





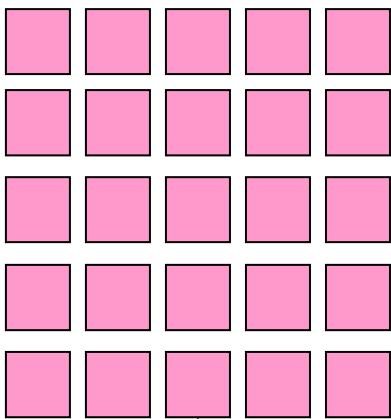
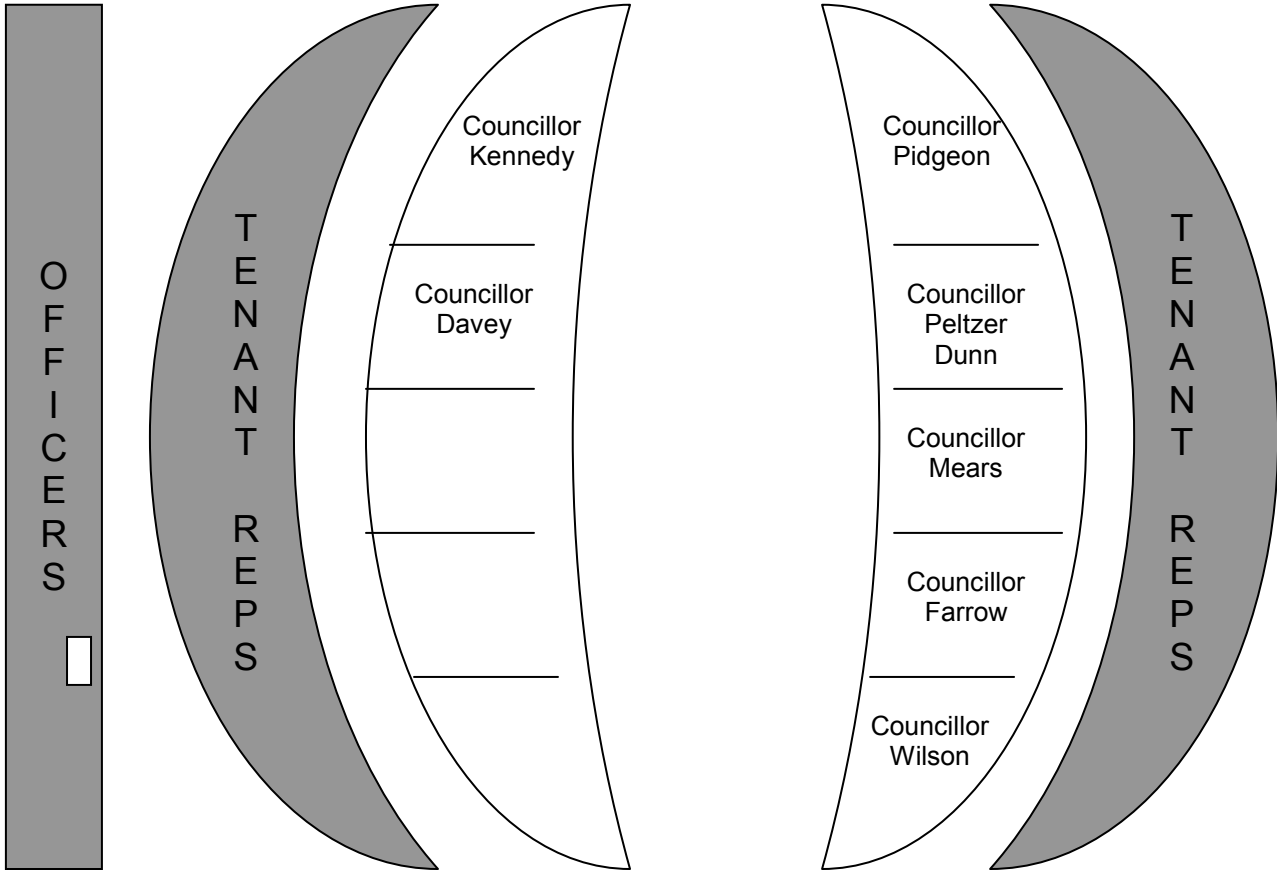
**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Housing Management Consultative Committee

Title:	Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee
Date:	29 October 2013
Time:	3.00pm
Venue:	Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillors: Randall (Chair), Peltzer Dunn (Opposition Spokesperson), Farrow (Opposition Spokesperson), Davey, Kennedy, Mears, Pidgeon and Wilson
Contact:	Lisa Johnson Senior Democratic Services Officer 01273 291228 lisa.johnson@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

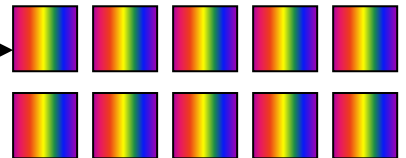
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Democratic Services: Meeting Layout



Public Seating

Members in Attendance



Press



Tenant Representatives:

Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel

Chris El-Shabba
Hedather Hayes

Central Area Housing Management Panel

Jean Davis
Alison Gray

North & East Area Housing Management Panel

Janet Gearing
Vacancy

West Hove & Portslade Area Housing Management Panel

Roy Crowhurst
Ron Gurney

Hi Rise Action Group

John Melson

Leaseholder Action Group

Tony Worsfold

Sheltered Housing Action Group

Charles Penrose

Tenant Disability Network

Ann Packham

AGENDA

19. 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:

- (a) Disclosable pecuniary interests not registered on the register of interests;
- (b) Any other interests required to be registered under the local code;
- (c) Any other general interest as a result of which a decision on the matter might reasonably be regarded as affecting you or a partner more than a majority of other people or businesses in the ward/s affected by the decision.

In each case, you need to declare

- (i) the item on the agenda the interest relates to;
- (ii) the nature of the interest; and
- (iii) whether it is a disclosable pecuniary interest or some other interest.

If unsure, Members should seek advice from the committee lawyer or administrator preferably before the meeting.

(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.

20. MINUTES

1 - 12

To consider the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2013 (copy attached).

21. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

22. 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.

23. 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 due date of 12 noon on the 22 October 2013;
- (c) **Deputations** – to receive any deputations submitted by the due date of 12 noon on the 22 October 2013.

24. 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, the closing date for which was 10am on 17 October 2013;
- (c) **Letters** – to consider any letters from Members, the closing date for which was 10am on the 17 October 2013;
- (d) **Notices of Motion** – to consider any notices of motion, the closing date for which was 10am on the 17 October 2013;

25. SUSTAINABLE TENANCIES STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN (WELFARE REFORM)

13 - 68

Contact Officer: Ododo Dafe Tel: 29-3201
Ward Affected: All Wards

26. INCOME COLLECTION AND ARREARS MANAGEMENT

Presentation by Ms L Yule, Housing Income Manager

27. HOUSING OFFICE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY

Presentation by Ms H Edgar, Housing Service Operations Manager

28. ANNUAL REVIEW OF REPAIRS PARTNERSHIP 2012/13

69 - 82

Contact Officer: Glyn Huelin Tel: 01273 293306

Ward Affected: All Wards

29. HOUSING MANAGEMENT PETS POLICY

83 - 114

Contact Officer: Eve Hitchens

Tel: 01273 293262

Ward Affected: All Wards

30. FIRE SAFETY IN TOWER BLOCK

Presentation by Officers and Fire Service

31. HOUSING AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-25 JOINT COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

115 - 148

Contact Officer: Narinder Sundar

Tel: (01273) 293887

Ward Affected: All Wards

32. UPDATE ON BRIGHTON & HOVE SEASIDE COMMUNITY HOMES BATCHING AND REFURBISHMENTS

149 - 152

Contact Officer: John Currell

Tel: 29-3355

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, (01273 291228, email lisa.johnson@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Date of Publication - Monday, 21 October 2013

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB-COMMITTEE

3.00pm 3 SEPTEMBER 2013

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

PART ONE

10. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

10(a) Declarations of Substitute Members

- 10.1 Councillor Morgan declared that he was attending as a substitute for Councillor Farrow
Councillor Robins declared that he was attending as a substitute for Councillor Wilson
Councillor Shanks declared that she was attending as a substitute for Councillor Randall
- 10.2 As Councillor Randall was not able to attend the meeting nominations were requested for the position of Chair. Councillor Kennedy was nominated and appointed Chair for the meeting.

10(b) Declarations of Interests

- 10.3 There were none.

10(c) Exclusion of the Press and Public

- 10.4 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.
- 10.5 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

11. MINUTES

- 11.1 Sub Committee considered the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2013.
- 11.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraphs 7.14 and 7.18 and asked if there was any further information on properties being transferred to Seaside Homes. The Head of

Housing, Mr Sharma, advised that work on this matter was still on going and the Sub Committee would be briefed in due course.

- 11.3 RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee held on 28 May 2013 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

12. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

- 12.1 The Chair gave the following communication:

Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee Tenant Representatives

Elections have recently been held for the positions of Tenant Representatives and Deputy Tenant Representatives to sit on the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee. Following the elections I would like to welcome Chris El-Shabba, Heather Hayes, Alison Gray, Janet Gearing and Ron Gurney who have been appointed to the meeting. I would also like to welcome Ted Harman, Martin Cullen, Jason Williams, Kim Gearing, Muriel Briault and Joe Macrae who have been appointed Deputy Tenant Reps. May I take this opportunity to thank Lynne Bennett, David Murtagh, Trish Barnard, Rita King, Rob Spacie, Tina Urquhart and Barry Kent for their contribution to the HMCSC.

Financial Inclusion Work

I would like to draw to the attention of the committee the success of the Council's Financial Inclusion Strategy for Council Tenants and Leaseholders. Through joint working with MACS, we have helped more than 370 people manage their debts and claim the benefits they are entitled to. This is an additional £350k income for council tenants and residents in the first 9 months that the Housing Inclusion Team has been operational.

Service demand has risen dramatically since April 2013 as a result of welfare reform changes coming in. Impact of benefit changes/loss of benefit is the most common issue identified by tenants, so we do not expect this level of demand to reduce. The majority of cases have been complex with individuals presenting with a number of issues that have needed resolving over several casework sessions rather than one intervention or session.

Flood at Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge

On 1st August there was a major flood at Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge. Unfortunately the flood caused water damage to a number of properties and meant that 5 households have had to move out into emergency accommodation while their homes dried out and were refurbished. On the day this happened staff from Housing, Mears and Adult Social Care were in attendance and stayed until late in the evening to ensure that the residents affected received the help and support that they needed. Some Mears staff remained throughout the night to try to limit the damage to resident's homes. The cause of this was connected to some old pipe-work which was being decommissioned and removed and so this would not happen again. Mears had accepted full responsibility and have provided the statement below:

We are very sorry for the inconvenience residents have experienced during the recent flood at Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge. Mears are now rapidly

undertaking the relevant repairs and reinstatement of residents' homes and belongings damaged as a result of the incident. We anticipate the remaining five residents that were moved out will be returning home by the end of next week. As a gesture of goodwill, Mears are providing them with welcome home food hampers as they return. We are keeping residents informed of our actions through regular communication. I can confirm that Mears are accepting liability for this incident and this incident alone and only damage caused as a result of this incident.

Lifts at Hereford Court and Lift Programme

Over the weekend of 9th & 10th of August we were in the unfortunate situation of having both lifts at Hereford Court out of service. Both breakdowns were due to the failure of very old components that are now obsolete. The first lift required a component to be sent away for repair. When the second lift went down during the early hours of the Saturday night, our contractors Liftec attended promptly but found that an original 1960's component had disintegrated. The engineer was not able to repair this lift straight away, and finding a suitable substitute part was quite a challenge given the timing of the breakdown. However, Liftec were able to draw on their stock of spare parts saved from old lifts that have been replaced and a replacement part was sourced and fitted by the following Monday morning, returning the lift to service. Both lifts were in service by 19th August. We are always concerned about the impact on our residents when a lift is out of order. We are aware that many of our residents have health issues or are older people and using several flights of stairs is not always an option for them. When two lifts go down, this can have a very serious impact on residents with mobility issues. In view of this we do aim to provide the support and assistance that residents need to manage when lifts are out of service. We will provide emergency accommodation in cases where people really can not manage and have no where else to stay. In other cases we may help with shopping and keep a check on people who so not have anyone else to help them. On Saturday 9th August while the lifts were out of action a council officer attended Hereford Court and tried to make contact with residents who we knew would find it difficult to manage without the use of a lift. She put up posters so that anyone who had difficulties who she had not made contact with could contact us over the weekend. This incident demonstrates the importance our lift replacement programme. Hereford Court is due to be replaced in this financial year. This lift replacement programme started in 2011 and so far 9 lifts have been replaced and 2 are in progress. The programme runs to 2019 and there are 43 more lifts that need to be replaced. The lift replacement programme is reviewed annually in conjunction with High Rise Action Group. If a lift starts to break down more frequently and/or parts become obsolete it may need to be brought forward in the programme.

- 12.2 Mr K Cohen referred to the flood at Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge, and said that everyone had been very happy with the way it had been handled and thanked the Council staff and Mear's employees for what they did.
- 12.3 Councillor Morgan thanked officers and Mears for the way the matter was dealt with, but asked why it had happened in first place and why the problems hadn't been noticed before. Councillor Mears asked what surveys had been carried out prior to the flooding. Mr Sharma said that a lot of work had gone into dealing with the situation and lessons

had been learnt. He suggested that a paper be brought to the next meeting providing more detail on what had happened.

- 12.4 A member of the public asked to speak. The Chair said she would use her discretion and allow them to speak. The member of the public referred to the lifts at Hereford Court and said that only one lift was now working. Ms R Chasseaud, Head of Tenancy Services, said that one of the lifts had recently stopped working; she would find out further information and advise the members of the Sub Committee.

13. CALL-OVER

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

14. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

- 14.1 (a) There were no petitions
(b) There were no written questions
(c) There were no deputations

15. ISSUES RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE SUB COMMITTEE

- 15.1 (a) There were no petitions
- 15.2 (b) A written question was submitted by Mr C Penrose (Sheltered Housing Action Group). The item was taken as read at the meeting. The question and response was as follows:

Question

At the Sheltered Housing Action Group meeting held on 10th July concern was shown when the decent homes standard was due to be completed by December 13th 2013. We question this timing as we still have tenants in sheltered housing having to share bathing facilities with 3 other tenants. Sanders House 12 tenants and Evelyn Court has 14 tenants. Also Evelyn Court were to have a new boiler fitted in 2012 and that has been delayed indefinitely .We were fortunate to have Councillor Randall present at this meeting who expressed a. Wish to visit Evelyn Court and his comments will be

appreciated. We feel that if Evelyn Court cannot be improved to a decent homes standard, it will be a severe blow to S.H.A.G. and diminish our purpose to improve the standards our tenants deserve. We would appreciate a report on the condition of sheltered housing considering the age of some of the properties. Leach Court opened in 1974, Woods House in 1975. Original government guide lines were 25 years old for a replacement kitchen and 30 years for a replacement bathroom. I was informed at the City Assembly in May that the goal posts had been moved, now 30 years for kitchen and 40 years for a bathroom. When did this happen and by whose authority? Clarification of this would also be appreciated.

Response

The Housing Team and in particular Sheltered Housing are committed to improving our sheltered housing service. Following our presentation at the HMCSC in March we've started reviewing our sheltered service with the help of the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH). One of the important reasons for reviewing our service is the anticipated rise in the 'very old' population in Brighton & Hove. Already a third of our sheltered tenants are over 80. As people in this higher age group are likely to need more assistance due to physical frailty, chronic conditions and/or multiple conditions (including dementia) we need to ensure that both our sheltered service and the scheme buildings are able to sustain them. The CIH have been asked to look at models of support that link more to the work of health and social care in supporting the very old remain independent and well in their home. A review of our scheme buildings will help us better plan our investment programme to meet the needs of the ageing population.

Update on works

The council has spent over £1 million on upgrading many of the sheltered blocks, where it has been relatively straight forward and cost-effective to do so. This includes Hazelholt, Laburnum as well as upgraded heating systems at Walter May House, including free solar hot water. The council is currently on site at Jubilee Court and Lindfield Court doing similar works. Despite some design challenges to be overcome at Sanders Court, which will be worked on over the next few months, the council will be looking to convert the existing 12 shared facility flats to self-contained (subject to resident agreement), along with a possible communal boiler replacement and solar panels. Economic Development and Housing Teams are currently evaluating the regeneration options of Evelyn Court and it is anticipated that these will be adequately progressed for presentation to Members at an imminent HSCMC.

Properties with shared facilities

Some flats do still have shared facilities and work is underway to address this in a number of areas. Properties such as these would not fail decent homes on this basis as sometimes it is not possible to make the required improvements to properties for physical or planning restrictions. The Decent Homes guidance published by government allows for these cases.

Sheltered housing and decent homes

Sheltered housing is not exempt from decent homes and a large amount of improvement works have been undertaken to sheltered properties. The council is undertaking a project reviewing the Brighton & Hove Standard for works after the achievement of decent homes. As part of this work council officers will be meeting with the Sheltered Housing Action Group and Tenant Disability Network to see whether there are specific items that they would like to see built into the standard. This will look at the potential for delivering elements of "lifetime homes" through the standard in the future.

Disabled adaptations and the decent homes standard

Changes to the Brighton & Hove Standard in relation to which properties benefit from new kitchens and bathrooms under the council's investment programme were agreed at Housing Committee in June 2012. This report proposed changes so that where a tenant has had a substantial adaptation carried out (for example a wet room or level access shower) this is not taken into account when assessing whether the property should have

a kitchen or bathroom replacement. In practice this means that if the bathroom was substantially adapted and the kitchen was old and in poor condition then the kitchen would be replaced under the council's investment programme. The changes proposed were discussed and supported by the Repairs & Improvement Partnership Core Group and a meeting of the Tenant Disability Network and the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group.

15.3 Mr Penrose thanked the Chair for the response, and asked if after considering the response he could submit a further question on this matter. The Chair agreed.

15.4 (c) There were no Letters

15.5 (d) There were no Notices of Motion.

16. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

16.1 Mr R Jordan-Penswick, Anti-Social Behaviour Manager, gave a presentation on how anti-social behaviour (ASB) was dealt with.

16.2 Mr Jordan-Penswick said that ASB was one of the most important issues for tenants of social housing. Its impact could be very serious and far reaching and it damaged lives and communities. One person committing acts of ASB could destroy the quality of life for an entire area and bring misery to their neighbours. It was consistently one of the top three priorities for tenants in surveys carried out country wide. Legislation placed a statutory duty on local authorities to "do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area" and to publish policies and procedures on how they would do this. The Housing service would not tolerate acts of nuisance and antisocial behaviour and would take prompt, robust and assertive actions to tackle each situation as quickly as possible using appropriate enforcement and support measures. Most reports would

come via customer contact centre. The Customer Contact Officers would then decide if the report was to be treated as ASB or nuisance. A risk assessment would be carried out and the matter referred to the relevant team; either the Tenancy Officer Team and or the ASB Team. The Tenancy Officer Team dealt with low and medium level ASB, such as garden nuisance, noise complaints, behaviour arising out of substance dependency or misuse or family members etc. There were 10 Tenancy Officers currently holding 189 open ASB cases. Their role was to investigate the case, establish the facts on the balance of probabilities and resolve the case by bringing an end to the nuisance through using the tools and powers and support interventions that were available. The ASB Team dealt with high level ASB cases which affected more than one household or were more serious or complex in nature. Work processes were the same for both Teams. On referral the Case Officer would assess, evaluate and establish an action plan which would address the needs of that particular situation and which established a comprehensive package of measures to address any offending behaviour and any support or diversionary needs. The clear priority was to bring an end to the ASB as quickly as possible. The working approach had to be thorough, transparent and able to withstand detailed scrutiny. Officers must be able to show that they had thoroughly

addressed the complaints with the perpetrator and given them a chance to change their behaviour. The key principles to the casework were a combination of enforcement/support and victim support. With regard to enforcement action there were many powers and legal remedies which could be used by the council and the police. These included Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC), Antisocial Behaviour Order (ASBO) Warnings (written and verbal) and informal action such interviews and letters. Mediation, Fixed penalty notices, Parenting Orders, Individual Support Orders, Injunctions, Forfeiture, noise Abatement Notices, Dispersal Powers, Crack House and Property Closure Orders, Introductory tenancies, Demoted Tenancies and ultimately repossession and eviction. There were often significant underlying problems which contributed to a person's anti-social behaviour, such as mental health issues, anger management, lack of parenting skills, lack of perception of what is acceptable behaviour, substance dependency (alcohol / drugs) etc. It was important not just to stop the anti-social behaviour but also to tackle its root cause. In recent years it has become increasingly clear that services were not focussing sufficiently on the needs of the victim of ASB and the impact that it was having on the individual victim. Brighton and Hove made the decision to be at the front of pushing for change and so the Council signed up to work alongside the Home Office and four other authorities to develop new ways to provide enhanced victim support and better joint case working with the police and other agencies. The result was that in 2010 we introduced new services. Officers now assessed the impact the ASB was having on victims. If they were assessed as being at high or medium risk the council officer would discuss and agree risk reduction measures which would be put in place without delay. One specific officer was assigned to the victim to act as the regular point of contact between the victim and all agencies. Together with the police and the community safety team we have established a highly integrated case management system where all agencies can jointly work on each case through one unified computer data system, which had proved to be highly effective. We meet formally with the other agencies each month to action plan all high risk cases.

A new ASB Bill was currently working its way through Parliament, and the current powers would be replaced with just four new Orders; Criminal Behaviour Order (replacing ASBO), the Crime Prevention Order (replacing Injunctions and Individual Support Orders), Level 1 Community Protection Order (replacing Noise abatement notices, Litter Clearing Notices*, Graffiti/Defacement Removal Notices) and level 2 Community Protection Orders (replacing Premises Closure Orders, Crack house Closure Orders). The Bill was anticipated to become law in 2013 / 2014.

- 16.3 Councillor Morgan thanked Mr Jordan-Penswick for the presentation and the work his team did. Councillor Robins asked how victims were helped. He was advised that appointing one case officer to liaise with the victim had been transformative; contact was made with 24-48 hours and regular contact was maintained thereafter.
- 16.4 Ms Gray said that some elderly tenants could be too frightened to report a matter and asked what the best way was to report a matter. Mr Jordan-Penswick advised that people either report an incident to his team or contact the police. Officers now shared a joint case management system with the police and so information was share. If necessary a report could be anonymous.
- 16.5 Councillor Shanks asked if officers helped to mediate between neighbours, and was advised that mediation was always a first option.

16.6 Mr Cohen said that he was aware of an ongoing case where it had taken a considerable length of time for a tenant to be served with a Notice to Quit and asked why cases could take so long to be concluded. Mr Jordan-Penswick said that each case was different, and all interventions would be considered but if a Notice to Quit was served it would then be for the Courts to award a Possession Order.

16.7 Mr Jordan-Penswick said that a report would come to future meeting of the Sub Committee once the Bill became law.

17. APPROACH TO NEIGHBOURHOODS

17.1 Mr Keelan, Neighbourhoods Manager, gave a presentation on the Council's approach to Neighbourhoods. The Neighbourhoods Team were auditing estates to look for potential problems and areas for improvement. Tenants could contact the team if they had any concerns or suggestions.

17.2 During a person's first year of tenancy they would be visited three times to ensure they were keeping to the terms of their tenancy agreement, and would then be visited every three years thereafter. Any issues or problems would then be referred to other teams or agencies where appropriate. Maps identifying all council properties were used by the team who worked on a ward basis.

17.3 Mr Keelan gave examples of the work of the Team. An example of the Ingram Estate with plastic wall coverings, covered in algae and looking unpleasant was presented. The Team were arranging for these parts of the buildings to be cleaned. The cost of the work was very low, but it transformed the front of the building. The Team held regular campaigns and a recent campaign concerned the state of residents' balconies. Some people used that area for storage and it could look very messy and become an eyesore for other residents. The Team had taken on the delicate job of asking people to tidy their balconies. Where necessary help and support was provided to tenants, such as assisting with disposing of goods which had been stored on balconies for some time. Fire Safety was another area the team was involved with; advising tenants on keeping common ways clear etc. There was some social housing which had been identified as areas of deprivation, and the Neighbourhood Team worked with tenants in those areas to support them. One area which had been identified was Kingswood Flats, and work had started with the tenants. The type of support provided included help in getting people into back into employment, assistance with education or even the provision of shared allotments etc. The Neighbourhood Team worked with different partners such as Community Payback, food banks, money advice centres, residents associations and local community groups. This was a big project and the Sub Committee would be kept updated with progress. Mr Keelan said that the Neighbourhood Team could be contacted via email at Housing.CustomerServices@brighton-hove.gov.uk or by telephone on 01273 293030.

17.4 Councillor Mears thanked Mr Keelan for the presentation, but had two areas of concern. The first was that the Team were preparing maps and she asked if there wasn't already a definitive list of properties. The second area of concern was that the Neighbourhood Team was being funded from tenants' rent. Councillor Mears was advised that the Council did have a list of all properties it owned, but needed to clarify which ones were from the General Fund and which from the Housing Revenue Account. A list would be

provided to the Sub Committee in due course. Councillor Morgan said that the work of the Neighbourhood Team was invaluable, and the quality of the environment in estates was important and could impact on levels of anti social behaviour.

- 17.5 Councillor Peltzer Dunn noted the work of the team with regard to fire safety to ensure common ways were kept clear, and that some tenants had a problem of where they could store their mobility scooters. The Chair said that was important issue and asked if an update could be provided on this matter at a future meeting.
- 17.6 Councillor Robins referred to the issue of fire safety, and said he had spoken with a fire officer who had informed him that walls covered in numerous coats of paint could itself be a fire hazard and asked if that was an issue being considered by the authority. He was advised that an action plan was being prepared with the Fire Service to look address issues such as this. When the action plan was completed it would be brought back to the Sub Committee.

18. HOUSING MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2013/14

- 18.1 The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Executive Director – Environment, Development & Housing on Housing Management Performance Report Quarter 1 2013/14. The report was presented by Ms Dafe, the Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement (Housing).
- 18.2 Councillor Peltzer Dunn thanked officers for the report and the information provided. He referred to paragraph 4.0 and suggested that the figure of £764,990 be referred to as 'arrears' and not 'Rent collected as proportion of rent due each year (current balance £764,990)'. Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to paragraph 4.2 and the reference to properties with an up to date gas certificate, and asked why the number of properties fluctuated. Officers advised that the number varied as some properties were sold, some had recently had gas installed etc.
- 18.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn referred to Appendix 2, and noted that two properties in Westbourne had been empty for 715 days. He accepted there would be delays with any major refurbishment, such as having to obtain planning permission, but asked why it was taking so long. The Head of Housing was unable to provide an answer at the meeting, and said more information would be provided later. Councillor Peltzer Dunn then referred to the number of households affected by the under occupation charge and the total arrears from under occupying households, and was concerned that the figures weren't consistent. Officers said the number of those affected by under occupation was constantly changing as people's circumstances altered. Some tenants had moved out of council properties, or had completed a mutual exchange, or were no longer in receipt of Housing Benefit etc and so the figures would not remain constant. The Chair agreed that the information in the report could be clearer and asked that the next report provide more information.
- 18.4 Councillor Mears referred to Appendix 1 and asked why so many properties were being transferred to Seaside Homes when there were so many people on the waiting list for properties. The Head of Housing said that a review was currently being undertaken on

the criteria for transferring properties, and the Sub Committee would be advised once the review had been completed. Councillor Mears was concerned that the format of the report had changed, and was advised that any amendments had only been made following requests from the Sub Committee.

- 18.5 Councillor Mears referred to paragraph 4.4.1 which gave the number of Anti-Social Behaviour incidents by ward, and asked why the number in East Brighton was comparatively high. The Chair said that the level of deprivation within the city varied and that could impact on the level of anti-social behaviour. The Chair suggested that it would be useful to have more information on the type of incidents.
- 18.6 Ms Hayes referred to under occupancy of properties and, as there were many people who were waiting for larger properties to become available, asked if those who were under occupying were being encouraged to move. Officers confirmed that a significant amount of work was being done to support those who were under occupying properties to move. In particular there was the Transfer Incentive Scheme (TIS), which provided assistance with all aspects of moving, such as the cost of the move, buying new carpets etc.
- 18.7 Councillor Shanks asked if any events were being held to publicise the TIS. Officers advised there were, and one was recently held to promote mutual exchange of properties. The event had been very successful and more were being planned.
- 18.8 Mr Penrose referred to paragraph 4.1 and asked if the figures included properties in Sheltered Housing, as he was aware of one property which had been empty for a year as the tenant had been moved into care and did not have the mental capacity to end the tenancy on their flat. Officers said that the issue of mental capacity and giving up tenancies was complex, and there were a number of cases under review at the moment.
- 18.9 **RESOLVED: That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee noted the report.**

The meeting concluded at 5.45pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 25

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Sustainable Tenancies Strategy (welfare reform)		
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013		
Report of:	Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Ododo Dafe	Tel: 293201
	Email:	ododo.dafe@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report shares with Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee the draft Sustainable Tenancies Strategy which outlines work being undertaken in response to welfare reform.
- 1.2 The Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced a wide range of reforms to the welfare benefits which represent the most radical changes in the benefits system since it was formed. The reforms are intended to:
 - § make work pay
 - § simplify the benefits system
 - § reduce public spending on welfare

The changes require focussed attention in order to mitigate potentially unintended consequences, and to protect the income stream to the Housing Revenue Account.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee note the draft strategy.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The council has established a Welfare Reform Board, and has already carried out an array of actions in preparation for the implementation of the reforms, and to mitigate some of their impacts. This strategy draws together work specifically undertaken and planned within Housing. It sets out the context and detail of the reforms, and incorporates issues around financial, economic and digital inclusion.

- 3.2 The anticipated outcome from the strategy is to facilitate the provision of suitable, tailored and timely support to tenants in order that they can sustain their tenancies and minimise the personal, council and wider societal costs of failed tenancies. The strategy illustrates that this presents a real challenge in terms of the numbers of people impacted, the range of issues that need to be considered, and the potential consequences on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget. It is difficult to determine the exact longer term impacts of the individual changes on all potentially affected households, and therefore more difficult to gauge the cumulative impacts they will have. Most of the changes have been implemented, but the major change, Universal Credit, which replaces many existing benefits and arguably poses the largest risk to the HRA, is expected have a phased introduction from April 2014 up to 2017.
- 3.3 The changes need to be seen in the context of savings to the national welfare budget of £18 billion by 2014/15, as identified by the coalition government.
- 3.4 The strategy, which can be found at Appendix 1 of this report, demonstrates the understanding of the issues involved and the clarity of purpose being taken to address them.
- 3.5 The potential impacts on Housing include:-
- § The inevitable increase in rent arrears as a result of reduced incomes
 - § Increased homelessness in the city
 - § Increased costs of rent collection and costs of supporting tenants
 - § Reduced revenue to invest in housing and regeneration programmes
- 3.6 Wider impacts include the increasing demand and financial pressures made on other services in the city, eg welfare advice, children's services and adult social care services, as a result of increasing numbers of people facing hardship.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The themes covered in the strategy have been discussed at various meetings with residents in order to prepare for the implementation of the changes that have already taken place. For example the theme for last year's City Assembly was financial inclusion, and presentations on benefit changes as well as the work of our Inclusion Team were given.
- 4.2 As part of our preparatory work, additional money advice support for council tenants was procured from the local voluntary sector organisation Money Advice and Community Services (MACS). The new service was promoted widely through Homing In, the council's website, a range of front-line staff, and through personal contacts with tenants. The success of the scheme and further promotion was communicated to all tenants through our Annual Report to tenants sent earlier this year.
- 4.3 Specifically, a summary of the strategy and a presentation of its contents and the issues it raises was given at each Area Panel in September this year.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The Sustainable Tenancies Strategy and appendices illustrate the potential impact of Welfare Reform to council tenants' benefit income and the potential impact this could have on the Housing Revenue Account budget. The summary table in Appendix 1 highlights the cumulative effect on the reduction of benefits currently received by our council tenants and highlights this as a potential risk through the reduction of income to the HRA through non payment of rents.
- 5.2 The HRA revenue budget 2013/14, approved by Policy and Resources Committee in February 2013, included an amount of £0.150 million to implement a range of measures to support financial inclusion through the development of a range of specialist money and debt advice services to support households in financial difficulty. In addition to this an amount of £0.070 million was set aside to set up a discretionary hardship fund for council tenants, which is administered through the Revenues and Benefits Service.
- 5.3 The HRA has a provision for doubtful (potentially uncollectable) debt, which is £1.015 million as at the 1st April 2013 and is based on setting aside 20% provision for current tenant arrears and 95% provision for former tenant arrears. In the 2013/14 HRA revenue budget an amount of £0.208 million is set aside as the annual contribution to the doubtful debt provision. This budget provision budget is regularly monitored as part of financial budget management of the HRA.
- 5.4 As mentioned above some of the additional costs resulting from Welfare Reform changes are already provided for in the current years HRA revenue budget. Budget proposals for the next financial year, 2014/15, are currently being formulated and the potential future financial implications identified in this report will be considered as part of the budget setting process and reported back to this Committee in December through the HRA 2014/15 Revenue Budget Report.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen 14/10/13

Legal Implications:

- 5.3 The council's standard secure tenancy agreement requires a tenant to "pay your rent and other charges on or before the date they are due". A court can make an order for possession of council property where it is satisfied that "rent lawfully due from the tenant has not been paid or an obligation of the tenancy has been broken or not performed" and that it is reasonable to make the order. The steps already taken to sustain tenancies, and actions going forward, will help avoid court action. The measures outlined are compatible with Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights – the Right to respect for private and family life. No individuals Human Rights Act rights are adversely affected by the report's recommendation.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

15/10/13

Equalities Implications:

- 5.4 The government has prepared an Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment for each of the welfare reform policy changes. They are available from this link: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/legislation-and-key-documents/welfare-reform-act-2012/impact-assessments-and-equality/>.

The council's financial inclusion equalities impact assessment identifies the impact of issues such as welfare reform, rising food and fuels costs, reduced incomes on residents on low incomes. The 'Equalities considerations' section of the Sustainable Tenancies strategy illustrates that there are very few groups of tenants who will not be affected by the changes - except for tenants over pensionable age in most cases.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.5 The strategy aims to ensure tenants are resilient, and are in most cases themselves able to acquire the skills, knowledge and support that they make appropriate decisions and choices in relation to their finances and their home. This will include for example decisions around fuel suppliers, banking services, food, affordable credit, budgeting, prioritising debt (where it exists), and generally maximising their incomes in order to sustain their tenancies. The 'Decent Homes' programme and other Housing initiatives to ensure the thermal comfort of tenants' homes will have contributed to reducing fuel poverty, which may a particular issue faced by tenants in the private rented sector.

Some of the implications of the Housing Benefit reduction due to under occupation are that tenants need to move home, sometimes to different areas – and there is the potential for this to have negative impacts on community cohesion and sustainable communities.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.6 The ability to sustain tenants in affordable accommodation, and to maximise their incomes has the potential to reduce crime in the city.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.7 A risk register in relation to welfare reform is established as part of the Housing Business Plan, and will be maintained by the Leadership Team.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 Mitigating the impacts of welfare reform is a key priority for the council, and there is significant work underway to support residents – particularly those impacted by the Benefit Cap where securing paid employment is critical to most of them.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Sustainable Tenancies Strategy 2013 – 2015

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None

Background Documents

Draft

Sustainable Tenancies Strategy

**Strategy responding to welfare
reform and incorporating financial,
digital and economic inclusion**

2013 - 2015

Title	Sustainable Tenancy Strategy
Department	Housing
Version	First draft - Ododo-June 2013 First internal comms version - July 2013
Version control	The version number will be maintained on the document. Any printed versions may not necessarily be up to date. Once adopted the latest version will be maintained on Sharepoint and the council's website
Electronic file location	Insert Sharepoint link Insert website link
Related Housing strategies	Rent income and arrears Customer Access Investment Strategy
Related council strategies	Financial Inclusion 2013 – 2016 Equality and Inclusion Policy 2012 - 2015
Date adopted	
Dissemination	Intranet Colleague email with link Councillor email (summary and link) Housing Manager Meeting presentation and feedback Area Panels Relevant committees Announcement in Housing Update Announcement in Homing In Twitter Facebook

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Executive summary

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 has brought about the biggest changes to the welfare benefits system since it was first created. The act aims to:-

- § create a fairer benefits system
- § streamline processes
- § reduce national public spending over the next five years
- § make work pay.

Councils are crucial in the behaviour change the government seeks.

Our Sustainable Tenancy Strategy will help minimise tenancy breakdown, and support tenants to cushion the impacts of potentially reduced household incomes.

The main outcomes we expect to achieve are:-

- § To increase tenants' confidence in managing personal finance, through a range of support activities
- § To avoid tenants accruing debt, through initiatives such as increasing mutual exchanges
- § To protect our revenue stream to enable investment in homes.

The welfare reforms commenced in April 2012 with the main changes being:-

- § Housing Benefit reduction where there is under occupation
- § Council Tax Benefit localisation
- § changes to benefits to people with disabilities
- § Benefit cap
- § Universal Credit.

They have already led to many challenges for residents and for the council.

The reduction in household incomes has already resulted in higher rent arrears which could ultimately lead to more evictions, and a rise in homelessness in the city. As well as this, our preventative and supportive work means there is an increasing pull on already stretched resources.

Some of the most impacted people are also known to be living in the most deprived areas of the city, to be long-term unemployed, have low education attainment and have health issues. As a result we have to respond more dynamically, stretching to non-traditional housing related support.

We aim to rise to the challenges presented by welfare reform and sustain tenancies wherever possible - and this will be through a mix of measures that support financial, digital and economic inclusion.

Ensuring tenants are financially included is one of the vital elements to sustainable tenancies. It goes far beyond being able to access financial products

and services. A range of research data gathered by the Financial Inclusion Centre demonstrates that social housing tenants are more likely than other residents to be impacted by financial exclusion. Our work in Housing fits with the council's Financial Inclusion Strategy for 2013 to 2016.

Research suggests that many people on low incomes prefer to manage on a cash basis as this gives them a better sense of control over their finances. In this way they can avoid the inflexibility and punitive bank charges relating to eg failed direct debits. Tenants are being supported in making the best decisions for them through the work of our Inclusion Team, our independent contract with a local money advice service, and through council wide work on a community banking partnership in the city.

It is widely recognised that digital exclusion significantly hinders people in different of ways - eg in obtaining employment, having access to cheaper goods and services, and developing and maintaining social contacts. Supporting tenants to be digitally included requires intensive work, especially when accounting for issues such as numeracy and literacy difficulties. Tenants are being encouraged to visit libraries where there has been an increase in public access computers, and there is support to use them.

Measures we have already taken to support tenants through welfare reform changes include:-

- § communications, visits and contact with impacted residents in council and temporary accommodation
- § encouraging tenants to downsize through the transfer scheme or by mutual exchange
- § giving information and advice around eg take in lodgers maximising incomes, applying for Discretionary Housing Payments
- § staff training
- § employment support through our new Inclusion Team .

As well as the individual impacts for tenants affected by the welfare reforms, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) will potentially be directly or indirectly affected by each of them. The reduction in Housing Benefit for under occupying tenants alone could result in a loss to the HRA of almost £700k in the first year, with the Benefit Cap resulting in a loss of around £66k . The total potential loss, without accounting for the impacts of Universal Credit, is estimated to be in excess of £1.8 million.

A range of ongoing actions to support tenants to sustain their tenancies are already in place. As the cumulative impacts of the welfare benefit changes become clearer, further actions are being developed to respond to the specific needs of impacted tenants.

Introduction and context

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 represents the most radical reform of the welfare system since its inception. The government intends that the reforms will:-

- make income, out of work, housing and disability related benefits fairer and more streamlined, and help reduce administrative costs
- reduce UK public spending on welfare benefits by £18 billion over the next five years (plus a further £3.75 billion announced in the 2012 Autumn statement)
- create the right incentives to get more people into work by ensuring that work is always more financially rewarding than claiming welfare benefits.

Brighton & Hove City Council is working to ensure that tenants are supported through these government changes, and has created this Tenancy Sustainment Strategy to capture our work to focus on sustaining tenancies.

What is sometimes referred to as the 'perfect storm' has been brewing for a number of years now and include:-

- Unemployment and under employment
- The condition of the local and national economy
- Public spending cuts – including cuts in legal aid services and funding to the voluntary sector
- Higher living costs – rents, fuel, food
- The welfare reform changes to benefits
- Limited access to affordable banking services.

The ingredients of the 'perfect storm' has generally led to an increase in demand for public services at a time of decreasing resources; and one of the coping strategies for individuals has been an increase in debt, particularly debt taken on with very high interest rates. While we continue to do everything we can to keep evictions to an absolute minimum, the other consequences of debt can be the threat of eviction, tenancy abandonment and relationship breakdown.

Purpose

This strategy sets out our aims, initiatives and actions to maintain sustainable tenancies in response to welfare reform.

It will help us minimise the personal, social and financial costs of tenancy breakdown and help build resilience against the challenges that the changes present. Significant impacts for the city are the reduction in household incomes, the way that rent related benefits will be paid direct to tenants with the introduction of Universal Credit, and the personal support some tenants will need around money management and online benefit claims.

The strategy is aimed at staff, Council Members and tenant representatives in pursuit of maintaining tenancies and communities in which people thrive.

Council context

This strategy responds to the council's priorities as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan:

- Tackling inequality
- Creating a more sustainable city
- Engaging people who live and work in the city
- Modernising the council

The work being undertaken in respect of this strategy is in accordance with the council's overall approach to managing the changes brought about by welfare reform, and in line with the council's core values of:

Respect by working with residents and being mindful of their specific situation

Collaboration by working effectively with others to ensure tenants have access to the services and support they need

Efficiency by eg seeking to maximise tenant incomes, avoid duplication and ensure resources are used effectively

Openness by communicating effectively and ensuring tenants are aware of the support and advice available to them

Creativity by considering a range of ways of mitigating against the impacts of welfare reform

Customer focus by working with residents and increasing our use of customer profiling to ensure we deliver targeted and tailor made approaches.

Outcomes expected from this strategy

The main outcomes we want to achieve through this strategy are to have:-

1. Increased tenants' access to and confidence in managing financial information and products
2. Maximised household incomes through a range of activities including benefits advice, employment and learning support, fuel switching
3. Reduced uncontrollable and unmanageable personal debt
4. Protected our revenue stream to enable investment in homes
5. Increased access to transactional bank accounts and suitable financial products
6. Increased access to and confidence in using the internet and online services
7. Reduced the number of tenants accessing high interest and unaffordable credit
8. Increased the number of residents moving by mutual exchange

9. Remained agile in the use of our staff and other resources to enable us to be flexible and respond accordingly to the changing environment and to tenants' changing needs
10. Continued to sustain tenancies.

Timetable of main welfare reforms

April 2012	Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
April 2013	Council Tax Support - localised council tax reduction scheme, and abolition of Council Tax Benefit
April 2013	Housing Benefit reduction from under occupation in social housing
April 2013	Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)
June 2013	Personal Independent Payments (PIP) - new claims
August 2013	Benefit cap
April 2014	Universal Credit - initially only new claims

Residents will also be impacted by increased **non-dependant deductions** - although this is not a change resulting from the Welfare Reform Act 2012.

Most of the reforms apply only to people of working age.

Main impacts of the changes

As well as the lower incomes and increase in levels of poverty within the city, the organisational impacts on the council include:-

- Inevitable increase in rent arrears
- Increase in resources to collect rent
- Increased cost of rent collection charges - more people paying and from various sources (rather than around 70% of rent income coming from HB)
- Increase in resources to support residents in a range of traditionally non-housing issues – eg in setting up bank accounts, seeking work, improving financial and digital capabilities
- Potential impact on other services offered to tenants – especially if resources are diverted to manage the impacts of welfare reform

- Potential impact on Housing's investment and regeneration programmes
- Potential increase in homelessness
- Increased workload for many teams eg Housing Options, Homelessness, Homemove, Customer Service, Sheltered
- Potential increase in tenancy fraud

The financial risks to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) are explored in more detail in Appendix 1.

Financial inclusion

Increasing financial inclusion is an important factor in sustaining tenancies.

The definition of financial inclusion the council has adopted is:-

“Having enough resources to meet basic needs adequately and to be able to make choices over a prolonged period to maintain physical and mental well-being and participate in community life.”

This definition reflects how financial inclusion is broader than simply having access to financial products and services, and encompasses considerations to mitigate a range of issues residents are facing.

Good progress was made towards promoting financial inclusion for our residents through a number of services and initiatives detailed in the Housing Management Financial Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2009 - 2012, including:

- Working with local specialist advice providers to refer tenants for money and debt advice
- Introduction of eBenefits, an on-line claims system which prevents rent arrears by reducing the time it takes to process claims to two days.
- Piloting the Housing Pre-action Advice Scheme in 2009/10, a project managed in partnership with Brighton County Court and BHT (Brighton Housing Trust) which aims to avoid possession action and prevent evictions and homelessness.
- Carrying out a Financial Health Check for all new tenants, covering advice and information on bank accounts, welfare benefits, affordable credit and savings; low-cost insurance; low-cost furniture; and energy efficiency.

A committee report initially taken to Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee on 19 March 2012 outlined further work to increase financial inclusion by adopting a Community Banking Partnership model. In summary the model proposed a seamless service to tenants which integrate the **ABCDE** of financial inclusion ie:

Advice - specialist advice casework to assist tenants to deal with problems related to debt, money and fuel poverty

Banking - access to basic banking, bill and debt repayment services

Credit - access to affordable loans

Deposits - access to savings facilities and incentives to save

Education - improving financial capability and budgeting skills, increased awareness of the dangers of loan sharks and illegal money lending, payday loans and loans with extortionate interest rates. This includes tenant training to become peer to peer money mentors.

With the very close linkages between the work we've been doing on financial inclusion and our current work to sustain tenancies, this strategy supercedes our previous Financial Inclusion Strategy and incorporates any ongoing actions.

In addition, Housing is working with colleagues across the council to achieve the actions in the council-wide Financial Inclusion Strategy for 2013 to 2016 which sets out **ABCDE** of financial inclusion, and now includes **F**, to address fuel and food poverty.

A range of research data gathered by the Financial Inclusion Centre demonstrates that social housing tenants are more likely than other residents to be impacted by financial exclusion:

- Of the poorest 10% of households in the UK, over half live in social rented housing
- 61% of social households have no-one working within the household, compared to 35% nationally
- Social housing residents earn on average half as much as private renters with a median annual income of £10,900
- 81% have no savings account
- 91% have no insurance cover
- According to Citizen's Advice, the proportion of social rented residents amongst their debt service users is twice as high as in the general population
- Lower income households are more likely to be exposed to unfair practices in the sub-prime lending sector - 20% of people in social housing have used doorstep lenders, and 94% are making poor financial product choices.

There is also a body of research evidence that makes the link between debt and mental health and wellbeing. For example, the Royal College of Psychiatry asserts that debt can cause and be caused by mental health problems, and estimates that one in four people with a mental problem is also in debt; and that one in two adults in debt also have a mental health problem. Debt prevention or management is an important aspect of supporting tenancy sustainment.

Transactional bank accounts and direct debit payments

A report published by Social Finance titled 'A new approach to banking; extending the use of jam jar accounts' provides national research information on a variety of issues relating to transactional bank accounts, the 'unbanked' and the 'under-banked'. Some of the national statistics it revealed includes:-

- 1.54 million UK residents do not have access to a transactional bank account
- 0.95 million have a basic bank account but choose to manage their money in cash
- 6.6 million pay more than £100 a year in banking fees
- 9 million are missing out on the benefits that transactional banking offers.

With the advent of Universal Credit, the general trend is that housing organisations are focussing on direct debit as the preferred method of rent payment in order to minimise rent arrears. The benefits for organisations are clear - it is the most cost effective payment method, and once set up, tenants do not have to remember to pay rent, nor do they have to go anywhere or do anything for it to happen.

There are also clear benefits of having transactional bank accounts for tenants:-

1. Affords better access to more keenly priced utilities
2. Enables internet shopping and the discounts that this can offer
3. Widens access to financial products and services
4. Reduces the 'poverty premium' which is assessed as being approximately £1,200 a year
5. Saves time, and in some cases money, travelling somewhere to pay bills
6. Offers psychological benefits in terms of peace of mind from not having to worry about falling into arrears
7. Removes the practical and sometimes psychological barrier to finding employment.

However, it is also useful to appreciate the reasons people on low incomes with bank accounts prefer to manage their finances on a cash basis. They are that it:-

1. Enables them to have control of their finances
2. Gives control over timing of payments – eg to fit in with variable dates when household monies come in, particularly where benefits are paid 4 weekly rather than on a set day every month
3. Avoids high and punitive penalty charges for missed direct debits or unauthorised overdrafts – which can represent a significant percentage of a households weekly disposable income
4. Offers transparency – "you know where you are"
5. Works well for people on variable incomes (eg irregular shift workers, casual labour)

6. Offers flexibility where direct debit arrangements do not
7. Responds to the mistrust of banks
8. Provides a workable alternative where people have experienced previous problems with banks

Locally, the above reasons for not considering direct debit payments were echoed by the Manor Place study respondents who do have transactional bank accounts but prefer not to use them because:-

- Their wages/benefits are paid into their accounts on variable pay dates
- They pay their rent when they collect their pension
- Benefit is paid 4 weekly, whereas direct debits go out monthly so they are not aligned
- They need to avoid bank charges

A Social Finance survey found that of the 1.5 million people in the UK who are 'unbanked':-

- 89% are on means tested benefits
- 79% are in households with no working adult and live in social housing
- There are high levels of single parents, disability, literacy and numeracy difficulties
- There are low levels of internet access
- However 84% do have a mobile phone.

The reason for including this information in this paper is that careful balancing will be required of our need to collect rent income in the most cost effective ways against the needs of some of our most vulnerable tenants. The majority will certainly be required to have a transactional account into which their benefit is paid in the future - but if we're to support them, we will need to be mindful of the pitfalls that this might present for tenants on very low incomes. A sensitive approach will be required from us.

Work currently being undertaken regarding transactional bank accounts

As part of the council's Financial Inclusion Strategy, the council is in dialogue with the East Sussex Credit Union – looking at the role it can play within our Community Banking Partnership in response to the banking offer, credit offer (affordable source of credit), deposits (encouraging residents to build up savings for 'lumpy' expenditure, and savings against which they can potentially borrow should the need arise).

The council is also in dialogue with the high street banks to see what they can offer locally - especially as many are talking about pulling their basic bank account offer and charging for use of other banks' cash machines. Both of these

measures will disproportionately impact on low income residents, especially our tenants who already have very limited access to cash machines.

Through our Financial Inclusion Officer, our Rent Accounting Team and the money advice contract we have with MACS, tenants can receive support for setting up transactional bank accounts. Information and advice is also offered on direct debit payments, and we are looking to offer such payments on any day of the month – as this will alleviate some of the concerns around the day on which payments are taken from bank accounts.

Levels of deprivation in the city

- 22,000 households (1 in every 5) in the city have someone with a support need
- There are high levels of mental health, physical disability, drug use
- 68% of the city's areas are in the most deprived 50% of England
- 12% of the city's areas are in the bottom 10% of deprivation
- Only 0.6% of the city is in the top 10% of England
- 23% of children are in poverty (9,488), and this increases to
 - 52% in East Brighton
 - 46% in Moulsecoomb & Bevendean

In addition, the demand for housing is high in the city with around 17,000 registered on the Homemove allocation scheme. Within the council's housing stock of almost 12,000 properties, less than 500 (or 4%) became empty during the last financial year.

Brighton & Hove's five most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs)

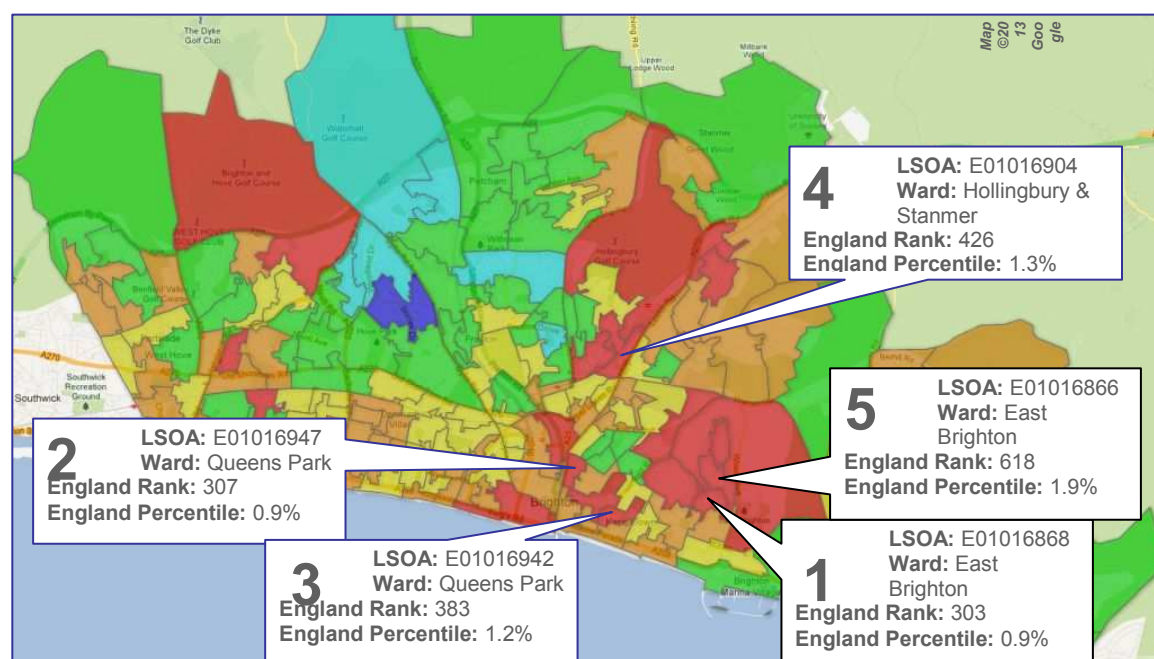
The table and map below show that the five most deprived areas in the city are also those where there are high numbers of council housing.

The ranks and percentiles are out of 32,482 LSOAs in England, where rank 1 is the most deprived, and rank 32,482 is the least deprived.

There are 164 LSOAs in Brighton & Hove, each representing an average of 760 homes, or 1,500 people, or 700 households.

Table 1 Ranking of the five most deprived lower super output areas in Brighton & Hove

	LSOA	Ward	Index of multiple deprivation rank	England Percentile
1	E01016868 South Whitehawk and Manor Hill area	East Brighton	303	0.9%
2	E01016947 Lower Albion Hill	Queens Park	307	0.9%
3	E01016942 Eastern Road area, Kemp Town	Queens Park	383	1.2%
4	E01016904 Saunders Park and SE Hollingdean	Hollingbury & Stanmer	426	1.3%
5	E01016866 Central Whitehawk	East Brighton	618	1.9%



Specific indices of deprivation

The table below looks at a few specific indicators of deprivation for our 5 most deprived super output areas, and ranks their position amongst Brighton and Hove's 164 lower super output areas. 1 is most deprived.

Table 2 Deprivation indicators for the most deprived lower super output areas in Brighton & Hove

	LSOA	Income poverty	Employment poverty	Child poverty	Health deprivation and disability	Estimate % living in fuel poverty
1	E01016868 South Whitehawk and Manor Hill area	1	3	4	4	13.5%
2	E01016947 Lower Albion Hill	6	2	15	20	13.8%
3	E01016942 Eastern Road area, Kemp Town	3	1	19	2	9.5%
4	E01016904 Saunders Park and SE Hollingdean	4	7	2	5	13.4%
5	E01016866 Central Whitehawk	5	9	6	6	10.0%

Research studies suggest that the following are characteristics of people living in the most deprived areas of the country. They are likely to:-

- Be long-term unemployed or in low paid jobs – likely to be seasonal, of a transient nature and/or in the service industry
- Have low education attainment, or have poor access to education
- Have health issues – eg low birth weight babies; coronary, pulmonary or mental health conditions
- Be a victim of crime or a young offender.

The maps above show that the areas of highest deprivation in the city are also those where council housing is concentrated.

Welfare reform changes in more detail

Aspects of the welfare changes will have a significant impact on our residents' household incomes and therefore their ability to pay their rent to sustain their tenancies. Some of the financial consequences on our business are difficult to quantify because they will not be known for some time.

1. Housing benefit reduction – social rented size criteria (also referred to as the 'under occupation charge')

Government objective: To support the overall reduction of welfare costs, to ensure best use is made of social housing stock, and to bring housing benefit into line with regulations in the private rented sector.

This reform became effective from April 2013, and reduces HB payments (and later the housing cost element of Universal Credit) for working age households who under occupy their homes by 14% for one bedroom, and by 25% for two bedrooms or more.

All households where the tenant or partner is over state retirement age under Housing Benefit rules are exempt.

One bedroom is allowed for each of the following:

- a couple
- a person who is not a child (aged 16 and over)
- two children of the same sex
- two children who are under 10
- any other child, (other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere).
- a carer (or group of carers) providing overnight care

An additional bedroom is also allowed for:

- an overnight carer who doesn't normally live in the household
- approved foster carer who either have a foster child/children living with them or are waiting for a child/children to be placed with them
- children are unable to share a bedroom because of severe disabilities – individual circumstances will need to be assessed
- adult child or children who are away from home serving as a member of the Armed Forces, and who intend to return to the home.

Factors that are not taken into account are:

- the size of bedrooms
- separated parents with shared custody – only the main carer or parent in receipt of child benefit will be allocated a bedroom for the child
- couples using the 'spare' room due to illness of one partner
- disabled people living in an adapted property that has additional bedrooms.

Our baseline data prior to the change being introduced showed we had almost 950 people of working age under-occupying council accommodation. This represents a total reduction of almost £700k in Housing Benefit for the tenants affected.

Table 3 Size criteria – impact from HB reduction

Under-occupation level	No. of households	Average wkly HB reduction per household	Estimated overall weekly HB reduction	Estimated overall annual HB reduction potential loss to HRA
1 bedroom	809	£12.12	£9,805	£520k
2+ bedrooms	140	£23.72	£3,321	£176k
Total	949	£13.83	£13,128	£696k

Source: Revenues & Benefits (April 2013)

As at the end of September 2013, the number of under occupying households impacted by the changes had reduced to approximately 750.

Tenants' options

- Transfer to a smaller property
- Mutual exchange
- Increase work hours if in work
- Seek employment if not in work
- Consider the possibility of non-dependant to make a higher contribution to household costs
- Take in a lodger
- Apply for additional help through the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) Fund
- Maximise income through eg ensuring all benefit entitlement is being claimed (eg Disability Living Allowance), and getting better gas, electricity, landline phones, mobile phone, and broadband deals.

Transfers

There is a shortage of appropriately sized accommodation for tenants wanting to move through transfers. During the last financial year 160 tenants moved by way of transfer, and by the end of September this year 129 have moved. Of this year's figure, 35 were impacted by the under occupation reduction in Housing Benefit and have downsized.

Table 4 Council house lets and transfers

	All council lets	...of which were transferring tenants	% of all lets to transferring tenants	No. let to impacted under occupiers (ie working age)	% of tenant transfers to impacted under occupiers
2012/13 year total	454	160	35%	17	11%
April - Sept 2013 6 month total	305	129	42%	35	27%
April - Sept 2013 monthly average	51	22	-	6	-

Source: Locata

From the table above, it can be seen that in the first five months of this year, the number and proportion of council properties let to impacted under occupiers had significantly increased. Although the number of under occupiers at the end of August has decreased, based on the March figure of 949, and assuming that a pattern of approximately 6 properties per month are let to impacted under occupiers, it can be projected that it would take just over 14 years to move all under occupiers through transfers alone.

Mutual exchanges

Mutual exchanges provide a good alternative to transfers for tenants wanting to move home.

Tenants advertise their properties in a variety of ways, but mainly online. Our webpage www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/mutual-exchange gives details of the scheme and online sites for tenants. There are also measures being adopted to offer more support to tenants who are not online, and to take a more proactive approach to matching potential mutual exchange applicants.

Table 5 Mutual exchanges

2013/14	Applied in					Total	Projected
	April	May	Jun	Jul	Aug		
Applications received in that month that went on to exchange	17	27	26	25	15	110	281
... of which, applications that were under occupiers	6 (35%)	7 (26%)	4 (15%)	8 (32%)	4 (27%)	29 (26%)	70 (25%)

Source: Tenancy Team spreadsheet

It is anticipated that the number of tenants moving through mutual exchange will increase as we increase our tailored approach to providing assistance to tenants – particularly those without access to the internet. There are significant numbers of overcrowded households to help achieve this. However, there are far fewer overcrowded tenants in a one bedroom flat needing a two bedroom, as there are over occupying tenants in a two bedroom flat needing a one bedroom property. This is further illustrated in Appendix 3.

Lodgers

For a sub-tenant or lodger (no meals are provided) – the first £20.00 of the rent charged is ignored then all the rest is treated as income. A separate £20.00 is disregarded for each boarder/lodger.

This changes when Universal Credit is introduced. The tenant will be considered as under-occupying and their entitlement to the housing cost element of their benefit will be reduced by the 14% or 25%, however all their rental income will be disregarded when assessing entitlement to the housing cost element of Universal Credit.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), administered by the Revenues & Benefits Service, is a fund allocated each year by the government. The allocation for the council for 2013/14 is £1.01 million, and represents less than 10% of the estimated £12 million total shortfall between housing benefits to and rents due from residents of the city.

Vulnerable people in exceptional circumstances can apply for DHP for extra help with their housing costs. Most commonly this means topping up their housing benefit where the amount they receive is less than their rent. Historically this has been most commonly used for people renting in the private sector because their housing benefit was more likely to be restricted to an amount lower than their rent. From April 2013, the introduction of the under-occupation reduction in housing benefit has seen an increase in demand for DHP from council and housing association tenants who are applying for assistance with eg the shortfall in their rent or removal costs.

For reasons mentioned in the two paragraphs above, a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) sum of £70k has been set aside on a one off basis to minimise the risk of evictions and enable tenancies to be sustained. This sum of money represents only around 10% of the projected shortfall in housing benefit in 2013/14 to council tenants who are under occupying. The decision was agreed at Housing Committee on 8 May 2013.

The additional funding will be administered by the council's Revenues and Benefits Service using current DHP guidance, and decisions on applications will remain discretionary and made on a case-by-case basis looking at health, appropriateness of accommodation, age of children, indebtedness, risk of homelessness, duration of support need, sustainability of tenancy, and other indices of vulnerability.

The Revenues and Benefits Service monitor the expenditure and report back to Housing on a regular basis detailing amounts paid to council tenants and cases where a DHP has been refused. This will enable us to be proactive in contacting tenants who will potentially fall into arrears.

As at end August 2013, approximately £33k has been awarded to 107 council tenants, with approximately £24k being awarded to 73 households for reasons directly relating to the under occupation charge.

Research finding: under occupation impacts on disabled under occupiers

Housing magazine, 24dash.com reported in July 2013 on research commissioned by the National Housing Federation, and conducted by the Charity Papworth Trust.

The report revealed that of under occupying disabled tenants refused Discretionary Housing Payments:

- 90% are cutting back on food or bills
- 37% are cutting back on specialist mobility transport
- 27% are cutting back on medical expenses such as medication, therapies and monitoring health conditions.

In addition, data collected from 24 local authorities shows that three in ten (29%) disabled people hit by the charges have been refused DHPs so far.

Arrears impacts arising from under occupation at the end of September 2013

753 tenants under occupying, of which 578 (77%) are in arrears

Average rent arrears for all under occupiers is approximately £160

Arrears attributable to under occupying tenants increased from £84k to £120k - an increase of £36k or almost 43%.

By comparison, arrears for all tenants increased by 20% in the same period.

By the end of this financial year, it is projected that the arrears of under occupying households will reach around £197k. This is more than double the base amount of £84k before the HB changes.

Of the 578 tenants in arrears, 359 (62%) did not have arrears before the changes came into effect in April.

People of pensionable age who are under occupying

While the government's current proposals relating to under occupation do not include people over pensionable age, it has indicated that this will be reviewed, with their possible inclusion after 2015. In the event of this happening, a review of potential impacts has been undertaken.

In addition, when Universal Credit is introduced, both the tenant and partner must be above the state retirement age in order to be exempt from the reduction in the housing cost element.

The number of under occupiers at or over pensionable age is currently 1,201.

Table 6 Under occupying households at or over pensionable age

Excess bedrooms	Number of households (whether on HB or not)
1	1,370
2	601
3	27
4	3
Total	2,001 (51% of all pensioner households)
% of all council households	17%

Source: OHMS

Table 7 Tenants at or over pensionable age

Pensioner households under occupying	2,001
Pensioner households not under occupying or overcrowded	1,802
Pensioner households overcrowded by 1 or more bedrooms	102
Total pensioner households	3,905
... of which are pensioner only households	2,936
... of which are pensioners living with people of working age and/or children	969
Pensioner households claiming HB	3,327
Estimated annual HB claimed	£1.2m

Sources: OHMS, Revenues & Benefits

2. Council Tax Benefit localisation

Government objective: To reduce government funding to local councils for council tax from 100% to 90% - while maintaining the benefit paid to claimants of pensionable age at 100%.

This change, introduced in April 2013 see all working age residents who previously received 100% council tax benefit now having responsibility for making a payment towards their council tax.

The maximum extra any claimant will have to pay in the first year will be £3pw, with the average contribution at approximately £1.70 per week. Those in severe hardship may be eligible for discretionary support, but there is a limited budget.

The council has an obligation to do all it can to collect council tax for the provision of local services, and has already needed to send notices of non-payment to residents who have defaulted on their payments. This can result in an additional charge if the bill is unpaid.

Table 8 Council Tax impacts

Welfare reform change	Impact on tenant	No. tenants potentially affected	Indirect potential impact on HRA
Council Tax Benefit to be abolished and replaced by Council Tax Reduction Scheme	All working-age households will now need to pay something towards their council tax, even if they received 100% benefit prior to April 2013. The maximum extra payable will be around £3pw. Pensioners are exempt from changes.	5,000	Indirect impact of tenants' reduced incomes by £780,000 (£3 x 5,000 x 52 weeks)

The Housing Income Management Team started piloting a new service with Council Tax and the Housing Benefit Recovery Team in February 2013, targeting those tenants under-occupying by 2 or more bedrooms who already have a housing or council tax debt. The idea is to provide one point of contact in order to create a sustainable agreement to cover all the debts, referring to money advice where appropriate. The DWP's Debt Management service has agreed, that where tenants fall into 4 weeks full rent arrears due to the reduction in benefit, we can apply for deductions from other benefits of 'rent' plus arrears, currently £3.55 per week.

This pilot has been successful, and is now being rolled out to all arrears cases.

Discretionary Fund for Council Tax Reduction

Council Tax Benefit was abolished from April 2013 and replaced with a local Council Tax Reduction scheme, for which the council has created a discretionary

fund. This allows vulnerable people in exceptional circumstances to be assisted with extra help towards their council.

3. Benefit cap

Government objective: To ensure households on benefit do not receive more than the national average wage, and to increase the incentive for people on out-of-work benefits to enter the labour market.

This part of the reform will limit the total amount of household benefits for out of work working age households to a maximum of £350 a week for single people and £500 a week for couples and families.

The cap was initially trialled in four London boroughs. Implementation began in Brighton and Hove on 12 August 2013, and all currently affected households have had personal visits or contact about the changes.

Until Universal Credit is rolled out, the reductions in people's benefit will be taken directly from Housing Benefit (HB). The impact of the cap on individual HB claims ranges from a cut of less than a pound to the loss of their entire housing benefit. If the cap takes all of the household's HB, 50p will be left in payment to enable eligibility for Discretionary Housing Payment applications.

NB: If a claimant or partner is eligible for Working Tax Credit (including underlying entitlement) then the household is exempt from the cap. They will also be exempt if a claimant, partner or dependent child is in receipt of:

Disability Living Allowance	Attendance Allowance	Personal Independence Payment	Industrial Injuries Benefit
Employment Support Allowance (support component)	Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Payments (AFCS)	Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP)	War Pensions Scheme Payments (WPS)

The number of BHCC tenants impacted by this is 19 (July 2013), and the reduction in their housing benefit ranges from £5.44 to £102.99 per week. The average weekly HB reduction is £58 and represents an average annual household reduction of £3,016.

The number of residents in temporary accommodation impacted by the Benefit Cap is 107 (July 2013), and the reduction in their housing benefit ranges from £1.50 to £280.32 per week. 29% of these households lose £100 or more of their weekly housing benefit. The average weekly loss for all temporary accommodation cases is almost £82 and represents an annual HB reduction for each household of around over £4,250.

There will be a constant fluctuation of the numbers of households affected, as households fall in and out of the Benefit Cap levels.

Observations from our benefit cap cases

Council tenants

All potentially impacted households initially identified by the DWP were contacted by letter with a follow up phone call and were offered a home visit or office interview. The majority were seen at their home by a Money Advice Worker and a Housing Benefit Officer to discuss the changes face to face. During these Benefit Cap meetings a financial health check was carried out (including benefit entitlement check, budgeting/financial assessment, housing needs assessment, assistance with finding work offered) as well as a cap questionnaire.

Some of the DWP reported cases were not actually affected by the cap because they are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Employment Support Allowance.

The majority affected are single mothers (62.5%) - most of whom are eligible for the free child care scheme to assist them when looking for and obtaining work. Seven referrals were made for this scheme.

Three households were open to children's services and were jointly seen with their social worker or family support worker.

Many of those who had the lowest shortfall said they would struggle under the cap and accepted money advice referral. Some of the larger families were already budgeting well due to the size of family making this necessary. However this tended to be couples rather than single parents.

A small number were assisted with registering with Homemove and applying for the Transfer Incentive Scheme, as they were also under-occupying.

Results of cap questionnaire:

- 87.5% households said they planned to meet the shortfall
- 43.75% planned to find work/increase hours (*18.75% took up referral to the Inclusion Team)
- 75% had a bank account

Temporary accommodation residents

Of the 107 households affected by the cap, 38 are new cases that are being contacted; 50 have been contacted and given support and advice about their options; and 29 are households from whom we have not had a response from our contacts to date.

Several of the households contacted are seeking work or looking to increase work hours, and some may transpire to be exempt if they are eligible for Disability Living Allowance or Employment Support Allowance.

NB: For all residents, the numbers affected by the cap will fluctuate week by week.

4. Benefits to people with disabilities

The changes outlined below potentially reduce disabled tenants' household incomes from between £4 to an estimated £28pw. However, the true impacts of the possibility of fewer tenants being eligible for the new Personal Independence Payments will need to be monitored over time.

Employment Support Allowance (ESA) was introduced in October 2008 to replace Incapacity Benefit (IB)– with claimants being phased onto it between 2010 and 2014. Stricter criteria are applied, and people not eligible for it might be eligible for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) instead.

However current IB levels for a single person over 25 range from £74.88 to £99.15 depending on the length of their claim, whereas the JSA level is £71. This results in a possible loss of benefit of around £4 to £28 per week.

The Department for Work and Pension's own analysis revealed that after appeals process have been accounted for, 53% of previous IB claimants were found not to be eligible for ESA and deemed to be fit for work – with the consequential loss of the figures mentioned in the paragraph above.

Personal Independence Payments

This new benefit replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for working age claimants from June 2013, and applies to working age people. The new payments are targeted at those whose disabilities impact upon their ability to carry out day to day activities independently, and will see most claimants being invited for an assessment on their ability to carry out a range of tasks before being awarded. Existing DLA claimants will not be automatically transferred and will be invited to make a claim for PIP – which must be done within a prescribed time.

DLA has a 'day' and a 'night' element paid at different rates, but PIP is assessed over the whole day. PIP has two parts - 'Daily Living' and 'Mobility'; and each part has two rates – 'Standard' and 'Enhanced'. Claimants who receive the 'Daily Living' part are entitled to apply for Carer's Allowance'.

DLA is awarded for a minimum of 2 years up to an indefinite period, whereas PIP can be awarded for less than two years up to a maximum of 10 years. Disabled children under 16 years and people aged 65 and over on 8 April 2013 will continue to receive DLA if they have an existing claim.

Table 9 DLA to PIP impacts

Welfare reform change	Date from	Impact on tenant	No. tenants potentially affected	Potential impact on HRA
DLA becoming PIP	Impact on DLA recipients from June 2013	Changed rules regarding the awarding of benefits to people with disabilities.	Approx 1,000	@ £4pw £208k to @ £28pw £1,456k

5. Universal Credit

Government objective: To simplify the current system of benefits to make it easier for claimants and more cost effective to administer.

This change introduces a single integrated benefit payment, replacing out of work and in work benefits for working age households. It will include the housing costs element, and in most cases will be paid by **direct monthly payments** in arrears to the account of one member of the household.

People over pensionable age will receive a housing credit as part of their pension credit, but there are no firm dates for this as yet.

The dates for migration to Universal Credit are not yet clear, although it might be:-

- October 2013 for new unemployed claimants in a further 6 pilot areas
- April 2014 through to 2017 as yet unspecified rollout for remaining existing claimants

For all claimants, benefit entitlement will be means tested, based on the income and circumstances of all members of the household, rather than an individual claimant. They will also need to have a bank account into which payments will be made.

The government expects 80% of claims to be made online, but acknowledges that this will present difficulties for many claimants and is therefore implementing a program of digital inclusion assistance to support this.

In recognition of the challenges some claimants might face by receiving all their monthly benefit entitlement (including housing costs) in one lump sum and needing to budget over a month period, the government has agreed to some flexibilities around payments. They include:-

- Some households being paid at more frequent than monthly intervals, eg 2 weekly for a period of time to give claimants an opportunity to develop different budgeting skills
- Direct payments to landlords where a claimant is vulnerable - the DWP estimate this might apply to 10% of claimants
- Payments made to landlords and the balance apportioned between claimant partners in cases of eg domestic or financial abuse.

Table 10 Housing Benefit (HB) payments to Housing Revenue Account

		No. of h'holds	% of all h'holds	Average weekly HB	Yearly HB expenditure £m	% of £50.7m rent roll
Working age	Full HB	3,015	26%	£79	£12.6m	-
	Partial HB	2,040	17%	£62	£6.7m	-
	Total on HB	5,055	43%	£72	£19.3	38%
Pension age	Full HB	1,888	16%	£81	£8.1m	-
	Partial HB	1,439	12%	£67	£5.1m	-
	Total on HB	3,327	28%	£75	£13.2m	26%
Total all households on HB	-	8,382	71%	£73	£32.5m	64%
Working age - not on HB	-	2,840	-	-	-	-
Pension age - not on HB	-	578	-	-	-	-
Total all households not on HB	-	3,418	29%	-	-	-
All households	-	11,800	100%	-	-	-

Source: Revenues & Benefits

Risks from Universal Credit - impact on HRA

It is difficult to precisely predict the behaviour of tenants will adopt when Universal Credit is introduced. Around 2,000 of working age households in receipt of HB already make partial rent payments to us. Our concern centres more on the 3,000 households that will be responsible for making payments directly to us the first time – although a small proportion will be exempt on the grounds of vulnerability.

The BBC published findings in March this year of the government's direct payments demonstration projects <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21756567> which have experienced increases in arrears from 11% to 50%.

Using the above percentages, the table below shows that the introduction of Universal Credit could see our arrears increase from between £71k and £322k.

Table 11 Arrears risk from Universal Credit

Current tenant arrears as at April 2013	Percentage increase	Estimated additional arrears from direct payments	Total arrears
£644k	11%	£71k	£715k
£644k	50%	£322k	£966k

Source: OHMS (arrears figures as at April 2013)

NB: Former tenant arrears figure (baseline £532k) will also fluctuate as new debt is added, and income recovered is removed.

Other financial impacts

- Universal Credit will be paid monthly in arrears - so we will experience an increase in debt of almost £2.8 million (full and partial HB) in the first month.
- £19.3 million annual HB currently paid directly to us in respect of working age tenants will need to be received from them.
- Increased administrative costs/management costs.
- Risk of non-payment from those who will be new to making rent payments, and who will need to travel to do it if they're not suitably banked.
- Tenants likely to be used to budgeting weekly or fortnightly; with different benefits/wages paid at different times, and thereby effectively doing 'jam-jar' budgeting. With one monthly household Universal Credit benefit payment, tenants will have to manage much larger sums of money over a longer period of time than they currently do, and are therefore likely to need support to develop new monthly budgeting skills.

Redirecting payments to landlords in arrears cases

The DWP can also make payments directly to the landlord where the tenant falls into arrears. It is expected that this will be at the eight week arrears level. Research carried out amongst social sector tenants by **Policis** on behalf of the National Federation of Housing found that two thirds of respondents thought they would be likely to manage under the new regime, but a third thought they would get into difficulties. They feared they would be unable to prioritise rent within their budgets and around half of them are already struggling to afford food, shoes and clothing. If the pattern is similar in Brighton and Hove, it might be reasonable to predict around a third of people falling into arrears or having higher arrears.

Increases to non-dependant deduction

This is not a change introduced by the welfare reform agenda, but is mentioned here because of the changes it will potentially have on tenants and their incomes.

A non-dependant is someone who normally lives with a tenant claiming Housing Benefit such as an adult son, daughter, relative or friend. It doesn't include joint tenants or boarders.

From 2010 there has been an annual increase in the rates charged of about 20% per year, and this is expected up to April 2014. The rates are currently in six income bands from £11.45pw (non-working or earning up to £124) up to £73.85pw (where the non-dependant earns £394 or more per week).

There are several exemptions - where either the claimant or the non dependent receives Attendance Allowance or higher rates of DLA; or where the non dependent receives pension credit, or is a lone parent with a child under 5, or is a carer, or is a prisoner.

Table 12 Non-dependant charges

Welfare reform change	Date from	Impact on tenant	No. tenants affected	Potential impact on HRA
Non-dependant charge	Current	Reduced Housing Benefit	401	£45k - £290k

Assessing the impact of increased non dependant charges

The 2012/13 rates within the six bands ranging from £11.45 to £73.85 increased in April 2013 to £13.60 to £87.75.

If all tenants with a non-dependant have their Housing Benefit reduced by the minimum amount, they would need to find an additional £2.15pw, which represents an annual loss of money to the HRA of £45k when multiplied by the 401 tenants.

However, if the Housing Benefit reduction was at the highest rate, this would represent a weekly loss of £3.90, totalling a loss to the HRA of £290k.

Regardless of whether the non-dependant pays the money to the tenant, the tenant is responsible for making up any difference between the amount of Housing Benefit they are eligible for and their gross rent.

The introduction of Universal Credit will see a flat rate non-dependant charge of around £15 per week for all non dependants aged 21 and over.

Digital inclusion

Housing providers are increasingly being tasked with supporting the government's drive to get more people online as a means of developing the economy and enabling people to better informed, obtain employment, have access to cheaper goods and services, and develop or maintain social contacts.

'Digital by default'

The government anticipates that the majority of claims for Universal Credit will be made online – and mentions a level of 80%. It also expects the majority of claimants to manage their incomes more formally through transactional bank accounts, rather than simply Post Office Card Accounts.

This will pose significant challenges for tenants who do not have a computer and have never used one, as well as those who do have access to computers but do not have the confidence, skills or predisposition to carry out financial matters online.

The inability of tenants to make their applications for benefits in the prescribed manner or in a timely way will affect their benefit entitlement, and ultimately impact our income stream.

Data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Internet Access Quarterly update for January to March 2013 shows that age, disability and income are key factors as to whether an individual has used the internet. In particular, the following groups have never been on line:-

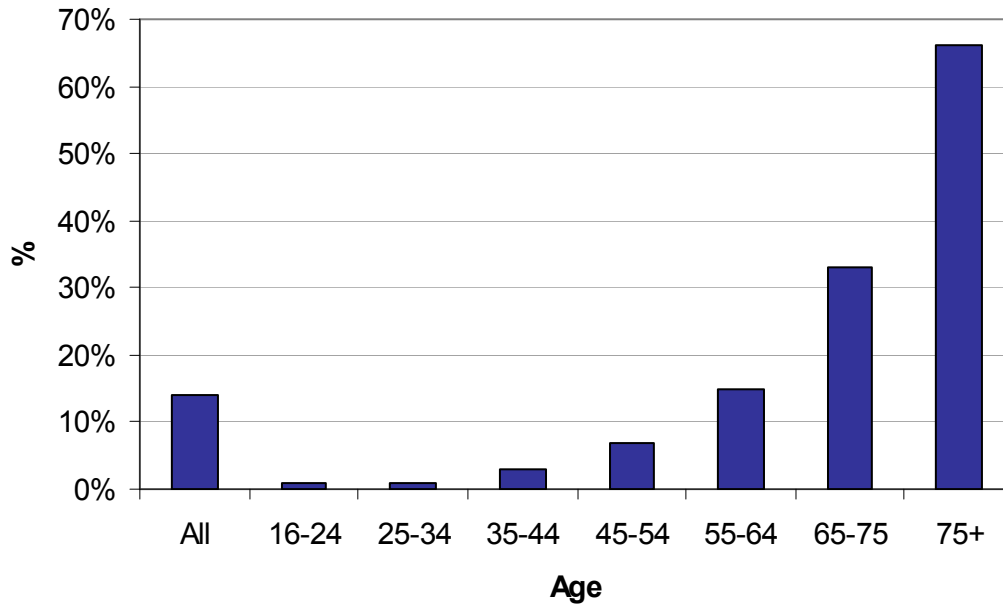
- 14% of UK adults
- 33% of people age 65 – 74 (compared to 1% age 16 – 34)
- 66% of people age 75 or over
- 5% of people over 16 in paid employment earning less than £200 gross per week (compared to 0% earning £1,000 or more)
- 32% of people with a disability* (compared to 9% who have no disability)

* Refers to those who self-assess that they have a disability in line with the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) definition of disability

The ONS data also shows that Brighton & Hove compares well against national and regional averages, with the lowest percentage of people who have never used the internet at 4%, compared to 14% nationally and 11% for the South East. This also compares well against Southampton at 10%, Portsmouth at 16% and East Sussex at 16% of people who have never used the internet.

Tables 11a and 11b Use of internet

Never used the internet by age



Never used the internet by income



Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS) national data

While the geographical comparison above is somewhat encouraging, it however remains that people amongst the most digitally excluded (ie those who are older, living with a disability or living on low incomes) are also prevalent among social housing tenants. And importantly, these people are missing out on the social, financial, educational and employment opportunities that internet access affords - hence the link between digital inclusion and other aspects of inclusion, and the pivotal role that digital skills and access can play in addressing these issues as well as contributing to overall wellbeing.

For example, research by Race Online ('Digital by Default' 2012) found that:

- You are 25% more likely to find work online
- You are likely to earn up to 10% more with digital skills than without
- 4.1m offline adults in social housing could save £530 million every year by paying bills and doing shopping online - that's an average of £129 per person.

We will need a range of ways in supporting tenants in making their claims, especially when we factor in those with numeracy and literacy difficulties. In addition, our general offer to support tenants in becoming digitally included will need a tailored, 'hand-holding' approach to meet specific needs rather than simply the provision of generic computer training.

The main way we can support tenants with no access to the internet is through the council's libraries. The library service is a UK online centre and can offer free access to all online services, and can also help people to use the internet.

The computers within libraries already conform to the relevant legislation for public access PCs and are able to monitor who is accessing specific sites. There is a programme of work underway to increase the number of computers available to the public from council offices that meet legislative requirements, and it is hoped to complete this work before Universal Credit comes into force for new claims in April 2014.

Housing staff are encouraging residents to join the library service, and helping them to do so online whenever they are in touch with our main frontline services. We will also be running specific 'getting online' courses for tenants who we know are not currently using online services, and are therefore missing out on key financial savings.

Equalities considerations

The full impacts of the welfare reforms are yet to be realised, however it is recognised nationally that the groups most impacted are:-

- Large families – benefit cap
- People with disabilities – who are likely to face significant reductions in their total household incomes
- Single parents
- BME households – often larger families; certain groups where there are cultural implications for children sharing bedrooms

The Ipsos Mori study found that the following groups were most likely to be impacted. People in/with:-

- Low paid work
- Precarious jobs
- Part time work
- Literacy difficulties
- No access to computer
- English as a second language or language difficulties

We also need to consider people who are:-

- Unemployed and under-employed
- Retired under retirement age with disabilities
- In arrears, with other council debts, or with other debts
- Foster carers
- Transgender residents – face multiple disadvantage

Within BHCC, we have a relatively small number of council tenant households impacted by the benefit cap, however they face significant reductions in their income.

Of the initial 949 under occupying households, 316 (39%) live in the east of the city – Whitehawk and Moulsecomb. These areas have high numbers of family size accommodation and the chances of moving to smaller accommodation within the area are limited. These areas of the city are also very high on the index of multiple deprivation.

While one of the stated aims of welfare reform is to move people into employment and off welfare altogether, some of our tenants are amongst those who are furthest away from the job market. We already know that the city has a high proportion of students, with many remaining in the city following their study, who will often compete more favourably against local people lacking in qualifications or job market experience in eg the service industries. With limited vacancies, this issue is even more acute.

So, overall, at a time when the economy is unstable and employment opportunities are limited, the welfare reform changes may further marginalise the most impoverished and deprived groups within the city – ie BME groups, single parents, people with disabilities, and young people.

Mitigating actions taken by Housing

What we've done so far

We have established which tenants will be impacted by this aspect of the reform, and sent a letter regarding the change to all of them. In addition some existing officers (Neighbourhood Officers and Housing Service Advisors) along with three newly appointed officers, have been trained to carry out a programme of home visits to ensure tenants have understood the changes, are aware of their options, and have the opportunity to get additional advice.

1. Created a profile of tenants affected by the reduction in Housing Benefit, affected by the cap in benefits, and potentially impacted by Personal Independent Payments
2. Written to all tenants known to be under occupying or affected by the benefit cap
3. Included comprehensive information for tenants affected by the changes on our website – which is constantly updated as new information comes in
4. Recruited and trained three specialist visiting staff who have carried out visits to every household affected by the under-occupation change to Housing Benefit. They have ensured tenants are aware of the changes, of how much they will have to pay from April, and of the options available to them (listed at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hbchanges) - as well as giving advice on:-
 - how to pay
 - how to contact if they get into arrears or are already in arrears
 - how to contact the local and independent money advice service – MACS
 - the impact of other welfare reform changes, focussing on the Council Tax Reduction (which will affect all of these tenants), and the changes to Disability Living Allowance, (for disabled tenants)
 - claiming Discretionary Housing Payments for those in particular hardship - but advising tenants that this is a limited fund which will have increasing demands because of all welfare reform changes and that there is no guarantee of assistance.
5. Visited all council tenants initially known to be affected by the benefit cap to offer detailed and person-specific advice and support, and to consider their eligibility for DLA (later PIP) or Attendance Allowance. This work is constantly under review as the numbers of impacted households can change on a weekly basis.
6. Credit Control Officers have developed a programme of visits to temporary accommodation tenants known to be impacted by the benefit cap to advise of housing options, work and learning support, and welfare benefit matters

7. Attended various tenant's association meetings and given presentations at the last two City Assemblies
8. Published articles in the last three editions of our Homing In magazine which is sent to every council tenant in the city
9. Established a new Inclusion Team within Housing including two Work and Learning Officers and a Financial Inclusion Officer, which is helping people to: manage their budgets; get online; overcome any barriers they may face to learning, up-skilling and seeking work; find work; and access learning, skills and training
10. Recruited a Money Advice Worker to help tenants to maximise their incomes and access the support and advice they need
11. Set up a dedicated money service through MACS (the Money and Advice Counselling Service) to help tenants experiencing financial hardship. In the first nine months of the contract (as at end of June) 377 tenants have been referred, and MACS has achieved financial outcomes for those seen of just over £350,000. The financial benefit includes unclaimed or additional annual benefit payments (£260k), compensation or other payments (£27K), debt write off (47k), debt renegotiation (£9k) and charitable payments (£3k).
The government estimates that nationally around £20 billion worth of means tested benefit and tax credits went unclaimed last year.
12. Embarked on a programme of staff training led by the BHCC Welfare Rights Team – over 50 staff have so far attended
13. During this financial year, we have so far supported 29 applicants to move using the Tenants' Incentive Scheme. The total for 2012/13 was 46 releasing a total of 72 bedrooms; and for 2011/12 it was 56, releasing a total of 118 bedrooms.
14. Recruited two dedicated Mutual Exchange Officers to better support tenants to move through this method by eg taking a proactive approach to identifying potential exchange partners, and to manage the increasing number of applications.
15. Held a mutual exchange event to which all under occupying tenants and those seeking larger accommodation were invited, and where they could view details of prospective properties, meet with other tenants, and receive advice from staff from a range of associated service areas – eg repairs, money advice, rent arrears, tenancy management, housing benefit etc.
16. Regarding PIP, we have talked with the Tenants with Disabilities Network and asked them to help keep their members informed, and to act as advocates at medicals for other tenants. They will need more training from Welfare Rights Team.
17. Instigated council-wide discussions with high street banks, building societies and the Credit Union regarding increasing access to fully transactional basic bank accounts

18. Contributed £22.5k of emergency funding to support Brighton Housing Trust and the Citizens' Advice Bureau for help to council tenants around maximising benefits, applying for benefits, household budgeting, making money go further etc.
19. All housing staff are promoting our Customer Online System (COS) for those with access to the internet so that they can keep a track on their rent and other housing other accounts, to prevent them getting into debt. For those tenants who do not have internet access we are promoting the Council Connect facility at libraries, and referring them to our Housing Inclusion Team for help to get online.
20. Working on a range of early interventions to prevent or minimise arrears – eg information provision to new tenants from our Rehousing Team, work and learning advice especially targeted at households likely to be losing significant sums through welfare reform.
21. Implemented the new policy decision taken at Housing Committee on 8 May 2013 regarding tenants in arrears as a direct result of under-occupation. The committee agreed:-
 - “That for a transitional period until 1st April 2014, where
 - (i) all other avenues have been explored
 - (ii) transfer is the only option but there are no suitable properties to transfer to
 - (iii) where it is possible to clearly identify that arrears are solely due to the under-occupancy penalty
 officers will use all means other than evictions and bailiffs to recover rent due.”

Additional actions of the Council to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform include:

1. Communications – eg regular website updates and visits to some impacted households.
2. Collaborative multi departmental and multi agency working to adopt strategies to support impacted residents – eg with Job Centre Plus.
3. Additional funding for two years for the council's own Welfare Rights Service as agreed at Budget Council
4. In addition to the money advice contract commissioned for by Housing for council tenants, a council contract has been commissioned for households in all sectors who will be affected by the introduction of Council Tax Reduction. This support is to be delivered as a coordinated approach by Money Advice and Community Support (MACS) to the value of £180,000.
5. Creating a Community Banking Partnership to deliver banking, savings and advice with other organisations in the city (including banks) to ensure a consistent approach and to support people with their finances.

6. Commissioning organisations to help people make the most of their money by going online (digital inclusion).
7. Created a Council Tax Reduction Discretionary Fund (£300,000 for 2013/14)
8. Has a local Discretionary Social Fund (£630,000 for 2013/14) and Discretionary Housing Payments budget (£1 million for 2013/14) administered by a single team.
9. Set aside a further £300,000 to top up any of these discretionary budgets under particular pressure.
10. Undertaking work to understand the cumulative impacts of the welfare reform changes on individuals, and on the city and its services.

Actions going forward

There is a range of ongoing and planned future actions to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform, which can be summarised under the following headings:-

Supporting tenants – work, learning, minimising debt and income maximisation

- New tenants and those in arrears to have detailed income and expenditure assessments
- Advice and communications on taking in lodgers
- Support sheltered residents under 65 with transition from DLA to PIP
- Maximise access to, and provide support for, setting up bank accounts
- Direct Debit campaign and support on mutual exchanges
- Increase access to welfare advice
- Digital inclusion – IT access and training
- Promote household contents insurance

Tenant communications

- Maximise use of communications methods and targeted messages
- Encouraging take-up of benefit entitlement
- Community based group briefing sessions
- Promoting the customer online system (COS)

Policy and process

- Proactive mutual exchange support and matching service
- Pre-tenancy sign up work
- Customer profiling to know our tenants better

Use of information technology

- Support for public access computers
- More customer profiling and analysis of impacted groups
- Automated arrears and rent due date text alerts
- Investigate developing a housing rents smartphone app
- Support for mobile working on estates
- Website updates

Data analysis

- Preparation for Universal Credit for new claimants from Oct 2013
- Analyse payment methods and costs
- Consider varied payment frequencies

Staff matters

- Resources for eg money management, budgeting advice, a tenant peer mentoring programme, supporting new tenancies
- Increased staff resources to proactively support mutual exchanges
- Refocus the work of the Resident Involvement Team
- Ongoing staff training

Appendix 1

Summary of potential financial impacts to council tenants and the Housing Revenue Account resulting from welfare reform

Change	Impact on tenant	Approx no. tenants potentially affected	Estimated benefit reductions
Under - Occupancy April 2013	Average £12.12 1bed £23.72 2bed+	949	£696k
Benefit cap August 2013	NB: higher impacts in future years as rents are likely to rise by more than benefits will	19	£60k
Non-dependent deductions April increase	Reduced Housing Benefit. Assuming the total of the previous year's lower amount is paid	401	£45k - £290k
Council Tax Benefit abolished April 2013 - new Council Tax Reduction Scheme in place	Maximum additional contribution capped at £3pw for first year. Reduction in tenants' disposable income	5,000	£780k
Disability Living Allowance for adults changing to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) June 2013	Potential loss or reduction in benefit - £4 - £28 per week reduction in tenants' disposable income. (The Government's budget reduction target is 20%).	1,000	£208k - £1,456k
Universal credit April 2014 -new claim Existing claims transferred up to 2017	Direct payments of all benefits to tenants monthly in arrears. Pilot projects saw arrears increase by up to 50%	5,100	-
Total potential reduction in benefit (excluding Universal Credit)			£1.8m - £3.3m
The impact of Universal Credit is difficult to quantify, but annual Housing Benefit paid to HRA for working age households is approximately £19.3 m. An 8% rent collection shortfall as a result of Universal Credit could add an extra £4.1m to this figure.			

Potential impact on income collection

Key points

- If our collection rate reduces to the average in the DWP direct payment demonstration projects of 92%, the 8% shortfall would represent £4.1m.
- A minimum of 10% of the HB lost as a result of under-occupation may remain unpaid.
- The 6 demonstration projects pilots assess that 20 – 30% of tenants will struggle to pay their under-occupation charge.

From the studies and analysis so far undertaken, there is a range of views on the impact of the welfare reform changes on rent arrears and therefore on revenue to the HRA.

Some factors clearly remain unknown – eg which tenants and how many of them will indeed manage to pay their rent, which and how many will struggle and fall into arrears, and the level of our ability to support people to manage their budgets effectively, or our ability to recover rent arrears.

Potential impact on rent arrears

Feedback from the Department for Work and Pension's six direct payment demonstration projects indicate an average rent collection rate of 92% - with the six areas varying from 88% to 97% collection. These figures need to be treated with some caution as each housing organisation within the pilot effectively selected tenants for involvement. So not all tenants were included – and those who were excluded might have been those who were vulnerable, already in financial difficulty or arrears, or those without transactional bank accounts.

Housemark, in its May 2013 Welfare reform club benchmarking report, has assessed that even if housing organisations performed at the level of the best demonstration project sample (ie 97% collection rate), it would put them at the bottom 10% of the 237 benchmarked organisations. In addition, the report estimates that if all organisations performed to the DWP average of 92% collection rate (ie a drop of 7 percentage points on average national performance), then the social housing sector will lose £1.4 billion of rental income a year, or £27 million a week.

The pilot undertaken by London & Quadrant Housing Association which has 66,000 homes found that arrears doubled – however there were no mitigating interventions.

An Ipsos Mori baseline survey reported that amongst the housing associations surveyed, 84% expected to see an increase in their arrears. The average increase anticipated was 51%, with 15% of associations expecting their arrears to at least double.

Currently, we achieve a collection rate of 98.49% of the £50.7m of rent due for the year, which is our rent debit for the year (£50.1m) plus our arrears carried forward (£644k as at 1 April).

As of September 2013, the shortfall in our collectable rent (ie the 1.63%) represented around £826k arrears. However if our collection rate was to reduce to the average rate of 92% experienced by the DWP direct payment demonstration projects, the 8% shortfall would represent £4.1million (based on 8% of our collectable rent of £50.7million).

Additionally, we are not yet sure of the level of arrears at which the housing cost element of UC payments can switch back to being paid directly to the landlord – although eight weeks is often mentioned.

Additional costs for the HRA relating to income management

Potential extra costs need to be considered for example :-

- Hardship funds
- Communications
- Additional staff to carry out welfare reform visits
- Transaction and banking costs associated with the increased numbers paying rent (eg Paypoint) - and possibly new transaction methods (eg Credit Union charges/costs). Housemark estimate additional transaction costs of £48 per unit per year – for us totalling almost £47k factoring in everyone impacted by under-occupation (however some of those are paying already – partial HB recipients)

Interesting to note that from the **Manor Place closure review** one year on – 17 of the 21 residents spoken to have a transactional bank account, of which 2 switched to direct debit, 2 would consider it, 1 wasn't sure, but 12 would not consider it. So time needs to be factored in for talking through with and supporting tenants to adopt more cost effective payment methods.

- Additional debt prevention/advice/rent recovery/arrears staff - we'd need to do some analysis factoring in preparation for Universal Credit
- Supporting staff – information, advice, financial inclusion, digital inclusion, economic inclusion, money management/budgeting skills (our Inclusion Team)
- Financial support for independent welfare advice (MACS, CAB, BHT)
- IT costs
- Legal and court costs (although it will be counter intuitive or counter productive to increase tenants' debt by adding court costs)

The Ipsos Mori baseline survey found that housing associations with 10,000+ properties expected to spend an average of an additional £200,000 to prepare for welfare reform, and that this figure was likely to nearly double in 2014.

Cash flow

Payment of HB is currently in advance, yet Universal Credit will be paid a month in arrears. This will reduce our monthly cash flow by around £2.8m (HB receipts for working age households).

Other impacts

1. A reduced HRA balance will impact on our ability to invest in building more homes, and potentially investment in our properties generally.
2. Potential increase in tenancy fraud eg if people sublet or 'sell' their keys and decide to move
3. Increased homelessness - this might not necessarily be significant numbers from social housing because of the provision for payments to be made directly to landlords after possibly 8 weeks arrears. However the cumulative impacts of welfare reform might increase eg relationship breakdown and private sector evictions.

Provision for council tenants debt

The HRA has a provision for doubtful (potentially uncollectable) debt, which is £1.015 million as at the 1st April 2013 and is based on setting aside 20% provision for current tenant arrears and 95% provision for former tenant arrears. In the 2013/14 HRA revenue budget an amount of £0.208 million is set aside as the annual contribution to the doubtful debt provision. This budget provision budget is regularly monitored as part of financial budget management of the HRA.

Appendix 2

Profile of under-occupying tenants - as at April 2013

	1 bed	2 bed+	Total
	809	140	949
Average weekly HB reduction	£12.12	£23.72	£13.83
Annual lost HB to HRA	£520k	£177k	£696k
Total rent debit for these properties	£3.7m	£704k	£4.4m
No. soon to become pensioner	4	4	8
Bedroom need if wanting to transfer			
Require 1bed	486	123	609
Require 2bed	285	14	299
Require 3bed	29	3	32
Require 4bed	9	0	9
Total	809	140	949
Location			
Central	155 (19%)	13 (9%)	168 (18%)
East	316 (39%)	63 (45%)	379 (40%)
North	190 (24%)	22 (16%)	212 (22%)
West	148 (18%)	42 (30%)	190 (20%)
Household			
Vulnerability HB claimants with a vulnerability alert code	118	13	131
Disability Person in household receiving DLA, Severe Disability Allowance and/or Attendance Allowance	336	52	388
With children	159	10	169
...of which, child with disability At least one child receives DLA (care component or mobility component)	27	0	27
1 child	73	4	77
2 or more children	86	6	92

	1 bed	2 bed+	Total
Arrears/debt			
No. with any arrears	233	44	277
...of which are over £100	125	22	147
...of which are over £300	62	15	77
...of which are over £500	34	7	41

Source: Revenues & Benefits

Size criteria – household profile

Under-occupation level	No. of h'holds	With children in h'hold	H'hold member on a disability related benefit	With current rent arrears	With arrears of £500+
1 bedroom	809	159	336	233	34
2+ bedrooms	140	10	52	44	7
Total	949	169	388	277	41

Source: Revenues and Benefits (April 2013)

Appendix 3

Stock, rent, relets, and potential need for council tenants

Bedroom size	Approx average rent 1.4.13	Stock number	No. relet during 2012/13	No. potentially needed for under occupiers	No. potentially needed for those over crowded	Number needed by all on housing register
Bedsit	£61	724	58	-	-	-
1	£70	3588	188	609	-	9,524
2	£80	4550	150	299	184	4,355
3	£93	2693	65	32	274	1,735
4	£99	221	2	9	180	201
5	£115	44	1	0	55	18
6	£108	2	0	0	14	1
	£79	11,822	464	949	707	15,834 (total on register 17,218)

Sources: OHMS (col. 2-4), Revenues & Benefits (col. 5-6), Locata (col. 7)

Bedroom size in, bedroom size 'needed'

(ie according to welfare reform changes, and not accounting for disability etc)

Currently in	Need 7bed	Need 6bed	Need 5bed	Need 4bed	Need 3bed	Need 2bed	Need 1bed
6	0	N/A	0	0	0	0	0
5	2	2	N/A	9	3	2	1
4	0	6	16	N/A	29	12	4
3	0	5	38	150	N/A	285	118
2	0	1	1	29	268	N/A	486
1	0	0	0	1	6	184	N/A
Under-occ Total 949	0	0	0	9	32	299	609
Overcrowded	2	14	55	180	274	184	N/A

Source: Revenues & Benefits

From the table above it can be seen that there are many instances where overcrowded households needing one extra bedroom outnumber those who are under occupying by one bedroom. This means that if we were able to put people

in touch with each other, the households impacted by the under occupation reduction in Housing Benefit would potentially have several swap options to choose from.

This reverses however when we look at under occupiers currently in a 2bed property, where there is a big mismatch in numbers and they triple those who are overcrowded and need two bedrooms.

Just over 600 households 'need' to downsize to 1bed accommodation, 486 of which are currently occupying a 2bed property. If all under occupiers currently in 2bed properties successfully carried out a mutual exchange with the 184 overcrowded households in a 1bed property who need a 2bed property, there would still be a shortfall of around 300 1bed properties for under occupiers. In the last year to April, we had less than 200 1bed flats become vacant, and there are over 9,000 households on the housing register awaiting 1bed properties. This, coupled with the impact of a percentage of empty properties being prioritised for households who are 'working or making a social contribution', means that there will be a considerable number of tenants who will have a slim chance of moving to a 1bed property in the coming year.

Appendix 4

Some citywide welfare reform impacts - all tenures

Council Tax

17,000 people in Brighton & Hove (across all tenures) have to pay more council tax than they did in 2012, of which 10,000 previously did not make any contribution. The minimum they are required to pay is around £1.20 and the maximum is around £3.

Discretionary Housing Payments

Within the city, residents across all tenures will lose around £12m in total in housing benefit payments. While Discretionary Housing Payments will make up some of the shortfall for some people, the total amount given by the Government is a subsidy of around £1.017 million which is less than one tenth of the total benefit lost in to the city's residents.

Benefit cap

Headline figures as at September 2013

Tenancy type	Number of cases
Private rented	85
Housing association	5
Council tenants	11
Temp accommodation	93
Total	194

Appendix 5

Feedback from work of the Housing Inclusion Team

Learning & Participation Service (2 full time equivalents)

Operational from October 2012.

Focus is to engage and progress tenants into learning, training, education and employment.

Funding is through the Interreg Learning Cities until Sept 2014.

Referrals come from in-house teams, self referrals, external teams and agencies.

Most referrals are from the Tenancy Sustainment Team.

October to March 2013

68 referrals

14% non-engagement (10 cases)

64% progressing into courses, training, volunteering or employment

April - June 2013

43 new referrals

20% non engagement (9 cases)

18 into courses/training

3 into volunteering

3 into employment

3 being helped with job search/cv writing.

Barriers to work

Mental and physical health issues

Lack of confidence/motivation

Lack of skills/qualifications - major barrier is access to funding for college courses as there is no provision for 24 years plus - only student loans available

Progression opportunities - difficult to get work placements, volunteering opportunities, into college without funding, childcare/carer costs

Lack of money for equipment, books etc or job search eg clothes for interview, specialist clothing eg H&S, haircuts, dental appointments

Employment opportunities - "Brighton factor" - competing with graduates for entry level employment; zero hour contracts; low hours available - benefits trap

What are we doing about barriers

Mental health/physical health - tend to be less work ready and require longer term intervention with the team.

Set achievable goals, build confidence and motivation, use work focused coaching techniques, link into services eg libraries, adult learning providers Community Hubs eg Bridge, Portslade Adult Learning, Whitehawk Inn,

Hangleton and Knoll, Friends Centre, Brighton Unemployed Families centre, the Fed etc

Get them into activities and courses. Work proactively with other services to ensure support needs are met and identify ways to overcome physical barriers.

Referrals to employment support programmes such as the Progress to Work; Work Programme Providers eg Avanta, Maximus, RBLI, JCP

College Fees: Funding course fees through the Tenant Training budget

Equipment/resources: set up a small funding pot to pay for one off expenses related to employment or college.

Case Study

Miss X. TSO referral, mental health issues, depression/anxiety - had not been out of the house for 6 months.

Working with the Learning & Participation worker initially on confidence and motivation. Initially met at home but progressed to meeting up in community settings. Found out interested in photography - got her onto a short photography course and then encouraged her to go out on her own to take photographs. Set up a work shadowing opportunity via the press office - went out with the photographer to cover shoots. Signed up for photography course at college, and volunteered to take photos at community events. Started to get offers of paid work but didn't have all the equipment she needed - we purchased a flash gun for her through the small funding pot - currently doing paid assignments for 3 local schools and covering a number of community events over the summer. Has offered to cover resident events such as city assembly for us.

Welfare Reform

Need to become more proactive and start targeting households affected by Welfare Reform.

Target groups should include

- ESA WRAG /JSA cases where entitlement to benefits has ended or is due to end (time limited claims)
- Benefit cap cases - cap doesn't apply if one adult is working 24 hrs plus or is registered self employed
- DLA/PIP claimants who want to work

Financial Inclusion

MACS contract performance information as at end of May:

No. of referrals 304

Rejected: 26 (non eligible)

Current caseload 168

Financial outcomes for tenants: £365,500

Referrals have doubled since April 2013 - main reason for referrals: arrears and benefit issues.

MACS is prioritising all cases marked as urgent from the Financial Inclusion Team and Housing Income Management Team. All court action cases are referred to MACS automatically.

Financial Inclusion Team (1.2 full time equivalents)

Referrals to this team have doubled since April. The main source of referrals is from the Welfare Reform Visiting Officers; and other sources include in-house teams, external teams and agencies citywide.

Areas of work

Referrals to MACS - 221

(Triaging, questionnaires, updating computer systems, budgeting advice and support etc)

Referrals to food banks (approx 5 per month) and delivering food parcels to housebound tenants

Telephone advice and support

Home visits

Energy comparisons and energy advice packs

Moving home advice packs

Budgeting, money management

Training provided since January

- Energy Efficiency 55 staff and 10 residents
- Loan shark advocacy - 30 staff 5, residents
- Although no take up for group money matters sessions

Work in progress

Setting up and delivering Money Mentors programme

One Planet Energy Pilots – working with Property & Investment Team and others

Food Partnership - growing projects and food poverty awareness training

Need to prioritise

Early intervention with arrears cases

Supporting and promoting access to banking and affordable credit

Support with benefit applications and appeals

Access and support to be online

Building financial capability

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB- COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 28

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Annual Review of Repairs Partnership 2012/13		
Date of Meeting:	Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee 29th October 2013		
Report of:	Executive Director, Environment, Development and Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Glyn Huelin	Tel: 29-3306
	Email:	glyn.huelin@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 This document provides an update on progress with the Repairs & Improvement Partnership with Mears in the financial year 2012/13, this is the third year of the partnership. The partnership is scheduled to run until March 2020 and delivers responsive repairs, empty property refurbishments, planned works and major refurbishment projects across the city.
- 1.2 The report is set out in sections focusing on specific areas of the partnership; each section closes with recommendations for improvement which have been identified through working with the resident representatives that monitor and manage the partnership. Actions are collated in the plan accompanying this report; progress against this action plan will be monitored by residents, officers and Mears through the Core Group which manages the partnership.
- 1.3 The report also includes a short section detailing the status of other service contracts managed by the Property & Investment Team.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

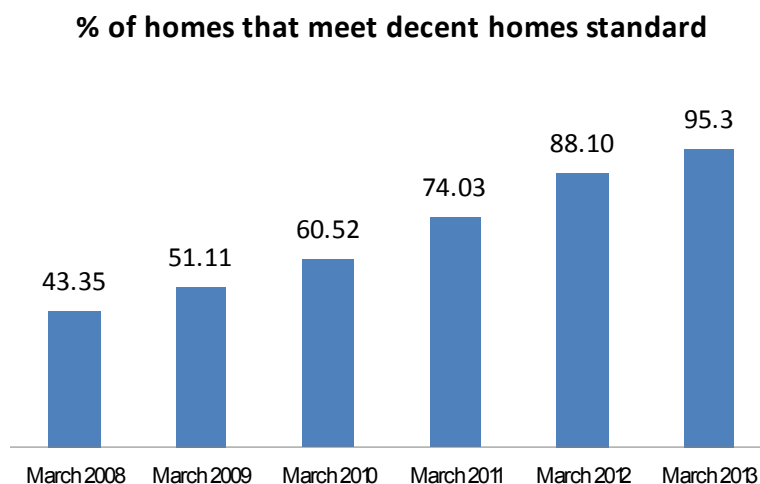
- 2.1 That sub-committee members note the report.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3.1 Progress towards achieving decent homes

The council has continued to make excellent progress in improving residents homes and bringing properties up to the government's Decent Homes Standard. At the end of March 2013 95.3% (11,347) of the council's housing stock (11,903) met the government's Decent Homes Standard compared to 88.1% at the end of March 2012. In 2012/13 a total of 948 new kitchens and bathrooms were fitted as well as 1,474 new doors, 937 new boilers and 484 properties were rewired.

- 3.2 The council remains on target to achieve 100% decency by the end of December 2013.
- 3.3 The improvement in decency is illustrated in the graph below. For illustrative purposes the progress against the Decent Homes' Standard has been demonstrated since the contract commenced in April 2010 as well as the previous three years.



- 3.4 The following improvement opportunities have been identified:
- Simplify the Brighton & Hove standard for improvement works so it is easier to understand and transparent for residents
 - Investigate how the standard measures properties where residents have invested in replacing elements themselves
 - Review quality assurance processes across the partnership to ensure they meet the relevant standards

3.5 Major projects within the city

Delivering Major projects has been a key focus since the partnership began. There is a clear need to progress these works effectively and also to ensure that the best value for money is achieved for the council and residents.

- 3.6 A number of large projects were completed and commenced during 2012/13 with several scheduled to commence this financial year. These are detailed in the table below:

Projects completed	
St. James House – Phase 1	Car Park concrete repairs and new boiler house
Walter May House	Boiler replacement and installation of solar panels
Bristol Estate Phase 1	Concrete repairs, External Wall Insulation, roofing works and windows to seven blocks
St James House – Phase 2	Roofing, window repairs, concrete repairs, decorations, cladding and

	insulation.
Nettleton Court & Dudeney Lodge	Boiler replacement, tanks and water pumps, windows, concrete repairs and roof repairs.
Projects in progress	
North Whitehawk High Rise Blocks	Window replacements, balconies, roofing, concrete repairs and external decorations (Kingfisher Court only). Due for completion in November.
Hereford Court	Concrete repairs, External Wall Insulation, roofing works, windows and disabled access improvements. Due for completion in November.
Jubilee Court and Lindfield Court	Boiler House and heating renewal
Tyson Place	Roofing works
Projects to be commenced in 2013/14	
Essex Place	Concrete repairs, External Wall Insulation, roofing works, balcony enclosures and windows
Bristol Estate - Phase 2	Concrete repairs, External Wall Insulation, roofing works, balcony works and windows to five blocks

- 3.7 The Partnership has also recognised that engaging with tenants and leaseholders is an essential part of delivering major projects successfully and now operate to a process with a higher level of stakeholder involvement than previously undertaken. This includes providing briefings to ward councillors and meeting with leaseholders to discuss works during the consultation period.
- 3.8 Residents have given good feedback around pilot schemes and find this a good way of building understanding of what works are involved in a project. The partnership will be looking at ways to use pilots further. Residents also felt that the newsletters used by the partnership on projects were a good way of keeping them informed about progress with works.
- 3.8 The following improvement opportunities have been identified:
- Improved communication with ward councillors throughout Major projects
 - Liaise with residents at every stage of project planning – including in the development of the feasibility study
 - Look at further opportunities to use pilot properties for major works projects
 - Survey residents at the end of projects to see how satisfied they were with works and where improvements can be made
 - Look at a formal closedown meeting for residents at the end of works especially in sheltered schemes
- 3.9 Performance and complaints
Contract performance is reported regularly to a number of groups such as Core Group and the Partnership Group where council officers, residents and Mears staff review performance in detail on a monthly basis. In addition a range of performance measures are reported to Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee as part of the quarterly performance report.

- 3.10 The table below details the contractual key performance indicators that are used to review performance to Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee on a quarterly basis:

Carrying out repairs to your home				
Performance Indicator	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Target 2013/14
Emergency repairs completed in time	98.38% (6,686 / 6,796)	99.13% (6,240 / 6,295)	99.57% (8,281 / 8,317)	99%
Urgent repairs completed in time	95.98% (9,195 / 9,580)	96.94% (6,551 / 6,758)	99.36% (618 / 622)	98%
Routine repairs completed in time	98.37% (19,711 / 20,037)	99.35% (28,015 / 28,199)	99.78% (33,799 / 33,873)	98%
Average time to complete routine repairs	11 days	8 days	9 days	15 days
Percentage of appointments kept	95.42% (26,334 / 27,597)	90.24% (35,608 / 39,460)	94.56% (27,434 / 29,013)	95%
Tenant satisfaction with repairs	95.26% (5,562 / 5,839)	97.14% (6,242 / 6,426)	97.03% (7,493 / 7,722)	95%
Percentage of responsive repairs passing post-inspection	98.15% (689 / 702)	96.18% (3,702 / 3,849)	95.44% (4,728 / 4,954)	95%
Percentage of repairs completed right first time	97.08% (32,881 / 33,870)	97.98% (40,536 / 41,373)	98.09% (45,717 / 46,607)	97%
Cancelled repair jobs	n/a	n/a	11.04%	n/a
Home improvements				
Performance Indicator	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Target 2013/14
Percentage of homes that are decent	74.0%	88.1%	95.3%	100%
Energy efficiency rating of homes (SAP 2009)	n/a	61.0	62.5	63.1
Percentage of planned works passing post-inspection	n/a	98.40% (2,091 / 2,125)	99.37% (2,221 / 2,235)	97%
Empty Homes				
Performance Indicator	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Target 2013/14
Percentage of empty properties passing post-inspection	99.24% (654 / 659)	98.23% (609 / 620)	98.99% (591 / 597)	98%

- 3.11 The drop in the number of urgent orders in 2012/13 reflects the phasing out of this priority, with statutory right to repairs now all being classified as emergency repairs. Those repairs that do not require a priority response are classified as routine and an appointment is agreed with the resident.
- 3.12 There was an overall increase in the number of repairs completed from the first to the second year of the contract reflecting the mobilisation of the service in April

2010 and changes in the service as it bedded in. There have also been changes to the appointments systems over the contract years which have led to fluctuations in the numerical data seen here. Appointments performance was an area where targets were missed in 2012/13 and weekly monitoring is now in place to ensure that improvements are delivered.

- 3.13 Subsequent to the performance reported here a number of changes are being made to the data reports that produce this performance information. These mainly relate to additional internal works orders which have been included in the right first time measure. Corrected reports are expected to be in place for the reporting of quarter two 2013/14 data.
- 3.14 Complaints, compliments and customer feedback are also reported each month. There has been a good reduction in the number of complaints received in the last financial year with the number of complaints dropping by a third from 328 in 2011/12 to 212 in 2012/13. Unfortunately the time taken to respond has increased and this is, in part, due to the fact that supervisors have taken more responsibility for replying to complaints. An action to improve this was agreed with Mears and performance was back within target (10 days) by June 2013.

Period	No. of Complaints	Average Time to respond
2011/12		
Q1	82	9 Working Days
Q2	81	9 Working Days
Q3	78	9 Working Days
Q4	87	9 Working Days
2012/13		
Q1	48	7 Working Days
Q2	57	10 Working Days
Q3	47	10 Working Days
Q4	60	13 Working Days

- 3.15 Improving the quality of customer service delivery is now the main focus of the partnership with the Core Group and residents identifying this as the key area to improve in 2013/14.
- 3.16 The following improvement opportunities have been identified:
- Establish a “Customer Service Board” to ensure that the partnership delivers excellent customer service at every opportunity
 - A quality log will be introduced to identify and track technical issues across the partnership
 - A process review will be undertaken for responsive repairs to eliminate duplicate and lost jobs that lead to a negative customer experience
- 3.17 Repairs Helpdesk
The delivery of excellent customer service through the Repairs Helpdesk has been a challenging area for the partnership. Improving this has been the main focus of the senior management team at Mears through 2013. Monitoring data has given a clear indication of peak times throughout the week and the team has been restructured to ensure that call answering times meet expectations.

- 3.18 The team is also been changed to have specific call takers who do not undertake other repairs tasks such as scheduling and liaising with operatives, this means they will be focused only on dealing efficiently with customer enquiries, ordering repairs, making and rearranging appointments and signposting to other services.
- 3.19 A new supervisory and management structure is also being put in place for the Repairs Helpdesk as well as customer service and communications. This will ensure that there is better and more consistent scripting when handing calls, eliminating duplicate jobs and using monitoring tools to ensure that good customer service is always being delivered by the team.
- 3.20 The following improvement opportunities have been identified:
- Revise call monitoring at Partnership Group, including number of calls and call answer times and longest wait time per day
 - Agree targets for waiting times and consider inclusion of this in contract performance indicator report
 - Ensure there is more consistent scripting when handling calls, ensuring that duplicate jobs are eliminated and good customer service is always being delivered
 - Review the scripting for repairs reported to communal areas
 - Text ahead - when routine repairs are generated the system will automatically send out a text reminder to the tenant a day before their appointment
 - Amend texts sent to residents to include the local rate Repairs Desk number
 - Promote Text Ahead in a future edition of Homing In
 - Look at accessibility of staff by telephone in other areas of the branch
- 3.21 Value for money and efficiency
The repairs and maintenance budget is £10.2 million in total. Money is invested into three main areas
- Responsive repairs – £6.1 million (funds Mears repairs and two gas contracts)
 - Empty properties - £1.4 million
 - Servicing and other repairs - £2.7 million (funds non-Mears service contracts)
- 3.22 Financial results are monitored on a monthly basis by a dedicated finance team and the Partnership Group. The partnership has delivered year on year savings over the first three years of the contract including a reduction of £300,000 in responsive repairs over 2012/13. The average cost of a responsive repair has fallen from £99.02 in 2011/12 to £87.33 in 2012/13. The average cost of an empty property refurbishment has fallen from £2,121 in 2011/12 to £1,897 in 2012/13.
- 3.23 Benchmarking carried out by the partnership has indicated some areas where further work is needed which are detailed in the improvement opportunities below.
- 3.24 The following improvement opportunities have been identified:
- Look at the pricing framework for the partnership and investigate opportunities to develop price per property models
 - Measure tenant satisfaction with empty properties after moving in

- Review use of subcontractors and whether the partnership can support greater delivery through directly employed operatives

3.25 Increasing employment and work opportunities

Part of the Partnership's strategy is to deliver significant work and apprentice opportunities to the city. The table below shows how many apprentice and development places have been allocated since the partnership began. Mears recruited a further 15 apprentices in August 2013:

Year	Apprentices
2010/11	15
2011/12	21
2012/13	14
Total	50

3.26 These apprentices are across a range of areas and include; plumbing, carpentry, electrical and multi-trade as well as painting and decorating, surveying and administration. Further events are being held to encourage people to join as administrative apprentices and to work with supply chain partners to provide work opportunities to local people.

3.27 Mears have signed up with Job Centre Plus to do work trials. This will involve having placements in the offices, stores and trades with the view to finding suitable candidates to signpost into apprenticeships as well as providing some valuable work experience.

3.28 The following improvement opportunities have been identified:

- Increase targeting of apprentices from areas of multiple deprivation to maximise opportunities for these families
- Review local labour plan for the partnership to give a greater focus on the ways the partnership can benefit the community

3.29 Resident involvement

The Partnership is committed to resident involvement and there are a range of meetings that support this alongside other ways for residents to highlight enquiries and influence the service. The Core and Partnership groups which manage the partnership have resident representation; this was previously through the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and the Asset Management Panel. From 2013 residents who sit on the Home Service Improvement Group will have the opportunity to sit on the Core and Partnership groups.

3.30 Mears are committed to attending each Area Panel meeting and HMCSC to respond to residents enquiries. In addition the partnership welcomes input from all residents and has a clear process for helping escalate issues as well as operating a Resident Action Plan. This is monitored by residents on the Home Group to ensure requests and issues raised by tenants and leaseholders are acted upon and resolved.

3.31 The Estate Development Budget (EDB), a ring-fenced community led budget, is operated by Mears on a profit-free basis and is now managed by a group of four

resident representatives with regular reporting from Mears and council officers. This group of residents decide on “quick bids” for projects under £500.

3.32 The “Our Neighbourhood” project in Whitehawk has piloted resident led monitoring where residents collect data on customer satisfaction with our repairs service. Resident led monitoring will now be rolled out across the partnership to provide an independent measure around the quality of services and an opportunity to develop resident’s skills around communication, using computers and working with data.

3.33 Additional tenants were also recruited as Resident Assessors during 2012/13. Their role is to evaluate the condition of empty properties which have been repaired before they are let to tenants. Feedback from residents has been that this is a good opportunity but is not being used as effectively as it could be. The partnership is going to review this programme to ensure it is useful for residents and also helps improve the quality of the repairs service.

3.34 The following improvement opportunities have been identified:

- Ensure earlier involvement of residents to enable the Annual Review to be taken at earlier HMCSC and Area Panel meetings.
- Roll out the “Our Neighbourhood” model of collecting resident satisfaction information across the city
- Review the resident assessor programme to ensure it is fit for purpose and benefits residents that invest time in the programme
- Improve the use of social media as a tool for promoting the partnership and getting feedback from residents
- Work with the Home Group to monitor and manage the Repairs & Improvement Partnership

3.35 Sustainability

The council’s major works programme improves the condition and efficiency of properties across the city. The programme includes works to replace windows, roofs, communal heating systems and install external wall insulation which is designed to prolong the life of buildings and to improve thermal efficiency. These works are also targeted to reduce the heating costs for residents in their homes.

3.36 Mears have installed vehicle trackers to their van fleet as a carbon reduction measure. This will enable Mears to ensure that the vans are only used for valid business usage as well as checking that the vehicles are driven in a cost-efficient manner and operatives work is scheduled to minimise travel time across the city.

3.37 Mears are also utilising their “Mears Energy” subsidiary to ensure that funding opportunities are investigated and realised wherever possible. This is offset against projects such as communal boiler installation and cladding to reduce project costs for residents.

3.38 Construction is on-going on the UK’s first house made almost entirely of thrown-away waste material. The “Waste House” project is led by Mears and the University of Brighton. The aim is to show how low-carbon homes can be built cheaply and quickly using waste including surplus material from building sites – the construction industry discards 20 per cent of everything it uses. More than 3,000 people, among them students, apprentices, local builders and school

children are involved in building the house, with the ambition to train students and apprentices around emerging sustainable industries. The project will demonstrate the process of building and once complete the house will be one of the first A* energy-efficient rated buildings in the UK.

- 3.39 The following improvement opportunities have been identified:
- Increasing awareness of energy efficiency through behaviour change is a major factor in continuing improvements
 - Energy efficiency needs to be part of the culture and a factor in all repair and improvement works we take forward
 - Include article in Homing In that communicates the benefit of cladding and data around potential energy savings for residents

3.40 Other service contracts

As well as the Repairs & Improvements contract discussed above, the Property and Investment Team also manage the following contracts:

Contract	Contractor	Description
Gas	PH Jones and Mears	Gas Installation, maintenance and servicing.
Lifts	Liftec	Lift Installation, maintenance and servicing.
Aerials	SCCI	Installation and maintenance of communal aerial systems.
Legionella	Hertel	Service and maintenance of water systems.

- 3.41 The Property and Investment Team also manage low voltage contracts such as Door Entry, Fire Alarms, ventilation and warden call. We are currently in the process of procuring new contracts for this work.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 This report sets out a review of the partnership and is for noting by sub-committee members. As such alternative options are not appropriate.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 As detailed in this report resident representatives sit on the Core and Partnership Groups which manage the partnership between Mears, the council and residents. These residents have inputted into the content of this report and a draft version of the report has been agreed by the partnership Core Group. The Annual Review was taken through Area Panels in August 2013 where residents across the city made a number of observations and recommendations that have been included in the report and action plan.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This report sets out progress in the delivery of the ten year Repairs & Improvement Partnership with Mears and is for noting.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report as this report is for noting. Value for Money and efficiency information is provided in paragraphs 3.18 to 3.21. Financial monitoring of the Repairs Revenue and Capital programme budgets are included in the council's Targeted Budget Management reports to the Policy & Resources Committee.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen

Date: 08/10/13

7.2 Legal Implications:

The long (724 pages) contract with Mears includes provisions relating to the delivery of high quality, value for money services; an open and honest approach to the joint resolution of problems and a commitment to continuous improvement and innovation. This report sets out how those provisions have been addressed.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 15/10/13

7.3 Equalities Implications:

Equality Impact Assessments are carried out on relevant projects undertaken by the Repairs & Improvement Partnership. This includes major works projects and discretionary work as well as the Estate Development Budget.

7.4 Sustainability Implications:

Implications are detailed within the main body of the report (see 3.32).

7.5 Any Other Significant Implications

None envisaged.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Action plan for improvements detailed in report

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

Annual Review of Repairs & Improvement Partnership – Action Plan

Number	Action	Owner	Quarter	Update
Achieving decent homes				
1	Simplify the Brighton & Hove standard for improvement works so it is easier to understand and transparent for residents	Performance Manager, BHCC	Q4	In progress. Initial consultation with residents at September area panels
2	Investigate how the standard measures properties where residents have invested in replacing elements themselves	Performance Manager, BHCC	Q4	In progress. Initial consultation with residents at September area panels
3	Review quality assurance processes across the partnership to ensure they meet the relevant standards	Contract Compliance Manager, BHCC	Q3	
Major projects				
4	Improved communication with ward councillors throughout Major projects	Partnership & Resident Liaison Manager, BHCC	Q1	Complete. A briefing is emailed to ward councillors ahead of leaseholder consultation.
5	Liaise with residents at every stage of project planning – including in the development of the feasibility study	Senior Project Manager, BHCC	Q1	Complete. This is now in place for future major works projects. Initiated for Bristol Estate Phase 2
6	Look at further opportunities to use pilot properties for major works projects	Major Project Manager, Mears	Q3	In progress. Pilots utilised for Essex Place project
7	Survey residents at the end of projects to see how satisfied they were with works and where improvements can be made	Partnership & Resident Liaison Manager, BHCC	Q3	In progress. Will commence with current round of major projects
8	Look at a formal closedown meeting for residents at the end of works especially in sheltered schemes	Major Project Manager, Mears	Q4	
Performance and complaints				
9	Establish a “Customer Service Board” to	Customer Care	Q4	In progress.

Annual Review of Repairs & Improvement Partnership – Action Plan

Number	Action	Owner	Quarter	Update
	ensure that the partnership delivers excellent customer service at every opportunity	Manager, Mears		Mears customer service programme has commenced
10	A quality log will be introduced to identify and track technical issues across the partnership	Partnership & Resident Liaison Manager, BHCC	Q2	Complete. Quality log is in place
11	A process review will be undertaken for responsive repairs to eliminate duplicate and lost jobs that lead to a negative customer experience	Performance Manager, Mears	Q3	In progress. Due for completion in October 2013
Repairs helpdesk				
12	Revise call monitoring at Partnership Group, including number of calls and call answer times and longest wait time per day	Performance Manager, Mears	Q3	In progress. Reports are currently being revised and will report in October
13	Agree targets for waiting times and consider inclusion of this in contract performance indicator report	Performance Manager, Mears	Q3	In progress. Targets to be agreed at October Partnership group
14	Ensure there is more consistent scripting when handling calls, ensuring that duplicate jobs are eliminated and good customer service is always being delivered	Performance Manager, Mears	Q3	In progress. New scripting will become operational in October 2013
15	Review the scripting for repairs reported to communal areas	Performance Manager, Mears	Q3	In progress. New scripting will become operational in October 2013
16	Text ahead - when routine repairs are generated the system will automatically send out a text reminder to the tenant a day before their appointment	Partnering Manager, Mears	Q1	Complete. Text ahead is now operational.
17	Amend texts sent to residents to include the local rate Repairs Desk number	Partnering Manager, Mears	Q2	Complete. This has been amended following suggestion from East Area Panel

Annual Review of Repairs & Improvement Partnership – Action Plan

Number	Action	Owner	Quarter	Update
18	Promote Text Ahead in a future edition of Homing In	Partnership & Resident Liaison Manager, BHCC	Q3	
19	Look at accessibility of staff by telephone in other areas of the branch	Partnering Manager, Mears	Q4	
Value for money and efficiency				
20	Look at the pricing framework for the partnership and investigate opportunities to develop price per property models	Partnering Project Manager, BHCC	Q4	In progress. Data analysis of costs on per property basis being undertaken
21	Measure tenant satisfaction with empty properties after moving in	Performance Manager, BHCC	Q3	In progress. Pilot scheme completed and now looking at full roll out
22	Review use of subcontractors and whether the partnership can support greater delivery through directly employed operatives	Partnering Project Manager, BHCC	Q4	
Increasing employment and work opportunities				
23	Increase targeting of apprentices from areas of multiple deprivation to maximise opportunities for these families	Partnering Manager, Mears	Q4	In progress. Data review in progress
24	Review local labour plan for the partnership to give a greater focus on the ways the partnership can benefit the community	Partnering Project Manager, BHCC	Q4	In progress.
Resident involvement				
25	Ensure earlier involvement of residents to enable the Annual Review to be taken at earlier HMCSC and Area Panel meetings.	Contracts Officer	Q4	
26	Roll out the “Our Neighbourhood” model of collecting resident satisfaction information across the city	Partnership & Resident Liaison Manager, BHCC	Q4	In progress. Investigating building this into the resident assessors role which will be discussed with Home Group

Annual Review of Repairs & Improvement Partnership – Action Plan

Number	Action	Owner	Quarter	Update
27	Review the resident assessor programme to ensure it is fit for purpose and benefits residents that invest time in the programme	Partnering Manager, Mears	Q3	In progress. Discuss with Home Group in November.
28	Improve the use of social media as a tool for promoting the partnership and getting feedback from residents	Partnership & Resident Liaison Manager, BHCC	Q3	In progress. Greater links established through Facebook and using Twitter to feedback compliments
29	Work with the Home Group to monitor and manage the Repairs & Improvement Partnership	Partnering Business Manager, Mears	Q3	In progress. Home Group will commence in November
Sustainability				
30	Increasing awareness of energy efficiency through behaviour change is a major factor in continuing improvements	Partnership & Resident Liaison Manager, BHCC	Q3	In progress. Collecting data on the financial benefits of insulation to residents
31	Energy efficiency needs to be part of the culture and a factor in all repair and improvement works we take forward	Asset Manager, BHCC	Q3	In progress. Good processes in place for major works, need to build on this across planned and responsive works
32	Include article in Homing In that communicates the benefit of cladding and data around potential energy savings for residents	Partnership & Resident Liaison Manager, BHCC	Q2	In progress Draft being prepared for winter Homing In

Subject: Housing Management Pet Policy
Date of Meeting: HMCSC 29 October 2013,
Housing Committee 13 November 2013
Report of: Director of Housing, Jugal Sharma
Contact Officer: Name: Eve Hitchens Tel: 293262
Email: Eve.hitchens@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This policy proposal updates how the Housing Management team deals with pets in council homes.
- 1.2 What the tenancy agreement currently says:
You (or members of your household) must not keep a dog, cat, bird or other animal in your home without our written permission-the tenant handbook gives details of when we will give permission. Your pet(s) must not annoy or frighten other people, nor must you allow your pet to foul shared areas. If nuisance occurs, we can withdraw our permission. It is a breach of your tenancy agreement if you are convicted of causing cruelty and suffering towards an animal (see Appendix 1 for Tenancy handbook guidance)
- 1.3 The policy has been formulated in consideration of guidance provided by the RSPCA (see appendix 1)
- 1.4 The policy has been formulated by Officers within the Neighbourhoods Team and tenant representatives through Area Panels

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee comments on the Housing Management Pet Policy
- 2.2 That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee recommends to Housing Committee the adoption of the Pet Policy.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

Pets are good for people: they enhance a person's mood, reduce stress, encourage exercise, bring blood pressure down, make social interaction easier and stave off loneliness and isolation (Elizabeth Scott M.S. "How owning a dog or cat can reduce stress" 14 January 2012)

- 3.1 The issue of pet ownership gives a number of issues for housing management staff. These include but are not exclusive to
- dangerous dogs
 - stray dogs
 - dog fouling
 - barking
 - smells
 - indiscriminate breeding

There tend to be more complaints about dogs because their owners have a legal onus to control them in a way that other pet owners do not. For example, while cat owners can allow their cats to roam the neighbourhood unrestrained, and do not have to pick up their fouling, dog owners cannot. These complaints are managed by the council's Neighbourhood Team.

Because dog owners have a legal obligation to control their dogs, there is accordingly a plethora of laws and by laws which dog owners must adhere to with set processes and penalties. The council's Animal Welfare Officers have a statutory obligation to investigate and take action on dog fouling, dogs being out of control, and to collect and deal with stray dogs, so Neighbourhood Officers will often work with them, to enforce nuisance problems in council properties. The police may also become involved in cases where dogs have bitten people.

Similarly, complaints of cruelty will usually be referred to the Animal Welfare Officers or the RSPCA.

(Full summary of pet related legislation Appendix 2)

- 3.2 There is not legislation to cover minor pet nuisance (ie., pet smells, cats being allowed to roam in common ways of flats) so there needs to be clear procedures for Neighbourhood Officers on how to resolve these problems in a sensitive and effective way.
- 3.3 The number of stray dogs being collected each year in Brighton and Hove has doubled since 2008 to around 360 dogs a year.

The law requires that these dogs are held for a minimum of seven days and the kennelling fees become very costly. Most of these dogs are not neutered, and cannot be identified as they are not micro chipped, and do not have ID tags on. Only half are reclaimed by their owners, so Animal Welfare Offices have to try and find rescue organisations to take the rest.

- 3.4 Research has shown that the greatest reason for persons abandoning their dogs is that they did not realise how difficult it would be to own a dog.

3.5 Cats are largely much more independent, and therefore easier to keep. However, because they are usually allowed to wander outside, they often mate without their owners intending it to happen. This results in the owner having to deal with unwanted kittens, and adds to the problem of there already being too many cats and too few homes for them.

3.6 A three stage approach is hereby recommended for Housing Management Staff

Firstly, Ensure tenants know what their obligations will be when given permission for a pet to ensure that they take responsibility for the welfare and behaviour of their pet. This process of education will begin before the resident decides to get a pet with the inclusion of pet owning information in Lettings Packs.

Secondly, to provide support when appropriate to help residents to solve pet related nuisance.

Thirdly, to provide enforcement action, as with other anti-social behaviour, which should be taken when stage 2 fails and the resident won't or can't take responsibility to solve the problem. In some cases, the answer may be for that person to relinquish their pet but this would be our end point rather than our start point in most cases.

The main things on which the Pet Policy will concentrate are:

3.7 Comprehensive management when taking applications to keep a pet.

3.7.1 The permission process will outline the obligations we place on residents to ensure that the pet is kept responsibly, and will not cause a nuisance to others in the vicinity. Part of the application process will require the tenant to give details of who will look after their pet if they are unable to do so.

3.8 Requiring all owners of dogs in our properties to micro chip their dogs.

3.8.1 This can be done free of charge by The Dogs Trust and should reduce the number of unidentified stray dogs being collected by Animal Welfare Officers. It will also identify owners in the rare cases where stray dogs attack people or other animals.

3.9 Prohibition of the breeding of pets

3.9.1 Council homes are not suitable for pet breeding, which requires space and can cause noise and smells. Pet breeding in private homes often leads to "accidental ownership" which is when friends or neighbours see the newly born puppies or kittens and can't resist taking one because they are so cute, without really thinking about the responsibility or work involved.

3.9.2 We are not making neutering compulsory, as this is surgery and therefore has risks attached. Some people also believe that neutering leads to unintended and unwanted health and behaviour problems. We will publicise neutering, and the health benefits and convenience this has, and the low cost availability, but if someone chooses to manage their pet's fertility differently, this will be their choice.

- 3.9.3 We will require pet owners to think about this, and to state how they will prevent their pet breeding on the application form.
- 3.9.4 If breeding does occur, the approach we take will depend on the circumstances under which this happens. A person whose pet escapes and becomes pregnant, is very different from someone who purposely breeds pets in order to make money. The former will probably require no action/advice on neutering, while the latter may be subject to tenancy action

3.10 A database established so that all dogs in our properties are recorded.

This will enable the Neighbourhoods Team to gain data on how many dogs there are in certain areas, to more easily identify a dog that may be running loose, or fouling, and to enable us to include pets in emergency contingency plans.

3.11 Other landlords

Some landlords use a simplistic approach to solve animal ASB.

It is often written as standard into letters (even initial ones) *"if you do not solve this problem we may withdraw permission for you to keep a pet"*. This can be very frightening to pet owners, most of who love their pets and do not want them to cause a nuisance or inconvenience to those around them. With a bit of support and guidance most problems can be solved

Other registered social landlords who the RSPCA feel demonstrate good practice were researched and a summary is attached in Appendix 3.

- 3.12 Due to the number of unwanted pets currently in shelters, **we will be promoting adoption from rescue societies**, rather than persons obtaining pets from newspaper ads or from breeders. Shelter staff have the expertise to be able to identify suitable owners, and pets from rescue societies will usually already be neutered, micro chipped and inoculated. Shelters also usually provide lifelong support to pet owners on behaviour issues, and will take the pet back if the person is unable to care for it.
- 3.13 The revision of the Housing Management policy will streamline the way we deal with pet ownership, so we will be more effective in solving problems. As much of the policy is preventative (ie., getting people to think about what getting a pet involves before they obtain one, and ensuring owners know their obligations) this should reduce the amount of nuisance which occurs
- 3.14 In order to promote responsible adoption and ownership, we will be featuring articles in Homing In, producing leaflets, and doing poster campaigns around our Estates.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

The proposals in this report to change and clarify our own pet policy was presented to Area Panels in January 2013. All of the proposals were well received and there were no objections to any of the proposals.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The costs associated with the introduction of policy relate to the production of information sheets, posters and leaflets in order to publicise the policy. These costs should be minimal and it is anticipated that they can be met out of existing publicity and marketing budgets for 2013/14.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 19/08/2013

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The legal framework around the keeping of animals is outlined in the report and Appendices. The council's standard secure tenancy agreement provides that a tenant must not keep a dog, cat, bird or other animal without written permission. The council therefore has a discretion as to whether it allows a tenant to keep a pet. The law requires a discretion to be exercised reasonably, and the proposed Housing Management Pet Policy will assist in the exercise of that discretion.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 15/10/2013

Equalities Implications:

An Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 5.

- 5.3 The RSPCA have stated that restrictions on pet ownership in tenancy agreements and pet policies are appropriate and will not infringe tenants' rights, where they are needed to ensure good animal welfare, avoid nuisance to other residents, and protect the landlord's premises from damage.
- 5.4 The policy would be non discriminatory and proportionate. We will not unreasonably withhold permission for people to keep pets, and will offer advice and assistance to people to ensure they are able to keep to our conditions for keeping pets.
- 5.5 Some Local Authorities restrict which pets are allowed in particular properties; for example, some will not allow dogs in high rise blocks, or cats where there is no direct access to an outside space.
- 5.6 We are not proposing at this stage to restrict cats and dogs to particular types of properties (as these pets can be kept responsibly within any type of housing with the right care). However, other species, such as chickens, can only reasonably live outside, so permission will be restricted to residents who have gardens.
- 5.7 A small number of our sheltered blocks do not permit pets, but many others do, so home seekers should not be disadvantaged when seeking a property.

Sustainability Implications:

There are no sustainability implications

Crime & Disorder Implications:

The revised Pet Policy will help to prevent pet owners breaking the law i.e. The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The risks to persons staff and residents will be reduced through more careful education and monitoring of pets and owners.

Public Health Implications:

The risks to health and safety residents and staff will be reduced through more careful education and monitoring of pets and owners.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

None.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 If there were no pets in council properties there would be no pet nuisance. However given how enormously important pets are to people and the joy they bring, to introduce a blanket “no pets” policy would greatly impede on the wellbeing of many of our residents. For some people it is literally their pets who keep them alive, and some people would choose to be homeless rather than live in a home without them.
- 6.2 It would not be proportionate to impose a compulsory neutering policy in order to stop the nuisance of pet breeding; this is not the only way to stop breeding, and people need to be able to make their own decisions about how to manage their animal’s health and fertility.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 To consult and seek comments from members of the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee on the proposal. To endorse the policy and recommend its adoption to the Housing Committee. .

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. RSPCA guidance leaflet
2. Summary of pet related legislation
3. Examples of pet policies from other social housing landlords
4. Revised pet policy
5. EIA

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

Appendix 1

RSPCA Publication "Housing, a Guide to Good Practice" Summary of Recommendations

1. The Basics

- i. "Housing providers should not discourage pets where facilities exist for their proper care. Controls are necessary, however, to prevent irresponsible pet ownership"
- ii. "In all written policies, the key questions to address are whether the policies are enforceable and whether they will be enforced by housing officers"
- iii. "It is also important to ensure that pet owners generally, or owners of specific pets, such as dogs are not vilified through policy. While there may be a need for greater conditions on some pets, they need to be proportionate to the problem and clearly explained to the residents"

2. The RSPCA state that the following should be included in a basic pet policy, and included in the tenancy agreement where possible

- i. **"A clear statement that the owner is responsible for their pets' welfare, as defined under the Animal Welfare Act 2006"**

This should be based on the "duty of care in Section 9" (see Appendix 2). There should be a clear process for dealing with any animal welfare/cruelty complaints

- ii. **"A clear statement that the owner must ensure that the pet does not cause a nuisance and is not to be used in an anti social manner"** This needs to "include clear details of what is expected from a responsible owner" A clear process for dealing with nuisance should be established which includes, "where applicable, working with other agencies such as the police and the RSPCA"

iii. "The RSPCA advises that - as with the majority of low-level complaints - positive action towards an improvement is sought in the first instance, and that the pet owner is directed to sources of information and advice"

iv. **"Clear guidance on which pets are allowed, where they are allowed, where they are not, and how many pets a tenant can have"**

"We recommend that this guidance should have the flexibility to assess individuals' requests on a case-by-case basis"

v. **"Conditions that tackle indiscriminate breeding and accidental ownership"**

"The breeding and sale of animals should be prohibited on premises that housing providers manage". This will:

- help encourage responsible pet ownership
- reduce the number of "accidental owners" (obtaining pets from friends/neighbours without really thinking about the animals' welfare needs)
- avoid environmental nuisance

vi. **"A clear policy on pets left behind in properties"**

This is when a resident goes into hospital, or leaves the property without taking their pet.

vii. **"Clear procedures on common pet-related problems"**

Allowing animals to stray repeatedly, fouling, excessive noise, animal neglect/hoarding

2. **Going beyond the basic standard**

"The provision of a basic pets policy, which is both enforceable and enforced, is essential if there is to be a consistent and effective approach to the issues arising from pets in housing. In order to tackle the root of the problem before it takes hold, however, a more

proactive approach must be taken and preventative measures put in place”

i) Microchipping and neutering

“housing providers should promote both (micro chipping and neutering) to residents. Micro chipping “makes traceability easier, and in turn helps tackle straying, fouling and nuisance and ASB issues”. Neutering is “an effective way of preventing unwanted litters..(and) may also prevent illnesses and some unwanted behaviours”

ii) Education

“Educating residents and staff can play an important part in tackling some key pet ownership problems. It can take many forms, from printed and online information to holding events that include a vet consultation or discounted micro chipping”

iii) Multi-agency working

“At a time of shrinking budgets and increasing workloads, working with other organizations is essential when tackling some of the issues surrounding pets in housing”

“Partnership working can also provide training and advice, particularly in the area of animal welfare”

iv) Pets of vulnerable tenants placed in self-contained accommodation

“In the majority of situations it is hoped that pet ownership.. doesn’t form a barrier to an individual being offered an overnight hostel or temporary accommodation”

This applies to homeless persons seeking hostel accommodation. Other residents may require emergency housing due to a crisis situation, such as fire, major works, harassment, or domestic violence.

Appendix 2

Animals and the Law; Summary of Relevant Legislation

1. Animal Welfare Act 2006

The Animal Welfare Act increases penalties for those who inflict serious cruelty on animals and also introduces a welfare offence. This places a "duty of care" on pet owners to provide for their pet's basic needs, such as adequate food, water veterinary treatment and a suitable living environment.

The new offence means that animals do not have to suffer for owners to be prosecuted.

2. Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976

This Act promotes public safety by regulating how dangerous wild animals are kept by individuals. The Act contains a schedule of animals such as monkeys, venomous snakes and crocodiles that are considered dangerous and so require a license from the local authority.

3. The Breeding of Dogs Act 1973, The Breeding of Dogs Act 1991 and the Breeding and Sale of Dogs (Welfare) Act 1999

Under the 1973 Act (as amended by the 1999 Act), anyone who breeds and sells dogs as a business (more than four litters a year) requires a license from the local authority. Local authorities have extensive powers to check on the standards of health, welfare and accommodation of the animals and are responsible for enforcing the requirements of the Act. The Breeding of Dogs Act 1991 extends their powers to obtain a warrant to enter any premises where dog breeding is believed to be happening. Private homes are excluded from the Act but outbuildings are not.

4. Control of Dogs Order 1992

This requires every dog in public to wear a collar bearing the name and address of its owner. If a dog is not, it can be seized by the local authority and treated as a stray. In addition, the person

responsible will be guilty of an offence and may be prosecuted by a fine.

5. Road Traffic Act 1988

Under the Act, it is an offence to have a dog on a designated road without it being held on a lead

6. Guard Dogs Act 1975

It is an offence to use or permit the use of a guard dog on any premises unless the handler has control of it, and there must be warning that a guard dog is present

7. Dogs Act 1871

Under this Act, if a court has received a complaint, it may decide that a dog is dangerous and not kept under proper control and will then order the owner to resolve the situation or have it destroyed.

8. Dangerous Dogs Act 1991:

This Act has two main sections:

Section 1

It is an offence to keep specific breeds of dogs without registration. These include Pit Bulls. Owners have to comply with certain legal requirements, including having their dog registered, neutered, micro chipped and tattooed. One of the main problems with this law is that the pit bull terrier is not a recognised breed in the UK. Consequently, many owners of cross breeds which are a "pit bull type" have been charged under the Act.

Section 3

This applies to all dogs and makes it a criminal offence to allow a dog to be dangerously out of control in a public place. This includes instances where there is simply fear that an injury may occur. Owners found guilty under either section of the Act face up to six months in prison, destruction of their dog and/or a fine of up to five thousand pounds.

9. Environmental Protection Act 1990

Section 149: seizure of stray dogs

This gives authorized council officers the power to seize and detain any dog it believes to be a stray. If the dog is not collected by the owner within seven days, the ownership transfers to the local authority, who may rehome, sell, or humanely destroy it. The owner is liable to pay for all expenses incurred because of the dog's detention.

Section 150: delivery of stray dog to the local authority

A member of the public who finds a stray dog must return it to its owner or take it to the local authority. No other stray animal has the equivalent legal status to dogs. If any other animal is picked up, a relevant animal welfare agency should be contacted.

Section 70: offence to keep any animal in a manner that is prejudicial to health, causes a nuisance or emits noise from a building that causes a nuisance

The civil law of nuisance covers animals causing noise to the general public or a particular person

10. Animals Act 1971

Under this Act, owners of animals and those in control of them have a duty to take reasonable care to ensure that their animals do not cause injury or damage

11. Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

This allows local authorities to tackle dog fouling, ban dogs from designated areas, require them to be kept on a lead and restrict the number that can be walked by one person. This Act also gives local authorities sole responsibility for strays (this was previously shared with the police)

12. Litter (Animal Droppings) Order 1991 made under the Environmental Protection Act (1990)

This places a duty on local authorities to keep designated areas clear of dog faeces.

13. Bye-laws

Certain Acts of Parliament give local authorities the power to make by-laws, which create criminal offences for certain acts carried out locally. For example, local authorities can restrict dogs in certain areas.

Appendix 3

I looked at the policies of about eight other social landlords which were recommended by the RSPCA as exhibiting good practice: there was some common ground in all the policies looked at; all obliged residents to apply for permission before they get a pet (with the exception sometimes of very small ones like fish, or insects).

Most of their pet policies state that they are supportive of pet ownership. They all prohibit the keeping of animals banned in law; i.e., breeds of dogs specified in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976.

Some prohibit the keeping of farm animals; others prohibit "exotic pets". And some prohibit certain types of pet depending on the type of dwelling that someone lives in.

Places for People Housing Association state that "in flats with communal entrance and passage ways, pets such as cats and dogs are not usually allowed".

Tendring District Council say they will "usually grant permission to keep dogs and cats in flats only if they have direct access to an outdoor space".

Eastland Homes Housing Association will "not permit dogs in high rise flats". They also will not permit any pets to be kept in sheltered blocks other than birds and other small caged animals.

Sometimes, policies state maximum permitted numbers: Tendring say they "nearly always" limit the number of dogs to one, and the number of cats to two.

Wolverhampton Homes state that "the keeping of animals should be restricted to one cat and one dog or two cats or two small dogs"

Some social landlords prohibit pet breeding.

Wolverhampton Homes state that they do not allow "commercial or non-commercial breeding and/or the selling of animals from the property"

Blackpool Coastal Housing state that tenants "must not breed animals in your home". They state that they "may request that dogs are neutered" if they are causing a nuisance. They also oblige dog owners to micro chip their dogs before permission will be given.

Wandsworth also state that residents are “not permitted to cause nuisance by breeding their animals”

Wandsworth introduced compulsory dog micro chipping in 2006 to address irresponsible dog ownership, straying and fouling. The number of stray dogs being reunited with their owners has risen from 43% in 2007/8 to 65% in 2010/11, which has saved the local authority kennelling costs.

Housing Tenancy and Leasehold Management Policy

THE KEEPING OF PETS IN COUNCIL ACCOMMODATION

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Keeping pets in social housing can provide many challenges for landlords. Yet research has shown that animals that are well cared for and responsibly kept can be a positive attribute to any community. For individual owners, pet ownership can enhance a person's mood, reduce stress, encourage exercise and stave off loneliness and isolation.¹ (RSPCA Housing: A Guide to Good Practice)

It is important therefore that our policy on keeping pets is supportive of pet ownership, while at the same time emphasizing individual responsibility, provides clear guidelines on what we expect from pet owners, and contains robust procedures to deal with any problems which may occur.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 This policy is to provide guidance to all staff and residents, on our approach to pet ownership in council owned properties.

3. The Tenancy Agreement, Lease Conditions, Tenants Handbook

- 3.1 It states in the **Tenancy Agreement** that:

You or they (members of the household) must not keep a dog, cat, bird or other animal in your home without our written permission- the Tenants Handbook gives details of when we will give permission. Your pet(s) must not annoy or frighten other people, nor must you allow your pet to foul shared areas. If nuisance occurs, we can withdraw our permission. It is a breach of your Tenancy Agreement if you are convicted of causing cruelty or suffering to an animal.

- 3.2 It states in The **Tenants Handbook** that:

How many pets can I have?

If you want to keep pets, you must get our written permission through your housing office. The number of pets we will allow depends upon the type of pet, and the size and type of home

you live in. If you live in sheltered housing, please check with your Scheme Manager to see whether your scheme allows pets. We will not unreasonably withhold permission but will not give permission for residents to keep the following animals:

- § any dangerous wild animal as detailed in the Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976*
- § the specific breed of dog restricted by law and detailed in the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 such as the pitbull terrier, and Japanese tosas*
- § a species prohibited by trade, import or export as detailed by the Endangered Species (Import and Export) Act 1976*
- § all venomous (poisonous) insect and spiders*
- § all large, poisonous or constricting snakes or lizards*

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

Is there anything I need to know about keeping pets?

If you have a pet or would like to get one, we expect you to look after your pets in a responsible way. You must make sure that:

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

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

If your pets are causing a nuisance or disturbance to your neighbours we may ask you to rehome them.

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

3.3 Leases.

We currently use two leases; a Brighton lease and a Hove lease. These both state the same thing about keeping pets, which states:

Not to keep any bird, reptile, dog or other animal in the demised premises without the previous consent in writing of the Council which may be given by the Council's Director of Housing for the time being or their Managing Agents for the time being such consent to be revocable by notice in writing at any time on complaint of any nuisance or annoyance being caused to any owner tenant or occupiers of any other flat in the building

4.0 Applying for Permission to keep a pet

- 4.1 Permission should be sought by contacting Housing Customer Services who will arrange for the form "Application to keep a Pet in a Council Owned Property" to be completed.
- 4.2 Each application is assessed on its own merits. There are some sheltered schemes which do not permit pets, or which restrict which pets may be kept. Pets may be kept in all other properties. However officers have the discretion to determine that certain pets (ie., livestock) cannot be practically kept without the use of a private outside space, or that the size or type of property may restrict the number or pets which are allowed.
- 4.3 We will not refuse the keeping of cats or dogs if the property does not have a private garden, but we will need to ensure that residents have thought about how they will exercise their pet.
- 4.4 Where appropriate, officers will ask the advice of the Animal Welfare Team or other agencies before giving permission. This may especially be the case where permission is being sought for a large number of animals, for exotic or farm animals, or where there have been some concerns previously about the owner's ability to give adequate care to an animal.
- 4.5 Permission will be given on the strict understanding that residents are responsible for their pet, and that they care for it in accordance with the Animal Welfare Act 2006.

- 4.6 Applications to adopt pets from rescue societies will be prioritized, and will be processed within three working days from the date of application in order to facilitate the rehoming process.
- 4.7 Pet owners will be required to give details of a person who can care for their pet in an emergency, or if they become unable to do so
- 4.8 The breeding of all pets is prohibited in council homes.
- Owners will be encouraged to neuter their pets. If they choose not to, or neutering is not practical or safe (ie., as may be the case with very small animals such as hamsters or mice) owners will be required to take practical steps to stop them from breeding, such as separating pets of opposite sexes. If breeding does occur, we may require that the pet is neutered.
- 4.9 We will never give permission for residents to operate a pet breeding business from their home
- 4.10 All pets must be properly controlled, and must not be permitted to roam free in shared hallways or gardens.
- 4.11 Owners are responsible for the making good of any damage that is caused in their own property or in shared areas by their pet

Special Conditions

5.0 Dogs

Owners of dogs have a legal responsibility to control and care for them in a way that the owners of other pets do not. Dogs are also the cause of most complaints of anti social behaviour. Dog owners are accordingly obliged to adhere to the *law*. These are the main ones:

5.1 The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991

Part 1 of this makes it an offence to own the following breeds, unless a Certificate of Exemption has been obtained.

- § The pitbull terrier
- § The Japanese Tosa
- § The Dogo Argentino

§ The Fila Brasileiro

Section 3 of this Act makes it an offence to allow any dog to be “dangerously out of control in a **public place**”. A dog may be regarded as being “dangerously out of control” if there are good grounds for suspecting that it will injure a person whether or not it actually does so

5.2 The Dogs Act 1871

This Act allows a Magistrate Court, on being satisfied that a dog is dangerous and not being kept under proper control in either a public or a private place, to make an order that the dog be kept under proper control or destroyed. A fine can be imposed for breach of such an order.

5.3 Control of Dogs Order 1992

- § Every dog, while in a public place, must wear a collar displaying its owner’s name and address.

5.4 Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005

The Dog Control Orders below are made by the Council using powers in the Act. They may not have effect outside Brighton & Hove.

- § Dogs must be kept on a lead on all roads and pavements (Dog control Order 2 Keeping on a Lead).
- § Dog fouling is prohibited in all public areas. Dog owners are expected to pick up after their dogs and dispose of it appropriately (Dog Control Order 1 Fouling of Land)
- § Dogs are not permitted in children’s play areas, cemeteries, certain inner city parks and squares, and certain memorial gardens (Dog Control Order 4 Exclusion from Land)

5.5 In addition to this, **Housing** stipulates the following:

- § All dogs living in Council owned properties must be micro chipped
- § Dogs must be kept on a lead on all Housing land, including the shared areas of blocks of flats, the surrounding land, and shared gardens

- § Dogs must not be left unsupervised on balconies or in any communal areas
- § Residents must not leave their dog unattended overnight, or for periods exceeding five hours
- § Where a resident has a private garden, they are responsible for ensuring that their dog is safely contained within it by providing hedging, fencing or some other form of restriction.
- § Dog fouling in private gardens and on balconies must be cleared up promptly

6.0 Cats

- 6.1 Under the Animals Act 1971 and the Common Law Duty of Care, it is a commonly-held view that cats have the “right to roam” wherever they wish. However, cat owners do have a general duty at law to take reasonable care to ensure that their cats do not cause injury to people or damage to property
- 6.2 A complaint commonly received about cats is that they are fouling in other people’s gardens, or digging up their flower beds. It is not realistic to expect cat owners to train their cats not to go into certain areas. Where this becomes a problem, we will advise the person affected on humane measures they can take to deter cats.
- 6.3 Cats can breed very frequently (up to three litters a year), and because they usually roam the neighbourhood, it is very difficult for owners to stop un-neutered cats from breeding. We strongly recommend that cat owners neuter their cats as early as possible.
- 6.4 Where a litter tray is used, it is important that it is emptied and cleaned regularly in order to avoid smells. Litter must be disposed of by sealing it in a plastic bag and disposing of it in the normal household refuse.
- 6.5 It is not permitted for cats to be left unsupervised on balconies or in shared hallways.
- 6.6 Cat owners can apply for permission to install a cat flap in their property by completing the necessary form and submitting it to the Clerk of Works. Each case will be assessed individually. We

will give permission where possible, but this may not always be the case.

6.7 We strongly recommend that cats are micro chipped, so that they can be identified if they become lost, stolen, or are involved in accidents

7.0 Keeping small mammals

7.1 In the case of very small animals such as rats, mice, gerbils and hamsters, residents must limit them to manageable numbers, and make sure they are suitable for the living conditions

7.2 Rabbits and guinea pigs should normally be kept outside the home, with a secure exercise run which is safe from predators

7.3 Residents must ensure that their housing is free from excess droppings

8.0 Keeping birds

8.1 Small caged pets are allowed provided that the cage is large enough to allow them to stretch their wings in any direction and gives them enough space to perch

8.2 Birds should be permitted to exercise out of their cage, provided they can't escape

8.3 Where birds are kept outside (aviary birds or fowl), residents will need to show that they know how to meet the welfare needs of the animal, including providing a suitable environment which is safe from predators

8.4 Residents are not permitted to keep cockerels

9.0 Keeping reptiles, amphibians and spiders

9.1 We do not recommend that residents keep these types of pets, as they require specialized living conditions and care. Most reptiles kept as pets die very quickly; 75% within one year (E. Totland et al 2012) There is also a significant risk of zoonotic (animal to human) disease.

9.2 If a resident wants to keep reptiles, amphibians or spiders they will be required to prove that they can provide the required care, and agree to a visit by an animal welfare professional to assess their suitability.

10.0 Farm animals

10.1 We will not usually permit the keeping of farm animals, such as pigs, goats and sheep in council properties. These animals need to be in a rural environment and may cause damage and noise in a residential setting. Exceptions will only be granted following advice from Animal Welfare Officers.

11.0 Nuisance Animals

11.1 Where nuisance occurs, we will seek to resolve the situation informally and by agreement.

11.2 Where appropriate, cases will be referred to the Animal Welfare Team, the police, the RSPCA, or other animal welfare agencies for advice, or enforcement action.

11.3 Where there is a complaint of excessive noise being caused by an animal, Housing staff will seek to determine the extent and cause of the problem before deciding upon further action. Many noise problems can be solved by appropriate advice on care or training issues.

11.4 If problems persist, and the owner is not taking responsibility for solving problems, a more formal approach will be used: this may include:

- § Enforcement Action by the Animal Welfare Team, when laws or by laws are being breached. This is especially the case with dog fouling, dogs not wearing identification, or dogs being out of control
- § Enforcement action by the Environmental Health Team where noise amounts to a statutory nuisance, and the owner is not taking steps to solve it
- § Intervention or prosecution by the RSPCA

- § Making responsible pet ownership part of an Acceptable Behaviour Contract- this is a contract signed by the owner in which they agree to adhere to certain behaviours
- § Serving an injunction which will legally oblige the owner to start or stop doing certain actions
- § Taking action against a person's tenancy or lease for a breach of tenancy conditions. This may include serving a Notice of Seeking Possession, or seeking to demote a secure tenancy.

12.0 Cruelty and Neglect

12.1 Any reports of animal cruelty or neglect will immediately be referred to the Animal Welfare Team or to the RSPCA. If a resident is successfully prosecuted for failing to look after an animal properly, we have the discretion to refuse permission for any further pets to be kept.

12.2 If a resident is found to be guilty of causing cruelty or suffering to an animal we will normally take action against their tenancy.

13.0 Monitoring and Review

13.1 We will monitor and review this policy annually, and amend in line with any future changes to national or local policy or legislative changes.

13.2 The Head of Housing has overall responsibility for the on-going monitoring of the policy through the work of frontline teams. The policy will be reviewed annually by the Housing Leadership Team.

14.0 Equalities

An equalities impact assessment has been completed, (Appendix 4) created along side the policy document, to ensure that we are complying with our duties set out in the Equality Act 2010 and that no groups of people are being adversely and cumulatively impacted upon by our decision making processes.

Residents who require assistance animals will not need to ask permission to keep them, and may be exempt from certain laws or conditions (ie., blind persons are obliged under the law to pick up fouling from their guide dog)

References:

Animals Act 1971
 Animal Welfare Act 2006
 Dangerous Wild Animals Act 1976

Dangerous Dogs Act 1991
The Dogs Act 1871

Brighton and Hove City Council Tenancy Agreement
Brighton Lease
Hove Lease

Housing; A Guide to Good Practice RSPCA
Guidelines on Pet Management for Housing Providers, Pet Advisory
Committee

Wild Pets in the European Union ENDCAP

The Exotic Pet Trade: Pet Hates (2012) E Totland et al

Contact: Eve Hitchens for comments Eve.hitchens@brighton-hove.gov.uk or via 293030

Equalities Impact Assessment

Name of review:	Pet Policy
Period of review:	2012-2013
Scope of the review:	<p>Residents who live in Council owned stock are permitted to keep pets, subject to the conditions we determine as a landlord. We have a total of over 14,500 tenants and leaseholders living in the Brighton and Hove area. The Council employs five Animal Welfare Officers (two full time, and three part time) who have a statutory obligation to collect stray dogs, to investigate breaches of the law such as dog fouling, and to investigate welfare concerns. These welfare officers deal with both council tenants and residents who privately rent or who own their properties. The conditions which residents must abide to when keeping pets are determined by law, or by their landlords. The Council's pet policy is written for its own tenants and leaseholders, although many of the conditions are underpinned by existing legislature.</p> <p>The purpose of reviewing the pet policy is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To produce a comprehensive policy detailing which pets we allow and under what circumstances, and to clearly outline the responsibilities of pet owners, especially in promoting animal welfare and preventing their pets from causing anti social behaviour. 2. To be supportive of responsible pet ownership, and to be as inclusive as possible, whilst maintaining sensible restrictions where conditions would be clearly unsuitable (ie., no farm animals). 3. Through clearly defined obligations, and procedures for addressing anti social behaviour caused by pets, to reduce the most common problems, such as dog fouling, noise, and dogs being poorly controlled. 4. To introduce compulsory micro chipping of dogs to increase the number of stray dogs being reunited with their owners, and thereby to save the council money in kennelling costs, and reduce the number of dogs needing to go to rescue societies, or being euthanized.

	<p>5. To introduce a No Breeding of Pets clause in order to reduce nuisance caused by breeding, prevent “accidental ownership” of pets, and to help to stem the number of unwanted pets.</p> <p>6. To adhere to guidelines on how to manage pets in social housing provided by the major animal welfare agencies; in particular the RSPCA has published comprehensive guidelines and awards “Footprint” awards each year to Local Authorities. We are currently a “bronze level” performing authority and aim to be awarded a “gold” level.</p> <p>7. Where problems occur, especially anti social behaviour, to produce clear guidelines for staff and residents on how to deal with these.</p>
<p>Review team:</p>	<p>Eve Hitchens, Senior Neighbourhood Officer</p>
<p>Relevant data and research:</p>	<p>Guidelines produced by the RSPCA, and the Pet Advisory Committee. Legislation relating to Animal Welfare/Control. Demographic data from OHMS, the main housing database.</p>
<p>Consultation: indicate who was consulted and how they were consulted</p>	<p>The policy was approved by Environmental Services, including the Animal Welfare Officers. A presentation was made to the four Area Panels in January 2013 (to talk generally about pet problems/suggested solutions), and in September 2013 when the draft policy was presented to them. Also presented to Estate Services Monitoring Group and to the Housing Management Consultative Panel (HMCC) in late 2013.</p>
<p>Assessment of impact, outcomes and key follow-up actions:</p>	<p>The success of the new policy will be determined by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * a reduction in the number of pet related complaints * a reduction in the number of stray dogs * greater efficiency with which pet related issues are dealt with * better joint working between council departments (especially Environmental Health, and Housing) and between the council and animal welfare agencies

Name and contact details of lead officer responsible for follow-up action:	Eve Hitchens, Senior Neighbourhood Officer Eve.hitchens@brighton-hove.gov.uk Tel (01273) 293262
For further information on the assessment contact:	Eve Hitchens Senior Neighbourhood Officer Eve.hitchens@brighton-hove.gov.uk Tel (01273) 293262

Subject:	Housing and Support for Young People aged 16-25 Joint Commissioning Strategy		
Date of Meeting:	29 October 2013		
Report of:	Executive Director, Environment, Development and Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Narinder Sundar	Tel: 29-3887
		Jo Sharp	Tel: 29-1911
	Email:	Narinder.sundar@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

The Housing and Support for Young People Needs Assessment undertaken in October 2012, identified the local housing and support needs for young people in the city. The Housing and Support Joint Commissioning Strategy for young people aged 16-25 specifically aims to:

- Increase the numbers of young people who are prevented from homelessness
- Ensure young people have a more positive transition to adulthood through the provision of a Young Peoples' accommodation and support pathway
- Better use of resources through a joint commissioning approach to accommodation and support for young people

The needs assessment found that an average of 234 16 and 17 year olds, and 917 18-25 year olds, approach Housing options per year for assistance on Housing needs (based on 2009-2012 figures). 16/17 year olds make up a total of 5% of customers accessing the Housing Options service. During 2009-2012 the average figure for 16/17 year olds with a dependent child was 11 per year, and 18-24 year olds was 254 per year.

The Housing Advice service, run by Sussex Central YMCA is often the first port of call for young people who need help with their housing. The Housing Advice service works with Housing Options Officer's and Children's Services (for under 18s) to assess the needs of the young person, and where possible support them to remain in their current accommodation, or make a referral for supported housing.

The Local Authority has a legal duty under the 1996 Housing Act to provide advice and assistance to prevent homelessness to individuals and households who find themselves homeless or threatened with homelessness and provide accommodation to individuals and households who are deemed vulnerable and in priority need.

The recession and welfare benefits reform have had a disproportionate impact on vulnerable individuals and families, resulting in significant increases in homelessness and rough sleeping across the country. In Brighton and Hove, additional local demographic factors such as pressures from an expanding population, an acute shortage of affordable and suitable accommodation, high numbers of vulnerable individuals and households with high care and support needs (such as substance misuse, mental health and physical health needs), a large high-cost private rented sector and high benefit dependency, has had a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of many local residents, particularly the most vulnerable groups.

Locally, Housing Options managers have reported increased pressures this year with increasing numbers of younger people being referred for assistance with housing, with complex support needs.

The DCLG have been working with local authorities and national homelessness agencies to assist local authorities in improving their response to young people who need housing and support. This includes the creation of a 'Young Peoples' accommodation pathway'. The pathway is also promoted in the Ministerial Working Group Report 'Making Every Contact Count'. The pathway stressed the need for an integrated approach from agencies, working together to support young people.

Throughout the development of this strategy Brighton and Hove have been working with Youth Homelessness Advisor with the Department for Communities and Local Government, who has supported this process.

This is a joint strategy with Children's Services, to be presented at the Children and Young People Committee in October.

This strategy is linked to other strategies within Brighton and Hove City Council, to include;

- Corporate Parenting Strategy
- Housing related Support Commissioning Strategy 2011-2015 (under review/consultation)
- Homelessness Strategy 2013-16 (under review/consultation)
- Joint Commissioning Strategy : Services for Young People in Brighton & Hove 2011-14
- Brighton & Hove Joint Commissioning Strategy for Adults with Autistic Spectrum Conditions 2012-2015
- Early Help Pathway

1.1 Stronger Families, Stronger Communities

This strategy will develop existing links with the work of the Integrated Team for Families to ensure there is an early intervention approach, between the work of Children's Services and Housing including how support is provided to families to prevent homelessness.

2. **RECOMMENDATION:**

That the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee note this report.

3. **SUMMARY OF CURRENT HOUSING AND SUPPORT PROVISION WITHIN HOUSING**

Currently young peoples' Housing Services are funded by the 'Supporting People' Welfare budget and the Homelessness Prevention budget. The accommodation based support and floating support are currently part of the Integrated Support Pathway (ISP). The services consist of

- Sussex Central YMCA, Young Peoples Housing Advice Service, which is in Band 1 and aims to prevent young people from becoming homeless, and provide general Housing advice and signposting
- Higher support supported accommodation with 24 hour support
- Supported accommodation with office hour support only for young people with lower support needs
- A floating support service
- Sussex Nightstop which provides short term accommodation for young people within family homes.

All commissioned services are subject to contract management, quality standards and value for money benchmarking. In 2012/13, out of 232 moves from young peoples service ,171 moved to greater independence (74% of all moves).

4. **OUTCOMES AND STRATEGIC ACTIONS PROPOSED IN THE HOUSING AND SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-25 JOINT COMMISSIONING STRATEGY**

4.1 **Outcome 1- Increase the numbers of young people who are prevented from homelessness**

Although there has historically been good practice in this area, in Brighton and Hove, this strategy recognises that could be doing more to prevent people from becoming homeless in the first place.

It has been recognised nationally that 'The experience of homelessness at a young age is not only stigmatising, but can, without effective support and accommodation options; result in long-term poor outcomes.' (V5 Developing a positive accommodation and support pathway for young people document 2013)

They key changes suggested in the strategy are

- Establish a joint assessment system that ensures the families of 16 and 17 year olds receive a joint visit by a social worker and a representative from Housing
- Provide Family Mediation/Whole Family Support including Family Coaching and Family Group Conferencing
- Review the universal prevention work through schools and youth provision to ensure young people are provided with the right information and messages about leaving home
- 'Promote a 'Twin track 'approach with targeted work to identify those at high risk of homelessness before they reach the age of 16/17.
- Work with family support and prevention programmes to ensure joint working and communication
- Contribute to the BHCC review of 'early help'

4.2 Outcome 2 -Young People have a more positive transition to adulthood through the provision of a Young Peoples' Accommodation and Support Pathway

- Create a Young peoples' Housing Pathway which includes all services which will provide information and advice across all stages of the pathway, not only about housing, but on other aspects of young people's lives as they make the transition to adulthood
- Review assessment allocation functions to ensure joint working and accountable decision making around the services that young people receive
- As part of this pathway, ensure that there is an effective access service for young people which can provide Housing Advice and casework support and can work with young people to prevent homelessness where possible.

4.3 Outcome 3 -Better use of resources through Joint Commissioning approach to accommodation and support for young people

- Housing, Adult Social Care (transitions) and Children's services to agree set of outcomes which will be included in all service specifications for services
- Agree a joint budget for the new Young Peoples' Pathway and have a commissioning plan based on the needs identified and the resources available
- Design the future shape of services for the young peoples' pathway in conjunction with residents, and partners to maximise the potential of the young peoples' pathway to meet the needs of young people and young families and provide value for money

4.3.1 Joint Commissioning Plan proposals: pooled Children's Services and Housing Commissioning budgets

The Young Peoples' Pathway will involve changes to pool existing Children's Services and Housing Commissioning budgets. These changes are proposed

based on the gaps identified from needs assessment and the consultation and the resources available.

This is a positive approach based on national good practice which recommends pooling resources to maximise the benefits for young people, and create efficiencies.

This strategy will be working towards implementing:

- commissioning a small high support service for high need young people
- commissioning a Supported Lodgings service (possibly with 'respite' beds where the young person stays for a limited period to enable family mediation)
- remodeling the floating support service to ensure adequate support is provided to young people in temporary accommodation and young families. Also provide some units of long term support for young people who would benefit from one professional rather than different support workers.
- commissioning some accommodation which could be used as an alternative to current temporary accommodation used.
- remodeling /decommissioning some models of support accommodation, and provide low cost accommodation for young people with low support needs (specifically 18-25 year olds)
- potential to jointly commission Young people Advice services in the city from 2015. This would include the existing Housing Advice Services and other advice service commissioned under Children's services.

5. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

The Needs Assessment which provided the evidence base for this project was completed in October 2012. The Needs Assessment specifically looked at

- Referral and assessment pathways and services provided to meet the council's statutory responsibilities
- Housing and Support provision for young people aged 16-25 (including young people who are looked after by the local authority, who are care leavers, who are unaccompanied asylum seekers or who are teenage parents)
- Prevention of homelessness among young people

The strategy has been developed jointly with Children's Services Commissioners and service managers, and in consultation with stakeholders. There have been development workshops with internal staff in February and August 2012. The city's Youth Homeless Working Group which is the strategic working group to

address Youth Homelessness, has been closely consulted. This group includes all current providers.

In April 2013, a project group was set consisting of Children's services and Housing staff to manage the delivery plan. This included setting up a pilot scheme around Joint assessments, (expected to start in October 2013) and a joint approach to the allocation of services.

The draft strategy was issued for consultation in June 2013.

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

There have been three main consultation phases with this project

- During the development of the needs assessment. Voluntary Organisations and staff and service users were asked to feedback on the content. Services users were specifically surveyed on their views.
- During the Strategy Consultation phase (June /July 2013) A consultation portal was set up which received 36 responses. Some visits were made to services to talk to young people.
- In developing the Equalities Impact Assessment- Voluntary agencies and staff contributed to developing this, and were consulted on the draft.

The city's Youth Homeless Working Group which is the strategic working group to address Youth Homelessness has been closely consulted. This group includes all current providers.

8. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

This is a joint strategy between Housing and Children's which will be funded through the Housing Related Support budgets (£1.023million), Homelessness Prevention budgets (£0.266million) t and the 16 Plus Service Accommodation budget (£0.592million, subject to approval of the budget at Council in February 2014.

A report will be presented to the Children & Young People Committee on 14th October 2013.

A significant change will be the commitment of funds to the project from Children's services which will allow some Commissioning through Housing, which will aim to reduce costs and provide value for money.

The strategy will be managed by the Commissioning team within Housing which currently has a gross budget of £0.205million and is expected to be delivered within existing resources.

Finance Contact Consulted Neil Smith

Date 13/09/13

Legal Implications:

Members are advised that that the objectives set out in this report fall within the council's statutory and policy obligations. The council has a range of statutory obligations in respect of housing young people by virtue of statute and regulation, both in relation to housing law and in relation to the law relating to duties to children. Case law and statutory guidance in this area recognises that integrated services can assist in the delivery of a seamless, child-centred response to the needs of young people who are homeless, or threatened with homelessness

The interface between housing law and the duties owed arising under the Children Acts are legally complex and require different departments to work together. For the young person a duty to ensure they have suitable accommodation is absolute and owed to them by the local authority as a whole, irrespective of which service ultimately takes responsibility for securing that accommodation. In this respect a joint strategy is likely to enhance the prospect of the local authority ensuring the joined up approach which is required in order to meet those legal duties, irrespective of which type of legislation ultimately applies in individual cases.

The joint strategy fulfils the expectations of the 2010 Statutory Guidance entitled '*Provision of Accommodation for 16 and 17 year old young people who may be homeless and/or require accommodation*' which advises local authority housing and children's services departments to work together to secure a range of suitable housing and support services for young people and their families, and recommends that Housing Homelessness Strategies and Supporting People or Housing Related Support Strategies should be drawn up to deal with the accommodation and support needs of vulnerable young people. The Guidance was issued by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families under section 7 of the Local authorities Social services Act 1970 and section 82 Housing Act 1996, and so should be followed,

Under Part III of the Children Act the local authority children's services and their partners have a duty to identify and support families where children and young people may be at risk of negative outcomes, including homelessness in the future, by delivering integrated and targeted services in their area. The council is also required under the Homelessness Act 2002 to undertake a review of homelessness in its areas and to formulate an effective policy to deal with it in consultation with the social services. In addition one of the key objectives of the council's Single Homelessness Strategy is to work with services for single homeless people to prevent homelessness, through early identification and intervention.

The council must be able to fulfil its obligations under the provisions of the Housing Act 1996 to provide advice and assistance to homeless persons in its area, and specifically to accommodate homeless 16 to 17 years old who are in

need, ex-care leavers under 18, and vulnerable care leavers of any age pursuant to the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002.

The services provided to young people seeking help because of homelessness, or risk of homelessness, should have due regard to the expectations of the statutory guidance referred to above. These include that where the initial approach or referral for housing assistance is made to housing services, the authority should treat the approach/referral as an application for assistance under Part 7 of the 1996 Act. The authority is required to consider whether there is reason to believe the young person may be homeless or likely to become homeless within 28 days (section 184 of the 1996 Act) and, if so, the authority will need to make inquiries to determine whether any duty is owed under Part 7 of the 1996 Act. If there is reason to believe the young person may be eligible for assistance, may be homeless and may be 16 or 17 years of age, the authority will have an immediate duty to secure interim accommodation (section 188(1) of the 1996 Act) pending a decision whether any substantive duty is owed under Part 7. Such accommodation must be suitable for a 16 & 17 year old and, in considering suitability, authorities should bear in mind that 16 and 17 year olds who are homeless and estranged from their family will be particularly vulnerable and in need of support. The Secretary of State considers that Bed and Breakfast accommodation is unsuitable for 16 and 17 year olds.

Statutory Guidance provides that if the young person may be homeless or may be likely to become homeless within 28 days, housing services should make an immediate referral to children's services for an assessment of their needs under S 17 Children Act. This applies to all 16 and 17 year old applicants without exception. Children's services must undertake and complete an initial assessment as soon as possible, and within the expectations of the statutory guidance known as Working Together. Under the statutory guidance referred to above housing services should continue to secure accommodation under section 188 (1) until they have notified the young person whether any substantive duty is owed under Part 7 of the 1996 Act.

The question of whether any substantive duty is owed under Part 7 of the 1996 Act will depend in part on the outcome of the assessment by children's services, and whether any duty is owed under section 20 of the 1989 Children Act. Where children's services have accepted that they have a duty under section 20 duty to provide accommodation, and the 16 or 17 year old has accepted the accommodation, the young person will not be homeless in law and no further duty will be owed under Part 7 of the 1996 Act. The duties to the young person will arise under the Children Act 1989.

Section 17(6) Children Act 1989 specifies that services provided under that section to young people can include the provision of accommodation. However, if a child is provided with accommodation under section 20 Children Act 1989, that child then becomes a 'looked after' child. It is a specific duty that a local authority **MUST** provide accommodation to a child if the criteria in section 20(1) Children

Act 1989 are met. These are that the child must be 'a child in need' within the local authority's area who requires accommodation as a result of:

- there being no person who has parental responsibility for him; or
- his being lost or abandoned; or
- the person caring for him being prevented from providing him with suitable accommodation (for any reason including the parent being unable to function as a parent).

The extent to which a young person should be accommodated under S20 or otherwise will turn on the individual circumstances of the case. If a child is 'looked after' under S20, the local authority then owes additional general duties to the child under section 22 Children Act and also becomes liable to provide leaving care support under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000.

There may be procurement implications with respect to the proposal relating to the commissioning of accommodation as an alternative to the current temporary accommodation provision and these will need to be dealt with in accordance with the procurement rules when the need arises.

Lawyer Consulted: Natasha Watson and Amma Boetang
September 2013

Date 12th

Equalities Implications:

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and will be finalised in September 2013.

Sustainability Implications:

There are no sustainability implications

Crime & Disorder Implications:

This strategy aims to improve the response to young people in need of help with housing, but also the creation of a pathway aims to address other needs the young person may have, and ensure joined up response for young people. This may mean improvements in areas such as anti social behaviour if families are supported to manage these issues.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

This strategy will improve the response to young people and young families who are in need of Housing and Support. There is a risk that young people will not achieve positive outcomes, if the service provision is not available to meet their needs. Not addressing the needs of young people, risks increasing demands on adult services in the future.

Public Health Implications:

There are no public health implications

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

The strategy highlights the links with the BHCC Corporate Plan 2013/14

• **Priority- Tackling inequality**

Specific outcomes in plan in 'Tackling inequality' relevant to the project

- Children and Young People have the best start in life
- Vulnerable adults supported to live healthy independent lives

Specific commitments relevant to the project

- Work with partners to create new services for people with multiple, complex needs including homelessness, mental health or substance misuse, subject to funding from a Big Lottery Fund bid.
- Review commissioning arrangements for supported housing provision between housing and public health to improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable people
- **Priority -Creating a more sustainable city-** promoting enterprise and learning, living within environmental limits and enhancing the environment, provision of sustainable transport
- **Priority -Engaging People** - improve engagement with people who live and work in the city.
- **Priority - Modernising the Council-** good governance and leadership, high performance workforce, excellent customer service, value for money

Specific outcome for 'Modernising the council': Value for Money

Specific commitments relevant to this project

- Deliver the council's value for money programme to make savings of £10.815 million this year from a total budget of approximately £400m

9. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

There are no alternative options.

10. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

To note the new joint commissioning strategy which aims to improve the city's response to young people, and young families between the ages of 16-25 who are in need of housing and support.

Relevant documents

- 1) Housing and Support for Young People aged 16-25 Joint Commissioning Strategy Children's Services and Housing Sept 2013**

Brighton & Hove

Housing and Support for Young People aged 16-25

**Joint Commissioning Strategy:
Children's Services and Housing**

September 2013



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

1. Introduction

This joint commissioning strategy aims to improve Brighton & Hove's response to young people, and young families between the ages of 16 and 25 who are in need of housing and support.

A needs assessment was completed during 2012, which is the evidence base for the recommendations and the actions outlined in this Joint Commissioning Strategy. Further consultation has occurred during 2013.

Section 2 of this paper reflects on the key findings and recommendations of the needs assessment. Section 3 is a summary of the existing outcomes relating to young people and young families. Section 4 is an action plan which gives more details of how we will achieve the recommendations.

Appendix A includes information on the 'Positive accommodation and support pathways to adulthood', which is a national good practice model which advocates an integrated approach to supporting young people in terms of:

- achieving in education
- career success and resulting economic independence
- being healthy, both physically and mentally
- having positive relationships with peers, family and within local communities
- involvement in meaningful, enjoyable activities, including volunteering, sports and arts

This also includes an example of how it could be used as the basis for a young peoples' pathway in Brighton & Hove.

This strategy has been developed taking into account the key findings of the needs assessment, and the feedback which has been received through the consultation process. Young people were consulted in the development of the needs assessment and this strategy through one to one interviews and surveys.

This commissioning strategy aims to

- deliver agreed outcomes for young people
- contribute to local strategic objectives
- enable partners to meet their statutory duties

This document links to other work undertaken or in process in this area:

- Housing related Support Commissioning Strategy review (starting in 2013)
- Homelessness Strategy review 2013-16

- Joint Commissioning Strategy : Services for Young People in Brighton & Hove 2011-14
- Brighton & Hove Joint Commissioning Strategy for Adults with Autistic Spectrum Conditions 2012-2015
- 'Early help' Pathway

2. The needs assessment – what the evidence tell us

The housing and support needs assessment looks at the needs and provision of services for

- referral and assessment pathways and services provided to meet the council's statutory responsibilities
- housing and support provision for young people aged 16-25 (including young people who are looked after by the local authority, care leavers, unaccompanied asylum seekers, or teenage parents)
- prevention of homelessness among young people

It identifies needs within the city locally. It also looks at good practice and research nationally, and reflects that currently a lot of work and good practice is available on how local authorities can improve their responses to young people in this area.

2.1 Keys findings from the needs assessment (October 2012)

Statistics

- An average of 234, 16 and 17 year olds, and 917, 18-25 year olds approach Housing options per year assistance (based on 09-12 figures)
- 16/17 year olds make up a total of 5% of customers accessing the Housing Options service. All of them are currently seen by specialist Young People Housing Options Officers.
- During 2009-2012 the average figure for 16/17 year olds with a dependent child was 11, and 18-24 year olds was 254
- Brighton is consistent with the national picture for young peoples' issues. For example; youth unemployment is rising, although actual numbers of young people presenting as homeless slightly decreased in 11/12
- The main reason for youth homelessness is young people being evicted from the family home due to lifestyle clashes (eviction by parents/carers)
- Rough sleeping for under 25's is increasing
- Brighton & Hove is ranked highly for 'children in need', and children with a child protection plan compared to statistical neighbours
- In March 2012 the numbers of looked after children have increased by 4%, compared to 2% nationally
- Over half of offenders aged 18-25 who were given an assessment had a housing need, and young offenders in unsuitable accommodation have a higher three month offending rate
- the average % of BME (black, minority ethnic) young people receiving help with housing reflects the local BME population (based on Housing related Support

performance returns –average of 18% of young people in Housing Related Support Services in 2010/2011)

- the average % of LGBT (Lesbian, gay , bisexual, transgender) for young people presenting for help with housing reflects the local population (15% based on figures from the Housing Advice Service 2009-2010)
- 70% of all moves from young people service are planned moves to greater independence.

(The information below is more recent statistics not in the needs assessment)

- BHCC Child in Need Rate per 10,000 as at 31st March 2012 was 378.2 per 10,000 children, above the national average of 325.7 and statistical neighbour average of 370.2.
- BHCC provisional rate of Children Subject of a Child Protection Plan as at 31st March 2013 is 56.1, above the national average of 37.8 and statistical neighbour average of 44.5.
- BHCC provisional looked after children rate at 31st March 2013 is 89 per 10,000 children, down from 98 per 10,000 last year, but above the 2012 England average of 59 per 10,000 and statistical neighbour average of 70.5.
- Crime Reduction Initiatives Rough Sleepers and Street Service and Relocation team worked with 46 young people under 25 in 2012/13
- Move on from supported accommodation has improved in 12/13 due to temporary policy changes
- In 2012/13, 73.4% of all departures from short term housing support services were planned departures

Observations

- Brighton & Hove has existing mechanisms to ensure statutory duties are met, and there are examples of good joint working in the forms of the Supported Housing Panel and the Youth Homeless Working Group
- Joint working has been effective, but improvements are needed particularly around ensuring the needs of the young person are the predominant factor influencing the service they receive, not which department has the statutory responsibility
- Preventing a young person from leaving the family home in the first place is an issue within Brighton & Hove with the 'respite' beds often used as emergency accommodation
- Gaps in provision have been suggested from the feedback including that young people are increasing having issues around mental health and that there is a gap in the provision for young people who are not eligible for adult learning disability services when they turn 18
- There are issues that young people band 2 are often (band 2 is hostel type accommodation which provides high support and 24 hour cover within the Integrated Support Pathway *) are not ready for the transition to band 3, despite vacancies in services at band 3 (band 3 is floating support for people in supported accommodation)
- Currently young people aged 18-25 are not being able to regularly access specific young people accommodation. Only 9, 19-25 year olds entered a young person

hostel in 10/11 as the young people specific service predominantly accommodates 16-18 year olds.

- Finding suitable permanent accommodation for young families is an issue in Brighton & Hove, with problems around a lack of move on from the supported service, and 18-25 year old pregnant mothers who seek help with housing
- Brighton & Hove has an issue with the use of emergency accommodation which is regularly used when spaces within supported accommodation are not available.
- Evictions from young people services have consistently been around 16% (recent figures are expected to show a decrease) with the main reason for being evicted from hostel type accommodation is violent/abusive or threatening behaviour. For supported accommodation (band 3) the main reasons are persistent anti social behaviour and violent abusive behaviour
- Outcomes data tells us that the key issues of support for young people are maximising income and maintaining accommodation.
- The key message from the consultation feedback for young people is that they really appreciate the keywork support and it does make a difference to their lives. Some of the young people they came up with were move on, provision of activities and help with employment. *This does not read right. Something like, “ Some of the messages the young people came up with were.....(as existing) ?*
- The key message from the consultation feedback with professionals is that there is a need to look at a pathway for young people and the different routes young people take, there is an issue for 18-25 year olds not accessing young people specific accommodation and we need a bigger range of housing options including something for higher need young people
- There are as many as four different ‘front doors’ which young people can be referred in for help with housing, and they don’t always get the same level of service
- Although pathways exist for services, there is a lack of a co-ordinated pathway for young people and young parents which includes housing services (including third sector providers) *and* services provided by Children Youth and Families (housing services are included within the Integrated Support Pathway)
- Housing Benefit and welfare changes will potentially have a negative impact on the availability and options for young people and housing

* The Single Homeless Integrated Support Pathway is made up of services that provide housing support for homeless people in Brighton & Hove.

2.2 Recommendations from the needs assessment (October 2012)

Please note these recommendations have been taken directly from the needs assessment which was issued in October 2012 and can be found here in this link

[Housing | Home](#)

Prevention, early intervention and community engagement:

The joint commissioning strategy should consider national and local evidence set out in the needs assessment showing the major cause of youth homelessness is the breakdown of relationships with family and friends and that the incidence of breakdowns has increased. The joint commissioning strategy should therefore:

- ensure that the city's housing strategy and the joint commissioning strategy for services for young people establish a robust communication and prevention strategy to provide information, advice and guidance to young people and their families especially for particularly vulnerable groups (including LGBT and BME groups) and local communities including those most likely to be affected by changes to national and local welfare benefits
- support early intervention and advice services commissioned or provided by the council including initiatives in the Children's Services Value for Money Programme for families and young people who may otherwise enter the social care system
- work with the emerging Families In Multiple Disadvantage Programme to target and support those families where insecure family accommodation and/or the risk of youth homelessness is perceived to be high
- work with relevant commissioners, providers and young people co-produce a statement of the outcomes we want for young people in respect of their transition to adult years in relation to accommodation, support and the move to independence

A dedicated referral, assessment, support and allocation pathway for young people

The joint commissioning strategy should consider the views expressed during the co-production of the needs assessment by professionals and young people and the benchmarking against national good practice to create a new dedicated pathway for young people i.e.

- establishing one 'front door' or access point with an integrated multi-agency social care/housing referral, assessment and allocation process; and/or
- agreeing one assessment process for all young people, wherever they present with issues of insecure accommodation and/or the risk of homelessness
- commissioning an integrated assessment and allocation team responsible for managing services attached to the new pathway. Those services are likely to include: support to return home; supported accommodation including life skills/preparation for adulthood and/or specialist advice and support; move-on/transitional arrangements including shared accommodation schemes where social housing and/or private rented sector tenancies are not available

Joint commissioning, pooled budget, co-production and partnership:

The joint commissioning strategy should seek to:

- Better integrate the commissioning of advice, support and accommodation services for vulnerable young people across the councils adult and children's social care, housing, supporting people and other services including joint commissioning arrangements with external partners
- Better integrate or pool commissioning budgets to support the new pathway
- Co-produce with providers a range of evidence based interventions and provision including: support to return home; supported accommodation including life

skills/preparation for adulthood and/or specialist advice and support; move-on/transitional arrangements including shared accommodation schemes

Integrated performance reporting and management

The joint commissioning strategy should use the data set out in the needs assessment as the basis for an Equalities Impact Assessment of future commissioning intentions and for the creation of an integrated performance framework to ensure that services commissioned to support the proposed new pathway take proper account of:

- the city's demographic profile and projections
- patterns of local socio-economic deprivation
- risk and vulnerability factors affecting young people
- the city's local accommodation and housing profile
- the predicted impact of changes to the welfare systems; and
- resource constraints and value for money priorities of the council and its partners.

Section 3: Outcomes relating to young peoples' housing and support Services

This section aims to identify the existing outcomes which are linked to this strategy.

3.1 BHCC Corporate Plan 2011/15

This strategy aims to reflect the outcomes identified in the Brighton & Hove City Council Corporate Plan 2013/14

- **Priority- Tackling inequality**

Specific outcomes in plan in 'Tackling inequality' relevant to the project

- Children and Young People have the best start in life
- Vulnerable adults supported to live healthy independent lives

Specific commitments relevant to the project

- Work with partners to create new services for people with multiple, complex needs including homelessness, mental health or substance misuse, subject to funding from a Big Lottery Fund bid.
- Review commissioning arrangements for supported housing provision between housing and public health to improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable people
- **Priority -Creating a more sustainable city-** promoting enterprise and learning, living within environmental limits and enhancing the environment, provision of sustainable transport
- **Priority -Engaging People -** improve engagement with people who live and work in the city.

- **Priority - Modernising the Council-** good governance and leadership, high performance workforce, excellent customer service, value for money

Specific outcome for 'Modernising the council': Value for Money

Specific commitments relevant to this project

- Deliver the council's value for money programme to make savings of £10.815 million this year from a total budget of approximately £400m

3.2 Other outcomes relating to the joint commissioning strategy

Housing -Housing Strategy 2009-2014

The strategy has 3 overall priorities that reflect the fundamental housing needs of the city:

- Priority 1: Improving housing supply
- Priority 2: Improving housing quality
- Priority 3: Improving housing support

Under priority 3 there are the following strategic goals

Our strategic goals under this objective are to:

- Support households to make informed choices about their housing options
- Provide adaptations and support to households and their carers
- Work to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping
- Contribute to the wider city agendas of reducing worklessness, improving community cohesion,
- reducing anti-social behaviour and reducing inequality
- Work to ensure student housing provides a positive contribution to students' lives and the city

Housing related Support (Supporting People Strategy 20011-15)

Strategic Priorities 2011-2015

- a. Improving Access to Services
- b. Flexible services with positive outcomes
- c. Working towards greater independence
- d. Sustaining Independence
- e. Value for Money

Children's Services

Services for Young People: Joint Commissioning Strategy

Aim:

Our aim is to make the best use of the city's resources to:

- Create opportunities
- Raise aspirations and achievement
- Build resilience
- Provide sustainable support to young people, their families and communities

Outcomes:

Our overarching outcome is to create:

- A city where teenage years are safe and rewarding, and where young people are supported to achieve their full potential.

Where:

- Young people have the opportunity to be active citizens, participate in community activities and shape the services that affect their lives so that values, expectations and responsibilities are shared and understood.
- Young people are able to enjoy their leisure time, using the opportunities on offer through open access youth provision and through the cultural, sports and other positive activities on offer across the city, so that they are inspired and challenged.
- The resilience of young people, especially those who are vulnerable or at risk is improved through advice and targeted early intervention services that increase their confidence, self-esteem, motivation and also their ability to communicate and deal with conflict, adversity and the challenges of adult life.
- Family and community stability is improved through early intervention services that enable parents, carers and young people to develop their relationships and behave in a responsible way.

Corporate Parenting Strategy/Plan:

Corporate parenting outcome

'Children and young people who have experienced the care system will be successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors whose life outcomes mirror those of their peers'

The specific outcome relating to the function of corporate parenting is:

'The council and their city partners will fully understand and accept their responsibilities as corporate parents and governance arrangements will be in place to make sure that work within councils and their partner organisations is child-centred and focused on achieving the overarching outcome'

The action plan includes an action to create an agreed set of outcomes for all services relating to the young people's pathway which will be the basis of a joint service specification, to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people.

3.3 Our outcomes for this strategy

1. Increase the numbers of young people who are prevented from homelessness

'The experience of homelessness at a young age is not only stigmatising, but can, without effective support and accommodation options; result in long-term poor

outcomes. Many young people report their experience as traumatic, leading to dropping out of education, training or employment and resulting benefit dependency. There is a significantly higher risk of mental health problems¹, substance misuse, anti social behaviour, crime and involvement in gangs. It is not, therefore, in young people's best interests to become homeless if this can be prevented, nor is it in the interests of wider society, in terms of negative impacts on communities and the cost to the public purse.'

(taken from the good practice document 'Developing positive accommodation and support pathways to adulthood'- 2013)

We would like to build on existing work to ensure we prevent homelessness whenever possible, but we recognise that homelessness cannot be prevented in some cases.

2. Young People have a more positive transition to adulthood through the provision of a positive accommodation and support pathway

In relation to youth homelessness, the Ministerial Working Group Report 'Making Every Contact Count' Report promoted the 'Youth Accommodation Pathway' - an approach developed by some of the countries leading youth homelessness charities and Local Authority partners. The pathway stressed the need for an integrated approach from agencies, working together to support young people.

Developing the positive accommodation and support pathway in Brighton and Hove will involve all partners including statutory departments and voluntary agencies working together to ensure systems are in place to ensure an integrated approach. There is already good joint working, but improvements need to be made to systems to ensure the best service for young people.

A young peoples' accommodation and support pathway will need to work with existing pathways (such as the Integrated Support Pathway, and pathways relating to Early Help/transitions) and will need to ensure there is reduced bureaucracy.

3. Better use of resources through a Joint Commissioning approach to providing accommodation and support for young people

Commissioning is 'the process for deciding how to use the total Resource available ... in order to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, equitable and sustainable way'

The identified advantages are

- Efficiencies coupled with better experiences and outcomes for young people by bridging the gap between children's services and (adult) housing and housing support services
- Better links with wraparound services by designing them into the system

¹Depaul UK and AstraZeneca 2012 publication: Improving the health of young homeless people

- Pooled commissioning and procurement expertise including approaches to quality and standards
- Advantages of increased scale, for example reducing procurement costs, aligning services, increasing influence on markets.

(Joining up the commissioning of accommodation and support for young people aged 16-25-Commissioning Support Programme)

We want to combine the relevant budgets, and use these resources to create the most effective young peoples' pathway possible with the resources available.

Section 4. Action plan for implementation of the Joint Commissioning Strategy

Activity	Outcomes /KPIs	Resources	Commissioning Lead	Operational Lead
Outcome – Increase the numbers of young people who are prevented from homelessness				
<p>1. Implement changes to the current set up of services with the function of preventing homelessness to ensure improved outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a joint assessment system that ensures the families of 16 and 17 year olds receive a joint visit by a social worker and a representative from Housing • Provide Family Mediation/Whole Family Support including Family Coaching and Family Group Conferencing • Review current universal work on homeless prevention through education (e.g. awareness raising, myth busting, realities of housing choices, where to go for help) to children at a younger age 	<p>Increase in the numbers of young people who are prevented from becoming homeless and who stay in the family home when it is safe to do so.</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p> <p>Within existing resources</p> <p>Within existing resources - part of contract monitoring External partner currently commissioned to provide work in schools which include 'peer</p>	<p>Housing Children's Services</p>	<p>Housing Options</p> <p>16 plus Team (16 plus team includes YPAST - young peoples' accommodation and support team)</p> <p>External partner</p>

		education'		
<p>2. Improve homelessness prevention activity for younger children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Twin track' approach with targeted work to identify those at high risk of homelessness before they reach the age of 16/17. • Work with family support and prevention programmes to ensure joint working and communication • Education through schools and youth provision • Contribute to the BHCC review of 'early help' 	<p>Reductions in the number of young people becoming homeless at 16/17</p> <p>Less duplication of resources, and better joined up working</p> <p>More awareness of the realities of housing options for both parents and children</p>	Within existing resources	<p>Children's Services</p> <p>Housing</p>	<p>Children's Services, (Youth Service, Stronger families, Stronger communities), YOS</p> <p>Housing Options</p> <p>External partners</p>
<p>Outcome - Young People have a more positive transition to adulthood through the provision of a Young Peoples' accommodation and support Pathway</p>				
<p>3. Create a pathway for young people and young families based on positive accommodation pathway approach (appendix A), with the function of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying the homeless prevention, assessment and service allocation processes and functions for 16-25 year olds • Clarifying the services available for young people • Ensuring clear progression for young people 	<p>Clear pathway for young people which includes all the services relating to young people from 14 to 25.</p>	within existing resources	<p>Housing</p> <p>Children's Services</p>	<p>Temporary Accommodation /supported allocations</p> <p>Housing Options</p> <p>16 plus support team</p> <p>External partners</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the Young Peoples' pathway are integrated into other care pathways - Make sure that young people under 25 who use services with other pathways can still access available services within the young peoples' pathway 				
<p>4. Introduce new flexible ways of working which will create a integrated prevention and assessment function to improve and streamline assessment processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint working around assessments for 16/17 year olds (see 1) Information accessible and shared 	<p>Streamlined assessments for all young people</p>	<p>Nil cost</p>	<p>Housing Children's services</p>	<p>Temporary Accommodation /supported allocations Housing Options 16 plus support team</p> <p>External partners</p>
<p>5.As part of the Young People's Housing and Support Pathway provide an effective, access service for young people with the following functions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The young person will have access to services which will offer support to remain in the family home and prevent homelessness Parents and carers offered specific support either through parenting skills or peer support Where it is assessed that the young person does need to leave the family home, there is a pro-active approach which ensures a 	<p>Improved response for young people</p> <p>Improved joint working between partners</p> <p>Better use of resources by creating a 'hub' where young people can access other services (note: the existing young peoples' Housing Advice service has access to other services)</p>	<p>Currently these functions are already commissioned and resources allocated, (although often within different teams) by Housing and Children's services.</p>	<p>Housing Children's Services</p>	<p>Temporary Accommodation /supported allocations Housing Options 16 plus support team</p> <p>External partners</p>

<p>planned move from the family home</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young person will have access to services which will advise them on their housing options • The young person will have their needs assessed in a consistent manner, taking into account their housing situation and support needs, and any statutory duty. <p>In addition, easy access to a wider range of advice and support, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice & support re: education, training & employment • Health services e.g. counselling, substance misuse, sexual health • Life skills & income maximisation advice <p>This would follow the YIAC's model (Youth Information, Advice, Counselling and Support Services *)</p>				
<p>6. Introduce new flexible ways of working which will create an integrated allocation function within the young people's pathway will be jointly managed by Children's services and Housing based on a criteria and clear allocation processes</p>	<p>young people are placed in accommodation suitable for their needs</p>	<p>Nil cost</p>	<p>Housing Children's Services</p>	<p>Temporary Accommodation /supported allocations Housing Options 16 plus support team</p>

Outcome - Better use of resources through a Joint Commissioning approach to providing accommodation and support for young people				
7. Housing, Adult Social Care (transitions) and Children's Services to agree set of outcomes which will be the basis for a joint service specification for young people's services (includes YOS, transitions, young families)	All services will be commissioned to achieve specific outcomes agreed	Nil cost	Housing Children's Services	Housing 16 Plus support team
8. Pool the relevant budgets associated with the new pathway including Housing Related Support, Homelessness Prevention and Children's services budgets for Looked after Children and care leavers aged 16 or 17. This to include a joint commissioning and contract management protocol	Improved use of resources through joint commissioning	Nil cost	Housing Children's services	16 plus Support team Commissioning Team (Housing)
9. Design the future shape of services for the young people's pathway in conjunction with residents** and partners to maximize the potential of the young peoples' pathway to meet the needs of young people and young families and provide value for money This strategy will look at remodeling/commissioning services to include • support to return home (respite	Young People's pathway to reflect the positive pathway approach (see appendix A)	within existing resources	Housing Children's Services Adult Social Care	Housing Temporary Accommodation /supported allocations Housing Options 16 plus support team Transitions team

<p>arrangements)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supported accommodation (including Supported Lodgings/shared lives or possibly with responsible tenants) alternatives to B&B, and a small unit of high need supported accommodation Long term floating support which follows young person through the pathway in addition to shorter term floating support Move-on/transitional arrangements (this would include lower support accommodation such as shared housing for 18-25 year olds. This would include looking at creative solutions such as Empty Homes, move on /student style accommodation) and landlord liaison work) Continue to monitor the outcomes of the Behaviour Support Service for young people as part of the young peoples' pathway <p>Where is 10?</p>	<p>Young People will have the benefit of a psychological based support service</p>		<p>Housing</p>	<p>Behavior Support service</p> <p>Commissioning Team (Housing)</p>
<p>11. Work with partners to implement actions of the Housing and support for young people aged 16-25 Equalities Impact Assessment.</p>	<p>Actions completed</p>	<p>Nil cost</p>	<p>Housing</p> <p>Children's Services</p>	<p>Temporary Accommodation /supported allocations</p> <p>Housing Options</p>

				16 plus support team External Partners
12. Implement /use existing mechanisms for young people and parent /carers and partners to be involved and engaged as stakeholders to ensure service improvement is informed by the customer experience	Young people and parents/carers consulted as stakeholders	Nil cost	Housing Children's Services	Commissioning team (Housing) Housing Options 16 plus support team External Partners

* YIAC 'under one roof model' (taken from information provided by Youth Access)

(YIACS services vary according to local need, but share the following features:

A range of interventions delivered 'under one roof' ,Young person-centred ,Open to a wide age range, e.g. 13 to 25, Holistic approach, meeting multiple and complex needs ,Multi-disciplinary teams, providing wrap-around support ,Flexible access routes, including through open door 'drop-in' sessions ,Free, independent and confidential)

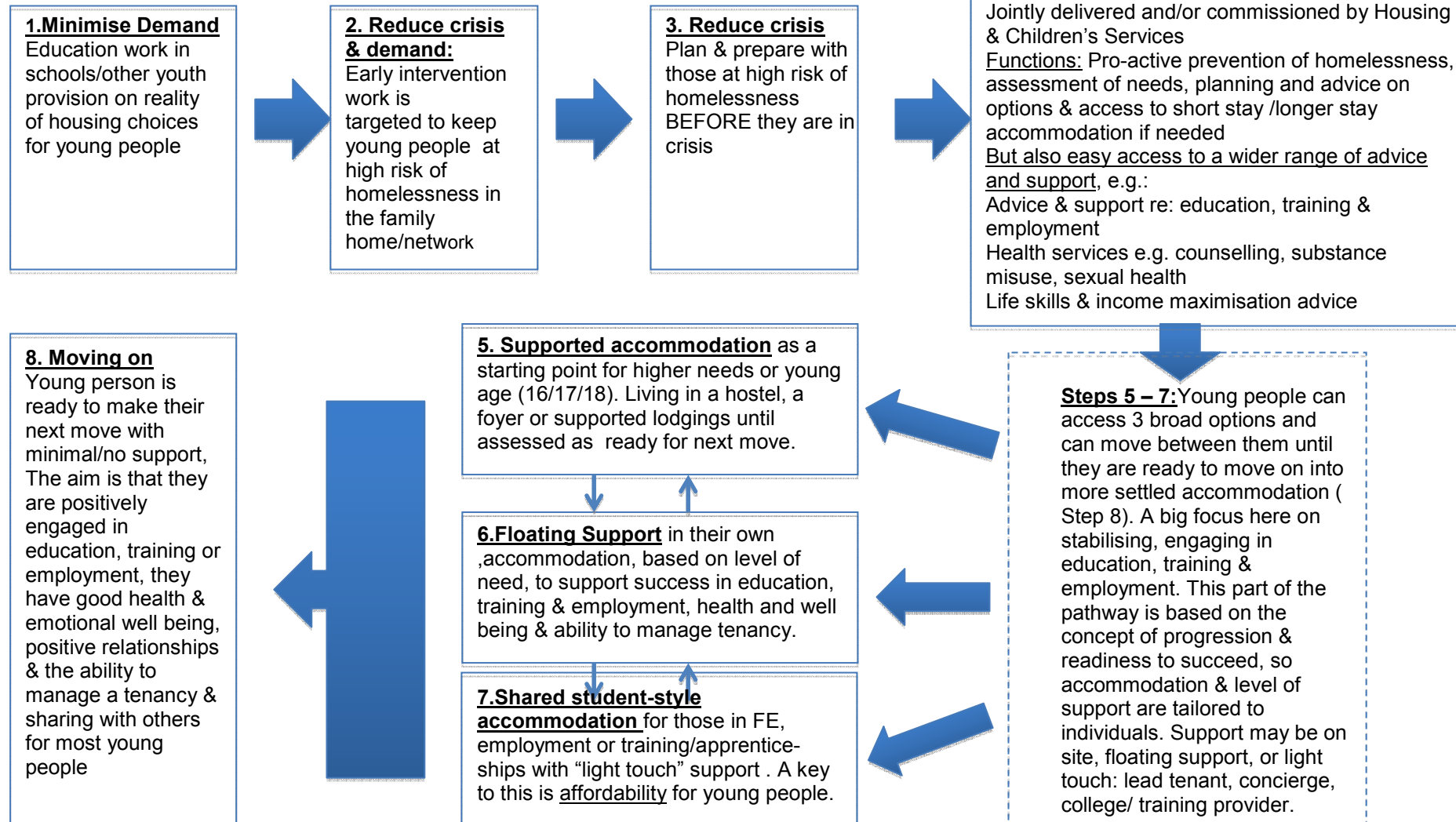
**'Co-production' to be part of this action 'Designing the future shape of services with residents, harnessing their knowledge and experience; ensuring services focus on what matters most to residents'

Appendix A- Positive Accommodation and support pathways to adulthood

The Positive Pathway aims to support the following outcomes for young people: achieving in education; career success; being healthy; having positive relationships and involvement in meaningful, enjoyable activities.

Steps 1 – 4: An integrated focus on PREVENTION: Young people staying within the family network for as long as it's safe and possible to do so. If they need to leave, agencies pro-actively plan options with the young person (and for

a



Brighton & Hove Positive Accommodation Pathway for Young People Aged 16-25 (This table aims to plot where the current services are within a positive accommodation pathway model)

PREVENTION				ACCOMMODATION- This includes 3 broad options for young people based on needs. Young people go into which suits them, and they can move between them			MOVING ON
1) Minimise Demand	2) Reduce crisis and demand	3) Reduce crisis	4) Service gateway	5)Supported Accommodation	6) Floating Support	7) Shared student style accommodation	8) Move on
prevention workshops in schools Youth service	Family mediation Integrated team for Families Family Conferencing Youth Service	Services commissioned by Housing – Housing Advice Service Integrated team for Families Youth Service	Housing Advice Service Housing Options Service 16 plus support team (Including Young Peoples' accommodation and support team) Temporary Accommodation and Allocation Team	Higher support supported (staff available 24 hours) Accommodation commissioned by 16 plus team for 16 plus looked after children/care leavers Some of the Supported accommodation where there is staff available during office hours Sussex Nightstop	Floating support services	Some of the previous 'band 3' would come in here, although the support can be medium rather than light touch	Private rented sector access schemes Empty homes Initiative
Gaps in current provision							

		Some aspects of prevention services including respite / more resources for mediation	Joint assessment of young people and joint decision making around the allocation of housing and support	Supported Lodgings Alternatives to B&B Small unit of high need supported accommodation	'Sticky support' This is a support worker who supports the young person through the pathway in addition to other services	Affordable student style accommodation for young people	
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Key contacts

Steve Barton	Lead Commissioner –Integrated Families 01273 296105 steve.barton@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Jo Sharp	Commissioning Officer Housing 01273 291911 joanna.sharp@brighton-hove.gov.uk

References

Developing positive accommodation and support pathways to adulthood: Positive pathway group 2012 Anna Whalen (DCLG Youth Homelessness advisor 2013)

(Joining up the commissioning of accommodation and support for young people aged 16-25-Commissioning Support Programme 2011)

Subject: Update on Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes batching and refurbishments

Date of Meeting: HMCSC 29th October 2013

Report of: Executive Director Environment, Development & Housing

Contact Officer: Name: John Currell Tel: 293355
Email: John.currell@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

FOR GENERAL RELEASE/ NOT FOR PUBLICATION**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This report sets out the current HRA position with regards to the batching of dwellings for lease to Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes (BHSCH) in Batch 8. There is also an update on the progress of current refurbishment of BHSCH dwellings.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That HMCSC notes the update on Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes batching and refurbishment progress.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION**3.1 *Batches 1 - 7***

Batches 1-7 have now been leased to BHSCH, with a total of 351 of the 499 units now delivered, as set out below:

Batches 1-7	Demand Profile	Already leased (batches 1-7)	Remaining to deliver
Studio & one bed	227	194	33
2 bed	214	112	102
3 bed	53	40	13
4 bed	5	5	0
Totals	499	351	148

3.2 Property harvesting for Batch 8

Batch 8 was originally modelled to include 62 dwellings, and so far around 53 empty HRA dwellings have been identified as meeting the agreed criteria for leasing via Batch 8, and are currently due to lease on 1 May 2014.

3.3 Financial model for Batches 8 – 10

The Seaside financial model anticipated it would take 14 months between Batches 7-8 for sufficient empty properties meeting the leasing criteria to become available for leasing in Batch 8, and 16 months between Batches 8 and 9. However, it is not acceptable to keep empty properties that meet the leasing criteria and are needed for the next batch empty and boarded up for that length of time, particularly as:

- a corporate priority is to reduce empty properties
- around two thirds of the properties for Batches 8-10 were expected to be 'routine' empties with a relatively low works requirement.

The modelled batches were estimated on the basis of historic average empty property rates in the housing stock that would meet the leasing criteria in the three years from 2008/9 to 2010/11. Stock turnover since the project went live in September 2011 has, however, been lower than historic rates. Properties from stock flagged as meeting the leasing criteria if they became vacant have been only just over two thirds of the projected number for Batches 1-7. The shortfall has been made up with higher than estimated numbers of major voids that meet the leasing criteria (with longer works period than the 'routine' empty property refurbishments).

Current refurbishments are progressing well, with 319 completed as at 1st October, and in addition several of the larger sites such as 57 Sackville Rd and 243/245 Preston Road, are approaching handover. The average days for responsive empty refurbishment is 106 days (compared to the modelled target of 120 days), and major empty refurbishments are being completed in an average of 154 days (against the target of 180 days). By completing these early, additional rental is generated over and above the original financial model for Seaside Homes.

- 3.4 As a result of the current position, it is now being proposed that Batch 8 should be brought forward for leasing from 1st May 2014 to 1st March 2014 with refurbishment prior to leasing so that Properties will be available for renting at an earlier opportunity.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Refurbishing properties more quickly after leasing than modelled

- 4.1 The Asset Team has already generally been achieving this but it is difficult to demonstrate or guarantee that this can be speeded up significantly, given the nature and volume of the works.

Leasing additional batches

- 4.2 If these bring forward the date some units go into rental, this may be a useful delivery mechanism as the gap between batches gets larger. This option will be reviewed again once Batch 8 is leased.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

6. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) receives a capital receipt for each property leased to BHSC which is then reinvested into the HRA Capital Programme for Decent Homes. The council also receives a capital receipt per property as reimbursement for the refurbishment costs to the empty properties.
- 5.2 The proposal to bring forward the lease batch date to 1 March 2014 will reduce the costs in the HRA associated with having empty properties, such as rent loss, council tax and security costs.
- 5.3 The refurbishment of batch 8 through the HRA Capital Programme prior to leasing will mean that the capital receipts for the works fees will be due to the HRA to cover these costs.
- 5.4 Further financial evaluation of the proposal for batch 8 will be required to inform the final decision to bring forward the transfer date.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Susie Allen Date: 18/10/13

Legal Implications:

- 5.5 Although the agreement between the council and Seaside Homes provides for the Batch 8 properties to be transferred on 1 May 2014, there is provision for the transfer date to be brought forward with the agreement of all the parties, namely the council, Seaside and Santander. Officers have delegated powers to approve this variation to the contract.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley Date: 18/10/2013

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 There are no specific equalities implications other than early refurbishment will make more social housing available at an earlier stage.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no specific sustainability implications, as homes are refurbished to the pre-agreed standards

Any Other Significant Implications

5.5 There are no further implications that are significant and need to specifically be drawn to members' attention.

6. CONCLUSION

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None