

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board to be held in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 24 October 2011 at 18:00.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 19 September 2011 (attached).
- 3 Public Question Time.
- 4 Declaration of Interests
To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- 5 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012 – 2042 - report of the Community Services Manager (now attached)
Reporting Officer: James Barrah
- 6 Housing Revenue Account Reform Project Dashboard - report of the Community Services Manager (attached)
Reporting Officer: James Barrah
- 7 Anti Social Behaviour Mandatory Powers of Possession Consultation - report of the Estates Manager (now attached)
Reporting Officer: Paul Hadley
- 8 Heating and Renewable energy - briefing notes from the Heating Project Manager (now attached)
Reporting Officer: Paul Hadley
- 9 Tenant led Scrutiny - oral update from the Tenant Empowerment Manager
Reporting Officer: Martin Price
- 10 Annual Report - oral update from the Tenant Empowerment Manager
Reporting Officer: Martin Price
- 11 Dates of TSMB Meetings 2012 - report of the Tenant Empowerment Manager (attached)

Reporting Officer: Martin Price

Tonya Meers
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

07 February 2012

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

If a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors or Tenant Services Management Board Members begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

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Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

For further information about the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on 01823 356382 or email d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk

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Tenant Services Management Board Members:-

Mr D Etherington (Chairman)
Mr M Edwards (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor R Bowrah, BEM
Councillor S Brooks
Mrs J Bunn
Mrs E Drage
Mr D Galpin
Mrs J Hegarty
Mr K Hellier
Mrs P Marshall
Mrs T Urquhart

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 19 September 2011 at 6pm in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr Etherington (Chairman)
Mr Edwards (Vice- Chairman)
Councillor Bowrah, Mrs Bunn, Mrs Drage, Mr Galpin, Mrs Hegarty, Mr Hellier, and Mrs Urquhart.

Officers: Kevin Toller (Strategic Director), James Barraah (Community Services Manager), Tim Burton (Growth and Development Manager), Maggie Hammond (Strategic Finance Officer), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Tracey Vernon (Tenant Services Development Officer), and Keith Wiggins (Democratic Services Officer).

Others: Councillor Mrs Adkins, Nigel Stuart-Thorn, Malcolm Andrews, John Beaman, Cathy Osborn (Savills)

(The meeting commenced at 6.08pm)

49. Apologies

Apologies: Councillor Brooks and Mrs Marshall

50. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 23 August 2011 were taken as read, with the exception of the omission of Mrs Hegarty from the declaration of interests, were amended accordingly and signed.

51. Declaration of Interests

The following members declared a personal interest as a Council house tenant:

- Mrs Bunn
- Mrs Drage
- Mr Edwards
- Mr Etherington
- Mr Galpin
- Mrs Hegarty
- Mr Hellier
- Mrs Urquhart

Councillor Bowrah declared a personal interest as a family member was a Council house tenant.

52. Tenant Awards

The Vice-Chairman introduced an urgent item to consider the board's view on a proposal for an annual awards scheme for council tenants.

Initial suggestions had been put forward for four award categories:

- Community Projects;
- Community Project Leader;
- Tenant of the Year and
- Young Tenant of the Year.

It was hoped the scheme would attract sponsorship and local press interest.

Resolved to support the award scheme and recommend it to the Tenant's Forum.

53. Housing Revenue Account Reform Project – Baseline Financial Position

Cathy Osborn from the consultants Savills described their role in assisting the Council to prepare a new Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, summarised the key issues and the current project status. As well as the changes to finance, the plan was taking account of public sector spending reductions, legislation on tenure and rent flexibility and welfare benefit reform.

Self Financing meant that, rather than the negative subsidy the Council currently paid back to the Government from its rents (approximately £7million per year), the Council would be allocated a share of the national housing debt directly. Draft debt settlement figures issued by the Government suggested the share of the debt would be £87million. The Council would be required to pay this debt amount back. Assuming that the Council chose to borrow that entire amount this would increase the total housing debt to £101.5 million.

Savills were conducting an external check on the status of the council housing stock to assist in estimates for repairs, renovation and re-build costs over the lifetime of the thirty year plan.

Using certain assumptions the baseline position was that the Council would be able to clear the HRA debt by year 19 of the business plan. The debt repayment period could vary between 17 and 30 years depending on Council decisions; associated risks were explained to board members.

Resolved to note the baseline financial position.

54. Housing Revenue Account Reform Project – Borrowing Options

Considered report previously circulated regarding the borrowing options for the Council, required by the move to "self-financing" of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Maggie Hammond explained that the Government estimate of the required repayment by the Council in March 2012 was £87.2m. This estimate might increase in December.

The various options for borrowing and likely associated borrowing rates were explained and questions from board members were answered.

Gilts were described as the benchmark for borrowing rates. At the time of writing the report the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB) rate was Gilts plus 1%.

However announcements had been made at the Liberal Democrat Party conference that indicated a more favourable rate would be available from the PWLB for HRA borrowing.

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy, approved in March 2011, already gave authority for officers of the Council to undertake the required borrowing.

Resolved to note the report.

55. Housing Revenue Account Reform Project Dashboard and SWOT Analysis

Considered project progress dashboard report and strengths and weaknesses analysis previously circulated, concerning planned reforms to council housing finance in England and the management of those changes by the Council.

James Barraah explained that there were only concerns with one workstream – Assets – where a data validation exercise involving Savills was underway.

A detailed briefing on HRA Finance for Taunton Deane Borough Councillors was planned for 10 October 2011.

Resolved to note the report.

56. Halcon North Project

Tim Burton reminded board members of the objectives of the regeneration project and some of the main issues it sought to remedy. He explained the timetable for taking a report for decision by the Council's Executive on 12 October 2011.

Cathy Osborn from the Council's appointed consultants (Savill's) outlined the main findings of their initial Development Appraisal and new suggestions for an amended scheme.

The revised appraisal was based on a scheme for 400 homes with 50% affordable housing and up to 50 houses returning to Council HRA control.

It was assumed the scheme would be delivered by a developer procured through competitive tendering and that the 200 homes for purchase would be built over a period of eight years. Some short term borrowing would be required but “soft market testing” had informed their assessment that the revised scheme could be viable.

Four options would be put forward to Council members to discuss at a public meeting in Halcon on 3 October.

During the discussion of this item, members of the board made the following comments and asked questions. Responses are shown in italics:

- How much would be paid to existing private home owners? *This would be depend on market factors and house prices at the time;*
- There were still many positives for the scheme which would produce 400 up-to date properties and 200 affordable homes;
- What percentage of housing will be designed for the elderly or those with disabilities? *This was not yet specified. The Council continued to consult with disabilities groups and any individuals assigned to accommodation would have their personal needs assessed;*
- How much had already been spent on homes in Halcon? *A higher percentage than the average across the council stock.*
- Our main concern would be the loss of homes in Halcon available for rental from the Council.

Resolved to support the proposal to proceed with the revised scheme, but with concerns about the small number of properties returning to the Council’s stock.

57. Installation of Solar PV Panels on the Council Housing Stock

Considered report previously circulated, concerning options for the installation of solar photo voltaic (PV) panels on suitable council owned homes.

PV systems would have positive financial benefits to tenants, as they would get to use the electricity generated. The amount that a tenant benefits would be dependant on the amount of the free electricity they could use, which would be likely to be related to how much they were at home during the daytime. Any electricity not used would be exported to the grid, from where the developer would gain – and where the Council would wish to see a return.

Members commented that they would wish to see any return to the Council earmarked for tenants’ schemes, fuel poverty and renewable energy.

Resolved to support the proposal to carry out a mini procurement process for a scheme operated through licence.

58. Fire Safety in Flats

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a 'zero tolerance' approach when managing communal areas of council owned blocks of flats in order to reduce the risk of fire and to safeguard tenants.

Comprehensive fire safety research had been undertaken following an arson attack at a block of flats in Taunton. The attack had resulted in six families being made homeless and required a significant redevelopment project to totally refurbish the block and relocate the affected families.

The inspection of other similar blocks had identified significant fire hazards attributable to the storage of personal items within the communal hallways. Two of the biggest issues for resolution were the storage of containers for recycling and mobility scooters.

Early discussions with the Group Commander of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service had indicated they were totally supportive of a zero tolerance policy within communal areas of flats.

Members commented that problems were not solely related to tenants but also to those sleeping rough or using communal areas for their own purposes.

Members discussed the merits and problems of door entry systems to blocks of flats.

Members' suggestions included:

- Working more closely on this issue with the Tenants' Forum;
- Inclusion of updated advice within the tenants handbook;
- Requiring all tenants to ensure hallways were kept clear;
- The creation of a working group to explore the options in more detail.

Some members were supportive of the zero tolerance approach whilst others favoured the suggested "managed use" alternatives.

Resolved to support the proposal to improve fire safety in flats based on zero tolerance within communal areas, but requesting council officers to take note of members' comments and concerns.

59. Annual Report to Tenants

The Tenant Empowerment Manager outlined the agreed calendar format and content for this year's annual report.

The calendar would contain dates of the forum and board meetings and details of choice based lettings options.

Resolved to support the production of the annual report.

60. Dates of TSMB Meetings 2012

Members had received a list of provisional dates for meetings of the board in 2012.

Resolved to accept the proposed dates.

(The meeting ended at 8.20pm)

Declaration of Interests

Tenant Services Management Board

Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants – Councillor Brooks,
Mrs Bunn, Mrs Drage, Mr Edwards, Mr Etherington, Mr Galpin, Mrs Hegarty,
Mr Hellier, Mrs Marshall and Mrs Urquhart

Member of Somerset County Council – Councillor Brooks

Family member a Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenant –
Councillor Bowrah

Taunton Deane Borough Council

HRA Business Plan 2012 – 2042

(Draft V1 for TSMB – 24 October 2011)

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Executive Summary

This business plan is produced in order to set out the Council's overall aims and objectives for the housing service, as a landlord for over 6,000 homes. It analyses the current position of the service and the homes and sets out the actions planned to achieve the Council's objectives. It reflects consultation carried out with residents, members and wider stakeholders. It provides a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress in delivering the plan. The plan forms a key part of the Council's preparation for HRA self financing. This is a major change in national housing finance which introduces new risks and opportunities for the Council's housing service.

Section 2, Strategic Context, sets out the issues that influence the business plan, at a national, regional and local level. This includes how changes in national housing finance and policy impact on the Council's priorities for its housing service. In this section we set out how the plan will support the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and wider housing and community objectives. The business plan is structured around four new housing strategic objectives

1. *Securing a long term future for our housing service.*

- This means continuing to invest in the management of the housing stock to ensure it meets tenants' needs, who should be at the heart of decision making

2. *Tackling deprivation and sustainable community development*

- This means taking action so that disadvantaged communities will have better access to local housing services, training and employment, continuing our support for a range of vulnerable people

3. *Investing in our housing stock, regeneration and affordable housing*

- This means investing in our existing stock to deliver a standard that meets the needs of the stock and local aspirations. It also means planning and successfully managing the regeneration of our housing estates and communities, providing homes that cater for the needs of an expanding and diverse population within communities that people are proud of

4. *Climate change*

- This means taking action to reduce carbon emissions across our housing stock through our investment planning, service delivery, partnership and community action to address climate change and reduce fuel poverty

The plan also highlights the local context in which we operate and our service delivery mechanisms.

Section 3, Consultation, sets out the Council's existing arrangements for involving tenants in decisions about the housing service, and summarises the key findings from consultation carried out as part of the development of plan. Tenant involvement is now well established in the borough, with a clearly defined participation structure and decision making process in place to ensure tenants are involved in shaping, developing and monitoring our services, in a variety of different ways. The Tenant Services Management Board has received regular reports on the development of the plan,

and had opportunities to feed their views into the development of strategic objectives and the action plan. The Council also held two stakeholder workshops to enable tenant representatives, members of the tenant forum, sheltered housing forum and tenant services management board, councillors, and partners to receive information on the impact of self financing and the development of the business plan. A staff consultation event was also held to discuss the implications of self financing. It is proposed that the Tenant Services Management Board will have a key role in monitoring the delivery of the plan, and that they will have opportunities to participate in regular reviews of the plan.

Section 4, Background, describes the way in which the service is currently delivered. The plan is produced in the context of major changes in national housing policy, both in the form of tenancy that Councils will be able to offer their tenants in future, and in the rent levels charged. This section sets out the Council's initial response to these changes, welcoming future flexibility to improve the service and the use of the housing assets. A detailed tenancy strategy, including policies on succession and under occupation will be developed in the first year of the new business plan in order to set out clearly the Council's response to the changes, once the Localism Bill has received Royal Assent. This section also describes the Council's current rent policy which is critical to the level of resources available to deliver the future service. It includes a summary of current performance and how the service will take action to achieve continuous improvement.

Section 5 describes the Council's housing stock and other assets. Our housing stock is a valuable asset. As a major provider of social housing we make a significant contribution to meeting the need for affordable housing in the borough. Generally our stock has been well maintained, with an investment strategy targeted at bringing all homes up to the decent homes standard. Tenant feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction with the quality of homes. Demand for homes is high across the stock. There is also evidence of a desire for an investment standard that delivers more than basic decent homes, with a focus on energy efficiency and sustainability as well as environmental improvements, such as improved parking provision.

The total expenditure to improve and maintain the stock and related assets over 30 years is currently forecast as £170.6m. This equates to £28,360 per dwelling over 30 years. This is based on information from the Council's asset management database, informed by local priorities identified as part of the consultation carried out in developing the business plan.

The current information indicates a requirement for an increase in the capital programme from current levels of £4.3m to over £9.5m in years 2 – 5. An exercise to validate the information in the stock condition database has indicated that the early years' requirement may be overstated, although costs overall are below expectation when compared with external benchmarks. The Council therefore proposes a capital programme of £5.5m in 2012/13, representing a £1.2m increase in the current programme. During 2012/13 a new stock condition survey will be carried out to inform future business planning. The Council will also develop the capacity of its asset management team to prepare to deliver a larger capital programme. In the meantime for the purposes of this business plan, investment has been "smoothed" over the first 10 years of the plan.

The investment plan includes actions to improve the energy efficiency, and upgrade heating systems, to improve the future sustainability of the homes, and to reduce the costs of tenants' fuel bills.

The Council is exploring options for the regeneration of Halcon North. This would involve replacing around 200 existing homes with up to 400 new homes. Until formal decisions are taken on the demolition of existing homes, resources for their future investment needs are included in the baseline business plan. The impact of removing these properties from the business plan will be modelled, based in updated information on existing stock investment requirements from the new survey, and on plans for the scope and timing of any redevelopment as these are established.

Beyond Halcon North the Council has ambitions to explore new build development, using a mixture of debt financing from the HRA business plan, grant, and income from affordable rents where this would meet an identified local need. In the short term capacity for development is constrained by government limits on the amount of borrowing that the Council can undertake, and the Council's own internal capacity to deliver. The business plan includes actions to map development opportunities that exist across the HRA land, and to explore options for delivery of identified schemes within the future business plan.

Section 6, Resources, describes the base line financial position for the Housing Revenue Account. It shows the impact of the increase in housing debt that will be required as part of the introduction of self financing. This is based on the draft settlement issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in February 2011 that indicated an increase in housing debt of £87m. This figure will be updated when DCLG issues a draft and final determination towards the end of this calendar year. The business plan will be updated with the revised debt figure based on this determination. As such the plan represents a position statement at this stage, which will be updated as a revised debt figure is received, and as stock condition information is updated with further survey work.

At this stage the plan projects a healthy financial position with all identified capital expenditure needs met, and revenue resources being sufficient to repay debt within 21 years. Sensitivities carried out to test key assumptions shows that the plan is resilient to changes in the external environment including changes to inflation, increased capital expenditure requirements and increased interest rates.

The Council will be able to review the plan regularly and make decisions about the use of surpluses, balancing repayment of debt and additional investment. This gives the Council a much greater level of flexibility in its long term planning than has been possible under the existing subsidy system.

Section 7, Priorities for Action, sets out the key activity that will be undertaken to deliver the four strategic objectives. This action plan will be supported by more detailed operational activity, set out in our departmental service improvement plans. The actions have been developed to respond to the consultation carried out with residents, councillors, staff and wider stakeholders.

Section 1 Introduction

This business plan is produced in order to set out the Council's overall aims and objectives for the housing service, as a landlord for over 6,000 homes. It analyses the current position of the service and the homes and sets out the actions planned to achieve the Council's objectives. It reflects consultation carried out with residents, members and wider stakeholders. It provides a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress in delivering the plan.

Why does the Council need a new business plan?

The existing business plan for the service was developed in 2004 and there have been many changes since that time, both externally and internally.

Externally the Council faces changes in national housing policy that have fundamental implications for all social landlords. Council housing finance is changing from April 2012. From that point the Council will no longer have to pay an annual amount to government under the housing subsidy system. Instead it will need to take on a significantly increased level of housing debt and manage this debt within a "self financing" business plan. This means that the Council will be able to make long term decisions about its services and the management of its assets. Self financing brings new financial risks that need to be managed within the business plan, but also brings new opportunities for freedoms and flexibilities, and for effective asset management that need to be seized to the benefit of Taunton Deane's residents. Details of the impact of self financing on the Council's business plan are set out in section 6 **Resources**.

Other external changes include changes in social housing regulation. Government is currently consulting on changes to tenancy standards and regulatory requirements in several areas including `tenure and rent reform, tenant involvement, mutual exchanges and quality of accommodation. Details of this consultation and the Council's response through this business plan, are set out in section 2 **Strategic Context**.

Internally the Council's Corporate Strategy sets out the Vision, Business Principles and Core Values of the Council and describes the key outcomes that it intends to achieve in the community. These are focussed on the key objectives of Tackling Deprivation and Sustainable Community Development, Regeneration, Affordable Housing and Climate Change. The objectives were agreed after considerable consultation with the community, senior managers, Scrutiny and the Executive. This business plan reflects how the Housing Service will deliver these objectives, as set out in section 2 **Strategic Context**.

How the plan has been put together

The plan has been developed through consultation with residents and stakeholders. This has included regular meetings with the Tenant Services Management Board and wider consultation with staff, members and other stakeholders. The process of consultation and the key findings are set out in section 3 **Consultation**. This also sets out how the Council will consult going forward to measure the success of the delivery of the plan.

Through this consultation, the strategic objectives for the service have been revisited and updated and are set out in section 2 **Strategic Context**.

The starting point for the plan is the current service. Section 4 **Background Information** sets out how the service is currently delivered and includes information on the current condition of the homes.

The condition of the homes, and the Council's strategy for managing the housing assets forms a fundamental part of this plan. The future investment needs of the stock have very significant financial implications for the plan and robust information on this is essential to ensure the homes can be maintained at a standard that fits with resident's aspirations and prevents them deteriorating in future. Details of the Council's understanding of its current assets, and its strategy for investment and repairs going forward is set out in section 5 **Assets**.

How the plan will be delivered

Section 7 **Priorities for Action** sets out the action plan that has been developed to deliver the Council's objectives for the housing service in the short and medium term. It also sets out how performance will be monitored and success measured over time. This section also describes how the plan's objectives feed down into individual staff members work plans through the Council's performance review and employee development scheme. It identifies the key risks that may prevent the achievement of objectives and how these will be managed. Finally it sets out how the plan will be reviewed in future to ensure it remains up to date with external and internal changes, and reflects ongoing resident consultation.

An equality impact assessment is a process through which the Council can assess any negative impact that our services and decisions may have on our customers or employees. The impact assessment prepared for the HRA business plan, and schedule of further impact assessments that will be carried out before specific actions are implemented is set out in appendix x.

Section 2 Strategic Context

In this section we set out the issues that influence this business plan, at a national, regional and local level. This includes how changes in national housing finance and policy impact on the Council's priorities for its housing service. In this section we set out how the plan will support the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities and wider housing and community objectives. The plan also highlights the local context in which we operate and our service delivery mechanisms.

National Housing Policy

This plan is prepared in the context of major changes in housing finance and housing policy.

From April 2012 the national housing subsidy system will end. This will mean that the Council will no longer have to make annual payments to government. Instead the Council will make a one off payment to government (currently estimated at around £87m) in March 2012. After that point it will be able to retain all surpluses from its landlord activity, and use these to support its future business plan on a self-financing basis. It will continue to have to account for its landlord activity in a separate ringfenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Two elements of national control of Council housing finance remain. The Council will continue to have to pay 75% of the proceeds of any right to buy sales to government. The remaining 25% will continue to be used for the Council's broader housing objectives for affordable housing and are not included in this HRA business plan which only represents the landlord element of the Council's housing role. Secondly the government has imposed a limit on the amount of money the Council can borrow, and reserves the right to reopen the settlement in the event of major changes in housing policy. The borrowing limit constrains the ability of the Council to consider major regeneration and new build projects financed from this HRA business plan. If the borrowing limit is relaxed, as a result of government decisions in future spending reviews, this would increase borrowing capacity and enable a wider range of options to be considered.

Self financing means that for the first time the Council can set long term plans for the future of its housing stock and housing services. The self financing settlement represents an increase in resources compared with the existing subsidy system (around 17% for Taunton Deane). The change means that responsibility for long term business plan and debt financing moves from central to local government. The Council will take responsibility for long term asset management. Although borrowing levels are limited by current government spending restrictions, in general there will be less top down regulation. The change means that the Council faces increased risks, particularly around long term asset management, inflation and interest costs. This business plan is designed to manage those risks and to put the Council in a position to take advantage of the freedoms and flexibilities offered by self financing in order to improve its housing stock and services.

The plan supports the two key elements of the government's housing policy; to continue to maintain its properties at the decent homes standard, and to set rents based on national policy, moving current rents to target by 2015/16 (rent convergence).

Supporting Council priorities

In addition the plan sets out how local objectives for housing will be delivered. These local objectives have been developed through consultation with residents and members during the development of the plan, and support the Council's corporate priorities.

The values and priorities of this business plan reflect the Council's corporate strategy that has been developed following community consultation. This approach has meant that the business plan priorities are closely aligned with the Council's corporate priorities. This means that the plan is able to deliver actions that reflect the concerns and priorities of the Council's residents. As the major provider of social housing in the area we have a key role to play in supporting the Council's strategic objectives and priorities.

Housing Vision

Our vision for housing services reflects the Council's overall vision to be recognised nationally as a place that is developing sustainably, securing a better life and future for its people, businesses and communities.

Within the HRA business plan, we translate this vision into a vision for landlord services which is to be recognised nationally as a landlord that has a long term sustainable business plan, securing a better life and future for its residents and properties.

Our business principles for housing services

The Council has established four essential principles to support the Council's vision and to make it happen. We reflect these business principles in our HRA business plan as follows:

- Excellent services: ensuring the delivery of accessible, high quality housing services that provide good value for money
- Customer driven: putting the needs of individual customers at the heart of all that we do.
- Local focus: making a positive difference to the quality of life in communities across Taunton Deane
- A dynamic organisation: a housing service that is innovative, forward-looking and focused on results.

Our values

We aim to reflect the following corporate values in all that we do as a Council housing service:

- Integrity: we will be honest, do what is right and stick to it
- Fairness: We will consistently treat everyone equally, respecting their individual needs and abilities
- Respect: we will always show respect for everyone
- Trust: we will show trust and confidence in our staff, councillors and resident representatives.

Our strategic housing objectives

This business plan has updated the strategic objectives set out in our earlier plan in 2004 in order to reflect the Council's current corporate priorities. They are also reflected in the asset management strategy, tenant compact and other housing policies.

5. *Securing a long term future for our housing service.*

- This means continuing to invest in the management of the housing stock to ensure it meets tenants' needs, who should be at the heart of decision making

6. *Tackling deprivation and sustainable community development*

- This means taking action so that disadvantaged communities will have better access to local housing services, training and employment, continuing our support for a range of vulnerable people

7. *Investing in our housing stock, regeneration and affordable housing*

- This means investing in our existing stock to deliver a standard that meets the needs of the stock and local aspirations. It also means planning and successfully managing the regeneration of our housing estates and communities, providing homes that cater for the needs of an expanding and diverse population within communities that people are proud of

8. *Climate change*

- This means taking action to reduce carbon emissions across our housing stock through our investment planning, service delivery, partnership and community action to address climate change and reduce fuel poverty

Taunton Deane Borough Council is committed to complying with the principles of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and the housing service has officers with a particular focus on anti social behaviour, to support the Council's role to tackle crime and disorder in its area of operation.

We also have a key role in supporting the Council's Equality policy. Taunton Deane Borough Council values diversity by respecting the unique knowledge and experience that individual people from different backgrounds contribute to society.

We aim to promote equality of opportunity in our role as a service provider, policy maker, employer purchaser of goods and services and elected leader in the local community.

In promoting equality of opportunity, we will oppose all forms of discrimination, whether on grounds of disability, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, age, religion, belief, or any other condition or requirement which may place a person or group at a disadvantage.

We believe that all people have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Summary of actions TDBC housing service has taken

Summary of how TDBC gains information on its residents and how it uses this to plan services.

Local context

Description of housing stock

Taunton Deane Borough Council's housing stock comprises of 6,022 rented homes¹, with a further 350 leasehold properties. The Council also manages two private leasehold schemes for the elderly. The housing service also owns and manages 1,511 garages and a number of shops, meeting halls, land and sewage treatment works.

A summary of our housing stock is set out in the table below:

Archetype by age band

Property type	Age				Grand Total
	PRE 1945	1945 - 1964	1965 - 1974	1975 ONWARDS	
Bedsit	45	14			59
Flat	82	690	450	800	2022
Maisonette		40			40
Bungalow		197	273	394	864
House - Detached	3	1	3	13	20
House - Semi-Detached	1013	738	21	106	1878
House - Terraced	192	507	132	308	1139
Grand Total	1335	2187	879	1621	6022

Just over a 33% of the rented homes are flats, including a small number of bedsits. Just over 20% of the total stock was built before 1945, of which 90% are houses, mostly semi-detached. Around 20% of the homes are designated as supported housing, including for the elderly. More than 50% of the sheltered housing stock has been built since 1970. Nearly 20% of the total stock is of non traditional construction. This includes homes that are built with prefabricated reinforced concrete (PRC) panels or other methods such as steel frames.

Over the years the level of stock owned by the Council has declined from Right to Buy sales and this has particularly impacted on the availability of homes outside of the Taunton itself. Over 70% of the stock remaining is located in central Taunton TA1 and TA2 areas. The level of stock is projected to fall further based on current trends, although the sales have significantly reduced in recent years. In 2010/11 a total of 11 properties were sold under the Right to Buy scheme, and the business plan assumes an average of around 8 sales a year, reducing further over time. Full details about the condition of our stock are contained in section 5 **Assets**.

Future demand for housing

The Borough of Taunton Deane is mainly rural and covers 462 sq km, extending from the Somerset Levels along the River Tone, with the Quantock Hills to the north and the Blackdown Hills to the south.

The main centres of population are Taunton, the county town of Somerset (66,000) and Wellington (13,000). The total Borough population of 109,000 is increasing, largely from inward migration. While the average age of the population is 42.2, the borough has a higher than average older population and this is expected to increase.

¹ As at 31.3.2011

In Taunton Deane 6.3% of the population are from a minority ethnic group (not classified as white British) which is below the national average of 16.4%.

Taunton Deane is generally prosperous with relatively low unemployment, but is also characterised by low wages and high house prices. In 2008 roughly 60,000 people were employed in Taunton Deane but a relatively large proportion of jobs, 36%, are part-time, compared with 24% nationally. Public sector employers, such as public administration, education and the health bodies, are the biggest employers in the area, and account for 39% of employees, compared to 27% nationally.

Emerging regional plans recognise Taunton as a major focus for growth over the next 20 years. Proposed changes to the revised Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West identified a requirement for at least 21,800 new homes to be provided over the period 2006 – 2026 with about 18,000 in the Taunton urban area.

Housing Market Areas (HMA) are defined as an area within which the majority of people choose to live and work. Work on HMAs in the region indicates two: one centred on Taunton (containing Taunton Deane, Sedgemoor and West Somerset) and the other on Yeovil (containing South Somerset and West Dorset).

The stock of housing in the Taunton HMA has increased noticeably over the past 10 years and household projection data would suggest that significant stock increases are likely to be required in the future. However, because there is such a significant gap between prices and incomes for many households, and a shortfall of 'cheap' housing to buy and rent, mechanisms for securing housing at below typical market entry-level prices will continue to be important in the future.

Over the past twenty five years there has been a reduction in social housing. The number of council houses has fallen by about 30%, from around 8,850 in 1984 to just over 6,000 now. Housing association stock has increased over the same period, but has not been sufficient to offset the loss in council housing, resulting in a net loss of social housing of about 15% (based on housing association stock up from 369 to 1,700).

Reflecting this, at the end of March 2011 the borough had 5,211 active applicants for accommodation on its choice based lettings system, a growth of more than 7% during the year.

In rural areas, the shortage of smaller and cheaper accommodation restricts the number of lower income households, and households in rural areas find access to services more difficult than any other group. The policy implications of these findings are that more affordable housing will be required to enable less well-off households to survive in rural areas, and thus contribute to the creation of 'mixed and balanced' communities. Infrastructure in rural areas is also a key policy consideration which needs to be tackled in order to improve access for poorer rural households to the services that they need.

In the affordable sector, the overall levels of housing need are high and the groups likely to have greatest priority (for example, those with children) are more likely to need larger homes. In addition, there is a lack of smaller, more affordable housing in rural areas when compared with regional and national data.

Data in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) indicates the main demand for market housing is amongst childless couples (32% of demand in the Taunton HMA) and that households with children make up around a quarter of the total market in both HMAs. When this is translated into dwelling sizes, the data suggests the greatest demands are for three and four plus bedroom homes, reflecting household ability and/or aspiration to afford more space than is technically required.

The SHMA indicated around 30% of all households in need could in principle afford something between a social rent and market housing. Within this group of households, there are two distinct affordability gaps: the first so-called 'intermediate' gap, made up of households who cannot afford a market rent but who can afford to pay more than a social rent; and the other gap is between households who can afford a private rental but are unable to buy at the bottom end of the market.

A further important policy issue to emerge from the SHMA is households with specific needs. In the Taunton HMA, a third of households contained someone with a limiting long-term illness. This is higher than the regional and national average. The main policy implications with regard to households with disabilities and/or support needs are the provision of new housing and improvements to current housing, as a means of meeting these requirements, and for supporting these households, as the population ages.

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment gives a detailed picture of the future housing required for people who choose to live and work in the Taunton Housing Market Area. The key policy issue arising from this work is housing affordability, in terms of future housing supply, size and tenure, to meet locally identified needs. There is nothing in the SHMA to suggest anything other than a continuing strong demand for social housing as part of a response to the demand for affordable housing. Data suggests that the Council faces strong demand for its homes and services from households with children, including loan parent families, and households with a need for support because of ill-health or reduced mobility. There appears to be a shortage of larger houses and for homes suitable for people requiring other forms of support to remain living in the community.

Current service delivery

Our approach to housing service delivery is based on the Council's business principles of providing excellent customer driven services that are locally focussed, delivered by a dynamic organisation. To achieve this we have had to balance national and local priorities with the needs and expectations of our tenants, and the resources available to us. In 2005 we consulted our residents on the transfer of the housing stock to a newly established housing association. Residents voted against this proposal and since then we have been responding to this consultation by developing our in house service. As a result of this consultation, and ongoing feedback from residents we have made a number of key changes to the way in which we deliver services. These include:

- TDBC have been pro-active in the way housing related support services are delivered, whilst maintaining Level C of the Quality Assessment Framework to ensure maximum funding from Supporting People. Tenants have been at the heart of the decision making process to introduce a hub and spoke model of service delivery

- Enhanced focus on activities within the housing estates team to tackle neighbour nuisance and anti social behaviour
- Improved customer contact arrangements with the creation of a new customer contact centre at the Council
- Created a new tenant empowerment and service development team which has lead to the development of a new Tenant Services Management Board for the housing service; and
- Introduced a new housing management software IT system which has lead to improved access to tenancy management information.

Full details about our current service delivery and staffing are set out in section 4 **Background**.

Section 3 Consultation

Introduction

Our first strategic objective, to secure a long term future for our housing service sets out our commitment to putting tenants at the heart of our decision making.

Existing consultation arrangements

Tenant involvement is now well established in the borough, with a clearly defined participation structure and decision making process in place to ensure tenants are involved in shaping, developing and monitoring our services, in a variety of different ways as set out below.

- Tenant Services Management Board
 - A formal sub-committee of the Council, which enables tenants to play a fundamental role in performance monitoring and decision making.
- Tenants Forum
 - Representatives from local Tenant and Resident Associations who play a key scrutiny role to drive performance improvement, with a dedicated budget for local priorities, the Special Estates Project Budget
- Sheltered Housing Forum, Tenants and Residents Associations
 - Local groups open to all relevant residents, who can raise issues with the Council on tenants' behalf, nominate members to the Tenants Forum and submit bids for expenditure from Special Estates Project Budget
- A variety of methods to give information to tenants, and receive feedback from them, used to inform service development, including mystery shopping, surveys, regular satisfaction monitoring (e.g. repairs and complaints), newsletters, as well as plans to introduce tenant inspectors

Consultation to develop the business plan

The Tenant Services Management Board has received regular reports on the development of the plan, and had opportunities to feed their views into the development of strategic objectives and the action plan.

Key priorities identified by the Tenant Services Management Board include

- Managing the impact of housing benefit changes
- Future investment standard to include a focus on renewables, tackling fuel poverty, offering a choice of heating, parking, bathrooms.
- Service improvement focussed on improving the process of delivering disabled aids and adaptations and the standard of properties at relet.
- Options appraisals to consider the future of non traditional homes, and opportunities for new build across the Council's area of operation

The Council also held two stakeholder workshops to enable tenant representatives, members of the tenant forum, sheltered housing forum and tenant services management board, councillors, and

partners to receive information on the impact of self financing and the development of the business plan. The workshop considered three areas of property, services and policy and people were given an opportunity to feed into the development of the emerging strategic objectives and action plan. Key priorities identified from these workshops include

- Services
 - Support for securing a long term future for the service, with tenants at the heart of decision making
 - Focus on fuel poverty, sustainability, tackling deprivation, community development
 - Safe and healthy housing – protecting and supporting vulnerable residents
 - The need for improved information technology to improve financial control
 - Support for widening tenant participation
 - Focus on retaining and developing skilled staff
- Property
 - Support for a local investment standard, beyond minimum decent homes, to include improved energy efficiency, heating, environment and tackling climate change
 - Investment priorities to include improved external doors, parking provision, insulation
 - Balance the needs of existing stock, with the need for new housing
 - Use of investment programme to improve employment opportunities for local people
- Policy
 - Support for the use of flexibility in tenure and rent levels offered by the localism bill
 - Review whether introductory tenancies would benefit the service
 - Review of underoccupation and succession policies to ensure best use of assets, and the needs of vulnerable tenants are met
 - Work with housing benefit to manage the impact of changes on tenants resulting from changes to the benefit system

A staff consultation event was held to discuss the implications of self financing. Again, two workshops were held, one on services and one on property. Priorities identified by staff include

- Services
 - A desire to ensure community development activity benefits tenants beyond the two priority areas of Priorswood and Halcon
 - Improving relet standards
 - Improving technology
 - Linking tenant participation with skills development – in particular to attract younger tenants to get involved
- Property
 - A local Taunton Deane Standard, that reflects property need and tenant priorities, consistently applied across the stock
 - Appraisal of garage sites to identify development opportunities
 - Improved lighting in communal areas
 - Improved disabled access in sheltered schemes
 - Improved transparency on external painting and major works schedules

- Heating and tackling fuel poverty (particularly for tenants with electric heating systems).

The consultation has been central to the development of the plan, and priorities are reflected in the action plan set out in section 7.

Future steps

We recognise that there is more work to do to deliver further improvements in resident participation. This includes

- Establishing clear arrangements for leaseholder participation
- Widening tenant participation to ensure all tenants have a wide choice of opportunities to receive information and give feedback to inform service improvement planning

The Tenant Services Management Board will play a crucial role in monitoring the delivery of the actions set out in this plan. Regular reviews of the plan will be presented to the board for feedback and input before being presented to the Council for decision.

Regular surveys of tenants and leaseholders will continue to test the success of actions set out in this plan, and to inform future business plan reviews.

Section 4 Background

Housing Services

The housing service provides management and maintenance to 6022² tenanted homes, as well as some 1,500 garages, meeting halls, land and sewerage treatment works.

There are **xx** staff employed in the delivery of the service. Staff structures are set out appendix **xx**.

Description of how service is provided e.g. general/specific teams, supporting people services etc.

Tenants can access the service by telephone, email and letter. The Council's website includes facilities for reporting repairs, paying rent and making complaints. Tenants can access the service in person at the Council's main office at Deane House and at the Wellington Community Office and at two satellite offices in Priorswood and Halcon. Estate Officers have a visible presence in local areas, and carry out home visits and attend tenant meetings. In addition housing surgeries are carried out regularly on certain estates as well as specific debt and benefit advice surgeries.

Our housing service standards reflect the Tenant Service Authority's national standards on

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment
- Home
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Value for Money

Our annual report to tenants sets out what these standards mean to tenants and how well the service performs in delivering them.

We have consulted our tenants on local priorities in order to provide an opportunity for them to influence how services are tailored to meet local needs. We introduced local offers in April 2011. Examples include

- Appointment of tenant property inspectors to monitor the standard of properties before they are let to new tenants
- Estate walkabouts with tenants to identify local issues
- Clear standards on what the housing service will do about anti social behaviour
- Introducing mystery shopping to monitor service quality
- Questionnaires and surveys (particularly for those not wishing or able to join a formal tenant group)

The Council is a member of the choice based lettings scheme Homefinder Somerset. This scheme is made up of five district/borough councils in Somerset and over 40 other providers. The service provides a single allocations policy and registration policy for all people seeking social housing in Somerset. The scheme operates a system of priority within four bands (Gold, Silver, Bronze and

² As at 31/3/11

emergency). Applicants bid directly for properties which are then allocated according to the banding system. The policy prioritises overcrowding and underoccupation in order to make best use of the stock and to meet households' changing needs. For the same reason some properties are identified specifically for transfer applicants whose change in circumstances requires them to move.

Tenure policy

Currently all new tenants receive a secure tenancy. The tenancy agreement sets out the rights and responsibilities of tenants and the Council. The Council provides support and assistance to tenants who need it to sustain their tenancy. The tenancy agreement includes ground for possession in the case of breach of tenancy. Eviction through a court order is used as a last resort in the case of continuous tenancy breach.

The Council does not currently offer probationary tenancies. This is a system where all new tenants are offered a probationary, or introductory tenancy which is converted to a lifetime secure tenancy following a period of time (12 – 18 months) providing there have been no major breaches in the tenancy agreement in that time. As a result of feedback from the consultation on the development of this business plan, the Council has committed to review this policy in the next 12 months to consider the advantages and disadvantages of this scheme for Taunton Deane. If it were adopted this would apply to all new tenancies.

The Localism Bill currently making its way through the parliamentary system proposes a new form of tenancy for local authority tenants. These proposals include a new regulatory requirement for all social landlords "to offer and issue the most secure form of tenancy compatible with the purpose of the housing and the sustainability of the community". This means that Councils will no longer be required to automatically let all new tenancies on long term secure tenancies (with or without an introductory or probationary period) but will have the option to issue fixed term tenancies in some cases.

The Council welcomes this new flexibility and is currently developing its tenure strategy to respond to these proposals and to consider the circumstances in which it may offer fixed term tenancies. The majority of tenancies offered will continue to be lifetime secure tenancies but there may be circumstances where the offer of a fixed term tenancy can meet an identified need, and make better use of the asset. Examples, from the consultation on the development of this plan include fixed term tenancies of properties subject to longer term regeneration plans, or fixed term tenancies to meet an identified need (e.g. family housing) which are reviewed once children reach adulthood.

The rights of existing tenants are unaffected by these proposals.

The bill introduces a further change to succession rights for all new tenancies. Currently tenants have one right of succession and can pass their tenancy on (in the event of their death) to a spouse/partner or certain qualifying family members. The new proposals would allow only for succession to a spouse or a partner. Again the Council welcomes this flexibility and is reviewing its policy on succession to reflect these proposals.

Rent policy

The business plan reflects the Council's current rent policy. This reflects national social rent policy to move Council rents to a target rent based on property value and local earnings. The aim of this policy is that rents charged by all social landlords (whether council or housing association) converge. This business plan assumes convergence by 2015/16. Up until convergence, rents move gradually to target over 4 years, with maximum increases limited to inflation (RPI) + 0.5% + £2. After convergence with target, rents increase by inflation (RPI) + 0.5%. The financial viability of the business plan is dependent on annual rent increases being agreed in line with this policy. Any divergence from this policy will impact on business plan resources and on the deliverability of actions in this plan.

Affordable rents

The localism bill provides a further flexibility on rents. This would allow the Council to charge higher rents on new build properties and a proportion of relets, in order to fund new development. This would mean the Council could charge up to 80% of market rent on these properties. The proceeds would be used to fund new development and cannot be used to increase business plan resources generally. The Housing Service welcomes this new flexibility and will explore how this can be applied to increase affordable housing provision.

Performance

The Council measures the performance of its housing service regularly against key performance indicators. This includes financial management, service delivery and customer satisfaction. This indicates strong performance in the following areas

- Rent collection
- Tenant satisfaction
- Anti social behaviour management
- Decent Homes delivery
- Gas servicing

This same monitoring has identified the following areas where performance could be improved:

- The time taken to relet voids
- The time taken to respond to complaints
- The % of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account
- The % of properties accepted on first offer
- The council's knowledge of tenants' diverse needs

A full list of the most recent performance indicators relating to the service is set out at appendix x.

Where performance does not meet targets, an action plan is developed, implemented and monitored, with tenant input where appropriate. For example in March 2011 we carried out a review of our void relet process. The focus of the review was to improve performance in relation to how quickly voids are relet and therefore to reduce the amount of rent lost from void periods. As part of the review we visited other local landlords to understand and learn from best practice elsewhere. As a result of the review an action plan was developed. This includes actions to

streamline the void process. The implementation of the action plan has been reviewed. This has shown the following results:

- Improvements in the management of voids, including weekly void meetings, clear responsibilities, improved record keeping
- A new surveying team to inspect voids and prepare works schedules
- Changes in operational processes including exit surveys for outgoing tenants and pre void inspections to improve the condition in which properties are left, accompanied viewings to improve acceptance rates, improved information for new tenants
- Improved void turnaround times, and improved proportion of homes accepted on first offer
- Reduced expenditure on void works.

In all service areas performance targets are set to achieve continuous improvement and to aim for performance to be in the top quartile when compared with similar social landlords in the area.

We have established arrangements to compare our performance regularly with other landlords through the Chartered Institute of Housing and National Housing Federation's benchmarking service, Housemark.

We also regularly measure tenant satisfaction using the National Housing Federation's STATUS survey and carry out a rolling programme to survey tenant satisfaction with repairs and anti social behaviour. Our tenant satisfaction is high, with our performance close to or above the National Housing Federation averages on all indicators. The most recent Status survey in 2011 showed that 90% of tenants were satisfied with the services provided by us as their landlord, an increase compared with 82% in 2008). The most recent results from our regular monitoring of satisfaction with repair work showed 99% of tenants that had had work carried out, were satisfied.

These results are excellent, but we are not complacent. We are keen to improve the percentage of tenants who are satisfied that their views are taken into account where although our performance compares well with others, we are not meeting our own internal targets for continuous improvement.

As part of the development of the business plan we have reviewed the current position of the service. Our summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats relating to the current service is set out at appendix x. This feeds directly into our priorities for action summarised below and set out in our action plan in section 7 **Priorities for Action**.

Tenant participation

The most recent annual report to tenants demonstrates how the Council is meeting the new regulatory standard for tenant involvement and empowerment. In April 2010 the Tenant Services Management Board was established as a formal sub-committee of the Council. It consists of 10 tenants and 2 councillors. Like all Council meetings, anyone can attend and minutes and papers are published on the Council's website. The Board's responsibilities include the monitoring of service standards and identification of improvements. Examples of key responsibilities include

- Reviewing and commenting on the annual housing services budget and any in year changes
- Setting and monitoring local service standards

- Setting and reviewing targets for service delivery

They also regularly request staff to attend to present on specific issues to enable the board's views to feed directly into finance and performance issues.

The board has been able to influence the way in which services are delivered in a variety of ways including

- Shaping new service standards in a variety of service areas including income management, anti social behaviour, supported housing and estate management
- Informing the Council's response to national government consultations on changes in housing policy
- Agreeing new arrangements for improved information for new tenants and to existing tenants on request

The Council also offers formal consultation and involvement through groups such as the Tenants' Forum and the Sheltered Housing Forum. The Tenants' Forum receives financial support from the Council and controls a special estates project budget for local spending priorities.

The Housing Service also works closely with local tenant and resident associations which are open to all residents living in the area. They elect members of the tenants forum and can put forward bids for spending from the special estates project budget, for consideration by the Forum.

Information is provided to wider tenants through 2 quarterly newsletters, "Deane Housing News" and "Tenant Talk" edited by an editorial board of tenants.

In 2011/12 a new tenant empowerment strategy will be published, bringing together the way in which the housing service will develop and enhance tenant involvement and empowerment. During the feedback on the development of this business plan the Tenant Services Management Board was keen to see more work done to widen involvement and ensure all tenants are given information on the service, and an opportunity to have their views heard. As a result the action plan includes actions to widen participation for example by developing the Tenant Services Management Board to identify service review areas, and to establish scrutiny groups involving a wider number of tenants to carry out the review.

Repairs service

In the 2011 Tenant Satisfaction Survey the repairs and maintenance service was identified as the most important service by tenants. Satisfaction with the service was found to be high. The factors that most influenced satisfaction were quality of repair work, followed by the information given out. Satisfaction with the information given out was average, compared with top quartile satisfaction with other aspects of the service. As a result the action plan for this business plan includes a review of the cyclical maintenance programme and with a view to publishing future plans following consultation with tenants.

Tenants can report repairs through the Council's website, by telephone, by email and letter and in person at Deane House.

Housing Property Services is the team responsible for the maintenance of the Council's housing stock. The service is part of the Community Services Theme which allows it to work closely along side Housing Services and achieve the desired separation from the DLO. The Community Services Business Support Team has responsibility for the support and office based staff with the technical side of the structure being managed by the Housing Manager – Property and the Property Manager. Structural diagrams are attached at appendix XXX.

The DLO following internal transformation is now organised in an area based working format. DLO staff and services are grouped under 'Open Space' and 'Building' functions, which in turn are organised and delivered across specified geographic areas of Taunton Deane. Open space services comprise of grounds maintenance, cleansing of streets and public conveniences, parks, nursery and tree surgery. Building services comprise of all housing maintenance and repair functions and highways and drainage works. The DLO is also moving towards more generic working where the workforce is supported to work across a wider variety of tasks. By utilising this generic approach there will be less repetition of work and less occasions of multiple trades needing to attend to complete a job. The savings in both time and travel from generic working are to be significant and will be factored into the HRA business plan as they materialise.

The DLO carries out around 85% of all day to day repairs on the Council's housing stock.

Rent collection

The regular and effective collection of rent is essential for the future financial viability of the service. Tenants are given advice at the start of their tenancy on the successful management of their rent account and advice on access to welfare benefits and payment mechanisms. An income management service standard has been produced and approved by the Tenant Services Management Board to inform tenants how the housing service will manage their rent. Tenants can pay rent through numerous methods including in person, by telephone, via the website, by post, standing order and direct debit. Tenants are sent a quarterly rent account statement which can also be requested at any time. A "rent calendar" for all tenants is published annually in the "Tenants Talk" newsletter. As a matter of routine articles are published in our newsletter promoting the take-up of payment via direct debit as our preferred method of rent collection.

The Council has in place procedures to escalate action to tackle rent arrears. Should an account fall into arrears tenants are contacted within 2 weeks and offered advice and assistance in drawing up a repayment plan and preventing further arrears.

Partnership working

The Council works in partnership with many agencies in order to ensure its services are efficient and co-ordinated to the benefit of residents. One example of this Southwest One which is a unique public/private joint venture partnership formed in 2007 between Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, Avon and Somerset police and IBM. The organisation aims to improve services and save money for the authorities. Southwest One services include a combination of managing back office (such as IT, Finance, HR), transactional services through a single shared service arrangement and delivering major strategic projects to transform and modernise the way authorities work.

Southwest One delivers approximately 3,000 services through multiple delivery channels, including telephone, face to face and self service through the website. The Southwest One contact centre handles on average 37,000 calls per month with 83% answered within 20 seconds. At first point of contact, 98% of Taunton Deane Borough Council and Somerset County Council enquiries are dealt with and 96% of all customers are satisfied with the service they receive.

The most significant example of successful partnership working has been the Council's involvement with Registered Providers and developers through the planning process, to deliver low cost housing in the borough to replace Council dwellings sold under the Right to Buy and to meet newly arising need. The Housing service also continues to develop good partnership working with other local authorities, companies and agencies.

Recent notable housing service partnership successes include:

[insert examples]

Continuous improvement and value for money is the ultimate aim and the Housing Service will continue to explore opportunities for partnership working to deliver this. For example the action plan for this business plan includes [insert details].

Information Technology

The Council uses an integrated housing management system for rents, allocations, housing repairs, planned maintenance and right to buy.

As part of the development of the Repairs Department, repairs officers will soon be using portable technology to enable the transfer of data to the Housing System. The integrated housing management system, can track individual property repair histories and associated costs and is invaluable in providing accurate information on the stock.

TDBC is also reviewing the process used to monitor rent arrears. This will lead to a more effective system of collecting arrears from start to finish. We are working with the system developer to observe officers at work to map and improve the process.

Tenant profiling is an important part of Housing Services identifying the needs of its tenants and shaping services to meet these requirements. By upgrading to the latest version of the integrated housing management system TDBC will be able to undertake greater analysis of the information and matching services to tenants.

In order to provide an enhanced repairs service TDBC is investigating the use of an Appointments Module that will allow the system to book a specific appointment with tenants for a repair to be completed. This will follow the work being carried out on looking at how repairs are logged and allocated. TDBC is also in the process of upgrading the system which holds the details of properties to allow planned maintenance to be detailed with more accuracy.

TDBC takes any reports of anti social behaviour (asb) seriously. This is reflected in the appointment of Estate Officers with a particular focus on asb and the plan to purchase an ASB Module which will be integrated with the existing housing management system to allow officers to track and resolve asb issues.

The improvement of IT systems, to improve financial control and operational effectiveness was identified as a key priority through the consultation on this business plan. As a result the action plan includes actions to prepare a housing IT and data management strategy to identify future improvements and resource requirements.

The growth in use of the internet and the potential for digital TV is likely to have a significant effect on the means by which customers contact the Council and access its services.

Information about housing services appear on the Council's website and more interactive applications are currently being developed.

Next steps

The priorities for action are set out in section 7 of this business plan. They focus on high level strategic priorities and are supported by detailed operational actions in departmental service improvement plans. The priorities are structured around the four housing strategic objectives of

1. Securing a long term future for our housing service.
2. Tackling deprivation and sustainable community development
3. Investing in our housing stock, regeneration and affordable housing
4. Climate change

Section 5 Assets

Introduction

Our housing stock is a valuable asset. As a major provider of social housing we make a significant contribution to meeting the need for affordable housing in the borough. Generally our stock has been well maintained, with an investment strategy targeted at bringing all homes up to the decent homes standard. Tenant feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction with the quality of homes. Demand for homes is high across the stock. There is also evidence of a desire for an investment standard that delivers more than basic decent homes, with a focus on energy efficiency and sustainability as well as environmental improvements, such as improved parking provision.

Stock profile

The Council's housing stock consists of 6,022 dwellings (at 01.04.2011) together with 1,511 garages, and a number of shops, meeting halls, land and sewerage treatment works.

Just over 33% of the stock is flats, including a small number of bedsits. Just over 20% of the stock is pre-war, and over 90% of the pre 1945 stock is houses, mostly semi-detached.

Of the total stock, 20% is designated for supporting people or the elderly, with more than half this stock having been built since 1974.

By post code district, over 70% of the stock is in TA1 and TA2.

Homes of non traditional construction types

Nearly 20% of the stock is of non traditional construction. This includes homes that are built with prefabricated reinforced concrete (PRC) panels or other methods such as steel frames. In 2004 a specialist stock survey was carried out on the non traditional stock by Curtins. At that point they reported that the structures will remain structurally stable until 2030 (for the Cornish and probably Reema and Airey), and approaching 2030 in the case of Woolaway (houses and flats).

The breakdown of properties by type and location is indicated below:

Ward	AIREY PRC	CORNISH PRC	REEMA PRC	WOOLAWAY	BISF HOUSE	EASIFORM	CONCRETE	TRU-STEEL	RELOCATE	STANDERWIC	Grand Total
BISHOPS HULL	12	19									31
BISHOPS LYDEARD							4				4
BLACKBROOK AND HOLWA					41						41
BLACKDOWN		15									15
BRADFORD ON TONE				14							14
COMEYTOWE				14							14
HALCON		98					52		11		161
LYNGFORD						157				8	165
MANOR AND WILTON				20							20
MILVERTON AND NORTH	1						2				3
NEROCHE		6									6
NORTH CURRY		6									6
NORTON FITZWARREN		80									80
PYRLAND AND ROWBARTO		86		168	39	173					466
RUISHTON AND CREECH		19						24			43
STAPLEGROVE		7									7
STOKE ST.GREGORY	2										2
WELLINGTON EAST			44			110					154
WELLINGTON NORTH		26		11							37
WELLINGTON & ROCKWELL		21		21							42
WEST MONKTON	11										11
WIVELISCOMBE AND WES							6				6
Grand Total	26	383	44	248	80	440	64	24	11	8	1328

With 2030 assumed as the “end date” for the expected lives of some of these dwellings, the business plan includes proposals for a detailed options appraisal of these dwellings to inform future investment strategy. In the meantime the business plan includes significant costs from 2026 to provide for extending the lives of these properties if that is the outcome of the options appraisal. An updated survey has also been commissioned from Curtins which will be used to inform the options appraisals. Early consultation indicates a desire to include the following factors in any future options appraisal:

- Impact on long term tenants and owner occupiers
- Improved energy efficiency and affordable warmth
- Improved land use – exploring opportunities to increase density and mix tenures
- Council capacity to deliver alternative options
- Business plan impact of heavy investment required to extend life of existing buildings

Sheltered housing

The Council has 1039 dwellings designated as sheltered housing or extra care housing for the elderly. In total there are 49 schemes, consisting of between 2 and 83 homes. These include two extra care schemes at Kilkenny Court in Taunton and Lodge Close in Wellington.

Somerset County Council a review of the future strategy for older people. The Council is working in partnership its partners and the South West Housing Support Unit to contribute to this review process to create a Housing Strategy for Older People that integrates intervention from healthcare, social care and housing to make the best use of the available resources, in the context of future demographic changes.

The high level aims of the strategy, which have been drawn from consultation already undertaken, will be to enable older people to:

- Maximise their choice and control.
- Retain their independence.
- Be confident of community support.

- Increase their quality of their life.

The requirements for investment in our own stock will be assessed in the light of the approved County Council strategy.

Temporary accommodation

The stock includes 23 units of temporary accommodation, including 2 hostels of non traditional construction (portakabins) at Sneddon Grove and Winckworth Way in Taunton. The asset management strategy includes an action to review whether these units remain fit for purpose. Other temporary accommodation is in traditionally built units but the Council has identified a need for more one bedroomed temporary accommodation.

Leasehold

Around 30% of flats have been sold and as a result the Council manages 372 leasehold properties. There are three blocks where all flats have been sold, and 22 blocks where over half of the flats are leasehold. This leaves the Council with a requirement to develop an effective and efficient leasehold management service and actions to deliver this are included in this business plan. The aim of the review was to improve services and leaseholder satisfaction, for example by improving billing systems so that leaseholders receive accurate and timely bills to improve transparency, accountability and collection rates.

Stock condition information

The last stock condition survey was carried out in 2005 by Savills. At that time the stock was assessed as having been reasonably well maintained on a day-to-day basis, but a significant number of components, such as kitchens and bathrooms, were identified for replacement in the short to mid term. In the period since 2005 the Council's investment programme has focused on the delivery of decent homes, with new kitchens installed in about 60% of the stock. Officers have maintained an asset management database which has been updated as work has been carried out, and newly arising need identified. Information from this database has been used to inform the projections of investment need reflected in the business plan.

In order to ensure that the stock condition information is robust and consistent, a validation of the Council's data has been carried out by Savills.

This validation process has identified various areas of concern, relating to the underlying data and the database methodology used to create the overall costs. The result of the issues highlighted by this validation has culminated in a set of investment costs that are considerably below expectation when compared with external benchmarks, and indicate an investment profile in direct contrast to the validated properties. There is some indication from the validation that costs in early years may be lower than indicated in the database, with increased costs to be expected in later years.

On this basis it is not considered that the survey data, and arising costs reports, are robust enough to be relied upon as a true reflection of the investment need of the stock over the next 30 years. Consequently the investment programme for 2012/13 has been reduced compared with the requirement indicated in the stock condition database. Investment has been prioritised based on the Council's ability to deliver, with investment priorities informed by local knowledge and resident consultation.

During 2012 the Council will take action to improve the overall quality of the data to inform longer term business planning with the following actions

- A fresh stratified sample survey will be undertaken to a suitable volume of properties to achieve a high level of statistical accuracy.
- Following this the new survey data will be “cloned” to the non surveyed properties and overlaid with empirical data regarding element replacement over say the last 5 years.
- A dedicated resource in-house will be made available to ensure the data remains up to date and is managed correctly.

Consideration will also be given to the benefit of a 100% survey.

Stock investment needs

The total expenditure to improve and maintain the stock and related assets over 30 years is currently forecast as £170.6m. This equates to £28,360 per dwelling over 30 years. These costs relate to 6017 properties, are at a base date of August 2011 and comprise items of capital maintenance expenditure only. They include contract preliminaries, but excludes professional fees, leaseholders, management costs and VAT.

The following table sets out the capital requirements in five year bands.

	Yrs 2 -5	Yrs 6-10	Yrs 11-15	Yrs 16-20	Yrs 21-25	Yrs 26-30
Future Major Works	£27,275,612	£17,991,193	£17,480,384	£29,939,117	£15,420,636	£18,462,134
Improvements	£2,843,020	£3,389,375	£1,850,000	£1,850,000	£1,850,000	£1,850,000
Related Assets	£480,000	£600,000	£600,000	£600,000	£600,000	£600,000
Contingent Repairs	£305,986	£219,806	£199,304	£323,891	£178,706	£209,121
Exceptional Extensive	£1,000,000	£1,250,000	£1,150,000	£6,250,000	£6,250,000	£1,150,000
Disabled Adaptations	£2,000,000	£2,500,000	£2,500,000	£2,500,000	£2,500,000	£2,500,000
Backlog	£4,176,655	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
TOTAL	£38,081,273	£25,950,374	£23,779,688	£41,463,008	£26,799,342	£24,771,255

Year one capital expenditure in the business plan reflects the 2011/12 capital programme. The backlog of £4.2m reflects the difference between the projected investment need in year one and the actual capital programme.

A further £14.5m over 30 years has been included for disabled aids and adaptations, reflecting current spend of £500K a year.

This produces a capital expenditure profile as indicated in the chart below.

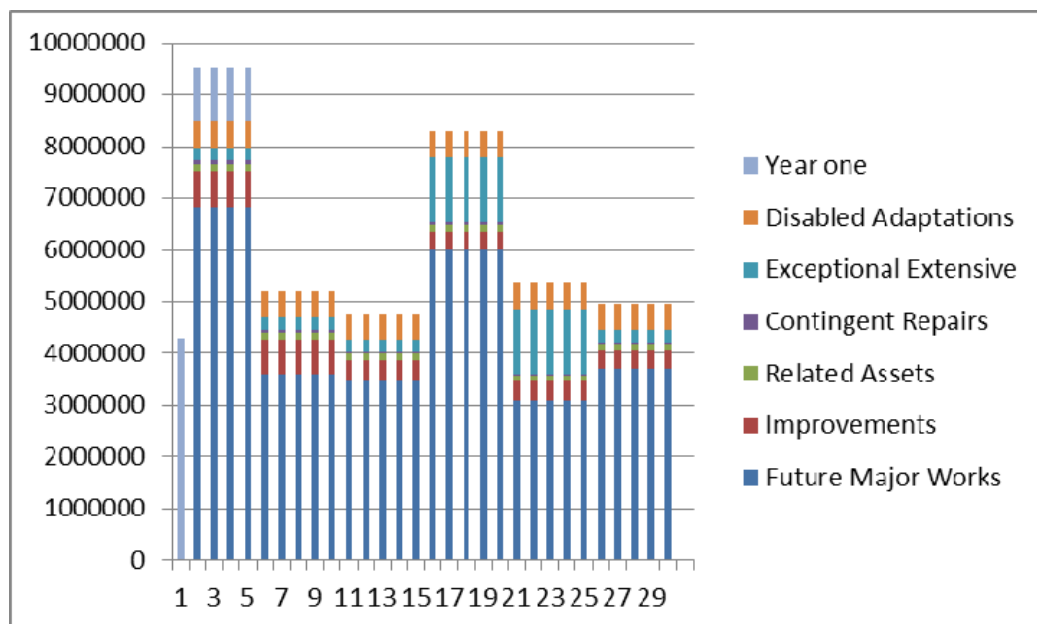


Fig 5.1 Capital investment profile based on stock condition database

Investment strategy

This profile indicates a requirement for an increase in the capital programme from current levels of £4.3m to over £9.5m in years 2 – 5. The stock condition validation has indicated that the early years’ requirement may be overstated. The Council therefore proposes a capital programme of £5.5m in 2012/13, representing a £1.2m increase in the current programme. Key elements of the 2012/13 programme will include

- [to be inserted]

During 2012/13 a new stock condition survey will be carried out to inform future business planning. The Council will also develop the capacity of its asset management team to prepare to deliver a larger capital programme.

In the meantime for the purposes of this business plan, investment has been “smoothed” over the first 10 years of the plan, resulting in a revised profile as set out below:

	Yrs 2 -5	Yrs 6-10	Yrs 11-15	Yrs 16-20	Yrs 21-25	Yrs 26-30
Original	£38,081,273	£25,950,374	£23,779,688	£41,463,008	£26,799,342	£24,771,255
Revised	£31,748,867	£36,582,279.11	£23,779,688	£41,463,008	£26,799,342	£24,771,255

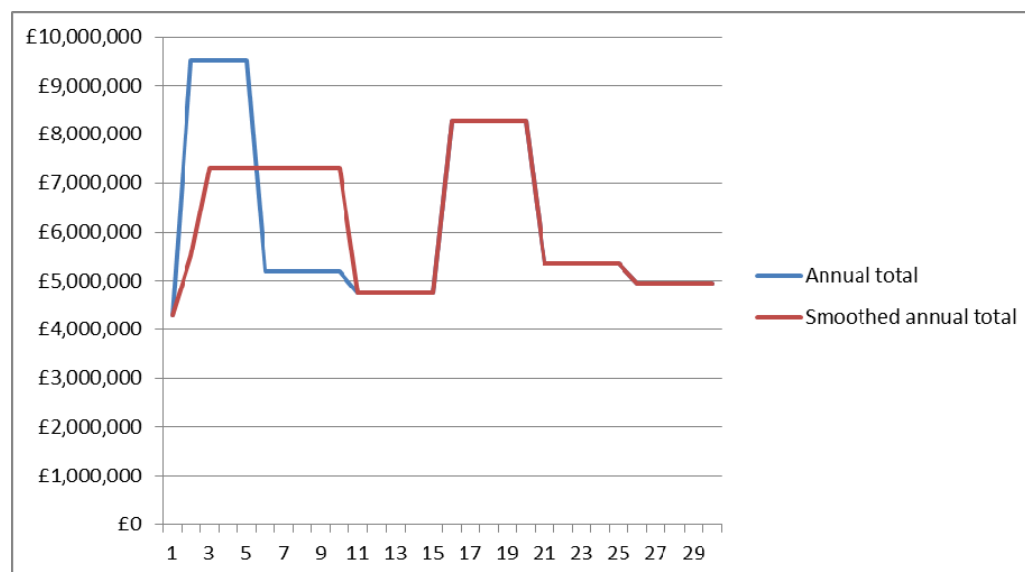


Fig 5.2 Investment strategy based on smoothed profile

Decent Homes and Local Investment Standard

The investment requirements in the current plan include all costs required to maintain the properties at the decent homes standard identified in the current stock condition database. It also includes costs for works that improve the stock beyond the basic decent homes standard including:

- £6.6m over 30 years as a sustainable energy contingency fund to provide affordable warmth, improve the energy efficiency of homes.
- £4.5m over 30 years for environmental improvements to fund works outside the home including improved parking provision.
- £2.4m in the first ten years to replace electric heating with gas/oil heating.

These allowances will be reviewed based on business plan affordability, depending on the outcome of the revised stock condition survey to be carried out in 2012.

Energy efficiency/sustainability

Consultation with residents and other stakeholders has indicated a strong commitment to energy efficiency and sustainability. This addresses a key strategic objective of our business plan to tackle climate change by reducing the carbon emissions from our housing stock. It also addresses key tenants concerns about fuel poverty, reducing the cost of heating by improving insulation and replacing electric systems with modern oil or gas central heating systems.

The asset management strategy highlights the fact that there are a small number of homes (around 250) with extremely poor thermal efficiency. Typically these are properties that have night storage heating and single-glazing. Some of these have since been upgraded and their thermal efficiency is being reassessed. Others will be prioritised for investment programmes in the short term.

The asset management strategy includes five key actions to tackle fuel poverty

- Advice and guidance
- Making homes more energy efficient.

- Making use of renewable energy installations (solar PV, heat pumps, solar thermal)
- Increasing the disposable income of householder through welfare benefit advice, access to grants and reduced fuel bills.
- Advice and assistance to households under occupying who wish to move to a smaller home that will be easier and cheaper to heat.

Regeneration and new development

The Council is exploring options for the regeneration of Halcon North. This would involve replacing around 200 existing homes with up to 400 new homes. The new homes would be mix of tenures, with private sale, shared ownership, affordable and social rented homes available for a wide range of local residents.

As consultation continues as to the most deliverable option for the area to address the Council's priorities for improvement, the business plan includes actions to increase the skills and capacity of staff teams to support major regeneration schemes.

Until formal decisions are taken on the demolition of existing homes, resources for their future investment needs are included in the baseline business plan. The impact of removing these properties from the business plan will be modelled, based in updated information on existing stock investment requirements from the new survey, and on plans for the scope and timing of any redevelopment as these are established.

Beyond Halcon North the Council has ambitions to explore new build development, using a mixture of debt financing from the HRA business plan, grant, and income from affordable rents where this would meet an identified local need. In the short term capacity for development is constrained by government limits on the amount of borrowing that the Council can undertake, and the Council's own internal capacity to deliver. The business plan includes actions to map development opportunities that exist across the HRA land, and to explore options for delivery of identified schemes within the future business plan.

In the meantime, the "smoothed" investment profile established, pending a review of the stock condition survey, will maintain resources within the business plan to provide a balance between the investment needs of the existing stock, and future new development.

Section 6 Resources

This business plan is prepared in the context of major changes in housing finance with the introduction of self financing from April 2012.

Existing housing subsidy system

Under the existing housing subsidy system the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) uses a notional calculation to assess the surplus that it believes Taunton Deane should be making on its housing revenue account and the Council is required to pay this amount into a national pool, which is then redistributed nationally to those authorities making a notional deficit, based on DCLG's calculation.

The allowances used to calculate the subsidy payment are published annually and the Council has to manage its annual budgets to take into account the subsidy payment required.

In Taunton Deane a subsidy payment of £7m is budgeted for 2011/12. Previous business planning indicated that this would increase over time to £12.2m within 10 years and an annual payment of £25m by the end of the 30 year plan.

The most significant limiting factor in the existing subsidy system is the level of cost allowances used (which in most councils are lower than actual costs), and the inability to set long term plans, due to the volatility of a system of annual determinations. The existing system had become increasingly complex, confusing and unaffordable to the long term HRA.

In asset management terms this meant that the Council's capital programme was limited to Major Repairs Allowances within the subsidy system. For 2011/12 this funded a capital programme of £4.3m. The programme was set based on what could be afforded each year under the subsidy system, rather than driven by the needs of the stock.

Housing finance reform

In February 2011 DCLG published its proposals for housing finance reform . The stated objectives of these reforms are:

- "To give local authorities the resources, incentives and flexibility they need to manage their own housing stock for the long-term and to drive up quality and efficiency.
- To give tenants the information they need to hold their landlord to account, by replacing the current opaque system with one which has a clear relationship between the rent a landlord collects and the services they provide. "

These reforms end the current redistributive housing subsidy system. Following April 2012 the Council will no longer be required to make an annual payment into the national housing subsidy pool. Instead it will need to finance a level of housing debt, calculated using a methodology that values the stock over 30 years, and aims to leave the Council with a long term sustainable business plan.

The valuation is based on assumptions about costs and income over the next 30 years. These are based on current government social rent policy, and its assessment of reasonable costs for management, maintenance and major repairs. These indicative cash flows are then discounted back to a value in today's terms to calculate the level of debt that the Council could afford, providing its actual business plan matches DCLG's valuation assumption.

Significantly the level of cost allowances used in the valuation is higher than under the current subsidy system. In Taunton Deane the allowances represent a funding uplift of 17% compared with the current subsidy system. This includes increases in allowances, and funding for disabled and adaptations which was not included in the existing subsidy system. The cost allowances for major repairs assume all stock is in a good condition from day one and do not provide resources to tackle any backlog of expenditure needed.

In Taunton Deane the valuation of the stock, using this methodology is higher than the current level of debt assumed in the housing subsidy system (subsidy capital finance requirement (SCFR)). The Council will therefore be required to pay government the difference as set out below:

• Opening debt allocation (Valuation)	£117.8m
• SCFR	£30.6m
• Debt to be taken on April 2012	£87.2m
• Average debt per dwelling based on 6,085 homes	£19,356

In order to control public sector borrowing, current government policy is that HRA borrowing will be limited at the opening debt settlement of £117.8m over the life of the 30 year business plan. This position may be reviewed in future spending review rounds.

The valuation assumes a level of Right to Buy sales of 8 per year in the early years, with numbers reducing in later years. The valuation reflects income lost from these sales. However the Council will continue to have to pay 75% of the proceeds from each Right to Buy sale to government. The business plan assumes the retained 25% is used by the Council to fund strategic housing objectives and is not used for reinvestment in the existing housing stock.

The assumptions used to estimate future cost allowances are higher than the assumptions used in the subsidy system, representing an uplift in allowances of 17%. This means that the Council should be better off under self financing than under the current subsidy system. The cost of financing the new debt payment is estimated in the DCLG plan to be a little under £6.5m, compared with £7m paid under the current subsidy system. More significantly the new system allows the Council to set firm long term plans which means that it can finance a higher level of expenditure based on debt that is repaid over time.

However, the increase in housing debt, and the ending of the redistributive system, passes increased risks relating to inflation and interest rates from central to local government. The DCLG business plan assumes an interest rate of 7% on debt. This compares with the Council's current consolidated anticipated future funding costs of under 6%.

The debt calculation will be updated by DCLG and issued to authorities in the form of a draft determination due in December 2011. The debt allocation figure provided by CLG in February 2011 is subject to change in respect of a revisit of inflation assumptions, stock numbers, rebasing of the expenses calculation and future right to buy sales. It is difficult to accurately estimate at this stage how this position may change. There is also further guidance due from CLG about the treatment of debt and depreciation. There is also a need to update the information on future stock condition as set out in the previous section 5, **Assets**. Therefore based on the guidance awaited from CIPFA/CLG, revised debt allocation and revised stock condition survey data this is very much a position statement as to the status of the current business plan.

As inflation is likely to be higher, the revised debt settlement is expected to be higher than the current figure of £87m. However, providing that inflation figure is also used to set rent increases for 2012/13 (in line with the Council's current rent policy), and providing other costs are contained within general inflation, then the change in inflation should not mean that the settlement is significantly less affordable to the council's business plan.

The more significant risk is the stock condition survey data. The long term position of the business plan cannot be warranted or relied upon until this information is updated, as set out in section 5 **Assets**. In order to manage that risk, costs have been smoothed over the first ten years but this smoothing should not be taken to be a reliable profile for planning beyond the first year of the plan.

The introduction of self financing is subject to the Localism Bill receiving royal assent before April 2012. The Bill includes a provision for government to reopen the settlement in future years if there are major changes in housing policy that would impact on future business plans.

Baseline financial position for Taunton Deane

In order to consider the impact of these proposals on the Council it is necessary to replace the indicative business plan based on DCLG's valuation assumptions, with actual costs and income estimated for Taunton Deane over the next 30 years, in a new business plan financial model that can be used to project future income and expenditure, debt financing and stock changes over time.

Actual costs and income are based on the Council's 2011/12 budgets and make the following assumptions:

- Rents increase in line with government policy, to converge with target rents by 2015/16 and increasing at inflation + 0.5% thereafter
- Non dwelling income (garages etc) increases by inflation only
- The void rate is set at 0.97% to reflect current performance in year 1 and then increases to 1.02% from year 2 onwards and the bad debt provision is estimated to increase to 0.5% from 0.24% over the next 3 years to reflect the anticipated impact of future housing benefit reforms.
- Day to day maintenance costs increase in line with inflation and do not vary with small stock losses from Right to Buy.
- Management costs increase by 0.5% above general inflation. Any further unforeseeable cost increases such as increases to employer pension contributions, pay awards and supplies and

services increasing above general inflation plus 0.5% would have to be met by efficiency savings.

- The contribution to reserves for the establishment of SWOne procurement consortium of £0.430m is forecast to continue for the next 6 years only.
- Supporting people grant reduces by a real 11% a year and is withdrawn completely from 2014/15. No reduction in related expenditure is made in the plan
- Major repair costs increase by inflation only, and are based on the Council's internally generated figures, smoothed over the first 10 years, pending revised stock condition information. Costs are assumed to vary with stock loss over time.
- Professional fees for major repair works are included within capital costs or management costs – no additional allowance is included
- Service charge income and costs increase in line with inflation
- General inflation based on RPI of 2.5%
- Cost of borrowing 6%

Additional management costs have been included of £48K p.a. which represent the net increase in costs (after deducting savings from the restructuring of the housing service) to provide the necessary resources to improve services in both housing and property such as the database administration. This represents the cost of short term actions to improve the service. Longer term changes around additional staffing requirements to support regeneration will need to be factored into the plan as decisions are made about individual projects.

Current council HRA debt, as measured by the Housing Capital Finance Requirement (HCFR) is £14.45m. The actual debt is lower than the amount assumed in the subsidy calculation (SCFR £30.6m). When additional debt of £87.2m is added to the existing debt, this gives the Council an opening self financing debt of £101.65m. This is some £16m below the debt limit or cap imposed of £117.8m, which gives the plan a level of headroom of additional borrowing potential.

The business plan model assumes that debt is repaid at the earliest opportunity, in order to demonstrate financial viability. The model ensure that the capital programme is fully funded by available revenue surpluses from the HRA, whilst maintaining a minimum balance. If additional borrowing is required, the model allows for this up to the designated debt cap. Any capital shortfalls are carried over to the following year and inflated. If capital expenditure can be fully funded, any remaining balances above the £1m minimum HRA balance is used to repay debt.

In reality the Council will be able to review the plan regularly and make decisions about the use of surpluses, balancing repayment of debt and additional investment. This gives the Council a much greater level of flexibility in its long term planning than has been possible under the existing subsidy system.

The graph below represents the projected in-year cashflows for the HRA and closing balances under self-financing in £'000s;

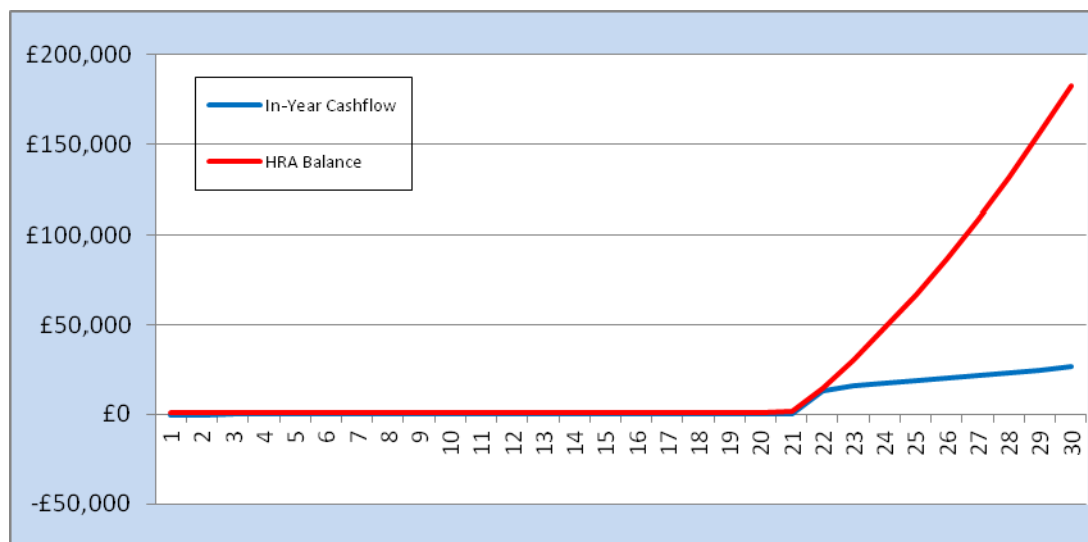


Fig 6.1 Baseline revenue position

The plan projects a healthy position for the HRA account, given that the balances do not fall below a pre-set minimum balance of £1m. After year 21 the balances start accumulating to £182m in year 30 within the plan.

All capital expenditure is met, according to the stock condition database outputs as demonstrated in the graph below in £'000s;

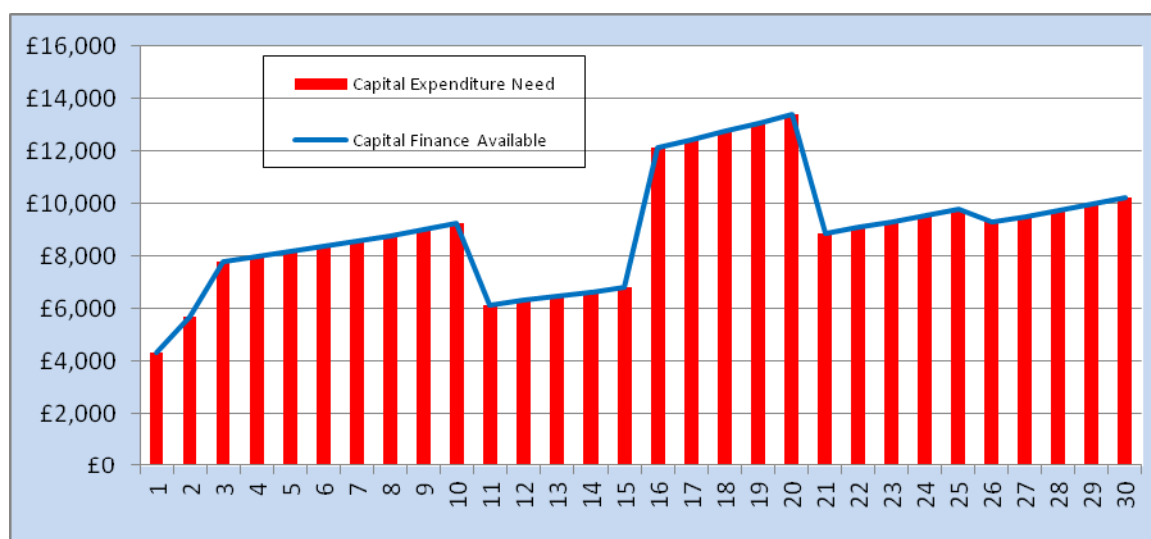


Fig 6.2. Baseline capital position

The plan shows that the capital expenditure can be fully met with the resources available from depreciation charges, Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay (HRA contributions). At this stage the plan predicts that no further borrowing is required, maintaining the available headroom up to the debt cap.

To best demonstrate the viability of the plan the HRA debt graph below shows the initial position of debt take-on of £87.198m. Year 1 effectively being 2012.13 and the scale £'000;

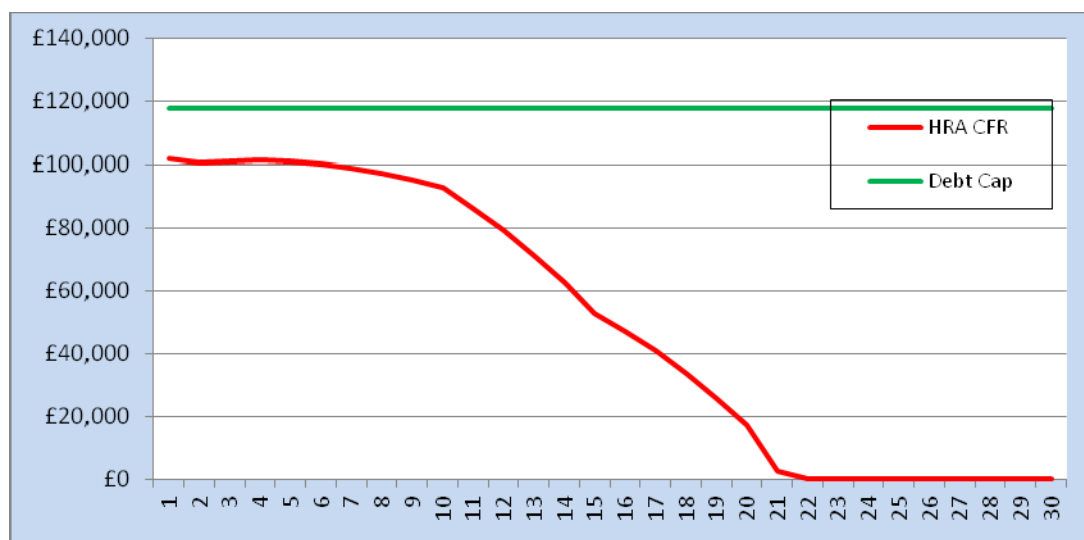


Fig 6.3 Baseline position HRA debt

This graph demonstrates that the debt could be repaid as early as 21 years if all the available HRA resources were co-ordinated to repaying the loan. The maximum debt is £101.65m, well within the debt cap of £117.8m.

Sensitivities

The baseline plan is viable and very resistant to changes in key assumptions. Key sensitivities, showing movements in RPI, levels of capital expenditure, interest rates and real growth in capital and revenue repair costs are set out below.

At all points HRA debt is contained within the debt cap and repaid within 30 years.

	Peak Debt	Peak Yr	Debt Repaid
Base Position	101.649m	1	21
RPI reduces to 2%	101.649m	1	21
RPI increases to 3%	101.649m	1	19
£1m Year Extra Expenditure each year from year 2	104.591m	6	24
Capital Expenditure costs increase by 0.5% above RPI	101.649m	1	21
Capital & Rev Repairs costs increase by 0.5% above RPI	101.649m	1	22
Interest rates reduce to 5.5%	101.649m	1	19
Interest rates increase to 6.5%	101.860m	5	21

Summary

The above projections under self-financing demonstrate that the HRA business plan is fully self-funding and can meet all its obligations under self-financing.

The business plan will be continually developed and updated in conjunction with the asset management strategy and the final proposals for HRA reform.

Examples of this will be the updated debt settlement figure to be published in December 2011 as well as further guidance on depreciation and the treatment of debt. A further example will be the use of updated stock condition survey information. This will provide information based on a statistically reliable sample of properties, to provide more robust information to inform the future investment strategy.

Section 7 Priorities for action

Our priorities for action to improve our services and homes are structured around the four housing strategic priorities of

- Securing a long term future for our housing service
- Tackling deprivation and sustainable community development
- Investing in our housing stock, regeneration and affordable housing
- Climate change

These strategic actions are supported by more detailed operational activity, set out in our departmental service improvement plans.

The business plan will be monitored annually and priorities for action revised at that point. The results of this monitoring will be presented to the Council along with any decisions required as a result of changes. The Tenant Services Management Board will be at the heart of the annual review process. The reviews will also be informed by the results of regular consultation with tenants throughout the year, including the results of surveys, mystery shopping and tenant inspection and scrutiny. We will also use information from complaints, service reviews and regular stock condition surveys to inform the development of the plan over time.

Objective one: Securing a long term future for the housing service

- This means continuing to invest in the management of the housing stock to ensure it meets tenants' needs, who should be at the heart of decision making.

Priority	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
1.1 Widen tenant participation and empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Tenant Services Management Board to identify service improvement areas and establish scrutiny groups to review the areas 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All proposals for service improvement supported by evidence from tenant feedback. • Increase in proportion of tenants providing feedback to inform service reviews • Increase in proportion of tenants satisfied their views are taken into account
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect evidence from tenant inspectors, surveys, questionnaires, estate walkabouts and mystery shoppers 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link tenant participation with opportunities for skill development 			
1.2 Improve services to leaseholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree actions arising from service review 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate and timely billing • Improved leaseholder engagement • Understanding our financial position • Measure and improve leaseholder satisfaction
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult leaseholders on views of current service and participation arrangements 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmark service with other landlords 			
1.3 Deliver successful self-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve debt and income management 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business plan used to inform

Priority	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
financed business plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review business plan annually with residents 			investment and service planning, regularly updated to reflect emerging needs, issues and resident feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased business plan income from improved income and debt management
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark performance with other landlords 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realistic performance improvement targets set to move to top quartile performance in all areas Annual budgets set based on business plan priorities, with costs benchmarked against other providers to demonstrate value for money
1.4 Develop and support our staff to deliver excellent services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and deliver staff training plan linked to business plan objectives 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved staff satisfaction Improved staff retention and recruitment of quality staff Improved customer satisfaction Developing pride in the housing profession as staff progress their careers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff's views used to inform training and development and service improvement planning 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing restructure to deliver business plan objectives 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing costs and structure benchmarked with other landlords 			
1.5 Review of staff accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing accommodation use and identify opportunities for improvement to match new staffing structures and other Council wide pressures/changes on accommodation 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff accommodation fit for new structures
1.6 Review of IT/data management systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current arrangements and identify areas for improvement and resources – to include 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing IT and data management strategy

Priority	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
	review of renewal of major systems			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved use of new technology to deliver services Improved use of customer service centre Improved compatibility between financial and operational systems

Objective two: Tackling deprivation and sustainable community development

- This means taking action so that disadvantaged communities will have better access to local housing services, training and employment, continuing our support for a range of vulnerable people.

Action	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
2.1 Prepare for supporting people funding reductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand cost base 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services for vulnerable tenants maintained with flexibility to enable future needs to be met Full understanding of cost base to support financial viability of the service
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore alternative service delivery options 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand current and future needs 			
2.2 Establishing a strategic tenancy strategy that ensures that local housing need is met and assets are used effectively, utilising all available flexibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to date information on local housing need 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic tenancy strategy in place Improved ability to meet a wide range of housing need Revised underoccupation strategy in place Revised succession policy in place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respond to consultation on national policy changes 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of introductory tenancies 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of underoccupation and succession policies 			

Action	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
2.3 Continuing to fund disabled adaptations and disabled facilities grants for HRA tenants and improve the delivery process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good and up to date information on needs of tenants 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient process to reduce waiting times • Relets with existing adaptations targeted to meet need • Understanding of adequacy of budget provision • Increased satisfaction from residents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of current service delivery 			
2.4 Assess the impact of welfare benefits on existing and future tenants and ensure services are designed to help manage the impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good and up to date information on tenant income and benefit eligibility 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact on tenants is managed to avoid problems of affordability and increased debt • Impact on business plan income (rent arrears and bad debts) minimised • Impact on demand is understood and responded to
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased resources in income management team 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular information and advice to tenants on changes 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing liaison with housing benefit service 			
2.5 Invest in community development to improve opportunities for employment and skills for tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review funding for corporate community development activity to at least maintain current levels and consider case to increase funding to provide services beyond priority areas to the benefit of council tenants. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement in key indicators including health, education and employment (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) for TDBC tenants • Increase in resources for community development – either from business plan, or from external sources • Increase in activity delivered and/or
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase partnership working to leverage in additional resources and provide a wide range of services 			

Action	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider provisions in contracts for contribution to tenant employment and supporting community development. 			funded by partners

Objective three: Investment in our housing stock, regeneration and affordable housing

- This means investing in our existing stock to deliver a standard that meets the needs of the stock and local aspirations. It also means planning and successfully managing the regeneration of our housing estates and communities, providing homes that cater for the needs of an expanding and diverse population within communities that people are proud of.

Action	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
3.1 Improve the information on our housing stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New stock condition survey 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Easily accessible robust information on investment requirements of the stock is readily available to inform investment planning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade to latest version of codeman asset management system 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New post of codeman database administrator 			
3.2 Establish an investment strategy to meet agreed local investment standard that goes beyond minimum decent homes to ensure our stock remains attractive and meets the needs and expectations of existing and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise investment standard to reflect consultation on local investment standard carried out as part of business plan development to establish a Taunton Deane standard 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment strategy based on up to date and reliable data, delivered to a transparent standard that reflects the needs of the stock, and local priorities. Improved tenant satisfaction with quality of home
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop assessment of relative performance of the portfolio to inform investment planning 			

Action	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
future tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree the draft asset management strategy updated to reflect revised standard, and business plan budgets 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update business plan to reflect updated stock condition survey information and revised capital investment requirements 			
3.3 Investment options appraisal of non traditional properties with limited future life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curtins updated report 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All options considered including investment to extend life, and redevelopment. Deliverable long term strategy agreed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenant consultation 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial analysis 			
3.4 To provide an excellent repair and maintenance service that the Council can afford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement actions from void process review 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver a value for money service that achieves top quartile resident satisfaction. Improved void turnaround times. Cyclical programme that extends the life of assets but reduces costs over time Reduced revenue repair costs following DLO transformation Increase the proportion of repairs completed right first time
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review cyclical maintenance programme and publish future plans following consultation with tenants 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review impact of DLO transformational review 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess options for direct funding of DLO workforce 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete end to end review of repairs service 			

Action	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
3.5 To establish a clear policy on the use of HRA assets for regeneration and affordable housing schemes and a process of appraisal of options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map potential HRA development opportunities 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in affordable homes Increase in Council owned affordable housing stock Increase in skills and capacity of internal teams to deliver regeneration and new build Disposal of uneconomic assets Increased resources for investment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carry out development appraisals of identified sites and review business plan capacity to develop 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the regeneration of Halcon North and other regeneration schemes identified by the Council 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review and resource internal skill requirements to deliver 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure all future affordable housing are considered against potential regeneration required for non traditional and other essential projects 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve internal co-ordination of projects affecting HRA stock so all relevant parties are aware and competing demands are managed 			
3.6 Improved performance management and financial planning systems in housing property services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review performance management systems and take action to improve 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved staff capacity to deliver excellent repairs service Improved staff capacity to deliver long term asset management
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review financial planning systems and reflect requirements in new housing IT and data management strategy (see 1.6) 			

Objective four: Climate Change

- This means taking action to reduce carbon emissions across our housing stock through our investment planning, service delivery, partnership and community action

Action	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
4.1 Future investment standard to include actions to improve average energy efficiency and reduce fuel costs for residents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise property standard to reflect consultation from business plan development that identifies priorities of affordable warmth and choice of heating as tenant priorities 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future standard costed and agreed with residents and reflected in investment strategy and business plan • Improved SAP ratings • Reduced fuel costs for residents • Reduced revenue repair costs • Improved tenant satisfaction with repairs service • Clarity on Taunton Deane standard for properties
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved information on cost in use of existing housing stock 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions prioritised to homes with lowest SAP ratings 			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include energy affordability and sustainability as key components of TDBC's criteria for assessing stock quality 			
4.2 Establish sustainable energy contingency fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £6.6m sustainable energy fund established to provide affordable warmth and improve energy efficiency of homes 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved SAP ratings • Reduced fuel costs for residents
4.3 Access external funding where available to reduce carbon emissions and improve energy efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsibility identified in existing property section to identify funding opportunities 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased funds available for investment in the stock
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progression and evaluation of Solar PV and Air Source Heat Pump projects 			
4.4 Build climate change as an integral part of future contracts let by the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review future contracts to include clauses to require contractor to take action to tackle climate change relevant to work to be carried out 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contractors supporting council and housing service objectives to tackle climate change

Action	Activity/Resources required	By when	Lead Officer	Measure of success
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build requirement into tender process for future contracts 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced carbon emissions from building works and from Council homes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor compliance through existing contract monitoring systems 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced fuel costs for residents

Equality Impact Assessment

Responsible person	<i>James Barra</i>	Job Title: Community Services Manager
Why are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment? (Please mark as appropriate)	Proposed new policy/service	√
	Change to Policy/service	
	Budget/Financial decision – MTFP	√
	Part of timetable	
What are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment on (which, service, MTFP proposal)	Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2012 - 42	
Section One – Scope of the assessment		
What are the main purposes/aims of the policy/decision/service?	<p>The strategic objectives of the business plan are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Securing a long term future for our housing service; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means continuing to invest in the management of the housing stock to ensure it meets tenants’ needs, who should be at the heart of decision making. 2. Tackling deprivation and sustainable community development; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means taking action so that disadvantaged communities will have better access to local housing services, training and employment, continuing our support for a range of vulnerable people. 	

	<p>3. Investing in our housing stock, regeneration and affordable housing; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means investing in our existing stock to deliver a standard that meets the needs of the stock and local aspirations. It also means planning and successfully managing the regeneration of our housing estates and communities, providing homes that cater for the needs of an expanding and diverse population within communities that people are proud of. <p>4. Climate change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means taking action to reduce carbon emissions across our housing stock through our investment planning, service delivery, partnership and community action
<p>Which protected groups are targeted by the policy/decision/service?</p>	<p>Taunton Deane Borough Council’s HRA housing stock comprises of 6,022 rented homes, with a further 350 leasehold properties. In addition, the Council also manages two private leasehold schemes for the elderly. Housing services are designed to ensure they meet the needs of wide ranging customer base. As such the HRA Business Plan 2012 – 2042 is targeted at all the protected groups including: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or belief; Sex; and Sexual Orientation; Marriage and civil partnerships.</p>

<p>What evidence has been used in the assessment - data, engagement undertaken – please list each source that has been used</p> <p>The information can be found on....</p>	<p>Data:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Major changes in national housing finance and housing policy – 2011; 2. Values and priorities reflected in the Council’s corporate strategy, which were developed following community consultation with TDBC residents – 2010; 3. Strategic Housing Market Assessment which gives a detailed picture of the future housing required for people who choose to live and work in the area. <p>Engagement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consultation with residents and stakeholders which included regular meetings with the Tenant Services Management Board and wider consultation with tenants, staff, members and other stakeholders - 2011
<p>Section two – Conclusion drawn about the impact of service/policy/function/change on different groups highlighting negative impact, unequal outcomes or missed opportunities for promoting equality</p>	
<p><i>The Department for Communities and Local Government’s initial screening (which included an analysis of responses to national consultation) of the reform of council housing finance for race, disability and gender equality concludes that it does not believe that any specific equalities impacts will arise.</i></p> <p><i>In terms of Taunton Deane Borough Council’s HRA Business Plan 2012 – 42 the impact on protected groups, whether potential negative impacts or opportunities to positively advance equality, are detailed as follows:</i></p> <p>Age: The impact of both investment prioritization and improvements to service delivery need to be assessed in more detail as part of an annual planning process in order to identify more precisely the potential for both negative and positive of the business plan on this specific group.</p> <p>Elderly tenants will benefit from the overall investment in the council’s housing stock. Any improvements in energy efficiency would help to protect elderly and vulnerable from fuel poverty.</p> <p>Any reduction and or loss of funding to help vulnerable people with housing related support needs will lead to a reduction in people’s</p>	

independence which will in turn increase their need for other services.

Communications on any complex changes may disproportionately worry tenants in sheltered housing.

Any proposed re-development of the housing stock could potentially have a negative impact on a specific group of tenants, depending upon the location. For example: The redevelopment of land locking sheltered housing accommodation.

Disability: The impact of both investment prioritization and improvements to service delivery need to be assessed in more detail as part of an annual planning process in order to identify more precisely the potential for both negative and positive of the business plan on this specific group.

Disabled tenants will benefit from the overall investment in the council's housing stock. Some disabled tenants will particularly benefit from the provision of disabled adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants to council housing.

Gender Reassignment: The impact of both investment prioritization and improvements to service delivery need to be assessed in more detail as part of an annual planning process in order to identify more precisely the potential for both negative and positive of the business plan on this specific group.

People will benefit from the overall investment in council housing. There is not expected to be any particular negative impact on this specific group.

Pregnancy and maternity: The impact of both investment prioritization and improvements to service delivery need to be assessed in more detail as part of an annual planning process in order to identify more precisely the potential for both negative and positive of the business plan on this specific group.

Within the business plan there is potential for investment in better quality and additional family housing. There is not expected to be any particular negative impact on this specific group.

Race: The impact of both investment prioritization and improvements to service delivery need to be assessed in more detail as part of an annual planning process in order to identify more precisely the potential for both negative and positive of the business plan on this specific group.

People will benefit from the overall investment in council housing. Wider tenant participation and engagement will increase the proportion of tenants providing feedback to inform service improvements.

Any proposed re-development of the housing stock could potentially have a negative impact on a specific group of tenants, depending upon the location.

Communication about the business plan may not fully reach those for whom English is not their first language. For example: Requiring decant of households away from established community groups.

Religion or belief: The impact of both investment prioritization and improvements to service delivery need to be assessed in more detail as part of an annual planning process in order to identify more precisely the potential for both negative and positive of the business plan on this specific group.

People will benefit from the overall investment in council housing. Developing and supporting staff to deliver excellent services will ensure appropriate and sensitive services are delivered to the religious or belief requirements of tenants.

Any proposed re-development of the housing stock could potentially have a negative impact on a specific group of tenants, depending upon the location. For example: Requiring decant of households away from religious community.

Sex: The impact of both investment prioritization and improvements to service delivery need to be assessed in more detail as part of an annual planning process in order to identify more precisely the potential for both negative and positive of the business plan on this specific group.

People will benefit from the overall investment in council housing.

Sexual Orientation: The impact of both investment prioritization and improvements to service delivery need to be assessed in more detail as part of an annual planning process in order to identify more precisely the potential for both negative and positive of the business plan on this specific group.

People will benefit from the overall investment in council housing. Investment in community development will ensure information about various initiatives is accessible so that people can benefit from such services. People experiencing alarm, distress and harassment will benefit from investment being made into developing excellent services which are community inclusive.

Marriage and civil partnerships: The impact of both investment prioritization and improvements to service delivery need to be assessed in more detail as part of an annual planning process in order to identify more precisely the potential for both negative and positive of the business plan on this specific group.

There is not expected to be any particular positive impact on this specific group. There is not expected to be any particular negative impact on this specific group.

Currently the service collects data on seven strands of equality, However, the service would benefit from a better understanding of service take up by all service users. This information can then be provided to management so that they can have a clear picture of need, and therefore take appropriate action to plan services.

I have concluded that there is/should be:

No major change - no adverse equality impact identified	
Adjust the policy/decision/service	Actions will be identified that will help mitigate the impacts identified above – see action table.
Continue with the policy/decision/service	
Stop and remove the policy/decision/service	

Reasons and documentation to support conclusions

The engagement activity shows that there will be impacts. Actions will be put in place to limit the impacts as much as possible.

Section four – Implementation – timescale for implementation

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012 -2042 effective from April 2012 involving ongoing monitoring and controlling of impacts.

Section Five – Sign off

Responsible officer: James Barraah

Management Team

Date

Date

Section six – Publication and monitoring

Published on	
Next review date	Date logged on Covalent

Action Planning

The table should be completed with all actions identified to mitigate the effects concluded.

Actions table						
Service area				Date		
Identified issue drawn from your conclusions	Actions needed	Who is responsible?	By when?	How will this be monitored?	Expected outcomes from carrying out actions	
Reduction and or loss of funding to help vulnerable people with housing related support needs	Prepare for supporting people funding reductions	Housing Services Lead	2011/12	Regular meetings and wider consultation with stakeholders	Services for vulnerable tenants maintained with flexibility to enable future needs to be met	
Communications on any complex changes may	Utilize the existing tenant involvement channels to	Supported Housing	2012 - ongoing	Regular meetings and	Easily available and accessible information on	

disproportionately worry tenants in sheltered housing	communication any changes in service to tenant in sheltered housing	Manager		wider consultation with stakeholders	any changes to services
Alienate specific ethnic groups if community housing is identified for regeneration/redevelopment	Consider re-supply of appropriate housing to meet the needs of ethnic groups as part of any future regeneration / redevelopment scheme	Housing Enabling Officers	2013 - ongoing	Regular meetings and wider consultation with stakeholders	Improved tenant satisfaction with housing services
Those for whom English is not their first language are not made fully aware of changes.	Offer translation of communication into alternative languages. Engage with minority groups using existing tenant involvement channels	Housing Services Managers	2012 – ongoing	Regular meetings and wider consultation with stakeholders	Easily available and accessible information on any changes to services
Alienate religious or belief groups if community housing is identified for regeneration/redevelopment.	Consider re-supply of appropriate housing to meet the needs of any religious or belief groups as part of any future regeneration / redevelopment scheme	Housing Enabling Officers	2013 - ongoing	Regular meetings and wider consultation with stakeholders	Improved tenant satisfaction with housing services
Lack of comprehensive					

equality data held by housing service to effectively inform service development					
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Schedule of further impact assessments

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are a way for us to look at what we're doing and to make sure our policies and actions take equality and diversity fully into account. It is one of several ways we make sure we talk with people from a range of backgrounds and use other information to do our very best to deliver fair, equitable and need sensitive services.

A schedule of further impact assessments that will be carried out before specific actions are implemented can be found below:

Abandonment of Property
Aids and Adaptations
Community and Neighbourhood Development
Income Management
Fire Safety
Debts
Developing - New Build and Acquisitions of property and land
Demolitions/Disposals of property and land
Energy Efficiency
Financial Inclusion
Rent setting
Repairs and Maintenance
Finance - Accounting Framework for HRA under self financing, Borrowing, Reserves,
Debt repayment, Depreciation
Leaseholders
Garages
Under occupation of properties
Supported Housing
Service Charges
Voids
Tenant Empowerment
Tenancies and Tenure
Estate Management - Estate Management (e.g. grass cutting, cleaning communal areas,
graffiti, removal of abandoned cars, car parking, waste disposal)

AGENDA ITEM 6



HRA Reform Project Dashboard – September 2011 Phase 1: Policy & Priority & Development of Outline Business Case

Status Of Project		Last Report	This Report	Comments
HRA Reform – Phase 1		G	G	
Status by Key Project Activities for Phase 1	Workstream Lead	Last Report	This Report	Comments
1. Treasury Management	Maggie Hammond	G	G	
2. Data Checking	Fiona Gudge	G	G	
3. Financial Control & Reporting	Paul Fitzgerald	G	G	
4. Affordable Housing	Martin Daly	G	G	
5. Policies/Best Practice	Martin Price	G	G	
6. Income Management	Stephen Boland	G	G	
7. Business Plan	Stephen Boland	G	G	
8. Stakeholder Engagement	Martin Price	G	G	
9. Assets	Phil Webb	A	A	Savills providing feedback from data quality validation exercise on the 27.9.11.
10. Baselineing/Benchmarking	Stephen Boland	G	G	

Key	
Red	Unsatisfactory progress – milestones & timescales not being met corrective action or re-plan required
Amber	Issues against some milestones but remedial action will keep project under control overall
Green	All milestones being met & project on target/completed

Key Accomplishments LAST Period
<p>Treasury Management-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List of borrowing options updated to include pros & cons and recommendations shared with Tenant Services Management Board and Members Change Steering Group. <p>Affordable Housing –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapped information on GIS of those HRA assets ‘earmarked’ for regeneration that were supplied in response to original request. Based on this GIS mapping an initial approach to Strategic Director, Capital Asset Manager, Economic Development Specialist, Development Management Lead and Project Taunton was made about value for money considerations involving HRA disposals at nil value, the potential for alternative uses and site utilisation issues. <p>Stakeholder Engagement –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder event for business plan held on the 15th September. Stephen Boland made a presentation regarding the project and business plan at the Leads Meeting on the 21st September. Core brief article published on the 26th September.

- Sharepoint site for staff was launched on the 26th September containing frequently asked questions and other key documents.

Policies/Best Practice –

- Analysis of relevant good practice and HRA reform policies.
- Identified operational areas to benefit from review of policies and best practice.
- Prioritised operational areas for review and timetabled actions.

Financial Control & Reporting –

- HRA coding and reporting structure has now been refreshed to meet service and statutory reporting requirements as at 1st September; it has been accepted by the service and is ready to be easily refreshed to meet proposed housing structure.
- Prudential Indicators are ready in outline, some fine tuning to include actual borrowing required will defer completion to week commencing 3rd October.
- Revision of depreciation policy and practices has begun, utilising business plan preparation for componentisation and pre planned maintenance.

Key Activities NEXT Period

Treasury Management –

- Understand the effect of the recent Treasury change in Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rates on the business plan.

Affordable Housing –

- Obtain a view from Strategic Director of the viability of considering alternative uses fro HRA sites 'earmarked' for regeneration and whether we should be questioning how we traditionally dispose of HRA assets to housing associations.

Business Plan –

- TDBC Officers to respond to questions raised by Savills in relation to early drafts of business plan chapters i.e. Introduction and Strategic Context etc.
- Savills to draft remaining chapters for business plan document.
- TDBC Officers and Savills to pull together the emerging business plan 'action plan'.

Stakeholder Engagement –

- Members briefing session to be held on the 10th October in the JMR.
- Staff briefings to be held on the 10th October and further briefings at team meetings.

Baselining/Benchmarking –

- Housemark has undertaken a validation exercise re: the data we have submitted on our data collection form (DCF) and we are in the process of responding to a small number of queries resulting from that exercise.

Financial Control & Reporting –

- HRA coding and reporting to be refreshed to meet proposed housing restructure.
- HRA coding and reporting to be discussed in detail with Housing Managers at a series of individual meetings throughout October.
- HRA balance sheet to be completed the week commencing 3rd October.
- Prudential Indicators and debt repayment policy and practices to be completed the week commencing 3rd October.

Issues

Treasury Management –

- We need a steer on how fast Councillors would like to repay the loan/s to enable more detailed work on the loan profile to be drawn up.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 24 October 2011.

CLG consultation – “A new mandatory power of possession for anti-social behaviour”

Report of Estate Officer – John Hart

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

1.0 Executive Summary

The government department Communities and Local Government (CLG) has embarked on a consultation exercise exploring the practicalities and feasibility of introducing new powers to speed up the process for social landlords to repossess properties where tenants have breached conditions of tenancies through anti-social behaviour.

Consultation is aimed at front line practitioners who deal with anti-social behaviour and the public, particularly victims of anti-social behaviour or those who have provided evidence in court cases.

The consultation feedback takes the form of 6 questions. Closing date for feedback is 7th November 2011. The comments of the TSMB will inform the Council's formal response to the consultation.

2.0 Background

The focus of central and local government is to take a positive approach in dealing with perpetrators of anti-social behaviour. Prevention and early intervention should be at the heart of all landlords' approaches to tackling anti-social behaviour. The CLG estimates that over 75% of anti-social behaviour cases are resolved through early intervention without resorting to formal tools.

The CLG has analysed survey data from 61 landlords in England covering over 500 recent anti-social behaviour possession cases and highlighted that on average it takes over 7 months from the date of initial application to the court for a possession order to an outcome. The process is cumbersome and there are often adjournments for a variety of reasons such as defendants not turning up or because further evidence is required. The current process puts pressure on court resources and creates significant costs for landlords to meet out of their tenants' rents.

The CLG are not encouraging greater use of repossessing properties as a sanction because it recognises that eviction is the last resort. There is, however, a need to speed up the anti-social behaviour possession process in a way that properly and fairly considers both the rights of victims and witnesses and the rights of those at risk of losing their homes.

3.0 Key points in summary.

CLG are seeking views on 2 issues:

- Extending the scope of the existing discretionary ground for possession for anti-social behaviour so that serious anti-social behaviour and criminality beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the property can be taken into account. This proposal has been introduced following the recent serious inner city riots in order that tenants/ residents in social housing accommodation found guilty of offences anywhere in the country could be evicted.
- Introducing a mandatory power of possession where anti-social behaviour or criminality has already been proven by another court. A trigger mechanism is proposed, broadly along the lines of:
 - (1) Conviction for a serious housing related offence
 - (2) Breach of a housing related injunction for anti-social behaviour
 - (3) Closure or premises under a Closure order (e.g. crack house closure)

The term “mandatory” and “discretionary” relate to the Court processes and not the route that the landlord decides to take. At present the Court has the discretion to order possession for certain criminality or breaches of tenancy. The proposals still allow for the landlord to apply to the court to use its discretionary powers to order possession. The CLG are proposing that landlords can apply to the court for a mandatory possession order, thus if the conditions are fulfilled and the correct procedure followed the Court must give possession.

4.0 Consultation process within Taunton Deane

Consultation meetings have been held with the following interested parties;

- Tenants’ Forum
- Estate Officers
- Legal Services (Alison Taylor)
- Housing Briefing (comprised of Councillors, tenants and senior officers)

5.0 The next steps

It is proposed to obtain the views of the Tenants Service Management Board at the meeting on 24th October 2011.

Due to the time constraints set for the meeting, attached is a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix 1) which was used during the consultation meetings.

There is also a link to the full CLG consultation document -

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1959275.pdf>

Views from all interested parties will be collated and the Council will make a formal response to the 6 questions posed to be received at the CLG by 7th November 2011.

6.0 Finance Comments

It should be noted that this is a consultation document. Any financial implications would have to be examined if and when the CLG decide to implement any of the proposed changes.

7.0 Legal Comments

It should be noted that this is a consultation document. Any legal implications would have to be examined if and when the CLG decide to implement any of the proposed changes.

8.0 Links to Corporate Aims

It should be noted that this is a consultation document. Any links to corporate aims would have to be examined if and when the CLG decide to implement any of the proposed changes.

9.0 Environmental Implications

It should be noted that this is a consultation document. Any environmental implications would have to be examined if and when the CLG decide to implement any of the proposed changes.

10.0 Community Safety Implications

It should be noted that this is a consultation document. Any community safety implications would have to be examined if and when the CLG decide to implement any of the proposed changes.

11.0 Equalities Impact

It should be noted that this is a consultation document. Any equalities impact would have to be examined if and when the CLG decide to implement any of the proposed changes.

12.0 Risk Management

It should be noted that this is a consultation document. Any risk management implications would have to be examined if and when the CLG decide to implement any of the proposed changes.

13.0 Partnership Implications

It should be noted that this is a consultation document. Any partnership implications would have to be examined if and when the CLG decide to implement any of the proposed changes.

14.0 Recommendations

The Tenant Services Management Board is asked to:

- Note this report and presentation document headed “Appendix 1 - New powers of possession for anti social behaviour”
- Give consideration to the 6 questions posed in the presentation document (page numbers 8 to 13) and be prepared to comment on these during the meeting on 24th October 2011.

Contact: Officer Name John Hart
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 [e-mail](mailto:john.hart@tauntondeane.gov.uk) address john.hart@tauntondeane.gov.uk



APPENDIX 1

New powers of possession for anti social behaviour

Facilitated by
John Hart

Introduction

- Aims of the meeting
- Current legislative framework
- New powers
- Procedure for new mandatory power
- Triggers for seeking possession orders
- Consultation questions 1 to 6
- Summary

Aims of the meeting

- Consultation exercise for proposed new powers for social landlords to repossess properties.
- Consider a new mandatory power for eviction
- Assess the potential impact of proposals on TDBC
- Answer 6 questions which will form TDBC corporate response

Current legislative framework

- Ground 2 of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985 provides the Court may grant possession

Tenant or person residing or visiting dwelling:

- Causing ASB to another resident, visitor or someone lawfully in locality OR
 1. Convicted using dwelling for immoral or illegal purposes or
 2. Commits Indictable offence in or in locality of dwelling

New powers

- Extending existing powers so Court may grant possession where tenant/ member of household has been convicted of violent disorder / related thefts anywhere in the UK.

New mandatory power

New route for possession for serious housing related ASB which has been proved by another court.

Procedure for mandatory power

- Serve notice of proceedings
- Give reasons
- Date after which proceedings will commence
- Court would have to grant order of possession provided correct procedure followed
- Modelled on possession during “introductory tenancies”
- Statutory right to request a review.

Triggers for new power

- Conviction for a serious housing related offence, e.g. Violence against neighbours, drug dealing, drug cultivation.
- Breach of injunction for ASB – housing related so landlord has either obtained or is party to injunction.
- Closure of premises under a closure order.

Question1

Do you agree we should extend the scope of the current discretionary ground for ASB and criminality in this way?

Extend the scope of the ASB from within the locality/neighbourhood to anywhere in the country?

Key considerations

- Proportionality/ reasonableness

Question 2

Do you agree that we should construct a new mandatory power of possession in this way?

Considerations

- Is there a need for a new mandatory power or should it be left to the courts to exercise their discretionary powers?
- Practicalities of introducing a review mechanism

Question 3

Are these the right principles which should underpin a mandatory power of possession for ASB?

- Reduce length of possession proceedings
- Facts proved in one Court should not have to be proved a second time.

1. Landlord can demonstrate the criteria are met. Is there a clear test?

2. Is the ASB serious and housing related?

Question 4

Have we defined the basis for the new mandatory power correctly? If not how can we improve the definition?

Triggers

- Conviction for serious housing related offence
- Breach of injunction for ASB
- Closure of premises under a closure order.

Still expectation on re-housing vulnerable tenants
Landlord can still use discretionary grounds

Question 5

As a Landlord would you anticipate seeking possession using the mandatory power?

- Reduce pressure on Courts
- Lower Landlord costs
- Bring faster relief for communities

Increase profile of injunctions for ASB as threat of eviction is in “clear line of sight”

Question 6

Are there other issues relating to the introduction of a mandatory power for possession for ASB we should consider?

- Proportionality.
- “Two bites of the cherry”
- Managing media/ public expectations
- Displacing the problems

Summary

- **Government want to send a powerful message that it is tough on ASB by threatening eviction for perpetrators guilty of ASB anywhere in the country.**
- **New mandatory process of eviction for certain ASB offences.**
- **Speed up process/ Reduced costs**

Versus

- **Undermining County Court/ Increased expectations**



ANY QUESTIONS?

THANK YOU!

Briefing note

From: Clive Chamberlain, Temporary Project Manager

To: Tenant Services Management Board, Monday 24th October 2011

Subject: **Re-procurement of the Heating contract.**

Background.

A project is now underway to re-procure the contract for servicing and maintenance of domestic heating systems and associated works.

This briefing provides information on the project plan, progress to date and raises for discussion a number of issues on the new service.

The existing contract

The existing service has been provided by local contractor MJT Mechanical since 2005. Originally a 3 year contract, this has been extended annually by agreement but must now be re-procured through an open tendering method by first placing a notice in the official journal of the European Union (OJEU) because the value exceeds the threshold.

Scope

The current contract provides for:

- Annual servicing of gas appliances, oil fired boilers and open fires,
- Annual safety checks of electric storage heaters and smoke detectors, and
- 24 hour breakdown cover and response maintenance.

The contract covers most Council homes, containing the following equipment:

Combination Boilers
Wall Mounted appliances
Back Boiler Units
Floor standing appliances
Tenant Owned appliances
Solid Fuel appliances
Oil Fired appliances

Outcomes

Subject to consultation this month, the specified outcome of the project is to procure an enhanced service which commences on 1st April 2012 and provides the following:

- A measurable improvement in first time access for servicing and repairs,
- A reduced call out rate for breakdowns,
- 100% compliance with annual servicing consistently,
- A reduction in tenant failure to meet appointments,
- Improved reporting on performance,
- Increased exchange of intelligence on performance of equipment to inform the stock reinvestment plan, and
- Reducing costs through the life of the contract.

Project plan

The project timetable is as follows:

Activity	Date
Issue of Pre qualification questionnaires	15.09.11
Last Date to submit Questions	14.10.11
PQQ Return Deadline	24.10.11
Notify Participants of PQQ Outcome	27.10.11
Issue tenders to successful applicants	27.10.11
Tender submission deadline	06.12.11
Evaluation of tenders	19.12.11
Issue tender evaluation outcome	06.01.12
Recommendations and approval	06-08.01.12
Mobilisation period	Feb and March 2012
Service Commencement	01.04.12

Specification of services

The existing specification has been thoroughly reviewed and re drafted and is now ready for internal consultation.

Colleagues in Housing services are being engaged to seek their input to the specification.

The existing contract is a 'three star' service including servicing and 24-7 call out to breakdowns and heating loss within the contract price.

To meet the aims for an improved service identified above and to meet with accepted good practice, the new specification will expect contractors to demonstrate how they will meet the following elements within their proposal:

- Enhanced resident engagement through text messaging for appointments,

- Imaginative use of technology and communications to engage the widest possible range of residents in a fully inclusive way in gas safety and maintaining equipment in their homes,
- Calls to arrange appointments made out of hours by the service provider,
- Engineers use personal digital equipment to record technical information during their visits, linking to a live reporting system, giving TDBC access to real time data through a portal access,
- Monthly reporting and detailed analysis of trends in performance of equipment, rogue units and breakdowns etc,
- Feedback on dangers from tenant damage or interference with equipment,
- Provision of an environmentally sustainable service and providing benefits from recycling scrap materials, and
- Engage with the community by investing in apprenticeships, community events or regeneration projects as a way of demonstrating their commitment to social enterprise.

Performance against the targets will be measured through a range of key performance indicators (KPI's). The following targets are currently proposed:

Item	Priority	Target
Any health, safety or welfare Issue with potential danger to life or property	1	Emergency – (H & S Issue) make safe within 2 hours repair within 24 Hours.
Fumes	1	(H & S Issue) make safe within 2 hours repair within 24 Hours
Gas Escape	1	Emergency – (H & S Issue) make safe within 2 hours and repair within 24 Hours Normally reported to Transco
Water leak (major)	1	Emergency – (H & S Issue) make safe within 2 hours repair within 24 Hours
Total Heating Failure	1	Emergency – make safe within 2 hours repair within 24 Hours
Partial loss of heating	2	Urgent – complete within 5 working days
Re-commissioning system	2	Urgent – complete within 5 working days
Faulty heating controls	2	Urgent – complete within 5 working days

Faulty hot water controls	2	Urgent – complete within 5 working days
Noisy system	2	Urgent – complete within 5 working days
Refitting radiator	2	Urgent – complete within 5 working Days
System pressure loss	2	Urgent – complete within 5 working days
Resident damage / misuse	2	Urgent – complete within 5 working days.
Water leak (minor)	2	Urgent – complete within 5 working days
Partial loss of hot water	3	Routine – to be completed within 28 working days
Replacement of any non-essential part	2	Routine – to be completed within 28 working days
Resetting controls	3	Routine – to be completed within 28 working days
Instruction on use of system	3	Routine – to be completed within 28 working days
Overflow pipe dripping	3	Routine – to be completed within 28 working days

The key performance indicators are currently proposed as follows:-

<u>CONTRACTORS KPIs</u>	TARGET	MONITORED BY
1. The number of heating/hot water systems out of action overnight – not to exceed	0 per month	Contractor
2. The number of heating/hot water systems out of action for longer than 24hrs – not to exceed	0 per month	Contractor
3. All completed gas safety tests to have certificates reach Employer within –	5 days	Employer
4. All properties to receive an annual gas safety check within 12 months of previous test date.	100%	Contractor
5. Provide written quotations to Employer for works outside of contract – within	5 working days	Contractor
6. Provide follow up appointment within 24 hrs where no access has occurred.	100%	Contractor
7. When it has been necessary to put an appliance “at risk” notify Employer immediately	100%	Contractor
8. To attend to emergency repairs within 2hours, Urgent repairs within 3 days and Routine repairs within 28 days.	100%	Contractor
9. Where appointments are made, keep to appointment date & time	100%	Contractor
10. Invoice for non contract works within 28 days of completion.	100%	Contractor

EMPLOYERS KPIs

11. Payment of correctly submitted invoices within 28 days.	100%	Contractor
12. Confirm verbal instruction within 3 working days.	100%	Employer
13. Respond to “requests for information” within 2 working days	100%	Contractor

Input is requested to the proposed specification, targets and KPI’s from colleagues and stakeholders.

Evaluation and selection.

Whilst I am leading the project, I am supported by:

- David Carpenter,
- Amanda Oaten,
- Tim Haynes,
- James Barra

An evaluation and selection team will be established to include representatives of key stakeholders and residents.

The selection process will involve scoring the tender submissions on the basis of 40% cost and 60% quality. References will be taken up at pre-qualification stage and visits to complete reality checks on short-listed bidders before a final interview.

Communications

The project is reviewed and updates issued weekly to senior management team.

Briefings are arranged in October to Housing Management Team and Corporate Management Team.

Clive Chamberlain

Briefing note

From: Clive Chamberlain, Temporary Project Manager

To: Tenant Services Management Board, Monday 24th October 2011

Subject: Installation of renewable energy equipment.

Background.

A project is now underway to complete the installation of renewable energy heating equipment into 37 bungalows at Stoke St Gregory, Churchinford and Creech St Michael.

This briefing provides information on the project.

Trial installations

Earlier this year a trial was completed involving the installation of air source heat pumps into 4 bungalows, 2 at Polkesfield, Stoke St Gregory and 2 at Churchinford.

Although a full seasonal heating cycle has yet to be experienced, the initial feedback from residents has been extremely positive. Monitoring of electricity consumption is underway and contact being maintained with the residents to capture their observations on operating and living with the new technology.

Air source heat pumps are well proven technology and have been used in commercial applications for many years. They are now growing in favour for domestic use and are particularly well suited to well insulated homes with lower and more constant heating demand.

Scope

The trail involved installing new Daikin air source heat pumps at the rear of the properties, together with new water storage vessels and radiators and control systems. Installation took ten days.



Value

Benefit was gained from the highly competitive rates for purchase of equipment through Advantage South West and installation was completed by a local contractor. It is intended that ASW rates will be used once again for the remainder of the project.

The remaining project is likely to require a budget in the region of £200,000.

Outcomes

The desired outcome of the project is:

- Reduced heating costs for residents,
- Reduced maintenance of equipment and consequent intrusion,
- Consistent and reliable heating and hot water for elderly residents instead of electric storage heating which is less controllable and more expensive to run, and
- Quieter operation and more flexible control systems.

I am researching the possibility of adding solar Thermal hot water systems to the new installations, however not all properties are suitably orientated to benefit from this.

Project plan

The project timetable is as follows:

Activity	Date
Completion of specification	07.10.11
Tender	14.10.11
Tender return	28.10.11
Selection	31.10.11
Issue contract	11.11.11
Start on site	01.12.11
Completion	28.02.12

Communications

The project is reviewed and updates issued weekly to senior management team.

Further update briefings can be provided.

Clive Chamberlain

Taunton Deane Borough Council - Tenant Services Management Board meeting dates

(all meetings are 6pm on Monday in Deane House, Taunton– unless otherwise stated)

2011

24 October 2011
21 November 2011
19 December 2011

2012

23 January 2012
20 February
19 March
23 April
22 May (Tuesday)
19 June (Tuesday)
16 July
August date not yet confirmed
17 September
29 October
19 November
17 December 2012.

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 24 October 2011 at 6pm in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr Etherington (Chairman)
Mr Edwards (Vice- Chairman)
Councillor Bowrah, Mrs Bunn, Mrs Drage, Mr Galpin, Mrs Hegarty, and Mrs Marshall.

Officers: James Barrah (Community Services Manager), Clive Chamberlain (Project Manager), Paul Hadley (Housing Estates Manager), John Hart (Estate Officer), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer) and Keith Wiggins (Democratic Services Officer).

Others: Councillor Mrs Adkins, Mrs Beryl Edwards and Nigel Stuart-Thorn

(The meeting commenced at 6.04pm)

61. Apologies

Apologies: Councillor Brooks, Mr Hellier and Mrs Urquhart

62. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 19 September 2011 were taken as read and signed.

63. Declaration of Interests

The following members declared a personal interest as a Council house tenant:

- Mrs Bunn
- Mrs Drage
- Mr Edwards
- Mr Etherington
- Mr Galpin
- Mrs Hegarty
- Mrs Marshall

Councillor Bowrah declared a personal interest as a family member was a Council house tenant.

64. Heating and Renewable Energy

Considered report previously circulated regarding the re-procurement of the contract for servicing and maintenance of domestic heating systems within the Council's housing stock.

Clive Chamberlain explained that the contract for an enhanced service would be for five years and provide:

- A measurable improvement in first time access for servicing and repairs,
- A reduced call out rate for breakdowns,
- 100% compliance with annual servicing consistently,
- A reduction in tenant failure to meet appointments,
- Improved reporting on performance,
- Increased exchange of intelligence on performance of equipment to inform the stock reinvestment plan, and
- Reducing costs through the life of the contract.

The pre-qualification questionnaires deadline was that day, with indications that ten or more responses would be received.

The responses would be evaluated the following week by an internal panel and the Portfolio Holder. Tenders would be issued to successful applicants for return by 6 December 2011.

The new specification would expect contractors to demonstrate how they would meet a number of elements including:

- Enhanced resident engagement,
- Imaginative use of technology and communications,
- Two hour slots for appointments, including out of normal hours;
- Monthly reporting and detailed analysis of trends;
- Feedback on dangers from tenant damage or interference with equipment.

During the discussion of this part of the item, members of the board made the following comments and asked questions. Responses are shown in italics:

- What about solar energy systems? *This was outside of the scope of the heating contract because it was already included within the “rent a roof” solar PC scheme;*
- What would be done to reduce the number of missed appointments? *The new monthly reporting would include failed appointments – and the TSMB could receive a quarterly summary if required;*
- Solid fuel boiler repairs were not handled well by the current contractor;
- The contract should be mindful of new heating technologies and ensure replacements were efficient and use renewable energy where possible, *The contract would make use of Advantage SW pricing where appropriate and include regular review of approved products;*
- Why were boiler systems for blocks of flats not included in the contract? *These were specialist systems but officers undertook to follow up and review.*

Members then considered the report previously circulated regarding the installation of renewable energy heating equipment into bungalows at Stoke St Gregory, Churchinford and Creech St Michael. This followed the trial of air source heat pumps earlier in the year.

The new systems would replace electric storage systems with conventional radiators heated by air source heat pumps and (in appropriate housing) solar panels.

Tenants would be provided with alternative heating and hot water during the installations.

In response to questions about possible vandalism and effect of weather conditions, it was confirmed that units needed to be properly and securely located and should be 10cm above ground.

Resolved to note the reports on heating and renewable energy.

65. Housing Revenue Account Reform Project Dashboard

Considered project progress dashboard report previously circulated, concerning planned reforms to council housing finance in England and the management of those changes by the Council.

James Barrah explained that there were only concerns with one workstream – Assets – where a data validation exercise covering 100 properties involving Savills had now been completed.

The Savills report had revealed a number of problems and inconsistencies with the data in two database systems. Consequently it was possible that the repair backlog was overstated in the draft HRA Business Plan.

Action was planned to cleanse the stock database, which may require further property assessments from tenants or housing officers.

Resolved to note the report.

66. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2012 – 2042

Considered the draft HRA Business Plan previously circulated concerning the Council's overall aims and objectives for the housing service, as a landlord for over 6,000 homes, and as a key part of the Council's preparation for HRA self financing.

The forthcoming major change in national housing finance introduced new risks and opportunities for the Council's housing service.

The report reflected consultation carried out with residents, members of the board and Council and wider stakeholders. It provided a framework for monitoring and evaluating progress in delivering the plan.

The draft plan would require amendment when final settlement figures were announced by Government – and the final version would be agreed by Council in February 2011.

During the discussion of this item, members of the board made the following comments and asked questions. Responses are shown in italics:

- What information is held about individual properties? *Details are held in two systems Codeman and Academy. The Savills survey indicated some data is out of date or incorrectly dated. Action to correct the errors may include a requirement to survey a larger proportion of properties;*
- Would tenants be asked for the information to correct the data? *When we understood the state of the problem - yes;*
- How flexible is the plan to adapt to circumstances? *The plan was designed to be resilient to external circumstances, but performance would be checked quarterly and the plan refreshed annually;*
- Are you trying to improve tenant engagement? *Yes.*

The Community Services Manager highlighted a number of recommendations within the draft Business Plan where he sought initial support from the board:

- The new four strategic objectives for Housing Services.
- That the business plan reflects the Council's current rent policy
- To explore the use of proposed new "Affordable Rents" in developing its plans for affordable housing.
- To review the use of probationary or introductory tenancies in the next 12 months.
- The potential introduction of fixed term tenancies.
- To take on new borrowing in March 2012 to the "settlement" level published by Government and repay the loan as soon as the business plan allows.
- To review the HRA business plan annually.

Resolved to support the draft Business Plan and the highlighted recommendations.

67. Anti Social Behaviour Mandatory Powers of Possession Consultation

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Government consultation on introducing new powers to speed up the process for social

landlords to repossess properties where tenants have breached conditions of tenancies through anti-social behaviour

The consultation sought views on two main issues:

- Extending the scope of the existing discretionary ground for possession for anti-social behaviour so that serious anti-social behaviour and criminality beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the property can be taken into account;
- Introducing a mandatory power of possession where anti-social behaviour or criminality has already been proven by another court.

The first proposal had been introduced following the recent serious inner city riots in order that tenants/ residents in social housing accommodation found guilty of offences anywhere in the country could be evicted. Members discussed the validity of such a measure only applying to those in social housing.

Resolved not to support the extension of discretionary powers.

The second issue of mandatory power was the original main scope of the proposals, which were designed to speed up the process where eviction is deemed necessary. There were five consultation questions related to the mandatory power which were considered in turn by board members.

Overall members felt that the mandatory power was a useful tool in the right circumstances but would and should only be applied where clear breach of housing policy warranted its use.

Officers agreed to take account of the views of board members in the Council's submission to the consultation.

Resolved to support the mandatory power of possession proposals.

68. Tenant led Scrutiny

The Tenant Empowerment Manager presented a suggested approach to future involvement of tenants in scrutiny of the housing service delivered by the Council. It showed a division on work between the Tenants' Forum and the Tenant Services Management Board, suggesting the work of the board covered strategic and borough wide issues.

As well as the formal meetings of the board there may be up to three "scrutiny group" investigations each year, supported by officers in the Housing Service.

Members suggested that the majority of tenants would prefer a formal letter notifying them how they could become involved and that this could be included with rent statements.

The Chairman suggested there could be a website or online forum to help tenants raise issues.

Resolved to approve the proposal to convene a Scrutiny Group in January 2012.

69. Annual Report to Tenants

The Tenant Empowerment Manager confirmed the agreed calendar format and content for this year's annual report.

Resolved to support the production of the annual report.

70. Dates of TSMB Meetings 2012

Members had received a list of dates for meetings of the board in 2012. One date outstanding was for August 2012, which officers agreed to inform members when a date and venue had been agreed.

Resolved to note the meeting dates for 2012.

(The meeting ended at 9.02pm)