



Annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2011

Council tenants and leaseholders are at the heart of our services. We aim to treat you fairly and ensure that our services meet your needs and provide value for money.



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

As the new Cabinet Member for Housing, I welcome this annual report to all council tenants and leaseholders on the council's performance as your landlord in the year from 1 April 2010 to 31 March 2011.



The report sets out facts and figures about the council's performance and how it has worked with residents to improve services to you, in line with the commitments made in last year's annual report.

It also sets out how I and the staff plan to make further improvements to housing services to you in this current year. The priorities of the new Green administration include involving residents in everything we do, tackling inequalities and making Brighton & Hove the greenest city in Britain. I intend to reflect those priorities in how we develop our housing services to you. I want to build on the strong partnership between the council, tenants and leaseholders to include more of you in shaping our landlord services.

Our priorities for council housing are to involve council tenants more deeply in managing their homes by holding annual consultations on housing budget options and setting up a Tenants' Scrutiny Panel with powers to look into any aspect of council housing management. We also aim to reduce council housing maintenance and management costs and will continue to work to improve conditions in sheltered housing schemes.

Our other housing priorities include working with Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes – the housing company set up by the council as a 'local delivery vehicle' to raise investment to help bring every council tenant's home up to standard – and others to begin a programme of at least 1,000 new affordable homes. We will work to ensure minimum acceptable space and design standards for new homes. We also want to create an ambitious programme to insulate every home in the city and install renewable energy technologies. That would make homes healthier, slash carbon emissions and cut residents' energy bills.

I would like to thank all those tenants and leaseholders who gave their suggestions of what they wanted to see and say in this annual report or who commented on the consultation draft. A big thank you also goes to the tenants, leaseholders and officers whose words are quoted in this report, and to all other residents and staff who work hard in their communities and resident working groups to make life better for everyone in council housing.

Liz Wakefield,
Cabinet Member for Housing

Front cover photograph: Housing staff and tenant representatives celebrate the new service pledges

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The sections in this annual report reflect how we meet the standards set by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) for council and housing association landlords, any gaps and our improvement plans.

At 31 March 2011 Brighton & Hove City Council owned and managed 12,283 rented homes across Brighton, Hove and Portslade, including 847 flats in 23 sheltered schemes. Another 2,248 flats in our blocks were owned by leaseholders.

Introduction

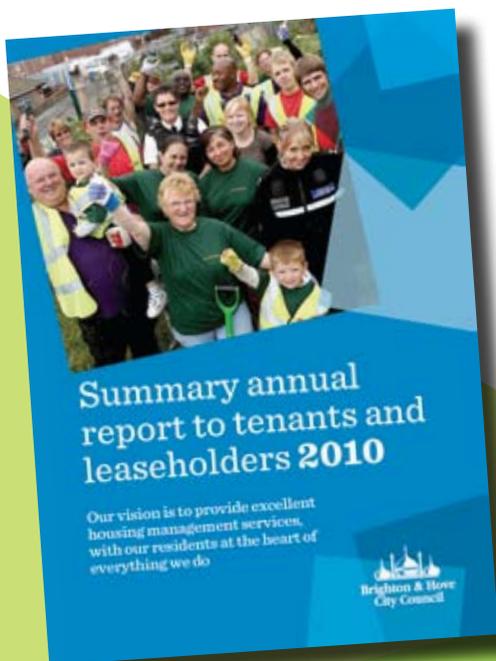
This is our second annual report to all council tenants and leaseholders. We have again tried to involve as many tenants and leaseholders as possible in reporting how we perform as a landlord and how residents work closely with us to deliver the services you need and that fit your priorities.

Last year's report included tenants' views on how we met the standards for all council and housing association landlords, introduced by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) in April 2010. We collected them through questionnaires, exercises with resident representatives and focus group meetings with tenants not involved in our resident participation structure. We used that information to outline in last year's report how we met the TSA's standards, any gaps and what we planned to do by 31 March 2011 to improve our services to you.

This report for 2010/11 sets out the progress we have made in those improvement plans, so you can see how we have met our commitments to you. It shows how we measure up against the TSA's regulatory framework and the performance outcomes we've agreed with the council's Lead Commissioner for Housing through a performance compact.

It outlines the consultation we carried out with residents during the year to review all our customer charters and replace them with new service pledges. These service pledges were developed and agreed with residents to reflect what you think is most important in how we provide our services to you, and they are our 'local service offers' required by the TSA. Residents will be closely involved in checking that we meet them.

Finally, this report also sets out the further improvements we plan to make to our services this year.



Last year's report

How tenants and leaseholders have been involved in producing and checking this annual report

We asked tenants and leaseholders to tell us what they thought of last year's annual report and how we could improve it in the report itself, in *Homing In* magazine and on our website.

In January the Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC), including tenant and leaseholder representatives, agreed a plan and timetable to involve residents in producing and checking this report. We asked tenants and leaseholders for suggestions on the content of this report and outlined the plan, with a short update on our progress in meeting our commitments in the 2010 report, in the spring edition of *Homing In*. All residents attending the tenants' and leaseholders' City Assembly and Area Panels in May and June were asked what they would like to see or say in this report. Summer's *Homing In* invited comments and suggestions from all tenants and leaseholders, explaining that a consultation draft of the report would be available for everyone to comment on at the end of June.

The consultation draft was sent to all tenant and resident associations and made available on our website and in our housing offices to every tenant and leaseholder who wanted a copy, along with a feedback sheet. We also emailed over 2,200 tenants and leaseholders who we have email addresses for with a link to the council's consultation portal on our website for their comments. We posted on Twitter and Facebook that we were asking all council

tenants and leaseholders to have their say in the annual report. We asked what you think of our performance and our improvement plans, and for residents to report in their own words what they and their groups have achieved. We have included a range of tenants' and leaseholders' quotes to reflect residents' feedback and achievements in this final version.

"I think you have covered everything in this consultation draft annual report. I have no other comments than well done, keep up the good work!"

Resident comment on the consultation draft report

The final draft report was checked by resident representatives and members of the Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC) and the *Homing In* Tenant Editorial Board, then approved by the Cabinet Member for Housing. This final report has been sent to all tenants and leaseholders with *Homing In* magazine in September.

If you would like to know more about our performance or services or have any other queries, please contact your housing office or look on our newly improved website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing.

Nick Hibberd,
Head of Housing & Social Inclusion

Section 1

Resident involvement and empowerment

Customer service, choice and complaints

Customer service

How are we doing?

In 2010/11 staff in housing management responded to more than 131,000 phone enquiries, 54,000 customer visits to our offices, 17,500 home visits, 10,000 email enquiries and 5,500 letters. More tenants and leaseholders are choosing to use our website to get information, pay rents and charges, report repairs and other jobs that need doing, give feedback and make applications. This is a cheaper and often easier and quicker way of contacting us and getting things done, for both the council and residents, and you can contact us at a time that suits you.

We changed the Housing Officer duty system to increase the time they can be out on estates and meeting tenants, which residents had told us they wanted.

91 tenants returned customer satisfaction forms about the sheltered service in 2010/11. 90% were satisfied with our service overall; 55% were very satisfied. Three people were dissatisfied and one person very dissatisfied.



In her own time, late on Christmas Eve Ginny Buckland, Sheltered Housing Team Manager, shopped for food for a sheltered resident just discharged from hospital

Residents agreed opening and closing times for 12 laundries newly refurbished under a contract monitored by the Laundry Facilities Review Group.

Our new service pledge, agreed with residents to reflect what's important to you, includes that we will be easy to reach, be clear and treat you with respect and listen and act to get things done.

"Communication with the council has improved. If you use the right process to report things you get better information and results."

Dave Murtagh, East Moulsecomb Tenant and Resident Association



How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

You can now get more services on our website at a time to suit you at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing. You can pay your rent and other charges, report housing repairs, report housing fraud, order a PayPoint card for your rent, as well as getting access to a whole range of forms and information 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This August we introduced a 'Customer online system' giving tenants secure access to check their rent and other accounts. You can sign up for the service at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/tenants-online.

"Nice clear easy to use site, have used it a couple of times now, no problems, but it would be nice to have a proper log off button."

Tenant feedback on the new 'Customer online' system.

We are making improvements in response to your feedback.

We provided easy instruction guides by our computers in housing offices that customers can use. Library staff and trained volunteers can now show you how to get information or carry out transactions on the internet through Council Connect, introduced in libraries in March 2011. Internet transactions save money both for us and residents, free up our time to focus on those in most need of help and improve sustainability by, for example, using less paper.

Using information from residents who had contacted us, staff across the housing service have mapped out how we get and deal with customers' queries, eg on moving home and rent arrears letters, to see if we can streamline them to improve our customers' experience, and developed a plan of actions to make improvements. We reported our customer access review work to resident representatives at the Housing Management Consultative Committee (HMCC), which agreed with our proposal to set up a housing customer service hub as the main contact point for all housing management queries (apart from repairs).

We agreed an action plan with the tenants' Sheltered Housing Action Group on developing the sheltered service, with five tenant-led working parties looking at key aspects. Having reviewed our sheltered local letting plan and our out-of-hours service, the groups are now focusing on how care and support is provided, promoting tenant participation, repairs, lettings and health and safety.

We contacted thousands of residents asking what you think of our services through community events and questionnaires to develop the new service pledges with you. We also got your views through paper, phone and online surveys for Customer Services Week, the Estates Service, sheltered housing, lettings and leaseholders' satisfaction surveys and also knocked on doors and held meetings in the grounds maintenance review pilot areas. We reported results in Homing In and in our Leaseholder Update.

We have used your feedback to improve our services in 2010/11. For example, in response to leaseholders' concerns about wasting electricity, we are monitoring areas where lights are not needed during the day. Where they wanted to make sure the outside of the building was kept much cleaner, we made sure litter picks take place. And when sheltered tenants told us they wanted more social activities, we worked with community groups to offer a range of new weekly social events.

"I would like to congratulate you on the very kind and helpful staff you employ. Nothing is too much trouble for this hard working duo and they go out of their way to be very helpful to one and all."

Sheltered scheme resident, July 2010

Below: "Five Sheltered Housing Action Group working parties work in real partnership with the council improving services and care for sheltered residents"

Louis Loizou (left), Bryan Balchin, Charles Penrose, Roy Crowhurst, Kath Davies and Paul Agius, SHAG working party members



In October, nine sheltered schemes took part in the Elderly Accommodation Council's Housing for Older People award. They scored the sheltered service as average for the 162 providers overall. We can use their survey results to benchmark our service against the other providers and make improvements.

In 2010/11 tenant and leaseholder mystery shoppers carried out three checks on the customer services we and Mears provide and our response to complaints. We reported the results in Homing In and there is more information in this report.

"I have really enjoyed our assignments, it has given me an opportunity to help change things and suggest things to help make services better for everyone."

"What I have liked is working in a relaxed way with housing staff, just being able to discuss issues and change things but as well just see what good things are done."

Resident mystery shoppers

Residents helped produce new welcome packs for new tenants and leaseholders. We set up a new Tenancy Management Focus Group of residents to review our procedures including improving our letters and forms.

We made rent statements and arrears letters easier to understand after tenants told us they didn't understand some phrases. We also switched to one clear rent increase letter at the end of February, greatly reducing tenant enquiries and complaints. And we made the way we charge for our sheltered service easier to understand. We have improved the information on our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing for both tenants and leaseholders.

How will we continue to improve?

We will improve the ways you can get information and report issues on our website at any time, not just when our offices and phone lines are open.

We will support residents to make use of the internet by publicising training opportunities and giving step-by-step advice on how you can access the service you need online.

We will consult with you and involve groups of tenants on various aspects about how access to our services can be improved. We have a programme for mystery shoppers to complete five 'shops' in 2011/12.

We will use a new STAR (Survey of Tenants & Residents) national resident satisfaction survey for council and housing association landlords to help us compare our service with other social housing providers and focus on areas for improvement.

We will carry out the actions agreed with the Sheltered Housing Action Group in the Business and Progress Plan 2011/12. They include revising our out of hours service to ensure a more specialist and targeted service to those in need, as a result of the tenant-led working group.



"To achieve this is a fairly long work process of changing habits and thinking out of the box to ensure the best services for the best value for money. However to tick all the boxes takes time but we are getting there, thanks to very enlightened tenants, officers and councillors."

Tom Whiting, Sheltered Housing Action Group

Choice

How are we doing?

Residents have continued to control the yearly £540,000 Estate Development Budget (EDB) to decide on improvements to communal areas around their homes through Area Housing Management Panels.

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

By working with the Estate Services Monitoring Group and conducting surveys in five pilot

areas, we understand better what residents want from the grounds maintenance service. Where residents agree, we make changes to the service where we can. For example, Elwyn Jones Court tenants did not like the planting so Community Payback cleared the site, and our parks service replanted with colourful flowers residents wanted and left an area for residents to maintain. Our new leaseholder service charge collection strategy and procedures aim to give more options to leaseholders who have difficulty in paying for major works charges. The Leaseholders Action Group worked with staff to ensure leaseholders got more choice of lower cost options in a review of the fire door strategy. Mears are working on a range of services that leaseholders could buy directly from them, including new bathrooms, kitchens and doors.

We found out more about what sort of choices residents would like through our 'Tell us what you think!' events and surveys to develop service pledges, through questionnaires for the grounds maintenance review pilot areas and feedback from resident groups. Our Estates Service pledges include offering to change locks for tenants on payment of a charge and fitting spy holes to doors for vulnerable households on request.

"We lobbied the council to do our own grass cutting with a 'proper' mower to save money. If you're sure your idea has merit – don't let go of it, keep your eyes on the prize!"

Stewart Gover, Wellington Road & Ainsworth House Tenants & Residents Association and Vice-Chair of the City Assembly

How will we continue to improve?

We will complete the grounds maintenance review and extend choices to other areas where we can.

We will investigate extending payment options for high major works charges for leaseholders.

We will carry out loft or other extensions for some overcrowded families in suitable properties to offer them the choice of staying in their current home.

Complaints

How are we doing?

We received more complaints in 2010/11 than in the previous year and some replies took longer than our target timescales. We just missed our target of replying within an average of 10 days on complaints about Mears, but took longer on average to reply to other complaints about repairs and maintenance. We met our target of replying to 70% of complaints about housing management within 10 working days but some complaints took longer. We completed 68% of all replies within 10 working days, the same as in 2009/10.



Our performance in dealing with complaints in 2010/11

Complaints about	Number of new complaints we received	Average time we took to reply to complaints, against our target of 10 working days	Percentage of replies we completed within our target of 10 working days
Housing management	188	10.8 days	71%
Repairs and maintenance			
• Mears	269	10.5 days	74%
• other	72	25.5 days	39%
Total	529	12.6 days Overall we missed our target of replying within an average of 10 working days	68% Overall we just missed our target of replying to 70% of complaints within 10 working days

The largest number of housing management complaints were about tenancy management issues, car parks and garages and anti-social behaviour. For repairs and maintenance, they were about delays in repairs and poor diagnosis or quality of repair. 35% of complaints at Stage 1 of our complaints process were fully or partly upheld, putting us in the top performing quarter of council and housing association landlords in the new Housemark national benchmarking club.

In 2010/11 we dealt with 69 Stage 1 leaseholder disputes, 19 at Stage 2 and 9 at Stage 3. The council's record on resolving leaseholders' complaints over the last seven years is 80% resolved at Stage 1 and 62% at Stage 2. This means that 92% of disputes have been resolved at either Stage 1 or Stage 2.

Tenant and leaseholder representatives also play a valuable role in telling us when residents have problems with any of our services so we can put things right where we can.

Some examples of how we've acted on and learnt from your complaints:

- we're replacing the handles of new doors installed under the contract before the Mears partnership started

- we produced a leaflet explaining why we need to replace communal TV aerials before the region switches over to digital in March 2012
- we surveyed residents after complaints of nuisance parking and introduced parking enforcement where most wanted it
- Mears and/or council staff now inspect all new bathrooms and kitchens to check they meet the standards agreed with tenants

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We asked resident mystery shoppers over a three week period to look at a random selection of complaints and our replies. They gave us lots of useful feedback and recommendations about our letters. Our new service pledges include details of how residents can complain about our services online, by phone or in writing.

We are reviewing our complaints process to improve the speed and quality of our response to complaints.

How will we continue to improve?

We will improve our performance in answering complaints within target times.

We will work with managers, officers and partners to improve the quality of our responses to complaints, following the recommendations from resident mystery shoppers. We will carry out quality checks and review progress and improvement.

We will report the outcome of tenants' complaints and our complaints performance.

We will follow any new requirements for dealing with tenants' complaints that are introduced for social landlords.

Involvement and empowerment

Offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved

How are we doing?

In March 2011, there were 72 tenant and resident associations and over 20 resident-led working groups plus citywide groups such as the High Rise, Leaseholders and Sheltered Housing Action Groups. New groups include the Building New Council Homes Tenant Working Group (BuNCH) which is working on the design and planning process for new council homes.

"As a member of the BuNCH Group, being able to have a say in the design of the 15 homes on the Ainsworth site and have also been part of the Procurement & Evaluation Team has been great. As a resident, being involved from the start has been a good experience."

Phil Bradick, Building New Council Homes Tenant Working Group (BuNCH)

127 tenants and leaseholder representatives served on resident working groups, most of them elected by their Area Panel. But of those, 56 representatives were on more than two resident working groups and 17 reps served on six or more groups. The average number of tenant and resident association committee members was six or seven. We recognise it can be a strain on representatives to maintain all these groups, when they also work hard in their communities to look after their estate and residents' interests.

"There needs to be a comprehensive examination of the nature of the resident participatory structure and proposals brought forward to ensure maximum and representative participation."

Resident feedback on consultation draft report

Our new service pledge commits us to provide a wide range of opportunities for you to be involved in what we do and how we do it.

"My new association is trying to get more youngsters involved and working together to improve the community."

Billy Miller, Manor Farm (North) Residents and Tenants Association



Our new Housing Centre in Moulsecoomb has an area for resident groups and representatives to use and they are being involved in deciding how the room is developed and what they would like in it. This will also help them play a full part in managing the repairs and improvement partnership with Mears, who are also based at the centre.

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We are continuing to build on our strong resident involvement structure to offer a wider range of opportunities for you to have a say in how your home and neighbourhood are managed, in ways that suit you. Tenants' and leaseholders' twice yearly City Assemblies in May and November gave residents across the city an opportunity to tell us their views and suggestions.

"To get more residents involved, including younger people, I'll update Twitter @CityAssembly regularly on what tenant reps are doing."

Chris Kift, Chair of Brighton & Hove Tenant & Leaseholder City Assembly



The residents' Tenant Compact Monitoring Group did more work on the draft tenant and leaseholder involvement strategy, with four groups considering each of the strategy's four objectives and feedback from consultation with residents and staff. They confirmed the strategy's objectives to:

- provide a wide range of opportunities for residents to be involved in their housing
- develop a framework for agreeing local offers and priorities with our residents
- involve residents in the development of housing policy and the design and delivery of housing services, and
- involve residents in monitoring and scrutinising our performance in delivering housing services

They also recommended some changes, including providing more information about resident associations, to consult younger residents in particular and to set up a residents' scrutiny panel.

Over 1,800 tenants and leaseholders are on our resident involvement database to tell us how they'd like to have more of a say in how their homes and neighbourhoods are managed. We used this to contact residents about their priorities and choices in developing the service pledges, on the draft resident involvement strategy and to recruit more resident mystery shoppers and members for the Asset Management Panel. Having a record of residents' preferences means we can make sure we can contact people of all ages, genders, races, religion, sexual orientation, etc, and those with disabilities, and hear from all sections of the community.

How will we continue to improve?

We will continue to try to involve a wider range of tenants and leaseholders in having a say in how their homes and neighbourhoods are managed, including younger people, families with children and other groups who are under-represented in our formal participation structure and whose voice we need to hear.

We will make greater use of our website and social media such as Facebook and Twitter to communicate with and involve a wider range of residents.

We will consult residents on the revised resident involvement strategy and proposed changes through our website, our resident involvement database and resident groups.

We will continue to record the ways residents tell us they would like to be involved and the areas they are interested in, and to use that information to contact all sections of the community for their views and suggestions.

We will work with residents to develop a tenant scrutiny panel which will be able to check in detail how we manage and maintain council homes.

Agreeing 'local offers' for service delivery

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We consulted as many tenants and leaseholders as we could to find out your priorities for our services, using a variety of ways to get the views of all sections of the community. Over 100 staff were involved in holding four big 'Tell us what you think!' events across the city. We had activities and a competition for children as well as events at various times and locations to attract all residents. We sent out some 3,300 'Tell us what you think!' questionnaires to a cross section of tenants and leaseholders on our resident involvement database in December 2010 to reach residents in all equalities and diversity groups.

Maggie Smeech gave us her views at one of the 'Tell us what you think!' consultation events



We used what you told us to develop service pledges for all aspects of our landlord service with resident working groups. These pledges set out the standards of housing services that you can expect. They cover getting involved, looking after your home, looking after your neighbourhood, dealing with anti-social behaviour, managing your tenancy, living in sheltered housing, paying your rent, council leaseholders and garages and car parking. They include how performance will be monitored, reported to and checked by residents and what we will do if we fail to meet those pledges.

After further consultation on our website, a summary service pledge and eight detailed service pledges were agreed by HMCC and the Cabinet Member for Housing and came into effect on 1 April 2011. All tenants and leaseholders received details of the summary service pledge in the summer edition of Homing In and the pledges are all available at our offices and online at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hm-service-pledges. We can also make them available in translation, in large print, Braille or on CD or audio tape.

These service pledges have been developed and agreed with residents and will be reviewed and updated regularly.

How will we continue to improve?

We will measure our performance against the service pledges and report back in our annual report, articles in Homing In, regular reports to HMCC and resident groups and by including performance information on the housing pages of the council's website, so you can check that we are meeting the standards we have agreed with you.

Meeting the TSA's standards

How are we doing?

We have worked to fill the gaps in meeting the TSA's standards tenants identified last year. The new performance compact with the council's Lead Commissioner for Housing requires us to meet the TSA's standards and we will measure that we do that.

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We reported our progress in meeting the commitments in last year's annual report to fully meet the TSA's standards to HMCC and they agreed the arrangements for involving residents in producing this report. We invited all tenants and leaseholders to give suggestions and get involved in this annual report in last year's report, in Homing In, on our website and at the City Assembly and Area Panels.

Full results of the TSA standards questionnaires and exercises last year were displayed at Area Panels and the City Assembly last autumn and summarised in the 2010 annual report.

We have looked at best practice examples for reporting to residents from other authorities and will present a range of reporting options to the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group and HMCC. The outcomes of mystery shopping and resident satisfaction surveys are reported in Homing In.

We included 'You said, we did' feedback in Homing In, letting you know how we take your views into account and giving examples of how you have influenced the service.

How will we improve?

We will work with residents to develop full proposals for increasing resident scrutiny of our performance.

Providing support so tenants can be more effectively involved

How are we doing?

Our four Community Participation Officers continue to support tenant and resident associations and resident groups, as does the Resource Centre. A new residents' Activity & Media Centre at Leach Court has been funded from a £4000 'Get Digital' grant and Estate Development Budget money. This centre will help train tenants in computer skills and provide a new social space. Training older residents in computers started in January 2011 with a Get Digital tutor using facilities at Patching Lodge.

“The council has provided advice and support in the development of our Facebook page to allow us to engage with residents who would not normally participate with their local association, allowing them to have a say on issues that affect the building and its grounds, as well as broader city-wide concerns.

James Morgan, Hereford Court Community Association

How did we meet the commitments in last year’s report?

The Resource Centre helped 61 associations in 2010/11 with 75 support, advice and training sessions, designing 172 newsletters, flyers and posters and checking 50 accounts.

We trained resident mystery shoppers and resident assessors for the ‘Rate your Estate’ pilot project in East Brighton. Residents came up with lots of suggestions at a Green Communities training event on energy saving that have helped the Energy Efficiency Working Group. Training was held for tenants involved in the Partnership Group for repairs and improvements and we supported tenants to attend conferences.

How will we improve?

Our Housing IT training officers will help resident associations to use social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, as well as free online software for producing newsletters.

We will review and look to improve the support offered to residents groups.

We will offer more residents training in becoming a resident assessor as Rate Your Estate is rolled out across the city.

Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

How are we doing?

We are one of only three local authorities in the country to be awarded ‘Excellent’

status under the Local Government Equality Framework for providing fair and accessible services for everyone, while combating all forms of discrimination. Tenant representatives were interviewed as part of the assessment. We have published around 30 equality impact assessments looking at how our housing management services might affect different groups and identifying actions to improve services. Our staff completed new equalities training in 2010/11.

The sheltered service’s contract with Supporting People has been extended until 2015 due to its ‘excellent service’. We have improved performance in our support planning from 76% sheltered residents having an up to date support plan in 2009/10 to 91%.

How did we meet the commitments in last year’s report?

We increased recording of tenants’ needs to build up a better understanding of them and tailor our services to meet them. We explained what data we keep and why in Homing In. Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans are being agreed with vulnerable or disabled residents who need them in case there is an emergency in their block. Decent homes improvements are tailored to meet tenants’ needs and choices. We can now help sheltered residents with changing light bulbs, moving furniture, etc and installed new easy access shower rooms in two schemes.

The new Housing Centre is accessible to residents with disabilities and includes an evacuation lift they can use in the event of fire. Our improved website makes us more accessible for people with various needs, or who work during the day. We now use the RNIB Webdocs online service to produce short large print, audio or Braille documents more quickly and economically, with good customer feedback.

“This is marvellous and such a quick service, please keep using it.”

Resident on Webdocs

A Mobility Scooter Working Group with members from the Tenant Disability Network and Sheltered Housing Action Group are looking at the options for storing scooters, which were identified as a fire and trip hazard in common ways in fire risk assessments. We are piloting special external scooter stores at Clarke Court and Leach Court.



“The council have recognised the problem of storage for mobility scooters and have worked with a working group to look at solutions to provide storage.”

Alison Gray, Tenant Disability Network

We deal with racist and religiously motivated hate crime in line with the arrangements across Sussex. We reviewed how we deal with residents experiencing domestic violence in conjunction with the council’s Housing Options

service and now recommend priority transfers on police advice. We gave our pledge to the THUMBS UP scheme, developed by people with learning disabilities, and work to the new pan-Sussex multi-agency policy and procedures for safeguarding adults at risk to prevent and deal with abuse of vulnerable adults.

How will we continue to improve?

We will check we have complete and accurate information about tenants’ circumstances and needs when we sign up new tenants and carry out tenancy visits, and make better use of information you give us to meet your individual needs.

We will consult young people and black and minority ethnic residents to ask what they need from our service and what they think about resident involvement. We will use the results from the STAR satisfaction survey to see if any groups are less satisfied with our service and how we can respond.

We will develop the mobility scooter storage pilot and policy before rolling it out citywide.

We will develop our processes and policy on how we safeguard vulnerable tenants.

Section 2

Home

Our Property Investment Service is working closely with residents to jointly manage our contractual partners, such as Mears, to ensure quality of accommodation and the delivery of excellent repairs and maintenance services across the city.

Quality of accommodation

How are we doing?

The first year of the new ten year partnership between Mears, the council and residents met its target of improving your homes, with nearly 1,700 properties brought up to the Brighton & Hove Standard, an improvement of nearly 14% on 2009/10. In 2010/11 we replaced 676 kitchens and 299 bathrooms and installed

new windows in 209 homes and 1,039 new doors. 298 homes were rewired. We also replaced 984 boilers across the city, improving the energy efficiency of homes and cutting residents’ heating costs.

“Thank you so much for sending me such a nice young man...to put in a new fuse box, a new shower and an elec box. He did all of these jobs so well, he was also so nice and polite, so clean and tidy.”

“I am writing to thank Mears and the council for our splendid new kitchen ... The professionalism of all the various trades involved was something to behold.”

Tenants’ letters to Mears in March 2011

Residents are on the partnership's Core Group, which oversees the contract and monitors progress on the decent homes target at monthly meetings. Resident representatives also give us feedback on performance. You said you wanted better communication on decent homes and project works. So the partnership now sends regular newsletters to all residents that have work carried out in their blocks. We also hold evening meetings to update residents where major works are being carried out.

You told us the government's Decent Homes and Brighton & Hove Standards were difficult to understand, so we developed a simplified version with feedback from residents at the City Assembly this May. We also asked their priorities for planned works to feed into our plans.

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We met our promise to bring 74% of tenants' homes up to Decent Homes Standard by 31 March 2011, with a £24 million programme of improvements in 2010/11. We are on track to bring all homes up to Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2013/14.

We have invested in most sheltered schemes with shared facilities to bring them up to a modern, self-contained standard. In 2010/11, we replaced shared facilities at two schemes.



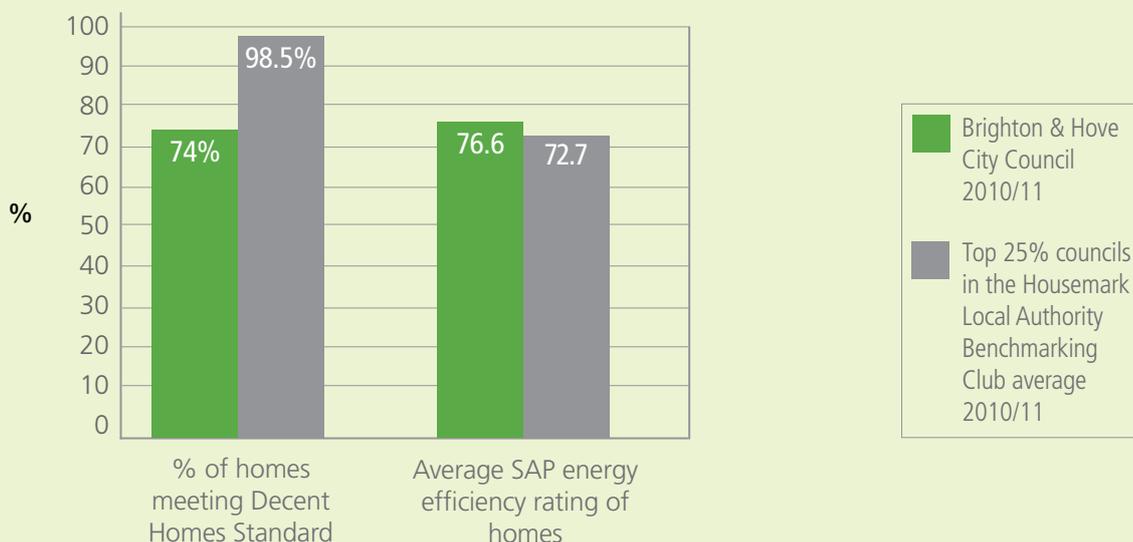
"Residents on the Asset Management Panel are involved in monitoring progress of the Mears contract through the Partnership and Core groups. We're also now participating in the new service contracts for door entry systems, fire alarms, CCTV, emergency lighting, lifts and digital aerial works."

Nixon Dube, Asset Management Panel

We consulted widely with residents as part of our service pledges to agree the Brighton & Hove Standard, a higher standard for homes developed by the residents' Asset Management Panel. It includes extras like more sockets in kitchens, redecorating new bathrooms and kitchens and a choice of kitchen units and work tops, external doors and tiles and flooring in new bathrooms.

We installed A-rated boilers and improved the energy efficiency of homes, increasing the

How do we compare? Quality of accommodation at 31 March 2011



SAP measure of energy efficiency for our stock from 75.9 in 2009/10 to 76.6 last year. This reduced electricity and gas costs for residents, improved the sustainability of the stock and kept us in the top performing 25% of councils in England.

A large scale programme to upgrade communal lighting is underway, reducing the amount of energy required with improved fittings and automated controls. The council is working with others to set up a contract to install solar panels on south facing roofs of up to 1600 flats and houses to benefit from 'Feed in Tariffs'. We consulted tenants through the Energy Efficiency Working Group, Area Panels and HMCC. This would reduce the carbon footprint, cut residents' fuel bills and create jobs across the city.

How will we continue to improve?

We will overclad more blocks of flats, insulating them and reducing residents' fuel consumption by up to about 17%.

We will continue working to set up contracts to benefit from Feed in Tariffs through solar panels.

We will improve 1,720 properties to the Brighton & Hove Standard in 2011/12, bringing 88% of tenants' homes up to Decent Homes Standard by 31 March 2012.

We will upgrade communal TV aerials to be ready for digital switchover in March 2012.

We will modernise and make self-contained sheltered flats at Broadfields and look at options for the 14 shared facilities flats at Evelyn Court.

We will take account of residents' priorities for planned work and involve residents in quality checking work such as new doors and communal aerial systems.

We will consult residents and other stakeholders on a new provisional four year investment programme to ensure that residents' priorities are met and we make best use of available resources.

Repairs and maintenance

How are we doing?

2010/11 was the first year of the new repairs and improvement partnership with Mears Group and over 4,500 more repairs were carried out than in 2009/10. The partnership met almost all its performance targets, with excellent performance in completing emergency repairs within 24 hours and completing routine repairs in an average of 11 days, one day quicker than the previous year. The partnership missed the target to complete urgent repairs within three days by 1% and the Core Group which monitors the contract asked for a review and set a clear action plan to improve performance over the first part of this year.

Repairs performance in 2010/11

- 34,275 repairs completed – an average of 94 each day
- 98.4% Emergency repairs completed within our target of 24 hours
- 96.0% Urgent repairs completed within our target of three working days
- 98.4% Routine repairs completed within our target of 20 working days
- Average time to complete routine repairs 11 days

Over 95% of the 5,839 residents we spoke to in 2010/11 were either satisfied or very satisfied with the repairs carried out. You also gave us good feedback around uniforms and ID which we have worked to improve. We published Mears' code of conduct in Homing In after you asked about it. Two dedicated Customer Service Liaison Officers regularly visit residents to discuss any issues and are always available for feedback on Mears works.

We have compared our performance with other landlords' and used this in setting performance targets for year two of the partnership and in monthly reports for managers and resident representatives.

We are working to develop this 'benchmarking' and share best practice with all Mears' social housing clients.

The council, Mears and PH Jones continue to deliver high performance in gas servicing. 99.81% of properties had a current gas safety certificate at 31 March 2011, an improvement on 2009/10. Regrettably 20 homes were overdue for safety checks at 31 March 2011. We provide information and support to vulnerable residents but as a last resort we are forced to take legal action if they do not give us access to do these essential checks.

We continue to work closely with East Sussex Fire & Rescue to check that our homes and communal areas are safe. We are ensuring all communal staircases are vented to help any smoke disperse and are adding signs so people know where to go in the event of a fire. The fire door replacement programme is on schedule and due to be completed in 2014.

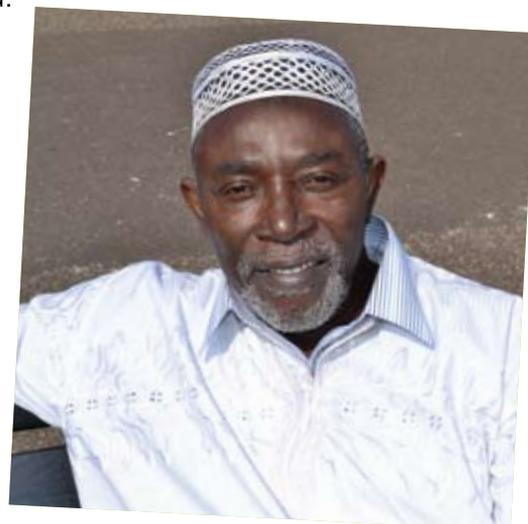
How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We worked with the residents' Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group and Asset Management Panel to develop and agree the repairs and maintenance 'local offer' service pledge. This reflects residents' priorities and feedback from events and questionnaires.

We maintained and developed resident involvement at all levels of the repairs partnership. Residents sit on both the Repairs Core Group and the Partnership Group which make the key decisions for the partnership and check progress. We keep a log of issues residents raise in a resident action plan and report back to the Repairs and Maintenance Monitoring Group, who decide when these issues are resolved.

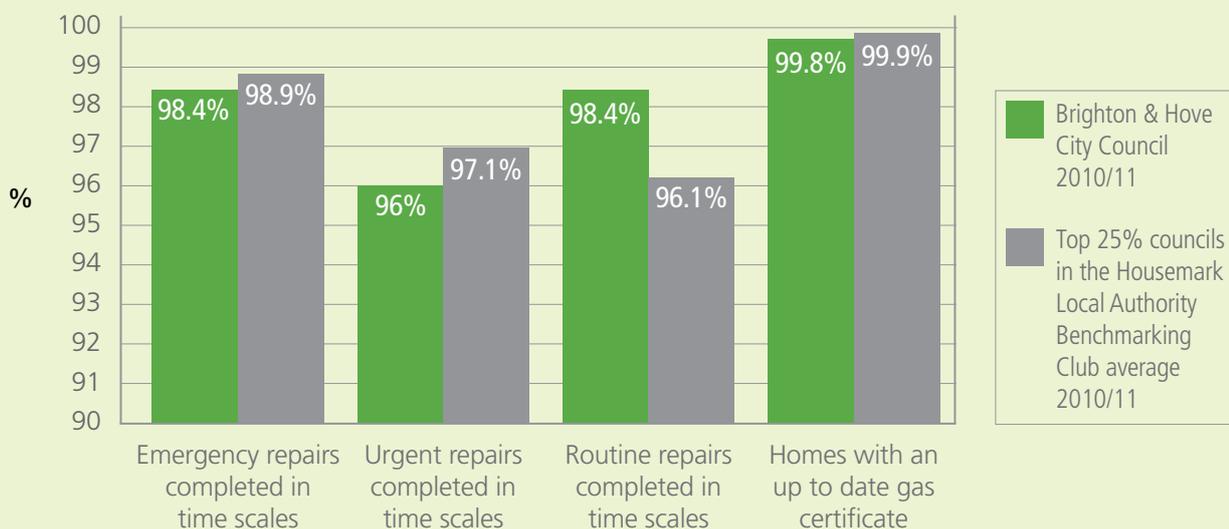
"The new Housing Centre and the progress of the contract so far show that the partnership is working well."

Mbye Sohna,
Asset Management Panel and Core Group



The City Assembly this May was dedicated to getting your views and suggestions on the repairs service and all recommendations fed into the Core Group's action plan. Valuable feedback from residents' mystery shopping of the repairs desk and out-of-hours service was used to improve performance in answering calls and helping residents with enquiries.

How do we compare? Repairs and maintenance performance



Mystery shoppers found that response times and standards improved dramatically after the Repairs Helpdesk transferred to Mears in April 2010. While they found the out-of-hours repairs service to be reasonable overall – with 46 out of 48 calls connected on the first try - they recommended training on a number of issues and an action plan for further improvements, which Mears are following up.

We invested £773,000 on 498 adaptations to help disabled or elderly tenants stay in their council homes in 2010/11. To avoid delays, our Neighbourhood Response Team now carry out small jobs such as grab rails, stair rails and lever taps. They did 43 from January to March - more than the target of 10 a month - in an average of four days. After a resident's suggestion at City Assembly, you can now call the Repairs Desk to ask about simple adaptations such as grab rails by the Neighbourhood Response Team.

The Housing Adaptations Occupational Therapy team are now responsible for all major housing adaptations to assess needs more quickly. They work with Mears on the Decent Homes programme, so that tenants who need a kitchen or bathroom adaptation get that

work done at the same time. They also now attend Tenant Disability Network meetings to give information about the adaptations service and get feedback. You can contact them via Access Point.

We are recruiting a group of tenants to help develop the new tenant guide to repairs.

How will we continue to improve?

We are in discussions with tenant representatives about training resident assessors to check and sign off works as part of our quality assurance processes.

We will look at using social enterprises to improve our decorating and gardening schemes for elderly and disabled tenants.

Residents from the Asset Management Panel and High Rise Action Group will help choose the new lift service contractor, who will also carry out a city-wide renewal programme.

Mystery shoppers will look at the whole process of reporting a repair to find ways to improve.

We will work with residents and Mears to produce the new tenant guide to repairs.

Section 3

Tenancy

Allocations and lettings

How are we doing?

We let 755 council homes in 2010/11, 32% of them to existing tenants transferring. At 31 March 2011, 20% of the 12,737 applicants on the Homemove joint housing register for council and housing association homes in the city were transfer applicants.

We continued to use local lettings plans to make best use of our stock and balance communities after wide consultation. For example, the sheltered local lettings plan was revised as a result of a tenant-led working

group. All sheltered schemes have been awarded the Elderly Accommodation Council's 'Quality of Information' kitemark for accurate and detailed information about them.

In 2010/11, 49 tenants downsized from a family home or wheelchair-adapted property they no longer needed or found their own home in the private sector, getting up to £3,500 through the transfer incentive scheme. We hope new payments will help more tenants move to free up homes for overcrowded families. We also help overcrowded households find larger homes in the private rented sector.



Our Lettings Team worked hard to re-let empty homes an average of 7½ days faster in 2010/11 than the year before

Our Lettings Team cut the average time to let an empty home (including repairs) to only 18 days in 2010/11 from 25½ days in 2009/10. Sheltered flats took an average of 33 days to re-let, five days less than in 2009/10. We now add post codes to details of empty properties in Homemove after residents asked for them.

A survey of the 47 new tenants in February 2011 found 75% who responded were very satisfied with the overall lettings service and 59% said they would rate it 10/10. They were less happy with the condition and cleanliness of properties, and we have now worked with residents to review our standard for empty homes before they are let.

After the Energy Efficiency Working Group highlighted the furniture that is dumped or left in properties when people move, we now send details of four furniture recycling companies to tenants who are moving. Mears are also talking to the YMCA about recycling furniture that tenants leave in properties.

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We brought in a new allocations policy after a review by a tenant-led group and full consultation with tenants and homeseekers in the city. Changes include giving priority to working households, having a local connection of residency in the city of 24 months and reducing homeseekers' banding after three unreasonable refusals of accommodation.

How will we continue to improve?

We will implement residents' recommendations for the Lettable Standard to fit energy saving light bulbs and decorate sheltered flats in need of it before the new tenant moves in, and evaluate their other recommendations.

We will work with residents and the city to review the new allocations policy and include any changes from the government's Localism Bill now going through Parliament.

We will put into practice the sheltered local letting plan which was revised as a result of a tenant-led working group.

We will further improve the letting process for sheltered housing to reduce rent loss.

Tenure

How are we doing?

After consultation with resident HMCC representatives, the council decided it will not use the flexible tenancies that the government is introducing as an option for councils, and our tenancies will remain secure.

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We worked with tenants and leaseholders to provide an effective housing management service and support to fulfil their rights and responsibilities, with scrutiny and feedback from resident working groups. The survey of new tenants in February found 92% felt very well informed about the tenancy agreement

before their tenancy started. Our Turning the Tide strategy involves three levels of support depending on tenants' needs and a balance of support and enforcement. New and vulnerable tenants needing support were referred to our Tenancy Sustainment Officers and we worked with other services to ensure support needs were met. The Tenancy Sustainment Team helped 89% of tenants they worked with who needed intensive support to keep their tenancy.

We evicted 26 tenants for rent arrears in 2010/11, including eight properties that were abandoned, which was within the target agreed with HMCC. We are robustly enforcing tenancy conditions around the upkeep, maintenance and appearance of homes and gardens, recharging costs of putting things right and serving notices where we need to.

We set up a resident led Tenancy Management Focus Group in August 2010 to consult about our tenancy management policies and procedures. It meets regularly and has become an effective forum. We issued the new tenant handbook produced with residents to all tenants, which summarises our policies on tenancy management.



"Tenancy visits are making a real difference in helping to identify and support some of our most vulnerable tenants and their families."

Allan Haryott, Community Warden, who received the council's 'Big Difference' award in December for his outstanding effort and results.

We launched a new financial inclusion strategy, so staff can spot financial hardship and point residents to appropriate financial help and advice to help them manage any debts and avoid loan sharks. Support from staff helped reduce tenants' rent arrears by £170,104 from 31 March 2010 to 31 March 2011.

We became the second council in the country to successfully prosecute a tenant who was subletting their council home unlawfully. We trained staff to identify and deal with people fraudulently living in council housing and have specialist officers to investigate and prevent it. We publicised that residents can report suspected tenancy fraud easily, anonymously if preferred. HMCC agreed we should use a £30,000 government grant to improve the prevention and detection of tenancy fraud to buy equipment to introduce photographic records of tenant identity for new tenants.



"We continue to work with the Right to Buy & Leasehold Team to improve guidance on responsibilities for new leaseholders, who increasingly include those purchasing for buy-to-let. Their tenants can also cause anti-social behaviour that affects other residents and needs to be addressed at an early stage."

Muriel Briault, Leaseholders Action Group

How will we continue to improve?

We will continue to extend financial inclusion and support the Credit Union to help residents manage their finances.

We will make information on our website for new tenants or those wanting to move more customer-friendly and informative.

We will introduce photographic tenancy records and continue to use other initiatives to prevent tenancy fraud. We will continue to investigate and act on all reports of fraud.

Section 4

Neighbourhood & Community

Neighbourhood management

How are we doing?

We are developing a policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with residents' homes, working with the Estates Service Monitoring Group. This will bring together information on how we work with residents to deal, for example, with vandalism, fly-tipping, graffiti, bad weather, supporting community clear up days and use of community rooms. We also work with other services and community groups helping to deal with crime, disorder, anti-social behaviour and safety problems, such as neighbourhood Local Action Teams.

Our Estates Service managers now check at least 20% of work done by cleaners and the Neighbourhood Response Team and have found over 90% satisfactory performance. We are continuing to work with the council refuse and recycling service to improve how they do work for us such as graffiti removal. And, after customers' request, we are starting to jet wash moss and algae from external common areas. We provided 75 grit bins for ice and snow and they are ready for next winter.

Estates Service staff worked hard in the snow and ice to grit paths and roadways



The grounds maintenance review involved residents in five pilot areas looking at improving the grounds around their homes, offering choice, making clear what residents are paying for and the service they should expect, and leading to better working. Examples include the Estates Service picking up litter beyond the immediate buildings and following CityParks spraying and removing weeds, working with residents to establish wildlife conservation areas, agreeing a service pledge with CityParks on planting, and training Community Wardens to identify trees that need attention.

"I enjoy trying to get improvements to our small area and appreciate the help officers and community wardens give us. The Community Payback team are a great help with making the gardens look good."

**Chris El-Shabba,
Robert Lodge
Residents
Association**



The RSPCA awarded us a bronze Community Animal Welfare Footprint for having a good pet policy and offering vouchers for free cat neutering. Residents on the Housing & Estates Forum are working with us to apply for the Cleaner Safer Greener Neighbourhood Quality Mark award in Moulsecoomb.

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We developed and agreed with residents service pledges on the estates service and tenancy management, including grounds maintenance, as part of 'local offers'.

Our Estates Service carried out telephone satisfaction surveys on our cleaning service

and developed new cleaning standards and monitoring sheets for the 724 blocks they clean with the Estates Services Monitoring Group. We have had positive feedback from both the group and customers and you have alerted us to deal with any problems. Eight out of 10 customers told us they were satisfied with the service from cleaners and the Neighbourhood Response Team.

We encouraged residents to get involved in our regular estate inspections by putting the dates of inspections on our website and results of inspections on community notice boards and in our offices. The Rate your Estate pilot in East Brighton, which uses score cards and photo books, encouraged more residents to get involved. You can find out when estate inspections are happening in your area and report issues you would like the inspection to look at on our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing.

Residents presented the outcomes of the Rate Your Estate and Housing & Estates Forum initiatives in the 'Turning the Tide' pilot in Moulsecomb and Bevendean to the residents' City Assembly in November 2010. In January, HMCC and the Cabinet Member for Housing agreed they should be rolled out city-wide.

We developed comprehensive emergency response procedures for in and out-of-office hours covering what we will do if there are gas leaks, electricity supply failures, lift breakdowns, severe weather. etc. We have an out-of-hours rota in place, business continuity and emergency plans completed and staff briefed and trained.

We have continued to make improvements to fire safety. We have been installing new fire signs to all our common ways to make sure people know where to go in the event of a fire. We carried out regular inspections of blocks to check that common ways are clear of hazards and obstructions, both to prevent fires and ensure everyone can evacuate blocks quickly and safely. We are visiting vulnerable residents to advise them and agree plans to provide help to those who need it. Fire drills are now



Housing staff and residents on an estate inspection of Queens Park

taking place annually in all sheltered schemes and the resident-led Fire Safety Working Group for sheltered housing is working to address problems and find solutions.

Our Health & Safety team continually carry out fire risk assessments in our buildings with communal ways and prioritise and deal with any risks. Our Fire Safety Working Group meets regularly with East Sussex Fire & Rescue and fire safety experts. For high rise blocks we are producing information leaflets and evacuation plans tailored to each block.

How will we continue to improve?

We will complete the policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with residents' homes with the Estates Service Monitoring Group and take it to HMCC for consultation and approval.

We will continue with the grounds maintenance review, evaluate the pilots and, if residents agree they are successful, roll it out citywide.

We will develop the Rate Your Estate model to roll out across the city and recruit and train more resident assessors using the resident involvement database.

We will minimise fire risk and comply with fire safety requirements, with regular meetings and training with the fire service. We will also help the fire service to carry out their own tests and training in our buildings.

Local area co-operation

How are we doing?

We work in partnership with residents and other agencies to improve the neighbourhoods you live in and provide opportunities for local residents.

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

We worked with residents and other organisations to help make your neighbourhood a better place to live in and reported successes in Homing In. Staff attended Local Action Teams (LATs) and various community-led meetings and were actively involved in 'Cleaner Greener' initiatives including community clean up days. Bevendean LAT won a government Big Society award for their achievements clearing up their area, with help from staff and residents.



"We are not frightened of getting stuck in and in getting down dirty, and it was dirty, but even better than that... the rubbish has not returned, or the fly-tipping, so all in all a really good result."

Cathy Bath, Housing Officer who helped in Bevendean LAT's clean up

We supported community garden initiatives and projects such as Leybourne Parade Project, Bevendean Community Garden and the proposed Moulsecomb Community Farm.

Sheltered schemes held many successful community events including an Active Pharmacy with Brighton University, and our Community Warden launched a new Sundowners Club open to older people in the community. The sheltered service agreed protocols with partner organisations including Community Transport, Complete Community Care, Money Advice and MIND, who ran outreach surgeries in our schemes. Access Point also established outreach services in two schemes, giving specialist advice and support to residents.

As well as the 10 new local apprentices taken on by Mears this year under the repairs partnership, we gave local construction students training in a project with Mears and City College to bring an empty home back into use. The Community Payback Team improved communal facilities and gardens, benefiting residents and the wider community. The High Rise Action Group won its long campaign for Southern Water to install water meters in individual flats where residents want them, after meetings led by the council.

How will we continue to improve?

We will work with communities to develop community gardens and growing projects.

The new Housing Centre will offer local employment opportunities, including Mears apprenticeships and kitchen assembly work and cleaning and catering roles.

We will support partnerships with social enterprises and projects which help get people into work and training, and benefit our residents.

Anti-social behaviour

How are we doing?

The Anti-Social Behaviour Team and Tenancy Sustainment Team have now set the approach to dealing with and preventing anti-social behaviour (ASB) across the city. You can now report anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance on our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing.

How did we meet the commitments in last year's report?

Anti-Social Behaviour Housing Officers now provide case management on low and medium level ASB cases city-wide, as well as managing the most serious and complex cases. We have continued to take early and robust action to deal with ASB and work closely on each case with Sussex Police and other agencies. We have brought an end to situations of noise, public disturbance, harassment, threat, acts of nuisance and drug dealing throughout the city and secured the closure of three properties.

By providing a balance of support and enforcement, taking appropriate action and offering better support for victims and witnesses, we have improved resident satisfaction with how we deal with ASB from 39% to 84%, compared to 68% nationally. We have also increased turnover of cases and now deal with 28% more cases than the national average. At the same time, we have reduced the number of evictions by 40%.

We have worked with the residents' Anti-Social Behaviour Focus Group set up in May 2010 to deliver an action plan addressing a range of ASB issues. The representatives looked at how to improve communication and understanding about ASB, and develop trust in ways to successfully deal with it. They have also been working towards increasing tenant involvement.

We introduced improved service standards for victims and witnesses of ASB as part of our service pledge for anti-social behaviour developed and agreed with residents. These ensure that we provide a more intensive level of service for residents who are the most

"Before taking part, I had no prior knowledge whatsoever of the comprehensive framework of legislation designed to tackle anti-social behaviour, or the hard work and long hours allocated to every single case. Housing are strongly committed to ensuring that as far as possible their residents are able to live free from nuisance, annoyance, fear or distress."

Rita King, Anti-Social Behaviour Focus Group



vulnerable and at risk. We have appointed an ASB Housing Officer who has special responsibility for overseeing support for victims and witnesses.

How will we continue to improve?

We will carry on developing new and innovative ways to tackle anti-social behaviour.

We will continue to develop personalised support services for victims of anti-social behaviour.

We will continue to work with the ASB Focus Group to scrutinise our work and look at ways to improve our services.

Section 5

Value for money

How are we doing?

The new repairs partnership helped us save £2.5 million on our maintenance costs in 2010/11. Costs of responsive repairs, repairs to empty homes, gas servicing and other service contracts were cut from an average of £20.02 per rented property per week in 2009/10 to £15.99 in 2010/11. Leaseholders also benefit from the savings, with an average service charge for 2010/11 10% lower than the previous year and savings on administration and management as well as on repairs.

Our management costs for 2010/11 were £17.67 per rented home per week, higher than in 2009/10 mainly because of inflation and the Turning the Tide pilot, but lower than budgeted. Our costs are now average

compared to other councils, but we are working to reduce them further. We expect to save around £100,000 this year on office costs and bringing teams together to work more efficiently at the new Housing Centre.

The Housing Income Management Team achieved their highest collection rate ever in 2010/11, collecting 98.7% of rent due. The Former Tenant Arrears team collected £269,000 - 47% of rent owed by previous tenants - in 2010/11. We also improved the time taken to set up rent accounts for new tenants from five days to three days.

We implemented the leaseholder service charge collection strategy and collected 95%



“Value for money is a key issue for all leaseholders. The Leaseholder Action Group ensure that contractors are invited to the LAG meetings to inform and update on work to be carried out and are challenged when charges for proposed work are deemed excessive, with some positive outcomes.”

Linda Shaw, Leaseholders Action Group

of recoverable arrears, beating our target and performance in 2009/10. Benchmarking leaseholder services with eight other city councils has shown we have the second lowest staff costs per leasehold flat. The Mears partnership has resulted in much lower costs for work to which leaseholders contribute, and the council’s Clerks of Works and quantity surveyors help control and oversee costs.

We have completed the first three years of our Improvement Programme which has co-ordinated the service’s improvement work and projects. This has largely focused on developing the new repairs and improvement partnership and Housing Centre, but also included projects to improve customer service, tackle inequality and improve financial inclusion, among others. By taking a project management approach to our improvement work we have been able to complete our projects on time and achieve the expected benefits and financial savings. We reported our progress to HMCC.

We are moving ahead with the housing company set up by the council – Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes. We expect to start receiving payments from leasing 499

vacant properties to the company over a five year period this autumn. This includes homes currently empty because the council does not have funding for major repairs to bring them back into use. We will use these payments to help bring all council tenants’ homes up to the Decent Homes Standard. The company will also pay for the leased homes to be brought up to standard and the project’s set up costs, which have not been funded from the council housing budget.

“It’s exciting to be involved in such a worthwhile project which is going to benefit the tenants.”

Ann Ewings, Tenant Board Member, Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes



How did we meet the commitments in last year’s report?

We continued to involve residents in working to ensure that the services we provide meet your priorities, are high quality and at the right cost. Residents on the Partnership and Core Groups helped ensure the repairs partnership delivered within budget. The Leaseholders Action Group made sure our fire door strategy for leaseholders achieved clearer communication and more choice of lower cost options. Following tenant consultation, we are looking at upgrading existing front doors in sheltered schemes for fire safety instead of replacing them, saving around £300 per door.

The resident-led Laundry Facilities Working Group monitor the new contract for laundry facilities, which will save around £25,000 a year. A tenant representative suggested we install sensors so lights come on only when someone uses the laundry, saving electricity and CO2 emissions. We will install sensors at other suitable locations.

As a result of consultation with a tenant-led working group and the Sheltered Housing Action Group, we made our out-of-hours service for sheltered tenants more effective. The grounds maintenance review is securing better value for money and all sites are being redrawn electronically, to allow more accurate and transparent bills of quantities and charges to tenants and leaseholders.

With the resident-led Car Parks & Garages Working Group, we've worked to increase rental income. We introduced clamping at some sites and Penalty Charge Notices at others as a pilot scheme and a new licence agreement allowing empty garages to be used for storage where there are no waiting lists. Bringing management of St James House car park inhouse will save about £40,000 a year.

We are reviewing options for reporting to residents so you can see how well we provide value for money and compare our performance and costs to other landlords. These will be presented to the Tenant Compact Monitoring Group and then HMCC.

The average rent in 2010/11 was £66.55 per week.

How will we continue to improve?

We will continue to involve residents in monitoring that the repairs partnership and other contracts operate efficiently and provide value for money.

We will deliver services more efficiently and cost effectively by making better use of our buildings, streamlining our processes and making other organisational changes.

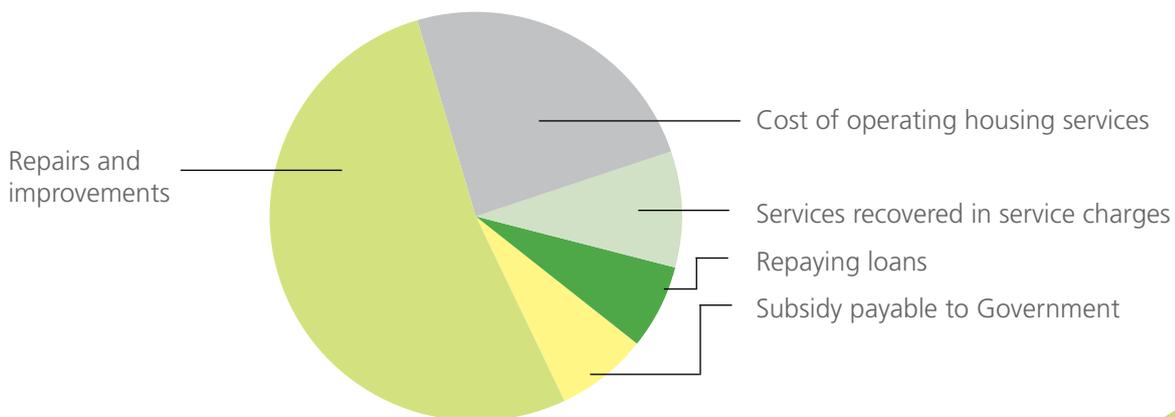
We will launch the next phase of our Improvement Programme and carry on taking a co-ordinated project management approach, involving residents in this work.

We will review our licence agreements to ensure we can get garages and car parking spaces back if a resident moves out of the area and re-let to local residents.

"Moving forward with energy efficiency would be a goal of mine."

Resident suggestion for this annual report

How we spent tenants' rents and service charges in 2010/11



Please let us know what you think of this annual report and what you would like in a future year's report.

Send your comments via our website www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing, by email to the Community Participation Team on cpt@brighton-hove.gov.uk, through your housing office or by post to **Carol Jenkins, Housing Stock Review Manager, Kings House, Grand Avenue, Hove BN3 2SR.**

Thank you.

Translation? Tick this box and take to any council office.

- ترجمة؟ ضع علامة في المربع وخذها إلى مكتب البلدية. Arabic
- অনুবাদ? বক্সে টিক চিহ্ন দিয়ে কাউন্সিল অফিসে নিয়ে যান। Bengali
- 需要翻譯? 請在這方格內加別, 並送回任何市議會的辦事處。Cantonese
- ترجمه؟ لطفاً این مربع را علامتگذاری نموده و آن را به هر یک از دفاتر شهرداری ارائه نمایید. Farsi
- Traduction? Veuillez cocher la case et apporter au council. French
- 需要翻译? 请在这方格内划勾, 并送回任何市议会的办事处。Mandarin
- Tłumaczenie? Zaznacz to okienko i zwróć do któregoś z biura samorządu lokalnego (council office). Polish
- Tradução? Coloque um visto na quadrícula e leve a uma qualquer repartição de poder local (council office). Portuguese
- Tercümesi için kareyi işaretleyiniz ve bir semt belediye bürosuna veriniz Turkish
- other (please state)

This can also be made available in large print, Braille, or on CD or audio tape

Housing & Social Inclusion
Brighton & Hove City Council
Kings House
Grand Avenue
Hove BN3 2SR



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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