

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB- COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 55

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Update on annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2012, and proposals for 2013 report		
Date of Meeting:	26 March 2013		
Report of:	Strategic Director - Place		
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 This report updates the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee on progress in implementing the improvement plans set out in the annual report to all council tenants and leaseholders for 2012. It also proposes an outline plan and timetable for involving residents and members in producing and scrutinising the council's annual report to tenants and leaseholders for 2013.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee notes the progress in implementing improvement plans included in the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders for the financial year ending 2013 highlighted in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 That the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee notes the proposed plan and timetable for producing a concise report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The annual report of 2012 was substantially influenced by the change in the regulatory framework for social housing introduced in April 2012. The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) was abolished and the legal framework was thereafter 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. The HCA's 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.

As a result of these changes the Housing Management Consultative Committee agreed in February 2012 to a shorter report than in previous years, supplemented by further information available on the website or on request.

- 3.2. A focus group was held with residents in summer 2012 to discuss the format and style of the annual report of 2012. They concluded that the report should be changed in the following ways:
- It should be substantially shorter
 - It should present facts largely in the form of bullet points
 - It should contain more visual content
 - The shorter printed version of the report should be supplemented by website articles

Residents were also invited to write articles for the report. Draft versions of the report were discussed with the *Homing In* editorial board and at the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee in October 2012.

- 3.3. The final eight page version of the report was approved at Housing Committee on 14 November 2012 and was sent out with the winter edition of *Homing In*. The reduction in size of the magazine from 28 pages to eight pages made savings of just over £3,000.
- 3.4. Although the Housing Management Consultative Sub Committee broadly welcomed the changes to the annual report it noted that eight pages may still be too long. Moreover, although the graphics enhanced the visual impact of the report some details needed to be clarified – such as the labelling of pie charts.
- 3.5. Taking this into consideration for the annual report of 2013, we propose to produce a four page printed report. This will contain key achievements and goals outlined in bullet points. We will continue to use graphics to enhance the visual impact of the report. Residents will again be invited to write articles for this version. The printed report will again be supplemented by a larger website version. We will consult with the *Homing In* editorial board on the design and content of the report.
- 3.6. A draft version of the report will be presented to Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee in May 2013 with a view to send the final version out in the summer edition of *Homing In*.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1. We propose to produce the 2013 report after consulting with and involving residents as detailed in paragraph 3.5. These arrangements are in line with the Community Engagement Framework and Standards and regulatory framework. The decision to publish the annual report in the summer edition of *Homing In* aligns it more closely to the end of the financial year but means it will be printed before the summer area panels.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The budget for producing the annual report to tenants is included within the 2013/14 publicity budget for the Housing Revenue Account. Last year the 8 page document cost £2,920 in print and design, a saving of approximately £3,000 on the year before. If a shorter document were to be produced for 2013/14, this may lead to further savings but this would depend on the amount of graphics and the complexity of the final document.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks 04/03/2013

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 The Homes and Community Agency (HCA) became the Regulator for Social Housing in England in place of the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) with effect from 1 April 2012 by virtue of changes to the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 introduced by the Localism Act 2011. The HCA's approach to the regulation of social housing is less prescriptive than the TSA's. The proposals outlined in paragraph 3.5 for the Annual Report should satisfy the Regulator's requirements.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley 05/03/2013

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 The annual report illustrates how the council meets that standard and its progress in continuously improving its performance in this area. The report itself can be obtained in a number of accessible formats and can be translated into a number of languages.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The annual report outlines how the council as landlord addresses sustainability issues and its progress in meeting its objectives. The commitment to a shorter printed report means less use of paper and printing resources.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 The annual report outlines how the council as landlord addresses anti-social behaviour, its progress in meeting its objectives, and commitments to continue to work with residents to improve our services.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 This report demonstrates the council is making progress in meeting the commitments in the 2012 annual report to council tenants and leaseholders.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 The annual report includes examples of how the council is improving the living conditions of its tenants and leaseholders and engaging with them to help maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives, to promote sustainable communities and to improve our service delivery.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 Involving tenants and leaseholders in producing the annual report specifically supports the priority of engaging people who live and work in the city, demonstrates that the council listens to and collaborates with its tenants and leaseholders, and is open and transparent about its performance as a social housing landlord.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Progress made in meeting improvement plans set out in the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2012.

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 2012 <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=c1232454>

