

Annual report

to council tenants & leaseholders 2023 to 2024

This report gives information about our housing services between April 2023 and March 2024 and plans for this year.



Brighton & Hove
City Council

Welcome to the housing annual report for 2023/24

It has been a busy year across our housing services.

As always, the safety and wellbeing of our residents is at the heart of everything we do, and we continue to be committed to providing safe, good quality homes.

This year has seen a big focus on building safety, fire safety and other health and safety measures, in line with national regulations. This will continue to be a priority in 2024/25.

A key part of this fire safety work has been carrying out enhanced fire risk assessments on all our high-rise blocks of flats and senior housing schemes, and we are now carrying out assessments on our medium and low-rise blocks.

We are also doing a lot of work around electrical safety, water safety and asbestos safety and have carried out structural surveys on our high-rise blocks. For a full round up of safety work, see page 6.

Providing more new affordable homes continues to be a priority, and I am pleased to report 127 new council homes were completed earlier this year at Denman Place in Coldean.

A further 38 council homes have been provided in Whitehawk by purchasing a block of flats built by a private developer.

And we have bought back 62 former council homes, sold under the Right to Buy, to let to people in housing need.

We're also improving the sustainability of our housing and have started a 3 year programme to install solar panels on 800 council homes across the city.

We're taking action to deal with damp and condensation. We've appointed specialist contractors to support council teams in this work and are also investing in cavity wall insulation for more properties.

And we've appointed contractors to tackle the repairs backlog, all as part of our goal to deliver accessible and high quality homes for local residents.



Cllr Gill Williams
Cabinet Member for Housing and New Homes

Our housing

As at 31 March 2024, we had 12,039 council homes made up of:

6,970
flats

597
studio flats

4,045
houses

250
bungalows

177
maisonettes

There are also a further
2,218
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 **95.8%** last year to **97.2%**. We're committed to making sure all council homes meet the national Decent Homes Standard and our local Brighton & Hove Standard.
- Our Repairs & Maintenance team complete an average of around **2,951** repairs every month. During 2023/24, we completed **34,415** repairs, including **13,751** emergency and **21,664** routine jobs.
- We completed work to bring a total of **832** empty homes back into use, including **311** temporary accommodation properties.

Repairs backlog

We've appointed 2 new contractors to work with us to clear the repairs backlog. Contractors will be contacting tenants directly to make appointments to free up council repairs staff to respond to newly reported repairs more quickly. Once again, we thank residents for their patience, and we will feedback performance on the work to clear the backlog in next year's report.



During **2023/24**
we completed
34,415 repairs



During
2023/24
we completed
2,699 damp repairs

Damp and condensation

- We've appointed 6 additional specialist contractors to support council teams to treat and remove damp and condensation from tenants' homes. In total, we've completed **2,699** damp repairs job over the year.
- We've invested more than **£330,000** on cavity wall insulation work in **43** properties, ahead of a further **£750,000** programme of work this year.

If you have problems with damp in your home, please report it to our Repairs Helpdesk by

calling
01273 294409 or **0800 052 6140**

emailing
repairs.helpdesk@brighton-hove.gov.uk

or online at
www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/repairs

EV charging points

We've used Carbon Neutral funding to install fast electric vehicle chargers at the Brockhurst, Ellen Street and Dudeney Lodge car parks.

Each site has 2 charging points, one exclusively for residents and the other for housing service vehicles between 8am and 8pm. Electric vehicle charging points will be included at all future new build sites with available car parking.



Apprenticeship programme

Following an extremely successful Apprenticeship Open Day last summer, we recruited 9 Property Maintenance Operative apprentices and 6 Electrical apprentices.

Our apprentices have been learning their trades, attending college and understanding how to carry out repairs with great care to meet our tenants' various needs.

We have received great feedback from residents and will be recruiting 6 more Electrical apprentices this summer.

New energy supply service

We've listened to tenants' views about their difficult experiences of having no electricity or gas on move in day, and have worked with British Gas to ensure energy supplies are available for residents on the first day of their tenancy.



Another benefit of this arrangement is that our Empty Homes Team have power to carry out their work, cutting down on the delays caused by accessing electricity and having light to work a longer day in the darker months.

Installing solar panels

Our work installing solar panels on council homes continues, with installations on 140 council homes in Moulsecoomb, Coldean, Patcham, Hollingbury, Hollingdean and Hove over the past year. The solar panels can help reduce energy bills and reduce carbon emissions.

This is the start of a 3-year programme where we're aiming to installing panels in 800 council homes across the city.



Increasing the number of council homes

Two new major housing developments have been delivered over the past year at Denman Place, Coldean and Kubic Apartments, Whitehawk.

The 127 new homes in Denman Place, Coldean Lane are part of the second project delivered through the council's Homes for Brighton & Hove partnership with housing association, the Hyde Group.

To help with the biodiversity in the area, trees, shrubs and wildflowers have been planted as part of landscaping work around the new buildings and will also enhance communal areas and encourage wildlife. Bat boxes have also been installed and woodland areas created, which includes a path connecting to the lower end of Stanmer Park.

The Kubic Apartments is a block of 38 new flats in Whitehawk purchased by the council to provide much needed new council homes. The development in Whitehawk Way was built by a private developer.

The flats will be let as council-rented homes to people on the city's housing register during 2024, and could help existing council tenants downsize, and free up larger family homes.

New Homes for Neighbourhoods

Our New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme is building much-needed new rented council homes on council-owned land.

Work is continuing on plans for more than 200 new council homes and a new community hub in Moulsecoomb. We're aiming to appoint contractors to build the scheme, with construction work expected to begin in 2025.

We are also working on some smaller sites, such as Frederick Street, which is going to provide 4 new flats and is due for handover in October this year.

More information about New Homes for Neighbourhoods can be found on our website www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/nhfn

Hidden Homes

We've used a very large side garden space to build a new 3-bedroom family house in The Crescent, Bevendean, and will be following this with a similar project in Godwin Road, Hove. We also delivered 3 new homes in Manor Hill.

Over the next year, we're also planning to convert disused spaces at Saxonbury and Highleigh flats in Ashton Rise, Brighton, to provide 4 new flats.



Buying back homes
Through the **Home Purchase Policy**
we bought back a total of
62 former council homes
to let to people in housing need

A blue sign with the word "Sold" in white, tilted slightly to the right.

Building safety

The Building Safety Act 2022 and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 are 2 new pieces of legislation which, among other things, seek to ensure that landlords have the safety of their residents at the heart of the services they provide.

- **99.99%** of council-owned homes with a gas supply have a valid landlord's gas safety record.



- We've set up a dedicated Electrical Testing and Compliance Team, who have started a programme of electrical testing to make sure all homes have a current electrical certificate. The initial work is expected to take 3 years and homes will then be reinspected every 5 years.
- Contractors have been appointed to carry out a programme of home rewires through the electrical testing.
- We've completed structural surveys on our 8 large panel system high-rise blocks and have begun visual inspections of the remaining 38 high-rise blocks.
- We've appointed an asbestos manager to set up an asbestos register for our properties and asbestos management plan, which includes completing up-to-date surveys of all common ways.

- We've started work on a full review of building water compliance safety testing.
- We've set up a new Asset Management system and will be updating information on health and safety compliance.

Fire Safety

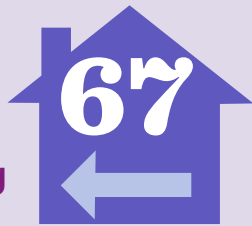
- We have met the legislative requirements of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations and the requirements of the Fire Safety Order.
- We've carried out new Fire Risk Assessments on our 46 high-rise blocks, plus a further 26 priority blocks (including 21 senior housing schemes).
- We have completed the registration of all our high-rise blocks with the regulator and carried out 3 phases of the Fire Safety Remediation Surveys for the regulator.
- We're now carrying out a programme of fire risk assessments for our 569 medium and low rise blocks and buildings, which will be complete by late autumn 2024.
- We're installing hard-wired smoke detection and carbon monoxide equipment to ensure all council homes have adequate detection.

Supporting tenants

This year...

Our Tenancy Sustainment team supported **67** 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 team officers supported **67** tenants in danger of losing their homes



Our rent collection rate is currently **93.46%**.

As of 31 March 2024, there was **£4.5 million** in unpaid rent – **6.84%** of the total rent due.

During the year, **93** referrals were made to **Money Advice Plus** to help tenants access quality debt advice and maximise their income.

The Housing Income Management Team supported tenants to access **£109,417** in Discretionary Housing Payments.

Our Housing Inclusion Team worked with **83** vulnerable households to help with benefit claims and appeals, grant and funding applications, health and wellbeing issues and access to support services.

Your community, your safety

We opened **319** new tenancy breach cases (for example, untidy gardens and homes kept in poor condition)

- Officers responded to **17** tenant and leasehold related fraud cases.
- Our officers responded to **675** new cases of anti-social behaviour.



Adaptations

We carried out **49** minor adaptations and **176** major adaptations in council homes, ensuring that these properties are appropriately suited to our residents' diverse needs.



Moving home

- We let **753** homes, including **256** new homes and **497** previously occupied homes, an increase of **114** on last year's total.
- The average time to re-let an empty home was **108 days** over the year, including the time needed to carry out major repair work.

As at 31 March 2024, we had **137** empty homes, down from **180** at the same point last year.

We let **256** new homes and **497** previously occupied homes last year...



an increase of **114** homes from last year.

Seniors Housing

Our Seniors Housing service continues to work with a range of partners to improve social connectivity and address loneliness and isolation for our residents. The Arts Council funded a project to work with a women's circus theatre company, Circo Rum Ba Ba. Our residents, along with pupils from local schools explored the following themes: creativity, personal history and identity.

The service is also continuing to help residents age well with a range of healthy living promotions including falls awareness and nutrition workshops run with Public Health. We have also hosted visiting opticians and chiropodists in our schemes.

Four schemes have been improved with better decoration, flooring and lighting as part of the Seniors Housing Improvement Programme. For example, Leach Court has a new mural painted by seniors resident art group 'Drawing Together' (see mural below) celebrating the history and diversity of the scheme and city.



Next year we will continue to improve the internal decorations throughout our schemes, and work with residents for them to have their say on how their schemes should look and feel.

We are also proud to say that the **seniors housing service** was selected as a finalist in the 2023 Affordable Housing Awards under the 'Best older people's landlord' category.

Looking ahead

Social Housing Regulation

The new Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduces changes to how social housing must be managed, with significant focus on safety and engagement.

This includes increased regulation of social landlords, who will be subject to regular inspections against new Consumer Standards, set out by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). From 1 April 2024, the RSH began a regime of inspections across the country to ensure that all social housing landlords are keeping to these new standards.

Under the new standards landlords will need to:

- ensure tenants are safe in their homes
- listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right
- be accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect
- know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them
- collect and use data effectively across a range of areas, including repairs

For more detailed information about the new standards, visit [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) and search for 'regulatory standards for landlords'

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard requires all registered providers of social housing to collect and report annually on their performance using a core set of defined measures. These are the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).

- We must collect and provide key information to show how we meet the Regulator's Tenant Satisfaction Measures to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance.
- We must annually publish the information that we collect and report our performance against the TSMs back to the Regulator for Social Housing.

The council's first set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures will be published on the council's website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housing-performance



Complaints handling performance

We received **775 Stage 1** complaints relating to housing landlord services, compared to a total of **592** in 2022/23.

There are some types of complaints that we can't accept. This year we have refused to accept complaints for the following reasons:

- Where the same matter had already been considered at all stages of the internal complaint procedure, where the issue was not part of an ongoing situation, no new matters were raised and where no new evidence was provided which may have affected the previous outcome.
- Where the outcome sought by the customer was solely compensation for damages, whether personal injury or unquantifiable financial loss, and no additional matters were raised.
- Where a more appropriate route of appeal or challenge was available (Leaseholder service charge dispute, complaint solely about the conduct of elected members) and where no additional matters were raised.

Types of complaints received

- Repair/maintenance/improvement of property condition (**620**)
- Anti-social behaviour complaints (**26**)
- Staff conduct (**21**)
- Failure to take action (**13**)
- Estate management services (**12**)
- Unhappy with service delivery (**12**)
- Re-housing (**6**)
- Disagree with policy or procedure (**5**)
- Delay in providing outcome (**5**)
- Other tenancy matters (**55**)

How we handled your complaints

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

- **21%** were upheld
- **34%** were partially upheld
- **45%** were not upheld
- **99** complaints were not resolved at Stage 1 and escalated to Stage 2

Stage 1

83% responded within 10 working days

Stage 2

49% responded within 20 working days

Lessons learned

We have made a number of service improvements through learning from the complaints we received this year, including:

- A review and revision of internal processes which relate to Section 20 leaseholder consultation requirements.
- A review of all policy and documents relating to pet ownership to ensure all wording is up to date, clear, consistent and specific.
- Changes to a contractor's processes to include a daily review of cases marked as having no heating or hot water, to ensure that we are prioritising people we know have vulnerabilities.
- Reviewing and updating the rent arrears policy based on current practice.
- A review of all documents and procedures relating to the Community Trigger process to ensure the process is clear for residents.
- A review of mobility scooter storage at all properties as part of our landlord's fire safety response, with particular focus on seniors housing schemes.

There have been some occasions this year where, unfortunately, we have not been able to meet compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code:



- A service failure in our response to a resident's report of structural movement within the property due to a leak and associated repairs. There was also maladministration in regard to our response to the resident's reports about staff conduct.
- Maladministration in respect of our handling of a water leak in a resident's bathroom, as well. There was also a service failure in our handling of a resident's associated complaint about Tenancy Services.
- Service failure in our handling of repairs to a resident's bathroom and their subsequent request for compensation following a leak to the property. There was also a service failure in our handling of the complaint.
- Maladministration in our handling of anti-social behaviour allegations made against a resident and maladministration in our handling of the resident's reports of anti-social behaviour by their neighbours. There was also a service failure in our handling of the complaint.
- Service failure in relation to our response to a resident's reports about repairs and a service failure in our handling of a complaint.
- Maladministration in our handling of a resident's reports of anti-social behaviour. There was also a service failure in our handling of the complaint.

We do apologise for all occasions when we've got it wrong. We review all these cases to look at what we need to improve.

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.

Visit www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/residents/guide-to-landlord-performance-reports

Email info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

or call **0300 1113000**.

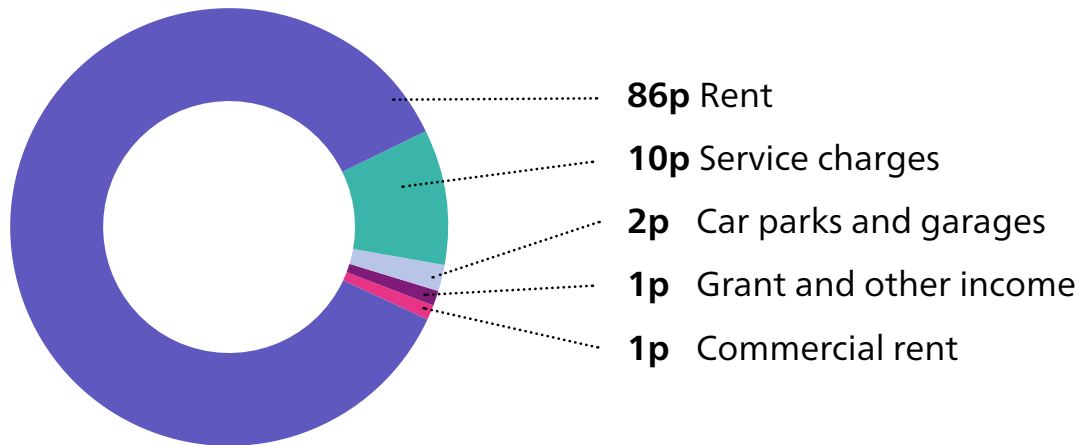
For information on our complaints process and our self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Code to see how we comply, visit www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/HOCCSA

Brighton & Hove City Council's Corporate Complaints Policy & Procedure is available on our website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/complaints

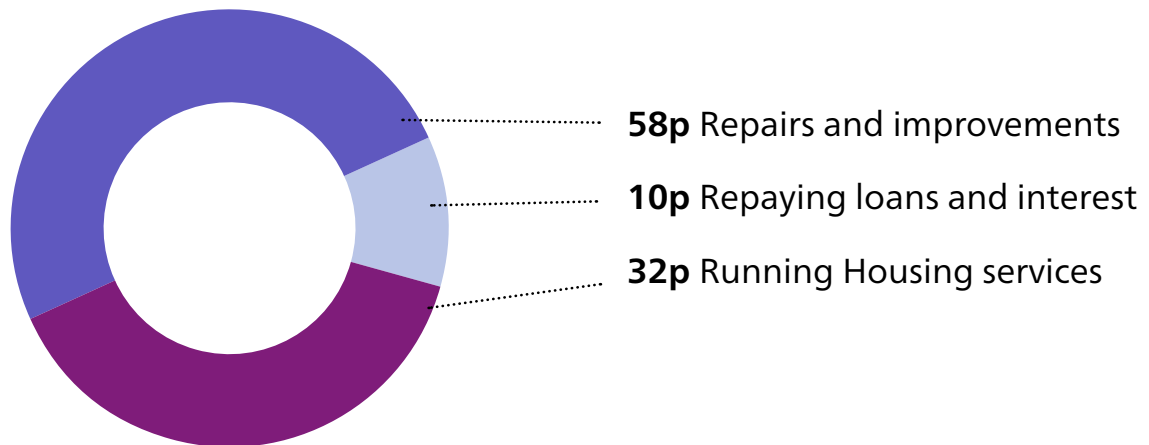


Value for money

Where every £1 of our income came from



How every £1 was spent



Total income £71.376 million

Total expenditure £71.376 million

Funding for new homes **£41.7 million**

- **£27.7 million** from borrowing
- **£6.9 million** from capital receipts
- **£0.9 million** from reserves
- **£6.2 million** 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

 [X.com/bhhousing](https://x.com/bhhousing)

 facebook.com/BHHousing

Or you can write to us at: **Housing Performance, Housing Centre, Unit 1 Fairway Trading Estate, Eastergate Road, Brighton, BN2 4QL.**