

To: Deputy Leader and Members of the Resources Board

Councillors Symonds, A Clews, D Clews, Davey, Deakin, Dirveiks, D Humphreys, Lees, Morson, Moss, O Phillips and Simpson

For the information of other Members of the Council

For general enquiries please contact Democratic Services on 01827 719221 or via email – democraticservices@northwarks.gov.

For enquiries about specific reports please contact the Officer named in the reports.

This document can be made available in large print and electronic accessible formats if requested.

RESOURCES BOARD AGENDA

28 March 2022

The Resources Board will meet on Monday 28 March 2022 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire.

The meeting can also be viewed on the Council's YouTube channel at [NorthWarks - YouTube](#).

AGENDA

- 1 Evacuation Procedure.**
- 2 Apologies for Absence / Members away on official Council business.**
- 3 Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests.**

4 **Minutes of the Resources Board held on 24 January 2022** – copy herewith, to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 **Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to put questions to elected Members.

Members of the public wishing to address the Board must register their intention to do so by 9:30am two working days prior to the meeting. Participants are restricted to five minutes each.

If you wish to put a question to the meeting, please register by email to democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk or telephone 01827 719221/719226/719237.

Once registered to speak, the person asking the question has the option to either:

- (a) attend the meeting in person at the Council Chamber;
- (b) attend remotely via Teams; or
- (c) request that the Chair reads out their written question.

If attending in person, precautions will be in place in the Council Chamber to protect those who are present however this will limit the number of people who can be accommodated so it may be more convenient to attend remotely.

If attending remotely an invitation will be sent to join the Teams video conferencing for this meeting. Those registered to speak should dial the telephone number and ID number (provided on their invitation) when joining the meeting to ask their question. However, whilst waiting they will be able to hear what is being said at the meeting. They will also be able to view the meeting using the YouTube link provided (if so, they made need to mute the sound on YouTube when they speak on the phone to prevent feedback).

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION (WHITE PAPERS)

6 **HEART Shared Service Partnership** – Report of the Director of Housing

Summary

This report updates the Resources Board about the HEART shared service partnership and makes a proposal for future joint working.

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369).

7 **Vexatious Complaints Policy** – Report of the Director of Housing

Summary

This report asks the Resources Board to approve the introduction of a vexatious complaints policy to accompany the Housing Division's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369).

8 **Off - Street Parking Scheme for Residents** - Report of the Corporate Director – Streetscape

Summary

Following the public questions considered at Full Council in January and in response to wider concerns expressed about off-street parking restrictions for residents with no immediate access to on-street or driveway parking, officers are proposing a trial scheme to make off-street parking easier for those residents worst affected.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

9 **Closure of Corley Churchyard** – Report of the Corporate Director – Streetscape

Summary

The report advises the Board on the Council's obligation in respect of the maintenance of the churchyard at Corley Parish Church following the transfer of responsibility under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

10 **Housing Maintenance Service & Asset Management Plan** - Report of the Director of Housing

Summary

This report provides an update for Members about the delivery of the Asset Management Plan for the Council's Landlord stock and informs the Board about the challenges posed by an ageing stock profile and proposes a review of the Maintenance Team to support future service delivery.

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369).

- 11 **Leisure Facilities: Local Authority Trading Company** – Report of the Corporate Director – Resources and the Director of Leisure and Community Development

Summary

This report seeks the Board's approval to use the New Initiative Reserve through which to engage external advisory support to assist the Borough Council with its approved undertaking to establish a wholly owned Leisure Facilities Local Authority Trading Company.

The Contact Officers for this report are Sue Garner (719374) and Simon Powell (719352).

- 12 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

To consider whether, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12 A to the Act.

- 13 **IT System Replacement** – Report of the Head of Development Control and the Environmental Health Manager

The Contact Officer for this report is Erica Levy (719294)

- 14 **Staffing Matter** – Report of the Corporate Director – Streetscape

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

- 15 **Property in Coleshill** – Report of the Corporate Director – Streetscape

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

- 16 **Request to Purchase Land** – Report of the Director of Housing

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369).

- 17 **Confidential Extract of the minutes of the Resources Board held on 24 January 2022** – copy herewith to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

STEVE MAXEY
Chief Executive

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES BOARD

24 January 2022

Present: Councillor Symonds in the Chair

Councillors A Clews, D Clews, Davey, Deakin, Dirveiks, D Humphreys, Morson, Moss, O Phillips, Simpson and D Wright.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lees (Substitute D Wright).

27 **Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared at the meeting.

28 **Minutes of the Resources Board held on 8 November 2021**

The minutes of the Resources Board held on 8 November 2021, copies having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29 **Shuttington Wildflower Meadow**

The Director of Leisure and Community Development informed the Board of the use of the Chief Executive's urgent business powers to grant a Licence to Shuttington Parish Council, through which it has assumed responsibility for the management and maintenance of a wildflower meadow on Borough Council owned land in Milner Drive, Shuttington.

Resolved:

That the Board noted the use of the Chief Executive's urgent business powers to grant a Licence to Shuttington Parish Council, through which it has assumed responsibility for the management and maintenance of a wildflower meadow on Borough Council owned land in Milner Drive, Shuttington.

30 **General Fund Fees and Charges 2022/23**

The Chief Executive, Corporate Director – Streetscape, Corporate Director – Resources and Director of Housing reported on the fees and charges for 2020/21 and the proposed fees and charges for 2022/23.

Resolved:

That the schedule of fees and charges for 2022/23, as set out in the report of the Chief Executive, Corporate Director – Streetscape, Corporate Director – Resources and Director of Housing be approved.

31 General Fund Revenue Estimates 2022/23 – Services Recharged Across All Boards

The Corporate Director – Resources reported on the revised budget for 2021/22 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2022/23, together with forward commitments for 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26.

a That the revised budget for 2021/22 be accepted; and

Recommendation to the Executive Board:

b That the Estimates of Expenditure for 2022/23, as submitted in the report of the Corporate Director – Resources, be included in the budget to be brought before the meeting of the Executive Board on 14 February 2022.

32 General Fund Revenue Estimates 2022/23 – Services Remaining within the Board

The Corporate Director – Resources reported on the revised budget for 2021/22 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2022/23, together with forward commitments for 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Resolved:

a That the revised budget for 2021/22 be accepted; and

Recommendation to Executive Board:

b That the Estimate of Expenditure for 2022/23, as submitted in the report of the Corporate Director – Resources, be included in the budget to be brought before the meeting of the Executive Board on 14 February 2022.

33 General Fund Revenue Estimates 2022/23 - Summary

The Corporate Director – Resources reported on the revised budget for 2021/22 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2022/23, together with forward commitments for 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Recommendation to Executive Board:

That the following items be recommended to the Executive Board for consideration in setting the Council Tax of the Borough Council:

- a The revised budget for 2021/22; and**
- b The schedule of expenditure requirements totalling £8,652,800 for 2022/23.**

34 Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2022/23 and Rent Review

The Corporate Director – Resources reported on the revised budget for 2021/22 and gave an estimate of expenditure for 2022/23, together with forward commitments for 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26.

Resolved:

- a That the revised estimate for 2021/22 be accepted;**
- b That garage rents be increased by £0.50 per week in 2022/2023;**
- c That the rent be increased by 4.1% in 2022/23 in line with the social rent policy set by the Government;**
- d That the proposed fees and charges for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix D (as amended by recommendation B above) to the report of the Corporate Director – Resources, be approved;**
- e That the service charges for the cleaning of communal areas, as set out in Appendix E to the report of the Corporate Director – Resources, be approved from April 2022;**
- f That the service charges for window cleaning, as set out in Appendix F of the report of the Corporate Director – Resources, be approved from April 2022; and**
- g That the Estimates of Expenditure for 2022/23, as submitted, be accepted.**

35 Capital Programme 2021/22 to 2024/25

The Corporate Director – Resources identified changes to the Council's 2021/22 capital programme and proposals for schemes to be included within the Council's capital programme over the next three years.

Resolved:

- a That the changes to the 2021/22 revised capital programme be supported;**
- b That the proposed three-year capital programme, which includes the growth bids, set out in appendix A, be supported;**
- c That the proposed vehicle replacement schedule, shown in Appendix B, be supported;**

36 Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2022/23

The Corporate Director - Resources outlined the Treasury Management Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Investment Strategy for 2022/23.

Resolved:

That the proposed strategies for 2022/2023 be approved.

37 Atherstone Public Conveniences

The Corporate Director – Streetscape recommended the permanent closure of Atherstone public conveniences with effect from 1 April 2022.

Resolved:

- a That Members agree to the permanent closure of Atherstone public conveniences with effect from 1 April 2022;**
- b That, from that date, the site is declared surplus to requirements; and**
- c That the Corporate Director - Streetscape be given delegated authority to dispose of the site once the public conveniences have been permanently closed to the public.**

38 Appointment of PATROL Representative

The Corporate Director – Streetscape reported on the requirement for the Council to nominate a Member representative to sit on the joint committee of PATROL, following the implementation of Civil Parking Enforcement within the Borough of North Warwickshire from 1 February 2022.

Resolved:

That Councillor Denise Clews be nominated to sit on the Joint Committee of PATROL.

39 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.

40 Property in Coleshill

The Corporate Director Streetscape asked the Board to consider the de minimus work that had been undertaken and recommended some further steps for the Board to consider in respect of the property in Coleshill.

Resolved:

That the item be deferred to a future meeting, with further information provided.

C Symonds
Chairman

Agenda Item No 6

Resources Board

28 March 2022

HEART Shared Service Partnership

**Report of the
Director of Housing**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report updates the Resources Board about the HEART shared service partnership and makes a proposal for future joint working.

Recommendation to the Resources Board

- a That the progress to provide one, consistent service to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants and a Home Improvement Service for the whole County be noted;**
- b That the proposal that 2022 acts as a transitional year to allow Authorities to refresh key aspects of the Partnership, act to strengthen it and consider how full service integration could be achieved be approved;**
- c That the Director of Housing be authorised to sign a letter of intent to agree to extend the partnership contract arrangements during the financial year 2022/2023;**
- d That the strategic objectives of the HEART Board be confirmed;**
- e That the HEART Management Board's intention to draw on the expertise of Foundations to support it to innovate and develop HEART be welcomed;**
- f That the implications of the White Paper for Social Care for arrangements to deliver Disabled Facilities Grants be acknowledged; and**
- g That the recommendation of the HEART Board to continue to build the partnership during 2022 with a view to creating a new legal agreement for a 5 year Partnership from April 2023 be supported.**

2 Consultation

- 2.1 None undertaken.

3. Introduction

- 3.1 This report provides information about the HEART shared service Partnership. The Partnership was set up to improve the delivery of mandatory grants provided by Borough and District Councils to provide for adaptations for private householders (Disabled Facilities Grants). The system awards grants to tenants of Housing Associations. The service provides assessment recommendations for Local Authority tenants with an expectation that the landlord Council fund and deliver the adaptation. The aim of HEART is to deliver holistic home assessments and interventions to enable applicants to remain independent at home.
- 3.2 The shared service Partnership has been in place for 5 years and is subject to a legal contract which reflects the arrangements agreed by the six Councils in Warwickshire. It has one host – Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council. The service is delivered by two teams – one in the north and one in the south – with the host providing a single line managed staff structure. The HEART Management Board oversees the partnership arrangements and has representation from all 6 authorities involved.
- 3.3 The contract required an oversight review two years into the Partnership. Although the review report and the initial action plan were presented in February 2020 progress was interrupted by the necessity on partners to address and work within COVID-19 safety requirements. The requirements had an impact on the capacity of the HEART Board and service delivery.
- 3.4 Whilst the constraints were unavoidable progress was made against the action plan. More recently the Board has engaged Foundations, the national body for home improvement agencies for England, in advisory capacity to help it to review the focus and objectives for the Partnership so that it can continue to build a successful service for residents. This relationship is ongoing as the Board refreshes the strategic objectives for HEART and starts to understand the implications of the 2021 White Paper for Social Care. Foundations will support the Board to deliver the key tasks required to provide a sound basis for HEART as the Partnership looks to recommend the development of integrated arrangements from April 2023.
- 3.5 This report sets out the key tasks that need to be undertaken by the HEART Board over the next 12 months to provide assurance that the Partnership will be effective. The Board is intent on building on the ambition shown in the original project aims in order to deliver a fully integrated and efficient service.

4 Strategic Direction

- 4.1 As part of the two year review report a number of key strategic objectives were agreed in order to develop a robust and efficient partnership. These included:
- Specifying and procuring a bespoke IT system to support the case management and reporting undertaken by the service. To include in the project a review of the performance data provided to the Board.
 - Using budget reserves to increase the staff establishment and recruit dedicated duty officers support customer assessments and release other staff to undertake home visits.

- Reviewing the level of fee charges in order to revise the staff structure and meet current demand
- The appointment of an experienced consultant to review and recommend efficiencies in systems of work and in accordance with recommendations update procedures.
- The revision of procedures to enable the team to assess the need for urgent action and fast track interventions for customers at an early stage

4.2 Progress has been made to deliver all of these objectives however there was a notable task to update and revise the staff structure. This included ensuring HR policies support the team. Unfortunately pressures on HR Teams and the Board members over the last 2 years have meant that this objective has not been met. It will be prioritized during the first part of 2022.

4.3 The current five year Partnership Agreement expires at the end of March 2022. Following meetings supported by Foundations the HEART Board will be recommending that 2022 is a transitional year which will allow it to take stock of the purpose of HEART and seek to complete key tasks to move the service forward towards full integration. The move is supported as best practice by Foundations and reflects the ambitions set out in the Social Care White Paper for this type of service.

4.4 During the transitional year the key tasks for the HEART Board to direct the strategic purpose for the partnership are to:

- Refresh the Business Plan to ensure it reflects current intent and purpose
- Ensure the service delivery model reflects the Business Plan objectives and meets all partners requirements
- Update the staff structure to provide for sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the service and act to develop HR policies which support the team to be effective and efficient
- Complete the installation of the case management and reporting software
- Reflect on the leadership and governance requirements of the HEART Board and update the Partnership Agreement with any changes. Considerations will include appointing an independent Chair to the Board.
- Consider options for reporting customer satisfaction to the Board and key partners.
- Update the Housing Assistance Policy when the Business Plan and service delivery model are signed off

4.5 Underpinning the completion of these tasks will be considerations about how changes are reflected in the Partnership Agreement from April 2023 and clarity about financial arrangements and how costs of delivery are met. In addition the Board will need to set a clear direction for the service with regard to the level of performance it requires in addressing both demand and the quality of delivery.

4.6 The strategic objectives which will define the purpose of the HEART partnership and set a policy context will be reported through the relevant Governance procedures of each Authority.

4.7 Whilst the HEART Board will offer leadership to deliver these objectives it should be noted that the Local Authorities involved act as a Partnership and delivery will depend on the support and capacity in departments such as Finance, HR and Legal to provide advice and information.

4.8 The performance of the HEART Partnership will continue to be reflected in the Warwickshire Cares Better Together arrangements because the services provided can act to improve outcomes for well being. This recognizes the role of HEART in enabling residents to remain independent at home. Interventions include reducing non elective admissions to hospital, reducing delayed transfers of care from hospital, reducing permanent admissions to residential and nursing care and help to increase the effectiveness of re-ablement services

5. **Social Care White Paper 2021**

5.1 The Social Care White Paper has implications for the HEART Partnership. The Government intends to undertake a public consultation with regard to the legislation which underpins the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants during 2022. Nonetheless the Warwickshire partnership which started to come together in 2011 and culminated in the HEART Partnership anticipates the Government's future requirements for these services. There will be encouragement for Housing Authorities to take advantage of the opportunities for coordination and collaboration that the Better Care Fund offers to "make sure that people can quickly access the adaptations they need, in a way that is coordinated with other practical support they receive."

5.2 The future of services to deliver adaptations referred to in the White Paper is being influenced by Foundations as the representative body for home improvement services. This will continue as Disabled Facilities Grant legislation is updated and guidance is developed to ensure that Local Authorities can meet the needs of their residents and provide efficient and effective delivery of Grant related services.

5.3 Whilst the policy framework set out by the White Paper is developed the Government has committed to fund £570 million per year (2022–23 to 2024–25) for local areas to deliver the Disabled Facilities Grants. The Grant for Warwickshire is currently £4.4m.

5.4 The White Paper also indicates an intention to provide a fund to deliver new minor repairs and adaptations (effectively funding for handyman services).

5.5 The public consultation on the recommendations of the 2018 Disabled Facility Grant Review is planned for 2022 and will look at:

- The allocation of DFG funding to local authorities.
- The maximum amount a DFG can pay for a single adaptation.
- How best to align the means test with the social care charging announced in the Health and Social Care Levy in September 2021.

5.6 The HEART Management Board will act to incorporate any new legal requirements brought forward by Government however it will also anticipate any changes that will enhance the service for customers.

6 Report Implications

6.1 Financial and Value for Money

6.1.1 Government continues to provide funding for Disabled Facilities Grants which remain mandatory. This was £5,124,786 for Warwickshire in 2021/2022. For North Warwickshire specifically the grant funding for 2021/22 was £794,560. In addition, the Housing Revenue Account provides a budget of £185,000 for adaptations required in the Council's own stock. Although we are part of a shared service the grant provision designated for North Warwickshire is used for our own residents as the grant funding is not pooled.

6.1.2 The grant provision is part of Government Better Together funding which is paid to the County Council. The mandatory grant is given directly to the Boroughs and Districts from the County Council and has to support the provision of Disabled Adaptation Grants however it is not ring fenced entirely for that provision and therefore can be used for home improvement grants and to support hospital discharge arrangements. The joint Housing Financial Assistance Policy provides a clear framework for spending the grant.

6.1.3 The requirements for the Better Care Fund are set out in the Government's "Integration and Better Care Fund planning requirements for 2017-19". Adherence to these requirements is overseen by the Health and Well Being Board.

6.1.4 The Council employs one member of staff (a Housing Assessment Officer) as part of the HEART structure.

6.2 Legal and Human Rights Implications

6.2.1 The relevant legislation for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants is set out in the Housing Grants, (Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) and the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

6.2.2 The partnership arrangements ensure that all of the Local Authorities involved can contribute to the Care Act 2014 principle of universal assessment of need.

6.2.3 The shared service provisions must comply with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and of the Local Government (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2000. Any change or extension to the hosting arrangements as suggested above would, in addition to any contractual changes, require careful consideration of the 1972 Act and regulations and, may require a further resolution of the Council to implement.

6.2.4 The "Integration and Better Care Fund planning requirements document for 2017 - 19" explicitly states that Disabled Facilities Grant Funding can be used to support any expenditure incurred under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and therefore enables authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes. That document also states that this discretionary use of the funding can help improve delivery and reduce bureaucracy involved in the grant application process. Whilst this document related specifically to the 2017-19 period, this slightly wider use of funding is still permitted. Account will need to be taken of any updated planning requirements document.

6.2.5 The current shared service partnership contract ends on 31st March 2022. It is proposed that all partners agree for the current contractual arrangements to continue during 2022/2023 with a view to renewing the shared service from April 2023. A letter of intent which can be signed by all partners has been drafted to provide for this transition.

6.3 **Environment, Climate Change and Health Implications**

6.3.1 By supporting people to be able to live independently the Council is contributing directly towards the developing healthier communities' priority of the Health and Well Being Strategy.

6.3.2 Improvements to the HEART and continued delivery of this service should provide our customers with consistent information, advice and adaptations that will assist in improving their quality of life.

6.4 **Equality Implications**

6.4.1 The aim of the HEART is to improve the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grants service both in quality and timescales and offer a holistic assessment which is much more than just delivering adaptations. This should result in a positive impact for people with disabilities and other service users as defined under the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010.

6.5 **Risk Management**

6.5.1 The Council requires the grant funding provided by Government to deliver its mandatory duties to provide Disabled Facilities Grants. The use of grant for permitted wider purposes could put the funding for this specific duty at risk. However, this is recognised in the partnership documentation and the service will always act to provide funding for mandatory grants.

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
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Agenda Item No 7

Resources Board

28 March 2022

**Report of the
Director of Housing**

Vexatious Complaints Policy

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report asks the Resources Board to approve the introduction of a vexatious complaints policy to accompany the Housing Division's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

Recommendation to the Board

- a That the report included at Appendix A be considered; and**
- b That approval be given for the policy statement.**

2 Consultation

- 2.1 When the Resources Board has considered the vexatious complaints policy the Borough Wide Tenants Forum will be asked to give their feedback before it is introduced and published.

3 Background

- 3.1 The Tenancy and Neighbourhoods Team deal with complaints about anti-social behaviour and nuisance about tenants of the Council's dwellings. They do so in accordance with the approved Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and the supporting procedures.
- 3.2 Most complainants have a genuine complaint and co-operate with the Team in order to resolve it. Some complaints are serious and take time and a legal intervention to resolve but most are resolved in a reasonable amount of time without the need for legal action.
- 3.3 Recently the Team has had to deal with complainants that have an expectation that the Council will deal with and act on matters that they are concerned about but which do not necessarily fall within either the Council's tenancy conditions or its Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. Having sought legal advice on one such case the advising Counsel suggested that the Council introduce a vexatious complaints policy in order to provide clarity for staff and for tenants about how the Council will act when dealing with complaints.

4 **Draft Policy**

- 4.1 A draft of a policy position about how the Housing Division's teams will deal with what are deemed to be vexatious complaints is attached at Appendix A for the Board's consideration.
- 4.2 If adopted the policy will ensure that the Team can deal with complaints that are considered vexatious in a transparent manner. This type and level of complaint can be very time consuming and the expectations of the complainant mean that matters escalate even when the type of complaint made is not a matter that the Council can take action to resolve. Vexatious complaints also have an impact on the tenant complained about.

5 **Report Implications**

5.1 **Finance and Value for Money Implications**

- 5.1.1 The tenancy management service, including dealing with complaints about nuisance, is delivered by the Housing Management Section. The costs of the service are reflected in the Housing Revenue Account budgets. There will not be any additional budget requirement to implement this policy.
- 5.1.2 Dealing with vexatious complaints is time consuming for staff and stressful for those tenants who are subject to the multiple and constant complaints. This policy will help the team to resolve this type of complaint in a more effective manner.

5.2 **Safer Communities Implications**

- 5.2.1 An important part of the role of the Housing Management Section is to help create nice neighbourhoods where people choose and like to live. This policy supports that aim.

5.3 **Legal, Data Protection and Human Rights Implications**

- 5.3.1 The Council's legal basis for managing its tenancies is the Housing Act 1985 and the subsequent amendments to that Act. The primary contract with its tenants is the Tenancy Agreement. When managing its tenancies, the Council must act in accordance with the relevant legislation and the terms of its tenancy agreement.
- 5.3.2 The Council is required to conform to the housing regulator's Regulatory Framework and Standards. These include standards with regard to the neighbourhood in which tenants live and for dealing with anti-social behaviour and complaints.
- 5.3.3 A complaint may be made to the Housing Ombudsman if the complainant is not satisfied with the Council's response. The Ombudsman may also consider the Council's handling of a complaint as well as the original issue giving rise to the complaint. Accordingly, whilst the Council may on occasions have to deal with a complainant robustly under the proposed policy, care should be taken to apply its

provisions where there is no reasonable alternative and to do so on a measured and objective basis.

- 5.3.4 It should be noted that, even if the policy were implemented in relation to a complainant regarding a specific issue, the Council may still have an obligation to engage with that person in relation to other services and/or the discharge its statutory duties.

5.4 **Equalities Implications**

- 5.4.1 Before taking any action as defined by this policy staff will satisfy themselves that the complainant's individual circumstances have been taken into account including such issues as age, disability, gender, race and religion or belief. The Anti-Social Behaviour Policy provides for a risk assessment procedure which includes these considerations.

The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369)

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Persistent or Vexatious Complaints Policy

Housing Division policy on dealing with abusive, persistent or vexatious complaints and complainants

1. About this policy and procedure

- 1.1 This policy is about the management of abusive, persistent and/or vexatious complainants. It sets out how North Warwickshire Borough Council's Housing Division ('the Council') will deal with complainants that fall within the scope of this definition. Those identified will be treated consistently, honestly and proportionately while ensuring that other service users, officers and the Council as a whole suffer no detriment. This policy applies to cases in which the Housing Division is required to take action.
- 1.2 It is considered that all complainants have the right to have their concerns examined in line with the relevant complaints procedure. In most cases, dealing with complaints will be a straightforward process; however in a minority of cases, the complainant may act in a manner that is deemed unacceptable.
- 1.3 They may act in a way that is considered abusive, unreasonably persistent or vexatious and by doing so it may hinder the Housing Division's ability to investigate their complaint or the complaints of others. This behaviour may occur at any time before, during or after a complaint has been investigated.
- 1.4 The time spent on dealing with all complaints should be proportionate to the nature of the complaint and consistent with the outcome that is being sought being realistic and achievable.

2. How is unreasonable complaint behaviour defined?

- 2.1. It should be noted that raising a complaint about a Council service does not in itself constitute unreasonably persistent behaviour and neither do complainants who escalate through all stages of the relevant complaints procedure or those who express criticism about the complaints process itself.
- 2.2. The Housing Division has adopted the Local Government Ombudsman's definition and the identified characteristics for unreasonable or unreasonably persistent complainants "*For us, unreasonable and unreasonably persistent complainants are those complainants who, because of the nature or frequency of their contacts with an organisation, hinder the organisation's consideration of their, or other people's, complaints*".
- 2.3. Examples of unreasonably persistent behaviour:
(this list is not exhaustive, nor does one single characteristic on its own imply that the person will be considered as being in this category)
 - Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of help.
 - Refusing to cooperate with the complaints investigation process.

- Refusing to accept that certain issues are not within the scope of the Council's jurisdiction or within the scope of a complaints procedure.
- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted complaints procedure or with good practice.
- Making unjustified complaints about staff who are trying to deal with the issues, and seeking to have them replaced.
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds.
- Denying or changing statements he or she made at an earlier stage.
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information at a later stage.
- Raising many detailed but unimportant questions, and insisting they are all answered.
- Submitting falsified documents from themselves or others.
- Adopting a 'scatter gun' approach: pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue with various members of staff and/or organisations.
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of staff with lengthy phone calls, emails to numerous council staff, or detailed letters every few days, and expecting immediate responses.
- Submitting repeat complaints with minor additions/variations, which the complainant insists make these 'new' complaints.
- Refusing to accept the decision; repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence.

2.4. Examples of abusive and/or vexatious complainants

The Council will take steps to protect its staff from members of the public who are behaving in a way which is considered abusive and/or vexatious. This may include physical or verbal abuse and could include the following (however this list is not exhaustive):

- Speaking to the member of staff in a derogatory manner which causes offence.
- Swearing, either verbally or in writing despite being asked to refrain from using such language.
- Using threatening language towards Council staff which provokes fear.
- Repeatedly contacting a member of staff regarding the same matter which has already been addressed

3. **Managing unreasonable complainant behaviour**

3.1 This policy may be invoked if the Council considers that a complainant has behaved in a manner which is deemed unreasonable (see above). The Council may take any actions against a complainant that it considers to be reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances.

3.2 Types of actions the Council may take:

- Where the complainant tries to reopen an issue that has already been considered through one of the Council's complaints procedures, they will be informed in writing that the procedure has been exhausted and that the matter is now closed
- Where a decision on the complaint has been made, the complainant should be informed that future correspondence will be read and placed on file, but not acknowledged, unless it contains important new information
- Limiting the complainant to one type of contact (e.g. telephone, letter, email, etc.)
- Placing limits on the number and duration of contacts with staff per week or month
- Requiring contact to take place with a named member of staff and informing the complainant that if they do not keep to these arrangements, any further correspondence that does not highlight any significantly new matters will not necessarily be acknowledged and responded to, but will be kept on file
- Assigning one officer to read the complainant's correspondence, in order to ensure appropriate action is taken

- Offering a restricted time slot for necessary calls to specified dates and times
- Requiring any face to face contacts to take place in the presence of a witness and in a suitable location

4. **Matters to take into account before taking action**

- 4.1 Before taking a decision to invoke this policy consideration should be given to whether any further action is necessary, such as:
- Consideration about whether it is appropriate to convene a meeting with the complainant and a senior officer in order to seek a mutually agreeable resolution
 - If it is known or suspected that the complainant has any special needs then consider offering an independent advocate who may assist the complainant with their communication with the Council
 - Where more than one department is being contacted by the complainant, agree a cross departmental approach; and designate a lead officer to co-ordinate the Council's response.
- 4.2. Staff must be satisfied before taking any action as defined by this policy that the complainant's individual circumstances have been taken into account including such issues as age, disability, gender, race and religion or belief.

5. **Imposing restrictions**

- 5.1. In the first instance the Tenancy Services Officer in consultation with the Housing Services Manager or Tenancy Services Manager will communicate to the complainant either by phone or in writing to explain why this behaviour is causing concern, and ask them to change this behaviour. The Complaints Team will explain what actions the Council may take if the behaviour does not change.
- 5.2. If the complainant continues with the unreasonable behaviour the Complaints Team will consult with the Head of Legal and Compliance about whether it is necessary to take appropriate action by invoking this policy.
- 5.3. When the decision has been taken to apply this policy to a complainant, the Complaints Team will contact the complainant in writing (and/or as appropriate) to explain:
- why this decision has been taken
 - what action the Council will be taking
 - the duration of that action
 - the review process of this policy
- and
- the right of the complainant to contact the Housing Ombudsman about the fact that they have been treated as a persistent/vexatious complainant.
- 5.4. Any restriction that is imposed on the complainant's contact with the Council will be appropriate and proportionate and the complainant will be advised of the period of time the restriction will be in place for. In most cases restrictions will apply for between three and six months but in exceptional cases may be extended. In such cases the restrictions would be reviewed on a quarterly basis.
- 5.5. If the complainant continues to behave in a way which is deemed unacceptable then the Complaints Team, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, may decide to refuse all contact with the complainant and cease any investigation into his or her complaint.

5.6. Where the behaviour is so extreme or it threatens the immediate safety and welfare of staff, the Council will consider other options, for example reporting the matter to the Police or taking legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant prior warning of that action.

6. New complaints from those who have been treated as being abusive, vexatious and/or unreasonably persistent complainants.

6.1. Any new complaints received from complainants who have come under this policy will be treated on their merits. The Council does not support a blanket ban on genuine complaints simply because restrictions may be imposed upon that complainant.

7. Review

7.1. The Tenancy Services Officer will review any restrictions which are imposed upon the complainant after three months and at the end of every subsequent three months within the period during which the policy is to apply.

7.2. Should the decision be taken to extend the period of restriction, the complainant will be advised in writing how the Council plans to go about this and that the decision to restrict contact will be put in place for a further specified period (e.g. six months). The outcome of any subsequent review will be communicated to the complainant, outlining if the restrictions will continue to apply and if so why.

7.3. If at the end of the restricted period it is considered that the complainant's behaviour is no longer deemed to be unreasonable, the Council will confirm this in writing advising that the restrictions have now been lifted.

8. Ceasing Contact with a Complainant in relation to the issue concerned

8.1. There may be occasions where the relationship between the Council and unreasonably persistent or vexatious complainants breaks down completely. This may even be the case while complaints are under investigation and there is little prospect of achieving a satisfactory outcome. In such circumstances, there may be little purpose in following all the stages of the complaints procedure. Where this occurs the Council will advise the complainant that they may approach the Housing Ombudsman who may be prepared to consider a complaint before the procedure has run its course.

9. Record Keeping

9.1. The Tenancy Services Team will keep a record of all complainants who have been treated as being unreasonably persistent, abusive and/or vexatious in accordance with this policy. This will include details of why the policy was invoked, what restrictions were imposed and for what period of time.

9.2. Anonymised information will be reported in the complaints annual report.

10. Links with other policies

10.1. Please note that this policy is not exhaustive and does not cover all forms of behaviour that may be considered unreasonable.

Agenda Item No 8

Resources Board

28 March 2022

**Report of the Corporate Director -
Streetscape**

**Off-Street Parking Scheme for
Residents**

1 Summary

- 1.1 Following the public questions considered at Full Council in January and in response to wider concerns expressed about off-street parking restrictions for residents with no immediate access to on-street or driveway parking, officers are proposing a trial scheme to make off-street parking easier for those residents worst affected.

Recommendation to the Board

- a That the Board agrees to the implementation of a trial off-street parking scheme for residents, as set out at 3.2 in the report, for twelve months; and**
- b That a further report be brought back to a future meeting of the Board updating Members on the scheme's success and recommending next steps.**

2 Background

- 2.1 Civil Parking Enforcement and the new Off-Street Parking Places Order and associated Schedules came into force on 1 February 2022. Under the new regime, overnight parking remains free in most of the Council's off-street car parks and a two hour charge-free period has been introduced. One issue which has been raised by residents of Innage Terrace, Atherstone, among others, is that where there are no on-street or driveway parking alternatives, the requirement to obtain a parking ticket or book a session, although free of charge, is unduly onerous. This is a particular concern for those residents who work shifts or antisocial hours.

3 Proposed Off-Street Parking Scheme

- 3.1 In response to the concerns raised, officers have been investigating the options to make the current arrangements work better for those residents worst affected without compromising the availability of spaces to other residents or significantly increasing the cost to the Council of providing off-street parking service.
- 3.2 Officers are therefore proposing a focused residents' off-street parking scheme, as follows:
- 3.3 In brief, it is proposed that:
- The scheme covers only those households for whom the only reasonable available parking adjacent to their home is in one of the Council's long stay car parks.
 - Households would be able to register up to three vehicles with the Council (as long as each vehicle was registered at an address covered by the scheme).
 - The vehicle details would be logged on the Council's handheld equipment (no physical permits would be necessary).
 - At one designated car park only, registered vehicles parked between the hours of 8am and 10am, and 4pm and 6pm would not be required to display a parking ticket or register for the stay on the app.
 - This would effectively allow overnight parking free of charge from 4pm to 10am Monday to Friday.
 - Parking outside those hours for any length of time (including Saturdays) would need to be paid for at the usual rate (£3 Saturday all day).
- 3.4 The proposed arrangements will not give residents anything additional to what they already have access to. There is currently no restriction on vehicles parking overnight for free in the Council's car parks. Furthermore, the two hours charge-free parking already in place allows users to extend an overnight stay in the morning or at night (essentially by obtaining a charge-free two hour ticket to park). The proposed scheme would simply remove the requirement to get a charge-free ticket (or to book a session through the app) each time.
- 3.5 It is proposed that the scheme would operate at Cattle Market and Sheepy Road car parks in Atherstone, as well as residents who use Pear Tree Avenue in Kingsbury, Church Hill and Parkfield Road in Coleshill and Birmingham Road in Water Orton.
- 3.6 If approved, the Council would contact affected residents directly as well as promoting the scheme on the Council's website and elsewhere.

4 Report Implications

4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 4.1.1 There are no additional costs associated with the implementation of the proposals set out in this report. There will be no loss of ticket income and the staffing time spent administering the scheme will be more than offset by the reduction in time spent dealing with related enquiries, complaints and appeals.

4.2 Legal and Risk Management Implications

- 4.2.1 The proposed changes will reduce unnecessary enforcement and eliminate appeals and refunds associated with local residents legitimately using the Council's off-street car parks for overnight stays. Since it is a change only to the arrangements for enforcement of an existing right to park for free, it does not require a formal process to change the existing order or charges under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984. Whilst the formal process would not apply to this proposal, should Members agree the recommendation, it would be prudent to publicise the change in a similar manner to that required under the Act to ensure that residents understand how to make utilise their rights to park.

4.3 Safer Communities Implications

- 4.3.1 On street parking issues are regularly raised as a community safety issue to the North Warwickshire Safer Neighbourhood Team. These proposals should help those residents who use the Council's off-street car parks overnight on a regular basis.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440)

**Report of the
Corporate Director - Streetscape**

Closure of Corley Churchyard

1 Summary

- 1.1 The report advises the Board on the Council's obligation in respect of the maintenance of the churchyard at Corley Parish Church following the transfer of responsibility under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Recommendation to the Board

That the Council's obligations in respect of the maintenance of the churchyard at Corley be noted.

2 Background

- 2.1 Under Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972, a Parochial Church Council (PCC) can require local authorities, upon three months' notice, to assume responsibility for the maintenance of a closed churchyard, or specific parts of a churchyard, which are deemed to be closed. A churchyard is closed if one of the following conditions is met:
- The churchyard is full;
 - The continuing use of the churchyard for burials may constitute either a risk to public health or be contrary to decency; or
 - The discontinuance of burials may prevent or mitigate nuisance.
- 2.2 If an incumbent and Parochial Church Council (PCC) wish a churchyard to be closed, an Order in Council under the Burial Act 1853 (Section 1) has to be sought from the Home Office.
- 2.3 Initially, following issue of such an Order, the obligation to maintain a closed churchyard is passed to the Parish or Town Council, who may decide to accept the obligation or decline. In the instance of a Parish or Town Council resolving to decline to maintain the churchyard, the obligation is then passed to the Borough Council.

3 Closure of Corley Churchyard for Burials

- 3.1 On 15 December 2021, the Council was given notice of the intention to close Corley Churchyard to burials. On 16 February 2022, the Council was informed that the decision had been made and the Order granted to discontinue burials at Corley churchyard.
- 3.2 As set out above, the obligation for taking on responsibility for the closed churchyard was initially passed to Corley Parish Council. On 8 February 2022, the Parish Council resolved to formally request the Borough Council to assume responsibility for maintaining the closed churchyard and confirming that it will accept no responsibility for such from the date of closure.
- 3.3 Under the 1972 Act, onus is on the Parochial Church Council (PCC) to ensure that the churchyard is “in decent order and its walls and fences in good repair” before responsibility passes to the local authority. Council officers have since visited the site to assess the overall condition.
- 3.4 The required works to maintain the churchyard in good order will be absorbed by the Council’s Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleaning teams. Any future repair or maintenance work on the walls and fences of the churchyard will be assessed by the Facilities Management Team and dealt with accordingly.

4 Report Implications

4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 4.1.1 There are no immediate financial implications as the necessary works required to maintain the churchyard in good order will be absorbed into existing grounds maintenance and street cleaning work programmes. The costs and implications of any future capital works will be considered at the time, but the requirement on the PCC to transfer the site in “decent order” and “good repair” means that there are no immediate liabilities or significant works required of the Borough Council.

4.2 Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 4.2.1 Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972 obliges the Borough Council to maintain the closed churchyard “by keeping it in decent order and its walls and fences in good repair.” The effect of acting under Section 215 of the 1972 Act is to transfer the functions and liabilities of the PCC with respect to the maintenance and repair of the churchyard to the local authority. This does not mean that the churchyard itself is transferred to the local authority nor any other functions or liabilities. All other rights and powers of the PCC in relation to the churchyard remain unaffected.

4.3 **Environment, Climate Change & Health Implications**

- 4.3.1 Continued maintenance of the churchyard will ensure that it continues to contribute to the built heritage of the village.

The Contact Officer for this report is Richard Dobbs (719440).

Agenda Item No 10

Resources Board

28 March 2022

**Report of the
Director of Housing**

**Housing Maintenance Service &
Asset Management Plan**

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update for Members about the delivery of the Asset Management Plan for the Council's Landlord stock and informs the Board about the challenges posed by an ageing stock profile and proposes a review of the Maintenance Team to support future service delivery.

Recommendation to the Resources Board

- a That the current position of the Housing Asset Management Plan be noted;**
- b That the implications of the Social Housing White Paper be considered;**
- c That it is acknowledged that the Asset Management Plan and 30 Year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan will be reviewed during 2022/2023;**
- d That the development of the Housing Direct Works team to meet the demands on the service be welcomed and the proposal to undertake a review to further develop the team (including a review the salary structure) to meet the demands on the service be noted;**
- e That the market supplement for the Carpentry and Bricklayer trades approved by the Special Sub-Group and shown at Section 7 of the report be approved;**
- f That approval is given for the temporary roles of multi trade Plasterer and Decorator to continue whilst the review is undertaken; and**
- g That the progress to deliver the major works programmes be welcomed and risks caused by increased costs and delays for materials be noted.**

2 Consultation

- 2.1 As programmes of work are developed and planned the Housing Division informs Local Councillors and notifies tenants about the anticipated works to their homes.

3 Overview

- 3.1 Progress to deliver the Asset Management Plan for the Council's landlord stock was previously reported to the Board in January 2021. The term of the current Plan ends in March 2022. This report anticipates a comprehensive review of the Plan during 2022/2023 with the need to consider emerging legislation for social housing landlords and the Government's drive to deliver zero carbon homes.

- 3.2 The Asset Management Plan is concerned with both maintenance works which keep the Council's assets in good order and the management of the stock. The current Plan is at Appendix A for information.

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- 3.3 Since the Plan was agreed Government has published its White Paper on Social Housing on 17 November 2020. Whilst a Bill has not yet been produced to reflect the considerations in the White Paper both the Housing Ombudsman and the Social Housing Regulator have been active in anticipating the requirements for landlords that will be forthcoming.

- 3.4 The White Paper is particularly concerned with the safety of buildings, promises to review the Decent Homes Standard and states that the role of the Social Housing Regulator will be enhanced – including re-introducing an inspection regime. The White Paper sits alongside and compliments the Building Safety Bill and considerations about fire safety regulations.

- 3.5 Since the current Asset Management Plan was published the Government has relaunched its commitment to delivering zero carbon homes. The Council has done extensive retrofit works to its stock over the last five years to improve energy efficiency. In face of a sharp increase in costs for this type of work over the last 18 months future programmes are under review.

- 3.6 The Council has a 30 Year Business Plan for the Housing Revenue Account. This financial Business Plan underpins the Asset Management Plan as it sets out how income and expenditure will be managed. Revenue for services provided for in the Asset Management Plan is from rent income. This has previously been under pressure because Government constrained rent increases to take the pressure off Housing Benefit expenditure. It is now under pressure because of the increase in costs linked to the economic situation. The Business Plan sets out the income expected against risks to collection and then allows for expenditure to meet the Council's priorities for its housing stock. During 2022/ 2023 we will start to reconsider what those priorities might be in the next 5 to 10 years.

4 **Delivery of the Asset Management Plan 2018-2022**

- 4.1 The capital programme priorities funded by the Housing Revenue Account aim to ensure that the housing stock continues to meet the Decent Homes Standard and that all health and safety requirements are met. This part of the service is delivered by both the Planned Programme/ Asset Management Team and the Response Repairs Team.
- 4.2 The annual capital programme should deliver against the priorities set out in the Asset Management Plan in accordance with the funding provided by the 30 Year Business Plan. During the last two years there have been some logistical issues with delivery caused by the Pandemic. Nonetheless most critical programmes have continued. This includes:
- A roofing programme. 56 new roofs were provided in 2019/20 and 41 in 2020/2021. This followed a pause due to the first phase of lockdown requirements. There have been problems obtaining specific types of roof tile which has caused delays for some properties.
 - During the last 2 years major works have been undertaken to improve the Council's flats and do essential works at Welcome Street and Alder and Heather Court in Atherstone, Long Street and Church Road Dordon, Monument View Polesworth and Oldbury View Hartshill. This included a flat to pitched roof conversion at Alder and Heather Court and a new flat roof at Monument View. Works are now progressing well at Alexandra Court which will benefit from a new pitched roof, new windows and improved insulation.
 - The external wall insulation and new windows programmes of work to provide more energy efficient homes have been a success for individual properties across the Borough over the lifetime of the Asset Management Plan. Since 2015 329 properties have had new windows fitted and 379 have had the benefit of external wall insulation. In addition the flats at Welcome Street and Alder and Heather Court have also benefitted from new windows and external wall insulation.
 - During 2019/20 126 new, efficient gas heating systems were installed. From July 2020 to March 2021 47 were installed. Boilers have to be replaced every 15 years to meet the Decent Homes Standard. Over the last 6 months energy efficient Air Source Heat Pump heating systems have been installed in properties in Baxterley, Dordon, Baddesley and Maxstoke.
- 4.3 Health and safety requirements are an essential part of the Asset Management Plan. Whilst the Maintenance Team are competent in matters relating to health and safety the service does benefit from the support of a designated Health and Safety Officer. The post has been vacant for the last 2 years but a recent appointment means that this role will be back in place to give assurance that health and safety requirements are met. The post holder will also support the Director of Housing with the forthcoming requirement to

have a person responsible for compliance with statutory health and safety responsibilities that is visible and accessible to tenants requires consideration. In practical terms they are delivered from a range of actions:

- A major programme of electrical upgrades was started in 2018 by way of a partnering contract with Solihull MBC and Dodd Group. The Pandemic has resulted in some access issues but this is improving. To date we have delivered 1493 Electrical Inspection Condition Reports. During the visit we take the opportunity to undertake any priority repairs and then plan for either upgrades or a rewire if required. Programmes of work have also been undertaken to flats. This includes major upgrade work in the communal areas of flats to ensure fire safety as well as individual properties. The delivery of these safety works remains a critical priority in the capital programme.
- It is a legal requirement for the Council to undertake an annual gas boiler service within 12 months of the previous one. The performance required with our external contractor is 100%. Sometimes gaining access can cause a delay. There were 12 outstanding services on 31 March 2021.
- In 2020 we provided new Fire Risk Assessments for all of the common areas in the Council's flats and the sheltered scheme communal rooms as well as our homeless hostels. We have completed a programme to install fire doors to flats. An inspection programme for fire doors will be a priority for 2022/2023.
- Asbestos management is dictated by our Asbestos Management Plan and supported by two contracts – one for surveys and one for removal prior to works commencing. Records are kept against properties on the asset management software.
- Systems are in place, supported by a specialist testing company, for protecting premises from Legionella.
- The CDM requirements underpin all of the work undertaken in both teams. Having clear and robust risk assessments and method statements in place is critical. Staff are given suitable training and information to meet health and safety requirements and to be competent in them as they undertake their roles.

4.4 Members will be aware from financial reports to the Board that there has been pressure on capital budgets caused by the need to address issues arising from an ageing stock. This has included extensive work to individual properties to remove causes of damp, deal with structural problems and also remedial works to flats to prevent conditions from becoming dangerous before major programmes of work can be delivered. Delivering these works is resource intensive in terms of staff and budget.

- 4.5 Over the term of the Plan there has been an increased demand to provide for adaptations to properties to meet the needs of tenants with a disability and to support their independence. Works to provide level access showers, stairlifts and ramps can be largely routine depending on the specification but extensions are resource intensive. During 2020/2021 56 adaptations were delivered to support tenants to live independently at home.
- 4.6 The Housing Revenue Account provides budget annually to support the development of new homes. In the past few years regeneration schemes have been the priority. There have been delays to the schemes in Atherstone because of the Pandemic. Developments on Coleshill Road and Long Street should be completed by the end of April 2022. The Council bought 10 houses from the Hatters Close development in Warton to supplement its stock and developed 10 following the demolition of 4 properties on Trinity Close, Warton.
- 4.7 Letting the Council's vacant properties involves all of the front line teams in the Housing Division – Housing Direct Works, Lettings Officers and Tenancy Services Officers. 151 vacancies were let during 2020/2021. Some required extensive work due to their age and took longer to let. We aim to complete works to standard voids within 20 working days.
- 4.8 The Asset Management Plan sets out the Council's intention to deliver proactive tenancy and neighbourhood management. The Council's tenants have security of tenure – a lifetime tenancy if they do not break their tenancy conditions. This means they have obligations with regard to the upkeep of their tenancy. The Council also has obligations but how it delivers them will dictate the cost of the service and the effective management of the asset.
- 4.9 Tenancy Services Officers continue to work in a hybrid manner whilst the Neighbourhood Warden service is on site to ensure that blocks of flats and surrounding areas are in good order and safe.
- 4.10 Tenant engagement is encouraged by way of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum and their work is supported by local Community Panels and ad hoc tenant involvement meetings. How we engage with tenants will be reviewed in the next few months to incorporate the ability to meet remotely and engage by way of social media to encourage involvement.

5 Implications of Social Housing White Paper 2020

- 5.1 The revised Asset Management Plan will have to set out how the Council will meet the requirements of the regulations for social housing.
- 5.2 Whilst there is no date yet for a Bill to follow the White Paper both the Social Housing Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman are being proactive in directing the activity of social landlords. The following summarises the main priorities being heralded:

- The Housing Regulator has set out their intention to be more proactive in monitoring the performance of social housing landlords. A first step will be the introduction of a full suite of Tenant Satisfaction Measures to be collected in 2023 and published annually from 2024. The proposed measures are included at Appendix B of the report.

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- Over the next 12 months the role of Building Safety Regulator will be introduced as part of the Building Safety Bill requirements. They will be concerned with the safety of all buildings.
- The Housing Ombudsman is proactive and has recently set out guidance about dealing with complaints from tenants about damp in their homes and about responding to heating and hot water system failures. Comprehensive guidance has been provided about complaints handling procedures.
- The Housing Division has published customer care standards to meet the current requirements and will also publish a new complaints procedure to reflect the Housing Ombudsman’s best practice guidance.

5.3 Particular safety matters are also referred to in the White Paper. Legislation is expected to require landlords to identify a nominated person for complying with their health and safety requirements. There will be a requirement to provide smoke alarms and expectations for carbon monoxide alarms with measures introduced to ensure that social housing residents are protected from harm caused by poor electrical safety. Landlords will be expected to ensure there are arrangements for residents voices to be heard with regard to building safety

5.4 In strengthening the role of the Regulator the White Paper states the Government’s intention to “put safety at the heart of social housing regulation”. There will be a requirement for all landlords to have a person within the organisation for compliance with their health and safety responsibilities. The Paper makes it clear that this person “should be visible and accessible to tenants”. It will be a nominated person required in law and should be sufficiently to drive a culture of safety throughout the landlord organisation. The new Health and Safety Officer will support the Director of Housing in delivering this requirement.

6 **Maintenance Team**

6.1 Maintenance for their homes is an important service for tenants. Good maintenance of properties is a key aspect of the Housing Regulator’s requirements for social housing and is subject to legislation. As well as being accountable to Councillors and tenants the Council’s housing services are expected to meet the requirements of the Housing Regulator. The Maintenance Service requirements are set out in the ‘Home Standard’. This states that a Registered Provider should with regard to repairs and maintenance:

- Provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service

- Respond to tenants' needs, offer choice and have the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time
- Meet all statutory requirements for health and safety of occupants

6.2 Over the last 5 years the Resources Board has made decisions which have changed the structure of the Maintenance Section to ensure major programmes of work could be delivered and tenants receive the response repairs service that they expect. Two teams deliver the service. There is a Planned Investment Team that tenders and delivers major works programmes and a Response Repairs Team (Housing Direct Works) that responds to tenants' requests for repairs to their homes and manages gas and electrical services.

7 **Housing Direct Works**

7.1 The new structure for the Housing Direct Works Team is settled. There has been an improvement in performance and productivity. For response repairs services this generally relies on three key factors – appointments made and kept, competent tradesmen and ready access to materials.

7.2 For most jobs ordered by a tenant an appointment can be made at the same time they call to report the repair. The job is allocated directly to a tradesman (Plumber, Carpenter, Electrician) who takes responsibility for ensuring it is completed. The system works well and for these jobs the average turn around is 7 days. The system allows for emergencies to be attended quickly. Right first-time performance is currently an average of 95%. Some jobs need more organisation because of the materials required and health and safety implications (for example working at heights). All of these jobs are appointed with the tenant but can take an average of 28 days.

7.3 The Housing Direct Works Team provides the response repairs service for tenants. The team consists of multi skilled Plumbers, Carpenters and Bricklayers as well as Electricians and Labourers. Whilst qualified tradesmen have one main trade, they operate in a multiskilled/ multi trade manner to ensure efficiency and good productivity.

7.4 Having competent and diligent tradesmen to assess and complete the repair is essential to the system. There are two Chargehands who support the organisation of the work but the effectiveness of the service is dependent on the tradesmen. Following the arrangements provided by the new structure the productivity of the team has improved. A key indicator of this is that the service has been less reliant on contractors to support it to get core work completed. Traditionally the service has relied on a designated contractor to provide this support. As the organisation of the team has improved the need has lessened and there has been a saving in the Trading Account. The flexibility in the workforce and their ability to undertake more than one trade has been the most significant change that has achieved this shift in reliance on a supplementary sub-contractor. We are keen to sustain this and seek further improvements.

7.5 Having the right stock of materials on vans is another critical element for productive working. When it is not possible to have materials on vans the logistics and timeliness of deliveries are critical to efficiency. Over the last 3 years we have changed our materials suppliers (one for general trades and one for electrics) and we have seen improvements in stock availability. Increases in prices which all organisations in construction are experiencing are having an impact on this service but we are managing it closely with our suppliers.

... 7.6 The overall structure of Housing Direct Works remains productive. It is attached at Appendix C for information. The default of the service is for the in house team to undertake both the quick response repairs and the larger jobs that need to be planned. This part of the service is managed by the Response Repairs Supervisor. Maintenance Surveyors organise for the works that are not undertaken by the in house team. This includes home adaptations recommended by HEART/ Occupational Therapists and structural works to dwellings as well as addressing damp in properties.

7.7 Recent reports to Corporate Management Team and Special Sub Group have raised awareness that over the last two years the market for qualified tradesmen has become very competitive. Companies requiring tradesmen to deliver their services have been paying ever increasing salaries to recruit and sustain their staffing levels. The difference in salaries in the public sector compared to the private sector has been a concern and a constraint to recruitment for a number of years and the Council has addressed this as required. Following a prolonged period of not being able to recruit Plumbers into the team the Resources Board agreed a market supplement in 2019 for this critical role. The application of this helped with recruitment and sustained this part of the team. In addition we have recruited agency staff to fill vacancies. This ensures we can meet demand but has created differences in hourly rates paid to tradesmen undertaking the same work.

7.8 Tenants have consistently voiced their support for an in house team to deliver response repairs. The Team prides itself on customer care and has shown a consistent positive attitude to customer service throughout the Pandemic continuing to provide a 24/7 repairs service throughout. With the new structure embedded we want to continue to develop the team. For example over the last 18 months tradesmen have achieved a qualification which has moved them from multi skilled to multi trade. This shift enables supervisors to organise the work more efficiently. It has also allowed for flexibility in the team with two tradesmen moving into different roles because of an increase in demand and in doing so preventing the need to use sub contractors.

7.9 Recently Special Sub--Group agreed that a market supplement could be awarded to the Bricklayer and Carpentry trades to try and sustain the current team and help with recruitment. However it is recognised that this is a partial and interim solution only. The Director of Housing intends to consider and review the salary structure in the Housing Direct Works Team and to report back to both the Resources Board and the Special Sub Group in the next 6 months. As part of that review how we can achieve flexibility in the team will

also be considered. Flexibility in a front line team such as this is achieved by having multi skilled/ multi trade tradesmen. However it can also be achieved by having a flexible structure that is stable with regard to numbers in the establishment but allows for tradesmen to be recruited in accordance with the demand on the service. To support the team and, in recognition of recruitment challenges, the Director of Housing will also bring forward proposals for the recruitment of apprentices. The service has traditionally supported one Apprentice at any one time. This has been very successful. Building on this experience we will consider proposing having more than one Apprentice in the team.

- 7.10 The quality of electrical installations is high profile in the White Paper and with Regulator as a key area of safety. The provision of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in social housing is to be made mandatory and landlords are expected to provide a safety certificate every 5 years. (The Council has programmes in place to meet these requirements now). The Supervisor of the in house team of 3 Electricians ensures that regulatory requirements are met. The service is accredited with the NICEIC. A contractor is being used to support the team to provide safety reports for dwellings currently but over time we expect to bring more of this work in house. To do so should be better value for money.

8 Planned Investment Team

- 8.1 The Planned Investment Team assesses what work programmes are required to sustain the Council's residential stock in good condition using the Decent Homes criteria. The team tenders the contracts and when the programmes are on site they monitor and manage the works.
- 8.2 The team has been stable for the last five years and the extensive programmes of work delivered over that time are evidence of the competence and commitment in the team. Nonetheless with an imminent retirement in the team we have tried to recruit recently but received no applications. In conjunction with considerations for staffing the Housing Direct Works team we will also consider how we can sustain the Planned Investment Team. This will ensure that we can continue with our principle that all contractors must be monitored and managed – even the good ones. It is also important that we can sustain this team if the Council wants to continue providing new build developments for its own stock in future.

9 Report Implications

9.1 Finance and Value for Money

- 9.1.1 Since the Council met the Government's Decent Homes Standard as required by 2010 its ability to commit funding to a full capital programme for its housing stock has been constrained. The constraint is a result of payments necessary to fund its subsidy system settlement and a period when Government set a cap on rent levels.

- 9.1.2 The annual capital programme (excluding new build schemes) is in the region of £3.5m. It is critical that the team continues to build on its successes to deliver the Council's capital programme, take actions to ensure health and safety requirements are met and to address matters which will be agreed as part of the Asset Management Plan. Programmes of work are based on stock condition data which is held on the asset management database. Funding of around £1m annually is made available for new build/ regeneration schemes as part of the capital programme. The level of capital funding available on an annual basis is not sufficient to enable the team to tackle structural repairs in older blocks of flats which are not a traditional structure. Resources Board has acknowledged this and has provided additional funding for blocks at Alexandra Court and Drayton Court. Works required to and costs for the blocks at Abbey Green Court will be subject to a specific report to Resources Board during 2022.
- 9.1.3 In order to meet electrical safety regulations funding for the electrical testing programme will be prioritised again in 2022/2023. A full testing programme will continue. Following the tests remedial works is undertaken as required and upgrades or re-wires arranged. The extent of the work required is significant and reflects the lack of a regular programme until 2018. Remedial work is also required in the communal areas of flats. A programme started in 2018 to upgrade the electrical installations and provide for better lighting and smoke alarms. We need to continue with an extensive electrical upgrade programme over the next two years. When the catch up repairs are completed a routine programme will be established to undertake tests to properties every 5 years.
- 9.1.4 Following budget approval by the Resources Board for extensive works to the blocks of flats at Alexandra Court and Drayton Court work is progressing well at the former. Leasehold consultation will start for the works at Drayton Court in the next few months. The extensive, structural works are also required at Abbey Green Court and will require close communication with tenants and leaseholders before a works programme is agreed.
- 9.1.5 Over the last 6 years the Planned Investment Team has delivered successful programmes of work for External Wall Insulation. Most of the programme was for individual properties. Work has also started on flats. Some funding has been made available from Government (£5,000 for each property) but most of the funding has been provided by the Housing Revenue Account. Nonetheless grant funding of £340,000 has supported these schemes of work.
- 9.1.6 No specific budgetary arrangements are in place or are proposed at the current time for works to garages, a replacement fascia programme where a new roof is not required or to communal rooms. Remedial works will be undertaken if resource is available or urgent works are required.
- 9.1.7 Major works are contracted out. Contracts are in place for the extensive works we are undertaking to blocks of flats and for structural works to dwellings as well as adaptations for disabilities. We are experiencing increases in costs for

all contracts. This reflects the cost increases for materials, transport and people. A tender for improvement works to kitchens and bathrooms has been put out and one is due for new roofs. The partnering contract with Solihull MBC is being retendered this year as the current arrangement ends in October 2022. Budgets to fund the capital works programmes are under pressure due to the increase in costs. The capital programme will be kept under review in consideration of rising costs.

9.1.8 The budget to deliver the response repairs service is £1.7m annually. This budget supports the work of the in-house team and the gas installations contract as well as asbestos, Legionella and fire safety management. A reduction in the use of a designated contractor to support the work of the in house team of tradesmen has helped to improve the budget position over the last 12 months. We intend to sustain this position by using the workforce flexibly to deliver the service. The proposals that we intend to develop to appoint apprentices will be subject to the Trading Account being able to afford the salaries.

9.1.9 The supplement agreed by the Special Sub Group will be applied to the Carpenters and Bricklayers in the establishment and would be used in advertising current vacancies. The table below shows the additional costs associated with the market supplement.

	Top of scale Grade 7 Spinal Point 17 £	Top of scale Grade 8 Spinal Point 21 £
Salary	24,491	27,041
National Insurance	2,182	2,512
Apprenticeship Levy	122	135
Superannuation	4,923	5,435
	31,718	35,124
Additional costs per Tradesman		3,405
x 9 Tradesman		30,647
The above figures are subject to a pay award		

9.1.10 The additional employee costs to the Housing Revenue Account's Repairs Fund would be £30,647 per annum, whilst in place, which can be funded from the Repairs Fund balances. If we can recruit into the team with the market supplement, there will be a saving on agency staff costs. The Trading Account budget can sustain the continuation of the employment of an additional multi trade Bricklayer and Decorator to support the team to address works required in void properties for a further six months. Contracting this work out would be a more expensive option.

9.1.11 Achieving value for money for tenants dictates that we need to deliver services which receive good satisfaction feedback, are cost effective and are comparatively good performing when benchmarked with other social landlords. In a recent survey 82% of tenants responding said that they were satisfied with the overall housing service provided by the Council and 83% expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of their home. 85% said there were satisfied that their home was safe and secure. 84% of the tenants surveyed were satisfied with their neighbourhood. Whilst positive we want to improve on this feedback.

9.1.12 Multiple visits to properties to fix a repair is a cause for dissatisfaction for tenants and can be a signifier of inefficiency in the service. It can also be a signifier of a poor quality repair. Whilst Supervisors are able to use reports to monitor these jobs we intend to pilot some new software which will assist the team to eliminate/ reduce multiple visits. It uses algorithms to track jobs in the system and flag up those that have had previous visits for the same or similar repair. Having tracked the job the tradesman being asked to return to the property will be advised that this is 'multiple visit' job and be expected to address the problem so that no further return is required. Supervisors will also track these jobs so that they can understand the issue and act to resolve it. The cost of the software for the first year will be £6,000. This should be offset by a saving if the number of multiple jobs is reduced.

9.2 Safer Communities Implications

9.2.1 The Council owns properties on estates in most areas of the Borough. If its' stock of homes and garages is not kept in good order and are empty for long periods blight can be caused to estates. In addition to matters set out in this report the revised Asset Management Plan actions will set out to ensure that these matters are addressed and that the Council's assets are also an asset to the community.

9.3 Environment, Climate Change and Health Implications

9.3.1 The Maintenance Service should ensure that work is undertaken to ensure Council properties are energy efficient. It also plans for future work which will be carried out. Energy efficient homes benefits the tenant through reduced household costs and also the environment. Making homes more energy efficient reduces their carbon emissions and in turn supports the Councils commitment to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

9.3.2 The Council's stock contributes to the provision of affordable housing. The provision of affordable housing is a key contribution towards ensuring sustainable communities and this is reflected in the Developing Healthier Communities priority of the North Warwickshire Sustainable Communities Strategy 2009-2026.

9.4 Human Resources Implications

- 9.4.1 Over the last 12 months to meet specific demand for repair works in void properties two of the Labourers in the team have been placed temporarily in roles to provide plastering and decorating. Creating these temporary roles within the team has prevented the need to use sub-contractors to support the team to meet the demand and has also benefitted the team because we are taking the opportunity to develop staff. Given that the demand for this type of work has not abated we intend to continue with this arrangement for the 6 months period of the review.
- 9.4.2 Given the constraints to recruitment as part of the review of the salary structure of the Housing Direct Works Team we will consider how we can develop a programme for apprenticeships. Apprenticeships have been successful in the past. One of our past Apprentices is now a Chargehand in the service. Nonetheless the team has had limited capacity to bring more than one into the team. As the team has developed over the last 2 years there is now an opportunity to consider having an apprentice for each of the key front line trades.
- 9.4.3 The White Paper states an intention to review the professional training and development qualifications for housing staff – including senior staff. Government is establishing a working group to explore the relevance and value of professional qualifications and consider best practice – including for delivering support to customers with mental health issues.

9.5 Legal Implications

- 9.5.1 The Council has to meet legal requirements as a landlord for maintaining gas installations, electrical installations, for health and safety arrangements, building regulations and Right to Repair.
- 9.5.2 Building safety issues have become more high profile following the Grenfell Tower fire. There is considerable legislation which covers regulatory requirements that must be adhered to. There have been recent changes to enhance these and more is expected to ensure buildings are safe.
- 9.5.3 The Council has legal duties set out in the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 to ensure its buildings are not in disrepair and to consult with leaseholders about proposed repairs which are deemed qualifying works. If a tenant suffers disrepair as a result of the Council's failure to meet its repairing duty under the 1985 Act the Council can be liable to pay damages for any harm suffered. Further, if as a result of the Council's failure to maintain the structure of buildings a leaseholder's property is damaged, the Council can be liable to pay damages for their losses.
- 9.5.4 There are two main steps in the legal requirements for consultation with leaseholders about qualifying works. The first is a written notice of intention. The second is written notification about the estimates / tenders received. In

this situation we will seek a dispensation from the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal for the second stage.

- 9.5.5 As well as being accountable to Councillors and tenants the Council's housing services are expected to meet the requirements of the Housing Regulator. The Maintenance Service requirements are set out in the 'Home Standard'. This states that a Registered Provider should:

With regard to quality of accommodation:

- Continue to maintain at least the decent homes standard after December 2010
- Meet the standards of design and quality that applied to the home when it was built if they are higher than the Decent Homes Standard
- Consider whether the locally agreed standard can be more than the Decent Homes Standard (the continuing need for energy efficient homes is a factor here)

With regard to repairs and maintenance:

- Provide a cost effective repairs and maintenance service
- Respond to tenants' needs, offer choice and have the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time
- Meet all statutory requirements for health and safety of occupants

- 9.5.6 Systems of work in the Response Repairs team are expected to adhere to the 'Right to Repair' legislation. The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires the Council to proactively address the condition of properties. This legislation has been enhanced recently by the Homes (Fitness for Habitation) Act 2018. It amends the 1985 Act and applies to our tenancies since March 2020. It provides for a new implied covenant that the premises are fit for habitation at time of letting and during the term of the tenancy. Crucially it allows tenants to challenge their landlord directly in Court. The Act underpins current legislation and sets out that a property could be deemed unfit (if it is defective and not reasonably suited for occupation) due to issues such as disrepair, stability, damp & mould growth, excess cold, crowding and spacing, lighting and noise. There is an exception if the tenant has caused the issue by not acting in a tenant like manner.

- 9.5.7 A significant amount of health and safety legislation and regulation applies to the work of the Housing Maintenance Service. This includes those for gas (annual servicing and works), Legionella management, Asbestos management, fire safety (especially in communal areas), electrical installations (programmes and works), working at heights and manual handling. The CDM requirements underpin all of the work undertaken in both teams and having clear and robust risk assessments and method statements in place is critical. Staff must be given suitable training and information to meet health and safety requirements and to be competent in them as they undertake their roles.

9.5.8 The Social Housing White Paper sets out intentions for a new regulatory regime for all social housing landlords. When this is enacted the Council will have to act to meet the requirements.

9.5.9 The Building Safety Bill responds to the Dame Judith Hackitt Independent Review. Dame Judith set out four broad concerns with regard to complex buildings however future legislation will require specific safety requirements in all buildings.

She said that in the construction and maintenance services she found:

- Ignorance – of current regulations and guidance
- Indifference – a culture of doing things quickly and cheaply
- Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities – which results in lack of accountability
- Inadequate regulatory oversight and enforcement tools – the size & complexity of the project not informing the way it is overseen by the regulator
- This indicates significant issues to be resolved in the culture of construction companies and procurement practices.

The Building Safety and Fire Safety Acts which have been developed as a consequence of the Hackitt report will apply to the Council's services.

9.6 Equality Implications

9.6.1 The provision of affordable housing is a positive contribution towards equality objectives by providing opportunities particularly for younger people and families to access affordable housing in the borough. The Council's services for its tenants aim to provide equal access for all and to be able to tailor services to meet particular needs.

9.7 Risk Management Implications

9.7.1 The age of its stock and health and safety requirements mean that it is important to be able to continue to take a more proactive approach to managing the Council's assets.

9.7.2 This report sets out the current position and requests funding to invest in important programmes of work that have been delivered over the last few years. During this financial year there will be a wider review of the Council's assets with an intended outcome of proposing programmes of work which ensure they are maintained to a safe and decent standard.

9.7.3 As highlighted in the report the ability of the service to recruit staff and sustain the teams is a risk. Both the private and public sectors are finding it a challenge to recruit and sustain competent staff and this has caused demand in the market. Considering pay grades, developing the staff in the team, providing professional training for staff and introducing apprenticeships for succession planning will help to mitigate this risk.

- 9.7.4 The availability and cost of materials is a challenge to delivering the maintenance service. It is a challenge because there can be long lead in times for materials and because of the pressure increased costs are putting on budgets. In some circumstances the work will have to be halted or slowed. Working with long standing, experienced contractors is helping to mitigate these issues but they cannot be eliminated as they are universal.
- 9.7.5 We will need to consider the requirements of the forthcoming Fire Safety Act 2021 with regard to cost implications and capacity to deliver what is expected in the legislation.

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NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING DIVISION

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

2018 - 2022

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Executive Summary

1 Introduction and Context

1.1 Context

Much has been achieved since the last Asset Management Plan was published in 2013. The previous Plan set out some key objectives for the Housing Division. The achievement of these has set a firm foundation for the activities set out in this Plan. They include:

- New build schemes in Atherstone, Grendon and Polesworth to add to those in Fillongley, Arley, Kingsbury and Water Orton.
- Completing regeneration schemes in Atherstone & Mancetter
- Continuing to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard
- Major works to the roofs of blocks of flats
- Extensive programme of works to provide energy efficient heating systems
- Robust arrangements for health and safety compliance
- Completion of condition surveys of properties & garages
- Restructuring the Housing Maintenance Service
- Developing a proactive Tenancy and Neighbourhoods service
- Achieving good levels of tenant satisfaction

1.2 Scope

The Housing Division Asset Management Plan covers all of the housing stock owned and managed by North Warwickshire Borough Council and includes garages and sheltered scheme communal rooms.

1.3 Definition and Purpose

This Asset Management Plan provides a framework to enable us to manage the stock proactively and support the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan objectives. It is important that the Council's housing assets continue to meet housing needs. It helps to ensure that resources for maintaining the assets in good condition and investments made are clearly focussed.

1.4 Corporate Goals and Objectives

The objectives for the Asset Management Plan support the strategic objectives set out for the housing service in the Corporate Plan. These include sustaining the decent homes standard as a minimum throughout the stock, building new homes, ensuring the efficient and effective management of the Authority's asset, involving tenants in the service and ensuring we tailor our services our customers needs.

1.5 Lifespan and review process

This plan reflects the changes in the social housing sector as well as progress made locally over the last few years. Since the last Plan was agreed there has been renewed emphasis on the safety of social housing tenants, the reform to the housing subsidy system has allowed for funding for new build to meet the needs for affordable housing, Homes England is now the regulator for social housing and changes have been made to how we deliver services locally. This includes developing a Maintenance Service which provides for an effective balance between improvement programmes and reactive responsive repairs. Tenancy services are focussed on rent collection following the introduction and roll out of Universal Credit and

neighbourhood services have a focus on good housekeeping and safety in flats and sheltered schemes.

This Plan offers a position statement with regard to the Council's housing assets and looks to the future as we build on the firm foundations over the last two years. The action plan covers 3 years with a view to fully revising the Plan from 2021.

1.6 Data Sources

The Asset Management Plan links strategic and operational drivers for the Housing Division's services. In order to achieve this link this plan considers:

- the profile of the stock and its condition
- the priorities identified by tenants
- performance and benchmarking information
- Corporate Plan objectives and Government direction on housing

2 Current Position

This section outlines the Council's current position with regard to its stock, meeting housing need and understanding tenant priorities.

The housing stock totals 2,690 as at 31st December 2017. The stock condition survey information has been updated.

3 Use of Resources

The Council's 30 Year Business Plan is directed at ensuring its property assets remain in good condition and, when funding is available, building new homes. Government policy has meant that rents have been reduced year on year since 2016/2017. The policy has been revised to allow for rent increases from 2020. The policy introduced in the Housing and Planning Act 2015 which allows for an assessment of and levy against high cost voids to pay for a Private Registered Provider Right to Buy scheme remains in place although Government has not yet claimed any payment. Consultation has been undertaken about appointing a stand alone, new regulator for the social housing sector.

4 Future Direction

This Asset Management Plan sets out the Council's current position with regard to the management of its stock. The Plan also looks forward. There are a number of steps which need to be undertaken to ensure the sound development of that 3 to 5 year plan. A broad outline of the work required to progress our Asset Management Plan is set out in the Plan and this includes work to be undertaken to:

- Meet Housing Needs
- Involve tenants and understand and meet their priorities
- Retain the stock in good condition
- Ensure health and safety requirements are met in full
- Provide a service which is value for money
- Understand risks to delivering the Plan

The Government has stated its intention to set out a direction for social housing in a forthcoming Green Paper. Future plans will reflect on Government policy and set out the Council's response.

1. Introduction and Context

1.1 Context

North Warwickshire is a rural Borough with the largest centres of population in the market towns of Atherstone, Coleshill and Polesworth.

The Council's stock is spread over a rural area with a significant amount of its properties in Atherstone (598), Arley (164), Dordon (128), Mancetter (166) Polesworth (303), Kingsbury (164), Baddesley (154), Hartshill (130) and Coleshill (137).

The previous Plan set out some key objectives for the Housing Division. The achievement of these has set a firm foundation for the activities set out in this Plan.

They include:

- Works programmes to improve the energy efficiency of homes
- The review of systems of work to provide for robust arrangements for health and safety
- Building new homes to add to the Council's housing stock
- Undertaking regeneration schemes at Lister Road, Atherstone and Church Walk, Mancetter
- Completing a new stock condition survey
- An assessment of the demand for and condition of the stock of garages
- A review of the Lettings Scheme to ensure housing need is met
- Change of policy to allow for sheltered scheme flats to be let to younger applicants
- Incentive scheme to support tenants to downsize
- Providing for a Tenancy Services and Neighbourhoods Team able to achieve high rent collection rates and manage the Council's asset.
- Achieving good levels of tenant satisfaction

In addition to taking opportunities to bid for Social Housing Grant to build new homes, the Council has also successfully bid for properties which have become available as part of planning Section 106 Agreements. Buying from private developers has enabled us to sustain a supply of Council owned properties for social rent without the need to buy land because our own supply is limited.

This Asset Management Plan provides a revised focus for the Council in the context of the findings of the comprehensive stock condition survey which has been undertaken and the demand for its properties due to changes in the Private Rent Sector and welfare reforms. Since the last plan the Asset Management Team has been established to provide for programmes of work through tendering or partnering to keep the Council's stock in good condition and the Housing Direct Works Team has been reviewed to provide response repairs efficiently. In both teams the technical and health and safety expertise has been enhanced to meet regulations and expectations. As part of the Waterloo Housing Group consortium the Council continues to be a development partner with the Homes England and able to attract Social Housing Grant. Since the last plan this has seen two distinct phases. In 2015 the levels of Social Housing Grant reduced significantly. At this time Section 106 Agreement properties were bid for and delivered. Grant availability has increased again and there should be opportunities as part of this plan to access it and use it to meet local needs. The housing regulator has changed but the regulatory system has remained largely the same. The Government is consulting about its plans to have a stand alone regulator for social housing. Welfare arrangements using Universal Credit have been rolled out and will impact on the Council's tenants further from September 2018. Interest in the Right to Buy scheme remains strong.

Some of the changes offer opportunities whilst others pose risks which have to be addressed. The Housing Division develops an Asset Management Plan as a stand alone document because of the detail necessary to provide a clear direction for the management of the assets that the Housing Division manages. The Plan has been developed in a way that enables tenants to understand the current position of the Housing Division with regard to Asset Management and future direction. The Borough Wide Tenants Forum has been fully informed about the decisions which have been necessary to establish the foundations set out in the Plan and have been asked for their views.

This Asset Management Plan identifies the investment and maintenance needed to contribute to the Council's strategies. The Asset Management Plan supports and is informed by the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Asset Management Plan reflects the priorities set out in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. This 30 year plan has been agreed by the Council to reflect its position with regard to the Housing Revenue Account now that there is no subsidy

system. It has been adjusted to reflect the reduction in rents that the Government introduced in 2016/2017. The budget set out in the Business Plan takes into account the stated Government policy to levy funds for the sale of “high cost voids” to pay for a Right to Buy Scheme for Private Registered Providers.

The outcome of the Council’ Stock Options Appraisal was a commitment to stock retention which is also a commitment to providing homes in sustainable communities into the future. This has not changed. The financial information set out in the 30 year Business Plan underpins this commitment. However it is noted that there are risks to the Business Plan. These include collecting rent income in the face of the welfare reform agenda, the possibility of increased ‘Right to Buy’ sales following the criteria changes and the “high costs voids” levy.

1.2 Scope of the Asset Management Plan

The Housing Division Asset Management Plan covers all of the housing stock owned and managed by North Warwickshire Borough Council and includes garages and sheltered scheme communal rooms.

North Warwickshire Borough Council is responsible for the management of 2690 properties (at 31st December 2017). The breakdown of the Council stock by location is set out in appendix 1. The Council has of stock of 1093 garages and 22 sheltered scheme communal rooms. It manages 105 blocks of medium rise flats.

The Housing Division’s vision is:

“To provide customer focussed services by well trained knowledgeable staff with tenants fully involved at a level suitable for them at both strategic and operational levels.”

The focus of the whole team delivering management and maintenance services is to manage a very important asset for the Council corporately and most importantly for the tenants who live in the Council’s properties and on estates that the Housing Division manages. Both the Management and Maintenance Sections work together to provide services which are aimed at maintaining and improving the Council’s asset to ensure we provide homes and estates where people choose to and want to continue living. This is the case whether we are carrying out day to day repairs, bringing homes up to modern standards, managing tenancies so that they remain in good condition or providing neighbourhood services to keep estates to a high standard and free from anti social behaviour.

1.3 Definition and Purpose of the Asset Management Plan

This Asset Management Plan provides a framework to enable us to manage the stock proactively and support the 30 year Business Plan. It helps to ensure that resources for maintaining the assets in good condition and investments made are clearly focussed on meeting current and future customers' housing needs in terms of type of properties available, location, facilities and standards.

1.4 Corporate Goals and Objectives

The objectives for the Asset Management Plan support the strategic objectives set out for the housing service in the Corporate Plan. These include sustaining the decent homes standard as a minimum throughout the stock, building new homes, ensuring efficient and effective management of the Authority's asset (including collecting rent due), involving tenants in the service and ensuring we tailor what we do to our customers needs. The aims of this plan also need to support the actions set out in the Council's Homelessness Strategy to ensure we can meet housing need.

1.5 Objectives for the Asset Management Plan

The objectives for the Asset Management Plan support the strategic objectives set out for the housing service in the Corporate Plan this includes ensuring that the Authority takes a strategic and proactive role in meeting the housing needs and associated issues across all tenures and that housing plays a fully integrated role in corporate initiatives. The plan therefore aims to:

- Set out the role of the Council's stock in meeting housing need
- Set out the resources required to keep the asset in good condition, sustain the Decent Homes Standard as a minimum for the whole of the stock, improve its energy efficiency and as funding allows building new homes.
- Ensure the service offers best value for the rents tenants pay
- State how high standards of health and safety for customers and the workforce will be sustained
- Deliver services which meet tenants priorities and encourage tenant involvement
- Assess the risks posed to achieving the aims of the Plan

1.5 Lifespan and Review Process

This Asset Management Plan is a working document that drives decision-making in the management of the Council's housing stock of dwellings and garages and sheltered scheme communal rooms.

A considerable amount of work has been carried out since the last Asset Management Plan in to review and improve services provided by the Housing Division to manage the Council's assets. Firm foundations for Asset Management into

the future have been laid and provide a clear direction. We now need to work to mature the service and work with Councillors, tenants and other stakeholders to make decisions that enable us to tackle repair issues in the stock at the same time as meeting tenants expectations for modern homes.

This plan reflects achievements made to date but mainly looks forward. It aims to set a direction for the service in the new context it finds itself in.

This Plan offers a position statement with regard to the Council's housing assets and looks to the future as we build on the firm foundations developed over the last two years. The action plan covers 3 years with a view to fully revising the Plan from 2022.

1.6 Data Sources

The Asset Management Plan links strategic and operational drivers for the Housing Division's services. In order to achieve this link this plan considers:

- the profile of the stock and it's condition, and
- the priorities identified by tenants
- services required to provide sustainable neighbourhoods

This information is then used to inform:

- the programmes of work
- the budget profile, and
- the methods of delivery
- future arrangements for tenancy and neighbourhood management services

The data used in the preparation of this plan are from:

- current information about responsive repairs and stock condition data as held on the IBS housing management system
- financial information in the 30 Year Business Plan
- performance data and customer satisfaction feedback

2 Current Position

2.1 Overview

As a social housing landlord the Council is a Registered Provider and as such is subject to regulations. In accordance with the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing the Council ensures it meets the national standards. The national standards underpin all aspects of the Council's landlord services from customer care and tenant involvement, rent collection, property maintenance, tenancy and neighbourhood management. The Regulator is particularly concerned with the safety of tenants and the last few years have seen action taken against landlords who have failed to meet gas safety requirements and do not have fire safety measures in place.

The Council's local commitments are set out in its 'Tenant Partnership Agreement' which is reviewed annually and submitted to the Resources Board for consideration. Understanding tenant priorities through their involvement and scrutiny arrangements is critical to the success of asset management planning.

In accordance with the regulations a report setting out our performance across all of the housing services delivered is published annually.

The Housing Division participates in a national benchmarking club and undertakes an annual satisfaction survey in order to measure performance. The most recent tenant satisfaction survey shows that 83% of respondents were satisfied with the overall condition of their home. 85% expressed satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live.

2.2 Stock Profile and Condition

The housing stock totals 2,690 at 31 December 2017. In summary the stock comprises:

Property	Size	Number
Bedsit		24
Flat	1 Bed	459
	2 Bed	129
	3 Bed	11
Maisonette	1 and 2 Bed	27
Houses	1 Bed	8
	2 Bed	427
	3 Bed	928
	4 Bed	59
	5 Bed	1
Bungalows	1 Bed	311
	2 Bed	306
Total		2690

In the last Asset Management Plan we reported a stock of 2739 properties as at 31st March 2012. 82 properties have been sold since 2015. 73 of these were houses. Since the last plan enhanced 'Right to Buy' regulations which provide for up to £75,000 discount in some circumstances have been in place. Some of the sales have been new properties built by the Council to meet housing need.

During January and February 2018 we have let new houses and flats at Cadman Close and Joseph Cadman Close, Mancetter. We have also let new build houses and bungalows in Polesworth.

The table below sets out the new build properties developed by the Council since 2010. We have developed 129 new properties to date for our own stock.

Development	Number and types of property
Beavons Close, Water Orton	9 x 2 bed bungalows
Eastlang Road, Fillongley	2 x 2 bed houses and 2 x 3 bed houses
Laurel Close, New Arley	2 x 2 bed houses and 4 x 3 bed houses
Stanyers Close, Kingsbury	3 x 2 bed houses and 3 x 3 bed houses
Dragons Court, Atherstone	9 x 2 bed bungalows
Jenners Court, Atherstone	9 x 2 bed bungalows, 4 x 2 bed houses and 3 x 3 bed houses
Lister Road, Atherstone	3 x 2 bed flats, 1 x 1 bed flat, 4 x 3 bed houses
Princess Road, Atherstone	2 x 2 bed bungalows
Chetwynd Drive, Grendon	4 x 2 bed houses, 1 x 3 bed house and 4 x 4 bed houses
Hastings Road, Grendon	2 x 2 bed houses and 2 x 3 bed houses
Wood View, Grendon	2 x 2 bed houses and 1 x 3 bed house
Cadman Close, Mancetter	4 X 2bed houses and 2 x 3 bed houses
Joseph Cadman Court, Mancetter	6 x 1 bed flats and 8 x 2bed flats
Byford Drive, Polesworth	1 x 2bed bungalow
Grinham Avenue, Polesworth	4 x 3 bed houses
Little Jims Close, Polesworth	5 x 2 bed houses and 5 x 2 bed bungalows
Thompson Way, Polesworth	8 x 1 bed houses, 1 x 2 bed bungalow, 9 x 2bed houses and 2 x 4 bed houses

The Council needs good data to inform its work programmes. Since the last plan was published the Housing Division has reviewed the software used to capture the data and an in house team of surveyors has proactively undertaken condition surveys of our stock. They have accessed and surveyed most of the stock and updated our Decent Homes database. In addition to undertaking surveys of individual properties technical surveys have been carried out at some of the Council's blocks of flats where the fabric of the building is showing signs of deterioration and to assess the condition of the flat roofs on blocks of flats.

The stock condition database is kept up to date as improvement programmes are completed to properties to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. Information is held on the Housing Division's housing management system and can be readily used and reports can be drawn from it to inform programmes of work. It includes dates when properties had improvement works and predicts when future improvement work will be required in accordance with the component life cycles set out in the Decent Homes Standard. Capital programmes are based on this

information and supplemented to ensure homes are energy efficient. The Decent Homes life cycles are set out in appendix 2. The development of the team delivering programmed works over the last two years will mean that this area of work retains the priority it requires to provide for good information about the Council's asset.

Where the stock is older we are starting to see the break down of the fabric of some buildings which can lead to problems of damp and disrepair. We have had to undertake extensive, major works to a number of vacant properties over the last two years and we are experiencing an increase in reports of damp from tenants. In addition some of our blocks of flats are in need of significant remedial work. Addressing these issues is captured in the 'Future Direction' section of the Plan.

The condition of some of our properties that become vacant is poor. There are a variety of reasons for this. For some the fabric of the building has been found to be poor with extensive, major works required to floors and walls. In others older tenants have refused improvement works and they are in need of modernisation. Unfortunately some properties are returned in a poor condition because of the behaviour of the tenants. Whatever the reason if a vacancy needs more work than would normally be expected there is a cost to the Housing Revenue Account both for the remedial work and loss of rent.

Future planned works programmes are based on information held in the housing management system about the expected lifespan of component types with consideration for age and condition as well as energy efficiency and the provision of modern facilities. The Council does not have a published local policy with regard to addressing the needs of its stock. Its main reference point is the Government's Decent Homes Standard. However its continuing ambition for its asset is to sustain it in good condition and ensure it remains in demand.

The Regulatory Framework sets out its expectations with regard to the stock of Registered Providers in the 'Home Standard Section'. This requires Providers to maintain their homes to at least the Decent Homes Standard, have a prudent approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas with an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs and be able to show value for money in all aspects of its maintenance service. An adaptations service has to be provided and statutory requirements have to be complied with for health and safety.

The investment priorities to ensure resources are available to support the management and maintenance of the Council's stock is set out in appendix 3. The Council's housing stock is in demand and continues to benefit from good levels of investment. There was a period after the Decent Homes Programme ended in 2011 when investment was driven by information from responsive repairs information and requests. Over the last two years Councillors have agreed to move back to a more traditional way of working and the Asset Management Team has been developed to be able to deliver the level of work programmes required to keep the stock in good condition.

The work programmes which have been developed are to provide consistent programmes of work to ensure that properties continue to meet the Decent Homes Standard however we have also started a stream of bespoke works to flats and to individual properties with serious structural defects.

The Council has a stock of 1093 lock up garages for rent. A survey of the Council's garages was undertaken during 2016. The survey is detailed and splits the stock into three main categories. There are blocks which are at the end of their useful life, would not be economical to repair and should be demolished. There are blocks that would benefit from significant investment to bring them back to a good standard. There are other blocks that are generally in good repair but would benefit from minor repairs and a painting programme. Many garages have asbestos roofs and care will have to be taken to deal with those to safeguard health and safety.

There are currently 62 long term vacant Council garages across the Borough (38 less than reported in the last Plan). Four underused garage sites were used to provide new affordable rural homes for rent in 2010. Other sites will be considered to provide for development but access issues are making them less attractive than those already used.

The Housing Division manages 22 communal rooms as part of its sheltered schemes. Two have had conversion works since the last Plan was published. At Rowland Court, Arley the local Pharmacy undertook works to provide for a pharmacy premises in the room and in doing so they developed new facilities for the communal room using the old boiler house. At Eastlang Road, Fillongley the large, underused communal room was divided to give a smaller communal space for the sheltered scheme in order to allow for a one bedroom flat to be developed for letting. The

rooms are all in good condition and do not need any major works however some are under utilised and will be reviewed as part of this Plan.

2.3 Meeting Housing Needs

The Council's stock plays a critical role in the local housing market to meet the need for affordable homes. Whilst owner occupation remains a clear aspiration for many and the Government has provided for schemes to assist first time buyers affordability is still an issue for some families and single people can be an issue. The private rented sector remains relatively small in this area with rent levels and the need to provide a deposit being prohibitive for some households. Access is also restricted due to welfare benefit changes. Universal Credit criteria mean that rent payments are paid direct to the tenant and not the landlord and Local Housing Allowance rates have bedroom restrictions in accordance with household size. As access to home ownership and private sector housing has been squeezed over the last three years there has been an increase in the need to find accommodation for applicants who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. The most prevalent shortfall to meet demand is for two bedroom homes.

Our biggest demand is for Atherstone and Mancetter and Polesworth and Dordon. Demand for family homes generally outstrips supply in Coleshill, Water Orton and Kingsbury.

The Council's own stock turnover continues to be relatively low at around 6%. This is an indicator of sustainable communities however it also means there is pressure to meet housing demand. The Council's ability to provide new homes and to work in partnership with Registered Provider partners to develop more affordable homes in the Borough remains a priority. Nonetheless it should be noted that the Council's ability to provide for new affordable homes to rent direct and its partnership with Waterloo Housing Group are the main contributors to increasing the supply as other Private Registered Providers have limited interest in developing in the Borough.

The type of properties which become vacant does change however profiling indicates that around 40% of vacancies are houses 20% bungalows and 40% flats. This means that as well as ensuring focussed services for our older tenants we also need to consider services for younger tenants who may be moving into their first home to live independently and as well as support to settle in and deal with financial issues or life skills may also require assistance to ensure that they are able to manage their obligations with regard to maintaining their home in good condition and repairing

responsibilities. The introduction of Introductory Tenancies since the last Plan was published is helping the Tenancy Service Team manage tenancies closely in the first 12 months.

Our contribution is important as the largest stockholder of affordable rent homes in the Borough. We recognise that for the Council to continue to provide properties where people choose to live our asset management must provide properties which meet modern standards and are part of estates which are in good condition and free from anti social behaviour. Currently we have a low refusal rate and we intend to work to sustain that.

The Council recognises the importance of making the best use of its own stock. Whilst it has no hard to let properties data collected as part of the lettings process indicates that some properties are less in demand than others. Following decisions by the Resources Board to change our policy sheltered schemes of flats have been allocated to younger applicants over the last two years and this has largely addressed areas where there was a consistent issue of no waiting list for these areas. Nonetheless there remain some areas where properties can be more difficult to let.

In order to improve the occupancy levels of its current stock the Council should continue building properties which offer older people a positive choice to move out of their larger family homes and by giving tenants applying to downsize high priority in the Allocations Scheme. The support scheme provided to tenants' downsizing which was developed following the last Asset Management Plan has worked well and remains in place. We will continue to use our customer information to discover how many properties are under occupied in order to encourage transfers to smaller homes in order to make better use of the stock.

The Housing Division is realistic with regard to the extent that its own properties can help to meet housing need. The changes to the Letting Scheme since the last Asset Management Plan has created an housing register which is based on housing need and the Council's ability to meet the need of individual applicants. Qualifying criteria were agreed when the Scheme was overhauled in 2013. Since then the waiting list has had a rolling average of 300 applicants registered. The majority are family households. The scheme is concerned with addressing housing need and reduced the number of applicants who registered an application as a 'safety' measure for future plans and the number of tenants registering a speculative request to move not

linked to housing need. The Council lets around 160 properties a year from current stock. The average waiting time is 3 to 4 months.

2.4 Modern and Energy Efficient Homes

The Council has prioritised providing modern and energy efficient homes to meet the expectations of both current and future tenants. Its wide range of modernisation schemes over the past few years reflected the priorities of tenants. These included:

- Modernising kitchens and bathrooms
- Roof replacement programme (including soffit and fascia replacement)
- Flat to pitched roof conversions for blocks of flats
- Providing energy efficient gas boilers
- Providing heating choices in flats
- External installation

These works have been carried out to high levels of customer satisfaction. To date these schemes have sustained the Decent Homes Standard including taking the opportunity to work with tenants to ensure their homes are brought up to standards for modern living. All of this work will assist to ensure our properties meet customers' expectations in the future.

The Asset Management Team is now undertaking a range of different capital programme works. There are our traditional programmes that are now re-established again but there is also bespoke work. The annual programmes are to upgrade kitchens and bathrooms, window replacement schemes, new roofing, external installation and to provide efficient gas central heating boilers and carrying out electrical upgrades. In addition flat to pitch roof schemes have been completed at Arden Forest Estate and Chancery Court and the major refurbishment scheme at Alder and Heather Court is underway. Planning permission has now been received for the works proposed at Welcome Street and Long Street Atherstone. Works to renew the roofs of the flats at Water Orton are underway. These are being carried out by a contractor because they are working at height. Complimentary work is being undertaken by Housing Direct Works to replace the fascia boards on the bungalows.

Future years will see a similar range of programmed works. Some meet tenant expectations as well as the Decent Homes Standard. Others are more concerned with addressing structural issues in buildings.

In addition to traditional capital works programmes since 2010 the Housing Division has been delivering new affordable homes for the Borough. We have delivered schemes on garage sites, on our own land as part of regeneration schemes and by buying properties from developers. Developing our own schemes is resource intensive. There is a consultation process, scheme design, planning requirements, procurement of contractors, rehousing needs to address and the building development to oversee. To take a development from design to completion is more resource intensive for the Council but we are able to direct the size and layout of these schemes. The opportunity to buy properties off a developer is helpful in adding to our stock and being able to use Right to Buy receipt but the downside is that the Council has no influence over the property design or the products installed and fittings.

In our most recent survey 83% of tenants who responded said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall quality of their home.

Programmes of works have largely been procured using traditional tendering methods. However other methods are considered if they are suitable such as making use of frameworks or partnering contracts. Processing tenders is resource intensive and the mobilisation periods are necessary but create a hiatus in delivering works. Contracts are generally awarded for two years with the possibility of extending them for a further two years if they are cost effective and delivering. Tenants are fully involved in evaluating and overseeing the programme of works for major investments as part of the work of the work of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum.

The capital programme is driven by stock condition information kept and utilised from the Division's housing management software. It is also influenced by common response repairs reports and information from technical officers' site visits. Business planning and capital programmes are driven by the expected life cycle of components set out in the Decent Homes Standard. There are also legal requirements which need to be met. Required funding is assessed over a 30 year business planning period with the Maintenance Service working on a 3 year capital programme with a rolling tender process. The capital programme priorities for the next 3 years is shown in appendix 3. For 2018/2019 there is a continuation of current works and for the following two years the priority areas for the budgets start to change. Tenders are based on a 60:40 price/ quality split and contracts awarded in accordance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

As well as modernisation schemes the Housing Division is developing new programmes for cyclical repairs and minor planned works to properties and garages. To date these schemes have been provided by the in house team. This will continue to be the case for low level premises. Work to properties above one storey will be undertaken by external contractors. Some of the work required in future cyclical programmes will reduce due to the installation of low maintenance products such as PVCu fascias.

Fuel poverty is being addressed as part of our improvement programmes with the installation of new gas boilers, external wall insulation, new double glazed windows and new doors. There has also been a programme of loft insulation as part of the roofing programme. The Council's new properties are built to good levels of energy efficiency with some having solar panels to provide very energy efficient and low cost homes.

The Council's investment programme for its own stock has improved energy efficiency measures. The work programme includes work to improve the insulation of dwellings through:

- External insulation
- Loft insulation
- Re-roofing (including increasing insulation)
- Fuel swaps (with a choice to move from electric to gas)
- Replacement of windows and doors

The average SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) rating for the measurement of the energy efficiency of our dwellings is 65. This is above the national average but below the benchmarking upper quartile which is 72. Programmes of work to provide external insulation and roofing programmes with loft insulation are addressing this. Work is underway to capture the relevant Energy Performance Certificate information on the database to have an accurate reflection of the energy rating of our stock. It will be an action from this Plan to update the database we use to capture the SAP ratings from the Energy Performance Certificates.

As part of our most recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey we asked Tenants to prioritise the top three services we provide in order of importance. 75% of those replying said repairs and maintenance was a priority and 63% said the overall quality of their home was a priority. 35% prioritised their neighbourhood as a place to live. The Council

recognises that how we deliver our maintenance services is critical with regard to keeping properties in good condition. Tenant satisfaction with the repairs and maintenance service is currently 78%. The restructure of the service which was completed at the end of 2017 is intended to improve this position.

We want a comprehensive, prompt, efficient and customer friendly service for our tenants. Tenants have consistently told us that they prefer the response repair services to be delivered by the in-house team – with 92% of them judging the tradesmen as having a positive attitude to customers.

In February 2018 we concluded the review of the Housing Direct Works Team. The in house team is important to tenants. 84% of those surveyed said they were satisfied with the quality of work undertaken. It needs to be organised to meet expectations about quality and efficiency. Changes include how the appointments system is managed and how we plan and schedule the work to avoid delays. The satisfaction information indicates that 82% of those surveyed were content with the time taken before work started, that 84% were satisfied with the speed of completion of the work but only 78% were satisfied that the repair was done right first time. Having multiple appointments to complete works is an inconvenience to tenants.

Central to new systems of work are right first time principles. This means that the organisation of work has to be able to deliver the right tradesman, with the right materials by appointment to the property requiring a repair.

The work that the Housing Direct Works Team carries out critically links with the improvement work being carried out by the Housing Division and ensures properties remain in good condition once the work has been completed. The response repairs team and the programmed works team are now linked by the combined roles of the Gas Compliance Supervisor and Electrical Compliance Supervisor as well as the Support Team Leader. Practical matters such as ensuring materials used in the improvement programmes link to the response repairs service are agreed between the teams.

2.5 Safe and Accessible Homes

The Housing Division carries out around 90 adaptations every year – stair lifts, level access showers and ramps as well as extensions when moving home is not possible. Whatever the adaptation a speedy response makes a significant difference to tenants. The HEART shared partnership assesses the needs of the tenant and

makes a recommendation to the Housing Division to meet it. The time scale for delivering a bathroom adaptation has reduced from an average of 6 months to an average 3 months over the last 3 years. Further improvement on this time scale is expected over the life of this Plan. The team also deal with requests for minor adaptations that do not need a HEART referral.

The Housing Division has a clear and robust stance to asbestos management. There are clear regulations in place about asbestos management which we adhere to and our policy is set out in our Asbestos Management Plan for the Division. The principles are concerned with having good information about asbestos in common areas and individual properties and having robust procedures in place to share that information with tenants, staff and contractors. Training is provided annually. Since the last Plan we have undertaken management surveys in over 85% of our properties to provide information for responsive works. We continue to provide intrusive refurbishment and demolition surveys before any work is undertaken in our properties to fully inform contractors about the materials found and to enable us to arrange for its removal before work begins if required. Decisions about removal are made on a risk basis and specialist contractors are used to remove the materials when required. We have tendered contracts to provide for surveys and removal during 2017 and have two new contractors in place. We expect them to continue for the period of this Plan.

Providing prompt and robust services for gas installations is an important area for customer safety. The annual gas service visit is a legal requirement. To deal with resilience issues in the in house team on 1st January 2018 the repair work and annual gas service programme became part of a contract with an external supplier. We have been consistently performing at 0% outstanding and expect that to continue. The new contract will be in place for the period of this Plan.

Since the last Plan was agreed we have appointed a new contractor to support our management of our water supplies in our premises. New risk assessments have been provided and we are acting in accordance with their findings. Generally this is to continue, with a regular testing programme for Legionella bacteria undertaken to ensure water tanks in flats and supplies in sheltered scheme communal rooms are safe. Work has been undertaken to renew the water tanks in two areas where their use could not be eliminated completely to provide for modern designs and ensure there is safe access for monitoring. We are currently assessing two other areas to understand whether the water tanks can be eradicated.

New fire risk assessments were delivered by an external fire safety specialist company in April 2017. They provided a basis to review all fire safety measures in our common areas of flats and for sheltered schemes. An action plan to deal with the risk assessment recommendations was drafted and the priority actions dealt with. Actions included improving on housekeeping to keep common areas clear of combustible items, removing bin stores from common areas, recording fire alarm and safety lighting testing, dealing with compartmentation issues and providing tenants with information about how they can help the Council keep them safe. The action plan will be revised annually and the fire risk assessments undertaken bi-annually. The implementation of the recent review of the Neighbourhood Services Team will underpin the work required to keep common areas safe from fire risks.

2.6 Sustainable Neighbourhoods

An important part of our Asset Management is concerned with ensuring that we are delivering the right services in the right way to our customers. A good source of information is what customers tell us about our service. We undertake an annual satisfaction survey and have regular local meetings with tenants as well as a monthly meeting with the Borough Wide Tenants Forum.

Sustainable neighbourhoods are about estates and communities as well as properties which are in good condition and have modern standards.

Introductory Tenancies have been used since 2014. This introduction to a Secure Tenancy is for 12 months initially and can be extended if there are concerns about the tenants' behaviour. These tenancies have helped the Tenancy Services Officers manage new tenancies closely in the initial stages.

In general the Housing Division has little serious anti social behaviour on its estates – with an average of 1 or 2 cases a year where a Notice of Seeking Possession or other legal enforcement action has to be taken. When it does occur it is difficult for tenants and resource intensive for the team to address however we work with partner agencies to address issues promptly. Community Protection Warnings and Notices are now being used where action is required but we want to avoid possession proceedings or are dealing with a leaseholder. In our most recent satisfaction survey 85% of tenants stated that they were happy with their neighbourhood as a place to

live. They were also asked to give us feedback about serious problems that they experienced on their estates.

A fifth of respondents to our recent survey said that their neighbourhood had improved in the last three years. However 67 % thought that parking was a major or minor problem which is the highest level since this question was asked in the survey in 2011. Proposals to improve parking on estates will be considered as part of future programmes of capital works however budget provision is likely to be limited.

Following a pilot project to provide an enhanced grounds maintenance service to some of the Council's sheltered schemes a formal service level agreement was agreed with the Streetscape Division in 2016. The agreement sets out the enhanced standard that is provided for all of the sheltered schemes and for other areas of open space that are maintained from tenants rent payments.

The enhanced capacity of the Tenancy and Neighbourhoods Team which will be introduced by the recently agreed new structure will provide for a fresh focus on priority areas. The Council's landlord services are paid for entirely from the rent that the team collects. If the rent collection rates drop there will be a consequence for service delivery. From May 2018 the Tenancy Services Officers will have a smaller patch to manage and this should enable them to be more proactive in managing the condition of tenancies, address the challenges presented by the roll out of Universal Credit to rent collection and be proactive in dealing with tenancy fraud. The Neighbourhood Wardens will have a clear focus for a designated area of flats and sheltered schemes to ensure they are in good repair, free from signs of anti social behaviour and safe. The team will continue to troubleshoot on estates if problems are reported.

Over the last year we have improved our systems of work to let vacant properties. Critically there is closer liaison between the tenancy management and maintenance teams. Our average turn around time at the end of the third quarter of 2017/2018 is 31 days. It is 27 days if properties which required capital works are excluded. We continue to have issues of extensive repairs being required in vacancies from an ageing stock and where tenants have not maintained their tenancy in the manner we would expect. This is a cost to the service not only because of the extent of the repair work but also the rent loss. The Tenancy Services Officers are proactive in dealing with the condition of properties where a tenant requests a transfer but those which become vacant because of a death or notice are more difficult to address. The

condition in which a property is kept has to be addressed during the life of the tenancy not at the end of it and smaller patch sizes should assist with this. We continue to ensure that properties are not routinely left empty for long periods of time causing blight to estates and compromising rent income levels.

To create sustainable tenancies our Lettings Scheme ensures applicants choose the area in which they want to live. We also work to ensure that new Tenants have good information about our service and the property and area they are moving to as well as access to support if appropriate. The Tenancy Services Officers meet the new tenant when they accept the tenancy and set out the tenancy conditions. There is a further opportunity to do so at the six week settling in visit.

A large part of the work of the Tenancy Services and Neighbourhood Services Teams is to engage with Tenants. They do this as part of their mainstream work as well as our specific Tenant Led Community Panels and local meetings. As part of their objectives the Panels agree to:

- Find out what the important issues are in their local area and represent those views
- Promote awareness of the Community Panel in their area
- Get involved with visits and events taking place in their local area and beyond

To ensure the Panels can pro-actively take remedial action on estate issues within their area, constituted Tenant Led Community Panels can bid for monies from the Housing Revenue Account to cover small scale environmental improvement issues such as installing gates, erecting additional fencing, installing security lighting, providing additional gardening services, removing or pruning bushes, erecting signage. It is envisaged that these environmental improvements are not currently covered by spending priorities but are important to the local Tenant community. A sum of £20,000 is set aside for the work the Panels request.

Listening to what Tenants tell us and acting on their feedback is at the heart of our asset management. We understand that most of our customers cannot readily take their 'custom' elsewhere and therefore we must have easily accessible ways for them to be able to voice their opinions about our services. We want to encourage communities to work with us. Tenant participation is established in the Borough and we have a well established, strong and experienced Borough Wide Tenants Forum

which provides clear and honest feedback on our services. There is also a Scrutiny Panel to consider particular areas of our service in detail.

3 Use of Resources

The Council is expected to meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard as a minimum. Resources are directed at sustaining the assets in good condition and where possible, to use surpluses to build new homes.

Currently the Housing Revenue Account is in a healthy position and we can ensure that services required to address the Council's landlord commitments are available. Government policy has meant that rents have been reduced year on year since 2016/2017 and this has caused an adjustment of the 30 Year Business Plan. There are risks to rent collection from the introduction of the Universal Credit welfare benefit arrangements and from the Government's stated intention to introduce a levy for high value voids to pay for a Private Registered Provider right to buy scheme.

The Housing Revenue Account Subsidy reform was implemented from April 2012. The terms of the reform dictated that the Council had to take on £60m in debt to buy itself out of the subsidy system. The financial business model underpinning the new financial arrangements offers both opportunities and challenges. The financial position is set out in the Housing Revenue Account 30 year business plan and the position is reported to the Resources Board. It can be noted that reform does not mean freedom. The Government's recent intervention in setting a policy for rent levels to reduce is an example of this and another is their stated intention to provide for a levy against Local Authority Housing Revenue Accounts to fund a Right to Buy Scheme for Private Registered Providers. The regulations state that the levy will be taken using a formula and not based on actual sales of high value vacancies.

A balanced approach has been taken with regard to spend expectations. In accordance with tenant priorities and the need to ensure the Council's asset is in good condition the Council has provided budget provision of just over £3.5m annually for the three years of this plan to meet the demands of its capital programme. The work programme is dictated by the need to retain stock at the Decent Homes Standard in line with regulatory expectation. Health and safety compliance with regard to gas and electrical installations, water supplies and Legionella, fire risks and asbestos management is a priority. Budget provision has been designated to ensure that compliance can be sustained and improved.

In addition to budget commitments for capital improvement works there is budget provision of just over £3.1m annually in the Response Repairs Fund which supports revenue spend and response repairs works. This includes funding the Housing Direct Works team as well as some specialist services (for example for asbestos removal, health and safety risk assessments and damp surveys) and planned repair programmes.

The budget provision for cyclical and minor planned works is important and is sustained for the forthcoming period to provide for a fascia replacement programme and works to garage sites.

Traditionally the maintenance service has targeted to spend 30% of its budget on responsive and cyclical and minor planned work and 70% on planned, capital improvement works. This is with the intention of planned works keeping the asset in good condition proactively so that there are less responsive repair requests made. We are not currently achieving this balance however changes to how the Maintenance Service is delivered should ensure the service gets closer to this target during the period of this Plan.

The Council has used its funding to improve the energy efficiency of tenants homes and reduce fuel poverty. Works include structural improvements including new windows and doors as well as the provision of more efficient heating and hot water systems. Over the last 3 years there has been significant investment in providing new energy efficient boilers and heating systems for tenants.

The Council is committed to providing more new homes as part of its own stock as funding allows. Since 2010 the Housing Division has consistently provided for a development programme to provide additional affordable homes for the Council's own stock. This is helping to provide much needed additional homes to rent to meet housing need in the Borough and provides a buffer against a reduction in stock and possible viability issues caused by a potential increase in 'Right to Buy' sales. Resources of just over £1m annually has been provided for within the capital programme which includes any surplus in the Housing Revenue Account combined with funding from 'Right to Buy' capital receipts received over and above those profiled in the Subsidy settlement. A legal agreement with Government has been

entered into in order to enable usage of additional receipts to provide for new build locally.

Spend on housing management services are in the region of £1.9m annually. This covers tenancy and neighbourhood management, including rent collection, as well as services to let the Council's properties.

Future spend is dependent on rent income collected. The experience across the social housing sector is that rent collection in the face of welfare reforms is challenging. Most landlords have experienced a dip in rent income where Universal Credit has been rolled out. There are challenges for tenants who have to decide whether they need to downsize because they are effected by the under occupation changes. There are also challenges for the Council as a landlord in collecting rent from tenants because for Universal Credit claimants there is a delay in payments being made and when they are made the housing benefit element is no longer paid direct to the Council.

A further challenge is to ensure vacant properties are let to a good standard quickly. Not to do so could result in significant loss of rent combined additional spend on Council Tax because of the change in liability locally. The risk to income cannot be underestimated. Historically the Council has let its properties in an average of 21 to 25 days. Recently older properties which are becoming vacant are presenting issues which require extensive, costly and time consuming work including asbestos removal. Action has been taken to reduce the amount of hard to let properties in the stock. This is important because long letting delays whilst prospective tenants are found is a drain on income and means that the stock is not being used to best effect to meet housing need.

Value for Money is central to our asset management. Specific issues pertinent to the Division's Asset Management Plan include:

- Ensuring the Council's properties continue to be in demand and neighbourhoods are places where people choose to live
- Let vacant properties to a good standard quickly
- High satisfaction levels with the services the Housing Division provides
- Evidence of comparatively good performance in key areas such as rent collection and delivering maintenance services
- Our approach to procuring works to deliver improvement programmes and planned maintenance
- Ensuring the Housing Direct Workforce is efficient and effective
- Improved effectiveness in providing disabled facility adaptations
- Working to improve grounds maintenance services

Procurement is a key area of business in managing our assets well. How we procure services to manage the assets is set out in the Council's Contract Standing Orders.

To accord with the provisions we need to:

- Ensure the Response Repairs service offers good value for tenants
- Ensure contractors offer best value
- Have a clear customer focus in all procurement decisions
- Ensure that all other housing objectives are achieved within or less than the revenue budgets
- Be able to prove value for money in all significant spending areas within the housing division
- Have arrangements in place to monitor the effectiveness of contracts and use the information improvements in future procurement
- Have consideration for sustainability and equality issues in procurement

Recent feedback from our annual tenant survey indicates that 86% of those asked think the Housing Division services offer value for money.

To assist the monitoring of the use of resources the Housing Division is a member of the national Housemark benchmarking club. This provides comparative information annually that enables the Council to assess its performance against its own targets as well as benchmarked with other social housing providers. The information we have is based on the data provided for 2016/2017. It included information provided from a specific piece of work to benchmark the in house response repairs service. The summary information about the costs of our services states that housing management costs are £295.14 per property and that this is £34.69 less than the median. The summary also states that response repairs and voids costs are £877.35 per property and that this is £72.65 more than the benchmark median. Benchmarking information has been used in the last 18 months to inform the service reviews of both the maintenance and management services which are intended to improve customer service and performance.

The structure of the Housing Direct Works team has been adjusted in order to continue to modernise the service, ensure that the team can be organised well, closely managed and developed, to provide flexibility to deliver the service and to ensure that legal duties are delivered. Designated Supervisors are now in place for gas and electrical installations. The gas installations works have been outsourced to improve resilience for this heavily regulated part of our service. We have provided for a Response Repairs Supervisor and two Charge Hands to ensure that we act to deliver the reactive repairs tenants expect a quick response to and are able to manage voids effectively. Calls are now handled by the Council's Customer Contact

Centre leaving the Maintenance Support Team focus on planning and scheduling works. The right first time principle defines the efficiency of the service and works alongside an appointments system which provides for good access rates and customer service. Currently response repairs jobs are completed in an average of 9 days.

The review of the Tenancy Services Team will create an increase in capacity in both the Tenancy Services Officers team and the Neighbourhood Wardens team. The proposals anticipate the roll out of Universal Credit for the whole of North Warwickshire, ensure we have sufficient capacity to manage tenancies (including their condition) and be proactive to protect the Council from tenancy fraud as well as to ensure that health and safety compliance for flats and communal rooms is a priority.

4 Future Direction

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 This Asset Management Plan sets out the Council's current position with regard to the management of its stock. It sets out the progress that has been made since the last Plan was developed and states how the Council will sustain the its stock in good condition and continue to deliver high levels of customer satisfaction. Of necessity the Plan is underpinned by the Regulatory Framework for social housing providers however its central concern is focussed on meeting local priorities.

4.1.2 The action plan attached at section 5 underpins the Asset Management Plan and sets out a number of steps which need to be undertaken to ensure the deliver of the Council's objectives for its stock.

4.2 Meeting Housing Needs

4.2.1 It is crucial to the soundness of the Asset Management Plan that we understand the type and level of demand on our services and what is of value to our customers in order to ensure that properties and services are fit for purpose and tailored to demand.

- 4.2.2 Building new homes is now an important part of our Asset Management Plan however it is resource intensive and we need to ensure new developments are not prioritised over the good management of and investment in our current stock. We need to make sure current stock is fit for purpose and that best use is made of it. To do so we have already undertaken several regeneration schemes across the Borough. The most recent were in Atherstone and Mancetter. There are two blocks of flats in Atherstone that require extensive works because the fabric of the buildings has deteriorated. Options appraisals for these flats will be subject to separate reports to the Resources Board. As part of the actions to further this Plan options appraisals will be undertaken to other blocks of flats and garage stock to ensure they continue to be a valuable asset to the Council and if they are not what options are available.
- 4.2.3 When the Council undertakes works to common premises of flats which include leaseholders it has to follow the legislation for service charges. What we can charge a leaseholder for works depends on the consultation process being undertaken in accordance with the legislation, the type of work being carried out and the contents of the lease. A review of these arrangements will be one of the action plan objectives.
- 4.2.4 The Council's current 30 Year Business Plan provides funding annually for continuing the Council's commitment to fund new build for its own stock. This funding is subject to any Government legislative changes including their stated intention to introduce a levy for higher value voids to pay for Private Registered Provider Right to Buy scheme. The Council has very limited access to land which it owns for development purposes. Buying land adds to the cost of the development and access to grant funding is important in this circumstance.
- 4.2.5 The Council's Lettings Scheme and supporting procedures must be effective and efficient to ensure that housing need is met. The current scheme provides for a focus of resources on meeting housing need however consideration now needs to be given to how the Scheme can support the principles and legislative requirements set out in the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. In face of possible rent loss and additional budget required for Council Tax payments for vacancies, performance is constantly monitored at a senior level to ensure properties are brought up to a letting standard quickly.
- 4.2.6 Everyone wants to live in a nice place. Our business planning relies on our homes being in demand. The Council's Tenancy and Neighbourhoods Team is a critical

resource in ensuring that its estates and properties are in good condition and that there is no anti social behaviour from our tenancies. Ensuring that anti social behaviour is kept to a minimum, the delivery of the Service Level Agreement for the grounds maintenance service and considering using some funding to improve parking on estates will help to meet tenants' reasonable expectation that the Council provides a nice place for them to live.

- 4.2.7 The Council has published a Tenancy Policy and a Flexible Tenancy Policy in accordance with regulatory requirements. The Tenancy Policy states the Council's commitment to continue to provide secure tenancies in order to promote sustainable communities however in grant funded new build schemes flexible tenancies have been offered. These tenancies are in place for five years and then reviewed in accordance with the agreed Policy. During the life of this plan we will consider whether more flexible tenancies should be used for new tenancies in order to promote best use of stock.

4.3 Tenants' Priorities and Involvement

- 4.3.1 We find out about what services are priorities for tenants by asking them in satisfaction surveys and by talking to them. Partnership with the Borough Wide Tenants Forum is critical to the latter.

- 4.3.1 Over many years tenants have consistently told us that the quality of their home is the most important priority we should be achieving. We meet this priority mainly through the funding provided in the capital programme for improvement works. It remains a considerable commitment from the Housing Revenue Account. The most recent annual satisfaction survey indicates a satisfaction level at 85% with the overall service. However there continues to be an indication of disparity between older and younger tenants. Consideration of this will be an action from this Plan.

- 4.3.2 Tenants also consistently tell us that their neighbourhood is also a high priority. The Tenancy Services and Neighbourhood Warden team in conjunction with the Streetscape service is instrumental in keeping estates in good condition and being able to pick up on issues and actively troubleshoot. Most estates are in good order visually however there will be a renewed focus on blocks of flats where the behaviour of some tenants can be detrimental to the community and the area. In the annual satisfaction surveys it is issues with parking that is continually stated as a significant problem rather than neighbour nuisance. The consideration of an annual scheme to

improve parking on estates will be considered, as budget allows, to address tenant feedback.

4.3.4 Every business which serves customers must have an understanding of their priorities and have a high level of customer care at its heart if it does not it will fail. Surveys indicate good levels of satisfaction with the Housing Division's services but there can be no room for complacency. All complaints are monitored and responded to positively. We need to build on recent improvements which include making appointments for all repair requests standard, putting prospective tenants at the centre of the lettings procedures and providing good information and support services for welfare benefits changes. How we promise to act is set out in our 'Empowerment Promise'. This covers access to services, feedback, challenge and our aim to provide cost effective services.

4.3.5 Ensuring our services are focussed will also depend on how we are able to engage with tenants. The Borough Wide Tenants Forum is recognised and provides a focus for involvement and challenge. How this is affected is set out in the Tenant Partnership Agreement which is revised annually.

4.3.6 The requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is likely to increase the demand for temporary accommodation for housing applicants that are homeless. Some provision for this will be made in the Council's own stock depending on availability and suitability. Rent will be payable but occupants will be given a short term licence agreement rather than a tenancy.

4.4 Stock Management

4.4.1 Its stock of properties is an important asset for the Council. The services delivered by the Housing Division are expected to act to ensure it is retained in good condition. The Housing Management Team collect the rent which pays for the services and acts to manage tenancies to ensure tenants adhere to their conditions of tenancy. The Housing Maintenance Team acts proactively to provide capital programmes of work in accordance with stock condition information and reactively to respond to tenants telling us there is a repair problem in their home.

4.4.2 The stock condition information is up to date following the extensive programmes of work recently undertaken. This information is used to develop the three to five year capital improvement programmes. As part of the actions undertaken for this Plan the stock condition information will be validated, an appropriate depreciation scheme will be agreed, timely annual programmes of work will be undertaken based on detailed specifications and the most appropriate procurement path will be taken to provide for a good balance of cost and quality. Consideration will be given to how the application of the Decent Homes Standard to the capital programme will ensure that the Council has modern homes which continue to be in demand. Information about improvement schemes will be published annually so that tenants know if their home will be affected. Leaseholders will be kept informed in accordance with legal requirements, regulations and best practice.

4.4.3 The stock condition information, regulatory requirements and technical knowledge of the team have directed the programme of works that we are setting out in this Plan for the next four years. Priority work includes:

- Consideration of options for blocks of flats with structural defects
- Rolling programme of improvement works for blocks of flats
- Inspection reports and works for electrical installations
- Providing energy efficient electric and gas heating systems
- Fire safety works
- Replacing windows due to their age and condition
- Replacement of door entry systems due to their age and condition
- New roof programme
- Programme for the provision of external wall insulation
- Rolling roofing programme and remedial works for the garage stock
- Kitchen and bathroom improvement programme to meet the Decent Homes Standard

4.4.4 Where the stock is older we are starting to see the break down of the fabric of some buildings which can lead to problems of damp and disrepair. We have had to undertake extensive works to a number of vacant properties over the last two years and we are experiencing an increase in reports of damp from tenants. In addition some of our blocks of flats are in need of significant remedial work. As part of our action plan we will build on the training we have recently provided for the team about damp and disrepair complaints in order to provide for proactive services to both provide good information for tenants and quick action where damp and disrepair is

reported. We need to be proactive in advising tenants how to avoid disrepair and mould growth caused by condensation.

- 4.4.5 Tenants expect the Council to act to ensure they are safe. To do this actions include:
- Management and Maintenance Teams acting together to gain access to carry out gas servicing
 - Refreshing the Asbestos Management Plan and acting to ensure information is readily available about the presence of asbestos containing materials
 - Having risk assessments in place and a specialist company to support the team to address Legionella bacteria risks
 - Management and Maintenance Teams acting together to minimise fire risks
 - Having a rolling programme in place to assess electrical installations and ensure that smoke alarms are working and in good repair

4.5 Value for Money

- 4.5.1 Reviews in the Housing Division have focussed resources on providing services based on what is of value to the customer and cutting out waste processes to provide more efficient systems of work. A right first time approach is critical. Tenants don't want multiple visits to resolve issues. They want timely action which gets the job done in the most effective way. The Division will continue to work to these principles to provide the value for money that tenants expect.

Our intention is to have good levels of customer care within our front line teams and to provide them with the sufficient flexibility in delivering services to enable them tailor services to meet their needs. 84% of survey respondents said that they think our staff are friendly and approachable. Information held within the housing management software helps to guide staff about what tenants have told us about their circumstances and how they can be best assisted.

- 4.5.2 Satisfaction with the service is regularly monitored by way of customer surveys and complaints and compliments. This will continue to inform our work. Performance against agreed measures is also monitored and reported to Councillors and tenants. Costs are benchmarked with other social housing providers.
- 4.5.3 There is a commitment to keep an in-house repairs workforce because of the level of flexibility and customer care it can deliver, however it needs to be efficient and effective. The team undertake works included in the Housing Repairs Fund for

planned revenue and cyclical works and allows for a number of trades as part of the team. Work streams include:

- Responding to tenant repair requests
- Replacement fascia programme
- Disabled adaptations
- Gas servicing and central heating repairs
- Electrical testing and remedial works
- Minor planned works

Following the implementation of the new structure in order to ensure the team is able to work efficiently actions for the forthcoming year will include monitoring access rates, materials purchase and right first time delivery of repairs. Consideration will also be given to the interaction between capital programmes and responsive work. We will use this information to inform and identify our work to find an appropriate balance between responsive and planned work.

4.6 Risks

A number of risks are identified as part of the Plan and will be addressed as objectives arising from the Action Plan, the Corporate Plan and the Housing Division's Forward Work Plan:

- Challenges to income revenue arising from Government policy reducing what rent can be charged and changes to welfare benefit arrangements
- Rent income loss and Council Tax liabilities when properties are vacant for over 7 days
- Increase in 'Right to Buy' sales to a level at which there is an impact on the Financial Business Plan
- The requirements of an ageing stock and the need to meet the Decent Homes Standard and sustaining the resource both in budget and staffing levels to keep premises in an acceptable standard
- Any reduction in the performance of Housing Direct Works which will put pressure on the Council to use external contractors and therefore impact on the level of expenditure available
- Costs of asbestos removal from properties to allow works to be undertaken are putting pressures on budgets
- The levy for high value voids if introduced would require a reduction in spending on services for tenants
- The Lettings Scheme priorities do not deliver mixed and sustainable communities

DECENT HOMES STANDARD

ANNEX A

Component lifetimes and definition of 'in poor condition' used in the national measurement of the disrepair criterion

- Table 1 shows the component lifetimes within the disrepair criterion to assess whether the building components are 'old'. These are used to construct the national estimates of the number of dwellings that are decent and those that fail. These lifetimes are those considered appropriate for use in planning for newly arising renewal works for social Landlords. They are the same as those used to calculate the MRA which were agreed following consultation in November 1999. Landlords will wish to consider whether these lifetimes are appropriate within their own stock for predicting the age at which the component ceases to function effectively.

Table 1: Component lifetimes used in the disrepair criterion			
Building components (key components marked*)	Houses and bungalows	All flats in blocks of below 6 storeys	All flats in blocks of 6 or more storeys
Wall structure*	80	80	80
Lintels*	60	60	60
Brickwork (spalling)*	30	30	30
Wall finish*	60	60	30
Roof structure*	50	30	30
Roof finish*	50	30	30
Chimney*	50	50	N/A
Windows*	40	30	30
External doors*	40	30	30
Kitchen*	30	30	30
Bathrooms	40	40	40
Heating central heating gas boiler*	15	15	15
Heating central heating distribution system	40	40	40
Heating other*	30	30	30
Electrical systems*	30	30	30

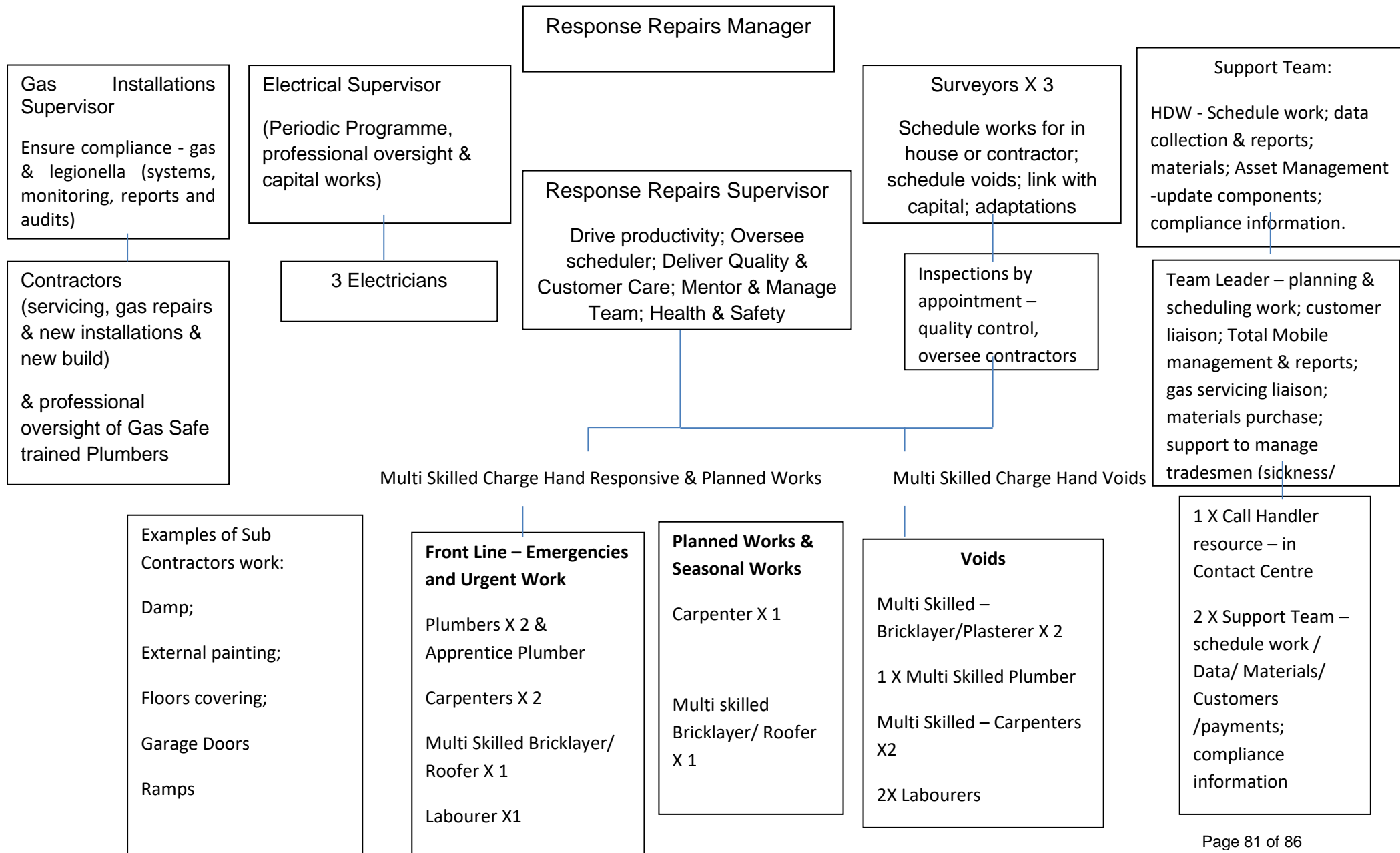
19. Kitchens are assumed to require replacing on grounds of repair every 30 years, bathrooms every 40 years. Therefore, the age aspects in the disrepair criterion are set at 30 and 40 years respectively. These lifetimes were agreed following consultation on the MRA. It is clear that social landlords and tenants prefer these amenities to be replaced more frequently to enable them to be maintained at a reasonable modern standard. Thus different ages are required for kitchens and bathrooms under the reasonably modern facilities and services criterion.

Consultation on the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Table E1: Summary of proposed TSMs

Theme	Code	Issue
Overall satisfaction	TP01	Overall satisfaction
Keeping Properties in Good Repair	RP01	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard
	RP02	Repairs completed within target timescale
	TP02	Satisfaction with repairs
	TP03	Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair
Maintaining Building Safety	BS01	Gas safety checks
	BS02	Fire safety checks
	BS03	Asbestos safety checks
	BS04	Water safety checks
	BS05	Lift safety checks
	TP04	Satisfaction that the home is well maintained and safe to live in
Effective Handling of Complaints	CH01	Complaints relative to the size of the landlord
	CH02	Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code
	TP11	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of complaints
	TP12	Tenant knowledge of how to make a complaint
Respectful and Helpful	TP05	Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
Engagement	TP06	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
	TP07	Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect
Responsible neighbourhood management	NM01	Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord
	TP08	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean, safe and well maintained
	TP09	Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
	TP10	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of anti-social behaviour

Principles: Good balance between what the asset needs & customer service and between planned and responsive works; personal accountability - all levels



Agenda Item No 11

Resources Board

28 March 2022

Report of the Corporate Director – Resources and the Director of Leisure and Community Development

Leisure Facilities: Local Authority Trading Company

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks the Board's approval to use the New Initiative Reserve through which to engage external advisory support to assist the Borough Council with its approved undertaking to establish a wholly owned Leisure Facilities Local Authority Trading Company.

Recommendation to the Board

That the Board approves the use of the New Initiatives Reserve, in the maximum sum of £60,000, through which to engage external advisory support to assist the Borough Council in the establishment of a wholly owned Leisure Facilities Local Authority Trading Company.

2 Consultation

- 2.1 As the Authority's leisure facilities are of Borough-wide significance, this report has been circulated to all Councillors for their consideration. Any comments received will be reported at the meeting.

3 Introduction

- 3.1 Members will be aware that, at its meeting held on 14 March 2022, the Community and Environment Board approved the establishment of a wholly owned Leisure Facilities Local Authority Trading Company (LATCo). During its consideration of this undertaking, the Community and Environment Board recognised that this was a significant undertaking and that the Borough Council would benefit from external advisory support in its delivery of a number of the associated key actions.
- 3.2 Subsequent to the meeting of the Community and Environment Board, advice has been received in respect of the areas of work in which this external support would best be deployed and also with regard to the possible cost of engaging that support. The table below identifies the key activities in respect of which it is felt that external support would be most beneficial.

Key Actions
Strategic Objectives: Scope of Service: Short, Medium and Long-term Outcomes
Key Performance Indicators
Core Terms of Contractual Agreement
Public Law Duties: Satisfy Vires, Best Value, Public Procurement, Teckal Exemption and Public Subsidy Requirements
LATCo Company Documents: Company Registration, Documents and Articles of Association
LATCo Company Documents: Member / Shareholder Agreement
Board Structure: Set Out Member / Shareholder Responsibilities and Governance Arrangements
Performance Management: Establish Performance Management and Reporting System
Contract / Agreement: Develop Draft Contract (Term?)
Draft Leases Developed and Agreed (Concurrent with Contract)
Service Specification
SLAs Drawn Up for Agreed Services
Outline Business Case (Green Book Compliant)
Draft Five-year Business Plan Produced
Business Plan Sensitivities
Company Financial Reporting Requirements
Review Existing Sales and Marketing Arrangements and Consider Requirements Under the LATCo

- 3.3 The above list of key activities is non-exhaustive, in that it is not the full extent of work to be undertaken in establishing the wholly-owned Local Authority Trading Company (LATCo) and it is not necessarily the limit of areas in which external support would be helpful. It does, however, represent the main areas of work in which it is felt that external advice would be most beneficial. An indicative cost of £60,000 has been provided for the provision of external support in respect of these tasks.
- 3.4 Given the significance of the commitment to establish a wholly-owned Leisure Facilities LATCo, both for the sustainability of the service and in respect of the Borough Council's need to realise savings within its revenue budget, the Board is asked to approve the engagement of external advice to support this process. Subject to Member approval of this course of action, the funding commitment could be met through the New Initiative Reserve.

4 Report Implications

4.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

4.1.1 As highlighted above, if the Board is minded to approve the engagement of external advisory support for the process to establish a wholly-owned Leisure Facilities LATCo, the corresponding funding requirement of up to £60,000 could be met through the New Initiatives Reserve.

4.1.2 As indicated in the report to the Community and Environment Board, it is anticipated that business rate savings of around £152,090 per annum could be achieved by the provision of leisure services through a Trading Company, which would give a pay back in the first year of operation.

4.2 Safer Communities Implications

4.2.1 Leisure facilities contribute to community safety through the provision of well-managed indoor and outdoor leisure and recreation services that are safe by design and that afford opportunities for positive activity.

4.3 Legal, Data Protection and Human Rights Implications

4.3.1 The Borough Council can rely upon Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, which contains the “general power of competence”, in order to establish a LATCo, together with section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 regulates how local authority companies operate and sets out several criteria that must continue to be met whilst such companies operate. Some of the external support that is the subject of this report will be provided to ensure that any LATCo is set up in a way that is both legal and beneficial to the Borough Council.

4.3.2 Given the specialist nature of much of this work, together with the limited capacity of the Council’s Legal Services Team, the Council’s interests are likely to be best served by the proposal to obtain these services externally. There will however, need to be internal legal input to ensure that all necessary arrangements are made to enable Officers and Members to perform their functions within the LATCo once established.

4.3.3 There are no immediate data protection or human rights implications arising directly out of this report.

4.4 Environment, Climate Change and Health Implications

4.4.1 The provision of a sustainable, fit-for-purpose portfolio of well managed leisure facilities has a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities by providing opportunities for leisure and recreation activities and by contributing to an improved quality of life.

4.5 Human Resources Implications

4.5.1 There are no human resource implications arising directly out of this report.

4.6 Risk Management Implications

4.6.1 The corporate risk management process identifies and scores risks associated with the provision, management and maintenance of leisure facilities. The process through which a LATCo would be established and the services transferred thereto would require the detailed assessment of risk at a number of key stages in order to ensure the maintenance of the best interests of both the Borough Council and the new company. This process will help to ensure that informed decisions can be made in respect of the most appropriate means by which to sustainably meet and manage the leisure-related needs of the local community.

4.7 Equality Implications

4.7.1 It is intended that Local Authority Trading Company management and operation of the Authority's Leisure Facilities service would ensure continued equality of access to sustainable, good quality leisure opportunities.

4.8 Links to Council's Priorities

4.8.1 The proposal to establish a wholly owned LATCo will have direct and positive links to the corporate priorities in respect of:

- Safe, liveable, locally focused communities
- Prosperous and healthy
- Sustainable growth and protected rurality
- Efficient organisation

4.8.2 It is also intended that management of the Borough Council's Leisure Facilities service through a LATCo would contribute directly to the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy, namely:

- Raising aspirations, educational attainment and skill levels
- Developing healthier communities
- Improving access to services

The Contact Officers for this report are Sue Garner (719374) and Simon Powell (719352).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date
1	Director of Leisure and Community Development	Leisure Facilities: Local Authority Trading Company	March 2022