

Falkirk Council
Housing Revenue Account
Business Plan
2023-53



Foreword

As Head of Housing & Communities, I am delighted to present Falkirk Council's Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for 2023-2053. This plan outlines our strategic vision for providing high-quality, affordable housing and services to nearly 17,000 households. Developed in consultation with tenants and partners, it builds on our commitment to improve our housing stock while addressing the challenges of rising costs and sustainability.

Our priorities align with the Falkirk Plan and the Council Plan, focusing on value for money, tenant satisfaction, poverty, equality and environmental sustainability.

The next 30 years will present significant challenges, including inflation and the need for sustainable practices. However, we will address these challenges through effective financial and risk management.

By working closely with our tenants, we can ensure their voices are heard and influence decisions on service design and housing investment.

I want to express my gratitude to all our partners and especially our tenants, whose input and collaboration are invaluable. Together, we will continue to build strong, sustainable communities, ensuring that Falkirk remains a place where everyone can thrive.

Kenny Gillespie
Head of Housing & Communities

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Context

Introduction

Falkirk Council's housing service provides high quality homes and services to nearly 17,000 households and has an annual revenue budget of approximately £72 million and a five-year capital investment programme of around £328 million.

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan covers the 30-year period from 2023/24 and focuses on the management of the Council's housing assets. It provides the financial framework for delivering services and provides assurance that the HRA is being managed effectively and strategically.

The HRA Business Plan consolidates the service plan, Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and Housing Asset Management Plan (HAMP). The priorities identified in the Business Plan will be delivered through the aforementioned plans and existing performance monitoring frameworks. The HRA Business Plan will be revised every 2 years.

The HRA Business Plan is closely aligned with both the Falkirk Plan and the Council Plan. Falkirk Council works in partnership with other organisations, including registered social landlords (RSLs) and the private sector, to deliver its objectives.

All data referred to was collected in 2023, unless stated otherwise in the body of the text.

“Annual revenue budget of approximately £72 million and a five-year capital investment programme of around £328 million”



What is the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)?

The HRA records all income and expenditure relating to a local authority's landlord service. It is a ring-fenced account which means that the Council must collect sufficient income from rents to cover HRA expenditure.

All income to the HRA is derived from rent and service charges paid by Council tenants or by the sale or lease of HRA land and properties.

Our Housing Investment Programme (HIP) is the HRA capital investment programme and is funded mainly through borrowing, repaid over a number of years by the HRA as loan charges. Alongside Scottish Government grant funding this borrowing, which is paid for by our tenants' rents, funds the housing improvement programmes and the Council's house building programme.

Local authorities must ensure that their HRAs are managed in accordance with the Scottish Government's Guidance on the Operation of Local Authority Housing Revenue Accounts in Scotland.

The key principles behind this guidance are that:

- ▶ The HRA must comply with legislation, statutory guidance and accounting codes of practice.
- ▶ HRA assets must be used to benefit present or prospective tenants either in direct usage or as investment properties providing a financial return.
- ▶ There must be a robust, written methodology for calculating and allocating HRA costs (including internal costs charged by the Council to the HRA).
- ▶ There must be clear, published mechanisms and procedures for consulting with tenants on matters of financial transparency.
- ▶ Where appropriate, non-council tenants living in mixed tenure areas benefiting from HRA provided services are charged for goods and services.

Operating Context

The context in which we are delivering our services is challenging. With inflation at its highest for 40 years, the cost of providing services to our tenants is increasing. Rising costs are impacting on our tenants' household budgets too, with many of our tenants struggling with increasing heating bills and other living costs.

People are living for longer and we will build homes for life that meet the Housing for Varying Need standard and review our Disabled Adaptation Scheme to make it easier for people to access services and the adaptations they need sooner.

Expectations are changing too - the Scottish Government's Housing to 2040 strategy makes it clear that space and quality standards are evolving, with a drive towards place-based approaches and 20-minute neighbourhoods, zero emissions heating and revised Housing for Varying Needs standard.

One of the biggest challenges we face is how we reduce our carbon emissions to become net zero. The Council aims to be net zero by 2030 and, as a landlord, we are upgrading the energy efficiency of our homes and switching to zero or low emissions heating.

Strategic Drivers and Priorities

The focus on how we manage our HRA must always be to provide value for money to our tenants who pay for the services. Around 88% of income to the HRA comes from tenants' rents, therefore one of the key drivers is meeting the service and investment priorities of our tenants.

The HRA supports the Council Plan and other partners to meet strategic priorities. By investing in building new homes and improving our existing homes we can support stronger and healthier communities, promote opportunities and reduce inequalities and support a thriving local economy and green transition.

The key drivers and priorities for the HRA Business Plan are:

- ▶ Delivering high quality, value for money services to tenants that are responsive and person-centred.
- ▶ Providing high quality affordable homes that meet the regulatory requirements and standards by investing in our existing stock and council new build programme.
- ▶ Supporting stronger and healthier communities by delivering housing services that reduce homelessness and support people to sustain tenancies.
- ▶ Supporting a thriving economy and green transition by pushing towards becoming net-zero by 2030.
- ▶ Supporting health and social care objectives to help people live independently at home for as long as possible and meet specialist housing need.



Managing Risk

Financial and Treasury Management

Nationally, local authorities are facing challenges and significant pressures to do more with less. To address this challenge, the Council has developed a financial strategy that aims to balance its budget while delivering its priorities and meeting statutory obligations.

The twin challenges of increasing supply and improving existing housing stock, within the operating context of rising costs and materials shortages, is putting unprecedented pressure on the HRA. As a result of effective HRA management, we are in a strong position to deliver our service and investment priorities. However, it is more important than ever that we manage our HRA effectively to maximise the resources available to improve our services and homes.

In line with the Council's Financial Strategy, we will manage the pressures on the HRA by:

- ▶ Investing in ways to make homes more energy efficient and reduce fuel poverty.
- ▶ Transforming services to be more efficient and customer-focused, adopting a more flexible and agile approach to service delivery.
- ▶ Introducing a new Digital Housing Strategy and technology to improve processes and customer satisfaction.

Ensuring Affordability

Capital investment must be affordable, prudent and sustainable. All borrowing undertaken to fund capital investment will result in revenue costs which will need to be supported by housing rental income. It is, therefore, essential that housing investment is considered within the context of the HRA budget and that appropriate rent levels are set.

The Prudential Code enables councils to invest in housing so long as their capital spending plans are affordable, prudent and sustainable. This principle has been followed in preparing this programme.

To ensure the continued affordability and viability of the HRA, we:

- ▶ Carry out long-term financial modelling of the HRA, considering the financial implications of future housing investment while maintaining a viable HRA. This modelling indicates that beyond 2023/24 a minimum average rent increase of 4% per year is necessary to deliver the levels of investment set out in the current Housing Investment Plan (HIP).
- ▶ Maintain a minimum investment and contingency fund to absorb any short-term impacts of income reduction or support any unforeseen expenditure. Having sufficient contingency fund is a key part of managing risk and ensuring the delivery of our capital investment priorities. Maintaining a reserve balance of £5 - £6 million is considered prudent to meet future revenue and capital investment requirements.

Risk Management

In addition to the inflationary, pay and cost pressures identified in the Council's Financial Strategy, specific risks to the HRA have been identified. Risks identified through the Council's risk management process and the HRA Business Planning Process, are identified below, along with a summary of mitigation.

Risk	Reason	Evaluation	Mitigation
Reduction in rental income	<p>People are affected by increased cost of living, therefore more people fall into rent arrears</p> <p>The level of rent arrears rise as people are unable to clear their debt</p> <p>Loss of income on properties that are void</p>	High	<p>Introduction of the Income Maximisation Strategy and Action Plan and staffing and which includes additional staff resources to identify and support tenants sooner and prevent tenants entering arrears</p> <p>Rent Arrear Matching Scheme to reduce the level of arrears</p> <p>Improving the void process following a service review additional resources are in place to decrease the length of time properties are void</p>
Reduction in Scottish Government Resource Planning Assumption (RPA) grant level	<p>National Affordable Housing Supply Programme is reduced</p> <p>Reduced ability to build new Council homes and meet housing need</p>	High	<p>Reviewing housing new build specification to identify savings</p> <p>Acknowledging housing as a strategic priority across the Council and adopting a partnership approach to make projects financially viable such as reducing overall project costs by reducing professional fees, land costs, developer contributions and seeking financial contribution from other services such as Health & Social Care partnership to help meet housing need.</p>

Risk	Reason	Evaluation	Mitigation
Insufficient rental income to deliver investment priorities	<p>A minimum 4% rent increase in year 25-26 is required in to balance the HRA.</p> <p>If rent levels are too low this will reduce the Councils ability to deliver tenant and council priorities</p> <p>Falkirk Council's rent charges are low in comparison to other social and private landlords which places more demand on the service</p>	High	<p>Use the HouseMark Affordability Tool to check proposed rent rise is affordable for tenants</p> <p>Communicate the impact of rent strategy decisions on services and investment programmes to Elected Members</p> <p>Ensure tenants understand links between rent and investment</p> <p>Undertake Equality and Poverty Impact Assessments as part of HRA Rent Report and the Local Housing Strategy</p>
Increase in borrowing costs	Interest rates rise	Medium	<p>Undertake Financial viability assessment for council new build projects and the Housing Investment Program (HIP)</p> <p>Scenario planning is undertaken each year to assess prudential borrowing costs and affordability</p>
Unplanned stock condition issue arising	<p>An unanticipated stock condition issue could require a change to the investment programme reducing our ability to meet priorities.</p> <p>New Scottish Housing Quality Standard introduced which requires additional cost</p>	Medium	Stock condition survey and up to date asset management database reduces risk of unexpected investment needs.
Insufficient workforce to deliver programmes and services	The service has an ageing workforce and faces recruitment and staff retention challenges.	High	<p>Ensure career progression opportunities and invest in staff learning and development</p> <p>Engage with employment and training unit to secure apprentices</p> <p>Continue the Graduate trainee programme</p>

Risk	Reason	Evaluation	Mitigation
Unplanned change to fire safety standards/ fire protection	A change to standards could potentially impact on the planned Housing Investment Program (HIP) and our ability to meet priorities.	Medium	Financial provision within HIP to ensure compliance with new regulations Maintain awareness of policy/ regulatory developments.

Ensuring Value for Money

To ensure value for money to our tenants, we will:

- ▶ Ensure all HRA asset investment and disposal decisions are based on a thorough options appraisal and cost benefit appraisal.
- ▶ Manage surplus HRA assets effectively, ensuring only HRA assets that meet the Council's corporate objectives are retained. This could include selling small strips of land that are considered surplus to operational requirements, or disposing of non-operational property assets with high investment needs and low rental yields.
- ▶ Ensure the HRA asset portfolio is suitable for its current use and supports efficient and effective service delivery, both now and in the future.
- ▶ Ensure HRA assets are in an appropriate condition and maintained effectively.
- ▶ Where possible, ensure HRA property assets are accessible for people with disabilities.
- ▶ Minimise the cost and consumption of resources.
- ▶ Ensure that the HRA non-operational portfolio continues to generate sufficient revenue and encourages economic development.
- ▶ Procure and manage contracts and projects efficiently and effectively.

The HIP is assessed for financial viability and affordability, with costs scrutinised prior to approval. This includes a review of the housing specification to assess opportunities for reducing costs whilst maintaining and improving quality.

In addition to this, we will explore how we can consider whole life costs as we develop our investment programmes. This may involve higher upfront capital costs but lower ongoing revenue costs for repair, maintenance.

Internal Review, Scrutiny and Performance Management

This Business Plan will be revised every 2 years and take account of both current and future regulatory requirements and changes as introduced by the Scottish Government and the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Each year Housing Services prepare the Annual Assurance statement required by the Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework. This is presented to the Regulator and validated by Committee. Falkirk Council's Internal Audit also carries out an Internal Audit of Housing's activity and performance reporting mechanisms. As reported to Executive Committee on 4th October 2022, Housing Services attained "substantial assurance" and validation on its Annual Assurance return. The Local Housing Strategy priorities and action plan are closely monitored and reported to Committee annually.

The HIP is closely monitored to ensure delivery and a performance monitoring framework is in place to guarantee the housing service understands and manages risk.

Key performance information is recorded and monitored to inform service decisions and improvements. Performance and comparative costs of the service are being scrutinised through benchmarking to ensure scope for improvement is identified and lessons are learned from top performing landlords.

Investing in Services

Services designed for tenants with tenants

Services that are designed for tenants with tenants means that we understand their priorities and we can balance these with our statutory and legislative requirements.

We are widely recognised as best practice for our collaborative approach to engaging with our tenants, having been awarded gold accreditation for our engagement work at the TPAS Scotland National Good Practice Awards.

Tenant satisfaction with opportunities to participate is higher than the national average at 98% compared to 86.8% according to 2021/22 Scottish Housing Regulator data), and significantly higher than the average for Scotland's local authorities at 67%.

Our tenants influence decision making and strategic planning through a variety of mechanisms, including close working and seeking the views of our Registered Tenants Organisations, Housing Asset Management Plan Group, Editorial Panel, How Your Rent Money is Spent. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel comprising of tenants who carry out independent reviews of housing services and make recommendations for improvement. The findings of this panel inform how we design and shape our HRA funded services.

**“98% of tenants are
satisfied with the
opportunities to
participate”**

2021/2022



Service Performance

We don't just want to be a top performing Council landlord - we want to be a top performing landlord. To achieve that, we will focus on the following service improvement priorities:

Improving rent collection:

- ▶ Improving rent collection.
- ▶ Delivering digital transformation to improve service delivery.
- ▶ Supporting our staff to provide high quality services.
- ▶ Improve the repairs service.
- ▶ Designing services to support our tenants.
- ▶ Improving tenant satisfaction.

Around 88% of our income to the HRA comes from tenants' rents, so it is critical that we maximise rent collection. In 2021/22, the amount of money we collected from current and past rent due was 98.2%, compared to the Scottish average of 99.3%, and rent not collected on empty homes was 2.3% compared to Scottish average of 1.4%.

We have adopted an early intervention approach to prevent rent arrears from arising and recently allocated an additional 10 staff to provide person-centred support, help with income maximisation and ensure our tenants get the help they need as early as possible.

We are currently consulting with tenants on the introduction of a Rent Arrears Support Scheme to incentivise rent arrears repayment through "matched" payments. A budget allocation of £250k will help reduce our rent arrears, sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness and generate rental income.

We will build on these initiatives to ensure our HRA remains strong and that we support our tenants to reduce poverty, improve wellbeing and maximise income. By helping our tenants to claim all the benefits and support they are entitled to, we will increase rent collection whilst also reducing the inequalities that arise from poverty including poorer health, attainment and achievement. Think Poverty training will be provided to staff to raise their awareness and understanding of poverty and the support they can help tenants to access.

A review of the Void Process has been carried out, and a new plan is in place with additional resources secured to ensure our homes are empty for a shorter period of time. This will minimise rental loss and increase the number of homes available for allocation.

“A budget allocation of £250k will help reduce our rent arrears, sustain tenancies and prevent homelessness and generate rental income”



Improving the repairs service

Our repairs service is often the main contact our tenants have with the housing service, so it is critical that the service meets, if not exceeds expectations.

Although satisfaction with repairs and maintenance is high (93% compared to Scottish average of 88%), we know we need to improve the number of reactive repairs we get 'right first time' (71.5% compared to Scottish average of 88.3%). There is scope to improve the length of time it takes to complete non-emergency repairs which is nearly double that of the Scottish average (17 days compared to 9 days Scottish average).

We are reviewing how we provide our repair services and have invested in new software that includes automation of processes and workflows. This will help improve the efficiency and management of processes and improve communication with contractors, delivering better outcomes for our tenants.

**“93% of our tenants
are satisfied with
the repairs and
maintenance service”**



Delivering digital transformation to improve service delivery

The Council's first Digital Housing Strategy will help us utilise technology to improve our services, make better use of data and minimise digital exclusion. It will also help us to evaluate what is not currently working within the service, identifying opportunities for improvements. Taking this strategy forward will help us to address the digital divide and ensure equitable access to technology in housing.

As well as improving efficiency through automation, our new housing management system includes real-time monitoring and reporting, making it easier to track and manage projects. It will also provide insights and analytics to improve decision-making.

Designing services that support our tenants

We will design our services and working environments to support all our tenants including specialist support for our most vulnerable, including those who have experienced trauma. We will apply the NHS 'Trauma Informed Practice' model to our customer journey and provide specialist training, skills development and support to our staff so they can deliver a trauma informed housing service.

Supporting our staff to provide high quality services

To meet our tenants needs and our statutory obligations, we need a workforce that is agile and responsive. We will invest in our staff as well as our homes through education, training development, career progression opportunities and provide a range of services to support staff wellbeing.

We acknowledge that our staff and their families may be affected by the current economic challenges, and we are committed to supporting them to care for their wellbeing. We aim to attract and retain a motivated workforce and we invest in a very successful Graduate and Modern Apprenticeship programme. Following the pandemic, we have embraced new ways of working, including the hybrid model where people can work flexibly between a range of locations, including: home, Council and community venues.

Improving Tenant Satisfaction

Tenant satisfaction is reported at 75% for year 2021/22 which is lower than the national average of 82%. Tenant satisfaction with the quality of their homes is 77% in comparison to the national average of 85% (Scottish Housing Regulator data). We will make improvements across the service to improve customer satisfaction and be more visible within our estates and have more in person contact with our tenants.

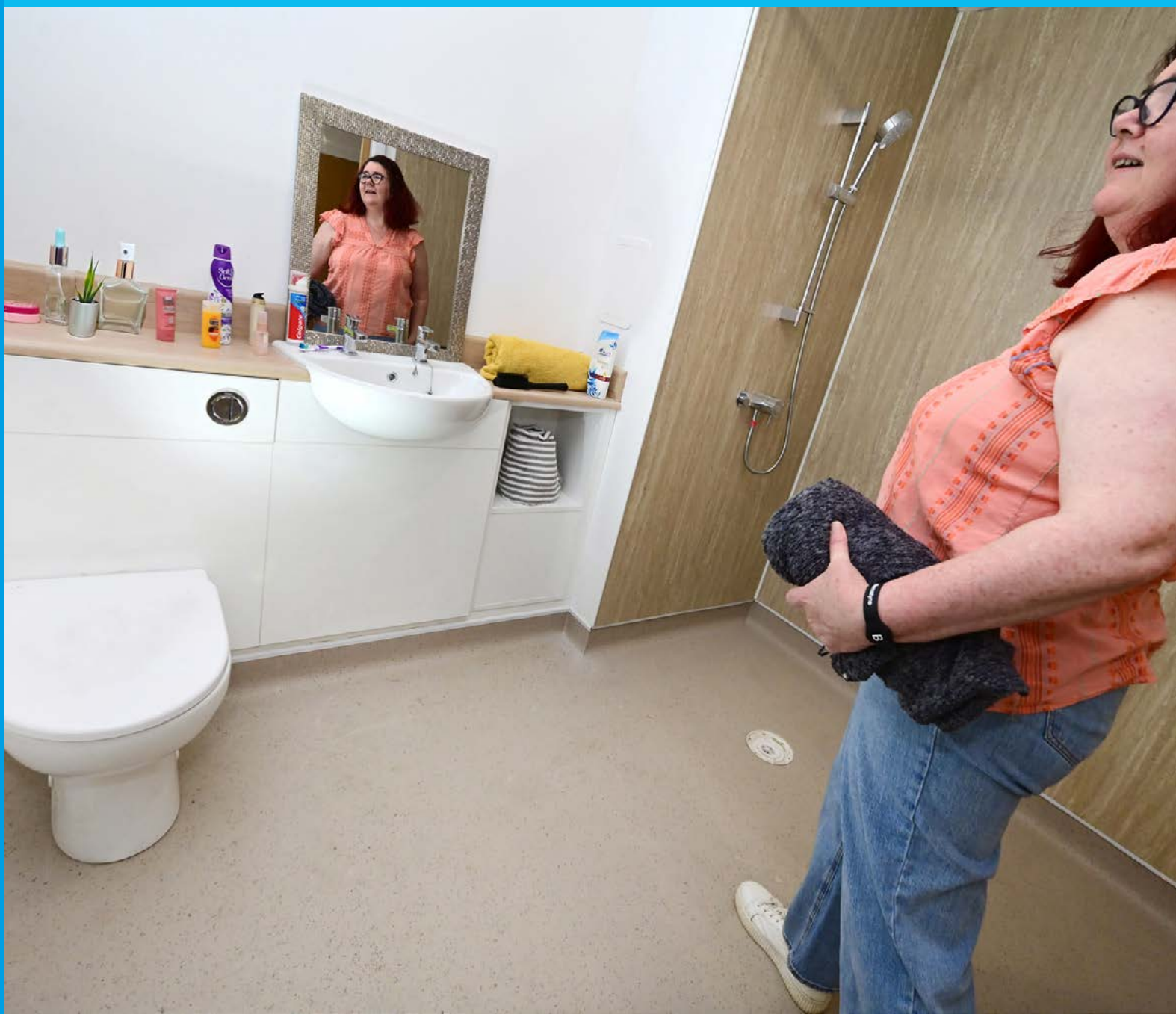
Investing in Existing Homes

The requirement to meet the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) and the continued need to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) influence our investment priorities. The Housing Asset Management Plan (HAMP) sets out a strategic and planned approach to maintaining and improving our homes, ensuring that our approach is agile and responsive to new legislative measures introduced over the lifetime of the plan.

Our Housing Investment Program was developed in partnership with our tenants, focusing on their priorities, ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements and reducing the carbon footprint of our homes.

We are investing in new resources to reduce damp and mould, and our approach includes working with tenants on prevention through effective use of heating.

“the continued need to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) influence our investment priorities”



Tenant Priorities

Tenants' priorities will always be at the heart of our investment programme.

Our Tenant Satisfaction Survey in 2022 identified that tenants wanted investment in windows and doors. Starting from the 2022/23 period, replacing windows and doors now constitutes a major part of our Housing Investment Program, with an average of 2,000 homes undergoing these updates annually.

Kitchens and bathrooms were the next highest priority for our tenants, so our program includes resources to upgrade approximately 1,100 kitchens and 550 bathrooms.

Tenants also prioritised the management and maintenance of common areas, so a rolling programme of estate improvements as well as improvements through our cyclical maintenance programme are included.

“Our Housing Investment Programme is replacing windows and doors in 2000 properties between 2022 - 2028”



Net Zero Ready Homes

Ensuring our homes are ready for the transition to zero or low emissions heating is a significant part of our investment programme.

The HRA supports the Council's Climate Emergency Action Plan by reducing carbon emissions through investing in improving the energy efficiency of our homes and upgrading heating systems. We are also investing in the skills needed to deliver this transition and aim to appoint an Energy and Climate Change Officer with a specialism in housing energy.

We adopt a fabric first approach, investing in improving the fabric of homes before decarbonising the heating system. The HIP includes an on-going programme that will improve the energy efficiency of around 1,100 homes per year.

We are investing in low and zero emissions heating in off-gas grid areas and installing air source heat pumps (ASHP), Solar PV and battery storage. We will increase investment in renewable technologies over the first five years of the Business Plan period, prioritising tenants who will see the most positive impact in terms of energy costs. We will access Scottish Government grant funding to offset costs to the HRA.

The standard was introduced in 2014 setting the first milestone for social landlords to meet for social rented homes by 31st December 2020. As of 31st March 2022, 97% of our homes met the standard.

A second milestone was set that requires all social housing to meet Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band B (Energy Efficiency rating), or be as energy efficient as is practically possible, by the end of December 2032 and within the limits of cost, technology and necessary consent.

The Scottish Government is reviewing EESSH2 in 2023 to strengthen and realign the standard with the target for net zero heat in houses.

Our HIP will be regularly reviewed to ensure it enables us to meet future standards and milestones, whilst continuing to also deliver our tenants' investment priorities.

**“97% of our homes
met Energy Efficiency
in Social Housing
standards”**



Mixed Tenure Management

Managing common repairs is challenging where there is mixed ownership of a block. Where necessary, the Council will make use of powers under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 to enable the improvement of Council homes in mixed tenure blocks.

Mixed ownership of blocks can present a challenge in relation to ensuring Council homes meet the high levels of energy efficiency we are working towards. We work with partners to combine resources to deliver mixed tenure Area Based Schemes which can transform whole streets by pooling Council, RSL, Scottish Government and Energy Company Obligation funding.

We will continue to work with partners to deliver Area Based Scheme projects to ensure our tenants and others can benefit from living in warm, healthy and energy efficient homes.

Whole-life costs and cyclical maintenance

By considering the whole life costs of our homes and investing in cyclical maintenance, we can improve the condition of homes as well as benefit the HRA through potential reductions in revenue expenditure on repairs.

We will consider whole-life costs and potential efficiencies when developing and reviewing our investment programmes.

Supporting people to live longer, healthier lives at home

Each year the Council transfers resources to the Integrated Joint Board to deliver aids and adaptations for Council tenants - the amount transferred is determined by demand and expenditure in the previous year.

Technology Enabled Care uses technology to help people live longer, healthier lives at home, in a community setting like care homes, or assisted housing. Working alongside Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership, the Council has prioritised the development of this technology to enhance service provision.

Using technologies which are already a part of many people's daily lives, we offer a range of award-winning services aimed at supporting independent living for our tenants. Falkirk Council was the first local authority in Scotland to overcome barriers caused by outdated technology, developing infrastructure which enabled end-to-end telecare services.

We will continue to invest in Technology Enabled Care and consider how technology can support people to live longer, healthier lives at home.

Investing in New Homes

Housing Need and Demand

The Council undertakes a Housing Need and Demand Assessment (HNDA) every five years to estimate the number of additional new build homes required across all housing tenures. Generally, the numbers of new households decrease in an economic downturn.

The HNDA 2022-26 estimates that 466 new build homes are required per year to meet housing need. This is an “all tenure” target which means all new homes, privately owned and social housing. Of the 466 per year, the HNDA estimates that 224 of these homes should be affordable housing and 242 market housing.

Affordable housing is defined as housing of a reasonable quality that is affordable to people on modest incomes. Affordable housing may be provided in the form of social rented accommodation, mid-market rented accommodation, shared ownership housing, shared equity housing, housing sold at a discount (including plots for self-build), and low cost housing without subsidy.

We will contribute to the affordable housing estimate through delivery of the Strategic HIP.

- ▶ It is estimated that 2000 homes across all tenures will require an adaptation.
- ▶ It is estimated that 500 wheelchair-accessible properties across all tenures are required with approximately 400 for social rent.
- ▶ A need for full wheelchair accessible housing for a range of household types and sizes, including families with children.
- ▶ An acute need for larger family properties with 4+ bedrooms.
- ▶ A need for a housing model as an alternative to residential care such as bedded care.
- ▶ A need for a core and cluster housing model for people with community care and complex needs.

**“We have delivered 451
new council homes
since the council new
build program began in
May 2010”**



We have delivered 451 new council homes since the council new build program began in May 2010 and we have significant expertise internally that enables us to deliver high quality affordable homes that meet the needs of our residents.

As well as providing much needed homes and supporting the local economy, our new build programme also strengthens the HRA by increasing the income stream to the HRA over the long term.

Through using HRA resources to acquire sites from the Council's General Fund and from other public sector bodies, there is an opportunity to build on what has already been delivered.

We apply a scoring matrix to aid decision-making on which developments are included in our SHIP, which takes account of:

- ▶ Strategic direction from the LHS and housing need.
- ▶ Project deliverability.
- ▶ Size, tenure and house type.
- ▶ Number of wheelchair accessible homes.
- ▶ Sustainability relating to energy efficiency.

The 2023/24 - 2027/28 SHIP includes 1,484 homes, the majority of which will be delivered by our partner registered social landlords. There are currently 208 new build Council homes under construction, and it is anticipated that Council projects will provide a further 305 new homes over the first five years of this business plan period. This is an ambitious program and rising construction costs and the risk of restrictions on rental income have led to us pushing some projects to later in our programme. However, we remain committed to delivering new affordable Council homes and will consider options to bring sites forward in the programme if financially viable.

We will explore new ways of increasing our affordable housing supply and are considering innovative practice across the UK to inform our approach.

**“We will provide a
further 305 new homes
over the first five years
of this business plan”**



Acquisitions and Remodelling

Buying former Council-owned properties from the market contributes significantly to our affordable housing target and can be an effective way to increase supply during periods of rising construction costs.

Since its introduction in 2013/14, the Council has purchased 813 ex-local authority homes through the Buy Back Scheme and our Strategic Housing Investment Plan outlines a target to purchase a further 500 over the first five years of this Business Plan period.

We will ensure that our acquisitions programme is strategically driven and supports us to meet known needs and challenges. For example, the HNDA 2023-28 identified an acute need for larger and wheelchair accessible properties, therefore we will seek to acquire more larger properties that can potentially be adapted to be wheelchair accessible. Buying back former Council owned properties can also help address the challenge of mixed tenure management by consolidating ownership in blocks.

Meeting Particular Needs

Furthermore, alongside our investments in Technology Enabled Care for our current residences, we will collaborate with Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership to explore possibilities of implementing similar technological solutions in our upcoming and renovated homes, ensuring they cater to the requirements of our residents. We will progress improvements to the Disabled Adaptation Scheme to ensure ease of access to the scheme, and complete adaptations sooner.

We will work with partners to identify how the HRA can support meeting particular needs, including the need for alternatives to residential care and core and cluster developments, as identified through the HNDA.

Meeting specialist housing need is a key priority, and we will work with internal and external partners to help ensure we meet specialist housing needs sooner.

**“The Council has
purchased 813 ex-local
authority homes through
the Buy Back Scheme”**



HRA Glossary

Action Plan

A list of measures that a landlord or other agency intends to do to change something or implement a policy.

Capital Investment

Refers to the allocation of funds towards the acquisition, development, or improvement of long-term assets or infrastructure within the jurisdiction.

Council Plan

A council plan is a strategic document developed by local authorities to outline their priorities, objectives, and actions over a specific period.

Disabled Adaptation Scheme

A scheme provided by local authorities or housing associations to assist individuals with disabilities by adapting their homes to meet their specific needs.

Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH)

This sets the minimum energy efficiency standard for social housing. It has been developed by the Scottish Government following consultation with social landlords and tenants. The new standard is based on minimum energy efficiency (EE) ratings. These are found on Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) (Scottish Government).

Equality and Poverty Impact Assessment

Is a systematic evaluation or analysis carried out to assess the potential impact of a policy, program, or decision on equality and poverty. It is a tool used by governments, organisations, and public bodies to ensure that their actions consider the potential effects on different groups within society, particularly those who may be marginalised or vulnerable.

Financial Strategy

A comprehensive plan or framework that outlines the financial objectives, policies, and actions of a local authority. It provides a roadmap for managing the council's finances effectively and efficiently to achieve its goals and meet the needs of the community.

HouseMark Affordability Tool

A tool enabling housing providers to analyse and measure the affordability of their properties and services in relation to the income and financial capabilities of their tenants or prospective tenants. The tool considers various factors, such as rental or housing costs, household income, and local affordability benchmarks.

Housing Asset Management Plan (HAMP)

A strategic document that outlines a comprehensive approach to managing and maintaining a housing provider's property portfolio effectively. Its purpose is to guide the long-term management and investment decisions related to their housing assets.

Housing for Varying Need Standard

Forms part of the criteria for receipt of Scottish Government funding for new house building by housing associations and councils. It sets out good practice on the design of housing to achieve flexibility and suitability for people of all abilities.

Housing Investment Programme (HIP)

A comprehensive plan that outlines a local authority's investment priorities and strategies for improving and expanding the housing stock within their jurisdiction.

Housing Needs and Demand Assessment

Analysis conducted to understand the current and future housing needs and demands within a specific area or jurisdiction. The purpose of an HNDA is to provide evidence-based insights that inform housing policies, strategies, and decision-making processes by local authorities.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The council's financial account dealing with income and expenditure relating to management and maintenance of the council's stock.

Income Maximisation

Helping the client achieve their maximum possible entitlement to welfare benefits and helping them to make savings where possible.

Local Housing Strategy (LHS)

A document developed by a local authority or municipality to outline its approach and objectives regarding housing within its jurisdiction. It serves as a framework for guiding housing policies, initiatives, and decision-making at the local level.

Mixed Tenure

Refers to the integration of different types of housing tenures within a development or neighbourhood. It involves combining a variety of housing options, including social or affordable housing, market-rate housing, and potentially other forms of intermediate or shared ownership schemes.

Net Zero

Refers to the concept of achieving a balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. Generally, this consists of initiatives to reduce greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide and methane) generated by human activity to negligible levels.

Prudential Code

Sets out the principles and practices that local authorities must follow when borrowing money for housing-related purposes, such as financing the construction, acquisition, or improvement of housing stock. It aims to ensure responsible financial management and decision-making in the housing sector.

Resource Planning Assumption (RPA)

This is a term used by the Scottish government to describe the planning assumptions for councils to plan their housing supply for a given period. These assumptions are published annually and are used by councils to plan their housing supply for the next five years

Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)

The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) was introduced in February 2004. It is the main way the government measures housing quality in Scotland.

Technology Enabled Care

Refers to the use of technology and digital tools to support and enhance healthcare and social care services. It involves the application of various technologies to deliver care, monitor health conditions, provide remote assistance, and improve overall well-being.

If you would like this document in Braille, LARGE PRINT or another language, please contact the Community Engagement Team by email at tenant.participation@falkirk.gov.uk or by telephone on 01324 590796/590858



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