



ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024-2029



BE BOLD BE BIRMINGHAM

VISION

Based on our research, and feedback from residents, we have designed our strategy focusing on three priority areas, which were those that were most important to our residents:

- Safe this means we commit to making sure our homes are safe to live in. This includes how we support our communities and manage estates, as well as the fabric of the homes we provide.
- Warm this means we commit to making sure we make our homes as environmentally friendly, energy efficient, and more affordable to heat for our residents.
- Sustainable this means we commit to making a positive contribution to neighbourhoods, helping to make them resilient over the long term, providing the right infrastructure and regenerating challenging estates.



INTRODUCTION

Birmingham City Council is the largest Local Authority social housing provider in the UK. Our aspiration is to make sure that all residents live in warm, safe and sustainable homes. The strategy intends to support the preservation of Birmingham City Council homes and focuses on improving living standards for our residents.

The housing sector is facing several economic, political, social and environmental challenges. This strategy looks to future proof our resident's homes so that they are warm, safe and sustainable for years to come. To achieve this, we must be honest about the constraints and challenges both locally and nationally, actively promoting and maintaining positive relationships with our residents, building trust and accountability. This should be supported by suitable long-term funding through the 30-year Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan.

We strive to ensure that through effective management of our housing stock we can provide homes, neighbourhoods and communities that are warm, safe, sustainable and enjoyable to live in. Most importantly of all, we will ensure we get the basics right as a landlord and create homes residents can be proud of.

The strategy will be reviewed after five years. We think this is imperative given the scale of the challenges in Birmingham and as an acknowledgment that we must make further improvements within the homes of our residents to achieve our vision and to ensure we take into account any future legislative national policy requirements.

This strategy has been developed with our residents, with their voice influencing all aspects of our decision making. Delivery, monitoring and evaluation of this strategy will include our residents, making sure investment in our assets is focused on what is truly important to them. The importance of providing high quality affordable homes is reflected in our strategic priorities, outlined in our Housing Strategy (2023 – 2028).

Priority 1: a strong supply of genuinely affordable housing.

Priority 2: citizens can access and sustain the right home for them.

Priority 3: neighbourhoods are enhanced, and the quality of existing homes is improved.

This strategy also aligns with the Councils' Corporate Plan (2022 – 2026). We believe this strategy is bold, does not shy away from the challenges facing the city and the stock portfolio and contributes to the Council's overarching objectives to level up. Consistency with strategic priorities is critical to stimulate synergy, drive change and provide clarity and stability of the council's vision.

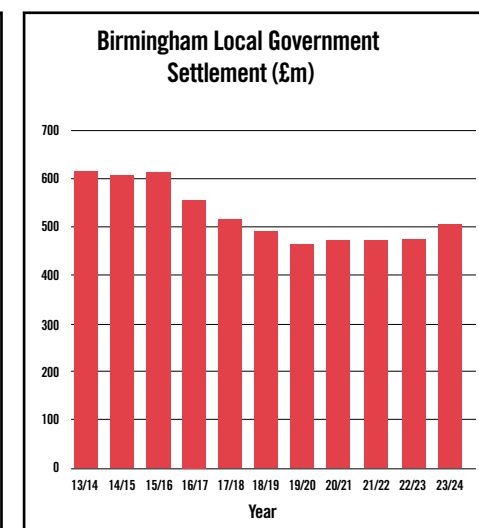
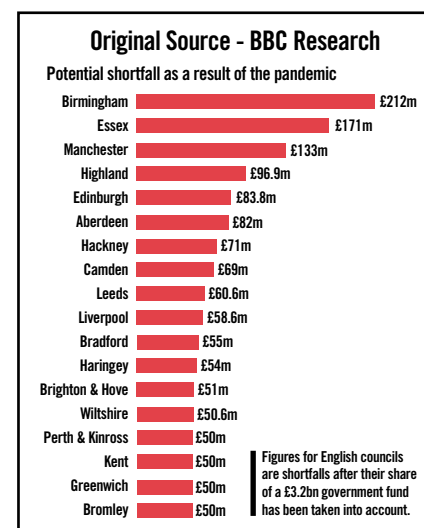
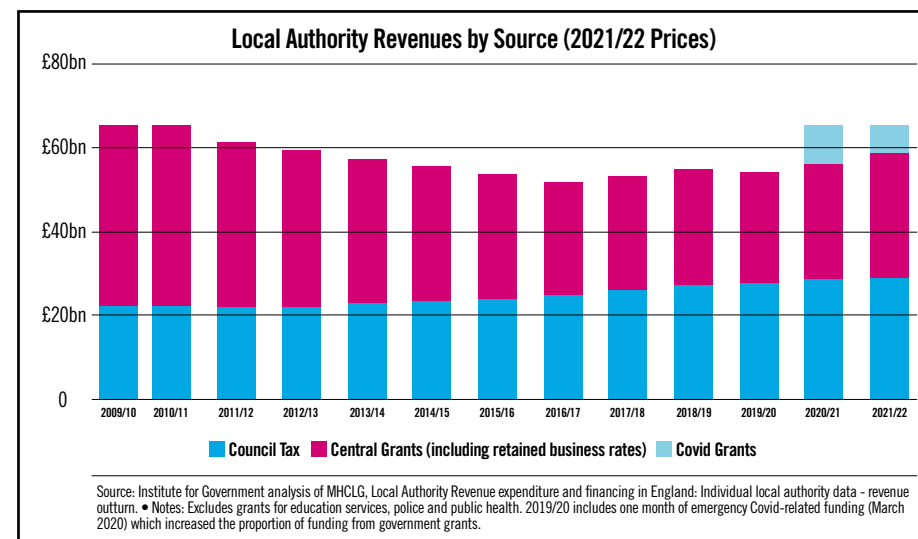
Additional related documents:

- 2022-25 Digital Strategy and the Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan (Nov. 21).
- Everybody's Battle, EVERYBODY'S Business initiative 2022.
- Birmingham Development Plan.
- Central Birmingham 2040 Strategy.
- Our Future City Plan.
- Birmingham City Council Levelling Up Strategy.
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy.
- Digital Cities.
- Decent Homes Standard.
- Housing Strategy 2023-2028.
- Levelling Up Strategy - Central Government.
- Corporate Plan.
- Consumer Standards 2017.
- Fire Safety Act (2021).
- Building Safety Act 2022.
- Independent Review of Building Safety and Fire Regulations (2018)
- Homelessness Reduction Act (2017).
- National Planning Policy Framework 2021.
- Rent Standard.

NATIONAL CONTEXT

The way in which our assets are managed is significantly influenced by the national landscape. Public sector funding has faced cuts since 2010, Council budgets have been cut in half (£15bn real term reduction), and austerity measures have culminated in a £30-50bn shortfall in public finances. The pandemic further reduced the capability of delivering investment with the restrictions on services

to residents. Inevitably crucial services have been cut to balance budgets, which directly impacts citizens and disproportionately affects infrastructure in local areas. Local Authorities now have a combined £3.2bn overall budget pressure, with a continued need to create efficiencies.



Birmingham is impacted in the same way; evidence demonstrates the city's own financial position was likely to rise to £146.5million by 2026/27 and with s.114 intervention and the Council's current financial pressures this could be significantly higher. Between 2011- 2019, 43 local services for young people were closed and local community hubs such as the Phoenix Community Centre in Witton (2017), Square Club in Weoley Castle (2017), and the Newtown Community Centre have been closed or sold.

Birmingham City Council continues to provide homes for some of the most deprived communities; 71.5% (42,298) of the stock portfolio falls within the 10% most deprived LSOAs in the country. The Council have ambitions to level up and have developed their own strategy setting out a blueprint to achieve this. The way in which the stock portfolio is managed plays an essential part in reducing inequality. This strategy demonstrates our commitment to developing healthy communities, making sure households live in homes that are safe, warm and sustainable.

This strategy aims to respond to some of the key national challenges; whilst there are a multitude of factors that contribute, these are summarised by three key themes:

- Achieving Route to Zero
- Operating in a new regulatory landscape - Social Housing Regulation Act
- Maintaining Decent Homes Standards



Our 30-year investment plan, which supports the objectives set out in this strategy, focuses on ensuring we face these challenges head on, targeting investment towards getting the basics right as quickly as possible for our residents. It also accounts for the significant reduction in investment over the last 12 years with a requirement for a catch-up programme of investment for the life of this strategy.

Climate change and its devastating effects on the environment, people and communities is one of the most pressing issues across the world. In May 2019, the UK government declared a national climate emergency and committed to target net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Addressing the climate crisis has never been more urgent for our city, nation and its people. Scientific evidence shows that current human activity is increasing the rate of global warming which, in turn, causes rising sea levels and more extreme weather such as heat waves and flooding. The Energy Saving Trust reports that UK's housing stock is the least energy efficient in Europe with homes in the UK accounting for 21% of all carbon emissions. The way in which we heat, use and operate our homes is not sustainable and we need to prioritise phasing out of high carbon fossil fuel heating, such as gas, oil and coal, to reduce our emissions and improve air quality. It is our responsibility to ensure our stock is energy efficient by investing in the most inefficient homes and using data and intelligence to make better informed decisions on where, when and how.

REGULATORY AND LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Over the last 5 years there have been significant changes to the regulatory and legislative environment following the Grenfell tragedy and more recently the tragic death of Awaab Ishak. The Regulator of Social Housing is moving from a reactive, relatively light touch regulatory approach towards a proactive and more robust level of oversight, mirroring the likes of CQC and Ofsted in other sectors. This is summarised within the Social Housing Regulation Act.

The Social Housing Regulation Act places a greater emphasis on empowering residents and increases the role of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) to intervene on behalf of residents and seek "swift and fair" redress from local authorities where there is a failure to comply with the Consumer Standards (2017).

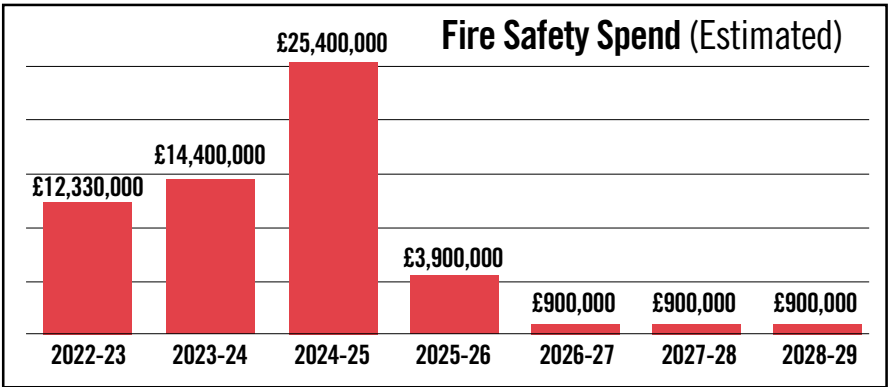
In May 2023 the Council received a regulatory notice from The Regulator of Social Housing for a breach of the following:

- The Home Standard - 39% of our homes are categorised as ‘non-decent’. Performance, across some compliance areas, was identified at below that which they should be; specifically fire safety in low rise blocks; electrical safety; asbestos and the number of overdue remedial actions were all noted.
- The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard concerning our performance relating to:
 - The way we listen to and learn from complaints.
 - The way we manager complaints
 - How we engage with our residents



To supplement the Social Housing Regulation Act, the Housing Ombudsman updated their Complaint Handling Code in October 2022, again placing a greater responsibility on landlords to demonstrate compliance with legislative obligations and to streamline the way in which complaints are managed.

Grenfell directly led to the implementation of the Fire Safety Act (2021) and Building Safety Act (2022). Responding to these changes has resulted in significant investment (fire safety spend is shown in the below diagram) on fire safety in high-rise blocks. The Council is responsible for 209 blocks with over 10,000 units and the new regulations have required the Council to divert resources to support vital fire safety work. The Council’s high-rise portfolio represents around 17% of the overall housing stock, significantly higher than most other landlords, inducing a greater financial pressure. Despite the additional investment requirements, no financial provisions were provided to Local Authorities to meet these requirements.



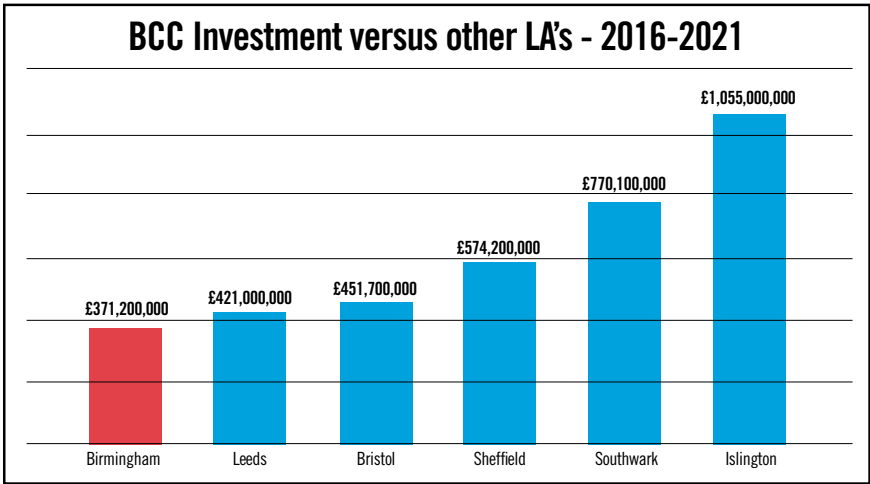
All legislative changes post Grenfell continue to promote co-regulation with residents, giving them more of a voice in the way their homes are managed. The regulations aim to create greater transparency around landlord performance through the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), ensuring that tenants can hold the Council to account for their performances and the way in which they deliver services.

DECENT HOMES STANDARDS (2006)

The existing Decent Homes Standard has been in effect since 2006, providing a minimum acceptable national standard for social landlords to adhere to. The existing standard is currently under review and it is likely that the definition of “decent” accommodation will be widened both in terms of the internal and external condition of accommodation and energy efficiency. The Council is acutely aware that compliance with the existing Decent Homes Standard has been impacted by the need to invest in other areas (such as fire safety), and that achieving a position of compliance with the existing standard (irrespective of any future heightened standard) will require significant investment and will take time. The Council has begun to take steps to bridge this gap with additional investment in the Capital Programme for 2023-2024 and the intention, in the HRA Business Plan to increase investment over the next 8 years to reach Decent Homes Standard.

LOCAL CONTEXT - INVESTMENT

Due to the age and nature of the Council’s housing stock and the investment pressures the Council has faced in recent years, the current condition of the housing stock is a concern. A large percentage of the complaints received relate to repairs and/or the condition of tenants’ properties. The below graph demonstrates the “scaled spend” over the last five years and demonstrates the amount that the Council would have invested in its stock if investment had matched the pace of other comparable local authorities.



SAFE

Making sure our properties and residents are safe is a basic right for citizens living in Birmingham City Council homes. Our properties must be compliant with all relevant standards to provide full confidence to residents that they are safe, particularly considering widespread fear and concern post Grenfell. This includes the way we manage our estates, listen to residents when they raise concerns and make sure we build communities that can truly thrive in their environment.

KEY COMMITMENTS

Ensure that we achieve 100% compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements by 2028, except Decent Homes Standards which will be achieved by 2031.
Achieve the minimum levels of satisfaction (60%) through Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) collection and reporting process.
100% stock condition surveys undertaken on all BCC stock, as part of a 20% rolling stock condition survey programme.
Reduce the number of repairs per property per year from 4.4 to 3.3 by 2028.
Reduce the number of Disrepair and Litigation claims by 50% by 2028.
Will bolster investment in Decent Homes in line with expenditure set out in the HRA Business Plan and Capital Programme 2023/2024.
Reduce the number of residents experiencing ASB and improve the time it takes the Council to respond.
Re-integrate CCTV and security into blocks/homes where impact assessments support the need.
Develop a specific offer and relating standards for residents living in high-rise accommodation.
Develop and deliver a set of tenant-led service standards by 2028.
Review the service model, re-designing this to ensure our services are delivered locally and visibility in estates is improved.

DESIGNING PHYSICAL SOLUTIONS TO HELP REDUCE ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (ASB)

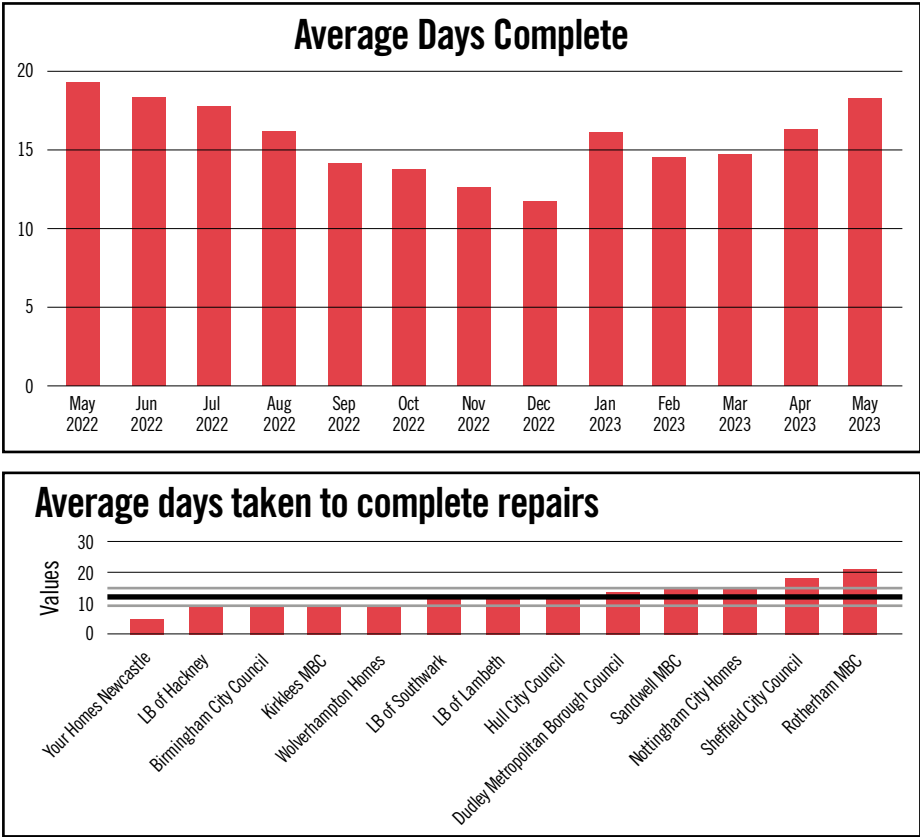
Residents have told us that anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a significant cause for concern, particularly on larger estates. The Council received 4384 reports of ASB in 2023/2023 and our most recent baseline TSM survey (July 2023) highlights that only 36.30% of tenants are satisfied with the way in which we address ASB. The issue was explored further in tenant focus groups. Tenants unanimously referenced the lack of CCTV and security as one of the key things they would like to see addressed within our investment plans.

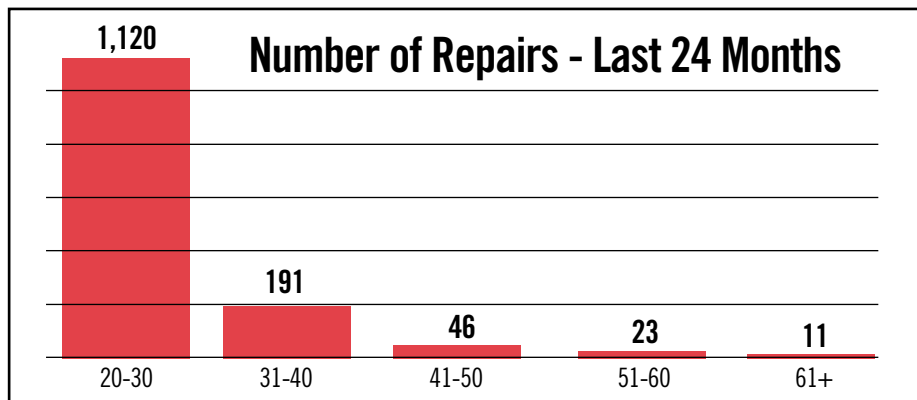
CCTV services were decommissioned in 2014/15 due to the financial implications of upgrading the service and the desire to minimise the costs to tenants. This, linked with the roll out of Universal Credit, meant that tenants would be under more pressure to manage budgets independently. A decision was made to move to an enhanced remote night security service and secure entry systems in all high-rise blocks. Our tenants have been clear in their message that CCTV would make them feel safer in their home. The provision and monitoring of CCTV presents both logistical and financial issues for the Council, the cost of upgrading, at the time of decommissioning was projected at £13m (£18m at 2023 costs). We are committed to working with our residents to find a solution that is cost effective but also improves the feeling of safety, particularly on our estates; we are beginning this process by piloting the implementation of CCTV where there are 'hot spot' areas of ASB and will proactively assess the difference this makes. This will support decision making around any potential further roll out across the portfolio.

The reduction of ASB will not be solved solely through the provision of CCTV, either in small pockets or across the whole portfolio. The need to embed a preventative approach will be paramount if we want to encourage communities that live together in harmony. A new ASB policy will be developed, focusing on intervening early, working in partnership and in accordance with the corporate commitments in this area, making sure residents have the support they need to succeed. This will be supported by a new Target Operating Model (TOM) across the Directorate, moving towards increased visibility, locality working and overall, a more proactive approach to delivering services.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY AND CONFIDENCE IN REPAIRS & MAINTENANCE

For our tenants to feel safe, the Council must have a reliable and responsive repairs service. Our Repairs & Maintenance services are currently delivered by strategic partners, Fortem and Equans - Fortem covering the South of the city and Equans covering North, East and West. Our partners deliver circa 250,000 repairs per year across all of our properties and an average of 4.4 repairs per property per year. Whilst complaints about the repairs service only make up 3% of the total repairs undertaken, the number of repairs per property, per year is significantly more than the national average at 3.3 repairs per property.





The number of repeat repairs has an obvious impact on tenant satisfaction, the most recent baseline TSM survey (July 2023) demonstrates that only 55.80% of tenants are satisfied with the most recent repair completed in their home. This data is supplemented by the learning from complaints; we continue to receive circa 500 complaints about repairs monthly. We accept that there is a disconnect between our contractor performance and what tenants are experiencing and commit to undertaking a full gap analysis, reviewing our systems and improving quality assurance to properly understand why the way in which the service is delivered is not working for our tenants. We have received criticism from the Housing Ombudsman in relation to both its repairs performance and efficiency, and the way in which it deals with complaints and provides effective recompense to tenants where failures have occurred.

A special report in January 2023 found severe maladministration and service failure across the repairs handling and resolution service. The Council has taken several steps to recognise and address the failures and the Housing Ombudsman has formally recognised the hard work shown to improve service delivery for our tenants. We commit to delivering on the recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman to provide a fit for purpose service that tenants can rely on.

We do have the control to make changes and commit to making sure that our contracts are robust and well managed moving forward. Our Repairs & Maintenance contracts are undergoing a full recommissioning process; this provides us with an opportunity to make sure any future contracts take into consideration the way tenants currently experience the service, ultimately focused on improving customer experience.

CITY	INVESTMENT 2016-2021	STOCK	INVESTMENT PER UNIT 2016-2021
Birmingham	£371.2m	59,000	£6,291
Bristol	£214.4m	28,000	£7,657
Islington	£456.5m	25,515	£18,244
Leeds	£388.3m	54,377	£7,140
Sheffield	£375.8m	38,887	£9,663
Southwark	£495.8m	37,962	£13,060

AREA	TOTAL OF NON-DECENT DWELLINGS - 2021/22 - RAW VALUE	% LA HOUSING STOCK THAT IS NON-DECENT
Birmingham	22,469	38.1%
Bristol	2,009	3.7%
Islington	1,122	4.2%
Leeds	497	1.3%
Sheffield	331	1.3%
Southwark	271	1.8%

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES TO INVEST

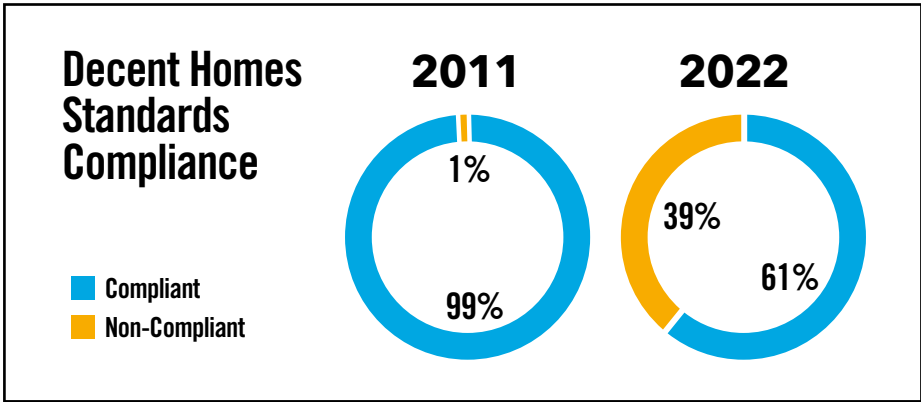
The Council have faced difficult decisions around what, when and how to invest in the stock portfolio; the requirement to divert funding, post Grenfell, has meant that investment in housing stock has not happened at the rate that the Council would have intended for investment works and for planned maintenance. This has resulted in both a gap in the Council's investment when compared to other local authorities with comparable stock holding, and a decline in the number of properties compliant with the existing Decent Homes Standard.

We know that providing safe homes means providing homes that meet the Decent Homes Standards, we are disappointed in our current position against Decent Homes Standards (39% non-decent) and are committed to unlocking investment to drive this forward.

The projected expenditure to achieve compliance with the current Decent Homes Standards, as well as achieving the Council's commitment to Route to Zero by 2030, with the ongoing pressures of compliance in a heightened regulatory landscape around Building and Fire Safety, means that the Council need to reconsider the way in which the Housing Revenue Account is managed to achieve these strategic priorities within the challenging timescales set.

No additional government funding has been made available to support this work, leaving the Council to find the resources within existing budgets.

Between 2004-2011, the Council invested circa £680m in achieving Decent Homes Standards, achieving 99% decency, although there was limited stock condition data to substantiate this. Due to investment pressures in the intervening period and the continuing deterioration of the Council's housing stock, the majority of which is at least 50 years old, the decency figure has dropped.



The Decent Homes Standard is under review and it is likely an enhanced standard will be implemented in the next 12 months, meaning we must invest as much as possible to try and catch up over time. The current backlog is an estimated £509m. The table below outlines the catchup programme of investment required, alongside the ongoing programme of investment needed to ensure our homes meet the decent homes standard.

The backlog around Decent Homes Standards is estimated using available data; at the time of publishing this strategy, we have currently have valid internal stock condition data for 29% of our properties and external condition data for 38% of our properties.

We also have 2,685 block surveys, making up 58% of blocks. Currently 8021 physical stock condition surveys have been completed within the last five years. An accelerated programme to meet the needs of the capital programme, the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing and increase decency standards, is being commissioned. This will ensure we meet the commitment to undertake 100% stock condition surveys on all Council homes stock, as part of a 20% per year rolling stock condition survey programme.

We accept that the limited stock condition data available makes vital decisions around investment difficult to make. We are committed to improving the data and intelligence across the portfolio and will ensure this is monitored throughout the life of the strategy.

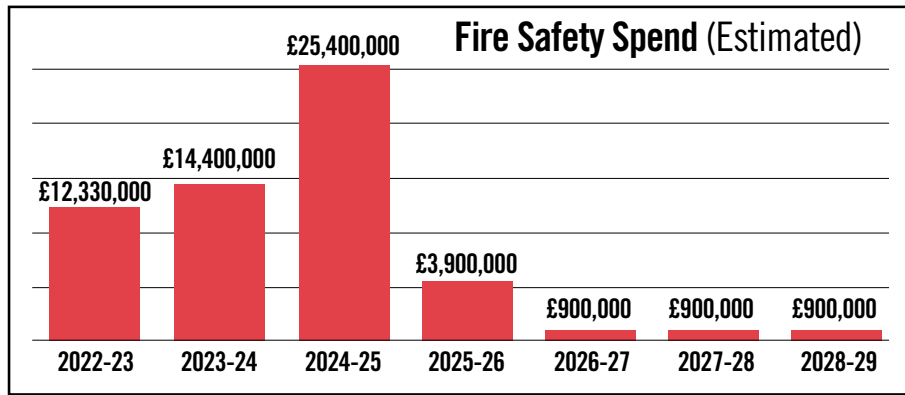
We know that the level of investment in the portfolio has dropped over recent years and are committed to putting things right. Our 30-year Investment Plan unlocks an additional funding to be targeted towards Decent Homes Standards on an annual basis; we know it will still take time to fully address the backlog of investment needed and understand the risks of a potential enhanced standard. However, we will adopt a methodological approach, making investment based on the intelligence we receive through our increased stock condition programme; whilst it will take time to bring our homes up to standard, we are confident and committed to facing the problem head on.

EMBEDDING A CULTURE OF COMPLIANCE

The Regulator of Social Housing will move from a reactive, light-touch approach to a more proactive regime in April 2024 and will soon consult on a refreshed set of Consumer Standards. The Housing Ombudsman have also made changes which have an impact on how landlords manage complaints, and a raft of requirements must be embedded to ensure compliance with the Building Safety Act (2022). Since the Grenfell tragedy, the Council has understandably invested in fire safety measures to mitigate the impact of any similar tragedy. The total annual investment in Building and Fire Safety has risen from £2m pre-Grenfell to £20m every year since.

Birmingham has more high-rise blocks than anywhere else in the country, and it is understandable that there has been an element of caution following the Grenfell tragedy. Over £33m has been invested to install sprinklers and we must invest annually to mitigate risk in the most high-risk properties. In total, we will have invested over £175m between 2016 and 2029 when the programme ends. We received no additional funding from central government towards these works, and this has had an obvious effect on our ability to invest in other areas throughout this time.

The lack of investment has impacted standard programmes, often referred to as the ‘big 6;’ whilst our attention has focused on high-rise blocks, other areas have had less resource attached to them. This has led to increased engagement with the Regulator of Social Housing.



REGULATORY COMPLIANCE				
'Big 6'		Carbon Monoxide Rollout 57.31%		
Gas	Properties Serviced	99.71%	Blocks Serviced	100%
Electrical	Properties Serviced	83.63%	Blocks Serviced	84.13%
Fire Risk Assessments	High Rise Blocks Serviced	100%	Low Rise Blocks Serviced	63.47%
Legionella	Properties Serviced	74.01%	Blocks Serviced	100.00%
Asbestos	Properties Serviced	94.46%		
Lifts	Lifts Serviced	97.21%		

Birmingham has re-focused, with compliance as a priority across all areas of work. Lagging programmes such as asbestos management and fire risk assessments in low-rise blocks are being quickly accelerated and a full review of all data across the ‘big 6’ is underway. Throughout the life of the strategy, we aim to ensure compliance across all the ‘big 6’ areas achieve at least 90%. We are working closely with the Regulator of Social Housing to make sure this happens and use this strategy as confirmation of our commitment to put things right.

PUTTING RESIDENTS AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO

Throughout the development of this strategy, we have made sure that the voice of our residents underpins all areas of activity. We have consulted with tenants through regular tenant perception surveys, across the board and drilling down into specialist services- for example, sheltered housing. We have undertaken several tenant focus groups to seek more detailed information on our priorities and sense check whether we have really understood the tenant's views. We also consulted City Housing Liaison Board, our resident representatives, throughout the process. The reality though, is that our residents have not always felt engaged with us as a landlord and this has been reflected both in complaints and through the pilot TSM work we have undertaken.

	MEASURE	TSM SCORES QTR 2, 2023/24	YTD
TP01	Overall satisfaction	47.20%	51.10%
TP02	Satisfaction with repairs	55.80%	58.10%
TP03	Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	55.80%	56.60%
TP04	Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	51.50%	52.90%
TP05	Satisfaction that the home is safe	62.30%	64.60%
TP06	Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenants views and acts upon them	38.30%	40.10%
TP07	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	49.00%	50.00%
TP08	Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	66.40%	71.10%
TP09	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	24.60%	21.10%
TP10	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	48.30%	46.50%
TP11	Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	46.30%	45.60%
TP12	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling antisocial behaviour	36.30%	30.40%

Our March 2023 TSM baseline survey, undertaken by industry expert Housemark, demonstrates that there are several areas where our tenants do not have confidence in our landlord functions but the overall improvements between March and July show an increase in our tenants' satisfaction. We commit to ensuring that, by the end of the strategy term, we achieve 60% across all areas of tenant satisfaction and will work hard to shift tenant perceptions into a more positive place.

We are also reviewing our formal engagement structures, looking to develop a more flexible model that enables greater representation across our resident base. We are working with industry experts TPAS to re-engineer engagement with our residents and provide a more varied menu of engagement that gives everyone a chance to engage with us, in a way that works for them. This includes embedding more transactional surveys, exploring opportunities to support community researchers or experts by experience to inform the way services are delivered. Our work with TPAS will enable residents to have a meaningful opportunity to co-regulate and co-design services, in turn, we can develop our understanding around their lived experience and genuinely use this to improve service delivery.

As part of this work, we must recognise the needs of hard-to-reach groups. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) in 2019 identified the need for greater provision of permanent and transit pitches for Travellers across the city, and an ongoing future need for suitable sites to be identified for growing families and for travelling households who expressed a desire to reside permanently in Birmingham. We commit to improve the quality of data in relation to Travellers to ensure that consultation and engagement is tailored to the needs of these communities.

We know that some residents engage differently and recognise the need to adapt our communication approach; we have already begun developing face to face surveys for sheltered accommodation sites so that we can seek their views using the best approach for them. We must mirror this approach across a broad variety of hard-to-reach groups so that we act inclusively when seeking out opportunities to engage with and involve our residents - one size does not fit all.

WHAT ARE WE ALREADY DOING TO KEEP OUR HOMES SAFE?

- We have commissioned TPAS to review our tenant participation services and formal engagement structures.
- We have completed a robust action plan against the Housing Ombudsman Paragraph 49 report, and this has been signed off by the Ombudsman.
- We have commissioned 4oc to deliver a root and branch review of our complaints service, including an in-depth analysis of the way in which complaints are managed.
- We have unlocked additional investment in Decent Homes across 2023/2024.
- We have mobilised a Compliance Board, providing assurance across all areas of landlord compliance including the 'big 6'.
- We have developed operational service plans to respond to TSM data.
- We have begun the initial stages of procurement for the new Repairs & Maintenance contract, to be awarded in April 2024.
- We have commissioned 2,000 stock condition surveys to be undertaken whilst we recruit internal capacity.
- We have developed mechanisms to regularly assess tenant perception and are working with Housemark to make sure this is delivered in an impartial and fair way.

FUTURE COMMITMENTS

- We will recommission the Repairs & Maintenance contract to provide a service more in keeping with what tenants want to see.
- We will improve quality assurance processes around our Repairs & Maintenance services, including undertaking a full customer journey review.
- We will deliver on 100% of the actions set out in the Housing Ombudsman Paragraph 49 report.
- We will embed our locality-based Target Operating Model (TOM) so tenants feel confident that concerns around safety will be managed and that staff are visible to address these.

- We will embed our experts by experience/community researcher model so tenants can be fully involved in strategies, policies, and service improvement.
- We will deliver our Engagement strategy ensuring that review our engagement structures to ensure these are representative of our tenant base and give flexibility for all of our tenants to engage.
- We will accelerate programmes across all of the 'big 6' to ensure they reach 100% compliance and that this is maintained in the future.
- We will launch our 30-year Investment Plan setting out how Decent Homes Standards will be improved over time.
- We will recruit internal capacity through accessing apprenticeships, increased training access and personal development to deliver a robust rolling stock-condition programme.
- We will pilot opportunities to implement CCTV in hot spot areas of ASB, exploring the potential to roll this out across the wider portfolio.
- We will review and launch our new ASB policy setting out a prevention focused approach to Neighbourhood Management
- We will develop a clear service offer, and engagement opportunities for hard-to-reach groups so that we are always inclusive in our approach.
- We will continue to prioritise investment in fire safety to ensure compliance with the Building Safety Act (2022) and mitigate the risk of fire across the board.

SUSTAINABLE

Ensuring our communities are sustainable is a key driver of the strategy. Considering, and addressing, multiple human needs, not just one at the exclusion of all others. A sustainable community is a place where people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives can feel welcome and safe, and where prosperity is shared.

The strategy hopes to address a long-term perspective – focusing on anticipating and adapting to change in both the present and future.

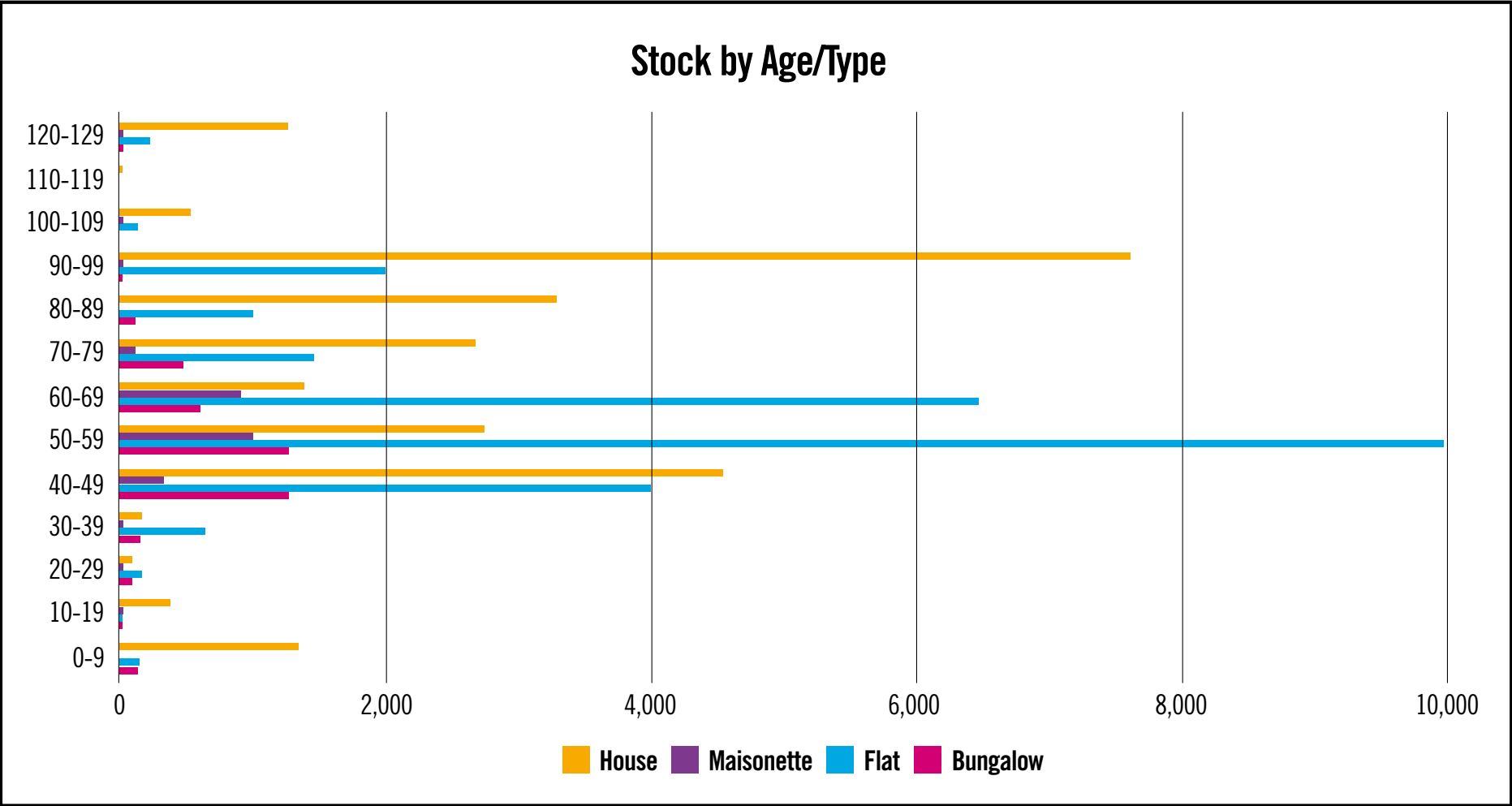
KEY COMMITMENTS

Ensure as many residents as possible are digitally included and can access Wi-Fi at home.
Improve data and intelligence across our full asset portfolio, making sure decisions around sustainability are based on clear evidence.
Undertake full sheltered housing review, and produce a robust offer for older people, in line with their needs.
Increase the number of properties that meet the Lifetime Home Standards.
Develop a robust model that enables us to regularly appraise our assets, encouraging regeneration opportunities and thoroughly assessing financial viability.
Develop a Neighbourhood Management Strategy to ensure our communities remain resilient against local and national challenges and are well supported.
Develop a delivery plan that sets out the actions we will undertake to support households experiencing financial hardship.
We will reduce the length of time it takes to let our properties and undertake a full review of the lettable standard as part of the Repairs and Maintenance contract re-procurement process.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES TO BE RESILIENT IN THE FACE OF CHALLENGE

With the cost-of-living crisis, rising inflation, and the lasting effects of the pandemic, the quality of much of the UK's housing stock, and by extension the neighbourhoods they reside in, has been put under pressure. It has become increasingly difficult for housing providers to fund and sustain maintenance, respond to legislative change and support the vital projects needed to support communities. In Birmingham, this is coupled with a historical lack of investment and cuts to services have prompted a centralised way of working, taking our officers away from localities and responding more reactively to service requests. This has had a direct impact on the way in which communities are supported, directly impacting the quality of life for those who are vulnerable or on a low income.

The table below sets out a breakdown of the portfolio by archetype:



The age of the portfolio also presents an issue; 78% of the total stock is over 50 years old, 28% is over 80 years old whilst only 4% is under 30 years old. There are 1,500 properties between 120-129 years old. The age and archetype of properties has left tenants dissatisfied with their homes, explicitly around the condition in which properties are let, highlighting the lack of care and attention to areas such as decoration, etc.

Q: How do you feel about the void standard, or the state in which properties are let?

A: Intimidating, social housing stigma, off-putting, dirty, lack of care.

EXPERIENCES

- Electrical safety issues
- Fittings within property broken, door handles, light fittings, etc.
- Hazards - broken tiles, rubbish in garden
- Lack of decoration - tenants can't afford to 'do up'
- Properties cold, windows and doors don't seem to fit
- Considered ungrateful if issues are raised
- Obvious that BCC don't feel tenants deserve a home like everyone else



RECOMMENDATION

- Minimum void standard based on what tenants need, not just legal standard
- Certificate confirming property has been checked
- A thorough handover from the lettings officer
- Don't let properties before they are ready/get the work done first
- Already waiting ages for the property - would expect a better standard for all the waiting
- Bad management of the tenants beforehand - leaving properties in a poor state
- Don't expect gratitude for poor quality

We understand the feeling of stigma and shame tenants feel when they move into their home that does not feel well looked after. Like all landlords, we tread a fine line between wanting to make sure tenants do not wait unnecessarily for their new home vs. making sure our homes are let at a reasonable standard. Following an analysis of complaints data and feedback from tenant perception surveys and focus groups, work is already underway to review our void standard. We want to implement more robust measures to reduce the impact of damp and mould by identifying more susceptible homes and improving the standard of decoration. We also want to reduce the time that tenants wait for their home to be ready, aiming for a standard target of 28 days.

The archetype and age of property is not in keeping with the types of homes our citizens need. The demand for larger properties significantly outstrips the current availability:

5 bed homes – 3 were let in the last year, with 698 households waiting for this size home (with only 126 of this size property available in the full portfolio).

6 bed homes – 0 were let in the last year, with 117 households waiting for this size home (with only 11 of this size property available in the full portfolio).

There are 4,400 households in temporary accommodation, with over 700 in Bed & Breakfast and 22,000 on the housing register with some form of housing need. Given the rate of lettings and the types of properties available, it is likely that citizens will be waiting for years for scarce resource or homes that do not exist within the portfolio.

Our stock portfolio only continues to be an asset if it meets the need of our citizens. 45% of the portfolio is made up of flats.

PROPERTY TYPE	TOTAL NUMBER OF STOCK
Bungalow	4,140
Flat	25,879
House	25,567
Maisonette	2,391
Prefab	16
TOTAL	57,993



The Council are looking for new ways to make sure citizens can access the right type of home for them. The Housing Strategy 2023-2028 sets out a refreshed approach to the delivery of affordable housing but there is no doubt it will take considerable time to balance the books. As part of this strategy, we commit to undertaking a whole scale review of the stock portfolio, improving intelligence and capitalising on opportunities to making sure households can access the right size and type of home.

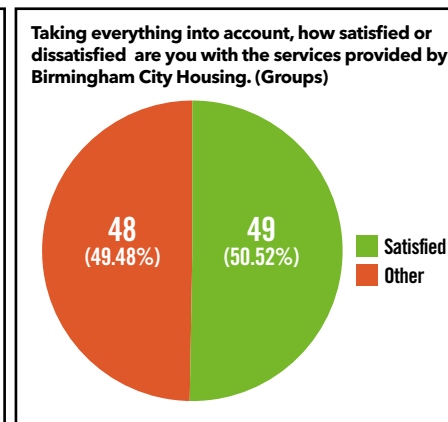
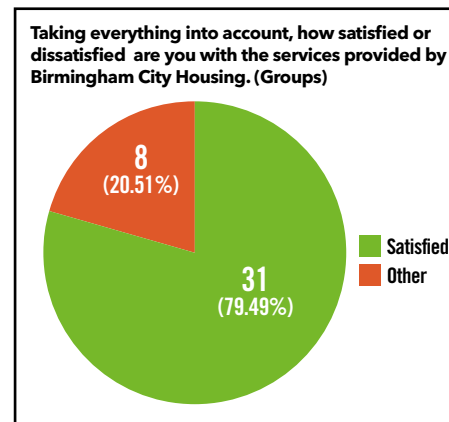
SOLIDIFYING THE LINK BETWEEN HOUSING AND HEALTH

Identifying links between health and housing continues to be a priority for the Council, understanding that health needs can impact on the property type and adaptations to the property and that these may be different to those in general needs homes. Out of the 57993 tenanted properties, the Council has a portfolio of 4,897 which are sheltered.

82.8% of sheltered homes are flats, of which 40% are high-rise. Meanwhile there are more than 12,500 households on the housing register who have selected that they wish to move into sheltered or extra care housing, which significantly outstrips supply (4,900 properties). Only 6.9% of 12,500 households waiting require a 2 bed property, yet 2 bed properties currently make up 26.2% (1,275 units) of all sheltered stock.

91% of applicants specified that they need a 1 bed apartment, it would be beneficial for the current 1 bed properties (3,586) to increase above 73.6% already available. Similarly, while bids for bungalows (currently reserved almost exclusively for category 1 sheltered accommodation) outstrip those for sheltered flats 10:1, bungalows currently only make up just shy of 17%, of which 34% are high-rise.

A recent TSM survey was undertaken specifically with those living in sheltered accommodation. Households living high-rise sheltered accommodation had an overall satisfaction rate of 50.52% whilst those in other types of provision, like extra care for example, had an overall satisfaction rate of 79.49%.

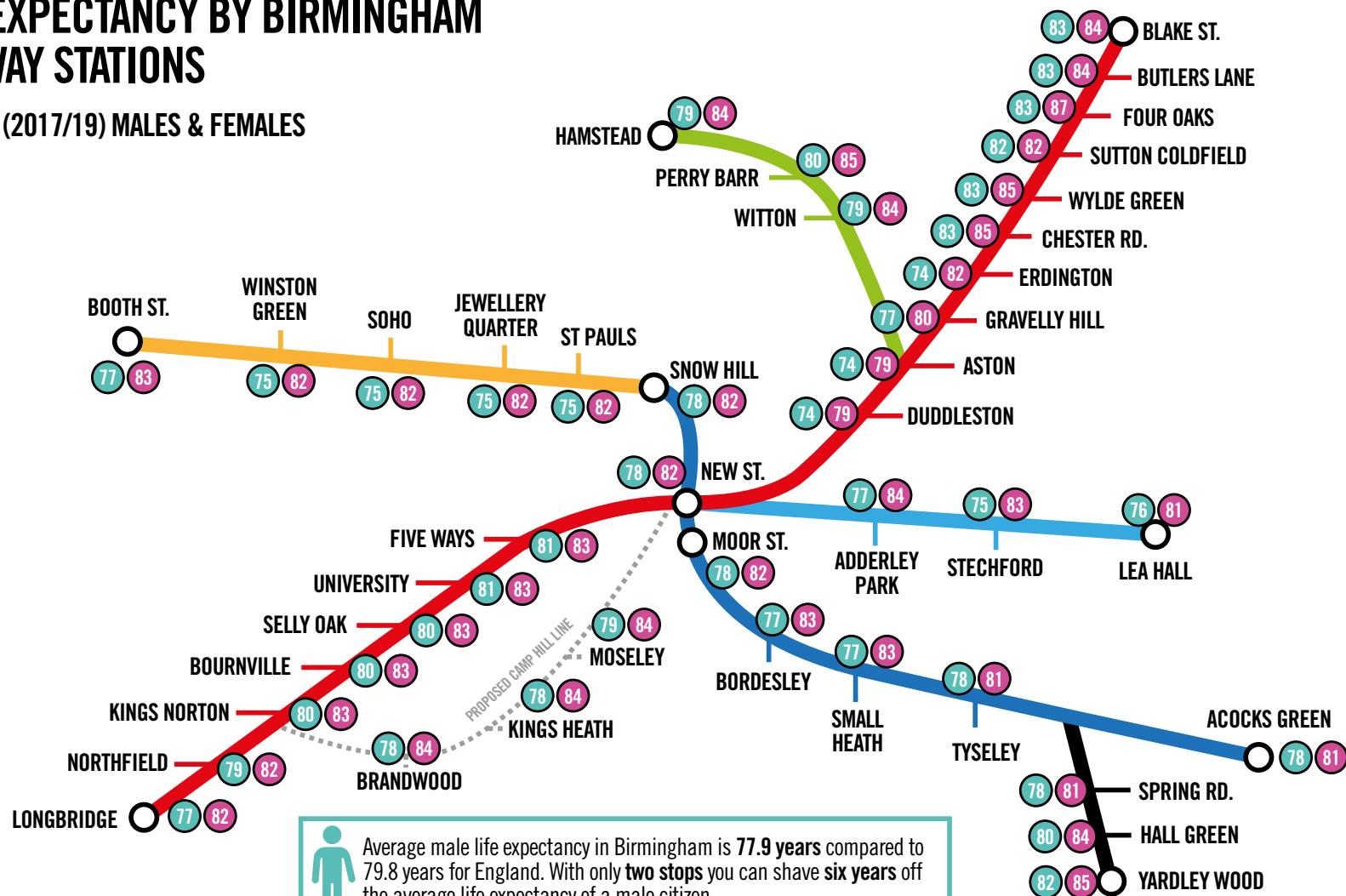


Whilst there are several variables that will impact this data set, it is not too much of a reach to suggest that the portfolio of sheltered stock available is not what citizens want. The variety of bedrooms does not meet the current need and people who are looking for sheltered homes through the register are not looking for high-rise homes. The age and archetypes of our stock does not enable the Council to provide homes that meet M4(2) life standards; this is an aspiration for the Council moving forward into the future. The data requires further review before any conclusions can be made and one of the commitments of this strategy is to undertake a deep dive into the sheltered portfolio to make sure the offer is based on what citizens need. There are models of good practice across the city; Housing 21's co-living design provides a sustainable offer that encourages applicable households to release capacity in larger family or multi-generational homes, that the city so desperately needs.



LIFE EXPECTANCY BY BIRMINGHAM RAILWAY STATIONS

AT BIRTH (2017/19) MALES & FEMALES



Average male life expectancy in Birmingham is **77.9 years** compared to 79.8 years for England. With only **two stops** you can shave **six years** off the average life expectancy of a male citizen.



Average female life expectancy in Birmingham is **82.4 years** compared to 83.4 years for England. With only **two stops** you can shave **six years** off the average life expectancy of a female citizen.

SOURCE: ONS DEATHS 2017/19
BIRMINGHAM PUBLIC HEALTH 2021

Birmingham's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2030 sets out several key commitments to improve people's health across the city; it is universally accepted that poor quality housing, lack of green space and poverty can have a detrimental impact on people's health, and this is reflected in people's life expectancy across the city.

Birmingham is a large geographical area with several communities across the city. Areas where poverty is prevalent, like Aston and Erdington as an example, have a much lower life expectancy in both males and females. It is not a coincidence that these areas are also areas where the Council have large housing estates with high concentrations of social rented homes. Whilst intelligence on health across the city has continued to develop throughout the pandemic, little is known about the health needs of those living in our homes. Across our asset base, there is no verified data which sets out the number of properties that have adaptations, are wheelchair accessible or have basic aids and adaptations like grab rails or stairlifts etc. We do know, however, that in 2020/2021, Birmingham delivered 341 aids and adaptations to homes and in 2021/22 they delivered 242 number.

We want to make sure our citizens can be digitally included, understanding the positive impact this can have on both physical health issues where communication is difficult, as well as conditions like loneliness and social isolation. The Council has a corporate focus on the Digital Cities agenda, summarized by the 2022-25 Digital Strategy and the Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan (Nov. 21). This approach commits to make digital services accessible to all citizens, maximizing Wi-Fi especially in areas where there are large proportions of vulnerable people, this includes care homes and sheltered accommodation. Where possible, we want to contribute to this across the portfolio by making sure we explore opportunities to include Wi-Fi in communal areas and investigating the potential for applying innovative technologies such as tech assisted care.

Our aspiration to make sure people have the support they need is well publicised across the city and most definitely extends to our own tenants. Services such as Think Family, our Domestic Abuse service, and the embedded Financial Inclusion Partnership Act are a safety net for tenants that may be struggling. We have also developed a new Supported Housing Strategy, which sets out how vulnerable people will be supported. This Strategy will support the Housing Strategy to deliver intelligent based support to vulnerable residents.

Similarly, intelligence around the needs of the people living in our homes is limited; we know that 12.37% of households apply to the housing register

requesting a move on medical grounds each year but once a household moves into a property, we do not regularly collect information on support needs, this includes both physical and mental health needs, as well as vital information around financial hardship.

The pandemic significantly altered the way in which tenants live their lives and the way the Council deliver its services; it is accepted that during this time proactive visits lessened and a lack of face-to-face interaction between tenants and Council service has meant that intelligence about both the property and the person has reduced. We are already making inroads to improve this through our new Target Operating Model; last quarter visits to tenants increased from circa 500 per quarter to 3,114, which reflects our commitment to improve visibility. This strategy makes a commitment to improve our current position; we recognise that people cannot be properly supported if we do not understand their needs and improving our data will mean we can improve our offer to tenants.

WHAT ARE WE DOING ALREADY TO MAKE OUR HOMES SUSTAINABLE?

- We are reviewing our void standard as part of the new Repairs & Maintenance contract, set for go live in April 2026.
- We are working with strategic partner ARK to review HRA sites such as depots, etc. as part of an appraisal process against our assets.
- We have increased the number of proactive visits undertaken.
- We are working with corporate landlord services to launch a Property & Investment Board, a focused way of managing Council assets.
- We will continue to invest in services that support our tenants, including Think Family, our Domestic Abuse Housing Service and Financial Inclusion .
- We have begun to develop a master plan for large scale regeneration project in Druids Heath and Ladywood.
- We have built on the success of the Commonwealth Games through the successful regeneration of Perry Barr .
- We have teamed up with Arcadis to deliver our new strategic plan regarding central renewal areas.
- We have delivered targeted surveys in sheltered accommodation services to better understand the lived experience of older people.
- We have begun to improve visibility across our neighbourhoods and communities through the Early Intervention and Prevention Pilots.

FUTURE COMMITMENTS

- We will develop a robust appraisal model that will enable us to ensure the full stock portfolio is financially viable and has equal opportunity for regeneration.
- We will develop a Neighbourhood Management Strategy setting out how we will make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods, as a social landlord.
- We will undertake a full review of sheltered housing services and embed an older persons offer that works for our citizens.
- We will explore opportunities to ensure our tenants are digitally included wherever possible.
- We will deliver a robust programme of stock condition surveys, and these will contribute to strategic decision making around demolitions and regeneration.
- We will improve data and intelligence around health needs, including understand how many properties we have with relevant adaptations.
- We will learn more about the support needs of our tenants, building in wrap around support wherever necessary.

WARM

KEY COMMITMENTS

All Council homes will reach EPC C by 2028.
Continue to contribute to the Council's the ambitious objective to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.
Ensure all new build homes are delivered with energy efficiencies in mind and strive to build homes being carbon neutral or net zero ready.
We will invest in our stock in order to achieve Decent Homes Standards, promoting energy efficiency wherever possible.
We will source and maximise grant funding working with partners and other Local Authorities and Registered Providers (RPs) to lobby government to increase funding streams and support Decarbonisation.
We will increase tenant visits with trained officers to recognise and report damp and mould.
We will embed the recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on damp and mould.
Develop a Damp and Mould Policy setting out our approach to supporting houses experiencing Damp and Mould.

GREEN, ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY HOMES

As the largest local authority landlord in the country, the Council understand the importance of warm, sustainable and energy efficient homes and will maximise this to benefit both tenants and the wider community.

The Council takes a leading role in tackling climate change, and we are committed to deliver Retrofit aligned to the corporate Net Zero targets.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recognises fuel poverty as one of the most significant causes of poor health. Since 2021, global shortages and increased prices in oil, gas and electricity markets have caused 55% of UK households to fall into fuel poverty. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) estimates that in 2022 there were 3.26million UK households in fuel poverty amidst the cost-of-living crisis, an increase on figures of 3.16million in 2021. It is predicted that this will increase to 3.53million in 2023. West Midlands has the highest proportion of fuel poor households at 19.2% in the country. A household's fuel poverty status, using Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) measure, depends on three key drivers:

- **Energy Efficiency** – Improvements in the energy efficiency of homes between 2021-2022 is estimated to have reduced fuel poverty by around 145,000 households if no other factors had changed.
- **Incomes** – Post-pandemic, higher earnings growth for low-income households was recorded and means tested benefit households received cost of living payments in the winter of 2022/23. Overall, fuel poverty reduced by around 48,000 households if no other factors had changed. The effects of rising mortgage rates were not fully realised in 2022 due to many fixed-rate deals having not yet ceased; the number of those affected in 2022 by rising mortgage rates were for a minority.

- **Energy Prices** – The energy price cap increased in April 2022 by 54% to £1,971 and, following the Energy Price Guarantee in October 2022, the typical bill increased to £2,500. A range of government support partially offset this uplift, however, the increase in energy prices after government support is estimated to have increased fuel poverty by around 287,000 households if no other factors had changed. It is estimated that without the energy bill support given in 2022/2023, an additional 350,000 households would have been in fuel poverty.

The government, through the Social Housing Regulation Act, will make energy efficiency a main objective and have consulted with social housing providers and tenants to understand their views. They have already committed £800million to decarbonisation and this investment will help social housing landlords to provide energy efficient upgrades in their least efficient stock.

Birmingham responded to the increasing public concern and extensive scientific evidence on climate change by declaring a Climate Emergency at Full Council in June 2019 and committed to taking action to reduce the City's carbon emissions and limit the climate crisis. The Council set itself an ambitious target to become 'net zero carbon' or 'carbon neutral' by 2030, or as soon as possible thereafter as a 'just transition' allows, ensuring we reduce inequalities in the city and bring our communities with us. A Route to Zero taskforce has been established and is actively developing and delivering initiatives to tackle climate change, such as launching the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) scheme.

Two thirds of greenhouse gas emissions in Birmingham come from the buildings within, with most carbon emissions being because of burning of gas for space and water heating. Birmingham has approximately 450,000 homes and the City Council is the largest social landlord in the country having a housing stock of 57,993 tenanted properties, and 6,025 leasehold properties. We know that much of the housing in Birmingham was built in the 1900's and our stock profile has an average age of 70 years old. This has led to inefficient, draughty, poorly insulated and ventilated, cold homes; in turn, these are costly to heat. There is also a considerable number of high-rise blocks (209) and low-rise blocks (6,756), which come with their own challenges in relation to energy efficiency upgrades. It is believed that at present, around 41% of properties from the Council's stock have an EPC rating of A-C, however, lack of data, subsequent upgrades within homes and the use of cloned data makes it difficult to fully understand the energy performance of our homes. 5,052 properties have been identified a not

having the potential to reach SAP grade C and will therefore require significant intervention and investment through retrofitting; over 60% of these were built between 1950 and 1970 with another 15% between 1970 and 1980; nearly 70% of these properties are flats. It is estimated that it will cost in the region of 3.6 billion to upgrade the energy efficiency of all our council stock.

The economic consequences of the pandemic, alongside the recent cost of living crisis means that it has never been more important to support our citizens to live in more efficient homes that are cheaper to run. Birmingham has one of the highest rates of fuel poverty in the country with current research identifying around 21.5% of households over 10 constituencies as fuel poor.

Birmingham City Council experienced 3,211 reports of damp and mould between April 2022 - March 2023 last year. The Council faces challenges in overcoming this issue due to the age and design of its homes, overcrowding in households and poverty, which can lead to accelerated growth of mould. This is amplified by the cost-of-living crisis and the increase in fuel poor homes unable to heat their homes effectively.

The City Council require accurate data and intelligence to enable us to make informed decisions when identifying the right properties at the right time for improvement works. Although the Council does hold data on its housing stock, much of the data is derived from cloned/extrapolated information, previous and adhoc stock condition surveys, historical data and component replacement details. In 2013 a stock surveying programme commenced and ran over 6 years but did not achieve full reporting on all social properties. It is important for us to address this gap in property data to ensure we are making informed decisions on identifying and delivering measures to homes that are the least energy efficient.



THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM FOR BIRMINGHAM

- Excessive cold-Cat 1/Cat 2 hazards.
 - 21% of private sector properties in the city have at least one Category 1 hazard.
 - 5% of BCC stock have open jobs in relation to Category 1 (1.3%) and Category 2 (3.7%) hazards. Of these, 1.7% relates to excess cold.
- Retrofit
 - 68% of Birmingham City Council homes are related EPC D or below and the average age of our properties is 70.
 - The age of Birmingham's property portfolio means that properties were often built to previous legislative requirements, meaning that the level of ventilation and insulation would not be considered adequate in the current climate. This has been compounded by a substantial period of limited investment, which is one of the reasons why only 62% of our homes reach the required Decent Homes Standards .
- Poverty/COL
 - The cost- of-living crisis has further compounded the issue; tenants are reluctant to use their heating because of the rising costs, contributing to damp and mould within the home .
 - 11,083 social housing tenants are over £500 in rent arrears.
 - 22,139 people have a clearly identified need for affordable housing in the city.
- Fuel poverty
 - Birmingham also have a significantly higher rate of poverty and deprivation than other parts of the country, with 21.1% of households being considered to be in fuel poverty. This is higher than the national average at 13.8%. All these factors contribute to damp and mould within our properties.
- Damp & Mould - over the past 3 years
 - Birmingham City Council had 3211 reports of damp and mould in the last year.
 - Damp and mould reports make up 1.2% of the repairs completed on an annual basis.
 - 73% of damp and mould reports were remedied on the first visit, whilst more serious cases needed additional treatment.

- According to the 2019-2020 English Housing Survey, serious condensation and mould problems were in at least one room of 133,000 social sector households, 3% of all social rented homes.
- All reports of damp and mould are considered a statutory nuisance and are responded to within 30 days and in the most severe cases, within 7 days.
- The Housing Ombudsman found Birmingham to have a maladministration rate of 1.4 per 10,000 properties, in relation to the way in which damp and mould reports were managed.

LANDLORD	ALL DAMP AND MOULD FINDINGS	MAL FINDINGS	MAL %	NUMBER OF HOMES	MAL RATE PER 10K HOMERS
Birmingham City Council	14	9	64%	65,600	1.4

ISSUES AROUND RETROFIT

Due to the nature of some of the stock the concept of 'Retrofitting' can cause additional issues. For instance, of the high-rise blocks, 51 are of Large Panel System (LPS) construction that do not have efficient heating and hot water systems, which means not only to do they need to be altered, but they may have to be renovated in a different way to the other high-rise blocks, causing additional complications, as well as potential time and cost. Many of our LPS blocks require structural rectification. Similarly, prior to 1966, Building Regulations did not require any form of insulation, so it was often not installed at the time of construction, which applies to most of Birmingham City Council's stock, given that they were built during this period. These buildings are not easy to retrofit and are classed as hard to treat, much like the additional 900 low-rise blocks of varying construction types, which also do not meet modern day thermal insulation levels. Consequently, improving this stock will prove a significant challenge, given the level of renovation required, the specific renovation needs for differing housing types and planning constraints.

Supply and delivery of energy efficiency measures is challenging due to the increase in demand in this sector amplified by shortage of materials and skilled workers to install and maintain the new systems and technologies. This is an opportunity for Birmingham to lead the way in retrofit within the West Midlands and nationally. We will develop, alongside The Retrofit Academy, a retrofit training network, which will identify gaps in the industry and address the skills and capacity shortage within the Birmingham supply chain, creating jobs and opportunities for local people and businesses.

FUNDING INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS

The Council is already delivering several projects across the city which will see improvements to the energy efficiency, fuel consumption and utility bills for approximately 4,500 homes.

CURRENT PROJECTS	HOMES BENEFITING
Sustainable Warmth Competition (SWC)	630 (private), 70 Social (BCC stock)
Whole House Retrofit Pilot	300 Social (BCC stock)
Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2	1,931 Social (BCC stock)
Energy Company Obligations (ECO4, ECO Flex, Help to Heat Group, Great British Insulation Scheme)	Target estimate 1000 (mixed tenure)
Net Zero Neighbourhood (plan in development)	383 (mixed tenure)
Home Upgrade Grant – Phase 2 (HUG2)	500 (mixed tenure)
Boiler Upgrade Scheme	1,200 properties pa (BCC Stock)
PV Panels	1,895 (BCC Stock)

Funding for retrofit projects is developed in line with government policy. The upfront cost of retrofitting existing homes is extremely high in comparison to the savings in energy bills. It is estimated that the decarbonisation of our stock alone will cost in the region of £3.6billion.

The recent successful bid for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2 saw £23million in grant funding being achieved with an additional £129million of match funding from Birmingham City Council to retrofit 2,231 properties, equating to £68k per property.

Currently the high costs of retrofit and lack of affordable finance solutions create challenge in terms of take up across all tenures. In addition, the unrealistic timeframes set for completing government funded programmes and the continual stop-start nature of delivery add further constraints. Recent government funded retrofit programmes, whilst providing well needed grants for energy efficiency measures, have failed to understand the complexities and challenges that housing retrofit presents. The funding streams such as LAD and HUG have been too restrictive in terms of time and measures. With only 12 months to deliver these programmes and little lead in time, the depth of engagement required to really build trust across communities has been impossible. This has led to misunderstanding, confusion and, in many cases, a lack of applications and increased dropouts.

The government's focus on immediate outputs rather than long term carbon and energy bills reduction has led to the design and installation of measures which may not be the ideal, long-term solution for a property. Instead, measures are installed which tick the "measure installed" box and secure the funds.

Whilst we endeavour to take a "no regrets" approach, which means future retrofit measures remain a possibility, this is not the "fabric first" approach that is most needed to reduce energy consumption. Local authorities and other housing providers need to join up their approach in lobbying government to request that schemes are devolved to councils, so they can take a local led approach to accelerate delivery, targeting the homes that need the support most, while working with local educational providers and businesses to build skills and growth.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Birmingham City Council have adopted a multi-agency taskforce approach to engaging with citizens and are building strong community relationships with local community groups and Local Energy Hubs to help promote confidence and 'buy in' for current and future schemes and to advise and educate citizens on the positive outcomes that can be achieved from them. The 2021 census shows that over 15% of people aged over 3 years in Birmingham do not speak English as their main language and Birmingham are adapting their approach to ensure these citizens are not missed due to language barriers. We have developed social media campaigns, hosted energy cafés and worked with community and religious groups to help engage with and gain the confidence of citizens. As part of the development of the strategy, we have engaged with tenants during focus groups to understand their views on what should be made a priority over the next 5 years and energy efficiency and sustainability was a common theme. The delivery of energy efficiency schemes gives us the opportunity to make a significant contribution to economic recovery and growth through training and employment opportunities improving the knowledge and skills of our citizens and the economic benefits to local businesses.

Due to the funding and eligibility criteria of the government funded schemes, low Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) areas have been our focus for the delivery of schemes to date; this is to ensure that the most vulnerable households can be identified quickly, and delivery achieved in the tight timescales set. Without accurate property data such as energy rating (Energy Performance Certificate EPC), property wall types and internal room variations, challenges can be faced where, following assessment, those identified homes do not meet the required criteria and therefore we are unable to offer installation of energy efficient measures. There are also restrictions in relation to the value spend per property and planning restrictions that can make delivery unachievable. Unsuccessful properties are managed by reviewing criteria in relation to future schemes and, wherever possible, transferring these to the next viable offer.

THE COST-OF LIVING CRISIS

The Cost-of-Living crisis is impacting on many families and the Council initiated the Cost-of-Living Emergency Programme in October 2022 to respond to the rising energy prices within the city.

The Cost-of-Living Emergency has particularly affected Birmingham due to the prominent levels of unemployment, the concentration of poverty within key ethnic groups, the two-child limit for Child Benefit and Universal Credit from April 2017 and the aged and poorly insulated housing stock leading to high levels of fuel poverty.

A Strategic Response Group (SRG) was set up to ensure we respond to the crisis and accelerate longer-term strategic work such as Early Intervention and Prevention and Net Zero. As a result, the following actions are underway:

- The provision of warm spaces across the city – current provision on 209 Warm Welcome spaces.
- Improving the availability of advice to citizens with focus on increasing benefits take-up – the Neighbourhood Advice and Information Service (NAIS) centres Erdington and Northfield have extended their opening hours and, as a result, have assisted at least an additional 557 clients to claim benefits of £736,579. The issuing of foodbank vouchers has doubled in a single year from February 2022 to February 2023.
- Increasing the energy efficiency of homes with focus on reducing household fuel bills – we have provided £250,000 of additional energy top ups to 5000 homes and are offering a scheme for loaning slow cookers to citizens to allow families to cook nutritional meals using less energy to cook.
- Increasing the supply of food through foodbanks across the city – the Emergency Food Aid Fund has supported 100 foodbanks through a grant of £800 per foodbank per month for six months.
- Supporting Birmingham City Council staff – a staff campaign to promote city wide warm touchdown spaces where employees can choose to work, the offer of free flu vaccinations and the promotion of My Birmingham Rewards staff benefits scheme.

The Birmingham City Council Corporate Cost-of-Living task force set up focuses on food, fuel and warmth, enabling some of the poorest households to access vital services, which includes warm welcome spaces in the city.

DAMP AND MOULD

The tragic death of Awaab Ishak has again highlighted how health problems caused by the environment can lead to tragic consequences. The government are set to deliver Awaab's Law which, through the Social Housing Regulation Act, will force social landlords to fix reported health hazards, such as damp and mould, within strict time limits and will strengthen the Housing Ombudsman and Regulator's powers.

Birmingham City Council already have several mechanisms in place to address damp and mould and these are closely monitored to ensure we continue to improve our provision for our tenants. Damp and mould are specifically referred to in our Tenancy Agreement to support our tenants in recognising cases in their homes and alerting the council to these and our Housing Officers have been trained to identify and report on cases and provide support to our tenants to facilitate this where needed. The repairs reporting process already treats damp and mould as a statutory nuisance in line with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

Since Awaab's death, Birmingham have put some additional assurance in place to make sure that damp and mould is being managed in the way in which we would expect. This includes the following:

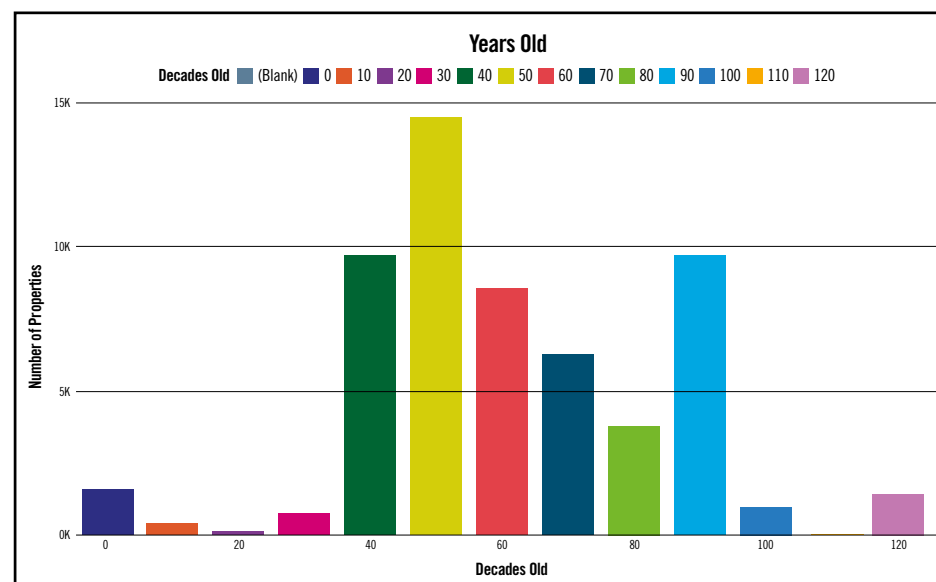
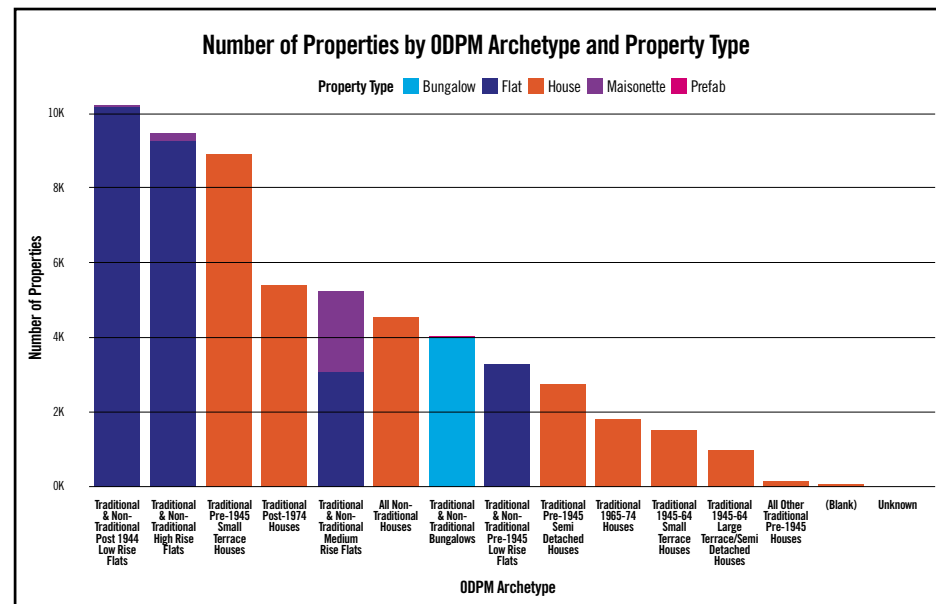
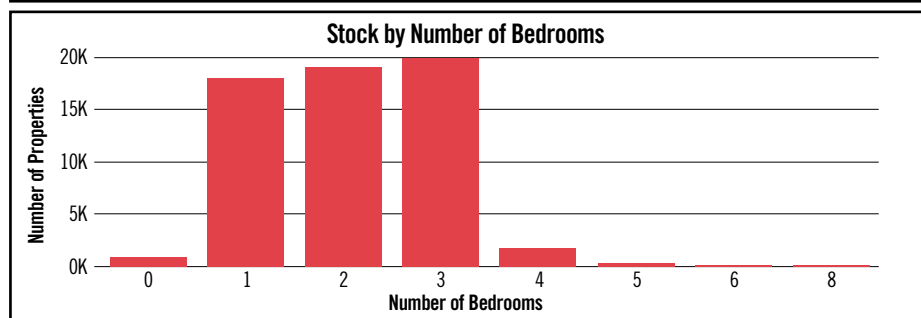
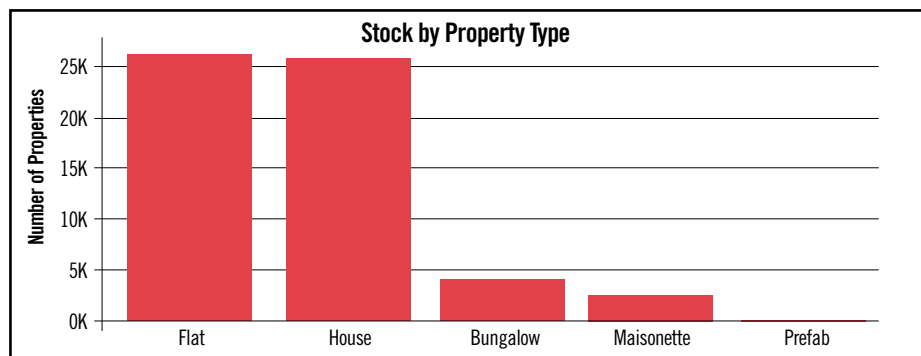
- Audit of all live damp and mould cases to ensure that the response has been appropriate.
- Written to all Elected Members to provide advice around how damp and mould can be managed, ensuring tenants are given consistent advice on the ground.
- Writing to all Registered Providers (RPs) reinforcing our expectations and inviting collaboration.
- Briefings to MPs, Councillors and BCC colleagues on the council's response to damp and mould.
- Formal written instruction to both repairs contractors to confirm the need to continue to prioritise damp and mould cases.
- Written response to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) regarding the Private Rented Sector (PRS).
- Written response to the Rt Hon Secretary of State Michael Gove.

HOW WE WILL MAKE HOMES WARM AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE

- By 2028, our homes will be safer and greener and to achieve this, there is a need to address current challenges and adopt a more strategic approach.
- We will improve our stock conditions and energy performance intelligence by instructing an accelerated stock condition programme, including EPCs to properties, and ensuring the reporting of this data is up to date and accessible and continues to address this challenge in the coming years.
- We will prioritise investment and reach those that are most vulnerable but will also put a strategic plan in place in relation to improvement works.
- We will develop a stock appraisal model to ensure the best use of the asset, which will fit within the Council's wider asset planning.
- We will prioritise ventilation and fabric first measures in of retrofit projects in line with the legislative requirement and guidance, which will help both the energy efficiency of homes in Birmingham but will more importantly reduce the moisture in properties and remove the build-up of mould.
- We will provide additional resources and support for citizens to help them understand the cause and how to manage damp and mould in homes along with giving advice on using heating systems in the most energy efficient way to reduce fuel bills.
- We will develop a specific Damp & Mould Policy as per recommendations within the Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report
- We will develop a framework to better understand the impact of the Cost-of-Living Emergency Programme to enable learning for the benefit of future Cost of Living interventions and the wider emergency responses.
- We will develop a Housing Decarbonisation Strategy and Implementation Plan which will allow us to define a roadmap to support the Council's net zero ambitions.
- We will look to use smart technology in our homes to support our tenants in understanding how to better heat their homes more economically and cost effectively whilst enabling us to gather trend information through the monitoring of fuel usage to ensure our commitment to net zero can be achieved.

- We will learn from delivering our energy efficiency pilots and schemes so that we can be more intelligent when planning future delivery and will adopt a council-wide approach to ensure the support and 'buy in' from all members and partners which is essential for the successful delivery of the implementation plan.
- We will source, secure and maximise grant funding by joining with partners, other local authorities and housing associations to lobby government as the current funding model requires the Council to match fund projects, which uses substantial amounts of housing revenue funds that are needed to be spent on other priorities.
- We will continue to positively engage and take a co-design approach with key stakeholders to ensure we understand what is important to them and how they can access advice and support and prioritise building positive relationships so that we can ensure the improvement of citizen's lives.

SUGGESTED STOCK PROFILE



APPENDIX

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	GOVERNANCE/LEAD
SAFE		
Ensure that we achieve 100% compliance with all statutory and regulatory requirements by 2028, except Decent Homes Standards which will be achieved by 2031.	<p>Create a robust programme of works to ensure that statutory requirements are met. Ensure staff undertake the mandatory Housing Management Training, in light the legislative change for compliance.</p> <p>We will ensure there is a solid understanding around management of assets for landlord competency requirements.</p>	
Achieve the minimum levels of satisfaction (60%) through Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) collection and reporting process.	Lessons Learnt from TSM- through analysis of trend will be completed with the data in each quarter and Task and Finish group actions aligned to support improvements.	Strategic Director - Asset Management Board
100% stock condition surveys undertaken on all BCC stock, as part of a 20% rolling stock condition survey programme.	<p>An accelerated stock condition survey programme is underway with anticipated completion by 2030.</p> <p>We will complete condition stock surveys and record the data centrally, then drill down further to analyse the data.</p>	Strategic Director - Asset Management Board
Reduce the number of repairs per property per year from 4.4 to 3.3 by 2028.	<p>Make a commitment to establish an Asset Management Delivery Board to monitor the capital investment.</p> <p>With the TSM (Tenant Satisfaction Measures) increase there will be a reduction in tenant complaints. BCC will also challenge second visits around repairs. We will monitor the capital investment programme to ensure that repeat repairs are captured by capital improvement works.</p>	Strategic Director - Asset Management Board

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	GOVERNANCE/LEAD
Reduce the number of Disrepair and Litigation claims by 50% by 2028.	<p>Capture information from TSM regarding tenant complaints.</p> <p>TPAS (Tenant Engagement Participation Advisory Service) will enable residents to have a meaningful opportunity to co-regulate and co-design services, in turn, we can develop our understanding around their lived experience and genuinely use this to improve service delivery.</p> <p>Capture information from Asset Management Delivery Board around capital investment. BCC will invest capital at similar levels across the council's stock as done in subsequent years. The strategy will be reviewed after five years. Satisfied residents will reduce the number of claims over time.</p>	Strategic Director - Asset Management Delivery Board.
Will bolster investment in Decent Homes in line with expenditure set out in the HRA Business Plan and Capital Programme 2023/2024.	Allocate funding across 2023 to 2024 and thereafter in line with HRA (Housing Revenue Account) Business Plan. Bridge the gap with an additional £40m invested in the Capital Programme for 2023-24.	Strategic Director - Asset Management Board
Reduce the number of residents experiencing ASB and improve the time it takes the Council to respond.	<p>Monitor reports from the Corporate Community Safety Team. ASB training educating staff in BCC improving the understanding of the drivers.</p> <p>Why raising awareness of anti-social behaviour is crucial to community safety - The Birmingham Blog</p> <p>Community safety Birmingham City Council</p> <p>Birmingham City Council supports ASB Awareness Week Birmingham City Council</p>	Strategic Director City Housing and Community Safety.

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	GOVERNANCE/LEAD
Re-introduce CCTV and security into blocks/homes where impact assessments support the need.	<p>Make digital services accessible to all citizens, maximizing Wi-Fi especially in areas where there are large proportions of vulnerable people, this includes care homes and sheltered accommodation.</p> <p>Monitor the piloting of the implementation of CCTV where there are 'hot spot' areas of ASB. BCC will be proactively assessing the difference this makes. Support decision making around any potential further roll out across the portfolio.</p> <p>Continue working with BCC Corporate Community Safety Team.</p>	Strategic Director City Housing and Community Safety.
Develop a specific offer and related standards for tenants living in high-rise accommodation.	<p>Work with Housing Management Board to ensure compliance with Building and Fire Safety. We will invest to install sprinklers to mitigate risk in the most high-risk properties.</p> <p>Mobilise a Compliance Board, providing assurance across all areas of landlord compliance including the 'big 6'. We also consulted City Housing Liaison Board, our resident representatives, throughout the process.</p> <p>We will work around resident engagement to develop an offer.</p>	Strategic Director - Housing Transformation Board.
Develop and deliver a set of tenant-led service standards by 2028.	<p>Work with Housing Management Board and the Compliance Board to ensure compliance with Building and Fire Safety.</p> <p>Continue with resident engagement.</p>	Housing Transformation Board, Housing Management Board.
Review the service model, re-designing this to ensure our services are delivered locally and visibility in estates is improved.	<p>Develop a locality-based model to improve Tenant engagement, so tenants feel confident that concerns around safety are being managed and staff are visible to address these.</p> <p>Multi-agency taskforce approach to engage with citizens creating strong community relationships with local community groups and Local Energy Hubs to help promote confidence.</p>	Strategic Director

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	GOVERNANCE/LEAD
SUSTAINABLE		
Ensure as many residents as possible are digitally included and can access Wi-Fi at home.	Digital Inclusion Strategy (2022-25 Digital Strategy and the Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan) will be supported to ensure that tenants have access to Technological developments within the city.	
Increase the number of properties that meet the Lifetime Home Standards.	Building new homes to help manage the predicted that the population will increase by 150,000 by 2031. We are reviewing our void standards as part of the new Repairs & Maintenance contract.	Asset Management Delivery Board.
Improve data and intelligence across our full asset portfolio, making sure decisions around sustainability are based on clear evidence.	We are undertaking stock condition surveys across BCC portfolio. Working with partners who have knowledge with regards to their stock; RP's, City Observatory who hold knowledge about Birmingham.	Strategic Director - Asset Management Board.
Undertake full sheltered housing review and produce a strategy setting out our offer for older people by 2028.	Completed TSM survey specifically with residents living in sheltered accommodation. Developed a new Supported Housing Strategy, which sets out how vulnerable people will be supported. Deep dive into the sheltered portfolio to make sure the offer is based on what citizens need.	Strategic Director, Housing Management Board, Housing Transformation Board.
Develop a robust model that enables us to regularly appraise our assets, encouraging regeneration opportunities and thoroughly assessing financial viability.	We have launched a Property & Investment Board, a focused way of managing Council assets. Improve visibility across our neighbourhoods and communities through the Early Intervention and Prevention Pilots. Investment Proposal to supply accommodation for Homeless Families yearly for the next 5 years, focused on alleviating the pressures from temporary accommodation and purchasing more assets for large families.	Strategic Director - Asset Management Board.

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	GOVERNANCE/LEAD
<p>Develop a Neighbourhood Management Strategy to ensure our communities remain resilient against local and national challenges.</p>	<p>Strategic Response Group (SRG) set up to ensure we respond to the crisis and accelerate longer-term strategic work such as Early Intervention and Prevention.</p> <p>We will a Develop a Management Strategy to create resilient communities.</p> <p>An investment of new jobs has been generated, including apprenticeships such as Women in Construction and the Central Birmingham 2040 strategy. This pulls together a series of studies with recommended areas of renewal; Edgbaston, Nechells, Digbeth, Bordesley, Highgate, Hockley and Ladywood are all areas that have been targeted for regeneration over the life of the strategy.</p> <p>Continue working with the Church of England to ensure all their developments meet five core principles (Sustainable, Safe, Stable, Sociable, Satisfying) and are actively contributing to the progression of neighbourhoods and communities.</p>	<p>Strategic Director City Housing and Community Safety.</p>
<p>Develop a Financial Inclusion delivery plan to support the corporate Cost of Living program, setting out interventions that's support our residents.</p>	<p>Increased the number of visits undertaken and will continue to deliver more.</p> <p>Engage regularly with both TPAS and TSM.</p> <p>Neighbourhood Advice and Information Service (NAIS) centres Erdington and Northfield have extended their opening hours and, as a result, have assisted at least an additional 557 clients to claim benefits.</p> <p>Birmingham City Council Corporate Cost-of-Living task force to focus on food, fuel and warmth enabling some of the poorest households to access vital services, which includes warm welcome spaces in the city. Issuing foodbank vouchers which has doubled in a single year from February 2022 to February 2023.</p> <p>Emergency Food Aid Fund has supported 100 foodbanks through a grant per foodbank per month for six months.</p>	<p>Strategic Response Group (SRG).</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	GOVERNANCE/LEAD
We will reduce the length of time it takes to let our properties.	<p>Undertaking a whole scale review of the stock portfolio, improving intelligence and capitalising on opportunities to making sure households can access the right size and type of home for lettings.</p> <p>Identify the archetype and age of property in areas in keeping with the types of homes our citizens need, to better understand where the demand sits.</p>	<p>Housing Management Board,</p> <p>Housing Transformation Board.</p>
WARM		
All Council homes will reach EPC C by 2028.	<p>View current data and new data to down further to identify priority areas.</p> <p>Delivery of energy efficiency schemes will provide the opportunity to make a significant contribution to economic recovery and growth through training and employment opportunities, improving the knowledge and skills of our citizens and the economic benefits to local businesses.</p> <p>Make multiple deprivation areas our focus for the delivery of schemes to date; this is to ensure that the most vulnerable households can be identified quickly, and delivery achieved in the tight timescales set.</p>	<p>Asset Management Delivery Board.</p>
Continue to contribute to the Council's the ambitious objective to achieve carbon neutrality by 2030.	<p>Route to Zero taskforce has been established and is actively developing and delivering initiatives to tackle climate change, such as launching the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) scheme.</p> <p>BCC continued compliance with the current Decent Homes Standards.</p>	<p>Strategic Response Group (SRG).</p>

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	GOVERNANCE/LEAD
Ensure all new build homes are delivered with energy efficiencies in mind and strive to build homes being carbon neutral or net zero ready.	<p>Social media campaigns, hosted energy cafés, and collaborated with community / religious groups, to help engage with and gain the confidence of citizens.</p> <p>Delivery of energy efficiency schemes gives us the opportunity to make a significant contribution to economic recovery and growth.</p> <p>Set a baseline for our carbon footprint and measure our carbon reduction each year against set targets, both for existing and new housing in Birmingham.</p>	Strategic Director City Housing and Community Safety.
We will invest in our stock in order to achieve Decent Homes Standards, promoting energy efficiency wherever possible.	<p>Delivering several projects across the city which will see improvements to the energy efficiency, fuel consumption and utility bills for homes.</p> <p>Sustainable Warmth Competition (SWC), Whole House Retrofit Pilot and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 2. Energy Company Obligations, (ECO4 and ECO Flex. Net Zero, a Boiler Upgrade Scheme and a PV Panel project are all current sustainable projects.</p> <p>We will work alongside the Retrofit Academy, a retrofit training network.</p>	Asset Management Delivery Board.
We will source and maximise grant funding working with partners and other Local Authorities and Registered Providers (RPs) to lobby government to increase funding streams and support Decarbonisation.	<p>Current grant projects like Help to Heat Group as well as the Great British Insulation Scheme) and Home Upgrade Grant – Phase 2 (HUG2).</p> <p>Affordable Housing Programme providing grant funding to support the capital costs of developing affordable housing for rent or sale, to ensure more homes are built in areas of greatest need.</p> <p>Successful bid for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2 grant funding being achieved with an additional of match funding from Birmingham City Council to retrofit properties.</p>	Asset Management Board.

OBJECTIVE	ACTION	GOVERNANCE/LEAD
We will increase tenant visits with trained officers to recognise and report damp and mould.	<p>Review the manner we communicate to the public and residents around Damp and Mould, ensure that contractors communicate in the same way (uniform approach with combined literature).</p> <p>Damp and Mould is incorporated in BCC Tenancy Agreement to support our tenants recognise cases in their homes, alerting the council to such cases.</p>	Housing Management Board.
We will embed the recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on damp and mould.	Work inline the repairs reporting process which already treats damp and mould as a statutory nuisance in line with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.	Asset Management Delivery Board.
Develop a Damp and Mould Policy setting out our approach to supporting houses experiencing Damp and Mould	<p>Draft a Damp and Mould Policy to go alongside the following assurances measures:</p> <p>Audit of all live damp and mould cases to ensure that the response has been appropriate. Provide advice around how damp and mould can be managed, ensuring tenants are given consistent advice on the ground. Give briefings to MPs, Councillors and BCC colleagues on the council's response to damp and mould. Instruct both repairs' contractors to confirm the need to continue to prioritise damp and mould cases. Including liaising with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) regarding the Private Rented Sector (PRS).</p>	Asset Management Delivery Board.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE:

CITY HOUSING REGULATORY COMPLIANCE BOARD

Specific focus on:

- Focused delivery of Regulatory compliance, TSM, Housing Ombudsman activity.
- Led by Strategic Director of City Housing.
- Focus on ensuring Regulatory Compliance.

HOUSING TRANSFORMATION BOARD

- Corporate and Directorate oversight of all projects within City Housing including the Implementation of the Target Operating Model TOM.
- Led by the Strategic Director of City Housing and Corporate Transformation Programme Management Directorate.
- Oversight of all Transformation Programmes and Projects.

CLIMATE CHANGE, NATURE & NET ZERO DELIVERY GROUP

- Corporate Board with oversight of Climate Change, Nature and Net Zero.
- Support for collaborative projects with focus areas in mind.
- Alignment of Net Zero commitments and Retrofit delivery programmes.

RETROFIT DELIVERY BOARDS

- Alignment of delivery projects which are funded from the Government supported Schemes: Sustainable Warmth Competition(SWC) Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund(SHDF) including Whole House Retrofit, ECO schemes.

ASSET MANAGEMENT DELIVERY BOARD

- High level tracking of action plan and the commitment of the Asset Management Strategy.

HOUSING MANAGEMENT BOARD

- Focus on existing stock provision and services of Landlord.
- Asset MANAGEMENT strategy Implementation and HRA Business Plan Implementation.
- Continued refreshed approach to Tenant Engagement.
- Stock Appraisal model- quality of existing stock/stock condition.

HEALTH AND HOUSING DELIVERY GROUP

- Continue to strength links between two areas.
- Adaptations.
- Mental Health in homes – professional development of HM staff.
- Cross partner working to prevent people having to leave their homes.
- Financial Inclusion Partnership.
- Specific focus on Poverty in housing.
- Cost of living.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY

- Energy Poverty support.
- Maximising financial opportunities for tenants.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING DELIVERY GROUP

- Specific focus on affordable housing and development.
- Support in Net Zero ready buildings and development.



