

APPENDIX A



**Harlow Council
Housing Services
Business Plan**

2021 – 2051

Housing Services Business Plan 2021 – 2051

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HOUSING



The COVID-19 pandemic has seen a direct economic and social impact on people's lives and future prosperity. The Council's focus in this strategy will therefore be on establishing a strong recovery for Housing Services, tackling housing need, providing support for tenants/leaseholders and re-establishing the delivery of the Housing Investment Programme (HIP) to keep our stock to the highest quality, safe, and improving housing conditions. The Council will work with its partner Harlow Trading Service (HTS) Housing & Regeneration Ltd, the private sector and registered social landlords to pursue this aim.

The Council continues to receive additional government grant to help and support those who find themselves sleeping rough with our Partner "Streets2Homes". Together, we are finding more settled housing solutions. We will continue to support tenants and leaseholders in financial difficulties with help and access to Government support.

The Council has a principle role in all this through its substantial proportion of the housing stock. We are determined that our homes are safe and well maintained. We want everyone to have a home they can afford and where they wish, to raise a family in neighbourhoods where there is social cohesion and community wellbeing.

We have an ambition to build more council homes. We want all of our homes to be sustainable and affordable to heat, meeting the latest building standards. To achieve all this we will talk to our tenants, leaseholders and residents, to explain what we are doing and why. We will find out more about the people who live in our properties so that our services meet their needs. This is an ambitious plan, but we have the drive and ambition to see it delivered.

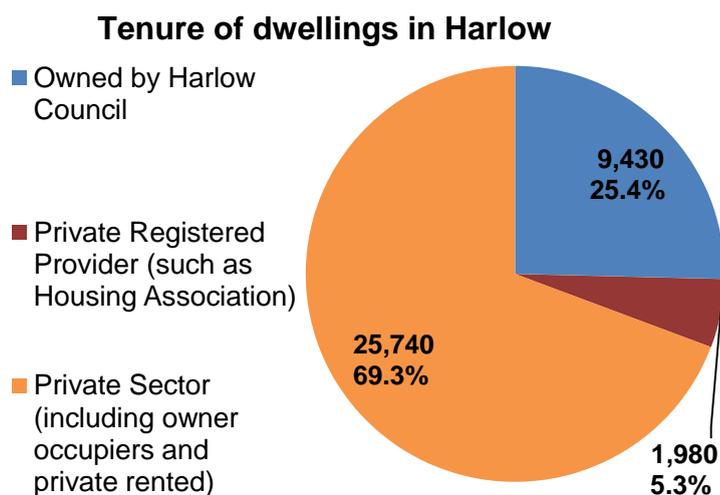
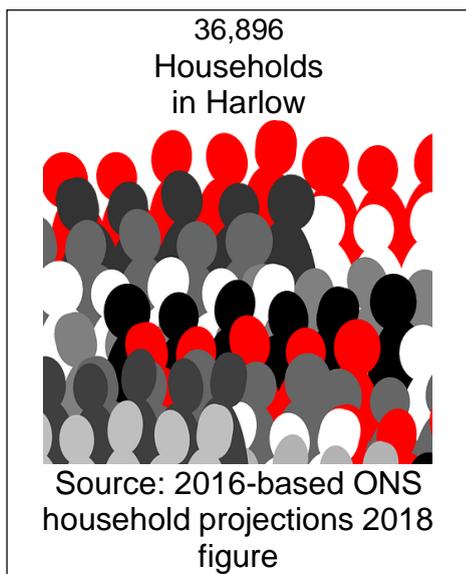
Councillor Simon Carter
Portfolio Holder for Housing

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Local Authority housing has its own ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This operates as a “business” of its own, separate to Councils’ other operations. The HRA takes its income from rents and service charges and spends its money exclusively on building and maintaining housing and providing services to tenants and leaseholders.
- 1.2 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business plan is one of the central components of the Council’s overall business planning and is underpinned by:
 - The Corporate Strategy
 - Housing Strategy
 - Housing Need strategies
 - The Medium Term Financial Strategy
 - Service and Team Planning
 - Governance arrangements
 - Performance Management
- 1.3 To ensure the Council remains on target, its progress against our strategic ambitions will be monitored through the Council’s Performance Management Framework, which sets out the mechanisms and the range of tools utilised by Officers and Councillors in gathering and reporting the Council’s quarterly performance on service milestones, key performance indicators and the Council’s finances. The Council publishes a statement of its performance each quarter. These reports are presented to Cabinet and when agreed are published here: <http://www.harlow.gov.uk/performance-reports>
- 1.4 National priorities have been changed by successive Governments since the first Business Plan was presented to Full Council back in February 2012. Then, under self-financing, Harlow Council took on a debt of £208.837 million, in settlement of what was a centrally distributed subsidy system. This replaced the negative subsidy under the previous system where around a third of the rental income was paid to the government.
- 1.5 In 2015, Government measures required changes to the self-financing regime, of which only the central setting of rent levels was implemented, requiring Councils to mandatorily reduce dwelling rents by 1% annually from 2016/17 to 2019/20.
- 1.6 Councils may now, however, under the ‘Rent Standard 2020’, increase rents by no more than CPI+1% annually until 2024/25. It should be noted that CPI+1% will mean that tenants’ rents will increase by 4.1% in 2022/23. RPI (which is applied to costs in the Business Plan) will be 4.9%. So, although the Rent Standard may seem more generous, Harlow, along with all other stock-holding Councils, will likely experience a financial strain on their HRA Business Plans caused by an erosion of 0.8% between income and expenditure.

1.7 Notwithstanding this, the updated Business Plan is designed to reflect the position and achieve the Housing themes outlined in the Council's Corporate Strategy in a positive manner. The Corporate Strategy was approved in December 2021 and continues to develop.

1.8 Although slightly out of date, the diagram below shows that Harlow Council is a significant player in the local housing offer, owning, managing and maintaining more than 25% of the properties in the District. This is why it is so important that the Council sets an excellent standard in the delivery of its Housing Service and the management and maintenance of its stock.



1.9 This document sets the Council's Housing Delivery Plans in the context of National and Local priorities and the themes expressed in the Council's Corporate Strategy. It then moves on to explain how the HRA Business Plan Financial model underpins the delivery plans, together with potential issues, risks and opportunities in delivering the desired outcomes. However, firstly, the next chapter describes the importance that the Council places on consultation and engagement with its tenants, leaseholders and other interested parties to ensure that they can play an active role in developing the business and ensuring that their rents and service charges are spent wisely and in their best interests.

2. Consultation and Engagement

2.1 Consultation

2.1.1 A key aim of the Council's Corporate Strategy is to develop wider community engagement. Therefore, the Housing Service wishes to facilitate improved engagement with tenants and leaseholders regarding their housing service.

2.1.2 The Council recognises the genuine shared commitment to embrace tenant and leaseholder participation, working together, placing them at the "heart" of what the Council does and shaping and improving services to ensure the Council's housing regulatory role is delivered effectively.



2.1.3 The Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy takes into account the regulatory arrangements and its implications for the Council, tenants and leaseholders. The strategy forms part of the Council's approach to the social housing regulation built around the concept of "co-regulation". The enhanced Housing Regulator sets the rules and guidelines for co-regulation, requires the Council to demonstrate robust self-regulation incorporating effective tenant and leaseholder involvement through its governance structures.

2.1.4 It is recognised by the Council, there is a requirement to widen representation and develop a strong "tenant voice". This will enable the Council to demonstrate enhanced accountability using traditional and modern methods of engagement.

2.1.5 The tenant and leaseholder engagement strategy's key objectives are to:

- Widen representation and involvement.
- Continuously review ways of communication and participation.
- Enhance joint working with the development of shared priorities.
- Establish effective and robust performance management across tenant and leaseholder participation activity.

2.1.6 The updated Business Plan has been produced in consultation with tenant and leaseholder representatives. The Council is committed to tenant and leaseholder participation and believes that this is a way in which they can be involved in the management of their homes.

2.1.7 The HRA Business Plan will be reviewed by tenants and leaseholders together with the other landlord's housing related policies and priorities. This will ensure tenant and leaseholder involvement in the:

- Making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards.
- Scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved.
- Management of their homes, where applicable.
- Management of repair and maintenance services.

2.1.8 The Council's Housing Standards Board and Tenant and Leaseholder Standards Panels will jointly monitor service delivery against the consumer standards applicable to the Council and regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing.

2.2 Engagement

2.2.1 Housing Services' landlord survey identified the need to further enhance the way it interacts with customers. Almost 30% of respondents stated they would prefer to interact through an electronic method of communication such as the internet.

2.2.2 The new online customer portal went live in August 2020, providing access, including repairs, to a range of housing services. On line requests to the portal allow access to tenant and leaseholder charge accounts, providing advanced visibility of information, easier access to council services and reducing the number of manual transactions being processed. Associated business processes created to deal with the contact are allowing more effective responses to customer enquiries as part of the Council's wider

Customer Access Strategy.

2.2.3 There are a number of areas where improvements can be made to the information available to Council tenants and leaseholders. There are IT interfaces that can share this information automatically, and these will continue to be enhanced. The ambition is to increase the number of events which will enable the Council to provide the customer with more information about Council services.

2.2.4 Housing services are in the process of updating and realigning their Customer Service Access plans to align to the new Corporate Strategy. These plans include enhancing customer repairs, taking forward tenant profiling, and reinvigorating the Corporate Customer Service Access Strategy.

2.3 Landlord Survey

2.3.1 Housing Services conducts its Tenant Landlord Survey every two years and a Leaseholder Survey once a year. However, the completion of alternative surveys is important to both the Housing Service and Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement as the results can be used to measure and assist in shaping and developing future services.

2.3.2 The surveys cover questions around the overall tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with Housing Services as a whole. These also ask how satisfied tenants and leaseholders are when receiving housing and communal repairs, cleaning and grounds maintenance, modern homes or major works, service charges, leaseholder management fees and tenant and leaseholder engagement and empowerment. The Surveys also gauge tenants and leaseholders perception on different aspects of the Housing Service which include moving home, reporting anti-social behaviour, garages, contact and communication with Housing Services, complaints and value for money.

2.3.3 The Housing Service continues to review and update the way it engages with its Tenants and Leaseholders. Surveys of this nature allow the Council to develop a set of priorities based on consultation for future planning. The last survey showed satisfaction levels of 2018/19 was 71.43%. Due to the Covid pandemic and the recovery of services, both surveys will not resume until 22/23.

2.3.4 The main channels for consultation with tenant and leaseholder stakeholders are:

- Housing Standards Board
- Property and Tenancy Standards Board
- Leaseholder Standards Panel
- Harlow Times
- Housing Digital Tenancy Portal

2.3.5 Consultation with Councillors and Officers takes place through the Senior Management Board, Portfolio Holder Meetings and Cabinet.



3. Context: National and Local

3.1 National Context - General

3.1.1 Covid-19 has had a huge impact across society. We are facing higher than usual inflation, increases in the cost of living, along with procurement and supply chain issues which are having a direct impact on the landlord service. For a Housing Service, this becomes particularly important where:

- The Council has to set rents for the most vulnerable tenants in the community.
- Service charges to tenants and leaseholders are likely to increase due to increases in energy costs and the wider impact of inflation.
- Tenants and leaseholders may have experienced hardship due to “furlough” and loss of jobs.
- The Housing Service has not been able to access homes as easily as it previously could.
- There is a backlog of repairs.
- Energy costs and building costs have increased significantly.
- Access to building materials is not straightforward.
- There is a shortage of labour in the building industry.

3.1.2 It is against this backdrop that the current HRA Business Plan has been formulated, recognising that small steps will be made at first and that recovery plans are still in place to bring the service back to “normal”. In future years, the plan becomes more ambitious, delivering more to achieve the goals set out in the Corporate Strategy.

3.1.3 The increasing concern regarding climate change will also impact on the Housing Service. Homes need to become more energy efficient and the service needs to make changes in order to operate in a way that will render it carbon neutral by 2030.

3.1.4 In March 2020, the Government introduced a temporary £20.00 per week uplift for Universal Credit (UC) claimants in response to the coronavirus pandemic until the end of October 2021. The Government has subsequently announced in the Budget that it is making changes to the “taper” rate of UC with effect from December 2021, in relation to the amount deducted from claimants’ UC entitlements where the claimant is earning above their work allowance and will change from 63% to 55%, meaning that claimants will keep 45p (previously 37p) in every pound earned over the allowance. It is also increasing the Work Allowance by £500, which overall could mean an increase of £1,200 per annum in income.

3.1.5 The Office of National Statistics (ONS) reported in 2021 that national employment between the ages of 16 and 64 was 75.5%. Latest figures for Harlow, (June 2021) show employment rates at 74.2%.

3.2 National Context - Housing

3.2.1 The government continues to outline the commitments that social housing residents should be able to expect from their landlord. Some of these commitments have already been legislated, for example:

- Benefit Reform.
- Tackling Homelessness.
- Tackling Housing Need.

3.2.2 Others are expected to be legislated in the near future, for example:

- Building Safety.
- Raising standards and increasing the resident voice.
- Improvements in transparency and accountability, with a new housing regulation and a strengthened Housing Ombudsman.
- Increased regulation on consumer standards.
- A new national Rent Policy, placing standards on rent setting and affordability.

3.2.3 [The charter for social housing residents](#) (the new Housing White Paper) has been informed by a process of consultation and engagement with social housing residents following the fire at Grenfell Tower. It sets out a range of measures with the aim of rebalancing the relationship between social landlords – both local authorities and housing associations – and tenants. This is still yet to be legislated.

3.2.4 While much of the responsibility for delivering the expectations set out in the White Paper rests with social landlords, its implementation will be underpinned by a strengthened consumer regulation regime that we have been asked to take on as a “beefed up” Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). The new regime will build on our existing reactive “consumer regulation role and standards”, which Harlow Council will be subject to, and includes new Building Safety responsibilities.

3.2.5 What are the changes?

The White Paper sets out clear expectations that social tenants should be able to expect good quality homes and services. The new remit, once implemented, will be proactive and involve regular **regulatory engagement**. The expected key regulatory changes following broad areas:

- changes needed to the consumer standards that all social landlords will be required to meet,
- the proactive consumer regulation activity (including, for example, a programme of inspections as outlined in the White Paper) through which we will monitor and assess whether those standards are being met; and
- agreeing a set of tenant satisfaction measures that will both inform our regulation and help tenants hold their landlords to account.

3.2.6 Until the new legislation is brought in, the existing [consumer standards](#) continue to apply.

3.3 Local Context – Harlow

3.3.1 Harlow is a former new town, designated under the ‘New Towns Act 1946’.

3.3.2 The Act created a number of new satellite towns around London, which had suffered bomb damage during the Second World War and housed many in sub-standard dwellings. The town had the good fortune to be designed through the vision of Sir Frederick Gibberd (1908-1984), who was not only an architect and planner but also a landscape architect. Working with pretty much a blank canvas of small, sparsely populated, villages with houses, church and farms, Gibberd was able to design new communities among green wedges. Harlow is a relatively small town and one of the most densely populated areas in the East of England. In Harlow there is a larger proportion of terraced houses than is the norm, and 14 high rise flat blocks – The Lawn being the first high-rise residential tower block to be built in England, in 1951. Most of the immediate post-war housing was built by the public sector: a Development Corporation passed to the newly designated Harlow District Council its stock when it was wound up. The Council takes its housing landlord role very seriously. The financial challenges that it and all other Councils face mean that difficult choices have to be made.

3.3.3 The town is made up of suburban communities as well as shopping centres (note: the hatches are part of the smaller communities with schools and churches) and industrial and distribution centres. Harlow is at the centre of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor. Harlow has many things going for it: an internationally important public sculpture collection including works by Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), Henry Moore (1898-1986), Barbara Hepworth (1903-1975), Gerda Rubenstein (b.1931); artistic communities such as Parndon Mill and Gatehouse Arts; green spaces including Parndon Wood - winner of many Green Flag Awards - the Town Park, and the Gibberd Garden; as well as the fact that nowhere in Harlow is far from some wonderful and tranquil wood, pond or stream or open space.

3.3.4 Harlow is an urban and green town mixing high-quality, varied housing and occupancy types for all incomes. The Council is strongly committed to maintaining its “landlord role”. The financial challenges that it and all other Councils face mean that priorities and difficult choices have to be made about the roles it undertakes.

3.3.5 A summary of the key characteristics for Harlow reveal:

- Harlow has excellent rail links – 20 minutes to London Stansted Airport, 35 minutes to London Liverpool Street and 40 minutes to Oxford Circus.
- Harlow’s population is projected to grow to 103,000 by 2039.
- The number of homes in Harlow is projected to increase by a further 16,100 by 2033.
- Wage levels are lower for residents than workers.
- The rate of NVQ Level 3+ qualification is lower than the national average.
- Located at the heart of the London Stansted Cambridge Corridor, with the space and the potential to unlock growth in key sectors across the corridor.
- Benefitting from strategic transport connections, with London, Cambridge and Stansted less than 40 minutes away and access to the M11 and M25. Housing potential growth - it is expected from the new Local Plan for 9,200 homes to be included within Harlow itself. It is also expected for a further 6,100, integrating a new coherent expanded urban area which includes (not all of Harlow is

- included in the Garden Town) the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town.
- UK Health Security Agency new £480m science hub and headquarters, bringing 3,245 new jobs to the town and signalling its growing importance as a location for life sciences.
- £250m investment in Harlow Enterprise Zone, building on Harlow's ICT (Information and Communications Technology) and the Medi-tech (Medical Technology) Centre creating 1,000 new jobs.
- A new Harlow hospital is to be built by 2026 to ensure the hospital is fit for the future and healthcare provision meets the needs of residents.
- A new £81 million junction on the M11 motorway is under construction and is set to be complete in 2022 to improve connectivity and ease traffic around the town.

Current Challenges:

- Low skills levels, with poor higher education engagement, low confidence levels, and a rate of NVQ 3+ qualification below the national average.
- Significant funding for infrastructure achieved in principle for including new crossings of the River Stort, West Anglia Mainline upgrades and road improvements.
- Some large housing estates in poor condition, requiring significant regeneration to maintain an inclusive and cohesive community.
- Significant funding is being sought for the town centre with recent residential conversions limiting the potential to create a mixed-use asset at the heart of the town.
- The town's largest employer, Princess Alexandra Hospital, is on a constrained site near the town centre that is not fit for purpose.
- Harlow has a young population, with those under ten accounting for 13% of the population. Excluding London Boroughs, this represents the 19th highest rate in England and Wales.
- Harlow has a more diverse population than ten years ago. Around 16% of Harlow's population are from the black and minority ethnic groups. This is slightly lower than the national average.
- Harlow's homes were all built around the same time and are aging together. Around a third of Harlow's rented homes are social rented from the Council, the third highest in England and Wales. This remains a huge contextual issue for Harlow as it shapes its regeneration plans.
- 51% of Harlow's homes are terraced houses; the fourth highest rate in England and Wales; and 24% are flats.
- House prices have increased recently, albeit from a low base and average incomes are lower than in many neighbouring areas, making homes even more unaffordable for many.

Recent achievements

3.3.6 The Council has delivered key housing achievements which include:

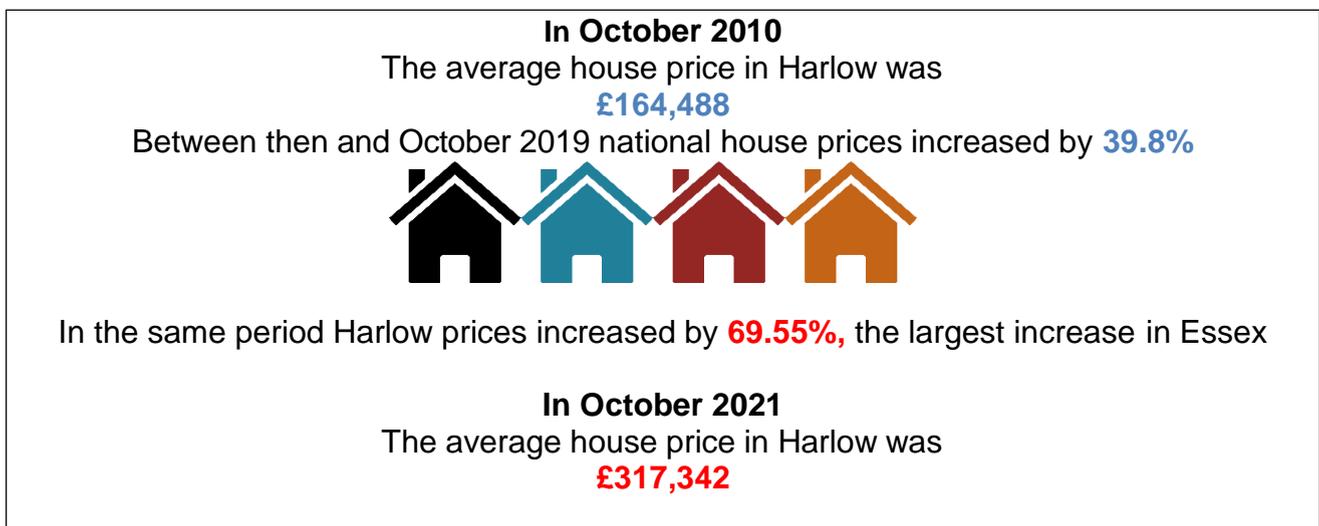
- Over £150 million in modern home investment to improve the homes of residents.
- New affordable housing for Harlow residents which include the replacement of estates at the Briars, Copshall Close and Aylets Field Estate Regeneration.
- 15 new council home on derelict garage sites.
- Repurchase of 46 houses within the town to assist with meeting housing need on the Council's housing register for family sized homes.

Stock condition challenges

- 3.3.7 The Council uses its Stock conditions surveys to manage its assets for assessing and planning its repair and maintenance programmes.
- 3.3.8 It is important it concludes the amount of resources that are required to sufficiently maintain its homes to a “modern homes” standard in order for a programmes and budgets to be identified for planned maintenance over the business plan period within resources forecasted.
- 3.3.9 As part of this year’s HRA Business Plan review, the housing service has reviewed its stock condition information. These have been aligned to new enhanced housing regulatory standards, as well as drawing conclusions on the amount of work required from the backlog identified left from Covid-19 restrictions. Over the coming seven years, in order to maintain its homes to modern construction/environmental standards, a profiled resource allocation to meet the stock requirements. Outlined in Appendix ii(a) are the identified resource allocations to include required annual allocations to meet these stock requirements.
- 3.3.10 The quantified “catch up” stock condition survey has been forecasted at £25.6 million and includes requirements for **enhanced** housing regulatory actions (e.g. fire safety/building safety/decent homes criteria), conclusions on ongoing repair requirements, an analysis of information on building components life cycles/building location and, importantly, any proposals for future use including remodelling or structural alterations. Continued review of these assumptions will be made annually and be aligned to wider town/estate regeneration priorities, estate renewal programmes, and wider environmental improvements. The profiled maintenance programme, detailed in Appendices ii and iii, includes estimated costs aligned to the wider 30 year projected life cycle maintenance required spend and will be reviewed annually against any national and local housing policy change.

Housing Need Challenges

- 3.3.11 Financial challenges continue to affect Harlow residents, including many Council tenants. In addition, many young adults find it hard to move into their own home. Average house prices are around seven times average earnings. This context demonstrates the ongoing lack of genuinely affordable housing in Harlow, with too many successful Harlow residents leaving the town, in part because they cannot find suitable housing:



3.3.12 The number of people renting in the private sector is increasing nationally and locally. The private sector remains a core component of the national housing supply. The high cost of buying a home and the sources of social housing means that many families have to rent privately in the medium to long term. Nearly 50% of growth in the private rented sector, in the last two years, has come from families with children with half of tenants aged 35 years or older.

3.3.13 There are currently 5,124 applicants on the Council's Housing Needs Register comprising:

Homeseeker Applicants	3,671	71.6%
Homeseeker Applicants (accepted homeless)	109	2.2%
Transfer Applicants	1,344	26.2%

3.3.14 During the year ending 31 March 2021, the Council housed 443 households which comprised:

Homeseeker Applicants	204	46%
Homeseeker Applicants (accepted homeless)	80	18%
Transfer Applicants	159	36%

3.3.15 In June 2021, the Council commenced its emergence from lockdown under Covid-19. A recovery plan for tackling housing need has been established to deal with the backlog of voids, lettings, and putting in place of Covid-19 revised business processes. The impact of Covid-19 has meant there continues to be fewer resources to meet local priorities.

3.3.16 Whilst there continues to be less resource to meet local priorities, the council will continue to work towards making more housing available in Harlow, with a wider choice of housing types which are genuinely affordable, by helping to improve the choices for those in housing need as well as improving health and wellbeing by improving housing conditions.

3.4 Analysis of Housing Stock

3.4.1 As at 1 April 2021, Harlow Council had a housing stock of 9,158 Council dwellings as shown in the table below. Of these, 11 homes are managed under the shared ownership scheme. A further 2,603 leasehold flats purchased under the 'Right To Buy' scheme are maintained by the Council. Harlow has one of the highest levels of social housing in the East of England, above the national average of 16.7% This is because of being one of the earliest New Towns in the country and the characteristics that prevail in terms of lower income levels and demographics.

Analysis of Housing Stock	Number
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Analysis by Type of Dwelling	
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Houses & Bungalows	5,579
Flats and Maisonettes	3,547
Other	32
Total	9,158

Analysis by Number of Bedrooms	
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Bedsitters	397
1 bedroom	2,042
2 bedrooms	3,538
3 bedrooms	2,830
4 bedrooms	321
5 bedrooms	25
Housing Multiple Occupancies	5
Total	9,158

4. Our Vision (Corporate Strategy)

Housing – Strategic Ambitions

- 4.1 Good quality affordable housing of all tenures that is appropriate for people at different points in their lives is a cornerstone of the Council’s new Corporate Strategy.
- 4.2 The Housing Portfolio contributes to a number of the key strategic themes as part of the overall vision to level up the Town, this includes continuing to invest in our homes, tackle housing need, and inequality by delivering housing strategies.
- 4.3 Set out below are the short, medium and long term ambitions envisaged to achieve Harlow’s aspirations for Housing

Short-term Ambitions	Medium-term Ambitions	Long-term Ambitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify preliminary council owned sites for all tenures appropriate for new housebuilding. • Identify housing needs to inform the type of housing that would be required for new housebuilding. • Improve the cleanliness of the communal areas in flat blocks. • Improve the customer experience with the Council’s repairs service • Continue to make the best use of and invest in our homes, tackling local priorities, prioritising energy efficiency schemes that can make a difference in tackling climate change and fuel poverty in line with the Government’s Green Paper. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In conjunction with Regeneration develop a house building plan for identified council owned sites. • Continue to tackle poverty and inequality by delivering housing strategies. • Deliver plans and strategies for affordable housing. This will include carbon reduction methods such as new boilers, roof installations (retrofitting). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure all neighbourhoods are desirable places in which to live with homes that are safe, secure, and appropriate for people at different points in their lives. • Ensure future housing plans and strategies are aligned to the new national Housing White Paper.

Short-term Ambitions	Medium-term Ambitions	Long-term Ambitions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable an improved conversation between the Council and tenants/leaseholders to help shape the continued development of housing services, allowing people to take a more active role in policy making. • Tackling homelessness, by providing more choices for those in housing need increasing the promotion of wider housing options and use of the private sector. • Ensure homes are decent, compliant, safe, affordable, and accessible to promote good physical and mental health and wellbeing and which are fit for the future. 		

Strategic Outcomes

4.4 The following Strategies will support the delivery and outcomes of our strategic aspirations for Housing. These are:

- **Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy.** Work with residents and deliver services in an open, transparent, and accountable way.
- **Allocations and Homelessness Strategies.** Ensure action plans are delivered, prioritised, and focussed to meet local housing need.
- **Affordable Housing Strategy.** Grow by building new homes that are affordable and meet local housing need. More residents in their own home whether its Council or private.

- **Sub Regional Strategy.** Play a leading and influential role regionally and nationally within the housing sector. Actively seek partnership opportunities with other housing providers.
- **Housing Regulatory Plan.** Invest in and deliver good housing regulatory governance, improving services.
- **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.** Invest in securing and keeping the best talent in housing services. Use housing assets effectively and support sound financial health and sustainability.
- Focus on the **Supported Housing Service** to ensure a “needs led” service taking advantage of any changes to the Social Care legislation and funding associated.

5. Delivery Plans



5.1 The statutory basis outlining responsibilities required of a housing landlord are contained within the 'Housing Act 1996', and subsequent legislation.

5.2 The housing service delivers Council landlord and associated housing related services formally regulated:

- Tenancy and Property
- Asset Management
- Compliance
- Income maximisation and tenancy support
- Managing the housing estates
- Managing empty properties
- Processing Right to Buy applications
- Tenant and leaseholder engagement
- Leasehold management
- Garage and hardstand management
- Enforcing tenancy conditions
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour
- Providing Housing Related Support (HRS) services

5.3 As landlord for 9,158 homes the Council has a responsibility to ensure that it:

- meets statutory regulatory requirements
- performs well in its landlord duties (e.g. rent collection, empty property management, and repairs)
- has housing that is safe and well maintained and managed
- listens to the tenants and leaseholders
- provides housing support where appropriate

5.4 The Housing service has the following delivery themes as part of the Council's corporate strategy:

Theme 1 - Identify preliminary council owned sites for all tenures appropriate for new housebuilding. Identify housing needs to inform the type of housing that would be required for new housebuilding. In conjunction with Regeneration, develop a house building plan for identified council owned sites.

5.4.1 The Council is strongly committed to the development of new housing in Harlow that is affordable and offers choice to all residents. Affordable includes:

- Social-rented
- Affordable-rented
- Shared Ownership
- Low Cost Home Ownership

5.4.2 Key worker housing Offering a mix of tenure will allow people in housing need to access their preferred and most appropriate option and allow the Council to build more homes owing to improved cost viability of a New Build Programme.

5.4.3 All homes built by the Council will meet criteria that will ensure that they are future-proofed and desirable places to live:

- Accessibility - built to "Lifetime Living" standards (i.e. flat, accessible entrance, wide door and corridor space, etc.)
- Appropriate materials used to ensure durability and prevent high repairing liability
- Carbon-neutral
- Designing out Anti-Social Behaviour (adequate lighting, no dark areas, anti-graffiti, etc.)
- "Tenure Blind" – whatever the tenure, passers-by will not be able to ascertain whether a property is Social Housing, Affordable or Owned
- Adequate greening (planting of trees and shrubs) with maintenance plans built in.

5.4.4 The Council is already in the process of building new Council homes – the schemes at 4, The Hill and Bushey Croft will deliver 18 new social-rented homes by the end of 2021/22. It is proposed also to establish an "Estate Renewal Working Group", which will be chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Director of Strategic Governance which will involve the Portfolio Holder for Housing, officers from the Housing, Environment and Finance portfolios, to form part of a wider town regeneration strategy.

5.4.5 A future House Building Programme is being extrapolated to deliver a significant number of new homes over the next few years. This will include opportunities for land acquisition as sites come to the markets. A comprehensive New Build Programme is to be reported to Cabinet in March 2022. The Council intends to increase the number of Council homes that it builds. This will assist in meeting the 2023/4 Corporate Strategy ambition over the next three years helping both to meet the local housing need and commence the regenerating of estates respectively.

5.4.6 The Bushey Croft scheme was awarded Homes England grant and bids will be made in the future for grant funding for new schemes. However, grant funding precludes the use of Right to Buy One for One Receipts (RTB 141), so the financial viability of schemes, use of grant funding and use of RTB 141 receipts will all have to be balanced carefully to ensure the best financial outcome for the authority.



Theme 2 - Improve the cleanliness of the communal areas in flat blocks.

5.4.7 The Council is currently undertaking a review of both the Cleaning standards and the current scope and coverage of the Caretaking and Cleansing service. The aim of the review is to improve and extend the service to all areas identified as requiring intervention. Three pilot sites have been identified for the extension of the service in 2022/23. Planning and consultation with residents will commence in 2022 with the aim of introducing the service from 1 October 2022. In addition to extending the service, a pilot on three existing sites is being undertaken in 2021/22 to review the current scope and frequency.

Theme 3: Improve the customer experience with the Council's repairs service.

5.4.8 The Council and HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd continue to move towards a developing a set of shared objectives to provide further enhancements to the service they provide for repairs and maintenance to tenants and leaseholders. Throughout 2022/23, further enhancements to the customer service will be jointly implemented by both organisations, allowing customers to report repairs online, providing enhanced information about the status of a repair and improvements to the way repairs are scheduled and the time taken to complete them. A review of the KPIs associated with the HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd service agreement is in progress to ensure that they are aligned to the recommendations contained with the Best Value Review reported in 2020. Intensive training of call centre staff is being developed and monitoring processes associated with customer satisfaction reviewed and updated.



Theme 4: Continue to make the best use of and invest in our homes, tackling local priorities, prioritising energy efficiency schemes that can make a difference in tackling climate change and fuel poverty in line with the Government's Green Paper.

5.4.9 Climate change continues to become an increasing priority. Whilst it is difficult to set targets there is a requirement for setting “overarching principles”. Many of the energy efficiency measures that have been discussed look at reducing CO₂ emissions, however climate change is affecting our weather patterns and we are seeing more frequent high winds and gales, heavy rains and floods in Harlow. This continues to cause significant damage to some of our buildings. The Housing service will look at measures that can be taken to reduce the effects of climate change to its housing stock:-

- Prioritising the Energy Efficiency of the Council's housing stock in regard to replacement and renewal of the Council's Communal and District Heating Systems, including the charging of heat and hot water on an individual household basis via the installation of heat meters within properties and improving the energy efficiency of the poorest performing properties which pose a risk of fuel poverty to our tenants
- The Council is committed to this programme of work with schemes identified for replacement in the 2021/22 Capital Programme
- Alongside this work, the Council has also continued to ensure its progress towards full compliance with its obligations under the 'Heat Network (Metering and Billing) Regulations 2014' – with the levying of individual heating charges to each property instead of a share of the total costs
- The Council fully recognises the scale and significance of this change for its residents, and has closely monitored the impact of this upon households. It has provided additional advice and support when necessary in regard to issues of vulnerability and/or affordability. This approach will continue into 2022/23 as the next phase of transition to individual heating charging takes place

- In addition, continued asset management value continues to be derived from the 2015/16 Harlow Home Energy Study by Rickaby Thompson Associates. This gave rise to, a programme of targeted improvement works ensuring that the Council will have – as required from April 2018 via the Energy Act 2011 and Fuel Poverty Regulations 2014 – no properties subject to re-letting restrictions via an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating below band E by April 2018



Theme 5: Tackling homelessness by providing more choices for those in housing need by increasing the promotion of wider housing options and use of the private sector.

- 5.4.10 The number of Homeless applications and Harlow's housing shortage continues to remain high, with the number of local residents on the Council's Housing Needs Register continuing to increase showing the demand for housing need locally. There are arguments to remove Band 4 from the Housing Needs Register (HNR) in view of the unlikelihood of the applicants achieving a property. The Council's view is that, whilst it may hold out unrealistic expectations for many, it provides a better idea of unmet demand for the Housing Strategy and local plan.
- 5.4.11 The Council continues to receive grant funding to support and assist with the duties prescribed by the Homeless Reduction Act, and is awaiting notification as to whether it has been successful in receiving further determination for grant funding under the Homeless Prevention Grant 2022/23. The Homelessness Grant is no longer ring fenced to homelessness, nor is it guaranteed. It is expected to be significantly reduced over time and could ultimately be withdrawn as the government attempts to reduce the reliance on government funding and achieves its target of removing rough sleeping by 2025.
- 5.4.12 It is recognised locally that London Boroughs, and other councils, continue to place their homeless in temporary accommodation in Harlow. This continues to put added pressure on local support services and planning regulations making best use of limited buildings.

5.4.13 The number of homeless households being placed in Temporary Accommodation (T/A) has steadily risen in Harlow. In March 2020 there were 258 and by October 2021 there were 277. However, this number has also been adversely affected by the Covid pandemic and the moratorium on evictions in both the social and private housing sectors. Whilst there continues to be a lack of housing in both the social and private sectors the Council continues to annual review its procurement arrangements for temporary accommodation to ensure best value and suitability and continues to explore alternative options for applicants who are owed an accommodation duty under current homelessness legislation.

5.4.14 Based on current volumes, there is an expectation both locally and nationally that T/A numbers will continue to rise by 20% in the next 12 months. It is envisaged that demand on the service will continue to increase due to Covid-19 emergency laws covering evictions that came to an end on 31 May 2021, the furlough scheme that came to an end at the end of September 2021 and other financial relief coming to an end, such as mortgage holiday breaks and the enhanced £20 per week uplift of UC payments which came to an end in October 2021.

5.4.15 In October 2021, the Government, through the ring fenced Homeless Prevention Grant, provided a top up grant of £116,246. The purpose of the grant is to help and support low-income vulnerable private renters with Covid-19 related rent arrears to avoid and reduce the risk of them being evicted and becoming homeless. The grant enables the Council to provide targeted funding to those who need it most.

5.4.16 To qualify for assistance, the households are required to satisfy the requirements under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 for the Prevention duty to be owed to them. The household must also meet either the vulnerability threshold or have a priority need and fall within the purpose of this grant. Low income households are classified as those that are entirely reliant on means tested benefits or are in paid employment but have an element of UC being awarded to them.

Rough Sleepers

5.4.17 Since the commencement of the Government's Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI), the council has successfully secured grant funding for the last four years to work intensively within the local area to tackle rough sleeping. In 2021/22 the Council secured RSI funding totalling £394,994. The Council are currently in the process of submitting a further RSI bid for funding for 2022/23.

5.4.18 Harlow Council has seen over a 90% reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in the town since the annual autumn count in 2020 which was 4. Due to the ongoing work with our partners Streets2Homes (S2H), the additional funding received from the Government to enhance the initiatives available to this group has reduced the numbers currently (October 2021) to nil.

5.4.19 The following initiatives within the government funding commenced in April 2021:

- Continued employment of a Rough Sleeper Co-Ordinator to manage and monitor the progress of the initiative and to lead and coordinate the enhanced Severe Weather Provision.
- Grant funding to S2H to recruit additional Outreach / Tenancy Support Workers.
- Providing personalised housing budgets to individuals to assist them in securing accommodation.
- Continue to support the S2H hostel at Bromley Cottages, with in-reach, outreach and Tenancy support.



5.4.20 Harlow's Homelessness Partnership Group, which was established in 2010, is in the process of being reviewed with a new approach to partnership working with the Probation Service, S2H , Registered Providers, The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). The aim is to work both strategically and operationally in partnership to tackle homelessness and target scarce resources to meet local priorities.

5.4.21 In terms of Harlow's strategic housing need, the total new housing requirement set out in the Harlow Local Plan is 9,200 dwellings (2011 – 2033), of which 3,200 should be Social/Affordable (2016-2033). These include social rented, affordable rented, intermediate housing, low cost home ownership, intermediate housing, and shared ownership. It is estimated there is a need for mixed sized dwellings for all areas. In Harlow there is a lower need for four or more bedrooms. The need for intermediate affordable housing is more heavily concentrated on smaller dwellings. Smaller properties may also encourage those in larger and family sized dwellings who are under occupying to downsize to a smaller property. With an increasingly ageing population and those who are affected by mobility restrictions, vulnerabilities and poverty, there continues to be an increasing need for suitable accessible properties and housing support services.

5.4.22 The HNR shows that 1,230 (as at September 2021) of all households registered are categorised as having an urgent or high need to be allocated a social housing property. The main reasons households want to move is due to both overcrowding and affordability. The HNR currently has approximately 5,124 applicants (as at September 2021).

Discharging to the Private Sector

5.4.23 Due to the limited supply of suitable housing within Harlow, the Council needs to consider all available accommodation options for applicants who are owed an accommodation duty. Therefore in line with the Localism Act 2011 and the amended Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996 which gave local authorities the power to discharge the housing duty by way of a private rented sector offer, such as an assured shorthold tenancy for a minimum 12 month period, the council will be looking to incorporate this option into its range of different prevention tools.

5.4.24 Extending the Council's options to discharge its homeless duty into the private rented sector will enable it to build on providing a range of different housing options available to assist and prevent households that are faced with homelessness.

5.4.25 Accessing the private sector in this way potentially reduces the number of households placed in temporary accommodation and therefore reduces the cost of this provision. It also provides applicants and their families a more settled life style, as some households can remain in temporary accommodation for extended periods of time, due to the lack and availability of permanent accommodation.

Implementing the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

5.4.26 The Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent on the 29 April 2021. The Act aims to ensure that victims of domestic abuse have the confidence to come forward and report their experiences, safe in the knowledge that the state will do everything it can, both to support them and their children and pursue the abuser.

5.4.27 The impact the Act will have on housing and accommodation offered is:

- To provide all eligible applicants who are homeless as a result of being a victim of domestic abuse, to have "priority need" for homelessness assistance
- To ensure that where a local authority, for reasons connected with domestic abuse, grants a new secure tenancy to a social tenant who had or has a secure lifetime or assured tenancy (other than an assured shorthold tenancy)

Enhancing Harlow's own Temporary Accommodation

5.4.28 The Council continues to face very considerable challenges and pressures in relation to its statutory obligations for meeting local housing need, including homelessness. The Council has committed to ending the use of external private temporary accommodation in the form of office conversions or permitted developments to ensure the suitability of the accommodation it provides. This has resulted in progressively increased pressure upon the Council's provision of temporary accommodation, and the budget related to this.

5.4.29 In order to assist with these pressures, there is a project to convert an existing temporary accommodation unit at Hare Street Springs into 3 x 2 bedrooms and 1 x 1 bedroom self-contained flats. The new designs will continue in line with the existing external dimensions of the current appearance of the property. The project is currently in its planning stages, including incorporating energy efficiency and carbon reducing measures, with a view to commence works in 2022.

5.4.30 The Council continues to assess further opportunities to enhance its portfolio of Temporary Accommodation as they are identified.

Theme 6 - Ensure homes are decent, compliant, safe, affordable, and accessible to promote good physical and mental health and wellbeing and which are fit for the future. Deliver plans and strategies for affordable housing. This will include carbon reduction methods such as new boilers, roof installations (retrofitting).

5.4.31 The Council continues to use data gathered through a number of sources to establish Programmes of work to its housing stock in order to maintain compliance with the Government's Decent Homes Standard and fulfil its wider regulatory and statutory duties as a responsible landlord.

5.4.32 The Council's Housing Investment Programme (HIP) centres upon establishing a set of internal, external and compliance related works packages. These work packages target resources to ensure homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard, the Council fulfils its statutory and regulatory duties and that local priorities are tackled. High standards of workmanship in all the programmes are expected to ensure that they are delivered on time, within the budget envelope allocated and to a consistently high customer experience standard – as reflected within contractual Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for all Service Providers.

5.4.33 The Modern Homes Programme has reached over 8,000 homes to date, illustrating the continued ambition and scale of delivery, transforming Council housing in Harlow. There is a robust inspection and performance management framework established which ensures that standards are met, contractors meet performance standards, and value for money can be demonstrated.

5.4.34 In addition to maintaining decency, additional asset management priorities shape investment within the housing stock over the next five year period as follows:

- Annual and mid-term reviews are undertaken to ensure the core capital programme of works delivers on the key principles of the Asset Management Strategy. From the stock condition data collected, a comprehensive programme of works has been developed that will deliver a programme of internal decent homes works to kitchens, bathrooms, heating upgrades and electrical rewires. The external programme of work will focus on flat block refurbishment works which include roofing, window and door replacement, internal and external fixtures and fittings and redecoration
- The annual review concluded that the scope of works is fit for purpose, having been developed over a period of years and takes account of statutory and regulatory requirements. The scope continues to deliver on all key principles of the Housing Investment Programme. However, following updated stock condition surveys, there has been a requirement to reprioritise sites and blocks within the programme. Generally the requirement to re prioritise works has been due to deterioration/wear and tear on the blocks
- Continued focus and planning on the Council's compliance (health and safety) obligations, including Fire Safety requirements, is a key priority for the authority. Attention continues to focus on high risk buildings which include the 14 high rise blocks, mid-rise blocks (2-5 floors), Houses in Multiple Occupation and Supported Housing stock. Landlords' responsibilities are increasing following the introduction of the Building Safety Bill in July 2021 and the regular Fire Safety updates received. Work Programmes are reviewed monthly and reported on quarterly to the Safety Committee. Fire Risk Assessments are undertaken every three years with reviews completed annually in order to prioritise work programmes.
- The Council's Asset Management Strategy recognises that housing assets can also become liabilities which ultimately impact on both the tenant and landlord. An area of significant risk to the Council is the increased number of properties being identified with structural subsidence. The reason for this increase is primarily due to adverse weather conditions over recent years and the effect of maturing trees on properties which have historically been planted in close proximity to the dwellings. The Council is undertaking a tree survey over the next three years which will help identify future 'hot spots'.
- Targeting works, priorities and resources identified in the approved Garage and Hardstand Strategy.
- Enhancing the portfolio of the Council's own Temporary Accommodation with a view to increasing its quantity and quality and reducing the reliance upon Bed and Breakfast and other more expensive external options.
- Maintaining the Council's significant investment in adaptations to the homes of some of our most vulnerable customers (disabled, long term illness etc.) to ensure that tenancies remain sustainable.
- The pandemic and the requirement now for self-contained temporary accommodation has resulted in the under occupation of various units across the town. An options appraisal on the remainder of shared Temporary Accommodation units is now being undertaken and will dictate how the programme of works is scoped.

5.4.35 The Council achieved full compliance with the Decent Homes Standard in March 2015 and this position was maintained up until March 2020. Due to the pandemic and periods of national lockdown and suspension of all internal works, the Council failed to attain full compliance in March 2021. With continued investment, increased supply chain capacity and performance improvement plans in place, the Council is on track to attain full compliance by May 2022.

5.4.36 As a result of government legislation to reduce rents by 1% each year from 2016 until 2020, the Council planned its housing stock investment and programme delivery (HIP) to meet, rather than as had originally been the intention to exceed, the Decent Homes Standard. However, it is proposed to return to the ambition of exceeding Decent Homes Standard for Harlow residents from 2022/23 onwards and therefore increased investment of £25.939m has been included in the Business Plan, to be spent over the next six years in order to catch up to this position.

5.4.37 Effective contractor management continues to be vital to ensuring optimum value for money is obtained for the Council's capital investment, with tight cost, quality and payment control secured through a continuous rolling monthly process of works handover, sign-off and valuation, holding contractors to account.

5.4.38 The detailed HIP covering 2021/22 and the next five years and a full list of short, medium and long-term priorities for asset management are identified in Appendix ii.

Continued focus and planning on the Council's compliance with health and safety obligations

5.4.39 As a responsible social landlord, Harlow Council has no greater asset management priority than ensuring the health, safety and welfare of its tenants via full compliance with its statutory, regulatory and legal obligations across the full range of issues related to fire, gas, electrical and water safety as well as asbestos management.

5.4.40 The Council continues to focus on validating and seeking comprehensive assurance that its approach to fire safety is robust. This has been the case in regard to positive feedback, as regular joint inspections to the Council's 14 High Rise Tower Blocks and other multi-storey Flat Blocks continue to be undertaken by Essex Fire and Rescue Service and Council Officers.

5.4.41 The Council, though, has continued to further prioritise and increase its asset management focus on both further fire safety-related activities and other compliance (health and safety) areas, including:

- The decommissioning of the warm air ducts and replacement of the central heating systems at the four remaining towers - due for completion in January 2022
- Continued operation of a comprehensive programme of electrical safety inspections and upgrading of communal electrical installations via ring-fenced, dedicated compliance capital funding
- Damp work is predominately funded from the housing repairs budget and is also funded from wider programmes within the wider external works programmes

Works identified in the Garage Strategy

5.4.42 The Council's Housing Garage and Hardstanding Strategy was first updated in 2007.

- 5.4.43 The strategy recognised the large portfolio and prioritised it according to retention, disposal, and redevelopment of further affordable housing. An investment appraisal was completed in 2014 which identified and strengthened sites for retention and/or disposal.
- 5.4.44 The budgetary resources available to this area of work were significantly reduced in 2016/17 in preference to works within domestic tenanted properties, and this position continues with an annual budget of £315,000 set for 2022/23 and £338,450 for 23/24.
- 5.4.45 This budget has been used for a programme of works – both refurbishment of existing garages as well as demolition and their replacement with hardstanding areas – derived from the original Garage Strategy across the town. Derelict garage sites also form part of the Council’s wider regeneration approach which seeks to maximise scarce land resources, identifying sites for a House Building Programme.

Maintaining the Council’s significant investment in adaptations to the homes of some of our most vulnerable customers (disabled, long term illness etc.) to ensure that tenancies remain sustainable

- 5.4.46 Work to disabled adaptations continues to be marked by levels of demand which substantially exceed the budgetary resources available.
- 5.4.47 As a result, a budget of £700,000 was allocated to these works for 2022/23 with £750,000 is to be maintained within the Council’s medium term financial planning for its Housing Investment Programme for each year through to (and including) 2026-27.
- 5.4.48 Service Reviews, covering all aspects of service and delivery structure and process, continue, in order to seek to ensure that the Council - and the vulnerable tenants and their families for whom adaptations work is so vital - is obtaining maximum Value for Money and efficiency, making best use of the stock. This will in particular focus moving forward upon an expanded role for and involvement from, the Council’s Housing Management function within decision-making and customer communication in individual disabled adaptation cases.

Supporting the development of HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd

- 5.4.49 The Corporate Strategy supports the commercial expansion of HTS Group Ltd to achieve its ambition to become a leading services provider in the East of England and to supply strong revenue to its Shareholder the Council.
- 5.4.50 An updated Business Plan for HTS Group Ltd is to be presented to the Shareholder in February 2022 which will align to the Council’s Corporate Strategy. The framework includes an investment plan aligning to the growth strategy outlined in the scoping reports approved by the Shareholder in October 2021 together with improvement plans for the repairs and environmental maintenance services.

5.4.51 The Business Plan will be reviewed by both the Board and the Shareholder and will strengthen the professional, managerial capacity, and Board membership to enable enhanced delivery of the Business Plan ambitions. The HRA Business Plan will be regularly reviewed to ensure Capital and Revenue programmes of work are maximised, offer value for money, within the legal standing order and procurement restraints.

5.4.52 The Shareholder also expects further progress for the Recovery Plans established for both housing and environmental maintenance. The plans must demonstrate the required improvements to the “customer experience” and delivery for the work required. This should set targets for tangible enhancements to the customer repair/access management processes over the next twelve months with a six month review period.

5.4.53 The Shareholder recognises further work is to be undertaken to assess the impact of moving HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd Annual Service Charge (ASC) to a more tax efficient model including the removal of service rebates alongside the introduction of other commercial charges. It will also annually review the ASC and services agreement to ensure corporate strategy ambitions, and any emerging priorities. It will also assist HTS Group Ltd in becoming more commercial taking advantage from market sources to fund expansion plans and new projects.

5.4.54 HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd will continue to be allocated on an annual basis work packages to the value of £5.8m encompassing areas including internal works to ensure homes remain decent and compliant, electrical testing and upgrades, Disabled Adaptations, and Garage Refurbishment / Demolitions. These allocations of works will be reviewed annually within in the affordability of the HRA Business Plan forecasted crossed models.

5.4.55 This Business Case process has been further refined and enhanced in order to ensure that the Council can evidence a continuous improvement in the quality of service delivery and Value for Money provided by HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd in accordance with the Council’s original objectives in implementing the Local Authority Trading Company structure.



Theme 7 - Continue to tackle poverty and inequality by delivering housing strategies. All neighbourhoods to be desirable places in which to live with homes that are safe, secure, and appropriate for people at different points in their lives.

Tenancy Strategy

5.4.56 The Council is required to have a Tenancy Strategy setting out its approach to tenure.

5.4.57 This was approved in 2019 and, together with a new Allocations Policy, helps to determine the priorities used for allocating Council housing. The policy has given greater freedom to establish local approaches to those who can join the Housing Needs Register and what priority the Council can award. The Council no longer manages an open waiting list to which any person can apply.

5.4.58 The Council wishes to promote mutual exchanges whereby tenants can swap with another tenant with permission from the landlord. This assists in tackling housing need and pressures on the Council's Housing Needs Register.

5.4.59 The Council also offers financial support to existing Council tenants wanting to move to a smaller Council home. The aim of the scheme is to free-up larger accommodation in the town for families in need. The scheme is voluntary with financial incentives offered depending on the number of the bedrooms released. Existing Council tenants wishing to downsize are given a higher priority when bidding for homes.

Providing Supported Housing

5.4.60 Harlow Council's Supported Housing Service consists of 16 sheltered housing schemes, one extra care scheme for the frail elderly, and a community support function for 800 private clients living across the town.

5.4.61 The Sheltered Housing Service plays an important role in this 'Wellbeing' Strategy.

5.4.62 Reductions in housing support place increasing pressure on supported housing services. However, the Council wants Harlow to be a great place to grow older with people living happy, healthy and independent lives with the Council playing a leading role in tackling the underlying root causes of poor health and the issues that affect wellbeing.

5.4.63 Older People can expect to live longer, maintaining their independence for longer, seeking care and support services later in life. In Harlow this age profile is projected to increase dramatically.

5.4.64 Therefore, it is appropriate to continuously review and reshape services to meet the changing needs with an emphasis on housing support services.

5.4.65 Implementation of the five year Supported Housing Plan has the following themes:

- Increase the number of telecare alarm units installed by 1% per annum
- Introduce pre-tenancy assessments ensuring appropriate allocation to meet tenant need
- A recommendation that all properties specifically identified to house older people over the age of 55 should have emergency alarms installed as an integral part of the tenancy
- Conversion of the farmhouse at Sumners Farm Close into four one bed disabled access flats, linked to the main independent living scheme

- Continue to procure and provide an out of hours mobile response service for tenants living in sheltered housing and in receipt of telecare services

Delivering Housing Related Support (HRS)

5.4.66 The Council realises the importance of delivering HRS services as part of the older people's health and wellbeing agenda, particularly in promoting independence and avoiding inappropriate hospital admissions. Supported Housing has an effective framework moving forward, dealing with reducing resources both within the Council's General Fund and HRA. This is in addition to being able to balance priorities against the wider priorities of the Council's landlord services, including sustaining tenancies through the work of the Tenancy Support Service with the Housing Management Team, dealing with the most vulnerable tenants that require support and assistance.

Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

5.4.67 Tackling anti-social behaviour continues to be a high priority for the Council. Early intervention is key and, by ensuring resources are targeted appropriately, it enables the Council to deal efficiently and effectively with complaints. Taking a multi-agency approach (involving the Police, Social Care, schools and other support agencies) is attributed to the continued success in reducing the number of complaints and need for enforcement action. Promoting Tenants Moves Incentive scheme and mutual exchanges to support Housing Need and make best use of stock.

5.4.68 The main priorities are:

- Promoting the support provided by the Council to assist, particularly to down-size.
- Make efficient and effective use of existing Council housing stock.
- Increased priority given to Council tenants wishing to move to smaller properties.
- Demonstrating value for money.
- Increasing housing options to meet housing need.

Universal Credit (UC)

5.4.69 The Council continues to be a Trusted Partner of the UC Full Service Landlord Portal, enabling Officers to verify claims for housing costs quickly and requesting managed payments more easily.

5.4.70 Since its implementation, the number of Council tenants claiming UC has continued to grow, with the number increasing dramatically from February 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. As at the end of August 2021, 2852 tenants were recorded as having made a claim for UC, amounting to 31.98% of Council tenancies. This compared to 1820 tenants (or 20.17% of tenancies) registered as claiming UC at the end of February 2020.

5.4.71 The HRA Business Plan 2021-2051 includes a provision for bad and doubtful debts, which it is hoped, is more than ample for any negative impact of UC.

Collecting Rent and Service Charges

5.4.72 The Council's "can't pay / won't pay" approach actively helps residents with dedicated money advice, early intervention, a range of support, not just financial but including wellbeing, through the Welfare Panel, and targeted income management, along with the promotion to take up direct debit payments. The Council continues to have clear and transparent processes and procedures for dealing with arrears recovery, will continue to work in line with its "can't pay/won't pay" ethos when managing debt in relation to support and enforcement.

5.4.73 The Council continues to improve on rent and service collection rates with performance still in the "top quartile" of high performing landlords, which is one of the highest collection rates in the region. In September 2021, rent collection rates have increased to 98.02% which is above previous year profile.

1. 98.69% of rent collected in 2020/21
2. 99.27% of leasehold service charges were collected in 2020/21.



5.4.76 Set out in Appendix i is the HRA Business Plan Delivery Plan which shows in detail the tasks to be undertaken under each of the above themes.

6. The Finances

- 6.1 The HRA Business Plan has been costed in light of all of the aspirations, corporate themes and delivery of a day to day housing service as described above, ensuring affordability, deliverability and ambition are appropriately balanced. The plan is financially sustainable in terms of both the 30-Year operating account and the 30-Year Capital Programme.
- 6.2 Appendix iii(a) shows the Operating Account, which takes into account the 2021/22 revised budget and the 2022/23 budget. The following points are worthy of note:
- The 2022/23 rent increase is 4.1% (being CPI+1%)
 - The Retail Price Index (RPI) for 2022/23 is 4.9%. However, the 2022/23 budget in the Business Plan increases by more than this, mainly due to a need to provide for pension costs from then onwards
 - After Year 2, both income and expenditure are increased by assumed CPI and RPI uplifts. Rents are assumed to increase by CPI+1% for 2023/24 and 2024/25, then CPI+0.5% thereafter. This is because the Government will issue a new rent standard commencing in 2025/26
 - In the first two years, there are large revenue contributions to fund the capital programme (£10.898m in 2021/22 and £4.668m in 2022/23). By the end of 2022/23, the balance on the account is close to the minimum required (4.653m), so thereafter, the revenue contributions fall to the level that can be afforded by the Operating Account (around £2.5m a year)
 - The minimum balance is set by reference to an “industry norm” of £500 per dwelling. Predicted balances on the account stay at this level from 2022/23 through to 2050/51
 - Capital charges steadily increase as new loans are taken out to fund the Capital Programme
- 6.3 Appendix iii(b) shows the Capital Programme. This takes into account the investment in a New Build Programme in 2021/22 and over the next three years, the core Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and £25.939 million of catch-up works to be delivered over the next six years. The points to highlight are:
- There was no borrowing in 2021/22, but borrowing will begin in 2022/23 (£8.502million), peaking at £11.826 million in 2023/24. This borrowing in the early years is directly related to the New Build Programme. A more detailed Cabinet report will be brought to the March Cabinet detailing the New Build Programme.
 - In later years, borrowing continues, albeit at a lower level. The Council will need to borrow every year except in 2032/33
 - A programme will need to be developed to use Right to Buy One for One Replacement receipts (RTB 141). Otherwise, the Council will need to repay them to Government
 - A careful balance needs to be struck between opting for Homes England grant or using RTB 141 to ensure that the Council maximises its resources in the future
- 6.4 Appendix iii(c) sets out all of the assumptions made in putting together the HRA Business Plan numbers, together with a commentary on why these assumptions were made and the risks and mitigations associated with them. The last column of the table indicates where there has been a change in the assumption from that included in the 2020/21 HRA Business Plan.

6.5 It should be noted that borrowing will rise from £208.837m in 2021/22 to £264.239m in 2050/51. There is very little scope for repayment, but this will be kept under review. It is worthy of note that, whilst it may be preferable to repay debt, a debt of £264.239m equates to £29,000 per property in 2050/51. Today, the average tenanted property value is £140,000, so the average value far outstrips the level of debt envisaged.

7. Issues, Risks and Opportunities

7.1 Financial

7.1.1 The main issues and risks identified in making the assumptions set out in Appendix iii(c) are:

- That the Government sets its rent standard at less than CPI + 0.5% with effect from 2025/26 – the HRA operating account is quite constrained as described above, and this will put more pressure on it
- That RPI outstrips CPI again as it has for 2022/23 – if this happens, then it will also further constrain the HRA operating account
- That tenants and leaseholders struggle to pay the 4.1% increase in their rent, or struggle to pay the higher service charges brought about by increases in costs around energy in particular
- That, owing to a calculated higher Major Works investment to maintain the stock at Decent Homes Standard, the Council has to increase its depreciation charge to the account in the future – this will constrain flexibility around the operating account and could lead to the Council being unable to borrow to fund its Capital Programme. Depreciation adjustments are in accordance with Council Financial Regulations
- That there is a fine balance between using RTB 141 receipts and using Homes England Grant Funding to support new developments – the Council needs to maximise its resources and not repay RTB 141 monies, with interest
- That interest rates are higher than predicted when replacement loans or new loans are required
- That debt is not repaid over the 30 years, although the debt outstanding is adequately asset-backed

An assessment and mitigation for each of these risks is included in the Appendix.

7.2 Housing Service

7.2.1 The generic service risk register is outlined in Appendix IV. In summary, the main strategic risks for the housing service are:

- *Lack of adequate council housing*, if the council does not provide adequate council housing it will not be able to fulfil housing need. Continued investment is also required in existing council housing stock to fulfil housing needs, maintain decent homes standards, and improve housing conditions
- *Provision of repairs maintenance, landscape, and street scene services*. If HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd is unable to provide its contracted services then Harlow Council may not be able to comply with its regulatory obligations as a landlord. Repairs, maintenance, landscape and street scene services are currently contracted to HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd, the term of the contract was extended in 2019/20 and a revised Business Plan is being developed to be approved by Cabinet in February of 2022.

7.2.2 The Corporate risk register and reporting is included in the quarterly performance monitoring as part of the Joint Finance and Performance Report is presented to Cabinet with progress.

7.3 The Housing White Paper

7.3.1 The new “Charter for Social Housing Residents” sets out the actions the Government wish to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, living in good quality homes and have access to redress when things go wrong.

Overarching requirements

- Strengthen the consumer standard including safety
- Identify a nominated Officer to lead on Health & Safety requirements
- Identify a Senior Officer responsible for compliance of the consumer standard
- Remove “serious detriment test”
- Introduce Local Authority routine inspections every 4 years
- Improve resident engagement

Chapter 1 – Safe in your home:

- Introduce mandatory Smoke and Carbon Monoxide alarms
- Introduce a responsible person to lead on Fire Safety Measures
- Provide residents with 2 way communication on home safety
- Identify accountable person, through the Building Safety Bill for each higher risk building to produce and implement a resident engagement strategy to promote engagement with tenants & leaseholders on safety of the building

Chapter 2 – Know how your landlord is performing:

- Regulator to introduce a set of tenant satisfaction measures
- Report annually to each tenant a breakdown on how income is spent and tenant satisfaction levels
- Produce an annual report on tenant satisfaction levels and comparisons
- Regulator to produce an additional core set of tenant satisfaction measures, which will be Repairs, Building Safety, Engagement and ASB
- Identify a responsible person to ensure the organisation is complying with consumer standards

Chapter 3 – Complaints:

- Run an awareness campaign on the Council’s complaints process, i.e. social media, leaflets, newsletters
- Local Authority to comply with Housing Ombudsman’s complaint handling code, aligning new Corporates complaints process.

Chapter 4 – Treated with respect:

- Remove “serious detriment test” and introduce routine inspections every 4 years
- Inspections to be 3 stages, 1. Desk top review carried out annually. 2. Risk based routine inspections. 3. Re-active investigations/inspections
- Regulator to review all consumer standards to ensure up-to-date

- Local authorities to establish a policy on how to tackle Domestic Abuse

Chapter 5 – Voice heard by your landlord:

- Improve engagement and show thinking in terms of strategy and actions

Chapter 6 – Good quality homes & neighbourhood to live in:

- Review decent homes standard to see if it needs updating, to now include ASB and CCTV
- Provide mental health training for staff
- Create a policy to deal with managing cases of domestic abuse
- Ensure allocations policy provides the armed forces with priority access to the Housing Needs register

Chapter 7 – 1st Step to ownership:

- Funding developments
- 10 Year repair free for major repairs for shared ownership

7.3.2 Proposals in the White Paper, when it becomes legislated, will make clear the standards the Council would need to adhere to. It is unclear when there will be a legislative timetable to include this and wider building safety requirements. The Business Plan will need to be reviewed at that time in terms of resource requirements.

7.4 Opportunities

7.4.1 Rent Review

Under the former rent restructuring mechanism, a Formula Rent was calculated for each property with the aim for actual rents to eventually match the Formula Rent. This was abandoned in 2015/16, but Councils are allowed discretion to set rents at Formula Rent level whenever a property is relet. Harlow Council has not used this option to date. The average weekly Formula Rent for 2021/22 is £94.96, compared to the current social rent of £93.62, so a difference of £1.34. If all rents were set at target, this would equate to an additional £632k per annum. Clearly, it would take time to achieve this level of income, but, with turnover being around 5% per annum, this would equate to additional income of £32k in the first full year, building up as time goes on.

7.4.2 The Council would need to set a new rent policy in order to move to target rents, so it is proposed to undertake a review of the rent policy during 2022/23.

7.4.3 At the same time, consideration will be given to setting some rents on newly acquired or newly built properties at affordable rent levels. This will improve viability on schemes and create a “mixed tenure”.

Discharge into the Private Sector

7.4.4 As set out in paragraph 5.4.5 above, the Council has an option to discharge its homeless duty into the private rented sector. It is recommended that this option is exercised by Harlow, as accessing the private sector in this way potentially reduces the number of households placed in temporary accommodation and therefore reduces the cost of this provision. It also provides applicants and their families a more settled life style, as some households can remain in temporary accommodation for extended periods of time due to the lack and availability of permanent accommodation.

7.4.5 The Council will commence a major programme of house building, aligned to regenerating Harlow's estates. This will attract further private investment and provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to spread opportunity and level up Harlow. Furthermore, it will provide the opportunity to house more Harlow families in high-quality new homes.

8. HRA Business Plan Summary and Conclusion

- 8.1 In summary, the 2021-2051 Housing Business Plan sets out the intentions of the Housing Services teams to ensure that the short term, medium term and long term objectives as expressed in the Council's Corporate Strategy are met.
- 8.2 It is robust and affordable across the 30-year planning timeframe and financial and performance targets have been agreed by all relevant stakeholders.
- 8.3 Although it will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, the underlying principles and priorities contained within it will remain, and proactive management will ensure that budget and performance targets, stock condition and targets for the supply of new homes are met.
- 8.4 Of paramount importance is good consultation with tenants and leaseholders to ensure that they understand, can influence and agree with the direction of travel of the business.

Appendix i: HRA Business Plan Delivery Plan

Housing Delivery Plan 2022-2023

Strategic Ambition (short term)	Theme	Actions 2022/23	Milestones 2022/23	Owner	Start Date	Due (Completion) Date
Identify preliminary council owned sites for all tenures appropriate for all housebuilding	Review current House Building Programme schemes	Publish revised House Building Programme and determine financing	Actions around the House Building Programme reviewed	Regeneration	01/01/2022	21/03/2022
	Establish house building programme	New house building programme published	Produce an annual House Building Programme for house building	Regeneration	01/02/2022	Annual
Improve the cleanliness of tower blocks communal areas	Review current scope and inspection regime	Specifications, standards, and resources applied (HTS)	Inspection regime established	Wendy Makepeace	01/04/2022	Annual
	Evaluate widening scope	Business case evaluated	Revised contracts awarded	Wendy Makepeace	01/10/2022	01/02/2023
Improve the customer experience with the Repairs Service	Facilitate an effective improvement and efficiency programme	Implement enhanced programme aligned to Customer Repairs and Access Strategy	Improvement actions identified and resources allocated	Wendy Makepeace	01/04/2022	Annual

Strategic Ambition (short term)	Theme	Actions 2022/23	Milestones 2022/23	Owner	Start Date	Due (Completion) Date
	Work towards improving access.	Implement revised action plan for customer access to the repairs service	Updated action plan	Wendy Makepeace	01/06/2022	Annual
Continue to make the best use of and invest in our homes, tackling local priorities, prioritising energy efficiency schemes that can make a difference in tackling climate change and fuel poverty in line with the Government's Green Paper.	Invest in the housing stock.	Publish an annual Housing Investment Programme (HIP) and invest in improvements to housing conditions. Maintaining the housing stock and raising housing standards	Produce an Annual Housing Investment Programme (HIP) for improvements to housing stock	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
			Contracts awarded for the Housing Capital Programme	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023

Strategic Ambition (short term)	Theme	Actions 2022/23	Milestones 2022/23	Owner	Start Date	Due (Completion) Date
			Programme and Project Management Processes established and reviewed at monthly PPMG meetings	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
			Annual Workplans published to Tenants and Leaseholders	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
			The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan is updated and approved by Cabinet	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
			Performance Management Framework established	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
		Prioritising energy efficiency schemes and fire safety programmes	District heating replacement programmes complete	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023

Strategic Ambition (short term)	Theme	Actions 2022/23	Milestones 2022/23	Owner	Start Date	Due (Completion) Date
			Revised energy billing processes in place	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
			Housing Capital programme allocations published	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
		Implement the programme of Fire Safety works, prioritised against fire risk assessments (FRA) with resources from the approved Housing Capital programme	Fire safety works identified and allocations made in the Housing Capital Programme	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
Enable an improved conversation between the Council and tenants/leaseholders to help shape the continued development of housing services, allowing people to take a more active role in policy making.	Encourage and facilitate effective tenant and leaseholder engagement.	Continue to Implement the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy	Tenant and Leaseholder Strategy reviewed	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023

Strategic Ambition (short term)	Theme	Actions 2022/23	Milestones 2022/23	Owner	Start Date	Due (Completion) Date
			Biennial Tenant Satisfaction survey results published	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
		Housing works programmes communicated in advance of commencement and monitored	HIP programmes 20/21 published and reviewed quarterly at Property Services Panel	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
		Ensure Tenants and Leaseholders have opportunities to choose, be consulted, and receive feedback	Report to Housing Standards Board quarterly	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023

Strategic Ambition (short term)	Theme	Actions 2022/23	Milestones 2022/23	Owner	Start Date	Due (Completion) Date
		Working with Tenant and Leaseholder representatives as part of the Housing Regulatory requirements to continue to improve performance	Performance reported quarterly	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
Tackling homelessness, by providing more choices for those in housing need increasing the promotion of wider housing options and use of the private sector.	Work towards improving choices for those in housing need	Implement revised Action Plan from Homelessness strategy	Aligning new Rough Sleeper Strategy to strategic Temporary Accommodation Plan/review	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/10/2022
			Updated Action Plan	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
			Revised Homelessness Strategy published	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
			Government grant allocated	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023

Strategic Ambition (short term)	Theme	Actions 2022/23	Milestones 2022/23	Owner	Start Date	Due (Completion) Date
		Increase promotion of wider housing options and use of private sector	Business process reviewed	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
		Continue to develop, working in partnership, with local agencies to implement the Homelessness Strategy and Action plan. targeting resources and joint working	Partnership framework reported quarterly in line with the Homelessness strategy	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023
			Review current market options and availability	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023

Strategic Ambition (short term)	Theme	Actions 2022/23	Milestones 2022/23	Owner	Start Date	Due (Completion) Date
Tackle homelessness and housing needs by improving choices	Increase the range and type of Supported Housing. Homelessness and allocations	Continue to Implement the five year Plan for Housing Related Support (HRS) to provide an effective framework for reducing resources both within the Council's General Fund (GF) and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to balance priorities against reduced resources and the wider priorities of the Local Council Landlord Service	Align Supported Housing Plan to new Government Guidance	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/12/2022
			Supported Housing Action Plan reviewed quarterly	Andrew Murray	01/04/2022	31/03/2023

Appendix ii(a): Housing Investment Programme

Programme	Revised 2021/22 £000s	Budget 2022/23 £000s	Budget 2023/24 £000s	Budget 2024/25 £000s	Budget 2025/26 £000s	Budget 2026/27 £000s
ASC Fixed Prices	1,056	1,089	1,116	1,139	1,161	1,185
Internal Works	3,509	3,500	3,000	2,600	2,600	2,800
External works including Energy Efficiency	4,471	4,830	6,440	5,300	5,300	5,000
Energy Efficiency / Fuel Poverty	290	100	100	100	100	100
Fire Safety	6,264	3,600	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Communal Boiler Renewal	450	1,250				
Disabled Adaptations	1,624	700	750	750	750	750
Compliance (Water Gas and Electric)	2,576	2,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Joyners Field Cladding	63	1,737				
Garage Refurbishment	662	172	181	202	197	173
HTS - Environmental Estate Works	17					
Property Conversions (HTS)	200	300				
Contingency		160	220	228	228	221
Asbestos Removal	215	100	100	200	200	100
CDM	74	50	50	50	50	50
Damp	151	100	100	100	100	100
Structural	1,245	500	1,000	500	500	500
IT	320	344	50	50	50	80
Disabled Adaptations (non HTS)	37					
Prentice Place	477					
Void works to 20/21 house purchases	384					
Catch Up Stock Need		2,000	3,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
2021/22 schemes reprofiled to 2023/24		-3,000	3,000			
Total Housing Investment Programme	24,083	19,532	21,107	19,219	19,236	19,059

Appendix ii(b): Housing Asset Management – Short, Medium and Long Term Work Plan

The following priorities form the basis of the Housing Asset Management Plan:

Short Term: Up to 5 years

Maintain compliance of the Council's Housing Stock with the Government's Decent Homes Standard

Continuation of the Council's External Works Programme against a revised specification and standards resulting from the impact of Government legislation, to include delivery of the annual programme of large-scale works schemes at a number of flat blocks. A review of the scope, operation and impact of the works programme will be undertaken annually to ensure the programme is aligned to the Housing Investment programme.

Ensure the Council, as a responsible landlord, continues to meet its duties in complying with all statutory, legislative and regulatory requirements in regard to Health and Safety. This will include:

- Completion of all recommended and required works resulting from the Fire Risk Assessments and the commissioning of annual review of all Fire Risk Assessments for all flat blocks, prioritised by the number of floors within the block.
- Annual review of the provision of information and advice to customers in regard to the risks associated with and best practice approach to the management of asbestos containing materials within their home;
- Update the specification of works associated with the programme of installing and servicing/testing of Smoke Detector and Carbon Monoxide following changes to the new statutory requirements.
- Full upgrading of all communal and domestic electricity supply installations to modern, required standards backed by an up to date Electrical Installation Condition Report;

Contribute to tackling fuel poverty within the Council's tenant base through improvements in the Energy Efficiency of the housing stock, to include:

- Targeted Improvement Works to the worst performing, most energy inefficient housing units (Energy Performance Certificate rated E, F and G) in order to bring these to rating D/C or above ensuring the Council is compliant with the requirements of the Energy Act 2011 (which states that no properties can be re-let which have an energy rating below Band E after April 2018)
- Completion of the programme of replacement and improvement works for the Council's portfolio of ageing (+30 years) District (10) and Communal (15) Heating Systems, including the installation of heat meters
- Continuing to explore the opportunities available for potential sources of external funding to Energy Efficiency
- Ensure full removal of the remaining inefficient, obsolete Warm Air Unit (WAU) Heating Systems from the Council's estate of High Rise Tower Blocks and their replacement with modern, efficient and controllable gas 'wet' systems – and associated decommissioning of the related SE Ducts (targeted for completion by end July 2022)
- Aligned to the projects currently being undertaken, continue with the implementation of heat meters in all properties where heating and hot water is provided by a communal heating system to allow residents to be individually charged for their own consumption, rather than an equal proportion of the entire block.

Continue to meet the Council's statutory obligations to provide Disabled Adaptations to tenant customers in need, whilst also seeking to improve our practice and approach, through:

- Continued investment in the annual capital programme of Aids and Adaptations
- Regular updating of the Council's Disabled Adaptations Policy in order to ensure continued compliance with the latest legislative requirements, clarity for tenant customers and effective integration/linkage with the Council's Allocations and Lettings Process (in regard to optimum use of the housing stock which has already been adapted).

Improve the quality of the Council's existing portfolio of Temporary Accommodation

- Conversion of the shared house at Hare Street Springs into self-contained units with a pilot scheme on renewables to align with the energy agenda

Continue to invest in the Council's stock of Garages and Hard Standings within Harlow

Medium Term: 5-15 Years

- We continue to invest annually with an allocation of funding within the Housing Capital programme. Through a revised approach due to budget constraints the work focuses on repairs and maintenance where possible as opposed to large-scale refurbishment/replacement.

Continue to identify potential sites for redevelopment to align with the Council's key objectives to build housing, providing affordable homes for rent in Harlow and meet housing need.

- Identify potential sites for the Regeneration service to incorporate into the New Build Programme to be reported to Cabinet in March 2022
- Ensure these sites are appropriate and realistic for development and that they could be delivered with value for money (e.g. avoiding as far as possible sites with water mains and other service issues that would drive up the delivery cost).

Ensure HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd. and associated Companies deliver effectively the priorities and ambitions set out by the Council within its new Corporate Strategy. These priorities included cashable and non-cashable efficiencies and the following:

- Introduce enhanced processes (time allocation, right first time, customer satisfaction) for the completion of responsive repairs through constant review of Scope of Works;
- Ensure that the Council meets all its statutory, legislative (including via the Right To Repair) and regulatory (in accordance with The Homes and Communities Agency's Homes Standard) obligations;
- Realise efficiency savings and gains through the new Scope of Works for the services provided by HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd, optimum use of ICT systems and reformed delivery structures;
- Operation of enhanced, robust Business Case methodologies for the allocation of Capital Works Projects to HTS (Property and Environment) Ltd in accordance with Schedule 2 of the Service Agreement with the Council.

Enhance the Councils methodology to assess the performance of its existing assets based on a financial evaluation of cashflows relating to the assets in order to understand how assets perform within the Business Plan. The assessment covers housing and garage stock and has been overlaid with non-financial sustainability analysis which will provide a framework for investment decisions

Medium Term: 5-15 Years

Enhance and refine the process associated with the programme of cyclical painting which addresses immediate priorities of worst condition

The Council's Medium Term Asset Management Plan aim is to make best use of its assets by carrying out a review of the property stock and housing land, comparing investment appraisal, likely demand, and unit expenditure. Specifically the following:

- Evaluate the use and need for bin storage including a replacement and refurbishment programme to stores, shed areas and drying areas
- Tackle unsatisfactory levels of dampness (condensation)
- Hardstanding review aligned to parking requirements
- Explore opportunities for EV installations within estates

Address Estate Management issues, including:

- Vandalism and graffiti of public realm
- Review all estate based schemes to ensure "Design out Crime" is factored in when developing the scope of works to address hot spot ASB areas
- Develop a programme of works to improve the infrastructure within estates ensuring ongoing environmental improvements
- Review lighting requirements within communal areas and garage blocks
- Limited maintenance and management of public realm
- Garage and Parking Strategy – to deal with Medium and Long Term priorities for replacement parking.

Sustainability and Energy Saving Schemes – supporting Government initiatives and ensuring the Council benefits from resources available

Temporary Accommodation – continue to ensure a supply of good quality accommodation to meet identified demand

Continue to identifying opportunities for New Build and exploring options for its funding, delivery and long term ownership

Long Term: 15 to 30 Years

In the Long Term, the Asset Management Plan will seek to increase and/or replace the housing stock and related assets. Specifically to:

- Improve the quality of the public realm and overall neighbourhood management;
- Enhance overall building stock and overcome weaknesses in any typology;
- Overcome any early failure of building components;
- Enhance local property market conditions by meeting the demands of existing and new residents and thereby increasing the value of the properties
- Fulfil the wider housing quality and choice agenda; and continue a programme of new build with annual review.

Appendix iii(a) - Harlow Council's HRA 30-Year Revenue Account Forecast

		Income			Expenditure												
Year	Year	Net rent Income £,000	Other Income £,000	Total Income £,000	Management £,000	Depreciation £,000	Responsive and Cyclical £,000	Other Revenue Spend £,000	Total expenses £,000	Capital Charges £,000	Net Operating (Expenditure) £,000	Repayment of loans £,000	RCCO £,000	Surplus (Deficit) for the Year £,000	Surplus (Deficit) b/fwd £,000	Interest £,000	Surplus (Deficit) c/fwd £,000
1	2021.22	43,789	7,476	51,265	(19,267)	(10,736)	(11,963)	(598)	(42,564)	(6,891)	1,809	0	(10,898)	(9,090)	16,243	63	7,217
2	2022.23	45,595	7,538	53,133	(20,757)	(11,228)	(11,580)	(463)	(44,028)	(7,023)	2,082	0	(4,736)	(2,654)	7,217	40	4,603
3	2023.24	47,084	7,764	54,849	(21,380)	(11,512)	(11,868)	(475)	(45,235)	(7,399)	2,215	0	(2,255)	(40)	4,603	33	4,596
4	2024.25	48,416	7,959	56,374	(21,914)	(11,802)	(12,103)	(484)	(46,303)	(7,687)	2,384	0	(2,418)	(33)	4,596	35	4,598
5	2025.26	49,425	8,158	57,582	(22,462)	(12,057)	(12,343)	(493)	(47,355)	(7,828)	2,399	0	(2,434)	(35)	4,598	39	4,602
6	2026.27	50,418	8,361	58,780	(23,024)	(12,299)	(12,587)	(503)	(48,413)	(8,169)	2,198	0	(2,237)	(39)	4,602	43	4,606
7	2027.28	51,430	8,571	60,001	(23,599)	(12,547)	(12,835)	(513)	(49,495)	(8,253)	2,253	0	(2,297)	(43)	4,606	45	4,608
8	2028.29	52,461	8,785	61,246	(24,189)	(12,799)	(13,088)	(523)	(50,600)	(8,291)	2,355	0	(2,400)	(45)	4,608	46	4,609
9	2029.30	53,512	9,004	62,516	(24,794)	(13,055)	(13,346)	(534)	(51,730)	(8,304)	2,483	0	(2,529)	(46)	4,609	47	4,610
10	2030.31	54,582	9,230	63,812	(25,414)	(13,317)	(13,609)	(545)	(52,884)	(8,426)	2,501	0	(2,548)	(47)	4,610	47	4,610
11	2031.32	55,673	9,460	65,133	(26,049)	(13,583)	(13,876)	(556)	(54,065)	(8,431)	2,637	0	(2,685)	(47)	4,610	48	4,611
12	2032.33	56,783	9,697	66,480	(26,701)	(13,855)	(14,148)	(567)	(55,271)	(8,432)	2,777	(9)	(2,816)	(48)	4,611	49	4,612
13	2033.34	57,915	9,939	67,854	(27,368)	(14,131)	(14,425)	(579)	(56,503)	(8,461)	2,890	0	(2,939)	(49)	4,612	50	4,613
14	2034.35	59,068	10,188	69,255	(28,052)	(14,413)	(14,707)	(591)	(57,763)	(8,560)	2,932	0	(2,982)	(50)	4,613	51	4,614
15	2035.36	60,242	10,442	70,684	(28,754)	(14,700)	(14,994)	(603)	(59,051)	(8,610)	3,023	0	(3,074)	(51)	4,614	52	4,615
16	2036.37	61,437	10,703	72,141	(29,472)	(14,992)	(15,286)	(616)	(60,367)	(8,658)	3,115	0	(3,167)	(52)	4,615	53	4,616
17	2037.38	62,655	10,971	73,626	(30,209)	(15,290)	(15,584)	(629)	(61,712)	(8,710)	3,204	0	(3,257)	(53)	4,616	54	4,617
18	2038.39	63,896	11,245	75,141	(30,965)	(15,593)	(15,887)	(642)	(63,087)	(8,781)	3,273	0	(3,327)	(54)	4,617	55	4,618
19	2039.40	65,159	11,526	76,686	(31,739)	(15,902)	(16,195)	(656)	(64,492)	(8,850)	3,344	0	(3,399)	(55)	4,618	56	4,619
20	2040.41	66,446	11,815	78,260	(32,532)	(16,217)	(16,509)	(670)	(65,927)	(8,919)	3,414	0	(3,470)	(56)	4,619	57	4,620
21	2041.42	67,756	12,110	79,866	(33,345)	(16,537)	(16,828)	(684)	(67,395)	(8,993)	3,478	0	(3,536)	(57)	4,620	58	4,621
22	2042.43	69,090	12,413	81,503	(34,179)	(16,864)	(17,153)	(699)	(68,894)	(9,059)	3,549	0	(3,607)	(58)	4,621	59	4,622
23	2043.44	70,449	12,723	83,172	(35,034)	(17,196)	(17,483)	(714)	(70,427)	(9,109)	3,636	0	(3,696)	(59)	4,622	61	4,623
24	2044.45	71,832	13,041	84,873	(35,909)	(17,534)	(17,820)	(730)	(71,993)	(9,136)	3,745	0	(3,805)	(61)	4,623	62	4,625
25	2045.46	73,240	13,367	86,607	(36,807)	(17,879)	(18,162)	(745)	(73,593)	(9,161)	3,853	0	(3,915)	(62)	4,625	63	4,626
26	2046.47	74,674	13,701	88,376	(37,727)	(18,229)	(18,510)	(762)	(75,229)	(9,185)	3,962	0	(4,025)	(63)	4,626	64	4,627
27	2047.48	76,134	14,044	90,178	(38,670)	(18,586)	(18,865)	(778)	(76,900)	(9,208)	4,070	0	(4,135)	(64)	4,627	66	4,629
28	2048.49	77,620	14,395	92,015	(39,637)	(18,950)	(19,225)	(795)	(78,608)	(9,229)	4,179	0	(4,244)	(66)	4,629	67	4,630
29	2049.50	79,133	14,755	93,888	(40,628)	(19,320)	(19,592)	(813)	(80,353)	(9,248)	4,286	0	(4,353)	(67)	4,630	68	4,631
30	2050.51	80,673	15,124	95,797	(41,644)	(19,697)	(19,965)	(831)	(82,137)	(9,266)	4,394	0	(4,462)	(68)	4,631	70	4,633

Appendix iii(b) - Harlow's 30 Year Capital Programme

		Expenditure			Financing						
Year	Year	Major Works & Imps £,000	New Build Development Costs £,000	Total Expenditure £,000	Borrowing £,000	RTB 141 Receipts £,000	Other RTB Receipts £,000	Other £,000	MRR £,000	RCCO £,000	Total Financing £,000
1	2021.22	24,083	3,094	27,177	0	224	1,449	2,296	12,310	10,898	27,177
2	2022.23	19,532	10,637	30,169	8,434	4,255	1,517	0	11,228	4,736	30,169
3	2023.24	21,107	10,074	31,181	11,824	4,029	1,560	0	11,512	2,255	31,181
4	2024.25	19,219	1,950	21,169	4,572	780	1,598	0	11,802	2,418	21,169
5	2025.26	19,236	0	19,236	3,108	0	1,637	0	12,057	2,434	19,236
6	2026.27	19,059	0	19,059	2,847	0	1,676	0	12,299	2,237	19,059
7	2027.28	18,507	0	18,507	1,947	0	1,717	0	12,547	2,297	18,507
8	2028.29	17,212	0	17,212	255	0	1,758	0	12,799	2,400	17,212
9	2029.30	17,551	0	17,551	166	0	1,801	0	13,055	2,529	17,551
10	2030.31	17,896	0	17,896	187	0	1,844	0	13,317	2,548	17,896
11	2031.32	18,247	0	18,247	90	0	1,889	0	13,583	2,685	18,247
12	2032.33	18,605	0	18,605	0	0	1,935	0	13,855	2,816	18,605
13	2033.34	20,442	0	20,442	1,391	0	1,982	0	14,131	2,939	20,442
14	2034.35	20,842	0	20,842	1,418	0	2,030	0	14,413	2,982	20,842
15	2035.36	21,249	0	21,249	1,396	0	2,079	0	14,700	3,074	21,249
16	2036.37	21,663	0	21,663	1,374	0	2,130	0	14,992	3,167	21,663
17	2037.38	22,085	0	22,085	1,356	0	2,181	0	15,290	3,257	22,085
18	2038.39	23,108	0	23,108	1,953	0	2,234	0	15,593	3,327	23,108
19	2039.40	23,556	0	23,556	1,966	0	2,289	0	15,902	3,399	23,556
20	2040.41	24,012	0	24,012	1,981	0	2,345	0	16,217	3,470	24,012
21	2041.42	24,477	0	24,477	2,002	0	2,402	0	16,537	3,536	24,477
22	2042.43	24,949	0	24,949	2,018	0	2,460	0	16,864	3,607	24,949
23	2043.44	24,203	0	24,203	791	0	2,521	0	17,196	3,696	24,203
24	2044.45	24,669	0	24,669	748	0	2,582	0	17,534	3,805	24,669
25	2045.46	25,143	0	25,143	704	0	2,645	0	17,879	3,915	25,143
26	2046.47	25,625	0	25,625	661	0	2,710	0	18,229	4,025	25,625
27	2047.48	26,115	0	26,115	618	0	2,776	0	18,586	4,135	26,115
28	2048.49	26,615	0	26,615	576	0	2,844	0	18,950	4,244	26,615
29	2049.50	27,122	0	27,122	535	0	2,914	0	19,320	4,353	27,122
30	2050.51	27,639	0	27,639	495	0	2,985	0	19,697	4,462	27,639

Appendix iii(c) - Harlow Council's 30 Year Financial Forecast – Key Assumptions

Cost/Income Type	Assumption	Rationale	Risk	Effect/Mitigation	Different From 2020/21 Plan?
Stock Numbers and Average Rents	Stock numbers (starting stock 9,158) and average rents and the breakdown have been obtained from the Orchard system	The rent system is the place where accurate records of both pieces of information would be held	N/A	N/A	No
Rent Inflation	Consumer Prices Index (CPI) +1% for Years 1-4, then CPI + 0.5% thereafter. For 2022/23, CPI is 3.1% and therefore the rent increase will be 4.1%	The Government has announced the CPI +1% policy, but, after four years (from 2025/26), this may change	We have already experienced changes in Government Policy that have had a huge detrimental impact on the HRA Business Plan	Any change in rent uplift policy has a significant and long- term impact on the plan, but, as it will be reviewed annually, this risk will be mitigated as necessary	No
Management, Maintenance and Other Cost Inflation	Retail Prices Index (RPI). For 2022/23, RPI is 4.9%	RPI is usually used for cost inflation, but measures will have to be taken to find efficiencies if RPI outstrips CPI again in the future	If RPI does outstrip rent increases (as is the case for 2022/23), then services may have to be reduced/cut	If the approach taken in the Business Plan is not sustainable, then the HRA could become unviable, but this will be reviewed as necessary	No
Rental Income	Rental Income starts at £43.931m in 2021/22. Service Charge Income is £6.300m	These figures come from the rent system	There is a risk that, for 2022/23, a rent increase of 4.1% plus significant energy increases could prove unaffordable for some tenants and leaseholders	The position will need to be monitored closely in order to ensure rent and service charge collection remains stable	No

Cost/Income Type	Assumption	Rationale	Risk	Effect/Mitigation	Different From 2020/21 Plan?
Management and Maintenance Costs	Management and Maintenance Costs in 2021/22 are predicted to be £31.471m. In 2022/23, the budget will be £32.427m	The 2021/22 figures are taken from the base budget plus carry forwards plus Quarter 2 monitoring , 2022/23 Figures reflect the Straw Budget	N/A	N/A	No
Capital Programme – Major Works	For 2021/22 - £24m reducing to circa £19m for the following six years	This is based on achieving a catch-up programme over the next six years without stretching resources beyond the point of physical deliverability and without the need to borrow to fund the programme	N/A	N/A	Yes – the previous plan did not include catch-up works of £25.939m
Capital Programme – Estate Renewal and New Build	The Council will increase the number of Council homes that it builds aligned to the wider town wide regeneration strategy.	The Council has a priority to build new Council Housing and this House Building Programme kick starts its delivery ambition over the next three years	N/A	N/A	Yes – the mix of schemes has been updated and a detailed New Build Programme will be reported to Cabinet in March 2022

Cost/Income Type	Assumption	Rationale	Risk	Effect/Mitigation	Different From 2020/21 Plan?
Capital Programme – Acquisition	No acquisitions are assumed in the HRA Business Plan	The Council prefers to spend its capital resources on New Build rather than acquisition in order that there are more properties available to those in need	N/A	N/A	Yes – the previous plan included acquisitions
Depreciation	£10.736m in 2021/22 rising by inflation each year	Based on depreciating The stock over 54 years using a Weighted Relative Useful Life methodology	The Major Repairs Reserve is currently running at a lower level than the value of the Major Repairs Programme	The Council will consider its depreciation policy at the point of renewal of the current valuation contract and may undertake valuation based on componentisation and individual asset lives	No
Right to Buy (RTB) Sales/Other Stock Reductions	RTB Sales - 43 per year. No properties will be demolished	RTB Sales based on previous three years' average	Low risk to the Business Plan unless there is a significant increase or decrease	N/A	Yes – the previous figure for RTB sales was 40 per year
Operation of the Government's Right to Buy One for One Replacement Scheme (RTB 141)	RTB 141 receipts have been applied to support new build	This not only uses RTB 141 receipts appropriately, but also assists in the viability of schemes and prevents repayment to Government	The Council needs to ensure that it is using up its RTB 141 receipts in order to prevent returning them to Government (with interest)	The Council has purchased a RTB model in order to be able to plan ahead and respond should this problem arise	No

Cost/Income Type	Assumption	Rationale	Risk	Effect/Mitigation	Different From 2020/21 Plan?
Interest Rate on Borrowing	Each loan has a fixed interest rate which is reflected in the plan. Replacement and new loans attract an interest rate of 3.5%	Current loan interest rates are fixed. The 3.5% medium term interest rate applied to new loans is considered reasonable.	Interest rates may have gone up at the point when refinancing is required	As the loan portfolio is diverse, additional interest on one loan at a time is likely to be manageable within the Business Plan (unless interest rate increases are significant)	No
Interest Rate on Balances	0.41% in 2021/22 rising to 0.5% from Year 2	This is the sort of rate that has been received on investments for some considerable time	Low risk to the Business Plan	N/A	No
Repayment of Debt	Current loans are repaid when they become due, but a new loan (30-year maturity) is taken out as soon as any current loan matures (at 3.5% interest rate). New loans are taken out as necessary to fund the current Capital Programme and not repaid	The value of a housing portfolio should outstrip the debt outstanding and therefore there is no need to repay principal. The current debt of £208.837m equates to £22,804 per property	There is always a risk associated with not repaying principal and it would be preferable to do so.	If housing values fall significantly, then there could be a problem with the loans outstanding. These currently stand at £208.837m. The HRA Stock Valuation is currently £1,282.120m	No
Minimum Revenue Balance	£4.563m	Based on £500 per dwelling for unforeseen emergencies	Low risk to the Business Plan	N/A	Yes – the previous minimum revenue balance was set at £1.4m

Appendix iv: Housing Services Risk Register

Risk Description	Possible Triggers	Possible Consequences	Risk Mitigation/Control	Officer	Action(s)	Resource
1. Staff personal safety	Lone working	Death or ill health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Operate Staff Alert List Partnership links with MAPPA, Police and Social Services Issue of mobile phones to staff working out of the office 	SHMT	1.1 All SHMT managers to carry out lone worker risk assessments for their lone workers	Staff Time
	Potential violent customers	Increase in sickness absence			1.2 Risk assessments of all new applicants to be carried out at the point of letting.	Staff time
	Hazardous premises	Loss of confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Bespoke assessment of safe working practices where required ✓ Safety Committee 		1.3 All HPMT managers need to ensure that all lone workers are signed up and on the system.	Staff Time
		Deterioration in staff morale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Accident/incident reporting and investigation 			
		Increase in compensation claims from staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ DSE assessments 		1.4 Carry out a full Departmental review, section by section, to understand risks	Staff Time
		Reputational damage				
Impact on service delivery						

2. Failure to meet contractual obligations	Lack of appropriate performance & contract management	Accidents/damage caused by lack of or poor health and safety practice of contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Effective procurement and contract management procedures in place including regular contractor meetings 	SHMT	2.1 Complete asset database	Staff time
	Not complying with procurement requirements	Failure to deliver statutory and contractual obligations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Materials and installations are specified to meet relevant standards 		2.2 Update stock condition information	Staff time
	Not monitoring contract renewal dates	<p>Deterioration in service delivery</p> <p>Increase in number of complaints / compensation / negligence / liability / claims</p> <p>Poor service performance against Delivery Plans</p> <p>Deterioration in staff morale</p> <p>Not legally compliant</p> <p>Financial cost to Council</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Monitoring of workmanship by Clerk of Works, Surveyors & Property Officers ✓ Regular review of the contracts register 		2.3 Review of Repairs and Maintenance contracts	Staff time

<p>3. Failure to comply with housing regulatory, statutory standards</p>	<p>Lack of adequate training or failure to comply with policies & procedures</p> <p>Lack of appropriate performance management</p> <p>Low staff morale</p> <p>Inadequate supervision and management procedures</p> <p>Fraud & corruption by staff, contractors or tenants (e.g. tampering with electric supply/meter)</p>	<p>Failure to deliver statutory and contractual obligations</p> <p>Deterioration in service delivery</p> <p>Increase in number of complaints / compensation / negligence / liability / claims resulting in financial cost and/or reputational damage to Council</p> <p>Poor service performance against PAP&SAP Measures</p> <p>Deterioration in staff morale</p> <p>Not legally compliant</p> <p>Breach of Data Protection Act</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Effective supervision and management controls in place including; one to ones, team meetings, appraisals, training, recruitment & selection, capability etc. ✓ Performance management framework being developed and implemented ✓ Corporate audit plans in place and service specific management audits in place ✓ Promotion of corporate policies, including; Anti-Fraud & Corruption Strategy, Bribery Act 201, Internal Audit guidance notes, Whistleblowing Policy, Money laundering Policy, Employee Code of Conduct ✓ Compliance with Standing orders, Code of Financial Practice ✓ Separation of duties and declarations of interests ✓ Effective budgetary control 	<p>SHMT</p>	<p>3.1 Continuously update all policies and procedures to ensure that they are up-to-date, relevant and compliant.</p>	<p>Staff time</p>
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			✓ Electronic devices have integrated security systems so that systems cannot be accessed if they are stolen			
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<p>4. Significant loss of staff & systems</p>	<p>Significant reduction in staff numbers for example due to; strike, sickness, pandemic etc.</p> <p>Staff unable to attend usual place of work for example due to; closure of building, petrol strike, severe weather etc.</p> <p>Staff unable to access electronic systems necessary to conduct their duties for example due to; Failure of WDC system or support, Power failure, System problems, including hacking/ cyber security threats & cybercrime.</p>	<p>Failure to meet statutory obligations</p> <p>Inability to provide services at normal levels</p> <p>Pressure on remaining staff leading to deterioration in staff morale</p> <p>Legal action</p> <p>Additional costs to employ temporary staff</p> <p>Reputational damage</p> <p>Death or ill health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The Service Area Crisis Plan has been updated to ensure sufficient plans are in place to maintain service in the event of significant loss of staff or systems ✓ Mobile (home) working practices in place ✓ Proactive assessment of upcoming events including reviewing Weather warnings sent by Community Protection and putting in place appropriate mitigations 	<p>SHMT</p>	<p>4.1 Investigate the opportunity of implementing agile working arrangements so that we are more flexible work force and business processes.</p> <p>4.2 All critical business continuity processes reviewed annually.</p>	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Staff time</p>
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<p>5. Risk of fire in council blocks of flats.</p>	<p>Fire in communal area of a block which spreads to other parts of the building.</p> <p>Damage by fire to a building</p> <p>General acts or omissions by anyone.</p> <p>Accidental or deliberate ignition of fuel.</p> <p>Electrical fault</p> <p>Gas explosion.</p>	<p>Loss of confidence and reputational damage</p> <p>Improvement notices.</p> <p>Prohibition notices.</p> <p>Fines, compensation and imprisonment.</p> <p>Ill-health and /or death.</p> <p>Damage to property.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fire risk assessments updated and reviewed. ✓ Compliance services testing programmes (gas/electric/fire/asbestos/evacuation procedures and firefighting equipment). ✓ Communications to tenant and leaseholders. ✓ Fire risk assessment priorities and resourced. 	<p>SHMT</p>	<p>5.1 Continue to operate testing programmes.</p> <p>5.2 Monitor and review fire risk assessment programmes.</p> <p>5.3 Review content and performance of FRA's.</p>	<p>Staff time</p> <p>Staff time</p> <p>Staff time</p>
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6. Unsustainable Business Plan	Significant variances in the assumptions that underpin the Business Plan.	Reduction in services. Reduction in delivery of house building.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regular review of Business Plan performance which is reported to Cabinet quarterly. ✓ Business Plan is updated annually and reported to Cabinet and Council for approval. ✓ All significant decisions are evaluated and impact on the Business Plan is considered, reviewed, and sensitivity analysis applied. 	SHMT	6.1 To update the Stock condition information as required to ensure that the Business Plan is based on robust data and future liabilities are fully understood.	Staff time
7. Government changing the laws on self-financing and rent policy.	Unable to deliver agreed Business Plan commitments.	Business Plan becomes unsustainable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Keep abreast of National policy developments and any changes in Government thinking. ✓ Any change in the Law that affects all Councils. 	Andrew Murray	7.1 Ensure that properties are maintained to sufficient standards to mitigate the risk of failing and to be responsive to any further legislative (White Paper) requirements.	Staff time
8. Unable to respond to emergency careline call from lifeline users.	IT system failure Power failure Loss of control centre (Tunstalls)	Death or ill-health Reputational damage Litigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Business Continuity arrangements formalised with external providers (Tunstalls) ✓ Corporate ICT available. ✓ Business resilience reviews (TSA accreditation) external accreditation established. 	SHMT	8.1 Regular review of core performance monitoring against targets 8.2 Contract review period	Staff time Staff time

Glossary

ASC – Annual Service Charge

BMG Research – Public and private sector research organisation (surveys)

CAB – Citizens' Advice Bureau

CPI – Consumer Prices Index

DSE – Display Screen Equipment

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions

EPC – Energy Performance Certificate

FRA – Fire Risk Assessment

GF – General Fund

HCA – Homes and Communities Agency

HIP – Housing Investment Programme

HNR – Housing Needs Register

HRA – Housing Revenue Account

HRS – Housing Related Support

HTS – Harlow Trading Services Ltd, a Local Authority Trading Company wholly owned by the Council

IT/ICT – Information Technology/Information and Communications Technology

KPIs – Key Performance Indicators

MAPPA – Multi Agency Protection Panel

MHCLG (now DLUHC) - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC))

MRR – Major Repairs Reserve

NVQ – National Vocational Qualification

ONS – Office of National Statistics

PAP – Pre Action Protocol for housing conditions

PPMG – Projects and Programmes Management Group

RCCO – Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay

RSH – Regulator for Social Housing

RSI – Rough Sleepers Initiative

RTB – Right to Buy

RTB 141 – Right to Buy One For One – refers to the Government's RTB 141 Scheme, where Councils can keep receipts from RTB sales if they replace sold homes with new homes

S2H – Streets 2 Homes

SAP - Standard assessment protocol energy rating

SHMT – Senior Housing Management Team

T/A – Temporary Accommodation

TSA – Tenant Services Authority

UC – Universal Credit

Rent Definitions

Affordable Rent

The Government describes affordable rents as “up to 80% of market rent”. For a long time, these were mainly applied to Housing Associations, but, when councils commenced building or acquiring new homes again (as a result of the RTB 141 scheme), it was recognised that, in order to ensure financial viability, there was likely to be a need to set rents at a level higher than Social Rent. Most councils do not set them as high as 80% of market rent (and this definition in itself is not simple to work out), since this compromises affordability for most tenants, but mainly for those in receipt of Housing Benefit/UC. They instead set them by reference to the Local Housing Allowance and local income levels.

Social Rent

The rent levels applied to HRA properties which have not been newly acquired or newly built since 2012 – Social Rent levels are determined by Central Government using a formula to ensure affordability, both for tenants and for Government (through Housing Benefit/UC allowances) – these rents are lower than affordable rents. Councils can opt to set rents for newly acquired/newly built homes at Social Rent levels (as is the case with Harlow), but this is likely to compromise financial viability.

Market Rent

The rent levels set by Private Sector landlords – these are likely to follow local purchase prices and therefore can vary greatly according to demand/proximity to amenities/refurbishment levels, etc. – even in one Local Authority area. This is why it is so difficult to set Affordable Rents at “up to 80% of Market Rent”.

Further Reading

MHCLG (now DLUHC). Policy statement on rents for social housing. February 2019
The Charter for Social Housing Residents (Housing White Paper)
Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.
'HRA Budget 2022/23'. Report to Cabinet, 27 January 2022.
'Capital Programmes 2021/22 – 2023/24'. Report to Cabinet, 27 January 2022.
'Capital and Treasury Report 2022/23'. Report to Cabinet, 27 January 2022.
Harlow's Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy