

**FLINTSHIRE
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT:
ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN AND
30 YEAR FINANCIAL FORECASTS
2020- 2021**

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1 FOREWORD

We are pleased to present our latest Annual Business Plan for 2020/21 and 30 year financial forecasts for the Housing Revenue Account. The plan includes our key priorities for the forthcoming year as well as progress against our action plan to date. We believe we are making good progress to deliver an efficient and effective service to our tenants. We are looking to undertake a Customer Survey this year so we can better understand where we need to focus our resources to deliver the excellent service our tenants expect.

The Council continues to value the principle that a good quality home is at the heart of individual and community well-being and is committed to enabling the provision of appropriate and affordable homes, particularly for those in the greatest need.

Some of our successes to date include the delivery of 114 new Council homes through our Strategic Housing and Regeneration Programme (SHARP). The whole SHARP new build scheme aims to deliver 500 new social and affordable homes by 2020/21 whilst providing new jobs and training opportunities for local people, as well as much needed new homes.

In addition, we have exceeded our delivery targets for the Welsh Housing Quality Standards (WHQS), improving our stock and providing quality homes for our residents, through the installation of new kitchens, bathrooms and roofs, and improving the local environment. We are on schedule to complete the WHQS programme by 2020.

This annual business plan sets out our ambition and priorities for the forthcoming year and provides the basis for the lifetime of the plan including: growing the housing stock by a minimum 1,500 over the lifetime of the plan; maintaining, sustaining and building on the improvements delivered through WHQS investment; and to be in the top quartile for performance and quality of service delivery in Wales.

Cllr Dave Hughes
Cabinet Member for Housing

Neal Cockerton
Chief Officer for Housing and Assets

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Annual Business Plan sets out Flintshire County Council's annual review and 30 year financial plan for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The narrative provides an overview of the current position, outlining our achievements, as well as setting out an action plan to deliver continuous improvements in our services. The business plan also sets out a financial forecast for the next 30 years.

The Flintshire HRA housing service aims to: *Ensure its residents have access to appropriate and affordable homes, through ensuring the supply of affordable and quality council housing of all types.*

The HRA service currently manages a portfolio of 7,271 properties (end of December 2019).

A priority is to continue to grow our housing stock by a minimum of 1,500 additional homes over the lifetime of the plan. This will be achieved through new build and strategic acquisitions, and is intended to meet the emerging and changing needs of Flintshire's population and the challenges we face through increased numbers of people on the housing register and a shrinking private sector rental market. The scale, type and tenure of housing delivery will be led and informed by the intelligence of demand and the profile of those on the housing register, Single Access Route to Housing (SARTH), as well as importantly through the County's new Housing Strategy and Action Plan (2019-2024), which identifies the current and emerging housing needs. We are continuing with the strategic acquisition programme, where we have purchased five previous right to buy properties to meet a specific need, and our new build programme has delivered a further 114 new build properties through SHARP to date.

A further priority has been to maintain, sustain and build on the improvements delivered through the WHQS programme, particularly to improve the energy efficiency of our homes. We aim to continue to improve our asset base, while developing an understanding of what measures can be implemented to ensure our current assets achieve a high energy rating whilst remaining comfortable for our tenants. We must also ensure the high standard of our asset base is maintained. As part of this process we intend to conduct an up to date housing stock survey to provide a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of our housing stock to enable us to prioritise activity.

The service is committed to the continuous improvement of its overall performance, particularly in relation to service delivery, and while this business plan identifies some significant performance improvements, the longer term objective and priority is to be in the top quartile for performance and quality of service delivery in Wales. To achieve this we recognise the need to ensure that intelligence is being gathered in a way which can be effectively and efficiently interrogated and analysed to inform methods of delivery, robust reporting and benchmarking. Following the implementation of the Mobyssoft software, further analysis of rent arrears will be carried out to identify trends and support tenants in reducing rent arrears. We have made developments in the responsive repairs service and have improved this area with the implementation of technical devices which assist the department to provide an effective and efficient service to tenants to ensure value for money and further efficiencies are achieved.

Our Housing and Neighbourhood Management Teams work on dedicated 'patch' areas, delivering improved customer service across Flintshire; and we have been working in partnership with other teams in the Council to provide support for our tenants who are facing financial issues and who are, as a result, in arrears with their rent. This proactive approach has provided early support, assisting tenants in resolving their financial issues and where possible preventing them from losing their home. Our priority is to develop a better understanding of our tenants needs and we are looking to undertake a customer survey, the results of which, will focus on and inform our priorities for future years.

Other strategic priorities for our services in 2020/21 include further work on understanding our stock and analysis of its best use, this will include:

- an update of the Sheltered Housing Review to include more analysis of sites;
- the development of a new voids policy; and
- adopt a collaborative approach to plan for the increase in demand for adaptations in properties to allow tenants to remain in their home longer.

Summary of achievements



We have built over 114 new Council homes upto December 2019



We are building a further 35 new Council homes this year



We have supported a total of 56 apprenticeships through WHQS and SHARP



We have let 568 Flintshire Council homes



Flintshire Council manages 7,271 properties



We continue to achieve 96% customer satisfaction for the WHQS programme



7,000 WHQS compliant kitchens delivered



7,000 WHQS compliant bathrooms delivered



5,500 WHQS compliant roofs and associated components delivered



All urgent repairs were responded to within 4 days of being reported



We continue to achieve an average of 99.92% gas maintenance

Flintshire County Council's housing service sits within the wider context of the Council Plan and the Well-being and Future Generations Act.

3.1 The Council Plan (2017 – 2023) Strategic Priorities

Flintshire County Council has identified housing as a key strategic priority as set out in the Council Plan for 2017 - 2023, ensuring its residents have access to:

- Appropriate and affordable homes, through ensuring the supply of affordable and quality council housing of all tenures; and
- Modern, efficient and adapted homes, through ensuring the supply of affordable and quality housing of all tenures.

The Council's aim is to:

- Prevent homelessness
- Meet the diverse housing and accommodation needs of the local population
- Develop more opportunities for people to access affordable rent and low cost home ownership
- Build the maximum number of Council houses possible as part of the housing supply solution
- Meet the Welsh Government target for all social housing to be brought up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS).

In order to achieve the aims and priorities:

- We need to be able to access grant funding to support new build affordable and social housing;
- There needs to be sufficient resources to fulfil the duties of the Wales Housing Act;
- Revised capital limits on borrowing for councils to build new houses;
- Maintaining of the funding of Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) so that the Council can meet the WHQS by 2020; and
- Maintaining a rent policy which allows the Council to achieve WHQS by 2020.

3.2 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The seven goals set out in the Well-being for Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 has informed the development of the Housing strategy, by ensuring that we consider how we work better with people, communities and other organisations, as well as looking at how we prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach in delivery of the strategy.

A prosperous Wales - An innovative, productive and low carbon society which recognizes the limits of the global environment and therefore uses resources efficiently and proportionately (including acting on climate change); and which develops a skilled and well-educated population in an economy which generates wealth and provides employment opportunities, allowing people to take advantage of the wealth generated through securing decent work.

A resilient Wales - A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change).

A healthier Wales - A society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

A more equal Wales - A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic background and circumstances).

A Wales of cohesive communities - Attractive, viable, safe and well-connected communities.

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language - A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.

A globally responsible Wales - A nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being.

3.3 Welfare Reform

Welfare reform has meant that Universal Credit (UC) has been rolled out in Flintshire, resulting in a cap on income from benefit which families and individuals can receive; ending housing benefit and direct payment to landlords; and limiting the amount of housing benefit for working age tenants.

A significant risk to the Business Plan is the collection of rent income as the tenant's income reduces or when they are expected to take ownership and manage budgets directly. Following the roll out of Universal Credit, the Council's Housing Service has experienced an increase in rent arrears, partly due to delays in the initial UC payments to tenants.

3.4 Housing Strategy

The Flintshire Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2019-2024 has been developed and identifies three priorities:

- Priority 1: Increase supply to provide the right type of homes in the right location;
- Priority 2: Provide support to ensure people live and remain in the right type of home;
- Priority 3: Improve the quality and sustainability of our homes.

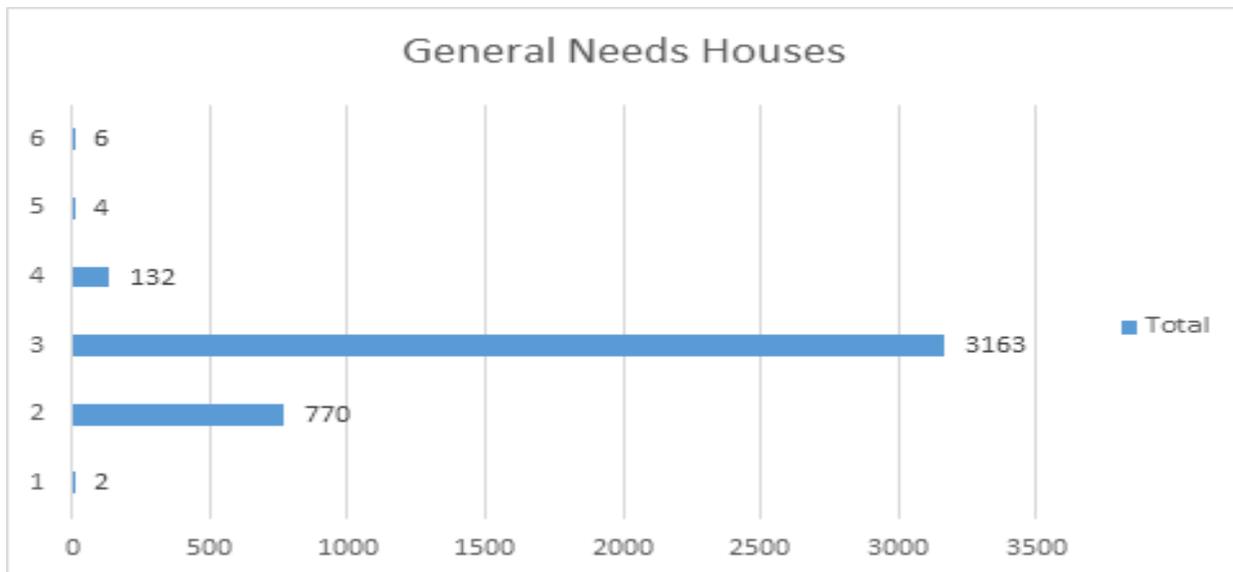
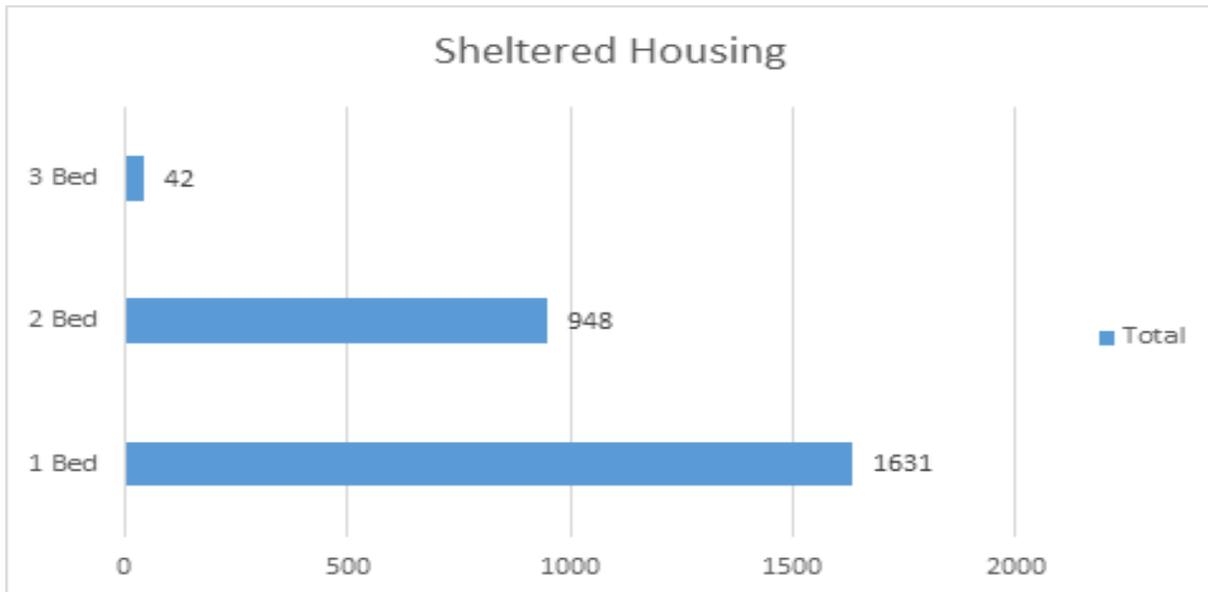
3.5 Housing need and supply

The demand for housing comes from all areas of our society including the under 35s; the 'squeezed middle' who can't afford to buy but are not eligible for social rented properties; and also the over 65's. Changing demographics, economic growth and changes in Government policies, such as Welfare Reform, all have an impact on Flintshire and its housing market.

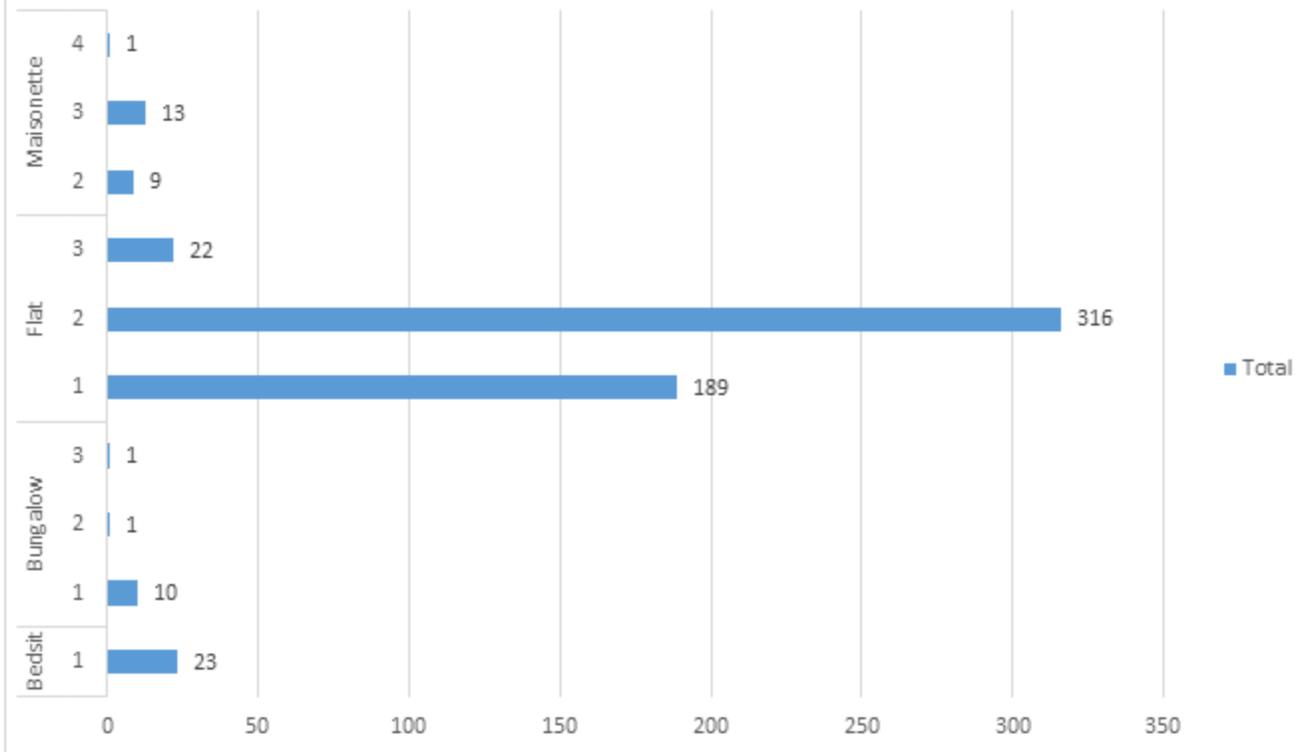
The design and location of some Council properties has resulted in low demand which, from a financial perspective, incurs costs for the council through rent loss. However, the demand for social housing exceeds the available supply, reducing risk to the HRA of not being able to allocate their properties. However, the issue is availability of the right type of social housing to meet the needs of those on the housing waiting list, in particular single households.

Critically, going forward, up to date and accurate intelligence will help to inform how the supply can meet the demand and reduce the financial risk of rent loss. Initial analysis of the current waiting list shows significant demand for smaller one bed accommodation to meet the housing requirements of single people and couples.

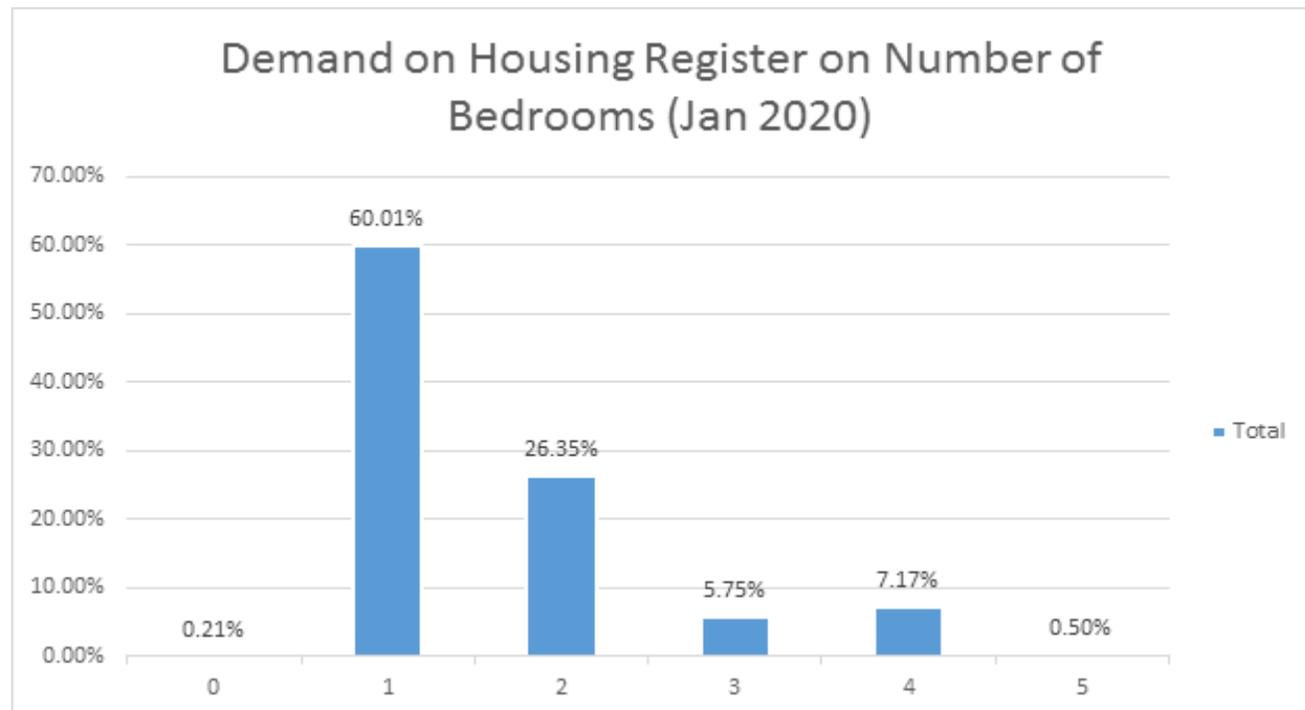
Breakdown of Flintshire County Council HRA Housing Stock (January 2020)



General Needs Flats and Bungalows

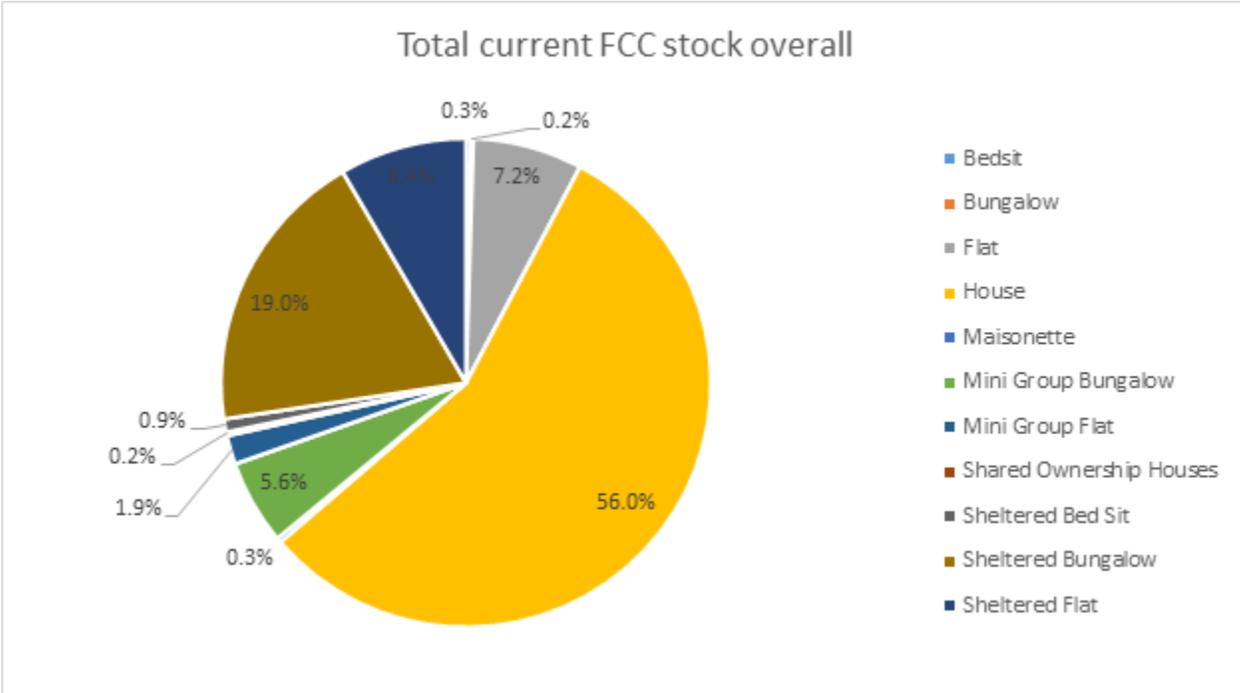


Demand on Housing Register on Number of Bedrooms (Jan 2020)



As at January 2020 there are 1,408 households registered on the Single Access Register to Housing (SARTH), which is a reduction in demand compared to 2019/20 of approximately 100.

The Council is aware that the current stock will not meet the demands of smaller one bedroom households, so building our understanding of the short to medium term demand for general needs, the Council is taking a strategic approach to meeting this demand through a combination of new build; strategic acquisitions; and realigning existing stock.



4.1 Strategic priorities

Older persons –sheltered accommodation

Over a year ago a desk based analysis was carried out on the council's sheltered housing stock. This included pulling together information on void loss, demand, property size and location. An in-depth Officer review was undertaken in 2019, the scope of which included:

Stage 1: A scheme by scheme review to ascertain:

- Analysis of property types and current use;
- Void rates - developing detailed understanding of reasons for turnover;
- Developing a series of options for individual schemes with the aim of reducing void rates and ensuring best use of stock;
- Produce recommendations for the Council to adopt on a scheme by scheme basis.

Stage 2: Assess best use of the stock where there are issues identified in stage 1:

- The review of those properties should identify the best use of the stock including whether they should be general needs or consider if they could be used to assist with delayed transfer from care / hospital and reduce costs to the Council and other stake holders.
- Consider whether it would be efficient to invest capital expenditure to make them fit for purpose for the future, for example:
 - Installation of Stair Lifts might be a cost effective solution to avoid the need for tenants in upper flats to move to a more accessible property.
 - Technology and training to enable internet shopping and other local deliveries, may be useful in supporting those who live in rural areas.
- Consider whether bedsit accommodation can best meet changing housing demand and expectations including the reduced demand from older people for this type of accommodation, and an increased demand for single person accommodation.

Underpinning both stages of the review, we will need to ensure we are being efficient in the use of our stock, and that it provides a series of recommendations for Cabinet to consider within the context of best use of the stock and its changing demand profiles.

Condition of stock

We aim to continue to improve our asset base, while developing an understanding of the issues of our existing range of improvement offers and installation or component lifecycles. As part of this process we intend to refresh our housing stock survey to provide a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of our housing stock so as to enable us to prioritise activity in a more targeted way. This will be a priority for 2020/21 as this will assist in informing the delivery of the ongoing cyclical maintenance programmes.

Customer Involvement

Previously the HRA developed a Customer Involvement Strategy and Action Plan to underpin the delivery of the Housing Service to ensure full customer involvement in all that it delivers, as such:

The aim of the strategy and action plan (2018-2021) is to support the involvement of our customers in the development of effective, efficient and quality housing services.

The strategy sets out our commitment to involve our customers in a meaningful and effective way identifying its key aims as:

- Ensure that customers are provided with a range of involvement opportunities.

- Provide customers with training and development opportunities to support their involvement.
- Ensure that customer involvement is considered a mainstream feature in all our service delivery activities.
- Encourage mutual trust, respect and partnership between customers and Flintshire County Council's Housing Service to ensure we have effective customer feedback.
- Work in partnership with other agencies and organisations to improve the communities in which our customers live, work and play.

To underpin these aims we are focusing on engaging and supporting (through training and information) our tenants by;

- Providing more opportunities for tenants to engage, particularly through the development of local arrangements.
- Helping tenants to resolve issues that affect them and help us ensure that we retain high levels of satisfaction in the quality of our services we deliver.
- Improving and extending the range of communication options to ensure our tenants are informed, engaged and have the opportunity to challenge.
- Developing training programmes which encourage participation and involvement in the development of resilient communities.

The action plan will be reviewed on a quarterly basis which will act as a challenge back to ask if we have achieved what we said we would do and to gauge what impact these actions are having on the delivery of services to our tenants.

Customer satisfaction

The overall service performance identifies areas of positive service delivery as well as areas for improvement, including capturing customer feedback, compliments and complaints, particularly in relation to the allocation and move in element of the service. Progress has been made on implementing the following actions but work will continue this year.

- Sourcing an independent company to undertake follow-up satisfaction surveys based on service delivered through regular surveys;
- Joining up the IT and delivering a digital solution using apps to capture feedback – this may require some up front work with tenants to ensure they use the service but it aligns with the Council's digitalisation strategy going forward;
- Reviewing resource management and ensuring ***we get it right first time***;
- Undertake the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR survey) to benchmark customer satisfaction; and,
- Use APSE to benchmark our performance and customer satisfaction.

Stores

The service has secured a contract with Travis Perkins to provide stock through bulk supply and has been closely monitored this year. The contract enables the HRA to ensure best value for the top 500 stock items through a transparent process where the HRA can benchmark and challenge prices through reviewing the high spend and high volume products and test the market when needed.

Fleet Monitoring

A corporate contract to supply fleet has been secured through GoPlant. This service is intended to achieve targeted efficiencies, including savings on mileage and fuel. Vehicles are tracked and reports produced for Team Leaders on mileage, fuel consumption and driving behaviours. This provides a

'demand plan' for the usage of the vehicles and enables the team leaders to manage the impact of the costs of the fleet.

4.2 New build programme (SHARP)

The following table provides an overview of the delivery of new Council homes to date in Flintshire.

Site	Property type	Number of units
Custom House, Connah's Quay	2 Bed House	8
	3 Bed House	4
Total units delivered 2016/17		12
The Walks, Flint	1Bed Apartment	4
	2 Bed Apartment	2
	2 Bed House	18
	3 Bed House	6
Redhall, Connah's Quay	2 Bed House	5
Maes y Meillion and Heol Y Goron, Leeswood	2 Bed apartments	4
	2 Bed bungalows	4
	2 Bed House	2
	3 Bed House	3
Ysgol Delyn, Mold	2 Bed House	10
	3 Bed House	6
Total units delivered 2017/18		64
Melrose, Shotton	1 Bed Apartment	2
	2 Bed Apartment	2
	2 Bed House	5
The Dairy, Connah's Quay	2 Bed House	3
	3 Bed House	3
Total units delivered 2018/19		15
Llys Dewi, Penyffordd	2 Bed House	16
	3 Bed House	7
Total units delivered 2019/20		23
Total units delivered under SHARP		114

The schemes below are on course to be completed before the end of the 2019/20 financial year:

Site	Property type	Number of units
St Andrews, Garden City (modular build) (Anticipated to be completed by end of March 2020)	1 Bed Apartment	5
	2 Bed Apartment	7
Dobshill (Anticipated to be completed by end of March 2020)	1 Bed Apartment	4
	2 Bed Apartment	4
	3 Bed House	4
	4 Bed House	1
	2 Bed Bungalow	2
Total units due to complete in 2019/20		27

A further four properties in Sychdyn will be transferred into the HRA stock by the end of March 2020. This will be at nil cost to the Council.

The following schemes at Nant y Gro and Maes Gwern have been approved by Cabinet and work will continue during 2020/21.

Site	Number of units
Nant y Gro, Gronant	37
Maes Gwern, Mold	8
Total	45

The Council is currently in the process of undertaking detailed site feasibility works on a number of additional sites for inclusion in the next tranche for development. These sites will be presented for Council approval during 2020/21.

4.3 Capital Programme - WHQS

The HRA has a six year rolling programme of works, which commenced in 2015/16, and is let to selected contractors. The work is arranged geographically, each district receiving a programme of work every year. The Council resources assigned to delivering WHQS are approximately 30 members of staff within the Capital Works Team, and other team members have been identified to help facilitate delivery, such as System Auditors, Tenant Liaison Officers, Surveyors, Inspectors and Modern Apprentices.

The programme internals includes kitchens, bathrooms and central heating, while the envelope works includes roofing, windows and doors. The following are the compliance guidance on installation:

- Electrical installations brought up to WHQS standards when renewed at the end of their economic life.
- Timber fascia's renewed with uPVC at the end of their economic life, unless forming part of wider project such as whole house approach.

- Timber doors renewed with uPVC at the end of their economic life, unless forming part of wider project such as whole house approach.
- Timber windows renewed with uPVC at the end of their economic life, unless forming part of wider project such as whole house approach.
- Kitchens that are over 15 years old and in poor condition are renewed as part of this approach. When renewed, kitchens will be upgraded to meet all requirements of the WHQS.
- Bathrooms without showers are upgraded when the current bathroom reaches the end of its economic life; or as part of a Capital Works Internal project; or 'Major Void' works.

More broadly, Flintshire County Council has been successful with a bid for energy efficiency funding for delivery in future years and has been awarded £2.7 million from the Affordable Warmth Solutions (National Grid) Warm Homes Fund to install central heating systems and energy efficiency measures in up to 500 properties across Flintshire and to provide broader energy and health assistance across North Wales.

Table A: Performance targets WHQS

	Year	Internal work Target	Envelope Target
1	2015/16	1,457	317
2	2016/17	1,398	209
3	2017/18	1,488	658
4	2018/19	389	860
5	2019/20	500	1,187
6	2020/21	500	969

So that we could successfully deliver Year 5 of the Capital Works Programme, we have completed the process of comparing various framework providers to ascertain which would be best suited for the individual work streams. We reviewed each of the Framework Provider's:

- costs;
- the sub-contractors on their lists; and
- references for past projects.

From this exercise we will now be able to tender and procure the best suited contractors to assist us to deliver this element of the WHQS Capital Programme with the aim of delivering efficiencies against costs and resource requirements.

Customer satisfaction

WHQS are currently achieving an average of 96% customer satisfaction. Each contractor is scored from 10 questions, which maps the tenant's journey through the upgrade works and scores key elements which allows us to identify any weaknesses or risks and to action accordingly. The tenant satisfaction survey is completed by the Council's Tenant Liaison Officers in a face-to-face informal interview, asking for honest feedback that can help the team and service to improve. Some tenants prefer to complete the survey in their own time and can return it via Free Post or can have it collected. This important part of the process enables the team to gather key performance data that is used to correctly measure the contractors' customer focus onsite.

Asset Compliance

(i) Fire Safety

The HRA own and manage three purpose-built high rise blocks, designated as sheltered housing with stay put/ stay safe policy in the event of a fire. The three high rise blocks have been refurbished externally and we are proceeding with the internal works following our Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) plans. The

external envelope was insulated with a Thermoshell Rock System which is a rock mineral wool slab, which is classed as an inert material. This was directly fixed to the substrate and as a result no BRE testing was required. The windows and roof covering were also renewed.

The three high rise blocks have also benefited from a retro-fit Sprinkler System to all flats, plant rooms and common areas with the exception of the single stair case. We have completed a number of Fire Risk Assessments to the high rise blocks and are in the process of continuing to apply the same method to all of our low and mid-rise blocks.

(ii) Asbestos

We maintain compliance under the duty to manage Asbestos Regulations. We have reviewed our approach to information management and have implemented a new system with regards to surveying 100% of properties before any works commence to a Flintshire Standard Scope.

(iii) Legionella

The HRA have completed a number of Legionella Assessments with the process continuing until all risks have been captured across the housing stock. We have developed a monitoring regime in line with current regulations and from this all actions that are identified are programmed and addressed within stipulated time frames.

(iv) Radon

The HRA have recently developed a draft proposal that will identify risk associated to radon and will develop an action plan of remedial work to reduce the risks to an acceptable level.

4.4 Housing and Neighbourhood Management

The service provides a strategic and important link to addressing tenants' vulnerability through a proactive approach with other internal teams such as the Income Team and Supporting People; as well as with key partners including Housing Associations. This ensures a joined up approach with maximum impact, whilst delivering an effective approach efficiently. As part of the approach to addressing vulnerability, the Council has produced a policy to focus the approach with the following objectives:

- To identify tenants who require support in the management of their tenancy.
- To encourage and promote partnerships and multi-agency working with both internal and external agencies in assessing and meeting the support needs of tenants.
- To enable tenants to reduce instances of breached tenancies and subsequent court actions.
- To provide practical assistance and financial advice to tenants who need this service.
- To attempt to prevent tenancy failure and resulting homelessness.

By having an approach that recognises the needs of vulnerable people and provides the necessary levels of support this will enable tenants to be more able to meet their tenancy obligations. As a result, tenancies will be more sustainable and the instances of anti-social behaviour will be reduced. All tenancies are managed and operated within the framework of the Council's Tenancy Management Policy.

Service delivery

The service is delivered through the following teams: Neighbourhood team; New Customer team; Community Safety team; and Customer Engagement team, the roles are set out below. The teams are each broken down into six 'patch areas' and local action plans are in place for every patch.

(i) Neighbourhood Team

There are seven Neighbourhood Housing Officers that cover the six patch areas:

- Buckley
- Connahs Quay and Shotton
- Deeside and Saltney
- Flint
- Holywell
- Mold

Each Officer is designated to one of the six patch areas, with the seventh Neighbourhood Officer being used to provide additional floating support in areas that require intensive management intervention and support. They also provide flexibility and cover to help build the resilience of the team.

The designated neighbourhood areas are an increase from the previous Neighbourhood Officers patch size, however, this is a reflection of the change in the functions and the creation of a new customer team who will be responsible for the allocations and lettings. The role of the Neighbourhood Officer is more focused on providing a visible and accessible tenancy and estate management service. This includes dealing with low level anti-social behaviour cases with the tenancy enforcement team taking responsibility for high level and complex ASB cases.

Neighbourhood Officers are expected to work in an agile and flexible way providing a responsive and mobile service, which is visible and accessible to customers. This will include regular estate walkabouts, identifying resident's needs and wider community issues. Neighbourhood Officers will then use this customer insight and data to tailor services and develop effective neighbourhood plans to target resources and drive forward improvements.

The Caretaker/ Janitor role has been reviewed creating a handyperson service. This role will be used to support some of the Council more vulnerable customers, helping them to maintain their tenancy. The handyperson's service will also help support local community initiatives and projects helping to maintain clean, green and safe neighbourhoods.

(ii) New Customer Team

There are six New Customer Housing Officers within the team who are designated to one of the new patch areas and they will also be responsible for covering each other's areas.

The new customer team are responsible for ensuring the effective and efficient allocation for the letting of void properties and ensuring that pre-tenancy assessments are carried out and support identified to help minimise tenancy failures. They work closely with Housing Solutions and the Voids team to ensure a seamless delivery of the service working to ensure that empty properties are re-let in the most efficient and effective way. This includes adopting innovative and dynamic approaches to marketing and allocating vacant homes. The new customers team also lead on marketing the Council 'available to let' homes on the website.

(iii) Tenancy Enforcement Team

The three Community Housing Officers are each designated to two of the six patch areas and are responsible for dealing with high level and complex anti-social behaviour cases including any legal action. They are responsible for overseeing the management of cases and assisting with performance reporting. As well as being responsible for using a wide range of tools to prevent and tackle tenancy breaches including adopting a multiagency approach. The team are the lead contacts for Community Safety Partnership Meetings.

(iv) Customer Engagement

To lead on developing and delivering a comprehensive engagement programme and activities aimed at tenants and leaseholder, ensuring the events are delivered to a high standard, well attended, on time and within budget.

To maximise opportunities for resident involvement and influence and develop a range of activities, projects and initiatives to enable customers to engage with the Council's Housing service in order to influence policy decisions and service delivery at a local level.

4.5 Repairs and Maintenance

The service delivers all responsive repairs and maintenance, voids and adaptations with a team of 110 operatives, across the HRA stock. The service provided includes:

- Gas servicing;
- Electrical checks in line with legislative requirements;
- Cyclical maintenance including monthly lighting checks and fire alarm testing;
- Emergency 24 hours call out service;

The priorities for the service are:

- to improve the efficiency of the service through improved resource management;
- to support other areas of the service to become more efficient (i.e. void turn arounds); and
- to become more effective through new ways of working.

Service delivery

The service works within a Value for Money (VFM) framework, embedding the principles of economy, effectiveness and efficiency, whilst maintaining a good quality of service. Contractor spend is monitored closely on a monthly basis resulting in reduced costs and contractor spend being used for specialist or major works only.

There have been a number of improvements across a range of areas of the service including:

- Reducing the void time and speeding up the turn around, resulting in reduced rent loss for the service. This is achieved through operatives reporting any issues prior to the property becoming empty and completing any external work once the tenants have moved in.
- Successful delivery of the in-house gas service team, which is subject to audit checks and Gas Safe inspections in line with compliance.
- Implementation of legislative changes such as the new regulations for electrical installations and checks, BS 761 18th Edition and installation of carbon monoxide monitors, with the aim of positively managing any potential impact on the service.

Performance and standards

The headline response times for repairs are being exceeded as set out below.

Repair	Target	Performance achieved
Emergency	24 hours	2 hours
Urgent	7 days	4 days
Routine	28 days	14 days

4.6 Voids delivery

(i) Void inspections

The voids inspection service was reviewed to refocus the resource utilisation and the time it took for the inspection, ensuring a quicker inspection turn around. Subsequently, two skilled / trades employees were

appointed to solely undertake the void inspections, significantly improving the performance of the service. This was a previous paper based system which has been recently replaced with hand held devices.

(ii) Void clearance

The HRA has now sub-contracted clearance to a social enterprise 'Flintshire Refurbs', who employ two of the Council's tenants, providing employability skills and basic skills training whilst assisting them into further employment at the end of the contract.

(iii) Major and minor works

All of the minor works and some of the major is completed by the in-house team, including bathrooms and kitchens, where this is deemed to be efficient. A percentage of major works is currently subcontracted to local contractors.

4.7 Aids and Adaptations

The service has developed an Aids and Adaptations Policy which is a cross service policy and aims to align delivery across the Council. The purpose of the policy is to:

'support council tenants to be supported to obtain the best solutions for themselves and their carers as quickly as possible ensuring a fair and timely system for all. This may involve carrying out adaptations or being supported to look at alternative solutions to meet people's needs'.

The HRA will consider and adapt to the principles of the:

- Housing and Regeneration Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014
- Enable adaptations scheme 2016

whilst meeting its financial and overarching duties to all its citizens.

The HRA has a dedicated annual budget for aids and adaptations of £1.030m, which funds minor adaptations up to £1,000 and major adaptations up to £36,000 as per Welsh Government guidelines. The adaptations are delivered by a dedicated team of skilled trades people and an in-house Surveyor. Where the work is specialised, and if major then this work is supported by local contractors.

In addition, the Council works in partnership with its RSL partners and Social Services to capture and address the demand for specialist housing through the Specialist Housing Group, which is deemed as good practice by Welsh Government. The demand is met through both existing stock and the necessary DFG; an acquisition of a property which can be adapted by our partner RSLs; or through including a specifically designed and built property as part of the new build programme. This approach has resulted in people being housed in suitably adapted properties.

5 RESOURCE AND FINANCIAL REQUIREMENT

5.1 Rents

In December 2019, Welsh Government released the Minister for Housing and Regeneration's decision around the Welsh Government Rent Policy for commencement in 2020/21.

This Rent Policy has been set for 5 years and it has been made clear that the rent policy settlement is a maximum amount which can be charged and landlords should consider value for money (as an annual assessment of cost efficiencies) alongside affordability for tenants (taking into account the whole cost of living in a property) as part of their rationale for setting rents.

The Rent Policy for Social Housing Rents from 2020/21 agrees the following:

- An annual rent uplift of up to CPI+1%, for 5 years to 2024/25 using the level of CPI from the previous September each year. September 2019 was 1.7%.
- The level of rents for individual tenants can be reduced, frozen or rise by up to an additional £2 over and above CPI+1%, on condition that total rental income collected by the social landlord increases by no more than CPI+1% (2.7%).

The 2020/21 average rent band proposed by Welsh Government is shown in the table below. A maximum uplift of 2.7% (CPI plus 1%) would take the average rent paid in 2020/21 to £96.57 which is just above the low end of the target rent band.

	2020/21 Target Rent Band		
Average Rent	Low End	Mid-Point	High End
Flintshire	£ 95.82	£ 100.87	£ 105.91

For the purposes of the Business Plan an overall uplift of 1.7% to all tenants has been applied and, in addition, the transitional uplift of £2 has also been applied to tenants who are currently paying significantly under target rent. This ensures that no individual tenant will pay more than the maximum allowed under the policy but moves towards readdressing the disparity between those rents under and those at target rent and seeks to make rent charges to all tenants more equitable.

Anticipated Rental (including voids rent loss) and other income for the three year period 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2023/23 are shown in the table below:

Year	Net Rental Income	Other Income	Total Income
2020 – 2021	£35.094m	£ 1.611m	£ 36.705m
2021 – 2022	£36.330m	£ 1.690m	£ 38.020m
2022 – 2023	£37.700m	£ 1.709m	£ 39.409m

HRA Rents		No.		
Property Type	No. of Properties	Equal to / above Target Rent	Below Target Rent	
G1Bedsit	22	22	0	
G1bungalow	12	4	8	
G1Flat	160	156	4	
GNB1Apartment	6	6	0	
G1House	2	0	2	
G2Bungalow	3	1	2	
GNB2Bungalow	4	4	0	
G2Flat	307	290	17	
GNB2Apartment	8	7	1	
G2House	704	319	385	
GNB2House	68	57	11	
G2Maisonette	9	9	0	
G3Bungalow	4	3	1	
G3Flat	35	24	11	
G3Maisonette	1	1	0	
G3House	3,124	832	2,292	
GNB3House	28	23	5	
G4House	132	32	100	
G5House	4	2	2	
G6House	5	5	0	
M1Mini Group Bungalow	299	179	120	
M1Mini Group Flat	115	115	0	
M2Mini Group Bungalow	94	56	38	
M2Mini Group Flat	24	23	1	
M3Mini Group Bungalow	1	1	0	
S1Sheltered Bedsit	64	64	0	
S1Sheltered Bungalow	849	532	317	
S1Sheltered Flat	322	322	0	
S1Sheltered House	1	1	0	
S2Sheltered Bungalow	511	167	344	
S2Sheltered Flat	305	305	0	
S2Sheltered House	1	1	0	
S2Wardens Bungalow	3	3	0	
S2Wardens Flat	4	4	0	
S2Wardens House	1	0	1	
S3Sheltered Bungalow	2	1	1	
S3Wardens Bungalow	15	11	4	
S3Wardens Flat	1	1	0	
S3Wardens House	20	7	13	
S4Wardens Flat	1	1	0	
Total	7,271	3,591	3,680	49.4%

Note

G = General Need

S = Sheltered

SO = Shared Ownership

GNB = General Needs New Build

M = Mini Group (over 55s with no warden service)

The number equates to the number of bedrooms the property has for example a G3house is a general need 3 bed house.

The above chart shows the average transitional rents paid by Flintshire tenants, by property type, as at December 2019 and how they compare to target rents. Only those who are currently more than £2 below target rent will be subject to the £2 transitional rental increase in 2020/21. This will result in more tenants moving away from target rent, however it will allow Flintshire to work towards making rents equitable for all and addresses the issue raised by Welsh Government around affordability for tenants.

5.2 Empty Properties

Void rent loss is assumed in the business plan at 1.75% of rental income.

5.3 Service Charges

The rent and service charges policy was introduced in 2015 and expected all Local Housing Associations (LHA's) to be achieving full cost recovery for service charges, if this had not yet been achieved a clear transition plan should be identified to achieve this.

At 2019/20 the Council was at 70% service charge recovery for implemented charges, it is recommended that the increase in service charges to take the HRA to full cost recovery should be stepped over the next 2 years (2020/21 and 2021/22). Based on this proposal, the revised charges for 2020/21 would be:

Charge	19/20 Charge	20/21 Charge	Increase	Total income
Aerials	£ 1.20	£ 1.55	£ 0.35	£130,950
Cleaning	£ 3.77	£ 4.60	£ 0.83	£174,018
Laundry	£ 0.72	£ 0.79	£ 0.07	£29,424
Window Cleaning	£ 0.47	£ 0.75	£ 0.28	£17,075
Totals	£ 6.16	£ 7.69	£ 1.53	£351,466

5.4 Garage Rents

The proposed garage rent increase for 2020/21 is £1.22 per week which takes the garage rent per week to £9.83 (based on 52 weeks), the proposed garage plot increase is £0.20 per week taking the garage plot rent to £1.60 per week.

5.5 Proposed financial changes to the 2019/20 business plan

The table below lists the proposed changes to the funding of the 2020/21 business plan. This includes additional funding and any efficiencies identified since last year and revisions to HRA expenditure and any pressures which have arisen since last year.

Efficiencies/Use of one off funding

No	Section	Description	Recurring/ Non-recurring	2020/21 £m	Narrative
1	Estate Management/Repairs & Maintenance	Impact of Restructure	Recurring	(0.018)	Based on current proposals.
2	Estate Management	Reduction in bad debt provision	One-off	(0.037)	Reduce BDP % to 2.15% due to the introduction of software.
3	Landlord Services	Garden/Hedge Cutting	Recurring	(0.098)	New contractor, lower prices.
4	Management & Support	SLA Contributions	Recurring	(0.038)	Business Support/Contact Centre. Reduce contribution. £0.038m efficiency based on proposed contribution of £0.100m p.a. for Contact Centre.
5	Management & Support	Reduction of Health & Safety Officer	Recurring	(0.062)	Vacant post.
6	Management & Support	Finance SLA	Recurring	(0.044)	Reduction due to finance restructure.
7	Management & Support	Housemark	Recurring	(0.009)	Cancellation of subscription to Housemark.
		Total revisions to HRA Funding		(0.306)	

Cost Pressures

No	Section	Description	Recurring/ Non-recurring	2020/21 £m	Narrative
1	Other Income	Reduction in water commission	Recurring	0.060	Reduction in commission received for collecting Water rates.
2	Other Income	Stepped Service Charge Increase	One-off	0.072	Full cost recovery increase stepped over 2 years
3	Garage Rent	Garages demolished in 18/19	Recurring	0.028	74 Garages demolished since last year's plan
4	Estate Management	Income team restructure	Recurring	0.035	Additional Income Officer.
5	Estate Management	Tenancy Enforcement	Recurring	0.030	CCTV, target hardening and enforcement action
6	Landlord Services	Servicing Contracts review	Recurring	0.113	Additional costs of contracts.
7	Repairs and Maintenance	Insurance	Recurring	0.050	Repairs and legal costs.
8	Repairs and Maintenance	Apprentice Budgets	Recurring	0.066	6 budgeted for however pressure figure calculated based on 9 trainees on a rolling basis.
9	Salaries	Ongoing impact of pay award	Recurring	0.212	Second year impact of pay award.
		Total revisions to HRA Expenditure		0.666	

		Net Revenue Pressure 2020/21		0.360	
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5.6 Staff and associated costs

The business plan includes 220.78 established Positions (FTE) within the Housing Revenue Account (including the Capital Works Teams) in 2020/21.

5.7 Housing Asset Management

Housing Asset Management (HAM) includes Responsive repairs, voids, WHQS and cyclical works and Disabled adaptations. Total FTE's for HAM assumed in the plan are 167.5. The revenue budget for 2019/20 is £8.907m (£1,223 per tenancy).

5.8 Estate Management

Estate Management includes Rents, Anti-Social Behaviour, Tenant participation and Tenancy management services. Total FTE's assumed in the plan are 34.91. The planned budget is £1.882m.

5.9 Landlord Services

Landlord Services includes all costs associated with service charges and landlord costs for communal buildings. Total FTE's assumed in the plan for Landlord Services are 7.00. The planned budget is £1.433m.

5.10 Management & Support Services

Management & Support Services include Finance and cash collection, I.T, member services, HR and Training, Legal, Insurance, Buildings, admin and corporate management costs. The FTE's assumed on the plan for Management & Support Services are 11.38. The planned budget is £2.637m.

5.11 Capital Financing

Financial Year	New Build Programme	WHQS	Regeneration	Total Borrowing Costs	Closing HRA Debt
2020.21	£9.455m	£1.300m		£9.027m	£147.823m
2021.22	£1.957m		£1.342m	£9.364m	£148.165m
2022.23	£7.505m		£2.200m	£9.523m	£154.907m

The deed to terminate the voluntary agreement for the HRA borrowing cap was signed on the 2nd December 2019, it is therefore important that going forward, increased borrowing in the HRA is carefully managed and monitored to ensure that it is sustainable and affordable to the business plan. Work will be undertaken to develop a set of treasury KPI's for the HRA to enable transparent monitoring of this going forward.

The capital programme for 2020/21 is £30.464m of which £17.914m is allocated to achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, £1.104m to DFGs, £0.275m to Energy Efficiency and £11.171m to new builds.

6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Risk management plans have been developed for the WHQS programme and the SHARP new build programme, which are regularly monitored by the Housing and Regeneration programme board; the Scrutiny committee and the Council's Cabinet.

The risks below for the overall HRA is updated and monitored at the Housing and Regeneration Programme Board.

Ref	Description/Issue	Risk	Mitigation Act (MA) / Response Plan (RP)
1	MRA funding certainty - MRA is included within the HRA 30 year Business Plan at £5.0m per annum	MRA funding is only guaranteed year on year the risk is that MRA funding is not received	Ensure delivery of WHQS programme Fully complete Welsh Government MRA returns on a quarterly basis Lobby Welsh Government on need for MRA to continue to invest in the Housing stock Monitor and review at HRA Programme Board
2	Meeting the WHQS by 2020 - Delivering a significantly increased investment programme	Annual programme is not delivered to target Major supplier issues Contractor performance or contractor viability issues Loss of key staff Recruitment to delivery team Significant stock condition issues Tenant satisfaction falls	Effective contractor management Appoint sufficient resource in delivery team Develop a revised delivery team structure Appoint additional Tenant Liaison Officers Post inspection of completed work Stock Condition Survey in place Monitor and review at HRA Programme Board
3	Delivering the New Build programme by 2020	Limited availability of sites for development Introduction of new SUDS drainage guidelines by WG may impact on scheme viability Supply chain limitations experienced in North Wales for key trades	Integration of the Programme with the development of the Local Development Plan (LDP) and the housing strategy Integrated Communications Plan Design Procurement process to meet commissioning objectives More intensive site visits to be conducted on potential development sites Early feasibility investigations to be undertaken in respect of sites identified Concurrent work stream to liaise with highways; planning and street scene officers Monitor and review at HRA Programme Board
4	Introduction of charging for services	Quality and cost of services delivered Recovery of income Tenant satisfaction	Extensive tenant consultation Effective debt management arrangements Review of standard and cost of services delivered

			Monitor and review at HRA Programme Board
5	Maximising rental income particularly in light of ongoing Welfare Reforms	Poverty issues Increase in rent arrears Tenancy sustainment issues	Effective tenancy management Creative use of DHP Consideration to resource for tenancy sustainment Monitor and review at HRA Programme Board.
6	Meeting Annual Efficiency targets - Delivering the HRA efficiency plan ensuring savings targets are achieved	Efficiency targets not met Detrimental impact on service delivery Tenant satisfaction	Monitor progress through Council Housing Service Senior Management Team Service Plans and 1:1's Financial management and monitoring Monitor and review at HRA Programme Board
7	Proposed Rent review	Impact on HRA Business Plan Ability to deliver WHQS Ability to deliver New Build programme Impact on HRA services and sustainability	Ensure dialogue with Welsh Government Ensure representation on relevant National boards Modelling and risk management Monitor and review at HRA Programme Board
8	Emerging changes in the priorities for the carbon based economy	Potential impact on the investment planning for the longer term	To be determined

7 ACTION PLAN - KEY ACTIONS FOR 2020/21

The following actions will support the delivery of the priorities set out in this business plan:

1. Grow the housing stock by a minimum of 1,000 over the lifetime of the plan;
2. Maintain, sustain and build on the improvements delivered through WHQS investment; and
3. To be in the top quartile for performance and quality of service delivery.

The table below sets out the high level actions for 2020/21 to enable the delivery of the HRA within the framework of the priorities set out above, and also reflect the individual detailed service plans.

Action		Detail	Progress	Timeframe	Responsible / lead team
1	Inform and influence the wider Council's housing strategy development.	Develop a robust and intelligence led strategic framework to inform the delivery of new build, acquisitions and services.	Housing Strategy for 2019-2024 complete	Ongoing – delivery of the action plan	Housing Strategy
		To undertake strategic acquisitions to support local regeneration or other local priorities including meeting short/medium term demand	Five properties have been purchased under the strategic acquisition / right to buy back scheme. These are now tenanted in accordance with the demand from the SARTH register.	Ongoing	Business Performance Team Manager
2	Deliver community benefits as part of the WHQS and SHARP programme	To continue developing existing arrangements to identify and agree the community benefits to be delivered	Continue to monitor community benefits delivered in line with the Council's Community Benefit Strategy	Ongoing	Regeneration Manager
		To establish a process, in line with the Council wide strategy, to measure and capture community benefits.			
3	Develop and inform the energy efficiency strategy	Review and update the HRA response to the energy efficiency and sustainability	Awaiting results of the refreshed stock condition survey	April 2020	Capital Works Team Manager

		agenda in relation to new build and current stock.			
		Develop an investment and VFM approach to energy efficiency post WHQS	Review of all of the Energy Performance Certificates (EPC's) and the procurement of further EPC's to enable the Council to complete an in depth review of all Council properties falling under the SAP 65 threshold. Complete an action plan to address those properties below SAP65 detailing the level of investment needed to bring each property up to WHQS Standard. From this a post 2020 delivery plan can be considered in line with WG requirements (decarbonisation) to acceptable levels.	Ongoing	Capital Works Team Manager / Operations Manager
4	Develop and introduce a value for money framework	Achieve year on year efficiencies through a cost benefit approach	Delivery of the new Management structure	May 2020 onwards	All Managers
5	Improved IT capability for reporting including Open Housing and KPIs	Update the servers to enable the productivity module to be opened in Open Housing so individual work output can be monitored.	Awaiting feedback from software provider	April 2020 onwards	IT services

		Join up the IT and deliver a digital solution using apps to capture customer feedback – this may require some up front work with tenants to ensure they use the service but it aligns with the Council's digitalisation strategy going forward. This follows the implementation of 'My Account'	Digital strategy work ongoing	Ongoing work in 2020 to deliver digital solution	Housing Manager / Project Manager
		Analyse trends appearing in rent arrears	Mobysoft software has been implemented	Ongoing	Income Services
6	Improved understanding of asset base	Undertake/ update the stock condition survey	Tender due to be completed and our in house PDA total mobile solution is due to be implemented, once implemented Stock Survey information can be imported directly into the Housing Asset Management System (Open Housing).	Ongoing	Capital Works Team Manager
		Maintain stock data and asset register	As above	Ongoing	Capital Works Team Manager
		Review and assess the potential to realign existing housing stock to meet changing demands on the stock	As above	Ongoing	Capital Works Team Manager

		Develop a register of stock that has existing aids and adaptations which can be identified at re-let for most appropriate letting, to achieve better efficiency of existing stock.	The maintenance inspectors for voids are capturing any historical adaptations that have been undertaken. This is being captured and recorded into back office computer system.	April 2020 and ongoing	Operations Manage
7	To implement the Customer Involvement Strategy and Action Plan	<p>Improved understanding of customer satisfaction and involvement through a range of tenant support including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing more opportunities for tenants to engage particularly through the development of local arrangements. • Helping tenants to resolve issues that affect them and help us ensure that tenant retain satisfaction in the quality of our services. • Improving and extending the range of communication options to ensure our tenants are informed, engaged and have the 		April 2020 and ongoing	Housing Manager

		<p>opportunity to challenge.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing training programmes which encourage participation and encourages their involvement in the development of resilient communities. 			
8	Preventative work with vulnerable tenants to address rent arrears in conjunction with the Income Team	<p>Working across internal teams including the Income Team, Benefit Team; Housing Solutions; Housing Options and Housing Management, develop appropriate actions around the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lettings arrangements and tenancy allocation to vulnerable tenants. 2. Early identification of arrears. 3. Initial contact to tenants experiencing financial difficulties. 4. Direct contact with tenants. 5. Arrangements in place to support tenants experiencing financial difficulties. 	<p>12 month pilot completed looking at reducing the number of rent arrears in Council properties. The Housing Intervention Team consists of 4 officers (2 income officers and 2 Accommodation Support Officers) who target low level rent arrears below £600. This early intervention is intended to prevent evictions and higher rent arrears.</p> <p>Next stage is to produce an evaluation for the HRA to establish cost effectiveness.</p>	Evaluate effectiveness of 12 month pilot – reduction in rent arrears	<p>Housing Manager / Income Services / Housing Options</p> <p>Income Manager and Housing Strategy</p>
9	Proactive Neighbourhood Management	Regular meetings with other landlords and key partners, including the Police, as part of the monitoring of the	In progress	Ongoing	Housing Manager

		proactive Neighbourhood action plans.			
10	Customer satisfaction	Review resource management with the aim of ensuring we get it right first time, particularly in relation to the Call Centre.	Electronic trading with Travis Perkins has been implemented. The next stage is to develop electronic van stock replenishment ensuring correct materials to complete the job on first visit.	Ongoing monitoring of implementation of service	Business Performance Team Manager / Customer Services
		Implement customer satisfaction process for voids	There is to be a review of the void policy / procedure and customer satisfaction will form part of the review. The satisfaction survey will need to capture the complete customer journey from allocation of a property to start of tenancy.	March 2021	All Service Managers
		Undertake the STAR survey to benchmark customer satisfaction	Delayed due to management changes	To commence in April 2020	Service Manager / All Managers
		Use APSE to benchmark our performance and levels of customer satisfaction.	Performance is currently being reported on APSE.	Ongoing performance data sharing	Business Performance Team Manager
11	To deliver 50 new homes per annum to meet the demand of the social housing register	Ensure the delivery of new build adds value through addressing the pressures for certain housing types by basing development	Up to December 2019 a total of 114 new council homes were completed. A further 27 new council homes will be completed	Ongoing in line with the delivery plan	Housing Programmes Service Manager

		plans on intelligence.	during the remainder of the financial year ending March 2020. During 2020/21 45 new council homes are planned and plans for additional sites are progressing.		
12	Implement the Asset Plan	Develop a work programme for the boiler repairs; smoke detectors; carbon monoxide and electrical p.i.r to inform budget requirements.	Central Heating Boiler Programme will be completed once the PDA total mobile solution is implemented and the stock survey data uploaded. This will generate the Central Heating Programme automatically. Any boilers that do not reach their desired lifecycle (15 years) will be reviewed with regards to performance and renewed individually through e-repairs and maintenance service.	Ongoing work to feed into and develop housing programme	Operations Manager / Capital Works Team Manager
13	Review of aids/adaptation materials	Consult on framework value for money on specified and specialist materials	Work with managed stores to obtain best prices and suppliers.	To commence in April 2020	Operations Manager/Business Performance Manager.
14	Reduce void periods	Increase reporting of issues prior to property becoming empty.	Specifically garden clearance. Develop a pre-termination	LEAN Review Ongoing	Operations Manager

		<p>Early identification of expected void and collaborative working to match to SARTH register demand</p> <p>Early engagement with tenants and enforcement of notification process</p>	<p>process to review requirements in the void property.</p> <p>Improved communications.</p> <p>Reporting on overall KPI's.</p>		
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