

# Annual Report

to council tenants & leaseholders 2015

Welcome to the annual report to council tenants and leaseholders covering the year from April 2014 to April 2015.

Inside this year's report you can read about how we've been performing, including the areas we could improve on and where we're doing things well.

You'll also see what we have been doing in the past year and what we have lined up for the year ahead.

Throughout the report you'll see how we continue to challenge ourselves to achieve value for money in the services provided.



# Chair of Housing and New Homes

## Welcome to the Annual Report



As the new chair of Housing and New Homes Committee, I would like to welcome you to your 2015 Annual Report.

It is an honour being the lead councillor responsible for 14,400 council homes, and the impact they have on the lives of tenants, their families and local communities.

A suitable, decent and affordable home is an essential foundation for a good quality of life and our housing work is critical to support residents and take pressure off other services such as social care, children's services and health.

I am looking forward to working with resident groups and the opportunities over the next 4 years to improve the housing situation for local people.

Anne Meadows

## Features

Housing highlights

Resident Involvement & Empowerment

Customer service, choice and complaints

Supporting residents

Your home

Anti-social behaviour

Neighbourhoods & Community

Value for money

Leaseholders

## Housing Highlights



### What we have done

- Achieved 76% overall customer satisfaction captured in the STAR survey
- 25 residents were trained and accredited as Money Mentors to help other residents with budgeting
- Delivered the capital programme – £28 million invested in your homes
- Developed a new service offer for 'Seniors Housing' (formerly Sheltered Housing), enhancing the service provided to older residents
- Reviewed discretionary gardening and decorating schemes to make sure those most in need benefit

### What we are doing

- Piloting free wi-fi in a high rise block to increase residents access to online services

**Continuing to help residents move through mutual exchanges by holding swap events – 79% of attendees have found them useful so far.**



Also working with other landlords and holding an event at the Brighton Centre on 14 July

- Broadening the extensions scheme to allow more properties to be extended for the general needs stock, while continuing to help overcrowded households with multiple needs
- Preparing tenants for the introduction of Universal Credit
- Transferring the final 83 properties to Seaside Homes bringing in additional money to the Housing Revenue Account

**“More swap events. The face-to-face contact is great, really helpful!”**

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## Resident involvement and empowerment

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It has been a busy year for resident involvement. We continue to provide a range of opportunities for residents to be involved, including having a say in setting our standards and making sure we meet them. If you'd like more information, please contact the Resident Involvement Team (RIT) on 01273 292112, email [RIT@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:RIT@brighton-hove.gov.uk) or private message them on our Resident Involvement Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/tenantandleaseholder](http://www.facebook.com/tenantandleaseholder).

### What you have told us



**64%** of you think we listen to your views and act on them

- 63% of you were satisfied with ways to get involved

### What we have done

- Resident-led Service Improvement Groups have been meeting regularly – you can find out the headline news from each group on our website at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/resident-groups](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/resident-groups) or from the Resident Involvement Team
- Residents considered and influenced decisions on a wide range of reports at Area Panel meetings, including proposals to convert 235 sheltered studio flats into one-bedroom flats, increasing parking enforcement on housing car parks and a review of how the Estate Development Budget (EDB) works
- 218 EDB projects to make improvements approved, with 211 completed so far

### What we are doing

- Looking at new ways to improve our service, including use of social media, workshops, community events and fun activities
- Rewriting our 'menu of involvement' and Tenant Representative Handbook
- 197 EDB bids have been voted on at Area Panel EDB voting events

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## Customer service choice and complaints

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### What you have told us

- 84% of you said we are easy to access

**81%** of you felt our standard of customer service is good



- 80% of tenants were satisfied with the way we deal with enquiries

### What we have done

- Eight team members have completed the Institute of Customer Services qualification and another 11 are studying towards it to provide the best possible service to you
- Introduced texting to provide you with early information on issues, such as lift breakdowns in blocks of flats
- Improved our approach to managing car parks and garages, for example introducing online applications
- Improved the way we deal with your complaints to provide a better service.
- Enabled jobseekers to gain work experience through offering work placements in our Housing Customer Service Team

### What we are doing

- Providing a reception service Monday to Friday from Bartholomew House, alongside Housing Benefit and Housing Advice teams
- Introducing parking enforcement on all housing land to reduce reported parking problems, increase income and follow council-wide parking enforcement

**“Keeping the website more up to date should be a priority. Also improving call pick-up times on the repairs phones.”**

# Tenant & Resident Scrutiny Panel

The panel is about to complete its third review, looking at responsive repairs. The panel's findings include good practice throughout and impressive new arrangements at the telephone helpline.

The main recommendation for improvement is about increasing tenants' involvement in assessing repairs after completion. To find out more about joining the panel or make suggestions on review topics, please email

[tenantscrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:tenantscrutiny@brighton-hove.gov.uk)  
or call **01273 291110**.

## What we are doing

- Responding to changes introduced by the Care Act in how we deal with adult safeguarding concerns
- Introducing a transfer incentive scheme for mutual exchanges to help under-occupying households downsize and release family-sized homes

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## Your home

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The repairs and maintenance budget is £11 million in total. Money is invested into three main areas:

- Responsive Repairs - £6 million
- Empty Properties - £2 million
- Servicing and other repairs - £3 million

## What you have told us

- 85% of you were satisfied with how we deal with planned repairs work
- 80% of you are satisfied with the overall quality of your home
- 76% of you were satisfied with your last completed repair

## What we have been doing

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## Support for residents

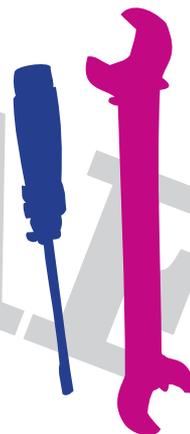
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### What we have done

- Put support in place for 99 tenants who were struggling to manage their tenancies to help them stay in their homes
- Piloted new multi-agency procedures for dealing with cases of self-neglect, such as serious hoarding



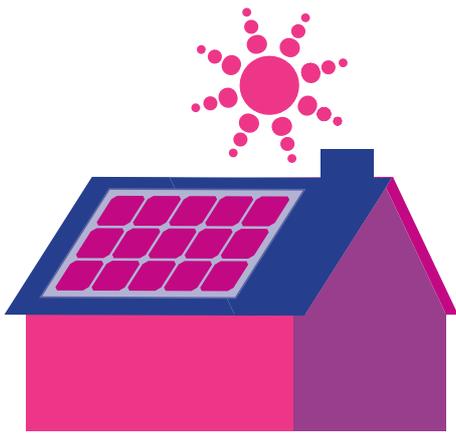
**Helped 251 people access financial, benefit and technological support**



**Completed 34,649 repairs this financial year an average of 95 repairs every calendar day**

- Completed a level access shower pilot in eight properties successfully
- Begun measuring repairs desk service calls - 76% were answered within 20 seconds

**Delivered over 200  
Solar PV systems  
to help reduce your  
fuel bills, with some  
families saving  
between £20 and  
£50 a month**



- Re-let 645 properties, and helped 125 mutual exchanges take place
- Upgraded communal wiring upgrades in 17 blocks, upgraded door entry systems in 146 blocks and insulated six blocks
- Achieved 100% gas compliance

#### **What we are doing**

- Working on the first year of our Seniors Housing investment plan to create modern, attractive accommodation by converting studios into one-bedroom flats
- Delivering our capital programme, includes a cyclical decoration programme and lift replacements in 12 blocks
- Investigating 'district heating' to lower carbon emissions through less energy generation – which also means lower costs to residents living in high rise blocks

## **Building new homes**

Our New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme is working with residents and councillors to improve their local neighbourhood and build much needed new homes on council land.

#### **What we have done**

- Demolished old, unused buildings to build new homes and improve neighbourhoods
- Started building 29 new council homes at five sites across Brighton, Hove and Portslade
- Involved local tenant and resident associations right from the start
- Consulted widely with residents and responded to local feedback before applying for planning permission
- Set up a webpage at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/nhfn](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/nhfn) with lots of information
- Carried out a 'Planning for Real' consultation exercise in the Whitehawk area
- Invested 1.15 million on capital work for new builds

#### **What we are doing**

- Working on over 200 more new homes across the city
- Building all homes to high design and sustainability standards and at least one in 10 specially for wheelchair users
- Keeping local residents updated and involved as developments progress

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## Seniors Housing

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### What you have told us

- 90% of Seniors Housing tenants are satisfied with how we deal with their housing

### What we have done

- Changed the name to 'Seniors Housing – Independent and Community Living'
- Agreed a new 'service offer' setting out a new direction for the service, which includes providing well-designed and maintained housing which helps people to live comfortably as they age
- Recruited new scheme managers with resident representation on the recruitment panel

### What we are doing

- Preparing a programme of refurbishment to communal areas
- Introducing the new service offer
- Improving the way we let our homes by reviewing the criteria to access Seniors Housing
- Helping schemes to set up facebook pages for their community with two currently set up
- Arranging open days inviting prospective tenants to view schemes and facilities

**The staff are a real team and always on hand to help, and now I have this lovely home – it's just what I wanted I couldn't be happier'**

## Converting studio flats

We've begun a three-year work programme to convert all remaining studio properties to one-bedroom flats, with 14 already complete. Studios have been unpopular with some not being re-let. We've involved tenants in the new design and layout, and will be fully supporting residents while the work to convert their homes is carried out.

Some residents have expressed concern with the works and we will continue to work in partnership with the Seniors Housing Action Group to resolve these concerns.

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## Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

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### What you have told us

- 62% of tenants were satisfied with the way housing deals with ASB

### What we have done

- Reorganised the front line teams dealing with tenancy enforcement into area clusters to improve services
- Provided a package of training to ensure front line staff are fully aware and confident on using the powers given to the council under the new ASB legislation
- Carried out four evictions this year
- Dealt with four cases of ASB in Seniors Housing, obtained injunctions and or taken possession action
- Switched off the trade buttons to increase security in two blocks experiencing ASB

### What we are doing

- Looking at ways to improve support to victims of ASB
- Consulting with residents about switching off trade buttons in other blocks
- Working with the new powers and injunctions, which can now include requiring tenants to take positive action – to engage with an agency for example

## Tackling tenancy fraud

This is a key priority for Housing and we have been working in partnership with the council's Corporate Fraud Team. This year the team have:

- received 98 new notices of possible fraud - 65 were investigated and closed with 33 still under investigation
- obtained an outright possession order for one property
- stopped two applications for succession
- returned 15 properties to the stock following investigations

If you suspect tenancy fraud, please contact us on **01273 291847** or **01273 291700** or email **[anti-fraud@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:anti-fraud@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk)**.

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## Your neighbourhood and community

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### What you have told us

**84%** of you are satisfied with your neighbourhood as a place to live 

### What we have done

- Introduced a 'don't walk by' standard for all staff and contractors to report environmental concerns when out and about on our estates
- Responded to 49 requests to remove graffiti within target times
- Worked with tenants:
  - 81 progress into learning, education or training
  - 15 to complete 10 week employability courses
  - 42 to access volunteering or paid employment

### What we are doing

- Reviewing tenancy visits to ensure you have appropriate advice and support, and that working age tenants are prepared for the introduction of Universal Credit
- Introducing satisfaction ratings at blocks of flats to demonstrate how you feel about cleaning, gardening and neighbourhood management

**“I'd suffered a bereavement and was battling depression when my Learning and Development Officer contacted me. She helped get me on a course I'd always wanted to do. She goes the extra mile and really helped to save my life.”**

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## Leaseholders

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### What we have done

- Sold 50 properties under the Right to Buy with residents receiving an average discount of £73,500 per property
- Worked with our solicitors to recover 70% of service charge arrears
- Dealt with 60 leaseholder disputes, with almost three-quarters of these resolved at Stage 1 of the complaints process

### What we are doing

- Identifying all building costs incurred over the last year in order to continue passing on accurate service charges to leaseholders
- Dealing with solicitors' pre-sales enquiries where leaseholders are selling on their flats



# Value for money

## What you have told us

- 76% of you are satisfied that your rent provides value for money
- 71% of you are satisfied that your service charge provides value for money

## What we have done

- Collected over £51 million in rent this year – 98.4% of rent due
- Promoted more services online to offer you more convenience, and encourage sustainability while reducing costs
- Trained 41 residents and staff in energy awareness and fuel and food poverty
- Business and Value for Money SIG reviewed the Money and Community Support Service (MACs) and believed it offered value for money – MACs secured approximately £785,000 overall financial benefit for 109 tenants
- Increased the number of payments received by direct debit - up 856 from last year

## What we are doing

- Introducing paperless direct debits later this year which will speed up the process for you
- Investing in technology to ensure we are able to provide a fast, responsive service to all residents

**Reducing the mobility scooter charge from £3 to £2 per week**



- Working with the new joint community-run Money Works service to signpost vulnerable residents to support such as money advice and employment support

# Income & Expenditure

## Total income

**£58,862,000**

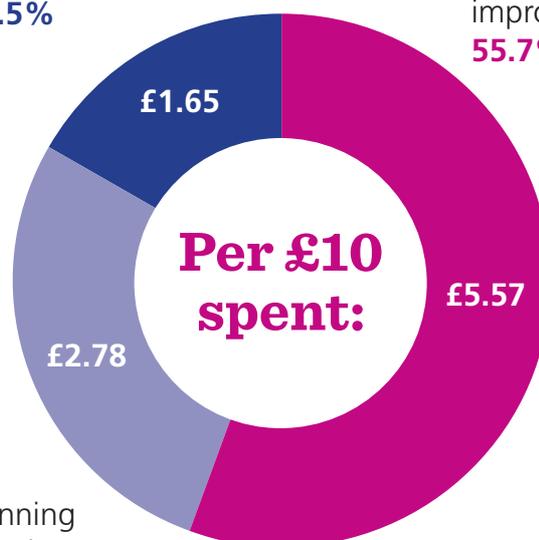
## Total expenditure

**£58,619,000**

The difference in income of £243,000 has been added to reserves in the Housing Revenue Account and can be used at a later date.

Repaying loans:  
**16.5%**

Repairs and improvements:  
**55.7%**



Running housing services:  
**27.8%**

You can find more information on our performance at [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hsg-performance](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/hsg-performance)

If you have any comments on this annual report or if there's anything you'd like to see in a future issue, please let us know. Contact us at [housing.performance@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:housing.performance@brighton-hove.gov.uk) with your suggestions