

Annual report

to council tenants & leaseholders 2022 to 2023

This report gives information about our housing services between April 2022 and March 2023 and plans for this year.



Welcome to the housing annual report for 2022/23

As you'll see, it's been a busy year for our repairs & maintenance service, with 30,000 emergency and routine repairs completed.

We've also been working hard to bring the number of empty homes back into use. As of 31 March 2023, 180 of our homes were empty, which included 35 of the newly completed homes in the process of being let in Jay Court and Perching Court in Portslade.

We do still have a backlog of outstanding repairs and we're sorry that residents are still experiencing delays with routine repairs. We will continue to work to get this back on track.

A priority this year has been dealing with damp and condensation, following a significant increase in reports. We've appointed more contractors to help tackle this problem. If you have damp and mould problems in your home, please do report it.

Improving council housing and the safety of our residents remains our service priority.

Our long-term investment programme sets out to make sure we continue to provide safe, good quality council homes and support reductions in responsive repairs.

We're committed to making sure all council homes meet the national Decent Homes Standard and the local Brighton & Hove Standard.

We're employing more contractors to replace more kitchens and bathrooms in need of modernisation.

Another key priority is significant investment in building and fire safety to get ahead of our new duties under the Building Safety Act. This includes a programme of building surveys of our blocks to record key information and enhanced fire surveys.

We're also continuing to invest in installing energy efficient heating and hot water systems to help residents reduce their energy costs and reduce carbon, including air source heat pumps.

We're making good progress with the work so far improving the average energy performance of council homes in the city from band D to a band C rating.

We are also preparing for the new social housing regulatory framework, including new tenant satisfaction measures and consumer standards, as well as a government review of the Decent Homes Standard.

And, last but certainly not least, we're continuing to increase the number of council homes in the city, with a total of 111 homes built or bought over the last year.

Our housing

As at 31 March 2023, we have 11,819 council homes made up of:

6,761
flats

598
studio flats

4,041
houses

248
bungalows

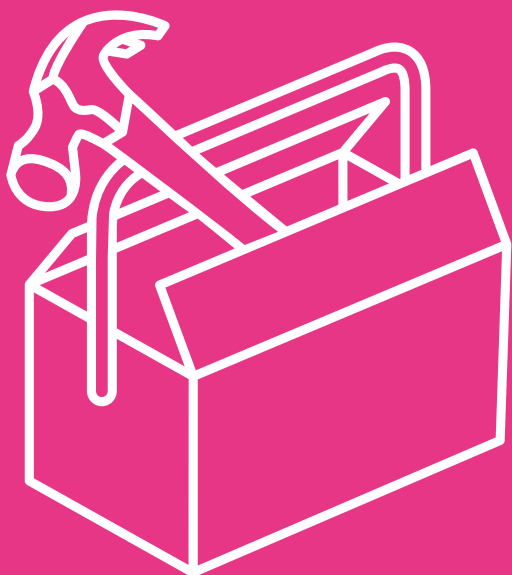
171
maisonettes

There are also a further
2,266
leasehold flats in council blocks.

Highlights and performance

Repairs and improvements

- The proportion of our homes meeting the 'Decent Homes Standard' has risen slightly from **95.6%** last year to **95.8%**. We're committed to making sure all council homes meet the national Decent Homes Standard and the local Brighton & Hove Standard.
- Our Repairs & Maintenance team complete an average of around **2,500** repairs every month. During 2022/23, we completed **30,000 repairs**, including **11,500** emergency and 18,500 routine jobs.
- Customer service measures, including satisfaction with repairs, standard of work and satisfaction with overall customer service are above target. Customer satisfaction with completed repairs remains high.
- We brought a total of **948 empty homes** back into use, including **414 temporary accommodation properties**.
- The new online system which went live in March allows tenants to report repairs online and include details of the repair required, which will help us get it **'right first time'**.



During **2022/23**,
we completed
30,000 repairs

Supporting tenants

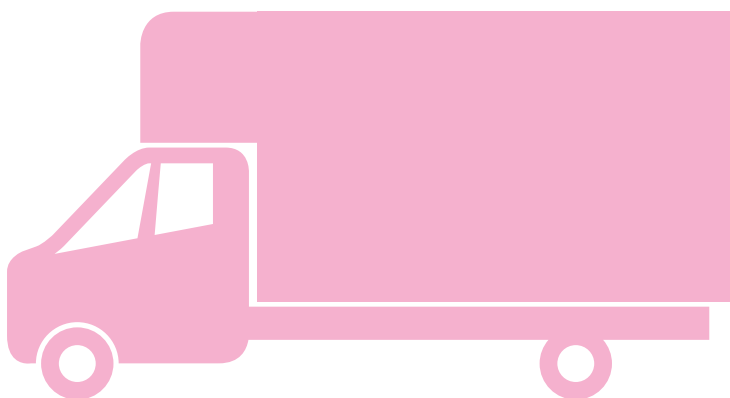
- Our Tenancy Sustainment team supported **75 tenants** struggling to manage their tenancies and in danger of losing their homes. The support included help with benefit claims, help to improve the condition of their homes, and help to reduce anti-social behaviour.
- Our rent collection rate is currently **94.02%**.
- At the end of March, current tenants owed £3.5 million in unpaid rent – **6%** of the total rent due.
- During the year, **66 referrals** were made to Money Advice Plus, helping tenants access quality debt advice and maximise their income.
- The Housing Income Management Team supported tenants to access **£138,454** in Discretionary Housing Payments.
- Our Housing Inclusion Team worked with **65 vulnerable households** to help with benefit claims and appeals, grant and funding applications, health and wellbeing issues and access to support services. Their success rate with benefit claims and appeals had a huge impact, bringing in more than **£100,000** additional benefit payments.
- To support residents with the cost of living crisis, we collected and distributed **196 items of furniture** to existing and new tenants through our furniture recycling scheme. This included essential household items such as beds, sofas and fridges.
- Our officers responded to **428** new cases of anti-social behaviour. To improve our response to anti-social behaviour, we introduced a new policy, developed in response to tenant and leaseholder feedback.
- We carried out **181 adaptations** in council homes, including 3 projects linking in with the loft and extensions programme creating much needed adapted family properties for overcrowded households.

Building safety

- We fitted **545** replacement doors to provide better fire resistance, as part of our programme to replace non-compliant flat entrance doors.
- We carried out **93** fire risk assessments in our blocks and the Estates Fire Safety Team removed **317** bulky items from common ways during inspections.
- We visit blocks weekly where we're aware of frequent problems with items left in communal ways, and inspect all other blocks quarterly. In one block where bikes were causing an obstruction, we worked with residents to create a secure storage by fitting a rail under the stairs.
- **99.97%** of council-owned homes with a gas supply have a valid landlord's gas safety record.
- We carried out electrical inspections and testing of **1,130** properties.

Moving home

- We let **639 homes**, including **79 new homes** and **560 previously occupied homes**, an increase of 124 on last year's total.
- As of 31 March 2023, **180** of our homes were empty, down from **251** at the same point last year. This included 35 of the 42 new homes in Jay Court and Perching Court in Portslade which were in the process of being let.
- Our homes were re-let in an average of **125 days** over the year, including the time needed to carry out major repair work. An improvement on the average of 210 days in 2021/22.
- We reopened our online mutual exchange applications, with 90 tenants successfully moving between April 2022 and March 2023.



Seniors Housing

Our Seniors Improvement Programme is underway, with work starting to refresh and improve our seniors housing schemes with decoration in communal areas using dementia friendly colour choices, carpeting and new lighting where needed.

Rose Hill Court and their Rose Hill Rebels art group are now firmly on the 'Open House' arts trail. Resident gardeners were also runners up in the 2022 national BIG Biodiversity Challenge Awards in the Community Engagement and Habitat Creation categories.



Complaints handling performance

We received 592 Stage 1 complaints relating to housing landlord services, compared to a total of 432 in 2021/22.

How we handled your complaints

We investigate all complaints to see where we need to take action to improve our services.

- **569** Stage 1 complaints closed
- **18%** upheld
- **25%** partially upheld
- **57%** not upheld
- **69** were not resolved at Stage 1 and escalated to Stage 2

Stage 1

88% responded within 10 working days

Stage 2

70% responded within 20 working days



Lessons learnt

A common theme from complaints in the last year related to the need for quicker call-backs, quicker appointments and better communication on the progress of repairs.

In response, we've recruited more office staff to make sure we call residents back within 2 working days with updates on existing repairs and speed up booking appointments.

We've taken on new staff in our Repairs Helpdesk team to improve our customer contact and introduced texting for block repair notifications, gas reminders, arrears reminders and appointments from March 2023.

Housing Ombudsman

Residents dissatisfied with the outcome of stage 2 complaints can escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman offer an advice, mediation, and complaint resolution service.

Their website includes performance data for Brighton & Hove City Council, including the number of referrals, investigations and the outcome of any investigations.

Visit www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/guide-to-landlord-performance-reports, email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk or call **0300 1113000**.

For information on our complaints process and our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code to see how we comply, visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/HOCCSA

Investing in homes and neighbourhoods

We invested £16.99 million in tenants' homes.

This included £0.9m on adaptations to make homes more accessible, £1.5m on roofing improvements, £2.2m on new doors and windows, £2.4m on replacing boilers, £1.74m on new kitchens and bathrooms, and £1.35m on electrical rewiring.

Increasing the number of council homes

We have built or purchased a total of **111** additional homes over the last year, with the net number of council owned homes increasing by **73**.

This includes:

- Building 42 new homes at Jay & Perching Court in Victoria Road, Portslade.
- 69 homes brought back into council ownership through our Home Purchase Policy scheme.

Warmer and more energy efficient homes

As part of housing's contribution to the city-wide objective of becoming carbon neutral by 2030, we've invested in new energy modelling software to look at options to reduce carbon, increase energy efficiency and lower energy bills for residents.

We're continuing to review heating and hot water systems and have installed 52 low carbon heating systems, including air source heat pumps with insulation upgrades where appropriate.

We've also installed 21 thermal batteries to provide less expensive low carbon hot water, to help residents reduce their energy costs.

Following these investments, the energy performance of our homes has improved to an average band C rating.

Improving homes & neighbourhoods

We've invested £125,000 to upgrade our CCTV systems, with new equipment installed in 50 of our 65 blocks with CCTV. We'll be upgrading the systems in the remaining 15 blocks this financial year.

We take damp and condensation very seriously and understand the concern this problem can cause.

Following the tragic case in Rochdale, we've worked proactively to encourage the reporting of damp and mould issues in tenants' homes.

We've also worked to recognise and remove barriers to the reporting of problems in your homes, including damp and mould.

As a result, we've experienced a significant increase in reports of dampness and condensation issues.

To further improve our service in this area, we've appointed a number of specialist contractors to provide:

- surveying to quickly identify the cause of the issue
- specialist damp remedial work to increase our capacity to carry out repairs
- cavity wall insulation to help keep homes warmer.



Your tenancy and community

We've introduced a new anti-social behaviour (ASB) policy, pledging to take a victim-centred approach and keep victims and witnesses updated on our actions.

You can see the new policy on our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing-asb-policy.

We completed a pilot of 12 estate walks, attended by staff and residents. As a result of the walkabouts, 27 proposals at a value of £51,200 have been approved.

The Community Engagement team carried out a review of the Area Panels and talked to over 500 tenants about how they would like to be involved. As a result, Housing Committee agreed a new 'terms of reference' for Area Panels welcoming any council tenant or leaseholder to attend.

Looking ahead

We plan to invest **£35 million** across our rented and leasehold homes in 2023/24.

This includes significant investment in building and fire safety in light of legal changes following the Grenfell tragedy and new duties under the Building Safety Act.

We're starting a programme of surveys of our blocks to record key information about the buildings, as required by the act. We will also be carrying out enhanced fire surveys of our blocks.

We are also preparing for the new social housing regulatory framework, including new tenant satisfaction measures and consumer standards, as well as the government review of the Decent Homes Standard.

We're continuing to invest in improving the energy performance of council homes through our work programmes, including improvements to roofing, windows, doors, external work and heating systems.

We're looking to install up to **1,000** new solar panel systems over the next 3 years.

We've started installing electric vehicle charging points on housing land. We'll provide

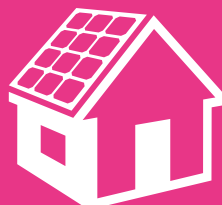
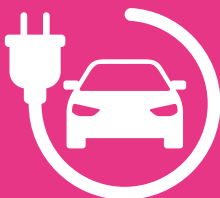
a dedicated resident parking space at each location, alongside a space for repairs and maintenance vehicles, which residents can use outside of business hours.

We're also investing in our apprenticeship programme, increasing support for residents and communities, reducing anti-social behaviour and improving estates and neighbourhoods.

In February, Housing Customer Services began a project looking to improve access to support for tenants who may be struggling with utility costs. This includes support with money and debt advice, claiming benefits, and health and wellbeing.

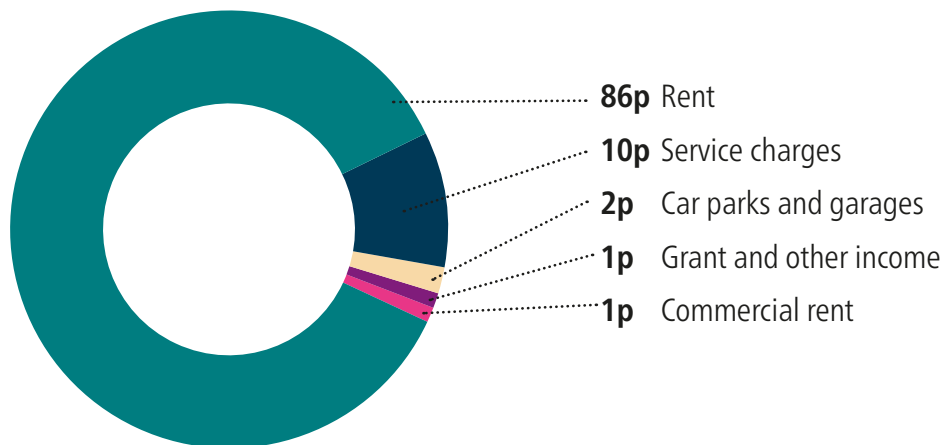
We will be planning waste amnesty days and will be looking in to how we can help low income households to dispose of their bulky waste.

We will take delivery of 173 new council-rented homes with the completion of 2 schemes developed through our Homes for Brighton & Hove partnership with the Hyde Group. Quay View in Portslade was handed over in April 2023 and Denman Place in Coldean is due to be completed in the autumn.

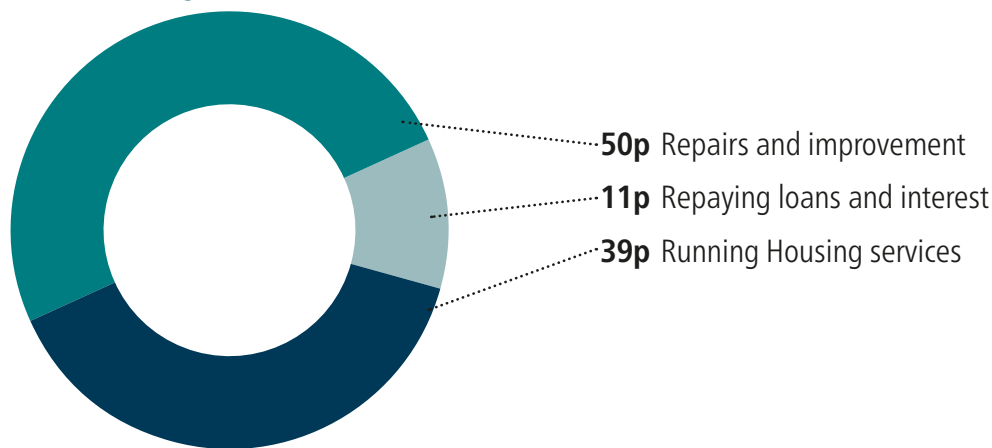


Value for money

Where every £1 of our income came from



How every £1 was spent



Total income £64.728m

Total expenditure £64.057m

The difference in income of £0.671 million has been added to reserves in the Housing Revenue Account to fund future investment in your homes.

Funding for new homes £54.3m

£0 from direct revenue funding

£34.8m from borrowing

£6.3m from capital receipts

£1.7m from reserves

£11.5m from grants

If you have any comments on this annual report or there's anything you'd like to see in future editions, we welcome your feedback. Please contact us at:

housing.performance@brighton-hove.gov.uk

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