

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 80

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Update on annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2011 and plan for resident involvement in the annual report for 2012		
Date of Meeting:	6 February 2012		
Report of:	Strategic Director Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Carol Jenkins	Tel: 29-3832
	Email:	Carol.jenkins@brighton-hove.gov.uk	
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 This report updates the Committee on progress in implementing the improvement plans set out in the annual report to all council tenants and leaseholders for the year ended 31 March 2011. It reports the proposed revised requirements for registered providers of social housing to produce an annual report to their tenants set out in the Tenant Services Authority's consultation on a revised regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012. The report also proposes an outline plan and timetable for involving residents in producing and scrutinising the council's annual report to tenants and leaseholders for the year ending 31 March 2012.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee notes the progress in implementing improvement plans included in the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders for the year ending 31 March 2011 highlighted in Appendix 1 to this report.
- 2.2 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee notes the proposed reduced regulatory requirements for producing annual reports to tenants with effect from April 2012.
- 2.3 That the Housing Management Consultative Committee notes the proposed plan and timetable set out in paragraphs 3.6 to 3.7 of this report for involving residents in producing the annual report to tenants and leaseholders for the year ending 31 March 2012.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

- 3.1 The annual report to all council tenants and leaseholders for the year ended 31 March 2011 was produced with tenants in line with the requirements of the current regulator for social housing landlords, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA). It set out how we met the TSA's regulatory standards introduced on 1 April 2010, any gaps, our improvement plans to fill those gaps and our offer to tenants against the standards for this year. It was sent to all tenants and leaseholders in September 2011 with the autumn edition of Homing In. The current regulatory framework requires registered providers to fulfil the commitments to tenants that they make in their annual reports. Appendix 1 to this report highlights examples of the progress already made in meeting our improvement plans as set out in the annual report.
- 3.2 As in our first annual report, for 2010, we sought to involve as wide a range of council tenants and leaseholders as possible in the production and scrutiny of the 2011 report. In the previous year's annual report and in Homing In we asked for their views and invited residents to tell us via their housing office, email, post, in a form on our website and at Area Panels what they would like to say or see in the 2011 report. In June 2011 we also issued a consultation draft report for all residents to scrutinise and comment on, which we publicised widely through Homing In, our website, Twitter and Facebook and by emailing over 2,200 tenants and leaseholders who we had email addresses for.
- 3.3 We were very pleased to include in both annual reports to date comments and photos of numerous tenants and leaseholders who are actively involved in our resident groups or who had given us feedback on our performance in other ways. However, we received very few suggestions from residents for the content of the 2011 report or comments on the consultation draft. We have also received no feedback from residents on the final 2011 report or suggestions as to what they would like to see in a future year's report, as requested in the report itself and on our website.
- 3.4 The Tenant Services Authority's consultation revised regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012 changes the requirements for annual reports. Although the council will still have to produce an annual report to tenants about our performance against the housing service or 'consumer' standards (which are the only standards the council will be subject to), the regulator will no longer issue guidance on what the report should contain or collect a copy, as this power has been repealed by the Localism Act 2011.
- 3.5 The requirements relating to annual reports throughout the current TSA standards will be replaced by a revised Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard. The specific expectations for that standard include "the provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in a form which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants. Such provision must include the publication of an annual report which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets". There are no further requirements on the annual report within the

proposed revised standards, so we expect to have much greater freedom on the content of future annual reports.

- 3.6 For the 2012 report, therefore, we propose to seek the views of the Tenant Editorial Board of Homing In magazine and a representative cross section of residents on what format, length and content they would like. We will invite tenants on our resident involvement database from a broad range of equalities groups to a one-off focus group meeting to hear their views. We will aim for a shorter published report than in previous years, supplemented by further information available on our website or on request. We do not intend to issue a consultation draft before the final report, in view of the limited response last year.
- 3.7 However, we will continue to invite residents to contribute to reporting our performance and progress in meeting our improvement plans in their own words and photos. We will again offer all tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to tell us what they would like to say or see in the annual report through Homing In and our website. The timetable will remain to issue the report with Homing In at the end of September, after it has been scrutinised by the Housing Management Consultative Committee.

4. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The annual report to council tenants and leaseholders is a key means to achieve co-regulation with residents of the council's housing landlord service. The previous annual reports were produced with the extensive involvement and scrutiny of a wide number of tenants, leaseholders and their representatives. We propose to produce the 2012 report after consulting with and involving residents as detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 above. These arrangements are in line with the Community Engagement Framework and Standards and regulatory framework.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 5.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in this report. Any costs associated with the proposed plans and timetable for the year ending 31 March 2012 will be met within existing Housing Revenue Accounts budgets.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen

Date: 18/01/12

Legal Implications:

- 5.2 Under the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 the regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), may require a provider to prepare annual reports assessing the registered provider's performance by reference to standards set by the regulator. The requirement may specify matters to be covered by the report. Failure to comply with the regulator's requirement without reasonable excuse is an offence punishable on conviction to a fine not exceeding £5000. A prosecution under this section may only be brought by or with the consent of the Director of

Public Prosecutions. The plan and timetable proposed in the report will assist the Council in complying with its legal obligations. No individual's human rights will be adversely affected by the report's proposals.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley

Date: 24/01/12

Equalities Implications:

- 5.3 Annual reports to council tenants and leaseholders including the commitments to tenants have been produced in line with the TSA's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard, which requires registered providers to understand and respond to the diverse needs of tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs. An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed on work to meet the TSA's requirements. We will seek to involve residents from all equalities groups in developing the 2012 report. The annual report will continue to be made available in alternative formats as required.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.4 Appendix 1 to this report highlights our work in projects investing in learning and skills for local people and improvements to the council's housing stock. The 2012 annual report will be shorter than previous versions, saving paper and waste.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.5 There are no crime and disorder implications. The annual reports and improvement plans include the council's performance on dealing with anti-social behaviour, illustrated also in Appendix 1 to this report.

Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.6 It is currently a regulatory requirement of the TSA as set out in its regulatory framework that the council should meet the commitments made to tenants in its annual report. Appendix 1 demonstrates the council is making progress in meeting the commitments in the 2011 annual report to council tenants and leaseholders. The plans for the 2012 annual report comply with the proposed new regulatory framework from April 2012.

Public Health Implications:

- 5.7 Appendix 1 to this report includes examples of how the council is improving the living conditions of its tenants and leaseholders and engaging with them to help maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives, to promote sustainable communities and to improve our service delivery.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.8 The annual report and Appendix 1 illustrate some of the ways in which management of the council's housing stock supports the council's priorities. Involving tenants and leaseholders in producing the annual report specifically supports the priority of engaging people who live and work in the city, demonstrating that the council listens to and collaborates with its tenants and leaseholders and is open and transparent about its performance as a social housing landlord.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Examples of progress made in meeting improvement plans set out in the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2011

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. *The regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2010*
Tenant Services Authority, March 2010
2. *A revised regulatory framework for social housing in England from April 2012*
A statutory consultation Tenant Services Authority, November 2011

Examples of progress made in meeting improvement plans set out in the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders 2011

Planned improvement	Progress to date
Resident involvement and empowerment	
Customer service, choice and complaints	
<p>We have a programme for mystery shoppers to complete five 'shops' in 2011/12.</p> <p>We will carry out loft or other extensions for some overcrowded families in suitable properties to offer them the choice of staying in their current home.</p>	<p>A mystery shop by trained resident mystery shoppers and resident members of the Asset Management Panel of the whole repairs process has been completed and an action plan developed, which is being implemented by Mears. A mystery shop of all 23 sheltered schemes has also been completed with a third area of our service being 'mystery shopped' in January.</p> <p>We have visited over 20 overcrowded families with colleagues from Adaptations to provide a personal service in exploring opportunities to alleviate their overcrowding. We starting the first three projects to extend homes to provide the additional bedrooms they need.</p>
Involvement and empowerment	
<p>We will continue to try to involve a wider range of tenants and leaseholders in having a say in how their homes and neighbourhoods are managed, including younger people, families with children and other groups who are under-represented in our formal participation structure and whose voice we need to hear.</p>	<p>We have encouraged more residents to join our resident involvement database through a new online resident involvement form on our improved council housing website and by sending a copy of the form along with the STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) satisfaction survey to a representative sample of 3,000 tenants in November. We have used the resident involvement database to contact residents to ensure we hear from residents in all equalities and diversity groups, for example to consult on the new Repair & improvement handbook and recruit to the Innovation Group looking at resident involvement, as well as specifically hearing the views of young tenants.</p> <p>In addition, 97 tenants visiting our website took the opportunity to tell us their views by completing the STAR survey online that we promoted through new media. We attracted high numbers and more new faces to the November City Assembly with more publicity and a crèche. We also made it accessible to a much wider range of residents through the live webcast which had 448 views on the day (including 15 residents at St James's House community café) plus more viewers since, Twitter tweets from delegates, officers and people unable to attend and a live blog which enabled residents to send in questions and</p>

	<p>messages and get answers throughout the day.</p> <p>The new Brighton & Hove Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Facebook page is successfully engaging residents in dialogue with us about our services as well as providing information in a variety of formats, with 80 fans so far.</p>
Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants	
<p>We will check we have complete and accurate information about tenants' circumstances and needs when we sign up new tenants and carry out tenancy visits, and make better use of information you give us to meet your individual needs.</p>	<p>We have introduced new print outs and procedures to check and update the information on tenants' equalities, diversity and care and support needs recorded on our database when we carry out tenancy visits and sign up new tenants. Officers have been trained to request this information sensitively, to input it onto the database and to run off reports to help meet tenants' individual needs and help with service planning.</p>
Home	
Quality of accommodation	
<p>We will upgrade communal TV aerials to be ready for digital switchover in March 2012.</p>	<p>We have upgraded approximately 350 communal aerial systems in readiness for Digital Switchover in March 2012. This involved getting access to nearly 6,000 properties. A large number of individual satellite dishes have been removed as a result, which has improved the appearance of our blocks. Residents have been involved in checking the quality of the work once completed.</p>
Repairs and maintenance	
<p>Residents from the Asset Management Panel and High Rise Action Group will help choose the new lift service contractor, who will also carry out a city wide renewal programme.</p>	<p>A new long term lift maintenance, repair and replacement contract is now in place with Liftec. Residents from the Asset Management Panel and High Rise Action Group helped evaluate the quality of all the tender returns and were in agreement that Liftec offered the best solution. Residents at Tyson Place, St John's Mount and Essex Place will benefit from the new lifts installed in their blocks. Lifts now stop on each floor which is a great help to all residents with disabilities.</p>
Tenancy	
Allocations	
<p>We will further improve the letting process for sheltered housing to reduce rent loss.</p>	<p>A working group of staff from Lettings, Sheltered Housing and Homemove is currently looking at how we can reduce the rent loss for sheltered housing.</p>

Tenure	
We will continue to extend financial inclusion and support the Credit Union to help residents manage their finances.	A speaker from the Credit Union addressed the tenants' and leaseholders' City Assembly in November. Energy efficiency measures we have taken such as installing new heating and new water meters at Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge will help tenants manage their finances and address fuel and water poverty.
We will continue to investigate and act on all reports of fraud.	We became one of the first councils to successfully prosecute a tenant for sub-letting under the Fraud Act last year. We have participated in a pilot data matching exercise with regard to suspected sub-letting and are currently reviewing the output. There has been an increase in the number of reports of suspected sub-letting allegations this year. A number of investigations are at an advanced stage and we hope that civil and/or criminal proceedings will be commenced shortly.
Neighbourhood and community	
Neighbourhood management	
We will complete the policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with residents' homes with the Estates Service Monitoring Group and take it to HMCC for consultation and approval.	The Council Housing Neighbourhood Policy, together with the Grounds Maintenance and Adverse Weather Policies which sit beneath it, were developed with the help and involvement of residents in the Estates Service Monitoring Group. These policies were approved by the Cabinet Member for Housing in December on the recommendation of the Housing Management Consultative Committee after discussion at its meeting on 7 November 2011.
Local area co-operation	
We will support partnerships with social enterprises and projects which help get people into work and training, and benefit our residents.	We have successfully secured external funding for targeted work around access to education, training and employment with residents in partnership with the Bridge Community Education Centre and Portslade Adult Learning. This will give us two outreach workers to work alongside housing staff to provide one to one support, information, advice and guidance, and be involved in delivering training and employment activities, peer learning programmes, life skills programmes, helping residents to access courses and activities citywide, job search and volunteering support. The funding will also provide some literacy, numeracy and ICT classes for tenants at the Housing Centre in Moulsecoomb. We have worked with Mears and City College to offer

	<p>training opportunities to building construction students. They helped refurbish two properties for leasing to Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes, under the project to raise investment for council tenants' homes.</p>
Anti-social behaviour	
<p>We will continue to develop personalised support services for victims of anti-social behaviour (ASB).</p>	<p>We have built on the measures introduced last year to ensure a timely and appropriate response to all reports of anti-social behaviour (ASB). Factors that have helped us to improve our performance include carrying out an initial risk assessment within 24 hours of receiving a report of ASB; having a dedicated Victim and Witness support officer within the ASB Housing Team; piloting a new database system in conjunction with partner agencies e.g. Police, Community Safety Team and other registered social landlords and having a named point of contact for each ASB case, in order to monitor all victim and witness cases citywide, which has improved data sharing and multi-agency working; and carrying out regular customer satisfaction surveys to monitor how we are performing.</p> <p>Earlier and more detailed identification has enabled us to respond more appropriately to the individual circumstances of victims and witnesses, with personalised support and action plans put in place to take preventative action as appropriate, whilst simultaneously working with perpetrators to address the ASB using a balance of support and enforcement. As a result, customer satisfaction rates have been consistently high at around 90% compared to the national average (68%).</p>
Value for money	
<p>We will deliver services more efficiently and cost effectively by making better use of our buildings, streamlining our processes and making other organisational changes.</p>	<p>More residents are accessing information and services at a time that suits them and cost effectively for us through our website. Visits to our improved www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/council-housing webpage increased from around 1,300 in July to 1,800 in December 2011 and we now have 14 forms on-line. The 630 tenants now using our Housing Customer Online system to check their rent account 24/7 rather than waiting for a quarterly paper rent statement are already saving us over £550 a year.</p> <p>The Customer Access Strategy and move of the Manor Place Housing Office to the Whitehawk Hub, both discussed and agreed by Housing Management Consultative Committee this autumn, will help us deliver services more efficiently and cost effectively. We are also consulting staff on the proposed transformation and restructure of Housing & Social Inclusion to enable us to achieve our objectives, including moving further into a model of co-production and co-regulation with tenants and leaseholders.</p>

