





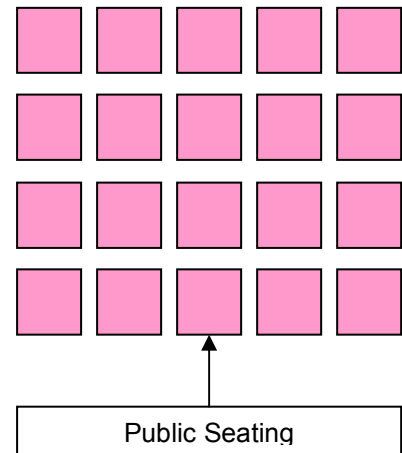
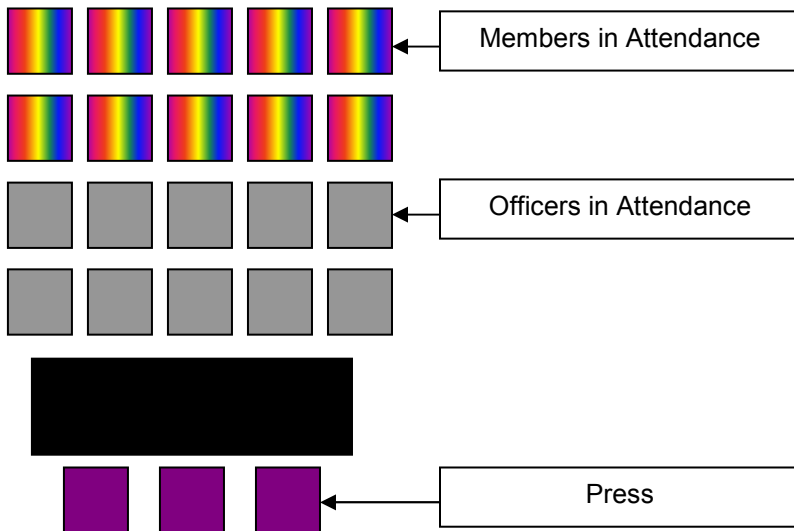
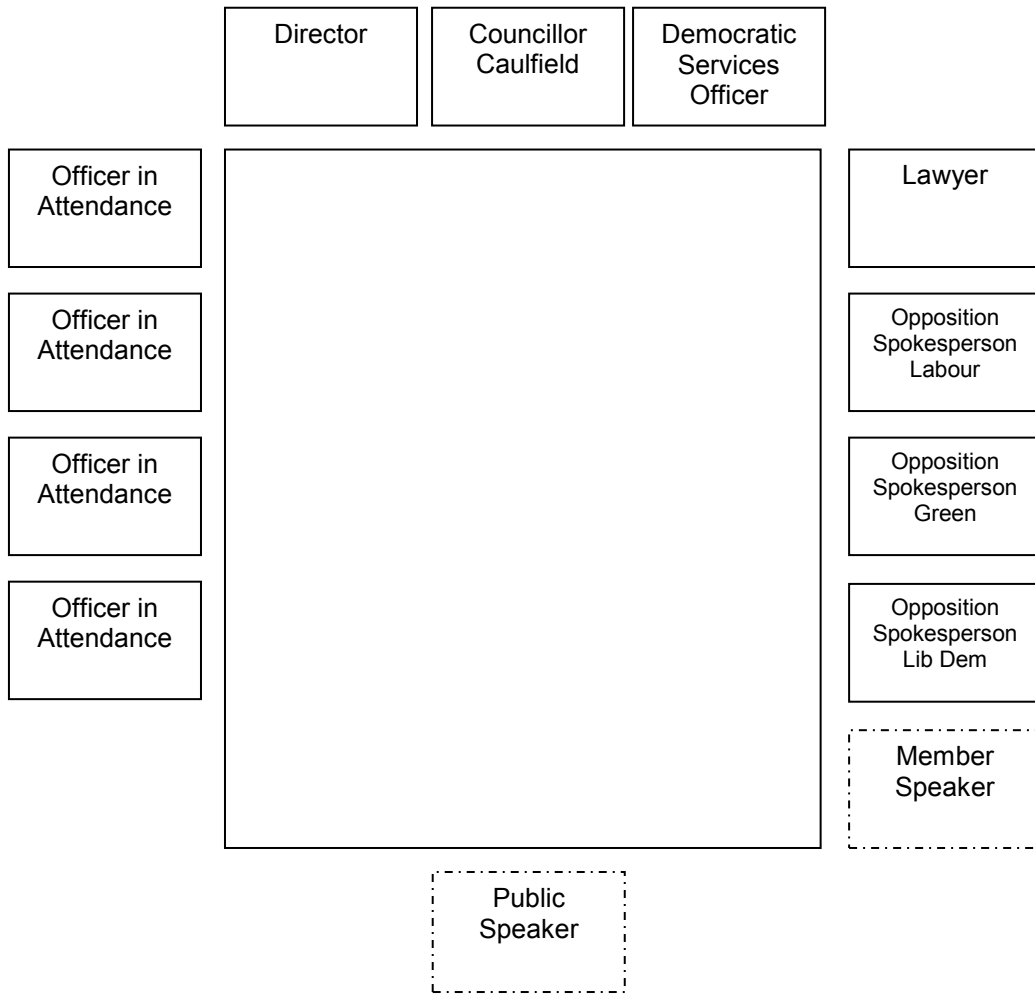
Brighton & Hove
City Council

Cabinet Member Meeting

Title:	Housing Cabinet Member Meeting
Date:	22 March 2011
Time:	4.00pm
Venue	Council Chamber, Hove Town Hall
Members:	Councillor: Caulfield (Cabinet Member)
Contact:	Caroline De Marco Democratic Services Officer 01273 291063 caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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Democratic Services: Meeting Layout



AGENDA

112. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

- (a) Declarations of Interest by all Members present of any personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Members regard the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
- (b) Exclusion of Press and Public - To consider whether, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, the press and public should be excluded from the meeting when any of the following items are under consideration.

NOTE: Any item appearing in Part 2 of the Agenda states in its heading either that it is confidential or the category under which the information disclosed in the report is exempt from disclosure and therefore not available to the public.

A list and description of the categories of exempt information is available for public inspection at Brighton and Hove Town Halls.

113. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

1 - 10

Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 February 2011 (copy attached).

114. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

115. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- (a) Items reserved by the Cabinet Member
- (b) Items reserved by the Opposition Spokespersons
- (c) Items reserved by Members, with the agreement of the Cabinet Member.

NOTE: Public Questions, Written Questions from Councillors, Petitions, Deputations, Letters from Councillors and Notices of Motion will be reserved automatically.

116. PETITIONS

No petitions have been received by the date of publication.

117. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

(The closing date for receipt of public questions is 12 noon on 15 March 2011)

No public questions have been received by the date of publication.

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

118. DEPUTATIONS

(The closing date for receipt of deputations is 12 noon on 15 March 2011)

No deputations have been received by the date of publication.

119. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

No letters have been received.

120. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

No written questions have been received.

121. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

No Notices of Motion have been received by the date of publication.

122. MINUTES OF THE ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 11 - 18

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2011 (copy attached).

123. SERVICE PLEDGES FOR TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS IN COUNCIL MANAGED HOUSING 19 - 52

Report of Strategic Director Place (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Sam Smith Tel: 01273 291383
Ward Affected: All Wards

124. ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW 53 - 138

Report of the Lead Commissioner Housing (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Sylvia Peckham, Verity Walker Tel: 293318, Tel: 01273 293130
Ward Affected: All Wards

125. BRIGHTON AND HOVE LANDLORD SOLUTIONS 139 - 144

Report of Lead Commissioner Housing (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Sylvia Peckham Tel: 293318
Ward Affected: All Wards

126. OUT OF HOURS SHELTERED SERVICE 145 - 152

Report of Head of Housing & Social Inclusion (copy attached).

Contact Officer: Peter Huntbach Tel: 01273 293248
Ward Affected: East Brighton; Goldsmid;
Hangleton & Knoll;
Hanover & Elm Grove;
Hollingdean & Stanmer;
Moulsecoomb &

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

*Bevendean; North
Portslade; Patcham;
Queen's Park; South
Portslade; St Peter's &
North Laine; Westbourne;
Wish*

127. THE PROVISION OF LOFT CONVERSIONS AND EXTENSIONS TO ASSIST OVERCROWDED COUNCIL TENANTS **153 - 178**

Report of Strategic Director Place (copy attached).

*Contact Officer: David Rook Tel: 29-4639
Ward Affected: All Wards*

128. HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY INVESTMENT OPTIONS **179 - 188**

Report of Lead Commissioner Housing (copy attached).

*Contact Officer: Martin Reid Tel: 29-3321
Ward Affected: All Wards*

PART TWO

129. PART TWO MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING **189 - 190**

Part Two minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2011 – Exempt Category 3 (copy circulated to Members only).

The City Council actively welcomes members of the public and the press to attend its meetings and holds as many of its meetings as possible in public. Provision is also made on the agendas for public questions to committees and details of how questions can be raised can be found on the website and/or on agendas for the meetings.

The closing date for receipt of public questions and deputations for the next meeting is 12 noon on the fifth working day before the meeting.

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Meeting papers can be provided, on request, in large print, in Braille, on audio tape or on disc, or translated into any other language as requested.

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact Caroline De Marco, (01273 291063, email caroline.demarco@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Date of Publication - Monday, 14 March 2011

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

4.00pm 16 FEBRUARY 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillor Caulfield (Cabinet Member)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simpson (Opposition Spokesperson)

Other Members present: Councillor Mitchell attended for Item 99.

PART ONE

95. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

95(a) Declarations of Interests

95.1 There were none.

95(b) Exclusion of Press and Public

95.2 In accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 ("the Act"), the Cabinet Member considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during an item of business on the grounds that it was likely, in view of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the press and public were present during that item, there would be disclosure to them of confidential information (as defined in section 100A(3) of the Act) or exempt information (as defined in section 100I(1) of the Act).

95.3 **RESOLVED** - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Items 110 onwards.

96. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

96.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting held on 5 January be agreed and signed by the Cabinet Member.

97. CABINET MEMBER'S COMMUNICATIONS

Report withdrawn from the agenda

- 97.1 The Cabinet Member reported that Item 107 – Permission for Pedestrian Access across the Plot of Land Behind 95 The Ridgway from Kipling Avenue, Brighton, had been withdrawn at the request of the Leader of the Council who wanted to review the proposal.

Flexible Tenancies

- 97.2 The Cabinet Member reported that the Government had announced that there was going to be a review of tenancies with the introduction of flexible tenancies. The Cabinet Member confirmed that flexible tenancies would not be introduced in Brighton & Hove.

Council Housing at Ainsworth House site update

- 97.3 The Cabinet Member reported that an application for this site would be considered at the Planning Committee in April 2011.

Local Delivery Vehicle

- 97.4 The Cabinet Member reported that the council were currently working with tenants on the creation of the LDV to bring in an additional £30m investment to meet the council's housing objectives. The council was currently considering investment offers from two banks. Councillor Simpson declared a personal interest in this matter as she was a Board Member of the Brighton and Hove Seaside Community Homes (the Local Delivery Vehicle).

Local Housing Letting Agency

- 97.5 The Cabinet Member reported that the council was working with the university to introduce a Social Housing Letting Agency. The Head of Housing Strategy and Development would be submitting a report to a future meeting.
- 97.6 Councillor Simpson mentioned that at the Scrutiny Panel on Letting Agents, it had been reported that the council were considering supporting an initiative of Brighton Housing Trust to set up a social letting agency. Councillor Simpson asked if this proposal was a different letting agency. The Cabinet Member replied that this proposal was specifically to meet the need of university student housing.

98. ITEMS RESERVED FOR DISCUSSION

- 98.1 **RESOLVED** – That all items be reserved for discussion.

99. PETITIONS**99(i) Petition – Request to an extension to the car park at Southease, Whitehawk Road**

- 99.1 Councillor Turton had submitted a petition presented at Council on 16 December 2010 and signed by 24 people requesting an extension to the car park at Southease, Whitehawk Road.
- 99.2 Councillor Mitchell presented the petition on behalf of Councillor Turton who was unable to attend the meeting. She stressed that the car park was very small with only 4 to 6 spaces. She requested a feasibility study to see if more spaces could be created.
- 99.3 The Cabinet Member stated that Southease was a purpose built block containing 24 dwellings. The block was constructed around 1970, with car parking provision limited to small lay-bys off Whitehawk Road. The Council recognised that demand for parking had grown since the flats were built, as car ownership levels amongst residents had increased.
- 99.4 The housing asset management team had been to inspect the site and had found that there was not an immediately obvious solution to providing additional parking spaces at Southease. This was because of the physical restrictions of available space, and its close proximity to the busy Whitehawk Road, and an adjacent junction. Any planning application for additional car parking would need to be able to overcome these physical and traffic management issues, to be able to gain planning permission.
- 99.5 The asset management team had therefore recommended that a specialist in this field was commissioned to undertake a feasibility and options study, which would establish what could be achieved for the site, given the location.
- 99.6 It had been suggested to the residents that they apply to the Estate Development Budget (EDB) for funding to commission a specialist feasibility study. It was understood that the Community Participation Officer was supporting the chair of Southease Residents Association and the committee member that initiated the petition (David Hall) with preparing their EDB bid.
- 99.7 In addition this matter had been discussed at the Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel meeting and the Head of Housing and Social Inclusion had suggested a meeting with the tenants and with the Assistant Director, Cityclean and Cityparks, to discuss parking. Local councillors could be involved as well.
- 99.8 The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion reported that one of the actions from the Brighton East Area Housing Management Panel was to hold a meeting with appropriate managers and to include the chair of Southease in that meeting.
- 99.9 Councillor Mitchell mentioned that there was a traffic amendment order in relation to Manor Hill. She suggested that officers might wish to look at this matter in relation to the traffic order. Residents were asking if additional parking could be included in their curtilage where bushes were planted at present. This could be carried out under the EDB bid.

99.10 **RESOLVED** – That the petition be noted.

93(ii) Petition – To repair lift at Viscaria, Donald Hall Road, Brighton

- 93.4 Mr John Ramage had submitted a petition signed by 22 people urging the council leaders to fix the lift at Viscaria, Donald Hall Road to enable residents independence.
- 93.5 Mr Ramage presented the petition and stated that the lift had been out action for weeks. He asked why the council could not get someone in the UK to manufacture parts. Mr Ramage stated that this situation could not continue when there were elderly and disabled people living in the flats.
- 93.6 Mr Ramage expressed concern that a note of one paragraph had been delivered to tenants in Viscaria from the Housing Manager which had suggested residents should move out of the block until the lift was repaired. This was not the right response.
- 93.7 The Cabinet Member thanked Mr Ramage for his petition. She stressed that a number of blocks were old and lift parts sometimes needed to be manufactured or imported. In this case a new drive unit was required. The Cabinet Member agreed that it was unacceptable that this was happening but stressed that housing officers were looking after elderly and vulnerable residents. A decision had been made to procure a lift replacement programme. A report on the first part of that programme was on the agenda of today's meeting.
- 93.8 The Cabinet Member said she would like to see a copy of the note that was sent to residents. When lifts failed housing officers did try and contact residents to offer help with shopping and helping people get to hospital appointments.
- 93.9 Mr Ramage asked why there had been a breakdown when there had been a lift refurbishment programme 5 years ago. The Cabinet Member replied that the current programme would be a whole replacement programme. The lifts needed to be replaced to meet today's standards. There needed to be consistency in the lifts installed across the city. Hopefully, with the procurement process there would be a warranty.
- 93.10 Councillor Simpson asked if the programme was established already over the 9 year period. She also asked on what basis the prioritisation programme was carried out. The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion replied that the council had an initial programme for all 99 lifts. This programme was subject to change and there would be a prioritisation process.
- 93.11 Councillor Simpson was pleased to hear that breakdown as well as age would be taken into consideration. It was unsatisfactory for elderly and vulnerable residents to be left isolated for a long period. There seemed to be more instances of breakdowns. The lift replacement programme should be rolled forward.
- 93.12 The Cabinet Member stated that there were more lift breakdowns due to the age of blocks. Blocks that have two lifts would have less of a priority than blocks with one lift. She stressed that when lifts broke down there needed to be a clear line of communication, so that residents could let officers know if they required help.

93.13 Mr Ramage stated that residents needed to be kept informed by letter. Residents should be asked if they needed help, and told how long the lift was likely to be out of action.

93.14 **RESOLVED** – That the petition be noted.

100. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

100.1 There were none.

101. DEPUTATIONS

101.1 There were none.

102. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

102.1 There were none.

103. WRITTEN QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

103.1 There were none.

104. NOTICES OF MOTIONS

104.1 There were none.

105. MINUTES OF THE HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

105.1 The Cabinet Member considered the minutes of the Housing Management Consultative Committee meetings held on the 13 December 2010 and 24 January 2011.

105.2 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes be noted.

106. DCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT ANNUAL EXPENDITURE AND ALLOCATION

106.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Lead Commissioner Housing, which set out the performance outcomes from the 2010/11 grant allocation for services and initiatives as set out in Appendix A. Individual proposed financial settlements for current and future work were detailed in Appendix B of the report (on part 2 of the agenda). In the proposals to maintain funding for current services, no inflation increase had been built into the allocation, which represented one way in which the local authority could aim to deliver further value for money from homelessness services currently working together in the city.

106.2 The Single Homelessness, QA & Risk Manager reported that the DCLG had acknowledged the innovative work of the council and had increased the Homelessness Prevention Grant by 52%. This level of grant was guaranteed for the next two years, and was likely to be set at a similar level for 2013/14 and 2014/15.

- 106.3 The Cabinet Member asked for her thanks to be passed on to all the staff in the team for the work being carried out. She stated that other local authorities were asking how Brighton & Hove were able to achieve this work, and St Mungo's had highlighted the work of the team. The Cabinet Member was pleased that there had been some indication of funding for the next few years, which would enable long term planning. Although the funding was not a huge pot of money it would make a significant difference. She was pleased that there would be enough funding available for the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol this year.
- 106.4 Councillor Simpson remarked that some changes to welfare benefits would present challenges. She stated that it was sad that one growth area in funding was preventing homelessness. Councillor Simpson said that the perception among some people was that there were more rough sleepers over the last few months. She asked if there was any particular reason for this.
- 106.5 Councillor Simpson considered the implementation of the prevention approach to homelessness was good and was glad the council was able to share experience elsewhere. She noted that some funding was being used to improve access to the private rented sector and asked for more detail. She referred to the Scrutiny Panel on Letting Agents which met 10 February and asked if the initiative would address issues discussed by the Panel.
- 106.6 The Single Homelessness, QA & Risk Manager reported that the figures from CRI showed no big increase in rough sleeping with the people they were working with. The summer months generated more rough sleepers in the city. Numbers over the last three years had stayed roughly the same. People were now spending less time on the street. The work being carried out by CRI was more effective and faster. With regard to using funding for access to the private rented sector, there were a number of current access schemes. There was work being carried out to prepare people for private rented accommodation. There were a number of projects and it was important to ensure that there was no duplication. The private rented sector strategy would be co-ordinated. The aim was to develop partnerships and improve landlords' understanding of what the council could offer them when people on housing benefit were presented.
- 106.7 The Cabinet Member stressed that an increase of funding would not mean an increase in homelessness. A core group of people in the homelessness sector were in a vicious circle. These people needed more intervention and the increase in funding would help them move on.
- 106.8 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That the progress and outcomes of the homelessness strategies and commissioned services through the 2010/11 Homelessness Grant funding as set out in the report and Appendix A, be noted.
 - (2) That the carry over of any identified underspend from the 2010/11 budget to the Homelessness Prevention Grant budget 2011/12 be approved.
 - (3) That the recommended allocation of the confirmed 2011/12 and 2012/13 Homelessness Prevention Grant funds be approved, as set out in Appendix A, and Appendix B which is presented in Part 2 of the meeting.

- (4) That it be agreed that subject to confirmation of the DCLG grant funding for 2013/14 and 2014/15, the recommended allocation of funds in 2.3 can be extended for a further two years as detailed in Appendix B to the report.

107. PERMISSION FOR PEDESTRIAN ACCESS FOR THE PLOT OF LAND BEHIND 95 THE RIDGEWAY FROM KIPLING AVENUE, BRIGHTON

- 107.1 The Cabinet Member reported that this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

108. SOCIAL INCLUSION PILOT - EVALUATION/FINAL REPORT

- 108.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place which explained that the draft Social Exclusion Strategy – “Turning the Tide” outlined the aims and objectives to address anti-social behaviour, intergenerational social exclusion and quality of life experience for residents in social housing living in areas of multiple deprivation in Brighton & Hove. The strategy was a work in progress, currently at the second draft stage. Comments/feedback from key stakeholders, partners and council tenants and leaseholders would be sought before presenting a final draft to Cabinet for approval/agreement in June 2011.
- 108.2 A detailed report on achievements, performance and outcomes was attached as appendix 1 of the report. The report had been discussed at the Housing Management Consultative Committee held on 24 January 2011 and members had recommended that the citywide roll out of the strategy be approved by the Cabinet Member.
- 108.3 The Cabinet Member reported that there had been a good debate at the Housing Management Consultative Committee. Most tenants at the Selsfield Drive Housing Office had seen a massive difference as a result of the pilot strategy, and she understood officers preferred this model of working.
- 108.4 Councillor Simpson agreed it was a very successful pilot. The challenge would be rolling it out across the city without diluting it too much. Councillor Simpson was concerned about financial inclusion and the possible lack of opportunity of working with other services and organisations and making referrals. Debt counselling for example was being reduced in the city. She asked if anything was being done to address these issues. Councillor Simpson also raised the issue of noise nuisance. She asked if there could be a report on this issue. Noise in high rise blocks could be due to structural problems as much as anti-social behaviour.
- 108.5 The Cabinet Member agreed that a report on noise problems could be brought to the Housing Management Consultative Committee. An officer from Environmental Health could be invited to attend. The Cabinet Member stated that some noise problems could be caused by having students living next door to tenants, or due to structural problems.
- 108.6 The Social Inclusion Manager reported that figures on every aspect of anti-social behaviour were tracked on a monthly basis. Officers could analyse the figures on noise nuisance as anti-social behaviour. Meanwhile, work was being carried out to ensure early intervention to deal with the matter of financial inclusion. Staff were being trained to advise people on what help they could receive. There was a need to be pro-

active with regard to early intervention, and a need to ensure that there was no increase in loan sharking.

- 108.7 The Lead Commissioner, Housing stressed the importance of people claiming the benefits to which they were entitled. There were large numbers of people who should be claiming Disability Living Allowance. The biggest challenge was reaching the most vulnerable clients.
- 108.8 The Social Inclusion Manager stated that officers could use advanced tenancy checks as an opportunity of ensuring tenants were maximising benefit take-up.
- 108.9 The Cabinet Member stated that there would be some areas of the city where the roll out of the strategy would not replicate what had been carried out in the pilot. There was a need to target the strategy in a way that was appropriate to the particular area.
- 108.10 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decision:
- (1) That the achievements, outcomes and performance of the Social Inclusion Pilot be noted
 - (2) That the citywide rollout of the Strategy be approved.

109. AWARD OF CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF LIFTS AT ESSEX PLACE, TYSON PLACE & ST JOHN'S MOUNT

- 109.1 The Cabinet Member considered a report of the Strategic Director Place, which sought the approval to award and enter into a contract with a single contractor to supply and install 6 passenger lifts, within 3 separate tenanted high rise blocks. The report detailed the process undertaken, the outcome of the procurement process and sought authority to enter into this contract.
- 109.2 The Cabinet Member stressed the importance of proceeding with this contract as there was an urgent need to replace the lifts in the three blocks. However, the Cabinet Member was concerned about the cost to leaseholders, especially those who were retired or on low incomes. The costs would range from £4,000 for Essex Place to £7000 for St Johns Mount and Tyson Place. She had asked for a report to be submitted to the Housing Management Consultative Committee to look at options to help leaseholders finance some of these costs.
- 109.3 Councillor Simpson commented that the sums required would be alarming for leaseholders.
- 109.4 **RESOLVED** – Having considered the information and the reasons set out in the report, the Cabinet Member made the following decisions:
- (1) That the selection of Liftec Lift Ltd to supply and install six passenger lifts within 3 separate tenanted high rise blocks be approved.
 - (2) That the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion be authorised to take all steps necessary or incidental to the award and completion of the contract with Liftec Lift Ltd and so enable the supply and installation of the lifts.

Part 2 Summary

110. APPENDIX B - DCLG HOMELESSNESS GRANT ANNUAL EXPENDITURE AND ALLOCATION - EXEMPT CATEGORY 3

110.1 The Cabinet Member considered Appendix B to item 106. The report detailed the individual proposed financial settlements for current and future work.

110.2 **RESOLVED** – That Appendix B to item 106 be noted.

111. PART TWO MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

111.1 The Cabinet Member noted the Part Two minutes of the meeting held on 5 January 2011.

111.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Part Two minutes be approved and signed by the Cabinet Member.

The meeting concluded at 5.20pm

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ADULT SOCIAL CARE & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4.00PM 6 JANUARY 2011

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Meadows (Chairman); Wrighton (Deputy Chairman), Allen, Davey, Janio, Older, Barnett and A Norman

Co-opted Members: Steve Lawless, LINK

PART ONE

41. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

41A Declaration of Substitutes

41.1 Councillor Dawn Barnett was substitute for Councillor Brian Pidgeon. Councillor Ann Norman was substitute for Councillor Ted Kemble.

41B Declarations of Interest

41.2 There were none

41C Declarations of Party Whip

41.3 There were none

41D Exclusion of Press and Public

41.4 In accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, it was considered whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of any items contained in the agenda, having regard to the nature of the business to be transacted and the nature of the proceedings and the likelihood as to whether, if members of the press and public were present, there would be disclosure to them of confidential or exempt information as defined in section 100I (1) of the said Act.

41.5 RESOLVED – that the press and public be not excluded from the meeting.

42. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

42.1 These were approved.

43. CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

43.1 The Chair welcomed Councillor Ian Davey to the committee; this was his first meeting.

44. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

44.1 There were none.

45. LETTERS FROM COUNCILLORS

45.1 There were none.

46. NOTICES OF MOTIONS REFERRED FROM COUNCIL

46.1 There were none.

47. SCRUTINY OF BUDGET STRATEGIES

Housing Revenue Account

47.1 Nick Hibberd, Head of Service, Housing & Social Inclusion , presented the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) element of the Budget Strategy papers and responded to councillors' questions.

Mr Hibberd explained that the council was still waiting for the final confirmation of the HRA subsidy determination from central Government. The budget strategy being discussed today reflected the current housing subsidy system; a new system of self-financing was due to come into force from April 2012 which would mean that the council could keep all of its housing revenue.

The service was planning to make savings by reducing management unit costs. Investment proposals are focused upon the Turning the Tide initiative, and maximising revenue resources in order to invest in decent homes, renewable energy and house building.

47.2 In response to a query about the £130,000 employee pension savings in the Property and Investment section on page 33 of the report, Mr Hibberd said that this was a saving in the pension liability cost estimation made at the time of the TUPE transfer of staff to Mears. He confirmed that all of the staff had been transferred on full Local Government pension arrangements.

47.3 In response to a question about the current situation with the Local Delivery Vehicle (LDV), Mr Hibberd confirmed that Cabinet had approved a report in November 2010 giving officers permission to work with the LDV to seek funding, and this was

proceeding. In addition, officers were continuing discussions with the CLG regarding consent..

- 47.4 Members asked why the leaseholder charges mentioned on page 32 appeared to be £100,000 higher than the actual charges.

Mr Hibberd clarified the strategy include an estimated reduction in the income budget for leaseholder service charges, due to the budget being set a greater level than the actual charges

- 47.5 Members asked for more information about the Turning the Tide initiatives, which was a programme to improve the lives of residents in the city to tackle issues such as unemployment and anti-social behaviour.

Mr Hibberd said that the pilot interventions had been successful and were due to be introduced on a citywide basis where appropriate. There had been some local initiatives including Rate Your Estate.

- 47.6 In response to a query about possible impacts on frontline staff due to any budget reduction, Mr Hibberd said that he was not anticipating any significant impact on staff. In future, the service may work with staff to try and deliver services in a different way, but it would not significantly affect the numbers of staff.

On page 44 of the report, there was more information about the staffing implications of the Customer Access Review. The review was intended to streamline customer access arrangements to housing management services, co-locating some back office functions and reducing Housing Officer time spent on administration. Mr Hibberd explained that the review work was due to be completed in October 2011, at which point there would be more concrete information about staffing proposals.

- 47.7 Members asked whether it was possible to borrow now against the potentially increased 2012-13 Housing Revenue Account money, in light of the proposals in the Localism Bill to allow authorities to keep all of their housing revenue. Mr Hibberd said that as the Localism Bill was not statute yet, it would not be possible to do this.

- 47.8 Members asked whether any planning and budgeting had been made for the impact of cold weather and contingency plans.

Mr Hibberd said that the budgets had seasonal profiles to reflect trends in service demand. This was particularly important for Repairs, who always had a spike in demand in winter months. Housing Management had business continuity plans, which had worked well to date, particularly in the recent snow spells. Extra grit bins had been installed in larger estates as well as the gritting service provided by the highways service.

Housing Strategy Budget

- 47.9 Martin Reid, Head of Housing Strategy and Development, and Narinder Sundar, Commissioning Manager, Supporting People presented the Housing Strategy element of the Budget Strategy papers and responded to councillors' questions.

Key elements to the budget strategy included renegotiating provider contracts for temporary accommodation, and joint commissioning of some supported housing. Housing Strategy did provide some hostel accommodation but was much more often a commissioner of services.

47.10 Members asked for clarification of the homelessness grant amount referred to on page 24 of the report. Mr Reid said that the council had retained the same level of homelessness grant as last year with indications that this may rise in the future.

47.11 Members said that they were concerned that the drive to re-commission and streamline services referred to on page 23 would have a negative impact on smaller third sector providers.

Mr Reid said that this should not be the case; it was important to retain a mixed economy of providers for the Supporting People programme. It was necessary to look at the economies of scale and also to help support small providers.

Ms Sundar said that they were very keen to protect small specialist providers; it was important to provide a range of services for all client groups. They had been working with their Supporting People providers throughout 2010, reviewing their processes through a number of mechanisms including stakeholder groups. The new Supporting People strategy would be in place from April 2011.

47.12 Members raised queries about potential work duplication with the forthcoming Health White Paper, in which local areas would be given resources to improve housing and improve poor health.

Mr Reid assured the committee that Housing Strategy would work with colleagues in Adult Social Care and in Health in order to avoid duplication and coordinate the best use of money. However it should be noted that the Supporting People programme was a specialist one with a focus on housing and homelessness in vulnerable people.

Adult Social Care budget scrutiny

47.13 Councillor Ken Norman, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, and Karin Divall, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, presented the Adult Social Care element of the Budget Strategy papers and responded to members' questions.

There had been increased pressures due to demographic growth and increased expectations of customers. Key strands to the budget strategy included the further roll out of personalisation, Value for Money initiatives and workforce efficiencies.

47.14 Members commented that that ringfencing around Learning Disabilities funding was disappearing; would services be affected?

Ms Divall confirmed that it was the intention that efficiencies would be made in Learning Disabilities through integration of the service within Adult Social Care and with personalisation. Efficiencies would be made around reablement, the use of technology etc. There were no plans to reduce services or funding.

- 47.15 Members asked whether it was the case that everybody would be moved onto Personal Budgets or whether there was any scope for discretion. How were savings being made through personalisation?

Councillor Norman assured the committee that personal budgets were available for those who wanted them but that people would never be forced into using them, as not everybody would want to use them. It had been shown from experience that people using personal budgets were able to get lower prices for services than the local authority so savings were being made.

- 47.16 Members asked about the implications of some grants ending. Ms Divall said that some of the grants had been scheduled to end and provision had been made in those cases. In particular, in the case of the dementia grant, this had been used to run a time-limited project for carers from the BME community. The PCT had now committed to finding the funding for the project so the work would be sustained.

- 47.17 Members commented that personalisation seemed like a very positive story, with benefits for the customer, for the provider and for the local authority, leading to genuine choice for users. Councillor Norman said that it was about rearranging services in a more proportionate manner. The savings made by doing so would eliminate the need for cuts.

- 47.18 Members asked whether Councillor Norman thought that Intelligent Commissioning would help to make significant future savings; Councillor Norman said that he was unable to say at this stage what the outcome would be but he hoped that this would be the case. It might be better to direct this question toward the Director of Finance.

- 47.19 Members asked for more information about the Section 75 reviews.

Jane Simmons, Head of Commissioning and Partnerships, explained that there were three Section 75s in place in Brighton and Hove concerning joint working with a variety of health partners. The arrangements were working very well, but there had been some lack of clarification around contract requirements, roles and responsibilities and it was an opportune time to review and clarify working arrangements for everyone.

- 47.20 Members said that they welcomed the intention to continue building social capital as this had huge benefits for the city. However long-term gain was only possible with short term investment now; was this being planned?

Ms Simmons said that the council needed to complete a 'Prevention and Wellbeing' strategy which would show how the council could provide universal services. There was thinking around introducing community hubs to deliver some services. The Supporting People team also had some resources to help support social capital. The challenge was to bring the funding streams together in a coherent and meaningful way. Nevertheless it was recognised that developing social capital was a major challenge.

- 47.21 Members asked about the impact on the workforce with the planned rearrangement of services.

Ms Divall explained that it was about changing the way in which people worked. She gave the example of Access Point, which provided a proportionate and timely response to their callers and had dealt with the backlog of clients waiting for Occupational Therapy assessments. It was able to deal with 90% of cases at the point of contact, freeing up social workers to carry out the more involved and complex work. There was a similar situation in the case of reablement, where some concentrated work with the client at the outset freed up social worker time later on to focus on more demanding cases.

- 47.22 Some members queried how it was the case that there could be no additional service pressures with the removal of some significant grant funding. Councillor Norman assured them that this was the case and that personalisation and new ways of working such as Access Point had freed up considerable resources for other areas. He said that he believed that the service could continue to be provided within budget.
- 47.23 The committee thanked all of the officers for their work and thanked Councillor Norman for attending the scrutiny committee. Councillor Norman expressed his thanks for the officers' work too.
- 47.24 RESOLVED – That the Committee have noted and commented on the proposed budget strategies and that the minutes are sent to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission for their information.

48. LAA HALF-YEARLY UPDATE REPORT

- 48.1 Richard Miles, Performance Analyst, presented the report on the six-monthly progress of the LAA and answered questions from the committee.

Mr Miles advised members that there would no longer be a requirement to report on the LAA targets to central Government; instead, targets would be set and measured locally. Brighton and Hove was in the process of developing a city-specific partnership performance framework. They would be measuring against the outcomes and sub-outcomes in the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Performance Team was also in the process of producing a 'State of the City' report, updating on the Reducing Inequality Strategy and carrying out needs assessments where necessary.

The proposals for the new performance framework were due to go to the Strategic Leadership Board, to Cabinet, to the Public Service Board and the Local Strategic Partnership in May 2011. It would be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission at the same time.

- 48.2 Mr Miles said that in the report that had been brought to the scrutiny committee today, there were four red indicators. This had been the situation at the time of compiling the report but since then, two of the four indicators - the targets for quitting smoking and for bringing empty properties back into use - were back on track and it was hoped that they would reach their target by year end. The other two red indicators had been affected by the economic situation and were likely to remain unmet- these were the targets for families living in temporary accommodation and for new additional homes provided.

Three of the indicators were marked as grey, indicating that they did not have enough data to be measured at present. The Place Survey that had been intended to measure these had been cancelled so the information was unlikely to become available. With regard to the indicator for measuring street homelessness, the definitions had been altered and so the data was unavailable to compare like with like.

- 48.3 In response to members' questions about the implication of the removal of the performance reward grant, Mr Miles said that the total grant would have been relatively low in comparison to previous years, totalling approximately £2 million if all 35 of the targets had been met. The council had not anticipated getting any of the reward grants and had not included the money in any budget calculations.
- 48.4 Members queried the red status of the indicator for bringing empty properties back into use. Martin Reid, Head of Housing Strategy, confirmed that a lot of the work to bring the properties back into use happened in the second half of the year; this was the report for the first half of the year. The team was confident that it would meet the targets by the end of the year.
- 48.5 Members asked about the target for giving up smoking. There had been some concern at the Local Involvement Network (LINK) meetings that the approach was not inclusive and had focussed on helping middle class smokers to stop smoking whilst not providing the same support for people in more deprived parts of the city. Mr Miles said that he was aware that work was being carried out to help support specific target groups of smokers; he offered to circulate the list of target groups.

The Chair added that she was aware that some of the stop smoking services in Bevendean had closed previously, but that they were being reinstated. There were some issues about the service's opening times, as they operated in the daytime when the majority of people were at work, but it was hoped that these problems could be ironed out.

- 48.6 Members asked how Scrutiny could become involved in helping to shape the new local performance framework and contribute to the indicators that were set. Mr Miles said that the new framework was unlikely to look like the existing one, it would be less numerically-based and more concerned with the outcomes. It would also be more fluid than the present system as it would not be bound by the same three year legal framework.

The intentions had been to set the targets at the Public Service Board and at Cabinet level; Scrutiny had not been included in that process as it stood at present. Members agreed that they wanted to be involved; Mr Miles agreed to feed this back to his managers.

- 48.7 Members queried the target for building additional homes. There was a reference in the report to the Estates Masterplan; this had never been to Scrutiny and it was possible that ASCHOSC could help with the masterplan, suggesting alternative locations for properties etc. Members agreed that they would like the Estates Masterplan to come to committee for discussion.

48.8 RESOLVED – a): that enquiries would be made as to how scrutiny could become involved in setting the new performance framework; b) - that the Estates Masterplan would come to scrutiny; and c) that the LAA year end report would come to scrutiny in due course.

49. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO CABINET OR THE RELEVANT CABINET MEMBER MEETING

49.1 There were none.

50. ITEMS TO GO FORWARD TO COUNCIL

50.1 There were none.

The meeting concluded at 5.45pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

Housing Cabinet Member Meeting

Agenda Item 123

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Service Pledges for council tenants and leaseholders		
Date of Meeting:	22 March 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director Place		
Contact Officer:	Name: Sam Smith	Tel:	29-1383
	E-mail: sam.smith@brighton-hove.gov.uk		
Key Decision:	Yes	Forward Plan No - HSG 20788:	
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the development of service pledges with residents and includes the service pledges that have been agreed with residents in the appendices. The service pledges meet the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) requirement to produce local service offers by 1st of April 2011, which is still a requirement of all council's who are landlords.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Cabinet Member approves the Service Pledges attached in appendices 1, 2 and 3.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The approach for developing service pledges was agreed with the Housing Management Consultative Committee in June 2010 and an update report went to the January meeting. We have engaged a wide range of residents in developing the pledges using community events, questionnaires and resident groups to find out what matters most and what standards should be set. The aim of the pledges is to give clear guidance on what tenants and leaseholders can expect from us and what we will do if we fail to meet our commitments. The service pledges will replace our current service charters.
- 3.2 We invited all tenants and leaseholders to four 'Tell us what you think!' consultation events held at varying times and at different venues across the city in October and November 2010. These events were publicised in Homing In, on posters distributed to all tenant and resident associations and at housing offices. Residents who attended were asked about their priorities for the range of services that we deliver and to give us their ideas and opinions by talking to staff, using a video diary and writing down their ideas on how we can improve our services.

- 3.3 Questionnaires were sent to tenants and leaseholders in December 2010 to find out what they think of our current standards and improvements that could be made. Questionnaires were sent to samples from the following groups:
- People who have expressed an interest in a specific service area from our involvement database (e.g. repairs or anti-social behaviour)
 - People who are on waiting lists (e.g. garages or sheltered housing)
 - People on resident working groups (e.g. the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group)
- 3.4 Posters and leaflets in housing offices publicised the questionnaires and they were made available at our offices, on our website and to any tenant or leaseholder who requested them. In total 676 questionnaires were returned. The findings were used along with residents' feedback from the consultation events to develop draft service pledges.
- 3.5 The pledges cover tenancy management, anti-social behaviour, leasehold management, repairs and maintenance, income management, the estates service, car parks and garages, sheltered housing and resident involvement. Each service pledge has been agreed with a resident group which considered the consultation findings, amended and agreed the service pledge, and identified the top three pledges for inclusion in the summary document. The following groups were involved in this process:
- Sheltered Housing Action Group
 - Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group
 - Asset Management Panel
 - Estate Service Monitoring Group
 - Anti-Social Behaviour Focus Group
 - Income Management Monitoring Group
 - Leaseholder Action Group
 - Garages & Car Parking Working Group
 - Tenancy Management Focus Group
 - Tenant Compact Monitoring Group
- 3.6 A summary service pledge has been created from the detailed service area pledges. This will be the main public document and aims to be easy to read and understand; giving residents an overview of what they can expect from housing management services at a glance. The summary pledge contains the top three service pledges that have been identified by each resident working group using the wider consultation findings. Some of the wording has been amended to make sure that the pledges avoids jargon, are consistent and in plain English. This summary pledge also gives an overview of how the council will report back to residents on our performance against the commitments and what residents can do if they feel we are not keeping to them. The summary pledge is attached in Appendix 1 and, once agreed, will be designed by the council's in-house communications team and launched in May 2011.

- 3.7 Each service area has produced their own pledge which details all the commitments residents can expect from them. These pledges also contain details of the key outcomes and performance measures that the commitments can be measured by and how residents are involved in running and improving the service. These pledges are attached in Appendix 2. The TSA also require councils to agree a local enhanced version of the Decent Homes Standard. This has been agreed locally as the Brighton & Hove Standard and was recently been refreshed with the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and Asset Management Panel (see Appendix 3).
- 3.8 The service pledges support the corporate objective of becoming a 'council the city deserves', which includes commitments to involve residents more in the improvement and monitoring of services, as well as looking to improve customer service across the organisation. The service pledges will help to ensure that the experience of customers using housing services is improved and that residents have clear commitments by which they can measure our performance. The service pledges are also helping to inform the development of the Housing & Social Inclusion Delivery Units Performance Compact. The pledges will be reviewed annually with Housing Management Consultative Committee.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 A wide range of consultation was carried out with residents on the development of the service pledges and is detailed in 3.1-3.7.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 The associated costs of the Service Pledges will be met within the existing Housing Revenue Account Revenue and Capital Budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen, Principal Accountant Date: 3 March 2011

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Section 204 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 allows the regulator, the TSA to require a registered provider such as the council to prepare an annual report assessing the provider's performance by reference to standards set by the regulator. One of the standards, the Tenant Involvement and empowerment standard requires providers to consult with the tenants on the desirability and scope of local offers in relation to services to meet the following TSA standards: Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, Home and Neighbourhood and Community. In providing opportunities for tenants to agree local offers by no later than 1 April 2011 they shall offer commitments on:

- local standards for performance
- how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants
- what happens if local offers are not met (including procedures of redress)

- arrangements for reviewing the local offers on a periodic basis
- 5.3 Failure to comply with the regulator's requirements without reasonable excuse is a criminal offence. The report outlines how the council has met its obligations under the Act. No individual's Human Rights Act rights are adversely affected by the report's recommendations.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley Date: 9 March 2011

Equalities Implications:

- 5.4 The development of local service offers have been undertaken in line with the TSA's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard, which requires registered providers to understand and respond to the diverse needs of tenants in meeting all of the standards, including in relation to the seven equality strands and tenants with additional support needs. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed on work to meet the TSA's requirements. Alternative formats and provision of translators was offered and provided for the questionnaires.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.5 The TSA standards promote the use of engagement and partnership with tenants to support sustainable communities. The local offers will help to ensure that services delivered in Brighton & Hove meet local needs and help to improve local communities and neighbourhoods.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.6 The service pledges include commitments on tackling anti-social behaviour and enforcing the tenancy agreement.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.7 There is a risk to the council if the service pledges are not agreed by 1 April 2011 as the council would be in breach of TSA statutory requirements. Where agreement cannot be reached on local offers, the TSA states it would encourage the landlord and tenants to seek independent mediation. The TSA states it wants co-regulation between landlords and tenants to work to resolve any issues: 'Only in exceptional circumstances (such as when the provider is not delivering services in line with the outcomes set out in the TSA standards and has failed to address this) and where it is reasonable and proportionate will the TSA consider more formal intervention'.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The TSA's regulatory framework continues to apply pending new legislation and it has committed to work closely with the Audit Commission.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 A number of approaches and options were considered for the development of local offers. This 'service pledge' approach and consultation strategy were supported at the June 2010 meeting of HMCC.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The development and agreement of local service offers by 1st April 2011 is a requirement of the TSA.
- 7.2 The Department of Communities and Local Government's review of social housing regulation in October 2010 recommended that the principle of co-regulation with tenants, of which 'local offers' are part, should be retained and enhanced. Local offers agreed between landlords and tenants should complement clear outcome-focused standards set by the regulator, with tenants providing ongoing scrutiny of the delivery of those offers and agreeing the format of performance information to enable them to do so. The review proposed a clearer role for tenants in scrutinising performance and greater freedom for landlords to deliver high quality services, with the regulator's attention focused only on serious failures.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Summary Service Pledge
2. Detailed service pledges
3. Brighton & Hove Standard

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. *The regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2010*
Tenant Services Authority, March 2010

Brighton & Hove City Council

Summary Local Service Pledge for council tenants and leaseholders

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.

We will meet the national standards all council landlords are required to meet. In addition we have worked with our residents to develop local service pledges for our services that meet your priorities. This document provides a summary of these and a detailed pledge is also available for each service.

We will:

- be easy to reach
- be clear and treat you with respect
- listen and act to get things done

Getting involved

We will:

- provide a wide range of opportunities for you to be involved in what we do and how we do it
- involve you in setting our standards and making sure we meet them

Looking after your home

We will:

- complete home improvement works to the Brighton & Hove Standard
- keep you informed of when works will be carried out and deliver them to agreed timescales
- make sure that all empty homes meet the locally agreed standard before they are let to new tenants

Looking after your neighbourhood

We will:

- make sure common areas and estates are cleaned and looked after
- carry out estate inspections with residents three times a year
- provide a budget for residents to decide how to spend on improvements to their blocks and estates

Dealing with anti-social behaviour

We will:

- not tolerate acts of anti-social behaviour
- take all reports of anti-social behaviour seriously, take action and keep you informed
- offer support to vulnerable people and those experiencing anti-social behaviour

Managing your tenancy

We will:

- provide information and support to new tenants to help them settle into their home
- help tenants to understand and comply with their tenancy agreement, and enforce it when necessary
- as well as other routine visits, we will visit tenants in their homes at least every three years to make sure that everything is okay

Living in sheltered housing

We will:

- provide each resident with a personalised support plan, co-ordinated with other services, to organise their appropriate care and support
- call each resident personally between 8.30 am and 12.00 noon (Monday to Friday) and the most vulnerable also at weekends to check they are okay
- provide at least one social activity per week to residents who want them

Paying your rent

We will:

- offer a range of ways for you to pay rent and other charges 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- provide an advice service for people with payment difficulties from 8.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Thursday and from 9am to 5pm on Friday
- fast track Housing Benefit claims for new tenants

Council leaseholders

We will:

- offer a range of payment options to make it easier for you to pay leaseholder charges
- ensure that service charge bills are sent in good time and clearly explain the charges
- carry out regular satisfaction surveys of all leaseholders to listen and respond to your feedback

Garages and car parking

We will:

- allocate car parking spaces and garages fairly and have a priority waiting list for the most vulnerable
- visit all sites to make sure they are clear of rubbish, safe and in good working order
- make sure that people who rent car parking spaces have access to them, and take enforcement action when necessary

Making sure we keep these pledges

We will measure our performance against these pledges and report this back to you so you can see that we are meeting our commitments, for example how we have dealt with anti-social behaviour and how quickly we complete different types of repairs. We will also feed back the findings from regular customer satisfaction surveys and resident 'mystery shopping' exercises.

We promise to share this information with you by:

- Reporting on performance in our annual report to tenants and leaseholders
- Articles in Homing-in magazine
- Regular reports to Housing Management Consultative Committee and Area Panels
- Including performance information in the housing pages of the council's website

Putting things right

Letting us know what we are doing well or if something goes wrong helps us to improve. Should we fail to meet any of these service pledges please let us know so we can apologise and do all that we can to put things right.

If you are still not happy you can make a complaint to the council by completing our online complaint form at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk, phoning Freephone **0500 291229** or writing to Standards & Complaints, Brighton & Hove City Council, King's House, Grand Avenue, Hove, BN3 2LS.

These service pledges have been developed with residents and will be reviewed and updated regularly. You can obtain a detailed pledge for each service area on the council's website (www.brighton-hove.gov.uk) or by contacting the service direct.

A. Looking after your home

The aim of the Property & Investment service is to repair, maintain and improve residents' homes, and to respond to repair requests and enquiries in a quick and helpful way.

Key service pledges

We will:

- complete home improvement works to the Brighton & Hove Standard
- keep you informed of when works will be carried out and deliver them to agreed timescales
- make sure that all empty homes meet the locally agreed standard before they are let to new tenants

Other pledges

We will:

- complete all reported repairs within the agreed time
- ensure all properties with a gas supply are serviced each year
- give residents choice over when works are carried out to their home
- test mains powered smoke alarms each year, where fitted
- carry out regular maintenance to lifts to reduce the number of breakdowns
- publicise the availability of our decorating and gardening schemes for older people and people with disabilities

How we will measure our performance against these commitments and report to you

- % of repairs completed 'right first time'
- % of responsive repairs passing post-inspection
- % of planned works passing post-inspection
- % of empty properties passing post-inspection
- % of responsive repairs completed in the agreed time
- % of planned installations completed within the agreed time
- % of properties with a gas safety certificate
- Average time to complete routine repairs
- Average energy efficiency rating of dwellings (based on SAP 2005)
- 88% of homes will meet the Decent Homes Standard by April 2012
- 95% of homes will meet the Decent Homes Standard by April 2013
- 100% of homes will meet the Decent Homes Standard by April 2014
- Customer satisfaction – eg % of residents satisfied with the speed and quality of their repairs

Our performance on these commitments will be reported to the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and Asset Management Panel, as well as quarterly reporting of the key pledges to Housing Management Consultative Committee.

We will regularly analyse our customer care and complaints feedback to identify any trends or concerns that residents have.

How we will involve residents

- Performance will be reported to and scrutinised by the Repairs & Maintenance Monitoring Group and Asset Management Panel.
- Residents are involved with regular Mystery Shopping exercises across the Property & Investment service and with our Partners.

B. Dealing with Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

The service aims to tackle and reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour within the city in order to improve the quality of life for residents.

Key service pledges

We will:

- not tolerate acts of anti-social behaviour
- take all reports of anti-social behaviour seriously, take action and keep you informed
- offer support to vulnerable people and those experiencing anti-social behaviour

Other pledges

We will:

- respond to initial reports of ASB within agreed target times
- Inform you of the name of the officer dealing with your case
- Take the lead and work with other agencies to deal with ASB
- let you know in writing when we have closed your reported case, why, and what to do if there are any more problems

How we will measure our performance against these commitments and report to you

- Number of new ASB cases reported
- Number of enforcement and support actions taken
- Number of closed ASB cases
- % of closed ASB cases that were resolved
- Customer satisfaction eg with speed of our contact following initial report of ASB, with communication and being kept up to date, and with the outcome

Our performance results will be included in Housing Management Consultative Committee reports, and summary results will be reported to residents through Homing In and via the council's website.

How we involve residents

We will involve residents through the ASB Focus Group.

C. Estates Service

The aim of the estate service is to make all estates cleaner, safer places to live and to improve the quality of life for all residents. To achieve this we carry out a range of activities, each with a set of standards about what you can expect us to do.

Key service pledges

We will:

- make sure common areas and estates are cleaned and looked after
- tackle fly-tipping on our estates
- help vulnerable tenants regain entry to their home if they become locked out

Other Service Pledges

We will:

- carry out weekly cleaning tasks in low rise blocks
- carry out monthly cleaning in the hallways and other communal areas of houses of multi occupancy
- carry out a range of daily, weekly and monthly tasks in high rise blocks of flats
- check all high rise blocks at weekends and respond to emergencies
- display cleaning standards in each block with a tick and time sheet to record cleaning done
- provide information about the disposal of bulk waste and take action against anyone known to be affecting the quality of their neighbourhood by leaving bulk rubbish in public areas
- repair door locks and handles within 24 hours
- remove offensive graffiti within 24 hours of becoming aware of it
- fit spy holes to doors for vulnerable households within 7 days of a request
- provide a dedicated Neighbourhood Response Team Officer or Sheltered Housing schemes.
- carry out minor adaptations to peoples homes to enable them live independently
- offer to change locks for tenants on payment of a charge
- adjust timers and sensors within 24 hours of a report

- clean light fittings when bulbs are changed
- when out in our neighbourhoods we will also look out for issues that need to be reported to other services, or other organisations - eg street lighting issues or criminal damage

How we will measure our performance against these commitments and report to you

- % passing quality inspections of our cleaning service
- % passing quality inspections of our minor repairs service
- Reduction in fly tipping which has to be removed from common areas
- Reduction in graffiti reported
- Customer satisfaction eg with cleanliness of the block and 'Rate Your Estate' satisfaction

Our performance results will be included in Housing Management Consultative Committee reports, and summary results will be reported to residents through Homing In and via the council's website.

How we involve residents

- Estates Service Monitoring Group is the key group to scrutinise performance in the Estates service
- Customer satisfaction monitoring and surveys
- Recording all informal complaints and giving feedback to the customer
- Estate inspections and quality monitoring

D. Car Parks & Garages Service

The Car Parks & Garages Team is responsible for renting out car parking spaces and garages on council housing land. The team also manage a parking enforcement contract, covering some of our sites and provided by Ethical Parking Management.

Key service pledges

We will:

- allocate car parking spaces and garages fairly and have a priority waiting list for the most vulnerable
- visit all sites to make sure they are clear of rubbish, safe and in good working order
- make sure that people who rent car parking spaces have access to them, and take enforcement action when necessary

Other Service Pledges

We will:

- investigate the possibility of introducing a unified license agreement

- investigate incidences of nuisance parking and take the appropriate action to make sure licencees can use their spaces
- respond to e-mail enquiries within 24 hours
- seek to maximise income by publicising the availability of spaces where there are no waiting lists

How we will measure our performance against these commitments and report to you

- Speed of re-letting vacated spaces or garages
- Speed of setting up new accounts
- % rent collected against rent due
- customer satisfaction

Our performance results will be included in Housing Management Consultative Committee reports, and summary results will be reported to residents through Homing In and via the council's website.

How we will involve residents

The Car Parks & Garages Working Group is the key group to scrutinise performance in the car parks and garages team.

E. Housing Income Management Service

The Income Management Service aims to maximise income for the Housing Revenue Account and tenants by giving high quality advice and support to tenants experiencing financial hardship; to minimise household evictions.

Key Service Pledges

We will:

- offer a range of ways for you to pay rent and other charges 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- provide an advice service for people with payment difficulties from 8.30am to 6.30pm Monday to Thursday and from 9am to 5pm on Friday
- fast track Housing Benefit claims for new tenants

Other Service Pledges

We will:

- recover recharges for damage caused to properties, within agreed procedures
- contact tenants as soon as they fall into arrears using a variety of methods including letter, telephone, email and text messages
- make sure tenants are aware of the potential consequences of non-payment of rent, which can include eviction
- only pursue court action where all other attempts at recovery have failed including letters, telephone contact and at least two home visits

- support a welfare benefit and money advice service for tenant.
- develop website access to a rent and financial advice site so tenants can access this information at any time
- recover any debts after a tenancy has ended
- carry out financial health checks for all new tenants
- work with other officers within Housing Management to ensure that financial health checks can be offered to all tenants
- work with a wide range of agencies and support workers to ensure that tenants in debt receive the best possible help
- send quarterly rent statements to all tenants

How we will measure our performance against these commitments and report to you

- % of rent collected as a proportion of the rent due each year
- % of tenants with more than 7 weeks rent arrears
- % of secure council tenants served a notice of Seeking Possession for rent arrears
- The number of tenants evicted because of rent arrears
- % of rechargeable repair debt collected

Our performance results will be included in the HMCC report and will be reported to the Housing Income Management Monitoring Group.

How we will involve residents

- The Housing Income Management Monitoring Group is the key group to scrutinise our performance; we will continue to meet with them quarterly
- We will respond to feedback from the Housing Income Management Monitoring Group and other residents' feedback e.g. mystery shopping, surveys etc.

F. Sheltered Service

The sheltered housing service aims to provide older people with a high quality of accommodation and support services, meeting a wide range of needs that enable older people to live independently and in comfort.

Key service pledges

We will:

- provide each resident with a personalised support plan, co-ordinated with other services, where necessary. The plan will be reviewed at least annually (and at regular intervals depending on the nature of the support need and the level of vulnerability). Priority will always be given to the most vulnerable who need more intensive care and support.

- offer to call each resident personally between 8.30 a.m. and 12.00 noon (Monday to Friday). Our weekend call service will be targeted at the most vulnerable.
- provide at least one social activity per week, where requested, in liaison with the tenants association or social club

Other Service Pledges

We will:

- listen and respond to the views of residents through a variety of different means (including customer satisfaction surveys, scheme meetings, tenant participation)
- provide a named on-site scheme manager (or a relief when they are away)
- provide access to a 24 hour emergency alarm service 365 days per year
- ensure that every new resident receives an induction to the service by their scheme manager when they first move in.
- provide every new resident with a sheltered housing 'Residents' Guide'
- supply an electric cooker and fridge in our sheltered homes, where required
- clean our sheltered schemes each week day (with a schedule of the cleaning displayed on the scheme notice board)
- clean communal windows every three months
- carry out regular health and safety checks, including an annual fire safety talk
- make available guest rooms in some sheltered schemes for the benefit of all sheltered residents
- have a special feature on what is happening in sheltered housing in each edition of Homing In
- assess an applicant's support needs when they apply for sheltered housing, and will provide help with bidding where an applicant needs this
- have a Local Letting Plan for sheltered housing, which prioritises tenants who wish to move within their own scheme.

How we will involve residents

- Sheltered Housing Action Group is the key group to scrutinise performance in the sheltered service
- Customer satisfaction surveys currently record feedback on support planning and social activities. This will be expanded to include the daily call service. CareLink Plus will conduct surveys of the weekend call service

G. Tenancy Management

The aim of the tenancy management service is to provide a fast and responsive service, dealing with your tenancy enquiries, ensuring that tenancies are well managed, and that neighbourhoods are well maintained.

Key service pledges

We will:

- provide you with advice on your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and our responsibilities as a landlord as well as ensuring that the tenancy conditions are understood and enforced where necessary
- carry out estate and block inspections every 3 months with residents and ward councillors to check on the condition of our neighbourhoods and identify any issues
- carry out tenancy visits to all our properties at least once every two years to find out how we can help you, ensure that the property is being looked after and check that the property is occupied by the tenant

Other pledges

We will:

- monitor the grounds maintenance of our shared areas.
- provide advice on moving options to tenants wishing to move including transfers to council and housing association properties, mutual exchanges and moving into the private sector
- provide support to new tenants by carrying out a welcome visit within the first two weeks of their tenancy. Introductory tenants will receive 3 visits in the first year of their tenancy
- tackle tenancy fraud to ensure no tenancy has been obtained fraudulently and to deal with illegal subletting of a property. We will investigate cases within 5 days of becoming aware of them.
- provide support when either a tenant wishes to end their tenancy or if a tenancy needs to be ended due to the death of a tenant.
- work alongside tenant and resident associations to deal with local issues, and to set up neighbourhood agreements with residents and partner agencies such as the police. These are jointly agreed standards and plans for delivering services in a particular area.
- carry out regular inspections to ensure our fire signage is in place and that common ways are clear of hazards and obstructions. We can also arrange fire safety advice for any tenant. Your safety in the event of a fire is a priority for us.
- complete personal evacuation plans with vulnerable or disabled tenants

How we will measure our performance against these commitments and report to you

- Number of tenants visited(including those visited 3 times in the first year)
- Number of estates inspected 3 times a year
- Numbers of tenancy checks carried out

These will be reported to Housing Management Consultative Committee quarterly.

Details of estate inspection findings will be placed on block notice boards

How we will involve residents

The Tenancy Management Focus Group is the key group for monitoring Tenancy Management performance.

H. Council Leaseholders

The Right to Buy & Leasehold Team provides a landlord service for the council's residential housing portfolio. The team provides direct advice to leaseholders and is primarily responsible for ensuring service charges and major works charges are calculated and issued correctly and that these charges are collected promptly.

Key service pledges:

We will:

- offer a range of payment options to make it easier for you to pay leaseholder charges
- ensure that service charge bills are sent in good time and clearly explain the charges
- carry out regular satisfaction surveys of all leaseholders to listen and respond to your feedback

Other pledges

We will:

- offer to share the documentation we have relied on to calculate service charges with any leaseholder who wishes to view it
- formally consult leaseholders on works where their share of the cost is more than £250 and include information of a range of payment options for those in financial difficulty
- go beyond the formal consultation with large scale and will offer to meet with leaseholders and residents to discuss the works and the service charge implications
- publish our three year provisional capital investment programme online
- maintain a council leaseholders section on the council's website for online information

How we will measure our performance against these commitments and report to you

We will publish the following information in the council leaseholders section of the council's website:

- the number of service charge disputes we have received in the year and whether they have been resolved or are still outstanding
- the number consultation notices issues in the year for works over £250

- the findings reports from our leaseholders satisfaction surveys
- the minutes of the Leaseholders Action Group meetings

How we will involve residents

Through the Leaseholders' Action Group, its elected committee and its delegates on the various monitoring groups, committees and the City Assembly



The Brighton & Hove Standard

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Brighton & Hove Standard is a quality standard for Brighton & Hove City Council homes developed in consultation with Brighton & Hove City Council tenants. It is based on the government's Decent Homes Standard, with additional items agreed in consultation with our tenants to meet tenants' local priorities.
- 1.2. The government's Decent Homes Standard is defined in "A Decent Home: Definition and guidance for implementation" June 2006 update, published by the Department for Communities and Local Government. This guidance reflects the Housing Health and Safety Rating System June 2006.
- 1.3. The Brighton & Hove Standard means one of our homes will meet the following agreed criteria:
 - *It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing*
 - *It is in a reasonable state of repair*
 - *It has reasonably modern facilities and services*
 - *It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort*
 - *It includes the items agreed in consultation with tenants*
- 1.4. These criteria are detailed in sections 2 - 6 below.

2. ***It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing***

- 2.1. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System June 2006 contains the hazards in a home that are assessed as serious (category 1). These include fire safety, excess cold and serious trip hazards. All Category 1 hazards will be assessed with action taken to reduce the hazard or remove it unless the expense of doing so is uneconomic or the disruption to residents is disproportionate to the hazard.

2.2. A home that meets the Brighton & Hove Standard will be free of all category 1 hazards.

3. *It is in a reasonable state of repair*

3.1. The Brighton & Hove Standard requires the **key building components** of a home to be reasonably modern or in a condition that means that they do not need replacing or immediate major repair. Each of the components has a different estimated life time that is set out in government guidelines.

3.2. Key components that pass the standard can be old but in good condition or in poor condition but not old. For example, if a roof is old but only needs minor repairs, then it can still meet the Brighton & Hove Standard. However, if the roof is old and needs major repair then it will need to be replaced to meet the standard.

3.3. Key components include:

- External Walls structure and finish
- Roof Structure and finishes
- Chimneys
- Windows
- External Doors
- Boilers
- Electrical Systems
- Plumbing (cold water storage/distribution)

3.4. Homes that meet the Brighton & Hove Standard will be weather tight and water tight. There will be no visible or apparent signs of significant defects or damage to the **roof structure** and coverings, **chimney**, flashings, gutters, downpipes, rendering, tile hanging, brickwork, lintels or other **structural components**, which may impair the safety of the home, the residents or members of the public.

3.5. **Windows** will fit properly to prevent water penetration and be in reasonable condition. Timber windows will be free of any rot or decay and be able to open and close with ease. Draught strips will be provided where necessary.

3.6. Glazing will be free of cracks and chips with the putty and beading in place. Faulty glass will be replaced with visibly marked laminated safety glass that meets current British Standards. Windows that are over 30 years old and in poor condition will fail the Brighton & Hove Standard. If windows are replaced then they will meet the agreed specification, which is stated in *appendix 1*.

- 3.7. **External front and rear doors and frames** will be free of any rot or decay, hung correctly to prevent water penetration and allow ease of opening and closing without an undue draught. Good quality draught strips will be provided where necessary. Any glazing will be free of cracks and chips with the putty and beading in place. Faulty or ordinary float glass will be replaced with visibly marked laminated safety glass.
- 3.8. External doors will have a five lever mortise lock that complies with BS 3621. If a mortise lock can't be fitted to the rear entrance door then a latch will be provided and secured internally with two barrel bolts. Existing front and rear access doors will be replaced where they do not have a security rating to BS5750/PAS24.
- 3.9. If an external door is replaced then it will meet the agreed specification that is stated in *appendix 1*. Tenants will be given a range of choices regarding the style and finish (e.g. colour) of their new door.
- 3.10. A **boiler** will be under 15 years old or, if it is older than this, in a reasonable condition, and not requiring major repair. If a new boiler is installed then the vertical pipes can be boxed in if required. All gas boilers are serviced on an annual basis to ensure that they are working safely and efficiently.
- 3.11. All **electrical systems** will be safe. If a system, or parts of a system, fail to meet this standard then it will be replaced. New installations will comply with BS7671 and include the works specified in *appendix 2*.
- 3.12. The **plumbing** will be in reasonable condition. The bath/shower, WC, wash hand basin and kitchen sink will have direct mains cold water supply or indirect supply from the cold water storage tank. There will be a means of heating the water and supplying hot water to the sink, wash hand basin and bath/shower.
- 3.13. All cold water supply pipes outside of the home will be lagged to prevent freezing and a cover will be fitted to the cold water storage tank. This will comply with Water Bylaw 30 or be adequate for the age and design of the tank.
- 3.14. The WC flush will work fully and the water level control valve will be in reasonable condition and properly adjusted. If a WC water inlet valve needs to be replaced then a ball valve service valve will be provided where practical.
- 3.15. The Brighton & Hove Standard requires all taps to be in good working order. If a tap needs replacement then it will be replaced as a pair with ball valve service valves provided if practical. Waste pipes will not leak and will be free running.

- 3.16. The Brighton & Hove Standard can not be met if two or more of the **other building components** are old and need replacing or require immediate major repair.
- 3.17. Other building components include:
- Kitchen
 - Bathroom
 - Heating distribution system
- 3.18. A **kitchen** meets the Brighton & Hove Standard if it is less than 30 years old and in reasonable condition. This assessment is based on standards that have been agreed with the council's partner, Mears Group. If a new kitchen is required then it will meet the approved specification that is stated in *appendix 3*. The tenant will have a choice of cupboard fronts, worktops, floor covering and ceramic tiles and be involved in designing the kitchen where practical.
- 3.19. A **bathroom** that is under 40 years old and in reasonable condition meets the Brighton & Hove Standard. If a bathroom needs replacement then it will meet the agreed specification that is stated in *appendix 4*.
- 3.20. The **heating distribution system** will be sufficient to provide a reasonable level of heating in the home. The heating outlets will be safe and fully functional. They will be in reasonable condition and free from excessive distortion and corrosion. If replacement units are required then they will match the existing units. The estimated life of a heating distribution system is 30 years

4. *It has reasonably modern facilities and services*

- 4.1. Homes that fail to meet the Brighton & Hove Standard are those which lack three or more of the following:
- A reasonably modern kitchen
 - A kitchen with adequate space and layout
 - A reasonably modern bathroom
 - An appropriately located bathroom and WC
 - Adequate insulation against external noise (where external noise is a problem)
 - Adequate size and layout of common areas to blocks of flats
- 4.2. A home lacking two or fewer of the above still meets the Brighton & Hove Standard, which means that kitchens and bathrooms will not be modernised if a home meets the remaining criteria.

- 4.3. A **kitchen with adequate space and layout** is one that has enough room to contain necessary items (sink, cupboards, cooker space, work tops etc) appropriate to the size of the home. The storage requirements set out in *appendix 3* is used to consider whether a kitchen provides adequate space.
- 4.4. An **appropriately located bathroom and WC** is one where the main bathroom or WC isn't located in a bedroom or accessed through a bedroom (unless the bedroom isn't used or the property is for a single person). A WC should be inside and on the same floor as the nearest wash hand basin. If the main WC does not have a wash hand basin but is on the same floor as the bathroom it will meet the standard. If a WC without a wash hand basin opens into a kitchen in an inappropriate area, for example the food preparation area, then consideration will be given to installing a wash hand basin in the WC or moving the food preparation area.
- 4.5. **Inadequate insulation against external noise** is where there are significant problems with, for example, traffic or factory noise. Reasonable insulation from acoustic glazing should be in line with the current building regulations.
- 4.6. **Adequate size and layout of common areas to blocks of flats** are areas that have enough room to move easily without narrow access ways with awkward corners and turnings, steep staircases, inadequate landings, no handrails and low head room. Physical or planning restrictions may mean that the improvements required are challenging or impossible to undertake. In these situations the best possible solution will be developed in consultation with the appropriate agency.

5. *It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort*

- 5.1. The Brighton & Hove Standard requires a home to have effective insulation and efficient heating.
- 5.2. Efficient heating is defined as any of the following:
- gas or oil programmable central heating
 - warm air systems
 - under floor systems
 - storage heaters
 - programmable LPG/ solid fuel central heating
 - similarly efficient heating systems developed in the future
- 5.3. Programmable heating is where the timing and temperature of the heating can be controlled by the residents. Homes with gas or oil programmable heating will have cavity wall insulation where possible or at least 50mm of loft insulation if there's a loft. If possible, at least

200mm of loft insulation or cavity wall insulation is required for homes heated by electric storage heaters or programmable LPG/ solid fuel central heating.

- 5.4. Improving the energy efficiency of a home is a key aim when there is an upgrade or replacement to the communal parts of a property such as lift, communal heating or lighting replacement works.

6. *It includes the items agreed in consultation with tenants*

- 6.1. The Brighton & Hove Standard is a quality standard for Brighton & Hove City Council homes. It is based on the government's Decent Homes Standard and incorporates the additional items that have been developed in consultation with tenants. These items are contained throughout the Brighton & Hove Standard.

- 6.2. Further items include:

- Additional electrical sockets in the kitchen
- Choice of kitchen units and work tops
- Tiling for wall areas between the work top and wall units in the kitchen
- Choice of style and finish of external doors
- Common way lighting upgraded to energy efficient lights when rewiring
- Installation of hard wired smoke alarms
- Vertical pipes boxed in with new boiler installations
- Choice of tiles and flooring in new bathroom installations
- Tiling for wall areas around the bath in the bathroom
- A tiled splash back for wash hand basins
- Redecorations to bathrooms and kitchens after new installations

- 6.3. Examples of the kitchen, bathroom, and door styles and choices will be available to view at the Housing Centre. This will allow tenants to see the products, raise any queries, give feedback and view examples of the typical quality of finish.

- 6.4. The Brighton & Hove Standard will be updated and reviewed annually in consultation with tenants and the council's partners. This will ensure that it remains current and continues to meet the local priorities of Brighton & Hove City Council tenants.

B&H Standard Appendix 1

The Brighton & Hove standard specification for new windows and doors

1. Ironmongery

Generally all hinges, stays, locks, espagnolettes and similar functional ironmongery will be of austenitic stainless steel grade 304. Fixings to be austenitic stainless steel grade 302 / 304.

2. Windows

Generally all existing windows (except where PVC-u frames and double glazed units exist) will be replaced with double glazed PVC-u frames.

New windows will be internally glazed for security. All frames and double glazed units will be specified to current British Standards and will be designed to meet the requirements of the current Building Regulations with lockable window fasteners to all ground floor casements.

Generally (not always applicable on blocks of flats) all new windows at first floor level and above shall allow for fire egress from habitable rooms only. These windows shall be fitted with safety catches or restrictors to ensure safety considerations are met.

Where internal access to windows is restricted by basins, sinks or kitchen units, the design of the frame will cater for the handle/locking mechanism to be located as low as possible to the window sill to assist tenants in the opening/closing operation. In certain circumstances top hung frames may be fitted to accommodate handles at sill level.

All windows will be supplied with two keys, which will be given to the tenant on completion of the window installation. Spare keys are to be easily available for replacement of lost keys.

3. External Doors

Existing front and rear access doors to homes will be replaced where they do not meet the relevant part of the standard, or are likely to require replacing within the next 5 years. The new replacement doors are to be composite GRP doors complete with frame and security ironmongery. New composite security door and frames will incorporate double glazed apertures (with laminated safety glass).

A secure locking system will be included and the doors will be hung on three heavy duty hinges. Principle access doors will be fitted with double draught

proofed letter plates, spy-hole viewer, security chain and low-level threshold, where required.

Entrance doors to flats from communal landings will take account of appropriate fire regulations

All external doors to blocks shall be fitted with automatic closers set to ensure that doors return to their secure closed state after use. Designs should take account of inclement weather such as strong winds and the difficulties users may experience in their operation.

4. Ventilation

Closeable trickle ventilation will be provided to windows and doors, where appropriate.

B&H Standard Appendix 2

The Brighton & Hove standard specification for new electrical installations

Lighting and power within a property will either be rewired or upgraded as necessary to comply with the current Edition IEE regulations (BS 7671).

1. Sockets

If a full or partial rewire is required then the number of sockets will be increased to include the following minimum provision:

Bedrooms: 3 double sockets
Bathroom: fitted with shaver socket
Hall: 1 double socket
Landing: 1 double socket
Kitchen: 1 7kw cooker point with combined 13 amp single socket, 3 double sockets & 1 single socket for both a fridge/freezer and washing machine
Living room: 4 double sockets
Dining room: 2 double sockets

All sockets will be double other than in kitchens where single sockets may be installed to serve individual appliances depending upon the kitchen layout. All sockets will be switched or controlled by a remote double pole switch.

2. Lighting and Switches

If a full or partial rewire is required then the following lighting and switching arrangements will be adopted:

Rooms with one entrance point will have one way switching
Rooms with two entrance points will have two way switching
2 gang switches to be provided where appropriate
Low energy external lights to be switched from internal positions alongside the front and back door

Standard rose and bayonet fittings will be used with the following variations:

Kitchen: energy saving light fitting
External: vandal resistant low energy bulk head lights will be supplied and fitted to

the principal entrance door position switched from inside the property

Bathroom: sealed low energy fitting controlled by a pull switch within the bathroom

Accessory heights and locations will conform to building regulation requirements where reasonably possible and take account of individual tenants' specific needs.

If any of the tenant's fittings are found to be unsafe during a rewire then they will be disconnected and the tenant informed. Safe fittings may be refitted.

3. Smoke Alarm

During a full rewire, each home is fitted with a smoke alarm on each floor level of the property. This will be hard wired with a non-removable battery backup.

4. Finishes

Cabling works within individual properties must be chased into the walls beneath the plaster. Under certain exceptional circumstances (for instance solid concrete floors in blocks of flats) it may not be possible to chase in cabling and under these circumstances surface mounted mini-trunking may be used with the proviso that this will be kept to an absolute minimum.

5. Communal Areas

The following will be provided where appropriate to communal areas within blocks of flats:

A door entry system will have an audio entry system from the external point of access, which links to a handset and door release in each flat.

Communal lighting, when replaced, will be on a timed system that is controlled by PIR sensors with key override switches, wherever possible.

Communal areas will have emergency lighting installations.

A smoke alarm to each landing and a fire alarm system to the block will be provided where required

B&H Standard Appendix 3

The Brighton & Hove standard specification for new installations of kitchens

1. Unit

BSI kite marked to Bs 6222: part 2: 1997 Level "H"
Carcase to BS EN 312 Type P5

2. Storage and layout requirements

The design of the kitchen layout will be agreed with the tenant before the work is undertaken. A minimum of four colour combination choices will be offered covering cupboard fronts, worktops, floor coverings and ceramic tiling.

The government's recommendations for space will be met where possible:

Kitchens of less than 5m² to have 7m³ of storage with 1200mm of units
Kitchens over 5m² but less than 10m² to have 2.0m³ of storage with 1600mm of units
Kitchens over 10m² to have 2.3m³ of storage with 2700mm of units

All units will be accessible base units comprising of a mixture of wall, floor and larder units as appropriate. 600mm deep units will be fitted as standard.

Kitchens that have pantries and/or larders will have them retained wherever practicable with the storage they provide included in the storage calculations.

All kitchen layouts will include spaces for:

- a fridge/freezer space of 620mm minimum
- a free standing cooker space of 620mm minimum with gas and electric connections and cooker restraint chain.
- a washing machine space of 600mm minimum with plumbing and electrical connections provided wherever possible
- existing dishwashers and tumble dryers will be accommodated within the layout wherever possible subject to agreement from the tenant, as each appliance will be counted as a 600mm base unit which will reduce the storage space

There will be an inset one bowl stainless steel sink with a right or left hand drainer. It will be fitted with a chrome finish monobloc ¼ turn mixer tap. Where required, a spreader plate will be used to ensure the tap installation is sturdy.

36mm thick worktops will be installed with at least one continuous run of 1000mm worktop provided and a maximum of 3000mm.

3. Tiling

Three rows of 150x150mm glazed edge ceramic tiles will be fitted between the worktops and wall units as appropriate. Tiling will be taken down to the floor level behind the cooker space and where openings for appliances are provided.

4. Electrical

The existing electrical installation is inspected and tested by an approved contractor registered by the NICEIC.

The following sockets will be provided unless further electrical works are required to enable additional sockets to be spurred from the existing:

- One 7Kw cooker point with combined single 13 amp single switched socket
- Three double switched socket outlets above the worktop
- One single socket outlet for each appliance installed under the worktop with a switch spur for control above the work top
- Lighting shall be provided by a 1200mm electronic ballast fluorescent luminaire with prismatic diffuser.

Electrical works shall be carried out in accordance with the 17th Edition of the IEE Regulations.

5. Plumbing

Disconnecting, rerouting and reconnecting all hot, cold and waste water pipes as necessary to the new kitchen sink taps and washing machines positions is allowed.

Full bore quarter turn ball valves with appropriate blue and red tee handles will be used to isolate all services and taps.

The existing sink and washing machine wastes will be reused where possible. If not possible, the existing will be removed and a 38mm diameter plastic pipe work will be rerun to the existing stack/outlet. A 76 mm bottle trap will be fitted to the sink waste and washing machine trap/waste pipe. Necessary connections and rodding eyes will be provided to give access to all parts of the pipe runs.

New stopcocks will be provided and fixed to isolate the rising main and cold water supply to the sink.

Plastic cover plugs will be supplied and fitted around the pipe work that penetrates the work top in order to seal the gaps.

6. Flooring

New floor covering will be laid on suitable backing. The floor covering will be sheet vinyl with welded seams. It will be fitted continuously under all kitchen units and appliances to ensure a fully watertight solution and prevent water egress.

The flooring will conform to the European norm for safety flooring EN 13845.

7. Ventilation

If a serviceable extractor fan exists it will be serviced and retained. If it needs to be replaced, or a new one installed, then a wall mounted extract fan with humidistat control and heat recovery will be provided.

8. Decorations

Walls and ceilings affected by the works will be prepared and painted with emulsion.

Joinery affected by the works will be prepared and painted with gloss.

B&H Standard Appendix 4

The Brighton & Hove standard specification for new installations of bathrooms

If tenants need a major adaptation then an Occupational Therapist should be involved to make an assessment of need.

1. Suite

Generally sanitary fittings will be white and consist of:

- bath and fittings which includes a shower mixer tap if there isn't a separate shower
- side and end bath panels as appropriate
- WC /cistern and fittings which includes seat and cover
- wash hand basin and fittings

All WCs and WC suites will fully conform to EN997:2003 Class 2.

Baths will be 1700 mm long wherever practicable. Dependent upon the dimensions of the bathroom, shorter baths may be utilised. Side and end panels will be fitted to the bath as appropriate.

An 'L' shaped curtain track and shower curtain will be installed if there is a shower above the bath. These pieces of equipment will be gifted to the tenant on completion of the works, which means the tenant retains all responsibility for the maintenance of the items.

2. Furniture

All wash basins will be fitted with a pair of quarter turn lever arm taps with flow restrictors with non drip valves.

If an over bath electric shower exists then the wiring and plumbing will be checked and renewed as necessary to current standards. If it is found to be unsafe then it will be disconnected and replaced with an over bath mixer unit.

3. Tiling

Three rows of 150x150mm ceramic tiles will be fitted as a splash back around the bath sealed with proprietary sealant. One row of 150x150mm ceramic tiles will be fitted as a splash back to the wash hand basin.

If a shower is fitted over the bath then the tiling will extend so as to provide adequate coverage for normal shower use. Shower enclosures will be fully tiled.

Tenants will be given a selection of tile colours to choose from.

4. Light fitting

A low energy, ceiling mounted, sealed light fitting IP65 will be installed, which will be operated by a pull cord.

5. Flooring

Floor covering will be sheet vinyl flooring that conforms to the European Norm for safety flooring EN 13845. Tenants will be given a selection of floor colours to choose from.

Raised skirting will be used.

6. Ventilation

If a serviceable extractor fan exists it will be serviced and retained. If it needs to be replaced, or a new one installed, then a wall mounted extract fan with humidistat control and heat recovery will be provided.

7. Decorations

Walls and ceilings affected by the works will be prepared and painted with magnolia or white vinyl emulsion.

Joinery affected by the works will be prepared and painted with gloss.

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 124

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Allocations Policy Review		
Date of Meeting:	22nd March 2011		
Report of:	Lead Commissioner for Housing		
Contact Officers:	Sylvia Peckham	Tel: 293318	
	Verity Walker	293130	
E-Mail:	E-mail:	Sylvia.peckham@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
		verity.walker@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The current Housing Register Allocations Policy was approved by committee on 6th January 2005 with an update in March 2009 agreed by Housing Cabinet. However, following Tenants dissatisfaction it was agreed that the area of Choice Based Lettings and systems for allocating accommodation be subject to a fundamental review. This review has now been undertaken resulting in recommendations for changes to the way the Housing Register is to be operated. The recommended changes to the Allocations Policy are attached as Appendix 1 for approval. If approved the changes would be implemented in May 2011.
- 1.2 A full 12 week consultation with the City has now been conducted. This further report brings back final recommendations for implementation.
- 1.3 The policy is based on the principle that it is:
 - easily understood by tenants;
 - fair and equitable;
 - effective;
 - efficient and
 - legal.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Housing Cabinet Member Meeting approve the changes recommended in Appendix 1 (also attached at Appendix 6 is a full policy document with the changes highlighted).

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

The following areas of focus were identified by the tenant-led focus group

3.1 Choice Based Lettings platform

The platform for which permanent social housing in Brighton & Hove was discussed and was found not to be the cause of any outstanding issues from the tenant led group.

3.2 Allocations Policy

The tenant led group raised issues around certain areas of the Allocations Policy and who is being offered and allocated social housing in Brighton & Hove. Attached in Appendix 1 are the changes recommended which if agreed will be adopted and implemented.

3.3 Local Lettings Plans (LLPs)

LLPs were reviewed and pilot Local Lettings Plans were implemented in early 2010. It had been agreed that these were reviewed in Autumn 2010.

3.4 Communication

We have taken on board the feedback from our user group so that information given is clear, correct and timely. Tenant representatives will be more actively involved to promote such initiatives as under occupancy and assist with developing positive adverts of properties in their area and to provide information on the neighbourhood for prospective and new tenants, to enable them to settle into the community . This will also contribute towards developing sustainable communities as people are more likely to feel a part of the community.

3.5 Other areas examined

The tenant led group considered information around other areas of social housing and the allocation of it and whilst this information was useful to all there were no outstanding issues raised that would mean any changes. These areas included; Accessible Housing, Housing Options, Homelessness & information from another Local Authorities who are not using Choice Based Lettings.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The tenant-led focus groups identified the areas for improvement (Appendix 1 & Appendix 6 Policy document) and the 12 week consultation process with wider stakeholders in the City over proposed changes has now been completed. Stakeholders include our Communities of Interest, our partner agencies, Age Concern, support agencies, people on the Housing Register, and support providers (a full list is provided in Appendix 2).

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 Financial Implications.

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendation made in this report. The recommended changes as highlighted in appendix 1 will be managed within existing budgets

5.2 Legal Implications

Under section 167 Housing Act 1996, the council as a local housing authority is required to have an allocations scheme for determining priorities and as to the procedure to be followed, in allocating housing accommodation. Local housing authorities must not allocate housing accommodation otherwise than in accordance with their allocation scheme. The amended Housing Register Allocations Policy, which the Cabinet Member for Housing is asked to approve, is the Council's allocations scheme for the purpose of section 167. Although there is no specific right to housing under the European Convention on Human Rights or Human Rights Act 1998, there is within the Court system an increasing focus on Human rights issues, however there appears to be no obvious issues in relation to this policy.

Equalities must also be considered in any service provided by a public body. This will be dealt with by the Equalities Impact assessment.

Legal officer Consulted: Simon Court – Senior Solicitor

11.02.11

5.3 Equalities Implications

Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out for the proposed changes to the Policy (Appendix 3).

5.4 Sustainability Implications

The proposals will ensure that better use is made of the housing stock and will contribute to sustainable housing solutions.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications

None.

5.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications

Failure to adopt the changes prescribed in the attached new Allocations Policy could render the Local Authority vulnerable to legal challenge.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications

Limited social housing stock will be used in the best and most efficient way possible and that the city will benefit from clearer communication and updated Local Lettings Plans.

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

- 6.1 The alternative to the amendments would be for the policy to remain as per the current policy. This however would not make best use of the housing stock nor address the issues identified by Tenants.

7. **REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The recommendations have been made so that through the Allocations Policy we can ensure that best use is made of the council and RSL housing stock in the City. The policy will be clear, transparent and easily understood.

APPENDIX 1

Recommended Changes:

1. Local Connection

- 1.1 Applicants are able to apply for social housing within Brighton & Hove from anywhere within the United Kingdom. Brighton and Hove is a high demand area where demand for social housing is in excess of supply. For this reason applicants, who live outside the area with no local connection to it, cannot expect the same priority for housing as those with a local connection. Therefore, in order to ensure that the Council meets the needs of the local community, reduced priority will be given to those people without a local connection.
- 1.2 Applicants without a local connection will have their priority reduced to Band C (below those with a local connection in this band) until they acquire a local connection with the Council.
- 1.3 The following factors as set down in s199 Housing Act 1996 will be taken into account in determining whether or not an applicant has a local connection with the Brighton & Hove City Council area. An application is awarded a local connection if:
- an applicant is currently residing in the City in either temporary or permanent accommodation and has been resident in the city **for a minimum of 24 months**
 - or is a serving member of the armed forces and is posted in the Brighton & Hove City Council Area. This provision will also be considered for those who are serving in the armed forces and returning to Brighton & Hove as a main place of residence after leaving service, the 24 month residency will apply at the point at which the city was left and service was started where the same (this will not include those who have been dishonourably discharged).
- 1.4 For the purposes of determining local connection, living in Brighton & Hove will not include the following:
- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on an official Council approved site **or other Council approval obtained (toleration on unauthorised sites is not included).**
 - Occupation of a holiday letting which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation for the purposes of a holiday.
 - Resident of Bail Hostels or other such accommodation.
 - In-Patient of Hospitals/specialist centres.
- 1.5 Exceptions
There may be occasions not predicted by this Allocation Scheme where the application of the Local Connection Policy is deemed inappropriate by the Council and accordingly there is a Commissioning Director level Discretion available not to invoke the Policy in these Special Circumstances. One example might be someone who has been placed out of Brighton & Hove for a period of time, whilst being looked after by the Children & Young people's Trust, or the Community Mental Health Team – although each case would be considered on its merits.

Applicants who do not have a local connection with Brighton & Hove but to who the City Council have accepted a full Homelessness duty under section 193(2) will not be subject to any reduction in their priority (as the Council is under a statutory duty to provide long term settled housing).

2. Leaving Supported Accommodation

Accepted Homeless s193 households where supported housing is required

In some cases where a household has been accepted as homeless under s193 of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, an assessment of the housing need will take place. If the outcome of the assessment is that the household is not ready for independent accommodation but need supported accommodation, then they will not be able to access general needs housing.

The Integrated Support Pathway comprises high support accommodation, leading to lower supported accommodation, until ultimately households are ready to move into the general needs housing with floating support.

Households are worked with throughout this process and their skills and abilities are thoroughly assessed to ensure that they are ready to make each step to greater independence.

Band 1 is primary contact organisations, e.g. Rough Sleepers Street Services Team

Band 2 is high support accommodation with 24 hour staffing and intensive support

Band 3 is step down accommodation, independent flats and shared houses with several support hours a week.

Band 4 is floating support provided to clients who are living in the general needs sector.

Band 5 is peer to peer support for clients who are stable but need some community support.

When these households are ready to move on from the Council's Integrated Support Pathway reasonable preference will be awarded when a household is assessed as ready to move to independent settled housing on the recommendation of the Support or Key worker.

If ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan will be put in place. This will mean that only those households who are ready to manage a tenancy will be able to access social housing.

3 Refusals of suitable accommodation

Applicants who have refused 3 reasonable first offers of accommodation within 12 months of the date of the first offer will have their priority for re-housing reduced to Band D for a 12 month period, please note that if applicants who are second or third become first for an offer and refuse will be deemed 'first' under this part of the policy. After this 12 months period the applicant will have their case returned to their original band with their original date as long as a change of circumstances has not occurred.

It should be noted that if a tenancy is accepted and then refused without the tenancy being moved into this will be seen as a refusal and dealt with as the

above and may result in a Band D priority for 12 months if the reason is not accepted.

All cases will be dealt with based on information supplied and submitted. There is no right to request a further review of the decision unless the applicant's circumstances change and they can provide evidence of this.

It should also be noted that this does not include Accepted Homeless cases where if households in this category are successful in obtaining an offer of accommodation within six months, this will be considered a final offer. The Council may exercise discretion to retain the current bandings in certain instances, for example where a Council or Housing Association tenant is releasing a property they are under occupying or one that has been adapted that could meet the needs of households who are waiting in a high banding.

4. Leaving Care

4.1 Move on from Care.

This is picked up under the Joint Protocol for Care Leavers and so CYPT requested it is removed from the policy.

5. Priority for Working Households and those making a Positive Contribution to the City

There is an increased recognition of the importance of Allocations Schemes at a National level to ensure that Authorities make best use of housing stock, but also to improving access to affordable housing for those who are on low incomes and the ease of mobility for positively contributing to the community.

The Government has published "Fair and Flexible - Statutory Guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities In England". This is enabling Local Authorities to be open to change within the Allocations Scheme so that is it responsive to local needs.

To ensure that Brighton & Hove City Council promotes a positive contribution to the **community up to 50% of all permanent** social housing stock will be advertised with a priority being given to those who can show that the ingoing primary tenant(s) is/are working or is making a positive contribution to Brighton & Hove City.

To ensure that the policy helps those on low incomes and taking into account feedback from Consultation we propose **income caps** as follows:

For those needing a 2 or more bedroom property an income cap of £35,000 pa gross income to include all forms of the households income,

For households needing studio or 1 bedroom property an income cap of £17,000 pa gross income to include all forms of the households income.

Exceptions for Special Circumstances

There may be occasions where someone is serving a 'Community order with an unpaid work requirement', 'community service order(s)' or 'compulsory manual labour' and therefore would not be considered to be 'working' or 'volunteering' under this scheme and therefore would be excluded from the definition of the priorities above.

Sheltered accommodation will be excluded from offering 50% as Priority for working households or those making a positive contribution but mobility standard flats and houses will be included

The Council reserves the right to refuse that employment is relevant for the Policy where it is in variance with Council policy and procedure.

5.1 Working Households
Economic Contribution

This part of the policy aims to support the economic growth of our city. We aim to encourage people who can, to work and want to raise levels of aspiration and ambition. We will offer priority on property adverts to the prime applicant(s) who is/are working (see definition below) and who are therefore making a contribution to Brighton & Hove's economy. The priority for Working Households will apply to rehousing across the city and is not linked with a specified area or property type.

Definition of Working Households

For the purposes of this Allocations Scheme employment is described as having a **permanent contract, working as a temporary member of staff or being self-employed**. Applicants will only qualify if the worker has been employed for **9 out of the last 12 months, is currently in employment and is working for a minimum of 16 hours per week**. Verification will be sought at point of application as well as point of offer under the same terms. Applicants must provide payslips, P60, bank statements or a verifying letter on headed paper in order to qualify (we may also contact employers directly for confirmation of employment). If employment status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes. Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

5.2 Positive Contribution
Community Contribution

Brighton & Hove City Council wishes to recognise residents who make a positive contribution to the City and play a part in making their neighbourhood a strong, stable and healthy place to be. We believe those who help make it a good place to live, work and play are valuable people and they need to be recognised for the good they do. We will offer priority on property adverts to the prime applicant(s) who is/are positively contributing to their community (see definition below) and who are therefore making a contribution to Brighton & Hove's wellbeing. The priority for positive contribution Households will apply to rehousing across the city and is not linked with a specified area or property type.

Positive Contribution – definition

This covers households who are undertaking voluntary work or who are full-time carers and so unable to undertake paid work.

- **Volunteers**
Volunteers must have been volunteering for a **continuous period of at least 6 months** up to the point of application and the same at point of offer. Volunteering must be for a not-for profit organisation or a charity and must be for a **minimum of 32 hours per month**.

Evidence required for voluntary work.

Letter from Manager responsible for Volunteers confirming applicant's involvement in a minimum of 32 hours per month of voluntary work in the requested area for over 6 months. This person must not be related to the applicant in any way and we may also contact manager directly for confirmation of work done. If volunteer status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

The Council reserves the right to refuse that volunteering is relevant for the Policy where it is in variance with Council policy and procedure

- Full Time Carers

If the prime applicant(s) provide care in an area of the City, the priority may be applied for in the area in which they provide care. Carers must have been providing for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer.

Evidence required for voluntary work.

Proof that full time care is required (this will be in the form of a care assessment from Adult Social Care or Children and Young Persons Trust in Brighton & Hove City Council) or a copy of the carers allowance that is being paid and proof of receipt of this. We will also require a letter from the person/people requiring care confirming applicant's full time involvement. We may also contact Adult Social Care, Children and Young Persons Trust, the person/people receiving the care or any other point of contact directly for confirmation of care given. If care status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Work & positive contribution and disability

The complexity and breadth of the needs of disabled people can not easily be tested by the means above and this is partly due to the fact that each individual will have varying degrees of ability which present unique barriers. We feel that it is important to recognise that many disabled people are and wish to remain active in their communities regardless of level of employment status or volunteer work and it has been found that they will likely benefit from being able to bid on all accommodation irrespective of level of work, paid or otherwise that they do. We therefore believe that anyone with a proven chronic long term disability* who works or volunteers (irrespective of hours carried out) should be able to be awarded this priority. Proof will still be required. If work or volunteer status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Exceptions for Special Circumstances

There may be occasions where someone is serving a 'Community order with an unpaid work requirement', 'community service order(s)' or 'compulsory manual labour' and therefore would not be considered to be 'working' or 'volunteering' under this scheme and therefore would be excluded from the definition of the priorities above.

6. Minor wording changes regarding Private sector housing repairs banding to bring the allocations scheme into line with the H&S hazard rating system

Band A

- Private Sector Housing nomination issued under a quota arrangements as agreed by the Private Sector Housing Team.

Band B

- Other unsatisfactory housing conditions (category 1 hazard(s) that cannot be rectified within 6 months as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004)).

Band C

- Unsanitary conditions that cannot be addressed by the Private Sector Housing Team action including lacking one or more of the following; a kitchen (eg sink and space for a cooker), an inside WC or a bathroom (e.g. basin and bath or shower).
- Other unsatisfactory housing conditions (higher category 2 hazard(s) where formal remedial action is being pursued, as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004))

***This will be evidence by the receipt of high rate benefit i.e. DLA (both care & mobility rates), or Incapacity Benefit. If someone has autism, sensory loss, physical disabilities or serious mental health issues they will have been assessed by DWP. We do sometimes ask for proof of blue badge as a good indication of long term disability. We will also ask if they have a social worker and/or support worker.**

Appendix A
Overcrowding

Where the property is deemed to be 'statutorily overcrowded' by the Private Sector Housing Team under section X of the 1985 Housing Act and there are no practicable means to make the property suitable for the number of occupants within a reasonable time period the applicant will be placed in band A. Applicants will be placed in band B if they lack two or more bedrooms and band C if they lack one bedroom below these minimum provisions

7. Directors Discretion (for other exceptional circumstances not covered by this scheme)

To replace Severe need – exceptional circumstances and/or multiple needs, which warrant emergency priority – to be agreed by Head of TA and Allocations.

From time to time a situation may arise that is not adequately reflected in this Allocations Scheme but the needs or circumstances are exceptional and significant. Where a case is considered exceptional but the applicant does not meet any of the Banding criteria or it is felt that a higher Banding than the one awarded is more appropriate then the **Lead Commissioner for Housing** reserves the right to override this scheme and allow an applicant to have a higher priority than they would be entitled to under the Scheme. These cases will be few in number and will be closely monitored and regularly reported on to ensure that the duty to achieve Reasonable Preference overall is not compromised. The Lead Commissioner Discretion can also be used to block an allocation or to make a direct allocation of a property in circumstances not predicted by this scheme but where the Council is satisfied someone has unfairly taken advantage of the scheme to the detriment of those in housing need. Again, these cases will be monitored and are will be few in number.

All of the above cases will be taken to Housing Consultative Committee on a yearly basis to review the numbers submitted, the outcome of the cases and brief reason for the case being submitted via this route

8. Homeless priority changes

In order for the Council to maximise and make the best use of social housing stock as well as local private sector housing all Accepted Homeless households who are owed a full part 7 main duty with the following priority reason will be placed into Band C. The council will retain the main duty owed until such time as suitable accommodation can be sought to warrant the discharge of this duty.

The following bands will now be placed into Band C and will be helped via the Temporary Accommodation Allocations Team.

- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by Brighton & Hove City Council placed in B&B or short term temporary accommodation where the only prospect of meeting the household's needs is in permanent accommodation (eg the applicant has obtained employment and is experiencing severe financial hardship or the household has severe medical or disability reasons).
- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by B&HCC making their own temporary arrangements or suffering family split due to a genuine lack of accommodation.

These band reasons will now be aligned with the following that is currently Band C under the allocations scheme:

- Accepted Homeless households occupying temporary accommodation on an assured short hold or non-secure tenancy until such time as the landlord requires the property back or the household's needs are no longer met unless offered permanent accommodation.

At the end of all private sector leases further leased accommodation will be considered. If at this time no accommodation can be sought or if for financial reasons or accessibility reasons the leased accommodation is no longer suitable (as decided by the temporary Accommodation Allocations Manager) the case will be recommended to the Homemove Team to be placed into Band A for social housing. At this time the following band reason will be given:

- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by B&HCC, placed in temporary accommodation where the landlord requires the property back or the property is unsuitable to meet the applicant's needs or a member of the household's needs, and where the household have been assessed as ready to manage independent accommodation.

9. Closing of Homemove applications

Once a household has been moved via the Homemove Scheme it will be deemed that housing need has been met and therefore all housing applications for the entire household will be closed and sent to the landlord for the information to form the start of the tenancy file.

10. Change in wording for adapted property releases in Band A

Previous

- Releasing an adapted property or to make best use of adapted stock – at the council's discretion, where the tenant does not require adaptations or where the existing property cannot be adapted to meet the applicant's needs
Remove the clause following feedback as it is covered by TIS or the medical priority.

11. Medical priority wording changes

Band A

Overriding (severe and immediate) medical priority awarded by the Medical Advisor – where the housing conditions are having a severe and immediate adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant emergency priority.

Band B

High (major) medical priority awarded by the Medical Advisor – where the housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant extra priority.

Band C

Low (minor) medical priority awarded by the Medical Advisor – where the housing conditions are having a minor adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant reasonable priority.

12. Transfer Incentive Scheme

The TIS scheme has proved very popular and successful, currently there 120 tenants on the waiting list to downsize to smaller flats from larger family homes they no-longer need (usually when adult children have left home).

However feedback we have had from households is that they would be happy to move with reduced payments as what is more important is having support in the form of a person to help them with organising and arranging the move. This combined with the need to continue to ensure we make best use of the existing social housing stock and meet the needs of the city has prompted a value for money review of the Scheme without affecting its success.

Recommendations:

- 1) Reduce the amount of incentive payment so around 20- 30 additional tenants can be helped to move, releasing large family homes, within the same budget.

	Current payment	Proposed new payment
Downsizing by one bedroom	2,000	1,000
Downsizing by two bedrooms	2,500	1,500
Downsizing by three bedrooms	3,000	2,000
Downsizing by four bedrooms	3,500	2,500
moving from a wheelchair-adapted property, even if the same size	2,000	1,000

- 2) Amend the scheme to also include tenants moving from not just fully wheelchair adapted properties, but also partially adapted properties they no-longer need (graded Mobility 2), to non-adapted, non-Mobility rated properties. This is because there are very few fully wheelchair adapted properties in our council stock, but many that have been partially adapted (eg with level access showers, ramps) These properties are in great demand and there are currently 162 disabled residents waiting for this type of property.
- 3) The scheme currently pays an incentive payment if tenants move to the private sector, releasing a family home. However there is currently a 3 month waiting period. This is acting as a disincentive for tenants to move, and so it is recommended that the waiting period be removed.

APPENDIX 2

Who we Consulted with.

Total number contacted directly 1228.

This was made up of some of the following (please note this is not a definitive list):
789 Homeseekers from within and outside of Brighton & Hove who are registered on the Housing Register (8% of total on register).

292 Transfer tenants on the Housing Register who are currently a tenant of the Council or one of the partner Housing Associations (10% of total on register).

All of the partner Housing Associations

All of the partnership board from the Pan Sussex Homemove Partnership.

RISE

Survivors Network

BHT

Local Police

Local NHS

GP Surgeries

DWF/LGBT/BME council forums

Race panel

MAPPA

All Housing Staff

CYPT

CMHT

Age UK

Shelter

Sussex Interpreting service

BHCC Tenant Area Panels

Occupational Therapy

OPCAT

Housing Income Management

Relate

CAB

Terrance Higgins Trust

LGBT Switchboard

Albert Kennedy Trust

All Councillors

All Local MPs

Probation service

National Witness Protection Service

YMCA Groups

Supported housing Projects

Outreach Service

Women's Refuge

APPENDIX 3

LLP – Working families

Void/Letting Data showing the impact of the working households LLP. November 2009 – November 2010

Total adverts for Working family priority = 90.

The maximum number bypassed in one shortlist is 13 households. (see below for the case study)

We have moved: 44 Homeseekers & 33 Transfers

Who was rehoused under LLP

2 beds	3 beds	4 beds
A – 13	A – 9	A – 0
B – 22	B – 15	B – 1
C – 16	C – 1	C – 0
D – 0	D – 0	D – 0

Who would have been rehoused if no LLP

2 beds	3 beds	4 beds
A – 35	A – 20	A – 1
B – 15	B – 5	B – 0
C – 1	C – 0	C – 0
D – 0	D – 0	D – 0

Case studies:

25% of the lets done since the start of the LLP:

2 bed flat – let to Band A Homeseeker

Bypassed = 0

1st Household on the list who accepted tenancy was Accepted Homeless from 06/09 and was working.

2 bed flat – let to Band A Homeseeker

Bypassed = 0

1st Household on the list who accepted tenancy was accepted homeless from 04/10 and was working.

2 bed flat – Let to Band B Homeseeker

Bypassed = 2 as not working

1 – Band B Very High Medical – 11/08 – Since rehoused.

2 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 12/08 – Since rehoused.

2 bed flat – Let to Band B Transfer

Bypassed – 1 as not working

1 – Band A Homeless – 02/10 – Since rehoused.

2 bed flat – Let to Band C Transfer

Bypassed = 4 as not working

1 – Band B Very High Medical – 10/07 – Since rehoused.

2 – Band B Very High Medical – 03/09 – Since rehoused.

3 – Band C sharing facilities – 08/05 – Still waiting

4 – Band C medium medical need – 03/07 – Still waiting.

5 households refused this property for personal reasons and 1 was bypassed due to housing debt.

2 bed flat – Let to Band C Homeseeker

Bypassed = 3 as not working

1 - Band B Very High Medical – 03/09 – Since rehoused.

2 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 10/09 – Since rehoused.

3 – Band C lacking 1 bedroom – 12/05 – Still waiting.

1 was bypassed due to housing debt.

2 bed flat – Let to Band C Homeseeker

Bypassed = 1 as not working

1 – Band B Management Transfer – 02/10 – Household evicted.

1 household refused this property for personal reasons and 1 was bypassed due to housing debt.

2 bed flat – Let to Band C Homeseeker

Bypassed = 5 as not working

1 – Band A Homeless – 08/10 - Since rehoused.

2 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 04/09 – Since rehoused.

3 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 05/09 – Still waiting.

4 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 08/09 – Still waiting.

5 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 05/10 – Still waiting.

2 households refused this property for personal reasons and 1 was bypassed due to housing debt.

2 bed house – let to Band A Homeseeker

Bypassed = 2 as not working

1 – Band A Homeless – 05/10 – Since rehoused.

2 – Band Social Services nomination – 06/10 – Still waiting.

2 bed house – Let to Band A Transfer

Bypassed = 0 working

1st Household on the list who accepted tenancy was under occupation case from Mar 2008 and was working.

2 bed house – Let to Band B transfer

Bypassed = 0 working

1st Household on the list who accepted tenancy was Band B High Medical need from March 2010 and was working.

1 was bypassed due to housing debt.

2 bed house – let to Band B Homeseeker

Bypassed = 4 as not working

1 – Band A Homeless – 08/10 – Since rehoused.

2 – Band A Homeless – 09/10 – Since rehoused.

3 – Band B Very High Medical – 10/08 – Still waiting.

4 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 06/10 – Still waiting.

1 was bypassed due to housing debt.

2 bed maisonette – Let to band B Homeseeker

Bypassed = 1 as not working

1 – Band B Very High Medical – 04/08 – Still waiting.

1 was bypassed due to housing debt.

3 bed flat – Let to Band B Transfer

Bypassed = 0

1st Household on the list who accepted tenancy was Band B High Medical Need from November 2008 and was working.

3 bed house – Let to band Band A Transfer

Bypassed = 4 as not working

1 – Band A Social Service nomination – 09/09 – Since rehoused.

2 – Band A Homeless – 03/10 – Since rehoused.

3 – Band A Transfer Priority – 03/10 – Since rehoused.

4 – Band B lacking 2 bedrooms – July 2000 – still waiting.

1 households refused this property for personal reasons

3 bed house – Let to Band A Homeseeker

Bypassed 1 as not working

1 – Band A Transfer Priority – 03/10 – Still Waiting.

1 household refused this property for personal reasons

3 bed house – Let to Band B Homeseeker

Bypassed = 4

1 – Band B High medical need – 04/06 – Still waiting.

2 – Band B High medical need – 07/06 – Still waiting.

- 3 – Band B High medical need – 09/06 – Since rehoused.
- 4 – Band B High medical need – 11/06 – Since rehoused.

3 bed house – Let to Band B Transfer

Bypassed = 1 as not working

- 1 – Band A Homeless – 12/09 – Since rehoused

3 bed house – Let to Band B Transfer

Bypassed = 12 as not working

- 1 – Band A Statutory over crowded – 03/10 – Since rehoused.
 - 2 – Band A Statutory over crowded – 03/10 – Since rehoused.
 - 3 – Band A Transfer Priority – 03/10 – Since rehoused.
 - 4 – Band A Transfer Priority – 05/10 – Since rehoused.
 - 5 – Band A Homeless – 05/10 – Since rehoused.
 - 6 – Band A Overriding medical need – 02/10 – Still Waiting.
 - 7 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 07/00 – Still waiting.
 - 8 – Band B High medical need – 09/01 – Still waiting.
 - 9 – Band B High medical need – 10/03 – Still waiting.
 - 10 – Band B High Medical need – 05/07 – Since rehoused.
 - 11 – Band B High Medical need – 01/08 – Still waiting.
 - 12 – Band B High Medical need – 03/08 – Still waiting.
- 1 household refused this property for personal reasons and 1 was bypassed due to housing debt.

3 bed house – Let to Band B Transfer

Bypassed = 9 as not working

- 1 – Band A Overriding medical need – 01/10 – Still waiting.
 - 2 – Band A transfer priority – 05/10 – Still waiting.
 - 3 – Band A Homeless – 09/10 – Still waiting.
 - 4 – Band A Overriding medical need – 02/10 – Still waiting.
 - 5 – Band B lacking 2 bedrooms – 08/07 – still waiting.
 - 6 – Band B High medical need – 07/08 – Since rehoused.
 - 7 – Band B High medical need – 02/09 – Still waiting.
 - 8 – Band B High medical need – 05/09 – Still waiting.
 - 9 – Band B lacking 2 bedrooms – 07/09 – still waiting.
- 1 was bypassed due to housing debt.

4 bed house – Let to Band B Transfer

Bypassed:

- 1 - Band A – Overriding medical – 05/08 – since rehoused.

Special case:

3 bed house – let to Band B Homeseeker

Bypassed = 13

- 1 – Band A Transfer Priority – 05/10 – Since rehoused.
- 2 – Band B High Medical need – 03/06 – Still waiting.
- 3 – Band B High Medical need – 03/07 – Still waiting.
- 4 – Band B High Medical need – 04/07 – Still waiting.
- 5 – Band B High Medical need – 08/07 – Still waiting.
- 6 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 11/07 – Still waiting.
- 7 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 06/08 – Still waiting.
- 8 – Band B High Medical need – 08/08 – Still waiting.
- 9 – Band B High Medical need – 01/09 – Still waiting.
- 10 – Band B High Medical need – 02/09 – Still waiting.
- 11 – Band B High Medical need – 05/09 – Still waiting.
- 12 – Band B High Medical need – 06/09 – Still waiting.
- 13 – Band B Lacking 2 beds – 06/09 – Since rehoused.

Thoughts:

The majority of emergency cases in Band A who have been bypassed due to not working and meeting the criteria for the LLP have since been rehoused. It therefore appears that we are able to meet this LLP as well as meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the city.

APPENDIX 4 – Implications for RTB and loss of stock.

Some of the feedback we received was that people who were working might exercise their Right To Buy and there would be a reduction in stock.

The following information has been provided from the Council's Right to Buy Department.

Mortgage Lenders are requiring sizeable deposits now so savings are required. This can be 25%.

On the basis that there is no deposit, an average 2-bed council house valued at £165,000 would have a selling price of £127,000. Using 3.25% of earnings for a prudent mortgage this would mean household income of £39,000. However, any amount of deposit would reduce this figure.

On the same basis an average 3-bed council house valued at £180,000 and selling for £142,000 with a 100% mortgage would mean an income of £44,000. If there was 25% deposit - this would mean an upfront payment of £35,000 and income of around £33,000 to make mortgage repayments anywhere near affordable.

Having said that the Right to Buy is unquestionably beyond the means of most council tenants at the moment – as you can see from sales figures over the past 2+ years – basically since the Northern Rock crash.

Year	Houses	Flats	Total RTB sales
2008/09	2	5	7
2009/10	3	7	10
2010/11*	3	11	14

* to 15 Feb 2011

Appendix 5

Equalities Impact Assessment

Aim of Policy / Scope of Service:

Equality Impact Assessment for Allocation Policy update – March 2011

The allocations policy ensures that social rented housing within the City is allocated fairly in accordance with legislation, recognising housing needs and making best use of the limited stock available. The policy establishes the priorities in which applicants may be allocated to properties from the Council's Housing Register.

Different Groups included in scope

Ethnicity

including (Asylum seekers, Refugees, Gypsies and Travellers)

Gender

(men, women, trans / Gender Variant people)

Disability

(physical or mental health issue, long term illness, learning disability, physical/sensory impairment)

Age

(included – older & younger people)

Religion/Belief, including

(faith communities including no belief)

Sexual Orientation

(lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other)

Homeless

Other

Impact	Potential Impact on this group	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts
1- Local connection	(-) Gypsies/Travellers we have no official long term site in the city at this time and therefore they would be unable to qualify for the 24 month residency.	ACTION: we have taken on board that many members of this community would be unlikely to have fixed and permanent residency in the city (save where they have stopped their nomadic way of life, for various reasons) and that as of Spring 2011 the Local Authority does not have permanent pitches in order for qualification for the 24 months residency and therefore under Local Connection – Exclusions there is the ability for the Lead

	<p>(-) People (elderly, disability) who are living out of the area who needs support from the family.</p>	<p>Commissioner of Housing not to invoke the Policy in these Special Circumstances and that these cases can be considered on their own merits at the time of application, for instance where somebody has to stop their nomadic lifestyle due to health issues; education needs or any of the other legitimate issues recognised in statute and case law.</p> <p>ACTION:</p>
<p>2- Leaving Supported Accommodation</p>	<p>(+) Homeless will be ready to sustain a tenancy (+) They will have a support plan in place if it is needed.</p>	<p>ACTION: make sure they are ready to move on and they have a support plan in place and that this is with the landlord prior to the tenancy starting</p>

<p>3- Refusals</p>	<p>(-) English not first language could have issues around understanding how to advise of a refusal</p> <p>(-) For households with mental health issues there could be issues with reasons for refusing certain properties and explaining this to the landlord at the viewing</p> <p>(-) People with disability or high medical needs refusing properties as the properties are not suitable for their needs.</p> <p>(+) This does not apply to homeless households as if they are successful in obtaining an offer of accommodation within six months, this will be considered a final offer.</p>	<p>ACTION: Landlord would explain it in person and interpreter on viewing if necessary.</p> <p>ACTION: we would ask for key or support worker to be at viewing and would take their advice into account when making decision.</p> <p>ACTION: consideration of suitability of the property for their needs</p> <p>ACTION: consideration of suitability of the property if homeless household refuse a final offer.</p>
<p>4 Leaving Care</p>	<p>(-) all references to Leaving Care will be removed from the Allocations Policy.</p>	<p>ACTION: There is now a joint protocol that enables CYPT and Housing to manage all relevant children to be dealt with with regards to their housing. This looks at all forms of housing in the city and helps to choose the most appropriate on a case by case</p>

		basis and enables the Council to help and accommodate those that it has a duty to.
<p>4- Priority for Working Household and those making a Positive Contribution to the City.</p>	<p>(-) If English is not the first language there could be issues around being ABLE to work or volunteer and therefore not being able to qualify for this priority</p> <p>(-) People with high levels of disabilities (e.g. mental health, long term illnesses, sensory impairments) may have more difficult in being able to work or volunteer and therefore may not qualify for this priority</p> <p>(-)(+) exclusion of sheltered properties from this priority.</p> <p>(+) it is less likely that elderly people are working or volunteering.</p> <p>(-) some elderly remain active in their communities and should be able to have this priority.</p> <p>(-)(+) exclusion of mobility properties from this priority</p> <p>(+) More households contributing to the economic growth of the city and more sustainable communities</p> <p>(+) Less working households leaving the city</p>	<p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor the implications in homeless households - Monitor how many people is bypassed in the shortlists and what housing need they had - Monitor if the number of bids increase dramatically for the properties with not priority to working households or if they maintain similar than before the scheme. -undertake to investigate number of sheltered tenants working, volunteering or careering and who would have this priority. - is the city more economically active? <p>We would like to monitor this over the first year of this scheme and report back to ensure that no groups who are in high housing need are missing out because of the working and positive contribution priority.</p>

<p>5- Minor wording changes regarding Private sector housing repairs banding to bring the allocations scheme into line with the H&S hazard rating system</p>	<p>(=) None identified</p>	
<p>6- Directors Discretion (for other exceptional circumstances not covered by this scheme)</p>	<p>(-)(+) To all the Groups in the same measure</p>	<p>ACTION: All of the above cases will be taken to Housing Management Consultative Committee on a yearly basis to review the numbers submitted, the outcome of the cases and brief reason for the case being submitted via this route to ensure that it is working in a fair and transparent way</p>
<p>7- Homeless priority changes</p>	<p>(+) Dynamic housing list (+) More homeless households in leased accommodation were they will get support if it is needed that will help them to manage independent accommodation before obtain a secure tenancy. (-) Possible increase on the numbers of TA (-) need for more leased properties (+) Less homeless households refusing properties waiting a secure tenancy</p>	<p>ACTION: monitor and verify data with the homeless team reports</p>

8- Closing of Homemove applications	(=) None identified	
9- Change in wording for adapted property releases in Band A	(+) increase the number of adapted and partially adapted properties which should benefit those applicants in need for these properties	ACTION: Identify adapted properties. Training and work closely with other teams (e.g. adaptations team, lettings, housing officers)
10- Medical priority wording changes	(=) None identified	
11- Transfer Incentive Scheme	(=) None identified	

What consultation has been used or undertaken?	Methods Used	Findings	Agreed Actions
<p>A 12 week consultation process with wider stakeholders in the City over proposed changes has now been completed. Stakeholders include our Communities of Interest, our partner agencies, Age Concern, support agencies, people on the Housing Register, and support providers</p>	<p>Consultation was offered via email, in writing, face to face meeting, over the telephone, group meetings, offered in large print and translators were offered if necessary.</p> <p>It was also made available on Brighton & Hove City Councils website consultation portal.</p>	<p>Those households from BME heritage number 1876 on the Housing Register. We also have 442 where ethnicity has not been stated. Total this could be 2318 (19% of the Housing Register) households on the Housing Register who could have issues around language and cultural barriers to be considered for the working or positive contribution priority. However, the priority is not on all accommodation and these households will be considered for all other accommodation that is advertised.</p>	<p>That we will ensure as much support for understanding these changes is given to households on the Housing Register and that that we will review the Allocations policy amendments again in 12 months.</p>

Lead Equality Impact Assessment Officer:	Elena Castells	Date	11.2.11
Homemove Manager	Verity Walker	Date	15.2.11
Head of Service	Sylvia Peckham	Date	Please date when you have seen and agreed
Chairman of Housing:	Maria Caulfield	Date	Please date when you have seen and agreed



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Introduction

It is Brighton & Hove City Council's policy to operate a Choice Based Lettings scheme. This is the council's scheme as required under section 167 of the Housing Act 1996. It sets out the priorities and procedures for the letting of permanent council housing, and our nominations to housing association (HA) housing. The scheme applies to existing council and housing association tenants in Brighton & Hove on the Transfer Register and to homeseekers applying to the Joint Housing Register.

It meets the requirements set out in Part VI Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002), giving reasonable preference to those applicants in greatest need. It incorporates the council's key aims and objectives outlined in its Housing Strategy for Sustainability in Housing and the recommendations detailed in the Best Value Review of Allocations December 2003.

The council is committed to a lettings scheme that offers greater choice to all those seeking housing and enables people to make well-informed decisions about their housing options.

Choice Based Lettings will help improve the sustainability of our housing stock to maximise its effectiveness and encourage residents to have a stake in their community. This scheme applies across the city but also complements regeneration work being undertaken in East Brighton and the Neighbourhood Renewal programmes in Hollingdean and Tarner.

Under the Choice Based Lettings scheme, called Homemove, tenants and homeseekers are placed in one of four broad Bands of housing need according to their circumstances. All applicants become members of Homemove and actively search for a home. Vacant properties are advertised in a regular freesheet magazine and on the Internet and members are able to bid for properties. Adapted properties will be classified and advertised as suitable for applicants with a matching mobility need.

The council's lettings scheme incorporates targets set for transfers and homeseekers. Targets will be set taking into account the council's statutory obligations, financial considerations and the housing situation across the city. Targets will be set and agreed in advance and will be reviewed annually based upon projected supply and demand for the coming year.

Equalities & Diversity

The council's Choice Based Lettings policy aims to ensure that our services are fair and equitable for all our customers. We want our services to be accessible and useful to everyone regardless of age, disability, gender, race, colour, national origin, sexual orientation or any other factor that may cause disadvantage. This policy has been drafted with reference to the Race Relations Act 1976, Sex Discrimination Act 1975, and the Disability

Discrimination Act 1995 (2005) and all other applicable equality and diversity legislation. In addition Brighton & Hove City Council has adopted the Commission for Racial Equality's Statutory Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Housing 2006.

Brighton & Hove City Council is committed to help all people who need assistance to access social housing in the city. We will work closely with agencies and supported housing providers to try and assist customers to access the scheme, and have ensured that information meets the requirements of people with a disability, or sight or hearing impairment and is in other languages. For more information, see the council's strategy for meeting the needs of vulnerable people, available at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/homemove.

An equalities impact assessment is carried out on all existing and new services including the Homemove Scheme and annual equalities monitoring is carried out on the service, which is scrutinised by Housing Committee.

Joint Housing Register Partners

The following Registered Social Landlords are partners on the Joint Housing Register (JHR):

- HydeMartlet Housing
- Downland Housing Association Ltd
- Home Group
- Kelsey Housing Association Ltd
- MOAT Homes Ltd
- Orbit South Housing Association
- Places for People
- Sanctuary Hereward
- Servite Houses
- Southern Horizon
- Southern Housing Group
- The Guinness Trust

How to apply

All Homeseekers requesting re-housing and tenants requesting transfers must complete an application form to be put on the housing register. These are available from the Homemove team, from local housing offices (Manor Place, Lavender Street, Oxford Street, Selsfield Drive & Victoria Road) and from www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/homemove. If you need help completing the form, need information in another language or in large print, or on CD, you can contact the Homemove Team on 01273 293130 who will be happy to help.

Who can apply?

The Housing Register is open to anyone who is 16 years of age or over (subject to the statutory exclusion provisions) although applicants under the age of 18 will only be offered accommodation in certain circumstances (see

below).

Priority will be given to:

- People with a local connection found to be unintentionally homeless under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.
- Households with a need to move for welfare or medical reasons that make their current home unsuitable.
- **Young people leaving care who are referred by Social Services under quota arrangements.**
- People moving on from supported housing.
- Households who occupy accommodation that is unsanitary, overcrowded or does not provide adequate facilities.
- Households who occupy accommodation where there is substantial disrepair.
- Households needing sheltered accommodation where the applicant is aged 60 years of age or over.
- Households with a local connection (see Local Connection criteria).

Tenants

Any secure council tenant or any assured tenant of any of the council's partners in the Joint Housing Register living in the city.

The council will not normally make an offer of accommodation to a transfer applicant where the tenant is guilty of a breach of tenancy resulting in:

- A valid Notice of Seeking Possession or Suspended Possession Order for rent arrears.
- Housing Act Injunction, Anti-Social Behaviour Order, Notice of Seeking Possession, Suspended Possession Order or demoted tenancy (if adopted) granted as a result of the breach of other aspects of the tenancy agreement.

The council will regard a failure to pay rent or other housing-related charges or debts as behaviour affecting the suitability of applicants to be tenants. Other than in exceptional circumstances (to be agreed by Housing Management and the Housing Income Management Team), an applicant with outstanding rent arrears or other housing-related debts owed to the council or to other social landlords in Sussex will not be allocated housing if there are other applicants eligible for housing under this policy.

Exclusions from the register

The following persons are not eligible for entry on the Housing Register for the allocation of social housing.

By virtue of the Housing Act 1996 (section 160a) the council cannot allocate housing accommodation to the following:

- A person who is subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 unless that person falls within an exemption specified by the Secretary of State.

Any applicant where the council is satisfied that:

The applicant, or a member of the household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour, which if the applicant was a secure tenant of the council would entitle the council to a possession order (part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985). These can include:

- Serious breach of tenancy conditions: involvement in serious nuisance or annoyance to neighbours;
- Conviction of using the accommodation or allowing its use for immoral or illegal purposes.
- Allowing the property to be seriously damaged by the tenant or other residents.
- Conviction of an arrestable offence committed in the locality relating to violence or threats of violence.
- Eviction from social housing for nuisance or harassment (racial or otherwise) where this behaviour is apparent at the time of application.

The unacceptable behaviour is serious enough to make the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant.

AND

The applicant is unsuitable at the time the application is considered. Consideration will be given to the length of time that has elapsed and whether there has been any change in circumstances.

OR

- All exclusions will be considered on an individual basis for any applicant who has demonstrated 'unacceptable behaviour'.
- Where the applicant knowingly gave false or misleading information or withheld information that was reasonably requested.

Eligibility for the JHR will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account exceptional circumstances or special needs.

There is a right under Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 to ask the council to review a decision not to accept an application to join the JHR. A senior officer from the council not involved in the decision to exclude, will carry out the review.

We will write to anyone who is being excluded from the Register giving our reasons, the length of time for the exclusion and their right to request a review of the decision. After the review we will provide our decision, the reasons for it and the facts that we have taken into account.

A fresh application will be considered if:

- The applicants immigration status has changed, or
- The applicant can demonstrate that the behaviour has improved.
- The applicants financial circumstances have changed.

Who can be included on the application?

- Anyone who is part of the household at the date of registration and is still in occupation.
- A partner, husband or wife of the main applicant living at the same address. This includes couples in same sex relationships.
- Dependent children under 18 years who live with the applicant where the applicant is the parent or guardian in receipt of Child Benefit or has a court order agreeing custody for 50% of the time.
- Someone not currently living with the applicant but for whom it would be reasonable to do so, for example: a relative needing care but unable to live with the applicant at present due to a genuine lack of or the unsuitability of present accommodation.
- A carer where the applicant can prove that a live-in carer is essential, one has been identified and has moved in with the household or is ready to do so when accommodation available.
- Any other non-dependant adult who is normally permanently resident with the applicant.

Local Connection

Applicants are able to apply for social housing within Brighton & Hove from anywhere within the United Kingdom. Brighton and Hove is a high demand area where demand for social housing is in excess of supply. For this reason applicants, who live outside the area with no local connection to it, cannot expect the same priority for housing as those with a local connection therefore, in order to ensure that the Council meets the needs of the local community, reduced priority will be given to those people without a local connection.

Applicants without a local connection will have their priority reduced to Band C (below those with a local connection in this band) until they acquire a local connection with the Council.

The following factors will be taken into account in determining whether or not an applicant has a local connection with the Brighton & Hove City Council area. An application is awarded a local connection if:

- an applicant is currently residing in the City in either temporary or permanent accommodation and has been resident in the city for a minimum of 24 months.
- or is a serving member of the armed forces and is posted in the Brighton & Hove City Council Area. This provision will also be considered for those who are serving in the armed forces and returning to Brighton & Hove as a main place of residence after leaving service, the 24 month residency will apply at the point at which the city was left and service was started where the same (this will not include those who have been dishonourably discharged).

For the purposes of determining local connection, living in Brighton & Hove will not include the following:

- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on an **official Council approved site or other Council approval obtained (toleration on unauthorised sites is not included)**.
- Occupation of a holiday letting which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation for the purposes of a holiday.
- Resident of Bail Hostels or other such accommodation.
- In-Patient of Hospitals/specialist centres.
- Rough Sleeping / Squatting

Exceptions

There may be occasions not predicted by this Allocation Scheme where the application of the Local Connection Policy is deemed inappropriate by the Council and accordingly there is a Strategic Lead Commissioner of Housing level Discretion available not to invoke the Policy in these Special Circumstances. One example might be someone who has been placed out of Brighton & Hove for a period of time, whilst being looked after by the Children & Young people's Trust, or the Community Mental Health Team – although each case would be considered on its merits.

Applicants who do not have a local connection with Brighton & Hove or anywhere else but to who the City Council have accepted a full Homelessness duty under section 193(2) will not be subject to any reduction in their priority (as the Council is under a statutory duty to provide long term settled housing).

Under 18s

Anyone over 16 can join our housing register, although we will not usually offer them a property until they are over 18. In the event that there is an urgent housing need, a further assessment will be carried out and we will work with the individual to find the most suitable accommodation to meet their need. An offer of permanent accommodation will only be made if the council is satisfied that: the young person is able to live independently; able to sustain a tenancy; and has an identified package of support available to them.

Owner occupiers and people with savings/capital

Section 167(2A) of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended by the 2002 Homelessness Act) allows allocation schemes to give less priority to an applicant who was financially able to secure alternative accommodation at market rent or to buy a home. Therefore, owner-occupiers or those with a substantial amount of savings or substantial equity in a property that would enable them to obtain accommodation suitable to meet their needs will generally be placed in band D. These applicants will be provided with advice and guidance on other housing options. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and medical, disability, community care and other relevant needs will be taken into account.

Where there are medical problems, applications will be considered in the following circumstances:

- Where it is not possible to adapt the current accommodation to meet the needs of the owner occupier's medical condition.
- Where it is too expensive to adapt the existing accommodation to meet the needs of the owner occupier's medical condition and they cannot afford to buy or rent suitable alternative housing.
- The sale of the property would not able the owner occupier to purchase or rent an alternative property suitable to their needs.

False or misleading Information

Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Homeless priority

In order for the Council to maximise and make the best use of social housing stock as well as local private sector housing all Accepted Homeless households who are owed a full part 7 main duty with the following priority reason will be placed into Band C. The council will retain the main duty owed until such time as suitable accommodation can be sought to warrant the discharge of this duty.

At the end of all private sector leases further leased accommodation will automatically be considered. If at this time no accommodation can be sought or if for financial reasons or accessibility reasons the leased accommodation is no longer suitable (as decided by the temporary Accommodation Allocations Manager) the case will be recommended to the Homemove Team to be placed into Band A for social housing.

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 1988 (the Act) is designed to protect personal data about living individuals (Data Subjects). The Act also places obligations on those organisations that process personal data (Data Controllers). As a Data Controller, the council and its partners in the JHR are committed to complying with this legislation by applying the Principles of Good Information Handling across all services related to Homemove.

The Registration and Assessment Process

Homeseekers and Tenants must apply by completing the council's housing registration form. These are available from the Homemove team, from local housing offices and from www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/homemove. Some eligible persons, however, may be registered without completing the form, eg nominations from Adult Social Care.

- If not eligible to register, the Homemove team will notify the applicant in

writing giving the reason for the decision and informing them of their right to request a review and the timescale that the request must be made within.

- Once accepted onto the Housing Register, the Homemove team will make an initial housing needs assessment based on the information on the registration form and other information made available.
- In order for this Banding assessment to be completed official proof of ID and other relevant information will need to be provided. This information is stated on a checklist on the front of the Housing Application Form.
- Medical priority is assessed by the Medical Advisor based on the information supplied by the applicant using the council's Self Assessment Medical form and applicant's GP where appropriate. The Medical Advisor will refer the Self Assessment Medical Form to the Housing Occupational Therapist (OT) where there is a need for an OT assessment.
- Once assessed the applicant is placed in the appropriate bedroom category and into one of the four priority bandings and awarded a priority date.
- The Homemove team will write to the applicant to inform them of their priority date and registration number and give the following information:

Priority Band and reason for it.

Priority date, which is the date the application is received, or in the case of homeless applicants, the date that Brighton & Hove accepts a duty to rehouse.

The minimum and maximum bed size they can bid for.

Mobility group (level of access requirement) if applicable.

Advise the applicant that they have a right to see the information held in relation to the application. If they consider any details inaccurate then they can request a review.

Re-Registrations

All homeseekers and transfer applicants must complete a review form to stay on the Register. The Homemove team will send the review letter within three months of the anniversary of their registration date. Applicants will be allowed to re-register six weeks after the review date and if this is not responded to a final letter will be sent advising cancellation date if no contact is made.

If the applicant fails to re-register on time the Homemove team will check their contact details. If the applicant appears to be a vulnerable person and/or has a high priority need the Homemove team will visit or contact them by phone or letter, or refer to the relevant support service for intervention.

If there is no contact and the applicant fails to re-register the application will be cancelled. The Homemove team will notify the applicant in writing of the date and the reason for the cancellation.

Closing of Homemove applications

Once a household has been moved via the Homemove Scheme it will be deemed that housing need has been met and therefore all housing applications for the entire household will be closed and sent to the landlord for the information to form the start of the tenancy file.

The Banding Structure

The four priority Bands are:

Band A

- Overriding (severe and immediate) medical priority awarded by the Medical Officer– where the housing conditions are having a severe and immediate adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant emergency priority.
- Social Services nominations under quota arrangements.
- Witness Protection nominations under a quota arrangement and agreed through the National Witness Mobility Service.
- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by Brighton & Hove City Council and placed in temporary accommodation where the landlord requires the property back or the property is unsuitable to meet the applicant's needs or a member of the household's needs, and where the household have been assessed as ready to manage independent accommodation and no further temporary accommodation can be sought as agreed by the Temporary Accommodation Allocations Manager.
- Transfer applicants under-occupying family sized accommodation qualifying for the Transfer Incentive Scheme.
- Households who are statutorily overcrowded.
- Transfer applicants needing a permanent or temporary decant where the property is imminently required for major repair.
- Private Sector Housing nomination issued under a quota arrangements as agreed with the Private Sector Housing Team Manager.
- Where the property is deemed to be 'statutorily overcrowded' by the Private Sector Housing Team under section X of the 1985 Housing Act and there are no practicable means to make the property suitable for the number of occupants within a reasonable time period the applicant will be placed in band A.
- **Move on from care as agreed by housing options or leaving supported housing as agreed by supporting people.**
- Priority transfer, agreed in exceptional circumstances due to significant and insurmountable problems associated with the tenant's occupation and there is imminent personal risk to the household if they remain.
- Retiring council and HA employees, eg Sheltered Scheme Managers, Residential Estate Wardens where the council or HA has a contractual obligation to house.
- Non-statutory successors – where agreement has been provided by Housing Management and Housing Options that the council will try to re-house in accommodation suitable for the applicant's housing need.

Band B

- Severe Overcrowding – Households lacking two or more separate bedrooms.
- Management Transfers – agreed by Housing Management for transfers on management grounds.
- High (major) medical priority awarded by the Medical Officer – where the housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant extra priority.
- Ex-tenants returning from institutions, eg rehabilitation - where a prior commitment has been made in writing in order to secure the relinquishment of a council or HA tenancy on entering the institution.
- High priority hardship – homeseekers with a dependent child/ren living in insecure accommodation and not having a bedroom and lacking or sharing amenities.
- To enable fostering or adoption – where agreement reached to provide permanent accommodation on recommendation from Children & Young People's Trust.
- Unsatisfactory housing conditions as confirmed after a visit from the Private Sector Housing Team and classed as a category 1 hazard(s) that cannot be rectified within 6 months (as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004))).
- Multiple Needs that warrant high priority – applicants whose needs match more than three of the priority reasons from the band when considered cumulatively are deemed to be so severe as to warrant applicant being placed in a higher priority band.

Band C

- Moderate Overcrowding - households lacking one separate bedroom.
- Council and housing association tenants under-occupying that do not qualify for the Transfer Incentive Scheme.
- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by Brighton & Hove City Council placed in B&B or short term temporary accommodation where the only prospect of meeting the household's needs is in permanent accommodation (eg the applicant has obtained employment and is experiencing severe financial hardship or the household has severe medical or disability reasons).
- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by B&HCC making their own temporary arrangements or suffering family split due to a genuine lack of accommodation.
- Accepted Homeless households occupying temporary accommodation on an assured short hold or non-secure tenancy until such time as the landlord requires the property back or the household's needs are no longer met unless offered permanent accommodation.
- Households identified in an Adult Social Care Plan where accommodation is required to assist in delivering a Care Plan or to relieve other social/welfare hardship as agreed in Adult Social Care & Housing.

- Low (minor) medical priority awarded by the Medical Officer – where the housing conditions are having a minor adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant reasonable priority.
- Unsanitary conditions that cannot be addressed by the Private Sector Housing Team action including lacking one or more of the following; a kitchen (eg sink and space for a cooker), an inside WC or a bathroom (e.g. basin and bath or shower).
- Other unsatisfactory housing conditions (higher category 2 hazard(s) where formal remedial action is being pursued, as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004))
- Applicants for sheltered housing where no higher need.
- People who need to move to a particular area in the city where failure to meet that need would cause hardship, eg to give or receive support.
- Multiple Needs that warrant high priority – applicants whose needs match more than three of the priority reasons from the band when considered cumulatively are deemed to be so severe as to warrant applicant being placed in a higher priority band.

Band D

- Transfer applicants with no other housing need.
- Homeseekers with no other housing need.
- Key workers.
- Owner-occupiers or those with a substantial amount of savings or substantial equity (not withstanding consideration of other needs e.g. medical).

Full details of how assessment and banding decisions are made can be found in Appendix A.

Lead Commissioner for Housing Discretion for other exceptional circumstances not covered by this scheme

From time to time a situation may arise that is not adequately reflected in this Allocations Scheme but the needs or circumstances are exceptional and significant. Where a case is considered exceptional but the applicant does not meet any of the Banding criteria or it is felt that a higher Banding than the one awarded is more appropriate then the Lead Commissioner for Housing in Brighton & hove City Council reserves the right to override this scheme and allow an applicant to have a higher priority than they would be entitled to under the Scheme. These cases will be few in number and will be closely monitored and reported on to ensure that the duty to achieve Reasonable Preference overall is not compromised. Lead Commissioner for Housing Discretion can also be used to block an allocation or to make a direct allocation of a property in circumstances not predicted by this scheme but where the Council is satisfied someone has unfairly taken advantage of the scheme to the detriment of those in housing need. Again, these cases will be monitored and will be few in number.

All of the above cases will be taken to Housing Management Consultative Committee on a yearly basis to review the numbers submitted, the outcome of the cases and brief reason for the case being submitted via this route

Priority for Working Household and those making a Positive Contribution to the City

There is an increased recognition of the importance of Allocations Schemes at a National level to ensure that Authorities make best use of housing stock, but also to improving access to affordable housing for those who are on low incomes and the ease of mobility for positively contributing to the community.

The Government has published “Fair and Flexible - Statutory Guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities In England”. This is enabling Local Authorities to be open to change within the Allocations Scheme so that is it responsive to local needs. To ensure that Brighton & Hove City Council promotes a positive contribution to the community **50%** of all permanent social council housing stock will be advertised with a priority being given to those who can show that the ingoing primary tenant(s) is/are working or is making a positive contribution to Brighton & Hove City.

Exceptions for Special Circumstances

There may be occasions where someone is serving a ‘Community order with an unpaid work requirement’, ‘community service order(s)’ or ‘compulsory manual labour’ and therefore would not be considered to be working or volunteering under this scheme and therefore would be excluded from the definition of the priorities above. The Council reserves the right to refuse that employment is relevant for the Policy where it is variance with Council policy and procedure.

Mobility standard flats and houses will be excluded from these allocations as will all Sheltered accommodation. It is hoped that this will help increase an economic balance within all parts of the city community.

Working Households

Economic Contribution

This part of the policy aims to support the economic growth of our city. We aim to encourage people who can, to work and want to raise levels of aspiration and ambition. We will offer priority on property adverts to the prime applicant(s) who is/are working (see definition below) and who are therefore making a contribution to Brighton & Hove’s economy. The priority for Working Households will apply to rehousing across the city and is not linked with a specified area or property type.

Definition of Working Households

For the purposes of this Allocations Scheme employment is described as having a permanent contract, working as a temporary member of staff or being self-employed. Applicants will only qualify if the worker has been

employed for 9 out of the last 12 months, is currently in employment and is working for a minimum of 16 hours per week. Verification will be sought at point of application as well as point of offer under the same terms. Applicants must provide payslips, P60, bank statements or a verifying letter on headed paper in order to qualify (we may also contact employers directly for confirmation of employment). If employment status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes. Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Income caps

In order to ensure those households most in need benefit from the council's Working Priority, income caps will be applied according to the size of property needed. For those who need a property of 2 or more bedrooms the cap will be £35,000pa gross income to include all forms of income to the household. For households requiring studio or 1 bed property, the cap will be £17,000 pa gross to include all forms of income to the household.

Applicants will be required to produce payslips at the point of application and offer.

Positive Contribution

Community Contribution

Brighton & Hove City Council wishes to recognise residents who make a positive contribution to the City and play a part in making their neighbourhood a strong, stable and healthy place to be. We believe those who help make it a good place to live, work and play are valuable people and they need to be recognised for the good they do. We will offer priority on property adverts to the prime applicant(s) who is/are positively contributing to their community (see definition below) and who are therefore making a contribution to Brighton & Hove's wellbeing. The priority for positive contribution Households will apply to rehousing across the city and is not linked with a specified area or property type.

Positive Contribution – definition

This covers households who are undertaking voluntary work or who are full-time carers and so unable to undertake paid work.

Volunteers

Volunteers must have been volunteering for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer. Volunteering must be for a not-for profit organisation or a charity and must be for a minimum of 32 hours per month.

Evidence required for voluntary work.

Letter from Manager responsible for Volunteers confirming applicant's involvement in **a minimum of 32 hours per month** of voluntary work in the requested area **for over 6 months**. This person must not be related to the applicant in any way and we may also contact manager directly for confirmation of work done. If volunteer status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home. The Council reserves the right to refuse that volunteering is relevant for the Policy where it is variance with Council policy and procedure.

Full Time Carers

If the prime applicant(s) provide care in an area of the City, the priority may be applied for in the area in which they provide care. Carers must have been providing for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer.

Evidence required for voluntary work.

Proof that full time care is required (this will be in the form of a care assessment from Adult Social Care or Children and Young Persons Trust in Brighton & Hove City Council) or a copy of the carers allowance that is being paid and proof of receipt of this. We will also require a letter from the person/people requiring care confirming applicant's full time involvement. We may also contact Adult Social Care, Children and Young Persons Trust, the person/people receiving the care or any other point of contact directly for confirmation of care given. If care status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Work & positive contribution and disability

The complexity and breadth of the needs of disabled people can not easily be tested by the means above and this is partly due to the fact that each individual will have varying degrees of ability which present unique barriers. We feel that it is important to recognise that many disabled people are and wish to remain active in their communities regardless of level of employment status or volunteer work and it has been found that they will likely benefit from being able to bid on all accommodation irrespective of level of work, paid or otherwise that they do. We therefore believe that anyone with a proven

chronic long term disability who works or volunteers (irrespective of hours carried out) should be able to be awarded this priority. Proof will still be required. If work or volunteer status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Exceptions for Special Circumstances

There may be occasions where someone is serving a 'Community order with an unpaid work requirement', 'community service order(s)' or 'compulsory manual labour' and therefore would not be considered to be 'working' or 'volunteering' under this scheme and therefore would be excluded from the definition of the priorities above.

The national and regional housing agendas are encouraging new housing schemes to be of mixed tenure. Where the council has the opportunity to nominate applicants to new schemes, the council will consider the needs of people in all Bands A - D to ensure new developments have a mix of residents.

Leaving Supported Accommodation

Accepted Homeless s193 households where supported housing is required

In some cases where a household has been accepted as homeless under s193 of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, an assessment of the housing need will take place. If the outcome of the assessment is that the household is not ready for independent accommodation but need supported accommodation, then they will not be able to access general needs housing.

The Integrated Support Pathway comprises high support accommodation, leading to lower supported accommodation, until ultimately households are ready to move into the general needs housing with floating support.

Households are worked with throughout this process and their skills and abilities are thoroughly assessed to ensure that they are ready to make each step to greater independence.

Band 1 is primary contact organisations, e.g. Rough Sleepers Street Services Team

Band 2 is high support accommodation with 24 hour staffing and intensive support

Band 3 is step down accommodation, independent flats and shared houses with several support hours a week.

Band 4 is floating support provided to clients who are living in general needs housing or the private rented sector.

Band 5 is peer to peer support for clients who are stable but need some community support.

When these households are ready to move on from the Council's Integrated Support Pathway reasonable preference will be awarded when a household is assessed as ready to move to independent settled housing on the recommendation of the Support or Key worker.

If ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan will be put in place. This will mean that only those households who are ready to manage a tenancy will be able to access social housing.

Re-assessing need and priority dates:

The council reviews all applications annually. If an applicant's circumstances change they may be moved up or down a band depending on their need.

All applicants must inform the Homemove team immediately when their circumstances change. If any change results in a band change, the Homemove team will write to inform the applicant of the new band, their new priority date if applicable and of their right to request a review of this decision. The principle of the scheme is that no one should overtake existing applicants in a band.

Moving up a band:

If an applicant moves up a band their priority date will be as follows:

- Overcrowding due to the birth of a child: the date will be taken from the child's date of birth.
- Transfer Priorities: the date as agreed by the Housing Manager.
- For Private Sector Housing Team reasons; the date the decision is received from the Private Sector Housing Team.
- For Social Services nominations, the date the request is received from Social Services.
- Medical reasons, the date the information is received into the Homemove Team.
- Homeless Households, the date duty was accepted by Brighton & Hove City Council.
- All other applicants, the date the application is received.

Moving down a band:

If an applicant moves down a Band, then their priority date will revert to the date that applied when the applicant was previously in that Band, or any earlier date in a higher Band.

Multiple Needs:

As part of the assessment of an applicant's needs, those applicants who have a range of needs will be identified. These cases will be assessed to identify

those applicants whose needs, when considered cumulatively, are deemed to be so severe as to warrant them being placed in a higher priority band. Where such exceptional circumstances exist and a higher priority band is thought to be appropriate the Homemove Team, having fully considered the details of the case, will forward their recommendation to the Lead Commissioner of Housing to seek authorisation that the applicant be placed in a higher priority band.

How does the council advertise empty properties?

The Homemove Magazine and website

The Homemove magazine is available on the Internet at www.homemove.org.uk and can be posted to applicants for a small fee. Full details of how to bid are set out in the Scheme User Guide which is sent out to all new applicants or is available from the Homemove website. The council will advertise all properties as being for Transfer applicants or Homeseekers or both and set the eligibility criteria for the property, such as:

- The minimum and maximum number of persons in the household.
- If there are age limits or for households without young children.
- The mobility group, if applicable, and details or potential for adaptation.
- If applications are restricted to special cases such as key workers.
- If pets are allowed.
- Whether it is sheltered housing.
- Who owns the property, whether council or housing association.
- The weekly rent, including any other charges.

The size of property you can bid for

An assessment of your housing need is made and you will be informed of the size of property you can bid for, please see the table below for guidance.

Size	Minimum people	Maximum people	Example Types of Household
Studio	1	1	Single Person
1 bed	1	2	Single Person or
2 bed	2	4	one to two child family or single
2 bed	2	3	A single person/couple
3 bed	3	6+ (depending on size)	two or more children
4bed	4	8+ (depending on size)	Five or more children

In deciding the appropriate size of a property the age and gender of the children within the household are considered for example a male and female child where one is over 10 years are not expected to share a bedroom. Therefore, some two child families are eligible for a two bedroom property and other two child families are eligible for a three bedroom property.

All properties adapted for disabled people will be advertised across all bands. Properties will have a mobility classification as below and priority will be given to those with a matching need. Properties will be also be advertised with notes where the potential for adaptation or further adaptation exists:

Mobility Group 1 – Typically suitable for a person who uses a wheelchair full time, ie indoors and outdoors. The property will provide full wheelchair access throughout.

Mobility Group 2 – Typically suitable for a person with restricted walking ability and for those that may need to use a wheelchair some of the time. The property will have internal and external level or ramped access, but some parts of the property may not be fully wheelchair accessible.

Mobility Group 3 – Typically suitable for a person able to manage two or three steps, but unable to manage steep gradients. The property may have adaptations to assist people with limited mobility.

Where a disabled applicant applies for accommodation which does not meet his or her access needs, the council will take into account whether it is reasonable and practicable to adapt that property when assessing the offer consistent with our duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and also whether it would meet the housing need. On occasion accommodation offers may be withdrawn from a case where the housing need would not be met.

Homeless Applicants and Property Size

In cases where households have been accepted as homeless under Part VII Housing Act 1996 and have been awarded the relevant band, a household may bid for accommodation that falls outside of the above criteria if it has been assessed that the property is reasonable for the households needs. The offer will discharge the council's duty under Part VII Housing Act 1996.

In addition

- Where there is overriding medical need to support the request the council will allocate households up to one additional bedroom over the standards set above.
- No applicants can bid for properties that would result in overcrowding or under-occupation.
- Where a household is moving to smaller accommodation, they may be entitled to assistance under the Transfer Incentive Scheme.
- If there are no eligible bidders over 50 years of age where an age restriction applies, applicants under 50 without children will be considered.

Sheltered Housing

Applicants can apply for sheltered housing using the Housing Registration form or can be referred by a relative, support worker, GP, or by the Medical Advisor recommending sheltered housing.

The council and Housing Association partners have a variety of sheltered accommodation specifically for an older community where it has been agreed with the Supporting People Team that a housing and support need is called for.

On receipt of an application for sheltered housing, the Homemove Team will register the application and place it in the relevant housing and support need band.

The Bidding Process

Eligible applicants can make bids for properties advertised by sending in a completed coupon, by telephone bidding, text bidding or by bidding online via the website. Applicants can also nominate a proxy bidder, and in exceptional circumstances request that the council bid on their behalf. Full details of how to bid are set out in the Scheme User Guide, which will be sent out to all new applicants and is available on the website www.homemove.org.uk.

Applicants with support needs and those who have difficulty with written English will be supported by an appointed support provider or the Homemove team.

Applicants who urgently need to move and who do not bid for properties may receive a direct bid. (see 'Direct bidding').

All bids for a property are checked against the eligibility rules, for example any age restrictions or size of property. Ineligible bids are excluded from consideration. We will provide advice and support to applicants who regularly bid for properties they are not eligible for.

Applicants can bid for up to three properties they are eligible for per fortnight. Bids can be made from the Friday the 'Homemove' magazine is published until 2pm the following Wednesday when bidding closes. Shortlists will be created within three working days and successful applicants contacted as soon as possible by the landlord.

Once an offer has been made the applicant has the choice to refuse the property. If they refuse they may be able to bid again the following cycle (see refusals). If an applicant is an Accepted Homeless case and refuses a successful bid (irrespective of bidding deadlines) then the Housing Options Team and the Homemove Team may consider that this is a full discharge of

duty. Any accepted homeless case considering refusing a part 6 offer should contact the Housing Options Team before formally refusing a property.

The Selection Process

All eligible bids for each property are placed in priority order. Priority is decided first by band, second by qualified local connection, thirdly by priority date within the band. Where a property has been advertised to give preference to a mobility group, bids from these applicants will be prioritised in band order above bids from members who are not in that stated group. Every bid will be assigned a random number when the bid is made. This number is used to resolve a tie; the highest number gets the priority. If there are no eligible bidders for a property the Homemove team may decide to re-advertise the property.

If the property is owned by a housing association, the prioritised list will be referred to the landlord for offer.

To minimise delays the landlord may arrange multiple viewings for up to three applicant households per property. Applicants will be required to bring proof of identity (for example Driving Licence or Passport) to the viewing. For general needs council housing, the Lettings Team will:

- Arrange accompanied viewings, advise on any non-essential repairs to be completed after the tenancy start date and give a target date for the completion of these repairs.
- Offer the applicant the option to accept and invite to sign for the tenancy or agree a decision within 24 hours.
- If the applicant chooses to refuse, the Lettings Officer will note the reasons for the refusal and the next applicant is selected for an offer. Some applicants are not penalised for refusing offers, there are however some cases listed in Direct Bidding and refusals that may lose priority if a suitable offer is refused and reason is not accepted.
- Applicants who do not provide proof of identity at the viewing will be given 24 hours to provide proof at a council office prior to signing for the tenancy, if this is not provided there is the chance the offer may be withdrawn and the case referred back to the Homemove team for investigation.
- Once an offer of accommodation has been accepted the Housing Application will be closed by the Homemove Team or the Lettings Team.

If the property is considered to be a sensitive let any issues surrounding this will be discussed with the incoming tenant prior to a tenancy being granted.

How Shortlisting Takes Place

Offers will normally be made to applicants at the top of the shortlist. In very exceptional circumstances we may need to reject an applicant on the shortlist

for a particular property to ensure that we meet the following objectives:

To ensure that communities are as balanced as possible

Landlords may adopt Local Lettings Plans for specific areas. These plans will need to be agreed by stakeholders and Brighton & Hove City Council and will consider the problems that need addressing, backed up by evidence. Properties subject to Local Lettings Plans will be clearly advertised and priority will be given to those that meet the agreed criteria.

To ensure that allocations are sensitively made

In exceptional cases, for housing management reasons, we may not offer to the person at the top of the shortlist. You will be contacted by the landlord in writing with the reasons for this decision.

To make best use of the council's stock and to reduce under occupation

From time to time a property may be advertised for those who are releasing larger council accommodation or reserved for those who need to move urgently because the council is undertaking work on the property.

To ensure properties are let quickly

This is important to minimise rent loss and empty property turn around time. Applicants must be available and able to take up an offer of accommodation, applicants will be contacted by telephone and letter, and if there is no contact after three days then the offer will be withdrawn.

If an offer is not made to the applicant at the top of the shortlist, the reasons will need to be agreed by the Homemove Manager in line with this policy.

Time Limits for Bidding for Properties

There is a six-month time limit for bidding for the following categories of applicants (except where otherwise noted):

- Social Services nominations under quota arrangements.
- Witness Protection nominations under a quota arrangement and agreed through the National Witness Mobility Service.
- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by Brighton & Hove City Council and placed in temporary accommodation where the landlord requires the property back or the property is unsuitable to meet the applicant's needs or a member of the household's needs, and where the household have been assessed as ready to manage independent accommodation and no further temporary accommodation can be sought as agreed by the Temporary Accommodation Allocations Manager.
- Households who are statutorily overcrowded.
- Transfer applicants needing a permanent or temporary decant where the property is imminently required for major repair.
- Private Sector Housing nomination issued under a quota arrangements as agreed with the Private Sector Housing Team Manager.

- Where the property is deemed to be 'statutorily overcrowded' by the Private Sector Housing Team under section X of the 1985 Housing Act and there are no practicable means to make the property suitable for the number of occupants within a reasonable time period.
- **Move on from care as agreed by housing options or leaving supported housing as agreed by supporting people.**
 - Priority transfer, agreed in exceptional circumstances due to significant and insurmountable problems associated with the tenant's occupation and there is imminent personal risk to the household if they remain.
 - Retiring council and HA employees, eg Sheltered Scheme Managers, Residential Estate Wardens where the council or HA has a contractual obligation to house.
 - Non-statutory successors – where agreement has been provided by Housing Management and Housing Options that the council will try to re-house in accommodation suitable for the applicant's housing need.
 - Under-occupiers who have succeeded to the tenancy where the council has grounds for seeking possession by offering suitable alternative accommodation.
 - Those leaving hospital under special arrangements have six weeks to bid.
 - Lead Commissioner of Housing discretion
 - Management Transfers – agreed by Housing Management for transfers on management grounds.
- Unsatisfactory housing conditions as confirmed after a visit from the Private Sector Housing Team and classed as a category 1 hazard(s) that cannot be rectified within 6 months (as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004))).

If an applicant does not bid within these time frames, the Homemove Team will bid on their behalf for suitable properties according to the case. If no bids are placed there is the right of the Homemove Team to review or remove the priority awarded and close the case.

Direct Bidding

It is our aim to advertise all properties through Homemove but there may be exceptional circumstances where we will make bids on behalf of households.

- Special circumstances, eg applicants who are assessed as high risk offenders have their application processed through a multi-agency panel. This group will be restricted from bidding and a property identified as recommended by the panel. The panel will make one reasonable offer and if refused the applicant can request a review.
- Accepted Homeless households in Band A who have failed to exercise choice through the bidding process within the six-week/month timescale or who have bid within the timescale but have not been successful. The council may make one reasonable offer of accommodation before duty is discharged, or priority lost.

- Retiring council employees or those who have highly specific requirements or who have failed to bid successfully within the six month time limit will be made a direct bids. If refused a Housing Manager will review the case and priority lost..
- Tenants who need to be temporarily or permanently decanted who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be offered one property. If the offer is refused Housing Management will review and/or begin proceedings for possession.
- Ex-council & HA tenants released or discharged from an institution that the council has given an undertaking to house who have not successfully bid within the timescale will be made one offer before duty is discharged or priority lost.
- Non-statutory successors who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one offer, if refused Housing Management will begin proceedings for possession.
- Priority Transfers who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one offer. If refused the Homemove Manager will review and may recommend priority lost and close the case.
- Those who have succeeded to a tenancy and are now underoccupying who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one offer. If refused the Homemove Manager will review and may recommend proceedings for possession.
- Retiring council and HA employees who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer. If refused the Homemove Manager will review and may recommend proceedings for possession.
- Those leaving hospital under special arrangements who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.
- **Move on from care as agreed by housing options or**
- Leaving supported housing as agreed by supporting people who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.
- Social Services nominations under quota arrangements who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.
- Witness Protection nominations under a quota arrangement and agreed through the National Witness Mobility Service who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.
- Private Sector Housing nomination issued under a quota arrangements, as agreed by the Private Sector Housing Manager, who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost..
- Severe need – exceptional circumstances and/or multiple needs, which warrant emergency priority – to be agreed by Head of TA and Allocations who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.
- **Lead Commissioner of Housing discretion priority who have failed to bid**

successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.

- Management Transfers – agreed by Housing Management for transfers on management grounds who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.
- Unsatisfactory housing conditions as confirmed after a visit from the Private Sector Housing Team and classed as a category 1 hazard(s) that cannot be rectified within 6 months (as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004)) who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.
- Where the property is deemed to be 'statutorily overcrowded' by the Private Sector Housing Team under section X of the 1985 Housing Act and there are no practicable means to make the property suitable for the number of occupants within a reasonable time period. who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.
- Those leaving hospital under special arrangements have six weeks to bid who have failed to bid successfully within their bidding time will be made one reasonable offer or priority may be lost.

Refusals following Direct Bidding

In the above cases the council will make a reasonable offer, one that as far as possible matches the size, and type of property the applicant is eligible for and in their areas of choice where possible. The applicant must give their reasons for refusing. The property will not be held empty while the refusal is reviewed but will be let to another applicant.

If the offer is to a homeless household the Temporary Accommodation Allocations Manager will review the case and will take the necessary follow-up action.

If an offer is to other categories of applicant the Homemove manager will consider the reasons for refusal. If there is a clear mismatch, eg where applicant or property details were incorrect, the offer will be withdrawn and the applicant notified. If the offer was found to be a reasonable one, the Homemove manager will advise the applicant of the reasons for this finding and of the effect that this decision has on their application.

Refusals of suitable accommodation

Applicants who have refused 3 reasonable first offers of accommodation within 12 months of the date of the initial offer will have their priority for re-housing reduced to Band D for a 12 month period, please note that if applicants who are second or third become first for an offer and refuse will be deemed 'first' under this part of the policy. After this 12 months period the applicant will have their case returned to their original band with their original date as long as a change of circumstances has not occurred.

It should be noted that if a tenancy is accepted and then refused without the tenancy being moved into this will be seen as a refusal and dealt with as the above and may result in a Band D priority for 12 months if the reason is not accepted.

All cases will be dealt with based on information supplied and submitted. There is no right to request a further review of the decision unless the applicant's circumstances change and they can provide evidence of this.

It should also be noted that this does not include Accepted Homeless cases in Band A where if households in this category are successful in obtaining an offer of accommodation within six months, this will be considered a final offer. The Council may exercise discretion to retain the current bandings in certain instances, for example where a Council or Housing Association tenant is releasing a property they are under occupying or one that has been adapted that could meet the needs of households who are waiting in a high banding.

Feedback on Let Properties

All properties let will be listed on the Homemove website showing the number of bidders for each property and the band and priority date of the successful applicant.

Ending a joint tenancy when one party to the tenancy leaves

Broadly speaking the council will grant a joint tenancy to partners applying together for housing. A joint tenancy remains in joint names until one or both joint tenants terminate the tenancy. In the case where one party to the joint tenancy has left the property and has no intention to return, the council may agree to offer a new sole tenancy to the remaining party if there is proof of priority Need and the accommodation matched the proved housing need, this will only occur once all Housing Options have been investigated. Council tenants must contact their Housing Officer for advice.

Local Lettings Plans

A local lettings plan is an agreement between the social landlord and local tenants and residents that restricts lettings in the area to certain households. This is done to tackle a specific issue or problem that has been identified locally at either block, street, estate, neighbourhood or City level, or to achieve a sustainable community on a new development

Local lettings plans allow the council or HA to:

- Identify and explore the barriers to access housing.
- Deliver better outcomes and improve life chances for current tenants and future residents.
- Developing a stock and demand profile of the area alongside the views of Local tenants and residents groups will primarily identify the need for any local lettings plans.

Four key elements will be considered when developing a new local lettings plan:

- Selective lettings - there may be some restrictions as to who can apply for certain properties or areas. For example this may involve age restrictions or a requirement to have a local connection.
- Making the best use of housing stock.
- Developing a balanced and sustainable community - where a local policy would promote community cohesion and balance the needs of existing and new tenants to create more inclusive neighbourhoods where people want to live. This may be in areas where there is a high turnover of properties either within an estate or amongst certain property types.
- Attract potential tenants - for example certain properties may be offered with a level of furnishings.

Key stages of development

Developing a stock and demand profile of the area - this may include a breakdown of and information on:

- Property types and numbers.
- Household type, including customer profile information of residents
- Voids and lettings within last financial year.
- Numbers and reasons for refusal.
- Reasons for rehousing and reasons why tenants leave.
- Where most availability has occurred and why.
- Number of registered transfers.
- The level of demand for properties in the area.
- How long tenancies are lasting.
- How quickly vacancies are filled.
- The layout of the area and services available.
- Social issues within the area and any multi-agency involvement.
- An estimate of vacancies expected.
- Local targets for performance.

Involving and consulting residents and tenants

The council and its partners will be responsible for consulting with residents and existing tenants and involving them in the development of any proposals for local lettings plans. This may involve carrying out 'door to door' surveys to collate resident and tenants views. Partner landlords who have stock within the area will be consulted on the need or otherwise for a local plan. Full Quality Impact Assessments will be carried out on all Plans.

Evaluating the information

The council will evaluate the information in the stock and demand profile. It will also take account of tenants' views when identifying recommendations to develop local lettings criteria. The council must also consider diversity and equal opportunity issues of local communities when formulating any local lettings plans.

Making recommendations

Recommendations may include some of the following criteria:

Setting a maximum or minimum age limit for certain properties.

- Preference to tenants / applicants with a local connection or who already live or work in that area.
- Preference to tenants / applicants who are giving or receiving support to or from family/extended family, voluntary work, day care, playgroups or other support from locally based organisations.
- Preference to people who are employed.
- Preference to other household types who would not normally be eligible under the council's letting policy – eg this could be couples without children, where there is a high density already in the area of families with children.
- Preference to specific groups of people for specific types of properties or in specific localities where this would benefit the community.
- Preference to people from BME and religious cultures.
- Meeting need of a category of people to ensure most appropriate use of stock.

Impact of Local Lettings Plans on the Lettings Policy

Once a report with recommendations has been finalised, the council will have to formally adopt the plan and this will override the current eligibility criteria. This will take into account the impact of overall lettings in the district. Any property subject to a local lettings plan will be clearly labelled within the advertisements.

Review of local lettings plans

The council will ensure that Local Lettings Plans are publicised and implemented. In addition, they will ensure that these plans are continuously monitored and reviewed annually with the involvement of local tenants and residents. If a local lettings plan is agreed it will be promoted within the affected area.

Housing Options

As you may be aware, there is a shortage of social housing in Brighton & Hove and a huge demand for accommodation. This means that council and housing association properties are not widely available and usually only go to those who are in the most need. Here are some other housing options you may wish to consider

Help and Advice: The Housing Options Team is based around preventing homelessness by offering housing options tailored to individual needs. They can offer specialist housing advice to help you keep your current home, advice for people who need support to live independently and advice on alternative housing options. Phone (01273) 294400 or e-mail housing.advice@brighton-hove.gov.uk for more information.

Private Renting: You can apply to the private rental agencies in the area for

suitable accommodation. You may be eligible for help with paying your rent by claiming for housing benefit. Contact Housing Options on (01273) 294400 for more information.

Mutual Exchanges: the council operates a mutual exchange system for council or housing association tenants who wish to swap their homes. Go to www.homemove.org.uk. Or speak to your Housing Officer.

Low Cost Home Ownership - if you are interested in Low Cost Home Ownership then register at www.homebuy.co.uk or call Moat Housing on 07002 662846 to be considered for new schemes in the City.

Appeals and Reviews

This section sets out the procedure for reviewing or appealing the following decisions:

- Not to put someone on the Joint Housing Register (or to exclude them from bidding) who has applied to be put on it or to remove someone from the JHR other than at his or her request.
- That a member is ineligible for an offer.
- Other decisions relating to the Choice Based Lettings Scheme, including banding and priority dates.
- Where a priority has been removed and a Direct bid implemented.

An officer senior to the officer making the original decision and who was not involved in making the decision will carry out these reviews.

Procedure

- A request for a review must be made within 21 days from the day on which the applicant is notified of the council's decision and the reasons for it. The council has discretion to extend the time limit if it considers this would be reasonable otherwise no appeal/review can be made.
- A request can be made in person, over the telephone or in writing.
- The officer carrying out the review will carry out an investigation, and, if further information is needed, invite the applicant to write or if unable to do this, make oral representation, or the applicant may also appoint someone on his or her behalf to do this.
- If the reviewing officer finds that the officer who took the decision did not take relevant information into account they will refer the file back to that officer for re-consideration.
- The officer will notify the applicant of their decision and the reasons for it within eight weeks of the request for a review, there is no right to request a review of the decision unless the applicant's circumstances change.

Appendix A: Assessments and Banding Decisions

Following the registration a decision will be made on what, if any, follow up action is appropriate e.g. referral to the Medical officer, Occupational

Therapist, Private Sector Housing Officer, Housing Options Team if there is a threat of homelessness, Social Services or Supporting People. The Homemove Team makes decisions about banding in the light of appropriate advice and the following guidelines.

Medical Needs

Members who indicate that they or anyone in their household have an illness or disability, which is affected by their current housing situation, or who may be vulnerable on physical or mental health grounds and in need of settled accommodation are requested to complete a medical self assessment form and/or mobility form. The Homemove Team considers this form, together with any relevant information from the General Practitioner, Hospital Consultant, or Occupational Therapist as appropriate. Where appropriate, the team also seeks advice from the Medical Officer.

Assessments are made of the effect of present housing on the state of health of the member or anyone in the household and not on the medical condition alone. In reaching the decision we will consider whether the overall effect on the household or any member of the household is sufficiently severe to warrant inclusion in a higher band.

In each case the recommendation is based on a judgement of housing need. Members with medical needs will be placed in one of the following bands:

Band A

Overriding (severe and immediate) medical priority awarded by the Medical Advisor – where the housing conditions are having a severe and immediate adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant emergency priority.

Band B

High (major) medical priority awarded by the Medical Advisor – where the housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant extra priority.

Band C

Low (minor) medical priority awarded by the Medical Advisor – where the housing conditions are having a minor adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant reasonable priority.

Where a household is overcrowded and/or there are other adverse circumstances the medical assessment will take into account the effect of the overcrowding and the adverse circumstances on the health of the household.

Mobility Needs

Irrespective of the band assessment, where a member, or one of the household, has a substantial and permanent physical disability which may place them in mobility groups 1, 2 (see below) the Homemove team will advise the household to refer themselves to the Occupational Therapist team, for a report on their housing needs. Taking into account the recommendations of the report the Homemove team will place the member in one of the following mobility groups:

Mobility Group 1 – Typically suitable for a person who uses a wheelchair full time, ie indoors and outdoors. The property will provide full wheelchair access throughout.

Mobility Group 2 – Typically suitable for a person with restricted walking ability and for those that may need to use a wheelchair some of the time. The property will have internal and external level or ramped access, but some parts of the property may not be fully wheelchair accessible.

Mobility Group 3 – Typically suitable for a person able to manage two or three steps, but unable to manage steep gradients. The property may have adaptations to assist people with limited mobility

Unsatisfactory Housing Conditions and Statutory Duty

The Homemove Manager agrees with the Private Sector Housing Team Manager an annual quota for housing clients in housing need.

Households will be placed in **Band A** where there are:

- Private Sector Housing nomination issued under a quota arrangements as agreed by the Private Sector Housing Team.

Households will be placed in **Band B** where there are:

- Other unsatisfactory housing conditions (category 1 hazard(s) that cannot be rectified within 6 months as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004)).

Households will be placed in **Band C** where there are:

- Unsanitary conditions that cannot be addressed by the Private Sector Housing Team action including lacking one or more of the following; a kitchen (eg sink and space for a cooker), an inside WC or a bathroom (e.g. basin and bath or shower).
- Other unsatisfactory housing conditions (higher category 2 hazard(s) where formal remedial action is being pursued, as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004))

Overcrowding

- Where the property is deemed to be 'statutorily overcrowded' by the Private Sector Housing Team under section X of the 1985 Housing Act and there are no practicable means to make the property suitable for the number of occupants within a reasonable time period the applicant will be placed in band A. Applicants will be placed in band B if they lack two or more bedrooms and band C if they lack one bedroom below these minimum provisions

Applicants will be placed in band B if they lack two or more bedrooms and band C if they lack one bedroom below these minimum provisions:

An independent adult (18 years+)	1 bedroom, including a bedsit
Co-habiting couples	1 bedroom
A dependent child	1 bedroom
Two children of opposite gender where one is	2 bedrooms
Two children of the same gender (any age)	1 bedroom

Please note that if there is a second reception room it will generally be deemed to be available for use as a bedroom and box rooms, which can reasonably be used by a child, will count as a single bedroom.

Accepted Homeless Applicants

Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by Brighton & Hove City Council under s193 of the 1996 Act or s.65 of the 1985 Act will be placed in the following bands:

Band A

- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by B&HCC, placed in temporary accommodation where the landlord requires the property back or the property is unsuitable to meet the applicant's needs or a member of the household's needs, and where the household have been assessed as ready to manage independent accommodation and no other temporary accommodation can be sought.

Band C

- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by Brighton & Hove City Council placed in B&B or short term temporary accommodation where the only prospect of meeting the household's needs is in long term accommodation (eg the applicant has obtained employment and is experiencing severe financial hardship or the household has severe medical or disability reasons).
- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by B&HCC making their own temporary arrangements or suffering family split due to a genuine lack of accommodation.

- Accepted Homeless households occupying temporary accommodation on an assured short hold or non-secure tenancy until such time as the landlord requires the property back or the household's needs are no longer met unless offered permanent accommodation.

Social Welfare Considerations

Where there are social welfare needs the Homemove Team will consider the recommendations of Social Services and other relative agencies and take into account any multiple needs. They will place the member in the appropriate band as follows:-

Band A - Severe Need Authorised by the Lead Commissioner for Housing where members are in 'severe need', where exceptional circumstances and/or multiple needs warrant emergency priority and they meet the criteria laid out in 'lead Commissioner for Housing Discretion'

Band B – Multiple Needs - Authorised by the Homemove Manager where an applicant who would otherwise be placed in band C, has needs which when assessed cumulatively are deemed to be so severe as to warrant them being placed in band B (three or more band reasons from Band C).

Band B - High priority hardship – To be authorised by the Homemove Manager for homeseekers with a dependent child/ren living in insecure accommodation and not having a bedroom (see the minimum bedroom standards) and lacking or sharing amenities.

Band B - Enabling Fostering/Adoption – Where social services make a recommendation that permanent accommodation be provided to enable someone to foster or adopt a child, if the Homemove Team agrees this then the applicant will be placed in band B. This is only accepted with the full support of Brighton & Hove City Council Children and Young Persons Trust.

Band C - Other social welfare/hardship – Households who need to move to a particular area in the city where failure to meet that need would cause hardship e.g. to give or receive care or support.

Band C - Delivering a Care Plan – This is where accommodation is required to assist Brighton & Hove City Councils Social Services in delivering a Care Plan (eg moving the member nearer to the source of care and support or to accommodate a carer), or to relieve other social/welfare hardship as agreed between Social Services and Housing.

Other High Priority Categories (applicable to Transfer Applicants only)

Band A - Priority Transfers

Agreed in exceptional circumstances by the Homemove Manager and

Housing Manager where there are significant insurmountable problems associated with the tenant's occupation of a dwelling and there is imminent personal risk to the tenant or their family if they remain in the dwelling.

Where the Homemove Manager and Housing Manager agree a non-urgent management transfer band B will be awarded.

Band A - Moving for major works

Awarded to transfer applicants if their property is imminently required for essential works and the tenant cannot remain in the property. Although the council will encourage and assist such tenants to make bids through the Homemove system we recognise that we have a duty to provide suitable alternative accommodation and will make a reasonable offer within the necessary timescale whether a successful bid is made or not.

Council Interest Transfers

Band A is awarded to facilitate a tenant's move in one of the following circumstances;-

- Make best use of adapted stock – for example where providing adaptations in the current property is not feasible but there may be a suitable alternative property available.
- Enable tenants under occupying family accommodation or adapted property they no longer require, to move to smaller accommodation or alternative accommodation under the Transfer Incentive Scheme (information on this scheme can be requested from your housing officer). Under occupiers who do not qualify for this scheme will be placed in band C.
- Non-statutory successors – approved by Housing Management, Housing Options and The Homemove team for an offer of suitable accommodation.
- Retiring council and HA employees, eg Sheltered Scheme Managers, Residential Estate Wardens where the council or HA has a contractual obligation to house.

Band B is awarded to facilitate a tenant's move for the following circumstance;-

- Ex-tenants returning from institutions, eg rehabilitation where a commitment has been made in order to secure the relinquishment of a council or HA tenancy on entering the institution.

Transfer Incentive Scheme (TIS)

The TIS scheme is a popular and successful route for many households, wanting to list to downsize to smaller flats from larger family homes they no longer need.

The table below shows the payment amounts (before any deductions)

	payment
Downsizing by one bedroom	1,000
Downsizing by two bedrooms	1,500
Downsizing by three bedrooms	2,000
Downsizing by four bedrooms	2,500
moving from a wheelchair-adapted property, even if the same size	1,000

The scheme to also include tenants moving from not just fully wheelchair adapted properties, but also partially adapted properties they no longer need (graded Mobility 2), to non-adapted, non-Mobility rated properties. This is because there are very few fully wheelchair adapted properties in our council stock, but many that have been partially adapted (eg with level access showers, ramps).

It should be noted that some Housing Association Tenants can qualify for the Priority Banding but that the payments listed above are for Council tenants who have held standard tenancies for at least 12 months.

Other categories

Move on from care – Band A

The Housing Options Team assists those moving on from care to find suitable accommodation. For the majority of applicants, supported accommodation is appropriate, but some applicants are referred by Housing Options to the Homemove team who place the applicants in band A. Applicants must normally have a local connection as defined by Part V11 of the Housing Act 1996.

Move on from Support Housing – Band A

For the majority of applicants agencies will be expected to work with their clients to access the private rented sector. For exceptional cases, who has been accepted as homeless under s193 of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, an assessment of the housing need will take place. If the outcome of the assessment is that the household is not ready for independent accommodation but need supported accommodation, then they will not be able to access general needs housing.

The Integrated Support Pathway comprises high support accommodation, leading to lower supported accommodation, until ultimately households are ready to move into the general needs housing with floating support.

Households are worked with throughout this process and their skills and abilities are thoroughly assessed to ensure that they are ready to make each step to greater independence.

Band 1 is primary contact organisations, e.g. Rough Sleepers Street Services Team

Band 2 is high support accommodation with 24 hour staffing and intensive support

Band 3 is step down accommodation, independent flats and shared houses with several support hours a week.

Band 4 is floating support provided to clients who are living in general needs housing or the private rented sector.

Band 5 is peer to peer support for clients who are stable but need some community support.

When these households are ready to move on from the Council's Integrated Support Pathway reasonable preference will be awarded when a household is assessed as ready to move to independent settled housing on the recommendation of the Support or Key worker.

If ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan will be put in place. This will mean that only those households who are ready to manage a tenancy will be able to access social housing.

Social Services Nominations under quota arrangements – Band A

The Homemove Manager and Housing Options Manager agrees with Social Services an annual quota for housing clients in housing need under two schemes: 1. The Divert Scheme, which has been designed to prevent children being looked after by the Local Authority, and 2. General Social Services Nominations as recommended at Head of Service level.

Witness Protection – Band A

The Homemove Manager agrees with NWMS (National Witness Mobility Service) an annual quota for housing clients in housing need.

APPENDIX 7

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Recommended Changes:

Local Connection

Applicants are able to apply for social housing within Brighton & Hove from anywhere within the United Kingdom. However, in order to ensure that the Council meets the needs of the local community, reduced priority will be given to those people without a local connection.

Response from RSL

Could the wording be changed to make it a bit clearer ie Brighton and Hove is a high demand area where demand for social housing is in excess of supply. For this reason applicants, who live outside the area with no local connection to it, cannot expect the same priority for housing as those with a local connection.

Response from support provider.

Due to the limited amount of social housing available, some of the team felt it would be fairer to close the list to families without a local connection but allow them to access mutual exchanges.

The following factors will be taken into account in determining whether or not an applicant has a local connection with the Brighton & Hove City Council area. An application is awarded a local connection if:

- an applicant is currently residing in the City in either temporary or permanent accommodation and has been resident in the city for a minimum of 24 months or is a serving member of the armed forces and is posted in the Brighton & Hove City Council Area.

Response from RSL

There is no mention if they do not live but are in permanent paid work – is this going to be included.

Response from Supported Accommodation provider

The Family Connection is not included in the Consultation paper.

Could you confirm the Family Connection is still in place? If it were removed this would have a big impact on many of our clients who rely on the support of their families.

Comment from Conservative Councillor

Should this not be open to all armed forces wherever they are/have been based?

Comment from a tenant

I couldn't see any provision in the Allocation policy for this aside from that if people were based here as part of the forces then it would give a local connection. However, in terms of those who had lived here prior to going in the forces, then after several years are coming out – then they wouldn't have a local connection here. Can we include this in the consultation along the lines of residency prior to the armed forces and ignoring the period they were in the forces in order to consider Local connection e.g. if someone lived here for 5 years and then joined the forces for the next 5 years and then applied to us – we'd ignore the 5 years in the forces and look at the 5 years they were resident?

Response from Support provider

Why are the armed forces identified as a special case? Serving members of the forces have a reasonable income and generally have access to housing.

For the purposes of determining local connection, living in Brighton & Hove will not include the following:

- Occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on an official residential site.
- Occupation of a holiday letting which includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation for the purposes of a holiday.
- Resident of Bail Hostels or other such accommodation.
- In-Patient of Hospitals/specialist centres

Exceptions

There may be occasions not predicted by this Allocation Scheme where the application of the Local Connection Policy is deemed inappropriate by the Council and accordingly there is a Director level Discretion available not to invoke the Policy in these Special Circumstances. One example might be someone who has been placed out of Brighton & Hove for a period of time, whilst being looked after by the Children & Young Persons Trust, or the Community Mental Health Team – although each case would be considered on its merits.

Applicants who do not have a local connection with Brighton & Hove but to whom the City Council have accepted a full Homelessness duty under section 193(2) will not be subject to any reduction in their priority (as the Council is under a statutory duty to provide long term settled housing).

Leaving Supported Accommodation

Accepted Homeless s193 households where supported housing is required

In some cases where a household has been accepted as homeless under s193 of the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, an assessment of the housing need will take place. If the outcome of the assessment is that the household is not ready for independent accommodation but need supported accommodation, then they will not be able to access general needs housing.

The Integrated Support Pathway comprises high support accommodation, leading to lower supported accommodation, until ultimately households are ready to move into the general needs housing with floating support.

Households are worked with throughout this process and their skills and abilities are interrogated to ensure that they are ready to make each step to greater independence.

Band 1 is primary contact organisations, e.g. Rough Sleepers Street Services Team

Band 2 is high support accommodation with 24 hour staffing and intensive support

Band 3 is step down accommodation, independent flats and shared houses with several support hours a week.

Band 4 is floating support provided to clients who are living in the general needs sector.

Band 5 is peer to peer support for clients who are stable but need some community support.

When these households are ready to move on from the Council's Integrated Support Pathway reasonable preference will be awarded when a household is assessed as ready to move to independent settled housing on the recommendation of the support worker.

If ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan will be put in place. This will mean that only those households who are ready to manage a tenancy will be able to access Social housing.

Responses from support provider

1. The heading and introduction to Section 2 refer explicitly to cases accepted as homeless under s193 of the Housing Act 1996. But some clients in supported housing, who have been referred there because they need support, have not actually been accepted as statutorily homeless. So despite the heading and introduction, do the recommended changes equally apply to them?

2. Section 2 focuses only on the Integrated Support Pathway. However the term “Supported Accommodation” also covers services such as sheltered housing and specialist accommodation for victims of domestic violence, people with learning difficulties, people with mental health problems, offenders, etc. If clients are ready to leave those other types of supported housing, do the recommended changes equally apply to them?
3. Currently people living in supported accommodation have the same rights as all other housing applicants to apply for council accommodation and to be considered under the normal allocations policy. Consequently they might qualify for a council tenancy by virtue of medical circumstances, employment, positive contribution to the city, etc. even straight from a Band 2 hostel. Do the recommended changes mean that this right will no longer apply? Do the recommended changes mean that supported single homeless clients must travel through every stage of the Integrated Support Pathway before leaving supported housing, regardless of their personal needs? If so, is this expected to apply when moving to private housing or just to social housing? Exactly who is the “support worker” who will assess when a household is ready to move to independent settled housing?
4. Service users are only allowed to stay in different Bands of the Integrated Support Pathway for certain lengths of time, typically 2 years. However they are not allowed to move into independent settled housing until they are ready to do so. When someone’s support needs genuinely last longer than ISP time limits, for example through combinations of mental disability and ill health for which no cure is readily available, where should they therefore go?
5. Would it be possible to change terminology so that confusion can be avoided between “Bands” in the Integrated Support Pathway and “Bands” in the Housing Allocation Policy?

Response from support provider

Route 1 is not part of the Integrated Support Pathway, as is a Mental health service. Therefore, can you confirm where Route 1 sits within this context?

Response from Green Party

This system will only work if there is support available for people moving on from the Council’s Integrated Support Pathway through **Professional Support Workers** yet I understand that we have a shortage of them already

Responses from Support provider

What if someone doesn't want to live in supported accommodation and what about families?

The word "interrogated" was felt to be inappropriate. "thoroughly assessed" may sound better.

'When these households are ready to move on from the Council's Integrated Support Pathway reasonable preference will be awarded when a household is assessed as ready to move to independent settled housing on the recommendation of the support worker.'

What criteria will be used to make this assessment of skills?

'If ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan will be put in place. This will mean that only those households who are ready to manage a tenancy will be able to access Social housing.'

Does this mean manage a tenancy without even floating support?

Refusals of suitable accommodation

Applicants who have refused 3 reasonable offers of accommodation within 12 months of the date of the first offer will have their priority for re-housing reduced to Band D for a 12 month period. After this 12 months period the applicant will have their case returned to their original band with their original date as long as a change of circumstances has not occurred. This does not include Accepted Homeless cases where if households in this category are successful in obtaining an offer of accommodation within six months, this will be considered a final offer.

Response from an RSL

What about applicants that sign for a tenancy and then rejects the property, does this count as a refusal?

Response from a Support Provider

Please could you explain what constitutes 'reasonable accommodation'?

Is there an opportunity to appeal against a decision to demote banding if a client disagrees that proposed accommodation is of a reasonable standard?

Does this rule apply only to offers or does it also include viewings? Given that the mental health of our clients may impair their decision making process will there be any allowance made for this?

Also, if a client is third priority and offered a flat that both priority candidates turn down will the same rules apply?

Response from Green Party

Refusals of suitable accommodation. We are concerned that there is no support for people who are 'voluntarily homeless' as there are reported cases of people who are classed in this bracket when, although they may have defaulted on some rent payments (in private and council rented accommodation), they have made tremendous efforts to make up for this. These people are even refused advice from the Housing Options Team.

Response from Hastings Borough Council

Not objecting to but goes against the Sussex Homemove principals that applicants are free to exercise choice without being penalised for refusing. Also, may discourage people from bidding for hard-to-let properties which may impact upon voids times increasing. Could force household to apply as homeless if they have no realistic chance of being rehoused after banding reduced.

Response from an RSL

We would strongly support a change whereby a nominations priority is reduced to a band D if they decline three reasonable offers. There is a particular high rate of refusals in B&H and nominations are very aware that currently there is no consequence to declining properties, for any reason however trivial.

Response from Housing Management:

My understanding is that currently home seekers or transfer applicants can bid for, view and then refuse a property limitlessly. I welcome the idea of limiting the number of refusals. However, I think it would be helpful to have some guidance on how the decision as to what constitutes a reasonable offer is made. It might be that this is different for different categories of applicant. I'm thinking for example where we are desperate to get back a particular property from a transfer applicant i.e. a 5 bed house or a property with very much needed adaptations – in such cases we may want the flexibility to allow more than two refusals. This may particularly be the case where the property being left is pristine and the new property only meets our basic minimum standard.

Leaving Care

Move on from Care.

Applicants are awarded this category in accordance with protocols between the Housing Service and the Children and Young Persons Trust. Applicants

must be a former “Relevant Child” as defined by the Children Leaving Care Act 2002 and be a young person at risk.

The evidence to support this will be provided by the City’s Housing Options Team and will consist of confirmation that:

- The care leaver is ready to move to independent settled housing and is genuinely prepared for a move to independent living.
- The care leaver possesses the life skills to manage a tenancy including managing a rent account.
- The care leaver is in need of either long term or medium term tenancy support.

The Council wants to ensure that care leavers and other vulnerable people with a support needs are helped to move on from schemes. It is important that they are only able to access social housing when they are assessed as ready to move on.

Therefore their application for housing will be demoted to Band D until they are ready to move on and this has been confirmed by the Housing Options team specialist worker. At this point the applications will be placed in the appropriate Housing Need Band as assessed under the full Allocations Scheme.

The following cases leaving care will qualify for Reasonable Preference under this category:

- An applicant is ready to move to independent settled housing on the recommendation of the Housing Options Team.
- The applicant is in need of appropriate tenancy support.
- That a support package has been assessed and where required, is in place.

Ongoing support needs have been assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan is in place.

Once this information has been assessed and received by the Homemove Team a Housing Needs assessment will take place in accordance with the main assessment criteria laid out in the Allocations Scheme.

Responses from a Support Provider

Leaving Care

Please see point 2. As Route 1 does not follow the ISP is this where our clients would fit into the consultation ?

How long will the demotion process to Band D take?

How will readiness for move on be assessed? Who is the specialist worker who confirms this (David Allerton?)?

Response from a Support Provider

What is the criteria for this and how will it be assessed and verified?

Priority for Working Household and those making a Positive Contribution to the City

There is an increased recognition of the importance of Allocations Schemes at a National level to ensure that Authorities make best use of housing stock, but also to improving access to affordable housing for those who are on low incomes and the ease of mobility for positively contributing to the community.

Response from Housing Management

I'm assuming the first paragraph here is referring to people working or volunteering within organisations that the council would not wish to support – i.e. those with extreme views or whose beliefs contradict the council's values. If that is not what was meant then this needs to be included wither here and / or in the positive contribution section.

The Government has published "Fair and Flexible - Statutory Guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities In England". This is enabling Local Authorities to be open to change within the Allocations Scheme so that is it responsive to local needs.

To ensure that Brighton & Hove City Council promotes a positive contribution to the community at least 50% of all permanent social council housing stock will be advertised with a priority being given to those who can show that the ingoing primary tenant(s) is/are working or is making a positive contribution to Brighton & Hove City.

Response from Green Party

Priority for Working Household and those making a Positive Contribution to the City

For the reasons outlined in the introduction we think 50% is too high a quota and would propose this is reduced to 25%.

Response from Policy, Performance & Analysis

With regard to paragraph 5 and priority for working household, the target of 50% seems very high. However I am sure that there are robust calculations to arrive at this figure and I am aware that the Administration is particularly keen on promoting this policy.

Exceptions for Special Circumstances

There may be occasions not predicted by this Allocation Scheme where the application of the priority given to working family policy/positive contribution is deemed inappropriate by the Council and accordingly there is Director Level Discretion available not to invoke the Policy in these Special Circumstances.

Mobility standard flats and houses will be excluded from these allocations as will all Sheltered accommodation. It is hoped that this will help increase an economic balance within all parts of the city community.

Response from Housing Management:

To exclude sheltered housing and mobility standard flats from the Working Households and Positive Contribution LLP effectively discriminates against older people with a need for sheltered housing and those requiring mobility standard properties who may well be working and / or contributing. With a growing older population, better health care and the current economic climate older people are often working well beyond retirement age or volunteering. Indeed it is recognised that keeping active both physically and mentally helps keep older people happy and healthy

Working Households Economic Contribution

This part of the policy aims to support the economic growth of our city. We aim to encourage people who can, to work and want to raise levels of aspiration and ambition. We will offer priority on property adverts to the prime applicant(s) who is/are working (see definition below) and who are therefore making a contribution to Brighton & Hove's economy. The priority for Working Households will apply to rehousing across the city and is not linked with a specified area or property type.

Response from Green Party

Definition of working households: Applicants will only qualify if the worker has been employed for 9 out of the last 12 months, is currently in employment and is working for a minimum of 16 hours per week. We feel this definition is too harsh, particularly in these times of recession. Someone may have tried very hard to find work but only succeeded in finding a little. We would propose therefore that this is changed to 6 out of the last 12 months.

Definition of Working Households

For the purposes of this Allocations Scheme employment is described as having a permanent contract, working as a temporary member of staff or being self-employed. Applicants will only qualify if the worker has been employed for 9 out of the last 12 months, is currently in employment and is

working for a minimum of 16 hours per week. Verification will be sought at point of application as well as point of offer under the same terms. Applicants must provide payslips, P60, bank statements or a verifying letter on headed paper in order to qualify (we may also contact employers directly for confirmation of employment). If employment status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes. Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Response from a support provider

Is there an income limit?

Response from Housing Management:

Do we need to include the maximum household income in this section of the policy – even if the policy states this will be reviewed every 12 months or 2 years?

Response from a support provider

How much is a substantial fine? Some of the team thought that loss of home on its own was adequate as families on low incomes would struggle to pay the fine.

Positive Contribution

Community Contribution

Brighton & Hove City Council wishes to recognise residents who make a positive contribution to the City and play a part in making their neighbourhood a strong, stable and healthy place to be. We believe those who help make it a good place to live, work and play are valuable people and they need to be recognised for the good they do. We will offer priority on property adverts to the prime applicant(s) who is/are positively contributing to their community (see definition below) and who are therefore making a contribution to Brighton & Hove's wellbeing. The priority for positive contribution Households will apply to rehousing across the city and is not linked with a specified area or property type.

Positive Contribution – definition

This covers households who are undertaking voluntary work or who are full-time carers and so unable to undertake paid work.

Volunteers

Volunteers must have been volunteering for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer.

Volunteering must be for a not-for profit organisation or a charity and must be for a minimum of 32 hours per month.

Evidence required for voluntary work.

Letter from Manager responsible for Volunteers confirming applicant's involvement in a minimum of 32 hours per month of voluntary work in the requested area for over 6 months. This person must not be related to the applicant in any way and we may also contact manager directly for confirmation of work done. If volunteer status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Full Time Carers

If the prime applicant(s) provide care in an area of the City, the priority may be applied for in the area in which they provide care. Carers must have been providing for a continuous period of at least 6 months up to the point of application and the same at point of offer.

Evidence required for carers.

Proof that full time care is required (this will be in the form of a care assessment from Adult Social Care or Children and Young Persons Trust in Brighton & Hove City Council) or a copy of the carers allowance that is being paid and proof of receipt of this. We will also require a letter from the person/people requiring care confirming applicant's full time involvement. We may also contact Adult Social Care, Children and Young Persons Trust, the person/people receiving the care or any other point of contact directly for confirmation of care given. If care status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Response from a support provider

Are people requiring full time care likely to be able to write a letter

Work & positive contribution and disability

The complexity and breadth of the needs of disabled people can not easily be tested by the means above and this is partly due to the fact that each individual will have varying degrees of ability which present unique barriers. We feel that it is important to recognise that many disabled people are and wish to remain active in their communities regardless of level of employment status or volunteer work and it has been found that they will likely benefit from being able to bid on all accommodation irrespective of level of work, paid or otherwise that they do. We therefore believe that anyone with a mobility 1 assessment on the Housing Register who can prove that they work or volunteer (irrespective of hours carried out) should be able to be awarded this priority. Normal proof (as stated above) will still be required. If work or volunteer status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Response from Accessible Housing Coordinators

New amended paragraph suggested:

Work & positive contribution and disability

The complexity and breadth of the needs of disabled people can not easily be tested by the means above and this is partly due to the fact that each individual will have varying degrees of ability which present unique barriers. We feel that it is important to recognise that many disabled people are and wish to remain active in their communities regardless of level of employment status or volunteer work and it has been found that they will likely benefit from being able to bid on all accommodation irrespective of level of work, paid or otherwise that they do. We therefore believe that anyone with a proven chronic long term disability who works or volunteers (irrespective of hours carried out) should be able to be awarded this priority. Proof will still be required. If work or volunteer status changes whilst on the Housing Register or at the point of offer it is up to the prime applicant(s) to inform the homemove team immediately of the changes, as part of Section 171 of the Housing Act 1996 makes it an offence to withhold information that we reasonably require to assess an application, or to provide false or misleading information that leads to gaining a tenancy. We will take appropriate action against anyone who gains a tenancy through knowingly providing false information. This may result in a substantial fine and/ or the loss of the home.

Exceptions for Special Circumstances

There may be occasions not predicted by this Allocation Scheme where the application of the priority given to working family policy/positive contribution is deemed inappropriate by the Council and accordingly there is a Director Level Discretion available not to invoke the Policy in these Special Circumstances.

It should be noted that anyone serving 'community service order(s)' or 'compulsory manual labour' would not be considered to be working or volunteering under this scheme and therefore would be excluded from the definition of the priorities above.

Response from a Support Provider

Please can you confirm the 'Special Circumstances' exemption from this rule?

Does this rule apply to our clients?

How is disability defined?

Will there be any allowance made for our client's who are unwell or may have periods where their Mental Health will not allow them to attend their voluntary or work placement.

Please clarify what a 'mobility 1' assessment is and who carries this out?

Response from Green Party

Exceptions for Special Circumstances. We feel as the restrictions are already harsh it's hard to imagine what kind of special circumstances there could be other than 'community service order' / 'compulsory manual labour'. Without examples to justify this we feel the first paragraph should be removed.

Response from a Support provider

Will this be reported in the public domain i.e. Homemove magazine and website?

Response from Policy, Performance & Analysis

Paragraph 5 exceptions for special circumstances refers to Director Level Discretion –given the recent restructure I wonder if this should be either the Head of Service or the Chief Executive given roles and responsibilities and line management arrangements. The same applies to section 7.

Regarding paragraph 5.2 volunteers, 32 hours per month seems very high – this translates to approx. 8 hours a week. I would suggest that a range may be more inclusive, for example a single non-working parent may only be able to volunteer for one morning a week due to child care but is still making a valid contribution to the local community and city economy. Having a range would allow for greater recognition of individuals different, valid, circumstances.

Minor wording changes regarding Private sector housing repairs banding to bring the allocations scheme into line with the H&S hazard rating system

Band A

Private Sector Housing nomination issued under a quota arrangements as agreed by the Private Sector Housing Team.

Band B

Other unsatisfactory housing conditions (category 1 hazard(s) that cannot be rectified within 6 months as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004)).

Band C

Unsanitary conditions that cannot be addressed by the Private Sector Housing Team action including lacking one or more of the following; a kitchen (e.g. sink and space for a cooker), an inside WC or a bathroom (e.g. basin and bath or shower).

Other unsatisfactory housing conditions (higher category 2 hazard(s) where formal remedial action is being pursued, as assessed by the Private Sector Housing Team using the HHSRS (Housing Health and Safety Rating System (part 1 HA 2004))

Appendix A

Overcrowding

Where the property is deemed to be 'statutorily overcrowded' by the Private Sector Housing Team under section X of the 1985 Housing Act and there are no practicable means to make the property suitable for the number of occupants within a reasonable time period the applicant will be placed in band A. Applicants will be placed in band B if they lack two or more bedrooms and band C if they lack one bedroom below these minimum provisions

Response from a Supported provider

Please can you explain what this means?

Directors Discretion (for other exceptional circumstances not covered by this scheme)

To replace Severe need – exceptional circumstances and/or multiple needs, which warrant emergency priority – to be agreed by Head of TA and Allocations.

From time to time a situation may arise that is not adequately reflected in this Allocations Scheme but the needs or circumstances are exceptional and significant. Where a case is considered exceptional but the applicant does not meet any of the Banding criteria or it is felt that a higher Banding than the one awarded is more appropriate then the Strategic Director for Housing reserves the right to override this scheme and allow an applicant to have a higher priority than they would be entitled to under the Scheme. These cases will be few in number and will be closely monitored and regularly reported on to ensure that the duty to achieve Reasonable Preference overall is not compromised. Directors Discretion can also be used to block an allocation or to make a direct allocation of a property in circumstances not predicted by this scheme but where the Council is satisfied someone has unfairly taken advantage of the scheme to the detriment of those in housing need. Again, these cases will be monitored and are will be few in number.

Response from Housing Management:

Would be useful to know where and to whom these cases will be reported and also how frequently.

Homeless priority changes

In order for the Council to maximise and make the best use of social housing stock as well as local private sector housing all Accepted Homeless households who are owed a full part 7 main duty with the following priority reason will be placed into Band C. The council will retain the main duty owed until such time as suitable accommodation can be sought to warrant the discharge of this duty.

The following bands will now be placed into Band C and will be helped via the Temporary Accommodation Allocations Team.

- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by Brighton & Hove City Council placed in B&B or short term temporary accommodation where the only prospect of meeting the household's needs is in permanent accommodation (e.g. the applicant has obtained employment and is experiencing severe financial hardship or the household has severe medical or disability reasons).
- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by B&HCC making their own temporary arrangements or suffering family split due to a genuine lack of accommodation.

These band reasons will now be aligned with the following that is currently Band C under the allocations scheme:

- Accepted Homeless households occupying temporary accommodation on an assured short hold or non-secure tenancy until such time as the landlord requires the property back or the household's needs are no longer met unless offered permanent accommodation.

At the end of all private sector leases further leased accommodation will be considered. If at this time no accommodation can be sought or if for financial reasons or accessibility reasons the leased accommodation is no longer suitable (as decided by the temporary Accommodation Allocations Manager) the case will be recommended to the Homemove Team to be placed into Band A for social housing. At this time the following band reason will be given:

- Accepted Homeless households owed the main duty by B&HCC, placed in temporary accommodation where the landlord requires the property back or the property is unsuitable to meet the applicant's needs or a member of the household's needs, and where the household have been assessed as ready to manage independent accommodation.

Response from a Supported Provider

If a client approaches Route 1 with a status of homelessness or vulnerability do the Council discharge their duty of care?

Are Route 1 considered temporary accommodation?

Response from an RSL

Whilst the effect of such changes may not have a direct impact on HydeMartlet, we were surprised by this area as it looked like it may lead to a large increase in temporary accommodation/ B&B costs.

Closing of Homemove applications

Once a household has been moved via the Homemove Scheme it will be deemed that housing need has been met and therefore all housing applications for the entire household will be closed and sent to the landlord for the information to form the start of the tenancy file.

Change in wording for adapted property releases in Band A

Previous

- Releasing an adapted property or to make best use of adapted stock – at the council's discretion, where the tenant does not require adaptations or where the existing property cannot be adapted to meet the applicant's needs

Change to

- Releasing an adapted property or to make best use of adapted stock – at the council’s discretion, where the tenant does not require the mobility 1 or 2 assessed adaptations or where the existing assessed property cannot be adapted to meet the applicant’s mobility 1 assessed needs.

Medical priority wording changes

Band A

Overriding (severe and immediate) medical priority awarded by the Medical Advisor – where the housing conditions are having a severe and immediate adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant emergency priority.

Band B

High (major) medical priority awarded by the Medical Advisor – where the housing conditions are having a major adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant extra priority.

Band C

Low (minor) medical priority awarded by the Medical Advisor – where the housing conditions are having a minor adverse effect on the medical condition of the applicant or member of the current household as to warrant reasonable priority.

Response from a Supported provider

Please can we have a copy of the original wording to compare this version against?

Response from Green Party

Medical priority wording changes

We feel that there should also be changes to the wording in the priority bands to include people suffering from domestic violence who should be in Band A as well as people suffering from bullying and harassment which we feel should be classed as Band A or Band B depending on the severity of the case

Transfer (not tenants) Incentive Scheme

The TIS scheme has proved very popular and successful, currently there 120 tenants on the waiting list to downsize to smaller flats from larger family homes they no-longer need (usually when adult children have left home).

However there is evidence to suggest Brighton & Hove currently offers very high rates of incentive payments compared to other local Authorities. This combined with the need to continue to ensure we make best use of the

existing social housing stock and meet the needs of the city has prompted a value for money review of the Scheme without affecting its success.

Recommendations:

- Reduce the amount of incentive payment so around 20- 30 additional tenants can be helped to move, releasing large family homes, within the same budget.

	Current payment	Proposed new payment
Downsizing by one bedroom	2,000	1,000
Downsizing by two bedrooms	2,500	1,500
Downsizing by three bedrooms	3,000	2,000
Downsizing by four bedrooms	3,500	2,500
moving from a wheelchair-adapted property, even if the same size	2,000	1,000

- Amend the scheme to also include

tenants moving from not just mobility 1 standard properties, but also adapted properties that have been assessed as meeting a mobility 2 standard, that they no-longer need and are moving to non-adapted, non-mobility assessed properties. This is because there are very few fully wheelchair adapted properties in our council stock, but many that have been partially adapted (e.g. with level access showers, ramps). These properties are in great demand and there are currently 162 disabled residents waiting for this type of property.

- The scheme currently pays an incentive payment if tenants move to the private sector, releasing a family home. However there is currently a 3 month waiting period. This is acting as a disincentive for tenants to move, and so it is recommended that the waiting period be removed.

Response from Housing Management:

I didn't understand what was meant by a waiting period? Is this the same as a cooling off period so that households aren't rushing into perhaps better quality and more appropriate but less secure private rented accommodation. If so then I think the waiting period should remain or check and balance be put in place to ensure we know a person in this position fully understands what they are agreeing to and what may happen in the future.

General Feedback:

several comment from the Survivors Network Brighton-

I received a copy of the proposed changes to the allocations policy at the Domestic Violence Forum and would like to feed in some comments.

Survivors' Network works with women who have experienced sexual violence and abuse. We work with approximately 1000 women a year and provide a range of confidential services designed to provide practical information and emotional support. The majority of the women that we work with are survivors of childhood sexual abuse and as a result have long entrenched coping strategies resulting from PTSD. The other significant category of clients we work with are adult women who have experienced rape or sexual assault. More details on our services can be found on our website.

I have been with Survivors' Network now for four years and in my time with the organisation I have been made aware of a growing unmet need in the city with regard to changes in housing and a lack of flexibility for survivors with regard their housing priorities. I feel that the revisiting of the allocations policy gives us an opportunity to express these clients' wishes.

Firstly it should be noted that the majority of women will not face immediate threat of homelessness as a result of their sexual violence experience – in this way women who have experienced sexual violence are at a lower risk level than those who have experienced domestic violence or abuse. I do believe though that a woman's experience of sexual violence does mean that she has significant housing needs that are not currently taken into account.

Survivors of childhood sexual abuse have commented to us that their housing has become untenable due to their experiences of childhood sexual abuse. This can be to do with location – for example a survivor who lived across the road from her the house that her abuse happened in, or proximity of their perpetrator. These concerns have not resulted in a high priority for relocation and I can see no indication in the proposed changes to the allocations policy that these very real safety concerns or concerns for ongoing well-being will be addressed by the new allocations policy.

There have also been concerns about style of housing – for example one woman was allocated a property which caused flashbacks and nightmares due to the layout of the upstairs bathroom and bedrooms. The complexities involved in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as a result of childhood abuse and the often related issues of safety and self harming or compulsive disorders to maintain safety are often listed as low (minor) medical priorities in Band C which due to limited housing stock means that clients are often unable to move or are unallocated properties. There is a very real concern for me that because clients are unable to explain fully the impact that their housing has on the post trauma symptoms that they are experiencing that they are mistaken

for mild/moderate mental health needs and provided with lower medical priority.

Another area that I don't feel is covered by the proposed changes to housing allocations' policy is the large number of women who are raped or sexually assaulted in their own home. I feel that these women should be named as a priority area for re-homing and allocation of a council property. The majority of our service users are raped by someone known to them and a significant proportion of those are raped in their own home. For those who report to the police – forensic examination of the scene of crime often results in the clients possessions being removed from her home – in some cases even her mattress or sofa. To feel completely safe in your own home after an assault of this nature is extremely difficult and for some may never be possible. We firmly believe that women who need to change their housing as a direct result of their experience of sexual violence should be treated as a priority by the city.

If you would like clarification on any of the above points or further discussion please do not hesitate to contact me either by email or on the telephone number listed below.

Green Party reports to proposed changes to the Allocations policy

We welcome many aspects about these changes but remain very concerned about other aspects of it, in particular the high proportion of homes that are reserved for working families or those making a positive contribution. Whilst we understand the reasons for this in terms of aiming to create more mixed communities, we must not forget the enormous housing shortage in this city. We also need to bear in mind the fact that the current economic climate is putting many hard working families out of work, so that they will be failing to meet the allocations criteria not only through no fault of their own, but as a direct result of government policy. This policy is radically different from any other allocations policies in the country and we have still not seen the Equalities Impact Assessment of this. We feel this policy is in serious danger of being discriminative to those most in need. Until housing need is properly met in the city we think there should be a much lower proportion of homes that are reserved for working households.

We also have concerns that these proposals will lead to a loss of overall housing stock as it falls into the hands of those who are more likely to be able to afford to buy it outright. We understand that take-up of Right to Buy is low at the moment but if the recession finishes or people's income increases this could change. And whilst we understand the proposal is to cap joint family income at £40K, individuals or families on this salary may still have a deposit large enough to make purchase possible

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda item: 125

Subject:	Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions		
Date of Meeting:	22nd March 2011		
Report of:	Lead Commissioner for Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Sylvia Peckham/Martin Reid	Tel: 293318
	E-mail:	Sylvia.peckham@brighton-hove.gov.uk Martin.reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE.

1 SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This is a proposal to amalgamate the various ways in which we are working with the private sector under the name Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions and to expand the work we are doing to incorporate joint work with other organisations on head leasing accommodation in the City. Initially this will incorporate joint head leasing with the Universities in the City but there could be other opportunities where a social letting agency would deliver accommodation more strategically.
- 1.2 BHCC and the Universities in the City obtain accommodation from private landlords. There are opportunities to work together so as to obtain accommodation to meet demands and manage accommodation in a more strategic manner, making best use of the available resources.
- 1.3 Bringing all the current schemes together into Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions will enable BHCC to have a clear identity in the private market from which to attract further landlords and developers to enable access to good quality housing.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Housing Cabinet Member Meeting commend for approval bringing together all the current work with private landlords and developers into Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions.
- 2.2 For Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions to incorporate joint head leasing with the Universities, and undertake joint management functions with the Universities to provide efficiencies and value for money for each organisation.

3 RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS

3.1 We currently have several schemes where we work with private landlords and developers to provide housing to vulnerable households ranging from the statutorily homeless, households that our corporate partners need accommodation for e.g. CYPT, ASC, and those we accommodate under Wellbeing Powers for example so as to prevent a household becoming homeless.

3.2 Schemes we currently operate are as follows:

- Leasing from landlords (up to 10 years)
- Management Agreements (up to 25 years)
- Direct Letting (where we match a landlord with a tenant)

This provides accommodation for all our internal corporate partners and we propose to expand this to cover University students.

3.3 In addition we can link in our private sector housing so that we can cover such areas as Empty Properties, available grants and HMO licencing. This will move towards providing a one-stop service for landlords who have properties in the City and will enable us to consistently manage the private market to enable access for our households.

By incorporating all of the above into Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions we can better deliver housing solutions for the city.

4 STRATEGIC CONTEXT:

4.1 The creation of Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions and our joint work with the Universities will underpin the Student Housing Strategy, the Housing Strategy and fits with the work of the Strategic Housing Partnership.

4.2 The Student Housing Strategy sets out a strategic approach for the supply and management of student housing in the city, to ensure that students are integrated into established residential communities in ways that do not unbalance local population structures and housing markets. In doing so, the strategy seeks to harness the many benefits of a large student population for the long-term health and well-being of the city, and engender mixed, cohesive and sustainable communities. The strategic goals of the student accommodation strategy

- Strategic Goal 1: to ensure effective management and support high density student housing and populations within HMO dominated studentified neighbourhoods, using an area based approach
- Strategic Goal 2: to reduce or halt over-concentrations of HMO across studentified neighbourhoods via the sustainable development of affordable and appropriately-designed, purpose-built student accommodation, which offers relative ease of access and proximity to place of study/campus

- Strategic Goal 3: to work collaboratively to ensure effective management and support the impact(s) of high-density student populations within large purpose-built student accommodation on adjacent residential environs
 - Strategic Goal 4: monitor the effects of the movement of students into purpose-built student accommodation, and identify the signs of destudentification
 - Specifically Strategic Goal 1 Action 5: Encourage and support the role of the universities and other appropriate organisations for increasing and managing head-leased accommodation in Brighton & Hove.
- 4.3 Drawing our work together into Brighton and Hove Landlord Solutions will enable intelligent commissioning of accommodation in the City to meet all our clients' needs and to ensure that we work strategically across the city to source and obtain accommodation which is of good standard. Additional benefits that this will generate are that we will be better placed to manage the areas where student housing is situated so as to minimise any negative impacts on the surrounding neighbourhoods.

5 DEMAND AND SUPPLY

- 5.1 BHCC currently lease just over 700 units of accommodation for use by homeless households and also to meet the needs of corporate partners e.g. Learning Disabilities, CYPT, Adult Mental Health. From April we will be managing properties on behalf of the B&H Seaside Community Homes and are continuing to work with landlords in the city to commission and develop other accommodation.
- 5.2 Demand is growing such that we have projected that over the next 10 years we need an additional supply of around 700 properties. At the same time the access to private rented sector for vulnerable households is increasingly difficult as demand is pushing up rents. This trend is set to continue as the recent increase in VAT and predicted increase in interest rates impacts which will likely result in upward pressure on rents.
- 5.3 The Universities are also projecting an increase in Demand. While Sussex University provides accommodation for the majority of its students on campus, there is a growing demand for accommodation in the City at a rate of 25 – 50 additional units per year. Brighton University provides for a much larger number of students to live off-campus in the city and currently leases around 200 bedspaces which is also set to grow, particularly to meet demand from International students.

6 JOINT COMMISSIONING

As all three organisations are working with private landlords to lease accommodation and manage accommodation, there are areas of work where it would be beneficial to work together.

- a. Leasing – BHCC offers leased up to 10 years which enables it to lock in supply and to negotiate favourable rates with landlords. This also gives landlords certainty which they can use to obtain additional lending to increase the supply of accommodation. Both Universities offer only annual lease agreements to landlords and so by working together we may be able to better manage the market to the benefit of all parties. We can offer leases of up to 10 years, which will provide the universities with more stable accommodation at set costs to improve future planning and value for money. Landlords will have one system so that we can provide a clearer and streamlined service.
- b. In addition, by working together we will be better able to manage where accommodation is in the city such that if there is over concentration of one client group in an area of the city, we could move properties between the organisations to dilute the concentration.
- c. Marketing. All 3 organisations are marketing to landlords and there may be opportunities to combine the marketing to appeal to a wider audience of landlords. There may also be economies to be realised by undertaking joint marketing and advertising.
- d. Management – Each organisation manages the accommodation they lease and there may be opportunities to undertake joint management and/or co-locate staff to benefit from close working and reduce office costs. Co-locating staff and sharing office space and sharing back office functions deliver economies and efficiencies for each organisation.
- e. Maintenance/Repairs. All 3 organisations are undertaking repairs and maintaining properties and again there may be benefits to undertake some of this work jointly to provide a more responsive service and minimise costs.

7 FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT

- 7.1 BHCC are currently leading on a Framework Agreement whereby larger volumes of accommodation can be procured through landlords who have been approved to form part of the Framework Agreement. Partners who are party to this Agreement will have the benefit of not having to undertake a tendering process when additional accommodation is required. All 3 organisations are set to be parties to the Framework Agreement which it is envisaged will be in place by late summer 2011. Notwithstanding, there are opportunities for Joint working on Head Leasing that could be progressed in advance of the Framework Agreement.

8 CONSULTATION

- 8.1 We have consulted with both Sussex University and Brighton University who are supportive of this work.

9 FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

9.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report however it is envisaged that the joint working should result in efficiencies and improved value for money for all parties.

Finance officer Consulted: Michelle Herrington Date: 9 March 2011

9.2 Legal Implications

Under the well-being powers in the Local Government Act 2000, the Council may do anything, including entering into agreements, for the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area. The proposals contained in the report fall within those parameters and are therefore within the Council's powers. No individual's human rights are adversely affected by the proposals in the report

Legal officer Consulted: Liz Woodley Date: 10 March 2011

9.3 Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications.

9.4 Sustainability Implications:

The proposals will ensure that better use is made of the housing stock and that the private sector is maximised for vulnerable people and students in a way that will contribute to sustainable housing solutions.

9.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

None.

9.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

There are opportunities for joint working between the three organisations which will offer value for money and efficiencies.

9.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:.

Strategically we will be better placed to work with the market to access accommodation and to support the Student Housing Strategy.

10 EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 10.1 The alternative is for us to continue as we are. However, we won't maximise our potential to appeal to the market and to realise the full potential of the efficiencies that could be achieved.

11 REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 The recommendations have been made so that BHCC can promote itself as a clear competitor in the private market to maximise use of the private market to deliver housing solutions, provide good quality products to landlords and realise efficiencies and benefits through Joint leasing. This will also contribute to the corporate priorities and those identified in the Housing strategy and Student Housing Strategy and contribute to the work of the Strategic Housing Partnership.

HOUSING CABINET MEMBER MEETING

Agenda Item 126

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Out of Hours Sheltered Service
Date of Meeting:	7 March 2011
Report of:	Head of Housing & Social Inclusion
Contact Officer:	Name: Peter Huntbach Tel: 293248
	E-mail: Peter.huntbach@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Key Decision:	No
Wards Affected:	East Brighton, Goldsmid, Hangleton & Knoll, Hanover & Elm Grove, Hollingdean & Stamner, Moulscomb & Bevendean, North Portslade, Patcham, Queens Park, South Porstlade, St. Peters & North Laine, Westbourne, Wish.

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report is to consider the recommended changes to the weekend call service and the service to sheltered housing tenants after out of hours.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing be recommended to approve the twelve proposals set out in section 3 of the report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Twelve proposals to revise the out of hours and weekend service provided to sheltered tenants were identified by the tenant-led focus group, and agreed by Sheltered Housing Action Group.

3.1. CareLink Plus Service

- 3.2. CareLink Plus is a community alarm service owned by Brighton and Hove City Council. It is the only local alarm service and unlike some commercial alarm services, offers a service whereby its officers can attend to emergencies. CareLink Plus has Telecare Services Association accreditation and was voted 'Public Service of the Year' in 2010's Brighton & Hove Public Services Awards.

- 3.3. **(Proposal 1).** The sheltered service should continue to use CareLink Plus service (subject to the council's procurement policies and procedures)..
- 3.4. **(Proposal 2).** Sheltered services retain the home visiting service offered by CareLink Plus.
- 3.5. **(Proposal 3).** CareLink Plus should visit each sheltered scheme at least annually to talk about the service they provide and listen for comments. CareLink Plus should also undertake the same level of customer satisfaction monitoring that is provided to older people using their service in the community.
- 3.6. **(Proposal 4).** Residents, nominated through (and reporting back to) Sheltered Housing Action Group should routinely meet with CareLink Plus to scrutinise their performance.
- 3.7. **Responding to Community Alarm Responses Out of Hours:**
- 3.8. All sheltered homes are supplied with emergency alarms so that residents can alert someone in an emergency. During normal office hours (Monday to Friday) these calls are answered by the scheme manager. Out of hours, these calls are answered by CareLink Plus.
- 3.9. **(Proposal 5).** CareLink Plus should include the option of contacting a named emergency contact where an alarm is activated by a sheltered resident out of hours.
- 3.10. **(Proposal 6).** CareLink Plus should use details of any 'key holder' where this would help the emergency services gain access in an emergency.
- 3.11. To help implement proposals 5 and 6, sheltered services would write to all named emergency contacts and key holder so (1) they are clearer of the services offered by sheltered service and CareLink Plus, and (2) how they can help in an emergency, and (3) to seek their authority for CareLink Plus to contact them in an emergency.
- 3.12. **(Proposal 7).** Sheltered Services should consider key safes to enable better access for the emergency services only. Key safes could either be provided on a scheme basis (with a key safe installed in the main lobby containing a 'master key') or on an individual basis.
- 3.13. **(Proposal 8).** CareLink Plus should include the option of contacting a nominated tenant volunteer within the block when responding to a 'no-voice' response alarm activation in the common ways e.g. lift or common room.

3.14. **Weekend Call Service**

3.15. Sheltered residents can receive a 'call' using the alarm system each morning to ensure that they are alright. Unlike some sheltered providers, the council's sheltered services offers a weekend call alongside the weekday call service. This weekend service has been provided by staff employed by sheltered services to work only at weekends and Bank Holidays. Difficulties in recruiting, maintaining and supporting weekend staff has resulted in a limited weekend service.

3.16. **(Proposal 9)**. A full weekend call service (Saturday, Sunday, Bank Holidays) should be restored, but targeted at those without any other weekend contact and where there is a known vulnerability.

3.17. The tenant-led focus group recommend for the purpose of the weekend call service that 'vulnerability' be defined as:

- People who are unwell and with a serious or terminal illness.
- People with a disability (including learning disability) or long term frailty.
- People with a substantial or identified risk or exceptional circumstances e.g. anti social behaviour

Their focus-group recommended that the scheme manager has the primary responsibility of determining vulnerability, based on their supportive role at the sheltered scheme.

3.18. **(Proposal 10)**. The current weekend service should be protected for all those sheltered tenants who currently receive a call.

3.19. **(Proposal 11)**. CareLink Plus should have the primary responsibility of carrying out the weekend call.

3.20. **(Proposal 12)**. To ensure that contact through weekend is effective, scheme managers should establish a greater role in monitoring social care plans (although the primary responsibilities for monitoring health and social care provision will remain with health and social care).

3.21. To help implement proposals 9 to 12 sheltered services would write to all those identified as vulnerable (and in need of a weekend call) so their authority can be obtained for passing this information to CareLink Plus.

3.22. **Benefits of Revised Service**

3.23. Involving emergency contacts more will ensure a closer relationship between relatives and families and the services that support sheltered residents.

- 3.24. Better promotion and use of key holder information will mean that emergency services are able to access sheltered residents quicker in an emergency.
- 3.25. There will be more clarity about the role of the weekend service. At present it has tried to replicate the weekday scheme manager service with substantially fewer staff. The revised weekend service will be promoted as a service to help the most vulnerable.
- 3.26. The revised weekend service will be delivered by an organisation that currently provides a continual service during the 365 days of the year (rather than staff only employed to work at weekend and through staff overtime arrangements). This is therefore a more sustainable provision of the weekend service.
- 3.27. The revised weekend and out of hours service will be easier for people to understand since all out of hours service provision will be delivered by CareLink Plus (rather than a combination of CareLink Plus and out of hours sheltered staff).
- 3.28. The revised weekend and out of hours service will ensure better communication between the scheme manager and staff responding to out of hours issues. At present, mobile sheltered officers are not able to speak to the scheme manager since they work at different times of the week.
- 3.29. To ensure that the revised service works effectively, working arrangements will be reviewed after 12 months of implementation, with a more substantive service review (including a review of the alarm provider) within 3 years of implementation. These reviews will be tenant-led.
- 3.30. Cost Implications**
- 3.31. The cost of the current weekend service (including stand-by payments for building related responses) for financial year was £50k in 2009/10 and £43k in 2010/11. This lower cost in 2009/10 was due to a staff leaver. These costs include standby costs to CareLink Plus and overtime costs to sheltered staff
- 3.32. CareLink Plus is proposing the revised weekend and out of hours service to cost £29k (plus a cost approximated at about £200 for each Bank Holiday covered). This excludes the cost of the current mobile officer who will be retained at a current cost of £12k. The cost of the revised service based upon the proposal is therefore expected at £42k.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 A tenant-led focus group identified areas of improvement to the weekend call

service and the out of hours service. An initial report of the focus group was submitted to HMCC in December 2009.

4.2 Sheltered Housing Action Group considered the improvements identified by the focus-group at their meetings in August and November 2010. All the proposals to change the service were put to the vote and unanimously agreed upon, as recorded in their minutes.

4.3 A questionnaire on the sheltered service was sent to all sheltered households in December 2010 as part of the housing management consultation on service pledges. 212 questionnaires were returned. The majority of respondents agreed that the council continue a weekend call service (78.7%), that this should be delivered by CareLink Plus (89.9%) and targeted at the most vulnerable (76.1%). The majority of respondents agreed that where an emergency contact has been given by the tenant, that they should be contacted in an emergency (85.2%).

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

This enhanced out-of-hours service for our sheltered residents will be provided at no extra cost to the HRA.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks
2011*

Date: 17th February

5.2 Legal Implications

There do not appear to be any Human rights issues which would be a cause for concern.

The definition of vulnerable adopted by the tenants consultation, contains a definition of disability – this is a broad term but one that is acceptable under the Equalities Act and does not breach any of the requirements in that act, indeed it will help with equalities issues.

As there will be lists of individuals both who will receive support and who are 'named' contact points care will have to be taken when compiling those lists and where possible permission should be obtained specifying the purpose for which we seek to set up the list.

In relation to proposal 7 access to the key safes will have to be limited and they should be very secure to avoid liability if they were misused.

In relation to proposal 8 this would have to be limited to common ways and I would advise against any entry in to private places. As they act as a Council 'agent' we will be responsible for their actions. Adequate training should be given to them in emergency responses.

As is the case when any local authority extends support and assistance we are also responsible if that support and assistance is provided in a negligent way. We should ensure that there are regular checks to ensure compliance and safe working practices.

Lawyer consulted: Simon Court Date: 7.2.11

5.3 Equalities Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

The revised service is a more sustainable option of providing the weekend call service since it utilises an organisation that already operates an effective 24/7 service.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications

There are no crime and disorder implications.

5.6. Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

This represents an opportunity to revise and improve a key aspect of the sheltered service in partnership with the Sheltered Housing Action Group. The revised service will provide a more tailored service at a lower cost.

There is a risk that if the current weekend services are not revised that this service will not be sustainable in the future.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

There are no corporate/city wide implications.

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

- 6.1 The council could stop any weekend call service, as not all sheltered providers carry out a weekend call. However, consultation has shown that the provision of a weekend call, albeit for the most vulnerable only, is still a desired service.

6.2 The council could retain the current service arrangements. However, there is a fundamental service weakness in the current structure for the weekend call service. Namely that weekend staff have no direct contact with staff delivering the week day service nor the managers who support them.

6.3 The council could reduce the level of service from CareLink Plus, ceasing the home call element. Not all emergency call services offer a home call element. This would further reduce the cost of service. However, this option is not recommended as nearly a third of sheltered residents do not have an emergency contact.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 These are contained within the body of the report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

HMCC Report 7 December 2009

Report of Out of Hours Working Group to SHAG (9 August 2010)

Equality Impact Assessment.

Subject:	The Provision of Loft Conversions and Extensions to Assist Overcrowded Council Tenants		
Date of Meeting:	22 March 2011		
Report of:	Strategic Director Place		
Contact Officer:	Name: David Rook	Tel: 294639	
	E-mail: David.rook@brighton-hove.gov.uk		
Key Decision	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for 2011-2014, approved by Council on 3 March, includes setting aside £388,000 per annum to fund a programme of loft conversions and extensions to alleviate overcrowding in Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties.
- 1.2 This report sets out how a loft conversion and extension programme could operate and includes
 - how the selection process might work
 - what considerations officers would need to take into account
 - whether a conversion or extension is the most suitable option for a household
 - the estimated timescales for each stage of the process from selecting the household through to the works being completed.
- 1.3 This report was considered by the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 7 March 2011 and was widely welcomed. There were no requests for any amendments or additions to be considered.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Member for Housing:
 - approves the selection criteria, set out in Appendix A.
 - awards discretion to the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion to amend the selection and prioritisation criteria in accordance with any relevant changes agreed to the council's Allocations Policy. (These will primarily concern priority for working households and those making a positive contribution to the city).

- notes the key events in the process and the estimated timetable for each event to be completed, set out in Appendix B.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION / CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 Brighton & Hove City Council provides approximately 12,300 homes across the city. During the course of a tenancy the composition of a household may change and this can lead to overcrowding which in some cases can be severe.
- 3.2 Reducing overcrowding by providing opportunities for households to move to larger homes or downsize as their needs change is a key goal of the council's Housing Strategy 2009-14. This is achieved by:
- Making best use of the existing housing stock, and through our Transfer Incentive Scheme, we help tenants downsize as result, we free up around 80 family homes a year for reletting, helping both homeless households and existing overcrowded households in social housing.
 - Many tenants are also helped to move through our Mutual Exchange scheme, around 30 tenants a month move by swapping homes.
 - Negotiating long-term leasing in the private rented sector. This provides the opportunity for homeless households to move into higher quality temporary accommodation than traditional B&Bs and has given more opportunity for existing council tenants to transfer, alleviating some overcrowding.
 - Supporting tenants who are having no success moving into social housing to move to the private rented sector. There is a designated overcrowding officer in the Homemove Team who supports tenants through the process of finding a new home.
 - Maximising the amount of family homes that are built on new developments is key to our Local Housing Investment Plan for 2011-14 which outlines our long term commitments to delivering new affordable homes in the City.
- 3.3 Brighton & Hove has been recognised as having concentrations of overcrowding in the private rented sector and social housing attributed to high housing costs and a shortage of larger family accommodation.
- 3.4 Demand for family homes is high in the City. The Housing and Needs Survey highlighted that 31% of housing demand that could not be met through the existing housing stock was for homes with 3 or more bedrooms. These findings are backed by the average waiting times for those being rehoused in social housing. In 2008/09, those needing 3 bedroom homes waited on average more than 1½ years to be rehoused against 9 months for those needing 1 bedroom homes.

- 3.5 The table below illustrates the high numbers of overcrowded housings on the Housing Register, 13.9% of households (1,559) are recorded as either lacking 1 or more bedrooms or being statutorily defined as overcrowded. 366 of these are currently living in social housing.

Applicants Overcrowded on the Housing Register

Band Reason	Transfer Applicants	Applicants in the Private Sector
Lacking 1 Bed (band C)	322	1075
Lacking 2+ Bedrooms (band B)	37	110
Statutory Overcrowded (band A)	7	8
totals	366	1,193
<i>(Total Register 11,221 households @ 16/02/11)</i>		

- 3.6 If a loft conversion or extension is not a viable solution for a particular property or household, then officers will ensure tenants are aware of the other options open to them. Where these works are viable then they will enable some households to have their accommodation needs fully met in a home and an area where they may have been settled for many years.
- 3.7 With the funding available it is anticipated that up to 10 households per year can be assisted. However this will inevitably depend on the cost and complexity of individual projects.
- 3.8 The selection criteria for determining which households will be prioritised for either a loft conversion or extension are set out in Appendix A. The criteria effectively mirror the council's Housing Register Allocations Policy in terms of the highest priority being awarded to the most overcrowded households.
- 3.9 Statutorily Overcrowded households would be awarded band A, the highest priority. Thereafter those lacking two or more bedrooms would be awarded band B and those lacking 1 bedroom band C. Within each band priority is awarded to the applicant who has been waiting the longest.
- 3.10 The current Housing Register Allocations Policy is undergoing review and a number of changes have been suggested and will also be considered by the Housing Management Consultative Committee on 7 March 2011.
- 3.11 These changes include awarding priority for 50% of all family sized properties to working households, or those who are making a positive contribution to the city. The selection criteria as set out in Appendix 1 also mirrors this prioritisation whereby 50% of loft conversions or extensions will be undertaken where the household is working or making a positive contribution to the city. The selection criteria will use the same definitions for

working households and those making a positive contribution to the city and in this respect will reflect the final outcome of the Housing Register Allocations Policy Review as agreed by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

4. SELECTION CRITERIA

4.1 Please see Appendix A.

5. ESTIMATED TIMETABLE FOR THE WORKS

5.1 In terms of delivering each type of works the estimated timescales would only begin once the project has full go-ahead in terms of the feasibility and household preference.

5.2 The estimated timescales for the key events for the design and build for each type of project are set out in Appendix B.

- For loft conversions and extensions, assuming no planning permission is required, it is estimated the design and build will take approximately 9 – 10 months.
- For loft conversions and extensions where planning permission is required it is estimated the design and build will take approximately 11 – 12 months.

6. CONSULTATION

6.1 At this stage no formal consultation has taken place with tenant led groups or staff. Key staff have contributed towards this proposal including Homemove Manager, Housing Income Manager, Housing Asset Manager, Asset Project Manager and the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion.

6.2 In terms of the selection criteria significant consultation has been undertaken when reviewing the council's Housing Register Allocations Policy. The outcome of that consultation will directly feed into the Review of the Allocation Policy and the Cabinet Member for Housing's decision will be incorporated into the selection criteria for loft conversions and extensions.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Financial Implications:

The HRA Capital Programme 2011/12 includes £0.388 million to fund up to 10 conversion or extensions per annum, with similar amounts in the following two years programmes.

An increase in a property's bedroom numbers or the value of the property, resulting from a conversion or extension, would increase the rental charge of the property. The rental charge for the property would still be following rent restructuring guidelines with the affordability safeguards in place.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen, Principal Accountant

Date: 15/02/2011

7.2 Legal Implications:

Brighton and Hove City Council is a housing provider under the various housing acts. The majority of properties are held under the HRA scheme. The council holds the property as de facto freeholders and can make alterations and improvements as a matter of course, as long as these meet appropriate building regulations and fire safety requirements and these must form part of any arrangements which are put in place.

Any improvements made to a property will in most cases be subject to the right to buy. The length of time before that right arises will depend on the date of the tenancy. After 2005 it will be 5 years. This means that any work undertaken may not be a long term benefit to the Council if the right to buy is exercised.

It may be prudent to reconsider the question of conversions to flats when the experience with houses has been reviewed.

With increased space available the nature of the property is changed and consideration should be given to whether to increase rents. Under s102 of The Housing Act 1985 the terms of a tenancy (rent) can be varied by agreement (so it could be a term of any work); under s1 of the current tenancy agreement we have reserved the right to increase rent.

Within the criteria the relevant commissioner has been given discretion to make decisions outside the criteria. This is permissible as long as the decision making is clear and transparent and properly recorded. He has the authority under delegated powers and a properly exercised discretion, would not open us up to Judicial review.

Lawyer Consulted: Simon Court, Senior Solicitor

Date: 15/02/2011

7.3 Equalities Implications:

There will be cases where an overcrowded household has not applied for a transfer and as such their housing need will not be registered. An Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken to identify such problems and to develop a selection procedure that does not exclude households in this position.

7.4 Sustainability Implications:

The creation of new habitable loft rooms, or extensions, will bring two key opportunities for improvement to the environmental performance of each property. Firstly, through constructing to current building regulations, and upgrading where required, and secondly by examining the potential for additional benefits to be integrated into projects. For example, whilst scaffolding is in place, there is the possibility to install solar thermal or photovoltaic (PV) panels, where the roof space and direction are suitable.

7.5 Crime & Disorder Implications:

There are none.

7.6 Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

The types of work described are likely to have a significant impact on residents during the construction phase. As such, housing officer and management support, and possible decant, may be required in a number of cases. Each project also brings the opportunity to improve homes to a modern standard, and will link with the wider decent homes and capital investment programmes across the city.

7.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

This scheme aim to help tackle overcrowding in the city and the impact it has on households and other services. Research by the ODPM (“The Impact of Overcrowding on Health & Education: A Review of the Evidence and Literature”, ODPM, 2004) identified that there are links between overcrowding and physical health concentrated in mortality rates, respiratory conditions and tuberculosis.

Shelter surveyed 505 overcrowded families as part of their research (“Full House, Shelter, 2005)with the majority of respondents stating that overcrowding had a direct impact on their households health, will being and educational attainment.

8. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 8.1 The alternative to the amendments would be not to provide loft conversions or extensions to alleviate overcrowding in council properties. for the policy to remain as per the current policy. This however would not make best use of the housing stock.

9. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The recommendations have been made so that through the Capital Programme we can ensure that best use is made of council stock and we are better able to help tenants who live in overcrowded conditions.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

Appendix A, which sets out the selection criteria for properties and households

Appendix B, which sets out the key events and estimated timetable for those events in the design and build of the works.

Appendix C, draft Equalities Impact Assessment

Documents In Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

None

SELECTION CRITERIA

Property Type

For the first year it is suggested that the project focuses on conversions or extensions to houses. Generally works of this nature will be more challenging and potentially not viable in flats. Initially houses should be looked at to make best use of accommodation whilst recognising the changing demographics and high demand for smaller units of accommodation for single person households and for those down sizing.

Concentrating initially on houses will enable officers to fully test the process and if viable flats could be included in the consideration process in years 2 and 3.

Prioritisation of Households to Benefit from the Scheme

Officers will need to ensure the provision of a loft conversion or an extension is applied in a transparent, fair and consistent way. It is also important to demonstrate that value for money has been achieved and that the capital expenditure will make a real improvement to the recipient household for many years to come.

Household Selection

The selection of households will be based on the council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Council tenants who wish to transfer to another property may join the scheme and will be placed in one of four broad bands of housing need depending on their circumstances. It is from this list that households will be selected.

The banding structure is contained within the council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme guidance. Households in band A have the highest priority for alternative accommodation and those in band D have the lowest priority. A number of different factors are taken into account when deciding which band a household is placed in including overcrowding:

- Applicants will be placed in band A where the property is deemed to be statutorily overcrowded by an Environmental Health Officer under Section X of the Housing Act 1985 and there are no means to make the property fit.
- Applicants will be placed in Band B if they lack two or more bedrooms and Band C if they lack one bedroom below the following provisions:

An independent adult (18 years +)	1 bedroom, including a bedsit or studio flat
Co-habiting couples	1 bedroom
A dependent child	1 bedroom
Two children of opposite gender where one is aged over 5 years	2 bedrooms
Two children of the same gender, any age	1 bedroom

Within each band priority is awarded to the household who has been registered the longest.

Please note that if there is a second reception room it will generally be deemed to be available for use as a bedroom. Box rooms, which can reasonable be used by a child, will count as a single bedroom.

Therefore when determining priority for a conversion or extension the first consideration will be council tenants who have applied for a transfer and who are overcrowded. The first priority will be those who are in band A for overcrowding reasons, then band B and then band C. Within each band the priority will be given to the household who has been registered the longest. As such the determination mirrors the council's agreed Allocations Policy and Choice Based Lettings Scheme.

Where the number of eligible applicants in Band B exceed the number of extensions that can be completed with the funding available in any one year priority will be given to those lacking the greatest number of bedrooms and then in order of the date of application.

Prioritisation for Working Households / Those Making a Positive Contribution

With the funding available it is estimated that 10 properties year could benefit from a loft conversion or extension. The current Allocations Policy sets out that 50% of all properties containing 2 or more bedrooms are allocated to working households. An income cap of £35,000 per annum also applies.

This policy is currently being considered and it is proposed to also include households who are making a positive contribution. The proposed Allocations Policy clearly defines working households, those who are making a positive contribution, income capping, exclusions and evidence required. This policy will be agreed at the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting on 22 March 2011.

In tandem with the Allocations Policy, subject to Housing CMM on 22 March 2011, 50% of properties selected will be tenanted by working households or those making a positive contribution. The selection process will mirror the agreed Allocations Policy in this respect and use the same definitions, evidence collection and other criteria as outlined above.

Initially households who meet the definition and are in band A due to overcrowding will be considered. Thereafter households will be selected in order from band B and band C.

As of 15 February 2011 analysis of overcrowded transfer applicants living in houses showed:

Band	No. on list	No. Working	No. Not Working	No. in Arrears
A	11	4	7	2
B	37	11	26	12
C	85	50	35	26

No information regarding making a positive contribution has been collated and would need to be gathered from applicants.

Tenants with Rent Arrears or Other Housing Related Debts

If the tenant has rent arrears or other housing related debts the case will be referred to the existing Arrears Transfer Panel. This is a panel of officers who consider cases where transfer applicants are by-passed for a move because of housing related debts. This will ensure a consistency in the decision making process and ensure comprehensive advice is given to the household to help reduce their debt or to get them into a repayment plan. Such a process can act as a very strong lever to tackle and resolve arrears issues.

Tenants with Other Breaches of Their Tenancy Agreement

The council's allocation policy states that the council will not normally make an offer of accommodation to a transfer applicant where the tenant is guilty of a breach of tenancy resulting in:

“Housing Act Injunction, Anti-Social Behaviour Order, Notice of Seeking Possession, Suspended Possession Order or demoted tenancy (if adopted) granted as a result of the breach of other aspects of the tenancy agreement.”

It is intended that this scheme will adopt the same stance and exclude such tenants from benefitting from a loft conversion or extension.

Lead Commissioner for Housing Discretion for other exceptional circumstances not covered by this scheme

From time to time a situation may arise that is not adequately reflected in these selection criteria in terms of the priority they have been awarded but the

needs or circumstances are exceptional and significant. Where a case is considered exceptional but the applicant would not qualify for a loft conversion or extension then the Lead Commissioner for Housing in Brighton & Hove City Council reserves the right to override the criteria and allow an applicant to have a higher priority than they would be entitled to. These cases will be few in number and will be closely monitored.

All of the above cases will be taken to Housing Management Consultative Committee on a yearly basis to review the numbers submitted, the outcome of the cases and brief reason for the case being submitted via this route

Assessing the Suitability of a Property for Conversion or Extension

Initially it is proposed to carry out a paper based assessment of the top 30 overcrowded properties as set out above. Then the council's Asset Management Team will review these properties and make an initial assessment of their suitability for conversion or an extension (hereafter referred to as 'works'). Factors to be considered will include if the roof space is large enough or whether there is suitable outside space for an extension. At this early stage no internal inspection will be carried out but the property's suitability will be externally assessed without raising the expectations of the residing tenants. These tenants would still receive information on other options open to them to help alleviate their overcrowding.

Once the top 20 suitable properties have been identified, specially trained Officers will visit those households and assess their circumstances to see if works would meet their overcrowding needs. It is recognised that this may be a sensitive subject and expectations will need to be managed in case the property is found to be unsuitable following a full feasibility study. As such officers will be specially trained to be able to advise each household on the range of alternative options open to them.

When considering each household, officers will need to take into account if the household actually wants to move from the area, the nature of the overcrowding, and if this is likely to be alleviated within 3 years of the work being completed eg by a non-dependent leaving the property. The council will want to ensure value for money when investing in these types of works and therefore would not proceed where overcrowding is likely to cease within that time period.

Officers will need to check if the household will be able to afford the new rent and increased energy bills. The works will result in a rent increase linked to the increased number of bedrooms and consideration will be given to installing solar panels, thus reducing energy bills.

Appendix B – Estimated Timetable for an Extension where Planning Permission is Required

Task No.	Task Name	Duration Working Days
1	Property Inspection	10 days
2	Walk over site survey including: measured survey, identification and evaluation of the condition and suitability of existing services	2 days
3	CAD drawing of existing property	2 days
4	Design conception with recommendations and viability modelling including needs requirements, assessment and programming	5 days
5	Client design approval to proceed – presentation to tenants / Housing Management	5 days
6	Prepare documentation for planning application – scaled / detailed drawings, specification of works	10 days
7	Lodge planning application	1 day
8	Planning validation period	10 days
9	Planning application decision – maximum time 8 weeks, although may be quicker depending on volume of applications*	40 days
10	Prepare documentation for Building Regulations i.e. engineers report, specification etc	10 days
11	Lodge Building Regulations application	1 day
12	Building Regulations Decision – maximum 8 weeks, although may be quicker depending on volume of applications	40 days
13	Queries and agreement with Building Control	5 days
14	Construction tendering period	24 days
15	Contractor lead in / mobilisation period including pre contract Health & Safety Plan	21 days
16	Construction period	10 days
17	Seasonal lag – lead in and holiday periods i.e. Christmas	20 days
18	Construction period	64 days
19	Snagging	5 days
20	Handover to client	2 days

* Planning have agreed to channel all applications under this scheme to one identified Planning Officer. This will build up a close working relationship and help to minimise any delays in the process.

Appendix B – Estimated Timetable for a Loft Conversion where Planning Permission is Required

Task No.	Task Name	Duration Working Days
1	Property Inspection	10 days
2	Walk over site survey including: measured survey, identification and evaluation of the condition and suitability of existing services	2 days
3	CAD drawing of existing property	2 days
4	Design conception with recommendations and viability modelling including needs requirements, assessment and programming	5 days
5	Client design approval to proceed – presentation to tenants / Housing Management	5 days
6	Prepare documentation for planning application – scaled / detailed drawings, specification of works	10 days
7	Lodge planning application	1 day
8	Planning validation period	10 days
9	Planning application decision – maximum time 8 weeks, although may be quicker depending on volume of applications*	40 days
10	Prepare documentation for Building Regulations i.e. engineers report, specification etc	10 days
11	Lodge Building Regulations application	1 day
12	Building Regulations Decision – maximum 8 weeks, although may be quicker depending on volume of applications	40 days
13	Queries and agreement with Building Control	5 days
14	Construction tendering period	24 days
15	Contractor lead in / mobilisation period including pre contract Health & Safety Plan	21 days
16	Construction period	60 days
17	Seasonal lag – lead in and holiday periods i.e. Christmas	20 days
18	Snagging	5 days
19	Handover to client	2 days

* Planning have agreed to channel all applications under this scheme to one identified Planning Officer. This will build up a close working relationship and help to minimise any delays in the process.

Appendix B – Estimated Timetable for an Extension where Planning Permission is not Required

Task No.	Task Name	Duration Working Days
1	Property Inspection	10 days
2	Walk over site survey including: measured survey, identification and evaluation of the condition and suitability of existing services	2 days
3	CAD drawing of existing property	2 days
4	Design conception with recommendations and viability modelling including needs requirements, assessment and programming	5 days
5	Client design approval to proceed – presentation to tenants / Housing Management	5 days
6	Prepare documentation for Building Regulations i.e. engineers report, specification etc	10 days
7	Lodge Building Regulations application	1 day
8	Building Regulations Decision – maximum 8 weeks, although may be quicker depending on volume of applications	55 days
9	Queries and agreement with Building Control	5 days
10	Construction tendering period	24 days
11	Contractor lead in / mobilisation period including pre contract Health & Safety Plan	21 days
12	Construction period	10 days
13	Seasonal Lag – lead in and holiday periods	20 days
14	Construction Period	64 days
15	Snagging	5 days
16	Handover to client	2 days

Appendix B – Estimated Timetable for a Loft Conversion where Planning Permission is not Required

Task No.	Task Name	Duration Working Days
1	Property Inspection	10 days
2	Walk over site survey including: measured survey, identification and evaluation of the condition and suitability of existing services	2 days
3	CAD drawing of existing property	2 days
4	Design conception with recommendations and viability modelling including needs requirements, assessment and programming	5 days
5	Client design approval to proceed – presentation to tenants / Housing Management	5 days
6	Prepare documentation for Building Regulations i.e. engineers report, specification etc	10 days
7	Lodge Building Regulations application	1 day
8	Building Regulations Decision – maximum 8 weeks, although may be quicker depending on volume of applications	55 days
9	Queries and agreement with Building Control	5 days
10	Construction tendering period	24 days
11	Contractor lead in / mobilisation period including pre contract Health & Safety Plan	21 days
12	Seasonal Lag – lead in and holiday periods	20 days
13	Construction Period	60 days
14	Snagging	5 days
15	Handover to client	2 days

Equalities Impact Assessment – The Provision of Loft Conversions or Extensions to Alleviate Overcrowding in Council Owned Properties

Aim of Policy / Scope of Service:

The aim of the policy is to provide overcrowded households living in council property the opportunity to have either a loft conversion or extension to their current home. Such works would resolve the overcrowding. This scheme would be particularly suitable for households who wish to remain in their current home and area where they are already settled.

The selection of properties and households to be included need to be open, fair and transparent. In this respect the criteria broadly reflect the priority awarded to overcrowded households on the council's Housing Register and as published in the council's Allocations Scheme.

Funding has been set aside in the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2011 – 2014 and it is anticipated that up to 10 households per year will benefit. This will inevitably depend on the size and complexity of each individual project.

Different Groups included in scope

Ethnicity

including (Asylum seekers, Refugees, Gypsies and Travellers)

Gender

(men, women, trans / gender variant people)

Disability

(physical or mental health issue, long term illness, learning disability, physical/sensory impairment)

Age

(included – older& younger people)

Religion/Belief, including

(faith communities including no belief)

Sexual Orientation

(lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other)

Other

Impact	Potential Impact on this group	Potential actions to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impacts
1. Focus on houses in Year 1	(-) Households living in flats who are overcrowded will not be able to benefit from the scheme and instead will need to rely on other options for example the Housing Register, Mutual Exchange or for those who qualify the Tenants Incentive Transfer Scheme.	<p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During the first year of the scheme full analysis should be undertaken to review the number of overcrowded households living in flats so that we are aware of the full impact of not including flats. The analysis should also include an assessment of the housing need for transfer applicants by property size.. - At the same time a feasibility study should be undertaken to assess the potential for flat loft conversions or extensions and the implication of this in terms of the Right to Buy being exercised in the future and the lease implication. - The Lead Commissioner for Housing will have discretion to override the selection criteria in exceptional circumstances and may use this discretion to assist a household living in a flat.

<p>2. Selection of households in priority order from the Housing Register, for overcrowding reasons</p>	<p>(+) A number of households who are the most severely overcrowded and have been waiting the longest will benefit first from the scheme, assuming they would like the works carried out and it is feasible for those works to be undertaken in their property.</p> <p>(+) The Housing Register is a fair and transparent way of awarding priority for households and has undergone extensive consultation. The selection criteria of this scheme mirror that policy and as such is able to piggy back on the consultation already undertaken in this respect.</p> <p>(-) Some households may not have registered their housing need on the Register and would therefore be unable to benefit from the scheme, other than through the Lead commissioner for housing's discretion.</p> <p>(-) Households who are less severely overcrowded, for example lacking 1 bedroom and placed in band C may either wait a long time for the opportunity of a loft conversion or extension or may never reach the top of the waiting list.</p> <p>(-)(+) Some households may be in a higher priority band for reasons other than overcrowding. For</p>	<p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Households who are overcrowded but who have not registered their need will be encouraged to register. - These households will still be able to bid on properties through Choice Based Lettings and where eligible may also benefit from opportunities to move into private sector via The Overcrowding Project, participate in a mutual exchange or benefit from the Transfer Incentive Scheme. - Where medical needs or factors other than overcrowding have placed the household in a higher priority banding the Lead Commissioner for Housing may use discretion, in exceptional circumstances, to award priority to that household. Other factors assessed under the Housing Register application will assist when deciding to exercise that discretion.
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	<p>example a household may be lacking one bedroom and as such would be awarded band C. However, they may actually be placed in a higher banding for other reasons i.e. medical needs.</p>	
<p>3. Prioritisation for working households and those making a positive contribution.</p>	<p>(-) If English is not the first language there could be issues around being able to work or volunteer and therefore not being able to qualify for this priority.</p> <p>(-) People with high levels of disabilities (e.g. mental health, long term illnesses, sensory impairments) may have more difficulty in being able to work or volunteer and therefore may not qualify for this priority.</p> <p>(+) More households contributing to the economic growth of the city and more sustainable communities</p> <p>(+) Less working households leaving the city</p> <p>(-)(+) Working households on low incomes may struggle to pay the increased rent payable on larger properties</p>	<p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor how many households are bypassed during the selection process because they are not working or making a positive contribution. Analyse those households by housing need and equality strands. - Provide financial advice to households to ensure income maximisation and that they can afford any increased costs with having a larger home. - We would like to monitor this over the first year of this scheme and report back to ensure that no groups who are in high housing need are missing out because of the working and positive contribution priority.

<p>4. Excluding tenants with Rent Arrears or other breaches of their tenancy agreement</p>	<p>(-) Tenants who have rent arrears or who have otherwise breached their tenancy agreement, for example anti social behaviour, will be excluded from the scheme.</p>	<p>ACTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenants with rent arrears will be targeted for assistance by the Housing Income Management Team. Cases who would otherwise be bypassed will be considered by The Arrears Transfer Panel to devise an action plan to assist these households so they can benefit - Tenants with other breaches of their tenancy agreement will be referred to their Housing Officer or specialist teams for appropriate assistance and advice. - Households excluded for such breaches will be monitored by housing need and the equality strands. The outcome of this monitoring can feed into other strategies designed to help such households.
<p>6- Lead Commissioner for Housing Discretion (for other exceptional circumstances not covered by this scheme).</p>	<p>(-)(+) To all the Groups in the same measure</p>	<p>ACTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All of the above cases will be taken to Housing Management Consultative Committee on a yearly basis to review the numbers submitted, the outcome of the cases and brief reason for the case being submitted via this route to ensure that it is

working in a fair and transparent way

7. Refusing permission for the works where it is likely the overcrowding will be alleviated within 3 years.

ACTION

- **The Homemove Team will be able to provide an assessment of the likely waiting time for the household to successfully bid for an alternative property.**
- **Sensitive discussions will need to take place with the household in respect to any likely changes to the household composition.**
- **Officers will explain to all households the potential alternative options that are open to them in order to alleviate overcrowding.**

What consultation has been used or undertaken?	Methods Used	Findings	Agreed Actions
<p>The council’s allocations policy is currently undergoing a review and proposed changes to that policy have undergone a 12 week consultation process with wider stakeholders in the city.</p> <p>Stakeholders include Communities of Interest, our partner agencies, Age Concern, support agencies, people on the Housing Register, and support providers.</p> <p>In so far as this scheme is concerned no formal consultation has been undertaken. However, the selection criteria for households mirrors the current, and proposed changes, to the allocations policy.</p>	<p>Consultation was offered via email, in writing, face to face meeting, over the telephone, group meetings, offered in large print and translators were offered if necessary.</p> <p>It was also made available on Brighton & Hove City Councils website consultation portal.</p>	<p>There are currently 133 overcrowded households living in houses who have applied for a transfer. Of these 65 are working households and 68 households do not work. A total of 40 households have rent arrears.</p> <p>There are an additional 189 households who have registered their housing need, are overcrowded and live in flats.</p>	<p>Further analysis needs to be undertaken around the equalities strands attributable to overcrowded households who have applied for a transfer as a result of overcrowding.</p> <p>The details of the scheme should be formally circulated to a group of selected colleagues and tenant representatives for their comments and also contribution towards this Equalities Impact Assessment.</p> <p>That we will ensure as much support for understanding these changes is given to households affected by this scheme and that that we will review the scheme and it’s impact in 12 – 18 months Allocations policy amendments again in 12 months.</p>

Lead Equality Impact Assessment Officer:
 Business Improvement Manager
 Head of Housing & Social Inclusion

Martin Booty
 David Rook
 Nick Hibberd

Date
 Date
 Date

Please date when you have seen and agreed
 Please date when you have seen and agreed
 Please date when you have seen and agreed

Housing Cabinet Member Meeting

Agenda Item 128

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Home Energy Efficiency Investment Options		
Date of Meeting:	7th March 2011		
Report of:	Lead Commissioner Housing		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Martin Reid	Tel: 29-3060
	E-mail:	Martin.reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 One of the key strategic priorities outlined in the City-wide Housing Strategy 2009-14 is to improve housing quality, to make sure that residents are able to live in decent homes suitable to their needs. Our strategic goals under this priority include, reducing fuel poverty, minimising CO2 emissions and improving tenants' homes ensuring they are of high quality and well maintained.
- 1.2 The Housing Revenue Account Capital programme for 2011-14 includes home energy efficiency investment as a housing commissioning investment priority for possible future investment. In order to maintain our current level of performance and meet our strategic priorities we also need to explore alternative funding streams to enable the continued delivery of home energy efficiency programmes in both the private sector and council stock. Previous reports and presentations to Housing Management Consultative Committee and Housing Cabinet Member Meeting have noted the importance of continuing to work with potential partners such as energy companies to explore means of maximising investment to meet our strategic housing goals, including potential opportunities offered by the Government backed Feed in Tariff scheme.
- 1.3 The Council has the opportunity to install solar PV panels onto its Council-owned residential properties. This has arisen out the Government's new Feed-in-Tariff incentive scheme and would:
 - Significantly raise the profile of renewable energy in the city;
 - Attract a multi-million pound investment and possibly create new business and employment opportunities;
 - Create investment into city housing stock;
 - Reduce the carbon footprint;
 - Allow some Council tenants to lower their fuel bills;
 - Create an income stream into the council and subsequently further investment opportunities.

We wish to move quickly to assess the benefits of the Feed in Tariff scheme and to take advantage of any opportunity this offers the Council to gain investment and energy savings before the Feed In Tariff is reviewed in April 2012.

As part of this commitment Housing Commissioning have been working with tenants, our procured Energy Managing Partner (Climate Energy) and other local authority partners to investigate and maximise home energy efficiency investment options for our tenants and residents from Feed-in Tariffs (FITs).

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- (1) That the Cabinet Member for Housing note the Home Energy Efficiency Investment options and opportunities available to the Council, its tenants and residents through installation of solar photovoltaic panels on council and other homes to take advantage of the Feed in Tariff scheme.
- (2) That the Cabinet Member for Housing note the outcome of the initial options appraisal undertaken by Climate Energy, indicating that there is an outline business case to support delivery of a solar photovoltaic scheme across the council housing stock and to meet strategic housing and other council priorities, including private sector housing renewal, reducing fuel poverty and reducing carbon emissions.
- (3) That the Cabinet Member for Housing note that existing sub-regional local authority partners in the BEST consortium are also undertaking similar initiatives to install solar panels to take advantage of the Feed in Tariff scheme and that we have identified significant potential advantages to working in partnership to move quickly to enable economies of scale to be explored through procurement arrangements.
- (4) That the Housing Management Consultative Committee recommends that the Cabinet Member for Housing agree that BHCC works with partners in the current BEST consortium to ascertain whether BHCC can take forward any procurement of the supply and installation of solar PV panels together with those partners in order to establish actual costs to inform economies of scale and further consideration of business case and appropriate funding model. In addition, consideration will be given to procuring the supply and installation of solar PV panels with our partner Mears Ltd.
- (5) That the Cabinet Member for Housing notes any final decision on funding options, level and source of funding to progress this scheme together with any procurement supply and installation of solar PV panels as set out in this Report will be subject to Cabinet approval.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 One of the key strategic priorities outlined in the City-wide Housing Strategy 2009-14 is to improve housing quality, to make sure that residents are able to live in decent homes suitable to their needs. Our strategic housing goals include:

- Goal 4: Making best use of the housing stock
- Goal 6: Work with home owners & landlords to maintain and improve the quality of their housing
- Goal 7: Reduce fuel poverty & minimise CO2
- Goal 8: High quality and well maintained council housing, improving tenants homes to meet the Decent Homes Standard
- Local Area Agreement target NI 187: reducing fuel poverty

3.2 The Council has a strong background in delivering home energy efficiency improvements across both the council housing stock and the private sector. Across private sector housing the BEST programme has funded the Brighton & Hove Energy Action Partnership (BHEAP) that has delivered home energy efficiency measures to some of the most vulnerable residents in Private Sector Housing, including:

- 1346 loft insulations
- 1037 cavity wall insulation
- 1481 heating measures
- 141 solar water heating systems

Historically across the council housing stock we have invested significantly in insulation & heating. The current SAP Energy Rating of 76.4 puts us in the top quartile of performance in this indicator. In addition:

- We are investing £3.5 million in boiler & heating replacements and upgrades, installing high efficiency condensing boilers
- Last year we completed 2 insulated overcladding projects to Wiltshire House & Somerset Point and a communal solar hot water system at Hazelholt sheltered scheme, partly funded by utility company grant monies

3.3 In April 2010 the Government introduced electricity Feed-in Tariffs (FIT) to accelerate the implementation of technologies that create on-site renewable electricity. These rates are considered generous and ultimately reward investment in renewable technologies.

3.4 The Government will guarantee the Feed-in-Tariffs (set out in current legislation) for 25 years. The current, generous, tariff levels are only guaranteed at the present level for the 25 year period if panels are installed and operational by April 2012. Panels installed after that date will still benefit but at a reduced level. The recently announced early review of the FIT tariffs is unlikely to target this type of scheme as it will be focussed on larger installations, sometimes referred to as solar farms.

3.5 The proposal can help tackle fuel poverty in the following ways:

- Reducing residents' electricity bills as they can use electricity that is being generated by the panels, either free of charge or at a reduced rate
 - Through re-investment of FIT income in other energy efficiency measures
 - Creating an investment stream for further renewable energy technologies that in turn may create further investment opportunities i.e. the governments Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI).
- 3.6 The proposal will help the City to reduce its carbon footprint, through the use of renewable energy to meet some of the city's electricity needs. Surplus electricity generated is fed back to the national grid thereby helping to reduce the need for electricity production from fossil fuels.
- 3.7 We have carried out an extensive options appraisal with our existing energy efficiency managing partner to identify the potential benefits of a solar PV scheme across the council housing stock. The appraisal has been based on a survey of suitable roof space that has identified approximately 1,600 dwellings as being suitable based on a number of factors including orientation, roof pitch and the risk of 'overshadowing'.
- 3.8 The options appraisal has identified that a solar PV scheme has the potential to provide lifetime carbon dioxide savings of over 48,000 tonnes.
- 3.9 Market testing by Climate Energy has been carried out as part of the options appraisal. This has indicated that the capital costs of a fully funded and operated solar PV scheme of this size would be in the region of £15 million. However more accurate capital costs would be provided through a tender exercise, at which time the business case and financial model can be updated and fully assessed by officers prior to a final decision needing to be made.
- 3.10 There are a number of different ways that a solar PV FIT scheme can be delivered: fully owned and funded by the council (either within current structures or via a special purpose vehicle); externally owned and funded (sometimes referred to as 'rent a roof'); or a shared equity approach in partnership with an external investor.
- 3.11 The options appraisal has indicated that the greatest benefits to the city could be achieved through a fully owned and funded model. This model would provide the same benefits in terms of CO₂ savings and potential reductions in energy costs to residents but would also provide the council with an additional funding stream from the Feed in Tariff payments. Payments received from the feed in tariff would enable funding of the scheme through borrowing; FIT payments are at a level that would allow paying back loan costs whilst creating a surplus. Such an income stream can then be re-invested into housing across the city to allow the council to continue to meet the aims and objectives set out within the Housing Strategy.

- 3.12 In addition to the potential income that can be generated, there are other significant benefits to the Council of opting for the self-funding route:
- There will be complete control over investments
 - There will be greater opportunity to create local employment opportunities (including apprenticeships)
 - There will be an opportunity to recycle money back into the community
 - The fuel-poor can be assisted
 - The Council can play an important role in developing the local renewable energy economy, and support Brighton & Hove businesses
 - The scheme sets up a platform for other low-carbon technologies and further opportunities presented by both the Renewable Heat Incentive and the governments 'Green Deal'

3.13 In addition to Council housing, we are keen to expand the benefits of the scheme into alternative markets/tenures, including private sector housing and the commercial market. The scheme may provide other sectors with the opportunity of purchasing solar panels and paying for the installation at competitive rates, with measures in place to assist low income households to take advantage of the initiative. This would be a key part of the scheme in that the Council would be utilising its purchase power for the benefit of the wider community. Engaging with the private sector would also ensure that installation volumes remain high and keep the price per unit of the solar panel at a reasonably low level for the council housing scheme.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Consultation has taken place with council tenants through Cabinet Members Energy Efficiency Working Group. Presentations were given and options discussed at meetings on the 1st November 2010, 10th January & 21 February 2011. Feedback from the group has been generally positive; a summary of feedback is contained in Appendix 1.

4.2 Presentations and discussions have also taken place at Area Panel tenant participation meetings on the following dates;

- North & East Area Panel – 17th November 2010
- East Area Panel – 22nd November 2010
- West Area Panel – 23rd November 2010
- Central Area Panel – 25th November 2010

Feedback has been positive, with residents keen to understand which buildings may be suitable (Summary of feedback is contained in Appendix 1).

4.3 Presentations have also been delivered to members, tenant reps and others through previous HMCC meetings, specifically 13.12.2010 & 08.11.2010.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 An initial options appraisal commissioned by Housing from Energy Managing Partner, Climate Energy indicates that there is an outline business case to support the delivery of a solar photovoltaic scheme across the council housing stock.

Following the outcome of the joint procurement exercise and consideration and possible inclusion of procuring through Mears Ltd, finance officers will conduct a full evaluation of the options available. Any future solar photovoltaic scheme and associated funding requirements will need to be reported to Cabinet for approval.

Finance Officer Consulted: Sue Chapman Date: 23 February 2011

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Brighton and Hove City Council is a housing provider under the various housing acts. The majority of properties are held under the HRA scheme. The council holds the property as de facto freeholders and can make alterations and improvements, as long as these meet appropriate building regulations and fire safety requirements and these must form part of any arrangements which are put in place. Right to Buy will be a relevant factor for future consideration.

In relation to working with partners in the current BEST consortium to ascertain whether BHCC can take forward any procurement of the supply and installation of solar PV panels together with those partners, as the value of the contract exceeds the EU threshold for this type of contract, BHCC should work in compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders in addition to the Public Contracts Regulations.

Lawyer Consulted: Simon Court & Isabella Hallsworth Date: 25.2.11

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 A full Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out at pre project delivery stage. At present we do not foresee significant equalities implications. Outcomes of the EIS will be reported at the next decision making stage.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 The proposals outlined above would bring significant sustainability benefits in terms of climate change and energy use and promoting sustainable communities.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 We do not foresee any significant crime and disorder implications.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 There are significant risk and opportunity implications that will be fully assessed and where necessary mitigated at pre project delivery stage.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The proposals support the council priorities:

- Protect the environment while growing the economy
- Better use of public money
- Reduce inequality by increasing opportunity

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 At this time the Council wishes to work with partners in the current BEST consortium to ascertain whether BHCC can take forward any procurement of the supply and installation of solar PV panels together with those partners in order to establish actual costs to inform economies of scale and further consideration of business case and appropriate funding model. Any final decision on funding options, level and source of funding to progress this scheme will be subject to Cabinet approval. However, an initial options appraisal by Climate Energy indicates that the greatest benefits to the city could be achieved through a fully owned and funded model.
- 6.2 Solar PV installation companies, together with the backing of private investment companies, are willing to pay the capital costs to install solar PV panels onto the roofs of homes if, in return, they receive the Feed In Tariff (FIT) incentive over a 25-year period. It would be possible for the Council to generate additional receipts, by some form of “profit share” or roof rental agreement. This would be in addition to an element of free or cheap electricity. This model would be unlikely to deliver the same benefits outlined at 3.12 and the income would be significantly less than that available through a fully funded and operated model.
- 6.3 In addition to a fully owned and funded business model as described in the report or a fully externally funded and owned model described in 6.2 there is the option of a shared equity model. Shared equity would entail the establishment of a special purpose vehicle by the council in conjunction with an external partner; together the two bodies would fund the capital project and share the benefits based on the split of investment. Again the capacity of the council to deliver the benefits outlined in 3.12 would be restricted and the financial benefits would be significantly reduced.
- 6.4 There are potential benefits in the two options described above:
- No or less capital borrowing required
 - Reduced or shared risk related to delivering the installation and ongoing maintenance and monitoring of solar PV installations
 - Working in partnership with a company already established in this field would bring benefits such as expertise and established supply chain

6.5 Indications from initial options appraisal suggest that on balance a fully owned and operated scheme has the potential to provide significantly greater benefits to the city as a whole and that risks associated with this model can be adequately mitigated through in-house and procured expertise and through a partnership working agreement. A fully funded and owned model of delivering a solar PV scheme has the potential to create significant income, generated by the Feed in Tariff payment, to the council over a 25 year period. Initial findings estimate the initial capital outlay could create a payback (after loan repayments) in the region of £16 million over 25 years. A fully owned and funded model gives the council greater influence over delivering the benefits outlined in 3.12.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 We wish to move quickly to assess the benefits of the Feed in Tariff scheme and to take advantage of any opportunity this offers the Council to gain investment and energy savings before the Feed in Tariff is reviewed in April 2012.

7.2 We wish to work with partners in the current BEST consortium to ascertain whether BHCC can take forward any procurement of the supply and installation of solar PV panels together with those partners in order to establish actual costs to inform economies of scale and further consideration of business case and appropriate funding model.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Summary of tenant's feedback

Documents in Members' Rooms

1. None.

Background Documents

1. None.

Appendix 1 – Summary of Tenant Feedback

Feedback received from	Comment	Follow up action
Area Panels November 2010	Broadfields sheltered housing scheme could benefit from this	Details of suitable roof space to be identified through the stock survey
	Robert Lodge to benefit?	As above
	Blocks with flat roofs	Where appropriate a frame can be used to create a tilt for maximum generation
	Blocks in very exposed positions (wind / salt - near sea front)	Specific issues would be picked up at installation stage but survey of stock will identify where installations are appropriate or not
	Blocks where one part may face south but other face north	The business model and suitability of roofs based on roofs 67.5° of south on communal blocks
	A question was raised about mixed blocks where leaseholders and tenants occupy and how we address this in terms of implications for installations and income / benefit sharing	How the benefits of the scheme are to be shared has yet to be confirmed, however where there are different tenures this will be taken into account
	Please look at St James House - also can one block generate for other blocks in neighbourhood	As point 1 above. How the benefits can be shared between different sites has yet to be confirmed, however we are keen to share the benefits across the as many tenants as possible
	Risk related to pigeons and cleaning the Panels	Maintenance and monitoring of panels will be factored into the ongoing programme, regular cleaning will be included
	Importance of the solar panels being provided in conjunction with insulation and other measures	The scheme will fit into the planned programme of works

	also key	across the council housing stock which includes install of energy efficient boilers and insulation. Income generated from the scheme can be re-invested into improving housing quality including energy efficiency measures
Cabinet Members Energy Efficiency Working group	Concerns were raised that if free or cheap electricity is offered this would reduce energy efficiency in some households In addition a query arose as to how the scheme would work in blocks with communal boilers and where there was electricity use in common areas	How the generated electricity is to be shared/used has not been agreed but there is a risk and this scheme on it's own would not achieve energy efficiency, other measures including education and information sharing are important The issue around common areas and communal boilers will be included and reported upon as part of further evaluation scheme
	Maintenance costs were raised	These are included in the business/financial model at the beginning of the scheme
	What is the expected lifetime of the panels	The technology is well tested and has been extensively used across Europe, panels are expected to last at least the 25 years of the FIT payments although there would be some drop off in performance which is factored into the business/financial model
	Can residents in the private sector benefit	The initial focus is on the council housings stock however we are considering how the benefits can be rolled out to support private sector housing renewal through procurement on a larger scale and the council's involvement providing a level of assurance

Document is Restricted

