Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Investigative Panel

Scrutiny Report - Students in the Community

February 2009

Overview & Scrutiny

Brighton & Hove City Council

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Chairman's Introduction

It is recognised in Brighton and Hove that the student population is making a positive contribution to the city's economy and diversity. However, we need to find a balance between the energy, vibrancy and economic value that students bring to our city with the genuine concerns of local residents, to maintain a positive sense of community for everyone who lives here.

As a city, we need to take steps to manage and reduce any adverse impacts on particular areas. This can only be achieved by the local authority working together with the universities, colleges, local residents, students and other partners.

This investigation and report have been borne out of the desire to recognise and balance the lifestyles of all of Brighton & Hove's residents, whether they are living in the city for the short term or have settled here more permanently

We should all strive to achieve a more equitable residential mix of housing to ensure that our city's community spirit is maintained. I hope that the recommendations made in this report will contribute to achieving this ambition.

On behalf of all three of the panel members, I would like to thank everyone who took the time to contact the panel with their views and comments and all of those people who attended our meetings; your input was greatly appreciated

Anne Meadows, Chairman Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny

Committee Ad Hoc Panel

February 2009

Executive Summary

1. The Scrutiny Review on Students in the Community was instigated by members of the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee at Brighton & Hove City Council in autumn 2008.

2. The initiative for the work came following the Committee's consideration of Brighton and Hove City Council's draft Housing Strategy. The draft strategy had been formulated with extensive reference to issues relating to student housing, but following discussions with the Directorate, the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee members felt that there was an opportunity for a more focused piece of work on the issues relating to the effect of students living in Brighton and Hove.

3. The scrutiny panel was established, consisting of three members of the Committee, Councillors Anne Meadows, Georgia Wrighton and Tony Janio. Councillor Meadows was Chairman of the panel.

4. The panel recognised at the scoping stage that there was the potential for a very large piece of work; they were conscious that their work had to be focussed on the effect of student accommodation on other residents.

5. Panel members felt that hearing from members of the public was vital to establish an understanding of the effect of students living in the city; they sought public comments in a variety of ways, including inviting people to speak to the panel or send in letters or emails. A total of 42 letters and emails were received, as well as a representation on behalf of 87 Elm Grove residents. In addition, 12 city residents including students spoke to the panel at the public meeting.

6. The panel heard that residents' frustrations could be broken down into a number of broad categories:

- noise complaints from within student houses or from halls of residence
- noise complaints in the street, particularly late at night when students were returning home or due to non smoking legislation within buildings
- refuse and recycling was being left out on the wrong collection days
- refuse, especially bulky waste, was being left on the pavement or in front gardens for extended periods of time, causing an inconvenience
- student households having multiple cars per house, and using a lot of on-road parking spaces
- residents did not know who to contact when they had a problem with a student household, or what action they were able to take
- student landlords did not maintain the properties adequately, leading to a run-down appearance in the neighbourhood and a poor standard of accommodation
- that there were no restrictions on the number of student households in an area,
- some areas were becoming saturated with student households, affecting the balance of the community and the infrastructure.
- There were problems associated with accommodation in both halls of residence and in private sector housing.

7. Residents were also keen to make the point that the problems that they had

experienced were often limited to a minority of students and that they were aware that the majority of students lived in the city without causing any disturbance to other residents.

8. In addition, the students who attended the panel raised further issues:

- There was a wide spread tendency to view all problems associated with young people as being student related but this was not always the case
- There should be an accreditation system for student landlords, to ensure that all accommodation was of an acceptable standard
- The council, universities and students' unions should work together on campaigns that targeted students
- Students brought a lot of positive benefits to the city, and carried out volunteering work which benefited the city. They should be encouraged to play an active role in the community
- The Students Unions could encourage students to use public transport rather than private cars

9. The panel recognised that residents might not differentiate between a student and a non-student occupied House of Multiple Occupation, tending to assume that the property was tenanted by students if it was tenanted by young people. Nevertheless, it was still beneficial to consider the impact of students on residents and neighbourhoods, as there was felt to be a correlation between student households and residents' concerns.

10. The focus was on the two large universities in the city, the University of Sussex and University of Brighton as the majority of students living in the city attend one of these two institutions. However this should not be taken to mean that the panel's discussions and recommendations exclude other establishments such as City College and Brighton Institute of Modern Music, amongst others, as both of these have their own students living in private rented accommodation and will invariably have their own student effect issues.

11. Following the first public meeting, the panel held three evidence gathering public meetings over November and December 2008, inviting a number of expert witnesses to speak to them, including officers of the City Council, Brighton and Sussex Universities, the police and city landlords, in order to understand the various issues that they had heard about from residents, and suggest recommendations to remedy areas where there may be problems.

12. At the end of the evidence gathering process, the panel met again to discuss the evidence that they had heard and to compile their recommendations. The panel have made a total of 37 recommendations which they hope will help to address the negative effects that residents reported.

13. The recommendations are aimed at a variety of audiences, including Cabinet Members within Brighton and Hove City Council and to the universities themselves.

14. The panel's work is intended to complement other research going on across the city through the Strategic Housing Partnership but it does not duplicate that work. It is hoped that this report and recommendations will be included in the ongoing work that is developed through the Partnership, helping them to formulate future policy documents.

Summary of Recommendations

Noise Nuisance

Recommendation 1 - The panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment extends the council-run Noise Patrol to operate over more nights of the week, probably Wednesday and Thursday, and to extend the existing weekend operating hours, (page 28)

Recommendation 2 - The panel recommends that there should be increased publicity to advise residents that they can report a noise nuisance problem retrospectively; this could be included in City News, on the council's website and perhaps in leaflets in public offices.(page 29)

Recommendation 3 - The panel recommends that the Out of Hours emergency noise patrol service should be properly resourced and properly publicised, (page 29)

Recommendation 4 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment resources a 24 hour telephone line for the public to report non-emergency noise and anti-social behaviour, (page 29)

Recommendation 5 - the panel recommends that the Environmental Health and Licensing Team reviews its noise nuisance procedures in order to assess whether the noise nuisance diary sheets are always the most effective and user-friendly way of addressing noise complaints, (page 29)

Recommendation 6 - the panel would like to see the SShh campaign developed by Students' Unions and publicised widely in conjunction with community association representatives and ward councillors. This should be an ongoing annual campaign due to the turnover of students. (page 30)

Recommendation 7 - the panel recommends that the universities, the Police and the Student Union work together to find ways to jointly address the issue of street noise nuisance in residential areas, caused by groups of students returning from nights out. (page 30)

Recommendation 8 - the panel recommends that the University of Brighton considers whether there is a more suitable outside space that might be used, and that measures are put in place to address noise from smokers and other students gathering on the Podium at the Southover Street Phoenix Halls, (page 30)

Recommendation 9 - The panel would recommend that the University of Brighton considers introducing a policy asking students on the Phoenix Halls site to close their windows before playing music at night, in order to minimize noise nuisance for neighbours. The panel would also ask that clearer, more visible signage is installed across the Phoenix Halls site asking that noise is kept to a minimum after 11pm. (page 30)

Recommendation 10 - the panel would like to suggest that the University of Brighton considers the staffing resources that might be needed to provide an effective way of managing and minimising the noise nuisance and how its premises in residential areas are controlled, (page 31)

Recommendation 11 - the panel recommends that the University of Brighton considers planting trees and bushes on the Phoenix Halls site, in order to assess whether this would help to mask any noise. The panel would like to suggest that the university talks to local residents about their experiences after a trial period, (page 31).

Recommendation 12 - the panel would like to ask that the universities and developers have regard to possible noise impact on neighbours and the particular architectural nature of the area in which they will be built when they are being designed, especially in relation to the provision of smoking areas for residents. The panel also recommends that this suggestion is formalized in any relevant planning documents relating to student accommodation, (page 31)

Community Liaison Staff

Recommendation 13 - the panel recommends that the University of Sussex considers following the good practice established by the University of Brighton and establishes a role of a dedicated Community Liaison Officer for the University of Sussex. The two officers could work together to address shared student problems across Brighton and Hove, (page 32)

Refuse & Recycling

Recommendation 14 - the panel recommends that CityClean issues wheeled bin stickers giving information about collection days so that all households know when to put their refuse out. It is recommended that this would be an alternative to the magnets that are currently issued, (page 33)

Recommendation 15 - the panel recommends that for those areas of the city that do not currently have council-issued wheeled bins, CityClean should erect additional notices on lamp-posts advising residents of their collection day. (page 34)

Recommendation 16 - the panel recommends that CityClean places the information stickers for their recycling boxes in order that they can be stuck to the box rather than on the lid, as the lids tend to blow away, (page 34)

Recommendation 17 - the panel recommends that CityClean advertises information about changes in collection dates for refuse and recycling in both of the universities' newspapers and on the universities' websites, in addition to the usual council publication locations. (page 35)

Recommendation 18 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment considers the issue of how to tackle the problem of bulky waste being fly tipped by student households, both throughout term-time and at the end of term. The panel recommends that the Cabinet Member gives the suggestions made in the body of the report due consideration, (page 36)

Recommendation 19- the panel suggests that the universities organise termly clean up days in conjunction with their student unions, (page 36)

Car Parking

Recommendation 20 - the panel recommend that the universities include information in their prospectuses and accommodation guides about the range of public transport and Car Clubs in the city and that they explicitly recommend that students do not bring cars with them, (page 37)

Recommendation 21- Students should be treated on the same basis as non-students when it comes to the issue of residents' parking permits, (page 37)

Council Tax

Recommendation 22 - the panel would encourage Council Tax officers to continue to liaise regularly with the universities in order to establish current and future student numbers, (page 38)

Recommendation 23 - the panel recommends that the Council Tax service considers the four suggestions made in the body of the report about how to improve levels of registered student household exemptions, (page 39)

Planning Policies

Recommendation 24 - the panel recommend that the existing Planning Strategy team carries out research into the various planning options available to control the level of student housing, and to consider whether there would be any merit in introducing such controls into Brighton & Hove where this was appropriate for the area. If planning controls were introduced, this would help to ensure balanced and mixed communities across the city.

The Planning Strategy Team should also consider the feasibility of adopting a planning condition regarding the need for universities who have planning permission to expand their educational space to provide a commensurate increase in bed spaces.

The findings should be published as a Supplementary Planning Document, (page 41)

Recommendation 25 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment lobbies central Government on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council with regard to the planning Use Classes Order and the associated permitted development rights, (page 41)

Recommendation 26 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Housing lobbies central Government on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council to request that student housing is given its own targets with regards to providing accommodation, (page 41)

Recommendation 27 - the panel recommends that the Planning Strategy team recognises the need for student accommodation to be planned and that the team considers positively identifying land suitable for halls of residence in the Local Development Framework. The team could consider the scope for including small numbers of units of student housing amongst major new- build developments (page 42)

Provision of Halls of Residence

Recommendation 28 - the panel would suggest that the universities, working with the students' union consider the potential for offering alternative, affordable accommodation in halls of residence for students with low incomes, (page 43)

Recommendation 29 - the panel would suggest that the universities consider whether there is scope to expand the offer of rooms in halls of residence, not only to first year students but also to those second and third years who would like to live there, (page 43)

Recommendation 30 - the panel would suggest to the universities that they explore the possibilities of expanding their portfolio of directly managed properties over the long term, in order to increase the range of options available to student tenants, (page 44)

Student Landlord Issues

Recommendation 31 - the panel recommends that the Private Sector Housing Team discuss the potential benefits of extending the landlord accreditation scheme in relation to student accommodation, which does not fit into the existing Houses of Multiple Occupation accreditation scheme, with representatives from Brighton and Hove's landlord associations and other parties, (page 46)

Empty Properties

Recommendation 32 - the panel recommends that the Empty Properties Team works proactively with student landlords and managing agents to ensure that student properties that are unoccupied can be reused for social housing, (page 46)

Partnership Working and Communications

Recommendation 33 - the panel recommends that a Student Working Group is formed, comprising of both of the universities and local colleges, the council, police, residents representing Residents' Associations, the students' unions, ward councillors, representatives for landlords and community liaison staff or staff from the accommodation teams. This would facilitate ongoing and improved communication and liaison between the partners.

The Group should consider the operational issues caused by the impact of students living in the city and discuss ways of addressing possible solutions where necessary. The Group should also coordinate a shared database of sanctions that the partners already have. (page 48)

Recommendation 34 - the panel recommends the immediate benefits of a shared information pack for all partners in the city to issue to students and that the Student Working Group could implement this as one of their first actions, (page 49)

Recommendation 35 - the panel recommends that the Student Working Group considers the benefits of carrying out a 'Neighbourhood Health Impact Assessment' or a cumulative

impact zone in student neighbourhoods, (page 49)

Positive Impact of Students to Local Community

Recommendation 36 - the panel would recommend that the universities continue to encourage students to take part in volunteering opportunities in the residential areas in the city where there is a significant student population in order to foster improved community relations. The ward councillors and community association should become involved in helping to prioritise tasks, (page 50)

Recommendation 37 - the panel would encourage students, via their Students' Unions, to attend their Local Action Team meetings and to play an active part in the community. (p50)

Part A - Introduction

1-The Scrutiny Review

1.1 The Scrutiny Review on Students in the Community was instigated by members of the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2008, as part of Brighton and Hove City Council's Overview and Scrutiny programme.

Brighton and Hove City Council's draft Housing Strategy had been formulated with extensive reference to issues relating to student housing, but the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee members felt that there was an opportunity for a more focused piece of work on the issues relating to the effect of students living in the local community.

The scrutiny panel was proposed, with its remit to seek to take evidence from local residents including students and from a variety of expert sources, including officers of the City Council, Brighton and Sussex Universities, the police and city landlords, in order to understand the various issues and suggest recommendations to remedy areas where there may be problems. Please see Appendix 2 for copies of the letters and emails and Appendix 4 for a list of witnesses.

1.2 The Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to form the proposed ad-hoc investigative panel to investigate this issue at its 4 September 2008 meeting.
http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000139/M00001586/$$$Minutes.doc.pdf

1.3 Councillors Anne Meadows, Georgia Wrighton and Tony Janio agreed to become panel members. The panel members subsequently elected Councillor Meadows as Chairman of the panel.

1.4 The panel held one public meeting for residents and students to share their experiences with the panel, and three public meetings for evidence gathering, at which invited witnesses spoke to the panel, responding to questions about students in the local community.

1.5 The public meeting was very well attended. Many city residents took the opportunity to share their views about living alongside student households; students from both universities also spoke about their experiences of living in Brighton and Hove. In addition to the public comments, the panel received a number of written submissions from residents on this topic.

1.6 The witnesses at the three evidence gathering meetings included experts on student impact both nationally and locally; representatives for the Strategic Housing Partnership; representatives from Neighbourhood Police; officers of Brighton & Hove City Council (including managers from Private Sector Housing and Housing Strategy, Neighbourhood Renewal, Development Control, Planning Strategy, CityClean,

Environmental Health and Licensing, Council Tax and Strategic Finance); local letting agents; a representative on behalf of the National Federation of Private Landlords; senior officers from both the University of Sussex and Brighton University, and members of staff from both universities.

The panel would like to place on record its thanks to all of the people who took the time and effort to write in to them or gave evidence in person, to the expert witnesses for their invaluable contribution, and to all of the participants for the positive and helpful way in which they discussed the matter with the panel.

2 - Scope of the Review Panel

2.1 The panel members met prior to the first public meeting in order to agree the scope of the review.

2.2 The members agreed that their focus would be to consider how best to investigate the effect of student accommodation in residential areas, whilst recognising the long and short term positive effects of the universities and colleges and their student population for Brighton and Hove. It was important to set the effects in a context of the advantages of having the universities and colleges and their students in the city.

The panel was aware that there were already high-level strategic partnerships in place between Brighton & Hove City Council, both of the city's universities and other housing partners through the work of the Strategic Housing Partnership, one of the family of partners in the Local Strategic Partnership.

The ad hoc panel's work was not intended to duplicate the Strategic Housing Partnership's work but rather to assist its work by considering operational and practical solutions to the effect of student accommodation.

2.3 The panel recognised from the outset that a significant proportion of the negative impacts that they were investigating were not limited to student households, but that they were often indicative of Houses of Multiple Occupation.

Brighton has one of the highest proportions of privately rented homes in England outside London, although not all of these will be Houses of Multiple Occupation. Nationally 48 per cent of heads of household in the private rented sector are under 35, compared to 20 per cent in social renting and 13 per cent in owner occupation (http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingresearch/housinasurvevs/survevofenalishhousina/sehlivetables/survevenalish/224421/)

The panel also recognised that residents might not differentiate between a student and a non-student occupied House of Multiple Occupation, tending to assume that the property was tenanted by students if it is tenanted by young people. Nevertheless, it was still beneficial to consider the impact of students on residents and neighbourhoods, as there was felt to be a correlation between student households and higher reports of residents' concerns.

2.4 The panel members had an initial range of ideas of the witnesses that they wished to invite to speak, but they felt that it was essential for residents to be able to have their input into the review at an early stage, so that members could attempt to identify and

understand the various issues involved from the outset. With this in mind, the first meeting was publicised as being open to anybody who wished to speak to the panel; written submissions were also actively encouraged, through press releases in the local newspaper, *The Argus,* and on the council's website, www.brighton-hove.gov.uk.

2.5 There was evidence from the content of some residents' contact with ward councillors suggesting that student housing - and in particular what was felt to be an overwhelming level of student accommodation in some areas- was causing a significant level of resentment and unhappiness that it was hoped could be avoided or reduced.

2.6 Following the public meeting and the written submissions, the panel finalised their list of invited witnesses, arranging for the relevant people to be able to respond to the points that had been raised by residents.

2.7 During the investigative panel, the focus was on the two large universities in the city, the University of Sussex and University of Brighton as the majority of students living in the city attend one of these two institutions. However this should not be taken to mean that the panel's discussions and recommendations exclude other establishments such as City College and Brighton Institute of Modern Music, amongst others, as both of these have their own students living in private rented accommodation and will invariably have their own student impact issues.

2.8 Due to the time-limited nature of an ad hoc panel (with constitutional guidance that the work should be conducted within three meetings or less) the panel took an early decision to focus on areas of residents' complaints and concern, particularly within the accommodation arena, as this was felt to be the focus of residents' dissatisfaction. As a related issue, the panel also wished to cover associated aspects of student impact, such as the effect on Council Tax due to student-only households, as this has an effect on the city as a whole.

2.9 Again, due to the time restrictions of an ad hoc panel, at the scoping stage the members also took the conscious decision not to actively investigate the many positive aspects that students living in Brighton and Hove brought to the city, although several members of the public and a number of the invited witnesses did make specific reference to this. In particular, the panel decided that it would not be practical to include the economic effect of students on the city in its scope.

2.10 The final report will be considered by the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the parent committee of this panel. The report will then go to Cabinet Members for a formal decision on the recommendations that have been made.

3 - Number and Areas of Student Households

3.1 There are two universities in Brighton & Hove, the University of Sussex and University of Brighton, as well as a number of other smaller colleges including City College and the Brighton Institute of Modern Music.

3.2 Mapping from 2002-2007 showed the greatest concentration of student households in the 'traditional' student areas of Hanover, Hartington Road and Moulescoomb but the situation had been fluid. Recent years have seen significant numbers of students residing near London Road Station and in Regency Ward, with future movements into

Hollingdean anticipated.

3.3 Joanna Sage, a research student from the University of Brighton has provided the panel with a breakdown of student households from both of the universities in Brighton and Hove, by ward for the 2006/07 intake.

Table One shows students living in the private rented sector or their own homes (but not those living in the parental home). Table Two shows students living in halls of residence, for example, those living in Phoenix Halls in Southover Street.

Table One:

Ward	Students in Private Rented Sector or Own Home
Withdean	189
North Portslade	54
Hangleton and Knoll	92
Stanford	75
Moulsecoomb and Bevendean	1715
Hollingbury and Stanmer	711
Rottingdean Coastal	184
Woodingdean	63
Wish	103
Goldsmid	347
St. Peter's and North Laine	1650
South Portslade	81
Preston Park	568
Patcham	85
Hanover and Elm Grove	1497
East Brighton	253
Brunswick and Adelaide	429
Westbourne	154
Central Hove	210
Regency	569
Queen's Park	697
TOTAL	9726

Source: University of Brighton and University of Sussex enrolment: data

Coverage: 2006-07 intake, Brighton & Hove City

Description This data refers to undergraduate students living in the Private Rented Sector, or in their own home - this does not refer to the parental home, but a home owned by the student or their family, but lived in solely by the student. This data does not include the postgraduate population.

Table Two:

Ward	Number of Students Living in Halls/ University Managed Accommodation
Withdean	13
North Portslade	0
Hangleton and Knoll	3
Stanford	0
Moulsecoomb and Bevendean	419
Hollingbury and Stanmer	3334
Rottingdean Coastal	4
Woodingdean	0
Wish	0
Goldsmid	29
St. Peter's and North Laine	117
South Portslade	1
Preston Park	43
Patcham	1
Hanover and Elm Grove	161
East Brighton	6
Brunswick and Adelaide	179
Westbourne	3
Central Hove	3
Regency	230
Queen's Park	56
TOTAL	4602

Source: University of Brighton and University of Sussex enrolment data

Coverage: 2006-07 intake, Brighton & Hove City

Description: This data refers to the undergraduate student population living in halls of residence or University managed accommodation, and does not include the postgraduate population. This data has been mapped according to student term time postcode data provided by the student at the point of enrolment. Students living outside of the Brighton & Hove City boundary are not included in this data set.

3.4 It can been seen from both of these tables that there are some areas of Brighton & Hove that are more sought after and populated by students as areas to live, in particular, the four Brighton wards of Moulescoomb and Bevendean, Hollingbury and Stanmer, Hanover and Elm Grove, and St Peters and North Laine, each of which had in excess of 1500 students in the ward.

At the opposite end of the scale, there were a number of wards within Brighton & Hove that had a very low student population. Six wards - North Portslade, Hangleton and Knoll, Stanford, Woodingdean, South Portslade and Patcham - each had fewer than one hundred students living in the ward. It can be seen from the numbers above that

students are more likely to live in Brighton rather than Hove.

3.5 This pattern of a concentrated number of student households in certain areas of the city is not unique to Brighton and Hove. It is a situation that has been occurring nationally in university towns and cities. It has been termed 'studentification', a term coined by Dr Darren Smith of the University of Brighton.

'Studentification' can indicate the social and environmental changes caused by very large numbers of students living in particular areas of a town or city (Macmillan English Dictionary - http://www.macmillandictionary.com/New-Words/040124-studentification.htm)

However the term 'studentification' has taken on negative connotations in the media - page 11 http://resource.nusonline.co.uk/media/resource/communitv%20report1.pdf- and the National Union of Students Welfare Campaign looking into the issue of student housing suggested that the term 'students in the community' was used as an alternative; we have endeavoured to use 'students in the community' in this report.

Part B - Evidence Gathering

1 -Public Engagement

1.1 Panel members considered it essential for residents to have the opportunity to describe how their lives were affected by students living in their neighbourhoods at the start of the process so that the investigation could be resident-led.

1.2 An article was published in the Argus on 4 October 2008 and on Brighton & Hove City Council's website at the same time inviting people to either write in with their comments or to attend the public meeting at Hove Town Hall on 17 October 2008. Subsequently, stories were published in the Argus on 21 October, 27 October, 29 October, 30 October, 31 October, 10 November and 24 November 2008. It was the topic of an on-line 'Friday Inquisition' on the Argus's website on 31 October 2008, where members of the public emailed in their questions about student housing and Councillor Meadows and representatives from both universities publically responded to the questions. http://www.theargus.co.uk/search/3808497.Councillor Anne Meadows and Brighton universities Student Unions /

Please see Appendix 1 for the press release and Appendix 5 for copies of the text of the above articles.

1.3 The panel ensured that both Sussex and Brighton's students' unions were aware of the public meeting. The student union presidents and students from both universities were encouraged to attend and did attend the meeting.

1.4 The panel received 42 individual letters and emails from residents, and a representation from David Lepper MP on behalf of 87 residents from the Elm Grove area of Brighton. Please see Appendix 2 for copies of the text of the letters, emails and representations.

1.5 Members heard detailed submissions and statements from twelve residents including students at the public meeting on 17 October 2008 in Hove Town Hall. The local media attended, as they did for the evidence gathering meetings, and stories and letters were published in the Argus after the meetings.

1.6 Members would like to formally thank everybody who took the trouble to contact them or to come to the public meeting. Members were particularly pleased to hear from students from both universities, including the presidents of both Students' Unions.

Residents' Comments

1.7 As mentioned in Section 2a, there are four areas of Brighton and Hove which have a much higher student population than others. It was anticipated that the majority of resident comments would therefore come from residents living in those four wards - Moulescoomb and Bevendean, Hollingbury and Stanmer, Hanover and Elm Grove, and St Peters and North Laine. This proved to be the case.

1.8 Residents expressed a wide variety of views, both positive and negative, about the impact of student households in their neighbourhoods and in the city generally.

Residents were, in general, keen not to lay the blame for problems with students as a whole, recognising that the majority of student households did not cause trouble.

Residents felt that it was the problems that had been experienced were largely due to a combination of factors, including a lack of information being given to student households on a variety of issues such as refuse collection days, a lack of planning legislation specifically on student housing.

1.9 The more negative comments that the panel received from the letters, emails and the public meeting are summarised in the list below.

- noise complaints from within student houses or from halls of residence
- noise complaints in the street, particularly late at night when students were returning home or due to non smoking legislation within buildings
- refuse and recycling was being left out on the wrong collection days
- refuse, especially bulky waste, was being left on the pavement or in front gardens for extended periods of time, causing an inconvenience
- student households having multiple cars per house, and using a lot of on-road parking spaces
- residents did not know who to contact when they had a problem with a student household, or what action they were able to take
- student landlords did not maintain the properties adequately, leading to a run-down appearance in the neighbourhood and a poor standard of accommodation
- that there were no restrictions on the number of student households in an area,
- some areas were becoming saturated with student households, affecting the balance of the community and the infrastructure.

It is important to note that there were problems associated with accommodation in both halls of residence and in private sector housing.

1.10 In addition, the students who attended the panel - who are also residents in the city- raised further issues:

- There was a wide spread tendency to view all problems associated with young people as being student related but this was not always the case
- There should be an accreditation system for student landlords, to ensure that all accommodation was of an acceptable standard
- The council, universities and students' unions should work together on campaigns that targeted students
- Students brought a lot of positive benefits to the city, and carried out volunteering work which benefited the city. They should be encouraged to play an active role in the community
- The Students Unions could encourage students to use public transport rather than private cars

More information is given on each of these points in the relevant chapters of this report.

2 -Evidence Gathering Meetings

2.1 Following the public meeting on 17 October 2008, the panel held three expert witness meetings in public, where invited witnesses came to speak to the panel about their thoughts on the impact of students living in Brighton and Hove. These were on 7

November 2008, 21 November 2008 and 5 December 2008. Residents and students attended each of the meetings.

The panel decided to divide the meeting location between Hove Town Hall and Brighton Town Hall in order to allow for greater accessibility for members of the public.

Full copies of the minutes for each of the four public meetings can be found in Appendix 3.

2.2 7 November 2008 in Hove Town Hall

2.2(i) Dr Smith, Reader in Geography, and Ms Sage, University of Brighton told the panel that they had studied the effect of increasing student numbers on several cities across the UK; they had mapped student households in Brighton and Hove. There was fluidity in the student housing market, with different areas of the city having higher concentrations and others lower numbers. The panel heard that Dr Smith and Ms Sage anticipated that there would be more student movement into Hollingdean in the near future.

The panel heard that Dr Smith and Ms Sage did not think it likely that de-studentification (where the overall numbers of students fall significantly) would occur in the city as it was an attractive destination for students. Both universities anticipated their attendance figures rising or staying stable until at least 2015.

Dr Smith and Ms Sage's research had shown that, in cities where de-studentification had occurred in some areas, this did not mean that the properties reverted to use as family housing; instead they were used for young professional tenants.

2.2 (ii) Mr Mannall, Community Liaison Officer, University of Brighton spoke about his role at the University of Brighton. He liaised with different agencies across the city on behalf of the University, as well as investigating and resolving individual complaints. Mr Mannall said that agencies welcomed there being a liaison officer.

Mr Mannall thought that it might be useful for there to be a shared information/ induction pack for all of the educational institutions to use, as well as the landlords, letting agents, the local authority and other partners. University of Brighton students were currently made aware of the standard of behaviour that was expected through compulsory inductions; the Student's Union was very involved in this process.

2.2(iii) Mr Newell, Community 2020 Partnership Officer, Brighton and Hove City Council spoke on behalf of the Strategic Housing Partnership, who were carrying out their own investigation into student impact on the city from both a positive and a negative stance. The Strategic Housing Partnership was focused on high-level strategic planning, coordinating discussions between various partners.

2.2(iv) Mr Reid, Head of Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing, Brighton and Hove City Council told the panel about the legislation relating to Houses of Multiple Occupation from a private sector housing viewpoint. Legislation was fairly restrictive, both with regards to the way in which it defined a House of Multiple Occupation - a property of more than two storeys and/ or housing more than five people not living together as a single household - but also in terms of the powers given to local authorities. These powers tended to focus on ensuring a certain standard of

accommodation rather than managing any effect on the local community. Mr Reid said that most city landlords already provided good quality accommodation; any problems could be addressed through close working together between the universities and the local authority.

2.2(v) Mr Allen, Director, ebndc (East Brighton and New Deal for Communities) Partnership and Head of Neighbourhood Renewal Development and Strategy, Brighton and Hove City Council spoke about the positive contributions made by students to Brighton and Hove. Both of the universities were heavily involved in community and voluntary work in the city.

2.3 21 November 2008 in Brighton Town Hall

2.3(i Sergeant Belfield, Street Policing Team explained that his team covered Hanover, St Peters and the North Laine areas. These were areas with high numbers of student residents, in both private rented accommodation and in halls of residence. Sergeant Belfield said that in his experience, students did not tend to cause difficulties in the city centre, but that the Street Policing Team would be tend to be called for noise complaints from students returning home or from noisy house parties. The police had powers to become involved in closing down noisy parties; tackling parking obstructions and double parking offences and so on.

Sergeant Belfield felt that students were often unaware that they were causing noise problems; it was important to raise students' awareness, perhaps by students attending residents' meetings to gauge the scale of the upset caused.

2.3(ii) Mr Nichols, Head of Environmental Health and Licensing, Brighton and Hove City Council explained that his officers had a statutory duty to investigate all noise complaints received. The largest proportion of environmental health complaints were about noise nuisance, with over 3200 complaints received in 2007/8. It was not possible to calculate what percentage of the complaints received were about student households as this information was not collected.

The panel heard that a variety of penalties could be imposed, with equipment seizure being the most stringent. In 2007/8 149 noise abatement notices had been issued, with 16 prosecutions and two audio equipment seizures. Noise nuisance complaints had escalated by approximately 10% last year and 7% the year before. So far in 2008/9, there had been six equipment seizures [This had now increased to eight equipment seizures by February 2009]. It was hard to quantify why complaints had escalated, but it could be due to a combination of factors including better audio equipment, smoking legislation leading to more people being outdoors, and the removal of artificially early fixed licensing hours. Mr Nichols listed the various ways that the team could investigate noise complaints; it was not limited to calling out the noise patrol.

Mr Nichols said that he felt that addressing the problem of street noise was a gap in protection for residents. The recent Noise Act had introduced the power to issue fixed penalty notices of £100 fine or £1000 on prosecution which assisted in remedying sporadic, occasional loud parties. The council had issued 67 warning notices in 2007/08 and 71 warning notices between April 2008 and 22 January 2009.

The Environmental Protection team carried out customer satisfaction surveys, which had shown a generally high level of customer satisfaction with the service. The most

common comment from residents was that the hours of the service should be extended or operated on other days of the week.

2.3(iii) Mr Fraser, Head of Planning Strategy, Brighton and Hove City Council told the panel that the current Local Plan had been based on information from 2001 at which time student housing had not been an issue for the city; therefore student housing had not featured within it. Central government gave local authorities various housing targets, but that there was no government target for student housing. He would be wary of allocating land for student-specific accommodation in the city centre, due to the competing demands for any such land.

Mr Fraser did not feel that planning controls were the way to tackle problems caused by student accommodation; instead, it would be more beneficial to work with the universities and housing colleagues to find ways of providing more adequate student accommodation near the universities. The Planning Strategy Team was actively working with both universities to address possible solutions to the student housing problem.

2.3(iv) Ms Walsh, Head of Development Control, Brighton and Hove City Council, outlined the role of the Development Control Team in making recommendations on planning applications, and in investigating breaches of planning control. Ms Walsh clarified the legislation on Houses of Multiple Occupation from a planning control perspective, which differed from the private sector housing viewpoint.

2.3(v) Ms Marston, Head of CityClean, and Mr Marmura, Operations Manager, Brighton and Hove City Council, explained CityClean's policies with regard to student households. Households of five or more people could request a larger wheeled bin from CityClean. There was no limit (within reason) to the number of recycling boxes that a household could have. Problems such as leaving refuse or recycling out on the incorrect day were not a student-specific problem but a city-wide issue; CityClean would be happy to consider other communication campaigns to help address this. CityClean worked with the universities on a communication campaign. It was felt that more could be done with landlords to keep information flowing to student households. CityClean would welcome telephone calls from residents advising them of any households that might be causing problems.

2.4 5 December 2008 in Brighton Town Hall

2.4 (i) Mr Ireland, Head of Strategic Finance, and Ms Pearce, Assistant Director, Customer Services, Brighton and Hove City Council, spoke about the effect of student households on Council Tax, both in terms of households being exempt and in terms of the unnecessary costs incurred by the local authority in billing households who had not claimed exemption. This was particularly costly for those cases where the council had issued court proceedings before the household notified of their exemption status. The Council Tax Team already worked closely with the universities to try and encourage students to register for exemptions as early as possible, but it was always possible to improve the situation and raise students' awareness.

2.4(ii) Mr Pearce, MTM Lettings said that he had been a student landlord in the city for 14 years; MTM had been in operation for five years. They managed approximately two hundred properties in the city, mostly being student lets in popular student areas. MTM were keen to tackle any negative student impact issues, and issued an induction pack with useful information. MTM operated a complaints procedure and addressed resident

complaints directly with the students where necessary.

Mr Pearce felt that the supply of student accommodation exceeded demand, and that he already had some empty properties on his books. The key factor was the quality of the accommodation.

2.4(iii) Mr Shields, G4 Lets said that G4 Lets focused on student lets, particularly in the Ditchling Road area. G4 gave their tenants a welcome pack with useful information and aimed to visit each property once a month. If a neighbour reported a problem household, G4 would address this directly with the student.

Mr Shields spoke about the trend of adding conservatories to student properties in order to create a living area. Mr Shields felt there were a number of benefits to converting the garden to a conservatory; students tended not to garden and so it made the space more useful.

2.4(iv) Ms Rich, National Federation of Private Landlords explained her qualifications to the panel; these included being a previous director of the National Federation of Private Landlords and author of the Federation's Landlord Training Manual. Ms Rich felt that it was becoming harder for landlords to let to students due to the lack of power given to landlords to take any action against problem tenants. It would take several months for a landlord to take a case to court; this was not a practical solution. Ms Rich did not feel that planning controls would be the answer to tackling the problems; it depended on micro-management. Ms Rich felt that one solution to noisy tenants could be to introduce on the spot fines, to be imposed by the council or police.

2.4(v) Mr House, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Brighton said that the university needed to expand its campus accommodation; if it wished to offer first year accommodation to those students who had expressed an interest, it would have to double the current level. There were plans to expand Varley Hall and to develop land in Circus Street. However private sector housing also had a key role.

Mr House spoke about the problems that had been reported from Phoenix Halls; the university had been surprised by the current level of complaints as this was a relatively new situation. The university was committed to dealing with the problems and resolving them for the benefits of all parties. The university had employed a fulltime Community Liaison Officer, which he hoped would show their commitment to tackling problems. They were also reviewing the adverse effect of the smoking ban, recognising that students gathering to smoke outdoors had caused significant noise problems.

2.4(vi) Mr Dudley, Director of Residential, Sport and Trading Services and Ms Holness, Residential Services Manager, University of Sussex said that the university did not have a designated community liaison officer but that they suggested residents contacted the Housing Team in the case of any problems. Ms Holness said that the university did not tend to receive many complaints about its students in general. The university took steps to teach skills for life to their first year students living in halls.

The university was committed to housing all first year students in university managed accommodation. An exit survey was carried out with first year students leaving halls; 45% of students would like to have remained living in halls for a further year. There was almost 100% occupancy rate for the accommodation, with a majority of students stating that they believed them to offer value for money.

A study was underway looking at shared services with the University of Brighton; it was possible that recommendations from this might include the University of Sussex having its own community liaison officer, and improved communication channels between the two universities.

Part C - Recommendations

1 - Next steps

1.1 Following the public meeting and the three expert witness meetings, the panel met to consider all of the evidence that they heard and to suggest recommendations that might improve or affect some of the negative student effects that residents had raised.

1.2 Recommendations that have been made about council services will need to be considered and responded to by the relevant Cabinet Ministers. There are recommendations which will be made to the Cabinet Member for Housing; recommendations made to the Cabinet Member for Environment; recommendations made to the Cabinet Member for Central Services; and recommendations made to the Cabinet Member for Communities.

1.3 There are a number of suggestions that the panel has made that are solely for the universities. The panel acknowledges that the universities will have their own requirements and priorities, and that the council cannot impose its own rules on the universities. Nevertheless, there were a number of issues that residents raised which the panel wished to address as much as they were able. It is hoped that the universities will give reasonable consideration to the suggestions that have been made.

Recommendations

2 - Tackling Negative Impact in Residential Areas

2.1 The panel heard about a range of ways in which student households had a negative effect on residents' day to day living. These included noise nuisance in a variety of forms, problems with refuse and recycling, and student households having more than one car, thereby taking up an excessive number of parking spaces.

2.2 Noise Nuisance

'all night parties were a very regular, sometimes nightly occurrence both at the Phoenix and in the streets and gardens backing onto mine'

'there is the everyday disturbance that happens when people come home drunk at 2am, chase each other screaming up the stairs...a house filled with fire doors slamming through the night'

'the sshh campaign is a great idea'

2.2(i) Nuisance caused by noise was one of the areas most commonly raised by residents who contacted the panel or who spoke at the public meeting and it is clearly an issue that generates a high level of public feeling.

Complaints fell into two broad themes, noise caused by students whilst they were inside their house, and noise caused whilst students were returning to their homes or were gathering outside them.

2.2(ii) Noise from within a student property could be because of a late night party or students and friends returning home late at night, or by slamming fire doors that are required under House of Multiple Occupation legislation

2.2 (iii) Residents told the panel that noise nuisance caused by students was the biggest issue and caused the most concern for residents. They commented on the current noise patrol service provided by Brighton & Hove City Council and its effectiveness in tackling noise complaints:

The service was currently only in operation on weekends until 3am, which meant that it could not address the issue of students coming home after clubs closed and having parties. It was suggested that some students might deliberately choose to have parties after 3am, knowing that the noise patrol was no longer in operation. If a house party was broken up, it was often the case that the noise was simply transferred into the street outside. Residents suggested that the service should be available on weekdays and with extended hours of service to help tackle some of the later parties

In addition, some residents felt that the current system of issuing diary sheets to people who made complaints about noise nuisance did not adequately address the noise complaints. For example, it might be the case that different houses in the same street had parties on different nights, and the noise diary sheets that are issued was not suitable for capturing this cumulative nuisance information.

In addition, some people felt that noise was more of a problem during the week, with students coming home late, taxi engines running, car doors slamming, people shouting, noise coming from rooms in the attic or the conservatory, front and internal doors banging and so on. This problem was exacerbated by the fire doors in the house; often the doors would be slammed shut throughout the day and the night. This could be addressed by insisting that door closers be fitted and maintained.

Residents commented on the length of the prosecution process in relation to noise nuisance; it could be the case that the offending neighbours might have moved on before the process is over, and potentially another set of noisy neighbours had moved in, meaning a new prosecution process must be started

2.2(iv) External noise nuisance was often caused by students returning home late at night and forgetting that other people were asleep or being disturbed by the noise. Other factors included students smoking outside properties due to the ban on smoking inside properties.

Residents in Hanover complained particularly about Phoenix Halls, and about the Podium, a large space where students gathered, often for extended periods of time well into the night. Due to the layout of the Hanover streets and houses, residents said that noise echoed around the streets and through the houses. Residents said that they had tried to complain to the security staff on duty at the halls and had asked them to take action, but that there seemed to be little that the staff were able to do to address the noise on a permanent basis. Some residents felt that it would make a significant difference to the noise levels if there were more security staff on duty; they appreciated that there was a mobile patrol that could attend from the Falmer site but this would invariably mean that the problem had already occurred and the patrol was attending in

reaction to this. If there were more security staff on site at Phoenix Halls, this would be a preventative measure. It was also requested that signs were installed on the halls site asking that noise be kept to a minimum after 11 pm.

Residents welcomed the SShh campaign and said that it had made some improvements but that these had been undermined by the decision not to allow smoking on campus, leading to students smoking outside the halls on Southover Street, and the subsequent noise that was caused.

2.2(v) The Head of Environmental Health and Licensing told the panel that noise control was an accepted local priority in Brighton and Hove. The panel heard about the noise nuisance complaints that were received and investigated, and the penalties that could be imposed, including the recent Fixed Penalty Notices issued under the recent Noise Act. The panel heard about the different ways that noise nuisance complaints could be investigated and dealt with. The noise patrol team was just one way to gather evidence; other methods included interviewing and corresponding with complainants and alleged offenders, collecting statements, installing recording equipment, visiting the premises at any time of the day or night, carrying out surveillance and stakeouts. However it was difficult to address complaints about sporadic noise complaints.

The Environmental Health and Licensing team operated an out of hours emergency service to deal with all environmental health emergencies, for example, widespread public noise nuisance, food poisoning and infectious disease outbreaks, severe pollution incidents, for instance, major fires, food hazard warnings, work place major injuries and fatalities. It is staffed on a voluntary basis by four managers and is unfunded, but its officers are on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and are called out approximately twice a month.

The team had carried out customer satisfaction surveys which showed a generally high level of customer satisfaction with the service. The most common comment from residents was that the hours of the service should be extended or operated on other days of the week.

2.2(vi) The University of Brighton said that they were aware that the Phoenix Halls had become a focus of resident concerns in relation to noise over the past year. In response to these concerns, the University had switched to direct employment of a night security officer with back up support from the University mobile security team, relocated the staff office at Phoenix to provide a better overview of the site, and were due to install an upgraded CCTV system with audio capacity and additional cameras. The University acknowledged that the smoking ban in halls introduced as a result of the legislation banning smoking in public places had resulted in an increase in noise from students smoking outside and they were exploring whether a shelter could alleviate the problem.

The universities and students told the panel that the SShh (Silent Students, Happy Homes) campaign was in operation in Brighton and Hove. The campaign aimed to ensure students were respectful of their neighbours to assist in creating a good community atmosphere.

The University of Brighton Students' Union launched its first SShh campaign in Eastbourne in 2006; this was successful in raising awareness about noise disturbance with the students, and the Students' Union reported receiving fewer complaints following its introduction. The University of Brighton's Students' Union had decided to launch the

SShh campaign across all of its campuses.
(http://www.ubsu.net/content/index.php?page=13651)

2.3 Recommendations

2.3 (i) The panel wished it to be noted that they fully appreciated all of the work that the Environmental Protection team was carrying out; they recognised that it was a service that was in high demand across the city and they wished the team to carry on the work that they were doing. The panel was aware that this was not an issue that could be dealt with solely by the council. The panel appreciated the fact that the SShh campaign was in operation in the city, recognising that this was a positive step to addressing some of the late night noise complaints that they had heard.

With these points in mind, the panel wished to make some recommendations to enhance those services:

2.3(ii) The panel was mindful of the fact that many residents who made submissions requested that the noise service be extended. The panel heard that the current provision did not adequately address the noise nuisance incidents in the city. The current patrol was consistently working at maximum capacity and it was clear that there was more demand than could be met by current provision.

The panel was aware that the noise patrol team currently operated between 10pm and 3am and that analysis had been carried out into the frequency of calls that were received. Between 10-11 pm, on average the team received 25% of their calls; 11pm-12am, a further 25%; between 12-1 am, a further 25%; between 1-2am, 12.5% and between 2-3pm, the team received 12.5%. The inference was that call numbers and requests for service tapered down throughout the evening and early morning, although there was still a significant demand for the service.

The panel was aware that the annual unit cost for providing one night of noise patrol for five hours once a week was approximately £25, 000. The panel recognised, therefore, that there would be considerable resource implications to extending the noise patrol service.

Recommendation 1 - The panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment extends the council-run Noise Patrol to operate over more nights of the week, probably Wednesday and Thursday, and to extend the existing weekend operating hours.

2.3(iii) The panel heard that the Environmental Protection Team encouraged residents to report noise complaints to the council, whether this happened retrospectively or at the time, in order and to try and avoid a recurrence of the noise nuisance and to enable a central record of reported noise problems. It would generally be the case that a household that had caused an alleged noise nuisance would receive a warning letter from the Environmental Health Team; this was often enough to stop the problem from recurring.

However it did not appear that many residents were aware of the service. The panel felt that if awareness was raised of this facility, it might help address some of the frustrations that were expressed about the current operating hours. The panel considered various options to publicise the service, in order to reach as many residents as possible. It was felt that the two recommendations below could be combined to

ensure that residents had a twenty-four hour service.

Recommendation 2 - The panel recommends that there should be increased publicity to advise residents that they can report a noise nuisance problem retrospectively; this could be included in City News, on the council's website and perhaps in leaflets in public offices.

Recommendation 3 - The panel recommends that the Out of Hours emergency noise patrol service should be properly resourced and properly publicised.

2.3(iv) The panel heard that other local authorities, for example, Canterbury, had considered the introduction of a non-emergency 24 hour telephone line. The intention was that this would be used when the Noise Patrol was not in operation but the noise nuisance was not felt to be an emergency. The telephone line could be another means of recording noise nuisance complaints, keeping a central database of incidents and taking the necessary steps to deal with it.

The panel felt that this was an option that ought to be explored further within Brighton & Hove, as it may be another way for residents to register non-emergency noise nuisance complaints with the authority, and for the authority to build up a record of persistent offenders and assess the cumulative impact of such nuisance.

Recommendation 4 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment resources a 24 hour telephone line for the public to report non-emergency noise and anti-social behaviour.

2.3(v) The panel heard from residents that Brighton & Hove City Council's noise nuisance procedures and the issuing of noise diaries did not always seem to be particularly useful in addressing sporadic problems. The panel recognised that there were limited resources for the team and they were mindful that there were statutory requirements on the council but they felt that there were benefits to be gained from reviewing the team's procedures and considering whether there were alternative ways of addressing intermittent noise nuisance complaints.

Recommendation 5 - the panel recommends that the Environmental Health and Licensing Team reviews its noise nuisance procedures in order to assess whether the noise nuisance diary sheets are always the most effective and user-friendly way of addressing noise complaints.

2.3(vi) The panel heard that the University of Brighton promoted the SShh campaign across all of its campuses, including those in Southover Street. This was welcomed and the panel would encourage its ongoing expansion and promotion, particularly bearing in mind the turn-over of students on campus. The panel also felt that it might be beneficial to publicise the SShh campaign to people outside of the university so that residents were aware that the matter was not being ignored; this might help relations between students and non-students.

Residents told the panel that they were annoyed by students parking their cars and playing music from the car with their windows open. The panel felt that this was an issue that could be tackled by the SShh campaign. Residents said they would also welcome firmer action being taken against students playing music from the Phoenix Halls late at night with the windows open.

Recommendation 6 - the panel would like to see the SShh campaign developed by Students' Unions and publicised widely in conjunction with community association representatives and ward councillors. This should be an ongoing annual campaign due to the turnover of students.

2.3(vii) The panel heard that many residents were distressed and upset by the noise caused by students returning home late at night and it was felt that tackling street noise should be a priority for partners. The nuisance was exacerbated by the fact that the noise was unpredictable and it could extend for long periods into the night. Residents felt that this was a particularly student problem rather than one caused by young people in general. The panel felt that this noise nuisance was not generally within the local authority's power to address; it was suggested that it would be better addressed by the universities, the Student Union and the Street Policing Team.

Recommendation 7 - the panel recommends that the universities, the Police and the Student Union work together to find ways to jointly address the issue of street noise nuisance in residential areas, caused by groups of students returning from nights out.

2.3(viii) The panel heard from residents who lived near the Phoenix Halls in Southover Street that students often gathered in groups on an outside area known as the Podium; this was either when they had returned from nights out, or when they wished to smoke, as it was not permitted to smoke inside the halls. The panel heard that, due to the narrow residential streets, noise echoed from the students all around the streets and caused significant noise nuisance.

The panel would like the University of Brighton to consider whether there is a more suitable outside space that might be used instead of the Podium. The panel considered recommending that the University re-allowed smoking in private rooms, as this is within the University's power, but it was felt that this would be unfair on other residents in the property.

The panel would like the university to consider introducing a policy asking students to close their windows before playing music at night, in order to minimize noise nuisance for neighbours. The panel would also like the university to install clearer, more visible signs across the Southover Street site, requesting that noise was kept to a minimum after 11pm.

Recommendation 8 - the panel recommends that the University of Brighton considers whether there is a more suitable outside space that might be used, and that measures are put in place to address noise from smokers and other students gathering on the Podium at the Southover Street Phoenix Halls.

Recommendation 9 - The panel would recommend that the University of Brighton considers introducing a policy asking students on the Phoenix Halls site to close their windows before playing music at night, in order to minimize noise nuisance for neighbours. The panel would also ask that clearer, more visible signage is installed across the Phoenix Halls site asking that noise is kept to a minimum after 11pm.

2.3(ix) The panel heard that residents near to Phoenix Halls also expressed frustrations with

the level of staffing allocated to the halls, particularly late at night. When residents contacted the halls to complain about the noise caused by students gathering on the Podium, it did not seem that the security staff were able to control the noise on a permanent basis.

Residents asked whether consideration could be given to either moving the night reception area to a location nearer to the Podium in order to monitor any disruptive behaviour by students, or alternatively whether there could be a porter's lodge on the Podium to overlook the area. The panel would ask the university to consider both of these suggestions.

Recommendation 10 - the panel would like to suggest that the University of Brighton considers the staffing resources that might be needed to provide an effective way of managing and minimising the noise nuisance and how its premises in residential areas are controlled.

2.3(x) A number of residents explained that, inadvertently, the design of the Phoenix Halls of Residence and the inclusion of the Podium has led to unanticipated noise nuisance due to students gathering outside the halls. The panel recognised that this was entirely accidental but they would like to ask the universities to be mindful of what has happened in Phoenix Halls and to bear this in mind in any future developments. The panel will also recommend that this suggestion is included in any planning documents that relate to student accommodation.

With regard to the Phoenix Halls, residents were concerned that there were no trees or bushes to conceal some of the noise from the halls, and asked whether these could be introduced.

Recommendation 11 - the panel recommends that the University of Brighton considers planting trees and bushes on the Phoenix Halls site, in order to assess whether this would help to mask any noise. The panel would like to suggest that the university talks to local residents about their experiences after a trial period.

Recommendation 12 - the panel would like to ask that the universities and developers have regard to possible noise impact on neighbours and the particular architectural nature of the area in which they will be built when they are being designed, especially in relation to the provision of smoking areas for residents. The panel also recommends that this suggestion is formalized in any relevant planning documents relating to student accommodation

2.4 Community Liaison Staff

2.4(i) The panel heard that the University of Brighton had chosen to employ a full time member of staff as a Community Liaison Officer. The Community Liaison Officer's remit includes: coordinating activity to promote social responsibility and good citizenship amongst students; advising students on maintaining good relations with local communities; liaising with community groups in areas near to the university's campuses; mediating between students and residents as necessary and acting as a focal point of contact for non-student residents with a complaint.

The Community Liaison Officer said that he was aware that partner organisations in the city welcomed his role and that they found it very useful to have a central contact.

2.4(ii) The University of Sussex told the panel that they had opted not to have a designated Community Liaison Officer but that they had a dedicated housing team who could assist with any issues or complaints about student households. The University said that it seemed that they would need to do more work to promote awareness of this service amongst residents.

2.4(iii) Residents told the panel that they appreciated having a known person to contact when they had problems with particular households and that the Community Liaison Officer was very effective at dealing with complaints about students from the University of Brighton and in identifying practical ways forward. The panel heard that some residents found it more difficult to make complaints about students from the University of Sussex; the existing service was reported to be insufficiently responsive to their needs. There seemed to be a lack of awareness about the role of the University of Sussex housing team in addressing complaints. If residents wished to complain about a student household, the residents would not necessarily be aware of whether they were students of Sussex or of Brighton. Residents were adamant that there should be a consistent service across the city, regardless of which university the students came from.

2.4(iv) Residents from the Elm Grove Local Action Team requested that university representatives liaise regularly with Local Action Teams and other residents groups across the city, ensuring that their contact details are known to residents. It was asked that the universities provide clear and consistent advice to students about avoiding neighbour disputes, as well as informing them of their rights as tenants and providing support for them to enforce those rights where necessary.

2.5 Recommendations

2.5(i) The panel considered the comments made by the universities and by residents. They felt that there was a case to be made for the University of Sussex to appoint its own Community Liaison Officer, who could work with the officer from the University of Brighton to address issues about students across the city.

The panel felt that, in the interim period, it would be beneficial for the University of Sussex to promote their existing housing team's service, advising residents that they could contact the housing team if they wished to complain about a student household from the University of Sussex. The University of Sussex agreed that it would be useful to raise awareness of how to contact the team.

Recommendation 13 - the panel suggests that the University of Sussex considers following the good practice established by the University of Brighton and establishes a role of a dedicated Community Liaison Officer for the University of Sussex. The two officers could work together to address shared student problems across Brighton and Hove.

2.6 Refuse & Recycling

'they [students] do not take a blind bit of notice about the rubbish collection day, when their bags get ripped open by seagulls they just leave it on the pavement'

'the majority of students in this area do not recycle'

'at the end of summer term, the whole contents of houses are thrown onto the streets...this then encourages fly-tipping...it often remains on the pavements for weeks'

2.6(i) When the panel considered the comments made by residents about the influence of student households on residential areas, it was apparent that households who were not sticking to the correct refuse and recycling procedures were a particular problem. However it should be noted that these are not solely student problems, but happen across the city in student and non-student households.

2.6(ii) Residents commented that student households were not always aware of their refuse/ recycling collection day. This could lead to refuse being left out for several days before collection and related environmental/ hygiene problems. Residents and students felt that this was in part due to a lack of information given to student households by CityClean, Brighton & Hove City Council's refuse and recycling service.

The panel heard examples of situations where residents had called CityClean on behalf of the student households to address problems with their refuse collections, as the student households had not been aware of who to contact or what they could request.

As well as problems with the weekly refuse collections, residents told the panel that they were unhappy about bulky waste and furniture being left either in front gardens or on the pavement. It was quite often left there for long periods of time, which was not only unsightly but caused obstructions on the pavement.

2.6(iii) Students told the panel that at the end of term, some landlords encouraged them to leave all of their refuse including bulky furniture on the pavement regardless of the correct collection day, telling the students that CityClean would clear the refuse away.

2.6(iv) The letting agents told the panel that they issued induction packs to their tenants at the start of their tenancy, which included information on refuse and recycling collections.

2.6(v) CityClean told the panel that problems such as leaving refuse or recycling out on the incorrect day were not student-specific but a city-wide issue. CityClean worked with the universities on a communication campaign but they would be happy to consider other options and introduce new ways of notifying residents about their collection days. It was felt that more could be done with landlords to keep information flowing to student households.

2.7 Recommendations

2.7(i) The panel recognised that CityClean provided refuse and recycling services to all households across the city. The panel considered ways of increasing awareness of their refuse and recycling collection days for all households, including student households. They heard from CityClean that households were currently issued with fridge magnets,

leaflets and letters showing the collection dates for the year, but there was concern that the magnets and letters were liable to become lost or get thrown away as tenants moved in and out of the properties.

The panel felt that it might be more beneficial to issue stickers with the collection day to go onto the wheeled bin rather than the magnets currently used. It was more likely that the wheeled bin would stay with the property and so the information would stay with the house.

The panel felt that this could be a solution that could be implemented across the city, as it had been noted that this was not an issue caused solely by student households but by households across Brighton & Hove. It was suggested that the roll-out could begin in areas with the highest numbers of student households, but this would be an operational decision for CityClean.

Recommendation 14 - the panel recommends that CityClean issues wheeled bin stickers giving information about collection days so that all households know when to put their refuse out. It is recommended that this would be an alternative to the magnets that are currently issued.

2.7(ii) The panel was aware that there were a number of areas, including Hanover and Lewes Road, in which households did not have council-issued wheeled bins; it would not be possible for the recommendation above about wheeled bin stickers to be introduced in those areas. The panel considered that an alternative might be for streets in those areas to have notices fixed to lampposts advising residents of their collection day and of the possible penalties for refuse being put out on the wrong day. The panel was aware that this system had already been successfully introduced in some areas but felt that that was scope for it to be more widely spread.

CityClean updated the panel about their progress on this recommendation; they had begun to install signs in Kemptown, Hanover and Elm Grove. They would then be moving on to the Lewes Road and Bevendean/ Moulsecoomb areas. Cityclean also advised that they were trialing another refuse container known as ‘binvelopes’ in parts of Hanover. If this scheme were successful, CityClean would look to roll this out across other areas that could not have wheeled bins.

Recommendation 15 - the panel recommends that for those areas of the city that do not currently have council-issued wheeled bins, CityClean should erect additional notices on lamp-posts advising residents of their collection day.

2.7(iii) The panel heard that CityClean issued stickers to go onto recycling boxes to advise residents of what could be recycled, and of their collection dates for the year. However, the panel heard that the stickers were designed to go on the lids of the box, and these tended to blow away if it was windy and the information would be lost. The panel felt that the idea of the stickers was a positive one, but that it might be more beneficial if the stickers could be redesigned to go on to the box itself, rather than the lid. Again this was a recommendation that could benefit all households across the city, not just those with student tenants.

Recommendation 16 - the panel recommends that CityClean places the information stickers for their recycling boxes in order that they can be stuck to the box rather than on the lid, as the lids tend to blow away.

2.7(iv) The panel heard that the letting agents and landlords advised their student tenants on where to find information about their refuse and recycling collection; this was welcomed. It was recognised, however, that student households might not be aware of any changes in the collection schedule, for example, over bank holidays. The panel was aware that this information was published in CityNews and on the council's website but they were unsure how effective this might be in reaching student households. They thought that it would be useful for CityClean to publicise changes in the collection dates in the universities' own newspapers in order to try and reach student households that would be affected. It might also be prudent to include this information on the universities' websites.

Recommendation 17 - the panel recommends that CityClean advertises information about changes in collection dates for refuse and recycling in both of the universities' newspapers and on the universities' websites, in addition to the usual council publication locations.

2.7(v) Residents and students told the panel that there was an ongoing issue with regards to bulky waste, how it might be stored and where it might be left. Bulky waste might include such items as old furniture, unwanted mattresses, unwanted bicycles etc. Residents were upset that items might be abandoned in a front garden for months on end, causing a visual blight and possible health and safety risk. The panel heard that some residents had approached the student households to ask them to remove the bulky waste; this had received mixed reactions. Students told the panel that they knew landlords who had advised students to leave unwanted furniture on the pavement for collection and that the council would collect it.

The panel heard that there was a difference as to how refuse could be handled according to whether it was left on the pavement or whether it was left within the curtilage of a property, i.e. in a front garden. If the item was within a property's boundary, CityClean would be unlikely to be allowed to remove it, as it would be designated as private property. However if the item was on the pavement, CityClean could remove it, and may have the right to recharge the cost to the owner or tenants.

The panel was aware that this was a complicated issue, and that there might be a number of options that could help reduce the bulky waste being left out, either in a garden or on the pavement. The panel has suggested various options below but would recommend that further work is carried out by the Cabinet Member and/ or the Directorate to consider each suggestion, both on its own merits and in conjunction with other options.

Options to address this issue include:

- The city council carrying out more enforcement cases, either for refuse being left out on the wrong day, bulky waste being abandoned on the pavement or other cases of fly-tipping.
- An agreement between landlords and the council in which landlords would have a specified amount of time to clear a property and dispose of the waste, once it became empty, or CityClean would do this and re-charge the landlord.
- There might be an incentive offered where CityClean would offer a discount on their bulky waste collection service at the end of term for a fixed period of time.
- The end of term waste issue should also be tackled by better publicity and promotion of

the existing services that are available

Recommendation 18 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment considers the issue of how to tackle the problem of bulky waste being flytipped by student households, both throughout term-time and at the end of term. The panel recommends that the Cabinet Member gives the suggestions due consideration.

2.7(vi) The panel was aware that some cities, for example Canterbury and Loughborough, who had previously considered how to tackle the bulky waste issue had introduced termly clean-up days in student neighbourhoods. These were organised by the student's union in conjunction with ward councillors. During the termly clean-ups, the students took anything that was re-sellable to charity shops, arranging for the remainder to be collected for recycling or for landfill.

The panel thought that this might be a useful approach for Brighton and Hove; it could be introduced in student halls as well as in private sector student housing. The panel felt that it would be best led by the students' unions and the universities, as an indication that they were taking responsibility for the students. The panel suggested that the two students' unions work together, as student households will be made up of a mixture of students from both universities. The students' unions might wish to work in conjunction with Magpie as well as charity shops in the city.

Recommendation 19 - the panel suggests that the universities organise termly clean up days in conjunction with their student unions.

2.8 Car Parking

' a *car was parked outside my house for three months'*

'the road simply can not cope with 4 or 5 cars per household'

2.8(i) Residents told the panel that they were often frustrated at student households who had several cars per household and who occupied several parking spaces in the street. Residents felt that their opportunities to park near their homes were hampered by a proliferation of student cars in their neighbourhood. Some residents asked whether students needed their cars, pointing to the public transport links across the city. Students said that there could be scope for the students' union to promote the public transport and discourage students from bringing cars to the city.

The Sergeant from the Street Policing Team told the panel that parking obstructions and double parking offences were targeted on a regular basis, with fixed penalty notices being issued where necessary. More permanent measures had been put in where possible; for example in Elm Grove, barriers had been erected to stop on-pavement parking.

2.9 Recommendations

2.9(i) The panel thought that a good way to encourage students to use public transport rather than rely exclusively on their own cars would be for both universities' prospectuses and accommodation guides to have promote public transport and explicitly recommend that

students do not automatically bring their cars with them. This could include reference to the 24 hour bus to the university campus the Big Lemon bus, the car clubs in the city, the cycle routes to and from the universities and the train stations.

The panel noted that the University of Brighton's accommodation guide did include a section on public transport and explained that students living in certain halls of residence must not bring cars with them, but it was felt that there was room for a more direct statement requesting that students think carefully before bringing cars to Brighton & Hove. The University of Sussex's accommodation guide did not appear to make reference to public transport, although it did explain that students living on campus must not bring cars with them. The universities could draw students' attention to the difficulties and potential costs of parking in the city.

Recommendation 20 - the panel recommend that the universities include information in their prospectuses and accommodation guides about the range of public transport and Car Clubs in the city and that they explicitly recommend that students do not bring cars with them

2.9(ii) The panel also considered what options there might be for those student households who did choose to bring cars to the city. There are a number of Controlled Parking Zones in Brighton & Hove, where residents must have a permit to park their cars. Permits are restricted to one permit per person, and the car must be registered to a Brighton or Hove address. Not each area of the city has a Controlled Parking Zone, and for those areas that do not have one, there are generally no restrictions on parking. The panel felt it was important that, where applicable, student households were treated equally with other households requesting permits. They understood this to be the case already and wished the practice to continue.

It was noted that the four areas with the highest student population numbers - Moulescoomb and Bevendean, Hollingbury and Stanmer, Hanover and Elm Grove, and St Peters and North Laine - only one, St Peters and North Laine, was subject to any type of parking restriction. There were plans to consult on a Controlled Parking Zone in Hanover in summer 2009, with a potential introduction date of 2011.

Recommendation 21 - Students should be treated on an equal basis as non-students when it comes to the issue of residents' parking permits.

2.10 Council Tax

2.10(i) The panel heard from the Head of Strategic Finance and the Assistant Director, Customer Services that those student households who had not registered themselves as exempt under Council Tax legislation led to the local authority incurring costs in sending bills to those households, up to and including issuing court proceedings. These costs were incurred unnecessarily and this was therefore an inefficient use of council funds. The Assistant Director, Customer Services said that they worked closely with the universities in trying to publicise the importance of registering for exemption as soon as possible but recognised that this would not always be a priority for students.

The panel heard from one letting agent that they would return tenants' rent deposits only after the households could evidence that they had cleared their Council Tax obligations.

The panel also heard that it was important that the council had the correct number of student households registered, as this might affect central Government calculations for the council's funding. There were already regular information sharing meetings where this data was discussed but the panel queried whether these were as effective as they might be in communicating the necessary information between partners.

2.11 Recommendations

2.11(i) The panel was pleased with the proactive work of the Council Tax officers in meeting students and registering student households for exemption but wished to make recommendations for ways in which this could be extended.

The panel discussed whether there might be scope for letting agents or landlords to take any steps with their student tenants to complete the exemption forms at the beginning of their tenancy.

2.11(ii) The panel understood that meetings already took place between the universities and the council to establish the numbers of students in the city and to estimate future numbers in order to advise central Government for their funding calculations and that such information was shared with the Strategic Housing Partnership. The panel felt that these were important and wished to encourage the various parties to continue the meetings, perhaps on a bi-annual basis. The panel requested that results from the meeting could be made available to the proposed Student Working Group so that they could take it into account in their considerations.

Recommendation 22 - the panel would encourage Council Tax officers to continue to liaise regularly with the universities in order to establish current and future student numbers.

2.11(iii) The panel was concerned at the unnecessary administrative overheads being incurred by the Council Tax team in billing student households because those households had not registered their exemption. They were aware that Council Tax was not often a priority for students, and that many students might incorrectly assume that they did not have to register their exemption. The panel heard that the Council Tax officers went to Freshers' fairs at the beginning of term and that this was successful in terms of a number of households registering for exemption. The panel wished to think of ways in which this could be extended, perhaps by involving letting agents or universities earlier in the process. The panel had a number of suggestions that they wished the Council Tax team to consider:

- Letting agencies and private landlords could be emailed a web link to access exemption certificates online and encouraged to provide a form to each student household at the start of their tenancy. The email link would mean that as many forms as were needed could be printed off by the landlords, and it would be in line with the council's sustainability agenda
- The universities and student unions could be emailed the same web link and students actively encouraged to complete the forms as soon as possible. The Council Tax team could consider whether an incentive could be offered to the universities if a certain percentage of households were registered
- The universities and students' unions could be asked to publish the form in their

newsletters and on their website on a regular basis. This would mean that students could either tear out the form from the printed newspaper or complete the form online via the university website. The university newspapers might wish to expand this by publishing occasional articles reminding students to register their exemption and explaining the benefits for students in registering?
• When students enrolled with the university with details of their address, they could authorise the university to share the information solely with Council Tax, to ensure that an exemption form is sent to the household as soon as possible.

Recommendation 23 - the panel recommends that the Council Tax service considers the four suggestions made in the body of the report about how to improve levels of registered student household exemptions.

3 - Planning & Accommodation Policies

3.1 Planning Policies

'Neighbours ...tell me of feeling like they are virtual prisoners in their own homes because they are surrounded by HMOs. Many of these have conservatories built out into the garden so there is no escaping their presence.'

'overbuilding is a huge problem'

'one solution would be... to limit the numbers of extensions granted for HMOs'

3.1 (i) The panel heard from a number of residents that they felt that there should be a cap put on to the number of Houses of Multiple Occupation tenanted by students in certain areas. This was requested because it was felt that some areas were in danger of losing or changing their character as the make-up of tenants had changed. They pointed to the fact that one school had already closed one of its two reception classes due to low pupil numbers, because there were fewer families and more students living in the area.

The panel's research showed that some university cities had chosen to introduce restrictions on future student housing, for example Loughborough introduced a threshold approach and Newcastle established areas of Student Housing Restraint, where potential student landlords would be subject to tighter planning restrictions for future developments.

The universities and the Federation of Private Landlords told the panel that they did not think that further planning restraints would be of any benefit to Brighton & Hove; they recommended that it would be better to micro-manage the situation and address problems as they arose.

The panel heard that there was currently no requirement to report or obtain permission for plans to convert family accommodation for student use unless the accommodation in question was designated a 'House in Multiple Occupation'. Although there was widespread support for the notion of introducing some kind of 'class order' for such changes of use, this could not apply retrospectively, so even if it were to be introduced,

it would apply to only a small percentage of student housing.

The panel's research had indicated that local authorities had the discretion to extend licensing to other categories of Houses of Multiple Occupation to address particular problems that existed in smaller properties, although there was a corresponding requirement to compensate landlords who were negatively affected by any such licensing introduction. The panel said that an analysis of this option and its potential application in Brighton and Hove should be included in the research undertaken by the Planning Strategy team.

3.1 (ii) The panel heard that some local authorities had a planning condition that stipulated that, for every square metre of additional educational space that was agreed, the university would agree to supply a corresponding number of bed-spaces rather than relying solely on private sector housing to meet the additional need that would be created. The panel thought that this was an interesting concept and one that should be explored further by the Planning Strategy team in their work on the Supplementary Planning Document.

3.1 (iii) The Head of Planning Strategy and the Head of Development Control told the panel that there was a limited amount that Brighton & Hove City Council was able to do with regard to registering student households, due to the legislation on Houses of Multiple Occupation. The panel heard that there were two sets of legislation relating to Houses of Multiple Occupation, one from a planning perspective, and one from a private sector housing point of view, and the two sets of legislation did not correlate.

In terms of planning permission and property classification under the Use Classes system, the panel were told that, although it was relatively straightforward to re-classify a 'family home' as a 'student home', it was more complicated to change the classification in the opposite direction. This might discourage possible purchasers from buying an empty property. The panel's research indicated that there was already a national lobby regarding this issue. The panel thought that it would be helpful if the Government took action to make it easier to change property classification from 'student' house to 'family house'.

3.1 (iv) The panel heard that the Planning Strategy team had to demonstrate how they would meet challenging government targets for different housing types in the Local Plan; at least 11, 000 new homes were needed by 2025. However there was no government target for student housing. This meant that the Planning Strategy Team was loath to allocate specific land for student housing in the Local Plan and it was not considered a priority. On-campus accommodation did not conflict with any other housing policies.

3.2 Recommendations

3.2(i) The panel considered residents' requests for the council to introduce a cap on student housing in the city. The panel concluded that they did not have sufficient time to explore all of the options in enough detail to provide meaningful comment. However they were mindful that it would be useful for further research to be carried out and that the conclusions be drawn up and included in a formalised Supplementary Planning Document by the council.

The panel therefore felt that it would be more appropriate for a recommendation to be made that the Planning Strategy team carry out research into the various planning

options available to control the level of student housing, and to consider whether there would be any merit in introducing such controls into Brighton & Hove. Their findings should either be published as or be included in a Supplementary Planning Document. The Supplementary Planning Document would be of use to the Strategic Housing Partnership in their work on strategic planning for student impact.

Recommendation 24 - the panel recommend that the existing Planning Strategy team carries out research into the various planning options available to control the level of student housing, and to consider whether there would be any merit in introducing such controls into Brighton & Hove where this was appropriate for the area. If planning controls were introduced, this would help to ensure balanced and mixed communities across the city.

The Planning Strategy Team should also consider the feasibility of adopting a planning condition regarding the need for universities who have planning permission to expand their educational space to provide a commensurate increase in bed spaces.

The findings should be published as a Supplementary Planning Document.

3.2(ii) The panel heard about the discrepancies in the planning and private sector housing legislative systems with regard to the use classes order. The panel felt it would be of use for the local authority to make representations to the Government on these anomalies, requesting that the process was streamlined.

The panel was also mindful of residents' comments that developers were using permitted development rights to build conservatories at the rear of properties and using these as living rooms, thereby freeing up additional rooms to be used as bedrooms. Residents were aggrieved that there was no action that could be taken to prevent this from happening.

Recommendation 25 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment lobbies central Government on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council with regard to the planning Use Classes Order and the associated permitted development rights.

3.2(iii) The panel was mindful of the competing demands on land resources and it recognised that the Planning Strategy team had a number of demanding targets to accommodate, although student housing was not included within a target. The panel thought that it would be advantageous for the council, through the Cabinet Member for Environment, to lobby central Government to issue a target for student housing so that more forward planning could be carried out.

Recommendation 26 - the panel recommends that the Cabinet Member for Housing lobbies central Government on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council to request that student housing is given its own targets with regards to providing accommodation.

3.2(iv) The panel considered that it was necessary to take steps to plan for future student housing provision in Brighton & Hove, regardless of whether or not there were central Government targets for student housing. The panel appreciated the various competing demands on the available land, but they felt that it was short-sighted not to consider

allocating land space for the development of halls of residence. The panel thought that there might also be scope to include some units of student housing in major new build housing developments across the city, for example, Preston Barracks. This work would be best carried out in conjunction with the universities.

Recommendation 27 - **the panel recommends that the Planning Strategy team recognises the need for student accommodation to be planned and that the team considers positively identifying land suitable for halls of residence in the Local Development Framework. The team could consider the scope for including small numbers of units of student housing amongst major new- build developments.**

3.3 Provision of Halls of Residence

'reduce demand for student housing by encouraging the Universities to build more student halls on their own land'

'recent campus building has focussed on the luxury end of the market …beyond the means of many students'

3.3(i) The panel, the universities, residents and students were all in agreement that providing more halls of residence would be valuable in addressing some of the issues of student effect, although it should be borne in mind that the halls of residence themselves led to certain problems. It was clear from listening to both of the universities that there was a high demand for accommodation in halls of residence and that the universities were unable to meet the demand.

3.3(ii) The University of Sussex had drawn up a housing strategy campus master plan in consultation with planning officers from Brighton & Hove City Council. The University guaranteed to offer accommodation to all of its first year students who wanted to live in halls. It managed 3,400 bedspaces in total, with 3,145 at Falmer. 35% of students were housed, which was in line with the national average, and were aiming at a target of housing 40%. 18% of their students did not require housing, preferring to live at home or make their own arrangements. The University's housing strategy was having a positive influence, with the number of students living in private sector accommodation reducing by more than 1000 people. The University had recently received planning permission to build a new halls of residence on its land.

3.3(iii) The University of Brighton told the panel that its supply of purpose built halls accommodation has not kept pace with the growth in student numbers; as a result, a high proportion of their students lived in private sector accommodation. The University considered it a high priority to increase the stock of halls accommodation on offer and was working with Brighton & Hove City Council to expand Varley Hall and on a development in Circus Street.

A comparison of the approximate numbers of full time students at each of the University of Brighton sites with the availability of halls of residence accommodation is below:

Campus	**Full time students**	**Number of halls beds**	**Shortfall**	**Halls places as % of students**
Falmer	3,500	1,128	2,372	32%
Moulsecoomb	5,000	163	4,837	3%
Grand Parade	1,500	298	1,202	20%
Total	10,000	1,589	8,411	16%

3.3(iv) The panel heard from some students, however, that they found the costs of the rooms in halls prohibitive, at up to £125 per week inclusive for an en-suite study room, and that they actively chose to live in lower standard private rented accommodation because it was much cheaper. The panel also heard that there was demand for accommodation in halls from some second and third year students, but that this could not be met at present.

3.3(v) The panel also heard from the universities that they currently managed some properties in the private rented sector that were tenanted by students. These were popular places to live for students, and the demand outstripped supply. The universities did not rule out the possibility of expanding their portfolio of managed properties, although they were mindful that they did not wish to become full landlords directly.

The panel was aware that halls of residence had to be carefully sited and planned, as they would also have a significant effect on the local community, as seen, for example, in the case of the Phoenix Halls. Both of the universities said that they would be happy to consider any suggestions for managing student impact.

3.4 Recommendations

3.4(i) The panel recognised that the halls of residence were highly in demand and that there were almost 100% occupancy rates in halls. They were also mindful that the rent included gas and electricity, cleaning costs, broadband internet and other facilities.

However, members were concerned at the comments made by some students that the costs were too high for the students to consider living in halls and wished the universities to consider whether it was possible to offer cheaper rooms to students with a low income, perhaps in exchange for slightly fewer facilities to be offered.

Recommendation 28 - the panel would suggest that the universities, working with the students' union consider the potential for offering alternative, affordable accommodation in halls of residence for students with low incomes

3.4(ii) The panel heard that a significant proportion of second and third years who had lived in halls in their first year had expressed an interest in staying on in halls in their second and/ or third years but that this was not possible due to the limited number of rooms available. The panel considered that, if even a small number of second or third year students were able to live in halls, this might slightly reduce the number of private sector houses needed for students.

Recommendation 29 - the panel would suggest that the universities consider whether there is scope to expand the offer of rooms in halls of residence, not only to first year students but also to those second and third years who would like to live there.

3.4(iii) The panel considered the option of the universities directly managing accommodation in the private rented sector. It was apparent that there was unmet demand for such accommodation and the universities said that they would not rule out taking on more properties in this manner. The universities have their own occupancy standards for properties, and any private property would need to meet the standard.

The benefit of these properties for residents is that the university is directly involved with

the management and can take swift action against any complaints; the benefit for students is that the property would be of a certain guaranteed standard.

Recommendation 30 - the panel would suggest to the universities that they explore the possibilities of expanding their portfolio of directly managed properties over the long term, in order to increase the range of options available to student tenants.

3.5 Student Landlord Issues

'Landlords should be made, through their HMO licences to have more responsibility for their properties and tenants'

'Little money is spent in the upkeep of houses…HMO houses are easily identifiable by their scruffy exterior'

3.5(i) The panel heard from residents unhappy with the condition of student properties in their neighbourhood; the panel heard about houses with flaking paint, broken windows, and unkempt gardens. Students told the panel that they often had to live in unsatisfactory conditions in private rented accommodation, and that they had little control over the condition of the building.

The panel was mindful that this was an issue that could cause tension between student and non-student neighbours, and that it was not a subject that could be resolved by either party, but that it was the responsibility of the landlords to resolve.

3.5(ii) The Head of Private Sector Housing told the panel about the legislation that already existed in terms of Houses of Multiple Occupation, from a housing perspective.

The Housing Act 2004 relating to the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and the new Housing Health & Safety Rating System for assessing property conditions came in to effect in 2006. The Act requires landlords of many Houses in Multiple Occupation to apply for licences. Licences were needed for Houses of Multiple Occupation with:

- three or more storeys, which are
- occupied by five or more people forming two or more households (ie people not related, living together as a couple, etc), and
- which have an element of shared facilities (eg kitchen, bathroom, etc)

The council issued a set of standards for licensable houses in multiple occupation: http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/housing/hmo licensing/BH HMO Licensing Standards.pdf

The panel heard that the legislation governing Houses in Multiple Occupation was quite restrictive, both in terms of defining an House in Multiple Occupation and in terms of the powers it granted to local authorities, which tended to focus on ensuring the quality of accommodation provided rather than on managing the effect upon the local community.

3.5(iii) In terms of landlord accreditation schemes, members were told that there was an existing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupation and that most city landlords already provided good quality accommodation. However most student properties did not fit the House of Multiple Occupation definition, so it might be beneficial to extend the scheme's criteria. This might be achieved by closer co-working with the universities.

It might also be useful to encourage the universities to manage their own accommodation. It was recognised that the ultimate guarantor of housing quality was demand: if demand for a particular kind of housing outstripped supply, then accreditation could never be wholly effective, as non-accredited landlords would still find customers.

3.5(iv) The panel heard that some private landlords were wary about the introduction of a formal accreditation system; there were concerns that some landlords might decide not to continue renting properties if the legislation were too onerous.

3.5(v) Letting agents told the panel that potential student tenants would choose or ignore properties based on the standard of the accommodation. They already had some properties that were not tenanted and they felt that this number would be likely to increase.

3.5(vi) Students told the panel that they felt there would be benefits to having an accreditation system for properties as this would mean it would be more likely that accommodation would be of a reasonable standard.

3.5(vii) The panel heard that the universities limited the private sector rental properties that they advertised on their websites to those properties with a rent of £80 or under. They were concerned that this gave potential students who did not live in Brighton and Hove a false idea of rental levels in the city, and potentially restricted their access to better quality accommodation. The panel thought that it might be more beneficial if the universities were to offer the full range of housing options on their websites, and then allow students to make their own choice about costs.

3.6 Recommendations

3.6(1) The panel considered the comments of all of the parties involved and the experience of local authorities who had introduced a voluntary accreditation scheme. Canterbury, for example, reported that approximately 50% of private landlords had signed up to their voluntary accreditation system. Canterbury said that they had found it useful to offer incentives to the landlords, for example, additional refuse services for registered accredited landlords at the end of term.

3.6(ii) The panel was mindful that it would not do to be too heavy-handed or forceful with any potential accreditation system as this would alienate landlords and not achieve the desired outcome. However it was hoped that a voluntary accreditation scheme would be of assistance to landlords too; if there was more of a supply of properties than was needed, the accreditation system might help to signpost students to properties of a better standard. It would help to improve the management and safety of student houses in the city.

The panel thought that it would be valuable to explore the potential for a voluntary accreditation system with the various parties concerned or to extend any scheme that was already in existence. It was suggested that this would be led by the Private Sector Housing Team as they would be likely to be the team to administer any such scheme. The research should take resource implications into account as well as any costs for the landlord.

Recommendation 31 - the panel recommends that the Private Sector Housing Team discuss the potential benefits of extending the landlord accreditation scheme in relation to student accommodation, which does not fit into the existing Houses of Multiple Occupation accreditation scheme, with representatives from Brighton and Hove's landlord associations and other parties.

3.7 Empty Properties

3.7(i) The panel was concerned by comments from the letting agents that some properties were already sitting empty because they had not been let to student tenants. The panel thought it was more likely that these properties would become rundown and so become less desirable; any disrepair might have an adverse effect by spreading to neighbouring properties. The letting agents told the panel that they anticipated that more and more student properties would remain vacant as there was higher supply than demand in the city. Empty properties were of no benefit to the owners; they would be losing money for the entire time that the property is empty, and they would have to cover any resulting repairs costs etc.

3.8 Recommendations

3.8(i) The panel was mindful that there was an overwhelming demand for family accommodation in Brighton & Hove, and that some of the student properties that were now standing empty had originally been intended as family housing. They considered whether there might be a citywide strategy to encourage landlords to use empty homes for family accommodation again. This might be particularly welcome in the current economic climate; any steps that could be taken to reduce the number of vacant properties, assist community cohesion, help landlords financially and ensure that family accommodation was brought back to its original use should be strongly considered.

The Panel discussed whether there might be a further role for the council's Empty Properties Officer to build on its existing good practice. The Officer could look at properties that had been empty for perhaps one or two years, assisting with grants or other ways of renovating property on the agreement that the property would then be let to families via a Housing Association.

3.8(ii) The panel was aware that there would be a great many factors to be taken into consideration when debating how the long term empty properties might best be used and that there were already empty property strategies in place within Brighton & Hove City Council. They felt that it was a piece of work that should be fully researched and the potential benefits of extending the Empty Properties Strategy to be considered.

Recommendation 32 - the panel recommends that the Empty Properties Team works proactively with student landlords and managing agents to ensure that student properties that are unoccupied can be reused for social housing.

4 - Partnership Working and Communications

4.1 Partnership Working

4.1(i) The panel felt that an overarching approach for all of the student impact issues could be useful in continuing to develop partnership working in the city. The partners might include:

stakeholders such as both of the universities and local colleges, the council, police, residents, the students' union, local councillors, landlords and community liaison staff. It was recognised that the Strategic Housing Partnership met to consider a wide range of strategic housing issues across the city and there was no intention to duplicate this work.

The panel felt that this was a significant piece of community work. The issues that had been raised could not be addressed in isolation but would be better tackled by cross-partner working and shared approaches; for example, the council might introduce an initiative to address noise problems but this would be more effective if, as suggested in recommendation 7, the universities and Students' Unions were involved and could promote the message amongst its students.

It was felt that local councillor involvement might be better coordinated through more joint working. At present, individual ward councillors tend to contact the universities separately, although it is likely that the issues are largely the same. In addition, the panel felt that there were also a number of initiatives going on across the city but they are not always joined up as well as they might be.

4.1(ii) Residents told the panel that they were not concerned about which university or college a student household might attend; if there were complaints about the tenants, they would like there to be a consistent approach across all of the educational institutions in the city. Partnership working and shared communication could help to address this. Residents said that it was difficult to always know to which agency a particular complaint should be addressed; would it be a police matter, local authority or university. The panel heard that residents would welcome guidance and asked whether this might be publicised on the council's website.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2(i) The panel heard that the Strategic Housing Partnership met to develop strategic approaches to a variety of housing issues in the city, and that both of the universities were represented at the Partnership. There was debate amongst the panel as to whether the Strategic Housing Partnership might be best placed to deal with the operational issues that had been raised by residents or whether another forum ought to be established. It was felt that a number of the potential issues would fall outside of the remit of the Strategic Housing Partnership, for example, noise nuisance protocols or work involving CityClean.

The panel concluded that it wished to recommend a new Student Working Group, which might act like a 'Student Impact Local Action Team'. Their work would be community based, facilitating better relationships between residents and students, and covering the whole range of student effects that have been discussed in this report.

Subject areas might include residents' complaints about street noise; about refuse, recycling and bulky waste; planning policy; council tax implications; the quality of student housing; review students living in certain wards; student numbers in the private rented sector compared to numbers in halls of residence, joint work on promoting the SShh campaign as suggested in recommendation 7, review the provision of purpose built accommodation and so on.

4.2(ii) The panel was mindful of Dr Darren Smith's comments that 'existing powers were often

enough to tackle problems' and that it might not always be necessary to introduce new policies but rather to use the existing ones. The partner organisations each already had a number of powers and sanctions that might be of use in tackling any kind of antisocial behaviour, not just that which could be attributed to students. The council, for example, had its noise abatement procedures, and CityClean could take enforcement action if households consistently left refuse or recycling out on the wrong days.

However, there was a sense that partners were not always fully aware of the extent of the power that other stakeholders might have. The panel thought that it would be beneficial for the members of the Student Working Group to summarise the powers that already existed, and to monitor and update the information as necessary. This information should be made available to the public, via the website and other means.

There may well be other occasions when various partners needed to meet up throughout the year; this suggested meeting is not intended to replace those other meetings. However the suggested Student Working Group would be an opportunity for all of the various stakeholders to be together to discuss operational issues and to allow them to consider possible solutions.

The panel recognised that there would be resource implications in establishing a new group. It was felt that the local authority could provide officer support and it was hoped that all of the partners, in particular the universities, would recognise the benefits and value of having such a group, and support it accordingly.

The panel felt that it would be important for the Student Working Group to be aware of the information gathering that was currently happening in the city. It welcomed the work that was being carried out by the University of Brighton on behalf of the Strategic Housing Partnership in mapping student numbers in Brighton & Hove and hoped that this research would be continued into the future, as this would help to inform planning and strategies for student housing in years to come.

Recommendation 33 - the panel recommends that a Student Working Group is formed, comprising of both of the universities and local colleges, the council, police, residents representing Residents' Associations, the students' unions, ward councillors, representatives for landlords and community liaison staff or staff from the accommodation teams. This would facilitate ongoing and improved communication and liaison between the partners.

The Group should consider the operational issues caused by the impact of students living in the city and discuss ways of addressing possible solutions where necessary. The Group should also coordinate a shared database of sanctions that the partners already have.

4.3 Communications

4.3(i) The panel felt that one of the areas that the Student Working Group might wish to consider was that of the induction packs given to students. At present, the universities each have their own pack, the letting agents and landlords issue students with a pack, and the council has its own information that it wishes to give to students; this can lead to students being overloaded with information and discarding it all out of frustration.

The Community Liaison Officer from the University of Brighton confirmed that a joint

council/ university information pack for students would be useful, particularly if landlords and letting agents were encouraged to distribute it, as many students take up accommodation in advance of their university induction, meaning that landlords are a better initial contact than universities or student unions.

4.4 Recommendations

4.4(i) It was felt that it might be more effective to have one induction pack that was used by all of the partners in order to coordinate the information that is given to students across the city.

The panel thought that this might be resourced by redirecting the funds that are currently spent on each partner's individual induction packs. It was considered that it could prove to be more cost-effective to have a centralized induction pack.

The pack might include a checklist that students ought to consider when setting up their tenancy, for example, suggesting that the students introduce themselves to their neighbours; that they check details of their refuse and recycling days; has the household completed its Council Tax exemption form etc. The panel was aware that the University of Sussex's current accommodation induction booklet included a checklist of this nature; they considered this to be an example of good practice that they would like to see continued.

Recommendation 34 - the panel recommends the immediate benefits of a shared information pack for all partners in the city to issue to students and that the Student Working Group could implement this as one of their first actions.

4.4(ii) As a long-term goal, the Student Working Group might wish to commission a piece of work to look at various environmental factors in a student neighbourhood, in order to assess its 'healthiness'. This could include car pollution/ refuse/ effect of poor standard accommodation on heath and stress levels, and so on The research might include work about the hidden costs of student accommodation, for example, the number of students living in private rented accommodation means that a certain number of family type houses are no longer available for family use, and the ongoing effect that this might have on the demand for social housing.

Alternatively, the working group might wish to work in conjunction with researchers at the universities to carry out investigations into the feasibility of an Area Action Zone, also known as a cumulative impact zone.

Recommendation 35 - the panel recommends that the Student Working Group considers the benefits of carrying out a 'Neighbourhood Health Impact Assessment' or a cumulative impact zone in student neighbourhoods.

5 - Positive Impact of Students to Local Community

5.1 (i) The panel was concerned that it may seem as if Brighton & Hove did not welcome students and that the entire panel had been focused on listing the negative effects of students living in the city. The members wished to place on record their commitment to students living in Brighton and Hove.

The panel heard that students played a valuable and useful community role in the city in terms of carrying out volunteering in the city. This was welcomed and students were encouraged to carry on volunteering.

5.1(ii) The panel heard that the University of Brighton was linked to local communities through the Community University Partnership Programme which had been in operation since 2003. One of its main tasks was to develop the curriculum to give students the chance to contribute to their local community through their studies. Over 300 students were annually involved in community projects as a formal part of their learning, with each student would normally do 50 hours which equates to 15,000 hours of University of Brighton student resource going into the community each year. On top of this many students also volunteered in their own time. The panel heard that the University of Brighton was the winner of the national award for outstanding contribution to local community 2008, awarded by the Times Higher Educational Supplement. Students from the University of Sussex also contributed to community engagement in a large number of projects in the city.

5.2 Recommendations

5.2(i) The panel welcomed and supported the current volunteer arrangements that were in place at both universities. The panel thought that there may be benefits if students were encouraged to undertake volunteering opportunities in their immediate neighbourhood as much as possible, as this would help to foster good relationships between students and non-students. Members thought that it would be useful for the volunteer coordinator or organising group to work closely with ward councillors to establish what might need to be done in an area; this would help to ensure that the most pressing tasks were being prioritised. The panel would encourage the student volunteers to liaise with the local press and with the university newspapers in order that their achievements could be recognised and publicised.

The panel was aware that work was underway on a citywide volunteering strategy and would encourage the universities and students' unions to sign up to the strategy.

Recommendation 36 - the panel would recommend that the universities continue to encourage students to take part in volunteering opportunities in the residential areas in the city where there is a significant student population in order to foster improved community relations. The ward councillors and community association should become involved in helping to prioritise tasks.

5.2(ii) Dr Smith told the panel that students were traditionally under-represented on residents' groups and associations and any work which encouraged greater engagement should be welcomed. The panel also thought that it would be a positive move if students were encouraged to be active members of their Local Action Teams and Residents' Committees. This would help to build relationships between students and non-students, and break down barriers between the two groups.

Recommendation 37 - the panel would encourage students, via their Students' Unions, to attend their Local Action Team meetings and to play an active part in the community.

6 - Conclusion

6.1 The panel heard and received evidence from a wide range of Brighton and Hove residents and bore this in mind throughout the three evidence gathering meetings. The panel members would like to sincerely thank all of the residents and witnesses who took part in the work of the investigative panel in any way.

6.2 The panel appreciated that the issue of students living on a temporary basis amongst longer established communities had a significant effect on residents, although it was often the case that the majority of students had little or no effect on other residents.

6.3 The panel has made a range of recommendations that it hopes will help to address the various aspects of the student impact on residents. These recommendations are not intended to stand alone but, if accepted, should form part of the policy framework for student housing that already exists in the city.