

# **BOROUGH OF BARROW-IN-FURNESS**

## **HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM**

Meeting: Thursday, 15th March, 2018  
at 2.00 p.m. (Committee Room 4)

Group Meetings at 1.15 pm

### **A G E N D A**

#### **PART ONE**

1. To note any items which the Chairman considers to be of an urgent nature.
2. To receive notice from Members who may wish to move any delegated matter non-delegated and which will be decided by a majority of Members present and voting at the meeting.

3. Admission of Public and Press.

To consider whether the public and press should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any of the items on the agenda.

4. Declarations of Interest.

To receive declarations by Members and/or co-optees of interests in respect of items on this Agenda.

Members are reminded that, in accordance with the revised Code of Conduct, they are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests or other registrable interests which have not already been declared in the Council's Register of Interests. (It is a criminal offence not to declare a disclosable pecuniary interest either in the Register or at the meeting).

Members may however, also decide, in the interests of clarity and transparency, to declare at this point in the meeting, any such disclosable pecuniary interests which they have already declared in the Register, as well as any other registrable or other interests.

5. Confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting held on 18th January, 2018.
6. Apologies for Absence/Changes in Membership.

#### **FOR DECISION**

#### **OPERATIONAL**

- (D) 7. Cumbria Choice Based Lettings.

- (D) 8. Annual Garden Competition.
- (D) 9. Purchase of Freehold.
- (D) 10. Housing Service – Investment in Social Value.

**NOTE:** (D) – Delegated to the Executive Committee  
(R) – Referred to the Council

## **HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM MEMBERS:**

Councillors: K. Hamilton (Chairman)  
D. Barlow  
S. Blezard  
D. Brook  
J. Heath  
W. McEwan  
A. Thurlow  
L. Williams

Tenant Reps: Mandy Anderson  
Allan McIntosh  
Mervyn Gray  
Eddie Lynch

Substitutes: Two vacant positions

### **For queries regarding this agenda, please contact:**

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# HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM

Meeting: Thursday 18th January, 2018  
at 2.00 p.m.

PRESENT:- Councillors Hamilton (Chairman) and Barlow.

Tenant Representatives:- Mrs M. Anderson, Mr M. Gray, Mr E. Lynch and Mr A. McIntosh.

Officers Present:- Colin Garnett (Assistant Director - Housing), Paula Westwood (Democratic Services Officer - Member Support) and Katie Pepper (Democratic and Electoral Apprentice).

## 26 – Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2nd November, 2017 were taken as read and confirmed.

## 27 – Housing Maintenance Investment Programme 2018/19

The Assistant Director - Housing had submitted a report with the purpose of agreeing the expenditure profile for 2018/2019. The proposed profile and priorities had been based on the agreed Five-year Asset Management Strategy 2015 and made reference to the findings of the 2014 Stock Condition Survey.

He reported that the principles adopted in the 2018/19 proposed programme continued with the previously agreed targets as set out in the 2015 Asset Management Plan (AMP) which had been agreed by Members at the Housing Management Forum meeting held on 27th August, 2015 and sought to ensure:-

- The Council maintained the Decent Homes Standards.
- The aspirations of Tenants were considered and incorporated within the Programme.
- To work collaboratively with other housing providers and contractors to improve delivery of planned and responsive repair services.
- Ensure properties were safe, energy efficient and weatherproof; and
- Investments were prioritised on a just in time and worst-first basis.

He advised Members that Officers would need to undertake a further detailed survey of the condition of the housing stock and related assets in 2020.

### 1. Progress during the Current Year 2017/18

The progress of works during the current year had been presented as follows:-

## **Decent Homes Standard (DHS)**

Of the 76 non decent properties identified in the 2014 Stock Condition Survey, 71 now met the standard but 5 properties remained non-compliant due to Tenant refusals (3 No) or that work was scheduled to be completed (2 No) in the next financial year.

## **Planned Maintenance**

Delivery of planned investments and major works transferred from Cumbria Housing Partners to Procure Plus during 2017/18. The arrangements continued to be an effective delivery method in terms of value for money, compared with historical costs. The new arrangements with Procure Plus Holdings offered additional savings on fees and continued to deliver efficiencies through streamlined management, administration and monitoring of the contracts. Members had been requested to note that the delivery of investments via Procure Plus Holdings offered additional social value benefits throughout the borough.

- Phase 4 of Roosegate re-roofing and rendering works were 100% complete;
- Dalton cavity wall and wall tie replacement works were 100% complete;
- External painting improvements were 100% complete;
- Bathroom improvements were 40% complete;
- Heating improvements were 52% complete;
- Rewire improvements were 75% complete;
- Yew Tree estate roofing works were 25% complete; and
- Craven Park Court roofing works were 50% complete.

Whilst all work streams shown above were expected to be completed by the end of the financial year, there was an ongoing problem with the Walney rendering as there were a number of supplementary works identified that required Officers to consult further with Leaseholders.

The 2017/18 window installation works were presently on hold due to ongoing cost clarification matters with the Contractor and Procure Plus Holdings.

Both schemes were not expected to re-commence until the new financial year.

## **2. Suggested Investment Profiles for 2018/19**

The proposed investment profile for 2018/19 had been attached as an appendix to the report.

The profile followed the “sustainable” investment model shown in the 2015 Asset Management Plan and built on existing priorities to upgrade external components such as roofs and external wall finishes. Heating and electrical circuits continued to receive significant investment whilst the trend to spend less on kitchen and bathroom improvements would continue for the foreseeable future.

There had been some newly arising maintenance needs identified with regard to the following work streams;

- Fire Risk Assessments;
- Re-Roofing (Greengate estate);
- Re Pointing works (Newbarns estate); and
- Radon Gas (Dalton, Askam and Lindal).

The HRA baseline model allocation for 2018/19 was based on an asset portfolio containing 2,590 (Forecast at 1/4/2018) properties:

Maintenance Allowance (per property £1281.14)	£3,318,157
Major Works (per property £744.40)	£1,928,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>£5,246,157</b>

Members had been requested to note that Officers would be conducting a detailed performance review of the responsive repairs and gas Contractors during 2018/19 in conjunction with Procure Plus Holdings. It was anticipated that the review would be undertaken in late spring/early summer and the findings of the review would be reported to Members in early autumn 2018.

### **3. Progressing the Planned Investment Works**

Over the next year, major investment works would continue to be delivered through the existing arrangement with Procure Plus.

Members had been requested to note that the 2018/19 program included some newly arising investment needs that which had not been identified in the 2014 stock condition survey as follows:-.

- **Fire Risk Assessments**

Following the fire at Grenfell, Officers had undertaken a detailed fire risk assessment of all Council owned flats with communal access arrangements to identify potential fire risk hazards. The survey also included analysis of housing shops and additional fire risks that may exist due to the location of living accommodation and its close proximity to light industrial cooking facilities.

A detailed summary of the fire risk assessment findings had been included in the Fire Risk Assessment report contained in Agenda Item No. 9 (Minute No. 28 refers).

- **Re-Roofing (Greengate estate)**

Since the 2014 Stock Condition Survey there had been a significant number of repetitive minor roof repairs on this estate. This was evidenced by the numerous lead straps that were present on some elevations and was linked to the general age and condition of the slate covering, nails and battens. Members' agreement had been requested to re-roof the estate over a 3 year period.

There were a small number of Leaseholders on the Greengate estate who would be affected by the re-roofing works.

- **Re-Pointing Works** (Newbarns estate)

There were large areas of the Newbarns estate which had a mix of facing brick and render facades. Some elevations required extensive re-pointing works in order to maintain adequate weather protection. Members' agreement had been requested to re-point the affected properties on the estate over a 2 year period.

There were a number of Leaseholders on the Newbarns estate who would be affected by the re-pointing works.

- **Radon Gas** (Dalton, Askam and Lindal)

Officers had identified a contingency budget (£100,000) to carry out any essential works identified during the Radon Gas testing programme to be conducted by Public Health England.

It was anticipated that Members would be provided with a detailed report of the Radon Gas test results in August 2018 regarding the recommendations from Public Health England and any arising improvement required.

#### RECOMMENDED:-

1. To note progress on achieving and maintaining the Decent Homes Standard;
2. To agree the annual investment profile which had been appended to the report and is included at **Appendix 1** to these Minutes;
3. To agree continued delivery through Procure Plus; and
4. To note the newly arising investment works identified in the report.

#### **28 – Fire Risk Assessments 2018/19**

The Assistant Director - Housing submitted a report to provide Members with an update on the findings of the recent Fire Risk Assessment report and sought Members' approval to introduce a number of key priorities and actions regarding fire safety in communal areas, flats and shops premises.

He advised that following a joint fire safety inspection with Cumbria Fire Service in August 2017, Officers had sought quotations from suitably qualified Fire Safety Consultants to undertake a detailed review of the Council's housing assets with regard to fire safety in order to ensure compliance with the Council's statutory duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO).

He reported that a total of 114 premises had been inspected. The survey had included all of the Council's two and three storey flats that were accessed via a

communal access area or via a walkway or balcony arrangement as well as all of the housing owned shops and commercial premises.

He advised that the Fire Safety Consultants had provided a detailed report for each asset and advised that the Council should periodically review fire safety arrangements and ensure a fire risk assessment was undertaken every time there was a significant modification to the design, layout or use of the affected buildings.

This report pulled together the key findings and recommendations that were common across all two and three storey blocks accessed via a communal access area or via a walkway or balcony arrangement. Members had been requested to note that there were some recommendations which were specific to individual blocks that required an individual response to Residents or Leaseholders; e.g. a Resident had installed their own PVCu flat entrance door that was failing fire safety standards.

Fire safety risks had been classified in line with the table shown below:-

Risk Summary		Potential severity of harm		
		Slight Harm	Moderate Harm	Extreme Harm
Likelihood of fire occurring	Low	Trivial	Tolerable	Moderate
	Medium	Tolerable	Moderate	Substantial
	High	Moderate	Substantial	Intolerable

The highest priority risks had been shown as INTOLERABLE and SUBSTANTIAL and Members had been requested to bear that in mind when prioritising improvements.

Other categories of fire safety risk include Moderate; Tolerable and Trivial.

In general terms the report had highlighted 12 key issues with varying degrees of risk, summarised as follows:-:

1. Shops (especially with cooking facilities) should have a heat detector and interlinked smoke alarm to ensure the flats above shop premises would be aware of a serious fire; **INTOLERABLE RISK**
2. Stairways should be kept free from fire risks especially vehicles that contained flammable liquids or batteries. **SUBSTANTIAL RISK**
3. In ground and first floor blocks, smoke detection should be installed in the stairways and interlinked with detectors in individual flats to give occupants early warning of a fire affecting their only escape route; **MODERATE RISK**
4. Where the only exit from a bedroom was through the lounge there should be interlinked detectors in the lounge and hallway; **MODERATE RISK**
5. All flats with walkway/balcony escape routes should be fitted with emergency lighting arrangements; **MODERATE RISK**
6. Where the exit route from a flat was down a stairway which was separated from the hallway there should be interlinked smoke detectors in the stairway/hallway; **MODERATE RISK**
7. All flats should have a fire route notice detailing the action to be taken in the event of a fire; **TOLERABLE RISK**
8. Provision to be made to ensure bins were kept in a secure area away from buildings, particularly escape routes; **TOLERABLE RISK**

9. High fire risk areas should be separated from escape routes by fire resisting construction to a minimum of 30 minutes; **TOLERABLE RISK**
10. All replacement fire resisting doors should be positively self-closing (not rising butt hinges) and include intumescent strips and cold smoke seals; **TOLERABLE RISK**
11. New blocks or replacement doors should not include letter boxes in doors unless they have been tested to BS: 476; **TOLERABLE RISK**
12. Communal entrances should have a general purpose extinguisher, this should be secured in a box to stop malicious usage; **TOLERABLE RISK**

In addition to the 12 key risks outlined above, the Fire Safety Consultant's report had also made reference to a MODERATE RISK that was associated with a general lack of break glass alarm points near the main exit doors from stairways. The primary function of the break glass was to allow Residents to warn others of a developing fire. Members had been requested to note that many of the Council's communal areas were subject to frequent vandalism to the communal security doors and CCTV equipment. In view of that, it was likely that break glass alarms would become additional focal points for vandals and as such may lead to an increase in nuisance calls to the Fire Service.

Officers had suggested that the present interlinked smoke detection systems in three storey flats and the proposed installation of interlinked smoke detectors in two storey flats accessed via a communal access area or via a walkway or balcony arrangement provided sufficient fire notification for Residents without the need for additional break glass provisions.

The report also highlighted a number of supplementary recommendations that related specifically to the layout, emergency lighting and means of escape arrangements to individual shops. These issues had arisen as a result of unrecorded and in some cases unauthorised alterations to the shop premises over many years.

Members had been requested to agree that Officer's review and discuss these fire safety concerns to the affected shops on a case by case basis. They had also been requested to note that a budget provision of £125,000 had been allocated in the 2018/19 investment programme to undertake fire safety improvements and had been requested to endorse and agree the following suggested approach and implementation timetable:-

<b>WORK REQUIRED</b>	<b>ESTIMATED COST</b>	<b>TIME FRAME</b>
Install new heat detectors and interlinked smoke alarms to all flats above shops or commercial outlets	£30,000	April – June 2018
Agree a policy to introduce a quarterly inspection regime for communal areas and access walkways including recording and monitoring of refuse storage facilities and enforcement of fire safety prohibition notices	NIL (Conducted In-House by Mobile Caretaker Unit)	February 2018



Install new interlinked smoke alarms to all two storey flats with communal or walkway/balcony access arrangements	£60,000	April – June 2018
Install new break glass alarm points to all three storey flats	£10,000	April – June 2018
Install new emergency lighting to all flats with walkway/balcony access arrangements	£15,000	April – June 2018
Install new interlinked smoke detectors to all flats where the bedroom exits into the lounge or where the exit route from a flat is down a stairway which is separated from the hallway	£5,000	April – June 2018
Provide each block of flats serviced by a communal or walkway/balcony access arrangements with an escape route plan and muster point notice	£500	February 2018
Agree a policy to replace existing flat entrance doors and fire escape route doors with new fire retardant doors that offer a minimum of 30 minutes fire protection when flats become void	£25,000 pa (Funded from HRA – Void budget)	April 2018
Agree a policy not to install firefighting equipment (Extinguishers, Blankets etc.) to blocks of flats with communal or walkway/balcony access arrangements and to advise residents to sound the alarm, evacuate and ring the fire service	NIL	February 2018
Endorse the Officers view that the existing interlinked smoke detection systems provide an adequate means of raising the alarm should a fire be detected and that break glass points were not required.	NIL	N/A

#### RECOMMENDED:-

1. To agree to install new heat detectors and interlinked smoke alarms to all flats above shops or commercial outlets;
2. To agree a policy to introduce a quarterly inspection regime for communal areas and access walkways including recording and monitoring of refuse storage facilities and enforcement of fire safety prohibition notices;
3. To agree to install new interlinked smoke alarms to all two storey flats with communal or walkway/balcony access arrangements;
4. To install new emergency lighting to all flats with walkway/balcony access arrangements;

5. To agree to install new interlinked smoke detectors to all flats where the bedroom exits into the lounge or where the exit route from a flat was down a stairway which was separated from the hallway;
6. To agree to provide each block of flats serviced by a communal or walkway/balcony access arrangements with an escape route and muster point notice;
7. To agree a policy to replace existing flat entrance door and fire escape route doors with new fire retardant doors which offered a minimum of 30 minutes fire protection when flats become void;
8. To agree a policy not to install firefighting equipment (Extinguishers, Blankets etc.) to blocks of flats with communal or walkway/balcony access arrangements and to advise Residents to sound the alarm, evacuate and ring the Fire Service;
9. To agree that Officers review and discuss these fire safety concerns to the affected shops on a case by case basis; and
10. To endorse Officers' view that the existing interlinked smoke detection systems were an adequate means of raising the alarm should a fire be detected and that break glass points were not required.

## **29 – Planned Investment and Planned Maintenance 2017/18**

The Assistant Director - Housing submitted information relating to the Planned Investment and Planned Maintenance Programme for 2017/18. The information is attached at **Appendix 2** to these Minutes.

RESOLVED:- To note the information.

<b>REFERRED ITEMS</b>
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<b>THE FOLLOWING MATTERS ARE REFERRED TO COUNCIL FOR DECISION</b>
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## **30 – Housing Revenue Account 2018/19**

The Assistant Director - Housing had submitted a report with the purpose agreeing a Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget for the 2018/19 financial year. His report provided details about the Expected Outturn Budget and balances for the current year.

Whilst there were a significant number of factors considered in drafting a HRA budget, a major factor had been the fall in income because of the Government's rent Policy to reduce social rents by 1% over a four year period. With that and continued Right to Buy, the reduction of income had been estimated at £500k over the 2018/19 and 2019/20 financial years.

At the last meeting on 2nd November, 2017, Members had agreed to reduce expenditure by £265k. Proposals within the Assistant Director's report provided the

opportunity to reduce further the expenditure of the HRA in 2018/19 by a further £200k.

It was understood that the Government had indicated that at the end of the current four-year rent policy, social rents would be allowed to increase by CPI plus 1%.

Members had been requested to note whilst that offered some good news, the income would remain challenged with the continued sale of Council properties through Right to Buy, increasing costs and inflation generally.

The Assistant Director - Housing suggested the Council needed to remain focused on controlling expenditure with the objective of ensuring there was adequate provision to maintain the stock, provide services which reflected the aspirations of Tenants and had regard to the reducing property base. He also requested Members to note that ongoing adjustments to the establishment may be required to ensure effective or efficient delivery of services. Whilst downsizing of the establishment had been agreed, he advised of two areas of the Service where additional staffing input or changes to existing staffing was required to deliver the necessary services, in particular Homelessness Services and the Maintenance Team. The Housing Management Forum does not have responsibility for establishment matters so a report would be presented to the next Executive Committee to consider these proposals. The proposals did not add any cost to the overall HRA but would be funded by new grants or alternative use of existing resources.

He reported that the savings already agreed had resulted in some downsizing of teams. The new arrangements were bedding in and early indications were colleagues were adjusting to the new arrangements.

#### **1. Expected Outturn Budget 2017/18**

The outturn for the year forecasted a net deficit of £37,900.

#### **2. Balance on the Expected Outturn for 2017/18**

The above was likely to result in the following movement in balances.

<b>2.1</b>	Major Repair Reserve balance as at 31 March 17	£1,194,586
	Windows Scheme for 17-18 deferred	£150,000
	Revised Reserve balance as at 31 March 2018	<b><u>£1,344,586</u></b>
<b>2.2</b>	Housing Revenue Account balance 31 March 17	£1,443,736
	Forecast deficit	(£37,900)
	Estimated Balance at year end	£1,405,836
<b>2.3</b>	Voluntary Repayment Provision as at 31 March 17	£5,632,520
	Forecast Provision 2017/18	£870,010
	Provision at year end	<b><u>£6,502,530</u></b>

### 3. HRA Budget 2018/19 Proposal

The proposed budget for 2018/19 had been appended to the report and the following factors had been taken into account:

- 3.1 A further reduction of 1% on rental income for residential property.
- 3.2 The housing stock had been re-valued in the year resulting in an increase in depreciation costs.
- 3.3 Reductions in expenditure of £265k agreed at the previous meeting on 2nd November 2017 had been incorporated.
- 3.4 The set aside costs for the voluntary repayment of debt (our mortgage) had again been re-assessed, and because we had put more aside in previous years could be reduced by £140k\*
- 3.5 New grants for the delivery of the Homeless Reduction Act enabled some costs of homelessness to be covered by the grants reducing expenditure required by the HRA of £45k.\*

\* Target for reducing expenditure over two years c£500k, if the above were agreed this would result in agreed reductions in expenditure of £450k.

- 3.6 A contingency of £50k had been retained in the draft budget to which is referred to below.
- 3.7 Bad debt provision increased by £35k over the £91k calculated budget.

The result of the above actions provided a draft budget which allowed for the creation of an Operational Reserve Budget.

### 4. Dwelling Rents

- 4.1 The effect on rents of the 1% reduction would be as follows:-

	52 Weeks	48 Weeks	Average Rent decrease over 48 weeks
2016/17	£76.13	£82.48	<b><u>82p</u></b>
2017/18	£75.36	£81.65	
<b>2018/19</b>	<b>£74.61</b>	<b>£80.83</b>	
<b>Decrease</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>1%</b>	

- 4.2 Moving forward, the expenditure within the HRA had been agreed through the democratic process but it was the case that occasions arose which resulted in under and over spends within the account. It had been suggested in order for the HRA to be managed effectively it would be appropriate to operate an "Operational Reserve" which provided the opportunity for the Director of

Resources to manage budget volatility as and when required within the parameter of the overall agreed budget. A figure of £200k had been identified for that purpose for 2018/19, as referred to above, which was the benefit to the HRA of implementing the required budget reductions in a timely manner. The HRA fund balance would be assessed by the Director of Resources; the minimum fund balance and reserve would be established.

## **5. Garage Charges**

The Council had discretion to set the appropriate rent for garages. During the current year, garage rents had increased by 2% and there did not appear to be any difficulty in attracting new occupiers when they become vacant. It was therefore proposed garage rents increase again in 2018/19 by 2%.

	No.	2016/17	2% inc 2017/18	2% inc 2018/19	Increased revenue 2018/19
Garage rate 1	27	£6.96	£7.10	£7.24	£4,511
Garage rate 2	451	£9.60	£9.79	£9.99	
Total	478	£216,840	£221,135	£225,646	

## **6. Additional considerations**

### **6.1 Service and Facility Charges for dispersed and furnished property**

The future funding of service charges would change at some point with the rollout of Universal Credit. However, additional cost was still incurred for the provision of such accommodation and it had been suggested the charges remained the same until the future funding of such accommodation becomes clearer.

### **6.2 Service charges e.g. communal area cleaning**

Agree Officers increase charges as necessary to reflect any increases in contractual arrangements for the delivery of the service. Charges to be adjusted as and when necessary to reflect recovery of the cost of provision with no additional administrative charges.

### **6.3 Charges for enquiries in respect of re-sale of former Council Property**

From time to time the Council would receive enquiries from third parties involved in the process of re-selling ex-Council property. Moving forward Members had been requested to agree the introduction of a charge for recovering the cost in replying to such enquiries. Officers would progress that in time for introduction early in the new financial year.

#### **6.4 Charges for the administration of leases**

It was the Council's practice to recharge Leaseholders for a range of costs incurred by the Council in managing leasehold property. In short the recharges were "at cost" so did not include any reward for the service, e.g. the actual cost of the insurance for the property or a repair. However, the Council had not previously included any charge for the cost of administering the lease.

Members had been requested to agree in principle that Officers would investigate and progress the option to introduce such charges, identify the cost and look to introduce such charges at the appropriate time.

#### **6.5 Adelphi Court**

The property was leased to the Richmond Fellowship (previously Croftlands Trust) as a supported housing scheme and under the terms of the lease it was recommended the annual rent of £40,000 remained the same for 2018/19.

#### **6.6 ASB Action Ltd - Service Level Agreement 2018/19**

Effective management of anti-social behaviour was a key component of the Housing Service achieving its aim to provide well-maintained homes and estates where people choose to live.

ASB Action Ltd offered a specialised service which focused on assisting social housing providers to deal with such issues including specialized legal advice at short notice for a fixed fee ensuring value for money.

Members had been recommended to agree a further annual Service Level Agreement with ASB Action Ltd, and suspend the requirement to obtain alternative estimates. The cost of a 10-day Service Level Agreement including training was £4,785 plus VAT.

### **7. Priorities for the Year**

During the financial year there were a number of key factors which would impact on the service, summarised as follows:-

#### **7.1 Maintain a balanced Housing Revenue Account**

As referred to elsewhere in this Report the Housing Service Review Working Group (HSRWG) had identified a significant reduction in expenditure agreed at the meeting on the 2nd November 2017 and further proposals had been included in this draft budget. Should those be agreed it would go a considerable way to meet the estimated reductions in expenditure required to implement the annual 1% rent reduction.

It was understood that the Government had now proposed after the end of the current rent Policy, they would allow social Landlords to increase rents by CPI plus 1%. Whilst that was positive news, it did not change the fact that the number of properties continued to decline and there would be a need for

ongoing financial prudence, remodelling or consideration of the future delivery models for service delivery.

**Action:** The HSRWG would continue to meet to consider actions to maintain a balanced HRA.

## **7.2 Introduction of New Housing Management System**

Officers continued to progress the introduction of the new CX system. The go live date had to be delayed until the 10<sup>th</sup> November and had to be “staged” to reflect the practicalities of introducing the new system. It had been unfortunate that key personnel involved in the planning stages had left the Council during the implementation and with them, the knowledge they had acquired over the course of the Project. Work was ongoing to remedy the ongoing outstanding issues with Stage 1 and it was envisaged these matters would take some time to complete before progressing on to Stage 2 implementation. This would require ongoing external support and a contingency had been included within the draft budget to ensure that could continue.

**Action:** The delivery of the CX system would remain a key priority across the service during 2018/19.

## **7.3 Welfare Changes and Income Collection**

The roll out of Universal Credit would commence in July 2018. Members were aware of the changes that would introduce and whilst Officers had and continued to prepare for its introduction, it was clear it would be a significant risk to the Councils income and become a more significant feature of the work of the Operations Team particularly.

**Action:** Operations would continue to prepare and adopt best practice to minimise the risk to the income of the service.

## **7.4 Introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act**

Increased responsibilities for Housing Authorities from April 2018 required increased focus on “prevention”, engagement with potentially homeless families/persons at an earlier stage and increased “case management” over a longer period. Indications were that additional staffing resources would be required and the Council would receive new grant funding to assist with implementation.

**Action:** This Forum does not have the remit to consider matters of establishment. This had been provided for information only and possible changes would be progressed to the Housing Options Team through the Executive Committee.

## 7.5 Housing Maintenance Team

Agenda Item No. 8 (Minute No. 27) had I had identified a number of matters pertinent to the maintenance services but, again for the sake of completeness, Members had been requested to note that the Assistant Director - Housing would be making proposals to the Executive Committee for changes to the Maintenance Team establishment to resolve capacity issues and build resilience into the team.

In addition, the team were currently trialling a new software system in conjunction with Procure Plus Holdings to make use of mobile videoing to share the condition of vacant property and agree repairs with a Contractor. During the testing stage it was about improving communications however, it may provide options for further service development once the usability of the system had been proven. Provision had been included within the Maintenance Budget for that purpose.

**Action:** Agree the continued development of the mobile video facility as a service improvement in the management of void property and note that changes with the establishment would be progressed via the Executive Committee as above.

## 7.6 Water Rates Collection

During deliberations at Tenants' Forum and the HSRWG it had been agreed to continue collection of Water Rates for a further year which had been progressed. The matter would need to be re-considered next financial year as to whether it should remain a longer term arrangement but needed to be considered against a potential loss of a further c£200k should the Council stop doing so.

## 7.7 Rent collection weeks

At the meeting on 2nd November, 2017 it had been agreed to consult on whether the Council should move to a 52/53 weekly collection arrangement. It was agreed to consult Tenants on the basis we would go with the majority of responses. There was a disappointing rate with only 35 completed returned votes with only 12 in favour of the change. Based on our published intention of going with the majority, although only a small return it was suggested that the Council remained with a 48 week collection.

## Summary

The proposed budget provided assurance that the Council could respond to the ongoing reduction of income in the next two years.

The creation of the 'Operational Reserve Fund' provided a provision for flexibility in the service but also to ensure a balanced budget over the following financial year (2018/19) should further reductions or efficiencies not be identified.

Achieving that had required considerable support from colleagues to adjust to new ways of working. Moving forward our principles would be:-



1. Simplifying processes wherever possible;
2. Flexibility in teams to build in resilience; and
3. Making maximum use of the CX system when fully operational.

The above efficiencies would become a focus for the culture of the service to achieve the long-standing objective of the Housing Service to “provide homes and communities where people choose to live”.

Officers would continue to work with the HSRWG to consider the direction and options for the future delivery of the Service.

#### RECOMMENDED:-

1. To note the information provided through the Report;
2. To note the Expected Outturn Budget for 2017/18 of a deficit of £37,900;
3. To note the balances on the Expected Outturn Budget for 2017/18;
4. To agree the basis on which the 2018/19 draft Budget had been proposed in 3.1 to 3.7 of the report;
5. To agree the creation of an Operational Reserve as described at Point 4.2 of the report;
6. To agree the garage increase of 2% as detailed at Point 5 of the report;
7. To agree or note others outlined in 6.1, 6.2 and 6.5 of the report re: changes for resale enquiries;
8. To agree the introduction of administration charges for Leaseholders;
9. To agree the continuation of the Service Level Agreement with ASB Action Ltd and waive the normal procurement requirement in those instances;
10. To agree the ongoing role of the HSRWG to consider action required to maintain a balanced HRA; and
11. To agree the approach to matters raised in 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6 and 7.7 of the report.

The meeting closed at 2.42 p.m.

# 2018/19 MAINTENANCE BUDGET

# APPENDIX A

Total Budget £5,246,157

## Routine Property Repairs

£995,492	Tenant Demand Repairs
£250,934	Preliminary Costs
£100,000	Major Works(Tenant Led)
-£10,000	<i>Rechargeable Repair Income</i>
-£8,209	<i>Leasehold Repairs Income</i>

## Void Property Repairs

£429,827	Void Property Repairs
£83,645	Preliminary Costs

£1,841,688

## Cyclical Repairs

£302,106	Gas Servicing/Breakdown
£19,176	Door Entry Maintenance
£180,000	External Decoration (PP)
£61,000	Electrical Testing
£11,528	TV Aerials
£40,000	Consultancy Fees
£7,800	Legal Fees
-£15,641	<i>Service Charge Income</i>

£605,969

## Major Improvement Work

£100,000	Disabled Adaptations
£15,000	Asbestos Surveys
£30,000	Decoration (After Major Works)
£20,000	Fencing and Gates
£320,000	Rerendering (Walney) (PP)
£172,500	Re-Pointing (NEWBARNs) (PP)
£40,000	Communal Lighting (PP)
£10,000	Communal Painting (PP)
£20,000	Garage Improvements
£8,000	Shop Improvements
£5,000	Community Centres
£5,000	EEB Improvements
£125,000	Fire Risk Assessment Works
£100,000	Contingency
-£100,000	<i>Service Charge Income</i>

£870,500

## MRA - Capitalised Improvement Work

£306,000	Rewires (PP)
£420,000	Heating and Insulation (PP)
£207,000	Bathrooms (PP)
£50,000	Kitchens (PP - VOIDS)
£200,000	Window and Door Replacements (PP)
£120,000	Re-Roofing Houses (DAL) (PP)
£450,000	Re-Roofing Houses/Flats (Greengate) (PP)
£25,000	Flat Roofing Houses (ROO) (PP)
£150,000	Re-Roofing Flats (Hindpool) (PP)

PP = Procure Plus

£1,928,000

## APPENDIX B

SCHEME	PROCUREMENT TYPE	AVAILABLE BUDGET	EXPENDITURE TO DATE	ESTIMATED START DATE	ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE	CONTRACTOR	COMMENTS	Leasholders affected?
RE-ROOFING AND POINTING WORKS ROOSEGATE ESTATE PHASE 4	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£490,000	£ 357,382	1.4.2017	1.4.2018	DLP Roofing	100% COMPLETE	No
WINDOW & DOOR REPLACEMENTS VARIOUS HOUSING AREAS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£200,000	£ -	1.4.2017	1.4.2018	TOP NOTCH	0% COMPLETE (DISPUTE WITH CONTRACTOR)	No
WALNEY RENDER & DAMP PROOFING WORKS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£234,000	£ 497	1.4.2017	1.4.2018	DLP Roofing	PILOT BLOCK COMMENCED DECEMBER 2017 ADDITIONAL CONSULATION	No
DALTON CAVITY WALL TIE REPLACEMENTS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£150,000	£ 24,729	1.4.2017	1.4.2018	DLP Roofing	80% COMPLETE AWAITING INVOICES FOR HANDOVER	No
CRAVEN PARK COURT RE-ROOFING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£120,000	£ 759	1.10.2017	1.4.2018	DLP Roofing	ON SITE	Yes
YEW TREE ESTATE RE-ROOFING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£240,000	£ 1,404	1.10.2017	1.4.2018	DLP Roofing	ON SITE 10% COMPLETE	Yes
COMMUNAL ENTRANCE LIGHTING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£40,000	£ 6,545	1.11.2016	1.4.2018	GEORGE JONES	ON SITE	Yes
COMMUNAL ENTRANCE PAINTING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£10,000	£ -	1.11.2017	1.4.2018	GEORGE JONES	ON SITE	Yes
GARAGE IMPROVEMENTS	CUMBRIA ROOFING	£75,000	£ 590	1.4.2017	1.4.2018	CUMBRIA ROOFING	GARAGE SITES IDENTIFIED WORKS DUE TO START 2018	No
REWIRES	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£306,000	£ 245,236	1.4.2017	1.4.2018	K WILSON	75% COMPLETE	No
BATHROOMS	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£126,000	£ 419	1.8.2017	1.4.2018	WRIGHT BUILD	ON SITE	No
HEATING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£420,000	£ 316,799	1.4.2017	1.4.2018	AFM GAS Ltd	52% COMPLETE	No
PAINTING	CUMBRIA HOUSING PARTNERS	£180,000	£ 95,800	1.4.2017	1.4.2018	G JONES	100% COMPLETE	Yes

### HOUSING MAINTENANCE COMMITMENTS 2017-18

	Funding Available	EXPENDITURE TO DATE	Weekly Available	Gross Comm. as a % funds available
Tenant Demand Repairs	£ 1,394,575	£ 498,219	£ 26,819	36%
Voids	£ 480,038	£ 311,282	£ 9,232	65%
Gas Servicing	£ 293,000	£ 209,453	£ 5,635	71%
Decoration Vouchers	£ 30,000	£ 22,114	£ 577	74%
Environmental Impmts	£ 25,000	£ 9,614	£ 481	38%
Disabled Adaptations	£ 250,000	£ 84,622	£ 4,808	34%
Electrical Testing	£ 81,000	£ 19,419	£ 1,558	24%
Door Entry Maintenance	£ 19,176	£ 14,490	£ 369	76%

<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 7</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 15th March, 2018</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Assistant Director - Housing</b>	

**Title: Cumbria Choice Based Lettings**

**Summary and Conclusions:**

The purpose of this report is to provide you with an update on Cumbria Choice Based Lettings (CBL) software, governance and the way forward for the future.

**Recommendations:**

Members are asked:-

1. To note the content of the report;
2. To agree to continue to work within the CBL Framework and explore options in terms of software and report back to Housing Management Forum; and
3. To agree that the Assistant Director - Housing makes reasonable resources available from the HRA Budget 2018/19 to contribute towards any cost to improve the existing system.

**Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide you with an update on the current position with Cumbria Choice Based Lettings (CBL) software, governance and the way forward for the future.

**CBL Facts**

- There are currently 13,087 applications registered on Cumbria Choice across Cumbria.
- 2,467 properties were let through CBL from April 16 to March 17. As a result of limited flexibility 10% of those were let outside of the advertising process on CBL.
- We are seeing a growing weekly increase in the number of applicants choosing to register on line. Online applications now account for 53.8%

although Barrow Borough Council has the highest number of paper applications.

- A Partnership Agreement is in place bringing together all District Councils and the main registered providers who jointly oversee the delivery. This sets out the governance.
- South Lakeland District Council manages the budget and South Lakes Housing employ the co-ordinator who works three days a week
- The CBL Project Board meet every two months supported by the Operations Group

We have recently carried out a review of Cumbria CBL as a partnership. Areas reviewed included:

- Partner's commitment to CBL as a partnership;
- Review of the current software;
- Governance of CBL; and
- Requirements and guidance needed to respond to the new Homeless Reduction Act (HRAct).

### **A summary of Key Findings**

- The software from Civica (Abitas) that is currently being used by Cumbria Choice is now considerably out of date, having not being upgraded since the partnership was established. There are numerous operating difficulties with it which makes the system problematic for all parties including customers.
- Lack of communication and lack of structure within the partnership between the Partnership and Abitas/Civica.
- The Partnership Agreement is no longer relevant to the current operating environment and needs to be reviewed.
- The system does not support the Digital Agenda of all partners.
- It is not intuitive, there is little 'self service' making it resource intensive.
- There is urgent need to review the commitment to, the role of and the funding for the Co-ordinator role.
- Response to legislative change is poor ie, the HRAct and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- There is a weakness in terms of governance, decision-making, risk management, resource and investment, strategic direction.

The findings of the Review were reported at the Registered Providers/Local Authority Group Meeting (RP/LA Group) on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 2018. A summary of the recommendations is as follows:

- The RP/LA Group, representing all partners, agrees a commitment to Cumbria Choice.
- The RP/LA Group provides a vision for CBL that the Project Board can develop.
- CBL sits within the Cumbria Housing Group (CHG) framework. The RP/LA Group becomes the lead for CBL in Cumbria.
- To avoid excessive risk and get the best possible service moving forward, Civica should be retained at present as the ICT supplier and we work with them to get the strongest possible solution.
- A formal structure is agreed for communication between the Partnership and Civica to ensure Civica carry out planned improvements, they are monitored, reviewed and well managed going forward.
- The Partnership Agreement is reviewed and in future contains funding liability, opt-out arrangements and engagement requirements from each Partner.
- Terms of Reference are established for the RP/LA Group, Project Board and Operations Group, Project Board has a fixed Chair.
- The system meets the need of Data Protection legislation now and in the future.
- Joint liability for funding the Co-ordinator role is established with Partners.
- Partners share the capital and revenue costs and procurement arrangements are reviewed.
- Processes are amended to respond to the requirements of the new HRAct.

### **Next Steps**

- A Task and Finish Group has been established and charged with developing the recommendations into a project plan to include risk log, resource requirements and timescales to be brought back to RP/LA Group to agree how the work will be resourced.
- Barrow Borough Council to take the lead through the Task and Finish Group to deliver the requirements/guidance of the new HRAct.
- Joint funding be secured to continue working with a specialist ICT consultant to deliver system improvements needed both in the short and longer term.
- The role of Cumbria Housing Partners be explored to assist with future procurement activity.

#### (i) Legal Implications

The recommendation has no legal implications.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The Cumbria Choice Partnership provides a common allocation policy across Cumbria. The policy is transparent for customers and all partners benefit from the partnership arrangement having a shared IT system, policy and procedures and a central co-ordinator role. To break away from the partnership would involve cost implications and resources to operate a stand-alone CBL policy.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has no financial implications at present. Agree the Assistant Director - Housing make reasonable resources available from the HRA budget 2018/19 to contribute towards any cost to improve the existing system going forward.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no implications.

(v) Equality and Diversity

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on service users showing any of the protected characteristics under current Equalities legislation.

(vi) Health and Well-being Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the Health and Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil

<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 8</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 15th March, 2018</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Assistant Director - Housing</b>	
<b>Title: Annual Garden Competition</b>	
<b>Summary and Conclusions:</b>	
The purpose of this report is to raise the question whether the Housing Service should continue with the Annual Garden Competition.	
<b>Recommendations:</b>	
Members are asked to agree that the Housing Service no longer run the Annual Garden Competition.	

**Report**

The Annual Garden Competition has been run by the Housing Service for many years. The 2017 event was its 30th anniversary since it was restarted.

However, I think it is appropriate timing to ask you whether it is still appropriate to run the event having consideration for the operational challenges the Housing Service is faced with, including financial but also operational changes that are required.

In considering the matter I would make the following comments regarding the practicalities of the Housing Service running the event:

- Cost - in terms of monetary value, is not the primary issue, it costs around £2k to put the event on each year.
- There are, however, other hidden costs which I cannot easily quantify including staff time to promote, encourage participation, preparation for the day and reporting after the event, arranging sponsorship, judging, obtaining prizes, etc. I cannot emphasise enough that this has a significant time implication within the Service and is potentially a distraction from the day-to-day job.
- Much of this activity is lead by one Officer, who volunteers to do it with the help of other Officers when practical. In reality only a limited number of Officers are in a position to volunteer to help in the process and, with the deletion of posts in the current budget, the pool of potential Officers is reduced further.



As referred to above, the event has been operating for some years. Whilst popular with those who attend I think one of the significant considerations in the delivery of the Service is what added benefit it delivers. I am sure to those who attend it is a positive but I then find it difficult to establish whether it has a positive benefit to the wider community on estates or the delivery of Housing Services generally.

As a Tenant engagement process, I have personally used the event as platform to promote more involvement with our Tenant participation processes, flyers have been left on tables, but basically receiving little response.

In taking a wider view of the event, it is clearly popular with those who attend - last year was the largest entry with 60 entrants. However, this was following pro-active promotion by Officers.

We have an excellent turnout from schools and I would suggest the arrangements for young people to meet the Mayor and see the inside of the Town Hall is a positive outcome.

However that said the entry of 60 is only a small percentage of the total housing stock of c2600.

In summary, the direct financial benefits for ending the garden competition are not a key consideration. I would suggest the indirect costs in terms of distraction from our core role and effort from the delivery of the event outweighs the potential benefits it accrues.

Having said that, I know a number of Tenants will be disappointed, but I would suggest it is an appropriate time to consider the matter.

(i) Legal Implications

The recommendation has no legal implications.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The ability of the Housing Service to operate a 'time-consuming' event with a reduced establishment and other operational requirements.

(iii) Financial Implications

The recommendation has no financial implications.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no implications.

(v) Equality and Diversity

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on service users showing any of the protected characteristics under current Equalities legislation.

(vi) Health and Well-being Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the Health and Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil

<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 9</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 15th March, 2018</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Assistant Director - Housing</b>	
<b>Title: Purchase of Freehold</b>	
<b>Summary and Conclusions:</b>	
The purpose of this report is to advise the Forum I have received an enquiry – but not been served with a formal notice yet - from a Leaseholder who owns two adjoining flats to purchase the freehold of the properties.	
<b>Recommendations:</b>	
Members are asked:-	
1. To accept the application; and	
2. To authorise the Assistant Director - Housing to progress the sale of the freehold for these two adjoining flats.	

**Report**

I have recently received an enquiry – but not been served with a formal notice yet - from a Leaseholder to purchase the freehold of his two flats. The legal term is “enfranchisement”; Section 3 of The Leasehold Reform, Housing & Development Act 1993 provides guidance on the procedure.

The leaseholder’ properties are within a block of four flats. They own two of the flats which are on one side of the block, on the ground floor and first floor. I have taken advice and understand as the two properties are “separate” from the adjoining two, could be developed independently, and have no common services it would be classed as a separate building for the purpose of the Act and the Leaseholder would have a right to purchase the freehold.

Although I have received tentative enquiries previously, the Council has not previously sold the freehold to a leaseholder or group of leaseholders. I will be taking further advice to progress the sale.

(i) Legal Implications

Section 3 of the Leasehold Reform, Housing & Development Act 1993 provided the right for leaseholders to purchase a freehold of their properties subject to

certain conditions. Such conditions are not for “individual” flats but must be part of a group.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

There are no detrimental implications to the Council. The Council will no longer levy an annual leaseholder charge, but will also not be required to provide any services.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no implications.

(v) Equality and Diversity

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on service users showing any of the protected characteristics under current Equalities legislation.

(vi) Health and Well-being Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the Health and Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil

<b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</b>	<b>(D) Agenda Item 10</b>
<b>Date of Meeting: 15th March, 2018</b>	
<b>Reporting Officer: Colin Garnett, Assistant Director - Housing</b>	
<b>Title: Housing Service – Investment in Social Value</b>	
<b>Summary and Conclusions:</b>	
<p>The purpose of this report is to provide information to the Forum on the investment in social value which is being delivered through our maintenance arrangements. We deliver much of our ongoing investment through a framework arrangement owned by Procure Plus Holdings (PPH), and previously via Cumbria Housing Partners (CHP). Both are not-for-profit organisations and a fundamental requirement of the above is to reinvest in social value initiatives in the areas in which their customers operate.</p>	
<b>Recommendations:</b>	
<p>Members are requested to note this information and I will provide ongoing updates at appropriate times.</p>	

### **Report**

The information in this report relates to activity in the past, but in the future I will look to provide more timely information.

As referred to above, we were previously part of CHP and paid a fee for use of the framework, plus a small uplift to enable the activity of social value. This enabled a number of our Contractors at the time to employ apprentices, and the trainees to receive support from CHP.

During the years we operated within the CHP arrangement, we delivered a number of Social Value initiatives including the refurbishment of Cotswold Crescent Community Centre and contributing to the refurbishment of the Youth Centre on Ormsgill. Unfortunately, it proved increasing difficulty to encourage applications through this arrangement, but if the monies generated for this purpose were not be spent in the year, they were returned to the Council.

CHP in the latter year of our membership moved to a position where the social value arrangements were delivered through Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF). On leaving, the monies still held from our arrangement were c£37k. Bids are invited from local organisations, with a requirement they will be used to benefit areas of Council housing and focus on employment opportunities.

More recently, I have been in communication with Signal Films who have successfully been awarded c£10k from CCF and will look to promote a digital film scheme over coming months.

Since delivering our maintenance plans through PPH, efforts to invest in social value are continuing. We pay a set percentage for using their framework, but as a not-for-profit organisation, any profits made are reinvested, based on the value of the maintenance delivered by the Landlord.

Over the time of our relationship with PPH, I have provided assistance to focus on organisations within the Borough who can assist them with the process. PPH's main target is to create employment opportunities and, again, must focus on Council estate areas.

As a result of our partnership, Re:vision, which is the charitable arm of PPH, at our suggestion, met with various organisations within Barrow who support local people into employment. As a result of these conversations Re:vision have started working directly with Inspira based in Barrow town centre. Inspira have been commissioned to support 10 people from Barrow Borough Council housing communities, into employment over the next 12 months. Referrals for this additional support are being made directly by the housing teams. In addition to this, the framework activity has supported nine apprentices (six who started in previous years and three starting this year) who are working with Contractors carrying out maintenance work on behalf of Barrow Borough Council.

As you aware, the framework remains our preferred method of delivery for financial and ease of delivery on a day to day basis but the social values further supports the approach. I will update you further on the progress of delivering social value as it becomes available.

(i) Legal Implications

The social value arrangements are an integral element of customers of the framework. Should the Council decide not to support the arrangements then alternative arrangements for the delivery of our investment plans would be required.

(ii) Risk Assessment

The recommendation has no implications.

(iii) Financial Implications

The cost of the delivery of this arrangement is included in the fees for using the PPH framework.

(iv) Health and Safety Implications

The recommendation has no implications.

(v) Equality and Diversity

The recommendation has no detrimental impact on service users showing any of the protected characteristics under current Equalities legislation.

(vi) Health and Well-being Implications

The recommendation has no adverse effect on the Health and Wellbeing of users of this service.

Background Papers

Nil