

# Public Document Pack

## Cabinet

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Meeting Venue  
**Hybrid meeting - Zoom - County Hall**

Meeting date  
**Tuesday, 28 March 2023**

Meeting time  
**2.00 pm**

For further information please contact  
**Stephen Boyd**  
01597 826374  
steve.boyd@powys.gov.uk



County Hall  
Llandrindod Wells  
Powys  
LD1 5LG

22.03.2023

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Mae croeso i chi siarad yn Gymraeg neu yn Saesneg yn y cyfarfod.  
Rhowch wybod pa iaith rydych am ei defnyddio erbyn hanner dydd, ddau ddiwrnod gwaith cyn y cyfarfod.  
You are welcome to speak Welsh or English in the meeting.  
Please inform us of which language you wish to use by noon, two working days before the meeting.

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### AGENDA

1.	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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To receive apologies for absence.

2.	<b>MINUTES</b>
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To authorise the Chair to sign the minutes of the last meeting held in 7<sup>th</sup> March 2023 as a correct record.

(Pages 3 - 8)

3.	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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To receive any declarations of interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

4.	<b>HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) THIRTY YEAR FINANCIAL BUSINESS PLAN 2023-2024</b>
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To consider a report by County Councillor Matthew Dorrance, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for a Fairer Powys.

(Pages 9 - 76)

<b>5.</b>	<b>WINTER SERVICE REVIEW PHASE 2</b>
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To consider a report by County Councillor Jackie Charlton, Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys.

(Pages 77 - 98)

<b>6.</b>	<b>DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING</b>
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To note the delegated decisions taken since the last meeting.

(Pages 99 - 100)

<b>7.</b>	<b>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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To consider the Cabinet forward work programme.

(Pages 101 - 104)

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT COUNTY HALL AND ON ZOOM ON TUESDAY, 7 MARCH 2023**

**PRESENT**

County Councillor M Dorrance (Chair)

County Councillors J Berriman, J Charlton, R Church, S Cox, S C Davies, J Gibson-Watt, S McNicholas, P Roberts, D Selby and D A Thomas

In attendance: County Councillors A Davies, E Vaughan

Councillor Dorrance took the Chair as Councillor Gibson-Watt had connectivity problems.

<b>1.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>
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Apologies were received from the Chief Executive.

<b>2.</b>	<b>MINUTES</b>
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The Leader was authorised to sign the minutes of the meetings held on 7<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> February 2023 as correct records.

<b>3.</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>
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County Councillor S Davies declared a personal non prejudicial interest in item 4 as a local authority appointed governor of Ysgol Gymraeg Dyffryn Y Glowyr.

County Councillors M Dorrance and J Gibson-Watt declared personal interests in item 5.

<b>4.</b>	<b>ESTABLISHING A WELSH-MEDIUM STREAM AT YSGOL Y CRIBARTH</b>
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Cabinet considered responses received to the consultation on the proposal to formally establish a Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol y Cribarth from September 2023. The consultation period had run from 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022 to 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023 with consultees asked to complete the online consultation form, or filling in and returning a paper copy of the form. In addition, virtual meetings were also held with the staff, governors School Council of Ysgol y Cribarth.

Based on the findings of the consultation, the advice of officers was that the Council should proceed with the proposal to formally establish a Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol y Cribarth by publishing a Statutory Notice for the reasons outlined in the report. The Statutory Notice would be published in April 2023 (after the Easter holidays), and a further report, summarising any objections received, would be considered by the Council's Cabinet in May or June 2023.

County Councillor E Vaughan speaking at the Chair of WESP welcomed the proposal. Whilst he would have liked to have seen the school move further along the Welsh language continuum, he acknowledged that the proposal had the

support of the community. He emphasised the need to ensure investment and support for immersion. He asked for a study to be carried on bilingualism in the area so that it became normalised. He also noted that the pilot had been a success and asked for it to be repeated in other parts of the county.

County Councillor A Davies speaking as the Leader of the opposition said that in his view the proposal was not ambitious enough and that the school should have been moved further along the Welsh language continuum.

County Councillor D Thomas speaking as a local member said that the proposal had his full support and had the support of the local community.

County Councillor S Davies speaking as a local member also spoke in support noting that there was room for more Welsh medium education provision in the area. She was concerned about any impact on Ysgol Gymraeg Dyffryn Y Glowyr which had been established as the area Welsh medium primary school. She also noted that the proposal would in future affect free school transport for pupils wishing to attend Ysgol Gymraeg Dyffryn Y Glowyr. Officers recognised that Ysgol Gymraeg Dyffryn Y Glowyr had been and would remain the Welsh Medium primary school for the area. The school had been a great success and would continue to have an important role providing fully immersive Welsh Medium education. It was also confirmed that nothing in the proposal would affect local authority representation on the governing body.

The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys noted that it was important to have local support and that maintaining that support would enable further steps to be taken along the Welsh language continuum, with the school becoming dual stream in due course.

Having considered the findings of the consultation and the advice of officers, Cabinet

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. To receive the Consultation Report in respect of formally establishing a Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol y Cribarth.**
- 2. To approve the publication of a Statutory Notice to make a regulated alteration to formally establish a Welsh-medium stream at Ysgol y Cribarth from September 2023.**

<b>5.</b>	<b>RETAIL, LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY RATES RELIEF SCHEME IN WALES 2023-24</b>
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County Councillors M Dorrance and J Gibson-Watt declared interests in this item and left the meeting when it was being considered. County Councillor P Roberts took the Chair for this item.

Cabinet noted that the current Retail, Leisure & Hospitality Rates Relief scheme for 2022-23, which offered relief of 50%, was being extended with a further temporary Business Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme for the financial year 2023-24 offering increased relief of 75% on Business Rates

bills with the total available relief being subject to a cap in the total amount each business can claim across Wales of £110,000.

Powys was to receive funding of up to £4.9m by way of a Welsh Government Grant, and it was estimated that 900 Powys businesses may be entitled to the 75% rates relief, estimated at total value of £4.1m off their Business Rates bills. Due to the £110,000 cap, the relief would need to be applied for via an on-line application form. The report set out the qualifying criteria. It was confirmed that charities and not for profit organisations could apply. It was also confirmed that businesses would be written to advising them of the scheme and that it would be promoted on the Council's social media.

## **RESOLVED**

- 1. That a Business Rates Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Rates Relief scheme 2023-24 be established in accordance with section 3 of the report.**
- 2. Applications for Business Rates retail, leisure, and hospitality rates relief 2023-24 under the scheme referred to above shall be delegated to and determined by the Portfolio holder for Finance in consultation with the Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer).**

County Councillors M Dorrance and J Gibson-Watt returned to the meeting.

<b>6. QUARTER 3 STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER</b>
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Cabinet considered the Strategic Risk Register for the third quarter of 2022/23. There were 15 risks on the strategic risk register and strategic risk owners had provided a short summary of progress since last quarter, to give assurance that mitigating actions were being actioned and monitored.

The following risks were escalated to the Strategic Risk Register:

IAWARD0009: If the Council is susceptible to higher levels of fraud, as people struggle with the cost-of-living crisis and as organised fraud take advantage of the challenging environment

PPPP0029: If planned power outages (rota disconnections) occurs then it may affect our ability to deliver services.

CS0091 If there is insufficient capacity to respond to the longer-term demand in children's and adults' services in timely manner

The report set out potential consequences and mitigating actions.

Two risks were proposed for de-escalation from the Strategic Risk Register:

ED0022: If the Council is unable to improve financial management of the schools' budget, through ongoing adjustments to the distribution formula, they

will be unable to manage the budget, resulting in a significant compromise to the quality of education for Powys learners

CS0081: If Children's Services are unable to manage within budget.

Both would be managed on their own service risk registers and the following principal applied; Any individual services budget related risk will be integrated into FIN0001 however should an individual service risk score elevate to catastrophic it will be considered for escalation to the strategic risk register separately.

County Councillor A Davies speaking as the Leader of the opposition queried de-escalating ED0022 and asked whether the school maintenance budget was sufficient to ensure school buildings remained fit for use. He asked the S151 Officer if the budget decision not to fully fund budget pressures would impact on the risks going forward. The S151 Officer advised that there were appropriate budget monitoring systems in place and that schools governing bodies would be supported in setting budgets. The Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys also noted that changes to the school funding formula would have a mitigating effect, not least by reducing the costs of supply cover.

**RESOLVED that Cabinet notes the current Strategic Risk Register and is satisfied with progress against mitigating actions for quarter 3, approves escalation of IAWARD0009, PPPP0029 and CS0091 (detailed under points 3.5, 3.6 and 3.8 of the report) and de-escalation of ED0022 and CS0081 (detailed under point 3.7) to the Strategic Risk Register.**

<b>7.</b>	<b>RISK APPETITE</b>
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Cabinet considered the Risk Appetite statement. The risk appetite definition was the amount and type of planned risk that the Council was willing to take to meet strategic objectives and deliver services. By deciding risk appetite, the Council would more effectively prioritise risk for mitigation, better allocate resources, and demonstrate more robust decision making around project/programme initiation.

On Programme and Project Delivery, where there was a low to high risk appetite, it was clarified this did not mean there was a tolerance for cost and project overruns.

**RESOLVED to approve the Risk Appetite as set out in appendix A of the report.**

<b>8.</b>	<b>DELEGATED DECISIONS TAKEN SINCE THE LAST MEETING</b>
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The delegated decisions taken by Cabinet members since the last meet were noted.

<b>9.</b>	<b>FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME</b>
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The forward work programme was noted. Heads of Service were asked to keep the programme up to date and to liaise with Scrutiny chairs.

**County Councillor M Dorrance  
Chair**

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## CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.

## CABINET

March 28th, 2023

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Matthew Dorrance  
Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for a Fairer Powys

**REPORT TITLE:** Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year  
Financial Business Plan 2023-2024.

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present for approval the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year Financial Business Plan Starting 2023-2024 as set out in the HRA Business Plan Narrative (attached to this report as Appendix A).

## 2. Background

- 2.1 All councils in Wales in their role as the Strategic Housing Authority have the responsibility to plan for the housing needs of their population. Powys is one of the eleven stock retaining local authorities in Wales, providing 5,500 affordable, secure homes across the county, as well as an ongoing programme to develop a further 350 new homes, scheduled for completion by the end of 2031, with plans to expand that programme further in future years.
- 2.2 Landlord councils in Wales are required to present an “acceptable” HRA Business Plan, including a thirty-year financial model, to the Welsh Government each year. The Plan must conform to a structure and Business Plan parameters set out by the Welsh Government. This is to allow the Welsh Government to assess the progress of local authorities in maintaining the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) to be eligible for the annual Major Repairs Allowance (MRA) Grant (for Powys £3,732,000 in 2023-2024). Powys achieved WHQS compliance in December 2018.
- 2.3 The HRA borrows to fund capital works such as the new build and improvement programmes. The level of borrowing is closely monitored as this is related to annual capital financing costs. The Council is required by regulation to have regard to the Prudential Code when carrying out its duties under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 2003. Any borrowing undertaken for the HRA Business Plan is ‘unsupported’, in so much as there is no financial support from the Welsh Government for the cost of such borrowing. Schemes, such as development of new homes, may however benefit from grants to help cover cost of such projects.
- 2.4 This means that the Council is able to borrow additional resources without statutory limit to fund investment in both existing and new homes, as long as the income generated by the HRA from rents and other charges is able to cover the cost of servicing and repaying the debt.

- 2.5 On January 17th, 2023, Cabinet approved an increase in rents and other charges levied by the HRA in line with the Welsh Government's policy for social housing rents, which calculates rent levels using a number of factors including economic and housing market data.
- 2.6 The impact of the increases in the cost of living have been taken into account in developing the Business Plan. Financial modelling has been carried out to account for the risks of increasing rent arrears and the additional resources needed to make sure that rent due to the Council is paid promptly.
- 2.7 The HRA Thirty Year Business Plan starting 2023-24 for Powys:
- Supports the outcomes of the Council's Corporate and Strategic Equalities Plan: 'Stronger, Fairer, Greener'.
  - Makes sure the HRA treasury management strategy is prudent and complies with the Council's approach to borrowing.
  - Sets a balanced budget with minimum reserve of £1,000,000 (or 3% of expenditure).
  - Allows the Council to maintain WHQS for current homes.
  - Supports the development of at least 350 new homes by 2031.
  - Balances the need to keep rents affordable with making sure that homes are maintained and kept in good condition.
  - Maximises revenue and expenditure efficiencies.
  - Complies with the Prudential Code

### **3. Advice**

- 3.1 To make sure that the Council continues to make efficient use of its housing assets and operates a sustainable landlord service, the HRA Business Plan, as proposed for approval, has been informed by a long-term approach to important investment programmes.
- 3.2 Detailed proposals are set out in the HRA Business Plan narrative, attached as Appendix A to this report, for the five-year period starting in 2023-2024. This allows for a strategic approach to be taken to investment decisions and planning and allows for more informed consultation and communication with residents and tenants. A summary of the current proposals, for the five years beginning 2023-2024, is presented below. The figures for 2023-2024 will form the basis of the budgets for that particular year.
- 3.3 New Homes for Powys (Capital Programme)
- 3.3.1 There were 4718 (December 2022) people registered with Homes in Powys for affordable, rented homes. A new build housing programme is underway which will deliver at least 350 new council homes by 2031. Further schemes are being developed to expand this programme. However, new development is subject to land and development opportunities and all necessary planning, regulatory and environmental consents being secured by the Council. Developing homes available for let at social rents or sale at below market prices is not usually possible without direct grant support from the Welsh Government. This is to offset such expenditure as land acquisition which reflects open-market property and construction costs to meet Welsh Government requirements for social housing. Such grant support is not available to fund core HRA borrowing. At a time of rising land and

construction costs, the scale and pace of continued development of homes available for accommodation at sub-market rates will depend upon the availability of grant from the Welsh Government and securing competitive construction costs that allow schemes to recover their costs within sixty years. If grant falls and land and construction costs continue to increase, the Council will need to consider alternative financial models which subsidise the continued development of new homes by the HRA.

- 3.3.2 The Council has between 2018-2019 and the end of December 2022 purchased 34 homes on the open market, the majority of which have been ex-municipal homes. In determining which properties to purchase there has been a focus on those in areas of high demand and where the new build programme is unlikely or due to planning and land restrictions, unable to meet the need. All such purchases are subject to the same viability criteria as new build, with appropriate allowances made for any works needed to bring the properties up to WHQS. The programme will continue to be a significant part of the Council's ambitious plans to increase the availability of genuinely affordable, secure rented homes across Powys.

Table 3.3.2: New Homes for Powys Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028

<b>New Homes for Powys - Financial Summary 2023-2024 to 2027-2028</b>				
<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>New Build (£)</i>	<i>Number of Homes Completed</i>	<i>Acquisitions (£)</i>	<i>Number of Homes Acquired</i>
2023-2024	£12,569,338	<b>22</b>	£800,000	4
2024-2025	£19,469,932	<b>48</b>	£2,300,000	11
2025-2026	£25,040,622	<b>147</b>	£2,300,000	11
2026-2027	£11,811,205	<b>54</b>	£2,300,000	11
2027-2028	£10,041,950	<b>40</b>	£2,300,000	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>£78,933,046</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>£10,000,000</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Notes</b>				
Completions and acquisitions will be dependent upon securing all necessary planning, environmental and other regulatory consents, securing viable development sites and where needed Social Housing Grant.				
Number of homes completed refers to being able to develop on secured, unsecured and phosphate impacted sites.				
Investment planned for each year will cover completing earlier schemes, progressing current developments and preparing for future projects.				
The figures and numbers for Acquisitions 2023-2024 refer to a core Acquisitions Programme. If additional opportunities arise, the programme can be expanded in year by drawing upon additional scheme-by-scheme borrowing (as each acquisition is required to be self-financing) as and when necessary, by bringing forward budgets from later years (and reprofiling for that year as part of the annual HRA Business Plan process) or using any underspends elsewhere in the wider capital budget.				
The figures shown in the table above are the gross scheme cost before any grant contributions, the New Build and Acquisitions Programme assumes that Social Housing or other Grants will contribute on average 40% of the gross costs.				

### 3.4 WHQS (Capital Programme)

- 3.4.1 The Welsh Government has published proposals for WHQS-2, initially planned to start in 2023-2034 and complete by 2033-2034. To meet the current proposals for WHQS-2 will require a major increase in investment in

each home. Initial estimates suggest that meeting WHQS-2 could mean a total investment of £48,360 per home. The Welsh Government is currently reviewing the consultation responses to the WHQS-2 proposals. To date, it is not yet clear what the final standard will be.

3.4.2 Accordingly, the HRA Business Plan has, in the absence of clarity over the expectations for WHQS-2, been designed to make sure the Council's homes continue to meet the current WHQS. The programme has been structured to smooth the peaks and troughs of funding and investment needs, with the focus on those components where replacement is most needed. Lower level of new resources will be needed between 2023-2024 and 2027-2028 because the focus is now on maintaining rather than reaching the WHQS – the benefits of past investment will reduce the need for future expenditure. Some of the investment activity within the WHQS programme also contributes to the objectives of the Green Powys and Compliance One Hundred programmes (see sections 3.5 and 3.6).

Table 3.4.2: WHQS Programme Financial Summary 2022-23 to 2026-2027

<b>WHQS Programme Financial Summary 2022-23 to 2026-2027</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Kitchens	£420,000	£400,000	£600,000	£800,000	£1,000,000
Bathrooms	£200,000	£200,000	£0	£400,000	£600,000
Rewiring	£120,000	£60,000	£100,000	£45,000	£250,000
Windows and Doors	£500,000	£0	£0	£0	£0
Roofing	£1,000,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000
Walls	£650,000	£650,000	£650,000	£650,000	£0
Estate Works (contribute to Love Where You Live)	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000
Heating (contributes to Green Powys)	£1,400,000	£1,400,000	£1,400,000	£1,400,000	£1,400,000
Energy Efficiency (contributes to Green Powys)	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Asbestos Management (contributes to Compliance One Hundred)	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£0
Management Fees	£777,700	£785,480	£793,330	£801,260	£809,270
F-Door & B-Door	£0	£0	£0	£200,000	£0
Miscellaneous WHQS	£450,000	£250,000	£250,000	£450,010	£250,010
<b>Total WHQS</b>	<b>£7,017,700</b>	<b>£5,645,480</b>	<b>£5,693,330</b>	<b>£6,646,270</b>	<b>£6,059,280</b>

### 3.5 Compliance One Hundred

3.5.1 The Compliance One Hundred programme is designed to make sure that all of the Council homes and associated assets are one hundred per cent compliant with all relevant and applicable legislation and regulation. The investment schemes detailed below are in addition to those included within the WHQS programme, detailed above in section 3.4 and Day-to-Day Repairs and Maintenance which includes all inspections and servicing of safety-critical components and assets, such as heating systems and lifts.

Table 3.5.1: Compliance One Hundred Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028

<b>Compliance One Hundred Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Fire Safety Works	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000	£50,000
Water Supply and Sewerage Works	£150,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Legionella	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
<b>Capital Compliance One Hundred Investment Programme</b>	<b>£400,000</b>	<b>£350,000</b>	<b>£350,000</b>	<b>£350,000</b>	<b>£200,000</b>
WHQS Contributions to Compliance One Hundred	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£0
Revenue Compliance Repairs & Maintenance	£1,449,350	£1,388,550	£1,388,550	£1,423,550	£1,408,550
<b>Total Compliance One Hundred Investment Programme</b>	<b>£1,999,350</b>	<b>£1,888,550</b>	<b>£1,888,550</b>	<b>£1,923,550</b>	<b>£1,608,550</b>

### 3.6 Green Powys

3.6.1 The Green Powys programme is designed to contribute to the Council's aim to be a 'net zero' organisation by 2030 and the declarations of 'Climate Emergency' in September 2020 and a Nature Emergency' in October 2022. Green Powys will increase fuel efficiency, reduce fuel poverty for tenants of the Council, make tangible improvements to the wider environment, with a particular emphasis on increasing planting of trees, shrubberies and other actions to promote bio-diversity, encourage appreciation of the natural world and give a greener feel to our communities.

- 3.6.2 The cost of ‘decarbonising’ all homes currently owned by the Council is difficult to quantify. However, a broad-brush estimate based on research undertaken by Inside Housing suggests a possible investment of £108,000,000 will be needed for Powys. That equates to £20,000 per Council-owned home.
- 3.6.3 A particular focus of the Green Powys programme will be the 400 municipal properties that have an Energy Performance Certificate rating of E, F or G, the lowest ratings. A ‘whole house’ approach, which looks at heat loss, heat retention, ventilation and the most efficient way to provide heating as and when it is necessary, is being developed for these properties. The ‘Optimised Retrofit for Powys’ initiative blends Optimised Retrofit Programme and Energy Company Obligation funds. The programme runs from quarter four of 2022-2023 to 2024-2025. At least 74 homes will be improved over the next two years, with investment in that period totalling £4,788,474.

Table 3.6.3: Green Powys Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028

<b>Green Powys Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Damp Prevention	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
Photo-voltaic (Solar Panels)	£75,000	£75,000	£75,000	£75,000	£0
Decarbonisation and Energy Efficiency	£100,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
<b>Capital Green Powys Investment Programme</b>	<b>£425,000</b>	<b>£575,000</b>	<b>£575,000</b>	<b>£575,000</b>	<b>£500,000</b>
WHQS Contributions to Green Powys	£1,550,000	£1,550,000	£1,550,000	£1,550,000	£1,550,000
Day-to-day Repairs Contribution to Green Powys	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
<b>HRA Green Powys Investment Programme</b>	<b>£2,075,000</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,150,000</b>
Optimised Retrofit for Powys	£2,394,237	£2,394,237	£0	£0	£0
<b>Total Green Powys Investment Programme</b>	<b>£4,469,237</b>	<b>£4,619,237</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,150,000</b>

### 3.7 Fit for Life

3.7.1 The Fit for Life programme is designed to make the Council’s homes better suited to the needs of older people and those with health-related needs that impair or adversely affect their mobility.

Table 3.7.1: Fit for Life Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028

<b>Fit for Life Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Fit for Purpose	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£600,000	£0	£0
Adaptations - Capital	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
<b>Capital Fit for Life Investment</b>	<b>£1,250,000</b>	<b>£1,250,000</b>	<b>£850,000</b>	<b>£250,000</b>	<b>£250,000</b>
Adaptations - Revenue	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000
<b>Total Fit for Life Investment</b>	<b>£1,840,000</b>	<b>£1,840,000</b>	<b>£1,440,000</b>	<b>£840,000</b>	<b>£840,000</b>

### 3.8 Love Where You Live

3.8.1 The Love Where You Live tenancy sustainability strategy is designed to make the homes and estates managed by the Council places where people can enjoy their lives and we improve the wellbeing of our residents. The investment schemes detailed below are in addition to those included within the WHQS programme, detailed above in section 3.4.

Table 3.8.1: Love Where You Live Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028

<b>Love Where You Live Programme Financial Summary 2022-23 to 2026-2027</b>					
<i>Investments</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Brecon Area Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Newtown Area Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Welshpool Area Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Wye Valley Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Ystradgynlais Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Communal Area Improvements	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Garage Strategy	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Play Area Improvements	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000
Adjustments back to Council budget	£600,000	£300,000	-£500,000	-£325,000	-£100,000
<b>Love Where You Live Investment</b>	<b>£900,000</b>	<b>£600,000</b>	<b>-£200,000</b>	<b>-£25,000</b>	<b>£200,000</b>

WHQS Contributions to Love Where You Live (Estate and Boundary Works)	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000
Day-to-day Repairs Contribution to Love where you Live	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
<b>Total Love Where You Live Investment</b>	<b>£2,200,000</b>	<b>£1,900,000</b>	<b>£1,100,000</b>	<b>£1,275,000</b>	<b>£1,500,000</b>

### 3.9 Community Alarms

3.9.1 During 2023-2024, a set of proposals will be considered by the Council for the future of the Careline community alarm service, offered to both tenants of the Council and people living in privately owned accommodation. This follows a review of customer needs and demands, the full range of options now available in today's digitally connect world to provide such services and in recognition of the need to replace the current equipment, much of which is of an age that it is beyond economical maintenance and repair.

Table 3.9.1: Community Alarms Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028

Community Alarms Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028					
Investments	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Community Alarms	£120,000	£120,000	£0	£0	£0

### 3.10 Repairs and Maintenance (Revenue Programme)

3.10.1 Since July 2022, repairs and maintenance to all Council-owned homes have been delivered directly by Housing Services, supported where necessary to meet unforeseen demands for works or specialist skills by external sub-contractors. By the summer of 2023, the service, through the Full Capability Initiative, will have recruited the tradespeople and operatives needed to fully meet demand for high quality repairs. Included in this will be the appointment of apprentices to provide the skilled workers of tomorrow.

Table 3.10.1: Repairs and Maintenance Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028

Repairs and Maintenance Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028					
Investments	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Day to Day Repairs & Maintenance	£2,828,870	£2,673,870	£2,673,870	£2,593,870	£2,583,870
Voids Repairs & Maintenance	£2,888,000	£2,860,000	£2,860,000	£2,860,000	£2,860,000
Adaptations Repairs & Maintenance	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000



Compliance Repairs & Maintenance	£1,449,350	£1,388,550	£1,388,550	£1,423,550	£1,408,550
Vehicle Financing (Revenue)	£215,120	£215,120	£215,120	£215,120	£215,120
ICT	£112,100	£124,000	£0	£0	£0
Estate and Grounds Maintenance	£925,860	£925,860	£925,860	£925,860	£925,860
<b>Total Repairs and Maintenance Investment</b>	<b>£9,009,300</b>	<b>£8,777,400</b>	<b>£8,653,400</b>	<b>£8,608,400</b>	<b>£8,583,400</b>

### 3.11 Management and Supervision

3.11.1 The HRA Business Plan includes provision for Supervision and Management Costs, which cover the costs of managing the service, for example staff, support services and office costs.

<b>Management and Supervision Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Staffing	£7,718,630	£7,950,189	£8,188,695	£8,434,355	£8,687,386
ICT	£112,100	£124,000	£124,000	£124,000	£124,000
Pop-up Powys	£23,500	£23,500	£23,500	£23,500	£23,500
Out of Hours Call Management	£12,460	£12,460	£12,460	£12,460	£12,460
Fleet and Associated Costs	£361,430	£372,273	£383,441	£394,944	£406,793
Service Support Costs <sup>1</sup>	£1,365,460	£1,406,424	£1,448,617	£1,492,075	£1,536,837
Premises - Depots and Offices	£375,650	£386,920	£398,527	£410,483	£422,797
Miscellaneous Support Costs	£871,830	£897,985	£924,924	£952,672	£981,252
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,841,060</b>	<b>£11,173,750</b>	<b>£11,504,164</b>	<b>£11,844,490</b>	<b>£12,195,026</b>

3.11.2 Housing Services plans to introduce a whole service, fully integrated ICT by 2025-2026. This is to replace the current use of a number of different systems, that have been commissioned at different times in response to new needs or changes in service design. By commissioning an integrated system, which may use components from different software suppliers, the outcome will be greater efficiency in designed and organising works, more accurate record keeping and swifter responses to tenant enquiries. The Council's ICT team will in 2023-2024 develop detailed proposals for a whole-service solution as part of this project. Provision for the cost of replacing and upgrading ICT is included in the HRA Business Plan.

<sup>1</sup> Service Support Costs include Financial Services, Human Resources, Legal Services and Valuation Services.

#### 4. Resource Implications

4.1 The HRA Business Plan submission to the Welsh Government sets out how the Council will fund the service, aggregating certain categories of expenditure within generic headings set by the Welsh Government to help manage the allocation of MRA. Councils are however free to allocate investment across programmes of their own choosing. Table 4.1 sets out how Powys County Council proposes to invest in and fund the HRA Business Plan for next five years. All data is sourced from the HRA Thirty Year Financial Business Plan 2023-2024.

Table 4.1: HRA Business Expenditure, Income and Financing Summary 2023-2024 to 2027-2028

<b>HRA Business Expenditure, Income and Financing Summary 2023-2024 to 2027-2028</b>					
	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
<b>Capital Expenditure</b>					
WHQS Improvements & Maintenance	£7,017,700	£5,645,480	£5,693,330	£6,646,270	£6,059,280
Community Alarms	£120,000	£120,000	0	0	0
Compliance One Hundred	£400,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
Fit for Life	£1,250,000	£1,450,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
Green Powys	£425,000	£575,000	£575,000	£500,000	£500,000
Love Where You Live	£900,000	£500,000	£500,000	£150,000	£150,000
New Build	£12,569,000	£19,473,000	£25,041,000	£11,811,000	£10,042,000
Acquisitions	£800,000	£2,300,000	£2,300,000	£2,300,000	£2,300,000
Other Capital Expenditure					
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£23,481,700</b>	<b>£30,313,480</b>	<b>£34,609,330</b>	<b>£21,907,270</b>	<b>£19,551,280</b>
<b>Capital Funding</b>					
Major Repairs Allowance	£-3,732,000	£-3,732,000	£-3,732,000	£-3,732,000	£-3,732,000
Capital Receipts	£-1,000,000	£-1,000,000			
Borrowing	£-9,822,100	£-8,607,880	£-16,609,630	£-6,804,560	£-3,998,760
Other Funding Sources (WG Social Housing Grant) Assumption 40%	£-5,027,600	£-7,485,600	£-8,120,400	£-4,575,200	£-4,016,800
Capital Expenditure funded by HRA	£-3,900,000	£-9,488,000	£-6,147,300	£-6,795,510	£-7,803,720

<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>-£23,481,700</b>	<b>-£30,313,480</b>	<b>-£34,609,330</b>	<b>-£21,907,270</b>	<b>-£19,551,280</b>
<b>Revenue Expenditure</b>					
Debt Servicing costs Baseline	£5,074,150	£5,546,560	£6,136,070	£7,022,590	£7,400,480
ICT	£112,100	£124,000	£0	£0	£0
Repairs & Maintenance	£2,828,870	£2,673,870	£2,673,870	£2,593,870	£2,583,870
Repairs & Maintenance Voids	£2,888,000	£2,860,000	£2,860,000	£2,860,000	£2,860,000
Repairs & Maintenance Adaptations	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000
Repairs & Maintenance Compliance	£1,449,350	£1,388,550	£1,388,550	£1,423,550	£1,408,550
Corporate Support Costs	£1,365,460	£1,365,460	£1,365,460	£1,365,460	£1,365,460
Legal Contribution	£56,840	£56,840	£56,840	£56,840	£56,840
Outdoor recreation	£55,000	£55,000	£55,000	£55,000	£55,000
Lease cars	£55,000	£55,000	£55,000	£55,000	£55,000
Fleet & Associated costs	£306,430	£306,430	£306,430	£306,430	£306,430
Vehicle replacement	£215,120	£215,120	£215,120	£215,120	£215,120
Other staff Costs	£88,350	£88,350	£88,350	£88,350	£88,350
Management costs	£646,810	£646,810	£646,810	£646,810	£646,810
Management Utilities	£400,480	£400,480	£400,480	£400,480	£400,480
Ground Maintenance	£925,860	£925,860	£925,860	£925,860	£925,860
Staffing	£7,718,630	£7,722,280	£7,799,500	£7,877,500	£7,956,280
Revenue Contribution to Capital	£3,900,000	£9,480,000	£6,140,000	£6,760,000	£6,760,000
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£28,676,450</b>	<b>£34,500,610</b>	<b>£31,703,340</b>	<b>£33,242,860</b>	<b>£33,674,530</b>
<b>Revenue Funding</b>					
Gross Rental Income	£29,083,050	£31,469,640	£32,402,150	£34,313,940	£36,090,730
Garages	£720,990	£742,620	£764,900	£787,850	£811,480
Service Charges	£297,440	£309,710	£309,460	£315,650	£321,960
Other Commercial Rental Income	£22,080	£22,740	£23,420	£24,130	£24,850
Voids	-£1,099,100	-£1,099,240	-£950,570	-£815,830	-£638,570

Bad Debts	-£661,060	-£715,040	-£736,020	-£779,220	-£819,470
WG Affordable Housing Grant (AHG)	£202,700	£202,700	£202,700	£202,700	£202,700
Interest on Balances	£21,450	£13,760	£5,040	£5,010	£5,010
Other Income	£458,990	£472,760	£486,940	£501,550	£516,600
<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£29,046,540</b>	<b>£31,419,650</b>	<b>£32,508,020</b>	<b>£34,555,780</b>	<b>£36,515,290</b>
<b>HRA Financing Welsh Government Business Plan</b>					
Borrowing Opening Balance	£108,499,114	£117,195,514	£124,693,356	£140,153,050	£145,678,227
Loan repaid from MRP	£1,125,600	£1,364,616	£1,591,467	£2,002,058	£2,226,354
Additional Borrowing	£9,822,000	£8,862,458	£17,052,157	£7,527,235	£4,903,593
Borrowing Carried Forward	£117,195,514	£124,693,356	£140,154,045	£145,678,227	£148,355,466
<b>Balance Carried Forward (HRA Reserve)</b>	<b>£4,503,406</b>	<b>£1,013,759</b>	<b>£1,005,239</b>	<b>£1,005,013</b>	<b>£1,005,195</b>

4.2 The financial model includes many assumptions, the primary ones being detailed below in section 4.3. Due to the long-term nature of the forecasts within the Business Plan, the uncertainty inherent in trying to predict future economic trends and factors, these assumptions are extremely sensitive to change.

- 4.3 The primary assumptions made to inform the HRA Business Plan are:
- Rental income will increase by CPI + 1% per year, the maximum allowed by the Welsh Government's Rent Policy, with the exception of 2023-2024 when maximum rent increases were limited by the Welsh Government to 6.5%.
  - Service charges are increased for future years in line with inflation for full cost recovery.
  - The Welsh Government will in future years allocate grant to support the development of social and low-cost housing on a scheme-by-scheme basis. For the purposes of forward planning, an average grant rate of 40% has been assumed.
  - The Welsh Government Major Repairs Allowance receivable is assumed to remain at previous levels of £3,732,000 per year.
  - Void loss and bad debt have been assumed at 6% (3.75% voids and 2.25% bad debt). Work continues to reduce void turnaround times, with substantial improvements already made in the time taken to let a property once it has been returned to the Council, fit to let.

- The average interest rate for current debt is 3.3%, any new borrowing is assumed at the following rates, 4.2% 2023/24, 4% 2024/25, 3.5% 2025/26, 3.2% 2026/27 and 3% 2027/28.
  - General inflation as per the Powys County Council's FRM for 2023-24 and 3% afterwards. 5.36% for CPI in 2023-24, 4% in 2024-25 and 2% annually afterwards.
  - A minimum balance of £1,000,000 will be maintained over the medium term to mitigate against any future risks.
- 4.4 The Business Plan is subject to regular review to make sure new expenditure, to be paid for by borrowing. This is undertaken for essential improvements or for schemes that have an element of pay back, such as the development of new homes. This is to make sure that there are no long-term issues of affordability and sustainability in respect of borrowing.
- 4.5 The Business Plan process requires the Council to assess the impact of a number of key variables and how changes in these may impact on priorities both in capital investment and for revenue budgets.
- 4.6 It should be noted that the HRA is ring fenced. This means it can only draw income from rental income, self-generated income and approved grants from the Welsh Government. It cannot benefit in any way from General Fund income. By the same token, the HRA can only be used to fund services and investment of direct benefit to domestic tenants of the Council. It cannot be used to fund General Fund services or investment. Welsh Government will later this year begin working on a revised HRA guide detailing what the HRA can and cannot fund, provisionally scheduled for adoption in 2024-2025.
- 4.7 The Head of Finance (Section 151 Officer) notes the content of this report and is satisfied that the HRA business Plan is acceptable, that the assumptions contained within the report are appropriate but noting the sensitivity to change in the current economic climate. This will need to be kept under review. The plan conforms to the structure and business plan parameters set out by Welsh Government. The plan is therefore viable and can be supported from a financial perspective.

## **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1 The Principal Housing Solicitor has commented as follows: There are no direct legal implications but the requirement for a plan is set out in this report. The approval of the Business Plan is an executive function which does not have to be referred to full Council.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

## **6. Data Protection**

- 6.1 The proposals and recommendations contained in this report do not involve the processing of personal data.

## **7. Comment from local member(s)**

- 7.1 This matter has equal effect across the Council.

## **8. Integrated Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 An Impact Assessment has been completed in respect of this report.
- 8.2 The Impact Assessment shows that the proposals for the HRA Thirty Year Business Plan 2023-2024 set out in this report contribute positively to maintaining and developing the Council's role as responsive and viable social landlord. A balanced approach has been taken between maintaining and improving existing homes and increasing the range of affordable housing options available for the people of Powys. Risks arising from changes by the Welsh Government to rent and affordable housing grant policy and inflationary construction costs are well mitigated. The Powys HRA Thirty Year Business Plan makes a substantial contribution towards making 'Stronger, Fairer, Greener' a reality, which includes 'Transforming Where We Live' within the Transformation Portfolio.
- 8.3 The impact on the Council of not approving the proposed HRA Thirty Year Business Plan, set out in this report, will be considerable. There will be a high risk of the Council not being to comply with the Welsh Government's requirement for the Council to have in place by April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, a sustainable and viable HRA Thirty Year Business Plan. This may result in the loss of MRA (£3,732,000 per annum) and direct intervention by the Welsh Government in the management of the landlord service.

## **9. Recommendation**

- 9.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
- 91.1. Approve the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year Business Plan 2023-2024, as set out in the HRA Business Plan Narrative (attached to this report as Appendix A).

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Corporate Director: Nina Davies (Interim Director – Social Services and Housing)



## **At Home in Powys**

### **Housing Revenue Account Thirty Year Business Plan 2023-2024**

**March 2023**

## **Index**

At Home in Powys	1
Stronger, Greener, Fairer	2
Looking Ahead	6
The Powys Housing Market	11
Housing Services	20
Investing for a Stronger, Fairer, Greener Powys	25
Resourcing 'At Home in Powys'	38
Listening to the People of Powys	42
Sustainable Commissioning and Procurement	48
Risk Management	49



## At Home in Powys






'**Stronger, Fairer, Greener**' is Powys County Council's Corporate and Strategic Equalities Plan which will improve the quality of life for the people of Powys. 'Transforming Where People Live' is at the heart of the '**Stronger, Fairer, Greener**' Transformation Portfolio.

The Council provides flats, houses and bungalows for 9.5% of all households in Powys. Making sure that the Council is able to continue to manage and develop a financially viable landlord service is therefore essential to help people to be at home in Powys.

In March 2023, Powys County Council approved its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year Business Plan for 2023-2024. The Business Plan, which works on a rolling thirty-year basis, sets out the financial management plans needed for the Council to successfully manage and provide secure, affordable homes. Detailed investment programmes are prepared for the five year period 2023-2024 through 2027-2028, with outline financial allocations prepared for the remaining 25 years. This is to make sure that the HRA clearly sets out what will be achieved for homes in the immediate period and is financially sustainable in the long term with the scope to respond to changing circumstances and needs in the future, that may mean changes to the investment priorities.

A balanced approach has been taken between maintaining and improving existing Council-owned homes and increasing the range of affordable, secure housing options for the people of Powys. The Housing Services' approach to the way it invests in existing and new homes majors on liveability, maintainability and longevity. This is to make sure that Council-owned homes are easy to live in and enjoy, that they can be cost-effectively and easily kept in good condition and that we think ahead and do not create environmental, maintenance and desirability liabilities for future generations.

'**At Home in Powys**' sets out what the Business Plan means for Powys:

-  How the Business Plan supports '**Stronger, Fairer, Greener**'.
-  Information on Powys housing markets.
-  How the Council works with tenants and other stakeholders to make sure the HRA Business Plan improves the quality of life for residents.
-  How the Council will increase for the people of Powys, the range and choice of Council-owned homes.
-  How the Council will finance and operate the HRA Business Plan to make sure the Council's landlord service is responsive and meets the expectations of tenants and residents.

## Stronger, Fairer, Greener

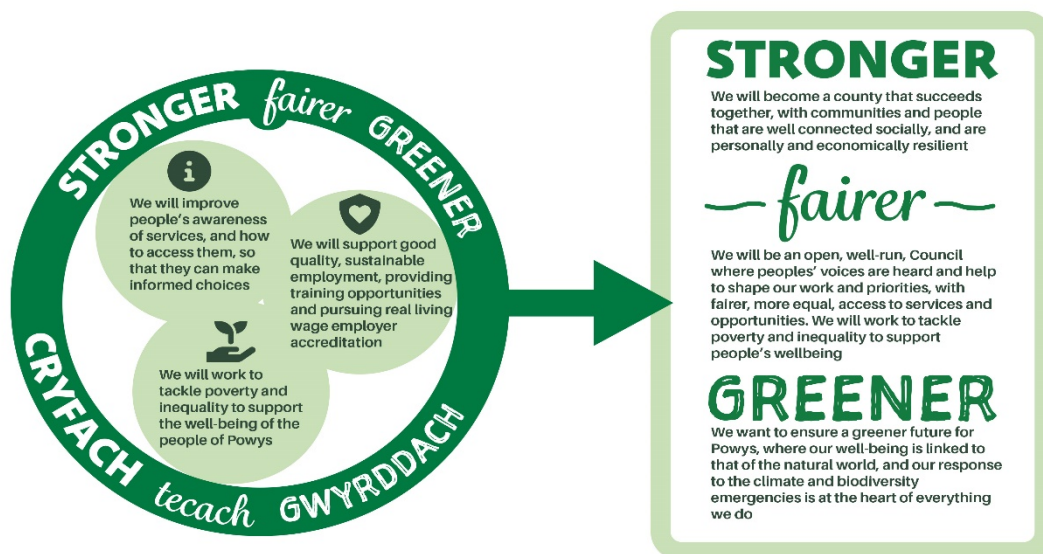
In March 2023, the Council published ‘**Stronger, Fairer, Greener**’, our Corporate and Strategic Equalities Plan.

Our ambition is that by 2027:

**Stronger** - We will become a county that succeeds together, with communities and people that are well connected socially, and are personally and economically resilient.

**Fairer** - We will be an open, well-run, Council where peoples' voices are heard and help to shape our work and priorities, with fairer, more equal, access to services and opportunities. We will work to tackle poverty and inequality to support the well-being of the people of Powys.

**Greener** - We want to ensure a greener future for Powys, where our well-being is linked to that of the natural world, and our response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies is at the heart of everything we do



To achieve our ambition, we have three objectives for the Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan:

**We will improve people's awareness of services, and how to access them, so that they can make informed choices.**

One example of how the HRA Business Plan will contribute to this objective is by improving the percentage of tenants satisfied with satisfied with the service provided by the Council's Housing Services. This will be measured using the bi-

annual survey as part of the All-Wales STAR<sup>1</sup> survey, allowing us to compare and contrast with other social landlords and our own past achievements. The next survey will be completed in 2023-2024.

 ***We will provide good quality, sustainable employment, and training opportunities, whilst pursuing real living wage employer accreditation.***

Now that Housing Services is directly providing repairs, maintenance and other asset management services for our tenants, we are planning to increase the number of apprentices to provide opportunities for people to develop the skills needed for tomorrow's workforce. This includes liaising with Neath Port Talbot College, one of the main providers of vocational training for the people of Powys.

 ***We will work to tackle poverty and inequality to support the well-being of the people of Powys.***

Insecure, unaffordable, poor quality housing is widely acknowledged as being a major cause of inequality. 'Transforming Where People Live', which is at the heart of the '**Stronger, Fairer, Greener**' Transformation Portfolio<sup>2</sup>, will by providing better housing - more affordable, to a higher quality, with reducing running costs - make a substantial contribution towards reducing poverty and inequality.

## **Transforming Where We Live**

The HRA Business Plan is designed to fund the building of at least 350 new social homes by 2031. Plans are already well advanced with land identified to build 217 homes - two thirds of the overall target for 2031. However, the development of new homes is subject to many factors, many of which are beyond the control of the Council. These include the availability of land that is suitable for building, securing planning consents, resolution of phosphate management, ready availability of competent contractors and tradespeople, supply chains able to readily meet the need for materials and components, the high cost of installing (and then maintaining) new types of heating systems and bringing rising construction cost inflation under control.

As well as building new homes, the HRA Business Plan will by 2024-2025 be buying at least ten homes per year, for letting by the Council, at social rents on secure contracts, subject to the availability of suitable properties to buy at prices that represent value for money for the HRA.

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<sup>1</sup> The Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) asks tenants what their experiences are of their social landlords. STAR uses a common set of questions so that landlords - both councils and housing associations - can compare and contrast the quality of their services. Surveys are usually undertaken once every two years.

<sup>2</sup> The Transformation Portfolio in 'Stronger, Fairer, Greener' brings together the main projects and initiatives being taken forward by the Council to transform for the better the quality of life in Powys.

We will also be reducing the time taken to re-let properties owned by the Council, speeding up the time people get the keys to their new home and reducing rental income lost when properties are empty.

The addition of a dedicated Empty Properties Officer to the service from April 2023 will improve our already excellent record of creating new homes by bringing empty properties back into use. Most of these will be privately owned but some may be taken into the HRA.

By increasing the number of Council-owned homes, alongside other work to help housing associations add to their homes in Powys, we will also be contributing to these **‘Stronger, Fairer, Greener’** outcomes:

- 🏠 A fall in the number of households registered with ‘Homes in Powys’<sup>3</sup> for an affordable and secure home.
- 🏠 A fall in the number of households who are living in temporary accommodation.
- 🏠 A fall in the number of people who are homeless.



*Note: Our Transformation Portfolio is still developing, so the information and diagram provided within ‘At Home in Powys’ are subject to change.*

<sup>3</sup> ‘Homes in Powys’ is the one-stop shop for people to find social rented home in Powys. All homes provided by the Council and eight housing associations working Powys are allocated using the ‘Homes in Powys’ common allocation policy. People looking for a home simply need to make one application to be able to be considered for all social housing available in the county.

## **Climate and Nature: Tackling the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency**

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in September 2020 and a Nature Emergency in October 2022. These will contribute towards Powys becoming a ‘net-zero’<sup>4</sup> council by 2030, and a national leader in protecting and enhancing nature. Improving the energy efficiency and longevity of Council-owned homes and reducing the need for repairs and replacing components such as heating systems, will make a positive contribution towards making our environment more sustainable. Powys and the UK will be more resilient in the face of increasing challenges securing the energy and materials we all need to live well.

## **Equality: Giving everyone the opportunity and support to have a good life in Powys**

The Council’s role as the largest social housing provider in Powys is well placed to deliver better outcomes for those who experience inequality and socio-economic disadvantage. **‘Stronger, Fairer, Greener’** recognises that the causes and impacts of inequality are not isolated from one another. Poverty and inequality can be caused by many different things. Not being able to find a truly affordable home that offers security of tenure is major cause of inequality. The HRA Business Plan and its investment programmes and services will, by expanding the supply of secure homes and improving the quality of those we have will make a major contribution towards creating a Powys that makes it possible for people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.

## **Developing Prosperous Towns and Villages: The Local Development Plan**

The Council has started work developing a new Local Development Plan<sup>5</sup> (LDP), which will support the aims of the Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan. The LDP will shape the future of Powys by outlining opportunities for future development and land use in the county – including of course where new Council homes can be built. The Brecon Beacons National Park Planning Authority (BBNPPA) is using its current LDP, which was adopted in December 2013, for those areas of Powys which fall within the national park.

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<sup>4</sup> Net Zero is a policy objective to reduce the net emissions of carbon dioxide from human activity to zero.

<sup>5</sup> A Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out the local planning authority's proposals for future development and use of land in their area. It is used to inform decisions on planning applications to build homes, factories and shops.

## Looking Ahead

None of our estates or neighbourhoods are mono-tenure so it is important when designing the HRA Business Plan to consider the relationships between all the homes and residents in each neighbourhood. Housing Services works across all tenures so although 'At Home in Powys' focuses on the HRA Business Plan, it is well worth looking back on what the service as a whole achieved over the past year and what we plan to do in future years.

### A look back at 2022-2023...

Among Housing Services many achievements in 2022-2023...

- ☺ Completed the 'Moving on Up' service redesign to align the way we work with the way the people of Powys experience housing and homes.
- ☺ Completed 'Bringing It Back Home', welcoming into Housing Services the technicians, administrators, engineers and operatives who repair and maintain Council-owned homes.
- ☺ Remained one of the best social landlords in Wales for collecting rent.
- ☺ Between July and December, reduced by a third the works time needed to make voids ready to let.
- ☺ Continued to allocate and let homes within our 16-day target from when the home is good-to-go.
- ☺ Inspected nearly a hundred host homes for Ukrainian families looking for a safe refuge while their country remains at war.
- ☺ Completed new-build housing schemes in Clyro, Newtown and Llanidloes.
- ☺ Updated 'Homes in Powys' and driven forward the 'Really Important Goal' initiative to help us reduce the massively increased number of homeless households needing a new home following the introduction by the Welsh Government of the 'Everyone In' policy.
- ☺ Successfully managed the introduction of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act.
- ☺ Improved the experience tenants have of their new home by rolling out the new Quality of Accommodation Standard, including the ability to gift carpets.

...and looking ahead to 2023-2024 and beyond...

### Stronger...

- ✓ Add to the availability of genuinely affordable homes, let on secure contracts across Powys, by increasing our new homes development programme - and starting a major programme of property acquisitions to take advantage of the changing housing market.
- ✓ Increase the availability of homes for the people of Powys by driving forward our Empty Homes Action Plan.



- ✓ Further improve our approach to reducing homelessness including even closer working with our colleagues in Social Services and the Housing Support Grant team.
- ✓ Underpin economic development in Ystradgynlais by developing ready for delivery the regeneration plans for Ael-y-bryn and Pen-y-bryn.
- ✓ Understand how we can work to improve housing for tenants of private landlords by introducing a forum so that they can share their experiences with the Council.

### *Fairer...*

- ✓ See where we need to make tweaks, nips and tucks to improve further the way we deliver our services by having a look at the way Housing Services works as a whole, taking account of the impact of 'Moving on Up' and 'Bringing It Back Home'.
- ✓ Bringing together by 2025 in one place all the ICT systems we need to manage and deliver all our services effectively by starting work to develop a user-friendly whole-housing ICT system.
- ✓ Build stronger relationships with our tenants and communities by starting the roll out of 'Keeping in Touch'<sup>6</sup> tenancy visits.
- ✓ Improving the quality of service and value for money experienced by our tenants by recruiting the operatives we need to fill gaps in the repairs and maintenance service.
- ✓ Complete the improvement works to the Kings Meadow gypsy and traveller site in Brecon.

### *Greener...*

- ✓ Continue to help people manage the increases in the cost of living by driving forward energy efficiency programmes and offering financial advice and support across all tenures.
- ✓ Improve the long-term environmental sustainability of homes across Powys.
- ✓ Invest in long term, maintainable and useable efficiency and environmental improvements in homes owned by the Council to contribute toward the Council's target to be a 'net zero' council by 2030.

The HRA faces many challenges in the years to come.

### *Construction*

- 👉 The Council's housing stock is aging and increasingly in need of investment to make sure it can continue to provide homes now and in the future. Considerable high-cost investment is needed in many homes – for example new roofs and repairing or replacing retaining walls. In 2024-2025, the Council will undertake a

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<sup>6</sup> 'Keeping in Touch' is a rolling programme of visits to every tenant of the Council, each tenant being visited at least once every three years. The outcome is better, closer relationships with tenants, better knowledge of the condition of our homes to drive forward preventative maintenance, enhanced estate management and be able to offer help and support proactively where that will help people enjoy a better quality of life.

full Stock Condition Survey of all our homes, to inform an Asset Management Strategy. This will allow for future investment in our homes to be directed where it will most benefit tenants and communities. This will include consideration for rebuilding in cases where that represents the best way of providing low maintenance, long life, energy efficient homes that will remain desirable for generations to come. Undertaking the Stock Condition Survey in 2024-2025 will make sure that the work is able to accommodate any requirements of the forthcoming Welsh Housing Quality Standard-Two (WHQS-2) expected to be confirmed in 2023 by the Welsh Government.

- ☞ Powys achieved the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) in December 2018 and has managed to maintain this standard across all homes. However, to meet the current proposals for WHQS-2, which has a target date of 2033, will require a major increase in investment estimated to be £48,360 in each home.
- ☞ Supply chain constraints, for both materials and tradespeople, housing officers with experience of working with both public and private property owners and development officers are having a negative impact on the ability of the Council build new and maintain existing homes.
- ☞ Particular risks are found in securing engineers or contractors to maintain heating systems, competitive prices for new developments and contractors capable and willing to undertake improvement programmes such as window replacements. There is a diminishing number of contractors able and willing to build new homes in Powys. The HRA Business Plan includes provision to increase in 2023-2024 the number of directly employed tradespeople. This will mitigate the uncertainty and quality issues of over relying on over-stretched or out-of-Powys contractors, build up internal capability and capacity, provide the foundation for an apprenticeship programme and create more flexibility in the way we work.
- ☞ The Council will explore and bring forward, practical ways to encourage and support, for smaller build schemes and improvements, the use of small and medium sized enterprises based in the county and mid-Wales.

#### *Management of phosphates in river catchment areas*

- ☞ Until the management of phosphates in the catchment areas of the River Wye and River Usk is resolved, the building of new homes by the Council – and indeed all other developers – in these areas will be extremely limited. The earliest when development can start again in the Wye area is currently expected to be 2025 and in the Usk, 2028. That means the Council's HRA development programme will for the next three to four years by necessity be very much focused on those areas of the county where phosphate restrictions do not apply – centred on communities such as Machynlleth, Llanidloes, Newtown and Welshpool. However, in preparation for mitigation being in place in the Wye area in 2025, Housing Services will in 2023-2024 begin progressing planning applications for housing developments in this part of Powys. This is so that construction can start as soon as possible once the current moratorium of new developments is lifted. The same approach will apply in 2025-2026 for the communities in the catchment area of the River Usk.



## *Environmental sustainability*

- ☞ Increasing the environmental sustainability of all the Council's homes is likely to require substantial investment, including support for the Welsh Government's policy of 'decarbonisation' and the Council's commitment to itself being 'net-zero' by 2030. The average cost of making existing homes 'zero-carbon' remain best estimates – for Powys a total of £108,000,000 would be needed, based on research undertaken by Inside Housing<sup>7</sup>. That equates to £20,000 per Council-owned home. As noted above, WHQS-2, which majors on 'net zero' could mean a total investment of £265,980,000 investment – equivalent to £48,360 per home.

## *Cost of Living Pressures*

- ☞ Powys has not been immune from the rises in the cost of living. Indeed, the county's rurality, living where accessing services means extensive travelling, for many limited options for heating fuels due to the sparse energy grid networks and comparatively low wages, makes keeping up with cost increases harder. Rising rents and insecure occupancy terms in the private rented housing market and rising property values, driven in part by inward migration from more prosperous parts of the United Kingdom, have resulted in unprecedented increases in demand for Council homes. For our tenants, the increased cost of essentials such as food and heating are adding to the pressures of life. To help people, for 2023-2024, Powys County Council in consultation with our Tenant Scrutiny Panel, opted for rent increases averaging 5.36% - well below the prevailing rate of inflation and the Welsh Government's upper limit of 6.5%. In spite of the challenges, Powys has maintained its record as one of the best landlords in Wales when it comes to collecting rent.

There are however opportunities for the HRA and the Council's role as the largest single landlord in Powys...

## *More housing opportunities in a changing housing market*

- ☞ The increase in the numbers of private landlords now selling their properties and exiting the housing market may increase the availability of properties for the Council to buy and then let at affordable rents, with secure contracts. There may also be more opportunities for home buyers, especially first-time buyers, to find a home they can afford in a less overheated market. More people will have the chance of a 'forever home'. This could help relieve pressure on 'Homes in Powys' and our homelessness services.

## *Accelerating development of energy efficiency components and housing materials*

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<sup>7</sup> 'The cost of net zero: social landlords' decarbonisation plans revealed' – Inside Housing (November 2020).

- 👉 As energy efficiency becomes ever more important, at a time of high cost and increasingly insecure energy supplies, there will be greater receptiveness from tenants to investment in their homes in systems and work to reduce their heating and energy costs. As the development of more energy efficient components progresses, the cost of these – both to install and then to maintain - may fall over time, helping the Council to improve more of its homes.

#### *Economic and social changes in urban areas*

- 👉 Changes in the way people use town centres, prompted for example by the growth of internet shopping and hybrid working models, will lead to a need to repurpose urban buildings and neighbourhoods. This will, linked to pragmatic regeneration, planning and economic policy and practice, provide opportunities to create from redundant shops and offices, new homes. By being located in urban centres, with day-to-day core services available – such as convenience stores and social venues such as cafes – people will be able to reduce their need to travel as the fifteen-minute city develops. The social and natural environments will be improved as a result. The HRA is well-placed, working with the Council's Economic Development Team, to make the most of such opportunities.

## The Powys Housing Market

Powys is extremely diverse. That is only to be expected in a county that accounts for a quarter of the land mass of Wales. Powys covers a total of 2,007 square miles or 5,200 square kilometres – the largest of any county in Wales. The distance from one end of Powys to the other is greater than the distance from London to Bristol.

Powys is home to 133,200 people<sup>8</sup>, making up 59,986 households<sup>9</sup> and has the lowest population density of all the principal areas of Wales. The sheer size of the county, and its remoteness from major conurbations, presents many challenges for developing, managing and maintaining homes.

Average price by type of property in Powys					
Date	All property types	Detached houses	Semi-detached houses	Terraced houses	Flats and maisonettes
November 2021	£232,090	£313,030	£204,943	£159,331	£96,311
November 2022	£262,634	£353,590	£232,542	£181,309	£104,938

Source: UK House Price Index (data.gov.uk)

Powys housing markets are as diverse as the county itself.

The north-west of Powys, in and around Machynlleth, is close to the Snowdonia National Park and the university town of Aberystwyth, which is also the administrative centre of the county of Ceredigion. Housing demand is strong, especially for affordable housing due to the relatively high property values and private sector rents.

The north-east of Powys is dominated by Newtown and Welshpool, towns with relatively good rail and road links to the West Midlands and the towns and conurbations serving the Merseyside area. Housing demand is high, with Welshpool in particular experiencing high demand for homes across all tenures.

The centre of the county is home to Llandrindod Wells, the county town for Powys. South of Builth Wells is Brecon, which is part of the Brecon Beacons National Park. Like all national parks, property prices are high leading to increasing demand for affordable housing in and around the town.

The southernmost point of Powys is Ystradgynlais, a town with a proud industrial heritage and now on the edge of the Swansea commuter belt. The housing market has until recent years been relatively balanced but is now experiencing rising demand and increasing values. There are pockets of housing that no longer meets the needs and aspirations of today's households.

<sup>8</sup> Source: 'Census 2021' – Office of National Statistics.

<sup>9</sup> Source: 'Wellbeing Information Bank: View information about Household Income' - Powys County Council (2023).

Average house price – by area - Powys						
	<i>Machynlleth</i>	<i>Newtown</i>	<i>Welshpool</i>	<i>Llandrindod Wells</i>	<i>Brecon</i>	<i>Ystradgynlais</i>
Average house price	£216,315	£184,014	£203,113	£207,549	£256,053	£192,419

Source: <https://www.rightmove.co.uk/house-prices-in-Powys.html>; February 2023

Tenure of homes in Powys shows that the number of people renting a home from the Council and housing associations is now less than those renting accommodation from a private landlord.

Homes - by tenure - in Powys		
Owns outright	28,098	47%
Owns with a mortgage or loan	12,586	21%
Shared ownership	151	0%
Social rented from council	5,294	9%
Social rent from housing association	3,187	5%
Private landlord or letting agency	8,592	14%
Other private rented	2,168	4%
Lives rent free	106	0%
Total	60,182	100%

Source: 2021 Census, ONS

Allocation of all social housing in Powys is managed through ‘Homes in Powys’, a common allocation scheme that also offers a one-stop shop for people looking for a home. It is an on-line system making it easy for people to apply and amend their applications as and when needed. One application is all that is needed for someone to be considered for all social housing provided in Powys by the Council and eight housing associations. ‘Homes in Powys’ also provides an excellent and up-to-date insight into an important part of the wider housing market.

The table below shows the tenure of applicants registered with ‘Homes in Powys’ at the end of December 2022. The highest number of applicants are currently renting private sector accommodation, suggesting a clear desire for the security of tenure and affordable rents offered by social landlords.

Households Registered with Homes in Powys - Current Tenure and Priority Band (December 2022)						
<i>Tenure</i>	<i>Band 1 - specific, defined and evidenced housing needs that can be resolved only by a move to a different home.</i>	<i>Band 2 - ‘Ready-to-Move’ and have special housing needs.</i>	<i>Band 3 - ‘Ready-to-Move’ and have a clear ‘Housing Need’.</i>	<i>Band 4 - no ‘Housing Need’ but ‘Ready-to-Move’.</i>	<i>Band 5 - housing need but are not ‘Ready-to-Move’.</i>	<i>Total</i>
Renting from a private landlord	6	41	611	596	112	1,366

Powys County Council Tenancy	15	32	268	196	46	557
Living with parents	3	19	239	216	32	509
Other	3	23	201	184	36	447
Staying with friends/relatives	1	26	193	78	29	327
Other Social Landlord		2	112	153	31	298
Owner Occupier	1	1	136	118	31	287
Barcud Housing Association Tenancy	3	4	101	81	9	198
Temporary Accommodation	2	60	62	15	23	162
Wales & West Housing Association Tenancy	4	1	59	63	9	136
Rough Sleeper	1	20	49	15	8	93
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association Tenancy	2	2	34	43	10	91
Lodging		3	38	27	7	75
Pobl Housing Association Tenancy			15	22		37
Newydd Housing Association Tenancy		4	17	11	5	37
In home provided by employer		3	11	7	4	25
Adult Placement		1	9	8	3	21
Living in care	1		14	2	4	21
Grwp Cynefin Housing Association Tenancy			3	7	2	12
Melin Homes Housing Association Tenancy		1	2	6	1	10
HM forces accommodation		1	4	1	3	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>2,178</b>	<b>1,849</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>4,718</b>

Source: Homes in Powys, December 2022

Applicants who join Homes in Powys are asked to say why they require housing. Households can have more than one reason - for example a prison leaver may also be threatened with homelessness. The table below shows the housing need reason declared by households registered with 'Homes in Powys'.

## Housing Needs of Households Registered with Homes in Powys, by Tenure (December 2022)

<i>Housing Need Reason</i>	<i>Social Housing Tenure</i>	<i>Other Tenure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Other to those detailed below	291	1,008	1,299
Medical need or have a disability and my existing home is not appropriate for my needs	377	822	1,199
Homeless or about to become homeless within the next 56 days	49	1,027	1,076
Existing home is overcrowded	217	526	743
Current home is unaffordable	69	592	661
Experiencing anti-social behaviour	263	368	631
Need to move to give or receive support and proven level of support is required and can be given	148	457	605
Existing house is too large for my needs	118	331	449
Housing for older people required	72	326	398
Found employment in the area and need to move closer to work or will otherwise lose that employment	37	183	220
Experiencing domestic violence	48	165	213
Current home planned to be demolished or needs major repairs	17	161	178
Leaving prison	1	29	30
Current home has disabled adaptations which are no longer required	13	9	22

*N.B. An applicant may choose more than one housing need reason.*

*Source: Homes in Powys, December 2022*

The demand for social housing has been increasing for years in Powys, as property prices and rents continue to outstrip both income growth and the availability of affordable, secure housing.

## Households registered for affordable, secure homes in Powys

December 2018	2,356
December 2019	2,274
December 2020	3,326
December 2021	4,053
December 2022	4,718

*Source: Homes in Powys, December 2022*

The growth in demand is also outstripping the ability of social landlords to provide secure homes for people who need them.

## Homes let by all social landlords working in Powys

2018-2019	857
2019-2020	645
2020-2021	708
2021-2022	693
Quarter One to Quarter Three 2022-2023	501

*Source: Homes in Powys, December 2022*

There is also a very clear mismatch between the size of properties available in Powys, regardless of tenure, and types of homes needed by people registered with ‘Homes in Powys’ – especially for people whose income may be low enough to mean that they need to claim social security to help make their rent payments.

Property size - by bedrooms - in Powys		
1 bedroom	3825	6%
2 bedrooms	13,827	23%
3 bedrooms	27,383	46%
4 or more bedrooms	15,147	25%
Total	60,182	100%

Source: Number of bedrooms - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

Households Registered with ‘Homes in Powys’ - by minimum bed size and priority band						
Minimum bed size	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3	Band 4	Band 5	Grand Total
1	21	160	1,150	1,031	232	2,594
2	13	61	629	518	111	1,332
3	7	20	280	259	50	616
4	1	3	108	34	11	157
5			9	5		14
6			1	2		3
7			1		1	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>244</b>	<b>2,178</b>	<b>1,849</b>	<b>405</b>	<b>4,718</b>

Source: Homes in Powys, December 2022

Changes in the way people work and spend their leisure time have also had an impact of the housing market. The growth of hybrid working patterns, with more people working from their home, has driven inward migration to the county raising demand for homes. The growth of the AirBnB market for holiday breaks, which offer high rates of return that can be well in excess of longer-term rental arrangements, for relatively low risk, have proved attractive to some property owners and buyers. This may be reducing the number of homes available to buy and rent as long-term homes. In May 2022, Powys had 1,978 AirBnB properties - the third highest in Wales and equivalent to 1.8% of all homes suitable for longer term occupation in Powys<sup>10</sup>. A third of AirBnB properties in Powys have one or two bedrooms – the sizes of homes most in demand by people with low to middle incomes.

Average household income in Powys is £33,458 which is slightly lower than the Welsh average of £34,700 and well below the UK average £40,257. In Powys 55% of households earn less than the average Powys household income<sup>11</sup> and 4,008 families with children are living in absolute poverty in Powys.

<sup>10</sup> Source: ‘Holiday Lets and the Private Rental Sector’ - Bevan Foundation; September 2022

<sup>11</sup> Source: Wellbeing Information Bank: View information about Household Income - Powys County Council

Average household income by Powys locality					
<i>Machynlleth</i>	<i>Newtown</i>	<i>Welshpool and Montgomery</i>	<i>Llandrindod Wells and Rhayader</i>	<i>Brecon</i>	<i>Ystradgynlais</i>
£32,164	£31,788	£34,731	£30,140	£34,443	£30,367

Source: CACI Paycheck, 2022

The average house price to earnings ratio in Powys in 2021 is 7.7:1, up from 6.3:1 in 2020. Long term, the rise of unaffordability is even more pronounced – in 2001 the house price to earnings ratio was just 4.0:1<sup>12</sup>. These figures are averages across the county but everywhere in the county is increasingly unaffordable for home buyers with average incomes.

Comparisons of weekly council house rents with rents in the private sector, the Living Rent and housing associations across Powys show that, with the exception of one-bedroom properties, the rents charged by the Council’s HRA funded service are the lowest in the county. Research by the Bevan Foundation in 2022 showed that there were virtually no privately owned properties available for rent in Powys at rents at or below the Local Housing Allowance, which caps the amount of social security support available to low-income tenants renting their accommodation from a private landlord.

Rents across all rented sectors in Powys					
	<i>Median private rents (2021-2022)<sup>13</sup></i>	<i>Living rent (2021-2022)</i>	<i>Housing association average (2022-2023)<sup>14</sup></i>	<i>Average Powys County Council rents (2022-2023)</i>	<i>Average Powys County Council rents (2023-2024)</i>
One bedroom	£76	£77	£80	£81.79	£85.87
Two bedrooms	£102	£100	£100	£92.62	£97.24
Three bedrooms	£127	£124	£113	£104.90	£110.15
Four bedrooms (or more bedrooms)	£159	£ N/A	£134	£115.12	£120.94

Please note that these are the most recent figures available at the time of writing for housing association, private rents and the Living Rent.

The risk of continued migration away from Powys by younger people, including those in their 20s and 30s, makes it more important than ever that there are affordable homes available not only to rent but also to buy. This makes the county’s housing market more attractive and encourage younger and economically active households to stay in local communities. It will also help attract more young families move to the area and be at home in Powys. The shortage of affordable housing of all tenures in many parts of Powys mean that it is increasingly difficult for people who work in low wage sectors of the economy to remain living in the County. This will have a significant impact on the ability of employers to recruit to posts. The Council is

<sup>12</sup> Source: Housing affordability in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

<sup>13</sup> Source: Median Private Rents: Welsh Government Rent Officers.

<sup>14</sup> Source: Housing Association Average Rents: Average weekly rents in self-contained stock at social rent by accommodation type, number of bedrooms and provider type (www.gov.wales)



developing a range of low-cost home ownership options for direct delivery itself and in partnership with housing associations.

‘Homes in Powys’ data, a continuously updated assessment of prevailing market conditions – such as house price to income ratios and the comparative costs of rented housing in the social and private sectors – and the LHMA findings are used to shape

### **Local Housing Market Assessment for Powys**

Every planning authority in Wales is expected to produce a Local Housing Market Assessment (LHMA) once every five years. The most recent LHMA for Powys was adopted in March 2022.

The LHMA provides the Council with a strategic understanding of the housing need in Powys and provides an evidenced basis on which to plan strategically for meeting current and future housing. The LHMA also provides essential evidence for the formulation of the Local Development Plan (LDP), the principal planning guide required to be produced by every Planning Authority. Powys started work in November 2022 on a new LDP for those areas for which Powys is the planning authority and which is planned to be in place by spring 2026. The Brecon Beacons National Park’s current LDP expired in 2022 but remains in force pending adoption of a new plan.

To have a complete picture of how housing markets function across local authority boundaries, it was decided to commission a regional LHMA in conjunction with seven other planning authorities. These are Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot along with the Brecon Beacons and Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks. This approach was supported by the Welsh Government.

The findings of the LHMA confirm Housing Services’ understanding of need, from ‘Homes in Powys’ registrations, homelessness demand and ongoing interaction with tenants and residents:

- An ageing demographic with higher requirement for specifically age-related housing.
- A reduction in household size.
- An increase in overall household numbers.

the Council’s programme to build new council homes. This is co-ordinated through the Powys Strategic Housing Partnership to make sure that all developments by the Council and housing associations complement each other to meet the needs of the greatest number of households. Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) funding from the Welsh Government is also used to support the development of the Council’s new build programme.

### **Homelessness and the Housing Revenue Account**

The Council is creative and innovative in making effective use of HRA housing to meet the most pressing of housing needs. One example includes the measured deployment of HRA homes to provide higher quality emergency and temporary accommodation for people who are homeless. This creates savings for the Council's General Fund, as it reduces the Council's use of bed and breakfast accommodation in emergency situations. There are moreover no negative impacts on the HRA Business Plan.


### **Balancing the Powys Housing Market**

There is a clear and evidenced need for a net increase in the supply of all homes in Powys, with a particular emphasis on those that will be affordable to people with low and middle incomes, to rent on secure contracts at social rents and for low-cost home ownership for those who may prefer to buy rather than rent. The Powys Thirty Year HRA Business Plan 2023 includes a strong commitment to fund an extensive programme of new developments and acquisitions.


The HRA will, where it is the best option to bring empty properties into use as homes, support the Council's Empty Homes Action Plan. A dedicated Empty Properties Officer will be joining Housing Services in April 2023. The Council will be making good use of the Empty Property Grant Scheme, launched by Welsh Government in 2023, to help home buyers turn empty properties into homes for their families.

The focus for social and affordable rented housing demand, which the HRA Business Plan is designed to contribute towards meeting, is for five main types of housing.


#### ***Specialist Housing for Older People***

 Powys has an ageing population and a growing need to provide appropriate homes for the elderly. The largest increase in the elderly population is projected to be in and around Welshpool and to a lesser extent also in the Brecon, Talgarth, Hay, Newtown and Llanidloes areas. Such housing may include sheltered housing/retirement accommodation extra care housing. Given commitments to care in the community, hybrid versions of these such as 'extra care lite' may also evolve. The provision of such a wide variety of housing will help older people to live independently for longer and release general needs housing for younger people.

#### ***Homes for Smaller Households***



 Household sizes in Powys are getting smaller. In 1991, the average household size was approximately 2.5 people, in 2001 it had fallen to 2.3 persons, in 2011 was 2.25 and in 2021 2.21. Household projections indicate that household sizes are likely to reduce to an average of around 2.1 by 2031. The falling household size may result in the number of households remaining relatively steady or increasing despite the reducing population.

#### ***Accessible Housing***


 Powys has an aging population. To make sure homes remain desirable for older people, the Council will need to adapt or extend existing – and sometimes

aging - accommodation or buy and remodel properties to provide homes for people who cannot access or live successfully in un-adapted dwellings.


### ***Secure, affordable rented housing***

-  The number of households registered with ‘Homes in Powys’ for secure, affordable rented housing has doubled since 2018 and now accounts for around eight per cent of all households in Powys.
-  Over the same period, the number of homeless households who have come to the Council for help has increased from 441 to 813. By the end of December 2022, the Council had 62 homeless households in emergency accommodation (B&B) and a further 216 households in temporary accommodation, waiting for a permanent home to be become available at a rent they could afford.

<b>Homelessness Presentations to the Council - 2017 to date</b>						
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023 (@ 31.12.22)
Total	383	441	613	704	833	813

-  The essential foundation for a long term and permanent answer to homelessness and the ever-growing waiting list for social housing is to have enough homes available to be let on secure contracts, at rents that people can afford and which they can consider to be their forever home.

### ***Low-cost home ownership***

-  Not everyone wants to rent their home, yet the high cost of property means that the option to buy remains out of reach for many households. To give people a real choice, the Council will be promoting low-cost home ownership properties, developed by both the Council and housing associations.

## Housing Services

Since July 2022, Housing Services has been part of the Council's 'Housing and Social Services' directorate. This realignment brings together the most important things that matter to people when they look for, find and then settle down to enjoy their home.

To build on the past successes of Housing Services and to be better able to meet the challenges faced by the Council as both a landlord and strategic housing authority, a new structure for Housing Services - called 'Moving on Up' - was rolled out in 2022-2023. 'Moving on Up' was designed around the way people experience housing – finding, keeping and enjoying a home. It also took into account the rurality and geography of Powys, the largest county in Wales, with a strong emphasis on locally provided services. A strong network of area-based housing management and maintenance teams offer day-to-day services for our tenants and communities, working as much as possible out and about in our communities.

In July 2022, the Council's 'Bringing It Back Home' initiative brought in-house the repairs and maintenance services that had for five years been provided by a private contractor. The decision was informed by the need to improve value for money, raise the quality of service, increase accountability to tenants and members and allow for flexibility of service to meet actual rather than contractual needs. Already, service improvements are being felt – for example void repairs times are on average down a third and compliments about repairs and maintenance are now regularly received.


The new approach to service delivery is taking advantage of the opportunities revealed by the Council's corporate approach for more flexible working. This includes replacing fixed-base office-based working with a neighbourhood-focused mix of working out on estates and developing and using local services and community hubs. Housing Services is moving towards having all colleagues regardless of role – for example plumbers, housing officers, development officers, carpenters, housing environmental health officers - having a single core-hub for each area. This means that people can, when they are not out and about or working from home, can meet up more easily and communicate quickly and effectively. The first is already up and running in Newtown and the second is planned for Brecon in 2023-2024.

A light-touch review of both 'Moving on Up' and 'Bringing It Back Home' is underway in the final quarter of 2022-2023, to make sure that the changes are delivering the improvements need to further improve services to our tenants – and indeed all communities across Powys.

## Housing Services in Powys

### Housing Communities

*Rationale for the Housing Communities division...*

 Clear focus across all aspects of finding, keeping and enjoying a home.

- 🏠 All homelessness services managed and delivered locally to facilitate closer client-council-service provider liaison.
- 🏠 Strong local understanding of communities and people to enhance, through local knowledge and local provision of estate and tenancy management services.
- 🏠 High visibility of the Council in neighbourhoods.
- 🏠 Teams to work with a mix of home working, hubs and drop-in centres to increase visibility and contact with communities and support the Council's New Ways of Working<sup>15</sup>.
- 🏠 Close working links between housing and tenancy management, homelessness, Housing Support and agencies able to help people increase their incomes and quality of life.

#### *Housing Communities service responsibilities...*

- 🏠 'Homes in Powys' including allocation and letting of social homes, void management, understanding local housing markets (including highlighting acquisition and development needs).
- 🏠 Homelessness and housing advice services (including Housing First, Rapid Rehousing, temporary accommodation, enabling move-on options).
- 🏠 Supported housing services (including 'Housing Support').
- 🏠 'Rent First' - front-line income recovery.
- 🏠 'Love Where You Live' (including estate and neighbourhood management).
- 🏠 Tenancy management (including anti-social behaviour).
- 🏠 'Keeping in Touch' – the tri-annual visit to every tenant to maintain and develop closer relationships.
- 🏠 Gypsy and traveller site management.
- 🏠 Encouragement of high management standards by private sector landlords.
- 🏠 Crime and anti-social behaviour.
- 🏠 UK Resettlement Scheme and similar initiatives to help people from around the world who need a safe place in which to live.
- 🏠 Powys Housing Support Programme (HSP) which centres on the prevention and resolution of homelessness.

## **Housing Quality**

#### *Rationale for the Housing Quality division...*

- ✂ Expertise shared and able to be deployed more efficiently across all aspects of asset management and construction activity.
- ✂ Capacity and capability to provide and manage works in a variety of ways, each tailored to the outcome required (including direct provision and use of external providers where appropriate).
- ✂ Single approach to the provision of more places for people to live by embracing acquisition and new development.
- ✂ Strong health, safety and compliance capacity and capability for the benefit of all housing clients and services.

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<sup>15</sup> 'New Ways of Working' is being rolled out by Powys County Council to improve efficiency, locating people where they can work most effectively – in a depot or office, at home, at a drop-in hub, library or family centre, on-the-go or a hybrid of all options tailored to the outcomes expected of each person.

- ✘ Flexibility of resource deployment across all aspects of asset management to meet service needs.
- ✘ New build and improvement programme specifications continuously informed ongoing and current knowledge and intelligence about maintenance liabilities.
- ✘ Link aids, adaptations and disabled facilities grant work with wider asset management strategy and services to better inform works and development programmes.

*Housing Quality service responsibilities...*

- ✘ Acquisition and development of new homes by the Council - social rent, low-cost home ownership, market housing.
- ✘ Repair, maintenance and improvement of municipal homes.
- ✘ Maintaining the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) for municipal homes (including WHQS Compliance Policy).
- ✘ Aids and adaptations (including disabled facilities grants, Fit for Life).
- ✘ Compliance across all municipal housing assets.

**Housing Resources**

*Rationale for the Housing Resources team...*

- 📁 Single resource for services, projects and policies that impact on and support all Housing Services.
- 📁 A co-ordinated insight into all housing markets, needs and aspirations across Powys informing investment and policy decisions on the provision, maintenance and management of homes.
- 📁 Environmental sustainability expertise and drive applied across all aspects of housing services.
- 📁 Focused and robust approach to income collection (including 'Rent First', support for Housing Officers, efficient and robust to managing rechargeable repairs, full recovery of Temporary Accommodation charges).
- 📁 Strong market research capacity and capability that understands all aspects of the way people experience their homes and neighbourhoods.
- 📁 Driving force for constant improvements in customer care.
- 📁 Coherent and clear messaging for all aspects of Housing Services.
- 📁 Performance management and co-ordination in one place providing the ability to understand and share all the experiences people have of the impact of our services on the quality of their homes and neighbourhoods.
- 📁 Expert approach to market research and client surveys.
- 📁 Ability to quality assure all services with a critical but friendly eye.
- 📁 Recognition that skilled administrative support is essential for all services to focus on their technical and professional outcomes.
- 📁 Co-ordinated and capable ICT support that is able to capture the needs of all service users and shape ICT support around Housing Services outcomes.

*Housing Resources service responsibilities...*

- 📁 Policy and practice development, co-ordination and continuous review.
- 📁 Housing market intelligence.

- ✎ Housing standards in the private sector (including enforcement of standards – Housing Health & Safety Rating System or HH&SRS, home improvement and town centre loans).
- ✎ Increasing the availability of homes and contributing to economic development by bringing empty homes and properties into use.
- ✎ Environmental sustainability including driving forward Green Powys, increasing energy efficiency and environmental sustainability across Housing Services, encouraging sustainable activity in the way services are designed and delivered and the way assets are built and maintained.
- ✎ Maximum income collection to maintain service viability.
- ✎ Gathering and sharing client experiences to improve, expand or reduce services according to market needs and demands.
- ✎ Customer Care programme co-ordination and quality assurance.
- ✎ Communication with communities to make sure there is clear understanding of housing's opportunities and constraints.
- ✎ Quality assurance to make sure all services are to a high standard (including audits, client research, member and tenant engagement).
- ✎ Administration and dissemination of STAR survey.
- ✎ Up to date, accurate performance management - administration, reporting, sharing and challenge.
- ✎ Efficient, service friendly ICT systems.
- ✎ Co-ordination, quality assurance, analysis and submission of all service, corporate and national performance indicator, statistical and data returns.
- ✎ Archiving and records.

### ***Responsibilities across Housing Services***

<b>Housing Communities</b>	<b>Housing Quality</b>	<b>Housing Resources</b>
<i>Helping people to find, keep and enjoy a home</i>	<i>Providing maintaining and improving homes</i>	<i>Understanding the way people experience their homes and communities</i>
Housing advice across all tenures	Building and acquiring new homes	Continuous market engagement to drive forward improvements in all the work we do
Homelessness prevention and resolution	Bringing empty properties into use as homes	Customer relationship management
Allocation of social homes in Powys	Repairs, maintenance and improvements to homes owned by the Council	Effective and interactive communications
Tenancy management of Council-owned homes	Encouraging higher maintenance standards by private property owners	Provision of information technology and data systems
Estate management	Compliance and health and safety across all Housing Services	Quality assurance and performance management
Management of gypsy and traveller sites	Aids, adaptations and disabled facilities work to	Income management

	increase the well-being of people in Powys	
Love Where You Live	Welsh Housing Quality Standard	Environmental sustainability
Rent First	Asset Management Strategy	Housing market research and policy development



## Investing for a **Stronger, Fairer, Greener** Powys

Over the next thirty years, Powys County Council has the capacity to invest £673,152,000 in maintaining and improving the homes already owned by the Council add to add to the availability of council-housing to the people of Powys.

All borrowing for both new homes and buying and converting existing properties will only be for schemes that are financially viable and able to pay back the full cost of all borrowing - as well as ongoing management and maintenance - within sixty years. The strict sixty-year payback period for all new housing developments, acquisitions and conversions of empty properties into homes. This is only exceeded in the most exceptional of circumstances – for example purchasing properties that allow the Council to have full ownership of block of flats or to meet extraordinary housing needs for people with special accommodation needs that cannot otherwise be met. This way, the Council is able to continue to expand the housing options available to the people in Powys while safeguarding the financial viability of the HRA.

The HRA investment programme represents a massive injection of resources into the local economy of Powys. Wherever practicable the Council will invest in ways that secure the benefits to the local economy, supporting the ‘Powys Pound’ and domestic manufacture and service providers based in Wales and the United Kingdom.

A comprehensive Asset Management Strategy is essential to manage all assets held within the HRA. In 2018-2019, the first stage was finished - mapping all the open spaces and green areas held in the HRA. In 2019-2020, a garage review was completed looking at the most effective way of making use of HRA’s garage estate, which includes more than directly owned garages and assorted garage sites leased to individuals. Further work on the strategy in 2020-2021 and in 2021-2022 was put on hold due to the impacts of Covid-19. This restricted access to properties and required a clear focus of all Council resources on supporting work to mitigate and manage the impacts of the pandemic. In 2022-2023 the focus has been on recovery after Covid and the introduction the major changes needed for ‘Moving on Up’ and ‘Bringing It Back Home’, while 2023-2024 will focus on consolidation of the organisational changes made and driving forward - with all Council teams - the roll-out of ‘Stronger, Fairer, Greener’. In 2024-2025, work will begin on a full Asset Management Strategy with an emphasis on understanding and improving the energy efficiency of our homes.

### **Stronger**

#### **New Homes for Powys**

The target in ‘Stronger, Fairer, Greener’ is to have by 2031 added another 350 new homes to the Council’s total stock. Between 2026 and 2031, the Council’s development programme – taking into account secured and unsecured land – already stands at 217 new homes. This includes secured land banks able to support 112 homes once the management of phosphates in these communities is resolved. Additional sites and opportunities are expected to become available between now and 2031.

However, progressing all new developments is dependent upon events often outside the control of the Council. These include securing viable development sites, gathering all necessary planning and other regulatory consents, having a range of competent and stable construction contractors able and willing to build new homes, supply chains being able to provide cost effective and timely supplies of materials and components, and addressing the current increases in construction cost inflation. Of critical importance will be addressing the challenges to new development posed by the need to improve phosphate management in the River Wye and River Usk catchment areas in the south of Powys. Under current proposals for improving the capability and capacity of water treatment works, this should be resolved by 2025-2026 for the River Eye and 2027-2028 for the River Usk.

The scale and pace of continued development will also depend upon the availability of grant from the Welsh Government to allow for the homes to be let at social rents. If construction costs continue to increase beyond the ability of grant to allow properties to recover their full costs within sixty years, be let at social rents and be easily and effectively maintained to a high standard, the Council will consider how it can develop homes for open market sale to generate surplus funds to underpin the affordable housing programme. The Council will also be exploring the options for increasing the range of low-cost home ownership options that can be offered to the people of Powys.

Further additions to the social housing available to people living in Powys will be secured through continuing the programme of property acquisitions. The numbers to be bought will depend upon the opportunities presented by the housing market, the availability where needed of social housing grant, the type of property to keep maintenance costs low and how the properties match local housing needs and represent long-term value for money. In 2018-2019, 21 homes were bought, followed by four in 2019-2020, three in 2020-2021 and six between April 2021 and December 2022.

Powys County Council has in place a Package Deal policy to encourage developers to bring to the Council turn-key developments of social housing. The developer designs and builds the homes, to a standard acceptable to the Council, with the Council having the option to buy upon completion at a mutually agreed price. This approach frees up our own capacity to focus on those schemes where we buy the land and directly develop ourselves. In 2022-2023, we have added seven social rented homes using our Package Deal model.

Building new homes can be made easier and quicker by applying a suite of standard house types, with the ability to be flexible to meet both planning requirements and local area vernacular. Developers and contractors can save time and cost through experience of the designs themselves and in building the properties, this too can achieve a greater quality finished product. Powys County Council aims to have a suite of standard house types in place by the January 2024, informed by the Design Guide for new homes adopted in 2022. The Design Guide sets out clearly the core features and standards we expect for all our new housing schemes. Examples include low

maintenance exterior finishes, commonality of kitchen components to make future maintenance easier and curtilage treatments that create defensible space.

In 2022-2023, to further improve the efficiency of new development, architectural services, mechanical and electrical design and consultancy and planning consultancy has been brought in-house, reducing the links in the development chain which enables a programme which is able to be more responsive to the competing demands within housing design and development, greater cost control and to build up our capability and capacity to once again be one of Powys' major housing developers.

<b>New Homes for Powys - Financial Summary 2023-2024 to 2027-2028</b>				
<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>New Build (£)</i>	<i>Number of Homes Completed</i>	<i>Acquisitions (£)</i>	<i>Number of Homes Acquired</i>
2023-2024	£12,569,338	22	£800,000	4
2024-2025	£19,469,932	48	£2,300,000	11
2025-2026	£25,040,622	147	£2,300,000	11
2026-2027	£11,811,205	54	£2,300,000	11
2027-2028	£10,041,950	40	£2,300,000	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>£78,933,046</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>£10,000,000</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Notes</b>				
Completions and acquisitions will be dependent upon securing all necessary planning, environmental and other regulatory consents, securing viable development sites and where needed Social Housing Grant.				
Number of homes completed refers to being able to develop on secured, unsecured and phosphate impacted sites.				
Investment planned for each year will cover completing earlier schemes, progressing current developments and preparing for future projects.				
The figures and numbers for Acquisitions 2023-2024 refer to a core Acquisitions Programme. If additional opportunities arise, the programme can be expanded in year by drawing upon additional scheme-by-scheme borrowing (as each acquisition is required to be self-financing) as and when necessary, by bringing forward budgets from later years (and reprofiling for that year as part of the annual HRA Business Plan process) or using any underspends elsewhere in the wider capital budget.				
The figures shown in the table above are the gross scheme cost before any grant contributions, the New Build and Acquisitions Programme assumes that Social Housing or other Grants will contribute on average 40% of the gross costs.				

### **Penybryn Regeneration**

In Penybryn, Ystradgynlais, the Council has a cluster of flats, for which there has over the years been erratic housing demand and which are in poor condition. Proposals have been developed and shared with the local community to resolve what was seen by local people as a problem adversely affecting their lives. The flats were empty, unsightly and attracted anti-social behaviour. Over the next three years, some of the flats will be demolished, others reconfigured into high-quality apartments for single people and couples and the centre of the estate greened as an attractive open space. On-site construction works are, subject to securing planning consents, due to start in 2023-2024.

Garage sites which are no longer needed or which cannot be brought up to a standard suitable for accommodation modern cars, which are larger than those which prevailed when the garages were built in the mid twentieth century, will be considered for use as sites for new homes.

### Day-to-day Repairs and Cyclical Maintenance

Since July 2022, repairs and maintenance to all Council-owned homes have been delivered directly by Housing Services, supported where necessary to meet unforeseen demands for works or specialist skills by external sub-contractors. By the start of 2023-2024, the service, through the Full Capability Initiative, will have recruited the tradespeople and operatives needed to fully meet demand for high quality repairs. Included in this will be the appointment of apprentices to provide the skilled workers of tomorrow.

In 2023-2024, a new, improved Quality of Accommodation Standard – which sets out what new tenants can expect from their new home – will be introduced, providing a better balance between aspirations of tenants, especially those moving to their first Council-provided home, the time taken to re-let empty properties and the financial resources available within the HRA Business Plan.

Repairs and Maintenance Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028					
Investments	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Day to Day Repairs & Maintenance	£2,828,870	£2,673,870	£2,673,870	£2,593,870	£2,583,870
Voids Repairs & Maintenance	£2,888,000	£2,860,000	£2,860,000	£2,860,000	£2,860,000
Adaptations Repairs & Maintenance	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000
Compliance Repairs & Maintenance	£1,449,350	£1,388,550	£1,388,550	£1,423,550	£1,408,550
Vehicle Financing (Revenue)	£215,120	£215,120	£215,120	£215,120	£215,120
ICT	£112,100	£124,000	£0	£0	£0
Estate and Grounds Maintenance	£925,860	£925,860	£925,860	£925,860	£925,860
<b>Total Repairs and Maintenance Investment</b>	<b>£9,009,300</b>	<b>£8,777,400</b>	<b>£8,653,400</b>	<b>£8,608,400</b>	<b>£8,583,400</b>

### Fairer

### Fit for Life

The Fit for Life programme is designed to make the Council’s homes better suited to the needs of older people and those with health-related needs that impair or adversely affect their mobility.

<b>Fit for Life Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Fit for Purpose	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£600,000	£0	£0
Adaptations - Capital	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
<b>Capital Fit for Life Investment</b>	<b>£1,250,000</b>	<b>£1,250,000</b>	<b>£850,000</b>	<b>£250,000</b>	<b>£250,000</b>
Adaptations - Revenue	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000
<b>Total Fit for Life Investment</b>	<b>£1,840,000</b>	<b>£1,840,000</b>	<b>£1,440,000</b>	<b>£840,000</b>	<b>£840,000</b>

The adaptations programme includes capital and revenue investment, acknowledging that a number of larger adaptations should be treated as capital expenditure.

### **Community Alarms**

During 2023-2024, a set of proposals will be considered by the Council for the future of the Careline community alarm service, offered to both tenants of the Council and people living in privately owned accommodation. This follows a review of customer needs and demands, the full range of options now available in today’s digitally connect world to provide such services and in recognition of the need to replace the current equipment, much of which is of an age that it is beyond economical maintenance and repair. A sum of £130,000 has been set aside in 2023-2024 to cover the cost of managing and maintaining the current system.

<b>Community Alarms Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028</b>					
<i>Investments</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Community Alarms	£120,000	£120,000	£0	£0	£0

### **Compliance One Hundred**

With increased expectations by tenants and residents, a top priority for the Council is to make sure that the Council’s homes are always fully compliant with all relevant health and safety related legislation. The Compliance One Hundred programme is designed to make sure that all of the Council homes and associated buildings are one hundred per cent compliant with all relevant and applicable legislation and regulation.

‘Moving on Up’ introduced for the first for Housing Services a dedicated Compliance and Quality Assurance team which includes the Compliance Technical officer (CTO) for fire safety now trained to undertake Fire Risk Assessments and the CTO leading on asbestos now holding competency certificates for P400 Asbestos Foundation, P405 Asbestos Management in Buildings and IOSH Managing Safely Training.

All LOLER<sup>16</sup> assets receive an annual service and a six-monthly independent inspection and always have an in-date servicing certificate. Legionella control has been improved – for example, Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) L8 Risk Assessments have been undertaken within communal areas and specific dwellings. Considerable improvements have taken place across the sewage treatment plants owned by Housing Services, especially regarding site security, safety and general condition. Telemetry has been installed in high-risk sites.

The Housing Services ‘Compliance and Assurance Board’ receives monthly reports on all aspects of compliance, offering a high level of quality assurance.

<b>Compliance One Hundred Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Fire Safety Works	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000	£50,000
Water Supply and Sewerage Works	£150,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Legionella	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
<b>Capital Compliance One Hundred Investment Programme</b>	<b>£400,000</b>	<b>£350,000</b>	<b>£350,000</b>	<b>£350,000</b>	<b>£200,000</b>
WHQS Contributions to Compliance One Hundred	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£0
Revenue Compliance Repairs & Maintenance	£1,449,350	£1,388,550	£1,388,550	£1,423,550	£1,408,550
<b>Total Compliance One Hundred Investment Programme</b>	<b>£1,999,350</b>	<b>£1,888,550</b>	<b>£1,888,550</b>	<b>£1,923,550</b>	<b>£1,608,550</b>

<sup>16</sup> LOLER stands for ‘Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations’, brought into force in 1998. They are drawn up and overseen by the Health and Safety Executive.

## Compliance One Hundred Priorities

### ***Fire Safety***

Respond to the recommendations of the recently completed comprehensive fire doors inspection initiative and the update of all Fire Risk Assessments, replacing and repairing as necessary all fire doors and putting in place fire safety improvement programmes.

### ***Asbestos***

Drive forward the newly established Asbestos Working Forum which will meet monthly to make sure that our work to manage asbestos risks is always up-to-date. Improve the management of asbestos surveys, including making sure that the surveys are proactively used by colleagues and contractors.

### ***Heating Systems***

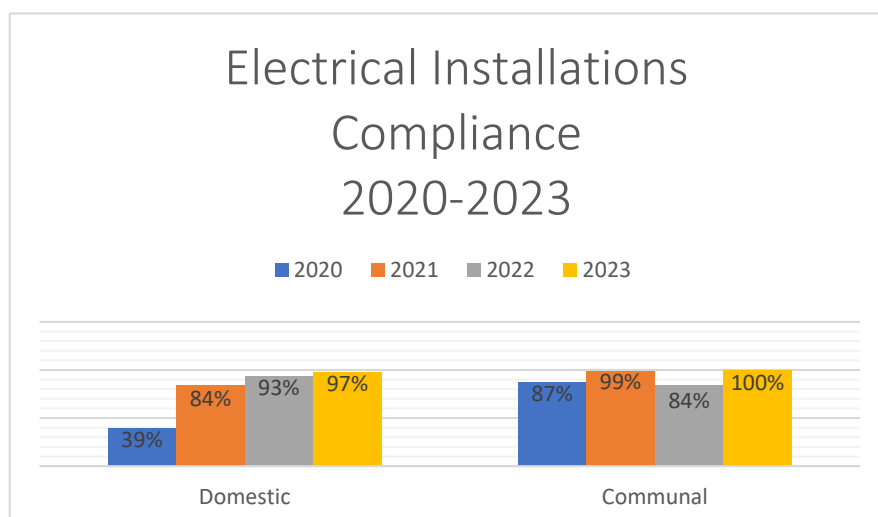
Mobilise a new contract for heating servicing, to start work in Q1 of 2023-2024.

### ***Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER)***

A new LOLER servicing contract will be mobilised in 2023, one for north Powys and one for south Powys.

### ***Fixed Electrical Testing***

Maintain the excellent performance achieved over the past three years.



### ***Legionella Control***

Recruit additional plumbers and skilled operatives in 2023-2024 to allow annual inspections to be completed quickly and to a high standard.

Temperature monitoring to come in house during 2023-2024.

### ***Sewage Systems and Pumping Stations.***

A number of larger scale projects will be progressed to modernise failing systems.

## Greener

### Green Powys

The 'Green Powys' programme is designed to increase fuel efficiency, reduce fuel poverty for tenants of the Council and make our environment and lifestyles greener. 'Green Powys' contributes to the Council's corporate outcome of being a 'net zero' organisation by 2030, in response to the declaration in September 2020 of a 'Climate Emergency'. A really important part of the programme is to make tangible improvements to the wider environment, with a particular emphasis on increasing planting of trees, shrubberies and other actions to promote biodiversity, encourage appreciation of the natural world and give a greener feel to our communities. This element of 'Green Powys' recognises the Council's declaration in October 2022 of a 'Nature Emergency'.

Housing Services is always exploring how it can increase the use of recycled and long-life materials, products and components sourced locally within Wales and Great Britain. This is to reduce environmental transport costs and contribute towards a more environmentally friendly – and one that is economically beneficial to Powys, Wales and Great Britain - approach to the construction, refurbishment and maintenance of homes.

Estimating the cost of 'decarbonisation' of all municipal homes is challenging, because of the many factors outside the control of the Council or households themselves. For example, the way energy is produced and supplied to homes may make a major contribution towards 'decarbonisation'. Conversely, there remain concerns about the capacity of the electricity grid in Powys to be able to support a substantial increase in the use of electricity, for example power for air source heat pumps and for reliable and readily available charging for electric vehicles, essential for life in a very rural area.

Powys County Council is working alongside Ceredigion County Council to develop a Local Area Energy Plan, to address coherently how the two counties will be able to continue to enjoy stable, reliable and sustainable energy supplies.

Considerations of the user-friendliness, maintenance and eventual replacement of components such as batteries, heat pumps and solar panel inverters and other new technologies promoted as making a contribution to 'decarbonisation', all need to be taken into account when deciding investment strategies for homes and housing. The cost of all possible options - both initial and life-cycle – is a critical factor. The additional maintenance and repair and replacement costs of more complex heating, ventilation and water management systems compared to current installations are challenging.

A prudent approach of spreading over ten years the initial costs of 'decarbonisation' has been adopted by Powys County Council in assessing the impact on rents and the HRA Business Plan. A 'decarbonisation' figure of £20,000 per home, based on research



undertaken in 2020 by Inside Housing magazine<sup>17</sup>, has been adopted. The total cost for the initial investment to ‘decarbonise’ all 5,500 homes owned by the Council over the period 2023-2024 through 2033-2034, excluding borrowing costs, amounts to £108,000,000.

To address high energy costs, special attention is being paid to those Council-owned homes that have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of ‘E’, ‘F’ or ‘G’. A ‘whole house’ approach started work in quarter four of 2022-2023 to lower the need for energy in these properties, reducing the cost of living for those living in these homes as well as improving environmental sustainability. Blending ECO4 and Optimised Retrofit Programme Three (ORP3) funding for energy efficiency measures allows for substantial investment to improve energy efficiency in the Council’s homes to be made between Quarter Four 2022-2023 and March 2025. Powys County Council has since 2018 been working in partnership with Warm Wales, a Community Interest Company which specialises in managing fuel poverty and delivering energy saving projects. Warm Wales is an integral partner for ‘Optimised Retrofit for Powys’.

<b>Green Powys Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Damp Prevention	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
Photo-voltaic (Solar Panels)	£75,000	£75,000	£75,000	£75,000	£0
Decarbonisation and Energy Efficiency	£100,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000
<b>Capital Green Powys Investment Programme</b>	<b>£425,000</b>	<b>£575,000</b>	<b>£575,000</b>	<b>£575,000</b>	<b>£500,000</b>
WHQS Contributions to Green Powys	£1,550,000	£1,550,000	£1,550,000	£1,550,000	£1,550,000
Day-to-day Repairs Contribution to Green Powys	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
<b>HRA Green Powys Investment Programme</b>	<b>£2,075,000</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,150,000</b>
Optimised Retrofit for Powys	£2,394,237	£2,394,237	£0	£0	£0
<b>Total Green Powys Investment Programme</b>	<b>£4,469,237</b>	<b>£4,619,237</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,225,000</b>	<b>£2,150,000</b>

<sup>17</sup> The cost of net zero: social landlords’ decarbonisation plans revealed’ – Inside Housing (November 23rd, 2020).

## Optimised Retrofit for Powys

Optimised Retrofit for Powys is funded by Optimised Retrofit Programme Three (ORP<sub>3</sub>) and Energy Company Obligation Four (ECO<sub>4</sub>) funding. This initiative will transform the Council's least energy efficient homes – those with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of G, F & E – to an EPC rating 'B', and if practical an 'A' rating. The programme runs from quarter four of 2022-2023 to 2024-2025, with at least 74 homes to be improved over the next two years with investment in that period totally £4,788,474. Already, nine homes have had EPC improved from 'E' to 'B' and eleven from 'D' to 'A'.

ORP<sub>3</sub> is the Welsh Government's principal funding programme for local authority landlords to start being better able to meet affordable warmth and 'decarbonisation' outcomes. This includes for example the proposals in WHQS-2 for each social home in Wales to have a 'Target Energy Pathway' report. A total of £3,457, 820 of ORP funding was in December 2022 awarded by the Welsh Government to Powys County Council. During years two and three the Council will aim to deliver a full whole house approach to each home. Each solution is be-spoke to each property and could include the installation of air source heat pumps, solar PV, smart battery systems and enhanced insulation or a tailored mix of these measures.

Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is a government energy efficiency scheme for Great Britain, administered by Ofgem. The scheme now in its fourth iteration - ECO<sub>4</sub> will be a four-year scheme running from April 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2026.

ECO works by placing a Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation (HHCRO) on medium and large energy suppliers. Under HHCRO, obligated suppliers must promote measures that improve the ability of low-income, fuel-poor and vulnerable households to heat their homes. This includes actions that result in reduced energy usage, such as installing insulation or upgrading heating systems. The overall target for these measures is divided between suppliers based on their relative share of the domestic gas and electricity market. It is anticipated ECO<sub>4</sub> will contribute circa £3,392,000 to the Optimised Retrofit Programme to address municipally owned homes, subject to Ofgem qualification criteria which is subject to changed.

In November 2022, in partnership with Warm Wales, Powys County Council launched the tenure neutral ECO<sub>4</sub> LA Flex (flexibility) programme: 'The Warm Wales Powys Energy Saving Scheme'. The 'flexibility' element of the scheme enables households not in receipt of passport benefits (required under normal ECO<sub>4</sub> funding rules) but are living in fuel poverty, or on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of living in a

Plans were announced in February 2023 to add between 2% and 5% to Great Britain's main gas pipelines as part of the government's plans to reach 'net zero' by 2050. Trials in Germany have increased the hydrogen content in blended gas supply to existing homes to 30%. Hydrogen-ready boilers could also become mandatory in newly built properties in Britain by 2026, following an announcement by the government in

December 2022<sup>1</sup>. The Council is already exploring how it can efficiently and effectively replace gas-fired boilers with ones than can easily be converted to use hydrogen.




## Love Where You Live

The ‘Love Where You Live’ tenancy sustainability strategy is working to make the homes and estates managed by the Council places where people can enjoy their lives. It includes such investment as improvements to our garage sites, additional parking where needed, investment in walls, fencing and security to properties and improved garden areas, footpaths and estate lighting. ‘Love Where You Live’ is closely linked to ‘Green Powys’. The investment schemes detailed below are in addition to those included within the WHQS programme.

<b>Love Where You Live Programme Financial Summary 2022-23 to 2026-2027</b>					
<i>Investments</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Brecon Area Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Newtown Area Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Welshpool Area Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Wye Valley Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Ystradgynlais Estate Improvements	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Communal Area Improvements	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Garage Strategy	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Play Area Improvements	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000	£25,000
Adjustments back to Council budget	£600,000	£300,000	-£500,000	-£325,000	-£100,000
<b>Love Where You Live Investment</b>	<b>£900,000</b>	<b>£600,000</b>	<b>-£200,000</b>	<b>-£25,000</b>	<b>£200,000</b>
WHQS Contributions to Love Where You Live (Estate and Boundary Works)	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000
Day-to-day Repairs Contribution to Love where you Live	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
<b>Total Love Where You Live Investment</b>	<b>£2,200,000</b>	<b>£1,900,000</b>	<b>£1,100,000</b>	<b>£1,275,000</b>	<b>£1,500,000</b>

## Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)

Powys achieved the WHQS standard in December 2018. The focus has since then been on targeting ‘acceptable fails’<sup>18</sup> and maintaining WHQS by:

-  Reviewing support and working methods for residents concerned about disruption.
-  Tackling damp properties and targeting improvements to improve thermal comfort and reduce fuel poverty.
-  Effective management of component replacement lifecycles.

At the time of writing (February 2023), the requirements of WHQS-2 have yet to be confirmed by the Welsh Government. The Powys County Council programme for 2023-2024 onwards is therefore designed to make sure the Council’s homes continue to meet the current WHQS.

<b>WHQS Programme Financial Summary 2022-23 to 2026-2027</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2023-2024</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>
Kitchens	£420,000	£400,000	£600,000	£800,000	£1,000,000
Bathrooms	£200,000	£200,000	£0	£400,000	£600,000
Rewiring	£120,000	£60,000	£100,000	£45,000	£250,000
Windows and Doors	£500,000	£0	£0	£0	£0
Roofing	£1,000,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000
Walls	£650,000	£650,000	£650,000	£650,000	£0
Estate Works (contribute to Love Where You Live)	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000	£1,200,000
Heating (contributes to Green Powys)	£1,400,000	£1,400,000	£1,400,000	£1,400,000	£1,400,000
Energy Efficiency (contributes to Green Powys)	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000
Asbestos Management (contributes to Compliance One Hundred)	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£150,000	£0
Management Fees	£777,700	£785,480	£793,330	£801,260	£809,270

<sup>18</sup> Acceptable Fails: Acceptable Fails are circumstances where it is either impossible or not practicable, due to for example cost or timing of works, for a property to be brought up to WHQS or where a tenant refuses to have the work carried out. Currently Powys has 2,408 properties that have acceptable fails. The majority of Powys Acceptable Fails are due Timing of Remedy at 1,909 and 494 properties through Resident Choice.

F-Door & B-Door	£0	£0	£0	£200,000	£0
Miscellaneous WHQS	£450,000	£250,000	£250,000	£450,010	£250,010
<b>Total WHQS</b>	<b>£7,017,700</b>	<b>£5,645,480</b>	<b>£5,693,330</b>	<b>£6,646,270</b>	<b>£6,059,280</b>

## Management and Supervision

The HRA Business Plan includes provision for Supervision and Management Costs, which cover the costs of managing the service, for example staff, support services and office costs, and the cost of funding debt taken on when the HRA became self-financing in 2014 and any additional borrowing secured to fund investment programmes.

### Housing Management ICT Systems

Housing Services plans to introduce a whole service, fully integrated ICT by 2025-2026. This is to replace the current use of a number of different systems, that have been commissioned at different times in response to new needs or changes in service design. By commissioning an integrated system, which may use components from different software suppliers, the outcome will be greater efficiency in designed and organising works, more accurate record keeping and swifter responses to tenant enquiries. The Council's ICT team will in 2023-2024 develop detailed proposals for a whole-service solution as part of this project. Provision for the cost of replacing and upgrading ICT is included in the HRA Business Plan.

<b>Management and Supervision Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028
Staffing	£7,718,630	£7,950,189	£8,188,695	£8,434,355	£8,687,386
ICT	£112,100	£124,000	£124,000	£124,000	£124,000
Pop-up Powys	£23,500	£23,500	£23,500	£23,500	£23,500
Out of Hours Call Management	£12,460	£12,460	£12,460	£12,460	£12,460
Fleet and Associated Costs	£361,430	£372,273	£383,441	£394,944	£406,793
Service Support Costs <sup>19</sup>	£1,365,460	£1,406,424	£1,448,617	£1,492,075	£1,536,837
Premises - Depots and Offices	£375,650	£386,920	£398,527	£410,483	£422,797
Miscellaneous Costs	£871,830	£897,985	£924,924	£952,672	£981,252
<b>Total</b>	<b>£10,841,060</b>	<b>£11,173,750</b>	<b>£11,504,164</b>	<b>£11,844,490</b>	<b>£12,195,026</b>

<sup>19</sup> Service Support Costs include Financial Services, Human Resources, Legal Services, Valuation Services.

## Resourcing 'At Home in Powys'

The Council is the largest social landlord in Powys with 5,500 properties under its management, as of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023. The breakdown of homes owned by the Council...

- 39.0% are three bedroomed properties.
- 42.4% are two bed properties - this includes a substantial number of older persons' accommodation and 30.7% of these two bed homes are houses.
- 20.6% are flats.
- 25.3% are bungalows.
- 34.5% are designated for older persons.

Powys County Council Homes - by Type and Number of Bedrooms							
Property Type	Bedrooms						Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Bungalow	457	927	8	1			<b>1393</b>
Double House					1		<b>1</b>
First Floor Flat	154	300	8				<b>462</b>
Ground Floor Bedsit	14						<b>14</b>
Ground Floor Flat	207	335	1				<b>543</b>
House	13	716	2088	132	7	3	<b>2959</b>
Maisonette		24	40				<b>64</b>
Second Floor Flat	30	27					<b>57</b>
Third Floor (or higher) Flat	3	4					<b>7</b>
<b>Totals</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>2333</b>	<b>2145</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5500</b>

Powys County Council Properties Designated for Older Persons							
Property Type	Bedrooms						Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Bungalow	425	889	7	1			<b>1322</b>
Double House							
First Floor Flat	82	140	1				<b>223</b>
Ground Floor Bedsit	9						<b>9</b>
Ground Floor Flat	136	187	1				<b>324</b>
House			2				<b>2</b>
Maisonette							
Second Floor Flat	8	7					<b>15</b>
Third Floor (or higher) Flat							
<b>Totals</b>	<b>660</b>	<b>1223</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>1895</b>

Since 2017-2018, the Council has used a rent setting model which takes account of property type, property size and fuel type (fuel type is used as a proxy indicator for SAP rating and will be replaced when complete data on SAP ratings of individual homes is available).

The Council's HRA Business Plan has been stress tested to see what changes in rents and services charges need to be made to allow it to remain viable and able to increase

the number of affordable homes available across Powys. The conclusion is that a rent increase for 2023-2024 of 5.36% is appropriate to make sure that the Housing Services is sustainable, able to provide homes and services for both current and future tenants and makes sure that rents to remain affordable and do not contribute excessively to any increase in the cost of living for the Council's tenants.

The Council has therefore approved a recommendation that with effect from April 2023 the average rent in Powys will increase by 5.36% (£5.16 on average per week) for all 5500 Council owned homes. Tables below show the average rent in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 and also shows the rent of the properties which will experience the greatest increase. It should be noted that the figures show rents over a 52-week rent year. In Powys rents are charged over a 48-week rent year with two 'rent free weeks' at Christmas and two 'rent free weeks' at Easter.

<b>Powys County Council Housing Rents for 2022-23 and 2023-24</b>			
	<i>Rent - 2022-2023</i>	<i>Rent - 2023-2024</i>	<i>Weekly Increase</i>
Average HRA rent for Powys County Council	£96.28	£101.44	£5.16

The Council with its 'Rent First' ethos takes a proportionate and pragmatic approach to the collection of rent. Tenants who face unavoidable financial challenges linked to the return of comparatively high inflation rates to the world economy and increases in the cost of living – including in Britain, food and energy - are offered help and support to secure additional income, including for example submitting claims for social security payments and getting advice via the Council's money advice team. Housing Services Financial Support Officers and the Housing Officers keep in touch with people to make sure that help is offered as soon as possible to prevent arrears climbing to high levels. The approach is proving to be successful in maintaining income to the HRA. At the start of Quarter Four 2023-2024 income recovery is running at 97.08% of rent due; for the same period last year this was 97.14%. This rigorous but pragmatic approach will continue in 2023-2024 when it is expected to yield a similar success rate.

<b>Garage and Garage Plot Rents for 2022-23 and 2023-24</b>		
	<i>Rent - 2022-23</i>	<i>Rent - 2023-24</i>
Garage Rents	£12.89 per week	£13.73 per week
Rent for Garage Plots (not subject to rate at time of letting)	£163.93 per annum	£174.59 per annum

### **Resourcing the Powys HRA Business Plan**

The thirty-year Powys HRA Business Plan has been produced in accordance with the model supplied by the Welsh Assembly Government and is attached with the electronic version of this document. The financial assumptions in resourcing the Business Plan are sensitive to changes in forecast income and expenditure, investment and inflation rates. Accordingly, a number of assumptions have had to be made in planning ahead for our programme of investment in existing and additional municipal homes for the people of Powys.

### ***Powys HRA Business Plan Assumptions***

- 👉 Rental income will increase by CPI + 1% per year, the maximum allowed by the Welsh Government's Rent Policy, with the exception of 2023-2024 when maximum rent increases were limited by the Welsh Government to 6.5%.
- 👉 Service charges are increased for future years in line with inflation for full cost recovery.
- 👉 The Welsh Government will in future years allocate grant to support the development of social and low-cost housing on a scheme-by-scheme basis. For the purposes of forward planning, an average grant rate of 40% has been assumed.
- 👉 The Welsh Government Major Repairs Allowance receivable is assumed to remain at previous levels of £3,732,000 per year.
- 👉 Void loss and bad debt have been assumed at 6% (3.75% voids and 2.25% bad debt). Work continues to reduce void turnaround times, with substantial improvements already made in the time taken to let a property once it has been returned to the Council, fit to let.
- 👉 The average interest rate for current debt is 3.3%, any new borrowing is assumed at the following rates, 4.2% 2023/24, 4% 2024/25, 3.5% 2025/26, 3.2% 2026/27 and 3% 2027/28.
- 👉 General inflation as per the Powys County Council's FRM for 2023-24 and 3% afterwards. 5.36% for CPI in 2023-24, 4% in 2024-25 and 2% annually afterwards.
- 👉 A minimum balance of £1,000,000 will be maintained.

Inflation rates used are based on CPI and RPI projections. The rates used are appropriate for the 2023-2024 Business Plan but there is, in making any such projections, an element of risk which can be managed by adopting pragmatic flexibility for the investment programmes to account for future inflation outcomes.

### **Financial Monitoring and Management**

The Council continually monitors and evaluates the impact on the HRA Business Plan of service requirement and financial variables and how changes in these may impact on priorities both in capital investment and for revenue budgets. Monthly meetings of a group of senior housing and financial specialists make sure that budget profiles are maintained and that costs are kept under control.

Financial and managerial control measures include:

- 👉 Assessing the validity and sustainability of different sources of funding such as the use of prudential borrowing to support housing provided outside of but complementary to the HRA.
- 👉 Correct deployment of capital and revenue funding.
- 👉 Keeping under review all HRA revenue expenditure to make sure that the Council identifies and makes, wherever possible, meaningful revenue savings.
- 👉 Progressing self-sufficiency in the ability to generate mid- and long-term lifecycle forecasting, so the Council does not have to rely on outsourced providers for this critical intelligence about our housing assets.



- 👉 Use of a Dynamic Purchasing System to increase the speed of delivery of works programmes to improve the quality of our homes.
- 👉 Developing financial benchmarks across Wales for municipal borrowing.

The HRA Business Plan assumptions and performance against targets and expectations are regularly subject to scrutiny. A monthly budget report is produced by the Council's finance team, which details the monthly status of the HRA. A group of senior officers meet each month to manage progress on the HRA Business Plan with the authority to make operational changes to make sure that investment programmes are managed effectively. 'New Homes for Powys' is overseen by the New Development Project Board. During 2023-2024, regular reports on progress on the HRA Business Plan will be submitted to the TSP for scrutiny and comment.

### ***Income from Asset Sales***

We do not anticipate any substantial income from land or asset sales, as Right-to-Buy (RtB) sales have ended. In the event that Council decides to sell HRA land or other assets, such as properties beyond economical repair or for which there is no social housing demand, at anything more than nominal cost then this would have a positive impact on funding by allowing the Council to reduce borrowing. However, any beneficial effects will to some extent be tempered by reductions in income.

## Listening to the people of Powys

Powys County Council takes a comprehensive approach to involving, engaging and understanding our tenants and communities. This includes:

- 🔗 Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) with a number of focused sub-groups –including the Investing in Your Homes (WHQS) Group, and a Repairs Group.
- 🔗 ‘Love Where You Live’ tenancy sustainability strategy.
- 🔗 Publication twice a year of our ‘Open House’ newsletter.
- 🔗 Publication twice a year of our ‘Welsh Housing Quality Standard’ newsletter.
- 🔗 Regular use of questionnaires and surveys.
- 🔗 Housing Services ‘Group 100’ consultative forum.
- 🔗 Extensive use of social media, including the Powys County Council website and bespoke Facebook pages for housing services.
- 🔗 Housing Development engagement events and housing need assessments.

### Performance Management

To make sure we keep on track ‘Objectives’ and ‘Measures’ set out in **‘Stronger, Fairer, Greener’**, will be used to help manage our services and understand what difference we are making for the people of Powys. These will be reported and published quarterly. The measures that relate directly to the HRA are highlighted below in **burgundy**.

Service Performance Indicators for Housing Services	
Objective	Measure
Give the people of Powys more opportunities to have a secure, affordable, well-maintained home.	Provide 350 new council homes for social rent between 2023 to 2031 (subject to availability of land, securing planning consents and resolution of phosphate management).
	Acquire and let least ten homes per year, from 2023-2024 onwards, all at social rents on secure contracts.
	Number of households registered with ‘Homes in Powys’ for an affordable and secure home
	Number of new homes created by bringing empty privately owned properties back into use.
	Number of council-owned homes with an EPC improved from D, E, F or G to A or B.
Improve the quality of life for people who rent their homes from the Council.	Number of privately owned homes with an EPC improved, as a result of direct support from the Council, from D, E, F or G to at least a B.
	Overall tenant satisfaction in the 2023-2024 STAR survey will increase to 75%, to 79% in the 2025-2026 survey and to 83% in 2027-2028's survey.
Improve the quality of privately rented accommodation in Powys	The number and percentage of privately rented properties, identified as having a Housing Health and Safety Rating System Category One or Category Two risk, that have been improved to an acceptable level.

Help people have a better quality of life and be able to stay in their own home for longer.	Aids, adaptations and disabled facility grant funded works for large adaptations (e.g DFG's/ Major adaptations) will be delivered within 180 days (from date of Occupational Therapist referral to certified completion of the work).
	Aids, adaptations and disabled facility grant funded works for medium adaptations (e.g. Medium adaptation grants) will be delivered 90 days (from date of Occupational Therapist referral to certified completion of the work).
	Aids, adaptations and disabled facility grant funded works for minor adaptations will be delivered within 28 days (from date of ASSIST or Occupational Therapist referral to certified completion of the work).
Improve the quality of our tenants' homes	The number and percentage of repairs we delivered at the time agreed with the tenant.
	The number and percentage of tenants surveyed that are satisfied with major programmes of repair and improvement focusing on the primary elements of kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems at point of completion.
	The number and percentage of tenants surveyed that are satisfied with major programmes of repair and improvement focusing on the primary elements of kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems 12 months after completion.
	The number and percentage of tenants surveyed, that are satisfied with the responsive repairs service.
	The number and percentage of Powys Council homes with a compliant, in date, heating safety certificate at the time of reporting (taking into account the number of homes subject to unresolvable non-access constraints).
	The number and percentage of new tenants who are satisfied with their new home.
Prevent and resolve homelessness by working with households to quickly and effectively address their housing and support needs.	Number and percentage of homeless cases successfully resolved.
	The number of people who are homeless.
	The number of rough sleepers in Powys.
Reduce the negative impacts of homelessness by minimizing the use of emergency and temporary accommodation.	The average number of days all homeless families with children spent in 'bed and breakfast' accommodation.
	The number and percentage of all homeless households, with children, that have had to be accommodated in 'bed and breakfast'.
	The average number of days that all homeless households spent in 'bed and breakfast' accommodation.

	The number and percentage of all homeless households, that have had to be accommodated in 'bed and breakfast'.
	The average number of days that all homeless households have spent in temporary accommodation (excluding 'bed and breakfast').
	The number and percentage of all homeless households, that have had to be accommodated in temporary accommodation (excluding 'bed and breakfast')
	The number of households who are living in temporary accommodation
Make sure the Council has enough money to be able to manage and maintain homes to the highest practicable standard	The amount and percentage of rent income collected (all sources).
	The amount and percentage of rent income collected (secure tenants only).
	The amount and percentage of rental income lost through unoccupied housing (known as housing voids)
	The average number of days taken to re-let a Council owned property.

The Council has joined Housemark, which provides a benchmarking service for landlords across the United Kingdom. This will help the Council from 2023-2024 to compare and contrast its performance against other social landlords with similar housing markets and housing profiles.

### Tenant Scrutiny Panel




The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) is a countywide, tenant led panel and has a considerable impact on Council decisions about the housing service. Membership includes tenant representatives to provide experience and knowledge from a tenants' perspective, four County Councillors and the Cabinet Member with the portfolio responsibility for Housing. The TSP is chaired by a tenant and the panel members agree the agenda items for scrutiny and discussion. Joint decisions are made at the TSP meetings between the Council and tenants. Guest speakers also attend the meetings as requested by the tenant representatives.

The Investing in Your Homes Group (WHQS) sub-group of the TSP is a small group of tenants, elected members and contract management staff that meet once a month. They monitor the progress of investment work being carried out to tenants' homes, review the feedback from and responses to tenant questionnaires, are involved in discussions for environmental works, help produce newsletters and attend Open Days and Community Events.



The Repairs Sub-group is a group of tenants, elected members, engagement officers, repairs staff and representatives from HoWPS. The group meets monthly to discuss the repairs service, make sure that tenant experiences are understood by the Council and HoWPS and drive forward service improvements.

## Love Where You Live




The Council's Tenant Sustainability Strategy 'Love Where You Live' focuses on how tenancy and estate management can help people enjoy their homes and neighbourhoods. It has three themes:

-  Understanding. To continually improve we need to know what to improve by understanding how our services and estates are experienced by tenants and residents.
-  People. To help people be able to enjoy their homes and communities, we can support, encourage and help people to play an active part in their communities and economy as well as improve their own personal well-being.
-  Place. To give people reasons to love where they live, we need to make sure that the environment is green and thriving, clean and tidy – in short, a pleasant place to be.

As part of Love Where You Live the Council has:

-  Improved the speed and impact of how the Council responded to tenant and resident concerns about the quality of their environment, including for example the quality of grass cutting, maintenance of shared spaces and day-to-day estate management. A full caretaker service is in place across the County along with two dedicated, directly managed in-house grounds and estate maintenance teams.
-  A strategic approach in place for investment in play areas located on housing estate land.

In 2023-2024, Love Where You Live' will:

-  Launch the 'Keeping in Touch' initiative for every tenant, who will once every three years receive a personal visit from their local Housing Officer. This will encourage and support closer relationships between the Council and our tenants, helping us to work together to respond promptly to any requests for help and support to sustain tenancies and encourage financial independence.
-  'Pop-up Powys' which takes services out into the community, using a mobile office vehicle will become part of Housing Services in 2023-2024. This follows a successful trial of the concept, which was extremely popular in rural areas, improving the Council's understanding of how people experience its services and what type of homes they and their communities need now and in the future.
-  Introduce a fresh approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour, which will streamline the process to make sure that the right agency with the powers to deal with problems was involved as soon as possible. A more robust approach will be taken to cases where there are clear breaches of tenancy conditions, with injunctions and other legal action being deployed where they are the only reasonable solutions.

## **‘Open House’ Newsletter**












The ‘Open House’ newsletter is produced twice a year (summer and winter) and is distributed to all Council tenants in Powys. The newsletter contains housing news, information and articles. The newsletter is available to view on the Powys County Council website.

## **‘Investing in Your Homes’ Newsletter**

The ‘Investing in Your Homes’ newsletter is produced twice a year (spring and autumn) and is distributed to all Council tenants in Powys. The newsletter contains news about works completed under the WHQS programme, the contractors carrying out the works and general news about WHQS in Powys.

## **Questionnaires and Surveys**

In 2021, the Council undertook a STAR survey of tenants. The survey showed:

-  Overall satisfaction with Powys County Council as a landlord is 71%.
-  Satisfaction with the neighbourhood is 88%.
-  Tenants feeling safe and secure in their home is 87%.
-  Tenants considering their rent as value for money (VFM) is 78%.
-  Tenants considering service charges as VFM is 77% of those paying service charges.
-  Satisfaction with the overall quality of accommodation is 74%.
-  Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance was 63%.
-  Satisfaction with the way that the Council listens to and acts on tenants’ comments is 55%.
-  Satisfaction with the way Housing Services deals with anti-social behaviour is 51%.
-  Satisfaction with opportunities to participate in decision making processes is 44%.
-  Having a say in how services are managed is rated at 42%.

All of these results are an improvement over the 2019 STAR survey results except for perception of the overall quality of the home, which shows a decrease in satisfaction of 4%. A new STAR survey will be commissioned in 2023.

The Council regularly carries out surveys with tenants after their homes have been improved through the WHQS programme. These surveys are carried out either by post or telephone. All comments are considered by the Investing in Your Homes (WHQS) Sub-group with recommendation for changes being forward to the teams responsible for managing the work. The latest surveys show that 77% of tenants are currently happy with the improvements made to their homes.

## **Housing Services One Hundred Group**

Housing Services Group 100 is a group of active tenants who act as sounding board and consultative panel for the Council. They are consulted (by telephone, email or questionnaire) according to their preference on the area of Housing Services they would like to be consulted about (allocations, repairs, tenant participation, etc.) The views, opinions and suggestions are used by the Housing Service to inform the way policy and practice are developed. Feedback is sent to the members on the outcomes of the consultations and how their views have influenced decisions made by Housing Management. Members also receive an annual newsletter.

## **Social Media**

An increased amount of information about the Housing Services is available electronically via the internet and social media. All information is published in both Welsh and English.

## Sustainable Commissioning and Procurement

Suppliers and contractors are encouraged to embrace sustainability through the application of contract award criteria. These take into account not only financial factors but also whole life cost and the implications for society, the economy and the environment. However, wider changes in the construction sector in particular, linked to rising costs of labour and materials, mean that attracting the number of contractors able and willing to tender for works is becoming harder.

In the most recent tendering exercise undertaken in 2022 for the WHQS programmes for 2023-2024 onwards, for twelve lots the Council received eighteen bids. Some lots received no bids, and some bids unfortunately did not meet the criteria needed to make contract awards. Three contractors engaged in building new homes have gone into administration during the time they were working for the Council.

For future WHQS work, the Council will consider direct provision using its own workforce, the award of three-year contracts with the option of extending these for up to a further twelve months or tenders on a scheme-by-scheme basis, depending on the nature of the works being purchased. For new development, fluctuation clauses will be introduced in 2023-2024 to help give contractors the confidence to submit competitive bids.

The Council works with suppliers to realise the benefits of sustainable procurement. Examples include:

- Adopting whole-life costs and community benefits as the contract award criteria.
- Adopting our own financial standing orders to establish criteria of “economically most advantageous” as the optimum combination of whole life costs and benefits as the best value contract award criteria.
- Implementing sustainable design and procurement strategies, and building sustainability into procurement processes and contracts, where relevant.
- Inviting proposals for the delivery of community benefits (economic, social and environmental) that are relevant to the contract and that add value to Powys communities, including targeted recruitment and training and enterprise opportunities.
- Reducing the cost of doing business with the Council by reducing the costs of tendering, for example through E-tendering.
- Working with the Welsh Government to assist local small to medium enterprises (SMEs) and micro-businesses with the public sector tendering process.
- Involving tenants more closely in the procurement process and in evaluating the effectiveness of contractors.



## Risk Management

Housing Services Risk Register 2023-2024		
Risk	Consequences	Mitigations
Phosphate Restrictions - Rivers Wye and Usk Catchment areas affecting new Council Housing developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing developments will be required to mitigate phosphates, as required at the end of March 2021 by Natural Resources Wales (NRW).</li> <li>The policy and mitigations available are currently unclear as no policy/procedure has been agreed between planning authorities and NRW.</li> <li>Planning permissions will require phosphate mitigation, there will be additional costs in either offsetting mitigations or installing additional plant/systems to mitigate phosphate. Mitigations required will affect the financial viability of schemes.</li> <li>Development schemes in affected areas cannot be progressed until policy and procedure is agreed between planning authorities and NRW.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular liaison with Planning teams, NRW and Welsh Government regarding mitigations and policy.</li> <li>Timetables for addressing the management of phosphates are being shared by Welsh Water, which suggest that new development in the affected areas of Powys may be able to resume in 2025-6 (River Wye) and 2027-8 (River Usk).</li> <li>The Council has in place a number of sites in the area that, once phosphate management is resolved, will be developed to provide more homes for the people of Powys.</li> <li>Purchase of existing properties for social rent.</li> </ul>
BREXIT - Import-export barriers imposed or tolerated by the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced exports leading to instability in exporting businesses.</li> <li>Reduced employment opportunities.</li> <li>Reduction in supply of products imported from the EU, reducing economic and construction activity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage exporting business to find new non-EU markets.</li> <li>Encourage and support domestic business to develop products for import substitution.</li> <li>Training and development for people to take advantage of changing economic opportunities.</li> <li>Increase focus on local (Powys&gt;Wales&gt;Britain) sourcing by the Council (and other bodies) of materials, goods and services (taking advantage of proposed changes to public procurement rules).</li> </ul>

<p>Insufficient financial resources to deliver Housing Services (both Housing Revenue Account - HRA and Housing General Fund - HGF)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service outcomes not delivered (HGF and HRA).</li> <li>• Health &amp; safety implications of not consistently meeting statutory requirements (HRA).</li> <li>• Deterioration in standard of homes and assets (HRA).</li> <li>• Limited capacity to provide additional affordable homes (HRA).</li> <li>• Undermining of quality of life, community sustainability and cohesion (HGF and HRA).</li> <li>• Inability to maintain Welsh Housing Quality Standard (HRA).</li> <li>• Reduced repairs and maintenance service contributing to adverse customer outcomes and landlord-tenant relationship (HRA).</li> <li>• Council unable to meet statutory duties to homeless households (HGF).</li> <li>• Council unable to maintain payments on loans (HRA).</li> <li>• Reduced services to those needing aids, adaptations and disabled facilities to maintain quality of life (HRA and HGF).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous and robust financial monitoring and treasury management (HGF and HRA).</li> <li>• Zero budget-based approach for HRA Thirty Year Business Plan Review (HRA).</li> <li>• Value engineering to reduce improvement and new build home programmes cost (HRA).</li> <li>• Void management changes to minimise rental loss (HRA).</li> <li>• Maintain 'Rent First' approach, including pro-active tenancy support and rigorous performance management, to income recovery (HRA).</li> <li>• Reprofile services, standards and expenditure to bring in line with income (HRA and HGF).</li> <li>• Develop alternative sources of income (HRA and HGF).</li> <li>• Reprofile asset base to match available resources (HRA).</li> </ul>
<p>Tenants and residents not effectively involved in strategic decision making, service monitoring and shaping service delivery and outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor customer satisfaction ratings.</li> <li>• Ineffective service delivery that is not able to define, deliver and demonstrate value for money.</li> <li>• Increased risk of challenge that services are not delivered in an equitable and fair way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active, evidenced, continuous and representative tenant involvement.</li> <li>• Tenant Scrutiny Panel actively involved providing oversight, challenge and proposals for service improvements.</li> </ul>
<p>Allocation and lettings not effectively contributing to meeting housing demand.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failing to use housing assets effectively can contribute to homeless issues, overcrowding and social dislocation – all of which will adversely impact on the well-being of communities.</li> <li>• Social and economic disruption experienced by people living in homes and communities that hinder their ability to participate in work and community life.</li> <li>• Income to the HRA reduced due to an increase in rent loss caused by increased void properties and re-let times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing quality assurance of allocation and letting performance to identify how effective housing demand is being met, identify service improvements and inform the development of new homes.</li> <li>• Ongoing focus to make sure that investment in homes is matched to housing needs.</li> <li>• Working with individuals to help them take the lead in resolving their housing needs providing appropriate support as and when needed.</li> <li>• Collaborative working with all social landlords, housing developers and other</li> </ul>

		accommodation providers to better match supply with demand.
Unable to provide or enable the development of enough additional homes to fulfil housing market demand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic dislocation and contraction arising from challenges recruiting and retaining staff in the context of not being able to increase the total number of homes in Powys.</li> <li>• Increased demand for homelessness services, with limited options to find homes for these clients, exacerbated by a diminishing ability to add to the net number of homes available in Powys.</li> <li>• Increased number of households registering with 'Homes in Powys' for social housing as limited new supply of all types of homes increases the cost of existing accommodation.</li> <li>• Contraction in locally based construction capability and capacity arising from limited opportunities to develop and build new homes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value engineering of design and construction to increase value-for-money.</li> <li>• Identify opportunities for cross subsidy from market housing to increase resources for investment in social housing.</li> <li>• Increase collaborative working with economic development team and agencies to be better placed to take advantage of commercial-to-residential conversion opportunities.</li> <li>• Identify alternative funding sources for investment in social homes.</li> <li>• Increase acquisitions of properties to increase the availability of social rented homes.</li> <li>• Empty Homes Grant from Welsh Government has been secured for 2023 for two years, along with an Empty Property Officer, to help bring into use as secure homes more empty properties.</li> </ul>
Repairs and maintenance service and improvement programmes failing to deliver high quality services and outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer satisfaction falls, reducing confidence by tenants in the Council.</li> <li>• Properties fall into disrepair, increasing future maintenance liabilities.</li> <li>• Excess costs are generated by remedial work to put right poor-quality repairs.</li> <li>• Safety standards are compromised by poor quality or non-delivered repairs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous quality assurance of work for example post-inspections and tenant surveys informing changes in policy and process.</li> <li>• Amend delivery model to address performance failings and improve services.</li> <li>• Value engineer specifications.</li> </ul>

<p>Technical and cost challenges of making substantial environmental improvements to housing assets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure to improve long term environmental sustainability across all aspects of the environment (for example use of unsuitable materials or systems for house construction and improvement) will hinder contributions towards a better environment for everyone.</li> <li>• Long term maintenance liabilities (including for example increased costs and shorter or increased number of component replacement cycles) that may increase costs and harm the environment.</li> <li>• Reduced consumer appeal of municipal housing.</li> <li>• Unfunded design requirements reducing provision of additional affordable and secure housing opportunities for households with low and middle incomes.</li> <li>• Financial insecurity for private home-owners arising from unfunded changes to systems and components (for example heating systems).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous review and research of all systems, components and materials to identify those which contribute positively and cost effectively to long term environmental sustainability.</li> <li>• Increased use of locally sourced (Powys &gt; Wales &gt; United Kingdom &gt; Global) materials and components.</li> <li>• Increased use of recycled materials.</li> <li>• Increased involvement of communities in designing and approving materials, systems and components.</li> <li>• Reconfiguration of grants and loans programmes to support home-owners to make proven and effective changes to reduce any negative environmental impact of their homes.</li> <li>• Increased greening of estates to improve overall well-being and environmental quality.</li> </ul>
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**CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL.****CABINET EXECUTIVE****28 March 2023**

**REPORT AUTHOR:** County Councillor Jackie Charlton  
Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys

**REPORT TITLE:** Winter Service Review Phase 2

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**REPORT FOR:** Decision

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**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 This report outlines Phase 2 of the Winter Service review and proposing updating the criteria used to determine our winter gritting routes and associated measures that are in-line with the latest guidance and legislative requirements (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.2 The winter route hierarchy currently in use has not had a major review for 20 years, during which time changes have taken place to the location of amenities, transport links, essential services, and best practice.
- 1.3 This report only focuses on gritting routes that will be used to treat county roads and not Trunk Roads as that is a matter for Welsh Government as the Highway Authority. It should be noted that extreme weather contingencies, and ad hoc provision are all within the scope of the Authorities Winter Plan.
- 1.4 This report sets out the criteria and categorisation of the proposed Winter Service hierarchy and a public engagement exercise is proposed to help the service shape this model. Once this exercise has been concluded updated routes will be prepared and issued for consultation.
- 1.5 The scope of this report is set out in **Appendix 1**.

**2 Background**

- 2.1 The Winter Service Review Phase 1 paper was approved on the 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019. This paper included the recommendation to review the existing treatment network and return to Cabinet to agree any proposed amendments.
- 2.2 Minutes of the Cabinet meeting recorded that liaison was required with local members, Town / Community Councils and residents before any route hierarchy amendments were to be approved by Cabinet.
- 2.3 The review has been approached in line with the National Winter Service Research Group [NWSRG] Practical Guidance for Winter Service. It has:
  - Categorised the network within a hierarchy using a risk and evidence-based process tailored to the circumstances of this Authority.
  - Identified the risk-based criteria to be adopted by the Authority and the

categorisation.

- 2.4 Powys contains circa 5,500 km of surfaced road comprising 431 km of trunk road, 243 km of County A roads, 2,708 km of category B and C roads and 2,128 km of minor roads. Trunk roads are the responsibility of Welsh Government with service standards being set by them.
- 2.5 The current precautionary salt network for county roads (excluding trunk roads) extends to circa 1,005 km, which equates to 20% of the county road network.
- 2.6 All winter service is provided within financial constraints, and it is recognised that authorities cannot always be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to determine a policy that is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice.
- 2.7 Powys declared a Climate Change Emergency (20th Sept 2020) with an ambition to reduce its carbon emissions to net zero in line with the Welsh public sector target by 2030.
- 2.8 Powys also declared a Nature Emergency (13th Oct 2022) giving a commitment to protecting and rejuvenating Powys' natural environment for its inherent value, for the role nature plays in achieving a vibrant and viable economy and for the benefits nature provides to the wellbeing of our county's residents.

### **3 Advice**

- 3.1 It would not be reasonable or practical for any local authority to maintain the same level of service across their entire road network. The call on resources must be assigned on a priority basis, with an agreed network of gritting routes.
- 3.2 Maintaining the present practices does not represent a robust position as the rationale and reasoning for the existing network is not in line with current guidance. It has also noted that there appear to be inconsistencies across the existing network. Retaining existing service provision without review would not be in line with current national best-practice.
- 3.3 **Appendix 1** to this report provides detail on the methodology used to identify groupings and priorities together with recommendations for Route Criteria and Categorisation. This recommends a five group or "Tier" approach to produce a hierarchy that ensures equitable service delivery having regard to a range of factors.
- 3.4 **Appendix 2** to this report provides a matrix of the proposed hierarchical group or "Tier" structure using the process set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.5 The Service believes the methodology of assessment and the proposed level of service aligns with current best practice guidance and the current interpretation of "reasonably practicable" but will continue to keep service provision under review.
- 3.6 There is currently little combined research into the environmental effects of gritting on UK roads. Studies have been carried out into individual elements such as rock salt and vehicle emissions. These have identified impacts, and each will need to be considered at the relevant stage to ensure appropriate mitigation e.g. policy on when and how to treat, purchase of vehicles and salt

#### **4 Resource Implications**

- 4.1 This review centres around the Authority demonstrating that it has a reasonably practicable approach to delivering the service and that this assessment has been made in accordance with current good practice.
- 4.2 In dialogue with the Section 151 officer, it has been agreed that the financial impact of the new operating model will be included in the second report once the maps of the new routes have been developed.
- 4.3 The Deputy Head of Finance acknowledges the report and its content, and that the financial impact will be considered in the next report once new route maps are available, although regard should be given to remaining within the current budget envelope.

#### **5 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Whilst there are legislative duties relating to winter service provision, there are no legally defined service standards. Legal Service and the service department monitor to see if any changes to policy should be considered in the light of recent court decisions.
- 5.2 The Head of Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer has commented as follows: "I note the legal comment and have nothing to add to the report".

#### **6 Data Protection**

- 6.1 The proposal does not involve the processing of personal data.

#### **7 Comment from local member(s)**

- 7.1 Local Members will be consulted following the decision on this report. Their comments will be considered by the Portfolio Holder and reported to Cabinet as required.

#### **8 Impact Assessment**

- 8.1 An impact assessment is not required at this stage of the Phase 2 Winter Review.

#### **9 Recommendation**

- 9.1 Recommendation 1 - to note the proposed updated Winter Service Hierarchy in accordance with best practice as set out in Appendix 1 and 2.
- 9.2 Recommendation 2 – to undertake a public engagement exercise on the groupings and Tiers as set out in Appendix 1 and 2 to this report.

- 9.3 Recommendation 3 – to consider the findings of the public engagement and return to cabinet confirming the route criteria and categorisation, with options for route assignment, treatment levels of each Tier and the financial implications of the proposals.

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## Appendix 1 - Winter Service Review Phase 2 - 2023

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### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Phase 2 of the Winter Service Review is about picking key factors to help group roads together and decide a priority order for those groups for winter services.
- 1.2 The purpose of grouping is to collect together those roads that have different but comparable need in terms of priority e.g. is a hospital comparable with a high school, are all health facilities equal, is the number of users relevant?
- 1.3 There is no set number of groups at the start of the process. Too few will not allow informed decisions and outcomes. Too many will have little difference between groups and will be cumbersome to administer.
- 1.4 The groups are described in this review as “Tiers”.
- 1.5 Different road users will likely have different priorities and therefore compromise will be necessary.
- 1.6 The level of service for each group [e.g. when roads will be treated and how] will be determined in subsequent phases of the review.
- 1.7 Phase 1 of the review looked at rates of spread for de-icing material [rock salt] and re-treatment criteria to help reduce salt usage. This has been completed and implemented within the existing winter service policy resulting in reduced salt usage, environmental impact and costs.

### 2 Principles

- 2.1 The ‘Well Managed Highway Infrastructure’ code of practice (2016) alongside the National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) Practical Guidance documents (updated 2019 to 2021), recommends using a risk-based approach to appropriately manage our roads and provide a reasonable level of Winter Service.
- 2.2 The National Winter Service Research Group (NWSRG) practical guidance documents are comprehensive and are an established industry standard.
- 2.3 Route Selection forms part of this guidance and is designed to assist authorities to review and amend their winter service routes based on local needs by adopting a risk and evidence-based approach. This approach is recommended in Well-managed Highway Infrastructure Section B.7 Winter Service.
- 2.4 This has been used as the basis for categorising the network within the hierarchy. This is a risk-based selection process that is tailored to the circumstances of this Authority. It follows the principles set out in the NWSRG Practical Guidance for Winter Service under Section 13, Route Selection and Optimisation, published in 2020. Using the principles outlined in this guidance, a consistent and transparent process has been established to demonstrate the categorisation of the winter service route network.
- 2.5 It is particularly important that an authority can demonstrate that its Winter Service Policy is reasonable and appropriate and that the Service is being delivered in line with policy. This report determines a winter service hierarchy for roads across Powys and establishes service levels to be applied which reflect defined criteria.

### **3 Legislation and Scope**

- 3.1 The Highways Act 1980 Section 41(1A) places a duty on the Authority to ensure; so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice (this amendment to the act was introduced under the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003, Chapter 20 Part 6 Section 111).
- 3.2 Section 150 of the Highways Act 1980 Act places a duty upon Authorities to remove any obstruction of the highway resulting from accumulations of snow.
- 3.3 The Authority believes the current level of service meets the requirements on the current interpretation of “reasonably practicable” but there is a need to keep service provision under review, particularly in respect of any legal judgements, updated guidance or changing conditions.
- 3.4 The national code of practice, Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure, makes the risk-based approach more explicit, without specifying any prescriptive or advisory criteria or minimum standards. The guidance is designed to assist authorities review and develop their winter service based according to local needs by adopting a risk and evidence-based approach. There are many factors that can be considered when assessing risks in this respect and, although a number of these may be similar for authorities, local knowledge is essential in identifying particular risk. Using an evidence and risk-based approach, the assessment should consider network user requirements, making use of best available data and professional judgement.
- 3.5 This review covers mechanically propelled vehicle highways maintainable at the public expense as defined by Section 36(6) of the Highways Act 1980 but does not include:
  - 3.5.1 Trunk Roads – Welsh Government are the highway authority for the eight trunks roads across Powys [A40, A44(part), A458, A470, A479, A483, A487, A489(part)] and are responsible for setting service standards for these sections of highway.
  - 3.5.2 Rights of Way included on the Definitive Map;
  - 3.5.3 Other council assets e.g. access roads to council offices,
  - 3.5.4 Other public sector assets e.g. health board access roads to hospitals,
  - 3.5.5 Private assets e.g. private roads, supermarket car parks
- 3.6 Some sections excluded above may be treated by the council under separate agreements with the responsible organisation.
- 3.7 Footways and cycleways are categorised through a separate process and are not in scope.
- 3.8 Due to the varied nature and impacts of snowfall, specific snow routes have not been designated through this process. Snow events typically affect sections of route within each category and require a specific response that can only be determined as the event unfolds. The Winter Service Plan sets out the methodology for response to snow events in line with the priorities set out by this report and any identified welfare or community need responses.

### **4 Environment and Climate**

- 4.1 As well as legal duties the Council declared Climate Change and Nature Emergencies in September 2020 and October 2022 respectively. This reinforces the need to consider environmental impacts when considering priorities.
- 4.2 The winter service has the potential to be a significant contributor with regard to environmental impacts given the reliance on vehicles and mined rock salt which have traditionally been heavily reliant on fossil fuel for production and use together with environmental impacts and pollution issues.
- 4.3 Managing environmental and climate impacts will be done for all elements of the winter service:

e.g. when purchasing salt it will be necessary to consider other alternatives with lower impacts; what is the most appropriate vehicle to use such as electric, hybrid etc; does the vehicle adequately control salt spreading to reduce over application.

- 4.4 Phase 1 of the review resulted in reduced salt usage by adopting options for lower rates of spread for salt applied to roads and for retreatments.
- 4.5 The key environmental and climate consideration for Phase 2 will be to avoid moving roads to a higher group or reducing the number of groups because it feels more comfortable. This could result in over-treatment for the required conditions and location, thus spreading more salt and using more fuel than needed.

## **5 Approach**

- 5.1 Section 13 - Route Selection and Optimisation guidance of the NWSRG Practical Guidance for Winter Service under Section 13, is complementary to the latest code of practice “Well-managed Highway Infrastructure Section B.7 Winter Service” and is designed to assist authorities to review and amend their winter service routes based on their local needs by adopting a risk and evidence-based approach.
- 5.2 Assigning roads to a level of service category will not necessarily be determined by the road classification alone, but also by other factors that can be considered when assessing risks in this respect. Priorities for Winter Service need to be coherent with wider objectives for transport, integration and accessibility including strategies for public transport, walking and cycling.
- 5.3 Examples of criteria recommended by the guidance [para. 13.4.5] for consideration in selecting which parts of the network to treat and how to categorise are listed in Table 1 below. Each of these is considered in the relevant section.
- 5.4 The guidance recognises financial constraints as a factor in categorisation, for it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice
- 5.5 A five ‘Tier’ approach has been adopted to help assess and rank the priority of functions within any given criteria. The five Tier model (Tier 1 – High Priority to Tier 5 Low Priority) is considered to give sufficient opportunity to suitably differentiate between the various levels of priority required.
- 5.6 The approach considers a Primary Factor [Traffic Volume/Pedestrian and Cycle crossing Volume] to define a core criteria alongside Secondary Factors that look at other considerations to determine if a route warrants inclusion in a higher or lower Tier than determined by the Primary Factor.
- 5.7 Identification of a Factor in a Secondary category does not automatically require the route to be moved to a higher Tier but will be based on an assessment of perceived or known risk having regard to the risk relevant to other identified factors.
- 5.8 In some cases, physical or operating constraints mean it is impossible to treat some areas using routine operating practices. This is particularly the case where winter service vehicles are unable to turn, resulting in the need to carry out reversing manoeuvres, often in dark or inclement conditions. The provision of smaller vehicles or reversing assistants is considered to present a significant financial constraint. In such circumstances the service response will aim to get within 500 metres of the facility for precautionary treatment regimes

## **6 Route Assignment Criteria**

- 6.1 The process of Route Assignment focusses on grouping sections into comparable and equitable groups based on defined factors or criteria. At this stage it does not consider if or when winter services will be applied or the manner in which it will be delivered.
- 6.2 Assessment of risk has been considered under six Secondary Factor criteria headings:
  - 6.2.1 Emergency Services;
  - 6.2.2 Health and Social Care;
  - 6.2.3 Routes of Local Importance;
  - 6.2.4 Education Facilities;
  - 6.2.5 Public Transport Interchanges;
  - 6.2.6 Services
- 6.3 Table 1 below sets out how the above criteria we have used relate to the example criteria set out in the guidance.

<b>NWSRG Practical Guidance for Winter Service</b> <b>Section 13, Route Selection and Optimisation</b> Examples of criteria for consideration in categorising highways for treatment [para. 13.4.5]		Traffic and crossing Volume	Emergency Services	Health and Social Care	Routes of Local Importance	Education Facilities	Public Transport Interchanges	Services
		Primary	Secondary					
A	The type of road i.e. motorway, A road, B road, C road, link road, unclassified, estate road etc.	✓						
B	Level of use of the road i.e. number of vehicles per hour and types of vehicles.	✓						
C	The speeds observed on the road, e.g. 85th percentile.	✓						
D	Network accessibility such as single road access to settlements, access to critical infrastructure e.g. power stations, dams, water treatment plants etc.				✓			✓
E	Access to key public services such as schools, hospitals, fire & ambulance stations whilst taking into the account the highway user e.g. public transport user, car driver etc.		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
F	Consideration if to include public and school bus routes – these routes can be extensive and frequently changing. Factors to consider may include frequency of service, differences between rural and urban services					✓		
G	Topography is an important consideration, and this is an area where local knowledge can be invaluable. High ground should be considered which is likely to experience lower road surface temperatures (RST). Steep inclines providing limited traction, exposed areas prone to drifting. Consideration should also be given to locations near to water sources i.e. marshes, rivers, lakes and sea.				✓			
H	Hazardous locations which have been identified through collision records, third party claims or local knowledge.				✓			
I	Whether the road links to treated routes in adjacent authorities?				✓			
J	Does the road have a strategic significance i.e. is a diversion route of a strategic route (motorway or trunk road is closed). Is it used for a special event?				✓			
K	Climate – macro or micro climates				✓			
L	Consideration if footways and cycleways are to be treated – these can include a wide variety of routes and levels of use. Consideration may be given to times and locations of peak flow, which can affect sections such as the more major links to public transport. Guidance is available in the Winter Service on Footways and Cycleways section of the NWSRG practical guide [To be reviewed in a later Phase of the Winter Service Review]	✓						
N	Financial constraints – all winter service is provided within financial constraints and it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 1

## 7 Primary Factor

### Traffic Volume

7.1 Guidance criteria (Table 1) considered within this section include:

A	The type of road i.e. motorway, A road, B road, C road, link road, unclassified, estate road etc.
B	Level of use of the road i.e. number of vehicles per hour and types of vehicles.
C	The speeds observed on the road, e.g. 85th percentile.
L	Consideration if footways and cycleways are to be treated – these can include a wide variety of routes and levels of use. Consideration may be given to times and locations of peak flow, which can affect sections such as the more major links to public transport. Guidance is available in the Winter Service on Footways and Cycleways section of the NWSRG practical guide [To be reviewed in a later Phase of the Winter Service Review].
N	Financial constraints – all winter service is provided within financial constraints and it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice

- 7.2 The Council has adopted the County Surveyors Society Wales (CSSW) Risk Based Approach to Highway Management which primarily defines a hierarchical approach based on traffic volume i.e. number of users. The primary consideration for this is that risk increases as traffic volume increases [see CSSW Methodology paper for further background].
- 7.3 A baseline Powys hierarchy has been defined using this approach and forms the basis from which more specific hierarchies can be developed to reflect specific needs, such as the hierarchy for highway inspections.
- 7.4 The baseline hierarchy covers over 5,500km of highway network made up of over 26,500 individual sections. This includes A, B, C and unclassified roads. It does not include Trunk Roads which are the responsibility of Welsh Government.
- 7.5 Data for traffic volume [i.e. users per hour] and speed are not available for the majority of sections within the hierarchy as recommended by the Practical Guidance. The costs of collecting data for vehicle users is estimated at around £500 per site. Collecting data on the basis of a km interval would cost £3.25m; whilst a more rationalised approach of around 2,000 sites would still cost in the region of £1m. This is against an historical baseline winter service budget of £1.3m. Costs for collecting data for other users e.g. cyclists and pedestrians, is likely to be of comparable cost.
- 7.6 Collecting comprehensive user volume and speed data for the highway network is therefore not considered to be a reasonable expectation and a more pragmatic view has been used to assign each section to the relevant winter hierarchy category based on available data together with officer experience and judgement.

7.7 The CSSW approach has defined six hierarchy categories based on user volumes for both carriageways and footways:

CSSW Hierarchy Level			
Carriageway	Users [AADT]	Footway	Users [AADT]
CHSR	Based on local importance rather than traffic flow but often in the range >20,000	FHVHU	> 10,000
CH1	10,000 to 20,000	FH1	5,000 - 10,000
CH2	5,000 - 10,000	FH2	1,000 - 5,000
CH3	1,000 - 5,000	FH3	500 - 1,000
CH4	200 – 1000	FH4	< 500
CH5	< 200	FH5	< 100

7.8 These hierarchy levels have been used as the primary basis for defining the Tiers of Winter Service hierarchy defined in the table below. Due to the limited number of CHSR and FHVHU hierarchy categories, they have been combined into a single Tier.

7.9 Whilst the Footway volumes [AADT] refer to movement along a footway, it is probable that a proportion of these will generate crossing manoeuvres and thus provide a starting point for identifying potential sites where the interaction between vehicle flow along the road and pedestrian crossing manoeuvres over the road may warrant inclusion in a higher tier.

7.10 As with road traffic volume, data is not available for pedestrian volumes or crossing manoeuvres. Costs for collecting the data are likely to be comparable with the roads data.

7.11 To help understanding what the user volumes might look like the figures below give a broad brush indication. Annual Average Daily Traffic [AADT] or flow is measured and calculated in a defined way. If we average the AADT figures across a 12 hour day the figures below show how many movements would be expected to occur with one minute for every minute of that 12 hour period.

AADT	Number of movements per hour averaged over 12 hours
20,000	1667
10,000	834
5,000	417
1,000	84
500	42
200	17
100	9

Number of movements per minute averaged over 12 hours
28
14
7
2
1

7.12 Whilst the primary factor contributing to risk is user volume, other secondary factors

may contribute to the level of risk sufficiently to require inclusion in a higher Tier than identified by user volume alone. Seven groupings have been identified for Secondary Factors as detailed below:

Primary Factor				Secondary Factors
Carriageway Hierarchy				
Tier 1	CHSR CH1	Strategic Road Primary Distributor	20,001+ 10,001- 20,000	Emergency Services Health and Social Care Routes of Local Importance Education facilities Public Transport Interchanges Services
Tier 2	CH2	Secondary Distributor	5,001- 10,000	
Tier 3	CH3	Link Road	1,001-5,000	
Tier 4	CH4	Local Access Road	201-1,000	
Tier 5	CH5	Minor Road	0-200	

7.13 Assessment of secondary factors is within each grouping. No weightings for secondary factors have been applied across groupings, albeit comparison across groupings has been considered, e.g. an emergency ambulance station would have the same priority as a hospital with accident and emergency facilities. Whilst in different groupings they would be assigned to the same Tier.

7.14 The allocation to of groupings and Tiers is summarised in Appendix 2.

## 8 Secondary Factors

### 8.1 Emergency Services [Secondary Factor]

8.1.1 Criteria considered within this section include:

E	Access to key public services such as schools, hospitals, fire & ambulance stations whilst taking into the account the highway user e.g. public transport user, car driver etc.
N	Financial constraints – all winter service is provided within financial constraints, and it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice

8.1.2 Ambulance, fire and police provide 24 hour emergency response and are assigned to Tier 1. Some voluntary facilities, such as St John’s Ambulance, provide 24 hour support to the ambulance service and have also been assigned to Tier 1. No Coastguard facilities have been identified within Powys.

### 8.2 Health and Social Care [Secondary Factor]

8.2.1 Criteria considered within this section include:

E	Access to key public services such as schools, hospitals, fire & ambulance stations whilst taking into the account the highway user e.g. public transport user, car driver etc.
N	Financial constraints – all winter service is provided within financial constraints and it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and



	snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice
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- 8.2.2 Health and Social Care facilities will not necessarily generate high traffic volumes. The service(s) they provide however, may be critical for health care and warrant inclusion in a higher Tier than derived from traffic volume of the public highway access.
- 8.2.3 Facilities requiring 24 hour access such as Accident and Emergency; Minor Injury and those centres offering life dependent treatments or critical care such as Dialysis units are examples that warrant inclusion at the highest level. Where patients rarely access the facility overnight it is unlikely that it would warrant inclusion at a high level.
- 8.2.4 GP surgeries and hospitals that provide non-emergency services are in Tier 2.
- 8.2.5 Those facilities that provide more limited services of a non-essential nature such as dentists / chiropody, are in Tier 4. It is considered in the main that these will be on an appointment basis that can be re-scheduled if required.
- 8.2.6 Care / Nursing homes, sheltered housing, supported living and the like are generally residential. Such locations would be expected to have in place contingency arrangements to manage short duration weather events. Where specific events occur that need support these would be considered as part of a reactive support on an ad-hoc basis. They are therefore proposed to be placed in Tier 4.

### 8.3 Routes of Local Importance [Secondary Factor]

8.3.1 Criteria considered within this section include:

D	Network accessibility such as single road access to settlements, access to critical infrastructure e.g. power stations, dams, water treatment plants etc.
G	Topography is an import consideration and this is an area where local knowledge can be invaluable. High ground should be considered which is likely to experience lower road surface temperatures (RST). Steep inclines providing limited traction, exposed areas prone to drifting. Consideration should also be given to locations near to water sources i.e. marshes, rivers, lakes and sea.
H	Hazardous locations which have been identified through collision records, third party claims or local knowledge.
I	Whether the road links to treated routes in adjacent authorities?
J	Does the road have a strategic significance i.e. is a diversion route of a strategic route (motorway or trunk road is closed). Is it used for a special event?
K	Climate – macro or micro-climates
N	Financial constraints – all winter service is provided within financial constraints and it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice

8.3.2 A national road numbering system exists across the UK for “A” [Class 1] and “B” [Class 2] roads with locally derived numbers used for all other roads. A roads are generally identified by the travelling public as main roads that provide connectivity between main destinations. Around 238km of A roads and 604km of B roads exist across Powys. By using traffic volume as the Primary Factor, not all A roads across

Powys are included in the highest category of Tier 1. In order to meet expectations and enable a consistent easily identifiable message, i.e. that all A roads across Powys will receive the highest level of service, it is proposed that all A roads be included in Tier 1.

- 8.3.3 Some facilities identified under a Secondary Factor as being of higher priority than derived purely from traffic volume, may be located on a lower Tier route e.g. a facility categorised as Tier 2 which is located on a Tier 4 highway would need to be linked to the appropriate Tier 2 highway by upgrading intervening routes to Tier 2. They are identified as “Tier Connector Roads”.
- 8.3.4 Some vital services, such as accident and emergency health care, are provided out of county. Whilst most routes out of the county are likely to be via higher Tier routes, consideration has been given as to whether any cross-border routes warrant inclusion in a higher Tier.
- 8.3.5 As a rural county many smaller settlements will not be connected to key settlements via a higher Tier route. Connecting routes are unlikely to warrant inclusion in the highest Tiers but, will need to be appropriately assigned a linking route for treatment. Assessment has been based around classifications from the Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plans [LDP] with detail provided at Appendix 3. Settlements not specifically listed in either LDP will be categorised having regard to similar listed settlements.
- 8.3.6 Other criteria such as climate, topography, season traffic volume variations, accident history etc warrant consideration but, is concluded that they will only affect this assessment in exceptional circumstances. Further detail is provided below:
- 8.3.7 Climate has been considered as two elements: Macro-climate and Micro-climate.
- Macro-climate considers weather variations across larger areas. Powys is a large County where weather patterns can vary significantly thus requiring different responses at the same time. For this reason, the County has traditionally been split into three weather domain areas, each receiving a specific forecast. Macro-climate considerations have not had a significant impact on the allocation of routes to Tiers. This is primarily because they are linked with weather patterns rather than highway features and therefore are more important in operational decisions about when and how to implement winter services.
  - Micro-climate considers local natural or constructed features such as frost prone spots or large concrete bridge decks. The weather forecasts used in decision making take account of the worst-case scenario across weather domains but local knowledge may still identify areas prone to micro-climate variations that may warrant inclusion in a higher Tier.
- 8.3.8 Powys roads vary significantly in altitude from around 5 metres in the coastal region south of Machynlleth to 549 metres at Gospel Path south of Hay-on-Wye. Routes at higher altitude will generally be colder and may warrant inclusion in a higher Tier than allocated by traffic volume. Treating routes based on altitude alone is not considered practicable but there may be exceptional circumstances that warrant a higher altitude route being included in a different Tier.
- 8.3.9 Local topography can vary considerably over very short sections. Where this occurs on busier routes, the need to include them will likely already be covered by traffic volume. For those sections in lower Tiers identification and assessment will be on a local knowledge and needs basis, having regard to the potential risks.
- 8.3.10 Accident data may provide evidence of localised sites where variations to standard

treatment regimes are required. Accidents are routinely classified into personal injury accidents [PIA] and damage only. Accident data is monitored regularly and “cluster” sites mapped where a number of incidents have occurred in close proximity. Identification of a cluster site would be followed by a more detailed examination of the circumstances to determine appropriate action.

#### 8.4 Education Facilities [Secondary Factor]

8.4.1 Criteria considered within this section include:

E	Access to key public services such as schools, hospitals, fire & ambulance stations whilst taking into the account the highway user e.g. public transport user, car driver etc.
F	Consideration if to include public and school bus routes – these routes can be extensive and frequently changing. Factors to consider may include frequency of service, differences between rural and urban services
N	Financial constraints – all winter service is provided within financial constraints and it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice

8.4.2 Access to education is seen as an important factor and pre-planned treatment of a single route only has historically been a priority. It is proposed to include these links in Tier 2. In extreme weather conditions schools will be closed and therefore placing these links in Tier 1 would draw resource unnecessarily.

8.4.3 A proportion of learners will access education via feeder transport routes utilising minor roads. Consideration has been given as to whether these should be included in a higher Tier than that derived by traffic volume. Other factors considered include the availability of other means for delivery education e.g. on-line learning, home study packs and the frequency with which routing requirements can change. It has been concluded that placing feeder routes in a high tier would require a significant and disproportionate resource. They are therefore proposed to be allocated according to the primary factor unless other secondary factors are relevant.

#### 8.5 Public Transport Interchanges [Secondary Factor]

8.5.1 Criteria considered within this section include:

E	Access to key public services such as schools, hospitals, fire & ambulance stations whilst taking into the account the highway user e.g. public transport user, car driver etc.
N	Financial constraints – all winter service is provided within financial constraints and it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice

8.5.2 Access to public transport is important for many across Powys. As well as local services, a number of strategic interconnecting routes exist across the county. These

strategic services and many local services rely on six strategic public transport interchanges for connectivity. It is proposed that links to these should be included in Tier 2 to ensure that they can connect with the highest levels of winter service provision. This would not include for treatments of the hubs themselves. Away from the higher Tier routes it is not considered practicable or a reasonable use of resource to treat every public service bus route.

8.5.3 The Regional Strategic Network (e.g. Trawscymru bus services) will be Tier 2.

8.5.4 Core local bus network with high frequency bus services will be Tier 3.

8.5.5 Feeder Services (rural services / town services / demand response) will form part of Tier 4

## 8.6 Services [Secondary Factor]

8.6.1 Criteria considered within this section include:

D	Network accessibility such as single road access to settlements, access to critical infrastructure e.g. power stations, dams, water treatment plants etc.
E	Access to key public services such as schools, hospitals, fire & ambulance stations whilst taking into the account the highway user e.g. public transport user, car driver etc.
N	Financial constraints – all winter service is provided within financial constraints and it is recognised that authorities cannot be reasonably expected to protect against ice and snow at all times on all parts of the network. The responsibility for the authority is to demonstrate that their policy is reasonable and meets their statutory duties in respect of the risks to road users posed by snow and ice

8.6.2 Sites considered to be Critical Infrastructure are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Examples of such infrastructure would be electric substations / main sewage treatment works. Experience suggests that such critical utility infrastructure does not routinely require inclusion in a higher Tier. Support may be required however at specific times such as during periods of extended inclement weather e.g. water treatment plants can operate for a number of days before essential deliveries are required. Where difficulties are being experienced, operators will request support to treat minor access routes. Therefore, inclusion in a higher Tier by default would not be an appropriate allocation of resource. The Winter Service Plan will outline a level of ad-hoc support in such instances.

8.6.3 Access routes to Council service hubs for winter as well as recycling & waste service hubs are assigned to the highest Tier so that these key services can be maintained and offer shared resource in support of winter service delivery.

8.6.4 Continued access to Retail Services is important. Access to key retail and commercial areas will generally be reflected by higher volumes of traffic and it is felt that consideration of this alone is sufficient to allocated roads to Tiers. Prioritisation for footway and cycle routes is to be reviewed separately in a separate Phase.

8.6.5 Car parks with Pay& Display in Main Towns and Key Settlements [as defined in the LDP's] provide parking for access to Services and are therefore included in Tier 2.

## 9 Categorisation

9.1 It is not realistic or practical to treat the entire road network across Powys on the same basis. The call on resources must be assigned on a priority basis, with a network of

priority routes.

- 9.2 “Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice” recommends that a Local Authority should have a Resilient Road Network which identifies all critical routes within the County which are classed as priority in severe weather incidents. It should include both the Minimum Winter Network and the Precautionary Salting Network.
- 9.3 Winter service operations comprise precautionary pre-planned treatments aimed at managing the formation of ice or accumulation of snow. In some circumstances, treatments will be in reaction to events e.g. when temperatures fall below forecast and cause ice to form.
- 9.4 Levels of winter service defined for the Powys road network are:
  - 9.4.1 **Minimum / Emergency Network** – This comprises the core routes that the winter service would aim to cover during periods of prolonged severe winter weather and/or when resources are scarce e.g. personnel [pandemic], salt, or fuel shortages.
  - 9.4.2 **Precautionary Network** – This comprises the routes that the winter service would aim to cover in normal circumstances in-line with the approved winter service policy. Typically this is when freezing conditions are expected to affect the road surface. Treatment is generally undertaken ahead of forecast incidences.
  - 9.4.3 **High Network** – This comprises a sub-category of the Precautionary Network and includes high ground [typically over 200 metres that are likely to experience lower road surface temperatures (RSTs) more frequently.
  - 9.4.4 **Community Network** – This network extends the Precautionary Network in exceptional conditions where prolonged periods of ice or snow etc exist unbroken beyond 24 hours from the initial onset. Practical and resource implications mean that these routes will usually only be treated during normal working hours and when they do not impact on resource availability for higher priority treatment networks.
  - 9.4.5 **Ad-hoc Networks** – These comprise all other routes not included in any other Network. Grit bins and salt heaps are provided at various locations, usually in villages or on untreated roads, so that users can assist keep roads and pavements in their area free from ice. Grit bins and salt heaps will be placed at locations which are locally important. During exceptional periods available resource will be deployed to assist on a local needs basis.

9.5 The Table below shows an example of the Route Assignment and Categorisation matrix:

		Route Assignment				
		Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4	Tier 5
Categorisation	Minimum / Emergency Network					
	Precautionary Network					
	Community Network					

	Ad-hoc response					
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**10 Abbreviations / Glossary / List of relevant publications**

10.1 CSSW - County Surveyors Society Wales

10.2 NWSRG - National Winter Service Research Group

10.3 Practical Guidance - National Winter Service Research Group [NWSRG] Practical Guidance for Winter Service

10.4 Well-Managed Highway Infrastructure: A Code of Practice – UK Roads Liaison Group

**Appendix 2 - Matrix of proposed Winter Service group and Tier structure**

This document should be read in combination with the accompanying Winter Service Review Phase 2 - 2023 document which gives further information.

Primary Factor		Secondary Factors						
Carriageway (Perceived Traffic Volume)		Pedestrian and Cycle Movements crossing Carriageway (Perceived Traffic Volume)	Emergency Services	Health and Social Care	Routes of Local Importance	Education facilities	Public Transport Interchanges	Services
<b>Tier 1 Sections of public highway to be included in the pre-planned treatment regime</b>								
	CHSR - Strategic Road (20,001+) CH1 - Primary Distributor (10,001-20,000)	FHVHU (10,001+)	Ambulance Fire Police	Hospital [A&E, MIU, critical care]	"A" or Class 1 Roads Tier 1 Connector Roads Exceptional Circumstances [3]			Critical Infrastructure [2]
Notes	Winter service treatment may not be feasible due to local access difficulties		Single route to main access from nearest precautionary network (subject to access limitations)	Single route to main access from nearest precautionary network (subject to access limitations)	Alternative routes designated by traffic regulation order for highways in this category. Alternative routes for certain classes of user due to constraints on the network.			Key Council Service Hubs for: Winter Service; Recycling and Waste Service.
<b>Tier 2 Sections of public highway to be included in prioritised treatment regime</b>								
	CH2 - Secondary Distributor (5,001-10,000)	FH1 (5,001-10,000)		GP Surgery Hospital/Health Facility (Multi-functional)	Connection from town or key settlement [1] Tier 2 Connector Roads Exceptional Circumstances [3]	College High School Primary School Special School	Welshpool Machynlleth Newtown Llandrindod Brecon Ystradgynlais	Car Parks - Towns and Key Settlement [1] with Pay&Display
Notes	Winter service treatment may not be feasible due to local access difficulties			Single route to main access from nearest precautionary network (subject to access limitations)	Alternative routes designated by traffic regulation order for highways in this category. Alternative routes for certain classes of user due to constraints on the network.	Single route to main access from nearest precautionary network (subject to access limitations)	Single route to main access from nearest precautionary network (subject to access limitations)	Single route to main access from nearest precautionary network (subject to access limitations)
<b>Tier 3 Sections of public highway to be included in prioritised treatment regime</b>								
	CH3 - Link Road (1,001-5,000)	FH2 (1,001-5,000)		Health Facility (One service)	Connection from large village [1] Tier 3 Connector Roads Exceptional Circumstances [3]			
Notes	Winter service treatment may not be feasible due to local access difficulties							
<b>Tier 4 Sections of public highway to be included in prioritised treatment regime</b>								
	CH4 - Local Access Road (201-1,000)	FH3 (501-1,000)		Care Homes Day Facilities Sheltered Housing Supported Living	Connection from small villages and settlements [1] Exceptional Circumstances [3]	Early Years or similar provision		Leisure Centre Library Public Services Hub  Car Parks - Other Commercial
Notes	Winter service treatment may not be feasible due to local access difficulties							Other = Main Town, Large and Small Villages [1]
<b>Tier 5 Sections of public highway to be included in prioritised treatment regime</b>								
	CH5 - Minor Road (0-200)	FH4 (101-500) FH5 (0-100)			Connection from rural settlement, limited growth settlement [1]			
Notes	Winter service treatment may not be feasible due to local access difficulties							

Public highways only, private or service roads not treated.

- [1] As defined by Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plans.
- [2] Critical Infrastructure to be considered on a case by case basis. Some facilities only require support during specific weather events that can be managed on a responsive basis.
- [3] Exceptional Circumstances covers a range of factors including: Topography, Climate, Seasonal use variations.

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Appendix 3 - Classification of development areas by Local Development Plan [Powys and Brecon Beacons National Park]

Powys Local Development Plan [LDP]

		Retail 2	Retail 3
Towns		USRN, Road Name	USRN, Road Name
Llanfair Caereinion	M	26200237, Broad Street 26200246, Mount Road	
Llanfyllin	M	26203252, High Street	
Llanidloes	M	26200615, China Street 26200631, Long Bridge Street 26200625, Great Oak Street	
Llanwrtyd Wells	M	4108905, Irfon Crescent	
Machynlleth	M	85314743, Maengwyn Street 26200194, Heol Pentrerhedyn 85315545, Penrallt Street	
Montgomery	M	26200576, Broad Street	
Newtown	M	26200451, Broad Street 26200501, High Street 26200550, Short Bridge Street	26200548, Severn Street
Welshpool	M	26200285, Broad Street 26200317, High Street 26200280, Berriew Street 26208893, Severn Street 26200302, Church Street	
Llanelwedd (included with Builth Wells)	R	see below	
Knighton	R	30900690, Broad Street	
Llandrindod Wells	R	85314679, Station Crescent 30900827, Middleton Street	
Presteigne	R	30900902, High Street 30900872, Broad Street 30900901, Hereford Street	
Rhayader	R	30900754, North Street 30903094, East Street 30908902, West Street	
Builth Wells (including Llanelwedd)	B	4100929, Broad Street 4100949, High Street	
Hay-on-Wye (part BBNP area)	B	30901059, Castle Street 30901069, Lion Street 30901068, High Town	
Ystradgynlais	B	4107961, Heol Eglwys 4101391, Commercial Street 85317528, Station Road	

Retail 4

Large Villages	
Abermule	M
Arddleen	M
Berriew	M
Bettws Cedewain	M
Caersws	M
Carno	M
Castle Caereinion	M
Churchstoke	M
Coelbren	M
Crewgreen	M
Forden and Kingswood	M
Four Crosses	M
Gulfsfield	M
Kerry	M
Llanbrynmair	M
Llandinam	M
Llandrinio	M
Llanfechain	M
Llangurig	M
Llangynog	M
Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant	M
Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain	M
Llansilin	M
Llanymynech	M
Meifod	M
Middletown	M
Penybontfawr	M
Pontrobert	M
Trefeglwys	M
Tregynon	M
Trewern	M
Llyswen	R
Clyro	R
Crossgates	R
Glasbury	R
Howey	R
Knucklas	R
Llanyre	R
New Radnor	R
Newbridge on Wye	R
Abercrave	B
Boughrood	B
Bronllys	B
Three Cocks	B

Retail 4

Small Villages	
Abertridwr	M
Adfa	M
Bwlch y Cibau	M
Cemmaes	M
Cwm Linau	M
Derwenlas	M
Esgairgeiliog Ceinws	M
Foel	M
Glantwryn	M
Groes-lwyd	M
Leighton	M
Llandyssil	M
Llanerfyl	M
Llangadfan	M
Llangedwyn	M
Llanwddyn	M
Penegoes	M
Refail	M
Sarn	M
Y Fan	M
Abbeycwmhir	R
Aberedw	R
Builth Road	R
Erwood	R
Gladestry	R
Llanbadarn Fynydd	R
Llanbister	R
Llandewi Ystradenni	R
Llangunllo	R
Nantmel	R
Norton	R
Pantydwr	R
Penybont	R
St Harmon	R
Beulah	B
Caehopkin	B
Cilmerly	B
Felinfach	B
Garth	B
Llanddew	B
Llanfihangel Tal-y-llyn	B
Llangammarch Wells	B
Llanigon	B
Llanwrthwl	B
Velindre (Brecknock)	B

Retail 5

Rural Settlements
These are not listed but will be assessed against the following criteria:
> Historically recognised / named settlements;
and
> Contain at least 10 closely grouped dwellings.
The count of dwellings in bullet point 2 above shall not be taken to include farmhouses rural conversions or dwellings originally granted for local need/affordable or agricultural/rural occupancy.

Retail 5

Open Countryside
Including the Undeveloped Coast Land outside the (development) boundaries of defined settlements;
Including the undeveloped coast associated with the Dyfi estuary.

Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan [BBNP LDP]

		Retail 2	Retail 3
Primary Key Settlements		USRN, Road Name	USRN, Road Name
Brecon	B	4101177, High Street Superior 4108916, High Street Inferior 4107939, Bulwark	4108915, Ship Street
Key Settlements		USRN, Road Name	USRN, Road Name
Crickhowell	B	4101863, Beaufort Street 4101885, High Street	4101898, Standard Street
Hay-on-Wye (part PCC area)	B	see Powys LDP above	
Sennybridge and Defynnog	B	85318002, High Street	
Talgarth	B	85319184, The Square 4101110, High Street	

Retail 4

Settlements	
Bwlch	B
Crai	B
Libanus	B
Llanbedr	B
Llangors	B
Llanigon	B
Llanspyddid	B
Pencelli	B
Pennorth	B
Pontneddfechan	B
Talybont on Usk	B

Retail 5

Limited Growth Settlements		
Cradoc	B	4C
Cwmdu	B	4A
Felin Crai	B	4B
Glangrwyney	B	4C
Llanfrynach	B	4A
Llangattock	B	4A
Llangynidr	B	4C
Llangenny	B	4B
Tretower	B	4B
Trecastle	B	4C
Ynyswen	B	4C
Ystradfellte	B	4B

Retail 5

Countryside Places
All areas outside of listed Settlements are designated as countryside locations.

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# 6

8 March	Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys	Approved the amendment of the Instrument of Government for St. Michael's Church in Wales (A) School.
16 March	Cabinet Member for a Learning Powys	Approved the appointment of school governors.
16 March	Cabinet Member for a Connected Powys Cabinet Member for a Fairer Powys	Approved the transfer of land at Maes-Yr-Esob, Llanrhaeadr-Ym-Mochnant to Housing Services from Strategic Property to enable the provision of new Council Housing.
22 March	Cabinet Member for a Fairer Powys	Approved the purchase of a property at Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain to add to the social housing stock.

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Cabinet / Delegated	Decision Date	Title	Portfolio Holder	Lead	Decision Maker	Scrutiny
	28/03/23	HRA Business Plan 2023-24	Councillor Matthew Dorrance	Nina Davies	Cabinet	
	28/03/23	Corporate Asset Policy	Councillor Jake Berriman	Gwilym Davies	Cabinet	
	28/03/23	Winter Maintenance Review	Councillor Jackie Charlton	Matt Perry	Cabinet	
	18/04/23	Quarter 3 Treasury Management Report	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
	18/04/23	Welsh Language 5 Year Strategy	Councillor Susan McNicholas	Emma Palmer	Cabinet	
	18/04/23	Mid-Wales Education Partnership – Business Plan	Councillor Pete Roberts	Georgie Bevan	Cabinet	Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee 29 March 2023
	18/04/23	Revenue Outturn as at 28 February	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
	18/04/23	Capital Programme Update as at 28 February	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
	18/04/23	Regional Partnership Board Area Plan	Councillor Sian Cox	Joe Wellard	Cabinet	
	09/05/23	Quarter 4 Performance Plan	Councillor James Gibson-watt	Emma Palmer	Cabinet	
	09/05/23	Quarter 4 Strategic Risk Register	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
	09/05/23	Annual Corporate Complaints report	Councillor James Gibson-watt	Helen Dolman	Cabinet	
	09/05/23	Customer Services Review	Councillor Jake Berriman	Helen Dolman	Cabinet	
	09/05/23	PSB Plan	Councillor James Gibson-watt	Emma Palmer	Cabinet	
	23/05/23	Corporate Safeguarding Board Activity Report	Councillor Richard Church	Nina Davies	Cabinet	
	23/05/23	Brynllwarch Final Business Case	Councillor Pete Roberts	Emma Palmer	Cabinet	

23/05/23	Llanfyllin Catchment Review Report	Councillor Pete Roberts	Emma Palmer	Cabinet	
20/06/23	Welsh Language Standards Annual Report	Councillor Susan McNicholas	Emma Palmer	Cabinet	
20/06/23	Secondary School Improvement Strategy	Councillor Pete Roberts	Georgie Bevan	Cabinet	
11/07/23	Financial Forecast as at 31 March	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
11/07/23	Capital Forecast as at 31 March	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
11/07/23	Quarter 4 Treasury Management Report	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
11/07/23	Ysgol Cribarth Objection Report	Councillor Pete Roberts	Emma Palmer	Cabinet	
11/07/23	Llanfyllin Catchment Review	Councillor Pete Roberts	Emma Palmer	Cabinet	
01/08/23	Annual Self-Assessment Report	Councillor James Gibson-watt	Emma Palmer	Cabinet	
01/08/23	School Standards	Councillor Pete Roberts	Georgie Bevan	Cabinet	Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee 19 July 2023
01/08/23	Chweched Powys Sixth	Councillor David Selby	Georgie Bevan	Cabinet	Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee 19 July 2023
01/08/23	Curriculum for Wales	Councillor Pete Roberts	Georgie Bevan	Cabinet	Learning and Skills Scrutiny Committee 19 July 2023
01/08/23	Annual Information Governance Report	Councillor Jake Berriman	Helen Dolman	Cabinet	
01/08/23	Corporate Safeguarding Board Activity Report	Councillor Richard Church	Nina Davies	Cabinet	
19/09/23	Quarter 1 Finance Report	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
19/09/23	Quarter 1 Capital Report	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
19/09/23	Quarter 1 Treasury Management report	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet	
19/09/23	Annual RIPA report		Helen Dolman	Cabinet	

19/09/23	Quarter 1 Performance Report	Councillor James Gibson-watt	Emma Palmer	Cabinet
10/10/23	Quarter 1 Strategic Risk Register	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet
24/10/23	Quarter 2 Finance Report	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet
24/10/23	Quarter 2 Capital Report	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet
24/10/23	Quarter 2 Treasury Management report	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet
21/11/23	Council Tax Base for 2024/25	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Jane Thomas	Cabinet
21/11/23	Corporate Safeguarding Board Activity Report		Nina Davies	Cabinet
12/12/23	Quarter 2 Strategic Risk Register	Councillor David Arnold Thomas	Bets Ingram	Cabinet
27/02/24	Quarter 3 Performance Report	Councillor James Gibson-watt	Emma Palmer	Cabinet

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