

Housing & Property Services

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

REFRESHED FOR

2025/2026 - 2054/2055



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Date of publication:

07/02/2025

Date of Approval:

06/2/2025

Approved by:

Executive Board

New or existing strategy:

Existing

CONTENTS

REF	SECTION	PAGE(S)
	<u>Foreword</u> Councillor Carrington, Deputy Leader and Executive Board Member for Housing	5
1	<u>Introduction</u>	6
2	<u>Background</u>	6
3	<u>Strategic Context</u>	7
	3.1 National	
	3.2 Local	
	3.3 Housing Need and Demand	
	3.4 Delivery of Services	
4	<u>Business Plan Analysis</u>	19
	4.1 Our Homes – Stock Profile	
	4.2 Our Homes - Condition	
	4.3 Our Homes - Valuation	
	4.4 Our Tenants	
	4.5 Business Plan Priorities	
5	<u>Housing Services</u>	28
	5.1 Housing Register	
	5.2 Tenancy Management	
	5.3 Income Management	
	5.4 Communal Facilities	
	5.5 Key Challenges – Housing Services	
6	<u>Asset Management</u>	33
	6.1 Climate Emergency and Our Homes	
	6.2 Our Approach to Asset Management	
	6.3 Retrofit CO ₂ SY Homes	
	6.4 New Build CO ₂ SY Homes	
	6.5 Procurement, Business Resilience and Procedures	
	6.6 Key Challenges – Asset Management	

CONTENTS

REF	SECTION	PAGE(S)
7	<u>Financial Plan</u>	49
	7.1 Key Principles	
	7.2 Assumptions	
	7.3 Housing Capital Investment Programme	
	7.4 Sensitivities	
	7.5 Financial Risk	
	7.6 Key Challenges – Financial Plan	
8	<u>Service Delivery and Performance Management</u>	54
	8.1 Service Standards	
	8.2 Information Systems	
	8.3 Equality and Diversity	
	8.4 Resident Engagement	
	8.5 Performance Management, Benchmarking and Reporting	
	8.6 Value for Money	
	8.7 Key Challenges – Service Delivery	
9	<u>Governance and Tenant Engagement</u>	66
	9.1 Regulation	
	9.2 Data Returns	
	9.3 Complaints	
	9.4 Risk Management	
	9.5 Resident Engagement, Involvement and Scrutiny	
	9.6 Key Challenges – Governance & Engagement	
10	<u>Monitoring, Reporting and Review</u>	73
	10.1 Reporting Arrangements	
	10.2 Monitoring of Delivery Plan	
	10.3 Review	
	Appendices	
	A Updated Summary Delivery Plan	
	B Updated Financial Plan – Operating Account	
	C Updated Component Replacement Programme	

Accountable to you
Our Tenants, Customers, Colleagues, Members and Partners

FOREWORD

Working together to help build homes

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan sets out the Council's plans and ambitions in its role as a social housing landlord. Our plans have always, and will always, be developed in consultation with our tenants. Our tenants, and their homes, are at the heart of everything we do.

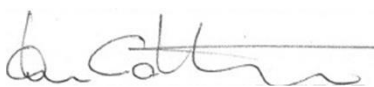
This Plan has been produced at a time of continued challenges across the housing sector.

However, it is also a time of optimism and opportunity. The Social Housing Act is now in place, which together, with the Regulator of Social Housing's regulatory standards, provides clear expectations, requirements and desired outcomes for all social housing tenants. Mostly they are things North Kesteven takes pride in having worked hard at for years already. Making sure our homes are safe, that our tenants are listened to and kept informed, that we learn from feedback and complaints, and that we have an independent check on how we're doing.

We prioritise investment in areas that matter. Top of the list is achieving the Council's Carbon Net Zero target to combat climate change, so all new homes will meet our CO₂sy standard giving high energy efficiency and thermal comfort. We continue to develop innovative ways to retrofit existing homes to make sure every resident benefits from reduced energy costs as well as helping our environment. A priority our tenants have continued demonstrated support for.

The Council's new build programme is ambitious, and through this refreshed Business Plan, we plan to continue that, with the aim to replace the number of homes lost through the Right to Buy.

These are challenging times, times which are having an impact on our residents and on wider housing need. However, we are determined to continue to provide the best quality of service and a range of support to our tenants and to make sure the North Kesteven housing service plays its part in the overall service the Council delivers to the District's residents.



Cllr Ian Carrington
Deputy Leader of North Kesteven District Council, and
Executive Board Member for Housing

1. INTRODUCTION

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is the financial account used to manage North Kesteven District Council's landlord activities. It is "ring-fenced" and therefore can only be used for providing services to tenants, through collection of rent and other charges. Other council services are funded through the General Fund.

The HRA Business Plan is the Council's strategic plan for managing and maintaining its housing stock. It highlights the Council's priorities for the landlord function within Housing and Property Services, sets out detailed plans for the short to medium term (five years), and provides a long term (30 years) outlook on stock investment and financial planning. The Council has full responsibility for the financial management of the HRA, and the business planning process ensures that the priorities of the plan are affordable and deliverable.

This refreshed plan, covering the period 2025/2026 to 2054/2055, takes into account this and the many other key changes since the last plan was developed in 2021.

Supporting delivery of the HRA Business Plan is the HRA Delivery Plan, a living document that will be subject to ongoing monitoring and be reviewed at least annually to reflect ongoing changing circumstances and priorities.

2. BACKGROUND

The HRA Business Plan, in its current form, was first approved in April 2012, following the abolition of the existing housing subsidy system and introduction of self-financing through powers introduced in the Localism Act 2011. In simple terms, self-financing awarded the Council control of its HRA, in return for taking on a proportion of national housing debt.

Generally, the Business Plan will be reviewed in full every five years, but also subject to ongoing monitoring to ensure that the Council responds appropriately to change in key policy areas.

The Plan focuses on the core landlord function of the Council in managing, maintaining and investing in the Council's residential based assets. It sets out how the Council will deliver its key Housing and Property objectives within the resources available, aiming to achieve a balance between: Spending on housing management, maintenance and support services that meet the needs of our customers and comply with regulatory requirements, whilst achieving value for money and maintaining efficiencies;

- Investing in existing homes to ensure that agreed standards are met;
- Investing in new homes, contributing to meeting local housing demand;
- Repaying the housing debt, and
- Ensuring a sustainable Business Plan currently based on a 30yr period.

Our Purpose: Customer Service and Asset Management

3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1. National Context

The Council operates within a complex and changing political, economic and social environment, and changes to national housing policy can have a significant influence on the HRA Business Plan. This section outlines the key national policies that already impact, or are expected to impact, the Plan.

3.1.1 Welfare Reform

Governments have pursued various reforms to the welfare system, aimed to make the benefit system fairer and more affordable, reduce poverty, worklessness and welfare dependency; and reduce levels of fraud and error. This has encompassed a number of different policy aspects; the majority of provisions were implemented through the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. In response, the Council implemented a Landlord Welfare Reform Strategy for the period 2016 to 2020, to help mitigate the impact of Welfare Reform changes on the Council's landlord function and tenants. This provided a clear focus for the Council's interventions and initiatives, the most successful of become embedded in standard working practices.

A number of welfare reform policies continue to have an impact on the Council's landlord function and tenants, including the Removal of the Spare Room Subsidy and the Benefit Cap. The most significant of these continues to be the rollout of Universal Credit, involving a restructure of the benefit system intended to create one income-replacement benefit for all working age adults.

3.1.2 HRA Borrowing Cap

As part of the self-financing determination in 2012, the government placed limits on the amount of borrowing that a Council could undertake within the HRA – known as the HRA Borrowing Cap. In October 2018, the government issued the Limits on Indebtedness (Revocation) Determination 2018, abolishing the HRA Borrowing Cap with immediate effect. As a result, local authorities are no longer constrained by government controls over borrowing for housebuilding in the HRA, and are able to borrow against their expected rental income, subject to tests of prudence, affordability and sustainability.

3.1.3 Regulatory Standards (including Rent Setting & the Rent Standard)

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England was first published in 2015 by the Homes and Communities Agency, which was the government's housing, land and regeneration agency, as well as the regulator of social housing providers in England, at that time. In order to ensure propriety and separate the agency's investment and regulatory functions, in January 2018 the Homes and Communities Agency was replaced by Homes England, overseeing housing investment and acceleration of housing delivery, and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), with responsibility for the regulation of registered social housing providers in England. Local authority landlords such as North Kesteven District Council are subject to mandatory registration with the Regulator.

The Regulatory Framework comprises a number of Regulatory Standards, classified as either Economic or Consumer. The current Regulatory Standards are explored in further detail in Section 9.1. All registered providers of social housing must comply with the Consumer Standards, however, until recently the Regulator had no power to set Economic Standards for local authorities, therefore, they did not apply to local authority landlords.

In order to address this, the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) issued a Direction to the RSH to set a new standard on rent for registered providers (the “Rent Standard”), to come into effect on 1 April 2020. Unlike the other Economic Standards, the Rent Standard applies equally to private and local authority registered providers, and therefore since April 2020, the Council has been subject to direct rent regulation by the Regulator. Alongside this, MHCLG issued a Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, permitting annual rent increases of up to the Consumer Prices Index + 1% (as at the preceding September). There is currently consultation on proposed rent policy going forward, currently suggesting a continuation of CPI+1%, the outcome of which and subsequent policy determination is not likely to be known until 2025/2026.

3.1.4 Building Safety Act 2022

Following the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety and consultation with industry and the public, in July 2020, the Building Safety Act was granted Royal Assent on 28/04/2022 with implementation through to 2024. The Act delivered more rights, powers and protections to all residents, through overhauling regulations on how residential buildings should be constructed, maintained and made safe.

The Act created three new bodies to provide effective oversight, the Building Safety Regulator (safety and performance of all buildings), the National Register of Construction Products (including enforcement across sector) and the New Homes Ombudsman (enabling home owners to escalate complaints).

3.1.5 Housing Disrepair & the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018

The provisions of the Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018 were implemented in phases, becoming applicable to all tenancies (other than fixed term tenancies granted for a period longer than seven years) from 20th March 2020. The Act implies a contractual term into each tenancy agreement, complementing the existing legal repair obligations for landlords as established in Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, which allows for the courts to compel landlords to undertake works, issue fines if the works are not carried out, and award compensation to tenants, subject to following the Pre-Action Protocol for Housing Conditions Claims (England). The Homes Act gives tenants a direct route to challenge their landlord in court, as well as expanding factors able to be considered to include any prescribed hazard under the Housing Health & Safety Rating system.

In general, it is the landlord’s responsibility to ensure that their homes are considered fit for human habitation; however, the landlord is not liable until they have been given notice of the issue, and the landlord is also not responsible for problems caused by the tenant failing to act in a “tenant-like manner”.

To mitigate the risk of disrepair claims, it is recommended that landlords ensure policies are fit for purpose; good records are kept (including detailed records of every repair and contact with each tenant); and that cross-departmental training and awareness of disrepair claims is provided to ensure procedures are adhered to, and responses are co-ordinated across customer service, housing management and repairs teams.

3.1.6 Energy & Clean Growth

Following the Paris Agreement in 2015, the government published its Clean Growth Strategy which included two key policy proposals for improving the emissions from housing across the UK a) improvement of energy efficiency, b) roll out of low carbon heating.

The Energy White Paper details government proposals to clean up the energy system and reach net zero emissions by 2050, and a number of these proposals will impact on the HRA Business Plan. It is important to note that while energy efficiency and reducing carbon emissions (or decarbonisation) are highly linked, they are not necessarily interdependent and therefore each may be considered in isolation as well as in conjunction.

Energy Efficiency

The Clean Growth Strategy contained a variety of proposals to improve the energy performance of housing stock, currently measured through the Energy Performance Certification (EPC) assessment. It confirmed the ambition to have as many existing homes as possible (regardless of tenure) to reach EPC Band C by 2035; for the private rented sector, the target for the vast majority of homes to reach EPC Band C was by 2030, and the Strategy suggested that similar targets were being considered for social housing. It also outlined plans for newly developed homes to meet more stringent energy performance targets through updates to building regulations, later confirmed in the consultation on the Future Homes Standard, which concluded in 2020.

We currently await the outcome of the 2023 consultation into Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) undertaken in 2023. The consultation included potential for additional requirements relating to energy efficiency standards of homes, along side fire safety hazards and competency framework. Current position is any revised regulations will be introduced after the conclusion of the Decent Homes Standard review.

Decarbonisation

The Clean Growth Strategy contains a variety of proposals for decarbonisation, identifying that reducing demand for energy by improving energy performance of homes will be necessary, but insufficient to meet the net zero emissions by 2050 ambition, therefore decarbonisation heating in homes is also needed. In addition to proposals to encourage the take up of low carbon heating systems, it outlined an ambition to phase out installation of high carbon fossil fuel heating in new and existing residential buildings.

The Ten Point Plan confirms that the Future Homes Standard requires new properties to be “zero carbon ready”, and these homes are expected to have between 75% and 80% lower carbon emissions. In October 2021, the government published its Net Zero Strategy, setting out policies and proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the economy to meet the net zero target of 2050. This was accompanied by the Heat and Buildings Strategy, which outlined significant further detail on how the Government intends to deliver the ambitions set out in the Ten Point Plan with a particular focus on reducing carbon emissions from heating.

The Council’s corporate Capital Programme includes budget provision for improvement and enhancements to Council owned assets to take steps in addressing this.

3.1.7 Decent Homes Standard

The governments Decent Homes Standard has played a key role in setting the minimum standards that social homes are required to meet since early 2000s. A commitment was made in 2020 to review that standard, and to extend it to the private sector.

In September 2024, the government announced their intention to launch consultation for Decent Homes Standard in the rented sectors. Naturally, any change to the requirements will affect the Councils current investment programme, and will require review to ensure the Council continues to ensure the Decent Homes Standard is met across all its homes.

3.1.8 Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

The Act addresses core principles the government believes every social housing tenant should expect from its landlord:

- To be safe in their home with a good quality home and neighbourhood
- Be treated with respect, their voices heard and complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- To know how their landlord is performing
- Be supported to take steps to home ownership

Specifically the law brought the following changes:

- Regulator of Social Housing to carry out inspections and the power to issue unlimited fines to social landlords
- Additional Housing Ombudsman powers to publish best practice guidance to landlord following investigations into tenant complaints
- Powers to set time limits to address hazards such as damp and mould
- New qualification requirements for social housing managers (further consultation)

Significant focus is placed upon strengthening the regulatory regime and powers to the Regulator of Social Housing, moving from reactionary to a proactive regulatory regime, requiring landlords to:

- Be transparent about performance and decision making
- Put things right when they go wrong
- Listen to tenants through active engagement

The Act provides a strong legislative framework to ensure that the tenant and landlord relationship is strengthened, with increased accountability to tenants backed by proactive consumer standards and powers for the Regulator and a more active role for the Housing Ombudsman in provision of guidance on good practice.

With effect from 01 April 2024 the Regulator of Social Housing issued its revised set of consumer standards [LINK TO - RSH - Consumer Standards 2024](#):

- Safety and Quality
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability

Previously social landlords were expected to make a self referral for any non-compliance against the standards that may have resulted in a risk of harm to tenants. In respect of these revised standards, landlords are expected to make a self referral for any element of non-compliance. This approach is in conjunction with a planned inspection regime.

3.2 Local Context

3.2.1 North Kesteven, Lincolnshire

North Kesteven is one of seven districts in Lincolnshire and covers an area of 92,244 hectares (356 square miles), of which 95% is classed as green space, including agricultural land and open space. The District is characterised by small settlements and large areas of farmland; more than 64% of the population live in rural settlements, including villages or market towns, and therefore North Kesteven has been classed as being “mainly rural” by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). It is a large and diverse rural area, stretching from the Witham in the east almost to the Trent in the west, and from the sparsely populated villages to the south of Sleaford to the more densely populated Lincoln fringe in the north.

There are around 100 communities in the North Kesteven district. The population of the District was estimated at 118,100 in 2021, an increase of over 9% compared with 2011. There are two towns, with approximately 19,500 people in Sleaford, and 16,400 in North Hykeham. Around a third (34%) of North Kesteven’s residents live in communities in the Lincoln “fringe” (the area immediately surrounding Lincoln City, including North Hykeham), and nearly a fifth (17%) live in the Sleaford area. Of the remaining 49%, around half live in communities with fewer than 1,000 people, and the other half live in communities outside the Lincoln fringe or Sleaford, with more than 1,000 people. The 2011 Census showed that North Kesteven was the fourth fastest growing district in England and Wales; more recent projections continue to demonstrate a high level of population growth. The population of North Kesteven is forecast to grow by just over 6% by 2026, and nearly 9% by 2031, almost double the forecast growth for all of England.

North Kesteven traditionally has a higher than average number of older residents; 2021 census results show that over a quarter (28.94%) of residents are aged 65+, compared to an average of 18.4% for the rest of England. Correspondingly, there are lower than average numbers of children (17.4% aged 0-15 compared to the England average of 19.2%) and working age residents (59% aged 16-64 compared to the England average of 62.4%). Recent projections show that the population aged 65+ is expected to increase by over a quarter (25.7%) by 2031. North Kesteven has a low ethnic minority population, with the most recent estimates showing that over 97% of residents are White British and just over 2% belong to a minority ethnic group.

In 2019, MHCLG released the newly updated Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). North Kesteven was in the top 16% of the least deprived local authority areas in England, ranking 268th of 317 in total. However, North Kesteven remains the least deprived of all the Lincolnshire authorities.

Rural isolation is a potential issue for many residents, with a lack of access to public transport and/or a lack of local facilities being a particular feature of a number of settlements in North Kesteven. This is reflected in the “Barriers to Housing & Services” domain of deprivation, which considers road distance to a post office, primary school, general store/supermarket and GP surgery, alongside household overcrowding, homelessness and housing affordability. Of the 64 LSOAs in North Kesteven, six rank in the bottom decile (i.e. the bottom 10%) for this domain, representing over a third (27) of the total of 75 parishes in North Kesteven.

The HRA Business Plan interrelates with other strategies in the Council's corporate strategy framework. In developing the plan, careful regard has been given to aligning Housing and Property priorities with corporate priorities and ambitions, and other key strategy documents. A range of programmes, policies and plans enable the Council to implement the improvements, activities and investment needed to meet its Housing and Property objectives.

3.2.2 Lafford Homes Limited

North Kesteven District Council established its first wholly owned private company, Lafford Homes Limited, in 2016/2017. The objectives of the company are to support the Council to meet Local Plan targets and housing demand in North Kesteven, unlock sites for development and provide more housing choice and meet housing need.

Lafford Homes Ltd currently provide most of their homes at market rent, some homes are at an affordable rent in accordance with s106 requirements, these homes are let through the Council's housing register. The company has plans to develop homes for sales.

There is a clear link between directly provided Council services such as our housing register and landlord services and the objectives of Lafford Homes Ltd.

3.2.3 Community Strategy

The Council's Community Strategy sets out our aspirational direction of travel to 2030, our strategic direction to enable a district of flourishing communities where everyone has a future, a job, a home, a life and a champion. Concepts that directly link to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and established corporate priorities. [LINK TO - NKDC Website - Community Strategy](#)

We define flourishing as being when an individual or members of a community are happy, healthy, feel capable and engaged and are experiencing high levels of wellbeing. We recognise the importance of partnership working to achieve our goals and making that difference for our residents.

3.2.4 NK Plan

The NK Plan is the Council's strategic vision for the realisation of our priorities, purpose and services to develop and enrich our flourishing communities, shaping our delivery through to 2030. [Link To - NKDC Website - Corporate Plan 2024](#).

The NK Plan builds on:

- A big ambition and clarity of purpose, supported by inclusive, positive values
- A balanced general fund
- A viable housing revenue account
- A £114.8m ten year capital programme, with £29.1m within three years of the current plan
- A great track record of performance and delivery

The NK Plan together with our overarching Community Strategy drive forward the Council's priorities, detailed in the table below. Housing and Property Services have a role to play in supporting all of the NK Plan priorities, with the fundamental HRA Business Plan priorities contained within the "Our Homes" ambition and its priorities.

Priority	Ambitions
Our Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enhance the health and wellbeing, safety and resilience of all our communities: inspiring and supporting a sustainable and flourishing future Promote participation and engagement within all our communities, ensuring the voices of younger people are heard Ensure a clean, safe and inclusive district Promote healthy lifestyles by providing a range of leisure and cultural opportunities and supporting partnership health strategies Provide effective and efficient support services for our residents, recognising and be responsive to the ongoing cost of living challenges
Our Environment	<p>Champion and deliver a just transition for our climate and environmental commitments and aspirations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Champion greenhouse gas reduction both within the Council and across the district Research & promote actions needed to increase resilience to climate change Deliver the requirements of the Environment Act (2021) Conserve and enhance NK's heritage assets Enhance biodiversity across the District and support natural carbon capture
Our Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To support sustainable and regenerative local economic growth and resilience, transitioning to a green economy working within environmental thresholds Supporting employers where possible, alongside the protection of existing jobs, the creation of new jobs and promotion of the wider skills agenda Attract investment to improve physical infrastructure support regeneration and enhance digital connectivity Create a clear vision of place, celebrating and marketing all that the District has to offer Promote the economic opportunities from tackling climate change
Our Homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through the Local Plan, deliver sustainable housing growth and pursue energy efficient development to meet the current and emerging needs Facilitate the provision of community infrastructure to align with housing growth Provide high quality services for both housing and tackling homelessness recognising the additional cost of living pressures Maintain, improve and future-proof housing Deliver homes that are affordable and meet the full range of needs and the net zero ambitions of the Local Plan
Our Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To be a high performing, value for money Council that is agile, resilient and actively embraces the challenges and opportunities of the future Deliver high quality value for money and sustainable services underpinned by effective workforce planning Ensure our Council is financially resilient Promote and protect good governance and healthy democracy with accountable, transparent and timely decision making Ensure a strong and adaptable focus on our customers

3.2.5 Climate Emergency and Action Plan

The Council recognises that climate breakdown is the biggest challenge of our time, recognised as a leader in local government on climate action. As a signatory to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change in 2008, this Council embarked on a journey to build sustainable, just, healthy and flourishing future for communities throughout its district. In 2019 it declared a climate emergency followed by a detailed action plan that encapsulated an overarching Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plan.

The Council's strategic aims demonstrate a green thread through all service delivery, towards achieving net zero by 2030 both for the Council and the district, designed to decarbonise services, assets and communities. Through a substantial investment programme, detailed later in this document, to retrofit social housing and reduce emissions alongside reductions in energy costs.

Housing and Property Services have a role to play in achieving both of these aims and aspirations, but are likely to have a more significant impact on the target to become a carbon neutral council by 2030. To do this, the Council has set a target for "net zero" carbon emissions by 2030, this will involve:

- Achieving a 95% reduction in emissions by 2030; and
- Offsetting remaining emissions in 2030.

In the 2023/24 Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey, tenants were asked whether they agree that North Kesteven District Council has to act urgently to address climate change, to which 57% of tenants agreed. Sections 6.4 and 6.5 provide more detail on how this is being delivered through our landlord services and investment.

3.2.6 Health and Wellbeing Strategy

The North Kesteven District Council Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan identifies further ways to improve health and wellbeing across the District through interventions, opportunities and partnerships as well as utilising the authority's existing work across service areas and with partners. [Link To - NKDC Website - Health & Wellbeing Strategy](#)

The Delivery Plan was approved unanimously by the Council's Executive Board on Thursday 30 March 2023. Alongside it at the meeting were also two other items aimed at positive impacts on health in the District – the Council's Inclusive Housing Strategy and a policy on damp and mould which strengthens existing procedures. Both were approved by the Council's Executive Board unanimously. Our Damp and Mould Policy has subsequently been updated and approved by the Executive Board on 09/01/2025, in response to the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report and other sector expectations and improvements in responding to reports of damp and/or mould in homes.

The Health and Wellbeing Delivery Plan for North Kesteven maps out the actions to be taken specifically to help residents and communities in the District. It comes after the Lincolnshire District Councils' Health and Wellbeing Strategy which district councils have published together, intended as a blueprint with individual delivery plans to follow. North Kesteven's delivery plan which drives the Council's contribution to that strategy.

The Health and Wellbeing delivery plan for North Kesteven, much like the overall strategy, is split across five themes. It spells out specific actions under each theme while also being based on health needs in North Kesteven, alignments with existing Council partnerships and possible new actions.

3.2.7 Inclusive Housing Strategy

Approved in March 2023, replacing the previous Older Persons Housing Strategy, this document sets out our framework for providing homes to meet the current and future needs of our tenants. [LINK TO - NKDC Website - Inclusive Housing Strategy](#)

Recognising and understanding how housing is a key social determinant of health and wellbeing. Suitable good quality housing can decrease the need for medical interventions and help maintain independence safely. The strategy encompasses building a better future for those with physical and mental health challenges by providing options and choices for their housing needs, supported by an action plan for delivery of those ambitions:

- The Customer journey
- The Homes we provide
- Listening to our tenants
- Rural isolation and contributing to local communities

3.2.8 Tenancy Strategy

The Localism Act 2011 brought in a requirement for local authorities to produce and publish a Tenancy Strategy, setting out matters which all registered providers of social housing in the area (including stock retained local authorities themselves) must consider when framing their own tenancy policies.

The Central Lincolnshire authorities of City of Lincoln Council, North Kesteven District Council and West Lindsey District Council published a joint Tenancy Strategy, with a key aim to make the best use of the social housing stock in order to provide homes from those households who are unable to meet their own housing needs within the Central Lincolnshire area.

The Tenancy Strategy is undergoing review; it is anticipated that the outcome of the review will be the development of a local authority specific Tenancy Strategy for each of the Central Lincolnshire authorities, and any emerging North Kesteven Tenancy Strategy will be used to inform future reviews of the Housing Services Tenancy Policy.

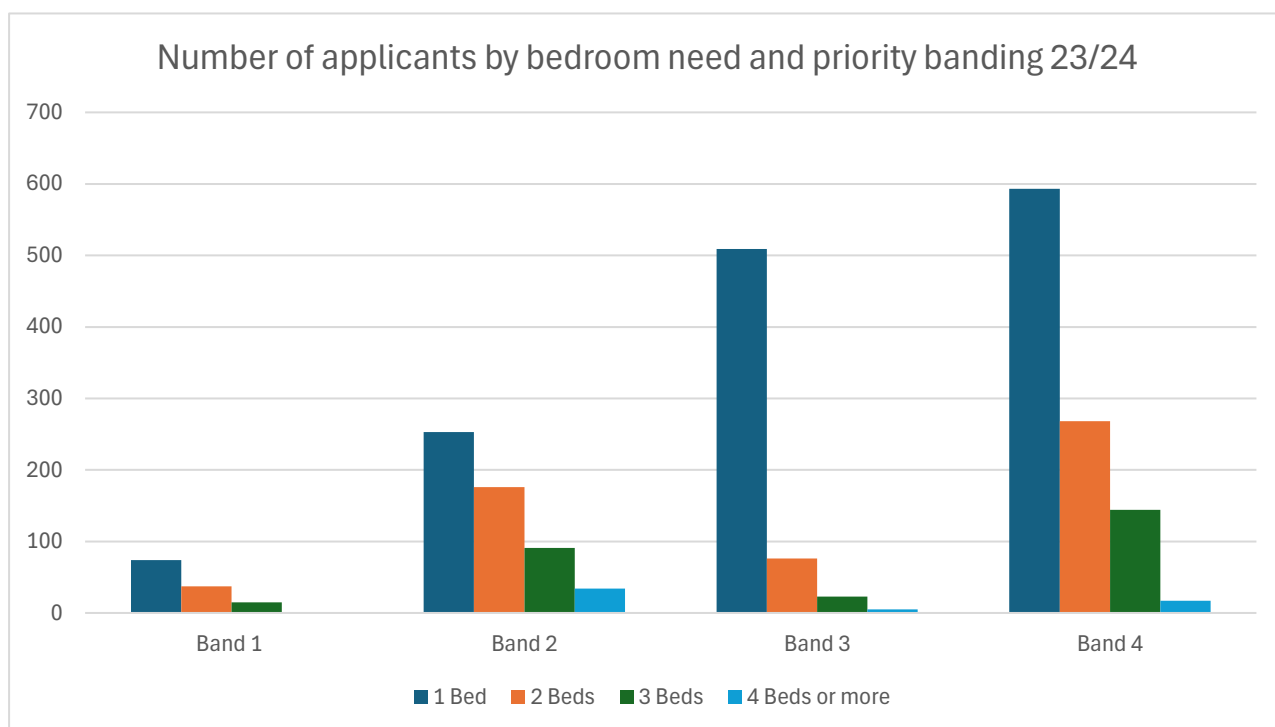
3.3 Housing Need & Housing Demand

As at 01/04/2024, there were over 2,000 applicants registered on Lincs Homefinder, the Council's choice based lettings system; of these, just under 1,500 have a local connection to North Kesteven, as determined by the current allocations scheme.

Applications are assessed in accordance with housing need, Band 1 highest and Band 4 lowest or no housing need. Nearly half of these applicants, 44%, are not considered to be in housing need, with over 1,000 being placed in Band 4. Of the remainder, over 500 applicants are assessed as Band 1 (urgent need to move) or Band 2 (high need to move), therefore it can be shown that housing need in the district is lower than overall demand for social and affordable housing. The profile of our applicants is summarised below.

Our Housing Register, Lincs Homefinder

- Applicants by bedroom need and priority banding as at 31/03/2024



The increase in 1 bed housing need is based on single and couple of working age, opposed to older person households.

Our Housing Register, Lincs Homefinder

- Comparison of Applicants registered in 2016 and 2024

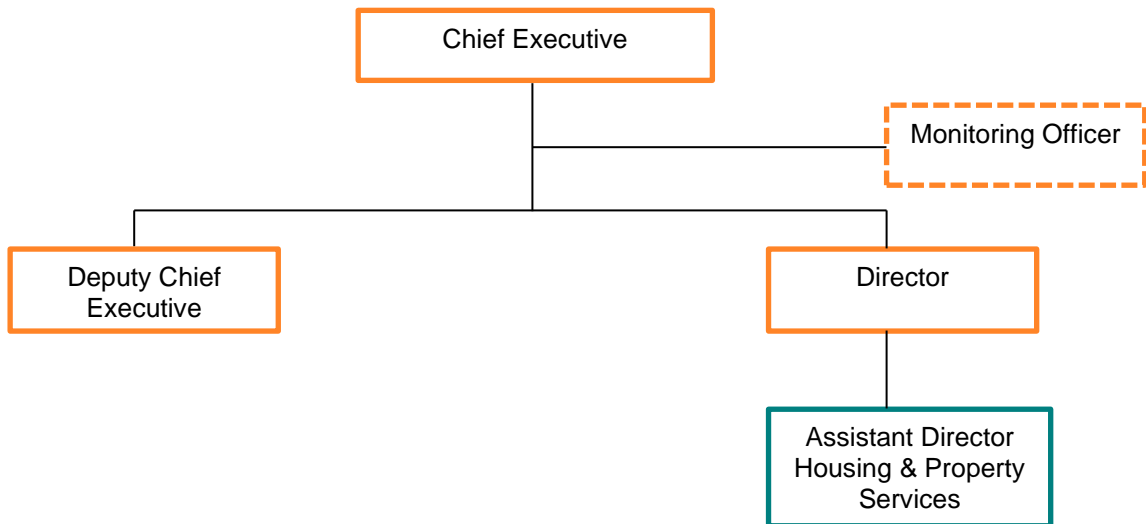
Bedrooms Required	Banding	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Total
1 bed	2024	74	253	509	593	1436
	2016	11	74	343	419	847
	(% change)	^572.7 %	^241.9%	^48.4%	^41.5%	^69.5 %
2 beds	2024	37	176	76	268	557
	2016	23	73	71	221	388
	(% change)	^60.9%	^141.1 %	^7.0%	^21.3 %	^43.5 %
3 beds	2024	15	91	23	144	296
	2016	7	46	14	116	183
	(% change)	^114.2 %	^97.8 %	^64.3 %	^24.1 %	^61.7 %
4 beds or more	2024	1	34	5	17	57
	2016	1	12	1	31	45
	(% change)	0 %	^183.3 %	^400%	^45.2 %	^26.6 %
Totals	2024	127	554	613	1,022	2,316
	2016	42	205	429	787	1463
	(% change)	^202.4%	^170.2%	^42.9%	^29.9 %	^58.3 %

Please note that this does not include the applicants not assessed by North Kesteven, due to operating a shared choice based lettings scheme with City of Lincoln Council.

3.4 Delivery of Services

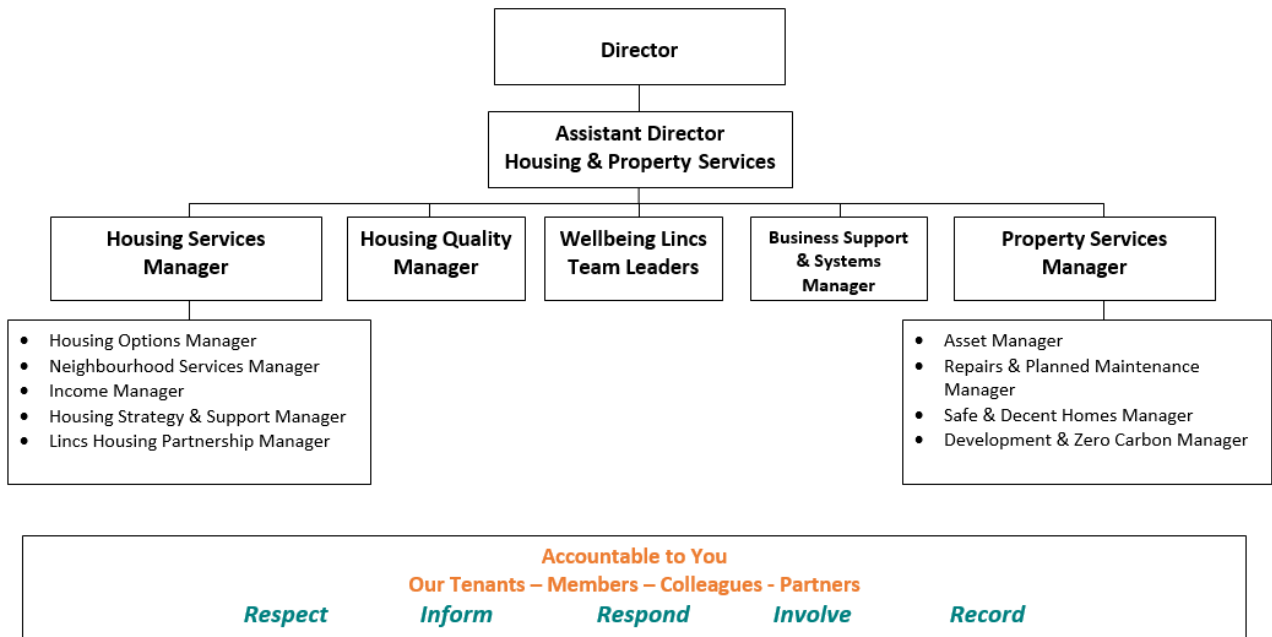
3.4.1 Corporate Management Team

The chart below shows the current Corporate Management Team. Indicated is the reporting structure for the Assistant Director of Housing and Property Services that includes responsibility for the delivery of the Council’s landlord services. The Council’s Constitution provides a clear framework for corporate governance, responsibilities and delegated decision making.



3.4.2 Housing and Property Services

Housing and Property Services
Our Delivery
 Our Tenants - Members – Colleagues - Partners



Housing Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of housing register, housing advice and homelessness services • A housing management function for homes owned and/or managed by the Council • Maintain communal and open spaces • To maximise the Housing Service's income • Support and assistance to sustain accommodation • Ensuring the Council complies with its safeguarding duties • Facilitate the resettlement of vulnerable households across Lincolnshire
Property Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Council's General Fund Asset Management functions • Effective HRA Asset Management, ensuring compliance with Decent Homes standard • Deliver a responsive repairs service for homes owned and/or managed by the Council • Technical services relating to design, tender and procurement of contract services • Disabled Facilities Grant based home improvement to HRA and private sector homes • Health and Safety compliance across all managed assets • To deliver new HRA Homes
Performance / Regulatory Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of HPS performance, and benchmarking services provided • Assurance on compliance with the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing • Resident engagement and tenant involvement activities • Complaints – compliance, performance and learnings • Research (including TSMs) and analysis, feedback is used to drive service improvement • To coordinate required statistical returns
Systems & Business Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divisional operational support • To develop and maintain all IT systems across HPS • To oversee the administration of Right to Buy, and other associated sales
Wellbeing Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County service procured by Lincolnshire County Council delivered by district council partnership • Enabling individuals to maintain wellbeing, independence and quality of life through empowerment and support

4 BUSINESS PLAN ANALYSIS

The stock profile and tenant profile are key drivers of the Business Plan and are set out in this section, followed by a summary of the key tenant priorities that have been identified through engagement and consultation. These have been used to inform the overall Business Plan priorities, set out at the end of this section.

4.1 Our Homes – Housing Stock Profile

As at 31/03/2024, the Council owned 3883 homes in the HRA, and managed 49 leasehold properties. Of those 3,883 homes accounted for in the HRA, 3598 at social rent levels, making the Council the largest provider of social housing in North Kesteven district.

The stock primarily consists of self-contained 1, 2 and 3 bed homes for general needs; the majority of 1 and 2 bed homes are bungalows, and the majority of 3 bed homes are houses. Bungalows with two bedrooms and houses with three bedrooms comprise over two thirds (67%) of the total stock.

Our Homes

- Housing stock by number of bedrooms and property type as at 31/03/2024

Bedrooms	Bungalow	Flat	House	Maisonette	Total
1 bedroom	321	115	14	0	450
2 bedrooms	1,323	345	407	0	2,075
3 bedrooms	21	5	1,260	10	1,296
4 bedrooms	2	0	51	0	53
Total	1,667	465	1,732	10	3,874

* The above table does not include the HRA homes currently being used for temporary accommodation purposes (general fund activity) as they are not considered generally available housing stock for usual letting and management purposes.

The overall profile of property types within the housing stock remained relatively static over the lifetime of the previous Business Plan, taking into account acquisitions and sales.

Our Homes

- Property type with historical changes from 2016 to 2024 as at 31/03/2024

Date	Bungalow	Flat	House	Maisonette	Total
31 March 2017	1,655	469	1,734	11	3,869
31 March 2018	1,655	468	1,717	11	3,851
31 March 2019	1,656	467	1,696	11	3,830
31 March 2020	1,659	466	1,696	11	3,832
31 March 2021	1,664	472	1,697	12	3,845
31 March 2022	1,669	479	1,744	12	3,904
31 March 2023	1,678	467	1,734	12	3,891
31 March 2024	1,667	465	1,732	10	3,874

* The above table does not include the HRA homes currently being used for temporary accommodation purposes (general fund activity) as they are not considered generally available housing stock for usual letting and management purposes.

4.2 Our Homes – Condition

The stock is generally assessed as in good condition, meeting current housing standards. However, the age profile combined with the number of non-traditional stock may present challenges for future investment. Approximately 55% of homes were built prior to 1965 and circa 15% are defined as non-traditional construction.

Whilst a majority of homes benefit from gas heating, this is not an option for homes located in settlements within the district where there is no connection to the gas mains. There are therefore a number of homes with solid fuel, oil or electric heating provision, for which we have a programme to move to more sustainable heating provisions such as air and ground source heat pumps, this is covered later in this document.

4.3 Our Homes – Valuation

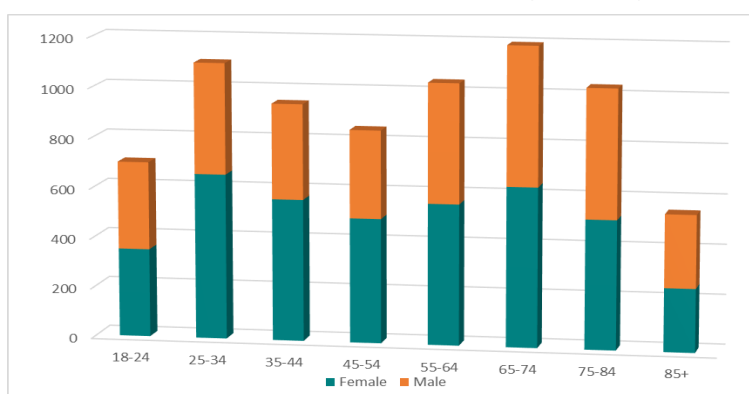
In line with the relevant guidance, the Social Housing – Existing Use Value (EUVSH) is the basis for valuing the Council’s residential assets within the HRA. This involves undertaking a market valuation, then applying an adjustment factor (determined by region) to reflect that the asset is socially rented (i.e. reflecting factors such as security of tenure for the tenant and being let at less than market rent). In the East Midlands, the adjustment factor is 42%.

In 2021 a market valuation of the Council’s housing stock was undertaken by a RICS valuer, the value at 31st March 2021 was £392,734,000. After applying the adjustment factor of 42%, the EUVSH adjusted value was £166,230,000. The Council’s policy is to carry out a full revaluation every five years, with interim annual desktop valuations. As at 31/03/2024 current market value is £580,177,000, and EUVSH value £243,674,340.

4.4 Our Tenants

4.4.1 Tenant Profile

As at 31/03/2024, just over a third (30%) are over 65 years old, and 16% are over 75 years old, with a majority of households consisting of 1 or 2 people. It is important we understand the profile of our tenants to support our operational delivery. We recognise that we have further work to improve our understanding of tenants needs and ability to delivery flexible services, this is a focus within our “Knowing our Tenants” project work. The table below shows our tenant profile by age and gender as at 31/03/2024.



Although take up of Housing Benefit has reduced overall due to Universal Credit, over 50% of our tenants are in receipt of some assistance with their housing costs. Further information on the diversity profile of our tenants is captured in the newly developed, 2023/2024, HPS Assurance Report, that will be produced on an annual basis going forward, replacing the previous annual equality and diversity statement.

4.4.1 Tenant Priorities

Our Tenants were involved in developing the Business Plan 2021, including the following:

Roadshows & Initial Questionnaire

In Autumn 2019, a series of roadshows were held to engage with tenants across the district in order to establish their main concerns for the future. A questionnaire was used to capture tenants' views at these events, and over the eight roadshows arranged, 68 tenants attended. Their comments and queries were used to inform minor amendments to the questionnaire to gain further insight on issues raised at the roadshows.

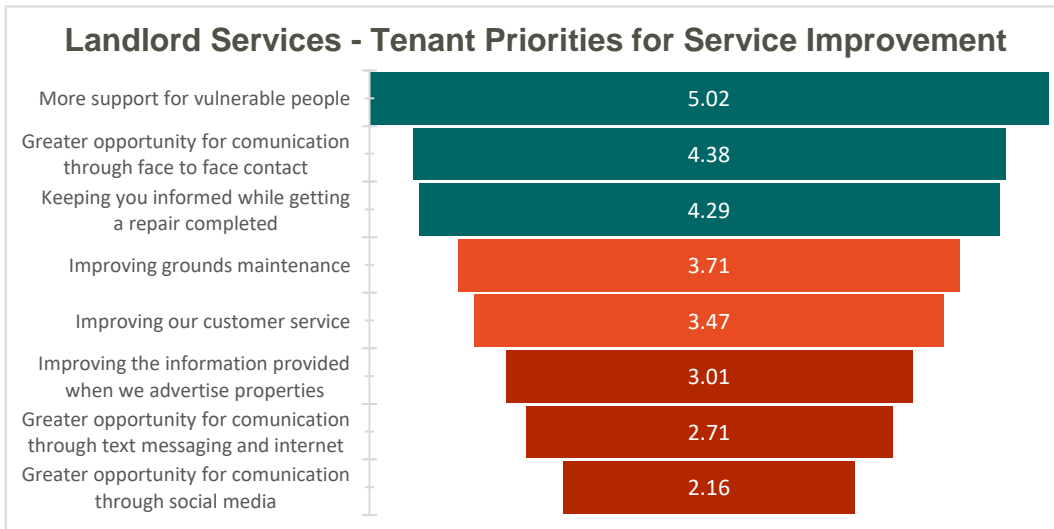
The revised questionnaire was sent out to all our tenants in early 2020 as part of our annual Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR), to which 30.9% (n1175) tenants responded. For ranking questions, weighted average methodologies (appropriate to the format of each question) were applied to the results to ensure the overall sentiment expressed by tenants was captured as accurately as possible. The outcomes of the roadshow and STAR surveys were then compared; for each question, across both surveys, tenants had generally identified the same three priority items for each question across both surveys, although there were some slight differences in rank. The significantly higher response rate for the STAR survey gives better assurance on the resulting data, and therefore the results provided here reflect the rankings determined from the STAR results.

Follow Up Questionnaire & Facebook Polls

In Summer 2020, the tenant priorities identified through the roadshows and STAR results were analysed and collated, and the resulting list of priorities drawn up. This list formed the basis for a follow up survey, to check the correct priorities had been identified, and seek tenant views on options for addressing the identified priorities; this was distributed to all tenants in late 2020. In addition, individual questions were put to digitally engaged tenants through polls held on the NK Housing Facebook page.

Overall, just over 9% (n340) of tenants responded to the follow up questionnaire or Facebook poll; while the resulting additional insight is useful, regard must be given to the fact that, as fewer than 1 in 10 tenants chose to participate, the views expressed may not necessarily be representative of the wider tenant base. While the trend has been to move towards more digital interactions, our tenants place significantly higher value on opportunity for in person communication.

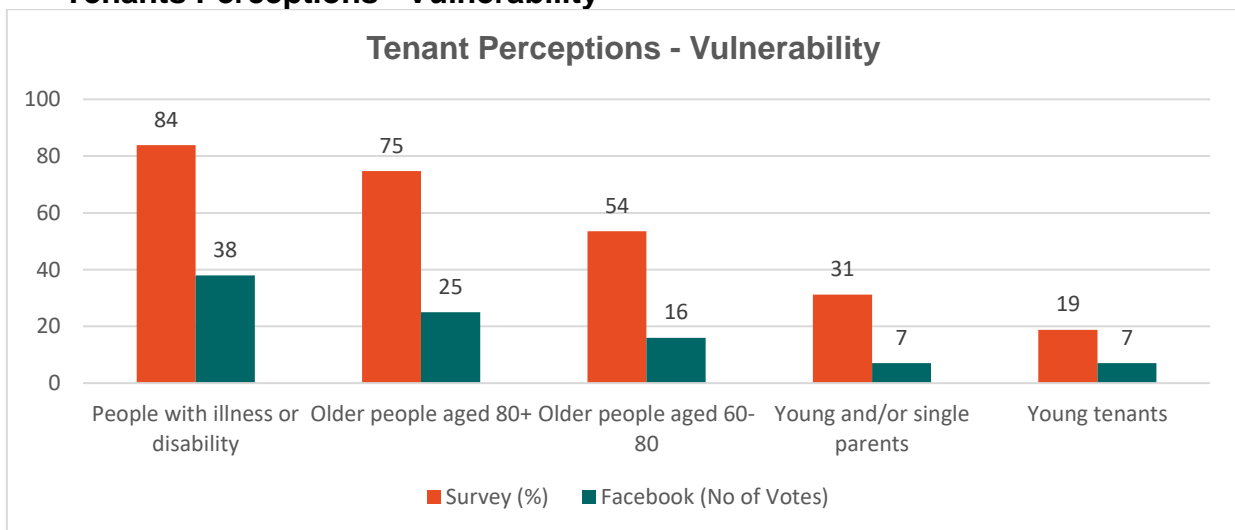
Our Tenants: Tenants Priorities - Landlord Service Improvement



Given the expression for “More support for vulnerable people” as the top priority for landlord services, additional questions were included in the follow up survey to further clarify what was meant by this, seeking to identify exactly who tenants understand “vulnerable people” to mean, and what additional support they felt would be most beneficial.

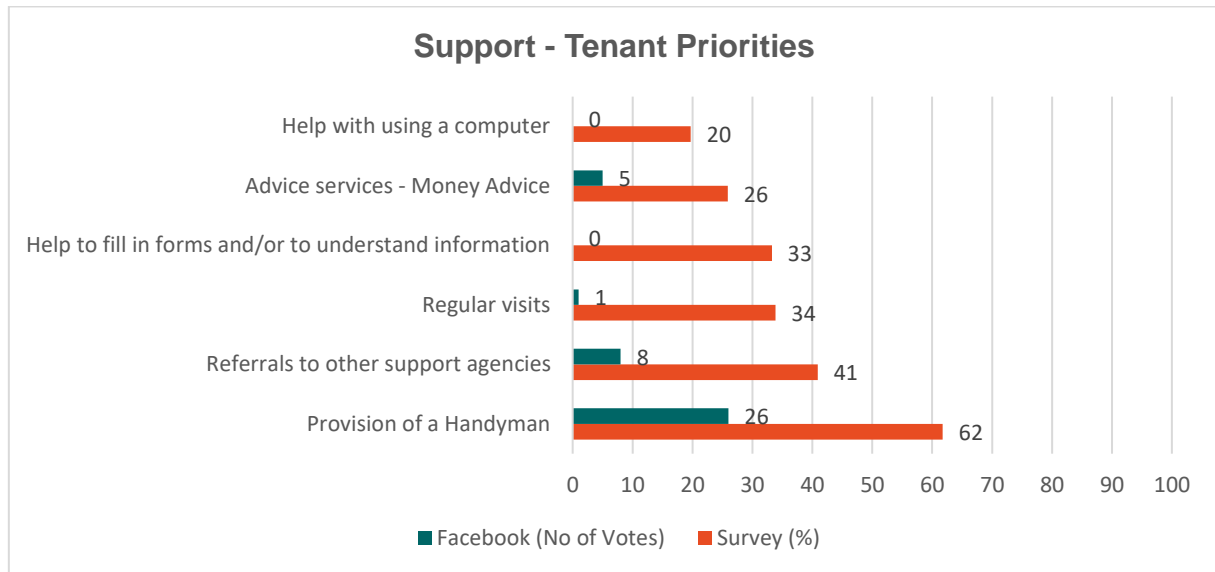
Our Tenants

- Tenants Perceptions - Vulnerability



A significant majority of tenants who responded consider that people of any age with an illness or disability, along with people aged over 80, are vulnerable and in need of more support. The types of support that tenants felt would be most beneficial are below.

Our Tenants: Tenants Priorities - Support

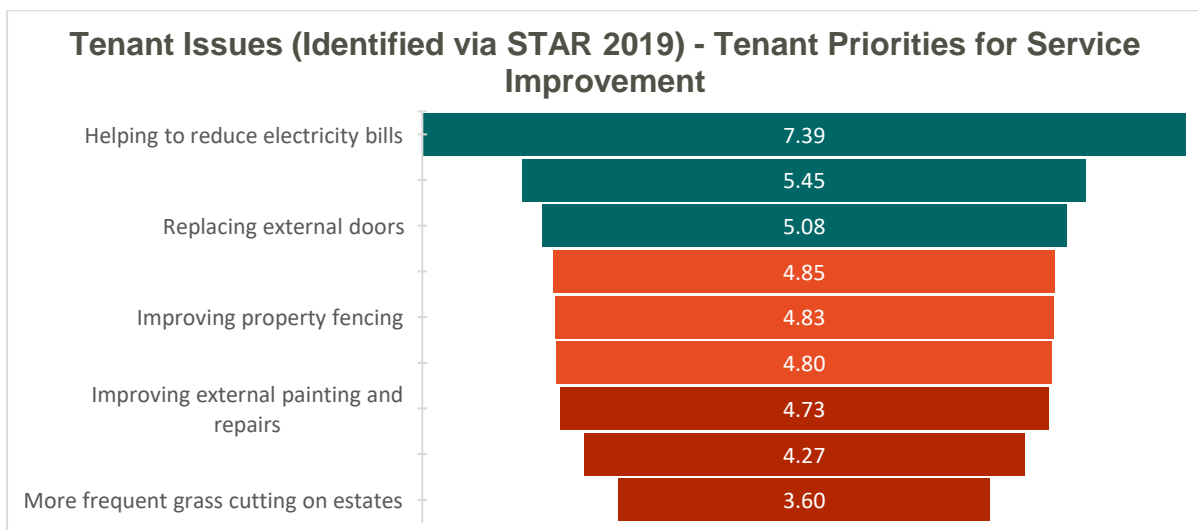


As the top two tenant priorities for support – provision of a Handyman service, and referrals to support agencies – are already available to tenants, it demonstrated further promotion was needed to raise awareness and encourage access.

Our Tenants

- Tenants Priorities – Service improvement

Using the common issues raised by tenants in previous STAR (2019), tenants were asked to rank each issue in order of importance for them; energy efficiency, reducing the carbon footprint and issues of potential fuel poverty featured highly in the tenant sentiment. Accompanying comments provided suggest energy efficiency is also a factor in the high ranking of replacement of external doors.

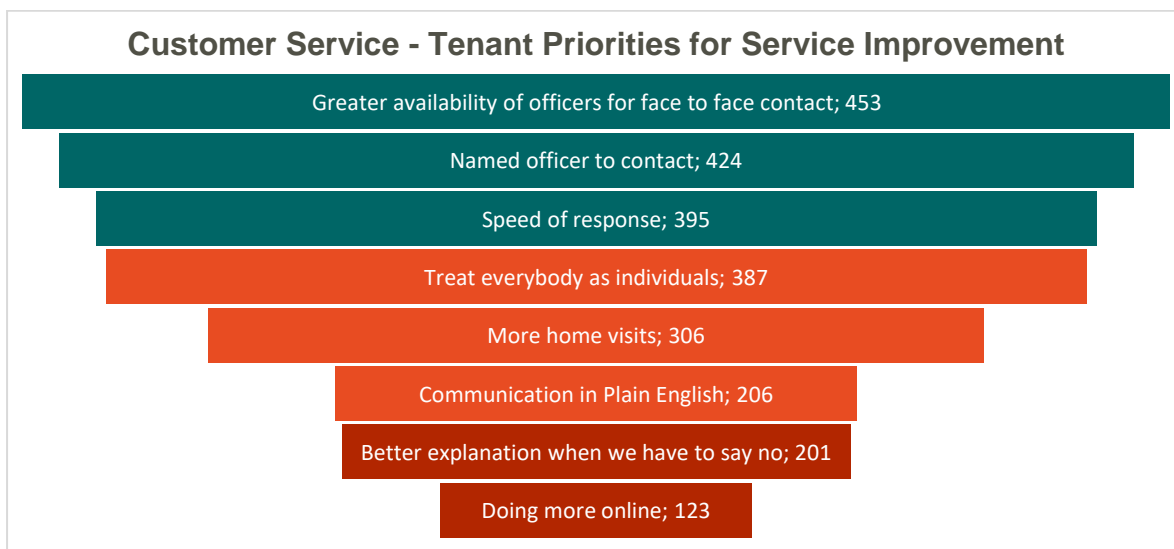


91% of tenants responding to the follow up survey agreed that the correct three priorities had been identified, along with all 36 tenants who responded to the same question posed on the NK Housing Facebook page. This focus on energy efficiency is also reflected in the Tenant Priorities for Investment in Existing Properties.

Our Tenants

- Tenants Priorities – Customer Service

Tenants responding to the 2020 STAR who had ranked “Improve customer service / availability of officers to help and support vulnerable tenants” in their top four tenant-identified issues were asked to complete an additional question, requesting they choose up to three aspects of customer service they felt most needed improvement.



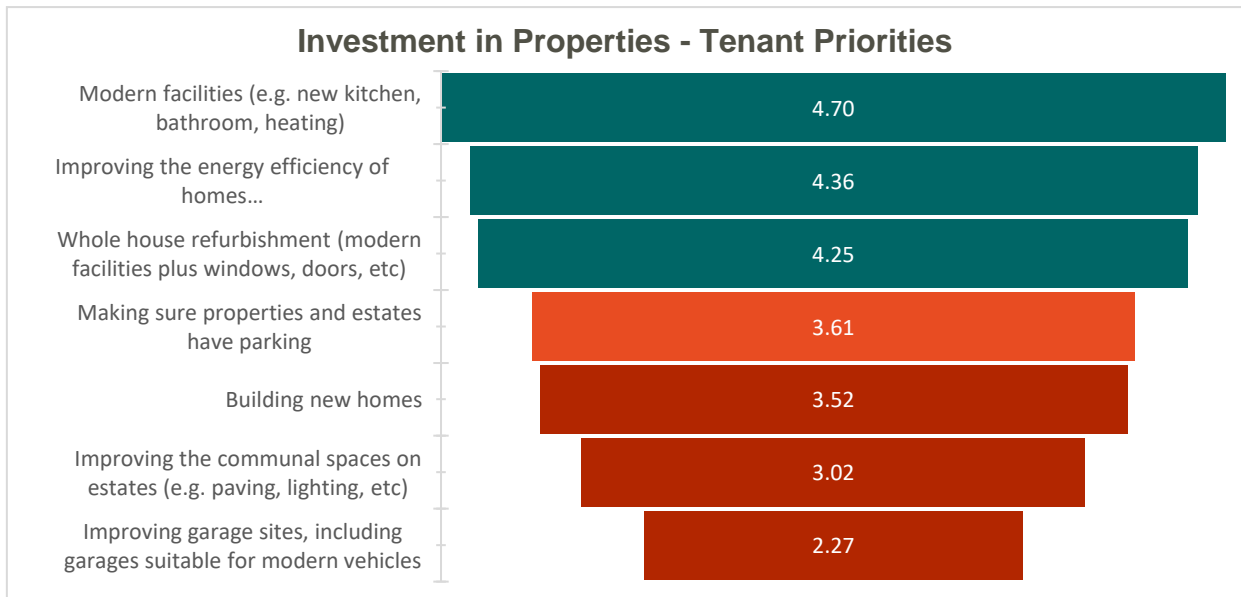
While a smaller number of tenants identified “doing more online” as a priority, almost four times as many identified “greater availability of officers for face-to-face contact”, and this was closely followed by have a “named officer to contact”. This underlines the sentiment expressed in previous questions of a general preference for personal, face to face contact rather than a digital first approach.

During 2024, a Customer Care and Communication guidance setting out clear expectations and measurable outcomes, has been developed with our tenant representatives. We are in the process of this being rolled out to all colleagues and contractors working in our homes, anticipating that we will shortly be able to demonstrate a consistent and improving approach to all customer service interactions.

Our Tenants

- Tenants Priorities – Investment

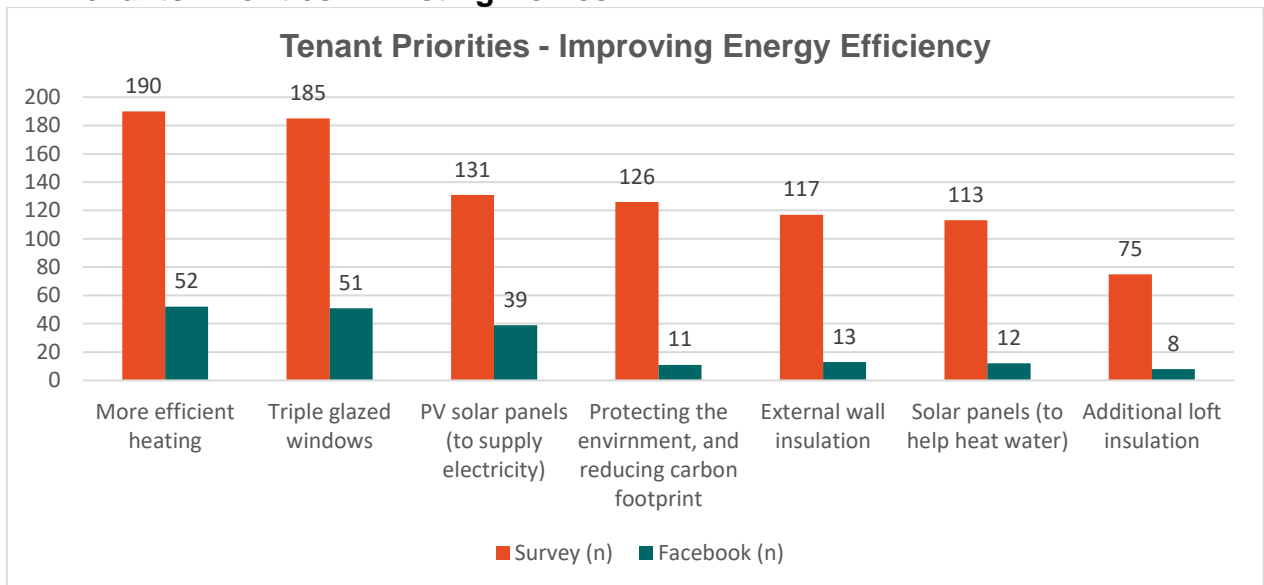
Tenants’ views were also sought on future investment, both in existing homes and the provision of new homes, to establish their priorities for investment in existing homes, and benefit from their lived experience of residing in a North Kesteven home to inform the authority’s understanding of tenant considerations for the design of new homes.



Following the trend of the previous questions, energy efficiency again features highly in tenant priorities, second only to modern facilities. For each of the top three priorities identified, an additional question was included in the follow up survey and put to poll on Facebook to gain tenants' views on prioritisation of the work required.

Our Tenants

- Tenants Priorities – Existing Homes

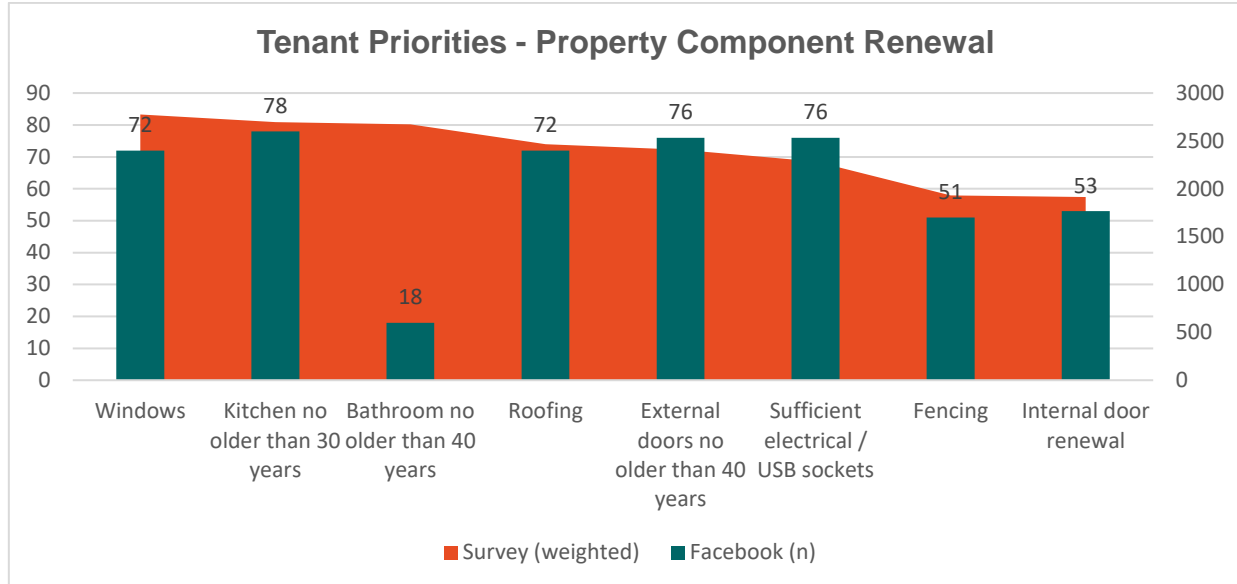


Across both the survey and Facebook polls – each of which requested tenants to choose their top three measures – a significant preference was expressed for more efficient heating, and triple glazed windows. Facebook respondents also expressed a particular preference for the third ranked priority (PV solar panels to supply electricity), whereas the follow up survey found similar levels of support for this and the next three ranked items.

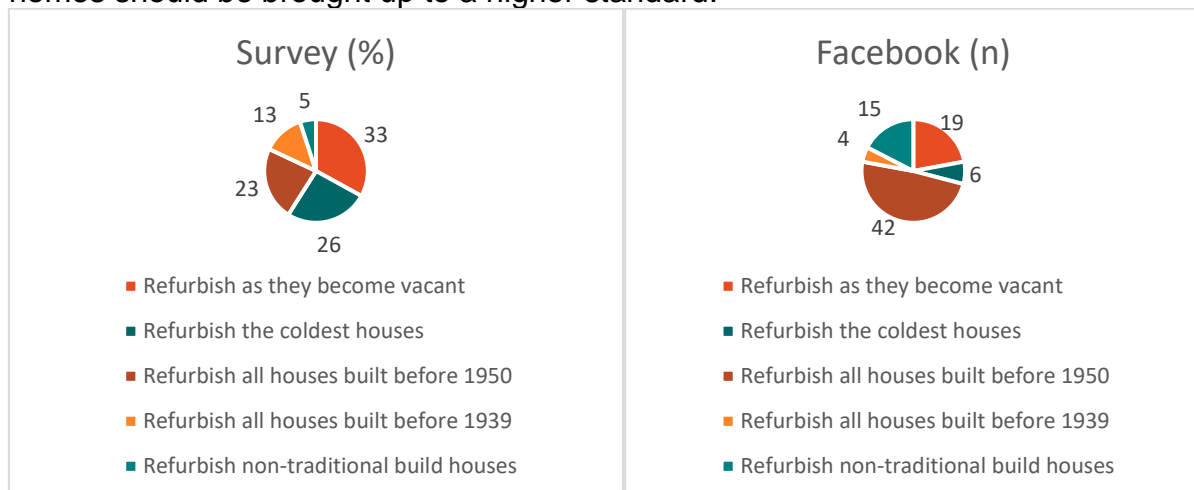
Our Tenants

- Tenants Priorities – Home Component Renewal

Tenants were next asked to prioritise replacement of individual components (with the results weighted accordingly), as well as confirming their preferences in relation to whole house refurbishment.



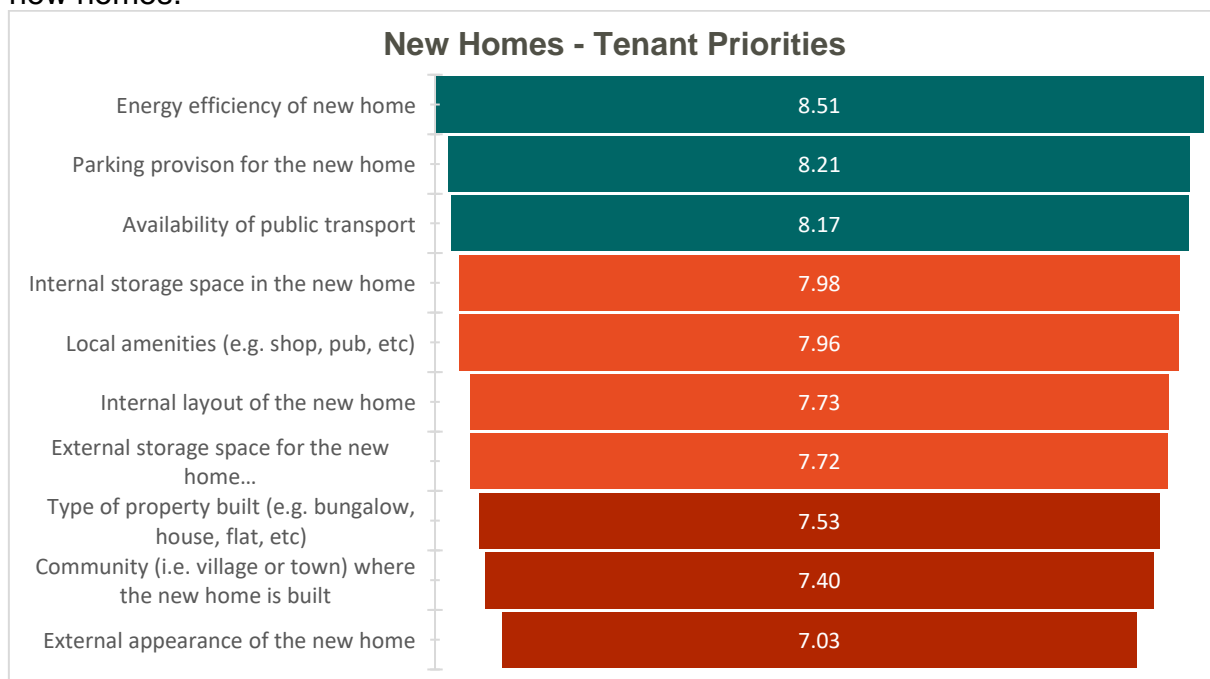
Tenants were asked how whole house refurbishments should be prioritised; different preferences were expressed in the Facebook polls than the follow up survey. Tenants were also asked whether such refurbishments should bring homes up to present building regulation standards, or a higher standard (such as retrofit Passivhaus). Again, the results differed across engagement methods, with a significant majority (39 of 44) of tenants polled on Facebook feeling homes should be brought up to present building regulation standards only, whereas over half (53%) of tenants responding to the follow up survey feeling that homes should be brought up to a higher standard.



Our Tenants

- Tenants Priorities – New Homes

Tenants were asked to prioritise various considerations that may apply to the provision of new homes. Energy efficiency was the top priority identified by tenants. It is interesting to note the fairly consistent scores generated across all options provided, suggesting that tenants do not have a strong preference for specific priorities in relation to provision of new homes.



88.2% of tenants who responded to the follow up survey, and 98.2% of tenants polled on Facebook agreed that the top three factors identified above were the correct priorities when building new Council homes.

Tenant Liaison Panel

During 2023/2024 the Council undertook its first full survey in compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing Tenants Satisfaction Measures, in which we posed additional questions regarding the Council's commitment to climate action, from which we have been able to demonstrate our tenants support in our investment programme that aims to tackle climate change related challenges and support the Councils ambitions of net zero carbon.

The Tenant Liaison Panel undertook a dual role in the development of the Business Plan 2021. First, it has considered, and provided validation of the main concerns identified by our tenants. Second, it formally considered and supported the draft HRA Business Plan 2021 for recommendation to the Council, that was subsequently approved.

For the purposes of this 2024 refresh of the Business Plan, our Tenant Liaison Panel considered the draft at its meeting on 15/01/2025. The outcome of which demonstrated unanimous support for the Business Pan, the supporting documents and planned full review.

4.5 Business Plan Priorities

As detailed in section 3.2.3 the HRA Business Plan supports the Council in its delivery of its priorities and ambitions.

Analysis of Housing Revenue Account features and activities in the strategic context of both the external and internal operating environments has established the following priorities for this refreshed Business Plan:

- Maintaining a financially viable plan – enabling continued investment & service delivery
- Maximising income - while providing appropriate support for tenants and residents
- Maintaining safe and quality homes and neighbourhoods
- Meeting housing need - ensuring homes are affordable and meet the needs of tenants. Through the best use of existing stock and new build/acquisitions
- Responding to the Climate Emergency
- Compliance with provisions of the Social Housing Act

The key challenges in delivering the Business Plan priorities are explored in further detail in the following sections. The summary actions to address these challenges are contained within the HRA Delivery Plan that supports this Business Plan and informs our annual service delivery plans.

During 2025/2026, it is intended to fully review the HRA Business Plan to ensure continued long term financial viability, at that time full tenant consultation will be undertaken seeking tenants views on our long term service delivery and investment plans. From this, it is anticipated to develop a new HRA Business Plan during 2026/2027.

5 HOUSING SERVICES

5.1 Housing Register

The Council has a housing register, Lincs Homefinder, for all applicants seeking social and affordable housing in North Kesteven. This register is maintained within the Housing Options Team. The Lincs Homefinder Lettings Policy is choice based, and defines how applications will be assessed and prioritised, as well as setting out how tenancies will be allocated; both new applications for housing and transfer applications from existing tenants are subject to the Policy. Most Council owned accommodation will be let in accordance with this Policy; specific exceptions include specialist extra care units, and flexible tenancy reviews. Vacancies are advertised with details of facilities, rent, charges and tenancy type.

5.2 Tenancy Management

The majority of tenancy management services are provided in the Neighbourhood Services team.

5.2.1 Allocations, Lettings and Mutual Exchanges

On average, the Council re-lets approximately 300 homes per year, equating to around 8% of the overall housing stock. While there is mainly demand for all types of accommodation, the identified housing need is largely for flats and smaller family houses; however, a majority of homes that become vacant are bungalows, or larger family houses.

Once allocated a tenancy, both the Housing Options and Neighbourhood Services teams work closely with the prospective tenant(s) prior to viewing, to understand their needs and make an assessment on affordability, to aid their transition. An escorted internal viewing is available, prior to prospective tenants deciding whether to accept the offer of the tenancy.

Some vacancies experience some low level of demand, variously due to the location, configuration, eligibility criteria, or a combination of one or more of these. Local Lettings Policies have provided a mechanism to address this, but have been insufficient in some areas. Alternative options to increase the desirability of such homes, such as converting properties to meet the identified need for specific areas, will therefore be considered in the future.

Mutual exchanges are actively promoted; the Council subscribes to HomeSwapper as a means to enable tenants to access accommodation that meets their needs.

We can summarise annual turnover to be around 300 homes, and nomination to approx. 100 other housing providers through formal nomination agreements. This section demonstrates how increasing demand and needs far out trips the homes that become available for letting, and the importance of a Lettings Policy that meets local needs and makes the best use of that limited housing available.

5.2.2 Tenancy Sustainment

As a landlord, the Council recognises that there are many contributing factors to tenancy sustainment, and invests in a variety of tools to enable tenants to live independently.

The Council's Money Advice Service prioritises Council tenants for assistance with income maximisation and debt management.

Within Neighbourhood Services, a team of in-house Tenancy Sustainment Officers provide flexible and practical assistance to tenants who have been identified with additional needs that could potentially risk their tenancy. Types of support provided include (but not limited to): income maximisation; rent payment management support; assistance with improving living conditions; support for setting up first homes, and homes for those who have previously been homeless or experienced domestic abuse; and support for residents at former sheltered housing schemes. Where appropriate, referrals are able to be made to a range of external agencies to provide tenants with support, assistance and advocacy, which includes signposting to appropriate agencies for more intensive support where this is required.

5.2.3 Enforcement

As described above, the Council's aim is to enable the sustainment of successful tenancies, and Housing Services will work with tenants to address any breaches in tenancy conditions.

Where it is not possible to resolve an issue, or an issue is considered to be serious, appropriate enforcement action will be taken. The Anti-Social Behaviour (Housing) Policy Statement, consistent with the corporate ASB Policy, is a document setting out how Housing Services will respond to unacceptable behaviour, in conjunction with other teams within the Council such as Community Safety / Anti-Social Behaviour, Environmental Protection, Licencing and Building Control.

5.2.4 Neighbourhood Management

The role and impact of the wider environment on estates is recognised and valued. The Council aims to have communal and open spaces to be proud of, and that are of value to the local residents. A budget is available to maintain and improve these areas, along with contracts for grounds maintenance, and investment has been made in a full time general maintenance officer, responsible for undertaking regular inspections, and improving and maintaining these areas. The Managing Our Estates Policy sets out what tenants can expect from the Council as the landlord in managing these locations.

5.3 Income Management

Income management services are primarily provided by the Income Management team, in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Services team, as Housing Officers manage day to day rent accounts as part of their tenancy management responsibilities.

5.3.1 Income Policy

Our Income Policy sets out how we will set, communicate, collect and enforce payment of rent and other housing-related charges. Non-payment is pursued through the relevant channels, whilst also offering a range of support to those who have genuine difficulty in paying.

The Council recognises that in order to maximise the collection of income due, it must promote a culture in which tenants and customers understand and accept their obligation to meet their debts. It aims to actively develop and facilitate a culture where customers understand and act upon their responsibility to meet their financial obligations. Key principles that underpin this culture are:

- Rent is a priority debt;
- Prioritising other debts will not be accepted as a reason for non-payment of rent;
- Tenants have responsibility for payment of their rent;
- Active engagement between tenants and Council officers is nurtured;
- Tenants should take every possible opportunity to improve their financial situation; and
- The Council supports tenants who are struggling.

5.3.2 Financial Assistance

The Council recognises that very few tenants are wilful non-payers, and as such offers a range of financial assistance to tenants, acknowledging that some financial difficulties are as a result of circumstances outside their control. These include, but are not limited to:

- Discretionary Housing Payments;
- Homeless Prevention Payments;
- Transfer Incentive Scheme;
- Money Advice Service; and
- Domestic Energy Advice.

5.3.3 Leaseholders

Whilst the Council has a relatively low number of Leaseholders, it recognises the importance of being able to manage them effectively and ensure accurate services charges are calculated and evidence provided. This is reflected in recent investment in the housing management system to support this area of work. The Council complies with all legislation when consulting with Leaseholders when undertaking improvement works or repairs to leasehold properties.

5.4 Communal Facilities

The Council has 15 locations at which communal facilities are sited; these include communal lounges, laundries and guest rooms, all situated on former sheltered housing schemes. The cost of maintaining and running the communal facilities are charged to the tenants of the dwellings that were linked to those facilities, when they were designated as sheltered housing. The charges are recovered on the basis of actual costs incurred. Bookings are also taken from third parties for community uses, with any funding received from such bookings used to help to offset the costs to tenants.

The future of the communal facilities has been reviewed during 2022/2023 and 2023/2024, during which the following questions considered:

- Are there further community uses that the buildings can be used for that will be for the benefit of all tenants?
- Can the communal rooms be self-sufficient without the need to recover the costs from tenants?
- Are the current tenants linked to the rooms happy to continue to be charged for the costs?
- Are there other uses for the rooms?

Next steps are to implement the findings from that review to ensure consistent and fair management of the areas, and appropriate charging of applicable costs associated with the provision of those facilities.

5.5 Key Challenges – Housing Services

The key challenges for delivery of Housing Services arising from the Business Plan analysis set out in this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- **Housing Need** - Improving the ability to meet housing need for households with mobility needs;
- **Maximising income** - Continuing to achieve high level of income collection whilst continuing to adapt to welfare reform, and balancing support to tenants where needed
- **Best use of assets** – through effective Lettings Policy and to implement the findings of the communal facilities review (at former sheltered housing schemes) to ensure value for money

The summary actions to address these challenges included within our Delivery Plan.

6 ASSET MANAGEMENT

Over the lifetime of the previous Business Plan, significant changes have emerged in the construction industry. This document incorporates our asset management strategy, setting out how we maintain and invest in existing assets and our commitment to new assets through a new build and acquisition programme.

Management of the HRA stock, homes and other buildings, to ensure homes are safe, secure and remain in a decent condition, can be broken down into five distinct areas:

- **Responsive Repairs** - day to day maintenance in response to reported faults, and emergencies
- **Planned/Cyclical Maintenance** – aids and adaptations, health & safety management and servicing
- **Void property repairs** - works undertaken whilst property is empty between tenancies to ensure homes met required safety standards and NK letting standard
- **Retrofit CO₂sy Homes** – this new standard seeks to ensure that all of the Council's homes aspire to achieve the targets set out within the Climate Emergency Strategy;
- **New Build CO₂sy Homes** – this specifies the standard for all HRA New Build homes, to achieve zero carbon in use and Certified Passivhaus.

6.1 Climate Emergency and Our Homes

The Climate Emergency and major events in the building safety environment have dictated a need for change in the strategic approach to asset management. As set out in earlier sections 3.1 Strategic Context and 3.2 Local Context, the Climate Emergency Strategy & Action Plan identifies a number of actions required to meet the Council's strategic aims in relation to the climate emergency. Climate emergency and net zero emissions targets are fully integrated in corporate decision making, and service delivery.

Domestic homes account for a significant amount of Britain's carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. The Council is tackling these issues directly within its domestic assets. In recent years, the Council has been successful in reducing energy usage and improving the efficiency of the housing stock through a major programme of installing highly efficient gas boilers, and by taking advantage of grant funding available to social landlords to undertake loft and cavity insulation. These measures have not only contributed to reducing CO₂ emissions, but also towards tackling fuel poverty for tenants.

The key challenges in relation to the Council's existing homes and estates are:

- Increasing low energy exterior lighting for street lighting and council housing
- Avoiding the most carbon intensive heating fuels
- A home performance package
- Increasing renewable energy generation through solar panel installation
- Increasing and improving management of green spaces, infrastructure and biodiversity to compensate for and to absorb the greenhouse gas emissions which the authority cannot eliminate, whilst taking into account local community benefit.

Additionally, specific to the Council's new homes provision are:

- Increasing housing standards by establishing a carbon neutral specification and compare to Passivhaus
- For new developments to be net zero emissions

To achieve the corporate ambitions set out within the Climate Emergency Strategy, our standard aimed at reducing CO₂ levels by 2030, is branded as **"CO₂sy Homes"**.

We recognise that delivery of the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan could have a significant impact on the financial viability of investment in our homes, and is therefore at the core of our decision making.

6.2 Our Approach to Asset Management

This section details the Council's approach to managing the housing related assets held in the HRA. It covers a range of activities that ensure the housing stock meets the required standards, both now and in the future.

The strategic approach encompasses the principles set out within the Climate Emergency Strategy & Action Plan, ensuring that decisions relating to stock management consider the aspirations of the Strategy and are incorporated into the Business Plan and stock management approach.

To ensure a robust and balanced approach to the utilisation of the HRA, this Business Plan seeks to ensure resources are used in the most cost-effective manner. This strategy is key to the Council's asset management and business planning approach. It is essential to have a sound understanding of the asset base, future investment requirements and options in order to achieve this.

Our homes represent the Council's most valuable asset and set against the repair and maintenance costs, its largest obligation. The Council needs to ensure that all the assets it owns and manages are:

- In good condition and meets relevant safety standards
- In the right location to meet local needs;
- Designed to fit modern purpose, and adaptable to meet changing household needs;
- Sustainable, and improved in line with the climate emergency aspirations.

The purpose of asset management in this context is to ensure our residential assets are closely managed in order to:

- Ensure all homes meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard
- Ensure safe, complying with all Health & Safety requirements
- Maintained in cost effective ways;
- Provide a balance between responsive, cyclical repairs, capital investment and new build delivery/acquisition;
- Achieve high standards of energy efficiency, and contribute to the Council's aim to achieve net zero carbon by 2030;
- Provide assurance to the Council's auditors and relevant regulators that the Housing and Property service is well managed.

Our strategic approach is to:

- Engage with stakeholders in developing and implementing asset management;
- Ensure that requirements defined by the Regulator of Social Housing are adhered to;
- Develop a capital programme that also meets tenant aspirations and priorities,
- Undertake stock condition surveys, using outcomes to inform investment programme;
- Seek value for money in all investment decisions and contract procurement;
- Deliver a Retrofit CO₂s Homes programme improving energy performance;
- Deliver a financially viable New Build CO₂s Homes programme.

6.2.1 Decent Homes Standard and Component Replacement

Whilst all social landlords have a statutory obligation to maintain their Homes to the governmental Decent Homes Standard, the Council seeks to ensure that the condition of our homes exceed the minimum statutory requirements with components replaced on a condition basis once the expected lifespan has expired whilst still ensuring compliance with the Decent Homes Standard. It is anticipated that the Decent Homes Standard will be revised shortly and the revised Standard will be considered during the next review.

The challenge facing the Council's housing stock is:

- To establish a Capital Investment programme which will allow for a flexible assessed 'Just-In-Time' approach to be adopted for key components;
- To work with tenants and stakeholders to prepare a 30-year business plan based on a condition based component replacement programme, whilst refining a five-year short-term plan aimed at ensuring maximum lifespan of components; and
- To consider the revised Decent Homes Standard once published.

Our approach is based on a component being replaced on a condition-based approach i.e. poorest condition first while still ensuring that components are considered at the end of its life cycle period, with the exception of boiler replacement and roof replacement; life cycles for key components are shown in the table below.

Our Homes – Investment - Life Cycles Key Components

Component	Life Cycle (Years)
Bathroom	40 (& subject to condition survey)
Boiler	20 (& subject to condition survey)
Heating System	40 (& subject to condition survey)
Kitchen	30 (& subject to condition survey)
Roof & Chimneys	80 (& subject to condition survey)
Windows & Doors	40 (& subject to condition survey)

Savings have been realised by extending the life cycle of non-critical components, based on condition survey data. An approach based on a combination of a condition-based programme once the component lifespan has been reached for all components. This approach differs from previous business plans by evaluating the remaining lifespan of all types of components rather than replacement solely based on when a certain age has been reached. For example, space heating boilers will be surveyed prior to their planned target replacement 15-year lifespan, through the accredited maintenance contractor inspection regime. It is anticipated that this approach will allow for up to a maximum of five additional years lifespan for boilers, whilst not significantly increasing the number of early failures.

To ensure that tenants and residents continue to receive the highest quality of service, our contracts have provision for emergency boiler replacement service to ensure continuity of service.

Savings achieved through the extension of component lifespans will be recycled into an energy efficiency investment fund to provide for an ongoing programme of improvements to meet the Climate Emergency Action Plan. This is along with reducing the installation of fossil fuel appliances where appropriate and feasible.

6.2.2 Stock Condition Surveys

In order for the Council to plan future investment programmes and demonstrate compliance with the Decent Homes Standard, stock condition surveys are vitally important. This is essentially a visual inspection of the inside and outside of a property where the surveyor will assess the age and condition of components such as kitchen, bathroom, windows, doors and the like.

The current plan for undertaking stock condition surveys is based on visiting and inspecting assets on a 4-year rolling programme. The District has been divided into 16 'Zones' and the plan is to visit 4 of these 'Zones' each year (c800-1000 properties each year). Commencing the surveys in 2017, and based on an average access rate of 66%, c2000 properties had a survey undertaken prior to the 2020 pandemic.

The pandemic in 2020 and its restrictions/lockdowns had a major impact on undertaking surveys, so the 4th year of the plan was completed in 2023 with a further c500 properties surveyed. The 1st year of the next 4-year rolling programme commenced in 2023 with a further c150 properties surveyed. Our current plan anticipates that by March 2026, all homes will have a stock condition survey dated within the previous 5yr period.

In addition to the rolling programme of surveys, properties where components such as kitchens, bathrooms, roof coverings, etc are identified as reaching the end of their lifecycle, will also be surveyed. This flexible 'Just-In-Time' assessment approach to surveys potentially releases savings within future investment programmes.

The surveys are carried out by the Council's Asset Surveyors using mobile devices. The data captured is uploaded directly to the NEC Housing Asset Management System. This robust stock condition information forms the cornerstone of an effective strategy and provides the data required to produce programmes of investment that will appropriately maintain the stock in good condition. This data is enhanced and regularly validated by feedback from all programmed and cyclical repairs, maintenance and servicing activities.

6.2.3 Planned Maintenance Programme

Our approach, described above, of entailing a planned maintenance programme achieving economies by replacing components on a 'Just-in-time' basis rather than purely an age based approach.

Kitchens and Bathrooms

Kitchens and bathrooms are specifically surveyed at 30 and 40 years respectively but prioritise replacement based on condition. Tenants are given a number of choices with both kitchens and bathrooms, which include:

- Kitchen unit styles and worktops - on a like for like basis with only minor adaptations to allow for current tenants household appliances;
- Wall tiles;
- A choice of decorative finishes and colours for walls; and
- Floor coverings offered in kitchens and bathrooms at the time of component replacement (we acknowledge this may change with introduction of Decent Homes 2, but yet to be confirmed).
- Optional additional/upgraded electrical improvements such as additional sockets are no longer offered, although a minimum number are included to ensure living space is suitable for current living standards.

Boiler Replacements & Heating

For the length of this business plan, gas central heating boilers will continue to be used, and be replaced at between 15 and 20 years old, subject to survey to assess condition.

Oil and solid fuel boilers, and electric storage heaters, will be replaced on a planned approach incorporating "Just-In-Time" principles, subject to survey and in accordance with the Retrofit programme and CO₂s Homes Standard.

Heating systems are programmed to be renewed in 40-year cycles with priority based on condition.

Mains Gas

Where mains gas is available, a highly efficient condensing gas boiler and radiator system will continue to be installed on replacement. A secondary focal point fire will not be provided.

While the carbon status of mains gas as a fossil fuel is recognised, during the lifetime of this Business Plan the focus will be on addressing the more carbon-intensive fossil fuel systems. The renewal of main gas boilers will need further consideration upon the next review of the Business Plan during 2025/2026 when we anticipate being able to identify other ways we can support the Council's net zero carbon ambition through these works.

Oil, Solid Fuels, Bottled Gas and electric Storage Heaters

The installation of these systems are no longer considered as standard in line with the Council's priorities, driving the need for more efficient heating due to the carbon intensity of the fuels they require (including fossil fuels used in electricity generation). Installations of these systems will therefore only be made in exception, for example, where a referral from social care specifies such a system as most appropriate to meet tenant needs.

For all heating systems up for replacement, the heating provided will be an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) system, subject to the installation of an ASHP being technically viable under the package of measures that would be implemented. Where it is not possible to provide an ASHP, the most carbon efficient approach will be reviewed and applied.

Building Safety Improvement Works

The ongoing collection of data confirms that the Council's homes are generally in good condition, while also identifying some works for which it will be prudent to take a planned approach, for a larger number of properties. Therefore, a programme of works are being developed that includes:

- Chimney repair and replacement;
- Footpath replacement;
- Fencing replacement;
- Gutter replacement; and
- Brickwork repair and re-pointing.

Emergency or responsive repair failures can be added to the Capital Works Programme, where the nature or quantity of the work would be more cost-effective or better managed through a planned programme. Work for inclusion in this contract will be approved through the Housing Stock Group and contained within existing budgets.

Windows and Doors

The Council's approach will be to ensure that both windows and external doors are replaced within 40 years where possible.

Windows, when installed, will be triple glazed in line with the identified in 2021 Tenant Priorities for Investment in Existing Properties for energy efficiency.

External doors and frames are replaced with a composite door set with UPVC frame and a factory-manufactured door set. Doors must meet either Secured by Design or PAS 011 security standards.

Estate Improvements

Following a programme of improvements and annual survey of estates, the general condition has been assessed as “Good”. It is important that the Council considers ongoing repairs and maintenance in order to maintain the estates to this standard.

While the focus of the Decent Homes programme was simply the condition of homes, all indications are that as a result of the recent reviews of that standard it is intended that going forward there will be a wider scope that encompasses estates and access to open green spaces. Where tenant reports or tenant survey results identify issues, the following areas will be considered for repair or upgrade where necessary, subject to available funding:

- Lighting;
- Fencing;
- Issues of anti-social behaviour;
- General condition of communal and common areas.

Over the lifetime of the previous Business Plan, a review of car parking provision was previously undertaken, involving evaluation and scoring of existing parking arrangements. The outcome of the review and any recommendations made have informed the Council’s estate improvement investment plans.

Electrical Systems

Electrical fixed wiring condition surveys and feedback from tenants have identified an emerging issue with the number of electrical sockets in homes. An insufficient number of sockets may not allow for the significant number of modern-day electrical goods that may be present in habitable areas, and overloaded trailing cables present electrical risks and safety hazards.

In order to identify the extent of the issue so that an appropriate response can be developed, a full survey will be carried out during the electrical periodic inspections, in the next cycle of inspections.

Roofing and Chimneys

The roofing survey forms part of the ongoing stock condition survey; to date, this has identified potential for extending the roof lifespan. The previous 65-year roofing lifespan has been amended to an 80-year lifespan, subject to condition being verified and established through an aerial survey. Using drone aerial technology, or other sources, a roofing and chimney survey will identify any necessary repairs, and provide a realistic estimate of the useful life remaining in order to inform the 30-year programme. Extending this component lifespan has contributed savings which have in turn enabled increased investment in energy efficiency works such as our CO₂sy Home Standard.

Ventilation

Additional ventilation is considered as part of our Retrofit CO₂sy Homes Standard for the existing housing stock, to further mitigate the risk of condensation, damp and mould. As a minimum, all homes subject to this standard will have mechanical extraction from kitchens and bathrooms; through the condition survey, any homes without kitchen and bathroom ventilation will be added to a programme of works.

Maintaining Ageing Homes (Whole House Refurbishment at Void)

A specific budget enables, when identified at void stage, a whole house refurbishment of selected older stock, in line with the Tenant Priorities for this type of work. Some pre-war properties require significant refurbishment work to reach a lettable standard. To avoid some homes being let with inadequate numbers of electrical sockets, old overpainted internal woodwork, doors and plasterwork which fall below easily maintainable standards, this budget allows for the inclusion for works that would not be picked up through the current capital investment programme.

This Council has traditionally, over several years, experienced an annual turnover of homes in the region of 10% of its total housing stock; each year, approximately 300 homes are re-let to new tenants. Over 10% (n508) of the Council's homes were constructed before 1940, and whilst the major components, including kitchens, bathrooms and heating installations, have been replaced as part of an ongoing planned programme, the internal joinery, walls, ceilings, doors and electrical layouts have generally not been replaced. Pre-war properties are now a minimum of 80 years old, and some internal finishes require major refurbishment to raise the standard to that of a modern lettable home.

This Plan identifies work, in addition to the current Void Standard that would seek to improve let-ability of these homes. On an annual basis, undertaking whole house refurbishment of those properties in most need will reduce ongoing maintenance, and provide an increase in lifespan of the home.

Structure repairs to Non-Traditional Stock

A survey (undertaken by Michael Dyson Associates in 2011) showed that the structural integrity of the non-traditional stock can be maintained for an assured life of at least 30 years (i.e. up to 2041) if repairs and maintenance measures are implemented to maintain the effective weather tightness of the external fabric. It is proposed that a new review of the non-traditional stock survey will be undertaken to update and test the assumptions, as more recent surveys have suggested that the fabric of those buildings are faring better than anticipated.

Tenant Support During Improvement Works

Delivering the Council's ambitious programme of investment for improvement and environmental enhancement of its housing stock is dependent on tenants allowing works to be undertaken within their homes. Some improvement works are essential to maintain the fabric of the building, and keep tenants safe and secure.

Encouraging tenants to have improvement works completed will ensure that the housing stock is well maintained and meets the Decent Homes Standard, as well as keeping the housing stock as energy efficient as possible, which in turn helps to keep tenants' energy bills down, reducing carbon emissions while also ensuring the home is able to be kept warm.

The Council recognises that tenants may have valid concerns about improvement works to be undertaken, which may be mitigated through the provision of additional support, detailed in the Tenant Support During Work Guidance. This guidance identifies a number of tools that, depending on individual circumstances, may be used to help and support tenants to have their improvement works completed.

Aids and Adaptations

The Council recognises its social responsibility to provide adaptations and facilities for people with a disability, as well as the statutory requirement to comply with the provisions of: the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996; the Equality Act 2010; the Care Act 2014; and the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) [England and Wales] Order 2002.

The Council seeks to deliver a responsive aids and adaptations service which meets the needs of customers and provides good value for money. To achieve this, the Council's Executive Board, at its meeting on 31/10/2024 approved a revised Council Disabled Adaptations Policy, setting out the Council's commitment as a landlord to meet the needs of its tenants and the framework for delivering this service [LINK TO - NKDC Website - Disabled Adaptations Policy](#).

Through Allocations, Lettings & Mutual Exchange, the Council aims to ensure that vacancies with disabled adaptations are let to a new household who requires such adaptations. This minimises the need for further expenditure on works for the new tenant, or costly removal of adaptations.

6.2.4 Cyclical Maintenance

Regular cyclical maintenance of components is planned and carried out at regular intervals based on statutory requirements or best practice, which includes:

- Annual boiler servicing;
- Maintenance of fire extinguishers, fire alarms to flats and shared housing schemes;
- External redecoration, including joinery pre-paint repairs, every seven years;
- Fixed wiring periodic tests of electrical installations;
- Annual smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm servicing;
- Servicing and maintenance of sprinkler systems;
- Servicing and maintenance of solar thermal and PV panels;
- Servicing and maintenance of mechanical ventilation and heat recovery systems;
- Lift maintenance;
- Door entry system and TV aerial servicing;
- Annual stairlift servicing; and
- Sewage treatment plant maintenance.

6.2.5 Health and Safety

The corporate process for managing Health and Safety has led to the creation of a number of council-wide management teams, to review specific areas of Health and Safety, to manage and review compliance against statutory requirements. Each has a Terms of Reference, and cover the following areas:

- Legionella Health & Safety Working Group;
- Electrical Safety Health & Safety Working Group;
- Fire Safety Working Group, and Fire Health and Safety Action Group;
- Construction Health & Safety Working Group;
- Asbestos Health & Safety Working Group; and
- Gas & Heating Health & Safety Working Group.

The following policies identify the actions and responsibilities for the management of Health and Safety of the housing stock:

- Water Hygiene and Control of Legionnaires Disease Policy;
- Electrical Safety Management Policy;
- Fire Safety Policy;
- Contractor Control Policy & Procedures;
- Management and Control of Asbestos Policy; and
- Gas Safety Management Policy.

Budgets are in place to allow a continual programme of works to meet Health and Safety requirements, and to ensure compliance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) operating guidance.

The Council's aim is to ensure that dwellings meet Health and Safety requirements so that tenants are living in a safe and secure environment. In line with the Health and Safety regulatory framework, this will be achieved by identifying and managing those risks.

The Council has reviewed its compliance with the main areas of Health and Safety and has reported the outcome to tenants through the At Home magazine.

6.2.6 Housing Health & Safety Ratings System (HHSRS)

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) replaced the Fitness Standard element of the Decent Homes Standard, assessing the main risks inherent in a home, although subject to change following consultation with revisions anticipated during 2025.

If a home fails the HHSRS, it automatically fails the Decent Homes Standard. HHSRS is used in response to reports of damp and/or mould, in accordance with the Council's Damp and Mould Policy, that was updated and approved by the Council's Executive Board 09/01/2025. The update was in response to the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report and other sector expectations and improvements to responding to reports. This ensures full assessment in the context of those occupying the home and impact or potential impact to their health and wellbeing as a result of presence of damp and/or mould.

As part of the ongoing work plan to meet the HHSRS requirements, asset surveyors involved in carrying out condition surveys of properties have been trained to approved industry standards to identify potential HHSRS failures. Additionally, during 2024, a number of other key posts within Housing and Property Services have undergone this accredited training to supporting embedding the approach into our service delivery and provide additional resilience. This will enable the Council to build up accurate safety data relating to its housing stock through the ongoing condition surveys.

Asbestos in Non-Housing Stock

The Council's Management and Control of Asbestos Policy sets out how the Council identifies and manages asbestos for all Council owned homes. The Council conducts surveys and sampling, managing asbestos-containing materials in accordance with its Management and Control of Asbestos Policy, and The Control of Asbestos Regulations. Management surveys are undertaken to all non-domestic properties; in the HRA, this includes communal lounges, shared housing schemes and communal areas to flats. This information is held in an Asbestos Register together with an Asbestos Management Plan.

All high-risk asbestos-containing materials are programmed for removal as they are identified. Medium and low risk asbestos-containing materials are left in-situ, and are only removed if the risk should change (e.g. they become damaged, the condition worsens or require removal to enable repair or alteration work to be carried out).

Asbestos in Our Homes

The Council's Management and Control of Asbestos Policy sets out how the Council identifies and manages asbestos for all council homes. The Council's aim is to carry out asbestos management surveys to 100% of the housing stock; there is a rolling programme of surveys, with 684 homes outstanding as of November 2024. All information is recorded and made available to tenants and contractors who require it. Good practice supported by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) suggests landlords should collect and hold asbestos data on a minimum of 15% of their stock; the Council exceeds this and now holds information on over 82% of its homes. The surveys identify asbestos-containing materials and enable the Council to monitor their condition. Where access is not obtained to carry out a physical survey, this information is cloned from others of a similar type, to provide records for all properties.

Contractors are made aware where asbestos-containing materials are located before undertaking repairs or refurbishment work. If Refurbishment and Demolition Surveys are required, these are undertaken prior to work commencing.

An explanatory and advisory leaflet about asbestos has been sent to all tenants and leaseholders. The Council has also issued all tenants with the details of known asbestos-containing materials for their homes. Tenants of homes that have been 'cloned' (as described above) have also been provided with information of the likely location of asbestos-containing materials. All new tenants are provided with this information as soon as is practical after the tenancy has been signed.

Legionella

The Council has a Water Hygiene & Control of Legionnaires Disease Policy for all assets. Risk assessments have been completed, and are reviewed on a periodic basis regarding the risk of Legionella at former sheltered housing sites and other sites with common stored water, as required by the HSE Approved Code of Practice L8: Legionnaires' Disease. A contractor undertakes regular inspections and any remedial work that may be required. The Council also carries out risk mitigation work by flushing hot and cold water systems to empty homes just before new tenancies.

Gas Installations

The Council has a Housing Gas and Heating Safety Management Policy that ensures the safety of tenants in homes that contain a gas supply, and associated appliances. Under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 and HSE Approved Code of Practice L56, it is a requirement that landlords issue a Landlords Gas Safety Certificate within 12 months to each home. The Council aims to ensure that 100% of certificates are renewed within this timescale.

The servicing of gas appliances is audited on the Council's behalf by a third-party company. At present, a 10% sample is checked to ensure compliance with legislation. This can be increased, or specific operatives targeted, dependent on the findings of the audit. The policy contains a robust process to take action against tenants who do not allow the contractor access to service appliances and check gas safety.

Electrical Installations

Periodic electrical safety inspections of the fixed wiring installations are undertaken at periods of no more than five years. The next inspection date is detailed on each individual certificate issued. Following a rolling programme, the whole housing stock now has a fixed wiring certificate and necessary remedial works have been undertaken (76 outstanding as of November 2024).

Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms

The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendments) Regulations 2022, which came into force on 1st October 2022, placed a statutory duty on all social landlords to provide smoke and carbon monoxide alarms and to ensure that these alarms are repaired or replaced once notified of a fault.

To comply with these statutory duties the Council ensures that a carbon monoxide alarm is installed in any room of a home that contains a fuel burning appliance, such as gas boilers, solid fuel appliances and oil fired boilers. Cookers are excluded from this requirement. In terms of smoke alarms, the Council will ensure there is at least one alarm on each storey where there is a room used for living accommodation.

All alarms are inspected annually by an engineer and a full replacement undertaken on a rolling ten year programme.

Fire

In accordance with The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the Council has undertaken Fire Risk Assessments of communal areas to flats, communal lounges and shared housing schemes. The Fire Risk Assessments are reviewed on a regular basis (bi-annually), or when physical changes are made to the layout of a building, and recorded on a register. Any physical work required to mitigate the risks identified is undertaken, and management processes put in place.

Housing Officers carry out regular checks of the communal areas of flats, and the Property Officers and/or the Housing Health and Safety Co-ordinator carry out checks on former sheltered housing schemes. As these inspections are completed they are recorded, and any issues identified are reviewed through the corporate Fire Safety Group meeting.

Estate and Common Part Risk Assessment Inspections

The Council, as a landlord, has a policy in place for estate management; maintenance and housing management staff carry out regular inspections of the estate areas, garage sites and other common parts of our assets – Managing Our Estates. An assessment is undertaken based on ensuring the health and safety of tenants, residents and visitors to the Council's estates. Where high risks are identified, mitigating works are undertaken either through planned or responsive repairs contracts.

6.2.7 Repairs and Maintenance Service

The overall aim of the repairs and maintenance service is to provide a fit for purpose responsive repairs and maintenance service to Council tenants, in order to respond efficiently (and in a timely manner) to unplanned failures, to prevent deterioration in their condition and ensure service standards are maintained.

The final year of the former repairs contractor, 2023/2024, brought significant challenges to operational service delivery that directly impacted tenants. As a result the Council redistributed works orders to a range of alternative contractors to minimise that impact. This did result in some delays and a list of legacy works when the contract ended on 31/03/2024. The transition to a new responsive repairs contractor and mobilisation, added to those operational delivery challenges. Tenants were kept informed throughout the 2023/2024 challenges and alternative arrangements, involved in the procurement process, and since been informed of new contract expectations.

Responsive Repairs

The objective of the Repairs Service is to provide a customer focused responsive repairs service, which achieves high levels of performance, customer satisfaction and good value for money. The key actions required to achieve this objective are:

- Establishing a service plan to align the repairs standards with the Retrofit CO₂sy Homes and New Build CO₂sy Homes Standards;
- Developing successful working relationships with contractors;
- Making appointments for all repairs;
- Getting the job done right first time, as quickly as possible; and
- Using tenant feedback to shape the service.

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

Repairs that are not the Council's responsibility, or which arise through the unreasonable actions of a third party, are charged to the tenant(s).

The responsive repairs service has more contact with tenants and residents than any other service, and therefore, the performance of the service is used by most tenants and residents as a proxy for how effective the overall Housing and Property service is.

Contracts are in place for the following responsive repairs:

- Day-to-Day Repairs – combined with void and external repairs;
- Heating Repairs – combined with gas servicing;
- Door Entry Systems and TV aerial maintenance to blocks of flats;
- Stairlifts annual servicing, and installations following a Disabled Adaptation; and
- Disabled Adaptations and minor works to Council owned homes.

Our Responsive Repairs Service has been carried out by a single repairs contractor. The contract responds to the most repairs of all the responsive services, and the Council works continually to improve the service and value for money. The Heating Repairs and Servicing contract is carried out by a second contractor. The advantages of the long-term relationships with our contractors have been:

- Both main contractors deliver a telephone customer service centre taking calls from our customers, allowing the contractor to make appointments at first point of contact;
- Improving tenant involvement to develop the service;
- Grouping as many repairs as possible, so they can be undertaken in a more pre-planned way;
- Improving repairs priorities to ensure work is completed at the earliest opportunity; and
- Basing the Heating Repairs Service on a year's maintenance all-inclusive cost per home, so any repair work is carried out at no additional cost to the Council.

Approximately 15,000 calls are received, of which 5,000 were for heating repairs and 10,000 day-to-day responsive repairs. The Repairs Service will continue to be subject to regular review and contract management.

6.2.8 Void Works

The objective of the void management process is to make homes available to let as quickly as possible, minimising rent loss and maximising the housing available, whilst striving to meet customers' expectations. The priorities are to:

- Provide a safe and secure home;
- Improve re-let timescales;
- Provide a re-let standard that meets customers' expectations; and
- Undertake works to improve, where possible, the environmental standards of the property.

General void repairs (excluding the whole house refurbishments), including cleaning, clearing and decoration are undertaken by our responsive repairs contractor. The current letting standard (agreed as part of the Council's Local Offers) is that the Council will:

- Carry out a gas safety check where gas is installed, leaving a certificate copy on site;
- Carry out a safety check of the electrical installation;
- Undertake a water hygiene test, and provide a certificate;
- Remove any rubbish from both internally and from the individual garden;
- Clean the property;
- Re-decorate parts, if it is deemed required at the void inspection; and
- Carry out all of the urgent repairs, and try to complete all other repairs during void period, otherwise being clear on those that will be completed once occupied.

To ensure that homes are made available to new tenants as promptly as possible, the Council may:

- Leave minor repairs to be completed until the new tenant has moved in (if this is the case then tenants will be informed of the timescale for their completion); and/or
- Delay work to garden areas, for it to be completed once occupied.

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

6.4 Retrofit CO₂sy Homes

6.4.1 Our intentions – Existing Homes

The intentions for the existing housing stock are to:

- Improve energy efficiency, and respond to the Climate Emergency Action Plan;
- Set the Retrofit CO₂sy Homes Standard- that ensures all homes meet an EPC Rating of C or above, and where possible homes are zero carbon ready; and
- Review our Responsive Repairs Service alongside the Retrofit CO₂Sy Homes Standard to ensure they align where possible.

In order to achieve these objectives, the Council recognises the need to balance its decisions on the options available, which include:

- Targeting carbon saving, or energy efficiency or fuel poverty;
- Reducing carbon, or achieving net zero carbon emissions;
- Prioritising investment in new homes, or investment in existing homes;
- Prioritising investment into the homes that are “easiest” to improve, or properties that will see the “biggest” difference;
- Focusing on the cheapest options, or comprehensive programmes

The performance of domestic properties is currently measured through the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) assessment, which gives each property a Band rating from A (very efficient) to G (very inefficient). EPCs tell the occupant how costly the home will be to heat and light, what its carbon emissions are likely to be, and what measures could be undertaken to improve the energy efficiency.

The Council ensures an EPC is available for every home that is let; all new homes have an EPC, generated as part of the commissioning documentation. Over a number of years, this has meant that a large percentage of the stock now has an EPC. The remainder of the stock have been cloned from the available data.

From this assessment of the current EPC position, our housing stock has been split into EPC Rating (detailed in the table below), with worst performing G through to best performing A.

Our Retrofit Programme began in 2022/2023 tackling our worst performing homes. As at 31/03/2024 there were 2274 homes with an estimated below EPC C. In addition to Council investment, the Council has benefited from the government’s Social Housing Decarbonation Fund Wave 2.1, enabling 305 homes to have retrofit works completed by April 2025.

The table shows the potential impact of delivering Warm Homes Social Housing Fund Wave 3 (fund that is replacing the above SHDF), if our application is successful. To be delivered between 2025/2026 and 2027/2028, aiming to deliver 1672 homes improved to a minimum level of EPC C.

OUR HOMES

- EPC ratings and impact of our Retrofit CO₂sy Homes

EPC Band	Band G	Band F	Band E	Band D	Band C	Band B	Band A	Total
No. Homes - April 2025	0	14	248	1807	1332	472	20	3893
Projected data - April 2026	0	0	0	1512	1889	472	20	3893
Projected data - April 2027	0	0	0	955	2446	472	20	3893
Projected data - April 2028	0	0	0	397	3004	472	20	3893

*This does not account for any acquisitions or disposals

In April 2028 we anticipate a further 397 properties to fall below EPC C and would be subject to future budget and grant applications post 2028 to enable our commitment to minimum EPC target for the Retrofit CO₂sy Homes Standard is achieved.

The Council's budget for our Retrofit Programme was established through a shift in component life span (section 6.2.1) and utilising grant funding opportunities where available.

6.5 New Build CO₂sy Homes

New Build CO₂sy Homes is our preferred standard for our new build homes and acquisitions, replacing the previous Fabric First 2018 standard.

The Fabric First Standard was introduced in 2013, revised in 2015 (as Fabric First Plus). It was further improved in 2017, and in 2018 uplifted again (as Fabric First 2018) moving it noticeably beyond current building regulation requirements; thermal performance was improved, and features already included in the Standard (such as additional storage space and triple glazing) were retained. In order to build upon the Fabric First Standard, and meet the actions contained within the Climate Emergency Action Plan, the Council engaged specialist consultants to report on the options available to be considered to move towards Zero Carbon homes in accordance with the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

Our New Build CO₂sy Homes Standard is to build net zero carbon new build homes to a certified Passivhaus standard, subject to the financial viability model.

The Council, as a social housing landlord remains committed to delivering a new build programme that aims to increase the number of affordable homes to rent, responds to levels of need identified on the housing register and, as a minimum investment, replaces those existing homes sold through the Right to Buy.

The Council's New Build Delivery Plan sets the direction for delivery of new build homes in the HRA through to 2030, this Plan is subject to review as a result of this Business Plan refresh.

6.6 Procurement, Business Resilience and Procedures

6.6.1 Procurement and Procedures

It is vitally important that the Council manages future procurement exercises effectively, in order to ensure that social value is demonstrated, and value for money is obtained.

The Council has robust contract procedures in place, contained in the Constitution. Procurement Lincolnshire provide advice to ensure these are followed.

A standard set of policies and procedures have been developed to ensure consistent operational delivery and procedural quality assurance and compliance across Housing and Property Services.

6.6.2 Data Strategy

As contracts for systems are due for renewal, an options appraisal will be carried out to determine if they can be integrated into existing systems used by the Council, preferably the Housing Management System (NEC) to enable an improving single and integrated information source. Housing and Property Services developed its own Data Strategy, approved March 2024, setting out our approach to operational delivery and information management. The Data Strategy is supported by a real time delivery plan, that is built into the service delivery plan each year.

6.6.3 Business resilience and managing risk

In an increasingly interdependent and uncertain environment, the Council should ensure that it is well placed to maintain its key services in the event of major challenges. There are several areas that have, within the lifetime of the existing Business Plan, shown to be fragile and incapable of coping with major national or local emergency. Both the Exit from the EU and the global Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted the critical need for a business continuity emergency plan, to enable the service to continue to deliver its statutory and operational functions.

Business resilience requires that the Council is able to demonstrate a capability to respond to unforeseen circumstances.

The following summary identifies functions that may be impacted in future emergencies:

- Contractor failure;
- Appliance servicing (e.g., gas, oil, solid fuel, electric);
- Fire safety;
- Water hygiene;
- Electrical systems;
- Asbestos management;
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015;
- LOLER (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998);
- CO and smoke alarms;
- HHSRS (Housing Health & Safety Rating System);
- Other functions:

- General repairs and maintenance;
- Planned maintenance;
- Cyclical maintenance;
- New Build.

A service specific Business Continuity Plan and Live Risk Register will be kept updated to identify the risks, and mitigation measures against each risk to minimise the Council's exposure to critical failure.

6.7 Key Challenges – Asset Management

The key challenges for delivery of Housing Services arising from the Business Plan analysis set out in this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- **Responsive Repairs Service** – ensuring consistent delivery that meets tenants expectations and effective contract management that ensure values for money and well maintained homes
- **Retrofit CO2sy Homes Standard** – ensuring a continued programme that maximises on external grant funding, and improves living conditions for those occupying our worst performing homes
- **New Build CO2sy Homes** – ensuring a continued investment programme for new build and acquisitions that enables the replacement of homes lost through Right to Buy and addresses the increasing identified needs of those registered for housing.

Actions to address these challenges are contained within the Delivery Plan.

7 THE FINANCIAL PLAN

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is the financial account used to manage North Kesteven District Council's landlord activities. It is "ring-fenced" and therefore can only be used for providing services to tenants, through collection of rent and other charges.

Self-financing was implemented nationally in April 2012, and involved a one-off financial settlement with central government in return for the ability to retain and control all rental income. The Council's net debt settlement was agreed at £56.867 million. Under self-financing, the Council has the ability to use surplus rental income to invest in the existing housing stock and service improvements and to build additional council housing.

The Council's current 30 year business plan operating account - the "HRA Financial Plan" - includes all revenue and capital income and expenditure associated with the HRA over a 30 year period, along with debt repayments. The HRA Financial Plan requires continued updating on the basis of changes to levels of Right to Buy sales, future inflation, in-year budget amendments, changes to investment levels and interest on balances.

7.1 Key Principles

The following key principles underpin the HRA Financial Plan:

- The plan supports the Council's key housing objectives for managing its stock, delivering housing services and investing in new social rented homes;
- The replacement of dwelling components maintains the useful life of each dwelling,

- and ensures the Council’s adopted dwelling standards are adhered to;
- To build new dwellings to meet the social housing waiting list, and aim to at least replace the number of dwellings that are expected to be disposed of under the Right to Buy legislation;
 - Right to Buy receipts are fully utilised in the Housing Capital Programme – current Government policy is for receipts not to be returned centrally but to be retained locally by councils. This is therefore currently used to part fund the Housing Capital Programme, thus reducing the amount required to fund the programme from borrowing; It is important to note this may be only a temporary arrangement and subject to change as determined by government policy;
 - Rents are set in adherence to central government policy and statute;
 - The treasury management objective is that borrowing take up is affordable, sustainable and prudent, ensuring that both revenue and capital objectives are met by effective cash management with a risk averse approach;
 - Sufficient reserves and balances are maintained, to enable the Council to maintain its financial standing, and to ensure financial sustainability throughout the life of the plan; and
 - Wherever possible, external grants are sought to part fund new build dwellings (e.g. Homes England grants for Affordable Homes).

7.2 Assumptions

The underlying assumptions within the revised plan are summarised below:

Key Assumptions	2025/ 2026	2026/ 2027	2027 /2028	2028/ 2029	2029/ 2030
Cost of Living Award	2%	2%	2%	2%	2%
Inflation Rate Applied to Capital Components	3%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Borrowing Interest Rates	4.7%	4.7%	4.3%	4%	4%
Rent Increase	2.7%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Number of Right to Buy Sales	15	15	15	15	15

7.2.1 Rents

In early 2019, MHCLG issued a Policy Statement on Rents for Social Housing, confirming a return to Formula Rent from 2020/21 onwards, and permitting annual rent increases of up to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) + 1%. In addition, a direction was issued to the Regulator of Social Housing to set a new standard on rent for registered providers (the “Rent Standard”), that came into effect on 1 April 2020.

Unlike the other Economic Standards, the Rent Standard applies equally to private and local authority registered providers, and therefore since April 2020, the Council has been subject to direct rent regulation by the Regulator (see also Section 8.1.2 – Economic Standards).

Whilst the previous Business Plan correctly assumed a return to Formula Rent from 2020/21, it also made assumptions on the relevant rate of CPI (as at September of the preceding financial year) with further assumptions of an annual rent increase of 3%, which in reality has not been the case. Meaning over recent years the rent changes have been outside that which was assumed, which has been further compounded over the 30yr term

of the Business Plan. However, in the absence of a current long term and more stable Rent Policy, social rent increases at a rate of 3% have been assumed going forward, but will be subject to the annual review of the operating account, to ensure accurately reflected in current year and implications applied for subsequent years.

7.2.2 Other Charges

The Council makes other charges to tenants and leaseholders, including ground rents and service charges; estimates of the income from these charges have been included in the 30 year projection. These are determined in accordance with the Councils Income Policy.

7.2.3 Inflation

Within the 2021 HRA Business Plan, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is assumed to be 2% in the Business Plan, but not all costs are uplifted by CPI or the Retail Price Index (RPI). Building costs inflationary uplift is assumed to be 4%, based on the Building Cost Information Service (BCIS) indices and historic trends. However, the impact of the 2020 pandemic was much more enduring than initially anticipated, this in conjunction with Brexit and the war in Ukraine has caused fluctuating inflations and a great deal of unpredicted increased costs beyond what would normally be experienced as a result of inflation and housing sector influences.

7.2.4 Right to Buy

Assumptions on Right to Buy sales have been reviewed based on more recent years actuals, and updated to 15 per year for 2024/25 onwards, broadly reflecting the average annual sales over the lifetime of the previous Business Plan. Right to Buy Sales have a significant impact on the HRA; an indicative rent loss figure for 15 properties would be £57,600 per year (based on an indicative rent of £80 per week, over 48 weeks). The financial impact on the HRA of the Right to Buy Sales is shown in the table below.

At the time of refreshing this document, the Autumn Budget in October 2024, amongst various housing related announcements included the reduction in the applicable discount for Right to Buy. This has led to a significant increase in applications keen to maximise the current discount rates. If all applications received preceding the deadline set in the budget, then we are looking at a significant increase in RTB sales for 2024/2025. This will of course have an impact on future year income projections.

Financial Impact of Right to Buy Sales (2019 – 2024)

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Number of properties sold	20	11	12	21	16
Total Market Value of Properties Sold (£)	2,470,000	1,327,000	1,688,000	2,950,000	2,463,000
Total Discount Awarded to Tenants (£)	1,066,470	598,550	818,465	1,400,610	1,174,100
Total Amount Received by Council after Discount (£); of which:	1,403,530	728,450	869,535	1,549,390	1,314,360
Total Pooled to Central Government (£)	401,885	401,945	402,008	1,688	1,608
Total Retained by the Council for Investment in the Capital Programme (£)	1,001,645	326,505	467,527	1,547,702	1,314,896
Total Rent Loss over 30 Years Resulting from Sales (Estimated; £)	4,115,566	2,226,011	2,532,442	4,658,578	3,620,325

7.3 Housing Capital Investment Programme

The Council's Capital Strategy, includes provision for a continued Housing Capital Investment Programme to maintain/improve existing homes and to develop new homes. The 30 year budget provision for component replacement is circa £314.6m, with £15.5m for the period 2025/2026 to 2027/2028, and £72.2m for 2025/2026 to 2034/2035.

Our Retrofit CO₂sy Homes Programme, also addressing decarbonisation, is circa £18.9 for 2025/26 to 2030/31. This is complimented by grant funding allocated to the Council through the governments Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, and now Warm Homes Social Housing Fund

In respect of investment in new social and affordable homes, £13.2m has been identified for 2025/2026 to 2027/2028, and £41.1m for 2025/2026 to 2034/2035. This demonstrates our commitment to replacing homes lost through Right to Buy and meeting increasing housing need. A commitment which was supported by tenants when surveyed.

7.3.1 Treasury Management

The Council took on an additional debt of £56.867 million as part of the self-financing settlement with central government. The loan to repay the debt has been taken through the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB), as the Treasury has offered advantageous rates for this type of loan at 3.03% per annum. The loan will be paid back using 'equal instalments of principal' (EIP) over the agreed term. This means that the repayments, including interest, will be higher in the early years before reducing towards the end of the term. This represents the cheapest option for the HRA over the lifetime of the plan and provides scope in future years to borrow further amounts in order to improve the housing stock or create new dwellings.

Following the removal of the HRA Borrowing Cap, the Council is no longer constrained by government controls over borrowing for housebuilding in the HRA, and is able to borrow against expected rental income, in line with the Prudential Code.

7.3.2 Investment Priorities

The 30 year projections have been based around a number of principles, which will be used to consider further investment proposals over the lifetime of this Plan.

The guiding principle is to invest funds to:

- **Improve** the quality of existing homes, to a minimum of EPC C;
- **Build** new homes for rent at social or affordable rents; and
- **Respond** to the service needs and priorities of customers.

Funding will be allocated to meet the priorities set out in this document where possible; Any substantial change to priorities will be subject to consultation with HRA tenants. Investment decisions will be taken in the long term interest of the service and will be fundable within 30 year forecasts without detrimentally impacting on priorities for the service.

7.4 Sensitivities

Sensitivity analysis is undertaken as part of the annual budget setting and Medium Term Financial Strategy review processes, and outcomes are used to inform the 30-year HRA Financial Plan model. There are a number of sensitivities that can be run to test the base model, and to assess the impact of variations in, for example:

- Rent and service charge changes;
- Bad debts and void rent loss;
- Inflation;
- Right to Buy sales;
- Future major repairs costs; and
- Rent collection and bad debt recovery rates.

The HRA operational budget assumes CPI of 2% in future years, and therefore future rent increases are assumed to be 3%; based upon a rent policy of CPI +1%. Should CPI fall below 2%, rental income will be lower than forecast.

Right to Buy Sales have a significant impact on the HRA; any increase in sales above the anticipated levels would have a detrimental impact on the rental income receivable over the life of the 30-year Financial Plan, while a decrease in sales and associated receipts would improve the Council's ability to fund the housing capital programme.

Any significant reduction in the rent income receivable would mean that the Council would have to undertake another in-depth review of the HRA services it provides, to assess the impact. This would include:

- The level of service delivered, e.g. standard (or basic), instead of the high quality service with a number of discretionary provisions currently provided;
- Potential reduction to the new build programme; rental income funds the contribution to the Major Repairs Reserve, which in turn funds component replacement and new build activity; and
- Ultimately, the Council would have to "cut its cloth" accordingly, making tougher decisions with less spending capacity, as income would be a more scarce resource. Where this is required we will work with our tenants to make these decisions.

Future investment will also be informed by the condition of the housing stock; the ongoing programme of continuous stock condition surveys has identified that, while the Council's residential assets are generally in good condition, works will be required for which it will be prudent to take a planned approach, for a larger number of properties.

With regard to inflationary assumptions, it must be noted that all management, maintenance and capital expenditure is forecast to increase by specific inflation factors; most notably, the BCIS inflationary uplifts are applied on repairs and maintenance budgets, and component replacements in the capital programme. Any real increases above these provisions would therefore have to be met by efficiency savings, reductions in planned service enhancements, or by scaling back the capital programme.

7.5 Financial Risk

The move to self-financing significantly altered the risk profile in HRA Financial Plans. The Council is not at risk of fluctuations in interest rates on any currently contracted debt, as the Council only holds fixed rate loans. Any variation in base rates will not impact on the Council's finances for loans taken to date.

The Council undertakes stress testing and sensitivity analysis on all major income and expenditure budgets, to ensure it is in a position to react to deviations in expected budgetary outcomes. A HRA Business Plan risk register has been developed, which combines key service-based and financial risks associated with the Plan (see Section 9.4 – Risk Management).

7.6 Key Challenges – The Financial Plan

The key challenges arising from the Business Plan analysis set out in this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- **Financial Sustainability** - Delivery of a viable and sustainable operating account
- **Compliance** - Ensuring continued compliance with rent regulation;
- **Responsive** - Revising the HRA operating account in line with any changes to the financial market; and
- **Risk management** - Continuing to minimise risks through stress testing, ensuring the HRA is in a position to react to deviation in expected budgetary outcomes.

8 Service Delivery & Performance Management

8.1 Service Standards

The Regulator of Social Housing is very clear in its requirements through the Consumer Standards 2024, on the requirements and outcomes it expects from social housing landlords. The Council compliance with these standards is obviously our main priority.

Additional to the consumer standards, tenants have identified other important areas of service delivery they expect from the Council as their landlord. These are referred to as “Local Offers”, these are agreed through our Tenant Liaison Panel, balancing feedback from tenants with the resources available for service delivery. Local offers aim to make a positive difference to tenants’ homes, quality of life, and community.

The current Local Offers were implemented in 2017, and are in need of review which we aim to undertake in conjunction with the full review of this Business Plan in 2025/2026. This will form the basis of the tenant consultation at that time, to ensure that we are not only meeting our requirements as a social housing landlord but that our service delivery and investment takes into account tenant’s priorities and preferences.

During 2024, as a result of feedback, we have worked with our tenant representatives and Tenants Liaison Panel to develop a Customer Service and Communication Standard. This is currently being implemented from October 2024, providing colleagues and customers clarity on expectations. Our approach and summary of this standard is demonstrated in the chart below:

Housing and Property Services

Our Customer Service

Our Tenants - Members – Colleagues - Partners



Our Vision	For all our customers to feel valued and clear on services provided.
Our Aim	To deliver an effective customer service that makes every contact count.
Our Purpose	Customer Service and Asset Management - working together to help make homes

Our Commitment

Respect

- Value and dignity
- Fairness and equality
- Honesty and openness

Inform

- Proactive communication
- Plain English
- Further signposting and how to [contact](#)

Respond

- To all contact within expected timescales
- Listen and hear, to inform your [response](#)
- Follow through on all commitments [made](#)

Involve

- Enable informed [decisions](#)
- Identify and adhere to communication [preferences](#)
- Understand individual needs and reasonable [adjustments](#)

Record

- All, and attempted, interactions recorded on [systems](#)
- Accuracy and with appropriate language
- Confirmation in writing where appropriate

8.2 Information Systems

As the management of the Council's tenancies and housing stock becomes more complex, it will be vital that information systems are fit-for-purpose and capable of supporting new ways of working. In March 2024, the Council's Executive Board approved a Data Strategy for Housing and Property Services. This document pulls together all data related activity across all functions within the division. The Strategy sets out what data we will collect, how we will manage that data and how it will be used to inform service delivery.

Accompanying the Data Strategy is a delivery plan, setting out the priority areas for action. The most significant priorities being "Knowing our Tenants" and "Knowing our Homes" to ensure a comprehensive single data source that is verified and can be relied upon for decision making.

The mobilisation of the new repairs and maintenance contract during 2024/2025, alongside the expiry of contracts for some of the current information systems in use, over the lifetime of this Business Plan, has provided an opportunity to reduce the number of systems being used, enabling more to be managed within the Housing Management System (NEC).

Alongside this, in line with the corporate approach that services are "Digital By Design", the online presence of Housing and Property Services will need to be enhanced, to enable tenants and residents to make more service requests online, as well as improving capability and capacity to disseminate appropriate information to tenants in a timely way, in a manner of their choosing. The HPS Data Strategy includes the development of Housing Online, a portal that enables tenants to access information relating to their home and tenancy.

8.3 Equality & Diversity

The Council is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and promote equality of opportunity, recognising that discrimination in society exists, and seeking to provide services fairly to all. The Council uses an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process when making decisions, updating policies and implementing projects to identify the effect that decisions may have on different groups within the District.

Housing & Property Services are committed to meeting the Council's equality objectives, and a self-assessment against the Local Government Association's Social Housing Equality Framework was undertaken in early 2022, to identify any actions required in order to do so, and ensure these are progressed through inclusion in future service delivery plans. Included within that was undertaking an exercise to capture more consistent information on our tenants and their households in order to better meet their needs, this ambition was built upon in the HPS Data Strategy.

8.3.1 Knowing Our Tenants

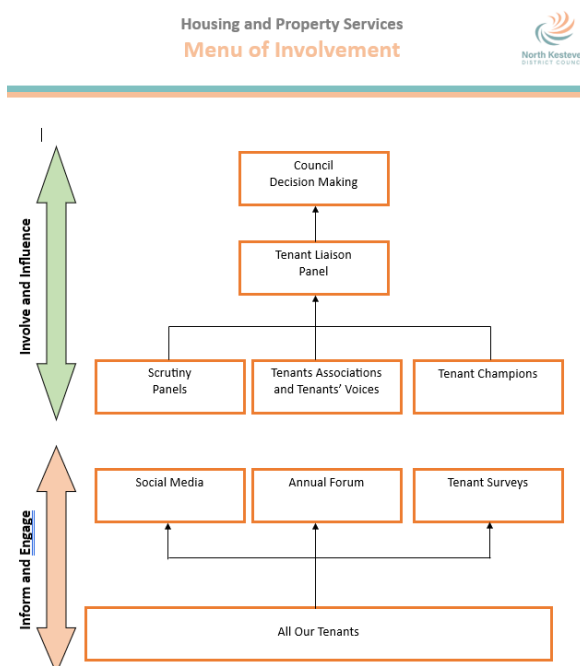
As a social landlord, it is important that the Council is aware of the detailed profile of its tenants, to ensure that services are shaped appropriately to meet their diverse needs. In addition, effective tenant insight means that, where resources are limited, they can be more effectively targeted towards those tenants with the highest need.

In 2011, the Council undertook a Tenant Census, to collect a range of information and data from tenants and their households. A key part of this exercise was to capture relevant basic information related to households with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act. The information gathered has been used to inform service delivery in a variety of ways. However, there have been significant challenges in ensuring that this data remains accurate and up to date, this together with the developing expectations of understanding our customers and tailoring services to meet their needs, has led to our approach being reviewed.

It is therefore planned to carry out another Tenant Census in 2025. Prior to carrying out the Tenant Census, best practice datasets have been reviewed to inform the final dataset to be collected, ensuring compliance with data processing requirements. How this information will be stored and maintained within the Housing Management System for ease of reference and use has also been redefined.

8.4 Resident Engagement

Given the significant changes experienced over the lifetime of the previous Business Plan, it is timely to undertake a review of our approach to resident engagement. In February 2024, the Council's Executive Board agreed a pilot for the delivery of the Menu of Involvement. The intention of the menu was to trial some different ways to engage our tenants in ways and on matters that they wish. This is currently being evaluated, November 2024, with learnings to be applied to the review of the Resident Engagement Strategy during 2025/2026.



8.4.1 Tenant Satisfaction

Housing and Property Services collect and analyse a range of tenant satisfaction data, often through transactional surveys to give a real time health check of operational delivery. During 2023, a review was undertaken on the effectiveness of those transactional surveys in place. During 2024, a new methodology has been developed and transactional surveys are currently targeting our service areas prioritised for review.

In order to measure wider perceptions of Housing and Property Services gathered qualitative data on tenants' experience for a number of years through the Council's annual Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR). This data was analysed to identify trends and emerging issues, which, in turn, inform service planning. The overall results and actions taken in response to the survey outcomes are reported back to tenants through the At Home magazine, and Annual Report to Tenants.

This approach was replaced in 2023, with the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) [LINK TO: RSH Summary of TSMs](#). Tenant Satisfaction Measures have a clearly defined methodology and expectation for being publicly available, to help tenants make informed judgements on our performance as a social housing landlord.

Undertaken in 2023, the following table shows the key results of our Tenant Satisfaction Measures as submitted to the Regulator of Social Housing in June 2024, and published as required. Full outcome of survey [LINK TO - NKDC website - TSM results 23/24](#).

TSMs - 2023/2024 Outcome Summary	
Taking everything into account, how satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the service provided?	72.1%
How satisfied/dissatisfied are you that NKDC a home that is well maintained?	69.1%
Thinking about the condition of the property or building you live in, how satisfied/dissatisfied are you that NKDC provides a home that is safe?	71.8%
If you live in a building with communal areas, inside/outside, that NKDC is responsible for, How satisfied/dissatisfied are you that NKDC keeps areas clean and well maintained?	61.7%
If NKDC housing services carried out a repair to your home in the last 12 months, How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the overall repairs service over the last 12 months?	67.6%
How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with the time taken to complete your most recent repair after you reported it?	64.0%
How satisfied/dissatisfied are you that NKDC listens to your views and acts upon them?	57.1%
How satisfied/dissatisfied are you that NKDC keeps you informed about things that matter?	66.0%
To what extent do you agree/disagree with `NKDC treats me fairly and with respect`?	73.6%
How satisfied/dissatisfied are you that NKDC makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood?	56.4%
How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with NKDC approach to handling anti-social behaviour?	50.2%
If you have made a complaint to NKDC in the last 12months, How satisfied/dissatisfied are you with NKDC approach to complaints handling?	29.3%

The outcome of the above, together with other feedback received, such as complaints and our self assessments, have informed the priority services areas for review.

As the collection and publishing of Tenant Satisfaction Measures are an annual requirement, the above core questions have been posed to our tenants again between October and November 2024, for analysis between January and March 2025, and publication in June 2025.

8.5 Performance Management, Benchmarking & Reporting

The Council has a corporate Performance Management Framework and a specific performance monitoring system to facilitate oversight of numerous aspects of service performance, ensuring any deteriorating performance is identified at an early stage so actions can be put in place to remedy emerging issues. A range of performance and management information is collected and analysed, and:

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) tell the Council whether it is achieving the ambitions captured in the Corporate Performance Framework, and are reported regularly to the Council's Executive Board, Performance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Corporate Management Team;
- Service Performance Indicators (SPIs) cover service issues in more detail, and help the Corporate Management Team monitor trends and service development; they are reported regularly to the Corporate Management Team;
- Operational Performance Indicators (OPIs) comprise a range of performance and management information to assist the Council in delivering services that are efficient, economic and effective, and are monitored on a regular basis by Directors, Heads of Service and Departmental Management Teams.

In July 2024, the Council's Executive Board reviewed its approach to performance management, approving a new corporate framework.

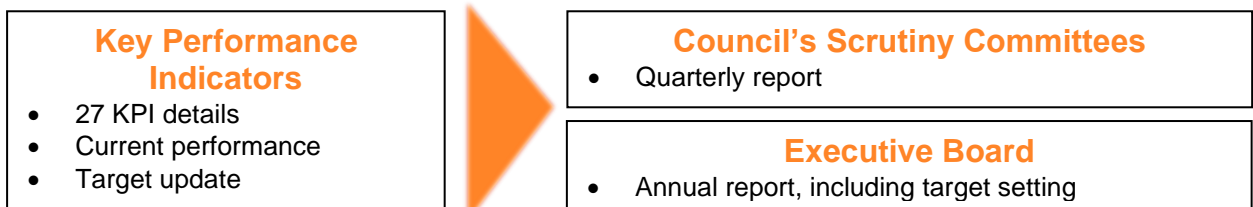
8.5.1 HPS Performance Management Framework

Following the approval of the new corporate performance framework, our Tenant Liaison Panel reviewed the framework in place for Housing and Property Services in September 2024, to ensure that it meets the Regulators expectations in respect of transparency, accountability and accessibility, as well as aligning to the new corporate framework.

The Executive Board then approved a revised HPS Performance Framework later in September 2024, that was implemented immediately.

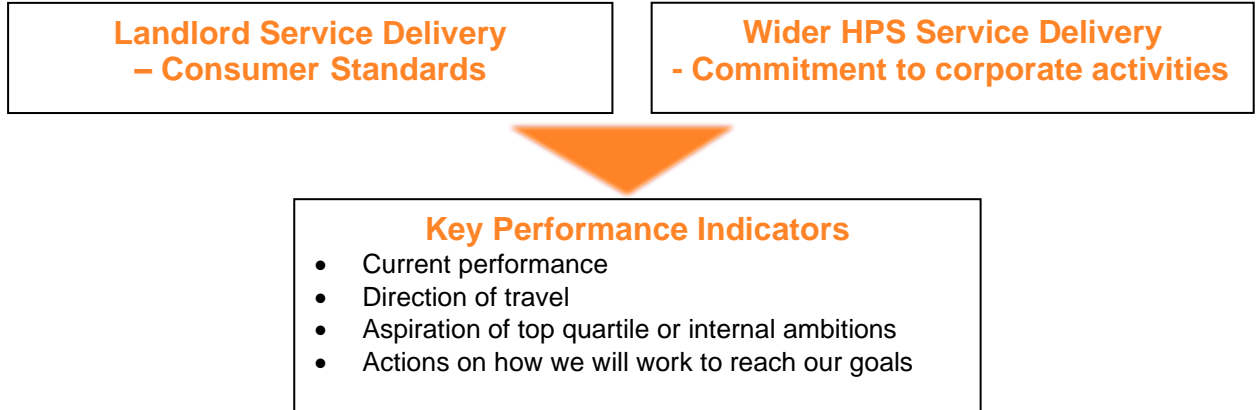
Housing Regulatory KPI Report:

This document set out our current performance against key compliance areas. The document is prepared as a report to inform and enable scrutiny of our current performance as a landlord. Demonstrating accountability this is reported within the wider corporate performance framework.



Challenge Plan:

This document sets out our ambitions for continuous improvement. Our current performance, direction of travel, how we aim to improve our core performance with timescales for those actions. This is agreed and reviewed through our Tenant Liaison Panel.



Assurance Report:

This document aims to provide a single point of reference to provide assurance on compliance with established requirements and expectations.

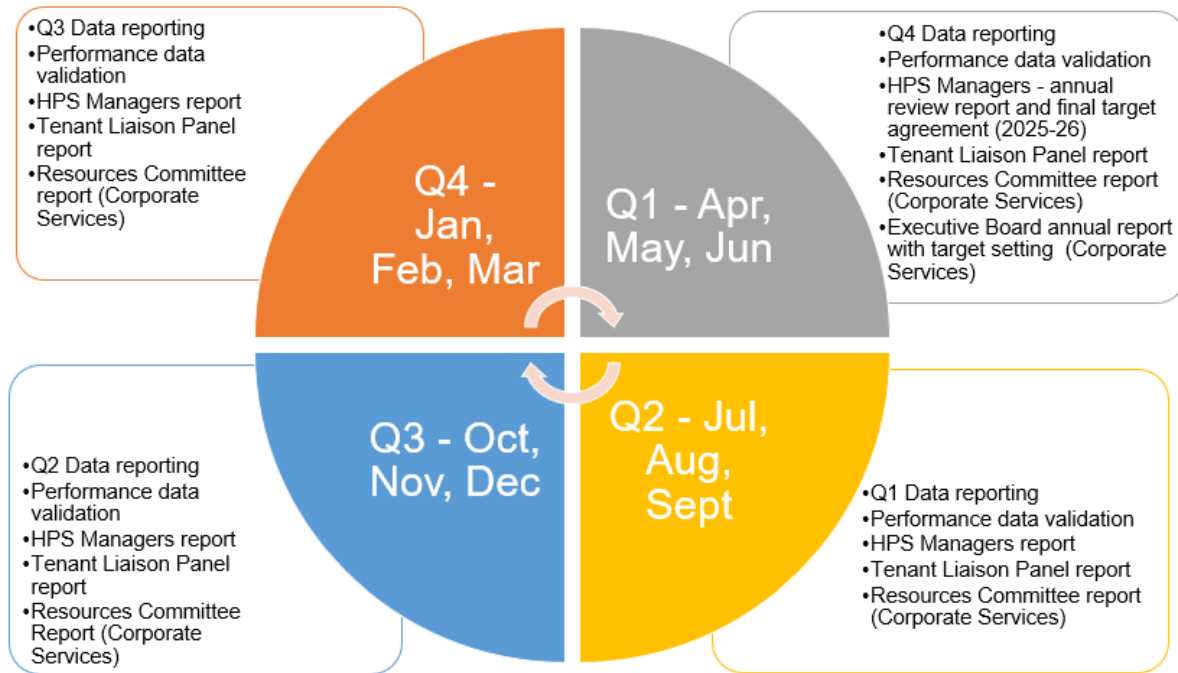


Annual Report to Tenants:

A summary across all the above areas of service delivery, to inform our tenants and enable them to scrutinise and make informed judgements on our delivery and performance as their landlord.

Landlord Services Performance to Tenants			
Annual facts/figures, benchmarked against the previous year	Honest and self-critical	Income and expenditure within the HRA	Accessible and attractive

8.5.2 Performance Reporting Cycle



Accountable to you
Our Tenants, Customers, Colleagues, Members and Partners

8.6 Value for Money

Delivering high quality, value for money services is a Key Ambition in the NK Plan, and in managing the HRA. The Council must ensure that its statutory duties and functions are adequately resourced, while also safeguarding viability of the Account in the long term. To meet these requirements, Housing and Property Services strive to deliver services that provide value for money, by ensuring that:

- Costs compare well with other housing providers, allowing for external factors;
- Costs are commensurate with service delivery performance, and outcomes achieved;
- Performance in relation to value for money is monitored and reviewed;
- Full, long term costs are taken into account when making spending decisions, including procurement; and
- Where possible, improved value for money and efficiency gains are achieved.

8.6.1 Benchmarking Performance & Cost

The Council recognises the importance of appropriate and timely benchmarking of housing performance and costs against other housing providers (both local authority, and private registered social landlords) and has been a member of Housemark for a number of years.

Housemark is a national housing benchmarking organisation, jointly owned by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and the National Housing Federation (NHF). Subscribed housing providers submit detailed information on performance and cost using consistent methodology, enabling comparison with other housing organisations nationally; member organisations are able to define their own peer groups for comparison, using a number of parameters such as type of provider, geographical location or stock size. Costs are generally compared on a “per property” basis.

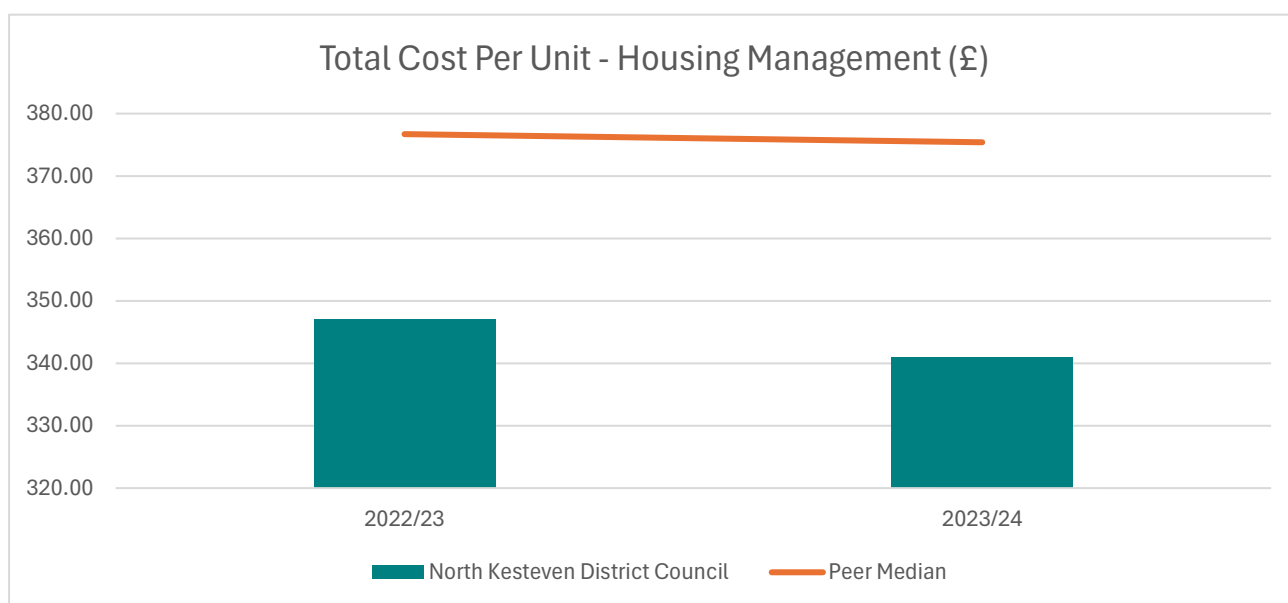
To ensure an adequate sample size for appropriate comparison the Council benchmarks with other housing providers with a similar stock size (between 2,500 and 5,000 properties), regardless of landlord type or geographical location. Due to the complexity of the benchmarking exercise and large number of landlords that participate, full comparative outcomes generally do not become available until around 6 months following the end of the financial year benchmarked.

A selection of benchmarking outcomes during the lifetime of the previous Business Plan is provided on the following pages.

Benchmarking Outcomes

- Total cost per property – Housing Management

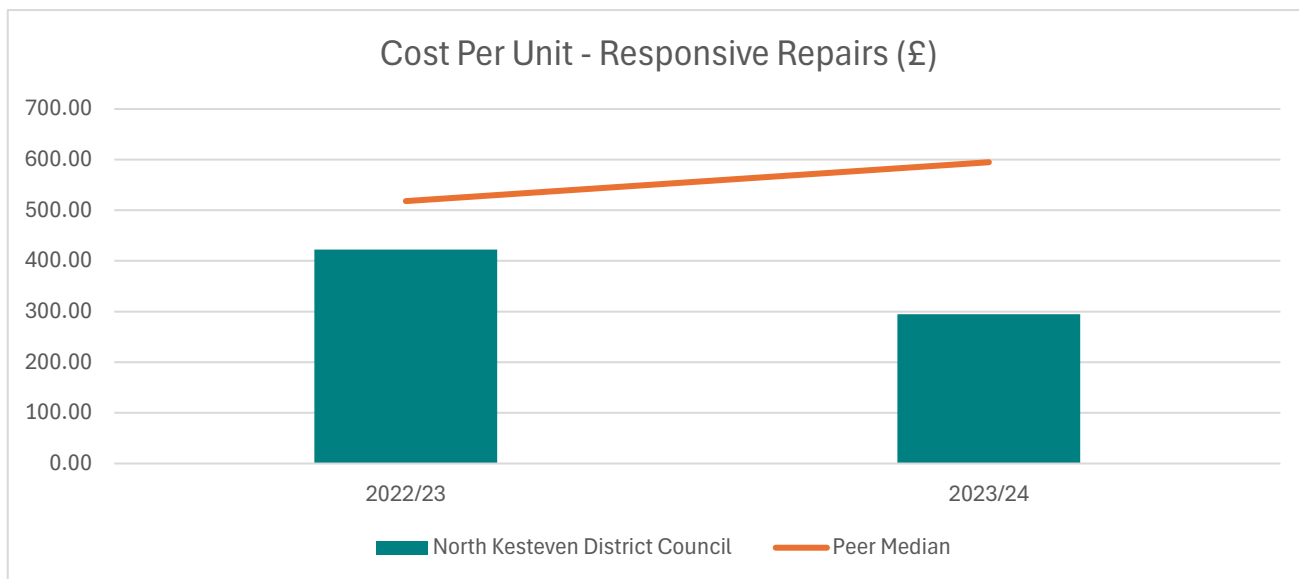
Housing management services – as defined by Housemark – include tenancy and leasehold management, rent arrears and collection, lettings, resident involvement and management of anti-social behaviour.



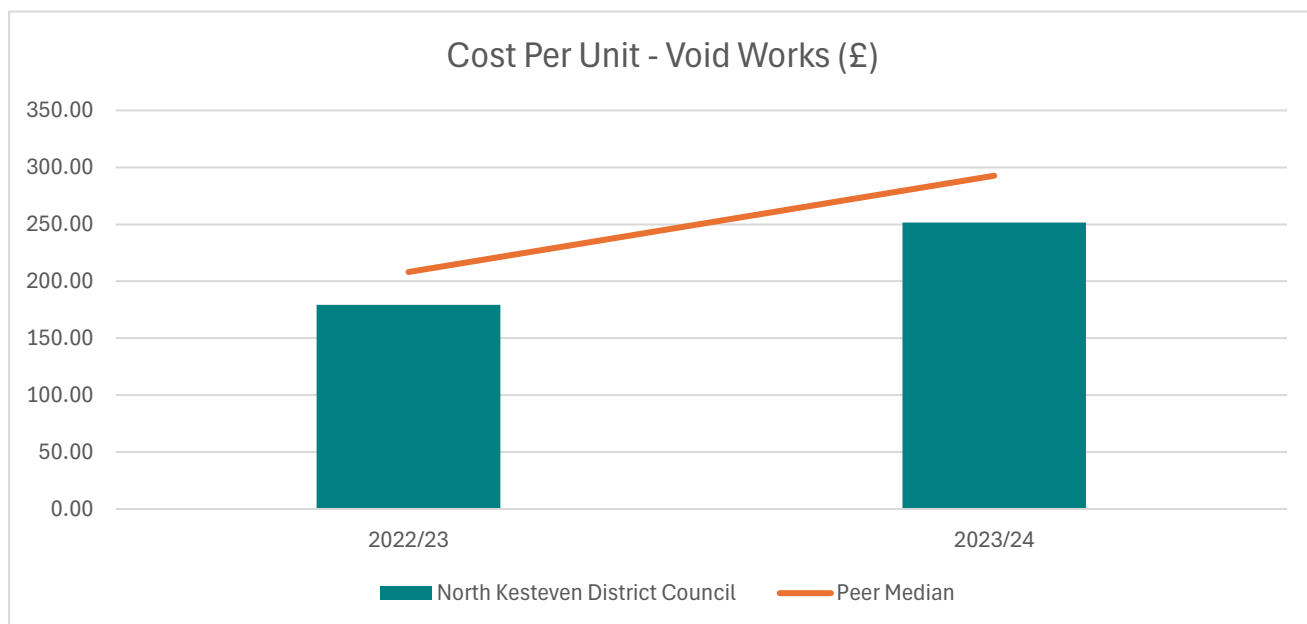
The cost of housing management services has generally compared extremely favourably over the period benchmarked; the cost per unit for North Kesteven is generally between 50% and 60% of the peer group median, and costs have remained relatively stable over the last two years.

Benchmarking Outcomes

- Total cost per property – Responsive repairs and void works



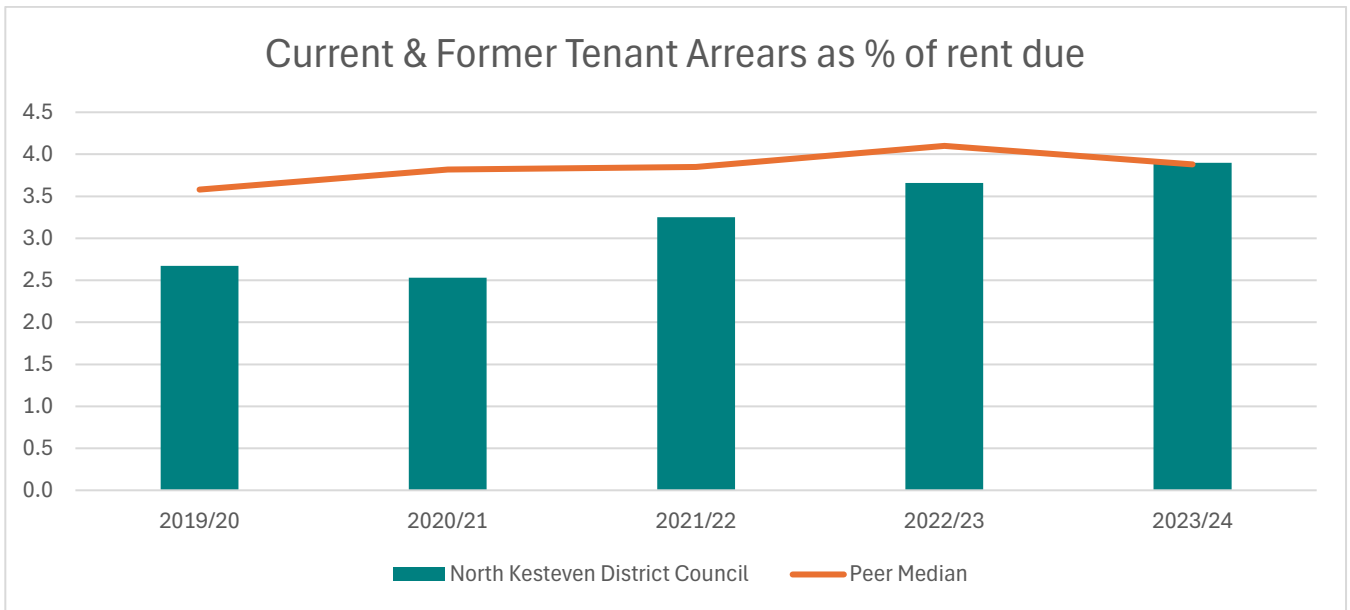
Similarly, the cost of responsive repairs and void works has also generally compared extremely favourably over the period benchmarked, and we remain below the peer median.



Benchmarking Outcomes

- Income – current & former tenant arrears as a % of rent due

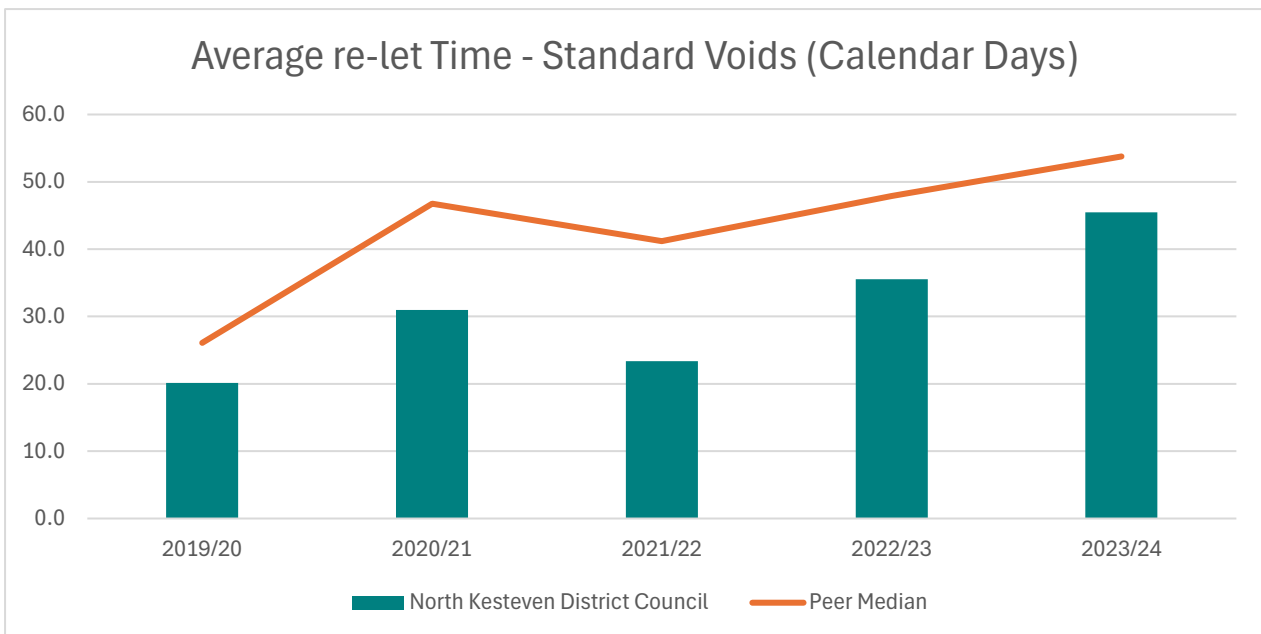
Performance of North Kesteven's tenancy and income management services has compared favourably over the period benchmarked, with rates of current tenant arrears significantly less than half of the peer group median until the last year.



Analysis undertaken shows that some of the increase is partially attributable to the various implications of welfare reform and rollout of Universal Credit from 2017/18, to which the authority responded through the initiatives detailed in the Housing Income Policy. The overall impact, however, has been significantly less than elsewhere, due to the lower starting position.

Benchmarking Outcomes

- **Average re-let time – standard voids (calendars days)**

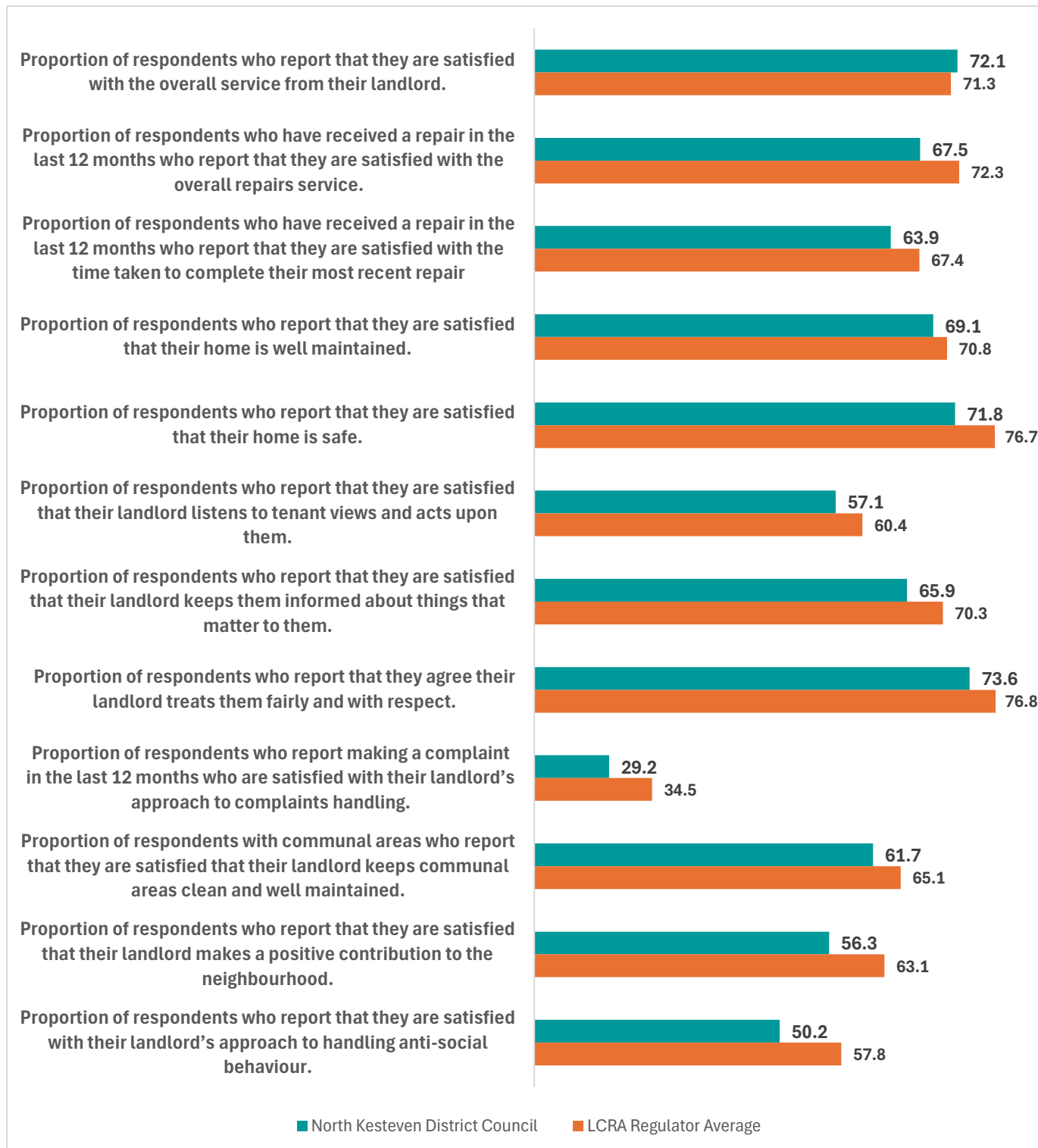


The average re-let time for standard voids remained consistently lower than the peer group for the period benchmarked, and is a key factor in our review for continuous improvement. Balancing the demands of time, cost and quality is recognised as an ongoing challenge. Performance in this area has been further compounded during 2024/2025 with the demobilisation of our former contractor and mobilisation of new contractor, whilst ensuring operational delivery of a responsive repairs service.

Benchmarking Outcomes

- Tenant satisfaction – Tenant satisfaction Measures

In 2023, we undertook the required survey to capture Tenants Satisfaction Measures, as directed and defined by the Regulator of Social Housing. In November 2024, the Regulator shared summary findings from all the 2023/24 landlord submissions. Our results comparison to the Regulator's averages are set out below:



8.6.2 Using Benchmarking Data Effectively

Benchmarking outcomes are used to highlight areas where value for money could be improved, and commission service reviews to drive efficiencies. As part of service improvement activities, “best in class” housing providers are investigated to identify best practice and innovative approaches to common challenges.

Benchmarking outcomes are reported to tenants through the At Home magazine, the Annual Report to Tenants and through digital channels where available. Identifying additional ways to report timely and up to date performance and benchmarking outcomes enabled tenants to make informed judgements on the performance of their landlord. Opportunities for this form a key part of our Resident Engagement Strategy.

8.6.3 Service Reviews and Continuous Improvement

Housing and Property Services regularly review service provision in a variety of areas, to ensure they are of consistent quality and demonstrate value for money. Areas for review are identified through analysis of a variety of data, including tenant feedback, performance data and benchmarking outcomes.

When considering initiatives for service improvement, best practice is sought from a variety of credible sources, including exemplar housing providers identified through benchmarking, the CIH, and other leading housing sector organisations such as the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and the Housing Association Charitable Trust (HACT).

At the time of refreshing this document, we are working with tenant representatives to identify the key areas for review during 2025/2026. Currently highlighted is a review of the Resident Engagement Strategy following the 12 month trial of new menu of involvement during 2024/2025. The aim being to ensure we have sufficient and appropriate opportunities for tenants to be involved, scrutinise landlord delivery and performance, and influence decisions on matters affecting them, their homes and communities, therefore meeting the requirements of the Consumer Standard for Transparency, Influence and Accountability.

8.7 Key Challenges – Service Delivery & Performance

The key challenges arising from the Business Plan analysis set out in this chapter can be summarised as follows:

- **Data** - Implementation of the HPS Data Strategy
- **Resident Engagement** - Reviewing our Resident Engagement Strategy, improving opportunities to be heard, listened to and to influence decision making, standards and delivery
- **Effective and timely Framework** - Review of our HPS Performance Management Framework
- **Continuous Improvement** – demonstrated through our HPS Challenge Plan
- **Inclusivity** - Refreshing our approach to Equality and Diversity, using the Local Government Association Social Housing Equality Framework to establish a programme of, “Knowing our tenants”.

9 GOVERNANCE & TENANT INVOLVEMENT

The Council’s Constitution, sets out how it operates, how decisions are made, and the procedures in place that ensure the Council is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people; decisions with regard to the HRA Business Plan will be made in accordance with these arrangements.

The Council has two scrutiny committees, to scrutinise the decisions made by committees, act as a critical friend, review current and emerging policies and their contribution to the Council’s priorities, and challenge performance. Overview and scrutiny of the Council’s landlord services falls within the remit of the Communities and Economy Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Tenant scrutiny is facilitated through our current Resident Engagement Strategy’s Menu of Involvement, most notably through the Tenant Liaison Panel. The Panel considers wider tenant feedback in conjunction with opportunity to scrutinise on key strategic, policy, performance and operational delivery matters.

Additionally, the Executive Board Lead Member for Housing and Property Services meets regularly with senior managers of the service, for oversight and accountability.

The table below demonstrates our governance approach to the Council’s landlord services. Through the provision of open and timely information together with opportunities to scrutinise and influence we believe we demonstrate accountability.



9.1 Regulation

Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England was first published by the Homes and Communities Agency in 2012. Subject to several updates since its implementation, it contained a number of Regulatory Standards, classified as either Economic or Consumer. All registered providers of social housing must comply with the Consumer Standards; of the Economic Standards, only the Rent Standard applies to local authority registered providers, with the remainder applicable to private registered providers only. Each Standard confirms the outcomes that registered providers of social housing are expected to achieve, and the specific expectations of the regulator.

In 2018, responsibility for social housing regulation was transferred from the Homes and Communities Agency to the newly created Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The current regulatory regime at that time was largely reactive in relation to the Consumer Standards, with pro-active regulatory activities focused on the financial viability and governance of private registered providers.

Substantial changes to the regulatory regime, have been introduced with effect from 01/04/2024 as a result of the Social Housing (regulation) Act 2023. One of the most significant of these for local authorities is the shift from reactive to pro-active regulation of the Consumer Standards, which will see inspections of compliance with the applicable Regulatory Standards undertaken on a regular cycle. [LINK TO - RSH - Consumer Standards 2024](#)

9.1.1 Consumer Standards

The Council has, for its landlord functions, adopted a thorough evidence based monitoring of compliance with current 2024 Consumer Standards within CAMMS, the Councils performance management system.

The Outcomes of the Consumer Standards apply to all registered landlords including local authorities. They apply to the social housing that landlords provide and the tenants living in those homes. Alongside the Consumer Standards Code of Practice [LINK TO - RSH - Code of Practice](#), the current 2024 standards are:

- **Safety and Quality**
Focusing on asset management and the Decent Homes Standard
- **Neighbourhood and Community**
Focusing on work with others to ensure clean and safe community/communal spaces
- **Tenancy**
Focusing on lettings homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way
- **Transparency, Influence and Accountability** (inc TSMs)
Focusing on provision of information to make informed judgements on services provided, enabling opportunities to be heard and involved in decision making

It is anticipated that there is likely to be a further Consumer Standard linked to professionalism and capability, following recent sector consultation.

There is a clear requirement for landlords to make a self referral to the Regulator of Social Housing for any non-compliance with these Consumer Standards.

9.1.2 Economic Standards

There are three Economic Standards:

- Governance & Financial Viability Standard
- Value for Money Standard
- Rent Standard

The Rent Standard applies to all landlords registered with the Regulator of Social Housing, including Local Authorities. Whereas the Governance and Financial Viability Standard and Value for Money standard only applies to housing associations and other private registered providers.

9.2 Data Returns

Currently, the Council is required to complete one regulatory data return in order to comply with regulatory requirements, the Local Authority Data Return (LADR).

The LADR is an annual census conducted by the Regulator of Social Housing, and is required to be completed by all local authority registered providers of social housing in England. It is used by the Regulator to collect a range of data on stock and rent levels, and has replaced part of the Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS) statistical data return made annually to MHCLG.

Collation, verification and submission of the required data is coordinated by the Policy & Performance function within the Housing Regulatory Team, in collaboration with key colleagues across the service.

Table: Governance - HPS Summary of Statistical returns

Title	System	Frequency	Collection open	Collection deadline
CORE Form Returns Reconciliation	DELTA	Annual	Apr	Jun
Housemark Annual	HMrk	Annual	May	Aug
Disabled Facilities Grant)	DELTA	Annual	Oct	Nov
Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS)	DELTA	Annual	April	June
Rough Sleeping Snapshot	DELTA	Annual	Oct	Nov
Housemark monthly pulse	HMrk	Monthly	1st	15th
H-CLIC - Homelessness Case Level Information Collection	DLUHC	Quarterly	Jul, Oct, Jan, April	Jul, Oct, Jan, April
Quarterly housebuilding	DELTA	Quarterly	Oct	Oct
Local Authority Data Return (LADR)	NROSH	Annual	April	Jul
Complaints Handling Code	Ombudsman	Annual	Jun	Jun
Local Authority Housing Statistics (LAHS)	DELTA	Annual	May	Jun
Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM)	NROSH	Annual	May	June
Local Authority Data Return (LADR)	NROSH	Annual	May	Jun
Fire safety remediation survey (FSRS)	NROSH	Quarterly	Jan	Feb

9.3 Complaints

The Council has a corporate Customer Feedback Policy which has a two-stage process for dealing with complaints, but makes specific provision for complaints from tenants and relating to landlord services, including the Housing Ombudsman.

The Housing Ombudsman is a free, independent and impartial service set up by law to look at complaints about housing organisations registered with them, resolving disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social housing providers, and voluntary members (landlords in the private sector); registration is mandatory for local authority and private registered providers of social housing.

The Council undertakes a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code and publishes the results as required. Housing and Property Services has developed, in 2024, a clear compliance monitoring arrangement with CAMMS, performance management system, to demonstrate an evidence based approach to compliance with the Housing Ombudsman code.

Our self assessments are available on the corporate website [LINK TO - NKDC Website - complaints self assessments.](#)

During 2023/2024 and into 2024/2025 we experienced an increase in the number of complaints received and the number of issues being upheld. Whilst themes remain across landlord service delivery, the significant proportion was in relation to our repairs service. We recognise this was during the demobilisation of our former contractor and mobilisation of our new contractor, but also that there were underlying issues relating to general communication and record keeping. Whilst understanding there is some way to go to demonstrate improvement is embedded, the development of the HPS Customer Service and Communication Standard in 2024 seeks to ensure clear expectations across our colleagues and contractors.

9.4 Risk Management

A risk is a future event (or series of events) which has the potential to impact on the Council's objectives, either at strategic or service level. Risk management is a systematic process whereby organisations identify, evaluate, respond to and monitor the risks attached to their activities. The Council has a dedicated corporate risk management system in place, to facilitate a consistent approach to risk.

9.4.1 Internal Audit

As part of the Councils Combined Assurance model, we work with managers, third parties and internal audit to manage the risks from our operations. We work with Assurance Lincolnshire to establish an assurance framework for risk management, control and compliance.

9.4.2 Risk Register

A risk register has been produced to assess the risks associated with factors and activities relating to this Business Plan and with consideration to the published Sector Risk Profile [LINK TO - RSH - Sector risk profile](#). The risk register will continue to be monitored, updated and evaluated to ensure the Housing and Property service is able to mitigate the impact of future risk.

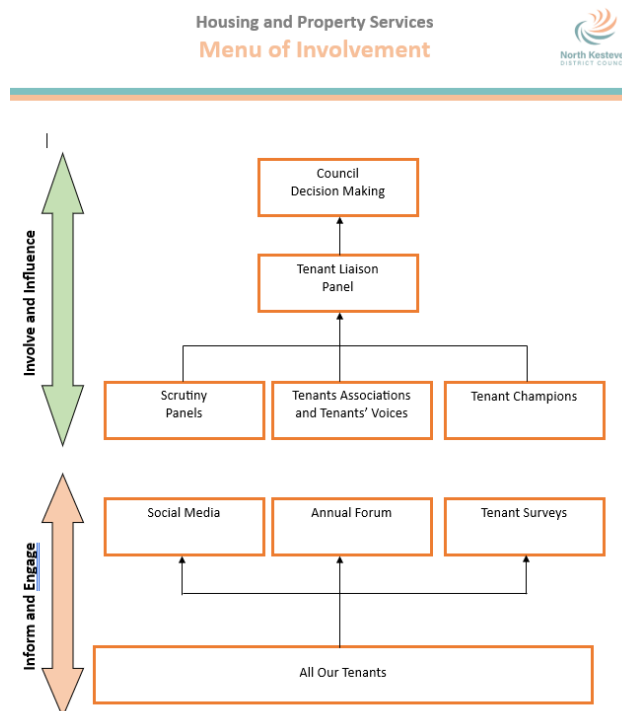
9.5 Resident Engagement, Involvement & Scrutiny

The Council provides different ways for tenants to be involved in decision making and service design, outlined below. In order to maximise the opportunities for resident involvement and scrutiny and ensure the opportunities provided meet the various needs of tenants, the Council's approach to resident involvement and scrutiny will be included in the scope of the wider review of resident engagement, identified in Section 8.4.

The Tenant Liaison Panel is an advisory part of the Council's decision making process, giving tenants a voice with which to promote their interests, in partnership with the Council as their landlord.

The Panel meets regularly – a minimum of four times per year – and is intended to give tenant representatives an opportunity to discuss matters affecting their homes and local environment with officers of the Council and elected members, influencing decisions prior to debate at other Council Committees.

The Panel is a partnership of all tenant representatives and five nominated Councillors, with formal administrative support from the Democratic Services team. Chairing of the Panel is shared, alternating between a Councillor and a tenant representative on a two year cycle; when the Chair is a Councillor, the Vice Chair will be a tenant representative, and vice versa.



9.6 Key Challenges - Governance and Resident Involvement

The key challenges arising from this section of the Business Plan analysis is summarised as follows:

- **Regulatory Compliance** - ensuring continued compliance with the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing, using regular self-assessment against applicable standards to inform service planning and development;
- **Complaints** - Ensuring that the Complaints handling process aligns with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, further developing the internal mechanisms for both specific customer feedback and Housing Ombudsman best practice reports to inform delivery of services;
- **Resident Engagement** – to review the current Resident Engagement Strategy as a result of evaluation of the pilot menu of involvement during 2024 to ensure appropriate opportunities for tenants to be informed, involved and engaged on our performance and service deliver with effective opportunities to scrutinise and influence standards and decision making.

Summary actions to address these challenges are incorporated within the Delivery Plan

10 MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVIEW

The Council has in place an established annual financial and service planning cycle. This sets the process for refreshing corporate priorities, aligning budgets, undertaking corporate and service planning activities and reporting against progress, with ongoing engagement with the community, partners and staff taking place throughout. The monitoring and refreshing of the HRA Business Plan is integrated into this process and the associated HRA action plans, performance indicators and risks will be updated accordingly.

10.1 Reporting

It is important that progress on the Delivery Plan and achievements against performance targets are monitored throughout the year, as incorporated within the annual Service Delivery Plan. The Financial Plan and risks associated with the HRA Business Plan must also be kept under review, this is done through established channels including:

- Budget and Contract Stock Group – HPS Managers and Finance Colleagues consideration of current and projected spends/savings against contracts in place
- HPS Departmental Management Team – progress with key tasks within Delivery Plan, and any barriers to those identified actions
- Tenant Liaison Panel – progress, planned consultation and identifying tenants priorities
- Executive Board – through quarterly reports on the corporate Financial Plan and performance management, annual HPS Assurance Report and Challenge Plan

10.2 Monitoring of Delivery Plan

Throughout this Business Plan we have identified the key challenges for our core areas of service delivery. These can be summarised as follows:

Challenge 1 - Maximising income

- whilst continuing to adapt to welfare reform and providing appropriate support for tenants and residents experiencing where needed

Challenge 2 - Maintaining quality homes and neighbourhoods

- that are safe and secure to live in whilst acknowledging the anticipated revisions to the governments definition of Decent Homes 2 remains unknown

Challenge 3 - Meeting Housing Needs

- ensuring homes are affordable and meets the current and future needs of our tenants, through making best use of our existing stock and delivery of new homes/acquisitions

Challenge 4 - Responding to the Climate Emergency

- Improving the energy efficiency of homes and the contribution of wider estate improvements, working towards net zero carbon emissions by 2030

Challenge 5 - Regulatory Compliance

- underpinning all our functions and service delivery, through a robust performance framework providing information, opportunity to scrutinise and influence

The actions to be undertaken to address these challenges are set out in our Delivery Plan 2024/2025 – 2025/2026. The Delivery Plan will be monitored through the Housing and Property Services Departmental Management Team to ensure timely progress, and the Council’s Tenant Liaison Panel to ensure tenants are informed and have the opportunity to scrutinise progress and influence actual delivery.

At the time of this document being refreshed there are a number of “unknowns” that may have a significant impact on our service delivery, financial plans and investment programmes, these include but are not limited to:

- Governments revised definition of the Decent Homes Standard (DH2)
- Rent Policy – currently subject to consultation (Dec 2024)
- Right to Buy Eligibility - currently subject to consultation (Dec 2024)
- Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards revisions to include an additional standard on professionalism and conduct
- Review of our Resident Engagement Strategy

The outcome of these current “unknowns” are anticipated during 2025/2026. This document will therefore be reviewed during that period, with a revised HRA Business Plan being drafted in 2026/2027, following full tenant consultation, hence the relatively short term delivery plan.

10.3 Review

During 2025/2026 it is intended to fully review the HRA Business Plan to enable longer term financial viability, at that time full tenant consultation will be undertaken seeking tenant’s views on our long term service delivery and investment plans. From which it is anticipated to develop a new HRA Business Plan during 2026/2027.

From the development of a new HRA Business Plan during 2026/2027, the operating account, Financial Plan, will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure it is accurate. The Business Plan itself will be reviewed in accordance with our corporate strategy and policy governance framework on a 3 yearly basis, unless significant changes to the operating environment require an earlier review.

Minor matter of fact amendments will be undertake as required by the Assistant Director of Housing and Property Services.



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

District Council Offices, Kesteven Street, Sleaford, Lincolnshire NG34 7EF
Telephone Number: (01529) 414155
180912-JA2