

Annual report

to council tenants
& leaseholders 2022

This report gives information about our housing services between April 2021 and March 2022 and our plans for this year.



If you have any comments about this report, or have suggestions for next year's, we welcome your feedback. Please contact us at:
housing.performance@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Welcome

The last year has been another busy one for our housing services.

While the Covid-19 pandemic continued to pose challenges, we've pressed ahead with our commitment to provide more council homes in the city.

We have built or purchased a total of 108 new homes over the last year, and we have many more new homes in the pipeline.

42 new council flats are being built in Victoria Road, Portslade, as part of our New Homes for Neighbourhoods project. The development has also benefitted the local community, with the opening of a new sports pavilion in Victoria Recreation Ground last year.

And a total of 176 new council homes are under construction in Coldean Lane, Coldean and Wellington Road, Portslade. These are Homes for Brighton & Hove developments, a partnership of the council and the Hyde Group housing association.

We've also continued to invest in our existing homes and are prioritising work to make homes warmer and more energy efficient.

Over the last year, we've installed 671 energy efficient new boilers and more than 20 air source heat pumps, which will reduce carbon emissions and lower energy bills for residents.

We'll also be installing solar panels on a further 1,000 homes over the next 3 years which will help reduce residents' electricity bills.

Our new homes are designed to be energy efficient, with solar panels and high levels of insulation.



Councillor Siriol Hugh-Jones and Councillor David Gibson at the 'topping out' ceremony of the development of new council-rented homes in Victoria Road, Portslade.

With food and energy prices rising, the cost of living crisis is a major concern for everyone. Our staff have been providing advice and support to residents around benefits, reducing energy costs and accessing additional funding.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during the past year in the face of continuing challenges posed by Covid, which continued to impact on our repairs and improvement services in particular.

We've now recruited more staff and are making progress on catching up on outstanding repairs now we've returned to a more usual working environment. We'll continue to make this a priority this coming year.

Councillor Siriol Hugh-Jones and Councillor David Gibson

Co-chairs of the Housing Committee

Our housing

As at **31 March 2022**, we have **11,592 council homes** made up of:

6,556

flats

590

studio flats

4,028

houses

248

bungalows

170

maisonettes

2,290

leasehold flats in council blocks

Our performance

Highlights April 2021 to March 2022

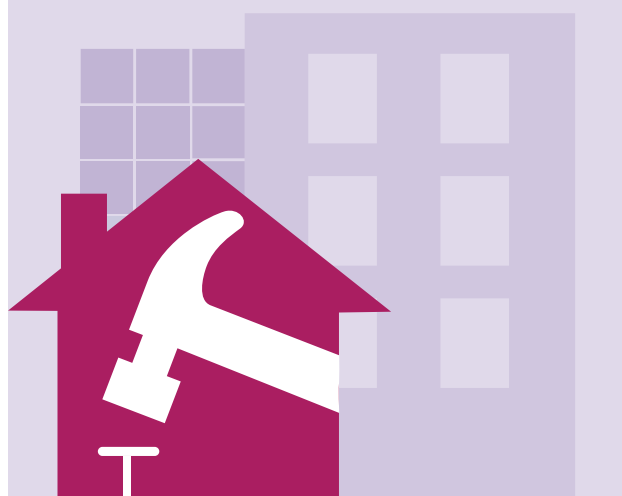
Repairs and improvements

- The Repairs Helpdesk answered an average of **305** phone calls every working day, and received over 120,000 emails in 2021-22, over **470** every working day.

We completed a total of

26,754 repairs

over the year – up from **21,903** in 2020/21 and an average of **106 every working day**.



- The Empty Homes Team completed **615** empty home repairs to council properties and **346** to temporary accommodation properties.
- The Electrical Team rewired a new home every working day, completing **300** rewires over the year.
- Since our kitchen and bathroom replacements resumed, we've installed **104** bathrooms and **248** kitchens and the proportion of our homes meeting the 'Decent Homes Standard' has risen from 91.8% last year to **95.6%**.
- We've carried out a tendering process to set up **14** new contracts to support the repairs operation.

Supporting tenants

- Housing Customer Services dealt with an average of **76** phone calls and **85** emails per working day. The most common queries were about resident parking, tenancy issues such as anti-social behaviour and the housing register.
- The Estates Service team continued their extra cleaning tasks to keep people safe, including handles and rails in common ways, and completed **3,212** jobs to remove bulky items.
- Our officers supported residents with **839** reports of anti-social behaviour.

Moving home

- We let **515** homes, including 43 new homes and 472 previously occupied homes.
- Our homes were re-let in an average of **96** days, excluding those that required major work. It's a priority to speed up the turnaround of our empty homes as we catch up on the delays caused by Covid.
- At 31 March 2022, **251** of our homes were empty, down from 268 at the same point last year.

Gas safety

- **100%** of council-owned homes with a gas supply have a valid landlord's gas safety record.



100% gas safety

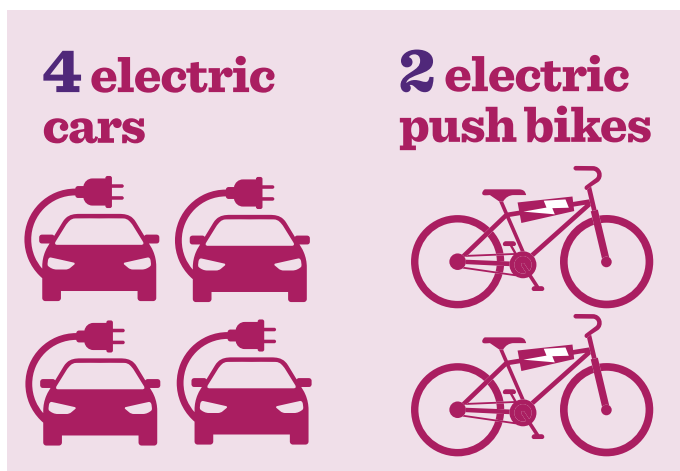
Our key achievements

Repairs & improvements

Through the pandemic, we maintained a responsive repairs service, focussing on the most urgent tasks. As we return to a more usual work environment, we're making progress to catch up on outstanding repairs.

We've been recruiting to many trade and support staff roles to boost our capacity to carry out repairs to your homes.

As part of our push to be carbon neutral by 2030, we're introducing more electric vehicles to our fleet. Our repairs service now has 2 electric vans, 4 electric cars and 2 electric push bikes to travel around the city. We've installed 4 charge points at the Housing Centre and are working to install more electric charging points on housing land.



As part of our ongoing lift programme, we have refurbished or replaced lifts at 4 of our Seniors Housing schemes. Refurbished lifts offer residents another 20 years reliable service while the new lifts are bigger than the ones they replaced, providing larger capacity.

Empty homes

We've seen a significant improvement in our lettings this year, and we're now back at pre-pandemic levels. We let 485 council homes this year, including 42 new homes. This compares with 271 lettings in the last year and 481 before Covid in 2019/20.

The Empty Homes Team completed over 615 repairs to empty council homes over the last 12 months. We're now seeing a reduction in the number of properties awaiting repair and anticipate being back to pre-pandemic levels by the autumn.

Supporting tenants

We've introduced a new housing IT system and a much-improved Housing Online system where you can view your rent account, pay online, update your contact details and view any recent repairs logged.

We now have almost **1,500 residents** signed up to Housing Online. Find out more at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housingonline

" I just wanted to say how excellent the new Housing Online service is. Much clearer and much easier to use – well done and thank you. "

Seniors Housing

All our Scheme Managers are now trained as 'digital champions' to support residents to use technology and get online.

We're pleased to have restarted social activities in our schemes, including those run with partner organisations such as South East Dance, Music for Connection and the Fabrica art gallery for sessions at our Brooke Mead extra care scheme.

We supported Rose Hill Court to become an 'open house' displaying residents' artwork during November and December 2021.

" It's more than I could ever have wished for. It's beautiful and the carpet is lovely. Thank you, thank you, thank you for all of your help. "

Feedback from a new Seniors Housing resident

Investing in homes & neighbourhoods

We invested **£12.37 million** in tenants' homes, including around £1.1m on adaptations to make homes more accessible, £1.2m on roofing improvements, £1m on new doors and windows, £1.8 million on replacing boilers, £1.5m on new kitchens and bathrooms, and £1.3m on electrical rewiring.

Increasing the number of council homes

We have built or purchased
a total of 108
new homes
over the last year, with
the net number of
council owned
homes increasing
by **60**



- 90 homes bought back into council ownership through our Home Purchase Policy scheme.
- 8 new homes through our Hidden Homes programme at Bristol Estate.
- 10 new temporary accommodation flats at Oxford Street, through converting a former housing office.

Warmer and more energy efficient homes

We've installed over 20 air source heat pumps which reduce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and lower energy bills. These have been well received by residents, both in terms of thermal comfort and running costs.

We've installed 671 new boilers, which will save tonnes of carbon emissions and cut energy costs for residents. All the new boilers are rated 'A' at 94% efficiency and meet the Energy Related Products Directive on energy efficiency.

Our new build homes will be more energy efficient, with better insulation and solar panels. We are using modern methods of construction, including building structures off-site in a factory which reduces waste, disruption to neighbours and delivers high quality homes.

Improving neighbourhoods

Our £0.5m Environmental Improvement Budget has allowed us to act on resident priorities to improve and refurbish a number of public areas across the city, such as a new play area at Haig Park and accessible planters at Clarke Court and Lindfield Court.

We've also invested £0.11m to refurbish housing-owned play areas as part of a city-wide revamp.

We're using 6 mobile CCTV cameras across our estates to deter fly-tipping at targeted hot-spots where there's been a significant increase. Removing rubbish dumped on our estates costs the housing service more than £100,000 a year.

Following resident concerns, we've replaced and upgraded external column lighting to low energy usage LEDs on several car parks and pathways. The improved lighting helps residents feel safer and can discourage anti-social behaviour.

We've carried out extensive work to improve the car park beneath St James' House following resident reports about serious anti-social behaviour. Parking income had also reduced. The improvements will make the renamed Chapel Street Car Park a brighter, cleaner and safer place to park.

Your tenancy and community

In the last year, our Tenancy Sustainment Team supported **93 tenants** who were struggling to manage their tenancies and in danger of losing their homes.

The support included help claiming the right benefits, accessing appropriate support services and improving the conditions in their homes. Through the support, all tenants were able to keep their tenancies and improve their personal circumstances.

One tenant fed back that we had been the light at the end of the tunnel and the support we gave helped them take back control of their life.

Our Housing Inclusion Team have been making energy efficiency and fuel poverty home visits, providing advice and support to tenants and leaseholders around reducing energy costs, accessing additional funding and resolving disputes with suppliers.

Their visits and telephone advice helped 115 residents' save on their fuel costs while keeping warm in winter.

Tenants eligible for the gardening scheme now remain on the scheme automatically, saving them the need to re-apply every year.

A furniture and household goods recycling project run by Estates Services provided 238 items to help tenants in need over the last year. The donations have been a lifeline for residents struggling to furnish their homes.



Looking ahead

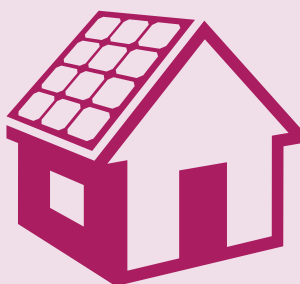
As part of our **carbon neutral 2030** ambitions and work to help reduce energy costs, we're reviewing heating systems, in recognition of the need to move away from natural gas in the future.



We're starting to install different forms of low carbon heating, including increasing the use of **air source heat pumps**.

While not suitable for all homes, we'll be looking to install around 100 more in 2022-23, focusing on homes with inefficient electric heating and lower energy efficiency ratings.

We're recruiting to our new Sustainability & Energy Team to take forward a range of sustainability and energy projects across our housing. This includes the development of an energy plan which will prioritise measures to improve properties with energy performance ratings of D to F.



We'll also be **installing solar panels on a further 1,000** homes over the next 3 years.

We'll continue to make our fleet more sustainable by moving towards hybrid, electric or hydrogen vehicles, and looking to reduce the length and number of vehicle trips across the city to complete repairs.

Improvements to our IT systems will help you instantly check the status of a repair and we'll be introducing an online tool called 'Repairs Finder' to help identify your repair more easily.

We'll continue the focus on getting our kitchen and bathroom programme back on track, which has been impacted by the pandemic. We're starting to make improvements and anticipate outstanding jobs from the 2019-20 & 2020-21 programmes will be completed early next year.

We're reviewing the way we deal with reports of anti-social behaviour to improve the level of satisfaction and the outcomes for residents. We will make sure we take responsibility for cases, regularly update victims and are clear what the likely outcomes will be from the beginning.

Our Seniors Housing Scheme Managers will be trained to offer more advice and support to residents around falls, using a falls prevention tool developed by Public Health.

We'll also be training Scheme Managers to become 'enhanced assessors' so they're better able to advise on low level adaptations, such as fall detectors and telecare.



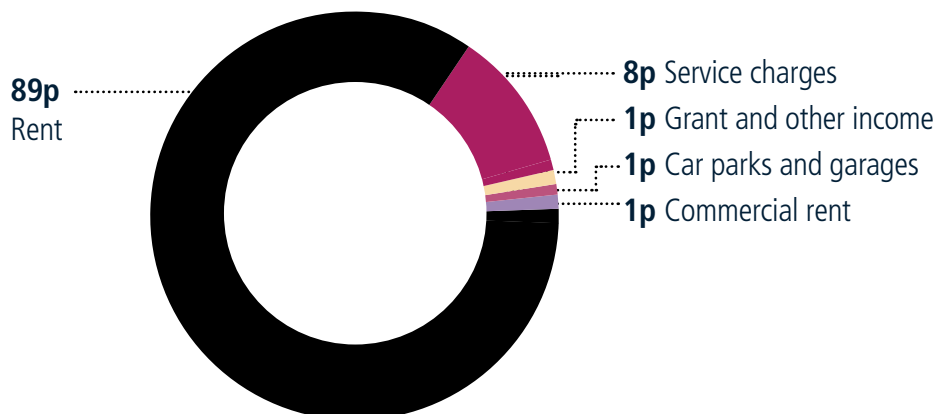
42 new homes are being built as part of the New Homes for Neighbourhoods project in Victoria Road. We've built 227 new homes since the programme began, with more in the pipeline.

We're also working with Hyde Housing on the Homes for Brighton & Hove partnership building new affordable housing in the city. The current schemes in development in Coldean and Portslade include **176 council homes**, due to be available in 2023.

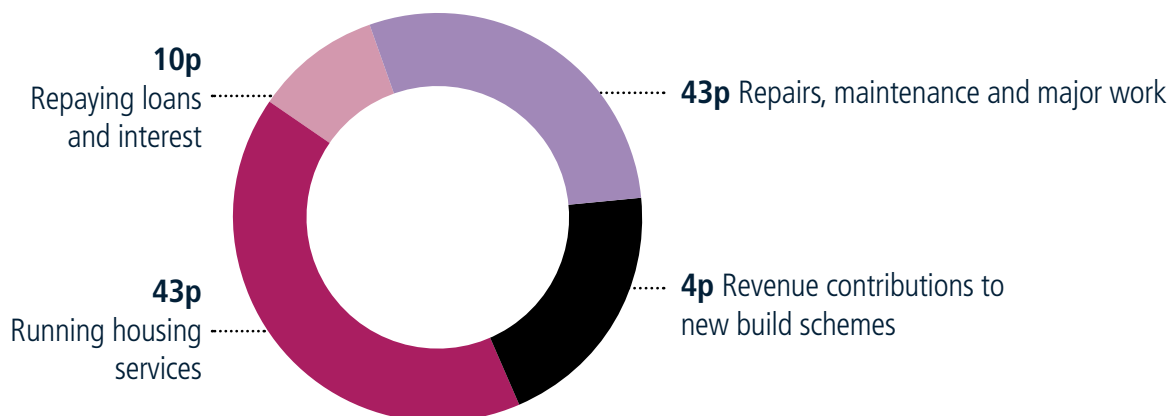
Value for money

Housing Revenue Account income and expenditure

Where every **£1** of our income comes from



How every **£1** is spent



Total income £60.7m

Total expenditure £60.7m

Funding for new builds £36.5m

£20.4m from borrowing

£7.3m from capital receipts

£5.6m from grants

£2.5m from direct revenue funding

£0.7m from reserves

If you have any comments on this annual report, we'd welcome your feedback.

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