

1. Drains at 68-70 Godwin Road and overall system

This issue was raised at the West Residents meeting 16/4/2019. A response was given at the Area Panel on 4/6/19. (At 18/6/19 the drains had still not been cleared).

Several points of concern were raised:

- a) It is worrying that there was no record of the original complaint. Complaints were made monthly, using the online form. Every time this was done an email was also sent to Pat Liddell, to keep her informed. The absence of any record of the on-line complaints indicates that the system for reporting repairs is not working properly.
- b) There was confusion about whether or not the drain was the responsibility of highways or housing. The resident then had to follow this up with Highways as well as Housing. If there is a central repairs number, shouldn't this be sorted out by the repairs line?
- c) When a complaint is lodged, the person making it is not told when it has been actioned, or kept informed of progress.
- d) The original item raised an overall concern which was not addressed. When residents asked for regular maintenance of drains in order to prevent blockages and reduce the risk of flooding they were told (Area Panel 16/10/18) that this was not necessary as any issues would be rectified as soon as they arose.

As this does not appear to be the case, it was agreed to ask at Area Panel:

- a) what is being done to improve the system
- b) for a reconsideration of the original proposal that regular maintenance would provide residents with the best and most efficient service.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from P&I- not yet available

2. **Door entry system at Ingram Court**

This issue was raised at the West Residents meeting 16/4/2019. A response was given at the Area Panel on 4/6/19

The response said that *'From this point on we have changed our consultation process for installing new door entry systems and will carry out engagement with tenants and leaseholders through letters ahead of any formal consultation. This is in place with immediate effect'*.

However, work has started on a new door entry system at Lovegrove. Some residents were not aware of the planned work until it started. This raised two issues:

- a) Why did the promised consultation not happen effectively at Lovegrove?
- b) When promises are made at Area Panel and then not carried through it undermines confidence in the whole Area Panel system.

Ingram Court Residents' Association will be following up on this, but it was also felt it should be raised at Area Panel.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from P&I- not yet available

2. **Field Officers**

There is some confusion about the role of Field Officers.

The response to a question raised by North Area (Residents' question time, Area Panel agenda June 6th 2019) says that:

- a) The Field Officer team carries out enforcement action only on behalf of other council departments.
- b) Field Officers can be contacted on 01273 291485 or at fieldofficers@brighton-hove.gov.uk

It isn't clear when and why residents should contact Field Officers directly, as they can only action items raised by other council departments.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from Brett Stacey, Field Officer Manager. T: 01273 291552

Residents can use the contact details given above to request information which relates to any issue which is currently under investigation by the Field officer team. Residents should continue to report any new concerns to the responsible council department using the information on the council's website.

3. Don't Walk By

The Council's recently launched 'Don't walk by' policy aims to encourage residents to immediately report issues and problems as soon as they become aware of them.

It was agreed that this is a good policy, and one that Resident Association representatives are in the forefront of implementing.

It was noted that this policy will only succeed if a) there is a clear, accessible and people-friendly way to report issues and b) reporting issues leads to action.

Problems with the system that residents have encountered are:

- If you phone, you are often put into a queue, with no indication of how long you will have to wait.
- You don't get to communicate with the person responsible for that area.
- You don't get any feed-back on how your complaint has progressed – it can feel that it disappears into a void.
- If there is no action as a result of the complaint, you have to go through the whole process again. People lose faith in the system, and the motivation to report issues.
- If the issue you have raised can't be resolved, you are not told why.
- Increasingly the only way to report issues is on-line. This discriminates against lots of people who do not have access to computers. Residents have been told they can go to the library, but this clearly discourages immediate reporting of problems.

It was agreed that if the Don't Walk By policy is going to work, residents' experience and feed-back on how the system works needs to be taken on board, and the system improved in the light of these comments.

A discussion about this was requested for the Area Panel.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from Janet Dowdell, Tenancy Services Operational manager

T: 01273 293191

We are pleased residents agree this is a good policy and thank them for taking time to feedback on their experiences with reporting issues to us.

When we launched the policy we aimed to provide as many contact methods as possible to enable staff and residents to report issues easily in the method they choose. To do this we have tried not to add confusion by providing too many different routes into the service.

Following this feedback we have added additional information to help understanding around where to report issues against different team contacts so that it reaches the correct part of our service without delay. See below:

How to report

Online:

- Complete a [Report a problem](#) form on the Council website

- Join the Housing Facebook page & report non urgent issues
- Follow @BHCCtenants on Twitter for service updates

By email or telephone:

Email: housing.customerservices@brighton-hove.gov.uk **For reporting of ASB & tenancy related issues. Fencing issues and Car parks and garage enquiries**

- Telephone: 01273 293030
- Email: BHCC.repairs@mearsgroup.co.uk **For reporting repairs to aerials, central heating, chimneys, external doors, drains and covers, flooring & walls.**
- Telephone Freephone 0800 052 6140 (24hrs) or 01273 294409
- Email: estatesserviceteam@brighton-hove.gov.uk **For reporting emergency sharps, lock changes, graffiti removal in communal ways, fly tipping on housing land, repairs to communal lights.**
- Telephone: 01273 294769
- Email: seniorshousing@brighton-hove.gov.uk **For reporting repairs please contact Housing customer services number as displayed.**
- Telephone: 01273 293030

By post, address all enquiries to:

Housing Centre
Unit 1 Fairway Trading Estate
Eastergate Road
Brighton
BN2 4QL

Below are answers to

- If you phone, you are often put into a queue, with no indication of how long you will have to wait.

Response: The response time for calls to the Housing Customer Service team (01273 293030) is good, with the average waiting time in June being one minute. The Housing Customer Service team is increasingly receiving contact from residents by email and web enquiries, particularly for non urgent queries and again response times to this form of contact is very good, with the team replying to the majority of queries in one working day. The council's telephony system does not have the facility to advise callers of where they are in the queue, if their call is not immediately answered. The current telephony contract is coming to an end and this is one of the features that we are looking to include in the future.

Mears telephony systems do not state how long a caller has to wait as this is dependent on how long the existing calls take to end, however the Repairs Helpdesk telephony system does indicate where the caller is in the queue e.g. "you are 2nd the queue". The average call wait time for the month of June for the Repairs Helpdesk was 52 seconds.

- You don't get to communicate with the person responsible for that area.

Response: If you are reporting a tenancy related issue and it needs to be managed as a case, the issue will be allocated to one of our Housing Officers working out of the area teams or our Complex Cases Team. If allocated, you will be provided with the Officer name and direct contact details and they will maintain contact with you until the case is closed. This guidance is aimed at reporting communal issues on Housing land and the service doesn't have area based officers for this.

- You don't get any feed-back on how your complaint has progressed – it can feel that it disappears into a void.

Response: When reporting a repair, you should be given a job reference number, if not please ask for it. For an update, please call the Repairs Helpdesk quoting the job reference number. Unfortunately Mears do not have resources to call residents to provide updates on the vast number of communal repairs carried out.

- If there is no action as a result of the complaint, you have to go through the whole process again. People lose faith in the system, and the motivation to report issues.

Response: If you are not satisfied with the Repairs Service, please follow the agreed Process for Resident Representatives to Resolve Repairs Issues - please find attached.*

- If the issue you have raised can't be resolved, you are not told why.

Response: As above, if you have a job reference number you can make enquiries to Mears about any reports you make to the service for a repair. When managing requests for funding under the new Environmental Improvement Budget, we have introduced a process which includes direct feedback on projects being considered. The projects coming from our new Environmental Improvement Meetings will also follow this process and results will be posted on the website.

- Increasingly the only way to report issues is on-line. This discriminates against lots of people who do not have access to computers. Residents have been told they can go to the library, but this clearly discourages immediate reporting of problems.

Response: We provide details of the many different methods of accessing our service and although for many, email is the most straightforward we understand that this will not be the case for all residents. We ensure all methods of accessing the service are managed by staff but some receive high levels of demand, and this can sometimes lead to a delay in our ability to respond quickly.

NB attachment of reporting repairs process

4. Equality and inclusivity of customer services

It is becoming more and more difficult to contact customer services unless you do this on line. It was agreed that this is discriminatory and not good practise in terms of the council's commitment to equality and inclusivity.

Alternative options need to be available so everyone is able to access the services.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from Tracie James, Housing Customer Services Manager. T:01273 293212

I am sorry to hear that some residents are having difficulties in contacting Housing Customer Services. We want our residents to have a choice of methods to contact us; they can ring us, email, send a tweet or a Facebook message.

We're keen to encourage people who can, to report on line, but this is just one method of contact and it allows residents who are unavailable during working hours, to contact us. We are currently replying to emails and on line form requests within 24 hours.

On average we receive approximately 3000 phone calls a month and in June had an average telephone answering time of 1 minute 16 seconds. Housing Customer Service is currently exceeding the Council customer promise for contact.

However, there may be times when many people call us at the same time, which means waiting times will increase. We are currently looking into how we can introduce a queuing system, so people will know how long they may have to wait; this means if they phone at a busy time they can decide whether to wait or phone later.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

5. Rubbish clearance at Clarendon & Ellen

There has been a reduction in the number of rubbish bins at Clarendon & Ellen. At Livingstone, for example, bins have been reduced from 11 to 2. These are supposed to be collected every day, but this doesn't happen. Rubbish then piles up around the bins and becomes a health and safety issue.

The bins have also been relocated on to a public road, leading to them being used by people not living at Clarendon & Ellen and compounding the problem.

Measures need to be taken to ensure that City Clean carry out their contractual duties properly.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from Lynsay Cook, Head of Business Support & Projects, T: 01273 292448

The bins in the Clarendon and Ellen Estate have not been reduced. The refuse and recycling bins in the surrounding area had to be moved, as they were a fire risk due to their location against the buildings. A City Clean Team Leader has met with Housing Officers and tenants to talk over what we are proposing to do with the bins.

At the moment the bins have been moved from away from the building and placed in two car parking spaces towards the road. We are currently waiting on delivery of new communal bins, which are the larger bins around the city. Once these bins have been installed they will be collected frequently, starting with collections every day until we can gauge how many collections are required to avoid overflow. In the interim we are trying to arrange for the crew usually emptying on a Thursday, to also do so on a Monday, to reduce the amount of waste that is being blown into the street

6. Rats at Clarendon & Ellen

There is a major rat problem at Clarendon & Ellen. In Ellen Street, there is a rat hole in the public garden against the bedroom wall of one of the houses. A resident has videoed 6 rats coming in and out of this hole.

A number of concerns were raised:

- Calls to the 293030 line resulted in the suggestion that a supervisor came out to look at the situation in a couple of weeks' time. A quick response is needed when dealing with a vermin problem; this is a health and safety issue.
- Individual residents have been told that they are responsible for the cost of pest control. This is unreasonable when building work and uncollected rubbish have helped create, and then added to the problem.
- Residents have been told that if the problem is 'outside' then the council will pay costs, and if it is 'inside' the resident is responsible. This is a difficult distinction to make as rats move between areas and residents can be experiencing a problem in their homes which is caused elsewhere.

It was agreed to raise this at Area Panel and ask for a) quicker response times when vermin problems are reported and b) clarification of the reasoning about when the council or the resident are responsible for payment.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from Tracie James, Customer Services Manager T: 293212

This case was raised as "urgent" with Mears but the contractor advised this can take up to 20 days for action to be taken.

Generally, if rats are in the resident's property, it is the responsibility of the resident to deal with the problem; this is stated in the Tenancy Handbook. If the problem is in the communal area, then the council takes responsibility for dealing with this.

7. Report back on major works at Clarendon & Ellen

Major works, including replacing windows, doors and roofs, have been taking place at Clarendon & Ellen since May 2019. Resident representatives were told there would be a survey done on each flat before work started, but this hasn't happened. Instead standard work is being carried out across all properties.

Residents asked for an explanation of why the individual surveys have not taken place.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from P&I- not yet available

8. Upkeep of gardens

A lot of properties in the Knoll area have gardens which are not being maintained. There does not appear to be any enforcement of tenancy requirements to keep your garden tidy.

It was agreed to ask for information on what action the council takes to ensure gardens are properly maintained.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from Jake Woollard, Housing Officer, Complex Case Housing Team

T: 01273 291937

Untidy Gardens Project Brief - Hangleton

Summary

July 2019

The untidy gardens project has been in full operation since the beginning of January 2019. The project has been led by Housing Officer, Jake Woollard and assisted by two new Housing Apprentices; Lily Broughton and Olivia Davis.

Hangleton

The number of untidy garden cases in Hangleton that have been allocated to the team since the start of the project is 62 (as of the date of this brief).

By writing to, visiting and otherwise positively engaging with tenants, the number of cases the team has managed to address, resolve and close currently stands at 38, which is just over 61% of the overall untidy garden cases raised in Hangleton.

Here are some before and after examples of one of the team's recent cases in the Hangleton area:



This particular garden was entirely dealt with by the tenant after the team sent several letters and conducted multiple visits.

The team will continue to carry out inspections in Hangleton for the duration of the project. As part of these inspections, we will monitor all existing cases, as well as identify any new cases along the way; however, if you wish to raise any specific issues, please do so by emailing the team:

Housing.tenancygardens@brighton-hove.gov.uk

We are proud of the work we have done so far, and we have had some great successes. The team currently has access to a limited budget, which has been primarily used to help the more vulnerable tenants whose gardens have reached a condition beyond their control. The team is also working towards taking enforcement action against tenants who refuse to engage or cooperate with requests to tidy their gardens.

9. Age restricted blocks

Philip Court was built as a block for over 50's. Residents moved into the block on this understanding, and were given to believe this would continue. The adult children of some residents were unable to move into Philip Court with them. At some stage, with no consultation or even notification to residents, the over 50's status of the block was removed.

It was noted that Clarke Court and other blocks in the city have also lost their over-50's status, and that this is an issue of city-wide concern.

Philip Court Residents' Association would like the block to still be designated as over 50's and are asking for the council to re-introduce this.

The following points were raised for Area Panel:

- Why were residents not consulted or informed about the change to Philip Court and other block's over 50's status?
- Why was the over-50's status removed?
- Will Brighton & Hove City Council commit to a policy of re-introducing over 50's blocks? If the impediment to doing this is central government regulations, B&HCC should lobby for these to be changed, so they can implement a policy requested by their residents.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting and all Area Panel agendas**

Response from Lorraine Bourton, Housing Manager- rehousing

T: 01273 293217 Not yet available

10. Refuse and rubbish collection at Clarke Court

A lot of residents do not seem to understand the system for recycling and rubbish collection and the bin rooms are filling up with bulk waste which won't be collected.

It was suggested that the following would help:

- a) Better signage
- b) Improved information and education for all residents (including those sub-letting)
- c) Individual letters to each flat

Clarke Court residents are following up the problem, and are trying to get the bulk waste collected. However, the problem will just build up again if a longer term solution isn't found.

It was agreed to raise this at Area Panel and ask for the comments from Clarke Court to be fed into the environmental survey.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting**

This issue will be discussed at area panel

11. Residents room at Philip Court

There have been recent changes to the management of Philip Court residents' room, which has left residents with less access. Books have also been removed from the lounge, and residents told they are a fire hazard. This is all causing upset which is affecting the Residents' Association.

It was agreed to ask for clarification of where the advice has come from that books in a residents' lounge are a fire hazard.

Action:  **for West agenda setting meeting**

Response Community Engagement Manager Sam Warren

The Residents' Association choose colours for the refurbishment of the lounge as last year this had been a bid for works to be paid for from the Estate Development Budget. As the works were imminent, surplus items were removed from the lounge and residents were to discuss what should happen to the books. In the past, residents who have one of the old main door keys have been able to access the lounge using these, with no time limits or permissions. New residents who have only ever had a Fob could not access the lounge freely. For the most part this has worked well except for residents occasionally disposing of household items and mobility scooters for charging, this is consider to be a fire risk and therefore shouldn't happen. The Community Engagement Officer worked with the committee to ensure that were aware of the need for good health & safety procedures and this resulted in changing the locks on the room to ensure the charging of scooters no longer happened in the room . Consequently, letters were delivered to all residents on behalf of the association to let them know when and why the locks needed to be changed. The books were removed when the room was decorated and the committee made a decision not to replace the shelves as they felt the books were rarely used and could be a fire risk. This decision could be revisited with the committee should the residents wish to do so.

