

Agenda item:

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Housing

Date of meeting: 28th January 2014

Subject: COUNCIL HOUSING BUDGET 2014/15

Report by: Head of Housing and Property Services
Head of Finance and S151 Officer

Wards affected: ALL wards

Key decision: Yes

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The law requires that all income and expenditure relating to Council Housing is accounted for separately in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). All other Council income and expenditure is accounted for together in a separate account called the General Fund. This report deals solely with the HRA.
- 1.2 The City Council has delegated the function of setting rents, charges and budgets for Council Housing to the Cabinet Member for Housing. Following extensive consultation with residents and leaseholders this report seeks to deal with all HRA budget issues.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet Member's decisions on Council Housing budgets, rents and other charges and to give authority for managers to incur expenditure in 2014/15.
- 1.4 The report also seeks to:
- Approve the Revenue budgets for 2013/14 and 2014/15 and give authority to the Head of Housing and Property Services & the Head of Finance and S151 Officer, to amend the budgets to reflect the latest available information prior to finalising budgets for 2014/15.
 - Set a rent policy, which not only aims to ensure that Portsmouth City Council meets convergence with Governments Formula Rent, but also meets Central Government's amended social rent setting policy from 2015/16 until 2025/26.

2. Recommendations

Recommendations submitted for approval by the Housing Portfolio Holder:

- (i) All new rents and charges to be effective from 4th April 2014 or such other date as determined by the Head of Housing and Property Services (HHPS) in consultation with the Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer (HFS).
- (ii) Dwelling rents, general service charges, sheltered housing charges and laundry charges for next year to be set at this meeting by reference to the two options and principles set out in this report.
- (iii) Dwelling Rents to be increased to formula rent when tenancies change.
- (iv) Subject to legislative changes being implemented, PCC will consider adopting a policy of charging higher rents to those households earning over the £60,000 taxable income threshold, with a review of the options and consequences of pursuing being presented at a future meeting.
- (v) A new method of calculating Sheltered Housing charges be developed in consultation with residents during the forthcoming year for implementation in 2015/16.
- (vi) Heating Charges to be set in accordance with Appendix 10.
- (vii) Mobile home license fees as shown on Appendix 11 are approved.
- (viii) Garages and parking site rents as shown on Appendix 11 be approved and authority to let garages at reduced rents where demand is low be delegated to Head of Housing & Property Services in consultation with the Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.
- (ix) Revenue budgets for 2013/14 and 2014/15 be approved and authority given to the HHPS in consultation with the HFS to amend the budgets to reflect the latest available information prior to finalising budgets for 2014/15.
- (x) The relevant Managers be authorised to incur expenditure in 2014/15.

3. Rent Restructuring and Rent Policy

The History of Rent Restructuring

- 3.1 Rent restructuring has been in place since 2002 with the initial aim to achieve the alignment of social sector rents, by bringing all council housing and social landlord (Housing Association) dwelling rents on to the same basis of calculation by 2012. The calculation is based on the following main factors:

- Property value at January 1999 compared to national average value.
- Average earnings in Hampshire compared to national average earnings.
- A “bed weighting” to give higher rents for properties with more bedrooms.

3.2 Following consultation six years ago the Government decided to extend the period over which Rent Restructuring is to be achieved from 2011/12 to 2016/17, then five years ago further extended the period from 2016/17 to 2023/24. Four years ago the date of convergence was brought back to 2012/13 and three years ago it was extended back to 2015/16.

3.3 Rent Restructuring also provides that rents are to be subject to “Limits” and “Caps”. The “limits” are to restrict annual rent changes to a maximum increase of inflation plus half a percent plus £2 per week. The “caps” are maximum rents set by the Government each year to avoid very high rents on valuable properties, however none of Portsmouth City Council’s homes have rents so high that these “caps” would come into effect.

The Approved HRA Rent Policy

3.4 As discussed in paragraph 3.2, rent restructuring requires Portsmouth City Council’s Rents to converge with other Social Sector rents by 2015/16. This average notional rent is known as Formula Rent. Historically, Portsmouth has always set relatively low rents year on year when compared to the formula rent.

3.5 Whilst setting low rents is to the personal financial benefit of tenants, it does result in the variance between formula and actual rents becoming wider. The impact of this was that the necessary increase required to reduce this variance by 2015/16 would be steeper in the latter period.

3.6 At the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Housing on 29th January 2013, a five year rent strategy was set which aimed to meet convergence by 2015/16, with on-going rents increases to be linked to RPI plus 0.5% going forward. At that time, based on our inflation assumptions, this was expected to be equivalent to:

Year	Formula Rent (per week) £	Average Actual Rent (per week) £	Increase Required (per week)	
			£	%
2013/14	82.98	79.44	4.45	5.9
2014/15	86.22	83.89	4.45	5.6
2015/16	88.34	88.34	4.45	5.3

Requirement to Change and the impacts to PCC

- 3.7 On 20th March 2013, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that in order to give financial certainty to landlords and their investors, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) would be amending the social rent policy from 2015/16 to 2024/25, by setting all rent increases to CPI plus 1%.
- 3.8 It should be noted that although RPI plus 0.5% and CPI plus 1% produced the same result in September 2013 (3.7%), the difference between the two in the past has been as much as 1.8%.
- 3.9 The decision to implement this change prior to PCC meeting convergence also creates financial issues for the HRA. For example, if PCC was to honour the already approved 5.6% (£4.45) increase in 2014/15, and then limit its 2015/16 increase to CPI plus 1%, the HRA would be short of the formula rent by £1.35 per tenant per week, as shown below.

Year	Rent Increases agreed in January 2013		Amended Rent Policy		Difference (pw)
	Average Increase (pw)	Average Weekly Rent	Average Increase (pw)	Average Weekly Rent	
2013/14	£4.45	£79.44	£4.45	£79.44	£0.00
2014/15	£4.45	£83.89	£4.45	£83.89	£0.00
2015/16	£4.45	£88.34	£3.10	£86.99	(£1.35)

- 3.10 This equates to a loss to the HRA of over £1m every year. This loss would need to be either met by additional income or by reducing costs, if the HRA is to continue to be able to adequately manage, maintain, improve and replace its housing stock over the next 30 years.

Rent Options

- 3.11 The change in government rent policy means that in order to be no worse off, PCC would need to implement one of the following options:
- Option 1 Continue with the 2014/15 rent increase agreed in January 2013 (5.6%), but to reduce repairs and maintenance spending by £1m per year. This cut would affect all tenants and leaseholders.
- Option 2 Bring forward part of the previously agreed rent into 2014/15, to ensure the HRA is no worse off. In addition, we would freeze general service charges, sheltered housing charges and laundry charges.

3.12 It should however be noted that both proposals would result in a lower than previously approved increase in 2015/16. Based on current inflation assumptions the options are as follows:

Option 1

Year	Rent Increases agreed in January 2013		Option 1		Difference in increase (pw)
	Average Increase (pw)	Average Weekly Rent	Average Increase (pw)	Average Weekly Rent	
2013/14	£4.45	£79.44	£4.45	£79.44	£0.00
2014/15	£4.45	£83.89	£4.45	£83.89	£0.00
2015/16	£4.45	£88.34	£3.10	£86.99	(£1.35)

Option 2

Year	Rent Increases agreed in January 2013		Option 2		Difference in Increase (pw)
	Average Increase (pw)	Average Weekly Rent	Average Increase (pw)	Average Weekly Rent	
2013/14	£4.45	£79.44	£4.45	£79.44	£0.00
2014/15	£4.45	£83.89	£5.90	£85.34	£1.45
2015/16	£4.45	£88.34	£3.00	£88.34	(£1.45)

3.13 In order to ensure that all individual tenancies converge and not just the City's average rent, it is proposed that in the event of a change in tenancy, be it new tenants or transferring tenants, the relevant rent will automatically be increased to formula rent.

A Full Cost Recovery Approach for “Other Charges”

3.14 At the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Housing on 29th January 2013, it was agreed that a number of charges would move towards full cost recovery over a three year period. Those charges were:

- General Service Charges
- Sheltered Housing Charges
- Laundry Charges

3.15 As discussed earlier in this report, it is proposed that if Option 2 rents are adopted for 2014/15, then these charges will be frozen for 2014/15. If Option 1 rents are adopted then the previously approved increases will remain as per the following paragraphs.

General Service Charges

3.16 General Service charges are made to all tenants and relate to the provision of a number of different services, including the Estate Services Officers, Anti-Social Behaviour team and Residents Participation Team. The charge to tenants for these services cannot exceed the cost of providing them and a decision has been made in the past to ensure full cost recovery by 2015/16.

3.17 The two options being proposed produce the following charges for 2014/15:

Year	Charges linked to Option 1 Rents		Charges linked to Option 2 Rents		Difference	
	Low Rate (pw)	High Rate (pw)	Low Rate (pw)	High Rate (pw)	Low Rate (pw)	High Rate (pw)
2014/15	£2.61	£10.21	£2.61	£9.26	£0.00	(£0.95)

Sheltered Housing Charges

3.18 Sheltered Housing is intended to meet the needs of residents who require support to live independently. There are three levels of service with increasing levels of support termed Category 1, Category 2 and Category 2.5. Sheltered Housing was set up originally on the basis that the extra costs of provision of the service over and above those arising from normal Council Housing provision would be recovered from the tenants in Sheltered Housing via a “Sheltered Housing Service Charge”.

3.19 With effect from 2003/04 the Government introduced “Supporting People” legislation, which required all landlords, including the City Council, to identify the level of “support” provided through their residential schemes providing sheltered care. A number of significant changes occurred resulting in a reduced Sheltered Housing Service Charge (which is eligible for Housing Benefit) and the creation of a new “Supporting People Charge” charge (which is NOT eligible for Housing Benefit).

3.20 The policy adopted was that tenants receiving any Housing Benefit (HB) towards their rent and/or Sheltered Housing Service Charge (currently around 80%) would not have to pay anything towards their Supporting People Charge. For some years thereafter Supporting People Grant from the Government offset

the shortfall in income arising because tenants on HB did not pay their Supporting People Charge.

- 3.21 The new arrangements also provided that those tenants not receiving Housing Benefit who were in their current tenancy in March 2003 should only have to pay increases in Supporting People Charges in line with inflation.
- 3.22 In the last four years the Government has cut Supporting People Grant significantly and so it no longer meets the loss of income arising because tenants on HB do not pay their SP charge, resulting in charges being subsidised by tenant rents.
- 3.23 At the meeting of the Cabinet Member for Housing on 29th January 2013, it was agreed that this subsidy would be reduced to zero over a three-year period.
- 3.24 The two options now being proposed for 2014/15 produce the following charges, with both aiming to achieve full cost recovery from 2016/17. A detailed breakdown of these charges can be found in Appendix 8.

Year	Category	Option 1 Rents - Combined Sheltered Housing Charges (pw)	Option 2 Rents - Combined Sheltered Housing Charges (pw)	Difference (pw)
2014/15	Cat 1	£17.35	£15.49	(£1.86)
	Cat 2	£42.82	£41.16	(£1.66)
	Cat 2.5	£89.11	£87.45	(£1.66)

- 3.25 With the continued reduction of Supporting People funding and the proposed end to Housing Benefits (to be replaced by Universal Credit), it will be necessary to review the method by which charges to residents of Sheltered Housing are calculated. It is proposed that the method of calculating these charges be reviewed in consultation with residents during the forthcoming year, in order to be implemented as part of the 2015/16 budget setting process.

Laundry Charges

- 3.26 The Council has a number of Laundry facilities that operate from within blocks and Sheltered Housing Schemes. Although the charges for both washing and drying facilities were reviewed last year, they still remain much lower than the commercial market price. In addition, following a review of the cost of running the service, it was evident that the charges failed to recover the cost of the service.

3.27 The two options being proposed produce the following charges, with both achieving full cost recovery from 2016/17.

Year	Charges linked to Option 1 Rents		Charges linked to Option 2 Rents		Difference	
	Wash	Dry	Wash	Dry	Wash	Dry
2014/15	£1.20	£1.00	£1.00	£0.50	(£0.20)	(£0.50)

3.28 The Cabinet Member for Housing's decision is requested on the level of rents and related service charges for 2014/15 and the principles for charges from 2015/16 onwards. The options are summarised below:

	Option 1 £	Option 2 £
Average Rent (pw):	83.89	85.34
General Service Charge (pw):		
Lower	2.61	2.61
Higher	10.21	9.26
Sheltered Housing Charges (pw):		
Cat 1	17.35	15.49
Cat 2	42.82	41.16
Cat 2.5	89.11	87.45
Laundry Charges:		
per wash	1.20	1.00
per dry	1.00	0.50

Heating Charges

3.29 Heating charge calculations are based on usage data over previous years. This is used to calculate the estimated cost of heating the relevant dwellings. Residents have always been keen to continue to support a full cost recovery model and reduce the level of subsidy required from other HRA tenants.

3.30 Housing Management continue to undertake work to both reduce energy consumption and negotiate better tariffs which has resulted in the required heating charge increases to be relatively low compared to those in previous years, whilst still maintaining full cost recovery.

3.31 Appendix page 10 shows the proposed charges for 2014/15.

3.32 The Cabinet Member for Housing's decision is requested on the level of Heating Charges for next year.

Mobile Homes

- 3.33 Rent increases for mobile homes are linked to the “Retail Price Index, all items excluding Mortgage Interest Payments & indirect taxes” (RPIy) for the preceding September. The method agreed with residents uses an average of the monthly changes for the twelve months up to and including the preceding September, although it should be noted that legally these increases can be set at a higher rate if the net costs of running Mobile Homes rose above the RPIy level of inflation. The proposed charges for 2014/15 can be found in Appendix 11.

Garages and Parking Sites

- 3.34 The way that the HRA garages and parking sites are marketed and managed continues to evolve in response to changes in demand whilst maintaining the underlying Budget Principle to “Get the best return possible from non-core activities”. Income is still rising steadily, although charges still remain very competitive when compared to other parking providers in the city and Leigh Park.
- 3.35 Steps have been taken in this year's budget to assist the marketing of the new park and ride scheme, by bringing forward the move to 'local/non-local' parking rates. Whilst maintaining the ethos of charging more for high-demand areas, all parking spaces irrespective of location will be charged at two rates, a lower rate for those people who live near to where they park, and double for those who do not live within easy walking distance from where they park. This should encourage those who drive into the city to consider using the Council's new park and ride facility.
- 3.36 A summary of the proposed charges for next year can be found in Appendix 11. It is recommended that authority to let garages at reduced rents where demand is low be delegated to the Head of Housing & Property Services in consultation with the Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer.
- 3.37 The Cabinet Member for Housing's decision is requested on the level of Garage and Parking charges for next year.

4. Budget for next year 2014/15

- 4.1 The budget sheets attached as Appendix 4 shows the original and revised estimate for 2013/14 and columns F and G show the original and revised estimates for 2014/15. Also shown for comparative purposes are the estimated budgets through to 2019/20 both as they were following the decisions made at last year's budget meeting in January 2013 compared to as they are now estimated for this report. The last three columns show the total change over the seven year period.

- 4.2 It is important to note that there are a number of years that show in year deficits where expenditure exceeds anticipated income, and the shortfalls are being funded by drawing on HRA balances. These deficits are mainly due to large revenue contributions to fund capital projects and have been incorporated into the 30 year plan. Despite these deficit budgets, the HRA balances as a whole no longer goes into deficit over the 30 year period.

Other budget issues

- 4.3 A Contingency Provision of £200,000 in 2014/15 and £100,000 in 2015/16 has been provided to cover any unforeseen costs that cannot be met by reducing other budgets or by generating extra income.

5 Future years budgets and the level of balances

- 5.1 The law requires that a budget be set to avoid a deficit on the council housing account (Housing Revenue Account). It is forecast that the level of balances will be almost £4.6 million at 31st March 2015, including the earmarked capital reserves, so unless significant unforeseen costs or losses of income arise, this requirement will be achieved for 2014/15.

- 5.2 The financial models maintained by the Head of Financial Services estimate what will happen on the council housing accounts for 30 years into the future. Prudent estimates have been made on inflation, interest rates, capital spending, etc so that the model can estimate the effects that budgets, rents and charges decisions made now could have on future years.

- 5.3 The advantage of longer term financial planning over 30 years is to enable actions to be taken well in advance to achieve a medium term balanced budget. The aim therefore for the Council Housing Account is to remain in balance over the medium term, i.e. over a minimum rolling 6 year period and ultimately over the 30 year period, which the budgets presented in this report continue to achieve.

6 Authority to incur revenue expenditure

- 6.1 It is recommended that Heads of Service be authorised to incur expenditure in accordance with the City Council Constitution. The only exceptions would be those items members consider should be the subject of a separate report before expenditure is incurred.

7 Duty to involve - Resident involvement in the budget process

- 7.1 Representatives of the Residents Consortium have played a vital part in the detailed budget setting process. At the invitation of the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Head of Housing and Property Services (HHPS) and the Head of

Financial Services (HFS) a panel of resident's representatives have helped draw up both this council housing budget and also the Housing Investment Programme which was approved by the City Council on 12th November 2013.

- 7.2 A number of meetings have also been held with Resident Groups across the City and in Havant where the proposals set out below were discussed including the proposals for rents, service charges etc and other proposed charges as shown on the attached Appendices 5 to 11. Residents were asked if they felt spending should be reduced and if so where they felt economies should be made. They were also asked if they felt that new services should be provided which could be financed by cuts in services or new service charges.
- 7.3 In addition to obtaining feedback from these residents meetings, a consultation supplement was published with the December edition of Housetalk magazine, which aimed to inform all residents and leaseholders of the issues, and encouraged them to respond with their views on the matters raised.
- 7.4 The Housing Portfolio Holder has attended the Residents Consortium meetings, listened to the details of residents' responses and reviewed the feedback from the Housetalk supplement in time to take them into account when making his decisions at this meeting.
- 7.5 Both HHM and HFS would like to place on record their thanks for the invaluable help given by our resident representatives, tenants and leaseholders.

8. Reasons for recommendations

- 8.1 To set budgets, rents and charges for council housing for 2014/15.

9. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

- 9.1 A preliminary EIA has been carried out which indicates that the requirement for a full EIA is low.

10. Head of Legal's comments

- 10.1 The body of the report contains a discussion of the key legal issues, and the Council is empowered to approve the recommendations.

11. Head of Finance's comments

- 11.1 The Head of Finance has been consulted and is in agreement with the recommendations to this report.

Signed by:

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Owen Buckwell – Head of Housing and Property Services

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Chris Ward – Head of Financial Services and S151 Officer

Appendices:

- 1 Council Housing Accounts – The Law
- 2 Housing Strategy: Executive Summary and Priorities
- 3 Budget Principles 2013/14 – 2019/20
- 4 Revenue budget sheets 2012/13 to 2019/20
- 5 Rent Increase Option 1 - 5.6%
- 6 Rent Increase Option 2 – 7.4%
- 7 General Service Charges
- 8 Sheltered Housing Charges
- 9 Laundry Charges
- 10 Heating Charges
- 11 Mobile Homes, Garages and Parking Sites Rents

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
1 Budget files	Financial Services Housing Accountancy team

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

COUNCIL HOUSING ACCOUNTS - THE LAW

The Council Housing accounts are termed the "Housing Revenue Account" in the following notes. The rest of the City Council's accounts are termed the "General Fund".

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING ACT 1989

This Act has provided the main framework for Housing Finance since 1 April 1990. In summary the Housing Revenue Account provisions are as follows:

- 1 Local Housing Authorities must keep a separate Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 2 Amounts to be credited or debited to the Housing Revenue Account can only be in respect of items detailed in the Act or covered by regulations issued by the Secretary of State.
- 3 Budgets must be prepared each year for the Housing Revenue Account which will avoid a debit balance on the account. Action must be taken if in any year it appears a debit balance may arise.
- 4 An authority should maintain a separate Housing Repairs Account.
- 5 Housing Revenue Account Subsidy - originally this led to payments of grant by Government to Councils. Now the vast majority of Councils have to make payments to Government. The Localism Act 2011 put an end to the Housing Revenue Account Subsidy System with effect from 1st April 2012.
- 6 A transfer must be made from the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account in respect of amenities provided by the Housing Revenue Account but shared by the whole community.
- 7 With the exception of 6 above no contribution can be made by the General Fund to the Housing Revenue Account except for certain items detailed in regulations issued by the Secretary of State.

In addition, the Act provides the main framework for the Capital Finance of Local Authorities

LEASEHOLD REFORM, HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT ACT 1993

The above Act came into force in 1993 and gave Housing Authorities the power to provide Welfare Services and to account for them within either the Housing Revenue Account or the General Fund at the Authorities discretion.

The Act also gave the Secretary of State wide powers to amend this provision and regulations have been made which prevent "personal services" such as regular feeding or bathing or cooking of meals from being accounted for within the Housing Revenue Account. Accordingly the net costs relating to the element of personal services provided by staff in sheltered accommodation are shown within the General Fund Housing budgets of the Cabinet Member for Housing.

Executive Summary

A great deal has changed since the city council's last housing strategy was published in 2005: the housing market, political and financial environments, and sustainability standards for new and existing housing.

The context

- The greater Portsmouth economy, which is successful and resilient
- The age of Portsmouth's housing stock which is much older than many towns
- The city's housing market which is active and thriving when viewed over the long term
- Increasing recognition of the essential links between housing and the economy, health and educational opportunities.

There are five themes

Advice and accommodation

A portfolio of services will continue to be offered to all residents by the city council and several independent organisations acting in partnership. These include crisis assistance for homeless households; managing the housing waiting list for allocating social rented housing; the private rental Access Scheme; and a Tenancy Rights Service.

Housing-related support

This strategic plan illustrates several support programmes and services: Supporting People, Tenancy Support, Telecare communications, Homecheck home safety, sheltered housing for older people; and dwelling design for special needs as part of affordable housing development.

Creating more homes

Portsmouth must continue to provide new homes, both market and affordable, and this strategic plan's intentions are presented as three priorities:

Improving availability: More housing is essential to meet growing demand and support the economy. Planning policy identifies several sites in Portsmouth on which new housing for families will be a priority.

Improving affordability: Maximize development opportunities for homes that local residents can afford.

Improving quality: The latest design and sustainability standards will continue to feature in housing scheme requirements.

Management principles

A framework is proposed to ensure estate management standards for affordable housing are achieved during an era of increasing change.

Portsmouth's housing stock

The strategic plan focuses on physical conditions for all dwellings, tenures and ages:

- Private housing: improving standards through grants and loans backed by a professional surveying service and, where necessary, applying legal powers to raise standards. Proactive promotion and working will continue to apply to the Landlord Accreditation Scheme and the Empty Property Campaign
- Affordable housing: summarising and illustrating ways in which social landlords will be improving their properties to meet energy conservation and generation objectives using new programmes such as Green Deal.

What We Wish To Achieve: Our Priorities

Housing priorities summarised in this third section are derived from social and economic evidence, published strategies, and a policy context in which the importance of housing is articulated by both the Portsmouth Local Strategic Partnership and the city council. The Local Strategic Partnership confirms its long term priorities in Vision for Portsmouth 2008 to 2018 and the housing priority is to "Deliver affordable quality housing where people want to live"; this is interpreted and acted upon by the LSP's Housing Partnership, a standing sub-group whose members represent several property interests in the city. The city council in its Corporate Plan for 2010-13 explains its housing priority is to "Increase the availability, affordability and quality of housing". Behind these statements of priority objectives lies the need to plan for

housing and housing related services for an increasingly diverse population, while attempting to balance resident's competing requirements either individually or as groups.

The Green Agenda

The 'green agenda' must be closely allied to the provision and upkeep of housing, whether newly built or existing. Because of the significance of these 'green' issues they will be treated as integral elements to several themes, rather than being reported separately. Local priorities are influenced by national aspirations and one example is the Government's UK Low Carbon Transition Plan. This aims to comprehensively improve the nation's housing stock over the next 37 years so that by 2050 every home, new and existing, will have a zero carbon rating. The Code for Sustainable Homes is one of the tools to attain this national objective and the specific implications for Portsmouth are explained in Section Four below. Similarly the Green Deal is a Government initiative involving power supply companies with new financial arrangements for funding energy efficiency measures through customer utility bills: national implementation commenced from 2012. The city council's Sustainability Strategy and the Portsmouth Plan incorporate these aims and standards within principles that apply across all areas of activity including Portsmouth's built environment.

Advice & Housing for Those in Greatest Need

Access to informed advice about housing rights and help in obtaining accommodation has been a priority for years in Portsmouth. A consequence of this commitment is that a network of

advisory services has grown up which is available without charge to Portsmouth's residents. Two are operated by the city council, the Housing Options Service and Tenancy Rights Service, while others are operated by independent organisations, one of the largest being the Portsmouth Advice Centre (PAC) which is jointly run by the You Trust and the Citizens Advice Bureau, with financial support from the city council. Requests for help received by these services are considerable: personal callers, for example, to the Housing Options Service exceed 10,000 annually. This is because, as outlined in Section Two, Portsmouth has high levels of demand for social renting, for which there is insufficient supply, which in turn increases reliance on the private rental sector. Whilst thousands need to rent a home, others need advice (often urgent) due to threatened homelessness and legal problems with their existing, usually private, tenancy.

A Helping Hand – Housing Related Support

The provision of appropriate housing with related support is an integral part of the commissioning and development of new properties, as well as for residents in their existing homes. Example will be found across all domestic situations and housing tenures in Portsmouth. Services provided are immensely varied and essential for the recipients, thereby enhancing their independence and quality of life. For these reasons alone, and despite the budgetary challenges expected to at least 2015, continuance of support services will be a priority. Other important reasons for prioritising expenditure include:

- Stabilising client's health in their home minimises emergency hospital admissions

- Digital technologies are enabling new forms of support to be created
- The 'personalisation agenda' introduces an expanded element of customer choice
- Home-based support is more economic than hospital and other institutional care
- Flexibility of care is improved, such as extra-care facilities for frail older people
- For some needs a communal environment is necessary for intensive support.

Creating More Homes

City council policies create the context for housing development, a priority informed by research that includes resident opinion surveys. It is given shape by a planning regime that has the new Portsmouth Plan as the principal element of the Local Development Framework (LDF). As a result homes for sale by commercial developers have been encouraged and partnership arrangements with housing associations have been productive. The outcome has been 4,300 additional homes built or refurbished in various programmes such as the Empty Property Campaign over the six years to March 2011. Over one third are affordable with rents and sale prices set at below market levels. The city council has also created a housing development team that is focusing on sites held in the Housing Revenue Account and operated by the Housing Management service. In consequence new council housing is being planned for the first time in years, with over 40 homes on sites at Buckland and Somerstown in the development pipeline as of spring 2011.

In the present environment this momentum will be difficult to sustain. Prospects for the two to 2014-15 are highly uncertain due to market conditions and reductions in public expenditure. However, about 1,900 new homes of all tenures, and meeting diverse housing needs, are projected to March 2015. Just over one third will be for rent for purchase at below market prices by housing associations and the city council. Some of the homes are expected to be developed on land released by the city council and other public agencies. Others will be part of mixed-use developments in the city centre or above existing retail premises across Portsmouth.

Nurturing the City's Stock of Housing

Newly constructed dwellings are rarely more than one percent of any built-up area and thus the standards defined by the Code for Sustainable Homes only affect a tiny proportion of Portsmouth's housing. The other 99 percent, effectively the entire housing stock, are existing properties whose increasing age has implications for the future. Hence the continuing priority given to programmes that improve the condition and quality of the city's housing whatever the tenure. This work has taken on a new urgency owing to the importance attached to better energy efficiency by the nation's

housing, as set out in the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan referred to earlier.

Management Principles for Affordable Housing

As the Second Section above explains, the affordable housing sector is a very significant element of Portsmouth's housing market, with one in five dwellings and well over 30 not-for-profit housing providers. The city council is the largest social landlord, with around 15,000 properties in Portsmouth and neighbouring Havant. Other providers, although having a smaller presence in the city, are often national or regional organisations with substantial stock holdings totalling tens of thousands. Some local housing providers are long established charities with less than 50 dwellings. But the market for affordable housing is changing and new forms of housing provider are emerging who intend to develop affordable housing without public subsidy: the momentum for such change is expected to increase during the coming decade.

With the affordable housing market experiencing such rapid change there is a need to protect the interests of the individual householder by ensuring that estate management is of a high standard across Portsmouth.

BUDGET PRINCIPLES 2013/14 to 2019/20

Budgets to be driven by PCC Strategies to meet Corporate Priorities with particular emphasis on all forms of regeneration & creation of sustainable communities to achieve safe, secure, independent & healthy living for our residents, tenants & leaseholders with increased economic well-being, including the following:

- Offering access to respite care and other support for carers and service users
- Assessing individuals needs and developing care/support to those needs
- Contributing to effective rehabilitation for people leaving hospital
- Enabling and contributing to the provision of good quality low cost homes with well-planned infrastructure
- Delivering and promoting high quality house design combined with exceptional environmental performance.
- Tackling fuel poverty
- Working to reduce carbon emissions and to eliminate negative environmental impacts from all areas of work.

Budgets to be prepared in consultation with residents, tenants & leaseholders & reflect their views

Balanced budgets to be prepared for a minimum 3 years for revenue budgets & 5 years for capital budgets

Work with suppliers & partners, particularly the Health Service, to try & co-ordinate services in the best interests of residents, tenants & leaseholders.

Support effective preventive measures wherever possible.

Maintain & improve homes by:

- Tackling disrepair in private housing to ensure vulnerable people housed in decent homes.
- Reducing the number of unfit and inaccessible private sector homes
- Maintaining the cycle of planned external inspection & repair of council dwellings.
- Improving the quality of council dwellings and maintaining decent homes.
- Working towards a “Decent Environment” for all council dwellings.
- Improving energy efficiency and opportunities for microgeneration.
- Encouraging the reduction, reuse and recycling of materials.

Maintain high management standards for council dwellings

To set affordable rents, charges and Council Tax charges, to avoid any unreasonable burden.

Get the best return possible from non-core activities i.e. provision of garages and parking

Achieve continuous improvement through systems thinking methods, designing services against customer demand

Comply with the law.