



# Folkestone & Hythe District Council Housing Asset Management Strategy 2022- 2027

*V12 25 November 2021*

## Folkestone & Hythe District Council - Housing Asset Management Strategy

The vision of the housing service is: *'to create a truly excellent service - one that is digitally enabled, easy to do business with and where tenants (customers) are at the heart of everything we do'*

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## Background

1. This Housing Asset Management Strategy (HAMS) sets out Folkestone & Hythe District Council's (FHDC) approach to the management of its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) property portfolio, providing the framework for the delivery of a detailed investment plan; adherence to building legislation and regulatory standards; improved energy efficiency; the introduction of digital channels; increased customer satisfaction and the use of innovative technology.

2. The strategy is framed around four objectives and will drive the decisions on asset spend in the 30 year HRA business plan. It provides the framework around which the maintenance, regeneration and the new build of its social housing portfolio will be undertaken. It is the primary work in a library of documents that (when completed) will include:

- a. **Carbon reduction strategy**<sup>1</sup> - this strategy will set out how the housing service will play its part in meeting the Council's commitments to the net zero carbon agenda. It will detail the overall approach, priority areas and how this work will be delivered, along with an indication of costs.

- b. **HRA housing new build strategy** - this strategy will set out what the Housing Service will build and where, together with the types of construction to be used. It will outline the delivery arrangements and the governance of schemes from inception to completion together with the golden rules of the financial appraisal. It will link with the Council's project management arrangements.
- c. **Annual major works five year delivery programme** – this rolling 5 year programme details what major work is planned to be carried out, where in the district and in which year. It will be published annually in quarter 1 each year.
- d. **Healthier Housing Strategy** (approved 2018) – this strategy identifies all tenure and housing needs across the District. The HRA will play a small part in meeting this need.
- e. **Tenant engagement strategy** (approved May 2021) - this document sets out how the Council will work with and involve its tenants in the Housing Service. The strategy has received both Council and tenants approval.

3. The Council's HRA has a property portfolio of 3,397 council homes (including 14 shared ownership homes), 211 leasehold homes, together with six commercial properties. In 2020, the Council brought its housing stock back in house, having previously been managed by East Kent Housing (EKH) ALMO<sup>2</sup> since 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> UK Green Building Council definition of NZC in use definition: *When the amount of carbon emissions associated with the building's operational energy on an annual basis is zero or negative. A net zero carbon building is highly energy efficient and powered from on-site and/or off-site renewable energy sources, with any remaining carbon balance offset*

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<sup>2</sup> Arms Length Management Organisation

4. Although this strategy is written for the Council's social housing stock<sup>3</sup>, the authority has purchased 11 homes that are used to house households in temporary accommodation. The properties are not part of the HRA, not classed as social housing and not regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing, however, as part of good governance, it is intended that the same standards that apply to the authority's social housing also applies to these properties.

5. FHDC has not previously benefited from having a Housing Asset Management Strategy and recognising this, one of the key requirements in setting up the new housing service has been to understand the nature and extent of investment needed in the property portfolio in order to produce a viable 30 year HRA business plan that will help to ensure that FHDC continues to provide safe, attractive homes in neighbourhoods where people want to live.

6. The Strategy is based on Four Priorities and supports the Corporate Plan, the Local Plan (housing and the built environment) and the Place Plan, the boundary of which includes a number of the Council's homes.

7. Where possible, the strategy has considered up-to-date knowledge of the housing stock; future expectations for social housing; the aging population of tenants along with the expectations of current and future tenants. The strategy is based on a comprehensive survey of the housing stock undertaken in 2021 that surveyed approximately 100% of the stock externally and 90% internally. It also uses population data from Kent County Council and from surveys undertaken with FHDC tenants by consultants, Campbell Tickell.

8. This strategy provides a framework for the investment in the HRA property portfolio over the next 30 years (2022 – 2052). It does not analyse costs which are addressed in the HRA Business Plan and annual budget process.

9. An action plan has been developed to oversee the delivery of the strategy.

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<sup>3</sup> FHDC owned Council Houses.

## Executive Summary

10. The purpose of an Asset Management Strategy has changed significantly in the last five years. No longer is it just a guide to how the housing portfolio should be maintained and improved, it now embraces the changes in landlord compliance, in particular, significantly enhanced landlord health and safety responsibilities following the Grenfell Tower disaster; the council and government's commitment to net zero carbon by 2050; the emerging requirements of the charter for social housing residents; Social Housing white paper<sup>4</sup> and the yet to be formally announced, Decent Homes 2 which is expected to deal with the wider environment beyond the home.

11. The science supporting the management of assets has also seen a sea change as data collection becomes easier and technologies more powerful, enabling models to be produced that help to predict the likely repair demands from particular tenure and property types. The development of this science is included as future work in the action plan.

12. The vision of the housing service ...*where tenants are at the heart of everything we do...* is embodied in the Tenant Engagement Strategy and their involvement is key to delivering a successful asset management strategy. Another element of the vision is *to be one that is digitally enabled and easy to do business with*, although tenants will have choice, the preferred option for delivering asset management will be digital, in terms of communication, contractor management as well as the equipment and services that are installed. As the service develops its digital offer, its first priority will be to ensure that tenants and stakeholders find it easy to do business with the service. Developed in the right way, digitisation will help to improve services; information flow; speed of transactions and reduce carbon emissions, e.g. with remote monitoring and testing of appliances rather than the need for site visits.

13. The HRA is well placed to maintain its existing housing stock in reasonable repair over the 30 year life of the HRA business plan. However, the business plan is not sufficient to deliver the combined future demands of a Decent Homes 2 programme, enhanced fire safety works, meeting the net zero carbon agenda, an ambitious new build programme along with the work detailed in the stock survey. Responding to these, demands will be addressed in the HRA business plan as the nature of the work and government requirements become clearer.

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<sup>4</sup> This sets out the actions the Government will take to ensure that social housing customers are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and put things right when things go wrong.

14. Alongside an aging housing stock, the Housing Service will have to respond to, and learn to work with an aging population. Overall, the adult population of the District is expected to increase by 18% over the period 2021 – 2039 with 18-60 year olds increasing by 6% and the over 60 population by 37%. This change will have a significant impact on the suitability of the housing stock, what services are needed and how they are delivered.

15. Work can be planned where sufficient information is available e.g. Sheltered Schemes<sup>5</sup>, while making a financial provision in the business plan where the detail of future work is not yet known.

16. Responding to the priorities of the future may need changes to the Council's current procurement rules and procedures along with its ambitions to deliver only social housing without the need for cross subsidy.

### Housing Asset Management Strategic Objectives

The Housing Asset Management Strategy is based on four objectives:

**Objective 1** - Ensure the housing stock is safe and well maintained.

**Objective 2** - Develop a social housing portfolio that is fit for purpose, meeting the needs of current and future generations of tenants and their families.

**Objective 3** - Improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock and the ways of working that reduce carbon emissions and

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<sup>5</sup>Particularly Win Pine House & Romney Marsh House

levels of fuel poverty by achieving at a minimum EPC rating of C by 2030 and operational net zero carbon in use (NZC)<sup>6</sup> by 2050 for all of its housing stock.

**Objective 4** - Supporting the local economy, developing skills and recycling the Folkestone pound.

### Housing Asset Management Priorities

17. Within the objectives the HAMS has identified the following priorities:

- a. Ensure homes are safe and complaint at all times.
- b. Work towards achieving a planned: responsive maintenance programme of at least 70:30.
- c. Determine the future use, design and locations of the Sheltered Schemes.
- d. Develop and implement a fabric first approach to net zero carbon in use.
- e. Implement a new build programme to deliver the 300 homes by 2026 and a pipeline to deliver 1000 homes by 2036.

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<sup>6</sup> UK Green Building Council definition of NZC in use definition: *When the amount of carbon emissions associated with the building's operational energy on an annual basis is zero or negative. A net zero carbon building is highly energy efficient and powered from on-site and/or off-site renewable energy sources, with any remaining carbon balance offset'*

## Corporate Ambitions and Asset Management Objectives

### Creating Tomorrow Together – Corporate Plan 2021-30

#### Service ambition 1: Positive community leadership

Priorities in the next three years:



#### Service ambition 2: A thriving environment

Priorities in the next three years:



#### Service ambition 3: A vibrant economy

Priorities in the next three years:



#### Service ambition 4: Quality homes and infrastructure

Priorities in the next three years:



18. The Asset Management Strategy provides direction for the 30 year HRA Business Plan and contributes to the Council's four strategic objectives in the following way.

	Corporate Ambition	Asset Management Link
1	Positive Community Leadership	The Service contributes to this priority through having homes in neighbourhoods where tenants want to live; by managing its estates and tenancies, tackling anti-social behaviour, ensuring tenants can maintain their tenancies and the encouragement of community activities. It also facilitates and encourages tenant engagement in the work it undertakes.

2	A thriving environment	The Service is proud of its properties and the estates in which they are located, having service standards for rubbish collection, landscaping and graffiti removal, providing an attractive and clean environment. Where possible it will emulate the corporate ethos to imaginative design to new homes and ongoing maintenance, e.g. when decorating properties it will endeavour to emulate the flair demonstrated elsewhere in the district.
3	A vibrant economy	The HRA spends £4m annually maintaining its homes and has a capital programme of £14m. Where possible local approaches will be taken to ensure reinvestment of this into the local economy, recycling the Folkestone £. This approach should also reduce the carbon footprint. Examples could include supporting developing businesses and using local labour.
4	Quality homes and infrastructure	In providing and managing quality homes in neighbourhoods where people want to live the housing service contribute significantly to the physical and mental wellbeing of its tenants. Homes that are adapted to meet the changing demands of tenants and the provision of accommodation for older people all help to improve the health of the district.  The HRA has ambitions to build & acquire 300 affordable homes by 2025/26 and up to 1000 further homes over the period 2025/26 and 2035/36.

## External Environment

### Housing Demand

19. FHDC operates in an area of high housing demand<sup>7</sup>, where prices (both rented and home ownership) are out of reach for many on lower incomes. The Council provides access to predominantly social rent<sup>8</sup>, affordable rent, leasehold, and a small number of shared ownership homes.

20. Although there are some exceptions due to shortages of affordable housing across the district, there is generally a high demand for all vacant properties. Modelling the future demand for homes will inform asset management and development decisions, in terms of the number, types and locations of properties required.

### Regulation

21. Social Housing is a regulated service operating within an environment which reflects continued public sector spending constraints and welfare reform. The 'Charter for Social Housing Residents' published in November 2020 highlights the main areas of national housing policy, ensuring social housing tenants are safe in their home, have good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in.

22. The Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH) provides oversight on all social housing intervening where failures are identified. The housing sector risk profile (published 26 November 2020) highlights the following relevant risks for all social landlord which this strategy helps FHDC to manage:

- a. Landlord compliance – all providers have an obligation to act to ensure the homes they provide are safe. FHDC have carried out significant work to ensure the accuracy of its data.
- b. Stock condition – investment should be based on a good, evidenced understanding of the overall condition of stock underpinned by up-to-date data. FHDC have completed a comprehensive survey of its stock surveying approximately 100% externally and 90% internally.
- c. Reputational risk – decisions should have regard to the expectations of all stakeholders.

23. In 2008, The UK Climate Change Act set out statutory reduction targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (these were set against a 1990 baseline and required a net 34% reduction by 2030 and 80% by 2050). In 2019, secondary legislation was passed to amend the 2050 target to a net reduction of 'at least 100%' by 2050 against the same baseline. This means that some GHG emissions will remain, but these will be fully off-set (removed from the atmosphere). The 2050 commitment means that delivery now falls within the scope of the HRA 30 year Business Plan.

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<sup>7</sup> FHDC waiting list had 1419 applicants as at September 2021

<sup>8</sup> Social rent is determined by a rent formulae set by central Government, based on property size. Affordable rent is 80% of market rent; at FHDC this is capped at LHA level. Shared Ownership depends on the equity purchased with a minimum initial purchase share of 25% of market value.



24. As part of the wider ambition to meet the 'net-zero-carbon' challenge by 2050, the Government, through the Clean Growth Strategy, has set a target for social housing providers to attain the minimum rating of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C for rented properties by 2035 (2030 for 'fuel poor' households<sup>9</sup>). This is an important milestone towards the longer term, and much more ambitious and challenging aspiration to make all homes 'net-zero-carbon' by 2050. Without specific details, this strategy assumes all of the Council's housing stock has tenants in this category and will aim to achieve the 2030 target.

25. Energy efficiency, the eradication of fuel poverty and readiness for changing environmental technologies have all become more prevalent in the sector. This is a trend that is set to continue and is an area that will require significant investment over the course of the 30 year Financial Plan.

26. The 2020 draft Building Safety Bill sets out proposals for new building standards and regulations that will apply to new and existing homes. The Bill places a duty on landlords' to ensure the data held on assets is accurate and adequate to ensuring health and safety risks can be properly managed. The Bill proposes new requirements for building safety management and for greater involvement of residents. Additional costs and management obligations are anticipated for landlords of buildings over 18m, as well as having an impact on lower rise buildings. Fortunately the FHDC housing portfolio does not contain high rise homes and therefore the impact of the Bill is less demanding than for other social landlords. The Council does however have a large number of sheltered schemes which, because of their vulnerable tenants and possible difficulties in evacuation will be considered high risk by the HAMS.

## Local Context

### Overview of the Housing Stock

27. The Council's housing stock comprises 3,397 homes with houses being the largest proportion of the stock, followed by flats, (a large proportion of which are part of the sheltered housing portfolio) in blocks of two to five storeys, including 146 bedsit properties, 131 maisonettes as well as 416 bungalows. There are also an additional 211 leasehold flats and six commercial leases that include variety of sub-leases that include a restaurant and an ex-library which is currently used as a parish council office. The HRA also leases a house from the Radnor Estate that has been converted into three flats.

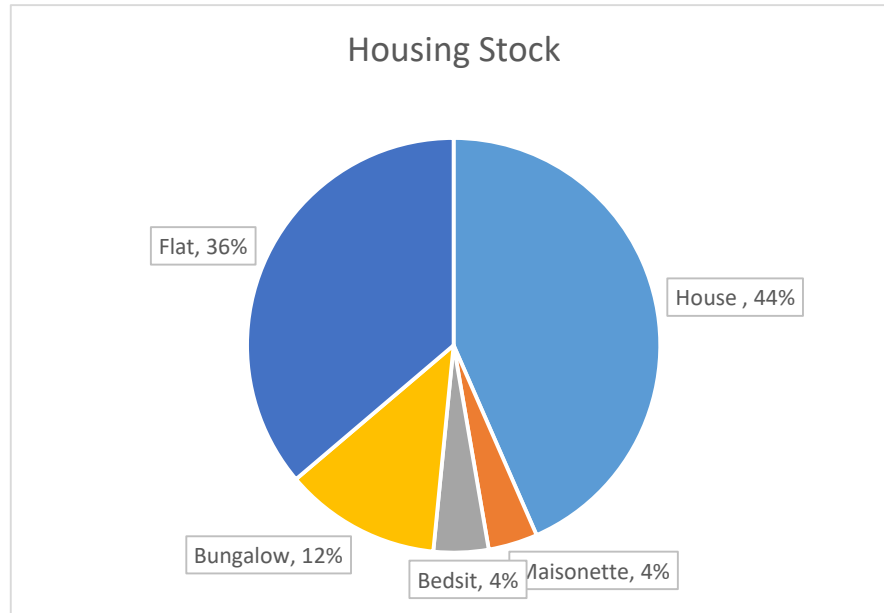
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<sup>9</sup> Fuel poverty is the condition by which a household is unable to afford to heat their home to an adequate temperature. It is caused by low income, high fuel prices, poor energy efficiency, unaffordable housing prices and poor quality private rental housing.

28. The 14 sheltered housing schemes are primarily designated for tenants over the age of 60. Much of this stock some with bed-sit accommodation is no longer fit for purpose and increasingly difficult to let. Over the life of the Business Plan, the age of the over 60 population of the district is predicted to increase by 37% and the importance of this type of accommodation will be a significant feature in future investment programmes.

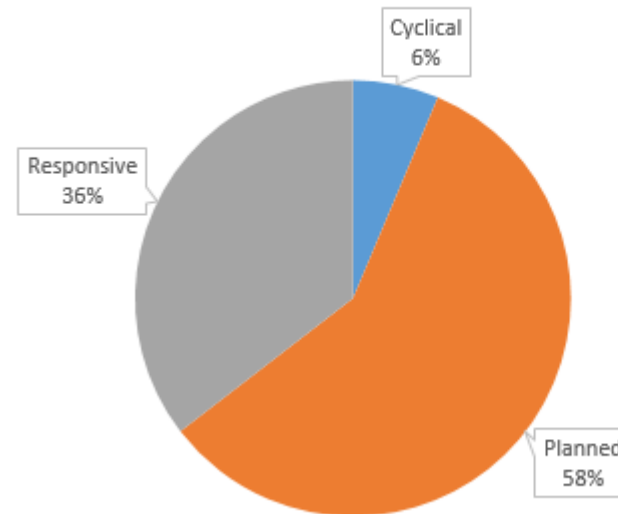
30. Currently 99.9% of the Council stock meets the Decent Homes standard. The ratio of spend on planned works to responsive maintenance is 61:38 (excluding cyclical maintenance shown in table 2), which is close to the good practice minimum ratio of 70:30. The Council has approved an enhanced budget that will help address this imbalance although it will take several years to address.

**Table 1** - Composition of FHDC's housing stock



**Table 2** - details how the annual budget was spent in 2020/21.

Break Down of Maintenance Categories



29. The FHDC housing stock accounts for 7% of the total housing in the district, housing associations 3%, private rented 17% and the remaining 73% are owner occupied.

31. FHDC declared a climate emergency in 2019 committing a budget of £4.75m to achieve net zero carbon by 2030. The Carbon Action Plan identified the sheltered housing stock as some of the highest energy consuming buildings in the Council's buildings, accounting for 44% of the Council's energy consumption. The Housing Service has a separate strategy to achieve Net Zero Carbon.

### Age Profile of Tenants

32. Overall the adult population of the Folkestone & Hythe District is predicted to increase by 18% over the period 2021 - 2039 with 18 - 60 year olds increasing by 6% and over 60 year olds expected to increase by 37% over the same period.

33. An aging tenant population will bring increased health issues and vulnerabilities. Life time homes and adaptations will support tenants living longer but not necessarily in good health. This will mean the housing service and the property portfolio will need to cater for frailer tenants who may not be able to meet their responsibilities to look after their homes; many may need significant support due to dementia rather than physical disability.

34. The design of new and the adaptation of existing homes, to meet the aging population will be a key feature of future programmes. Properties that enable tenants to remain in their homes longer will need to embrace not just structural adaptation but also telecare products that enable remote monitoring and care. Links between housing, social services and National Health primary care will become essential as the same tenants are cared for by the different agencies e.g. potential for adult social care contributing to the cost of the building of extra care<sup>10</sup> schemes that create a safer environment for elderly tenants and therefore reduce the cost of care provided by adult social care is a model delivered in other local authorities.



<sup>10</sup> Extra Care Homes - homes providing supportive accommodation with 24/7 on-site care arrangements for tenants over 60 that choose to take up this type of accommodation, often as a viable alternative to entering a residential care home.

**Objective 1** - Ensure the housing stock is safe and compliant at all times.

35. FHDC housing stock is generally in good condition with 99% meeting the Decent Homes standard. In meeting this standard all stock<sup>11</sup> has either a kitchen that is less than 30 years old or a bathroom less than 20 years old. All of the housing stock has central heating and double glazed windows. Some homes are not on mains gas and use oil or propane gas which is not economic for tenants nor carbon efficient. The average EPC rating for the stock is C, already meeting the government's 2030 target but there are still some 700 properties that are below this level.

36. The layout of some properties and their environs needs modernising which is best resolved through regeneration. Kitchens for example, lack the space for modern appliances and estates which are no longer in the sole ownership of FHDC have challenges with car parking, layout and maintenance of common areas.

37. The housing portfolio has 19 non-traditional residential Precast Reinforced Concrete (PRC) homes. These homes are often on large plots that lend themselves to redevelopment, building new homes to higher densities on the site. In order to assemble sufficient land, it may be necessary to buy back neighbouring properties, often sold under the RTB scheme.

38. To avoid fitting modern kitchens and bathrooms into layouts that will not be suitable for the future, the design of the properties will be reviewed when this work is planned and where possible, better layouts, e.g. create open plan arrangements between kitchen and lounge creating more attractive homes that can facilitate modern appliances and help to meet the requirement for life-time homes.

39. Where the housing stock is uneconomic to maintain or cannot be cost effectively improved or in areas where there is no demand, alternative options to retention will be explored which may include disposal, demolition and regeneration.

### Garages

40. Separate from garages that are attached to individual dwellings, the Council owns 809 garages. In September 2021, 444 garages were let and 365 were vacant. There are wide variations in these occupancy levels with some locations sustaining sufficient demand while others have only low, or no demand. A garage strategy will be needed to identify the future investment priorities for this aspect of the housing portfolio.

41. Within some blocks, individual garages may have been sold and these represent a constraint to uninhibited site development and in these rare instances compulsory purchase may have to be a consideration.

42. Tailored approach will be developed for the future of garage sites that will:

- a. Identify those sites where there is an ongoing demand.

<sup>11</sup> Except where work has been refused by the tenant.

- b. Consider change of use e.g. into storage units.
- c. Find alternative uses for the garage sites where there is insufficient demand. Sites that are no longer sustainable may be considered for the development of new housing or disposal to raise additional resources. Where there is no requirement or the sites do not lend themselves for development, alternatives will be considered including surface parking, green space development, opportunities for partners e.g. Parish Council's to develop alternative uses.
- d. Where sites currently demonstrate a marginal positive return, their viability will be reviewed on an individual basis every two years. In some cases, improved marketing or minor works may improve long term viability.



## Leased Properties

### Commercial Stock

43. The HRA is responsible for six commercial properties. During the last five years there has been very little capital investment in these properties and currently there is no capital programme or budget. As a result, any work is funded on a reactive basis from the HRA repair budget and recharged to the commercial leaseholders. Going forward, this could result in leaseholders being presented with significant invoices for works undertaken e.g. roof works which they may not be able to afford. Internal maintenance of the demised premises, remains the leaseholder's responsibility and checks will be put in place to ensure these obligations are being met.

44. The total annual income received from the commercial stock is just under £4,000. The cost to the HRA of managing and maintaining this stock needs to be accurately assessed and recharged to leaseholders accordingly. This will include determining the income and expenditure over the next 30 years alongside the social value of the HRA having the buildings in its portfolio, e.g. the social value of a local shop.

### Homes

45. A similar situation exists for the 211 residential leaseholders where there is no sinking fund for major works and in the future leaseholders will face significant bills as their contribution to major works in the blocks of flats where they live are needed.

## Other Assets

46. The HRA is responsible for the maintenance of a number of other properties including properties leased<sup>12</sup> to other organisations and land leased to tenants, the income from which goes to the HRA. The general principle with all properties leased to other organisations should be that they produce a medium term surplus to the HRA.

47. The arrangements regarding each of these properties will be reviewed and their commercial viability and long term sustainability examined along with the affected parties.

## Non HRA Homes

48. The housing service is responsible for 11 houses and flats in four locations across the district and were purchased with the help of grant(s) specifically to provide temporary homes for homeless households. In order to not exceed the grant threshold, the properties that have been acquired are old, sometimes complex buildings e.g. a large house that has been converted into flats with communal fire alarms etc. In order to provide safe homes and good governance, it is intended that these properties are managed by the HRA Assets and Development Team to the same standards as HRA properties with appropriate recharges to the general fund.

49. Future new development will include shared ownership products which will require new policies on maintenance and management to be developed where FHDC still retain an interest in the freehold.

## Mixed Tenure Estates

50. FHDC is no longer the sole landlord on its estates, they are shared by a host of users and it is necessary to review the appropriateness of HRA tenants paying for the upkeep of assets that are not for their sole use, through their rents and service charges.

51. With the sale of council houses, the HRA has, by default, taken on responsibility for assets that should be the responsibility of all who enjoy the facilities e.g. the HRA is responsible for pumping stations where significant capital works may be needed in the future; roads, car parking and sewers are further examples of shared assets that historically were the sole responsibility of the HRA that are now used by home owners and other landlords and will need ongoing investment. Work will be carried out to identify and allocating responsibility or costs that are currently being met through tenants rent.

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<sup>12</sup> E.g. fisherman's huts; 3 flats leased from the Radnor Estate.

## Asset Management Programme

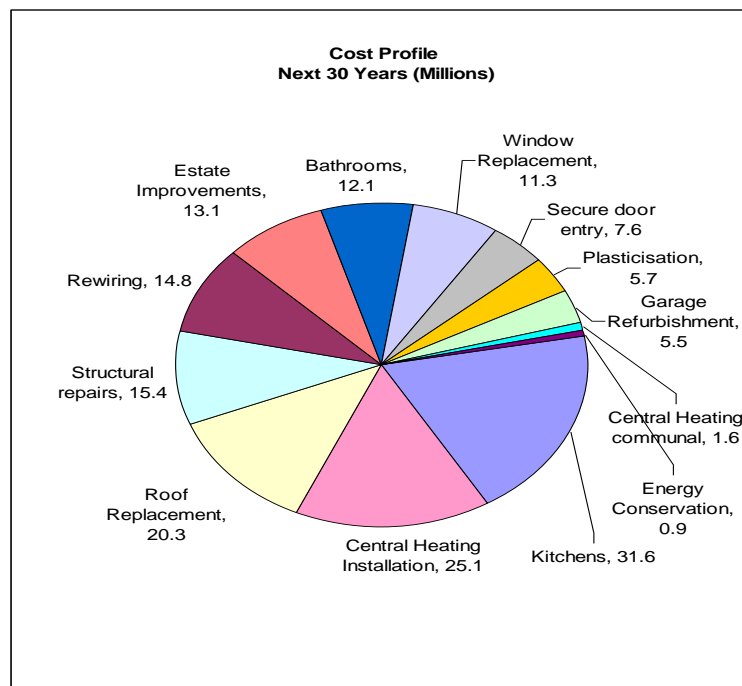
52. The business plan outlines the expected expenditure and income that the HRA needs to plan for over the next 30 years. The Major Works Programme (MWP) details the work needed over a five year timeframe detailing what work will be carried out, when and where. The MWP is the operational driver for the service and will inform tenants, leaseholders, and Right to Buy applicants what is planned for their homes and neighbourhoods.

53. A key element of this programme will be the seven year external redecoration programme. With the installation of UPVC windows and composite doors, the need for external decoration has significantly reduced. However, the importance of this cyclical programme should not be underestimated, providing the opportunity to clean and lubricate windows; clear out gutters; carry out repairs to fencing and similar external works on a cyclical basis, reducing the demand for responsive repairs.

54. Programmes of works will be smoothed, ensuring work is carried out in a priority that maximises tenant safety; the life cycle of the assets; cash flow and operational delivery. This will mean accelerating or delaying work within a plus/minus five year timescale enabling work to be combined, reduce inconvenience to tenants and maximising efficiency e.g. not painting doors and windows in a street that are due for replacement in five years' time but also taking the opportunity to renew gutters at the same time as the roof in order to maximise the use of scaffolding. This approach will need to be managed with tenants as appearances of their homes could deteriorate in the short term. As a general rule, in order to maximise the life of the asset, the preference will be to push work back in the programme, rather than bring it forward.

55. Where viable, and where possible, only one improvement will be carried out at a home within a five year period e.g. a kitchen or a bathroom. This will reduce the disruption to tenants and given the financial constraints on the HRA, deliver improvements to homes throughout the district at the earliest opportunity.

**Table 3** - Main areas of planned maintenance spend over the next 30 years Amend **FOLLOWING STOCK SURVEY**



**Objective 2** - Develop a social housing portfolio that is fit for purpose, meeting the needs of current and future generations of tenants and their families.

56. While detailed knowledge of the properties is essential to an effective asset management strategy, so is knowledge of the tenants who live in them, their current and future aspirations. Anecdotally, tenants who have lived in their home for some time are more satisfied than tenants taking up their first tenancies. Tenant lifestyle and their ability to look after their home has a significant impact on the number of repairs that are needed, as does the construction of the property.

57. A key aspect of place-making is understanding the current and future aspirations of tenants in order to develop thriving neighbourhoods as well as building the right homes in the right places.

58. Overall, the adult population of the District is expected to increase by 18% over the period 2021-2039 with 18-60 year olds increasing by 6% and the over 60 population expected to increase by 37%. This means that the number of people aged 75 and over will change from 1 in 10 in 2018 to 1 in 5 by 2043<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> KCC data

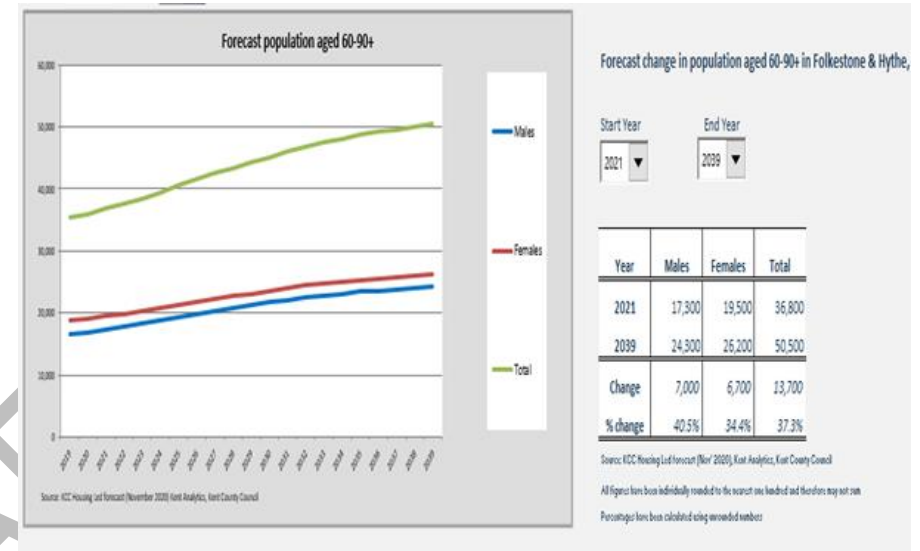


**Table 4** - Projected increase in the Folkestone District population over the period 2020-2039

Year	Total Population	Age Group		
		0-15	16-64	65+
2020	113,500	19,100	66,000	28,400
2024	117,100	18,800	67,500	30,700
2028	120,700	18,200	68,800	33,700
2032	124,300	17,900	69,200	37,200
2036	127,900	18,000	69,600	40,300
2039	130,500	18,300	70,200	42,000

Source: KCC Housing Led Forecasts (November 2020) - Interactive Population Toolkit

**Table 5** – Projected increase in the over 60 adult population 2021-2039



59. National research indicates that most people will continue to live in their homes (whether owned or rented) but are likely to require support and facilities to assist them to continue doing so as they age. Where people do need to move to specialist accommodation such as sheltered, extra care or a care home, this will be when they are much frailer and/or often in response to an unplanned for event e.g. illness/accident.

60. Enabling older people to move into more appropriate accommodation, often releasing larger family homes is an important consideration for FHDC and for tenants who could have a more enjoyable and safer lifestyle in their later years. However, with an understandable reluctance to move, FHDC will need to develop an attractive 'downsizing offer' to encourage tenants to make such moves.

61. While sheltered housing is not, and will not be the preference for all older people, population demographics indicate a continued long term demand and the housing portfolio should continue to provide older people's housing accommodation that is attractive and meets the increasing demand.

62. Having an appropriate level of suitable older person's accommodation is a critical aspect of delivering the housing service in the future. From an asset perspective, this may involve a combination of conventional sheltered, extra care as well as general needs housing. Understanding the needs of an aging population, the impact of managing a service for tenants with increasing vulnerabilities together with buildings from which the services can be delivered is a key action for the Housing Service.

63. The Kent County Council market position statement on housing of the elderly identifies a need in the FHDC district of an additional 260 units of housing with care by 2026 and a further 55 by 2031. The majority of these new homes are likely to be provided by the private sector but the HRA will have a role to play in meeting this demand.

64. The Housing Service will endeavour to influence the future delivery of "Lifetime Homes" with s106 properties<sup>14</sup> delivered by private sector developers, enabling tenants to live healthier lives and remain part of their communities longer.

### **Adaptations for Disabilities**

65. Adapting homes is key to meeting the changing needs of the tenant, helping them to live in their homes for longer. However, where homes are under occupied, efforts will be made to encourage tenants to move to more suitable accommodation and, most likely, freeing up much needed family accommodation.

66. In all cases, a value for money judgement needs to be made comparing the work that is needed to adapt the property with the benefit it will bring. In some cases, it may be necessary to move a tenant to ensure the best responses to their needs for example, moves to a home that has already been adapted that better meets their needs or, a new purpose built home. These factors would be considered alongside the tenants wishes.

67. As adaptations are often expensive, a register of adaptations and adapted properties will be maintained. Where possible, homes would be re-let to a household with similar needs and/or to recycle adaptation equipment.

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<sup>14</sup> Section 106 (s106) agreements between the local authority and developer to provide

68. Only in exceptional circumstances will adaptations be removed for new tenants e.g. the removal of a shower and installation of a bath (when the initial adaptation was the opposite). Wherever possible, adaptations will be designed so that they can be used by all types of tenure.

### **Stock Sustainability**

69. Not all of the housing stock is sustainable for the long-term and with some properties having poor layout or construction where long-term investment in the property may not be viable. Some of the Council's' sheltered schemes are no longer fit for purpose, being difficult to let, have high energy usage. Future options will include change of use, disposal, adaptation, remodelling and potentially demolition and redevelopment. All of which will require careful planning and discussion with tenants to ensure support for the work.

70. Where there is demand for larger homes the option to increase the size of properties, through extension, including building up on existing blocks of flats and creating rooms in the roof space will be considered. This is likely to be more cost effective than increasing the buildings footprint and more acceptable in planning terms.

### **Regeneration**

71. Area regeneration will be considered where a neighbourhood is failing to meet tenant expectations or future viability is no longer evident. In these cases, a strategic master plan will be developed in conjunction with relevant agencies.

72. Where regeneration is to take place, a variety of delivery vehicles will be considered including mixed use development, selling or swapping land to support the viability of priority schemes, gifting land in return for nomination rights, new build social and affordable rent models.

73. Decisions about which stock is to remain, which should be demolished or be re modelled, what to build, where to build and for which client groups will be taken in the context of neighbourhood strategies and local demand. Opportunities will be provided to local residents to become involved in the process helping to shape the future of their neighbourhoods.

### **Development Opportunities**

74. The HRA has a separate New Homes Development Strategy (to be drafted).

75. The Council has set an ambitious target to develop 300 affordable new homes during the period 2015 - 2026 and a further 1,000 new affordable new homes over the period 2025 – 2036. This will include those built at Otterpool Park, acquisitions and s106 contributions from private housing developments<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> The HRA Business Plan was updated in 2020 including a 4 year development pipeline of 140 new homes & will need updating in order to achieve the initial phase of 300 homes by 2026.

76. In maximising the affordability of new developments, a variety of funding options including outright sale, first time homes<sup>16</sup>, shared ownership<sup>17</sup> life-time homes, extra care scheme, key worker accommodation and affordable rents<sup>18</sup> will be considered. The priority will be the provision of homes for social rent<sup>19</sup> but cross subsidy models may be necessary to deliver schemes that are viable.

77. The current financial criteria for all new HRA homes is to have a Net Present Value (NPV) of zero (break-even) over 30 years. This criteria will need to be reviewed as new schemes are designed to zero carbon in use standards and may be more costly to build and maintain. Future schemes may need to be mixed use developments combining affordable housing, shared ownership and outright sale in order to also provide homes at social rent levels. The approach and modelling parameters will be detailed in the HRA New Homes Development Strategy.

78. Consideration will be given to evaluating the HRA development programme as an entity that needs to achieve a NPV of zero overall. This approach will provide flexibility to offset schemes that do not break even with those that break even sooner.

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16 First time homes are market sale product & meet 'affordable housing' criteria for planning purpose.

17 Shared Ownership - providing the opportunity for tenants who are able to do so, to move into home ownership.

18 Affordable rent is 80% of market value rent for the property. FHDC has pegged its affordable rent at the Local Housing Allowance level. Homes England may require the 80% of market rent model to be used in providing grant.

19 Social rent is the rent charged for HRA homes and is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. For the period 2020 - 2025 the maximum rent increase is CPI+1%.

79. Where the Council has land and buildings in the general fund that may be suitable for housing, the HRA will consider purchasing suitable assets at appropriate rates.

80. Consideration will be given to the disposal of HRA assets that do not fit the future housing portfolio due to demand or maintenance costs. This could include sale at below market rates for first time buyers prepared to invest sweat equity<sup>20</sup> in improving their first home.

81. In developing the housing portfolio, the HRA will, subject to financial viability, in addition to building its own homes, acquire homes on the open market, from housing associations as well as buying back ex-Council stock.

82. The Council has Development Status with Homes England which enables FHDC to access government grants for new development opportunities. The current HRA development programme is small and self-funded. In order deliver its development aspirations, this approach will be reviewed to maximise grants along with other funding models.

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20 Sweat equity refers to a person contribution toward a venture. Generally comes in the form of physical labour, mental effort, and time.

83. Where the HRA develops new homes they will, as far as possible, be to net zero carbon in use standards and to Lifetime Homes Standards. Where this standard cannot be met approval will be obtained through the Investment Panel<sup>21</sup>. Where the standard cannot be met, the construction and services will be designed to accommodate future developments in the transition to net zero carbon, many of which are currently not clear and reliant on future technologies not yet developed<sup>22</sup>.

84. With the increased emphasis on reducing carbon emissions and with government support, off-site construction, (also referred to as Modern Methods of Construction (MMC)<sup>23</sup>), will feature significantly in the New Homes Development Strategy. However, what can be built on a site is dependent on many factors and this method of construction will not be suitable for all locations.

85. It is important that FHDC decides what type of MMC it will use, enabling procurement as well as future maintenance cycles to be developed and training to be given as new skills to maintain the properties, as well as live in them will be needed.

86. Where the Council purchases homes, including through s106 agreements, it will have less choice and control over the standards of layout, thermal value than in the standards it sets for its own developments. In modelling the financial viability of any acquisitions, the cost of retrofitting the properties to meet net zero carbon in use will be part of the overall viability assessment.

87. The district has “brownfield” (former use) sites that are suitable for development. Suitable locations will be reviewed against the development priorities and available resources to decide how best to take each site forward. The vehicle to capture these opportunities is the Housing Development Portfolio<sup>24</sup>.

88. In creating the critical mass necessary for development and regeneration, the purchase of land and properties may be necessary e.g. post war system build homes that have low thermal values and will be expensive achieve acceptable carbon emissions. This type of property often occupies large plots of land which, when a number are brought together can provide an opportunity to increase the density and provide better homes on the same overall footprint. This approach may include the purchase of properties previously sold under the Right To Buy (RTB) scheme.

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21 Terms of reference to be developed. See para 121 for further details

22 E.g. the use of hydrogen

23 Modern Methods of Construction' (MMC) is a wide term, embracing a range of offsite manufacturing and onsite techniques that provide alternatives to traditional house building

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24 An internal document that records potential new build sites.

89. In order to improve efficiency and resident satisfaction, building new homes and developing existing homes will adopt a Building Information Management (BIM) system approach<sup>25</sup>. A Soft Landings<sup>26</sup> approach will also be introduced which requires the team to be fully aware of the project's success criteria. It also requires those required for the future maintenance of the building along with the end users be closely involved in the project, especially in the decisions which affect operation and management of the delivered building.

**Objective 3** Improve the energy efficiency of the housing stock and the ways of working to reduce carbon emissions and levels of fuel poverty by achieving a minimum EPC rating of C by 2030 and operational net zero carbon in use<sup>1</sup> by 2050 for all of its housing stock.

90. The HRA has a separate Carbon Reduction Strategy (to be drafted).

91. In the 1970's just a third of UK homes had central heating; today 95% of UK homes are centrally heated, with gas and oil fuelling more than 90% of the UK's housing stock. The government's 2020 Energy White Paper, '*powering our net zero future*', proposes new measures to start switching home heating to low-carbon alternatives. Although existing boilers won't need to be replaced immediately, it does mean that from the mid-2030s, it will not be possible to get a traditional gas or oil boiler installed. Instead, a low-carbon heating system or an appliance that can be converted to use a clean fuel will need to be installed.

92. Systems such as heat pumps or hydrogen-ready boilers will be likely candidates to replace gas and oil boilers in the future. Against this background, the HAMS advocates careful planning, replacing boilers on a failure basis and not life expectancy in order that the most suitable appliances can be installed.

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<sup>25</sup> See digital agenda, p29

<sup>26</sup> Soft Landings – a strategy to ensure transition from construction to occupation is as smooth as possible.

93. Moving towards Net Zero Carbon (NZC) will be complex and reliant on technologies yet to be discovered or commercialised. New technologies may have more expensive life-cycle costs, impacting on the HRA 30 year business plan. Careful planning will be necessary to avoid costly mistakes and abortive work. However, careful planning is not a reason for being over cautious and the roll out of electrical charging points and the requirement for contractors to use electric vehicles are realistic considerations for future contracts.

94. The Fuel Poverty Regulations 2014 required that by December 2030, as far as reasonably practicable, where people live in fuel poverty their homes have a minimum EPC rating of C. The assessment of fuel poverty varies with tenant circumstances and for simplicity the HAMS advocates planning for all homes to be retrofitted to a minimum EPC level C by 2030.

95. The Council housing stock has benefitted from a history of energy efficiency improvements. These measures have helped to achieve an average rating for the stock of EPC C and therefore the government's initial target has already been achieved. However, it still has almost 700 homes in the EPC D, E, F and G range which need to be improved along with the 11 homes purchased for Temporary Accommodation which have an EPC ratings of E & D.

96. At the moment, the Governments position on zero carbon and new build is not totally clear. There is discussion that new homes built from 2025 onwards are zero-carbon ready, including consulting on whether it is feasible and appropriate to end the connection of new-build homes to the gas grid. Similarly, proposed changes to the Building Regulations to reduce carbon emissions would, by default, prohibit the installation of gas boilers in homes build after 2025 although these changes have not yet been adopted. The HAMS makes a commitment that, as far as possible, the new homes built by the HRA will be to net zero carbon in use standards and ready to accommodate future carbon reduction initiatives. Where homes and schemes are refurbished similar standards will be aspired to.

97. Net Zero Carbon is not something the HRA can achieve<sup>27</sup> without significant additional government funding and changes to the national infrastructure, e.g. the National Grid will need to provide electricity from renewable sources in order for zero carbon to be fully achieved. Where homes meet NZC standards it may be possible (depending on future legislation) in the future to levy an increased rent or service charge (which could be offset by the reduced heating costs), which could help to fund the cost of retro fitting or building new homes to higher thermal values.

98. Individual NZC strategies will need to be developed for the various house types but in general it is expected that the approach will be:

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<sup>27</sup> The assumption is made that the housing stock will not move off grid and become totally reliant on renewables.

- a. Fabric first - ensuring the roof, wall, windows etc. of homes are as energy efficient as possible.
- b. Worst first - tackle properties with the lowest EPC rating first.
- c. Lowest regrets - minimising the likelihood of having to replace work through being early adopter of new initiatives<sup>28</sup>. In this respect FHDC should be a follower and not a leader of new initiatives.

99. Within the stock, there are some 300 properties that are not on mains gas and rely on either electric, oil or LPG for their heat and hot water. These properties have an EPC's ranging from E to C and will be particularly costly to run and have high carbon emissions. These properties will be prioritised for energy efficiency works.

100. A further priority will be the HRA sheltered housing schemes which are some of the highest consumers of gas in the buildings owned by the Council, overall the schemes have an EPC rating of C, with individual flats ranging from an EPC E to an EPC B.

101. Future homes will need to meet both the NZC agenda and the needs of tenants. How this will be achieved will need careful planning, for example, replacing a gas boiler with a ground source heat pump will produce less carbon but on its own, is likely to increase the energy bills for tenants due to the cost of electricity to operate the heat pump. This could be offset with increased thermal insulation and the installation of photo voltaic (PV) panels to produce electricity.

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<sup>28</sup> Ground source heat pumps are currently being promoted but their impact on tenant lifestyles not fully understood.

102. It is already the case that at least 1.5C of global warming is 'locked in' and the impacts of this warming along with other adverse effects of climate change, air pollution, flooding will form part of any holistic net zero strategy.

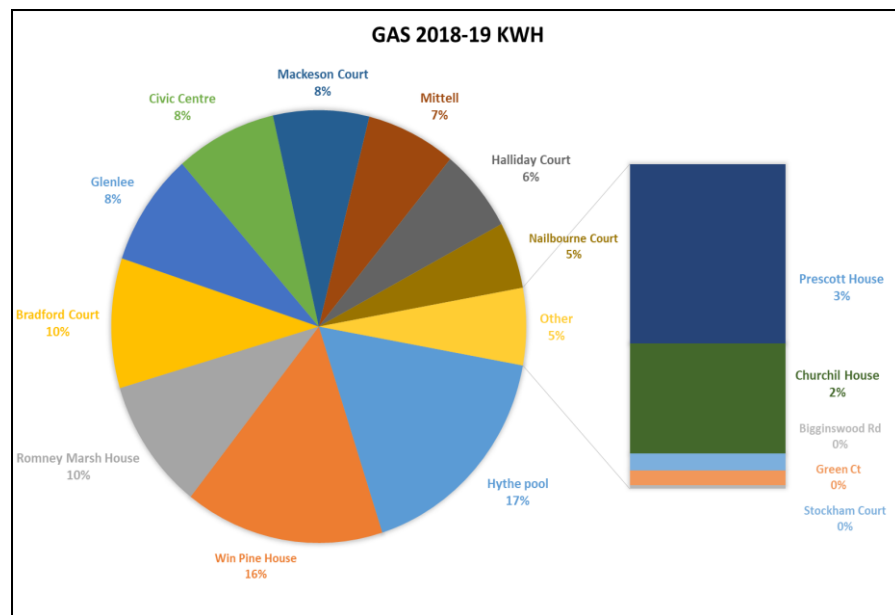
103. Overheating is already a key consideration in sheltered housing schemes, where better insulation, draft free homes, increased use of electrical appliances all add to the problem<sup>29</sup>. With global warming, this problem will increase and needs to be catered for through design and not mechanical means which will create carbon emissions.

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<sup>29</sup> CIBSE define over heating as 'conditions when the comfortable internal temperature threshold of 28C is surpassed for over 1% of the time'. Temperatures above 35C present a significant danger of heat stress.



**Table 6** Gas Consumption of FHDC buildings 2018-19 (total consumption 1,871,922 KWH)



104. Where it is uneconomic to retrofit properties to meet the zero carbon agenda, consideration will be given to their disposal. However, although this may be a sound economic approach, it runs the risk of further breaking up the housing portfolio and does little to address the global NZC agenda on the assumption that purchasers will not achieve net zero carbon.

105. A key approach of the asset management strategy is that work is carried out 'just in time'. With a fabric first approach to the carbon agenda. This means additional insulation would be installed where the need has been identified but the replacement of windows would only happen when the windows need to be replaced and not earlier to achieve carbon reduction targets.

106. When specifying materials, consideration will be given to the complete carbon cycle including manufacture, delivery, installation, cost in use along with the embedded carbon at the end of a products life cycle. Examples include the use of recycled products, for example, the materials in UPVC windows can be recycled several times before they become landfill.

107. The HAMS embraces modern technology and different ways of working to reduce the carbon footprint of the property portfolio. This will include remote monitoring of equipment e.g. systems that will not need an engineer to travel to site, working with tenants to diagnose repairs remotely using smartphones, video-conferencing and equipment that diagnoses and self-reports faults.

108. The NZC journey will include encouraging behaviour change and the development of new skills for staff, tenants and the contractors it works with. It will mean working with tenants to not only adapt their lifestyle to living in low carbon homes, but also their approaches to recycling and communicating digitally. On new developments, this may include the use of car pools, reducing the need for car parking and potentially creating space for more homes, green space.

109. Contractors will be required to demonstrate the same level of commitment to environmental sustainability as FHDC e.g. ensuring waste is minimised and where possible, recycled, providing environmental benefits and reducing the cost of waste disposal. In evaluating tenders, consideration of the contractor's approach to carbon reduction over the life of the contract.



**Objective 4** Maximise efficiency, supporting the local economy, developing skills and re-cycling the Folkestone pound.

### Supporting the Local Economy

110. Procurement of work outlined in the HAMS will, where possible, encourage the employment of labour and companies from the within the district.

111. The new build programme will draw heavily on Modern Methods of Construction which makes significant use of factory produced components, often using semi-skilled labour. Encouraging contractors to establish factories within the district to produce the required components would enable the employment of local labour, ideally tenants building HRA homes. Building local reduces the carbon miles the material and labour travels. From a business perspective, these factories could have a wider customer base, supplying some of the new homes at Otterpool Park and maybe developments in neighbouring districts. Contributing to the local economy will be a consideration when determining the type(s) of MMC FHDC should invest in.

### Maximising Efficiency

112. Efficiency is not just about cost and achieving upper quartile performance. Efficiency from asset management is long-term and reliant on careful evaluation and specification of materials and construction methods. Efficiency is future proofing, it is ensuring what has been specified is delivered and installed correctly, it is replacing materials when necessary, not before.

113. Efficiency will need careful planning of maintenance programmes, not painting surfaces that are to be replaced and accepting they will not be aesthetically pleasing, undertaking only essential work on homes and estates that are identified for regeneration and accepting a managed decline.

114. The Asset Management Programme is based on the 2021 stock survey which is an indicative guide for planning and financial modelling. Life expectancy of building components are assessed visually and have wide variation in practice. Operationally, before work is undertaken, reference will be made to the Housing Service’s primary database (Northgate), to determine if work is needed or whether a further inspection is necessary, e.g. the stock survey may indicate windows need replacing, but if there are no repairs reported, the need for window replacement on maintenance grounds is questionable. Future programmes of work will be based on the stock survey but determined using data from Northgate, ensuring that only work is carried out where it is needed.

115. A data driven approach to the delivery of planned maintenance programmes may result in components not being replaced until they have failed which will result in a pepper pot approach<sup>30</sup> and possible complaints but the careful use of data and planning should maximise the just in time approach to asset management.

**Table 7** - Expected life of key building elements used in the stock survey and therefore in the HRA business plan

Building Component	Life Expectancy years
Roof – pitched	70
Roof – flat	25
Wall Structure	50
Windows	30
External Door	30
Space heating	15
Sanitary ware	40
Electrics - rewire	30

### Delivering the Strategy

116. The HAMS has its own action plan that will help to deliver the strategy. Progress will be monitored quarterly by the Housing Leadership Team and to the CLT through the Service Plan monitoring. The plan identifies what needs to be done, what the expected outcome looks like, time frames and the officer responsible for delivering the action. The plan will link with and inform both the Housing Service Plan and those of other directorates. Critically, it is the basis for the Major Works Programme which details the work to be undertaken over the next five years, the current year in detail and subsequent years in less detail. This programme will be agreed annually as part of the budget setting process and shared with tenants. Significant changes in the programme will be accounted for in the HRA business plan. The Northgate database will be at the heart of planning the delivery programme.

<sup>30</sup> There may be anecdotal argument that this approach is not cost effective, economies of scale etc. that should be challenged.

117. The preferred approach to delivering maintenance and new homes will be to work in partnership with contractors and consultants ensuring lean structures and simple processes, avoiding duplication while retaining appropriate contract management and governance.

118. With detailed information from the stock survey, accurate programmes of work can be constructed and contracts procured against the delivery time lines. The skills necessary to deliver the programmes can be with staff or through the engagement of consultants.

119. Where possible, viable local contractors will be used to maximise local employment, develop skills, employ apprentices and invest in the district. This may need changes to current IT, procurement policies and financial rules in order to accommodate smaller contractors depending on their financial and operational capacity.

120. Regardless of size, a requirement of working for FHDC will be to have ICT compatible links to update the Northgate system that provides a digital dialogue for invoicing, contract changes and the storage of documents.

## Risk Management

121. An officer Investment Panel will be established to have oversight of all commercial risks the HRA intends to undertake. As part of project management, the Panel will be a gateway through which investment proposals will need to pass at key stages e.g. approving the viability of a new build scheme; the disposal of property; the entering into of complex contracts such as Joint Ventures. The panel will initially comprise of key officers from procurement, finance and housing.

122. Governance of major projects will be exercised through a risk management approach. All aspects of contract procurement and delivery will be the responsibility of individual officers. Contractors will be required to demonstrate both independent and joint approaches to Quality Control, in this way improving health and safety compliance and performance reporting.

123. In addition to the routine audit programme, the critical areas of landlord compliance (the big 6) will have a four line control of risk as follows:

- a. Engineers qualified to carry out work
- b. Contracting companies employ their own quality control
- c. FHDC employed quality control
- d. A third party independent scrutiny of works. It is intended that this will be a single expert company

providing scrutiny across all of the big 6 areas of landlord compliance.

124. The caretaking service will have an increased role in carrying out minor repairs.

125. Redevelopment of estates and properties will be driven by the ability of the housing portfolio to meet demand as well as the economic viability of the existing stock. In crafting the Major Works Programme, the economic viability of managing and maintaining individual stock will be evaluated across the district and investment decisions made to retain, improve or dispose of stock.

### Void Properties

126. A key element of having sufficient housing is how quickly homes are re-let after they become vacant, ensuring homes remain vacant for as shorter time as possible. On average, there are around 200 voids annually, at any point in the year 6% of the stock is in the process of being re-let.

127. The approach to void properties and day-to-day repairs will be reviewed, encouraging contractors to complete work quickly and 'right first time' developing timed appointments in exchange for more flexible works scheduling including evening and weekend working. Where major works are required, the priority will be to let the property and agree a works programme with the incoming tenant, providing tenant choice on what is to be done and when.

### Involving Tenants and Stakeholders

128. Co-regulation requires landlords and tenants to work closely in scrutinising the delivery of standards and local offers. This is a key element of the Housing Services vision and a requirement of the Regulator of Social Housing.

129. Tenants are, and will increasingly be involved in shaping service decisions. The mechanisms for this are outlined in the Tenant Engagement Strategy.

130. The preferred method of communication with tenants will be digital, maximising the website, email, text and social media to improve and extend the services provided. Electronic communication is easier, cost effective and more responsive to changing circumstances. Where practical, each tenant will be given a choice over how they receive communication.

131. Councillors will be kept informed of all major works programmes through the annual asset plan and specifically, when a contract starts in their ward.

132. Tenants will be involved in the work programme and when work is scheduled for completion to their home. During major capital schemes, tenants will be supported by Customer Liaison Officers which will be a requirement of, and paid for through the contract.

133. Creating ownership of communal areas is often difficult. Where there is interest a 'responsible tenant' programme will be developed where a tenant(s) e.g. in a block of flats becomes the point of contact for access and monitoring of works in communal areas. With 180 blocks of flats this could be a major undertaking but worthwhile. The payment of out of pocket expenses would be considered.

### Keeping Stock Data up-to-date

134. The information on the housing stock is stored in the Northgate management database and is up-to-date in 2021, when the stock survey completed. Having invested in this comprehensive survey it is important that the information is kept up to date when the following happens:

- a. If there are any major changes to a buildings elements, e.g. new windows are installed, adaptations undertaken, room numbers change.
- b. If work is carried out at change of tenancy e.g. new kitchen is installed.
- c. As a result of surveying year one of the five year major works programme where it is found that work is not required and a new remaining life cycle date is needed.
- d. As a result of any survey carried out as part of the tenancy audit e.g. the tenant may have carried out changes without approval.

- e. As part of an annual programme that ensures 20% of the property portfolio (including the above) are surveyed annually commencing in 2024.

### Impact of the Strategy

135. Services will be transparent and accountable. Performance and works programmes will be published. New opportunities will be developed for tenants to be involved in commissioning services to their homes, including choice of kitchen colours and layouts and the option to pay for additional work e.g. kitchen units or additional tiling at contract rates.

136. The effectiveness of the work undertaken in terms of cost and customer satisfaction will be benchmarked through HouseMark where the expectation will be to achieve upper quartile performances by 2025 in the following key areas:

- a. Customer satisfaction with the overall housing service
- b. Customer ability to influence the service
- c. Customer satisfaction with repairs
- d. Value for money

## The Digital Agenda

137. Being digitally enabled is part of the vision for the Housing Service. The Asset Management Strategy is underpinned by the Northgate database that holds stock condition information; surveys; completion information; guarantees; repairs; decency records etc. It also needs to be able to access operating manuals, pictures of the housing stock and future work programmes.

138. Through the Council's customer portal, 'My Account', information will be made available online to tenants e.g. details of asbestos in their home, details of when work is planned for their home. Northgate informs all relevant decisions on planned investment and maintenance. The integrated approach of Northgate allows key housing management data/information to be linked with asset management data and shared across the organisation as well as with contractors who will also be able to update the system providing real time data.

139. Where needed, cloud based systems may provide agile reporting solutions. In all instances, software solutions used by the Council and its partners should synchronise seamlessly with Northgate and not rely on work around solutions.

140. As part of the management of new build and major refurbishment projects, Business Information Modelling (BIM) software will be used for creating and managing information on a construction project throughout its whole life cycle. Using BIM will ensure construction data, materials, operating manuals are filed in a single accessible location<sup>31</sup>.

## Responsibility of Delivering the Strategy

141. In order to deliver the strategy and secure the impact sought, an action plan has been prepared which pulls together the various tasks that need to be undertaken to deliver each of the priorities set out in this HAMS, providing brief details of the work needed, assigning of responsibility and a target date for completion.

142. The Council's Chief Officer for Housing and Lead Officer for Housing Assets and Development has overall responsibility for the ongoing development of this strategy and ensuring it is delivered successfully.

## Equality & Diversity

143. The Council values and respects the wide variety of people from diverse backgrounds, cultures, beliefs and lifestyles who are part of the community it serves. As such, the housing service is constantly trying to improve its knowledge and understanding of the demographic profile of its tenants to ensure that new and existing services reflect the needs of the communities it serves.

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<sup>31</sup> One of the findings from the Grenfell enquiry was that organisations had limited records of the construction, materials and operation of their buildings.

144. In certain circumstances, the standard works may not meet the particular needs of some individuals or the way in which the works are programmed may not be consistent with their lifestyle. The service will try to accommodate requests for flexibility.

145. Contractors and partners will be expected to demonstrate a similar understanding and approach to the diverse make up of our tenants.



## Review of the Strategy

146. The strategy and progress on the action plan will need to be reviewed annually. Any alterations that may be required for operational reasons will be agreed by the Lead Officer for Housing Assets and Development in consultation with the Chief Officer for Housing. Substantial changes will not be authorised without appropriate tenant involvement and CLT consideration.

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