



Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing



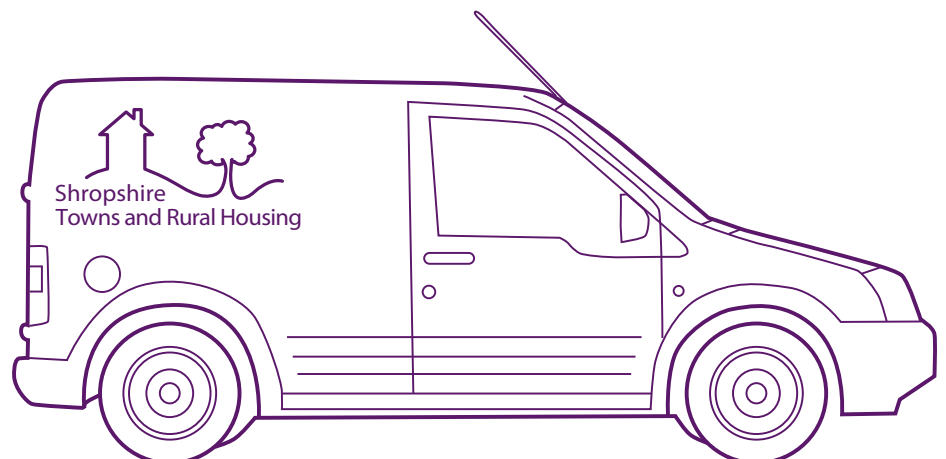
BUSINESS PLAN

2020 - 2024



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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Cllr Simon Harris,
Chair of STAR Housing



Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing (STAR Housing) was set up by the Council in 2013 to run Shropshire Council's housing, around 4,200 homes.

We have worked hard since then to positively transform the delivery of services to tenants and residents.

Through our prudent and effective management of the Housing Revenue Account we have been able to secure over £23m of capital investment to meet and maintain our homes at the Decent Homes Standard. This includes £9m to ensure that homes are well insulated and meet high energy efficiency standards that are above the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard.

We have also significantly invested in our services, introduced better ways to report repairs and other issues, introduced appointments for repairs and revamped our on-line offer to tenants. We intend to continue to invest in new technology to improve services. As well as investing in our services we also continue to invest in our communities. We have spent over £107K in Neighbourhood Projects, investing in our estates and a further £117K on our micro-grants to a range of community projects.

We have also built 140 properties; this includes 40 shared ownership properties. Our programme includes a specialist unit built with Ethos, for people with physical disabilities and an extension of 14 bungalows to a sheltered housing scheme in Highley.

We have also played an important role in supporting the Council to meet their statutory responsibilities by providing 64 homes for use as temporary accommodation and 12 homes for those with long-term care needs. We also, as part of the SUSTAIN consortium, provide support to homeless residents in emergency Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

In the last few years we have worked with the Council to evaluate the impact of Government proposals on Council housing and, in turn, the impact on our Company through an options appraisal process. Some of the most significant

challenges included in the policy proposals were not pursued; such as sale of higher value Council homes and the policy landscape has become much more favourable with the abolition of the borrowing cap.

In those years we continued to deliver on our contract with the Council and deliver improved services to residents in Shropshire. Our tenants endorsed that in our tenants' survey in 2019.

The result of this is that the Council has endorsed the continued management of Council homes by STAR Housing. We will work to support the Council in delivering on its priorities in the next three years.

I have recently become Chair of STAR Housing and I am proud that we will continue to work to improve the lives of Shropshire tenants and residents. We will continue to invest in our people and our services and we have strong foundations from which to innovate and grow and support the Council in delivering on its priorities.

We aim to invest at least £10m in our homes over the next 3 years to continue to maintain homes at the Decent Homes Standard. We will also continue to invest in our estates and communities by funding more Neighbourhood Projects and awarding community micro grants.

We intend to be the partner of choice to build more affordable Council housing in Shropshire, utilising the new freedom to borrow and to fund further investment.

I am optimistic about the next 3 years. We are already known as a good landlord; now we will work to be a great landlord, a major partner in the delivery of affordable housing and deliver great value to the Council.

The Councils Housing Vision for Shropshire is:

“All homes are well designed decent homes of high quality, which will protect Shropshire’s unique urban and rural environments and ensure it is a great place to live.

That all Shropshire residents have access to the ‘right home in the right place’ to support and promote their health and wellbeing throughout their lives.”

STAR Housing is the Council’s housing management company. We work to support the Council in achieving their vision for housing and our vision too is rooted in delivering for the community that we serve.

OUR VISION



“Listening to our residents, together we create quality homes and vibrant communities”

We aspire to be the provider of choice of housing services and affordable housing to the Council by delivering excellent services and homes; delivering on the Council’s vision for Shropshire.

Our values show who we are and are embedded in everything that we do. They are:

We will be enterprising

We don't want to stand still; we want to welcome new ideas. We'll challenge ourselves to think differently and be innovative. We want the people who live and work in our communities to get outstanding services and live in great communities.

We will act with integrity

We are committed to being open and honest, and will hold ourselves and others to account. We will use our resources in areas that people have said are a priority. We know there are difficult decisions to take, we will address these issues and explain how we reach our conclusions. We will consult and listen to residents before we address issues and explain how we reach our conclusions.

We will take responsibility

If we promise something we will deliver it. We will always stand by our actions and be accountable. We will listen to all of our customers and be non-judgemental in our approach.

We will be reliable and supportive

We will help residents in our communities to be confident and achieve. We will be dependable and reliable and listen to the concerns in our neighbourhoods. We will be welcoming and approachable recognising that everybody is an individual.

We will use our resources wisely

We recognise that we work in a challenging economic environment that makes us more determined to ensure our money and people are used in the best possible way. We will be organised but flexible and provide a professional service that provides value for money.

OUR APPROACH

Our approach is our values in action; in the way that we approach our stakeholders, customers and interact with each other. They are our guide to the way we do things and our 4 golden rules of success.



Caring and Respect

- *We are here to make our customers lives better but there is more ...*
- *We need to be approachable and polite and listen to what our customers say*
- *We will show empathy and compassion for those that we come into contact with*
- *We know that we need to show caring and respect not just in the words we use but in our voice and body language*
- *We need to show we care about those that we deliver services to, by delivering services in a way that everyone at STAR Housing can be proud of*



Keeping our Promises

- *Our reputation relies on us keeping our word so...*
- *We will be realistic and honest about what we can achieve and then make sure we do what we say we will do*
- *We will take personal responsibility for making sure that STAR deliver what they promised and tell our customers what we have done*
- *If something does go wrong we will be honest about any mistakes, say sorry and put it right as quickly as possible*



Be positive

- *Our colleagues, customers and communities rightly expect a lot from us, so we have a responsibility to be positive in our interactions with others as perception of our service is a reality so ...*
- *We will be committed, and deliver services in a caring, respectful, friendly and professional way*
- *We will be positive about STAR Housing because we are positive about the work that we all do*



Learning and Development

- *We pride ourselves in always trying to improve our services so ...*
- *We will do that by listening to our customers, learning from any mistakes we may make and constantly improving what we offer*
- *We will listen to staff and tenants who suggest ways to improve our services*
- *We will ensure that we invest in our staff so that they are better able to improve their service delivery*
- *Our staff will succeed at STAR Housing by taking the initiative and responsibility for what they do and their own development*



STAR HOUSING IN NUMBERS *

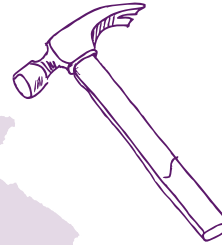
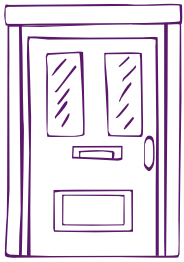
4,054
properties managed

26%
of social housing in
Shropshire Council
area

Responsible for
collecting

£17.8m

in rent, service charges
and other income



359
properties relet

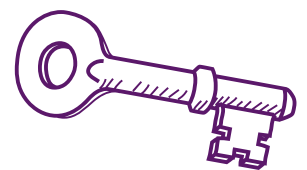
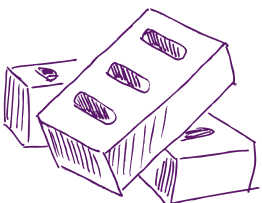
19,942
repair jobs
completed

140
new council
homes built

64
properties used
as temporary
accommodation

Employ over
120
staff

12
units leased to
adult social care



*All 2018/19 current financial year except temporary and leased accommodation and new builds where figures at the end of 2019

We have delivered on our 2016-20 Business Plan. We have consistently improved services for our tenants and value to the Council by reinvesting efficiency savings.

Our tenants endorsed our services in our independent survey in 2019. 88% of tenants said they are satisfied with the overall service provided and value for money for rent. Tenants overwhelmingly said they would recommend our service to others. All these results are in the top quarter of landlords in the country.

We have delivered on our Asset Management Strategy by investing in surveying all Council housing; now 99% completed. This enabled us to be focused on continuing to meet the Decent Homes Standard through investing £3.9m on average per financial year from 2016-20 delivering an efficiently planned programme. We also invested £1m from 2016-20 in adapting our homes to ensure their suitability for our disabled tenants.

We have built new Council homes. We were shortlisted for the 2016 UK Housing Awards as 'Outstanding New Developer of the Year' and have built 70 new properties between April 2016 and March 2020. This includes 30 bungalows and 19 shared ownership properties as well as a specialist unit for people with spinal injuries in partnership with Ethos. We were shortlisted for the National Housing Awards in 2018 for our partnership with Shifnal Town Council to develop the former Baptists Chapel site; this was completed in 2019.

In 2017 we acquired for the Council hostel accommodation at New Century Court in Oswestry and invested £137K in refurbishing the accommodation. We provide housing and 24-hour support for 12 young people aged 16-25 for up to 2 years with just £20,000 grant per year required from the Council to fund the scheme. This has been a great success in supporting young people to move into living independently and into jobs, education and training.

We have supported the Council by letting 64 units as temporary accommodation managed by the Housing Options Team and 12 units leased to adult social care for those who need longer term housing as at December 2019. We also, through our contract to the Council as part of the SUSTAIN consortium, provide cross-tenure support to those in crisis and others with a support need and to those placed by the Council in bed and breakfast. The consortium landlords were shortlisted for the UK Housing Awards 'Innovative Landlord of the Year' in 2019 for its work in setting up the successful SUSTAIN consortium.

We have also invested £82K in the estates that we manage through our Neighbourhood Projects programme from 2016-19 and a further capital investment of £160K at Castlefields in Oswestry; investing in play areas and parking and significantly improving the environment of the estate.

We have significantly improved the energy efficiency of our stock going from a SAP rating of 65.30 in 2016 to 67.75 by March 2019 in our on-grid properties.

We have increased the number of off-grid properties that have access to efficient low-carbon heating for their homes by investing £1.3m into 256 air source heat pump systems. Our programme is supported by 'Warm Homes Fund' grant funding. We secured £205K of grants for new gas heating systems and £286K of funding for 'non-gas' solutions including air source heat pumps.



We delivered major change to our repairs service through the introduction of new IT systems including mobile working and reworking business processes. This meant that we could offer appointments to our tenants as well as improving the productivity of our staff. This included over 98% of repairs delivered 'Right First Time' by the end of September 2019. We also procured a new materials framework in 2018 from Jewsons that will deliver future savings for us. 87% of tenants in our independent survey said they were satisfied with repairs and maintenance; a result in the top quarter of landlords. We were shortlisted in 2019 for the 24Housing 'Repairs and Maintenance Provider of the Year'.

We have kept safety at the forefront of our services, making sure that we regularly fire risk assess the homes we manage. We have maintained 100% gas certification of our homes and have a programme of safety inspections including electrical, water hygiene and asbestos testing. We have invested £82K for 2 officers supporting local teams to support tenants to allow us access to their homes.

We commissioned a review of Sheltered Housing from HQN and have made significant changes to sheltered housing as a result. This included de-designating part of 1 sheltered scheme and converting it to general needs. We have significantly invested in the community facilities on the 15 other sheltered schemes owned by the Council. This includes £75K on the community rooms. We have also built an extension to our scheme in Highley increasing the scheme from 19 to 33 bungalows. We introduced Intensive Housing Management charges to the schemes that generated income of £160K in 2018/19 for scheme management. Our survey in 2019 showed satisfaction with the service provided in sheltered housing is 92%, up from 86% in 2017; a result that places STAR Housing in the top 25% of landlords.

We improved communications with our customers. We invested over £30K in developing a contact centre and now have 1 number for all our services. Our contact centre answered our calls in an average of 15 seconds in 2018/19. We have also revamped our website and now offer a tenant portal with information about tenants' rent accounts and repairs reporting. Our tenants and residents also keep in touch with our services through social media with over 579 followers on Twitter and 2,290 on Facebook at the end of October 2019. We continue to provide newsletters and annual reports to all our tenants, in the format they prefer.

We reviewed our Resident Involvement Strategy to support our vision 'listening to our residents'. Our residents' Area Panels have carried out an important scrutiny programme and review all our customer facing policies. They also reviewed and approved £52K of grants for 89 community projects since 2016. We also run popular summer pop-up events with over 105 events taking place since they were launched in 2016 to replace unpopular walkabouts. 79% of tenants say they are happy with the way that we are 'listening to views and acting on them', a 14% increase that now places us in the top quarter of all landlords.

We continued to collect over 98% of rent as a percentage of rent owed by dealing effectively with welfare reform and achieving over 99% of rent due for the financial year 2018/19, a result in the top 25% of landlords. We invested an extra £52K annually into our rent collection team and £24K in the new Financial Inclusion Team that helps tenants with their budgeting, debts and welfare benefits. Our teams have helped tenants manage over £149K of debt and identified additional income or benefits of £43K. We keep evictions low, only 0.15% of tenancies, 2 households in 2019/20 were evicted due to rent arrears. This places STAR Housing in the top 25% of landlords.

We have been effective in dealing with housing management issues. This was assisted by investing in mobile working for housing management staff. This enables us to reduce administrative work and staff can increase the time spent on the patch. We have been particularly successful in tackling anti-social behaviour with over 99% of cases resolved successfully in 2018/19. We also received recognition in 2019, receiving the National Resolve ASB award for 'Best Project' for our work in tackling drug dealing and 'cuckooing' in Oswestry.

The recent election of a Conservative government with a large majority will bring some certainty to the policy framework for housing. Many key policy initiatives such as Universal Credit are set to continue but further key announcements on housing have been made.

Key areas to consider are:

Rollout of welfare reform

The introduction of Universal Credit (UC) continues to impact in Shropshire. UC continues to cause real challenges for our customers. There is a reduction in tenants who receive Intensive Housing Management charges in general needs households from 64 to 24 over the last 2 years. These charges funded additional services to those who need them but this charge is benefit ineligible under UC. There are currently 494 UC tenancies as of November 2019, of which 345 are in arrears totalling £132K. This figure represents an average of £383. This compares favourably with the national average of over £552 for UC claimants. The Government has said that they will end the freeze on increases in welfare benefits.

Homelessness Reduction Act and National Rough Sleeper Strategy

The introduction of the Act and the Strategy has placed significant extra burdens on local authorities. Since 2013-14 homelessness has increased in Shropshire with a significant increase of 24.5% in the last 2 years. In the Queens Speech there was a commitment to end rough sleeping by the end of this parliament by investments in key interventions and supporting those at risk of homelessness through enforcement of the Homelessness Reduction ACT.

We have supported the Council through provision of the majority of their temporary accommodation units and support in Bed and Breakfast through the SUSTAIN consortium. However, The Council has seen significant increases in the placements in temporary housing. Since 2014-15, the number of households placed in temporary accommodation has risen, by 46% in the last 2 years with 131 households placed in temporary accommodation in 2017/18. This had risen to 162 households in temporary accommodation at the end of March 2019, significantly higher than Telford and Wrekin and Herefordshire.

Raising of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) 'Borrowing Cap'

In April 2012 the Government ended the Housing Subsidy system and instead implement self-financing for the HRA. Under this arrangement local authorities were required to make a one-off settlement payment to the Government. As part of this transition the Government imposed a borrowing cap on all HRAs in a measure to prevent a significant increase in the level of public sector debt. In October 2018 the Government announced the abolition of the cap with the specific intention of increasing the supply of new affordable housing. Local authorities are now free to undertake additional HRA borrowing subject to their own affordability constraints. Preliminary assessment indicates that this could support the delivery of at least 500 new affordable homes in the Council's HRA.

Social Housing White Paper

Following on from the Green Paper earlier in the year the Government in the Queen's Speech pledged to introduce the Social Housing White Paper. This will set out further measures to empower tenants, support the continued supply of social homes and improve regulation. ALMOs and Councils, including STAR Housing will be brought further into the regulatory regime. We have a strong culture of compliance with existing Consumer Standards so we welcome this change. We have been involved at a national level in commenting on the proposed framework and many of the elements such as focus on satisfaction and outcomes for tenants is already a key part of our approach.

Implementation of Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Fire Enquiry and the Hackitt Review

The government has committed to implementing all the recommendations put forward in the first phase report looking into the Grenfell Tower fire. This includes a proposed Building Safety Bill. The Bill will take forward the recommendations of the Hackitt Review with a focus on the management of high rise blocks. Although STAR Housing does not have any high rise properties and therefore some specific measures do not apply, there will still be measures that we will need to comply with. The Government has also committed to bringing in a Fire Safety Bill which will implement recommendations from the Phase 1 report.

STAR Housing has always taken the health and safety of our tenants seriously. In 2018 a new internal post with specific responsibility for Fire Safety within the housing stock was created. We will make sure that requirements following on from the Review and Report are implemented.

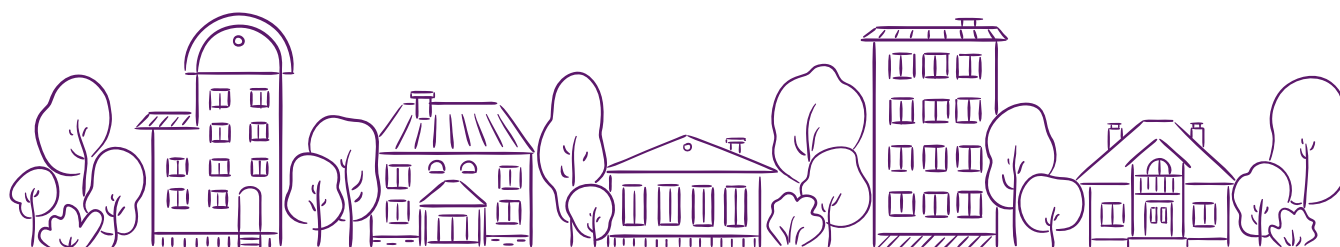
Target for new build announced and a focus on home ownership

There was a pledge by Government to renew the Affordable Homes Programme but the focus was on new initiatives aimed at supporting home ownership. These included consultation on the introduction of 'First Homes' offering new homes for local people and key workers to be sold at 30% below market price. The Government also said they would introduce a new, reformed shared ownership model, making buying a share of a home fairer and more transparent. There was a pledge to deliver one million homes in the next parliament but there were not specific targets regarding the delivery of affordable homes. There was also a commitment to creating a single £10bn Housing Infrastructure Fund that would be used to provide schools, roads and GP surgeries to support new developments.

There were also proposals to take forward a comprehensive programme of reform to end unfair practices in the leasehold market. This includes working with the Law Commission to make buying a freehold or extending a lease easier, quicker and more cost effective. They have also pledged to reinvigorate the Commonhold tenure and the Right to Manage. In the Queens Speech the intention to introduce a Planning white paper was announced. This aims to speed up the planning process.

Reform of the private rented sector

The government's 'Better Deal for Renters', outlined in the Conservative manifesto, will abolish 'no-fault' evictions and to introduce lifetime deposits, alongside further reforms. This has received a mixed reaction mainly because it could make landlords become more risk averse regarding the tenants they would be willing to take on. This could adversely affect attempts to place homeless tenants in the private sector.



The draft Housing Strategy for Shropshire sets out the Councils objectives in relation to housing. They are:

To meet the overall current and future housing needs of Shropshire's growing population by addressing the housing needs of particular groups within communities.

There is housing need across Shropshire and particularly for homes of the right type and in the right place to meet growing housing needs. The population is projected to increase by 5% to 337,800 and households 14% to 156,700 by 2041 compared to the baseline in 2018. 27% of the population is projected to be 65-84 years old and 7% are over 85 years old compared to 21% and 3% in 2016. The cohort of those over 85 is expected to be 23,000 by 2041. The highest proportions of the older population are located in the rural south of Shropshire and in the market towns of Shrewsbury, Ludlow and Oswestry.

The Strategy identifies groups where we need to give particular attention to providing housing solutions to their needs. These are older people, including those approaching retirement, students, gypsies and travellers, people with disabilities, care-leavers, those leaving prison, those leaving the Armed Forces, those living in rural areas and essential local workers.

To ensure people whose housing needs are not met though the local open housing market can access affordable housing that meets their needs.

The lower quartile affordability ratio (lower quartile house price to lower quartile gross household income) is similar in Shropshire at 8.5 to the England average at 8.7. However there are large variations across Shropshire. High levels of affordable housing need have been identified in Albrighton, Bishops Castle, Church Stretton and Ludlow that have ratios above 9 and Shifnal is the highest at 10.1.

The availability of social rented accommodation varies from 11.3% in rural areas to 16.2% in urban Shropshire compared to the national average of 17.7%. Note that there is a relative shortage of smaller accommodation with 9.3% of flats/maisonettes and 17.9% terraced houses compared to 9% and 23% respectively for England. In 2016 around quarter of households were single households but by 2036 a third of households are projected to be single households. The number of older single households is set to rise from 13.9% of households in 2001 to over a fifth of households by 2036. Smaller, generally lower cost dwellings are more evident in urban employment centres of Shrewsbury, Oswestry, Ludlow and Whitchurch.

Working to reduce and prevent households from becoming homeless and where this is not possible ensuring they have safe, secure and appropriate accommodation until they are able to resetttle.

As outlined there have been significant increases in homelessness presentations and households placed in temporary accommodation in Shropshire; provision made largely in STAR Housing stock. The number of homeless households identified as being homeless and where there is a duty owed is significantly higher in Shropshire than neighbouring counties. 261 were identified at the end of June 2019 compared to 127 in Telford and Wrekin and 158 in Herefordshire.

To ensure people can access a mix of housing options within Shropshire's urban and rural landscape that best meets their needs in terms of tenure, safety, size, type, design and location of housing.

The Strategy highlights the important role played by the private sector, particularly private rented homes. At the census it was identified that 15.2% of households were living in private rented homes in urban areas and 14.8% in rural areas. The Shropshire lower quartile monthly rental value of £475 is 9.5% below the national lower quartile monthly rental value of £525. Comparison nationally and with identified comparator Local Authorities shows Shropshire to be relatively affordable.

The Strategy outlined that there is a need to ensure that empty properties are minimised and the need for accessible and adaptable housing in all tenures. There is a fund and a dedicated officer to carry out adaptations to STAR Housing stock. We also fit as standard wet rooms in all bungalows and ground floor flats on void. Comprehensive records are kept of adapted properties so that they can be allocated to tenants who need the adaptations to ensure best use of the housing stock that we manage.

To minimise the environmental impact of existing housing stock and future housing development in the interest of climate change. To work with policy makers, developers and private and social landlords to maximise resource efficiencies and to ensure optimum use of sustainable construction techniques.

The Strategy outlines that Shropshire Council declared a climate emergency in May 2019. The Council will be reviewing planning policies to ensure that there is a requirement for high environmental standards and encouraging sustainable construction techniques.

Fuel poverty in Shropshire is an issue as 11.8% of households in Shropshire are recognised as being in fuel poverty. We have worked to address issues in our homes that contribute to this issue through addressing insulation standards, off-grid heating systems and providing financial and energy saving advice to our tenants.

Higher than required standards of internal insulation has been installed as has cavity wall insulation where possible. We have fitted external wall insulation on 36 properties plus improved windows and doors. The 30 remaining properties that would benefit from external wall insulation will be fitted if funding becomes available.

All of our off-grid properties will be upgraded with air source heat pumps so that they have access to affordable green energy. To assist us in this work we access Renewable Heat Incentives funding.

To support the drive for economic growth by ensuring that there is enough housing supply to enable businesses to attract and retain the local workforce that they need.

The drive to economic growth is a key priority for Shropshire Council. In the 2019 Shropshire Business Survey 73% of employees live less than 5 miles from their work location. Also, the trend for the population to become older is reflected in the dependency ratio. In 2016 it was 67 dependant to 100 independent people. This is set to rise to 100 dependant people for every 100 independent people by 2041. The Strategy highlights that there is a need to attract working age people to the area and the lack of housing will be a barrier to business and increase pressure on community services. There are variances within Shropshire and identified shortages are exacerbated by the lack of public transport options to move workers to where jobs are.

There are 2 strands to the resources that we have available for STAR Housing to deliver on the Business Plan. The first is the Housing Revenue Account and the second is the budget available to STAR Housing.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

The HRA is a ring-fenced account that records the financial transactions relating to the management and maintenance of the Council's retained housing stock. The primary source of income (98%) comes from tenants' rent with the remainder coming from a range of service charges. In 2019/20 total HRA income will be around £17.3m. Expenditure is restricted to costs arising from the management of tenancies, property maintenance including both responsive repairs and planned works, servicing HRA debt and providing new affordable homes.

Through our Management Agreement with the Council we receive an annual fee to provide the services we deliver and this is funded directly from the HRA. In 2019/20 the more significant charges to the HRA are:

- £8.3m Management Fee paid to STAR Housing
- £3.0m debt interest payment
- £3.8m depreciation charge to fund planned maintenance capital works
- £4.8m contribution to fund new homes building works.

Following the introduction of HRA self-financing in April 2012, the Government imposed a borrowing cap on HRAs. This restricted the ability of the Council, through STAR, to undertake a large scale new homes building programme. Despite this we have managed to deliver 140 new homes over the last 6 years by using headroom within the HRA. The HRA was further constrained by legislation in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 that imposed 4 years of successive 1% rent reductions from April 2016 to April 2019. Locally, the options appraisal undertaken by the Council created a period of uncertainty surrounding the long-term future of both STAR Housing and the Council's intention to retain the stock.

As mentioned earlier in recent months there has been positive developments in regard to these issues. In October 2018 the Government announced the end of the HRA borrowing cap with the specific intention of giving Councils the opportunity to increase the supply of affordable housing through their HRAs. In July 2019, the Council concluded the options appraisal and resolved to retain the stock and continue the Management Agreement with STAR Housing. From April 2020 the period of enforced rent cuts will end and an annual rent increase of CPI plus 1% will be permissible for at least the next 5 years. The combination of these factors has created a favourable environment for STAR Housing to undertake a significant new homes building programme and we will work with the Council to develop a capital strategy aimed at delivering around 500 new homes in the HRA over the short to medium-term. This will be funded through a combination of utilisation of existing reserves, grant funding where available and additional long-term borrowing. A major factor in achieving this ambition is the availability of suitable land and we continue to seek viable development sites.

Whilst undertaking this development programme we will maintain our commitment to continue to adhere to the Decent Homes Standard for the current stock and these works will continue to be fully funded from within the HRA and not supported through additional borrowing.

The principal activities of the Company listed below are defined in the Management Agreement between the Council and the Company. The Company receives the annual Management Fee for the provision of these services.

Service/Operational Area	Principal Activities/Responsibilities
Tenancies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allocations and voids Rent and other charges Leaseholder services Tenancy management Tenancy support Provision of support services Right to buy
Tenant Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer service and information Consultation
Properties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvement works Repairs and maintenance Communal areas Servicing and testing Development of new properties, refurbished properties and estate
Neighbourhoods Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local area co-operation Antisocial behaviour, hate crime and domestic abuse Safeguarding vulnerable people

As stated above our Management Fee in 2019/20 is £8.3m which is derived from the cost of delivering these services at the time of our formation in April 2013 with an inflationary adjustment. Where opportunities are identified we supplement our income through direct charges to service users and currently these account for around 9% of our total income. Through service redesign, investment in new technology and innovative working methods we have generated efficiency savings that have enabled us to deliver our core services to a higher and improving standard and also generate financial capacity to allow us to invest in increasing the range of services we provide. Evidence of this is reflected in our improving key performance indicators, our ability to absorb over £272k cut in Supported Housing Grant funding with no detrimental impact on service delivery and open new facilities such as the Council hostel accommodation at New Century Court for young people aged 16-24. Beyond April 2020 we will continue to seek further efficiency savings and operate in a flexible and responsive ways to meet the changing needs and expectations of our tenants and support Council priorities.



In addition to the principal services defined in the Management Agreement and funded by the Management Fee we manage the HRA capital programmes for Planned Maintenance and New Homes Building. STAR Housing commissions these works and awards contracts in accordance with our Procurement Rules and then seeks reimbursement from the HRA at cost through the Works Fee. Our managed procurement of these contracts ensures that we achieve value for money and remain on course to maintain the stock at the Decent Homes Standard and develop new housing supply.

Using our Resources

STAR Housing seeks to respond to the challenges it faces using resources as efficiently as possible hence the focus in this strategy on our key resource, Our People. We have an ambition to provide 'Excellent Service Delivery' and will reinvest efficiency savings where appropriate to achieve that.

We need to 'Innovate and Grow'. We also want to increase our stock numbers and deliver more much-needed affordable housing; a challenge when Council housing is subject to the Right to Buy. Increased stock levels keeps unit costs down and helps to deliver a strong balance sheet for STAR Housing and the HRA. As stock levels increase this, in turn, will mean we will be able to support the Council with additional income for service delivery priorities and provide increased support to the Council by buying services from them. As part of our strategy we will explore the best way to achieve that.



Based on our earlier analysis our Operating Principles are:



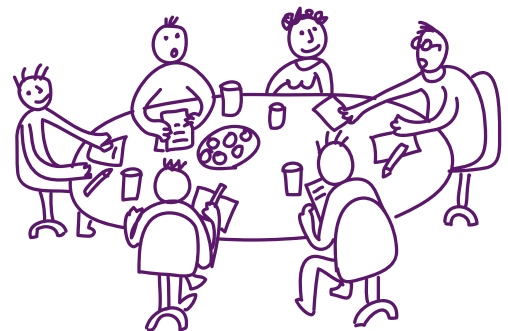
We make a positive difference in Shropshire

As outlined in the Council's Corporate Plan, 'Shropshire is a fantastic place in which to live, work, and visit'. Our services are delivered to make a positive impact on Shropshire and Shropshire communities.

We work with people, including those who are most vulnerable in the community, to help them play a full part in community life and help residents to sustain their occupancy. Our support includes helping residents to maximise their incomes and access employment, training and education. We also offer a programme of work placements for young people and an apprenticeship scheme. We offer adaptations or priority moves to people with a disability. These more suitable homes enable residents to live in the community; our network of Independent Living Schemes and our hostel for young people are also invaluable resources, and our support and intensive management services all ensure that we support residents to stay well and independent, reducing the pressures of high cost health and social care services in Shropshire.

We also work with our communities. This includes supporting community groups with practical advice and our Community Chest micro grants for a wide range of projects. We also support our residents to suggest and develop neighbourhood projects on our estates. We are a visible presence in our communities with 25 community and 'pop-up' events in 2019.

We maintain over 4,054 Shropshire Council homes. Our Council homes are maintained to a level above the Decent Homes Standard with a focus on improving the energy efficiency of the homes. We also have invested in our in-house workforce and, where possible, focus on using local providers for other contracted work.



Grow from strong foundations

Our extensive change programme over the past 4 years, including substantial investment in our IT systems, was all about delivering our housing services in the best and most efficient way that we can. We focused on getting our core service right and this is reflected in the achievements outlined earlier. This now provides a stable base for growth without compromising service delivery.

In our service delivery we will deliver an increasing share of the services and work required to our homes and reduce reliance on sub-contractors. However, we will only grow our internal service delivery at a pace that we can absorb it. We will also seek to diversify our services but only where it is not to the detriment of delivery of our services to residents. Our focus will be on delivery of more services to the Council should they wish us to do that.

We also want to grow our stock; partly to offset losses through right to buy but also to take advantage of the new opportunities that have arisen through the lifting of the HRA borrowing cap. Our delivery will include meeting gaps in the market that are not filled by other providers. This will include exploration of tenures and type of property and provision of specialist accommodation.

Safely deliver our services

The safety and security of residents and staff is extremely important. We strongly focus on compliance to ensure that our Council homes are looked after in accordance with the relevant legislation. This includes welcoming external challenge to ensure that we deliver our compliance framework effectively. Our Asset Management Strategy sets out clear expectations in how we manage our homes and we will not make decisions that compromise the safety of our residents.

We are focused on ensuring a strong culture of health and safety within our workforce to protect both our staff and the residents whose homes and communities we work in. We provide guidance, training, processes and procedures to minimise the risk of injury or incidents. We review incidents and near misses and ensure that we learn when things go wrong. We require any sub-contractor to adhere to all of our standards too.

Support and invest in our people

51 % of our budget in 2019/20 was scheduled spending on employing our workforce. This is set to grow as we deliver more of our services through our in-house teams. We recognise that the services that we provide are only as good as the people who deliver them and our People Strategy outlines how we will attract and develop the best staff. We will create the environment for staff to succeed in their jobs, encourage and empower staff to develop their skills and talents and contribute to service improvement. We will support the development of confident managers to bring out the best in our staff. This is supported by an expanded HR team and dedicated training and development budgets. We will also continue to invest in IT and equipment to ensure that staff are as productive as they can be. We will create opportunities and support staff to take those opportunities to ensure that they take the next step in their career with STAR Housing.





We will deliver for the Council

We monitor our services through performance measures agreed with the Council and our Board focused on delivering for residents and for the Council.

Our Resident Involvement Strategy outlines how we work with residents to continuously improve our services and service performance. This includes seeking feedback on our services through our regular surveys with residents, social media and through analysing complaints. We also work with groups of residents and this includes analysing in-depth our service delivery. Examples includes development of customer-facing policies, scrutinising service areas and performance, and making recommendations for improvements.

Our delivery for the Council is monitored at quarterly client meetings and through regular reports on finance, performance and outcomes. Our performance measures are reviewed with the Board and the Council annually. Our future strategic plans are agreed with the Council and focus on delivery of Council priorities.



Delivery on Our Strategy will depend on the resources we have available. How we deploy those resources depend on the issues we have to address, both nationally and locally and in accordance with our operating principles, meeting the priorities we have identified.

Key areas of focus are:



Our People

Great staff deliver great services. We will focus on recruiting the best and developing our staff to be the best. We will create opportunities and support staff to take those opportunities to ensure that they take the next step in their career with STAR Housing.

<p>STAR Housing people directly deliver services</p>	<p>Ensure that our structures can appropriately support staff and the delivery of services.</p> <p>Ensure that staff, including those who are transferred in, work in accordance with our values and our approach.</p>
<p>Recruit the best STAR people and retain them</p>	<p>Ensure that we employ the best by reviewing success of recruitment campaigns and review use of market supplements.</p> <p>Raise our profile, including publicising our benefits package, to ensure that we are a Shropshire employer of choice.</p> <p>Review the diversity of our workforce in roles and develop proposals to increase diversity.</p> <p>All vacancies to be advertised internally unless there are good reasons why we advertise externally.</p> <p>Develop a career conversation offer.</p> <p>Develop our approach to succession planning to identify gaps spot talent and identify how to develop them.</p> <p>Explore how we can 'grow our own' workforce building on our successful 'Follow in my Footsteps' and apprenticeship programme</p> <p>Build on the annual awards and develop further activities to celebrate staff successes.</p>
<p>Be the best leaders that we can be</p>	<p>Externally appraise the Board and implement any recommendations.</p> <p>Develop a 'Confident Manager' programme.</p> <p>Identify and develop staff talent to be 'Confident Managers'.</p>
<p>Embed our commitment to learning and development</p>	<p>Develop annual programmes of learning including mandatory training to fulfil legal and regulatory requirements and 'STAR Focus' training to meet business needs.</p> <p>Develop our STAR Approach training programme to embed cultural values and excellent customer service.</p> <p>Review budgets to ensure that meet STAR training business needs.</p> <p>Invest in IT and other tools to improve productivity of staff.</p>

Excellent Service Delivery

We have developed a stable base for growth. The next stage in our development is to grow and innovate without compromising our service delivery. We will improve from good to great service delivery.

<p>Continue delivering core services in accordance to standards and targets agreed with the Council and the Board</p>	<p>Maintain a strong HRA through continued high performance in the collection of rent and turnaround of voids.</p> <p>Maintain homes to meet the statutory Decent Homes Standard.</p> <p>Resolve anti-social behaviour cases successfully involving partner agencies appropriately.</p> <p>Deliver excellent services with high levels of tenant satisfaction.</p> <p>Ensure that STAR Housing are a landlord of choice for tenants.</p>
<p>Continue digital transformation of service delivery</p>	<p>Develop a programme, including the use of tenant portal, to channel shift tenants so that they digitally access STAR Housing services.</p> <p>Introduce CRM and document management to more effectively deliver STAR Housing services</p> <p>Increase the range of services and productivity of the contact centre using channel shifting appropriately.</p> <p>Explore changes to service delivery in all services to ensure that we maximise the benefits of digital delivery and mobile working.</p>
<p>Improve complaints and customer feedback processes</p>	<p>Implement revised complaints policy and procedures.</p> <p>Implement our Review Panel of Tenants to deal with the third stage of the complaints process.</p> <p>Develop appropriate use of tenant compensation for service failure.</p> <p>Improve our transactional survey processes.</p> <p>Carry out a Survey of Tenants and Residents in 2021/22 using this as an opportunity to compare ourselves with others.</p> <p>Ensure that we embed learning from complaints and customer feedback into business improvements and feedback to the Review Panel and the Board.</p>

<p>Facilitate tenant involvement in co-design of services</p>	<p>Review tenant involvement staffing and delivery to ensure that we involve tenants in the development and delivery of services both operationally and strategically.</p> <p>Review service standards and quality assurance of service standards ensuring that tenants are at the heart of this process.</p> <p>Review tenant scrutiny to ensure that there are opportunities for all tenants to be involved in directing and engaging with the process.</p> <p>Develop a conversation in our communities to ensure that as wide a group of residents and tenants can shape our involvement structures and that STAR Housing understand resident and tenant priorities.</p> <p>Develop a programme of targeted estate based works based on the priorities expressed by tenants.</p>
<p>Ensure that we continue to deliver services in accordance with safe methods of working</p>	<p>External audits to be carried out and recommendations implemented in regard to asbestos management, electrical safety and fire safety risk assessment.</p> <p>Ensure that tenants are aware of potential risks to their health and safety including fire risk and how to mitigate them.</p> <p>Review method statements in relation to hazardous working and working in homes of vulnerable people.</p>

Innovate and Grow

By using all the resources at our disposal we will be able to innovate and grow to better meet the needs of all our residents and address the priorities of the Council.

<p>Resource internalisation</p>	<p>Identify areas for growth within STAR Housing with particular focus on Repairs and Maintenance delivering into Shropshire.</p> <p>Internalise provision where appropriate to achieve efficiencies and service improvements.</p>
<p>Maximise Value for Money</p>	<p>Explore costs that are above average compared to peers. Where appropriate develop plans to improve efficiency of the service.</p> <p>Develop Value for Money Strategy for 2020/21 and report to Board through development of a Value for Money Statement.</p>
<p>Develop and acquire housing for the Council</p>	<p>Explore the benefits that developing additional delivery vehicles to bring to the Council and STAR Housing such as widening funding opportunities and tenure offers. If appropriate develop and implement plans to widen delivery vehicles.</p> <p>Explore the use of on-lending to STAR Housing to support delivery of new and acquired housing.</p> <p>Working with the Council explore opportunities for STAR Housing to maximise the delivery of new and acquired homes within and outside of the HRA.</p>
<p>Prevent and alleviate homelessness in Shropshire</p>	<p>Review offer of temporary accommodation and explore ways that we could provide further support to the Council to alleviate homelessness.</p> <p>Offer delivery of joined up homelessness prevention and support that will allow for improved delivery at reduced cost for the Council.</p>
<p>Support and assist our vulnerable residents to sustain their accommodation</p>	<p>Develop and implement our Independent Living Communities for older people.</p> <p>Develop a practical mental health response for those who are struggling to maintain their accommodation.</p> <p>Further develop our response to deal appropriately with those who refuse access; including for those with mental health issues such as hoarding.</p>
<p>Respond to the climate emergency and impact on customers</p>	<p>Develop and implement a plan to help tenants' access affordable energy.</p> <p>Use grant funding to ensure that we insulate our homes to enhanced standards.</p>
<p>Publicise STAR Housing</p>	<p>Ensure that social media is regularly updated and used by our residents and stakeholders to engage with STAR Housing.</p> <p>Ensure that we respond and engage appropriately with media including developing opportunities for promotion of STAR Housing.</p> <p>Regularly take part in competition for awards to provide opportunities to promote STAR Housing.</p>

We review the performance measures for STAR Housing annually working with the Council to agree those measures relating to the Management Agreement. Outlined below are the measures used in 2020/21 and the targets we are expected to agree and how it compares to our peers.

Our People

<p>STAR Housing people directly deliver services</p>	<p>STAR Housing PIs Annual % Responsive Repairs delivered by own workforce % Apprentices successfully completing Apprenticeship framework</p>
<p>Recruit the best STAR people and retain them</p>	<p>STAR Housing PIs Quarterly % Vacancies filled at 1st advert Annual Number of Apprentices employed annually % staff satisfied with STAR Housing as an employer % existing staff who would recommend STAR Housing as an employer Number of early leavers during employment % voluntary staff turnover % of those exiting the organisation that would recommend STAR Housing as an employer</p>
<p>Be the best leaders that we can be</p>	<p>STAR Housing PIs Quarterly Average number of days lost due to sickness Annual % staff satisfied with the arrangements for team meetings</p>
<p>Embed our commitment to learning and development</p>	<p>STAR Housing PIs Annual % staff feel they have access to training and development opportunities % staff have a clear understanding of how to access organisational policies and procedures.</p>

Excellent Service Delivery

Continue delivering core services to standards and targets agreed with the Council and the Board

Management Agreement PIs

Quarterly

- A1i Average time in days to relet empty properties
- A2i Rent collected as % of rent due from current and former tenants
- A1ii % rent loss due to empty properties as % of rent due
- A2iv Former tenant dwelling arrears written off as % of total rent debit to date
- A4i % of ASB cases resolved successfully.
- C1i % dwellings failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard
- % repairs completed at 1st visit.

Biennial

- A4iv % of respondents very or fairly satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.
- B2i % respondents very or fairly satisfied with the service provided (general needs)
- C2i % of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the way STAR Housing deals with repairs and maintenance
- Net promoter score

STAR Housing PIs

Quarterly

- Average time in days to relet properties (excludes properties that received major works)
- Average time in days to relet properties (includes properties that received major works)
- % appointments kept as % appointments made.
- % of emergency repairs completed on time (1 day)
- % of urgent repairs completed on time (7 days)
- % of routine repairs completed on time (28 days)
- % of programmed repairs completed on time (6 months)

Continue digital transformation of service delivery

Management Agreement PIs

Quarterly

- A4iii Number of customers registered to access services online as a percentage of properties managed.

STAR Housing PIs

Quarterly

- % of calls answered
- Average time taken to answer an inbound call (in seconds)
- Calls offered per unit

<p>Improve complaints and customer feedback processes</p>	<p>Management Agreement PIs</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>B2vii % of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the lettings process (transactional survey)</p> <p>C2ii % of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the repairs service they receive (transactional survey)</p> <p>% of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the most recent planned repairs service that they receive (transactional survey)</p> <p>% of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the outcome of their ASB case (transactional survey)</p> <p>D1i % complaints responded to in target time</p> <p>D1iii satisfaction with complaints handling</p> <p>D1iii satisfaction with complaints outcome</p> <p>STAR Housing PIs</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>% of complaints acknowledged within 3 days</p> <p>Ratio of complaints to compliments</p>
<p>Facilitate tenant involvement in co-design of services</p>	<p>Management Agreement PIs</p> <p>Biennial</p> <p>% of respondents very or fairly satisfied that their views are being listened to and acted upon.</p> <p>STAR Housing PIs</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>% of engaged tenants (as a % of all tenants)</p> <p>Annual</p> <p>Number of scrutiny topics completed</p>
<p>Ensure that we continue to deliver services in accordance with safe methods of working</p>	<p>Management Agreement PIs</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>% dwellings with valid gas safety certificates</p> <p>% dwellings with an electrical safety certificate less than 5 years old</p> <p>% dwellings with asbestos management re-inspection report less than 5 years old.</p> <p>STAR Housing PIs</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>%% planned tenancy audits completed.</p>

Innovate and Grow

<p>Maximise Value for Money (VFM)</p>	<p>Management Agreement PIs Biennial A2vi % of residents very or fairly satisfied that their rent provides VFM. A2vii % of respondents very or fairly satisfied that their service charges provided value for money.</p> <p>STAR Housing PIs Quarterly Contingency reserve</p> <p>Annually Direct cost per property of responsive repairs and void works Average cost per responsive repairs service Average cost per void repair service Average number of responsive repairs per property</p>
<p>Develop and acquire housing for the Council</p>	<p>Management Agreement PIs Quarterly C5i Number of new homes completed.</p>
<p>Prevent and alleviate homelessness in Shropshire</p>	<p>Management Agreement PIs Quarterly A2ii % of all tenants evicted for rent arrears % of STAR Housing stock used as temporary housing</p>
<p>Support and assist our vulnerable residents to sustain their accommodation</p>	<p>Management Agreement PIs Quarterly A2v Number of tenancies terminated as % of properties managed % of major adaptations completed within timescale</p> <p>Biennial % of respondents very or fairly satisfied with the service provided (housing for older people)</p> <p>STAR Housing PIs Quarterly % of SUSTAIN clients achieving independent and sustainable living</p>
<p>Respond to the climate emergency and impact on customers</p>	<p>Management Agreement PIs Quarterly AC6i Number of homes that have a SAP rating 35 or less (Category 1 hazard HHSRS). C6ii Average SAP rating for off-grid properties C6iii Average SAP rating for properties on-grid % properties that have a current EPC</p>
<p>Publicise STAR Housing</p>	<p>STAR Housing PIs Number of award applications shortlisted</p>

Our partners



Our contacts



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