Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH)

Value for Money Statement 2021/22

At Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH) we strive to generate value in all we do. Our vision is "to provide homes which enable people to live happy and healthy lives in enriched communities". To deliver this vision, it is essential that value for money (VFM) is central to our business.

Our key strategic priorities are:

- to deliver and maintain high quality homes and estates;
- to deliver high quality customer focussed housing services;
- to improve empowerment, opportunity and access for all;
- to develop and maximise partnerships to build stronger, safer and thriving communities in Northampton; and
- to be an open, inclusive, effectively managed and trusted organisation.

Historically NPH has had a rolling 3-year VFM Strategy that takes account of our wider strategic objectives and describes how VFM fits. As you would expect there is a strong link between our 'critical success factors' for delivering the strategic objectives and VFM.

For us, VFM means obtaining the maximum benefit from the resources available to meet the needs and aspirations of our tenants and leaseholders. This requires us to be effective in how we plan, manage and operate our business.

NPH does not believe VFM is solely concerned with achieving the lowest cost and we maintain a strong focus on improving services for customers. Any gains made are reinvested back into the delivery of frontline services and the Happy to Help Community Interest Company. We look for outcomes that can be measured and which demonstrate our trajectory towards increasing VFM.

NPH VFM - 2021/22

NPH began operating in January 2015 to provide and improve housing services, with the requirement of refreshing and reinvigorating the Council's housing offering. As an arms-length management organisation (ALMO), NPH is wholly owned by West Northamptonshire Council (WNC).

The performance of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is where overall financial performance is demonstrated. This statement therefore uses metrics that take account of HRA performance and position, within which NPH's accounts are the fundamental contributor. For example, the HRA has an annual revenue cost of approximately £30.3m (2022/23 business plan) and NPH has a budgeted management fee of £28.9m to enable the delivery of housing services across Northampton for 2022/23.

NPH Corporate Approach to VFM

NPH has adopted a holistic approach to embedding VFM into the way it provides corporate support services, day to day service delivery and in overall management decision making.

This approach started at the point of set up in 2015, through the implementation of a set of performance measures put in place to monitor performance. These measures are the Tier 1 and 2 performance indicators that the Council uses to review quarterly performance. These measures and the associated targets are reviewed annually with the Council.

In addition to the agreed measures, NPH has introduced other operational practices through the delivery of key corporate services and activity, acknowledging that they have a major role to play in providing organisational controls, minimisation of risk and exploitation of opportunities to drive efficiency and service improvement. By doing this, NPH ensures VFM is considered at the point of decision making. The key contributing corporate VFM control activities include:

- Procurement
- Corporate Programme and Project Management
- Workforce Management
- Performance Monitoring, benchmarking, and customer satisfaction tracking
- Happy to Help Community Interest Company (CIC)

Procurement

Driving efficiencies in procurement activity, creates one of the greatest opportunities to improve VFM at NPH. The function plays a key role in delivering VFM for all works or services we buy in from external companies. 2020/21 was the second year of the 3-year procurement strategy (2020/23).

Procurement delivery during 2021/22 has been reviewed and approved by the Executive Management Team with due consideration of the ongoing impact on materials cost and scarcity not only due to the pandemic but also as the fuller impact of Brexit took hold. The rising costs and capacity issues has on occasions caused delays in key areas of activity (e.g., delivery of the new build programme), however NPH has supported its supply chain and continued to provide a critical service to our community whilst maintaining a clear focus on VFM.

The Procurement function is provided internally with additional resource from WNC Procurement supporting all areas of the business across the full procurement lifecycle. This support includes the initial appraisal of options for delivering the work or service, working with specialist frameworks to secure additional VFM and/or social investment assistance, developing specification and procurement documents, setting the tender evaluation criteria, and assisting throughout the tender process until the contract is awarded. During 2021/22 there has been a review and expansion of existing framework allowing further benefits to be realised including a Neutral Vendor Framework for Consultancy, Works, and Services. This has provided an easy, efficient, transparent, and compliant solution for consultancy, providing a platform that we can invite and utilise the local supply chain. In addition, this has provided value for money for both NPH and the supply chain due to reduced framework fees whilst providing a competitive platform with savings over budgeted figures.

Our approach to assessing value is to focus on the elements of each contract that are of most importance to the service area. This could be cost, service delivery improvements, efficient processes, risk management or social value. We then develop tender evaluation criteria that is weighted according to the importance of each for that particular contract. We don't have a standard price / quality split or standard evaluation criteria, as the factors are different for each contract and during 2021/22, we have generated CSR monies to support our community interest company, Happy to Help of £112,000 which supports our residents and their communities. In addition, there are further collective savings during 2021/22 of over £400,000.

Corporate Programme and Project Management

NPH introduced a bespoke corporate Programme and Project Management Framework in 2019 to ensure that resources, both budget and people, were aligned to delivering against NPH corporate priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan and that any resources used provided VFM and identifiable benefits.

The framework enables flexibility whilst ensuring that project ideas that require multi service resource input or have potential for organisation wide impact, are considered by a Virtual Programme Management Office (VPMO) prior to seeking formal approved by EMT. As part of these improvements, assessments are made of the ongoing savings both in time of cost and resource to ensure these maximise VFM for NPH. The agreed programme is monitored monthly, and benefits delivery tracked. The approach has been assessed by Internal Audit with a 'Substantial Assurance' outcome.

During the year, key corporate projects include:

- Recharging residents for repairs where these are due to their actions rather than NPH responsibilities as WNC's managing agent (e.g. replacement fobs or locks). This has provided additional revenue for WNC and the HRA to cover expenditure on repairs which are not covered by existing service charges. The reputational and behaviour change benefits must also be considered as tenants are now aware that NPH will seek to charge for certain types of damage

- Continued rollout of the use of handheld devices to gather data and this project has saved 0.5 FTE of housing officer administration time, reductions in paper and printing costs and subscriptions due to improved processes as well as significant reduction in fire safety risk for tenants. The approach was shortlisted for a national award and NPH has been supporting other organisations to share best practice

- Improvements to the out of hours emergency repairs service has allowed calls to be processed more effectively reducing delays to residents and providing savings on out of hours personnel costs and back-office process (to be fully realised in 2023)
- Introduction of online contractor portal to allow contractors to upload invoice and payment certificate information to allow for a single source of information. This has allowed swifter processing time, additional financial controls, reduced queries, and reduced staff administration resource time for both NPH and contractors.

Workforce Management and Development

NPH recognises that its workforce is a significant resource and active management, oversight and control of this resource is a key contributor to ensuring VFM. NPH actively monitors sickness absence levels and ensures that management processes support individuals to return to work. Staff turnover is tracked to monitor trends and reasons for staff leaving are important to understand as recruitment processes are costly and gaps in resources can have a negative impact on remaining staff. All vacant positions are challenged by EMT to agree whether the resource is still needed or not, allowing budget for roles no longer considered a priority to be utilised elsewhere.

Staff training and development spend is also considered by EMT in terms of VFM as it is an investment to reduce turnover and should also be expected to provide other benefits to the organisation. NPH considers all requests for Post Entry training and all training programmes include evaluation. In one area we have continued to achieve year-on-year savings of £8,000 from moving external design work to an ‘in house’ team, following training delivered.

	2018/19	**2019/20**	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
	Actual	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	***Target***
Staff turnover %	15.95%	11.60%	7.53%	15.44%	n/a
Average days lost to sickness per employee	7.88	7	6.4	6.8	7

The data table above shows that staff turnover reduced during Covid, which is to be expected however, since then levels have increased again consistent with national trends. Through active management, sickness absence levels have been consistently reducing since 2018/19. Low sickness absence minimises agency costs for temporary staff and protects service delivery within existing salary budgets.

Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH)

Performance Monitoring, Benchmarking and Customer Satisfaction Tracking

Satisfaction with service and the value achieved from rents received are strategic, critical success factors. Tier 1 and Tier 2 performance measures (previously reviewed and targets agreed annually with the Council) include a suite of operational service level and satisfaction KPIs.

Tenant satisfaction is usually formally measured by NPH every two years using a Tenants Survey. The last full survey took place in October 2019. A mini sample survey of 2,000 tenants was also carried out in the Winter 2020, in order to gauge tenant views following the long first Coronavirus Lockdown.

NPH set out an objective to achieve accreditation through the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) to drive service improvement through a focus on the needs of customers. As a result of this, NPH moved to reporting satisfaction using the Customer Service Index (CSI) scoring methodology. The CSI methodology provides results based on actual service experience and the level of importance to the customer on the service received. This differs from the Housemark methodology which is focused on perception of a service rather than actual experience. 'STAR' Housemark measures are no longer collected and had been replaced with new CSI measures.

NPH's approach is changing again as the Regulator of Social Housing has consulted on introducing a new set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures that all Registered Providers must comply with. The final set of measures, expected to be introduced from April 2023, are due to be confirmed in Summer 2022. This will obviously have an impact on the way NPH conducts satisfaction surveys moving forward. NPH is currently reviewing its approach to ensure compliance with the proposed new requirements. When notification of the change was announced NPH decided to suspend planned surveying for 2022/23 due to the need to commence the new survey methodology from April 2023.

Internal service satisfaction trackers have been introduced as part of a corporate Customer Service Programme and this data enables services to quickly identify issues and make changes to improve services to customers.

Relevant historical satisfaction data is detailed in the various data tables shown below. While progress has been made since 2015 the levels of satisfaction are still not where we would like them to be. When benchmarking externally against the best performing organisations we still have work to do in this area.

We use HouseMark to benchmark our performance against peers, however there are still differences as NPH is an ALMO and the peer organisations are generally Housing Associations. As such not all data is comparative.

Happy to Help Community Interest Company (CIC)

During 2021/22 we continued to deliver additional services to benefit tenants via Happy to Help, our Community Interest Company (CIC), utilising 'Corporate Social Responsibility' money that we secure through procurement exercises. This financial year we have supported 187 vulnerable people with furniture, white goods, and essential items, a further 389 homes (538 people) with food parcels and over 200 vulnerable households with Christmas hampers. For the wider communities across Northampton, we have also supported 16 groups via our Communities Fund, reaching an estimated 480 people including funding garden equipment and furniture, hi-vis jackets and insurance for a community cycling group, litter picking equipment and support for a stay and play group.

Working within the government guidance for non-essential retail we continued to operate our Paint Shop in Kings Heath where possible. This financial year we have recorded 261 hours of volunteering, helped 330 households to decorate on a budget and recycled enough paint back into the community diverting 2,299 litres of paint from landfill.

This was also the first full year of our handyperson service providing subsidised, affordable services for small jobs in and around the home with over 170 households accessing the service. Our new gardening service also assisted ten households to bring their gardens back to a manageable position for them to enjoy. Both services meet an identified unmet need and were requested by our tenants.

VFM for Overall NPH and Service Area Performance

In addition to the above corporate mechanisms in place to drive organisational VFM, NPH also uses metrics both corporately and across individual service areas to assess and benchmark performance. Working to achieve these measures are critical success factors for NPH and several of the key measures feature in the metrics below:

Overall NPH Performance

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	Actual	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	***Target***
Headline Social Housing cost, £ per unit	£4,521	£4,217	£4,470	£5,931	£5,419*	£6,225	*£6,419*
CSI satisfied with overall service**	N/A	N/A	N/A	68.7%	67.6%	N/A	*TBA*
CSI satisfied with advice and support**	N/A	N/A	N/A	84.5%	79.7%	N/A	*TBA*
CSI score for contacting NPH**	N/A	N/A	N/A	61.0%	60.0%	N/A	*TBA*
Staff cost per unit £	£808	£790	£757	£823	£890	£995	*£1,072*

Note:
* At the time of writing only draft accounts are available for 2020/21 for NBC, and 2021/22 for WNC though the 2020/21 accounts are in the final stages of review.
** CSI Customer Satisfaction measurement is carried by an independent survey organisation, following the Customer Service Institute scoring approach full census Tenant Survey is usually conducted every two years, however due to the expected introduction of new RSH Satisfaction Measures from April 2023, the current approach is suspended, see detail on page 5 above.

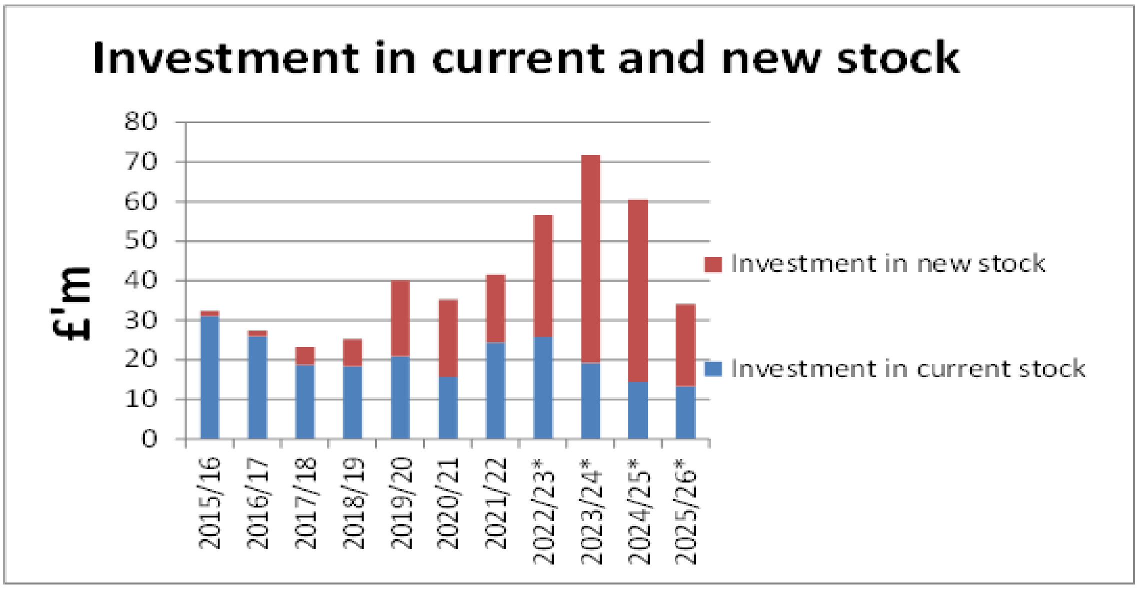
The Headline Social Housing Cost has increased in line with expectations to £6,225 following the slight dip during 2020/21. This is mainly due to the backlog of responsive repairs following Covid, the growth in planned investment work amplified by the decarbonisation funding from SHDF together with the completion of a further 60 units.

There has been and continues to be substantial investment in the new build capital programme (2020/25) with ambitions to deliver over 1,000 homes by 2025 and this is anticipated to be reflected in 2022/23 and future years. This additional investment has been made possible due to the removal of the HRA Borrowing Cap from October 2018 onwards, 1-4-1 receipts, together with accessing additional funds through NHS England, Homes England and from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

The demand on housing in Northampton is significant and continues to grow as tenants exercise their Right to Buy (RtB), further depleting housing stock year on year. Following the reduction during 2020/21, numbers are now consistent with pre-pandemic levels with 119 tenant sales in 2021/22.

At the end of the 2021/22 year there were 3,178 people on the housing register an increase of 202 from 2020/21. New housing investment is very important to Northampton and provides significant value both socially and economically. Between 2017/18 to 2021/22 NPH have delivered 291 new homes. Of those 3,178 people on the housing register waiting there were 133 households where a full housing duty had been accepted. In addition, there were some 400 households accommodated in temporary housing, whilst their housing applications were being considered by WNC. This demonstrates the ever-growing homeless problem that is a symptom of the housing crisis across the country. There were also 257 individuals and families living in temporary accommodation. This presents a critical need and the investment made in this area is clearly value adding. Investment in this area will grow the housing stock of WNC to support dealing with these issues and provide valuable long-term assets that strengthen the HRA balance sheet.

The extent of the capital investment is highlighted in the graph below, illustrating the growth over this and future years to help reduce and reverse the current depletion of housing stock. This shows that investment in current stock remains consistent and high for the foreseeable future and also that new build investment is not to the detriment of expenditure needed on existing stock.



During 2021/22 investment has risen, returning to pre-Covid levels as expected following the slight drop during 2020/21. During 2021/22 NPH was able to access grant funds from the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) pilot. This provided investment in neighbourhoods allowing more homes to become more energy efficient working towards the Government's net zero carbon target of EPC C rating for tenants' homes by 2035.

If capital spend is stripped out of the Headline Social Housing cost indicator the investment across the housing stock has clearly increased. This reflects the considerable level of repairs delivered during 2021/22 which also included catching up on the backlog following Covid from 2020/21, see table below).

	2016/17	**2017/18**	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2020/21**	**2021/22**	**2022/23**
	Actual	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	***Target***
Headline Social Housing cost ex capital, £	£2,160	£2,204	£2,260	£2,355	£2,346	£2,581	*£2,782*
% Change	4.6%	2.1%	2.5%	4.0%	-0.2%	10%	*7.8%*
Annual inflation (year to March)	3.1%	3.3%	2.4%	1.9%	0.7%	9.2%	*N/A*

Combining the improvement in service and new delivery with the underlying headline social housing and staff costs per unit remaining broadly static, it is clear that more has been achieved with the resources available. This includes servicing and supporting the increased capital programme where staffing costs to date have largely remained as revenue spend included in the above figures.

Asset Management and Investment

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	*Target*
CSI score for Major Improvement Works*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	*66.6%*	N/A*	*N/A*
Capital spend £ per unit	£2,361	£2,013	£2,210	£3,557	£3,096	£3,670	*£3,869*
Reinvestment %[1]	5.9%	4.3%	4.7%	6.8%	5.6%	9.9%	*5.5%*
New Supply %[2]	0.1%	0.3%	0.6%	0.7%	0.8%	0.8%	*1.4%*

Note: Currently only draft information is available from 2020/21 onwards therefore, the housing properties book value used for and 2020/21 is the draft value on 31 March 2020 plus the new build capital programme costs.

* Pending confirmation of new RSH Satisfaction Standard measures expected Summer 2022 to commence from April 2023, see detail on page 5 above.

[1] Reinvestment is the cost of investment in current and new stock as a percentage of housing properties book value in total

[2] New supply is the number of new units as a percentage of the closing stock for the year.

Investment in current and new stock is important to the long-term viability of the HRA, but it is also essential for social value generation within Northampton, particularly when considering the provision of new homes. Historically, there has been a net loss to social housing across the borough of Northampton because the number of homes lost through Right to Buy exceeded the number of new homes being built, this was the case for a number of years. 2020/21 saw the first year when additionality exceeded the RtB sales, generating a net increase of 31 homes. It was anticipated that this would continue during 2021/22 however there was a resurgence of RtB with 119 sales, almost a full return to pre pandemic levels. In addition, two major schemes (Riverside House and Beaumont House), expecting to deliver a total of 120 homes, encountered delays.

We are actively working to further increase our new housing stock by building new homes and have increased the number of larger scale projects over the forthcoming years including adding to the net social housing stock. New schemes approved during 2021/22 include St George's Campus and Southbridge in addition to those approved in earlier years that are in progress such as Belgrave House (The Clock House) and the Roof Gardens. Collectively these will deliver a further 276 homes across Northampton, in line with our ambitious plans as stated in our new 10-year Development Strategy.

The statistics in the earlier table demonstrate the continued commitment to increasing investment in the stock base and this covers both planned investment into existing stock and the building of new housing. This investment has risen, continuing the trend seen in earlier pre pandemic years, despite the challenges brought by Brexit and Covid in relation to the scarcity and rising cost of materials and labour experienced by us directly and through our construction partners. Our capital investment supports our ambitious capital programme as agreed with WNC.

Sustainability

At NPH, we believe that each of our residents, employees, suppliers, and stakeholders has a crucial role in creating a sustainable future for Northampton. To help us become a more sustainable organisation we have adopted the One Planet Living framework based on ten simple principles that provide a holistic approach to sustainability and will feature clearly in our plans for the future.

The NPH Sustainability Strategy 2020/23 commits NPH to continual reduction of our operational carbon footprint, targeting 7% reduction in carbon emissions each year and an overall 20% reduction by 2023 from a 2018/19 baseline. For the financial year 2021/22 the NPH carbon footprint is 1,931 tCO_2e.

High Level Summary of Environmental Performance

Since implementation of the EMS, NPH carbon emissions have continually reduced. A reduction in carbon emissions of 12% was achieved in 2020-21, greatly exceeding the 7% annual target. This year again, we can report a reduction in carbon emissions of almost 12%, both in real terms and measured by the intensity ratio of emissions per homes (0.156 tCO_2e per home).

In addition, the target of a 20% overall reduction in carbon emissions from a 2018/19 baseline has been achieved one year ahead of expectations.

The major reduction in emissions has been achieved in relation to electricity, despite consumption showing little change. This is partly due to the UK electricity grid becoming cleaner as more renewables replace coal. However, the main impact has been from a successful energy procurement risk management strategy implemented in 2020. NPH electricity is now procured via a renewable energy contract on a Green Tariff under the Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO) scheme3. The benefits of this procurement approach have reduced emissions related to electricity by three quarters, with the remaining quarter coming from outlying electricity supplies yet to fall into the REGO contract.

Gas consumption in kWh has shown a decrease compared to previous years, and it is anticipated that this is due to efficiency improvements and boiler upgrades made by NPH on some of the larger communal heating systems such as Abbey House. Scope 3 emissions dropped significantly in 2020/21 mainly due to reduced business mileage during the pandemic. These emissions have rebounded this year but not to pre-Covid levels, suggesting the benefits of new ways

of working such as virtual meetings are having a long-term positive impact.

[3] The Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO) scheme provides transparency to consumers about the proportion of electricity that suppliers source from renewable generation https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/renewable-energy-guarantees-origin-rego

Energy efficiency action taken

Over the course of the financial year an extensive project to upgrade communal lighting systems has been implemented. Almost 1,000 outdated lamps in multiple apartment blocks have been replaced with low energy LEDs with motion sensors. This is modelled to reduce energy consumption by approximately 240,000 kWh per year, saving £40,000.

Over 1,600 homes NPH manage have solar PV installed on the roof, providing more than 3MW of renewable electricity generation. For the period 2021/22 this generated 2.8 million kWh of renewable electricity, saving 661 tCO2e. Approximately 70 new solar PV systems have been added to the portfolio over the financial year via a combination of new build homes and in whole house retrofit of houses included in the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Demonstrator scheme.

Progress Towards Net Zero

Earlier this year, West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) signed up to the UK100 Net Zero pledge, which is focused on tackling the climate emergency and reducing carbon emissions. WNC have committed to cutting their own emissions to net zero by 2030, and those of their residents and businesses by 2045. This is five years ahead of the UK government's 2050 target. As a management agent for WNC council housing stock and a significant stakeholder in Northampton's economy, NPH has an important part to play in helping WNC meet these targets.

Housing Management Services

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	Actual	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	***Target***
CSI score for communal services	N/A	N/A	N/A	59%	54.7%	N/A	*n/a***
CSI score for grounds maintenance	N/A	N/A	N/A	57%	61.1%	N/A	*n/a***
CSI score with anti-social behaviour	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	53.1%	N/A	*n/a***
Housing management cost per unit	£1,023	£1,045	£1,073	£1,174	£1,240	£1,268	*1,342*
Current tenant rent arrears (CTA) %	2.01%	2.25%	2.23%	2.65%	2.57%	2.80%	*3.15%*
Former tenant rent arrears (FTA) %	1.08%	1.11%	1.27%	1.49%	1.28%	1.45%	No target
CTA and FTA write off as % of rent roll	0.51%	0.38%	0.38%	0.29%	0.53%	0.31%	No target

** CSI Customer Satisfaction measurement is carried by an independent survey organisation, following the Customer Service Institute scoring approach Full census Tenant Survey is usually conducted every two years, however due to the expected introduction of new RSH Satisfaction Measures from April 2023, the current approach is suspended, see detail on page 5 above.

By completing satisfaction surveys with tenants at various points when they interact with us, we can use the information to make changes to our services. The new specialist accommodations have incurred significant additional costs now they are tenanted, Oak Tree Rise in particular.

Coming out of Covid Housing Management has returned to business as usual, however the impact of the pandemic has increased the number of tenants who require on-going support and assistance managing their tenancies, we currently have 188 in active support which includes 18 Domestic Abuse cases. This work has had a significant impact on tenants being able to manage their tenancies.

There has been an increase in costs associated with life-lines in older persons housing, and NPH has undertaken a programme of linking smoke alarms to life-lines for very vulnerable tenants. This has added an additional layer of assistance for older people. We have also been working on the digital switchover of life-lines from analogue devices.

Court action in relation to anti-social behaviour has been delayed due to backlogs in the courts, however we are proactively managing 73 cases, with 4 pending legal action. Managing these cases allows other tenants to live in quiet enjoyment of their homes avoiding tenancy termination.

We supported 46 victims of Domestic Abuse which allowed families to remain in their current home, but where that has not been possible, we have moved 6 to safe housing. Over the year we have also provided new tenancies due to extenuating circumstances for 10 further households because of hate crime, medical reasons or due to ASB challenges.

The refurbishment of the community hubs has been completed and the engagement programme now concentrates of community events and weeks of action across the town.

NPH has successfully housed 60 homeless families into secure housing, many of whom were placed in expensive temporary accommodation.

During 2021/22 we have increased our collections to reduce the impact of fly-tipping across Northampton, recognising that whilst this is the responsibility of WNC rather than NPH the impact this has for residents is significant. During 2022/23 this proactive approach will continue as we increase the methods of reporting to allow timely intervention wherever possible.

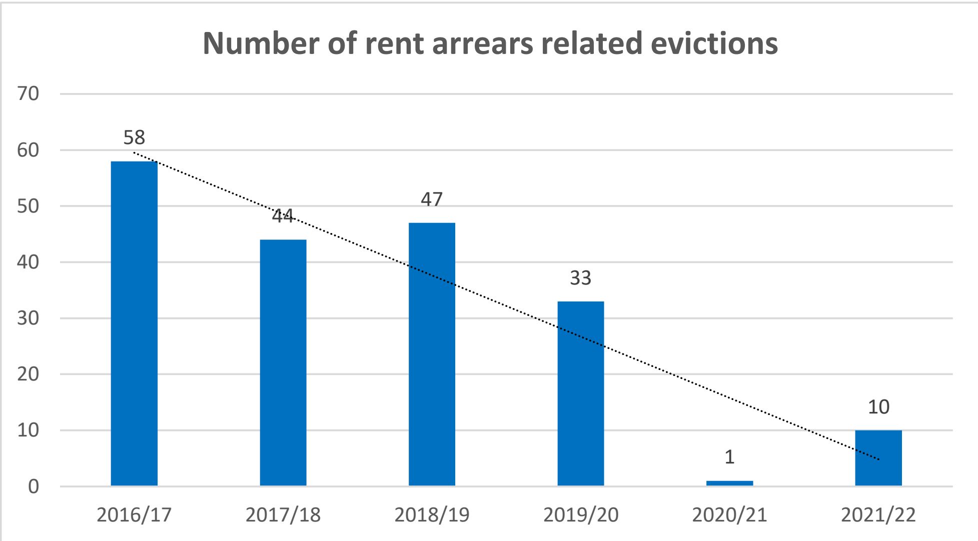
<u>Income from HRA homes</u>

Tenant arrears and debt levels have an impact on value. The more rent collected; the more resource we have available to invest through the HRA. The arrears indicator in the table above shows current tenant arrears have increased to 2.8% from the exceptionally low 2.57% seen in 2020/21, although still within the original target for the year of 3.25%. This shows that performance has continued to exceed expectations, as arrears are controlled, though post-unitary complications for court submissions have hindered the progress of evictions for rent arrears. At the end of the year, the number of Universal Credit claimants stood at 4,036 increasing 20% during the year. Given the substantial impact on operations resulting from the pandemic and the continuing roll out of Universal Credit, the position is much better than was expected at the commencement of the year.

The financial inclusion and welfare reform team were also able to secure additional support and benefits for residents of over £300,000.

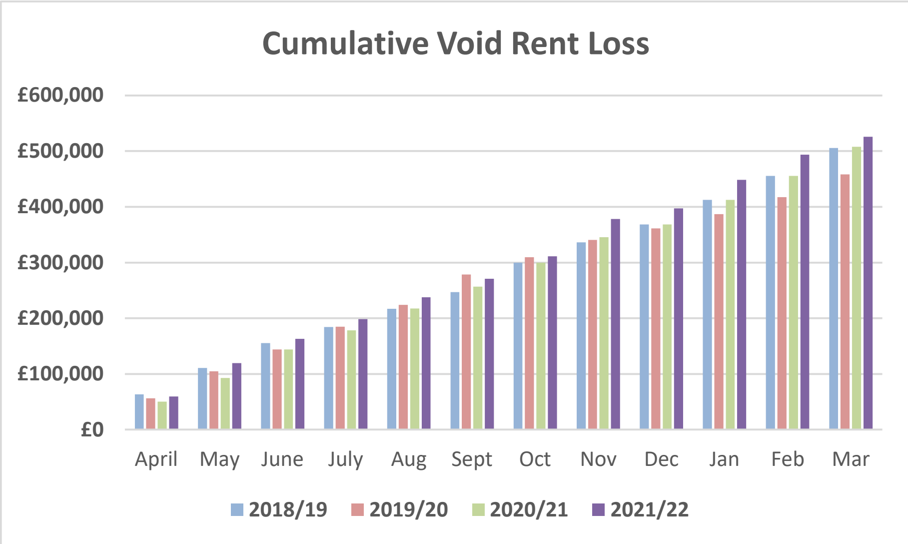
At the end of 2021/22 arrears had risen by a marginal £146,000 (0.3% of the rent available for collection) substantially lower than the rent increase during the year of 1.5%. This reflects significant work undertaken supporting tenants in financial difficulties during the second year of the pandemic. The number of evictions has increased, however only slightly, 10 this financial year, due to technical issues following the transfer of the housing stock from NBC to WNC and the role of NPH as an ALMO, however this issue is nearing resolution. The reduced number of possession hearings and evictions realised financial savings against budgeted costs and in addition fewer evictions help to reduce void expenditure and increase tenancy sustainment.
The following graph illustrates the significant reduction in evictions:

Graph: Number of annual evictions (rent arrears)



NB At the end of the financial year there were a number of stayed cases due to additional clarifications required following the unitary changes and change of ownership from NBC to WNC.

Void rent loss during the year had risen by 3.5% to £525,000. This has been a result of the increase in major or complex voids, where work has taken a considerable length of time to complete, in addition to several new build properties where final Highway's approval was not available to enable them to be let. Although this seems quite high when compared to the rental increase of 4.1% during the year, the increase of 3.5% fell below this increase. It is anticipated that the level of void rent loss will reduce in 2022/23 as improved ways of working have been implemented to minimise delays in the future.



Repairs and Maintenance Service

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	Actual	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	**Actual**	***Target***
CSI score for repairs service**	N/A	N/A	N/A	72%	81.7%	N/A	*n/a***
Repairs service cost per unit, £ per unit	1,088	1,121	1,050	1,158	1,043	1,209	*1,083*

** CSI Customer Satisfaction measurement is carried by an independent survey organisation, following the Customer Service Institute scoring approach Full census Tenant Survey is usually conducted every two years, however due to the expected introduction of new RSH Satisfaction Measures from April 2023, the current approach is suspended, see detail on page 5 above.

Satisfaction levels across the repairs service have improved, this is reflective of the repairs improvement programmes delivered. This remains above general reported satisfaction levels which are reducing across the whole sector. Although costs per unit have increased, there has been significant increases in labour and materials across the industry, impacting on the cost of providing the service. There was a budget overspend in 2021/22, due to the impact of Covid when operational staff were not able to work but continued to be paid. This resulted in a backlog of 2,700 jobs, which is still being worked through, with a plan in place to revert to a business-as-usual service by the start of 2023/24.

As with the other services however, satisfaction levels from the ICS and survey of tenants and residents are below benchmark median positions and we strive to continue to make improvements. Our target for customer satisfaction is 90% for our transaction surveys which was achieved, and we are currently performing at a 90% satisfaction level. The targeted (and budgeted) position for

2022/23 is to reduce the cost per unit of repairs, which we hope to achieve, but considering the current economical target it is acknowledged this going to be challenging.

Phase 3 of our Repairs Improvement Programme has been completed, which concludes the groundwork for service delivery improvements. 2022/23 will see the embedding of these new processes, which are expected to result in greater efficiencies across the service.

Compliance

The restructured compliance team is responsible for building safety as well as a range of compliancy areas, the main ones being, gas, electrical, fire, legionella, asbestos, and radon. During the year there has been substantial compliance work completed, in preparation for the fire safety act 2021 and building safety bill, expected in 2022. The team have also started the migration from a 10-year electrical testing programme to a 5-year programme, ensuring we are preparing for future legislative changes in this area of compliance.

By the end of 2021/22 we have been working on three major projects supporting our VFM aims within repairs and maintenance, which we are confident will positively impact on future scores in these areas:

a) The Repairs Improvement Programme phase 3 further reviewed processes throughout the team, putting the building blocks in place for embedding new ways of working during 2022/23. During the year, data interrogation and verification was enhanced, ensuring our reporting is accurate and transparent. This has resulted in the average number of repair visits per property decreasing, due to our improved right first time performance and management processes when a repair is not completed right first time

b) The staff performance management framework was introduced and will be embedded throughout the team during 2022/23

Looking towards the future, the following initiatives have been introduced for 2022/23:

- Review of the diagnosis of repair requests – getting it right first time and striving for excellent levels of customer satisfaction will be aided through ensuring requests for service are managed efficiently and effectively. This project will review the current diagnostics process, with an aim of making it more effective, thereby providing the trade operative with the autonomy to diagnose and complete more repairs right first time

In Summary

We aim to continue to make cost savings while improving the services. At times costs have increased in part from the impact of Covid, Brexit and inflationary pressures, but also our own ambitions to deliver more. We are pleased with the direction of travel over the 7 years since NPH was founded. Quality has increased as measured by satisfaction and the ‘like for like’ cost has decreased since 2015. Performance against strategic critical success factors is strong and we are looking towards improving the long-term value and viability of the HRA. Investment into new and existing stock is growing and, whilst we have had delays with new developments, our pipeline is strong and will continue over the coming years to ensure that NPH is able to deliver good quality housing that meets the needs of Northampton.

Over recent years our focus on sustainability has grown recognising our commitment to the zero-carbon agenda, being involved in the pilot scheme with the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund improving the legacy housing stock.

However, we do recognise that continued progression is essential. When compared to external benchmarks in a number of the areas above we still have much to do and are not complacent. Whilst we await the new RSH metrics, the plan for the coming years is to continue to target improvement in the metrics, minimising where possible the impact cost pressure challenges the pandemic and our exit from the EU bring to delivering new homes and services to our tenants. We are committed and focused on driving up satisfaction and our investment in NPH.

The investment we have already made, working with the Institute of Customer Service, should support our goal to receive accreditation in 2023. This focus continues to demonstrate the positive impact hawse have made, and we look forward to continuing our training and culture change programme ensuring we work to put our tenants and leaseholders' needs first.

Services that are efficiently and effectively delivered at the right price mean that over the long-term NPH will be able to deliver happier and healthier communities that support more of those in need and most importantly, provide people with the strong foundation of a home that is essential to furthering aspiration.

Northampton Partnership Homes (NPH)

Appendix 1

NPH also produce and monitor additional VFM metrics across all areas, tracked alongside the NPH corporate plan. An example is shown below which covers corporate health.

Measures	Unit	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 Actual	2022/23 Target	Housemark Quartile 2019-20	Housemark Quartile 2020-21
Overall Corporate Health								
Corporate health metrics (costs, overheads etc)								
Headline Social Housing cost, £ per unit (RSH)	£	£4,470	£5,931	£5,419*	£6,225	£6,419	n/a	n/a
Headline Social Housing cost ex capital, £	£	£2,260	£2,394	£2,346	£2,581	£2,782	n/a	n/a
% change in Headline Social Housing cost ex capital	%	2.50%	4.00%	-2.00%	10%	7.80%	n/a	n/a
Annual inflation CPI (Apr - Mar)	CPI %	2.40%	1.90%	0.70%	9.20%	TBC	n/a	n/a
Staff cost per unit	£	£757	£823	£890	£995	£1,072	n/a	n/a
Overhead cost per property		£152.72	£171.47	£172.17	n/a	n/a	A (Q2)	A (Q2)
Overheads as a % of turnover	%	7.49%	9.10%	9.58%	n/a	n/a	A (Q2)	A (Q2)
Staff turnover %	%	15.95%	11.60%	7.53%	15.44%	n/a	G (Q1)	G (Q1)
Average days lost to sickness per employee	Days	7.88	7	6.4	6.8	7	G (Q1)	A (Q2)
% of calls answered within target (180 seconds)	%	n/a	90.80%	87.39%	78.10%	90%	A (Q2)	A (Q3)
% satisfied with value for money of rent (STAR)	%	n/a	77.70%	76.60%	n/a	n/a	R (Q4)	R (Q4)
Tenants satisfied that their service charge provides value for money (STAR)	%	n/a	62.70%	59.30%	n/a	n/a	R (Q4)	R (Q4)
Average days taken to re-let minor works void properties	Days	28.79	23.06	21.12	20.45	18	n/a	n/a
Average days taken to re-let major works void properties	Days	50.73	42.48	46.93	50.52	38	n/a	n/a
Average days taken to re-let ALL void properties	Days	34.26	27.18	26.9	29.05	26	A (Q2)	G (Q1)
Void rent loss (Rent loss due to voids)	%	0.77%	0.90%	0.99%	1.03%	0.85%	A (Q2)	A (Q2)
Customer metrics								
CSI satisfied with overall NPH service	Score	n/a	68.70%	67.60%	*Pending confirmation of new RSH Satisfaction Standard measures Summer 2022*			
CSI satisfied with advice and support	Score	n/a	84.50%	79.70%				
CSI score for contacting NPH	Score	n/a	61%	60%				
Average seconds to answer inbound calls	Seconds	150	182	160	237	180	R (Q4)	A (Q3)
Calls answered per property	Number	n/a	n/a	4.7	5.32	n/a	n/a	G (Q1)
Stage 1 Complaints received per 1K properties	Number	n/a	n/a	7.2	4.05	n/a	n/a	G (Q1)
% of complaints responded to within target time	%	85.38%	62.63%	73.61%	86.22%	92%	R (Q4)	A (Q3)
% of complainants satisfied with case handling	%	96.15%	99.43%	98.10%	100%	96%	G (Q1)	G (Q1)
Number of unique website hits	%	66,357	67,294	237,797	n/a	n/a	R (Q4)	G (Q1)
Number of service requests made online per 1,000 properties managed	Number	287.65	299.49	112.07	n/a	n/a	R (Q4)	R (Q4)
Number of residents registered to access services online as a percentage of properties managed	Number	22.29%	30.40%	3.18%	n/a	n/a	A (Q2)	R (Q4)
Apprentices since 2018	Number	n/a	n/a	n/a	29	n/a	n/a	n/a