



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

# Housing Management Panel

Title:	<b>Housing Management Panel: North Area</b>
Date:	<b>28 September 2015</b>
Time:	<b>7.00pm</b>
Venue	<b>St George's Hall, Newick Road, Moulsecoomb, Brighton BN1 9JJ</b>
Members:	<b>Councillors:</b>  Hill (Chair), <b>Ward Councillors for the Area, Delegates of Tenants Association in the area.</b>
Contact:	<b>Gregory Weaver</b> Democratic Services Assistant 01273 291214 greg.weaver@brighton-hove.gov.uk



**AGENDA**

<b>Part One</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>8 APOLOGIES</b>	
<b>9 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</b> Minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2015 (copy attached).	<b>5 - 8</b>
<b>10 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS</b>	
<b>11 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME</b> Responses to items raised at the Tenant Only Meeting held on 18 August 2015 (copy attached as 'blue pages').	<b>9 - 16</b>
<b>12 TENANT AND RESIDENT SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT ON RESPONSIVE REPAIRS</b> (copy attached). <i>Contact Officer: Glyn Huelin Tel: 01273 293306</i>	<b>17 - 34</b>
<b>13 RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT</b> (copy attached).	<b>35 - 36</b>
<b>14 ELECTIONS TO SERVICE IMPROVEMENT GROUPS</b> To appoint representatives to the following Groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Home</li><li>• Neighbourhood &amp; Community</li><li>• Tenancy</li><li>• Involvement &amp; Empowerment</li><li>• Business &amp; Value for Money</li><li>• Tenant Disability Network.</li></ul> Two representatives and two deputies on each group.	
<b>15 CITY WIDE REPORTS</b> To <u>note</u> the minutes and reports of the following Committees and City Wide groups (copies attached): <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Service Improvement Groups;</li><li>B. New Homes for Neighbourhoods Update</li><li>C. Brighton &amp; Hove Seaside Community Homes.</li></ul>	<b>37 - 46</b>
<b>16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>	

## HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: NORTH AREA

**BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL**  
**NORTH AREA HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL**

**7.00pm 3 AUGUST 2015**

**LABURNUM GROVE, BURSTEAD CLOSE, HOLLINGDEAN, BRIGHTON, BN1 7HX**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Councillors Hill (Chair), Meadows, Penn, Yates

**Representatives:** Dave Eve (Nettleton & Dudeney), Peter O'Connor (Bates Estate), Heather Hayes (Coldean), Bob Spacie (Laburnum Grove), Tracy Cox (North Moulsecoomb), John Marchant (East Central Moulsecoomb)

**Non-Voting Delegates:** Paul Wright (Coldean), Terrence Hill (Bates Estate), Elizabeth Tinkler (Laburnum Grove), Gloria Woolvern (North Moulsecoomb), Barbara Castleton (North Moulsecoomb), Mary Marchant (North Moulsecoomb), Peter Hartley (East Central Moulsecoomb), Ray Metcalfe (East Central Moulsecoomb)

**Officers:** Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager), Keely McDonald (Resident Involvement Officer), James Cryer (Mears), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement), John Peel (democratic Services Officer), Rachel Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services)

**1 APOLOGIES**

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Marsh, Jane Hunter, Kath Davis and Walter Sargisson.

**2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

2.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes of the previous meetings held on 2 February and 14 May 2015 be approved and signed as the correct record.

**3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

3.1 The Chair introduced Councillor Meadows, the new Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee to the Panel. In her introduction, Councillor Meadows stated that she would be seeking to increase resident engagement and proposals on how to do so would be forthcoming.

**4 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME**

4.1 (item 1- Oxford Street Housing Office) Bob Spacie asked if a decision had been made on a facility for cash payments but residents in the city centre.

- 4.2 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvements clarified that that Housing Committee had made a decision to close cash desks earlier in the year and this had been reported to Area Panels. The decision was made on the basis that cash desks were expensive to operate; less people were using them, the high cost of security to transit cash deposits and the introduction of Universal Credit. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement added that residents could still use the Paypoint facility and telephone the council to make payments.
- 4.3 Bob Spacie stated that Housing Offices were useful not only to make payments but also to report issues and make complaints.
- 4.4 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that only Oxford Street Housing Office had closed due to emergency structural risk. Manor Street Housing Office had moved to the Whitehawk Hub, Victoria Street Housing Office was now based in Portslade Town Hall and services from Oxford Street Housing Office were now based at Bartholomew House. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement supplemented that across its services the council now received many more enquires via telephone than in person.
- 4.5 Heather Hayes stated that she had found that elderly residents were increasing using tenant representatives to resolve issues due to Housing Office closures and because they didn't have internet access.
- 4.6 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that she was sorry to hear tenant representatives time was increasingly pressured and asked that residents be reminded that Housing to arrange to visit residents to discuss any problems and the customer service team via telephone.
- 4.7 **RESOLVED-** That the responses provided to the items raised at the Tenant Only meeting be noted.

## 5 PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 5.1 The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement presented a report that covered Housing Management Performance during Quarter 2 of the 2015/16 financial year. The Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement stated that the table provided figures and a RAG rating system against key performance indicators adding that the intention of the report was to provide Area Panels with information on Housing services performance and, as with previous versions of the report, comments and feedback on its presentation was welcomed to improve future versions.
- 5.2 John Marchant stated that he had emailed the council to report fly-tipping and had been asked for more details including the postcode of the site that he felt the council should already know and was unnecessary if the road name was provided.
- 5.3 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that she unfortunately could not provide a response to an issue she was unaware of.
- 5.4 Ray Metcalfe asked if the rise in rent arrears related to the bedroom tax.
- 5.5 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that some of the increase in arrears was related to the Spare Bedroom Subsidy. The council had made every effort

it possibly could to address this issue including a tenant incentive scheme, mutual exchange and other support.

- 5.6 Ray Metcalfe asked what action was taken with tenants in rent arrears.
- 5.7 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement stated that the council undertook every possible action to prevent eviction and worked with the individual tenant to ensure any case did not reach court. The council employed money advice officers and promoted the work of Money Advice Plus. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement urged representatives to refer any resident they knew to be in financial difficulty to the council.
- 5.8 Tracey Cox added that the introduction of Universal Credit would pose a significant challenge to residents and the council. Tracey asked if the council were working with banks to help those with a bad credit rating that could not open a bank account.
- 5.9 The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement replied that the council were taking preventative and preparation work for the change to Universal Credit. The Head of Income, Involvement & Improvement supplemented that the council were working closely with banks and had reached an agreement whereby some conditions of opening a bank account would be reduced.
- 5.10 **RESOLVED-** That the report be noted.

## **6 FEEDBACK FROM TENANT AND RESIDENT ASSOCIATIONS ON THEIR COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

- 6.1 Tenant and Resident Associations presented provided the following updates on events and functions they had recently undertaken:
- Bates Estate had recently held a jumble sale and were currently surveying residents on the associations communication methods
  - Coldean had established a knitting group and a lunch club.
  - Laburnum Grove had an active garden club, had several day trips arranged and were planning a street party.
  - North Moulsecoomb had held a community day in St George's Hall to raise funds in memory of a young resident who had recently passed away that had gathered £5,000.
  - East Central Moulsecoomb had recently raised money to clear the local their local wood

## **7 CITY WIDE REPORTS**

- 7.1 **RESOLVED-** That the minutes and reports of the various Citywide Groups be noted.

The meeting concluded at 9.00pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of



Items from the Tenant Only meeting held on 18/08/15

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**1. Matters arising from the Blue Pages**

*When blue pages items are discussed at Area Panel residents are asked to vote on whether they accept the response they have received.*

*However, the item that has been agreed is rarely followed up with residents and information is not provided as to when the work agreed will be carried out.*

*For example, at the Area Panel on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, residents raised the problems of damp in Coldean Houses that were built with Midhust White interior bricks.*

*A clear written response was provided that stated:*

*“We are pleased to inform you that Haig Avenue is currently on this years planned programme to be painted with a specialist coating designed for this brick type. This work will be subject to the statutory leaseholder consultation requirements.”*

*However, no time scale was given for this work, and residents are concerned that it may not be completed before the autumn, when problems of rain and damp will get worse again.*

*They have been told that the work is being delayed due to the leaseholder consultation process, but the general understanding was that leaseholder consultations should be completed within 30 days and should not unduly delay work being carried out.*

*The meeting agreed to propose a new process, to be implemented at all four Area Panel to ensure that residents receive more effective feedback:*

*Following any commitment made at an Area Panel meeting to carry out work, officers will report back to the chairs of the Residents Meeting within 4 weeks (20 working days) to advise them of the date when the work will commence.*

*If the chairs do not receive a response within 4 weeks (20 working days) they will decide on how best to follow up the issue, and this may involve them initiating a formal complaint.*

**Action: (III)**

***It was agreed to put this proposal forward to the Area Panel and to the City Assembly.***

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**Response from Theresa Youngman, Contract Compliance Manager – T:- 01273 293190**

The Property & Investment team provide information to residents regarding proposed works across the city. This can only happen once the budget is agreed at the start of the new financial year. The programming of the agreed projects is then carried out by Mears project manager Phil Ludwig.

We are sorry it is not always possible to give exact timescales for works as this is often dependant on many things, leaseholder consultation being one, weather conditions being another and any emergency work which may take precedence being another consideration. This is why all of our planned work states 'Provisional' before any heading. All projects are subject to change and there can be delays for reasons given above.

Furthermore, in the case of Haig Avenue works, this project has been delayed due to high cost implications and the need for agreement between Mears and the Contract Compliance Team to ensure the council delivers value for money for its residents and leaseholders.

Where possible timescales are given and residents are always informed in advance of works commencing on all projects. We hope you understand why it is not always possible to give this information in the first instance.

If residents wish to make a formal complaint regarding this matter, they are entitled to do so.

## **2. Reinstatement of the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee (HMCSC)**

*The proposal from the Central Residents meeting, that the HMCSC should be reinstated, was read out and discussed.*

*The meeting felt that attendance at the HMCSC had given them more influence, as it was a city wide meeting where councillors, officers and residents were present.*

*It was felt that the influence of residents had been watered down by the new structure, and that the new city-wide groups have not effectively replaced the role of the HMCSC.*

*A vote was taken and there was unanimous agreement to support the proposal from the Central Residents Meeting and put it forward to the next Area Panel.*

### **Action: (II)**

***It was agreed to put this proposal forward to the Area Panel.***

***It is proposed that the new Council administration reinstate the Housing management Consultative Sub-Committee (HMCSC).***

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### **Response from Ododo Dafe – Head of Income, Inclusion and Improvement – T: - 01273 293201**

Thank you for raising this question. Also it is a good example of a response that should feed through to all Area Panels as it will be of citywide interest, or that tenants wish to be on the agenda of each of the panel meetings.

In response, it is important for me to initially outline that the decision regarding the abolition of the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee(HMCSC), was not one that was taken by the then Housing Committee, and neither was it taken on party political grounds. The matter was discussed at the all-party Constitutional Working Group, and the decision was made at the May 2014 Policy & Resources Committee – which did take into account feedback from the Area Panels which in the majority wanted to keep HMCSC.

In case it helps, I have set out here some of the reasons that the change was made:-

1. HMCSC was unique - there was no other sub-committee in the council. It didn't make decisions but served a useful advisory role at the time when the council had an executive system with only one Executive Councillor making decisions. Whereas in the current cross-party committee system, the Sub-Committee stood out as an arguably extravagant and outdated way to achieve limited consultation with a limited number of tenants – particularly when other methods were available.
2. There was significant duplication and overlap between the Area Panels and HMCSC, with both providing a forum for tenant consultation and for tenant representatives and councillors to jointly debate matters.
3. Housing, and the council generally, needed to make efficiencies in time and costs in order to meet the increasing demands made upon services – for example by higher numbers of vulnerable tenants, and as a result of welfare reforms. These conditions still exist today and are ever more important – particularly with additional changes to welfare reforms that will affect almost 70% of tenants. HMCSC required significant staff and financial resources which are more effectively used to meet tenants' needs.

4. On the matter of costs, the following paragraphs also appeared in the report to Area Panels in March 2014:-

“...Costs are important, particularly as public funds are involved – with council rents being significantly subsidised by tax payers. There is also the issue of officer, councillor and tenant time involved in a process that is duplicated.

Any savings that can be made in these austere times are helpful to tenants in the round as the money is reinvested into housing services. There is a big demand for social housing, with an equally large responsibility on the council to provide value for money services, exercise prudence, and invest in meeting that demand.”

5. Tenants’ views could and still can be effectively represented in the consultation section of committee reports for decision making - arguably in more ways and with greater ease than for any other group of people in the city receiving council services. In addition, as with the other council committees, if residents wish, they can make deputations to the committee or submit a letter for response.
6. Housing is now one service with different and overlapping ‘customers’ or service users across the city who are not solely council tenants – for example people on the housing waiting list, home owners, private sector tenants, people in need of adaptations, homeless households. Yet only council tenants attended HMCSC.
7. There still exist a range of other ways that tenants are involved, for example Service Improvement Groups, Area Panels, City Assembly and through the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.
8. The tenants’ indicative vote was rarely used at HMCSC, and feedback from Area Panels is currently able to provide decision makers with a broader feedback base and differing perspectives.
9. Area Panels may take on more of a ‘neighbourhood governance’ role in the future and will want to increase their collaborative working style with communities and be able to increasingly influence decisions in a variety of other ways, and possibly through a number of committees, not solely Housing.

Following the Policy & Resources Committee, work was also carried out with Area Panel representatives and officers to look at how Area Panels could be further strengthened, with an example of an outcome from that being that Blue Page items are now placed at the beginning of the agenda.

A review of resident involvement is due to take place towards the end of this calendar year, and all aspects will be considered for potential further areas for improvement.

### **3. Role of Resident Involvement Officers**

*The meeting felt that Resident Involvement Officers (RIOs) have moved away from their role in supporting and advising residents associations, and often undermine what they are doing or attempt to control them.*

*Two examples were given.*

- a . A RIO put a message on Facebook asking residents to contact her if they want work done in their area. At the same time the Residents Association is attempting to get people to come along to their meetings to discuss work to be done in the area under EDB. If residents can circumvent the residents meetings by going straight to a RIO, this undermines the role of Residents Associations who are trying to bring people together to improve their local area.*
- b . A RIO brought along the proposed new constitution to the East Central Moulsecoomb Tenants and Residents Association meeting and asked them to discuss it, without anyone having seen it or having had time to think about it in advance. Those present were unhappy with much of the content, which they felt was trying to stop residents speaking openly. They decided to postpone the discussion until they have had time to look at it carefully.*

#### **Action: (II)**

***It was agreed to put this forward to the next Area Panel meeting for discussion***

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#### **Response from Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager – T:- 01273 293022.**

- a. Two years ago the Lewes Road Consortium (LRC) requested that officers help the members identify residents who can benefit from support from the LRC Estates Development Budget (EDB) Clear up fund. The project has been promoted in a number of ways, in the Moulsecoomb Local Action Team Newsletter for example, and the majority of bids have come from Neighbourhood and Tenancy Officers.

At the LRC meeting held on 29 July 2015 it was agreed that all bids including those under the £500 threshold will first go to the LRC for agreement if eligible.

Housing is now just using one Facebook page [www.facebook.com/tenantandleaseholder](http://www.facebook.com/tenantandleaseholder) and will ask the LRC whether they wish to promote the Clear up fund this way.

- b. Following consultation with the Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group, the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee, and two rounds of Area Panels the Model Constitution was updated to bring it in line with the new Recognition Policy. This was agreed by the Housing Committee on 10 September 2014. Associations are being asked to bring their constitutions in line with the Model Constitution that sets out the minimum requirements for a council tenant and resident association to be recognised by the council.

The Resident Involvement Officer has communicated with East Central Moulsecoomb Tenants and Residents Association about this on a number of occasions.

- February 2015 talked through and explained the Model Constitution with the Chair.

- April 2015 emailed the Chair, Secretary and Vice Chair a suggested draft of how the new constitution might look and asked if the committee could review it. Suggested that it could be on the agenda of the upcoming AGM in May.
- 19 June 2015 emailed the Chair and Secretary asking them to prioritise this for next meeting.
- 15 July 2015 went through constitution at the general meeting. She then updated the draft as per the discussions and provided copies for all committee members as agreed at the meeting. She suggested at the meeting that members read through the draft updated document and that if the group were happy they would sign it off at the next general meeting in September.
- 25 August 2015 received a call from the Chair saying some committee members were unhappy with the constitution being changed. On further conversation with another committee member, the Resident Involvement Officer agreed to circulate papers once again to all committee members with an explanation of the process, which has been completed.

Changes to the constitution need to be circulated at least 14 days in advance and agreed by the majority of residents at a quorate general association meeting. I am happy to come to an association meeting to explain the minimum requirements of the Model Constitution and the process of consultation that was undertaken to develop it if members request this.

#### **4. Problems with damp and subsidence**

*There are many properties in Coldean that have ongoing problems with damp, but when residents report it the council say that it is just condensation and offer to put in an extractor fan.*

*Two recent examples of this are 5 Twyford and 15 Haig Avenue.*

*There are also several properties which have large cracks in the outside walls due to subsidence, where no work is proposed to solve the problem.*

*An example of this is 16 Twyford.*

*The meeting felt the council is neglecting its properties and failing to maintain them properly.*

#### **Action: (II)**

***It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel and ask for clarification on what action will be taken at properties where there are problems of subsidence and damp.***

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#### **Response from Ben Ashby, Mears Resident Liaison Officer – T:- 01273 574354**

Mears have treated mould growth at 5 Twyford Road using an anti-fungal treatment. On the last treatment in March 2015, Mears advised that the property would benefit from the installation of a passive vent in the bedroom. An appointment was arranged for the vent to be installed in early April, however, the resident of the property cancelled this appointment with Mears, advising that they would call back when they were ready for the works to go ahead.

Mears have completed works in 15 Haig Avenue in response to problems with condensation. – In this we were required to open and clear cavity to the left hand side of the front door. Internally thermaline external wall and skim, finish with 2 coats of Silexene

Mears Senior Surveyor Ken Warren has attended to inspect both 16 and 18 Twyford Road. Neither properties are subsiding. Mr Warren advises that there are cracks in the outer skin of the properties, however these cracks are rust heave from the oxidising wall ties and certainly not from subsidence.

#### **Response from Perrin Horne, BHCC Partnership & Resident Liaison Manager – T:- 01273 294641**

We are sorry you feel the council are not fulfilling their repair obligations, we feel that in the majority of cases and situations we get it right and have much to celebrate. However, improvements can be made and we welcome your input in this.

We are aware that damp and condensation is an ongoing issue for both tenants and the council. All condensation (including severe) is caused by many contributory factors including and not exhaustive, overcrowding (too many people and or animals) in the home, not ventilating the property correctly and regularly, not heating the property regularly or effectively, too much furniture and or belongings (especially against walls), or hanging wet laundry over or too close to radiators and cold bridging.

Cold bridging is usually rectified by thermal boarding the walls inside. Advice is also given to residents in order to help them reduce the levels of condensation.

When attending to reports of damp in a property, Mears carry out a full assessment to diagnose the cause of damp and/or mould in the home. This can be rising damp, penetrative damp or condensation. In some cases it can be all three, in others, and the majority of cases it is in the form of condensation. Upon the completion of Mears assessment, the appropriate works are arranged and completed to resolve the cause of the damp/mould in the property. If the cause of damp/mould in the property is diagnosed as condensation, Mears may advise for an extractor fan or passive vent to be installed which would assist in better air flow in the home, thereby reducing condensation.

The Property & Investment Team along with our partners Mears will be working closely with other Housing Teams to promote awareness around condensation and tackling this problem in a more holistic way in the future.



## **Area Panels: September 2015**

### **Briefing Paper: Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel on Responsive Repairs**

#### **Background:**

The Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel was set up in April 2013. The scrutiny review on Responsive Repairs is the panel's third scrutiny panel and was selected after analysing responses to tenant surveys submitted to the panel, with over half of the responses suggesting this as an area for scrutiny.

The scope of the panel was to:

- Focus on the repairs pathway for tenants when reporting a fault, right up to completion and for the feedback process afterwards.
- Visit the Mears Repairs Helpdesk to listen into telephone calls and find out how the service operated; how are jobs prioritised?
- Carry out visits with operatives to see how well the repair is fixed and how the tenant found the experience.
- See if the responsive repairs service were meeting the needs of its residents by looking at tenant satisfaction data. To see how tenant satisfaction was received, recorded and used to improve the service. The panel also wanted to find out whether the council was carrying out sufficient monitoring itself of the repairs service
- Identify if there were any improvements that the service could make.

#### **Key findings:**

The full review is attached and commends the council and Mears on its partnership working, it notes that staff are working to high standards and working hard to achieve tough targets. The panel was very impressed with much of what they saw and makes three recommendations:

1. Repairs office staff shadow operatives as part of their training and induction – This is agreed and commences in October. The relationship between good identification of the repairs and completing a repair right first time is really important and this change will support improvements in the service.

2. Resident Assessors are implemented fully to assess repairs – This is agreed in part and has progressed well over last six months through joint working with residents. The scheme will re-launch shortly and the Resident Inspectors (new title) will meet six times a year to plan their activities and focus on providing a resident perspective on the quality of the service. However, the recommendations around Resident Inspectors visiting in person and choosing which properties to visit present specific risk management concerns and it is not recommended that this is implemented.
  
3. Rate Your Estate scheme for estate inspections is reintroduced – The council operates a regular estate inspection programme throughout the city which residents can and do attend, therefore this recommendation is not agreed. Residents on the Neighbourhood & Community Service Improvement Group are continuing to look at ways to maximise the involvement of residents in addressing issues on their estates, including using new technology to highlight issues such as fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, and anti-social behaviour quickly so that the council can respond in a timely way.

**Next steps:**

- The report will go to Housing & New Homes Committee in November
- Progress against the agreed recommendations will be tracked by the Repairs Partnership Core Group.

Contact:

Glyn Huelin, Partnering Business Manager, Brighton & Hove City Council,  
[glyn.huelin@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:glyn.huelin@brighton-hove.gov.uk), 01273 293306

<b>Area Panel Report</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>
	Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Response to the Tenant &amp; Resident Scrutiny Panel on responsive repairs</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>			
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Executive Director, Environment, Development and Housing</b>		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Glyn Huelin</b>	<b>Tel: 01273 293306</b>
	<b>Email:</b>	<b>Glyn.huelin@brighton-hove.gov.uk</b>	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

## FOR GENERAL RELEASE

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 This report sets out the Housing response to the recommendations of the Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel in their report on responsive repairs. That report can be found at Appendix 1.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the committee notes the evidence, findings and recommendations of the Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel relating to the responsive repairs service.
- 2.2 That the committee agrees the actions proposed in this report in response to the Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel's recommendations.

### 3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel was set up in April 2013. The scrutiny review on Responsive Repairs is the panel's third scrutiny panel and was selected after analysing responses to tenant surveys submitted to the panel, with over half of the responses suggesting this as an area for scrutiny.
- 3.2 The scope of the panel was to:
- Focus on the repairs pathway for tenants when reporting a fault, right up to completion and for the feedback process afterwards.
  - Visit the Mears Repairs Helpdesk to listen into telephone calls and find out how the service operated; how are jobs prioritised?
  - Carry out visits with operatives to see how well the repair is fixed and how the tenant found the experience.
  - See if the responsive repairs service were meeting the needs of its residents by looking at tenant satisfaction data. To see how tenant satisfaction was received, recorded and used to improve the service. The panel also wanted to find out whether the council was carrying out sufficient monitoring itself of the repairs service
  - Identify if there were any improvements that the service could make.

3.3 The Housing team would like to thank members of the panel for their hard work reviewing the service. All officers and Mears staff found the input of the panel a valuable challenge and welcome the opportunity to share how the service operates with residents.

#### 4. RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 4.1 Recommendation one

4.2 ***The panel recommends that as part of their training and induction, the Repairs Helpdesk staff should spend time with repairs operatives so that they can get a better understanding what is involved in the various repairs jobs and the average time taken. Both new and existing helpdesk staff should shadow plumbers, carpenters and electricians, and any other staff who may be regularly involved.***

4.3 This recommendation is agreed in full and work is underway to implement it commencing in October 2015.

4.4 As the panel has identified the relationship between diagnosis (carried out by Repairs Helpdesk staff) and carrying out repairs is critical to delivering a right first time service to residents.

4.5 This recommendation will support the development of Repairs Helpdesk staff as the main contact point for residents with repairs enquiries. The recommendation has been fully agreed by Mears and will be monitored by the partnership Core Group.

##### 4.6 Recommendation two

4.7 ***The panel recommend that resident assessors are used to assess a percentage of the completed repairs, to get a fuller assessment of these repairs. The panel believes that by having another tenant visiting in person, it would lead to a more open discussion about the standard of the repair and increase the feedback for BHCC and Mears. The panel would expect that the assessors are able to choose for themselves the homes they visit to assess completed repairs and the number of assessments carried out.***

4.8 ***It might be necessary to increase the capacity of the resident assessor scheme to enable more assessments to take place. It would be sensible to use the existing expertise of tenants and leaseholders, e.g. for ex-builders to assess repairs.***

4.9 This recommendation is agreed in part and the council has been working with Resident Inspectors (previously Resident Assessors) to develop this initiative across the repairs service, however the recommendations around Resident Inspectors visiting in person and choosing which properties to visit present specific risk management concerns and it is not recommended that this is implemented.

- 4.10 The detail of the report from this scrutiny panel indicates that improvements can be made to how the service engages with residents and uses feedback to improve. The partnership has successfully integrated learning from complaints to change processes and improve customer service over the last few years. The council is developing the Resident Inspector programme and recognises that this programme should be effectively integrated into the responsive repairs service and also needs to operate with the existing Home Service Improvement Group.
- 4.11 Over the last six months existing Resident Inspectors, members of the Home Service Improvement Group and officers have been working to improve the Resident Inspectors project, increase the opportunities for residents to get involved and identify recommendations for where the service can improve.
- 4.12 Resident Inspectors meet together six times a year to identify what inspections they wish to carry out and to feedback to the Home Service Improvement Group. The inspectors are looking at a sample of empty properties before re-letting, reviewing sheltered scheme projects from a resident perspective, and contacting residents who have recently had a repair completed to get feedback on the service.
- 4.13 An article will be published in the autumn edition of Homing In to ask for more residents to join the Resident Inspector project and this will also be publicised through resident associations and online.
- 4.14 The recommendation includes details about visiting residents in their homes which has implications around health and safety, data protection, management of the clients of concern register and safeguarding. It would not be appropriate for resident inspectors to have access to repairs details for other residents and to select which properties to visit and further the council has specific controls and processes around safeguarding residents and staff which could not operate effectively under this model. An alternative way of enabling resident to resident discussion about the service may be to arrange a session with a number of residents that have had recent repairs to identify what went well and what could be improved.
- 4.15 Recommendation three**
- 4.16 *Panel members are aware that there are no current estate inspections such as Rate Your Estate. This scheme was a useful way of recording residents' concerns against a set of maintenance and appearance standards that were shared across the city. The panel recommends that this scheme is reintroduced with sufficient resources in order to enable residents to raise concerns about their estate. This will help to identify hotspots where there are problems such as fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles etc.***
- 4.17 The council operates a regular estate inspection programme throughout the city which residents can and do attend, therefore this recommendation is not agreed.
- 4.18 Residents on the Neighbourhood & Community Service Improvement Group are continuing to look at ways to maximise the involvement of residents in addressing issues on their estates, including using new technology to highlight

issues such as fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, and anti-social behaviour quickly so that the council can respond in a timely way.

- 4.18 The Rate Your Estate scheme was trialled as part of the Turning the Tide pilot in 2011 alongside the Housing and Estates Forum. Evaluation of the Rate Your Estate scheme identified that whilst the approach was popular with some resident representatives in the pilot area, there was a lack of response and poor engagement with local residents and resident representatives in other parts of the city, despite a proactive recruitment and training campaign. The scheme was not accessible to all communities/residents and was also a very resource-intensive model.
- 4.19 The Housing and Estates Forum brought together service providers at a neighbourhood level which residents found useful. The Council are currently looking at neighbourhood models as part of the Co-operative Council agenda and will use previous learning to determine future models.
- 4.20 The council is consulting on development of a new Asset Management Strategy which will be taken through a future committee and will include consideration of repairs and maintenance to communal areas and how this can link into the existing estate inspection programme.

## **5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The panel sought resident input into this scrutiny through a survey and through meetings with residents at the Home Service Improvement Group.
- 5.2 The scrutiny panel findings will be presented to the four Area Panel meetings in September 2015 before going to Housing & New Homes Committee.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 This report sets out the actions proposed by Housing alongside the recommendations in the Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel's report on the responsive repairs service.

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

### 7.1 Financial Implications:

To follow

*Finance Officer Consulted:*

*Date:*

### 7.2 Legal Implications:

To follow

*Lawyer Consulted:*

*Date:*

7.3 Equalities Implications:

There are no direct equalities implications arising from this report.

7.4 Sustainability Implications:

There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report.

7.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

There are significant risks around residents visiting other residents independently in their homes which are detailed in 4.14 and below and as result this element of the recommendation from the scrutiny panel is not recommended for implementation.

In particular the council operates a range of controls around resident information to comply with data protection responsibilities and it would not be appropriate to share information on clients of concern, recent repairs, tenure and address with other residents. In addition the council has a duty of care to ensure the safety of both staff and residents which is supported by detailed processes, risk management controls and working arrangements. A client of concern register is in operation to manage safety and access to this register could not be given to residents. Independent resident visits into the home to inspect repairs would not be covered by these controls and would present significant risk to residents involved.

7.7 Public Health Implications:

There are no direct public health implications arising from this report.

7.8 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

There are no direct Corporate or Citywide implications arising from this report.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1: Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel Report

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

None

### **Background Documents**

None



**May 2015**

## **Responsive Repairs**

**Panel Members:**

**Dave Murtagh (Chair)**

**Philip Bradick**

**Lesley Cope**

Chief John Blackbear was also a member of the panel but resigned in March 2015.



## **Chair's Foreword**

I have found the experience of chairing this Responsive Repairs panel a privilege. I have learned so much about the processes and planning that goes on to deliver the Responsive Repairs Service.

As part of the panel's work we visited the Mears Repairs Helpdesk at the Housing Centre in Moulsecoomb. We saw how the team worked in a pressurised environment in a professional manner; the team had good staff morale and were very well managed.

We noted that the Helpdesk staff had altered how they ran the service following tenant feedback. We think that the changes made were positive ones, which have improved the service that is offered. We welcome the changes, including the helpdesk actively contacting tenants after repairs to get feedback.

We were also able to go out with different repairs staff to see how they carried out their day to day work; between us we spent time with plumbers, electricians and carpenters. We would like to thank Mears for arranging these sessions for us, for the operatives for making us feel so welcome, and to the residents that we visited for allowing us to come to their homes.

Overall, we came away with a very positive view of the service that is provided by everyone we spoke to, and in particular, the Repairs Helpdesk.

Our main recommendation is around the lack of tenant involvement in assessing repairs after they have been carried out – we strongly support the tenant assessor scheme that is in place already and feel that it should be used more widely to improve honest feedback from tenants.

We would also like to see the re-introduction of the Rate your Estate scheme as a key part of the responsive repairs service. This will increase tenant involvement in services. The repairs service is a service paid for by the tenants and should have tenant involvement at its heart. We hope that this is something that can be taken forward to improve services for tenants across the city.

I would like to add my personal thanks to Chief John Blackbear and to others for their part in this panel and other work that we have done together. This panel was originally chaired by Chief, but he had to leave before it could be completed, as did Andreas. I and the other panel members are grateful for their input and wish them well for the future.

Dave Murtagh

**Chair of the Responsive Repairs Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel**

May 2015

## 1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The panel selected this scrutiny review following suggestions from tenants, with over half of the responses suggesting this as an area for scrutiny.
- 1.2 The Responsive Repairs service is contracted to Mears Group (referred to as Mears in this report) by Brighton & Hove City Council, running from 2010 for ten years. The service provides unplanned ('responsive') repairs to the homes of council tenants (as opposed to planned maintenance repairs).
- 1.3 Members of the team spoke about the key concerns raised by tenants which were:
  - Low levels for customer feedback received after a repair job had been completed. There was also concern that 'mystery shopping' of repairs has been discontinued, adding to the lack of tenant involvement.
  - It appears that Mears are the only people who are currently collecting tenant feedback, which is seen as a conflict of interest, since Mears also provide the initial repairs service. The panel accepts that there is a role for Mears to play but the feedback that they collect should only be part of the overall picture.
  - There had been a pilot of tenant involvement in estate inspections but the most useful elements of this, such as tenants leading the process or the central reporting back on all repairs raised, had not been taken forward.
- 1.4 The Responsive Repairs service provided the panel with useful performance and benchmarking information. Senior managers and the Chair of Housing Committee emphasised the importance of having useful customer feedback to monitor and make service improvements.
- 1.5 The panel want to commend the Council and Mears on its partnership working. It found the staff were working to high standards and were working hard to achieve tough targets set by the council. In addition the panel was very impressed with much of what they saw and they would like to thank everyone who spoke to them as well as the tenants who contributed to its investigation.

In particular the panel would like to thank the operatives who took them out to demonstrate the work that they carried out. The panel felt the operatives undertake a wide range of jobs to high standards, and wanted to recognise the key role that they play in keeping tenants' homes up to standard.

## **2. List of recommendations**

- 2.1 The panel would like to make the following three recommendations based on the evidence they heard:

### ***Recommendation One:***

***The panel recommends that as part of their training and induction, the Repairs Helpdesk staff should spend time with repairs operatives so that they can get a better understanding what is involved in the various repairs jobs and the average time taken. Both new and existing helpdesk staff should shadow plumbers, carpenters and electricians, and any other staff who may be regularly involved. (to check what is feasible in relation to the contract with Mears and whether this kind of recommendation can be implemented)***

### ***Recommendation Two:***

***The panel recommends that resident assessors are used to assess a percentage of the completed repairs, to get a fuller assessment of these repairs. The panel believes that by having another tenant visiting in person, it would lead to a more open discussion about the standard of the repair and increase the feedback for BHCC and Mears. The panel would expect that the assessors are able to choose for themselves the homes they visit to assess completed repairs and the number of assessments carried out.***

***It might be necessary to increase the capacity of the resident assessor scheme to enable more assessments to take place. It would be sensible to use the existing expertise of tenants and leaseholders, e.g. for ex-builders to assess repairs.***

### ***Recommendation Three:***

***Panel members are aware that there are no current estate inspections such as Rate Your Estate. This scheme was a useful way of recording residents' concerns against a set of maintenance and appearance standards that were shared across the city. The panel recommends that this scheme is reintroduced with sufficient resources in order to enable residents to raise concerns about their estate. This will help to identify hotspots where there are problems such as fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles etc.***

### 3. Introduction

- 3.1 The panel selected this review after analysing the responses to their tenant surveys. Over half of the responses<sup>1</sup> received requested that the panel scrutinise responsive repairs. There were a range of issues raised, including the standard of repairs and how feedback was collected after repairs were carried out.
- 3.2 The panel's key concern was to find out whether the correct processes were in place for tenants when reporting a fault right up to completion, and for the feedback/ review process afterwards. They wanted to ensure that the current processes are the best ones for achieving tenant satisfaction.

### 4. The scope of the panel

- 4.1 The panel agreed the scope would be to:
- 1) Focus on the repairs pathway for tenants when reporting a fault, right up to completion and for the feedback process afterwards.
  - 2) Visit the Mears Repairs Helpdesk to listen into telephone calls and find out how the service operated; how are jobs prioritised?
  - 3) Carry out visits with operatives to see how well the repair is fixed and how the tenant found the experience.
  - 4) See if the responsive repairs service were meeting the needs of its residents by looking at tenant satisfaction data. To see how tenant satisfaction was received, recorded and used to improve the service. The panel also wanted to find out whether the council was carrying out sufficient monitoring itself of the repairs service
  - 5) Identify if there were any improvements that the service could make.

However, the panel resolved not to look into budgets or the cost of materials as tenants had been involved in the contract discussions.

### 5. How the panel collected evidence

Dates	Meeting
2 July 2014	Scope of the panel
5 August 2014	Evidence gathering private scoping meeting with Glyn Huelin (Partnering Business Manager), James Cryer (Partnering Manager- Mears) and Dave Warner

<sup>1</sup> A total of 31 tenant survey responses had been received. 19 responses referred to repairs.

	(Performance Manager-Mears)
2 September 2014	Evidence gathering private meeting. Analysis of repairs information requested by the panel. Draft survey for tenants.
16 September 2014	Private meeting. Continuation of the analysis of repairs information requested by the panel.  Approval of Tenant Scrutiny survey on repairs to be emailed to residents on the resident involvement database.
7 October 2014	Private meeting. Compilation of scrutiny questions for their next meeting. Analysis of information from Amicus Horizon.
23 October 2014	Visit to Mears Repairs Helpdesk
11 November 2014	Private meeting with Benjamin Okagbue (Head of Property & Investment), Glyn Huelin and James Cryer
2 December 2014	Private meeting with the Head of Housing - Councillor Bill Randall & Member of the Housing Committee – Councillor Mary Mears
2 February 2015	Panel meeting to discuss report findings – Councillor Gill Mitchell spoke to the panel.
Early Feb 2015	Visits with operatives
March/ April 2015	Panel meetings to discuss report findings and recommendations

- 5.1 In addition the panel attended several housing meetings and analysed the tenant survey responses that they had received.
- 5.2 The panel was very impressed by the written information given to them by the Mears staff; they had a presentation on the repairs pathway from the first point of call up to completion and were provided with information about how feedback was collected. The panel was also grateful for the information supplied by Amicus Horizon, a housing association.

### **Improving resident engagement & the collection of performance information**

- 5.3 Panel members were disappointed by the low level of resident responses to their email survey (with only nine responses received in total) and will continue to look at ways to improve resident engagement with the panel as part of their ongoing work programme.
- 5.4 The panel believes that the lack of resident response reflects the relatively low levels of engagement that the panel saw between council tenants and the Repairs Team; the lack of customer feedback is the biggest gap in the service provided by the Repairs Team.

- 5.5 The panel was also concerned that they did not receive the same level of information from the council about repairs, as they did from Mears. The panel regretted that projects such as mystery shopping and estate inspections had ended, because they had been used by both the council and residents to assess the performance of the repairs service. The panel would like to see both the council and residents collect more evidence about the repairs service.

## 6. The Responsive Repairs service

- 6.1 Mears hold a ten year contract for responsive repairs for Brighton and Hove City council; this began in 2010. The Mears helpdesk is the first point of contact for tenants reporting a fault or repair and is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is responsible for calls from 11,000 council properties. The helpdesk has 9 call agents and a call centre supervisor. In one month (June 2014) it handled 6,500 calls. The team works to targets, with the aim to answer calls within 20 seconds; data supplied to the panel shows that they are reaching this target between 75% and 80% of the time, with their performance improving.
- 6.2 The panel was informed that one call agent carries out telephone customer satisfaction surveys every day and other call agents do so when volumes of incoming calls and emails are low. The most recent figures available for April 2015 show that Mears contacted 18% of tenants who received responsive repairs and 25% of tenants who received gas repairs. Service data shows that that 95.7% of residents rated the repair service as good/excellent<sup>2</sup>.

The responsive repairs service has targets for the time taken to carry out routine and emergency repairs. The target is for 98% of responsive repairs to be carried out within the time specified- figures for the year 2014/15 show that this was achieved in 99% of responsive repairs.

- 6.3 Panel members observed the helpdesk staff at work, listening in to phone calls requesting responsive repairs and observing how the staff addressed the query. Panel members reported back that they were very impressed with the way in which the helpdesk operated and how the staff handled the calls. They felt the staff were well managed and well trained, and that they were highly motivated, working hard to answer all of the calls that were received.
- 6.4 The panel were particularly impressed with the detailed questions that the helpdesk staff asked to help identify the exact repair that was needed. Call handlers have to be skilled at asking residents detailed information about the issue and fittings per specification. The more information that is collated means that the operative can have the correct tools, fittings and background to fix the fault efficiently. The team also needed to be able to calm the tenant down in a crisis situation i.e. the flooding of a room.

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<sup>2</sup> Data provided by the service

- 6.5 Overall the panel was very pleased with the way in which the helpdesk was managed and operated. The only suggestion that they had was for staff to develop their knowledge of the various repair types by shadowing operatives at work.

***Recommendation One:***

***The panel recommends that as part of their training and induction, the Repairs Helpdesk staff should spend time with repairs operatives so that they can get a better understanding what is involved in the various repairs jobs and the average time taken. Both new and existing helpdesk staff should shadow plumbers, carpenters and electricians, and any other staff who may be regularly involved.***

**Operatives**

- 6.6 Panel members were invited to join operatives to see the repairs pathway from an operative receiving the job number to completing it on-site. This was arranged with the resident's permission. The panel members accompanied electricians, plumbers and carpenters for a day each. Operatives said that they wanted office staff to spend more time shadowing them to see what their day to day work involved. Panel members agreed with the suggestion - please see above for Recommendation One which supports this.
- 6.7 Again panel members reported that they were happy with the standard of service provided by the operatives, and could not think of any ways in which this aspect of the responsive repairs service could be improved.
- 6.8 Following their visit to the helpdesk, the visits with the operatives and discussions with senior managers within Housing and within Mears, panel members agreed that they were satisfied with the way in which the service operated from the initial request for responsive repairs to the repairs that were carried out by the operatives.
- 6.9 The panel then moved on to examine how tenant satisfaction with the service was considered.

**7. Tenant satisfaction with repairs service**

- 7.1 The council carries out an annual Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR). The most recent survey was in June 2014 with a sample of 3000 Brighton & Hove City Council tenants, who were sent the survey. There was a response rate of 24%- 724 respondents.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Housing Committee- 12 November 2014, Agenda Item 38

- 7.2 Two thirds of the sample had had a repair in the previous twelve month period. Satisfaction with the last completed repair had dropped since the last STAR survey; 2014 responses indicated 76% were satisfied overall with the repair, which has gone down from 81% in 2011. There were also disappointing responses with regard to the time taken before the repair work started, which had fallen from 83% to 77%; results had also fallen for satisfaction with the speed of repairs completion.
- 7.3 It should be noted that these figures differ from the satisfaction responses that Mears' own surveys have received. Mears reported that telephone surveys to 477 residents gave a 93% satisfaction response.
- 7.4 This difference in results is one of the reasons that the panel feel that Mears may not be best placed to carry out their own satisfaction surveys; tenants may not feel that they can give an honest response if they have had a less positive, or less satisfactory, service. The panel believe that resources such as mystery shoppers and resident assessors could be used to fill this gap.

It should also be noted that Housing are now asking tenants the question 'what could we do better?' and analysing and feeding back the responses received.

#### **How is satisfaction information currently collected?**

- 7.5 In the past Mears used handheld PDAs (Personal Data Assistants) to capture tenant satisfaction information immediately after every repair job. However this had ceased due to concerns from tenants<sup>4</sup>.
- 7.6 Postcard response cards were also used to assess customer satisfaction, with tenants being asked to complete and return them giving their comments on the service received. Results showed that tenants only completed the cards if their experience was very positive or very negative. This meant that there was a low response rate for jobs that had been completed to a satisfactory level.
- 7.7 Mears has now moved to a telephone based system, where a member of the Mears team calls tenants to ask for their feedback on the service they have received. This has proved successful in increasing response rates and the most recent figures indicate that in April 2015 telephone surveys were carried out relating to 18% of the responsive repair jobs and 25.5% of gas repairs jobs.<sup>5</sup> However panel members did not think that this was the best solution as tenants might not feel comfortable giving negative feedback to the service provider.

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<sup>4</sup> Tenants did not like using the handhelds, not enough time to carry out the inspection of work and whether the problem was fixed on a long term basis and tenants did not know how the repair should be fixed and to what standard. Housing Committee, 12 November 2014

<sup>5</sup> Data provided by the service



- 7.8 The panel felt that, whilst most of the repairs service performed very well and was based around the needs of the tenant, this was one area that ought to be reviewed.
- 7.9 Amicus Horizon told the panel that they collected resident satisfaction for responsive repairs through carrying out telephone surveys of approximately 5% of residents who have had a repair completed the previous week. Amicus Horizon employs a survey team to carry out this survey and ask residents to rate their experience of their most recent repair. The panel felt that this was a more independent way of collecting repairs feedback than the contractor collating the feedback, However they were aware that there would be resource issues if employees were taken on specifically to carry out this role.
- 7.11 Panel members suggested that as an alternative, the existing role of Tenant / Resident Assessors could be expanded. These are tenants who have been trained to examine empty properties before they are let, to ensure that properties are up to a lettable standard before new tenants move in.
- 7.12 Two of the panel members are currently tenant assessors and felt that the assessor role's remit could be easily expanded to include checking the standard responsive repairs on properties that are already tenanted.
- 7.13 Panel members suggested that the Repairs Helpdesk staff advise all callers that they may be contacted by a Resident Assessor after the repair has completed, who would come and check the standard of repair. This would allow the tenant to opt out of the service if they did not wish to be contacted. The Resident Assessor could then carry out checks after the repairs had been completed and feedback any comments or issues to Mears.

Panel members thought that tenants talking to other tenants through the resident assessor scheme about their repairs could lead to more open discussions and more honest feedback. The panel feel it is essential to have proper tenant involvement throughout the repairs service, which should be tenant-led rather than officer-led.

- 7.14 Panel members felt that this could be extended to be used for a wider estates inspection service. Some of the panel members had been involved in the Rate Your Estate pilot in which residents were trained to carry out official estate inspections and report defects or concerns. The residents went on 'walkabouts' with other residents, putting together a photo-book scorecard looking at factors such as repairs, grounds maintenance, cleaning and the appearance of communal areas. One of the benefits was that there was an agreed set of standards across the city, increasing consistency.

Panel members were aware that there are no estate inspections of this nature at present, and feel that they could be re-introduced quite easily in order to increase resident involvement in estate inspections and identify problem areas.

7.15 The panel wanted to assure Mears and operatives that they were not querying the standard of repairs carried out but that they wanted to improve the feedback mechanism in order to provide another way of quality assurance.

#### **7.16 Recommendation Two**

***The panel recommend that resident assessors are used to assess a percentage of the completed repairs, to get a fuller assessment of these repairs. The panel believes that by having another tenant visiting in person, it would lead to a more open discussion about the standard of the repair and increase the feedback for BHCC and Mears. The panel would expect that the assessors are able to choose for themselves the homes they visit to assess completed repairs and the number of assessments carried out.***

***It might be necessary to increase the capacity of the resident assessor scheme to enable more assessments to take place. It would be sensible to use the existing expertise of tenants and leaseholders, e.g. for ex-builders to assess repairs.***

#### **7.17 Recommendation Three:**

***Panel members are aware that there are no current estate inspections such as Rate Your Estate. This scheme was a useful way of recording residents' concerns against a set of maintenance and appearance standards that were shared across the city. The panel recommends that this scheme is reintroduced with sufficient resources in order to enable residents to raise concerns about their estate. This will help to identify hotspots where there are problems such as fly-tipping, abandoned vehicles etc.***

## **8. Conclusion**

8.1 Panel members were impressed overall with the service provided by the repairs service including the very high standard of service from Repairs Helpdesk staff and by the operatives that they spent time with. They would like to see greater work shadowing between the two teams to increase knowledge and skills.

8.2 The members of the panel did feel that the service could be improved by changing the way in which post-repairs feedback was collected. They considered various ways of doing this but agreed that the most effective way of doing so would be to widen the remit of the Resident Assessor scheme so that tenants could be more involved in assessing the standards of repairs. This is in order to provide more quality assurance which will be of benefit to tenants, the council and to Mears.

8.3 The panel would like to thank everyone who spoke to them about the repairs service for their helpful and open approach.

## Area Panels: September 2015

### Briefing Paper: Resident Involvement

#### City Assembly

Attendance at the City Assembly has been falling since November 2013.

Venue	Date	Residents
Hove Town Hall	May 2013	74
Housing Centre	November 2013	99
Housing Centre	May 2014	82
Clarendon Villas	November 2014	59
Housing Centre	May 2015	53

Residents on the City Assembly sub group of the Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group have been reviewing the history of the City Assembly and discussing ways to improve attendance. They have looked at feedback from tenant representatives, and have visited the housing offices to speak to other residents.

The majority of people who have not attended the City Assembly have not heard of the City Assembly and were focused on their own concerns, although some said they would prefer a shorter event and suggested practical workshops.

Involved residents have fed back that all day is too long, they would prefer a central venue, and while the themed assemblies have been useful there could be more of a focus on housing matters.

From this they hope there might be better attendance if the event was held during the week as it had been when set up in 2008 rather than a Saturday.

The sub group decided at its meeting last week that the next City Assembly would therefore be as follows:

Date: Wednesday 16 December 2015  
 Venue: Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton  
 Time: 4pm – 8pm  
 Theme: “Vision for Housing for the next 30 years”

The sub group feel that the name City Assembly may be difficult for people who have not been to the event to understand and would like the views of the Area Panel’s on the suggested name change to the Citywide Conference?

#### Elections

Elections to the Service Improvement Groups (SIGs) are taking place at this round of Area Panels along with the elections to the Tenant Disability Network (TDN). Each Area Panel

has two representatives and deputies on each group. TDN representatives have to be Area Panel representatives, but SIG representatives can be association committee members.

Below is a brief description of the five service Improvement Groups

- Home: the quality of our homes
- Neighbourhood & Community: safer, cleaner and greener estates
- Tenancy: ensuring tenants have the right support
- Involvement & Empowerment: promoting more active and confident participation
- Business & Value for Money: encouraging residents to have their say on investments that effect their area

A reminder that representatives can sit on Involvement & Empowerment, and Business & Value for Money but can only also sit one of the following groups – Home, Neighbourhood & Community, and Tenancy.

The council would like the views of the Area Panels that the same representative should only be able to Chair one SIG? Elections of Chair and Vice Chair of the SIGs take place at the first meeting following the Area Panels.

### **Estates Development Budget**

A remainder that the deadline for next year's Estates Development Budget bids is Friday 13 November. Please do get in touch with your RIO if you require any help with the consultation process. The Resident Involvement Team are still chasing some receipts mainly from quick bids, if they are outstanding please do endeavour to get them in or it may affect your EDB application process.

An update on the EDB programme will be emailed and some paper copies will be available at the meeting.

**Contact:** Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager  
Email: [becky.purnell@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:becky.purnell@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

**Business & Value for Money Service Improvement Group  
22 July 2015**

- Discussed Universal Credit with Housing Income Management Committee.
- Had photo taken to advertise group in Homing In.
- Reviewed the Housing Management end of year performance report.
- Reviewed the Resident Associations' Grant Application criteria.

**Home Service Improvement Group  
11 August 2015**

- Resident Inspectors terms of reference agreed. Project to include empty property inspections and all other areas of Mears contract.
- Resident Action Plan – discussion about stained cladding and management / communications between Mears and subcontractors.
- Subgroups reports – Partnership & Core.
- Jargon Busting reference first draft completed and discussion to roll out across other areas of resident involvement.
- Volunteers will be working on how to improve on Estate Development Budget fencing programmes.



# New homes for neighbourhoods Update



September 2015

Brighton & Hove City Council's New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme is building much needed new council homes on council owned land. We work with local resident associations, ward councillors and many council teams and partners to make best use of council housing land and buildings, improving neighbourhoods and helping to meet the city's housing needs. We are aiming to build at least 500 new council homes across Brighton & Hove.

This summer tenants moved into the first new council homes to be completed under this programme. Another 77 new council homes for affordable rent are now being built at six sites in Brighton, Hove and Portslade, with more in the pipeline. The new homes will be let through Homemove.

## **Preston Road – 2 new wheelchair accessible family bungalows**



Tenants have moved into two fully wheelchair accessible three bedroom family bungalows which were completed on time and below budget at the end of July, thanks to collaborative working across the council and with the council's Sustainable Futures construction partnership and in-house architects. They have been built on the foundations of unfit, former temporary accommodation units.

## **Former Manor Place office – 15 new flats at Robert Lodge**

The concrete structure for the first block on the site of the old prefab Manor Place Housing Office is now up to the same height as Robert Lodge. The Estate Regeneration Team and constructor, Westridge, have kept in very close contact with Robert Lodge Resident Association during this noisiest part of the build and residents have been very patient. However, they helped redesign and replant their communal gardens, which are now a larger, more open shared space.



The southern block of nine one bedroom flats with a lift should be finished in early 2016 and will be suitable for tenants with mobility needs. We expect work on the northern block of six flats to start as the first block is completed.

## **12 new family houses in Portslade and Hangleton**

Garages on the north side of Flint Close in Portslade have now been demolished to make way for two new houses, with another pair to be built on the south side. Four family houses are also being built on former garage sites at both Foredown Road, Portslade and Hardwick Road, Hangleton. All 12 houses will be let in summer 2016.

## **Brooke Mead – 45 extra care flats**

The constructors are removing underground cabling and diverting sewers and gas pipes in preparation for the demolition of the old Brooke Mead former temporary accommodation block in Albion Street. The 45 extra care flats with community facilities which will replace it should be ready by summer 2017.

The Estate Regeneration Team and constructor Willmott Dixon are in regular contact with local residents and businesses as well as with Albion Hill Residents' Association.



## **Ardingly Street car parking site – 5 new homes in Kemp Town**

The sixth scheme now on site is on a small cleared site in Kemp Town formerly used for car parking. After completing ground works and foundations, construction of the concrete walls and floors should start in November. We expect the five homes, including a ground floor wheelchair accessible flat, to be let next summer.

Westridge, like all constructors in the programme, are signed up to the Considerate Constructors Scheme and aim at all times to keep nuisance, noise and disruption from the building works to a minimum. They and the Estate Regeneration Team also make sure that the local tenant and resident association, ward councillors, Local Action Team and neighbouring residents are updated with progress on the works.



### How is the council paying for the new homes?

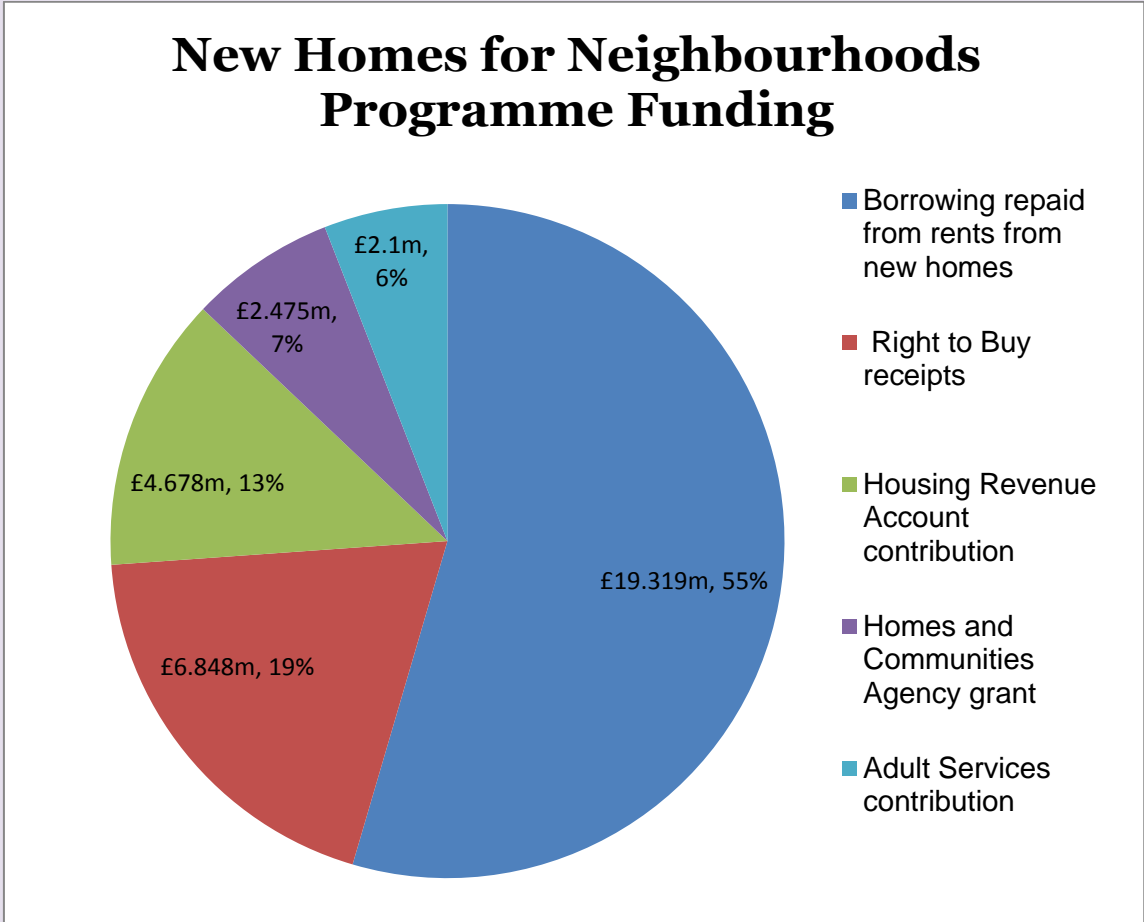
Most of the money comes from the rents for the new homes, which are higher than rents for existing council homes. They are 'affordable rents', set at the Local Housing Allowance levels of Housing Benefit. This rental income repays borrowing at low interest rates to help fund development costs.

Secondly, we use Right to Buy receipts from other tenants exercising their right to buy their council home. Receipts from sales pay for up to a third of the cost to build each new home. If we don't use this money to build replacement new homes, we have to pay it to central government.

Thirdly, we can use some of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) surpluses we make by running council housing more efficiently, now that the council housing budget is 'self-financing' and does not have to make payments to the government every year.

Fourthly, we have some government grant paid by the Homes and Communities Agency: £2.4 million for Brooke Mead. And finally, Adult Services have also made a contribution of £2.1 million to the Brooke Mead extra care scheme.

The chart below shows how the current new homes programme totalling £35.42 million is being funded over three years. The programme of capital works and improvements to existing council homes is £31 million for this year alone.



## **Findon Road, Whitehawk – 57 new flats on former library site**



This scheme of 57 new flats is currently going through the planning process. If successful, we expect building work to start in early 2016.

The two blocks include one, two and three bedroom flats with private balconies and lifts and six wheelchair accessible ground floor flats with private patios.

## **Wellsbourne site, Whitehawk**

The council's in-house architects are now developing the initial design for 28 flats of varying sizes in two blocks on the cleared Wellsbourne site, between the health centre and the school on Whitehawk Road. The council's Housing & New Homes and Policy & Resources Committees will be asked to approve development of the Wellsbourne scheme once further design work has been completed.

## **Design Competition for small sites**

The New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme is testing the value for money, speed and quality of many different ways to develop the affordable new homes that the city needs on council owned land.

As part of our strategy for small, challenging sites we are running a design competition with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) for four small former or underused car parking sites on council housing land at Hinton Close, Rotherfield Crescent and Natal Road and a small council owned parking site in Frederick Street, Brighton. The competition attracted 140 initial designs. 20 have now been shortlisted and will go out to consultation with local residents around the sites this autumn and be developed further. The four winning designs will be announced in January.

## **Former Selsfield Drive Housing Office**

A council architect is developing the initial design for 20 flats on the site of the former Selsfield Drive Housing Office on Lewes Road. Bates Estate Residents Association will continue to be involved as plans develop and the Estate Regeneration Team will organise full consultation with residents after further design.

## **For more information**

There's more information on the New Homes for Neighbourhoods council webpage at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/nhfn](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/nhfn), including regular updates on individual schemes and links to planning documents.

You can contact the Estate Regeneration Team by:

Email: [estate.regeneration@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:estate.regeneration@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

Phone: 01273 290591

Post: Estate Regeneration Team, Brighton & Hove City Council, Room 506, Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 2SR



## Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes

Latest Information – 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Since Seaside Homes went live in November 2011, we have leased a total of 456 properties and the partnership has now generated just over £23.5 m for the HRA to continue the decent homes work.

### Property Details

Property Type	Batch 1 1 <sup>st</sup> Nov 2011	Batch 2 1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2012	Batch 3 30 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2012	Batch 4 1 <sup>st</sup> Jun 2012	Batch 5 1 <sup>st</sup> Aug 2012	Batch 6 1 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2012	Batch 7 27 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2013	Batch 8 17 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2014	Batch 9 1 <sup>st</sup> Sep 2015	Total
Studio	5	1	5	3	6	8	11	4	1	44
1 Bedroom	19	21	20	12	27	23	32	29	0	183
2 Bedroom	20	17	12	18	16	18	13	27	36	177
3 Bedroom	14	9	3	2	6	3	2	5	3	47
4 Bedroom	3	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
<b>Total Properties</b>	61	48	41	35	56	52	58	65	40	456

The batch 9 transfer has just been completed with the batch comprising of 19 refurbished and 21 un-refurbished properties.

The 19 refurbished properties were tenanted immediately, taking us to a total of 435 tenanted properties.

Refurbishment works are already underway on the 21 un-refurbished properties with the first completions due to be ready around December. All works are expected to be complete within 6 months.

The following tables provide a breakdown of the number of refurbished and un-refurbished properties received in each batch and progress made on refurbishment works.

<b>Table 1</b>	<b>Refurbished Properties</b>	<b>Un-refurbished Properties</b>
Batch 1	44	17
Batch 2	8	40
Batch 3	0	41
Batch 4	0	35
Batch 5	3	53
Batch 6	0	52
Batch 7	2	56
Batch 8	43	22
Batch 9	19	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>337</b>

*Table 1 - the breakdown of properties leased to date:*

At the time of handover Seaside Homes receives a mix of properties some of which have already undergone refurbishment and are ready to be tenanted and others for which refurbishment is about to commence.

**Refurbishment – Progress to date:**

<b>Table 2</b>	<b>Refurbishment Works COMPLETED</b>	<b>Refurbishment Works Incomplete</b>
Batch 1	17	0
Batch 2	40	0
Batch 3	41	0
Batch 4	35	0
Batch 5	53	0
Batch 6	52	0
Batch 7	56	0
Batch 8	22	0
Batch 9	0	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>316</b>	<b>21</b>

*Table 2 – 337 properties were transferred to Seaside as un-refurbished.*

[www.seaside-homes.org.uk](http://www.seaside-homes.org.uk)

