



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

**Housing Revenue Account Thirty Year  
Business Plan 2024-2025**

**March 2024**

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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. The 'Cynefin' transformation project – which is focused on how people are able to live better lives in their homes and communities - is at the heart of the '**Stronger, Fairer, Greener**'.






As part of Transforming Powys<sup>1</sup>, the Council is rethinking the way that the people of Powys are able to have the services they need to be **stronger, fairer and greener**. This is at the heart of the 'Sustainable Powys' strategy to make sure that the Council remains financially and operationally sustainable at a time of increased service demands and expectations.

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. A safe, secure and affordable home are the foundation of people being able to enjoy stronger, fairer and greener lives and communities.

In March 2024, Powys County Council approved its Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Thirty Year Business Plan for 2024-2025. 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 2024-2025 through 2028-2029, 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.

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 nice 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.

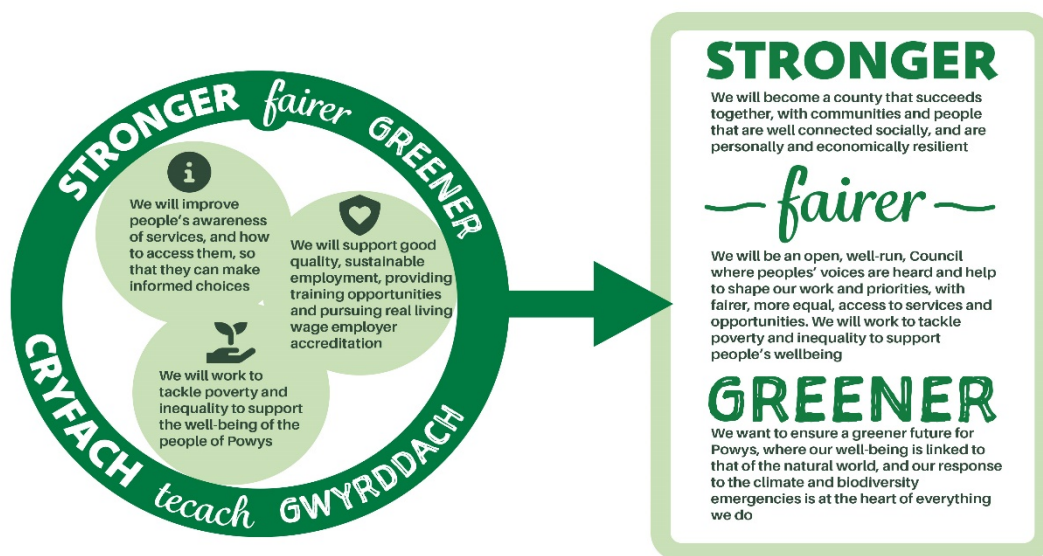
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<sup>1</sup> Transforming Powys brings together the main projects and initiatives being taken forward by the Council to transform for the better the quality of life in Powys.

## Stronger, Fairer, Greener

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



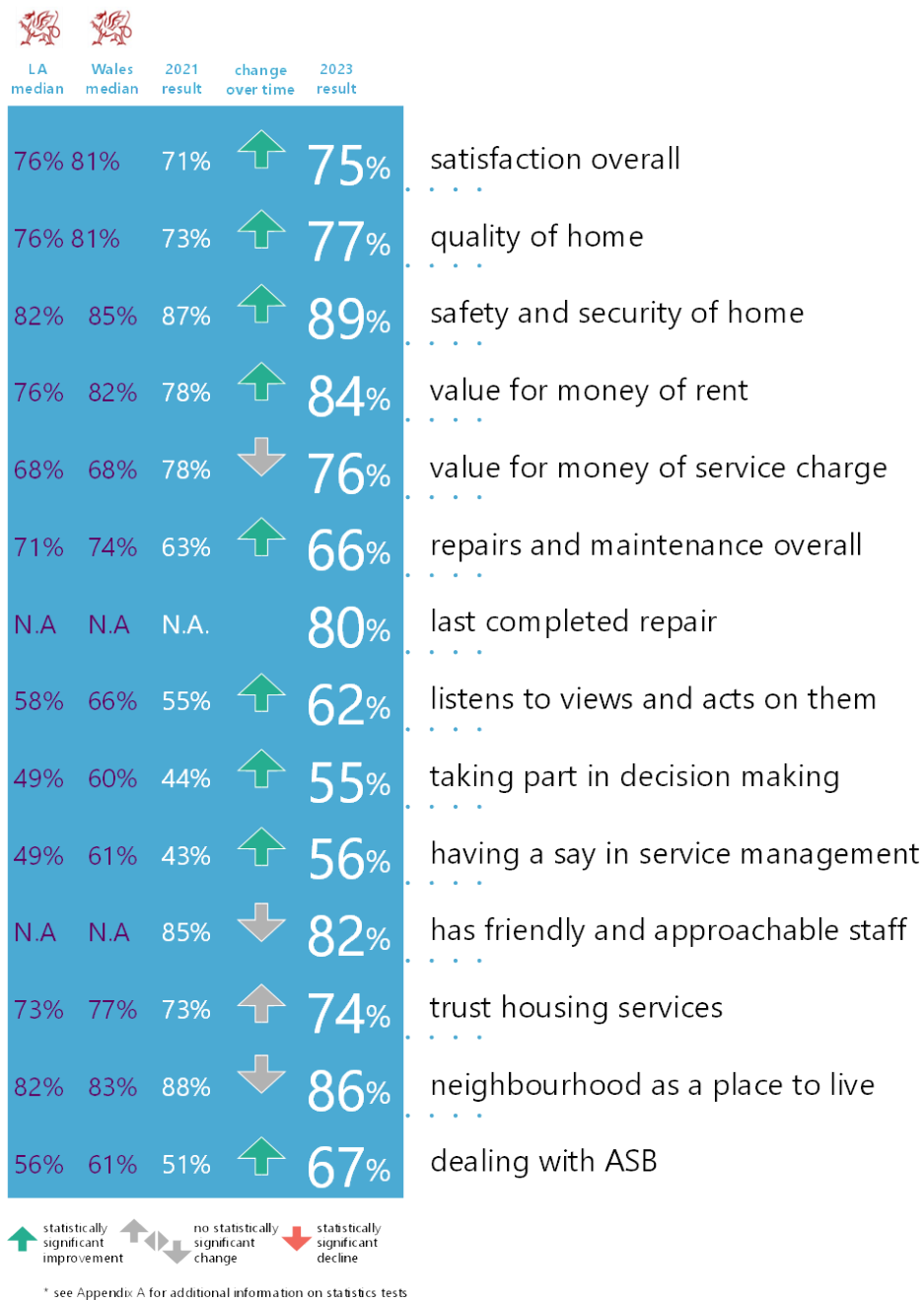
To achieve our ambition, we have three objectives for the Corporate and Strategic Equality Plan:

-  ***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 the service provided by the Council’s Housing Services. This will be measured using the bi-annual survey as part of the All-Wales STAR<sup>2</sup> survey and will allow us to compare and contrast with other social landlords and our own past achievements. The latest STAR survey reported in December 2023 and showed an increase in overall satisfaction with the Council’s housing service.

<sup>2</sup> The Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) asks tenants what their experiences are of their social landlords. STAR uses a common set of questions so that landlords – both councils and housing associations – can compare and contrast the quality of their services. Surveys are usually undertaken once every two years.

## STAR Survey – Powys 2023



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

Housing Services is planning to recruit trades apprentices in 2024-2025 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 have already recruited a Rent Accounting Apprentice.

**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. The 'Cynefin' project, which is at the heart of Transforming Powys, 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 180 new council homes with a further 125 potential new homes on the cards, subject to resolution of the management of phosphates in the River Wye and River Usk catchment areas.

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, 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 required by the Welsh Government and bringing rising construction cost inflation under control.

As well as building new homes, the HRA Business Plan is now buying at least ten homes per year, for letting by the Council, at social rents on secure contracts. This programme is subject to the availability of suitable properties to buy at prices that represent value for money for the HRA. In the past year, the values of larger properties have increased beyond what can be afforded by the HRA, so we are focusing the programme on smaller homes, which are those in most demand by households registered with 'Homes in Powys'<sup>3</sup> for social housing.

The addition of a dedicated Empty Properties Officer to the service in June 2023 is improving 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 bought and 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' 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.

## Climate and Nature

The Council declared a Climate Emergency in September 2020 and a Nature Emergency in October 2022. These will contribute towards Powys becoming a 'net-zero'<sup>4</sup> council by 2030, and a national leader in protecting and enhancing nature. Improving the energy efficiency and longevity of Council-owned homes and reducing the need for repairs and replacing components such as heating systems, will make a positive contribution towards making our

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

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

environment more sustainable. A ‘Green Powys’ housing-led working group is actively working, with our communities, to create more environmentally friendly approaches to how we manage and maintain our homes and open spaces. Examples include converting redundant laundry areas into green spaces and a competition for residents to design and build bug and hedgehog houses this year. 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 a major cause of inequality. The HRA Business Plan and its investment programmes and services will, by expanding the supply of secure homes and improving the quality of those we have will make a major contribution towards creating a Powys that makes it possible for people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances.

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

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



*New Council-built homes in Newtown*

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

## Looking Ahead

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


### A look back at 2023-2024...

Among Housing Services many achievements in 2023-2024...

- ☺ Made sure the HRA is financially viable by remaining one of the best social landlords in Wales for collecting rent.
- ☺ Increased the speed at which people can move into a new home by continuing to reduce the time it takes to repair and let Council-owned homes.
- ☺ Increased the choice of secure, affordable homes in Newtown by completing another new-build Council-housing scheme.
- ☺ Reduced the number of homeless households needing help because they have either lost or at risk of losing their home by continuing to drive forward the 'Really Important Goal'<sup>6</sup> initiative.
- ☺ Improved the quality of life for gypsies and travellers living in Brecon by completing improvement works to the Kings Meadow site.
- ☺ Given people a better start to life in their new Council home by rolling out a new, improved Quality of Accommodation Standard for properties ready to be let.
- ☺ Continued to help people with disabilities be better able to enjoy their home – regardless of tenure – through our aids, adaptations and disabled facilities grants programmes.
- ☺ Explored the practicalities and challenges of 'decarbonising' homes through the Optimised Retrofit for Powys' project and taking part in the Welsh Government's Whole Stock Assessment<sup>7</sup> and Target Energy Pathways<sup>8</sup> pilot.
- ☺ Started help more people become home-owners by beginning the roll-out of the Empty Property Grant programme to bring empty properties back into use as homes.

### ...and looking ahead to 2024-2025 and beyond...

#### Stronger...

-  Help balance the housing market in Powys by adding to the availability of genuinely affordable homes, let on secure contracts by increasing our new homes development programme and our programme of property acquisitions.






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<sup>6</sup> The 'Really Important Goal' (RIG) initiative is centred on working collaboratively with homeless clients to support a positive discharge, through the provision of suitable affordable accommodation, of homeless duties owed to the client by the Council. RIG is performance managed as the percentage of homeless clients with a planned discharge of homeless duties. Since RIG introduction in August 2023, RIG has facilitated as 21% reduction in overall homeless cases and a 14% reduction in statutory homeless cases.









<sup>7</sup> A Whole Stock Assessment is a review of the condition of the Council's homes, its energy efficiency data and the software and data analytical skills needed have an informed understanding of the condition and investment needs of the homes owned and managed.

<sup>8</sup> A Target Energy Pathway identifies the measures that could lead to the 'decarbonisation' of an individual home, to allow it to be heated by a 'low carbon' heating system.



-  Increase the availability of homes for the people of Powys by driving forward our Empty Homes Action Plan, including helping people turn empty properties into homes they own.
-  Improve the quality of life in Ystradgynlais by start work on turning the regeneration vision into a reality for Ael-y-bryn and Pen-y-bryn.
-  Continue to reduce the cost and improve the quality of repairs and improvements to Council housing by increasing our directly provided capability and capacity and putting in place new 'value for money' material supplier agreements.
-  Keep our homes safe by mobilizing Robert Heath Limited as our new contractor for heating servicing and working together with the Council's Strategic Property Team to keep our fire risk assessments up to date.
-  Improve the availability of social housing by continuing to reduce the time it takes to make a home fit to let and hand the keys over to a new tenant.

### *Fairer...*

-  Customer First – our big project for 2024-2025 to really improve the way we communicate with residents and tenants – including keeping people up to date with their service requests and making sure the way we communicate is always friendly, informative and easy to understand. This includes building on build on our strengths and improving where needed, revealed in the most recent STAR survey, 'Keeping in Touch'<sup>9</sup>, 'Tell Us'<sup>10</sup> and the New Tenant Surveys<sup>11</sup>.
-  Make sure that we know what we need to do to improve the quality of work to Council-owned homes by keeping in touch with tenants about how they experience our services.
-  Reduce the time people spend waiting for a resolution of being either homeless or at risk of losing their home by streamlining the way we work with people and encouraging greater self-help where that is a real option.
-  Increase the range of housing options for people who are homeless, or at risk of becoming so, by rolling out the 'Fair Shares'<sup>12</sup> initiative across all social landlords working in Powys.
-  Improve our knowledge management and customer intelligence by starting the installation and introduction of a new ICT system.
-  Offer people from global conflict zones safe places to live with active participation in resettlement schemes.
-  Continue to help people manage the increases in the cost of living by offering financial advice and support across all tenures.
-  Reduce the number of Children Looked After having to live outside Powys through the 'Closer to Home'<sup>13</sup> project.

### *Greener...*

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<sup>9</sup> 'Keeping in Touch' is the Housing Services project to visit every tenant at least once every three years.

<sup>10</sup> 'Tell Us' is our estate and community survey programme, when our Customer Care team spend quality time in a community, meeting people to find out more about what is important to make their homes and communities better places in which to live.

<sup>11</sup> Every new tenant of a Council-owned home is asked about the quality of service they have received – from joining 'Homes in Powys' to moving into their new home.

<sup>12</sup> 'Fair Shares' is designed to equitably share the use of social housing, used as temporary accommodation, owned by all social landlords working in Powys. As of February 2024, the Council is providing nearly 80% of all temporary accommodation while managing and owning 63% of social housing in the county.

<sup>13</sup> 'Closer to Home' is a project designed to provide in Powys more places for young people and children who need supported or safe accommodation to meet their special needs. This will mean providing more homes and local support services. The result will be people being better able to stay living in their home communities.

- 🌳 Improve the places where people live, work and play by raising the standard of grounds and estate management and maintenance across our housing estates.
- 🌳 Improve the long-term environmental sustainability of homes across Powys.
- 🌳 Contribute toward the Council's target to be a 'net zero' council by 2030 by encouraging affordable investment in long term, maintainable and useable efficiency and environmental improvements to homes of all tenures.
- 🌳 Improve the quality and value of the Optimised Retrofit Programme for Council homes by introducing a new, simpler approach to works and tenant liaison.
- 🌳 Prepare for the introduction of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 (WHQS-2023) by preparing for the Whole Stock Assessment<sup>14</sup> and preparation of a Target Energy Pathway<sup>15</sup> for all Council-owned homes.

## Challenges for the HRA

### *Welsh Housing Quality Standard-2023*

- 👉 Powys achieved the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) in December 2018 and has managed to maintain this standard across all homes. In October 2023, the Welsh Government published WHQS-2023. In April 2024, WHQS-2023 comes into effect. WHQS-2023 increases the standards expected of all social landlords providing homes in Wales, with full compliance across all homes owned by each social landlord required by no later than March 2034. WHQS-2023 majors on the 'decarbonisation' of social homes across Wales and is designed to contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition for the public sector to be collectively net zero by 2030.
- 👉 Completing the Whole Stock Assessment and Target Energy Pathways are the first stage in achieving WHQS-2023 by 2034. This information is essential to allow for budgets to be set, funding agreed, and tenants consulted about the detail of the works to their homes. However, Housing Services has undertaken a high-level estimate of what the costs of meeting WHQS-2023 by 2034. This is to allow us to have early sight of the scale of the challenge. The average increase in investment needed across all the Council's homes could average £46,717 for each home. To allow for the additional borrowing to fund such a major investment programme could mean an average weekly rent increase of £32.
- 👉 It is not yet clear whether additional financial support over and above the current Major Repairs Allowance will be made available from the Welsh Government to allow landlords to meet the requirements of WHQS-2023 by March 2034. The Welsh Government's Five-year Rent Policy is due for renewal in 2024-2025 for implementation from 2025-2026 onwards and may include provision for increases income from rents to contribute towards the costs of WHQS-2023. However, any increases over and above prevailing inflation rates may lead to social housing, in time, becoming less affordable for tenants.

*To mitigate this challenge...*

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<sup>14</sup> The Whole Stock Assessment is a review of the condition and energy efficiency of the Council's homes and the data, software and data analytical skills to inform the investment programmes needed for WHQS-2023.

<sup>15</sup> A Target Energy Pathway identifies the measures that can lead to the 'decarbonisation' of the heating systems for an individual home.

- In 2024-2025, the Council will undertake the first stage of a full Whole Stock Assessment condition survey of all our homes, to inform a proactive Asset Management Strategy and provide a Target Energy Pathway for every one of our homes. This will inform investment in our homes that will be necessary for them all to meet the new Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 by the Welsh Government's deadline of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024.
- The Powys Thirty-year HRA Business Plan 2024-2025 has been designed to make sure the Council's homes continue to meet the current WHQS and includes provision for the initial stages of WHQS-2023 – the completion of the Whole Stock Assessment and the associated TEPs.

## Construction

- Every home in Great Britain, at current rates of renewal and across all tenures, will have to be habitable for 1,500 years. The Council's housing stock is also aging and increasingly in need of investment to make sure it can continue to provide homes now and in the future. Half the Council's homes are more than sixty years old – sixty years being the accepted time before a house will likely need a full refurbishment, unless work has been ongoing to renew components as they wear out. That is why Powys has an ethos of 'liveability, maintainability, longevity' for our asset management work. Whatever we do is designed to make each home a better place in which to live, be low maintenance and have a long and useful life. That means we focus our investment and improvement programmes on the things that are essential to keep a home safe and secure: kitchens and bathrooms when they are needed, replacing walkways for flatted blocks, new roofs, windows and doors to keep the weather out, long-life easy-to-use and maintain heating systems and high levels of health and safety related compliance.

Age of Powys Council-owned Homes		
Decade Built	Number of Homes	Percentage of Homes
1800's	11	0.20
1860's	12	0.22
1900's	27	0.49
1910's	19	0.34
1920's	50	0.90
1930's	201	3.64
1940's	306	5.54
1950's	751	13.59
1960's	1,342	24.28
1970's	2,131	38.55
1980's	429	7.76
1990's	114	2.06
2010's	6	0.11
2020's	129	2.33
	5528	100.00

- 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.

- 👉 There is a diminishing number of contractors able and willing to build new homes in Powys.

*To mitigate this challenge...*

- 👉 The HRA Business Plan includes provision to maintain and develop our skilled and high quality directly employed tradespeople. This will mitigate the uncertainty and quality issues of over relying on over-stretched or out-of-Powys contractors, reinforce our internal capability and capacity, and provide the foundation for our apprenticeship programme.
- 👉 In 2024-2025 the Council will explore through the 'Routes to Market' initiative what can be done to put in place 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 and in the medium term, its own workforce building homes.
- 👉 In 2024-2025 the Corporate Asset Policy will be reviewed to find out how the development of new Council-owned housing can be better supported by the use of assets and properties owned by the Council as a whole.
- 👉 We will begin preparation for an Active Management Strategy, informed by the Whole Stock Assessment and the Target Energy Pathways, to focus investment in homes that are good to live in, easy and low cost to maintain and will have a long life. We will be considering properties against those criteria and the current predicted housing need for each community. In some cases, we may for example sell high cost, low demand properties to fund building or acquiring value-for-money, higher demand homes.

### **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.

*To mitigate this challenge...*

- 👉 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.
- 👉 In preparation for mitigation being in place in the Wye area in 2025-2026, Housing Services has already begun progressing planning applications for housing developments on two sites owned by Housing Services in Llandrindod Wells. 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 for the communities in the catchment area of the River Usk where the HRA already owns land, when there is greater clarity on when the development moratorium will be lifted.

### **Cost of Living Pressures**

- 👉 Powys continues to feel the impact of the rising 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. In spite of the challenges, Powys has maintained its record as one of the best landlords in Wales when it comes to collecting rent.

*To mitigate this challenge...*

- 👉 The HRA is designed to maintain rents at their affordable level – overall the lowest in Powys.
- 👉 The Financial Support Officers will continue to provide bespoke help and support to tenants to increase their income, manage their finances and be better placed to address cost of living pressures.

## **Opportunities for the HRA**

### ***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. This could help relieve pressure on ‘Homes in Powys’ and our homelessness services.

### ***Accelerating development of alternative heating systems***

- 👉 As the development of alternative heating systems continues, the cost – to install and then to maintain and operate - may fall over time. This may lead to increased receptiveness from tenants to investments being made in their homes in these new heating systems and help make sure that the HRA is able to fund such work.

### ***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, is already prompting 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, as Housing Services from March 2024 becomes part of the Council’s new Economic Development and Growth Directorate, to make the most of such opportunities – and contribute towards increasing affluence across Powys.

## The Powys Housing Market

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

Powys is home to 133,200 people<sup>16</sup>, making up 60,182 households 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 but the changes in working patterns such as working from home, which developed during the Covid pandemic, are making Powys more attractive to home seekers. Research published by the Halifax in autumn 2023 revealed Powys experienced the fastest growth year-on-year in property values in Britain.



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 for Ceredigion. Housing demand is strong, especially for affordable housing due to 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. Newtown too is an increasingly high demand market.

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. The growing demand reflects the special appeal of the Brecon Beacons to buyers moving out from towns and cities since the Covid pandemic. Unlike Wales's two other national parks — Snowdonia in the north and Pembrokeshire in the west — the edge of the Brecon Beacons is 40 minutes' drive from Cardiff. Of the three Welsh national parks, it is the closest to London. This means there is an 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 is now experiencing rising demand and increasing values. The development of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE) at the former Nant Helen opencast site and Onllwyn Washery, which straddles Neath Port Talbot and Powys, will be a major boost to the local economy. The GCRE will be a purpose-built site for world class research, testing and certification of rolling stock, infrastructure and innovative new rail technologies that will fill a gap, not just in UK rail, but across Europe.

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.

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<sup>16</sup> Source: 'Census 2021' – Office of National Statistics.

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%
<b>Total</b>	<b>60,182</b>	<b>100%</b>

- 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.

Housing Needs & Aspirations - By Tenure and First Choice Location					
Local Housing Market Area	Social Rent	Intermediate Rent	Low-cost Home Ownership	Total Affordable	Affordable Housing Need - % of All Households
Brecon	262	2	6	270	4.3%
Builth and Llanwrtyd	88	0	3	91	2.9%
Crickhowell	95	2	5	101	3.3%
Hay and Talgarth	87	4	7	98	2.5%
Knighton and Presteigne	117	1	1	119	2.6%
Llandrindod and Rhayader	222	3	5	230	3.8%
Llanfair Caereinion	75	0	0	75	2.8%
Llanfyllin	94	3	3	99	2.4%
Llanidloes	97	1	4	102	3.4%
Machynlleth	111	3	2	115	4.1%
Newtown	482	2	4	488	6.4%
Welshpool and Montgomery	387	9	41	436	5.3%
Ystradgynlais	261	0	0	261	5.6%
<b>Powys</b>	<b>2,378</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>2,484</b>	<b>4.1%</b>

- N.B: If households have been approved for both intermediate rent and low-cost home ownership (LCHO), they have been allocated as half to both. This causes the totals not always to add up.
- Source: 'Homes in Powys' for social rent; Tai Teg for all other affordable tenures. March 2023.

The table below shows the tenure of households registered with 'Homes in Powys' at the end of December 2023. The highest number of households are currently renting private sector

accommodation, suggesting a clear desire for the security of tenure and affordable rents offered by social landlords.

<b>Households Registered with Homes in Powys - Current Tenure and Priority Band (December 2023)</b>						
<b>Tenure</b>	<i>Band One - specific, defined and evidenced housing needs that can be resolved only by a move to a different home.</i>	<i>Band Two - 'Ready-to-Move' and have special housing needs.</i>	<i>Band Three - 'Ready-to-Move' and have a clear 'Housing Need'.</i>	<i>Band Four - no 'Housing Need' but 'Ready-to-Move'.</i>	<i>Band Five - Housing Need but are not 'Ready-to-Move'.</i>	<b>Total</b>
Renting from a private landlord	3	32	436	592	117	1,180
Powys County Council Tenancy	35	29	241	169	44	518
Living with parents		5	132	189	37	363
Other	4	23	128	154	49	358
Staying with friends/relatives	3	25	125	96	33	282
Other Social Landlord		1	82	140	23	246
Owner Occupier	5	5	95	128	33	266
Barcud Housing Association Tenancy	10	4	94	84	12	204
Temporary Accommodation	5	62	49	22	31	169
Wales & West Housing Association Tenancy	8	1	37	49	11	106
Rough Sleeper	1	10	43	8	17	79
Clwyd Alyn Housing Association Tenancy		1	31	29	6	67
Lodging		2	21	21	5	49
Pobl Housing Association Tenancy			10	20		30
Newydd Housing Association Tenancy	2	2	19	14	3	40
In home provided by employer	1	1	9	15	5	31
Adult Placement		2	5	4		11
Living in care		2	9	5	3	19
Grwp Cynefin Housing Association Tenancy			7	7	2	16
Melin Homes Housing Association Tenancy			2	5		7
HM forces accommodation		1	3	4	2	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>1,578</b>	<b>1,755</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>4,051</b>



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'.

<b>Housing Needs of Households Registered with Homes in Powys, by Tenure (December 2023)</b>			
<i>Housing Need Reason</i>	<i>Social Housing Tenure</i>	<i>Other Tenure</i>	<i>Total</i>
Other to those detailed below	185	676	861
Medical need or have a disability and my existing home is not appropriate for my needs	392	757	1,149
Homeless or about to become homeless within the next 56 days	44	848	892
Existing home is overcrowded	202	474	676
Current home is unaffordable	77	547	624
Experiencing anti-social behaviour	239	283	522
Need to move to give or receive support and proven level of support is required and can be given	157	418	575
Existing house is too large for my needs	125	292	417
Housing for older people required	85	335	420
Found employment in the area and need to move closer to work or will otherwise lose that employment	31	163	194
Experiencing domestic violence	38	145	183
Current home planned to be demolished or needs major repairs	30	155	185
Leaving prison	2	29	31
Current home has disabled adaptations which are no longer required	10	10	20

- *N.B. An applicant may choose more than one housing need reason.*
- *Source: Homes in Powys, December 2023*

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. However, in the past year a review of 'Homes in Powys' and the return of the Council to the development of new homes has reduced the number of households registered. Even so, 6.7% of all households in Powys are registered with 'Homes in Powys' suggesting an underlying and constant need to balance the housing market in favour of affordable and secure homes.

<b>Households registered for affordable, secure homes in Powys</b>						
<i>Period</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Band One</i>	<i>Band Two</i>	<i>Band Three</i>	<i>Band Four</i>	<i>Band Five</i>
December 2018	2,356	21	77	1,348	311	599
December 2019	2,274	16	88	1,197	752	221
December 2020	3,326	16	101	1,775	1,126	308
December 2021	4,053	37	101	2,214	1,381	320
December 2022	4,718	42	244	2,178	1,849	405
December 2023	4,051	77	208	1,578	1,755	433

- *Source: Homes in Powys, December 2023*

## Homes in Powys Priority Bands

**Priority Band One** households need to have specific, defined and evidenced housing needs that can be resolved only by a move to a different home. These include:

- ☛ **Community Safety** where there is a real and present risk to the safety of the household if they do not move to a new home.
- ☛ **Extraordinary Medical Needs** that can only be met by moving to a different home.
- ☛ **Housing First and Housing First for Youth** to help people with complex housing needs have a stable home.
- ☛ **Safeguarding and Social Care** where a move to a new home will help reduce risks to a household member who has received a statutory safeguarding assessment.
- ☛ **Natural Disaster** where the household's home has been made uninhabitable by flood or fire and cannot be made fit-to-live-in again for at least a year.
- ☛ **Redevelopment** schemes which may result in the loss of their current home.
- ☛ **Housing Management Move** where a move is the only way to prevent a serious threat to the health and safety of the applicant or the local community.

**Priority Band Two** households must be 'Ready-to-Move' (able to move into a new home with no delays, able to make the rent payments, not be in breach of any current tenancy conditions and not owe money from previous tenancies) and be:

- ☛ **Key Workers** needed to support the provision of essential public services and address skills shortages identified by industry and agriculture working in Powys.
- ☛ **Service Personnel** who have been seriously injured or disabled in while in Service.
- ☛ **Overcrowding** in one bed-room accommodation.
- ☛ **Owed a Section 75 Homelessness Duty** by the Council.

**Priority Band Three** households need to be 'Ready-to-Move' and have a clear 'Housing Need' which includes:

- ☛ People who are **homeless**, as defined by Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 and the Housing Act 1996 Act, where accommodation may help prevent homeless or provide a place to live for those who do lose their home.
- ☛ People living in **unsatisfactory housing conditions** with Category One Hazards.
- ☛ People who need to move on **medical or welfare grounds**.
- ☛ **Care Leavers** subject to them being ready for independent living.

**Priority Band Four** is for households who have no 'Housing Need' but are 'Ready-to-Move' and are not eligible to join Priority Bands One to Three.

**Priority Band Five** is for households who have a housing need but are not 'Ready-to-Move' or eligible to join Priority Bands One to Four.

- *Under Section 75 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014 the Council must make sure that suitable accommodation is available for a homeless household if the household does not have suitable accommodation available for occupation for at least six months, has a priority need for accommodation, and is unintentionally homeless.*
- *The term 'Housing Need' covers a wide range of situations set out in Part 2 of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the Housing Act 1996 and the Welsh Government's 'Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness 2016'.*
- *Category One Hazards in a home are defined in the Housing Health and Safety Rating System as being a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety.*

Over the next year, the roll out of a rolling ‘anniversary’ review approach will be completed. Each application will be reviewed every six months after the date it was first registered with ‘Homes in Powys’. This will make sure that all applications are up to date so that people are offered homes best matched to their needs and aspirations.

Demand for social rented housing is outstripping the ability of social landlords to provide secure homes for people who need them.

<b>Homes let by all social landlords working in Powys</b>	
2018-2019	857
2019-2020	645
2020-2021	708
2021-2022	693
2022-2023	675
Quarter One to Quarter Three 2023-2024	453

- Source: Homes in Powys, December 2023

There is also a very clear mismatch between the size of properties available in Powys, regardless of tenure, and the 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.

<b>Property size – by bedrooms – in Powys (all tenures)</b>		
1 bedroom	3,825	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)

<b>Households Registered with ‘Homes in Powys’ - by minimum bed size and priority band</b>						
<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	40	147	814	996	260	2257
2	26	43	439	466	111	1085
3	9	13	227	228	47	524
4	2	4	86	55	13	160
5		1	10	7	1	19
6			2	3		5
7					1	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>1,578</b>	<b>1,755</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>4,051</b>

- Source: Homes in Powys, December 2023

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.

Average gross household income in Powys in 2021 was £33,458 which is slightly lower than the Welsh average of £34,700 and well below the UK average £40,257. In Powys 55% of households earn less than the average Powys household income<sup>17</sup> and there are 4,390 children in absolute low-income families in 2022 in Powys<sup>18</sup>.

<b>House Prices and Incomes - Local Housing Market Areas in Powys 2023</b>								
<i>Local Housing Market Areas</i>	<i>Median House Price</i>	<i>Deposit at 5%</i>	<i>Average Gross Household Income</i>	<i>Loan Value to Income Ratio</i>	<i>Lowest Quartile House Price</i>	<i>Deposit at 5%</i>	<i>Average Gross Household Income</i>	<i>Loan Value to Income Ratio</i>
Brecon	£233,964	£11,698	£34,443	6.79	£170,912	£8,546	£34,443	4.96
Builth and Llanwrtyd	£235,965	£11,798	£33,089	7.13	£161,001	£8,050	£33,089	4.87
Crickhowell	£349,946	£17,497	£42,116	8.31	£248,574	£12,429	£42,116	5.90
Hay and Talgarth	£274,687	£13,734	£36,333	7.56	£217,814	£10,891	£36,333	5.99
Knighton and Presteigne	£229,914	£11,496	£31,678	7.26	£172,774	£8,639	£31,678	5.45
Llandrindod and Rhayader	£203,969	£10,198	£30,140	6.77	£147,024	£7,351	£30,140	4.88
Llanfair Caereinion	£229,914	£11,496	£35,448	6.49	£173,460	£8,673	£35,448	4.89
Llanfyllin	£263,960	£13,198	£34,241	7.71	£180,648	£9,032	£34,241	5.28
Llanidloes	£227,905	£11,395	£32,534	7.01	£151,259	£7,563	£32,534	4.65
Machynlleth	£211,763	£10,588	£32,164	6.58	£159,928	£7,996	£32,164	4.97
Newtown	£192,571	£9,629	£31,788	6.06	£139,159	£6,958	£31,788	4.38
Welshpool and Montgomery	£205,713	£10,286	£34,731	5.92	£161,063	£8,053	£34,731	4.64
Ystradgynlais	£147,372	£7,369	£30,367	4.85	£108,907	£5,445	£30,367	3.59
<b>Average</b>	<b>£231,357</b>	<b>£11,568</b>	<b>£33,775</b>	<b>6.80</b>	<b>£168,656</b>	<b>£8,433</b>	<b>£33,775</b>	<b>4.96</b>

Long term, there has been a rise of unaffordability taking Powys as a whole - in 2001 the house price to earnings ratio was just 4.0:1<sup>19</sup>. The average house price to earnings ratio in Powys in 2023 is now 6.80:1 for median priced properties and 4.96:1 for the lowest priced homes. However, there are substantial variations between different Powys housing markets – from a high of 8.3:1 for Crickhowell to a low of 3.59 for Ystradgynlais. These figures show that at a loan value to income ratio of 4.5:1 – mortgage lenders generally cap the loan-to-income ratio at 4.5 times – a majority of communities in Powys are increasingly unaffordable for home buyers with average incomes. This increases the importance of the HRA Business Plan being able to support a growing programme to develop more affordable homes, both for social rent and in the medium term (three to five years) homes for low cost home ownership.

Research by the Bevan Foundation in 2023 showed that of all the properties advertised in one month in Powys for rent from private landlords, just 3.5% would have had the rent fully covered by the Local Housing Allowance. Comparisons of weekly council house rents with

<sup>17</sup> Source: (<https://en.powys.gov.uk/article/12025/Wellbeing-Information-Bank-View-information-about-Household-Income>)

<sup>18</sup> (<https://stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/webapi/jsf/dataCatalogueExplorer.xhtml>)

<sup>19</sup> Source: Housing affordability in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

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.

<b>Weekly rents across all rented sectors in Powys</b>					
	<i>Median private rents (2022-2023)<sup>[3]</sup></i>	<i>Living rent (2022-2022)</i>	<i>Housing association average (2023-2024)<sup>[4]</sup></i>	<i>Average Powys County Council rents (2023-2024)</i>	<i>Average Powys County Council rents (2024-2025)</i>
One bedroom	£88	£136	£84	£82	£86
Two bedrooms	£110	£176	£106	£98	£102
Three bedrooms	£138	£217	£122	£111	£118
Four bedrooms (or more bedrooms)	£173	Not available	£141	£120	£130

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

### **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 (and housing association) homes to provide higher quality emergency and temporary accommodation for people who are homeless, with the HRA recovering its costs from a mix of occupancy charges and the Council’s General Fund. This generates 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. In cases where a homeless person staying in temporary accommodation provided by the Council or a housing association would be allocated that home through ‘Homes in Powys’, and they are found to be eligible for permanent rehousing, their temporary homes is converted to a secure contract. This avoids disruption to the households and helps support stable communities.

[3] Source: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2023-11/private-sector-rents-by-local-authority-april-2022-to-march-2023.ods>

[4] Source: Housing Association Average Rents: [Average weekly rents in self-contained stock at social rent by accommodation type, number of bedrooms and provider type \(www.gov.wales\)](https://www.gov.wales/statistics-and-research/2023-11/average-weekly-rents-in-self-contained-stock-at-social-rent-by-accommodation-type-number-of-bedrooms-and-provider-type)

The increase in homelessness being experienced in Powys over the past six years increases the pressure on the HRA to be able to provide more homes for people who are at risk of becoming – or are already – homeless. The number of homeless households who have come to the Council for help has increased from 383 in 2017-2018 to 1103 in 2022-2023. By the end of December 2023, the Council had 40 homeless households in bed-and-breakfast style emergency accommodation and a further 217 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	2023-2024 (@ 31.12.22)
Total	383	441	613	704	833	1103	599

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. The HRA has a major role to play in reducing and resolving homelessness.

### Balancing the Powys Housing Market

‘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 Local Housing Market Analysis<sup>20</sup> findings are all used to shape 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.

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 2024-2025 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 joined Housing Services in June 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.

<sup>20</sup> The Welsh Government requires all local authorities to develop a Local Housing Market Assessment to determine local housing requirements and form a key part of the evidence base for Local Development Plans which inform planning policy. LHMA’s across Wales are produced using a consistent methodology and national data sources.

## Local Housing Market Analysis

Every local authority in Wales must 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 evidenced basis housing need estimates for a 15-year period on which to plan strategically for meeting current and future housing need. The LHMA also provides evidence to inform the Local Development Plans (LDP), the planning policy for every Planning Authority. Powys Planning Authority started work in November 2022 on a new LDP 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, Powys opted 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, mainly due to inward migration from other parts of the UK.

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

 The number of households registered with 'Homes in Powys' for secure, affordable rented housing has nearly doubled since 2018 and now accounts for around seven per cent of all households in Powys. The affordability of property to rent privately – and usually let on insecure contracts that do not provide the security of tenure needed to make a house a home – strengthens the need for more social rented housing across Powys.

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

 Regardless of tenure, just 6% of all homes in Powys have one bedroom. For people with low incomes and needing social security support to help cover their housing costs, the 'Bedroom Tax/Spare Room Subsidy'<sup>21</sup> and 'Single Room Allowance'<sup>22</sup> for those under 35 years old, exacerbates the problems for single people and couples of finding a home they can afford. Household sizes in Powys are however 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

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<sup>21</sup> 'Bedroom Tax/Spare Room Subsidy' reduces by up to 25% the housing support (Housing Benefit; Universal Credit) available to people living in rented homes that are considered, under social security regulations, to be too large for the size of their household.

<sup>22</sup> 'Single Room Allowance' limits the amount of help available to low income single people aged 35 and renting a home from a private landlord to an amount equivalent to the cost of renting a room in a shared house or house in multiple occupation.

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.

### ***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, bungalows and Extra Care schemes. 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.

### ***Accessible Housing***

🏠 To make sure homes remain desirable for older people and are able to meet the needs of those with mobility needs, the Council will need to adapt or extend existing – and sometimes aging – accommodation. It will also, where this option is now practicable, buy and remodel properties to provide homes for people who cannot access or live successfully in un-adapted dwellings.

### ***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.



*Newly built Council apartments in Newtown*



## Housing Services

From March 2024, Housing Services will become part of the Council's 'Economic Development and Growth' directorate. This realignment recognises the inter-dependence of the economy and the housing market. During 2024-2025, the Council will be undergoing transformation as it reshapes services around communities and localities. A local approach where that is the most responsive and effective way to deliver services – and for those services to be tailored to suit the needs of different communities – will drive forward the way the council serves the people of Powys. Place Based Planning will embrace out-and-about working, hubs, formal office environment, multi-osevice centres digital service accessibility and co-location and co-working with public, private and third sector organisations.

Housing Services had already put in place 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. 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.

### Housing Services in Powys

<b>Housing Communities</b>	<b>Housing Quality</b>	<b>Housing Resources</b>
<i>Helping people to find, keep and enjoy a home</i>	<i>Providing maintaining and improving homes</i>	<i>Understanding the way people experience their homes and communities</i>
Housing advice across all tenures	Building and acquiring new homes	Continuous market engagement to drive forward improvements in all the work we do
Homelessness prevention and resolution	Bringing empty properties into use as homes	Customer relationship management
Allocation of social homes in Powys	Repairs, maintenance and improvements to homes owned by the Council	Effective and interactive communications
Tenancy management of Council-owned homes	Encouraging higher maintenance standards by private property owners	Provision of information technology and data systems
Estate management	Compliance and health and safety across all Housing Services	Quality assurance and performance management
Management of gypsy and traveller sites	Aids, adaptations and disabled facilities work to increase the well-being of people in Powys	Income management
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 continue maintaining and improving the homes already owned by the Council and 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 manufacturers 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 2024-2025, the Council will begin work on the Whole Stock Assessment house condition survey, which will include preparing the Target Energy Pathway that every home will need to shape WHQS-2023 investment. The survey will also be the foundation of a proactive Asset Management Strategy.

The Asset Management Strategy will be used to inform investment and divestment decisions by for the HRA. For example, there may be properties in areas with low demand for social housing, which need a disproportionately high amount of investment to meet WHQS-2023 but which would be attractive to owner occupiers. The sale of these homes, at market value, would allow the Council to reinvest funds in developing or acquiring low maintenance, long life properties in places where people want to live. Overall, the number of homes offered by the Council will increase to meet the strong need for genuinely affordable housing, let on secure terms of occupancy. The Housing Services ethos of ‘liveability, maintainability and longevity’ will underpin the Asset Management Strategy which is planned for introduction in 2027.

### **Stronger**

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

The target in ‘**Stronger, Fairer, Greener**’ is to have by 2031 added another 350 newly built 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 305 new homes. This includes secured land banks able to support 125 homes once the management of phosphates in these communities is resolved. Additional sites and opportunities are expected to become available between now and 2031. Taking account of new homes already built since

2022-2023, when the target of 350 was set, it is possible that the Council will exceed its ambition.

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 address phosphate management in the River Wye and River Usk catchment areas in the south of Powys.

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. This is in addition to the development of new homes. The numbers to be bought will depend upon local housing need, the availability of affordable housing to buy, 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, twenty-one homes were bought, followed by six in 2019-2020, twelve in 2020-2021, seven in 2021 – 2022, two in 2022-2023 and to date from April 2023 Housing Services eleven property purchases.

In 2023-2024, we have added to the HRA seven social rented homes using our current turnkey approach. Powys County Council will be reviewing and improving its Package Deal Policy Guide to include traditional package deals in addition to its current turn-key arrangement. This approach will allow the Council to achieve value for money from a range of different builders, help give developers the confidence needed to invest in the county by having a firm partnership with the Council to buy a proportion of the homes being built and spread the risk of development across a range of providers. The review is intended to make it easier and more accessible for developers to work with the Council in the delivery of more Council homes via a traditional package deal route.

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 will have a suite of standard house types in place by March 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 were brought in-house. This has reduced the links in the development chain and allow the development programme to be more responsive to the competing demands within housing design and development, greater cost control and to build up our capability and capacity to once again be one of Powys' major housing developers.

<b>New Homes for Powys - Financial Summary 2024-2025 to 2028-2029</b>				
<i>Financial Year</i>	<i>New Build (£)</i>	<i>Number of Homes Completed</i>	<i>Acquisitions (£)</i>	<i>Number of Homes Acquired</i>
2024-2025	£22,418,644	4	£2,000,000	10
2025-2026	£14,474,479	72	£2,000,000	10
2026-2027	£9,548,404	168	£2,000,000	10
2027-2028	£28,629,746	20	£2,000,000	10
2028-2029	£28,561,625	70	£2,000,000	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>£103,632,898</b>	<b>334</b>	<b>£10,000,000</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Notes</b>				
Completions and acquisitions will be dependent upon securing all necessary planning, environmental and other regulatory consents, securing viable development sites and where needed Social Housing Grant.				
Number of homes completed refers to being able to develop on secured, unsecured and phosphate impacted sites.				
Investment planned for each year will cover completing earlier schemes, progressing current developments and preparing for future projects.				
The figures 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.				

### **Ystradgynlais Regeneration**

In the Aelybryn-Penybryn area of 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. 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 2024-2025.

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**

In 2023-2024, a new, improved Quality of Accommodation Standard – which sets out what new tenants can expect from their new home - was 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. This includes greater emphasis on making homes ready to move into – for example decoration where needed to make a house a home. From 2024-2025, as part of the roll-out of WHQS-2023 floor coverings will be fitted to all properties being let to new tenants, where it hasn't been possible to make good use of existing floor covering. Wherever practicable existing floor coverings are retained in support of the environmentally friendly 'repair, reuse, recycle' philosophy to the use of materials and resources.

<b>Repairs and Maintenance Financial Summary 2024-25 to 2028-2029</b>					
<i>Investments</i>	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000
Day to Day Repairs & Maintenance	£1,971	£2,030	£2,080	£2,132	£2,186
Voids Repairs & Maintenance	£2,975	£3,064	£3,141	£3,219	£3,300
Stock Survey (contributes towards WHQS-2023)	£1,400	£1,442	£0	£0	£0
Repairs and Maintenance Compliance	£1,515	£1,560	£1,599	£1,639	£1,680
Repair and Maintenance Adaptations	£590	£608	£623	£638	£654
<b>Total Repairs and Maintenance Investment</b>	<b>£8,450</b>	<b>£8,704</b>	<b>£7,443</b>	<b>£7,629</b>	<b>£7,820</b>

Reducing the time taken to let properties will not only reduce void rent loss but also help people move more quickly into a new home – including for example those who are homeless and staying in temporary accommodation such as a 'bed and breakfast' type establishment. Since July 2022, when repairs and maintenance services returned from being provided by a private contractor to a directly employed workforce, Housing Services has reduced the average key-to-key time<sup>23</sup> for void properties from twenty-two weeks to twelve and a half weeks. The allocation and letting of properties once fit-to-let has also been on a continuous downward trend. However, further improvements are needed which is why a five programme of key-to-key targets are now integral to the HRA Business Plan.

<b>Key-to-key Time for Letting Properties</b>					
Year	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029
Calendar Days - Average	42 days	39 days	36 days	33days	30 days

- Excludes properties scheduled for demolition, disposal, major capital works and renovation and held for use by Social and Childrens' Services

<sup>23</sup> Key-to-key: the time from when keys are received from the outgoing tenant and the tenancy is terminated until the ingoing tenant receives the key to their new home and their tenancy starts.

## Fairer

### Fit for Life

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

<b>Fit for Life Programme Financial Summary 2024-25 to 2028-2029</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>	<i>2028-2029</i>
	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>
Adaptations - Capital	£250	£250	£250	£250	£250
Adaptations - Revenue	£590	£608	£623	£638	£654
<b>Total Fit for Life Investment</b>	<b>£840</b>	<b>£858</b>	<b>£873</b>	<b>£888</b>	<b>£904</b>

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

### Careline Community Alarm Service

From April 1st, 2024, all Council tenants will be charged £3.91/week for the Careline Service. This means that the charges for the Careline service are equitable for all tenants, regardless of the type of property in which they live and whether or not they are in receipt of Housing Benefit or the Housing Element of Universal Credit. The new charge now accurately reflects the cost of providing the Careline service including the replacement of the current equipment that is not digitally compatible, in preparation for the Digital 2025 'Switchover'.

During 2024-2025, 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. Given the choice of other digital options now available at different price points, the proposals will include consideration of whether or not the Council continues to directly provide the service.

### 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.

A new heating servicing contract came into force in February 2024. A joint programme with the Council's Strategic Property team will from February 2024 will maintain up-to-date Fire Risk Assessments across Housing Services assets, informing works and management changes to address identified risks. A five-year programme is being put in place to renew fire doors that are no longer compliant with regulatory requirements.

## Compliance One Hundred Priorities

### **Fire Safety**

Roll-out updating of all Fire Risk Assessments, with a five-year programme to replace and repair as necessary all fire doors which no longer meet regulatory standards.

### **Asbestos**

Improve by.... the management of asbestos surveys, including making sure that the surveys are proactively used by colleagues and contractors.

### **Heating Systems**

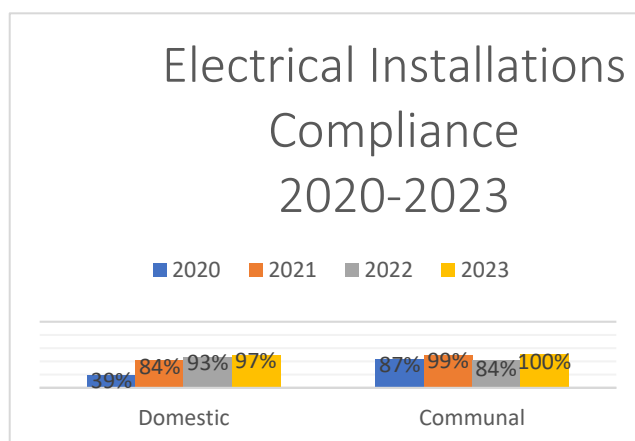
Move forward with the new contract for heating servicing, mobilised in Quarter Four of 2023-2024.

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

A new LOLER servicing contract, mobilised in 2023 will...

### **Fixed Electrical Testing**

Maintain the excellent performance achieved over the past three years.



### **Legionella Control**

The Council's approach to managing Legionella will continue to assess and manage risks within communal areas and Houses in Multiple Occupation, identifying and evaluating through a Legionella Risk Assessment (LRA) all potential sources of risk and the means of preventing exposure to legionella bacteria or if prevention is not reasonably practicable, the means of controlling the risk from exposure to legionella bacteria.

### **Sewage and Water Treatment Systems**

A total of 185 properties/homes are connected to Housing Services sewerage schemes. The type of sewage and water treatment systems in use range from complex pumping stations to septic tanks. With the exception of the systems serving the Council's gypsy and traveller sites, the systems are now more than thirty years old having been installed when the houses were built. A number are fifty years or more old. A new charging system to allow for scheme-by-scheme cost recovery will come into effect in 2024-2025, with all costs apportioned and recharged according to tenure.

All LOLER<sup>24</sup> assets receive an annual service and a six-monthly independent inspection and always have an in-date servicing certificate. Legionella control includes Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Approved Code of Practice (ACoP) L8 Risk Assessments within communal areas and specific dwellings.

A review of how the sewage treatment plants owned by Housing Services are managed has led to the introduction from 2024-2025 of scheme-by-scheme charging to make sure that costs are shared fairly by those households, regardless of tenure, served by the systems.

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

<b>Compliance One Hundred Programme Financial Summary 2024-25 to 2028-2029</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>	<i>2028-2029</i>
	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>
Fire Safety Works	£500	£100	£100	£100	£100
Water Supply and Sewerage Works	£30	£100	£100	£100	£100
WHQS Contributions to Compliance One Hundred	£150	£150	£0	£0	£0
Revenue Compliance Repairs & Maintenance	£1,515	£1,560	£1,599	£1,639	£1,680
<b>Total Compliance One Hundred Investment Programme</b>	<b>£2,195</b>	<b>£1,910</b>	<b>£1,799</b>	<b>£1,839</b>	<b>£1,880</b>

## 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'. An 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'.

<sup>24</sup> LOLER stands for 'Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations', brought into force in 1998. They are drawn up and overseen by the Health and Safety Executive.



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.









Housing Services will be wherever practicable introducing PAS2035<sup>25</sup> into our frameworks and contracts to make sure the right designs are in place for every project, so that the right measures are installed in the right circumstances to improve energy performance. This will also make a contribution towards the Council's and the Welsh governments 'decarbonisation' ambitions.

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.

### Green Powys Housing Sustainability Group

The 'Green Powys Housing Sustainability Group', brings people from across Housing Serviced as well as colleagues from other Council services together to take forward ideas and projects to improve the environmental sustainability of Housing Services and to help make our communities greener.

Some of the Group's initiatives in 2023-2024 include...

-  **Community Spaces:** Working with residents to 'green' two redundant laundry areas in Welshpool.
-  **Open House:** Articles in our Open House tenants' magazine suggesting ideas such as the 'One Metre Matters' campaign (setting aside one square meter for nature) and the Thirty Days Wild event (doing something wild every day for a month).
-  **Bug and Hedgehog Houses:** Housing Services is running a competition for residents to design and build bug and hedgehog houses.
-  **Housing Green Spaces:** Helping residents adopt areas of housing land to turn them into community garden.
-  **Housing Nature Queries:** Providing advice and expertise to colleagues across Housing Services on best practice in such areas as in managing green spaces and providing swift boxes when undertaking roofing works.
-  **Bird Boxes:** Undertaking maintenance and inspection of existing bird boxes and arranging for more to be installed.
-  **Bulb Planting:** Planting bulbs wherever suitable to give our estates a bright look to welcome in spring.
-  **Green Powys Estate Event:** is being considered for 2024-2025 in Newtown, to celebrate nature and wildlife on people's doorsteps. Activities under consideration include a 'bioblitz' of estate, nature education trail, stalls and displays, and fat ball and bird feeder making.

25 experience people and organisations must have to be able undertake retrofit work to homes and buildings.

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 - initial cost, repair and maintenance and replacement – 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. Powys in 2023-2024 blended ECO4<sup>26</sup> and Optimised Retrofit Programme Three (ORP3)<sup>27</sup> funding for energy efficiency measures to allow for substantial investment to improve energy efficiency in the Council’s homes between now and March 2025. The experiences gained in the first year of ‘Optimised Retrofit for Powys’ are being used to develop a new approach to deliver these improvements to our tenant’s homes. To improve the quality of the works, underpinning the development of retrofit in-house knowledge and capabilities we have been training our own Retrofit Assessors and will reduce the links in the funding and delivery chain, by working directly with ECO-approved installers.

<b>Green Powys Financial Summary 2024-25 to 2028-2029</b>					
<i>Investment</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>	<i>2028-2029</i>
	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>	<i>£,000</i>
Damp Prevention	£500	£375	£250	£250	£250
Decarbonisation and Energy Efficiency	£0	£250	£250	£250	£250
WHQS Contributions to Green Powys	£1,650	£1,550	£1,750	£1,550	£3,470
<b>Total Green Powys Investment</b>	<b>£2,150</b>	<b>£2,175</b>	<b>£2,250</b>	<b>£2,050</b>	<b>£3,970</b>

## **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 investment 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 2024-25 to 2028-2029**




<sup>26</sup> The Energy Company Obligation (ECO) is a government energy efficiency scheme in Great Britain designed to tackle fuel poverty and help reduce carbon emissions. The ECO scheme 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.

<sup>27</sup> Optimised Retrofit Programme (ORP) is a Welsh Government project to investigate ways to ‘decarbonise’ existing homes and takes into account the materials homes are made from and the way occupiers heat and store energy.

<i>Investments</i>	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000
Brecon Area Estate Improvements	£15	£15	£16	£16	£17
Newtown Area Estate Improvements	£15	£15	£16	£16	£17
Welshpool Area Estate Improvements	£15	£15	£16	£16	£17
Wye Valley Estate Improvements	£15	£15	£16	£16	£17
Ystradgynlais Estate Improvements	£15	£15	£16	£16	£17
Garage Strategy	£175	£175	£0	£0	£0
Play Area Improvements	£25	£26	£26	£27	£28
Play Area Improvements	£25	£25	£25	£25	£25
WHQS Contributions to Love Where You Live (Estate and Boundary Works)	£1,000	£1,200	£1,200	£1,200	£1,200
<b>Total Love Where You Live Investment</b>	<b>£1,300</b>	<b>£1,503</b>	<b>£1,331</b>	<b>£1,333</b>	<b>£1,336</b>

## Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)

Powys achieved the WHQS standard in December 2018. The focus has since then been on targeting ‘acceptable fails<sup>28</sup>’ and maintaining WHQS by:

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













The Welsh Government in October 2023 published WHQS-2023. WHQS-2023 majors on the ‘decarbonisation’ of social homes across Wales and is designed to contribute to the Welsh Government’s ambition for the public sector to be collectively ‘net zero’ by 2030.

The current WHQS requires all social homes in Wales to have up-to-date well-designed kitchens, utility areas and bathrooms, accessible gardens and outdoor space, safe and secure doors and windows, safe places in which to live with particular regard to fire safety, heating systems and electrical systems and each home to be in a good state of general repair and free from damp.

<sup>28</sup> Acceptable Fails: Acceptable Fails are circumstances where it is either impossible or not practicable, due to for example cost or timing of works, for a property to be brought up to WHQS or where a tenant refuses to have the work carried out.

In addition, all homes let by the Council have to be Fit for Human Habitation as required by the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016 and do not have any avoidable Category One hazards as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System<sup>29</sup>.

The additional requirements of WHQS-2023 include:

-  All the Council's homes having by March 2034 a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP)<sup>30</sup> energy rating of 'SAP 92 – A' (with an interim requirement for each home to meet 'SAP 75 – C' by March 2030).
-  Heat Loss Parameter<sup>31</sup> of less than 2.6 W/m<sup>2</sup> for each home.
-  The Council's whole housing stock must, when accounted for altogether, by March 2034 achieve carbon emissions equivalent to an Environmental Impact Rating (EIR)<sup>32</sup> of 92.
-  All installations of all measures taken to achieve SAP A and EICR 92 must comply with the current version of 'PAS2035 Retrofitting Dwellings for Improved Energy Efficiency'.
-  Potential water consumption is, through the use of water-saving fixtures when replacing fittings and fixed appliances, be less than 110 litres per person per day, effective from April 2024.
-  Water butts are to be installed where possible, effective from April 2024.
-  External lockable storage for cycles and equipment is to be made available for all tenants, effective from April 2024.
-  At change of tenancy all habitable rooms (bedrooms and living rooms), staircases and landings located within the home should have suitable floor coverings, effective from April 2024.
-  Exposure to noise resulting from inside the home caused by lack of sufficient sound insulation or within its curtilage, is to be minimised, effective from April 2024.
-  Adequate space needs to be provided for local recycling requirements.
-  Biodiversity opportunities are to be introduced for verges, parks, grounds and open green spaces to make them more wildlife friendly, effective from April 2024.
-  Each home must have adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes, effective from April 2024.

Not all the measures slated for 2024 will have to be put in place across all homes in that year. However, the Council will be expected to be proactively moving towards making these requirements a feature of all its homes. By March 31st, 2034, the Council will be required to confirm to the Welsh Government that all its homes meet WHQS-2023.

To meet the standards required for compliance with WHQS-2023 will likely require a major investment in each home, over and above that required to maintain the original WHQS. High level estimates of the cost of WHQS-2023 across all homes owned by the council is estimated to be £179,322,050. For different types of homes provided by the Council, the investment needs

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<sup>29</sup> The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in homes.

<sup>30</sup> The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the methodology currently used by the government to estimate the energy performance of homes.

<sup>31</sup> The Heat Loss Parameter (HLP) is a measure of the rate of heat transfer to or from a building per degree of temperature difference between inside and out, by reference to the total floor area of the building, measured in units of W/m<sup>2</sup> (Watts per metre square).

<sup>32</sup> The environmental impact rating is a measure of a home's impact on the environment in terms of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions. The higher the rating the less impact the home has on the environment. For most homes, the majority of energy costs come from heating.






range from £34,050 for a flat, £47,550 for a house and £58,550 for a bungalow, taking account of works already completed and components installed that will contribute towards meeting WHQS-2023. Those figures could equate to a possible rent increase of £23 per week for a flat, £33 a week for a house and £40 a week for a bungalow. Appendix A to this Business Plan, 'Additional Costs of WHQS-2023 (over and above maintaining WHQS)', sets out how these high level 'guesstimates' have been calculated.

Until the Whole Stock Assessment and Target Energy Pathway for each property are completed, these figures are estimates based on our current understanding of the condition and energy efficiency of our homes, the costs of works already undertaken similar to those required by WHQS-2023 and our knowledge of the construction industry and market for materials and components. The figures in this Narrative are presented not as a definitive assessment of costs but as an initial stage of scoping the extent to which the HRA will need to plan and make provision for resourcing the WHQS-2023 programme.

The total debt supported by the current HRA income is £110,000,000, which amounts to £20,370 per home. The current income to the HRA can afford to cover this outstanding debt but would not be able to cover additional borrowing unless that was covered by an increase in income – for example by building or acquiring new homes.

The initial estimates of the costs of WHQS-2023 are therefore not affordable if it requires additional borrowing unless the HRA is able to generate the additional income to recover the costs from those homes which will be subject to WHQS-2023 works, or external funding in the form of grants or awards is made available to the Council.

WHQS-2023 makes provision for the Council to set out by March 2025 its timeline for achieving WHQS-2023. This must include the Council having completed the following actions:

-  Assess the condition of its stock and the work necessary to meet WHQS-2023.
-  Estimate the investment needed to achieve WHQS-2023.
-  Complete tenant engagement on the WHQS-2023 programme.
-  Prepare and submit a Compliance Policy to the Welsh Government.
-  Update the Housing Revenue Account Thirty Year Business Plan to reflect the programme to achieve WHQS-2023.

Housing Services is now designing and preparing to commission a Whole Stock Assessment, that will aim to complete a technical condition survey and by March 2027 Target Energy Pathway for all 5,523 homes owned by the Council. Provision for the cost of this required work, estimated at £2,800,000, has been included in the Housing Revenue Account Thirty Year Financial Business Plan 2024-2025, funded as a one-off investment from the HRA Reserves.

The HRA Business Plan has been designed to make sure the Council's homes continue to meet the current WHQS and make provision for the initial stages of WHQS-2023 – the completion of the Whole Stock Assessment and the associated TEPs. As the findings of the Whole Stock Assessment are completed, it will be possible to develop an informed financial assessment of the investment needed to achieve by WHQS-2023 by March 2034.

<b>WHQS Programme Financial Summary 2024-25 to 2028-2029</b>					
<i>Investments</i>	<i>2024-2025</i>	<i>2025-2026</i>	<i>2026-2027</i>	<i>2027-2028</i>	<i>2028-2029</i>

	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000
Kitchens	£400	£600	£800	£1,000	£1,980
Bathrooms	£250	£0	£400	£600	£400
Rewiring	£120	£100	£45	£250	£400
Windows and Doors	£550	£0	£200	£0	£1,920
Roofing	£1,550	£400	£400	£400	£1,600
Walls	£750	£650	£650	£0	£0
Estate Works (contribute to Love Where You Live)	£1,000	£1,200	£1,200	£1,200	£1,200
Heating (contributes to Green Powys)	£950	£1,400	£1,400	£1,400	£1,400
Energy Efficiency (contributes to Green Powys)	£150	£150	£150	£150	£150
Asbestos Management (contributes to Compliance One Hundred)	£150	£150	£150	£0	£0
Management Fees	£785	£793	£801	£809	£817
Miscellaneous WHQS	£275	£250	£250	£250	£250
<b>Total WHQS</b>	<b>£6,930</b>	<b>£5,693</b>	<b>£6,446</b>	<b>£6,059</b>	<b>£10,117</b>
<b>WHQS - 2023</b>					
Whole Stock Assessment (including Target Energy Pathways)	£1,400	£1,442	£0	£0	£0
Floor Coverings	£375	£386	£396	£406	£416

### Helping develop Target Energy Pathways for Wales

The Welsh Housing Quality Standard 2023 (WHQS-2023) adds to the requirements of the original WHQS with a focus on the ‘decarbonisation’ of all social housing across Wales by 2034. In partnership with Welsh Government, we have joined a pilot project working with Sustenic, a British company specialising in domestic energy efficiency, particularly energy efficient retrofit of housing. The pilot is designed to kick-start the process of how social landlords can effectively understand and evaluate their property data. This will be essential to prepare an evidenced Target Energy Pathway for each and every home owned by the Council. The project has included Sustenic undertaking interviews with Housing Services colleagues and leading a series of workshops to evaluate effectively the data already gathered.

### Management and Services

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.

Management and Service Costs Financial Summary 2024-25 to 2028-2029					
Investment	2024-2025	2025-2026	2026-2027	2027-2028	2028-2029
	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000	£,000
Staffing	£9,892	£10,189	£10,444	£10,705	£10,973
Staffing - Non Pay related costs	£183	£189	£194	£199	£204
ICT	£118	£121	£124	£127	£131
Fleet and Associated Costs	£480	£494	£507	£519	£532
Service Support Costs	£1,331	£1,371	£1,405	£1,440	£1,476
Grounds Maintenance	£986	£1,015	£1,041	£1,067	£1,093
Vehicle Replacement	£416	£428	£439	£450	£461
Premises - Depots and Offices	£207	£213	£218	£225	£230
Utilities	£292	£300	£308	£316	£323
Additional Management Costs New Builds	£2	£14	£49	£78	£95
Other costs	£523	£539	£552	£566	£580
<b>Total</b>	<b>£14,429</b>	<b>£14,874</b>	<b>£15,280</b>	<b>£15,691</b>	<b>£16,098</b>

## Housing Management ICT Systems

Housing Services plans to introduce a whole service, fully integrated ICT system 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 and modules from different software suppliers but designed and specified to interface effectively and efficiently, the outcome will be greater efficiency in designed and organising works, more accurate record keeping and swifter responses to tenant enquiries. Provision for the cost of replacing and upgrading ICT is included in the HRA Business Plan.



*Architect drawing for new Council-homes for Newtown – building work is planned to start in 2024-2025*



## Resourcing 'At Home in Powys'

The Council is the largest social landlord in Powys with 5530 properties under its management, as of March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024. The breakdown of homes owned by the Council...

- 39% are three bedroomed properties.
- 43% are two bed properties.
- 21% are flats.
- 25% are bungalows.
- 33% 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	926	9	1			1,393
Double House					1		1
First Floor Flat	154	301	8	1			464
Ground Floor Bedsit	14						14
Ground Floor Flat	207	335	2				544
House	13	733	2089	135	10	3	2,983
Maisonette		25	42				67
Second Floor Flat	30	27					57
Third Floor (or higher) Flat	3	4					7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>2,351</b>	<b>2,150</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5,530</b>

Powys County Council Properties Designated for Older Persons							
Property Type	Bedrooms						Totals
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Bungalow	413	876	8	1			1,298
Double House	78	134	1				213
First Floor Flat	9						9
Ground Floor Bedsit	133	179	1				313
Ground Floor Flat			2				2
House	7	7					14
Maisonette							
Second Floor Flat							
Third Floor (or higher) Flat							
<b>Totals</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>1,196</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>1</b>			<b>1,849</b>

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

The Council's HRA Business Plan has been stress tested to see what changes in rents and services charges need to be made to allow it to remain viable and able to increase the number of affordable homes available across Powys. The conclusion is that a rent increase for 2024-2025 of 6.7% 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 2024 the average rent in Powys will increase by 6.7% for all 5,530 Council owned homes. Tables below show the average rent in 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 and also shows the rent of the properties which will experience the greatest increase. It should be noted that the figures show rents over a 52-week rent year. In Powys rents are charged over a 48-week rent year with two 'rent free weeks' at Christmas and two 'rent free weeks' at Easter.

<b>Powys County Council Housing Rents for 2023-24 and 2024-25</b>			
	<i>Rent - 2023-2024</i>	<i>Rent - 2024-2025</i>	<i>Weekly Increase</i>
Average HRA rent for Powys County Council	£101.44	£108.24	£6.80

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. As of the end of February 2024, income recovery was running at 95.48% of rent due; at the same time last year this was 96.11%. This rigorous but pragmatic approach will continue in 2024-2024 when it is expected to yield a similar success rate.

<b>Garage and Garage Plot Rents for 2023-24 and 2024-25</b>		
	<i>Rent - 2023-24</i>	<i>Rent - 2024-25</i>
Garage Rents	£13.73 per week	£ 14.65 per week
Rent for Garage Plots (not subject to rate at time of letting)	£174.59 per annum	£186.29 per annum

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

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.

- 👉 Rental income will increase by CPI + 1% per year, the maximum allowed by the Welsh Government's Rent Policy, with the exception of 2024-2025 when maximum rent increases were limited by the Welsh Government to 6.7%.
- 👉 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 5.75% (3.50% 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 2024-25, 3% for 2025-26 and 2.5% afterwards. 6.7% for CPI in 2024-25, 2.1% in 2025-26 and 2% annually afterwards.
- 👉 A minimum balance of £1,000,000 will be maintained over the medium term to mitigate against any future risks.

Inflation rates used are based on CPI and RPI projections. The rates used are appropriate for the 2024-2025 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. Regular reports on progress on the HRA Business Plan are submitted to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel for review 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.

## Listening to the people of Powys

The overriding priority for Housing Services is to improve the customer experience and put our tenants, residents and customers at the very heart of everything we do. Our surveys show that we need to improve the way we communicate with our tenants, residents and customers. Our Customer First programme is an on-going programme which will make sure we always understand what people expect of us and how they experience our services. This includes respecting, responding and resolving service requests, enquiries and suggestions in a way that fulfils the needs and expectations of the people of Powys. For example, as a matter of course we analyse complaints and report the outcomes and learning to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

During the first and second quarters 2024-2025 we will be running an intensive training programmes across Housing Services so that everyone can help improve customer experiences. This will include improving Knowledge Information Management (KIM) so that we are better able to respond quickly and accurately to enquiries and service requests and be better placed resolve matters first time, every time.

Housing Services has a team of Resident Engagement Officers who work out and about the community, bringing people together with each other and with Housing Services. Their work includes getting people involved in Green Powys environmental improvements, Love Where you Live projects to improve the lives of our tenants, organising Community Events, supporting the development of Community Hubs, 'Tell Us' visits, helping people understand and make the best of the Optimised Retrofit for Powys project and making sure people allow technicians and engineers access to service their heating systems.

Our Quality Assurance officers make sure that investment in new and existing homes is to a high standard and delivered in a way that provides a positive experience to tenants and residents and value for money for the Council.

All our neighbourhoods are now multi tenure, including for example former Council-homes sold under the now defunct Right to Buy scheme. How these homes are managed and maintained has an impact on the quality of life and the neighbourhood for everyone be they tenants of the Council, a private landlord or an owner occupier. Our team of Housing Environmental Health Officers help occupiers of privately owned homes make sure their homes are maintained and managed in a way that allows them to enjoy their home and so that the properties do not have an adverse impact on the wider community.

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

- 🔗 Working alongside and with our Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) which has established a series of focused sub-groups – including the Investing in Your Homes Group and the Repairs Group - so it is always able to understand and share with Housing Services how tenants experience services and what needs to be changed to improve that experience.
- 🔗 Our 'Love Where You Live' is the Council's strategy for our estate and tenancy management services to help make the experience of living in a Council home something of which to be proud, providing the foundation for how we provide direct services in our communities and with our tenants.
- 🔗 Publication twice a year of our tenants' 'Open House' newsletter.
- 🔗 The Housing Services 'Group 100' is a group of tenants who have requested that they be consulted by e-mail on any relevant housing or topical issues. The views, opinions and

suggestions are used by Housing Services to inform policies and the way we work. Feedback is sent to the Group 100' members on the outcomes of the consultations and how their views have influenced the way we develop and provide services.

- 📍 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.
- 📍 'Tell Us' visits are in-person visits face-to-face visits to tenants, meeting up with them at home to gather first-hand information about how they feel about the Housing Service. The Resident Engagement Team lead on this essential work, sharing feedback with the right teams within Housing Services and to everyone in the monthly Housing Services Update team newsletter.
- 📍 'Keeping in Touch' are home visits made by area Housing Officers to identify any matters or issues impacting on tenancy sustainability and then proactively working with tenants to address any matters raised and so improve the quality of their life in their home and community. Our aim is for every tenant to have a 'Keeping in Touch' visit at least once every three years.
- 📍 The 'New Tenant Survey' is sent to every new tenant, seven weeks after their tenancy started. The surveys are completed either by email or a telephone call. The Resident Engagement Team follow up any outstanding issues and a quarterly report is provided to the TSP, the Housing Management Team and to everyone in the service through the Housing Services Update.
- 📍 Locality Meetings take place in each of the four core service delivery areas for Powys, providing an opportunity for elected Members and Housing Services colleagues to meet up and discuss issues, concerns and ideas that impact locally on tenants and residents.

## 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.
	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.

Improve the quality of life for people who rent their homes from the Council.	Overall tenant satisfaction in the 2023-2024 STAR survey will increase from 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	The average number of days all homeless families with children spent in 'bed and breakfast' accommodation.

by minimizing the use of emergency and temporary 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 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 - including the development of the HRA Business Plan. 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.

The Local Tenant Participation Strategy Steering Group includes tenants, an elected member and the Engagement Strategy Officer who together continually review and monitor the Local Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan. This means the Local Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan are produced by tenants for the tenants.




The Repairs and Voids Group is made of tenants, elected members, engagement officers and colleagues from the Housing Quality Team. The groups meet every month to consider and discuss repairs and maintenance services, and uses the information to propose improvements of changes to such things as telephone and e-mail channels for tenants to make service requests, the quality and timeliness of repairs, the Quality of Accommodation Standard for void works, improvement programmes and overall performance.

The Net Zero Group includes tenants, an elected member, engagement officers and colleagues from the Compliance Team. The group meets quarterly to discuss and monitor the implementation of the Optimised Retrofit for Powys programme, related initiatives and projects and how Housing Services can contribute to the Net Zero ambitions of the Council and the Welsh Government.



The Investing in Your Homes Group 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.

### **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.

In 2024-2025, Love Where You Live' will:

-  Improve the speed and impact of how the Council responds 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 already in place across the County.
-  Introduce a fresh approach to dealing with anti-social behaviour centred on early intervention and prevention through tackling the root causes of such behaviour to avoid any repeat. This will be underpinned by ongoing partnership working to make sure that the right agencies with the powers to deal with problems are involved as soon as possible. Where there are clear, ongoing breaches of tenancy conditions, the full range of legal actions including use of injunctions and possession proceedings will be actively considered to minimise the impact on neighbours and the wider local community.

### **'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.

### **Questionnaires and Surveys**

In 2023, the Council undertook a STAR satisfaction survey of tenants. Most of the results across the survey are significantly higher than in 2021, with particularly strong improvements in the scores for tenant involvement and anti-social behaviour. The survey showed:



### ***Drivers for giving tenants a good service...***

- ☺ Rent value for money.
- ☺ Repairs and maintenance overall.
- ☺ Listening to views and acting upon them.

### ***Overall Satisfaction...***

- 👍 Now at 75% - 10% higher than 2019 and 4% higher than 2021.
- 👍 On a par with local authorities but below housing associations.
- 👍 Retirement age tenants more satisfied.

### ***Rent - value for money...***

- 💷 Now at 84% - 14% higher than 2019 and 6% higher than 2021.
- 💷 Above the median for all Welsh social landlords.

### ***Repairs and Maintenance...***

- ✂ Overall satisfaction 66% - 12% higher than 2019 and 3% higher than 2021.
- ✂ Below the median for Welsh social landlords.
- ✂ Working age tenants less satisfied.
- ✂ Recent repairs satisfaction now running at 80%.

### ***Property...***

- 🏠 Quality 77% - 1% higher than 2019 and 4% higher than 2021.
- 🏠 On par with local authorities but below housing associations.

### ***Contact and Communication...***

- 🗣 Listens and acts now at 62% - 15% higher than 2019 and 7% higher than 2021. Above local authorities but below housing associations.
- 🗣 Working age tenants less satisfied.
- 🗣 Staff friendly and approachable 82%.

### ***Neighbourhood...***

- 🏡 As a place to live now at 86% - 2% higher than 2019 but 2% lower than 2021. Above the median for Welsh social landlords.
- 🏡 Anti-social behaviour - 67%, dissatisfied - 16% higher than 2021. Above the median for Welsh social landlords.

A new STAR survey will be commissioned in 2025.

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 xxx% of tenants are currently happy with the improvements made to their homes.

### **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.

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.

*The Resident Engagement Officers are always out and about helping people make the most of their communities and getting involved in encouraging biodiversity in their communities. In Troedyrhiw in Meifod residents now have wonderful wildflowers around the flats, which includes loads of full of daisies and are attracting hoverflies. The raised beds were provided by the Council's Countryside Services team.*



## Risk Management

Housing Services Risk Register 2024-2025		
Risk	Consequences	Mitigations
Phosphate Restrictions - Rivers Wye and Usk Catchment areas affecting new Council Housing developments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ The policy and mitigations available are currently unclear as no policy or procedure has been agreed between planning authorities and Natural Resources Wales (NRW).</li> <li>☞ Planning permissions will require phosphate mitigation for which there will be additional costs in either offsetting mitigations or installing additional plant/systems to mitigate phosphate. Mitigations required will affect the financial viability of schemes.</li> <li>☞ Development schemes in affected areas cannot be progressed until policy and procedure is agreed between planning authorities and NRW.</li> <li>☞ Developments contributing to the CSEP objective of delivering 350 homes by 2031 could be delayed or discontinued in affected areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Regular liaison with Planning, NRW and Welsh Government regarding mitigations and policy.</li> <li>☞ Schemes being developed in these areas when there is greater clarity about the timelines for development moratoriums to be lifted</li> </ul>
Current level of homeless clients a number of which have complex needs and challenging behaviours being placed in 'bed & breakfast' type accommodation with limited move on to more suitable accommodation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Homelessness related demand for affordable homes reduces opportunities for other households in unsuitable homes to secure social housing.</li> <li>☞ Increased use of and extended stays in temporary accommodation reduce health and well-being of clients, raising demand for social services.</li> <li>☞ High number of complex clients presenting and requiring accommodation, high support applicants ending up in general needs supported accommodation when their needs would be better met by residential support.</li> <li>☞ Vulnerable people at increased risk and negative impacts on communities: Having to accommodate individuals with complex but differing needs in close proximity with each other, including those with substance use issues or subject to Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) increases the risk of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Top Three Priority for Housing Services in 2024.</li> <li>☞ Revised individual risk assessment process to determine suitability of temporary accommodation option for each homeless household.</li> <li>☞ Proposed development of two directly provided Instant Access 24/7 Triage facilities and two directly provided Interim 24/7 Supported Accommodation schemes.</li> </ul>

	<p>sexual or financial exploitation, criminal activity (for example drug dealing), and substance use and / or violence. The same risks apply equally to placing vulnerable people in the wider community, in general needs accommodation repurposed as temporary accommodation or as permanent housing without preparing them sufficiently for the responsibilities and skills of managing their own home.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Management challenges and neighbourhood disruption:</li> <li>☞ The Council faces reputational risks arising from not being able to provide the appropriate safe and secure services and facilities needed to effectively manage the full extent of homelessness, including the safeguarding, health and safety and wellbeing risks to both clients and members of the wider community, failure to fulfil its statutory obligations both to those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.</li> </ul>	
<p>Empty Council owned properties reducing the income for management and maintenance and reduces the availability of homes for households registered with 'Homes in Powys'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Reduced income to the HRA.</li> <li>☞ Reduced availability of Council-housing to address housing need.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Top Three priority for Housing Services in 2024.</li> <li>☞ Greater use of in-house teams to make empty properties fit to let.</li> <li>☞ Weekly area-based void meetings to performance manage letting of homes.</li> </ul>
<p>System of recharging (introduced in 2017) for Housing Services owned sewerage and water treatment systems resulting in inequitable charging for repairs,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Increasing costs for tenants and owner occupiers which are not manageable.</li> <li>☞ Tenants and owner occupiers may be paying for works that do not apply to the systems serving their homes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Proposals changing the way that sewerage charges are managed, to resolve the risk identified, being considered by Cabinet in March 2024.</li> </ul>

<p>maintenance and replacements for tenants and private property owners.</p>		
<p>Risk of technical, cost and consumer challenges as a result of substantial environmental changes to housing assets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Failure to improve long term environmental sustainability across all aspects of the environment (for example use of unsuitable materials or systems for house construction and improvement) will hinder contributions towards a better environment for everyone.</li> <li>☞ Long term maintenance liabilities (including for example increased costs and shorter or increased number of component replacement cycles) that may increase costs and harm the environment.</li> <li>☞ Reduced consumer appeal of municipal housing.</li> <li>☞ Unfunded design requirements reducing provision of additional affordable and secure housing opportunities for households with low and middle incomes.</li> <li>☞ Financial insecurity for private home-owners arising from unfunded changes to systems and components (for example heating systems).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Continuous review and research of all systems, components and materials to identify those which contribute positively and cost effectively to long term environmental sustainability.</li> <li>☞ Increased use of locally sourced (Powys &gt; Wales &gt; United Kingdom &gt; Global) materials and components.</li> <li>☞ Increased use of recycled materials.</li> <li>☞ Increased involvement of communities in designing and approving materials, systems and components.</li> <li>☞ Reconfiguration of grants and loans programmes to support homeowners to make proven and effective changes to reduce any negative environmental impact of their homes.</li> <li>☞ Increased greening of estates to improve overall well-being and environmental quality.</li> <li>☞ Information and technical support campaign to encourage support for environmental improvement activity.</li> </ul>
<p>Tenants and residents not effectively involved in strategic decision making, service monitoring and shaping service delivery and outcomes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Poor customer satisfaction ratings.</li> <li>☞ Ineffective service delivery that is not able to define, deliver and demonstrate value for money.</li> <li>☞ Increased risk of challenge that services are not delivered in an equitable and fair way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>☞ Active, evidenced, continuous and representative tenant involvement.</li> <li>☞ Tenant Scrutiny Panel actively involved providing oversight, challenge and proposals for service improvements.</li> </ul>

## Appendix A: Additional Costs of WHQS-2023 (over and above maintaining WHQS)

Additional Costs of WHQS-2023 (over and above maintaining WHQS)										
<i>WGQS-2023 Additional Measures</i>	<i>Flats</i>	<i>Properties To Be Upgraded</i>	<i>Cost per Property</i>	<i>Houses</i>	<i>Properties To Be Upgraded</i>	<i>Cost per Property</i>	<i>Bungalows</i>	<i>Properties To Be Upgraded</i>	<i>Cost per Property</i>	<i>Notes</i>
All the Council's homes having by March 2034 a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) energy rating of 'SAP 92 - A' (with an interim requirement for each home to meet 'SAP 75 - C' by March 2030).	£6,113,400	443	£13,800	£14,523,600	637	£22,800	£42,757,000	1265	£33,800	Insulation upgrades for properties currently below SAP69: Flats - 443 @ £15,000 each; Houses - 637 @ £24,000 each; Bungalows - 1265 number @ £35k,000 each.
The Council's whole housing stock must, when accounted for altogether, by March 2034 achieve carbon emissions equivalent to an Environmental Impact Rating (EIR) of 92.	£9,960,000.00	996	£10,000.00	£40,281,000	2778	£14,500	£18,342,500	1265	£14,500.00	Replacing fossil fuel heating systems with electric systems (assumption that all electricity used in municipal housing is not produced using fossil fuels). Installation of solar panels: Flats - 996 @ £10,000 each; Houses - 2778 @ £14,500 each; Bungalows - 1053 @ £14,500 each.

All installations of all measures taken to achieve SAP A and EICR 92 must comply with the current version of 'PAS2035 Retrofitting Dwellings for Improved Energy Efficiency'.	£1,195,200	996	£1,200	£3,333,600	2778	£1,200	£1,518,000	1265	£1,200	Scheme Administration, Retrofit Assessment Survey & Modelling Costs, Post EPC & Energy Pathway Report: £1,200
Potential water consumption is, through the use of water-saving fixtures when replacing fittings and fixed appliances, be less than 110 litres per person per day, effective from April 2024.	£577,000	1154	£500	£1,491,500	2983	£500	£696,500	1393	£500	Cost of water saving fixtures over and above normal fixtures.
Water butts are to be installed where possible, effective from April 2024.	£1,154,000	1154	£1,000	£2,983,000	2983	£1,000	£1,393,000	1393	£1,000	£1,000 per property with slight alterations to paths to provide base for water butts. Could be additional costs where paths have to be widened in restricted spaces.
External lockable storage for cycles and equipment is to be made available for all tenants, effective from April 2024.	£1,038,600	577	£1,800	£2,684,700	1492	£1,800	£1,253,700	697	£1,800	£1800 average cost per shed. Estimated that 50% properties would require additional works or new provision.



Exposure to noise resulting from inside the home caused by lack of sufficient sound insulation or within its curtilage, is to be minimised, effective from April 2024.										Low risk for Powys County Council therefore no provision made.
Adequate space needs to be provided for local recycling requirements.	£125,250	167	£750	£125,250	167	£750	£125,250	167	£750	
Each home must have adequate facilities for washing, drying and airing clothes, effective from April 2024.	£5,770,000	1154	£5,000	£14,915,000	2983	£5,000	£6,965,000	1393	£5,000	Average £5,000 per property minimum
Total	£25,933,450		£34,050	£80,337,650		£47,550	£73,050,950		£58,550	
Cost of Borrowing per Annum	£855,804		£1,124	£2,651,142		£1,569	£2,410,681		£1,932	
Additional Rent per Annum	£855,804		£1,124	£2,651,142		£1,569	£2,410,681		£1,932	
Additional Rent per Week (48 weeks)	£17,829		£23	£55,232		£33	£50,223		£40	

Borrowing Cost per Annum %	3.3
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<b>Total Cost of WHQS-2023 for Powys County Council</b>	<b>£179,322,050.00</b>
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<b>Considerations</b>
Installation costs only (excludes repair, maintenance and replacement)
No allowance made for lend-of-life replacement for componeets and systems
Borrowing at standard HRA rate