



At **Home** in **Powys**

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

March 2023

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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

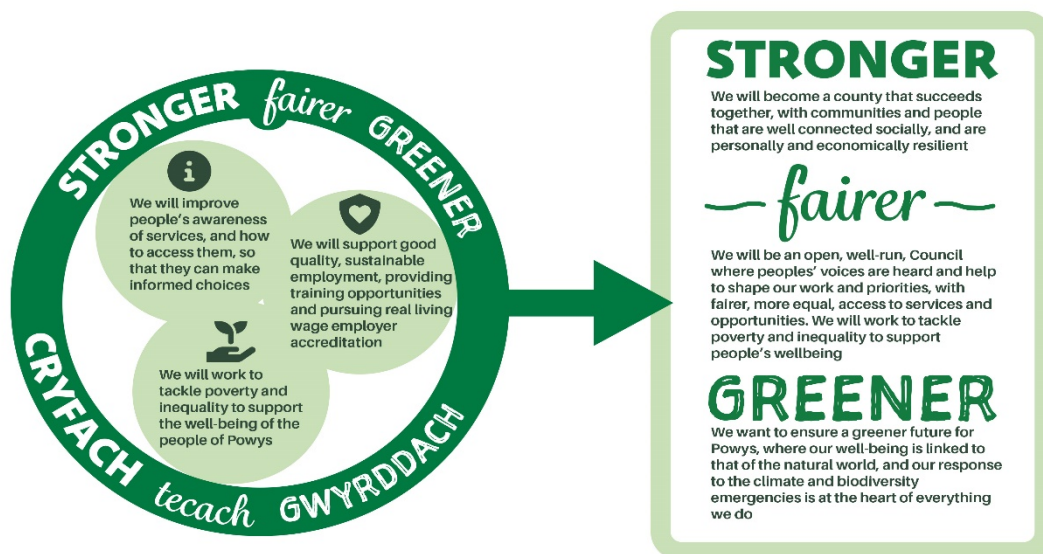
In March 2023, the Council published ‘**Stronger, Fairer, Greener**’, our Corporate and Strategic Equalities Plan.

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 STAR¹ 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 Portfolio², 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.

¹ 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.

² 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’³ 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.

³ ‘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’⁴ 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 Plan⁵ (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.

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

⁵ 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'⁶ 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

⁶ '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 Housing⁷. 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

⁷ '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 people⁸, making up 59,986 households⁹ 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.

⁸ Source: 'Census 2021' – Office of National Statistics.

⁹ 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
Total	42	244	2,178	1,849	405	4,718

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						
<i>Minimum bed size</i>	<i>Band 1</i>	<i>Band 2</i>	<i>Band 3</i>	<i>Band 4</i>	<i>Band 5</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>
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
Grand Total	42	244	2,178	1,849	405	4,718

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 Powys¹⁰. 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 income¹¹ and 4,008 families with children are living in absolute poverty in Powys.

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

¹¹ 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 4.0:1¹². 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)¹³</i>	<i>Living rent (2021-2022)</i>	<i>Housing association average (2022-2023)¹⁴</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

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

¹³ Source: Median Private Rents: Welsh Government Rent Officers.

¹⁴ 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.

Homelessness Presentations to the Council - 2017 to date						
	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 Working¹⁵.
- 🏠 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.

¹⁵ 'New Ways of Working' is being rolled out by Powys Cnty 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

Housing Communities	Housing Quality	Housing Resources
<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.

New Homes for Powys - Financial Summary 2023-2024 to 2027-2028				
<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
Total	£78,933,046	311	£10,000,000	48
Notes				
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
Total Repairs and Maintenance Investment	£9,009,300	£8,777,400	£8,653,400	£8,608,400	£8,583,400

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.

Fit for Life Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028					
<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
Capital Fit for Life Investment	£1,250,000	£1,250,000	£850,000	£250,000	£250,000
Adaptations - Revenue	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000	£590,000
Total Fit for Life Investment	£1,840,000	£1,840,000	£1,440,000	£840,000	£840,000

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.

Community Alarms Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028					
<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 LOLER¹⁶ 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.

Compliance One Hundred Programme Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028					
<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
Capital Compliance One Hundred Investment Programme	£400,000	£350,000	£350,000	£350,000	£200,000
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
Total Compliance One Hundred Investment Programme	£1,999,350	£1,888,550	£1,888,550	£1,923,550	£1,608,550

¹⁶ 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

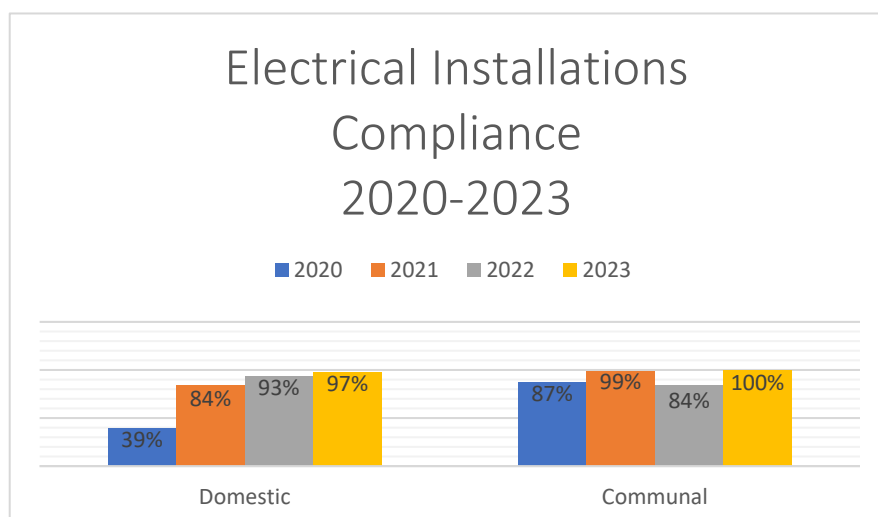
Mobilise a new contract for heating servicing, to start work in Q1 of 2023-2024.

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 magazine¹⁷, 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’.

Green Powys Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028					
<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
Capital Green Powys Investment Programme	£425,000	£575,000	£575,000	£575,000	£500,000
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
HRA Green Powys Investment Programme	£2,075,000	£2,225,000	£2,225,000	£2,225,000	£2,150,000
Optimised Retrofit for Powys	£2,394,237	£2,394,237	£0	£0	£0
Total Green Powys Investment Programme	£4,469,237	£4,619,237	£2,225,000	£2,225,000	£2,150,000

¹⁷ 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 (ORP₃) and Energy Company Obligation Four (ECO₄) 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'.

ORP₃ 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 - ECO₄ will be a four-year scheme running from April 1st 2022 to March 31st 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 ECO₄ 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 ECO₄ 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 ECO₄ 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 2022¹. 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.

Love Where You Live Programme Financial Summary 2022-23 to 2026-2027					
<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
Love Where You Live Investment	£900,000	£600,000	-£200,000	-£25,000	£200,000
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
Total Love Where You Live Investment	£2,200,000	£1,900,000	£1,100,000	£1,275,000	£1,500,000

Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)

Powys achieved the WHQS standard in December 2018. The focus has since then been on targeting ‘acceptable fails’¹⁸ 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.

WHQS Programme Financial Summary 2022-23 to 2026-2027					
<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

¹⁸ 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
Total WHQS	£7,017,700	£5,645,480	£5,693,330	£6,646,270	£6,059,280

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.

Management and Supervision Financial Summary 2023-24 to 2027-2028					
<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 ¹⁹	£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
Total	£10,841,060	£11,173,750	£11,504,164	£11,844,490	£12,195,026

¹⁹ 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 31st, 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			1393
Double House					1		1
First Floor Flat	154	300	8				462
Ground Floor Bedsit	14						14
Ground Floor Flat	207	335	1				543
House	13	716	2088	132	7	3	2959
Maisonette		24	40				64
Second Floor Flat	30	27					57
Third Floor (or higher) Flat	3	4					7
Totals	878	2333	2145	133	8	3	5500

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

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.

Powys County Council Housing Rents for 2022-23 and 2023-24			
	<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.

Garage and Garage Plot Rents for 2022-23 and 2023-24		
	<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"> Housing developments will be required to mitigate phosphates, as required at the end of March 2021 by Natural Resources Wales (NRW). The policy and mitigations available are currently unclear as no policy/procedure has been agreed between planning authorities and NRW. 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. Development schemes in affected areas cannot be progressed until policy and procedure is agreed between planning authorities and NRW. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular liaison with Planning teams, NRW and Welsh Government regarding mitigations and policy. 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). 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. Purchase of existing properties for social rent.
BREXIT - Import-export barriers imposed or tolerated by the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced exports leading to instability in exporting businesses. Reduced employment opportunities. Reduction in supply of products imported from the EU, reducing economic and construction activity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage exporting business to find new non-EU markets. Encourage and support domestic business to develop products for import substitution. Training and development for people to take advantage of changing economic opportunities. Increase focus on local (Powys>Wales>Britain) sourcing by the Council (and other bodies) of materials, goods and services (taking advantage of proposed changes to public procurement rules).

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

		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"> • 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. • 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. • 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. • Contraction in locally based construction capability and capacity arising from limited opportunities to develop and build new homes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value engineering of design and construction to increase value-for-money. • Identify opportunities for cross subsidy from market housing to increase resources for investment in social housing. • Increase collaborative working with economic development team and agencies to be better placed to take advantage of commercial-to-residential conversion opportunities. • Identify alternative funding sources for investment in social homes. • Increase acquisitions of properties to increase the availability of social rented homes. • 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.
Repairs and maintenance service and improvement programmes failing to deliver high quality services and outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction falls, reducing confidence by tenants in the Council. • Properties fall into disrepair, increasing future maintenance liabilities. • Excess costs are generated by remedial work to put right poor-quality repairs. • Safety standards are compromised by poor quality or non-delivered repairs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous quality assurance of work for example post-inspections and tenant surveys informing changes in policy and process. • Amend delivery model to address performance failings and improve services. • Value engineer specifications.

<p>Technical and cost challenges of making substantial environmental improvements to housing assets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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. • Reduced consumer appeal of municipal housing. • Unfunded design requirements reducing provision of additional affordable and secure housing opportunities for households with low and middle incomes. • Financial insecurity for private home-owners arising from unfunded changes to systems and components (for example heating systems). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous review and research of all systems, components and materials to identify those which contribute positively and cost effectively to long term environmental sustainability. • Increased use of locally sourced (Powys > Wales > United Kingdom > Global) materials and components. • Increased use of recycled materials. • Increased involvement of communities in designing and approving materials, systems and components. • 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. • Increased greening of estates to improve overall well-being and environmental quality.
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