

# Adult Social Care & Housing Scrutiny Committee

## Agenda Item 74

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Housing Management Performance Report</b>		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>5 March 2009</b>		
<b>Report of:</b>	<b>Director of Adult Social Care &amp; Housing</b>		
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<b>Key Decision:</b>	<b>No</b>		
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	<b>All</b>		

### FOR GENERAL RELEASE

#### 1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 To provide the Committee with information on current performance within Housing Management services and on general policy initiatives underway to improve performance. The appendices to the report summarise the key performance results for the third financial quarter of 2008/9.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Adult Social Care & Housing Scrutiny Committee comment on the contents of this report.

#### 3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

##### 3.1 Rent Collection and Current Arrears

- 3.1.1 This section of the report provides information pertaining to four performance indicators relating to the collection of Housing Revenue Account rent. The four indicators are known as BVPI66a, BVPI66b, BVPI66c and BVPI66d respectively and concern:
- The proportion of rent collected during the year that was actually due (or charged) during the year.
  - The percentage of tenants with more than 7weeks rent arrears
  - The percentage of tenants in arrears who have had a Notice of Seeking Possession Served on them during the year

- The percentage of tenants who have been evicted as a result of rent arrears

### **BVPI 66a. Proportion of rent arrears collected**

<b>BVPI 66a</b>	
Brighton & Hove	<b>97.9% (3rd Quarter 2008/09)</b>
Unitaries – Top Quartile	98.4%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	97.3%
Unitaries – Average	97.9%

N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national figures from 2007/08.

- 3.1.2 This performance indicator relates to the proportion of rent collected as a percentage of the total rent due during the year. It does not take account of any cash collected to clear arrears from previous arrears or pre-payments taken to cover rent due in future years. This means that it is not possible for the result to exceed 100%.
- 3.1.3 The indicator result includes former tenancy arrears when a tenant has moved from one Housing Revenue Account property to another.
- 3.1.4 There are a number of examples where a tenant in arrears may transfer to another property. These include tenants who are relocated due to serious harassment or who are moved due to exceptional over-riding medical need. There are also circumstances where a new tenancy is granted at the same address, for example where a tenant succeeds the tenancy from a spouse or partner.
- 3.1.5 The results shown for Brighton and Hove are the results to the end of December 2008.
- 3.1.6 The graphs on pages 4-11 of the appendix show performance for the year to the end of October. Below the monthly data for 2006/07 and 2007/08 is also shown as a comparator.

Neighbourhood	Performance December 2007	Performance December 2008	Difference Between 2007/08 and 2008/09
Brighton East	96.46%	97.33%	+0.87%
Central	97.66%	98.19%	+0.53%
North & East	97.69%	98.14%	+0.45%
West	96.96%	98.22%	+1.26%
Temporary Accommodation	93.14%	96.77%	+3.63%
Citywide	97.11%	97.90%	+0.79%

- The table below shows what the percentages translate to in financial terms. Based on current performance it is forecast that the council will collect £39.27 million of the total collectable rent during the year that became due during the year.

Neighbourhood	Annual Rent Charged to Tenants (£)	Performance to the end of December 2008	How much of the rent charged for the year that we forecast we will collect (£)
Brighton East	12,716,214	97.33%	12,376,691
Central	7,774,150	98.19%	7,633,438
North & East	11,459,843	98.14%	11,246,690
West	7,787,749	98.22%	7,649,127
Temporary Accommodation	278,708	96.77%	269,706
<b>Totals</b>	<b>40,016,664</b>	<b>97.90%</b>	<b>39,176,314</b>

3.1.8 The figures above are a forecast relating to rent collected from charges made through the year. This figure can only ever be a forecast until the end of the year as only then is the exact rent charge for the year known. This is because during the year properties are purchased and rent is no longer charged, whilst others become empty and rent is not charged until they are occupied once again.

3.1.9 The figures above do not include any rent collected from arrears in previous years. There has been a slight drop in performance from the end of September 2008 to the end of December 2008 from a collection rate of 98.04% to 97.90%. This is an anticipated drop due to the seasonal period. It is also likely that the effects of the credit crunch are beginning to be seen. To help households the Housing Income Management Team interviews all new tenants prior to key collection. This interview includes offering advice and assistance on income maximisation and financial management including, for example, how to set up a bank account, what benefits may be available and which utility services are least expensive. The

actual arrears at the end of December 2008 are £859,742 against a figure of £ 905,675 at the beginning of the financial year.

- 3.1.10 All neighbourhood areas have improved on last years result for the same period demonstrating that after a period of settling into the role and resolving many long standing complex cases the team are obtaining the results that have been expected by tenants, leaseholders and members. The team is confident that it will meet its target collection rate of 98.5% by the end of 2008/09.
- 3.1.11 Although the performance for temporary accommodation is lower than other areas the significance of this is far less with arrears standing at £ 9,572 at the end of December and a significant improvement on their position a year before. It also needs to be remembered that temporary accommodation staff have a high turnover of residents and often only a very short period of time in which to deal with benefit claims and resolve arrears issues.

**BVPI 66b. % of tenants with more than seven weeks arrears**

<b>BVPI 66b</b>	
Brighton & Hove	<b>6.42% (3rd Quarter 2008/09)</b>
Unitaries – Top Quartile	4.7%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	7.3%
Unitaries – Average	6.0%

N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national figures from 2007/08 published by the Audit Commission.

3.1.12 This indicator shows the percentage of tenants with more than seven weeks' arrears. The indicator is an average over the year rather than a snap shot at anyone time i.e. the end of a month or quarter. This means that the figures shown are cumulative and we take weekly snapshots to calculate average to date.

3.1.13 For 2008/09 we have set a target of no more than 7.60% of tenants having more than seven weeks' arrears. In setting the target we have factored in the number of new tenancies each year, approximately 800, and the percentage of tenants who are in receipt of full and partial Housing Benefit. This is because a small proportion of this debt will be as a result of Housing Benefit processing times and delays caused by some tenants not providing relevant information to allow their claim to be processed quickly.

3.1.14 At the end of quarter 3 performance stood at 6.42%, or an average of 767 debtors with arrears of more than 7 weeks. During the first three quarters of the year the number of tenants with more than 7 weeks arrears has dropped by 71.

**BVPI 66c. Tenants who have received a NOSP for rent arrears.**

<b>BVPI 66c</b>	
Brighton & Hove	<b>21.89% (3rd Quarter 2008/09)</b>
Unitaries – Top Quartile	14.9%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	23.1%
Unitaries – Average	23.6%

N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national reported figures from 2007/08 published by the Audit Commission.

3.1.15 This indicator measures the percentage of local authority tenants who have had a Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP) served on them for rent arrears. A NOSP is the first stage of legal action against tenants and gives notice that unless a tenant takes steps to address their arrears or enter into an agreement with the council to repay the debt then the council may proceed to court action. A NOSP will not be served without attempts to speak with the customer. These efforts will then continue after the NOSP has been served and through all stages until the case reaches court, if indeed it does go that far. The government calls for the indicator to be calculated as a percentage of the average number of tenants in arrears throughout the year.

3.1.16 The government is very clear that local authorities must adopt a preventative approach to rent arrears. The aim of this indicator is to ensure local authorities are only using legal action and threats of legal action as a last resort. The government expect local authorities to review policies and procedures to ensure that preventative measures are in place so that Notices of Seeking Possession are kept to a minimum.

3.1.17 Although the government's intentions here are clear, many landlords see the serving of a NOSP as an effective tool to collecting rent arrears, as it gives an obvious message to debtors that we are serious about collecting debts. It does not follow that the serving of a NOSP will lead to court action. Within a well thought out and proactive rent arrears procedure the serving of a NOSP can actually reduce the number of tenants taken to court.

3.1.18 Brighton and Hove's arrears procedures are well laid out and do not lead officers into inappropriate court action. The government has issued a pre-action protocol for taking recovery action and internal procedures ensure officers follow these guidelines to give tenants every opportunity to enter into a repayment agreement and engage support services, where necessary. It does not therefore seem appropriate or desirable to artificially influence this indicator by not serving a NOSP, potentially at the expense of the overall collection rate. It is instead anticipated that our proactive policy of early intervention/prevention work will stop debts escalating to the 6-7 week point at when a NOSP is usually served.

At present the protocol prior to serving a NOSP is as follows:

Week 2	First Arrears letter
Week 4	Second Arrears letter
Week 5	NOSP warning letter
Week 6/7	NOSP served

The tenant is contacted by phone throughout this process and we will not serve a NOSP without attempting a home visit, even if that only results in us leaving a calling card.

3.1.19 As the year progresses, an increasing number of NOSP's will be served although consideration is always given to individual cases. At the time of writing benchmarking information is only available for 2006/07. Extrapolating that data we estimate that this result will place Brighton & Hove in the 4<sup>th</sup> Quartile.

3.1.20 Brighton & Hove's procedure means that a NOSP is generally served where arrears are at the 6 – 7 week level. This gives a very clear message to a tenant who has not engaged that we are serious about debt collection. It also protects the council's interests as we cannot proceed to court, (if we deem that necessary) until four weeks after a NOSP has been served. The objective is to do well at BVPI66a whilst keeping BVPI66c as low as possible. It is disappointing that we are moving well outside our target, however, members of the Consultative Committee are asked to recognise the achievement for BVPI66a, which is the actual income that feeds into the Housing Revenue Account.

#### **BVPI 66d. Tenants evicted as a result of rent arrears**

<b>BVPI 66d</b>	
Brighton	0.11% (3rd Quarter 2008/09)
Unitaries – Top Quartile	0.2%
Unitaries – Bottom Quartile	0.3%
Unitaries – Average	0.4%

N.B The benchmarking information is taken from national figures from 2007/08. .

- This indicator measures the percentage of all tenant evicted as a result of rent arrears. The denominator in this calculation looks at the number of tenancies at the end of each quarter. It has been agreed that we do not wish to evict more than 35 households as a result of rent arrears. During the first three quarters of 2008/09 Brighton & Hove Council evicted 13 households for rent arrears

3.1.22 During the first two quarters of 2008/09 Brighton & Hove Council evicted 7 households for rent arrears.

### 3.2 Empty Property Turnaround Time

- 3.2.1 The project to enable new tenants to start their tenancies on any day of the week is now in its final preparatory stages before being rolled out across the division. Processes have been established between the lettings Team, rent accounting and Housing IT to ensure a smooth transition to a system whereby a tenancy may commence on any day of the week rather than just on a Monday, as is the current arrangement. The initiative will enable new tenants to collect keys for the property into which they are moving as soon as they can after repair works have been carried out. The improvement in customer service will ensure that tenants will be able to carry out their move over the weekend if they wish to.
- 3.2.2 It is anticipated that there will also be a saving by ensuring that the council spends less money on clearing unwanted items from council properties, or recharging for the work, as transferring tenants will have more time to move from one property to another. A further benefit will be that where new tenants collect their keys on a Friday for example it will reduce the empty property turnaround time by three days.
- 3.2.3 New tenancies will not be charged for the part of the week in which they take early possession of the property. This is an added advantage for them, as they have a few days grace, and has no additional cost to the council as the property would have remained empty until the following Monday.

#### **Empty property turnaround time:**

### 3.3 Repairs and Maintenance Performance

#### Responsive Repairs

3.3.1 The tables below shows the percentage of responsive repairs completed within target time. The columns show overall performance for last year, the performance

2008/9 Target – 28 days	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Year to date
<b>General needs housing</b>													
<b>BV212- Gen needs</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>				<b>25</b>
Total let	56	53	63	50	45	54	68	59	44				492
% Let in target	75%	77%	70%	82%	73%	78%	76%	76%	80%				76%
<b>Sheltered housing</b>													
<b>BV212 - Sheltered</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>23</b>				<b>36</b>
Total let	14	9	11	6	12	15	7	7	11				94
% Let in target	57%	67%	45%	83%	58%	40%	86%	29%	77%				59%
<b>Total for Housing Management</b>													
<b>BV212 – Total HM</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>24</b>				<b>27</b>
Total let	70	62	74	56	57	69	75	66	57				390
% Let in target	71%	76%	66%	82%	70%	70%	77%	71%	79%				73%
<b>Temporary Accommodation</b>													
BV212 - TACC	47	67	40	31	38	44	41	36	19				42
Total let	15	17	17	8	12	9	10	17	8				113
% Let in target	47%	59%	35%	63%	67%	33%	40%	53%	100 %				53%
<b>All properties</b>													
BV212 - All	30	38	30	24	30	32	25	28	24				29
Total let	85	79	91	64	69	78	85	83	65				699
% Let in target	67%	72%	60%	80%	70%	65%	73%	67%	82%				70%

target for each repair priority, as well as the overall performance and the

performance achieved by each repairs constructor. Latest information is provided for quarter three and the information for orders completed in quarters one and two has been updated.

<b>Priority of Repair</b>	<b>Last Year</b> 2007 / 2008	<b>Target</b> 2008 / 2009	<b>Q1 Total</b> Apr – Jun 08	<b>Q2 Total</b> Jul – Sep 08	<b>Q3 Total</b> Oct-Dec 08
Emergency Repairs Completed in time	88.36 %	97 %	97.08 %	93.84 %	97.09%
No of Emergency Repairs completed	8,299	N/A	2,020	1,819	1,853
Urgent Repairs Completed in time	87.40 %	96 %	90.15 %	90.15 %	96.32%
No of Urgent Repairs completed	8,938	N/A	1,808	1,097	598
Routine Repairs Completed within target time	88.63 %	95 %	91.08%	94.10 %	98.48%
No of Routine Repairs completed	13,892	N/A	4,259	4,596	4,925

3.3.2 Top quartile performance for other Major Cities is as follows (based on Housemark Major Cities benchmarking data for 2007/2008):

- Emergency Repairs      97.88%
- Urgent Repairs            95.08%
- Routine Repairs            93.10%

Performance continues to improve with the council meeting its targets for all categories of repair in quarter three and achieving results within the top quartile as detailed above.

3.3.3 At the constructor level Mears have delivered results above target in all categories of repair and are approaching the higher performers in the Major Cities Group. Mears' performance is detailed in the table below.

Mears' Performance

<b>Priority of Repair</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Q1 Mears</b>	<b>Q2 Mears</b>	<b>Q3 Mears</b>
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	2009/2009	Apr - Jun 08	Jul - Sep 08	Oct - Dec 08
Emergency Repairs Completed in time	97 %	97.77 %	97.87 %	98.79 %
No of Emergency Repairs completed	N/A	1,122	1,034	1,074
Urgent Repairs Completed in time	96 %	93.42 %	94.87 %	98.73%
No of Urgent Repairs completed	N/A	1,018	585	314
Routine Repairs Completed within target time	95%	94.51%	97.33%	99.40 %
No of Routine Repairs completed	N/A	2,477	2,625	2,853

3.3.4 Kier have also made a positive step forward in the third quarter of 08/09 and are rapidly approaching the annual target for Emergency and Urgent repairs and have already exceeded the target for routine repairs. Kier are also continuing to manage the backlog of overdue repairs so performance is slightly affected adversely by this.

3.3.5 The minor IT issues identified in last quarter's report have now been addressed resulting in a contribution to the improvements identified above improved upon. Kier's performance is detailed in the table below:

#### Kier's Performance

<b>Priority of Repair</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Q1 Kier</b>	<b>Q2 Kier</b>	<b>Q3 Kier</b>
	2009/2009	Apr - Jun 08	Jul - Sep 08	Oct - Dec 08
Emergency Repairs Completed in time	97 %	96.31 %	98.54 %	94.74 %
No of Emergency Repairs completed	N/A	898	785	779
Urgent Repairs Completed in time	96 %	85.95 %	84.77 %	93.66%
No of Urgent Repairs completed	N/A	790	512	284
Routine Repairs Completed within target time	95%	86.41%	89.80%	97.20%
No of Routine Repairs completed	N/A	1,818	1,971	2,072

3.3.6 The Whitehawk Project is a local service delivery model developed by residents, Mears, Brighton & Hove City Council and the police. The project opened and became operational on the 5th February, operating out of refurbished offices in Swallow Court, North Whitehawk.

3.3.7 Estate Action Days have also taken place across the city. This is an initiative which addressed both individual and environmental repair issues. Our partners, Kier, managed a broad range of local needs from small repairs to clear up of common areas. The event helped create a sense of civic pride for the residents of the area that took part. This is an ongoing initiative we wish to develop City wide.

3.3.8 Decent Homes and Energy efficiency

The table below shows performance for other areas of repairs and maintenance:

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Last Year</b> 2007 / 2008	<b>Target</b> 2008 / 2009	<b>Q1 Total</b> Apr – Jun 08	<b>Q2 Total</b> Jul – Sep 08	<b>Q3Total</b> Oct-Dec 08
NI158 % of council homes that are non-decent	56.65 %	46 %	56.45 %	55.69 %	53.82%
BV63 - Energy Efficiency (SAP Rating)	75.4	75.6	75.5	75.6	75.7

3.3.9 A number of projects are specifically focused on decent homes and are in progress for the financial year 2008/09. These include large programmes to install gas heating boilers and to replace kitchens and bathrooms in resident’s homes as well as the replacement of front doors. Despite considerable effort by our repairs team the decent homes programmes have suffered from a slow first half of the year mobilisation start and only now, in the latter part of the third quarter of 2008/09 are we approaching an acceptable level of delivery and quality.

3.3.10 At the end of the third quarter the percentage of properties that are non-decent has improved and reduced by 2% to 53.82%

3.3.11 The full impact of these programmes will continue to reduce the levels of non-decency during the final quarter of the year. Our current projections suggest that non-decency levels will reduce to 49.5% by 31 March 2009.

3.4 Energy efficiency

3.4.1 Brighton & Hove City Council remains a strong performer on the energy efficiency of dwellings. Performance has continued to improve and remains in the top quartile

for performance when compared to other authorities. Top quartile for all authorities is 72, top quartile for unitary authorities is 75.

### 3.5 Gas Servicing

3.4.1 The table below shows the progress of Brighton & Hove City Council, Mears and PH Jones in servicing gas installations. Performance has been maintained over the last quarter.

	<b>Last Year</b> 2007/2008	<b>Target</b> 2008/2009	<b>Q1</b> June 08	<b>Q2</b> Sep 08	<b>Q3</b> Dec 08
Mears Area	98.91%	100%	99.35%	99.64%	99.70%
PH Jones Area	99.27%	100%	99.73%	99.91%	99.76%
Citywide	99.06%	100%	99.52%	99.75%	99.73%

The number of council properties with a valid gas safety certificate remains high. (December 2008) is an improvement of 0.93% on the figure for the same time last year and means that there are currently 29 properties citywide without a current gas service. There remain no properties with safety checks more than a year overdue. The current performance is within top quartile level when compared to other Major Cities (based upon Housemark Major Cities benchmarking data for 2007/2008 which indicates a top quartile of 99.43%.

### 3.6 Estates Service

3.6.1 In the third quarter of this year the percentage of cleaning tasks carried out continued to be high, to the extent that during this period almost 100% of all cleaning tasks were completed across the city.

3.6.2 The Estates Service Monitoring Group has met three times this quarter to review job descriptions and put forward a new structure for the Estate Service that will deliver and support a cleaning service based on dedicated cleaners. Estate Service staff are now being consulted on these changes and it is anticipated that the new structure will be fully in place by May 09

Estates Service Monitoring Figures					
Cleaning Performance Sep 08 – Dec 08					
	2007/8	September	October	November	December
Cleaning Performance	87	99	99	99.5	99
This data shows the cleaning performance percentage. This is defined as the cleaning tasks completed in the 4 week period as a percentage of the total number of jobs on the cleaning schedule that period.					

- 3.6.3 The bulk and graffiti removal teams continue to carry out a high volume of work across the city. Links have been established with City Clean's Graffiti Officer who now sends information each month on the most prolific taggers. This information is given to Estate Service Staff and the Community Wardens with advice on how to report this back to City Clean who work with the police to take enforcement action where possible.

Estates Service Monitoring Figures					
Bulk Waste Removal Aug 08 – Dec 08					
	August	September	October	November	December
Urgent jobs	1	0	0	1	2
Routine jobs	191	226	193	208	171
Total	192	226	193	209	173
Target met for urgent jobs	100%	N/A	N/A	100%	100%
Target met for routine jobs	91%	90%	88%	95%	91%
Target - urgent jobs removal in 1 working day of report					
Target - routine jobs removal within 7 working days of report					
Estates Service Monitoring Figures					
Graffiti Removal May 08 – Sept 08					
	August	September	October	November	December
Urgent jobs	N/A	4%	1%	5%	0%
Routine jobs	N/A	31%	39%	37%	35%
Total	N/A	35%	40%	42%	35%
Target met for urgent jobs	N/A	100%	100%	100%	N/A%
Target met for routine jobs	N/A	94%	90%	90%	100%
Target - urgent jobs removal in 1 working day of report					
Target - routine jobs removal within 7 working days of report					

#### 4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The Performance report will be presented to customers at the next round of Housing Management Area Panels and Housing Management Consultative Committee.

**5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

- 5.1 Financial information on performance is included in the main body of the report. Most performance measures discussed in this report have financial implications. For example, any improvement in turnaround times or reductions in empty property numbers increases the amount of rent collected. Improvements in performance will, in general, lead to more resources being available for tenants services in the future.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks December 2008*

Legal Implications:

- 5.1 There are none

*Lawyer consulted: Deborah Jones Date: December 2008*

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 There are no direct Equalities Implications arising from this report

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 There are no direct sustainability implications arising from this report

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.5 There are no direct risk and opportunity management implications arising from this report

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.6 There are no direct Corporate or Citywide implications arising from this report.

**6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):**

6.1 Not applicable to this report.

## **7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 These are contained within the body of the report.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

#### **Appendices:**

1. Housing Management Performance Reports - Charts

#### **Documents in Members' Rooms**

None

#### **Background Documents**

None

