

# Housing Strategy 2015



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# The Housing Strategy

## Our Vision

The strategy is for everyone living in the city as housing has a fundamental effect on our lives whether we are an owner-occupier, living in a social housing, renting privately or homeless. Our vision is:

***We want Brighton & Hove to be an inclusive city with affordable, high quality, housing that supports a thriving economy by offering security, promoting health and wellbeing and reduces its impact on the environment. We want to help bring about integrated communities in a society that values everyone to recognise and tackle the inequality faced by families, the poor and the vulnerable.***

We have listened to local people to identify the housing needs that matter most and set out our priorities for action that will make a real difference to their lives and have a positive impact on the city. Our strategy also supports the council's priorities where housing impacts on their success particularly in helping to alleviate the pressure on social care and health services arising from an expanding older population.

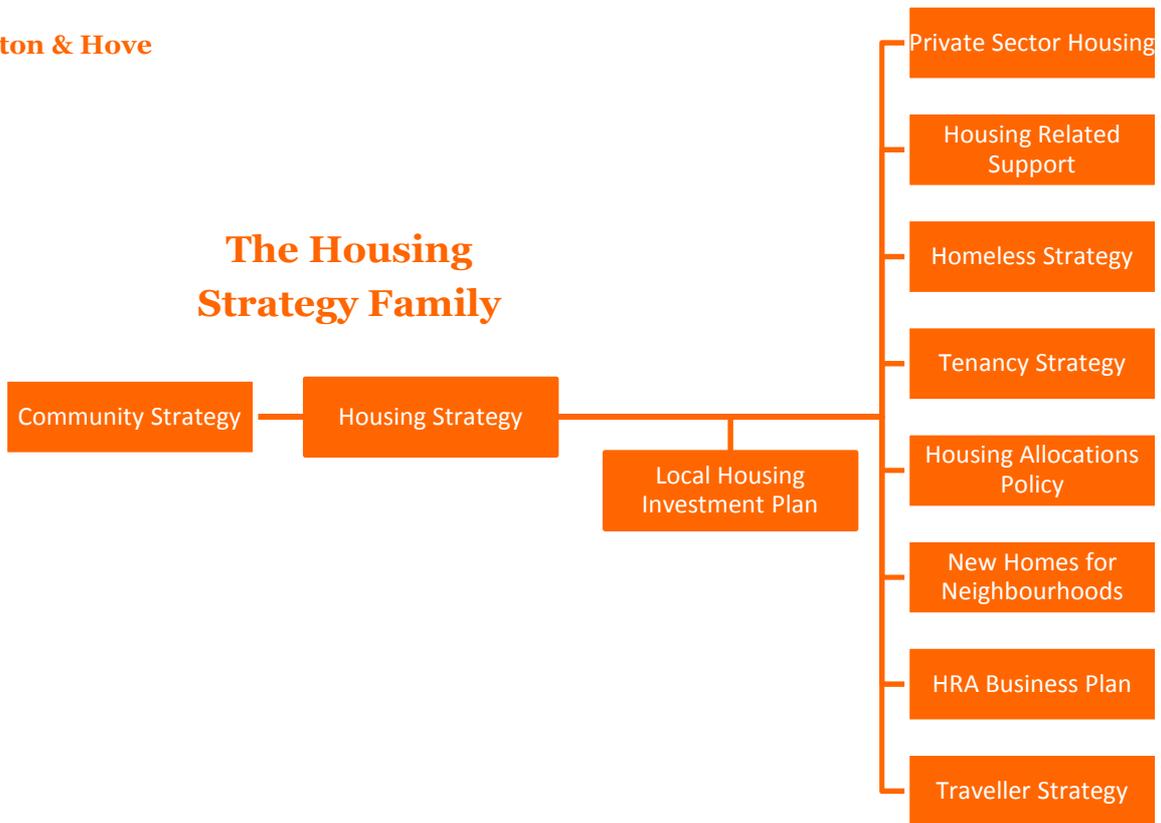
The council's Values of Respect, Customer Focus, Openness, Creativity, Efficiency and Collaboration underpin the work we do by going beyond the traditional bricks and mortar focus of housing to deliver real change focussed on the needs of individuals and communities.

The new Housing Strategy is a key stand alone chapter of the Community Strategy<sup>1</sup> and a fundamental piece of evidence to support the City Plan, our Local Housing Investment Plan and other housing related funding opportunities. The strategy sets out how the council and its partners work together to address housing pressures in the city and brings benefits to the city through leveraging in funding for the authority and its partners.

This is an overarching document that focuses and co-ordinates a number of other housing related strategies enabling us to continue our impetus to help address the housing needs of the city and provide a consistent drive towards achieving our priorities. We are committed to making sure that all of our housing work continues to align and work together to provide effective and efficient services in a time of reducing resources and increased need.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/strategy/strategy>



This strategy has clear commitments to improving the issues identified through consultation and research, as well as building on the successes of the previous housing strategy. Delivery of the new Housing Strategy will also make sure that services internal and external to the council are able to adapt to and work towards addressing the city’s housing needs.

### Our Housing Challenges

Brighton & Hove is a popular place to live, work and visit, and is recognised for its important commercial, educational, tourist and conference, sporting and cultural role in the South East and beyond. The city has good transport links to neighbouring towns and is within easy reach of London making it an easy location to commute to and from.

However, our city is a place of contrast, with areas of extreme affluence and areas of deprivation where residents can experience significant inequality compared to the rest of the city in terms of access to suitable housing, employment, health and life expectancy. Pressures from an increasing population, high property prices, pockets of poor quality housing, limited opportunities for new development and the effects of welfare reform are impacting on many families, particularly the most vulnerable people living in the city.

The city has one of the highest average house prices outside London, coming within the top 10 local authorities and high rents in the private rented sector making rent unaffordable for many households.

Over the last few years we have been successful in providing additional affordable housing across the city, we have built the first new council homes for a generation and successfully bid for funding to build extra care housing. We have initiated and invested in our New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme to build further new council homes.

It is estimated that an additional 17,400 affordable homes are needed by 2017 above that planned<sup>2</sup> however, limited subsidy and high land values are pushing up costs. This highlights the need to think differently and explore wider partnerships that can demonstrate viable business cases for development of the housing needed by residents.

We have improved the quality of homes in the private and social sectors. Our existing council homes have been brought up to 100% decency and the introduction of additional licensing is improving housing conditions for residents living in smaller Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Unfortunately, around a third of the city's housing is still non-decent, which is almost entirely in the private sector.

We are one of the best performing councils in preventing homelessness in England, helping many households sustain their home or find an alternative suitable home however, over the past few years we have seen an increase in the number of households accepted as homeless and in priority need, placed in temporary accommodation and on our Joint Housing Register.

However, the last few years have seen significant changes to the funding available to deliver our strategy which means we have to look at new ways of working to support local people. These changes include the removal of private sector renewal funding that helped owners and landlords improve the quality of their homes, a reduction in grants for new affordable housing which has seen a shift away from Social Rented housing to Affordable Rented housing and a range of welfare reforms affecting housing benefit and other support.

Additionally, the funding challenges faced by the council, wider public sector and third sector need to be met by making the best use of the resources available. This strategy comes at a time where the council has to save £102m over the period 2015/16 to 2019/20, around 30% of our net budget. Whilst the development of new homes and bringing empty homes back into use brings almost £4m per annum to the council from the New Homes Bonus, this funding is needed to reduce pressures on the council's overall budget and is not available to support the implementation of the Housing Strategy.

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<sup>2</sup> Assessment of Affordable Housing Need Report 2012: [http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/ldf/Assessment\\_of\\_Affordable\\_Housing\\_Need.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/ldf/Assessment_of_Affordable_Housing_Need.pdf)

Our growing population includes a significant increase in the number of older people with a support need leading to additional demand for long term care services with a significant projected impact on the Community Care Budget. We are committed work collaboratively with Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Health to reduce long term social care cost pressures, including through supporting housing options that enable people to remain living independently at home for longer in support of corporate and budget priorities.

As a city, we also want to support our diverse communities to help them realise their potential and shift the emphasis away from requiring services. Citizens and communities are the lifeblood of our city with independent community action and volunteering building resilience and cohesion. This includes building community skills and capacity to take on more responsibility to create a cultural shift from reliance on traditional support to one where everyone does their bit as active, independent and resilient citizens.

### **Our Priorities and Themes**

The strategy has 3 overarching priorities that reflect the fundamental housing needs of the city. Within these, there are a number of themes detailing areas of need which have been highlighted by local people during the consultation as those areas that matter the most and will make the most impact:

- **Priority 1: Improving Housing Supply**
  - New Affordable Housing
  - Family Housing
  - Community Housing Sector
  - Student Housing
  
- **Priority 2: Improving Housing Quality**
  - Decent Warm & Healthy Homes
  - Empty Homes
  - Private Rented Sector
  - Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)
  
- **Priority 3: Improving Housing Support**
  - Homelessness Prevention
  - Housing Related Support
  - Supporting Older People
  - Supporting our Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) Communities
  - Supporting our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans\* (LGBT) Communities

## Our Consultation

This strategy, the themes and priority actions have been developed through extensive consultation with commissioners, service providers, community groups and residents over 2014.

In addition to attending a wide range of individual meetings and partnership meetings, three key events were held, a main stakeholder event, a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community event hosted by BMECP and one for those with disabilities hosted by the Fed Centre for Independent Living. There was also an online consultation questionnaire. We promoted our events and engagement routes via social media using Twitter and Facebook.

The main findings are summarised in the consultation report as part of our evidence base.

## Our Evidence

The background documents contain a detailed analysis of the issues affecting the city including demographic change, housing costs, development pressures, deprivation, and changing need that were used to support the development of this strategy:

- Supporting Data Analysis;
- Family Housing Supporting Data Analysis;
- Consultation Report;
- Equality Impact Assessment.

This strategy is designed to be read with reference to these documents, which are available at: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housingstrategy](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/housingstrategy)

We also publish a number of regular reports that help us monitor the city's housing markets and residents needs:

- Housing Strategy Statistical Bulletin: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-statistical-bulletins](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-statistical-bulletins)
- Housing Costs Update Report: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-costs-reports](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-costs-reports)
- Rent and Local Housing Allowance Comparison Report: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-costs-reports](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-costs-reports)
- Local Intelligence on a wide range of health, care and other social issues: <http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/content/local-intelligence>

## Supporting the Council's Priorities

### Our Corporate Ambitions

Our purpose is to provide strong civic leadership for the wellbeing and aspiration of Brighton & Hove. We will be successful if we are judged to deliver:

- **A good life:** Ensuring a city for all ages, inclusive of everyone and protecting the most vulnerable.
- **A well run city:** Keeping the city safe, clean, moving and connected.
- **A vibrant economy:** Promoting a world class economy with a local workforce to match.
- **A modern council:** Providing open civic leadership and effective public services.

The same types of challenges faced by our council and the city are driving debates both here and across the country about what councils should be doing and how they should be doing it. The dilemma is that councils and public services more generally cannot continue in the same way, since public spending is reducing, populations growing and costs rising.

In order to respond to the challenges and to meet our purpose, by 2020 we will:

- become a **smaller**, more efficient organisation, working as one, with a reduced budget, fewer employees and fewer services provided directly by us;
- **collaborate** more with other public services, the community and voluntary sector and businesses to find common and jointly owned solutions;
- **positively** enable more citizens to play an active role in the creation and provision of services for their local community;
- create a more **connected** council with more shared services, with other providers and other places.

### Our Values

Our values describe the professional behaviour required to modernise the council:

- **Collaboration:** Work together and contribute to the creation of helpful and successful teams and partnerships across the council and beyond.
- **Efficiency:** Work in a way that makes the best and most sustainable use of our resources, always looking at alternative ways of doing things.
- **Respect:** Embrace diversity with kindness and consideration, and recognise the value of everyone.

- **Customer focus:** Adopt our Customer Promise for colleagues, partners, members and customers.
- **Openness:** Share and communicate with honesty about our service and ourselves, whenever appropriate. Accept where we have to change in order to improve.
- **Creativity:** Have ideas that challenge the 'tried and tested', use evidence of what works, listen to feedback and come up with different solutions.

## Housing and the Corporate Plan

The Housing Strategy 2015 works to deliver a number of priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- **Citizen Focused**
  - Prioritise services to provide earlier, more accessible and preventive support to vulnerable people and families, avoiding more complex problems before they arise.
- **Increasing Equality**
  - Coordinate services and spending better between public services to improve equality, for example through the Health & Wellbeing Board and the Local Housing Investment Plan.
  - Improve our engagement with communities of interest and identity to foster good relations across the city, and tackle discrimination and prejudice.
- **Active Citizenship**
  - Develop genuinely engaging and collaborative approaches with citizens for all service design and delivery.
  - Engage people through coordinated consultation and research activity, using results to shape future service provision.
- **Economy, Jobs and Homes**
  - Bring forward plans for key development sites, including Preston Barracks, Circus Street Market and New England House, linked to job growth and skills.
  - Enable development of new, affordable homes, including new council homes, working with government, registered providers and other partners to maximize investment.

- **Children & Young People**
  - Ensuring that, where children and families require support, we provide early help services that make a difference.
- **Health & Wellbeing**
  - Create supported housing to promote independence and reduce the need for acute and residential care services.
  - Improve health and social care outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, as part of our Better Care programme.
- **Community Safety & Resilience**
  - Review options for further discretionary licensing of private rented homes, including Houses in Multiple Occupation, where evidence supports this will address poor standards or anti-social behaviour.
- **Environmental Sustainability**
  - Develop opportunities with partners to improve the quality and energy efficiency of the city's housing stock.
  - Continue to increase energy efficiency measures for the council, including carbon reduction across services and renewable energy schemes for our own land and property.
- **Contributing to the Medium Term Financial Strategy**
  - Maximising New Homes Bonus and Council Tax revenue resources through improving housing supply.
  - Reflecting that fees, charges and rents are an increasingly vital part of the council's resource base and an important aspect of ensuring services provide value for money.
  - Ensuring Housing investment aligns with the Corporate Plan priorities.

### **A Shared Agenda across Childrens' and Adults' Services**

In our Housing Strategy we are committed work collaboratively with Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Health to reduce long term social care cost pressures.

In working collaboratively with Children's Services to aim to ensure that we meet our collective responsibilities to raise standards for children and young people, keep them safe and support more integrated provision, including discharge of council's statutory responsibilities in respect of: children in need or at risk; homelessness; and, housing allocations.

Family Housing is a priority theme within our Housing Strategy. The Strategy supports our Corporate Parenting commitment to care leavers and the actions in the Joint Commissioning Strategy: Children's Services and Housing 2013 focus on the needs of those aged 16-25 and Corporate Parenting objectives by supporting the early help pathway for young people and vulnerable adults who are parents to:

- Increase the numbers of young people who are prevented from becoming homeless.
- Young People having a more positive transition to adulthood through the provision of a positive accommodation and support pathway.
- Better use of resources through a Joint Commissioning approach to providing accommodation and support for young people.

In addition, we seek to promote housing options that enable people to remain living independently at home for longer in support of corporate and budget priorities. Housing services are critical in supporting independence to limit the need for more costly health and care interventions that often come with a reduced quality of life.

Our action on homelessness seeks to support vulnerable households by:

- Providing Housing and Support Solutions that aim to prevent Homelessness and Promote the Health and Well-being of Vulnerable Adults.
- Provide 'whole families' housing and support solutions that tackle homelessness and promote the well-being of families, vulnerable adults and young people.
- Develop Access to Settled Homes.
- Reduce Inequality and Tackle Homelessness amongst Our Communities of Interest.
- Provide Integrated Housing, Employment and Support Solutions as a Platform for Economic Inclusion.

The council invests £11m in housing related support services that help around 5,000 vulnerable people each year to work towards or maintain independent living. Budget pressures mean this funding is expected to fall to £9m in 2015/16. There is a need for services to be delivered in a more integrated way with prevention services linked to statutory services such as social care, probation, and health.

The pathway for people who have been homeless needs to be reviewed so that we can ensure that we are able to support people with more complex

needs, including through initiatives such as Housing First. To support this, the council will:

- Review service commissioning across health, housing, care and other services so that we can ensure a joined up approach to prevention.
- Improve health and social services for the single homeless.
- Support more independent accommodation to prevent long term use of hostels and reduce rough sleeping.
- Review how people access support services to ensure they are able to access the most appropriate services for their needs.

Our growing population includes a significant increase in the number of older people with a support need leading to additional demand for long term care services with a significant projected impact on the Community Care Budget. Many older people and carers living in the city are home owners, asset rich but cash poor and have limited disposable income, preventing many from maintaining and heating their homes effectively. Through our Housing Strategy we will:

- Ensure supported housing reduces the need for residential care and other more intensive services.
- Continue the annual Warm Homes Healthy People Programme to support vulnerable households.
- Support further extra care developments including Brooke Mead.
- Remodel sheltered housing to ensure that it supports the right people and improves social networks and well being.
- Continue to renovate sheltered schemes to convert studios into one bed homes.
- Ensure that adaptations are done at the right time to support people to stay in their homes when they want to.
- Support people to 'downsize' when they choose and provide a range of options for them and accessible tools to support decision making.
- Ensure that new developments are built to 'dementia friendly' standards and that staff in older people services have access to training on dementia.
- Better links between sheltered schemes and surrounding communities.

Our Housing Strategy also recognises the needs of other vulnerable groups and commits us to:

- Ensuring that services are accessible to people with autism.
- Supporting the Mental Health Accommodation approach as a good practice model.
- Ensuring a joint approach to housing for people with learning disabilities across housing, health and care services.

## Priority 1: Improving Housing Supply

The city is an expensive place to live. The Council's Assessment of Affordable Housing Need Report 2012<sup>3</sup> identified that almost 88,000 Brighton & Hove households (72%) can not afford market housing without spending a disproportionate level of their income on housing or some form of subsidy.

Our research<sup>4</sup> has identified that the average cost to buy a one bedroom flat is around £205,000 needing an income of £47,000 per annum and a three bedroom house is around £367,000 needing an income of around £85,000 per annum<sup>5</sup> to be affordable. The Land Registry reports that property prices in the city are now 44% higher than the England & Wales average.

Renting in the private rented sector is also expensive with a one bedroom flat costing around £843 per month needing an income of £44,000 per annum and a three bedroom house around £1,550 per month needing an income of £82,000 to be affordable. Over the last 5 years, our monitoring has shown that private rents have risen faster than the rate of inflation.

With half of all households earning less than £28,240 per annum, the city's private sector housing is unaffordable for the majority of our population and the reason around 20,000 households are on our Housing Register.

The Assessment of Affordable Housing Need Report 2012 estimates that 22,132 households are likely to be in housing need and unable to afford buying or renting in the residential housing market by 2017.<sup>6</sup> In addition, 59% of those in need (10,642 households) are only able to afford social rented housing rather than affordable rented.

After factoring in the expected supply of new affordable housing it leaves an unmet housing need of 17,403 affordable homes by 2017.<sup>7</sup> However, the city only has the space for an additional 11,798 homes between 2015 and 2030.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Assessment of Affordable Housing Need Report 2012: [http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/ldf/Assessment\\_of\\_Affordable\\_Housing\\_Need.pdf](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/downloads/ldf/Assessment_of_Affordable_Housing_Need.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Housing Costs Report, Autumn 2014: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-costs-reports](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-costs-reports)

<sup>5</sup> Assuming a 25% deposit and a mortgage of 3.5 times income

<sup>6</sup> 7,890 is the backlog of households in need and 14,243 is the figure for newly arising households in need

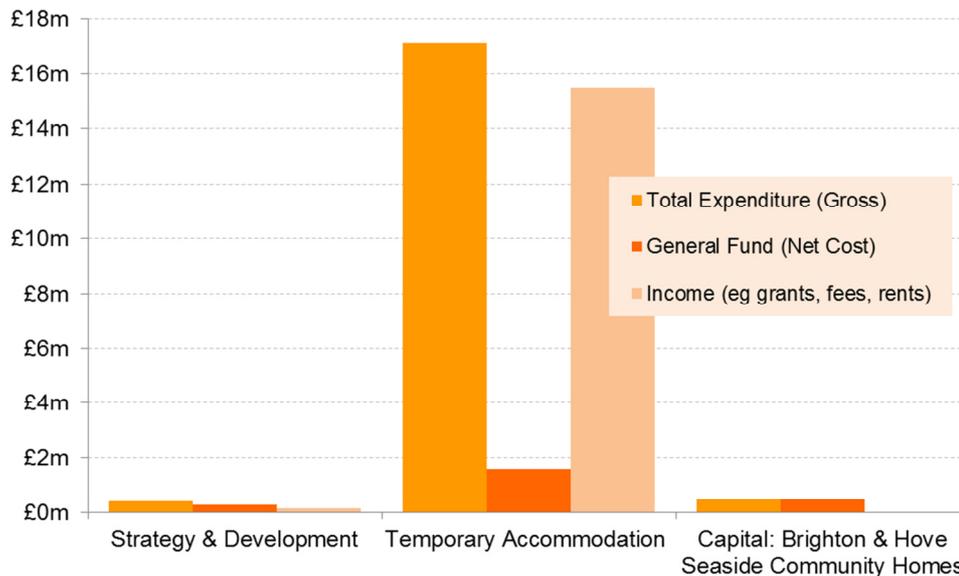
<sup>7</sup> Calculation: 22,132 affordable need to 2012-17 less 4,729 met from current and new affordable housing stock 2012-17 leaves 17,403 unmet need

<sup>8</sup> Calculation: City Plan housing projection of 13,200 from 2010 to 2030, less 1,402 completions 2010-2014 equals 11,798 new homes 2015-2030. Overall affordable delivery estimated at 30%, 3,539 homes

## Brighton & Hove

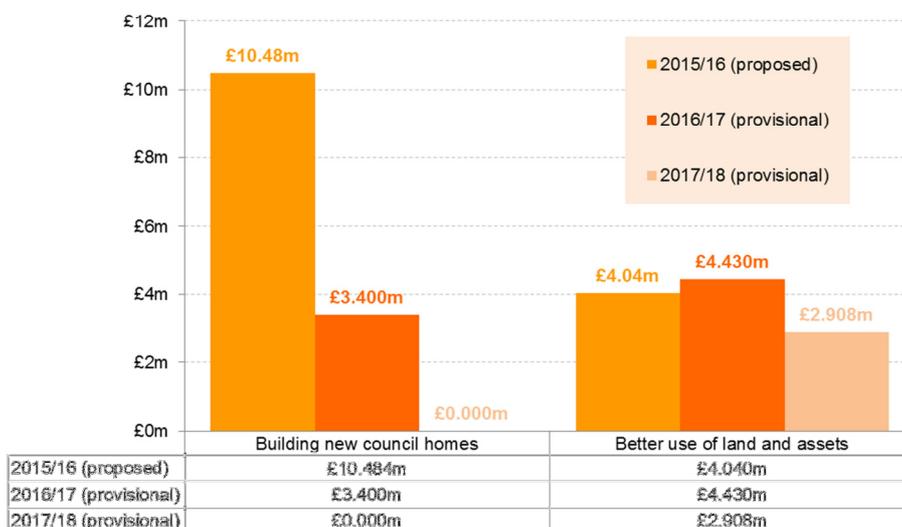
The Council spends around £18m per annum on our strategy co-ordination, supporting the development of new homes and managing our temporary accommodation. The majority of this relates to temporary accommodation rents and once this and other income is deducted, the net cost to the council's General Fund for this work is £1.85m per annum (at 2014/15 budget levels which are subject to annual review):

### Brighton & Hove City Council General Fund Improving Housing Supply 2014/15



Our capital investment is to support the development of new council housing and making best use of existing council homes by providing extensions:

### Brighton & Hove City Council Housing Revenue Account Improving Council Housing Supply (Investment)



## New Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing is comprised of a range of different housing types:

- Social Rent: homes let at a low rent
- Affordable Rent: homes let at up to 80% of market rent (in Brighton & Hove registered providers have agreed to cap these rents at the Local Housing Allowance limit)
- Low Cost Home Ownership: where residents buy a share of the home and pay rent on the remaining share

Between April 2009 and March 2015 a total of 792 new homes will have been completed and funded through the Affordable Housing Programme in partnership with the Homes & Communities Agency and Registered Providers in the City. A further 159 homes are in progress or ready to start with completion estimated in 2015/16.

The national changes to the grant regime for affordable housing providing smaller subsidies over the last few years has seen a shift away from Social Rented homes to Affordable Rent to an extent that there are no new social rented homes planned over the next few years. With limited grants, increasing land values and build costs continuing to increase, we are now seeing a shift from Affordable Rent to Low Cost Home Ownership with providers struggling to make Affordable Rented homes financially viable. Only 75 new homes are planned by housing associations in the next Affordable Housing Programme between 2015 and 2018. Of these, 14 (19%) will be for Affordable Rent with 61 (81%) homes for shared ownership.

The City Council has responded to these challenges by initiating a 'New Homes for Neighbourhoods' programme to develop new affordable council homes on council owned land. The programme aims to deliver more than 200 new homes over the lifetime of this strategy.

The community housing sector has also been responding to the funding challenge to provide a further 47 new social homes for rent over the past 3 years (and 416 empty homes have been refurbished), all of which have been provided without any grant funding. This includes:

- 36 new homes developed by Brighton Housing Trust to provide much needed self-contained accommodation for people moving on from homeless hostels
- 11 studio flats for homeless people financed and developed by Brighton YMCA

In consultation, residents were generally positive about our work with other housing providers and our desire to develop more social housing directly is seen as positive for the city.

With housing associations reducing their building due to a reduction in government subsidy, it is important that we work with a wide range of partners and make best use of our local authority resources to fill this gap.

### *What is the city going to do?*

1. Prioritise support for new housing development that delivers a housing mix the city needs with a particular emphasis on family, Affordable Rent and where feasible, Social Rented housing.
2. Continue work with a range of partners including Homes & Communities Agency, housing associations and the community housing sector to develop more affordable housing.
3. Directly provide more council housing, such as by developing ourselves through our New Homes for Neighbourhoods programme, buying new homes off-plan or by supporting others to build and manage on our behalf.
4. Use Right To Buy receipts and developer contributions to fund new housing.
5. Maximise housing provided from best use of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) investment, land and buildings.
6. Support housing associations and community housing organisations with their proposals to deliver affordable homes.
7. Work with the local business sector to maximise housing on mixed use developments incorporating homes, offices and retail.
8. Continue to look at alternative use of public assets including land, with a focus on maximising the social value of opportunities where appropriate.
9. Where compatible with local and national planning policy, increase housing supply through the conversion of unused and unneeded properties.
10. Continue to work with adjacent local authorities in the Greater Brighton and Coastal West Sussex area to address unmet housing need across a sub-regional area.
11. In accordance with City Plan policy, support taller buildings and higher density development in appropriate locations of the city.
12. Reinvigorate the Home Ownership for People with Long-term Disabilities scheme.

## Family Housing

With buying or privately renting a 3-bed home in the city requiring an income or more than £80,000 to be affordable<sup>9</sup>, many families, particularly younger ones are struggling.

The 2011 Census reported 3,900 households with dependent children were living in overcrowded homes. 991 were owner occupiers or shared ownership households, 1,443 were living in social rented homes and 1,466 were living in the private rented sector.

In April 2014 there were 2,805 households on the Housing Register overcrowded through lacking 1 or more bedrooms however, during 2013/14, only 103 larger homes with 3 bedrooms or more were available for letting.

Consultation respondents welcomed the Transfer Incentive Scheme that supports council tenants who are under-occupying to find more suitable accommodation which frees up family sized homes for re-letting and in 2013/14 a total of 101 homes were re-let under this scheme.

Residents were very concerned about the lack of affordable family housing in the city and the conversion of previous family homes into Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's).

### *What is the city going to do?*

- 13.** Prioritise family housing in our housing investment plan and in enabling work with Homes & Communities Agency, Registered Providers and other partners.
- 14.** Look to new developments to deliver family housing as part of the affordable housing requirement.
- 15.** Support households wanting to downsize to increase supply of available family housing.
- 16.** Work with occupational therapists and social workers to ensure that family properties are allocated and adapted in a co-ordinated manner.
- 17.** Early intervention for families struggling with accommodation including money advice and tenancy support.

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<sup>9</sup> Housing Costs Report, Autumn 2014: [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-costs-reports](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-strategy-costs-reports)

## Community Housing Sector

The Community Housing Sector are local housing and community organisations whose key aim is to increase the supply of community housing options to meet local need. Many are represented by the Community Housing Network. This provision may be in the form of traditional affordable and supported housing or more creative solutions such as co-operatives, community land trusts, and self build schemes. These initiatives empower communities so that they become more self-sufficient and integrated.

Community Land Trusts (CLT) are non-profit community-led organisations that steward land and buildings to meet long-term community needs, by promoting development of affordable housing and other community facilities. There are 5 key features of CLTs:

- Community controlled and owned;
- Open local membership and democratic structure;
- Permanently affordable housing (of other facilities);
- Not for profit;
- Long-term stewardship, with community ownership of freehold or lease.

Our Empty Property Team has a long-term working relationship with Co-operative Housing in Brighton & Hove (CHIBAH), a network formed of seven local housing co-operatives. We work with them to meet shared goals; supporting them in their business modelling, helping them in identifying eligible empty properties in the private sector and supporting them through joint work on short life lease end and lease renewal issues.

In 2012 we supported local housing co-ops and community groups in their successful bid under the communities' element of the Government Empty Homes Programme 2012-15 with £650,000 allocated to local groups. The funding will provide 38 bed-spaces in 6-8 properties by April 2015. Two properties have already been purchased on the open market and negotiations are underway for a further property on a long lease.

A proposed modification to the City Plan<sup>10</sup> (PM064 under Policy SA4 Urban Fringe) highlights that there will be a particular emphasis on delivering housing to meet local needs through the sites identified in the 2014 Urban Fringe Assessment Study. Further consideration and a more detailed

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<sup>10</sup> Schedule of Proposed Modifications to the City Plan Part One, October 2014: <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/B%26H%20City%20Plan%20Part%20One%20-%20Schedule%20of%20Proposed%20Modifications%20FINAL%20v4Oct.pdf>

assessment of potential housing sites will be undertaken to inform allocations made in Part 2 of the City Plan over the next two to three years. As part of this process, the City Council will consider how best to ensure that opportunities for community land trusts, community-led development, right to build, and housing co-operatives are brought forward/ safeguarded in order to maximise housing opportunities that meet local housing needs.

### ***What is the city going to do?***

- 18.** Promote the concept of Community Housing.
- 19.** Explore the viability of Community Land Trust and wider community housing development options when land is available with a focus on maximising the social value of new developments where appropriate.
- 20.** Explore the use of commercial properties for co-operatives where compatible with City Plan policies.
- 21.** Share information on development opportunities with the Community Housing Network.

### **Student Housing**

Our universities and students have a positive impact, bringing economic growth to the city. Whilst this was recognised in the consultation responses, those commenting also highlighted there can be tensions between the different communities, with pressure put on housing and other services, as our universities expand.

The 2011 Census reported a total of 32,294 full-time students aged 16 and above living in the city and represents 14% of the city's population aged 16 and older with students accounting for 52% of people aged 20-24 years old. The 2011 Census reported that most student households live in the private rented sector with 2,680 student households living in this tenure, representing 93% of the total student households. Often this places pressure on the city's family housing which, in many areas, has seen large numbers of family homes converted into shared housing. The universities also have plans to increase student numbers by 9,000 over the next 5 years.

We need a wider range of affordable accommodation options for students to take pressure off the existing housing stock and we need to work with landlords to improve the quality of accommodation and ensure student housing does not cause disruption in our neighbourhoods.

The City Plan, Policy CP21 Student Accommodation and Houses in Multiple Occupation, sets out how the council will meet the increasing accommodation needs of students while continuing to create mixed, healthy and inclusive communities. It identifies specific sites for purpose-built student accommodation which do not conflict with proposed housing site allocations.

The University of Sussex has a Student Housing Strategy at the core of its strategy for growth and is keen to house a large proportion of its students on campus to help take pressure off the city's housing stock.

The recent University of Brighton Student Accommodation Survey 2013-14 identified the ideal choice of accommodation preferred for students. Year 1 students prefer University halls of residence (78%) and Year's 2 and 3 students prefer a shared house with other students (69% and 59% respectively); Around 1 in 9 of all students would like to live in purpose built student accommodation. The University of Brighton is reviewing its accommodation strategy early in 2015.

Over 2,000 units of new purpose built student housing have been approved in the city for development over the next few years including large schemes at Northfield, University of Sussex Campus and Varley Halls of Residence for University of Brighton in Coldean. Further new purpose built student housing is currently proposed at the University of Sussex campus and on identified sites in the city including provision on the site of the old Co-op store building in London Road and the Circus Street development.

### *What is the city going to do?*

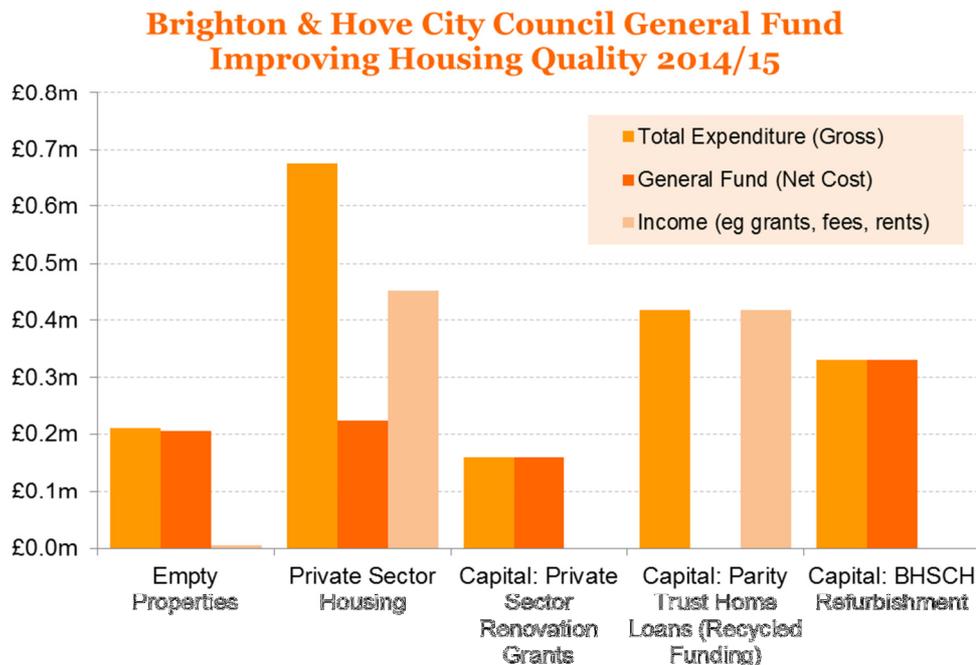
- 22.** Continue to support the development of new affordable purpose built student accommodation in a range of locations within the city in accordance with City Plan policies.
- 23.** Support local initiatives to integrate students and the local communities through shared projects such as the Good Neighbour Guides.
- 24.** Reduce the impact of student lets on neighbourhoods through managing the concentration of student lets (City Plan policy) and other measures such as requiring safe bicycle storage, communal bins and working with letting agents to reduce signage.
- 25.** Promote support services to students around tenancy management, rights, and responsibilities.
- 26.** Work with bordering authorities to support satellite campuses.
- 27.** Promote the Student's Union "Rate Your Landlord" report across the city and the idea of rented accommodation that is 'fit for study'.

## Priority 2: Improving Housing Quality

We know from the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 report that more than 1 in 4 of the city's Lower Super Output Areas (small areas of around 1,500 residents / 650 households) are in the bottom 10% nationally for housing quality and the Private Sector House Condition Survey 2008 reported that a third of the city's housing stock (up to 37,000 homes) is considered to be non-decent. In addition, approximately 1 in 8 of the city's households were calculated to be in fuel poverty (14,500 households)<sup>11</sup>.

The Council's Private Sector Housing Team work to improve housing conditions in private rented and owner occupied homes through renewal advice, assistance and enforcement; improving Home Energy Efficiency, improving thermal comfort and reducing fuel poverty and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

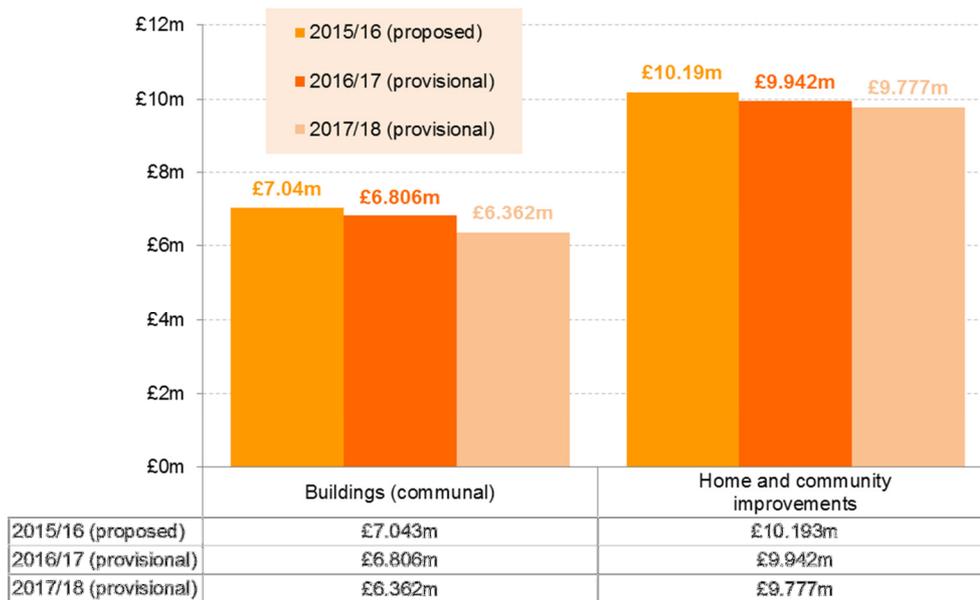
2011 saw the end of government funding for private sector housing renewal and most elements of our renewal assistance have been suspended. However, the Council and partners still spend around £1.8m per annum on our work to improve the quality of private sector housing and once income from fees and grants is taken into account the net cost to the council's General Fund for this work is £0.9m per annum (at 2014/15 budget levels which are subject to annual review):



<sup>11</sup> Using the 10% measure. A household is said to be fuel poor if it needs to spend more than 10% of its income on fuel to maintain an adequate level of warmth.

The council spends a further £17m per annum on maintaining and improving the council housing stock, funded through tenant’s rents:

**Brighton & Hove City Council Housing Revenue Account  
Improving Council Housing Quality (Investment)**



**Decent Warm & Healthy Homes**

The council works to improve the quality of homes in the city and introduce measures to reduce the city’s carbon footprint through a wide range of initiatives and continues to seek to utilise appropriate available resources:

- Private Sector Renewal: Since 2009, more than £9m has been invested in enabling over 4,500 homes to be made decent or moved towards decency. A fund of £312,500 is held by the Parity Trust on behalf of Brighton & Hove City Council for home improvement loans with £103,000 currently unallocated.
- Energy Efficiency: Since 2009, 2,438 energy efficiency measures installed and 1,592 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> saved. In addition:
  - Since 2011, a Warm Homes, Healthy People Programme has been overseen by Private Sector Housing and Public Health, funded by bids to the Department of Health totalling £200,000 in 2011 and 2012, and a further £60,000 of local Public Health funding in 2013 and 2014.
  - £221,000 has been secured for 100 free Green Deal assessments;
  - £411,000 has been secured for energy efficiency improvements to vulnerable householders in the private sector through a joint bid with Eastbourne Borough Council;
  - Held energy cafés to offer advice and assistance to residents;

Within our council housing stock we have now achieved 100% decency through an intensive programme of improvements undertaken via a long term partnership between Mears and the council. Since 2009, improvements to council homes have included new kitchens, bathrooms, windows, doors, and rewiring. In addition we have improved the energy efficiency of homes and cut residents heating bills by replacing boilers; installing insulation such as solid wall, cavity wall, loft and floor new solar heating and power installations.

Housing conditions have a major impact upon the health and well-being of the occupants, particularly those in vulnerable groups such as older people, people with disabilities, and low-income households. For example, living in cold and damp housing (including as a result of fuel poverty) increases the risk of ill health, unplanned hospital admissions and preventable winter deaths in vulnerable people. The Council's Private Sector Housing and Public Health teams and the local Clinical Commissioning Group are now looking at jointly identifying vulnerable people who could benefit from targeted support.

In consultation there were concerns raised that although we were leading the way we needed to offer support to owner occupiers and the private rented sector in order to have a city wide approach to reducing emissions, home improvements, and fuel poverty.

### ***What is the city going to do?***

- 28.** Continue to promote the highest possible building, space and environmental standards in all new developments, including new council homes being built to high sustainability levels.
- 29.** Promote available grants and loans to owner occupiers and landlords.
- 30.** Continue to improve council housing sustainability standards.
- 31.** Work through the One Planet City Sustainability Action Plan to set a target on reducing the carbon emissions from the city's housing.
- 32.** Continue the annual Warm Homes Healthy People Programme to support vulnerable households.
- 33.** Work with the Food Partnership to ensure that housing and food are linked to improve well being and reduce waste.
- 34.** Further explore through the Strategic Housing Partnership and the Health & Wellbeing Board how the housing sector can work in partnership with health, social care and voluntary sector providers to improve health and wellbeing of local people.

## Empty Homes

The council works to bring empty properties back into use as homes across the city, recognising that empty homes represent a waste in housing terms as well as creating concerns for those who live nearby. We have helped bring more than 800 private empty homes back into use since 2009.

Our work focuses on long term empty residential properties in the private sector (where the vast majority of empty homes in the city can be found), by working with the owners in the first instance but moving to enforcement action as needed. The empty property team also works with housing co-ops and individuals to identify housing opportunities from empty residential and commercial empty properties.

In addition, the community housing sector through Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes has refurbished 416 empty council homes to provide temporary accommodation for homeless people funded without grant using borrowing secured against the future rental income from these homes.

### *What is the city going to do?*

- 35.** Continue successful system of making and maintaining contact with all owners of empty property.
- 36.** Update the Empty Property Enforcement Protocol to encourage an increase in the number of properties being returned to use.
- 37.** Promote any available funding options to owners.
- 38.** Explore additional funding opportunities as and when available.
- 39.** Consider empty commercial property as a potential source of new housing.

## Private Rented Sector

There is a growing private rented sector in the city with 28% of households living in a home that is privately rented. This percentage rises to nearly 60% in some areas of the city and we are aware that some of the most vulnerable households can be living in this tenure.

The consultation saw clear feedback that we had a thriving private rented sector that generally delivered good quality vital housing but there were ongoing concerns around rising costs and affordability. A large majority of respondents to the consultation wanted us to introduce a register of all private sector landlords to help support efforts to maintain and improve standards.

### ***What is the city going to do?***

40. Support a register of landlords in the city.
41. Support for landlords to better manage properties.
42. Develop an ethical standard for letting agents including a commitment to equalities and diversity, a 'living rent' scheme where rents are linked to wage inflation, and longer tenancies to support family stability.
43. Up skill small and accidental landlords to improve tenancy management.
44. Promote commonhold ownership amongst leaseholders in the city (in both the private sector and amongst council leaseholders when all the flats are leasehold).
45. Review evictions from the private rented sector to analyse the underlying reasons behind homelessness.

### **Houses in Multiple Occupation**

It is estimated that there are a total of 6,460 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) in the city, 1 in 35 of all HMOs in England and Wales which is nine times the national average. An HMO is a property rented out by at least 3 people who are not from 1 'household' but share facilities like the bathroom and kitchen. Examples include bedsits, shared houses, lodgings, hostels, private halls of residence, accommodation for workers/employees and refuges.

The Housing Act 2004 requires landlords of certain HMOs to apply for licences. The HMOs that need to be mandatory licensed are:

- Three or more storeys that are
- Occupied by five or more people forming two or more households and
- Which have an element of shared facilities (e.g. kitchen, bathroom, etc.)

We currently licence or have applications to licence 1,040 of these larger HMOs across the city under the national mandatory licensing scheme.

The licensing scheme is seen as improving the quality and fire safety in these properties and in November 2012, the council introduced additional licensing in five Lewes Road wards where a concentration of smaller HMOs has been identified. This additional licensing applies to HMOs, consisting of two or more storeys, with three or more occupiers from two or more households sharing facilities. To date we have received 2,035 additional license applications, of which 1,795 to date have led to full licenses (often subject to conditions).

Consultation showed that HMO's provide vital accommodation for single working people and students. There were concerns raised that we needed to improve standards by ensuring that the additional licensing scheme is applied fairly across the city. More publicity is needed for tenants and landlords to ensure that we can improve the standards of HMO's in the city.

### *What is the city going to do?*

- 46.** Promote the HMO licensing scheme so that we can ensure that un-licensed HMO's are reported and licensed properties are of standard.
- 47.** Consult on extending HMO licensing to other areas where there is an identified need.
- 48.** Respond to issues where legal standards are not being met.
- 49.** Improve refuse collection and storage where there are high levels of HMO's.

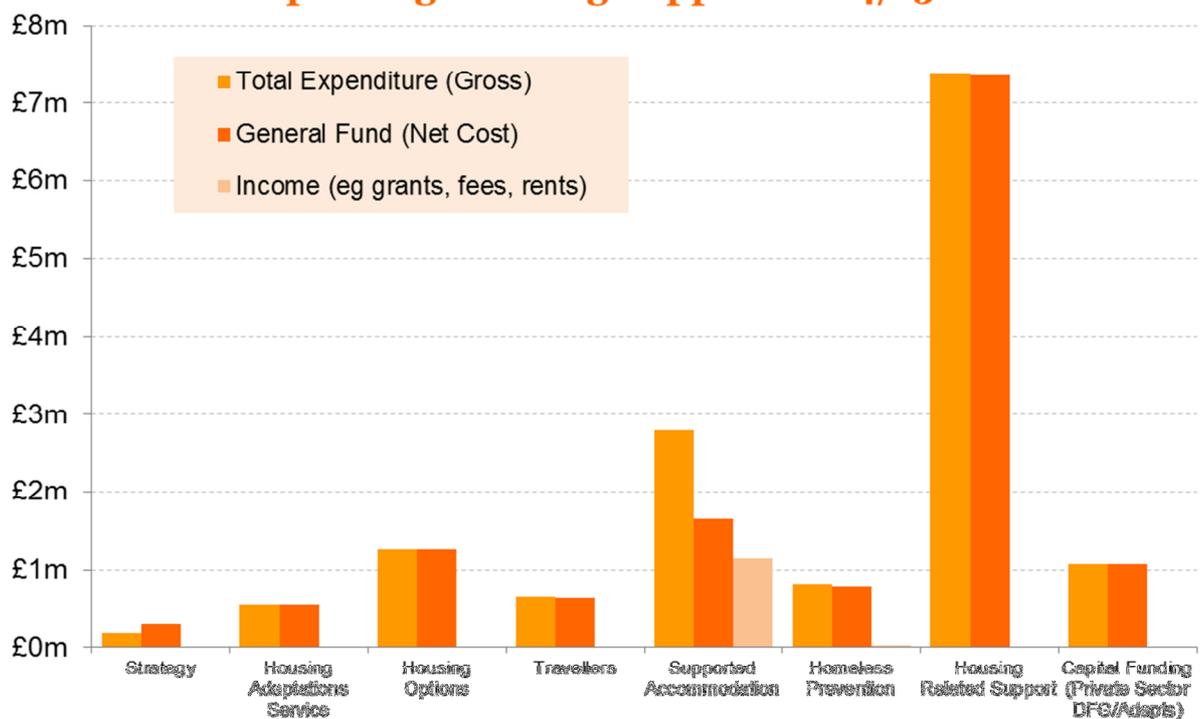
## Priority 3: Improve Housing Support

Working to help residents remain independent in their own homes and preventing homelessness are a fundamental part of the Council’s approach to helping local people and is a key indicator on the Public Health Outcomes Framework. In addition, helping people remain independent helps to mitigate pressures on the more intensive and costly services provided by Adult Social Care, Children’s Services and Health.

The Housing Related Support services provided or commissioned by the council support 5,000 households and each month thousands of households at risk of homelessness seek advice and assistance from our Housing Options Team or agencies working in partnership with us.

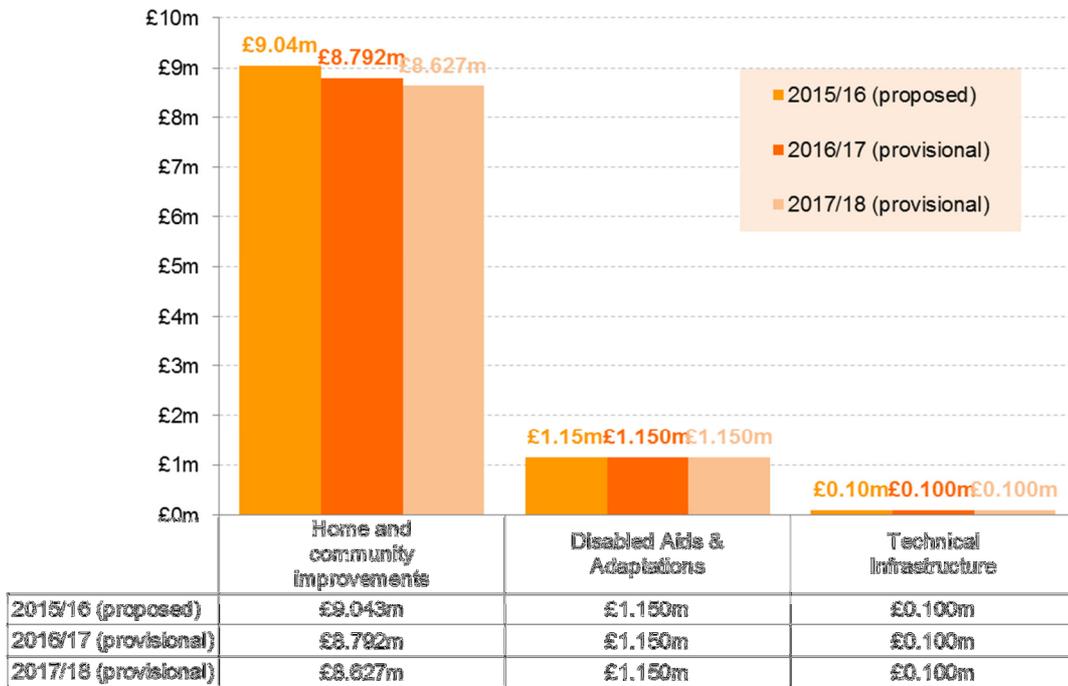
The council currently spends around £14.7m per annum on day to day housing support activities, such as our homeless prevention work, hostels, providing housing related support to help people stay in their own home and adaptations. After taking into account income, the next cost to the council’s general fund is £13.6m per annum (at 2014/15 budget levels which are subject to annual review):

### Brighton & Hove City Council General Fund Improving Housing Support 2014/15



Within the council housing stock a further £10m per annum is spent on improvements homes and communities to improve resident’s quality of life which is paid for through tenant’s rents:

**Brighton & Hove City Council Housing Revenue Account  
Improving Council Housing Support (Investment)**



We also know some communities in the city face additional housing barriers as a result of health conditions or legally protected characteristics<sup>12</sup> which can often manifest themselves in increased incidences of poverty, poor health, accessibility issues, discrimination and homelessness. We need to understand these needs and ensure the city’s housing provision and services are as flexible and responsive to individuals as practical within our resources.

**Homelessness Prevention**

Overall there has been an increase in homelessness and rough sleeping in the City. In the past four years homelessness applications have risen by 50% and those accepted have risen by 40%. The last rough sleeper count in December 2014 found 41 sleeping rough on one night however estimates during 2014 ranged between 100 rough sleepers in winter to around 200 at the height of the summer.

<sup>12</sup> Equality Act 2010: Protected characteristics relate to age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation

The following factors have had an impact of this increase as it has been harder for vulnerable households to compete in the housing market: - the recession, the growth in population, the increasing cost of the private housing market, restrictions on mortgage funding which means more people are renting for longer which pushes up rents. Notwithstanding, we have continued with our prevention approach in tackling homelessness and have successfully, with our partners, sustained or found alternative accommodation for over 2,000 households each year.

The number of households in Temporary Accommodation has increased by 300% from 316 at the end of March 2010 to 1,266 at the end of March 2014 with nearly 1,000 households where a Section 193 (homeless) duty is owed. Since March 2010 we have increased the use of Private Sector Leased Temporary Accommodation by nearly threefold, providing additional good quality self-contained temporary accommodation and reducing the dependence on emergency B&B accommodation.

Our action on homelessness is detailed in our dedicated Homelessness Strategy 2014-19.<sup>13</sup>

### ***What is the city going to do?***

- 50.** Provide Housing and Support Solutions that Tackle Homelessness and Promote the Health and Well-being of Vulnerable Adults.
- 51.** Provide 'whole families' housing and support solutions that tackle homelessness and promote the well-being of families and young people.
- 52.** Develop Access to Settled Homes
- 53.** Reduce Inequality and Tackle Homelessness amongst Our Communities of Interest
- 54.** Provide Integrated Housing, Employment and Support Solutions as a Platform for Economic Inclusion

### **Housing Related Support**

Housing-related support helps many people with support needs such as:

- Mental Health
- Older People
- Substance Misuse
- Physical and Sensory Disability
- Single Homeless
- Young People at risk
- People at risk of Domestic Violence

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<sup>13</sup> Homelessness Strategy 2014-19: [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000709/M00005185/AI00040396/\\$HomelessStrategy2014CommitteeVersion.docx.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000709/M00005185/AI00040396/$HomelessStrategy2014CommitteeVersion.docx.pdf)

- Former Offenders
- Rough Sleepers
- Teenage Parents
- People with a Learning Disability

It helps people to sustain their own home through supporting them to:

- Look after themselves Mental Health
- Manage their money, pay bills, budget and apply for benefits
- Look after where they live
- Understand their tenancy agreement
- Stay safe at home
- Get on with neighbours
- Take up day time activities, training, education and employment

The council invests £11m in housing related support services that help around 5,000 vulnerable people each year to work towards or maintain independent living through the provision of long-term and short-term support. Budget pressures mean this funding is expected to fall to £9m per annum in 2015/16.

People who had used these services said that they were invaluable in promoting and sustaining their independence and increasing demands are showing how important it is to continue this work.

There is a need for services to be delivered in a more integrated way with prevention services linked to statutory services such as social care, probation, and health. The pathway for people who have been homeless needs to be reviewed so that we can ensure that we are able to support people with more complex needs, and continue to help people to achieve and maintain independence.

### ***What is the city going to do?***

- 55.** Review and remodel the Integrated Support Pathway for homelessness so that it can deliver a more personalised service with better outcomes for service users.
- 56.** Review service commissioning across health, housing, care and other services so that we can ensure a joined up approach to prevention.
- 57.** Improve health and social services for the single homeless.
- 58.** Support more independent accommodation to prevent long term use of hostels and reduce rough sleeping.
- 59.** Review how people access support services to ensure they are able to access the most appropriate services for their needs.

60. Ensure supported housing reduces the need for residential care and other more intensive services.
61. Ensure a joint approach across housing, health and care services to tackle the impact of housing on well being.
62. Ensure a joint approach to housing for people with learning disabilities across housing, health and care services.
63. Review outreach, advice, and floating support services to ensure that they meet the need in the city.
64. Support the early help pathway for young people and vulnerable adults who are parents.
65. Ensure that services support survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
66. Ensure that services are accessible to people with autism.
67. Investigate the benefits of women only services.
68. Referral panels to promote choice and mixed communities in supported accommodation.
69. Support the Mental Health Accommodation as a good practice model.
70. Assess the impact of any potential future budget challenges with community groups and service users.

### **Supporting Older People**

Whilst between 2001 and 2011 the number of people aged 65 and over has declined, the number of oldest old (aged 85 and above) has increased and is projected to continue to increase. Many older people and carers living in the city are home owners, asset rich but cash poor and have limited disposable income, preventing many from maintaining and heating their homes effectively.

Over the last few years we have seen improvements in house conditions across the different tenures, including improvements to our sheltered housing stock, that has seen the adaptations team working closely with the decent homes programme, improved support to vulnerable older people through services like Carelink Plus and all newly built affordable houses constructed to lifetime standards with 10% fully wheelchair accessible.

In addition we have seen an increase in the provision of extra care housing and the council has been awarded £2.4m government funding to build a new extra care scheme at Brooke Mead, that will provide 45 flats for older people with support care provided on site and communal spaces not only for residents but also for people from the local community.

Consultation showed support for sheltered housing and extra care, but that sheltered housing needed to offer more social activities to improve well being. As well as outreach support to enable older people to remain in their own homes, there was support for 'downsizing' allowing older people greater choice about where they move to and when.

### ***What is the city going to do?***

71. Support further extra care developments including Brooke Mead.
72. Remodel sheltered housing to ensure that it supports the right people and improves social networks and well being.
73. Continue to renovate sheltered schemes to convert studios into one bed homes.
74. Ensure that adaptations are done at the right time to support people to stay in their homes when they want to.
75. Support to people to 'downsize' when they choose and provide a range of options for them and accessible tools to support decision making.
76. Ensure that new developments are built to 'dementia friendly' standards and that staff in older people services have access to training on dementia.
77. Support community links between older people and students where both groups can benefit.
78. Better links between sheltered schemes and surrounding communities.
79. Ensure new housing development includes community spaces.

### **Supporting our Black & Minority Ethnic Communities**

There is a growing Black & Minority Ethnic (BME) population in the city with 53,351 of the population identifying as being from a minority ethnic group, representing 19.5% of the city's population, 1 in 5. The 2011 Census reported that 38% of the BME households are owner-occupiers, 49% are living in homes privately rented homes and 13% were living in socially rented homes.

In May 2014, a BME communities and housing event was hosted by the BME Needs Assessment Steering Group. Over 60 people attended who were split into groups and to consider questions that had been agreed in advance. Responses to the questions highlighted the issues of affordability for people renting and also for home owners. The size of available housing was identified not just for families but also for elders who needed spare rooms for family or a carer. There were concerns regarding racial discrimination, neighbourhood noise and harassment across the different tenure and barriers to accessing housing and housing services were identified.

### ***What is the city going to do?***

- 80.** Continue to work with the BME Needs Assessment Steering Group to identify housing issues specific to BME communities.
- 81.** Work with Community Safety to resolve housing issues and harassment in a timely manner.
- 82.** Work with the BME groups to provide scrutiny on the Housing Strategy.
- 83.** Improve front facing customer service at Council housing offices.
- 84.** Review the equalities impact of the allocations of social housing and consider the positive contribution made by single parent families.

### **Supporting our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans\* Communities**

Brighton & Hove is known throughout the world as an Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans\* (LGBT) centre. As sexual orientation is not included in the Census it is difficult to accurately gauge how many residents are lesbian, gay or bisexual. Our best estimate of the number of lesbian, gay and bisexual residents is 11-15% of the population aged 16 or more, 25,000-35,000 people<sup>14</sup>. We have very little information about transgender residents in the city, although work is underway to address this.

We need to ensure that the city has:

- Accessible, welcoming and safe housing and support services that are responsive to the needs of LGBT people and promote their health and well-being;
- Housing and support services that contribute to LGBT community safety and challenge harassment, discrimination and hate crime;
- Housing and support services that are planned and reviewed in consultation with the LGBT community.

In consultation, Housing services are seen as supportive and accessible in general but there was a perceived need for further training.

### ***What is the city going to do?***

- 85.** Ensure that as services are reviewed we check that they are accessible and safe for all.
- 86.** Carry out more research in partnership with community groups to identify specific gaps and needs.

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<sup>14</sup> City Snapshot 2014:

<http://www.bhconnected.org.uk/sites/bhconnected/files/City%20Snapshot%20Summary%20of%20Statistics%202014.pdf>

- 87.** Joint work with Community Safety to resolve housing issues and harassment in a timely manner.
- 88.** Investigate potential impacts of 'out of area' placements for LGBT people in relation to local services and support networks.
- 89.** Work with sheltered housing providers to ensure that services are accessible for the LGBT communities.
- 90.** Support local LGBT agencies who are working with LGBT agencies in other areas where LGBT people are looking to move to Brighton to ensure this is done in a planned way.
- 91.** Use the skills in LGBT community groups to deliver improvements to frontline housing services.
- 92.** Examine the provision of LGBT specific housing support services in the city.
- 93.** Continue to implement Trans Scrutiny Panel Recommendations for Housing and consider the recommendations of the forthcoming Trans Needs Assessment.

## Abbreviations and Acronyms Used

- BME Black & Minority Ethnic
- BMECP Black & Minority Ethnic Community Partnership
- CHIBAH Co-operative Housing in Brighton & Hove
- CLT Community Land Trust
- CO<sub>2</sub> Carbon Dioxide
- HMO House(s) in Multiple Occupation
- HRA Housing Revenue Account
- LGBT Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Trans\*
- VAWG Violence Against Women and Girls

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