

Delivery Plan

2017 update



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1. Foreword

Welcome to our updated Northampton Partnership Homes Delivery Plan for 2017.

Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) is the Arm's Length Management Organisation set up by Northampton Borough Council (NBC) to run the Council's housing services, following extensive consultation with residents and employees. We commenced our operations on 5 January 2015, with a contract for 15 years with options to extend.

NPH is governed by a Board with Council, independent, tenant and employee representatives. We believe that putting residents and employees at the heart of our governing arrangements is delivering positive improvements.

NPH's five year Delivery Plan was approved by the Board of NPH and by the Council's Cabinet in November 2014. This set out our vision, mission and values, our ambitions for our first five years of operation, as well as the challenges we face.

We have now completed our second year of operation and this updated plan gives information about our achievements to date as well as our plans for 2017/18 and the current challenges and opportunities we face.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our residents and stakeholders who have helped make our second year as Northampton Partnership Homes a success. We have continued with our strong and positive relationship with the Council and other partners and look forward to not only continuing these relationships in the coming years but developing them further and creating new initiatives and opportunities. We would welcome your comments on this updated Delivery Plan and please continue to let us have your thoughts and views which are highly valued.



David Latham,
Chair of the Board, Northampton Partnership Homes



2. Vision, Mission and Values

The Vision, mission and values for NPH were developed in consultation with all of our stakeholder groups including tenants, employees, board members, operating partners, contractors and with Northampton Borough Council. These are confirmed as:

Vision

NPH provides homes which enable people to live happy and healthy lives in enriched communities.

Mission

We improve lives by sharing a common purpose.

We improve and maintain the quality of our homes.

We provide services which endeavour to meet the needs and aspirations of all tenants and residents.

People can influence the immediate and long term futures for themselves and their communities.

Values

Open and Strong

Listen and Respond

Achieving more with others

Aim High and Deliver

These statements set the direction for our strategic objectives. Our stated purpose and intention are at the core of who we are, what we want to achieve and how we want to deliver.

Our strategic objectives are set out in section 5.



3. National Context

In our second year of operation, the changes to rents and benefits introduced nationally in 2015 started to take effect.

The 1% reduction in social housing rents each year for four years took effect from April 2016. This has a direct impact on our budget as the income from our Management Fee derives from rents and other charges paid by tenants and leaseholders into the Housing Revenue Account. The work we put in place in late 2015 to early 2016 to find efficiencies in our budget meant that we were able to protect services for customers and continue to deliver our planned programmes of improvements. We achieved this through savings from better procurement of contracts and managing staff vacancies carefully. However, future years remain a challenge and further details of our plans for reducing our costs to match the reduction in income is given in section 9.

Universal Credit (UC) continues to be rolled out across the country, with completion of the full roll out due by September 2018 for all new claimants. We currently have 165 tenants claiming UC with a housing element (as at January 2017). Rent debt is problematic in most of these cases with rent arrears across the 165 tenancies totalling £89,712, an average debt of £544 per tenancy. This compares with an average debt per tenancy across non UC households of just £90. A contributing factor to these higher levels of arrears is the wait between an application for UC and first payment, of at least 6 weeks. Applicants are frequently struggling to meet their rental commitment while waiting for their first UC payment. This problem is compounded by the profile of those currently being placed onto UC;

younger, single people, who are less likely to be in a position to be able to draw on savings.

Given the level of arrears it is not surprising enforcement activity among those on UC is high and cases are demanding a disproportionate amount of officer resource to manage. NPH have served Notice of Possession Proceedings in 57 cases and obtained County Court Possession Orders on a further 16 cases, all these actions having been taken since the tenant's UC claim commenced. Around a third of our current UC caseload is now on direct rent payments from DWP due to the build-up of arrears.

The household benefit cap reduced to £20,000 in November 2016 and we are starting to see the effect of this on household incomes. Around 180 families in council tenancies are affected.

The government has announced its intention to limit Housing Benefit payments to Local Housing Allowance rates. This will affect all new tenancies signed after April 2016 but will not be applied until April 2018. Among tenancies managed by NPH we are likely to see the biggest impact on those single households where the tenant is under 35 years, where the Local Housing Allowance shared room rate will apply. On average these tenants will see an £11 per week shortfall between the rent they are required to pay and the maximum amount of housing benefit they can claim.

The Housing and Planning Act obtained Royal Assent in May 2016. There are a number of parts of the Act that may have a direct implication on service delivery including:

- “Pay to Stay” arrangements for social housing tenants. These would require tenants with a household income of over £30,000 to pay an increased rent to reflect market rents in the area. The compulsory nature of this arrangement was dropped in November 2016 and so is unlikely to affect Northampton tenants in the immediate future.
 - The end of lifetime secure tenancies for new tenants. New tenancies will be granted for a term of five years, or 10 years for those with a disability and 19 years for those with young children. At the end of this period, the tenants’ circumstances will need to be assessed to determine whether they are able to move to a market rental property or into home ownership. We are waiting for regulations on this to be published in full.
 - The sale of higher value council homes to support an increase in home ownership, particularly through the introduction of the voluntary Right to Buy for tenants of Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations). This has now been delayed until April 2018 at the earliest. Regulations will need to be published to determine the definition and numbers of voids that may need to be sold. It is unlikely that this will be implemented until April 2018.
 - The Housing and Planning Act also sets out a definition of a “starter home” and who will be eligible to buy a starter home. Starter homes are also defined as “affordable housing” for the purposes of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- In 2015, The Government set out its ambitions to build one million new homes by 2020 with a focus on low cost home ownership and starter homes. In 2015, just under 142,000 properties were completed. Although housebuilding is at its highest level for a number of years, there is some doubt that this target will be met.
 - Support for “Help to Buy” is being extended with the introduction of a Help to Buy ISA and there will be increased support for the development of shared ownership. Funding for building homes at social or affordable rents is limited and consequently the supply of affordable rented homes is unlikely to increase. Despite limited funding for social rented homes, we are keen to work in partnership with NBC to develop new homes on available land, including the redevelopment of non-sustainable housing sites, garage sites and other publicly owned land. Further details are given in section 8.
 - The UK population is ageing significantly, with an increase in people aged 85 or over. In 2014, there were 1.5m people in the UK aged 85 or over and by 2029 this is projected to rise to 2.4m, presenting pressures on health and social care and also presenting challenges for the housing sector. All social landlords are likely to see the age profile of their tenants rising over time, and services will need to be redesigned to meet the needs of older tenants.

4. Local Context



Northampton's population increased by 10,000 between 2011 and 2015, from 212,000 people to 222,000. The unemployment rate has decreased. At the start of 2015 it was 4.2% and has reduced to 1.3% by October 2016. However, salaries are below the national average (£25,605 locally against a national figure of £27,872 for 2015) which leads to pressures for the provision of more affordable social housing.

There is a growing older population in Northampton, in keeping with the rest of the UK. NPH's Older Persons' Housing Strategy shows that the number of people over 65 living in Northampton is projected to rise from 32,500 in 2015 to 47,400 by 2030, with significant increases in the population over 85 years old. There are also corresponding projected increases in people with limiting long term illnesses and also living alone. This presents challenges not only for health and social care services locally but also for housing services. The Older Persons' Housing Strategy has a number of key recommendations relating to future requirements for older person's housing, including housing related support services for older and vulnerable people. These recommendations are being implemented.

We will continue to work with NBC to support the development and delivery of the Housing Strategy objectives, particularly in the areas of increasing the supply of social rented homes through a new build programme and improved support for older and vulnerable people as a result of our review of older persons' housing.

We will also continue to work closely with NBC to support its statutory obligations as detailed in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and Homelessness Act 2002. Part of this service requires us to provide suitable accommodation to those applicants, to enable the Council to discharge its statutory duty. The Rehousing team monitor homeless applicants and their bidding trends on a weekly basis, and liaise with the NBC Homeless team to provide offers of accommodation to those most in need. Part of this service includes the provision of properties that can be used as Temporary Accommodation to alleviate the budgetary constraints that are associated with high level usage of B&B accommodation.

The current legislative changes around the Welfare Reforms continue to provide significant challenges within the Social Housing Sector, and as such, we are required to utilise partnerships and joint working protocols as much as possible to not only meet our responsibilities within the Management Agreement, but also to support a suitable transition from temporary accommodation to more secure housing for those in the most need. These working practices are managed through liaison meetings on a regular basis between NBC & NPH where issues and concerns can be addressed quickly and effectively. A structured service level agreement is being developed to include a robust set of performance targets that both parties will be expected to adhere to going forward from April 2017.

5. Northampton Partnership Homes Strategic Objectives

We have developed a framework of strategic objectives that acknowledge the priorities of Northampton Borough Council and Northampton Partnership Homes, reflecting what is important to our organisations, our tenants, leaseholders and staff, and the partnerships that help us to improve our services overall.

These strategic objectives are as follows:

	Strategic Objective 1	Deliver and maintain high quality homes and estates
	Strategic Objective 2	Deliver high quality and customer focussed housing services
	Strategic Objective 3	Improve empowerment, opportunity and access for all
	Strategic Objective 4	Develop and maximise partnerships to build stronger, safer and thriving communities in Northampton
	Strategic Objective 5	Be an open, inclusive, effectively managed and trusted organisation

The following pages outline our key achievements in delivering these objectives in our first year of operation and our plans for further improvements next year.

A detailed summary of all key performance measures is given in the Appendix. The measures are closely aligned with the Delivery Plan key objectives and actions and focus on delivering quality service outcomes.

As members of Housemark, we have the ability to compare performance with other, similar organisations, identify trends and develop solutions for performance improvement.

6. Achievements in delivering the strategic objectives 16/17

Strategic Objective 1 - Deliver and maintain high quality homes and estates

We have carried out a wide range of improvement works to homes across Northampton, including the following:

- Improvement works at Eastfield and Kings Heath are underway including new fencing, external wall insulation, external maintenance, landscaping and improvements to communal areas.
- External wall insulation and external works at Far Cotton.
- A number of major improvements to properties in the Spring Boroughs area. These include:
 - Works to improve the exterior and communal areas at St Katherine's Court. This will include a single storey ground floor extension.
- External works and upgraded communal areas in Cooper Street, with the removal of a walkway.
- External works at St Peters and Doddridge.
- Demolition of a garage block in Lower Bath Street to be followed by the construction of 14 family homes.
- Demolition of empty flats in Little Cross Street and planning permission granted to construct 18 new homes.
- The construction of a new shop in St Peter's Way.



- Dover Court has been improved and modernised, including internal works, upgrades to the communal areas and landscaping improvements. Two additional flats are being provided, subject to planning permission. The feedback from new residents has been very positive.
- Works to improve Eleonore House including the refurbishment of communal areas and modernisation of flats have been completed. Six new flats were also provided.
- External wall insulation and external works at Abbey Street Development in St James have been completed and new landscaping is underway.
- The former now derelict care home at Lakeview House has been demolished and a contractor appointed to start work on the new development of 45 Older persons' flats, subject to planning permission.
- Continuation of internal modernisation works to Decent Homes standards for properties where works were previously refused. We have completed 746 properties this year.
- We have revised and updated our Asset Management Strategy based on improved stock data and the results of sustainability modelling. The key elements of the revised strategy include:
 - Adopting a 'Whole house, whole neighbourhood, whole business' approach to carrying all planned works to estates within a single contract in order to make the quickest visual transformation of estates and attain improved customer satisfaction.
 - Prioritising energy efficiency works to homes and in particular existing solid wall stock, non-traditionally built homes and other inefficient stock.
 - Stretching 30 year Business Plan assumptions on component replacement where possible via more detailed property surveys.
 - Introducing more option appraisals to ensure all opportunities to maximise returns are explored.
 - Reviewing the current reactive Repairs and Maintenance service so it becomes more 'planned' and effective.

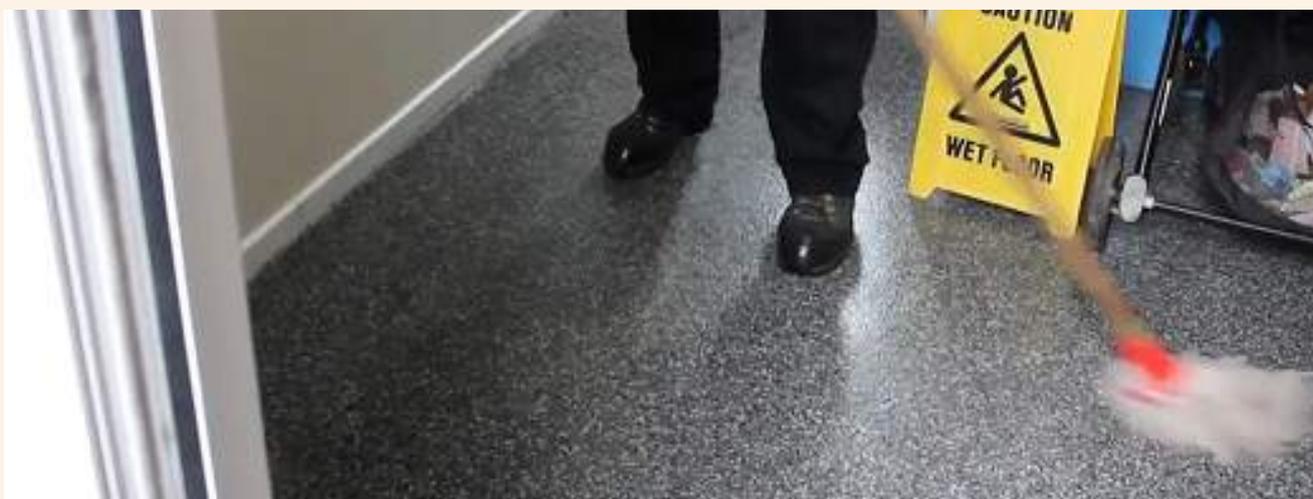




- We have appointed a new single Investment Contractor, Keepmoat, on a partnering basis for up to 10 years from April 2017 to work with us to deliver our planned investment works to existing properties and estates.
- The installation of photovoltaic panels to 1,200 bungalows in 2015/16 resulted in savings in energy costs for tenants estimated to be up to £200 per year as well as income for NPH from feed-in tariffs, which pay for the cost of installation. We are forecast to receive £300,000 from feed-in tariff income secured through registration of renewable heat and photovoltaic installations by the end of 2016/17.
- When properties become void, we are switching energy suppliers to Robin Hood Energy, a not-for-profit energy supplier owned by Nottingham City Council, which provides tenants with the opportunities to access cheaper energy costs.
- This energy switching initiative is also being offered to existing tenants, where it suits their needs, and has seen over 100 households accessing cheaper tariffs.
- Energy contracts for gas and electricity supply were inherited from NBC. The contracts were benchmarked against rates available under other framework agreements and a potential saving was identified. New contracts were put in place for the sites which had transferred to NPH which achieved a cost saving. The costs of the communal supplies are recovered from tenants through service charges, so the new contracts should deliver a saving for tenants. This has realised an overall saving to our customers of £56,000 per annum for a three year contract.



- We carried out a review of grounds maintenance and estate cleaning. This included gathering data and mapping the areas of land which need to be maintained and the blocks which need to be cleaned. An options appraisal of the methods of service delivery and the level of service required is being carried out to establish the most cost effective future delivery model for these services. We have worked closely with colleagues at NBC, who are currently reviewing the Environmental Services contract, to advise them of the review and of our future requirements. Once the method of delivery is established, a procurement exercise may be required to appoint contractors to deliver the service.
- We obtained value for money through the re-tendering of our gas servicing contract, with reduced costs of £175,000 per annum over the next five years.
- We have successfully implemented our Fire Safety Policy which recognises that tenant safety is paramount and ensures that communal areas of blocks of flats are kept free from hazards. We have also implemented a Mobility Scooter Policy to ensure that mobility scooters are stored safely and do not cause an obstruction or fire hazard in communal areas. Our approach to Fire Safety has been commended by the Fire Service.



Strategic Objective 2 - Deliver high quality and customer focussed housing services



- We have improved services for leaseholders including developing a leaseholder handbook and setting up a quarterly leaseholder surgery to increase involvement opportunities.
- This year, our rent collection service was assessed by the Housing Quality Network to give an independent assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of the service and make recommendations for future improvements. The outcome of the assessment was very positive and a number of recommendations for further improvements in the service were made including:
 - taking rent payments in advance at sign up,
 - improving take up of Direct Debits and changing to DD payments in advance,
 - and delivering a more flexible arrears recovery service including potential evening and weekend working.
- Rent collection levels have remained high, despite the roll out of Universal Credit and the introduction of further benefit changes, particularly the reduction in the overall benefit cap.
- In September 2016, we implemented new IT for the repairs service called Scheduling and Mobile Solutions (SAMS). This is improving the efficiency of our service by scheduling jobs directly to the person's handheld device, cutting out paperwork and ensuring work is organised as efficiently as possible. We have already realised 7% savings in jobs that take over 30 minutes to complete and further savings will be realised next year.
- We have started consultation with tenants on a new Repairs Policy, which will deliver a new approach to the service. This is based on the Chartered Institute of Housing's good practice repairs model and will see a focus on increasing efficiency and customer service by moving all repairs, apart from emergencies, to an appointment basis and giving newly let properties a repairs "MOT" before letting. Tenants should therefore not need to order further repairs for at least 12 months, unless an emergency occurs. We have also consulted on a Rechargeable Repairs policy which will be implemented next year.

- Work has started on developing a Tenancy Sustainment strategy to support vulnerable people to stay in their homes, ensuring that tenants' needs are assessed and appropriate support provided. We have developed a Safeguarding and Vulnerable Person's Policy as well as a Domestic Abuse Policy and rolled out training to staff to ensure they understand the issues and referral mechanisms. We take a victim-centred approach and have set up a domestic abuse panel consisting of representatives from across the business to ensure we deal with each case sensitively and appropriately. We work closely with partner agencies involved in MARAC (Multi agency risk assessment conferences).
- We provide in-depth support for around 370 tenants at any one time. These are tenants who require specialist help and advice to stay in their homes and maintain their tenancies, but who do not meet the threshold for support from statutory services. These can range from older, frail tenants to people with debt and benefit problems, mental health issues or drug and alcohol addictions.
- The support team have assisted tenants to claim over £128,500 of unclaimed benefits over 12 months. Support is withdrawn gradually when tenants are considered able to manage their tenancies independently without support. Of the 260 tenants who have been floated from support, 243 have continued in their tenancies.
- The provision of support for vulnerable tenants has also had a positive impact on rent collection, with reductions in the numbers of Notices of Seeking Possession served (down by over a hundred since 2015/16) and reductions in levels of evictions.
- We also work with prospective tenants before their tenancy starts, identifying issues early on which could result in a tenancy failing. We then work to support prospective tenants by providing support such as debt counselling, benefits advice, personal budget planning, crisis food and cleaning packs.





- We have carried out innovative work to deal with chronic hoarding problems in our properties. Support workers have been trained to identify and support people with hoarding issues. Three of our most severe hoarding cases have been referred to a psychotherapist for specialist support.
- We finalised our Older Persons Housing Strategy and are now implementing it. This sets out a clear framework for the future provision of older persons' accommodation in council stock, including future demand, support needs, partnership working and reclassification of some existing housing to ensure that older persons' accommodation meets long term needs.
- Work to improve our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour is underway, with a new team of four Tenancy Compliance Officers in place. A comprehensive training programme has been delivered for both the Tenancy Compliance Officers and Housing Officers. Enforcement action has been taken in a number of serious cases, including Closure Orders, focussing on properties being used for the production and supply of Class A drugs.
- We have also developed our own in-house serious case review process to ensure we are taking appropriate action on high level, complex cases.
- We are currently developing an Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and are consulting with tenants and partners before finalising this.

Strategic Objective 3 - Improve empowerment, opportunity and access for all

- We agreed, and are now implementing our IT Strategy. The Strategy supports our aims to deliver modern, accessible services at reduced cost. This includes mobile working for staff, so they are able to give up to date information to customers in their own homes on rent balances, outstanding repairs and a variety of other issues. Mobile working also enables staff to work more efficiently without the need to return to the office to complete paperwork.
- We are also developing more online services for customers so they can access services quickly and easily at times to suit them.
- Tenants reviewed the TIES (Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy) document to ensure it meets needs and is continuing to deliver an effective involvement structure. Our Service Improvement Panels (SIPs) were refreshed and streamlined to make them more aligned to services within NPH. We have also developed “associate membership” for SIPs to give people who are unable to attend meetings an opportunity to participate. A new Code of Conduct was agreed. Tenants have received procurement training and are involved in the procurement of major contracts. They played a key role in the selection of the partnering contractor, Keepmoat, to deliver the investment programme.
- We established our Scrutiny Panel and tenants received specialist training to support them in undertaking scrutiny exercises.
- The tenant training programme continued, with a wide variety of courses offered across the following areas:
 - Employability
 - Health & Wellbeing
 - IT
 - First Aid
 - Managing Money
 - Neighbourhood Learning
 - Professional Meeting Skills
 - Life Skills
 - Basic skills (Maths, English)
- Over 230 tenants attended courses and feedback has been extremely positive, with over 95% of attendees rating the courses and trainers as either ‘good’ or ‘excellent’.

- A new Complaints Policy was approved and went live in July. This is supported by the Tenants' Complaints Panel, which scrutinises our performance as well as acting as "designated persons" for complaints. We are monitoring the types of complaints we receive and what we have learned from them, with the aim of reducing complaints in the longer term. To ensure our new policy is effective, all staff are receiving training in the behavioural aspects of how to handle complaints.
- We are planning to establish a subsidiary company to empower tenants further, to be run by tenants, to expand our community development work and generate income for the benefit of tenants and residents. This will provide a focal point for partners, contractors and local businesses to discharge their Corporate Social Responsibility obligations. It will also give tenants the opportunity to take a lead on deciding community investment priorities and monitoring outcomes. The establishment of this subsidiary company will require approval from NBC under the terms of our Management Agreement.
- We developed our own Food Bank supported by donations from staff. More often than not, when supporting our most vulnerable tenants, staff were finding that our tenants were lacking the most basic essential items such as food. To respond to this initially, an appeal was made to our staff to bring in food items for our most vulnerable customers. The uptake for this service was extraordinary, with numbers over the first 10 months of its inception being around 120 food parcels. Over the Christmas period of 2016, an appeal was made to the staff and financial support was given from the NPH Board to provide Christmas food parcels that included essential food items, and luxury items of chocolates, biscuits and festive food for 54 families in total. We have made a commitment to the continued provision of this service to our most vulnerable customers, and new initiatives will continue to be sought to support this worthy cause.



Strategic Objective 4 - Develop and maximise partnerships to build stronger, safer and thriving communities in Northampton

- We continued our strong relationship with Northampton Borough Council, meeting frequently with council colleagues and working in partnership on the financial forecasting of the Housing Revenue Account, potential development sites, capital spending and a wide range of other areas. We also support the work of the Council's Scrutiny function, having participated in recent scrutiny exercises of Anti-Social Behaviour in the borough and Child Sexual Exploitation.



- We are involved in a range of partnerships across Northamptonshire particularly in relation to improving community safety. These range from County and Borough Community Safety Partnerships, local hot spot groups and active involvement in public protection and safeguarding arrangements. NPH staff liaise with Safer Community Teams informally on a regular basis to discuss common issues in shared geographical areas.
- 2016/17 saw us increase our engagement with the County on the development of a county wide Older Person's Strategy.

- We continued our partnership work with third sector organisations. A particular example is our work with Elsie's Café, part of the Real Junk Food Project. We supported them by providing space for them to operate from in our Community Hub at Market Street and helped them apply for planning permission to erect a food storage container. The Café not only supplies low cost food for local people, helping to reduce food poverty, but also supports a number of local groups using the building, including a youth project, Rainbows and Brownies, Zimwomen and a local theatre group. Elsie's has also taken over supporting the weekly older persons group and a drop-in for people with mental health issues.

Strategic Objective 5 - Be an open, inclusive, effectively managed and trusted organisation

- We carried out successful Board Member recruitment this year as part of the first rotation process for Board Members. We continued to develop Board governance, with a development programme for Board members in place and an annual appraisal process, including using a 360° appraisal tool. Staff received Governance training to ensure they were up to speed with best practice in ALMO governance.
- We have made significant progress in delivering our People Strategy including:
 - A new learning and development framework and ongoing training programme. This is based on organisational, team and individual needs. Organisational priorities have included: lone working, how to handle complaints effectively and safeguarding. We have also developed a programme of bite-sized lunchtime learning sessions covering a variety of subjects from IT to manual handling to use of Plain English.
 - The introduction of new terms and conditions, salary structure and job evaluation process.
- The development of a Competency Framework - #thisisNPH - which is now included in performance appraisals and the recruitment process. Staff were consulted extensively during the development of the competency framework and have participated in workshops to bring these competencies to life within their teams.
- Further development of HR policies tailored to NPH's needs, including an Apprenticeship Policy, Whistleblowing Policy and Code of Conduct.
- Roll out of annual performance appraisals based on the new competency framework.
- We have managed staff sickness absence carefully and have seen the overall level of sickness absence reduce from an average of 14.71 days in 2015/16 to a projected 11 days for 2016/17. Long term absence has reduced significantly with the number of cases reducing from 49 during 2015/16 to around an average of 8 for 2016/17.



- We have held quarterly interactive Employee Engagement events with all staff invited to attend. Topics have included developing the competency framework, asset management plans, staff awards and setting up a Community Interest Company for community regeneration.
- We have developed a staff award scheme called the “MAD” (Making a Difference) awards with different categories of award from Customer Service Star award to Innovative Idea award. The award ceremony was held in January at our second anniversary celebration event for staff.
- We carried out an Employee Opinion Survey in late 2016 and had a great response rate, with 77% of staff completing the survey. 62% of respondents were very or fairly satisfied with their job, higher than in the CIPD Employee Outlook report for Autumn 2016 (45%) and 74% know what NPH’s core purpose is.
- We have developed a Value for Money strategy, which has been underpinned by a programme of service reviews, across all business areas. These reviews have focused on ensuring we have improved business intelligence (such as more in depth performance and cost information) to inform decisions about how services will be delivered in future. Savings were achieved from better procurement of contracts, careful management of the staffing establishment and efficiencies through improved technology such as the Scheduling and Mobile Solutions (SAMS) project. This meant we were able to meet our savings target for 2015/16 of £1.76m without the need to reduce services for tenants.

7. Our plans for 2017/18

Strategic Objective 1 - Deliver and maintain high quality homes and estates

Our capital budget for 2017/18 is £24m. Our investment partner, Keepmoat, will start work in April following a mobilisation period. Keepmoat will be delivering our planned capital works programmes including refurbishment and upgrades to existing accommodation.

Our plans for improvement works include:

- Refurbishment of Berkeley House and Blackfriars House.
- Landscaping works in Spring Boroughs and Kings Heath.

- Completing the external works at Eastfield, Kings Heath, Delapre and Far Cotton including upgrades of refuse storage areas and provision for mobility scooters where needed.





- We propose to launch a Garage Sites Strategy which will include plans for refurbishment of sites, replacement of garages or redevelopment of the sites for new homes.
- Our new build and acquisition programme will deliver 99 additional properties including 45 flats at Lakeview and the completion of new developments in the Spring Boroughs area.
- We will be implementing the outcomes of the options appraisal work for grounds maintenance and cleaning to deliver improved services in both areas and will ensure that the costs are accurately reflected in service charges to tenants and leaseholders.
- Cleaning standards in communal areas of flats will be improved, starting with deep cleaning to bring areas up to standard, and a programme of upgrading floor coverings as part of refurbishment works. The findings of the grounds maintenance review will be fed in to the Council's review of the Amey grounds maintenance contract, for implementation from May 2018 onwards.



Strategic Objective 2 - Deliver high quality and customer focussed housing services

- We will be implementing a Leaseholder Policy and will ensure that the cost of improvement works is properly recovered through section 20 consultation, by ensuring that we have proper processes in place to achieve this. We will also ensure that service charges accurately reflect the cost of the service.
- We will continue to implement the improvement plan for our income collection service, including taking rent in advance at sign up and moving to Direct Debit payments in advance. We will significantly increase the take up of Direct Debit as this is the cheapest and most efficient method of rent collection.
- We will continue to monitor the effect of Universal Credit on our rent collection rates, working closely with colleagues in the Department for Work and Pensions.
- We will also be preparing for the implementation of Local Housing Allowance rates in April 2018, where the impact on tenants aged under 35 is greatest. We will be examining the impact on these tenants and discussing this with them individually to ensure they are fully informed of the implications and have access to appropriate support, including money and benefits advice.
- We will be implementing the new Repairs Policy and recharging repairs, following tenant consultation in 2016/17. This will change the way that repairs are delivered to increase efficiency and reduce costs. Changes will include implementing a more proactive approach, moving away from traditional repairs categories to doing emergencies within 24 hours and all other repairs by appointment. We will be exploring delivering a handyman service for older and vulnerable people to carry out minor works around the home, such as putting up shelves for a small charge.
- We will finalise the consultation on the new Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and implement it. This will see further improvements in partnership working with the police and voluntary sector. Robust enforcement action and comprehensive case management will continue. We will also improve our statistical monitoring so that hot spots can be more easily identified and develop a mobile app so that staff and tenants can report ASB cases quickly and easily. We will also be raising awareness of ASB through increased publicity, roadshows and youth events.



- We will be implementing the outcomes of the Older Persons' Housing Strategy, including the redesignation of older persons' accommodation on a gradual basis and continuing to increase the provision of accommodation for older people, such as the development at Lakeview House. We will also complete the replacement of out of date hard wired alarm systems to more modern and effective dispersed systems, on a scheme by scheme basis. There are over 200 homes remaining with these hard wired systems and these will all be replaced in the coming year.

- We will be consulting on a Hoarding Policy which will set out how we will support and advise people with serious hoarding problems that cause significant distress or impairment.
- We will be reviewing the out of hours service currently provided by Call Care to ensure we are achieving value for money.
- We will support the council with its ongoing review of the Allocations Policy.
- Our support service for older and vulnerable tenants will continue and we will implement the Tenancy Sustainability Strategy.



Strategic Objective 3 - Improve empowerment, opportunity and access for all



- A key new initiative in 2017/18 will be the establishment of the subsidiary company, managed by tenants, to deliver community investment, outlined on page 17. Work is underway on establishing an appropriate vehicle for this investment and, following approval, 2017/18 will see its first year of operation, focussing on getting established and developing a business plan.
- Tenant involvement as detailed in TIES (Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy) will continue, with a further review and update of TIES in the autumn to take account of any amendments requested by tenants.
- We will be exploring establishing a volunteer scheme for tenants so that tenants can get involved in community work, develop their skills and receive rewards for their volunteer work.
- The tenant training programme will continue and we will be reviewing it to ensure value for money and that we are making the most use of training offered by partner agencies, some of which is at little or no cost.
- We will be carrying out a satisfaction survey to determine how satisfied tenants are with the services we provide and will benchmark our results against those of other landlords.
- We will implement our IT Strategy, with the aim to deliver more services online and make it easier for customers to access services at times to suit them. Priorities will include accessing rent accounts online, setting up direct debits, checking and amending housing applications and checking and amending personal details. We will also continue to provide staff with mobile working solutions so they can work more flexibly and efficiently on site, reducing travel time and costs. Other corporate projects will include implementation of Electronic Document Management to improve efficiency and improving the Asset database to ensure that we have comprehensive up to date property information.

Strategic Objective 4 - Develop and maximise partnerships to build stronger, safer and thriving communities in Northampton

In 2017/18, our partnership work will continue to gather strength. We are already active partners in a wide range of local partnerships including:

- Both strategic and operational county-wide Community Safety Partnerships.
- Northampton Community Safety Board and local hot spot groups and weeks of actions.
- MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) ensuring that we deal effectively with cases involving violence, sex offenders and domestic abuse.
- Supporting the most vulnerable street homeless people by involvement operationally in local partnerships.
- Working with Northamptonshire County Council on a county-wide older persons' housing strategy, including supporting them with the development of an extra care scheme at Foxfields.
- Northamptonshire Housing Management and Development Forums. These are used to update landlords on local and national changes and matters of interest as well as providing an opportunity for the sharing of information, benchmarking and good practice.
- Our strong working relationship with Northampton Borough Council will continue and we will support the council in its delivery of its objectives, particularly in relation to the Housing Strategy and increasing the supply of affordable housing.



Strategic Objective 5 - Be an open, inclusive, effectively managed and trusted organisation

- We will carry out a governance review in 2017 to ensure our governance arrangements continue to develop and reflect best practice. This may include reviewing the size of the Board, in consultation with NBC. We will implement the outcomes of the 360° appraisal reviews carried out in 2016 and continue with the Board development programme, including regular away days with the Executive Team.
- We have developed new arrangements for HR services, following the termination of arrangements with LGSS. This includes expanding the size of the in-house HR Team and buying in transactional and payroll services from NBC. These new arrangements will begin during 2017/18.
- We will continue to implement the People Strategy that was agreed by the Board in 2016. This will include implementing a programme of HR policy reviews and delivering a learning and development programme. This programme will include management development training for all levels of management and roll out of training to all staff on improving complaint handling.
- We will continue to reduce staff sickness absence further, reducing the previous year's target of 11 days down to 10 (to be agreed).
- We carried out a staff survey in 2016. This showed generally high levels of staff engagement and a good understanding of our vision and objectives. However, there are some areas with lower engagement scores and an action plan is being produced to put measures in place to improve these areas. These measures will be implemented throughout 2017/18. Employee engagement events with all staff will continue to be held every quarter.
- The organisational structure will be streamlined over the next three years to drive efficiencies and savings. Front line services will be protected although it is intended that £2.6 million will be saved by reducing staffing costs by 2019. This can be achieved by consolidating service areas, reducing the number of senior management positions and staff turnover.
- Delivery of Value for Money will remain a key priority for us, particularly given the ongoing reductions in our income as outlined in section 9. We will also be delivering further cost reductions through better procurement. We will use the results of the service reviews carried out in 2015/16 to deliver improved efficiency, reduced duplication and more effective use of technology.

8. Our plans for Future Growth

The 1% year on year reduction in income for four years from 2016 presents us with significant challenges in terms of maintaining services and delivering our commitments to tenants within a reducing budget. We are carrying out service reviews to improve our efficiency and reduce our expenditure, which is going a long way towards making sure we are living within our budget. We are also growing our stock to both increase our income from rents and also increase the supply of affordable rented accommodation in Northampton.

The Board has approved a development proposal which is now with the Council for approval. The overall principle of the proposal is to provide NBC with a new flow of affordable housing over a sustained period, initially 10 years, that:

- Is aligned to address the shortage of social housing across Northampton targeting NBC's waiting list.
- Provides additional revenue towards NBC's HRA (and hence increased income to NPH).
- Provides additional income to NPH offsetting income lost through continued Right to Buy sales.
- Addresses current issues with under-occupancy and over-crowding.
- Creates homes designed and fit for the future.
- Is complimentary to NBC's existing social housing portfolio.
- Is complimentary to new affordable and private sector housing.
- Provides a response to support the alleviation of the increasing issue of homelessness.



The proposal is for NPH to create and deliver a new Council House build programme to build between 80 and 100 new homes a year over the next 10 years. Predominantly properties built will be for social rent, with the opportunity to provide affordable/sub-market rent or market rent, or sale (to act as a cross subsidy where necessary) where the demand exists.

Plans are already in place which are delivering 99 additional flats and houses in Northampton, including new developments at Spring Boroughs and a new older persons housing scheme at Lakeview. We will also be progressing the redesign and redevelopment of Toms Close.

9. Resources

The Management Agreement sets out details of how NPH is funded from money available in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the General Fund, both of which are managed by NBC. The financial plan is discussed annually before the start of each financial year where any necessary changes can be agreed. The five year financial plan previously agreed was substantially changed in 2015/16 as a result of the government announcements on rent reductions.

A 1% per annum reduction in social housing rent for four years was announced in 2015 and started in April 2016. This has a direct impact on our income as rent income into the HRA will decrease year on year and consequently our Management fee and other Managed funds will need to be reduced to take account of this reduced income. The overall reduction in income from this policy, over the four years, is in the region of £20M.

There are proposed delays to the extension of Right to Buy and the Higher Value Voids levy, which will result in further reductions in future years, which at present cannot be modelled due to the regulations being unavailable.

There has been an increase to the national insurance employer's contribution rate from 13.4% to 16.6% and an increase in the pension deficit payment, the total pressure is an additional £660K per annum, from 2017/18 onwards, which will need to be absorbed through savings and efficiencies.

The plans we have set out for 2017/18 in section 7 will be delivered within the financial envelope. Our key aim is to safeguard services for customers as much as possible. We have developed a Value for Money Strategy and action plan that will enable us to deliver significant efficiencies and savings in our management fee over the medium term.

We have approved a new Asset Management Strategy that re-phases the capital programme to take account of the revised financial envelope. The commitments we have given in relation to capital spending on our estates in section 7 will be delivered.

We have bought online new income streams in relation to the installation photovoltaic (PV) panels on approximately 1,200 homes and are working on a 10 year new build development programme that will deliver up to 1,000 homes over the next 10 years.



The following table sets out NPH’s income and expenditure budget over the next 5 years:

Table 1: NPH Income and Expenditure					
Income and Expenditure	Draft Budget 2017/18	Indicative Budget 2018/19	Indicative Budget 2019/20	Indicative Budget 2020/21	Indicative Budget 2021/22
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000 (NEW)
NBC Management Agreement	49,953	46,794	42,897	44,147	44,147
Income from PV panels	300	300	300	300	300
Total Income	50,253	47,094	43,197	44,447	44,447
Management Fee – HRA	9,639	9,178	8,418	8,668	8,668
Management Fee - General Fund	260	260	260	260	260
Management Fee - Special Services	3,913	3,913	3,913	3,913	3,913
Repairs and Maintenance (Managed Budget)	12,454	12,568	11,265	11,565	11,565
Capital Programme (Managed Budget)	23,987	21,175	19,341	20,041	20,041
Total Expenditure	50,253	47,094	43,197	44,447	44,447
Surplus/(Deficit)	0	0	0	0	0
Efficiencies required in year	-2,953	-3,159	-3,897	1,250	0
Accumulative efficiencies year on year from 1st April 2016	-4,335	-7,494	-11,391	-10,141	-10,141

10. Governance

The Board has ultimate responsibility for ensuring the commitments given in this Delivery Plan are delivered. It will seek input and feedback from tenants, employees and other key stakeholders, particularly NBC. The responsibilities of each stakeholder will be as follows:

Board

The Board meets eight times per year to monitor delivery and performance, assisted by its committees. These are smaller groups made up of volunteers from the Board that meet regularly to focus on a particular area. Committees make recommendations to the Board who have the responsibility for any decisions made.

Council

NBC will work with NPH to ensure a high level of performance; this will also include input from both parties at both an operational and strategic level.

Tenants

Tenant engagement groups consisting of the Tenants' Panel, Service Improvement Panels (SIPs), Scrutiny Panel, Complaints Panel and the Leaseholder Forum will have regular information on performance and progress. The Scrutiny Panel is working through a planned schedule of reviews as well as completing ad-hoc reviews if the need arises.

Employees

Employees will have regular information on performance and progress at team meetings, employee workshops and through regular one to one meetings with their line managers. They will have opportunity to input at an operational level.

Benchmarking

Membership of Housemark will continue. Housemark is an organisation that provides a data analysis and interpretation service. It will help to understand cost, performance and quality and provides the opportunity to compare performance against other, similar organisations.

Appendix

Performance Measures - 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 Targets				
LEVEL	Core measure	Performance Measure	Frequency	2017/18 Targets
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE ONE - Deliver & maintain high quality homes & estates				
Tier 1		Percentage of homes not achieving the Northampton Standard	A	n/a
		Number of non-decent properties as at 1 April	A	0
		Satisfied with overall quality of home	Bi-E	74%
		Satisfied with neighbourhood as a place to live	Bi-E	71%
Tier 2		Appointments kept as a percentage of appointments made	M	99.60%
	Core measure	Percentage of total repairs completed within target period	M	99.60%
		Percentage of emergency repairs completed within target time (24 hours)	M	100%
		Percentage of repairs completed during first visit	M	98%
		Percentage of tenants satisfied with most recent repair carried out	M	98.50%
	Core measure	Number of dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate	M	0
		Communal area of blocks cleaned to a satisfactory or better standard	6M	60%
		Percentage of fly tipped rubbish reports removed within 2 days for which NPH is responsible	M	90%
		Number of cases of ASB received	A	n/a
		Number of cases of ASB closed	A	n/a
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE TWO - Deliver high quality & customer focused housing services				
Tier 1		LA tenants satisfied with NPH services	Bi-E	75%
Tier 2		Customer satisfaction with the adaptations service	Q	98.50%
		Number of tenancies terminated as a percentage of properties managed	M	no target
		Percentage of new tenants satisfied with the way the Rehousing Team dealt with your application	M	90%
		Percentage of lettings made as a direct let	M	20%
	Core measure	Average time taken to re-let minor works void properties	M	10 days
	Core measure	Average time taken to re-let major works void properties	M	28 days
	Core measure	Average time taken to re-let all void properties, not including those with management action plans	M	28 days
	Core measure	Average open void period for all local authority homes, including those with management action plans	M	n/a
		Percentage of dwellings that are vacant and available to rent	M	0.85%
		Percentage of dwellings that are vacant and unavailable to rent	M	0.95%
		Percentage of re-lets accepted on first offer	M	no target
		Average days to complete Rehousing Assessment for vulnerable applicants	M	14 days
	Core measure	Void rent loss	M	1.80%
	Core measure	Rent Collected as a % of rent owed (ex arrears b/f)	M	99%
	Core measure	Current Tenant arrears as % of annual rent debit	M	2.80%
		Travellers rent collected as a % of rent owed (ex arrears b/f)	M	93%
		Percentage of all quarterly support reviews completed	Q	95%
	New		Percentage of all new Older Persons tenants receiving Emergency Call Care options and advice within 48 hours of tenancy start date	M
New		Upon allocation of referral, percentage of urgent Support Assessments completed within 7 working days		90%
New		Upon allocation of referral, percentage of Support Assessments completed within 14 working days	M	90%
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE THREE - Improve empowerment, opportunity & access for all				
Tier 1		Percentage of tenants satisfied views are taken into account	Bi-E	56%
Tier 2		Percentage of complaints responded to in full within target time	Q	85%
	Core measure	Percentage of complainants satisfied with case handling	Q	75%
		Rate NPH is good at keeping tenants informed	Bi-E	77.5%
		Percentage of tenants on who NPH has all profile information	A	85%
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FOUR - Develop & maximise partnerships to build stronger, safer and thriving communities in Northampton				
Tier 1		Percentage of tenants that feel safe within their community	Bi-E	n/a
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE FIVE - Be an open, inclusive, effectively managed & trusted organisation				
Tier 2		Tenants satisfied that their rent provides value for money	Bi-E	70.5%
		Tenants satisfied that their service charge provides value for money	Bi-E	58%

NPH's performance is published monthly on our website at www.northamptonpartnershiphomes.org.uk/nph-performance

