

Subject:	Annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2012		
Date of Meeting:	14 November 2012		
Report of:	Head of Housing & Social Inclusion		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Ododo Dafe	Tel: 29-3201
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 An annual report for the year ending 31 March 2012 has been produced with the involvement of tenants and leaseholders. This is in line with the plan and timetable agreed with the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 6 February 2012.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Committee approves the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2012 at Appendix 1 of this report, for publication and distribution to all council tenants and leaseholders in December 2012.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The current regulatory framework for social housing has changed substantially since the publication of the 2011 annual report. The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) has been abolished and the legal framework is now provided by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Where the TSA laid out detailed instruction on how such an annual report should be produced, the HCA guidance is concise and leaves much of the substance and content to the provider.
- 3.2 The HCAs requirements are that the annual report should:
- Contain timely and relevant information
 - Contain information on the repairs and maintenance budget
 - Provide support to tenants to build capacity to be more effectively involved.
- 3.3 In February 2012 the Housing Management Consultative Committee noted the progress already made in implementing the council's improvement plans included in the 2011 annual report to council tenants and leaseholders. The Committee also noted the proposed plan and timetable for involving residents in producing this annual report to tenants and leaseholders for the year ending 31 March 2012.

- 3.4 For this year's report we involved the editorial board of *Homing In* at their meeting on the 28 August 2012 and used a focus group comprising 10 tenants to ascertain their views.
- 3.5 In the focus group, residents were shown the 2011 Annual Report produced by Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) and asked to compare this with annual reports produced by other housing organisations for the same period. One key view supported by the vast majority of the group was a preference for less text and a more visual style of presentation, with the key elements of text presented in bullet points. A minority of the group expressed the view that a report which minimised text in favour of photos and design icons could be seen as 'superficial' and might be used to hide poor performance. Only a minority of the residents had read the 2011 report when it was published.
- 3.6 In view of this feedback, and feedback from HMCC committee members last year, the report has been shortened to make it more accessible to all tenants. For residents wanting more information, supplementary articles on tenancy management, repairs, anti-social behaviour, leaseholders, sheltered housing, and resident involvement will be included on the council's website. To further allow for a more detailed study of statistics the quarterly performance report, which contains key performance indicators for many areas, will also be signposted as available on the website.
- 3.7 Comments from a few residents, in their own words, have also featured in this report.
- 3.8 Two versions of the report, the full version and a summary version of the report were produced for comparison and discussion at Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee on 23 October 2012. The Committee made a number of comments on the style of the full document, the importance of balancing achievements with improvements and how financial information is displayed. Some further suggestions were also made on the content and the importance of ensuring the document is accessible to residents. The committee also requested that the editorial board of *Homing In* review a revised draft.
- 3.9 While we recognise that one style of report will not suit everyone, we have made a number of changes to the draft report to reflect the feedback from Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee.
- 3.10 Copies of this revised report were forwarded to members of the *Homing In* editorial board who advised that it was much better and that they were happy with the way it looked and read. Feedback was also sought from members of the focus group. Those who responded commented that they were very happy with the report, that it was a fine piece of work that was easy to read, that it was good to see more graphics and less text, and that the graphics were helpful.
- 3.11 If approved by Housing Committee at its meeting on 14 November 2012, the annual report will be sent to all tenants with the winter edition of *Homing In* magazine. It will also be publicly available on our website and made available in alternative formats on request.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 Council tenants and leaseholders have been involved in producing the annual report. This has been through the resident Homing In editorial panel, and through a focus group consisting of a wide demographic profile of residents.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The cost of producing the annual report can be met within the existing 2012/13 Housing Revenue Account Budget. The cost of printing the report within the Homing In magazine is estimated to be £500.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 29.10.12

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2 of the report address the current legal framework for annual reports to tenants and leaseholders. No individual human rights are adversely affected by the report's recommendations.

Lawyer Consulted: Simon Court

Date: 30.10.12

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The HCA lays out no specific requirement for equalities reporting in the annual report. However, guidance on this issue is contained in the *Regulatory Framework*. The annual report illustrates how the council meets that standard and its progress in continuously improving its performance in this area. It is hoped that based on the feedback from residents as per paragraph 3.5 of this report the format of the annual report will be more accessible than the previous version. Alternative formats of the report will also be available on request.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The annual report outlines how the council as landlord addresses sustainability issues and its progress in meeting its objectives. The commitments in the report include actions to reduce residents' energy bills, fit solar panels, and support local employment through apprenticeships. Sustainability implications were also a factor in the decision to produce a shorter printed report – eight pages rather than twenty eight pages.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications arising from the report itself.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 The HCA says that providers are expected to 'achieve the expectations of the regulator'. These are laid out in paragraph 3.2 of this report. The report seeks to meet these requirements. The annual report informs residents about opportunities for a greater number of tenants to be involved in resident involvement – one of the key requirements of the HCA.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 There are strong links between improving housing and reducing health inequalities. The annual report details the council's investment in improvements to its housing stock to bring all tenants homes up to Decent Homes Standard. The annual report also reflects our progress and commitments to reducing inequality, such as continuing to extend financial inclusion, to help residents manage their finances and to increase our understanding of tenants' needs and tailor our services to meet them.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 Publication of this honest and robust assessment of our performance to council tenants and leaseholders meets the council's commitment to resident involvement and transparency. The commitments in the annual report to further improve our landlord services and housing stock support the council's priorities to involve residents in everything we do, tackle inequalities and create sustainable communities throughout the city. The annual report illustrates how the council as landlord works together with residents and other agencies to improve neighbourhoods and provide opportunities for local residents.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2012 final draft

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. *The regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012*, HCA <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/ourwork/regulatory-framework>
2. Annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2011 http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/downloads/bhcc/housing/council_housing/3799_Housing_Annual_Report_2011.pdf

