

January 2022

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Business Plan 2022/23



Introduction

Welcome to Sheffield City Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2022/23. The HRA Business Plan sets out our income and expenditure plans for delivering council housing services in Sheffield.

It covers our key council housing priorities for the coming years, showing how we intend to develop our services to tenants.

Income into the HRA mainly comes from tenant rents, with other income received from Right to Buy receipts and government grant. HRA income is used to provide services to council housing tenants such as the capital investment programme, tenant services and repairs and maintenance.

Each year we work out a detailed financial plan for the next 5 years, along with a broad approach to balancing the Housing Revenue Account over the next 30-years - our long-term planning horizon.

This year's plan summary provides an update on our key priorities for council housing and how we aim to deliver and achieve these. The HRA Business Plan also helps to support Sheffield City Council's One-Year Plan and other wider Council strategies and plans.



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Key Developments

National Policy Context

The HRA operates within a political environment therefore changes in national housing policy can have a big impact on our HRA Business Plan.

Potential national policy impacts are considered each year when we set out our plans. Here is what we have looked at this year:

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic we had to adapt our ways of working, focusing on the delivery of our statutory and critical services to our customers.

We have gradually reinstated our face-to-face activities over the past 12 months, re-opening some of our neighbourhood offices, providing home visits to tenants and undertaking repairs to tenants' homes.

We understand that some of our tenants will still need extra support so we will continue to actively engage with our most vulnerable tenants and ensure they have additional support in place where required.

In this ongoing situation, we will continue to work in accordance with Government guidelines in 2022.



Fire and Building Safety

Since the tragic events of the Grenfell fire in 2017, the Government has announced several measures to improve fire and building safety, especially for high-rise tower blocks and buildings of multiple occupancy.



Over the last few years, we have been working with the Government, other authorities, partners, and our tenants to ensure we are putting in place all the necessary fire safety measures required.

It is a priority for us to ensure our tenants are safe in their homes and we will continue to take a proactive approach to ensure we are implementing all the necessary improvements to our council homes.

Welfare Reform

Supporting our tenants with the transition to Universal Credit, continues to be a key priority. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in the number of Universal Credit claims made by our tenants.



We have provided a tailored service to different customer groups, helping all those in need of support to manage their money and understand their commitment to paying rent.

We promote Direct Debit as the preferred payment method for all tenants, including those claiming Universal Credit, as it increases the likelihood of receiving prompt payment of rent.

We continue to work with our partners to ensure our tenants and their families have the level of support required.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents (White Paper)

The Government's Social Housing White Paper – The Charter for Social Housing - sets out reforms intended to make landlords more accountable for the services they deliver, changes to the complaints process and the introduction of a set of tenant satisfaction measures that landlords will have to report against.

We have produced a new Customer Engagement Strategy and a new set of Landlord Commitments (formerly called Customer Promises) in anticipation of the new standards to be announced by the Regulator. The Engagement Strategy is a first step in addressing the 'customer voice' section of the White Paper.

The Strategy was produced in consultation and engagement with our tenants to ensure we have incorporated their views and feedback on how we should be engaging and involving our tenants.

The Landlord Commitments will drive service improvements for our customers as well as significantly contributing to our compliance with the requirements of the White Paper.

A review of the Decent Homes Standard (including energy and environmental standards) is also expected because of the White Paper. We will continue to monitor developments in relation to this and ensure we feed into any consultation as part of the review.



Local Policy Context

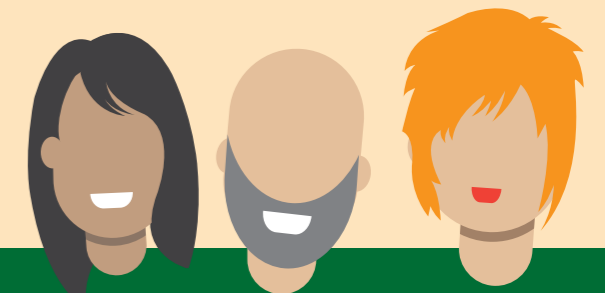
The HRA Business Plan is also set within a wider strategic context of the overall ambitions of Sheffield City Council and those of the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service.

Sheffield City Council's One-Year Plan was approved in July 2021 and is a roadmap to the City's recovery from the pandemic. The plan sets out priorities for the Council to

deliver on, that will make an immediate impact to help rebuild and recover. A number of these priorities relate directly to the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service; therefore, it is important that the business plan priorities align with the One-Year Plan priorities. The Council are also developing a longer-term corporate plan which the HRA Business Plan will continue to feed into and support.

In 2021, seven Local Area Committees (LACs) were set up to promote the involvement

of local people in the democratic process and to bring decision making closer to local people. The LACs are a way for people to get involved in making a difference to their local communities. As council housing services are delivered across the city, we will ensure the business plan priorities are fed into the LACs as they start to establish their local priorities and plans.

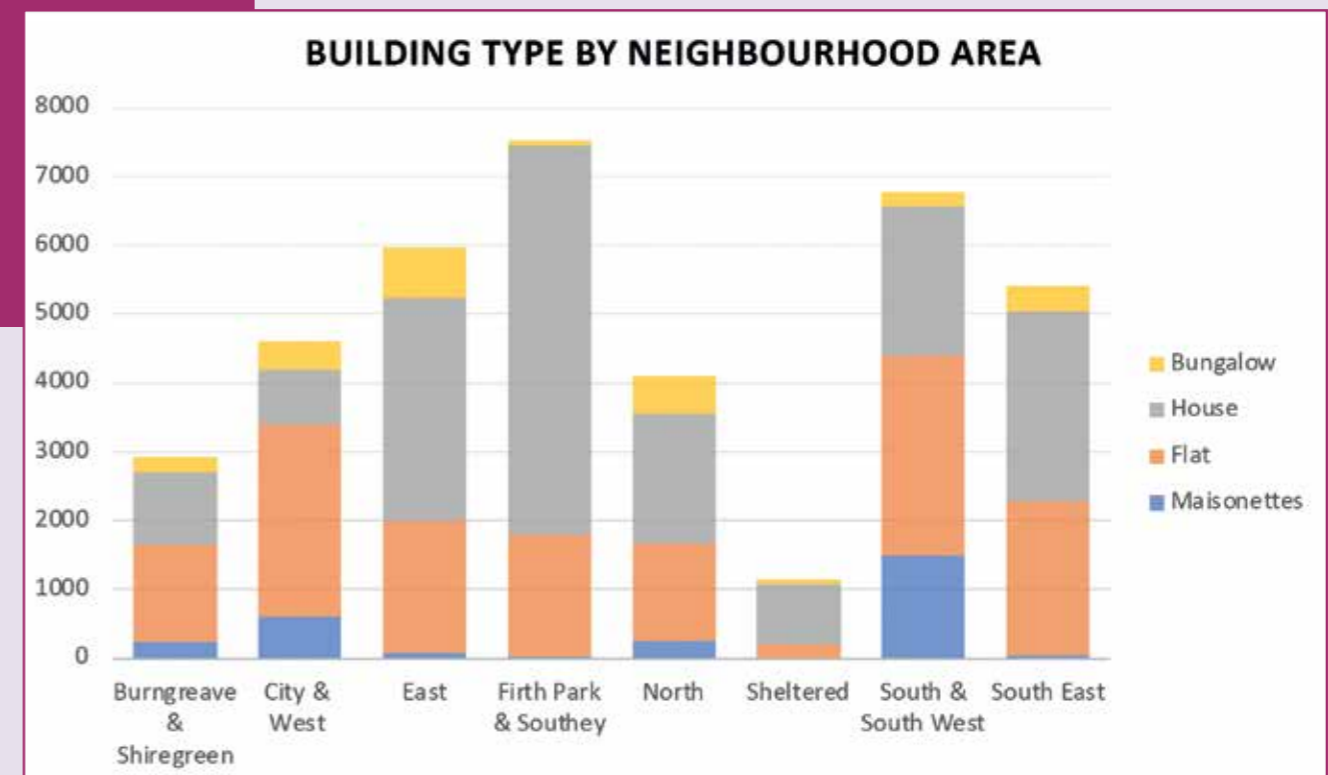


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Our Housing Profile

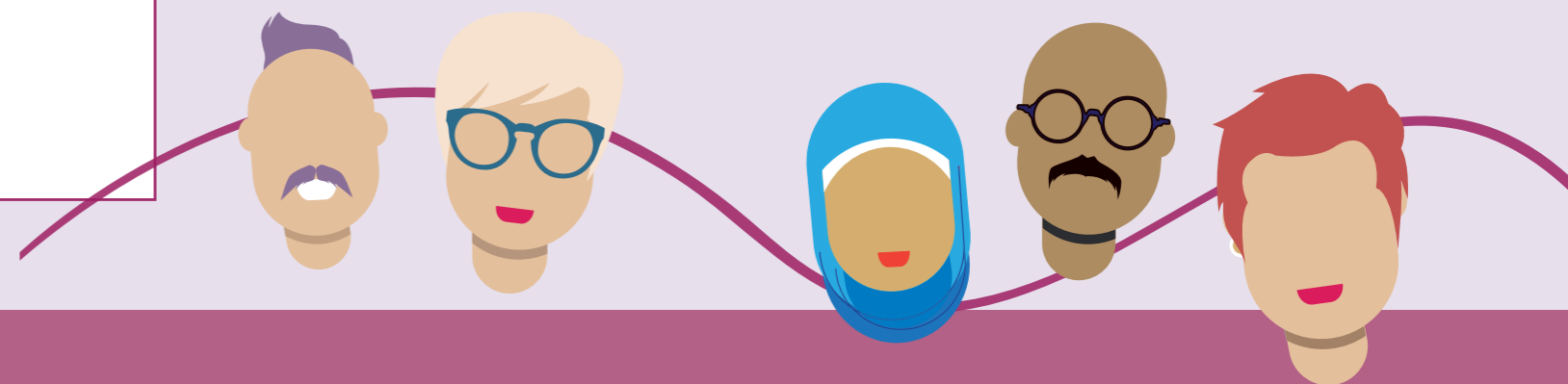
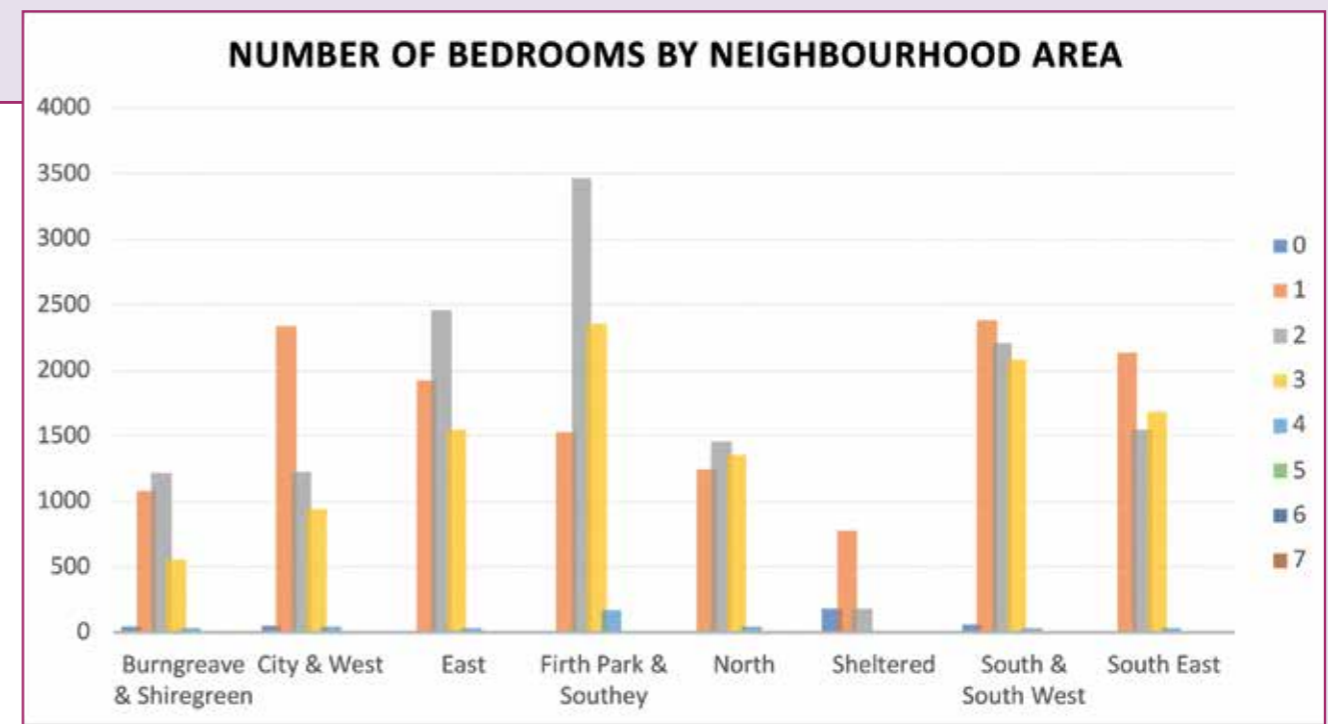
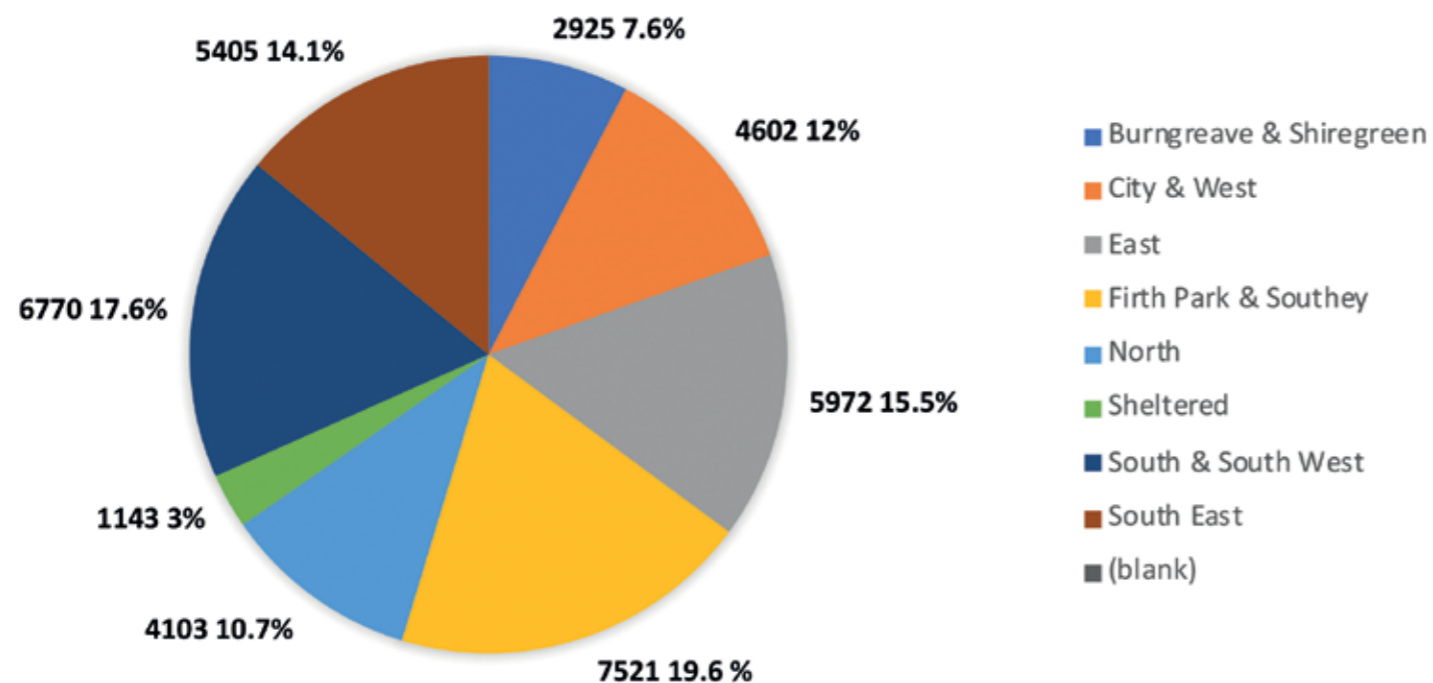


Houses	Flats	Maisonettes	Bungalows	Total	Leaseholders
18,449	14,624	2,741	2,627	38,441	2,703



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COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK BY NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA



HRA Business Plan Priorities 2022/23

Deliver our stock increase programme to build and acquire more council homes to meet our target of 3,100 homes by 2028/29

The HRA Business Plan includes a commitment to increase the number of council homes. Over the years this number has increased, with our current ambitions being to deliver 3,100 council homes by 2028/29.



As of September 2021, we had delivered 732 new homes (a mixture of homes purchased on the open market and new homes built or acquired off plan). A further 221 new homes are currently in construction and expect to be delivered by summer 2022. Our first new Independent Living Housing scheme (Older Persons Independent Living with Care) is currently under construction in Parson Cross (Buchanan Green) and is due for completion in Spring 2022.

It is not just the number of new homes we are looking at but also the types of housing that is needed and in what areas of the city. The demand for council housing is high and so it's more important than ever that we try an increase the number of new homes that we have and in the right places.

Deliver improvements to our tenants' homes to make sure they continue to be well maintained

A key investment priority is making sure our existing homes continue to be well maintained and improvements made. It is important for us that our tenants feel safe and comfortable in their homes.



Our 5-year investment plan sets out planned improvement and upgrade works that we will make to our homes.

This includes making improvements to roofs,

kitchens, bathrooms, windows and doors, electrical upgrades, heating replacement and energy efficiency improvements to our homes. Ensuring our existing homes are in a good condition will make our neighbourhoods more attractive and places where people want to live.

Deliver year on year targets to achieve the 'Better Repairs Project'

We have been working hard to improve our repairs and maintenance service and to work through backlogs created because of the COVID-19 pandemic.



This has been a challenging time; however, we are making changes and improvements to our repair processes that will help to ensure we are able to deliver an efficient and reliable repairs service to our tenants.

Our 'Better Repairs Project' will enable us to implement a 'new ways of working' structure which will help to make improvements and empower staff, enabling us to hit our targets and deliver a service that meets the needs of our tenants.

Over the next 12 months we will continue to modernise and invest in the repairs service that we provide to tenants. We introduced a new IT system in 2021 to enable better and smarter working, to reduce back-office administration and enhance the customer experience. This will improve the efficiency of the service we provide, both to customers and the teams we work with.

Invest in fire safety measures to ensure our council homes comply with the emerging building safety legislative environment

Investment in fire safety remains a key priority and work will continue in 2022/23 to ensure that our council homes, especially our high-rise tower blocks and flat blocks are safe.



We are addressing outcomes from Government legislation as part of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and Building Safety Bill and putting plans in place to ensure we are complying with the latest regulations and investing where additional fire provision is required.

The Building Safety Bill that was launched in July 2021 is expected to come into force from April 2022. It places significant duties on us as a landlord, and not only considers the buildings but equally important the building occupants. The Bill provides residents with more rights and decision making about their homes.

We are taking a pro-active approach to ensure we have the resources in place to comply with any further legislative requirements and we are bringing forward fire safety improvements to blocks and developing a resident engagement plan.

Deliver on plans to ensure all Sheffield City Council homes reach Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) level C by 2030

Our 5-year investment programme has been developed to support bringing all homes below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) level C up to that level. There are approximately 6,900 council homes that are currently below this level.



This will mainly be provided through improvements to the structure of underperforming homes including cavity, loft and wall insulation and improvements to heating. We have been successful already in securing grant funding which will enable us to deliver energy efficiency works to 517 of our council homes. We will continue to explore further funding opportunities in 2022/23 to help us make these improvements.

By 2022, produce a roadmap showing further options for council housing's contribution to achieving Sheffield's ambition of net-zero by 2030

Reducing carbon emissions and tackling climate change is a global priority and is high on the Government's agenda. A key aspect in Sheffield's One-Year Plan focuses on climate change and reducing carbon emissions in the city.



In 2021, we have been working with partners to start to develop a 'roadmap to net zero'. The roadmap will also help us to estimate the funding needed to improve our council stock. The cost of upgrading our existing stock will be expensive. It will therefore be important that we make the best cost-effective decisions as part of our plans. We are working with other landlords who are also developing plans so we can share ideas and learn from one another. We will continue to work with Government and partners in 2022 and maximise any opportunities to making our council homes greener.

Focus on the quality of our customer service offer – improving customer access, the management of complaints and implementing recommendations from the Race Equality Commission

Improving how our customers can contact and access us is more important than ever following the COVID-19 pandemic. We want to be able to provide a good quality customer service offer that ensures our customers can access and contact us in their preferred way and receive a quality service.



We also want to review how we manage and respond to complaints to improve this process to make it easier for our customers to make a complaint if they need to. We know there are improvements to be made and we are looking at the best ways of doing this.

Ensuring all our tenants have the same level of access to our Housing and Neighbourhood services is of vital importance. In 2021 we contributed and submitted evidence as part of the Race Equality Commission. We await the Commission's final report that is expected to be published in 2022, in readiness to make changes and implement recommendations.

Deliver improvements to the frontline neighbourhood housing services our tenants receive

We understand all our tenants have different needs and requirements, with some tenants needing more support than others.



We will therefore provide a more tailored approach to ensure that our most vulnerable tenants have access to the support they need.

We will develop better partnership working with other Council services in our neighbourhoods and estates to ensure we can tackle tenancy and estate related issues better and more efficiently. We want our estates and neighbourhoods to be places our tenants feel comfortable and want to live.

Work closely with Council colleagues to support the development of Local Area Committees across the city

In 2021, seven Local Area Committees (LACs) were set up to promote the involvement of local people in the democratic process and to bring decision making closer to local people. The LACs are a way for people to get involved in making a difference to their local communities.



As council housing services are delivered across the city, we will ensure the business plan priorities feed into the LACs priorities and plans. We will continue in 2022/23 to work closely with Council colleagues to support the development of the LACs across the city.

Consult with tenants over plans to charge for enhanced services and introduce cost recovery for some repair and management activities

Over the next year we will need to explore options for increasing income into the business plan to fund service improvements. We aim to consult with tenants around introducing a range of service charges where these are permissible to help fund improvements.



We will also look at some of our current repair and management activities to consider removing subsidies and implementing full cost recovery. This will help ensure that the business plan remains sustainable in future years.

Develop apprenticeship, employment and training opportunities to create a workforce representative of council housing communities

Supporting the local economy including providing improved employment and skills outcomes remains a key priority for the Council. We currently have around 100 apprentices



within the Housing and Neighbourhoods Service, and we usually recruit around 20 new apprentices a year, with many becoming permanent members of staff.

The apprenticeship scheme also provides an opportunity to help us improve diversity within the workforce. We will continue to look at ways in which we can promote and encourage new apprentices from a range of backgrounds and communities.

Invest in updating our information technology infrastructure to seamlessly integrate with the wider Council systems

We currently use lots of different systems which enable our staff to do their jobs.



A review of these systems is currently taking place and is looking at how our computer systems and working practices can be made more efficient and, as a result, improve the services that are delivered to our tenants.

Due to the age and number of systems used it can take time for our staff to find information that they need to deliver their service. There is sometimes duplication (doing the same task more than once in more than one system). We now have an opportunity to bring in a modern housing management system that will be easier for both our customers and our staff to use.

Develop different ways of working as we learn to adapt post COVID-19 and address any remaining backlogs caused by the pandemic

A key priority for 2022/23 is to resume services safely, increase front line service activity, tackling non-compliance, tenancy breaches and issues that are having a negative impact on council tenancies and estates.



We will look to take a more pro-active and multi-tenure approach to dealing with tenancy management issues within our neighbourhoods. This work will help to highlight responsibilities as part of our tenancy conditions, and we will explore potential cost recovery options as part of this.



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