

# Housing Management Consultative Committee

## Agenda Item 107

Brighton & Hove City Council

<b>Subject:</b>	Service Pledges for council tenants and leaseholders		
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	22 March 2011		
<b>Report of:</b>	Strategic Director Place		
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Name: Sam Smith	<b>Tel:</b>	29-1383
	E-mail: sam.smith@brighton-hove.gov.uk		
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes	HSG	20788
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	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 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2011, which is still a requirement of all council's who are landlords.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee commend the Service Pledges attached in appendices 1, 2 and 3 to the Housing Cabinet Member for approval.

#### 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 behavior)
  - 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 behavior, 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 Behavior 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 avoid 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.
- 3.9 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.

#### **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.

**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](http://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](http://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 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 5m<sup>2</sup> to have 7m<sup>3</sup> of storage with 1200mm of units  
Kitchens over 5m<sup>2</sup> but less than 10m<sup>2</sup> to have 2.0m<sup>3</sup> of storage with 1600mm of units  
Kitchens over 10m<sup>2</sup> to have 2.3m<sup>3</sup> 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.