

NOTICE OF MOTION**INVESTING IN THE CITY'S HOUSING**

“This Council welcomes the close involvement of Brighton & Hove’s tenants and leaseholders in deciding how housing services are planned and delivered in the City and in setting the Council’s housing budget strategy for 2011-12. Their identified priorities include:

- Continued investment in the Turning the Tide strategy to tackle anti-social behaviour and reduce social exclusion;
- Identifying measures to tackle overcrowding through an enhanced housing options approach;
- Leasing properties to Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes, the housing company set up by the council to raise investment for improvements to council tenants’ homes;
- Working in partnership to develop an estates “masterplan” to inform best use of our assets and identify opportunities to build new Council homes;
- Maximising the level of revenue resources available to support the Decent Homes Programme and working with residents to ensure that we are able to respond to opportunities to generate renewable energy.

However, this council is disappointed by the government’s record on housing so far, which includes:

- Controversially reducing housing benefit which risks driving thousands of vulnerable people from their homes in areas where housing costs are high.
- Not adjusting the formula to limit the rise in social housing rents, at a time of high inflation, to help Brighton & Hove tenants during the financial downturn;
- Housing associations being allowed to charge rents of up to 80% of market rate to fund new provision, which is likely to price vulnerable tenants out of their homes in these tough economic times.
- Ending the universal right to secure tenancies for existing as well as new tenants, despite promising in the 2010 Conservative Party Manifesto to “respect the tenures and rents of social housing tenants.”
- Extending the amount of time a home is allowed to stand empty, before a council can intervene, from 6 months to 2 years, meaning more empty homes for longer periods in Brighton & Hove.
- Reducing the affordable housing budget by 60% which will lead to a decline in affordable house-building nationally and locally.
- Taking-back 75% of right-to-buy income, rather than allow 100% of income from sales to be given to local authorities, such as Brighton & Hove.
- Abandoning previous planning targets, which could lead to fewer new homes locally and nationally.
- Failing to end the sale of council homes, leading to a reduction in the availability of affordable housing in Brighton & Hove.
- Doing nothing to regulate rents in the private rented sector or regulate the work of letting agents, thus failing to ease the many problems faced by private sector

tenants who account for almost a quarter of the tenancies in Brighton and Hove – more than twice the national average – and whose average tenancy length is between only 12 and 18 months.

The Council believes that the above measures, taken together, will have significant adverse impact on the availability of, and investment in, housing in the City.

Therefore, this Council resolves:

- (i) to place on record its sincere gratitude to the city's tenants and leaseholders for all their excellent partnership working with the Council in helping to deliver improvements to their housing;
- (ii) to continue to involve them closely in budget and policy setting, which affect their lives and homes;
- (iii) to request that the Chief Executive writes to the Housing Minister – Grant Shapps MP – with a copy of this motion highlighting this council's concerns with his government's housing policies, but also the excellent partnership working taking place in Brighton & Hove.
- (iv) notes that the Cabinet member for Housing has publicly stated that the potential sites for the building of new council homes in the city are "clearly mapped out" and requests that these maps and details are distributed to all members of the council forthwith."