

**To: Deputy Leader and Members of the Resources Board**

**Councillors Symonds, Barnett, Chapman, Clews, Davey, Humphreys, Parsons, O Phillips, Simpson, Stuart, Taylor and Watson**

**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**

**11 NOVEMBER 2024**

The Resources Board will meet on Monday 11 November 2024 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber at The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire.

The day after the meeting a recording will be available to 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 **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](mailto: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.

The Council Chamber has level access via a lift to assist those with limited mobility who attend in person however, 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.

- 5 **Minutes of the Resources Board held on 3 September 2024** – copy herewith, to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION (WHITE PAPERS)**

- 6 **Capital Programme – 2024/25 Position at 30 September 2024-** Report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer)

#### **Summary**

The report provides members with progress on the 2024/25 Capital Programme in terms of expenditure up to the end of September 2024. It also reports on the changes to the budget during the year.

The Contact Officer for this report is Nicolas Harris (719320).

- 7 **General Fund Budgetary Control Report 2024/25 (Apr-Sep)** – Report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer)

**Summary**

The report covers revenue expenditure and income for the period from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024. The 2024/25 approved budget and the actual position for the period are given, together with an estimate of the outturn position for services reporting to this Board.

The Contact Officers for this report are Adrian Vaughan (ext. 2379) and Akanksha Downing (ext. 4384).

- 8 **Supplementary Estimate – Development Control Appeal costs** – Report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer)

**Summary**

The Board is asked to agree a supplementary estimate of £225,000, to fund the costs of appeals in the current year, as detailed in the appendix to this report.

The Contact Officer for this report is Nigel Lane (719371).

- 9 **Homelessness Strategy** - Report of the Director of Housing

**Summary**

The report provides the Board with a draft homelessness strategy to consider.

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

- 10 **Grenfell Tower Inquiry** - Report of the Director of Housing

**Summary**

This report reflects on the summary findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and advises the Board about implications for the Council.

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

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

**To consider, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, whether it is in the public interest that 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 12A to the Act.**

- 12 **Use of Urgent Business Powers** – Report of the Chief Executive  
The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).
- 13 **Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme and Development Opportunities** - Report of the Director of Housing  
The Contact Officer for this report is Angela Coates (719369).
- 14 **Internal Audit Service** – Report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer)  
The Contact Officer for this report is Alison Turner (719374).
- 15 **Irrecoverable Debts** - Report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer)  
The Contact Officer for this report is Katie Hines (719234).
- 16 **Exempt Extract of the Minutes of the meeting of the Resources Board held on 3 September 2024** – 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

3 September 2024

Present: Councillor Symonds in the Chair

Councillors Barnett, Chapman, Clews, Davey, Jarvis, Osborne, Parsons, O Phillips, Simpson, Stuart and Watson

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Humphreys, (Substitute Councillor Jarvis) and Taylor (Substitute Councillor Osborne)

#### 17 **Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared at the meeting.

#### 18 **Minutes of the Resources Board held on 3 June 2024.**

The minutes of the Resources Board held on 3 June 2024, copies having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### 19 **Environmental Health and Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy**

The Director of Director of Housing submitted the finalised Environmental Health and Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy (“the policy”) for approval and adoption together with associated policies, enabling robust and fair regulation of matters relating to Environmental Health and Private sector housing.

##### **Resolved:**

**That the Environmental Health and Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy as set out in Appendix 1 and supplementary policies listed in Section 3 of the report of the Director of Housing be approved.**

#### 20 **Social Housing Regulator – Consumer Standards**

The Director of Housing updated the Board with information about how the Council is acting to ensure it meets the Social Housing Regulator’s Consumer Standards requirements as specified in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

##### **Resolved:**

**a That the draft policy on Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion be approved;**

- b That the draft policy on Hate Crime be approved;**
- c That the draft policy on Domestic Abuse be approved;**
- d That the growth bid of £12,240 to purchase case management software of cases of damp and mould and anti-social behaviour be approved; and**
- e That the growth bid of £40,000 to appoint a working Charge Hand to deliver damp and mould remedial works be approved subject to consideration by the Special Sub-Group.**

**21 Homelessness Strategy**

The Director of Housing presented the Board with a draft homelessness strategy for consideration.

**Resolved:**

- a That the draft Homelessness Strategy at Appendix A of the report of the Director of Housing be agreed; and**
- b That consultation on the strategy be undertaken, with feedback shared with the Board, with a final version of the Strategy signed off for approval.**

**22 General Fund Budgetary Control Report 2024/25 (Apr-Jul)**

The Corporate Director - Resources detailed revenue expenditure and income for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 July 2024. The 2024/25 approved budget and the actual position for the period, together with an estimate of the out-turn position for services reporting to the Board.

**Resolved:**

**That the report be noted.**

**23 Insurance Contract Renewal – Additional Cost**

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) presented to Members a request for additional funding for the insurance contract which, when it was renewed in July 2024, increased by 26.4% (£91,529). A supplementary estimate was required to cover the additional cost for both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

**Resolved:**

**That a supplementary estimate for the additional cost of insurance £91,529 (split £65,611 General Fund and £25,918 HRA) be approved. This covers the contract from 24 July 2024 to 23 July 2025. This is the last year of renewal; a full procurement process will take place during this year and a new contract will be in place for July 2025.**

**24 Capital Programme – 2023/24 Final Position and Carry forwards Capital Programme – 2024/25 Position at 30 June 2024**

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) updated Members on the position of the 2023/24 Capital Programme at the end of March 2024 and the progress of the 2024/25 Capital Programme in terms of expenditure up to the end of June 2024.

**Resolved:**

- a That the level of expenditure incurred to the end of March 2024 against the 2023/24 Revised Capital Programme be noted;**
- b That the requests to carry forward schemes identified in column 5 of Appendix A of the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) totalling £1,962,116 for HRA and £1,557,878 for General Fund be approved and added to the 2024/25 Capital Programme;**
- c That progress made against the 2024/25 Capital Programme be noted.**

**25 Housing Revenue Account Budgetary Control Report 2024/2025 Period Ended 31 July 2024**

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) reported the total Housing Revenue Account revenue expenditure and income for the period from 1 April to 31 July 2024.

**Resolved**

**That the report be noted.**

**26 Internal Audit Progress Report**

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) presented the internal audit activity and findings for the period 1 April to 31 July 2024.

**Resolved**

**That the audit activity and findings be noted.**

**27 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 items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.**

**28 Irrecoverable Debts**

The Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) provided details to Members of debts.

**Resolved:**

**That recommendations a and b as set out in the report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer) be approved.**

**29 Garage Matter**

The Director of Housing provided the Board with information regarding garage purchase.

**Resolved:**

**That the decision be deferred until a full report about garages is considered by the Resources Board in January 2025.**

**30 Middleton Report**

The Director of Housing provided the Board with information regarding a site at Middleton.

**Resolved:**

**That the decision be deferred until a full report about garages is considered by the Resources Board in January 2025.**

Councillor Symonds  
Chair



**Agenda Item No 6**

**Resources Board**

**11th November 2024**

**Report of the  
Interim Corporate Director – Resources  
(Section 151 Officer)**

**Capital Programme – 2024/25  
Position at 30 September 2024**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 The report provides members with progress on the 2024/25 Capital Programme in terms of expenditure up to the end of September 2024. It also reports on the changes to the budget during the year.

<p><b>Recommendation that members</b></p> <p><b>a Note the progress made against the 2024/25 Capital Programme; and</b></p> <p><b>b Approve a supplementary estimate of £263,520 to the programme – fully funded through the UKSPF Grant.</b></p>
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**2 Introduction**

- 2.1 The Executive Board approved the Council's 2024/25 Capital Programme of £16,548,620 in February 2024. In June 2024 supplementary estimates totalling £223,877 for General Fund schemes and £140,000 for HRA schemes were approved at the Executive Board and these figures have been added to the budgets in Appendix A.
- 2.2 Budget carry forward of £3,519,994 from 2023/24 was approved at the Resources Board in September 2024 and the proposed supplementary estimate of £263,520 has been added to the 2024/25 programme and along with the Chief Executives urgent approval of £50,000 giving a revised programme of £20,746,011, the supplementary estimate of £263,520 is funded from UKSPF grant so does not impact on funding required.(Appendix A).

**3 Housing Schemes**

- 3.1 The original budget for 2024/25 was £5,422,300 and together with a proposed carry forward of £1,962,116 and supplementary estimate of £140,000 gives a total Housing Capital budget of £7,524,416. (Appendix A).
- 3.2 There has been a total of £4,146,450 spent on the Housing Capital programme during the first six months of 2024/25.

- 3.3 There is significant pressure on the Electrical budget. The approved budget of £309,000 is insufficient for the year and reflects current demand and the age of the stock, as well as inflationary pressures. £706,750 has already been spent giving a current overspend of £397,750. Electrical installation reports are in place for 99% of the stock, upgrades and rewires need to be completed.
- 3.4 Members are aware that a major works programme is being delivered to provide remedial works to blocks of flats. The budget allocation of £618,000 in the 2024 programme is for schemes for all flat remedial works however Abbey Green Court has rolled into 2024/25 so this budget and the carry forward of £614,773 will be needed in order to complete those works. Given rising costs in the building industry, underspends on these schemes are not anticipated and additional costs on Abbey Green Court to ensure all works are addressed have resulted in a current overspend of £619,140.
- 3.5 To meet the Decent Homes Standard and ensure that tenants have energy efficient heating systems gas boilers have to be replaced within a 15-year period. Our programme of works is on track to continue to deliver against that requirement with an average of 3 installations a week.
- 3.6 Schemes to deliver adaptations to council properties, a roof programme, a kitchen and bathroom improvement programme and insulation works are all ongoing and currently in line with budget allocations.

#### **4 RTB receipts**

- 4.1 The New Government have changed the rules on use of Right To Buy Receipts relaxing the current rules allowing 100% to be spent on providing new affordable homes until March 2026, this could be extended further in the budget announcement. The RTB receipts are time limited if they are not spent on delivering new homes within 5 years they are required to be paid back to the Government with interest, so this must be avoided. This Council has £1,524,643 In RTB receipts which need to be spent by 31 March 2025 with a further £4,768,120 to be spent in future years but within the 5 year time limit.
- 4.2 The change in rules to 100% assists with spending the receipts because in previous years match funding was required which was always a challenge when competing with other priorities in the HRA capital programme such as decent homes standard on existing stock. There is a separate report from the Director of Housing on this agenda detailed the plans to ensure the current year RTBs are spent by 31 March 2025.

#### **5 General Fund Schemes**

- 5.1 The original budget for 2024/25 was £11,126,320 and together with the carry forward approved at the Resources Board in September 2024 of £1,557,878, and the supplementary estimates of £223,877 agreed at Junes Board Meeting and £263,520 requested in this report, as well as the Chief Executives urgent approval of £50,000 giving a total General Fund Capital budget of £13,221,595. (Appendix A).

- 5.2 There has been a total of £663,687 spent or committed against the General Fund Capital projects for 2024/25.
- 5.3 Within the Play Area Replacement programme and UKSPF funds, work has been undertaken at Baxterley park. In addition, some general and fitness leisure equipment has been replaced at the Leisure Facilities.
- 5.4 Within Central Services work is ongoing with improvements to the councils' network infrastructure improvements, and web development. Whilst work has commenced with the payment management system upgrade which is due to complete November 2024.
- 5.5 The new finance system has been implemented and is receiving continued support whilst work is ongoing with the replacement planning system and environmental health system.
- 5.6 The electrical upgrade planned for the Council Offices at Old Bank House has been delayed whilst its future use is considered.
- 5.7 Multiple vehicles have been ordered to maintain our vehicle replacement programme so that our fleet remains up to date. This is the subject of a detailed review into the future strategy for vehicle replacement looking at electric vehicles where appropriate. A separate report will be presented to members before the capital budget is set for 2025/26 and this will look at the capital cost along with the revenue costs of each vehicle.
- 5.8 Initial Feasibility work is currently underway for both leisure facilities at Polesworth and Atherstone, the capital programme currently has £4.5m for Polesworth and £3.75m for Atherstone. Clearly this will not be enough for new facilities but the outcome of the current work will produce estimates of the capital cost of building two new facilities for members consider.
- 5.9 The recommendation in this report is for additional UKSPF expenditure which is fully funded through the UKSPF grant programme to be added to the capital programme

## **6 Council Office Lift Replacement**

- 6.1 The Chief Executive approved under his urgent powers up to £50k for the replacement of the lift at the Council Offices, this was due to a health and safety issue and was therefore urgent. This funding will be taken from General Fund revenue balances.

## **7 Report Implications**

### **7.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

7.1.2 As highlighted in the report, there are inflationary pressures affecting capital spending, particularly in the HRA. Housing budgets are coming under increasing pressure due to the work needed on our ageing stock and inflationary increases currently being experienced across the economy. Further work will be carried out to establish the extent of these issues, which will be reported to the next meeting of the Board. The Housing Regulator and Government require social housing landlords to meet the Decent Homes Standard, prioritise building safety works, provide energy efficient dwellings and do works promptly to ensure premises are free from damp and mould.

7.1.3 Capital schemes will contribute to services provided by the Council, from maintaining decent Council homes, assisting in carrying out adaptations to tenants' houses funding, energy efficient heating systems to promote carbon reduction and encouraging fitness and the wellbeing of tenants.

### **7.2 Sustainability Implications**

7.2.1 Expenditure incurred as part of the Council's Capital Programme enables the Council to continue to deliver a range of services to the people of North Warwickshire which contributes towards improving the quality of life for the communities of North Warwickshire.

### **7.3 Risk Management Implications**

7.3.1 If the financial provision requested is not carried forward, the achievement of some of the Council's objectives may be at risk.

7.3.2 Many of the works required to the Council's Housing Stock reflect the Council's legal duties in relation to safety of properties and their occupants. Failure to undertake these works may expose the Council's staff and tenants to risk of harm, potential associated litigation, and risks damage to its reputation.

### **7.4 Legal Implications**

7.4.1 As members may be aware, the main considerations for the Council in planning future levels of capital spend are that:

- a) capital spend must be considered in light of its future revenue implications of both any running costs and the costs of any associated borrowing;
- b) capital budget allocation should relate to wider asset management planning, which should be found in the delivery of local priorities and services; and,
- c) capital allocations should be integrated into service planning, i.e., alignment with local authority strategic priorities, relating financial investment to the planning of service outcomes and performance management.

## 7.5 Equalities Implications

- 7.5.1 The Council must meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The Act brings consolidates and updates previous equality legislation and includes a public sector duty (the equality duty) which extends to those with protected characteristics including race, disability, sex, age, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, gender reassignment and religion or belief.
- 7.5.2 Failure to make reasonable adjustments could result in limiting access to services provided from our buildings and facilities by disabled people and the potential for legal challenges being taken against the Council.
- 7.5.3 Additionally, when decisions are made about spending the sums which have been allocated for specific capital purposes, it is necessary to consider any relevant equalities implications to ensure that the Council's duties are met.
- 7.5.4 The capital programme includes some provision for improving accessibility, the extent of previous duties being extended by the Equality Act 2010. The 2010 Act prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, harassment, and victimisation, and provides that prescribed requirements to adjust must be complied with.

The Contact Officer for this report is Nicolas Harris (719320).

### Background Papers

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

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>
Executive Board – Agenda item 10	Interim Corporate Director of Resources	The Proposed 3 year Capital Programme 2024-25 to 2026-27	12 <sup>th</sup> February 2024

**Capital Programme 2024/25 as at 30th September 2024**

**Appendix A**

(1) Costcuk (T)	(2) 24/25 Budget	(3) 23/24 Carry Forward	Supplementary Estimates	(4) 24/25 Revised Budget	(5) Spend	(6) Remaining
Housing Disabled Facility Adaptations Ch	206,000	-	140,000	346,000	224,836	121,164
Housing Windows And Doors	463,500	-	-	463,500	99,221	364,279
Housing Kitchens & Bathrooms	618,000	-	-	618,000	354,702	263,298
Housing Energy Saving Measures	257,500	-	-	257,500	-	257,500
Housing Roofing	412,000	-	-	412,000	13,950	398,050
Housing Heating	515,000	-	-	515,000	372,479	142,521
Housing Electrics	309,000	-	-	309,000	706,750	- 397,750
Remedial Works To Flats	618,000	614,773	-	1,232,773	1,851,913	- 619,140
Multi Trade Contract	360,500	-	-	360,500	522,599	- 162,099
New Build Projects	1,331,890	1,347,343	-	2,679,233	-	2,679,233
Housing General Costs	330,910	-	-	330,910	-	330,910

<b>HRA Total</b>	<b>5,422,300</b>	<b>1,962,116</b>	<b>140,000</b>	<b>7,524,416</b>	<b>4,146,450</b>	<b>3,377,965</b>
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Costcuk (T)	24/25 Budget	23/24 Carry Forward	Supplementary Estimates	24/25 Revised Budget	Spend	Remaining
Cap DDA	-	56,455	-	56,455	2,500	53,955
Refurbishment Of Council Owned Buildings	50,000	45,000	-	95,000	-	95,000
Atherstone Leisure Complex	3,750,000	-	-	3,750,000	-	3,750,000
Polesworth Leisure Facility	4,500,000	-	-	4,500,000	-	4,500,000
Cap Play Area Development	100,000	63,499	223,877	387,376	-	387,376
Cap Royal Meadow Drive Artificial Grass Pitch	372,170	-	-	372,170	-	372,170
Fire Door Replacement Programme	106,100	225,000	-	331,100	2,500	328,600
Playing Pitch Strategy	-	3,070	-	3,070	-	3,070
General Leisure Equipment	20,000	4,227	-	24,227	997	23,230
Atherstone Pool Fitness Equipment	-	36,841	-	36,841	1,086	35,755
External Works On Industrial Buildings	-	95,000	-	95,000	-	95,000
Depot Works	-	30,600	-	30,600	65,785	- 35,185
Cap Structural Maintenance Programme Of Car Parks	345,000	-	-	345,000	-	345,000
Cap Car Parking Coleshill	1,000,000	-	-	1,000,000	-	1,000,000

Dordon Pump Track	100,000	-	-	100,000	-	100,000
Computer Software	35,000	22,741	-	57,741	18,860	38,881
Infrastructure Improvements	20,000	37,398	-	57,398	36,564	20,834
Financial Management System	-	37,698	-	37,698	48,824	11,126
Network Infrastructure	50,000	24,300	-	74,300	1,297	73,003
PMS Replacement	15,000	15,000	-	30,000	15,000	15,000
Cap Telephone System	20,000	-	-	20,000	-	20,000
Cap Mobile Devices	5,000	-	-	5,000	-	5,000
Cap Rep Planning Systems	27,920	-	-	27,920	-	27,920
Cap Web Development	-	-	-	-	12,176	12,176
Cap Environmental Health System	-	34,934	-	34,934	-	34,934
Cap Backing Up	-	30,000	-	30,000	-	30,000
Capital Salaries	17,120	-	-	17,120	-	17,120
UKSPF Grant Funded Schemes	-	180,078	263,520	443,598	443,598	-
Council Office Lift Replacement			50,000	50,000		
Transport	593,010	616,037	-	1,209,047	14,500	1,194,547

<b>General Fund Total</b>	<b>11,126,320</b>	<b>1,557,878</b>	<b>537,397</b>	<b>13,221,595</b>	<b>663,687</b>	<b>12,507,909</b>
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<b>Total Capital Programme</b>	<b>16,548,620</b>	<b>3,519,994</b>	<b>677,397</b>	<b>20,746,011</b>	<b>4,810,137</b>	<b>15,885,874</b>
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## Agenda Item 7

### Resources Board

11 November 2024

Report of the  
Interim Corporate Director – Resources &  
Section 151 Officer

General Fund  
Budgetary Control Report 2024/25  
(Apr-Sep)

#### 1 Summary

- 1.1 The report covers revenue expenditure and income for the period from 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024. The 2024/25 approved budget and the actual position for the period are given, together with an estimate of the outturn position for services reporting to this Board.

#### **Recommendation to the Board**

**That the report be noted and that the Board requests any further information it feels would assist it in monitoring the budgets under the Board's control.**

#### 2 Introduction

- 2.1 Resources Board is responsible for monitoring the Council's overall financial position on the General Fund, and this report provides details of the position on 30 September 2024.
- 2.2 The Board is also directly responsible for several internal and frontline services. Accounting rules require frontline services to show the total cost of providing the service, which includes support costs such as finance and IT services, as well as costs and income directly incurred.
- 2.3 Internal service costs are therefore recharged to all the services they support, both those that remain within Resources Board and those which are the responsibility of other Boards. This report provides some detail on both the frontline services relating to this Board and the internal service costs that are recharged, on 30 September 2024.
- 2.4 In April 2024 a new Financial Management System (Unit 4) was implemented which has significantly changed how budget monitoring and budget preparation is delivered in the future making it more efficient and timely automating as much as possible, directing resources and interpreting the figures and presenting forecasts to give a clear indication of the outturn position and impact on balances which then feeds into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This report is ongoing budget monitor using forecasting rather than profiling, this will be more informative as the year progresses.



### 3 **Estimated Outturn**

- ... 3.1 The figures presented in Appendix A & B are based on the actual spend for April to September. The report provides details on the likely out-turn position for each of the services reporting to this Board. The forecast (anticipated out-turn) for this Board (resources Remaining and Recharged) for 2024/25 is **£3,995,926** compared to an approved budget of **£3,745,750**. An increase of **£250,176**.
- 3.2 The figures provided are based on information available at the time of forecasting, but it highlights the areas which need to be monitored closely during the year and may change as the financial year progresses. Members will be updated in future reports of any changes to the forecast out turn and any additional funding will need to be approved by members as a supplementary estimate. More detail is shown in Appendix A – C of this report.
- ... 3.3 Work is currently ongoing looking at the detailed budgets to forecast outturn for the current year and prepare the budgets for 2025/26.

### 4 **Services Remaining Within Resources Board**

- 4.1 Appendix A & B to this report provides details of the forecast and actual position for each service reporting to this Board.
- 4.2 The forecast outturn position is less than the budgeted level, but this in the main is due to Business Rates charged to car parks being lower than anticipated.

### 5 **Resources Recharged Budgets**

- 5.1 Current vacancy levels within the Directorates are slightly higher than the budget although this is based on assumptions with filling vacancies. After allowing for the use of agency/interim staff to cover some key duties, any recruitment costs resulting from these vacancies, the position will move to a net additional cost as the year moves forward, where some agencies cover cost exceeds savings from vacancies. This will need to be monitored closely and if additional budget is required a supplementary estimate will need to be requested.
- 5.2 The areas with vacancies are Environmental Health, Landscape Management, Community Development, Environment Division, Planning, Financial Services, Revenues and Benefits and Customer Contact. This level of vacancies is due to a limited response to recruitment exercises in some service areas. This has resulted in the Council relying on more expensive agency/interim staff to cover most of the posts in key areas of operations. The table below relates to the General Fund only.

	£
Forecast salary vacancies (after the budgeted pay award has been added back)	884,577
Current agency/interim staffing costs	941,741
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>57,164</b>
Less Central vacancy factor	(200,000)
<b>Total</b>	<b>257,164</b>

5.3 In addition to the salary variations identified above there are underspends on officer travel expenses due to the reduction in travel undertaken and some additional income. This can be offset against any predicted overspend.

5.4 The estimated overspend will need to be addressed when the budgets are presented in January and the annual position is clearer.

## 6 Overall General Fund Position

6.1 Appendix C provides an analysis of Board expenditure and the overall position for the General Fund at Net Budget Requirement.

6.2 The forecast level of Board expenditure as of 30 September 2024 is £13,499,939 compared with approved budget of £13,841,760, an underspend of £341,821.

6.3 Planning and Development Board is forecast to overspend, mainly relating to the income target which will not be achieved. This will continue to be monitored and adjusted in the January budget report if required. A supplementary estimate request of £225,000 is contained in a separate report on the agenda to fund the costs of the appeals in the current year.

6.4 Community and Environment Board is forecast to underspend due to income forecasted to exceed the approved budget position, offset by employee costs which are forecast to exceed budgetary position.

6.5 As well as expenditure directly attributable to services, and included in the Board totals, there are several other amounts that need to be considered that provide the total net expenditure for the General Fund. This includes investment income, external interest payments and adjustments to reverse capital charges included within Board expenditure, from out of council expenditure. The investment income is performing above budget by £956,840 based on current forecast.

## 7 Risks to Services

7.1 In setting the budget in February 2024, several key risks to the overall budgetary position of the Council were highlighted and these are shown below:

- A vacancy factor has been included within the overall estimates. Should vacancies be less than expected, additional costs will be borne by the Authority.

- There are potential additional costs for the Council in carrying out its planning function. If the Council loses a planning appeal, an award of costs can be made against the Council (the appellants costs for the appeal). If the Council consistently loses appeals it will become a designated authority, which means that prospective applicants can submit their applications directly to the planning directorate. This would mean the Council would lose the accompanying planning fee. In addition, any downturn in planning applications would impact on the fee income received. A supplementary estimate of £250k has been approved in this year for appeals.
- Council expenditure on housing benefit is significant, although the majority is recouped through grant. Any reduction in performance can lead to a loss of grant and/or increase in the non-recovery of overpayments. The transfer of housing benefit into the universal credit administered nationally will impact on council resources.
- A downturn in the current economic situation could have an impact on the industrial rent income that the Council can obtain. In addition, the NDR on vacant commercial properties will impact directly on the Council's costs.
- Legislation, as well as the economic situation, could also impact on other Council services such as Homelessness, with increased demand leading to additional expenditure.
- The Council is promoting recycling activities across the Borough. Reductions in income for recycling materials could add to the existing costs of the service.
- Limited budgetary provision is available for one off spending on areas such as public enquiries on planning, un-adopted roads, and contaminated land issues.
- Deterioration of the Council's assets could require costly remedial action and could also impact on the ability of some services to generate income. Income generation could also be affected more widely by the current economic position.

## **8 Report Implications**

### **8.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

8.1.1 The Council's original budgeted contribution from General Fund balances for the 2024/25 financial year was £2,331,600 with an additional £1,000,000 specifically for Invest to Save.

8.1.2 Income and expenditure will continue to be closely managed and any further issues that arise will be reported to this Board at future meetings.

### **8.2 Environment and Sustainability Implications**

8.2.1 The Council must ensure that it adopts and implements robust and comprehensive budgetary monitoring and control, to ensure not only the availability of services within the current financial year, but in future years.

The Contact Officers for this report are Adrian Vaughan (ext. 2379) and Akanksha Downing (ext. 4384).

## Background Papers

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

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>
Executive Board – Agenda item 56	Interim Corporate Director - Resources	General Fund Revenue Estimates and Setting the Council Tax 2024-25	12 Feb 2024

		Budget	Actual	Forecast	Variance
	<b>Director of Housing</b>	<b>£369,360</b>	<b>£219,707</b>	<b>£369,360</b>	<b>£0</b>
NW3084	Homeless Persons	£199,440	-£15,532	£199,440	£0
NW3086	Homeless project Watling Street Dordon	£0	£29,643	£0	£0
NW5008	Private Sector Housing Assistance	£147,310	£151,673	£147,310	£0
NW5035	Cctv	£22,610	£53,922	£22,610	£0
	<b>Director of Resources</b>	<b>£3,430,540</b>	<b>£2,507,092</b>	<b>£3,425,080</b>	<b>-£5,460</b>
NW3000	Democratic Process	£621,660	£431,211	£622,440	£780
NW3050	Finance Miscellaneous	£1,420	£1,136	£1,420	£0
NW3051	Compensation and Pension Increases	£244,380	£73,559	£244,380	£0
NW3052	Assisted Car Purchases	£1,040	£1,160	£1,160	£120
NW3059	Finance Unused Land and Assets	£102,540	£23,532	£102,540	£0
NW3060	Corporate and Democratic Core	£818,690	£204,241	£818,690	£0
NW3061	Unallocated CSS	£288,290	£165,160	£288,290	£0
NW3003	Business Rates	£112,040	£230,208	£112,040	£0
NW3004	Council Tax Collection	£466,520	£573,002	£466,520	£0
NW3097	Rent Allowances	£213,620	£230,814	£207,260	-£6,360
NW3098	Housing Rent Rebates	£202,910	£224,029	£202,910	£0
NW3101	Council Tax Support	£357,430	£349,040	£357,430	£0
	<b>Director of Streetscape</b>	<b>-£81,950</b>	<b>£7,325</b>	<b>-£83,477</b>	<b>-£1,527</b>
NW3041	Old Bank House	£0	-£47,975	-£1,463	-£1,463
NW3054	Electricity at Work	£29,160	£9,263	£29,160	£0
NW3065	Coleshill Shops and Flats	£0	£1,348	£1,348	£1,348
NW3066	Carlyon Road Industrial Estate	-£122,820	-£49,002	-£122,820	£0
NW3067	The Pavilions Holly Lane	-£77,300	-£17,964	-£69,499	£7,801
NW3069	Innage Park Industrial Estate	-£68,740	-£24,007	-£75,568	-£6,828
NW3070	Football Stadium	£0	£695	£695	£695
NW3079	Maya Bar & Restaurant	-£13,330	-£3,171	-£13,330	£0
NW3089	Public Conveniences	£770	£261	£770	£0
NW3120	Car Parks	£170,310	£137,877	£167,230	-£3,080
	<b>Director of Environment</b>	<b>£227,800</b>	<b>£99,515</b>	<b>£227,800</b>	<b>£0</b>
NW3001	Election Expenses	£134,410	£11,285	£134,410	£0
NW3002	Registration Of Electors	£93,390	£88,230	£93,390	£0
	<b>Grand Total Resources Remaining</b>	<b>£3,945,750</b>	<b>£2,833,639</b>	<b>£3,938,763</b>	<b>-£6,987</b>
	Resources Recharged (Vacancy Factor)	-£200,000		£57,164	£257,164
	<b>Resources Board (overall)</b>	<b>£3,745,750</b>		<b>£3,995,926</b>	<b>£250,176</b>

## Resources Board (April - Sept 2024)

Appendix B  
Res Remaining

	Budget	Actuals	Forecast	Variance
<b>Director of Housing</b>	<b>£369,360</b>	<b>£219,707</b>	<b>£369,360</b>	<b>£0</b>
Employees	£0	£44,503	£91,680	£91,680
Premises-Related Expenditure	£37,220	£10,835	£37,220	£0
Supplies & Services	£172,940	£136,990	£170,520	-£2,420
Income	-£11,330	-£342,701	-£100,590	-£89,260
Balance Sheet	-£180,210	£19,340	-£180,210	£0
Central Support Charges	£350,740	£350,740	£350,740	£0
<b>Director of Resources</b>	<b>£3,430,540</b>	<b>£2,507,092</b>	<b>£3,425,080</b>	<b>-£5,460</b>
Employees	£531,550	£173,585	£532,330	£780
Premises-Related Expenditure	£1,690	£211	£1,690	£0
Supplies & Services	£9,256,640	£4,130,241	£8,938,560	-£318,080
Transport-Related Expenditure	£12,240	£3,366	£12,360	£120
Income	-£9,065,380	-£4,462,459	-£8,753,660	£311,720
Balance Sheet	£9,680	£27,320	£9,680	£0
Central Support Charges	£2,684,120	£2,634,828	£2,684,120	£0
<b>Director of Streetscape</b>	<b>-£81,950</b>	<b>£7,325</b>	<b>-£83,477</b>	<b>-£1,527</b>
Employees	£20,290	£9,558	£19,700	-£590
Premises-Related Expenditure	£197,170	£92,980	£183,548	-£13,622
Supplies & Services	£94,480	£44,206	£93,695	-£785
Income	-£549,460	-£294,989	-£535,990	£13,470
Balance Sheet	£4,630	£4,630	£4,630	£0
Central Support Charges	£150,940	£150,940	£150,940	£0
<b>Director of Environment</b>	<b>£227,800</b>	<b>£99,515</b>	<b>£227,800</b>	<b>£0</b>
Employees	£1,570	£370	£1,570	£0
Supplies & Services	£144,920	£31,811	£144,920	£0
Income	-£1,640	-£27,482	-£1,640	£0
Balance Sheet	-£9,700	£3,300	-£9,700	£0
Central Support Charges	£92,650	£91,515	£92,650	£0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£3,945,750</b>	<b>£2,833,639</b>	<b>£3,938,763</b>	<b>-£6,987</b>
Resources Recharged (Vacancy Factor)	-£200,000		£57,164	£257,164
<b>Resources Board (overall)</b>	<b>£3,745,750</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£3,995,926</b>	<b>£250,176</b>

**Resources Board (April - Sept 2024)**

Appendix C

Consolidated General Fund Position

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actuals</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Variance</b>
Executive Board	£568,620	£460,262	£568,620	£0
Planning and Development	£293,250	£738,657	£636,250	£343,000
Licensing	£56,370	£92,853	£56,370	£0
Community and Environment	£7,686,370	£5,425,594	£7,636,749	-£49,621
Resources (including staff vacancies)	£3,945,750	-£1,520,073	£4,010,226	£64,476
Vacancy Factor	-£200,000	£0	£57,164	£257,164
<b>NET BOARD EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£12,350,360</b>	<b>£5,197,293</b>	<b>£12,965,379</b>	<b>£615,019</b>
Other Contingencies	£148,700	£0	£148,700	£0
Investment Income	-£1,094,030	-£1,453,240	-£2,050,870	-£956,840
Use of Balances and Savings	£3,217,300	£0	£3,217,300	£0
Financing Adjustment	-£780,570	£0	-£780,570	£0
<b>NET EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£13,841,760</b>	<b>£3,744,053</b>	<b>£13,499,939</b>	<b>-£341,821</b>

**Agenda Item No 8**

**Resources Board**

**11 November 2024**

**Report of the  
Interim Corporate Director – Resources  
(Section 151 Officer)**

**Supplementary Estimate –  
Development Control Appeal costs**

**1 Summary**

1.1 The Board is asked to agree a supplementary estimate of £225,000, to fund the costs of appeals in the current year, as detailed in the appendix to this report.

**Recommendation to Board**

**That the supplementary estimate of £225,000, to fund the costs of appeals in the current year be approved.**

**2 Introduction**

2.1 The attached report was recently considered and agreed by the Planning and Development Board and Members are asked to approve a supplementary estimate of £225,000, to fund the costs of appeals in the current year as detailed in the appendix at 4.1.

**3 Report Implications**

3.1 These are set out in the attached Appendix.

The Contact Officer for this report is Nigel Lane (719371).

**Background Papers**

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

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>



**Agenda Item No 5****Planning and Development Board****7 October 2024****Report of the  
Interim Corporate Director – Resources  
(Section 151 Officer)****Budgetary Control Report 2024/25  
Period April - August 2024****1 Summary**

- 1.1 The report covers revenue expenditure and income for the period from 1 April 2024 to 31 August 2024. The 2024/2025 budget and the actual position for the period, compared with the estimate at that date, are given, together with an estimate of the outturn position for services reporting to this Board.

**Recommendation to the Board**

- a That the report be noted and that the Board requests any further information it feels would assist it in monitoring the budgets under the Board's control.
- b That a supplementary estimate of £225,000 is approved for recommendation to Resources Board to fund the costs of appeals in the current year. This level of budget may also be required in next year but this will be requested as part of the 2025/26 budget process.

**2 Introduction**

- 2.1 Under the Service Reporting Code of Practice (SeRCOP), services should be charged with the total cost of providing the service, which not only includes costs and income directly incurred, but also support costs relating to such areas as finance, office accommodation, telephone costs and IT services. The figures contained within this report are calculated on this basis.
- 2.2 In April 2024 a new Financial Management System (Unit 4) was implemented which will significantly change how budget monitoring and budget preparation is delivered in the future making it more efficient and timely automating as much as possible directing resources an interpreting the figures and presenting forecasts to give a clear indication of the outturn position and impact on balances which then feeds into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. This report is the first budget monitor using forecasting rather than profiling, this will be more informative as the year progresses.

### 3 **Estimated Outturn**

3.1 The forecast for those services reporting to this Board as of 31 August 2023 is £650,452 compared with the Budgeted position of £293,250; variance of £357,202 for the period. Appendix A to this report provides details of the Forecast and Budgetary position for each service reporting to this Board, together with the variance for the period.

3.2 Where possible, the year-to-date budget figures have been calculated with some allowance for seasonal variations to give a better comparison with actual figures. Reasons for the variations are given, where appropriate, in more detail below.

3.3 The variance of £355,634 is due to two main issues: Planning application fee income is currently lower than the budgeted income, but this will continue to be monitored and if adjustment is required this will be recommended as part of the budget process. The other issue is the cost of appeals which is significant in the current year due to the cost incurred for professionals such as barristers. This cost can be split as follows:

- Hodgetts inquiry to date costs of £139,069 received.
- Fillongley Solar Farm hearing due to be held in December estimated costs of £86,000.

### 4 **Appeal budgets for Planning Control**

4.1 Additional budget of £225,000 has been requested to cover the appeals taken place to date and any further appeals in this financial year. There has been a proposal to continue with the appeals budget in the planning and control cost centre for the next financial year but this if required will be requested as growth as part of the 2025/26 budget process - Appendix B.

### 5 **Risks to the Budget**

5.1 The key risks to the budgetary position of the Council from services under the control of this Board are:-

- The need to hold Public Inquiries into Planning Developments. Inquiries can cost the Council around £50,000 each.
- A change in the level of planning applications received. A fall in applications is likely to lead to a reduction in planning income, whilst an increase in applications will increase the pressure on staff to deal with applications in the required timescales.
- The Government requires all planning applications to be dealt with within 26 weeks. If this is not achieved, the costs of the application must be borne by the authority. Whilst the Planning Team deals with almost 100% of current applications within this time, there is always the potential for this to slip, leading to a decline in the planning income level.
- There are potential additional costs for the Council in carrying out its planning function. If the Council loses a planning appeal, an award of

costs can be made against the Council (the appellant's costs for the appeal). If the Council consistently loses appeals it will become a designated authority, which means that prospective applicants can submit their applications directly to the planning directorate. This would mean the Council would lose the accompanying planning fee.

## **6 Report Implications**

### **6.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

6.1.1 Income and Expenditure will continue to be closely managed and any issues that arise will be reported to this Board at future meetings.

### **6.2 Environment and Sustainability Implications**

6.2.1 The Council must ensure that it adopts and implements robust and comprehensive budgetary monitoring and control, to ensure not only the availability of services within the current financial year, but in future years.

The Contact Officer for this report is Akanksha Downing (ext 4384).

## **Background Papers**

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

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>

**Development and Control Board (April - August 2024)**

**Appendix A**

		<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actuals</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Variance</b>
NW4009	Planning Control	£135,470	£71,006	£491,104	£355,634
NW4010	Building Control	£62,840	£11,290	£62,840	£0
NW4012	Conservation And Built Heritage	£68,300	£68,275	£68,300	£0
NW4014	Local Land Charges	£29,930	£32,384	£31,498	£1,568
NW4016	Civic Awards	£0	£0	£0	£0
NW4018	Street Naming And Numbering	-£3,290	£395	-£3,290	£0
	<b>Development and Control Board Total</b>	<b>£293,250</b>	<b>£183,350</b>	<b>£650,452</b>	<b>£357,202</b>

**Development and Control Board (April - August 2024)**

**Appendix B**

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actuals</b>	<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Variance</b>
Premises-Related Expenditure	£0	£0	£0	£0
Supplies & Services	£182,130	£168,646	£409,151	£227,021
Income	-£859,500	-£980,298	-£729,319	£130,181
Balance Sheet	-£8,610	£16,390	-£8,610	£0
Central Support Charges	£979,230	£978,612	£979,230	£0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>£293,250</b>	<b>£183,350</b>	<b>£650,452</b>	<b>£357,202</b>

**Agenda Item No 9**

**Resources Board**

**11 November 2024**

**Report of the  
Director of Housing**

**Homelessness Strategy**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides the Board with a draft Homelessness Strategy to approve.

**Recommendation to the Resources Board**

**That the final draft of Homelessness Strategy at Appendix A be considered and agreed.**

**2 Consultation**

- 2.1 The Housing Division has consulted with key partners and stakeholders, staff and the Borough Wide Tenants Forum. Their responses are reflected in the Strategy document. The Housing Task and Finish Group has met to consider the evidence findings which underpin the direction of the Strategy.

**3 Background**

- 3.1 The Council is required to have a published Homeless Strategy. The Council is expected to carry out a homelessness review for the Borough and to formulate and publish a strategy based on the results of the review. We are required to undertake a review and publish a strategy within a period of 5 years.
- 3.2 The review of homelessness and the first draft of a strategy to address the findings was submitted to the Resources Board at its meeting on 3 September 2024. Subsequently it has been considered by staff, stakeholders and partners.

**4 Consultation**

- 4.1 The draft strategy has been shared with the partners, staff and the Borough Wide Tenants Forum.
- 4.2 Partners work with the Council to address the housing needs of its residents. They were invited to give their observations and also to engage in a face to

face meeting to discuss the strategy and start to consider the actions we need to take to deliver it. Partners have welcomed the draft strategy as being focussed and covering key priorities which should enable the Council to meet the housing needs of the Borough. The only significant amendment to the Strategy following the consultation is to include the housing needs of single young people that are not Care Leavers and we have adjusted the reference to the lettings scheme to ensure that it is inclusive and we can consider how we provide accessible and adaptable accommodation.

## **5 Homelessness Strategy – 2024 - 2029**

- 5.1 The final draft of the Homelessness Strategy is attached at Appendix A for the Board to consider and approve.
- 5.2 When the Strategy is approved the Housing Division will seek to provide a user friendly design and then publish it, with the evidence, on our website.
- 5.3 We intend to draft an action plan and share it with partners in a series of meetings to seek feedback and their commitment before it is finalised.

## **6 Report Implications**

### **6.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

- 6.1.1 Homelessness services are a statutory function on the Council and therefore budget is allocated in the General Fund. For 2024/2025 this is £199,440. Government has been providing grant funding to support Local Authorities meet statutory requirements for homelessness for some years. The Council receives a homelessness prevention grant from the Government which enable us to deliver our homelessness services. The Homeless Prevention grant award was £169,141 in 2023/2024 and is £257,462 for 2024/2025.
- 6.1.2 Additional grant funding has been provided for a designated staff resource to support housing applicants suffering Domestic Abuse this is £37,846 for 2024/2025 as well as for supporting Guests from Ukraine and Asylum Seekers who are given leave to remain.
- 6.1.3 Over the three years from 2020 to 2023 the Council spend on hotel temporary accommodation costs was an average of £40,000 annually. In 2023-2024 the costs for hotel temporary accommodation was £145,571. These costs are largely covered by Housing Benefit payments or paid for by the applicant. Some of the increase in costs for 2023-2024 was due to the need to provide temporary accommodation for tenants made homeless by a fire for a short time.

### **6.2 Legal, Data Protection and Human Rights Implications**

- 6.2.1 The Council has a number of statutory duties to those people who present themselves as homeless which are set out in several Housing and Homelessness Acts which were extensively modified by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. As a local housing authority, the Council has a duty under the Homelessness Act 2002 to adopt a homelessness strategy for

- (a) preventing homelessness;
- (b) securing that sufficient accommodation is and will be available for people who are homeless;
- (c) securing satisfactory provision of support for homeless people.

6.2.2 The Council's Homeless Strategy must be kept under review at least every five years, as required by the 2002 Act.

6.2.3 A Data Protection Impact Assessment("DPIA") must be completed where there are plans to:

- (a) use systematic and extensive profiling with significant effects;
- (b) process special category or criminal offence data on a large scale; or
- (c) systematically monitor publicly accessible places on a large scale
- (d) use new technologies;
- (e) use profiling or special category data to decide on access to services;
- (f) profile individuals on a large scale;
- (g) process biometric data;
- (h) process genetic data;
- (i) match data or combine datasets from different sources; collect personal data from a source other than the individual without providing them with a privacy notice ('invisible processing');
- (j) track individuals' location or behaviour;
- (k) profile children or target marketing or online services at them; or
- (l) process data that might endanger the individual's physical health or safety in the event of a security breach

6.2.4 Taking into account of the above, there are no Data Protection arising from this report which would require a DPIA.

6.2.5 There are no Human Rights issues arising from this Report

### 6.3 **Equalities Implications**

6.3.1 Both our local and the County wide strategy aim to ensure that homelessness and support services are accessible to all households and do not discriminate against any particular client group. The Council is required to ensure that policies and decisions relating to homelessness and threatened homelessness do not amount to unlawful conduct under the Equality Act 2010 and must also comply with the public sector equality duty.

### 6.4 **Safer Communities Implications**

6.4.1 The Homelessness Strategy includes two key themes relating to domestic abuse and offending. Both themes have significant safer communities' contributions by supporting victims of domestic abuse and helping to reduce re-offending through seeking to address the risk of homelessness.



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

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>

# **North Warwickshire Borough Council**

## **Homelessness Strategy**

**2024 – 2029**

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**Objective 2: Develop proactive interventions to prevent homelessness**

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## **Foreword**

### **Chair of Resources Board**

Meeting the housing needs of its residents is a priority for the Council. Based on sound evidence this strategy meets our statutory duties and provides a clear focus and direction for our work with partners to address the housing needs of our residents.

The importance of collaboration runs through our new strategy. We will use it as a platform to re-invigorate our relationships with our partners to ensure a network of providers and services are engaged to prevent homelessness and reduce the need for temporary accommodation.

The evidence and strategy show that good work is being done in the Borough to meet the housing needs of our residents. It also indicates the challenges that some residents are facing to sustain their home or find alternative accommodation. Our services are designed to help them meet those challenges.

I would like to thank our own staff and our partners for the work they do collectively to prevent homelessness in the Borough. Our expectation is that the key objectives which will be delivered by the strategy will support them in their endeavours.

Councillor Carolyn Symonds

## Introduction and Context

The North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC) Homelessness Strategy sets out our vision and objectives to prevent and tackle homelessness in the Borough from 2024 to 2029.

Our strategy complements and supports the partnership priorities set out in the Warwickshire Homelessness Strategy, which are:

- Health – to reduce the inequalities and improve the health of people at risk of homelessness, homeless or sleeping rough
- Financial inclusion – to ensure that a wide range of appropriate services are available to support those at risk of homelessness due to financial difficulties
- Young people – to enhance and improve services that prevent homelessness among young people
- Domestic abuse – to prevent domestic abuse and the crisis homelessness resulting from it wherever possible
- Offending – to deliver better focussed housing and related support services for those at risk of homelessness when leaving prison

## About North Warwickshire

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

The homes the council owns and manages are spread over a rural area with the largest concentration of properties in Atherstone (550), Arley (150), Dordon (126), Mancetter (226) Polesworth (302), Kingsbury (158), Baddesley (145), Hartshill (148), Coleshill (129) and Water Orton (94).

## Demographics

The population of North Warwickshire increased by 4.9% between 2011 and 2021 (from 62,000 to 65,000). The largest age group is those aged between 50 and 64, which accounts for 14,582 people (22.4% of the total). 96.1% of the population have identified their ethnicity as white.

## Local economic context

North Warwickshire is ranked the 167<sup>th</sup> most deprived out of 317 authorities, while one area (to the edge of Mancetter, including the Mancetter Quarry) is in the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods across the country.

North Warwickshire has seen a decrease in the overall employment rate, from 79.4% in December 2022, to 74.5% in December 2023. This is compared to a figure of 75.2% for the West Midlands. 2.6% (1,025) of people were claiming Universal Credit as of May 2024.

## Local housing context

North Warwickshire has mainly semi-detached, detached and terraced homes within the borough, with semi-detached making up the largest number at just under 10,000 homes. As of 2023, the lower quartile house price in North Warwickshire was £190,000 which was at the average for other comparator local authority areas, while there has been significant house price inflation over the last five years which has slowed over the last year.

The proportion of social rented homes of the total housing stock in North Warwickshire is just above the average of the comparator group (14%). NWBC has 2,573 homes as of March 2024, with houses making up most of those properties with 1,347 dwellings. Other registered providers (housing associations) have 1,544 homes, with 1,187 of those available as general needs/social rent.

Right to buy sales have significantly decreased the number of larger homes available to let in the borough, with 61 homes of 3+ bedrooms sold under the right to buy since 2018/19. In terms of development of new homes, NWBC and other housing associations have developed 397 new homes between 2016/17 and 2023/24. It is important to note that of the 397 new homes, only 52 were developed for social rent, with 224 for affordable rent, 109 for shared ownership and 12 for low-cost home ownership.

The Council has a vacancy of around 5% annually with 36% of those vacancies being houses. Average re-let time for NWBC homes has increased by nearly 50% between 2019/20 and 2023/24 from 48 days to 69 days. This is a sector wide trend but will also have an impact on available homes and income for NWBC. There was a total of 821 empty homes across all tenures in North Warwickshire at the end of March 2024.

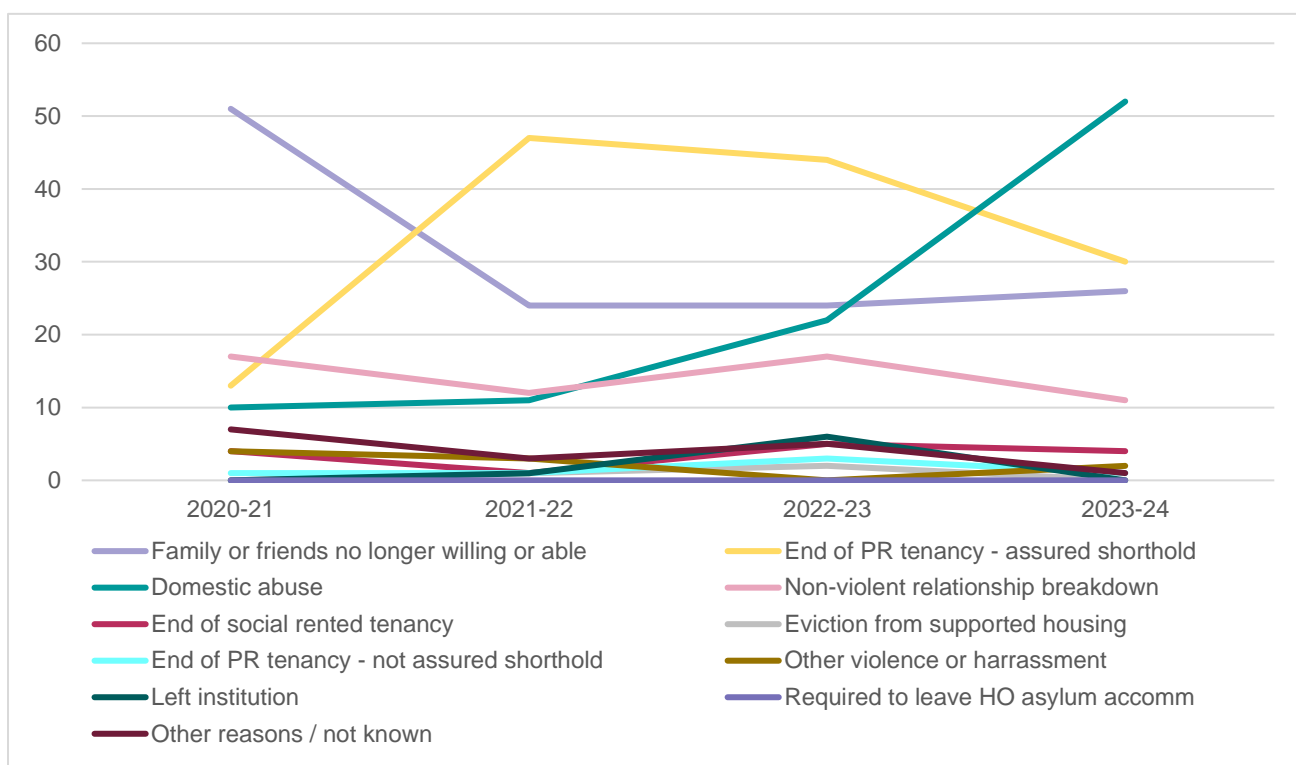
There were 341 applicants on the waiting list at NWBC in March 2023. This number is low by comparison but is down to NWBC only placing households on the waiting list who are intending to move and having a realistic prospect of being let a home. The property size preference of those on the waiting list reinforces the need for more one- and two-bedroom properties in the borough.

### Homelessness in North Warwickshire

The graph below shows the increase in the number of households owed a duty, both due to homelessness and those who are threatened with homelessness. It is important to note that those households owed a duty due to homelessness has increased by two thirds over the past two years.



The graph below shows the reasons for homelessness for those households who are owed the prevention duty. The data shows a significant increase in cases relating to Domestic Abuse, while the end of Private Rented Tenancies, and Family/Friends no longer to accommodate make up the two other main reasons.



The main types of households found to be under threat of homeless are single people with or without children. The table below illustrates the large increase in the number of cases of single men and women and single women with children.

### Households who are owed the prevention duty

Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
Single parent with dependent children - Male	1	2	4	5
Single parent with dependent children - Female	24	18	51	55
Single parent with dependent children - Other / gender n/k	0	0	0	0
Single adult - Male	40	29	25	16
Single adult - Female	28	29	28	27
Single adult - Other / gender not known	0	0	0	0
Couple with dependent children	11	11	10	10
Couple / two adults without dependent children	3	13	11	10
Three or more adults with dependent children	0	0	1	2
Three or more adults without dependent children	0	2	2	0
Not known	0	0	0	0

### Our operating environment

To define the challenges that we face in the delivery of our homelessness service, we have developed a 'PESTLE' analysis, which is shown below.

<b>Political</b>	There are significant political changes following the change of Government in the last election, and we can expect new legislation and policy to be forthcoming over the next 12 – 18 months. There is some security for the national picture due to the Fixed Term Parliaments Act which should see no change in government policy until 2029. The new Labour Government has already announced a commitment to the delivery of 1.5 million new homes over the life of this parliament and have regularly mentioned the need for more affordable housing as part of this development.
<b>Economic</b>	The economic environment is difficult, with inflationary pressures and high interest rates. It is predicted that this will ease over the coming years, but it presents a challenge to residents of North Warwickshire who want to buy a property, but also to those who own property with rising mortgage costs. It is essential that we are still able to supplement our homelessness budgets with grant top ups, and we may look to work more closely with our county wide partners to secure additional funding
<b>Social</b>	The population of North Warwickshire has increased marginally over the last 10 years, and the average age of our residents has also increased which has implications for the type of housing needed in the borough. We also know that many of our residents will be affected by the cost-of-living crisis, which has a direct impact on both quality of life but also their ability to sustain their homes. There are no concerns around employment levels.
<b>Technological</b>	There have been significant advances in technology, some of which can aid our approach to housing services in North Warwickshire, mainly around how we let our properties. We need to keep the effectiveness and efficiency of our housing management systems, and the quality of our data under review.
<b>Legislation and Regulation</b>	<p>The Social Housing (Regulation) Act came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, and we need to ensure compliance with the standards set out in the new Consumer Standards. Existing legislation, such as the Homelessness Act 2022, and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 have a direct impact on the objectives and delivery of this strategy.</p> <p>We are expecting legislation to be passed around private rented sector security, while the new government have set a mission to halve violence against women and girls within a decade and we would expect to see developments to the 2021 government strategy in the next 12 months.</p> <p>Added to this, we also expect developments around a new Decent Homes Standard, and updates to the National Planning Policy Framework to deliver quality homes and the government target of 1.5 million homes over the life of this parliament.</p>
<b>Environmental</b>	The government has reaffirmed its commitment to achieving EPC 'C' by 2030, and the narrative around green energy supply has become more prominent. This has an impact on our void standard, but also the development of new properties in North Warwickshire.

## Homelessness Strategy 2018 – 2023

Our previous Homelessness Strategy was launched in 2018, and contained the following strategic priorities and objectives:

### Priority 1 – Ensure people are well informed about their housing options



## Objectives

- To raise awareness and promote the homelessness and housing options service with the public and partner agencies
- To ensure there is easy access to high quality information about the services provided and where to get help
- To improve customer service, involvement and satisfaction

### **Priority 2 – Prevent people from becoming homeless as early as possible**

## Objectives

- To further develop and improve the prevention tools to assist households in different situations and to meet local need
- To actively support, promote and develop partnership networks to ensure a coordinated and multi-agency approach to homelessness prevention
- To develop strong protocols for multi-agency working to support and appropriately refer individuals and families at risk linking into the work of the Preventing Homelessness, Improving Lives (PHIL) project
- To design and implement early and targeted interventions for groups identified as higher risk of homelessness linking into the work of PHIL

### **Priority 3 – Assist people as soon as possible if they do become homeless so that homelessness can be relieved by securing sufficient accommodation and support**

## Objectives

- To review systems and processes to ensure the Homelessness Reduction Act requirements are fully implemented
- Strengthen partnerships with local housing related support providers and other organisations who provide accommodation and support to homeless persons
- Review temporary accommodation provision and ensure it is adequate to meet local need
- Reinforce commitments to minimise the use of bed and breakfast provision particularly for families with children and maintain zero usage for 16–17-year-olds

### **Priority 4 – Support people to recover from their experience and stay out of homelessness**

## Objectives

- To review the effectiveness of the tenancy sustainment service provided by the Council and ensure those most at risk of becoming homeless or losing their accommodation are assisted
- To maximise referrals to housing related support providers to assist people to sustain their accommodation and receive the support they require
- To develop financial inclusion services in conjunction with the North Warwickshire Financial Inclusion partnership ensuring a coordinated approach to offering advice on housing benefit, debt and welfare benefit

### **Priority 5 – Enable people to secure homes they can afford and maintain**

## Objectives

- To ensure adequate provision of housing to meet housing need in the Borough to include more supported housing
- To increase the supply of affordable housing through existing and new partnerships

- To review and monitor the Council's Lettings Scheme to ensure best use of stock and that social housing properties are let to those most in need
- To develop work with private landlords and initiatives that will improve access to the private rented market locally
- To ensure those ready to move on from supported accommodation can do so in a timely way

### **Successes from the previous strategy**

The previous strategy aimed to provide a clear direction for the service to meet the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. This provisions of this Act made it clear that Government knew that homelessness prevention would not be achieved without close partnership working. For this reason, local strategy direction in Warwickshire was complimented by a countywide strategy which was published in 2019 and provided a catalyst to stronger partnerships in tackling homelessness.

### **Locally**

- The Council developed 44 new homes to help meet housing need
- We have reviewed our Lettings Scheme & provided an online application form
- We have kept the use of temporary accommodation below the national trend.
- We have improved the type of temporary accommodation available to meet different needs
- Supported, shared accommodation schemes have been developed for Veterans specifically and single men generally
- Our tenancy sustainment service has supported homelessness prevention
- We have introduced a designated resource to support applicants reporting domestic abuse and closely link with other agencies. All front line staff have had training.
- An incentive scheme is in place to encourage transfers from family homes to smaller accommodation
- There is a Street Outreach Service to engage with individuals reported as homeless in the Borough
- A flexible Housing Prevention Fund is in place to help with rent deposit and rent in advance
- Officers are proactive in identifying private lets for individuals seeking re-housing in the Borough

### **In Partnership**

- Duty to refer arrangements have been developed and strengthened over time with particularly success with the Probation Service, Prisons and in the provision of a designated hospital discharge service
- The Protocol for addressing young people's homelessness has been reviewed, refreshed and training provided
- A specific service to provide housing options advice for Guests from Ukraine was developed and successfully implemented
- We proactively contributed to the Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy.

## **Consultation**

To inform the development of this strategy there has been consultation with a full range of stakeholders including:

- NWBC staff – Housing Options, Financial Inclusion Team, Hospital Discharge service
- NWBC residents
- NWBC Councillors
- Key partner agencies (such as DWP, Probation, Support Providers, Warwickshire County Council and Housing Associations)

The key observations and issues that have arisen through the consultation have been grouped below:

### **Partnerships**

- NWBC has a good culture – working together with partners and solution focussed
- Duty to refer works well
- Promote opportunities for stakeholders to co-ordinate efforts to tackle homelessness
- Consider meetings involving support providers
- Reach out to private landlords
- Seek further sharing around our approach to domestic abuse (and other issues)

### **Housing need**

- Single people with and without children
- Sofa surfers
- Domestic abuse
- Complex needs
- Leaving care

### **Housing supply**

- Delivery of new social rented homes
- Voids in NWBC stock
- Nominations work well
- There is a range of temporary accommodation types
- Supported housing (complex needs) is in short supply

### **Advice and support**

- Hospital discharge services very valuable
- Capacity of mental health services
- The high numbers of people experiencing Domestic Abuse
- The limited service available for those with complex needs
- Support services operating out of normal working hours
- Offenders with complex needs
- Many of the support services are time-limited
- The need to map any gaps in service to support those facing eviction from the private rented sector
- The reduction in funding for Housing Related Support services and change of focus for the tendered contracts is a risk area
- The PHIL Warwickshire service is missed by many

## The vision for our strategy

The vision for our strategy is *‘working closely with our partners, we will reduce homelessness in North Warwickshire through the provision of more affordable housing and tackling the root causes of homelessness in the Borough’*

## Themes and objectives

The consultation and research undertaken for the review has brought the following key themes to the forefront. They are presented to shape our strategic approach for the next five years:

- Our Housing Options Service is currently managing well given the demands placed on the service, however, it has been identified that service is at capacity and demand can cause a stress on the system.
- The key pressures on the service are meeting the housing needs of applicants suffering Domestic Abuse, and family/friends no longer willing to accommodate. All other reasons have for homelessness have remained consistent since 2020/21.
- A key demand is coming from single people, and single females with dependent children, the latter has seen the largest increase in demand.
- Domestic Abuse has become a major factor in demand through the homelessness service, and we need to do more work with our partners to tackle this issue to reduce the need to approach the council due to urgent housing need.
- There has been a marked increase in demand due to evictions from the social rented sector, and we need to work more closely with our housing association partners to drive tenancy sustainment, as well as tackling homelessness and the causes of homelessness as a priority.
- We have seen an increase in the use of temporary accommodation. We need to seek out opportunities to increase the provision of affordable housing options for residents to avoid this escalating further and becoming unmanageable.
- There is a long wait for four-bedroom properties, but the greatest demand is for one- and two-bedroom properties (as highlighted in the third bullet point above)
- Evidence suggests relatively low levels of rough sleeping in North Warwickshire
- The budgets for the homeless service at NWBC are small, and there are limitations to how much more can be achieved within the existing resources.
- There remains potential to do close partnership work at a County level, with neighboring authorities and partners.

Taking this into account, we have developed the following objectives which make up this strategy:

1. Increase the supply of affordable housing options in North Warwickshire
2. Develop proactive interventions to prevent homelessness in North Warwickshire
3. Develop a strategic approach to seeking opportunities to meet housing need with private sector housing.

The following sections detail how we will work to achieve each of these objectives over the life of the strategy.

## **Objective 1: Increase the supply of affordable housing options**

To meet housing needs in the borough, the council has developed 163 new homes since 2010. It has also enabled the development of new homes by Private Registered Providers – who use the Council’s Housing Register to allocate the first lettings. Over the last four years the housing market has changed and costs to rent privately have increased. To continue to successfully tackle homelessness in North Warwickshire, we need to not only sustain the new supply provided to date but to increase the supply of affordable housing options to meet demand. It is equally important that we increase the supply of the right homes to meet demand in terms of property type and size.

### **Where are we now?**

There is a total of 3,775 homes in the social housing rented stock in North Warwickshire. Vacancy rates are limited so we need more supply to meet the increasing demand indicated in this review. It is important that we develop the right homes, in the right places for our residents. There are particular pressures for one and two-bedroom properties, and for supported/sheltered accommodation.

The Coventry and Warwickshire Housing & Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA) 2022 states that there is a need for 176 additional homes per year between 2022 and 2032. Of this 176, it recommends that 131 are developed for social rent.

We had four empty homes in the Council’s social housing stock at the end of March 2024. The Council’s void turnaround times have increased by significantly which is putting further pressure on the supply of homes.

### **Where do we want to be?**

We want to ensure that we are offering a clear path to develop the right homes in the right places for North Warwickshire to increasing the supply of affordable housing to meet demand. This will help us to provide safe, secure homes for those that need them, whilst reducing our reliance on temporary accommodation, the use of which is costly and has increased in recent years. We will consider how we address the needs of applicants who have additional housing needs. We will take a holistic approach to increasing supply, which also looks at our voids processes and considers the reasons for empty homes across the residential stock.

### **How will we get there?**

We will work with our Registered Provider partners, and housing developers to enable the supply of good quality, accessible, adaptable, energy efficient homes into North Warwickshire.

We will seek to ensure that 100% of new affordable vacancies are let using the Council’s Lettings Scheme and to maximise the Scheme for future lettings.

The Housing Division will work strategically with the Planning Division to seek out opportunities to bring forward suitable developments for affordable housing.

As funding allows the Council as a landlord will seek to develop social housing to increase its own stock of properties.

The Council will seek to develop a Local Housing Company to ensure it can meet a broad range of housing needs in the Borough.

We will work in partnership with Warwickshire County Council to understand the demand for supported housing in the Borough to inform future developments.

**We will continue to ensure that our Lettings Scheme is inclusive and we will, where possible, provide accommodation which is accessible and adaptable.**

We will carry out a review of our internal voids process to get our properties to a lettable standard more quickly

We will review and develop incentive schemes for downsizing to free up larger properties which may be underoccupied.

### **How will we measure success?**

As part of the Strategy actions metrics will be developed to track the increase in the supply of vacancies. This will include:

- The number of new homes developed
- The number of new social/ affordable homes delivered
- The number of new homes provided by our Local Housing Company
- The number of supported housing properties available
- Tracking the vacancy rate of all Registered Provider stock
- Monitoring lettings by Private Registered Providers to maximise those made to meet local housing needs
- Average re-let times for the Council's own stock
- Number of households downsizing as a result of intervention

## **Objective 2: Develop proactive interventions to prevent homelessness**

Partner organisations are keen to engage with the Council to tackle homelessness in a co-ordinated and collaborative manner. Developing pro-active approaches in partnership with other specialist organisations will significantly increase the prevention of homelessness, as well as providing effective and efficient solutions for those who are already homeless.

### **Where are we now?**

We have strong partnerships with a range of stakeholders; however, this is managed on a case-by-case basis in the main. Feedback from our partners is positive, and they have commented on strong working relationships with NWBC, which gives us a great platform from which to move forward. We know that there is an increasing demand on the service from families who are experiencing Domestic Abuse, which needs to be a key focus through the life of this strategy. Our partners will be key in developing a solution to this.

### **Where do we want to be?**

We are aware that solutions to homelessness more often require multi-agency solutions. We want to develop firm partnership arrangements with agencies, particularly where there are complex cases requiring multiple solutions and expertise.

### **How will we get there?**

We will agree the most effective ways to bring together partners to co-ordinate our efforts to tackle homelessness

We will develop stronger working relationships with our key housing associations in North Warwickshire

Work with Social Care and Health Partners where customers have additional care and support needs

We will co-ordinate our partners to collate the evidence and to develop potential solutions to bid for funding to do more to tackle homelessness

We will work with partner agencies to establish clear and effective signposting for key issues, such as Domestic Abuse and family breakdowns

We will identify and develop partnerships with agencies who will be essential in managing households with complex needs to provide a holistic, one stop shop solution

We will develop a tenancy sustainment training package for new NWBC tenants

We will support the County Council's pathways for Care Leavers to ensure they do not face homelessness

### **How will we measure success?**

As part of the strategy, we will use our positive relationships with partners to develop a protocol which establishes how we will engage with them together and individually. We will:

- Set up a strategic multi-agency group to understand the reasons for homelessness and to co-ordinate the delivery of this strategy
- Organise regular operational meetings to maximise co-operation across partners
- Continue to focus on our partnerships that support applicants reporting Domestic Abuse and seek to enhance outreach work and information to enable early intervention
- Actively engage with the County Council Commissioners providing the new Housing Related Support services to ensure residents in North Warwickshire are supported
- Seek to provide a resource for tenancy sustainment training for our own tenants and support the endeavours of other Registered Providers to do the same
- Seek to reduce the number of people applying for housing because of the end of their private tenancy
- Engage with the County Council to support pathways out of care for Care Leavers
- **Work with local services, including Doorway, to understand the needs of young people in housing crisis and act in partnership to address them**

### **Objective 3: Develop a strategic approach to seeking opportunities to meet housing need with private sector housing.**

Working with private rented sector landlords may offer opportunities for us to reduce the number of people presenting to the council threatened with homelessness and to reduce our reliance on temporary accommodation. With the proposed regulatory changes to the private rented sector, this presents an opportunity for us to strengthen our relationships with private landlords in the borough, and to offer more secure accommodation for households that require it. The development of a Council owned Local Housing Company will proactively enhance our presence in this sector.

## **Where are we now?**

Many homes in North Warwickshire are privately owned, with the social housing sector having a significantly smaller number by comparison. We engage with private landlords on an individual basis and ad hoc around particular households that have contacted us for housing advice. A co-ordinated approach is proposed as part of this Strategy to seek an understanding of the sector as a collective and to seek positive and productive relationships with private landlords and develop our engagement and incentives to develop this relationship further.

## **Where do we want to be?**

We want to create, and foster, a mutually beneficial relationship with private landlords in North Warwickshire. This will help to raise the standards within the sector, whilst maximising the supply of good quality, secure homes for households.

## **How will we get there?**

We will start to proactively plan for the new private rented legislation (previously named the Renters (Reform) Bill).

We will look to strengthen our relationships with private landlords in North Warwickshire, and explore the options for open and regular dialogue.

We will look at extending our options to provide incentives (such as a rent guarantee scheme, or deposit bonds) to encourage private landlords to work with the council.

Having reached out to the sector to promote relationships and understand drivers we will consider developing a Private Sector Housing Strategy to sit alongside the delivery of a Council owned Local Housing Company.

## **How will we measure success?**

We are expecting changes to be delivered by Government that will impact on the private rented sector. Whilst small this sector is critical in meeting housing need in the Borough. We need to have a better understanding of the sector and the drivers for landlords locally. We will:

- Improve dialogue, communication and relationships with private landlords in North Warwickshire
- Seek to reduce the number of people presenting to the council threatened with homelessness due the end of a private rented property
- Seek to increase homes let at market rents – including by our Local Housing Company
- Provide incentive schemes to attract private landlords to work with NWBC
- Seek a resource to develop a Private Sector Housing Strategy

## **Evidence base**

As part of the development of this strategy, we have carried out extensive research to understand the pressures and demand on the homelessness service at NWBC. The findings from this research are captured in the accompanying 'Homelessness Strategy – evidence base' document for review.

## **Monitoring and review**



This strategy will be live between 2024 and 2029, when we will develop a new strategy for North Warwickshire.

In line with best practice, we will review the strategy yearly to ensure that the objectives remain appropriate and relevant. All the actions relating to each objective our monthly reporting and monitoring on progress.

**Agenda Item No 10**

**Resources Board**

**11 November 2024**

**Report of the  
Director of Housing**

**Grenfell Tower Inquiry**

**1 Summary**

- 1.1 This report reflects on the summary findings of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and advises the Board about implications for the Council.

**Recommendation to the Resources Board**

- a That the information provided from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Executive Summary be noted; and**
- b That the implications for the Council of the findings for its domestic stock be considered;**
- c That the policy on dealing with fire risks in the Council's domestic stock be approved; and**
- d A budget of £800,000 to support the continuation of a programme to provide new fire doors for flats be approved.**

**2 Consultation**

- 2.1 Following consideration by the Resources Board this report will be shared with the Borough Wide Tenant Forum.

**3 Background**

- 3.1 On 14 June 2017 there was a fire in Grenfell Tower in the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, which killed 72 people. The Government commissioned a public inquiry to understand the caused of the fire. This report reflects on the overview which was published in September 2024 as an Executive Summary with Recommendations from the full Phase 2 report.

- 3.2 As the implications from the Inquiry have become public there have been changes in legislation which are concerned with both building and fire safety but also regulations which inform the management of social housing stock. These changes have been introduced because the Inquiry has discovered that the fire was caused by systemic failures in regulatory bodies and the application of regulations.

## 4 Grenfell Tower Inquiry Findings

- 4.1 Grenfell Tower is a high rise tower block. The public inquiry has considered why the materials which were used to refurbish the building were chosen. In doing so it has not only considered whether the materials were fit for their purpose but also the regulatory systems that allowed for that choice.
- 4.2 The Inquiry has heard evidence about the operation of Department of Communities and Local Government, the Building Research Establishment (BRE), the British Board of Agreement (BBA), the National House Building Council (NHBC) and Local Authority Building Control (LABC). It has found that the DCLG received warnings about the risks of using the materials used on Grenfell Tower but failed to amend the guidance given in Approved Document B (approved documents give guidance on ways to meet Building Regulations). It noted that the BRE had a trusted position within the construction industry but had weaknesses in the way it dealt with testing and was exposed to the risk of manipulation by unscrupulous manufacturers. It says that the BBA safety certificates were accepted by the industry largely without question but that there were systematic shortcomings in how it provided certification. It has found that the LABC was vulnerable to manipulation because its processes were not implemented rigorously enough. The NHBC was found to have failed to ensure its building control function was free from the influence of commercial pressures.
- 4.3 The regulatory failings resulted in materials being used in the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower that were not fit for purpose. These materials were provided by Arconic Architectural Products (Reynobond 55 PE panels), Celotex (RS500 foam insulation) and Kingspan (K15 insulation). The Inquiry report says: Arconic had a 'deliberate strategy to continue selling Reynonbond 55 PE based on a statement about its fire performance that it knew to be false'.

Celotex said its material was "suitable and safe for use on Grenfell Tower although it knew that was not the case".

Kingspan 'created a false market in insulation for use on buildings over 18m in height claiming that K15 has been a system successfully tested under BS8414' and when they changed the composition of their product and tests were 'disastrous' they did not withdraw the product from the market and concealed from the BBA the product they were selling was different from the certified product.

- 4.4 Grenfell Tower was managed by a Tenant Management Organisation. The Inquiry heard evidence of reports which has been commissioned that identified issues around governance, customer service, staff attitude and a poor repairs service. Despite these reports there was little sign of change or learning in the Organisation about how to treat or relate to its residents. The Inquiry report notes that some/ many occupants regarded the Organisation as a bullying overlord that belittled and marginalised them and did not take their concerns seriously.

- 4.5 The Inquiry summary says that the Tenant Management Organisation lost sight of the fact that residents were people who depended on it for a safe and decent home.
- 4.6 The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the Tenant Management Organisation were jointly responsible for the management of safety at Grenfell Tower. It was the Tenant Management Organisation's duty to ensure compliance with the Fire Safety Order 2005. The Inquiry found that the fire risk assessor they appointed was ill qualified to carry out fire risk assessments for a building of the size and complexity of Grenfell Tower. It is asserted that the demands of managing fire safety were seen as an inconvenience by the Organisation rather than an essential aspect of its duty to manage its property carefully.
- 4.7 To undertake the refurbishment of the Tower professionals/ an Architect and main and sub contractors were appointed. The Inquiry found that the choice of combustible materials for the cladding of Grenfell Tower resulted from a series of errors caused by the incompetence of the organisations and individuals involved in the refurbishment. Failure to take responsibility for important aspects of design is noted as a particular failing. Considerations around cost are also referred to in the report. The report refers to the principal contractor's inexperienced team that did not have sufficient knowledge of Building Regulations or Approved Document B.
- 4.8 The Inquiry report that was published in September 2024 makes around 80 recommendations for Government to consider. It makes reference to legislation that has already been forthcoming – particularly the Building Safety Act 2022 and the reinvigorated role of the Social Housing Regulator – but is clear about the changes it views as being necessary in addition to what has already been implemented to strengthen regulatory systems. The Council will need to attend to the subsequent changes that Government makes if they are applicable to its stock and its function as a social housing landlord. In the interim this report reflects on the new legislation and regulations which have been introduced whilst Government was waiting for the Inquiry considerations.

## **5 Regulations**

- 5.1 The Inquiry found that 'the system of regulating the construction and refurbishment of high rise residential buildings that existed at the time of the Grenfell Tower fire was seriously defective in a number of respects.' As a consequence much of the Government focus to date has been on improving that system. Nonetheless whilst some of the new regulations which have been delivered since the Grenfell Tower are specifically concerned with high risk buildings over 18m there is learning and new regulations which are relevant to the Council.
- 5.2 The new regulations have been introduced in the last 3 years however a report commissioned from Dame Judith Hackitt which was published in 2018 – her Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety – set the tone for what

was to come. She pointed to four main concerns about the management of complex buildings:

- 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

It was an earlier indicator of significant issues to be resolved in the culture of construction companies and procurement practices.

- 5.3 The Fire Safety Act 2021 amended the Fire Safety Order 2005. It has specific provisions for the regulation for high risk buildings over 18m however it also provides regulations for all premises which have more than one residential unit. Qualifying buildings are included regardless of number of storeys or overall height and not limited to higher risk buildings. A further Act was enacted in 2022 with provisions required from 23 January 2023 and 1 October 2023. In summary a Responsible Person must be identified for the building and that Person must consider the structure and exterior walls of the building with regard to fire risk and they must also provide for a Fire Risk Assessment for the building. Information must be provided to residents of the building about safety instructions and also about fire doors.
- 5.4 The Building Safety Act received Royal Assent in April 2022. It is specifically concerned with high rise buildings however it stated aims are to “overhaul existing regulations, creating lasting change and makes clear how residential buildings should be constructed, maintained and made safe.” The Act creates three new bodies to provide effective oversight of the new regime: the Building Safety Regulator, the National Regulator of Construction Products and the New Homes Ombudsman. The Building Safety Act 2022 aims to put residents at the heart of a new system of Building Safety and improve the competence of the people responsible for overseeing, managing, and delivering the building works.
- 5.5 From 1 October 2022 the Council, as a social landlord, had to be compliant with the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations 2022. This has implications for all of the domestic stock – not just flats. It requires smoke alarms to be installed in our rented properties and to be installed at each storey and in all living accommodation. It also requires Carbon monoxide alarms to be fitted when new appliances such as gas boilers or fires are installed in any home. Alarms need to be replaced when found to be faulty.
- 5.6 The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 introduces new Consumer Regulations for all social housing from 1 April 2024. Landlords have a duty to meet these regulations. The Regulator is expected to play an active role in

overseeing safety standards and has the power to set them on competence and conduct. An annual return is sent to the Regulator in which landlords have to account for their provisions for safety in their stock – fire, asbestos, legionella and gas installations. A specific return must be submitted if the landlord manages buildings over 11m. The return also provides information about tenant satisfaction with the services provided by the landlord.

## **6.1 Implications for the Council – Domestic Stock**

- 6.1.1 The Responsible Person for the Council's buildings with more than one residential unit is the Chief Executive. The Council does not own or manage any high-rise buildings/ high risk buildings over 18m. It has not used the products used to refurbish the Grenfell Tower in its buildings. It does not own or manage buildings over 11m.
- 6.1.2 All of the domestic stock with more than one residential unit has a Fire Risk Assessment. The Fire Risk Assessments have been undertaken by an independent company that is competent and qualified to do the assessments. It is accredited. Our current Fire Risk Assessments reflect the new regulations. The company's technical team that support the Fire Risk Assessors have confirmed that the structure and exterior walls of our buildings meet current regulations. The Fire Risk Assessors make recommendations in their reports. All high risk recommendations have been completed. In addition to the general Fire Risk Assessments specific assessments of fire doors has been undertaken and this is being followed up with a programme of replacement. A designated officer has been given the task of completing the recommendations.
- 6.1.3 To give confidence and provide a clear position about the Council's actions on fire safety for its domestic stock our statement on fire risk management has been developed into a policy. The policy has been reviewed by our fire risk assessment consultant and is attached at Appendix A for the Board to consider and approve.
- 6.1.4 The information leaflet that is provided to residents of our blocks of flats is attached for information at Appendix B. It was hand delivered to all flats with an advisory letter in January 2024. It will be re-issued again early in 2025.
- 6.1.5 Dame Judith Hackett's statements about ignorance and indifference are concerning and the Grenfell Inquiry findings about the unreliability of certification about products indicates that even diligent decision making can be compromised. To counter these risks the Council can rely on an in house technical team that is experienced, competent and knowledgeable. Experience allows for a scepticism around commercial pressures with the promotion of the interests of the Council and its tenants as a priority.
- 6.1.6 Over the last four years the Council has committed funding to deliver essential works to its blocks of flats. This includes the blocks at Alder and Heather Court, St Leonards Close, Alexandra Court, Drayton Court and Abbey Green Court. In doing so it has procured contractors with the same attitude to safety

as the Council and who provide the design acumen which compliments that of the in house team. As a further safeguard all programmes of work are closely managed by the in house technical team with considerations about design lead by the Maintenance Manager and signed off by Building Control professionals. Particular attention is given to fire risks and opportunities are taken to improve compartmentation.

- 6.1.7 The Neighbourhood Wardens Team does weekly and monthly checks for all of our blocks of flats. This is documented. Some blocks have fire alarms which are checked weekly. Emergency lighting is also checked. All of this activity is documented. Housekeeping is a critical part of Fire Risk Assessments. Getting resident co-operation is a constant challenge and sometimes requires direct action to remove items that could be a fire risk/ risk if there was a fire. Linked to this endeavour for the past four years the Housing Division has stopped providing new tenants with a store adjacent to their flat. This is because they often contain combustible materials and the Council has no control over their contents. The Neighbourhood Warden Team is also responsible for the signage which informs residents and visitors about fire risks and routes of escape.
- 6.1.8 The Compliance Manager is responsible for electrical installations in the common areas of blocks of flats. They are subject to five year condition reports and annual checks. They are also responsible for the delivery and working order of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. In this they are assisted by the Gas Compliance Manager who provides information about both smoke and carbon monoxide alarms on the annual gas service certificate.
- 6.1.9 Relevant staff have had training on fire safety by the Fire Service and extensive training and information has been given to all of our teams and contractors about the importance of fire and carbon monoxide installations in protecting tenants from harm.
- 6.1.10 Programmes of work to install fire doors to flats were undertaken some years ago. These doors will provide protection in case of fire however they do not meet current standards and some have been compromised over time through use. The recent Fire Risk Assessments and the follow up assessments specifically for fire doors have indicated that a fire door replacement programme will benefit occupants of flats and ensure the Council is meeting its regulatory duties. With the funding available fire doors have been upgraded at Chancery Court, Drayton Court and Abbey Green Court. A programme is in place to upgrade the doors at St Leonards View and Alexandra Court in consideration of the recent assessments. The Local Authority Building Control service is involved in this programme. As part of this report it is recommended that the Board approve funding for the replacement of a further 416 doors – 208 flat doors and 208 store doors.
- 6.1.11 From 2024 the Social Housing Regulator requires on an annual return in which Social Housing Landlords state their position with regard to a number of regulatory matters. These include information on health and safety,

performance and tenant satisfaction. The Council has provided this return and published its position on its website. Reports on the regulatory requirements have been considered by the Resources Board, the Housing Task and Finish Group, and Borough Wide Tenants Forum.

## **6.2 Implications for the Council – Response to a Major Incident**

6.2.1 In addition to the construction industry the Inquiry considered the role of the London Fire Brigade and Local Authority in responding to the incident. In the Inquiry Executive Summary, there is a recommendation section for Local Authorities. The Council will consider this in relation to its response to major incident response procedures. The recommendations focus on training for resilience and planning for support of those who may be displaced following a major incident (including identifying residents, basic amenities, sheltering and communication).

## **7 Report Implications**

### **7.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications**

7.1.1 The cost of extending the current programme of upgrading the fire doors to flats and internal stores is estimated at £800,000. This is a considerable commitment in the capital programme but is assessed as necessary to ensure that the Council is meeting its regulatory duties and taking suitable care of its residents. The programme may need to be extended as other fire doors are assessed.

7.1.2 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. Part of the constraint is a result of payments necessary to fund its subsidy system settlement and caps on rent levels. The nationally recognised cost of living crisis places a risk on rent collection. Additionally, the costs of contract works has increased some materials.

7.1.3 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 in order to deliver the Council's capital programme, take actions to ensure health and safety requirements are met and to address matters which are 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.

7.1.4 At its meeting in January the Resources Board will receive a detailed report about the 30 Year Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and prevalent pressures on capital programme budgets. In the interim it is recommended that funding be approved for a fire door replacement programme.



## 7.2 Legal Implications

7.2.1 The Council has legal obligations to inspect and maintain gas and electrical installations. It also has duties set out in the Fire Safety Order 2005 (as amended) Other duties are set out in health and safety legislation, building regulations and the Right to Repair under the Housing Act 1985.

7.2.2 Building safety issues have become more high profile following the Grenfell Tower fire and there is considerable legislation imposing requirements that must be adhered to. Recent and pending changes to legislation tighten these duties. Dealing with damp and mould conditions proactively and effectively is also a focus for Government and the Housing Regulator who expect social landlords to act in a zero-tolerance manner regarding these issues.

7.2.3 The Council has a legal duty under 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 because of the Council's failure to repair the Council may be liable to pay damages for any harm suffered. Further, if because 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.

7.2.4 The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 sets out Consumer Standards that social housing landlords must meet. They include a 'Health and Safety Standard'. This states that a Registered Provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure the health and safety of tenants in their homes and associated communal areas.

1 Providers must identify and meet all legal requirements that relate to the health and safety of tenants in their homes and communal areas.

2 Providers must ensure that all required actions arising from legally required health and safety assessments are carried out within appropriate timescales

3 Providers must ensure that the safety of tenants is considered in the design and delivery of landlord services and take reasonable steps to mitigate any identified risks to tenants.

7.2.5 Systems of work in the Response Repairs team are expected to adhere to the 'Right to Repair' legislation. The 1985 Act requires the Council to proactively address the condition of properties. This has been enhanced recently by the Homes (Fitness for Habitation) Act 2018 and amends the 1985 Act. 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 2018 Act provides 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.

### 7.3 Human Resources Implications

7.3.1 Over the last 7 years the Council has been developing a technical team to manage its stock that has the necessary competency and experience. This has been strengthened in the last 12 months following a restructure which was aimed at ensuring that the team can meet all regulatory requirements.

7.3.2 To continue to deliver against the Government's agenda for social housing the Council has changed the structure and capacity of both the maintenance and management teams.

### 7.4 Risk Management Implications

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

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

<b>Background Paper No</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Nature of Background Paper</b>	<b>Date</b>
Decent Homes Standards	Government	Regulation of housing standards for social housing	2006
Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 2 Report Overview	Inquiry Panel	Executive Summary and Recommendations	2024
Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023	Government	Legislation	2023



# North Warwickshire Borough Council

## Fire Safety Management Policy Housing Premises

<b>Statement Written</b>	<b>August 2023</b>
<b>Policy Revisions</b>	<b>August 2024</b>
<b>Date of next review</b>	<b>October 2025</b>
<b>Review Schedule</b>	<b>Annually (or sooner if there is a significant change)</b>

Revision Date	Summary of changes
October 2023	Review following advice from Fire Risk Assessors
August 2024	Review to provide a more comprehensive policy
October 2024	Review following advice from Fire Risk Assessors

## Scope of Policy

This policy sets out the principles that North Warwickshire Borough Council applies to ensure the risk of fire is mitigated and that it complies with all relevant legal and regulatory requirements as part of the management of its domestic stock of properties.

Within the scope of this policy are the risk assessment of hazards and control measures used to:

- prevent potential fires from starting.
- provide adequate precautions and resources to minimise the risk of fire.
- carry out fire risk assessments.
- provide a range of alarms to alert residents to smoke and fire.
- ensure evacuation arrangements are in place as required
- provide training, instruction and information to employees and relevant persons, and
- engage with, and provide adequate information to customers, employees, visitors, and contractors on the risk of fire.

## Applicability

The policy applies to all domestic properties.

### 1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 We recognize our legal and moral duty to ensure the health and safety of employees, customers, visitors and members of the public it comes into contact with, and the significant impact fire can have on lives. The Housing Division will therefore ensure fire risks associated with our activities, and the properties we manage are minimised as far as reasonably practicable.
- 1.2 The Housing Division follows a systematic approach to the management of fire safety to meet the above requirements and to ensure the safety of customers, employees, contractors, visitors, and members of the public.
- 1.3 In particular the Housing Division:
  - Ensures that adequate resources are provided to maintain acceptable standards in fire safety across all owned or managed asset groups.
  - Carries out fire risk assessments where they are required.
  - Ensures actions identified from fire risk assessments are actioned and completed in accordance with recommendations made by competent persons.
  - Provides alarms for individual properties and common areas to meet regulatory requirements and tenants needs
  - Ensures fire safety performance is reported to through corporate governance structures
  - Provides training, instruction, induction and information to employees for them to perform their duties safely and efficiently.

- Sets minimum standards of fire safety performance expected from contractors and other service providers.
- Implements procedures to reduce the risk of fire and unwanted alarm signals (false alarms) in our properties, and
- Actively reinforces employees' responsibility to:
  - work safely and take reasonable care of themselves and others by adhering to the Council's fire safety policy and procedures.
  - report any incidents that have led or could lead to a fire.
  - not to interfere with anything that is provided in the interest of fire safety.
  - inform and educate customers of fire safety in their property, where applicable.

## **2. Context**

2.1 This policy is set within the context of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (as amended) and other relevant legal and regulatory requirements. The policy is underpinned by operational procedures.

## **3. Aims and Objectives**

3.1 The aims of this policy are to:

- Comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Housing Act 2004 and supporting regulations and applicable guidance.
- Comply with the Fire Safety Act 2021, Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, the Building Safety Act 2022 and applicable guidance.
- Ensure the risk of fires starting and spreading is minimised.
- Ensure employees, customers, contractors and visitors are safe when occupying or visiting the Group properties.
- Ensure contractors are competent and certified to carry out fire safety works.
- Ensure employees and customers are aware of their roles and responsibilities regarding fire safety.
- Ensure adequate resources and financial expenditure is provided to maintain fire safety.
- Ensure all machinery, plant and equipment is maintained in a safe condition.
- Ensure maintenance, test, and inspection are held securely to provide evidence of compliance – including for smoke alarms.
- Ensure the Housing Division carries out suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments and actions identified are reviewed and prioritised for completion with agreed time scales relative to the level of risk.
- Provide a range of alarms to ensure early warning of a fire
- Ensure that in the event of a fire or fire safety incident, an investigation is undertaken, procedures reviewed/amended as necessary and control measures are implemented which minimise any potential reoccurrence to foster a system of continuous improvement.

- Provide training, instruction, information, and supervision to enable employees to perform their duties safely, competently, and efficiently.

#### **4. Policy Outline**

4.1 This policy applies to all premises that fall within the remit of The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 that the Housing Division manages or have a defined responsibility to manage/control.

4.2 Responsibilities for fire safety are allocated across the Housing Division shown in a matrix and as follows:

See **Appendix 1** for details of our Roles and Responsibilities.

4.3 All employees play a valuable role in fire safety and are responsible for:

- Undertaking their role safely to ensure fire safety arrangements are maintained.
- Alert the Compliance Manager with regard to smoke alarm installations
- Reporting any fire incidents and remove or report any fire hazards identified in a timely manner.
- Co-operating fully with any control measures that are implemented to ensure fire safety and legal compliance.
- Highlighting any concerns to the management team in relation to fire safety.
- Attending fire safety training as and when required.
- Promoting and encouraging colleagues, customers, contractors and visitors to be fire aware.

4.4 We employ suitably qualified and experienced competent advisors in all matters relating to fire risk assessments, fire mitigation measures or fire safety related works.

4.5 The Senior Maintenance Team will keep under review and track:

- % of valid FRAs (Fire Risk Assessments) held
- number of overdue high-risk actions
- Compliance with smoke alarm installation regulations

#### **5. Contractors**

- 5.1 Whenever contractors are on site it will be the duty of the appointed person with the responsibility for the works undertaken by them to ensure the appropriate level of fire safety provision is incorporated within any work schedule, contract agreement or

risk assessment. Where such works are likely to impact on the existing fire safety provision, notification must be communicated to the relevant senior personnel for consideration.

- 5.2 Contractors will also require to be made aware of the fire management plan relevant to the area they are working in or are likely to attend. Where any work is likely to involve the application of a naked flame or mechanically induced heat source a 'Hot Work Permit' must be acquired and agreed prior to the commencement of such works.

## **6. Common Areas**

- 6.1 Common areas are defined as Internal Communal or Decked Access areas that are used to access dwelling units.
- 6.2 To reduce 'fire loading' in common areas and to ensure emergency exit routes for access and egress are kept clear and free of hazards at all times the Housing Division will operate a 'zero tolerance' approach.
- 6.3 Our Fire Safety advice leaflet informs tenants and leaseholders of our approach.
- 6.4 No unauthorised use of electrical supplies in common areas is permitted.
- 6.5 To reduce the spread of fire, fire doors (including flat front doors) are not to be replaced, tampered with, or altered in any way by unauthorised persons.
- 6.6 The necessity for emergency evacuation procedures will be kept under review.

## **7. Customers' Information and Advice**

- 7.1 The Housing Division will endeavor to house customers in appropriate buildings by matching the building fire safety requirements to the customer's capabilities when initially offering accommodation.

Smoke alarms are installed in accordance with regulations. Their installation is tracked as part of our annual gas boiler service visit and on Electrical Installation Condition Reports. Staff are trained to be alert during home visits and act to improve the installation if required.

- 7.2 Customers are advised to contact us if they feel at risk and need assistance in the event of a fire.



- 7.3 We appreciate that, with time, customer capabilities and needs may also change. If these changes or capabilities are to the extent that the customer will struggle to escape in the event of a fire we will re-assess the suitability of the accommodation and if required help customers seek more appropriate accommodation or mitigate the risk where practical to do so.
- 7.5 We will ensure that appropriate fire signage is posted in communal areas. In addition to the initial fire safety advice given to customers at the start of their tenancies, we will update customers on fire safety matters and information to comply with the latest fire safety requirements through a variety of means.
- 7.6 Customers can also request a scheme or personal visit should they have any queries or concerns about fire safety in their home.

## **8. Fire Prevention and Control**

- 8.1 To protect the safety of our employees, customers and the integrity of our buildings, we will implement and maintain appropriate fire prevention and control measures.
- 8.2 We will ensure that buildings fire safety equipment and systems are serviced and maintained to recognised standards. This includes the installation of smoke alarms and communal area fire alarms.

## **9. Building Design Considerations**

- 9.1 We will ensure buildings are designed and maintained in a manner that prevents and reduces the risk of fires:
- Fire safety is considered at the design stage of all new builds and the client group and the proposed fire strategy upon occupation of the new buildings are explicitly understood by the building designers.
  - There are procedures in place to effectively manage work during construction to ensure the integrity of compartment walls, floors, ceilings, fire doors and fire protection systems.
  - There is documented certified evidence and Regulation 38 (of The Building Regulations 2010 (as amended)) information at the handover of new buildings.

## 10. Fire Risk Assessment

- 10.1 The Council acknowledges the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) requires those who oversee or manage buildings should undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of fire risk and implement appropriate safety measures to minimise the risk of fire.
- 10.2 We will undertake Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) of all properties required by the Fire Safety Order. Only competent, third party accredited companies – for example British Approvals of Fire Excellence (BAFE) or Fire Risk Assessors Accreditation Scheme (FRACS) - will be instructed to act on behalf of the Group to undertake FRAs.
- 10.3 FRAs will assess the fire risk of the required buildings and will provide the Housing Division with:
- (i) a risk rating for each assessed building in line with the following risk rating definitions:
    - Substantial – resources might have to be allocated to reduce the risk; urgent action should be taken.
    - Moderate – look at risk reduction measures, which should take cost into account and should be implemented within a defined period. Priority for improving control measures should be given to risks with greater consequences than those with greater likelihood.
    - Tolerable – no major additional precautions required. However, there might be a need for reasonably practicable improvements that involve minor or limited cost.
    - Trivial – no action is required, and no detailed records need to be kept.
  - (ii) From these ratings a priority will be given to the recommendation:
    - Priority 1(High) – matters are serious breaches of Regulations that require immediate attention. Some items may require an extended time to complete but, in all cases, it is recommended that the action is completed within 4 to 6 weeks from the date of receiving the report.
    - Priority 2 (Medium) – matters are a breach of Regulations that should be completed as soon as possible but, in all cases, it is recommended that the action is completed within 3 to 6 months from the date of receiving the report.
    - Priority 3 (Low) – matters are non-mandatory and are not in breach of Regulations. They are considered good fire safety practice.
  - (iii) a mitigation plan of prioritised and costed recommendations for each FRA to ensure each property can achieve the lowest practical risk rating.
- 10.4 FRA frequencies are determined by the fire risk assessment. The Fire Risk

Assessment will provide recommendations about specific matters such as the protection provided by fire doors and about the construction of walls.

10.5 If the proposed FRA frequency is longer than 1 year, a mid-term Fire Risk Review will be carried out if:

- There have been any structural alterations to the building since the last FRA was carried out.
- There have been any layout alterations to the building since the last FRA was carried out.
- There have been any significant changes to how the property is being used or managed since the last FRA was carried out (i.e., a change in the type of residents that occupy the property).
- A fire has occurred in, or spread to, the common parts of the premises since the last FRA was carried out, and/or a new FRA will be undertaken when any of the above is confirmed to have taken place.
- The correct servicing/testing has not been undertaken since the last FRA.

## **11. Emergency Arrangements**

11.1 The Council operates a 'Stay Safe' policy for its domestic properties.

## **12. Record Keeping**

12.1 The Housing Division will ensure that all records (electronic or paper) are kept in relation to fire safety arrangements. These include:

- Fire Risk Assessments
- the installation of smoke alarms in flats – on gas certificates & electrical certification
- the installation of fire alarms in common areas
- emergency escape lighting provisions
- remedial actions (including evidence)
- repairs records
- certification
- inspection records
- logbooks
- training records
- fire service audit letters
- Building Regulation 38 fire safety documents

### **13. Guidance and Training**

13.1 The Council will ensure employees have the competency to undertake their activities and understand the principles of fire safety and prevention. The training will include but is not limited to:

- at the induction stage for new employees
- the introduction of innovative technology or fire safety equipment
- the introduction of a new or revised system of work
- periodic refresher training
- if employees are issued with firefighting equipment, we will ensure training in the safe use firefighting equipment is provided
- Neighborhood Wardens (Caretakers) will receive appropriate training

### **14. Equality and Diversity**

14.1 We are committed to fairness and equality for all regardless of their colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances or offending history, as referred to in our relevant policies. Our aim is to ensure that our policies and procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly.

14.2 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken in respect of this policy and which identified no negative impacts on any person/group with a protected characteristic as a result of this policy.

### **15. Complaints**

15.1 The Housing Division aims to meet the needs of its customers by providing an excellent service. However, it is acknowledged that occasionally things go wrong and customers may wish to complain. Should the need arise to make a complaint, please refer to our Complaints and Compliments Policy.

### **16. Monitoring and Review**

16.1 This policy will be reviewed annually or on the introduction of new legislation or best practice guidelines, whichever is the sooner.

## 17. Associated Documents

17.1 This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- North Warwickshire Borough Council Health and Safety and Welfare Policy
- Fire Safety Advice Leaflet for Tenants
- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulation 2022
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- Maintenance to Properties Policy
- Housing Act 2004

<b>Author:</b>	Angela Coates
<b>Document type:</b>	Policy
<b>Version 2.1:</b>	Draft
<b>Health and Safety Oversight</b>	Maintenance Manager and Health and Safety Officer
<b>Fire Risk Assessment Consultants</b>	FCMS
<b>Governance</b>	Corporate Management Team; Resources Board; Housing Task and Finish Group
<b>Consultation</b>	Borough Wide Tenants Forum
<b>Next review date:</b>	October 2025

**Fire Safety  
Roles and  
Responsibilities**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>Maintenance Team Managers</b>	<p>Responsible for implementing and maintaining the Fire Safety Management Policy for the Housing Division.</p> <p>All employees, customers, contractors and visitors are to be made aware of the details contained within this policy as required.</p> <p>Proactively manage contractors to promote fire safety and prevent fires.</p>
<b>Staff working in the Housing Division</b>	<p>Our staff play a valuable role in fire safety and are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• undertaking their role safely to ensure fire safety arrangements are maintained</li> <li>• reporting any fire incidents and remove or report any fire hazards identified in a timely manner</li> <li>• co-operating fully with any control measures that are implemented to ensure fire safety and legal compliance.</li> <li>• highlighting any concerns to in relation to fire safety – in flats or houses (for example where hoarding behaviour is discovered)</li> <li>• Supporting tenants to understand the importance of fire safety and seek to meet their particular needs</li> <li>• attending fire safety training as and when required, and</li> <li>• promoting and encouraging colleagues, customers, contractors and visitors to be fire aware</li> </ul>

<b>Compliance Manager and Tenancy Services and Neighborhoods Manager</b>	<p>Ensure adequate fire safety arrangements and are responsible for ensuring full implementation of the Fire Safety Management Policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensuring all properties have been adequately risk assessed for fire</li> <li>• Ensure smoke alarms are installed to meet Regulatory requirements and tenants needs</li> <li>• Manage the provision of fire alarms for blocks of flats and hostels</li> <li>• ensuring there are adequate resources deployed that this policy and associated procedures are executed fully</li> <li>• escalating any significant safety issues to the Director of Housing, Maintenance Manager and/ or Housing Services Manager</li> <li>• ensuring fire safety training is provided and records are kept</li> <li>• ensuring all records relating to fire safety are recorded and kept up to date, and</li> <li>• reviewing and monitoring arrangements to ensure compliance with this policy</li> </ul>
<b>Director of Housing</b>	<p>Overall responsibility for the operational implementation of this policy and the provision of resources across the Housing Division</p>
<b>Chief Executive</b>	<p>The Chief Executive is the Responsible Person for these safety arrangements</p>





North Warwickshire  
Borough Council

North Warwickshire Borough Council Housing Division

# ADVICE ABOUT FIRE SAFETY IN FLATS



North Warwickshire  
Borough Council

## CONTACT US

**Email:** [housingservices@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:housingservices@northwarks.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 01827 715341 (between 8.30am and 5pm, Monday to Friday)

**Out of Hours Emergency Repairs Telephone:** 01827 715341  
(calls will be directed to the lifeline centre which is manned 24 hours a day)

**Write to:**

Housing Division,  
North Warwickshire Borough Council,  
South Street, Atherstone,  
Warwickshire, CV9 1DE

**Website:** [www.northwarks.gov.uk](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk)





# ADVICE ABOUT FIRE SAFETY IN FLATS

## FIRE SAFETY LAW

As your landlord North Warwickshire Borough Council has responsibilities for the home in which you live.

One of those responsibilities is making sure that the structure of buildings and communal areas within them meet the fire safety requirements.

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 requires North Warwickshire Borough Council to carry out Fire Risk Assessments in all communal areas. The purpose of this is to identify and put in place all measures to reduce the risk of a fire starting, quickly spreading, or producing lots of smoke that will put lives in danger. One of these measures is restricting items stored by tenants in communal areas of flats/apartments.

## CALLING THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The fire and rescue service should always be called to a fire, whatever the size. This should be done straight away – don't wait for someone else to do it.

In some blocks there is a fire alarm system which gives an early warning about a fire. If a fire is discovered in the common area call the fire and rescue service. Smoking cigarettes in these blocks will set the alarm off.

## GOOD HOUSEKEEPING IN COMMUNAL AREAS

We need your co-operation to ensure occupants of flats are safe.

Items which are combustible and could cause or fuel a fire or cause smoke should not be kept on landings or in store cupboards. In addition, we need to ensure any items that may cause problem for routes of escape are not kept on landings or on stairs.

Examples of items which **should not** be placed in Communal Areas if they could cause or fuel a fire or create an obstruction:

- Household rubbish, cardboard boxes, paper.
- Chairs/ seating - especially with upholstery.
- Curtains & blinds.
- Pushchairs, car seats or toys.
- Rugs, runners, carpets & offcuts.
- Boots, shoes & clothing
- Wheelchairs & Mobility Scooter.

Or any other items which may be a trip hazard or are flammable.

## FOR YOUR SAFETY

- All escape routes must be kept clear.
- Fire exits must not be obstructed in any way.
- Fire doors must be kept closed.

- Rubbish should only be left in bins in allocated areas.
- Please report any damage or vandalism to fire exit doors to the Council on **01827 715341** including out of office hours.

## SMOKE FREE LAWS

- It is an offence to smoke in an enclosed public space.
- North Warwickshire Borough Council has a **no smoking** policy in all communal areas, and this **must** be adhered to.

## SMOKE ALARMS

The Fire Service highly recommends smoke alarms to be installed in flats to give an early warning of a fire. Please ensure you have a working smoke alarm in your home.

## STORE CUPBOARDS

The Council will ensure that the store cupboards for its use are kept clear of combustible items. We ask tenants not to keep their own personal items in the Council's store cupboards and certainly not without permission.

If you have a store cupboard as part of your tenancy, you must ensure that it is not used to store items which are flammable or could fuel a fire. This includes cardboard, paper, wood, paint, petrol, paraffin, or bottled gas. You must not use electrical appliances in store cupboards – for example fridges or tumble driers.

## ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

Faults with electrical appliance and installations are a common source of fire.

Electrical appliances can cause fires. Please ensure that the electrical appliances in your home are in good working order and that you use them safely. For example, tumble driers should have their filters cleaned out regularly and not left on unattended when on.

## MOBILITY SCOOTERS

We have been advised that the storage and charging of mobility scooters in communal areas can pose a fire hazard

Occupants of flats who use a mobility scooter must ensure that it can be stored and charged up in their flat.

## YOUR FRONT DOOR

- Individual flat entrance doors for **tenanted** properties are the property of North Warwickshire Borough Council. They provide protection from fire so **no** alterations should be made to these without written consent. Fire doors are designed to provide 30 minutes protection in case of fire.

**Leaseholders** should have front doors that offer good protection in case of fire in the building. They should be fire doors which prevent the fire and

smoke from escaping on to the communal escape routes for a sufficient period of time to allow for occupants to escape in an emergency. The Council can assist leaseholders with information about the type of door required or help to provide the correct type of door.

## IN CASE OF FIRE

Consider what you would do if you discovered a fire and plan your escape route.

If you discover a fire, you must contact the Fire Service immediately by **calling 999**. Tell them clearly the address where the fire is.

Do not replace the receiver until the fire service has repeated the address to you and you are sure they have got it right.

Alert other occupants.



## IN CASE OF FIRE IN YOUR HOME

- Leave the room where the fire is quickly and close the door.
- Evacuate your flat and close the front door behind you (this will help to protect your neighbours).
- Do not stay behind to put the fire out.
- Do not go back into the property.
- Wait outside away from the building.

## IF THE FIRE IS IN ANOTHER PART OF THE BUILDING

The Council operates a stay safe policy. This means you can determine whether to evacuate or not if there is a fire.

If the fire is not in your home and it is safe to do so you can stay there until the fire service extinguish the fire or order a full evacuation.

If you decide to leave the building wait outside away from the building.

**Agenda Item No 11**

**Resources Board**

**11 November 2024**

**Report of the  
Chief Executive**

**Exclusion of the Public and Press**

**Recommendation to the Board**

**To consider, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, whether it is in the public interest that 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 12A to the Act.**

**Agenda Item No 12**

**Use of Urgent Business Powers** – Report of the Chief Executive

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**Agenda Item No 13**

**Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme and Development Opportunities** - Report of the Director of Housing

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**Agenda Item No 14**

**Internal Audit Service** – Report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer)

Paragraph 1 - Information relating to an individual; and

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

## **Agenda Item No 15**

**Irrecoverable Debts** - Report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources  
(Section 151 Officer)

Paragraph 1 - Information relating to an individual.

## **Agenda Item No 16**

**Confidential Extracts of the Minutes of the Resources Board held on 3  
September 2024.**

Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual; and

Paragraph 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any  
particular person (including the authority holding that information).

In relation to the item listed above members should only exclude the public if  
the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosing the  
information, giving their reasons as to why that is the case.

The Contact Officer for this report is Amanda Tonks (719221).