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Chief Executive

Date: 17 July 2024



**Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council**

To: Members of the Scrutiny Commission

Cllr C Lambert (Chair)
Cllr MJ Surtees (Vice-Chair)
Cllr P Williams (Vice-Chair)
Cllr DS Cope
Cllr MJ Crooks
Cllr C Gibbens

Cllr C Harris
Cllr J Moore
Cllr A Pendlebury
Cllr M Simmons
Cllr A Weightman

Copy to all other Members of the Council

(other recipients for information)

Dear member,

There will be a meeting of the **SCRUTINY COMMISSION** in the De Montfort Suite, Hinckley Hub on **THURSDAY, 25 JULY 2024** at **6.30 pm** and your attendance is required.

The agenda for the meeting is set out overleaf.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Owen'.

Rebecca Owen
Democratic Services Manager

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- **Do not** use the lifts.
- **Do not** stop to collect belongings.

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Thank you

SCRUTINY COMMISSION - 25 JULY 2024

A G E N D A

1. **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

2. **MINUTES (Pages 1 - 4)**

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2024.

3. **ADDITIONAL URGENT BUSINESS BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

To be advised of any additional items of business which the Chair decides by reason of special circumstances shall be taken as matters of urgency at this meeting.

4. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

To receive verbally from members any disclosures which they are required to make in accordance with the Council's code of conduct or in pursuance of Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992. **This is in addition to the need for such disclosure to be also given when the relevant matter is reached on the agenda.**

5. **QUESTIONS**

To hear any questions in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.

6. **SCRUTINY COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 5 - 10)**

Work programme attached.

7. **HRA INVESTMENT STRATEGY (Pages 11 - 34)**

To present the HRA investment strategy 2024 to 2028 and associated financial information.

8. **CULTURAL STRATEGY 2024-28 (Pages 35 - 42)**

To seek support for the cultural strategy 2024 to 2028.

9. **RURAL STRATEGY 2024-28 (Pages 43 - 50)**

To seek support for the refreshed rural strategy 2024 to 2028.

10. **SCRUTINY REVIEW: DIGITAL POVERTY AND CASHLESS SOCIETY (Pages 51 - 56)**

To scope the review into digital poverty and cashless society.

11. **MINUTES OF FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY (Pages 57 - 62)**

12. **MINUTES OF HOUSING TASK & FINISH GROUP (Pages 63 - 64)**

13. **ANY OTHER ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DECIDES HAVE TO BE DEALT WITH AS MATTERS OF URGENCY**

As announced under item 3.

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMISSION

9 MAY 2024 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Cllr C Lambert - Chair
Cllr MJ Surtees and Cllr P Williams – Vice-Chair
Cllr RG Allen (for Cllr M Simmons), Cllr DS Cope, Cllr MJ Crooks,
Cllr C Gibbens, Cllr C Harris, Cllr J Moore, Cllr A Pendlebury and
Cllr A Weightman

Officers in attendance: Daniel Britton, Malcolm Evans, Julie Kenny, Rebecca Owen, Caroline Roffey, Paul Scragg, Madeline Shellard, Sharon Stacey and Ashley Wilson

354. **Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Simmons, with the substitution of Councillor R Allen authorised in accordance with council procedure rule 4.

355. **Minutes**

It was moved by Councillor Crooks, seconded by Councillor Williams and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March be confirmed as a correct record.

356. **Declarations of interest**

Councillor Allen declared a non-pecuniary interest as chair of Earl Shilton Town Council which had applied to the Parish & Community Initiative Fund (item 8).

Councillor Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in item 9 as he had been involved in the Environmental Improvement Programme as heritage champion and was a member of the heritage group mentioned in the report in relation to the schemes in Burbage.

357. **Scrutiny Commission Work Programme**

Members considered the work programme. In respect of the bus service review, it was reported that Leicestershire County Council had not yet received further information about the funding for public transport resulting from the cancelled HS2 project so the review could not be timetabled.

It was suggested that the housing association review should be brought forward given the concerns raised at the Housing task & finish group.

358. Scrutiny review: utility companies

Following a recent motion to Council in relation to future preparedness of utility companies and the subsequent agreement of the Scrutiny Commission to lead the review, National Grid's DSO Strategic Engagement Officer updated members on their work in relation to planning and forecasting.

359. Parish & Hinckley Community Initiative Fund allocation of grants 2023/24

Consideration was given to the proposed allocation of funding under the Parish & Community Initiative Fund (PCIF) and the Hinckley Community Initiative Fund (HCIF). A member suggested that parish councils be made aware that all who applied for the fund received a grant. It was noted that the new community equipment grant funded smaller items that were previously funded by the PCIF. It was moved by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Surtees and

RESOLVED –

- (i) The funding allocations of £91,892 be endorsed and RECOMMENDED to SLT;
- (ii) SLT be recommended to allow the seven previous years' schemes totalling £11,374.60 to be completed and to continue to be funded.

360. Environmental Improvement Programme 2024-25

The enhancement schemes for 2024/25 as part of the Environmental Improvement Programme were reported to the commission. In response to members' questions, it was agreed that information on work to Nutts Lane bridge and the location of the blue plaque for Margery Payne that was inside the former police station would be looked into and members would be informed.

RESOLVED – the enhancement schemes be noted.

361. Social Housing Regulation update - compliance and performance

Members were advised of changes to legislation following the implementation of the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023. During discussion, the following was noted:

- A lot of work was being undertaken to identify where damp and mould may be a problem
- Investment in IT systems was required
- Tenant satisfaction was high and stock was in good condition, with 100% meeting the government's decent homes standard
- Work towards a new tenant scrutiny panel was underway.

It was requested that a report on other tenant satisfaction measures not included in the report be brought to a future meeting.

It was moved by Councillor Crooks, seconded by Councillor Cope and

RESOLVED –

- (i) The new requirements of the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 be noted;
- (ii) The progress in meeting new legislative requirements be noted;
- (iii) The revised Damp and Mould policy be endorsed;
- (iv) The new inspection regime introduced from 1 April be noted.

362. Minutes of Finance & Performance Scrutiny

The minutes of Finance & Performance Scrutiny held on 18 March were received for information.

363. Minutes of the Housing Task & Finish Group

The minutes of the Housing Task & Finish Group meeting on 14 March were received for information, and an update on the outcomes of the meeting on 8 May were provided.

364. Matters from which the public may be excluded

On the motion of Councillor R Allen seconded by Councillor Crooks, it was

RESOLVED – in accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 10 of Part I of Schedule 12A of that Act.

365. Crematorium update

Members received an update on the crematorium site.

(The Meeting closed at 8.30 pm)

CHAIR

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Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

A Borough to be proud of

Scrutiny Commission Work Programme 2023-2027

JULY 2024

Date	Issue (report author)	Reason	Outcomes	Supports corporate aims
25 July 2024	HRA investment strategy (Ashley Wilson / Sharon Stacey)	Scrutiny prior to Council decision	Input into strategy	All
	Housing task & finish group feedback (Scrutiny review)	Update on work of group		1, 2
	Cashless society / digital poverty – scoping report (Scrutiny review)	Request of members: matter of importance to residents	Understand impact on businesses and residents but also benefits	1, 3
	Cultural strategy (Simon Jones)	Scrutiny prior to Executive decision	Recommendation to Executive	1, 2
	Rural strategy (Simon Jones)	Scrutiny prior to Executive decision	Recommendation to Executive	1, 2
29 August 2024	Economic regeneration strategy (Chris Brown)	Annual report	Briefing on outcomes	2, 3
	Housing task & finish group feedback (Scrutiny review)	Update on work of group		1, 2
	Utilities – future preparedness (Scrutiny review)	Action motion to Council. Attendance of Severn Trent	Assurance that the main utilities can cope with future development	1, 2
	Lack of GPs / dentists and Hinckley Hospital update (Scrutiny review)	Request of members: matter of importance to residents	Awareness of situation to be able to support and advise	1
24 October 2024	Bus services / public transport (Scrutiny review)	Request of members: impact on communities	Understand and influence policy	1, 2
	Affordable housing delivery (Valerie Bunting)	Annual report	Awareness of delivery	1, 2
	Infrastructure funding statement (Kirstie Rea)	Annual report	Awareness of S106 contributions and allocations	2
	Voluntary & Community sector partnership update and commissioning outcomes (Rachel Burgess)	Annual update	Awareness of VCS activity	1

Date	Issue (report author)	Reason	Outcomes	Supports corporate aims
	Housing review: final report (Scrutiny review)	To consider the report of the task & finish group	Recommendations to Executive	1, 2
12 December 2024	Planning appeals update (Chris Brown)	Annual report	Monitoring of performance on appeals	2
February 2025 (budget meeting)	Budget reports (Ashley Wilson)	Normal reporting pathway	Scrutiny prior to Council decision	All
	Pay policy statement (Julie Stay)	Normal reporting pathway	Scrutiny prior to Council decision	All
March / April 2025	Housing associations review (Scrutiny review)	Request of members: matter of importance to residents	Scoping of review	1, 2
	Young people's voice (Amy Casey)			1
	Parish & Community Initiative Fund allocations (Paul Scragg)	Normal reporting pathway	Recommendations to SLT	2
May / June 2025				
July / August 2025	Economic regeneration strategy (Steve Meynell)	Annual report	Briefing on outcomes	2, 3
	Environmental Improvement programme (Daniel Britton)	Annual report	Consult with members	2, 3
September / October 2025	Affordable housing delivery (Valerie Bunting)	Annual report	Awareness of delivery	1, 2
	Infrastructure funding statement (Kirstie Rea)	Annual report	Awareness of S106 contributions and allocations	2
	Voluntary & Community sector partnership update and commissioning outcomes	Annual update	Awareness of VCS activity	1

Date	Issue (report author)	Reason	Outcomes	Supports corporate aims
	(Rachel Burgess)			
November / December 2025	Planning appeals update (Chris Brown)	Annual report	Monitoring of performance on appeals	2
February 2026 (budget meeting)	Budget reports (Ashley Wilson)	Normal reporting pathway	Scrutiny prior to Council decision	All
	Pay policy statement (Julie Stay)	Normal reporting pathway	Scrutiny prior to Council decision	All
March / April 2026				
	Parish & Community Initiative Fund allocations (Paul Scragg)	Normal reporting pathway	Recommendations to SLT	2
May / June 2026				
July / August 2026	Economic regeneration strategy (Steve Meynell)	Annual report	Briefing on outcomes	2, 3
	Environmental Improvement programme (Daniel Britton)	Annual report	Consult with members	2, 3
September / October 2026	Affordable housing delivery (Valerie Bunting)	Annual report	Awareness of delivery	1, 2
	Infrastructure funding statement (Kirstie Rea)	Annual report	Awareness of S106 contributions and allocations	2
	Voluntary & Community sector partnership update and commissioning outcomes (Rachel Burgess)	Annual update	Awareness of VCS activity	1
November / December 2026	Planning appeals update (Chris Brown)	Annual report	Monitoring of performance on appeals	2

Date	Issue (report author)	Reason	Outcomes	Supports corporate aims
February 2027 (budget meeting)	Budget reports (Ashley Wilson)	Normal reporting pathway	Scrutiny prior to Council decision	All
	Pay policy statement (Julie Stay)	Normal reporting pathway	Scrutiny prior to Council decision	All
March / April 2027				
	Parish & Community Initiative Fund allocations (Paul Scragg)	Normal reporting pathway	Recommendations to SLT	2

To be programmed
Regeneration strategy 2021-25 review
Heritage strategy annual report

Key to corporate aims

- 1 – People
- 2 – Places
- 3 – Prosperity

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Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Scrutiny Commission	25 July 2024
Council	3 September 2024

Wards affected: All wards

Housing Revenue Account Investment Strategy

Report of Director (Community Services) and Section 151 Officer

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To present the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Investment Strategy 2024-2028 and associated financial information for approval.
- 1.2 To outline
 - Key achievements since the last HRA Investment Strategy was approved in 2018.
 - Investment priorities for the HRA.
 - Key challenges and risks in meeting strategic priorities.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Scrutiny Commission:
 - Notes and supports the Housing Revenue Account investment priorities and the underpinning HRA financial assumptions.
 - Supports the HRA Investment Strategy 2024 – 2028 to progress to Council or approval.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Investment Strategy outlines the council's investment priorities over the next 4 years, which includes capital programme delivery, compliance with regulation, acquisition, general management, and decarbonisation objectives. The strategy covers spending

on council housing from 2024/25 to 2027/28 and outlines a financial model until 2052/53.

- 3.2 The council housing service has responsibility for 3207 units of accommodation which are widely dispersed across the borough, including 11 sheltered housing schemes which provide accommodation to the over 60s or those who are over 55 with a support need. Additionally, the housing service is responsible for 143 leasehold properties, garage sites and housing land.

3.3 Key achievements since the last HRA investment strategy

- 3.4 Since the last HRA Investment Strategy 2018/19 -2022/23 the council has achieved a number of outcomes which align to the corporate objectives around People, Place and Prosperity. These include:
- Added to the stock by 70 new affordable homes (although 141 properties have been lost to the Right to Buy (RTB).
 - The redevelopment of Ambion Court, a sheltered housing scheme.
 - Capital improvement delivery- the following capital works have been completed over the last 5 years which includes:
 - 633 upgrades to electrical installations
 - 1471 Boilers/heating distribution system renewals with A Rated boilers
 - Renewal of windows to 329 properties
 - Renewal of doors to 369 properties
 - Replacement of 447 roof finishes
 - 585 kitchen refurbishments
 - 432 bathroom refurbishments.
 - Meeting 100% compliance with the Decent Homes Standard.
 - Working towards meeting the council's wider ambition to become net zero by 2030.

3.5 The HRA Financial Position

- 3.6 The HRA Investment Strategy outlines HRA investment requirements over the period 24/28. Overall, the updated model shows that the HRA is still in a balanced financial position. Central to ensuring that investment requirements remain viable is ensuring that rental and other income is maintained and maximised, and that reserves are maintained at an appropriate level.
- 3.7 There is less capacity than hoped to fund increasing the number of council homes, without taking on new debt as the existing debt is paid off. This is due to the demands on capital resources. Further work will take place on the impact of taking on new debt to fund additional acquisitions during 24/25.
- 3.8 The overall detail is contained within the HRA Investment Strategy attached to this report. A high-level summary is given in the table below, which gives the overall levels of income and expenditure expected based on the current 30

year Investment Plan. During this period debt will rise to around £97m. Table A provides a summary of financing requirements and estimated debt levels over the term of the 30-year business plan.

Table A: HRA financing and debt levels over the 30-year business plan

	2023/24 Prior year	2024/25 Forecas t	2025/26 Forecas t	2026/27 Forecas t	2027/28 Forecas t	2028- 2053 Forecas t	Total
Income	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Total income	£14.43	£15.42	£16.20	£16.69	£17.03	£511.67	£591.44
Total expenditure	-£7.64	-£7.75	-£8.00	-£8.18	-£8.32	-£261.65	-£301.54
Total financing costs	-£4.65	-£5.01	-£6.39	-£6.66	-£6.80	-£190.21	-£219.72
Net Operating Expenditure	£2.15	£2.66	£1.81	£1.85	£1.90	£59.80	£70.17
Appropriations	-£2.16	-£2.63	-£1.76	-£1.81	-£1.94	-£59.06	-£69.36
Net income/ (expenditure)	-£0.01	£0.03	£0.05	£0.03	-£0.04	£0.74	£0.81
HRA Balance	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Closing HRA Balance	£0.81	£0.84	£0.89	£0.92	£0.89	£1.62	£1.62



3.9 Key priorities

3.10 Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Housing Service has a number of key priorities over both the immediate and longer term which include:

- **Increasing Affordable Housing-** The four year investment plan allows for an additional 57 properties, including schemes already approved such as Peggs Close. This will include considering links with section 106 opportunities and maximising spend of RTB receipts.
- **Maintaining the Decent Homes Standard-** Investment in capital programmes including roof repairs, kitchen/bathroom upgrades, and heating system replacements to ensure all properties continue to meet the decency standard.
- **Improved Energy Efficiency-** Upgrading electrical installations, installation of A-rated boilers, and replacement windows and doors across our housing stock. Achieving compliance with a minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of C in all individual dwellings by 2035. Decarbonising wider council assets including sheltered housing schemes and community centres.
- **Supporting Independent Living** - Maintaining elderly persons' homes and sheltered housing schemes. Continued provision of aids and adaptations for older people and people with disabilities.
- **Service improvements** - including investment in ICT and staffing capacity.
- **Compliance with Social Housing Regulation**
- **Maintaining a balanced HRA financial position**

The HRA Investment Strategy will be reviewed to ensure any opportunities from a new government are maximised.

3.11 Risks

- 3.12 There are number of risks that may impact the viability of the investment strategy. Rising costs for materials have hit the building sector hard over previous years, but now seems to have stabilised. However, should costs begin to rise steeply again this will affect both development and stock improvement programmes.
- 3.13 There is a skills shortage in the housing and development sector which may impact on the council's ability to reach its ambitions for developing new homes.
- 3.14 The Homes England Affordable Homes Grant programme comes to an end in 2026, and availability of grant after that period is not yet known. In addition, the council may be unable to access other government funding due to demand or previous success in drawing down funding making the council ineligible to apply.
- 3.15 The council, as a social landlord, is subject to the new regulation regime which strengthens consumer standards to help protect tenants and drive improvements in landlord services. As this is a recently introduced requirement, the impact on resources is not yet fully quantified.
- 3.16 There is also uncertainty over priorities set by future government post-election 2024 on the emphasis given to social housing delivery.
- 3.17 This HRA Investment Strategy and the supporting 30 year business plan are based on maximising income and future rent policy/decisions affecting income to the HRA Business plan could pose a risk.
- 3.17 The council plans to address these challenges by maximising income, seeking grant opportunities, investing in staff training, adapting to new regulations, and working to continuously improve service delivery.

4. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

- 4.1 Report to be taken in open session.

5. Financial implications [AW]

- 5.1 The financial implications are contained within the appended HRA Investment Strategy attached to this report.

6. Legal implications [ST]

6.1 None

7. Corporate Plan implications

The HRA Investment Strategy and business plan align to the following corporate objectives:

People -*Help people to stay healthy, happy and active and continue to provide initiatives that support children and young people, older people and our vulnerable residents.*

Place- *Promote sustainable development and initiatives to reduce the carbon footprint of the borough.*

8. Consultation

8.1 Consultation with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel will take place.

9. Risk implications

9.1 It is the council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

9.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

9.3 The following significant risks associated with this report were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks

Risk description	Mitigating actions	Owner
HRA headroom will reduce if income is not maximised	Maximise income to the HRA through following rent policy and reviewing service charges	Head of Housing/Head of Finance
Changing legislative requirements may place additional financial demands on the HRA	Continue to explore opportunities to draw down grant funding	Head of Housing
Market forces- inflation and rising costs may impact service delivery and capital programmes	Competitive procurement, continue to keep under review technological advances, eg heating systems etc.	Housing Repairs Manager

10. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

- 10.1 Arising implications and delivery of the HRA Investment Strategy will directly affect Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council Housing tenants. The council has housing stock across the borough, including rural locations.

11. Climate implications

- 11.1 Decarbonisation is a central priority to the HRA Investment Strategy and subsequent delivery. The council housing service is working towards meeting the wider council objective to be net zero to 2030.

12. Corporate implications

- 12.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:
- Community safety implications
 - Environmental implications
 - ICT implications
 - Asset management implications
 - Procurement implications
 - Human resources implications
 - Planning implications
 - Data protection implications
 - Voluntary sector

Background papers: HRA Investment 30 year Business Plan

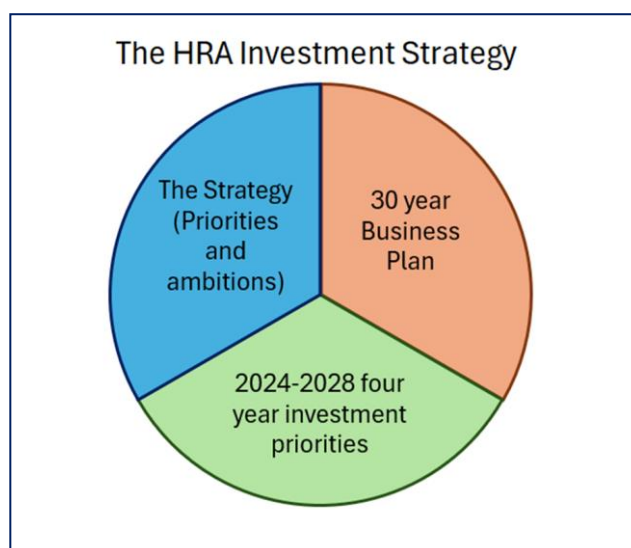
Contact officer: Sharon Stacey/Ashley Wilson
Executive member: Councillor MT Mullaney

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HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2024 - 2028

Introduction and context

- 1.1 This Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Investment Strategy builds on the work set out in previous plans, updated to reflect the changes in national guidance and local priorities since the last plan was adopted. The HRA Investment Strategy sets out the aims and ambitions of the Council in relation to the council housing service and is underpinned by a 30-year business plan with an initial focus on the 2024-28 four-year investment priorities for council housing in the borough. The image below gives the overview of how these elements relate to each other.



- 1.2 The 30-year business plan gives a basis to the decisions needed to maintain a financially healthy HRA position. For the immediate term, the 2024-2028 four-year investment period defines the immediate priorities which will meet our ambitions. Overall, the council strives to manage the debt requirements entered under the self-financing settlement, whilst maintaining 100% compliance with decent homes standards and ensuring that our housing services continue to meet the needs of our tenants.
- 1.3 Whilst the current financial position has tight constraints on the finance available, the HRA Investment Strategy is written so that the council can meet its strategic priorities.

Strategic links

2.1 The HRA Investment Strategy support the council's Corporate Plan objectives of:

- **People:** Help people to stay healthy, happy and active and in employment, by improving the quality of existing homes and increasing the availability of affordable housing.
- **Places:** Creating clean, sustainable and attractive places to live, visit and work in by reducing the carbon emissions from our own operations.

The Corporate Plan can be found [here](#)

Background

3.1 The Council Housing Service provides good quality, well maintained affordable housing and the service is responsible for managing and maintaining both the property and the tenancy of those residing in our homes. The composition of the housing stock is outlined in the table below:

Table 1: Homes	Description
3207 Homes	HBBC have 3207 homes that are widely dispersed across the borough with particular concentrations in Hinckley, Burbage, Barwell and Earl Shilton.
354 Sheltered Homes	We provide 354 units of Sheltered Housing accommodation
11 schemes	Homes providing accommodation to the over 60s or those who are over 55 with a support need

3.2 Additionally, the housing service is responsible for a number of leasehold properties, garage sites and housing land.

3.3 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) holds the budget for the service. The Business Plan forecasts over the next 30 years the investment requirements for the service, which equates to total planned investment from 2024 to 2053 of £176 million to ensure that our stock meets the expected standards and provides suitable homes for our tenants.

3.4 There are a number of specialist teams within the Council Housing Service which include Anti-Social Behaviour and Tenancy Management, Housing Repairs and Older Persons' services.

Key Achievements

- 4.1 The priority in the previous HRA Investment Strategy was for new council housing development and acquisition. Since the last HRA Investment Strategy in 18/19, the council has added to its stock by 70 new homes, including the demolition and redevelopment of a sheltered housing scheme in Market Bosworth which was no longer fit for purpose. It should be noted that during the same period 141 properties were lost from the housing stock due to the Right To Buy (RTB). Whilst £3.454m of receipts were used to support replacement, this level of RTB remains a challenge. Housing delivery since the previous strategy is detailed below.

Settlement	New development	Acquisition	Total number of homes
Hinckley	11	11	22
Market Bosworth	27		27
Burbage		9	9
Earl Shilton		2	2
Barwell		2	2
Stoke Golding		4	4
Groby		1	1
Desford		1	1
Twycross		1	1
Markfield		1	1

- 4.2 Since 2018/19, the housing service has progressed the following capital work improvements:
- 633 upgrades to electrical installations
 - 1471 boilers/heating distribution system renewals with A Rated boilers
 - Renewal of windows to 329 properties
 - Renewal of doors to 369 properties
 - Replacement of 447 roof finishes
 - 585 kitchen refurbishments
 - 432 bathroom refurbishments

- 4.3 Council Housing stock is 100% compliant with the Decent Homes Standard, and the capital investments in this report are essential to ensure ongoing compliance with this standard. The works are completed as planned programmes, ensuring value for money by replacing components just before the end of their predicted life span. They are also completed in groups of properties requiring work of the same type and by specialist contractors. Further details regarding the approach and management to the council's housing stock and wider assets can be found in the Asset Management Strategy which can be found [here](#)
- 4.4 The council has commenced works to meet its ambition to be Net Zero by 2030 and works to improve the energy efficiency of our housing stock are ongoing. We continue to maximise opportunities to access grant funding to enable us to make improvements to our stock. Since the last Investment Strategy, we were successful in securing local authority delivery funding (LAD2) to improve the energy efficiency of 34 of our council properties. Further grant funding of £1.4m via the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund (SHDF) and £330,000 of UKSPF funding has also been secured, enabling additional efficiency improvements to council stock to be made, Works for these 2 funding streams are ongoing and due to complete in March 2025.

Our Priorities

- 5.1 The priorities that support our corporate ambition to improve the quality of existing homes and increase the availability of affordable housing over the next 4 years include:
- Grow the council's stock to provide more homes to meet the need for affordable housing through new development and acquisitions where opportunities arise and funding permits. The four year investment plan allows for an additional 57 properties, including schemes already approved such as Peggs Close. Our aspiration is to provide further new homes over the 30-year financial investment period should finances allow.
 - Capital investment over the next 4 years for major projects such as roofing, kitchens, bathrooms and heating to maintain 100% decency.
 - Capital works budgets anticipate for the next 4 years the following to be completed:
 - 688 upgrades to electrical installations
 - 542 boilers/heating distribution system renewals with A Rated boilers
 - Renewal of windows to 312 properties
 - Renewal of doors to 285 properties
 - Replacement of 148 roof finishes
 - 472 kitchen refurbishments

➤ 560 bathroom refurbishments

- Working towards achieving the minimum band C EPC rating by 2035 for all individual dwellings.
- Continue works to decarbonise council owned sheltered schemes, community centres and houses by 2030. Upgrades to include the removal of gas boilers and installation of green technology such as air source & Photovoltaic panels.
- Retrofit, where possible, to increase energy efficiency. A further bid for SHDF Wave 3 funding is to be made in 2024. If successful, this funding will be utilised through to 2028.
- Continue to invest in assisting older people to live independently, by maintaining elderly persons' homes and sheltered housing schemes, and delivering aids and adaptations for older people and people with disabilities.
- Service improvements, including investment in ICT and staffing capacity.
- Compliance with Social Housing Regulation.
- Maintaining a balanced HRA financial position

Housing Demand- Affordable Housing

- 6.1 Demand for council housing remains high and we have seen significant increases in people applying to join the housing register over recent years. To meet this continuing demand, our ambition is to add to our housing stock by pursuing development and investment opportunities.
- 6.2 Work is underway to identify future opportunities to add to our housing supply whilst ensuring investment in existing accommodation remains a priority. Our aspirations include:
- Acquisition of new build affordable housing on section 106 sites, either as additional units or where there is no Registered Provider interest.
 - Acquisition of ex-council stock to meet high demand, low delivery property types such as 1 bedroomed flats.
 - To work in partnership with other affordable housing delivery partners to deliver new developments for council housing built to the council's specification in the medium term.

- Regeneration of underperforming stock which fails to meet minimum standards or does not provide the type of housing required to meet priority need.

Potential funding streams

Rental Income

- 7.1. The council aims to set and vary rents across its housing stock in a way that keeps rent both affordable and accessible for new and existing tenants, whilst at the same time ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. The council also needs to ensure that it has enough income to ensure that its housing services continue to be effective and meet customers' needs.
- 7.2. Since the last HRA Investment Strategy was implemented, there have been changes to and challenges around rental income which may impede future spending.
- 7.3. The latest of these was in April 2024, where rent increases have been capped at 7.7%, which will impact on the Council's capacity both to invest in its stock and meet its aspirations for growth. Relets of council housing continue to have rents set to formula rents. The projections for rental income rests on a number of assumptions to forecast the potential revenue available for projects, but the rent cap will affect finance available in years to come, as future rent increases will be set from a lower base rent.
- 7.4. Rent Policy recognises that registered providers should have some discretion over the rent set for individual properties, to take account of local factors and affordability. Rents set may include an upward tolerance, rent flexibility, providing clear rationale is available. Rent flexibility is limited to 5% for general needs tenants and 10% for supported housing. The council is working towards introducing rent flexibility for some of its stock over the term of this strategy.

Service Charges

- 7.5. In addition to rents, tenants may also be required to pay service charges. Service charges reflect additional services which may not be provided to every tenant, or which may be connected with communal facilities rather than being particular to the occupation of dwelling. To ensure that the HRA remains in a strong position a review of all service charges is currently underway. This will also ensure that our housing estates are well maintained

External funding streams

- 7.6. As well as income from rents, other funding sources may be available for investment in council housing, in the way of;

- 7.7. **Right to buy receipts** – receipts from the sale of council housing can be retained by local authorities as long as it is used for the provision of replacement social housing. The receipt can be used for up to 50% of the cost of a new home. The receipt must be spent within 5 years. There is a cap on how many acquisitions can be bought with right to buy receipts:
- The first 20 properties do not count.
 - For 2022/23 up to 50% of spend can be on acquisitions
 - For 2023/24 up to 40%
 - For 2024/25 onwards up to 30%
- 7.8. **Commuted sums** in lieu of on-site affordable housing. The preference for delivery of affordable housing from new housing development sites is on site. However, where a site is unsuitable for affordable housing, or a Registered Provider partner cannot be identified to acquire the affordable housing, the council may seek a commuted sum in lieu of onsite provision. The conditions for use of commuted sums are set down in individual legal section 106 agreements but all restrict the use to increasing or improving the supply of affordable housing within the Borough.
- 7.9. **Grant funding from Homes England** – the Council continues to hold Investment Partner status with Homes England and as such can bid to draw down grant from programmes which support delivery of affordable housing. The main grant is to support delivery of general needs affordable homes, but other grant is available from time to time, usually for more specialist accommodation. Opportunities to obtain grant to support the council's strategic objectives will continue to be pro-actively pursued on qualifying sites.
- 7.10. **Borrowing** – the council has the option to borrow against future rental income in order to increase the supply of affordable housing. However, any borrowing opportunities need to be affordable to the Council.
- 7.11. **Other funding opportunities**- The housing service will continue to maximise opportunities to draw down grant funding from other funding streams, such as the Social Housing Decarbonisation fund to work towards decarbonisation and energy efficiency improvements.
- 7.12. **Disposal**- the sale of some smaller HRA sites may provide additional income to the HRA.

Further Investment requirements/opportunities

Acquisitions

- 8.1. Acquisition has previously been carried out on an ad hoc basis. Going forward, where a number of opportunities present simultaneously, a sequential approach to purchase will be as follows:
- Homes on section 106 sites where there is no RP interest.

- Purchase of new properties on market sites above the affordable housing obligation set out in the section 106 agreement (“additionality”).
- Buy back of ex-council properties.
- Purchase of trickle transfer properties.
- Purchase of second hand homes on the open market.

Properties must be:

- located where there is a shortage of properties of that size and type.
- in high demand/ low turnover settlements.
- of a size that meet minimum space standards.
- for second hand properties – buyback, trickle transfer or open market – the cost of bringing the property into stock must be not greater than the average cost of void work on council stock.

Exceptions to the conditions above will be:

- where purchase will assist the council to achieve wider strategic aims such as regeneration of a site;
- in settlements where there is shortage of affordable housing stock and no opportunities for new development.

8.2. For the 2024-28 period there is the potential to deliver a further 45 units at a total debt need of £11.3m on top of the 57 units in the HRA Investment Strategy. However, to do this reduces interest cover and increases HRA debt considerably. As this has higher associated risk, further work is needed and a separate report will be provided to members to approve as part of a later review. If this is possible it will be from the 2026/27 financial year.

Development pipeline

8.3. The immediate priority for development funding is the demolition of 3 blocks of flats at Peggs Close, Earl Shilton. The flats will be replaced by a mixture of 1 bedroomed flats and family housing.

8.4. In addition, 19 units are being purchased on two development sites in Hinckley and Burbage

8.5. 8We would like to deliver more new homes over the period of the underlying 30-year business plan should finances allow. When funds become available, future priorities comprise:

- Development of a redundant garage site at Preston Drive in Newbold Verdon.
- Development of the garage site at Woodbank in Burbage.

Staffing resources

- 8.6. Recent benchmarking information has demonstrated that current housing management resources are lower than comparable landlords and could be increased. This would help the housing service best support its tenants and meet key performance priorities such as rent collection and arrears management.

Housing management systems

- 8.7. Additional investment in housing management software is required to ensure that the housing service can meet the requirements of recent legislation.

Decarbonisation and energy performance

- 8.8. The council declared a climate change emergency in 2019 and is working towards achieving Net Zero by 2030. Key priorities for the housing service are to decarbonise council housing assets and improve the energy efficiency of all stock. This approach will enable the council to support its tenants to reduce the likelihood of fuel poverty.
- 8.9. The council is working towards meeting a government target for social housing providers to attain the minimum rating of Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C for rented properties by 2035 (2030 for 'fuel poor' households).
- 8.10. Over recent years, as part of the Decent Homes programme the council has carried out a range of works to directly improve the overall energy performance of all stock. EPC certificates are now held for each individual dwelling. 1138 of the council's stock is currently below EPC C. We are working to improve the energy efficiency of all housing stock and have adopted a fabric first approach which has included investment in efficient heating systems, improved thermal insulation, and the installation of more energy efficient windows and external doors. Over the next 5 years we will focus on implementing upgrades across our housing stock to ensure that we are on track to ensure that all our properties have an EPC rating of C or more by 2035.

Meeting our ambition

HRA Financial position

- 9.1 The 2024-2028 investment priorities have been set to reflect the current financial position over the next 4 years. The Business Plan includes the following investments over the term of the plan:-

Investments 2024/5-2027/28		£000
Additional Decarbonisation works		7,200

Develop Peggs Close	4,183
Affordable Housing Developments	10,124
Other HRA capital Investment	40,873
Total	62,380

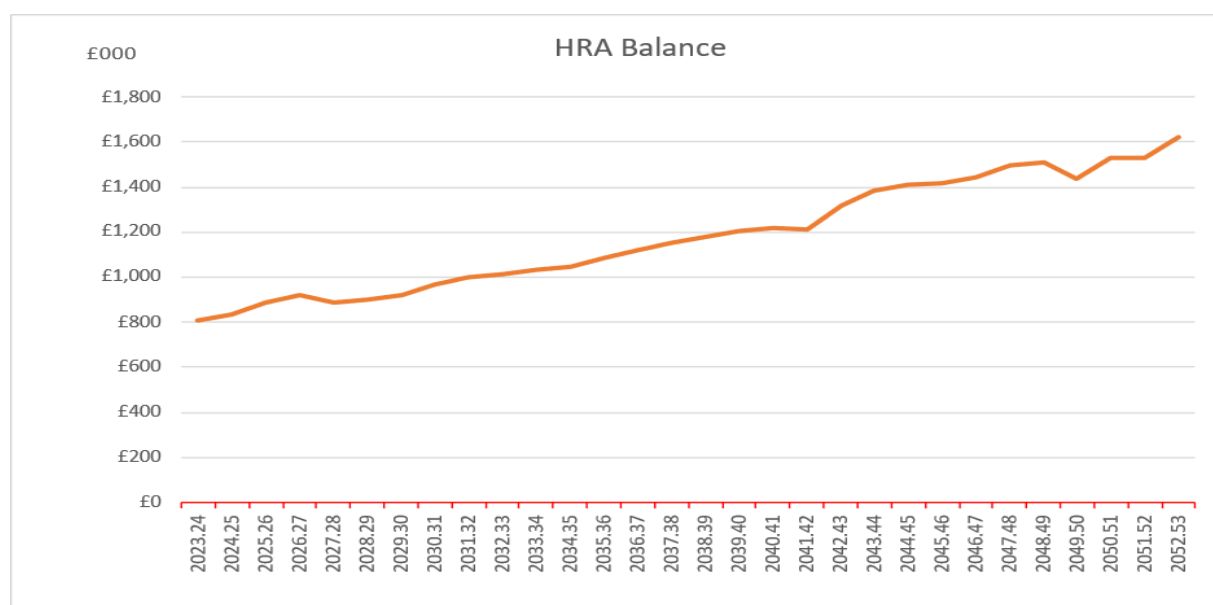
To achieve this and to continue to ensure that stock enhancements are progressed, the plan assumes that rent will continue to increase by inflation.

30 Year Business Plan Summary

9.2 The 30 Business Plan shows that the HRA continues to hold a balanced financial position, although, the future is less certain. To ensure a balanced future position, members will need to carefully consider all decisions. HRA reserves are not as high as in previous plans and so rent setting is a key risk area. Maximising rent increases will help to ensure the HRA can deliver its priorities and ensure the decent homes standard is maintained. Although the forecast in this strategy provides a balanced position, due to increasing pressures there is less capacity than hoped to fund the replacement of council homes, without taking on new debt as the existing debt is paid off. Income collected from the rental of the existing stock will be used to fund both housing management and ongoing repairs and maintenance.

9.3 Based on latest available information rent has been based on CPI plus one per cent for 25/26 and CPI for future years. Based on the forecasts in the plan balances will move from around £0.8million per annum to £1.6 million by the end of plan. This is slightly below the £2million average balance in the previous plan (2018). This is detailed in the graph below.

Graph 1 HRA balances to 2052/53



Overall Housing Revenue Account Projections

- 9.4 The table below gives the overall levels of income and expenditure expected based on the current 30-year Investment Plan. If new homes are provided in the future, then this will be reviewed and updated. The cost base assumes inflation falling to 2.5% by 2026/27 and is set at the governments target of 2% from 2027/28.

	2023/24 Prior year	2024/25 Forecas t	2025/26 Forecas t	2026/27 Forecas t	2027/28 Forecas t	2028- 2053 Forecas t	Total
Income	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Gross Rental Income	£14.09	£15.13	£15.91	£16.39	£16.72	£501.55	£579.78
Other Income	£0.34	£0.29	£0.30	£0.30	£0.31	£10.12	£11.66
Total income	£14.43	£15.42	£16.20	£16.69	£17.03	£511.67	£591.44
Expenditure	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Management	-£4.22	-£4.20	-£4.44	-£4.55	-£4.64	-£151.58	-£173.62
Bad Debt Provision	-£0.08	-£0.08	-£0.08	-£0.08	-£0.09	-£2.55	-£2.96
Repairs	-£3.34	-£3.47	-£3.48	-£3.55	-£3.60	-£107.52	-£124.96
Total expenditure	-£7.64	-£7.75	-£8.00	-£8.18	-£8.32	-£261.65	-£301.54
financing costs	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Interest paid	-£1.82	-£1.74	-£3.07	-£3.23	-£3.29	-£93.96	-£107.10
Depreciation	-£2.99	-£3.39	-£3.48	-£3.55	-£3.60	-£102.78	-£119.80
Other items	£0.16	£0.12	£0.16	£0.12	£0.08	£6.53	£7.17
Total financing costs	-£4.65	-£5.01	-£6.39	-£6.66	-£6.80	-£190.21	-£219.72
Net Operating Expenditure	£2.15	£2.66	£1.81	£1.85	£1.90	£59.80	£70.17
Appropriations	-£2.16	-£2.63	-£1.76	-£1.81	-£1.94	-£59.06	-£69.36
Net income/ (expenditure)	-£0.01	£0.03	£0.05	£0.03	-£0.04	£0.74	£0.81
HRA Balance	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Opening Balance	£0.81	£0.81	£0.84	£0.89	£0.92	£0.89	£0.81
Generated in year	-£0.01	£0.03	£0.05	£0.03	-£0.04	£0.74	£0.81
Closing HRA Balance	£0.81	£0.84	£0.89	£0.92	£0.89	£1.62	£1.62

Outline Programme of Investment

- 9.4 The current Capital Programme for the Housing Revenue Account (the HRA

Programme) covers the 2024 to 2028 four-year investment priorities and is summarised in the Table below. (year 23/24 is included for context/comparison).

Four Year Capital Programme (Includes Inflation)	2023/24 Prior year £000	2024/25 Forecast £000	2025/26 Forecast £000	2026/27 Forecast £000	2027/28 Forecast £000	Total Forecast £000
Void Works	687	802	802	802	802	3,895
Planned Maintenance	3,576	5,932	5,863	6,024	5,053	26,448
Aids & Adaptations	698	733	755	781	805	3,772
Decarbonisation	1,789	1,971	1,707	1,772	1,750	8,989
Affordable Housing	6,029	6,115	4,250	1,250	0	17,644
Other Capital Investment	40	25	26	26	27	144
HRA Capital Programme	12,819	15,578	13,403	10,655	8,437	60,892

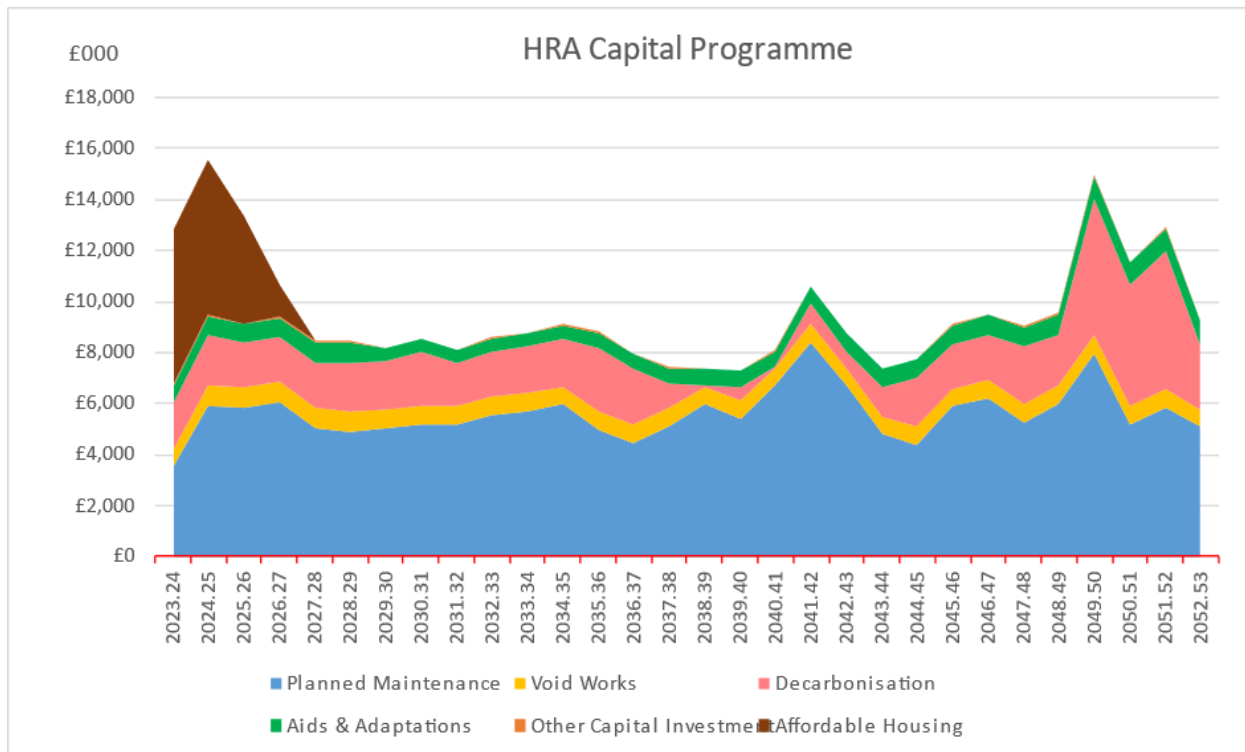
Affordable Housing delivery

9.5 The HRA Investment Strategy includes completion of affordable housing schemes already agreed and detailed in the following table.

Scheme	Amount (£000's)
Peggs Close	4,183
Development Budget	3,424
Affordable Housing (one off purchases of dwellings)	600
Total	8,207

Capital Expenditure Business Plan (30 Years)

9.6 The overall capital expenditure in the 30-year Investment Plan is summarised in the Graph below.



9.7 The HRA Investment Strategy underlying 30-year capital expenditure profile above seeks to balance the level of investment with the level of risk and needs to ensure there is sufficient 'resilience' built into the plan to mitigate against the financial risks. The graph illustrates there is scope for 57 units of affordable housing, including the agreed programmes, in the first four years and falls to zero in 2027/28. This element will be kept under review in light of any new funding streams or government initiatives with an ambition to deliver more homes if finances allow.

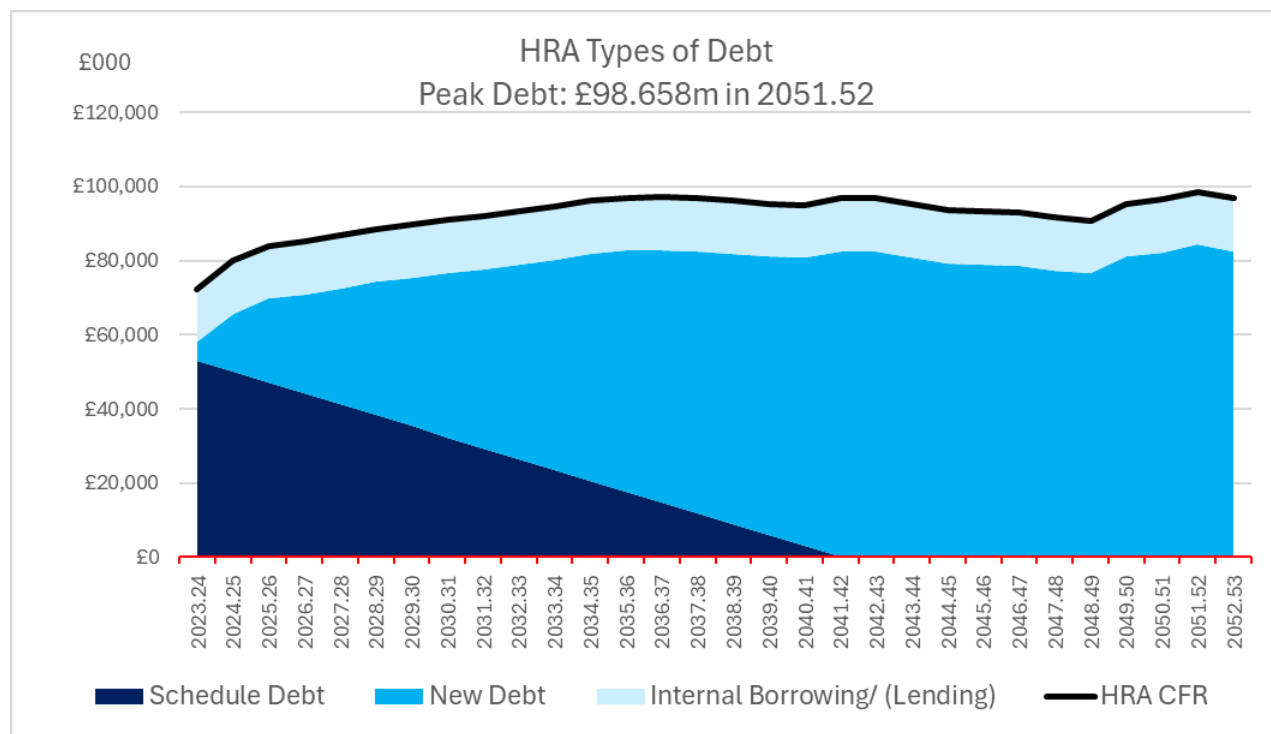
9.8 The cost of decarbonisation is a significant element of the financial pressure on the HRA over the full 30-year period. Capital spend on works to council housing stock is expected to be in excess of £9 million over the term of the plan. New technological advancements and changes to legislation are likely to affect this going forwards.

Debt

9.10 The graph below summarises the debt position for the current plan. The plan indicates borrowing will have to increase to around £97,000,000 by 2035/36. This level of borrowing will be required to ensure the investment plan can be financed, and the level of decarbonisation works required can be supported. The HRA debt cap on borrowing has been lifted. Therefore, as long as borrowing is affordable there is no cap on the level. However, future borrowing above the level indicated in the HRA 30 Business Plan will lead to additional interest costs on the HRA and opens up the council to interest rate exposure. This HRA Investment Strategy is affordable but could not withstand large increases in interest without matching income sources.

9.11 The council is also mindful of the potential for changes to legislation in future which may introduce new requirements around the maintenance of our existing housing stock. As there is always the chance of future changes, this HRA Investment Strategy will be kept under review as part of the budget setting process, and this will be considered alongside our ambition to increase overall levels of council housing to provide homes to people in the area should conditions be favourable, and debt becomes more affordable due to changes in interest rates.

9.12 The level of HRA Debt across the term of the plan is summarised below: -



Risks

10.1 There are number of risks that may impact the viability of the investment strategy, over the immediate and longer term, which are set out below.

Risks during the HRA Investment Strategy period:

- Rising costs for materials have hit the building sector hard over previous years, but now seems to be stabilised. However, should costs begin to rise steeply again it will affect both the development and stock improvement programmes.
- Skills shortages in the housing and development sector may impact on the council's ability to reach its ambitions for developing new homes.
- The Homes England Affordable Homes Grant programme comes to an end in 2026, and availability of grant after that period is not yet known.
- The council, as a social landlord, is subject to the new Social Housing Regulation regime which strengthens consumer standards to help protect

tenants and drive improvements in landlord services. As this is a recently introduced requirement, the impact on resources is not yet fully quantified.

- Uncertainty over priorities set by future government post-election 2024 on the emphasis given to social housing delivery.
- Future rent policy/decisions affecting income to the HRA Business plan.

The council is mitigating these risks by:

- Engaging with Homes England and other grant programmes to maximise external funding opportunities.
- The council is geared up to meet the new consumer standards and pursuing continuing improvement in our services.
- Ensuring that housing services are resourced appropriately and have the right skills to meet the recent changes in legislation.

10.2 Risks over the 30 Year Business Plan period:

- Recent disruption in the supply chain has led to rising cost of building and shortages of material. It is unclear at present whether this situation will continue longer term.
- The grant programme administered by Homes England to support affordable housing development is only awarded for 5 year periods so it is uncertain if and in what form future programmes will take.
- Long term implications from the new regulatory regime are unable to be quantified at this early stage in the programme.
- The assumptions made in the 30 Year Business Plan are sensitive to external changes such as rent increase caps, interest rate changes, CPI assumptions and withdrawal of grant programmes.
- Future rent policy/decisions affecting income to the HRA Business plan.

The council aims to mitigate these risks by:

- Ensuring income is maximised through rents and service charges.
- Bidding for any grant opportunities that arise which can assist in delivering the priorities for the council. New opportunities may help to derisk the Strategy priorities in the future.
- Ensuring staff have the skills and knowledge to meet any challenges and opportunities to increase and improve our stock.
- Continually monitoring procedures and resources to ensure the service is robust enough to manage future requirements.

- 10.4 A regular process to identify and assess risks (strategic and delivery) will be developed internally and actions agreed to manage risks in order to minimise impact.

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Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Scrutiny Commission	25 July 2024
Executive	11 September 2024

Wards affected: All Wards

Cultural Strategy 2024 - 2028

Report of Director (Community Services)

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek Scrutiny Commissions endorsement to adopt the Cultural Strategy 2024 - 2028 for Hinckley & Bosworth.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1.1 The Scrutiny Commission supports the adoption of the Cultural Strategy 2024 -2028.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 Culture is a key priority in the council's corporate strategy. This Strategy supersedes the previous version 2019 – 2023. This new Strategy will aid and support cultural sector organisations in seeking external funding and provides a key set of themes allowing resources to be focused. The strategy and supporting technical document capture several high-level achievements and outcomes during the past 4 years.
- 3.2 This new strategy intends to build on previous successes and outlines the priorities for action and interventions. The strategy encourages partnerships to work together towards common goals, maximising the impact of resources and activities.

4. Key Strategy Details

- 4.1 The vision for the Strategy is to enhance and enrich the life of our residents and visitors to the Borough via the delivery of a diverse range of high-quality well-being services through partnership engagement with our communities.”
- 4.2 For this vision to be achieved, it is important that there are a set of guiding themes underpinning the strategy. Therefore, a set of 5 key themes have been identified, which are as follows:
1. Increase and celebrate the Arts and creative Offer within the Borough
 2. Increasing economic spend via a thriving events programme
 3. To value and promote Tourism, our Heritage and Museums
 4. Developing Sports opportunities for all
 5. Increase physical activity levels and improve health and wellbeing
- 4.3 This Strategy will assist in supporting the emerging Local Plan for Hinckley and Bosworth Borough and will support the council's Corporate Plan. In addition, this Strategy complements wider local strategies such as:
- Rural Strategy 2024 – 2028
 - Tourism Strategy 2024 - 2028
 - Climate & Biodiversity Strategy 2024 - 2026
 - Community Safety Strategy 2023 - 2026
 - Economic Regeneration Strategy 2021 – 2025
 - H&B Health and Well-Being Community Plan 2023
- 4.4 There are huge benefits that underpin these themes. Participation in cultural activities is shown to have positive social impacts, such as helping establish social connectedness, a sense of belonging and breaking down cultural barriers. It can reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, can support people into employment, and we can contribute to the economic prosperity of our proud Borough.
- 4.5 The Technical Supporting Document captures and celebrates some of the significant achievements that have been delivered over the past 4 years – section 3.
- 4.6 As can be read, the strategy sets out several actions that will support the delivery and implementation of this strategy.
- 4.7 The final page of the strategy shows the cross-cutting principals that we adhere too.

5. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

- 5.1 To be taken in public session.

6. Financial implications [DW]

6.1 None directly from this report.

7. Legal implications [ST]

7.1 None

8. Corporate Plan implications

8.1 This strategy supports all three key aims People, Places and Prosperity within the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028.

9. Consultation

9.1 Key internal and external stakeholders have supported the development of this strategy.

10. Risk implications

10.1 It is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that there are no significant risks associated with this strategy have been identified.

11. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

11.1 The strategy supports and recognises the challenges faced by our rural communities and as the strategy explains, it covers all ages, abilities etc.

12. Climate implications

12.1 The strategy is fully aligned to climate matters and continues to play its part in lowering carbon emissions.

13. Corporate implications

13.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Economic regeneration implications
- Voluntary sector

Background papers:	None
Contact officer:	Simon D. Jones, Cultural Services Manager
Executive member:	Cllr M Boals

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Scope

This strategy supports Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council's cultural offer for arts, events, heritage, tourism, sport and health & well being interventions.

Purpose

The Culture Strategy aligns to the councils corporate strategy and provides a vision and sets out key delivery themes for the borough. It is underpinned by a Technical Supporting Document which reviews the national and local context. It summarises key issues and challenges, before setting out actions and initiatives to achieve the delivery themes set out below.

Vision

"To enhance and enrich the life of our residents and visitors to the borough via the delivery of a diverse range of high quality wellbeing services through partnership engagement with our communities".

Corporate Plan links

To achieve this vision we have identified 5 key work streams, these are detailed below:



Aim

Delivery theme

1 Increase and celebrate the Arts & Creative Offer within the borough

Strategic links:

- Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 - People and Places themes
- Rural Strategy
- Community Health & Wellbeing Plan

- We will work alongside the Creative industries, supported by Creative Leicestershire.
- We will develop exciting interventions to target rural areas and contribute to health and wellbeing priorities.
- We will seek to increase participation in the arts by supporting practitioners and promoters of arts activity.
- Seek to increase the number of public art pieces within the borough.



2 Increasing economic spend via a thriving events programme

Strategic links:

- Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 Prosperity theme
- Rural Strategy
- BID Business Plan
- Economic Development Strategy



- We will deliver a range of safe, vibrant and value for money events.
- We will offer support to the Hinckley BID & Town Centre Partnership and our rural town centres.
- We will advise and support community groups on safe event management.
- Aim to increase footfall and dwell time leading to economic vitality.
- Delivery of the events programme will support the 'Destination Hinckley' concept.

Delivery theme

3 To value and promote Tourism and Heritage

Strategic links:

- Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 - Places theme
- Heritage Strategy
- Tourism Strategy 2024 to 2028



- We will develop and support the Hinckley and Bosworth Tourism Partnership, including Bosworth Rural Tourism Association.
- We will align activity to support the countrywide Tourism Growth Plan and national priorities.
- We will assist in delivery of the Heritage Action Plan.
- We will lead in the delivery of the Bosworth 1485 Sculpture Trail project.
- We will clearly demonstrate our support to our Armed Forces veterans.
- Support improvements to Hinckley Museum.



4 Developing Sports opportunities for all

Strategic links:

- Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 - People and Places themes
- AT Sport & Physical Activity Strategy
- Green Spaces Strategy
- Playing Pitch Strategy
- Volunteering Strategy

- We will attract external funding into the Borough to support the development of facilities, aligned to the Facilities Framework and Green Spaces Strategy.
- We will actively increase participation, especially for underrepresented groups.
- We will increase capacity and skills opportunities for the voluntary work that we value and whom we rely upon.
- We will celebrate success at the annual Sport & Active Awards.

5 Increase physical activity levels and improve health and well-being

Strategic links:

- Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 People theme
- Hinckley & Bosworth Community Health & Wellbeing Plan
- Active Together Physical Activity Framework 2022 to 2031
- Climate Change & Biodiversity Strategy 2024 to 2028

- We will develop targeted programmes and campaign work based upon key local health priorities.
- We will support, enhance and sustain existing physical activity provision, supported by Public Health colleagues.
- We will promote the benefits of health improvement and the need to deliver preventive workstreams.
- We will work in close partnership with Hinckley Leisure Centre to maximise active well-being opportunities.
- We will work with multiple delivery partners including local GP's, INT, ICB, Patient Participation Groups and Local Area Coordinators.
- Support and grow our Health & Well Being Health Ambassador programme.

Cross cutting principles

- Ensure hard to reach groups are heard and have opportunities for active, meaningful engagement and participation. We will utilise our customer insight and intelligence in developing our services.
- Embrace and celebrate volunteering.
- Provide an equitable offer, we will ensure coverage across all parts of our borough, linking to our Rural Strategy.
- Evaluate our offer to ensure we meet the needs of our growing population and demographic profile.
- Delivery will be achieved via genuine partnership working, achieving shared outcomes.
- Early intervention and prevention will be fundamental when developing services.
- Enhancing community cohesion will be a by-product of our projects, supporting the Community Safety Strategy.
- Encourage behaviour change and upskilling our local workforce will be a golden thread.
- We will be commercially aware and strive for sustainability.
- We will align to climate objectives as identified in the Council's Climate and Biodiversity Strategy.
- We will encourage collaboration with other services and sectors to deliver a whole system approach to delivering our cultural strategy.



For more information please contact:

Cultural Services

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Tel: **01455 238141**

Email: **culture@hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk**

Web: **www.hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk**



**Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council**

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Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Scrutiny Commission	25 July 2024
Executive	11 September 2024

Wards affected: All Wards

Rural Strategy 2024 - 2028

Report of Director (Community Services)

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek Scrutiny Commission's endorsement to adopt the refreshed Rural Strategy 2024 - 2028 for Hinckley & Bosworth, that encompasses 51 settlements divided into 24 parished areas.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Scrutiny Commission endorses the adoption of the Rural Strategy 2024 –2028.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 The first Rural Strategy was adopted in 2016. This Strategy supersedes the previous version 2020 – 2023. This new Strategy will aid and support many positive rural interventions, opportunities, and developments. The strategy captures several high-level achievements during the past 4 years.
- 3.2 The purpose of Strategy is as follows:
- To enable Parish Councils to have a voice in informing rural priorities for the borough.
 - To ensure issues of importance for rural communities are given equal opportunity for promotion, support, and action.
 - To ensure further growth and development strengthens the wellbeing and prosperity of the borough's rural communities.
 - To maximise opportunities to enable access to services and facilities.

- 3.3 This new strategy intends to build on previous successes and outlines the priorities for action and interventions in the rural areas of the Borough. The strategy encourages partnerships to work together towards common goals, maximising the impact of resources and activities.

4. Key Strategy Details

- 4.1 The vision for the Strategy is to secure distinct, diverse and prosperous rural communities in Hinckley & Bosworth.
- 4.2 To achieve this vision, there are 4 strategic aims:
1. Inclusive, sustainable rural communities, where everyone has the opportunity to participate, and can access the services and facilities they need.
 2. An environmentally and economically sound rural borough where the needs of farming, conservation and development are appropriately balanced.
 3. Residents feel supported to take ownership and drive improvements in their own communities.
 4. Ensure our rural communities can be safe and welcoming for residents, visitors, and businesses.
- 4.3 The Strategy has several themes that have been agreed and developed in conjunction with Parishes and our rural communities. Supporting actions are captured within the strategy document. Summarised these are:
1. Access to services, facilities and well being
 2. Facilitation of transport solutions
 3. Promoting Neighbourhood Planning
 4. Rural housing delivery
 5. Protection and enhancement of the rural environment
 6. Economy, Farming, Enterprise, and Tourism
 7. Community Safety and Rural Crime
 8. Community empowerment and action through partnership working
- 4.4 To support the strategy a comprehensive consultation exercise has been undertaken with Parishes. The Rural Strategy Appendices technical support document captures key achievements and ongoing/emerging challenges. This document informed the strategy and will assist Officers and key partners in enhancing services as captured within the 8 themes listed above.
- 4.5 This Strategy will assist in supporting the emerging local plan for Hinckley and Bosworth Borough and will support the council's Corporate Plan. In addition, this Strategy complements wider local strategies such as:
- H&B Health and Well-Being Community Plan 2023
 - Tourism Strategy 2024 - 2028
 - Climate & Biodiversity Strategy 2024 - 2026
 - Community Safety Strategy 2023 - 2026
 - Economic Regeneration Strategy 2021 - 2025

5. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

5.1 To be taken in public session.

6. Financial implications [AW]

6.1 None directly from this report.

7. Legal implications [MR]

7.1 None

8. Corporate Plan implications

8.1 This strategy supports all three key aims People, Places and Prosperity within the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028.

9. Consultation

9.1 Parishes and key internal and external stakeholders have supported the development of this strategy.

10. Risk implications

10.1 It is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that there are no significant risks associated with this strategy have been identified.

11. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

11.1 The strategy supports and recognises the challenges faced by our rural communities.

12. Climate implications

12.1 The strategy is fully aligned to climate matters and continues to play its part in lowering carbon emissions.

13. Corporate implications

13.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

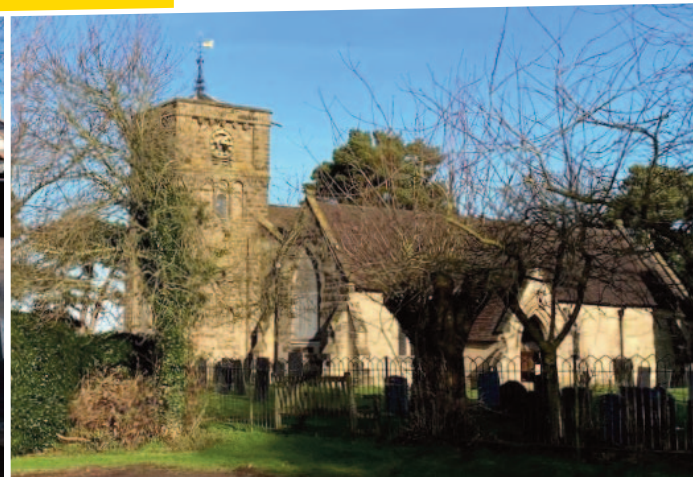
- Economic regeneration implications
- Voluntary sector

Background papers:	None
Contact officer:	Simon D. Jones, Cultural Services Manager
Executive member:	Cllr M Cartwright

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Hinckley & Bosworth's Rural Strategy 2024 to 2028

Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council



Introduction - The Rural Strategy sets out the high level priorities that are aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 for rural areas of the borough, underpinned by key actions, with the impact and outcomes presented at the annual Rural Conference.

Purpose of our Rural Strategy

- To enable Parish Councils to have a voice in informing rural priorities for the borough
- To ensure issues of importance for rural communities are given equal opportunity for promotion, support and action
- To ensure further growth and development strengthens the wellbeing and prosperity of the borough's rural communities
- To maximise opportunities to enable access to services and facilities



The Vision for our Rural Borough

To secure distinct, diverse and prosperous rural communities in Hinckley & Bosworth

our Strategic Aims

- Inclusive, sustainable rural communities, where everyone has the opportunity to participate, and can access the services and facilities they need
- An environmentally and economically sound rural borough where the needs of farming, conservation and development are appropriately balanced
- Residents feel supported to take ownership and drive improvements in their own communities
- Ensure our rural communities can be safe and welcoming for residents, visitors and businesses

Our Priority Themes and Focus:

1 Access to services, facilities and well being

- Engage with our rural schools to support students in providing advice and guidance on future career aspirations, democracy related activities and deliver key messages on a range of topics such as healthy relationships, exploitation, anti-social behaviour, drugs and alcohol, diversity mental health and health and wellbeing
- Promotion of health and well-being pathways to uplift healthy living in our rural population, including key health preventative interventions around mental well-being, loneliness, social isolation and physical activity
- Continue to provide welfare support and guidance to those most in need in our rural communities, which will include the promotion of social prescribing platform JOY allowing us to raise awareness of services & support on a neighbourhood level
- To support the ongoing development, delivery and access to services and facilities at a local level, such as Mobile Community Hub, welfare support outreach and neighbourhood mental health work
- Align relevant HBBC rural grant funding to support priority parish and community initiatives



2 Facilitation of transport solutions

- To enable parishes to work with Leicestershire County Council in the identification and implementation of local community transport solutions ensuring their voices are heard
- To work with the voluntary and community sector to map and promote community transport opportunities

3 Promoting Neighbourhood Planning

- Support parishes in developing Neighbourhood Development Plans under the neighbourhood planning process, or the development of Community led Parish Plans
- Ensure effective engagement of parishes and seek their views in the development of the Borough Council's Local Plan
- Continue to ensure new development makes provision for local facilities and infrastructure to enable communities to continue to thrive and be sustainable through the planning process



4 Rural housing delivery

- Housing development in our rural communities includes the community, particularly in the development of rural exception sites and community led housing schemes
- Rural housing development that supports and is supported by appropriate infrastructure improvements
- Affordable housing provision to be informed by local evidence of need, including tenures such as affordable homes for rent and home ownership need and properties such as bungalows

Our Priority Themes and Focus:

5 Protection and enhancement of the rural environment



- Continue to work with parishes in identifying and adopting Public Space Protection Order sites
- To support parishes and their communities to deliver on climate change initiatives and improvements, including enabling access to appropriate grant funding, which will underpin the Council's Climate and Biodiversity Strategy
- Continue to manage and deliver a comprehensive environmental health, protection and inspections programme including premises food hygiene rating, food hygiene inspections, infectious disease investigation, pest control and licensing



6 Economy, Farming, Enterprise and Tourism

- Enhance rural enterprise and tourism utilising the capital grants programme from the national Rural England Prosperity Fund
- To direct rural businesses to appropriate business advice and services
- To support our Rural Town Centres by offering support and guidance
- Support the delivery of the Tourism Strategy 2024 - 2030, to enable tourism growth across all parishes in the borough and continue to support the Hinckley & Bosworth Tourism Partnership
- Ensure the effective engagement of the farming community and seek their views in the development of countryside planning and development policies in the Local Plan, including green energy production, non-agricultural diversification and food production
- Support the agricultural and forestry sectors to make a positive environmental impact

7 Community Safety and Rural Crime



- To continue to support and enable parishes to take enforcement actions in relation to environmental nuisance issues e.g. planning breaches, noise nuisance and dog fouling
- Work with partners, volunteers and parishes to help tackle and reduce speeding and parking related issues
- Continue to promote 'neighbourhood' link in rural communities and other timely reporting mechanisms for crime and disorder
- Raise awareness through parishes of the funding opportunities available to volunteers to support community activities
- Work with our partners to tackle rural crime



8 Community empowerment and action through partnership working

- The overall aims and outcomes of this Strategy will be achieved through joint working with all our key partners – statutory, business, and voluntary & community sector, with delivery plans aligning to relevant national, countywide and local plans
- Support the delivery of regular Parish Forums and the hosting of annual conferences that address key rural topics

The Rural Strategy compliments wider local strategies such as:

- Health & Well Being Community Plan 2023
- Tourism Strategy 2024 to 2028
- Climate & Bio Diversity Strategy 2024 to 2026
- Community Safety Strategy 2023 to 2026
- Economic Regeneration Strategy 2012 to 2025



A Rural Strategy for the Borough of Hinckley and Bosworth encompasses 53 settlements divided into 24 parished areas

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| ● Atterton | ● Dadlington | ● Newbold Heath | ● Sheepy Parva |
| ● Bagworth | ● Desford | ● Newbold Verdon | ● Shenton |
| ● Barlestone | ● Earl Shilton | ● Newtown Unthank | ● Stanton-under-Bardon |
| ● Barton in the Beans | ● Far Coton | ● Norton Juxta Twycross | ● Stapleton |
| ● Barwell | ● Fenny Drayton | ● Odstone | ● Stoke Golding |
| ● Bilstone | ● Field Head | ● Orton on the Hill | ● Sutton Cheney |
| ● Botcheston | ● Groby | ● Osbaston | ● Thornton |
| ● Brascote | ● Higham on the Hill | ● Peckleton | ● Twycross |
| ● Bull in the Oak | ● Kirkby Mallory | ● Pinwall | ● Wellsborough |
| ● Burbage | ● Merry Lees | ● Ratby | ● Witherley |
| ● Cadeby | ● Lindley | ● Ratcliffe Culey | ● Upton |
| ● Carlton | ● Market Bosworth | ● Sibson | |
| ● Congerstone | ● Markfield | ● Shackerstone | |
| ● Cross Hands | ● Nailstone | ● Sheepy Magna | |

Further information please contact:

Cat Stilling, Events and Rural Support Co-ordinator tel 01455 255893
email catharine.stilling@hinckley-bosworth.gov.uk



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council



Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Scrutiny Commission 25 July 2024

Wards affected: All wards

Scrutiny review: digital poverty and cashless society

Report of Director (Corporate & Streetscene Services)

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To scope the review into digital poverty and cashless society.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The scope and style of the review be agreed.

3. Background to the report

- 3.1 At the work programming session, members raised concern about digital poverty and cashless society in light of the move towards providing more services online.
- 3.3 In many spheres of life, new technological developments and increasing digitisation of services make access to the internet crucial. Lack of access creates a digital divide and results in digital poverty. The coronavirus pandemic highlighted the importance of staying connected remotely. For many, education, work, shopping and social life all took place online.
- 3.2 The Digital Poverty Alliance defines digital poverty as “the inability to interact with the online world fully, when, where, and how an individual needs to”. There are several reasons why someone might be “digitally poor” including lack of devices and connectivity (including in rural areas) and lack of skills.
- 3.4 There are implications for digital inclusion both in provision of council services, and support for the community in accessing services from other organisations.

3.4 Council services

In increasing the number of services that can be accessed on the council's website, it is important that residents are not excluded due to being unable to access online services, whether this be due to lack of devices or connectivity, lack of skills, or lifestyle factors. The Scrutiny Commission may wish to receive more information on digitisation of council services and to explore access for those who are not able to use online services.

3.5 External services

3.5.1 Other tiers of local and national government

Our communities will also access services provided by Leicestershire County Council, the government, and in many cases parish councils. The Scrutiny Commission may wish to explore access for those who are not able to use online services.

3.5.2 Banking

A concern over recent years has been the closure of banks and post offices, resulting in those without access to online services having to travel long distances to access face to face services.

3.5.3 Healthcare

Healthcare is increasingly digitised. Digital poverty can impact an individual's healthcare by limiting access to health information to learn about symptoms and preventative measures, preventing access to "telehealth" (consulting with a healthcare provider through video calls or messaging), making it more difficult to manage health records, limiting access to health apps to monitor fitness and health conditions and reducing health literacy through lack of access to information to enable informed decisions about health.

3.5.3 Economic opportunities

Digital poverty can lead to economic disadvantages by hindering education, limiting job opportunities and reducing the ability to engage in the digital economy.

3.6 Cashless society

3.6.1 Whilst cashless transactions have increased over the years, the coronavirus pandemic contributed to a further increase in touchless and cashless transactions. It is estimated that only 34% of payments in the UK are now made using cash. Whilst many feel that digital transactions are more convenient for both customers and businesses, this method disadvantages people who don't have a bank account, don't have a mobile phone capable of paying online (for example to pay for a car park ticket), are in areas with poor

connectivity, lack the confidence and skills to use technology for this purpose and have a lack of trust of cashless payments.

3.6.2 There are also other risks including:

- technical glitches blocking access to funds (sometimes due to outdated IT infrastructure in organisations)
- system failures, natural disasters or hacking preventing payments
- breaches of data privacy.

3.7 The Scrutiny Commission may also wish to look at research and work being undertaken by other organisations and to invite representatives to present, including:

- LLEP's digital poverty call for evidence and digital skills projects
- The Multiply project – free courses to improve skills, part of a national project provided by Leicestershire County Council
- Leicester City Council's community digital grant funded by the UKSPF
- Research and reports produced by the Digital Poverty Alliance.

3.8 The Scrutiny Commission can also have a role in directing residents to support available, for example via Age UK, Give a Laptop campaign, NHS Digital, the Digital Literacy Project and Freephone Digital Skills Helpline.

3.9 Relevant to all of the above, online platforms must also be accessible to those with disabilities and/or who use assistive technology.

3.10 Since the work programming workshop, a motion was put to Council by Councillor Pendlebury, seconded by Councillor Gibbens:

“This Council notes that while we welcome technological advances and development, there is an increasingly wide digital divide between those who have access to online services and those who don't.

The Ofcom report of 2022 notes that 6% of households in the UK do not have access to online services. In Hinckley and Bosworth this would mean there are approximately 6,600 people who are unable to access digital services and these people are likely to be the most vulnerable in our communities, so those with disabilities, the young and the old and those on low incomes.

Therefore, this Council agrees to:

1. Appoint a Digital Divide Champion to take an active lead in this area.
2. Ensure all council services are available to all our residents and put in place action plans to resolve any deficits.
3. Work with council partners to maximise digital skills for local residents and address digital poverty.
4. Ensure that the implementation of future online services does not increase the digital divide and any future online developments take this into account.

Call upon Leicestershire County Council and the government to ensure that their own services, government offices, national corporations and banks that utilise online services do not negatively impact on those who are unable to access digital equipment in line with the Equalities Act 2010.”

The motion was approved. Letters were sent to Leicestershire County Council and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, with a response being received from the latter outlining the government’s commitment to ensuring everyone has access to public services, whether online or offline. This motion is largely in line with the suggested scope of the Scrutiny Commission’s review.

- 3.11 The Scrutiny Commission is also asked to consider how it wishes to conduct the review, for example by way of a task and finish group, or as part of scheduled meetings of the whole Scrutiny Commission.

4. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules

- 4.1 To be taken in open session

5. Financial implications (IB)

- 5.1 None

6. Legal implications (ST)

- 6.1 None.

7. Corporate Plan implications

- 7.1 People:

1. Help people to stay healthy, happy an active and continue to provide initiatives that support children and young people, older people and our vulnerable residents
2. Maximise our residents’ potential through employment and skills support

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Consultation will be undertaken as necessary during the course of the review.

9. Risk implications

- 9.1 No risks are associated with this report.

10. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications

- 10.1 This review aims to support all communities by ensuring access to council services, identifying gaps in provision of services to the community and supporting residents in accessing services provided by other organisations.

11. Climate implications

- 11.1 There are no climate impacts associated with this report, however as the review progresses this will be regularly reviewed to ensure that any recommendations will not have a negative impact.

12. Corporate implications

- 12.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:
- Community safety implications
 - Environmental implications
 - ICT implications
 - Asset management implications
 - Procurement implications
 - Human resources implications
 - Planning implications
 - Data protection implications
 - Voluntary sector

Background papers: None.

Contact officer: Rebecca Owen, Democratic Services Manager
Executive member: Councillor KWP Lynch

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HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY

13 MAY 2024 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT:

Cllr P Williams (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Cllr LJ Mullaney, Cllr H Smith, Cllr P Stead-Davis, Cllr BE Sutton and Cllr A Weightman

Also in attendance:

Officers in attendance: Rebecca Valentine-Wilkinson and Ashley Wilson

366. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Surtees and Councillor Glenville .

367. Minutes of previous meeting

It was moved by Councillor Weightman, seconded by Councillor Smith and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2024 be confirmed as a correct record.

368. Declarations of interest

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

369. Aged Debt Quarter 4 2023/24

Members were informed of the position on sundry debts as at 31 March 2024.

In response to a question from members about the housing repairs debt for over 90 days that had risen over the last 4 quarters, it was confirmed that this was part of the housing cycle of repairs that had seen more activity.

Members noted the report.

370. Business rates and pooling update Quarter 3 2023/24

Members were updated on the business rates performance from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023.

Members noted the report.

371. Treasury Management Quarter 4 2023/24

Members were updated on the treasury management activity in the fourth quarter of 2023/24.

In response to a question from members around the management of day-to-day cash flow it was confirmed that short-term borrowing had been put in place to cover the shortfalls.

In response to a further question from members it was confirmed that the £3,000,000 borrowed for capital expenditure was highlighted in the short term borrowing section of the report because it hadn't been taken out for longer than a year.

Members noted the report.

372. Finance & Performance Scrutiny Work Programme

Members were updated on the future work programme.

Members noted the report.

(The Meeting closed at 6.53 pm)

CHAIR

HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY

8 JULY 2024 AT 6.30 PM

PRESENT: Cllr MJ Surtees - Chair
Cllr P Williams – Vice-Chair
Cllr DT Glenville, Cllr LJ Mullaney, Cllr H Smith, Cllr P Stead-Davis,
Cllr BE Sutton and Cllr A Weightman

Also in attendance:

Officers in attendance: Rebecca Valentine-Wilkinson and Ashley Wilson

39. Minutes of previous meeting

It was moved by Councillor Williams, seconded by Councillor Sutton and

RESOLVED – the minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2024
be confirmed as a correct record.

40. Declarations of interest

There were no interests declared at this meeting.

**41. Performance & Risk Management Framework end of year summary for
2023/24**

Members were provided with the end of year summary for 2023/24 for performance indicators, service improvement plans, corporate risks and service area risks.

Members noted the 2023/24 end of year status and reviewed the corporate and service area red risks that posed a higher level threat to the council's objectives and priorities.

In response to questions from members, officers confirmed that there was a full review being carried out for all targets as some targets were not capturing some of the regulatory changes, and these would be updated for the next financial year to reflect current practice.

In response to a question from members around the under performance of the housing stock, it was confirmed that it was taking longer for voids work to be completed due to the complexity of the voids and targets were due to be reviewed for housing stock/repairs as some of the targets and performance indicators were not reflecting the changes. Members asked for additional information around these targets to be provided at the next meeting including the number of voids and suggested this may be a matter for the Housing working group to look at.

In response to questions from members about the conditions of the ground at the crematorium, officers confirmed that:

- The costs of continuing with a council owned and operate option was not viable due to increasing costs of construction and risk on the financial viability of the project. Therefore a partner was being sought and a report would be presented to members on the future of the crematorium site if a prospective partner came forward.
- The history of the site conditions and issues involved had been communicated to members on prior occasions.
- The current ground conditions on the site were now considered suitable for construction on the site.
- A consultant with considerable experience in this area was now working with the council to put together options to find and attract a potential partner.
- Should a commercial partner be appointed, the site would be a crematorium operated by a commercial operator in partnership with the council.
- If the decision was made to sell the land a formal valuation would be needed to confirm any potential sale price. A value in the range £1,250,000 - £1,500,000 maybe possible but this would need to be confirmed to members should such a disposal be agreed.

Members also requested that additional information be provided at the next meeting to support the number of fly tipping incidents being reported and enforcement actions taken. Members felt this area would be a candidate for a smarter target when next reviewed.

Members noted the report.

42. Business Rates & Pooling update quarter 4 - 2023/24

Members were informed of the business rates and pooling performance from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

Members noted the report.

43. Financial outturn 2023/24

Members were updated on the financial outturn for 2023/24.

In response to a question from members around the Housing Repairs Account (HRA) debt write offs in relation to deceased debtors, officers reported that the amounts owed would be recovered from the estate of the deceased where possible, but this was sometimes not successful as there were no contacts available for who was managing the estate. This led to no response to letters that could not be followed up any further.

Members approved the recommendations in the report.

44. Finance & Performance Scrutiny Work Programme

Members were updated on the future of the work programme.

Members noted the report.

(The Meeting closed at 7.10 pm)

CHAIR

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HINCKLEY AND BOSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING TASK & FINISH GROUP

8 MAY 2024 AT 12.00 PM

PRESENT: Cllr MJ Crooks - Chair
Cllr C Harris, Cllr MJ Surtees and Cllr P Williams

Officers in attendance: Valerie Bunting, Steven Connor, Rebecca Owen, Madeline Shellard and Sharon Stacey

7. **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Gibbens and Lambert.

8. **Declarations of interest**

No interests were declared.

9. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

10. **Empty homes**

An officer from the private sector housing team informed members of the work of the service in relation to empty homes including issues resulting from hoarding, techniques to encourage owners to bring properties back into use, and powers available.

Information from council tax was requested in relation to the number of empty properties, how long they had been empty, particularly those that had been empty for at least two years.

Targeting empty homes was discussed and it was acknowledged that due to the increase in damp and mould work, there was no capacity for additional work on empty homes. It was noted that the team couldn't proactively contact owners of empty homes, but if an empty home was reported, a questionnaire was sent. Officers reported that the Borough Bulletin was used to encourage those with empty homes to come forward, but the response rate was low. It was suggested that a full article be included in a future Borough Bulletin.

The difficulty of selling a home when a resident was in care or when they had deceased but there was a charge on the property for care costs was discussed.

11. **Changes in council tax premium on empty properties**

The Democratic Services Manager provided some information from Revenues & Benefits on the changes to charging council tax on empty properties. It was agreed that a senior officer from the Revenues & Benefits Service be invited to

the next meeting to give a full update on the new regulations and provide figures on numbers of empty homes, for how long they had been empty and numbers of council tax payers paying enhanced rates due to their property being empty for an extended period of time.

12. Housing needs study - private rented housing

The Housing Strategy & Enabling Officer provided an update on the housing needs study and the growth of the private rented sector. Discussion ensued in relation to private rented housing including some tenants' reluctance to complain about the condition of a property due to the worry of being evicted, and the affordability of properties for larger families.

The questions that might be put to a letting agent at a future meeting were discussed, including their opinion of standards of private rental properties. It was also suggested that a tenant who has had problems with a privately rented property could be invited.

Some of the problems of getting registered providers on board for S106 housing were highlighted. It was also noted that shared ownership seemed to have been overshadowed by the first homes schemes.

It was suggested that an outcome from this group may be to lobby government to give councils more freedom, powers and ability to buy new stock.

13. Census information

Some interesting points were noted from the census information. The following points were raised:

- The types of houses previously suitable for first time buyers were often purchased by landlords to rent out
- Some landlords were leaving the market due to new tax implications
- Properties were often extended, leaving fewer smaller properties.

14. Agenda and information required for next meeting

The following was suggested for the next meeting:

- Invite a letting agent, a tenant and a private landlord
- Draft a list of areas to lobby on
- Invite an officer from Revenues & Benefits to present council tax changes and figures.

15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting was agreed for 12pm on 13 June.