

Housing Management Panel: East Area

Date: 5 November 2020

Time: 7.00pm

Venue Virtual Meeting

Members: **Councillors:** Brennan (Chair), **Ward Councillors for the Area, Delegates of Tenants Association in the area.**

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FURTHER INFORMATION

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting contact , (01273 291214, email greg.weaver@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or email democratic.services@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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Date of Publication – 20 October 2020

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: EAST AREA

6.00pm 10 SEPTEMBER 2020

VIRTUAL MEETING

MINUTES

Present: Siriol Hugh Jones, Councillors Fowler (Chair), Sue Shanks, Mary Mears, John Allcock, Claire Rainey, Kate Knight, Martin Osbourne, Tracey Hill.

Representatives: Jane Thorp, Rosemary Johnson, Ian Beck, Barry Hughes, David Spafford, Heather Hayes, Theresa Mackay, Ann Pacjham, Alan Cooke, Carl Boardman, Christie Knipe, Claire Johnson, Graham Dawes, Liam Baker, Chris El-Shabba, Janet Gearing.

Officers: Sam Warren, Keely McDonald, Hannah Barker, Ododo Dafe, Glyn Huelin, Martin Reid, Simon Bannister, Diane Coe, Fabrizio Oliveri, Indi Hicks, Sophie Wadleigh, Justine Harris, Thomas Goodridge.

Guests: Sarah Booker Lewis, Eddie Wilson

1 APOLOGIES

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Nancy Platts, Roy Crowhurst, David Chapman.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 Councillor Mears referred to 42.9 and 42.10 and requested a more comprehensive transcript of the events.

3 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

3.1 The Chair gave the following communications:

“Chairs Comms for Area Panel

Some of you may be aware that since the last area panel there have been some changes in the make-up of the council, as a result of which there is now a minority Green administration. That said, Labour and the Greens had adopted a joint programme for housing last year anyway, and we will be continuing to implement that. David Gibson and I are sharing the role of chair of Housing Committee. We have divided up our responsibilities and repairs and housing management fall within my remit, so please let me know of any issues you have and how we can make the service run better for you.

Community Engagement

Some of you who are members of residents' or tenants' associations may already have seen the draft discussion paper on Community Engagement. You have told us:

- there are too many meetings, often with duplication;
- representation from wider tenants and leaseholders is poor so we need to find ways of engaging more people, including by using more virtual tools as well as physical events and activities.
- You need support and resources to do things in your communities and on estates and naturally you want your input to make a difference.

The document is currently being revised ahead of being available to all residents, but it will certainly look to address how we attract more active participation in tenants' associations and how we give you the resources to create change, such as through participatory budgeting using the Environmental Improvement Budget.

Repairs

As you will be aware, the repairs service was reduced to emergency repairs only during lockdown. I am aware there were issues with the telephone helpline while staff were working from home. These should be resolved shortly as new staff have recruited and are currently undergoing training.

More positively, during the last quarter 99.4% of emergency repairs were completed within 24 hours and 97.5% of appointments kept. While we are on repairs, I should mention that the GMB members of the housing repair team who came in-house in April are on strike this week. There was an unresolved pay claim existing when the service came in-house in April and issues around finding the right pay grades for people as they transfer into the structure of the council. The vast majority of those transferring will be considerably better off financially if they take a council contract, as well as being eligible for sick pay and holiday pay. The other thing to remember is that no-one will be forced to take a pay cut as, under the terms of the TUPE transfer, workers can opt to remain on their existing terms and conditions if these are better than what they would get in the council.

Warmer Homes

One of the things that jumped out at me when I was reading the Housing Management Report was the fact that Brighton & Hove is in the bottom quarter of local authorities in terms of energy efficiency. That is something we intend to address. Energy efficient homes mean more money in your pocket as you will spend less on heating, and it's good for the planet as it means fewer carbon emissions. Officers are working on a report on this to come to January's Housing Committee."

4 AGENDA FOR EAST WARD

4.1 (Housing Clarification of the Social Value)

4.2 Mr Huelin gave a brief overview of the social value. It was noted that the head of contracts were starting following consultation processes.

4.3 Residents had the following questions, enquiries and statements:

- A resident enquired how they would be involved in the delivery of bids.
- It was stated that the social impact and wellbeing of tenants was important.
- A leaseholder enquired of the cost of social value and sought more information on this.

- A resident suggested the use of more than one company for large contracts such as windows.
 - A resident enquired of the possibility of having a scrutiny process in place to stop contractors not providing value for money from attaining large contracts.
- 4.4 An officer gave the following responses to resident's and leaseholder's questions, enquiries and statements:
- It was stated that working with residents was important and that there were plans to do much work through the mobilisation phase of working with providers on expectations. It was further noted that BHCC would happily work with residents and the Home Group in future.
 - An officer offered to provide the leaseholder with more information.
 - It was confirmed that BHCC could not ensure that certain companies could be barred from attaining contracts.
 - It was stated that a different way of working was being considered following feedback from residents, this would see additional staff focused around contract management and that BHCC would go to the framework with detailed specifications of works to be contracted out.
- 4.5 Councillor Osbourne enquired how the social value could be enforced.
- 4.6 An officer stated that there was a sustainability element that was assessed in the contract such as standards of materials along with key commitments.
- 4.7 Councillor Knight reiterated resident's concerns regarding the BHCC not receiving value for money and stated that companies who provided bad standard of work should not be re-employed. It was enquired if there was a possibility of taking past performance in to consideration when procuring works.
- 4.8 An officer stated that tenant's had been involved in inspecting properties and that BHCC were happy to enlarge this role to provide further transparency.
- 4.9 **AGREED** – that the update be noted.
- 4.10 Service Update in Light of Covid-19
- 4.11 An officer gave a brief overview of Area Panels during the Covid-19 era. A list of actions were supplied and it was noted that most services were contacted by email and that efforts were undertaken to procure technology to enable staff at home to answer calls immediately.
- 4.12 **AGREED** – that the update was noted.
- 4.13 Housing Management Report
- 4.14 An officer outlined that the Housing Quarterly Report Q4 was the performance for the end of year 2019 – 2020 and was a short summary pages on how BHCC had benchmarked against other housing organisations. It was further stated that the second report provided a new look performance report from Quarter 1 of this financial

year which outlined information including progress on the Housing Committee Workplan areas.

4.15 **AGREED** – that the report was noted.

4.16 Seaside Homes

4.17 A vote, which was open only to residents within East Ward, was conducted to recruit a resident to sit on the Seaside Homes board

4.18 Chris El-Shabba was unanimously voted in.

5 HOUSING QUARTERLY REPORT Q1

5.1 See Agenda Item 4 Area Panel Agenda, 4.13 (Housing Management Report)

6 PERFORMANCE SUMMARY Q1

6.1 See Agenda Item 4 Area Panel Agenda, 4.13 (Housing Management Report)

7 HOUSING QUARTERLY REPORT Q4

7.1 See Agenda Item 4 Area Panel Agenda, 4.13 (Housing Management Report)

8 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

8.1 (Item 1 - Communication between Council and Residents – How will future meetings work?)

8.2 Residents had the following questions, enquiries and statements:

- A resident enquired of the current status of monies which had been used to pay for works that had not yet been completed.
- A resident noted the effort taken by BHCC to migrate Housing Area Panels to Zoom.
- A leaseholder affirmed the positive function of calling in via telephone as there was little lag / cut out.

8.3 An officer gave the following responses to resident's and leaseholder's enquiries concerns and statements:

- It was stated that the EDB came in April however although Mears had carried out the bid however the bid didn't provide further specifics.
- It was clarified that Mears had not been involved in the bidding process this year due to Covid.
- An officer stated that an effort to schedule service improvement group meetings was underway.

8.4 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

- 8.5 (Item 2 – Water Ingress in Housing in Woodingdean)
- 8.6 It was noted that there were no leaves now and that roof leaks were prioritised during the pandemic.
- 8.7 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.8 (Item 3 – Coordination of Repair Works)
- 8.9 A resident enquired noted that it took too long for electricity to get turned back on after works had finished due to inefficient communication.
- 8.10 An officer stated that a process had since been put in place where trade teams would notify each other of when works were booked.
- 8.11 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.12 (Item 4 – Right to Buy Following Succession)
- 8.13 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.14 (Item 5 – Laminate Flooring in Flats)
- 8.15 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.16 (Item 6 – Reporting Repairs Online)
- 8.17 Residents had the following statements, enquiries and concerns:
- A resident stated that a phone number left options for voicemail.
 - A resident enquired of the possibility of details being provided in Homing In magazine.
 - It was noted that the online form was not well designed.
- 8.18 An officer gave the following responses to resident's questions, concerns and statements:
- It was noted that issues with the online site were wide-ranging however residents were reassured that there were other modes of communication and that anyone calling via the helpdesk could still reach the relevant contact.
- 8.19 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.20 (Item 7 – EDB Bids)
- 8.21 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.22 (Item 8 – Eviction Targets)
- 8.23 **AGREED** - that the response was satisfactory.

8.24 (Item 9 – Communal Digital TVB Aerials)

8.25 Residents had the following statements, enquiries and concerns:

- A resident stated that since a communal aerial had been installed, they had experienced issues accessing freeview.
- A leaseholder enquired what assistance could be offered to people who were still being charged despite being denied access.

8.26 An officer gave the following responses to resident's questions, concerns and statements:

- An officer offered to look in to issues regarding the aerial installed.
- It was stated that an officer would contact the resident regarding any assistance available.

8.27 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.28 The following East Area 2 star questions were addressed at the breakout session which took place on the 1st October 2020.

8.29 (East Area **2 Star** – Item 1 – Craven Vale Roof)

8.30 An officer stated that it was recognised as being distressing for the tenant and that Housing were in direct contact and working with the resident.

8.31 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.32 (Item 2 – Chair of East Area Panel)

8.33 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.34 (Item 3 – Estate Development Budget Robert Lodge)

8.35 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.36 (Item 4 – Electric Car Charging Points in Craven Vale)

8.37 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.38 (West Area Panel – Item 10 – Matters Arising from the Last Meeting)

8.39 A resident stated a concern regarding Covid-19 in communal blocks

8.40 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

8.41 (Item 11 – Clarification on Council Opening)

- 8.42 It was enquired if this was still relevant in view of the incoming regulation of the rule of 6.
- 8.43 An officer stated that this would be kept under review and that risk assessments would be adjusted as necessary.
- 8.44 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.45 (Item 12 – Grass Cutting and Ground Maintenance.)
- 8.46 Residents had the following statements, enquiries and concerns:
- It was requested that officers address the issue of grass cutting at Sylvan Hall.
 - It was enquired when someone would be able to fix pavements.
- 8.47 An officer offered to contact City Parks to address the issues regarding grass cutting and pavements.
- 8.48 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.49 (Item 13 – Housing Revenue Account)
- 8.50 A resident expressed concern with the prospect of residents effectively paying twice for services provided in other areas of the City.
- 8.51 An officer stated that if there were any major issues then this would be scrutinised and that monies spent were closely monitored and that it was made sure that it was not spent outside of the legal restrictions imposed by the HRA.
- 8.52 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.53 (West Area **2 Star Items** – Item 1 – Stonery Close Gutter)
- 8.54 The following West Area **2 star** questions were addressed at the breakout session which took place on the 1st October 2020.
- 8.55 It was stated that the repair had been completed. A resident requested that residents be told when repairs had been completed.
- 8.56 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.57 (Item 2 – Clarendon & Ellen Putting Out Food for Birds)
- 8.58 An officer reported that all tenants had been written to advising residents not to put food out.
- 8.59 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.60 (Item 3 – Phillip Court Faulty Guttering)

- 8.61 It was stated that repairs have been completed however due to the time it took to do the works, doors to the refuse had swelled due to water leakage.
- 8.62 Assurances were sought that works to correct this were booked to repairs and maintenance.
- 8.63 An officer agreed to address this.
- 8.64 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.65 (Item 4 – Roof tiles)
- 8.66 It was reported that these were now repaired.
- 8.67 A resident stated they were unaware the repair had been carried out.
- 8.68 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.69 (North Area 3 Star – Item 14 – Disposal of Masks Gloves and PPE)
- 8.70 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.
- 8.71 (North Area **2 Star** Items)
- 8.72 Due to lack of attendance, there were no comments with regard to the Resident's Question Time responses for North Area.
- 8.73 (Central Area 3 Star – Item 1 – Lifts in Tower Blocks and Flats)
- 8.74 **AGREED** – that the response was satisfactory.

The meeting concluded at 9.20pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

East

Area Panel Agenda - November 2020

Meeting will be open 30 minutes before start. Anyone requiring help joining the meeting can contact the Community Engagement Team for assistance.

1	Welcome Apologies & Introductions	Verbal
14:00	5 minutes	
2	Chairs Communications	Verbal – Chair
14:05	5 minutes	
3	Minutes from Previous Meetings	Verbal and Minutes in Papers
14:10	5 Minutes	
4	Good News From Residents Groups	Verbal
14:15	10 Minutes	
5	Citywide Residents Question Time	Answers to Residents Questions
14:25	30 Minutes	
6	10 Minute Break	
14:55		
7	Reports going to Housing Committee	Verbal
15:05	5 Minutes	
8	Tenant and Leasehold Engagement Strategy	Sam Warren Verbal + Report Attached
15:10	25 Minutes	
10	Estate Development Budget Update	Kay Atherton, Keith Perry Verbal + Report Attached
15:35	20 Minutes	
11	AOB	Verbal
15:55		

- End -

Residents Questions for Area Panel November 2020

3 Star (★★★) Items

Central, West, North and East

1. Communal Aerials

Some residents have reported that they are no longer able to use their Sky subscriptions with the communal aerials due to a compatibility issue. The communal system does not support Sky's 'Q Box', however Sky is now transitioning all customers to the Q Box. How will Housing ensure that residents can continue to use the communal aerials with the new system.

Response

Miles Davidson | Housing Sustainability Manager & Interim Mechanical & Electrical Team Manager | Housing Strategy & Property & Investment

We are aware of this issue and have been working to resolve it for some time. We had a few meetings with Sky initially to try to resolve the issue but after an initial phase of upgrades they stopped working with and funding our own contractors to enable completion of upgrade works in our blocks, hence some of the communal blocks having been upgraded and others not. We have asked Sky in the past to not sell the Sky Q package to residents in blocks where the communal systems could not support it, as the resident would not be able to benefit from the enhanced service.

We are aware that they are now planning on moving all customers over to Sky Q and of the issues this causes many residents who are Sky customers.

We have asked our communal digital aerial contractor to carry out a survey on all blocks to confirm which are SkyQ compatible and where any upgrade works are required. We are now willing to allow our contractors to complete these works. The survey has been completed in the last week and we are in the process of working up a programme of upgrades, to include costs, to carry out these upgrade works over the next few months. This being a 'new' programme of work will need to be approved internally before we are able to proceed.

EAST

2. Estate Development Budget (EDB): Allocation of surplus funds

An email sent to residents on 5th August stated:

"If you are in the West or North area of the city, and have an idea for a main bid, contact our team ASAP as we have funds left over for extra projects this financial year."

However, when there was money left over in the East budget, this was not re-offered to residents in the East area, but was put back into the citywide pot of money.

*It was recognised that there could be surplus EDB funds for two different reasons:
due to insufficient bids to allocate all the funds
due to the final cost to the Council being lower than the original estimates (this can happen when work is to a block of flats and leaseholders have to make a contribution to the costs)*

Why were the surplus funds for East area reallocated back to the central budget, but surplus funds for North and West areas re-offered out for work in those areas?

Response

Sam Warren – Community Engagement Manager

Over the past few year, we have learnt from listening to the concerns of residents around underspend and funds going back into the overall pot. Residents have told us this seems unfair on specific area, so we are now trying to implement some recommendations that were made in the review.

The EDB review recommended that there was a second round of main bids – one in April and one in October. This is the first year we have been able to trial this and only for North and West as the other area spent the full allocation of EDB in the April round.

If this is implemented in full next year it would mean capping the amounts spent in round one by 50% to allow for a second round for each area. Any underspend in round one would be carried over into round two for each area.

In the review this was recommended as a better system to prevent the loss of underspend as it cannot be carried over to the next financial year. Therefore, two rounds of main bids increase that opportunities for residents to spend all the EDB funds each year.

3. EDB publicity

The Council's publicity for EDB implies that the Council will fund 100% of EDB work and makes no reference to the potential charges to leaseholders.

However, when work is done to a block, the leaseholders in the block have to pay a proportion of the costs (depending on the nature of the work).

It is proposed that the Council's EDB publicity be amended to include reference to potential charges for leaseholders when work is done to their blocks.

Response

Thank you for pointing out this error we will amend the flyers with a line that states that some 'works may incur charges to leaseholders'

4. Distribution of Homing In

The Council started to post the Homing In magazines out in biodegradable sleeves. This appears to be an environmentally friendly move, but for the many residents living in flats without access to composting, there is no option but to put them in the usual landfill bins. They also can't be put into plastic recycling.

It was felt that using the biodegradable sleeves is probably less environmentally friendly than it appears.

It is proposed that the Council consider alternative options for the posting of Homing In, such as paper envelopes.

Response to Follow.

CENTRAL

5. Vermin control

Recent bed bug and plaster beetle infestations at Essex Place and of mice and rats at Highcroft Lodge have highlighted problems with vermin control:

Response

Eddie Wilson | General Manager | Housing Services

The vermin control team is chronically short-staffed. Essex Place were told there was a 6-week wait before they could do the first spraying.

The team have confirmed the diary is full, but only for the next ten days and not six weeks, so we are not sure why this was said to the residents.

There has not been any notification sent to other flats in Essex Place that there is a bed-bug problem.

We do not know where this came from, but we suspect it came from a tenant. It has the potential to cause bullying and create unnecessary fear and concern for tenants who don't have bedbugs. We have suggested a letter to go on the noticeboard at Essex Place, asking tenants to call Pest Control if they suspect they have them. However, we are not sure who would be responsible for creating this document.

Residents face a real battle getting the council to recognise that vermin infestation in blocks of flats is the responsibility of the council, not of the

individual resident. Housing needs to work with residents sensitively around infestations.

We have re-issued the Handout (19A) which states that communal area are the responsibility of BHCC.

Residents who need re-housing during vermin clearance have been given unsuitable accommodation (e.g. no proper disabled access) and offered accommodation in Windsor Court where there is a known bed-bug infestation. Living with vermin infestations causes considerable distress to residents and exposes them to a health risk. It is particularly problematic during a period when people are confined to their homes and for people who have disabilities. Agreed. Unfortunately, we don't always know the severity of tenant disabilities.

There have been three bedbug jobs raised for Essex Place. We have no knowledge of a plaster beetle infestation at Essex Place but we expect this is from 87 reporting that they had an unidentified insect in the property. Pest Control reported that they were not bedbugs and no further action was taken.

Highcroft Lodge was attended to on 3/7/2020 but no follow ups were done. We have emailed the Team Leader in Pest Control asking her to chase it up.

NORTH

6. Repairs hotline (North and West Combined)

There are major problems with reporting repairs and getting repairs done.

It was agreed that this issue was not addressed satisfactorily at the Area Panel.

- *It is difficult to report repairs as the phone lines are not working. A reliance on on-line reporting discriminates against those without internet access.*
- *Tenants are still not able to talk to repairs staff on the phone. When they phone the repairs line they still get a recorded message, which hasn't changed since March, stating they should leave a message or report the repair by email/online.*
- *Once repairs are reported, responses are slow and communication very poor. There is no system for informing people when repairs are done, so residents continue to pursue repairs after they have been completed.*
- *There is a growing backlog of repairs, with no clear indication of when or how these will be dealt with. Meanwhile, residents are living with the consequences.*

At the September Area Panel, the response given to a question about the repairs phone line re-opening (page 69, 6a – excerpt below) seemed to suggest that the solution to the problem of lots of residents needing repairs was to close the phone lines.

*“The Repairs Helpdesk staff that transferred to the council are relatively new and are still undergoing training and supervision. We are currently recruiting 4 new call agents to join the team and they will also need training and supervision support. This, together with the recruitment of resources in the Response Teams, means that **the repairs phone lines cannot be opened yet due to the risk of a major increase in job requests that would be very difficult to process and manage at present.**”*

- *While problems have been made worse by COVID 19, many of these issues were already present and have been raised by residents over a long period.*

This means that tenants have no confidence that their repairs will be dealt with.

Two examples were given:

- *A tenant in Dunster Close phoned to report an emergency repair as they had a leak. They received a text stating “Your message has been received”. They then didn’t receive any further communication and nobody attended. Luckily they were able to find and turn off their own stopcock, but if they hadn’t been able to do this there would have been major water damage to their home.*
- *A tenant in The Crestway reported that her toilet cistern was falling off the wall. It was reported as an emergency and she was told that somebody would come out. This didn’t happen and the tenant was unable to turn off the stopcock because it was too stiff. Three weeks later the cistern fell off the wall causing major flood damage to the property.*

It is requested that the repairs hotline be reinstated as a matter of urgency so tenants can report repairs and be given information on their progress.

Response

Eddie Wilson | General Manager | Housing Services

The repairs helpdesk went back into operation on 14 September. Training is ongoing for the new members of staff and is going well. We are now taking all calls from residents and logging their repairs directly onto the system. There is a backlog of repairs which we are continuing to work through, the speed of which is linked to further recruitment of trade staff to increase resource levels.

Repairs: accountability

There is no accountability for broken commitments about when work will be done. The time and effort that residents’ put into preparing for work on an agreed date (for example, making sure an area is clear so undergrowth can be cut back) is wasted. Residents’ then spend time chasing it up and ensuring completion of the job.

It was agreed that:

- a) It was agreed to ask for a report on the backlog of repairs and the ability of the repairs service to respond.***

- b) Communication about repairs must be improved and residents kept properly informed.**
- c) There needs to be a system of accountability to ensure work is done when agreed, and that there are consequences if commitments are broken. One aspect of this is a change in attitude in the Council from a culture where it is assumed residents can be inconvenienced and let down without any consequence.**

Response

Eddie Wilson | General Manager | Housing Services

At the time of writing we have 3,683 live jobs on the system, of which 2,208 jobs were reported prior to September. We have been working on the backlog of repairs. When residents contact the repairs helpdesk either by telephone or email we update them on the anticipated timescale to complete their repair, or if it has become more urgent we will make an appointment with them to attend to the repair.

In line with other providers across the country there has become a significant of repairs which we are working through, but it is anticipated that it will take in excess of six months to catch up, dependent on any further lockdowns and the speed at which we can recruit the desired calibre of staff.

7. Grass cutting and grounds maintenance

Following concerns raised by North and West areas, a written response to the September Area Panel stated that the full service for grass cutting and grounds maintenance had now resumed.

However, the experience of residents is that this service has not resumed. Residents feel that the grass is becoming overgrown and isn't being cut often enough. Weeds are also growing in the gaps between paving slabs, causing a trip hazard.

There were concerns about the poor service before Covid 19 and this has now just been exacerbated.

It was proposed that an urgent resumption of Estate Inspections would help to identify and resolve areas of key concern.

It is proposed that Estate Inspections, with residents and Field Officers present, be scheduled as soon as possible.

Response to Follow.

8. Communication between the Council and residents

Residents are very unclear about

- which council services are running and which aren't
- which council offices are open and which staff are back working in the offices
- who to contact in the council when they have an issue

The answer machine message residents get when they phone the council has not changed since the beginning of the Covid 19 period. There is also limited information on the council's website.

There has also been insufficient communication with tenant representatives. Representatives are often the eyes and ears of the Council on estates and have a wealth of knowledge that they are happy to share. They are often aware of those who are vulnerable or need help. However, they have not been given information about who to contact and how to share this information.

It is proposed that the council urgently provide up-to-date information on the location of officers and service delivery to tenant reps and to residents in general.

Response to follow.

9. Tenancy termination following a tenant's death

When a tenant dies their relatives are given a very short period of time to empty all their belongings and personal items from their home. This often doesn't take into account the fact that the tenant may have lived in the property for most of their adult life, or the grief that their loved ones are experiencing.

This policy seems to be in contrast to the extended periods of time that some properties are left empty between the termination of one tenancy and the commencement of the next.

The report at the Area Panel stated the average turnaround for empty properties is 20 days. However, Residents are aware of the length of time some local properties are empty, which is often significantly longer than the average figure.

- a. It is requested that information be provided to the next Area Panel listing all properties that have been empty for more than three months in the last year and the reasons for this.
- b. It is also proposed that the procedures for terminating tenancies so quickly after a tenant's death take into account the circumstances of the deceased tenants and those who are clearing their home.

Response to follow.

10. Gardening scheme for elderly and disabled tenants

It seems that some disabled tenants are receiving help from this scheme and others are not. There was concern that some people are not receiving the help they are entitled to, possibly because they don't know about the scheme.

The meeting felt that more information was needed on the criteria for receiving help from the gardening scheme, and that more publicity needs to be done so that everybody is aware of it.

Information is requested on the criteria for the Gardening Scheme and what publicity is carried out to ensure all tenants are aware of it.

Response to follow.

WEST

11. Equipment to support virtual communication

At the Area Panel it was mentioned that there are some tablets and other equipment available from the Community Engagement Team.

It was requested that information on this, the criteria and how residents can apply for it is sent to the Chair of every Residents Association.

Response

Sam Warren – Community Engagement Manager

The Community Engagement Team are purchasing a small number of tablets (max 10) that will be able to be loaned out to residents on a short term basis at 3-month periods. In the first instance these will be loaned to residents without access to digital equipment that are already representatives on groups and panels, so they are able to engage in online meetings. The CEO's will be working with the residents to ensure they are able to access some training to use the tablets. Residents will be asked to sign a loan agreement. We are not planning to widely advertise this scheme as there are very few tablets available however the CEO's will be speaking to TRA's and groups directly to share this information. In the longer term we will be encouraging group to apply to EDB and other funds to purchase digital equipment for their group as this is more sustainable and gives the group more ownership over how they share and use this.

12. Estate Development Budget (EDB) Review

Disruption due to COVID 19 meant the resident group reviewing EDB was not able to finish its work. A paper has been written by officers, but not yet discussed with the EDB review group or put to Area Panels. It was agreed that this needs to happen before the EDB review paper is put to the Housing Committee.

It was asked for a report on plans for finishing the EDB review.

Response

Sam Warren – Community Engagement Manager

The EDB review paper came to the Involvement and Empowerment Service Improvement Group for discussion in March 2020. The draft Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy will include some actions to complete the implementation of the 2018 EDB review. Many actions have been implemented and are noted in detail in Appendix 3 of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy report within the

November Area Panel agenda. This is a draft report and will be presented at all Area Panels and November Involvement and Empowerment Service Improvement Group for consultation prior to Housing Committee in January.

If you would like to share your thoughts and idea on this, please contact me using the details below

13. EDB work progress report and update of future works (North and West)

The EDB work agreed in April 2020 does not yet seem to have started.

There is outstanding, agreed EDB work, some of it dating back to 2018.

A report was requested looking at:

- a) When Estate Development Budget work will re-start*
- b) A schedule of planned, incomplete and outstanding work*

This will be covered by Keith Perry and Kay Atherton in the EDB Update item that is on the agenda

2 Star (★★) Items EAST

14. September Area Panel

At the East breakout meeting on 1st October there needs to be a discussion on all 2 star items plus the 3 star item of 'Water Ingress to Houses in Woodingdean'.

Response to be given at Area Panel.

Communication between the Council and residents

Residents are very unclear about

- which council services are running and which aren't
- which council offices are open and which staff are back working in the offices
- who to contact in the council when they have an issue

The answer machine message residents get when they phone the council has not changed since the beginning of the Covid 19 period. There is also limited information on the council's website.

There has also been insufficient communication with tenant representatives. Representatives are often the eyes and ears of the Council on estates and have a wealth of knowledge that they are happy to share. They are often aware of those who are vulnerable or need help. However, they have not been given information about who to contact and how to share this information.

It is proposed that the council urgently provide up-to-date information on the location of officers and service delivery to tenant reps and to residents in general.

Response from Ododo Dafé, Head of Housing Income, Supply & Customer Service

Thank you for your comments and suggestion about information to residents regarding council services.

I am sorry that residents are unclear about our services, and while I know that not all residents are on the internet, the Council has published information on the website.

I can assure residents that most council services are running, but they may simply take a slightly different form in order that we comply with Covid-19 guidance, and that we safeguard residents, customers and colleagues.

Our offices are closed to the public, however services are accessible by telephone. In some cases, because many of us are working from our homes, callers may be asked to leave a voicemail message and we will call back, usually within 24 hours.

We will soon update residents with more information in Homing In.

Tenancy termination following a tenant's death

When a tenant dies their relatives are given a very short period of time to empty all their belongings and personal items from their home. This often doesn't take into account the fact that the tenant may have lived in the property for most of their adult life, or the grief that their loved ones are experiencing.

This policy seems to be in contrast to the extended periods of time that some properties are left empty between the termination of one tenancy and the commencement of the next.

The report at the Area Panel stated the average turnaround for empty properties is 20 days.

However, Residents are aware of the length of time some local properties are empty, which is often significantly longer than the average figure.

- a. It is requested that information be provided to the next Area Panel listing all properties that have been empty for more than three months in the last year and the reasons for this. —

Tom / Ododo to advise

Response from Ododo Dafé, Head of Housing Income, Supply & Customer Service

Thank you for your question regarding empty homes that have been empty for more than 3 months. In our older version of the Housing Management Performance Report which comes to Area Panels, we used to include a page listing the numbers of homes within each ward that had been empty for 6 weeks or more. In the Quarter 4 report (ie for January to March this year), the total number was 26 homes that had been empty for 6 weeks or more, so fewer would have been empty for more than 3 months.

In the new report, we do not list the number by ward any longer, but we can include a line to give the total number empty for more than 3 months.

For now though, I can confirm that we have an increasing number of homes that have been empty for some time, and the main reason has been because of the delays to repairs and lettings that has resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic.

I am sorry that we do not publish a list of empty properties with the addresses, as this would be in the public domain.

Gardening scheme for elderly and disabled tenants – Ododo

It seems that some disabled tenants are receiving help from this scheme and others are not. There was concern that some people are not receiving the help they are entitled to, possibly because they don't know about the scheme.

The meeting felt that more information was needed on the criteria for receiving help from the gardening scheme, and that more publicity needs to be done so that everybody is aware of it.

Information is requested on the criteria for the Gardening Scheme and what publicity is carried out to ensure all tenants are aware of it.

Response from Ododo Dafé, Head of Housing Income, Supply & Customer Service

Thank you for your question about the gardening scheme, and I am sorry that some eligible residents might not know about it. The scheme is publicised in Homing In when it is opened for applications each year, and we also have information on the Council's website, and on Twitter and Facebook.

The criteria for applying to the scheme is:-

- Anyone over the age of 70, where there is no-one living in the household who can help them with gardening
- People in receipt of Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, and Housing Benefit, again where there is no-one living in the household who can help them with gardening

Before applying tenants need to make sure that they:

- have no legal notices against their tenancy
- are up to date with paying their rent
- do not have an allotment
- are not in the middle of buying their home through the Right to Buy

There are currently 437 tenants on the gardening scheme, and residents can contact the Housing Customer Service team on 01273-293030 if they have any questions, or can get more information and apply to the scheme via the website

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/get-help-gardening-your-council-home>.

EAST OUTSTANDING EDB BIDS

Outstanding Main and Quick Bids 2018-2019												
Bid Type	Area	RIO	Approval date	Job No	T.R.A	Short Description of Works	Job Type	Estimated Cost/ Budget	Start Date	MCM Status	Resource	Job Notes
Main Bids	EAST	Sharon		9937326	Robert Lodge RA	North & South side gates		0.00	July	LIVE	On hold due to PSPO report	To be measured
Quick Bids	EAST	Keely	Oct-18	9936667	Craven Vale community association	Heavy duty vinyl flooring for Vale Community Centre		750.00		LIVE		To be put on hold, Alan will ring us after new furniture has been organised

Outstanding Main & Quick Bids 2019-2020													
Bid Type	RIO	Approval date	Job No	T.R.A	Short Description of Works	Job Type	Estimated Cost/ Budget	Invoice Value	Start Date	Date start on site	Completion Date	MCM Status	Job Notes

EAST OUTSTANDING EDB BIDS

Main Bids		P1	977734 9	Craven Vale	Southwater r Close store, after feasibility study				May				Bid is for £10,000.00.This is dependant on planning permission being granted, Emailed TJ to ask who, and how we pay this!!
Main Bids		P1	977737 2	Nuthurst Place 9-27	Deep clean flooring in the communal ways.		825.65		June				Recommendation is that this bid is withdrawn as floor is in a poor condition

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Outstanding Main Bids 2020-2021

Area	Job No	TRA/Group	Description	Proposed start
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EAST OUTSTANDING EDB BIDS

East	9960286	Bylands	<p>The residents of Bylands need a secure and weather-resistant bike storage facility in order to support residents to engage in cycling as a more healthy, environmental and sustainable option for their personal transport needs.</p> <p>A facility has recently been installed but the security it provides is minimal, with 2 bikes having already been stolen in the last 4 months, and the protection from the weather is poor.</p> <p>The existing facility does, however, provide a concrete pad for more secure facilities to be installed - a number of options have been investigated, some of which would be able to re-use the existing cycle hoops. Initial costings for some options have been already been determined with some price queries from suppliers due shortly.</p> <p>The principle considerations are to minimise cost, maximise security, achieve the number of bike spaces for existing residents bikes and reduce the noise from the existing bike shelter for adjacent residents due to the rain and high winds experienced at Bylands.</p> <p>Details gathered so far are attached to this bid.</p>	<p>We have managed to speak to residents at 7 of the 12 flats in the block so far and intend to speak to all residents within the coming few weeks.</p> <p>One flat is supportive of the initiative and noted the noise from the existing installation. A further flat would like better security for a bike, although they cannot afford one at the moment following the theft of their bike from the existing facility. A third resident has a bike that they store with a relative because they are concerned their bike will be stolen from the existing facility.</p>	<p>CEO team to determine what type of storage Unknown, CEO team to contact us ref delivery/ installation when purchased</p>
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EAST OUTSTANDING EDB BIDS

East	9960289	Craven Vale	<p>New Connecting Path Hadlow Close to Craven Road (73)</p> <p>The new paths built around the CV estate with the help of previous EDB awards have been very well-received and are well-used. We have now received a request for another wet-weather path linking Hadlow Close by the Vale Community Centre with Craven Road, passing around the edge of the 73-83 block, and estimated at 30-40 metres. This will be used both for people in Craven Road accessing the Vale CC, but also for a dry-weather route linking the middle of Craven Road with the Hadlow Close bus-stops on Queensway.</p> <p>Because the path will be across sloping land it will be less simple than the earlier paths.</p>	Minutes and information filed	New site visit required
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EAST OUTSTANDING EDB BIDS

East	9960290	Craven Vale	<p style="text-align: center;">CVCA Priority 2 Bid 2019-2020</p> <p>The 15 houses in Tilgate Close, Craven Vale, only have access to the roadside by one of three sets of steps, two to Tilgate Close of 13 or 17 steps, plus no pavement and an incline of about 1:5 up Tilgate Close to the junction with Queensway; and one of 11 steps to the pavement at Queensway, adjacencies to the communal bins and a bus stop. For many years they have sought some form of accessible path, particularly for the elderly, those in wheelchairs etc. Ambulances have never been able to serve this street satisfactorily.</p> <p>They are asking for a path to be provided. Following an exhaustive search, the only possibility seems to be that outlined below - a curving path across a steep slope with guard rails to protect people from falling down that slope.</p> <p>The attached plan shows a 36 metre path, of which ten metres is approximately level, and the other 26 on a curving path rising around two metres, at an incline of 1:13. A photograph is also attached showing the view from the pavement on Queensway.</p>	Minutes and information filed	New site visit required
East	9960291	Lichfield Court	<p>Create a bin store in the communal lawn area by the gate to house all of the communal bins, including the recycling that is on the street. The present positioning of the bins is unsightly, smelly and open to wildlife. The recycling on the street is being contaminated and used by people who are not residents at Lichfield Court.</p>	Anita to survey residents and send over results	December

EAST OUTSTANDING EDB BIDS

East	9960292	Westham	Build a rubbish/recycle hut on the north of the Westham car park	In person consultation with Keely	December
East	9960293	Westham	Create a cycle store in one of the launderer drying area in the building plus cycle racks/hut outside the building	In person consultation with Keely	New site visit required
East	9960295	Westham	New pathway from the main entrance leading to the street	In person consultation with Keely	November
East	9960296	Woodingdean	Erect new wire fence and gate around hard play area that was formally Woodingdean tennis courts in Central (Kipling) Park.	In person consultation with Keely	New site visit required

EAST OUTSTANDING EDB BIDS

East	9960298	Woodingdean	<p>Supply & secure two picnic tables onto existing hardstands at Bexhill Road Playground & Bexhill Road Skate Park. One in each location.</p> <p>Supply & secure two picnic tables, including new hardstands at Central (Kipling/Lockwood) Park at a location near to sandpit.</p> <p>Supply & fix two benches on lower pavement in front of shops on Warren Way.</p>	In person consultation with Keely	Unknown, CEO team to contact us ref delivery/ installation when purchased
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Outstanding Quick Bids 2020-2021

EAST OUTSTANDING EDB BIDS

East	9961103	Craven Vale	We wish to make safe an existing footpath which climbs from Craven Road to Craven Wood between 116 and 118 Craven Road by putting in 35 wooden steps. The bid is purely for the supply of 50 wooden steps and 100 wooden stobs to support them. Paul Gorringer can advise on the size, nature and supply of the wooden steps – preferably oak. The extra 15 are for future repairs here and elsewhere on the Estate.	Consultation letter and photo on file	March 20 QB: AG - Need to speak to Brett about H&S / CB - If this is an existing path it should be repaired by Housing or whoever is responsible for it.	Start TBC	Not approved by surveyor - liability issues - need to be constructed by the council. Resident rep has sent over details of other examples constructed on council land with supervision form City Clean. I am awaiting further response from the Surveyor
East	9960296	Woodingdean	Erect new wire fence and gate around hard play area that was formally Woodingdean tennis courts in Central (Kipling) Park. Duplicate job, now a main bid	Keely to consult		Start TBC	This is to re-open the disused park as part of a wider regeneration project for the area. The plan is to use this area as tennis courts once again.

1. Discussion paper for consultation and comment:
Area Panel and Involvement and Empowerment Service Improvement Group

The Community Engagement Team is a cross tenure team that supports resident engagement with council services including the council as a landlord. The team supports a collaborative relationship between residents and services. This report proposes an enhanced framework to strengthen and widen the opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to be engaged with the council as their landlord. This aim to increase and diversify resident involvement, develop further coproduction and participatory approaches, maximise the impact of the Estates Development Budget and change the culture between council and residents. The proposals will build on and augment the council's current approaches to consultation with tenants and leaseholders on landlord/tenant matters.

2. Recommendations for change

- the delivery of more 'pro-active' styles of engagement with tenants and leaseholders to consult and engage with a wider and more diverse group of residents.
- The proposed changes to the current engagement's structures for tenants and leaseholders as set out in Appendix One.
- the maximisation of Estate Development Budget by agreeing to fund revenue, as well as capital projects
- Supporting tenant and leaseholder input with the Environmental Improvements Budget to give tenants a greater say over environmental projects
- To work with the Estate Development Budget [residents] panel and develop 'participatory budgeting' style voting system for EDB, for approval by Housing Committee in March 2022

3. Context/ Background Information

National research shows that *'despite many different approaches and activities, it is not always clear what tenant involvement is seeking to achieve and why it is undertaken'* (Regulatory Board for Wales, 2019)

In Brighton and Hove engagement with communities is a core priority within the Corporate Plan 'A Stronger City' which states we

- Work alongside communities on what matters to them
- Increase participation by using Neighbourhood Action Plans and Ward Budgets
- Preserve and develop the civic spaces to ensure people have space to meet and get online, preventing digital exclusion
- Ensure that the city continues to be a place where people feel safe, supported and valued.

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard and section 105 of the Housing Act set out clear standards and duties for consultation on matters of housing management

- a. A landlord authority shall maintain such arrangements as it considers appropriate to enable those of its secure tenants who are likely to be substantially affected by a matter of housing management
 - to be informed of the authority's proposals in respect of the matter and
 - to make their views known to the authority within a specified period;
 - and the authority shall, before making any decision on the matter, consider any representations made to it in accordance with those arrangements.
- b. For the purposes of this section, a matter is one of housing management if, in the opinion of the landlord authority, it relates to
 - the management, maintenance, improvement or demolition of dwelling-houses let by the authority under secure tenancies, or
 - the provision of services or amenities in connection with such dwelling-houses;
 - but not so far as it relates to the rent payable under a secure tenancy or to charges for services or facilities provided by the authority.
- c. This section applies to matters of housing management which, in the opinion of the landlord authority, represent
 - a new programme of maintenance, improvement or demolition, or
 - a change in the practice or policy of the authority,
 - and are likely substantially to affect either its secure tenants as a whole or a group of them who form a distinct social group or occupy dwelling-houses which constitute a distinct class (whether by reference to the kind of dwelling-house, or the housing estate or other larger area in which they are situated).

Joint Green/Labour Housing Programme - the proposals in this paper will contribute to meeting many of the key priorities such as:

- Working in partnership with the existing forums and expanding the involvement of residents in temporary and emergency accommodation
- Improving transparency and accountability in the housing department
- Ensuring housing tenants have more coproduction opportunities in decision-making around housing policy and service delivery – to work with the council not just be consulted
- Extending participatory budgeting in environmental improvements to estates
- Reviewing community involvement in housing
- Meeting the regulator’s Involvement and Empowerment standard
- Developing and implementing a decent environment standard for council estates to go alongside the Decent Homes standard
- Involving residents in fire safety
- Ensuring greater transparency and early involvement with leaseholders over proposed capital works
- Continuing to ensure that leaseholders voices are heard and financial support is offered where necessary

4. Current Picture

In May 2019 Brighton and Hove City Council created a cross tenure Community Engagement Team. The aim of the team was also to support strong, active and inclusive communities that can influence and shape the city in which they live and work with the outcome being.

“Local people are effectively informed, engaged, involved and empowered by the council. They actively help define and design local priorities and policies, deliver and evaluate services and inform council decision making in areas that impact on their lives.”

The CE Team are key to providing the support to tenant and leaseholder engagement and ensuring the statutory duties are met, However, having one engagement team has enabled tenants and leaseholder to be engaged with a broad range of council services, supporting involvement in local priorities that include housing issues but are not limited to these.

Operational context - Engagement Structures -

There is a long-established operating model within tenant and leaseholder engagement which has been reviewed many times over the last 10 years, alongside smaller reviews and explorations of how to involve and engage more people in Tenant and Resident Associations (TRA) with the recognition of both formal and informal groups.

The last significant review was in 2016, whilst there were wider ranging recommendations only small changes have been achieved.

Changing engagement culture, practice and structures is difficult and there is not a widely accepted benchmark across local authorities. There is also a level of understandable resistance to change, particularly from the residents who have invested time and energy in the current structures for fear change will reduce influence and voice and dilute tenant involvement.

There is a small number of valued & dedicated tenants and leaseholders who are actively involved in working with the council on improving housing stock and services. However, whilst these tenants and leaseholders continue to work hard and give huge amounts of their time to being involved, they are only a very small percentage of the wider tenant and leaseholder population - approximately 0.4% of the total tenant/leaseholder population.

Evidence and statistics

There is some disparity in representation in relation to the people who are housing in our council stock

- 90% of engaged resident are over 50 and yet 37% of BHCC tenants are under 50.
- 10% of our tenants identify within a minority ethnic group but we only have a tiny proportion involved
- We have no young people involved in housing management
- We have a large section of people with disabilities and older people actively involved

In 2016 there was a review of resident involvement, approximately 5% of the tenant population participated. A series of core recommendations were made including providing more on-line opportunities for involvement and reducing the four Area Panels to one core Panel meeting. The latter was not implemented due to concerns about losing space and time for discussing specific localised issues. Many of the 2016 recommendations are outstanding

The review found that from 16 Area Panels 15 had the same agenda, with just the East Area Panel having an additional agenda item. In 2019 this had improved slightly with some additional area-based agenda items, but the core agenda remains the same in each area. This not only results in the officers reporting the same information at four different meetings, but the lack of a City-Wide Panel doesn't allow residents to share and explore the similarities across areas. This can result in piecemeal changes rather than looking strategically at a problem.

As a result of COVID 19 Area Panels have been held online and we have explored having one larger meeting with four breakout meetings to still retain the important area focus. Feedback from the first of these meetings has been extensive and mixed. Overall, the online format made it difficult to have a larger and longer meeting and residents preferred a small area-based meeting where more people were able to speak. The postponement of meetings due to Covid has created a backlog of 3-star items that means, for the moment, there is a preference among residents and members to keep to area-based meetings. Once [social distancing measures are lifted the format of Area Panel will need to

be reviewed to ensure we are addressing both local and strategic residents priorities.

Feedback from the 2019 Star survey showed that 67% of tenants and leaseholders remained satisfied with their involvement with the council. Whilst this is down three points compared to 2016, it still demonstrates the same improvement in the proportion of 'very satisfied' responses. Indeed, whilst making allowances for the change in methodology this year, it remains true that council's performance in this respect continues to generally trend upwards. However, when replying to the question respondents were just as likely to consider day to day transactions such as telephone queries and the repairs process, as they are to think about wider resident involvement and consultation. As such, the strong score is most likely linked to the generally high standard of customer service that tenants experienced.

The main demographic difference was age, with older tenants (aged 65+) significantly more satisfied (78%), whereas the opposite was true for the under 35's and those aged 35 - 49 (58% and 60% respectively). This is reflected in the make up of our most engaged residents, with very limited engagement from within these age groups.

Currently it is very difficult to evaluate any change that is created through the tenant and leaseholder engagement structures and there is no formal process to do this.

In early 2020 each Area Panel had a workshop on increasing resident involvement and 3 residents have voluntarily written full papers with proposals for change. Summary of feedback was as follows:

The burden of meetings is considerable
Information isn't joined up across meetings, creating duplication
The structures limit representation from tenants and leaseholders
Ways to get involved need to be expanded to interest more people
We need to do more online
Engagement/Involvement needs to be fun
Residents want to do things in their communities and on estates, they need support and resources to do this
Tenant Associations need support to achieve their aims and increase involvement
Residents want their input to create real change – they often feel the council is tokenistic about its engagement
Reports need to use less jargon
The council and officers need to be more open to input, constructive criticism and change

Outcomes for involvement should be clear and measured so we can see what has been achieved
Trust and confidence is a concern of residents in officer and the decision making process
Decisions are already made prior to their involvement, officers talk 'at them' with information and there is little time for real debate and opportunity to influence – 'it's a done deal'

Leaseholder Engagement:

There is a separate Leaseholder Engagement Strategy that was approved at Housing Committee in June 2018

The Leaseholder Engagement is supported in a number of ways.

- Leaseholder Action Group
- A dedicated Senior Leaseholder Liaison officer
- Involvement in the other formal engagement channels such resident associations, Area Panels and Service Improvement Groups
- Task and finish groups

Most often tenant and leaseholders have shared outcomes for the quiet enjoyment of a good quality home, to ensure value for money with spend of Housing Revenue Funds and to have a say in the services they receive.

However, there are issues that are very specific to leaseholders such as the cost of major works, billing and transparency of information that need exclusive engagement with the leaseholder rather than within the wider engagement structures.

Operational Context - Estate Development Budget (EDB)

The EDB process and budget £354,000 in 2020/21 is a fundamental means to engage and empower residents. It is an annual fund made available to tenants and leaseholders (as either formal or informal groups) to improve the quality of life.

Currently only a small number of tenants and leaseholders are successful in bidding for small capital works/equipment and an even smaller group of tenants and leaseholds comprise the decision-making panel. EDB funds are predominantly spent on capital works. However, there is no stipulation that EDB funding is restricted to capital work.

An internal audit of the EDB process 2018 found partial assurance in the process; 'weaknesses in the system of control and/or the level of non-compliance is such as to put the achievement of the system or service objectives at risk',

A resident led EDB review group was formed in response to the internal audit findings. The review group consists of residents drawn from the EDB Panel, Area Panels, Service Improvement Groups. The review group met seven times between July 2018 and January 2019 and were tasked to:

- Make EDB easier to understand and use

- Find ways to shorten the main bid process from application to the point of delivery
- Introduce new processes to encourage more and varied bids
- Ensure the processes are fair and equitable.

The group concluded resident dissatisfaction with the current scheme and a lack of clarity around EDB rules. The group made a series of recommendations (please see table in Appendix Four). Several of the recommendations from the EDB review have been implemented. The application process has been updated with a clear bidding and evaluation criteria now in place which aims to reduce the ambiguity of awarding funds.

There are outstanding recommendations which if implemented could considerably increase engagement and improve the fund's positive impact on tenants and leaseholders.

A specific recommendation from the EDB review group was for the council to provide a fund to support community revenue projects. This would enable groups to develop local activities within community rooms and on open space for example community fitness classes, arts and crafts groups, homework clubs, ICT classes. To address this, it is proposed that tenants and leaseholders can bid for revenue and capital projects through the EDB.

Further capital projects will also be funded through the £500k Environmental improvement budget (EIB). The two funds are complimentary and residents currently feed in views and priorities through the Community Engagement Team. Work is needed to expand participation in both bidding for EDB funds and in the decision-making processes. There is a small elected panel of residents that comprise the EDB decision making panel who evaluate the bids.

It is proposed that the EDB panel and EDB review group continue to work on options that form part of wider consultation, through local surveys, work with small groups, Homing-In and the Council's online consultation portal, to move towards a wider 'participatory budgeting' process for EDB. This would inform and engage more residents in both bidding and the decision-making process.

5. Future of Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Proposal

To widen and deepen engagement with tenants and leaseholders it will need us to expand the ways residents are able to be involved. Whilst there are already some good practices this paper proposes to develop and build on these, recognising communities play an important role in;

- Supporting the council to improve and measure performance
- Responding to challenges
- Improving the delivery of local services
- Providing community led independent activities and services
- Providing residents with the skills and methods to make a significant difference to the way services are shaped and delivered
- Developing different working practice that build a culture of collaboration and coproduction

Currently most of the engagement with tenants and leaseholders is carried out through meetings. This type of engagement will only ever be of interest to a small proportion of the community and often excludes those who are not able, keen or confident to attend. However, many people want to voice their view or do something about their estate, community or living conditions but are not sure how to do this.

The 2016 review acknowledged that the format of council led meetings does not always deliver the improvements and changes the residents want to see

The Community Engagement Team are working with many groups but to widen this engagement and meet the council's priorities and statutory duties we propose to develop these three core styles of engagement

Proactive Engagement – developing relationship with tenants by offering or joining everyday activities, consultations and events.

- Door knocking
- Questionnaires' and surveys
- Social media and online groups
- Support tenant and residents' groups to provide and deliver local activities and events
- Supporting and developing arts, cultural and fun days/events
- Networking and workshops
- Supporting residents to develop ideas and bid for EDB/EIB
- Developing Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Use of community rooms

This approach enables people to get involved or express their views on a wide range of council services, policies or practices in a more informal way

Responsive Engagement - supports and enables services in the council to speak to residents through outward communication and feedback.

- Supporting council departments and teams to engage with tenants and leaseholders
- Provide specific consultation and engagement workshops and facilitate events to engage communities in council/housing priorities
- Provide some financial support to tenant and leaseholder groups
- Providing area-based teams of community engagement officers and community development workers to support to neighbourhood groups residents, tenants and leaseholders and to work with the council and build their capacity to self-manage.
- Support tenants and leaseholder to develop their skills and knowledge through training and learning
- Commission other organisations to offer independent support to tenant and leaseholder groups
- Support ward councillors in their work with communities
- Facilitate the development of self-sustaining independent community groups

Structural Engagement – this is the most formal engagement. It is often meeting based and it used to look at, council policy and practice.

- Providing support to TRAs, and offering information, guidance and practical support to tenant, leaseholder and community representatives.
- Support to area based representative groups including Local Action Teams, Neighbourhood Forums
- Support to the Tenant and Leaseholder structures such as Area Panels, Service Improvement groups and specialist groups
- Commissioning training and learning for/with tenant and leaseholder representatives
- Supporting tenants and leaseholders to be representative and engage their communities
- Explore further engagement with people in temporary and emergency accommodation

These approaches are set out in more detail in Appendix Two

This work will be developed with a three-year plan to 20/21-22/23 in year one it is proposed to focus on the following actions:

Increase the **Proactive Engagement** – we aim to create a consistent programme over the 3 years with a specific approach to working with underrepresented groups

Year one

- Ensure community engagement has a regular and active social media presence
- Have a schedule of door knocking
- Send out 4 questionnaires' and surveys
- Networking and workshops x 6
- Have promotion on and offline for expanding EDB/EIB bids
- Develop 2 more Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Develop community room agreements, risk assessment and equalities impact support for management groups

Year Two

- Support all TRA's have a regular and active social media presence
- Have a schedule of door knocking
- Send out 2 questionnaires' and surveys
- Support a minimum of 2 tenant and residents' groups in each area to provide and deliver local activities and events
- Support and develop arts, cultural and fun days/events x 2
- Networking events x 6
- Have promotion on and offline for expanding EDB/EIB bids
- Develop 2 more Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Develop ways of engaging the BAMER communities
- Increase use of community rooms for diverse activities

Year Three

- Support all TRA's have a regular and active social media presence
- Have a schedule of door knocking
- Send out 2 questionnaires' and surveys
- Support a minimum of 2 tenant and residents' groups in each area to provide and deliver local activities and events
- Support and develop arts, cultural and fun days/events x 2
- Networking events x 6
- Have promotion on and offline for expanding EDB/EIB bids
- Develop 2 more Neighbourhood Action Plans
- Develop ways of engaging tenants and residents in underrepresented communities LGBTQ, older people (not in seniors' accommodation, young people and parents)

In light of Covid 19 these will need to be creative approaches with social distancing and safety as a top priority, however we still aim to deliver 'in person' approaches as well as online interactions.

Focus the **Responsive Engagement** on the key housing priorities for 20/21- 22/23

- **Year One**
- Consultation on the housing budget setting
- Consultation on the Allocations Policy
- Develop area plans that integrate the work of the Community Engagement Team and the commissioned Community Development Work, in order to provide a complete offer of engagement support and capacity building.
- Work with the tenants and leaseholder to develop a participatory budgeting programme to bring to Housing Committee for approval.
- Create a format for all reports to tenants and leaseholders that state the purpose of the engagement and the 'request' to the tenants i.e. decision making, information, debate, etc

Year Two

- Coproduce a new training and learning programme with the tenants and leaseholders.
- Develop an evaluation framework to tenant and leaseholder engagement
- Support an evaluation of the new repairs and maintenance service

Year three

- Set up a resident panel to support the commissioning of independent support to tenant and leaseholder groups
- Evaluation engagement – impact and evidence of change

Reorganise the Structural Engagement to create stronger governance with clearer lines of accountability and evidence of impact. It will also produce more opportunities for residents to be involved and share information

Year One

- Run 4 Area Panel meetings, 2 online meetings simultaneously Review regularly to ensure there are opportunities to raise city wide and strategic issues.
- Ensure the Housing Management governance structures are a clear, with accountability between Area Panels, Service Improvement Groups, city group and TRA's. Set up a process for Area panel Chairs to refer complex or longstanding to a Service Improvement Group to report back in more detail
- Merge the Service improvement groups from four to two with a focus on People and Buildings.
- Strengthen the Leaseholder Action Group to strengthen to becomes a key forum for council and leaseholder engagement
- Expand EDB to fund both capital and revenue projects.
- Increase the engagement of underrepresented communities within the tenant and resident associations
- the use of a co-production approach to work with tenants on the development of a Brighton and Hove "Decent environment standard" for housing estates, with this standard being reported to housing committee for adoption in June 2021

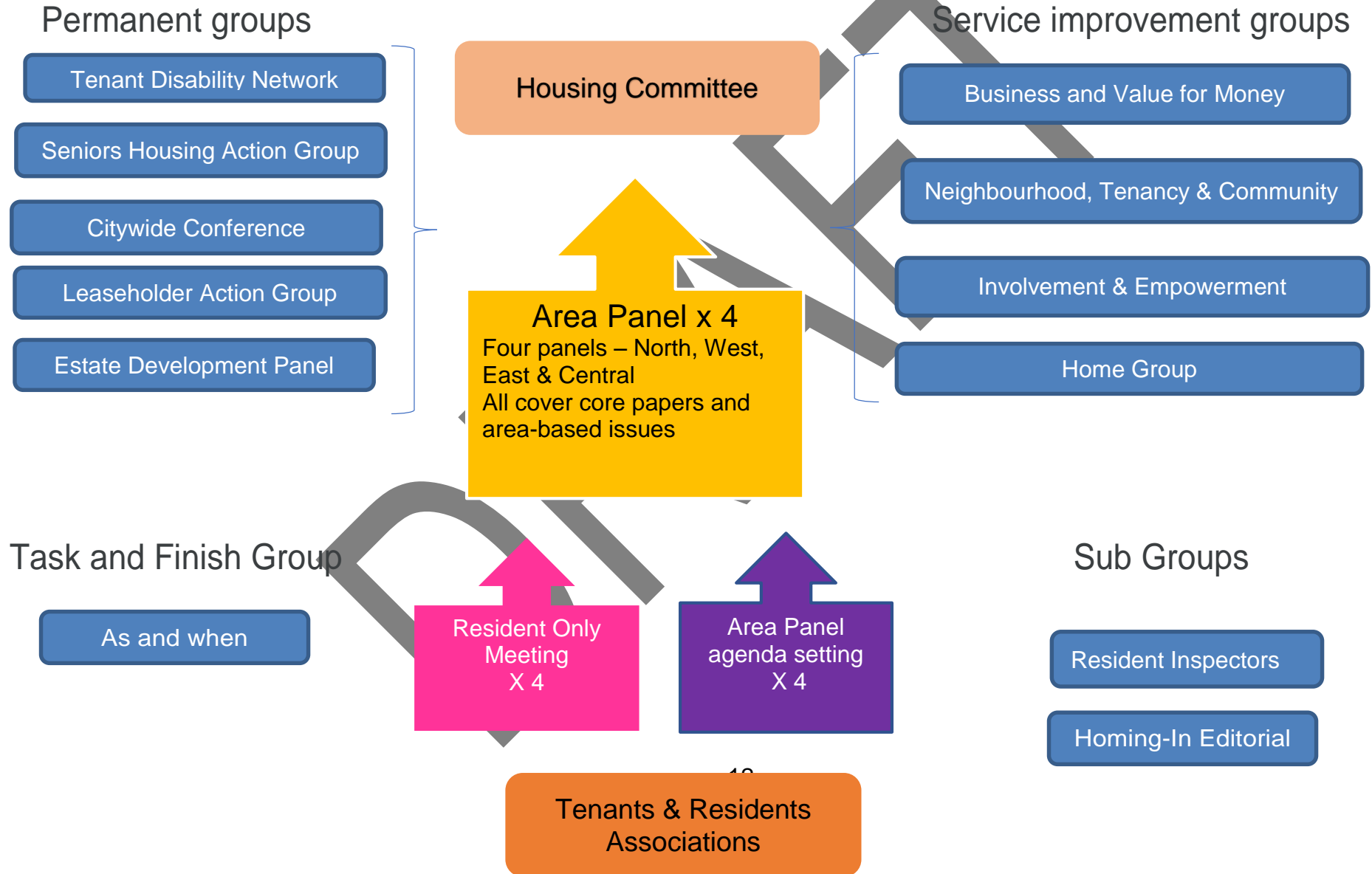
Year Two

- Develop a bespoke training and learning offer for TRA's and other tenant and leaseholder groups
- Implement all outstanding recommendations from the EDB review
- Develop work plans with outcomes and targets for all city wide group
- Increase the engagement of underrepresented communities within the Housing Management Structures

Year Three

- the integration of input from representative groups for residents living in temporary and emergency housing into structural engagement opportunities.
- Implement participatory budgeting programme across EDB and EIB
- devising measures to assess the impact and benefits for tenants of proactive, responsive and structural approaches to engagement, agreed with area panels and then subsequently to be reported back to area panels and housing committee on an annual basis

Appendix 1 / Current structure



Proposed Structure

Equalities / Identity Groups

- Tenant Disability Network
- Seniors Housing Action Group
- Leaseholder Action Group
- Temporary and Emergency Accommodation Groups

Interest Groups

- Citywide Conference
- Estate Development Panel

Task and Finish Groups

- As and when

Housing Committee

Area Panel x 4
Four panels – North, West, East & Central
All cover core papers and area-based issues

Resident Only Meeting X 4

Area Panel agenda setting X 1

Tenants & Residents Associations

Service improvement groups

People
Lettings
Tenancy
Star report
Tenants associations
Engagement
Communications
Consultations
Training
Anti-Social Behaviour
Estates – people, events, ASB etc.

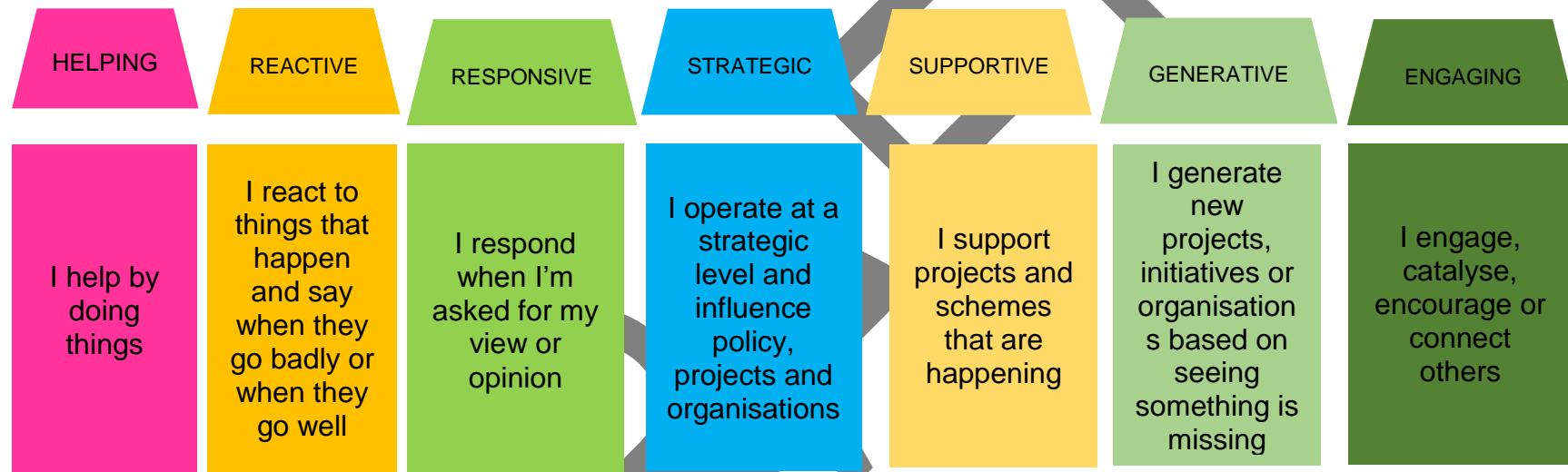
Buildings
Repairs
Maintenance
Planned works
Major Works
New Build
Estates – physical fencing, verges, open space etc.

Sub Groups

- Resident Inspectors
- Homing -In Editorial

Appendix 2 - Styles of engagement

To engage communities in a meaningful and valuable way we must ensure we are offering a range of opportunities that are; interesting, rewarding and accomplishing. We need to maintain enthusiasm and build trusting, open relationships. Different people will want to be involved in different ways. The diagram below helps us to consider the type of engagement opportunities we offer and help ensure we can support people in the right way.



Proactive Engagement - this enables us to build relationships with people that often do not wish to or cannot attend meetings. It reaches the people who are unaware of the opportunities to be involved with council services and supports people to engage with each other and develop new ideas, projects and activities within their communities. This approach enables people to get involved or express their views on a wide range of council services, policies or practices in a more informal way

Activities	Aim
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Door knocking • Pop up or mini events • Questionnaires' and surveys • Social media and online groups/meeting • Groups and activities • Events, art and culture • Fun days • Networking and workshops • Learning and training • Community led events and activities • Developing Neighbourhood Action Plans • Participatory budgeting, Estate Development Budget and Environmental Improvement Budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure residents can participate in engagement activities that work for them • To build trusting relationships with local communities • To develop insight and understanding about communities and their priorities • To ensure residents can participate in engagement activities that work for them • To ensure residents can participate in engagement activities that work for them • To build trusting relationships with local communities

Responsive Engagement - this supports and enables services in the council to speak to residents through outward communication and feedback. This approach develops clearer understanding and actions on local priorities and can support communities to develop their own ideas, activities and services

Activities	Aim
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for services to consult and engage on specific issues • Provide area-based teams with Community Development partners to offer a complete package of engagement and development support to communities, neighbourhood groups residents, tenants and leaseholders • To provide engagement workshops, facilitation or events to engage communities in council services • To enable and support ward councillors to work with communities • To support the implementation of Neighbourhood Action Plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide a complete area-based offer for council services, ward councillors and residents to work together on identifying and responding to city wide and local issues • To provide a complete area-based offer for council services, ward councillors and residents to work together on identifying and responding to city wide and local issues

Structural Engagement - this is the most formal engagement. It is often meeting based and it used to look at , council policy and practice.– This approach only appeals to some residents.

Activities	Aim
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to area based representative groups including LAT's, Neighbourhood Forums • Support to the Tenant and Leaseholder structures • Provide specific support to engage in • Support and develop the Tenant and Leaseholder grass roots groups • Provide guidance and support to the tenants and leaseholders • Ensure there are diverse and inclusive opportunities for involvement within these structures • To work with city wide communities of identity to engage them in neighbourhood working and tenant management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To support communities to have a voice in the development of council and public services policy and practice • To ensure the council is delivering on its statutory duties to engage

Appendix 3 - EDB Tables

Recommendations from 2018 EDB review

To be introduced in time for the 2020/21 EDB Programme	
1	Improve the information and guidelines for residents making EDB bids, including information from Neighbourhood Action Plans and the new process for progressing with environmental improvements.
2	Offer applicants who want to know more about EDB and how to make bids appointments with officers.
3	Set up a separate EDB budget from the citywide allocation for Seniors' housing; to be trialled for one year.
4	Decisions on Seniors' bids to be made by the Sheltered Housing Action Group.
5	Bids for fencing to be restricted to communal areas.
6	Carry out a review of new fencing installations and repairs.
7	Introduce an improved online EDB application form.
8	Aim to increase the number of decision points in the EDB cycle for main bids, to at least two a year.
9	Increase the maximum value of quick bids from £750 to £1,000.
10	Reduce the number of EDB Panel meetings from 10 to 6 per year.
11	Performance on the EDB programme to be reported twice yearly, including an end of year report.
12	Improve communications between the council and applicants at each stage of the EDB cycle.
Requiring further work	
13	Consider setting up a 'community chest' for community wellbeing projects funded from the grants to residents' associations' budget as it is regularly underspent.
14	Review maximum value of bids, for anticipated reduction of funding in 2021/22.
15	Review the decision making body for EDB bids.
16	Review how EDB funding is split between areas and/or property types.

Table One: Implemented changes to the EDB program

1.	<p>Improve the information and guidelines for residents making EDB bids, including information from Neighbourhood Action Plans.</p>	<p>An applicant guide has been produced which outlines what can and cannot currently be funded through EDB, with examples of each type of bid under each criterion.</p> <p>A new bid evaluation criteria has been produced (available in the appendixes), which the EDB panel refer to when voting on bids. This will be available for bidder's reference when completing applications.</p> <p>Bids for projects which benefit council residents on land owned by other parts of the council are considered for EDB funding, providing they have permission from the relevant directorate.</p> <p>Four Neighbourhood Action Plans (NAPs) have been published (East Brighton, Hangleton and Knoll, Moulsecoomb and Bevendean, and Portslade). Where appropriate, information from Neighbourhood Actions Plans will be used to inform residents when designing EDB projects, and will be taken into consideration when deciding upon EDB bids.</p>
2.	<p>Offer applicants who want to know more about EDB and how to make bids appointments with officers.</p>	<p>Residents can have appointments in person or over the phone with their local Community Engagement Officer (CEO) or the EDB Assistant to discuss EDB generally, to receive information on how to make bids, and to find out information on local community groups/associations which can offer further support in their application.</p>
3.1	<p>Set up a separate EDB budget from the citywide allocation for Seniors' housing, to be trialled for one year.</p>	<p>During the last EDB panel review meeting in March 2020, it was agreed that EDB would not be split between citywide and Seniors' Housing for the following reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. A new clear process and criteria for bidding and evaluating bids has been developed and all bidding needs to remain in line with this for equity. b. The budget split for Seniors' Housing based on the proportion of properties would be £26,500 per annum (8% of £320,000). This would limit the number of main bids to two per year for Seniors' Housing city-wide.
3.2	<p>Decisions on Seniors' bids to be made by the Sheltered Housing Action Group.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. The issue of age being a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 was considered at our last meeting, and questions raised as to the extent to which if Seniors' receive a separately controlled part of the budget, then why would

		<p>this not be available to other protected groups across the city.</p> <p>d. It was also raised that people with protected characteristic may have greater needs than others, so to split the budget by population data did not seem a sophisticated method.</p>
4.	Bids for fencing to be restricted to communal areas.	<p>This has been implemented. Individuals in need of fencing need to contact Housing Customer Services and will be advised on a case-by-case basis.</p>
5.	Introduce an improved online EDB application form.	<p>An online application form was introduced in June 2019, however, the application form had several issues.</p> <p>Most notably, the questions on the online application form did not require bidders: to outline how their bid will improve the quality of life of council tenants; to detail thoroughly how they have consulted with other residents; or to consider how they will evaluate success of their project.</p> <p>This meant that many of the applications did not appropriately meet key social value and evaluation criteria, which was highlighted as a crucial element in the EDB Audit 2017-2018.</p> <p>It was also requested that residents can use the form as a 'work in progress' as they complete different stages of the application. However, this was not an available feature which led to some confusion and frustration.</p> <p>Therefore, the online application has been closed until the questions can be changed to adequately reflect the social value criteria.</p>
	Defining the clear differences between spend from the Environmental Improvement Budget (EIB) and the EDB.	<p>The two funds are complimentary we have implemented a process to link any unsuccessful EDB bids to be passed to EIB if appropriate.</p> <p>To also look at funding separate parts of a single project using both funds to provide both capital and revenue.</p> <p>We will be producing communications to promote both funds and how to use them either separately or jointly.</p>
6.	Review the value of main bids. Increase the maximum value of quick bids	<p>As the amount of money available for EDB has not significantly reduced, the main bid maximum value will remain at £10K.</p> <p>The maximum value of quick bids has been raised to, and remains at, £1,000 per bid.</p>

	from £750 to £1000.	
7.	Reduce the number of EDB Panel meetings from 10 to 6 per year.	This has been implemented. The panel now meets on the last Wednesday of May, July, September, November, January, and March.
8.	Improve communications between the council and applicants at each stage of the EDB cycle.	Bidders are now notified and acknowledged when their application is received, they are informed on the outcome of their bids, and they are given a follow-up on reasons for the outcome of their bid by the Community Engagement Team.
9.	Decision making – how are bids decided upon?	The review group felt that the way of deciding on EDB bids encouraged 'Eurovision Syndrome' where residents voted for bids based on familiarity rather than the quality of bids. Community Engagement Team have now introduced an evaluation framework that the EDB panel, and those who attend the end of year EDB Area Panel, will use to judge bids. This will help to mitigate the possibility of residents voting on bids due to familiarity with the bidder, it will offer a 'paper-trail' of how decisions were made, and will act as further guidance for bidders when completing their application.
10.	Evaluation of EDB	From April 2021, an end of financial year report will be produced. This will involve all stakeholders of the year's program and will include: the number of bids, what was funded, impact, and changes needed to the guidelines for the following financial year. This evaluation will also include qualitative information on how residents have measured the social value of their projects.

Changes requiring implementation

3.1 There were further changes discussed during the EDB review that have yet to be made.

1.	Changes to capital only EDB projects	EDB funding is not restricted to capital work. Allow for revenue projects, to be funded from EDB.
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4.	Review the decision-making body for EDB	<p>Further work is needed to develop methods of widening the decision-making processes of EDB.</p> <p>It is proposed that the EDB panel with co-opted reps from the current task and finish group continue to work on options that form part of wider consultation e.g. through Homing-In and the Council's online consultation portal to move towards a wider 'participatory budgeting' style voting system, to be approved by Housing Committee before implementation.</p>
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3.2 Table 3: Changes to the use of funds which require Area panel approval

1.	A clear definition between an 'improvement' and 'repair/redecoration'	<p>The EDB stipulates that the fund is to be used for an 'improvement' to estates.</p> <p>Area Panel we define the definition between a repair, maintenance and an improvement to elevate the current confusion.</p>
2.	Review how EDB funding is split between areas and/or property types	<p>The annual EDB fund is split between the 4 areas according to the number of properties in each area. This does not take into account the amount of common land, property types, the need for improvements, and historic spend.</p> <p>The EDB panel, with the current task and finish group need to continue to work of options for the funding split, which will be reviewed and approved by Area Panel.</p>
3.	Increase the number of bid cycles	<p>The review group have advised that the long timescale between a bid being approved, and the project delivery has led to a loss of faith in the council.</p> <p>To mitigate this, the main bid cycle should be increased to two per year (with the main bid funding for the financial year being split into two rounds). The deadlines for applications would be January to be voted on in April, and July to be voted on in October.</p> <p>There was a significant underspend in the West and North areas on main bids for the financial year 20/21 and having a second bidding round in October 2020 to spend the remaining funds would be beneficial as a 'test-run'.</p>

4.	Ongoing costs	<p>The current EDB guidelines stipulate that an EDB bid cannot incur ongoing costs. However, this creates limitations to certain projects, such as the installation of Wi-Fi in community rooms.</p> <p>A review of this would allow groups to bid for an amount of money which could be split over a period of time in order to facilitate a broader range of projects.</p>
5.	Evaluation process	<p>Work needs to be done on reinstating the 'Resident Inspectors' programme to tie in with the end of year evaluation report, reviewing the delivery of some projects and meeting with residents who have engaged with the EDB process.</p> <p>This needs to be designed by the EDB panel, with the current task and finish group, and reviewed and approved by Area Panel.</p>

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