

23 March 2016

ITEM: 17

Council

Cabinet Member Report – Housing

Report of: Councillor Lynn Worrall

This report is Public.

Background

This report provides an overview of the key achievements, in 2015-16, relating to Thurrock's service delivery of Housing Services.

The report offers a performance insight on the services dealing with homelessness, the threat of homelessness, housing allocations, rent collection, support provision to service users, investment in housing stock, management of Thurrock owned housing stock and Private Sector Housing.

The Housing teams have implemented a suite of ambitious programmes designed to provide new homes, improve the quality of existing stock as well as the lives and opportunities of our residents whilst driving efficiency savings through stringent contract management. 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.

The Housing Needs team continue to play a key role in assisting Thurrock residents who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. In order to meet residents' housing needs and alleviate their housing predicaments, the service focuses on homeless preventions and adopts a collaborative and cooperative multi-agency work approach.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Housing continued to be a good and responsible social landlord, delivering value for money and good services.

1.2 The service accomplished various goals, achieved objectives, and reached milestones, here are some of these achievements:

- 33 days is the average time taken to let an empty property (target: 35 days).
- 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.
- 100% compliance has been achieved for Gas Servicing in Council properties.
- 70% of tenants rated housing services as Excellent or Good, the service is working towards achieving a satisfaction level of 75%.
- At 85%, satisfaction with the Well-homes initiatives is high
- Resident satisfaction with the Repairs Service has continued to improve and averages 88%.
- 94% of service request are dealt with within the targeted time framework.
- 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.
- Rent collection continues to perform well and exceeding the profiled target (97.84% YTD vs 97% profiled target).
- Over 30% of the Transforming Homes programme spend is within the local economy.
- 20% of supply chain partners are registered in Thurrock.
- 363 tenants have benefited from welfare support and advice offered by the service.
- 52 households were directly helped and incentivised to downsize to a more suitable home.
- 2186 households approached the service for housing help and advice.
- 78 new affordable homes have been completed, including the Council's first HAPPI scheme.
- 39 affordable properties sourced within the private rented sector.
- 26 properties were recovered by the housing investigations team.
- Nearly 1450 enquiries from Councillors, MPs, and MEPs were responded to.

2. Residents Engagements

- 2.1 Thurrock Housing has developed a strong residents' engagement strategy, and membership to the Tenants Excellence Panel has increased this year by 80%.

- 2.2 As part of a five years tenants' engagement plan, the service has surveyed the views of 1500 tenants so far this year
- 2.3 The Tenants engagement team hosted and facilitated four community days in the summer, introduced a social media campaign to engage with residents, and held various live Q&A Twitter sessions.
- 2.4 A recent initiative saw the establishment of an online residents involvement register. Thurrock social tenants can now feedback and inform the service of matters that concerns them, they can also inform the service on how they can further get involved.

Residents are kept abreast of the service performance via the publication online, and in noticeboards, of regular Housing Key Performance Indicators.

- 2.5 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.

Our Housing Performance

How did we do in September ...

Indicator	Target	Performance	Overall
Satisfaction with repairs	80%	87%	😊
Percentage of properties let to current tenants (Transfers)	25%	34%	😊
Number of complaints received	-	84	😞
Average re-letting time for properties (days)	35	33	😊
Number of illegally occupied properties recovered (year to date)	30	26	😞
Level of Rent Collection	94%	95.59%	😊

Did you know that...

- 100% of our properties are compliant with gas safety regulations.
- 37 households were helped to move to a smaller and more suitable property.
- In the last three months **210** residents have expressed their interest in engaging with the Council
- Since February, the Excellence Panel attendance has increased by **75%**
- Tenants can help us improve our services by joining the Excellence Panel, email us on residentengagement@thurrock.gov.uk if you would like to join or find out more.

twitter The next set of dates for our live twitter sessions are **01st December 2015** and **05th January 2016**. Please tweet us with any of your housing queries.

If you would like any help or advice with any housing queries please call us on 01475 62602

Housing Investment & Delivery work in line with the Community Engagement Strategy in planning, engagement and evaluation & feedback across repairs, capital, new build and regeneration.

Residents are integral to the development of the programme 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.

- 2.6 Specific engagement events held recently include:
 - Five local drop-in sessions for residents on the Transforming Homes Programme explaining what can be expected from the programme, how to prepare before works start, the support that is available from Thurrock Council and our partnering contractors and giving the opportunity to view samples of the products and the colour choices offered on the programme.
 - Surgeries for leaseholders who own properties undergoing external and communal works on the Transforming Homes Programme.

3. Housing Needs

- 3.1 Following the national and local trends, increases in homelessness and the risk of homelessness are becoming more prominent and acute in Thurrock. As many as 283 households made homeless assistance applications to the Authority. The impact of welfare reforms, and rent increases within the private rental sector, along with the scarcity of social housing and the lack of truly affordable housing are factors that continue to exacerbate and feed the problem.
- 3.2 Thurrock housing provides a key supporting and assisting role to mitigate these issues. 2186 households approached the council for help and were offered assistance and advice and 372 potential cases of homelessness were prevented.
- 3.3 356 social housing properties were offered to Thurrock Council applicants, and 52 households were directly assisted, incentivized to downsize.
- 3.4 The service was nationally recognised by achieving the: National Practitioners Support Service Gold standard challenge 3.
- 3.5 Housing plays a key role in supporting affected households and assists them in meeting their housing needs. This help takes different forms such as:
 - Provision of a housing options generic and specific advice.
 - Assisting under-occupying households to move to more suitable and affordable homes.
 - Making contacts with vulnerable households and at risks of homelessness.
 - Raising awareness and working with landlords in the private sectors.
 - Multi-agency work.

4. Estate Managements & Rent Collection:

- 4.1 With a social housing portfolio of over 10000; Thurrock Council is the largest Landlord in the borough. Estate Officers play a crucial role in building community cohesion by under taking steps such as mediating between neighbours, and dealing with anti-social behaviours. Estate Officers are making the service accessible to tenants by offering housing in different public local locations such as hubs and children centres.
- 4.2 An ongoing exercise is taking place to get to know our tenants by visiting them, auditing their tenancies, and establishing what need they may have, and act upon them.
- 4.3 Estate Officers and Financial Inclusion officers assist tenants in sustaining their tenancies by different means, ranging from formal support in budgeting

and accessing benefits and funds, to representing them in panels and meetings. So far, 155 tenants were helped to move to another property of their choice, and 363 households have been supported to maintain their tenancies.

4.4 Thurrock Housing Rent and Welfare team provide a critical service. Not only it ensures rent is collected appropriately and in a timely manner, but it also provides support to tenants in order to assist them to maintain their tenancies and prevent homelessness. It is estimated that the above-mentioned support has prevented more than 79 households from becoming homeless.

4.5 At 97.84% the rent collection in December was above profiled target

4.6 Thurrock Housing provide sheltered social housing for vulnerable and elderly residents so to ensure that the latter can continue to have supported but independent living that meets their needs. In 2015, sheltered housing service was remodelled to deliver a more flexible, independent living service. Officers were trained to provide Estate Management Service, which includes void turn around, tenancy sign-up and dealing with ASB.

4.7 Housing Services works to resolve and deal with anti-social behaviour issues arising from or between social housing tenants, the service deals with Hate Crime committed within council tenancies.

- 213 visits paid to victims and perpetrators in order to address issues and needs, and 91 cases conference held to help vulnerable service users.
- 100% of all Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub referrals were actioned on time and within target.
- Also, 107 Hate Crime and Domestic Abuse related risk assessments were undertaken by the service.

4.8 The service performance continue to improve, where the average time it take to re-let an empty home has decreased to 33 days. 70% of surveyed tenants have rated housing services as Excellent or good, and 65% have rated their Estate Officer as Excellent or good.

4.9 Specifically designed posters are published quarterly on line and in the notice boards to provide tenants with an updating resident of the service performance.

5. Transforming Homes – Overview of Delivery

5.1 The programme commenced in 2013 and is currently part-way through its third year.

5.2 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.

- 5.3 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
- 5.4 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

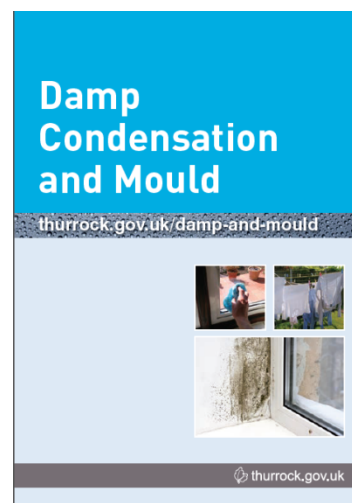
6. Thermal Efficiency Programme

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 Further energy efficiencies have been achieved through the installation of more efficient 'A grade' boilers in over 1300 homes through the Transforming Homes programme.
- 6.5 Plans for 2016 include the development of a scheme 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.

7. Damp & Mould Programmes – Overview of Delivery

7.1 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.

7.2 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.



7.3 This year (2015/16) we have continued to allocate resources to address the damp and mould issues through 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

7.4 Remedial works undertaken following the surveys have included the following:

- Improved Ventilation Mechanisms
- Improved Insulation
- Improved Heating
- Resolution of building defects as leaks or structural damage
- Providing chemical or physical damp proof courses
- Proprietary Decorative Treatments

7.5 We are continuously working to ensure that our approach is fully considered and relevant and in line with the latest methods and techniques. In September 2015, we 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.

8. Repairs and Maintenance – Overview of Delivery

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

8.4 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:

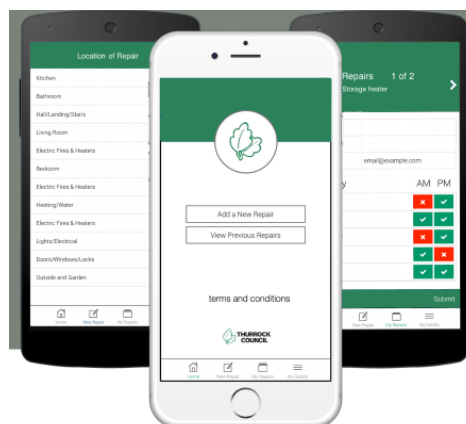
Figure 3: Number of Jobs Completed by Programme 2015/16

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

8.5 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.



9. Planned and Cyclical Maintenance – Overview of Delivery

9.1 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.

The 2015/16 programme has delivered:

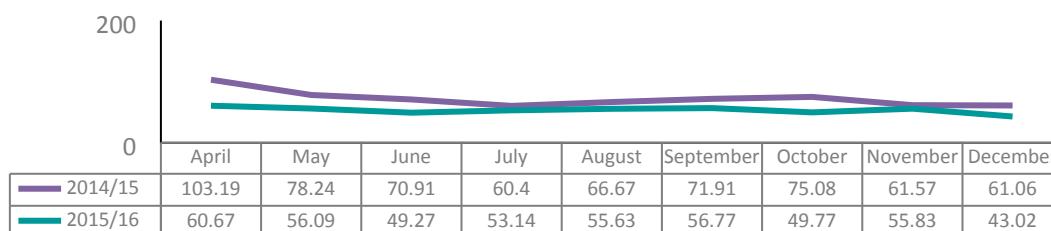
53 Planned Servicing and Maintenance Programmes including:

- Gas Servicing – 10,096 properties.
- Water Hygiene Servicing - 2,215 properties.
- Door Entry servicing and refurbishment. New programme on site to install new systems benefitting 744 properties.
- Lift Servicing and refurbishment. New programme underway delivering full refurbishment to benefit 217 properties.
- Assisted Decoration Programme for vulnerable residents – benefitting 670 properties.
- Electrical testing - 1,230 blocks.
- Asbestos Management.

10. Voids Delivery

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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. 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.
- 10.3 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 1st December 2015). Last year (2014/15) 107 voids were carried over from 2013/14 with 427 voids raised in year to 31st December 2014.
- 10.4 The turnaround time for Standard Voids year to date is 33 days.

Figure 4: Void Turnaround Times All Voids – both Silver and Gold standard



- 10.5 In terms of rent loss through voids, this 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

11. Delivering Social Value

11.1 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.

11.2 The key successes during 2015/16 are:

- Over 30% of the Transforming Homes programme spend is in the local economy and 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 and 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.
- Shortlisted for a TPAS award for Contractor Engagement on delivery of Social Value outcomes.

12. Building Homes for Local Residents:

12.1 The Council's housing development programme continues to drive the provision of good quality, new affordable housing across a range of tenures and housing types. The first affordable schemes (the Echoes at Seabrooke Rise in Grays and Bruyns Court in South Ockendon) have been completed, providing 78 new homes for local families and a further 12 units will be completed within 2016 at Bracelet Close in Corringham. The first Gloriana Thurrock Limited project (St Chads in Tilbury) is now in site and will complete the first of 128 new homes in 2017.

12.2 Work is well underway on the second wave of affordable housing projects including those at Calcutta Road in Tilbury, Claudian Way in Chadwell St Mary and the former Topps Club site in Grays. However, the anticipated 1% cut in rents (reported in December 2015) included within the Welfare Reform Bill is likely to reduce the ability of the Council to bring forward further affordable housing schemes through the Housing Revenue Account and has

necessitated a review of the wider development and estate regeneration programmes. As a result, previously reported development opportunities in Purfleet (former VOSA testing site) and South Ockendon (former Prince of Wales pub) are likely to be held back to be incorporated into any future estate regeneration programme whilst some of the additional, smaller sites highlighted as opportunities in September 2015 will not now be progressed.

- 12.3 Within this context, it is anticipated that Gloriana will take on a more prominent role in continuing to supply good quality housing across the Borough whilst generating a return to the Council which could be used to support wider service and/or housing delivery. The second anticipated Gloriana scheme, Belmont Road in Grays, has continued to progress, following initial Cabinet approval in March 2015, and a planning application is expected to be submitted shortly.
- 12.4 Building affordable homes to meet local housing needs offers more than just housing options for our residents; it offers apprenticeships, work experience and employment opportunities. At least 25% of the labour used on recent developments lived within a local post code; ensuring that the development programme provides local jobs and makes a direct contribution to the local economy.
- 12.5 More than 300 apprentice weeks have been granted, 71 students were given work experiences, 10 university students undertook project works and 820 students attended construction workshops or short courses
- 12.6 The Council's work on Housing Development is increasingly being acknowledged with the housing scheme at St Chads Road having won a design award and the Council having been shortlisted as a finalist for the Chartered Institute of Housing's 'New Developer of the Year' award.

13. Developing the Housing Asset Management Strategy

- 13.1 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.
- 13.2 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.
- 13.3 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 and sets in place the approach, principles and objectives for housing asset management going forward.

13.4 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
Objective 2: Understanding and Optimising Performance	Optimising the value and use of housing assets, supported by an asset performance management and appraisal framework.
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.

14. Private Sector Housing:

14.1 Apart from being a responsible social landlord, the Housing Team has a statutory duty to ensure that properties in the Private Sector are suitable for residents to live within. Whilst the services primary focus is on reducing and eliminating Health & Safety hazards in privately owned and rented properties, it also undertakes initiatives – such as The Well Homes project- which is a proactive programme with a holistic approach to support and help residents improve their living conditions, health and wellbeing.

14.2 The service endeavours to resolve disrepairs issues, providing advice and assistance, and help ensuring health hazards are removed; either by preventative methods, intervention, or even enforcement if necessary.

14.3 Housing health & safety hazards cover a wide ranging spectrum such as: excess cold : lack of heating and hot water, damp and mould, electrical safety, fire safety.

14.4 The Private Housing service has:

- Delivered an estimated £744,779 savings to NHS and society through the reduction or removal of housing health and safety hazards.
- Improved 63 homes occupied by vulnerable households and removed 53 household from Fuel Poverty
- Fully inspected, and followed-on, 157 Landlord and Tenants Housing H&S complaints

- Visited 244 households, and offered a further 150 households with informal advice and mediation.
- 127 households benefited from a Well Homes assessment; reaching out to 327 people in the borough. (This is since the new provider started in August last year, 260 from the start of the year)
- Via Well Homes the service made a total of 314 referrals to a support network of a variety of partners. 85 of these referrals were made to other Council services for support and assistance.

15. Housing Finance

Housing Revenue Account

- 15.1 In February 2015 Council agreed the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2015/16, which set a balanced budget, along with Council's overall budget that included the Housing General Fund. The current financial position is being monitored against these base positions and is reported below. The HRA Business Plan sets out how the Council will manage all aspects of its HRA services using the income raised locally through council rents and other sources of HRA income for revenue and capital purposes. The Housing General Fund budgets are set as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	Budget to Date £	Actuals to Date £	Variance £	FY Budget £	FY Forecast £	FY Variance £	% Variance
Repairs & Maintenance	9,271,054	9,061,683	(209,371)	12,670,878	12,881,634	210,756	1.7%
Estate Services	5,042,176	4,632,900	(409,276)	6,604,133	6,462,540	(141,593)	-2.1%
Tenancy Support	3,449,168	3,116,736	(332,432)	4,062,682	4,056,981	(5,700)	-0.1%
Service Improvement	19,186	8,943	(10,243)	82,764	82,770	6	0.0%
Financing & Recharges	2,971,183	9,998,145	7,026,962	24,614,552	24,546,873	(67,679)	-0.3%
Rent & Income	(35,901,207)	(27,441,191)	8,460,016	(48,827,707)	(48,827,707)	0	0.0%
Development	594,520	1,174,108	579,588	792,698	792,698	0	0.0%
TOTAL HRA	(14,553,919)	551,324	15,105,244	0	(4,210)	(4,210)	

- 15.2 As at the end of December 2015 the HRA is forecasting a small underspend of £4,210 against this balanced position. There is forecast to be an overspend on Repairs and Maintenance due to higher than budgeted expenditure on voids due to the number of properties falling void. Responsive Repairs costs relating to Mears are forecast to be higher than budgeted due to increased costs relating to exclusions and set up costs.
- 15.3 The Repairs and maintenance overspend is offset by an underspend in Estate Services of £141,593. Underspends on building maintenance on CCTV and Concierge account for the majority of the underspend with minor underspends elsewhere. In addition there are small underspends forecast on tenancy Support and Financing and Recharges. The budget is expected to come in online by the end of the year.

Housing General Fund

- 15.4 The Housing General Fund full year budget for 2015/16 is £2,460,627. As at 31st December 2015 the forecast for the whole year is £2,331,348 an overall forecast underspend of £129,279 against budget. The forecast underspend is due mainly to the completion of a number of work areas prior to the year end.

Housing General Fund	Budget to Date £	Actuals to Date £	Variance £	FY Budget £	FY Forecast £	FY Variance £	% Variance
Homelessness	227,848	219,744	(8,105)	470,780	441,708	(29,072)	-6.2%
DFG Capital Recharge	0	0	0	1,535,000	1,535,000	0	0.0%
Private Sector Housing	181,210	119,254	(61,956)	281,995	196,429	(85,566)	-30.3%
Hostel Provision	161,000	184,918	23,918	208,342	205,918	(2,424)	-1.2%
Travellers Sites	(35,224)	8,212	43,436	(35,491)	(47,707)	(12,217)	34.4%
TOTAL Housing General Fund	534,834	532,127	(2,707)	2,460,627	2,331,348	(129,279)	-5.3%

Transforming Homes and Development

- 15.5 The Transforming Homes budget for 2015/16 is £13.6m. The overall programme agreed by Cabinet in December 2015 is £58.4m over the next 5 years. Programme spend is forecast to be contained within the overall £58.4m budget. Work is ongoing to ensure the viability of existing development schemes and the estate regeneration proposals as they are developed within the HRA Business Plan. The impact of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill and Housing and Planning Bill continue to be assessed in terms of Business Plan implications.

16. Looking ahead to 2016/17 and beyond

- 16.1 Our aim is to continue the successes to date and ensure we continue to deliver resident focused services with a programme of investment that ensures current and future assets are maintained to an appropriate standard, and fully support the needs of the local communities.
- 16.2 Key Priorities for the coming year include:
- Continuing the delivery of the Transforming Homes programme for year 4 and beyond, re-profiling in accordance with the constraints of the revised investment budget following the 1% rent reduction.
 - Maintaining high levels of service provision from the Repairs and Maintenance Contract.
 - Continued and improved engagement and consultation with residents on the delivery of the Repairs and Maintenance service and planned investment programmes.
 - Develop a Housing Management Strategy that builds on the achievements to date and responds to the recent changes in government policy.

- Maximize the energy efficiency of our homes pursuing all opportunities for external funding streams to support this.
- Progress the delivery of social value offers from current programmes to continue the tangible benefits delivered for local residents and the local economy.
- Maximise the capabilities that will be available through the new housing management system to further enhance our strategic investment planning

17. Our vision for the future:

- 17.1 The coming year is likely to bring many changes to the Authority as a whole, and the service in particular.
- 17.2 Two new development are planned, 12 units family accommodations in Bracelet Close, and 128 family dwellings in St Chads. These developments will deliver a much needed affordable housing.
- 17.3 Budgetary initiatives, along with welfare reforms ones are likely to add further pressures on the service, the reduction in the rent charge by 1% over the next four years will no force the service to re-consider the delivery scale and time of its Transforming Homes programme.
- 17.4 The rolling out of the Universal Credit, the reductions and changes to the benefits system, the introduction of near market value rent (Pay to Stay) will require from the service to changes its way of working and focus on proactive interventions.
- 17.5 In the coming months, Housing will need to change in order to be able to support its tenants and other service users.
- 17.6 New innovative ways of working will need to be considered and implemented, including intervening in the housing market, whether by providing suitable affordable housing, or even enabling a cross-sector housing options (e.g. setting up social letting agencies).
- 17.7 Housing will continue its approach in reaching out and working with other services such: Health, Social Services, and Education.