



ASSET MANAGEMENT

STRATEGY

2007 to 2011

Updated April 2010



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This Asset Management Strategy should be read in conjunction with Northwards Housing's Business & Delivery Plan 2009-2014.

1 Background & Introduction

- 1.1 Northwards Housing is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) created by Manchester City Council in December 2005 to deliver housing management and capital improvements to approximately 12,500 homes across North Manchester.
- 1.2 In January 2007, Northwards Housing successfully achieved the Two Star rating with Excellent Prospects for Improvement from the Audit Commission Housing Inspectorate which unlocked £131 million of ALMO funding from Communities & Local Government (CLG) to bring homes managed up to the Decent Homes Standard by the end of 2010/11.
- 1.3 In 2008, Northwards was re-inspected and, in February 2009, was the maximum score of Three Star service with Excellent Prospects for Improvement.
- 1.4 This document describes the work completed to date and sets out the actions being taken to ensure that the Asset Management Strategy sustains the confidence of the Northwards Housing Board and Manchester City Council.
- 1.5 In addition, it sets out how Northwards Housing has responded to the Audit Commission's 2009 Inspection Recommendation:

R1 – Further develop the approach to void management

2 What is an Asset Management Strategy?

- 2.1 Asset Management is the range of activities undertaken to ensure the housing stock meets needs and standards, now and in the future. This goes beyond investing in repairs and improvements. The Asset Management Strategy is about reviewing and where necessary, changing the asset base to end up with the right accommodation in the right location. An Asset Management Strategy is an overarching statement of objectives, goals, processes and action plans for ensuring that all the current and future Northwards Housing resources are applied to delivering the effective management and maintenance of all council owned housing and land assets; and which provide the best service, value for money and customer satisfaction within the delivery of those services. It describes how processes and planning are pragmatic, affordable, improving and focused on contributing to delivery of Northwards Housing's corporate mission statement, objectives and values:

Mission Statement:

Brought to life by the resounding YES vote of North Manchester's council tenants in Autumn 2005, we are here to build on their trust by delivering the excellent standard of housing service residents deserve and desire.

Our service will be successful, responsive to tenants and driven by our can-do outlook. It will win us the extra funding needed to improve tenants' homes, and the wider environment by 2010 – up to and beyond the 'decent homes' standard.

We share this commitment to the future of social housing in North Manchester with our residents and the Council, as we work in partnership to make our communities safe and sustainable.

We respect each other – tenants, staff and partners, celebrating the diversity of our communities and workforce. Together we will help to renew North Manchester.

Objectives:

- Warm, safe and affordable homes
- Successful communities
- Quality services
- Value for money
- Safer places to live
- An attractive environment
- Promote equality and diversity

Values:

- Committed to our employees
- Accountable
- Service that is Top Class
- Tenant focused
- Local services
- Embracing equality and diverse communities

2.2 This Asset Management Strategy has been developed to complement and inform Northwards Housing's Business Plan. Its purpose is to ensure that the existing demand for properties managed by Northwards Housing is sustained and strengthened through a series of planned processes. It demonstrates the ability of Northwards Housing to effectively manage the City Council's assets and is therefore evidence that the organisation is well managed and well governed.

2.3 It also helps to demonstrate how, as an organisation, we satisfy the Audit Commission's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE), principally:

- Stock Investment / Asset Management
- Resident Involvement
- Tenancy and Estate Management
- Management of Leasehold & Right to Buy

- Housing Regeneration and Renewal
- Access and Customer Care
- Diversity
- Value for Money

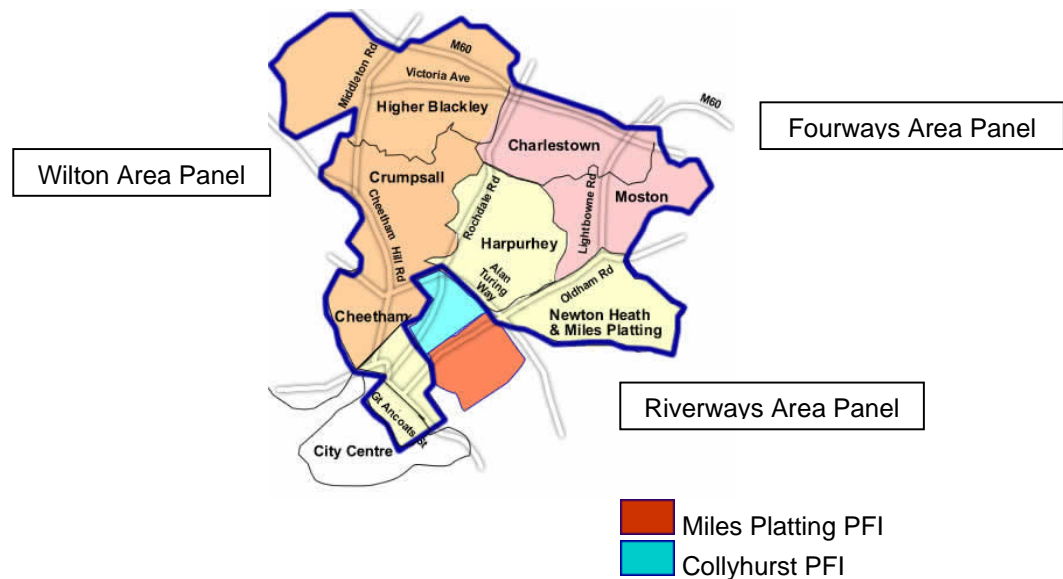
2.4 Aims & Objectives of this Asset Management Strategy

A range of specific asset management aims and objectives have been developed to complement and support the corporate vision, objectives and values of Northwards Housing:

- To deliver home improvements which are sustainable, represent best value, deliver promises made to tenants and provide excellent customer satisfaction
- To meet and exceed the Decent Homes Standard by 2010/11 and maintain homes in line with this standard
- To develop a platform from which further home improvements can continue to be made beyond 2010/11 in order to meet the increasing expectations of tenants and Government
- To optimise the balance between planned and responsive revenue funded expenditure in line with Government's expectations, notionally 60% planned to 40% responsive
- To achieve continuous improvement in all property related services through effective performance management to achieve a top quartile ranking of ALMOs
- To deliver value for money and identify efficiency savings where possible
- To improve the energy efficiency of homes in order to help reduce fuel poverty and contribute to the wider environmental sustainability agenda
- To create successful, sustainable communities through ongoing regeneration activity with partners and stakeholders
- To ensure resident involvement and consultation is effective; allowing views to be heard and services to be adapted accordingly
- To promote Equality & Diversity through Asset Management
- To comply with all property related legislation, particularly those regarding the control and management of asbestos and the assessment of fire risk

3 Asset Profile

3.1 Northwards Housing currently manages 12,457 council homes (at March 2010) along with around 250 leasehold properties across eight wards in the North of the City. The SHOUT Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) manages 103 council homes in the Harpurhey Ward under a pre-existing agreement with Manchester City Council. The Avro Hollows TMO was established in September 2008 following a successful tenants ballot; they currently manage 312 council homes in the Miles Platting and Newton Heath Ward.



The stock mix in North Manchester is close to that for the city as a whole; but there are proportionally more houses, bungalows and low-rise flats. The proportion of maisonettes and multi-storey blocks reflects the city average of 19.2%. The tenure pattern in North Manchester compares to the city as a whole with 29.5% of homes being council owned. However, the proportion of council tenancies varies considerably within North Manchester from 42.6% in Charlestown to 5.6% in Crumpsall.

Ward	Age				Total
	Pre 1919	1919-1944	1945-1964	Post 1965	
Ancoats & Clayton	199	0	0	80	279
Charlestown	0	1,296	335	1,236	2,867
Cheetham	43	79	8	1,063	1,193
Crumpsall	14	47	13	258	332
Harpurhey	19	171	156	1,900	2,246
Higher Blackley	465	638	964	230	2,297
Miles Platting & Newton Heath	100	678	71	1,300	2,149
Moston	7	390	275	422	1,094

Total	847	3,299	1,822	6,489	12,457
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(Figures as of March 2010)

See Appendices 2 – 7 for a summary of all stock managed by Northwards Housing

The older housing stock in inner and outer neighbourhoods in the district is generally sound, but in need of new facilities. It is the more modern neighbourhoods, particularly those with a Radburn layout, which cause more specific problems.

Northwards Housing recognises that there is the potential to redevelop estates to improve layout and where possible, improve the housing offer. In consultation with the City Council, Northwards Housing will help to develop proposals for estates (including vacant land and garage sites) where redevelopment is feasible to help diversify the housing tenure and help create mixed, sustainable communities (see Section 9 for further details).

3.3 Multi-Storey Blocks

Northwards Housing currently manages 19 multi-storey blocks across North Manchester, incorporating 1,392 homes. Two of the multi-storey blocks (Dobson Court & Liverton Court) are designated as retirement housing.

Appendix 4 contains a breakdown of the multi-storey blocks including details of the Home Improvement works planned and completed to date through the decent homes programme.

3.4 Retirement Housing

In addition to the two blocks detailed above, Northwards Housing currently manages 441 retirement homes across North Manchester, consisting of 68 individual dwellings and 9 retirement blocks detailed in appendix 5.

During the 2007/08 financial year, Northwards Housing developed a Retirement Housing Strategy and action plan to ensure the improvement, sustainability and full occupancy of retirement homes. Marketing strategies are continuing to bring in new tenants to ensure that the blocks are remaining popular across North Manchester. Void levels in most schemes remain very low.

Through the decent homes programme the retirement blocks have had substantial works carried out to their communal areas, as well as individual flats, making them more inviting and ensuring a higher quality environment for current and future tenants.

Northwards has now begun the redevelopment of a disused tower block in the Charlestown ward into an Extra Care scheme that will contain 91 fully refurbished apartments and a new ground floor extension that will incorporate a new day care centre. The scheme is due to be let from March 2011. Work is currently ongoing to market the scheme across north Manchester to attract new tenants to ensure full occupancy. More details can be found at 9.7.

3.5 Non-Traditional Stock

A non-traditional dwelling is defined as a dwelling whose load bearing structural members are wholly or predominantly metal or concrete. Northwards Housing currently manages 1,122 non-traditional properties (excluding multi-storey blocks) across North Manchester.

Appendix 6 contains a breakdown of the non-traditional stock including details of the Home Improvement works planned and completed to date through the decent homes programme.

3.6 Miscellaneous Stock

A 'miscellaneous property' can be defined as anything that is not purpose built by the City Council for residential letting. Miscellaneous properties were all acquired by the local authority for letting to a tenant.

Northwards Housing currently manages 99 miscellaneous properties (as at March 2010) across North Manchester; all of which are being improved to achieve the government's Decent Homes Standard. Northwards Housing will continue to manage these miscellaneous properties as it is not feasible to dispose of any properties given current levels of demand. As and when any of the miscellaneous properties become void, they will be subject to a Desk Top Option Appraisal to assess whether continued investment and management is still the most viable option.

Eleven miscellaneous properties being held as strategic voids in the Harpurhey ward; options are being considered in conjunction with Private Sector Housing with the aim of bringing these long-term voids back into use.

Appendix 7 and 7a contains a summary of miscellaneous stock.

3.7 Garages & Open Land

Northwards Housing currently manages 105 garages (as at March 2010) on behalf of the City Council. There has been no planned investment programme for garages in recent years, therefore whilst there is demand for garages, it may be more cost-effective in future to demolish rather than refurbish. Option Appraisals will be carried out when garages become empty to inform decisions.

There are areas of open land (including former garage sites and demolition sites) within the estates managed by Northwards Housing which are currently under review in conjunction with each of the three Local Services Teams. Northwards Housing also works closely with stakeholders (including Private Sector Housing, North Manchester Partnership, New East Manchester, Groundwork Trust and local residents) to identify potential new development sites to help create mixed tenure communities; improve the design, layout and quality of public open space on estates; or identify any alternative uses to help address local issues. Additional parking for residents was created after garage demolitions, at Shackelton Court and the Mill Estate.

Appendix 8 contains a summary of garage stock.

3.8 Stock Valuation (as at 1st April 2009):

£805m at Open Market Valuation with vacant possession

Average unit value: £64,522

- £386m at Existing Use Value – Social Housing
Average unit value: £30,970

The above Beacon Valuations (carried out by the Valuation Office Agency) are for properties owned by Manchester City Council, which are managed by Northwards Housing. Valuations are reviewed annually by the City Council Valuation & Property Services department by means of a desk-top exercise. The Beacon Valuations are updated by the Valuation Office Agency every five years. The next Beacon Valuation is due in 2010.

3.9 Right to Buy Sales

Current forecasts on stock reduction, based on current and anticipated Right to Buy sales projections, are set out in the table below (this includes an additional 91 units within Whitebeck Court and 32 new bungalows (LA New Build Programme) transferring into the management of Northwards Housing in 2010/11 – see section 9 for further details.

2008/09	12,474
2009/10	12,457
2010/11	12,538
2011/12	12,518
2012/13	12,498

This rate of sale is predicted to slow down considerably from the original assumptions and is closely monitored.

3.10 Stock Condition Survey & Database

Northwards Housing commissioned Savills to conduct a Stock Condition Survey in March 2007, the results were used to review the Business Plan and prepare future programmes. Savills carried out a visual survey of 20% of all stock managed by Northwards Housing and the surveys were cloned to represent the total stock. The sample surveys undertaken were based on factors such as location, age, construction type and property type. Each survey undertaken included a decent homes assessment. This provides information on the number of currently failing properties, and the cost to make them decent, the number of properties with the potential to fail, and the cost to prevent them becoming non-decent. It also includes housing health and safety rating data.

All data is held on Northwards' Promaster Asset Management system, which plays a central role in the business and operational planning of the organisation. The surveys have allowed Northwards Housing to produce 35-year expenditure forecasts for programme renewals and improvements.

We are implementing an interface between Promaster and the Northwards Housing management system, which will automatically update either system when changes are

made to a property. e.g. properties sold, work carried out by the day to day repairs service, work from improvement schemes etc.

In order to ensure accuracy and maintain robust projections to aid financial and operational planning, it is necessary to regularly update the Stock Condition Survey database. The original intention was to commission Savills to carry out a further stock condition survey in 2010. However Northwards Housing are carrying out stock condition validation surveys of cloned properties on an ongoing basis. The surveys are carried out by the Empty Homes surveying team as properties become void, and the Home Improvement Teams. By using this methodology we aim to validate 20% of cloned properties per annum.

3.11 Asbestos

Northwards Housing has a legal duty to manage any known asbestos containing material (ACM) within the properties managed, under the following legislation:

- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 (Sections 2, 3 & 4)
- Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 (Regulation 3)
- Control of Asbestos Regulations (CAR) 2006 (Regulation 4)

Following the Health & Safety Executives guidelines within MDHS 100, a Type 1 presumptive asbestos survey was carried out by Savills as part of the stock condition inspection. The purpose being to locate, as far as reasonably practicable, the presence, condition and extent of any suspect Asbestos Containing Material (ACM). More detailed Type 2 asbestos surveys (as set out in MDHS 100) were also undertaken by Savills (in conjunction with Thames Laboratories) within common areas of residential accommodation.

From this data, a written asbestos management plan has been produced setting out measures to be taken to control and manage the risk from identified and presumed ACMs (in line with the new duty to manage under the Control of Asbestos Regulations).

This data has been imported into the Promaster Asset Management system, providing officers and contractors with readily available information about any potential risk arising from the presence of any ACM. Furthermore, all responsive repair work tickets now contain the relevant asbestos risk information, thus safeguarding the operatives and enabling Northwards Housing to demonstrate that it manages its Health & Safety obligations under current legislation.

Procedures are also in place to ensure that all new asbestos information is captured from programmed asbestos surveys, associated with decent homes improvement schemes, which is then imported into the Promaster Asset Management system, thereby further educating the original stock condition information.

The way in which asbestos surveys are carried out has changed following the publication in January 2010 of 'Asbestos: The Survey Guide', which has replaced the previous MDHS100 document. The Northwards Asbestos Management Plan has since been reviewed and amended to respond to these changes and ensure continued compliance, with the key changes including;

- The majority of asbestos surveys will now be known as ‘refurbishment surveys’, being more intrusive and intended to relate to specific work that will disturb the fabric of properties.
- Remaining surveys will be known as ‘management surveys’, being less intrusive and related to minor works that are not expected to disturb the fabric of the property.
- When properties become void, the opportunity will be taken to commission refurbishment surveys, when there is obviously no impact on occupants, to gather more detailed asbestos knowledge of property archetypes. This new strategy is in response to particular new guidance, targeted directly to those that manage large numbers of domestic properties. It is anticipated that it may take up to three years until sufficient asbestos information has been collected to give us a full and accurate appreciation of where asbestos can be found within our property stock.

It should be emphasised that existing asbestos management information, held within the Promaster system, continues to remain applicable but it will obviously be supplemented and further educated by future ‘refurbishment survey’ data.

Individual asbestos registers, detailing the known or presumed ACMs within the residential and common areas of multi-storey flats and sheltered housing schemes, have been lodged with the relevant responsible person at each site and will be made available to contractors, emergency services and all others who may disturb the fabric.

Various levels of management reports can also be produced to address any asbestos related queries from individual tenants, officers, ward councillors or other interested parties.

3.12 Fire Safety

As of 1st April 2006, changes in the legislation (Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005) governing fire safety came into effect which rationalised and improved fire safety law. Northwards Housing has a legal duty to ensure it is compliant.

As a result of this new legislation, all organisations are now responsible for their own fire safety. All employers must conduct a fire risk assessment regardless of the size of the risk, provide staff fire awareness training, fire marshal training and the provision of fire safety management plans, log books and maintenance of fire safety precautions.

To ensure Northwards Housing is fully compliant, fire risk assessments of all offices and common areas of residential properties have been carried out. Savills undertook these assessments when the detailed Type 2 asbestos surveys were carried out to minimise disruption to tenants and offer better value for money.

From these risk assessments a Fire Action Plan was produced to carry out remedial building measures, categorised by priority ratings, thus addressing the perceived fire risks.

Further development work has been carried out, following consultation with the local Fire Service, to tailor the fire risk assessment template to ensure that it can satisfy the specific requirements of the partial evacuation procedure applying within the retirement housing schemes.

Northwards Housing now has its own internal source of competent fire advice and a programme of reinspection of properties has been instigated, ensuring that all fire risk assessments remain current and control measures continue to address the known fire risks. Since July 2008, we have been carrying out fire safety checks and providing fire safety awareness training to tenants at the same time as the annual gas safety check.

A recent tragic fire in a multi-storey block of flats in London necessitated that we revisited our existing fire risk assessments for all our common areas to ensure that they continued to adequately address the fire risks posed. This was done with full communication with the local Fire Service and a small number of corrective measures were identified and actioned. It was also determined that the specific construction method employed within the fire damaged London block of flats was not replicated anywhere within our housing stock and similar risk conditions were therefore not present.

In order to ensure that we continued to safely represent our tenants during any future negotiations with the local Fire Service, on more complex fire issues, it was decided to appoint an experienced fire consultancy company to provide additional higher level support and advice for a one year period, with their continued future role to be kept under review.

3.13 Legionella

Northwards Housing has introduced its own Legionella and Water Quality Policy based on, and compliant with, Manchester City Council's policy.

As a residential accommodation provider, Northwards Housing's obligations come under the Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) 'The Control of Legionella Bacteria in Water Systems' guidance (commonly referred to as L8). There is also a requirement to comply with the governments 'Water Supply (Water Quality) regulations'; BS 6700 'Design, Installation, Testing and Maintenance of Services Supply Water'; and Regulation 3 of the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002 which places a legal duty on social landlords to protect their employees and tenants.

The Property Services Directorate undertakes the actions set out within the Legionella and Water Quality Policy to ensure the risk from legionella is properly controlled and regulations are complied with. Updates are reported to the Board annually.

3.14 Aids & Adaptations

Adaptations services are essential to disabled tenants in ensuring that they live in suitable, safe housing. Northwards Housing is committed to addressing all tenants' needs particularly with regards to improving accessibility standards and removing barriers for disabled people within their homes and communal areas.

The service is delivered by Manchester Equipment and Adaptations Partnership (MEAP) under the terms of a protocol with Northwards Housing; as MCC have retained the Aids & Adaptations function under the terms of the Management



Agreement. As part of Northward Housing's Home Improvement Programme, work is undertaken, wherever possible, to install adaptations (walk-in showers, wet-rooms, ramps etc) alongside the other improvements and is carried out by the same contractor, ensuring best practice with a joined up approach in our service delivery to our customers. It also avoids further inconvenience to our customers with an additional visit, whilst at the same time achieving excellent value for money, reducing the cost of adaptations with the best use of resources.

For major adaptations (stair lifts, hoists etc), liability for repairs and maintenance passes from MEAP to Northwards Housing after a 12 month period. Northwards Housing's Mechanical & Electrical (M&E) team have responsibility for servicing all major adaptations from installation; a comprehensive database (which is to be collated into the Civica housing management system) is being established to inform the annual servicing programme.

4 Energy Efficiency & Environmental Sustainability

4.1 Thermal comfort is one of the four key components of the Decent Homes Standard. Northwards Housing, in conjunction with Manchester City Council, is committed to tackling fuel poverty and providing affordable thermal comfort for tenants. Energy efficiency related improvement work that has been carried out on Northwards properties through the Home Improvement Programme is entered into our Promaster Asset Management System on a continual basis. With this information, we are able to calculate an average SAP rating, CO2 emissions and running costs per property, by ward or for the whole Northwards stock, enabling strategies for properties/areas with poor energy efficiency ratings to be formulated. Our average SAP rating for all properties at 1 April 2010 was over 70 (using SAP 2005 measurement).

Completed and planned works to homes to improve their energy efficiency include:

- Both cavity wall and loft insulation delivered initially through our energy partners British Gas 'Here to Help' scheme and now through Scottish Power. This is well above the decency standard which requires only one of the above
- Existing boilers replaced with grade 'A' condensing boilers
- Homes rewired utilising energy efficient lighting
- Spray flow taps fitted as standard to kitchen sinks and wash hand basins, all new WCs are dual flush systems.
- All single glazed windows replaced with uPVC double glazed windows improving the standard from Grade E to a minimum Grade C standard
- All retirement housing blocks having uPVC windows installed to meet Grade A standard.
- Non-traditional 'corolite' properties stabilised and over clad with external insulation and render improve the thermal efficiency. Seven privately owned properties were also included in the scheme, supported by interest free equity release loans provided by MCC.

- Installation of external insulation and render to 3 blocks of 'hard to treat' non traditional maisonettes/walk up flats
- Installation of a Combined Heat and Power Unit to a block of 166 retirement flats. Electricity generated from the communal heating system will be used to power the communal lighting.
- A leaflet on energy saving tips is provided to Northwards tenants, owner occupiers and leaseholders at the start of a Home Improvement scheme.

We are currently looking into ways to engage and support residents further in behavioural change and energy saving measures.

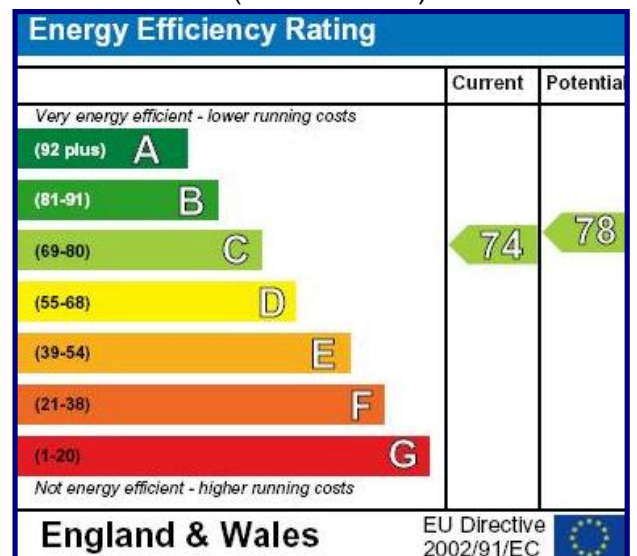
Northwards Housing also has Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in place to monitor all contractors and their supply chains on the amount of waste that is recycled as part of the work they are undertaking on the home improvements programme.

Our kitchen suppliers only use sustainable timber and one supplier uses the waste from old kitchen units to heat their factory.

We are the first landlord in the country to trial a UPVC recycling scheme in conjunction with one of our window manufacturers, which won a top national sustainability award.

4.2 Northwards Housing employs a Domestic Energy Assessor (DEA) to carry out energy assessments to properties that become void, so that an Energy Performance Certificate is available for prospective and new tenants to view when the property is ready for let. If during the energy assessment the DEA finds that the insulation is either missing or not up to standard, Scottish Power's appointed insulation contractor (InsulationUK) is notified immediately and the work is carried out within 48 hours before the property is tenanted (in most instances) to avoid any disturbance to the new resident.

Where an owner occupier within the Northwards area requests insulation works, Scottish Power is able to offer this service free of charge to residents over 65 years old or with children under 6 years old through the 'Warm Homes Scheme' which is managed by the Manchester Private Sector Housing Energy Team. Residents not meeting the above criteria can benefit from a subsidised rate for insulation work.



4.3 Northwards Housing has implemented and is exploring options to utilise renewable energy sources to contribute to environmental sustainability.



Utilising match funding secured through the Department of Trade & Industry's (DTI) Low Carbon Buildings Programme (LCBP), Northwards Housing has installed photo voltaic (PV) solar panels onto nine multi-storey blocks across North Manchester, two maisonette / walk up blocks of flats, and a retirement housing block. We also have LCBP grant funding approval for a PV installation at another

maisonette block on Sankey Grove to start in May 2010.

The DTI funding equates to 50% of the total scheme cost and Northwards Housing contributed the remaining funding from efficiency savings achieved in delivering the Home Improvements Programme. The solar panels will reduce costs of the landlord supply within the blocks and reduce the amount of CO₂ produced. It was agreed by the Northwards Board that some of the savings generated are spent on further energy efficiency measures within or around each block, subject to consultation with residents.

Again through the LCBP, we've received 50% grant funding to install solar hot water systems to 7 retirement blocks. The solar hot water systems pre-heat the communal hot water system, reducing the amount of CO₂ produced. We're also installing sun pipes in all our retirement housing properties (where applicable) as standard during programmes of work, which will provide free natural light to dimly lit areas.



Through discussions during the monthly Northwards Energy Initiatives Group meetings, we are investigating the use of other sustainable technologies for future projects.

Feasibility studies have been carried out on several maisonette blocks to evaluate which renewable technology would be most suited to each block. PV panels, solar thermal and wind turbines have been considered. Two of the blocks have no mains gas supply and we are investigating the possibility of a solar hot water supply to individual tenants supplemented by solar PV panels.

- 4.4** We have applied for funding from the Community Energy Saving Programme and European Regional Development Fund to carry out external render and insulation to 700 'Wimpey No Fines' solid wall properties and a multi storey block. Dependant on the outcome of the bid, we hope to commence work in early 2011. We will also be looking in the future to secure funding for our pre 1920's solid walled properties.

5 Home Improvements Programme

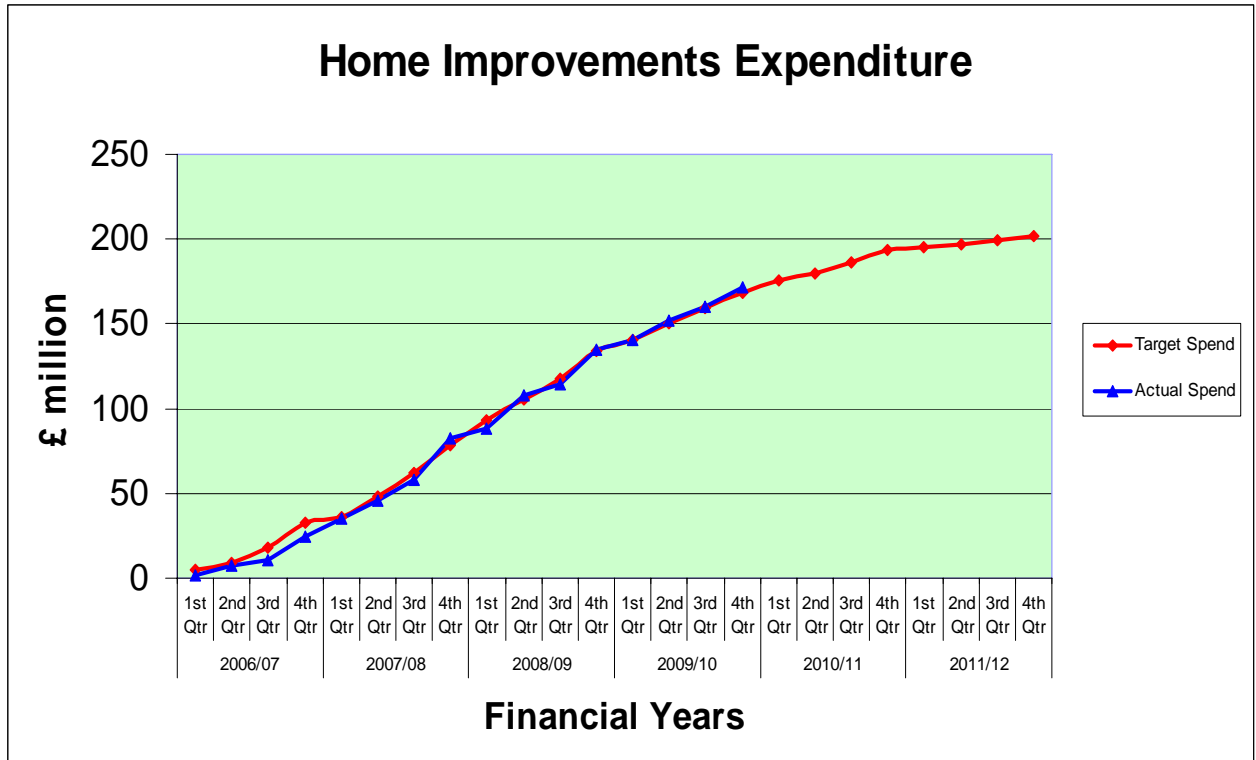
- 5.1** Northwards Housing is delivering a £200m Home Improvement Programme and is on target to achieve decent homes by the end of 2010. The programme was originally compiled using the 2001 stock condition survey and additional information collected at a local level.

The results of the analysis of the stock condition survey carried out in 2007 were largely consistent with the original investment plan, with some additional external works identified such as reroofing, chimney repairs and repointing. Details of the 5 year improvement programme can be found at appendix 10.

The funding of the programme, which commenced in 2006, is as follows:-

ALMO Supported Capital Expenditure	£131,044,000
LA Supported Capital Expenditure/Regional Housing Pot Grant	£8,865,000
Major Repairs Allowance	£42,772,000
Capital Receipts	£16,218,000
Energy Initiatives funding (CERT & LCBP)	£462,000
Revenue Contributions to Capital Outlay	£985,000
TOTAL	£200,346,000

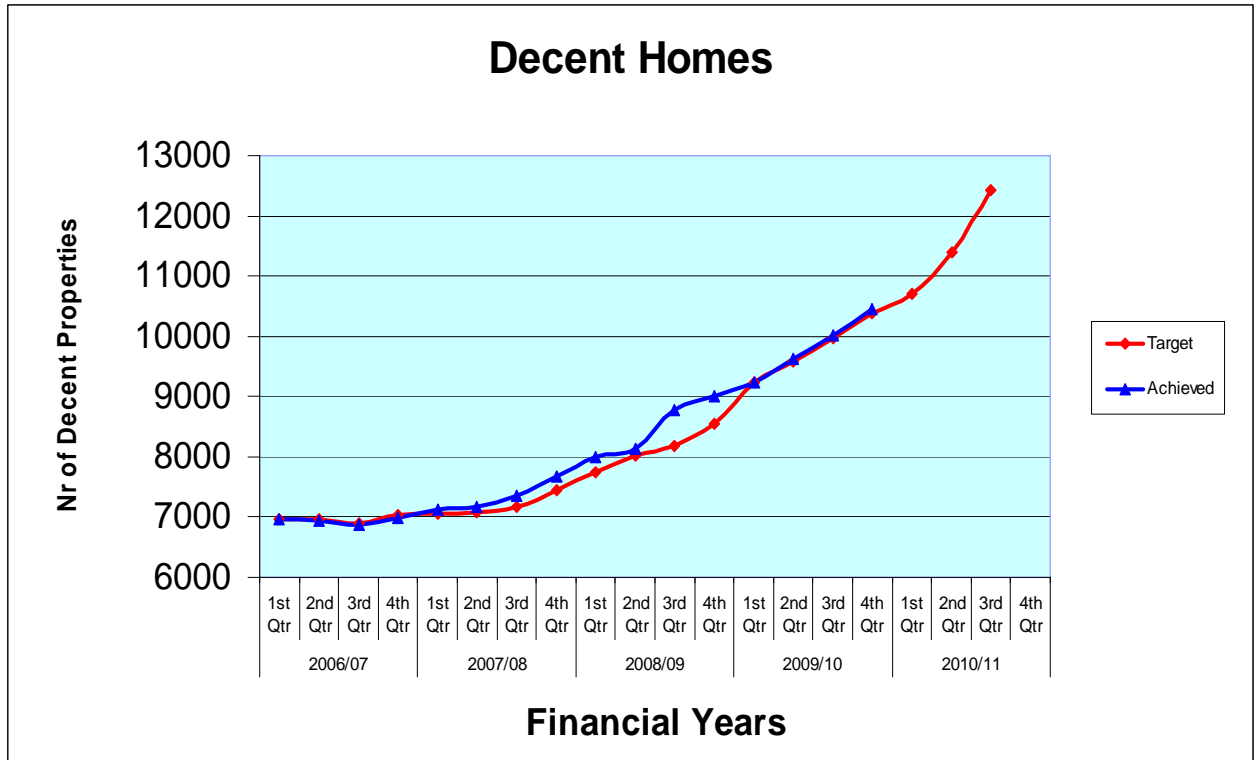
The graph below shows the breakdown of this over financial years, with actual spend incurred up to 1 April 2010.



The approach to investment was to prioritise either internal or external improvements in the first instance, then to return to carry out the remaining improvement works later on in the improvement programme. That way everyone benefited from some improvement work in the first two years of the programme. Resident satisfaction with the improvement work averaged at 9.7 out of 10 for 2009/10.

Northwards Housing has gone beyond the basic decent homes standard, ensuring that everyone has double glazed windows, everyone gets a new kitchen or bathroom (if it's at least five years old), and major improvements to the local environment are carried out, such as lighting and security, boundaries around homes, and open spaces. The knowledge of local residents is particularly critical for environmental and security improvements, and the three Area Panels each have direct responsibility for proposing how nearly £5m of the environmental budget is spent.

As at April 2010 Northwards Housing had spent £172m of the £200m programme, and the number of decent properties was 10,460 (84%). See the graph below which shows progress made towards achieving the decent homes target to 1 April 2010.



The Home Improvement Programme is being delivered by a procurement framework (see section 6), and costs are benchmarked with other organisations. Through value engineering and work smoothing efficiency savings have been made which have enabled additional works to be carried out, such as the installation of solar panels, investment in the Whitebeck Court extra care housing scheme, and additional improvements to our retirement housing schemes.

When we are working in an area, the improvement work is also offered to private owner occupiers and leaseholders (for internal works not covered by the lease).

- 5.2** Beyond 2010 there will be a need for ongoing investment to maintain the stock and keep properties in a decent standard. The stock condition survey identifies a total cost over 35 years for major repairs and improvements of around £445m (at 2007 prices). Options for Northwards Housing and ongoing capital investment beyond 2010 are currently being discussed. The outcome of the Government’s review of Council House Financing is critical to these discussions.
- 5.3** The Investment & Strategic Asset Management Team, within the Property Services Directorate, is responsible for providing the asset management service for the investment programme, including maintaining accurate stock condition data. This team is also plans future programmes of work and monitors the delivery of it.

6 Planned, Cyclical & Responsive Maintenance

6.1 By improving all properties managed to achieve the decent homes standard there is the potential to create an environment where spend on planned maintenance will overtake spend on responsive maintenance to achieve the Audit Commission recommended 60/40 split. Through this Asset Management Strategy, Northwards Housing is aiming to achieve greater effect from available resources and maximise on associated cost efficiencies. Through implementing a number of measures, Northwards Housing plans to facilitate the transfer of revenue resources into planned maintenance.

6.2 Planned Maintenance

The Home Improvement Programme will ensure that all properties meet the decent homes standard by December 2010. From the beginning of the 2011/12 financial year, Northwards Housing intends to reshape its approach to property maintenance in order to transfer revenue resources into planned maintenance. This will be achieved by having a much sharper focus on maintenance planning. A working party has been set up to drive this forward.

The following areas of maintenance have the potential for achieving this objective:

a) Subject to the availability of resources post 2010 Northwards will be commencing an external maintenance programme which will include maintenance of windows and doors, painting, servicing of extractor fans, roof, chimney and brickwork repairs, and gutter repairs and cleaning (items that tenants would not normally report as repairs because they are not necessarily detrimental to their lifestyle yet are detrimental to the building). Our aim is to carry out a maintenance programme on a 5 to 6 year cycle, subject to resource availability.

b) Annual gas service visits extended to include the following mechanical and electrical maintenance items:

- Smoke alarm batteries (unless hard-wired)
- Wireless central heating thermostat batteries
- Running hot and cold water “dead legs” (ref. Legionella)
- Checking for free operation of the water stop cock
- Electrical inspection and testing

c) Communal areas to flats, retirement housing schemes and multi-storey blocks require attention to the following items, over and above the traditional day to day maintenance:

- Fire risk assessments and any associated works
- Redecoration generally, but specifically the maintenance of suitable fire retardant surfaces of walls and ceilings in order to prevent rapid surface spread of flame (Class 0 or 1)
- The checking, easing and adjustment of self closing fire doors to ensure correct operation

d) A pilot scheme has been implemented to 5 multi storey tower blocks whereby the servicing of communal installations such as lifts, door entry systems, CCTV etc will be carried out together with an annual property ‘health check’. This includes the inspection of

electrical switches & sockets, doors, windows, kitchen units, bathroom fittings and pipework and preventative maintenance will be undertaken as required. Manchester Working are preparing a price per property proposal and extending the annual property 'health check' to all properties will be considered.

e) Caretakers in multi storey blocks and Scheme Managers in retirement housing daily inspect the condition of communal areas. There is a detailed recording of this inspection on a monthly basis, which includes resident involvement. Work is checked on a weekly basis by our Caretaking Manager and Retirement Housing Manager. Tenant Inspectors also check on our communal areas.

f) We will need to enter into "best value" negotiations with our major contracting partner, Manchester Working Limited, to implement planned maintenance initiatives.

6.3 Responsive Maintenance

Migration to the Opti-time appointment system was successfully implemented in responsive maintenance in 2009/10 with the exception of specialist repairs such as door entry systems, alarms etc . It is intended to continue with the migration to specialist repairs commencing in May 2010. Performance has improved due to the advantages of dynamic workforce scheduling and better communication with tenants from a dedicated control team. Performance of tenant satisfaction and completing jobs at the first visit which were areas of weakness are now consistently above target.

Northwards and Manchester Working's Operational and Customer Service Centre Heads of Service are now leading a working group to improve the remaining weak area of the volume of emergency work ordered.

6.4 Voids Repairs

The Audit Commission Inspection in November 2008 made the following recommendation to Northwards Housing:

Recommendation R1 –Further develop the approach to void management by

- *implementing a robust quality checking process for ready to let voids;*
- *exploring the need for surveyor inspection requirement to all voids;*
- *increasing the number of immediate re-lets;*
- *setting clear targets for and reducing the number of refusals, and*
- *increasing the level of pre-termination visits.*

In response the following action was taken:

1. All surveyors, team leaders and operatives attended briefing sessions on the Empty Homes Standard.
2. The cleaning companies were served with formal improvement notices and a new cleaning company was appointed.
3. A robust quality checking process was implemented and auditing is still being carried out by the Director of Property Services to ensure high standards are maintained.

4. The Empty Homes standard was reviewed by engagement with tenants through the Area Panels, Repairs and Improvements Forum, a focus group of new tenants and the Tenant Inspectors.
5. A new Voids Manager was appointed and commenced work on 05 January 2009 to manage the whole void repairs process.
6. A new target was agreed by the Asset Management Sub Committee for the number immediate relets and this has been achieved.
7. A single contractor was appointed to carry out the security, clear out and make safe processes to minimise the time lost in this period due to the movement of keys between contractors.

Performance in completing the void repairs on time and the average number of days to complete the entire void works process has been consistently good at 95% plus and 17 days respectively. Handheld technology will be introduced into void repairs in 2010/11 to further improve the reliability of voids being returned on time and to reduce the void works period.

6.5 Reletting of Voids

Average void relet times remain a high priority for Northwards Housing. Average relet times are now 41 days as of the end of March 2010. This is an improvement of 37 days over the last 3 year period. A target has been set of 36 days for 2010/11.

This is still though some way off top quartile performance and changes that are due to be implemented in 2010 and 2011 to the allocations policy and Choice Based lettings scheme will continue to drive down void times.

Weekly void reconciliation meetings between the Empty Homes Team, Local Services and Rehousing ensure that communication at all stages of the void process remains high.

In 2010/11 it is hoped that further changes can be made to the housing management system to ensure this can be used as a better tool for monitoring the journey of every void and to more accurately measure relet times without the need for manual adjustments to be made.

Other improvements in 2010/11 will be further work around multiple viewings and the continuing maximisation of the notice period to ensure that properties are continued to be let as quickly as possible.

The TSA tenancy standard incorporates the expectation that housing organisations will let properties quickly while taking the needs of tenants into account where necessary.

The Board of Northwards is keen to see a continued improvement in void times and has held 2 special board meetings in 2009/10 to discuss the issue in detail. These meetings

will continue to take place when necessary in 2010/11 to ensure that the appropriate focus is given to this area of work.

7 Procurement Strategy

- 7.1** By 2011, the Decent Homes Plus programme will have been successfully delivered using 5 of the 6 IMPACT Manchester framework contractors, including the joint venture company (JVCo), Manchester Working, established by Manchester City Council in 2006.

The contractors used were:

- Manchester Working (JVCo)
- Wates Living Space
- G & J Seddon
- Kinetics (formerly The Lord Group)
- Bramall Construction

The IMPACT Manchester framework and the JVCo were established following a robust procurement process which complied fully with European legislation. Short-listed contractors were evaluated on a 60% quality / 40% cost basis, and contractor performance has been closely monitored throughout the programme using a comprehensive suite of key performance indicators and by benchmarking costs, both internally within the Framework, and externally with similar social housing providers. During 2009/10 resident satisfaction with the contractor service on the Home Improvement Programme was an average of 9.7 out of 10.

- 7.2** In anticipation of the significant reduction in the size of Northwards Housing's capital investment programme over the next 5 years and, together with that of other social housing providers in the Manchester area, the IMPACT Manchester Board has decided to merge with GM Procure. This is a similar procurement vehicle operating in the same geographical area as IMPACT and, by combining the purchasing power of several organisations, the merger is considered essential for Northwards Housing in order to maintain the excellent value for money which has been secured over recent years.

This new procurement vehicle will be known as "Procure Plus" and, through an OJEU (Official Journal of the European Union) compliant process, will bring together 5 existing procurement organisations across northern England. Going live from June 2010 for a period of 4 years, Procure Plus will differ from the IMPACT model, in that the installer (contractor) and building materials will be procured separately by each client organisation. This is a new approach for Northwards Housing, but is one that has been successfully used by other social housing providers over recent years, whilst still providing excellent value for money.

The selection of installers and materials suppliers for Procure Plus is currently in progress, involving over 50 client organisations, some of which (including Northwards Housing) will have resident representation on the panel. Installer assessment will be based on 60% quality and 40% cost, with suppliers assessed on 50% quality, 50% cost.

Following the completion of the Decent Homes Plus programme, Northwards Housing intend, subject to resources, to embark on a 5/6 year cyclical external maintenance programme for all its properties, and proposes to use Procure Plus in its delivery.

8 Demand

8.1 Current Demand

Live Applicants

Demand for stock in North Manchester is remaining strong in most areas of North Manchester, a significant difference from the late 1990's. The table below shows "live" applicants registered by Northwards Housing as at January 2008 compared with active applicants in April 2010. There has been an 11% increase in "live" applicants over this time period. The Council is currently undergoing a cleansing exercise across all applications in readiness for the implementation of a new allocations policy and this work is showing signs of reducing the overall housing register fairly significantly at this point. However the new allocations policy will not allow us to "suspend" applications and therefore the number of active applicants will increase in 2011. This will be monitored carefully once the policy has been launched.

<u>Application case papers held at:</u>	Jan 2008	April 2010
Cheetham Hill	1310	1416
Monsall Street	945	1017
White Moss Rd	621	766
Hexagon Tower	31	65
Total held by Northwards	2907	3264
Total on Manchester Housing Register	18,743	16,096

A new Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme is also being implemented in 2011 that will produce data on applicants who are bidding for properties, giving some indication about real time demand for properties.

The Cheetham Hill ward has the most significant demand with a healthy demand for family housing and some of the longest waiting times.

Lettings

The table below shows the average waiting times for an applicant in Group 2 Housing Need across rehousing areas for properties allocated in 2009/10. These tables will be updated annually. The reasons for waiting times will be a mix of stock availability and the amount of people waiting.

These tables show that there has been little availability of larger family housing (4 bed +) across north Manchester in the past 12 months and a 2X (In housing need) rank date of 2005 – 2007 is needed for most family housing of 3 beds and bigger.

Letting Area	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Cheetwood	2007/2008	2006/2007	2005/2006	2004/2005
Cheetham Hill	2006/2007	2006/2007	2005/2006	No availability in 2009/10
Blackley	2007/2008	2006/2007	No availability in 2009/10	No availability in 2009/10
Higher Blackley	2006/2007	2007/2008	2005/2006	2007/08
Riverdale	2007/2008	2007/2008	2006/2007	No availability in 2009/10
Surrey Road Estate	2007/2008	2007/2008	2006/2007	No availability in 2009/10
Crumpsall	2005/2006	2006/07	2006/07	2006/07

Letting Area	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Harpurhey Central	2008/2009	2008/2009	2006/2007	No availability in 2009/10
Harpurhey South	2008/2009	2007/2008	2007/2008	2005/06
Monsall	2008/2009	2008/2009	2006/2007	2004/05
Lightbowne	2008/2009	2008/2009	2007/2008	No availability in 2009/10
Newton Heath	2007/2008	2007/2008	2006/2007	2004/2005
City Centre	2008/2009	2006/2007	2004/2005	No availability in 2009/10
Smithfield	No availability in 2009/10	No availability in 2009/10	No availability in 2009/10	No availability in 2009/10

Letting Area	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	4 bed
Charlestown	2007/2008	2007/2008	2006/2007	2005/2006
Moston	2007/2008	2007/2008	2006/2007	No availability in 2009/10
New Moston	2005/2006	2007/2008	2007/2008	2004/2005
Dam Head	2007/2008	2007/2008	2006/2007	2004/2005

Turnover

Turnover (based on number of properties terminating) across stock has increased over the past 3 years as the table below shows:

Year	Turnover %	Numbers
2007/08	8.1%	1022
2008/09	9.0%	1130
2009/10	9.2%	1150

Work is being undertaken to analyse terminations and to see if a better understanding can be gained as to the recent increase. The outcomes of this work will be presented to the Customers and Communities Sub Committee.

8.2 Low Demand

There are some areas and property types that have some challenges in letting. In the main this affects a number of one bedroom cottage flats in Harpurhey and Lightbowne, many of which have historical age restrictions. Many of these age restrictions have been reviewed and amended in the last 12 months and will therefore bring in a wider pool of applicants for each new void. This work is starting to see some rewards with less cottage flats empty at any one time in these areas. Where there is still a 50 or 60 + age restriction there continues to be problems in letting quickly.

There is also some lower demand retirement housing, however the Retirement Housing Strategy covers further plans to increase demand in this and other schemes. Marketing over the past 12 months has had some success in increasing demand and this is regularly reviewed. There is now approximately a 98% occupancy in the retirement housing schemes across North Manchester and the joint work of the Retirement Housing and Rehousing teams is continuing to ensure that new tenants are identified on a continuing basis.

8.3 Refusals

There are also patterns of refusal of properties by applicant group with 2009/10 as follows:

Group	Offers made	Numbers of refusals	Percentage refusal
1	175	64	36.5%
2X In Need	1273	567	44.5%
2C – Community Connection	174	48	27.5%
2 – Citywide	293	136	46.5%
3	345	141	41%
Total	2260	956	42.3%

Levels of refusals (although they have reduced very slightly over the past 12 months) are still at high levels and this was highlighted in the Audit Commission report published in February 2009 as an area for improvement. A new allocation policy for housing has been agreed and implementation should be in winter 2010/11. Work also continues with Manchester City Council to update the current Choice Based Lettings (CBL) model. The timetable for implementation has recently changed and this is now due in the Spring of 2011.

The benefits of a new CBL model will also add significant benefits for performance management and real time data for demand information. Bespoke reporting will allow more comprehensive information to be gathered and used to inform future asset management decisions. A new model will also be more widely advertised and research from schemes elsewhere shows that this should also help to bring in new tenants and increase demand.

8.4 Future Demand

In 2007 Manchester City Council published both a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment and an Access to Affordable Housing Strategy.

The Housing Needs Assessment calculated that there is an overall shortfall in Manchester of 1375 affordable units per year to meet demand. The study states that the shortfall in North Manchester is 484 units a year and that current supply is covering approximately 73% of the need. Housing markets are though complex and the simplistic assessment of numbers will not be enough to simply calculate the future demand. Many factors need to be taken into consideration when studying future need including peoples' willingness to move to meet their housing need, availability of jobs and properties that people want to live in. Ongoing work will take place, with Northwards as a key partner, to look at the links between supply and demand to ensure that North Manchester's housing markets are meeting the needs of the City and its current and future population.

The Housing Needs Assessment is available in full at www.manchester.gov.uk

The Access to Affordable Housing Strategy by Manchester City Council reflects on the scale of change in Manchester recently. In 2002, at least 50% of homes sold in Manchester were affordable to households with the average income of City residents. By 2006, this had fallen to 23%, and the great majority of newly forming households, with below average incomes, are struggling to afford to purchase a home. The aims of this strategy are to:

- Develop an updated Allocation Policy (for access to social housing).
- Develop a wider Housing Choices Scheme.
- Have more effective use of the private rented sector through an enhanced Rent Deposit Scheme aligned with landlord accreditation and licensing.
- Develop of tailored equity products to support home ownership.
- Introduce new Planning Guidance for the provision of new affordable housing as part of all larger new building projects.
- Implement a strengthened Empty Property Strategy.
- Develop the provision of advice and practical support.

In March 2010 Manchester City Council agreed a new housing allocations scheme for social housing in the City. Northwards played a full role in this piece of work, working with the city to ensure that a new allocations policy meets the outcomes of the Community Strategy.

Where there is a clear benefit for our customers Northwards Housing will play a full and active role to support the aims of the Access to Affordable Housing strategy and to ensure that North Manchester develops further as an area of choice for residents of the City. All of

the above aims will able the further sustainability of communities and thereby, either directly or indirectly have an effect on the assets that are currently managed by the Company.

Northwards is also making the best use of its stock through the employment of a Housing Options Officer for an initial period of 15 months. This role has now been extended until March 2011. This role will focus on overcrowded and under-occupied households and will look at practical solutions where possible. An under-occupation incentive scheme has been introduced along with the early identification of those households who may benefit from moving into the extra care scheme at Whitebeck Court in the Spring of 2011. 19 family homes were released in 2009/10 through this scheme. The Housing Options Officer is also working with households who are under-occupying family homes and would benefit from a move to the new build bungalows in 2010/11. The post will be funded for 6 months of 2010/11 by CLG funding.

8.5 Maintaining Demand – Neighbourhood Sustainability Indicators

The relative popularity of stock is affected by a wide array of factors. By introducing a suite of Neighbourhood Sustainability Indicators, we can analyse housing management data and local socio-economic conditions that may affect the popularity of a neighbourhood or estate. This regular analysis of neighbourhoods / estates is an important diagnostic tool within Northwards Housing's overall Asset Management Strategy.

It is basically a method of evaluating neighbourhoods / estates to understand the underlying reasons for decline; position each neighbourhood / estate in terms of how serious the actual or potential problems are; predict long term sustainability of a neighbourhood / estate; identify options for improving or maintaining viability; demonstrate the expected impact of solutions identified; select a preferred option; and review outcomes of investment / intervention decisions (did they achieve expected outcomes?).

This is not intended to be a one-off exercise, rather a basis for the regular review of the neighbourhoods / estates managed by Northwards Housing. It is essentially a diagnostic tool designed to enable us to identify and evaluate priority investment / intervention strategies and monitor their impact over time.

Understanding changing demand is a complex issue. It is not anticipated that this model on its own will provide answers to complex investment / intervention decisions. However, it is expected that the model will allow more sophisticated analysis of trends than previously undertaken. Changing demand for neighbourhoods / estates sometimes needs radical solutions, so it is important that we establish a basis for identifying problems and take ownership of solutions.

Indicators to be Considered:

- Turnover %
- Applicants on queue
- Refusal of offers
- Domestic burglary rate
- Transfer requests

- Voids %
- % Right to Buy (RTB)
- % of households dependent on Housing Benefit
- % of tenancies failed within 12 months of starting
- % of households in arrears
- Average house price (terraced properties only)
- % Attaining 5+ A-C GCSE (inc English & Maths)
- % Not Attaining 1 GCSE
- KS2 English Attainment (Level 4)
- KS2 Maths Attainment (Level 4)
- Household Income

Percentile scores will be calculated for each indicator which when combined will allow estates to be ranked and classified into one of the following:

- Estate/Neighbourhood in significant decline
- Estate/Neighbourhood at risk
- Popular Estate/Neighbourhood with specific problems
- Popular Estate/Neighbourhood

The next stage involves assessing the issues that particular estates/neighbourhoods face and identifying possible solutions or interventions to improve sustainability.

9 Option Appraisal

- 9.1** As part of the overall Asset Management Strategy, Northwards Housing carries out Option Appraisals to consider the sustainability of a property / group of properties by looking at maintenance, costs of repairs, cost of security and clear ups, demand and the effects of the property(s) within the community.
- 9.2** An Option Appraisal is a detailed analysis of information relating to an asset at a set point in time which looks at what alternatives could be implemented to redevelop or improve that asset to give long term sustainability. The appraisal will make use of management information, local knowledge and any other information that can help to assess what is happening to an asset and what options may assist in counteracting the issues of concern.

Examples of the information that the Option Appraisal process may include are:

- Number of empty properties and the current rental loss
- Turnover of stock
- Waiting list information - e.g. size and what needs people have
- Transfer requests - e.g. number and reasons for transfer
- Annual income from rents
- Number of owner occupiers and leaseholders in the target area
- Any properties leased or transferred to an RSL / Housing Association
- Repairs information - number of orders, value and breakdown of what types of work are most frequently required

- Level of crime or vandalism in the area - information the local office may have together with Police crime statistics for the target area
- Number of ASB cases ongoing / ASB orders in use
- Information on surrounding area, i.e. part of a wider regeneration area

An initial Desk Top Analysis of information may trigger a more detailed investment appraisal and consideration of alternative options.

- 9.3** Option Appraisal should not be viewed as a process on its own, rather it is part of the business planning that the organisation does on a regular basis and should be flexible enough to take account of changes in physical conditions, demand issues and funding opportunities.
- 9.4** A copy of Northwards Housing's Option Appraisal guidance is attached at Appendix 9.

10 Creating Sustainable, Mixed Communities

- 10.1** North Manchester is rapidly evolving. Northwards Housing works closely with colleagues from Manchester City Council's Private Sector Housing Team, Housing Strategy, North Manchester Regeneration Team and New East Manchester to ensure that all work undertaken complements and contributes towards the objectives set out in the City Council's Community Strategy (2006-15) and the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (SRF) for North and East Manchester.

Northwards contributes to the Manchester's Strategic Housing Partnership (MSHP) which brings together the City Council, public and private landlords, developers and others with an interest in the city's housing market. The MSHP aims to provide an improved housing offer, ensuring that the housing aspirations of the people of Manchester are met at all points on the housing ladder. There are six main workstreams below MSHP to which Northwards contributes.

Northwards also supports the Sustainable Neighbourhoods Partnership Forum (one of the thematic partnerships which operate below the Manchester Partnership) which leads on performance against outcomes within the Neighbourhoods of Choice spine of the Community Strategy. The Partnership provides a focus for the work in developing and sustaining existing neighbourhoods in the city.

Northwards works closely with the North Manchester Regeneration Team (who oversee the SRF for North Manchester) and New East Manchester (who oversee the SRF for East Manchester). The organisation is fully engaged with, and supports the North Manchester Task Force, which brings together the main public service providers from across the North and East districts of Manchester to identify key challenges and develop shared programmes of action to address them. In addition, Northwards has links with Manchester Salford Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder (MSP) who oversee the major investment and market stabilisation initiatives across parts of North and East Manchester. Northwards has been working closely with the preferred developers for Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Sites in the Harpurhey and Moston Wards to identify further development opportunities.

Northwards actively participates in Local Tasking Meetings (LTMs), Local Area Partnership (LAPs) and Ward Coordination meetings which bring together a range of public agencies and stakeholders, including Councillors and residents. This commitment to tackling issues collectively at a local level helps to improve the management of estates and neighbourhoods.

10.2 Northwards Housing recognises the key role it plays in contributing to the sustainable regeneration of North and East Manchester. With a £200 million investment programme, Northwards Housing will be undertaking significant physical regeneration through the improvements being made to homes and neighbourhoods managed. In addition, Northwards Housing is working with key partners and stakeholders to deliver the social and economic regeneration in order to create sustainable, mixed communities. Social Landlords are being transformed into the custodians of the government's Sustainable Communities agenda. It is therefore important that as an organisation, we look beyond the core housing services we provide to understand what creates sustainable communities and how we can deliver a range of strategies and interventions to create neighbourhoods where people choose to live.

10.3 Manchester Salford (Housing Market Renewal) Pathfinder (MSP)

In recent years, North Manchester experienced housing market failure in a number of areas. Put simply, there was a lack of quality housing to meet the demands of local people and to attract new residents into certain areas. Many of the areas were characterised by high volumes of empty homes in low demand and of low value restricting the housing choices available to those wishing to move up the housing ladder. MSP is one of nine pathfinders established in 2003 with the aim of narrowing the gap between specific neighbourhoods and the national average and to create places where people want to live and invest.

There are a number of clearance sites where unpopular, unsustainable terraced housing have been demolished; the vision is to provide larger, affordable family housing of which there is a shortage. There has also been a programme of alley-gating and street environmental schemes to enhance the sustainability of homes in areas where clearance was not a feasible option. Northwards Housing works closely with colleagues from the Regeneration Teams and Private Sector Housing and the North Manchester Partnership to ensure the work being undertaken by all parties' complements that of the others with the aim of creating sustainable, mixed communities in these neighbourhoods.

10.4 National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP) 2008 / 11

Northwards submitted a Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) to Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) in July 2009 and received confirmation that the organisation had achieved 'Investment Partner' status in September 2009 which allows Northwards to bid for social housing grant under the NAHP. Discussions regarding options for grant funding bids utilising NAHP and delivery models are ongoing with the Board and Manchester City Council.

10.5 Housing Management Accreditation

Northwards Housing has successfully acquired Housing Management Accreditation through the Homes & Communities Agency (formerly the Housing Corporation). This standard allows Northwards Housing to manage any home developed with grant funding through the Homes & Communities Agency. This is a significant boost to the organisation in terms of future partnership development arrangements, particularly with regards to improving neighbourhood management standards across North and East Manchester.

10.6 Local Authority New Build Programme

Following the announcement of £100m challenge fund available to Local Authorities to bid for grant funding to develop new council homes in the April 2009 Budget, Northwards Housing helped develop a joint bid with Manchester City Council (MCC) and were successful in securing funding through the 'Local Authority New Build (Round 1)' Programme.

Grant funding has been secured to develop 32 x 2-bed bungalows across a small number of infill sites across Higher Blackley & Charlestown Wards. Match funding for the project is provided via Prudential Borrowing by the City Council.

The City Council commissioned Bowker Sadler (architects) and Cruden Construction (developer) to take the project forward to deliver the two main project milestones on which funding for the project rely:

- 31st March 2010 – Contractors commence site works
- 31st March 2011 – Properties handed to Client

New homes developed under this scheme will be owned by the City Council and managed and maintained by Northwards Housing (under Housing Management Accreditation as detailed above). Northwards Housing is using this process as a learning opportunity for potential schemes delivered directly utilising NAHP funding.

10.7 Extra Care Housing Scheme – Whitebeck Court

Whitebeck Court was declared surplus to requirements by MCC Executive Committee in December 2005, as Northwards Housing was established. Northwards were tasked with managing the rehousing of residents from the block and then worked with MCC to develop options for its future use. Due to the strategic need to increase Extra Care Housing provision in North Manchester, a joint application was submitted by MCC (Adult Social Care & Housing Departments) and Northwards Housing to the Department of Health (DoH) Extra Care Housing Fund in May 2008, to refurbish the block to a high standard for residents over 55 with a range of care needs.

The application was made on the basis of a mix of units for social rent, sale and shared ownership; however due to the housing downturn the application was changed to a wholly social rented block due to the risk of not being able to sell units, although this will be reviewed on completion. The proposal includes an extension to the ground floor to provide a range of facilities/services (including treatment rooms, restaurant/cafe, lounge, ICT suite, shop and hair salon) to residents within the block and the local community. £6.54m was

secured from the DoH Extra Care Housing Fund towards the overall £9.4m scheme; Northwards have contributed £1.24m towards the refurbishment of the 91 units of accommodation, with the balance being made up from contributions from MCC Adult Social Care.

Wates Living Space were selected as the preferred contractor and work has started on site, with an estimated completion date of March 2011. Northwards representatives sit on the Project Board and Project Team which oversees the development to ensure all milestones are met and the project is delivered on time; all funding from DoH has now been secured having successfully achieved the four project milestones set.

On completion, the block will be added back into Northwards Housing's Management Agreement and Service Level Agreements will be put in place with MCC Adult Social Care for areas within the block that Northwards will manage on their behalf.

10.8 Community Regeneration Strategy

Northwards Housing has developed a Community Regeneration Strategy; the aim of which is to set out how Northwards Housing is contributing to the regeneration of North Manchester in order to bring lasting benefit to neighbourhoods and communities.

A copy is attached as Appendix 11.

11 Resident Involvement in Asset Management

Involving and valuing tenants is a key theme throughout Northwards Housing's values and objectives and as an organisation there is a strong corporate focus on access and customer care across all aspects of the housing service. Northwards Housing's 'Resident Involvement Agreement' sets out a range of ways that tenants and leaseholders can get involved in helping to monitor and improve the services delivered. With specific regards to Asset Management, tenants and leaseholders have the following opportunities for involvement:

11.1 Board, Sub-Committees & Area Panels

Northwards Housing's Board has overall responsibility for all policies, plans and strategies and ensures that services delivered are continually improving. The Board is made up of twelve members, four of whom are tenant representatives. Each Board Member is also required to sit on two of the four Sub-Committees. Each Sub-Committee has specific responsibility for a particular area of service, providing advice and guidance to the Board as necessary. The Asset Management Sub-Committee has responsibility for all aspects of Asset Management from monitoring performance of contractors to regeneration.

In order to maintain strong local connections, three Area Panels (see map on Page 6) meet regularly to monitor performance, agree environmental priorities and discuss any changes to services. Membership of the Area Panels reflects each of the areas they cover and are made up of seven tenants, two owner-occupiers, one leaseholder and a councillor from each ward. Each Area Panel consults with local people (via Tenants & Residents

Associations) and gives advice and guidance to the Board that reflects the needs of local communities. The Area Panels also have some budget responsibilities for environmental expenditure and makes recommendations to the Board..

11.2 Tenant Inspector Scheme

The aim of the scheme is to allow tenants to inspect services delivered, highlight areas for improvement and praise good quality service delivery. Inspections undertaken include Ready-to-Let properties, Estate Walkabouts, Completed Repairs and works undertaken as part of the Home Improvement Programme. After each inspection, the Tenant Inspectors compile a report of their findings which is provided to the relevant manager and an action plan (incorporating any improvements or recommendations made) is drawn up and agreed by both parties. A detailed report outlining any actions taken and lessons learned is then produced which is shared with the three Area Panels and published on the Northwards Housing website.

11.3 Home Improvement Leaflets and DVD

Leaflets are available to all tenants (within the Tenant's Handbook) to explain each of the possible Home Improvements in detail, from what choices they can expect to the type of improvements that will be undertaken. They were developed following detailed consultation with the Area Panels and all leaflets are written in plain English, with a range of translation options available. A DVD on home improvements is also given to all residents prior to work commencing.

11.4 Tenant Choices

Tenants are given a range of choices as part of the Home Improvements programme including windows, doors, kitchen units, worktops, handles, bath panels, toilet seats, wall tiles and flooring. In consultation with surveyors, tenants also have the opportunity to help design their new kitchen.

11.5 Monitoring satisfaction – Home Improvements

On completion of any Home Improvement works, a satisfaction survey is sent to every tenant for feedback on the service they received. The survey covers a range of aspects including the choices available, the quality of the work and the service provided by the contractor and Northwards. The results of the surveys are monitored using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are reported to the Board, Sub-Committee and Area Panels. Any negative feedback from tenants is seen as an opportunity to improve services. Equality and diversity data is used to analyse the results of the satisfaction surveys.

11.6 Monitoring Satisfaction – Repairs

Following a repair, tenants are asked to provide feedback on the service they received. This tenant satisfaction information is monitored using Key Performance Indicators which are reported to the Board, Sub-Committee and Area Panels. Any negative feedback from tenants on repairs undertaken is seen as an opportunity to improve services.

11.7 Repairs & Home Improvements Forum

The Task Group meets bi-monthly and is jointly chaired by the Head of Responsive Repairs and one of the Heads of the Home Improvement Service. The group is made up of tenants and is a forum to consult on services delivered, establish what tenants want, identify ways to improve services and consider the impact of services on leaseholders and owner-occupiers.

11.8 Repairs Appointments

In order to make the responsive repairs service more accessible to tenants, Northwards Housing trialled and has now extended the service to incorporate Wednesday evening and Saturday morning appointments for both responsive repairs and gas servicing.

11.9 Leaseholders

A Leaseholder Forum has been established to consider leaseholder involvement in all housing services and capital improvements delivered by Northwards Housing. The forum meets every quarter and makes recommendations where necessary. A Leaseholder Handbook, including service standards leaseholders can expect has been developed in consultation with the Forum, which has been provided to all leaseholders across North Manchester. In addition, a leaseholder representative has been co-opted onto the Asset Management Sub-Committee to ensure their needs and views are taken into.

11.10 Complaints

Northwards Housing's Complaints Panel aims to improve how complaints received and dealt with across the organisation. The complaints panel meet every 6-8 weeks to review the quality of complaints handling and responses. They review performance against targets and ensure action is taken to address any weaknesses to improve processes and provide better outcomes for the customer.

The Responsive Repairs team has established a separate complaints panel in conjunction with Manchester Working Ltd, focussing on complaints received in relation to the Responsive Repairs service. This panel looks to proactively deal with complaints, identify trends and ensure lessons are learned from all complaints received.

11.11 Customer Satisfaction Survey

In order to gauge customer satisfaction across all areas of service, an annual survey is sent out by Northwards Housing. This survey looks at a number of service areas including repairs and maintenance, community safety and satisfaction of neighbourhoods. Data extrapolated from the survey results can then be used to drive service improvement.

11.12 Equality & Diversity

There is a strong commitment and focus on promoting equality and diversity, with clear policies in place backed up by corporate values and objectives. Northwards produced our

first Single Equality Scheme in September 2008 to outline our commitment to equality, and to highlight actions that we would take through a three-year Action Plan. The scheme focuses on six strands of equality: Age, Disability, Gender (including transgender), Race, Religion/Belief and Sexual Orientation. Northwards carry out annual progress reviews of the Action Plan and will be revising the Scheme in 2011 in the line with recommendations from the new Equality Bill.

North Manchester is a culturally rich and diverse area and Northwards Housing appreciates the contributions that all our tenants can bring when evaluating our services. Northwards Housing consult and engage with a wide range of residents to ensure that they have the opportunity to share their opinions on our service and can recommend measures for improvement.

Equality Impact Assessments are carried out on a regular basis to assess all our new policies and procedures to ensure that they do not directly or indirectly discriminate against any groups or members of the community; that the service we offer is fair and accessible to all; and that we have taken into account the present and future needs of all our customers.

12 Coordination, Review & Delivery of the Asset Management Strategy

12.1 The Director of Property Services is responsible for the implementation and delivery of the Asset Management Strategy. The Property Services Management team drives the strategy forward and meets quarterly, along with the Head of Policy and Housing Options and the Chair and the Asset Management Sub Committee, to review progress against the action plans which underpin the Asset Management Strategy and review all homes which meet a set criteria including:

- Void for more than 8 weeks
- Difficult to let
- Significant improvement / repair costs
- One-off structural issues
- Demolition

The team also consider the outcomes of the Neighbourhood Sustainability Indicators and helps to identify possible solutions or interventions to improve the fortunes of the worst performing neighbourhoods / estates; in consultation with the appropriate Neighbourhood Services team.

12.2 An annual review is carried out to review the direction of the strategy and make recommendations where appropriate. The Director of Property Services regularly reports progress to the organisation's Executive Management Team, MCC Housing's Departmental Management Team (DMT); and the Board will receive annual progress reports.