



**Melton
Borough
Council**

Housing Asset Management Plan 2023 – 2028

Providing safe, modern, and affordable homes for our residents

Contents

Introduction.....	4
Our Homes.....	6
Our tenants.....	7
Background.....	8
HRA Business Plan 2022 - 2052	8
Financial planning.....	10
Risk management	10
Tenant feedback and their priorities.....	11
Influencing factors	12
Meeting local housing need	12
National context	12
Compliance and Safety in our Homes	13
Compliance plans.....	13
Compliance management system	14
Building safety	15
Asset data, planning of work and delivery	17
Asset Data.....	17
Performance and sustainability of our homes	18
Investment plan.....	19
Delivery.....	20
Procurement.....	21
Modern homes	22
Decent Homes	22
Melton Home Standard	23
Summary of the home standard.....	23
Choice based investment from tenant feedback	24
Heating (Energy Efficiency).....	24
Windows and doors.....	25
Kitchens	26
Bathrooms	27
Fencing.....	27
External and communal areas decoration.....	28
Garages	28

Outbuildings.....	29
Estates and neighbourhoods.....	30
Essential investment.....	30
Roofs.....	30
Electrical improvements.....	31
Damp and mould.....	31
Aids and adaptations.....	32
Non housing assets in the HRA.....	32
Housing for older people.....	33
Gretton Court.....	34
Leasehold properties.....	35
Tenant and leaseholder engagement.....	35
Responsive repairs and cyclical maintenance.....	37
Responsive repairs service.....	37
Void Works.....	38
Void Standard.....	38
Energy efficiency and decarbonisation.....	40
Energy performance certificate baseline.....	41
Baseline study.....	42
Technical Philosophy and Approach.....	42
External Funding.....	43
Resources, Skills and Contractor Capacity.....	43
Tenant Education and Knowledge.....	43
Addressing Fuel Poverty.....	44
Future strategy.....	44
Measuring success.....	45
Appendices.....	46

Introduction

This Housing Asset Management Plan has been developed to enable the safe, efficient, and effective management of Council homes. It provides a framework through which the investment and improvement commitments set out within the Council's [Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2022 – 2052](#) will be implemented. This plan and the overarching Housing Revenue Account Business Plan will be updated on annual basis.

The previous Housing Asset Management Strategy (2017-2022) focused on the following key priorities:

- Embedding Robust Property Databases & Maintenance demand analysis
- Sustaining Decent Homes Standard Compliance
- Maximising Investment Opportunities
- Tackling Affordable Warmth & Related Strategy
- Driving Value for Money & Cost Effectiveness
- Delivering Procurement that results in the right outcomes for MBC.
- Using Customer Intelligence to shape services into the future

These principles remain important, and through this plan are developed further to reflect the current legislative and operating context.

This Asset Management Plan has been developed at a time of regulatory change in the housing sector. Consequently, asset management in the housing sector has changed significantly since the last plan was produced and investment planning has altered as a result. The Grenfell Tower tragedy has resulted in an increased focus on health and safety and improvements to the delivery of building safety works. There is also an increased focus on energy efficiency and decarbonisation. The Council is resolute in its commitment to health and safety and to ensuring that homes meet the required standards, and in embracing meaningful tenant engagement and need to listen to resident's voices as we prioritise investment and service development.

This plan shows how the Council will manage and invest in its housing stock and monitor progress over the next five years. The action plan provides detail around activities and investment to deliver on these objectives and these will be monitored through project management arrangements.

This plan is designed to remain flexible to allow it to meet the requirements of a complicated and changeable environment and an increasingly challenging financial context. As current thinking, regulation and technology evolves this plan will adapt to suit and a dynamic approach will be required to management investment carefully and responsibly within the resources available.

The plan is supported by robust data, which will continue to be updated and used to inform strategic planning. The data will be used to help us develop a more proactive and assurance led approach to maintenance which keeps tenants safe and responds to the things that residents have told us are important to them.

Our home standard will set clear expectations for our residents, as well as providing consistency in investment and service across our portfolio. We will collaboratively work across our operational teams, using local knowledge and asset intelligence to inform how, when and where we deliver investment to maintain and improve our housing stock.

To support efficient and effective asset management, the Council will increase its focus on contract management and contractor performance, including in the efficient delivery of planned and responsive works, and in the swift and effective resolution of complaints.

By making intelligent use of data, experience and drawing upon best practice, this strategy will ensure the council continually improves its overall Asset Management to drive best value outcomes.

The graphic below shows how this plan will inform decision making:



Our Homes

The Council currently owns 1798 homes with a further 30 leasehold properties. Currently 60% are let as general needs homes with 40% homes classed as homes for older tenants or those with disabilities. In this respect, the stock profile matches the aging population identified in the HRA Business Plan.

There are no high-rise residential buildings over 18m within the Council's housing stock. This greatly reduces risk in terms of building and fire safety, however, building safety and fire risk management remains a key priority for the council regardless of building height.

The council also owns 371 garages which are rented to both council tenants and local residents. The HRA Business Plan has identified a requirement to review the condition and suitability of the garages. Consideration will be given to the use of less popular garage sites for future development opportunities and assessments will be carried out to understand the current condition and future maintenance liability to improve the letting of garages. This plan will identify the actions that will be taken to achieve this.

Key figures on stock:

The make up of the housing stock in terms of property type is as follows:

Houses 801 or 44.5%

Bungalows 287 or 16%

Flats 689 or 38%

Bedsits 24 or 1%

The homes split by bedroom size give roughly equal amounts of three-bedroom, two bedroom and one-bedroom homes. There are a small number of four-bedroom homes:

Bedsits – 24 or 1%

One bed 589 or 33%

Two bed 563 or 31%

Three bed 588 or 33%

Four bed 37 or 2%

Our tenants

Melton's tenants reflect the demographic of a Borough with an aging population. The proportion of tenants aged 65 – 85 is higher than the proportion for the Borough overall. The Council will keep the profile and needs of tenants under review to ensure housing stock can meet the needs of its population now and in the future.

Additionally, the Council takes resident engagement seriously and has started to actively embed resident views, suggestions and feedback into improvements to the way council homes are managed and services are delivered. Embedding and acting on the outcomes of resident engagement will form a key part of delivery of the asset management plan and will be particularly important in reaching decisions on key things such as investment in energy efficiency measures, new affordable homes, and major capital programmes.

Some notable changes and improvements already achieved are set out below:

- A consultation toolkit has been developed to support programmed improvement works. This includes letters and forms which ensure that tenants are given the appropriate level of information, consultation and notice before, during and after work.
- Improvements to the way that tenants raise repairs and the information they are given, such as a clear reference number and timescales.
- Updated consultation events for large scale improvements, with whole communities being consulted on major changes to their environment.

Background

HRA Business Plan 2022 - 2052

The Council approved a thirty-year Business Plan for Housing Revenue Account in 2022.

It sets out the Council's expectations and plans for council homes and the financial sustainability of the Council's Housing Services, providing a high-level plan to ensure Council homes remain safe and meet decent homes standards whilst also setting out what other improvements and investment choices can be made within the budget available. Set within a changing regulatory context and a challenging financial context, the Business Plan recognises the need to manage resources carefully.

The Business Plan shows that the management and maintenance of council housing in Melton is affordable over the thirty year period and that the council can meet the current regulatory requirements.

It also identifies that careful financial management is required. Rents need to be maximised and resources need to be carefully managed. The Business Plan sets out an evidence base and shows how investment will be prioritised, based on regulatory compliance, decent homes standard and in prioritising 'choices' for investment in line with tenant aspirations:

The Business Plan identifies the importance of this Asset Management Plan:

“An Asset Management Plan which will contain a detailed plan for planned maintenance and will cover an initial 5-year period. It will be updated annually, adding a 5th year to ensure that it always covers a 5-year period and reflects an up-to-date position.”

This document has been written to achieve this objective. It has been written in a way that will allow it to develop and adapt as regulatory changes continue to impact on the sector.

The HRA Business Plan includes a number of recommendations that cover the whole service. This Asset Management Plan directly supports the following policy recommendations:

Recommendation on budgeting and rents

The council will review the 30-year position at least annually and will maintain a 5-year asset management programme to which that position is aligned. The 5-year programme will be re-evaluated every year to add a new 5th year to the programme. The council will inform, engage, and consult tenants and leaseholders about these programmes.

Throughout this plan there are references to the levels of investment required for each area of work. These figures have been used to produce the five year investment plan attached to this plan.

Recommendation for Gretton Court

Work will commence to determine the future of Gretton Court. This would be best addressed by a project looking at present and future needs for the accommodation. In line

with other recommendations in this Plan, the Council should use its business case process to guide that project.

See “Housing for older people” section

Recommendation on compliance

All compliance measures will be undertaken within appropriate timescales to ensure that the Council’s housing meets the relevant health and safety standards, meets the requirements of the Homes Standard, and keeps tenants safe. There are a set of performance indicators which monitor how effectively the Council is meeting its compliance requirements.

See “Compliance and safety in our homes” section

Recommendation for regeneration

The Council’s focus on Fairmead as a priority neighbourhood should continue. Work with the community on the estate should include engagement to support community cohesion and developing options to reconfigure parts of the estate as well as developing sites for new build housing. A local housing allocations policy should also be explored to support a balanced and cohesive community. Where there is a need to deal with anti-social behaviour the Council will use its enforcement powers appropriately and will work collaboratively across teams and with other partners.

Recommendations on climate change and energy efficiency

The Council will:

Focus on improving energy efficiency in its existing homes but will set a zero-carbon standard for its new build homes.

Carry out further work to assess how best to adapt Council homes to be closer to zero carbon.

Consider and discuss with tenants, the implications and opportunities of decarbonisation options.

Set a SAP rating as a performance measure against which the Council will assess its progress in improving energy efficiency every year.

Provide advice on energy efficiency will be shared proactively with tenants.

Work to attract national funding to improve the energy efficiency of the stock.

See “Energy efficiency and decarbonisation” section

Recommendation on choices for investment

The Council will continue to replace metal windows with upvc windows. This will be built into the Asset Management Plan.

For fences, paths and external painting; works will be carried out on an as and when basis with a focus on risk.

Fences are included in the tenancy handbook as a tenant responsibility, but it is recognised that there will be occasions when the council may need to take a lead in repairing or replacing a fence (e.g., where there is a serious safety risk).

See “Melton home standard” section

Recommendation on garages and other HRA non-housing assets

Identify garage sites which could be made available for future council house development. Leading to demolition when a project has been put together.

Remaining garages to either be repaired if they can be let (either for cars or for storage of appropriate items) or demolished if they are creating a nuisance.

Other assets which are held in the HRA but are not housing will be reviewed within the Asset Management Plan.

See “Melton homes standard” section

Reference will be made to each of these recommendations at the relevant part of this plan.

Financial planning

The HRA Business Plan considered the viability of the Housing Revenue over a 30 year period. It was based on a number of assumptions, and an initial assessment of the data that was available. It identified that an Asset Management Plan was required to develop this financial planning further. It will also feed back into the annual review of the Business Plan.

One of the outcomes of the Asset Management Plan will be an investment plan. This investment plan brings together all areas that require funding and feeds back into the 30 year financial picture that is included in the Business Plan. This will allow for the impact of changes to investment options to be considered in the context of the 30 year plan.

This version of the Asset Management Plan includes a five year capital programme which is based on the stock condition data. This has been used as the basis for budget setting in 2023/24.

Risk management

Risk management is an essential part of asset management. The purpose of this plan is to inform key stakeholders and to seek their support through a process of informed decision making.

The plan focusses on key areas of risk and develops strategies for understanding and managing them. It will also be reviewed on an annual basis, which will give us the opportunity to adapt to new and emerging risks more quickly.

Risk is managed through a series of directorate risk registers. These registers are reviewed on a regular basis. As part of the review, new risks are added where required

and existing risks are reviewed. Each risk has an identified risk owner, current risk rating, control measures and a review date.

Tenant feedback and their priorities

Tenant feedback is essential in helping us to shape the way we improve and deliver our services. Preparation of the HRA Business Plan was informed by tenant engagement and feedback, which has subsequently informed the development of this Asset Management Plan.

Tenant feedback highlighted a need for improvements in the following areas:

- home improvements
- property condition
- repairs
- grounds maintenance.

Subsequent engagement identified areas considered highest priority for investment. This showed the top three priorities were:

1. Building more affordable homes.
2. Energy efficiency.
3. Replacing metal windows with uPVC.

The Business Plan gives further detail of the other priorities and their rankings. This asset management plan shows how these priorities have been taken into account.

Influencing factors

Meeting local housing need

The Council is resolute in its commitment to provide high quality homes and landlord services (Corporate Strategy 2020-2024) and to be a responsible and effective social landlord, with a mix of housing that can meet the needs of the community and can support people in creating happy, healthy, and diverse communities within the borough.

The overall average rent for a Council owned property in Melton is £320.96 per month. Benchmarking has indicated that our rents are comparatively low.

We must also make sure that our existing homes are meeting the needs of local communities within the borough. This can be highlighted or addressed in a range of different ways, and it is important that we are constantly monitoring the performance and suitability of our homes for our tenants.

National context

There are many external factors and regulatory changes that will impact on the delivery of this plan, the implications of some which are not yet fully known across the housing sector. However, the key areas that need to be taken into account are:

Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Bill 2021

Social Housing White Paper 2020

Clean Growth Strategy 2021

Quality Lifetime Homes – the future of the Decent Homes Standard

Future Homes Standard 2025

Regulator of Social Housing Sector Risk Profile – 2021

This plan must remain agile to account for future updates and progress with these key policy issues.

Compliance and Safety in our Homes

Business Plan recommendation on compliance

All compliance measures will be undertaken within appropriate timescales to ensure that the Council's housing meets the relevant health and safety standards, meets the requirements of the Homes Standard, and keeps tenants safe. There are a set of performance indicators which monitor how effectively the Council is meeting its compliance requirements.

Compliance plans

Compliance and safety in our homes is a high priority for the Council. This is demonstrated through the work and investment that has been focussed in this area over the last few years.

The key areas of compliance that we manage are:

- Fire
- Legionella
- Asbestos
- Gas
- Electrical
- Lifts
- Radon
- Oil and solid fuel

Corporately, the Council has developed safety management standards to document our methodology for managing key areas of compliance. Currently we have the following in place that cover these areas of H&S compliance:

- Fire safety
- Water hygiene
- Statutory inspections / cyclical maintenance

The following are being prepared:

- Asbestos
- Radon gas

The corporate safety management standards are high level documents which show how the Council as a whole will comply with each of these area. The housing stock often needs to be managed in a different way to commercial premises, so we will develop a series of safety management plans for the key areas. These will be approved individually and are:

- Asbestos Management Plan – Housing Assets
- Gas and Oil Management Plan – Housing Assets
- Solid Fuel Management Plan– Housing Assets
- Electrical Safety Management Plan– Housing Assets
- Radon Management Plan – Housing Assets
- Fire Safety Management Plan – Housing Assets

- Water Hygiene Management Plan – Housing Assets
- Lift Management Plan – Housing Assets

Currently the asbestos and gas and oil plans are in draft. The others are in progress.

Action 1 – Develop and implement management plans for each compliance area

For each area these plans will show:

- What our operational processes are.
- How we track actions.
- How we maintain our data.
- How we report compliance.
- How we manage risk.
- How we plan our financial and budgetary management.
- How we communicate with our tenants.

Compliance management system

As part of the housing improvement programme, it was found that the Council's general compliance was good. However, this relied heavily on paper base records and subsequently on spreadsheets for tracking.

The council has made significant improvements in its system capabilities and data management and a project has been completed to implement new modules in the Northgate system to manage gas, asbestos, and electrical compliance. The management standards explain in more detail, but the key principles are that progress is tracked, orders raised, and data stored in the system. This means that there is no longer a reliance on paper certificates or spreadsheets to monitor dates.

Each area of compliance has its own standard operating procedure. These explain the process that needs to be followed to use Northgate to manage that area of compliance.

We are also developing a data management operating procedure, which explains more generally how we manage our data.

Other areas of compliance are being added to Northgate and the same principles will apply.

Action 2 – Add all areas of compliance to Northgate to ensure effective compliance monitoring, tracking and reporting

The information held on Northgate is used to provide monthly compliance updates and assurance to senior managers and the Portfolio Holder. The reports show the level of compliance along with an update on any specific actions arising in each area.

Building safety

In a response to the Fire Safety Act and Building Safety Bill, the Council acknowledges the need to develop more detailed servicing and remedial works plans that we can share with our tenants and leaseholders. This is especially important where leaseholders may be responsible for a proportion of these costs and procurement is integral in this being successful for all work streams.

The newly procured water hygiene contract gives us the opportunity to have new risk assessments completed and reevaluate the whole site. We will ensure that each site that is monitored has a folder kept on site which records all of the information related to legionella checks. We also continue to have monthly checks completed to ensure that any water quality issues such as legionella can be identified and resolved swiftly and do not pose a risk to residents.

Asbestos surveys have been completed for all communal areas in council housing stock and are monitored inhouse by qualified staff. It is a requirement that all staff in the housing asset team have a minimum of asbestos awareness training.

This training is kept up to date and is integral in managing the asbestos in the building to ensure damages are found, reported, and followed up with the correct procedures.

Procurement is complete across to ensure we have robust contracts in place for servicing and remedial works, there is still work to be completed on this to cover further areas, this will enable us to create better plans and structure to receive the best outcomes for us, tenants, and leaseholders.

Having the right contracts in place gives us the opportunity to be pro-active and start of works from legislative changes because we have contractors that are procured and able to do the works without waiting on new procurement that delays the start of works that impacts the building compliance.

Currently at our sheltered schemes we have safety files on site with relevant information and forms that can be completed, however we need to review all these folders and make them consistent across the schemes because the contents do vary at times.

None of our buildings fall under the category of needing the new Safety Case Report on site according to the Building Safety Act Changes. We do hold some of the information required for this in our site safety files and will continue to do so until further file updates are put into place or if a Safety Case Report is created for site.

These servicing programmes and building safety files will allow us to gain more foresight into the upcoming risk, liability and investment that we will be required to maintain for compliance and safety.

We can plan for the future giving tenants and leaseholder a clearer insight to works with advance notice on works taking place and the costs associated with this, they will also allow us to have a more co-ordinated approach to works delivery, from both a responsive and planned investment perspective.

This would allow us to take a more preventative approach to compliance and building safety, which can be evidenced to our tenants.

Action 3 – Create Building Safety Files, prioritising sheltered schemes first

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Asset data, planning of work and delivery

The key investment priority raised by tenants was energy efficiency, followed closely by replacement of aluminium windows, then key components such as kitchens and bathrooms. To make sure that we deliver work programmes relating to these priorities we must make sure we understand our homes, tenant priorities and data and budget availability. Clear communication will help us to ensure that we take a co-ordinated and consistent approach to investment.

This will involve a combinations of improved asset data and management, coupled with a better understanding of our tenants' priorities.

Asset Data

As part of the HIP programme a commitment to improving the quality of stock condition data and the management of that data was made.

During 2021 a software upgrade project was completed on the Northgate Housing System, with the addition of an Asset Management and Planned Maintenance Module. The Asset Management module allows us to analyse and report on our stock, and also to run scenarios for different investment programmes. This has been used to develop the investment programme that results from this plan.

Throughout the Winter of 2021, 1440 of our homes were surveyed using a bespoke stock condition survey form. A further round of surveys was carried out in Summer 2022 resulting in another 167 surveys being completed. This represents a total of 87.9% of the stock. This represents a high percentage of accurate, up to date, property specific data on our assets.

The stock condition survey will continue as a rolling programme of surveys, with the aim of surveying 20% of the stock, each year, over a five-year period. The cost of doing this has been included in the revenue budgets for the life of this plan. The housing system will also be used to update the data whenever an element of a home is upgraded. This will ensure that our data is kept up to date and accurate.

When the outcome of the decent homes review is known, we will update our stock condition survey brief to ensure that we are collecting any new data that will be required to show compliance. This will then be used to inform and update the investment plan.

A standard operating procedure is being developed that explains how the data we store in Northgate should be managed. This procedure is to designed to ensure that compliance and stock condition data is kept up to date and properly managed for the housing stock. This will ensure that management reporting to track compliance is accurate, and that real-world capital works are based on correct data.

We will carry out quality checks of the data every time a property is void. This will allow us to monitor the data we receive and check the accuracy and consistency.

Action 4 – Commission a rolling stock condition survey for the life of this plan, ensuring that stock condition data is uploaded into Northgate and informs the annual review of the asset management plan.

The stock condition data we hold is a key part of the investment plan. To develop the investment plan further we will need to gather more data on specific areas. This plan identifies a number of actions that involve gathering that additional data, specifically:

Action 5 - Structural survey of non traditional homes

Action 7 – Energy efficiency review, which will include gathering more data on energy performance

Action 14 – Stock condition survey of garages

When this plan is reviewed and updated each year, any additional data needs will be included and addressed.

Performance and sustainability of our homes

It is important to understand the energy performance of homes and the optimal investment strategies going forward. We need to develop a process which will allow us to identify alternative opportunities for those properties, examples being remodelling, redevelopment or disposal.

This requires further development to achieve this, and this plan will set out how we intend to do so.

We have limited information on our non-traditional build properties (Approximately 150 homes across the councils housing stock). Non traditional properties were generally built after the second world war and were designed as temporary solutions to housing. Examples of non traditional homes include the concrete framed “Airey” type houses, timber framed “Swedish” houses and steel framed “Trusteel” houses. We have stock condition and energy efficiency data, but we do not understand the long-term investment required in the structure of these buildings. To understand this fully we will need to commission an intrusive structural survey of approximately 150 homes. The cost of this has been included in this plan during the first year of delivery. Once the survey is complete, we will be able to develop a strategy for these homes and this plan will be updated to include that.

Action 5 – Commission an intrusive structural survey of all non traditional homes to inform future business and investment planning

Action 6 – Develop a strategy for future investment and / or disposal or redevelopment requirements for non-traditional homes

We have a considerable amount of information on energy performance in our homes. The stock condition survey includes an energy assessment referred to as Reduced Data SAP. This information will allow us to start to develop a strategy for energy efficiency and zero carbon measures in our homes.

Whilst positive steps can be taken, fully decarbonising the Council's housing stock will not be possible without external funding. This is the case for many social landlords. The Council will need to be ready to apply for external funding as it becomes available.

A larger piece of work is required to help us understand how we can work towards achieving the challenges of zero carbon whilst also focussing on energy efficiency and affordability for our tenants.

The cost of carrying out this work has been included in year one of this plan and will inform a longer term strategy

Action 7 – Commission an analysis of energy efficiency data to inform a future strategy and investment plan to improve the carbon efficiency of council homes.

Investment plan

This version of the asset management plan is based on the stock condition data that we have. The stock condition survey results will provide the baseline for the investment planning process. The five year capital programme that is attached to this plan is the start of that investment plan, but this will need adding to once other actions from the plan are completed.

Some examples of the areas of additional investment include: communal mechanical and electrical systems, building safety, compliance, energy efficiency, neighbourhood improvements, garages, and day to day costs.

When the other projects have been completed, we will start to produce an investment plan which will be developed over a period of time. The plan will:

- Show how the financial headroom that we have identified will be invested.
- Meet the affordable parameters of the HRA.
- Prioritise expenditure in accordance with our priorities.
- Link into asset performance modelling and protect the business against unnecessary investment in unsustainable assets.
- Develop an efficient programme in terms of delivery.
- Create packages of work for upcoming procurement exercises to support the aim of generating value for money savings.
- Develop a more holistic approach to capital and revenue spend with the aim of reducing the high revenue costs we currently have.

The investment plan will consider funding based on a set hierarchy. The factors that need to be considered and included in the hierarchy are:

1. Statutory compliance relating to the health and safety of our tenants.
2. Works necessary to meet lease requirements and / or avoid statutory disrepair.
3. Decent homes standard.
4. Works necessary maintain an income stream.
5. Work necessary to fulfil existing policy commitments.

6. Works required to maintain the full life of components and / or to replace components that are driving high cost / failures.
7. Energy efficiency improvements.
8. Environmental work – non H&S
9. Other improvement and customer priorities.

Our current five year programme includes a significant spike in investment in 2025/26, mainly due to investment in kitchens. As part of the action identified below, we will reprofile this investment to create a more consistent annual budget across the five years.

Action 8 – Develop a five year investment plan to inform future investment in the stock

Delivery

During the HIP programme the structure of the Housing Assets Team was improved to include specific responsibilities for Planned Maintenance, Repairs and Compliance. Further changes were made to the permanent establishment in early 2022 which included new positions to deliver on the ambitions that were emerging from the HRA Business Plan. As highlighted already, this plan will develop over the next five years to meet the external challenges and to implement the work resulting from our further survey work. It is expected that the structure of the team will need to continue to evolve to resource this, subject to the financial viability of any proposed changes.

Many of our services are delivered through arrangements with Contractors, who are key to providing excellent services to our tenants and leaseholders. Creating collaborative relationships and ensuring effective contractor management and monitoring of their services will help us continually drive improvement, innovation, and tenant satisfaction.

During the period of this plan, we will continue to improve our relationship with our Responsive Repairs contractor. That contract finishes before the end of this plan, so future updates of the plan will include a strategy to reprocure this service.

We have already secured new contracts to deliver some of our planned works investment and energy efficiency measures. These include a contract management and reporting framework which will provide a consistent and auditable measurement of our contractors' performance. We will review our contract management processes, Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and satisfaction feedback methods to improve the way in which we manage our contracts. Working with our supply chain we will identify ways in which we can better use technology to capture tenant and leaseholder feedback, to improve contractor performance.

We will identify similar organisations where we can benchmark our services, costs and performance to gain best practice knowledge across the sector. This will be used to create improvement plans for our key contracts and set realistic KPI's within our contracts and as commitments to our tenants.

This information will be shared with our tenants and leaseholders to provide a transparent view of service delivery.

Action 9 – Benchmark against other authorities planned works to drive value for money and service improvements

Procurement

This plan identifies several areas where the procurement of a new contract will be required in order to deliver the requirements of the HRA Business Plan. All procurement activity will be carried out in accordance with the Council’s “Contract Procedure Rules” and the Council’s procurement processes.

The Procurement Framework aims to:

“promote effective procurement across the Council, as well as summarising how the Council will adopt a strategic approach to sustainable procurement based on national and regional drivers, best practice and recommendations on sustainable procurement. Every aspect of the procurement process and practice must be aimed at delivering best value for the benefit of the people of the local area.”

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Modern homes

“Providing high quality Council homes and landlord services”

This is one of the key corporate priorities that this plan aims to deliver. This section of the plan sets out how we will achieve this priority.

Decent Homes

One way in which we monitor the quality of our homes, is through their ‘decency’. This is largely aligned with the Government Decent Homes Standard and highlights any properties which have several key components such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows etc. that may require replacement. The standard sets lifespans for these components, and these are rolling schedule. This means that every year a batch of properties becomes non decent.

Historically, the Council had not invested in planned maintenance work and upgrades to key components have not been consistent. There was also a lack of data to help inform planned investment. This has resulted in a current level of non-decency of 335 properties or 18.6% of the stock, meaning that this proportion of our properties has a number of major components over-due for replacement (for example kitchen, bathrooms and windows).

We estimate this backlog of component replacements to be in the region of £720,000 and therefore we will need to take careful consideration as to the impact of this within the Housing Revenue Account.

This is a key area of focus for the council over the next two to three years to ensure that all our properties meet the required standards.

The Business Plan has identified that the decent homes standard may change, subject to a government consultation. We will consider any regulatory changes to the Decent Homes Standard following completion of the government’s consultation. The implications of any changes to the Decent Homes Standard will need to be costed and reflected within the council’s investment plans and will be incorporated into an agreed **Melton Homes Standard**.

We will review all component replacement dates that are identified for replacement pre-2022. Our programme of Stock Condition Surveys has validated the condition of these components. Where replacements are overdue they have been included in a focused programme of works to improve our overall levels of ‘decency’.

Our stock condition survey has also identified any hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. Any category one hazards were passed through to us for immediate action. Lower priority hazards were submitted to us with the other stock condition data and will be picked up as part of our programme of work.

Melton Home Standard

Business Plan recommendation on choices for investment

The Council will continue to replace metal windows with uPVC windows. This will be built into the Asset Management Plan.

For fences, paths and external painting; works will be carried out on an as and when basis with a focus on risk.

Fences are included in the tenancy handbook as a tenant responsibility, but it is recognised that there will be occasions when the council may need to take a lead in repairing or replacing a fence (e.g., where there is a serious safety risk).

To support this, we have developed a home standard that forms part of this document, developed directly from tenant feedback.

This will show our commitments to tenants and leaseholders, what they can expect from us as their landlord and understand how they can support in maintaining their homes. This standard includes our approach to building safety, energy performance and the Decent Homes Standard.

As with all parts of this plan, the home standard will need to be continually developed alongside tenants and leaseholders to capture their thoughts, ideas, and requirements. It will also need to take account of changes in legislation and government standards.

The Business Plan splits investment into areas that are a choice and areas that are an obligation. The home standard starts by focussing on the choice-based investment, in order of tenant priority. It then details our approach to areas of investment that we are obliged to carry out.

Summary of the home standard

1. A safe home with regular checks on relevant areas of health and safety compliance.
2. A home that meets the requirements of the decent homes standard.
3. A modern kitchen and bathroom.
4. An efficient and modern heating system.
5. uPVC double glazed windows.
6. A secure front and rear door.
7. A regular cycle of external decoration.

Choice based investment from tenant feedback

Heating (Energy Efficiency)

Actions 7 and 28 of this plan are critical in developing a long term strategy for improving the energy efficiency of our homes. Our overall position on energy efficiency and our plans for the future are outlined in detail at the end of this plan.

This section sets out the short-term strategy for energy efficiency improvements.

We will invest in heating upgrades where our stock condition data indicates that they are at the end of their useful life. This is in line with the Business Plan and will mean that we will carry out replacements at the following intervals:

Gas boiler – 15 years

Oil boilers – 15 years

Solid fuel boilers – 15 years

Heating systems (pipework and radiators) – 30 years

Electric storage heaters – 30 years

In most cases a new heating system will result in an improvement in the energy efficiency of the home due to increased boiler efficiencies.

As part of our heating upgrade programmes, we will carry out a review of the insulation levels in each property and carry out low-cost upgrades such as loft insulation top up or draft proofing measures. Where hot water storage tanks are required, we will install high efficiency tanks that are the correct size of the home.

A key element of reducing our carbon emissions will be the replacement of existing gas boilers or other solid fuel heating systems. It is also expected that as part of the revised Decent Homes Standard which is due in 2023 will be the directive that no new gas boilers can be installed in existing properties after 2035.

The council is committed to phasing out gas boilers as soon as possible but recognises that there needs to be a balance between provision of heating equipment to our residents and the short to medium term challenges of non-gas alternatives. These include cost, availability and deliverability at scale.

Whilst we need to carry out further tenant and internal consultation, alongside a technical project to understand the energy performance of our stock, our initial principles when replacing heating systems are:

1. We will carry out a technical review of each property on the gas boiler programme to determine if an air source heat pump would be appropriate. This would apply to more modern properties with a high EPC rating.

2. Where an air source heat pump is not appropriate, we will install a highly efficient, hydrogen ready, gas boiler.
3. Where gas is not available, we will carry out the same review to see if an air source heat pump would be appropriate.
4. The final option will be to install modern electric storage heaters.

We will agree a plan for the phasing out of gas boilers when the energy performance review is complete (Action 27).

We have a contract in place with our current heating contractor until June 2023. The prices that have been used to form the five year programme are based on our current costs in year one, these have then been inflated in years 2 to 5 to take account of the likely increase in capital install costs.

Action 10 – Re-procure heating install and servicing contract in 2023, ensuring that the contract enables the council to achieve the commitments set out within the Asset Management Plan.

Windows and doors

Our tenant feedback indicated that replacement of aluminium windows was a high priority.

Under normal circumstances, uPVC windows and doors are replaced when they reach 30 years old.

The stock has a high proportion of double glazed, aluminium, windows that were installed 20 – 30 years ago. Whilst the aluminium frames are durable, the locking mechanisms and handles that fail are hard to replace. There are also issues with seals that fail which are also not easy to repair. This results in properties having draughty and insecure windows. Often the only solution is to replace individual windows with uPVC, which results in a mix of age and material in one property.

Aluminium frames also create cold spots in properties, which can lead to condensation forming and eventually mould.

Where a mixture of aluminium and uPVC windows are encountered in one property and assessment will be carried out to determine the best course of action. Generally, where the majority of windows are aluminium, all windows in the property will be replaced to ensure they are the same material and age. Where a smaller proportion of aluminium windows are encountered an assessment of the age of the uPVC windows will be made. If the uPVC windows are reaching the end of their lifespan then all windows will be replaced. If the uPVC windows are relatively new they will be left in place.

This supports the HRA Business Plan “recommendation for choices on investment”.

The proposed investment programme includes for replacing all of the aluminium windows in 2023/24. After that date, the only windows and doors included in the programme are ones which have reached the end of their lifespan.

In normal circumstances windows and doors will be replaced when they are thirty years old. Windows will be replaced with double glazed uPVC windows. Doors will be replaced with GRP composite doors to the front of the property and uPVC doors to the rear.

Kitchens

Under normal circumstances, kitchens will be replaced when they are 20 years old, or in poor condition. Where a kitchen is under 20 years old, but the condition is poor, an assessment of its remaining life is made.

The stock condition data shows that we have a number of properties that have a kitchen that is over 20 years old. These kitchens will be prioritised based on age and condition with a view to working toward mainly age based replacement by 2026.

During the summer of 2021 we consulted with tenants on the range of colour choices we could offer as part of kitchen refurbishments. Our current range of choices is based on that consultation and means that when a kitchen is refurbished, tenants will be given a choice of:

- Three choices of cupboard door and drawer colour
- Three choices of handle
- Three choices of worktop colour
- Three choices of wall tiles colour
- Three choices of floor colour
- Two wall colours
- Choice and input around the final layout

Each property will be individually surveyed and a bespoke layout provided for each tenant. This will take account of any specific needs they have and wish to incorporate into the design. We will also carry out a full consultation which will give the tenant details of the work involved, but also seek their choices on colours and layout.

This workstream has recently been procured and the prices received have been used to update our thirty year plan. The contract is in place until 2025 and will need reprocurring at this point.

Action 11 – Re-procure kitchen contract in 2025, ensuring that the contract enables the council to achieve the commitments set out within the Asset Management Plan.

Bathrooms

Under normal circumstances, bathrooms will be replaced when they are 30 years old, or in poor condition. Where a bathroom is under 30 years old, but the condition is poor, an assessment of its remaining life is made.

The stock condition data shows that we have a number of properties that have a bathroom that is over 30 years old. These bathrooms will be prioritised based on age and condition with a view to working toward mainly age based replacement by 2030.

Bathrooms in houses and first and second floor flats will be refurbished to include a bath and over bath shower. The bath will be tiled to full height and include a shower curtain.

Bathrooms in bungalows and ground floor flats will be refurbished to include a level access shower. This will enable us to future proof properties and also reduce the number of relatively new baths that are removed to enable a bathroom to be adapted.

In bathrooms, tenants will be able to choose from the following:

- Three choices of wall tiles colour
- Three choices of floor colour
- Two wall colours

We will also carry out a full consultation which will give the tenant details of the work involved, but also seek their choices on colours and layout.

This workstream has recently been procured and the prices received have been used to update our thirty year plan. The contract is in place until 2025 and will need reprocuring at this point.

Action 12 – Re-procure bathroom contract in 2025, ensuring that the contract enables the council to achieve the commitments set out within the Asset Management Plan.

Fencing

Tenants identified this as a priority after kitchens and bathrooms.

The current tenancy agreement explains that tenants are responsible for fences between their property and their neighbours.

The Council is only responsible for fences that face onto areas such as public highway, communal paths, businesses, shops and agricultural land.

Where fencing is the Council's responsibility it will generally be replaced when it fails, rather than as a planned programme of work. The normal standard will be a 1.2m high chain-link fence on concrete posts.

We have drafted a new fencing policy which helps to clarify which boundaries will be maintained by the Council. It also explains what standard of fence will be installed in different locations.

This policy was developed to provide clear guidance on what the Council will provide, whilst recognising that it was lower on the tenants list of priorities. As a result, the type of fencing used will be functional and affordable to ensure that a higher proportion of funds is used for higher priority areas such as energy, kitchens, and bathrooms. The Council is unable to deliver on all 'choices' for investment due to budgetary constraints.

External and communal areas decoration

The Council has not carried out external decoration on a planned cyclical programme for several years.

A procurement exercise has been started in 2022 with the aim of having a new contract in place for 2023/24. This will include pre-paint repairs, external decoration of timber or render and washing down of cladding.

A normal painting cycle would be seven to eight year, but to factor in for the time since properties were last painted we will initially increase that to a five year cycle. This will mean that all properties are painted in the life of this initial plan.

Tenants will be given a choice of colour for paint where possible.

Action 13 – Procure a cyclical decoration contract in 2022, ensuring that the contract enables the council to achieve the commitments set out within the Asset Management Plan.

Garages

Business plan recommendation on garages and other HRA non-housing assets

Identify garage sites which could be made available for future council house development. Leading to demolition when a project has been put together.

Remaining garages to either be repaired if they can be let (either for cars or for storage of appropriate items) or demolished if they are creating a nuisance.

Other assets which are held in the HRA but are not housing will be reviewed within the Asset Management Plan.

The Business Plan commits to a review of garages and other non-housing assets in the HRA. Garages were identified as a low priority by tenants, however, there is a demand in certain areas.

To enable us to formulate a plan for the garage stock, we first need to understand their condition. A full condition survey will be undertaken during the first year of this plan and a budget has been included for this.

Action 14 – Commission a full stock condition survey of garages to inform a detailed understanding of investment requirements, and options for redevelopment or disposal.

We have also refreshed our waiting list for garages so that we can understand which areas are in demand. Allocation of garages has commenced.

When the stock condition survey is completed, we will carry out a review of demand alongside the housing development strategy. This will identify which garage sites can be demolished, which can be re-developed for housing, and which will remain as garages. We will prioritise and determine any investment in garages as part of the investment planning process.

Action 15 – Develop a strategy for future investment and / or disposal or redevelopment requirements for garages within the councils Housing Revenue Account

Outbuildings

Many of the blocks of flats have outbuildings associated with each flat. These outbuilding were originally provided for a number of reasons, including bin storage and general storage.

These building offer the opportunity for residents to store items that they might not be able to in their flat, which could include cycles or other items. They can also have a negative impact by attracting vandalism and fly tipping.

It is important to understand the demand and need for these outbuildings, so it is proposed that we will carry out a consultation with all residents in these areas so that their feedback can be used to determine a plan for each location. This may include demolition, retention or refurbishment / remodelling.

We will prioritise and determine any investment in outbuilding as part of the investment planning process.

Action 16 – Consult with residents to seek feedback on the demand for outbuildings and develop a plan for future investment, maintenance, disposal or redevelopment requirements for outbuildings within the councils Housing Revenue Account

Estates and neighbourhoods

The Business Plan identifies that the Fairmead Estate was previously highlighted as requiring regeneration. The original plans were for large scale demolition and regeneration, but the current feeling is that engagement with residents and focus on community cohesion could help to reduce the anti social behaviour.

Recommendation for regeneration

The Council's focus on Fairmead as a priority neighbourhood should continue. Work with the community on the estate should include engagement to support community cohesion and developing options to reconfigure parts of the estate as well as developing sites for new build housing. A local housing allocations policy should also be explored to support a balanced and cohesive community. Where there is a need to deal with anti-social behaviour the Council will use its enforcement powers appropriately and will work collaboratively across teams and with other partners.

Action 17 – Working with teams and wider partners, develop a strategy and business case for the Fairmead Estate,

There is also a requirement to create a plan to manage investment in the rest of the estates within the Borough. The Business Plan identifies that there is some capacity for enhancements to estates, but there is no mechanism for identifying the priority areas. A proposal needs to be developed for monitoring and prioritising regeneration work.

We will prioritise and determine any investment in estates as part of the investment planning process.

Action 18 – Through resident and stakeholder engagement, develop a mechanism to define and prioritise enhancements within housing estates

Essential investment

Roofs

The replacement of roof coverings is essential to maintain the fabric of the structure. As such roofing has been included as an essential element of this plan.

Roofs are currently replaced on the basis of their age and condition.

The lifespan of a roof differs for flat and pitched roofs. This ranges from 25 years for a flat felt roof to 50 years for a tiled roof.

Decent homes defines a roof covering as old when it reaches 50 years for a pitched roof and 30 for a flat roof.

We also carry out an assessment of its condition to then produce a remaining life for the roof covering. A roof that is over fifty years old but in good condition will not require immediate replacement. This defines when it will be included in the programme and forms the basis for our current budget setting.

A contract has just been procured for re-roofing and this will be in place until 2025 and will require re-procuring at this point.

Action 19 – Re-procure roofing contract in 2025, ensuring that the contract enables the council to achieve the commitments set out within the Asset Management Plan.

Electrical improvements

All our properties have a fixed wiring check every five years. Further detail will be included in the Electrical Safety Management Plan.

Where we carry out an electrical test and find that the wiring is not satisfactory, we will include the property in a programme of repairs and upgrades. Full re-wires will only be carried out if repair of the system will not result in a satisfactory test result.

Where we carry out electrical improvement and full re-wires we focus on ensuring that we comply with the current standards. This includes making sure that there are sufficient sockets throughout the property.

A budget has been included to carry our tests in our stock on a five-year cycle. The budget also includes an allowance for repairs. A separate budget has been created to allow for some re-wires to be carried out where required.

We are aware that a major upgrade of the communal electrics is required at Bradgate Flats in Asfordby. An increased budget has been included in year one of this plan.

A contract is in place for both test and upgrades for the life of this plan.

Damp and mould

We are committed to reducing and addressing damp and mould in our homes. As part of the sign up pack for new tenants, we provide advice and guidance on what tenants should do if they have issues in their home. This guidance is also provided to tenants that have reported damp and mould to us and sent out proactively with our newsletter. Our intention is to help our tenants to understand how they can reduce the impact of condensation, but it is clear that any ongoing problems should be reported to us so that we can investigate properly.

Initially, we respond to reports of damp and mould on a reactive basis. This means that we will investigate after a tenant has reported an issue to us, or where a hazard has been identified by a surveyor under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

As part of the investment planning process, we will analyse our repair data to determine whether we have a particular issue in certain locations, or with a certain type of property. This may lead to a focussed investment to proactively deal with damp and mould in certain properties.

We also take steps to address high levels of humidity in our properties by installing a humidity controlled extractor fan during kitchen and bathroom refurbishments.

Aids and adaptations

It is our aim to deliver a responsive aids and adaptations service which meets the needs of customers and provides good value for money.

To support this an Aids and Adaptations Policy was adopted in 2021, and this sets out our position regarding this workstream.

We recognise our social responsibility to provide adaptations and facilities for people with a disability and our responsibility to comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

The demand for this type of work reflects the tenant profile and ongoing the budget provision of £ 250,000 has been allowed within this plan. We have analysed previous years spend to help inform this budget.

The type of work undertaken ranges from small items such as handrails, to more major adaptations and, in a few cases, an extension. The team have developed systems to:

- ensure cases are effectively prioritised;
- work is carried out in a timely fashion, subject to Social Services assessments;
- ensure tenants are satisfied with the work.

The Council aims to ensure that vacant properties , which have disabled adaptations, are re-let to a new tenant who requires such adaptations. This minimises the need for further expenditure on such works for the new tenant.

A contract has been procured for this type of work and this is in place until 2025, at which point it will need to be reprocured.

Action 20 – Reprocure Aids and Adaptations Contract in 2025, ensuring that the contract enables the council to achieve the commitments set out within the Asset Management Plan.

Non housing assets in the HRA

There are a number of assets that are currently held in the HRA that are not domestic dwellings.

On 10th November 2020 the Government published some guidance on the operation of the HRA ring fence. While the guidance does not change their policy on the ring fence it does aim to better reflect the current policy landscape by taking into account the authority's local freedoms and responsibilities arising from the Localism Act 2011 and the self-financing settlement of 2012.

The guidance sets out what is, and what is not appropriate for inclusion in the HRA, with particular emphasis on 'grey area' items where a reasonable case can be made for inclusion in either the HRA or the General Fund.

Currently, the non domestic assets in the HRA are:

Hartopp Road Shop
Chapel Street Car Park (part of)
Hartopp Road - play area
Thrush Close - play area
West Avenue - MUGA pitch
Fairmead Community Centre
Site of South Melton Community Centre
Barker Crescent - amenity land
Kirkby Lane - land
Station Cottages, Hose – Land, access and sewage plant
Norman Way – Advertising hoarding

A joint project needs to be undertaken with the Council's Corporate Assets Team to understand the purpose of each of the non domestic assets so that a case can be made for either retaining it in the HRA or transferring it to the Corporate Assets Team. If the proposal resulted in properties being transferred to the General Fund then they would have to be purchased at an agreed value.

Action 21 – Undertake joint project with corporate assets to determine ownership and future use of each asset

Housing for older people

The Council currently has 40% of the stock designated for tenants who are over the age of 55 years old. In addition, we have a large number of residents over this age who live within our General Needs properties.

We will work to support tenants who wish to live independently in their own home through the use of assisted technologies and home adaptations.

Some tenants may be better suited to downsizing into one of our sheltered schemes. We will continually review our schemes to ensure that they suit the needs of older people and are desirable in an effort to free up larger family homes.

We are currently:

Reviewing digital upgrade requirements for warden call equipment.

Providing scooter storage and charging facilities.

Action 22 – Complete the digital lifeline project

We are aiming to:

Provide attractive and useful communal areas and amenities to provide Value for Money for tenants' service charges.

Gretton Court

Recommendation for Gretton Court

Work will commence to determine the future of Gretton Court. This would be best addressed by a project looking at present and future needs for the accommodation. In line with other recommendations in this Plan, the Council should use its business case process to guide that project.

There is a specific recommendation in the Business Plan for a project to consider improvements to Gretton Court. The starting point in this process was the completion of a business case.

The business case identified that there is a demand for units at Gretton Court and that the high number of voids was largely attributable to the difficulties in letting units during Covid lockdowns. It also highlighted that units were now being let in a different way, at the time of writing this plan there were only 12 voids, compared to 24 earlier in the year.

A tenant consultation was carried out as part of the business case. This identified that tenants liked living at Gretton Court but that the lack of individual bathing facilities was an issue.

The key area of investment at Gretton Court is in providing shower facilities for individual flats. Cost were included in the business case and it was shown to be viable if the void figures drop as a result of the increased desirability. The current proposal is to:

1. Prioritise the installation of an example shower room in each of the property types utilising current voids.
2. Current tenants will then be given the opportunity to view the new layout.
3. They will then have the choice on whether or not to have the upgrade in their own flat.
4. All future voids will have the shower upgrade work included in the void works.

It is proposed that a budget is created to complete this work over a period of time. Initially it will be used to complete work in void properties and tenanted properties where tenants ask for us to do the work. Then we will continue to complete the upgrades as properties become void. It is not possible to set an annual budget as the number of voids we receive each year is not fixed, so the proposal would be for the budget to be created in year one and the remaining budget carried forward each year.

Action 23 - Commence a programme of bathroom facilities improvements in the flats at Gretton Court through a combination of work at void stage and in tenanted properties where tenants request it in order to achieve decent homes standard

The windows at Gretton Court are currently original aluminium windows. These have been included in the 2023 capital programme to be replaced with new uPVC, double glazed windows.

Leasehold properties

Whilst we have a relatively small proportion of leasehold properties, ensuring that we manage our services and relationships is vitally important. We hold a legal responsibility with leaseholders to maintain and renew the communal areas and external envelope of their homes. We must meet the requirements of the leases held and ensure that we are providing value for money.

We feel that we can improve our services by providing leaseholders with a greater level of detail and foresight into upcoming major works investment. This will allow leaseholders to financially prepare for any payments they need to make under the terms of their lease. We will not only do this through statutory Section 20 consultation but also through resident engagement exercises for planned work.

We will continue to monitor the government's approach to Leasehold Reform and adapt our operational and management processes accordingly.

Tenant and leaseholder engagement

It is a priority for us to work alongside our tenants and leaseholders to continually improve the services we offer, and for us to understand their priorities.

The Business Plan was developed based on feedback from our tenants and this helped to shape the recommendations that came out of it, which ultimately formed the basis of this plan.

We have identified that we need to further develop our communication and feedback from tenants and leaseholders, as well as providing opportunities for them to be more involved in our Asset Management function. It is critical that our tenants and leaseholders are informed at all stages of planning, delivery and completion of major works. This has been highlighted within our 2021 STAR survey.

This has been clearly defined in our Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework 2022 which we will use for consultation with those living within our homes.

Since the framework was adopted we have developed a consultation toolkit for building work which requires tenant consultation. We are currently trialling the toolkit and seeking tenants feedback before we fully adopt and approve this.

Action 24 – Complete and adopt the consultation toolkit

We will identify core aspects of our service delivery to be reviewed by our Your Choice Group and work with them to identify challenges and improvements to our current service offer.

Working alongside our Your Choice Group, Responsive Repairs and Planned Maintenance contractors we will also review all tenant facing documentation and communications to make sure that these meet best practice guidelines as well as being easy to understand and accessible to all.

We will improve the use of technology to allow tenants and leaseholders to book, track and feedback on repairs and planned investment, allowing for easier access to our services when it is convenient for them.

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Responsive repairs and cyclical maintenance

Responsive repairs service

The objective of the repairs service is to provide a customer focussed responsive repairs service, which achieves high levels of performance, customer satisfaction and good value for money.

The priorities to achieve this objective are:

- Develop successful working relationships with contractors
- Making appointments for all repairs
- Getting the job done right first time as quickly as possible
- Using tenant views to shape the service
- Carrying out as many repairs in a pre planned way as possible

A 'responsive repair' is a repair carried out as a result of wear and tear, accidental or deliberate damage or the weather. Requests for responsive repairs, are usually tenant driven and undertaken as a single job normally of a low value, which make them difficult to programme.

Repairs that are not the Council's responsibility or which arise through the unreasonable actions of a third party are re-charged.

The responsive repairs service has more contact with tenants and customers than any other maintenance service and is therefore used as an important measure of how effective the housing service is.

Contracts are in place for the following Responsive Repairs:

- Day to Day Repairs – combined with voids
- Heating Repairs – combined with gas servicing

Contracts are required for:

- Door Entry Systems maintenance to blocks of flats
- TV Aerial maintenance

Action 25 – Procure contracts for outstanding response repair services ensuring that the contract enables the council to achieve the commitments set out within the Asset Management Plan.

Since 2018, the Day-to-Day responsive repairs service has been carried out by a single repairs contractor, Axis Europe. It generates the most repairs of all the responsive services and the Council is working to improve the service and value for money. The heating repairs have been carried out by Renuvo.

The current contract is due to be reviewed in August 2023.

Action 26 – Review the Responsive Repairs Contract and future requirements, ensuring that the contract enables the council to achieve the commitments set out within the Asset Management Plan.

Void Works

The objective of the void process is to make void properties available for letting as quickly as possible, minimising rent loss and maximising the housing available, whilst striving to meet customers' expectations.

Priorities are to:

- provide a safe and secure home;
- improve re-let timescales;
- provide a re-let standard that meets customers' expectations; and
- maximise the use of IT.

The Council will continue to aim to minimise the time a property is unoccupied by carrying out Pre-Void Inspections wherever possible. The Council will also identify properties where fast tracking is possible and set a challenging re-let time.

Void repairs are undertaken by the responsive repairs contractor. This includes the cleaning, clearing and decoration of void properties.

In the last twelve months we have had challenges around completion of void work in properties. The legacy of Covid 19, increasing material cost and lack of sub-contract resource have resulted in our principal contractor stopping all work on the void contract. We have worked with them to agree an uplift in the contract rates that is based on actual material and labour cost increases to assist. We are now in a position where the principal contractor is completing void works again. This progress will continue to be monitored through our monthly contract meetings and key performance indicators.

Action 27 – Monitor progress of void contract to determine if contract requirements are being met

Void Standard

The current re-let standard agreed is, that the Council will:

- Carry out a gas safety check where gas is installed and leave a copy of the certificate at the property.
- Carry out a safety check of the electrical installation.
- Remove any rubbish from the property and garden.
- Clean the property.
- Re-decorate parts, or all of the property if it is required at the void inspection.
- Carry out all of the urgent repairs and try and complete all other repairs whilst the property is empty.
- Keep the incoming tenant informed of the date the property will be ready.

After all work is complete, we carry out a full inspection of the property to ensure it meets our standard prior to reletting.

To assist with re-let times the Council may:

- Leave minor repairs to be completed once the new tenant has moved in. If this is the case tenants will be informed of the timescale for their completion.
- Leave work to the garden if this means the property can be let to a new tenant faster. The gardening work will be completed once the property is occupied.

Due to the lack of a planned maintenance programme in recent years, there have been a high percentage of voids that require major works such as kitchen and bathroom installs. As a result, a capital budget of £100,000 per annum was created to allow for capital works on voids to be charged correctly. It is anticipated that the increased focus on planned maintenance work will reduce the requirement for this budget. As a result, the budget has been included in the five years of this plan, but not in subsequent years. This will be monitored annually and the budget removed or reduced earlier if feasible.

Action 28 – Carry out an annual review of the void capital budget and reduce / remove as appropriate

A recharge order is raised for removal of goods and clearance of gardens to recoup expenditure and repairs where the tenancy agreement has been breached.

Action 29 - Develop and implement a policy relating to recharging tenants

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Energy efficiency and decarbonisation

Corporate priority “Protect our climate and enhance our natural environment”

Business Plan recommendations on climate change and energy efficiency

The Council will:

Focus on improving energy efficiency in its existing homes but will set a zero-carbon standard for its new build homes.

Carry out further work to assess how best to adapt Council homes to be closer to zero carbon.

Consider and discuss with tenants, the implications and opportunities of decarbonisation options.

Set a SAP rating as a performance measure against which the Council will assess its progress in improving energy efficiency every year.

Provide advice on energy efficiency will be shared proactively with tenants.

Work to attract national funding to improve the energy efficiency of the stock.

The Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and this helped define the priority above. We have an ambition for our own operations and functions to be carbon neutral by 2030, and to promote sustainability within the borough, with the aim that the borough will be carbon neutral by 2050.

We have recently completed a successful programme of energy efficiency improvements that was funded through BEIS LAD funding.

We worked with Fusion21 to access their Decarbonisation Framework, appointing contractor E.ON Energy Solutions Limited to secure Local Authority Delivery (LAD 1b) Scheme funding, and deliver works to improve the energy efficiency rating of some of our low income and low energy performance certificate (EPC) rated properties.

We awarded a contract worth more than £690,000 to E.ON to provide a full turn-key solution covering:

- Property analysis and eligibility criteria.
- The installation of energy saving measures.
- End-to-end support during the customer journey.
- Installation and post-install behaviour change advice, helping households gain the maximum benefits from the new measures.

E.ON are PAS2035:2019 compliant and Trustmark accredited.

The outcomes from the contract are:

- Increase EPC ratings for the properties identified.
- Tackle fuel poverty while reducing energy bills.

- Ensure homes are thermally comfortable and efficient.
- Contribute to supporting the UK's commitment to net zero by 2050.
- Inform the development and design of further energy efficiency and heat schemes.
- Include social value delivery activity, tailored to the council's priorities.

We are committed to significantly reducing carbon in our housing stock by 2030 and this a clear priority within our asset management function. Critical to meeting this target is to understand our current position and to develop a clear baseline which we can work against.

We also need to work across the council and with our tenants to ensure that there is a standardised definition, terminology and understanding of what our corporate targets are.

Action 30 – Communicate with tenants to clearly define terminology and standards and ensure information is accessible, easy to understand and that our tenants can hold us to account.

To meet this objective we have started by including an assessment of our homes SAP ratings in our stock condition survey. This means that we have current energy performance data for all homes that have had a stock condition survey.

Energy performance certificate baseline

Based on the properties that we have surveyed so far, approximately 57% of our homes meet or exceed the government's 2030 EPC Band C target. Work is required to improve the portfolio through retrofit measures, this may be to properties which fall below this rating or have high carbon emissions.

EPC Band	Percentage of stock
A	0
B	1
C	56.2
D	38
E	4
F	1
G	>1

The vast majority of our homes are already a band C or D, which suggests that they will require minimal improvement to meet the target of a band C. There are some properties that have been identified as a low rating which cannot be improved without significant investment. Long term strategies will need to be considered for these, which may involve redevelopment or disposal.

Baseline study

The current proposal is to work with an energy performance expert to review our stock performance and help us to develop a long term strategy.

We have already identified that we have good SAP data for a large percentage of the stock. This information is useful, but it will not allow us to fully assess all of the energy performance options. As part of the baseline study we will need to develop a revised stock condition survey brief to capture additional energy related information. We also propose to include an assessment against PAS 2035 as this is likely to be a feature of funding opportunities in the coming years. This will apply to the rolling programme of 20% of the stock each year over five years.

We can focus our earlier surveys on the areas where we know we will be investing soon. This will mean that we can use accurate data to inform a programme of upgrade work where we have already identified a need, for example, where heating upgrades are already due.

Using the information we receive from the surveys, we could model which measures would be most appropriate. This would take specific account of the cost of living crisis. We would aim to identify measures for reducing carbon but also projected running costs for the tenant.

This is likely to result in a staged approach to achieving zero carbon on the stock. We hope to identify the potential carbon savings by 2030 and then project a further saving for 2040 and ultimately 2050.

Once completed this would allow us to provide estimated costs for the work to supplement the zero carbon and running costs for different scenarios. This plan should consider any elements of the properties that already require work but also identify funding gaps using the information from the business plan. This will help us to align with the Business Plan commitments.

The ultimate aim is to develop a toolkit of measures which we can apply in different situations to improve the heating system, reduce carbon and maintain or potentially reduce running costs for tenants.

Technical Philosophy and Approach

After initial discussion it is likely that our approach will be to take a 'Fabric First' approach when investing in our properties, to meet a carbon neutral position. Not only does this provide the most sustainable and cost-efficient improvements for our tenants but is also aligned to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund principles. Examples of this may be cavity, loft or wall insulation, replacement windows and doors or more efficient lighting and the intention would be that this would be carried out alongside heating upgrades. The investment planning process would allow us to ensure that this investment is carried out in a sensible sequence to reduce disruption to tenants, manage costs and avoid

unnecessary duplication of works, i.e. the Council would aim to replace windows at the same time as carrying out external insulation upgrades.

When developing works and investment programmes we will review all measures to understand both their carbon impact and running costs to the council and our tenants. This is to ensure that firstly we are achieving the best levels of improvements (in terms of carbon savings and EPC ratings) for the investment required. Secondly, we will project the impact any new or replacement measures will have on the end costs to our tenants.

External Funding

To support the Clean Growth Strategy, the government has realised the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) to be accessed over a 10-year period. This will provide funding to encourage and enable social housing providers to accelerate their energy efficiency and decarbonisation plans. The fund aims to:

- Upgrade a significant amount of the social housing stock currently below EPC rating C up to that standard,
- Deliver warmer and more energy-efficient homes,
- Reduce carbon emissions,
- Reduce energy bills, and tackle fuel poverty and support the creation of 'green' jobs

There are other funding streams that could be accessed. The Council has had some recent success with LAD funding, which has seen fifteen properties benefit from external wall insulation and around fifty have had solar panels installed.

We have started to work with North West Leicestershire to consider which funding streams would be suitable for us to apply for. This joint approach will continue as it offers the opportunity for both organisations to benefit from greater buying power.

Resources, Skills and Contractor Capacity

Energy efficiency measures and sustainable heating systems are relatively new to the Council. We have installed one air source heat pump, and continue to learn from that. We will need to identify where the skillset of both our contractors and staff need to be enhanced. We do have an ideal opportunity through the re-procurement of our heating servicing and installation contract, and this is already being factored in to the procurement exercise. Where required contracts may be required for additional servicing and repair of complex heating systems.

It may be necessary to identify new resources, training and upskilling to further develop the council's technical capacity, project management and delivery. We will provide training to our teams to gain better knowledge in carbon awareness, technical solutions and cost management for new technologies entering the market.

Tenant Education and Knowledge

Reducing our carbon emissions will have an impact on our tenants and we are responsible for ensuring that any changes to people's homes are clearly explained and supported. We

will also work with tenants to help them understand how behaviour and lifestyle can have a positive reduction on their energy costs. Part of this will involve signposting tenants to partners and other organisations who are able to give further support on both energy efficiency and managing their energy expenses.

We will work alongside our contractor partners to create and deliver skills, training and employment opportunities through their social value commitments.

Addressing Fuel Poverty

Alongside the investment in our properties, we also will support our tenants in addressing Fuel Poverty. We must ensure that we do not increase tenants' energy bills through the installation of new or alternative technologies. This is a key aim of the energy performance review project. We will compare the energy efficiency and/or carbon reduction against any potential increase in energy usage and therefore cost to the tenant.

Future strategy

In the Home Standard section of this plan we outline our short term strategy. Once all of the work identified in this section of the plan is complete, we will be able to update the heating policy and implement a longer term strategy.

Action 31 – Develop an affordable strategy for improving the carbon efficiency of council homes including associated investment plan and opportunities to secure external funding.

Measuring success

We currently monitor performance across the Housing and Communities Directorate, and a number of those criteria relate to asset management. The performance indicators are recorded each month and then reported to the Senior Leadership Team on a quarterly basis.

Where appropriate, targets are set in terms of an expected level. For areas such as compliance, this may be 100%. Other areas may have a lower target, which would be reviewed on a regular basis to make sure it is still appropriate. Officers are assigned ownership of relevant indicators and they are expected to provide the current figures and any narrative that is required.

There are a number of these performance indicators that will be used to measure the success of this plan. These are:

1. Percentage of stock NOT meeting Decent Homes Standard
2. Percentage of stock with a current valid gas safety check
3. Average re-let time for Council housing (calendar days)
4. Average time to complete disabled adaptations in Council properties following referral from social care - (working days)
5. Average SAP rating
6. Percentage of stock with in date EICR
7. Percentage of blocks with current Fire Risk Assessment
8. Number of FRA actions outstanding
9. Percentage of FRA actions outstanding that are out of target
10. Number of properties (within the calendar month) where the gas safety check was not completed before the expiry date
11. Percentage of blocks with valid water hygiene certification
12. Percentage of water hygiene actions that are out of target
13. Percentage of stock requiring radon testing where testing is complete
14. Number of lift safety checks
15. Number of asbestos safety checks
16. Average time to complete responsive repair (working days)
17. Percentage of responsive repairs completed first time
18. Percentage of responsive repairs completed by appointment
19. Satisfaction that the home is safe
20. Non-emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale
21. Emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescale
22. Percentage of tenants satisfied with quality of responsive repairs
23. Percentage of tenants satisfied with quality of capital improvements
24. Percentage new tenants satisfied with their new home (condition of property)

Programme delivery against the identified budgets is monitored on a monthly basis and reported to the Senior Leadership Team and Council on a quarterly basis.

The performance indicators will continue to be updated when future versions of this plan are produced. This will allow for new areas to be monitored robustly.

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Appendices

Appendix needed – our capital investment programme per year (how many kitchens, bathrooms etc per year)

Appendix needed – action plan arising from this AMP, table format with timescales included

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