

Thurrock: A place of opportunity, enterprise and excellence, where individuals, communities and businesses flourish

Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

The meeting will be held at **7.00 pm** on **17 February 2016**

Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, New Road, Grays, Essex RM17 6SL

Membership:

Councillors Cathy Kent (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Sue MacPherson and Tunde Ojetola

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

Substitutes:

Councillors Yash Gupta (MBE), Graham Hamilton, Barry Johnson, Steve Liddiard and Joycelyn Redsell

Agenda

Open to Public and Press

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To approve as a correct record the minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 January 2016.	
3 Urgent Items	
To receive additional items that the Chair is of the opinion should be considered as a matter of urgency, in accordance with Section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972.	
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Queries regarding this Agenda or notification of apologies:

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Agenda published on: **9 February 2016**

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DECLARING INTERESTS FLOWCHART – QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Breaching those parts identified as a pecuniary interest is potentially a criminal offence

Helpful Reminders for Members

- *Is your register of interests up to date?*
- *In particular have you declared to the Monitoring Officer all disclosable pecuniary interests?*
- *Have you checked the register to ensure that they have been recorded correctly?*

When should you declare an interest at a meeting?

- **What matters are being discussed at the meeting?** (including Council, Cabinet, Committees, Subs, Joint Committees and Joint Subs); or
- If you are a Cabinet Member making decisions other than in Cabinet **what matter is before you for single member decision?**



Does the business to be transacted at the meeting

- relate to; or
- likely to affect

any of your registered interests and in particular any of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests?

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests shall include your interests or those of:

- your spouse or civil partner's
- a person you are living with as husband/ wife
- a person you are living with as if you were civil partners

where you are aware that this other person has the interest.

A detailed description of a disclosable pecuniary interest is included in the Members Code of Conduct at Chapter 7 of the Constitution. **Please seek advice from the Monitoring Officer about disclosable pecuniary interests.**

What is a Non-Pecuniary interest? – this is an interest which is not pecuniary (as defined) but is nonetheless so significant that a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard to be so significant that it would materially impact upon your judgement of the public interest.

Pecuniary

If the interest is not already in the register you must (unless the interest has been agreed by the Monitoring Officer to be sensitive) disclose the existence and nature of the interest to the meeting

If the Interest is not entered in the register and is not the subject of a pending notification you must within 28 days notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest for inclusion in the register

Unless you have received dispensation upon previous application from the Monitoring Officer, you must:

- **Not participate or participate further in any discussion of the matter at a meeting;**
- **Not participate in any vote or further vote taken at the meeting; and**
- **leave the room while the item is being considered/voted upon**

If you are a Cabinet Member you may make arrangements for the matter to be dealt with by a third person but take no further steps

Non- pecuniary

Declare the nature and extent of your interest including enough detail to allow a member of the public to understand its nature



You may participate and vote in the usual way but you should seek advice on Predetermination and Bias from the Monitoring Officer.

Vision: Thurrock: A place of **opportunity**, **enterprise** and **excellence**, where **individuals**, **communities** and **businesses** flourish.

To achieve our vision, we have identified five strategic priorities:

1. Create a great place for learning and opportunity

- Ensure that every place of learning is rated “Good” or better
- Raise levels of aspiration and attainment so that residents can take advantage of local job opportunities
- Support families to give children the best possible start in life

2. Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity

- Promote Thurrock and encourage inward investment to enable and sustain growth
- Support business and develop the local skilled workforce they require
- Work with partners to secure improved infrastructure and built environment

3. Build pride, responsibility and respect

- Create welcoming, safe, and resilient communities which value fairness
- Work in partnership with communities to help them take responsibility for shaping their quality of life
- Empower residents through choice and independence to improve their health and well-being

4. Improve health and well-being

- Ensure people stay healthy longer, adding years to life and life to years
- Reduce inequalities in health and well-being and safeguard the most vulnerable people with timely intervention and care accessed closer to home
- Enhance quality of life through improved housing, employment and opportunity

5. Promote and protect our clean and green environment

- Enhance access to Thurrock's river frontage, cultural assets and leisure opportunities
- Promote Thurrock's natural environment and biodiversity
- Inspire high quality design and standards in our buildings and public space

Minutes of the Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 6 January 2016 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Cathy Kent (Chair), Chris Baker (Vice-Chair), Jan Baker, Clare Baldwin, Sue MacPherson and Tunde Ojetola

Lynn Mansfield, Housing Tenant Representative

In attendance: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health
Richard Parkin, Head of Housing and Interim Head of Environment
Dermot Moloney, Strategic Lead Housing
Dawn Shepherd, Strategy Manager, Housing, Business Improvement
Julie Curtis, Corporate Finance
Jenny Shade, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

The Chair wished everyone a Happy New Year and welcomed Roger Harris the Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health to the Committee.

25. Minutes

The Minutes of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on the 30 November 2015, were approved as a correct record.

26. Urgent Items

There were no items of urgent business.

27. Declaration of Interests

There were no interests declared.

28. Changes to the Fees and Charges 2016/17

The Officer briefly presented the report and explained that similar Fees and Charges Reports were being presented to all overview and scrutiny committees and referred Members to the Appendix 1, the Fees and Charges Booklet. The Appendix identified the proposed changes to charges.

Lynn Mansfield asked Officers who the fee for the Communal Hall Hire would be applicable to. The Officer needed to clarify this point and will inform the Committee once known.

The Chair asked the Officers why only a £2 increase had been made to the Housing None Statutory Work. The Officer confirmed that this was a standard charge which had been set nationally.

Councillor Ojetola asked Officers what the reasons were for the increase in the Sheltered Housing Visitor's Room and why this increase had not been tapered in over the forthcoming years. The Officer confirmed that this was benchmarked nationally against other authorities in Essex. The increase to £12 was still considered to be a reasonable cost.

Councillor MacPherson asked Officers how many houses in Multiple Occupation Mandatory Licences (MOML) there were in Thurrock. The Officer confirmed that after an assessment undertaken last year on three storey properties with five bedrooms or more he can confirm there were five MOML Licences. Although with new guidelines in the pipeline this could have an effect on over 400 licences if regulations dropped to two storey properties.

The Officer confirmed that the proposal by Councillor Worrall to look at two storeys MOML was still under consultation and feedback would be provided to the Committee once available.

Councillor Ojetola questioned Officers on the Thurrock Charging Policy, particularly when considering charges, services that will consider the level of demand for this service and why had this not been done this year. The Officer needed to clarify this point and will inform the Committee once known.

Councillor Ojetola asked Officers if Right to Rent checks on immigrants was the responsibility of the Council and could this be a means of raising funds. The Officer confirmed this was not currently being undertaken and would be the Landlord responsibility. The Officer agreed to look into this suggestion and report back to the committee.

Members agreed that the wording to the recommendation should be changed to read "That the committee consider the proposed charges as detailed in the Fees and Charges Booklet Appendix and provide feedback to Cabinet".

RESOLVED

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the proposed charges as detailed in the Fees and Charges Booklet Appendix and provide feedback to Cabinet.

29. Housing Revenue Account Base Budgets and Rent Setting 2016/17

The Officer introduced the report and informed Members of the proposals to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) base budgets for 2016/17. The report

also identified the changes between 2015/16 and 2016/17 and that any growth or loss of income within the budgets will be funded through savings and efficiencies identified elsewhere.

The Officer confirmed that they had secured a meeting with the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to discuss any possible exemption.

Richard Parkin thanked the Officer for the complex report but explained that the recommendations in the report were for note only and the report would go to Full Council Budget meeting.

The Officer confirmed that even if the exemption of the 1 per cent reduction was agreed, residents would still have to pay the same rent; Rent statements will be issued in March 2016 to all tenants.

Councillor Baldwin asked for clarification from Officers that the Rent Table was correct in the report. The Officer confirmed that at the time of print the table was correct but will need to be updated for Cabinet.

Councillor Ojetola and MacPherson both agreed that although the report was very complex it could be made more clear and comprehensive. The Officer provided further information and clarification on the tables throughout the report and agreed to provide an additional Appendix 'Summary of HRA Budget' for the Cabinet report.

Lynn Mansfield asked Officers that when schedules were sent out, they were made clearer as to where and what monies had been spent. The Officer noted this comment.

Councillor MacPherson asked the Officer what percentage of residents on the Traveller's Sites received housing benefit. The Officer confirmed that there were none. The Officer explained that the travellers site under housing benefit rules were not classed as Housing.

Lynn Mansfield stated that only approximately 50 per cent of tenants understand the rent statement and more should be done to make it user friendly and explained better. The Officer noted the comments made.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the changes included in the base budget for 2016/17 be noted.**
- 2. That the 1% rent reduction outlined in the Summer Budget be noted.**
- 3. That the 1% increase in de-pooled service charges for 2016/17 be noted.**

4. That the 2.5% increase in garage rents for 2016/17 be noted.
5. That the 1.5% increase in to central heating charges in 2016/17 be noted.
6. That the 2.5% increase in traveller's sites rents be noted.
7. That the Officer to provide an additional Appendix - 'Summary of HRA Budget' for the Cabinet report.

Julie Curtis left the Committee Room at 7:50.

30. Housing Allocations Scheme - Second Year Review

The Officer presented the report to Officers and stated that a review of the Housing Allocations Scheme had taken place in 2014 following the introduction of the new statutory guidance and legislation. A further review has now been undertaken following the review and further amendments were recommended for noting by the Committee for approval and implementation by Cabinet in February and implementation for 1 April 2016.

The Officer presented each Issue of the report individually to members.

Procedural Changes for Advertising Properties

The Officer further clarified:

More flexibility around advertising dates – properties would still be advertised for the same amount of time but start and end dates would vary.

The bidding process would not change and that the Assisted Bidding option would still be available.

Local Lettings Plan

The Officer clarified that the process was consistent throughout the borough and that the allocation of properties would be 75 per cent allocated to existing tenants and 25 per cent be allocated in line with the Council's usual allocation process.

Pre-Tenancy Training

The Officer clarified that the training would only be mandatory to all new applicants.

A discussion took place between Members and Officers on the purpose and the process of the training and how the training was to be conducted. Councillor MacPherson expressed her concern that there was not a certain level to pass the training.

Councillor Ojetola stated that he supported this training initiative but should not be tagged as training and recommended that the title should be toned down and not say the word Training.

Lynn Mansfield asked for further clarification on the survey and how this was distributed. The Officer confirmed that this was sent out to all those on the waiting or transfer lists, encouraging applicants to go on-line to the Thurrock Choice Home Page to find the link to the survey which was available via the Council Consultancy Portal. Lynn Mansfield stated her concern for those that were not IT literate.

The Chair stated that residents should be made aware of what is expected from them to ensure that this training is completed.

The Members agreed that the recommendation should be reworded to that pre-tenancy information sessions were mandatory for all new tenants.

Sheltered or Extra Care 2 bedroom properties

Councillor Ojetola asked for clarification on costs on 2 bedroom rent if offered to a single person. The Officer confirmed that the cost would be at a 2 bedroom rate and that tenants would need to be made aware of this.

Discretionary power to award a welfare banding for homeless prevention

A discussion took place between the Members and Officers. The Officers confirmed that there were no specific numbers available on how many tenants this would affect but residents would be encouraged to talk to the council earlier and that the process would need to be conducted carefully.

Annual Review of financial qualification

Councillor MacPherson asked the Officers how many 4 bedroom housing were being built in Thurrock. The Officer confirmed approximately 6.

Options for older owner occupiers

The Officer confirmed that the leasing scheme would be for a minimum of five years. If the owner of the property were to decease, that lease would come to an end and a clause would need to be added to reflect this.

Members would be keen to see results of any pilot before agreeing to recommendations.

Members agreed that the recommendation should be reworded to that the financial qualification be removed for sheltered and extra care applicants who lease their properties back to the Council to allow a pilot scheme to run for one year.

The Chair stated this would have an effect on resident's finances as they would be liable for tax and could also affect pensions. The Officer confirmed that yes this would be the case and that residents would be advised to seek advice from independent financial advisors.

RESOLVED

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommend the following changes in this report to Cabinet for approval and implementation from April 2016.

- 1. That the bidding cycles were no longer limited to weekly but may be continuous on the property advert.**
- 2. That the Appendix 1 to the Local Lettings Plan be recommended for all new developments within existing Council estates.**
- 3. That the pre-tenancy information sessions were mandatory for all new tenants.**
- 4. That 2 bedroom properties can be offered to a couple or single person subject to there being no waiting applicants meeting the criteria for a 2 bedroom properties which were specifically designed for older people.**
- 5. That the welfare priority band 3 is awarded at the discretion of the Housing management panel on the condition that the applicant is able to remain in the current or an alternative home, following intervention by the Housing solutions team, for at least 6 months.**
- 6. That the financial qualification criteria were updated for 2016-17.**
- 7. That a pilot scheme is recommended whereby the financial qualification is removed for sheltered applicants who lease their properties back to the Council. The pilot scheme would be for one year.**

31. Fixed Term Tenancies

Revised copies of the Fixed Term Tenancies Report were distributed to Members prior to the start of the Committee.

The Officers introduced the report which detailed the advantages and disadvantages of introducing fixed term tenancies in order for them to be reconsidered for introduction at a future date.

The Officer gave a further update to the report that just before Christmas 2015 the Housing Planning Bill introduced the fixed term tenancies as mandatory. This was currently with the Planning Minister going through Parliament. The

Officer would bring this report back to Committee once further information was available.

Councillor Ojetola asked the Officer how flexible this new law was. The Officer confirmed that there was no particular flexibility available but this is not fully known at this time.

The Officer confirmed that this would not affect current tenancies but would affect tenants seeking to succeed to a tenancy where a fixed term would likely apply.

The Chair asked the Officer if a court order would need to be granted for the eviction of tenants. The Officer confirmed that this was the case and that the judge would be guided by the law and the circumstances of the individual case.

The Chair asked the Officer what the costs to administer these tenancies were. The Officer confirmed that this was not known at present and there were no benchmarking examples for fixed term tenancies were available with other authorities as yet. Benchmarking for similar processes being introduced showed that such costs may prove to be considerable. The change to the IT system may have impact on the way the processes are managed which may reduce the administration tasks.

Lynn Mansfield asked Officers would residents of larger or adopted properties not suitable to their needs to be asked to leave. The Officer confirmed that this would be the case and that suitable offers would be made.

Councillor MacPherson asked Officer for clarification if tenants who were evicted be offered this tenancies. The Officer confirmed that if the eviction was intentionally the residents would not be rehoused.

Councillor Ojetola asked Officers what the impact of this would be on the homelessness. The Officer confirmed that this would need to be managed by the authority on a one-to-one case basis.

The Chair stated that this may impact on sustainable ownership if only short term tenancies were offered and how this could affect the community.

RESOLVED

- 1. That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee note this report and made any comments necessary.**
- 2. That the Fixed Term Tenancies be added to the work programme when further information was available.**

32. Work Programme

Since the publication of the agenda a number of amendments to the work programme had been proposed and agreed, included:

- That an item on Rent Setting be Brief Only on the work programme for 17 February 2016 Committee.
- That an item on Housing Strategy and Homelessness Prevention Strategy for the 16 March 2016 Committee be combined into one report.
- That an item on Fixed Term Tenancies be brought back to Committee when further details were available.

Members were in agreement with the proposed changes to the work programme, following which the Chair requested that an updated work programme be circulated to the Committee and Officers following the meeting.

RESOLVED

That the work programme be noted, subject to the amendments detailed above.

The Chair referred Members to the Right to Move Brief that had been tabled for this committee and asked if there were any further comments or questions. There were none.

The meeting finished at 9.07 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk

17 February 2016		ITEM: 5
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Changes to Extra Care Services		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: Yes
Report of: Councillor Lyn Worrall, Portfolio Holder for Housing		
Accountable Head of Service: Dermot Moloney, Strategic Lead, Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris, Corporate Director of Adults, Housing & Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

Thurrock Council needs to make considerable savings to its budget; one area identified to help achieve this is the provision of extra care housing.

A report outlining proposed changes on how Social Care is provided was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 January 2016.

The Committee noted and recommended the changes to Cabinet.

This report outlines the changes and the implications for residents at the extra care schemes at Piggs Corner and Kynoch Court.

1. Recommendation(s)

That Housing Overview and Scrutiny committee note the changes outlined in this report.

2. Introduction and Background

Thurrock Council needs to make considerable savings to its budget; one area identified to help achieve this is the provision of extra care housing.

Thurrock has three extra care housing schemes:

	Total units	Of which = Extra care
Piggs Corner, Grays	55	39
Kynoch Court, Stanford le Hope	48	14
Elizabeth Gardens, Grays	65	65
Total units	168	118

A report outlining proposed changes on how Social Care is provided was presented to the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 January 2016.

In order to ensure financial viability, extra care schemes of 50 flats or more are usually needed. Currently neither of the schemes at Piggs Corner or Kynoch Court currently meets this requirement.

It was also identified that social care workers are carrying out many of the housing management functions such as controlling access to the building, reporting repairs and advising on tenancy matters.

The introduction of a concierge service and dedicated sheltered housing officer, in conjunction with social care out of hour's service, would remove the need for care staff to undertake these tasks and thereby reduce the number of hours worked at the scheme.

For this reason it was proposed to expand the Council's extra care offer at Piggs Corner to create 55 units of extra care accommodation, whilst no longer allocating extra care flats to new tenants at Kynoch Court.

Current residents at Kynoch Court would be provided with a domiciliary service but would also be offered the opportunity to move to Piggs Corner or Elizabeth Gardens if they preferred.

It is anticipated that the proposal will achieve savings to the Social Care budget of £236,000 in 2016-17.

During the course of the transition to the new arrangements, each resident will be assessed to ensure that the necessary arrangements for their care and support are maintained.

Consultation was undertaken with residents as outlined in section 5 below.

The proposals were recommended by the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee and will be presented to Cabinet in February 2016.

If implemented, all residents affected will receive a letter outlining the changes which will be implemented from 1 April 2016.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

Implications for Housing

In order to provide 24 hour on site cover to residents at Piggs Corner, the Housing department will introduce a concierge service which will be manned 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. The service will provide:

- A reception service for all visitors
- Controlled access to the building
- Help with enquiries e.g. caretaking and cleaning services, repairs and any tenancy issues
- Daily safety and security inspections

Concierge staff must have an awareness of the needs of vulnerable and older people including people with physical and mental disabilities such as dementia. They must be able to deal with extra care residents and visitors fairly and in a friendly manner without breaching professional boundaries between staff and residents.

A dedicated sheltered housing officer will also be recruited to manage the scheme during office hours. The officer will be available on site during office hours to assist with tenancy management and any emergency issues.

Provision of the new service will incur an extra cost which as a housing management function, will need to be added to the weekly rent. It will therefore attract Housing benefit subsidy, which means tenants in receipt of housing benefit will be able to claim the additional cost as part of their benefit claim.

For current residents who are not in receipt of housing benefit, a transitional arrangement will be made to ensure that no current tenant is worse off financially.

It is anticipated that the extra cost for the provision of the new service will be around £38 per week per flat.

4. Reason for Recommendations

The available funding for social care in Thurrock is not sufficient to cover the cost of all the services currently provided. A number of efficiency measures have already been undertaken, and operating costs have been reduced, including the deletion of a number of social worker and other posts.

By remodelling the extra care housing service further savings are anticipated whilst improving the offer.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

Consultation on the proposed changes was undertaken, as part of a larger consultation on changes to Adult Social Care provision, over 12 weeks between 14 September and 7 December 2015.

Two questionnaires were produced (one an easy read version for people with learning disabilities) and were published on the consultation portal. Letters were sent with the questionnaires to some 2,800 users of non-residential services in Thurrock.

In addition Thurrock Coalition and HealthWatch Thurrock held meetings and events across the Borough during the consultation period. The Council also ran briefings for staff, and providers attended the Thurrock over Fifties Forum to discuss the proposed changes.

In total 528 separate responses were received. These have been entered onto the consultation data base to inform the analysis contained in this report.

In addition, sheltered housing officers wrote to all of the extra care tenants at Piggs Corner and Kynoch Court and arranged visits to discuss the proposals. 93 tenants took up the opportunity for a visit.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

None.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Kay Goodacre**
Finance Manager

The proposed cost savings measures are required in order to ensure that the overall savings target within the Medium Term Financial Strategy is delivered. A decision on **implementing** the proposals will need to be taken by Cabinet, taking account of the views of the Committee, and the Council's statutory responsibilities.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Dawn Pelle**
Adult Care Lawyer

This consultation has been undertaken in accordance with the Thurrock Joint Compact between the Council and third sector partners. A Community and Equality Impact Assessment is currently being prepared in line with the Council's policy. A further report will be made to Cabinet in February for final agreement on the proposed changes to the provision of adult social care as set out in the report.

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
**Community Development & Equalities
Manager**

A Community and Equality Impact Assessment, taking account of the consultation responses and the Submission from Thurrock Coalition on the impact of the proposed changes is being prepared. When finalised, this will be signed off by the Head of Adult Services and matters relevant to the implementation of the proposals, including mitigation measures for negative impacts, will be reported to Cabinet alongside any recommendations for changes to provision and charges they are asked to approve.

7.4 Other implications (where significant – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None.

9. Appendices to the report

None.

Report Author

Dawn Shepherd
Housing Strategy Manager
Business Improvement, Housing

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17 February 2016		ITEM: 6
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Housing Investment & Development Programmes (2015/16)		
Wards and communities affected: All		Key Decision: Non Key
Report of: Susan Cardozo - Housing Asset Investment and Delivery Manager		
Accountable Head of Service: Richard Parkin - Head of Housing and Environment		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris - Corporate Director of Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report provides members with an overview of the key achievements in the first three quarters of 2015/16 relating to the management of our Council Housing Assets through the Housing Investment and Development programmes

The programmes comprise of the Transforming Homes programme (which includes tackling Damp and Mould and Thermal Efficiency programmes), Planned and Preventative Maintenance programmes, the Responsive Repairs Service, New Housing Development and the Estate Regeneration programme. The key deliverables that make up the work programmes for 2015/16 are derived from the Housing Strategy and Corporate Plan 2015/16.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 Note the continued progress made in the delivery of various components of housing repairs, maintenance and capital works programmes which have a positive impact on the living conditions and quality of life for council tenants.**
- 1.2 Note the progress with the delivery of new homes within the borough.**
- 1.3 Agree the proposed outline objectives for a new Housing Asset Management Strategy.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Housing Department has implemented a suite of ambitious programmes designed to improve Housing assets as well as the lives and opportunities of**

our residents whilst driving efficiency savings through a stringent contract management strategy. The core principles which are central to the delivery across all programmes are to ensure investment is targeted at maximising improvements to the assets and ensuring we have internal processes in place that challenge our contractors to deliver the best possible service and quality for our residents. Our aim is to ensure that the current and future assets are maintained to an appropriate standard, maintain asset value and to fully support the needs of the local communities.

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

3.1 Key Performance Highlights

- 54% of the current Council housing stock has now benefited from internal improvements under the Transforming Homes Programme (5402 homes).
- More than 1300 Council homes have improved energy efficiency.
- In Year 3, the Transforming Homes Programme has collectively achieved a resident satisfaction rating of 81% good to excellent survey responses. This is 5 percentage points higher than the 2014/15 outturn of 76% good to excellent responses.
- Resident satisfaction with the Repairs Service has continued to improve and averages 88% in 2015/16 which is 4 percentage points higher than the 2014/15 outturn and 6 percentage points higher than the 2013/14 outturn.
- Despite a 6.5% rise in void demand during 2015/16 on the previous year, void rent loss is down 19.2% (£95K) on the same period last year.
- 100% compliance has been achieved for Gas Servicing in Council properties.
- Over 30% of the programme spend is within the local economy.
- 20% of supply chain partners are registered in Thurrock.
- 27 apprenticeships have been created across all programmes.

3.2 Transforming Homes – Overview of Delivery

- 3.2.1 The programme commenced in 2013 and is currently part-way through its third year.
- 3.2.2 The original programme timeframe aimed to upgrade all major internal components and carry out any required external works in 5 years to 2018, thereby raising all domestic Council assets to the new Thurrock standard.
- 3.2.3 In December 2015, Cabinet reviewed the financial implications of the budget announcements and key policy changes through the government's introduction of the Housing and Planning Bill and Welfare Reform Bill 2015. Cabinet subsequently approved an extension of the Transforming Homes programme by up to 1 year for internal improvements (1,000 homes) and up to 3 years for external improvements (5,000 homes), where the asset can withstand delayed completion. This extends the timeframe for full completion of the programme to 2021 for all property elements.

3.2.4 Essential components will continue to age and will require on-going maintenance. There will be a requirement for a rolling programme of investment to ensure core components are updated at the appropriate time in order to continue to deliver housing at a standard which is suitable for the needs of our local communities.

3.2.5 The following table illustrates the numbers and types of works achieved by the programme to the end of December 2015:

Figure 1: Works Completed by Element

Element	Number Installed/Completed
Kitchens	3500
Bathrooms	2980
OT Showers	850
Boilers	1316
Re-wires	1160
External Works	752

3.3 Thermal Efficiency Programme

3.3.1 Across the Housing Department we are continuously working to improve our stock whilst effectively supporting our residents to live in warm and health homes. A key contributing factor is to improve the overall thermal efficiency of our homes and support some of our most vulnerable residents out of fuel poverty.

3.3.2 Over the last two years, one of the key components of the Housing capital programme has been the thermal efficiency element. In both 2014/15 and 2015/16 we successfully secured external funding under a partnering scheme with Eon Energy as well as additional funding from the Government as part of the Green Deal. These funding streams supplemented the capital investment made by the Council and facilitated installation of external wall insulation to 342 homes across Grays, Tilbury, and Chadwell St. Mary.

3.3.3 The external wall insulation programme delivers energy savings for the residents, improves the fabric of the building and also has a positive impact on the aesthetics of the buildings where works have been completed.

3.3.4 Further energy efficiencies have been achieved through the installation of more efficient 'A grade' boilers in over 1300 homes through the Transforming Homes programme.

3.3.5 In 2015/16, we have made a significant effort to explore the possibility of integrating renewable technologies into the asset to deliver efficiencies to our residents whilst also reducing our operational costs as a landlord. The changes in the renewable energies subsidies announced in the Governments autumn statement and official announcement on the 17 December 2015 meant the planned schemes were no longer viable.

- 3.3.6 Work continues in 2016 to continue to develop alternative solar PV schemes of which updates will be provided as further progress is made.
- 3.3.7 Within our stock, we are aware elements of the existing infrastructure are reaching the end of technical life expectancy. We are working on trialing new technologies that will replace these elements and deliver efficiencies whilst also being able to upgrade major elements within the housing asset without the need for any upfront capital expenditure.
- 3.3.8 Plans for 2016 include the development of a scheme in partnership with our responsive repairs provider Mears, to upgrade communal lighting in our residential blocks with new, energy efficient LED lighting. The aim of the scheme is to improve the asset for our residents whilst also reducing both energy consumption costs and reactive repair and maintenance costs.
- 3.4 Damp & Mould Programmes - Overview of Delivery
- 3.4.1 Damp and Mould is a major issue faced by a number of our residents and this is a common theme with large social landlords. Mould and dampness are often considered as the same issue and therefore, over the delivery of our programmes, we have embedded an approach that ensures the matter is appropriately understood and addressed based on the physical findings within the home.
- 3.4.2 Predominately within the housing stock, mould and dampness can be attributed to condensation. The cause of condensation is associated to inadequate space heating and ventilation meaning the environment within resident's homes becomes humid and causes condensation to form on cold surfaces and associated mould to form throughout the home. There are a number of everyday normal household functions which increase moisture within a home environment and in a number of instances residents are often unaware of the impact they are making. To address this factor, the Housing department has taken steps to educate residents through different communication channels.
- 3.4.3 This year (2015/16) we have continued to allocate resources to address the damp and mould issues with surveys and remedial works. This is achieved both through reactive maintenance and proactive identification as part of the Transforming Homes programme:

Figure 2: Damp/Mould Surveys & Remedial Works (2015/16)

Work Stream	Number of Jobs
Transforming Homes Mould Surveys	122
Transforming Homes Remedial Works	53
Responsive Mould Surveys	884
Responsive Remedial Works	550

3.4.4 Remedial works identified and undertaken following the surveys include:

- Mechanical and passive ventilation, insulation, heating, proprietary decorative treatments and on-going advice to residents.
- Resolution of building defects such as leaks, damage to structures etc.
- Provision of chemical or physical damp proof courses.

3.4.5 We are continuously working to ensure that our approach is fully considered and relevant and in line with the latest methods and techniques. On Friday 18 September 2015, Thurrock Council hosted a Conference in relation to the management of Damp and Mould which was attended by over 40 representatives from 14 different Local Authorities, Private Social Housing Landlords and our contracting delivery partners. The event provided a platform for all attendees share learning with a collective goal to understand the topic and ways in which it can be addressed, covering both building fabric defects and resident management and communication.

3.5 Repairs and Maintenance – Overview of Delivery

3.5.1 Following the successful mobilisation of a new Repairs & Maintenance contract in early 2015, a number of key developments and improvements are being implemented in order to further drive efficiencies in service delivery. The main focus of the new Repairs & Maintenance contract is improving efficiency of service provision while maintaining a high quality, resident focused service driving the development of the service area over the coming years. The key deliverables for 2015/16 are identified as:

- Driving value out of the contract through strong performance and financial monitoring.
- Undertaking more planned programmes to deliver long-term savings.
- Implementing new technologies - under the new Repairs and Maintenance contract a number of developments will be made with regard to the improved use of technology including use of online and mobile repairs reporting and the use of improved data analysis for the development of efficient and effective planned repairs programming.

3.5.2 Significant progress has been in the first year of the contract, and this is reflected in the improvements in resident satisfaction:

- Resident satisfaction with the Repairs Service has continued to improve and overall satisfaction with the service averages 88% in 2015/16.
- This is 4 percentage points higher than the 2014/15 outturn of 84% and 6 percentage points higher than 2013/14 outturn of 82%.
- 88% of resident rate the service as good or excellent.
- 89% of residents are happy with the quality of their repair.
- 93% of residents confirmed their appointment slot was kept.
- 97% repairs are completed in target timescales.

- 3.5.3 The new repairs policy introduced this year provides vulnerable residents with an enhanced and differentiated service. Vulnerable alerts are now in place on our systems to ensure this is offered proactively. The new policy has also meant that residents who have benefitted from the significant improvements provided under the Transforming Homes programme are now responsible for the upkeep of these improvements.
- 3.5.4 In order to drive further value in the delivery of non –urgent repairs a structured approach to batched programme delivery has been implemented. 5 batched programmes covering more than 4000 non-urgent or preventative repairs have been delivered.

Figure 3: Number of Jobs Completed by Programme 2015/16

Programme	Jobs Completed
Mould Survey Programme	1177
Gutter Clearance	824
Jetting	1910
Fencing	108
Glazing	156

- 3.5.5 Residents are integral to the development of the new arrangements and representatives from the Residents Excellence Panel continue to engage in the monitoring of the service through their attendance at operational governance meetings on a monthly basis. This enables insights and feedback from a resident's perspective.
- 3.5.6 Our aim is to simplify access to repairs ordering making use of new technology as far as possible. A new repairs reporting 'App' has now been developed for IOS and Android smart phones. This is currently being tested by the Resident Excellence Panel. Further enhancements in this respect will be implemented alongside the new Housing Management system in 2016/17. The new system will include the implementation of "Repairs Online" which enables residents to identify and report repairs without the need to make a telephone call.
- 3.5.7 Resident input at the operational level has highlighted some confusion surrounding the delivery of repairs that fall outside of the standard contract delivery. The information given to residents who have repairs of this nature has now been amended based on the recommendations made by the Excellence Panel. In addition to this further measures have been implemented in the way the service is monitored to ensure these works are delivered to the expected timescales.
- 3.6 Planned and Cyclical Maintenance – Overview of Delivery
- 3.6.1 A number of key developments have been made in planned maintenance throughout 2015/16 with the optimisation of contracts through improved procurement, consolidation and contractual specifications. Key deliverables for 2015/16 are identified as:

- Programming methodology - Dovetailing maintenance, capital and regeneration ensuring efficiencies are realised.
- Planned & Cyclical Maintenance - Prioritizing essential servicing and maintenance works for estate, communal and commercial assets.
- Delivering the 2015/16 programme which includes upgrading door entry systems and carrying out lift refurbishments.

Examples of progress with planned maintenance are:

Door Entry (Servicing, Breakdown/Repair and Installation) - A new three year contract for door entry systems was awarded in September 2015 providing a comprehensive approach to servicing, maintenance and upgrading systems by consolidating existing contracts. A door entry installation programme targeting blocks with the highest repair and maintenance costs is currently being mobilised. This programme includes all 9 high rise blocks in Grays, Tilbury Concierge (3 blocks), O'Donoghue House and all blocks at Lansbury gardens. The first phase of the programme will see 744 properties benefit from improvements in both accessibility and security.

Lifts (Servicing, Breakdown/Repair and Refurbishment) - In November 2015 a new three year contract was awarded for passenger lifts across Thurrock. This contract comprehensively includes all servicing, breakdown and refurbishment and is an amalgamation of two previous contracts ensuring continuity of service delivery for our residents by reducing breakdown times whilst also delivering savings over the term of the contract.

- 3.6.2 The first phase of a lift refurbishment programme will commence in February 2016 which includes five lifts, including a Sheltered Housing Complex and two high rise blocks located in Grays. This programme will also deliver a full stock condition survey on all of our passenger lifts within the Borough by the end of the 2015/16 financial year which will inform a 30 year life cycle costing plan prioritised on the basis of asset needs and demands.

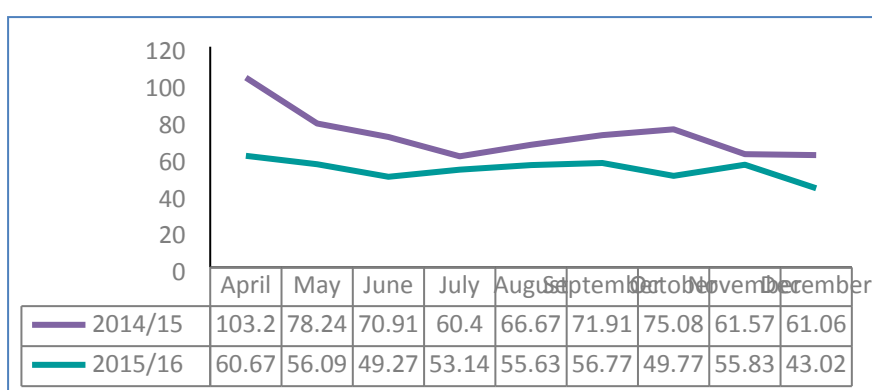
Assisted Decoration - As part of our support for our vulnerable residents we run a programme that offer redecoration of one room for those eligible. This contract was awarded in August 2015 for a period of 2 years. Each year the programme runs from January to March and this year includes the decoration of a room in 670 properties and 4 complexes. There are also plans for the full decoration of a communal hall within one of the complexes free of charge.

Gas Servicing - This contract was awarded in March 2015 for a period of 3 years. 100% compliancy has been achieved for gas servicing over the last 4 months. We are now currently working with the new contractor to smooth out the servicing programme across the year to facilitate more effective compliance management.

3.7 Voids Delivery

- 3.7.1 The fit to let standard was revised in 2015 in line with the new Repairs Policy and now all aspects of the property are covered in the standard.
- 3.7.2 The works to Void properties are delivered to two standards, Silver or Gold. Silver void works are completed by our repairs contractor and are delivered to our fit to let standard. This means that essential works take place to bring the property back to the revised corporate standard for letting. Our contractor has a target of 10 days to complete the works. Gold void works are completed by our Transforming Homes contractors. A full Transforming Homes survey is undertaken and new kitchens, bathrooms, re-wires and heating is installed where required. This means the property would be let at our Transforming Homes standard and as such takes longer than Silver void works.
- 3.7.3 Void demand has risen 6.5% so far in 2015/16 but performance has shown considerable improvements. A total of 84 void properties were carried over from 2014/15 into 2015/16. In addition to this, 467 voids have been raised so far in 2015/16 (to 1 December 2015). Last year (2014/15) 107 voids were carried over from 2013/14 with 427 voids raised in year to 31 December 2014.
- 3.7.4 Voids performance in terms of re-let times is traditionally reported by social landlords using methodology which excludes Gold (Capital) voids and voids which have undergone major structural works. However, this reporting methodology does not provide a full reflection of voids delivery overall and associated void loss.
- 3.7.5 During the 2015/16 financial year, void re-let times have improved by at least 5.74 calendar days against comparable months in 2014/15.

Figure 4: Void Turnaround Times (All Voids)



In terms of rent loss through voids, the improved performance has had a positive impact and despite a 6.5% rise in void demand in 2015/16 on the previous year, void loss is down 19.2% on 2014/15 to date.

Figure 5: Rent loss through voids by Year

Year	Rent Loss
2014/15	£497,186.00
2015/16	£401,859.00

3.8 Delivering Social Value

3.8.1 The significant investment which is currently taking place in the Council's housing stock represents a real opportunity to provide additional social value to the local communities in the borough. Our commissioning, contract management and partnering approach supports a framework for social value delivery that works with all sectors to support training and employment opportunities for all segments of our communities.

3.8.2 The key successes during 2015/16 are:

- Over 30% of the Transforming Homes programme spend is in the local economy.
- 20% of supply chain partners are registered in Thurrock.
- 27 apprenticeships have been created across all housing investment and delivery programmes.
- 32% of the delivery workforce is based locally.
- 305 sub-contractors are registered in Thurrock
- 120 jobs have been created or retained across all delivery programmes.
- 68 residents have been supported through pathways programmes which maximise value for local residents through provision of training, work experience and job opportunities.
- 127 young people have benefitted from support from the Princes Trust with 78% participants supported moving into employment, education, training and volunteering.

3.9 Developing the Housing Asset Management Strategy

3.9.1 The delivery of housing repairs, investment and regeneration programmes, as approved by Cabinet in recent years, has driven an approach to asset management. This has emphasised an efficient, effective and long-term approach which aligns to wider corporate objectives. In parallel to the major capital works being undertaken through Transforming Homes, Cabinet has approved a new Repairs & Maintenance contract, an associated Repairs Policy, as well as planned maintenance programmes which lie behind a move from a responsive to a planned approach to asset management.

3.9.2 Work is now underway to draw the agreed principles together into a new Housing Asset Management Strategy which builds on the improved resilience achieved to date sets in place the approach, principles and objectives for housing asset management going forward.

- 3.9.3 Asset management in the context of council housing is the management of the physical assets owned by Thurrock Council Housing Division i.e. houses, land, garages. An asset management strategy aims to ensure that the current and future assets are maintained to an appropriate standard to maintain asset value and to fully support the needs of the local communities.
- 3.9.4 The new housing asset management strategy will aim to ensure that all assets are well maintained to appropriate standards, are being used to maximum benefit and that opportunities are taken to unlock any untapped potential or take action over stock that no longer meets modern needs or is no longer 'fit for purpose'. As a result, the strategy looks beyond just the physical condition of the properties, seeking to identify actions that can be taken to secure better use of land or properties. It also recognises that at times decisions may have to be made around whether to continue to invest in maintaining existing properties or whether alternative options should be considered in order to provide homes and estates that better meet the existing and future needs of local people. In this way, the housing stock can evolve over time so it better meets housing needs and optimises the use and value of the property assets.
- 3.9.5 There are three key strategic objectives that frame this approach. These objectives support the further development of an asset base that exceeds minimum required standards and meets resident's needs and aspirations now and in the future.

Objective 1: Maintaining and Improving Housing Standards in Existing Stock

To ensure that current housing assets meet the statutory requirements, the Thurrock local decency standard, as well as standards for energy efficiency.

This will encompass the delivery of a whole asset approach to capital investment, with synergies and strategic procurement across investment programmes to ensure optimised performance and return. Ensuring we maintain a housing stock that continues to meet residents' needs and aspirations in the future.

The objective is to move the balance from a responsive service to a more cost effective planned approach which targets the aspects of the asset most in need.

This supports a programmed approach to addressing particular issues and needs. For example the prevention of damp & mould, improving the energy efficiency of the assets or carrying out adaptations to meet the needs of people with physical disabilities to enhance their lifestyle and, where appropriate, enable them to remain in their current home.

Objective 2: Understanding and Optimising Performance

Optimising the value and use of housing assets, supported by an asset performance management and appraisal framework.

To better understand the relative performance, value for money and contribution of properties to the HRA Business Plan. The aim is to allow us to categorise our stock in terms of how 'fit for purpose it is for the future.

This is still a new area of activity for the council as a landlord which will be developed looking at best practice performance assessment techniques from the social housing sector. It is envisaged that the bulk of the stock will be 'long term sustainable', but that some stock might exhibit some issues, with other stock exhibiting particular cause for concern. Property types or groups which fall into these latter two groups will, as appropriate, be the subject of option appraisals designed to determine the potential options and, ultimately, a preferred course for intervention.

Objective 3: Informing the standards and performance in new build council owned properties

Informing the standard and specification of new homes where the Council will be the landlord taking into account the operational maintenance and life time costs of the new assets.

Working together to ensure wider corporate and housing strategy objectives can be met, establishing standards and principles for future housing assets. Establishing new build quality standards: using London Space Standards, level 4 Code for Sustainable Homes, Lifetime Homes and HAPPI standards to ensure the Council is developing an asset base which has long term viability meeting space requirements, with improved sustainability, adapting to needs of different residents.

3.10 Delivering the Asset Management Strategy Objectives

Delivery of the Housing Asset Management Strategy will be supported by two associated documents - the HRA Business Plan which sets out the long term plan aligned to strategic objectives and an Asset Management Delivery Plan which sets out the medium term goals for delivery.

Housing Investment & Development recognise that this is a developing strategy - taking forward learning and improvements from the recent programmes, and implementing a comprehensive asset management strategy to ensure standards and performance meet corporate objectives and resident expectations.

The full strategy will be developed in the coming months to be taken to Cabinet for approval later this year.

Robust stock condition information forms the cornerstone of an effective asset management strategy. This stock condition information leads the programming of re-investment that ensures we maintain the stock appropriately.

While we are confident there is now a solid baseline of asset information in place, in order to maintain robust projections for future priorities it is vital that this data is continually confirmed. The planned implementation of the new Northgate Housing management system includes a new asset management IT system which will further enhance our capabilities to effectively manage this information and carry out this future planning.

3.11 Consultation and Engagement

The final strategy and implementation plan will be shaped through engagement with our internal and external partners and engagement and consultation with residents.

All the Housing Investment and Asset Management plans to date have been shaped by the ongoing consultation and engagement with residents across a range of service delivery streams. Housing Investment & Delivery work in line with the Community Engagement Strategy in planning, engagement and evaluation & feedback across repairs, capital, new build and regeneration.

4. Reason for Recommendations

- 4.1 This report is for noting and commenting on the proposed outline for the future Asset Management Strategy.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This report is for consultation with Overview and Scrutiny.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 The improvement of the Council's assets is linked to key corporate priorities:

- Creating a great place for learning and opportunity
- Encourage and promote job creation and economic prosperity
- Building pride, responsibility and respect
- Improve health and well-being

The different housing programmes continue to support strategic and local opportunities, investing in the long-term integrity of the Councils assets, new homes and new opportunities for our residents, contributing to their wellbeing and the long-term regeneration of Thurrock.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Joanne Freeman**
Management Accountant – Social Care and Commissioning

There are no financial implications arising from this report. It is a progress report update only.

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Martin Hall**
Housing Solicitor / Housing Team Leader

There are no Legal implications arising from this report

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren**
Community Development and Equalities Manager

A full impact assessment has been undertaken of the implementation of the Housing delivery of the reactive repairs service and the transforming homes investment programme.

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- Housing Programme Update and Scheme Approvals, June 2013
- Housing Capital Programme Procurement February 2013
- Housing Planned & Cyclical Maintenance Programme, April 2014
- Award Repairs and Maintenance contract, November 2014
- Implication of the Housing & Planning Bill and Welfare Reform Bill 2015 on HRA Services and Affordable Housing Programme, December 2015

9. Appendices to the report

None.

Report Author:

Susan Cardozo

Housing Asset Investment and Delivery Manager

**Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Work Programme
2015/16**

Dates of Meetings: 17 June 2015, 2 September 2015, 30 November 2015, 6 January 2016, 17 February 2016, 16 March 2016

Topic	Lead Officer	Date
Housing Investment and Development	Kathryn Adedeji	17 June 2015
Homeless Prevention Strategy	Dermot Moloney	17 June 2015
Right to Move	Dermot Moloney	17 June 2015
Update on Repairs Policy	Kathryn Adedeji	2 September 2015
Homelessness Prevention Strategy	Dawn Shepherd	2 September 2015
Elizabeth Gardens – local lettings plan (exception for 2 bed properties)	Dawn Shepherd	2 September 2015
Local Lettings Plan - Seabrooke Rise and Derry Avenue	Dawn Shepard/Kathryn Adedeji	30 November 2015
Impact Assessment of Housing and Planning Bill on HRA Business Plan	Kathryn Adedeji	30 November 2015
Thurrock Choice Homes Adverts	Dermot Moloney	30 November 2015
Shaping the Council Budget Update - Change to the Fees and Charges	Sean Clark	6 January 2016

Updated: 19 October 2015

Allocation Policy Update	Dermot Moloney	6 January 2016
Rent Setting	Richard Parkin/Mike Jones	6 January 2016
Flexible Tenancies	Dermot Moloney	6 January 2016
Right to Move – Brief Only	Dermot Moloney	6 January 2016
Housing Asset and Investment Management Plan	Richard Parkin	17 February 2016
Rent Setting - Verbal Brief	Richard Parkin/Mike Jones	17 February 2016
Extra Care Service Charges – joint report with Adult Social Care	Dermot Moloney	17 February 2016
Shaping the Council Budget Update on themed items as and when required	Sean Clark	16 March 2016
Damp and Mould Update	Richard Parkin	16 March 2016
Housing Strategy Action Plan and Update on Homelessness Prevention – End of Year Update	Dermot Moloney	16 March 2016

Homelessness Strategy will be added to the 2016/17 Work Programme for September 2016.
Fixed Term Tenancies will be added to the work programme when further information is available.
Improving Energy Efficiency will be added to the work when further information is available.