

Appendix 1

HOUSING MANAGEMENT CONSULTATIVE SUB-COMMITTEE

Brighton & Hove City Council

Subject:	Housing services the city deserves		
Date of Meeting:	29 May 2012		
Report of:	Strategic Director - Place		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Sam Smith	Tel: 01273 291383
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Key Decision:	No		
Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

- 1.1 The Housing & Social Inclusion delivery unit is responsible for around 12,300 council managed homes and over 2,200 leasehold properties in the city. The service has made great progress over recent years improving performance and achieving financial savings to re-invest in homes and services. Following consultation with residents and members about improvements that they would like to see to the way housing management services are delivered we are now restructuring the Housing & Social Inclusion service in order to further improve customer service, increase support for vulnerable residents and provide a platform for meeting our current and future challenges.
- 1.2 A presentation was given to Housing Management Consultative Committee on 30 April 2012 providing an overview of these changes. Members of the committee requested that further details are brought to a future meeting in the form of a report.
- 1.3 The changes taking place reflect improvements the wider council is making under the banner 'A council the city deserves' and are therefore under the heading 'Housing services the city deserves'.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Management Consultative Sub-Committee note the changes detailed in this report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

3.1 Housing management services have existed within a fairly static structure for a number of years with only marginal changes to meet service priorities and budgetary pressures. This is in part due to the fact that, for several

years, the service was preparing for the potential of major change through a stock transfer that did not go ahead.

- 3.2 There have been a number of reports that have been agreed by HMCC over the past few years which have recommended significant policy changes in order to improve service delivery, access to services and efficiency. For example the [Improvement Programme HMCC¹](#) report (September 2011), Customer Service & Access Strategy reports (HMCC [January 2010²](#) and [September 2011³](#)) and the [Turning the Tide recommendations⁴](#) (HMCC January 2011).
- 3.3 10 principles were agreed by residents at Housing Management Consultative Committee in January 2010 to provide a basis for the service to change and develop. These principles are:
- 1) Housing management should provide an effective and efficient service that meets residents' needs
 - 2) Current ways of working need to change as they are resource intensive and do not always deliver what residents want
 - 3) All residents should be able to easily access the service
 - 4) There should be a range of ways for residents to contact the service
 - 5) Administrative functions should be organised to reduce waste and avoid duplication
 - 6) Housing officers should have a proactive role focused on providing support and tackling problems as early as possible
 - 7) Housing officers should spend less time on administration and more time with residents and taking care of their neighbourhood
 - 8) Support should be targeted at those who need it most
 - 9) It is possible to improve service delivery whilst reducing costs
 - 10) Residents and staff should be involved in developing and delivering change and improvement.
- 3.4 The Customer Service & Access Strategy agreed by HMCC on 26 September 2011 included the following actions:
- Continue engaging with staff to develop and then formally consult on a proposal for service transformation
 - Set up a Customer Service Hub consisting of a front-line team who will be located together and responsible for the majority of our

¹ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

² [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002017/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002017/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

³ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

⁴ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

customer contacts by phone, email and letter. The team will also be responsible for staffing our reception points or service hubs, as well as responding to complaints. The team will strive to deal with 80% of its contacts 'right first time'

- Devise new staff training and induction to ensure officers have the skills and abilities to provide improved and memorable customer service

3.5 The [SocialInclusionPilotreport](#)⁵ that was considered by HMCC in January 2011 proposed that successful elements of the Moulsecomb 'Turning the Tide' pilot are rolled out to the citywide. The pilot demonstrated effective ways of tackling problems early, providing increased support to vulnerable residents and improved resident involvement in estate inspections. The changes to the service structure facilitate this, particularly in terms of:

- A focus on a preventative approach where problems are tackled early
- Increase in Tenancy Sustainment Team to support vulnerable residents
- Roll out the Rate Your Estate inspection model through the new Neighbourhood Team

3.6 In 2010 as part of the Housing Improvement Plan the 10-year Repairs and Improvement Partnership was procured and a new Property & Investment Service was established. There was also a restructure at the senior level of Housing & Social Inclusion. The unit was divided into three sections under three Heads of Service:

- Property & Investment – Asset Management, Partnership Management, Energy & Engineering and Contract Monitoring and Compliance
- Tenancy Services – Sheltered Services, Estates Services and Tenancy Management
- Customer Access & Business Improvement – Policy, Performance & Resident Involvement, Income Management, Rent Accounting, Leasehold Management, Car Parks & Garages, and Lettings.

3.7 In 2010 the Council was reorganised to move from a traditional departmental structure into Commissioning and Delivery Units. The Housing Management department became Housing & Social Inclusion Delivery Unit and are now commissioned to provide housing management

⁵ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

services. We needed to change our structure to meet the priorities of our Commissioners who have identified three arms of service delivery:

- Management – the basic landlord service that the majority of our tenants receive
- Support – work that we need to do with the most vulnerable residents on targeted and tailored interventions to help tackle inequality and promote social and financial inclusion
- Investment – capital investment in council homes, as well as supporting communities and improving neighbourhoods.

3.8 Housing & Social Inclusion are commissioned to reduce the cost of our basic landlord service from average to below average (compared with other social landlords), and to reinvest the savings into support and investment. Taking a stronger preventative approach will ensure problems are tackled quickly, homes are well maintained and longer term costs to the council are reduced.

3.9 The Government is seeking to bring about significant changes to the way local authorities provide their services and how social landlords provide their services. A central tenet of the Localism Bill⁶ is 'Freedom from Command and Control', for example:

- Less emphasis on nationally set targets and monitoring.
- A change in the Regulatory Framework for Social Landlords to make it less onerous and locally adaptable⁷
- A self-financing business model for local authority landlords – we will be required to operate as a 'stand-alone' business
- Increased resident scrutiny and involvement in local decision making

3.10 We need to ensure that our service model is ready to take these opportunities and rise to the challenges.

3.11 A new [Corporate Plan](#)⁸ was published in November 2011 and we need to adapt our service delivery to reflect these priorities. The five priorities of the Corporate Plan are:

- Tackling inequality

⁶ The Localism Act 2011 received Royal Assent on 15 November 2011 and is coming into force in instalments.

⁷ The Tenants Services Authority was dissolved in April 2012 and the residual regulatory functions transferred to the Homes and Communities Agency

⁸ <http://corporateplan.brighton-hove.gov.uk/>

- Creating a more sustainable city
 - Engaging people who live and work in the city
 - A responsible and empowering employer
 - A council the city deserves
- 3.12 The council's administration is also seeking to develop Neighbourhood Councils and devolve decision making to this level as far as possible. We need to align ourselves to this model of working as it develops.
- 3.13 There are a number of financial reasons for remodelling our service. Every public service is required to demonstrate that they are providing value for money by scrutinising the way they provide services and ensuring they operate at maximum efficiency. We are expected to demonstrate this through year on year efficiency savings alongside continuous improvement in service delivery.
- 3.14 We are experiencing an economic recession and, as a result the most significant public spending cuts in the UK since the 1980s. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is a ring fenced budget consisting of income from rents and service charges and is therefore not currently directly affected by these pressures. However some of our residents are amongst the most vulnerable people in the community and will be experiencing the impact of other public services being reduced or withdrawn. These changes enable us to provide additional support for residents at this time, for example by helping residents experiencing financial difficulties, providing learning opportunities and improving homes to reduce fuel bills.
- 3.15 This service restructure will save in the region of £146,000 in 2012/13. The new service model will provide us a platform to generate additional savings year on year. These savings have been made from reducing management posts and there has been an overall increase in frontline staff. These saving proposals were presented to HMCC in the [Housing Revenue Account Budget 2012/13](#) report⁹ following consultation at Area Panels and a resident workshop at Citywide Assembly.
- 3.16 There are other ways in which we can save money for the longer term by moving away from a reactive service model to a more preventative service model. This means that rather than responding to issues and problems as they arise, we tackle them as early as possible or prevent them from occurring at all. The housing stock in Brighton, Hove and Portslade has been underinvested in for many years. By freeing up money to improve the quality of our stock we can also help to free some pressure on our tenancy management service. For example we can reduce the numbers

⁹ [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003302/\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003302/$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

of repairs, the risk of lift breakdowns, and the impact of overcrowding and damp.

Improving our services

- 3.17 We are improving the way that residents access our services and making some changes to the way we organise ourselves (see structure chart in Appendix 1). These include:
- Creating a single phone number for housing enquiries provided through the customer service hub
 - Creating a new team to answer phone, email, internet enquiries and staff Housing Office receptions
 - Changing some staff roles and creating new specialist teams
 - Having a group of staff responsible for a larger geographic area rather than one officer for a smaller area
 - Changing the way estate inspections are managed
 - Increasing support for the most vulnerable residents
 - Providing improved money advice and learning opportunities for residents
 - Providing more support to deliver projects to improve sustainability, save energy and reduce carbon emissions
 - Improving delivery of major projects and ensuring the council gets good value for money
- 3.18 In order to support these improvements we are currently establishing a number of new teams that will cover services provided from our housing offices. A table of roles and responsibilities can be found in Appendix 2.

Improving the management of neighbourhoods

- 3.19 We are improving neighbourhood services by introducing a new team that will be responsible for the day to day work of the housing service. The Neighbourhood Team will be area based, with staff spending the majority of their time working out on our estates. Their role will be similar to that of the Community Warden with their duties including routine tenancy visits, leading estate inspections and monitoring estate areas including car parks and garages sites. To support improved neighbourhood management we have also introduced new senior posts.
- 3.20 We will also roll out the 'Rate Your Estate' initiative which has been trialled in Moulsecoomb and received positive feedback in improving the effectiveness of estate inspections.

Improving the management of tenancies

- 3.21 Tenancies will be managed by four teams that will work closely together and

resolve particular issues or problems and support residents through their time in a council property. The teams are:

- Tenancy Officer Team – dealing with any cases where ongoing work is required for example if there is a breach of tenancy
- Tenancy Sustainment Team –providing tailored support to help vulnerable residents maintain their tenancies
- Anti-Social Behaviour Team –dealing with serious cases of anti-social behaviour
- Rehousing Team – dealing with letting of vacant properties and supporting people to settle into their new home

3.22 The Tenancy Service Operations Manager will be responsible for all of these teams. There will no longer be a role called ‘Housing Officer’ and their duties will be continued by staff in new roles, primarily the Tenancy Officers and Senior Neighbourhood Officers. These staff will continue to be area based and will work in groups covering larger areas than previously. This will reduce the reliance on a single officer with the risk of things coming to a stop when they are away from work, and will result in a much more responsive and timely customer service.

Improvingcustomerservice

3.23 A new customer service hub will be the first point of contact for tenancy management and general housing enquiries, whether by telephone, letter or email. The team have experienced and knowledgeable officers who will answer telephone calls from across the city and staff reception counters at Housing Offices. The team will be responsible for resolving around 80% of all non-repairs enquiries.

3.24 A new single phone number for non-repairs enquiries will be introduced in autumn 2012 in order to make it simpler for residents to phone the service. Before the number is changed information and publicity will be sent to all residents’ homes, and we will also ensure that existing numbers are ‘forwarded’ to the new number for a transition period, so that residents who are not aware of the change still get through.

Supportingsocialinclusionandresidentinvolvement

3.25 We are introducing a new Inclusion team to promote social inclusion. Resident Involvement Officers will replace Community Participation Officers and will work as part of the Inclusion & Involvement Team. This is because we recognise that resident involvement is key to reducing social exclusion.

3.26 We are introducing new roles to improve support and advice for people who are experiencing financial difficulties. New posts are also being introduced to work directly with residents to improve access to training and skills.

3.27 We will also be improving our support for tenant associations and supporting residents to get involved in the management and development of the service in

a wide variety of ways. Resident Involvement Officers will play a key role in supporting those who are currently involved or want to get involved in improving their neighbourhoods and supporting their community.

Improving the delivery of planned works and sustainability projects

- 3.28 The Property & Investment Team are adding extra project management support to continue improving value for money and customer service through our partnerships. This will also improve our support for sustainability projects which will deliver energy efficiency measures to homes and create savings and benefits for residents.

Area structure

- 3.29 We are changing the way we organise our services into three areas to enable properties and workloads to be more evenly distributed. The changes are about how we organise ourselves internally and will not affect things like area panels or which housing office residents can report issues to. The areas are not yet final but are likely to be as in the attached map (appendix 3).

Housing Offices

- 3.30 Services will continue to be provided from local housing offices and residents will continue to be able to visit offices or make an appointment to see an officer as now. The changes in our team structures mean that residents can visit any housing office, including their local office and receive a consistent customer focussed service. We are also looking at different ways of providing face to face access such as teaming up with colleagues in community libraries. We will continue to look at ways of making better use of our buildings in order to reduce costs, and have already achieved this at Lavender Street where we now share the building with colleagues from Children's Services, and in Whitehawk where we have moved to the Whitehawk Community Hub.

Next Steps

- 3.31 The following actions will be taken to move forward with these changes and ensure that residents are kept informed:
- Briefing sent to resident representatives
 - Information in the summer and autumn editions of Homing-in magazine
 - Staff move into new roles in July 2012
 - Single phone number starts in autumn 2012 and widely publicised

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 These changes are part of the process of the council continually looking to improve the services we provide and ensure value for money for residents. The changes to customer access and the principles on which the changes are

based have been developed with tenants and resident groups over the last few years.

- 4.2 Formal reports presenting the Customer Service & Access Strategy and agreeing the principles for change have been unanimously agreed by Housing Management Consultative Committee which includes resident representatives and councillors. These reports and associated consultation are detailed on the table below:

Report	Date	Link	Associated consultation
Housing Management Customer Access Review HMCC	8/02/10	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C0000163/M00002017/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Satisfaction and other surveys • Customer Access focus groups • Mystery shopping
Turning the Tide Social Inclusion Pilot outcomes HMCC	14/01/11	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000000002796/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident & stakeholder workshops • Tenant association events • Various working groups, forums and steering groups • Website via Consultation Portal
Housing & Social Inclusion Customer Service & Access Strategy HMCC Report	26/09/11	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C0000163/M00003299/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homing-in • Satisfaction and other surveys • Customer Access focus groups • Resident workshops • Mystery shopping • Website
Improvement Programme HMCC update	26/09/11	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C0000163/M00003299/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell us what you think events and surveys • Various resident working groups • Various surveys and focus groups • Mystery shopping
20012/13 Housing Revenue Account Budget Report	6/02/12	http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C0000163/M00003302/\$\$ADocPackPublic.pdf	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussions at Area Panels • Resident workshop at Citywide Assembly

- 4.3 There has been a wide range of consultation with residents and residents groups which have helped us develop these new ways of working. These include:

- Consultation events and questionnaires such as the 'Tell us what you think?'
- Customer satisfaction surveys, focus groups and resident 'mystery shopping' exercises
- Feedback from resident representatives, meetings and working groups
- Feedback from compliments, suggestions and complaints

- 4.4 Housing & Social Inclusion staff and trade unions have been formally consulted about changes to roles and responsibilities following the council's Managing Change Policy.

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

FinancialImplications:

- 5.1 The service improvements in this report have produced forecast budget savings of £146,000 relating to employees costs and £31,000 for office costs. These savings were included in the Housing Revenue Account Budget 2012/13 report approved by Cabinet in February 2012 and will contribute to a reduction in management unit costs of approximately £0.28 per unit.

Finance Officer Consulted: Susie Allen, Principal Accountant. Ext 3105

Date: 10 May 2012.

LegalImplications:

- 5.2 The changes to the service outlined in the report do not need formal Member approval, as the Strategic Director of Place has extensive delegated powers to manage the Council's housing services. Those powers are also exercisable by the Head of Housing & Social Inclusion. The changes to the council's constitution required by the return to a committee system do not affect those delegated powers. No individual's human rights are adversely affected by the changes.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Woodley Senior Lawyer

17 May 2012

EqualitiesImplications:

- 5.3 A draft Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for these changes and will continue to be updated as the changes are implemented.

SustainabilityImplications:

- 5.4 The changes include additional support for projects to make homes more energy efficient and improve the sustainability of the overall housing stock.

Crime&DisorderImplications:

- 5.5 The changes include strengthening the council's preventative service including those to support vulnerable tenants and tackle anti-social behaviour.

RiskandOpportunityManagementImplications:

- 5.6 The changes are being made using a project management approach with risks and opportunities are being identified and recorded following the council's guidelines.

Corporate/Citywide Implications:

- 5.7 The benefits of improving council housing will have affects across our neighbourhoods and the city, that are not just confined to those living in council managed housing.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. New Housing & Social Inclusion structure chart
2. Table detailing new team responsibilities
3. Map of city showing proposed new area structure

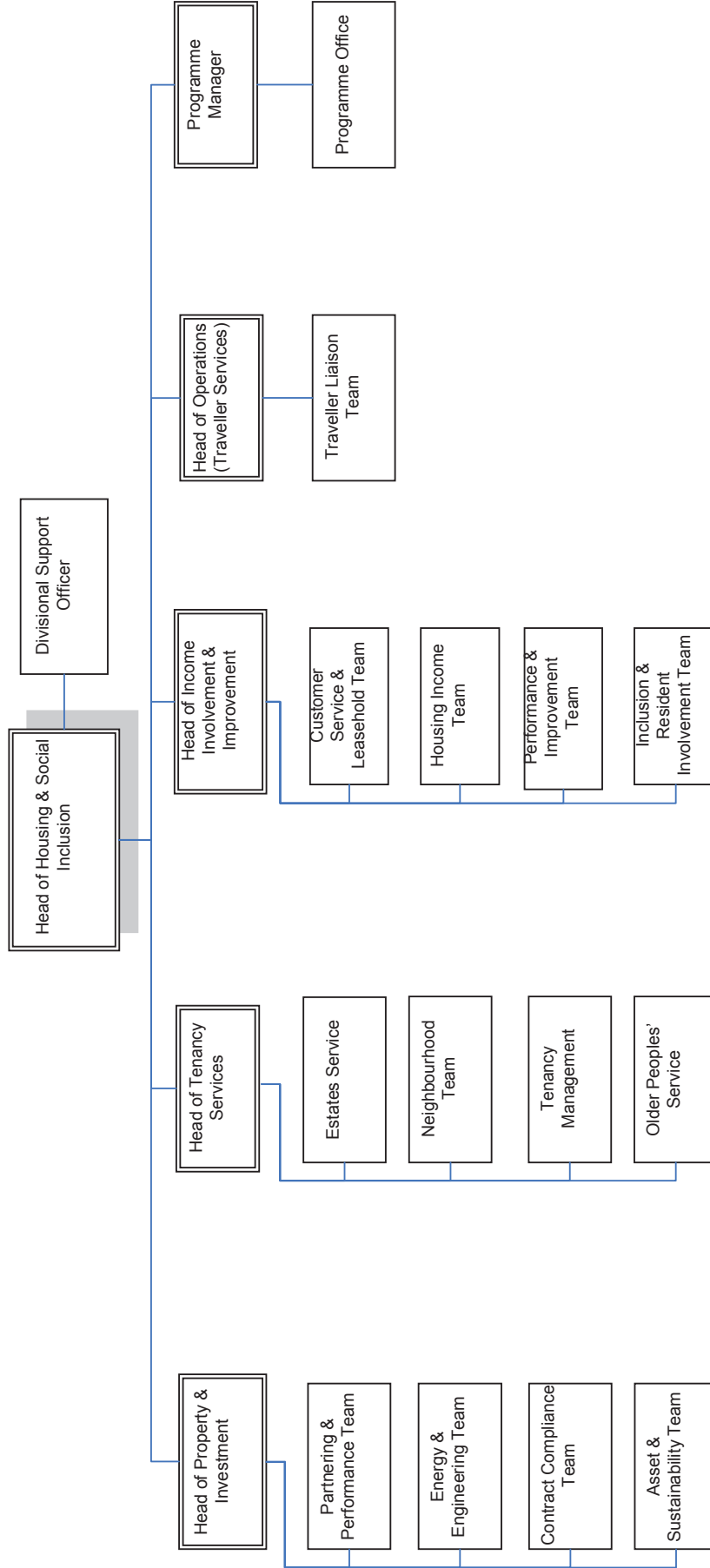
Documents In Members' Rooms

1. None

Background documents

1. A council the city deserves <http://corporateplan.brighton-hove.gov.uk/priority/council-city-deserves>
2. Corporate Plan <http://corporateplan.brighton-hove.gov.uk/>
3. Housing Management Customer Access Review HMCC Report 8/02/10 [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002017/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002017/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
4. Housing & Social Inclusion Customer Service & Access Strategy HMCC Report 26/09/11 [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
5. Turning the Tide Social Inclusion Pilot outcomes Report 14/01/11 [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00002796/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
6. Improvement Programme HMCC update report 26/09/11 [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003299/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)
7. 20012/13 Housing Revenue Account Budget Report 6/02/12 [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003302/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000163/M00003302/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

Appendix 1 – New Housing & Social Inclusion structure chart



Appendix 2 – New Team Roles and responsibilities

Neighbourhood Management Team	Tenancy Management Team	Housing Customer Service Team	Inclusion & Involvement Team
<p>Team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood Manager • Senior Neighbourhood Officer • Neighbourhood Officer <p>Key roles & responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day to day estate management • Current Community Warden duties • Estate inspections • Car park and garages inspections • Routine tenancy visits 	<p>Team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy Services Operations Manager • Tenancy Managers • Senior Tenancy Officers • Lettings Manager • Tenancy Officers • Tenancy Sustainment Officers • Anti-Social Behaviour Housing Officers • Rehousing Officers <p>Key roles & responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy related casework • Supporting vulnerable tenants to stay in their homes • Letting homes • Helping new tenants to settle in their homes • Tackling Anti-social behaviour • Enforcement of the tenancy agreement 	<p>Team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Services Operations Manager • Housing Customer Services Manager • Housing Customer Service Team Leaders • Housing Customer Service Advisors • Car Parks & Garages Customer Service Advisors <p>Key roles & responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering phone calls to the service (not those relating to repairs) • Staffing Housing Office reception counters • Dealing with email and internet enquiries • Managing complaints • Routine tenancy visits • Managing car parks and garages • Managing schemes such as decorating for older people 	<p>Team members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion Manager • Resident Involvement Manager • Resident Involvement Officers • Financial Inclusion Coordinator • Learning & Participation Coordinator • Basic Skills Coordinator <p>Key roles & responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging and supporting residents to get involved in a wide variety of ways Supporting resident and tenant associations • Organising Area Panels and the City Wide Assembly • Coordinating support and advice for residents experiencing financial difficulties • Developing learning and training opportunities for residents

