



Housing Revenue Account Budget (including Capital Programme) 2021/22

Full Council: 17th February 2021

Assistant Mayor for Housing: Cllr. Elly Cutkelvin

Lead director: Chris Burgin

Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report authors: Chris Burgin, Director of Housing & Stuart McAvoy, Principal Accountant

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for Full Council to consider and approve the City Mayor's proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2021/22.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The financial landscape of the four-year period from 2016 to 2020 was dominated by the government requirement that rents be reduced by 1% each year. Despite this pressure, the HRA delivered balanced budgets. For the 5 years from 2020 rents are permitted to increase by up to CPI+1%. Whilst this relaxation will help to sustain a financially viable HRA and support investment in the housing stock, the continuing impact of Right to Buy (RTB) sales on rental income persists.
- 2.2 This report recommends that the budget for 2021/22 is set as a balanced budget, with a core rent increase of 1.5%.
- 2.3 Consultation on the proposals within this report has been carried out with the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum, the Housing Scrutiny Commission, and the Overview Select Committee.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 Full Council is recommended to:
- i) Note the financial pressures on the HRA and comment on the proposals for delivering a balanced budget;
 - ii) Note the comments from the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum at Appendix G, the Housing Scrutiny Commission at Appendix H, and the Overview Select Committee at Appendix I;
 - iii) Approve the Housing Revenue and Capital budgets for 21/22;
 - iv) Approve rent and service charge changes for 21/22 as follows:
 - 1.5% increase to core rent;
 - 1.5% increase to garage rent;
 - changes to Dawn Centre rent as set out at section 4.1.4;
 - 2.0% increase to service charges;
 - no changes to sundry payments and charges;
 - v) Note the equality impact assessment of the proposed revenue and capital reductions required to present a balanced budget, at Appendix J;
 - vi) Note that the scheme of virement (included within the General Fund Revenue Budget report which is also on your agenda) applies also to the HRA budget with total expenditure and total income acting as budget ceilings for this purpose;
 - vii) Note that the capital strategy in that report applies also to the HRA;
 - viii) Agree that the delegations and determinations applicable to the main capital programme (which is also on your agenda) shall also apply to the capital programme in this report.

4. Report

4.1 Rents & Service Charges

4.1.1 The HRA operates in a self-financing environment. Spending priorities are made in the context of needing to achieve the right balance between investing in, maintaining and improving the housing stock, providing landlord services to tenants, building new homes and supporting and repaying housing debt of £225m.

4.1.2 The HRA budget is set by modelling expected levels of income and expenditure. Following four years of rent reductions from 2016, which reduced rental income by £3.1m p.a., 2021/22 is the second of 5 years in which rents may be increased by up to CPI+1%. CPI as at the end of September 2020 was 0.5%, meaning that rental increases of up to 1.5% are permitted. The recommendation of this report is to apply a rental increase of the full 1.5%, based on the unavoidable pressures detailed in this report, and the need to maintain a programme of capital maintenance.

4.1.3 Service charges and garage rents are set separately to core rent. This report proposes an increase in service charges for 2021/22 of 2%. It is proposed to increase garage rents by 1.5% (September CPI+1%) in line with the core rental increase. It is proposed that the sundry payments and charges listed at Appendix C remain unchanged.

4.1.4 Hostel rents and service charges are periodically re-set to ensure that they are aligned with the actual cost of running the service. This re-calculation has recently been undertaken, reflecting the proposed staffing structure for 2021/22. All individuals staying at the Dawn centre are eligible for Housing Benefit, and the Revenue & Benefits service have confirmed that these charges are at a reasonable level for charging to HB. The work has resulted in the following proposed weekly rents for 2021/22:

Dawn Centre	Proposed Weekly Charge 2021/22
Catered Beds – Core Rent	£73.78
Catered Beds – Eligible Service Charge	£310.52
Catered Beds – Ineligible Service Charge	£42.42
Emergency Beds – Core Rent	£55.65

4.2 Revenue Cost Pressures

4.2.1 The primary external pressure on the HRA continues to be reduced rental income arising from the loss of stock through RTB sales. Table 1, below, summarises the known pressures and budget growth requirements within the HRA:

Table 1: Revenue Cost Pressures	2021/22 £000
Rental Impact of RTB Stock Loss	1,135
Inflation & Staffing Cost Pressures	1,676
Capital Expenditure Funded from Revenue	75
Total Cost Pressures	2,886

Right to Buy

Sales of properties through Right to Buy can give discounts to tenants of up to 70% of the property value. From 2012 the government 'reinvigorated' the scheme by increasing the maximum discount, such that for Leicester it is now £84,200 compared with £24,000 in 2012. Sales have increased as a result, with a loss of nearly 1,700 properties in the last 4 years alone. The HRA loses rental income from properties sold in this way, and the economies of scale that come from managing a large portfolio are gradually being eroded. Although the number of people exercising their right to buy has dropped significantly due to the covid pandemic, it is still forecast that rental income will be £1.14m lower in 21/22 as a result of 300 Right to Buy sales.

Inflation

Provision is made for employee costs to rise by over £1.6m in 21/22. This includes the known cost of staff re-grading which took place in 20/21 affecting nearly 50 staff, alongside increases to pension contributions and a provision for any pay increases. Any funding not required will be identified in budget monitoring once the position is clear.

Capital Expenditure Funded from Revenue

The default source of funding for the HRA capital programme (other than acquisitions and new build) is from revenue resources, which in 2020/21 amounted to £16.235m. In 2021/22 the figure increases by £75k to £16.310m, drawing on additional resources and representing a revenue pressure. These schemes are detailed in section 4.4, below.

4.3 Revenue Savings

4.3.1 The proposals within this report meet the identified budget pressure of £2.886m in 2021/22. Table 2, below, summarises the proposed budget reductions:

Table 2: Additional Income & Reductions in Expenditure	2021/22 £000
Dwelling Rent & Service Charges	(1,345)
New Build & Acquired Property Rental Income	(904)
Border House Review	(247)
Interest Payable by HRA	(140)
Materials in Repairs & Gas Services	(150)
Structural Works	(100)
Total Savings	(2,886)

Rent & Service Charges

As outlined in section 4.1, the additional income shown here reflects the recommendation that rents, including garage rents, be increased by CPI plus 1%. It is proposed that service charges be increased by 2%, in line with the assumed rate of increase in staff pay since the costs of these services are heavily driven by such costs.

Rental income on New Build and Acquired Properties

The HRA has embarked on an extensive programme of acquiring properties on the open market to increase the number of homes available at an affordable rent. In addition, a programme of building new properties on Council-owned land is underway. Additional rental income will accrue of £0.9m in 2021/22 as a consequence of this.

Border House Review

The closure of Border House was announced in February 2020. Managing and operating Border House represented a net cost to the Council. Therefore, whilst its closure results in a drop in income received by the Council, this is more than offset by the reduction in staffing and non-staffing costs. This is expected to result in a saving of £247k.

Interest Payable By HRA

The HRA pays interest on debt of £225m, and earns interest on cash balances it holds. In-year budget monitoring indicates that in 2020/21 there is a surplus budget of £580k on the net interest payable by the HRA, which can be declared as a saving. Offsetting this, however, is the requirement to set aside additional budget of £440k for the interest cost and principal repayments linked to the acquisitions and new build programme. The net figure of £140k is available to help balance the 21/22 budget.

Materials in Repairs & Gas Services

As the number of properties held within the HRA have fallen over recent years, there has been a drop in the cost of materials used to undertake repairs. Surplus budget of £150k across the Repairs and Gas Services sections can be removed without any impact on service performance.

Structural Works

A budget of £256k is held for structural works, such as underpinning when foundations fail or the insertion of steel lintels above windows. This work is largely demand-led and has underspent in recent years. This budget can be reduced by £100k without an impact on the quantity of work being undertaken.

4.3.2 In summary, the proposed HRA revenue budget savings for 2021/22 will meet the amount required to balance the revenue budget without drawing upon reserves. Appendix A shows a high-level breakdown of the proposed HRA revenue budgets for the year.

4.4 Capital Expenditure

4.4.1 The 2020/21 capital programme (excluding budgets slipped from previous years) is £47.4m, with £30m of this relating to the Council House Acquisition programme.

4.4.2 Appendix E outlines the way in which capital works are identified as being required in council dwellings. Appendix F provides wider details of the priorities which direct HRA expenditure, including achievements throughout 2020/21.

4.4.3 Appendix B shows the proposed capital programme for 2021/22. Other than one-off schemes falling out of the programme, the following projects are those for which changes are proposed:

Re-roofing

Analysis of the remaining life of roofs has identified that a greater number of properties will need to be re-roofed over coming years than the current budget allows for. The budget increased by £400k in 2019/20 with a further increase of £150k being proposed for 2021/22.

Public Realm Works

An injection of £5m over 3 years was proposed within last year's budget report to allow for significant improvements to the appearance of low-rise flats, communal areas, and estates more generally. £1.2m was included within the 20/21 budget, rising to £1.9m for 21/22 and 22/23. A mix of reserves and revenue contributions are intended to finance this budget.

Disabled Adaptations

The current budget of £1.2m is utilised for the adaptation of Council properties to meet the needs of tenants, in liaison with Adult Social Care. This demand-led budget has consistently underspent in recent years, so a reduction of £300k is being proposed. This will be balanced by the creation of a new budget for adaptations to properties for those people currently on the housing register enabling them better access to properties which will meet their needs.

Fire Risk Works

There are in excess of 1,000 shared and communal spaces, for which Fire risk assessments are carried out, on average, every three years. High risk accommodation, such as tower blocks, are assessed every year. These assessments identify potential risks and works required to mitigate them, such as replacement doors, emergency lighting systems or ventilation systems. This budget was temporarily increased from £850k to £1m in 2019/20, and can now reduce back to its historic level.

Property Conversions

£500k was added to the 2020/21 programme to help address overcrowding in properties. This budget will continue to be utilised throughout 2021/22, whilst the scale and nature of the issue continues to be assessed. Not all properties are suitable for conversion/extension so further work is required to identify the number of properties which may benefit from this type of work.

Affordable Housing – Acquisitions & New Build

In November 2019 Full Council approved the addition of £70m for the purchase of properties and the extension of the LA new-build programme; £40m of this is already approved within the 2021/22 budget but is included in Appendix B for completeness. It is proposed in this report that a further £30m be added to the programme, supporting its continuation and ensuring that sufficient budget exists to exploit larger scale acquisition opportunities, should they arise. Of the £30m addition, 30% is expected to be financed from RTB receipts, with the remaining 70% from borrowing.

Business Systems

A long-standing budget for making improvements to Housing IT systems, including the increasing use of mobile working solutions requires £550k to provide sufficient budget for 2021/22. Budgets for future years may need to take into account procurement requirements for system replacement.

Climate Change & Retrofitting

It is acknowledged that addressing the climate emergency will require additional work to be undertaken to improve the energy efficiency of existing Council properties. The inclusion of £250k within the 2021/22 budget will enable feasibility work to be undertaken to identify the most suitable and cost-effective forms of retrofitting for the current stock.

Fencing

Currently, fencing around dwellings is almost always repaired rather than replaced. As well as being more aesthetically pleasing, in some cases a new fence would be cost-effective in the medium term by reducing the number of repairs being undertaken. The creation of a £200k budget for fencing will enable a replacement approach to be trialled.

Bridlespur Way Refurbishment

A block of 17 flats on Bridlespur Way has, until recently, been used as an extension of Border House Hostel. The intention is to continue using these flats as temporary accommodation, but the closure of the hostel provides an opportune time to refurbish the block, which is in need of some attention, at a cost of £300k.

4.4.4 The financing of the proposed capital programme is shown in the table below. This results in an increase in funding from revenue of £75k in 2021/22, reflecting the figure at paragraph 4.2.1.

Table 3: Financing of HRA Capital Programme	2020/21 £000	2021/22 £000
Funded From Revenue	16,235	16,310
Funded From Reserves	1,200	1,500
Funded From Right to Buy Receipts (incl. Allowable Debt)	15,000	29,000
Funded from Borrowing	15,000	41,000
	47,435	87,810

4.4.5 Authority for amendments to the HRA capital programme is in line with that for the corporate programme as set out in the Capital Programme Report to Council on 17th February 2021.

4.5 HRA Reserves

4.5.1 Drawing down on reserves in an attempt to avoid the need to make savings is only viable as a short-term approach to meeting any budget shortfall. Reserves are better utilised in meeting one-off costs, to support the delivery of long-term efficiencies and in the replenishment of dwelling stock to increase the long-term financial viability of the HRA. In keeping with this approach, the only use of reserves in the proposed 2021/22 budget is for a time-limited enhancement of public realm works (£1.2m) and adaptations to properties (£0.3m) using capital underspends from 2020/21.

4.5.2 Projections of the HRA reserve position at the end of 2021/22 indicate that there will be only limited unallocated reserves, in the region of £2m. Given the forecast revenue overspend for 2020/21 alongside the long-term financial risks facing the HRA, it is considered prudent not to allocate these funds at the current time.

Forecast Opening Reserves Balance as at 1 st April 2021	(£33.0m)
Amount held to cover minimum working balances, and to finance prior years' capital approvals (including policy provisions)	£19.1m
Earmarked for future anticipated calls on reserves	£10.4m
Reserves to be applied in 2021/22 to part-finance Public Realm Works & Disabled Adaptations	£1.5m
Forecast Unallocated Reserves Balance as at 31st March 2022	(£2.0m)

5. Financial, legal and other implications

5.1 Financial implications

5.1.1 This report is exclusively concerned with financial issues.

Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance (37 4081)

5.2 Legal implications

5.2.1 The Council is obliged to set a budget for an accounting year that will not show a deficit (S76 Local Government and Housing Act 1989).

5.2.2 The Council is also required to ring-fence the HRA to ensure that only monies received and spent for obligations and powers under the Housing Act 1985 can be paid into and out of the HRA (S75 and Schedule 4 Local Government and Housing Act 1989).

Jeremy Rainbow - Principal Lawyer (Litigation) – 37 1435

5.3 Climate Change and Carbon Reduction implications

5.3.1 Housing is responsible for a third of Leicester's overall carbon emissions. Following the council's declaration of a climate emergency in February 2019 and launch of the council's new Climate Emergency Strategy & Action Plan, addressing these emissions is vital to meeting our ambition to make Leicester a carbon neutral city.

5.3.2 Opportunities to reduce the energy use and carbon emissions of properties should be identified and implemented wherever possible. In the case of newly built or purchased dwellings this means meeting a high standard of energy efficiency, as provided in climate change implications for relevant reports. Additionally, the programme of maintenance for existing housing properties should provide opportunities to improve their energy efficiency, which should be investigated where practical. Improving energy efficiency should also help to ensure that housing reaches a high standard, reduce energy bills for tenants and may help to limit maintenance costs.

5.3.3 This need is reflected within the report, which details the inclusion of £250k in the 2021/22 budget to enable feasibility work to be carried out to identify the most suitable and cost-effective forms of retrofitting for the stock.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

6. Background information and other papers:

None

7. Summary of appendices:

Appendix A: Proposed HRA Revenue Budget 2021/22

Appendix B: Proposed HRA Capital Programme 2021/22

Appendix C: Other Service Charges and Payments 2021/22

Appendix D: Leicester Average Rents Comparison

Appendix E: Planning Capital Works in Council Dwellings

Appendix F: How Priorities are Assessed for HRA Expenditure

Appendix G: Feedback from Consultation with Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum

Appendix H: Minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Commission

Appendix I: Minutes of the Overview Select Committee

Appendix J: Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

8. Is this a private report (If so, please indicated the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?

No

9. Is this a "key decision"?

No

Proposed HRA Revenue Budget 2021/22

	2020/21 Current Budget £000	- 2021/22 -		Proposed 2021/22 Budget
		2021/22 Budget Pressures	2021/22 Savings & Reductions £000	
Income				
Dwelling & Non-Dwelling Rent	(74,183)	1,135	(1,792)	(74,840)
Service Charges	(5,726)	0	(83)	(5,809)
Total Income	(79,909)	1,135	(1,875)	(80,649)
Expenditure				
Management & Landlord Services	19,138	815	(621)	19,332
Repairs & Maintenance	25,544	861	(250)	26,155
Interest on Borrowing	9,010	0	(140)	8,870
Charges for Support Services	4,221	0	0	4,221
Contribution to GF Services	5,761	0	0	5,761
	63,674	1,676	(1,011)	64,339
Capital Funded From Revenue	16,235	75	0	16,310
(Surplus) / Deficit Before Reserves	0	2,886	(2,886)	0

HRA Capital Programme 2021/22

The table below shows the 20/21 capital programme as at October 2020 (excluding budgets slipped from previous years' programmes), and the proposed programme for 21/22. All of the schemes listed for 21/22 are immediate starts.

	20/21 Capital Programme £000	Provisional 21/22 Programme £000
Kitchens & Bathrooms	3,600	3,600
Boilers	3,425	3,425
Re-wiring	1,760	1,760
Re-roofing	750	900
Soffits & Facia	350	350
Windows and Doors	150	150
Door Entry	150	150
District Heating Maintenance	725	725
Communal Improvements & Environmental Works	750	750
Public Realm Works	1,200	1,900
Disabled Adaptations	1,200	900
Adaptations for Incoming Tenants	0	300
Fire Risk Works	1,000	850
Safety Works including Targeted Alarms	300	300
Loft Insulation	100	100
Waylighting	150	150
Sheltered Housing Improvements (ASC)	100	100
Concrete Paths Renewal	100	100
Property Conversions	500	0
Feasibility Study for Sheltered Housing	250	0
Maintenance of Non-Dwellings (policy provision)	700	0
Affordable Housing - Acquisitions & New Build	30,000	70,000*
Business Systems	175	550
Climate Change & Retrofitting Feasibility	0	250
Fencing Replacement	0	200
Bridlespur Way Refurbishment	0	300
Total Capital Programme	47,435	87,810

* Note: The £70m shown in the table above for Affordable Housing in 2021/22 includes £40m which was approved by Council in November 2019 and does not form part of the capital programme for which approval is being sought through this report; it is included within the table for completeness.

Other Service Charges and Payments

It is proposed that the payments and charges shown in the table below remain unchanged for 2021/22:

Service Charge	Details of Charges
Replacement Rent Swipe Cards	The charge for a replacement swipe card is £5.00.
Pre-sale questionnaires from solicitors and mortgage providers	Housing Services receive a large number of requests from mortgage providers and solicitors for information in connection with property type / condition and tenancy history. A charge is levied to recover the cost to the council of providing this information. The charge for this is £125 (Note that requests in connection with tenants' statutory rights under Right to Buy legislation are excluded from this charge).
Security Fob Replacements	Where tenants and leaseholders require a replacement security fob these are charged at £10 each.

Payments	Details of Payments																																
Disturbance Allowance	Disturbance allowances are paid when a full property electrical rewire is carried out to an occupied LCC-owned property. A disturbance allowance can also be paid where it is necessary to undertake major works in an occupied property. The disturbance allowance is £155 per dwelling.																																
Decorating Allowances	<p>Decorating allowances are paid to new tenants based on the condition of the property on a per room basis. The allowances are paid through a voucher scheme with a major DIY chain. Current allowances are set out below:</p> <table style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr><td>Bathroom</td><td>£45.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Kitchen</td><td>£56.25</td></tr> <tr><td>Lounge</td><td>£67.50</td></tr> <tr><td>Dining Room</td><td>£67.50</td></tr> <tr><td>WC (where separate)</td><td>£22.50</td></tr> <tr><td>Halls (flats/bungalows)</td><td>£45.00</td></tr> <tr><td>Hall/Stairs/Landing</td><td>£78.75</td></tr> <tr><td>Large Bedroom</td><td>£67.50</td></tr> <tr><td>Middle Bedroom</td><td>£56.25</td></tr> <tr><td>Small Bedroom</td><td>£36.00</td></tr> </table> <p>The amount payable is capped as follows:</p> <table style="margin-left: 40px;"> <tr><td>3+ bed house / maisonette</td><td>£300</td></tr> <tr><td>3+ bed bungalow / flat</td><td>£250</td></tr> <tr><td>2 bed house / maisonette</td><td>£250</td></tr> <tr><td>2 bed flat / bungalow</td><td>£200</td></tr> <tr><td>1 bed flat / bungalow</td><td>£150</td></tr> <tr><td>Bedsit</td><td>£100</td></tr> </table>	Bathroom	£45.00	Kitchen	£56.25	Lounge	£67.50	Dining Room	£67.50	WC (where separate)	£22.50	Halls (flats/bungalows)	£45.00	Hall/Stairs/Landing	£78.75	Large Bedroom	£67.50	Middle Bedroom	£56.25	Small Bedroom	£36.00	3+ bed house / maisonette	£300	3+ bed bungalow / flat	£250	2 bed house / maisonette	£250	2 bed flat / bungalow	£200	1 bed flat / bungalow	£150	Bedsit	£100
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Average Rents Comparison

The table below compares the rent levels for different types of property in the HRA with rents for similar sized properties across the city.

Property Type	HRA 2020/21	Formula Rent 2020/21	Housing Assoc. 2018/19	Private Sector (LHA rate) 2020/21	Private Sector (City Wide) 2019/20
Room only	-	-	-	£78.00	£82.85
Bedsit (studio)	£56.03	£64.44	£56.24	£103.56	£97.62
1 bed	£63.49	£68.80	£64.58	£103.56	£120.46
2 bed	£74.97	£79.28	£82.11	£130.03	£153.23
3 bed	£83.26	£88.08	£89.70	£155.34	£169.15
4 bed	£95.74	£99.61	£106.10	£205.97	£284.31
5 bed	£102.92	£107.60	£110.63		
6 bed	£117.51	£113.73	£123.90		

Planning Capital Works in Council Dwellings

Each defined element within a council property is upgraded or renewed in line with good practice, legislative requirements and the changing needs and expectations of our tenants. The table below identifies some of the main criteria for planning major works in council dwellings:

Component for replacement	Leicester's replacement condition criteria	Decent Homes Standard minimum age
Bathroom	All properties to have a bathroom for life by 2036	30 - 40 years
Central heating boiler	Based on assessed condition from annual service	15 years (future life expectancy of boilers is expected to be on average 12 years)
Chimney	Based on assessed condition from the Stock Condition Survey / Housing Health and Safety Rating System	50 years
Windows and Doors	Based on assessed condition from the Stock Condition Survey / Housing Health and Safety Rating System	40 years
Electrics	Every 30 years	30 years
Kitchen	All properties to have an upgraded kitchen by 2036	20 – 30 years
Roof	Based on assessed condition for the Stock Condition Survey / Housing Health and Safety Rating System	50 years (20 years for flat roofs)
Wall finish (external)	Based on assessed condition from the Stock Condition Survey / Housing Health and Safety Rating System	80 years
Wall structure	Based on assessed condition from the Stock Condition Survey / Housing Health and Safety Rating System	60 years

Asset data for all HRA stock is held on the Northgate IT system. This includes the age, construction type, number of bedrooms, type and age of boiler, the last time the lighting and heating circuits were rewired etc. Condition survey data is also held for certain external elements such as roofs and chimneys, external paths, windows and doors etc.

The proposed capital budget for 2021/22 is not purely based on life cycle and condition survey data; major elements are pre-inspected before they are added to the programme and the repairs history for the property is checked. For example, all roofs are pre-inspected before the order is sent to the contractor. Likewise, all electrical installations are tested at 30 years and a decision is made whether to carry out a full rewire or part upgrade of the circuits. Properties are not added to the kitchen programme if they have had major repair work carried out in the previous 5 years.

Requests for additions to the capital programme are also received from the Repairs Team if an element requires replacement rather than repair. For example, a roof repair may result in the property being added to the programme.

Some works are reactive such as Disabled Adaptations. There is a joint working protocol between Housing and Adult Social Care, which allocates priority points to each case.

How Priorities are Assessed for HRA Expenditure

1. Labour's Manifesto, For the Many not the Few, contains 12 main commitments that the Housing Division has primary responsibility for delivering. Most of the commitments sit under the Manifesto section 'Homes for all'. These are to:
 - Provide 1,500 more council, social and extra care homes;
 - Use our Housing company to tackle housing shortages;
 - Reduce the number of families and individuals placed in temporary accommodation;
 - Ensure that no-one has to sleep rough on our streets;
 - Establish a residential facility for people experiencing multiple and complex needs, many of whom are rough sleeping;
 - Support further work to meet complex needs experienced by women and Black and Minority Ethnic communities who may not be sleeping on our streets but are homeless;
 - Make Leicester a place of refuge for those fleeing conflict across the world, with a comprehensive offer of housing, support and learning;
 - Maintain our existing adaptations service for all homeowners and undertake a programme of council housing adaptations to allow people with disabilities to remain or move into our properties;
 - Undertake an ongoing £80m council home improvement programme;
 - Continue our environmental investment programme on council land and estates;
 - Provide free Wi-Fi on estates;
 - Establish a home extension fund for council tenants to reduce overcrowding in council properties.

2. The overall aim of Leicester City Council's Housing Division is to provide a decent home within the reach of every citizen of Leicester. Under this aim the priorities for the HRA budget, incorporating support to deliver the Labour Manifesto commitments, are:
 - Providing Decent Homes;
 - Making our communities and neighbourhoods where people want to live and keeping in touch with our tenants;
 - Making Leicester a low carbon city by improving the energy efficiency of homes;
 - Providing appropriate housing to match people's changing needs;
 - Making Leicester a place to do business by creating jobs and supporting the local economy.

3. This appendix sets out how we meet our five major priorities for investment in our 20,100 council homes and their neighbourhoods.

Priority One – Providing Decent Homes

Why is this a priority and what is our planned approach to achieving this?

4. Nearly one in six homes in Leicester is a council house, flat, maisonette or bungalow. It is crucially important that we look after these assets, not just for current tenants but for those who will live in them for many years to come. When we plan the Housing Capital Programme we must consider what investment will be needed over at least the next 40 years, not just the next three or four years. We must ensure we do not let the programmes for essential items with long life spans fall behind, for example roofs, boilers, wiring, kitchens and bathrooms.
5. Providing decent homes is not just about ‘bricks and mortar’, it can also lead to improvements in educational achievement and health, help tackle poverty and reduce crime.
6. The Government’s Decent Homes target was met in 2011/12. However, to meet the standard on an on-going basis further investment for major works is required.
7. Major works are planned for all council housing following an assessment of condition, age, tenant priorities and other criteria set as part of the Decent Homes Standard. We have a bespoke software package that enables us to analysis stock condition and plan major work accordingly, when it is required.
8. The Government’s current definition of a Decent Home was set in 2006. A Decent Home must meet the following four criteria:
 - It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing;
 - It is in a reasonable repair;
 - It has reasonably modern facilities and services; and
 - It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

The Government’s green paper “A new deal for social housing” was published and consulted upon in 2018. This document stated the Government was considering a review of the Decent Homes Standard. To date no new update on the Decent Homes Standard has been made as a result of this green paper, but the wider housing sector anticipate changes to the current criteria at some point in the future, for which we will need to respond.

9. As well as achieving the Decent Homes Standard, we also address tenants’ priorities. The majority of tenants see improvements made within their home as a priority and the priority element for improvement is kitchens and bathrooms. Our current commitment is to refurbish all kitchens and bathrooms by 2036.
10. From time to time major refurbishment or redevelopment projects are required. The current ones are the kitchen and bathroom refurbishment programme, St Leonards

Court lift replacement and installation of a second lift, demolition of Goscote House, central heating and boiler upgrades and the electrical improvement programme.

11. It is crucial we continue to repair and maintain homes. During 2019/20, 88,072 repairs were completed. The number for 2020/21 will, to some extent, depend on the impact of the pandemic. While every effort is being made to complete repairs in a timely manner to protect homes and meet customer expectations, due to COVID-19 a significant number of the non-urgent repairs have been moved from their original target timescales to a 365-days target timescale; this has meant that this indicator is not comparable with previous years' figures.
12. Work is taking place to reduce the length of time homes are vacant to ensure that new tenants are rehoused into suitable accommodation as quickly as possible and loss of income is minimised. During 2019/20 the average time to re-let a routine void property was 64.1 days. Due to COVID-19 issues relating to being able to prepare and let voids, and homes being held back to assist with housing those in temporary accommodation, for the first 3 months of 2020/21 the re-let time had risen to 99.4 days.

Achievements in 2020/21 and Proposals for 2021/22

13. In 2020/21 approximately £26m will have been invested in maintaining our homes and a further £17m for improvements through the Capital Programme. The estimates and proposals in the table below are subject to the impact of coronavirus and any associated new local restrictions and the repercussions these may have in future on us carrying out our planned programmes of work.

Programmed element	Achievements and proposals
Kitchens and bathroom	We expect to have installed 560 kitchens / bathrooms in 2020/21. During 2021/2022 we are expecting to install a further 850 kitchens / bathrooms. As at the 1 st April 2020 76% of all council properties have had either a Leicester Standard kitchen or bathroom.
Rewiring	We expect to have rewired 424 homes in 2020/21 and a further 750 during 2021/22.
Central heating boilers	Investment is calculated to replace boilers every 15 years based on condition data from the annual gas service. We expect to have replaced 800 boilers in 2020/21 and a further 1,050 in 2021/22.
Roofing and chimneys	We expect to have installed 100 new roofs in 2020/21 and a further 150 in 2021/22. The budget increased by £400k in 2019/20 with a further increase of £150k identified for 2021/22 to enable the increased demand for this work to be undertaken.
Central heating systems	We have 134 properties without any form of central heating. In these cases, tenants have refused to have central heating installed. Provision is made in the programme to install central heating on tenant request or when these properties become vacant.
Windows and doors	Excluding properties in Conservation Areas where there are often restrictions on the use of UPVC, we have 46 properties that do not

	have UPVC double glazed windows. In these cases, tenants have refused our previous offers of installing double glazing. Provision is made in the programme to install windows / doors on tenant request or when these properties become vacant. Future investment will be targeted at installing secondary glazing to properties in Conservation Areas.
Structural works	Investment is required to address any structural works identified each year. As well as dealing with structural problems such as subsidence, issues such as woodwork treatment and failed damp proof courses are also dealt with when identified.
Soffits, fascia's and guttering	By replacing these items with UPVC we reduce long term maintenance costs. During 2020/21 we anticipate replacing 127 soffits, fascias and gutters and a further 150 in 2021/22.
Condensation works	Investment is required to target those properties that have been identified as being more susceptible to condensation-related problems because of their construction type or location. A multi-option approach is adopted along with the use of thermal imaging technology to produce property specific solutions. In 2020/21 we expect to complete work on 50 properties and a further 500 in 2021/22. The projected number for this year (2020/21) is relatively low due to the difficulties gaining access to properties during the pandemic. Advice to tenants is also important as their actions can alleviate condensation problems, for example opening windows when cooking.
Safety and fire risk work	Investment is required to implement the planned programme of fire safety measures, as agreed with the Fire Service (see point 14 below.)

14. Fire safety is of paramount importance to us as a landlord. We have policies and procedures in place to reduce the risk of fires, for example our Assistant Housing Officers carry out regular fire inspections to properties with communal areas, such as flats, maisonettes and houses in multiple occupation. All of these buildings have their own fire risk assessments and people are provided with a personal evacuation plan in case a fire starts. We have a no tolerance policy on items left in communal areas. If found these are removed so evacuation routes remain clear and combustible items are not left to encourage the spread of fire. Our fire safety work includes implementing recommendations made by the fire service. None of our 6 tower blocks contain external cladding, which contributed to the spread of the fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017, nor do they have gas supplies. 4 of the 5 tower blocks in St Peters have had passive fire protection upgraded as part of the refurbishment work taken place. This includes communal fire doors and emergency lighting. We have agreed to fit sprinkler systems at our 5 high story tower blocks. Work installing sprinklers at Maxwell House has been completed and work on the 4 other blocks has been programmed - procurement for the sprinklers started in Q3 2020/21, with an expected start on site date of Q1 2021/22 – later than originally programmed due to the restrictions resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

15. During 2020 /21, the HRA contributed £5.7m for services provided to council tenants, such as the removal of fly tipping on estates and to address crime and resolve anti-social behaviour.
16. Our mobile working solution, Total Mobile, has been in place for 19 months, and an upgrade of the system is due early in 2021 that will bring additional functions. We will also be looking to move the voids staff onto Total Mobile. We are currently reviewing the system, looking at approaches to improve our ways of delivering services and we are closely working with the users to achieve this. We have been trialling Remote Assist which enables us to remotely help customers with issues, potentially without the need to visit the property. Remote Assist is a video sharing tool that allows the tenant to share their phone video with us so that we can see inside their property in real time to help diagnose issues, determine materials required, etc, with a view to reducing the number of visits required, which reduces physical contact during COVID-19 as well as saving costs The system is currently being reviewed by the Voids service to see if it will benefit their way of working.

Priority Two – Making our communities and neighbourhoods places where people want to live and keeping in touch with our tenants

Why is this a priority and what is our planned approach to achieving this?

17. Creating sustainable communities is about more than housing, it means cleaner, safer, greener neighbourhoods in which people have confidence and pride.
18. The environmental works and communal areas fund help deliver significant environmental improvements on estates, such as landscaping, new security measures, community facilities, pocket parks, fencing and communal area improvements. Tenants and ward councillors help decide where this money should be spent, based on their local needs and priorities. These schemes have made significant contributions to improving the overall image, appearance and general quality of life within our estates.
19. Housing office services are now in shared buildings within local communities.

Achievements in 2020/21 and Proposals for 2021/22

20. In 2020/21 the budget for environmental and communal works was £750,000. It was shared across the city in all neighbourhood housing areas. Works included parking improvements, resurfacing courtyards, improving the security of estates by the installation of gates and removal of bushes.
21. During 2020/21 a further £1.2m is being invested to start a 3-year public realm improvement programme, primarily in the St Matthews and St Peters areas of the city. This increases the amount on money we spend making improvements to our estates this year to £1.95 million. This will rise to £2.65 million for each of the following 2 years.

22. The Leicester to Work scheme (see also priority 5) carries out painting, clearing of alleyways, removal of graffiti and other works to improve the look of the local environment.
23. The Housing Division works closely with the Probation Service through the Community Payback scheme, undertaking tasks such as litter picking and painting. Though the scheme is temporarily suspended due to pandemic related transport restrictions, we are keeping this under constant review and, when we are able to will re-start the service, though it may be that the service offer needs to change in the light of current circumstances.
24. The programme of upgrading door entrance schemes will continue based on condition surveys. We expect to upgrade 2 door entrance schemes during 2020/21 and a further 8 in 2021/22.
25. We continue to provide our housing management service with local teams so that our staff know the neighbourhoods and communities in which they work. Housing Officers are out and about on their 'patches' and our craft workforce is fully mobile. This year we have had to radically change the way we work to keep our workforce and our customers safe. We have continued to carry out essential visits to our estates, such as fire safety visits to our blocks of flats/maisonettes and responding to emergency situations in people's homes, but a vast majority of our work has been carried out remotely using modern technology. We have a phased approach to returning to the estates which is dependent on the latest advice in the local area. We have equipped our frontline teams with PPE, so that they can go out when needed. As the situation is constantly changing, we are adapting with time. We are looking at moving access to some of our services on-line so that tenants can use them safely and more effectively, while keeping other methods of contact open as well. Our primary concern this year has been the welfare of our tenants and, during the initial lockdown, our teams made over 6,500 calls to vulnerable tenants (this is about one third of our stock).
26. District Managers attend ward community meetings and other local forums. We work closely with the police and are involved in the local Joint Action Groups.
27. We publish an Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders and information is also communicated through the Your Leicester electronic newsletter and the Council's Twitter and Facebook accounts.
28. The Customer Service Centre runs a telephone advice line during working hours where tenants can report repairs and tenancy issues. Out of hours emergency calls are taken by an external provider. In 2019/20 the Customer Service Centre received 204,272 calls during the working day on the tenants' advice line. 120,831 of these calls were about repairs. A further 14,734 calls were made out of hours.
29. We are continuing work on a programme to provide greater on-line access to our services, through a portal on the Council's website. We have already set up the facility

for tenants to view and download rent statements and they can now also view repairs and request routine repairs to their property and select an appointment slot. Further on-line developments we are working on include, the ability for tenants to send us an enquiry related to a repair they have reported and allowing tenants to contact us online for a broader range of reasons, such as changing their name and requesting permission to make alterations to their property.

30. We respond vigorously to reports of anti-social behaviour and have CCTV on many parts of our estates. We also offer security packages to tenants who are victims of anti-social behaviour, such as secure letter boxes and alarms, to help them feel safe in their homes whilst reports are investigated. In 2019/20 we received 1,487 reports of anti-social behaviour that were investigated and, where necessary, action was taken against perpetrators. In the first 3 quarters of 2020/21 we had received a total of 931 reports.
31. We work closely with the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum which has representatives from across the city. The Forum has made use of new ways of working to continue to meet and fulfil their scrutiny roll during the pandemic. Forum meetings have taken place using telephone conferencing and, where required, hard copy documents have been distributed using the remote Doc Mailer facility. The action log from the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum is attached to the documents for each Housing Scrutiny meeting. The Chair and / or Vice Chair of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum will also attend Housing Scrutiny meetings to provide an update on the work of the Forum. The Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum have also been consulted on this year's HRA budget proposals.
32. To address the needs of leaseholders we have established a Leaseholders Liaison Team who are responsible for responding to leaseholder queries and improving services to meet their needs. Up until the start of 2020, Leaseholder Forum meetings have taken place on a quarterly basis, though they were temporarily suspended after the meeting in January, due to the pandemic. The meetings began again in October 2020 as virtual meetings using Microsoft Teams.

Priority Three – Making Leicester a low carbon city by improving the energy efficiency of homes

Why is this a priority and what is our planned approach to achieving it?

33. The council and its partners have committed to cut carbon emissions by 50%, relative to 1990 levels by 2025. Part of this target was to reduce residential CO₂ emissions from 651,000 tonnes in 2006 to 530,000 tonnes by 2012, a reduction of 121,000 tonnes. Council housing accounts for approximately 16% of all residential housing in the city. Therefore, its pro rata contribution towards carbon reduction target is 20,268 tonnes. Through the Housing Capital Programme CO₂ emissions from council houses reduced

by 58,523 tonnes between 2005 and March 2017. This means that we have already exceeded our target by 180%.

34. This has been achieved by window replacements, new central heating installations, new energy efficient boilers and controls, internal and external wall and roof insulation and solar panels.
35. The most cost-effective opportunities for carbon savings in the council stock are diminishing now that all properties have double glazed UPVC windows and all cavity walls have been insulated. However, any further reductions will help towards the city target and will improve energy efficiency for individual tenants and reduce fuel poverty.
36. The homes being built as part of our current housebuilding programme have been designed to maximise energy efficiency. Phase 1 of the newbuilds are being built to higher standard than current building control standards and Phase 2 of the new build programme will deliver a 70% improvement.
37. There are three areas of energy efficiency work to prioritise as funds become available. These are:
 - Completing external wall insulation on all suitable properties.
 - Installing individual meters for tenants on district heating schemes.
 - Doing specialist work on the hardest to heat houses. For example, those properties with small wall cavities which are not suitable for typical wall installation programmes.
38. Bidding is being prepared for the Green Home grant and this will include bids for funding for Solar PV and External Wall insulation. Another bid is being made for cavity wall insulation and a further bid being made towards decarbonisation of our housing stock for those in lower energy efficiency categories.
39. The technical Housing team are working with the Energy team to procure an organisation to lead on the decarbonisation of the Council housing stock by 2030. Other collaborative research work is also going on with De Montfort University.

Achievements in 2020/21 and proposals for 2021/22

40. During 2020/21 we continued our programme of installing more efficient boilers as boilers need replacing, increasing loft insulation to 250 mm and putting in double glazed windows and doors as demand arises. This work will continue in 2021/2022.

41. Approximately 2,900 properties are on our district heating scheme. These tenants can control the heat in their radiators. However, without individual heat meters they cannot be charged exactly for the heating and hot water they use. A pilot scheme of installing 50 meters showed that, on average, tenants saved 33% when they could see the link between their heating and hot water consumption and the bill they pay.

Priority Four – Providing appropriate housing to match people’s changing needs

Why is this a priority and what is our planned approach to achieving this?

42. Leicester is a city with relatively low household incomes. For many, renting from the council or a housing association is the only hope of a decent and settled home. In October 2020 there were 6,342 households on the Housing Register.

43. Right to Buy sales reduce the number of council homes available at an affordable rent. In 2019/20 we sold 409 homes. It is estimated that a much smaller number will be sold in 2020/21 due to the impact of Covid-19.

44. The most recent Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment in 2017 identified that Leicester’s net affordable housing need is 786 additional affordable housing homes per year to meet current and future demand from households who cannot afford to enter the private housing market. The city’s average annual new supply of affordable homes has been less than a quarter of this need over the past 10 years.

45. Issues affecting our ability to provide new affordable housing include:

- The limited land available in the city for residential development (including for Affordable Housing). The council has been reviewing its landholdings and, as part of its new Local Plans process, inviting others to put forward sites in any ownership which might be suitable for development.
- The Government’s requirement that funds available to invest in the new supply of Affordable Housing from either Homes England’s programme or from Right to Buy receipts can only meet a portion of the total costs of new supply. Homes England funds and Right to Buy receipts cannot be used together towards the funding of any dwelling. The balance of the costs must be funded by other means.

46. Despite these constraints the Council has embarked on a new council house acquisition and building programme to help address housing need.

47. When a property, sold under Right to Buy, is placed back onto the market the council has the first opportunity to buy this property back before it goes onto the open market. We are increasingly taking this option to increase our supply of affordable housing.

48. Each year the Capital Programme funds the adaptations of tenants existing homes where Adult Social Care and Children's Services identify the current tenant or family members needs those adaptations.
49. The service also works closely with Children's Services to help looked after children, foster families, children leaving care and other vulnerable families.
50. The Supporting Tenants and Residents (STAR) service provides one-to-one support for council tenants who might otherwise lose their homes. Priority is given to support those in rent arrears, those who have been previously homeless and those who have other problems which means they are not coping or complying with tenancy conditions.
51. Housing Officers undertake a programme of Welfare Visits to tenants who may be vulnerable. Since the pandemic, these have continued via the telephone. This contact is an opportunity for us to check whether the tenant is coping in their home and, where appropriate, we signpost or refer people to support services. This is a preventative measure to help sustain tenancies, ensure people are safe, well and enables us to act before a crisis point is reached.

What will we achieve in 2020/21 and what are we proposing for 2021/22?

52. The Affordable Housing Programme delivered 340 new homes in 2019/20 and it is predicted that 156 will be delivered by the end of 2020/21.
53. During the first phase of council housebuilding 29 properties will be built on Ambassador Road, Selby Avenue, Maplin Road, Brocklesby Way, Felstead Road and Rosehill Crescent at a cost of £4.6m. These developments have all now completed with the exception of Felstead Road which is due to complete in March 2021. . Phase 2 of house building is also being planned, with potential sites at The Velodrome and Lanesborough Road. Phase 2b and Phase 3 sites have been identified. In addition to this, two Adult Social Care extra care schemes are in development which will provide an additional 155 units.
54. In 2019/20 the council bought back 183 homes that had previously been sold through the Right to Buy scheme. Between April and October 2020, a further 63 have been purchased with offers made and accepted on 60 that are progressing through to completion.
55. During 2019/20, 382 minor adaptations took place in tenants' homes, such as ramps and door widening. There were also 153 major adaptations, such as level access showers, stair lifts and through floor lifts. This work will continue in 2021/22 in response to assessments by Adult Social Care.
56. Work has started on developing a scheme to undertake extension work at properties where households are experiencing overcrowding, rather than them having to move through the Housing Register to resolve the issue. We are currently reviewing our properties where there is overcrowding to establish the feasibility of carrying out this work. The project is being managed by the Overcrowding Steering Board, which

includes representatives from a range of key Housing services who will scope the most effective way to deliver on project aims. A homes extension fund of £500k has been made available to progress the scheme.

57. Vacant council and housing association properties are advertised through Leicester HomeChoice. Last year, 245 council tenants transferred within the stock to homes better suited to their need and 654 households became new council tenants. A further 347 households obtained housing association tenancies (excluding HomeCome). In the first 6 months of 2020/21, 77 tenants had transferred properties, there were 271 new tenants and 73 had obtained housing association tenancies (excluding HomeCome).
58. We subscribe to the national Home Swapper Scheme that enables tenants to identify mutual exchanges. This is particularly important for those tenants who want to move but have a low priority on the Housing Register.
59. The Income Management Team continues to ensure rent is paid and tenants with arrears are given support to clear their debt. In 2019/20 a total of 98.55% of rent was collected, slightly less than 2018/19 due to the direct impact of the introduction of Universal Credit in Leicester. Total rent arrears at the end of 2019/20, stood at £2.036m. The team works closely with the Housing Benefits Service and make referrals for Discretionary Housing Benefit. In 2019/20 £389,327 in Discretionary Housing Benefit payments were made to council tenants.

Evictions are carried out as a last resort and during year 2019/20 a total of 37 evictions took place due to non-payment of rent. This figure is comparable to the same point in 2018/19 where the figure was 35. From the 19,869 current tenancies at the end of the year, this would amount to less than 0.2% percent (0.186%) of all tenants being evicted in the year.

There are now greater challenges to collect rental income with the ongoing roll-out of Universal Credit in Leicester and due to the current pandemic. The housing costs element of Universal Credit is paid directly to the claimant and therefore tenants will be responsible for paying the rent themselves, unlike previously where their housing benefit was paid directly to the council. By the end of the same financial year a total of 3,771 tenants were claiming Universal Credit. The Council has taken steps to mitigate the risk of increasing rent arrears by appointing Rent Management Advisors to support tenants make claims for Universal Credit and provide ongoing support where appropriate. In the last financial year, the Advisors supported a total of 447 council tenants. The Department of Work and Pensions has granted the Council Trusted Partner Status, enabling the Council to apply for managed rent payments directly to the Council for those tenants that are vulnerable.

Due to the current pandemic the Government imposed an eviction ban to prevent any risks impacting on public health, such as evictions resulting in homelessness. The ban was periodically reviewed and extended and lasted from 27th March 2020 to 20th September 2020. Moving forward, the Government has announced new temporary conditions they are putting in place to help courts determine how possession claims will be dealt with. Under the new rules, rental possession cases will not be listed or heard until the Council serves a 'reactivation notice' to tenants and file a copy in court. Within

the notice the Council must set out what knowledge we hold on the effect of the Coronavirus pandemic on tenant(s) and their household. Upon receipt of the notice the courts will consider if a hearing is reasonable and provide a hearing date if applicable. In addition to this, the Council will also be required to provide tenants full rent arrears history in advance of proceedings rather than at the hearing itself.

The Government announced that any Notices of Seeking Possession (NOSP), which is the first step of legal action against a tenancy, needed to be modified as per the Coronavirus Act 2020. This was also periodically reviewed and changed multiple times, with the most recent legal notices now being served with a 6-month expiry date as opposed to the previous 3-month rule. This applies to all cases until end of March 2021 and with the exception of those cases raising other serious issues such as those involving anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse perpetrators or rent arrears over 6 months. This presents significant challenges relating to those who persistently refuse to engage or pay rent. The team are encouraging conversations geared around support to help tenants financially with advice and guidance on income maximisation and, where applicable, offering the necessary referrals to supporting agencies. It's anticipated that the arrears performance will remain unstable and increases are expected due to the recent challenges

The Income Management team are working incredibly hard and continuing to achieve high performance despite the challenges faced and, at the forefront, is support for the tenants during this extremely difficult time to ensure their Income is fully maximised and any hardship is eased.

60. 91.1% of tenancies were sustained in 2019/20. This means that 91.1% of people who became new tenants in 2018/19 remained in their tenancy 12 months later. For the first quarter of 2020/21 this sustainment had increased to 93.3%. During 2019/20 STAR provided short term support to 1,416 tenants and longer-term support to 949, an increase of 436 cases from last year. In the first quarter of 2020/21 the STAR service was providing longer term support for 538 tenants and provided short term support for 632 tenants. The STAR service also provides an intensive package of support to help Syrian refugees settled into their new homes and improve pathways into employment.

Priority Five – Making Leicester a place to do business, by creating jobs and supporting the local economy

What is our planned approach for achieving this?

61. Contracts are placed through the corporate procurement team which takes steps to use council spending to stimulate the local economy. All contracts have local labour and social value clauses.
62. The service will continue the excellent record of training craft apprentices so they can develop the skills and knowledge to join the workforce and help maintain the stock. Many steps are taken to encourage women and people from ethnic and minority backgrounds to join the craft workforce.

63. The Council's Leicester to Work initiative provides opportunities to the long term unemployed and work experience for school students, graduates and ex-offenders.

Achievements in 2020/21 and proposals for 2021/22

64. The total value of our contracts, funded through the HRA, is £132m in 2020/21. The Housing Division employs a workforce of just over 1000 staff funded through the HRA.

65. 5 property maintenance operatives finished their apprenticeship in 2020. There are 18 other apprenticeships in place running through to the end of 2022 and one other running through to 2023. They include the trades of Carpentry, Electrics, Plumbing, Plastering, Gas technicians and an HGV mechanic. In 2021 we are likely to recruit 12 new apprentices. Work has recently begun to see which trades they will be for.

66. In addition to the apprentices in the Repairs Service, we employed 9 people as apprentice Admin and Business Support Officers (ABSOS) in 2019/20. ABSO apprentices have also been employed by the Housing Options and Renewal and Grants Services. No apprentices have been employed by the Admin and Business Support Service this year so far, due to the pandemic.

67. Housing's Neighbourhood Improvement Scheme continues to help the long-term unemployed by giving pre-employment training and a period of work experience. During 2019/20, 10 people completed 6-month fixed employment contracts as Neighbourhood Improvement Officers and a further 10 people have started employment with the Council under this scheme. Their work on our estates includes painting, clearing overgrown areas, tidying unsightly spots, cleaning UPVC windows and removing rubbish.

Feedback from Consultation with Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum

As a result of the Covid 19 restrictions in place, we were unable to hold a face to face meeting with members of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum, as we would normally do, to consult on the Housing Revenue Account budget proposals for 2021/22.

However, to ensure all members had the opportunity to comment on the proposals, we sent the budget report out to the Forum on the 25th November 2020, for them to consider. In early December officers telephoned each member individually to discuss the proposals and to receive their feedback. This was followed up by a telephone meeting with the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum on the 10th December 2020, where a summary of the individual feedback was shared, and members were given the opportunity to add any more comments.

The feedback received is as follows:

Rents and Service charges proposals
1.5% increase in core council rents
There were mixed views on this proposal. Some Forum members accepted the rent increase was needed to enable the continuation of services. However, they raised concerns about the impact this could have, in terms of affordability, for people on low incomes. Four Forum members stated they did not agree with the proposal and all quoted the circumstances that the Covid 19 pandemic has brought, where people are already facing financial hardship as a result of this. One Forum member suggested the proposed increase should be reduced to 1%.
2% increase in service charges
The feedback received on this proposal was similar to that proposed for the rent rise. Some members accepted there needed to be an increase in charges to provide services, whilst others were concerned about the financial hardship tenants and leaseholders were already facing as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic.
1.5% increase in garage rents
Again, some members accepted there needed to be an increase in garage rents and agreed with the proposal, whilst others were concerned about the financial hardship people were already facing as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. One member stated it would be particularly difficult financially, for those tenants facing a rent increase, who also rented a garage.
Re-alignment of Dawn Centre rents to reflect the cost of the services provided

On the whole people supported this proposal but wanted assurances that any rent increase would be eligible for benefits. One concern was raised about the impact on the Government needing to pay for additional benefit, when they are already facing financial difficulties with the Covid 19 pandemic. Another concern raised was around people's increasing reliance on benefit to pay rent, which could put them into a poverty trap, that could make them worse off if they secured employment.

Capital Programme proposals

An additional £150,000 on re-roofing to meeting the demand of properties needing this work

All Forum members supported this proposal.

£1.9m to be allocated in year 2 of the Public Realm improvement project (£5m over 3 years)

All Forum members supported the proposal to invest in public realm improvements. However, some members stated the funding should be distributed across the city, where there is most need, rather than focusing on one area.

Reduce the £1.2m budget on adaptations to council tenant's homes by £300,000. This work is demand led and the budget has been underspent in recent years. It is proposed the £300,000 saving is used to carry out adaptations to empty council properties to meet the needs of people needing these on the Housing Register

All Forum members supported this proposal.

Returning the fire safety work budget to £850,000. This was increased to £1m in 2020 / 21 to pay for additional work required, which will be completed by the end of this financial year

Generally, all Forum members supported this proposal. 1 member thought the original £850k should be increased to take inflation into account. Members wanted assurance that all necessary work would be completed to meet safety and legal requirements, even with money available returning to its original level.

It is proposed that £0.5m continues to be spent on converting tenanted properties to address overcrowding

All Forum members supported this proposal. One member stated the Council should also continue to build larger homes for those living in overcrowded situations.

£550,000 is to be allocated to improve our IT systems for mobile working of staff to improve services for tenants

Generally, this proposal was supported. Two members thought it was a lot of money to spend in this area and suggested work should take place to ensure current IT systems were fit for purpose. Another member stated money should

also be invested to ensure tenants without IT or the skills to use IT, have access to services as the channel shift initiative progresses.

£250,000 is to be made available to undertake a feasibility study to identify energy efficiency work in council homes as a result of the climate change emergency

There were mixed views on this proposal. Some members supported the proposals, whilst others raised concerns about the level of funding proposed just for a feasibility study.

It is proposed £200,000 is used to trial a replacement fencing programme on our estates

All Forum members supported this proposal. Some members stated that more should be done to make tenants financially accountable for repair work when they caused damage to fencing themselves.

It is proposed that £300,000 is used to refurbish our family temporary accommodation at Bridlespur Way

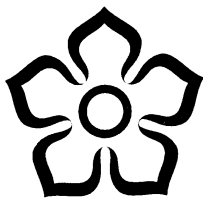
Generally, this proposal was supported. However, concerns were raised by some about the level of spend and it was asked whether all this money was needed to carry out the refurbishment. Comments were also made by a couple of members that households should be made financially accountable if they cause deliberate damage to the properties they are using as temporary accommodation. One member stated the money should be used to build new homes and not to refurbish existing properties.

It is proposed spend on kitchens and bathrooms remains the same at £3.6m

All Forum members supported the budget to continue replacing kitchens and bathrooms. One member suggested the budget should be increased as this work was a priority to tenants.

Door entry systems – no change to the budget of £150k

One member stated that security was important to people living in flats and that this budget should be increased to make further improvements to door entry systems.



Leicester
City Council

Appendix H

MINUTE EXTRACT

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: MONDAY, 11 JANUARY 2021 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor Westley (Chair)
Councillor Nangreave (Vice Chair)

Councillor Gee
Councillor O'Donnell

Councillor Pickering
Councillor Willmott

* * * * *

108. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Aqbany.

109. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair declared an interest in item 7 "Housing Revenue Account 2021-2022 – Consultation" as members of his family lived in Council accommodation.

The Vice-Chair declared an interest in item 7 "Housing Revenue Account 2021-2022 – Consultation" as her partner lived in Council accommodation.

Councillor Pickering declared an interest in item 7 "Housing Revenue Account 2021-2022 – Consultation" as she lived in Council accommodation.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillors' judgement of the public interest. They were not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

110. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission on 23 November 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

114. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT 2021-2022 - CONSULTATION

The Director of Housing and the Director of Finance submitted a report, which asked the Commission to consider the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2021/22. It was confirmed that the draft report to Council, which was attached as an appendix, would be considered in February 2021.

The Director of Housing reported that the financial landscape of the four-year period from 2016 to 2020 was dominated by the government requirement that rents be reduced by 1% each year. Despite this pressure, it was noted that the HRA delivered balanced budgets.

It was reported that for the 5 years from 2020, rents were permitted to increase by up to CPI+1% and that whilst this relaxation helped to sustain a financially viable HRA and support investment in the housing stock, the continuing impact of Right to Buy (RTB) sales on rental income persisted.

The Commission was asked to;

- ix) Note the financial pressures on the HRA and comment on the proposals for delivering a balanced budget;
- x) Note the comments from the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum; and
- xi) Note rent and service charge changes for 21/22 as follows:
 - 1.5% increase to core rent;
 - 1.5% increase to garage rent;
 - 2.0% increase to service charges;

To provide further context, the Director of Housing referred to detailed information in the appendixes attached to the report to Council, including the comparison of council house rents to private rents in the city. It was also clarified and emphasised that 60% of the council's current tenants would not be affected by any rent increase, as they were in receipt of Universal Credit or other benefit. The average rent increase would only be £1.11 a week.

A breakdown of capital items was submitted and explained, with the continued investment in stock and the significant programme of Council House building /acquisitions being noted. The changes within the capital programme were summarised, and it was noted that the housing team worked closely with the Council's energy team in the delivery of the de-carbonisation agenda. Work with DeMontfort University in relation to ongoing research in this area of activity was also noted.

The Chair thanked the Director for his report and asked the Assistant City Mayor (Housing and Education) to comment. Councillor Cutkelvin stated that the achievement to deliver a balance budget year on year was remarkable, particularly alongside ongoing financial pressures and stated that the money from this increase goes straight back in to investing in properties. Cllr Cutkelvin reiterated that 60% of the most vulnerable tenants being unaffected. She also commented on the effect of Covid-19 on the service. In conclusion Councillor Cutkelvin emphasised that income from the HRA was utilised within the

department, with expenditure in the capital programme being invested in property improvement, including access to the STAR Service.

In response to comments, Councillor Cutkelvin also reiterated that the 40% of tenants facing a rent increase were also considered to be vulnerable, but that the most vulnerable would be unaffected. The issues of 'in-work poverty' becoming a greater issue and the increased use of foodbanks and additional external support was recognised.

Councillor O'Donnell suggested that the effect of rent increases on full-time workers with already stretched family budgets would be significant and should have received greater reference and consideration.

Councillor Willmott supported the view that the 40% affected would find the increase hard to find in family budgets. He also commented on the investment proposals and advised that he was not convinced of the requirement to invest further in IT provision, or to accelerate the work being undertaken in relation to climate change. He informed the Commission that if these items were removed from the programme, or had reduced ambitions, the recommended rent increase could be reduced to 1%.

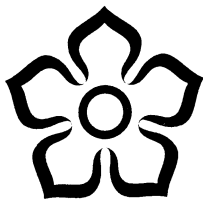
The Director of Housing was asked to respond. He reminded the Commission that should there be no increase approved over 1% then this would impact on potential for further investment in the housing stock and the budget would be required to be balanced. It was highlighted that rent increases could not be made retrospectively, and the investment capability would be permanently lost.

The Chair then commented on the severe impacts of the governments decisions and he thanked officers for their efforts in delivering a balanced budget year on year. He advised that he supported the recommendation adding that some tenants' representatives supported the proposed level of rent increases to ensure that future repairs and maintenance could be undertaken on the stock.

In conclusion the Commission noted the response circulated from the Tenants and Landlords Forum as part of the consultation.

AGREED:

That Council be informed that this Commission supports the budget for 2021/22 being set as a balanced budget, with a core rent increase of 1.5%.



Leicester
City Council

Appendix I

Minutes of the Meeting of the
OVERVIEW SELECT COMMITTEE

Held: THURSDAY, 4 FEBRUARY 2021 at 4:00 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor Cassidy (Chair)
Councillor Joel (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Gee (sub for Councillor Halford)	Councillor Joshi
Councillor Kitterick	Councillor Porter
Councillor Waddington	Councillor Westley

In Attendance:

Sir Peter Soulsby	City Mayor
Councillor Clarke	Deputy City Mayor, Environment and Transportation
Councillor Cutkelvin	Assistant City Mayor, Education and Housing
Councillor Dempster	Assistant City Mayor, Health
Councillor Hunter	Assistant City Mayor, Tackling Racism and Disadvantage
Councillor Master	Assistant City Mayor, Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Myers	Assistant City Mayor, Jobs, Skills, Policy Delivery and Communications
Councillor Patel	Assistant City Mayor, Communities, Equalities and Special Projects
Councillor Singh Clair	Deputy City Mayor, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Regulatory Services

* * * * *

137. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Halford. Councillor Gee was present as the appointed substitute for Councillor Halford.

The Committee noted that Councillor Thalukdar was present as a substitute Member.

138. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Joshi declared an Other Disclosable Interest in the general business and budget items of the meeting in that his wife worked in the Reablement Team at the Council.

Councillor Westley declared an Other Disclosable Interest in agenda item Appendix D Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget (Including Capital Programme) 2021/22, in that some members of his family were Council tenants.

In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, these interests were not considered so significant that they were likely to prejudice the Councillors' judgement of the public interest. They were not, therefore, required to withdraw from the meeting.

147. DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET (INCLUDING CAPITAL PROGRAMME) 2021/22

The Director of Housing submitted a report which set out the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget for 2021/22. The Overview Select Committee was recommended to make any comments on the report, in particularly the proposals for delivering a balanced budget and the proposed changes to rent and service charges.

Councillor Cutkelvin, Assistant Mayor for Education and Housing introduced the report. She gave thanks to the Director of Housing, Finance Team, and the tenants and leaseholders for meaningful engagement. It was acknowledged there were still some significant pressures to the budget, not least from the cumulative impact with right to buy. What had been put forward was a balanced budget that continued to invest in the quality and standards of stock.

The Director of Housing presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- The headlines to the HRA budget proposal was that a balanced budget is proposed by recommending to only increase core rent by 1.5%, and service charge by 2%. On average tenants would see a £1.11 increase in their weekly rent.
- Appendix D, Page 44 set out that Leicester City Council had significantly low rents with them being almost 50% cheaper than private sector rental rates in Leicester.
- Over 60% of tenants would be unaffected by the proposal because they were in receipt of either housing benefit or universal credit.
- The Council has been legally bound for the past four years of having to reduce the rents by 1% each year whilst having to manage ongoing pressures. The proposed increase would help to address a number of budget pressures, as set out at Page 33, 4.21 in the report, namely:
 - Ongoing Right to Buy stock loss and associated rental income loss of £1.135million
 - Inflationary pressures of £1.676million

- In order to balance the budget it had been necessary alongside the proposed rent increase to identify and implement balancing items as outlined on Pages 34 and 35, 4.31 in the report. Headlines included:
 - Additional rent through properties acquired
 - A saving linked to the homes not hostels offer
 - Reductions to budget in repairs and gas materials, and the structural works budget.
- The overall proposed capital budget was £87.8million with £70million of the budget related to Council house acquisitions and new build, with the remainder mostly going into property improvements. The additional commitment would take the Council's investment into new council housing to £100million, set out in more detail in Appendix B, page 41 to the report.
- The Council would continue to invest at same level in existing stock with ongoing programs involving kitchen, bathroom or boiler replacements, and rewires.
- Main changes to the budgets included an increase in the roof budget of £150k to £900k linked to an increase in need for roof replacements. There was also a proposed decrease in the fire risk budget due to reduced demand following strong investment for a number of years in communal area programmes of fire related improvements.
- The capital budget included an ongoing budget proposal for public realm investment in the St Matthews and St Peters areas with £1.9million proposed to be invested in Council housing estates.
- A new budget was proposed to be added, linked to retrofitting to address fuel poverty and climate emergency on existing stock, outlined on Page 54, App F, priorities 37 – 39. The Technical Team in Housing were working with the Energy Team to procure an organisation to lead on the decarbonisation of Council's housing stock by 2030. There would be an additional capital budget need in future years for this work.
- It was proposed in the capital budget to add a budget associated to a pilot on new fencing piece of work that would help drive and determine what the council housing fencing strategy would be going forward.
- Included was an additional budget link to ongoing work to change the family temporary accommodation offer in moving to homes not hostels, and enhancing the Bridlespur Way accommodation offer.
- Attention was drawn to the financial pressure on the HRA proposals for delivering a balanced budget, and the consultation feedback at Appendices G and H from the Housing Scrutiny Commission, and Tenants and Leaseholders' Forum on Pages 60 and 63 in the report.
- It was noted that whilst there was reservation from both groups on the 1.5% rent increase due to the current economic climate, and the impact on vulnerable people, overall both groups supported the budget proposals, including the rent increase.

The Chair invited Members to comment.

Councillor Westley, Chair of Housing Scrutiny Commission welcomed the report which had received thorough scrutiny. Also, whilst no one wanted to see rent increases, tenants' representatives had welcomed the report and had noted the requirement to invest in the Council's housing stock.

In response to questions the following points were made:

- With regards to adaptations for those with disabilities, it was commented on that the budget was being reduced for existing disabled people with a view to putting £300k into a new budget for adapting properties. The Director responded that investment of over £1.2million in adaptations for existing tenants had been made for some years, and requests for adaptations were up-to-date. Some money could now be diverted for people who were waiting for properties due to the lack of adapted properties coming forward. £500k had already been put into the budget in relation to completing extensions as part of the acquisitions programme, along with a review of those most in need on the Housing register. It was stated the £300k was a starting point with a review for the need for additional funding going forward.
- The 2% increase in service charge was on all council tenancies and not just elected ones.
- It was noted that Border House was closed in February 2020. The pausing of any evictions over rent arrears had seen a reduction in family homelessness during the past year. During that period people had been moved on positively and gradually people had been moved out of Border House. It was further noted there were no plans to utilise the building and would receive corporate consideration as to what should happen to the site, but it would not be associated to housing the homeless. Information on when the decision was made would be provided to Councillor Porter.
- As an update, the purchase of Hospital Close had progressed well and the Council was at the point of tying up legal aspects, and was a prime example of utilising 170 units for those most in need that would probably have been knocked down if the Council hadn't stepped in to purchase them.
- For a 10-year period beyond the Council purchasing a property, there was a cost floor associated with buying them back under Right-to-Buy, namely the purchase price paid for the property.
- The priority to 'provide 1,500 more council, social and extra care homes' was referenced (Page 47). Since the manifesto commitment officers had been working hard to deliver to the commitment in the first year, and 340 units had been delivered, and there would shortly be a press release focussing on Ross Hill Crescent new build houses and other properties coming available. Work would continue over the four-year duration of the commitment and would try to exceed the 1,500 manifesto commitment.
- The priority to 'ensure that no-one has to sleep rough on our streets' (Page 47) was also highlighted, and it was stated that there were still people who were sleeping on the streets, even one camping outside of the Dawn Centre. It was noted on the annual count the authority had the lowest number of rough sleepers on the night for a number of years at 12 people. The Commission was assured the Council had the ability and capacity to take anyone in and the 'everyone in' offer continued. Sadly, it was reported there were some individuals who would not accept offers of accommodation or engage until there was a change in their own personal circumstances.
- Reference was made to a report from the Fire and Rescue Service around culture, ethnicity and response. The Director stated he would welcome a copy of the report. It was further noted the Council met regularly with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service over existing stock and had a strong relationship with them.

The Chair commented that there were report of people living in appalling private sector accommodation, and it was good to see Leicester City Council's public housing being looked after and invested in to a high standard.

The Chair noted the proposal for a balanced budget, and comments made by the Overview Select Committee, the views of the Housing Scrutiny Commission, and the Tenants and Leaseholders' Forum that the proposed rent increase was valid and ensured continued investment in housing stock.

AGREED:

That:

1. The report be noted.
2. The proposals for delivering a balanced budget, and the proposed changes to rent and service charges be noted.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Title of proposal	Housing Revenue Account Budget (including Capital Programme 2021/22)
Name of division/service	Housing
Name of lead officer completing this assessment	Helen McGarry, Programme Manager. Tel: 0116 4545129, helen.mcgarry@leicester.gov.uk
Date EIA assessment completed	11 th December 2020
Decision maker	Full Council
Date decision taken	17 th February 2021

EIA sign off on completion:	Signature	Date
Lead officer		
Equalities officer		
Divisional director		

Please ensure the following:

- a) That the document is **understandable to a reader who has not read any other documents** and explains (on its own) how the Public Sector Equality Duty is met. This does not need to be lengthy but must be complete and based in evidence.
- b) That available support information and data is identified and where it can be found. Also be clear about highlighting gaps in existing data or evidence that you hold, and how you have sought to address these knowledge gaps.
- c) That the equality impacts are capable of aggregation with those of other EIAs to identify the cumulative impact of all service changes made by the council on different groups of people.
- d) That the equality impact assessment is started at an early stage in the decision-making process, so that it can be used to inform the consultation, engagement and the decision. It should not be a tick-box exercise. Equality impact assessment is an iterative process that should be revisited throughout the decision-making process. It can be used to assess several different options.
- e) Decision makers must be aware of their duty to pay 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty (see below) and 'due regard' must be paid before and at the time a decision is taken. Please see the Brown Principles on the equality intranet pages, for information on how to undertake a lawful decision-making process, from an

equalities perspective. Please append the draft EIA and the final EIA to papers for decision makers (including leadership team meetings, lead member briefings, scrutiny meetings and executive meetings) and draw out the key points for their consideration. The Equalities Team provide equalities comments on reports.

1. Setting the context

Describe the proposal, the reasons it is being made, and the intended change or outcome. Will the needs of those who are currently using the service continue to be met?

The financial landscape of the four-year period from 2016 to 2020 was been dominated by the government requirement that social housing rents be reduced by 1% each year, which reduced income to the Housing Revenue Account by £3.1m per annum. For the 5 years from 2020 rents can be increased by up to CPI+1%. Whilst this relaxation is welcome, a number of other external pressures on the Housing Revenue Account Budget persist. These include the impact of increasing Right to Buy sales (where it is predicted £1.135m rental income will be lost during 2021/22) and inflation and staff cost pressures (which amount to an additional £1.676m for 2021/22.). To address the deficit that this creates it is proposed additional income / savings can be delivered in several areas including, increasing rent and service charges (£1.3m), additional rental include from new build and acquired properties (£0.9m) and savings associated with the closure of Border House (£247k), The Housing Revenue Account budget report recommends that the budget for 2021 / 22 is set as a balanced budget, continuing the approach of only drawing on reserves to fund time-limited or one-off schemes.

The Housing Revenue Account Budget report is proposing a 1.5% increase to the core rents of Council homes, which is the maximum increase allowed under the government's new criteria. As well as this rent increase for 2021 / 22 the report is recommending:

- Increasing service charges by 2%
- A re-calculation of Dawn Centre rents to align these with the actual running cost of the service
- Increasing garage rents by 1.5%

The cost of the Capital Programme for 2021/22 is proposed to be £47.81m, with £30m of this relating to the Affordable Housing Acquisition and New Build Programme. The following projects are those where it is proposed that changes will be made to the allocation of funding through this Programme:

- An additional £150k is being made available for re-roofing schemes to meet the demand of more properties requiring this work.
- As part of the 2020 / 21 budget setting process it was agreed that £5m would be made available over a 3-year period to undertake public realm improvement work. It is

proposed £1.2m of this will be allocated from reserves within the 2021/22 Capital Programme.

- The Capital Programme provides funding to carry out adaptation work in Council tenant's homes. This work is demand led and in recent years has been consistently underspent. It is proposed that the £1.2m budget for this is reduced by £300K. However, it is proposed that this money used to create a new budget for adaptations to properties for those on the Housing Register, to enable them better access to properties which meet their needs. £0.3m of the total funding for adaptations will be allocated from reserves, using capital underspends from 2020/21
- For 2020/21 the fire safety risk work was increased to £1m to undertake a higher volume of work required. Now this has taken place it is proposed the budget reverts to its original £850k for 2021/22.
- It is proposed that £0.5m continues to be added to the Capital Programme to enable the conversion of tenanted properties to address overcrowding.
- An additional £375k is being made available for improvements to IT systems, including increasing mobile working solutions. This increases the proposed spend allocation to £550k, for 2021/22.
- To support the work to address the climate change emergency it is proposed that £250k is made available during 2021/22 to enable feasibility work to take place to identify the most suitable and cost-effective energy efficiency work that can take place within our Council homes.
- It is proposed that £200k is made available to trial a replacement fencing programme on our estates.
- £300k is being made available to refurbish our family temporary accommodation at Bridlespur Way.

The main service need of tenants is that they have a suitably sized, Decent Home, maintained through an effective repairs service with quality tenancy and estate management services. Current service user needs will continue to be met with the recommendations being made.

2. Equality implications/obligations

Which aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) are likely be relevant to the proposal? In this question, consider both the current service and the proposed changes.

a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation

- How does the proposal/service ensure that there is no barrier or disproportionate impact for anyone with a particular protected characteristic?
- Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?

From this equality impact assessment no significant impacts have been identified.

b. Advance equality of opportunity between different groups

- How does the proposal/service ensure that its intended outcomes promote equality of opportunity for people?
- Identify inequalities faced by those with specific protected characteristic(s).
- Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?

The proposals continue to commit to the provision of decent homes to council tenants and equality of opportunity for people to have decent homes to live in. The standard of accommodation in council owned properties is higher than in some areas of the private sector.

c. Foster good relations between different groups

- Does the service contribute to good relations or to broader community cohesion objectives?
- How does it achieve this aim?
- Is this a relevant consideration? What issues could arise?

Maintaining properties and making improvements on estates creates an environment where people are satisfied with their homes and the area they live in, reducing the likelihood of anti-social behaviour and community tensions.

3. Who is affected?

Outline who could be affected, and how they could be affected by the proposal/service change. Include people who currently use the service and those who could benefit from, but do not currently access the service.

The proposal to increase rents will affect all Leicester City Council tenants across the city. As of October 2020 approximately 9,000 tenants are in receipt of housing benefit (44.6%) and will continue to have their rent covered by their benefit entitlement. We are aware of 4,766 tenants who are in receipt of Universal Credit (23.6%). These tenants will have their housing costs covered by this benefit, even though the majority will be responsible for paying the full rent themselves. The negative impact of having to pay more rent will affect approximately 6,400 tenants (31.8%) who do not receive housing benefit or Universal Credit. The impact of the rent increase will be dependent on the tenants' financial situation rather than any protected characteristic.

Service charges are added to rent when improvement work has been completed in a property or extra services are provided, for example, new central heating systems. All

tenants who pay these charges will need to pay 2% more each week for these. The charge will depend on what improvement work has taken place over time at each property. Work is carried out as a result of the condition of a property through the capital programme and is therefore not based on a person's protected characteristic. Tenants in receipt of housing benefit will continue to have the majority of service charge payable covered by their benefit entitlement. Tenants in receipt of Universal Credit will also continue to have the cost of service charges included in their housing cost element of the benefit. The negative impact of having to pay more for service charges will affect approximately 31.8% of tenants who do not receive housing benefit or Universal Credit. The impact of the service charge increase will, in general, be dependent on tenants' financial situations rather than any protected characteristic. The exception is the service charge for district heating, which is not covered by Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. All tenants will have to pay this charge and any increase proposed. There are approximately 2,900 householders in the city on the district heating scheme. A high number of properties that are provided with district heating are located within the Centre area of the city. We know a higher proportion of BME households live in this area. However, the impact of the district heating charge will still be dependent on a person's financial situation rather than their protected characteristic.

The impact of the re-calculation of rents at the Dawn centre to align these with the actual cost of the service will impact upon single people and couples temporarily accommodated and also people who will use this facility in the future. Our records show the majority of people accommodated receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit and therefore this additional charge will be covered by these benefits. The impact of having to pay these rents will be for those people who do not receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit. However, we know there are low numbers of people in this situation using the service. The impact will be determined as a result of a person's financial situation and not as a result of a particular protected characteristic.

Council owned garages are rented out to members of the public generally, not just council tenants. The charge is not covered by housing benefit or Universal Credit. We currently have 598 garages rented out, so the proposed 1.5% increase could impact upon these people, also other people who start to rent garages in the future. Our protected characteristic profiling information in relation to people renting garages is currently limited, so it is not known whether there will be a bigger impact on a particular group. However, the impact is more likely to be as a result of a person's financial situation and ability to pay the extra rent rather than as a result of having a particular protected characteristic.

The Housing Capital Programme generally benefits all tenants in the city. The proposed £30m to be spent on the Acquisitions and New Build Programme will benefit those people on the Housing Register. This housing will be offered to people based on their housing need and not as a result of their protected characteristics. The only exception to this is for those properties built that are fully accessible. This will have a positive impact for people on the Housing Register who have a disability, with greater access to properties that will meet their needs. Projects to improve individual properties are decided on their condition to meet health and safety regulations, rather than a protected characteristic of a tenant.

Decisions on the Capital Programme are based on the age of properties, the predicted lifespan of when items will need to be replaced and health and safety regulations. The impact for tenants will generally be positive as properties and areas are improved.

- Increased funding for re-roofing relates to properties across the city to meet health and safety requirements, all tenants effected will benefit from this work, not just those with a protected characteristic.
- Projects related to £1.9m allocation for Public Realm improvements will be determined as a result of the condition of flats and communal areas, the appearance / safety of our estates and through consultation with residents. The work will not be determined as a result of the protected characteristic of a particular group or groups. Where improvements are made the benefits will be felt by all tenants and residents living in the area. The work will be focusing on improvements within the Centre area of the city. We know a higher proportion of BME households live in this area. However, the impact of the improvements will be of benefit to all people, not just those with a protected characteristic.
- £0.3m reduction in the disabled adaptation budget will impact upon tenants with a disability protected characteristic. This work is demand led and only undertaken after assessment by Occupational Therapists. As there has been an underspend on this budget for the last few years it suggests the budget reduction would not impact upon the work undertaken for those that need it in the future. If demand did increase the impact could be that people would need to wait longer for work to take place. If this waiting time becomes unacceptable consideration should be given to review budgets in future years. From this saving, it is proposed that a new budget is set up for adaptations to properties for those on the Housing Register, to enable them better access to properties which meet their needs will impact upon those people. This will have a positive impact on people with a disability protected characteristic, as the length of time they have to wait to be offered a suitable property to meet their needs could be reduced. We have approximately 290 households on the Housing Register with a high medical need for re-housing and approximately a further 420 households who have a medium medical need for re-housing.
- The reduction in the fire safety risk work budget, to its previous level, will provide resources for the work required during 2021/ 22. The work required is identified through risk assessments and inspections of our properties and communal areas, not as a result a person's protected characteristic. Work undertaken will address safety concerns of all living in an area where the work takes place.
- .£0.5m budget allocation for property conversions will address the individual overcrowding situation of tenants irrespective of their protected characteristic. The properties where this work is to take place will largely be determined by the suitability of properties to be converted.

- The proposed £375k increase in budget for IT system improvements is internal funding to include increased mobile working opportunities for staff. The spend will have a knock-on benefit for all tenants, irrespective of their protected characteristic, providing a more flexible and responsive service to meet people's needs.
- The £250k being made available to identify the most suitable and cost-effective energy efficiency work that can take place within our Council homes to support the response to the Climate Change emergency will depend on the condition of our properties and will not be related to the protected characteristics of the households that live in these.
- Money spent to trial a replacement fencing programme on our estates will be dependent on the existing condition of fencing on our estates and not the protected characteristic of the households where this improvement work takes place.
- Accommodation at Bridlespur Way is used temporary house homeless families. The £300k proposal to refurbish the accommodation will provide a more appealing living environment for families that are housed there in the future. This will also have a positive impact on these households where children are living in poverty.

4. Information used to inform the equality impact assessment

- What **data, research, or trend analysis** have you used?
- Describe how you have got your information and what it tells you
- Are there any gaps or limitations in the information you currently hold, and how you have sought to address this? E.g. proxy data, national trends, equality monitoring etc.

Tenant profiling information has been collected and analysed from the Northgate IT system (Appendix 1). This includes information on ages, ethnic origin, disability, gender, sexuality and religion. There are gaps in data in relation to gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation. There is also limited information collected specifically about disabilities.

Information has also been extracted from the Housing Register.

5. Consultation

What **consultation** have you undertaken about the proposal with people who use the service or people affected, people who may potentially use the service and other stakeholders? What did they say about:

- What is important to them regarding the current service?
- How does (or could) the service meet their needs? How will they be affected by the proposal? What potential impacts did they identify because of their protected characteristic(s)?
- Did they identify any potential barriers they may face in accessing services/other opportunities that meet their needs?

During February and March 2020, a council tenant satisfaction survey took place. Part of this exercise was to establish which services provided to council tenants are most important to them and what improvements on estates they wanted us to prioritise.

In order of priority, the services Council tenants felt were most important to them were:

- Carrying out repairs and maintenance
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour
- Asking residents how we can improve services
- Keeping neighbourhoods clean and tidy
- Letting empty properties
- Providing support and advice (e.g. welfare advice, financial help, help to move home)
- The upkeep of communal areas within blocks of flats and maisonettes
- Keeping residents informed
- Management of tenancies

In terms of improvements on our estates Council tenants prioritised these, in order as:

- Improved car parking
- External repairs and maintenance to properties
- Tackling anti-social behaviour and harassment
- External painting to properties
- Tackling crime
- Communal area refurbishment in flats
- Fence repairs
- Grounds maintenance (grass cutting and maintenance / removal of bushes and shrubs, improved security)
- Removal of rubbish and fly tipping
- Pathway repairs
- Improved local amenities (e.g. shops, transport links)
- Tidy gardens
- Removal of abandoned vehicles
- Increased recycling facilities
- Removal of graffiti

On the 25th November 2020 the draft Housing Revenue Account budget report for 2021 / 22 was sent to the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum members. In early December officers telephoned each member individually to discuss the proposals and to receive their

feedback. This was followed up by a telephone meeting with the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum on the 10th December 2020, where a summary of the individual feedback was shared, and members were given the opportunity to add any more comments. The feedback the Forum provided is contained within Appendix G of the budget report.

Areas of the feedback that specifically apply to this equality impact assessment are:

- Some Forum members raised concerns about the proposed rent and service charges increases, in light of the financial hardship some tenants are experiencing as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. However, it was stated that this would impact upon people with a low income, rather than a protected characteristic.
- All Forum members were supportive of the re-alignment of the disabled adaptations budget that would reduce the £1.2m budget by £300k. They felt using this money to provide adaptations for those that need them on the housing register would support the appropriate re-housing of households who have members with a disability.
- Although the Forum members generally supported of the proposed £550k for IT systems to support mobile working, they felt some tenants who have no access to IT or lack IT skills, may be at a disadvantage with the introduction of more online services. This could particularly impact upon older people or those with a disability.

No other areas within the budget proposals were identified as having an impact on any group with a protected characteristic.

6. Potential Equality Impact

Based on your understanding of the service area, any specific evidence you may have on people who use the service and those who could potentially use the service and the findings of any consultation you have undertaken, use the table below to explain which individuals or community groups are likely to be affected by the proposal because of their protected characteristic(s). Describe what the impact is likely to be, how significant that impact is for individual or group well-being, and what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove negative impacts. This could include indirect impacts, as well as direct impacts.

Looking at potential impacts from a different perspective, this section also asks you to consider whether any other particular groups, especially vulnerable groups, are likely to be affected by the proposal. List the relevant groups that may be affected, along with the likely impact, potential risks and mitigating actions that would reduce or remove any negative impacts. These groups do not have to be defined by their protected characteristic(s).

Protected characteristics

Impact of proposal:

Describe the likely impact of the proposal on people because of their protected characteristic and how they may be affected. Why is this protected characteristic relevant to the proposal? How does the protected characteristic determine/shape the potential impact of the proposal? This may also include **positive impacts** which support the aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Risk of disproportionate negative impact:

How likely is it that people with this protected characteristic will be disproportionately negatively affected? How great will that impact be on their well-being? What will determine who will be negatively affected?

Mitigating actions:

For disproportionate negative impacts on protected characteristic/s, what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove the impact? You may also wish to include actions which support the positive aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations. All actions identified here should also be included in the action plan at the end of this EIA.

a. Age

Indicate which age group/s is/ are most affected, either specify general age group - children, young people working age people or older people or specific age bands

What is the impact of the proposal on age?

No potential impact

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on age?

No group will be disproportionately impacted upon by this proposal

What are the mitigating actions?

Not applicable

b. Disability

If specific impairments are affected by the proposal, specify which these are. Our standard categories are on our equality monitoring form – physical impairment, sensory impairment, mental health condition, learning disability, long standing illness or health condition.

What is the impact of the proposal on disability?

Tenants with a disability requiring adaptations may be impacted upon by the reduction in the disabled adaptation budget as they may need to wait longer for work to take place.

People with a disability who are waiting for re-housing on the Housing Register may be offered accommodation to meet their needs sooner. This will be as a result of money being made available to carry out adaptations on properties to enable their re-housing. Also, by building accessible properties through the Affordable Housing Acquisition and New Build Programme.

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on disability?

This is a low risk that tenants will be waiting longer for adaptation work to take place in their home. Recent annual underspends of this budget suggests demand can still be met with the reduced budget

What are the mitigating actions?

Monitor the demand for disabled adaptations and waiting times for work to commence following the assessment of need.

c. Gender reassignment

Indicate whether the proposal has potential impact on trans men or trans women, and if so, which group is affected.

What is the impact of the proposal on gender reassignment?

No potential impact

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on gender reassignment?

No group will be disproportionately impacted upon by this proposal

What are the mitigating actions?

Not applicable

d. Marriage and Civil Partnership

What is the impact of the proposal on marriage and civil partnership?

No potential impact

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on marriage and civil partnership?

No group will be disproportionately impacted upon by this proposal

What are the mitigating actions?

Not applicable

e. Pregnancy and maternity

What is the impact of the proposal on pregnancy and maternity?

No potential impact

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on pregnancy and maternity?

No group will be disproportionately impacted upon by this proposal

What are the mitigating actions?

Not applicable

f. Race

Given the city's racial diversity it is useful that we collect information on which racial groups are affected by the proposal. Our equalities monitoring form follows ONS general census categories and uses broad categories in the first instance with the opportunity to identify more specific racial groups such as Gypsies/Travellers. Use the most relevant classification for the proposal.

What is the impact of the proposal on race?

Tenants from a BME background in the Centre area of the City may be more impacted upon by the increased service charges for district heating

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on race?

No group will be disproportionately impacted upon by this proposal

What are the mitigating actions?

The Income Management Team to continue to monitor rent arrears and provide support for those people struggling to pay as a result of the increased charges.

g. Religion or belief

If specific religious or faith groups are affected by the proposal, our equalities monitoring form sets out categories reflective of the city's population. Given the diversity of the city there is always scope to include any group that is not listed.

What is the impact of the proposal on religion or belief?

No potential impact

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on religion or belief?

No group will be disproportionately impacted upon by this proposal

What are the mitigating actions?

Not applicable

h. Sex

Indicate whether this has potential impact on either males or females

What is the impact of the proposal on sex?

No potential impact

What is the risk of disproportionate negative impact on sex?

No group will be disproportionately impacted upon by this proposal

What are the mitigating actions?

Not applicable

7. Summary of protected characteristics

a. Summarise why the protected characteristics you have commented on, are relevant to the proposal?

All protected characteristics have been commented on because work to improve the condition of properties and the environment of estates impact on all tenants.

b. Summarise why the protected characteristics you have not commented on, are not relevant to the proposal?

Not applicable

8. Other groups

Other groups

Impact of proposal:

Describe the likely impact of the proposal on children in poverty or any other people who we may consider to be vulnerable, for example people who misuse substances, ex armed forces, people living in poverty, care experienced young people, carers. List any vulnerable groups likely to be affected. Will their needs continue to be met? What issues will affect their take up of services/other opportunities that meet their needs/address inequalities they face?

Risk of disproportionate negative impact:

How likely is it that this group of people will be negatively affected? How great will that impact be on their well-being? What will determine who will be negatively affected?

Mitigating actions:

For negative impacts, what mitigating actions can be taken to reduce or remove this impact for this vulnerable group of people? These should be included in the action plan at the end of this EIA. You may also wish to use this section to identify opportunities for positive impacts.

a. Children in poverty

What is the impact of the proposal on children in poverty?

Children living in over-crowded conditions may benefit from the proposals to convert properties to address overcrowding. Children in poverty will benefit from the refurbishment work that is to take place at Bridlespur Way

What is the risk of negative impact on children in poverty?

No group will be disproportionately impacted upon by this proposal

What are the mitigating actions?

Not applicable

b. Other vulnerable groups

What is the impact of the proposal on other vulnerable groups?

No potential impacts

What is the risk of negative impact on other vulnerable groups?

Not applicable

What are the mitigating actions?

Not applicable

c. Other (describe)

What is the impact of the proposal on any other groups?

No potential impacts

What is the risk of negative impact on any other groups?

Not applicable

What are the mitigating actions?

Not applicable

9. Other sources of potential negative impacts

Are there any other potential negative impacts external to the service that could further disadvantage service users over the next three years that should be considered? For example, these could include:

- other proposed changes to council services that would affect the same group of service users;
- Government policies or proposed changes to current provision by public agencies (such as new benefit arrangements) that would negatively affect residents;
- external economic impacts such as an economic downturn.

No known impacts at present

10. Human rights implications

Are there any human rights implications which need to be considered and addressed (please see the list at the end of the template), if so please outline the implications and how they will be addressed below:

The budget proposals continue to support the Human Right of protection of property / peaceful enjoyment

11. Monitoring impact

You will need to ensure that monitoring systems are established to check for impact on the protected characteristics and human rights after the decision has been implemented. Describe the systems which are set up to:

- monitor impact (positive and negative, intended and unintended) for different groups
 - monitor barriers for different groups
 - enable open feedback and suggestions from different communities
 - ensure that the EIA action plan (below) is delivered.
- .
- Monitoring and analysing complaints received
 - Feedback received from Tenants and Residents Associations and the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum
 - Progress on actions resulting from the equality impact assessment will be monitored and reviewed by the Senior Management Team within Housing.

12. EIA action plan

Please list all the equality objectives, actions and targets that result from this assessment (continue on separate sheets as necessary). These now need to be included in the relevant service plan for mainstreaming and performance management purposes.

Equality Outcome	Action	Officer Responsible	Completion date
Actions are progressed to mitigate the potential negative impacts that are associated with the budget proposals	Monitor the demand for disabled adaptations and waiting times for work to commence following the assessment of need.		Ongoing
	The Income Management Team to continue to monitor rent arrears and provide support for people struggling to pay rent / service charges as a result of any increase.		Ongoing

Human rights articles:

Part 1: The convention rights and freedoms

Article 2: Right to Life

Article 3: Right not to be tortured or treated in an inhuman or degrading way

Article 4: Right not to be subjected to slavery/forced labour

Article 5: Right to liberty and security

Article 6: Right to a fair trial

Article 7: No punishment without law

Article 8: Right to respect for private and family life

Article 9: Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Article 10: Right to freedom of expression

Article 11: Right to freedom of assembly and association

Article 12: Right to marry

Article 14: Right not to be discriminated against

Part 2: First protocol

Article 1: Protection of property/peaceful enjoyment

Article 2: Right to education

Article 3: Right to free elections