

Asset Management Housing Strategy

2020 - 2024



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Foreword

Providing safe, decent, energy efficient homes that meet the needs of modern living for Council housing tenants' continues to be a key priority.

The Council continues to invest heavily in looking after our existing housing stock and we have implemented a suite of new maintenance policies and raised standards to ensure our tenants obtain the very best service from the Council.

The safety of our tenants' is our number one priority and we have comprehensive regimes in place to ensure that all our homes are legally and regulatory compliant.

The Council offer tenants' an in-house responsive repairs service which also ensures that properties that become vacant are prepared for re-letting as quickly as possible. An efficient and value-for-money maintenance service is one of the biggest drivers of customer satisfaction.

We now let all void properties with freshly painted walls, which I know will make a big difference to incoming tenants. This is a higher standard than before and is certainly not commonplace with other Housing Authorities or Registered Providers.

As well as traditional customer contact routes for tenants' to request repairs, we are increasing our digital capability to allow tenants' to self-serve, follow progress and feedback at a time convenient to them.

As well as undertaking reactive responsive repairs, the Council invests around £6million per year on planned capital improvement work to tenants' homes, modernising kitchens and bathrooms and ensuring the external envelope of homes are well roofed, with energy efficient double-glazed windows and fire-resistant doors.

All of this is carried out by a professional team who manage safety, repairs and investment in a customer focussed manner, to ensure quality and value for money.

Asset Management Housing Priorities 2020 - 2024

- Achieving high standards in the maintenance and repair of our Council stock.
- Achieving high levels of energy efficiency in Council homes.
- Delivering value for money across capital investment, responsive repairs and re-letting of empty properties.
- Delivering a modern customer model, empowering tenants' to self-serve.



Cllr Jill Cleary
Portfolio Holder for
Housing Services

Introduction

The Council is the largest provider of affordable homes in the New Forest. We have a strong housing vision and are committed to providing 600 new homes in the District by 2026.

We are committed to providing as many good quality, affordable council owned homes as possible, all located within neighbourhoods and in environments that help provide better life chances.

The cost of repairing, maintaining and investing in our homes is considerable. Over the next four years our business plan provides for us to spend over £40million on responsive repairs, cyclical maintenance and capital improvement work.

Our Asset Management Strategy explains how, through sound planning, we will design and put in place a range of flexible, dynamic approaches to maintaining, improving and developing our Council housing assets over the short, medium and longer term.

It sets out our priorities for the physical care and improvement of the housing properties and surrounding environment. In this way, over the life of the strategy and beyond, both the quality and quantity of council owned homes can be increased throughout the District.

Our Asset Management Strategy's aims and ambitions link strongly with the Corporate Plan and our wider Housing Strategy Vision to promote sustainable communities by raising the standard of existing homes and their environment, resulting in suitable, affordable, decent Council housing.

Partnership working across housing is central to this and will allow us to meet the vision and aspirations and maximise the outcomes and benefits to Council tenants'.



The current Housing Stock Portfolio

The Council owns and manages over 5,000 homes across the District, as well as providing a management service to 119 private sector leasehold properties. Despite the loss of properties through right to buy sales and an increased number of housing association properties, we remain, by far, the largest provider of social housing in the District.

The largest share of council housing properties (2,246 - 40%) were constructed in the post-war period between 1945 and 1964. 29% were constructed between 1965 - 1974, whilst 23% of the stock is relatively recent, being constructed from between 1975 to 2020. Just 8% of stock was constructed Pre-1945.

92% of our properties are purpose-built houses, flats and bungalows of traditional construction. We also have some 407 properties (8%) of non-traditional construction, including Airey, BISF, Reema and some timber frame houses built during the 1970's.

All the Council's general needs flats are in blocks of low to medium rise (two to three storeys). Access arrangements to the individual flats includes; deck access, internal communal staircases and individual external staircases to flats converted from houses. The council has a number of 'age restricted' blocks of flats which were previously warden-controlled under a partnership with Hampshire County Council. Such schemes were decommissioned in 2012. These blocks are now general needs (age restricted) accommodation. The council also has three extra care schemes in low to medium rise blocks of flats.

The overall condition of our properties is good, and this is evidenced by our stock condition surveys. This reflects the considerable investment that has been made over many years to ensure that we not only continue to meet the Decent Homes standard but develop our own Decent Homes Plus standard to further drive the quality of the homes we provide.

Nevertheless, a range of repair and investment challenges remain, including the need for improvements to the condition and quality of internal and external common areas as these were not a focus of our Decent Homes programmes.

The demand for our properties is high. However, there are some property types which have lower levels of demand. These include some of our flats in older blocks where there are housing management challenges and some of our houses that are on less popular estates or have poorer layouts such as ground floor bathrooms.

Investment in our own Decent Homes Plus standard for our assets and the environment in which they sit will offer the type, quality and style of accommodation to meet the needs or modern living and expectations of people coming onto our housing register.



Stock profile

- 1,539 flats
- 189 bedsits
- 59 maisonettes
- 2,817 houses
- 876 bungalows
- Three Extra Care Schemes
- Seven hostels
- 1,800 garages



Key facts

5,238

Total number of homes owned and managed by the council

£40million

Total four-year investment in maintenance, repairs and capital investment

19,000+

Total number of repairs carried out each year

250 - 300

Total number of homes prepared for re-letting each year

47,000

Total number of Housing Landlord Services customer contacts each year

304

Total number of homes designated for older people each year

70

Average SAP rating for our homes

96%

Properties meeting the decent homes standard

55 years

Average age of our properties

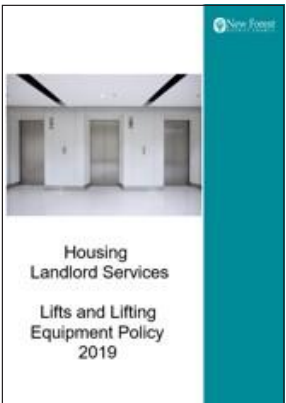
Achievements

This latest **Housing Asset Management Strategy** builds on a wide range of work, programmes and initiatives that we have carried out over recent years. Together, these activities have had a considerable impact on the quality of the homes we provide.

Our achievements include:

- Developing and using the Keystone Asset management database to become more efficient in delivering a range of internal improvements, including the installation of new kitchens and bathrooms across a large proportion of tenants' homes.
- Substantially improving the energy efficiency of a significant number of properties, including the replacement of all boilers over 15 years old with new 'A rated' boilers, installation of cavity wall and loft insulation and the installation of air source heat pumps and renewable energy sources such as solar PV Panels.
- Enhanced programme of fire safety improvement works, including the fire risk assessment of every property and communal area in our flat block accommodation, fire compartmentation works and replacement flat entrance doors.
- The implementation of a suite of new maintenance and compliance policies to raise standards to ensure that our tenants' obtain the very best service from the Council.

New Policies introduced in 2019/2020

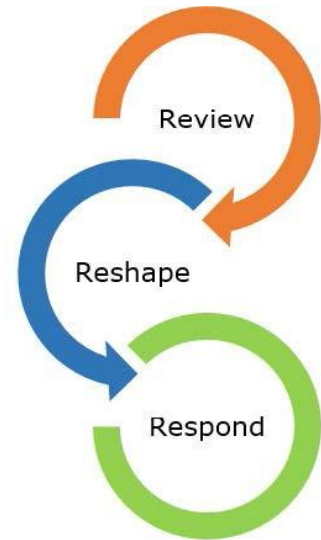


The Asset Management Challenge

As a social housing landlord, we face a range of challenges as we seek to invest wisely in our ageing properties.

We have particularly identified a need for us to:

- Collect, maintain and actively use good quality information and data to help actively shape and inform our decision making.
- Make the most efficient, effective and economic use of resources by having flexible and dynamic repair, maintenance and capital investment programmes in place to ensure we use money wisely and to best effect.
- Reshape and reconfigure the housing accommodation offer to make sure it responds to the changing pattern of housing needs and demands across all age groups.
- Examine the long-term economic value and sustainability of some properties before further significant investment is made.
- Explore the potential options for properties that, due to their age, condition or design are no longer suitable or fit for purpose.
- Secure the right balance between investing in the existing housing properties whilst also ensuring funding for the delivery of new council homes.
- Maximise the value of our expenditure on voids, striking the right balance between providing a good quality property and using limited resources to best effect.



Our asset management aims

To make sure we focus our activities we have devised four **aims** that clearly set out our main goals for what we want to achieve over the four-year life of the strategy, and beyond.

Our four aims are built on our desire to continue to improve the **quality** of the homes we provide, to deliver **value** and **impact** in all the work we do, to **improve life chances** for those living in our homes and to use the potential of the housing assets to help the council

Deliver the Housing Strategy

These aims will play a critical role in shaping and informing all our asset management strategy activities.

Aim 1

Raise the standard of the homes we provide to ensure they are fit for purpose for modern living.

Aim 2

Optimise the value and impact of our maintenance and repair spend and capital investment.

Aim 3

Improve the living conditions, health and well-being of tenants' through environmental and estate-based works to properties, schemes and neighbourhoods.

Aim 4

Maximise the use of housing assets to help deliver the Council's housing strategy.

To support us in achieving our asset management aims, we have developed four delivery **Strategic Priorities**.

The purpose of the strategic priorities is to ensure we have a stated, more measurable set of tasks and targets. This will allow us to monitor and assess how well we are doing in meeting our goals for securing the range of improvements we're striving to secure.

Strategic priority 1

Achieving high standards in the maintenance and repair of our Council stock

Why is this a priority?

The quality of the home we live in impacts upon our health, well-being, education and employment - impacts that can have lasting consequences for individuals and society.

In addition to our statutory obligations to meet the Government's Decent Homes standard, New Forest District Council wishes to work with tenants to create a new "Decent Homes PLUS standard". The Decent Homes PLUS standard will ensure that properties not only continue to meet statutory and/or regulatory minimum standards but offer a quality of accommodation which meets current and future residents' needs and aspirations. It also provides for a minimum standard/quality of environment.

We will:

- Improve the quality of homes by meeting and exceeding the decent homes standard.
- Our investment programmes will be designed to deliver cyclical, planned and improvement works at the timescales needed to ensure homes continue to meet the Decent Homes standard and the new Decent Homes PLUS standard.
- We will have a budget for environmental improvements to external areas of properties, with works being identified in conjunction with tenants'. Improvements will include works to upgrade the condition and appearance of common staircases and landings, fencing and boundaries, renewal of concrete/paved surfaces and off-street parking improvements etc.
- We will periodically review and revise the Decent Homes PLUS standard, so it responds to the changing market in which we are operating. By updating and enhancing the PLUS standard we can make sure it remains up to date and continues to drive up the quality of all our homes to take account of things such as new technologies, improved materials and changing lifestyles.



We will ensure health and safety compliance, as well as meeting the Decent Homes standard and our own Decent Homes PLUS standard.

We will ensure we have a budget and an active programme for external and environmental works, with an emphasis on 'face-lifting' our properties.

Strategic priority 2

Achieving high levels of energy efficiency in Council homes

Why is this a priority?

Achieving high levels of energy efficiency in existing homes continues to be very important to tenants to help protect them against rising fuel prices and the risk of fuel poverty. Making the homes we provide more sustainable also means they use less energy, and this contributes to reducing carbon dioxide emissions and global warming.

We will:

Existing homes

Our ambition is for all our tenants to have the opportunity to live in a well-insulated, energy efficient home that is affordable to heat

To achieve this, we will:

- Incorporate upgrades and energy efficiency improvements where we can when carrying out repairs and delivering investment.
- Make use of new technologies to help tenants' use less water, less electricity and less gas.
- Set and monitor targets for increasing the average and minimum levels of energy efficiency of our homes.
- Help residents to reduce their fuel and utility costs, signposting them to organisations who provide free support and advice.

Delivering these objectives and targets will be challenging with very few external funding opportunities available. Our progress in meeting the new targets will be monitored and recorded on our asset systems.

Building new, environmentally sustainable homes

In delivering, or facilitating the development of, new properties we will work with our Housing partners to seek to exceed the minimum standards required. In this way, the new properties will cost as little for tenants to heat as possible and will be highly sustainable in the widest sense.



Strategic priority 3

Delivering value for money across capital investment, responsive repairs and re-letting of empty properties

Why is this a priority?

Value for money is defined as “the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes”. We therefore have an obligation to ourselves, our tenants’ and other stakeholders to ensure that the investments and services we provide meet this requirement.

We will:

Capital investment

We will develop a 30-year business plan identifying the funding required to achieve our Decent Homes PLUS Standard across our stock and then maintaining at least that standard over the full 30-year investment period.

The fundamental approach to achieving an improved housing asset is to deliver the investment in overlapping phases. We will therefore:

- Address any planned maintenance backlog of works;
- Undertake health and safety, and fire related priority works;
- Maintain empty properties at less than 1% of the stock. All to be delivered through Council contracts;
- Undertake a long-term programme of planned maintenance alongside capital investment on major elements as identified by the on-going stock condition survey work;
- Provide an effective responsive repairs service.

Responsive repairs

- We will introduce a new system that will offer self-service for reporting repairs and confirmation of appointments with our tenants’ by SMS text messaging and send them a reminder before the appointment date.

The Housing Maintenance team have a strategic focus upon risk management and regulatory compliance.

- We will implement mobile technology solutions, enabling Housing Maintenance staff to pro-actively report repairs when out on site, which will speed up the reporting and repair process.

Disability and Equalities Act 2010

- We will work with the occupational therapist in assessing the needs of individuals who require adaptations to support them in being able to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

Re-letting of empty properties

We will work alongside the Allocations team to ensure that properties are left in a good state of repair when vacated and where repairs are required, we will carry these out as soon as possible to enable empty properties to be re-let and minimise lost rental income. Where major works are required, we will agree a time frame with the lettings team.

Strategic priority 4

Deliver a modern customer model, empowering tenants' to self-serve

Why is this a priority?

The Council deals within the region of 47,000 Housing related customer contacts per year across the current range of contact platforms including telephony, email and web chat, with the highest demand on maintenance and repair activities at around 19,000.

The end-to-end journey and experience for tenants needs to be at the forefront of service delivery design for the future. A modern customer model that seeks to maximise digital opportunities and empower Council tenants to have greater control and influence on the maintenance and repairs undertaken is a key priority.

A Corporate Website Project Board was set up in early January 2019 to review digital delivery across Council services and a dedicated Housing Customer Hub created in early February 2020.

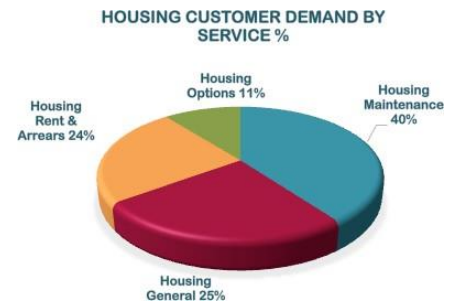
The priority for Housing is to develop a modern customer model, where tenants will be able to view information about their repairs in one location reducing telephone contact, and fewer information office visits.

Overall, we will empower tenants to have greater control and influence on the maintenance and repair activities undertaken to their property.

This will reduce customer contacts, reduce miss-diagnosed repairs, end to end repair processing and give the ability to self-serve routine repair requests and self-booking.

We will:

- Provide 24/7/365 customer access;
- Improve flexibility and control allowing tenants to self-book or amend an existing repair appointment;
- Provide interactive customer feedback;
- Improve customer experience;
- Design Housing web pages that are simple, easy to navigate and intuitive;
- Integrate Uniclass 'Repairs' portal giving our tenants the ability to log and track repairs digitally;
- Design self-help and policy guides and offer support surgeries to assist our tenants in the use of this new contact model.



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