

Agenda

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Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Date: **Thursday 4 June 2015**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **Plowman Room - Town Hall**

For any further information please contact:

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Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Membership

To be confirmed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 2 June 2015.

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AGENDA

Pages

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE 2015/16 MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Panel is asked to elect a Chair for the Council year 2015/16.

The Chair must be a member of the Scrutiny Committee.

2 APOLOGIES

The Quorum for this Panel is three and substitutes are not allowed.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4 HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

7 - 90

Contact Officer: Martin Shaw, Property Services Manager
Tel 01865 252775, mshaw2@oxford.gov.uk

Background Information
<p>The report seeks approval for the adoption of the Asset Management Strategy and associated action plan for Oxford City Council's housing stock.</p> <p>The City Executive Board on 11 June 2015 will be asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Recommend to Council the adoption of the Asset Management Strategy along with the Oxford Standard as part of the Council's policy framework,2. Endorse the action plan,3. Note that an Energy Strategy will be presented to CEB later this year. <p>The Panel reviewed the consultation strategy in December 2014 and its report to CEB is attached for information.</p>
Why is it on the agenda?
<p>For the Housing Panel to pre-scrutinise this decision before it goes to the City Executive Board.</p>
Who has been invited to comment?
<p>Martin Shaw will present the report and answer the Panel's questions.</p>

5 HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO) LICENSING SCHEME

91 - 160

Contact Officer: Ian Wright, Environmental Health Service Manager
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Background Information
<p>The report provides findings from a review carried out for the HMO Licensing Scheme.</p> <p>That the City Executive Board on 11 June will be asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consider the Review of Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation 2015 and note its findings,2. Resolve that the Review indicates that a significant proportion of HMOs in the Council's area are being managed ineffectively,3. Instruct Officers of the Council to proceed with a statutory 10 week consultation on the basis that it is necessary to renew the licensing scheme in its entirety for a further 5 years from the 25th January 2016 (Option 3),4. Request a future report in October 2015 setting out the results of the statutory consultation and the proposed future of the licensing scheme.
Why is it on the agenda?
<p>For the Housing Panel to pre-scrutinise this decision before it goes to the City Executive Board.</p>
Who has been invited to comment?
<p>Ian Wright will present the report and answer the Panel's questions.</p>

6 WORK PROGRAMME AND OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS

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All Councillors have been asked to propose items or issues for review by scrutiny by 12 June. The final list will be available in on the agenda of the next Committee meeting. In the meantime, the Housing Panel may wish to review the provisional list attached and consider its priorities for the year ahead.

The Housing Panel may wish to appoint a non-voting co-opted member to serve for a specific policy review or until the next annual Council.

7 NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

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For the Panel to note the record of the meeting held on 24 March 2015.

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Future meetings have provisionally been scheduled for:

9 September
8 October
9 December
9 March

All meetings start at 5pm.

DECLARING INTERESTS

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licences for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest.

If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". What this means is that the matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those of the member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

To: City Executive Board

Date: 11 June 2015

Report of: Head of Housing and Property Services

Title of Report: Housing Asset Management Strategy

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report:

To seek approval for the adoption of the Asset Management Strategy and associated action plan for Oxford City Council's housing stock.

Key decision Yes

Executive lead member: Councillor Seamons, Executive Member for Housing

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan Objective – Meeting Housing Needs

Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board

1. Recommends to Council the adoption of the Asset Management Strategy along with the Oxford Standard as part of the Council's policy framework;
2. Endorses the action plan;
3. Notes that an Energy Strategy will be presented to the Board later this year.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 Asset Management Strategy
- Appendix 2 Risk Register
- Appendix 3 Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix 4 Oxford Standard
- Appendix 5 Summary of formal consultation results

Background

1. The City Council's Asset Management Strategy sets out the practices and principles that the City Council will apply to ensure that its housing stock meets current and future needs, including planning for investment in repair and improvements, and reviewing and changing the portfolio to match local circumstances.
2. The strategy also takes a longer view, making sure that there are systems in place that can guide more major investment decisions to optimise the use of the stock in meeting future housing needs.
3. The strategy and the investment programmes that underpin it also contribute to wider corporate objectives such as employment and training, building stronger communities and area and estate regeneration.
4. One of the asset management objectives is to raise the standards of our housing stock with the adoption and delivery of an *Oxford Standard* which is a higher than the 'Decent Homes standard' which will mean we retain decent homes compliance (a statutory requirement), and also achieve affordable warmth and other increased standards relating to the key physical elements of what makes a property a great place to live. The Oxford Standard was drawn up with a scrutiny panel of members and tenants and the resultant report approved by CEB. Details of the standard are included at Appendix 4.
5. A key aspect of the strategy is to reflect local needs, and consultation was undertaken as part of the development of the strategy to identify local priorities. From the information received affordable warmth and external environment have been identified as specific priorities by tenants. A scrutiny panel consisting of tenants and members oversaw a tenant consultation and the development of the "Oxford Standard".
6. The proposed Asset Management Strategy (AMS) covers a period of ten years, with a specific four year rolling action plan.
7. The development of the investment programmes will be undertaken as part of our Housing Revenue Account business planning process and this has been included in our budget planning. The Council's agreed medium term financial plan includes an ambitious programme to deliver new Council homes, estate regeneration and significant investment to improve the standard of existing housing stock.
8. The full strategy document is included in Appendix 1.

Consultation

9. The Oxford Standard was developed in conjunction with a scrutiny panel of members and tenants. The scrutiny panel report outlining the recommendations of the panel was considered by CEB last year. As a

result a number of recommendations of the panel are now incorporated in the proposed Oxford Standard.

10. In addition formal consultation took place between the 2 March and 13 April 2015. The results and outcomes are included in Appendix 5.

11. The only change as a result of the consultation is to change the term Neighbourhood Plan to Estate Improvement plan to avoid confusion with town planning terminology.

Legal Issues

12. There is a regulatory requirement to maintain compliance with the Decent Homes Standard. The proposed strategy seeks to ensure that this standard will continue to be met.

Financial Issues

13. Additional investment to support the delivery of the objectives of the strategy are contained within the HRA business plan which is part of the Council's overall budget.

Environmental Impact

14. Co-ordinated investment in estate improvements will result in a more effective use of available resources taking into account resident requirements and priorities. Increased investment in energy efficiency measures will have a positive environmental impact.

15. Where appropriate investment in the estate environment will be co-ordinated with regeneration activity of the Council.

Level of Risk

16. The risk register is included in Appendix 2

Equalities Impact

17. An initial equality impact assessment is included in Appendix 3

Name and contact details of author:-

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ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY – HOUSING PORTFOLIO 2014 - 2023

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Appendix Two	Decent Homes Standard & the Oxford Standard
Appendix Three	Sustainability / Options Appraisal Model
Appendix Four	Fuel Poverty: a framework for future action

Glossary of terms	
AMISP	Asset management information systems plan
AMS	Asset Management Strategy
AR	Asbestos Register
BP (OCC)	OCC Business Plan
CLG	Department of Communities and Local Government
Decent Homes	Target standard set by CLG
DHS	Decent Homes Standard
DDA	Disabled Discrimination Act
DFG	Disabled facilities grant
EHCS	English House Condition Survey
EPC	Energy Performance Certificate
FRAs	Fire Risk Assessments
HCA	Homes & Communities Agency
HHSRS	Housing Health and Safety Rating System
HECA	Home Energy Conservation Act
ICT	Information and communication technology
JIT KPI	Just in time
MRA	Key performance indicator
M&E	Major repair allowance
OCC	Mechanical & Electrical building components
QA	Oxford City Council
RDSAP	Quality audit
RTB	See SAP. Reduced Data SAP is required to support EPCs
SOR	Right to buy
SMT	Schedule of rates
SLA	Senior management team
SAMP	Service Level Agreement
SAP	Specialist asset management package
VFM	Standard assessment procedure (energy efficiency)
	Value For Money

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CONTEXT

This Asset Management Strategy (AMS) has been prepared by Oxford City Council (OCC).

The immediate remit of OCC is to deliver an affordable and comprehensive repairs, maintenance and improvement service to the Housing portfolio. However, we have a responsibility to take a longer view, making sure that there are systems in place that can guide investment decisions in support of future investment programmes. For this reason, our Asset Management Strategy (AMS) covers a period of ten years, with a specific four year action plan.

Definition of asset management

Asset management is the management of physical assets to meet service and financial objectives. By applying good asset management practices and principles OCC will ensure that its housing stock meets current and future needs, including planning for investment in repair and improvements, and reviewing and changing the portfolio to match local circumstances.

Purpose of AMS

OCC's (AMS) provides the framework to develop detailed planned maintenance programmes that deliver commitments made in our business plan.

The AMS provides the guiding principles of all key asset management decisions. In more detail, this includes:

Asset management objectives

OCC' asset management objectives are:

- To deliver an ***Oxford Standard*** that means we retain decent homes compliancy, achieve affordable warmth, meet identified needs, and contribute to community development.
- To **manage the stock portfolio**, in terms not just of age, condition and standard, but also as part of a process of assessment to guide policies of re-investment to meet the needs of current and future tenants.
- To support our corporate priorities through **investment plans** that reflect the agreed allocation of resources for re-investment and will contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods.

ACTIONS TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES

Standards

To deliver homes that meet agreed standards the requirements are:

- Up-to-date and reliable data to show that all homes achieve and sustain the decent homes standard (4.1).
- An *Oxford Standard* which is option appraised, consulted upon, discussed, costed and agreed (4.2)
- Compliance with statutory testing / inspection regimes (4.3 & 4.4)

Portfolio management

To manage the stock portfolio in line with OCC's corporate priorities the requirements are:

- A simple approach to portfolio scoring to guide priorities for investment and the need for further option appraisal (5.1).
- Support for neighbourhood level management plans (5.2).
- A review of options where costs are high, demand is low, or where there is an opportunity to make better use of the assets (5.3).

Investment plans

To support the business plan by delivering affordable investment plans the requirements are:

- Thirty-year investment plan forecasts to be based on an up-to-date and reliable corporate stock condition database (6.1).
- Detailed five-year planned programmes demonstrating that the stock can be maintained at the agreed standard within budget (6.2).
- All work assessed against value for money criteria (6.3).

Data management

To ensure decisions are made on the best possible information, OCC will undertake a programme of rolling stock surveys, pre-works surveys, and surveys of void property. Work will be undertaken to improve data capture from works programmes. Data management is an important component of programme delivery and OCC understanding of the need to manage the stock condition database (7.1).

Information systems

OCC has access to specialist asset management software, CodeMan. Data from stock condition surveys together with the programmed works data, has been migrated into this package in order to define works programmes and demonstrate compliance with the decent homes target (7.2).

Service standards

It is essential that we understand our customers and translate this knowledge into a more responsive service. We will introduce validation checks on the customer satisfaction measures collected by contractors, and utilise data from OCC on the use of client profiling (7.3).

Resident involvement

Our Resident Involvement Strategy is to ensure residents are at the heart of decisions taken in planning, delivering and monitoring our service (7.4).

Equality & Diversity

We intend to use the results of our resident profiling to assist us in shaping the delivery of our services to residents and to ensure the skills of residents are used by contractors in delivering contracts on the estates. In particular, to include, consulting with residents to identify their specific needs, both individually while works are carried out and generally through the Oxford Standard work. We will also utilize the resident profile to assist in targeting and prioritising works.

Responsive and void

We have undertaken an end-to-end review of the responsive repair service to simplify processes and shape the service to the needs of residents (7.5).

We aim to reduce the time taken to relet voids, and will review approaches which encourage tenants to leave their home in a good state of repair, and to undertake relet work to an acceptable standard within agreed turn-round targets (7.5).

Responsibilities

OCC is responsible for delivering asset management functions across the partnership members and will formally review its AMS annually (7.6).

1. CONTEXT

1.1 BACKGROUND

The AMS specifically concentrates on providing a basis for consistency and continuous improvement across the 7785 housing portfolio.

Building on the organisation's Housing Strategy, this AMS:

- Has clear links to the objectives of the Housing Strategy, Energy Strategy and other interrelated policy documents.
- Shows how detailed plans are being maintained to meet and retain the government's decent homes target based on current and reliable stock condition data that can be used to inform stock investment priorities.
- Looks forward, seeking to address the agenda set out in *Homes for the Future*. This report had the objective of everyone to have access to a decent home at a price they can afford, in a place where they want to live and work. Good quality, affordable housing enables stable and secure family lives: we are all healthier, happier and wealthier when we have decent homes close to schools, healthcare and transport links.
- Shows how we can continue to fund the maintenance of our existing stock, to focus investment to support sustainable communities, and in the future to expand the stock of affordable, good quality, environmentally friendly housing in places where people want to live.

An AMS must be framed against longer term considerations and thus creates the need for a ten year planning 'horizon'. We have a responsibility to ensure that there are systems in place that can guide investment decisions and support the management of future investment programmes.

Additionally we need to take account of what our peers are doing in the areas where we operate and ensure that investment is focused in places where the stock is likely to meet future demands.

For these reasons the AMS focuses on a four year action plan, which provides stability and certainty whilst allowing a comprehensive review opportunity at the end of the fourth year.

1.2 ASSET MANAGEMENT

Asset management is defined as the management of physical assets to meet service and financial objectives. It is concerned with:

- The overall performance of the stock portfolio and the contribution it makes to the agreed business plan.
- The whole life cycle of a property, from the proposal to build, through development, investment and maintenance, to the decision and method of disposal if necessary.

- The way management and investment can be directed to support community development and improve portfolio performance.

The application of good asset management principles will ensure our housing stock meets current and future needs. We need to invest in repairs and improvements but, where necessary, change the portfolio to match local circumstances. We must:

- Understand what work is needed.
- Where it is needed.
- How it is prioritised.
- While ensuring we stay within our budgets.

Our AMS shows how we will prepare affordable investment plans, support the development of detailed planned maintenance programmes that deliver commitments made in our business plan, and provide well maintained homes which our tenants judge to be good, and which compare well with those provided by the best social landlords.

1.3 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

This AMS has been developed with appropriate linkages to existing OCC strategies and policies, for example:

Corporate Plan 2013-17

Fundamental Service Review – Repairs & Voids

Business Plan

Corporate Equality Scheme 2012-2015

Service Plan

Repairs and maintenance policy / Handbook

Housing Strategy 2012-2015

Corporate Asset Management Plan 2011-2014

Service standards

Decent homes delivery plan (maintaining decency)

Energy Policy (in development at time of writing)

Financial Inclusion Strategy (in development at time of writing)

Biodiversity Strategy (in development at time of writing)

1.4 VALUE FOR MONEY

A key requirement is for all social housing providers to have a clear perspective and understanding on the return of the asset base and how this is contributing to the delivery of the organisations objectives. In particular, how VFM decisions on maintenance and capital investment are informed by robust asset information enabling fully informed decision making on whether to hold particular stock in its current form, dispose of it to another provider, on the open market or conversion of tenure.

This strategy (and other co-dependant strategies) will enable OCC to take fully informed asset decisions based on a robust assessment process and by bringing together a high level of asset intelligence of the asset base, its strengths, limitations and options. This will also include the use of whole life

cycle cost modelling enabling the setting off of capital investment against cost in use considerations in order to take a strategic value for money perspective.

The approach to performance management will include benchmarking so that OCC fully understand it's asset management related cost drivers, how these compare to peers and how this translates into value for money.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

Asset management touches on demand for housing, development and redevelopment, financial performance, service delivery and value for money. Our aim is to address all aspects of asset management that are relevant to the proper functioning of OCC, but there is no requirement to include all this in a single document.

The focus of our AMS is to identify what is important if corporate objectives are to be achieved. This means an emphasis on investment priorities so that we can deliver high quality housing and make the best use of our existing assets. In order not to confuse this core message, there are related strategies which are not considered here because they are covered in other documents.

Specifically:

- The delivery of responsive and cyclical programmes are part of separate policies and procedures. This does not minimise the importance of moving work from responsive to planned, or of ensuring that components replaced under responsive works are recorded on the stock condition database.
- The approach to procurement is informed by the mechanism of delivery i.e. via Direct Services. Clearly there are overlaps with business planning functions, and we have ensured that the two strategies are aligned.
- The *Oxford Standard* will be dependent on the affordability aspects of the Business Plan.
- Our joint approach with other stakeholders to promote development of new housing.
- Continue to maintain the Decent Homes Standard to all of our housing stock.

2. SUPPLY AND DEMAND

2.1 STOCK DESCRIPTION

OCC currently manages a stock of 7785 general needs including 620 leasehold /freehold homes. These are self-contained units, plus 300 sheltered units.

The profile of the tenanted housing stock by archetype is shown in the following table:

Bedsit	1
Bungalow	326
Flat	3413
Hostel	40
House	3920
Maisonette	1
Rtb Shared Ownership - House	2
Sheltered Accommodation	51
New Development	31
Total	7785

There are a number of properties of non-traditional construction, as shown below:

Type	Total
Airey	18
Cornish	92
Other	495
Reema Hollow Panel	2
Timber Frame	324
Trusteel	154
Wimpey No Fines	81
Total	1166

Related assets

In addition to the above, OCC owns or manages 2271 garages, 58 commercial units and communal areas / community units. OCC is also responsible for un-adopted roads and footpaths on estates and these liabilities are taken into account within our investment budgets.

2.2 STOCK CONDITION

Stock condition survey

A fully stratified and statistically significant stock condition survey was completed in 2013/14 by Michael Dyson Associates. This provides an up to date perspective of the housing stock in terms of profile and liabilities. The general conclusion of the survey is, that the stock has been well maintained

and is currently fit for its purpose (ie, works identified can be attributed largely to an ageing stock as opposed to any unique factor).

In the above survey, 6774 properties out of a total stock of 7785 were surveyed giving a survey sample of 87%.

This sample is statistically significant to gain an accurate picture of our stock and enable us to agree our strategic direction as well as plan future works programmes.

The 1039 properties not surveyed due to “no access” will be picked up in the 2015/16 cycle of surveys.

The survey collected data to determine the following:

1. Current position against Decent Homes
2. Immediate expenditure required to bring all homes within the Decent Homes Standard
3. Investment required to maintain homes over the next 30 years
4. The energy performance of the housing stock

The information from the survey will be used to inform the future housing asset strategy of the Council.

However the stock condition survey identified a number of issues regarding property condition:

- The survey has identified that 203 properties (2.6% of the stock) currently do not meet decent homes. The sum of £920k has been identified as being required to bring these properties up to standard.
- In addition there are a further 993 properties that have elements that require replacing but still meet the Decent Homes Standard (minor element failures are permitted under certain defined circumstances and are still classed as achieving Decency under the legislation).

Energy performance

Policy context

The Climate Change Act 2008 committed the government to an 80% reduction in Green House gas emissions by 2050 from 1990. Approximately 45% of these emissions are from buildings. Therefore, OCC has committed to a 5% carbon emission reduction year on year from its own estate and operations. As a SAP rating from 1990 is not available, the 5% yearly reduction is recommended as a target for the housing stock, to be measured using RdSAP (Reduced data Standard Assessment Procedure) and adjusted where necessary (eg Tower Blocks refurbishment). The RdSAP process was introduced in 2005 as a lower cost method of assessing the energy performance of existing dwellings. The methodology is endorsed by the Building Research Establishment (BRE) and accordingly is nationally recognised as a robust process.

From April 2016, private residential landlords will be unable to refuse a tenant's reasonable request for consent to energy efficiency improvements, where a finance package (e.g. Green Deal or the Energy Company

Obligation) is available. From 2018, it will be unlawful to rent out a residential or business premise that does not reach a minimum energy efficiency standard, likely to be E rating on the Energy Performance Certificate (Energy Act 2011). As a landlord, OCC is preparing for this deadline now by improving the energy efficiency of the hardest to treat stock.

Fuel poverty is the ability of residents to afford to heat their homes. Three major things have an impact on this: energy prices, the income of tenants and the energy efficiency of the home. In this strategy, the Council is prioritising the energy efficiency of its properties in order to increase resilience of tenants against the other two factors. Accordingly we aim to exceed the requirements for thermal comfort contained in the Decent Homes Standard, where possible whilst assessing options for properties that are 'harder to treat'.

The Government recently supported the move towards energy efficient homes by announcing a new fuel poverty target to 'ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency standard of Band C, by 2030.' The Low Income High Cost indicator it refers to indicates that fuel poverty is more likely in families in larger homes, those paying high energy prices and/or off gas, and those in old dwellings. Further details are shown in the appendices to this strategy.

Current performance of the Council

OCC is required to report on the thermal efficiency of the stock by means of national indicators. The average SAP rating in OCC's stock was 68.4 at 31st March 2014 with a peer group average for comparison purposes being an average of 71. It is also important to focus not only on the average SAP level but also on minimum SAP level properties.

The OCC stock falls into the following bands:

Rating	SAP	No. of Dwellings	% of Stock
A	92 - 100	18	0.2
B	81 - 91	67	0.9
C	69 - 80	3074	39.7
D	55 - 68	3142	40.5
E	39 - 54	395	5.1
F	21 - 38	40	0.5
G	x1-20	7	0.1

There are a number of planned programmes to improve heating systems, insulate properties and provide double glazing and doors. Most of the 'quick wins' have been completed and projects to date have included:

- 3,465 cavity wall insulation installations
- 424 external wall insulation installations
- 7,369 window replacements with double glazing
- 3886 gas condensing boilers
- Centralised biomass system for 72 new Council flats
- Solar thermal (hot water heating) has been rolled out to older person bungalows, and 2 flat blocks
- 40 solar PV installations (generates electricity)

The Council is optimising access to external funding for:

- Maximising insulation and other energy saving measures in housing stock in 2014/15
- Planned upgrades of external wall insulation and potential other measures on five Tower Blocks over next few years

Future work

Improving energy performance is a key driver of this strategy and dovetailing energy measures in association with other asset management projects could include:

- Stock investment planning – refurbishment should maximise opportunities for energy efficiency as a more cost effective approach.
- Data Management – improving energy performance will require good, regularly updated Energy (SAP) data to keep monitoring against benchmark.
- Investment/Planned Programmes – target energy related DHS failures. Energy Efficiency programmes needs to form part of the budget programme – utilise funding to make the most of existing budget ascribed to this.
- Responsive/Void repairs – these can also be ‘trigger points’ for energy efficiency works. Produce checklists to maximise efficiency – i.e. add basic insulation/draught proofing, pipe lagging and other energy measures.

Resident involvement is vital and can be used to maximise efficiency of systems. This includes controls evaluation, understanding boilers, and maintenance requirements.

Targets for the future will be set to increase the average SAP, for the period covered by this strategy. We have actively participated in the identification of properties requiring energy efficiency improvements and carbon reduction measures. As such, this initiative will be one of the guiding principles of targeting our investment.

The focus however will be on improving the SAP rating of the F and G rated property (i.e. SAP < 38) to ensure they are prioritised whenever possible to do so in terms of investment works to improve the overall energy performance. This is particularly important as properties within bands F and G will not be able to be relet after 2018 until a SAP level within band E is obtained.

Renewable energy

Whilst a ‘fabric first’ approach is the best place to start for optimising building energy use, renewables, low carbon heating and lighting (LED) will also be considered as a means of reducing fuel poverty and maximising ‘clean’ sources of electricity. Broadly this involves the following approach:

- Assessing feasibility of individual properties for low carbon technologies like solar panels (PV or thermal), biomass or heat pumps, LED lighting;
- Yearly updates and consideration of the financial case and benefits for each (eg Feed in tariffs for solar PV and Renewable Heat Incentive for solar thermal, biomass, heat pumps etc);

- Working with tenants to ensure they understand the new technologies and use them appropriately and to maximum potential.

Asbestos

All common areas have been the subject of a Management / Refurbishment & Demolition asbestos surveys to (HS[G]264). The data is held in a specialist asbestos register and administered by our asset management team. OCC has a legal duty to have an Asbestos Management Plan, which contains our strategy on establishing and maintaining a process of asbestos control.

Decent Homes Standard

In England all social housing landlords have a duty to achieve and maintain the Decent Homes Standard. As the DHS programme is based on life cycle renewals (in part), careful attention is required to maintain full compliance. Properties that will become non decent in the next three years, **if no proactive investment is undertaken**, are shown below:

Year	Number Non-Decent	% Non-Decent
2014/15	993	12.7
2015/16	1526	19.6
2016/17	1644	21.1

2.3 HOUSING NEED

OCC operates in an extremely bouyant housing market. Demand for OCCs properties remains high. There are no particular parts of the housing portfolio that would be classified as 'hard to let'.

A summary of housing need is provided below:

	2013/14											
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
OCC properties let	37	25	24	39	25	36	29	25	28	25	24	
of which to OCC transfer applicants	10	4	9	12	7	11	8	6	6	5	9	
No on housing reg.	5414	5283	4752	n/a	4759	4845	4891	4448	4266	3974	3796	3829

Minimum bed need	General reg			Housing Assoc Transfer reg			OCC Transfer reg			Total Housing reg		
	General needs	Sheltered	TOTAL	General needs	Sheltered	TOTAL	General needs	Sheltered	TOTAL	General needs	Sheltered*	TOTAL
1	1240	57	1297	120	26	146	234	42	276	1594	125	1719
2	930		930	129	1	130	240	4	244	1299	5	1304
3	343		343	90		90	168		168	601	0	601
4	85		85	24		24	41		41	150	0	150
5+	35		35	6		6	14		14	55	0	55
	2633	57	2690	369	27	396	697	46	743	3699	130	3829

*Applicant has been assessed as eligible for sheltered accommodation

Whilst there are no existing plans for wholesale estate regeneration schemes there are opportunities for new development sites based upon existing sites. A detailed appraisal process for identification is undertaken.

2.4 LEASEHOLDER PROPERTY

Approximately 3.9% of the stock has been sold on a leasehold basis as a result of the right to buy initiative.

OCC retains responsibility for managing the external repair of blocks and communal services containing leasehold dwellings and leaseholders are liable for a proportion of the costs. Leaseholders can challenge the need to undertake works, which could slow the progression of the project and can frustrate the process when a multitude of investment needs are found that need to be procured jointly. This has sometimes proved a hurdle when undertaking major works in blocks where there are leasehold flats for other landlords. Experience to date from a significant number of landlords and managing agents has shown that recovery of leaseholder contributions can be demanding and are open to challenge particularly on definitions of work i.e. repairs –v- improve.

OCC recognises it needs to proactively engage with leaseholders as part of the appraisal process so that meaningful dialogues can be entered into. OCC takes this stance not only in recognition of the legal duty but as a responsible landlord.

In developing programmes of works, consideration to mitigating the impact of leaseholder consultation will be given. In particular the packaging of programmes of work. Consideration and reference to the outcomes of Leasehold Valuation Tribunals will help in gauging if proposed programmes are likely to be considered a repair or if an element of improvement may be considered.

2.5 PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE

Asset management requires a methodology for establishing investment priorities and OCC has carried out a review of its housing stock. That appraisal identifies a number of inherent issues with certain property types or certain units. Examples of these are damp, cold-bridging and roofing problems. This process is a useful model to use for particular schemes/estates to identify whether or not they have a viable future. Indicators of whether the properties should be appraised include:

- High turnover of tenancies (churning)
- Long standing void properties
- Increased complaints
- Increased /demanding management issues (ASB, arrears etc.)
- Increased demand for reactive maintenance
- Disrepair claims

2.6 PORTFOLIO 'MIX'

Having the optimal Portfolio mix is essential in delivering the targets and objectives of the business plan and this strategy. A key strategy going forwards is matching supply –v- demand. This will need to address:

- Over occupation
- Under occupation
- Having less bedsit stock
- Reflecting the needs of the Housing Needs Survey

The need for scheme or estate based option appraisal will be identified through work on portfolio performance and mix. However, the immediate priorities for option appraisal are:

- Holistic stock wide perspective via the first stage assessment
- Regeneration
- Land and related assets
- Remodelling and disposal
- Housing needs
- Rationalisation and reconfiguration

3. ASSET MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

3.1 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

While the immediate priority for OCC is the maintaining its decent homes investment programme, the 'Homes for the future' sets a new agenda in terms of more homes, more affordable homes and homes that are well designed, greener, and linked to good schools, transport and health care. Our AMS is therefore focused not just on the existing stock. It seeks to take into account the surrounding environment, looking at what is sustainable, and what needs to be done to support communities and homes that meet higher environmental standards.

3.2 THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES CORPORATE OBJECTIVES

The local authorities' vision for housing is for *more affordable, high-quality housing in Oxford. This is essential for the vibrancy of the economy and the health and well-being of residents.*

There are three basic principles under-pinning the Sustainable Communities Strategies:

- Sustainable growth - development and regeneration that creates a viable self-sustaining local economy where strategic decisions are made considering social, economic and environmental impacts.
- Narrowing the gap - raising standards in order to reduce disparities between other neighbouring boroughs.
- Assessing impacts - all partners will consider the impact of key decisions in relation to the seven key outcomes listed below.

These seven key outcomes are a commitment to create places:

- With a thriving local economy and sustainable towns.
- With a strong and balanced housing market where people choose to live.
- With high levels of educational achievement.
- Where all people have the opportunity for a healthier and longer life.
- Where people are safe, confident and proud to live.
- For everyone, which value and embraces diversity.
- That safeguards the environment.

From this, the housing principles include:

- Achieving a balanced housing market:
 - Meeting identified needs for affordable housing.
- Reducing unfit and disrepair and delivering decent homes:
 - Improving the condition of the housing stock to ensure fit for purpose.
 - To ensure that all social tenants have a decent home.
- To prevent homelessness and meeting the needs of vulnerable households:

- To tackle homelessness more effectively.
- To ensure that a range of specialist and supported housing is available.
- Building sustainable communities:
 - To build cohesive communities by meeting the housing needs and aspirations of all communities.
 - To tackle social exclusion through neighbourhood renewal action on a broad basis.
 - Sustainability, quality and design.

3.3 OBJECTIVES OF OCC

OCC is addressing five key issues to meet housing need in Oxford:

1. Building new homes
2. Providing a high-quality landlord service
3. Improving standards in the private rented sector
4. Reducing and preventing homelessness
5. Piloting Direct Payments and Universal Credit

In achieving these objectives, the following values which govern the way in which we work:

- Service excellence - striving to deliver excellent value for money services for all our customers.
- Valuing one another - treating everybody with respect, fairness and honesty, appreciating diverse needs and expectations.
- Trust - earning trust by being open, honest and doing what we say.
- Inspiring people - creating an environment that encourages and empowers ambition, aspiration and achievement.
- Excellence in business - being professional, commercially aware and responsible in all that we do.

3.4 EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The investment and ongoing maintenance into the housing stock also enables a further contribution to the corporate objective of *Improving the Skills of the Workforce*.

By allocating £50,000 each year for two years to provide ten new apprenticeships within the Council's own workforce and looking at ways to extend the arrangement into future years.

For external contracts, we will:

- Developing 'SMART' Key Performance Indicators into our new partnering contracts to measure the use of local labour and local supplies;
- Using residents profile data to target workshops for employment opportunities.

3.5 ASSET MANAGEMENT PRIORITIES

OCC's approach to asset management will ensure that our housing stock meets the current and future needs of customers, while being sustainable and affordable. Our asset management priorities are to improve the quality of existing homes and therefore to:

- Ensure the long term viability and sustainability of our stock.
- Maintain and manage the stock to meet current and future needs.
- To inform the targeting and development of neighbourhood management, environmental improvement and neighbourhood enhancement initiatives.
- To provide a framework to inform decisions on the retention of and investment in existing assets, on the sale of assets, and the conversion of assets.
- Reduce the costs of maintenance in the longer term.
- Tackle fuel poverty.

It follows that our AMS is centred on questions about improving the stock at a cost that can be afforded:

Better stock - What are the objectives for stock investment? What are the standards we aim to deliver to meet the goals of sustainable communities (safe and secure homes in a quality environment); meet future needs (the life time homes agenda); and respond to criteria to achieve environmental sustainability. How do we manage the stock portfolio to achieve our objectives of a high quality and attractive stock?

Lower costs - Can the investment requirement be funded? How can we align the investment plan with the business plan and what can we do to minimise costs through preventative cyclical programmes once the decent homes investment programme has been delivered?

The strategy is a response to these questions, and from it flows the following ambitions:

- To deliver an investment **standard** that mean our homes achieve and sustain the decent homes target, achieve affordable warmth, meet identified needs, and contribute to community development.
- To **manage the stock portfolio**, in terms not just of age, condition and standard, but also as part of a process of assessment to guide policies of reinvestment to meet the needs of current and future tenants.
- To support our corporate priorities through **investment plans** that reflect the agreed allocation of resources for re-investment, and contribute to sustainable neighbourhoods.

The objectives set out above are considered in more detail in Sections Four to Six. This is backed by a delivery plan described in Section Seven, which in outline addresses the following questions:

- What do we need to know about the stock and how can we improve performance management?

- How are residents involved in defining priorities, standards, managing programmes and evaluating the quality of customer service?
- Who is responsible for the AMS and what are the monitoring arrangements?
- What is the action plan?

4. STANDARDS

Goal	
To deliver homes that meet the needs of our residents.	
Objectives	
4.1	To achieve and sustain the decent homes standard
4.2	To develop an affordable <i>Oxford Standard</i> which meets the aspirations of our residents can be afforded within our Business Plan.
4.3	To provide well maintained homes and areas which are the responsibility of OCC- including gardens, boundary treatments, parking areas and street scene that enhance the feeling of pride in the area, etc.
Requirements	
4.1	Demonstrate continued and on-going delivery of decent homes.
4.2	The development of an <i>Oxford Standard</i> (which includes resident involvement) to be consulted, discussed, costed and agreed.

The quality and availability of our properties is important to the health and wellbeing of our customers. Our current investment strategies will ensure that all of our properties are up to the decent, modern standard that our customers expect.

Our planned maintenance programmes will deliver significant investment in the housing stock to improve standards and to ensure there is a continuing demand for properties. Effective asset management will ensure that this programme is financially sustainable. The key elements are:

- Maintain the decency standard for all properties.
- Keep homes in good condition beyond this by adopting a strategic, long-term approach to investment and an intelligent approach to cyclical maintenance aimed at maximising the life of building components.
- Deliver an affordable quality product in an attractive environment, complying with current and prospective requirements, particularly in terms of affordable warmth and environmental sustainability.
- Achieving high customer satisfaction and contributing to sustainable communities.

4.1 DECENT HOMES

Our immediate aim is to deliver decent homes within budget and with a high level of tenant satisfaction.

To plan the delivery of the decent homes programme and to demonstrate continuous DHS compliance, OCC will maintain an up-to-date stock condition database. This will build on the existing sample survey, capturing all pre-works inspection data and completions from the works programme.

4.1 Demonstrate delivery of decent homes	
Objectives	
Compliance	Up-to-date and reliable data to show that all homes meet the decent homes standard.
Tasks	
Data collection	Ensure data is collected to demonstrate compliance.

4.2 OXFORD STANDARD

Our residents will have other aspirations for their homes and will wish to see improvements to aspects of estates such as security and environment quality.

We will, in full consultation with the residents revise the current standard to match the expectations of our tenants while being affordable within the business plan. The Oxford Standard may include:

- A more ambitious thermal comfort standard.
- Accessibility standards for older and disabled people.
- Internal noise insulation within and between dwellings.
- Standards for communal areas and the external environment that support policies for sustainable communities. (including boundary treatment to gardens)

We will agree an Oxford Standard that reflects local circumstances. This will be discussed with residents, aligned with business objectives and be capable of being funded by the business plan.

The home

Concerns about affordable warmth and energy efficiency mean that there will be a focus on insulation and efficient heating systems. We will take account where possible of industry standards. We are committed to improving the energy efficiency of the stock and minimising the environmental impact of our activities.

Common areas

Internal common areas are an important part of the home environment. Upgrading communal areas within blocks is therefore a priority. Standards and expectations have risen since many of the blocks last had any substantial investment. Upgrading these areas will not only improve the environment of the block but will lead to cost savings on cleaning and maintenance.

The environment

We will continue to review our strategies for improving the external environment of estates. We are aware that the quality of the local environment affects the quality of peoples' lives. We know that the standard of maintenance on our estates is important to residents. We want to deliver the improvements that residents think are priorities, and to involve them in this process.

We envisage that residents' specific priorities for communal areas and environmental works in their own areas will be established through neighbourhood consultation. The mechanism for budgeting is that, in defining the aspirational standard, our AMS will forecast the costs associated with achieving the proposed *Oxford Standard* and environmental improvements. These forecasts must be fully fundable in the business plan.

4.2 Oxford Standard	
Objectives	
Sustainability	Include affordability and sustainability as key components of OCC's criteria for assessing stock quality.
Target standard	Guided by corporate objectives, OCC will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define aspirational standards. • Agree the standard that can be supported by the business plan. • Agree a delivery timescale.
Tasks	
Oxford Standard	Define an aspirational standard for OCC, including affordable warmth and environmental criteria.
Modelling of costs	Assess the costs of the aspirational standard to ensure the standard is fundable by the business plan.

4.3 FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS

Our immediate aim is to maintain 'suitable and sufficient' Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The outputs of this will be held on a database with a prioritised action points.

Action points requiring investment work will be 'dovetailed' with the investment works whenever possible and practical to do so.

4.3 Fire Risk Assessments	
Objectives	
Compliance	Up-to-date FRAs and associated action plans for all blocks requiring these
Tasks	
Data collection	Compile the required actions and phase with Investment works when possible to do so.

4.4 MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL

4.4 Mechanical & Electrical	
Objectives	
Compliance	Five yearly fixed wire testing regime, as prescribed in the industry standard published by Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) Wiring Regulations (BS 7671) Annual landlord gas safety certificates with 100% on-going compliance
Tasks	
Data collection	Compile the required actions and phase with Investment works when possible to do so. Robust escalation process for potentially non-compliant units

5. PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Goal	
To manage the stock portfolio in line with the business plan, meeting the needs of the wider community, demonstrate good stewardship and ensure the stock's long term sustainability.	
Objectives	
5.1	To develop our existing approach to portfolio scoring to indicate priorities for investment and any need for more detailed option appraisal.
5.2	Support for neighbourhood level management plans.
5.3	Review options where demand is low, costs are high, or there is an opportunity to make better use of the assets.
Requirements	
5.1	A measure of portfolio performance which can be kept up to date as a reliable guide to investment priorities.
5.2	Development of our approach to preparing estate improvement plans.
5.3	Asset management support for estate regeneration.
5.4	A review of the opportunities provided by under-used HRA land.
5.5	Option appraisal for marginal schemes.
5.6	Strategies aimed at achieving better use of the stock.

Our aim is to ensure that there is a continuing demand for our properties and to identify stock that is, or may become, a liability. Such properties may be a drain on resources and best suited for disposal or redevelopment. It is important that we do not continue to invest in properties if there is a question about their short to medium term future.

5.1 PORTFOLIO PERFORMANCE

OCC will develop an index, which uses indicators and compares environmental and socio-economic criteria in order to assess scheme viability and inform stock investment and disposal policies.

5.1 Portfolio Performance	
Objectives	
Portfolio performance	Measure on a scheme and area basis.
Tasks	
Index	Develop use of this to better inform portfolio management decisions.

5.2 ESTATE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

We know that the quality of the estate environment is important, and we will consult with residents as part of work to agree the *Oxford Standard*.

However, we want to be more ambitious, and link environmental works to other aspects of estate or neighbourhood planning. This would encompass:

- Renewal of some of the worst areas of hard and soft landscape, aiming to improve the visual impact, design-out crime, reduce maintenance costs and improve the sense of safety, well-being and ownership.
- Reviewing the opportunities to provide additional homes on under-used land.

We have a scheme investment budget for local determination. We believe that this work should be linked to neighbourhood or estate based plans. These plans would provide a basis for a more coordinated approach to asset management, and particularly to recognise that housing management should not be undertaken in isolation from investment planning.

A key role of estate improvement plans is to identify properties that are at risk of low demand and to prepare action plans to deal with them before they become financial liabilities. If the stock can achieve target standards at reasonable cost, the business plan will provide for coordinated re-investment that includes environmental works to secure the long term future of the area. Proposals for disposal will be reviewed in terms of the impact on the local community.

5.2 Estate improvement plans	
Objectives	
Develop an approach	Agree an approach to preparing neighbourhood or estate plans
Monitoring	The performance of estate improvement plans should be monitored, requiring the starting assumptions to be recorded.
Tasks	
Principle	Agree that neighbourhood planning is a realistic approach to linking housing management, asset management and development.
Define priorities	Agree priorities for estate improvement plans, informed by estate sustainability
Development	Use option appraisal to identify opportunities for new development.
Land management	Consider “greening” areas where there are problems due to over density

5.3 OPTION APPRAISAL

The need for scheme or estate based option appraisal will be identified through work on portfolio performance. However, the immediate priorities for option appraisal are:

- Regeneration
- Land and related assets
- Remodelling and disposal
- Housing needs
- Rationalisation and reconfiguration

Land and related assets

To support the housing strategy it is important to undertake a detailed review of the re-development potential across all our estates. ‘Hidden Homes’ is a key issue for a number of our peer organisations.

OCC proposes to establish two categories:

- A review of the potential for ‘Hidden Homes’. This involves the identification of redundant or underused spaces on existing Council estates and consider the possibility of creating new homes for local people; and
- Permanent environmental treatment where land has no potential alternative use.

We believe that imaginative solutions could increase the number of homes on our estates, through remodelling while improving the environment and making a positive contribution to the life of the community.

Remodelling and disposal

Remodelling is an option for specific schemes in our ownership.

In general terms, disposal of assets is not a high priority for OCC. However, there are occasions where a scheme may be expensive to maintain and delivers little social value. In these circumstances the best option may be redevelopment or disposal. We will evaluate these schemes within the OCC criteria and in consultation with area representatives.

Better use of the stock

As part of making better use of the housing stock, we will look at ways to minimise under-occupancy of the existing stock. There is logic in a policy which encourages movement to more appropriate stock that releases under-occupied homes for the use of families. We will work with representatives to develop an under-occupation strategy that will include incentives to assist people to move into smaller and more suitable accommodation.

The appraisal model is shown in the appendices.

5.3 Option appraisal	
Objectives	
Regeneration	Support development and regeneration plans
Re-modelling	A methodology for evaluating options for individual properties or schemes
Land	Assess the potential of sites.
Better use	Development of an approach to widening housing options.
Tasks	
Criteria	Adopt an approach to option appraisal that takes into account estate regeneration
Scheme	Apply scheme based option appraisal as required
Land assets	As part of investment plans and consultation with tenants on environmental works, assess development opportunities offered by sites and under-used land.
Under-occupancy	Prepare a strategy which offers housing options to those who might benefit from moving to a more suitable home.

6. STOCK INVESTMENT PLANNING

Goal	
To support business planning by delivering investment plans for the existing stock that are affordable.	
Objectives	
6.1	Prepare a 30 year investment plan.
6.2	Carry out a programme of component replacement identified through the stock condition survey.
6.3	Ensure all work is value for money.
Requirements	
6.1	Investment planning and budgeting.
6.2	Programme of component replacement planned and costed on a five year rolling programme, with the minimum decent homes 100% compliance.
6.3	Ability to demonstrate improving value for money.

OCC must operate a viable business with adequate resources to meet current and future business and financial commitments. Our business plan needs to be informed by asset management information that is reviewed regularly. Our approach to investment planning therefore has the following objectives:

- Improve the quality of management information about the nature, condition and sustainability of the stock.
- Provide reliable and detailed forecasts of future costs to support business planning.
- Show a thirty year investment plan driven by stock condition data.
- Provide a detailed rolling five year planned programme which builds on intelligent timing of component replacement.
- Manage the programme to ensure that it is affordable.
- Obtain value for money, delivering the programme with efficiency to the stated timescales.
- Deliver the programme that customers want within costs that are affordable.

Beyond the delivery of immediate decent homes targets the future investment requirements and business context must be understood. Business modelling is central to the assessment of options, and the AMS will support this by developing capacity to prepare investment plans.

It is essential that we know the level of investment required in the existing stock over future years, and that this investment can be funded. This includes the ability to prepare long-term investment forecasts for the stock; to report on decent homes; and to anticipate any widening of the decent homes agenda to embrace community and environmental criteria.

The requirement is for an investment plan driven by survey based cost forecasts, together with non-survey costs, which represent a complete estimate of the costs of maintaining all assets in good condition over the forecast period. To achieve this we require up-to-date and accurate

information about the condition of the housing stock. The foundation for this is a programme of pre-works surveys and updating of the database in-line with works programmes.

The resultant agreed investment plan, aligned with the business plan, will then be translated into a five year rolling planned programme as the basis for budgeting and procurement.

6.1 INVESTMENT FORECASTS

Future planned and programmed improvement work will provide for the continuous renewal of components in accordance with the life cycle expectations. The Business Plan has been modelled to finance this on-going investment to maintain standards.

The current financial plan includes a thirty year cash flow including provision for major repairs and improvement programmes and the effect of RTB sales. The investment plan have been used as the basis for figures in the cash-flow forecasts.

Resources have been identified in the Business Plan to meet the need for renewals and improvements identified in the stock condition survey. This totals £23,173,133 (exc. fees) over the 5 year plan period.

Table 1 below shows the expenditure identified by the survey over the next five years against the budget provision in the business plan.

It can be seen that while the year by year profile varies the overall budget provision for the next five years is in line with the spend required to meet decent homes.

Table 1

Financial Year	2014/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	Totals
Catch Up Repairs	920,000	0	0	0	0	920,000
Decent Homes Element Renewal	2,088,984	6,385,893	2,677,816	592,686	10,507,754	22,253,133
Total	3,008,984	6,385,893	2,677,816	592,686	10,507,754	23,173,133
Business Plan Budget	5,222,310	4,909,260	4,701,510	4,493,260	4,493,260	23,819,600
Variance + -	2,213,326	1,476,633	2,023,694	3,900,574	-6,014,494	646,467

Notes:

1. This limited top-level analysis confirms the previous financial projections for meeting Decent Homes and works programmes to date have addressed on-going compliance with Decent Homes.
2. Adjustments will need to be made for expenditure on the tower blocks as the Decent Homes works will be covered in the major tower block project.
3. The year on year programme will be adjusted to smooth out spend over the five year period.
4. The expenditure identified includes the replacement of all elements at the time of life expiry e.g. Kitchens 20 years, Bathrooms 30 years.

Table 2 shows other repairs and planned maintenance items identified by the survey:

Table 2

Other repairs (not DHS)	£440,224	£1,015,827	£516,638	£107,497	£4,021,926	£6,102,112
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These repairs do not contribute to the potential failure of dwellings against decent homes. Four million pounds (Approx. 60%) of this expenditure relates to external area works such as walls, boundaries and paving.

The Council is investing £5 million in estates enhancement and regeneration over the coming five years which is likely to significantly address these repairs although further analysis is required to confirm this.

The current investment plan includes for the cost of maintaining the stock in a decent condition. Any additional costs associated with achieving a higher aspirational standard will be included in subsequent work and where affordable will form part of our business plan.

Schedule of rate assumptions will be reviewed annually, and an annual investment plan provided as an input to the business plan. This annual review will look at the impact of new data, completed works, revised life cycle assumptions, any re-profiling of works, and the impact of any redevelopment proposals. It is essential that asset management plans are reflected in an investment plan that in turn is fundable by the business plan. If our business plan requires flexibility in the investment plan, this must be translated into a revised AMS.

The Energy Policy will be aligned with the Asset Management Strategy and Housing Strategy in order to form a cohesive and joined-up approach. It also has links with the Financial Inclusion Strategy for actions addressing fuel poverty and processes/prioritisation within it will utilise data from the Stock Condition Survey. This is a key consideration in investment planning and budgeting.

6.1 Investment planning and budgeting	
Objectives	
Investment plan	OCC has a strategic planning requirement for maintenance cost forecast over 30 years, at whole stock and scheme level, with the ability to report on main components. The purpose is to see trends and to support business planning.
Business plan	The investment plan will feed into business plans with a clear audit trail. The investment plan will report on the costs of the whole stock, in a consistent way. Reporting will extend to non-survey costs. Related assets and leasehold properties will be included.
Non-survey costs	OCC will prepare investment plans in a format that includes budget forecasts for responsive, void and cyclical works, as well as for contingent works.
Energy Performance	To maximise the energy efficiency and minimise fuel poverty in OCC's housing stock
Tasks	
Resident involvement	Involve residents at the earliest possible stage in the investment planning process
Investment plan	Migrate data into the database, run an investment plan and reconcile against earlier reports,

Review assumptions	Review the schedule of rate and life cycle assumptions annually. Compare against industry standards and peer group benchmarks, and against actual costs experienced by OCC.
Align investment plan with business plan	Review OCC's business plan in the light of investment requirements. Any funding gap to be addressed by specific policies. These options will be modelled.
Energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define targets for energy in the housing stock, both in terms of average energy performance (SAP rating) and poorest performers (minimum). These can be monitored on a yearly basis. • Determine basic measures that should be applied to all buildings and roll out (eg draught proofing, loft insulation). • Optimise efficiency by integrating energy efficiency works with planned and reactive maintenance • Consideration of stock for energy generation (renewables) potential • Prioritise larger energy saving works according to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Energy efficiency measures in terms of cost per carbon saving 2. Funding available and a given budget 3. Determined fuel poverty criteria • Ensure Technical staff working on building based projects are appropriately trained • Ensure tenant-supporting staff and tenants are aware and confident in key energy issues

6.2 PLANNED PROGRAMMES

Our requirement is to maintain up-to-date stock condition information in order to support the development of a rolling five year investment programme. Our database contains data extrapolated to give whole stock information. We can analyse by estate, linking this to an index of failures by decent homes criteria. This can be done while splitting into internal and external works (to fabric) plus communal areas, to identify what work would be done on a purely worst-first basis.

There will be a clear audit trail to demonstrate that the planned programme supports the AMS. In turn, the planned programme will demonstrate compliance with the decent homes standard, and the agreed *Oxford Standard*. In the future a rolling budget will be approved on the basis of the planned programme.

6.2 Planned programmes	
Objectives	
Preparation of planned programme	OCC has a requirement to prepare planned maintenance programmes based on survey data, with the ability to see the impact of accelerating or delaying works programmes. Reporting will be at unit level, to support aggregation by any grouping of units.
Planned programmes	Decent homes failures will be reflected in the planned programme. It should be possible to report on planned programme dates to demonstrate compliance.
Programme priorities	Publication of an indicative annual programme up to twelve months in advance of delivery
Consultation	OCC is committed to consulting with tenants on planned programmes, and to providing better information about when programmes will be delivered. This requires links between a finalised works programme and customer facing systems hosted on the mainframe IT platform

Tasks	
Preparing five year programme	Prepare detailed five year planned programmes at a local level that demonstrate the delivery and sustainability of decent homes.
Coordination	Hold the proposed planned programme on the mainframe so that corporate knowledge is shared.

6.3 VALUE FOR MONEY

Delivering value for money is a key area for service improvement. The aim to be more efficient means:

- An intelligent cyclical programme where preventative works are undertaken, but not done before the work is necessary.
- Potential warranty and handover claims flagged and properly actioned.
- New products identified that minimise maintenance liabilities through durability, easier cleaning and resistance to anti-social behaviour.
- The capacity to analyse repair activity to identify trends and reduce responsive and planned costs by intelligent cyclical or preventative works.
- Procuring contracts to ensure work is completed in the most efficient way and to the highest standards.

Environmental impact will be a key KPI used to monitor our investment programme. We intend to ensure wherever possible that programme waste is sorted on site. Waste will wherever possible be taken to local recycling depots. This not only provides environmental benefits but also reduces the cost of waste disposal.

Our investment programme will also be informed from the outset by a preventative agenda that aims to maximise the amount of future maintenance work that is directed towards planned and programmed activity. This is not a simple shift from responsive to planned. We will develop approaches which aim to extend the life of building components through intelligent planned repairs. This will be linked to our cyclical programme. The objective is to extend the life cycle of key components without seeing an offsetting rise in responsive repairs.

6.3 Value for money	
Objectives	
Benchmarking	Verify that all planned programmes are delivering value for money.
Preventative strategies	To undertake more work as planned programmes, reducing the proportion or responsive repairs, but not replacing components before the end of their useful life.
Reducing delivery costs	To lower end-to-end service delivery costs by doing the right things right first time and cutting out the costs of doing what is unnecessary.
Tasks	
Benchmarking	Establish a framework to verify that packaged planned works are achieving better value for money than responsive repairs.
Maintenance cost analysis	Develop a stronger understanding of the total costs of maintenance activity by monitoring maintenance costs in use for major components.
Cyclical	Develop the programme in more detail, linked to protocols which define repair or

programmes	replace decisions. Plan the monitoring of these programmes to test that they deliver genuine value for money by delaying major works without increasing the cost of responsive repairs. Support this by establishing automatic reports that can track responsive repairs trends by area and components.
Handover procedure	Implement a handover procedure to ensure that outstanding defects are resolved by the planned maintenance contract and do not become responsive repairs.
Demand	Analyse the spread of demand for responsive repairs (by area, type of works and customer characteristics). Review ways in which the demand for small value non-urgent work might be better managed.

7. DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

Sections 4-6 of this strategy focused on how we can improve our housing stock at a cost that we can afford. This means defining the standard, managing the portfolio and improving our ability to prepare investment plans. In order to achieve these ambitions and deliver the strategy there are a number of related tasks that need attention. These are discussed below. The order in which they are presented does not imply any particular priority.

7.1 DATA MANAGEMENT

Stock condition surveys have been undertaken and it is the intention to update stock condition data to a minimum of 20% stock each year. Building upon these surveys, our policy is to move to effective 100% real data through:

- A rolling programme of surveys on approximately 20% of the stock, linked to the cyclical programme and undertaken by our appointed consultants.
- Pre-works surveys as an important opportunity to identify the remaining life of elements that will not be replaced.
- Surveys of void property.
- Data capture from works programmes.
- Data capture from responsive repairs reviews.

Satisfaction data is being collected to measure the performance of service delivery. It is part of the responsive repairs process and is an integral part of the planned programme, through contractors' data validated by OCC. We also record tenant's views about the quality of the void property at the start of a tenancy. We will make sure that this data is used to improve service performance, and by linking it to better data about tenant characteristics this supports our approach to customer profiling.

We understand the need to manage the stock condition database and to continuously improve its quality. Data management is a crucial function. Without the proper skills and staffing the quality of data will decline, and what is there will not be used. The only way to make decisions on a rational basis is to be systematic, comprehensive and proactive in the exploitation of portfolio management techniques. This means combining quality information systems with good data management and then translating data into information which can be used. The data management role to be performed is to:

- Control the collection and management of good quality, consistent data as the basis on which to make decisions about investment priorities.
- Managing overall data quality.
- Manage the asset management software (including rates and life cycles).
- Preparing standard reports (for example, to ensure the proper treatment of block and leasehold costs).

- Preparing ah hoc reports, specifically to support investment and business planning, delivery of decent homes and neighbourhood reviews.

7.1 Data management	
Objectives	
Rolling surveys	Improve the quality of planning data through a programme of rolling surveys supplemented by pre-works inspections.
Works data	Works data is captured as part of the management of planned programmes, and this data is used to up-date the stock condition database. While computing questions tend to take centre stage, the main data problems are procedural: ensuring that accurate and timely programme information is returned at unit level.
Contract management	Timely data requires better communication from contractors about the status of individual orders. This raises questions about the data requirements from contractors and the extent to which systems are shared.
Voids	The requirements for capturing void works data is similar to that for other works programmes.
Responsive repairs	Though responsive repairs is a very important service to tenants the impact on asset management is minor. There are two requirements. First, that any repair ordering is informed by information about planned programmes. Second, that relevant responsive repairs are captured to update the stock condition database.
Satisfaction	Making better use of satisfaction measurement to understand the pattern of demand and to adjust the service to meet different needs.
Managing data	Improve the coverage and quality of data.
Tasks	
Survey priorities	Define the data items to be collected as part of pre-works surveys and link to the proposed delivery programme.
Works data	Review the procedure for collecting works data.
Satisfaction	Review of the approach to collecting and analysing data.
Managing data	Define responsibilities for managing the stock condition database and agree protocols for data collection and quality control.

7.2 INFORMATION SYSTEMS

OCC has access to a specialist asset management package (SAMP), CodeMan to which the recent stock survey outputs are being entered into.

The immediate priority has been to reconcile the new database against the current stock condition survey forecasts and begin the process of shaping more detailed delivery plans. Beyond this we will contribute to a number of related asset management issues which will need to be addressed at local level, but which have implications for the partnership organisations as a whole.

- To hold RDSAP data if required, the collection profile of which changes in late 2014.
- Asbestos is currently held in a stand alone data base. As asbestos information is required for works orders, with the mainframe being the correct home for the data.
- Interfaces will be required to the mainframe, and the objectives of integration will be revisited as part of the asset management software update post conclusion of the stock survey reporting.

- To have the ability to interrogate the responsive repair data and create trend analysis calculations and predictions which will in turn inform future strategic component replacement programmes

7.2 Asset management information systems	
Objectives	
Shared data	All corporate data will be held in the mainframe, including any specialist asset management attribute data which has corporate relevance (eg decent homes results, SAP scores).
Planned programmes	Information about planned programmes to be visible when ordering responsive repairs.
Gas data	Make the best possible corporate use of gas servicing records
Tasks	
Implementation plan	Asset management implementation plan for the migration of data to address issues of integration with the mainframe.
Shared data items	As part of the implementation plan, agree attributes to be passed between CodeMan and the mainframe.
Interfaces	Robust and performance tested.
Planned maintenance	Define the requirements for managing planned maintenance in partnership with the contractors delivering the planned programme.
Trend analysis	Develop a procedure to enable trend analysis of the responsive repairs to enable this data to inform future strategies

7.3 SERVICE STANDARDS

It is essential that we understand our customers and then translate this knowledge into more responsive service. The annual STAR survey of tenants provides an insight into how well issues around repairs are dealt with:

- 68% (the highest return) said repairs and maintenance was the highest priority service we provide them with
- 78% had had repairs to their home in the last year. 83% are happy with how repairs and maintenance is dealt with. 90% were happy with the overall quality of the work. 95% said appointments were kept
- 69% of tenants had contacted the council about their house in the last month. 78% of these contacts were about repairs. 90% of them phoned us and 7% visited us
- 64% felt that when they were initially interviewed (by phone or face to face) the speed of the repairs service was 'fair' or 'poor'
- Most tenants (58%) aren't aware of the council's published service standards
- 50% of tenants have access to the internet at home. 24% are happy to be contacted by email but 79% would wish to use telephone.

This high level of overall satisfaction for repairs is confirmed by the ongoing monitoring of customer satisfaction through the Council's GovMetric system (data from April to December 2012).

Channel	Good	Average	Poor
F2F	47.4%	21.1%	31.6%
Telephone	91.6%	7.3%	1.1%
Web	16.7%	0.0%	83.3%
Grand Total	90.8%	7.4%	1.7%

In addition, the customer feedback system for monitoring complaints, comments and compliments shows that compliments for the service outweigh complaints by over 4:1 (data from April to December 2012):

Work Area	Comment	Compliment	Stage 1 Complaint	Stage 2 Complaint	Stage 3 Complaint
Day to Day Responsive Repairs	312	624	108	7	7
Planned Maintenance	2	4	14	1	
Surveyors		1	16		
Grand Total	314	629	138	8	7

It is important to collect and use customer profiling information as the key to performing well on diversity. Accurate and comprehensive profiling information will be used to set targets and performance indicators. Information will be available to staff and to contractors where relevant.

Our AMS is supported by a comprehensive repairs and maintenance policy which shows what will be delivered, when and how this will be done, and the standards to be applied to the measurement of performance.

Improvements will be made to the way we handle and learn from complaints. Tenant satisfaction surveys are undertaken following decent homes programmes, and we will be more systematic about our approach to new lettings surveys.

These mechanisms used together are intended to embed tenant involvement in service monitoring and development, using customer satisfaction to drive-up standards, and then linking this back to show how customer feedback has shaped the service.

7.3 Service standards	
Objectives	
Customer satisfaction	Collection of reliable information about service standards.
Better customer information	Collection and analysis of data to shape service delivery more intelligently.
Better customer feedback	Listening to customers, acting on what customers have said, and then feeding this back to show how their views have influenced service delivery.
Better use of complaints	Not only to resolve complaints but also to demonstrate learning where the experience has wider applicability.

Tasks	
Validation of satisfaction scores	Introduction of checks on the satisfaction ratings reported by contractors on planned maintenance and responsive repairs
Service process review	Review repair and maintenance processes, looking for simplification and quality gains
Complaints procedure	Review the repair and maintenance element within the overall corporate complaints procedure.
Training	Initiate a continuous training programme on customer care induction training, extending it to include contractors.
Performance indicators	Complete a comprehensive review of performance indicators.

7.4 RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Resident involvement forms a very important part of the process of making decisions about assets.

Investment in assets should reflect the views expressed by residents in Customer Surveys and via other feedback mechanisms. Residents will be involved in investment decisions and specific tenants will be consulted about locally applicable proposals and strategies, for example in relation to remove stock reduction and conversions.

Additionally, we will put in place:

- A Resident Involvement Compact written in conjunction with residents.
- A Resident Involvement Strategy that sets out how residents will be involved in the development of plans and in the execution of works.
- A regular newsletter that has service users on its editorial panel.
- A core group of informed residents who are active within the organisation.
- A staff resource to facilitate and co-ordinate resident involvement.

Our strategic objective is to ensure tenants are at the heart of decisions taken in planning, delivering and monitoring our service, with discussions on Oxford Standard and estate improvement plans being the priorities within this AMS.

7.4 Resident involvement	
Objectives	
Aspirations	Agree aspirational standards.
Environment / Energy	Agree environmental / Energy standards.
Service standards	Agree service standards.
Tasks	
Aspirations	Involve tenants in defining aspirational standards.
Environment	Involve tenants in defining environmental standards.
Service standards	Involve tenants in defining service standards.
Security	Involve tenants in defining base security measures and at a neighbourhood level

7.5 RESPONSIVE AND VOID PROPERTY REPAIRS

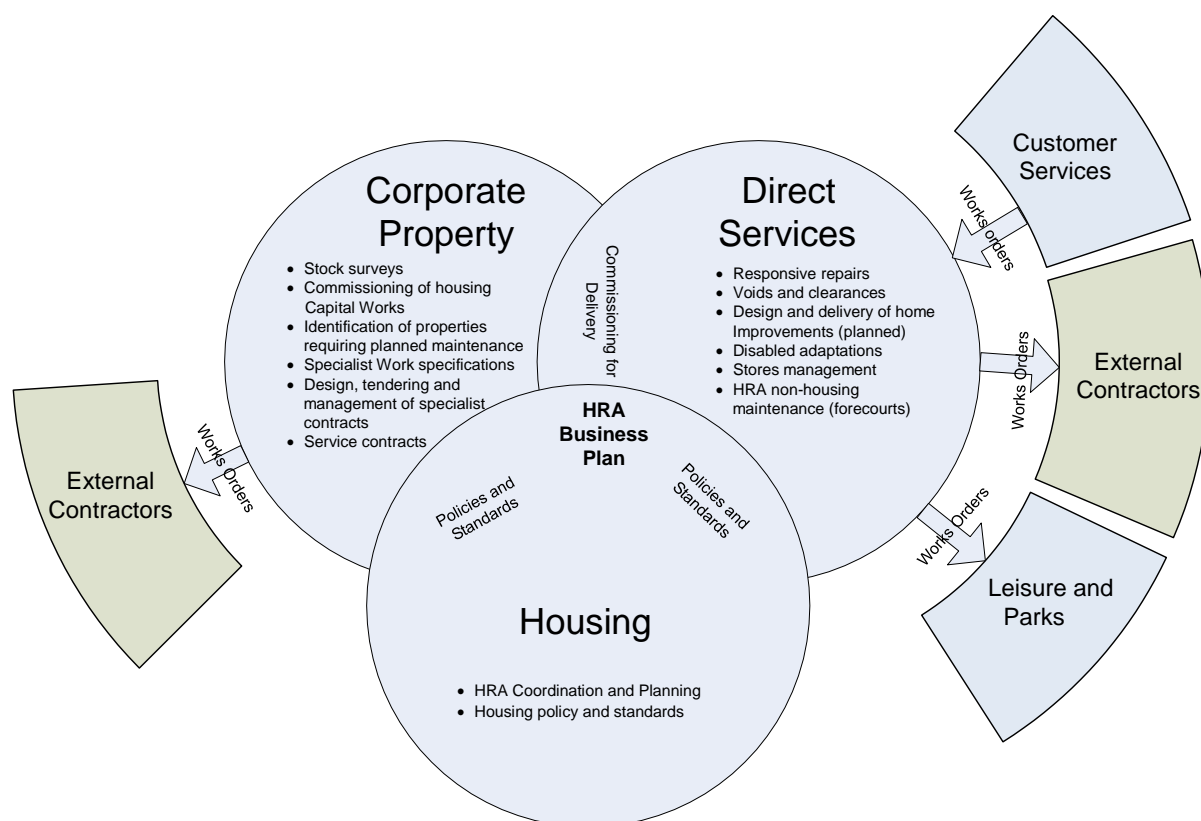
Fundamental Service Review

In 2012 a Fundamental Service Review was undertaken of Housing repairs and maintenance delivery. Key findings were:

- 7822 properties were maintained and 25,078 repairs were undertaken during 2011/12
- Each year approximately 350-400 voids occur, 350 kitchens are replaced, 260 bathrooms are replaced, 440 boilers are replaced and 300 windows are replaced
- £9m is spent on responsive and cyclical housing repairs (£3m responsive, £6m planned)
- £8-9m is allocated in the capital programme for housing maintenance

Internal and External Relationships in Housing Repairs

The management and fulfilment of housing repairs involves three council service areas directly and one indirectly, as set out in the diagram below. This has formed the basis for the Fundamental Service Review (FSR).



The relationships between the different services use a mixture of formal and informal commissioning to undertake work. A brief summary of the main interactions is set out below:

Day to day (responsive) repairs

- Residents report repairs to the Customer Service Contact Centre, which uses Lagan CRM scripting based on the tenants' Repairs Handbook to diagnose

repairs. Repair jobs are raised via the Lagan CRM direct to Direct Service's Job Costing System 'Servitor', along with appointing to most jobs at the time of call.

- Follow-up jobs (from initial inspections or repairs) are programmed directly by Direct Services and undertaken by them or external contractors where specialist trades or equipment are required (e.g. scaffolding), or where contracts have been set up by Corporate Property (e.g. door entry systems). Any tree work or maintenance of vegetation is placed with Leisure and Parks to undertake.

Planned repairs and improvements (i.e. to maintain the decent homes standard)

- Housing stock condition records are held and maintained by Corporate Property using a computer database (Codeman) which receives manual data entry following on-site surveys and direct services works. This is used to identify properties requiring replacement fixtures in order to maintain the decent homes standard, against the agreed replacement timescales
- Direct Services are commissioned on an annual basis to fulfil the replacement programme. Some additions to the programme will be included for properties becoming void (see below)
- Direct Services are responsible for the programming and design of minor improvement schemes including disabled adaptations.
- Major improvement schemes (e.g. tower block refurbishment) will be specified and tendered by Corporate Property directly with external contractors

Voids and re-letting

- Housing and Direct Services work closely together to act swiftly on properties becoming vacant. Direct Services deal with initial inspections of the property prior to tenancy termination, and handling key returns. They provide updated information on properties for advertising vacancies to Housing
- Once vacant, Direct Services undertake any works to bring the property up to the local void standard.
- Housing carry out shortlisting of potential tenants, with Direct Services undertaking viewings and signing up new tenancies

Future focus of Responsive Repairs

The strategic objective for OCC is to deliver a value for money service that meets the needs of our customers and achieve continuous improvement. Key objectives include:

- Achieve top quartile performance in all aspects of responsive maintenance.
- An optimum balance of expenditure between emergency, urgent and routine responsive repairs having regard to good practice guidelines.
- Support for economic regeneration by providing training opportunities for young people.
- Operate an appointment system / balanced score card (pain and gain)

We will:

- Continue to analyse the proportion of emergency repairs to see whether there are patterns that can be addressed, and set targets to reduce the proportion of work carried out as emergencies or urgent.

- Consider how energy efficiency works can be incorporated into this process to maximise efficiency
- Identify repair hotspots and develop strategies to address individual and collective issues.
- Reduce the overall volume of responsive repairs through planned programmes, batched repairs and predictive analysis.
- Attempt to reduce back-office costs by better system integration.
- Operate a system to retrieve Schedule of Rates data to inform future strategies

Future focus of Void repairs

Our strategic objective for voids is to maximise the use of our stock. The key objectives are:

- To reduce the time taken to re-let properties.
- To maintained the lettings standard consistently across our stock.

The management of void properties requires:

- Understanding our current and future customer profile.
- Managing a stock of dwellings that is suitable for and adapts to this profile.
- Maintaining and improving the stock to a level that our customers find attractive.
- An ability to present attractive dwellings for re-let within acceptable timescales and costs.

We are determined to turnaround voids in the most effective way and this means:

- Effectively managing the entire void process
- Encouraging tenants to leave their home in a good state of repair.
- Minimising re-let works within the agreed lettings standard.
- Use of decorating allowances.
- Working with our service partners to improve quality against agreed KPIs while reducing levels of inspection.

7.5 Responsive and void works	
Objectives	
Service management	Focus on the end-to-end responsive repairs service.
Improve customer satisfaction	Increase the percentage of jobs completed at first appointment and within timescale.
Delivering a value for money service	Reducing the overall volume of responsive repairs and decrease the proportion of jobs undertaken as emergency or urgent. Increase the proportion of work done under planned programmes.
Reducing the cost of service delivery	Simplifying the process to get the right job done at the first visit.
Maximum use of the stock	Reduce void relet times.
Adaptations	Continue to offer a very good service while achieving better value for money.
Tasks	

Service management	Develop the client role in monitoring overall service quality, developing QA functions and maximising customer feedback.
Tenant incentives	Review the use of incentives to encourage tenants to leave their homes in good repair.
Decorating allowances	Review the operation of allowances to maximise their use, minimise inconsistency and protect the needs of those who need more help.
Planned works	Create additional planned maintenance packages to cover additional areas of work targeted at reducing responsive repairs.
Defects	Reduce the demand for responsive repairs by minimising defects in planned programmes and specifying components based on whole life costing.
Void costs	Set a target for reducing the average unit cost of voids.
Future levels of demand	Undertake a review of the adaptations service to identify future levels of demand and the impact of DFG funding.

7.6 RESPONSIBILITIES

Ownership of the AMS

Ownership of the AMS rests with the Head of Housing and Property.

The ownership must be able to demonstrate that it has participated fully in the development of the AMS. Specifically it must ensure that the organisation's long term strategic objectives are converted into achievable plans with clear, measurable targets set within realistic timescales.

Financial control

Financial control will be in accordance with the OCC Scheme of Financial Delegation, in conjunction with: Standing Orders; Procurement Policy; budgeting control, procedures and guidelines; and all other applicable policies.

Risk Management

This AMS shall be subject to prudent risk management principles including an annual review and report to the relevant Committee forum.

The relevant Committee forum will also receive regular reports on related strategies and programmes, for example related to the delivery of the thirty year investment programme and retaining the decent homes target.

Progress and control of the asset management programme will be monitored and scrutinised. Quarterly progress reports on progress are presented including:

- Progress against AMS targets and key performance indicators.
- Report of budget approvals made through delegated powers.
- Budget monitoring.

A two-year external audit of the action plan will enable progress to be reviewed along with incorporation of new and emerging related initiatives.

APPENDIX ONE: FOUR YEAR ACTION PLAN

4.1 Demonstrate delivery of decent homes		When/By
Data collection	Ensure data is collected in a proper form capable of demonstrating decent homes compliance.	J Gould <i>(Completed)</i>
4.2 Oxford Standard		When/By
Oxford Standard	Agree a standard for OCC, including affordable warmth and environmental criteria.	M Shaw <i>(Completed)</i>
Modelling of costs	Assess the costs of the aspirational standard to ensure the standard is fundable by the business plan.	J Gould / M Shaw <i>(Completed)</i>
4.3 & 4.4 Regulatory requirements		When/By
Fire risk Assessments & electrical testing regime	Review current arrangements for the rolling programme of testing and resultant works to ensure a proactive approach is maintained and robust escalation process for potential non-complaint.	J Gould (April 2015)
5.1 Portfolio management		When/By
First-cut	Undertake first-cut analysis for comment.	J Gould (June 15)
5.2 Estate improvement plans		When/By
Principle	Agree that estate improvement planning is a realistic approach to linking housing management, asset	M Shaw <i>(completed)</i>
Define priorities	Agree priorities for estate improvement plans, informed	Mgmt Team (June 15)
Development	Use option appraisal to identify opportunities for new development. Phase 1	M Shaw (September 2015)
5.3 Option appraisal		When/By
Criteria	Adopt an approach to option appraisal that takes into account estate regeneration	M Shaw (Sept 2015)
Scheme	Apply scheme based option appraisal as required	M Shaw (Sept 2015)
Land assets	Complete the review of investment plans and consultation with tenants on environmental works, assess development opportunities offered by garage sites and under-used land.	M Shaw (Sept 2015)
Under-occupancy	Jointly prepare a strategy which offers housing options to those who might benefit from moving to a more suitable home.	G Parsons (Sept 2015)
6.1 Stock investment planning		When/By
Investment plan	Migrate data into AMS, run an investment plan and reconcile against earlier reports.	J Gould (completed)
Review assumptions	Check SOR and life cycle assumptions. Compare against benchmarks and against actual costs experienced by OCC.	J Gould (June 2015)
Align investment plan with business plan	Review OCC' business plan in the light of investment requirements. Any funding gap to be addressed by specific policies. These options to be modelled.	M Shaw (completed)
Energy performance	Complete analysis of energy data, establish priorities and agree energy targets and overall strategy. Ensure that energy efficiency is	J Gould / Debbie Haynes (May 2015)

	voids to optimise efficiency. Consider how income can be evaluated to target homes most at risk of fuel poverty.	
6.2 Planned programmes		When/By
Preparing five year programme	Prepare detailed five year planned programmes at a local level that demonstrate the delivery and sustainability of decent homes.	J Gould (completed)
Coordination	Pass the proposed planned programme to other staff so that corporate knowledge is shared.	J Gould (May 2015)
6.3 Value for money		When/By
Benchmarking	Verify that all planned programmes are delivering value for money.	J Gould / G Bourton (September 2015)
Maintenance cost analysis	Develop a stronger understanding of the total costs of maintenance activity by monitoring maintenance costs in use for major components.	J Gould (June 2015)
Cyclical programmes	Develop the programme in more detail to include optimisation of energy efficiency measures, linked to protocols which define repair or replace decisions. Plan the monitoring of these programmes to test that they deliver genuine value for money by delaying major works without increasing the cost of responsive repairs. Support this by establishing automatic reports that can track responsive repairs trends by area and components.	J Gould / (June 2015)
Handover procedure	Implement a handover procedure to ensure that outstanding defects are resolved by the planned maintenance contract and do not become responsive repairs.	(September 2015)
Demand	Analyse the spread of demand for responsive repairs (by area, type of works and customer characteristics). Review ways in which the demand for small value non-urgent work might be better managed.	(June 2015)
7.1 Data management		When/By
Survey priorities	Define the data items to be collected as part of pre-works surveys and link to the proposed delivery programme.	J Gould (completed)
Works data	Agree the procedure for collecting works data	J Gould (completed)
Satisfaction	Review of the approach to collecting and analysing data.	J Gould (October 2015)
Managing data	Define responsible for managing the stock condition database and agree protocols for data collection and quality control.	J Gould (completed)
7.2 Asset management information systems		When/By
Implementation plan	Prepare an implementation plan to migrate data into the SAMP and to address issues of integration with mainframe.	J Gould (<i>complete</i>)
Shared data items	Agree attributes to be passed between the SAMP and mainframe	J Gould (dependant on IT review) TBA
Interfaces	Agree the interface requirements between the SAMP and mainframe	J Gould (dependant on IT review) TBA

Planned maintenance	Define the requirements for managing planned maintenance in partnership with the contractors delivering the planned programme. Optimise energy efficiency considerations whenever possible and practical to do so.	J Gould (June 2015)
Asbestos	Update IT systems to include all data on one system and ensure information is available to contractors. Review asbestos management policy	J Gould (June 2015)
H&S monitoring	Update IT systems to include all data on one system to allow comprehensive reporting on compliance.	J Gould (June 2015)
7.3 Service standards		When/By
Validation	Introduction of checks on the satisfaction ratings reported by contractors on planned maintenance and responsive repairs.	J Gould (June 2015)
Service process review	Prepare an action plan for a phased review of repair and maintenance processes looking for simplification and quality gains.	(Sept 2015)
Complaints procedure	Review the repair and maintenance element within the overall corporate complaints procedure.	(April Sept 2015)
Performance indicators	Review performance indicators relating to customer service, specifically right first time and resident feedback	S Fry (Sept 2015)
7.4 Resident involvement		When/By
Aspirations	Involve tenants in defining aspirational standards.	M Shaw (completed)
Environment / Energy	Involve tenants in defining environmental / energy standards.	M Shaw (Sept 2015)
Service standards	Involve tenants in defining service standards	Completed
Security	Involve tenants in defining base security measures and at a neighbourhood level in line with estate improvement plans	M Shaw (October 2015) and on-going
7.5 Responsive and void works		When/By
Service management	Develop the client roll in monitoring overall service quality, developing QA functions and maximising customer feedback.	(Sept 2015)
Tenant incentives	Review the use of incentives to encourage tenants to leave their homes in good repair.	B Graves, S Fry, K Lang (Sept 2015)
Decorating allowances	Review the operation of allowances to maximise their use, minimise inconsistency and protect the needs of those who need more help.	B Graves, S Fry, K Lang (Sept 2015)
Planned works	Explore the potential for additional planned maintenance packages to cover additional areas of work targeted at reducing responsive repairs.	J Gould (September 2015)
Defects	Reduce the demand for responsive repairs by minimising defects in planned programmes and specifying components based on whole life costing.	J Gould / P Yerburch (April 2016)
Void costs	Set a target for reducing the average unit cost of voids.	Completed
Future levels of demand	Undertake a review of the adaptations service to identify future levels of demand and the impact of DFG funding.	G Parsons (completed)

7.6 Responsibilities		When/By
Audit	Periodical (every two years) external audit on the Action Plan to track progress, update for emerging and relevant initiatives and to re-prioritise as required	External Asset Management Consultant (April 2016)

APPENDIX TWO: DECENT HOMES

A decent home, as described by government, is one that is safe, wind and weather tight, warm and has modern facilities. In order for a social landlord to achieve this aim any individual dwelling must meet all four of the following criteria:

It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing

This is now defined as having no Category 1 failure under Version 2 of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System 2004.

It is a reasonable state of repair

Dwellings that fail this criterion are those elements such as roofs, rewires, boilers etc that are old (i.e. their age exceeds their life cycle) **and** in poor condition (i.e. identified by the surveyor as needing replacement or a major repair).

The elements listed within this criteria are sub-divided into two sections, key components and non-key components. Failure of a single key component will fail the dwelling completely, whereby the non-key components require two or more failures to make the property non-decent. Key components are elements such as roof, walls, windows, central heating boiler. Non-key components include kitchen, bathroom and radiators.

Whenever a key component fails then the property will become non-decent in that year. The concurrent failure of two non-key components may occur over several years (e.g. a kitchen in year 1 and bathroom in year 5).

It has reasonably modern facilities and services

The guidance lists six points of failure and any individual dwelling must fail on three or more items to be deemed non-decent. The six items are:

- Kitchen more than twenty years old
- Inadequate space and layout of kitchen
- Bathroom more than thirty years old
- Inappropriate bathroom location
- Inadequate space in common areas
- Excessive external noise

It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

This criterion requires dwellings to have both effective insulation and efficient heating. The standard is low, with 50mm of roof insulation or cavity wall insulation being sufficient for homes with gas central heating.

Decent Homes Plus (*Oxford Standard*)

In 2005, the Government introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) which replaced the "fit for habitation" criteria of the DHS. The HHSRS is far more onerous and takes into account 29 separate factors in relation to health and safety in the home.

The “plus” standard suggests more rigorous and demanding objectives which encompass some areas which were traditionally “non-core” decency issues. Amongst these are:

- A much more ambitious thermal comfort criterion which is in line with Building Regulations in force at the time the new Standard is set
- Accessibility standards for elderly and disabled people
- Internal noise insulation within and between dwellings
- Standards for the external environment (i.e. communal areas) that integrate Decent Homes Plus with Sustainable Communities policy.

There is currently no such thing as a “standard” Decent Homes Plus policy as every housing provider has its own aims and objectives in bettering the basic DHS. So typically, providers will include things such as:

- a. Doing more than the DHS
- b. Doing thing faster / more frequent than the industry standard
- c. Doing non-core DHS criteria
- d. Enhancing the external environs.
- e. Providing heating and insulation improvements
- f. Providing better sound insulation

The “Oxford Standard” has been developed to reflect the above.

APPENDIX THREE:

Sustainability Appraisal model

We recognise that care needs to be taken not to re-invest in poor performing areas at the expense of all others, nor should high risk re-investment occur without due consideration, option appraisal and piloting (on the basis that re-investment needs may not be the root cause of the poor performance).

Our appraisal process captures the expectations of the Regulator in demonstrating:

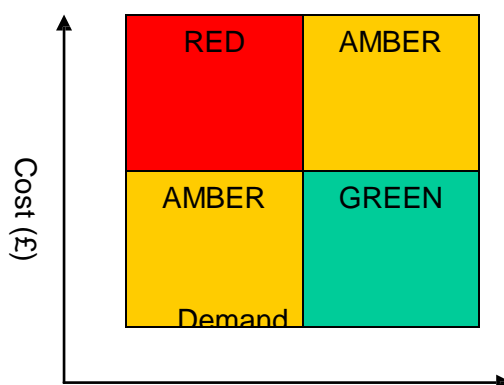
- an understanding of the value of assets including details of financial, social and environmental return at a detailed enough level to enable analysis of differing values of different stock according to location or type (e.g. Net Present Values or NPVs);
- that an understanding of such returns underpins strategic asset decisions;
- a proactive approach to asset management.

Our framework is the starting base for this evaluation process.

Re-investment will therefore be prioritised and with a bias towards those units that are deemed to be of low risk and high demand, as identified through the Sustainability Model, an operational tool that is used to assess sustainability.

Re-investment Priorities

Priorities will be identified through the Sustainability Model. This will consider a range of inputs, including income, demand and projected costs. Properties will be classified as red, amber or green (RAG status):



The portfolio will be divided into one of three categories:

1. **Red** – Those properties deemed to be of high risk (i.e. requiring higher than average levels of re-investment (or cost) in order to maintain them in a good lettable condition) and/or that are in low demand (i.e. are difficult to let or which have an unjustifiably high void turnover rate).
2. **Amber** – Those properties that offer peripheral performance and that require further investigation to be reclassified as either red or green.
3. **Green** – Those properties that are in high demand and that require average or below average levels of re-investment. This category may otherwise be described as 'core stock'.

Re-investment is influenced by these categories as follows:

1. **Red** (on hold/under review) – No major expenditure permitted. To be maintained on an 'essential only' limited responsive basis, plus essential cyclical (e.g. statutory gas servicing).
2. **Amber** (under review) – No major expenditure permitted unless an options appraisal has been undertaken to assess the impact of any re-investment on future works requirements and the likely impact on demand. Otherwise to be maintained on a responsive and cyclical regime only.
3. **Green** (go ahead) – All expenditure permitted

Property in Red or Amber status are to be the subject of further investigation, or review, through an options appraisal, until they are either re-classified or until such time as an alternative strategy is agreed (disposal or re-development for example).

A key consideration is the aspirations of residents.

The Red/Amber/Green status will be determined by plotting the re-investment required (cost) for the proposed projects against demand. For the portfolio as a whole the results of this exercise can be plotted to identify the clusters of each status as illustrated below:

The assessment of cost is made with direct reference to the Asset Management Database and associated reports. This will include the exceptional expenditure requirements to non-traditional dwelling structures for example.

Demand will be assessed with reference to housing management perception, informed by void turnover rates and associated performance indicators. Detailed options studies will take account of additional information such as new scheme Housing Quality Indicators.

We believe that paying attention to the views of residents will assist with improving satisfaction with the service as a whole.

Area based Sustainability Plan (for more than one property e.g. estates / areas etc.):

Sustainability Plan – (Address / Area)

Date (month & year)

Property details:

Number – total number of units (inc. supported/ sheltered)

Type – State if properties are mainly 2/ 3 bed, Terraced/flats, non traditional form of construction

Supported/ Sheltered – how many scheme's, No. of units, client group

Sizes – Breakdown of no. of 1beds , 2beds etc.

Balance –how many units are new build & rehabs

Local Environment – wider environment considerations including bio diversity, risk exposure, overheating, contaminated land etc.

Flood Risk - Any properties found to be at risk of flooding should be assessed for the relative benefits of:

Resilience measures – permanent internal works to significantly reduce repair costs and recovery periods in future events (potentially costly – so best undertaken during flood repairs or other refurbishment)

Resistance measures – fitted or demountable defenses to keep the water out. (These can require annual maintenance and / or 10-20yr renewal)

Planned response – Council action when floods occur

Communal defenses – on nearby land to protect groups of houses

Return on Asset

Cost to maintain & invested – v- contribution to housing stock

Traffic light assessment

Assess the overall condition of the stock using the following guidance.

GREEN – Properties in good condition. High demand

AMBER – Properties need improvement. Low demand

RED – Properties in poor condition. No current demand or hard to let.

Example. Amber for property condition & Green for demand

Photo's

Please include photo's that give a perspective of the stock

<p>Neighbourhood information:</p> <p><u>Wards / Estates / Neighbourhoods</u> <u>Tenure balance:</u> Owner occupied % LA % RSL % Private rented % <u>Demographic profiles</u> (and future expected profile) Match to stock profile leading to gap analysis <u>Schools:</u> Example; Good choice of primary & Secondary schools. <u>Transport links:</u> Example; Good bus links into city centre <u>Crime:</u> Example; Poor reputation <u>House prices:</u> Example; Lower end of the market. Include approximate price.</p>
<p>Employment: Example; - Universities & city centre</p>
<p>Introduction Provide a very brief flavour of the area; Is the stock generally pepper potted Is the area characterised by terraced streets/ Victorian houses converted into flats/ new build Low income households BME composition New emerging communities</p> <p>Key issues What are the key issues for the community E.g. tackling crime, environmental concerns What is the Housing Needs Survey showing for the area</p> <p>Our Status How would you describe our role in the area? Are we 'participants' 'contributors' 'influencers' or 'leaders' in delivering neighbourhood services and regeneration?</p> <p>Investment / regeneration status Is the area part of a renewal area? Is a Local Area Plan or a development framework in place? If so mention which one and who the lead organisations are. Briefly state what the key initiatives are?</p>

Weaknesses/ Opportunities:

Consider the our role in the area and opportunities for us to explore in the following areas:

Planned Works

State planned investment for next 3 years
Additional work required

Development

State any planned Development work

Regeneration

Our initiatives in place
Opportunities for to explore

Key Recommendations

Outline your key recommendations for the area

Detailed Property Appraisals for “Red” Indicator Properties

Property appraisals will be undertaken on particularly high maintenance individual units that have red indicators but appear within areas that are otherwise generally no concern. They will also be undertaken whenever a property presents with exceptionally high current relet cost. This will ensure that all red indicator properties are assessed before any spending decision is made. The objective of the appraisal exercise is to ensure that we are able to let the property and thereby continue to generate satisfactory levels of rental income. At the same time, we need to be satisfied that we can maintain the property at a reasonable cost while tenanted. The appraisals will be undertaken by considering the following factors and performance indicators:

1) Disrepair

Identify the disrepair issues at that property

2) Demand for that property type

Information to assess this will be obtained from our own waiting list information and demand trends obtained from the local authority.

3) Property suitability

The layout, internal features and external facilities of the property will be assessed to determine suitability, particularly in regard to the client Association.

4) Condition of adjacent properties

Adjacent properties will be assessed to determine their use and their condition.

5) Strategic importance

The relative importance of the property to the stock holding is assessed. The local authority’s local strategy for the area is considered.

6) Opportunity cost

All of the risks associated with not carrying out the work are identified.

Options

In the light of information obtained in respect of the factors above, a judgement is made as to which options would deliver the best result for the organisation.

- a) For demand issues:
 - Use of marketing measures
 - Regeneration section to seek funding opportunities / lobby local authorities to make environmental improvements etc.

- b) For property issues:
 - If caused by failure in DHS state when the work will be done to address the failure

- c) General issues:
 - Carry out the required repairs
 - Carry out a modified list of work
 - Carry out improvements

- d) Severe issues:
 - Transfer the property to another landlord
 - Disposal on the open market
 - Do not repair but keep vacant

A discounted cash flow analysis will be undertaken before any decision is made to sell.

Following the above a clear analysis and outcome can be shown in order to determine the most viable long-term option. Irrespective of how long the evaluation process takes and to implement the ultimate decision, all works that relate to compliance with health and safety matters shall remain in place.

APPENDIX FOUR:

Fuel Poverty: a framework for future action - DECC, July 2013

The new indicator

A new indicator of fuel poverty finds a household to be fuel poor if:

- Their income is below the poverty line (taking into account energy costs); and
- Their energy costs are higher than is typical for their household type.

It also uses a fuel poverty gap-difference between a household's modelled bill and what their bill would need to be for them to no longer be fuel poor to measure the severity of the problem faced by fuel poor households. This gives twin indicators of the 'extent' and 'depth' of fuel poverty. Illustrative levels are shown in Fig 2.

The aim is for higher accuracy and an increased ability to identify those who are suffering the most severe fuel poverty. The new Low Income High Costs (LIHC) indicator of fuel poverty finds 2.5 million households in England to be fuel poor in 2010, with a total fuel poverty gap of £1 billion or £405 per household in fuel poverty (see Fig 1).

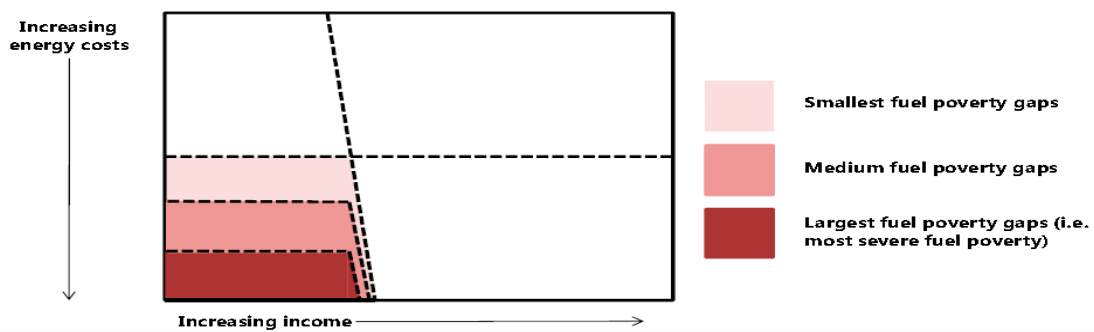
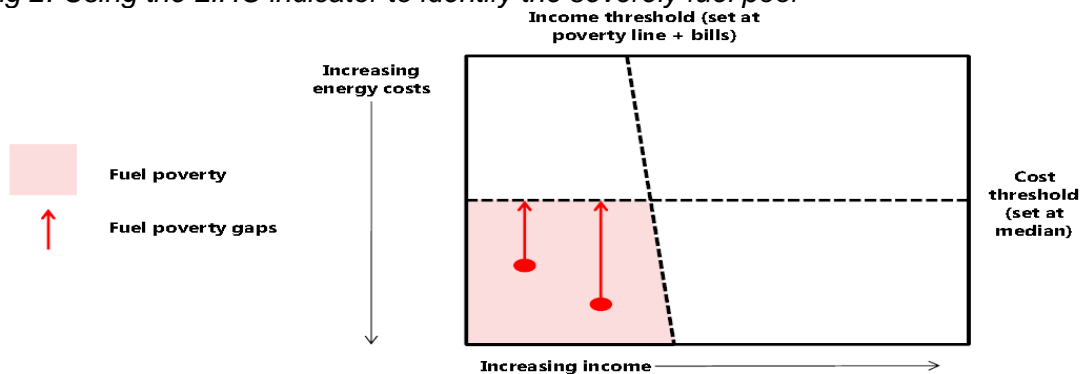


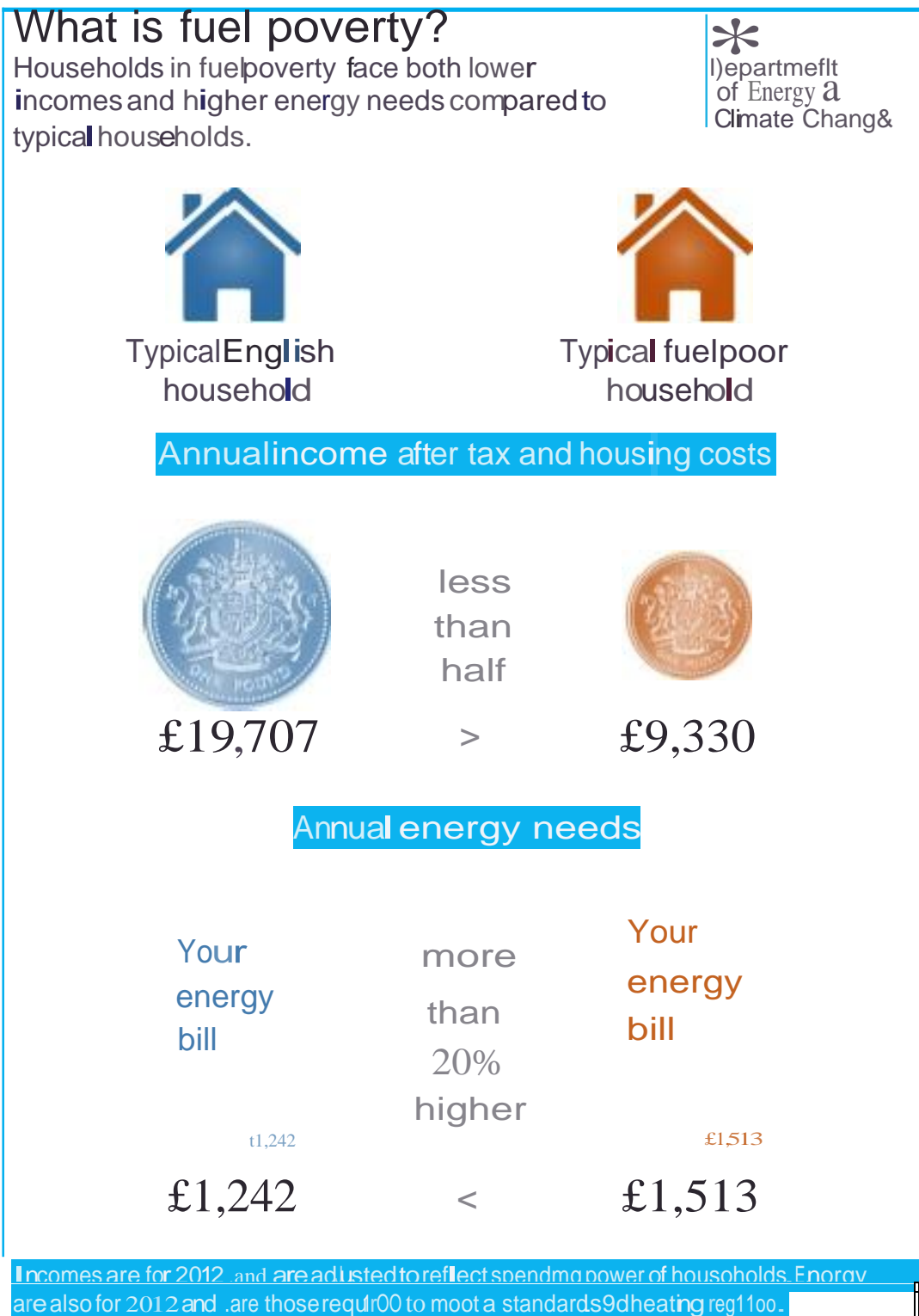
Fig 1: The low income high costs definition

Fig 2: Using the LIHC indicator to identify the severely fuel poor



Fuel poverty statistics now show both LIHC indicator and the previous 10 per cent indicator but the LIHC indicator is now the basis for the statistics.

In the 2014 Consultation paper, Cutting the Cost of Keeping Warm – a consultation to prepare for a new fuel poverty strategy for England; an overview of what forms fuel poverty is provided (and is reproduced below):



Fuel poverty drivers

Fuel poverty is primarily driven by 1) household income 2) energy prices and 3) the thermal efficiency of dwellings, in particular the following household and dwelling characteristics

- a. Low income
- b. Old dwelling (pre-1945)
- c. Larger dwelling

- d. Private rented sector
- e. Old/inefficient boiler (or no heating system)
- f. Non-gas heating

The 2014 Consumption paper also summarises in particular the impact and linkage of larger homes to fuel poverty:

Who are the fuel poor?

The annual fuel poverty statistics reveal a lot about the typical fuel poor household, including dwelling and economic conditions.

*** Department of Energy & Climate Change**

Mainly families

Household Type	Percentage
Families with children	45%
Single adults	25%
Couples	21%
Other	8%

Living in larger homes

Dwelling Type	Percentage
Semi-detached	31%
Terraced	37%
Detached	21%
Flat	12%

Usually private tenure

Tenure Type	Percentage
Own-occupied	51%
Private rented	33%
Social	16%

Living in old dwellings

Legend: ● Pre-1919 ● 1919-1974 ● Post-1974

Age Group	Percentage
Pre-1919	~35%
1919-1974	~35%
Post-1974	~30%

Information is drawn from the annual statistics for 2012 which were published 10 June 2014 and which are available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-energy-climate-change/publications/fuel-poverty-statistics

Impact of under occupation

Where a house is under-occupied, the fuel poverty methodology assumes that only a proportion – approximately half – of the dwelling will be heated so is less likely to be classified as fuel poor.

Fuel Poverty Marginal Alleviation Cost Curve (FP-MACC)

Policies that improve the thermal efficiency of dwellings tend to be more cost effective for addressing fuel poverty than those subsidising energy costs or increasing incomes. The analysis shows that there is significant potential for cost-effective measures to support the fuel poor. This is built upon by the FP-MACC which indicates:

- Potential for low-cost loft and cavity-wall insulation (CWI) and heating measures.
- Potential for supporting fuel poor households through renewable heat particularly off the gas grid.
- Energy bill rebates only have a positive impact on a household in the year in which the rebate is paid.

Vulnerable households

A number of health conditions – including cardiovascular and respiratory diseases are caused or exacerbated by living in cold conditions. The fuel poverty methodology takes some account of the vulnerability status of households by applying a more generous heating regime to people who are likely to spend more time in the home but doesn't consider the likelihood of increased health impacts.

Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALY)

This methodology estimates and monetises results from improving the efficiency of dwellings and the resulting increase in temperatures, laying out substantial health-related costs associated with cold homes. Examples of common energy efficiency measures below:

Intervention	Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALY) saved per measure installed	Value of health saving per measure installed (£ – NPV)
Cavity wall insulation	0.049	£969
Solid wall insulation	0.036	£742
Replacement boiler	0.009	£224
Central heating	0.012	£303

Future Government Policies

These will prioritise households suffering from the most severe problems, support priority households through cost-effective policies and ensure that vulnerable fuel poor households are prioritised. These will include:

Building energy efficiency/heating source related

- Green Deal
- ECO 1) Carbon Saving Obligation (CSO) -delivery of measures in hard to treat properties (such as those with solid-walls) 2) Carbon Saving Communities Obligation (CSCO), insulation measures in deprived and rural

areas 3) Affordable Warmth Obligation (AW) -basic heating and insulation measures in low-income private tenure households.

- Private rented sector (PRS). The Energy Act 2011 contains a provision that from April 2018 landlords will not be permitted to rent out any property under a minimum EPC rating (likely EPC band E), if there are no net or up-front costs to landlords.
- Local Authorities – e.g. Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) Guidance, first reports were due on 31 March 2013 and there was a suggestion that LA produce own Affordable Warmth Strategy, consider the role that local Health and Well Being Boards, health partners, LA Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) duties play a part. They will also evaluate the old Fuel Poverty Local Authority Competition.
- The Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) will be the key policy for promoting the take-up of renewable heat in the domestic sector, possibly via Green Deal financing.

Income related

- Warm Home Discount (WHD) – energy rebate payments continuing as £320 million in 2015/16 for low income and vulnerable households
- Winter Fuel Payment annually to all households containing someone over female state pension age.
- Cold Weather Payments provide additional weekly support to many vulnerable people who have to manage on a low income- in very cold winter weather.

Plans and policies – health related¹

- Tackling health inequalities as a priority for Health and Wellbeing Boards
- Cold Weather Plan - the Department of Health
- National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)

Measurements for fuel poverty

The new fuel poverty target is likely to be established through secondary legislation currently reflected in the Energy Bill but there will be a requirement established in primary legislation, for the Secretary of State to adopt a strategy for meeting the new target. Detailed proposals on the form, date and level of target will form part of the future consultation.

The main way that the energy efficiency of a home is measured is using the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) which assesses the energy performance of buildings.

Other measurements include the headcount and fuel poverty gap generated by the LIHC indicator and the energy efficiency of fuel poor households, the number of fuel poor households without insulation, those households with inefficient or no heating systems and the number of fuel poor households who live in EPC E, F and G rated properties.

Conclusion: next steps

The legislative framework set out is subject to decisions that are yet to be taken by Parliament, as part of its consideration of the current Energy Bill. Then they will set

¹ 21 See: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/156163/9211-TSO-NHS-Cold-Weather-Plan_Accessible-main-doc.pdf.pdf

²² For further details, see: <http://www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/13899/62692/62692.pdf>

out the final conclusions on these proposals- any such revisions to the fuel poverty strategy will be subject to public consultation.

Asset Management Strategy - Risk register

Title	Risk description	Opp/ threat	Cause	Consequence	Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current		Residual		Comments	Controls				
							I	P	I	P	I	P		Control description	Due date	Status	Progress %	Action Owner
Asset Management Strategy	Failure to meet the decent homes standard	Threat	Lack of investment in current housing stock	Failure to comply with regulatory requirements	11.11.14	Stephen Clarke			3	3	2	2	Recent stock condition survey indicates that current levels of investment sufficient to continue to meet decent homes	Ensure through the stock condition survey that programmed works are targeted to maintain compliance	Annual	Open	0	Stephen Clarke
Asset Management Strategy	Tenant dissatisfaction in standard and quality of their homes	Threat	Failure to manage tenant expectations	Increased number of complaints	11.11.14	Stephen Clarke			3	3	2	2		Investment programme prioritised to reflect need. Replacement programmes published and updated annually	Annual	Open	0	Stephen Clarke
Asset Management Strategy	Tenants increasingly unable to heat homes to required levels	Threat	Low energy performance of older stock and increasing fuel costs	Tenants in fuel poverty	11.11.14	Stephen Clarke			3	4	2	2		Additional investment in energy efficiency measures with defined targets for minimum standards of energy efficiency,	Annual	Open	0	Stephen Clarke
Asset Management Strategy	Disproportionate expenditure on responsive maintenance	Threat	Failure to invest in existing stock	Increased long term cost of maintaining the housing stock	11.11.14	Stephen Clarke			3	2	2	1	Current renewal programmes are not totally aligned with the outputs from the stock condition survey	Renewal programmes adjusted to align with stock condition survey outputs	1.4.15	Open	0	Stephen Clarke

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Appendix 3

Initial Equalities Impact Assessment screening form

Prior to making the decision, the Council's decision makers considered the following: guide to decision making under the Equality Act 2010:

*The Council is a public authority. All public authorities when exercising public functions are caught by the Equality Act 2010 which became law in December 2011. In making any decisions and proposals, the Council - specifically members and officers - are required to have **due regard** to the 9 protected characteristics defined under the Act. These protected characteristics are: **age, disability, race, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and marriage & civil partnership***

The decision maker(s) must specifically consider those protected by the above characteristics:

- (a) To seek to ensure equality of treatment towards service users and employees;*
- (b) To identify the potential impact of the proposal or decision upon them.*

The Council will also ask that officers specifically consider whether:

- (A) The policy, strategy or spending decisions could have an impact on safeguarding and / or the welfare of children and vulnerable adults*
- (B) The proposed policy / service is likely to have any significant impact on mental wellbeing / community resilience (staff or residents)*

If the Council fails to give 'due regard', the Council is likely to face a Court challenge. This will either be through a judicial review of its decision making, the decision may be quashed and/or returned for it to have to be made again, which can be costly and time-consuming diversion for the Council. When considering 'due regard', decision makers must consider the following principles:

- 1. **The decision maker is responsible for identifying whether there is an issue and discharging it.** The threshold for one of the duties to be triggered is low and will be triggered where there is any issue which needs at least to be addressed.*
- 2. **The duties arise before the decision or proposal is made, and not after and are ongoing.** They require **advance** consideration by the policy decision maker with conscientiousness, rigour and an open mind. The duty is similar to an open consultation process.*
- 3. The decision maker must be **aware of the needs of the duty.***
- 4. The **impact of the proposal or decision must be properly understood first.** The amount of regard due will depend on the individual circumstances of each case. The greater the potential impact, the greater the regard.*
- 5. **Get your facts straight first!** There will be no due regard at all if the decision maker or those advising it make a fundamental error of fact (e.g. because of failing to properly inform yourself about the impact of a particular decision).*
- 6. What does 'due regard' entail?
 - a. **Collection and consideration of data and information;***
 - b. **Ensuring data is sufficient to assess the decision/any potential discrimination/ensure equality of opportunity;***
 - c. **Proper appreciation of the extent, nature and duration of the proposal or decision.****

7. **Responsibility** for discharging can't be delegated or sub-contracted (although an equality impact assessment ("EIA") can be undertaken by officers, decision makers must be sufficiently aware of the outcome).
 8. **Document the process** of having due regard! Keep records and make it transparent! If in any doubt carry out an equality impact assessment ("EIA"), to test whether a policy will impact differentially or not. Evidentially an EIA will be the best way of defending a legal challenge. See hyperlink for the questions you should consider <http://occweb/files/seealsodocs/93561/Equalities%20-%20Initial%20Equality%20Impact%20Assessment%20screening%20template.doc>
1. Within the aims and objectives of the policy or strategy which group (s) of people has been identified as being potentially disadvantaged by your proposals? What are the equality impacts?

None

2. In brief, what changes are you planning to make to your current or proposed new or changed policy, strategy, procedure, project or service to minimise or eliminate the adverse equality impacts?

Please provide further details of the proposed actions, timetable for making the changes and the person(s) responsible for making the changes on the resultant action plan

This is a new strategy and it does not affect current council policies or procedures. It sets out the strategic management of the housing stock to maximise the benefit for existing and future council tenants and will operate within the legal obligations to council tenants.

Any major decisions arising as a result of implementing the strategy will be subject to consultation with tenants and separate CEB approval.

The action plan within the strategy document will be overseen by the Head of Housing and Property Services

3. Please provide details of whom you will consult on the proposed changes and if you do not plan to consult, please provide the rationale behind that decision.

Please note that you are required to involve disabled people in decisions that impact on them

As part of the development of the strategy a scrutiny panel consisting of members and tenants were consulted. The results and recommendations from the panel are included in a separate paper to CEB.

As part of the implementation of the strategy it is intended that residents directly affected by any actions arising from the strategy will be consulted individually and as a group as appropriate.

4. Can the adverse impacts you identified during the initial screening be justified without making any adjustments to the existing or new policy, strategy, procedure, project or service?

Please set out the basis on which you justify making no adjustments

There are no adverse impacts identified at this stage.

5. You are legally required to monitor and review the proposed changes after implementation to check they work as planned and to screen for unexpected equality impacts.

Please provide details of how you will monitor/evaluate or review your proposals and when the review will take place

The Asset Management Strategy sets out an approach to managing the housing stock into the future. Any actions arising from the strategy will be subject to separate approval and assessment.

Lead officer responsible for signing off the EqIA:

Role: Stephen Clarke

Date: 11 November 2014

Note, please consider & include the following areas:

- Summary of the impacts of any individual policies
- Specific impact tests (e.g. statutory equality duties, social, regeneration and sustainability)
- Consultation
- Post implementation review plan (consider the basis for the review, objectives and how these will be measured, impacts and outcomes including the “unknown”)
- Potential data sources (attach hyperlinks including Government impact assessments or Oxfordshire data observatory information where relevant)

The introduction to the Oxford Standard

As part of Oxford City Councils asset management strategy we have developed the 'Oxford Standard' which is the standard we expect all of the Council's housing stock to meet. This recognises that the Government's 'Decent Homes Standard' is below the standard that the Council would wish to adopt for its housing stock in the future.

Working with a scrutiny panel of councillors and tenants we have developed a new standard which received approval of the CEB on 17th December 2014.

Set out below is the proposed "Oxford Standard along with the background

Introduction and Background

1. Oxford City Council owns, lets and manages about 7,800 houses. All income and expenditure related to these properties is managed within the housing revenue account business plan.
2. In order to effectively maintain this significant asset for the benefit of current and future residents a stock condition survey has been undertaken with the aim of informing the production of an asset management strategy.
3. The asset management strategy is broad ranging but will have at its heart the standard to which properties are maintained and how this standard is implemented over time. Currently works are planned to achieve and maintain the 'Decent Homes Standard' set by the Government in 2000. It is considered that this standard is not ambitious enough and tenants and councillors wished to go beyond this and consider what an "Oxford Standard" might be.
4. A Panel of Scrutiny Councillors and Tenants have considered what the Oxford Standard should be and have proposed that it should be embedded in the developing asset management strategy with clear action plans and commitment to delivery.

Methodology

1. The Panel used a mixture of desk top reviews and consultation to form their views and recommendations. Two consultation phases were undertaken.
 - Phase one – Survey asking tenants to prioritise the following five key areas of work ‘new bathrooms’, ‘new kitchens’, ‘environmental improvements’, ‘security’, ‘heating and energy efficiency’. The surveys were carried out through face to face interviews on the doorstep over a seven day period and by including the same questions in this year’s STAR survey.
 - Phase two – Two open tenant consultation sessions in the Town Hall. This used the same key areas as above but focused on the detailed specification of what should be included in the works. In addition tenants considered waste and recycling and an ‘other’ category.

The Panel also were provided with extracts from the results of the current stock condition survey organised around the same works and geographical areas as the consultation and information from other social housing provider standards.

The Agreed Oxford Standard

1. The Oxford Standard will be included in the asset management Plan and provide a clear and “action planned” commitment to delivery.
2. The following categories of work will be included within the Oxford Standard:
 - Bathrooms
 - Kitchens
 - Security
 - Efficiency and Heating
 - Environment

All these categories of works should include some degree of choice for tenants where this is possible.

3. Bathrooms The Council will
 - Offer a bath grab rail to all households.
 - When installing a new bath will always install a shower fitting over the bath.
 - Give you the choice of having either a glass panel or curtain rail fitted over your bath.

- Install height adjustable shower heads.
- Always fit an extractor fan in your bathroom?
- Tile all walls (top to bottom) which are adjacent to the bath and shower
- Give you the choice of mixer taps being fitted (where feasible)
- Plan to replace bathrooms every 25 years.

4. Kitchens The Council will

- Consult with tenants on layout of their kitchen and facility spaces to fit specific appliances as requested.
- Provide you with a choice of a 1 ½ size sink.
- Install an extractor fan in your kitchen.
- Hard wire carbon monoxide detectors.
- Hard wire smoke detectors.
- Plan to replace your kitchen every 20 years.
- Provide provision for both an electric and gas supply for your cooker (where practicable)
- Offer a charged for service at the time of planned works to connect appliances.

5. Security The Council will

- Install window locks to all accessible windows.
- Gate our side and back alleys.
- Be responsible for the installation and maintenance of the fencing to the side and rear of your homes to a standard agreed with tenants.
- Ensure that all front doors are of high quality and secure.
- Ensure that the locks to front doors are of a high standard.
- When replacing front doors ensure they have a spy hole.
- In consultation with residents look to improve the lighting in the shared areas to blocks of flats.
- In consultation with residents look to improve lighting at the front and rear entrance doors of your home.
- In consultation with residents look to improve the communal areas leading to your building.

6. Heating and Energy Efficiency

The Council will set specific targets for energy efficiency.
Measures may include:

- Installing solar panels that provide hot water or free electricity (where feasible).
- Installing wall and loft insulation to the current government standard.
- Ensuring that all properties have double glazing that meets modern standards.

- Replacing windows and doors together.

7. Environment

The Council will carry out consultation and provide solutions for estates built around a blue print for the whole area rather than responsive investment based on issues and complaints

Additional consultation will take place to provide a lasting environmental standard, to include:

- More parking provision you (where feasible).
- Improved external lighting around homes.
- Secure the bin storage area (where feasible).
- Secured storage areas for prams/buggies/strollers, bikes, mobility scooters etc.
- Improved pathways to and around homes (limited to Oxford City Council land).
- Increased numbers of dog waste bins available in neighbourhoods.
- Improved shared garden areas.
- Windows which tenants are able to clean safely.

8. The priority for delivering the Oxford Standard will be decided by a combination of significant pockets of disrepair (identified with the stock condition survey) and the views of residents.

9. The works will be packaged together so that more efficient outcomes for residents and the Council can be achieved. For example:

- If we replace windows then doors should be done at the same time (if needed) to give optimum benefits.
- If the heating is to be replaced or upgraded we should consider insulation and other connected repairs at the same time.

10. The delivery of the Oxford Standard will be on an area by area basis with good communication both within and outside of the area so that all tenants can easily access information on when, where, how and why.

11. Individual tenants will not be able to “opt out” except in very exceptional circumstances. If there are difficulties these will be recognised and support offered so that the work can take place. Properties should be maintained for both the present and the future.

Housing Asset Management Strategy Consultation Report

The draft Housing Asset Management Strategy was approved for consultation by the Public Involvement Board in February 2015.

A questionnaire was created on the Oxford City Council web consultation portal E-Consult and was open from 2nd March 2015 to 13th April 2015. A full copy of the strategy and action plans were available to view and download as required. Participants were given the opportunity to submit a response via email.

Invitations to take part in the consultation were sent when the consultation opened using to around 360 individuals and organisations (see list below). A further reminder was sent on 25th March 2014.

- Staff
- Registered Housing Providers
- Other housing related support services
- Oxfordshire County Council
- Oxfordshire Strategic Partnership members
- Oxford Register Affordable Housing members

Tenants were not consulted on this document as it overlaps with consultation which has already been carried out on the Oxford Standard.

There was only one response to the consultation (via email) as follows:

'My only comment would be where 'neighbourhood plans' are referred to in Section 5.2. A 'Neighbourhood Plan' (with capital N and P) is a Planning document which has its own legislation for production and its own guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework and is something different from your neighbourhood plans. To avoid confusion, is it possible to change the name, what about Neighbourhood housing plan or neighbourhood housing strategy or neighbourhood action plan?'

This was noted and the strategy has been amended accordingly.

A copy of the questionnaire and the invitation are attached to this report. (The open text question responses on the web form expand for a respondent to input their answer, this has not been replicated in the version attached and the boxes may appear too small in this case.)

Housing Asset Management Strategy Consultation Survey

1 How easy did you find it to identify Oxford City Council's priorities in the Housing Asset Management Strategy document?

Please select one option. You must provide an answer to this question.

- Very Easy Easy Neither Easy or Difficult Difficult Very Difficult
 Don't Know

2 How far do you agree or disagree that the draft Housing Asset Management Strategy meets the challenges for Oxford over the next 10 years and in the longer term?

Please choose one option for each priority.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Ensure the long term viability and sustainability of our stock	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maintain and manage the stock to meet current and future needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To inform the targeting and development of neighbourhood management, environmental improvement and neighbourhood enhancement initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To provide a framework to inform decisions on retention of and investment in existing assets, on the sale of assets and on the conversion of assets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reduce the costs of maintenance in the longer term	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tackle Fuel Poverty	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3 What, if anything in your opinion should be given greater priority in the Housing Asset Management Strategy? (Maximum 500 characters.)

4 In your opinion, is anything missing from the Housing Asset Management Strategy?

Please select one option.

- Yes No Don't Know

Please say what you think is missing from the strategy document

5 In your opinion does the Action Plan (Appendix1) meet the objectives of the Housing Asset Management Strategy 2014 -2023?

Please select one option. You must provide an answer to this question.

- Yes, the objectives are fully met Yes, the objectives are mostly met No, the objectives are only partially met

If you don't think the objectives for the Housing Strategy are met by the proposed action plan please say why in the box below. (Maximum 200 characters.)

6 Do you think this strategy will impact in a positive or negative way on any individuals with the following protected characteristics ?

Please select all of the options.

	Positive	Negative	Neither	Not sure
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marriage and Civil Partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender or Gender Assignment Pregnancy and Maternity (including breastfeeding)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Religion, Faith and Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have indicated that an individual with any of the protected characteristics listed would be affected in a negative way, please tell us why. (Maximum 500 characters.)

End of form



Dear Colleague,

Just a quick reminder that the **Housing Asset Management Strategy consultation** closes on **13th April 2015 at midnight**. We would be grateful if you could complete the on-line survey if you haven't already done so.

The Oxford City draft Asset Management Strategy for the Housing Portfolio was approved for consultation by Council Executive Board in December 2014.

We are now seeking views from organisations and individuals with an interest in housing and related issues before we agree a final version of the strategy.

Consultation documents are available [here](#)



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To: City Executive Board

Date: 17 December 2014

Report of: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Title of Report: Asset Management Strategy – Council Housing Stock

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: To present recommendations from the Housing Panel on the Asset Management Strategy – Council Housing Stock.

Key decision Yes

Scrutiny Lead Member: Councillor Sam Hollick

Executive lead member: Councillor Scott Seamons, Executive Member for Housing and Estate Regeneration

Policy Framework: Corporate Plan 2014-2018; Meeting Housing Needs

Recommendations:

- 1. That the City Council reviews whether it is doing all it reasonably can to ensure that tenants leave their homes in good condition before vacating them.**
- 2. That the City Council strengthens partnership working to ensure that the advice and materials provided to tenants by the City Council and other agencies is joined up and consistent.**
- 3. That the City Council reviews whether mould is a recurring issue in the stock condition survey, and ensures that where mould occurs, it is treated effectively.**
- 4. That the City Council ensures that information about the National Home Swap scheme is made available to tenants who are under-occupying, in addition to other options.**

Introduction

- 1. The Housing Panel considered the Asset Management Strategy – Council Housing Stock at its public meeting on 10 December 2014. The**

Committee would like to thank Martin Shaw and Allison Dalton for assisting this wide-ranging discussion.

Summary of the discussion

2. The Housing Panel support the Strategy and the direction of travel it provides.
3. The Panel reviewed what the strategy says about void property repairs and felt that the wording on page 13 could be stronger than 'encourage tenants to leave their home in a good state of repair'. Members sought assurances that the City Council does all it can within the resources available to ensure that houses are in good condition when left vacant. The Panel recognises that the City Council would not want to hold deposits, and that recharges can be difficult to recover after the event, so the focus should be on working with tenants prior to properties becoming vacant.

Recommendation 1 - That the City Council reviews whether it is doing all it reasonably can to ensure that tenants leave their homes in good condition before vacating them.

4. The panel discussed heating and ventilation and noted that where new heating systems are installed, it is vital that residents are shown how to use them correctly. It was also noted that agencies such as Age UK advise older residents to keep their windows closed. The Panel sought assurances that the City Council works closely with such partners to ensure consistency of such communications.

Recommendation 2 - That the City Council strengthens partnership working to ensure that the advice and materials provided to tenants by the City Council and other agencies is joined up and consistent.

5. Members questioned how widespread the problem of mould is across the Council's housing stock. Members commented that it has been known for mould to be painted over and sought assurances that this was not common practice.

Recommendation 3 - That the City Council reviews whether mould is a recurring issue in the stock condition survey, and ensures that where mould occurs, it is treated effectively.

6. The Panel recognise the need to make better use of the Council's existing housing stock and questioned whether information about the National Home Swap scheme is made available to tenants who are under-occupying.

Recommendation 4 – That the City Council ensures that information about the National Home Swap scheme is made available to tenants who are under-occupying, in addition to other options.

7. Officers agreed to look into issues with night light systems that have installed in communal areas.

Further consideration

8. The Housing Panel will monitor delivery against the aims set out in the strategy. The panel will also consider the Council's Energy Strategy, Private Sector Housing Policy and its approach to under-occupancy in due course.

Director and Board Member Comments

I can agree to all the recommendations for the AMS.

Mould would not be covered in detail in a Strategy document but it is important.

Information about the National Home Swap Scheme is made available but we can tighten this up.

Name and contact details of author:-

Andrew Brown on behalf of the Scrutiny Committee
Scrutiny Officer
Law and Governance
Tel: 01865 252230 e-mail: abrown2@oxford.gov.uk

List of background papers: None

Version number: 1

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To: City Executive Board

Date: 11 June 2015

Report of: Executive Director for Community Services

Title of Report: Review of the HMO Licensing Scheme

Summary and Recommendations

Purpose of report: The report provides findings from a review carried out for the HMO Licensing Scheme and seeks approval from members to conduct a statutory consultation to renew the scheme in January 2016.

Key decision: Yes

Executive lead member: Ed Turner, Executive Member for Finance, Corporate Asset Management and Public Health

Policy Framework: Meeting Housing Needs and Effective and Efficient Council

Recommendation(s): That the City Executive Board:

1. Consider the Review of Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation 2015 and note its findings;
2. Resolve that the Review indicates that a significant proportion of HMOs in the Council's area are being managed ineffectively;
3. Instruct Officers of the Council to proceed with a statutory 10 week consultation on the basis that it is necessary to renew the licensing scheme in its entirety for a further 5 years from the 25 January 2016 (Option 3);
4. Request a future report in October 2015 setting out the results of the statutory consultation and the proposed future of the licensing scheme.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Report on the review of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Licensing Scheme 2015.

Appendix 2 – Risk Register

Appendix 3 – Equalities Impact Assessment

Background

1. In April 2010 the Department for Communities and Local Government issued guidance that provided Local Authorities with the ability to designate areas, containing HMOs to be subject to additional licensing without the need for approval from the Government.
2. The guidance set out a condition that required all Council's considering this approach to consult with all persons, likely to be affected by the scheme, for a period of not less than 10 weeks.
3. In October 2010 Oxford City Council designated the whole of its area as subject to additional licensing for HMOs under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004 (hereafter the Act).
4. The scheme was introduced over 2 years with Phase 1 commencing on the 24 January 2011 and Phase 2 on the 30 January 2012. The scheme will expire 5 years from these commencement dates.
5. The Council adopted an approach of annual licensing so that the scheme could be structured in such a way that its costs are covered by the fees received for delivering the service. An annual licence also provided the opportunity to improve compliance through more regular checks of items such as gas safety, electrical safety etc..
6. Within the Act there is a legal requirement to review the scheme "*from time to time*" following its operation. This review has now been completed and the full report is provided as Appendix 1 to this report.
7. Phase 1 of the scheme is due to expire on the 24 January 2016 so in order for the Council to consider the future of the scheme it must undertake the same process it did when it originally designated the area in 2010.
8. The Council must therefore consider a series of factors as set out in Sections 56 and 57 of the Housing Act 2004 and identify which HMOs it might wish to be covered by a scheme and consult with those people who are likely to be affected by the licensing scheme.

Legal Issues

9. The legal issues relating to this report are set out within the Housing Act 2004.
10. Firstly, under section 60 of the Act, the Local Authority must “*from time to time*” review the operation of the designation and if it is appropriate to do so then they may revoke the designation.
11. If they do not revoke the designation then the scheme will lapse after the period of 5 years from the date the designation was made.
12. The Additional Licensing scheme in the City was phased over two years for a period of 5 years. This creates a situation where Phase 1 and Phase 2 will expire on different dates (Phase 1 on the 24 January 2016 and Phase 2 on the 31 January 2017).
13. Under section 60(2) of the Act the time must be no later than five years after the date on which the designation comes into force.
14. The proposal would be that the new designation would commence on the 25 January 2016 for a period of 5 years and include a provision for Phase 2 of the original scheme to commence on the 1 February 2017 with an expiry date of the 25 January 2021. This would align the two phases of the scheme and reduce the financial burden associated with having to revoke Phase 2 of the scheme and re-designate it following expiry in 2017.
15. In order for the Council to ‘renew’ the scheme it must proceed through the statutory process as laid out in Section 56 and 57 and the guidance issued under the Housing Act 2004: Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Selective Licensing of Other Residential Accommodation (England) General Approval 2010.
16. Section 56 of the Act places requirements upon the Local Housing Authority when considering a designation for additional licensing of HMOs, in that the Council must:
 - Consider that a significant proportion of the HMOs of that description in the area are being managed sufficiently ineffectively as to give rise, or likely to give rise, to one or more particular problems either for those occupying the HMOs or for members of the public; and

- Take reasonable steps to consult with persons who are likely to be affected and consider any representations made in accordance with the consultation and not withdrawn; and
 - Have regard to any information regarding the extent to which any codes of practice approved under section 233 have been complied with by persons managing HMOs in the area (these codes relate to University managed accommodation).
17. Section 57 provides further considerations for the Local Authority in that they should ensure that:
- Exercising the designation is consistent with the authority's overall housing strategy; and
 - Seek to adopt a coordinated approach in connection with dealing with homelessness, empty properties and anti-social behavior affecting the private rented sector as regards combining licensing with other action taken by them or others; and
 - Consider whether there are any other courses of action available to them (of whatever nature) that might provide an effective method of dealing with the problem or problems in question; and
 - That making the designation will significantly assist them to deal with the problem or problems (whether or not they take any other course of action as well).
18. The DCLG General Approval provides the condition that any consultation period for the proposed designation should not be less than 10 weeks.
19. In February 2010 the DCLG produced general guidance around the approval steps for additional and selective licensing designations in England.
20. This document provides examples of properties being managed "*sufficiently ineffectively*" including:
- Those whose external condition and curtilage (including yards and gardens) adversely impact upon the general character and amenity of the area in which they are located;
 - Those whose internal condition, such as poor amenities, overcrowding etc. adversely impact upon the health, safety and welfare of the occupiers and the landlords of these properties are failing to take appropriate steps to address the issues;

- Those where there is a significant and persistent problem of anti-social behavior affecting other residents and/or the local community and the landlords of the HMOs are not taking reasonable and lawful steps to eliminate or reduce the problems; and
- Those where the lack of management or poor management skills or practices are otherwise adversely impacting upon the welfare, health and safety of residents and/or impacting upon the wider community.

Review of the licensing scheme in Oxford 2015.

21. The review of the Scheme has been completed and the full report attached as Appendix 1.
22. A summary of the key findings and how these reflect the considerations set out in Section 56 and 57 of the Housing Act 2004 are set out below.

Key Findings from the review.

23. The increase in the size of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) has been the most significant change in Oxford's housing market in the last ten years which has resulted in a considerable growth of HMOs, now estimated at circa 6,900.
24. The Council's ambition "to make Oxford a world-class City for all its citizens is driven through the delivery of a number of corporate priorities
 - a. A vibrant and sustainable economy
 - b. Meeting Housing Needs
 - c. Strong and active communities
 - d. Cleaner Greener Oxford City Council
 - e. An efficient and effective Council
25. The Housing Strategy 2012-2015 is a key driver for the delivery of these corporate priorities, principally "Meeting Housing Needs" but also in supporting the economy through housing provision of current and future residents and workers and also, through ensuring communities have stable and safe places to live.

26. The overall improvement of HMOs through Additional Licensing is seen as a key contributor to the priority of Meeting Housing Need so much so that the Council set corporate targets relating to the number of HMO licence inspections carried out and an improvement of conditions in the Private Rented Sector.
 27. The introduction of Additional Licensing of HMOs in 2011 provided a level playing field for all landlords and agents and has seen the Council adopt a multi-agency approach to dealing with the issues associated with the sector.
 28. Operational partners include various teams within the Council, Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Oxfordshire Health Service and the HM Revenues and Customs.
 29. The relationship with private landlords, agents and community groups has also been developed with regular events and meetings being held by the Council and the introduction of a landlord accreditation scheme.
 30. Accreditation is a free service and so far 94 landlords and agents have become accredited by the Council. 33 landlords became accredited in 2014 when the new fee structure and longer licence was introduced.
 31. Despite this many landlords remain disengaged until formal action is pursued by the Council and these non-regulatory interventions cannot be solely relied upon to address the issues with HMOs.
 32. During the life of the Scheme the Council has been able to licence 3,440 HMOs and over 7,000 licence applications for new and renewed licences have been processed by the Council and on average 80% of applicants had to be reminded to submit an application. 56% of applicants submitted fully completed applications with the need for additional information.
 33. Around 90% of HMOs did not meet minimum standards and approximately 80,000 licence conditions had to be attached to licences to maintain these standards. 49,000 discretionary conditions were required on licences to deal with a lack of acceptable minimum standards and management; 12,600 for fire safety; 35,000 for Health and Safety; and 1,600 for amenities and facilities.
 34. Licences required, on average, a minimum of 4 additional conditions, over and above the mandatory conditions, requiring work to be carried out to improve the standard of HMOs in the City.
-

35. During 2013/14 the Council conducted around 1,400 compliance visits. 26% of licences had outstanding conditions and 9% required additional conditions. In 2014/15 this had rose to 30% with outstanding conditions and 11% requiring additional conditions.
36. Over 19,700 visits have been carried out to HMOs and the Council has responded to approximately 2,700 complaints relating to living conditions and management issues. Over a 1,000 complaints have also been received regarding issues of environmental crime and anti-social behaviour.
37. 42 HMOs have also required conditions attached restricting the use of unlawful dwellings found at the property.
38. Around 90HMOs had legal action commenced by the Council with many more being subject to investigations for breaches of the legislation. Of those subject to legal action,38 have resulted in prosecutions and 26 simple cautions being issued. A further 30 HMOs are currently under formal investigation for potential legal action.
39. The Council has had to take over control of the management of 5 properties where the landlord has failed to licence the property as a HMO. One Rent Repayment Order has also been issued which required the owner of the HMO to repay over £5,000 in housing benefit.

Option Appraisal

40. The review report sets out the detail of the option appraisal exercise undertaken. In broad terms, 3 options were considered:
- Option 1 - Do nothing. Let the current scheme expire and carry out statutory action only.
- Option 2 - Renew the scheme to cover certain parts of the City.
- Option 3 - Renew the scheme in its entirety to cover the whole of the City.
41. The three options were subjected to an assessment against decision rules and objectives and the detailed assessment can be found at page 39 of the Review. The overall results indicated that Option 3 – Renew the scheme in its entirety was the most appropriate course of action. The results of this appraisal can be seen in the table below.

Table – Results of Option Appraisals

Assessment Method		Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
		Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
1	Decision Rule Assessment	3 rd	8	2 nd	12	1 st	14
2	Objectives Assessment (un-weighted)	3 rd	11	2 nd	25	1 st	34
3	Objectives Assessment (weighted)	3 rd	26	2 nd	55	1 st	72

42. The main reasons supporting the implementation of Option 3 are as follows.

43. The Private Rented Sector in Oxford has grown considerably in Oxford and the City is the most expensive place to live in terms of house prices. This puts a lot of young and vulnerable tenants outside of the home ownership market and places a burden on the private rented sector. Sharing accommodation is the only viable option for a large proportion of young and low income households and there has been a notable increase in the number of families with young children occupying HMOs.

44. The estimated number of HMOs has followed this pattern since the introduction of licensing. This suggests that this type of scheme does not impact on a reduction of this type of accommodation in the sector.

45. The current spread of HMOs is not concentrated in one particular area and the issues regarding this type of accommodation are widespread. Partial licensing of HMOs would likely result in an increase of HMOs in areas which were not subject to licensing and leave the Council with limited options for dealing with these properties.

46. Service requests decreased in the early years and it appears that standards in HMOs were improved but there are indications that certain issues relating to this type of accommodation are gradually increasing. More work needs to be done to maintain improvements and increase effective and responsible management of HMOs.

47. A large proportion of applicants need reminding to submit the necessary documentation and compliance with licence conditions are well below acceptable levels.

Financial Issues

48. When originally setting the fees and charges structure for the licensing scheme the Council had to take account of the staff costs, training, administration and publicity and that it was not allowed to use licensing fees to raise revenue for other projects or areas of work.
49. The original financial structure of the Scheme was designed to be 'cost neutral' to cover the costs mentioned above and to negate the need to use any revenue funding to support the delivery of the Scheme.
50. The Council regularly reviewed the fees and charges structure of the Scheme to ensure that this remained the case.
51. During year 1 the Council pump primed the scheme with an investment of £180K. This supported the financial implications of administering such a scheme and was recouped in year 2 effectively making the Scheme self- financing.
52. The income figures for the life of the scheme so far are shown below.
- 2010/11 - £84.2k
 - 2011/12 - £573.8k
 - 2012/13 - £565.3k
 - 2013/14 - £503k
 - 2014/15 - £675k
53. The Scheme is still in operation and the forecast is, that based on these income levels it will result in a cost neutral situation up to the end of January 2017.
54. If the Scheme were renewed then the suggested approach of pulling the original two phases together as one will have potential financial benefits of the reducing costs associated with administration and publicity. These savings could lead to a revised fee structure offering further incentives to landlords and agents who licence their HMOs. Further details on the potential financial costs and benefits of renewing the Scheme will be considered in the October report.

Conclusion

55. It is clear from the findings of the review that there have been some positive successes with the introduction and delivery of the HMO licensing scheme. Standards and management of HMOs are better than they were when the scheme was introduced, however there is still more that needs to be done to maintain these standards and build upon the successes of the Scheme. There is a growing Private Rented Sector and an increase in the number of HMOs in the City so constant pressure needs to be applied to ensure that standards do not spiral into decline.

Level of risk - a risk register is attached as Appendix 2.

Environmental Impact

56. There are a number of environmental impacts relevant to this report. The option of 'do nothing' could result in significant environmental impacts, particularly when the Council will have very limited ability to maintain and improve conditions. Issues around energy efficiency and thermal performance are likely to be out of the control of the Council so the energy performance of HMOs will decline. The failure to renew the Scheme may also impact on the ability to manage and maintain waste management issues in HMOs and as such household recycling rates are likely to be affected. The control of the impact to deal with waste management will be significantly reduced without the ability to take action using the powers associated with licensing of HMOs. This is likely to result in a spiral of decline and an increase in environmentally related service requests.

Equality Impact Assessment– An EIA is attached as Appendix 3.

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List of background papers: Report on the review of the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation 2015.

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Review of Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation 2015



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Introduction

This report provides the findings of a review carried out on the HMO Licensing Scheme in operation in Oxford since 2011 and provides options for the future of the Scheme post 2016.

Why now?...

In 2010 the Council became the first Local Authority in England to agree to designate the whole of its area subject to Additional Licensing. The scheme runs for a period of 5 years with Phase 1 commencing on the 24th January 2011 and Phase 2 on the 30th January 2012.

Under s.60 (3) of the Housing Act 2004 *'a local housing authority must from time to time review the operation of any designation made by them'*

This review fulfils the responsibility under the legislation but also provides the Council with a progress report which will be used as a platform for considering the future of the scheme.

Background

The increase in the size of the Private Rented Sector (PRS) has been the most significant change in Oxford's housing market in the last ten years.

A number of market factors such as house prices, high demand and an increased population have resulted in an increased growth of HMOs with the current predictions suggesting there are now circa 6,900 HMOs.

Additional Licensing in Oxford provides a mechanism to secure the improvement of all of the HMO stock in the City and is a significant undertaking by the Council. When it was first introduced the overall purpose of the licensing scheme was to: ***'alleviate the housing situation by setting and maintaining minimum standards across the city in the most vulnerable sector of Oxford's private rental market'***.

This is also a major contributing factor to the Council's Corporate priority of Meeting Housing Need by the number of HMO Licence inspections carried out and by improving conditions in the Private Rented Sector.

What is a HMO?

An HMO (House in Multiple Occupation) is defined in Sections 254 and 257 of the Housing Act 2004. An HMO can be a building or part of a building if it is:

- Occupied by persons who form more than one household, and where those persons share (or lack) one or more basic amenities, such as a WC, personal washing and cooking facilities.
- A converted building containing one or more units of accommodation that do not consist entirely of self-contained flats. (There is no requirement that the occupiers share facilities)
- A converted building consisting entirely of self-contained flats, where the building work undertaken in connection with the conversion did not comply with the 1991 Building Regulations and more than one third of the flats are occupied under short tenancies.

The HMO must be occupied by more than one household:

- As their only or main residence
- As a refuge by persons escaping domestic violence
- During term time by students

In all cases:

- Occupation of the living accommodation must be the only use of that accommodation
- Rents are payable or other considerations are provided

Under the Housing Act 2004, a **household** comprises:

- A single person
- Co-habiting couples (whether or not of the opposite sex)
- A family (including foster children and children being cared for) and current domestic employees.

Certain types of buildings will not be HMOs for the purpose of the Housing Act. They are:

- Buildings, or parts of buildings, occupied by no more than two households, each of which comprise a single person only (for example, two person house or flat shares)
- Buildings occupied by a resident landlord with up to two tenants
- Buildings managed or owned by a public sector body, such as the police, local authority, registered social landlords, fire and rescue authority and the NHS
- Buildings occupied by religious communities
- Student halls of residence where the education establishment has signed up to an Approved Code of Practice
- Buildings occupied entirely by freeholders or long leaseholders

Key Findings of the Review

Findings from the review can be seen below and further details can be found in the **Supporting Information** section of this report. Since the introduction of the Scheme the Council has:

- Found that around **90% of HMOs** did not meet the minimum standards
- Issued licenses for **3,440 HMOs**.
- Processed over **7,000 applications** for new and renewed licences.
 - On average **80%** of applicants had to be reminded to submit a licence application.
 - During the life of the Scheme **56% of fully completed applications** were submitted without the Council having to remind applicants to provide additional information.
- Carried out a total of **19,746 visits** to HMOs.
- Responded to **2,754 complaints** about living conditions and management of HMOs.
- Seen a **positive impact** in the reduction of the number of service requests received since the introduction of the scheme.

- Attached around **80,339** mandatory and discretionary conditions to achieve minimum standards at all licenced HMOs.
 - Around **49,000** discretionary conditions have been required on licences to deal with a lack of acceptable minimum standards and management.
 - **12,600** related to Fire safety
 - **35,000** to Health and Safety, and
 - **1,600** to amenities and facilities.
- Identified that during April 2013 and June 2014 around **34%** of works to **comply with licence conditions** had been completed at the time of a re-inspection; **26%** had **outstanding licence conditions** and **16%** had **outstanding conditions and additional conditions required**.
- Found that **14%** of renewal applications received had **conditions outstanding**.
- Estimated that around **£3.2 million** has been invested into improving HMOs during the life of the Scheme.
- Undertaken **87 formal investigations** the majority which related to failure to licence a HMO.
- Prosecuted **38 cases** and issued **26 cautions** for breaches of regulations.
- Made **5 Interim Management Orders** to take over control of the management of HMOs where the landlords have failed to licence and put the occupant's health, safety and welfare at risk.
- Made **1 Rent Repayment Order** requiring the landlord to repay over £5,000 of rent that was paid through housing benefit.
- Investigated **42 HMOs** found to have 'unlawful dwellings' in the rear garden.
- Implemented a **clearer and fairer fee structure** to provide charges that reflect the amount of time spent dealing with 'good' landlords in comparison to time spent 'chasing' 'bad' landlords.
- Introduced **longer licences** and **fee incentives** for 'good' landlords.
- Accredited **94 Landlords and Agents** through the Councils Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

Supporting Information

The National Picture

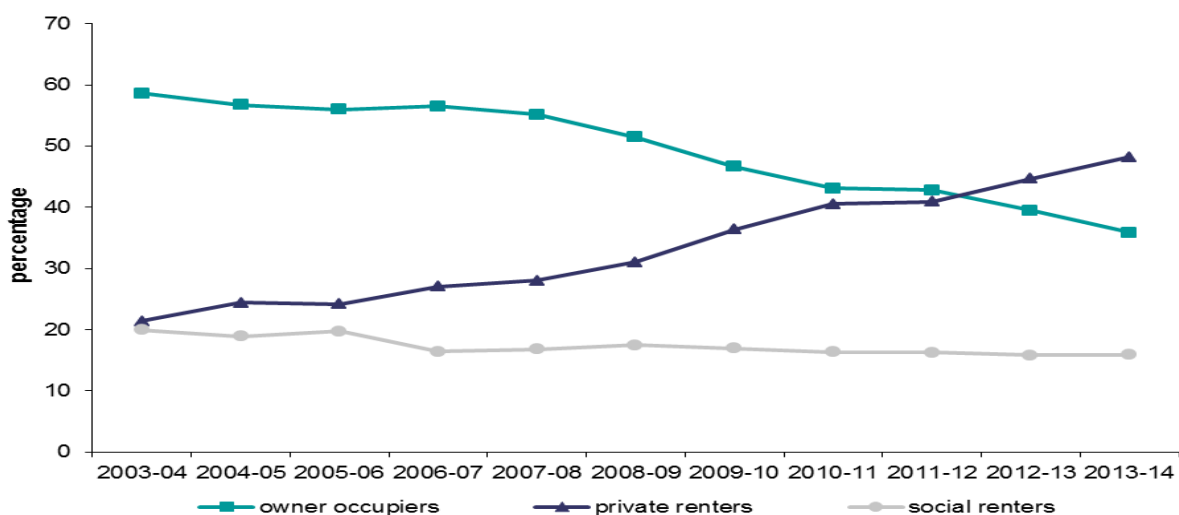
The Office for National Statistics projections indicates that there will be a population increase in the UK by 11 million over the next two decades. People are growing older and living longer. It is estimated that over the next 2 years the over 65's will increase by 7 million.

2.9 million people aged 20-34 are currently living with parents and for many home ownership is no longer a tenure of choice or aspiration resulting in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) being the only viable housing option for most newly forming households.

The English Housing Survey 2013/14 (EHS) reported, in February this year that the PRS has now grown to 19%, up from 18% in 2012-13 and 11% in 2003 and that nearly half of 25- to 34-year-olds rent their home.

Figure 1 - The table of results, from the EHS 2013/14, below shows where the majority of 25- to 34-year-olds owned their own home in 2004, however those born just a decade later are now far more likely to be renting from a landlord. As can be seen the 'tipping point' appears to be between 2011 and 2012.

Figure 1 – Tenure profile for 25-34 year olds



Further analysis shows that a full 59% of 25- to 34-year-olds owned their own home 10 years ago, but by 2014 this number had crashed to 36%. Rising house prices have seen many young people priced out of buying a home while the percentage of young people renting their homes from a private landlord has more than doubled in a decade and now stands at 48%.

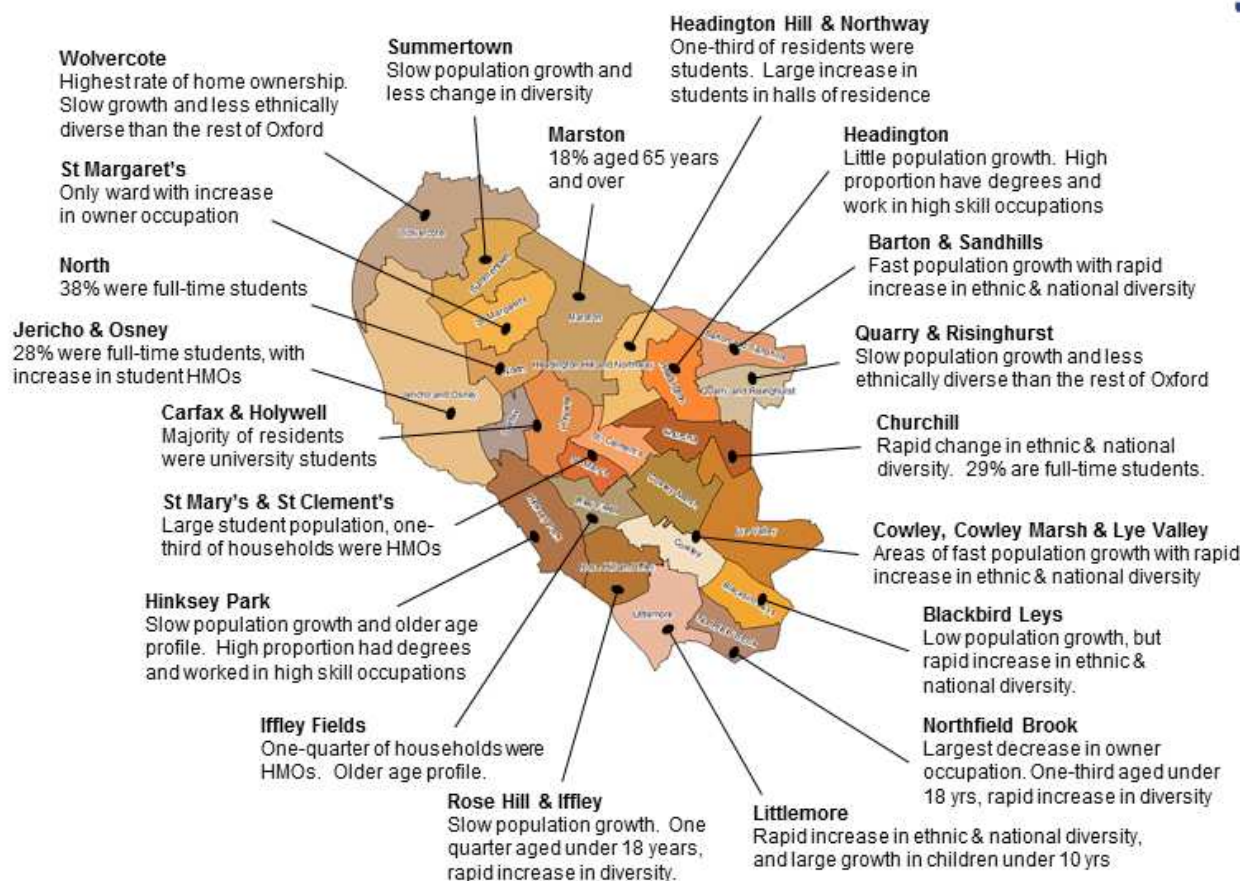
Households containing two or more families were the fastest growing household type in the decade to 2014, increasing by 56% to 313,000 households.

The rental market has also changed considerably. After stalling in 2013, rents charged by private landlords increased by 8.2% in 2014 across England with the average weekly rent climbing from £163 to £176.40.

Oxford Picture

Oxford's population has increased by 12% in the last decade. Figure 2 below provides a snapshot of how this has impacted on the 24 different wards.

Figure 2 – Ward profiles



Census 2011 data suggests that it is the younger population that is on the increase with a decline in the over 75's.

Currently 34% of the population of Oxford is aged between 20-35 years and the area has the highest proportion of students in England and Wales.

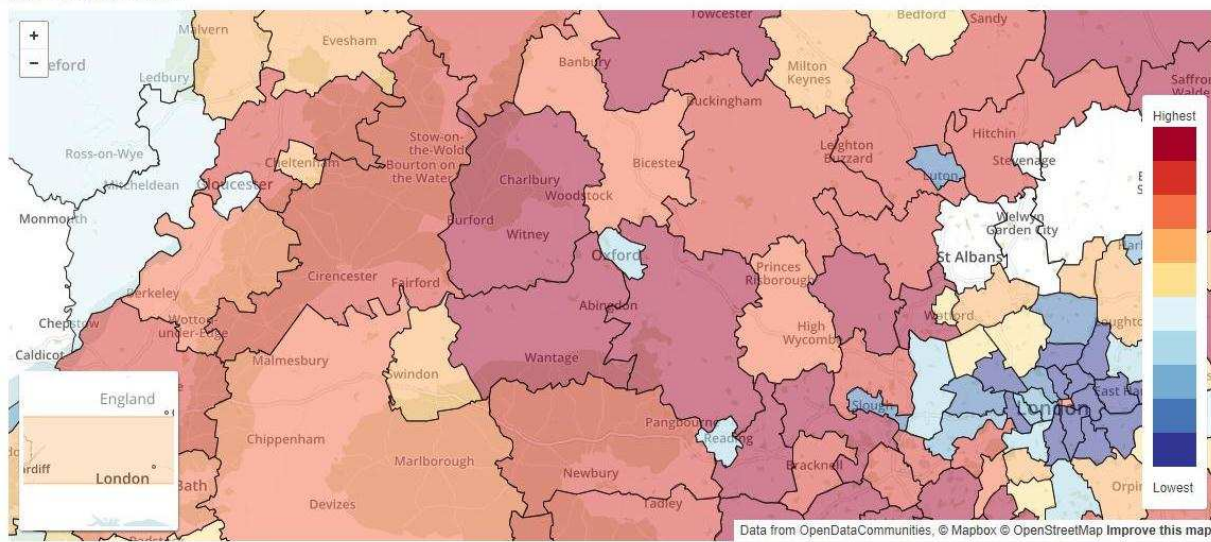
The English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is used to identify small areas of England which are experiencing multiple aspects of deprivation. Seven domains of deprivation are combined to produce the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation. Each domain contains a number of component indicators including Income, Employment, Health and Disability, Education Skills and Training, Barriers to Housing and Other Services, Crime and Living Environment.

It puts the 326 Local Authority Districts into a rank order based on the population weighted average rank of all areas with a rank of 1 being the most deprived.

Figure 3 below shows the summary measure of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2010 at local authority district level for Oxford and the surrounding area. Oxford is ranked 111 out of all 326 Local Authority Districts.

Figure 3 - IMD Rank for Oxford in 2010

IMD rank 2010



The Oxford Strategic Partnership was founded in 2003 to promote joined-up approaches for improving quality of life in the city. The Partnership helps to provide direction for the city's future, respond to local priorities, and engage more effectively with local concerns.

The aims of this Partnership are:

- To provide a clear and ambitious vision for the future of Oxford, developing its environmental, economic and social life in a positive and sustainable way;
- To improve the quality of life of all sections of the community, to reduce inequalities, and support the needs and aspirations of citizens in their local areas;
- To foster and promote closer working between local agencies to deliver responsive and high quality services across the city.

The ambition of our partnership is that Oxford should be a city in which all our citizens feel happy to live and experience a high quality of life. We want Oxford to be a world-class city for everyone.

The Councils Corporate Plan takes forward the main themes agreed by the Council in recent years. It reaffirms the Council's ambition – developed with the Strategic Partnership and partners, including local businesses, community organisations, the health and education sectors and the county council – **to make Oxford a world-class city for all its citizens.**

This ambition is driven through five corporate priorities which directly address the needs of the city:

- A vibrant and sustainable economy
- Meeting housing needs
- Strong and active communities
- Cleaner greener Oxford
- An efficient and effective council.

The Councils Housing Strategy 2012-2015 – Meeting Housing Needs links into the sustainable community strategy for Oxford by, firstly, contributing directly to the first flagship priority of 'affordable housing', and secondly, by linking the provision of such housing to the overall delivery of a healthy, vibrant and equal city for all residents.

The aim of the community strategy is, 'A world class city for everyone'; with five flagship issues prioritised:

- 1) Affordable Housing
- 2) Health and Social Inclusion
- 3) Climate Change
- 4) Quality of the Public Realm for Residents and Visitors
- 5) Safer, Stronger, More Cohesive City.

The Housing Strategy also links into the Corporate Plan by contributing to the delivery of the key corporate priorities, principally 'Meeting Housing Needs' but also in supporting the economy through housing provision of current and future residents and workers and also, through ensuring communities have stable and safe places to live.

The Environmental Health Service "**seeks to protect & sustainably develop the environment for all people living, working or visiting our City.**" Through education, engagement and enforcement activities in the spheres of people, place and the environment the service works to deliver a cleaner, greener, safer Oxford now and for the future.

The service has been working with landlords to improve conditions within the HMO stock of the city since the mid 1980s. A dedicated multi-disciplinary team was created in 1990 to tackle the growing problems within the HMO stock in the city and this approach has continued following the

introduction of the licensing scheme. This includes a bespoke accreditation scheme that links to licensing of HMOs, regular landlord events and a landlords newsletter.

A variety of interventions have been used in Oxford to tackle problems in the HMO stock in the city. These range from providing advice and support to landlords and tenants through to the use of legislative powers to raise standards within HMOs. In 1999, for example, Oxford successfully introduced a HMO registration scheme in part of the city, which had special control provisions.

One of the consequences of the registration scheme was the migration of rental properties to other parts of the city as landlords and agents tried to evade regulation.

In 2004 the Environmental Health service was reorganised and dedicated teams were set up to proactively work in this area and concentrate on mandatory HMO licensing and service requests.

With the introduction of the Additional Licensing Scheme the service was structured with two new teams to concentrate on HMOs, the HMO Enforcement Team and the HMO Licensing Team. There is a very close working relationship between the two teams. The service provided by the HMO Enforcement Team is supported by a Tenancy Relations Officer who works alongside them, providing advice and assistance to landlords and agents about their rights and responsibilities.

Where serious breaches occur legal action has been taken which has led to convictions and in some cases imprisonment. In many cases the Tenancy Relations Officer prevents homelessness through their involvement with proactive casework.

The primary driver for all of the work carried out by the HMO Enforcement team is the protection of the health, safety and welfare of residents living in HMO's whether it is acting in an advisory role or regulatory role through enforcement. The outcome of this work is a healthier and safer environment in which people live.

Operational partners include the various teams within the Environmental Protection Service, Direct Services, Housing Department and Planning and Development Services.

The teams within these service areas all contribute to the Councils Corporate objectives and there are also strong links with external agencies including in particular Thames Valley Police and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

An Officer from TVP has worked closely with the Council for the past 10 years through Oxford's Safer Community Partnership and has carried out numerous joint operations in relation to HMOs.

Oxford City PCT also supports the delivery of the scheme with links between health visitors and Environmental health used to identify HMOs being occupied by families with young children and new born.

The relationship with private landlords and letting agents within the city and other stakeholders has developed over the last ten years. A Landlords Information Exchange is held at least twice a

year and attendance has grown each time an event is held. The service also meets with letting agents, college domestic bursars and other strategic partners on a regular basis.

The Council also operates a Landlord Accreditation Scheme, details of which are provided later in this report. Despite this many landlords remain disengaged until formal action is pursued by the Council.

Housing in Oxford

According to the Lloyds Banking Group 'Oxford continues to be the UK's least affordable City', with some of the highest rents and market values in the South East of England, 'at an average price of £340,864, houses in Oxford are relatively more expensive than the average earnings in the city, partly due to Oxford's attractiveness to commuters working in London'.

More recent research, carried out by Oxford University, concluded that the average cost of a house in Oxford has risen by almost £38,000 during the past year and now stands at £426,720, making Oxford homes the least affordable in the UK.

Statistics from the IMD support this research and can be seen in Figures 4 and 5 below which rank Oxford as zero (0) making it the least affordable City in the UK.

Figure 4 – IMD Affordable Housing 2013-2014

Dwellings 2013-2014, Affordable housing

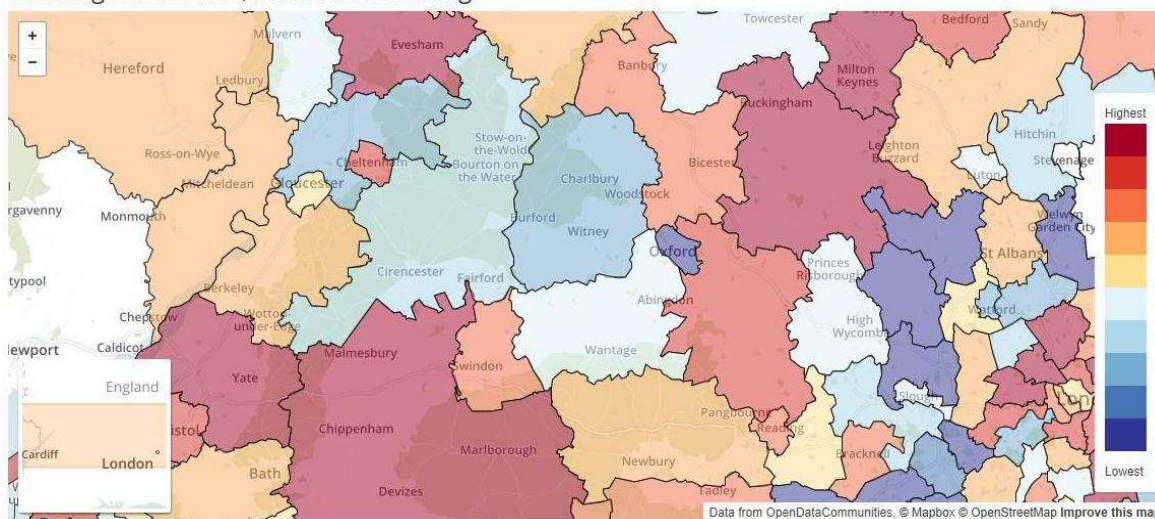
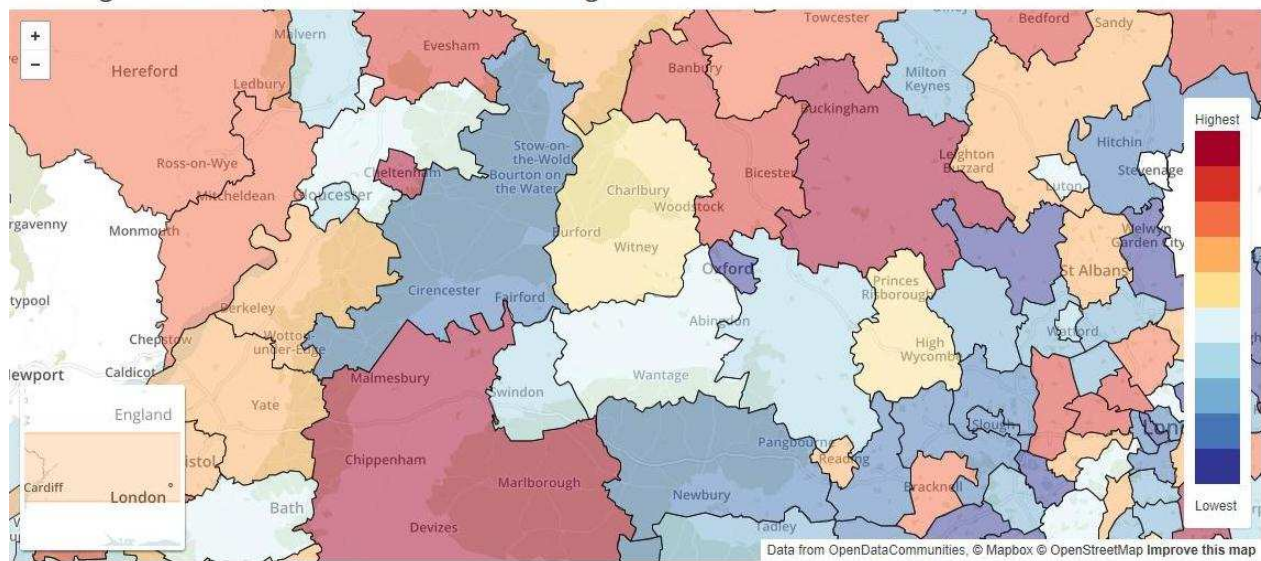


Figure 5 – IMD Affordable rented housing 2013-2014

Dwellings 2013-2014, Affordable rented housing

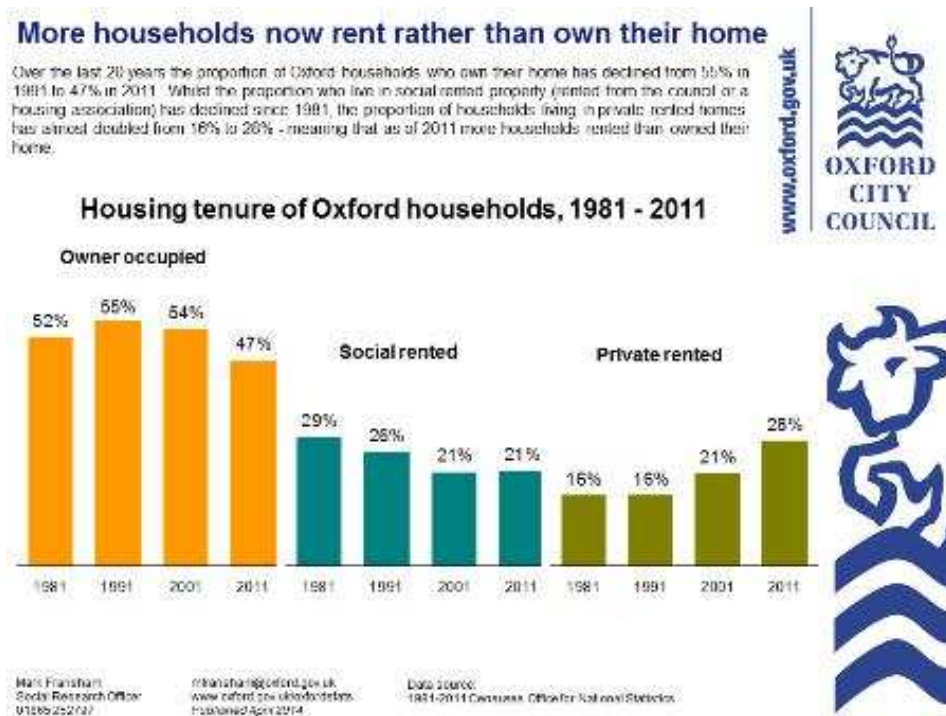


High house prices create a situation where younger people and low income households are not able to access the owner occupation market leaving the PRS as the only viable option for accommodation.

The Private Rented Sector in Oxford

The tenure profile in Oxford has changed considerably since 1981. The PRS is now larger than the social rented sector and based on the pattern over the past ten years the potential is for it to be larger than the owner occupied sector in the next 20 years.

Figure 6 – Tenure profile in Oxford



In 2011 the private rented sector (PRS) in Oxford had grown by almost 50% over the past 10 years from approximately 11,000 households in 2001 to 16,000. The sector made up for 28% of housing accommodation in Oxford compared to 17% in England.

A long term housing shortage where demand is high and availability is low provides an opportunity for landlords to offer less than perfect accommodation without any problems of finding a suitable tenant.

Rental values in Oxford have increased, on average by 11% between 2011 and 2014 compared to 7% in England. According to the Valuation Office Agency the average weekly rent for a property in Oxford was £294.25.

Local Housing Allowance rates in Oxford have also increased, below inflation, with the average LHA rate for 2014 being £219.73 p/w.

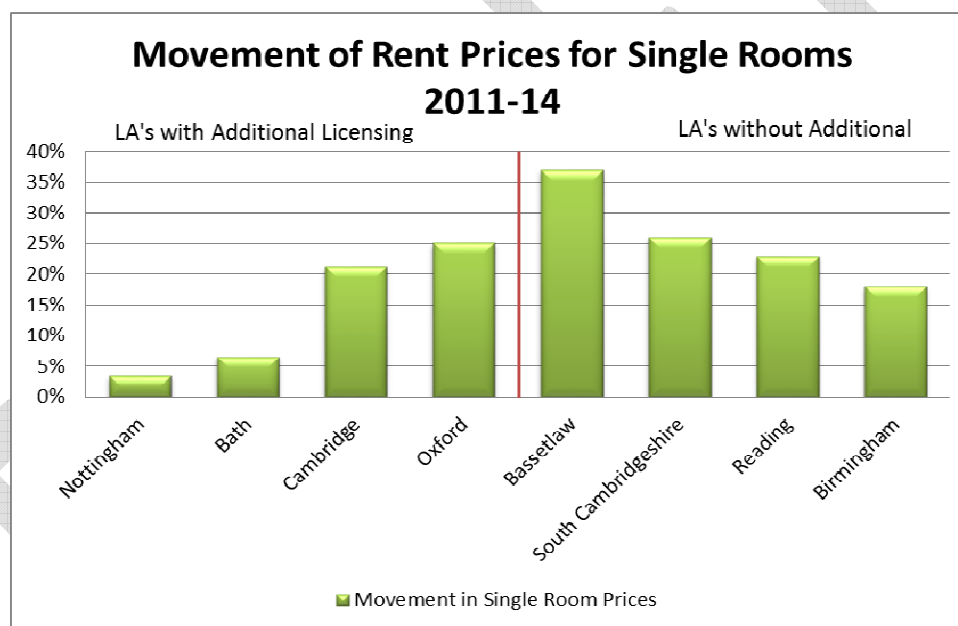
A comparison was conducted to assess the movement of rental values for single rooms and, in particular if licensing of HMOs has had a direct impact on increasing rental values in areas which had licensing schemes and those which did not have licensing schemes.

Figure 7 below provides the results of this comparison and although it shows that in Oxford there has been a considerable increase in rental values of single rooms, it is not dissimilar to increases experienced in other areas across the South East region and England where additional licensing schemes are not in operation.

The supply of housing in Oxford is driven by the situation where demand is high and availability is low and as already discussed, in the PRS this provides an opportunity for landlords to offer less than perfect accommodation without any problems of finding a suitable tenant.

These pressures on housing provision are inevitably going to result in high rental values so it is no surprise that increases have occurred however, there is no evidence to suggest that licensing increases rent, more likely that the undersupply in property in Oxford has driven up rents as a market force.

Figure 7 – Comparison of Rents in Areas with and without Licensing



HMOs

HMOs are a major concern in Oxford. It is estimated that Oxford has the 14th highest number of HMOs in England and Wales. Only the large metropolitan and unitary authorities and some London Boroughs contain more.

They form an unusually high percentage of houses in the city and it is estimated that 1 in 5 of the resident population live in an HMO. 28% of the working population of Oxford are students who typically live in HMO accommodation.

Planning policy has been developed by the Council to create 'mixed and balanced communities', which looks to limit the levels of HMOs in the sector so that there is a spread of sustainable and viable options for accommodation but despite all this the Council still have massive numbers of HMOs in the PRS.

In May 2005, the Council published the Private Sector House Condition Survey (HCS), which comprised a physical analysis of dwellings and a short socio-economic interview of inhabitants. It was estimated that there were 5,069 HMOs at the time of the survey.

A large proportion of HMOs, at the time were found to be in the private rented sector (77.5%) – in comparison, at the time 26.0% of all dwellings in the city are in the private rented sector.

The trend over many years has been for the HMO stock to grow steadily within the City.

Recent data from the Census 2011 suggests that HMOs currently make up 44% of the PRS (approx. 7,000 HMOs). This shows an increase of 36% over the past 6 years.

This has been presented in Figure 8 which shows other households as a percentage of all households across Oxford.

Figure 8 – Other households in 2011

The Council's Private Sector House Condition Survey (HCS) 2005 indicated that in Oxford around 62% of HMOs were shared houses and 17% were lacking in basic fire detection with 62% relying upon battery operated smoke detectors. Generally HMOs also had higher repair costs than other dwellings and although the majority had the use of basic amenities the sharing ratio of 1.5 persons was extremely prevalent.

The experience over the years, in Oxford, is that some of the worst conditions are present in HMOs.



Planning and HMOs

HMOs occupied by between three and six unrelated individuals are defined as Use Class C4 by the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended). Dwellings occupied by families or less than 3 unrelated people are defined as Use Class C3.

The government has granted planning permission in the form of permitted development rights for changes of use between these two Use Classes. Because of the potential implications of large

numbers of properties in an area changing to Use Class C4, the Council has removed the permitted development right to change between use Class C3 and Use Class C4.

Dwellings with Use Class C4 however still have permitted development to change back to a dwelling (Use Class C3).

This change came into effect on February 24th 2012 and means that planning permission is now required from the Council to change the use of a dwelling to an HMO in Use Class C4.

Any property already in Use Class C4 before this date does not need planning permission to continue as an HMO.

Since the introduction of the Article 4 direction there has been a total of 49 applications for changes of use (from family house to C4 HMO) were determined by the Council. 34 of these applications were approved, 15 were refused.

Licensing of HMOs

Mandatory Licensing of HMOs was introduced by the Housing Act 2004 and the Council implemented a rigorous approach to processing the requirements of the legislation, insisting that the licence must be more than just a piece of paper.

The process was used to upgrade each property to a decent standard with all licences being issued **after an inspection** of the HMO. This enables the Council to have a positive impact on the condition and management of 581 properties.

Where compliance was not achieved enforcement was pursued giving tenants and neighbours confidence that the City Council are serious about addressing the issues around HMOs.

In 2005 the larger HMOs subject to mandatory licensing accounted for approx. 12% of the total HMO stock. Current estimates suggest this figure is now approx. 8%, many having been converted to self-contained flats.

The preferred stance of the Council is that licensing should apply to *all* HMOs in the same way, for example that all drivers need a driving licence. The new powers gave the Council the opportunity to make this a reality.

Prior to the designation of the licensing scheme the Council had used existing powers to their full extent, took more prosecutions against landlords than any other Council in England or Wales but it still wasn't enough and concluded that more needed to be done.

With the introduction of additional licensing controls applied to the whole of the HMO sector the Council was able to take a reactive and proactive approach to dealing with the sector.

Processing HMO Applications

Although the Council has a responsibility to ***'take reasonable steps to secure that applications for licences are made'*** for HMOs, the legislation makes it clear that the responsibility to submit a valid application and licence a HMO lies squarely with the owner/landlord.

The trend over the past few years of the scheme has shown that, unlike other licensing regimes, the Council has had to take a more positive role in reminding applicants about the responsibility to licence a HMO.

On average, between 2011 and Sept 2014, 80% of applicants had to be reminded to complete the process of licensing and of those requiring an initial reminder an average 72% had to be prompted a second time to complete a valid application.

This is represented in Figure 9 below.

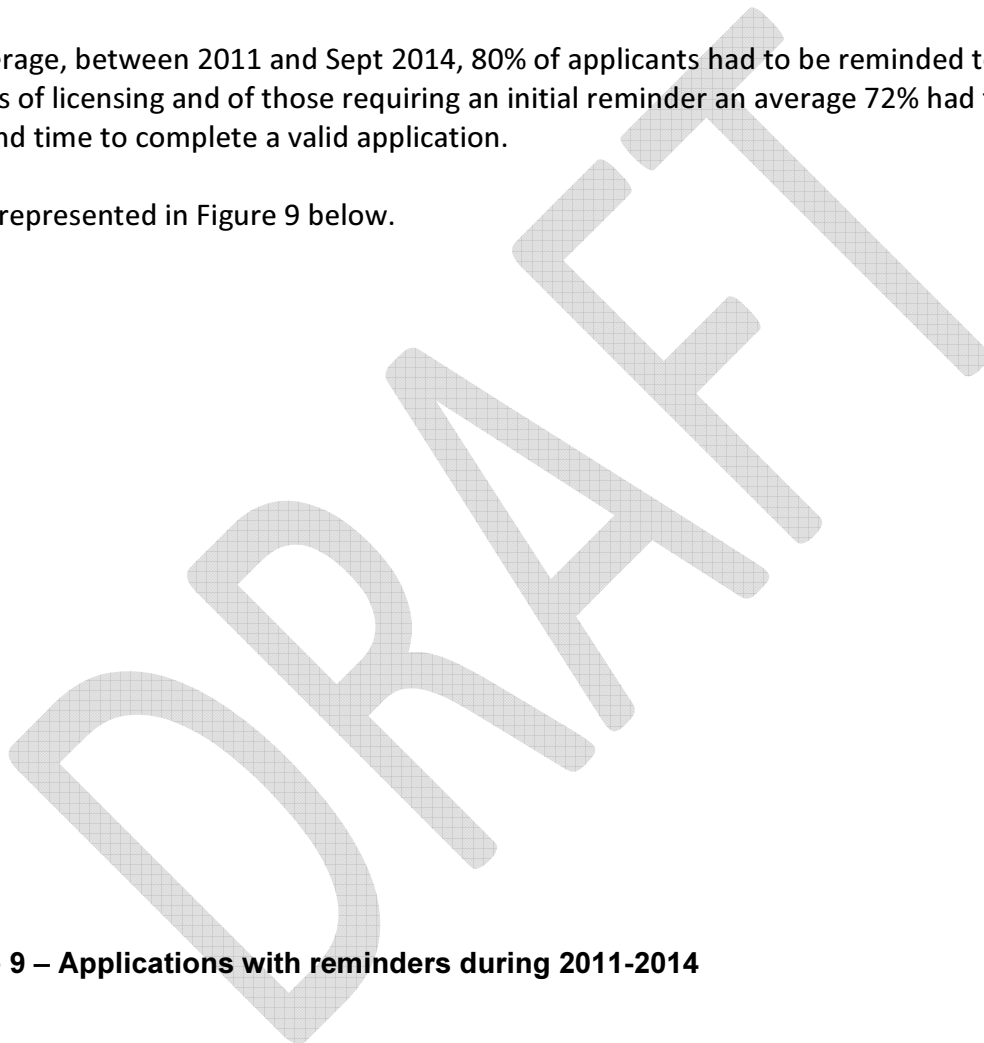
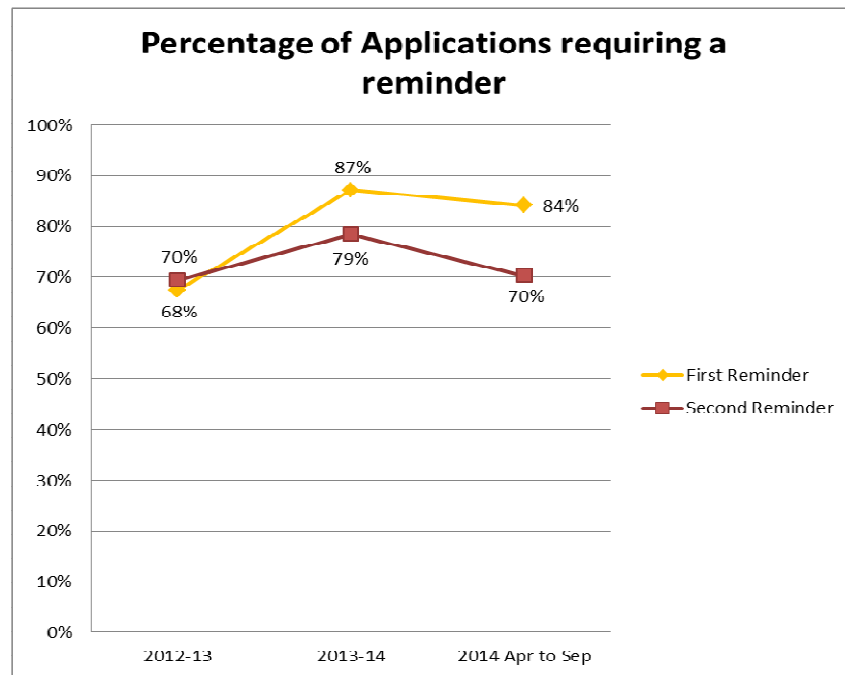


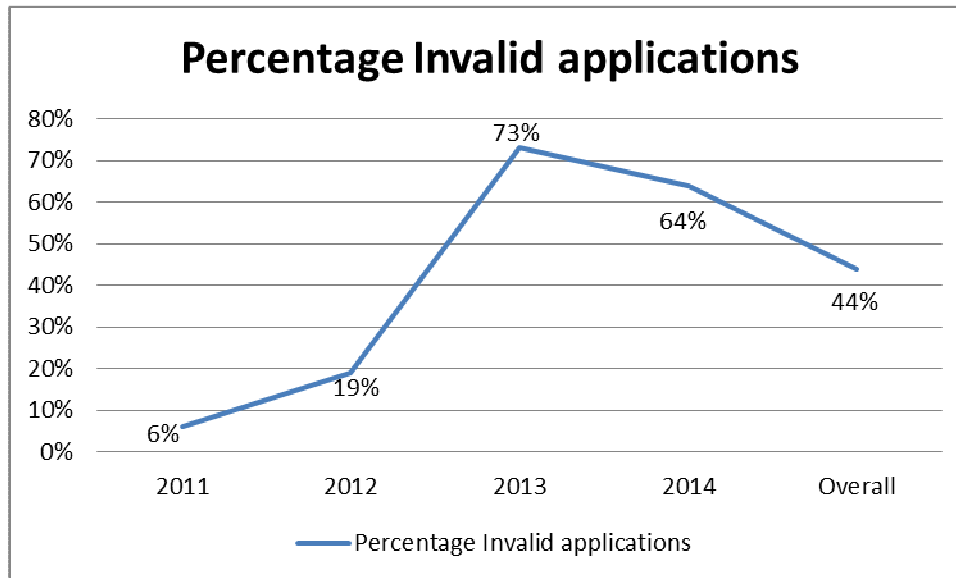
Figure 9 – Applications with reminders during 2011-2014



During the life of the Scheme around 56% of applicants submitted all of the necessary documentation to enable the Council to process their application and begin the process of setting conditions and licensing.

As can be seen from Figure 10 below, during the early years around 6% of applicants did not submit valid applications and as the Scheme progressed this peaked in 2013 to 73%.

Figure 10 - Percentage of Invalid Applications



Once a valid and complete application has been received the Council carries out inspections to set conditions and, in the case of a renewal application, check compliance.

Further inspections are also carried out to address any concerns raised in relation to confidence in management and issues of disrepair or poor standards.

The Council has carried out a total of 19,746 visits to HMOs to address a variety of issues.

Service requests are dealt with by the Council reactively and can include issues regarding landlord / tenant disputes, noise, rubbish and disrepair or poor conditions. In the two years prior to the introduction of the licensing scheme the Council received around 8900 service requests and during the first two years of the scheme these overall figures dropped to around 4,600. Further analysis for the past two years has shown that this decreased slightly to around 3,500.

Tables 1 and 2 below provide a breakdown for different categories showing the comparison between the number of service requests dealt with 2 years before and after licensing and for the past two years. With the exception of tenancy issues and noise there has been a positive impact to the reduction in service requests.

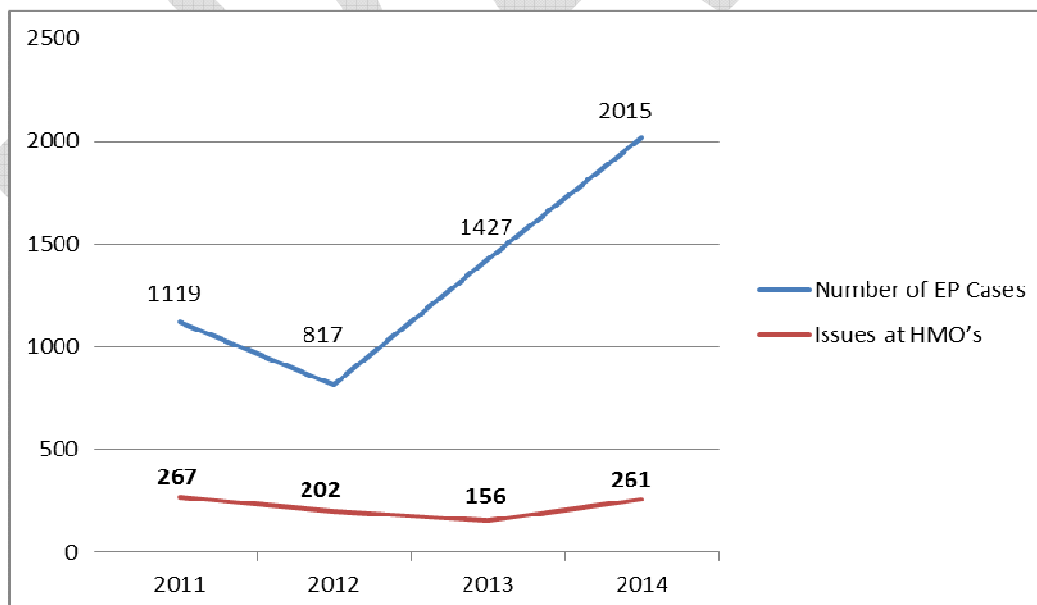
Table 1 - Service Requests before and during Licensing

	July 2008 to Jan 2011	Jan 2011 to July 2013	July 2013 to Jan 2015	Change from July 2008 to Jan 2011	Change from Jul 2013 to Jan 2015
Tenancy Issues	1152	1221	811	Up 6%	Down 34%
Noisy parties	600	256	552	Down 57%	Up 54%
Rubbish	4822	1641	1518	Down 66%	Down 7%
Poor conditions	2332	1459	674	Down 37%	Down 54%

In addition to these requests the Council's Environmental Protection Team, who deal with the prevention of anti-social behaviour (ASB), environmental crime and support the Cleaner, Greener Oxford campaign, also dealt with concerns about a number of issues at HMOs.

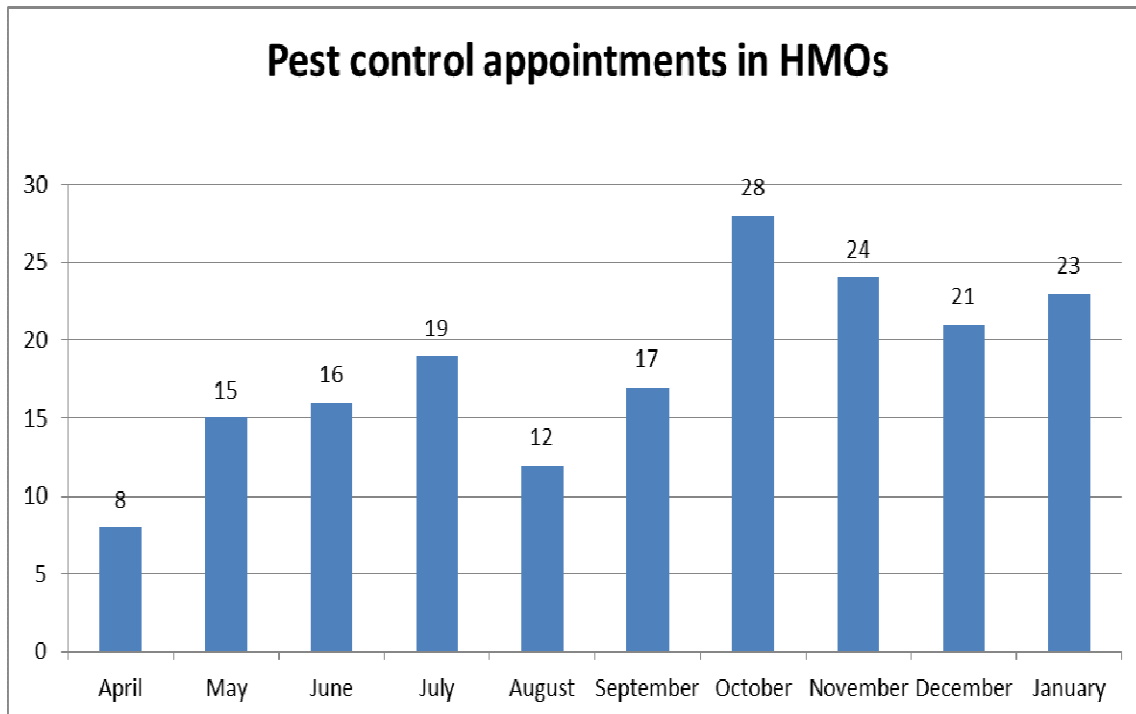
During 2011-14 the Service responded to approximately 1,040 service requests relating to HMO's. Figure 11 below provides the breakdown for each year.

The spread of service requests regarding HMOs is not restricted to one particular area of the City and the issues highlighted are found to be widespread.

Figure 11 – Number of Environmental Protection Service Requests at HMOs 2011-14

As mentioned earlier the issues associated with HMOs are far reaching and impact on the work of a variety of other teams, for example during 2014 the pest control service saw 21% of their appointments were in HMO's. Figure 12 provides a breakdown.

Figure 12 - Pest Control cases in HMOs during 2014



Energy Performance Certificates

The Energy Act includes provisions that will affect the private rented sector – both residential and commercial. From April 2016, private residential landlords will be unable to refuse a tenant’s reasonable request for consent to energy efficiency improvements to a property, where a finance package such as the Green Deal and/or the Energy Company Obligation is available.

Furthermore from April 2018, it will be against the law to rent out either residential or commercial premises where a minimum energy efficiency standard has not been achieved. The rating is likely to be EPC rating ‘E’.

Once this provision comes into force, landlords will not be able to let that property until appropriate certain energy efficiency improvements have been made. This means that landlords of buildings that are currently rated ‘F’ have some time to make the necessary improvements.

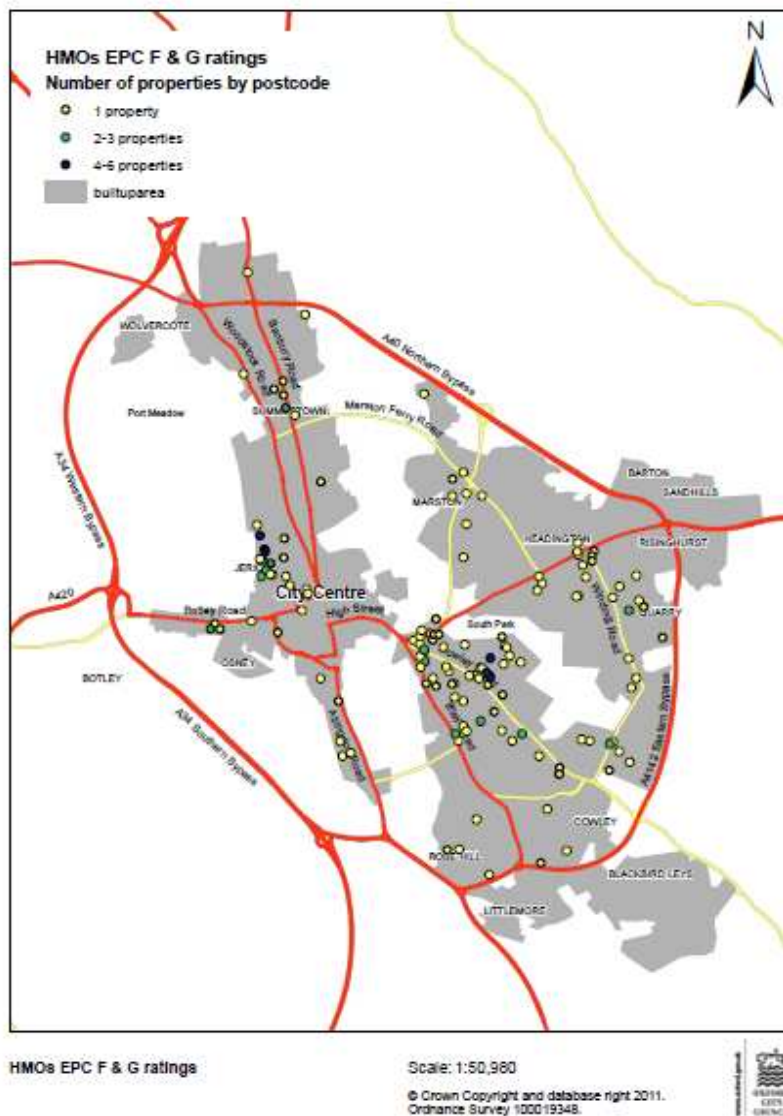
However, it is important to note that 1 April 2018 is a long-stop date and the rule could be applied earlier than this.

The Council has been leading the way with new initiatives to deal with energy efficiency in HMOs. During 2013-2014 the Council analysed 2554 EPC certificates and noted those that scored F and G. The results of this study are shown in Figure 13 below. New licence conditions are being

developed to provide landlords of HMOs with the opportunity to complete improvements in advance of these requirements.

This will make an important contribution to the Council’s carbon reduction targets because by improving energy efficiency in HMOs the PRS is making a positive step to reducing carbon emissions from buildings across the whole of the City.

Figure 13 – Distribution of F and G rated EPCs



Licence conditions

Under the legislation the Council must include a range of conditions requiring the licence holder to address matters regarding gas safety, electrical appliances, furniture, smoke alarms and details of the occupants.

These are applied by all Councils across England and Wales and are often referred to as the 'mandatory conditions'.

During 2011 to 2014 the Council included, on average, 10 mandatory conditions to every licence. In addition to the mandatory conditions the Council also included discretionary conditions which covered four broad areas relating to HMOs.

Legal and Standard Conditions – these covered aspects relating to the 'mandatory' legal conditions and standards conditions required to deal with the management of the property as a HMO and whether circumstances existed that were reflective of ineffective or unsatisfactory management, for example, gas safety, electrical safety, changes in circumstances, displaying contact details and licence etc..

Fire Safety Conditions – these are specifically over and above the mandatory conditions and would include such matter as fire separation, additional detection and providing fire safety equipment etc..

Amenities and Facilities Conditions – these conditions would relate to cases where there were not enough facilities or amenities present within the property for the number of people living there. This typically includes providing amenities such as kitchens or bathrooms and facilities within those elements.

Health and Safety Conditions – conditions regarding health, safety and welfare matters are also applied to licences. These cover items which do not constitute a serious hazard under the Health and Safety Rating System and therefore can be addressed through the licencing process.

Figure 14 below shows the average number of conditions applied per licence (new and renewals) across the 2011 to 2014 period. It suggests that on average every single licence issued or renewed required a minimum of 4 additional conditions, over and above the mandatory conditions, requiring work to be carried out to improve the standard of HMOs in the City.

Figure 14 – Average conditions per licence

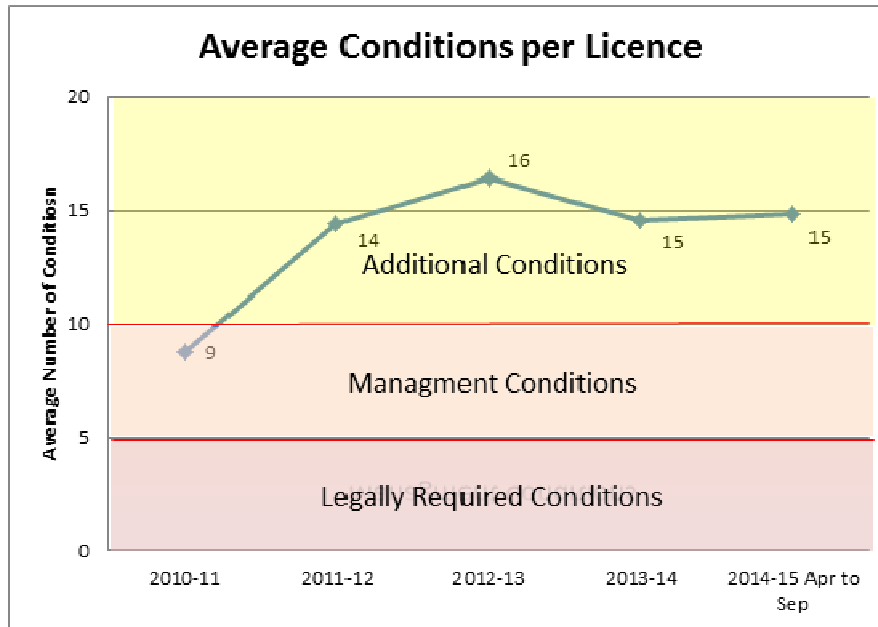
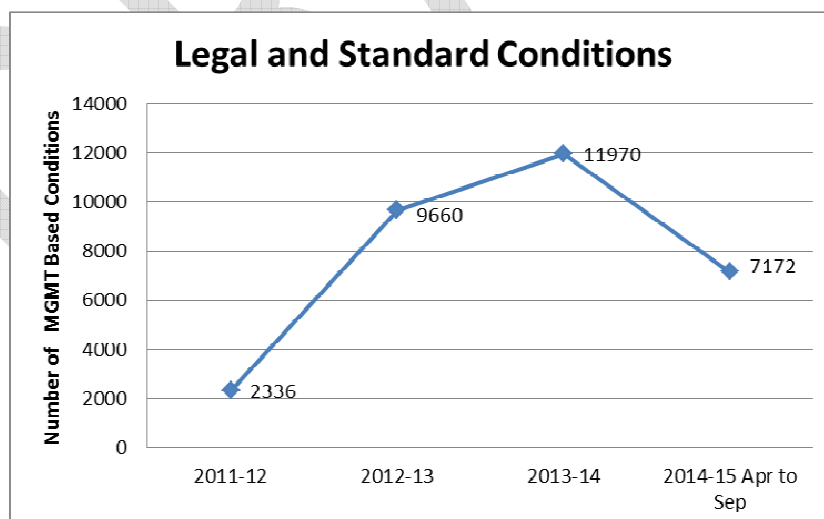
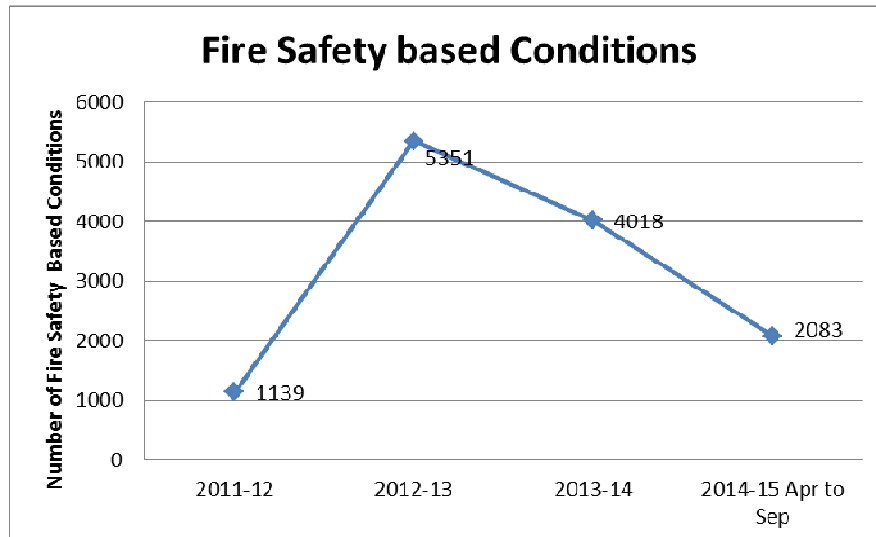


Figure 15 below shows the number of legal and standard conditions that have been attached to licences during the period 2011- 2014 and clearly show that after a peak of conditions regarding management issues there has been a gradual improvement in this area since 2013-14. It is however clear that there is still some work to do to address management issues in HMOs.

Figure 15 – Legal and Standard conditions



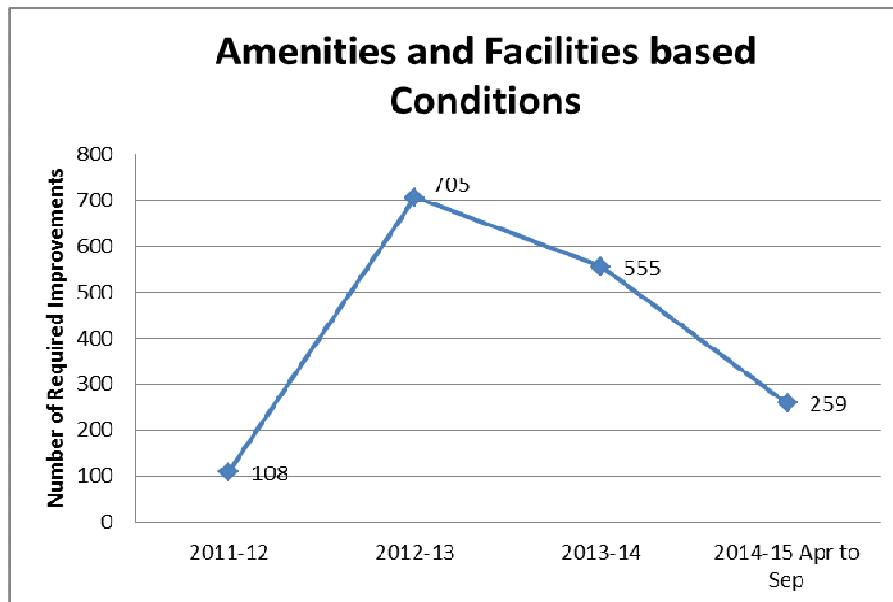
Figures 16, 17 and 18 below provide a breakdown of those discretionary conditions that were required on licences between 2011 and 2014 to improve conditions relating to fire safety, health and safety and amenities and facilities.

Figure 16 – Fire safety conditions

The significant peak of conditions relating to fire safety suggests that during the early years of the scheme there was a lack of fire precautions in HMOs. This is supported by the findings of the HCS 2005 which was discussed earlier. The fall in numbers over the past 6 months indicates improvements in fire safety have been addressed through compliance of these conditions. It is unlikely that these improvements would have been achieved to this extent without the conditions being attached to licences and the figure relating to the level of conditions still required is significantly higher than when the scheme started.

Conditions regarding basic amenities and facilities such as sufficient toilets, kitchen and bathing facilities are a fundamental issue in HMOs because the higher number of people sharing the greater level of amenities required.

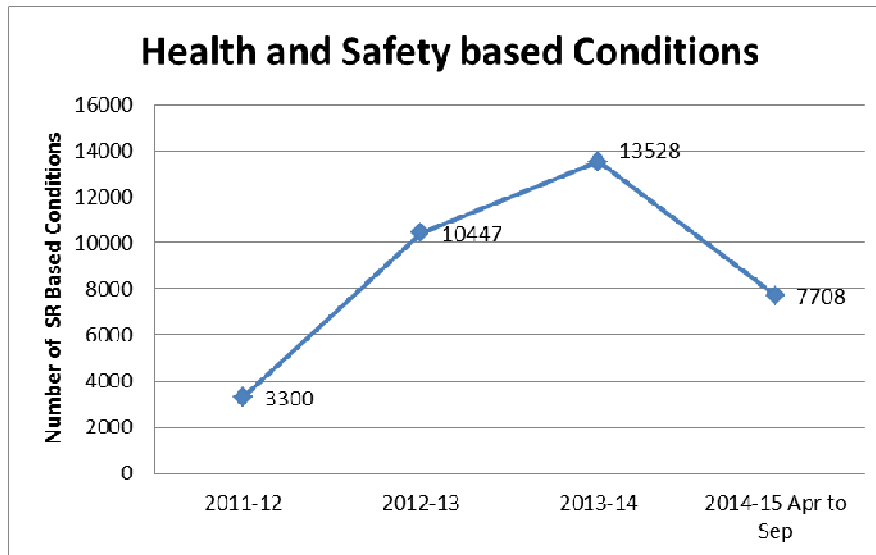
Figure 17 – Amenities and Facilities conditions



This figure suggests that in the early years of the scheme there were a large number of properties with insufficient facilities and over the period of 3 years this has reduced to a reasonable level.

The health and safety of occupants in HMOs is a major concern that can be addressed through applying licence conditions or assessing the property to determine if there are any hazards presents under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System. Where hazards are present, and considered serious enough, the Council is under a duty to pursue action under HHSRS. This would be done through the service of legal notices and orders.

These conditions therefore relate to cases where the Council considered it was not appropriate to pursue this separate action. It does however have to be borne in mind that these conditions are matters which have a direct impact on the health, safety and welfare of occupiers of HMOs and so will typically relate to factors regarding disrepair and other lower hazard rated issues.

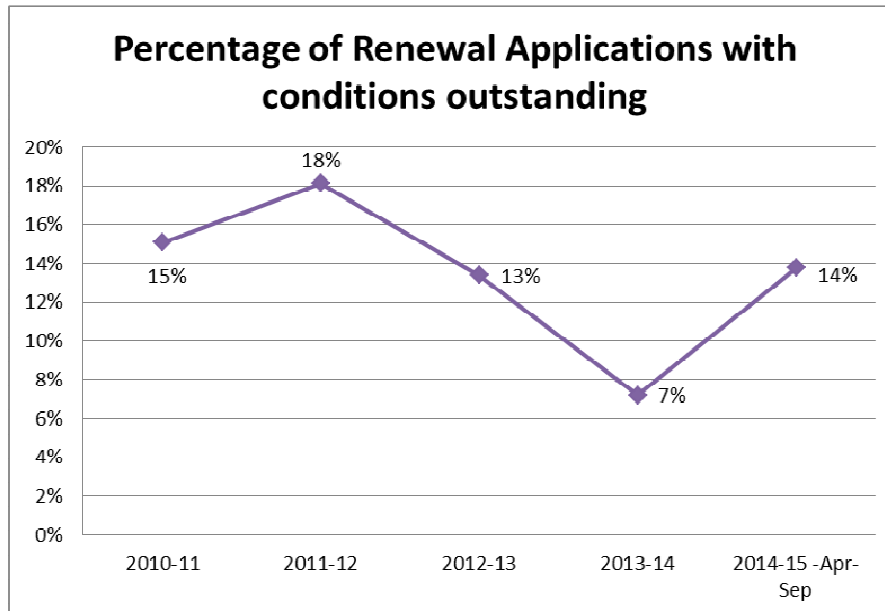
Figure 18 – Health and Safety conditions

This figure, relating to health and safety conditions, paints a similar picture to that of all of the other areas, in that there was a peak of conditions of this nature in 2013-14 and a fall, indicating compliance over the past 6 months. The level of conditions relating to health and safety matters is still at a level which raises concern and shows that there is still a concern around compliance in this area.

Not surprisingly across all of the discretionary conditions there was peak in the early years of the scheme. This was probably due to the fact that the scheme was phased over 2 years with phase one commencing 2011 and phase 2 in 2012. It is noticeable that in all cases there is also a gradual decline over the past 6 months where there has been some level of compliance. This is most likely due to the fact that the scheme has now 'bedded in' and those landlords who are proactively trying to manage their properties are taking action to comply.

Further analysis has been carried out to determine the percentage of renewal applications received which have conditions outstanding from when the initial licence was issued. This is presented in Figure 19 below.

Figure 19 – Percentage of Renewal Applications with Conditions Outstanding

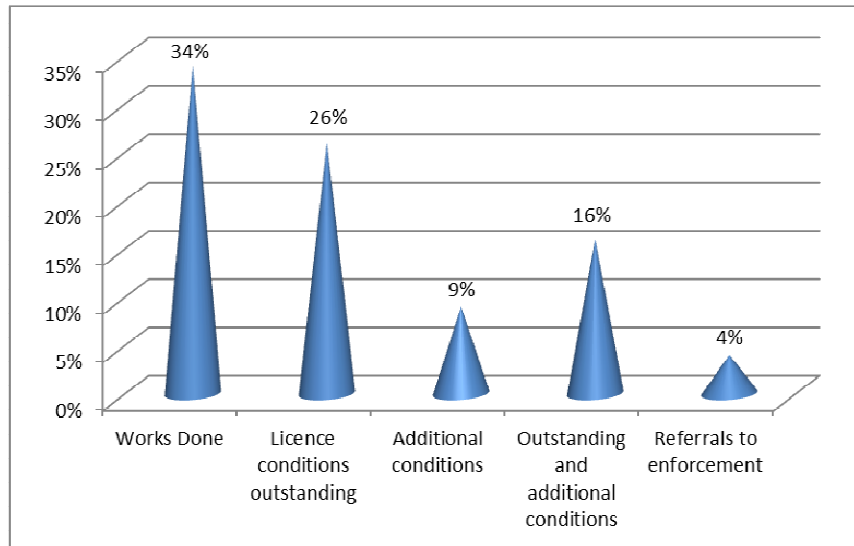


This figure clearly shows that after a slight increase in 2011-12, probably due to the phased approach mentioned above, there has been a gradual decline until 2013-14. Over the past 6 months the number of conditions outstanding has begun to increase indicating that non-compliance may be an issue for licences that have been renewed.

In order to assess this during April 2013 and June 2014 the Council recorded 1,397 renewal visits and recorded various factors relating to compliance/ non-compliance. These ranged from whether works required on the licence had been completed and whether there were any issues regarding the completion or addition of conditions.

The results can be seen below in Figure 20 below.

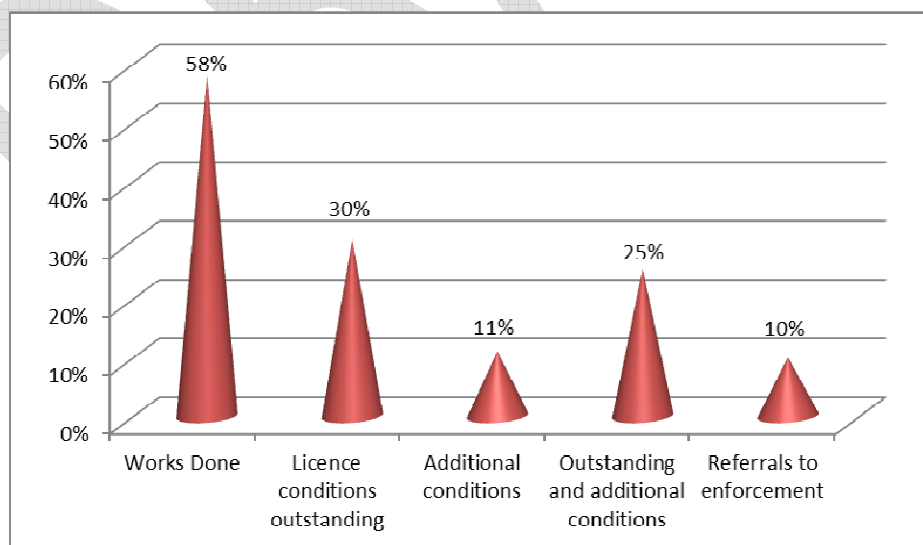
Figure 20 – Compliance/Non Compliance Rates between April 13 and June 14



This indicates that in 34% of the HMOs inspected all works to comply with licence conditions had been completed. It does however also show that in 26% of cases there were outstanding licence conditions and in 16% there were outstanding conditions and additional conditions required. This latter figure is indicative of cases where there are ineffective management arrangements in place and is one of the fundamental reasons why the Scheme is required.

A similar exercise was conducted between July 2014 and January 2015 where 946 visits to check compliance were carried out.

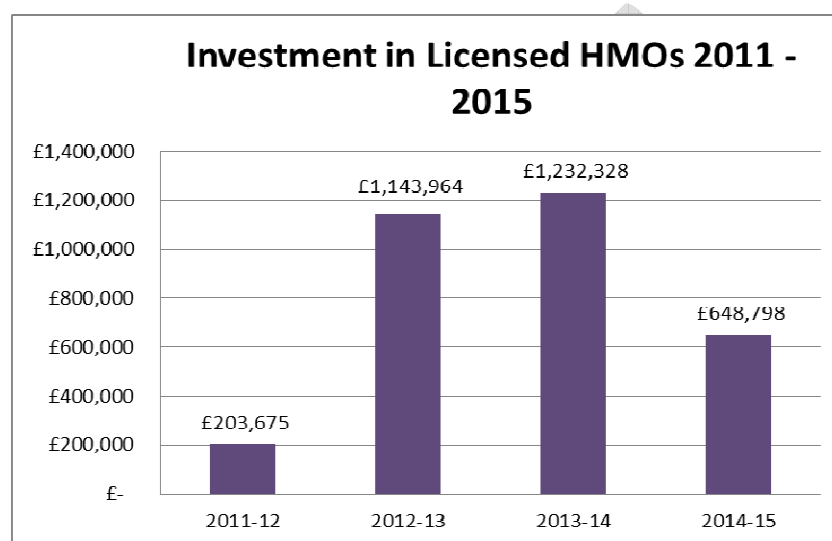
Figure 21 – Compliance/Non Compliance Rates between Jul 14 and Jan 15



It is apparent that during this period the levels of compliance had increased with 58% of works completed but there was 30% of licence conditions outstanding and a further 25% where conditions were not completed and additional conditions were required.

In order to assess any potential financial investment in the City a cost was attached to the type of work carried out to comply with conditions and an estimate on investment was calculated as a result. Overall it is estimated that since the introduction of licensing there has been approximately £3.2 million invested in HMOs in the City. This equates to £930.00 investment in every single licensed HMO over the past 4 years. The average investment for each year is shown in Figure 22 below.

Figure 22 - Investment in Licensed HMOs during 2011 - 2015



A comparison for the financial year 2013/2014 of compliance by food businesses has been made which shows that, out of 1204 food businesses, 83% were broadly compliant with a 4 or 5 'star' rating.

These are recorded on the Councils Food Hygiene Rating Scheme as set out in the table below.

Table 2 – Compliance/Non Compliance for Food Hygiene Rating

Food Hygiene Rating	Descriptor	Number of Businesses	Percentage of Total
0	Urgent Improvement Necessary	6	0.5
1	Major Improvement Necessary	43	3.6
2	Improvement Necessary	45	3.7
3	Generally Satisfactory	107	8.9
4	Good	270	22.4
5	Very Good	733	60.9
	Total	1204	

HMO Fees and Charges

The cost of an HMO licence is different across local authority areas. The government did not set a specific fee or set a limit as to how much each council can charge and it is up to the Council to calculate what it costs to implement HMO licensing. This will include consideration of staff costs, training, inspection and administration and can include publicity.

The Council then sets its licence fees on this basis and if appropriate may decide to subsidise licence fees in some cases. They are not, however allowed to use licensing fees to raise revenue for other projects or areas of work.

The Council introduced the Scheme as a self- financing project and has reviewed the fees and charges structure regularly throughout the life of the scheme.

In 2014-15 it made a significant change to the original structure set out at the beginning of the scheme. The idea behind this was to simplify the approach and move away from differentiating between different sizes of HMO because experience had shown that during the early years of the scheme the time spent administering a licence was no different for a small HMO than it was for a large HMO.

The new structure introduced two initial application fees to reflect the work involved in administering a licence where the owner had openly come forward to licence and where the Council had found the property to be a HMO and had to encourage the submission of a licence application.

A range of renewal fees were also introduced that acknowledged the difference in the time spent by the Council dealing with complete and valid applications that were submitted on time by landlords and those where the Council had to chase payment or documentation.

A higher fee was introduced which included a charge for a re-inspection where the Council did not have confidence in the management of the HMO or where there had been reported concerns about the condition of the HMO.

The Council also introduced a new 2 year licence for landlords and agents who are accredited through Oxford City Councils Landlord Accreditation Scheme (OCLAS) or the National Landlords Association (NLA). This did not include a re-inspection fee because experience had shown that in the majority of cases there was no need to re-inspect and therefore less time was spent administering these applications.

Further changes were introduced that removed charges for Variations and other charges were increased slightly to reflect inflation.

The main reason for adopting these changes was that the Council had to spend a lot more time in dealing with licence applications where the owner had not been forthcoming with their application or had not provided a valid application. As mentioned earlier over 80% of cases required an initial reminder.

Our experience had also been that the size difference of an HMO did not make any difference to the amount of work needed to facilitate and administer a licence.

The aim of this fee structure was also to try and encourage landlords to become better through joining the accreditation schemes and attending training which would enable them to be more competent and capable of managing HMO's appropriately.

The Council also wanted to reward landlords who had already licensed and where there was less work with administering the licence and ensuring compliance.

Where landlords had been prosecuted or reluctant to become accredited we would encourage them to use accredited agents, who have the experience and expertise to improve and manage properties, to manage them on their behalf and therefore take advantage of the 2 year licence.

These changes took effect in April 2014 with the intention of encouraging landlords to either become members OCLAS or the NLA or to use an accredited agent and therefore take advantage of the extended licence renewal which in the long term will help to drive up standards in HMO's in Oxford.

Landlord Accreditation

The Council operates a Landlord Accreditation Scheme (OCLAS) which aims to improve the condition and management of the private rented sector in Oxford.

The scheme comprises an element of self-regulation and accordingly relies on a degree of goodwill and trust on the parts of Landlords, Letting Agents, tenants and the Local Authority.

The scheme applies to the private rented sector only and not to Local Authority owned or Housing Association properties where other Service Level Agreements apply.

Under the Scheme it is a requirement that:

- (a) the Landlord or Letting Agent is a 'Fit and Proper' person
- (b) the physical condition of all the properties they own or manage meet minimum legal standards
- (c) that management practices are fair and reasonable and meet the management code of practice requirements
- (d) community relations are maintained, including waste management at the property
- (e) the Council's Cleaner, Greener agenda is complied with e.g. waste management at the property

Compliance with the scheme will ensure that:

- Landlords, Letting Agents, tenants and local residents enjoy the benefits of good property conditions, competent management standards and considerate neighbourly behaviour;
- Misunderstandings and disputes are reduced;
- The Council's Cleaner, Greener agenda will be actively promoted;
- Where problems do occur they are promptly resolved.
- Landlords and Agents of privately rented accommodation must ensure they manage their properties in a business-like manner and have knowledge of the requirements of private renting and the primary legislation under the Housing Act 2004.

The Council has put together a training course involving workshops delivering a comprehensive understanding of the legislation and technical aspects of managing a property, including in particular;

- Management Regulations - An overview of the requirements of landlord's statutory requirements under the Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation (England) Regulations 2006.
- The Housing Health & Safety Rating System, (HHSRS) - An introduction and overview of the HHSRS and the 29 associated hazards; emphasis will be placed on the more often encountered deficiencies. Understanding the concept of Categories and how to mitigate Category 1 hazards in accordance with the requirements of the HHSRS Operating Guidance.
- HMO Licensing - The requirements of the HMO licensing scheme, applications, documentation etc.
- Tenancy Relations - An introduction to the legal requirements of assured short hold tenancy agreements and the requirements for possession etc.

Accredited Landlords and Agents are required to attend the one day training course within three to six months of becoming accredited.

As previously mentioned accredited landlords and agents can take advantage of extended licences and lower fees because the Council acknowledges that they are more effective at managing their properties and meeting the requirements of licensing with minimal intervention from the Council.

94 Landlords and Agents have taken up accreditation, the most being during 2013/14 when the Council introduced the 'new' two year licence for accredited landlords.

Accreditation provides an opportunity for landlords to understand their legal responsibilities and provides them with practical advice on how to become better at managing and maintaining properties in the PRS under their control without the need for the Council's to intervene.

Despite the scheme the Council operates being free to join, membership is still relatively low in comparison to the total number of agents and landlords who operate in the City. This clearly shows that even with the introduction of financial incentives accreditation cannot be relied upon solely to meet the objectives of driving up standards in the PRS and HMO sector.

Enforcement in HMOs

The Council has always taken a proactive approach in dealing with concerns about HMOs. In the years prior to the introduction of licensing it used existing powers to their full extent and took more prosecutions against landlords under the Housing Act 2004 than any other Council in England and Wales. Only a handful of major cities such as Liverpool and Manchester have issued more legal notices to deal with HMOs.

This approach, however, only scratched the surface of the problems associated with a growing HMO sector in Oxford and licensing provided the Council with enhanced powers to deal with HMOs in a more proactive and focussed way.

It enabled the Council to conduct reactive and proactive visits to address concerns about HMOs. This has resulted in over 19,000 visits being carried out to HMOs.

Over 80,000 conditions have been added to licences requiring the licence holder to carry out works to bring properties up to the appropriate standard and to manage them effectively. This provided a level playing field for all landlords and licence holders making them more accountable for the management and improvement of HMOs.

Where non-compliance is found the Council has a mechanism to resolve these issues either through legal action which may result in the licence holder losing their licence and their ability to run HMOs or through further licensing controls. The Council has only had to take formal action in a handful of cases for non-compliance because it has found the possibility of losing a licence is of great concern to most landlords and they will take steps to remedy the problems referred to them without the need for legal intervention.

The Council is also able to focus its resources on tracking down those landlords who are operating unlicensed or ineffectively managed properties. This has resulted in 100's of investigations being carried out on HMOs.

These landlords are encouraged to find an agent or another suitable person to be the licence holder and cooperate with them to improve the property and its management. The fees and charges structure has been developed to encourage landlords to become accredited and take advantage of fee incentives.

If a landlord fails to heed warnings about problems then the Council has applied enforcement and prosecuted where the problem is serious enough and it would be in the public interest to take such action. This has resulted in 38 successful prosecutions and 26 cautions being issued.

Following a successful prosecution or acceptance of a formal caution, the landlord is no longer considered to be a "fit and proper person". Their licence is revoked and unless they pay another application fee for a suitable person to take over the licence the council issues an interim management order and takes over control of the property. This approach has been adopted on 5 occasions.

Around 25% of landlords in Oxford are from ethnic backgrounds and as a consequence a large percentage of legal cases that the Council has pursued involve these groups, around 60%. A lot of work conducted by the enforcement team has therefore involved working closely with these groups, such as Oxford Community Forum to develop a close working relationship and improve communication between landlords and the Council.

During 2013/14 a survey of 100 tenants occupying HMOs was carried out by the HMO Enforcement Team to measure the potential impact licensing had on them as people living in this type of accommodation.

A number of HMOs that had been licensed during the year were randomly selected and a series of questions were put to each of the households on a face to face basis during a 'door knocking' exercise. The questions were as follows:

1. Have you had any problems with your landlord since the Council introduced HMO Licensing?
2. Have you noticed any improvements to your home since the landlord applied for licensing?
3. Are you in favour of the Council's licensing scheme for HMO's?

The responses received are provided below.

Figure 23 – Tenants Views - Any problems with Landlord since HMO Licensing?

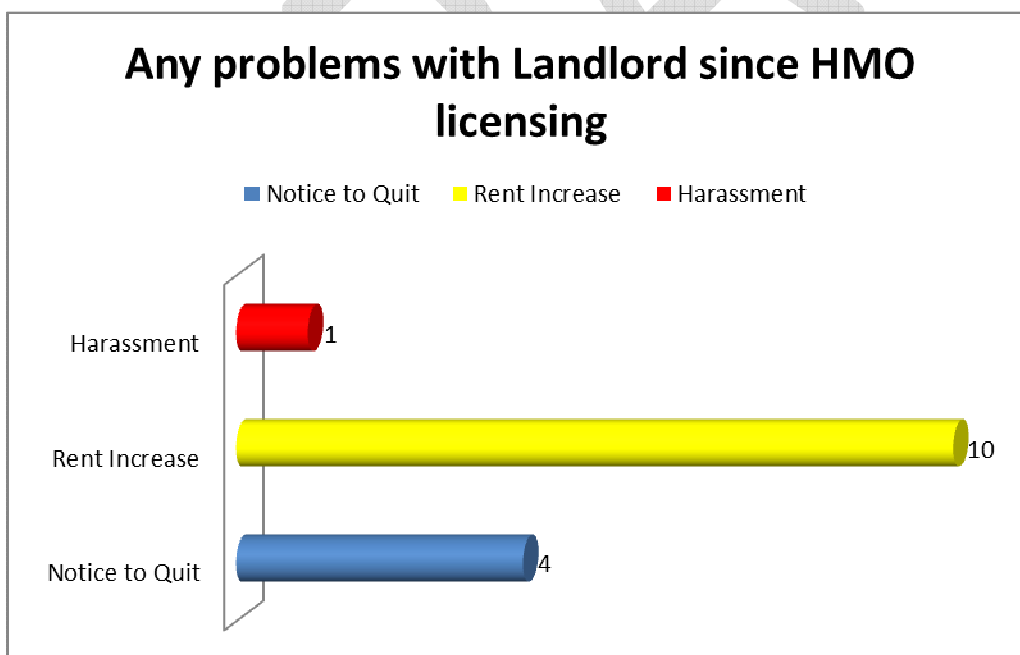


Figure 24 – Tenants Views - Noticed any improvements?

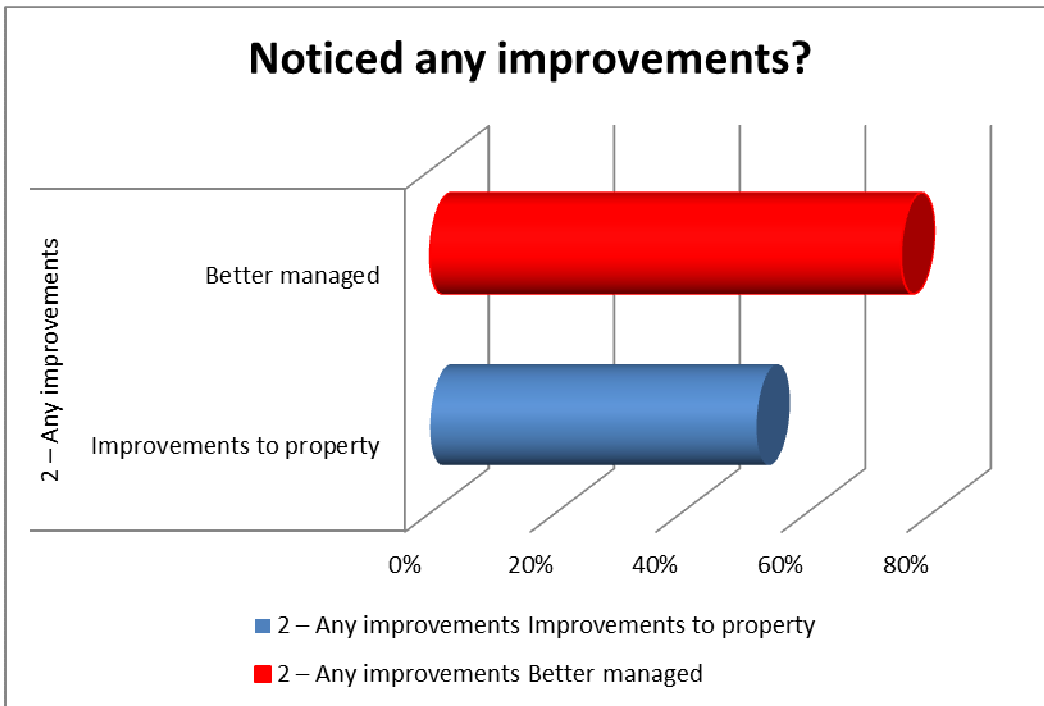
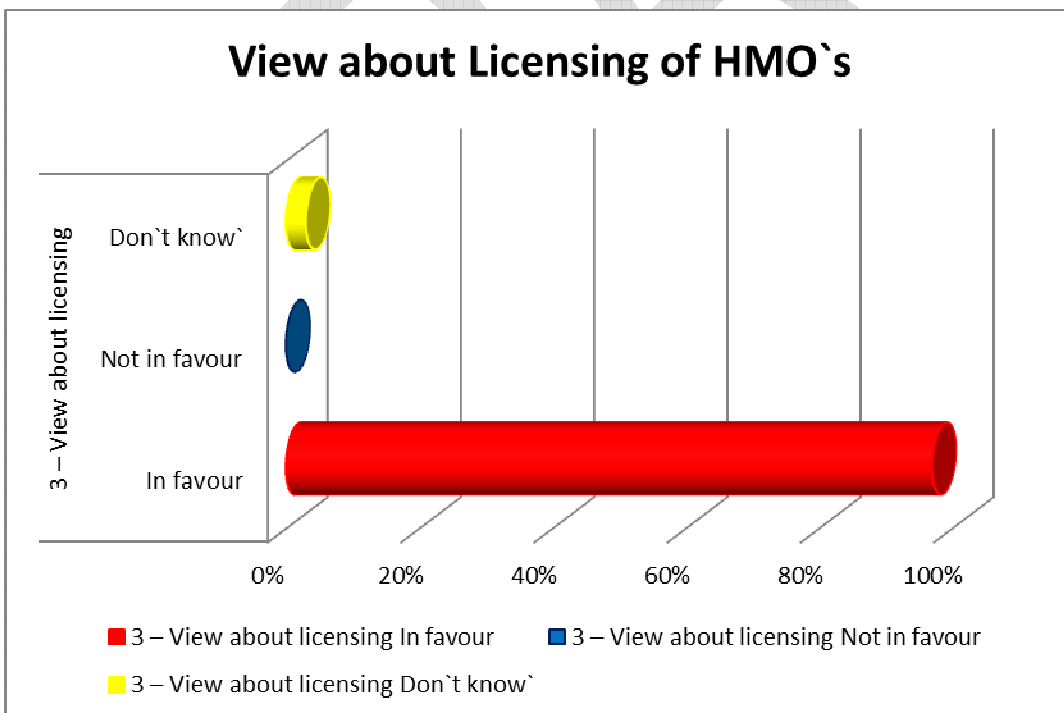


Figure 25 – Tenants Views about HMO Licensing?



A similar exercise was conducted during 2014/15 which focussed on the issue of potential retaliatory evictions in family homes, licensed and unlicensed HMOs. The first element of this study was to determine the percentage of tenants that were or had been afraid to report problems to their landlord due to retaliatory eviction. The results of this part can be found below.

Figure 26 – Fear of Retaliatory Eviction in Family homes and unlicensed HMOs

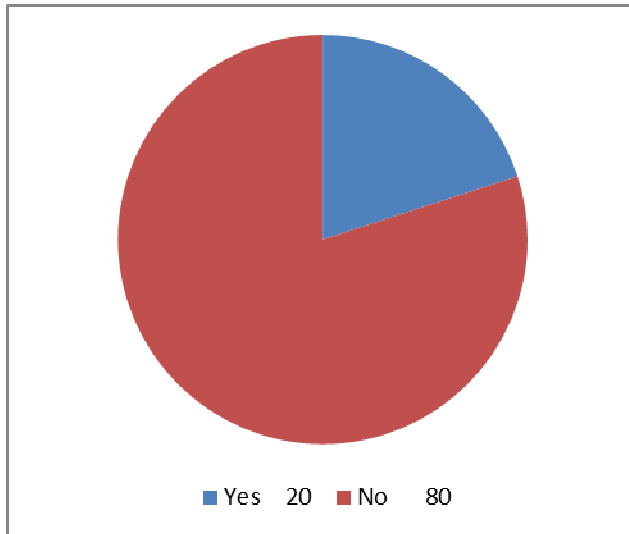
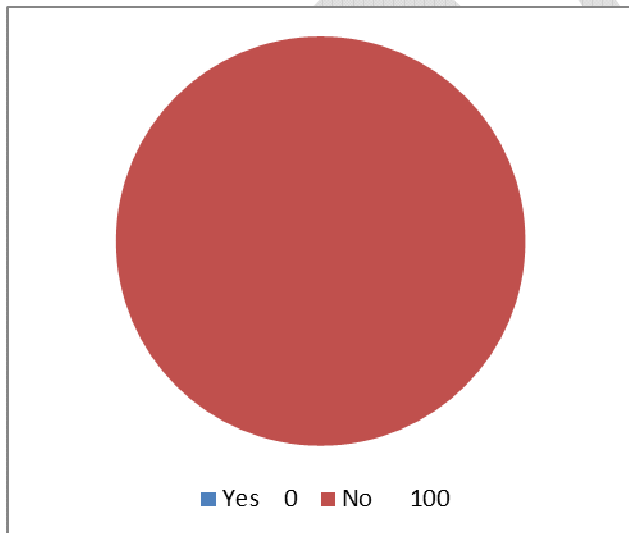


Figure 27 – Fear of Retaliatory Eviction in Licensed HMOs



The next stage was to determine the percentage of tenants that had directly experienced retaliatory eviction. The results of this part can be seen below.

Figure 28 – Experienced Retaliatory Eviction in Family homes and unlicensed HMOs

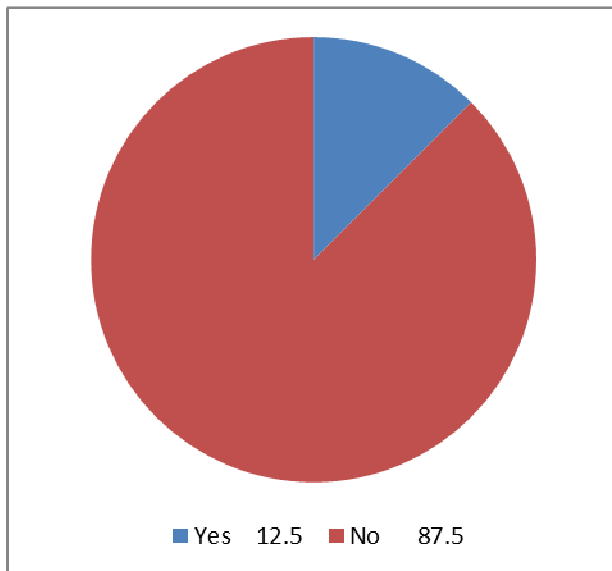
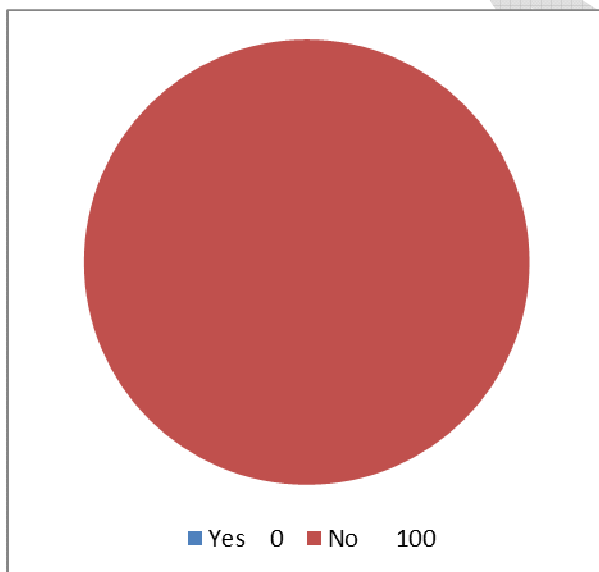


Figure 29 – Experienced Retaliatory Eviction in Licensed HMOs



In general terms this survey found the highest level of retaliatory evictions was in the family home and unlicensed HMO sectors. This demonstrates the high level of need to focus on unlicensed HMOs and also that the HMO licensing scheme is helping to raise management but more needs to be done to control poor practices in the sector.

The Way Forward....

The Additional Licensing scheme in the City was phased over two years for a period of 5 years. This creates a situation where Phase 1 and Phase 2 will expire on different dates (Phase 1 on the 24th January 2016 and Phase 2 on the 31st January 2017).

Under section 60(2) of the Act the expiry time must be no later than five years after the date on which the designation comes into force.

Under s.60 (3) of the Housing Act 2004 *'a local housing authority must from time to time review the operation of any designation made by them'*

In order for the Council to 'renew' the scheme it must proceed through the statutory process as laid out in Section 56 and 57 and the guidance issued under the Housing Act 2004: Licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Selective Licensing of Other Residential Accommodation (England) General Approval 2010.

Section 56 of the Act places requirements upon the Local Housing Authority when considering a designation for additional licensing of HMOs, in that the Council must:

- Consider that a significant proportion of the HMOs of that description in the area are being managed sufficiently ineffectively as to give rise, or likely to give rise, to one or more particular problems either for those occupying the HMOs or for members of the public; and
- Take reasonable steps to consult with persons who are likely to be affected and consider any representations made in accordance with the consultation and not withdrawn; and
- Have regard to any information regarding the extent to which any codes of practice approved under section 233 have been complied with by persons managing HMOs in the area (these codes relate to University managed accommodation).

Section 57 provides further considerations for the Local Authority in that they should ensure that:

- Exercising the designation is consistent with the authority's overall housing strategy; and
- Seek to adopt a coordinated approach in connection with dealing with homelessness, empty properties and anti-social behavior affecting the private rented sector as regards combining licensing with other action taken by them or others; and
- Consider whether there are any other courses of action available to them (of whatever nature) that might provide an effective method of dealing with the problem or problems in question; and
- That making the designation will significantly assist them to deal with the problem or problems (whether or not they take any other course of action as well).

The DCLG General Approval provides the condition that any consultation period for the proposed designation should not be less than 10 weeks.

In February 2010 the DCLG produced general guidance around the approval steps for additional and selective licensing designations in England.

This document provides examples of properties being managed “*sufficiently ineffectively*” including:

- Those whose external condition and curtilage (including yards and gardens) adversely impact upon the general character and amenity of the area in which they are located;
- Those whose internal condition, such as poor amenities, overcrowding etc. adversely impact upon the health, safety and welfare of the occupiers and the landlords of these properties are failing to take appropriate steps to address the issues;
- Those where there is a significant and persistent problem of anti-social behavior affecting other residents and/or the local community and the landlords of the HMOs are not taking reasonable and lawful steps to eliminate or reduce the problems; and
- Those where the lack of management or poor management skills or practices are otherwise adversely impacting upon the welfare, health and safety of residents and/or impacting upon the wider community.

Option Appraisal

The option appraisal process carried out for the review of the Scheme followed a series of logical steps, which when taken together, provided a thorough and systematic appraisal method to allow effective comparison of alternative options.

Although this process appears as a sequence of small steps following a linear pattern, in practice it is best viewed as a series of small cycles. The main steps followed are summarised below: -

Decide on the aim of the Scheme, i.e. the desired outcome and the objectives necessary to achieve this;

- Data gathering and analysis of findings;
- Generate a range of basic options;
- Appraise the options against criteria;
- Select a preferred option and carry out statutory consultation about the selected option.

The Option Appraisal process was managed by an internal Steering Group comprising senior staff from across the Council.

Deciding the aim of the Scheme

The overall purpose of the licensing scheme is to: *'alleviate the housing situation by setting and maintaining minimum standards across the city in the most vulnerable sector of Oxfords private rental market'*.

This is also major contributing factor to the Councils Corporate priority of Meeting Housing Need by the number of HMO Licence inspections carried out and by improving conditions in the Private Rented Sector.

The main aim for the review and future of the Scheme was therefore set around the purpose of the scheme and the Councils corporate priority of Meeting Housing Need. It was acknowledged by the officer steering group that the fundamental approach must also enshrine the need to improve conditions and management of HMOs whilst maintaining minimum standards.

Objectives

Objectives that would have to be realised to achieve this aim were therefore defined and included the need to:

- Maintain minimum standards of HMOs in the City;
- Raise the standard of HMOs in the City
- Improve management of HMOs in the City;
- Reduce the impact HMOs have on the surrounding area;
- Contribute to the creation of a viable and sustainable housing market;
- Promote long term confidence in the City;
- Support the existing community, in particular young and low income households; and
- Promote an improvement of conditions in the Private Rented Sector in the City.

Option Generation

Following a detailed assessment of the data, which is provided earlier in this review report, the next stage was to consider the generation of options which would seek to meet the stated aims and objectives and would deliver positive and lasting change.

The Officer steering group developed and confirmed a range of options that could be applied to the City, each of them involving different levels of intervention and accordingly producing a different range of outcomes. These options ranged across the spectrum from statutory action only

to complete renewal of the Scheme. The Officer steering group recognised that to be effective the review should consider all possible options.

The following options were considered:

Option 1 – Statutory Action Only. This is essentially the ‘base line’ position against which other options can be measured. It assumes that HMOs across the City will receive only minimum attention other than the action the Council is required by law to take to deal with poor conditions. i.e. mandatory licensing etc.. Action would be by way of legal notices and orders. It is also based on the current poor take up found with accreditation and the lack of compliance with standards even where conditioned by the licence process. At some stage prosecutions would also have to take place. It is likely that this would do little to address environmental and management issues and this would most likely lead to a continuing spiral of decline with a growing need for intervention in future years. The aim and stated objectives would not be achieved.

Option 2 – Renewal of the Scheme in certain areas of the City. This option assumes that the existing scheme is ‘renewed’ as necessary but only in certain areas of the City. The process of determination of these areas would be required but in essence this would create a situation where not all HMOs across the City are regulated consistently. In some parts of the City there are less HMOs but non compliance is found in all areas. Intervention to deal with these excluded areas would therefore be reduced if they were excluded from the Scheme and this could result in an increase of HMOs in the excluded parts of the City and therefore less power available to the Council to deal with concerns and issues. This approach does not address the need for a comprehensive scheme and as an option it does little to meet the wider aspirations of the residents of the area or the aims and objectives of the scheme.

Option 3 – Renewal of the Scheme in its entirety. This option assumes that the existing scheme will be ‘renewed’ in its entirety. The underlying basis of the option is that the Council will actively promote the Additional Licensing scheme and continue to implement the scheme under current conditions. Further reviews of the fees and charges structure would take place and options for extended licence periods would also be considered. i.e. 5 year licences for ‘gold’ standard landlords. This option would provide a level playing field for all HMOs and would ensure that the aims and objectives of the Scheme were met.

Option Appraisal

A series of decision rules, against which each of the options were to be appraised, were also set. Typically the final preferred option for the future of the Scheme must:

- Be technically feasible
- Be in accordance with relevant statutory powers
- Contribute toward strategic objectives
- Be appropriate to the needs of the community
- Be financially deliverable

Each of these options were assessed against the decision rules and the objectives set (based on scoring on un-weighted and weighted criteria).

It is important that assessments are made of the options for the contribution they make in meeting the objectives for the Scheme and addressing the decision rules set. The decision rules included a financial element but it is vital that any decisions affecting the area are not based on cost alone. The final option would then be open to statutory consultation.

Officers agreed the decision rules, assessments and scoring criteria. The Steering Group set out the weightings and carried out the assessments against the criteria. The results of each assessment can be found below.

Table 3 - Assessment of Options Against Decision Rules

Decision Rule		Options		
		1	2	3
1	Be technically feasible	3	3	3
2	Be in accordance with relevant statutory powers	3	3	3
3	Contribute towards the strategic objectives	0	1	3
4	Be appropriate to the needs of the community	1	2	2
5	Financially deliverable	1	3	3
Best fit against decision rules		8	12	14

Scoring (How option conforms to the decision rules)
0 = Breaks Rule
1 = Meets rule in some respects
2 = Meets rule in most respects
3 = Meets rule in all respects

The results of the decision rule assessment show that Option 2 and 3 are more favourable than Option 1. Option 1 is technically feasible and could be implemented in accordance with the relevant statutory powers but it does very little to contribute toward any of the other decision rules and would make very little contribution to the aims and objectives of the Scheme.

Option 2 scored slightly lower than Option 3 (12 compared to 14) because it was felt by the steering group that by licensing certain parts of the City the non-licensed parts would suffer with an increase in HMOs and this would impact of those neighbourhoods a lot more than if the whole area was subject to licensing. The Council would also have very limited powers to deal with any

issues in HMOs which were outside of the licensing scheme and so this would impact on the local community and would do very little to create a sustainable and viable housing market.

Option 3 meets all of the rules in all respects with the exception of 'appropriate to the needs of the community'. This rule scored slightly lower because it was felt by the steering group that a number of landlords who were part of the community may not agree that a scheme of licensing was appropriate to their needs.

Overall Option 3 (*Renew the Scheme in its entirety*) scores higher than any other option and meets all the rules in most respects and is the preferred course of action for the future of the Scheme.

An assessment against the Objectives set for the review of the Scheme was carried out to determine which option made the most contribution toward the objectives. The results of this can be seen in the table below.

Table 4 - Assessment Against Objectives (Unweighted)

No.	Objective Criteria	1	2	3
1	Maintain minimum standards in HMOs in the City	4	4	4
2	Raise the standard of HMOs in the City	2	3	5
3	Improve management of HMOs in the City	1	3	4
4	Reduce the impact HMOs have on the surrounding area	1	2	5
5	Contribute to the creation of a viable and sustainable housing market	0	3	4
6	Promote long term confidence in the City	0	3	4
7	Support existing communities, in particular young and low income households	1	4	4
8	Promote an improvement of conditions in the PRS in the City	2	3	4
Totals		11	25	34

The scores were recorded according to the following criteria:

Scoring (Contribution objective makes in meeting the vision)
0 = no contribution
1 = very little contribution
2 = limited contribution
3 = reasonable contribution

4 = significant contribution
5 = very significant contribution

The un-weighted assessment shows that Option 1 would have little or no effect in meeting the objectives of the scheme. Options 2 and 3 make more significant impact and would be the preferable over Option 1.

Option 2 scores significantly well against a number of the objectives but because of the piecemeal approach it promotes and the inability for the Council to deal with HMOs outside of the areas of the City that would be subject to licensing overall it scores less than Option 3. Option 3 is considered to be the better option for dealing with the whole range of objectives because it means that the Council is able to have a widespread and consistent impact in all areas across the whole range of objectives.

In order to test these options further a weighted assessment using the weighting factors agreed by Officers was carried out. The weighting was selected to reflect the contribution each of the objectives makes to the overall aim of the Scheme. This provides a balanced assessment of all elements of the option appraisal. The results of this weighted assessment are shown in the table below.

The weighting was chosen to reflect the contribution each of the objectives makes to the aim of the Scheme, which is to *'alleviate the housing situation by setting and maintaining minimum standards across the city in the most vulnerable sector of Oxford's private rental market'* using the following criteria:

Weighting
1 = Meets aim to some degree
2 = Meets aim to a large degree
3 = Meets aim to a greater degree or in full

Table 5 - Assessment Against Objectives (Weighted)

No	Objective Criteria	Weighting Factor	1	2	3
1	Maintain minimum standards in all HMOs	3	12	12	12
2	Achieve an improvement in conditions in all HMOs	2	4	6	10
3	Improve management of all HMOs	3	3	9	12
4	Reduce the impact HMOs have on the surrounding area	2	2	4	10
5	Contribute to the creation of a viable and sustainable housing market	2	0	6	8
6	Promote long term confidence in the area	1	0	3	4
7	Support existing communities, in particular young and low income households	3	3	12	12
8	Promote an improvement of conditions in the PRS	1	2	3	4
	Totals		26	55	72

The results of the weighted assessment support the findings of the decision rule assessment and the un-weighted objective assessment which is that Option 3 is the preferred course of action and will provide the 'best fit' for achieving the aim and objectives of the Scheme.

The local authority Officers agreed the decision rules, assessments and scoring criteria. The Steering Group set out the weightings and carried out the assessments against the criteria. Each option was assessed on an individual basis. The assessment summaries are set out below.

Table 6 - Summary of Option Appraisal Assessments

Assessment Method		Option 1		Option 2		Option 3	
		Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score
1	Decision Rule Assessment	3 rd	8	2 nd	12	1 st	14
2	Objectives Assessment (un-weighted)	3 rd	11	2 nd	25	1 st	34

3	Objectives Assessment (weighted)	3 rd	26	2 nd	55	1 st	72
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The table demonstrates that the most effective option is Option 3, and the least effective is option 1. The advantage of option 3 over option 2 increases significantly when considering the aims and objectives together.

On balance it is considered that **Option 3 better demonstrates that it meets the range of appraisal criteria and should be adopted within the preferred strategy.** It ranks 1st in all of the assessments and will best meet the aim and objectives for HMOs in the City.

Implementation

The next stages for implementing the proposal of Option 3 must follow the legal process set out in the Housing Act 2004 and be in accordance with guidance produced by Government. The Council also has internal procedures that must be adhered to ensure that the implementation of Option 3 is fully considered.

The Council will therefore be providing a summary of this report to the City Executive Board in June 2015 setting out the key findings and recommendations for the renewal of the scheme.

The recommendations will include a proposal to commence a new designation on the 25th January 2016 for Phase 1 HMOs for a period of 5 years and include a provision for Phase 2 of the original scheme to commence on the 1st February 2017 with an expiry date of the 25th January 2021 i.e. for 4 years. This would align the two phases of the scheme and reduce the financial burden associated with having to revoke Phase 2 of the scheme and having to re-advertise the new designation for the whole scheme.

If approved the Council will proceed with the statutory consultation for a new designation for a period of 10 weeks and submit a future report to City Executive Board setting out the results of the consultation and the structure of the new designation.

Testimonials

Local Letting Agent, Manager -

I am delighted to write informing you of how the introduction of Licensing and Accreditation have improved the private rental sector quality of shared houses.

I am still concerned that licensing does not apply to ALL rented properties in UK, and as Oxford has been a bold leader on the HMO front, I urge them to consider expanding the Scheme to all rented property in the private sector.

Before the introduction of Licensing we at Premier were regularly turning down dreadful properties we were offered by “rogue” landlords, now this is a fairly rare occurrence. With the huge number of HMOs in the City it has been an uphill task and the Council have largely succeeded – though of course there are still glitches in the system and sometimes not enough consistency in the inspections carried out by the councils’ officers – however we try to work with the officers on this and once they realise our commitment to high standards they are generally acceptable to our suggestions. This is extremely important as the only way to encourage ALL landlords to participate and not try to operate illegally is indeed to have co-operation and non-threatening attitudes.

Overall the Licensing has improved the standards of HMO’s making them safer and even though rents continue to rise most landlords now realise the importance of investing their profits in maintaining and raising standards. Of course there are still those who don’t understand that! However, with us and the Council working together we do manage to convince most of them!

Oxford Resident and Landlord -

“As both resident and new landlord in Oxford I value the HMO licensing scheme's support for responsible landlords and its calling to task of irresponsible landlords. Properly executed, HMO licensing ensures better neighbourhoods for all as well as reassurance on safety and housing conditions for HMO tenants. My licence application a few months ago was handled promptly, efficiently and fairly.”

DRAFT

Title	Risk description	Opp/ threat	Cause	Consequence	Date Raised	Owner	Gross		Current		Residual		Comments	Controls					
							I	P	I	P	I	P		Control description	Due date	Status	Progress %	Action Owner	
Insufficient evidence base	The consultation project does not provide sufficient evidence to support an approach for the future of the scheme	Opp and Threat	Lack of interest; insufficient marketing, promotion, inaccurate targeting of audience. Lack of resources	Consultation uneven, incomplete, insufficient for decision making process, suspend decision/ outcome	June 2015	Adrian Chowns								Ensure that statutory consultation period is satisfied. Staffing available to support consultation. Resources available to deliver wide enough project.					
Recommendations not approved	The recommendations of the report are not approved	Threat	Insufficient support from members to proceed with statutory consultation	Phase 1 of the Scheme will expire and Phase 2 will remain regulated.	June 2015	Adrian Chowns								Review and implement appropriate consultation project and ensure requirements of legislation fulfilled.					
Legal challenge	A legal challenge to the proposals is put forward as a judicial review	Opp and Threat	Statutory requirements not met. Insufficient resources provided to fulfill requirements. Insufficient evidence base. Lack of wider consultation		June 2015	Adrian Chowns								Ensure that statutory requirements for proving the case for licensing of HMOs is robust and are met.					

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Form to be used for the Full Equalities Impact Assessment

Service Area: Environmental Development		Section: Environmental Health	Date of Initial assessment: 31/03/2015	Key Person responsible for assessment: Adrian Chowns	Date assessment commenced: 17/04/2015	
Name of Policy to be assessed:			CEB Report: Review of HMO Licensing			
1. In what area are there concerns that the policy could have a differential impact			<i>Race</i>		<i>Disability</i>	
			<i>Gender</i>		<i>Religion or Belief</i>	
Other strategic/ equalities considerations			<i>Safeguarding/ Welfare of Children and vulnerable adults</i>		<i>Mental Wellbeing/ Community Resilience</i>	
					<i>Marriage & Civil Partnership</i>	

<p>2. Background:</p> <p>Give the background information to the policy and the perceived problems with the policy which are the reason for the Impact Assessment.</p>	<p>A licensing scheme requiring all HMOs in Oxford to be licensed was introduced in 2011 and following a recent review of the Licensing Scheme the aim is to consult with all relevant parties on the future renewal of the Scheme.</p> <p>A statutory consultation project of 10 weeks would have to be delivered to tight timescales because the Scheme is due to expire in January 2016 and failure to make a new designation could result in certain parts of the sector being regulated and other parts not regulated. This may also put occupiers at risk.</p>
<p>3. Methodology and Sources of Data:</p> <p>The methods used to collect data and what sources of data</p>	<p>Data held on the Council's systems has been used to identify the number of potential licensed HMOs that could fall outside of the requirements to be licensed if the statutory consultation is not completed and the Scheme is allowed to expire without renewal.</p> <p>An assessment on the proportion of landlords from BME groups has indicated that 25% are of Asian origin. This group make up 10% of the population of Oxford as a whole.</p> <p>An annual study was conducted in partnership with Health Visitors carrying out visits to HMOs where there were new born babies or families with children living in HMOs, which indicated that there had been an increase in this group living in shared accommodation.</p> <p>The profile of the PRS in Oxford has changed considerably since the introduction of the Scheme. Oxford is now the least affordable City to live in and has the highest proportion of young people. High house prices create a situation where they are unlikely to be able to access home ownership consequently the PRS is the most viable option and sharing reduces the cost of accommodation further.</p>
<p>4. Consultation</p> <p>This section should outline all the consultation that has taken place on the</p>	<p>Approval has been sought through the Project Involvement board to commence the statutory consultation once the report being submitted to CEB has been considered.</p>

<p>EIA. It should include the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why you carried out the consultation. • Details about how you went about it. • A summary of the replies you received from people you consulted. • An assessment of your proposed policy (or policy options) in the light of the responses you received. • A statement of what you plan to do next 	<p>No consultation has been carried out on this impact assessment because the proposals are still subject to approval through the CEB process.</p> <p>If the recommendations of the CEB report are supported then officers will proceed with the 10 week statutory consultation as approved by the Project Involvement Board.</p>
<p>5. Assessment of Impact:</p> <p>Provide details of the assessment of the policy on the six primary equality strands. There may have been other groups or individuals that you considered. Please also consider whether the policy, strategy or spending decisions could have an impact on safeguarding and / or the welfare of children and vulnerable adults</p>	<p>The project is based on the need to fulfil the requirements of national legislation. A key consideration is to ensure that all persons who are likely to be affected are consulted and any representations are taken into account.</p> <p>Data gathered will assist in informing the impact on target groups such as landlords from BME groups, tenants, students and migrants. The levels of impact vary across each group with 25% of BME landlords operating HMOs, young people likely to access this type of accommodation, the increase in families living in HMOs and vulnerable groups being the key considerations.</p> <p>In regulating HMOs, owners and agents who are regulated against may feel that they have been adversely impacted upon. However there are no other ways in which the service could be provided that would achieve these aims without adverse impact. Ultimately, when working within the legislative framework, people have a right to legal redress should they feel that a decision was unfairly/unlawfully taken; this can be via an appeal process or the Council's Complaints system.</p>

<p>6. Consideration of Measures:</p> <p>This section should explain in detail all the consideration of alternative approaches/mitigation of adverse impact of the policy</p>	<p>The key groups that are likely to be affected by these proposals have been identified and a consultation project developed to address the implications of the scheme. The proposed approach to consultation has been set out by the recent PIB report and approved. The report setting out recommendations will be considered by CEB and if approved the consultation will be conducted in accordance with the project plan approved.</p>
<p>6a. Monitoring Arrangements:</p> <p>Outline systems which will be put in place to monitor for adverse impact in the future and this should include all relevant timetables. In addition it could include a summary and assessment of your monitoring, making clear whether you found any evidence of discrimination.</p>	<p>The fee and charges structure associated with licensing of HMOs is reviewed on an annual basis to consider the impact this has on landlords generally.</p> <p>When enforcement activity is carried out each case is reviewed to ensure that the Council is being fair, consistent and proportionate in its approach. This review ensures that the impact of particular groups is monitored. Feedback is also obtained from relevant groups.</p>
<p>7. 12. Date reported and signed off by City Executive Board:</p>	
<p>8. Conclusions:</p> <p>What are your conclusions drawn from the results in terms of the policy impact</p>	

9. Are there implications for the Service Plans?	YES		10. Date the Service Plans will be updated	2015/2016	11. Date copy sent to Equalities Officer in HR & Facilities	
.13. Date reported to Scrutiny and Executive Board:			14. Date reported to City Executive Board:		12. The date the report on EqIA will be published	

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Signed (completing officer)

Signed (Lead Officer)

Please list the team members and service areas that were involved in this process:

Organisational Development & Learning Advisor/ Equalities

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Preparation for the 2015/16 Scrutiny work programme

These are for the Scrutiny Committee to agree as carry forward items:

Items carried forward	Suggested approach	Suggested / possible timing
Budget Review	Finance Panel Review	Dec 15-Feb 16
Neighbourhood working / community engagement	Review Group	
Local Economy Panel	Review Group	
Thames Water investment	Ad hoc Panel	16 July
Oxfutures	Member briefing	
Covered Market Leasing Strategy	Scrutiny Committee (pre-scrutiny)	2 June
Public Spaces Protection Orders	Scrutiny Committee (pre-scrutiny)	2 June and on-going monitoring
Proposed Lease and Monitoring Arrangements for Community Centres	Scrutiny Committee (pre-scrutiny)	30 June
Oxford Railway Station Redevelopment	Scrutiny Committee (pre-scrutiny)	30 June
Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy	Scrutiny Committee (pre-scrutiny)	30 June
Statement of Community Involvement 2015	Scrutiny Committee (pre-scrutiny)	30 June
Summary of Monitoring Information Reported by Community and Voluntary Organisations 2014/15	Scrutiny Committee (pre-scrutiny)	30 June
Fusion Performance 2014-15	Scrutiny Committee (pre-scrutiny)	30 June
Taxi Licencing	Scrutiny Committee	2 November
Discretionary Housing Payments	Scrutiny Committee	Mid-year
Performance Monitoring (corporate)	Scrutiny Committee	Quarterly
Budget monitoring	Finance Panel	Quarterly
Low Carbon Hub	Finance Panel	2 July
Municipal Bonds / Local financing	Finance Panel	2 July
Corporate Debt Policy	Finance Panel (pre-scrutiny)	2 July
Performance Monitoring (housing)	Housing Panel	Quarterly

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Scheme	Housing Panel (pre-scrutiny)	4 June
Housing Development delivery models	Housing Panel (pre-scrutiny)	4 June
De-designation of 40+ accommodation	Housing Panel	9 September

These are new suggestions that have been made by Councillors. This is a provisional list as Councillors have been given until 12 June to provide suggestions. The Committee may wish to set up a separate meeting of all or part of the Committee to advise or make suggestions on which items should be taken forward in the 2015/16 scrutiny work programme:

New additions and priorities	Suggested approach / comment
Mental health services	Review Group / Scrutiny Committee
Educational Attainment	Review Group / Considered by Inequality Panel
Tree cover, biodiversity and the work of the Forest of Oxford	Review Group / Scrutiny Committee
School/employer links and careers advice	Review Group / Scrutiny Committee
Tackling loneliness among the elderly	Review Group / Scrutiny Committee
The Council's external contracts and their impacts	Review Group / Ad hoc Panel
Better Partnership with the County Council	Review Group / Ad hoc Panel
Guest House regulation	Scrutiny Committee / Ad hoc Panel
Heritage listing process / Heritage & Conservation / impact of the Design Review Panel	Scrutiny Committee / Ad hoc Panel
How to ensure that the County Council improves the maintenance of roads and pavements / Highways works.	Scrutiny Committee
Public Communications / Consultation	Scrutiny Committee
Graffiti	Scrutiny Committee
Youth Ambition	Scrutiny Committee
Whether the Council would benefit from having a Personnel Committee to deal with employment, training and HR matters for staff	Scrutiny Committee
Complaints received by the City Council	Scrutiny Committee
Equalities	Scrutiny Committee
Employment of interns, apprentices and work experience students	Scrutiny Committee

Contact Centre performance	Scrutiny Committee
Review of the Homelessness Action Plan 2013-18	Housing Panel – 9 September
Sustainability of the Council's Housing Stock	Housing Panel
Designating areas for high density housing development	Housing Panel
Community Land Trusts	Housing Panel
Use of CPO and EDMO powers for newaffordable housing	Housing Panel
Providing more housing on the waterways	Housing Panel
The use of S106 funds and what influence Councillors have	Considered by Cycling Panel
Oxford Transport Strategy	Considered by Cycling Panel
Economic Development	Considered by Local Economy Panel
Child Poverty	Considered by Inequality Panel
How to improve the health of people in the city	Considered by Inequality Panel
Primary care in Oxford	Considered by Oxfordshire County Council's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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HOUSING PANEL (PANEL OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE)

Tuesday 24 March 2015

PANEL MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors Sanders, Hollick (Chair), Wade, Hill and Smith.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Laura Higgins, Dave Scholes, Shaibur Rahman and Andrew Brown (Scrutiny Officer)

1. APOLOGIES

No apologies

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

3. NON-STATUTORY HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

The Rough Sleeping and Single Homelessness Manager reported that Oxford has a large historic problem with homelessness. Many homeless people have a combination of Mental Health and alcohol or substance abuse issues.

The Panel heard that the City Council receives grant money from DCLG which it tops up to provide a total of £1.4m which funds a wide range of services. The City Council funding is protected over the medium term but the level of the government grant is decided annually. A small cut in the grant last year was manageable but significant cuts in future years would change the landscape. The County Council also currently provides a £3.8m of funding but this is reducing to £2.3m. It is difficult to predict the impact that these cuts will have on the homelessness pathway.

There are currently 220-230 hostel beds in the city and this number is being maintained, whereas nationally, bed numbers are declining. However, given the funding reductions, it seems likely that the quality of some types of provision will be reduced.

While there is some smaller scale homelessness provision in Abingdon and Cherwell, many homeless people come to Oxford from the neighbouring districts and also from further afield due to the concentration of facilities here. Once homeless people have settled in the city, they tend to stay. Local authorities now have local connection policies.

The high demand on bed spaces means that some people are on the streets, and some have been there for 2-3 years. There has recently been a slight increase in the numbers of people sleeping rough. Between June 2012 and December 2014 new rough sleepers spent an average of six nights on the street. There is a big focus on getting new rough sleepers off the streets quickly. Some people are now being given deposits for Private Rented Sector housing to free

up bed spaces but this represents a big cultural shift and there have been relatively few moves in to private sector accommodation.

The Panel heard that the City Council has good links with the Homeless Liaison Police Officer and Health services. There are operational procedures in place to ensure that no one should be discharged onto the streets and the City Council is normally given 24 hours of notice. Health services make a financial contribution to the homelessness pathway and also fund the mental health pathway. Moves towards pooled budgeting across different agencies are would be challenging but welcome.

The Panel resolved to monitor the impact of County Council cuts and requested further information on the numbers of individual homeless people who access services.

4. VERBAL UPDATE ON THE JOINT COMMISSIONING OF HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES

The Housing Needs Manager advised that the County Council is currently leading on the joint commissioning of housing support services and an update paper will go to the Health Improvement Board at the end of April.

The Panel were advised that the City Council has sought to influence the commissioning to achieve the best outcomes for the city. There will be a dispersal of bed spaces to districts, which was a City Council aim.

The homelessness pathway demands throughput but bed blocking is a problem because there is a lack of move on options in the city. The Panel noted that the housing situation in the city is not likely to improve any time soon.

The City Council is looking at property fund investment models that could increase the availability of housing at affordable rates. Due diligence is currently being done and neighbouring districts have been approached. The Panel noted that the City Council has a duty to provide best value and that the Inequality Scrutiny Group is deliberation of these kinds of options.

5. AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Team Leader for Spatial and Economic Development advised that Panel that the City Council is obliged to follow new government guidance.

The change affects the City Council's policy of seeking contributions towards affordable housing from developers of smaller sites of 4-9 dwellings. Since this policy was introduced in February 2013, it had generated approximately £500k per year in additional funding. This funding has been building up to enable a more sizeable investment.

Reading and West Berkshire Councils are challenging this government decision and the City Council is providing data to support this challenge.

In response to a question about whether the City Council can stop developers from deliberately building 9 dwellings to avoid affordable housing contributions, the Panel heard that the City Council can ensure good use of land through its planning policies. This is an issue that officers are very alive to. Some developers have tried to artificially sub-divide plots and have been challenged.

The Panel resolved to monitor the impact of the new government guidance after 6 months.

6. WORK PROGRAMME

Noted.

7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 6.30 pm

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