



**Brighton & Hove
City Council**

Housing Management Panel

Title:	Housing Management Panel: West Hove & Portslade Area
Date:	26 July 2016
Time:	2.00pm
Venue	St Richards Church and Community Centre, Egmont Road, Hove, BN3 7FP
Members:	Councillors: Moonan (Chair), Ward Councillors for the Area, Delegates of Tenants Association in the area.
Contact:	Cliona May Democratic Services Officer 01273 291354 cliona.may@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL

HOUSING MANAGEMENT PANEL: WEST HOVE & PORTSLADE AREA

2.00pm 27 JANUARY 2016

ST RICHARDS CHURCH AND COMMUNITY CENTRE, EGMONT ROAD, HOVE, BN3 7FP

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Moonan (Chair), Barnett, Peltzer Dunn.

Representatives: Joe Macrae (North Portslade), Pat Weller (Knoll), Blackbear (Ingram Crescent), Vic Dodd (Ingram Crescent), Ann Packham (Ingram Crescent), and Ann Tizzard (Knoll).

Officers: Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager), Pat Liddell (Resident Involvement Officer), John Currell (Housing Asset Strategy Manager), Glyn Huelin (Business & Performance Manager), Rachel Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services), Ododo Dafe (Head of Income Involvement & Improvement), Cliona May (Democratic Services Officer).

Guests: Ian Stone (Mears).

29 APOLOGIES

29.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Atkinson, Councillor Lewry, Councillor Janio, Councillor Nemeth, Tracey Hill, Julie Fosberry, June Baker and Muriel Briault.

30 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

30.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Chair be authorised to sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on 3 December 2015 as a correct record.

31 CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

31.1 There were none.

32 RESIDENTS QUESTION TIME

32.1 (Item 1 – Setting start and end dates for repairs and improvements) In response to Councillor Peltzer Dunn the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement explained that once something had been inspected, the timetabled repairs would then take place and tenants would be informed of the start date and the anticipated length of the work. It was added that minor repairs would not require a consultation process; however, the residents would be informed of lengthier repairs and a consultation process would be scheduled.

32.2 (Item 2 – Scaffolding) Glyn Huelin, Business & Performance Manager, explained to the Panel that depending on the housing insurance a tenant has, having scaffolding on their property could make it invalid and this was detailed to the tenant through a formal letter. Ian Stone, Mears representative, noted that scaffolding should be taken

down once the work had been completed on the property. To prevent it being up longer than necessary, Mears would not pay for the job until the scaffolding had been taken down. It was added that there was a less of a demand for scaffolding; therefore, it had become a recent problem that scaffolding was being left up on houses.

- 32.3 (Item 2 – Spacing of Resident Only meetings) In response to the Chair, the Resident Involvement Manager explained that the Area Housing Panels in January would be moved to March; therefore, the meetings would be evenly spread out over the year.

33 DRAFT ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- 33.1 John Currell, Housing Asset Strategy Manager, introduced the report and explained that there had been consultation meetings with residents. Residents were particularly keen to prioritise investment in the exterior repair of buildings and common parts, such as decorations in stairwells and lighting, with the aim of achieving a more consistent standard across the city. It was also feedback that residents wished the general focus for investment should be mainly on improving the quality of the existing housing stock, and ensuring that all housing should be of a good standard, and well insulated, to help with fuel costs.
- 33.2 In response to Pat Weller, the Housing Asset Strategy Manager clarified that Brighton & Hove City Council did have freehold buildings that were now 100% sold leasehold.
- 33.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn noted that a “block of flats” should be specified in the report, as this could include two flats in one property.
- 33.4 Councillor Barnett stated that her constituents have feedback that it was disappointing that they could not buy their freehold.
- 33.5 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

34 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT

- 34.1 The Head of Income Involvement & Improvement introduced the report and explained that it was a brief report due to the despatch times of the meeting agenda. It was agreed that the residents would be informed when the full report was available on the website and hardcopies could be sent to residents who did not have internet access.
- 34.2 It was highlighted to the Panel that the problem with transferring calls in Customers Services, which had been previously noted by the Area Housing Panel, had not been resolved; however, would be by February 2016.
- 34.3 In response to Ann Tizzard, it was confirmed that the full report would state current arrears; however, it would not specify whether they were long term or short term.
- 34.4 The Head of Income Involvement & Improvement confirmed to Pat Weller that there would be measures in place to help tenants that would be affected by universal credit. It was added that Officers had received training from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Head of Tenancy Services noted that funding had been received from the DWP to upskill and prepare unemployed individuals for work.

- 34.5 In response to Chief Blackbear, it was explained that individuals that may struggle, for example addicts, individuals with mental health issues and domestic violence victims, would be either exempt from universal credit or receive additional support. This decision would be made by the DWP. In response to the Chair, it was clarified that the individual would have to give consent for their information being shared with the DWP; however, would not need to inform tenants who are in long term arrears.
- 34.6 In response to Councillor Barnett it was explained that residents have feedback that there is a lack of correspondence with tenants who report tenancy fraud. The Head of Tenancy Services encouraged residents to directly contact either herself, Ododo Dafe, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement, or Tracy John, Assistant Director of Housing for an update.
- 34.7 In response to Councillor Peltzer Dunn the Head of Tenancy Services agreed to check that the full report would state the outcomes of the antisocial behaviour cases. It was explained that the 100% success rate for closed Tenancy Sustainment Officer cases, stated in the report, meant that they did not lose their tenancy.
- 34.8 The Head of Tenancy Services confirmed to Ann Tizzard that tenancy check letters were sent out to the resident and arrangements would be made, as tenants felt it was intrusive not to have notice. It was added that notice is not given for tenancy fraud checks.
- 34.9 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

35 REVIEW REPORT

- 35.1 The Resident Involvement Manager introduced and explained that the last review was three years ago. The review was carried out to broaden tenant engagement and to increase resident involvement satisfaction. It was added that residents, area panel representatives and other interested tenants, would be involved in the review and would explore all areas of resident involvement.
- 35.2 The Chair thanked the Resident Involvement Manager for the report and encouraged the tenants to get involved.
- 35.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

36 CITY WIDE REPORTS

- 36.1 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel agreed to note the report.

37 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 37.1 The Head of Income Involvement & Improvement informed the Panel that the Mutual Exchange Incentives report was agreed at the Housing & New Homes Committee; therefore, if tenants knew of residents looking for a mutual exchange, they should contact the Housing department.
- 37.2 Joseph Macrae noted that there was a problem with cars driving and parking on grass verges, which had been reported on a state inspection; however he had not had any

feedback on this. The Head of Tenancy Services agreed to report the query to the feedback team. Councillor Barnett noted that Councillor Gilbey was involved in a scheme to prevent cars driving on grass verges, and she agreed to contact her and feedback.

37.3 In response to Councillor Peltzer Dunn, the Head of Income Involvement & Improvement explained that tenants are encouraged to report problems to the individual teams.

37.4 In response to Chief Blackbear, Councillor Peltzer Dunn noted that the fire authority did not have concern regarding mobility scooters being kept in the communal hallways. The Head of Tenancy Services agreed to feedback to Chief Blackbear and Councillor Peltzer Dunn with further information.

37.5 The Chair requested feedback from the emergency sub-panel held 26 January regarding the budget proposals. The following feedback was given:

- The information was basic and was focussed on existing budgets, rather than the future budget proposals.
- The discussion was unfocussed and residents felt uncomfortable to comment and get involved.
- Would have been helpful to have the papers before the meeting. It was noted that the meeting was short notice and could not have despatched the papers in advance.
- The Panel agreed that having a budget meeting in September 2016 would be helpful.

The meeting concluded at 3.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of

Items from the West Tenant Only meeting held on 12/05/16

1a) Role of EDB panel

The EDB panel's original remit was to agree Quick Bids. There was concern that this panel is now making policy about how the EDB overall is run, without decisions going through the Area Panels.

Why has this decision making power been taken away from Area Panels? What is the formal role of the EDB panel, and who agrees this?

1b) £750 limit on Quick bids

It was noted that 'rolling' bids are not allowed for EDB Quick Bids. Clarendon & Ellen requested posts to stop cars parking, which came to more than £750. They wanted to apply for two lots of Quick Bids, but were told to go to the main EDB budget for this instead. This would mean a long delay, as main bids are only put in once a year.

It was noted that more money going to one Association would mean less going to others, and that Quick Bids are specifically designed to be for smaller jobs. However, it was felt that there could be more flexibility about this and it should be open to discussion.

1c) Officers' role in making EDB bids

There was agreement that EDB bids should come from Residents Associations, not individuals or Housing Officers. There is a collective process undertaken by the Resident Associations, involving local consultation, discussion and agreement about what bids to make. This is undermined if the process can be side-stepped and the money available for Residents Associations bids reduced.

1d) What can the EDB be spent on?

The original idea was that EDB money was for improvements, but increasingly it is spent on work that the Council should be doing anyway. Why is this happening and who agrees the guidelines for EDB spending?

1e) Getting EDB work done quickly

After long delays and many problems with EDB work, tenants were assured that jobs would be completed within the year, but work is still taking longer than this. This is frustrating and demoralising for residents, and detracts from the overall benefit that comes from the EDB.

Why is this still happening, and what can be done to improve the situation?

1f) Conflict of interest between tenants and leaseholders

It was noted that there can be a conflict of interest between tenants and leaseholders over the Estate Development Budget. If work is not essential and leaseholders will incur costs, they are unlikely to agree it. This causes friction between members of the Residents' Association, and can have repercussions for the overall smooth running of the Residents' Association. It was

agreed that this is a difficult issue, and needed more discussion about how the EDB was organised, and if there was a way of preventing this conflict within Resident Associations. involving local consultation, discussion and agreement about what bids to make. This is undermined if the process can be side-stepped and the money available for Residents Associations bids reduced.

Action: III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel

Response from Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Manager, Tel: 01273 293022

1a) As discussed at the May EDB Panel the Panel can only make recommendations and do not make decisions on policy. The Terms of Reference of the Panel were recirculated to clarify this, one of the purposes of the Panel in, *“to review the processes for the Estate Development Budget and make recommendations for improvements”*. The Panel is currently working on the EDB review and will be contacting the Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) to get their views. A report will be going to the Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group in September, before going to the November / December Area Panels.

1b) The EDB Panel have always been really clear about the agreed process, one bid up to the value of £750 should be a quick bid, proposals that cost more than this must be a main bid. Clarification regarding rolling bids is part of the EDB review.

1c) EDB bids are not submitted by officers or individuals and ensuring there has been proper consultation is an important part of the checking process undertaken by the Resident Involvement Team. Some seniors housing schemes have no TRA, however bids are put forward at coffee mornings. There is wide support that areas without an association are entitled to EDB. There have been some bids from these areas. Often these areas are blocks that are particularly run down. The Resident Involvement Officer lets people know there will be survey/s / and sometimes meeting/s and once there is evidence that the majority of people agree to a bid the form is submitted. Consultation about EDB is part of the review.

Response from Glyn Huelin, Business & Performance Manager, Property & Investment, Tel: 01273 293306

1d) Guidelines for EDB spending are agreed by Area Panels. This is currently being reviewed as part of the Resident Involvement review. The 2015/16 EDB guidance is:

“An Estate Development Budget (EDB) bid can be placed by resident associations or groups of tenants that have an idea for a community project that results in one of the following:

- an improvement to a council housing owned building or community facility
- an improvement to council housing owned land or local environment
- an improvement that benefits the community and the quality of life of tenants

1e) The EDB Panel of residents reviews progress against the work programme with council officers and staff from Mears on a monthly basis. In recent years the number of outstanding jobs has significantly reduced. Having said this some bids do take too long to complete and the Panel will work to improve the speed of completing jobs.

1) Some bids will have implications for leaseholders, in particular when they relate to work to common ways in blocks. The EDB guidance includes a short paragraph on leaseholders which provides some helpful information for residents preparing bids:

“Do leaseholders have to contribute towards the cost of work?”

The cost of Estate Development Budget work is passed on to leaseholders in their service charge in the same way as any other work. However:

- leaseholders contribute only to costs incurred at their building
- leaseholders will only incur costs if their lease allows for the charge
- the law says that the costs must be reasonably incurred

This means that works to keep the building in repair such as flooring, painting or improvements like exterior lighting are normally passed on, but works to improve community facilities or the local environment are not. For more information contact the Leasehold Team on 01273 293074, as they can give general advice on leaseholder charges before a bid is placed.”

2. Scaffolding

There was concern that scaffolding is still being left up for long periods of time. This issue has been raised before, and assurances given that scaffolding would be taken down immediately work is finished, but this is not happening (there have been recent cases in both Downland Court and Knoll).

Some specific issues were raised:

- a) Who is paying? Are contractors charging the Council for the unnecessary time that scaffolding is up after a job is completed?*
- b) When scaffolding is up the house contents insurance of affected properties is often invalid. You are only informed that you need to check this if you are in the flat where work is taking place. This means flats affected by scaffolding (eg a ground floor flat when work is happening on the flat above) may not realise they have no insurance.*
- c) If work undertaken by the Council invalidates an individual's insurance, who is responsible for any losses they might incur as a result?*
- d) If you have house contents insurance with the Council, is your insurance still invalid while scaffolding is up?*

Action: *III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

Response from Keith Dadswell, Mears Responsive & EDB Project Manager, Tel: 01273 574382

Mears have been working very hard in Partnership with the council to tackle issues with scaffolding raised by residents. I have attended the Home Group and discussed the new process which monitors and tracks all scaffold and the length of time it is in place.

- a) The council are charged in accordance with contract rates and set framework agreements with contractors for the supply and erection of scaffold. This is a one off charge to the council and does not change or alter due to the length of time it is in place.
- b) Mears are committed to inform all residents before scaffold is erected. The only exception is in an emergency situation. Included in the notices is the following advice on contents insurance..... "Please inform your contents insurance provider that scaffolding is now being erected around the block. Claims may prove invalid if this declaration is not made".

With Major Works and Planned Works all affected residents receive this communication, however, with responsive repair works as you correctly state some residents that need to inform their contents insurers do not currently receive this information. Therefore, the Responsive Repairs Manager Keith Dadswell will change the current communications process so that all relevant parties are informed.

- c) Under the terms of the tenancy agreement, a tenant is responsible for their household insurance. It is therefore the tenants responsibility to contact (whoever their insurers are) to let them know that scaffold is in place. It may not be valid whilst scaffold is in place if you do not inform them.
- d) Contents insurance will not be invalidated unless you do not let the insurers know there is scaffold in place.

3. Scaffolding and disabled access

A lack of consultation when scaffolding was erected in Clarendon & Ellen has caused problems with access for people with disabilities. This is not acceptable, and in future there must be proper consultation before any major works are done to ensure that the requirements of people with disabilities are covered.

Action: *III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

Response from Allen Shaw, Mears Project Manager, Tel: 01273 321376

We apologise if residents feel they have not been properly consulted on the erection of scaffolding. We do endeavour to consult with residents on all aspects of the project through our pre-commencement meeting. Beyond that, we communicate through regular newsletters and coffee mornings, however we recognise that these were interrupted for a time whilst further leasehold consultation was undertaken. We apologise if the cessation of the newsletters and coffee mornings has contributed to this issue in anyway.

On the 21st June, Paul Harrison (site manager) and Rob Daley (project co-ordinator) walked the site, however they could not find any areas where scaffolding is causing an obstruction for wheelchairs or persons with limited mobility. So, please can contact the team (contact details given below) and let the team know the access issues you are experiencing and they will try to resolve for you as soon as possible.

- Site Office - 01273 321376 (Message facility available)
- Sandra Cooke - 07872-672041 (Resident Liaison Officer).

3. *Damp*

When properties have severe damp problems a few bricks are taken out of the wall as part of the repairs process. Properties in Knoll have been left like this for up to 14 months, causing problems for the residents as rain and drafts come into the house. If residents don't constantly chase up the repair, it just gets left.

It was asked why these repairs are not being dealt with more swiftly and if there was a quicker and less disruptive way of resolving the problem.

Action: *III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

Response from Mears Danny Reddin, Mears Project Manager, Tel: 01273 574354

We are very sorry to hear that bricks have removed and are yet to be replaced in the Knoll area of the city. Danny Reddin, Mears Project Manager, has confirmed that following the unprecedented rainfall levels in the winter of 2013/14, we removed bricks from properties in the Knoll area in order to inspect the condition of the cavity wall insulation. Danny was unaware that some bricks have yet to be replaced and has therefore requested the addresses of these properties so that he can personally arrange for this to be rectified immediately. Please call the Mears Damp Team on 0800-052-6140 with the addresses affected.

4. Estate inspections

A number of points were raised about Estate Inspections:

- It is different in different areas, but some Associations are not kept informed of when estate inspections are happening and are not given the opportunity to get involved.
- After an estate inspection, Resident Association representatives are given a report on what needs doing and what action is going to be taken. However, there is then no follow-up or communication with the Association to say when jobs have been done, or to inform them of any problems. Communication needs to improve – it is very frustrating for residents if they have put effort into resolving a problem and then nothing seems to happen.
- Following an estate inspection in Knoll, letters were sent to residents whose gardens are full of rubbish and really neglected. This has not led to any improvement to the gardens. What happens next? Will the Council continue to pursue this?

Action: III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.

Response from Robert Keelan, Neighbourhood Housing Manager, Tel: 01273 293261

a) Estate Inspections dates are set in a two year period and have recently been set for the timescale of April 2016 to 2018. Estate inspection booklets are set out in wards and are all available in the council's internet pages by typing "estate inspections" into the search box which takes you to the page below.

<https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/council-housing/estate-inspections>

Please note a few ward booklets are showing inspection dates to the end of 2017 and this is being updated at time of writing to take us up to April 2018. I appreciate that not everyone has access to the internet so if you would like the estate inspection booklet for your area printed and sent to you then please call 01273 293030 and the Customer Service Team will send one out to you.

b) Estate inspections happen six monthly so I strongly encourage tenants not to wait for an inspection to report an issue. Whereas estate inspections look for items that are broken or in need of repair, they are also for Neighbourhood Officers to spend time on estate and ideally talking with tenants and councillors about issues that need attention or improvement on the estate.

The point is heard about communication so my initial proposal is rather than one estate inspection being displayed, that we display the last two so that at least we can see progress between estate inspections.

The remit of the Neighbourhood Officer is a very large one and estate inspections are a relatively small part of their role. Each Neighbourhood Officer manages approximately 1000 properties so it is difficult to tailor communication to what each group or residents want. I would encourage any Residents' Associations to invite their Neighbourhood Officer and Team Leader to a residents meeting and this can then be established locally.

We have also brought in an “I’ve been reported sticker” to attach to broken items which is removed when the repair is carried out. This should remove any confusion as to whether an item has been reported or not.

C) The state of gardens is a real concern for us and it’s a condition of the tenancy agreement that tenants sign, to keep their gardens in good repair. There is always a story behind a messy garden and some people have good reasons for not being able to manage their gardens and others less so.

The council is refreshing its recharge policy so that we can more readily recharge tenants if we have to go in and clear it. We do have a gardening scheme for some vulnerable residents but this is very limited and consistently over-subscribed.

We have run projects in other areas of the city where Neighbourhood Officers have run gardening campaigns and found time to do lots of door knocking and been hands-on in helping tenants clear areas. We would like to repeat these as resources allow.

It should be noted that many gardens in what looks like council properties are often privately owned properties that it is difficult for the Neighbourhood Officer to deal with.

5. Grass cutting

The grass is only being cut twice a year in Portslade, and residents there feel they are neglected and don't get as much as other parts of the city.

The meeting asked for assurance that the grass would be cut four times a year in Portslade as in other areas. Cutting should be done before the grass is really over-grown.

Action: II for West Blue Pages

Response from, Robert Walker, Head of Operations, City Parks Tel: 01273 294349

Thank you for this enquiry. I'm sorry residents feel the Portslade area has been neglected in favour of other parts of the city.

There have been more staffing issues in Portslade than in other areas; budget restraints have led to fewer members of staff available to work in a particular site and because these reductions do not affect Housing Revenue Account land and that of Education and Bereavement services, the impact is therefore more noticeable in parks and on grass verges.

Due to the weather this year has been an outstanding growing year, there has been a greater flush of growth and grass has become very long. The areas having the most cuts are those where staff do not attempt to do the follow up cutting round obstacles like lamp posts; there is mixed feedback from residents and councillors on whether this is better or worse.

5. Pot-holes in Downland Court car-park

There are serious pot-holes in the car park at Downland Court (which is owned by Housing). The pot-holes just open up again if they are re-filled, and more and more are appearing. The double yellow lines have faded so people park where they are not supposed to. The whole car park needs re-surfacing.

The Resident Association has been told to apply to the Estate Development Budget (EDB) for this. However, they want to go to the EDB for funding to help them convert some grass areas into extra parking, rather than for re-surfacing, which is general maintenance they feel should be done anyway. Can this work be done?

Action: *II for West Blue Pages*

Response from Keith Dadswell, Responsive Repairs Manager Mears, Tel: 01273 574404

There is currently no specific budget to resurface car park areas. Responsive repairs would fill potholes under the contract. However, if the car park requires resurfacing and realigning this would need to go through an alternative budget at this time.

6. Downland Court: Re-decoration of common-ways

The corridors and stair wells in Downland Court badly need re-decorating, and a lot of the paint is flaking off. The following information was requested:-

- a) *When were the common ways at Downland Court last re-decorated?*
- b) *Are they on a schedule for re-decoration? If so, when?*

Action: *II for West Blue Pages*

Response from Perrin Horne, Customer Services Manager, Property & Investment, Tel: 01273 294641

The common ways at Downland Court were last decorated in 2011 and are therefore not due for re-decoration at this time. Richard Daborn, the council's Housing Surveyor in the Property & Investment team has also previously post inspected the decoration and passed this work.

6. Roof repair at Highden, Westmount and Crownhill

A repair to roof doors at HWC took 2 years to complete, and there were a number of problems about the way these repairs were handled.

Action: *III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

Response from Delia Hills, Mears Ltd Complaints & Resident Liaison Team, Tel: 01273 574354

Please accept our apologies for our failure to stop water ingress through the roof doors in 2014. Our records show in April 2014 our sub-contractor attended to fit a new door and frame leading to the roof from the tank room. However, two years later in January 2016 our operative attended to a report of a fault and he reported that rain was again coming through the double door on the roof and repairs were completed on the 17th February 2016. Please be advised that the sub-contractor who attended in 2014 is no longer employed by Mears.

Mears have recently mobilised a direct roofing labour force and a roofing supervisor, this has resulted in greater control over available resources and a quicker turnaround on roofing repairs. In addition Mears have invested in alternative working at height access equipment enabling early diagnosis and an increase in first time fixes on roofing works whilst eliminating the need for many scaffolds.

An increase in direct trade operatives has enabled Mears to reduce their reliance on sub-contractors. Remaining subcontractors work streams are closely monitored and all contractors partake in a monthly review meeting where all operational key elements are discussed (performance, Health and Safety, quality etc).

2. Communication with leaseholders

Communication between the Council and leaseholders about major work, which will incur expense for leaseholders, is poor and needs improving.

Action: *III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

Response from Perrin Horne, Customer Services Manager Property & Investment Tel: 01273 294641

For residents who have bought leases on our council homes there is a responsibility to contribute to any improvements and repairs, carried out by the council, subject to the terms of their lease. The council believes the works carried out to council homes are necessary to maintain and improve the stock. We are acting on our professional structural, surveying and legal advice in complying with our obligations as a landlord to provide accommodation that meets specific decency standards and the terms of our leases in keeping the buildings in repair.

Consultation with leaseholders is a statutory requirement and we are obliged to adhere to the tight deadlines and requirements made in law in consultation with leaseholders. The Property & Investment Team can confirm that we have always maintained a high standard of consultation with leaseholders and continue to make improvements to how we communicate.

During the consultation we now offer one to one appointments with individual leaseholders to discuss the works, the costs associated and where requested, to discuss payment options. We also hold and arrange regular meetings while works are progressing to discuss any issues arising from the work. Alongside this, leaseholders and tenants receive monthly updates via newsletters.

Finally, we have put in place a range of flexible payment options for resident leaseholders who have difficulty in paying for high cost works.

7. Resident Inspectors

The Resident Inspectors have asked for permission to inspect major repair work on all properties. At the moment they are only allowed to inspect empty properties.

Action: *III for all Blue Pages and discussion at Area Panel.*

Response from Glyn Huelin, Partnering Business Manager Property & Investment, Tel: 01273 293306

The council has been working with the Home Service Improvement Group who led the resident inspectors' project over recent years to develop their role and opportunities for residents to provide feedback on the work of Mears and the Property & Investment Team.

The resident inspectors have recently been visiting tenants and resident associations across the city to discuss their role, get feedback on the Mears service and ask for further ideas for the Resident Inspectors to look into. The group are also working on looking at major work to senior housing conversions (studio to one bed flats) and will be carrying out a site visit in the coming weeks.

In past years the Resident Inspectors (previously called Resident Assessors) had focussed on empty property inspections. Since the revitalisation of the project, new terms of reference and name change, it has been open for discussion what areas of the Partnership could be inspected. There are suggestions being made as to what else the group might do and this is being prioritised by the Resident Inspectors to make the best use of the resident's and officer's time.

If residents are interested in getting involved in the resident inspectors programme they are welcome to attend the meetings and can contact Hannah Barker, Resident Involvement Officer 01273 296639. The dates of the Resident Inspector meetings are also online in the Resident Involvement calendar, <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/council-housing/resident-involvement-meeting-diary>

Three star items from the North Tenant Only meeting held on 03/05/16

1. Setting start and end dates for repairs and improvements

The meeting felt that residents still don't receive clear and up-to-date information about when repair and improvement work will commence and when it will be completed. It is understood that sometimes these dates have to be moved. However, it is reasonable for residents to be advised of planned start and finish dates, and for them to be updated when these dates have to be changed.

This was previously raised in the Blue Pages for the Area Panels on 10th December 2015 and 4th February 2016, but the meeting felt that this matter is still not fully resolved.

Action 1: III *It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel and request what procedures are in place to inform residents of changes to start and end dates for planned work.*

Response from Scott Lunn, General Building Manager, Tel: 01273 290282

As previously stated, timescales for individual projects are subject to change depending on need and overall assessment. There can be various reasons for this which can be explained as and when this happens such as any urgent work identified or budget restraints. The majority of city wide projects are also subject to statutory leaseholder consultation and we are required by law to ensure we have taken full regard to any leaseholder observations before we can issue any task order or instruction to the contractors. Therefore, no confirmation of start dates can be issued until the leaseholder consultation is completed.

Where a project or repairs are not subject to leaseholder consultation, there can also be instances where priorities can change. Where this happens we will endeavour to inform tenant representatives and explain the reasons for the changes.

We are committed to improve our communications with tenants and where any specific update for repairs, or an individual project, or stream of work is required, you can also request information using the agreed tenant representative process.

Please note that for all Area Panel meetings a member of the Property & Investment Team will be in attendance along with Mears where questions can also be raised regarding possible delays to works.

2. Scaffolding

The meeting discussed the responses that had been given to their previous queries, but felt that there are still instances when scaffolding is left up for longer than it needs to be, and that there were two outstanding questions relating to payments to scaffolding contractors and fines imposed.

Action: III

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel and request the following information:

a. Is Mears charged for scaffolding by the job (irrespective of how long the scaffolding is left up) or is there a charge per day, week or month?

b. Has Mears fined any of the scaffolding contractors for leaving scaffolding up after Mears have requested that it be taken down? What is the procedure for imposing such fines?.

Response from Delia Hills, Mears Resident Liaison Manager, Tel: 01273 574354

2a – Mears are charged in accordance with contract rates and set framework agreements with contractors for the supply and erection of scaffold. This is a one off charge regardless of length of time that the scaffold is erected.

2b – Scaffold contractors are instructed to strike a scaffold on completion of works Post Inspection. Contractors have two weeks in which to strike, if they fail to meet the set deadline date they are charged by Mears for any compliance checks that Mears scaffold inspectors carry out. To date the duration from instructed to strike has been achieved by all contractors and there has not been a requirement to charge for any compliance checks.

3. Estate Development Budget - fencing

The meeting discussed the response from Mears, which stated EDB work sometimes has to be deprioritised so that 'boundary' fencing work (with health & safety or vulnerability issues) can be done.

Barbara reported on a discussion she had had, where she was told that there is a separate budget and a separate team responsible for 'boundary work'.

Action: III

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel, and clarification be requested on whether 'Boundary' fencing work is done by the same team as EDB fencing work, or by a different team.

Response from Delia Hills, Mears Resident Liaison Manager, Tel: 01273 574354

To clarify, there is a separate health and safety fencing budget, however the same Mears operatives that undertake EDB fencing carry out the boundary health and safety work.

5. Pricing policy

The meeting felt that there is still a general problem with Mears' charges being very high. Three examples were given: replacement of a greenhouse in East Central Moulsecoomb area; removal of a silver birch tree in Broadfields; the water feature filter at Laburnum Grove.

The meeting felt that this could be resolved through resident involvement in the preparation of the specification for work and the pricing for each job. It was also felt that this would ensure that the specifications for EDB work fully match the proposals originally put together by Associations.

It was also suggested that the EDB bidding process would be more effective if:

- a) the specifications and quotes were put together before the meeting*
- b) Associations receive details of all the bids in advance so they can discuss them. This would need to be at least one week before the EDB meeting, but 2 weeks would be ideal.*

Action: III (3 stars)

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel with a view to discussing the following proposal for all EDB bids.

Those representatives of Residents Associations should:

- a) be involved in the preparation of specifications for EDB work to ensure that officers fully understand the nature of the work requested;*
- b) be invited to view the quotes for work, so they can query and/or clarify any instances where they feel the quote is too high or too low;*
- c) Receive a full list of EDB bids for their area at least one week (but ideally 2 weeks) before the EDB meeting.*

Action: III

Response from Keith Dadswell, Responsive & EDB Project Manager, Tel: 01273 574382

Upon submitting a main bid a series of checks are undertaken prior to Mears involvement these include Property & Investment's programmed and capital works checks. Mears receive the approved bids and using the information provided, site visits and meetings with tenants associations (TAs) compile a costing to undertake proposed works. The level of information provided by the TAs to support main bids is improving year on year and Mears encourages TAs to be involved in the specifications, designs of any potential main bids.

The majority of EDB work carried out is in accordance with contract schedule of rates, any specialist works will be specified and sent to Mears' subcontractors for quotation as per contract requirements. The costs are then presented at the EDB Area Panels. It would be possible for the TAs to be aware of the applied costs prior to Area Panel however Mears would require the bids to be received sooner to allow for any changes or to obtain alternative costs if the TA is in disagreement.

In response to item c) Resident Associations should receive a full list of EDB bids for their area at least one week (but ideally 2 weeks) before the EDB meeting.

8. Washing machines

The previous contract for provision of laundries expired 6 months ago, and there is still no clear information about what the council plans to do next.

Residents previously raised concerns about the proposed switch from a standard charge included with the rent to a card payment system. However, there doesn't seem to be any clear resolution to this.

Residents are also not clear about what the process is for starting a new contract, although it is understood that a final decision has been made by officers.

Action: III

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel and to ask the following questions:

- a) How much has the consultation on this matter cost?*
- b) Has a final decision been made about the future of the laundry service, or are there still ongoing discussions?*
- c) If a decision has been made, what is it?*
- d) If a decision hasn't yet been made, what options are being considered?*

Response from Robert Nayan, Project Manager, Tel: 01273 293021

a) There has been no direct financial cost incurred during this consultation besides officer time and administration.

b) The future of this service is that the council will continue to provide laundry facilities in blocks which have such facilities. This was communicated to residents and at the Senior Housing Action Group (SHAG) during the recent consultation.

The procurement for the new contract is underway and we anticipate an appointment of a new service provider by the end of December 2016 and to start the new contract on 1 April 2017.

c) The decision has been made by the council that the amount for the laundry service for senior housing residents is to remain within the tenant's service charge. General needs laundries have different systems in place.

We are returning to the SHAG meeting on the 13th July 2016 to present the decision reached by the Housing Leadership Team. We remain committed to this agreement.

7. Future of Homing In

There was concern that the paper version of Homing In might be withdrawn in favour of an online publication, and that this would exclude residents who do not have computers.

Action: III

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel and to ask if any guarantee can be given that this is not being actively considered.

Response from Diane Hughes, Performance & Improvement Manager, Tel: 01273 293841

The Central Area Panel representatives have previously raised concerns about Homing In and a three star response was included in the report packs for Area Panels held in November and December 2015.

Further to this response the Homing In Editorial Board are now carrying out the review alongside council officers. Without prejudging the outcome of such a review we know that some residents may not have access to the internet or computers and we are not currently considering withdrawing a paper copy for all residents. However in order to achieve value for money it is important that we look for opportunities to increase our online readership and we will be investigating ways to achieve this.

9. Sub-contractor overcharging

The meeting discussed the money that Mears had been overcharged by a sub-contractor. The figures of £500,000 and £300,000 were given.

It is Mears' responsibility to ensure this money is repaid to the council and recent reports state that only £140,000 has been repaid to date.

It was also reported that the council auditors are now going to scrutinise other aspects of the Mears contract.

Action: III

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel and details be requested on how much of the overcharged money has been paid back, and what action is being taken to recover the full amount.

Response from Glyn Huelin, Business & Performance Manager, Tel: 01273 293306

In May 2015 the council's in-house contract compliance team discovered overpayments were being made to one sub-contractor working on responsive repairs. Since then housing staff have been working proactively with Mears and the council's internal auditors to put the service back on track.

The council has taken steps to recover the overpayments owed to the council and improve the controls and inspection regime with our contractor and their sub-contractors. The council has received a total repayment of £513,113 related to the overcharge. This is made up of a sum of £274,866 for repairs post April 2014 and a sum £238,247 relating to the repairs undertaken by this subcontractor before April 2014.

Mears provide a comprehensive responsive repairs, planned maintenance and major works service for council homes across the city under a 10-year contract. Around 20% of the annual contract is responsive repairs and approximately 4% of the annual cost relates to sub-contracted responsive repairs. The overcharging was isolated to a single sub-contractor working on a small proportion of responsive repairs.

The sub-contractor involved with the overpayments no longer works with Mears and the council is now working with Mears to strengthen processes and procedures to prevent any reoccurrence.

This includes reducing the amount of sub-contracted work (currently around 30% of responsive repairs contracted work) and having a new quality assurance manager within the Mears Team.

The Housing & New Homes Committee reviewed this in January 2016 and has requested a bi-annual report to members of the committee to make sure that the contract is operating effectively.

An update report will also be shared with Area Panels.

A follow-up audit will also be carried out in this financial year.

Area Panels: 25, 26, 27 and 28 July 2016

**Summary: Housing Management Performance Report
Quarter 1 2016/17**

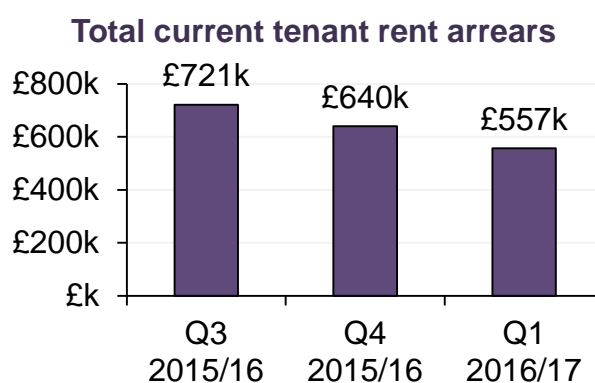
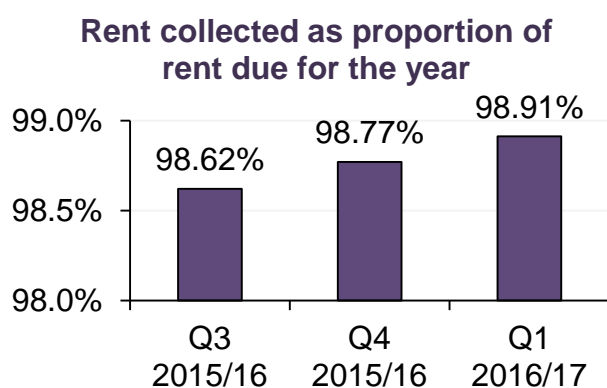
Background

The Housing Management Performance Report covers Quarter 1 of the financial year 2016/17. Due to the close timing of the end of the quarter to when papers are dispatched to Area Panel representatives, we are unable to bring the full performance report to Area Panels in July. However, information is currently available for this summary report for the Area Panels to note and comment on.

To ensure the timely reporting of performance information we would like to take the full report to Housing & New Homes Committee on 21 September 2016. We hope this will be acceptable to the Area Panels and we can on request provide representatives with a copy of the full report once it is available.

Rent collection and current arrears

- Rent collection rate at record high of 98.91%
- Current tenant arrears have fallen from £640k to £557k over the last quarter.



Customer services and Complaints

- 94% of calls answered
- 5 of 35 Stage 1 Complaints upheld (14%).

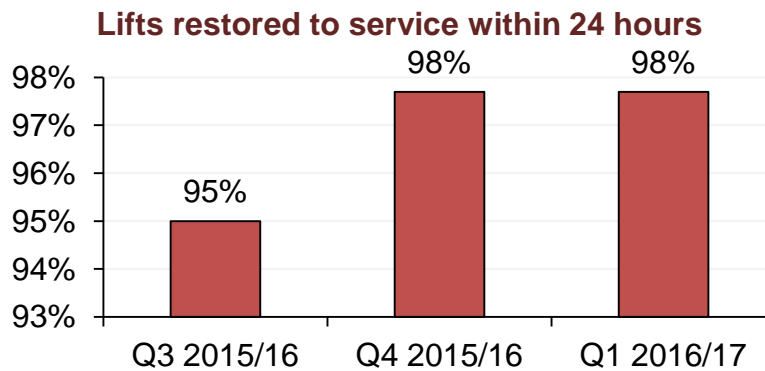
Empty home turnaround time

- 147 homes let, of which 110 general needs and 37 Seniors Housing
- 16 calendar days taken to re-let a home, excluding time spent in major works

- 100% of mutual exchange applications completed within 42 days.

Property & Investment

- 6,866 repairs completed
- 97% of appointments kept
- 96% of calls to repairs helpdesk answered.



Estates Service

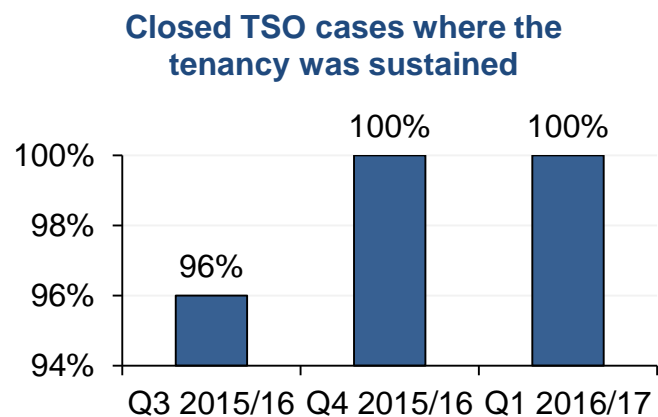
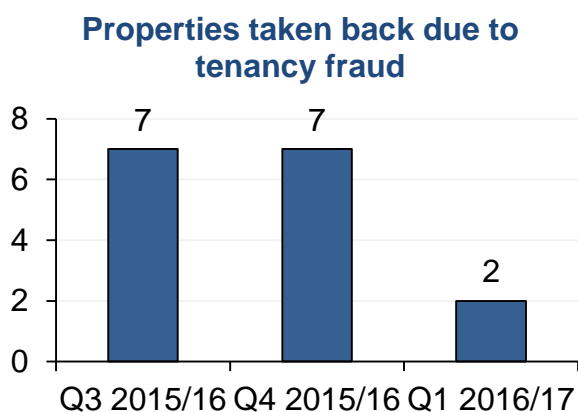
- 100% cleaning quality inspections pass rate
- 100% Emergency Response Team quality inspections pass rate
- 98% of Emergency Response Team jobs completed within 3 working days.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

- 37 cases closed, of which 2 resulted in tenancy legal action
- 136 open ASB cases.

Tenancy management

- 2 properties taken back due to fraud
- 121 open fraud cases under investigation
- 34 tenancies sustained.



Area Panel: July 2016

Briefing Paper: Code of Conduct

Background

The Code of Conduct was developed as part of the Everyone Counts report that was agreed by the Housing Committee in December 2012. Having a robust Code of Conduct that explained expected behaviours was the most supported part of the report during the consultation process with residents.

Some residents from the Area Panels and Tenancy Service Improvement Group came together with the Resident Involvement Team to undertake a review of the Code of Conduct between February and May 2016. A huge thank you for this constructive piece of work.

The Resident Involvement Manager also met with the Tenancy, Neighbourhoods, Sheltered and Customer Services Managers, and the Resident Involvement Officers.

Key findings and recommendations

1. The Code of Conduct takes a long time to read, a shorter version is more user friendly.

The draft revised Code of Conduct is shorter, and the Breach of the Code of Conduct process is now a separate document.

A shorter set of Ground Rules for meetings has also been developed.

2. It has been useful to use at activities in the community room organised by the association.

The fact that the Code can be used in association and resident involvement activities has been made more explicit.

3. The Everyone Counts Report said the committee would sign the Code and it would be displayed at meetings, in practice the Code was simply circulated, is this sufficient?

The Model Constitution refers to the Code of Conduct so it is not necessary to get members to sign it. A laminated copy of the Code and the Ground Rules will be circulated to all meeting / activities organisers to display.

4. There is no guidance on when a resident resigns or is voted off a committee how long does this stand. Should there be different timescales for different levels of poor behaviour?

Residents have recommended that the person cannot take part in the following annual general or election meeting. This will be explained when a person offers their resignation.

5. There is no guidance on when someone behaves poorly at a number of meetings. Can an association ask them not to attend future meetings, and if so how long would this be for? Or is this a local matter for associations to decide?

This should be up to associations to decide, a clause could be added to the constitution if agreed by members.

6. The unacceptable behaviour form is only of use for behaviours at meetings or activities.

The unacceptable behaviour form has only been used once regarding unwitnessed behaviour outside of a meeting. Otherwise breaches of the Code have been reported in person, over the phone or by email. The form should be removed.

7. The Code is useful for the behaviour of everyone at meetings and association activities as a person can be asked to modify their behaviour or leave.

The ultimate sanction is that it is requested that a person be removed from the committee or is removed from a Housing led meeting.

Anti-social behaviour is a breach of the Tenancy Agreement.

A section about reporting anti-social behaviour has been added. This is from the last Area Panel briefing note (December 2015) about the Code.

Contact:

Becky Purnell, Resident Involvement Team

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Draft Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct is a common sense list of guidelines to make things more pleasant for everyone taking part in resident involvement activities. The purpose is to contribute to a positive and constructive atmosphere for all tenants and leaseholders, officers, contractors, councillors and guests, and to ensure that everyone understands what behaviour is expected from them.

If someone breaches the Code of Conduct at a meeting or activity they will be asked to modify their behaviour or leave. If a person continues to breach the Code of Conduct, despite having what is acceptable behaviour explained to them, they could be suspended from resident involvement activities.

General behaviour in resident involvement activities or groups

- Act with fairness, courtesy and respect.
- Listen to others views and don't interrupt or dominate discussions.
- Make positive contributions especially when offering constructive challenge.
- Work together to achieve objectives.
- Don't use insulting or threatening language, discriminatory remarks or raise personal disputes. This covers in person, by phone, written, text, email or on the internet.
- Make sure you are representing the groups' views when communicating on behalf of an association or residents' group.
- Don't expect preferential treatment from councillors, officers or contractors as a result of being involved.
- Always use the established procedures to report issues such as repairs, complaints, request for service, etc even if they have been reported before.

Before a meeting, training session, workshop, or association activity

- Send apologies if not able to attend.
- If there are papers read them in advance.
- Try to arrive in time for a prompt start.

Conduct in Meetings

- Contribute only 'through the chair' by seeking their attention.
- Not to interrupt the meetings by holding conversations with others.
- Operate within the rules set out in the terms of reference or constitution.
- Declare any potential conflicts of personal interest that can affect discussions.
- Make new residents, visitors and observers feel welcome, and give new participants the opportunity to speak and become involved.

- Accept that the purpose of council led meetings is to benefit tenants generally and not individuals.

Role of the Chair

- Manage the agenda and timing of meetings.
- Encourage all to participate and to allow all attendees reasonable opportunity to speak.
- Sum up at the end of each discussion topic from agenda.
- Ensure that no personal motives or interests affect a judgment of decisions or any actions.
- Undertake initial or regular training on 'chairing skills'.
- If someone breaches the code of conduct explain that if they do it again they could be asked to leave the meeting.

Confidentiality

Residents must:

- Respect all individual tenants'/residents' confidentiality, whether present or not.
- Refrain from mentioning in public specific individual cases which may cause embarrassment or the identification of an individual.
- Not disclose any information shared with or by the officers that is of a confidential or commercially sensitive nature.

Financial responsibility

Residents who are acting on behalf of other residents (eg as a committee member of a TRA) are in a position of trust. They must, where finance is involved:

- Take reasonable care in management and accounting of funds.
- Ensure that accounts are accessible and available for audit.
- Spend money only on things that have been agreed by the committee.
- Make sure funds are used properly and there is consultation with members about expenditure, (not required for small running costs).
- Not obtain a personal gain or achieve ulterior objectives.
- Take reasonable care and precautions where property or facilities are made available for use (eg equipment should be stored properly so it is not stolen).

Breach of code of conduct procedure

If a complaint is about the service, an individual member of staff or a team, it should be made to the line manager or made using the council's formal complaints procedure.

Challenging unacceptable behaviour

Any participant can challenge unacceptable or offensive behaviour through the chair or agreed lead person at a meeting, Housing resident involvement event, or association activity.

Outside of meetings any participant can challenge behaviour through a tenant representative or a council officer.

Behaviour that is unacceptable, offensive or in breach of the code could lead to an individual or association being investigated. In the case of associations it could also lead to it being derecognised.

Examples of behaviours in breach of the code of conduct include:

- Behaviour that breaches of the council's policy on equal opportunities eg making jokes about people because of their age, race, gender, disability, faith, religion or sexual orientation, or because they are 'different' to you.
- Making assumptions and generalising about people because they belong to a particular group (for example: 'all young people...', 'all Asians...', 'all single parents...', 'all travellers...', 'all white people...').
- Describing people in a way that may be seen as an insult or a threat.
- Behaving in an aggressive manner towards other people or in such a way that they feel threatened or intimidated – including threatening to get someone sacked, shouting and using offensive language.
- Verbal or physical assault upon any person or persons.
- Criminal behaviour, including fraud.
- Financial mismanagement.
- Conflict between committee members that means the group ceases to operate effectively and is no longer representative
- Abuse of power - threatening to have an officer sacked or another tenant evicted instead of using appropriate channels to make a complaint.
- Abuse of power – public accusations about an individual in a meeting or by petition or by email and copying in senior managers, councillors and MPs instead of using the appropriate channels to make a complaint.

Please note that 'people' referred to above includes residents, officers, councillors, contractors and other people you come into contact with.

Financial irresponsibility

If an investigation is required, the relevant residents may be required to stand down from their position temporarily while the matter is looked into. Where a committee member or an involved resident has been proven to have deliberately fraudulently obtained funds, benefits, or property, they will be excluded from any further involvement with a recognised resident group. The council may also involve the police and its legal section.

Where mismanagement has resulted from a lack of information or training, the resident(s) will be expected to attend appropriate book keeping training.

Breach of the Code of Conduct process

It is difficult to be precise about how all breaches of the code of conduct will be dealt with. It can depend on the nature of the breach and the context within which the breach occurred. However, the following should act as a guide.

Breach at a meeting

1. Person asked to apologise and modify behaviour.
2. If person refuses they are asked to leave.
3. Person written to within one week, given the opportunity to apologise in writing within two weeks.
4. Person offered to attend training where relevant.
5. If a potential breach of tenancy may be referred to the Tenancy Team.
6. If actions not taken up by the person the organisers of the meeting are notified.

Breach outside of a meeting

Behaviour when acting on behalf of the association or in capacity as a member of a housing working group

1. Attempt to resolve amicably when it occurs.
2. Refer to the service manager or Resident Involvement Team as soon as possible.
3. Relevant officer investigates and informally meets the person.
4. If a potential breach of tenancy may be referred to the Tenancy Team.
5. In most cases person apologises and commits to not repeating behaviour.
6. If the behaviour is repeated person asked to withdraw involvement.

Outcomes

Depending on the circumstances, potential outcomes could be:

1. An apology is accepted.
2. An undertaking is agreed - eg to complete specific training or to stop a particular action.
3. The person might be removed from the housing working group.
4. The association might be asked to remove the person from the committee.
5. Tenancy action.
6. Referral for mediation.
7. Temporary de-recognition of a TRA.
8. Permanent de-recognition of a TRA.
9. Withdrawal of membership of the Area Panel.
10. Withdrawal of eligibility of Housing grant funding.
11. Withdrawal of eligibility to bid for the Estates Development Budget.

Length of withdrawal from resident involvement

When someone is no longer on a group due to the Breach of the Code of Conduct process they will be unable to take part in the next annual general or elections meeting.

This will be explained to the resident and will apply:

- When a person resigns from an association through this process.
- Is voted off the committee of an association through this process.
- Is asked to leave a Housing led resident working group.

Right to appeal

1. The person or residents' group who reported the breach, or the person or residents' group who have been asked to act in response to a breach of the code of conduct have the right to appeal.
2. In the first instance this should be to the Resident Involvement Manager or relevant service manager.
3. If not satisfied with the response refer the matter to the council's Standards and Complaints Team who will follow the complaints process.
4. Person or residents' group can contact and MP or local councillor to talk to Housing about the concern.
5. If have been through the complaints process and not satisfied can contact the Local Government Ombudsman.

Right to appeal if an association is de-recognised

1. It is open to a de-recognised association to appeal in writing to the Director of Environment, Development and Housing against de-recognition on the grounds that it complies with the policy.
2. During an appeal period the association shall not be entitled to the financial or consultation provisions made for recognised associations.

Please note that serious breaches of the Code of Conduct, allegations of financial mismanagement or of criminal behaviour may result in a TRA being derecognised by the council until the matter is resolved. In practice, this means that the council will cease to fund the association, and involve it in involvement and training initiatives.

All contact during the derecognised period will be confined to the issue under investigation, and a meeting will be arranged with council staff and the association's committee to discuss the process being followed; advise of expected future conduct, of any actions required by the association (eg training), and of potential consequences of further breaches. In extreme circumstances a report might also be made to the police.

Complainants will be told promptly how their complaint is being dealt with and the reasons for this.

Anti-social behaviour

The process of reporting anti-social behaviour (ASB) is through Housing Customer Services Team or by calling the police if it is an emergency.

This can be done in person at a housing office, by email Housing.CustomerServices@brighton-hove.gov.uk, or by telephone 01273 293030. They would then get advice on whether the matter should be recorded on the system only; or recorded and referred on for investigation by the Neighbourhood or Tenancy Enforcement Teams.

Another method of reporting is by using the on-line form on the council's website (search report a problem - council housing). The website states it is very difficult for the council to take action unless there are other witnesses or evidence to support what is being said by one person or the other.

The council cannot solve all neighbour disputes. While all ASB is recorded, the council provides funding to Brighton and Hove Mediation Service to solve some neighbour disputes and expects tenants who want to solve their neighbour disputes to participate in that process.

Leaseholder Action Group (LAG)

'Working for Council Leaseholders across the city'

Minutes of LAG Committee Meeting

Wednesday 14 January 2015, 6.00pm to 8:00pm
Hampshire Lodge

1. Present: Linda Shaw, James Corbett and Muriel Briault

Observers: Anthony Camps-Linney and David Croydon

Officers: Dave Arthur (BHCC), Pamela Cunningham, Reem Scott (BHCC) & Keely McDonald (BHCC)

Apologies: Apologies were offered for Beth Kent, Tony Worsfold and Dee Howland.

Introductions were given and the chair opened the meeting.

2. Tenancy Enforcement -Pamela Cunningham & Reem Scott

2.1 DA –explained to the group that Richard was unwell so Pamela and Reem were here to substitute for him and explain the new powers available to Tenancy Enforcement and answer questions from the group.

2.2 RS – the Tenancy Enforcement Team and Neighbourhood Team now deal with ASB. Tenancy Enforcement handle cases of high level ASB with the Neighbourhood Team being responsible for cases of low level ASB. However, in the first instance ASB should be reported to the Housing Customer Service Team (293030) who will forward it to the appropriate team. PC – both teams have daily duty officers who can be contacted in an emergency.

2.3 PC – Tenancy Enforcement deal with ASB on a case by case basis and are not patch based like the Neighbourhood Team. If a case of ASB is classified as being High Level a dedicated Tenancy Enforcement Officer will be allocated to the case and their contact details will be made available.

2.4 JC – asked what the success rate was for getting anti-social neighbours removed.

RS – ASB is dealt with on a case by case basis some are dealt with by mediation and others lead to eviction.

PC – stressed that it is the judge who makes the decision to evict and it will always be the last resort.

New Powers

2.5 PC –the new powers are being phased in from October 2014 and the onus is now on councils to do more. There are a lot more powers to resolve.

Leaseholder Action Group (LAG)

'Working for Council Leaseholders across the city'

2.6 LS – one of the main areas of concern has always been the need to fill in diary sheets.

PC – they are still important as a means of providing evidence when taking a case to court.

2.7 DA – asked what had been the changes to serving an injunction.

PC – the age requirement has been lowered (-now 10), some positive requirements added and there has to be an adequate person available to monitor the injunction.

2.7 LS –how does this effect tenants of leaseholders who commit ASB?

PC – it is the same but, a different person would need to apply for the injunction. Tenants are responsible for their visitors and action would be taken against the leaseholder for breaching the lease.

DA – in extreme cases where litigation was needed the council would apply for forfeiture. However, this is rarely used as the majority of ASB caused by tenants of leaseholders is low level and dealt with by the Neighbourhood Team through mediation.

2.8 LS – can an article giving a summary of the changes be printed in Homing-In?

PC – the changes were mentioned and it was stressed that it would take time for them to be in.

LS – is it possible for a summary of the changes to go out with the next leaseholder update?

DA – it could go out with March's issue in bullet points and be mentioned that there will be an update in future.

PC –the Community Safety Team has a crib sheet outlining the changes.

Action: RS will email DA a copy of the Community Safety Team's crib sheet for distribution to leaseholders.

PC – would you like Tenancy Enforcement to produce an information sheet?

LS – Yes-that would be useful.

2.9 PC –circulated copies of a hand out to those present outlining the changes being introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

Action: RS –will send TJ an electronic copy of the hand out to go out with the minutes.

2.10 PC – then gave an overview of the changes mentioning:

- Criminal Behaviour Orders –first being served by end of January
- Community Protection Notices – council officers can now apply for these
- Breaches of injunctions – burden of proof now lower

2.11 LS –thanked PC and RS for attending.

3. Annual General Meeting

Leaseholder Action Group (LAG)

'Working for Council Leaseholders across the city'

3.1 KM – mentioned the Strengthening Area Panel Task & Finish Group had amongst its recommendations suggested LAG elect a representative from each of the four areas to represent them at Area Panel meetings.

DA – we need to look at LAG's constitution for how representatives are elected to groups and whether they should be committee members or if any leaseholder can stand for election. Technically this means there are significantly more posts to elect to so it is important to set aside an appropriate amount of time on the AGM's agenda for holding the elections.

3.2 MB – asked where and when the AGM was going to be held?

KM – suggested the Clarendon Centre that was used to hold November's City Assembly and asked the group for their thoughts.

DA – we should be aiming to hold the AGM early in March.

After a general discussion it was agreed to look at holding the AGM on 7 March from 10.00am to 1.00pm at the Clarendon Centre.

Action: KM – will contact the Clarendon Centre to check the venues availability for 7 March and the cost for hiring the venue.

3.3 DA- asked the group for their views on the format for the AGM.

3.4 Having a section for questions was suggested.

LS – didn't think leaseholders found this helpful as the answers are generally non-specific. People want concrete information.

DA – thought it would be better to have information tables.

3.5 LS – it would be useful to have maps of the 3 year work programme available.

DA – there could be an information table especially for the 3 year work programme.

3.6 DA – do you want the AGM to be leaseholder led and then you report back to the council. Have officers present to conduct the elections but then leaseholders run the meeting.

3.7 After further discussion it was agreed the agenda would be:

- Information Tables 10.00am – 10.45am
- Leaseholder run plenary session 11.00am – 12.00noon
- Elections 12.00noon – 1.00pm

3.8 LS – it is important to supply information about the elections in advance.

DA – this can be done when we post invitations to leaseholders.

3.9 KM – provided copies of the lift replacement programme as requested at the previous meeting to those present.

LS – asked if there was an electronic copy available

Action: KM will email LS an electronic copy of the lift replacement programme.

3.10 LS – are there similar copies available for the window replacement and cladding programmes.

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Action: KM –will look into providing copies of the window replacement and cladding programmes.

3.11 DA –will speak to GH about what would be the best information to provide for the information tables at the AGM.

3.12 DC – asked if the costs for works done to date and any problems encountered could be displayed at the AGM.

Actions: LS –will discuss with DA what charges can be shown.

KM – will bring it up with the Property & Investment Team.

DA –felt consultation meetings provide leaseholders with a better source of information on the likely costs involved with major works than the AGM.

4. Minutes of previous meeting & matters arising

4.1 Page 1 Point 3.1 LS – has received copies of the RIO and Neighbourhood Officers job descriptions as requested.

4.2 Page 1 Point 3.2 DA – still had no information regarding the painting of the railings at Chates Farm Court.

4.3 Page 1 Point 3.3 MB – has still to hear from the Neighbourhood Team when the next estate inspections will be held.

4.4 Page 1 Point 3.4 LS, MB and TW attended November's City Assembly and they all felt the Clarendon Centre was a suitable venue.

4.5 Page 1 Point 4.2 TW went to the SAPTFG meeting and has sent LS a copy of the minutes from the meeting.

Action: TJ –will send a copy of these with the minutes from today's Lag meeting

4.6 Page 2 Point 5.1 DA – we have to act on legal advice on what information we provide under RTB but, not for a sell on.

MB- why is RTB political?

DA –the Conservatives introduced RTB and want to sell as many Local Authority properties as possible so raise the discount given. Labour when in power will generally lower the amount of discount to stop Local Authority properties being sold. There are rules governing what councils can spend the monies raised by the discounts on.

4.7 Page 3 Point 6.2 LS –has had the Ning training.

4.8 Page 3. Point 6.5 LS –will ask Mears for information flyers.

Minutes – were agreed as a true record of the meeting.

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5. Reports & feedback from LAG representatives on committees or consultative groups:

5.1 TW –had provided LS with a briefing note on the recommendations the SAPTFG had proposed for leaseholders. Those being:

- Leaseholders be represented at every Area Panel in future
- Subject to Housing Committee agreement
- If agreed then LAG have an indicative vote as to who represents them at Area Panel meetings.

And subjects relevant to leaseholders that are due for discussion at January's Area Panel meetings.

- Update on the new homes for neighbourhoods programme
- Level access showers
- High Rise security options
- Implications of ASB and Policing Act 2014
- EDB decision

5.2 MB –will be going to the first City Assembly sub-group meeting on 23 January at Sloane Court to begin arranging May's meeting and will report back at the next LAG committee meeting.

5.3 LS –as the other representatives are not at today's meeting there is nothing to report back from the Service Improvement Group's (SIG's).

6. Key Issues

6.1 DA –will add Tenancy Enforcement to LAG's key issues, delete Encouraging Participation and aim to complete this by the AGM.

Action: DA –will send committee members a copy of the Key Issues template for them to add any additional information.

6.2 DA –felt LAG needed to get to grips with the SIG's in the coming year and ensure all the posts available are filled at the AGM.

6. Update on reviewing the consultation arrangements for major works

6.1 DA –has spoken to Ben O'Kagbue and Glyn Huelin and the feeling is that it would be best to set up a working group from within LAG's committee to review the consultation arrangements for major works. The aim is to start this in April.

7. Any Other Business

7.1 There was no issues raised under AOB

8. Next Meeting.

8.1 Date for next LAG committee meeting to be confirmed.

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Meeting action minutes

Meeting	Seniors Housing (Independent Community Living) Action Group		
Attendees	<p>Residents: Roy Crowhurst - Chair (Woods House), Bob Spacie, Elisabeth Tinkler (Laburnum Grove), Walter Sargison, Kath Davis (Broadfields), Jean Davis (Leach Court), Joyce Bean, Ray Goble, Eunice Goble (Elwyn Jones Court), Tony Brown (Evelyn Court), Allan Davies (Rosehill Court), Steve Nye (Elisabeth Court), Tomm Nyhuus (Somerset Point)</p> <p>Partners: Colin Vincent (Older Peoples Council)</p> <p>Staff: Hannah Barker (Resident Involvement Officer), Peter Huntbach (Older Persons Housing Manager)</p> <p>Mears staff: Delia Hills (Resident Liaison Manager), James Taylor (Site Manager), A Shaw (Project Manager), Steven Thompson, Dan Scott (Site Manager)</p>		
Apologies	Charles Penrose (Sloane Court), Rachel Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services) Rob Nayan		
Location	Leach Court	Produced by	Hannah Barker
Date Time	09/03/16	completed	09/03/16

Section 1 – Update on actions from previous meeting

	Description
1	5.2 Re Fairness Commission evening Older People and Well-being on 16th March 2016 at Portslade Town Hall . Nothing has changed regarding timing of event (last meeting flagged as inappropriate for attracting older people.)
2	6.2 Peter Huntbach flagged up the paper on service charges that had been circulated
3	Intensive Housing Management charges breakdown will be made available soon following request.

Section 2 – Agenda items, agreements and future action

Agenda item 4 - Mears any questions – Delia Hills (Mears)	
Agreement / Decision	Delia not present at the meeting
Agenda item 5 – Scheme Managers cover	
Agreement / Decision	<p>Peter asked group; what should Scheme Managers (SM) do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They should be there and available – doing calls only doesn't do anything for community building. • Residents might not know that a SM has been in the building • E.g. in far end of Evelyn Court, far away from the board, don't know if SM has been. 'I feel it's a waste for me to pay' • We are hampered by not having any spare SMs <p>Peter: It seems to be about visibility of SM – should we think about lengthening the time of cover? To include more time than just the daily calls.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laburnum Grove has a white board – would like to see it say a defined

	<p>time about when SM will be around.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also board should show if SM on sick or annual leave or training. • Problem if person has disability can't get to see whiteboard. • Do we call or get a letter around to those who can't get to board? <p>Peter: We use 'text anywhere' service (to landline and mobile) – should we use that more?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elisabeth Court has a new alarm system being trialled • We have 25 SM over 22 Schemes (some have 2 SM due to size) • Suggestion to have at least one more SM whose sole responsibility is full time cover • Some residents unhappy at there being no cover at bank holidays & weekends. • We don't want to loose sight of 'Independent living' nor right to say do or don't want a call. <p>Peter: We are not nursing home/ residential care – service would be a different more expensive service to provide this. Some models of Sheltered housing nationally have automated button (for resident to notify they are well).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perhaps do daily call in afternoon sometimes? • Monday morning call is important – after the wk/end <p>Peter: Basic premise is that the SM accounts for everyone during the week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human contact each day is important – sometimes needs to be more time for contact to be meaningful (over and above simple checking in) • Evelyn court some residents are trialling a buddy system to help get some residents out of isolation with help. <p>Peter: Very keen to offer support with initiatives like this. How can we help? What is a reasonable level of service as we can't afford to provide the full time cover you would like, but what is a better level of service?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most people don't care if the SM is there until they want them. 		
<p>Action(s) 4.1</p>	<p>Chair proposed to carry on this conversation with Area Reps and come back again to the group. Could trial at one scheme with the groups consent.</p>	<p>By Who Roy</p>	<p>Deadline Next meeting</p>
<p>Agenda item 7 - Update on welfare reform – Nick Kitson (Performance & Improvement Officer)</p>			
<p>Agreement /Decision</p>	<p>Nick talked through the handout (appendix1)</p> <p>These changes are made at a National level, not by Nick, nor the council.</p> <p>Welfare Reform means changes to amount (usually a reduction) or method of payment.</p> <p>Universal Credit will indirectly affect Seniors Housing residents as there is a threat to Housing Revenue Account (HRA) . £14million over 4 years from rent being reduced.</p> <p>One positive is that we are in a position to help residents. People in private housing do not have this support.</p> <p>Questions:</p> <p>Q: how much is predicted that HRA will lose through rent arrears?</p> <p>A: Nationally 85% of people getting benefits are in arrears by some sort. At</p>		

	<p>the moment, most vulnerable people are not getting universal credit. (UC) so arrears levels are not too bad, However, when they do and next year when many more people will be moved to UC this will change.</p> <p>Discussion: Re. recent Policy & Resources Committee. Nick Hibberd had recommended that the council utilize the National Governments offer to freeze rents for supported housing for next year. The conservative councilors put forward an amendment that it should be the same for everyone, which was passed. Thus, Seniors Housing tenants will have their rents reduced by 1% in the next financial year.</p> <p>Comment: Excellent description of upcoming changes – a document with clarity – thank you for putting together.</p>
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Agenda item 8 - Potential changes to laundry system – Rob Nayan (Projects Manager, Housing Programme Team)

Agreement /Decision	<p>Rob Nayan not at meeting. Apology received at end of meeting.</p> <p>Comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are elected representatives, we voted clearly against the proposals • The council then conducted a ‘sham’ and expensive consultation, which again gave 90% against changes. • Then letters went out at further expense which are unclear, don not give costs and is bias. • We have had no report or communications with us. • If they want to push through this card system then nothing can stop them. • They have treated SHAG reps and Tenants Associations with disrespect when they didn’t get the result they wanted. • This could open up a can of worms; if people who don’t have washing machines don’t pay for the service, what about people that don’t use a lift service? • Many people who have wash machines don’t have dryers so still use laundry. • More personal washing machines in the buildings could cause noise issues. • They could have simply put up the prices and no one would have complained • Tower blocks have had the card system for years. Cllr Anne Meadows wanted to have the same system across the city, but without an understanding of senior housing resident’s needs. 		
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Action	By Who	Deadline
8.1	Chair will put together an official complaint about the Project Management team over the laundry communications and handling and will let tenants association reps know the response.	Roy Next meeting

Agenda item 9- Election to Tenant disability network

Agreement /Decision	Jean Davis put herself forward as the rep and the group agreed.		
Action	Hannah to let Resident Involvement Officer, Becca Mann know.	HB	This week

Agenda item 10 - Any other business			
Agreement /Decision	Tomm Nyhuus has raised scaffolding issue with Mears Ian Stone. Scaffolding appeared in Area Panel papers last blue pages.		
Actions		PH	Next few weeks
10.1	Peter will inform Laburnum Grove reps about lift replacement program		
10.2	Peter will let P&I know about scaffolding attending to repair leaking roof since before Xmas, still to be done at Rose Hill court and Evelyn Jones court.		
10.3	Hannah to send Reps Repairs Reporting process to Ray Goble, Allan Davis & Steve Nye.		

Section 3 – Agenda for next meeting 11th May 10am Leach Court

1	No suggestions made
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Future Meeting dates – all Wednesdays 10am – 12.30pm at Leach Court

13th July, 14th September (AGM) 9th November, 11th January 2017, 8th March , 10th May, 12th July, 13th September 2017 (AGM)

Appendix 1

Welfare Reform & Austerity Measures

Update for Seniors Housing Action Group

“Welfare reform” means changes to the amount of benefits that are paid (usually cuts) or changes to the way benefits are paid. “Austerity measures” are other ways the government reduces spending that don’t directly affect benefits, such as changing rent levels.

Pensioners will not be directly affected by any of these changes.

Under-Occupancy Deduction

- Sometimes called “**Bedroom Tax**” – since 2013 Housing Benefit has been reduced for people the government believes have “spare” rooms
- We have substantially reduced arrears for people affected in the last year
- We’ve held six **mutual exchange events**, with over 350 visitors since December 2014
- Incentive payments are available to most under-occupying tenants if they want to transfer or exchange

Universal Credit

- Combines several benefits into one, including Housing Benefit
- Benefits are now paid directly to the tenant instead of onto the rent account
- Active in Brighton & Hove since 2015, starting with single Jobseeker's Allowance claimants
- **21 tenants are now claiming the new combined benefit**, with new cases being added each week
- We expect to have around 100 by the end of the year, with a surge of new cases in 2017
- Arrears are expected to increase, because there is a 6 week delay in tenants receiving payment
- All new claimants are contacted by officers as soon as we know they are claiming, to offer support and make sure that they make a plan to pay their rent

Benefit Cap

- Benefits are capped at £500 per week but this **will soon reduce to £385 per week**
- Any money above this is taken from the Housing Benefit, which means tenants are expected to pay their rent from any other benefits they receive
- Disability benefits aren't affected and there are some exceptions
- The council is visiting all tenants who are capped to try to stop them being affected, or help them budget if this is not possible

Pay to Stay

- Pay to Stay is a proposal that any household where the top two earners together earn more than £30k will have to pay "market rent"
- The latest news is that it looks like this will now be raised to £50k with a "taper"
- Based on local market rents, families could pay up to £13k more per year
- The council has written to the Government to raise our concerns about how this change could affect our tenants
- These concerns include: the low threshold; very big rent increases; reduction in work incentives; increase in rent arrears and tenancy action; effects on communities and the cost to administer the scheme

Other changes

- All working age benefits are frozen for four years
- Tax Credits are being slightly reduced and the main rates frozen for four years
- Rent is being reduced over four years
- Benefits will not be paid for any children after the first two children, for anyone born after 1 April 2017
- From 1 April 2018 Housing Benefit is being limited to local private rent levels, which means there could be problems for sheltered housing schemes in parts of the country where rents are low, although this does not affect Brighton & Hove

Older People

- Although pensioners aren't affected, people approaching pension age still are, some of whom will live in seniors housing
- Friends and relatives will be affected, which could mean that older people are being asked for money more often
- The service as a whole will have less money if we collect less rent, which means there will be less to spend on all housing services including seniors housing

Available Help

Moneyworks

www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/moneyworks

Tel: 01273 809288

Brighton & Hove City Council

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/benefit-changes

Tel: 01273 293030

Department of Work and Pensions

www.gov.uk/government/policies/welfare-reform

Meeting action minutes

Meeting	TDN		
Attendees	Jason Williams, Martin Cunningham, Muriel Briault, Ann Packham Council Officer: Rebecca Mann, Resident Involvement Officer		
Apologies	Jean Davis, Sarah Potter - Adaptations		
Meeting location	Hampshire Lodge	Produced by	RM
Date Time	14 March 2016		

Section 1 – Update on actions from previous meeting

	Description
1	RM updated on Multi steel doors – recognized issues with opening (door entry system) for those with mobility problems. Jamie Smith explained that auto openers are being replaced when a new multi steel door has been refitted. Suggestion is that he liaises with Simon if there are particular doors that need to be refitted within Simon’s budget.
2	Few meetings to be quorate – RM to encourage attendance. Done.
3	Minutes Agreed from January
4	
5	
6	

Section 2 – Items discussed, agreements and future action

Agenda item 1			
Agreement / Decision	Hereford Court door opener in foyer – some residents in wheelchairs or with mobility issues find it difficult to gain entry to building. Can this work be administered through Simon’s project		
Action(s)	RM (RIO) to look into	By Who RM	Deadline Next meeting
Agenda item 2			
Agreement / Decision	Muriel to feedback from Involvement and Empowerment Group as she is a member and rep from TDN		
Action(s)	Muriel to provide feedback from meetings	By Who Muriel	Deadline After each meeting
Agenda item 3			

Agreement / Decision	Newsletter. Ann and Jason happy to take this project forward. Alison may wish to hand information to Ann and Jason then they will go to Resource Centre and produce the newsletter.		
Action(s)	Ann and Jason to take forward in future	By Who	Deadline
Agenda item 4			
Agreement / Decision	Further discussion around recording meetings. Agreed needs to go to a vote		
Action(s)	For future meeting to decide.	By Who All member	Deadline Future meetings
Agenda item 5			
Agreement / Decision	Ann Packham provided feedback on the Fed's Health & Well Being meeting she had attended (as asked to by the group) She explained that she had difficulty hearing the meeting as there was no hearing loop. Information was quite basic and centred around the importance of '5 fruit and veg a day' and drinking more water.		
Action(s)	Ann will attend next meeting and see whether it is more informative.	By Who Ann	Deadline n/a
Agenda item 6			
Agreement / Decision	TOR – extend membership/broaden involvement		
Action(s)	Agreed to be carried forward to next meeting to discuss. Open to all who are interested	By Who All residents	Deadline
Agenda item 6			
Agreement / Decision	Update on budget. Brief discussion: everyone aware £20m needs to be saved. Council Tax to increase. DLA being reduced for some and Rent Reduction of 1% over (each) 4 years.		
Action(s)	Nfa	By Who All residents	Deadline

Section 3 – Agenda for next meeting

1	Welcome/Apologies
2	Update from Simon Pickles (report or in person)
3	Terms of Reference – vote to broaden involvement (invite Joe, Ted, Barry to become fully fledged members)
4	Newsletter
5	Adaptations
6	AOB
7	Dates of next meetings (reduced to 4 per year)

Tenancy Service Improvement Group 4 November 2015

- Reviewed the succession letters- copies sent to non-attendees
- Agreed to look at conflict coaching and mediation
- Looking at fixed penalty notices for ASB
- Looking at a day in a life of Tenancy Officer
- Preventing fly tipping and developing respectful communities possible areas of work

Home Service Improvement Group 19 November 2015

- Asset Management Strategy - budget, affordability and report from resident consultation
- Sustainability plan - an overview for Housing stock, including solar panels on tenant's homes.
- Loft & Extension Scheme - Information and the change in criteria.
- Updates on jargon busting resident inspectors and resident action plan
- Elections of new reps to Estates Development Budget panel, Partnership Core Group, chair and vice chair

Involvement & Empowerment Service Improvement Group 26 November 2015

- Planning 2016 calendar of community events to promote Resident Involvement on estates
- Finalising text for new Resident Involvement Handbook
- Residents giving quotes about how being involved has made a difference for handbook, online version, and You Tube video
- Exploring recognition scheme for tenants and leaseholders who make a difference
- Working on updated Tenant & Resident Association manual, including information on setting up informal resident groups

Neighbourhood & Community Service Improvement Group 3 December 2015

- Delighted to welcome guest speaker from the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership
- Watched a video about community gardening and inspired to start one in Hove
- Will be consulting residents on the estate
- Idea to include neighbouring residents as well as the immediate community
- Fairly low cost, brings people together, and provides fresh produce

Business & Value for Money Service Improvement Group 7 December 2015

- Discussed alternative revenue streams for the council
- Agreed to encourage residents to look out for unused properties for possible use
- Discussed value for money of service charges
- Agreed to promote 'Jargon Buster' to residents to help simplify technical information
- Looked at the Council's Performance Report and commented on content