Part D – Appendices

Appendix 1 – Press Release page 53

Appendix 2 – Letters from Residents pages 54-98

Appendix 3 – Minutes of the Four Public Meetings pages 99-132

- 17 October 2008
- 07 November 2008
- 21 November 2008
- 05 December 2008

Appendix 4 - List of Expert Witnesses page 133

Appendix 5 - Media Coverage pages 134-152

Appendix One – Press Release

Council seeks views on students in the city

The growing number of students choosing to study in Brighton & Hove and the impact they have on local communities, is to be discussed at a series of public meetings.

Brighton & Hove City Council's Scrutiny Team has set up its first investigative ad hoc Panel under the new Cabinet arrangements.

The Panel, made up of councillors and open to members of the public will be looking at the impact that growing numbers of student households in the private rented sector might be have on longstanding communities within the city.

The Panel will be chaired by Councillor Anne Meadows, Chairman of the Adult Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee and will also include Councillor Georgia Wrighton and Councillor Tony Janio.

The Panel will be holding three public meetings to gather evidence and views. The first meeting, on 17 October 2008 from 2-4pm is for residents, including students, to tell the Panel about their experiences and make recommendations for feasible policy changes. If you would like to submit evidence but you are unable to make this meeting, you are able to provide a written statement to the Panel. Please email scrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk or write to the Overview and Scrutiny Team, Brighton & Hove City Council, Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 2LS.

These opinions and experiences will set the agenda for the second two meetings, in November 2008, when experts will provide evidence to the Panel.

Councillor Meadows said: "Everyone living in Brighton & Hove understands the benefits and the value that the two Universities bring to the city and we very much welcome their presence.
"This is the first time that Overview and Scrutiny at Brighton & Hove City Council has studied the effects that students living in the community might have on long standing local communities and we will be looking to make practical policy recommendations as a result of the Panel.

"I hope that residents in the city, including students, will take this opportunity to let us know their views, either by writing to us or by attending the meeting on 17 October 2008 at Hove Town Hall'.

Following these public meetings the Panel will report back to the Scrutiny Committee with practical recommendations.

Please contact the Scrutiny Team on (29)0450 or email scrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk for further details or if you would like to provide any evidence for the meeting.

Appendix Two –Letters from Residents

11 10 2008

Thank you for your letters. I am unable to attend the meeting as the time is not convenient, especially for those people who work. Shame as they are the very people being affected most by student problems. What about an evening meeting?

I live next door to five student house. The last two lots have been fine, but previous lot were very violent men. They were in their twenties so not young lads and they made my partner and I ill over the year they rented the house. Previous to that we had very noisy students, who dealt drugs we believe. With this in mind I am withholding my name and address as I do not want retribution from anything I have said in the statement I have put in the attachment. I hope it can go towards other statements, but if not then so be it. I like the many people who will be to scared to contact you or go to the meeting are to frightened of damage done to us or our property.

It sounds dramatic I know, but people are frightened, especially the elderly.

yours

A Brighton resident. (*from Bevendean*)

Statement for student meeting 17th October 2008

I am a resident in Brighton and the student population in my area has caused massive changes to a once quiet, tidy and clean residential estate. Here are my views on the impact students have made to the area.

1. Developers have bought nice family sized homes and turned them into student rooms, with the help of extensions many of these houses can have upwards of 6 students. This makes a problem straight away. Six people not recycling or putting their rubbish out in the bins provided. Six cars parked on the pavements, grass verges etc, as there is not the room. Mountains of vodka and lager bottles in the unkept gardens. This is the norm.

2. There are to many of these houses within the area. Many developers have 16 or more houses each. They do not take responsibility for their tenants, neither does Brighton University or the Council. Students have ridden rough shod over everyone in my area.

3. Noise levels during term time is unbelievable. Students wander around late at night into the early hours yelling and screaming, talking load on mobiles, playing football at 3am (yes 3am) on the green while the rest

of us who pay council tax have to get up in the morning for work. Children for school.

4. Many students have a drink abuse problem. By mid evening you see them up and down the street can or bottle in hand. The bottles end up smashed in the street or on the greens areas. Great for young children and dogs feet.

5. It has been said that students care for the community they are living in. My answer to that is utter rubbish. On the whole they only care about themselves. What are they supposed to do in the community to make us feel they are part of it.

6. Noise levels from their houses and outside is horrendous, parties going on from early evening till 5 am. Cars revving and doors slamming. Windows open at all times with sound systems on full blast. It seems that the landlords set the heating so in the winter if it gets to hot they resort to opening the windows but do not turn down the stereo.

7. Students are told to smoke outside the house. This also means more yelling and screaming and mobiles while the residents are trying to sleep.

8. Violence. Most students are non violent, lippy and rude yes, but not violent. However some are. We had some who were very violent towards us and we were very frightened, no-one wanted to help us. Even their landlord was frightened of them. Another student threatened to kill a friends husband when he asked them the be quiet. They were also dealing drugs from that house.

9. I feel that the student population has reached saturation point in my area. They are not part of the community and on the whole are not liked. The value of our houses has gone down. Who after all wants to move into a bunch of noisy people who might get abusive.

10. The rubbish is another real problem. These so called intelligent people are always in bed fast asleep when the rest of us lesser mortals have put our rubbish out on the right day. Students living a different day to the rest of us. They don’t go to bed until the early hours and then stay in bed till noon. This rubbish stays in the street for the gulls, foxes and rats to pick over. This is a very common problem.

11. All people want is respect. Respect that we live there all year, respect that we work and want to sleep at night, respect for the environment, that's all we ask. With students in the area on mass this will never happen.

Ryde Road
Brighton BN2 4 10 2008

Dear Sir/ Madam:
Re: Studentification/ multi-occupancy

1. At present, authorities ignore small student households of 3 or 4 residents but these can cause the same difficulties to neighbours as the larger houses with 7 or more in.

2. I believe the value of my house is reduced by having a student house next door.

3. I have had 3 years of 'good' students next door to me – but am always worried about whom I might get next time.

4. friends of mine had a happy family home in Hartington Road. They lived there until their children grew up and had every intention of staying there. They were eventually forced to move because they couldn't stand the noise from students on either side of them – after several years, they gave up the unequal struggle. That just is not fair.

Yours faithfully
GP

In response to your e-mail unfortunately I will not be able to attend but add the following for your consideration:-
I am chair of the Phoenix Community Ass which is located directly behind the halls of residence in Southover Street, Brighton.
Our estate comprises of 127 social housing units of mixed tenure ranging from single occupancy to family dwellings, situated in the middle of this is the Freebutt public house.
Over the past 11 years we have had to endure countless sleepless nights due to the noise levels emanating from the halls of residence to such an extent that residents have had to move into private sector rented accommodation because this impacted on their working lives.
When I was appointed chair I arranged a meeting between ourselves, the management and our local ward councillor to discuss the problems and try to find a way forward. From these meetings it was agreed that the councillor and a representation from our estate could attend their induction meeting with the students, the outcome of which was very positive with very few incidents that year. Another idea we implemented was to issue our residents with a direct number to the security office so as to inform them when there is noise emanating from the rear of the building so as they can act. Overall this has had the desired effect of reducing noise. The downside to this is every year

they have new students and noise levels increase. We as volunteers should not have to repeat this time consuming process every year. The management of these halls of residences should be responsible for getting the message across to their residents and made accountable where necessary with closure notices in relation to A.S.B.
As mentioned in my opening statement, the Freebutt Public House situated in the middle of our estate is an establishment frequented by students nightly to listen to live bands play. Again the history of this does not make good reading. Our resident's tolerated this establishment under the old licensing laws knowing that all should be quiet after midnight, but since the introduction to the new laws and longer hours the problems had increased to such an extent that the local authority issued a noise abatement order to the previous owner. On realising the cost needed to sound proof, immediately put the pub up for sale allowing another licensee to come in and start up again. The other problem we have to deal with is students cutting through our estate and jumping the boundary wall causing hundreds of pounds worth of damage to fencing that we have previously had raised in height at considerable cost to try and deter such action all to no avail.
I hope this enlightens you to some of the problems faced on the Phoenix Estate, if clarity is needed then I can be contacted on XXXX.
Kind regards
Malcolm Constable
Chair
Phoenix Community Association

Mr L

Ewhurst Road
Brighton

11 October 2008

Re : Survey on impact of city's student houses

Dear Sirs
Students are a continually changing population, so in streets with many houses rent to them, the character of the area has become less friendly as there are fewer neighbours to get to know and build a community spirit. The gardens of these houses are not maintained and soon become very untidy and overgrown. Houses rent to students will never become homes to them. From personal experience, I know that all a student requires is a room in which to sleep and study, not a house and gardens to maintain. Students have different lifestyles to townspeople.
Also, many students bring cars with them at the start of term, which makes parking extremely difficult, particularly close to one's home. Local residents need cars for a variety of reasons: to commute to work, bring home shopping, visit friends and family who live a few miles away, invite people to visit and to go out safely in the evenings. I suggest that students are prohibited from bringing cars to the city as they live near the universities and usually use buses and taxis anyway.
I think that large halls of residence in the city centre for students would be ideal for everyone. There are currently several empty buildings which could be converted. I can suggest the following: Anson House, Astoria Cinema, Circus

House, London Road Co-op, Preston Barracks, and Royal Alexandra Children's Hospital in Dyke Road.
I hope my comments and views will be helpful to you.
Yours faithfully
Mr L

Mrs M
Dudley Road
Brighton
Survey on student homes
With regard to the above, when is someone going to take control and responsibility for these students?
There are far too many of them. I complained last year to the agents and was told to contact Health and Safety and Noise Abatement regarding rubbish and noise. It is not my responsibility to contact those authorities, there should be a central contact that should deal with complaints as this obviously is going to be an oncoming problem.
The street is noisy all hours and dirty, they are spoiling our streets in one house they have converted the garage into a room. Its not just the students in the house, its their friends that stop over plus all the cars.
As a pensioner who feels unsafe on the streets I do not want at night to have park my car at the other end of the street or the next road if I am lucky.
Owners should be local and not miles away who only visit between change-overs.
Agents and owners make money out of this and should be made more responsible, there are far too many students in our streets and quite frankly spoiling Brighton as a whole.
The houses and students should be monitored and limited.
Yours faithfully,
JM
PS Would the owners of those houses like them next door to them?

Southall Avenue
Brighton

Dear Sir,
With regard to your article about student population in off campus accommodation in Brighton, we wish to offer this photographic evidence as to the scruffy and dirty conditions living amongst these students entails.
They mostly don't bother to put bins in and out on correct collection days, they just leave them out all the time, blocking pavements. They put out stuff the recycling team won't take and that is there for weeks.
Rubbish gets thrown into their front gardens and left there for months. Some are noisy, not all I will admit.
Some front gardens are very untidy and the absentee landlords don't bother to get them done, maybe once a year.
All these factors will have devalued our property should we wish to sell, which is a distinct future possibility, as we are not happy having lived here for 43 years to now be living in a student ghetto.
Yours faithfully, JB
These photos are just 3 of the many incidents along the road.

Brading Road Brighton
BN2 3PD

Thank you for your letter dated. 7/10/08. Yes, I would be happy for you to keep my letter, regarding excessive noise from the students next door, in the public evidence file.
However I would now like to add, that since my husband has spoken to them, and made it clear that he would not tolerate the continuation of the excessive noise, it has now become much quieter, especially in the early hours, which is when we had most of the problem.

I am not sure if the fire doors have been fixed to stop them slamming, or if the students themselves are being more careful, but they are also much quieter
Yours sincerely
JD

Dear councillor
I am writing on behalf of the Coldean Local Action team and Residences Association concerning the forthcoming investigation into student accommodation in our community.
This is of great concern to our residence. We have many elderly residents that have been approached by agents who want to buy their homes to be used for student use. In my area in a space of a hundred and fifty meters (approx) there are four houses housing 5 students each. Unruly behaviour we can control ourselves with help from the Police and other bodies. But our main concern is we need families that would appreciate living in our village type community.
I do think the university could have retained the land at falmer for accommodation for students and put the Stadium at Waterhall. There are many more concerns but I shall be at the meeting with our chairman on the 17Th October.
Regards Mr Trevor Wood
Coldean Local Action Team

I am writing to make my views known to the Scrutiny Committee on student housing.

I have lived in Hartington Road for 17 years now and watched the area change from a lovely mixed residential area, with lots of families and people of all ages to one which is dominated by a people within a narrow age range who are transient and have little or no commitment to the community. Houses and gardens have become neglected and the level of noise on the street, particularly at night, has become so bad that it is impossible to sleep in the bedroom at the front of my house.

For the past five years the house next door to me has been occupied by 6 students. Until this happened I had lived very happily here and never had

occasion to complain to a neighbour. I had never been woken in the night by neighbours returning home, or having impromptu parties. Now I dread every September, knowing it will bring a new batch of people who haven't lived on their own before and have no sense of the boundaries required to live amicably in terraced housing.

The noise problems are not just those of parties. There is the everyday disturbance that happens when people come home drunk at 2am, chase each other screaming up the stairs, stand outside their front door having loud conversations in the middle of the night, or the general noise of a house filled with fire doors slamming through the night. However well, or not, we develop an understanding over the year of what the boundaries might be, I know that come the new academic year, the whole process will start again.

I am particularly aggrieved that the landlords who are effectively running their business next door to our homes are not held more to account. Like any business they should have obligations in terms of social responsibility to the area in which they operate. Their business generates noise pollution that invades our people's homes. If this was a matter of machinery running late at night next to my bedroom, it would be shut down.

This year I spoke to the landlady of the house next door and asked whether she could help in giving clear advice to the tenants about the level of noise before they moved in. She informed me that she already did this in her contract, but assured me that she would let both the tenants and their guarantors know that the house was under a "noise" warning. I felt greatly relieved that she was taking some of the responsibility.

I was therefore dismayed that the very first day the new tenants moved in, they had a party. When I asked them about the advice they had been given before moving in, they told me that they had been told by the landlord's agent that this was a "student area" and that they would be living next door to students.

I would urge the council to consider the following:

- Develop a Code of Practice for all student Landlords, which would include advice to be given to all new tenants about how to be a good neighbour and require agents to inform new tenants of their responsibilities before handing over keys.

- Implement sanctions against those landlords and agents who do not enforce the elements of their tenancies which are supposed to protect the quiet enjoyment of the neighbours. Fine landlords as well as tenants when a household creates excessive noise more than once, or is guilty of anti-social behaviour.

- Keep a register of all private landlords and agents so that neighbours can easily contact the council and find out who is responsible for a particular property.

- Limit the number of HMOs in any one street / area to prevent the development of ghettos.

- Create broader definitions of HMOs so that more properties can be regulated under this legislation

- Increase the requirements for sound insulation in HMOs and ensure that there are communal living spaces within them which are not conservatories.

- Encourage the development of more purpose built student accommodation blocks.

- Create a bigger public awareness campaign around the issues of noise / anti-social behaviour, so that everyone knows what the laws are.

- Ensure that complaints about noise are held on record for one year only, not 5, as this just discourages people from complaining.

I love my house. I've spent most of my adult life here and one of my children was born here. I'm committed to the local school. I've had wonderful neighbours, old and young. Ive watched neighbours kids grow up and get married. Celebrated birthdays, Christmas and New Year with them. This area has been a tolerant, diverse place, but the community is disintegrating. So many of my neighbours, especially those with young children, have moved away from this area in the last 5 years because of the growing problem of noise. This used to be an area in which you could hear children playing in the early evening, dogs barking, people chatting to neighbours. Its ridiculous, but I crave hearing a dog bark. Now the noise you hear is drunk people careering through the streets at night. I feel on edge in my home, angry. Recently I spoke to woman in her 70 s who has lived here for 50 years. She wants to leave. How can this be right? People feeling uncomfortable, alienated, in homes they have lived in for most of their lives, because of unregulated commercial activities by greedy landlords who are not accountable to the community they are destroying. Unless we do something very soon, this place will become a ghetto of run-down properties with a completely transient population.

Please take action, both short term to manage the noise problems and stop the loss of non-student households, and long term to re-introduce diversity into the community and make it sustainable.

Many thanks

CF

To the Scrutiny Committee Members,

We have lived in Bonchurch Road for 8 years with our two young children. When we first moved into the area, we chose Elm Grove because it was very much a diverse but family orientated community with a great primary school nearby and a range of shops covering local needs.

However, in the last couple of years an increasing number of developers have out-bid family or first time buyers and consequently these properties have been over-developed and are now student accommodation. This has affected the community in many ways. Firstly the community atmosphere is very different for example: anti-social noise levels have increased, with students creating noise that ranges from their stereos to shouting in the street in the dead of night as well as spontaneous parties being held without any prior notice; litter and parking issues, not to mention the unbearable door slamming of the regulatory fire doors.

Personally speaking we do not have an anti-student mentality. We have lived next door to a property that until last year was owned by the University of Sussex and enjoyed for 6 years a very positive relationship with the ever-changing 4 students. Last year however the property was sold in a batch (it was not possible for a family or an individual to purchase a single property) to a private developer who has turned a three bedroom house into a HMO for 6 tenants. Houses in the Elm Grove area were purposely built for a family of 4. Overdeveloping these properties to house 6+ students, their cars, their noise, their rubbish and their friends has obvious consequences for the rest of the non-student community. Now that the area is being flooded with these properties the result is that families are choosing to move away.
We also have another HMO directly opposite our house occupied by another 6 students. With 2 properties either side up for sale we are very concerned that every house that goes onto the market in Elm Grove will be bought by an 'anonymous' developer and turned into another HMO.

Brighton and Hove City Council urgently needs to act; many are already saying that it is too late for our community. We, however, would wish to be more positive and ask that before it is too late, that legislation, either primary or delegated needs to be enforced in order to control the number of developers who can turn family houses into HMOs or our community will be destroyed. These developers may claim that they improve properties and invest huge amounts of money but ultimately most do not live in Brighton, are not available to respond to urgent/simple problems and have no personal interest in the preservation of communities. Nor indeed, do developers pay any council tax or care for the ultimate consequences of their developments. May I respectfully suggest that all housing for 4+ students becomes regulated as an HMO; that planning permission is needed for a HMO licence (to restrict the number of communal conservatories) and that a cap is put on each area for the number of houses that can be granted HMO licences. Finally that current landlords should be made, through their HMO licences to have more responsibility for their properties and tenants.

I urge the Council to seize the opportunity to take action before it becomes too late for our community.

Yours faithfully,

JH and CH

On 'Studentification' in Hanover, Brighton: A Plea for help.

The house opposite mine in Hanover Terrace was a very smelly, very refuse littered and intimidating property with rude aggressive occupants until the letting agency took responsibility by making it an anti social behaviour watch house. I still do get kept awake though, mostly by parties taking place behind me by people in the student HMOs in Coleman Street. This is less frequent now but it is still very unpleasant to sometimes be kept awake all night.

The situation at the Phoenix Halls of residence has got a little bit better now. I live a good distance away from the Phoenix but nevertheless since it's been built, would frequently be kept awake by screams and shouts and very, very loud music coming from there. All night parties were a very regular and sometimes nightly occurrence both at the Phoenix and in the street and gardens backing onto mine. Party houses would effectively duet leaving the poor noise patrol officers asking me which one of 2 or 3 I wanted them to visit. As a result of the noise my kids would often be exhausted. It was worse at certain times of the year. When there's a noisy party I realise that I have to go and identify where it's coming from for the noise pollution and environmental teams. This month I've only had to do it twice which is unprecedented for this, normally very bad time of year. However it's still pretty upsetting having to get up – as one time recently, at 4 in the morning and more recently, a little bit after eleven. The reception I get is mixed. The 11 0'clock lot were very nice the other night and hadn't realised, quite genuinely I think, that they were disturbing me. They quickly turned their music down, but the other one at 4am was too scary looking for me to approach – a crowd of stoned looking youngsters were going in and out. That affair ended I learned from neighbours, with the police being called to deal with an ugly situation. I certainly believe that drugs may have been involved.

There are a nice bunch of residents around here but quite a few people have moved away to escape the difficulties and I'd include some of the students among the nice – but, a very vocal and aggressive minority cause all the problems here. Neighbours have got together and some of these in the organised form of Podium. Podium has done a massive amount of work to improve the conditions at the Phoenix and environs and there is an improvement: but I wonder how long such groups can keep up this level of work before the universities, who have some responsibility for the students in their care, apply the sanctions which, according to the students' contracts which are signed at the beginning of courses, they are able to. These can be applied if a student behaves in an anti social manner and disturbs and distresses fellow occupants where they live and/or local residents who are innocently trying to work and play at home. Perpetrators would then feel the

consequences and be made, either to stop, or surrender their right to study at the university. Or perhaps the university may feel that the answer is to move the noisy ones to somewhere else where they are away from communities and diligent students.

Refuse and hygiene is another issue. The pavements outside some multi-occupancy student houses are filthy with waste. A minority put out their rubbish consistently on the wrong day and 'unbagged' or bagged poorly. Elderly people and young children, and indeed the rest of us, living in the area, do need not to have this sort of problem around us.

The council have done what they can and some people there in Environmental Health and the Refuse dept have been helpful and proactive - but it depends who you get on the phone line as to how much help you get. It's difficult for them to deal with the scale of problem we have in this area and beyond.

The police are doing their best now too. All the agencies need better resources to cope with the situation. Again I do feel that the responsibility does rest with the university and the students themselves. The discipline of living among others in a reasonable way is a part of the education of any young person I think. As a parent I feel very strongly about this. I ask now, what are the university going to do for us? How will they address our troubles? How much of the money they make from the students will be made available to sort this horrible mess out?

I hate to feel afraid at home here. Some of the sounds that come from the street are intimidating. I know that the police don't usually manage to come out when these things go on: they have too much to do. I'm also aware that the noise masks drug dealing and the general commotion and disorder provide a mask for other elements to come in and commit crimes.

My children have grown up and moved out now and as a single woman living on my own I've spent more time than I'd like to think about feeling scared out of my wits. Please help us. Please put a package together which will improve things. We've done a lot of work but it has been the case that whenever we've relaxed a bit, taken a rest and said 'things are better a bit better now' the old problems seem to redouble. As a community we shouldn't have to do all of this ourselves and nor can we.

There's a campaign at the university at the moment: the **sshh** campaign and it's a great idea. It has been having some impact but this has been somewhat undermined by the decision of the Phoenix halls to require smokers to smoke outside their building. We get the noise of squawking smokers at night now.

On Gumtree website agencies are promoting Brighton as a party town for student lets and the street backing onto mine is nick - named 'Party Alley'. It is not a party town for residents, who suffer and have no energy left for their own family celebrations!

Many local residents are afraid to complain because the law penalises complainants by ensuring that 'neighbour dispute' is put on documents relating to any sale of a house. There would be much more reporting of incidents were this not the case. This means that on failing to get students to behave well a resident may be condemned to live unhappily in an unsalable property and so people keep quiet about their problems. No escape! I intend to stay put and will take anyone who perpetrates this bad behaviour to court if need be. I know growing numbers of us are willing to do the same.

I understand that we are particularly badly affected in our part of Hanover. Can we rely on the university to keep up this education process for the students and, when there are problems, I ask again, will they use the powers that they have to bring perpetrators of this ASB, to book? I'm sure that whilst this may mean a short term loss of some income for the university as some expulsions will occur, in the long term it will surely benefit these institutions to have students who will undertake their studies to the end of their courses, gain their qualifications and make a wonderful contribution to our lovely city.

JP, Hanover Terrace.15-10-2008

Whilst appreciating that students are not liable for Council Tax I believe that because of the demands they make from rubbish collection etc if they do not pay then if they live in private rented accomodation-H.M.O's etc,then these premises should be re-classified as Business or Commercial Properties & the Landlords required to pay a Business rate of tax on the premises.

I am a single person on a low wage, but just over the threshold for any C.T. rebate, and have to pay £70 per month, the majority of which goes on schools something which I do not use & I believe this to be unfair when these private landlords are raking in the money & contributing nothing to the local community.
Sincerely,

Shanklin Road Street Contact
Elm Grove Area Residents Action Group

Subject: Impact of student halls and houses in Hanover, Brighton
>
Date: Thursday, 16 October, 2008, 1:11 PM
I am a member of a group of residents in Hanover Street and Hanover Terrace who has been involved in an exchange of correspondence, and in a series of meetings, with Brighton University over the massive impact on our neighbourhood of the Phoenix Halls, and satellite student housing. I am not intrinsically anti-student, being once again a student myself. But I have also lived in the area for over 20 years and have witnessed the great and distressing impact of the Phoenix on the surrounding residential community. [I should, by the way, like to express my reservation about the apparent use by the Council press office, in a press release of 1 October 2008, of the word 'resident' to include students in general. For me the word 'resident' means someone who lives in a place permanently, or for a considerable length of time. Although some students may do this, in the process becoming residents, I think it only causes confusion in discussion if the word 'resident' is used in general to include the word 'student'.]

IMPACT OF THE HALLS: I have seen how the Phoenix Halls, which accommodates 300-plus students (potentially up to 600 at weekends), has transformed the area from one which had a balanced mix of older and younger residents into one which has been gradually saturated by students. This was, indeed, the fear of some Council planners at the outset, although the building of the halls went ahead anyway, with little consultation with local residents. They were, in effect, presented with a fait accompli. The building of the Halls - not only a very ugly Kajima building, dominating what is, in part, a conservation area, but a traumatic and even abusive event in itself, causing huge stress to the residents and the collapse of one or two cellars - led to an unremitting increase in buy-to-let properties, or properties bought for students by their parents and used for multiple occupancy.

This process continues. The Council insists that 'everyone' understands the benefits of having two universities in the area. But I have to say that, as an individual living in the immediate vicinity of the Phoenix Halls, and surrounded by what is now student housing, what strikes me above all is the sheer extent of the noise pollution, the added traffic, the accumulation of litter, and the general widespread anti-social behaviour of young people who may not intend any harm whatsoever, and are naturally high spirited, but who do not have any long-term stake in the community around them. The exponential growth in student housing in the area has led many students (indeed some have told me so) to see the area as 'theirs' - a de facto campus. The properties adjoining my house are now occupied by large numbers of students. The yard immediately below my window, once daily swept and cleaned by its owner occupiers, became a pile of rubbish, which raised health fears and was a real eyesore. (This inner yard was cleared for the start of term but could become a tip again at any time).

NOISE SHEETS: Until recently I had to commute to London, starting out early every morning. With the amount of noise generated every night by students returning from pubs and clubs and hanging around in the street outside or within the Phoenix precincts throughout the night, this became increasingly difficult, with constant disturbance of sleep. Although I had to pay for secondary glazing to reduce noise disturbance, this still penetrates. Some while ago I diligently filled in noise diaries at the Council's request. In these reports, often written in the small hours of the morning, I noted times and dates of disturbances and what I had done about them, such as communicating with the night security guard or with other personnel the following day. I pointed out that there was a certain pattern to the noise disturbance, which was worst from between 11 p.m. to midnight, and then again between 3-4a.m.- 5a.m., with the return from the clubs of rowdy groups of people who then lingered outside or called up to or down from windows. During the summer months the problem naturally increased, and with the change in the licensing hours, the noise levels became more extended. The kind of noise included drunken shrieking and yelling, and occasional hilarious (to them) skateboarding or cycling over speed bumps, frequent calls to the Fire Brigade, etc. Even small groups of people standing around talking relatively quietly is very disruptive when it happens during the early hours of the morning, when the street traffic has ceased. Moreover, the building

appears to magnify sound to some extent.

Although my noise sheets, and those filled in by other residents, were sent to the Council, and Council staff attended meetings with residents and university staff, nothing seems to have been done by the Council to address the problem so far. I suspect that these noise sheets were simply filed. One wonders, in any case, whether they can be a practical tool when applied to something like the Phoenix, where students are transitory and personally unknown to residential neighbours.

LINKS WITH UNIVERSITY: The group of residents formed to address the above issues (informally called Podium, after the word technically used to describe one area of the Phoenix Halls which overlooks Southover Street and often acts as a focus for noise disruption) took part in a series of meetings with University staff over the last couple of years. Our group did not confine itself to making negative complaints, but suggested a number of ways in which the situation could be improved. These included: employment of more than one permanent night guard to help reduce noise levels and disruptive conduct throughout the night; the moving of the night reception area to a place at or near the podium or main Southover Street entrance, so that disruptive behaviour could be more easily monitored and prevented; and the 'greening' of the building to help reduce sound magnification. The University undertook to consider these and other proposals.

At a last informal meeting between members of this group and a member of the University staff, we were given to understand that nothing substantive would be done to help solve our problems as residents (possibly for financial reasons), and it was suggested that we should look elsewhere to bring pressure for a solution, such as attendance at 'lats'. It seems, therefore, that we are back to square one. Although there is a plan to move the reception area to an area which looks onto the main entrance, and to install better cameras, these would only cover a small part of the site, and the will to act does not seem to exist. I understand that there is no plan to increase the numbers of permanent staff policing the place at night beyond the one guard, who is clearly unable or unwilling to act. In my opinion (and, I know, tht of others), one night guard, who has primarily to deal with student problems, and does not want to be seen as an interfering busybody by the students, is simply not enough to keep the night-long noise under control. What we have continually asked for is a sort of porter's lodge at the gates or on the podium with an overview of the site. This would be dedicated to ensuring that there is no or minimal noise between midnight and 5/6 a.m., and to dispersing groups that continually assemble and re-assemble on the precincts during this time.

At present the problem is further exacerbated, since a no-smoking policy within the Halls has led to student spillage onto the streets throughout the night. But the fundamental problem would remain, smoking or no smoking. The University makes continual reference to a mobile patrol, based at Falmer or elsewhere, which descends on hotspots when notified. This, however, is no good for us, since the damage has already been done. What we need, and have constantly pointed out, are preventive measures.

Finally, as far as I can see, the University treats the Phoenix Halls in the same way as it treats the campuses that it has in largely non-residential areas. I strongly feel that, if the Halls are not to be closed down altogether, or their function altered, as I personally think they should be, on grounds of environmental health, the Council and University should AGREE ON SPECIAL MEASURES THAT DEAL WITH STUDENT HALLS IN THE MIDDLE OF RESIDENTIAL AREAS. Students who manage to obtain a room at the Phoenix, so close to the town centre, are well aware of the benefits. It seems only fair that there should be some return to those who must live with them. Anyone who knows the Hanover area can see just how close this massive building is to residential housing (just a yard or two) and how it dominates and towers over the streets below it. Universities may bring advantages to any town or city. But, in the situation of those who live directly in the shadow of their halls, such advantages remain distinctly academic!

Thank you for your attention
Ms F, Hanover Street

Date: 15 October 2008 23:15:14 BDT
Subject: Re: 'Studentification' Scrutiny Panel

Thank you for inviting me to take part in the panel. However, I am afraid I can't make it on Friday, so here's what I've got to say:

I don't really feel that the students around me actually intrude on my life in a negative way, any more than any other neighbours (which, pubs aside, isn't a lot, for the record).

Most students are young people living away from their homes for the first time. They need a little looking out for. If they leave their rubbish out early / have wild late parties, often all they need is to have the impact of their behaviour on their neighbours pointed out to them, as we would to our own young people. They are here learning all sorts of things, including how to be part of society.

If the houses look shabby and uncared for, it's usually the landlords and letting agents that are at fault for making a quick buck without taking care of their tenants' environments.

If you make an effort to befriend your student neighbours, this will pay back dividends. If they prove rude and unco-operative it's not because they are students, it is because they are rude and unco-operative (and there are a few neighbours in their fifties, sixties and beyond that fit that bill too).

Generally I think that Hanover has a good solid longer term residential core that can absorb the students. I have no sense of being 'invaded'. I like the younger demographic of the area. I like the diversity it brings. I like to go past windows and hear guitars being played, people laughing. (OK, perhaps not drumming practice all day, but the kid needs to learn about what is

acceptable...).

Sometimes the sight of girls staggering home from a good night out as I set out on my morning jog makes me feel a little nostalgic about my own student days...

However, there are a few things around here that do get my goat:

• Pubs that leave their doors and windows open with shouting clientele smoking and swearing on the street outside until well after the time they should be shut up inside (it's ridiculous that local neighbourhood pubs can do this - the new licensing laws combined with the smoking ban are a nightmare, but don't get me started on that).
• Drivers who use the area as a speedy rat run/parking lot.
• People who let their dogs mess all over the place.
• Awful grafitti artists who daub on people's houses (I can forgive the lucid poet who has written on some paving stones).
• Car vandals and burglars and 'adults' who insult my teenage son as he walks home from college.

This is all willful anti social behaviour, none of it restricted to students. If I have the time I would be happy to come along another time and talk about all that!

And there is room for public education about the unique nature of Hanover houses - 'if you stand here on the street right outside my front room window, you are 50cm away from me and I can hear everything you say (and smell your fags as if you are smoking in my house)' is, in my experience, something that can't occur to many people. Something I'm apt to forget myself sometimes!

I think more street parties and local get togethers would do a great deal towards breaking down the 'us and them' barriers between longer term residents and students/more transient populations.

Anyway, best wishes and thanks for getting in touch. Please don't hesitate to do so again!

JC

Dear Councillor Meadows,

Please consider this letter as evidence to present to the scrutiny team examining the impact student housing has on communities in Brighton and Hove.

I am a journalist who has lived and owned a property in the Coombe Road area of the city for about five years.

Several years ago, me and my neighbours experienced a six month period of

anti-social behaviour from a group of students which resulted in the council's environmental health team having to take action. Their work was fantastic and supportive and took up a huge amount of council resources and no doubt valuable budget, which is ironic when the people who caused the problem were not paying any tax, nor were the people (the landlords and letting agents) who refused to tackle the issues which we tried to resolve before they reached criminal levels of anti-social behaviour.

As a journalist this lack of responsibility and action in the months prior to the council stepping-in prompted me to carry out a report into issues related to student accommodation in this area, particularly as Caroline Flint MP had launched a unit to examine the issue of student housing and its impact on communities throughout the UK.

The following points are my findings from both personal experience and my investigations into the problems which are replicated throughout the city.

1) The panel need to consider that the students living in rented accommodation in this area not only attend the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex, but the Brighton Institute of Modern Music, Sussex Downs College and other further and higher education establishments including the language schools. Student accommodation is flourishing as it is a very lucrative investment for landlords as I will explain further into this letter.

2) The Lewes Road residential area was ideal for families and first time buyers from the city. Man people I know in the street, including my partner are in key worker roles. The small family homes were more affordable compared to the more expensive areas of Hanover, Preston Park etc. The homes offered small gardens and a reasonably safe environment for children due to the 20mph home zone restrictions. There are also plenty of facilities such as schools, shops all available on foot with links to public transport. There is also the promise of the new Falmer Academy and some excellent outdoor sports facilities.

3) However, in the past few years, there has been a proliferation of "student only" houses to let in this area, which are unavailable to anyone who is not in education. Other houses in this area are increasingly being converted into flats making them unsuitable for families.

4) Landlords now advertise properties in this area as "student let" only, and in the past two years, estate agency boards erected outside homes, now state this fact. This is so that the landlord can rent three to four rooms in one property to students and then avoid paying any council tax, despite gaining a healthy income and his/her tenants receiving council services. This student accommodation point is stated in point 'n' of the council's council tax exemption rules. This makes renting to students a very lucrative investment to landlords.

In addition to this, the practice of excluding anyone else from renting a property unless they are a student is blatant discrimination and I would expect

a council such as Brighton and Hove to challenge this.

5) Refuse services - The majority of students in this area do not recycle and an audit of refuse/recycling in this area and tonnage will undoubtedly confirm this. A simple walk around this ward will also confirm this. Plastic bags of rubbish spill over the top of wheelie bins and are often dumped next to wheelie bins and remain uncollected as Cityclean do not remove plastic bags outside of the wheelie bin. I have had to shovel up bags of rubbish myself from outside my home which remain uncollected and are inevitably ripped open by foxes. This must be dealt with before the council introduces fortnightly collections.

At the end of summer term, the whole contents of homes are thrown onto the streets of this area including mattresses, tvs and any other rubbish students or their landlords do not wish to visit the nearby waste recycling point in Wilson Avenue. Of course, this then encourages fly-tipping and a small pile of broken bookcases and mattresses soon turns into an extremely unsightly mound of waste. It often remains on the pavements and roads for weeks. This summer was an absolute disgrace to the city. Visitors to my home who live in other counties were shocked by the mess on the streets in this area could not believe this behaviour was not promptly acted upon when landlords whose names and addresses are available on the Land Registry and can be dealt with.

6) Crime - Students' homes in this area are targets for crime and I have received a number of door-to-door enquiries from the police who have told me this. The students' house next to me, which was lived in by a student whose father is a senior former Government cabinet minister, was burgled at 10pm on a weekday. I disturbed them as I arrived home and found them cutting a hole in the front door glass.

The police told me that criminals scour the area for student homes as they are often obviously unoccupied at certain times and now student let homes are now advertised as such by the estate agents boards, they have become easy targets. The police informed me that the criminals often return a few weeks later as students' parents replace their laptops and electrical equipment very quickly.

7) Graffiti - It would be unfair to blame students for graffiti, this is an anti-social activity carried out by many individuals.
However, the removal of graffiti is the property owner's responsibility and therefore, it remains on walls in this area for eternity as the landlords are often absent and never visit their investment homes. They just take the money. We have large tags plastered throughout the streets which have been here for years as no-one will take responsibility for ordering landlords to remove them and landlords do not live in the street so do not care about the environment we live in.

8) Anti-social behaviour - Approximately two years ago, me and my neighbours suffered more than six months of the most appalling behaviour by

students from the Brighton Institute of Modern Music which resulted in the council's environmental health team installing noise equipment in my home, and issuing me and my neighbours with noise and nuisance diaries.

The students would sit in the back garden all night playing bongo drums, guitars, lighting fires and sitting on the flat roof kitchen extension playing guitar until 7am in the morning. Up to 20 young people in cars would arrive at all hours with musical equipment and they would stay up all nigh almost every night. A games console was being used for days on end with groups of lads cheering and whooping all night. I booked into hotels and slept at friends' homes as some weeks I averaged three hours of sleep a night.

We would knock on the door and repeatedly ask them to turn it down, but we were told by one student to "move out as this was student town." One morning as I left for work I found a set of ear plugs had been pushed through my letterbox. My neighbours were sworn at and threatened.

I sent letters to the landlords asking them to intervene without a response. The council did not receive a reply when they contacted the landlords asking for the tenants to be managed. When we called the letting agent to ask them to deal with the tenants, Parks stated that their only collected the rent and did not manage the property. When I telephoned them to report a problem in the street, they asked me what house number was causing the problems as "they get loads of complaints about students in this area."

Eventually the fantastic work of the council's environmental health team, and the neighbours contacting the college to request a meeting with the college managers, the noise abated and they finally left. However, more students moved in and we have been subjected to the same issues at intervals from nearby properties. It is impossible to contact the colleges as we do not always know which colleges they attend or have their names. No-one is interested in managing these homes until the behaviour becomes so extreme the council has to spend its budget dealing with a private landlord's problem.

Please note that some full time students have as few as three contact hours of study a week, which means that although they are in full time education, they are at home for most of their time and from my experience in five years, not keeping the same hours as families and working people.

All of the above points make it difficult for anyone, including families to move into this area or remain here as we are at odds with a population of young people who have very different lifestyles and living hours.

There are however, solutions to these issues, which include stronger management of student landlords, letting agents and the students themselves. Problems should not have to reach the Environmental Health Office at crisis point before they are dealt with. This costs money.

Re-examine the student only lets and the council tax exemption point "n". When I was a student in the 1980s, the landlord paid full rates on the property

which he/she included in my rent and then the council refunded me if I could prove I was a student. This meant students shared properties with full time working people, who reigned-in anti-social behaviour to an extent as they had to get up for work.

Create a robust student liaison/landlord service, whereby residents affected by all student issues, from landlords failing to clear refuse from their properties and graffiti from their homes, have enforcement notices issued and action taken. A few prosecutions with costs paid to the council will re-coup the cost of employing such an officer.

Perhaps you could consider some sort of local city tax on these landlords, who should register their homes with the council before being allowed to let them. This would pay for the refuse collection, the road repairs and the graffiti removal from a very significant group of people who live in the city, yet are not contributing to the council's budget. Yes, they pay into shops, retail and leisure services but the council is providing essential services they are not being paid for. These costs are being spread among the working council tax payers.

As we move into a period of economic uncertainty, these issues will become more relevant as residents become increasingly dissatisfied at paying £124 a month council tax to live in neglected areas which will become unnecessarily unwelcome to families or working people.

Please remember, these student homes are making money for landlords otherwise they would not continue to rent them out. This is not an area of deprivation which needs Government funding as East Brighton received. There is a revenue stream here, that the council should tap into which in turn would make homes available to families and long-term city residents waiting for homes on the council's register.

Failing any action to remedy these issues, I too will rent my home out to four students, exploiting the council tax loophole and be able to afford to work part time and live in a nice mews property off Hove seafront.

Thank you for taking time to consider my points.

Regards, KH

Please mention the rubbish and noise too. We have had all night parties on a Tuesday, and they 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. We live in a community, not a student ghetto!!

Thanks,
AD, Hanover Street,

Kevin Mannel gave me your email address, as I've just had a long chat with

him about the awful problem we Hanover Residents have with students and their cars.

I live on Hanover Street, and whilst the parking problem is terrible (why we still haven't got permit parking is beyond me), it has become even worse since the students have come back. So many have cars, and I'm not sure why, as their place of learning, shops, the town centre are all within walking distance or a short bus ride away.

To give you an example, a car was parked outside my house for 3 months last year, and when I spoke to the Police about it they said it was registered in Bristol. Lo and behold, the day after the end of term the car was gone, so this must have been a student, so you can see my point.

My wife and I have one car, which is a company car for her work, as she travels all round the country on a weekly basis. It is very hard for me as someone who works from home to see my wife so stressed out after a hard day at work, driving round in circles past cars that haven't moved for weeks.

I would like this complaint to be logged, and some sort of response to it please.

Regards, Adrian.

Reference: Council seeks views on students in the city
Mr and Mrs A
Bernard Road
Brighton BN2

Dear Sir or Madam,

With this e-mail we would like to stress our concerns regarding the growing influx of students into the Elm Grove area and the affects this has on local residents.

Especially in Bernard Road more and more properties have been converted into HMO's over the last few years which is causing a lot of noise, parking, litter and other problems. We often have student parties starting at ridiculous hours during the night keeping residents awake for hours with people shouting outside in the roads. Firedoors which create noise day and night. We have litter all over the front gardens and pavements as not sufficient bins are supplied by landlords. Sofas and mattresses are kept in front gardens and not disposed of for months on end.

The increase of students in Bernard Road is also affecting parking for everybody, the road simply can not cope with 4 or 5 cars per household. Houses owned by private landlords are not maintained and cleaned properly

which affects the overall cleaniness of the area.

To sum up our issues:
No parking due to increase in population per household as HMO can house up to 9 people in an otherwise 3 bed family house
The fact that Noise Patrol is only available on Friday and Saturday nights is no support to local residents as most noise from parties are happening place during the working week.
Litter on pavements and front gardens
Lack of maintenance on facades / gardens by private landlords
Growing number of conservaties being used as communal areas. With all negative effects such as extra noise, light polution etc.
Most houses around Elm Grove area were built over 100 years ago when sound insulation was not thought off, these houses are just not suitable to be refurbished into flats nor shared accomodation.
Sussex University in particular selling off houses in batches of 5 which obviously attracts private landlords and not families.

We would like to see some quick actions being put in place by Brighton and Hove council to stop the current developments which destroy the area where we live.

Kind regards,

Dear Scrutiny Team

As a resident and street representative of the Elm Grove Resident Action Group who was present at the meeting held in Elm Grove school on Wed 16th, I am writing to put forward my views on students living in this area.

I live in a 3/4 bedroom house with my husband and two small children, over the last 7 years our lives have been blighted by anti social behaviour of students. We are sandwiched between two student houses, one of which has seven students, every room has been made into a bedroom apart from the kitchen and bathrooms. We also have two further student houses directly opposite. We have continual problems with noise, litter and parking, we also at times feel that we are living in student halls.

The owners of these properties do not live within the local area e.g. Devon and Weston Super Mare and any issues that arise are very difficult to resolve as both the owners and letting agents act on the interest of making money only, hence more and more students having to live in properties that where build not as student hall but as family homes. We are left being verbally abused and on occasions feeling frightened and isolated within our own home.

I would like to see the council working more closely with the universities to find a suitable site (the old barracks on the Lewes Rd) to build more accommodation for students, making the universities take responsibility for their behaviour. This will also allow the universities and students to feel proud and valued by the city when they have fantastic accommodation. Has the city not already got enough luxury apartments? This will then allowing the Elm Grove area to once again be a lovely part of the city for families to live, bond and make communities that the city of Brighton can be proud of.

I wish the scrutiny team every success with this but would also like to point out that it is swift action that is needed and not just talk! This needs to happen before our lives in Brighton are destroyed for ever and we more away from the area feeling angry and let down.

S. O.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you regarding houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) I've only recently been made aware of this term since a house opposite ours has been converted into one of these 'Student hostels'. Now that term time has begun I believe the owners of the properties either side of the recently converted one have been suffering with noise problems from the house.

I am fortunate enough to live in Bonchurch Road where HMO's have not yet taken over, but neighbours in the streets behind us (Brading Road, Whippingham Road, Bernard Road etc) tell me of feeling like they are virtual prisoners in their own homes because they are surrounded by HMO's.

Many of these have conservatories built out into the gardens, so there is no escaping their presence. The HMO's bring issues of noise, litter and exacerbate parking problems in an already crowded area. These buildings were not meant to house six adults and the only people who could possibly benefit from the situation is the property developers who rent out the houses.

I would propose that planning legislation is put in place to limit the amount of HMO's in one area, I think we would all welcome a mixed population in this area, but the lifestyles of students and those with young children, such as myself, are often incompatible. No one wins in the current set up except those who rent out these houses.

There is a huge building lying empty on Lewes Road (I am told it was a barracks at one time), is there a way this could be converted to student accommodation? I want to emphasise that I'm not against students in any way, but I am very much against greedy developers making a lot of money and leaving very bad feelings in the community, a community in which the developers themselves don't live.

I know a great many people in my street, we've built a real community with the Friends of the Patch group, and I hear from some that they want to leave this area now because of these HMO's. I know this is all anecdotal, but the people themselves will tell you the same at any meeting you care to arrange.

Thank you for your time

Yours Sincerely,

RG
Bonchurch Road
Brighton
BN2

I am writeing to you about this thing with the student houseing in Brighton that you had in the Argus paper last week.
I live in Lower Bevendean and we have students liveing on both sides of us and around Bevendean.
I think and Im not the only one that something has to be done,
Me and my fellow neighbours in Bevendean are fed up with the problems that they bring, like allways playing loud music, having partys, being loud into the early hours of the morning, their cars blocking up the street and and taking away the REAL neighbours parking places.
Whenever we say anything we just get a foul response back.
I think there needs to be some kind of law saying that you can only have so many student houses in a area or something along them lines.
Please take my words into account and please keep me updated with any news you have that comes out of this debate.
Thanks.

JA

To the Members of the Scrutiny Panel re: Students in the Community.

We live in Queens Park Road and both of the houses to either side of us have been turned into student lets. One houses 6 male students and the other has 4, the noise from these houses has had a dramatic impact on our lives. The owner of the house with 6 students has built a communal room in the back garden, which he apparently did not need planning permission for. The noise from this room when several of the students are in it can be intolerable, especially during the warmer months, so much so that we were unable to sit in the garden or have our french windows open, not only because of the loud talking but the language at times was dreadful. Often the students have several friends in and this makes the noise even more disturbing. We are a retired couple and our life style is so different from these young people, they often go out in the evening anything from 10.30pm onwards and then are returning home in the early hours, which can be very disturbing to us with the banging of taxi doors and doors within the house. It is not unknown for this noise to go on until 4 to 5 am in the morning.

This has been my home for 25 years and my partner and I feel that not only has the quality of our lives been affected by this situation, if we did feel that we were unable to continue living here the value of the house has probably dropped as we would have to be honest and say that both sides were now student lets, (if we could sell the house in the first place).

We have made the effort to have contact with the boys and I'm sure some of them do try to be quiet, but a situation like this puts the onuse on us to complain if the noise does get unbearable and that can be quite a stressful thing to have to do.

I would appreciate the panel taking these comments on board.

Regards JT & MD
Queens Park Road.
Brighton.

We attended the LAT meeting at Coombe Road School.

We are concerned at the increase in student houses in Ewhurst Road. There has been a large proportion of students houses at the Bear Road end of the street but in the past 3 years the Coombe Road end has gained 6 new student houses, nos. 61, 71, 79, 58, 60 and 60a, these within a very small section of the street. There are student houses in the middle section of the street as well. We think that this increase in student houses needs to stop or reverse for the wellbeing of the area.

We do not object to students living in our street providing they are considerate to their neighbours, but feel that the maximum number has been reached in Ewhurst Road.

Our concerns include RUBBISH – generally the students leave their wheelie and re-cycle bins on the pavement, often spilling over. These open bins lead to rubbish being blown around and to passers by depositing their own mixed litter in the re-cycle bins, which means the council does not empty them. At the end of the academic year we often find huge piles of 'clearance' rubbish, which can be left on the pavement for weeks. Is there any way that the landlords/letting agencies, who are making huge profits from the students, be made responsible for clearly advising the students that wheelie and re-cycle bins are kept within the boundaries of the property and for those landlords/lettings agents to pay for prompt clearance at the end of the academic year?

PARKING – we seem to have a group of more affluent students this academic year, as, for the first time, parking has become a serious problem after 5pm. We have a good bus service here and students should be strongly advised by the Universities that they do not need a car if they are living in the city.

UPKEEP OF STUDENT PROPERTIES – some

landlords are not ensuring that their properties are maintained to a reasonable standard and gardens are unkempt and overgrown. This is leading to a downgrade of the area. Students do not have a long-term commitment to the neighbourhood and this brings about a lack of community cohesion and impacts on property prices. Some residents have already moved out of the area due to the impact of student houses, and those of us left are beginning to feel in the minority.

NOISE – hasn't been a major problem, not many parties, but when they do happen they are very loud and can go on most of the night. We are, however, disturbed by the students returning home in the early hours of the morning, either to their accommodation in Ewhurst Street, or en route to other streets. This is particularly noticeable in the warmer months when we need to open windows.

As a group of residents, we are trying to build, and look at improving, our community. To that end, we held our first ever Street Party in September, students invited, and from that hope to establish a Residents Group.

We hope that our views will be incorporated and presented to the meeting you are chairing very shortly.

Thank you.

A M

When I spoke to your colleague on Friday to give my apologies for not being able to attend the meeting in person, I was told it would be ok to still offer my feelings relating to the students in my area.

I live in an area that has a very high percentage of students and other sharers, mainly due to its position - Baden Road is at the top of Coombe Rd and is in the Lewes Rd corridor convenient for both unis. The sharers are not confined to students, however, and with the increasing difficulty in getting a mortgage for young people, it seems that many are sharing well into their 20s. I would say that almost 50% of the houses in my street are now rentals, including the house next door to us, which we bought 3 years ago.

Over the past few years, I believe buying property has offered people a way of saving for their retirements, rather than a get rich quick option. However, with current housing markets, that may prove to have been a mistake. Our own property breaks even, but that's all. It was a rental property for several years before we bought it, and it offered us the chance to control our neighbours amongst other things.

Not speaking as a landlord, simply as a resident, I believe there are positives, but also things that could be improved.

On the positive side, the area has become much younger and more diverse, which makes it a more vibrant area to live in than it was 10 years ago. There are also several small local shops that would not, I believe, survive without the large numbers of sharers. The flip side of the younger resident profile is that the primary school, Coombe Rd, has struggled to build numbers, and a local pre-school in the church on Coombe Rd had to close, due to lack of pre-schoolers. There are also wider issues, which I believe are relevant, and have created a vacuum in the area allowing so many properties to be bought up by developers - the fact that anyone with school age children is unlikely to move into the area because all children are now forced to attend a poorly performing secondary school. Coombe Road primary is a good school, but parents are always looking ahead, and secondary school catchments are a big deciding factor when people decide where to move to. As soon as the Falmer catchment was set, it was almost certain that families would not be moving into the area for the foreseeable future. If the academy becomes successful, this may change, but that is a big if.

Cars are slowly becoming more of an issue - many sharer households have 2 or 3 cars, which means pressure for parking spaces is becoming greater, but it is still easier to park here than in most of the city.

Rubbish is an issue, and one that I believe could be quite easily improved:
1. The council rubbish collection dept needs to align itself far better to the rental calendar. Changes in collection days, do's and don'ts of recycling, and issues such as black bags and seagulls, etc, etc, are posted through the house doors as and when there's a change, but if additional notices were posted through in early September annually, each set of new tenants would be made aware. Otherwise it is down to how pro-active the landlord is about telling tenants. We are, because we live next door and a) are familiar with the routines, and b) have to put up with the mess personally if they get it wrong, but many landlords to not.

2. A council large rubbish collection service around areas with high density of student properties would make a huge difference. During the months of July/August (primarily) the streets in our area look like a tip because students are moving out and often leave anything they don't want to take stacked up on the street. Also, landlords clearing properties leave things piled up. Consequently the area becomes a real eye sore. This could be easily changed I believe. I would be happy to lose the 10% discount I get on the council tax when I'm paying it in the summer, if it meant that additional rubbish collections could be put on.

The other thing that really blights the area is To Let signs that are allowed to be left up for months on end. I know this is trivial, but it adds to the general un-cared-for atmosphere that helps make the area seem a less desirable place to live. I am certain that the Council could require estate/letting agents to remove the signs as soon as the property is let - it's not as if they don't know who to contact.

There is no reason why having lots of rental properties should make the area

less desirable, but if the area looks shabby, it influences people's attitudes when they are looking for places to move to, and makes those of us who do live here less inclined to stay.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions regarding these comments.
Best Regards
MC

I am writing in the hope that my comments will be included in the evidence needed for the Scrutiny panel into studentification and the effect of HMO's in Brighton and the Elm Grove area in particular.

I was present at the meeting of the Elm Grove Area Residents Action Group and would like to reiterate most of the complaints, comments and observations made by most of the people present ie:-

- The rapid increase of student accommodation in our area – many houses were sold as 'a job lot' to mainly one developer (different owners we believe) but mainly one developer.
- All of these properties were formally 3 or 4 bedroomed family or student accommodation, next to one of which we have lived comfortably for 12 years – always had 4 students next door with no problems
- These properties are now all 6 or 7 bedrooms, each with sinks and most have a conservatory built on the back leaving derisory, useless garden space.
- They all have been built into the roof with 2 bedrooms in each roof
- No permissions were sort before building on any of these properties commenced and many residents are confused at how easy it has been for the developers to have obtained planning permission on so many properties in a very short space of time, with absolutely no consultation with any of the adjoining properties
- All neighbours of these particular properties are complaining of excessive door slamming, all doors having been fitted with special doors for fire regulations. The noise and vibration from over 6 people going in and out of rooms all day and night and the resulting slam of each of the doors is intolerable – it sounds ridiculous but it is not just a bang of a door and ear plugs do not work as all our windows rattle and the furniture shakes. We have been promised for a month that something would be done – so far nothing.

All of the above are facts about various properties in our area – the resulting problems of noise, litter and parking are obvious with the quick increase of so many extra people in crowded conditions with little experience of independent living and inadequate facilities, such as bins for instance. Feelings are therefore running high as the streets are now strewn with litter, people are being kept up all night and feel frustrated as to how to deal with it all.

I personally appreciate all the stake holders at the meeting last night being so acknowledging of residents' predicaments and giving us all so many supportive ways to help us with noise etc.

However, I feel the ultimate issue is trying to change the planning legislation for the extreme developments of future properties in the whole area. Developers were absent of course from the meeting but I believe they must be made accountable for the problems that they, ultimately, are causing. I am not anti-student and appreciate their need to be young and have parties. I am, however, anti developer, landlord and agency – these are the people who are making huge profits out of squashing students into over-developed accommodation, forcing them to have potential problems with neighbours before they even start living there, due to their sheer numbers, the unnecessary conservatories which even if quiet, cause light disturbance and noise pollution at the best of times and the inability of agencies to inform them about or provide adequate refuse facilities.
Some agencies and landlords, as we heard last night, work closely with the Universities and abide by contracts etc but the majority do not and seem to have absolutely no interest in the welfare of the students in their properties after monies have been paid and even less interest in the effect they may have on neighbouring properties. For that reason, most complaints are not dealt with and residents and students alike can be left feeling hopeless and frustrated.

Is there any hope of legislation being brought forward quickly to change the planning rules for HMO's and over development of modest properties into what can only be described as hostel accommodation?

Can legislation be brought to bear on agencies/ landlords to ensure they can be held accountable for the upkeep of their properties, ensuring their tenants behave responsibly etc?

Can the universities be allowed to move more quickly in having new building work approved when providing student accommodation in Halls as was also mentioned last night at the meeting?

These points are the most important at this stage as we hope to have a LAT worked out fairly soon to deal with day to day problems.

If these points are not acknowledged and planning legislation not altered to accommodate these development loop holes then I fear it will too late in a year or so – all available property will have been sold to the only buyers who have cash and do not need mortgages ie. the developers and landlords and the area will be altered beyond recognition. I understand these things move notoriously slowly but this needs to be worked on fast.

I hope my comments are considered and wish the scrutiny team well in working out what is best to manage studentification in the area.

Regards,

FN
Bonchurch Road

Comments for Scrutiny Panel – Student Neighbours

The house next to ours at Bonchurch Road was formerly a Sussex University House for 3 – 4 students. Like an increasing amount of houses in the neighbourhood it has been recently purchased and developed into a HMO. To date we have not had major problems with our neighbours but the increasing influx of students into this area and the nature of the HMO developments are putting a strain on community relations and are eroding the quality of life for everyone (including students). Immediate action is required to prevent the 'ghettoisation' of our streets, particularly where HMO's and other rental accommodation are concentrated. Despite the well documented experiences in other parts of the country, including Nottingham and Headingly, it's a great shame that the policy makers here had not adequately planned for the increase in the student population and the negative impact this is having. Whilst we welcome the measures the Council and Universities are now taking, it's too little too late for many residents who have seen their properties become engulfed by student accommodation, including HMO's with conservatories and loft conversions. Residents, some that have lived here for generations, are feeling so desperate that they are being forced to sell their homes and leave the area and so, the spiral of deterioration continues as more family houses are developed for maximising rental income. Whilst current legislation favours the landlord (and Agencies) who are easily able to maximise income with little or no regard or accountability to the local community, policy makers need to do a lot more for the wider community. The tax payer is, and will continue to, foot the bill for any lack of a coherent strategy. It is in everyone's interest to maintain balanced and sustainable communities. Failure to do so will result in fragmented communities and a bitter resentment continuing to build amongst residents.

As you are aware, feelings are running so high that we have established Elm Grove Residents Action Group to specifically deal with the issues of HMO's and studentification. Our first meeting was attended by 57 residents and the following motions were approved:

Thursday 17th July 2008 Meeting Proposals:

1. *To formally establish the Elm Grove Area Residents Action Group and take nominees/volunteer Committee members including Street Representatives*

2. *To set up a LAT (Local Action Team) for the area*

3. *Call upon the Council to ensure that all planning, HMO licensing and safety regulations are, and continue to be, rigorously monitored and enforced.*

4. *Call upon the council to take immediate steps to ensure that our neighbourhood is not saturated by further studentification and the over development of properties by implementing a strategy to ensure the community remains both balanced and sustainable e.g. implement a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), tighten up local HMO Licensing requirements and, allocate the former barracks on Lewes Road to student residencies.*

5. *Call upon the Council to ensure that residents are easily and readily able to access support services including Street Cleaning, Environmental Health, Noise Abatement Team etc when they are needed.*

We have subsequently had a further meeting attended by 87 residents and the relevant policy maker's including the Leader of the Council, Police, and University Reps etc. The overwhelming feeling from residents is that the problems we are facing include:

- Increases in noise and anti social behaviour,
- More litter and rubbish left on the streets and in gardens,
- Parking problems,
- Devaluation of homes,
- Loss of family housing,
- Concentrations of run down houses with multiple occupants,
- Blighting of gardens and views with the increase in loft conversions and conservatories'
- HMO's are a means by which landlords are exploiting legislation to maximise rental income;
- Landlords over develop houses, taking stock out of use for families;
- Residents have experienced problems with loud banging doors and do not feel that these properties are being properly/adequately regulated;
- Council and Police services do not deal with noise and anti social behaviour problems e.g. the Noise abatement team is not often available when required during the week or in the early hours of the morning;
- Residents feel vulnerable and frustrated and are faced with little option but to leave the area;
- Agencies continue to show little regard for the community.

We would like the policy makers to do a lot more, including properly supporting residents to deal with anti social behaviour and noise. However these measures only deal with symptoms, immediate and progressive action is required to resolve the causes of our problems.

It's time for you to take some action!!!

We attended the residents' meeting recently at Elm Grove School and we very concerned to see how much or neighbouring street are suffering, as we are,

with high multiple occupancy houses, particularly those marketed towards students. We thought our street was alone in it's problems.
We whole-heartedly recommend the capping of HMO license issued to keep the mix of housing at the right balance. I would say the level we have now in Bonchurch Road is at it's maximum.
We currently have a house full of students (6 but often plus boyfriends) to one side and have a house on our other side that is mostly likely to be sold to a landlord in the very near future. I've lived in Bonchurch Road for most of my life and am extremely attached to the area. I run my business from home. It's taken us a very long time to save the deposit and then to actualy afford a house in this area. All the way we have been bidding against landlords for properties which has been expensive. The most disheartening thing that happened was when we made enquries about 99 Bonchurch Road to be told that Sussex University was selling it in a block of 5 houses released to the market. I found this to be absolutely unacceptable and made my feelings know to the relevant parties.
These houses are not that big and just aren't built for the capacities they are having to hold when granted an HMO. Couple that with boisterious student tennants ...PLEASE NOTE: not just parties...day to day noise but such things as very loud fire doors and noise from rooms in the roof. We regulary have interupted sleep which effects our work (we are both self-employed) and therefore our income. We would like to start a family but have reservations about if this is practical with the prospect of having twice the noise if number 96 is granted an HMO as well.
Our students had a party on Friday night (24th), which they admit got rather out of hand with the numbers and people they didn't know. When I asked them to drop the volume of the music, the party died down and they vacated but the nuisance then moved to the street. We had people using our front wall as a latrine. Our potted plants were stolen or damaged. Cans were thrown in gardens. In fact my parents' who live three doors down found cans in their front AND back gardens!! It was very unpleasant and upsetting. We were told the party was going to happen and we have a good relationship with the student neighbours but this is the sort of thing that is so very likely to happen when a house is occupied purely by students. We are not against parties when they are on Friday or Saturday night like this one. But the numbers concerned and the hanging around afterwards really caused the problems and upset.
As well as the issue of high occupancy, the other issue is the landlords themselves. Little money is spent in the upkeep of houses. HMO houses are easily identifiable by their scruffy exterior and over-flowing bins in front gardens. The streets are full of all the additional cars a HMO house brings. The landlord of 98 so far refuses to cut back the full-sized tree which cuts off light to properties around and he also seems not to be sorting out the banging fire doors. Our landlord lives in a different town and is at a safe distance from the problems. It's very easy for him to dismiss our complaints.
We ask you to take note of our comments and consider how many more HMO licenses can possibly be granted in densely student populated areas like ours.

Evidence for impact of student households enquiry

We have lived at XX Bonchurch Road since the late 1960s. The attractions of living in this area include it being a lively area with neighbours of all ages, including students. But there are limits and questions of balance. Our immediate neighbours, No. 106, is a rented property, currently to young people who have been no trouble to us at all, although some past tenants have been less easy to live alongside. But like many of the rented properties in Bonchurch Road, the outside decoration and garden are looking very run-down. Our concern at the moment is that the house on our other side, No. is up for sale and we are worried lest it become multi-occupied after being sold to a landlord or developer. Our daughter and her partner have recently bought No. as owner-occupiers.

Some of the problems are illustrated by what happened at No. 100 last night - and especially early this morning. The 6 (young women) students who live there had a large party. We are not opposed to parties - even noisy ones - but some features of this one were just not acceptable. We were far enough away not to be seriously disturbed by the noise, although we were certainly woken by people departing noisily en masse at about 3am . But this morning we found empty beer cans in both our rear and front gardens - two doors away – and other rubbish on the pavement outside the house. Other neighbours suffered disturbance, but we will leave them to report their experiences direct if they decide to do so.

The scale of these problems has surely something to do with the sheer density of occupation. These are not very large houses – accommodating 6 tenants is really 'packing them in'. With, say 3 or 4 occupants, which would be a reasonable number, one would anticipate that – on average – the number of guests at parties and consequently the potential for disturbance of all kinds would be less. Numbers would be more manageable. More of the problems associated with 'studentification' can be laid at the door of unscrupulous landlords who overcrowd and neglect the appearance of their properties than the students occupants themselves, who are in many ways joint victims with their neighbours.

At a recent public meeting at Elm Grove School representatives of both local universities were anxious to reassure residents that they took very seriously the problems resulting from allowing an imbalance to develop - so that whole areas were in danger of becoming run-down ghettos occupied almost exclusively by students during term times and deserted zones during vacations - and were determined to play their part in avoiding such undesirable outcomes Much of what they had to say *was* helpful, but our daughter pointed out that when she was still looking for a house in the area, she made enquires of the estate agent about the possibility of buying one of the four houses owned by Sussex University which had just come on the market and was informed that they would only be sold as a block.

Clearly the inevitable outcome in such cases is purchase by 'developers' intent on turning them all into multi-occupational use. All the Sussex University representative at the meeting – clearly embarrassed by this – could say in

reply was that they had been advised by their experts that this was the best way to sell the properties. It does seem either that the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing or that assurances of concern are simply warm words. The minor 'villains' of the piece plainly include some anti-social students; the major ones include unscrupulous landlords who overcrowd their property and, in part at least, a local authority that allows such things to happen without taking effective measures to manage changing communities in an acceptable way.

My wife recently attended the meeting at Elm Grove Primary School which you also attended in relation to the rise in the student population in the Elm Grove Area. I believe at that meeting that the issue of noise created from the slamming shut of fire doors was raised by a number of people. This was I believe addressed by Nancy Platts who from her experience of working in the Fire Regs Dept of the council stated that the fire doors in these HMO's should have self closers of the type which can be adjusted so that they close quietly, ie they have arresters on them. This morning after a night of my neighbours fire door's slamming, sometimes so violently that the walls shook in my house, I rang the Private Sector Housing Dept of the council to query as to whether this was the case and whether a landlord can be instructed to fit this type of closing mechanism.
They informed me that there is no requirement for this type of closer to be fitted and that as they are significantly more expensive some landlords, my neighbour being one, do not fit them. I find the financial argument rather pathetic as with 7 tenants at something like a market price of £400 each a month my neighbour is making a good return for his money. I wondered if you could clarify the position on which closers are required in HMO's and I wanted also to suggest that the requirement to fit self closers with arresters be put forward as a proposal to the Scrutiny Team.

Thankyou for your time in this matter. I look forward to your reply.

Yours Sincerely,

SE

I was unable to attend your meeting on 17th October but would like to put forward my views.

Students bring a lot of positive aspects to the city adding to its vibrancy and creativity and also the local economy as they spend in shops and pubs. I was a student myself and lived in the community in Leeds many moons ago.

However, housing students within the community needs to be done so with care to avoid student ghettos which rob a community of its heart.

I am all too aware of this effect, which I observed during the 14 years that I lived in St Pauls Street Brighton. This is where my husband and I bought our

first home and at that time there were a handfull of student properties in the street but the majority were owner occupied and there was a fantastic sense of community. You knew your neighbours and much socialising was done and a strong community spirit existed.
Over the following years as families expanded and moved to larger properties or out of Brighton almost exclusively the houses were bought up by landlords who converted them to student houses.

Problems with drugs and litter followed, we had our flower pots stolen or used to dump kebab wrappers in them and the appearance of the street seemed to go downhill.

I can't say I had any problems with the students being noisy or unfriendly but most were just not interested in getting to know their neighbours. It was great when some of them did introduce themselves or return our cheery hellos but on the whole they did not and the net result was that one day I realised that I had no idea any more who my neighbours were. At that point we'd had our first child and were thinking of our second and didn't want to be living in that kind of environment.

Two years ago we moved to Bonchurch Road and unfortunately that area now seems on the edge of a similar transition.

I would strongly urge the council to consider measures adopted elsewhere such as
1) A cap on the % of student accommodation. I understand a 25% cap on HMOs is proposed nationally but that is useless - the limit has to include all student accommodation not just HMOs otherwise at 25% HMOs you could easily have a 50% or higher level of student accommodation and then you get the ghetto and all the issues associated with studentification. I would suggest that a 10% figure is more realistic.

2) Student/let accommodation should be licensed in the same way as HMOs. Strong controls should exist to stop properties being left to go to rot and therefore unlikely to ever be bought by families again but just passed from one student landlord to the next.

3) Landlords of student accommodation should have to pay council tax otherwise, as the students themselves are exempt, its down to the rest of the community to pay higher council tax bills to maintain amenities.

I hope you will consider these measures in the hope that a more harmonious community can exist in which residents welcome rather than resent students.

Regards
JA, Bonchurch Road

There is no doubt that various neighbourhoods have very high densities of student housing assuming that this is thought of as a problem then what is the

solution.

Firstly reducing demand for student housing by encouraging the Universities to build more student halls on their own land and ensuring that the Universities do not expand further or if they do expand further that their expansion is more than met by their increase in their student housing on campus. There is currently a planning application for 700 units of student accommodation as long as this is not wholly taken up by an expansion of the university this should see a net reduction in the demand for private rented accommodation.

Secondly increased regulation of student housing through the Local Authority adopting further Licensing Powers to make it less appealing for landlords to specialise in this type of housing.

These factors taken together would help decrease the concentrations of student housing; of course there are many vested interests in this that must be considered and I wish you well in your deliberations on this matter.

I telephoned you the other day about the forthcoming Scrutiny meeting. I have digital video footage which shows the type of problems we're having but I can't download them in a format I can send to you. I'll keep trying, but I regret it won't be for Friday.

In the meantime here's a statement I did recently which one of the residents may already have forwarded to you; I hope it's useful.

I've written to the University and just receive stonewall responses. They always claim to be doing something about the noise, that they appreciate the needs of the local community etc etc but in reality, the problem is getting worse and nothing effective is being done.

On Tuesday night for example there were about 20 or so students standing in the Podium area shouting to each other and up to windows in the building before going out. This was at around 11.45. Then at around 02.30 some of them were coming back and were singing and shouting in Southover Street. They don't seem to have any idea at all of the impact of their behaviour on people who have to get up and work. I have been told to my face by a student that she 'doesn't give a ****...' and that if I didn't like it here I should just **** off.

I really hope the University can be pressurised to do something effective about this.

Regards,
MC

The impact of the Phoenix Halls of Residence on the vicinity

Noise levels from students at night have become intolerable. Noise from them in Southover Street seems to be amplified by the narrow street and relatively

high buildings; it echoes down the street in which we live, Hanover Street and along a lane leading along the backs of our houses so at night, trying to sleep on the third floor up, we can hear every word.

Noise starts at around 11.00 pm when they leave the Halls to go out. They gather outside and shout from one building to the other, then move down Southover Street, calling to each other as they go.

Noise continues at any time from 12.00 midnight, when some return from pubs, then around 2.00 a.m., then 3.00, then again at around 4.00 a.m. as they return from clubs. They shout to each other in Southover Street and this wakes us up.

Another issue is their standing outside the Halls smoking at any time throughout the night, every night of the week. The area some use is just opposite our back lane and as their conversations are not quiet, this wakes us up. On Saturday night last, 11th October one group in particular were smoking from around 3.00 a.m. Sunday morning every 30 minutes or so until about 7.00 a.m., the sound of their somewhat excited conversations kept waking us up.

The impact on our lives of this continual sleep interruption is increasing tiredness. My wife gets up at 5.30 a.m. every day, drives over an hour each way to The Royal Marsden Hospital where she is children's cancer nurse specialist. She is becoming so tired there is too much risk of her making a mistake with the complex chemotherapy dosages, or falling asleep at the wheel driving home at 7.00 p.m.

I'm up at 6.00 a.m. and do physical work outdoors with dangerous cutting equipment. I'm also becoming very tired and irritable as a result of lack of sleep. So, we have no choice but to move house and are preparing to sell after Christmas, completely against our wishes.

M.C, Hanover Street, Brighton

Hi,
I have just seen the information on the council website regarding student housing.
I have lived in the Hartington Rd - Elm Grove area for the past 25 years and have noticed a considerable change in recent years. There are now several student houses in close vicinity to my house and have found that several problems have become more noticeable
1- excessive noise , usually late night parties going on till 2 or 3 in the morning but also in summer from loud stereos and open windows
2 - drunkenness stemming from the parties
3- bins and rubbish left out for the seagulls to scatter
4 - Lack of street parking as each student house may have several cars and there is no off street parking in this area.

I have 2 friends who have rently sold their houses and moved out of Brighton

due to student house related problems, particularly noise and lack of sleep. One of these friends had a student house each side of her, one at the back and one opposite her in the street. The constant noise and interrupted sleep over the past few years have caused her to relocate her family to Burgess Hill despite having lived all her life in Brighton.

The problem is the concentration of student houses in certain areas, lack of awareness of their impact on working families and lack of anyone to take responsibility for the problems.

Regards
DS

Submission to the Adult Social Care and Housing Scrutiny Committee Inquiry into "Studentification".

David Lepper MP for Brighton Pavilion

Further and Higher Education are an important part of Brighton and Hove life, adding to the City's vitality and providing jobs of all kinds for hundreds of local people. Of course, as well as students at our 2 universities and City College, we also host thousands of English Language students of all ages each year – although most of this latter group are here for shorter periods of time.

Students add to our City's vitality. They spend money in our shops, cinemas, theatres, clubs, cafes and pubs, at sports events, on public transport and as rent! Many take part in local community groups, join churches, etc.

About one third of the 7,000 graduates per year stay in Brighton after graduation contributing to our local economy and helping us to maintain one of the most highly qualified workforces in the country. Over the years this has helped to attract and retain major employers to the City.

****

However, as an MP I have been dealing with individual cases of problems related to some isolated student households for a number of years in various parts of my constituency from the City centre off Western Road to Bates Estate on the Lewes Road.

What has changed over the last few years is that the issues which complainants highlight are now more often associated with greater numbers of houses in particular areas and so when problems arise they can be on a greater scale. Hollingdean, Hanover/Elm Grove, Coldean and Roundhill are some of the areas affected from which I have had complaints.

These are areas where there has been extensive “buying-to-let” in recent years with, what is seen by many residents to be, a loss of housing stock for first-time buyers and a proliferation of properties which are now HMOs or student lets which would once have been sold or let as self-contained flats for young couples and single people.

Problems mentioned by the 87 residents who met on 15th October to consider setting up an Elm Grove/Hanover Local Action Team are typical. They include –

- Increasing noise - especially late at night
- Over-development of properties with neighbours feeling they are being overlooked
- Low levels of maintenance, especially externally – neglect of windows, painting doors, fixing garden gates, maintaining gardens, lack of basic provision for storage for rubbish and recycling
- Rubbish left outside, especially end of term dumping
- Parking
- Loss of a sense of community - because the student tenants are not in any one place long enough to become part of it - with empty streets during holidays

Of course, many of these problems are not specific to student households in a City which has one of the highest proportions of privately rented homes in England outside London. (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).

Many young people who are not students may also have difficulties managing their own homes for the first time away from the family home. And students are not the only private sector tenants who can find themselves living in badly maintained properties because of irresponsible landlords or letting agents who fail to carry out essential repairs, etc.

On a related issue in January the Government asked Julie Rugg and David Rhodes of the Centre for Urban Policy at the University of York to carry out a review of the Future of the Privately Rented Sector.

The review was presented to government on 23rd October. It looked at a range of issues including the professionalism of landlords, the quality of properties, and problems in private renting. The Government says that it will now carefully consider the recommendations before deciding next steps.

Among the recommendations made in the report were to introduce -

- "a light touch licensing system for landlords and mandatory regulation for letting agencies, to increase protection for both vulnerable tenants and good landlords.

- "a new independent complaints and redress procedure for consumers, to help end long drawn out disputes."

I hope that the Council will give serious consideration to all the recommendations including these 2 and respond to any forthcoming government consultation on the report. Indeed, the Council might consider that, in the light of local experience, a "light touch licensing system" might not be sufficient" and then lobby accordingly.

****

The Universities.

A central issue is the need for both universities to provide more purpose built student accommodation on and off campus, although, of course, there will always be a number of students who will prefer not to live in such accommodation.

The University of Sussex – in 2007, completed two new housing schemes providing 714 study bedrooms and has plans to develop further student housing. It is reported that the University of Sussex has sold a number of properties it owned in the City to private developers and that they are now used for student accommodation. This, of course, distances the University from any responsibility for problems.

The University of Brighton – included the need to increase student halls of residence in its corporate plan for 2007-2012. Major new areas for development such as the Preston Barracks site might provide potential for more student homes.

The universities' representatives at the Hanover/Elm Grove meeting (see Appendix) provided information about how their institutions advise on and monitor student accommodation issues.

Consideration should be given to putting that on a more formal basis with a common system adopted by both universities in conjunction with the Council and letting agents/ landlord's organisations for minimising the chances of complaints and dealing with complaints where they arise.

University representatives should liaise regularly with Local Action Teams and other residents groups across the City and ensure that their contact details are known to residents and 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.

****

Brighton and Hove City Council

Many residents query whether or not the Council is using its powers to the full and I hope this is an issue which the Scrutiny Committee will consider.

The Housing Act 2004

- Provided a general framework of powers and approaches for the police and other agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour
- Housing Act 2004 introduced a package of measures, that amongst other things, seek to improve the management of HMOs
- HMOs of three or more storeys and that are occupied by five or more people who form more than one household, will require a licence from their local authority. They can then impose conditions such as a maximum number of occupants.
- Local authorities have the discretion to extend licensing to other categories of HMOs to address particular problems that exist in smaller properties.

I was told in April 2005 that the Council would be reviewing its discretionary powers under the Act.

The Council should clarify what resulted from that review.

A frequent complaint I hear is that the prosecution process in relation to noise nuisance is often so long drawn-out that the offending neighbours have moved on before the process is over – and another set of noisy neighbours have moved in, meaning a new prosecution process must be started.

Is the Council using powers which I believe were given by an amendment in the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003 to Noise Act 1996 which will allow local authorities to issue fixed penalty fines of £100 without having to provide the other services provided for in the Noise Act? I believe Fixed Penalty Notices can only be given between 11pm and 7am, that the noise must be measured from the complainant's premises. Their value seems to be that no prosecution is needed.

The Hanover/ Elm Grove meeting is not alone in suggesting that the Council's "noise patrol" service should provide a more extensive service which is more responsive to resident's needs. (See appendix.)

****

Landlords and letting/managing agents.

This, of course, leads back to the question of the responsibilities of letting agents or landlords where there is a succession of tenancies which cause a disturbance.

Should tenancy agreements always include clauses about neighbour disturbance and should the law provide for greater sanctions against landlords and letting agents who are reluctant to take action themselves? (See references to the Rugg/Holmes Report above.)

****

The universities, students, landlords and letting agent's organisations, the police and residents groups, including Local Action Teams, all have a role to play in improving the current situation in terms of quality of life for established residents and students and fostering community cohesion.

The prime responsibility must rest with the City Council as

- **the local housing authority**
- **the planning authority**
- **having responsibility for a wide range of environmental services through powers given to it by government to take action.**

The City Council, directly and through the Local Government Association and the City's MPs, is best placed to lobby government for new policies and powers if it believes they are necessary.

There was an opportunity for such lobbying this year. Caroline Flint MP, then the housing minister, asked ECOTEC consultants to gather ideas from councils about non-planning solutions to the proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation in certain areas which focused on student housing.

I have asked the City Council for details of any contributions it made to that review but the reply I have received gives no details referring only to the Council being "aware of government indications of changes that may be introduced to the Use Classes Order to try and give English planning authorities greater control over "studentification". There was no indication that the Council had made any attempt to influence policies by submissions to this review.

It is regrettable if that is so.

****

<u>ECOTEC HMO Report</u> to investigate non-planning solutions consulted local councils, universities and student unions

The report was delivered to government in early October. The independent

research sets out a series of measures that could tackle and stop the complex causes and symptoms of concentrated student neighbourhoods.

The measures suggested include new planning mechanisms and the widespread adoption of a number of the best common sense local solutions that can be easily adopted.

- Prevent new enclaves by considering changes to the Use Classes Order planning rules allowing for HMOs to be brought under greater council control. This has already been adopted in Northern Ireland.
- Capping and controlling the distribution and the dispersal of HMOs by using the local planning system to set up 'areas of restraint', which have been shown to help balance communities. Nottingham has already established a threshold of 25% per neighbourhood.

- Universities and student unions should develop housing and community strategies that include: community liaison officers; student codes of conduct; neighbourhood helplines; and use of authorised student accommodation agents to help protect students from bad tenancy deals. Many universities have already invested heavily in new student halls which could help ease pressures.

- Councils should target resources such as refuse/letting board collections, street cleansing, fly posting controls at key times in the academic year; establish landlord accreditation schemes; link the demand with regeneration opportunities; work with universities to consider purpose built accommodation; and make better use of their HMO licensing and empty property powers.

In a reply to a Parliamentary Question from me on 18th November the Housing Minister Iain Wright MP told me, "*Brighton is a fantastic place, but its large proportion of privately rented properties creates an issue. On studentification and its associated problems, he will be aware of a range of possible planning and non planning proposals. He also mentioned the ECOTEC report, on which I am hoping to consult later this year."*

Where these proposals recommended by ECOTEC do not involve new legislation our Council should give serious consideration to them. Where new legislation is needed the Council should consider its appropriateness to conditions in the City and, where necessary lobby for it with the LGA and the City's MPs.

My thanks to Nancy Platts, Hanover resident, for her research on this issue and for representing me at the Hanover and Elm Grove residents meetings when I had responsibilities in Parliament.

****

Appendix

Note of 'studentification' meeting – Elm Grove residents – 15th October

The meeting which was attended by 87 residents, representatives of the Council, Councillors, representatives of t he police, universities and a student union. I hope that consideration will be given to the issues and recommendation discussed at it.

Students and residents

- Suggested that residents introduce themselves to student neighbours and find out where they are from so they know who to contact if problems occur
- Leaflet all residents with all the information they need to tackle the problem
- Issue a welcome pack of rights and responsibilities to students when they move in (Council and Universities have produced and A4 sheet headed 'Don't be a noisy student, be a good neighbour' for residents to put through student houses)
- Information leaflets issued at meeting included tackling noise nuisance, cards on crime stoppers, useful contact sheet.
- Residents starting to move out of area because of problems

Landlords

- Where are private landlords and agents (main agent seems to be Parks)? Landlords not interested or not contactable.
- Residents need to be able to contact landlords – have panels outside houses (this is the case for some, but not all)
- Include clause on noise in contract (I think this already exists – not to be a nuisance to neighbours)
- Residents requested a list of all licensed HMOs from Council – Council agreed to supply

Universities and colleges

- Not always Brighton or Sussex University, some post-graduate or from language or music colleges.
- Contact details for local colleges, universities and councillors should be circulated to residents
- Brighton have a liaison officer, Sussex have accommodation officer to contact – Brighton Officer is trained in mediation techniques
- Sussex have a list of student addresses in Brighton, Brighton University don't have a database they can search but will visit properties where there are problems
- It was said that Sussex University sold properties to developers. Local residents believed this prevented families from buying and the target market was developers. Feelings ran high about this and Sussex University defended their right to get best value from the properties. Issue of selling to ethical landlords was raised. University housing and

liaison officers were prepared to act on problems and have stopped students finishing degrees and courses due to complaints about noise problems.

Over-development

- Houses over-developed – conservatories and dormers
- Conservatories – light pollution all night and residents could see into the property witnessing sights they'd prefer not to!
- Is there potential to limit size and number of HMOs as Notts Council and Northern Ireland are proposing ?
- Need student housing strategy

Noise abatement

- Currently available only on weekends until 3am. Cheap drink during the week in clubs, clubs close at 3am, noise abatement stops at 3am
- Noise abatement service needs to be available on weekdays – show of hands was asked for and looked unanimous!
- Noise is more of a problem during the week – people coming home late, taxi engines running, car doors slamming, people shouting, front and internal doors banging
- Noise service is not adequate – different houses in the same street are noisy on different days. Diary system not suited to this, the policy needs to be more flexible. Council have the powers to deal and residents need to report every incident so that Council have a full picture of all incidents. Residents complained that Council Officers just wanted to get them off the phone asap and issue a noise diary whether this was suited to the problem or not.
- Doors in HMOs are changed to fire doors – bang all day – door closers need to be adjusted so that doors don't slam, but agents need to be accountable for implementing fire regulations
- Residents not complaining because of the need to declare noise problems on selling the property will affect their ability to sell at the right price

Other issues raised

- Loss of community
- Rubbish – divan bed left in the street
- Could Council introduce a by-law to tackle people living in vans parked on the roadway? Wellington Road - people living in camper vans outside the old Children's Society building.
- Level – drinkers and drug takers
- Double parking
- No-one pays Council Tax on student housing
- Poorly maintained student properties

Recommendations

1. A student housing strategy is developed by the Council in conjunction with the universities, colleges and private landlords.
2. Sussex University and other colleges to take the problem seriously, take responsibility and make a commitment to tackle the issue, nominating a community liaison officer etc.
3. The Council set out a plan to tackle the problems caused by 'studentification' to include clear information and useful contact details for residents and students, measures to address the different noise problems by improving the times the noise abatement service is available, targeting problems of rubbish at particular times of the year when students are on the move, contacting the fire service or landlords to adjust door closers etc.
4. As a result of the plan, the Council should be able to establish what powers it already has under existing legislation and what, if any, additional powers are needed and to inform Communities and Local Government.
5. That any action is taken as quickly as possible before the situation and relationships between the various parties deteriorate further.

Appendix Three – Minutes of the Public Meetings

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD HOC PANEL -STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

2.00pm 17 OCTOBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Meadows (Chairman); Councillors Janio and Wrighton

PART ONE

1 PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

1a Declarations of Interest

1.1 There were none.

1b Exclusion of Press and Public

1.2 The Committee considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A, Part 5A, Section 100A(4) or 100 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

1.3 **RESOLVED –** That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

2. MINUTES (of Previous Meeting)

2.1 There were none as this was the initial meeting of the panel.

3. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chairman explained that this ad hoc panel had been established following examination of the council's draft Housing Strategy by the Adult Social Care and Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee (ASCHOSC).

3.2 Whilst the council's draft Housing Strategy was formulated with extensive reference to issues relating to student housing, members felt that there was nonetheless an opportunity for a more focused piece of work on the issues relating to students living in the local community: hence this scrutiny panel, which will 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.

4. EVIDENCE FROM WITNESSES

4.1 Panel members heard evidence from a number of city residents with points to make about the issue of students living in the local community.

4.2 Evidence from Sheila Rough, Milner Road

4.2(a) Ms Rough made the following points:

- The Milner Road area had now reached saturation point with students, and that additional accommodation on campus was therefore needed urgently;
- Privately rented housing occupied by students ('student houses') now outnumber other types of housing in the area;
- There should be a cap on Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs)* permitted in one street;
- The number of student houses in the area has a negative impact on general property values;
- The number of houses occupied by a number of adults (many of whom have their own cars) causes severe parking problems, exacerbated by anti-social behaviour in relation to parking (i.e. double-parking) which has the potential to impede emergency vehicle access;
- There is a major issue of noise nuisance (esp. late night parties);
- Rubbish is a major problem, with some students not adhering to collection days, not recycling etc;
- The universities should accept more responsibility for their students living in private sector housing;
- The universities should take responsibility for informing students of appropriate behaviour in terms of living in the community;

- Noise problems are constant, with particular problems at or after 3am;

- She had tried in the past to talk to individual students about these issues, but had been discouraged by negative responses;

- She had tried to involve the police, but had been discouraged by the police response (not attending incidents etc.);

- She would suggest key areas for improvement were: imposing a street-by-street cap on student numbers; provision of more on-campus accommodation; better guidance from the universities on appropriate student behaviour.

- NB: 'HMO' has a particular meaning in planning law – referring to housing with three floors or more/six or more occupants not living as a family unit. However, it is also frequently used more generally to refer to privately rented housing shared by several adults – e.g. to 'student houses', although relatively few student houses in the city are, technically speaking, HMOs. It seems sensible to assume that non-expert witnesses to the panel use the term HMO to refer to shared private sector rented housing in general.

4.3 **Evidence from Ted Harman, Chair of Coldean Tenant's Association**

4.3(a) Mr Harman made the following points:

- There are some problems with students in Coldean, particularly in terms of the number of adults living at some properties and in terms of parking;

- Although there have been isolated problems with student behaviour (including urinating in front gardens), most students are polite and do not cause trouble;

- Bus stops in the area can become very crowded with students queuing to go in to town etc. Sometimes the sheer number of students waiting for buses can pose a problem, particularly for older people/people with young children who can feel intimidated (even when no one intends to be intimidating);

- Given the very large numbers of people in the city on the shortlist for family homes, can it be a sensible use of resources to house students in homes more obviously suited to families?

4.4 **Evidence from Mr Wright, Southall Avenue**

4.4(a) Mr Wright made the following points:

- The major problems with students involve noise and rubbish;

- There is also a problem with absentee landlords who do not upkeep their properties;

- Clear guidance from the council and from universities (particularly in terms of refuse collection dates etc) might help;

- Furniture is frequently dumped in the front gardens of student houses for long periods of time. More pressure should be placed on landlords to ensure that this does not happen;

- Stickers placed on rubbish bins (giving details of collection days) would be useful. (This was endorsed by other audience members).

4.5 **Evidence from Anna Hunter, Hanover**

4.5(a) Ms Hunter made the following points:

- There was a growing feeling amongst Hanover residents that problems associated with students had reached an unsustainable level and that things needed to change;

- Hanover residents recognised the value of a vibrant and mixed community which welcomed students, but feared that the mix of the community had become unbalanced;

- Residents (both students and long-terms residents) could make an effort to get to know their neighbours;

- Most students are reasonable enough, but a minority cause very major disturbances; the problem is particularly centred around the Phoenix Halls of Residence and surrounding streets;

- Noise is the biggest problem in Hanover; a fact recognised by many students themselves;

- There have been positive changes in recent months, with local pubs enforcing drinking inside after 10pm and less graffiti appearing;

- The ‘SSHH’ campaign has had some effect and is much appreciated by residents;

- It is not always clear who people should contact with noise/ASB complaints. In particular, council Environmental Health services need a clearer pathway for complaints and all council staff need to be aware of and able to refer into this pathway. Too often, council staff offer conflicting advice to complainants;

- The situation at Phoenix Hall could be improved by Brighton University ensuring that: two security officers are present (and on duty) at nights (one officer cannot police the entire Halls effectively); that residents do not play loud music with their windows open; that more of an effort is taken to remind residents of the need to be considerate to neighbours; that firmer action (including academic sanction) is taken against persistent troublemakers.

4.6 **Evidence from Trevor Wood, Coldean Residents' Association**

4.6(a) Mr Wood made the following points:

- That students are normal people, often living away from home for the first time, and shouldn't be blamed for everything;

- Giving houses with 5 or 6 adults a wheelie bin the same size as that allocated to normal households does not make sense, as there is inevitably more rubbish produced than the bin can hold (which means the extra rubbish goes in black bags which are then pecked open by seagulls etc.);

- There are problems which CityClean needs to address, such as unacceptably long waits for recycling boxes and CityClean operatives who refuse to pick up recycling which hasn't been left in precisely the correct place. Such actions tend to discourage students from recycling when the council should be working hard to encourage them;

- In terms of noise problems, the Residents' Association makes a point of obtaining landlord details whenever possible and contacts landlords should problems arise. This is an effective way of dealing with noise nuisance;

- Members of the Resident's Association make a point of welcoming new students to the area and trying to work together with them to address any problems which might arise (advising people where they should park etc.);

- There should be a cap on HMOs, and the universities must take some responsibility for housing their students;

- Coldean is a community which welcomes students, but it is also a pleasant area for families to live and it is very important that the family nature of the area is not lost through an excess of student housing.

4.7 **Evidence from Richa Kaul-Padte, Sussex University Students' Union**

4.7(a) Ms Kaul-Padte made the following points:

- There is a tendency to view all problems associated with young people sharing houses as being student related, but by no means all young people in shared accommodation are in fact students;

- Sussex University houses nearly all its 1st year students on campus (or students live with their families);

- There are also large numbers of part time and mature students who do not necessarily fit the stereotype of students;

- There should be a properly functioning accreditation system for landlords, to ensure that student housing is of an acceptable standard: both in terms of the quality of accommodation which students should expect to find, and in terms of the impact of student housing on the broader community (e.g. landlords should be discouraged from using conservatories as living spaces);

- The council should work together with the universities and the Students' Union on refuse and recycling issues in order to encourage student recycling;

- Students should be seen as part of the local community; students do lots of volunteering and do make practical contributions to community cohesion;

- Landlords and Lettings Agents could do much more in terms of refuse/recycling – ensuring that students have up to date information, advising on bulk waste disposal etc,

4.8 **Evidence from Gillian Fleming, Hanover**

4.8(a) Ms Fleming made the following points:

- That she does not feel the universities do enough to tackle problems caused by students – particularly in terms of noise;

- That Phoenix Halls of Residence is a particular source of problems, with more needing to be done by Brighton University to minimise the disruption caused to local residents (for example by placing tighter controls on students congregating on the 'Podium' at night-time);

- That many students are very pleasant, but the annual churn of people in and out of student housing means that developing good relations with neighbours does not necessarily provide a permanent solution to neighbour problems.

4.9 **Evidence from Tanya, former student**

4.9(a) Tanya made the following points:

- Universities are in a 'catch-22' situation with regard to student accommodation: if they build halls of residence, they risk being accused of concentrating noise/ASB problems; if they rely upon private sector housing across the community, they risk being accused of not addressing the problem of housing their students;

- Universities can only fund new halls by increasing the student intake (which means increasing the future number of 2nd and 3rd year students seeking privately rented accommodation);

- Brighton University has no campus; it therefore has no option but to build halls in densely populated residential areas;

- A restriction on HMOs/student houses would only work if there was sufficient non-student demand (e.g. from young professionals) to replace students in particular areas. The risk would be that such restrictions would lead to empty homes;

- The 'problem' of students in the community may not be amenable to a single 'big-fix', but rather to a number of small scale interventions on issues such as refuse, recycling etc.

4.10 **Evidence from Tom Wills, near Lewes Road**

4.10(a) Mr Wills made the following points:

- He was shocked to hear of the behaviour of some students: such behaviour is by no means universal;

- In his experience local residents have been very reasonable and patient with students;

- Many students could manage quite happily without cars; perhaps the Students' Union could do more here to promote public transport;

- More campus accommodation is needed at the University of Sussex, particularly for 2nd and 3rd year students who would prefer to remain on-campus;

- Campus accommodation must be affordable; recent campus building has focused on the 'luxury' end of the student market (with en suites etc.) and such accommodation is beyond the means of many students;

- There is a basic lack of supply of student accommodation in the city; this means that landlords are not encouraged to bring rental properties up to an acceptable standard as they know that demand outstrips supply and that they will therefore find people who have no option other than to rent from them.

4.11 **Evidence from Julia Pilgrim, Hanover**

4.11(a) Ms Pilgrim made the following points:

- Noise is a major problem, even when the degree of noise does not reach a level at which Environmental Health (EH) services can take action;

- Noise problems are not just about students; non-students living in shared accommodation can cause just as many problems;

- Not all students cause problems; it's very much a minority;

- If the universities' contracts with students include sanctions for persistent ASB, then these should be enforced. If no such sanctions exist, they should be introduced;

- Noise can be very frightening: it's not just an issue of inconveniencing people;

- Preston Barracks should be considered as a possible site for dedicated student accommodation;

- A central point of contact for student-related problems (for people complaining about student behaviour, but also for students to use) would help, but only if it had real 'teeth';

- Given the size of local universities, they should really do more to manage their students' behaviour;

- Before EH will act on a noise problem, they require the perpetrator's exact address. Obtaining this information can be frightening, as it may involve going out on one's own in the early hours and possibly encountering the people who are making the noise who may well have been drinking heavily/taking drugs.

4.12 **Evidence from Adam, Sussex University**

4.12(a) Adam made the following points:

- That if city public transport was more affordable, fewer students might keep cars. As it is, it can be considerably cheaper to drive across the city than to take a bus;

- Students do not need to be singled out for special treatment: ASB should be treated as such whether students are its perpetrators or not;

- The universities have barred one landlord from advertising on their property lists, but that landlord is still doing business in the city, so it is not clear what effective sanction the universities actually have to ensure their students are housed by responsible landlords.

4.13 **Evidence from Sam, Brighton University**

4.13(a) Sam made the following points:

- He lives in Hanover and loves the area; he feels part of the community;

- Students should be encouraged to take an active role in the community, particularly in terms of engaging with Residents' Associations. This would help integrate students with long term residents and provide a means to address minor niggles before they escalate;

- The National Union of Students is currently running a Neighbourhood Pride campaign to encourage students to engage with their communities;

- Brighton University currently runs the SSHH campaign (silent students, happy homes);

- Housing density and inappropriate conversions of homes are essentially planning issues and the city council should take responsibility for them;

- Brighton University employs a full-time officer to liaise between the university and local communities.

5. Future Meetings

5.1 The Panel plans to hold additional meetings in public on 07 November, 21 November and 05 December. Witnesses at these sessions may include officers from Brighton and Sussex Universities; officers of the City Council (including senior officers from CityClean , planning and housing strategy); police officers; academics who have studied the issue of 'studentification'; city landlords and representatives of student letting agencies.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed Chair

Dated this day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD HOC PANEL -STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

2.00pm 7 NOVEMBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Meadows (Chairman), Janio and Wrighton

PART ONE

6. Procedural Business (copy attached).

6a Declarations of Interest

6.1 There were none.

6b Exclusions of Press and Public

6.2 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

6.3 **RESOLVED –** That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

7. Minutes of Previous Meeting

7.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17.10.08 were approved as an accurate record.

8. Chairman's Communications

8.1 The Chairman informed members that future meetings of the ad hoc panel would be held in Brighton Town Hall, to allow for wider public

access. An additional meeting of the panel has been scheduled for 05 December 2008.

9. Evidence Gathering

9.1 The panel heard from a number of witnesses.

9.2 Evidence from Dr Darren Smith, Reader in Geography, University of Brighton and from Jo Sage, University of Brighton

a) Dr Smith and Ms Sage introduced themselves, explaining that they had studied the impact of increasing student numbers on a number of cities.

b) In answer to a question regarding student/resident 'charters', the panel was told that these charters had been trialled in several locations, including Leeds, Nottingham and Loughborough. Such schemes could be difficult to implement as they required consistent engagement from Student Unions, something which was hard to guarantee, given the high turnover of Student Union officers. However, students are typically under-presented on residents group and associations, and any work which encourages greater engagement should be welcomed.

c) In response to a query concerning the concentration of student households in the city, members were told that the situation was very fluid. Mapping from 2002-2007 showed the greatest concentration in the 'traditional' student areas of Hanover, Hartington Rd and Moulescoomb. Recent years have seen significant numbers of students around London Road station and in Regency Ward, with future movements into Hollingdean anticipated.

d) Members were told this fluidity in student housing was not entirely due to the market expanding; there were also 'fashions' within the market, with some areas of the city seeing an expansion in the number of student households and others a contraction.

This was a very significant issue, as it was not necessarily clear whether former student housing tended to revert to family use or whether it stayed in the private rented sector (e.g. let to 'young professionals'). In the latter instance, the impact of student housing on family housing on the city might be considerably greater than in the former.

Members were informed that, in some other parts of the country such as Leeds, an expansion of student housing in one area of a city (e.g. from newly built Halls of Residence) had seen a matching reduction in the private rented sector for students, but little or no improvement in the availability of family housing, as the great majority of former student housing had been re-targeted at the young professional sector rather

than at families.

e) In answer to a question concerning the relationship between student numbers and national economic performance, the panel was told that the relationship was very complex. However, even if student numbers fell nationally as a result of an economic downturn (and this was by no means guaranteed), 'de-studentification' of Brighton & Hove was unlikely, as the city was considered a particularly attractive destination for students. Recent estimates for both the University of Brighton and the University of Sussex saw stable or rising student figures until at least 2015.

f) In response to queries about Planning issues, members were informed 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 'Home in Multiple Occupation' – an 'HMO'). 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 was to be introduced, it would apply to only a small percentage of student housing.

   Members were told that a more realistic approach to the issue might be to ensure that all existing management techniques were being employed efficiently in order to manage particular areas of city housing.

g) In answer to a question regarding negative student perceptions of areas such as Bevendean and Moulescoomb, members were informed that such perceptions may have originated from surveys undertaken in 2002, when there was relatively little student housing in either area. In recent years, student concentration in Bevendean and Moulescoomb has increased considerably, and perceptions have changed for the better.

   Members were also told that, in recent years, students had begun to favour proximity to their place of study above proximity to city centres, so this might also lead to improved perceptions of these suburban areas.

h) In response to questions about student Halls of Residence, the panel was told that a recent University of Brighton Needs Assessment identified 90% of 1st year students preferring Halls to the private rented sector, with up to 20% of returning students also expressing a preference for Halls. Similar figures could probably be assumed for the University of Sussex.

   Members were advised that if there were sufficient capacity for this volume of students in attractively sited Halls of Residence, there could be a very significant impact upon the private rented sector in the city.

9.3 **Evidence from Kevin Mannall, Community Liaison Officer, University of Brighton**

a) In response to a question concerning what the University of Brighton did to ensure that its students were aware of appropriate behaviour, members were told that this was covered in the compulsory induction for all first year students. Printed guides were also available, and the Student Union was extensively involved with this issue.

b) Members were informed that a joint council/University of Brighton information pack for students would be useful, particularly if landlords/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).

c) In answer to a question about accessing student addresses, Mr Mannall told members that he did not have direct access to students' address details, although he could often confirm which students lived at which addresses by informal means.

d) Mr Mannall told members that the majority of his time was not spent in dealing with complaints about students, but with liaising with a variety of city agencies. Mr Mannall noted that he had received very positive feedback from city organisations, glad that they had a liaison officer to deal with.

9.4 **Evidence from Simon Newell, Head of Partnerships and External Relations, Brighton & Hove City Council**

a) Mr Newell explained aspects of the role of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and of the city Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP) and gave members some background as to what the SHP had done in terms of examining the issue of studentification. Mr Newell noted that the LSP and SHP brought key city partners together and facilitated high level discussion of issues; consequent practical measures would typically be taken by individual partner organisations rather than by the strategic partnerships themselves.

b) Mr Newell noted that the LSP focused on the overall impact the city's universities had, not just upon any negative aspects of studentification.

c) Mr Newell was asked to provide some examples of actions arising from the SHP's work. Mr Newell offered to produce a briefing paper for the panel.

9.5 **Evidence from Martin Reid, Head of Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing, Brighton & Hove City Council**

a) In response to a question regarding Homes in Multiple Occupation (HMOs), the panel was told that the legislation governing HMOs was quite restrictive, both in terms of defining an HMO (a property of more than two storeys and/or housing more than 5 people not living together as a single household), and in terms of the powers it granted to local authorities (which tended to focus on ensuring the quality of accommodation provided by HMOs rather than on managing their impact upon the local community).

b) In answer to a query as to whether more Student Halls of Residence were required, members were told that this was an issue currently being examined by the Strategic Housing Partnership (SHP). The issue was not a simple one, as Halls could themselves impact upon the local community and it was not necessarily the case that increasing the number of places available in Halls would mean that an equivalent amount of private sector student housing was returned to more 'desirable' uses such as family housing.

c) In response to a question on landlord accreditation schemes, members were told that these could be useful, but that most city landlords already provided good quality accommodation. This situation might perhaps be best improved by closer co-working with the universities and by greater encouragement of university 'head-leasing' rather than via formal accreditation schemes. In any case, 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.

9.6 **Evidence from Paul Allen, Director of ebndc, Head of Neighbourhood Management, Brighton & Hove City Council**

a) Mr Allen stressed the positive contribution that the city's universities and their students made to local communities, much of which went relatively unheralded.

b) Mr Allen noted that both city universities were heavily involved in community work, although he had less direct work undertaken by the University of Sussex than by the University of Brighton.

c) Mr Allen told the panel that it was his understanding that the University of Sussex was considering introducing a compulsory element of community engagement into its undergraduate degree courses.

9.7 Evidence from Members of the Public

The panel heard additional evidence from members of the public attending the meeting.

a) **Mr Richard Scott**, a city resident, directed the panel's attention to the issue of the availability of city private rented sector accommodation for

young people who were not students, noting that competition from students could drive rents beyond the reaches of many young working people, and that the conversion of bedsits into (more expensive) studio flats could exacerbate this problem.

b) Mr Scott also noted that the ongoing scrutiny review into Dual Diagnosis (of mental health and substance misuse problems) had addressed housing issues, and that the work of the two panels might usefully be co-ordinated.

c) **Mr Mike Stimpson**, a city resident and landlord, informed the panel that there was in fact no legal or planning reason why student accommodation should not revert back to family use.

d) Mr Stimpson also queried whether the problem of studentification was really as major as was being supposed, noting that some research had suggested the problem was concentrated in a few localised areas rather than being a broader urban issue.

e) In addition, Mr Stimpson questioned whether useful comparisons could really be made between Brighton & Hove and large cities such as Leeds and Nottingham where there was typically a citywide oversupply of housing.

f) The Chairman responded to Mt Stimpson's first point (9.7(c) above), explaining that references by witnesses and panel members to student housing not reverting to family use referred to an observed tendency, on average, for such use not to revert, rather than to any legislative bar on such a reversion.

g) Dr Darren Smith challenged Mr Stimpson's assertions (in 9.7(d) and 9.7(e) above), arguing that the evidence Mr Stimpson had quoted on studentification was based on 2001 census data which was insufficiently sensitive and which largely pre-dated the rapid growth of student numbers in Brighton & Hove and many other cities. Dr Smith also noted that while it was true that direct comparisons of Brighton & Hove with much larger Northern cities were of limited value, a good deal of work had been done on the impact of students on comparator towns and cities such as Loughborough, Bath and Canterbury.

9.8 The Chairman thanked all the witnesses for their contributions.

10. Future Meetings

10.1 The Panel plans to hold additional meetings in public on 21 November and 5 December. Witnesses at these sessions may include officers from Brighton and Sussex Universities; officers of the City Council

(including senior officers from CityClean and planning); police officers; city landlords and representatives of student letting agencies.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed Chair

Dated this day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD HOC PANEL -STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

2.00pm 21 NOVEMBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Meadows (Chairman); Councillors Janio and Wrighton

PART ONE

11. Procedural Business (copy attached)

11a Declarations of Interest

11.1 There were none.

11b Exclusion of Press and Public

11.2 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

11.3 **RESOLVED –** That the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

12. Minutes of Previous Meeting (held on 7 November 2008)

12.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 7.11.08 were approved as an accurate record.

13. Chairman' s Communications

13.1 The Chairman informed members that she was aware that a number of residents still wished to make submissions. The Panel welcomed all submissions, to be received by the deadline of 5 December 2008.

14. Evidence Gathering

14.1 The panel heard evidence from a number of witnesses:

14.2 **Evidence from Sergeant Matt Belfield, Neighbourhood Specialist Sergeant, Sussex Police**

a) Sergeant Belfield introduced himself and explained his remit: he manages the Neighbourhood Policing Team that covers Hanover, St Peters and the North Laine areas of the city.

b) In answer to a question regarding the types of issues that his team had experienced regarding students, the panel was told that students generally caused very little trouble in the city centre. The Neighbourhood Policing Teams tended to be contacted regarding noise complaints, for example, when students returned to residential areas or when a house party over-spilled. Incidents tended to be more public disorder incidents rather than criminal offences. The Teams would deal robustly with any criminal matters.

At the beginning of the current academic term, the Neighbourhood Policing Team in Hanover had stayed at work until 5am to try and address some of the noise complaints, as it had been recognised that complaints escalated at the start of new academic years.

Sergeant Belfield told the panel that the police worked closely with Kevin Mannall, Community Liaison Officer at Brighton University and gave examples of some of the positive joint work that had taken place.

c) Members heard that dealing with noise complaints was generally not within the police's remit; it would generally be the case that details would be passed to Environmental Health on the next working day. However if the Neighbourhood Policing Team had resources available, officers would respond and talk to the household about their responsibilities as neighbours. When the police attend an incident, they will forward the case details to various agencies including the universities.

The panel heard that the police had the powers to arrest people for being drunk and disorderly but that this would be used as a last resort. There was also separate legislation to tackle alcohol being drunk in the street.

Sergeant Belfield said that in his view, he did not think that students often realised that they were causing problems. Sergeant Belfield felt it important to raise students' awareness with students and suggested it might be useful for students to attend residents' meetings so that they could gauge the scale of the problems and the upset to other residents.

d) In response to a query about licensing laws, and whether there was any capacity to impose conditions on premises which had received complaints, the panel was told that legislation was available to close a premises, for example if there was a large-scale disorder. However, noise caused by smokers or people exiting the premises would not be classified as large-scale disorder. If the police received repeat complaints about the same premises, they would discuss this with the Licensing Team.

e) In answer to a question concerning whether public order legislation could be applied to an incident within a residential property such as a garden party, the panel was told that the police could not use the legislation in this way. It would be more likely that the police would close the party down. If a particular household became problematic and was holding noisy parties regularly, the police would raise this with the various agencies including the council and the universities to consider the best way forward. The students would be advised of the possible consequences of continuing their actions, including the potential to be expelled from university.

f) Members heard that parking obstructions and double parking offences were targeted on a regular basis and fixed penalty notices issued as appropriate, More permanent measures were put in where possible, for example, on Elm Grove, barriers had been erected to stop on-pavement parking.

g) In response to a query concerning whether student houses were targeted by burglars, the panel was told that it did not seem to be the case that student households were particularly targeted but that burglaries happened in hotspots. When this happened, the police would offer crime prevention advice to all residents in the area.

14.3 **Evidence from Tim Nichols, Head of Environmental Health and Licensing, Brighton & Hove City Council**

a) Mr Nichols introduced himself and outlined the general duties of the teams that he managed; these included the licensing team and the environmental protection team that investigated noise.

Mr Nichols explained that the teams 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.

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, 7% the year before and 1% the year before that. So far in 2008/9, there had been six equipment seizures.

It was hard to quantify why complaints have escalated, but it could be due to a combination of factors including better audio equipment, tsmoking legislation leading to more people being outdoors, and the removal of artificially early fixed licensing hours.

Mr Nichols explained that the noise patrol was just one way in which the council could gather evidence about alleged noise nuisance. The Environmental Health Team also had the option to interview and correspond with complainants and alleged offenders, install recording equipment, visit the premises during the day or the night, carry out surveillance and stake-outs, and collect statements.

The panel heard that the noise patrol team had carried out customer satisfaction surveys. These had shown a high level of customer satisfaction with the service, although there had been a slight recent decline. The most common comment from residents was that the hours of the service should be extended or operated on other days of the week.

b) The panel heard about the impact of the Licensing Act 2003 on licensed premises. The Act had a presumption that licensed premises were well managed, and therefore any late-night opening licensing applications would have to be granted unless there were clear reasons against it.

The Act also gave the police stringent closure powers, on the grounds of disorder or likely disorder; to date, the police had used this power approximately 20 times. In addition to the police powers, Environmental Health could close premises on the grounds of public nuisance but this would only be in very extreme circumstances.

The most important balancing powers were within the Licensing Review powers, which could result in modifying a licence including: reducing a premises' opening hours or removing a licensable activity; removing the manager; revoking the licence or suspending the licence.

To date, the Panel had reviewed approximately 25 licences. Of these, the Panel had revoked two licences, suspended four licences and modified several other premises' licences.

c) In answer to a question about problems in identifying the source of a potential noise nuisance, the panel heard that it was quite common for there to be difficulties in establishing a property's address. Mr Nichols

said that he felt that his team was reasonably effective at stopping recurring problems but it might be less successful in dealing with sporadic incidents.

Mr Nichols said that he felt that addressing the problem of street noise was a gap in protection for residents. Although bylaws could be used by the police, aggrieved residents and others, it would be unrealistic to expect such powers to be effective.

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.

d) A member raised a resident's concern that they felt that city centre noise complaints took priority over complaints from areas further from the centre. Mr Nichols assured the panel that the team did not prioritise certain geographical areas over others, although they might deal with a clutch of complaints about the same geographical area at one time in times of high demand.

Complaints were categorised into different priorities and responded to accordingly, for instance, the highest priority was given to households where a noise abatement notice had already been served, the lowest priority given to a complaint with no previous history, which had lasted less than an hour and other complaint types being ranked in-between.

e) In response to a query regarding how complaint numbers were calculated, the Panel heard that each address which was being complained about would be categorised as one complaint, regardless of whether one or a hundred complaints had been received about the address.

It was not possible to calculate what percentage of the complaints received were about student households; this information was not currently collected although it might be possible to look at complaints by geographical area if this was useful.

14.4 **Evidence from Rob Fraser, Head of Planning Strategy, Brighton & Hove City Council**

a) Mr Fraser introduced himself and the role of Planning Strategy. Mr Fraser explained that the current Local Plan had been based on information and data from 2001, at which time the current student housing issues had not been so prominent. This meant that there was little in the Local Plan about student housing policy.

Mr Fraser explained that central government gave local authorities challenging housing targets, with financial incentives if the targets were met, for example, at least 11,000 new homes were needed by 2026. There was no current government target for 'student housing'.

b) Members asked about the potential benefits of a supplementary planning document (SPD) on the topic of student housing, commenting that one benefit of an SPD would be to highlight student housing as an issue, for which land needed to be allocated.

Mr Fraser explained that his department had scoped what other local authorities had done in terms of student housing including SPDs, but that there did not appear to be any instant solutions.

Most housing within Brighton and Hove did not fall within planning control, for example most housing was too small to require planning permission to be converted into housing of multiple occupation (HMO).

c) The panel asked whether a local authority had any potential powers to control HMO numbers in a particular area on the basis of the long-term impact on the community's infrastructure. Mr Fraser said that he was unaware of any such mechanism in planning policy, but that he would provide further information to the panel at a later date.

d) Mr Fraser said that it did not appear that planning controls were the way to tackle the issues. His view was that it would be of greater use to work with the universities and housing colleagues to ensure that adequate student accommodation was built near the universities. However, Mr Fraser was aware that he could not speak on behalf of Housing.

Mr Fraser explained that, due to the competing demands on the limited land available, his department would be wary of allowing student-specific accommodation in the city centre.

The panel heard that the Planning Strategy team worked closely with both of the universities in considering student accommodation needs. Mr Fraser explained that on-campus accommodation did not conflict with any other planning policies. There was room for high-density building along the Lewes Road, much of which was owned by the universities. Mr Fraser said that he would be keen to discuss any plans for university-owned land.

The panel heard that the University of Sussex had submitted a current planning application to build 700 units on their land, but this would be used in the first instance to move students from poorer quality campus accommodation.

Mr Fraser told the panel that there was also potential to work with Brighton University to explore the possibility of campus accommodation, as there was capacity on some of their sites.

14.5 **Evidence from Jeanette Walsh, Head of Development Control, Brighton & Hove City Council**

a) Ms Walsh introduced herself and outlined the statutory role of development control, in making decisions and recommendations on planning applications. The development control team also have a duty to investigate breaches of planning control and ensure decisions are in accordance with the Development Plan.

b) Ms Walsh clarified the legislation with regard to HMOs and permitted development rights, and referred members to the advisory note that had been prepared by the Planning Investigations and Enforcement Officer (copy attached to agenda papers).

Ms Walsh explained that there had been amendments to the national legislation regarding permitted developments, which would be likely to lead to larger conservatories and more attic rooms being built under householder permitted development rights.

c) Members queried the Planning Authority's role in controlling the number and the content of signs and billboards. Ms Walsh said that there may be scope for the Planning Investigations team to investigate complaints about multiples of signs although they would not have the authority to control the signage content.

(Mr Fraser added to this point, explaining that there was regulation governing estate agents' boards in conservation areas, but it was not known whether this could be used in non-conservation areas.)

d) In response to a query concerning enforcement action in Brighton and Hove, the panel heard that it was necessary to take a reasonable approach to planning enforcement matters and to consider the various options available. Since Ms Walsh had come into post, she had created a Planning Investigations Team. In the previous year, only six enforcement notices had been served by the team.

14.6 **Evidence from Gillian Marston, Assistant Director, Cityclean and Cityparks and Damien Marmura , Operations Manager, Cityclean , Brighton & Hove City Council**

a) Ms Marston introduced herself and explained Cityclean's role in the city.

b) In response to a resident's concern about students only being allowed small wheeled bins, Ms Marston confirmed that households of five or more people could notify Cityclean of their household size and be issued with a larger wheeled bin.

In response to concerns about students leaving their refuse out on the wrong collection day, Ms Marston confirmed that this was not a 'student' problem but was a citywide problem. Cityclean could write to those households notifying them of the correct collection day. Cityclean

had also installed signs on lamp-posts notifying residents of the correct collection day; this had had a positive impact.

c) Members asked whether Cityclean ever collaborated with the universities to raise awareness of refuse and recycling issues. The panel heard that Cityclean had attended student fairs in the past and that they had worked with one of the universities to introduce recycling facilities into halls and on a communication campaign.

d) Members asked whether it would be possible for Cityclean to issue wheeled bin stickers reminding residents of the correct collection day. Mr Marmura explained that Cityclean was in the process of issuing fridge magnets to every household with their collection day but that they would also consider issuing stickers, as they were less likely to be lost or misplaced. Ms Marston explained that Cityclean was also due to issue recycling box information stickers to all households early in 2009.

   Members queried whether there was a limit as to how many recycling boxes a household could have. Ms Marston said that, within reason, households could have as many recycling boxes as needed but that the recycling crew would also collect plastic bags of sorted recycling.

   Members queried information given at a previous meeting, in which a student household was told by their landlord to leave unwanted furniture on the street as Cityclean would come and clear it. Ms Marston said that this was not the case and that Cityclean did not provide a house clearance service. Cityclean would be reluctant to put skips out at the end of term, as this was contrary to the sustainable waste agenda of 'reuse' and 'recycle'. Mr Marmura confirmed that Cityclean had the power to issue fixed penalty notices to a landlord for refuse being left on the wrong day.

e) Members commented that a key part of the process seemed to be about information flow going to students and said that they were keen to help this process. It was noted that, although student households might change on a regular basis, landlords were fairly constant and perhaps more could be done through landlords.

   Members asked whether there might be a phone number that residents could use to tell Cityclean about households that were causing problems. Ms Marston welcomed this suggestion, explaining that Cityclean employed enforcement officers that would be able to investigate such reports.

14.7 The Chairman thanked all the witnesses for their contributions.

15. Any Other Business

15.1 The final panel meeting will be on 05 December at Brighton Town Hall. Witnesses at this session may include officers from Brighton and

Sussex Universities; officers of the City Council; city landlords and representatives of student letting agencies.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed Chair

Dated this day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE AD HOC PANEL -STUDENTS IN THE COMMUNITY

2.00pm 5 DECEMBER 2008

COUNCIL CHAMBER, BRIGHTON TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Meadows (Chairman); Councillors Janio and Wrighton

Procedural Business (copy attached)

16a Declarations of Interest

16.1 There were none.

16b Exclusion of Press and Public

16.2 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

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

17 Minutes of Previous Meeting (held on 21 November 2008)

17.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 21.11.08 were approved as an accurate record.

18 Chairman's Communications

18.1 The Chairman informed members that this was the final ad hoc Panel meeting on the subject of students in the community. The Chairman explained that the next stage would be for the Panel to meet and consider the evidence that had been gathered, in order to make recommendations. The draft report would then go to full Council in order for the recommendations to be considered and ratified.

18.2 The Chairman anticipated that the report would be available by the end of January 2009 and suggested that any interested parties should email their contact details to the Overview and Scrutiny Team at that time.

Evidence Gathering

19.1 The Panel heard evidence from a number of witnesses:

19.2 Mark Ireland, Head of Strategic Finance and Procurement, and Valerie Pearce, Assistant Director, Customer Services, Brighton & Hove City Council

a) Mr Ireland and Ms Pearce introduced themselves and explained their remit with regard to Council Tax.

b) The Panel heard that students were exempt from paying Council Tax (CT) under two exemption codes, one which applied to halls of residence and one for properties occupied only by students.

There can be problems in identifying student households. Student households might assume that they were exempt automatically and might not inform the council that they were students; they might ignore letters from the council. The council must chase up each of the households until contact is made; this incurs costs that would be avoided if the student households informed the council of their status more promptly.

Ms Pearce explained that Council Tax officers attended Freshers' fairs at both universities in order to complete exemption certificates and advise students of what they needed to do, but it was felt that more action might be taken in raising awareness of this issue.

c) The Panel received details of the number of households in the city registered for exemption on the basis of being a student-only household. Mr Ireland explained that, for the purposes of financial calculations, all exemptions were assumed to be a Band D assessed property, which would be liable for CT of £1200 per year.

For 2008/9, to date there had been 2869 properties, with a projection of up to 3080 by year end, giving an approximate cash value of £4.3 million for student-exempt properties. Mr Ireland explained the mechanisms and grants that central Government had for compensating local authorities for the exemptions.

d) In response to a query about what could help to minimise the costs for Council Tax collection, the Panel heard that it would be helpful if student households registered their exemptions as quickly as

possible, to avoid the council incurring costs in chasing up the bill-payer unnecessarily.

e) In response to a query about whether it might be possible to have, for example, a local City Tax, the Panel heard that this would not be possible under national legislation.

19.3 Toby Hamilton, owner of MTM Letting Agency

a) Mr Hamilton introduced himself and his company, explaining that he had been a student landlord for fourteen years, and that MTM had been in operation for five years. MTM owned approximately two hundred properties across the city, with the vast majority being student lets. The properties were predominantly in Bevendean/ Coombe Road/ Lewes Road/ Upper Lewes Road/ Hanover areas. MTM managed 15 properties along The Avenue, which as a whole had a 25-35% student occupancy rate.

b) The Panel heard that MTM were keen to address student impact issues and that they were aware that noise, refuse and unkempt gardens were the most likely areas of complaint. MTM issued tenants with a three-page welcome pack, which included items on respect, neighbourliness, how to manage your garden, refuse, applying for Council Tax exemptions, informing utility companies etc. Staff talked through the various issues with tenants at the start of their tenancy.

Mr Hamilton explained that MTM had a complaints procedure to be used when complaints were received from residents about student households. They would contact the tenants; carry out face to face visits and take the students to the neighbour's house, encouraging them to apologise, and to start communicating. Mr Hamilton commented that it might not always be apparent to residents that they should contact MTM regarding any problems with tenants.

The Panel heard that, on occasions when it was needed, MTM had worked closely with neighbourhood police officers to talk to households that were causing a more significant problem.

c) With regard to Council Tax, MTM operated a policy under which they would not return a tenant’s deposit until there was proof that Council Tax obligations had been addressed, either through applying for exemption or by paying the tax). Mr Hamilton said that he thought about half of local letting agents did this.

d) Mr Hamilton responded to residents’ concerns that letting agents had access to vacant properties before they went on to the open market, and therefore excluded families wishing to purchase family

properties. Mr Hamilton commented that this might happen on a small scale, but he was not aware of it being a big problem.

With regard to excess refuse being left at a property, Mr Hamilton said that MTM would consider it was the tenant's duty to clear it. If there were excessive refuse, MTM might employ cleaners and re-charge costs to the students. If MTM received complaints about furniture being left in a garden, for example, they would ask the students to remove it within a given timescale. If this was not done, they again would employ cleaners and invoice tenants.

e) The Panel asked whether the private rented student market might reduce, for example, if more halls of residence were built and/or student numbers decreased; if so, what might happen to the private rented market? Mr Hamilton said supply was already exceeding demand and that it was likely that there would be an increase in empty student properties. He did not think that reductions in rent would necessarily affect student take-up as the rent was often paid by parents. The key factor is the quality of the accommodation.

The Panel then asked whether, if supply exceeded demand, MTM could advise landlords to turn their properties back into family homes. They were advised that this might be problematic as most student homes were six bedroomed properties, and not many families would need that size accommodation.

19.4 Mark Shields, G4 Lets

a) Mr Shields introduced himself and explained the remit of G4 Lets; they focussed on student lets, particularly in the Ditchling Road area but with properties across Brighton.

b) Mr Shields explained that G4 gave their tenants a welcome pack, with information on a number of issues, including the contact details for Council Tax in order to register for exemption.

G4 staff would try and visit their properties as much as possible, on average once a month. If they heard about a problem, G4 would ask the student to meet with the neighbour to apologise. The office would keep a diary of any incidents, and include photographs if needed.

c) The Panel asked Mr Shields to comment on the issue of conservatories being used as living rooms, explaining that a number of residents had raised this element of permitted development as an area of concern due to the noise coming from the conservatories.

Mr Shields said that there were benefits to having a conservatory rather than a garden: for example, students tended not to garden and so it was better to develop the space more usefully. It was also

felt that, if there were a patio or garden rather than a conservatory, students would be likely to gather in the garden and cause more noise problems. Mr Shields explained that their properties were non-smoking; students would have to go outside to smoke, which may inadvertently cause noise nuisance to neighbours. The conservatories help to use outside space and contain noise and those whom wish to smoke. Outside space is still there for barbeques and table and chairs in the summer months.

d) In response to a query about whether deposits could be used to cover any outstanding Council Tax bills, Mr Shields said that this might be problematic. Under the Deposit Collection Scheme, deposits were not meant to be used for any other means, and they could not be used for paying debts and so on.

e) Mr Shields echoed MTM's comments about the problems in the letting market; the company had found this a very difficult year - any properties that had not been rented already might be empty for the entire year.

19.5 Shula Rich, on behalf of the National Federation of Residential Landlords

a) Ms Rich introduced herself and explained her qualifications to the Panel. These included being a past Director of the National Federations of Residential Landlords (NFRL); past Chair of the Private Sector Housing Forum and author of the NFRL Landlord Training Manual. Ms Rich explained that she had been a private student landlord for twenty years.

b) Ms Rich felt it was becoming more difficult to let to students, because of the lack of power given to landlords. If there was a problem, the only option would be to threaten eviction, but it could take two to three months for the court hearing, in a tenancy that was only six months long, so it was not a practical solution.

Ms Rich did not feel that extending planning controls would be the answer to tackling the problems; it should be about micro-management of issues. Landlords needed the powers to deal speedily with nuisance of any form.

Ms Rich felt that there was a difference between students and non-students in the way that they behaved as tenants; she received fewer complaints about non-students than about student households. She felt that this was largely due to students from the same university living together and having a shared circle of friends.

When she received complaints about tenants, she would write to the household asking them to be more considerate. She would involve the universities and colleges if she had to send three or more letters to a

household. Ms Rich felt that cheaper alcohol was one cause of the rise in the number of parties and related noise complaints. Ms Rich had always had help from Environmental Health when needed, and their service could not be improved.

c) In response to a query about how Ms Rich made her tenants aware of their responsibilities, the Panel heard that Ms Rich would go through the lease in detail, pointing out all of the tenant's responsibilities. Ms Rich would also check what music playing equipment each student owned.

d) In response to a query about how Ms Rich dealt with students' refuse, the Panel heard that Ms Rich considered it to be the students' responsibility, although she had arranged for cleaners for her properties. In the past, Ms Rich had arranged for clearance of any excess refuse in order not to inconvenience neighbours.

e) Ms Rich suggested that one solution to the noise problems could be the introduction of on the spot fines, in the region of £30 per person, to be imposed by the council or police when attending complaints of noisy parties.

19.6 **David House, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Brighton**

a) Mr House introduced himself; he has been Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Brighton (UoB) for twenty years. UoB had submitted a written statement to the Panel.

b) In response to a query concerning whether there were plans to build more campus accommodation, Mr House said that UoB needed to increase its accommodation offer. If UoB wished to offer campus accommodation to all first years who wanted it, they would have to double the current level of campus accommodation. It was working to expand Varley Hall in conjunction with the council, as well as on a development in Circus St.

c) The Panel asked Mr House to comment on Phoenix Halls in particular, which presented a particular set of challenges, as they were located in a densely packed residential area. Mr House told the Panel that, in the early years, Phoenix Halls had caused very few problems and that UoB had been surprised by the current level of complaints. UoB was committed to dealing with the problems and resolving them for the benefit of all parties.

Mr House said that a number of strategies had been introduced, including employing a fulltime Community Liaison Officer. UoB was reviewing the adverse impact of the smoking ban in halls of residence, recognising that this had caused significant noise problems for neighbours. UoB had the discretion to re-allow smoking in private

rooms; this was being considered as this might resolve some noise problems. The Panel heard that UoB had tightened up staffing levels at Phoenix Halls. UoB had various disciplinary procedures available, including a fine of up to £250, for action that might damage UoB's reputation.

d) The Panel asked Mr House whether he thought that the universities appreciated the scale of residents' frustrations with the impact of students. Mr House said that he hoped that the fact that UoB had employed a fulltime member of staff would show there was commitment to resolve the issues. UoB was spending a lot of time working with various partners, including the student union, to tackle the issues presented.

e) The Panel asked whether the university would ever contact parents directly. Mr House said that this would not generally happen; students were adults so it was not likely that UoB would have the power to contact parents.

f) In response to a query about whether UoB would look into head leasing properties, the Panel heard that they fully managed the halls of residence, and were interested in head leasing. UoB would not like to wholly own domestic properties as there would be ongoing management issues and costs

g) Mr House summed up UoB's position on accommodation: campus accommodation would gradually increase where possible, but private sector housing also had a key role to pay.

19.7 Charles Dudley, Director of Residential, Sport and Trading Services and Lorinda Holness, Residential Services Manager, University of Sussex

a) Mr Dudley and Ms Holness introduced themselves; Mr Dudley was in attendance to represent the Vice-Chancellor of the university. The University of Sussex (UoS) had submitted a statement to the Panel. UoS was pleased to note that the positive contribution of the institution on the local community was widely appreciated.

b) The Panel queried who residents should contact if they had problems with student neighbours, as UoS did not have a designated community liaison officer. The Panel heard that the Housing Team should be contacted, on 01273 678220. If residents were unaware of this, then UoS would need to do more work to promote the service.

The Panel heard that UoS knew where all of their under-graduates lived and that they were willing to deal with problems. Mr Dudley said that a study was underway, looking at a shared services programme with the University of Brighton, and it was possible that recommendations from this might include UoS having its own

Community Liaison Officer, amongst other outcomes. This was also likely to include suggestions for improved channels of communication between the universities and local stakeholders as the current consultation process was too fragmented

c) In response to a query about how first-year students living in halls were taught skills for living, the Panel heard that a number of initiatives were in place including workshops and information packs for students.

d) The Panel asked whether UoS knew about potential demand for accommodation in halls from second and third year students. Ms Holness explained that UoS carried out an annual exit survey for students leaving halls, and had asked this question for the first time in this year's survey. Approximately 45% of respondents said that they would prefer to have a second year in halls; of the 45%, a high proportion were international students.

UoS said that it was committed to housing all first-year students in university managed housing, with the majority on campus and had just received outline planning permission for 798 campus rooms. Mr Dudley commented that there was no public subsidy for student housing and it was a major financial outlay for UoS, which he hoped would evidence UoS's commitment to student accommodation. The success of their accommodation strategy could be demonstrated in the fact that there were 1000 less UoS students living in HMOs than last year.

e) The Panel raised students' concerns that campus accommodation can be too costly for students. Ms Holness said that the exit survey asked students whether they felt that the halls offered value for money. The question always got a positive response. There was an almost 100% occupancy rate for the current flats, which could be taken as an indication that they were not too costly. The rents were inclusive of utility costs, services, broadband connectivity and contents insurance which provided a value for money package. In addition, UoS offered a range of accommodation options including lower priced rooms with less included in the price.

f) In terms of student complaints, Ms Holness said that UoS did not tend to receive many complaints about its students, so it was hard to say whether it was more prevalent in head-leased properties, or in the private rented sector.

g) Mr Dudley commented on the earlier discussion of micro-managing problems and the need, as previously stated, to improve channels of communication which were too fragmented. This was an area that both universities would be keen to explore and discuss with partners to assist with issues arising from the concentration of students in particular areas of the city.

20 Any Other Business

20.1 The Chairman thanked all of the contributors for their input.

The meeting concluded at 4.00pm

Signed Chair

Dated this day of

Appendix Four - List of Expert Witnesses:

Paul Allen, Director, ebndc (East Brighton New Deal for Communities) Partnership and Head of Neighbourhood Renewal Development and Strategy

Sergeant Matthew Belfield, Street Policing Team, Sussex Police

Charles Dudley, Director of Residential, Sport and Trading Services, University of Sussex

Rob Fraser, Head of Planning Strategy, Brighton & Hove City Council

Lorinda Holness, Residential Services Manager, University of Sussex

David House, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Brighton

Mark Ireland, Head of Strategic Finance, Brighton & Hove City Council

Kevin Mannall, Community Liaison Officer, University of Brighton

Damien Marmura, Operations Manager, CityClean, Brighton & Hove City Council

Gillian Marston, Head of CityClean, Brighton & Hove City Council

Simon Newell, Community 2020 Partnership Officer, Brighton and Hove City Council

Tim Nichols, Head of Environmental Health and Licensing, Brighton & Hove City Council

Toby Pearce, MTM Lettings

Valerie Pearce, Assistant Director, Customer Services, Brighton & Hove City Council

Martin Reid, Head of Housing Strategy and Private Sector Housing, Brighton and Hove City Council

Shula Rich on behalf of the National Federation of Residential Landlords

Jo Sage, Researcher, University of Brighton

Mark Shields, G4 Letting Agents

Dr Darren Smith, Reader in Geography, University of Brighton

Jeanette Walsh, Development Control Manager, Brighton & Hove City Council

Appendix Five – Media Coverage about the Scrutiny Panel

All of the articles below have been taken from the website of the Argus (www.argus.co.uk)

Saturday 4 October 2008
Investigation into student housing

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3727681.Investigation_into_student_housing/?action=complain&cid=6874406

An investigation has been launched into how Brighton and Hove¹s growing student population is affecting housing in the city.

Brighton and Hove City Council's scrutiny team has set up its first investigative panel which will research the issue.

The number of students living outside campus has grown by 50% - from 2,000 student properties to 3,000 - between 2004 and now.

The panel will look at the impact student households is having on long-standing communities within the city.

A council assessment of the housing market showed two thirds of Brighton University and half of Sussex University students take private rented accommodation, meaning about 12,000 live outside of campus and halls of residence.

Students are concentrated along the Lewes Road, Upper Lewes Road, Hartington Road, Coombe Road and Bevendean areas of the city.

A key concern is that students sharing larger homes occupy properties that would otherwise be available to families.

Sussex University has submitted a planning application to build 800 new flats on its Falmer campus.

The panel will be led by Councillor Anne Meadows, chairwoman of the adult social care and housing scrutiny committee, and will also include Councillor Georgia Wrighton and Councillor Tony Janio.

Three public meetings will be held to gather evidence and views.

The first meeting, on October 17 from 2pm to 4pm at Hove Town Hall, is open to all residents.

These opinions and experiences will set the agenda for the second two meetings in November when experts will provide evidence to the panel.

Coun Meadows said: "Everyone living in Brighton and Hove understands the benefits and the value that the two universities bring to the city and we very much welcome their presence.

"This is the first time that overview and scrutiny at Brighton and Hove City Council has studied the effects that students living in the community might have on long standing local

communities and we will be looking to make practical policy recommendations as a result of the panel.

"I hope that residents in the city, including students, will take this opportunity to let us know their views."

Tuesday 21 October 2008
Brighton 'students are taking over'

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3777340.Brighton__students_are_taking_over_/?action=complain&cid=7265115

Residents are urging action because they say their communities are becoming “mini student cities”.

Problems of noise, rubbish and parking caused by many living in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) were raised at a meeting called to address the issues surrounding student accommodation.

A panel from Brighton and Hove City Council’s adult social care and housing overview and scrutiny committee heard the comments at the first of three meetings.

Councillor Anne Meadows, who chaired the panel, said: “We understand that the universities and students help to make Brighton and Hove the vibrant, diverse and thriving community that it is. At the same time it has to be recognised universities and students bring added pressures, not least to local communities.”

Speaking before the meeting, Sheila Rough, of Milner Road, Brighton, said: “We call our area ‘student city’. It’s like living on a time bomb, because you never know who is going move in each year.”

She told the panel local residents would welcome the building of student accommodation on campuses or a cap on the number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in streets.

She said: “We have reached saturation point in our area. We have reached the stage where HMOs outnumber privately owned homes.”

Noise was also an issue for many residents.

Anna Hunter spoke on behalf of a group of Hanover residents, who live near Brighton University’s Phoenix halls of residence and students living in HMOs, including Coleman Street, which is known as “Party Alley”.

She said: “Students are certainly welcome in our community but we are concerned that the mix is becoming too weighted towards students.

“If we are not careful, Hanover risks moving towards becoming a student housing estate.”

Jean and Ted Briant, of Southall Avenue, Brighton, said the area looked neglected because of rubbish and overgrown gardens.

Mrs Briant said: “A lot of the blame is to do with absent landlords.”

Members of both Brighton and Sussex student unions attended the meeting.

Richa Kaul-Padte, the union's welfare officer at Sussex, said more pressure should be put on landlords to provide acceptable housing.

She said: "It shouldn't be students versus the community."

Both groups agreed they would like to work with the council and residents to address some of the problems.

Monday 27th October 2008

Householders demand action over students

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3794312.Householders_demand_action_over_students/?action=complain&cid=7283227

Residents living in "student cities" have made a desperate plea to council leaders and university bosses to help them save their communities.

Late-night noise, antisocial behaviour, litter and parking problems mean many residents are deserting areas in Brighton that are popular with students.

Thousands of students from the universities of Brighton and Sussex live in residential areas of the city and while they undoubtedly support the city's economy there is growing concern about problems in densely-populated student areas.

As the council begins looking into the issue of "studentification", residents have spoken out about the changing face of their neighbourhoods.

At an Elm Grove Area Residents Action Group meeting, people from 80 households expressed their frustrations to representatives from Brighton and Hove City Council, Sussex Police and both universities.

Jo Roeg, 43, of Brading Road, Brighton, who has three children under ten, said: "I don't want to live in a hall of residence at my age. I feel hemmed in. It's so depressing."

Residents also went to Hove Town Hall to express their views.

Julia Pilgrim, of Hanover Terrace, said: "When there is trouble it is a minority of students. But minority trouble-makers can make a heck of a lot of trouble very quickly."

She said she had called the environmental health team after seeing rats in her road because of rubbish.

She added: "I am frightened sometimes when I hear screaming.

I think, 'Is it the young people or is there a crime out there?'"

The issue of studentification is a growing one for many university cities. At the University of Sussex all first year students are offered places on campus at Falmer. However, most second year students choose to move into private accommodation.

In 2006-07, 4,688 of its students lived in houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) in Brighton and Hove and in 2007-08 that number rose to 5,292. The number is expected to decrease this academic year, with new buildings opening on campus.

A spokeswoman for Sussex University said: “We are currently able to house nearly 3,500 students.

“In the past two years we have opened two new campus residences – Stanmer Court, which has 463 ensuite rooms and 11 studio flats, and Swanborough, which has 250 ensuite rooms.”

The university has also applied to build 800 study bedrooms on campus. The proposals will be considered by the council's planning committee in November.

At the University of Brighton demand exceeds the number of spaces available in the university’s halls of residence and it is unable to guarantee all first year students a place.

Most recent figures for the university show that 5,038 students live in private rented accommodation or at home.

YOUR VOTE

Who do you think is most to blame for the "studentification" of Brighton?

Students: **12%**

Landlords: **31%**

The universities: **16%**

Brighton and Hove City Council: **10%**

It's not a major problem: **31%**

A spokeswoman said: “We are looking at options to increase bed spaces to guarantee a place in halls for all students who require it.”

Wednesday 29th October 2008

Communities plea for an end to "studentification"

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3802791.Communities_plea_for_an_end_to__studentification_/

The Argus reported yesterday that residents living in “student cities” have made a desperate plea to council leaders and university bosses to help save their communities.

As council chiefs start a consultation on how “studentification” affects people living in Brighton and Hove, Emily-Ann Elliott and Annabel Daguerre speak to some of those whose lives are affected by the large numbers of students in their area.

'HEMMED IN'

Marion White, 64, was born in her house in Brading Road, off Elm Grove, and has lived there with her husband Graham, 66, for the past 40 years.

During that time the couple say they have seen the street change drastically, as more families

desert the area and landlords turn properties into houses of multiple occupation (HMOs).

The couple no longer know most of their neighbours and say they feel “hemmed in” by student houses, as landlords extend properties outwards and upwards, building conservatories on the back and dormers in the roof.

Mrs White said: “Over-building is a huge problem.

“We’re blocked in, because landlords are putting conservatories in the gardens, to be used as living rooms and students are sitting on the flat roofs in the summer.

“They can see right into our garden. We've lost all our privacy.”

The couple believe one solution would be for Brighton and Hove City Council's planning department to limit the number of extensions granted for HMOs.

Mrs White said: “I’ve lived here all my life. We could move but we don't really want to and why should we?”

YOUR VOTE

Who do you think is most to blame for the "studentification" of Brighton?

Students: **12%**

Landlords: **31%**

The universities: **16%**

Brighton and Hove City Council: **10%**

It's not a major problem: **31%**

NOISE IMPACT

Theresa Brookes, a freelance editor, lives in Southover Street, Hanover, with her partner John Thompson and their six-year-old son Luca.

She has lived in the area for more than 15 years, before the University of Brighton’s Phoenix halls of residence were built.

She said: “We are completely understanding of student life – we were students ourselves once – but there should be strategies in place to better protect residents who are living nearby.

“The impact on our lives since the halls were built is not to be underestimated.”

Although the site is patrolled by a security guard, residents say noise during the night is still a huge problem.

Ms Brookes said: “It depends on the intake each year. Some years are better than others.

“But every year we have a relatively quiet summer. We live for June, which is when the students all go home and we relax, but by August residents are already talking about them

coming back.

“The big difference between this year and last year is the smoking ban on the site.

“No measures were put in place, so students are coming out at all hours to chat and smoke, as well as shouting and causing a disturbance when they come home from the pubs and clubs.

“We are not being unreasonable.

We accept that there is going to be a certain level of noise but there really is too much.”

Ms Brookes feels unable to allow Luca to have a bigger bedroom at the front of the house, as she does not want him to be subjected to the often nightly disturbances of students returning home.

She said: “I’m woken up in the middle of the night by people shouting and their foul language.

You do kind of wake up shaking, thinking what’s going on.

“It’s a very stressful situation. If things continue, more and more families will leave Hanover.”

'LACK OF RESPECT'

Molly Thew says lack of respect has become a big issue in her street.

Mrs Thew, 42, who works for American Express, lives in Coleman Street, Hanover, with her husband Nigel, 47, and 82-year-old father John Goddard.

She said: "Noise is obviously a problem, although it is not constant every night.

“But for me it is the mess and the lack of respect from the students for the area they live in.

“Rubbish gets put out every day and bags get pecked open by seagulls, so there is mess everywhere.

“The outsides of the houses are not kept very nice, although I know that is down to the landlords.

“There are 90 houses in Coleman Street and I would estimate about 55 to 60 are occupied by students. There are 15 people living in the three houses opposite me.

“There is never enough parking and there are bikes clamped to every lamppost and drainpipe, which obstruct the pavements.

“My father cut his leg on the pedal of one of the bikes which was blocking the path."

Mrs Thew said she had noticed the changes over the past ten years. She said: “It is just the general attitude.

“The students hang around outside, have parties in the middle of the night and play football in

the road. I have even seen people running over the bonnets of parked cars.

“It used to be such a lovely area and everybody knew everybody.

“Something needs to be done but how it’s going to be controlled and managed I just don't know.”

EARPLUG NIGHTS

Simon Glaisyer believes the social mix in the area where he lives has changed drastically in the past 15 years.

The 39-year-old lives in Hanover Street close to the University of Brighton’s Phoenix halls of residence and a popular area for HMOs.

He said: “When I first moved here I loved the area’s vibrancy and social mix. There were older residents, young families, young couples, single occupancy, all sharing in the friendly and non-judgmental ‘Hanover-vibe’.

“But over the years all this has changed. I have seen a once vibrant, socially rich community slowly become little more than an enlarged student campus.

“I have lost count of the number of residents that have left over the years as the student timetable, complete with late night noise and disturbances, made living in the area intolerable.”

Mr Glaisyer, who works for a mental health charity, said: “Parents of students started buying houses in the area and landlords started renting them out to as many students as possible. You expect to be disturbed by noise sometimes but the level and frequency has got significantly worse.

“Brighton is a fun place and of course students are going to go out.

When they are returning at 3am, 4am or 5am most days it only takes a few people shouting to ruin your night.”

Mr Glaisyer has resorted to wearing earplugs at night and had to install secondary glazing in his home. He said: “I am glad the council is looking at the issue now. It has started to realise that some areas have changed almost beyond recognition and if they don’t do something soon it will be irreversible.”

'LANDLORDS COULD DO MORE'

Students have hit back at claims they are taking over the city.

Union representatives from the universities of Sussex and Brighton say problems raised by residents during consultation about “studentification” are caused by a small minority of students.

Members of Sussex and Brighton student unions said most students are considerate members of the community, who contribute a lot to the area they live in.

Richa Kaul-Padte, welfare officer for Sussex University’s student union, said: “I am worried students are becoming scapegoats for problems which aren’t particularly their fault.

“It shouldn’t be students versus the community. The community should include students.”

She advised residents and students to introduce themselves to one another when they move into an area to form good relationships.

She said: “Communities change over time as different groups move in.

“We just have to work together to be integrated. A lot of the time problems with students are caused by a very small minority.”

Ms Kaul-Padte added that landlords should be encouraged to sign up to an accreditation scheme, which is currently voluntary, to ensure houses are wellmaintained.

She said: “I really want the council to put pressure on landlords to develop a very strong accreditation scheme.”

Speaking about latenight noise problems Sam Forster, vicepresident of the University of Brighton student union, said: “We are concerned about it. It is a valid issue and one we are working on.

“We rolled out the Sshh campaign last year, which stands for Silent Students Happy Homes, which has been very successful.

“At the university we also have a full-time community liaison officer.”

Mr Forster said many students found themselves living in houses extended by landlords and now with six or seven bedrooms, as they were cheaper.

Landlords could play a part in controlling problem students. He said: “The situation is more people are buying houses and increasing the capacity from a three-bedroom house to six or seven rooms.

“The onus on landlords is also not what it should be.

“We can complain to the students causing the problems but have no real sway.

“But landlords have more sway with students as they are living in their houses and noise policies could be worked into their contracts.”

What steps to take What to do if you have a noise complaint.

Contact Brighton and Hove City Council on 01273 292929, email ehl.environmental protection@brightonhove.gov.uk or fill in an online complaint form at www.brightonhove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1112585.

Your complaint should include: Your name and address and a daytime telephone number. Anonymous complaints are not accepted.

The address (or site) where the noise is coming from. The type of noise (such as loud music, barking dog, alarm sounding). When and for how long the noise occurs.

The way the noise affects you (such as keeping you awake).

Anything you have done to try to deal with the problem (such as speaking to the person making the noise).

In an emergency outside normal office hours, contact the council's emergency service on 01273 292229. An immediate response cannot be provided to all noise problems that arise out of office hours.

A noise patrol operates from 10pm to 3am on Fridays and Saturdays to monitor and respond to noise problems. Call 01273 293541.

Both universities have a point of contact for residents who are having problems with students living nearby.

For University of Brighton students contact Kevin Mannall at communityliaison@brighton.ac.uk.

For University of Sussex students email the housing office at housing@sussex.ac.uk.

Thursday 30th October 2008

It's vital that city is student friendly

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/commentandanalysis/3805474.It_s_vital_that_city_is_student_friendly/

As residents, students and Brighton and Hove City Council discuss the impact of "studentification" on the city, Dr Darren Smith, reader of geography at the University of Brighton, who coined the term, talks about the changing face of the city and how he believes the issue should be tackled.

Nationally Brighton and Hove is viewed as a unique place in the midst of expanding student populations – a university city where town and gown relations flourish and where the benefits of the universities and the high proportion of students are highly visible and recognised.

As the first academic to coin the term "studentification", which describes urban changes linked to high concentrations of students in residential neighbourhoods, I have seen how the term all too often carries negative connotations.

But studentification has many positive impacts including higher levels of spending in the local economy, which is particularly important in today's economic climate, greater demand for public services, student volunteering, the "cultural buzz" created by students and buoyant local housing markets.

As part of my research at the University of Brighton on studentification across Britain, Brighton and Hove is consistently viewed as a "model of good practice" for integrating students into the city, particularly by those concerned with studentification in other university towns and cities.

I was commissioned by the University of Brighton in 2002 to investigate the impacts of students in the city. By contrast to other small university towns and cities, my research confirmed studentification was not unfolding here.

Instead, students tended to be dispersed throughout the city and that over-concentrations of students in houses of multiple occupation (HMOs) were not prevalent. The role of the accommodation offices of the universities was noted as a key factor and in particular, the use of head-leased, university-managed accommodation to manage the off-campus behaviour of students.

The findings also revealed that students did not have a preference to live in “student areas” of the city. This was viewed as a positive part of the “student experience” and a major appeal of the city.

Yet the recent media reports of tension between established residents and students suggest that such community cohesion may be diminishing.

This begs the question “Have student lifestyles and residential preferences changed over the last five years?” and this would appear to be the case.

This has led to the studentification of parts of the city in neighbourhoods such as Hanover and Elm Grove, whereby the population density of students is now viewed negatively by some residents.

One of the key factors is the increased activities of some landlords, letting agents and developers, which have created new “student areas” via the conversion of family housing into student HMOs. As students have moved into neighbourhoods such as Bevendean and Moulsecoomb the demographic structure has changed.

As seen in other university towns and cities a decade earlier, well-organised resident groups have formed in the city to contest the changes to their neighbourhoods.

Much of the activity is motivated by the effects of studentification, such as increased refuse and noise.

It is essential not to assume that these issues are linked specifically to student residents.

This is explicitly recognised by the resident groups.

Resident groups stress they are not anti-student and recognise the benefits of the universities for the city.

This broader understanding of the effects of students and universities is vital as the key institutions and local communities work together in effective partnerships to address the challenges of studentification.

With this level of co-operation and mutual working, I am optimistic the challenges of studentification in the city can be mitigated and solutions found.

A student housing strategy has been established for the city and the local authority should be commended for pushing forward this ground-breaking initiative.

The commitment to foster more cohesive town and gown relations led the University of Brighton to appoint a community liaison officer in 2007.

Central to the student housing strategy should be the need to supply more bed spaces for students in university halls of residence or purpose-built student accommodation.

The University of Sussex has submitted a planning application for an additional 900 beds on the campus and plans are under way at the University of Brighton to redevelop the Varley halls site to provide additional bed spaces.

The University of Brighton is also seeking other sites for the development of additional accommodation to serve the Moulsecoomb and Grand Parade campuses.

Ultimately, a student housing strategy must strive to engender sustainable and balanced communities across the city.

The key is to enable a positive "student experience" for both students and established residents, whereby students are responsible citizens motivated to remain here after graduation.

The long-term health and sustainability of the city depends on the annual in-migration of young populations and ensuring cohesive relationships between students, the universities and established residents is essential to maintain the appeal of Brighton and Hove as a "student friendly" city.

Friday 31st October 2008

Debate over 'studentification' intensifies

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3807780.Debate_over__studentification__intensifies/?action=complain&cid=7291655

A landlord has joined the "studentification" debate saying he is being made a scapegoat by students and residents.

As the issue continues to be discussed as part of a consultation by Brighton and Hove City Council, many are blaming landlords for the run-down appearance of some accommodation and for cramming too many students into small houses.

This week The Argus reported student union representatives from both Sussex and Brighton universities believe landlords should take more responsibility for some of the issues.

But the landlord, who asked not to be named, believes businessmen like him are being blamed for issues they have no control over.

He said: "We can't be responsible for our tenants' behaviour. They are very well protected by the law and we can't evict them unless there is something very serious."

He also agreed it is a minority of students who cause problems and said that after owning three flats, which each house three students, for seven years he has never had problems with tenants.

YOUR VOTE

Who do you think is most to blame for the "studentification" of Brighton?

Students: **12%**

Landlords: **31%**

The universities: **16%**

Brighton and Hove City Council: **10%**

It's not a major problem: **31%**

He said: “It is a tiny minority causing the problems.

“Noise is a common problem and can only be dealt with by the council and the noise abatement team.

“I know from experience that tenants have to record noise over several weeks before the council will act. This is not good enough.

“Zero tolerance should be the reaction in the first instance. Litter and fly-tipping is also the responsibility of the council and antisocial behaviour should be dealt with by the police.

“Universities should also take more responsibility.

“They should hold lessons for freshers on how to behave away from home and there should be consequences for nuisance students, like disciplinary action for bad behaviour that may lead to expulsion for persistent offenders.”

Councillor Anne Meadows, who is chairing the council committee examining the issue, said she was confident solutions could be found to some of the problems.

She said: “I am a great believer that very small actions can have a big impact on peoples’ lives and I think it will only take a few small actions to help solve a lot of the problems.

“However, I do feel that some areas might have reached a critical mass in terms of studentification and that overwhelms the community. We need to consider how we deal with those situations as well.”

Coun Meadows said the first meeting with residents and student union representatives had been “very positive”.

Series of meetings planned

A meeting will be held on December 5, which will include managing agents, landlords and universities.

The meeting is in addition to those which will be held on November 7, when experts including Dr Darren Smith, from Brighton University, who coined the term studentification, will speak and November 21 when council officers, including those from CityClean and the planning department will attend.

The November 7 meeting will be at Hove Town Hall at 2pm and the November 21 and December 5 meetings at Brighton Town Hall at 2pm.

Friday 31st October 2008

Friday Inquisition- Councillor Anne Meadows and Brighton universities' Student Unions

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/thefridayinquisition/3808497.Councillor_Anne_Meadows_and_Brighton_universities__Student_Unions_/

Send in your questions about students and studentification to The Friday Inquisition. Taking part today at 12.30pm will be student leader, Sam Forster, the vice-president for education and equalities at the University of Brighton's Student Union, Councillor Anne Meadows from Brighton and Hove City Council, who is carrying out a consultation into the issue and Richa Kaul-adte, the welfare officer for the University of Sussex Students' Union.

YOUR SAY *Your*Argus

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
12:37pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I'm Old Gregg! Can't the SU organise meetings between students and complaining residents? If someone sends a sneaky letter to the council about noise then it just winds everyone up and they would benefit from actually talking about it I feel.

Regards,

Old Gregg

Dear old Gregg, that's a very good suggestion. The University of Brighton has employed a full-time community liaison officer. I attend residents meetings, local action teams meetings and liaise on a regular basis with local councillors and council officials. This has proved an effective way of dealing with complaints at an early stage and has greatly improved partnership working and communications. If the complaint is about University of Brighton students you can contact the university directly at community-team@brighton.ac.uk.

Kevin Mannall, Community Liaison Officer for University of Brighton and Sam Forster

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
12:54pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I live on viaduct road in a student house. My room is freezing because my landlord will not fix my broken window. The kitchen and bathroom look very tired. Plus our communal area is tiny, with no table at which to sit and eat food. Why would I look after a place like this? If we, as students, are supposed to behave as normal residents, provide us with a good standard of housing. What are you doing to make sure landlords do so? Are there any standards that they have to abide by?

Josh

The University of Sussex Students' Union would like to call upon the council and both universities to enforce a compulsory code of standards and accreditation scheme. The current scheme is voluntary. If letting agents and landlords don't sign up they can't advertise their properties through the universities. This doesn't stop them though from advertising through other means, thereby subjecting students, like yourself, to substandard accommodation.

Richa Kaul-Padte

As a council we may be looking to introduce a compulsory accreditation scheme, however, this is dependant on the outcome of the studentification panel. This may have several legal requirements that would need to be considered first and of course consulted upon.

Councillor Anne Meadows

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:06pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I live next door to a house that is rented to students, and am fortunate in that they (and I believe most students) are a considerate lot, who let me know when they have parties and so on. But it seems there will always be a minority of inconsiderate louts who don't care about their community. What can be done to persuade those people to be a bit more public-spirited?

Norman Parkes

Thanks for your question. You do raise an important point which is that it is a minority of students who are causing problems in the local community and I think it is important that something is done to address this. As a university and Students' Union we will be looking to increase our publicity with regard to community engagement through campaigns aimed at raising awareness amongst students of how to live harmoniously with their neighbours.

At the moment we run the Silent Students Happy Homes or SSHH Campaign which encourages students to respect their neighbours when returning home from nights out by asking them to be quiet. The campaign also advises students to talk to their neighbours when they're planning parties to ensure they are aware it will be happening and to take into account their views.

As a union we are looking to add to our campaigns portfolio a new initiative concerning students in the community and we hope to roll this out over the next couple of months.

Sam Forster

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:13pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I agree some students are bad neighbours, but a lot of residents (like our neighbour) complains about everything we do even though we're quiet. She probably had a bad experience with another group which has prejudiced her against all students. Don't you think some literature or something could be sent out to encourage people to welcome students and be friends with them before they adopt some bigoted view before meeting us?

Thanks, Chris

Hi Chris, I think that's a really good idea. I think when talking about fostering good community relations, as well as dealing with potentially anti-social behaviour, the same information and awareness should be provided to all members of the community. Without specifically targeting students, I think it would be a really good initiative for the council together with the universities and students' unions to send out letters welcoming new people into the community and reminding residents of the need to be respectful towards each other.

Richa Kaul-Padte

Over the last few months as a students' union and a university we have been attending an increasing number of local residents meetings and have seen a number of instances where local residents are being encouraged to introduce themselves to student neighbours. But in the same vein there is nothing to stop students introducing themselves when they move into a new house.

Sam Forster

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:24pm Fri 31 Oct 08

I read that students were depriving families of homes in some areas of Brighton. Is this really true?

Why have the universities been allowed to expand without any consideration of the impact of extra students on the town? This seems like irresponsible behaviour.

Colbert

Thank you for your question Colbert. Some managing agents and estate agents have directed sellers directly to property developers and this has created a vacuum of family housing as local families were denied the opportunity to purchase. This has been proven in Bevendean and Moulsecoomb. I understand that investment agents are being directed to a new local area and I would wish the council to take account of this in the new housing strategy for the city.

Councillor Anne Meadows

The University of Sussex currently houses all its first year students on campus, apart from those who are already living in the local area. The university are looking to head lease a number of properties in the city, which would allow second and third year students to live in reliable accommodation spread across Brighton.

Richa Kaul-Padte

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:35pm Fri 31 Oct 08

To Sam Forster, what do suggest landlords should do to change their tenants behaviour?

Jessica

You raise an interesting topic. In my opinion a greater onus needs to be placed upon landlords to make their tenants aware of their responsibilities. I believe that in every tenancy agreement there is a clause relating to anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance, but in a number of instances this part of the contract is not actively monitored. There are a number of absentee landlords who don't live in the city and manage properties from afar. In these cases students see very little of their landlord and the landlord often has no idea of any problems relating to their property whether these be disrepair or anti-social behaviour.

As student unions, universities and the council we actively investigate complaints and seek to find a resolve, and it shouldn't be forgotten that students have responsibility for their conduct. But at the end of the day landlords are the ones holding the legally binding contract. Therefore I would like to see landlords take more responsibility for upholding the anti-social behaviour and noise-nuisance clauses in those contracts. This would go a long way towards improving relations between students and the community they live in.

SF

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:48pm Fri 31 Oct 08

The students in my road are incredibly noisy, and I have complained to the council several times, but to be honest, there isn't much they can do apart from send pointless letters is there? I'm reluctant to get the police involved, but what else can I do?

Eleanor Parsley

Thank you for your question Eleanor. It is a complaint I hear often as a ward councilor for Mouslecoomb and Bevendean. Many residents are asked to complete a diary of noise nuisance and this can be very stressful for a resident as it requires them to wait even longer for a response. One of the ideas that residents suggested at the studentification panel meeting was for the Noise Nuisance Patrol to be extended beyond 3am and also to take account of the fact that a lot of noise is created in the week as well.

The local PCSOs are a useful resource to residents as they can report back to the police without residents feeling fear of reprisals. To find out who your local PCSO is visit the Sussex Police website where that information can be found.

Another resource is of course your local ward councilor. They are very sympathetic and resourceful and will always listen to your concerns.

If you identify which university the students are from then please contact the university direct.

We still have three meetings of the studentification panel and it will be interesting to see what developments will come out of those meetings. I have high hopes we can provide a positive outcome for many residents and their concerns. The three meetings should be listed on the council's website if you wish to attend and listen to the experts' accounts. Residents and students are still able to submit their concerns and ideas in writing to the panel care of the council.

AM

REPORT THIS POST »

Friday Inquisition, Brighton says...
1:51pm Fri 31 Oct 08

Thank you all for your questions and we would like to reassure you that we are working together to try and address your concerns.

Sam Forster, Councillor Anne Meadows, Richa Kaul-Padte and Kevin Mannall

REPORT THIS POST »

bug eye, hove says...
12:21am Tue 11 Nov 08

thanks for not answering my question, maybe it did not fit in with your anti landlord agenda.

REPORT THIS POST »



Left to right: Richa Kaul-Padte, Councillor Anne Meadows, Kevin Mannall and Sam Forster

Monday 10th November 2008

Issue of 'studentification' discussed at council meeting

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3834192.Issue_of__studentification__discussed_at_council_meeting_/

The large numbers of students in Brighton and Hove has been discussed by experts as attempts to find solutions to some of the issues caused by “studentification” continues.

Speakers including Dr Darren Smith, from the University of Brighton and who coined the term studentification, answered questions from a panel of Brighton and Hove city councillors about students living in the area and gave examples of other cities which have had similar experiences.

The meeting at Hove town hall on Friday was also attended by residents and representatives from both Sussex and Brighton universities’ student unions.

Speaking after the meeting, Councillor Anne Meadows, who chaired the panel, said: “It was more challenging than the last meeting we had, as these people are experts so we were trying to delve a bit deeper into things.

“It was very much about getting extra information on some of the issues and we have now got a lot to take to the next meeting when council officers and police will attend.”

During the meeting, the panel heard about how other cities with large student populations have dealt with some of the issues.

Coun Meadows said: “Obviously one of the things we are looking at is best practice elsewhere, like Nottingham and Leeds, but we are also looking at places like Bath and Canterbury, in terms of size in relation to the city.

“The problem with bigger cities is they talk about building extra halls of residence, but they have got a lot of land to do that.

“But one of the challenges for us here in Brighton and Hove is how do you identify new land for halls of residence?”

The panel will hold two further meetings, on November 21 and December 5 Coun Meadows said: “We don’t want to rush the process as it deserves to be looked at from every angle.”

Monday 24th November 2008

Noise complaints to council soar

http://www.theargus.co.uk/news/3872322.Noise_complaints_to_council_soar/

Noise complaints in Brighton and Hove are increasing every year.

Last year Brighton and Hove City Council received more than 3,200 complaints from residents fed up with their noisy neighbours.

Tim Nichols, the council's head of environmental health and licensing, said the figure was 10% higher than the year before.

He added that in 2005 the figure had been 7% higher than the previous year and in 2004 it had increased by 1%.

Speaking to a panel from the council's adult social care and housing overview and scrutiny committee, which is looking into the issue of "studentification" in the city, he said: "It is becoming more serious."

Mr Nichols was one of a number of council officers who gave evidence to the panel at Brighton town hall.

He said that last year 159 abatement notices, which ban or restrict noise, were handed out to residents. 16 prosecutions were also made and in two cases audio equipment was seized.

So far this year there have been six cases of equipment being seized.

However Mr Nichols admitted: "Our service is reasonably effective at stopping recurring problems but not that effective at stopping sporadic problems.

"To do that the service would have to be quite different to the one we have."

Sergeant Mark Belfield, of Sussex Police's neighbourhood policing team in central Brighton, said much of the noise suffered by residents from students occurred as they made their way home from nights out.

He said: "I think it is about educating the students, making them see the effect they have in the city and coming up with solutions to combat this."

The problem of rubbish left out in the streets was also put to Gillian Marston, the head of CityClean, the council's waste collection department.

She said households with more than five people could apply for a bigger wheelie bin and that new ways were been explored to highlight bin collection days.