

Residents Questions - 3 star, All Areas

C3.1 Repairs Online Portal

Area in city	Central
Star rating	3 Star City wide issue
Date question raised	10.10.23
Week of Area Panel	11.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Grant Ritchie
Officer job title	Head of Housing Repairs and Maintenance
Contact Details	grant.ritchie@brighton-hove.gov.uk

C3.1 Question

Issue	it isn't possible to view the progress of repairs complaints for communal areas online.
Background	The Repairs online portal allows you to look at the history of repairs you have individually requested but not the repairs you have raised for communal areas, for example light bulbs in the car park. Leaseholders do not have access to the online portal.
Request or Question	Request that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A way is provided so residents can check online the progress of communal as well as individual repairs. • Leaseholders should also be able to access information on repairs to communal areas.

C3.1 Response

Response
<p>Thank you for your question. We are committed to providing greater access and information for tenants and leaseholders.</p> <p>Currently, leaseholders cannot view jobs on common ways in Housing online. We are currently developing this system along with ongoing improvements in the Housing IT systems. Access for leaseholders and vision of common way repairs is part of this development work.</p> <p>These improvements are being implemented over the next 18mths and should be complete by March 2025.</p>

C3.1 Action

Action	None
Start date	N/A
End date	N/A

C3.2 Maintenance of drains and gutters

Area in city	Central
Star rating	3 Star City wide issue
Date question raised	10.10.23
Week of Area Panel	11.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Sandra Cooke
Officer job title	Project Manager
Contact Details	sandra.cooke@brighton-hove.gov.uk

C3.2 Question

Issue	Drains and gutters are not cleaned regularly enough
Background	a lack of ongoing maintenance work means that gutters and drains get blocked. The resulting flooding and damp leads to far more expensive repair work. A regular schedule of clearing and maintenance of drains and gutters would be a cost-effective measure and a better use of tenants' money.
Request or Question	It was agreed to raise the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How often are drains and gutters cleaned? • Is there a maintenance/cleaning schedule for cleaning drains and gutters? • If so, can this schedule be provided to Residents' Association representatives?

C3.2 Response

Response
Tenants who are concerned that they have blocked gutters should report these to the Repairs Help Desk as any other repair. We are currently looking at options for introducing a programme of cyclical gutter clearance.

This will be rolled out in the new year all over the City. Whilst details are still being worked on, it is likely to start with houses and extend to blocks of flats in the following years.

In addition to cyclical work, we already have lists of vulnerable properties that we undertake regular clearances on.

In answer to your questions:

How often are drains and gutters cleaned. Currently, gutters and drains are cleared as responsive repairs only, so they are cleared only when reported as a repair.

Is there a maintenance/cleaning schedule for cleaning drains and gutters. No, as discussed above drains and gutters are cleared as a responsive repair only.

Can this schedule be provided to Residents' Association representatives. Once developed we will be happy to share the schedule with Tenants.

C3.2 Action

Action	N/A
Start date	N/A
End date	N/A

E3.1 Health & Safety concerns re condition of pathways/pavements (weeds/overhanging bushes)

Area in city	East
Star rating	3 star City Wide issue
Date question raised	05.10.23
Week of Area Panel	04.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Sarah Carlisle
Officer job title	Operations Manager, City Environment (Cityclean & Cityparks)
Contact Details	sarah.carlisle@brighton-hove.gov.uk

E3.1 Question

Issue	Overgrown weeds and bushes/brambles are obstructing pavements and pathways and creating health and safety hazards for residents, particularly those with mobility issues.
Background	<p>People, particularly those with mobility issues, are really struggling to get about due to the poor conditions of pavements and pathways in the area. A 70-year-old person has resorted to cutting back the brambles on Manor Place himself because this is not being done by the Council.</p> <p>Residents are frustrated that pavements and pathways on their estates are in such poor condition, while the city centre continues to be maintained.</p> <p>Residents are being told by the Council that they must do the weeding in their areas themselves.</p> <p>However, this is a service that residents are paying for, and which is not being done.</p> <p>Residents are not satisfied with the response that other areas are receiving on this same issue.</p>
Request or Question	<p>The weeding and maintenance of the pavements and pathways on estates is sub-standard and residents want to see an improvement to the service they are paying for.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is being done to improve this situation? • Why are the estates being neglected, while the city centre is being maintained? • How can the council link in with other organisations such as Community Payback, Good Gym etc. to help resolve this issue?

E3.1 Response

Response
<p>We have not stopped maintaining estates. This year has been unusual in that the weather has been warm and wet which is conducive to rapid growth in both grass and shrubs. This means that shrubs have put on more growth more quickly. We have started the winter cut back of shrubberies, to get through all the work in Housing it takes from late October through to February.</p> <p>We don't prioritise the city centre. We have teams based in each part of the city.</p> <p>Throughout the city the highway verges are now being cut less for biodiversity gain, minimum 4 cuts a year but this is not part of the Housing contract but the verges maybe near to estates.</p> <p>In the West, we have recruited staff recently so we will get round all sites quicker - growth that encroaches on pathways, under windows & beside railings, within our remit will be cut back as scheduled.</p>

There are ongoing recruitment difficulties in the CityParks service. The recent pay increase has helped with recruitment.

The Community Engagement Team would be happy to support any communities who would like to arrange for additional works carried out by Community Payback or Good Gym, please get in touch by phone on 07717 302986, or email CommunityEngagement@Brighton-Hove.Gov.Uk

E3.1 Action

Action	N/A
Start date	N/A
End date	N/A

E3.2 EDB bidding process is onerous and over-complex

Area in city	East
Star rating	3 star City Wide issue
Date question raised	05.10.23
Week of Area Panel	04.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Sam Warren
Officer job title	Community Engagement Manager
Contact Details	sam.warren@brighton-hove.gov.uk

E3.2 Question

Issue	Residents are finding the process of putting in bids to EDB onerous and frustrating.
Background	<p>While residents understand that some kind of consultation with other residents in the area is necessary for EDB bids to be considered, the bidding process is over-complicated and onerous in its requirements. There are too many hoops that residents have to jump through, e.g. various forms of consultation need to take place and in very specific ways before the bid can be taken forward. It's a lot of work for a handful of volunteer residents to take on in their spare time.</p> <p>The point was made that EDB funds belong to Council tenants, and the process of applying to EDB should not be made this difficult and complicated for tenants.</p>
Request or Question	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents request a review of the EDB bidding process, looking to simplify the consultation requirements in particular.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents request that the EDB form online be updated (currently shows an 2021/22 form)
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E3.2 Response

Response
<p>I'm sorry that some feel that bidding for the Estate Development Budget (EDB) process is complex and lengthy. We do aim to make it as easy as possible for bidders to understand what is needed to submit a high-quality bid as well as have any support needed to do so. We do appreciate that it can be a time-consuming process and make sure that the bidders are aware of the requirements when first talking about submitting an EDB bid.</p> <p>Consultation is a key part of each bid, without it there would be no way to show that the idea had backing from the community, or that the bidder had listened to the questions or concerns from the community. If someone objects to a project happening, consultation is how they have their concerns heard. It also helps the bidder by giving a set time for people to be able to voice their opinions, in carrying it out openly and fairly, they can demonstrate they've given the opportunity for objections to be heard as well as that they've taken them into account while developing a bid.</p> <p>There is a balance to be struck between having a process which is approachable while ensuring that it is robust enough to administer the sizable amount of Housing Revenue Account money available. It's also vital to be able to demonstrate value and measure the impact of the EDB fund fairly and efficiently, consultation is an important part of doing this by showing it's how residents want the money to be spent.</p> <p>The recent work carried out by the Task and Finish group to review the EDB process focussed on simplifying it for bidders. As agreed at the Area Panel meetings at the beginning of the year, the Community Engagement Team has created an EDB toolkit for prospective bidders. It contains information designed to help make the process clearer, for example a new and simplified bid form with accompanying guidance to help bidders understand what is being asked on the form and where they can go to get support. There is also new guidance on consultation, explaining what it is, when to use it and suggesting types of consultation which would be suitable for different types of EDB bids. The recommended options are proportional to the complexity of the bids, for example if a bidder is looking to install a noticeboard, we wouldn't recommend that they carry out a large range of complicated consultation activities like holding a public meeting, door knocking to gather opinions etc. It could be as simple as putting a poster up in a communal hallway outlining the proposal and how to get in touch with any questions.</p>

We hope that this toolkit is useful to prospective bidders, we welcome comments on the contents as well as any suggestions of useful information which could further help people make use of this valuable fund.

E3.2 Action

Action	Provide draft EDB Toolkit documents
Start date	Ongoing
End date	Ongoing

N3.1 City clean rubbish & recycling service is sub-standard

Area in city	North
Star rating	3 Star/ City wide issue
Date question raised	28.09.23
Week of Area Panel	04.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Melissa Francis
Officer job title	Head of City Clean, City Environment (Cityclean & Cityparks)
Contact Details	melissa.francis@brighton-hove.gov.uk

N3.1 Question

Issue	The service provided by City Clean in the city is not up to scratch. Service has not been improved and issues remain unresolved since the last Residents Only meeting in June.
Background	<p>All the reps from the different estates in the North area reported chronic problems with missed rubbish and recycling collections, not enough bins for the population size, broken bins not being repaired or replaced, and fly-tipping.</p> <p>Bates Estate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bins are emptied but rubbish stacked next to the bins is not collected • Smashed glass is left lying around after recycling collections, rather than being cleared up. Residents have had to clear up the mess themselves to keep residents in their areas safe. • Not enough bins – e.g. in one block, there is only 1 waste bin for 60 flats. • Bins are not emptied regularly enough so rubbish piles up, attracting seagulls and rats

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fly-tipping is an ongoing problem <p>Hollingdean</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In certain areas, there have only been 2 rubbish collections in 18 weeks • Fly-tipping is an ongoing problem <p>Sylvan Hall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also reported missed collections <p>Moulsecomb</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bins are overflowing, collections are missed • Recycling collections missed • Fly-tipping <p>Parkmead</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No recycling collections since last November <p>All of these issues have been reported repeatedly to City Clean, and have been raised with Councillors, Council officers, and MPs, but the problems remain unresolved.</p> <p>While these are issues raised in North, the meeting is aware that other areas in the city are also affected, and the problem is city-wide.</p>
<p>Request or Question</p>	<p>The meeting agreed that the level of service provided by City Clean is unacceptably poor. Residents spend a lot of time and effort chasing up problems and are fed up with having to repeatedly report issues with the rubbish and recycling service and would like the service to be improved and problems to be resolved. Residents pay for this service through their Council Tax and expect better. The service that City Clean are providing needs to be reviewed and scrutinised properly, and City Clean must be held accountable to the residents who are paying for this service.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do City Clean recognise that the level of service they are providing is sub-standard? • Why is it taking so long for City Clean to resolve issues that have been repeatedly reported? • What is City Clean doing to improve the services they provide to the city? • Residents at the June North Area Residents Only meeting (going to September Area Panel) requested a meeting with a City Clean representative to discuss issues and solutions. No response was given to this request.

N3.1 Response

Response

We're very sorry residents remain unsatisfied with the service they are receiving from City Clean.

Bates Estate

- **Bins are emptied but rubbish stacked next to the bins is not collected.**
Bagged refuse stacked next to the bins should be collected, crews have been

reminded, any concerns about individual collections, please contact City Clean directly on 01273 292929.

- **Smashed glass is left lying around after recycling collections, rather than being cleared up. Residents have had to clear up the mess themselves to keep residents in their areas safe.** I'm very sorry to hear this. As above Crews have been reminded, please contact City Clean to report individual concerns as they arise.
- **Not enough bins – e.g. in one block, there is only 1 waste bin for 60 flats.** Please could you let us know which blocks do not have enough bins so we can look into this. If this concerns a council block please phone through to the Housing Estates service 01273 294769 for all other types of blocks please call City Clean, number above.
- **Bins are not emptied regularly enough so rubbish piles up, attracting seagulls and rats.** Bins are collected on weekly collection schedule. As stated above we can look into which locations do not have enough bins.
- **Fly-tipping is an ongoing problem** Fly-tipping is an issue. Over the last 6 months Housing has attended to reports of dumped items 15 times. This covers items dumped both inside and outside blocks. The Estates Service Team attend and remove items within 10 days of receiving the reports. Housing now has 6 mobile CCTV cameras that we use for fly-tipping hotspots. They are moved around the city every 6 months and although we have recently carried out a move I will consider Bates Estate for a CCTV camera.

Hollingdean

- **In certain areas, there have only been 2 rubbish collections in 18 weeks** Please provide more information on which areas..
- **Fly-tipping is an ongoing problem** This cannot be answered without knowing the specific areas. Fly tipping can be reported to City Clean 01273 29292 or by contacting the Estates Service Team if it is Housing Land on 01273 294769.

Sylvan Hall

- **Also reported missed collections** City Clean are aware and are working hard to improve the service in this area.

Moulsecroomb

- **Bins are overflowing, collections are missed** More information is needed to enable the management team to identify the problem areas and look at the root causes which often relate to blocked access due to car parking, overgrown trees/bushes or other issues. It can take time to resolve especially if the solution involves working with other Council Departments.
- **Recycling collections missed** As above.
- **Fly-tipping** This cannot be answered without knowing the specific areas. Fly tipping can be reported to City Clean 01273 29292 or by contacting the Estates Service Team if it is Housing Land on 01273 294769.
- **Parkmead No recycling collections since last November** - City Clean are looking into this.

Why is it taking so long for Cityclean to resolve issues that we have been repeatedly reporting?

Often there are underlying causes such as blocked access however it is recognised that this isn't always the case. We do need specific information on locations – when these questions were asked, we requested more information on which roads were being referred to and no specifics were provided. More information will help us to investigate and monitor.

What is City Clean doing to improve the services they provide to the city?

Cityclean is working with Housing on a process for reporting repeated missed collections to improve the communication between Cityclean and residents and to improve the response time for resolving issues. Problem areas are being fed back to Cityclean which are then tracked. With regards to Bates Estate, spot checks are being undertaken by management. Crews have been spoken to about the key issues of side waste and clearing glass and the Head of Operations will monitor progress. Housing will review flytip hot spots and Cityclean will work with Housing regarding bin requirements where additional bins are required.

Residents at the June North Area Residents Only meeting (going to September Area Panel) requested a meeting with a City Clean representative to discuss issues and solutions. No response was given to this request.

Cityclean will liaise with Housing to arrange a meeting.

N3.1 Action

Action	Detailed above.
Start date	13 th November 2023
End date	Ongoing

N3.2 Issues with repairs service

Area in city	North
Star rating	3 Star/ City wide issue
Date question raised	28.09.23
Week of Area Panel	04.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Grant Ritchie
Officer job title	Head of Housing Repairs and Maintenance
Contact Details	grant.ritchie@brighton-hove.gov.uk

N3.2 Question

Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Repairs service is not run or coordinated efficiently • There is an assumption that everyone has digital access (smart phones, computers, internet) • There is still a culture of tenant-blaming for issues
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<p>Background</p>	<p>As an example of the problems:</p> <p>When the problem with the window (see item 10, Sylvan Hall) was reported to the Repairs team, they automatically sent a glazier around to replace the glass, rather than someone to assess the issue first (the problem being the window frame). The glass was replaced when it didn't need to be. The Repairs team didn't check the prior records of that flat to check what repairs had taken place before.</p> <p>When the problem was first reported, the tenant was also asked if this was a condensation problem, which implies that the tenant was being blamed for generating the problem through their 'lifestyle'.</p> <p>The tenant was asked to send a photo of the problem window digitally, but they didn't have access to a computer, didn't have smart phone or access to the internet. However, the glazier had taken photos so the Repairs team could have contacted the contractor directly to get a copy of the photos.</p>
<p>Request or Question</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents want this feedback to be reported back to the Repairs Service so that services can be improved. • Digital exclusion is an ongoing issue and needs to be taken into consideration when developing services. What is the Repairs service doing to take this on board? • The culture of blaming tenants for problems they report about their housing is problematic. What is the Repairs service doing to change the attitudes towards tenants within their teams?

N3.2 Response

<p>Response</p>
<p>Residents want this feedback to be reported back to the Repairs Service so that services can be improved.</p> <p>When the Service receives complaints, they are shared with team managers to ensure that we understand what has caused the tenant to complain and to learn lessons which help us improve going forward. To provide some context last month we received 45 complaints and completed approximately 2,732 jobs. Therefore, the number of complaints equates to 1.6% of tasks completed.</p> <p>Digital exclusion is an ongoing issue and needs to be taken into consideration when developing services. What is the Repairs service doing to take this on board?</p> <p>Fears around digital exclusion is often aired at tenants' meetings. We have previously assured tenants that we have no intention of moving away from receiving repairs requests by phone and remain the busiest call centre at the Council. However, we cannot ignore the fact that many people want to communicate with us in different ways. Digital communication is now very common, and we will continue to look at enhancing the ways in which people can interact with us.</p>

However, we remain committed to being an inclusive service and will not introduce modern technology at the expense of more traditional methods of communication.

The culture of blaming tenants for problems they report about their housing is problematic. What is the Repairs service doing to change the attitudes towards tenants within their teams?

The issue of tenant blame was at the heart of the ombudsman report in Nov 21 on damp and mould and the Service has taken on board the recommendations of the report and reviewed how it communicates with tenants both in person and through its written publications.

As described above we also review as a Service, complaints to help us understand where the Service needs to improve. However, we do need to work with tenants particularly around damp and mould as the way a tenant uses their homes is very important in finding resolutions to this issue.

We are engaging tenants using measuring devices that tenants can monitor themselves which help them understand the impact of normal life on the likelihood of damp and mould. Moving forward we need to avoid any feeling of blame, but we do need to help educate tenants on the causes of damp and condensation.

N3.2 Action

Action	N/A
Start date	N/A
End date	N/A

N3.3 How issues raised are dealt with within the Area Panel Structure?

Area in city	North
Star rating	3 Star/ City wide issue
Date question raised	28.09.23
Week of Area Panel	04.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Sam Warren
Officer job title	Community Engagement Manager
Contact Details	sam.warren@brighton-hove.gov.uk

N3.3 Question

Issue	There is a problem with the way issues that residents raise is dealt with and responded to within the Area Panel structure.
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<p>Background</p>	<p>Residents find that when joint issues affecting multiple areas are raised at Area Panel, these often get answered by officers in a general, operational/strategic manner, rather than addressing the specific estate-based cases.</p> <p>While Area Panels are meant to be the place where joint, broader issues are raised and addressed, it isn't leading to the resolutions of problems and the changes that tenants and residents are expecting, i.e. the expectations that tenants and residents have of the Area Panel structure isn't being matched by the responses they get from Officers and at the Area Panel meetings.</p> <p>Estate or area-specific issues raised by resident reps don't get addressed properly, leading to frustration because issues don't get resolved.</p>
<p>Request or Question</p>	<p>Residents propose a discussion with Housing around the purpose of Area Panels, with an aim to clarifying what issues can be raised, how these can be raised, and how these are best dealt with. Within this, it would be useful to explore what residents and tenants are expecting from this process, and if there are useful changes that can be made to the Area Panel structure so that tenants and residents are able to raise the issues that are most important/pressing in their areas in the most effective, productive way, that meets their expectations.</p>

N3.3 Response

<p>Response</p>
<p>Thank you for the question. I know that officers do try their best to respond with detail and follow up on actions but for a wide range of reasons this isn't always in the timescale that residents would hope for.</p> <p>We are happy to have a conversation about the expectations of residents and the responses to resident questions. In fact, this question is part of a developing conversation, a theme that resident only meetings have raised, and that we are looking at how to address; in October/ November, we have been talking with Kate and Mireille, Resource Centre staff about views expressed at the Resident Only meetings, and also residents at the Involvement & Empowerment meeting.</p> <p>I also acknowledge there are some persistent issues that have been more complex to resolve. During the Area Panel review there were a range of suggestions that are being put into place including having surgeries at the beginning of each area panel for residents to raise any personal or individual issues that have not been resolved. From December 2023 we will have these new surgeries.</p> <p>We are also introducing a new system to raise persistent City Clean issues that we hope will lead to quicker action being taken. This will mean that residents can raise City Clean issues through the Resident Only meetings and these will then go directly to the City Clean operational weekly meetings.</p>

We will be setting up a specific workshop in early January (preliminary date Wednesday 17th January, 11am-1pm) to look at communication with residents. It would be useful to explore resident and housing expectations of Area Panel as part of this workshop. We will ensure to invite all residents that attend Resident only meetings and Area Panels.

We will report back on the findings of the workshop in early 2024.

N3.3 Action

Action	Invite residents to December workshop to look at resident expectations of area panel
Start date	December 2023
End date	March 2024

W3.1 Grass cutting and weeding: on-going concerns

Area in city	West
Star rating	3 star City Wide issue
Date question raised	05.10.23
Week of Area Panel	11.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Sarah Carlisle
Officer job title	Operations Manager, City Environment
Contact Details	sarah.carlisle@brighton-hove.gov.uk

W3.1 Question

Issue	West Residents do not think the grass-cutting and weeding service has improved and are still experiencing a range of problems with blocked and overgrown pathways and inadequate grass-cutting. This continues to limit pedestrian access to the city's green spaces, paths and pavements. It is a particular problem for people with disabilities and in some cases is a health and safety hazard.
Background	The response to the item from West at Sept 2023 West Area Panel (from Sarah Carlisle, Operations Manager, City Environment) said that all complaints received had been addressed, that the grass cutting was on schedule and hedge cutting and pruning underway. It did not acknowledge any on-going problems with the service or look at ways it could be improved. Nor did it address the question of a refund to residents if services are routinely not provided adequately.

	<p>This response does not reflect the actual experience of residents in their local streets and neighbourhoods, where the service is still inadequate and complaints are not followed up. A good service would be one where work was done regularly and effectively, so it never reached the point where residents have to complain in order to get work done.</p> <p>Residents are following up on a number of issues specific to their neighbourhoods with local Councillors.</p>
<p>Request or Question</p>	<p>West Residents do not think the previous Area Panel response was sufficient and want to raise the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to Agenda Setting meeting and for inclusion on all Area Panel agendas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What improvements to the provision of CityClean/City Parks services are being made to provide an on-going acceptable level of service? Is it recognised that this service is currently not acceptable? ○ If this service continues to be inadequate, can residents get a refund? • to Agenda Setting meeting and for inclusion on West Area Panel agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Request a schedule of grass-cutting/weeding/pruning for the West Area, so people know what to expect. ○ Request a breakdown of spending on grass-cutting/weeding/pruning in the West Area.

W3.1 Response

<p>Response</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What improvements to the provision of CityClean/City Parks services are being made to provide an on-going acceptable level of service? Is it recognised that this service is currently not acceptable? <p>Unfortunately, we are not providing as good a service as we had hoped, this is partly due to a number of things including recruitment difficulties, budgets and also a change in the way the council removes weeds. We are differentiating between communal housing areas and general parks areas and housing areas are getting better maintenance. City Clean continually research the market for machinery to help with improving the service. An indicator of the data shows that City Clean has covered almost double the streets, than in previous years.</p> <p>We have committed to undertaking a comprehensive review for work we do on Housing land in the next financial year. We had hoped to have completed this by now.</p> <p>The general parks areas are impacted by both budget drift, and recruitment difficulties. The recent significant pay increase has helped with recruitment.</p> <p>In theory this should not impact on communal Housing areas where residents are paying directly for a service but in reality it does and although we have pulled up the level of</p>

service in North Brighton significantly Portslade has gone down-hill. We're very sorry for this.

The overall picture is that the resource does not match the work but the communal Housing areas should be better than the surrounding areas.

The issue with weeds on paths is separate. Although, Housing staff are clearing some and City Parks are cutting some, without weedkilling it is difficult to see how this will improve significantly due to stopping the use of weed killer

- **If this service continues to be inadequate, can residents get a refund?**

Unfortunately, we are unable to offer refunds for this type of service but will have a good idea of the spend on Housing land once we have completed the review

- **Request a schedule of grass-cutting/weeding/pruning for the West Area, so people know what to expect.**

We don't provide a schedule anywhere in the city, this is because there are so many variables - Grass growing rate, weather, time of year, machinery availability and types of machinery used. The weeding schedule is based on a Traffic light system and we give priority to Red Zones. However, what we can do is explain that there are 3 methods of grass maintenance in Housing Estates:

Ride on mowing covers the large grass areas where we can access. This is the quickest method, it is followed up by pedestrian mowing in the areas that the ride on can't reach. This is slower than the ride on, followed by the strimmer which covers difficult spaces e.g. slopes. So, we will have staff working at different sites at the same time. We can't say which general area we are working on and where we plan to go next.

We have a large remit maintaining all green spaces in the West of the city including Parks, Highways & Schools. We do not have a specific team that maintain Housing only but the team spends a high proportion of their time maintaining Housing Estates. We have recruited more staff recently in the West so the winter works - shrub & hedging pruning has started and will continue throughout the Winter until February. This will cover incursion on to pathways, under windows and handrails.

- **Request a breakdown of spending on grass-cutting/weeding/pruning in the West Area.**

Unfortunately, City Parks are unable to provide a breakdown, but this will form part of the ground maintenance review.

W3.1 Action

Action	N/A
Start date	N/A

End date	N/A
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W3.2 Equal access to information & services

Area in city	West
Star rating	3 star City Wide issue
Date question raised	05.10.23
Week of Area Panel	11.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Justine Harris
Officer job title	Head of Tenancy Services
Contact Details	justine.harris@brighton-hove.gov.uk

W3.2 Question

Issue	<p>West Residents are very concerned about the move toward online communication and service provision as the norm. This excludes older people who are not able to manage online services, people who aren't able to use computers or screens for medical reasons and those who cannot afford them. It ends up discriminating against certain sections of the population.</p>
Background	<p>While Housing services usually provide an alternative to online communication, it is often less effective and there is a lot of pressure to report complaints, repairs etc on line as the best and right way to do things. In some situations it is the only way.</p> <p>A number of specific points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increased use of online services means there is a reduction in human contact, knowledge and understanding. It is all anonymous and structured in a way which doesn't allow for any more complex understanding of an issue. • The Council website is not very user-friendly and is hard to navigate, even for people with some computer experience. • When residents have made contact by post, they have received a response directing them to the website. This doesn't acknowledge the reason why they were using the post in the first place. • When analysing information (eg a summary of complaints to Councillors reported recently in the Argus) only online complaints were collated, diminishing the voice of people who used other forms of communication. <p>It was acknowledged that this is part of a broader move towards online communication in all areas of society, and that online communication can work effectively in some situations and for some people. However, it can</p>

	also be a reduction in the quality and nature of services, as well as building inequality into service provision.
Request or Question	<p>West Residents asked for Housing Services to take some steps towards addressing this inequality by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always providing hard copies, by post, of long documents sent to residents. For many people it is difficult to read long documents on a small screen and most people do not have access to their own printers. • Making the Council website as clear and accessible as possible and seeking resident feedback on problems they experience. • In emails, to always provide a direct link to the specific issue tenants are asking about, rather than send them to the website generally.

W3.2 Response

Response	
	<p>In line with the Council’s customer promise we always try to make it clear how you can contact our services – and wherever possible this will be online (email / website / social media) as this can be the quickest and most convenient way for many of our customers.</p> <p>We recognise that isn’t necessarily the best way for all of our customers, and that we must make sure that our service works with individuals who are find using our digital services challenging.</p> <p>We are developing our customer offer for people who need a face to face to service; we are looking into whether the best way to deliver this is by appointment or drop in. We aim to begin delivering this in early 2024.</p> <p>Work is starting in December 2023 on the Housing pages of the website to ensure that they are accessible to as many people as possible and provide clear information on our services and how to use them and as much as possible customer feedback will help shape website.</p> <p>When requested we will provide hard copies of any documents/ forms as appropriate; we will also ask whether the customer has anyone who can assist them with completing these forms online and / or offer them the option of staff assistance over the phone or in person. This is to ensure we are able to provide to this level of assistance to those who need it.</p> <p>We will ensure that wherever possible direct links to specific web pages are provided, rather than simply providing the Council’s web address.</p>

W3.2 Action

Action	None
Start date	N/A

End date	N/A
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W3.3 Applying for Council Housing

Area in city	West
Star rating	3 star City Wide issue
Date question raised	05.10.23
Week of Area Panel	11.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Harry Williams
Officer job title	Head of Homelessness and Housing Options
Contact Details	harry.williams@brighton-hove.gov.uk

W3.3 Question

Issue	The process of applying for Council Housing is complicated and difficult. Errors made by Housing make this situation worse.
Background	Lucca Gatti, a Hangleton resident, is supporting a friend with a housing application. They have put in an online application three times – each time the Council have lost the application so they had to start again. His friend is autistic and is finding the process distressing and difficult. Lucca was given contacts for his local Councillor and Re-think to get support for this individual case.
Request or Question	The meeting agreed there was also a broader issue which needed addressing, about the housing application process. The following questions were raised to go to Area Panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can be done to improve the application process to ensure it isn't discriminatory and to make it more accessible? • If it is possible to lose applications what is being done to make this process more reliable and secure?

W3.3 Response

Response
<p>What can be done to improve the application process to ensure it isn't discriminatory and to make it more accessible?</p> <p>The Council is working with its software provider to introduce a single service login to Home Connections, the platform used to advertise social housing across the city, which will help improve accessibility to our online application.</p>

We are also currently working on updating our websites with frequently asked questions to support those wishing to access the housing register or obtain general advice.

The Council's Homemove Team have Housing Needs Officers that can provide support with applying to the housing register. The Team can offer telephone and face to face appointments. The Homemove Team can be contacted via email at homemove@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

If it is possible to lose applications what is being done to make this process more reliable and secure

When submitting an application to join the Council's Housing Register people can choose to use a paper form or to apply online via our Homemove website.

When applying online people have 2 weeks to submit an application once it has been started. However, the Council has worked with its software provider to increase this timeframe to 4 weeks to give people more time to apply.

This change will help a number of people in applying to join the Housing Register and make the process more reliable.

W3.3 Action

Action	Update website with frequently asked questions.
Start date	Ongoing
End date	Ongoing

W3.4 Fly-tipping

Area in city	West
Star rating	3 star City Wide issue
Date question raised	05.10.23
Week of Area Panel	11.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Chloe McLaughlin
Officer job title	Estates Services Manager
Contact Details	chloe.mcLaughlin@brighton-hove.gov.uk

W3.4 Question

Issue	Fly-tipping is a big and growing problem. This is a city-wide issue, with negative environmental impacts for many neighbourhoods.
Background	<p>There are two aspects to this issue:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resolving the problem of fly-tipping in specific areas. Residents' Associations are taking this up locally and following up complaints with their local Councillors. Tackling the city-wide problem of fly-tipping and looking for joint solutions
Request or Question	<p>On the city-wide issues, the following were raised for Area Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The meeting asked for information on the number of prosecutions and fines there have been for fly-tipping in the last year. There is a perception that when fly-tipping is reported, the perpetrators are not found or fined. This makes people less likely to report fly-tipping, as it doesn't feel like there is any point. How much has the collection of illegally dumped rubbish cost the Council over the last year? It was noted that the costs of collecting fly-tipped rubbish ultimately end up with residents, in their council tax, so this is not a free service. At the West Area Panel in September 2023 residents were told there would be a city-wide amnesty to allow for the collection of large items. There is support from Associations for this initiative, and it was requested that information on the plans be sent, by post, to all Residents' Association Chairs, Secretaries and Area Panel representatives.

W3.4 Response

Response
<p>There have been 193 Fixed Penalty Notice served in the period Apr 2022 - Mar 2023. From this £31,200 has been collected in penalty fines. These figures include both Housing and Non-Housing land. Residents are encouraged to report fly tipping providing as much evidence as they can to lead to a successful penalty.</p> <p>The Estates Service Team spent £130k last year collecting fly tipping from Housing Land.</p> <p>I am not sure about residents paying in their Council Tax but fly tip removals are not included in council residents' service charges.</p> <p>Waste Amnesties are led by residents with the support of the Council. It is therefore up to the residents to organise the amnesty and the Estates Service will provide guidance and support and gather volunteers on the day of the collections.</p>

W3.4 Action

Action	N/A
Start date	N/A
End date	N/A

W3.5 New housing developments and parking

Area in city	West
Star rating	3 star City Wide issue
Date question raised	05.10.23
Week of Area Panel	11.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Nicholas Fishlock
Officer job title	Estate Regeneration Project Manager
Contact Details	nicholas.fishlock@brighton-hove.gov.uk

W3.5 Question

Issue	The Council policy of not providing parking spaces in new housing developments adds to the current parking problems for other people in the neighbourhood.
Background	<p>Assumptions are made by the Council that residents will use public transport if parking is not available. Often this is not the case - people just park in the nearest free parking spaces, increasing congestion and parking problems.</p> <p>In some developments, residents have been told that it will be part of the tenancy agreement that they do not have a car. It is difficult to see how this will be enforced.</p> <p>If reducing parking spaces is going to work, there needs to be a corresponding significant improvement in public transport cost and reliability, which is not happening. There also needs to be a recognition that there will still be people who are unable to use public transport.</p>
Request or Question	<p>Raise at Area Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If it is part of the tenancy agreement that people do not have cars, how will the Council monitor and enforce this? • How do the Council intend to manage the increase in parking pressures as a result of new build?

W3.5 Response

Response
<p>The New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme, delivering new build council homes in the city, and the council's Joint venture with Hyde Housing, Homes for Brighton & Hove, do not have a policy outlining the amount of parking to be provided for new developments. A site by site approach is taken in relation to parking provision, to produce a development proposal that is acceptable to the Local Planning Authority at application stage. A Transport Assessment (a transport strategy for the development, including car parking) is often produced for a council housing planning application which quantifies the estimated impact on transport and parking, and identifies mitigations where needed. To date, most new build council housing developments delivered include parking spaces, but some do not.</p> <p>There is more information online in relation to the Local Planning Authority's approach to parking and transport:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPD14 Parking Standards www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/spd14-parking-standards • Planning Policy CP9 – Sustainable Transport of the City Plan Part 1 www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/development-plans <p>Q1: If it is part of the tenancy agreement that people do not have cars, how will the Council monitor and enforce this?</p> <p>A1: Where a car free scheme is delivered in a Controlled Parking Zone, residents of that development may not be eligible to purchase a parking permit, this restriction on eligibility is linked to the address. However not having a car would not form part of a tenancy agreement.</p> <p>Q2: How do the Council intend to manage the increase in parking pressures as a result of new build?</p> <p>A2: Each new build (above 10 homes) is required to develop a Transport Assessment as part of a planning application. The Transport Assessment identifies the likely effects of the demand for travel the development would create and include measures to mitigate the impacts by reducing car use, implementing agreed travel plans and making appropriate contributions towards sustainable transport measures. For each new build council housing development above 10 homes the council will prepare a Transport Assessment (that is suitable to the Local Planning Authority) and carry out the included measures to mitigate the impacts of the development on parking and other forms of transport.</p>

W3.5 Action

Action	N/A
Start date	N/A
End date	N/A

Residents Questions - 2 star, Central Area

C2.1 Delays to community workshop at Craven Vale

Area in city	Central
Star rating	2 star Local area issue
Date question raised	10.10.23
Week of Area Panel	11.12.23
Deadline for officer response	09.11.23
Name of officer responding	Geof Gage
Officer job title	Head of Housing Investment and Asset Management
Contact Details	geofrey.gage@brighton-hove.gov.uk

C2.1 Question

Issue	Residents working to set up a community workshop at Craven Vale are concerned that delays in getting the necessary building conversion work done will jeopardise the whole project.
Background	<p>Residents are very enthusiastic about a project to convert a disused storage area to a community workshop. They have been working on it for eight years and now have planning permission and a commitment from Housing to contribute £80,000 towards the conversion. Everything is now stalled because it has not been possible to get a start date for the conversion work from Housing.</p> <p>This raises anxieties about if it will ever happen, how much costs will rise in the meantime and how to maintain the community impetus and energy in the face of unspecified delays. It also effectively stops them from being able to fundraise for the additional £40,000 they need to raise.</p> <p>Craven Vale Community Association has been given a lot of support for this project from officers and Councillors as well as local people. However there is a growing concern that this project will never come to fruition if the conversion work keeps getting stalled.</p>
Request or Question	<p>It was agreed to ask for a response to the following at Area Panel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will Housing commit to a date for the work to start? • Can Housing provide a timeline for the conversion works, for residents to use as a guide to fundraising and building support for the project? • Residents would like to have a specified contact person who they can go to for updates on the work.

C2.1 Response

Response
<p>The project had an indicative budget allowed for this in 2022/23, this budget was not ringfenced to the project and is not a firm commitment from Housing. Currently the project is still undergoing review and a full specification of works is in preparation with the architects and external project team.</p> <p>Once the tender documents are prepared it will be necessary to tender the project through our framework of contractors and this will ascertain a budget requirement, and this will then be put forward to committee for budget approval. Approval for budgets is set at the February committee meeting, therefore we will not be able to give a firm commitment or update until after that meeting.</p> <p>To be clear until the specifications and tender documents are finalised and prepared and we have tendered the project through our framework we cannot give a full commitment.</p> <p>Should the project be approved, and budget agreed we will then appoint a nominated project manager.</p> <p>The timeline to send out and evaluate tenders is in the region of 8-10 weeks from when the tender pack is approved and finalised.</p> <p>As part of our contract standing orders, we are obliged to follow procedures and whilst this may be seen as a delay it is the regulatory process we have to follow.</p>

C2.1 Action

Action	Nothing further until tender documents are finalised and the project is tendered to ascertain budget requirements
Start date	16.10.2023
End date	16.10.2023

