

**REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE 17 DECEMBER 2020
HOUSING AND BUILDINGS STANDARDS SERVICE PLAN 2020 – 2022**

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 To present to the Communities Committee for consideration and approval the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 – 2022 which details the actions the service will undertaken in support of the Strategic Priorities set out in the Council Plan 2020 – 2022.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 Consider and approve the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 – 2022 and associated priorities attached as **Appendix 3** to this report.
- 2.2 Advise the Director to continue to report, by exception, to Committee quarterly on performance measures against service objectives and six monthly on progress in delivering all aspects of the service plan.

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 On the 23rd July 2020 Full Council received a report (item 4) setting out the finding of a review of the existing Council Priorities. These priorities had been approved by Council on 23rd September 2017 and formed the basis of the Council Plan 2017 – 2022.
- 3.2 Because of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Council services the report recommended that the existing Council Plan and associated priorities be formally closed down and a new Council Plan be developed around the following three pillars and six strategic priorities:-

Our People

- Education
- Health & Wellbeing

Our Environment

- Infrastructure
- Resilient Communities

Our Economy

- Economy & Enterprise
- Estate Modernisation

- 3.3 These priorities had been developed to better reflect the current challenges being faced by the Council and inform the development of the new Medium-Term Financial Strategy in order to address what is predicted to be a significant financial shortfall as a direct result of the pandemic.
- 3.4 Between July and October cross-party and cross-committee workshops were held to shape and inform the detailed proposals. A revised Council Plan for the period 2020 – 2022 was then presented to Full Council for adoption on the 7th October 2020. The Council Plan sets out the outcomes (Council Priorities) expected for the six strategic priorities. In all 27 Council Priorities have been identified.

4 Discussion

- 4.1 The Aberdeenshire Council Plan provides the strategic policy framework for the delivery of services by the Council. The Council Plan is the Council's corporate plan and covers two years from 2020-2022. When the revised strategic priorities were approved by Council in July it was agreed that Directorate Plans would be developed by each service to provide more detail on how the Council Priorities were to be delivered. Area Delivery Plans would also be developed to ensure alignment between community planning and Council Priorities as well as providing additional local level scrutiny, accountability and transparency in terms of Area reporting.
- 4.2 Directorate Plans are an essential element of the Council's performance management and improvement framework. They set out the key issues for delivering services in support of the Council vision and priorities, provide a focus on performance improvement and describe directorate specific risks that may impact on the delivery of the service. Directorate Plans provide the link between personal and team plans through to the Council Priorities so providing the golden thread from bottom to top across the organisation.
- 4.3 Infrastructure Services will contribute to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities through taking the lead role in the delivery of 15 of the agreed Council Priorities. The Directorate Plan for Infrastructure Services sets out the actions, outcomes and output measures that support delivery of the Council Priorities.
- 4.4 A corporate template has been developed for the production of Directorate Plans to ensure consistency of presentation and reporting across all committees. The final version of the Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan is expected to be presented to the Infrastructure Services Committee on the 21st January 2021 for approval.
- 4.5 Following a request from members of the Communities Committee it was agreed to produce a Service Plan for Housing and Building Standards. The draft Service Plan is attached to this report as **Appendix 3**.
- 4.6 The Housing and Building Standards Service Plan presents an extract from the Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan. The actions set out in the Service Plan

are included in the Directorate Plan but represent those actions that fall under the remit of the Communities Committee.

- 4.7 Although not falling under the remit of the Communities Committee, actions for Building Standards are included in the Service Plan in order to demonstrate an integrated approach to service delivery.
- 4.8 The Housing and Building Standards service contributes to the delivery of the following Council Priorities:-
- *Consumers are assured that businesses are conforming to regulations. Businesses are supported to ensure compliance with legislation, economic diversification and energy transition.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing, Resilient Communities and Economy and Enterprise. This is about developing a modern and streamlined approach by those services required by legislation to monitor, enforce and provide permissions to business, individuals and communities.
 - *Appropriate support is provided for those who are facing homelessness.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. It involves the actions taken to sustain people in their existing tenancies as well as actions to support people who present as homeless.
 - *Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. This involves the provision of affordable housing in partnership with other local social landlords through new build and acquisitions and actions taken to improve the quality and energy efficiency of the existing housing stock.
 - *Tenancies are sustained/community capacity building communities feel empowered and enabled.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing Resilient Communities. This involves a range of actions to be taken to support existing tenancies and reduce the threat of evictions, taking action to tackle anti-social behaviour and empowering tenants and service users to have a real say in the delivery of services.
- 4.9 In addition to the actions being taken by Housing and Building Standards to deliver these Council Priorities the Service Plan also sets out the actions the service is taking in support of its duties set out under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Building Standards (Scotland) Act 2003 and other related legislation.
- 4.10 Many of the actions detailed in the Service Plan are high level in nature. They are supported by action plans, team plans and individual work plans. Little detail has been included concerning collaboration and joint working with internal and external partners as this is regarded as an on-going activity, part of the day to day management of the business. Examples are projects to support people with chaotic lifestyles and addictions into secure accommodation, reviewing the overlaps between sheltered and very sheltered housing and providing aids and

adaptations to people’s homes to ensure they can continue to live independent lives.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 The Council Plan has been developed around the three pillars and six strategic priorities.

5.2 Underpinning the Priorities are a number of key principles. They are: right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plans; human rights and public protection; tackling poverty and inequalities; digital infrastructure and economy.

5.3 This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Health and Wellbeing” within the Pillar “Our People” and supports the principles around the Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plans and tackling poverty and inequalities;

This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Resilient Communities” within the Pillar “Our Environment” and supports the principal of climate and sustainability;

This report helps deliver the Strategic Priority “Economy and Enterprise” within the Pillar “Our Economy”, supporting the principle of human rights and public protection;

5.4 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendations are agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial			X
Staffing			X
Equalities	EIA attached as Appendix 2		
Fairer Scotland Duty	EIA attached as Appendix 2		
Town Centre First			X
Sustainability			X
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing			X

5.5 An equality impact assessment was carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as **Appendix 1** and overall the impact of actions set out in the Service Plan were felt to be positive. The Service Plan sets out the actions the Housing and Building Standards Service will take in support of the Council’s priorities to tackle poverty and inequality. It is felt that good quality, affordable housing that meets Government standards in terms of energy efficiency will make a considerable contribution to reducing

household and child poverty through reducing housing costs, reducing fuel poverty through reduced energy bills and help improve health and educational attainment through providing a safe and secure place to live.

Actions in the Service Plan will ensure that minority ethnic communities, New Scots, refugees and asylum seekers and Gypsy/Travellers have access to accommodation that meets their needs, culture and lifestyle. Additionally, actions the service will take will ensure that general relations between Gypsy/Travellers and settled communities are improved.

Actions in the Service Plan will also support the elderly and disabled live independent lives in their own homes through the provision of aids and adaptations and other support.

5.6 A Town Centre Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the production of the Local Housing Strategy in December 2017. This assessment has been updated for the Service Plan and it identifies that the development of affordable housing has positive impacts on town centres. This can be viewed in **Appendix 2**.

5.7 The following risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a corporate level:

- ACORP001 – budget pressures – these may impact on delivery of actions set out in the Service Plan;
- ACORP002 – changes in government policy, legislation and regulation (including Education reforms and potential impact on integration of children' services; Brexit) – new duties imposed on Housing and Building standards may require reprioritisation or reprogramming of agreed actions;
- ACORP004 – business and organisation change (including ensuring governance structures support change; managing the pace of change) – change in the leadership of Infrastructure Services may impact on management responsibilities and priorities within the service;
- ACORP006 – reputation management including social media – failure to deliver on key actions could impact on communities;
- ACORP007 – social risk (e.g. population changes, poverty and social inequality, demographic changes, crime and anti-social behaviour) – the impact of the pandemic represents a social risk due to impacts on poverty and inequalities and could lead to rising levels of anti-social behaviour which in turn may require a refocusing of priorities.

Click here for a link to the [Corporate Risk Register](#).

5.8 The following risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a strategic level:

- New statutory requirements on councils regarding issues like emissions, waste management, sustainability, housing provision and the definition of fuel poverty.

- Delivery of Affordable Housing:-
 - Lack of affordable house development sites means dependence on S75 agreements with developers.
 - Oil and gas downturn impacts on rate of house building causing Government affordable housing targets to be missed.
 - Fall in average cost of rental properties has made mid-market developments less desirable and more properties are becoming hard to let.
 - Demand for affordable housing exceeds supply causing rise in homelessness.

- Failure to meet Homelessness Duty

- Failure to complete Emergency Repairs

Mitigation of risks is addressed through a range of plans and also the Directorate Business Continuity Plan, which identifies our Critical Activities and puts in place plans to ensure our ability to continue to operate and deliver these vital services. Additionally, the Head of Housing and Building Standards assumes responsibility for each of the identified risks and ensures that appropriate plans for mitigation are put in place and reviewed regularly.

Click here for a link to the [Directorate Risk Registers](#).

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make and are satisfied that the report complies with the [Scheme of Governance](#) and relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider [and take a decision on] this item in terms of Section D 1.1 of the [List of Committee Powers in Part 2A](#) of the Scheme of Governance under which the following function of the Council is delegated to the Communities Committee:-

“Subject to the General Provisions, the Committee shall have full powers to decide on all policy issues and resource matters (within agreed budgets) relating to those functions which have not been reserved to the Full Council, are not within the remit of the Aberdeenshire Integration Joint Board or specifically delegated to any other Committee of the Council: Housing”

Rob Simpson - Head of Housing and Building Standards

Report prepared by Gillian Buchan Support Services Manager/Alan Morris Service Development Coordinator

Date 03/12/2020

List of Appendices –

Appendix 1 Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 Town Centre Impact Assessment

Appendix 3 Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 – 2022

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

EIA Version	Date	Author	Changes
1	17/11/2020	Alan Morris	New

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions including those that affect services the council delivers).	
Service	Infrastructure Services
Section	Housing and Building Standards
Title of the activity etc.	Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 - 2022
Aims and desired outcomes of the activity	The Service Plan provides the framework by which actions undertaken by the Housing and Building Standards Service are aligned to the Council’s Strategic Priorities.
Author(s) & Title(s)	Alan Morris Service Development Coordinator

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment and explain what it means in relation to the activity you are assessing.		
Evidence	What does it say?	What does it mean?
Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	(i) Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment	Identifies areas to be addressed by the service in order to reduce inequalities of outcome resulting from socio-economic disadvantage.
Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.	Consultation with councillors, IS DMT, Head of Housing and Building Standards, Housing Managers and Area Managers	Identified areas for focus of service delivery.

<p>External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).</p>	<p>Housing carries out an in-depth tenant satisfaction survey every three years. Although a survey has not been carried out for the past two years one will be carried out in early 2021. The outcomes will help determine priorities for service development and improvement.</p> <p>Apart from these surveys the service monitors satisfaction with the repairs service on a regular basis, feedback from these surveys help to shape service delivery.</p> <p>Housing also consults tenants when any major changes to policies or procedures are planned. Tenants were recently consulted on proposals to amend the allocations policy. Tenants were consulted as part of the rent setting process. The Local Housing Strategy was shaped by engagement with tenants, the general public, public, private and voluntary organisations and groups.</p> <p>The Next Step programme for tenant participation has increased the pool of tenants involved in consultation. The revised tenant participation strategy provides new and innovative opportunities to consult tenants and involve them in housing management issues.</p> <p>There is a Sheltered Housing Tenants Forum which is regularly consulted on sheltered housing issues and which recently provided input to the on-going Sheltered Housing review.</p> <p>Building Standards regularly measures customer satisfaction levels with the service it provides as part of the verification framework.</p> <p>On a corporate basis the Council has recently carried out an engagement exercise on the Council budget during which residents highlighted their priorities for spending.</p>	<p>Evidence shows that in general tenants are satisfied with services provided by Housing and Building Standards.</p> <p>The approach to tenant participation will continue to be developed to give more tenants the opportunity to comment on service standards and input into revised service priorities, strategies, policies and processes.</p>
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	The Council also speaks to 150 residents monthly and ask them to indicate levels of satisfaction with a range of services. The output from all these consultations feed into reviews of service delivery and priorities.	
External data (census, available statistics).	As part of the Strategic Assessment a range of external data sets were used including SIMD, Census, and for example statistics available from Scottish Government, Chamber of Commerce, ScotPHO, ISD. A comprehensive list of source data is referenced in the Strategic Assessment.	One example is the Housing Need and Demand Assessment which also informs the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan, the Local development Plan, the Local Housing strategy and the Housing strategic Investment Plan.
Other (general information as appropriate).	<p>This EIA has been informed by a range of other EIAs carried out by Housing and Building Standards during 2020 including:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Revenue Account Budget 2020/2021 (13/02/2020) • Housing Revenue Account Capital Budget 2020/2021 (18/03/2020) • Greenbanks Site (29/09/2020) • Community Safety Governance and Strategic Arrangements in Aberdeenshire (03/11/2020) • Housing Allocation Policy Review (05/11/2020) • Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021 – 2026 (05/11/2020) 	

Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.	
Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?	N/A

Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.		
What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.	Measures:	Timescale:

Stage 5: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups/areas?

These should be included in the action plan.

The Service Plan sets out the priorities for Housing and Building Services in support of the Council's Strategic Priorities. It is understood that priorities may change over time as the result of changing economic circumstances, the impact of the pandemic or revised Council or Government priorities but tenants will be consulted on proposed changes to service delivery and will be kept in touch with developments through various mechanisms including a tenants newsletter and posting information on the Council's website. Improving communications with tenants and service users is seen as key to promoting good relations between groups and areas.

Stage 6: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?

The Service Plan sets out the actions the Housing and Building Standards Service will take in support of the Council's priorities to tackle poverty and inequality. It is felt that good quality, affordable housing that meets Government standards in terms of energy efficiency will make a considerable contribution to reducing household and child poverty through reducing housing costs, reducing fuel poverty through reduced energy bills and help improve health and educational attainment through providing a safe and secure place to live.

Actions in the Service Plan will ensure that minority ethnic communities, New Scots, refugees and asylum seekers and Gypsy/Travellers have access to accommodation that meets their needs, culture and lifestyle. Additionally, actions the service will take will ensure that general relations between Gypsy/Travellers and settled communities are improved.

Actions in the Service Plan will also support the elderly and disabled live independent lives in their own homes through the provision of aids and adaptations and other support.

Stage 7a:

Are there potential impacts on protected groups?

The protected groups covered by the equality duty are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Who is affected by the activity or who is intended to benefit from the proposed activity and how? Complete the table below for each protected group by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger	Yes			
Age - Older	Yes			
Disability	Yes			
Race – (includes Gypsy Travelers)	Yes		Yes	
Religion or Belief			Yes	
Sex			Yes	

Pregnancy and maternity			Yes	
Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)			Yes	
Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)			Yes	
Marriage and Civil Partnership			Yes	

Stage 7b: Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy, activity etc. will or may impact on socio-economic inequalities?

This is about trying to be fair to everyone. Part of that is realising that not everyone may be starting at the same place. Some individuals and families may have low income, may have very little or no savings which means they are living from month to month therefore changes to council policies/services may have a greater adverse impact on them.

On this basis you should consider potential impacts on individuals/families by:

- Place: on specific vulnerable areas or communities (SIMD, regeneration, rural) e.g. housing, transport.
- Pockets: household resources, (Income, benefits, outgoings) ability to access a service
- Prospects: peoples life chances e.g.access to, or ability to access: employment, training, services (such as council or health) or support.

Groups of people who may be impacted include, but not limited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unemployed • Single parents and vulnerable families • People on benefits • Those involved in the criminal justice system • People in the most deprived communities • People who live in rural areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pensioners • Looked after children • Carers including young carers • Veterans • Students • Single adult households • People who have experienced the asylum system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those leaving the care setting including children and young people and those with illness • Homeless people • People with low literacy/numeracy • People with lower educational qualifications • People in low paid work • People with one or more protected characteristic
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Please complete by inserting “yes” in the applicable box/boxes below.

Socio-economic disadvantage	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Pockets: Low income/income poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing	Yes			

Pockets: Low and/or no wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future	Yes			
Pockets: Material deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies	Yes			
Place: Area deprivation – where you live, where you work	Yes			
Prospects: Socioeconomic background – social class i.e. parents education, employment and income , educational achievement.	Yes			

Stage 8: What are the positive and negative impacts?		
Impacts.	Positive	Negative
Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	Low income:- Housing will provide opportunities for first time buyers, who are typically younger households, to purchase properties at a discounted fixed price, through Low Cost Shared Equity and provides opportunities to access Mid-Market rental properties.	
	Actions to improve energy efficiency will reduce housing fuel costs helping take people out of fuel poverty.	
	Low or no wealth - there will be a positive impact by providing affordable housing for those in need.	

	<p>Material Deprivation - Housing aims to assist older people to live in their homes which are free from repairing issues and will promote independence. Care and Repair will have a positive impact is assisting older people, with disabilities.</p>	
	<p>Area Deprivation – the Strategic Housing Investment Plan and associated new build housing programme aims to target investment in new housing in areas of most need. It can be an important tool in supporting the regeneration of our towns and communities.</p>	
	<p>Socio-economic background – actions relating to Homeless people or those threatened by homelessness aim to transform their lives by providing suitable accommodation which meets their needs and by providing support as necessary to help them sustain their tenancies. A stable home life will help improve health, educational opportunities and social aspirations.</p>	

<p>Stage 9: Have any of the affected groups/areas been involved, engaged with or consulted?</p>	
<p>If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?</p>	<p>Actions set out in the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan were developed after taking into account the outcomes of consultations through – Strategic Outcome Groups, Citizens Panel, Minority Ethnic Working Group, Gypsy/Traveler Officer Group, Gypsy/Traveler Interagency Group Integrate, Grampian, Minority Ethnic Outreach Project Group, consultation with tenants as part of the rent setting process and the community engagement exercise on the Council's budget.</p> <p>The spirit of the plan is centered around improving outcomes for Tenants and service users and working in partnership with others including those who are affected by any of the changes proposed to service delivery.</p>

Stage 10: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?		
	Mitigating Steps	Timescale
These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.	The Housing Service will continue to maximise funding streams to optimise the delivery of affordable housing. This will include bids to Scottish Government, using alternative funding models and considering all affordable housing tenues to address housing methods.	On-going
	The Housing Service will continue to identify suitable land for development of affordable housing, through discussion with stakeholders; internal and external, i.e. Property Services, Estates, Planning, Private Developers, RSLs and other public bodies.	On-going
	To meet the needs of those who are homeless or threatened by homelessness Housing will continue to implement actions set out in the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan & Action Plan 2019 – 2024	On-going
	Housing will continue to bid for funding for energy efficiency improvements in private sector housing to help address issues of fuel poverty.	On-going


Stage 11: What monitoring arrangements will be put in place? How the EIA will be used to monitor the proposal	
These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).	<p>Regular performance reporting will evidence delivery of the actions identified in the Service plan.</p> <p>Tenants and service users will be asked to give their views on the impact of the Service plan and the overall quality of service delivery through surveys, ongoing engagement and dialogue.</p> <p>Regular equalities reporting will highlight the impact of priorities and outcomes upon people who have protected characteristics.</p>

Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?		
Please complete the appropriate box/boxes	1	No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.
	No negative impacts of the Service Plan have been identified for tenants or service users. The overall aim of the plan is to improve service delivery and provide a supply of affordable, high quality social housing which helps meet housing needs.	
	2	Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.
	N/A	
	3	The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen
N/A		

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.

N/A

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.

Sign off and authorisation.	1) Service and Team	Housing and Buildings Standards	
	2) Title of Policy/Activity	Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 - 2022	
	3) Authors: I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/activity.	Name: Alan Morris Position: Service Development Coordinator Date: 17/11/2020 Signature: 	Name: Position: Date: Signature:
	4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Gillian Buchanan Date: 17/11/2020	
	5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Rob Simpson Position: Head of Housing Date: 18/11/2020	Name: Position: Date:
	6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee.		Date: 19/11/2020
	7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk		Date: 17/12/2020

Action Plan					
Action	Start	Complete	Lead Officer	Expected Outcome	Resource Implications
Monitor progress with actions and performance in Service Plan and report progress to Communities Committee six monthly	January 2021	On-going	Service Development Coordinator	Actions are reviewed and amended as required. Performance issues are addressed.	Within existing resources
Monitor progress with actions in Local Housing Strategy and report on progress to Communities Committee annually	Started in 2018	On-going to end of Strategy	Housing Manager Strategy and Building Standards	Progress is monitored and actions adjusted as required. Monitoring will feed into a review and refresh of the Strategy.	Within existing resources

APPENDIX 2

TOWN CENTRE FIRST IMPACT ASSESSMENT (TCFIA)

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that town centres have an important role to play in the sustainable development of local economies.

The Town Centre First Impact Assessment (TCFIA) allows officers in all services to identify the detrimental and beneficial effects that decisions we take may have on our town centres. It will allow officers to consider any implications that council decisions may have on Aberdeenshire’s key town centres. Examples of this include changes to: the provision of civic and community facilities, employment land, retail, residential buildings, cultural assets, transportation, leisure and tourism.

A Town Centre Ambassador has been nominated within your service; you can locate your Town Centre First Ambassador through the Town Centre First Principle Arcadia pages.

Project Information	
Title of Committee Paper	Housing and Building Standards Service Plan 2020 - 2022
Service	Infrastructure Services
Department	Housing and Building Standards
Author	Alan Morris – based on the assessment produced by Ally Macleod for the Local Housing Strategy
Have you consulted your Town Centre First Ambassador?	Yes – as part of the development of the Local Housing Strategy

1) If approved would your project cause an impact (either positive or negative) with regards to any of these town centres? – Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Westhill, Stonehaven, Ellon, Portlethen, Banchory, Turriff, Huntly, Banff, Macduff.	
Yes – New affordable housing development proposed in a number of settlements across Aberdeenshire. Peterhead, Fraserburgh, Inverurie, Westhill, Stonehaven, Ellon, Portlethen and Banchory are high investment priorities in the Strategic Housing Investment Plan	No -

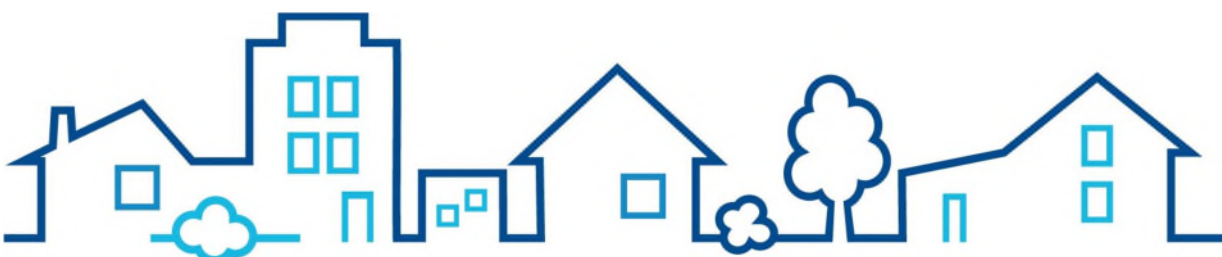


<p>which supports the Local Housing Strategy. Banchory, Huntly, Turriff, Banff and Macduff are medium investment priorities.</p> <p>All towns have housing need, and the plan attempts to address this need across Aberdeenshire.</p> <p>The Strategy also proposes bringing back empty homes into use and this will have an impact on town centres.</p> <p>Through the private sector and independent living, there are actions to help people live independently and for landlords to improve the condition of their properties.</p>	
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<p>2) If approved would your project cause an impact (either positive or negative) with regards to the footfall of any of these town centres?</p>	
<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes – the proposals will develop the towns through providing more affordable housing for people in housing need. The homes will also help reduce housing costs addressing issues such as child poverty and fuel poverty.</p>	<p>No</p>

<p>3)</p>	
<p>Please describe the aims of the committee paper?</p>	<p>To note and approve the Housing and Building Standards Service Plan which sets out the actions the service is taking in support of the Council's strategic Priorities</p>

<p>4) What are the positive and negative impacts?</p>		
<p>Impact</p>	<p>Describe the positive impact?</p>	<p>Describe the negative impact?</p>



<p>Please detail any potential positive and negative impact the project may have on Aberdeenshire's Key Town Centres.</p>	<p>Good quality, affordable housing that meets Government standards in terms of energy efficiency will make a considerable contribution to reducing household and child poverty through reducing housing costs, reducing fuel poverty through reduced energy bills and help improve health and educational attainment through providing a safe and secure place to live. Actions in the Service Plan will also support the elderly and disabled live independent lives in their own homes through the provision of aids and adaptations and other support.</p> <p>Increased footfall arising from affordable housing development.</p> <p>Support to local economy by allowing people to live and work in the identified towns and their town centres.</p> <p>Supports sustainable mixed communities in our town centres.</p>	




	<p>Creation of local employment opportunities.</p> <p>Improvements to the appearance, design and environmental quality arising from affordable housing development.</p> <p>Investment driven into town centres.</p> <p>Improvements to the private sector stock.</p> <p>Ensuring high management standards in the private rented sector.</p>	
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5) What mitigating steps will be taken to reduce or remove negative impacts? If none see Q6	
Mitigating Steps	Timescale

6) Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.



Question 7: Sign off and Authorisation	
7.1) Author: I have completed the TCIA impact assessment for this policy/activity.	<p>Name: Alan Morris Position: Service Development Coordinator Date: 18/11/2020</p> <p>Signature: </p>
7.2) Consultation with Service Manager	<p>Name: Ally Macleod Position: Housing and Building Standards Manager Date: 18/11/2020</p>
7.3) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	<p>Name: Rob Simpson Position: Head of Housing and Building Standards Date: 18/11/2020</p>
7.4) Have you consulted with your Town Centre First Ambassador?	<p>Yes – during the development of the assessment for the Local Housing Strategy</p>
8) TCFIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: tcfia@aberdeenshire.gov.uk	Date Sent:



INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES

HOUSING AND BUILDING STANDARDS SERVICE PLAN 2020 – 2022

4 December 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

The Aberdeenshire Council Plan provides the strategic policy framework for the delivery of services by the Council. The Council Plan is the Council's corporate plan and covers two years from 2020-2022.

The Council Plan is implemented through six strategic priorities, namely education, health and wellbeing, infrastructure, resilient communities, economy and enterprise and estate modernisation and the day to day work carried out by services across the Council.

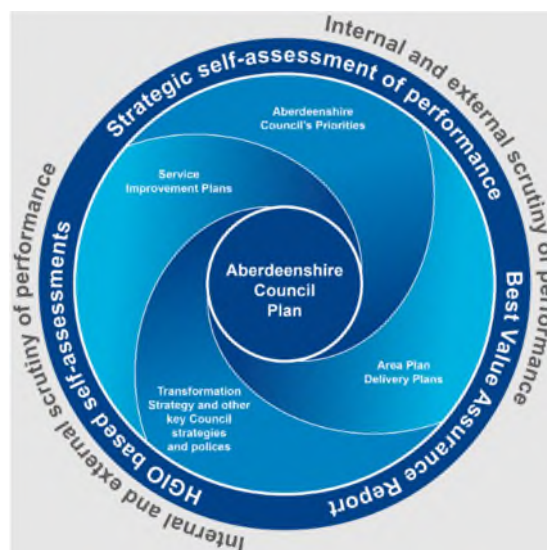
Directorate plans are an essential element of the Council's performance management and improvement framework. They set out the key issues for delivering services in support of the Council vision and priorities, provide a focus on performance improvement and describe directorate specific risks that may impact on the delivery of the service.

The Directorate plans need to be strongly rooted in the community impact assessment, with a firm focus on working with our partners and communities to deliver those priorities identified by our residents as important to them during this recovery and renewal period.

Directorate plans are informed by the Strategic Assessment 2019/20, the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2020 (MTFS) and the Community Impact Assessment. The MTFS is designed to ensure that council services remain financially sustainable in the current economic climate. Directorate plans should align clearly with the Council Plan and Community Planning Partnership priorities. They should also clearly demonstrate how they will support delivery of corporate improvement action plans including the Child Poverty Action Plan, How Good is Our Governance and the Best Value Assurance Report 2020.

The Housing and Building Standards Service Plan forms a sub-set of the Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan. It sets out those actions the service is responsible for delivering in relation to Council Priorities and those actions to be undertaken by the service to meet the needs of its tenants and service users or as a result of changing national priorities.

The diagram below provides a graphic representation of the Council's performance management framework and shows the strategic context within which directorate plans sit. It also shows the wider performance management and improvement framework which the Council has adopted to ensure rigorous scrutiny of performance and drive directorate across the Council.



2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

2.1 Council Plan

The Council Plan sets out the strategic priorities that will help fulfil our vision that Aberdeenshire is the best area for those who wish to live, learn, work and play here whilst ensuring the area is served by the best council. In support of these strategic priorities, the Council will focus on the delivery of a specific set of 27 Council Priorities. Housing and Building Standards will contribute to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities through taking the lead role in the delivery of the following Council Priorities:-

- *Consumers are assured that businesses are conforming to regulations. Businesses are supported to ensure compliance with legislation, economic diversification and energy transition.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing; Resilient Communities and Economy and Enterprise. This is about developing a modern and streamlined approach by those services required by legislation, to monitor, enforce and provide permissions to business, individuals and communities. The Head of Housing and Building Standards will be accountable for the approach to be taken by Housing and Building Standards.
- *Appropriate support is provided for those who are facing homelessness.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. It involves the actions taken to sustain people in their existing tenancies as well as actions to support people who present as homeless. The Head of Housing and Building Standards will be accountable for the delivery of these actions.
- *Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. This involves both the provision of affordable housing in partnership with other local social landlords through new build and acquisitions as well as actions taken to improve the quality and energy efficiency of the existing housing stock. The Head of Housing and Building Standards will be accountable for the delivery of these actions.
- *Tenancies are sustained/community capacity building Communities feel empowered and enabled.* This Council Priority contributes to the delivery of the Strategic Priorities of Health and Wellbeing Resilient Communities. This involves a range of actions to be taken to support existing tenancies and reduce the threat of evictions, taking action to tackle anti-social behaviour and empowering tenants and service users to have a real say in delivery of services. The Head of Housing and Building Standards will be accountable for the delivery of these actions.

2.2 Area Delivery Plans

Area Delivery Plans are to be developed to show the Council's intentions for developments and projects within each Area for the period of the Council Plan. The actions identified in the Area Delivery Plans will include those actions identified in the Service Plan that have a specific Area dimension and actions that reflect contact and dialogue with local communities, community groups, organisations and individuals as well as with Community Planning Partners.

The main action for Housing and Building Standards that links to the Council Priorities is as follows:-

- *Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required.* The Strategic Housing Investment Plan which was approved by the Communities Committee in November 2020 sets out the investment priorities for affordable housing for the five-year period 2021 – 2026. During this period 2027 homes could potentially be delivered subject to grant availability, financial capacity and financial viability. Proposed developments in each Area each year can be included in the Area Plans.

The Housing and Building Standards Service has been structured to manage service delivery on a functional, not Area, basis with the aim of ensuring consistent and equitable service delivery across all areas. Consequently, there are no further Area specific actions identified in this plan. Any future actions that do have an Area perspective will be developed in consultation with the relevant Area Management Team and included in the Area plans.

The Area Committees will continue to be consulted on changes to service policies and will be kept up to date on progress with the delivery of strategic priorities.

2.3 Local and National Policy issues

The pandemic has had a significant impact on the range of services that are delivered by Housing and Building Standards and how they are delivered. Responding to the pandemic and managing recovery from its impact will remain one of the key priorities for the service for years to come. In addition to the impact of Covid-19 there is a range of local and national policy issues which impact on the services to be delivered by Housing and Building Standards. The following summarises the main local and national policy issues affecting the service and the actions being taken as a result.

- ***Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.*** A range of responsibilities for the Housing Service is set out under the Act. For example, the Act places a duty on local authorities to prepare a local housing strategy. The strategy should set out the policy of the local authority to carry out its housing functions. Aberdeenshire Council agreed the Local Housing Strategy 2018-2023 in December 2017 and receives an annual update to monitor. The strategy aligns with Scottish Government guidance on the development of local housing strategies and identifies six priorities of: affordable housing; energy efficiency, fuel poverty and climate change; homelessness and housing options; independent living; minority ethnic communities; and private sector housing.
- ***Housing Need and Demand Assessment 2017.*** This informs the Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan, the Local Development Plan as well as the Local Housing Strategy. The assessment projects need and demand over three different scenarios up to 2039.
- ***Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Plan 2020.*** This provides the overall vision for the development of the north east of Scotland. The development of the Local Housing Strategy has been aligned with the main issues identified in the plan. In addition, the strategy has been informed by the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan 2017 which sets out exactly where development is expected to take place up to 2026.
- ***Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) of the Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership.*** There are three priorities in the plan, these are to reduce child poverty; change Aberdeenshire's relationship with alcohol; and connected and cohesive communities. Housing and Building Standards are working with Community Planning Partners to deliver key actions in

the LOIP, particularly in relation to Homelessness as part of the Housing First project and child poverty.

- **Scottish Government's Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH).** The Housing and Building Standards Service is making significant investment to improve the energy efficiency of our social housing stock to meet EESH. The aims of the standard are to build on the achievements of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard; to tackle climate change and fuel poverty; and to ensure that social rented housing meets a proposed minimum Energy Performance Certificate rating by 2020.
- **The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001** also places a statutory duty on each local authority to carry out an assessment of homelessness in its area and to prepare and submit to Ministers, a strategy (as part of the Local Housing Strategy) for the prevention and alleviation of homelessness. The Scottish Government has issued guidance on the prevention of homelessness.
- **Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans.** Since the Local Housing Strategy was developed, local authorities have had to respond to two sets of recommendations from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group. These included the development of Rapid Rehousing Transition Plans which has superseded the homelessness-related actions included in existing local housing strategies.
- **The Housing Support Services (Homelessness) (Scotland) Regulations 2012.** These came into force in 2013 and placed a duty on Local Authorities to assess anyone who is unintentionally homeless or threatened with homelessness who may be in need of Housing Support, and to ensure provision of support to that person.
- **Welfare Reform.** This has the potential to impact significantly on homelessness. All changes that are made by the Department for Work and Pensions should be taken into account when making decisions at local authority level in relation to temporary and supported accommodation arrangements. The Welfare Reform agenda will require Aberdeenshire Council to assess the provision of temporary accommodation charging to ensure affordability across all tenures.
- **Unsuitable Accommodation Order.** The Scottish Government brought forward changes to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order in May 2020, which means that some of our temporary accommodation properties may now be considered unsuitable, and we are currently reviewing the use of our hostel provision in light of these changes. We are also awaiting guidance from the Scottish Government concerning the permanent and temporary exemptions identified, some of which are extended until January 2021.
- **Scottish Government policy supporting independent living for all ages and for people with a disability.** In accordance with this policy and in accordance with Aberdeenshire's Joint Commissioning Strategy for Older People 'Ageing Well in Aberdeenshire 2013-2023' and the subsequent Market Position Statement Accommodation, Care and Support for Older People, the Housing Service will work with third sector organisations, private providers of health and social care and local communities to help people of all ages to maintain their independence and to access appropriate support when they need it.
- **Equality Act 2010.** All individuals have the right to expect the same quality of housing regardless of their ethnicity and many have requirements which are particular to their ethnicity. The council and its partners aim to set standards of achieving equality in all areas of housing. This relates to the race protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010 and supports the

Scottish Government National Outcome 7: 'We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society'

- ***Improving the Lives of Gypsy/Travellers: 2019-2021.*** Joint action plan between the Scottish Government and COSLA to improve outcomes for Gypsy/Traveller communities in accommodation, support and access to services across all partners.
- ***Housing (Scotland) Act 2006.*** Aberdeenshire Council has a statutory requirement under Section 10 of the Act to develop and implement a:
 - 'Scheme of Assistance' policy to help homeowners and private sector tenants to carry out repairs, maintenance, improvements or adaptations to their homes.
 - 'Below Tolerable Standard' policy to address those houses that fall below the Tolerable Standard.
 - 'Housing Renewal Area' policy which details how Housing Renewal Areas will be identified and designated.
- ***The Scottish Government's strategy for a successful private rented sector.*** This strategy, published in May 2013, sets out the vision for "a private rented sector that provides good quality homes and high management standards, inspires consumer confidence, and encourages growth through attracting increased investment". Housing has a key role in monitoring standards in the private rented sector.
- ***Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016.*** The new private residential tenancy regime was introduced through the Act which defined a new type of tenancy known as a 'private residential tenancy'. This is aimed at improving security for tenants and providing safeguards for landlords, lenders and investors. Housing has a role in monitoring compliance with the Act.
- ***Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004.*** Landlord registration was introduced in 2006 under this act. One of the requirements for landlords to become registered is a 'fit and proper person' test. Aberdeenshire Council works in partnership with Police Scotland in identifying landlords who are not suitable to be registered as part of the 'fit and proper person' test and in identifying those landlords who are involved in serious organised crime, extending to those involved in lower level crime. Operating as an unregistered landlord can carry a penalty of up to £50,000.
- ***Annual Assurance Statement.*** In February 2019, the Scottish Housing Regulator released an updated Regulatory Framework, setting out how it would regulate social housing providers and the reporting requirements for the next five years. This Framework introduced a new requirement for landlords to provide an annual Assurance Statement by the 31st of October each year, starting in October 2019. For local authorities, the Assurance Statement must consider whether the authority is meeting the 16 outcomes required by the SSHC and whether it is meeting its legal and statutory obligations (for example, that it is meeting its obligations around statutory homelessness). Aberdeenshire Council will report the assurance statement to the Communities Committee each year to be signed off before forwarding to the Regulator.
- The enforcement responsibilities for **Building Standards** are set out under the Building (Scotland) Act 2003 and verification responsibilities are principally achieved through the application of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2004. The enforcement actions undertaken by Building Standards are carried out in accordance with current statutory

guidance, codes of practice, Crown Office guidance and the Human Rights Act 1998 and in the case of business regulation will also take account of the UK Regulators' Code and the Scottish Regulators' Strategic Code of Practice.

2.4 Public Sector Equality Duty

The Council's responsibilities with regards equalities is set out in the Equality Act 2010. On top of this the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, which came into force in May 2012 requires the Council to identify and publish fresh Equality Outcomes every four years, and to publish an Equality Outcomes Progress Report every two years. At its meeting on 27 April 2017, Aberdeenshire Council approved new Equality Outcomes for 2017 – 2021.

Housing and Building Standards is contributing to the delivery of these outcomes through the delivery of the key objectives identified in this plan and through actions set out in the Local Housing Strategy which aim to ensure that minority ethnic communities, New Scots, refugees and asylum seekers and Gypsy/Travellers have access to accommodation that meets their needs, culture and lifestyle. Additionally, the service will take action to ensure that general relations between Gypsy/Travellers and settled communities are improved

The service will regularly monitor the progress made to achieve the equality outcomes and these reports will be available on the council's website.

Every activity that is identified to support the delivery of the objectives outlined in this plan, which has the potential to have a differential impact on different groups, will have an Equality Impact Assessment undertaken. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) aims to assess the impact of the council's policies, procedures and functions on those who have Protected Characteristics. It allows us to make balanced judgements in all decisions including difficult ones. When we carry out an EqIA and find certain groups do not have access to our services, are under-represented, or are not receiving as good a service as they should, we must take action to resolve the situation. All Equality Impact Assessments are available on our website. Examples of those developed by Housing and Building Standards during 2020 are given below:-

- Housing Revenue Account Budget 2020/2021 (13/02/2020)
- Housing Revenue Account Capital Budget 2020/2021 (18/03/2020)
- Greenbanks Site (29/09/2020)
- Community Safety Governance and Strategic Arrangements in Aberdeenshire (03/11/2020)
- Housing Allocation Policy Review (05/11/2020)
- Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2021 – 2026 (05/11/2020)

2.5 Sustainability and climate change commitment

Aberdeenshire Council was the first council in Scotland to set a carbon budget which sets out the reduction in CO2 emissions that the Council, and each service must achieve each year. Infrastructure Services has a target to reduce its carbon emissions by 1700 tCO2e by the end of the year.

There are no specific actions for Housing and Building Standards set out in the Carbon Budget. However, the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 sets out the service's key commitments to sustainability. It contains an action plan which aims to:-

- Improve the energy efficiency of housing both in the private sector and by meeting the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing.
- Assist households to maximise their income

- Reduce fuel costs by providing in-depth energy efficiency information, support and advice to households in all tenures
- Provide households with practical advice to change behaviours to reduce energy usage

Of significant importance is the investment being made in the social housing stock to improve energy efficiency. The aim is to improve the council housing stock to ensure it meets the Governments Energy Efficiency Standards in Social Housing (EESH) standards. Around 55% of our stock currently meets EESH, and the service is working hard to bring the remaining properties up to the required standard as quickly as possible.

On top of this Housing will work with its strategic partners such as Housing Associations and Private Developers to deliver over a five year period up to 2027 new homes across the social housing sector, all built to the latest energy efficiency standards. Meeting the EESH standards and providing modern new build homes will benefit tenants through reducing fuel bills and will also reduce the carbon footprint of the Council area through reduction in carbon emissions. This will also help the service meet its statutory duties with regards fuel poverty.

3. PROFILE OF HOUSING AND BUILDING STANDARDS

3.1 Introduction

The Council has clear aspirations for the future of Aberdeenshire, and these are reflected in the Aberdeenshire Council Vision:

Serving Aberdeenshire from mountain to sea, the very best of Scotland.

The Service Plan for Housing and Building Standards, links directly to the Infrastructure Services Directorate Plan and to the Council Plan and sets out the key actions and targets needed to deliver our core services. The Service Plan also delivers the Council's priorities and provides 'the golden thread', linking team plans, operational plans and council/service strategies to actions.

The values for the Housing Service that we all aspire to are focused around:

- Customer Focus
- Safety
- Respect
- Teamwork
- Quality of Service

In Contributing to the Council's vision Building Standards will:-

- manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment in the interests of current and future generations
- manage construction
- provide advice, information and support to our customers in all areas of work.

Housing and Building Standards is one of the five services that make up the Directorate of Infrastructure Services, the others are:

- Economic Development and Protective Services
- Planning & Environment Service
- Roads, Landscape Services and Waste
- Transportation

Two Area Managers (Kincardine & Mearns and Marr) also report to the Director of Infrastructure Services.

The Housing Service is responsible for the management, maintenance and allocation of around 12,977 homes. The service is organised around four functions:-

Housing Strategy and Building Standards which is responsible for the development of the Local Housing Strategy, private sector housing including private landlord registration, tackling fuel poverty, and the delivery of new build affordable housing across a variety of tenures, development and implementation of the Building Standards Regulations and associated procedures within Aberdeenshire.

Tenancy Services which is responsible for tenancy management, sheltered housing, rent management & housing finance, tenant participation and community safety.

Options and Homelessness which is responsible for homelessness, prevention temporary accommodation, allocations and support.

Asset Management and Repairs which is responsible for housing repairs, planned maintenance programmes and stock improvements.

Building Standards has two distinct roles - verification and enforcement. Verification is principally achieved through the application of the Building Standards (Scotland) Regulations 2004, when considering applications for Building Warrants and submissions of Completion Certificates.

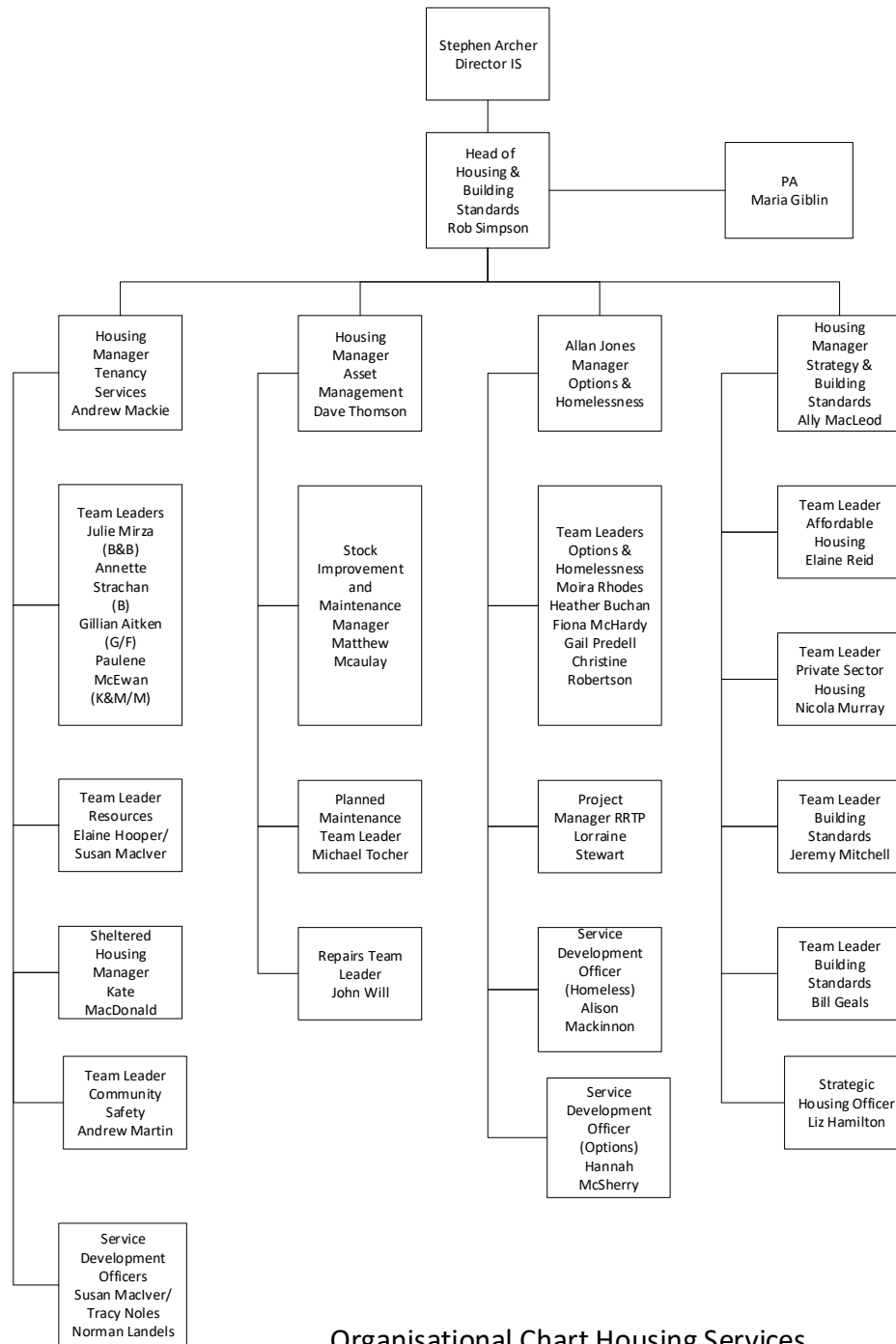
The Building Standards Service is also responsible for the enforcement duties contained within the Building (Scotland) Act 2003. This enforcement duty ensures that buildings comply with Building Regulations and public safety is maintained in relation to defective and dangerous buildings.

3.2 Staffing

The staffing resources available to the service can be summarised as follows:-

	FTE
Housing Officers/Asst Housing Officers	278
Repairs Operatives	158
Mobile Sheltered Housing Operatives	112
Unit assistants/Hostel Assistants	31
Building Standards Officers	29

3.3 Organisational Chart



Organisational Chart Housing Services
2020/10/14

3.4 Financial Profile

The HRA Revenue Budget for monitoring purposes for 2020/21 was agreed on 13 February 2020 by Council as breakeven, with £64.513 million of income and expenditure.

The General Fund Revenue Budget for Housing was set at £5.621 million.

The HRA Capital Budget for the year 2020/21 that was approved by Full council in March 2020 was £60,669 million. However, in June 2020 the budget was revised as follows:-

	Projects	Approved Budget £000
1	New Build Programme	14,112
2	Reactive Heating	1,254
3	Sheltered Housing Upgrades (Lifts, Boilers)	380
4	Sheltered Housing Sprinkler Programme (Fraserburgh)	790
5	Stock Improvements (non-HIP)	681
6	Housing Improvement Plan (HIP)	34,965
7	Macrae House Type External Wall Refurbishment	188
8	Smart Solar and Battery Storage (LCIPT)	5,563
9	Housing Fire and Smoke Detector Upgrades	2,841
10	Capital works done at Voids (Housing Repairs)	1,588
11	Housing Repairs Service Allocation	460
12	Staff Recharges	679
13	Other (ICT infrastructure, SH car park upgrades, hard to treat properties, etc)	1,300
	Total	64,801

It is anticipated, based on monitoring figures to the end of Quarter 2, that capital expenditure will be £31.6 million lower than budget due to the implications of Covid-19 on the delivery of the plan.

3.5 Efficiency Savings

The affordability of the revenue and capital budgets is regularly monitored and based upon the agreed Housing 30-year business plan.

In November 2018 in line with the business plan, the Council agreed to increase rent levels by RPI + 2.5% over the three years from 2019/20. Thus for 2020/21 the rent increase approved by the Council was 5%.

Following the impact of the pandemic, many of the assumptions made in developing the budget and rent strategy may have to be revisited. Rental income is down, rent arrears have increased, levels of voids have increased, costs of service delivery in some areas have increased as a result of measures to implement safe working practices and there have been delays progressing the capital programme. Many tenants are under financial strain due to unemployment, being furloughed or being put on reduced hours.

The planned increase in rent levels will have to be reviewed to ensure they remain sustainable. Any changes in planned increased will impact on the business plan and planned expenditure, particularly in relation to the capital programme.

The General Fund budget is also under pressure due to increased costs and a fall in income and all services will have to make efficiency savings wherever possible.

Across the Housing and Building Standards Service a review of service delivery arrangements has been undertaken by assessing the scope and standard of current service delivery. New

management arrangements have been agreed and will be implemented during the period of this plan.

Additionally, action is being taken to manage costs and deliver efficiencies through the management of vacancies, reduced levels of overtime working, reducing the number of agency staff and reviewing temporary contracts; options for voluntary severance, seeking voluntary reductions in contracted hours and focusing on redeployment and reskilling will also be considered. Additional appropriate governance procedures have been implemented to ensure that available resources are managed effectively.

In line with Council policy, a review of charges is to be undertaken to ensure that future charges levied reflect the actual cost of providing the service.

The continuous improvement process within Housing also seeks to identify and implement efficiency savings through changing how we deliver services, adopting a more digital approach to service delivery and continuous improvement projects which will identify and eliminate waste.

To help manage the impact of the pandemic, Housing and Building Standards will continue to keep under review the 30-year business plan and rent strategy and will implement further changes to the capital programme or seek further efficiency savings as required to ensure the plan remains affordable.

3.6 Consultation with other services and area management forums

The Service Plan for Housing and Building Standards builds on the work undertaken at a corporate level within the Council on a new set of Strategic Priorities developed to ensure that the Council is able to maximise service delivery and associated resources to those areas and communities within Aberdeenshire most affected by the pandemic and work carried out to develop the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 which sets out the policy of the local authority to carry out its housing functions.

The 3 pillars and 6 strategic priorities set out in the Council Plan were decided upon by elected members and, following adoption by Full Council in July 2020, work was undertaken to align existing and future service delivery/activities under each of the pillars/priorities. The Corporate Leadership Group began the review process setting out where the Council's attention will need to be focused and which activities we continue with and which activities we will reduce or cease.

Development work to support the delivery of the new strategic priorities was then undertaken during August and September when Policy Committee chairs, supported by Directors, led cross-service activity in line with the priorities to agree outcomes and performance measures and determination of what existing policies, strategies and plans the new priorities would replace.

Cross-party and cross-committee workshops were held to shape and inform the detailed proposals, supported by cross cutting work on the themes, to ensure a deep level of understanding of the work needed to address the priorities across each all services. This work was informed by the refreshed strategic assessment which provided a long term view of the issues affecting the Council and by community impact assessments which provided an understanding of the local impact of the pandemic on individual communities and gave communities a voice for how they have been affected and the kind of activity they would wish the Council to be pursuing in the future.

The outcome of this work was a set of Council Priorities supporting the strategic priorities and agreement on which Directorate would take the lead delivering each Priority. The final activity then involved developing these actions into the delivery plan for the service.

The action plan for Housing and Building Standards was based around the six priorities of affordable housing; energy efficiency, fuel poverty and climate change; homelessness and housing options; independent living; minority ethnic communities; and private sector housing as identified in the Local Housing Strategy but taking on board national policy issues that have emerged since the strategy was approved.

The Local Housing Strategy has been developed following widespread consultation with officers, elected members, tenants and other stakeholders, partner organisations, community groups and the wider public. In developing the Strategy elected members were invited to take part in an on-line survey to identify priorities for the Strategy. The draft Strategy was taken around the six Area Committees for comment and the final version was approved by the Communities Committee.

During development of the Service Plan, consultations were carried out with the Area Managers through the Area Management Teams to identify the area dimension to each of the actions proposed. This work informed the development of the Area Delivery Plans.

3.7 Peer review

A peer review of the plan was carried out by firstly by the Housing and Building Standards Management Team and subsequently by the Infrastructure Services Directorate Management Team who acted as a “critical friend” and provided feedback and input into the plan.

4. HOUSING AND BUILDING STANDARDS PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK

4.1 Performance

Housing and Building Standards is committed to effective performance management and its use in identifying and prioritising areas for improvement. Within Housing, regular monitoring of performance is carried out to improve the management of voids, allocations, rent collection and housing maintenance. The Northgate management system provides managers with the information needed to manage each key process.

Within Building Standards, the Uniform performance management tool provides daily updates on performance for staff and managers. The use of electronic workflow means that applications can be moved between teams via workload monitoring through Uniform to ensure performance is maintained.

On a monthly basis, managers receive performance reports covering their areas of responsibility. These reports highlight activities where performance has fallen below expectation and provide the focus for remedial action. On an annual basis, a report on progress with the Local Housing Strategy is presented to Committee, providing an opportunity for elected members to hold the service accountable for performance and progress and so fulfil part of their scrutiny role.

On an annual basis, the Housing service must complete an annual return on Charter for the Scottish Housing Regulator; this documents how well the Housing service is performing against the Scottish Housing Regulator’s indicators. This report must be signed off by Committee before being forwarded to the Regulator, providing elected members further opportunities to scrutinise

performance. A further report, that summarises the information forwarded to the Regulator, is provided for tenants.

For Building Standards quarterly returns are submitted to the Building Standards Division and circulated to Committee. The service also produces an annual performance report each year. This is published on the Council's website. The verification performance report is a strategic planning and management tool that provides information about the local authority Building Standards Service, communicates the vision and strategy, and sets out performance against strategy goals and targets. Building Standards verifiers in Scotland are required to utilise the performance report to manage, monitor, review and develop strategies for their business, and should focus on the performance framework's core perspectives and cross-cutting themes.

The Building Standards service has been accredited to the Customer Service Excellence Standard since December 2016. The service is assessed against 57 components with a particular focus on customer service, delivery, timeliness, information, and professionalism. On an annual basis Building Standards provides a continual improvement plan with evidence assessed against the criteria during an independent audit assessment with SGS. During the assessment the auditor also interviews staff along with a range of key customers and stakeholders.

Building Standards have a customer charter which is published online, and the service standards are monitored on an annual basis through mystery shopping with the results of this also published online.

Key Performance Measures for Housing and Building Standards

Description	Performance 2018/19	Performance 2019/20
Percentage of building warrant and amendment applications assessed for compliance with technical standards within 20 working days (Target 95%).	95%	94%
Percentage of building warrants and amendment applications issued within 10 working days from receipt of all satisfactory information (Target 90%).	94%	94%
Time taken from notification of a dangerous building report to assessment by a member of staff (Target 100% within 4 hours)	100%	100%
Number of social rented properties completed per year (Target 225).	197	249
Number of Mid-Market and Low-Cost Shared Equity properties completed each year (Target 25).	3	21
Energy efficiency measures installed in the private sector housing (Target 357).	377	200
Number and percentage of new build properties developed and fully accessible for clients with a particular need (Target 15%).	21%	21%
Number of disabled adaptations carried out in Private Sector (Target 200).	228	199
Number of disabled adaptations carried out in Local Authority (Target 80).	97	146
Average time to complete medical adaptations in working days	32.76 days	45.27 days
Number of waiting list applicants who access affordable housing each year (Target 1250)	1488	1611

Percentage of Council Housing meeting EESSH (Target 100% by 2020)	47.8%	55%
Total stock meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)	93.94%	95.4%
Average relet time in days (Target 39.7)	54.9 days	56.2 days
Percentage of rent due lost through the properties being empty during the last year	1.49%	2.09%
Average time to complete an emergency repair (Hours)	5.25 hours	4.48 hours
Average length of time to complete non-emergency repair	8.86 days	10.48 days
Percentage of tenants who had a repair carried out in the last year who were very satisfied or fairly satisfied with the repair carried out	93.44%	91.5%
Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases closed in year as a percentage of those opened	Revised measure	82.6%
Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as a percentage of rent due for the reporting year	4.6%	4.85%

4.2 Benchmarking

The Housing and Building Standards Service has a long tradition of benchmarking.

The Housing service provides data to two benchmarking organisations throughout the year. These are the Scottish Housing Network and Housemark. Both organisations provide presentations annually to the Housing Service. The presentations provide an in-depth analysis of what the service does well, what can be improved upon and how well the service compares to others within the sector. An Action Plan to improve the service is developed from this benchmarking activity.

For Building Standards, Aberdeenshire Council, in conjunction with Moray Council and Aberdeen City Council, forms The Grampian Consortium Group. This group meets on a regular basis and its main purposes are to establish a consistent approach to interpretation of policies and technical guidance, provide benchmarking, share best practice and facilitate training. Aberdeenshire Council and the Grampian Consortium Group are actively involved with national policy and working groups via Local Authority Building Standards Scotland (LABSS).

Each year Infrastructure Services collects information for the Improvement Service which feeds into the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF). The LGBF is a high-level benchmarking tool designed to support senior management teams and elected members to ask questions about key council services. It reflects a commitment by SOLACE (Scotland) and COSLA to develop better measurement and comparable data as a catalyst for improving services, targeting resources to areas of greatest impact and enhancing public accountability. The framework provides high-level measures which are designed to focus questions on why variations in cost and performance are occurring between similar councils. They encourage councils to engage with each other to 'drill down' and explore why these variations are happening.

The LGBF helps councils compare their performance against a suite of efficiency, output and outcome indicators that cover all areas of local government activity. Publication of the LGBF forms part of each council's statutory requirements for public performance reporting, replacing the previous SPI regime.

A summary of performance for the Housing Service taken from the last report produced by the Improvement Service covering the year 2018/19 is shown below:-

Local Government Benchmarking Framework DATA 2018/19

LGBF Ref	Indicator Description	Aberdeenshire Performance 2018/19	Scottish Average	Ranking
HSN1	Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as at 31 st March each year as a percentage of rent due for reporting year (SHR31)	4.6%	7.33%	4 th
HSN2	% of rent due lost through properties being empty during the last year (SHR34)	1.49%	0.95%	25 th
HSN3	% of stock meeting the SHQS (SHR7)	93.09%	94.32%	19 th
HSN4	Average number of days taken to complete non-emergency repairs (SHR12)	8.86 days	7.8 days	18 th
HSN5	Percentage of council dwellings that are energy efficient (SHR 8)	93.16%	97.49%	22 nd

4.3 Where are we now?

The overall quality of the Housing service is monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator. Each year the Housing service must submit an assurance statement saying how it is meeting its legal and statutory obligations against 16 outcomes. In November the annual assurance statement was signed off by the Communities Committee. The statement provided evidence to show how well the service was performing against each outcome. Overall, the service was performing well against the key measures in the charter although performance had fallen below expectations in certain areas (see paragraph 4.5).

Each year Building Standards publishes a report on its performance in compliance with the Building Standards Verification Framework. The report for 2019-2020 showed the service as being on target or slightly below target for all its key performance indicators. Covid-19 has impacted on service delivery and new ways of working have had to be developed to respond to the restrictions imposed by the virus such as virtual site visits. These new ways of working have been so successful it is expected they will continue once the pandemic eases.

4.4 Positive Messages

Housing and Building Standards adapted quickly and efficiently to the effects of the Covid pandemic to ensure that the majority of the services provided to tenants and other service users continued. This has meant changes to ways of working right across the board. The pandemic has meant that the majority of office based staff have had to work from home and in many cases have had to juggle their workload whilst providing home-schooling or other support to their family during lock-down.

For area- based staff new ways of working have had to be introduced based around innovative uses of technology allowing virtual home visits or site meetings to take place. The provision of emergency repairs in homes was continued after safe working practices were developed and appropriate protective safety equipment procured.

Prior to the on-set of the pandemic the service was making considerable progress with its Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) and the overall time taken to close homeless cases and the overall time spent in temporary accommodation had been significantly reduced. During lockdown we continued to provide essential services to homeless presentations including temporary accommodation but were unable to facilitate moves to more permanent accommodation due to the lockdown restrictions. Since these restrictions started to be lifted, we have worked with Registered Social Landlord partners and colleagues across the Council to provide the right support and progress people into permanent accommodation.

The Options and Homelessness service have been working jointly with the children and families social work team and the throughcare and aftercare team to develop a large range of options for care leavers or young people still in care. This includes taster flats, emergency accommodation to avoid out of area placements and a commitment to avoid care leavers having to make homeless applications.

The homelessness team have had a housing first service since 2017 and are pioneering service delivery in rural areas in Scotland which involves being involved nationally in best practice. The Aberdeenshire way of working is recognised due to the joint working in place between many different partners in Aberdeenshire including the police, NHS and H&SCP. The ADP also provide funding due to the joint outcomes the scheme delivers.

The Options and Homelessness team have also developed shared accommodation options for use as temporary accommodation which has been recognised as best practice nationally and led to a change in the unsuitable accommodation order. This has helped the council move away from placing homeless applicants in unsuitable bed and breakfast type accommodation, reduced the overall costs to general fund and enabled people to remain closer to their support networks.

A review of progress with the Local Housing Strategy in September showed that 24 out of the 33 indicators in the Strategy were on track at the end of March. Highlights included the establishment of an affordable housing hub, the development of a match maker scheme to make it easier for people wanting to buy an empty property to connect with property owners and a successful bid for funding to support the installation of energy efficiency measures in properties.

Over the past year almost 281 affordable homes were provided across Aberdeenshire. The majority of these (249) were for social rent with 21 mid-market/low cost shared equity properties and a further 11 properties bought from open market for social rent. Work has now started on a further 363 properties.

Work has been completed on the Greenbanks Gypsy/Traveller site in Banff. Although delayed by the pandemic the fully refurbished site was able to reopen for business in August.

During the year the latest phase of the resettlement programme for Syrian New Scots was completed. Nearly 200 refugees have been successfully resettled in Aberdeenshire under this scheme – around 60 families.

The pandemic has impacted on certain parts of the service. For example, rent arrears began to rise at the start of lockdown but levels are now relatively stable compared to other Scottish Local Authorities as a result of early intervention support by Housing officers. The proactive and person centred approach adopted will continue with the proposed introduction of additional software to ensure that resources are targeted appropriately.

The pandemic has also seen an increase in levels of support offered to vulnerable groups by Tenancy Management based on a person-centred approach, referral mechanisms in place have ensured early assistance from third sector organisations together with a wide range of agencies including the Health & Social Care Partnership and Information & Advice Services

Progress has been made in respect of the Sheltered Housing Review and the development of a new model of service provision. Sheltered Housing teams have ensured the safety of tenants throughout the pandemic by focusing on social distancing and infection control requirements within schemes. The Review also seeks to develop new technology to ensure regular and ongoing support is delivered to tenants.

The development of a new approach to Community Safety in Aberdeenshire has continued with the adoption of an operational, tactical and strategic model. A new Community Safety Strategy has been implemented emphasising a joint agency approach to dealing with specific issues impacting on communities throughout Aberdeenshire. The team work closely with the Police, Grampian Fire & Rescue, Criminal Justice and others to ensure a coordinated approach for residents.

A new Tenant Participation Strategy has been developed and implemented following extensive consultation that emphasised the need to engage with tenants in new and innovative ways. The Strategy also promotes the development of close links with communities to empower tenants to influence service delivery in their area. Officers seek to work closely with Area Management Teams in pursuance of joint objectives. Digital enablement forms a core element of improvement planning moving forward in order to ensure that tenants can seek to participate more effectively in the delivery of services.

4.5 Areas for improvement

The main areas where the service performance has fallen below expectations as identified in the return to the Scottish Housing Regulator were:-

- **Quality of Housing** – the Council will not meet its Energy Efficiency Standards for Social Housing (EESH) by the end of the year. This is due to a range of reasons exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. Work is on-going to reprioritise programmes of work and to identify alternative technologies and ways of delivering improvements to ensure the standard is met as quickly as possible.
- **Repairs, Maintenance and Improvements** – there have been various delays with the delivery of the Housing Improvement Programmes of work. The contractors were just addressing these issues and were making good progress with Year 2 of the works when the pandemic struck. When work recommenced after lock-down it was at a slower pace due to measures brought in to ensure safe working practices. A significant number of planned upgrades have yet to be delivered but the service is working with Property colleagues and the contractors to ensure works are delivered as quickly as possible. The pandemic has impacted on the delivery of general repairs, many of which were put on hold during the lock-down. However, the focus on emergency repairs has seen performance in this area significantly improve.
- **Value for Money** – the service is currently performing below expectations with regards to void turnover times resulting in delays for rehousing applicants and associated rental loss. A review has been undertaken to streamline the void process. In conjunction with a modified re-lettable standard it is hoped to significantly improve performance in this area.

- **Rent Arrears** have risen during the pandemic. Although action has taken to stabilise this increase, arrears remain high and work is being undertaken to address this issue. Rent affordability will be a key consideration with work ongoing to review strategy.

During the year the Housing Service has faced key challenges in progressing objectives set by tenants, elected members and staff engaged in the development of the new Tenant Participation Strategy. Despite attempts made by both Officers and TPPT to reach consensus, fundamental differences in approach became evident at a very early stage with the Council's principal Registered Tenant Organisation ultimately deciding to refer Housing to the Scottish Housing Register (SHR), alleging a Serious Performance Failure (SPF) based on an assertion that the Service had failed in its Statutory duties. Following investigation, the SHR did not uphold the complaint and TPPT ultimately chose to dissolve. Minor amendments are required to the Strategy as a result of the dissolution of TPPT.

Whilst the Housing service regrets the decision of TPPT to dissolve, it remains fully committed to developing opportunities for a wide range of tenants to scrutinize the delivery of services and has been successful in mobilising service users to engage in groups covering Communications, the HRA and Asset Management. A focus has also been placed on issues that are impacting on local communities with steps taken to develop links with Area Community Planning teams and the partners actively involved in Community Safety. Early successes have been achieved in areas throughout Aberdeenshire.

Other opportunities for the development of new and innovative methods for tenant engagement continue to be explored with the development of a Housing app and redesigned website to ensure more advanced levels of interaction. Social media presence continues to expand with the introduction of a tenant participation Facebook page.

4.6 Where do we need to be?

The Housing and Building Standards Service has already taken a range of actions to ensure it is better able to meet the future needs of the service. There has been an overall review of the Housing and Building Standards Service to ensure the correct structure is put in place to meet the existing and emerging demands on the service, this builds on the work previously undertaken to review Community Safety and the on-going review of Sheltered Housing designed to rationalise accommodation and improve the support provided to tenants.

The service has input to actions in the Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) in particular in relation to homelessness and child poverty. The LOIP supports and contributes to the Housing First project which focuses on supporting clients with multiple complex needs into mainstream housing so helping to reduce risk of homelessness. On top of this the service has developed and is implementing the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan & Action which will deliver a range of actions to address Homelessness over a five-year period 2019 – 2024.

The Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment has identified increasing the supply of affordable housing as a strategic priority for the area. A supply of good quality affordable housing contributes to the development of a strong and successful economy, assists in creating and maintaining mixed and sustainable communities where people want to live and helps address child poverty, fuel poverty and health issues through making homes more affordable and of better quality.

These issues are being addressed through the Local Housing Strategy which sets out the Council's ambitions with regards the delivery of affordable housing and through the Strategic

Housing Investment Plan which sets out the investment priorities for affordable housing over a five year period to achieve the outcomes in the Local Housing Strategy. One issue related to this is that most affordable housing in Aberdeenshire is provided through Section 75 agreements with developers. A slowing down of the build-out rate due to the down turn in the housing market as a result of economic conditions will impact on delivery of affordable housing as will constraints resulting from lack of availability of building land for affordable housing. New and innovative ways of procuring affordable housing continue to be explored.

Supporting the Local Housing Strategy are programmes of work through the Housing Investment Plan to improve energy efficiency within the council housing stock and to improve the quality of the housing. There have been difficulties delivering these programmes of work and Housing is working with Property colleagues and contractors to address them.

In October 2020 the Accounts Commission published the Best Value Assurance Report for Aberdeenshire Council. This identified a number of actions that the Council needed to take to meet its statutory requirements under Best Value. Specifically highlighted in the report were issues identified by the Scottish Housing Regulator concerning the way in which Housing managed tenant complaints, tenant participation and the time taken to relet empty homes. Action is being taken by Housing to address these issues and also to improve performance and improvement activities through embedding self-assessment using the How Good is Our Council methodology into its continuous improvement framework.

In November a review of the Mid-Term Financial Strategy was undertaken. At the end of Quarter 2 the HRA showed a surplus of £1.564 million and a predicted surplus of £2 million by the end of the year. For next year a break-even position is predicted so the budget position for Housing was described as “stable.” The unpredictable effects of the pandemic could still impact on the budget position so the position will continue to be monitored and appropriate action will be taken to address any issues as they arise.

The position with the General Fund is not so good with a significant deficit forecast for the end of this year and a greater deficit for the year after. There is considerable pressure on services funded through the General Fund to make efficiency savings. A range of Housing related services are funded through the General Fund, particularly in relation to homelessness so there will be a need to ensure we work in an efficient way as possible. Due to the rapid rehousing transition plan and homelessness being a key priority of the council any budget savings would be limited and there is the opportunity for increased funding from the government if new ways of working can be identified. Building Standards is funded directly from the General Fund Revenue Budget and through the fees it receives for service such as the provision of building warrants. A drop in income coupled with additional pressures on the General Fund budget will require efficiency savings to be identified.

5. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

It is of increasing importance in the organisation that managers are “risk aware”. This is different from “risk averse”, and the proposed approach will allow managers to fully understand the risks being faced and support them to manage the risks accordingly. It is important to note that risk is often unavoidable particularly during periods of significant transformational change.

There will however be a level where a risk is no longer deemed acceptable or tolerable (known as “risk appetite”), and as such appropriate management action will require to be taken to mitigate the impact of the risk. Escalation procedures may also be embedded into the process to ensure directorate and corporate risk registers will be populated as appropriate.

This approach would ensure that all directorate risk registers, including the Corporate Risk Register, will be aligned to the revised approach of identifying and recording risk and will secure a more consistent approach to directorate level risk recording which will be further enhanced through incorporating risk registers within directorate and service planning activity. This will allow directorate and service objectives and priorities, performance measures and directorate and service risks to be captured in a single document. These areas will always be closely aligned, and this approach will offer real benefits in business planning, service delivery, and performance and risk management.

A summary of key risks within the directorate at this time together with details of the current controls to mitigate these risks is provided in the table below. The full Corporate Risk Register is available [here](#).

RISK	MITIGATION – CURRENT CONTROLS
<p>Delivery of Local Housing Strategy:-</p> <p>New statutory requirements on councils regarding issues like emissions, waste management, sustainability, housing provision and the definition of fuel poverty.</p>	<p>Mitigation of risks is addressed through a range of plans and also the Directorate Business Continuity Plan, which identifies our Critical Activities and puts in place plans to ensure our ability to continue to operate and deliver these vital services. Additionally, the Head of Housing assumes responsibility for each of the identified risks and ensures that appropriate plans for mitigation are put in place and reviewed regularly.</p>
<p>Delivery of Affordable Housing:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of affordable house development sites means dependence on S75 agreements with developers. • Oil and gas downturn impacts on rate of house building causing Government affordable housing targets to be missed. • Fall in average cost of rental properties has made mid-market developments less desirable and more properties are becoming harder to let. • Demand for affordable housing exceeds supply causing rise in homelessness. 	
<p>Failure to meet Homelessness Duty</p>	
<p>Failure to complete Emergency Repairs</p>	

OPPORTUNITIES

2019 and 2020 have brought significant challenges which have included the contraction of the oil industry, the societal upheaval wreaked by the pandemic and a continuing lack of clarity on the requirements for the impending changes associated with Brexit in January 2021. These major challenges should not be viewed in purely negative terms as they also represent opportunities in that they force us to review the Services we deliver and the way that we deliver them.’ Necessity

is the mother of invention' and the pressures of the current situation have, ironically, fostered originality, agility, resourcefulness and a boost to the impetus of efforts to modernise and transform the Service. During 2020 the Service has, from necessity, found quicker and more efficient and resourceful ways to deliver or amend existing services, which have utilised creativity to allow the achievement of efficiencies in terms of time and manpower requirements. Some examples include:

All of our office-based staff have successfully adapted to working from home and have adapted and streamlined processes to allow continuation of service. This offers scope for to permanently significantly reduce office space requirement and travel time and expenses across many parts of the Service

Homelessness applications pre-COVID always had to be made in person at an office. Due to the restrictions of COVID 19 an alternative approach had to be developed rapidly and applications are now successfully dealt with by telephone calls, speeding up the process and reducing stress and expense for service users.

The Housing Repairs Team have accelerated the implementation of a new app which allows repairs reporting and requests to be made over a video link– this facilitates a pre-visit assessment/inspection, reduces the number of visits, speeds up the repair and thus both improves the service to tenants and allows better and more intensive use of our available resources.

Within Tenancy Services, innovative approaches to rent management are under development with a focus on the implementation of new software systems that will enable Officers to identify individuals at risk of rent arrears at a far earlier stage. This will ensure that support and advice can be introduced at an optimum time therefore ensuring a higher probability of tenancy sustainment for the individuals concerned.

Housing have also been active in the introduction of alternative methods of engaging with tenants using the wide range of technology available. Digital inclusion will be key to ensuring tenants can benefit from technological developments with successful bids submitted for 'Connecting Scotland' funding to assist with objectives.

The Infrastructure Services Directorate, of which the Housing Service is a part, has a Modernisation Programme in place that is working to take forward this flexible and adaptable approach, increase the pace of change and modernise ways of working across a range of areas. The projects fall into 3 main themes:-

- Flexible Workforce
- Continuous Improvement
- Digital & Data

HOUSING AND BUILDING STANDARDS ACTION PLAN 2021/22

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
STRATEGIC					
<p>Health and Wellbeing <i>Consumers are assured that businesses are conforming to regulations. Businesses are supported to ensure compliance with legislation, economic diversification and energy transition.</i></p>	<p>(i) In line with actions set out in the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 take action to improve standards within the private rented sector through routine compliance checks, routine advertising checks and Below Tolerable Standards Checks. (ii) Assist with regulating the new energy efficiency requirements in the private rented sector.</p>	<p>The aim is to improve the quality of housing in the private rented sector and the performance of private landlords.</p>	<p>(i) Complete 100% fit and proper tests for all persons applying to become registered landlords. (ii) Complete 10% routine checks to ensure that landlords are complying with registration requirements.</p>	<p>Private Sector Housing Team Leader</p>	<p>This is action is subject to regular checks throughout the year</p>

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	(iii) In accordance with requirements contained within the Buildings Scotland Act 2003 carry out enforcement actions to ensure compliance.	Building Standards will ensure that buildings comply with Building Regulations and public safety is maintained in relation to defective and dangerous buildings.	(iii) Time taken from notification of a dangerous building report to assessment by a member of staff (Target 100% within 4 hours)	Team Leader Building Standards	This is a continual action as required
	(iv) Submit assurance statement each year to show compliance with the new regulatory framework issued by the Scottish Regulator under the Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act 2014	The aim is to ensure regulatory activities are exercised in accordance with the principles of better regulation. These regulatory functions include advice, guidance, licensing, permissions and consents, inspections, monitoring and enforcement. The light touch approach		Housing Strategy and Building Standards Manager	Annual

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
		to regulation should provide opportunities to improve the health of our local communities and directly contribute to sustainable economic growth.			
<p>Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities.</p> <p><i>Appropriate support is provided for those who are facing homelessness.</i></p>	<p>Delivery of the Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan & Action Plan 2019 – 2024. This will deliver a range of actions to address Homelessness over a five-year period 2019 – 2024. Actions come under the following headings:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Prevention (ii) Access and Supply (iii) temporary accommodation (iv) Support 	<p>A rapid rehousing approach that ensures that homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring</p> <p>Homelessness is prevented where possible. Where homelessness cannot be prevented households access settled housing options and</p>	<p>The total number of homeless households to whom the local authority has a statutory duty to secure permanent accommodation presenting each year.</p> <p>The number of homeless cases closed and average days to complete</p> <p>The percentage of new tenancies to applicants who were</p>	<p>Housing Manager Options and Homelessness</p>	<p>Delivery of the RRTP Action Plan will take place over a five year period 2019 – 2024.</p>

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
		appropriate support as quickly as possible.	<p>assessed as statutory homeless by the local authority sustained for more than a year.</p> <p>The Number of households re-assessed as homeless within the same year</p>		
<p>Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. <i>Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required.</i></p>	<p>(i) Provide an efficient and responsive repairs and maintenance service to tenants.</p>	<p>Minimise time taken to complete repairs and ensure right first time. Ensures repairs and maintenance is managed effectively and tenant satisfaction with service is maintained.</p>	<p>Average length of time to complete non-emergency repair (days)</p> <p>Average time to complete an emergency repair (Hours)</p> <p>Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs service provided by the Council.</p>	<p>Housing Manager (Asset Management & Repairs)</p>	<p>Monitored monthly to constantly improve performance</p>

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	(ii) Deliver programme Health and Safety improvements in relation to fire detection in council houses.	All our properties to meet the standard (LD2) set out in the new fire detection legislation.	Percentage of properties meeting standards set out in the fire detection legislation	Housing Manager (Asset Management & Repairs)	By February 2021 or as soon as possible after.
	(iii) Meet the Energy Efficiency Standards for Scottish Social Housing (ESSH 1) as part of the Housing Improvement programme (HIP).	All properties conform to requirements by deadline. Improving the energy efficiency of housing stock is helping the area to reduce its carbon footprint and contributes to alleviating fuel poverty	Percentage of properties that meet the ESSH 1 standard % of council dwellings that are energy efficient	Housing Manager (Asset Management & Repairs)	All properties to meet ESSH 1 standard by end of 2020 or as soon as possible thereafter.
	(iv) Develop and implement a programme of works in relation to the Energy Efficiency	All properties conform to requirements by deadline.	Percentage of properties that meet the ESSH 2 standard	Housing Manager (Asset Management & Repairs)	All properties meet the ESSH 2 standards by 2032

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	Standard for Social Housing 2 (ESSH2)				
	(v) Deliver the Housing Improvement Programmes in partnership with colleagues in Property and private contractors.	The 4 -year HIP programme is successfully delivered improving the overall quality of the housing stock.	% of council dwellings meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standards	Housing Manager (Asset Management & Repairs)	Programme to be complete by 2021/22
	(vi) Improve the time to relet vacant properties Void turnaround – implement the revised process for the management of void properties in conjunction with the modified lettable standard to speed up the turnover of void properties and	<p>Reduces the time taken to relet a void property to below average of 40 days.</p> <p>Reduces rent loss due to void properties.</p> <p>Supports actions in relation to rapid rehousing of homeless families and the overall</p>	<p>Average relet time in days</p> <p>Percentage of rent due lost through the properties being empty during the last year</p>	Housing Manager Tenancy Services in conjunction with Housing Manager (Asset Management & Repairs)	Deadline of April 2022. Monitored by way of bi-weekly reporting

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	reduce the associated rent loss.	allocations and lettings process.			
<p>Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. <i>Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required.</i></p>	<p>In accordance with regulations prepare and submit a Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) to the Scottish Government each year.</p>	<p>This sets out the investment priorities for affordable housing over a five-year period for achieving the outcomes set out in the Local Housing Strategy. The SHIP provides a practical plan detailing how the LHS investment priorities will be delivered and forms the basis for a more detailed programme. It also guides the application of Scottish Government grants and other monies.</p>	<p>Number of affordable homes delivered per year</p>	<p>Housing Manager Strategy and Building Standards</p>	<p>Annual submission to Scottish Government by November each year</p>

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
<p>Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities. <i>Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required</i></p>	<p>Deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 in relation to (i) affordable housing</p>	<p>These actions will increase the supply of social rented housing and intermediate housing, including mid-market rent and affordable home ownership options in the area. It will contribute to meeting housing need and will assist in the regeneration of town centres.</p>	<p>Number of social rented properties completed per year (Target 225). Number of Mid-Market and Low-Cost Shared Equity properties completed each year (Target 25).</p>	<p>Housing Manager Strategy and Building Standards in partnership with Property colleagues, local developers and RSL partners.</p>	<p>Activity over the life of the Local Housing Strategy</p>
	<p>Deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy 2018 – 2023 in relation to (ii) fuel poverty, sustainability and energy efficiency.</p>	<p>The energy efficiency of both rented accommodation and properties in private ownership will be improved addressing issues of fuel poverty and contributing to reducing</p>	<p>Energy efficiency measures installed in the private sector housing (Target relates to availability of funding allocated annually. Current target is 357).</p>	<p>Housing Manager Strategy and Building Standards</p>	<p>Activity over the life of the Local Housing Strategy</p>

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
		greenhouse gas emissions			
	Deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy in relation to (iii) Independent living	This involves providing new build housing which meets the needs of people with disabilities or working with partners to adapt existing properties to help support people with particular needs within their own homes.	Number and percentage of new build properties developed and fully accessible for clients with a particular need. Number of disabled adaptations carried out in Private Sector Number of disabled adaptations carried out in Local Authority Average time to complete medical adaptations in working days	Housing Manager Strategy and Building Standards in partnership with Health and Social Care Partners and RSLs.	Activity over the life of the Local Housing Strategy
	Deliver actions in the Local Housing Strategy in relation to	This involves identifying barriers to meeting the	Number of families/households resettled in Aberdeenshire under	Housing Manager Strategy and	Activity over the life of the Local Housing Strategy

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	(iv) minority ethnic communities	housing needs of the minority ethnic community, including migrant workers, refugees and Gypsy Travellers, and providing appropriate housing information, advice and support.	the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme Number of outcomes delivered in the Gypsy/Traveller Action Plan for access to education, health, other services and employability.	Building Standards	
	(v) Deliver actions in the Local Housing strategy 2018 – 2023 in relation to the private sector	These actions assist private sector home owners and tenants to maintain the standards of their home. It contributes to sustaining tenancies as well as helping maintaining the well-being of individuals.	Provision of information and advice to households to help them to repair/maintain their home through Scheme of Assistance – number of individuals receiving advice Provision of practical assistance to households to help them to	Housing Manager Strategy and Building Standards	Activity over the life of the Local Housing Strategy

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
			repair/maintain their home through Scheme of Assistance – number of individuals receiving advice		
<p>Health and Wellbeing Resilient Communities.</p> <p><i>Tenancies are sustained/community capacity building Communities feel empowered and enabled.</i></p>	(i) Provide pre-tenancy support to new tenants in advance of them taking up their tenancy.	<p>Improved levels of tenancy sustainment</p> <p>Reduced numbers of abandonments</p>	<p>Percentage of new tenancies sustained for more than a year; all sources of let</p> <p>Abandonments as a percentage of stock</p>	Housing Manager Tenancy Services	Performance measured monthly
	(ii) Provide out-reach housing support to meet the needs of people who require help to prevent homelessness and keep people living independently in their tenancies.			Housing Manager Tenancy Services	Constant service activity
	(iii) Provide support to people who run	Reduction in evictions	Gross rent arrears (all tenants) as a percentage of rent	Housing Manager	Constant service activity

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	into rent arrears to manage their debt and pay back the arrears once they are able	Reduction in current tenant arrears	<p>due for the reporting year.</p> <p>Rent collected from tenants as a percentage of total rent due in the reporting year</p> <p>Evictions as a percentage of stock</p>	Tenancy Services	
	Improve links with individual communities and with Community Safety Partners and others to ensure that a comprehensive and coordinated approach is offered to tenants, particularly when criminal and anti-social activities are involved.	Tenants feel safer in their communities. Incidents of criminal and anti-social behaviour are reduced.	<p>Percentage of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in.</p> <p>Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases closed in year as a percentage of those opened.</p>	<p>Housing Manager Strategy and Building standards</p> <p>Community Safety Manager</p>	Constant service activity

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	<p>Empowering tenants and service users to have a real say in delivery of services –</p> <p>(i) develop new and innovative ways to engage with tenants</p> <p>(ii) Provide opportunities for a wide range of tenants to scrutinise the delivery of services.</p> <p>(iii) Carry out a tenant satisfaction survey using a telephone based model to allow greater engagement with tenants and explore the reasons for their dissatisfaction.</p>	<p>Development of a more informed and flexible approach to tenant participation. It will lead to improved levels of tenant involvement and participation and improved tenant satisfaction levels in surveys.</p>	<p>Percentage of Tenants satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in their landlord's decision-making process</p> <p>Percentage of Tenants satisfied with overall service</p>	<p>Housing Manager (Tenancy Services)</p>	<p>Engagement measured six monthly</p> <p>Tenant satisfaction survey to be completed by end of 2021</p>

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
OPERATIONAL					
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Carry out a self-assessment of performance against the criteria set out by the Scottish Housing Regulator. Present to Communities Committee to be signed off then forward to the Scottish Housing Regulator.	Statement sets out how the service is performing against the 16 outcomes. Areas of under-performance to be addressed by an action plan		Head of Housing and Building Standards	Annually by 31 st October
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Repairs and Maintenance – procure and implement an on-line repairs system for tenants to report repairs.	This will provide tenants with the opportunity to report repairs in a way that is convenient for them.	Tenant satisfaction with repairs service.	Housing Manager (Asset Management & Repairs)	By end of 2021
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Implement the revised allocations policy based around Choice Based Letting	Provides applicants with a choice of properties so reducing the number of refusals and reduce officer		Housing Manager Options and Homelessness	Implement by end of 2021

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
		time spent on re-offering properties.			
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Implement new on-line housing application system to replace Apply-4-Homes. As part of the project develop a housing options loading page to enable applicants to access lists and apply for Housing with all relevant landlords in the North East.	Provides an on-line housing application service. Supports a common approach to housing allocation with Registered Social Landlord partners	Number of waiting list applicants who access affordable housing each year	Housing Manager Options and Homelessness	Implement by end of 2021
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Set up an officer-member working group to consider the longer-term rent strategy in the light of the Covid pandemic. Consider outcomes as part of the regular	Ensures rent increases are affordable. Will impact on the 30 year business plan and the affordability of the capital programme		Housing Manager (Tenancy Services)	By end of 2021

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	review of the 30-year business plan.				
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Consult on an implement the review of Sheltered Housing. Continue to review the balance of sheltered housing and very sheltered housing	Provide an efficient and effective Sheltered Housing service which meets the immediate needs of its tenants and is able to respond to future needs.		Housing Manager (Tenancy Services)	Phase in agreed changes over 3 year period. Review balance of provision on an on-going basis.
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Consult on the proposed changes to the management arrangements within Housing and implement new structure.	Revised management structure for the Housing Service will be implemented.		Housing Managers	Phased in over next 2 – 3 years
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Prepare for and undergo independent audit assessment as part of the Customer Services Accreditation. This	Customer Services accreditation is retained.	Percentage of building warrant and amendment applications assessed for compliance with	Housing Manager Strategy and Building Standards/	Annual – December each year

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	Standard tests Building Standards against 57 components with a particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information and professionalism.		technical standards within 20 working days. Percentage of building warrants and amendment applications issued within 10 working days from receipt of all satisfactory information.	Building Standards Team Leaders	
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Take part in annual benchmarking exercises through Scottish Housing Network and Housemark. Develop actions to address areas of improvement identified through the benchmarking. Monitor and report on progress with the improvement actions	This activity demonstrates the services commitment to continuous improvement as part of the Best Value regime. The process identifies and leads to improvements being made to service delivery ultimately		Head of Housing and Building Standards	Annual

Council priority/service priority	Key Action	Anticipated outcome	Performance measure	Responsible person	Timescale
	to committee every six months.	to the benefit of tenants.			
Health and Wellbeing and Resilient Communities	Take part in annual self-assessment using HGIOS or other appropriate methodology to identify areas for improvement. Agree actions to address identified issues and monitor progress with actions on a regular basis.	This activity demonstrates the services commitment to continuous improvement as part of the Best Value regime. The process identifies and leads to improvements being made to service delivery ultimately to the benefit of tenants.		Head of Housing and Building Standards	Annual