

SIGNPOST ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

2009 - 2014

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- Appendix 1 Action plan**
- Appendix 2 Stock Condition Survey Validation Report (September 2008)**
- Appendix 3 Draft 5 Year Plan**
- Appendix 4 Terms of Reference for the Asset Management Steering Group**
- Appendix 5 Survey Methodology**

REFERRED DOCUMENTS

- Framework Agreement (Procurement Strategy)**
- Value for Money Strategy**
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy**
- Signpost Standard**
- Void Standard**
- Asbestos Management Policy**

1. Introduction

The property stock represents the highest value asset in Signpost and the maintenance of this stock is Signpost's largest liability. The stock has very significant value, both as a capital asset and as a revenue generating asset, therefore planning for its sustainable future is essential.

Asset management addresses the long term planning, provision and sustainability of this stock.

The majority of Signpost's assets are located in the original District of North Dorset, with development and acquisition accounting for a steady increase across Devon, Dorset, Somerset and Wiltshire.

This document is one of several interdependent strategic planning tools that Signpost employs.

1.1 Scope

This document defines the Asset Management Strategy (AMS) of Signpost Housing Association and Signpost Care Partnerships addressing the period 2009 - 2014.

Signpost Housing Association (SHA) and Signpost Care Partnerships (SCP) are members of the Spectrum Housing Group.

The following stock is not addressed in this strategy:

- Stock owned and managed by Signpost Homes Limited (SHL).
- Stock owned by SHA but managed by Signpost Homes Limited.
- Stock owned by SCP but managed by Dorset Residential Homes.
- Corporate stock, such as offices and depots

1.2 Mission Statement

SHA and SCP strive to achieve the Spectrum Group mission:

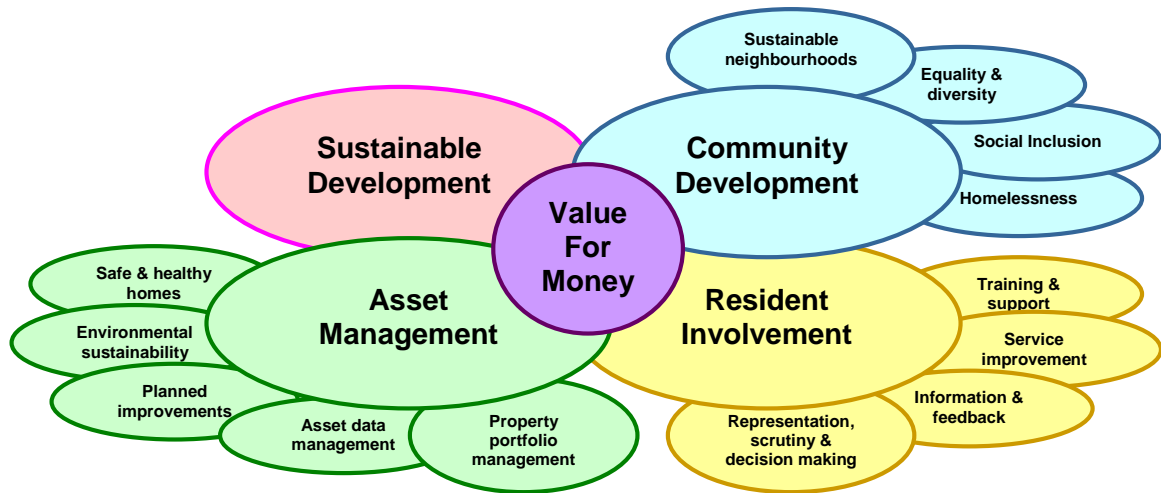
**To be recognised and respected for providing quality homes and services.
Empowering people, supporting active communities and building better futures.**

1.3 Related Strategies

The Associations have six interconnected operational strategies that deliver against each part of the Group's mission:

- Business Development Strategy –Providing quality homes.(Developing)

- Asset Management Strategy – Providing quality homes. (Maintaining)
- Value For Money Strategy – Providing quality services. (Cost Effective)
- Access and Customer Care Strategy – Providing quality services.(Accessibility and Care)
- Resident Involvement Strategy – Empowering People
- Community Involvement Strategy – Supporting active Communities and building better futures.



2. Background

Signpost is aware that effective asset management is fundamental to the successful delivery of the organisation's objectives, within the context and allowances of its Business Plan.

Signpost has embraced the principles of effective asset management, the importance associated with maintaining effective stock condition and attribute information, the assessment of sustainability and future options for poorly performing stock, effective procurement, the established relationship between the maintenance and development functions, and the effective delivery of works programmes required to keep the stock in good condition.

This strategy addresses the current position with respect to asset management and sets out a number of key actions that will further improve service and operational delivery in order to provide an excellent service. The action plan in the appendices defines objectives and timetable proposals.

This strategy establishes the framework within which asset management operations will be provided. It highlights the component parts of the asset management function and their inter-relationships.

This strategy will be overseen by Signpost's Asset Manager in conjunction with the Asset Management Steering Group. To ensure that the Asset Manager is able to focus on this role and to plan works effectively, there is a clear division of responsibility for 'planning' as opposed to 'delivery'. In this way Signpost aims to encourage the best use of resources and allow continued focus on high standards of delivery.

Signpost intends to meet the Decent Homes target by the deadline of 2010, to maintain that standard beyond 2010, and to deliver excellent housing services to its residents. In doing so, Signpost is mindful of the diverse needs of the wider community, regeneration issues and the need to ensure a joined up approach. The overall objective being to empower Signpost to innovate and deliver continuously improving, customer focused services with a long-term sustainable stock, in an efficient way.

Continued future re-investment is required to maintain the stock in good condition. The re-investment requirements are informed by the stock condition data held within the Asset Management Database (Keystone).

Revenue, or income, is limited by Government imposed constraints and will be influenced by the convergence of rents (required by 2012), known as rent restructuring.

Robust stock condition information forms the cornerstone of an effective strategy and gives rise to programmes of re-investment designed to maintain the stock appropriately and in good condition. Stock Condition Data will be enhanced and

validated by an ongoing programme of surveys and feedback from repairs and maintenance activities.

By regularly reviewing component costs and updating the asset management database, Signpost will ensure that its budgets and Business Plan are aligned with the requirements of the stock, the Association, its residents and other stakeholders.

The 'Signpost Standard' identifies repairs & maintenance specifications, and the materials standards that are to be adopted when procuring work. This standard was prepared in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and is subject to regular review and update.

Signpost has an Asset Management Steering Group which assesses works programmes, promotes options appraisals in the context of sustainability analyses, considers wider initiatives, monitors and reviews performance and has ownership of the Signpost Standard.

Signpost understands the importance of effective procurement and the requirement for good working relationships with partner providers, whilst delivering high standards and good value for money. Signpost will continue to develop long term partnering relationships with contractors who view Signpost as an important local customer. These activities are driven by the requirements defined in the Value for Money strategy and the Framework Agreement.

Signpost will encourage continued improvement and efficiencies in terms of financial savings and other benefits through seeking best value and by considering collective procurement with similar organisations.

Signpost will aim to undertake a greater proportion of its work in a planned way rather than responsive which will provide benefits from lower costs and improved opportunity for consultation and communication.

2.1 Context

All of Signpost's stock is located within the south west of England. The majority is located within and around North Dorset, with Blandford Forum, Shaftesbury, Gillingham and Sturminster Newton being the largest concentrations. Signpost also has stock located within Devon, Somerset and Wiltshire.

North Dorset has a population of approximately 61,900, in an area of 60,871 hectares. The main industries within this rural area comprise tourism and agriculture.

The demand for homes in south west England is high, with property values being affected by second home and holiday home ownership.

Increasing property values have seen a decrease in the number of right to buy and right to acquire sales in recent years. Only 5 dwellings were sold in the period 2006 to 2009.

Most of Signpost's stock is in high demand, although there are pockets of low demand, for example some sheltered studio accommodation.

The (then) Housing Corporation's Regulatory Code states that housing associations must be:

1. Viable;
2. Properly governed; and
3. Properly managed.

The Code also states that:

"Housing associations must develop and manage good quality homes that seek to meet people's needs and preferences now and in the future"

It requires housing associations to ensure that:

- *The homes their residents live in are well maintained and in a lettable condition;*
- *Maintenance is carried out effectively and responsively, in a way that reflects residents preferences; and*
- *Necessary investment in the future of their stock is made a key priority.*

There have been a number of Government initiatives and directives and perhaps at the top of the housing agenda is the requirement for registered social landlords to provide 'decent homes' and to ensure that all homes within their management achieve this standard by 2010.

In December 2000 the Government's Housing Policy Statement, 'quality and choice; a decent home for all; the way forward for housing', defined the strategy for ensuring that every household has the opportunity for a decent home and set out the timetable for its achievement.

"Housing is a basic requirement for everyone. Good housing strengthens communities and provides a better setting in which to raise families. It improves health, educational achievement and employment opportunities and provides a long term asset to be passed on to future generations."

John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, April 2000.

The Housing Corporation's Corporate Strategy listed the achievement of the target of bringing all social housing up to a decent standard by 2010 as one of its key objectives.

The decent homes agenda is very important to Signpost and is one of a number of key issues that need to be considered in the holistic view of housing asset management, albeit within the constraints of Signpost's wider objectives and funding basis.

Aspirations of both Signpost and its residents (as defined by the Housing Corporation's Resident Involvement Policy 2004) have been considered in the Asset

Management Strategy. These are far reaching and cover aspects that are included within decent homes but many others which fall outside the remit of this initiative. Signpost therefore proposes to deliver the Decent Homes Standard as a by-product of an effective re-investment programme. This could be referred to as 'decency plus'.

Signpost's residents expect a good service, choice and value for money to be provided in return for their rents.

The Asset Management Strategy will provide Signpost with the necessary business tools to deliver the Decent Homes Standard and the aspirations which have been identified in the Signpost Standard.

Signpost places a high degree of importance on other initiatives such as Supporting People and providing attention on services to vulnerable people and families with children.

2.2 Resident Consultation and Participation

Signpost continues to work hard to ensure that all residents 'have their say' in how their homes are managed and to the standard to which they are maintained. This includes, for example, choice in colours and type of kitchen units.

Signpost is committed to resident involvement from Board level through to day to day operations through various groups including the Tenants Forum (which includes leaseholders). To strengthen the existing bond, Signpost will continue to look for new and innovative opportunities to increase participation at all levels. These are incorporated in the Residents Involvement Strategy.

Signpost recognises that residents and prospective residents play a central role in future policy setting and the performance management framework.

Signpost consults with residents on a wide variety of issues, providing:

- Relevant information on service levels and agreements;
- Information on current performance standards;
- Written statements of policy and procedure (upon request);
- Regular, informative newsletters;
- Relevant information on reports, minutes and agendas of the Board; and
- Details of repair and improvement plans.

Residents have worked in partnership with Signpost to produce a residents statement. Through this they are actively encouraged to participate through the 'Tenants Compact'. Leaseholders are also actively encouraged to participate through their Forum.

Signpost aim to increase informal methods of resident participation to give more people more opportunity to take part in the decision making process. Resident

contributions are sought at both a strategic level, including at the Board and Asset Management Steering Group, and at a project level, including project communication groups and resident choice.

Signpost is also encouraging its residents to become involved on a wider regional and national level.

2.3 Asset Management Steering Group

The Asset Management Steering Group is an evolution and expansion of the group responsible for reviewing the Business Plan.

Activities considered by the AMMSG include:

- Development, review and frequent re-evaluation of the 'Signpost Standard';
- Sustainability assessment;
- Options appraisal;
- Formulation, evaluation of, and agreement to, proposed re-investment programmes;
- Project appraisal and evaluation;
- Production of implementation plans; and
- Exploration of 'wider initiatives', regeneration, environmental improvements and their funding through grants.

Stakeholders in the AMMSG include:

- Resident representation;
- Board Member representation;
- Technical staff (planned, cyclical, responsive and void);
- Housing Management staff;
- Signpost Services staff;
- Financial staff; and
- Development staff.

The AMMSG has a mandate to agree standards and establish logical programmes of work designed to meet the requirement of the stock, based on the recommendations of the Asset Manager. Requirements go beyond those that are purely technical and take into account other factors that contribute to effective asset management. The AMMSG is kept informed through accurate data sources, including the Asset Management Database, and through these make informed business planning decisions, subject to budgetary availability, including:

- What (which components)
- When (the programme sequence)
- Where (which dwellings or related assets)
- Why (does/should the money be spent at all? – sustainability analysis)
- How (procurement strategy)

The involvement of housing management is important from a lettings perspective. Care needs to be taken not to re-invest in poor performing areas at the expense of all others. Nor should high-risk investment occur without due consideration, option appraisal and piloting. Re-investment needs may not be the root cause of the poor performance.

The AMMSG formally analyse the performance of the stock, compare this with the re-investment requirements and target re-investment at the stock that is an intermediate or peripheral performer, with a view to converting it to good performing stock.

The aspirations of stakeholders including residents is a key consideration. Signpost uses questionnaires and consultation groups as a useful method of identifying their priorities. Paying attention to the views of residents assists with improving satisfaction with the service as a whole.

Terms of reference for the Asset Management Steering Group may be found at Appendix 8.

2.4 Purpose of the Asset Management Strategy

The purpose of this Strategy can be summarised as follows:

- To define Signpost's position with regard to asset management and how this aligns to core business objectives;
- To define needs, future trends and changes influencing these;
- To define the stock, its condition, use and required re-investment over the next 5 and 30 years;
- To identify the risks and issues relating to the assets and how these may be mitigated;
- To define the methodologies and implementation processes for the Asset Management Strategy; and
- To establish frameworks and templates for monitoring, recording and evaluating performance.

The Asset Management Strategy fundamentally needs to balance the value of Signpost assets and the costs of maintaining those assets with the social and economic needs of the residents. In the context of social housing, Signpost cannot charge open market rents and must therefore operate with a Business Plan that delivers good quality housing and services in a cost effective way whilst maintaining a balance of these factors to ensure sustainability.

The Asset Management Strategy Plays an important role in delivering the Mission

- Ensuring that the homes we provide are maintained to a high quality standard throughout their useable life
- Ensuring that the homes we provide are safe and healthy places in which to live throughout their usable life

- Protecting the value of our property assets through the assessment, planning and execution of cost-effective programmes of work

3. The Strategy

The Asset Management Strategy aims to support Signpost objectives including:

- Provide a high standard of affordable housing;
- Provide customer focused, high quality services to residents;
- Operate a sustainable business;
- Achieve the 'Decent Homes' Standard by the deadline of 2010 across the stock and to maintain this standard;
- Provide energy efficient, comfortable homes that residents are proud to live in;
- Ensure all targets agreed with the residents are achieved;
- Support and contribute to the relevant strategic objectives of partner local authorities and local strategic partnerships;
- Ensure effective communication and consultation with all stakeholders;
- Make services available and easily accessible to all the community, including 'hard to reach' groups;
- Work with and involve residents to provide excellence in service delivery;
- Maximise choice for residents in the context of achieving value for money;
- Empower and encourage residents to participate in and shape the services they receive;
- Promote equality and diversity in all aspects of service provision;
- Through the communications and marketing strategy, ensure that the aims and objectives of the Signpost Group are clearly communicated;
- Consult on and publish clear and measurable standards for all service areas;
- Enable a motivated and focused staff through empowerment, team building, training and effective appraisal;
- Recognise the central role of staff in delivering services, and provide them with attractive terms and conditions;
- Provide innovative, flexible and responsive housing management and maintenance services;
- Work with all of its partners to provide best value, quality solutions and continuous improvement across all services;
- Be an outward looking, learning organisation at the forefront of innovation and development in the housing sector; and
- Use complaints and customer feedback positively to learn and improve services that deliver a high degree of customer satisfaction.

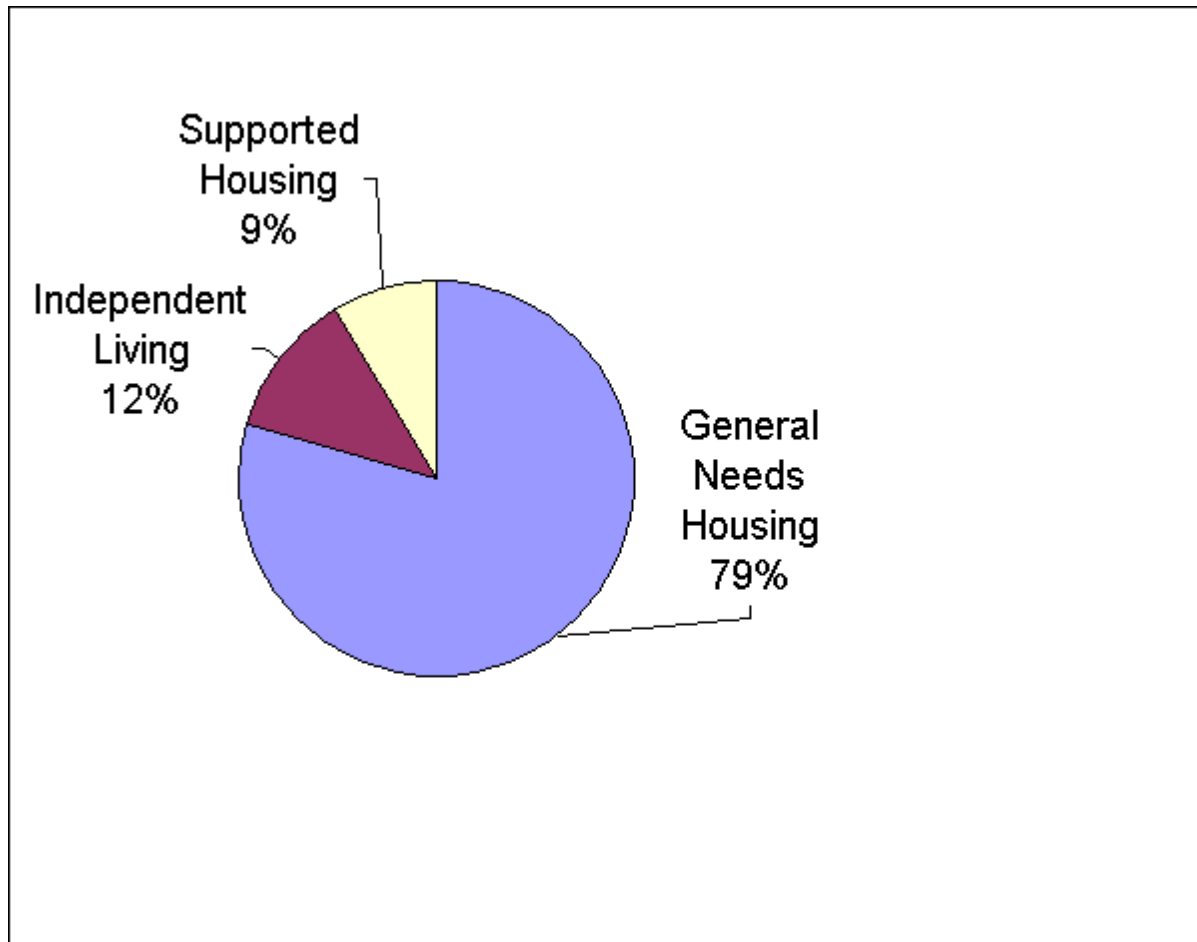
3.1 The Housing Stock

Stock Profile (Dwellings)

(Keystone Data - October 2010)

Stock Type	Signpost Housing Association	Signpost Care Partnerships	Total
Owned	4551	235	4786
Leased In	46	144	190
Total	4597	379	4976

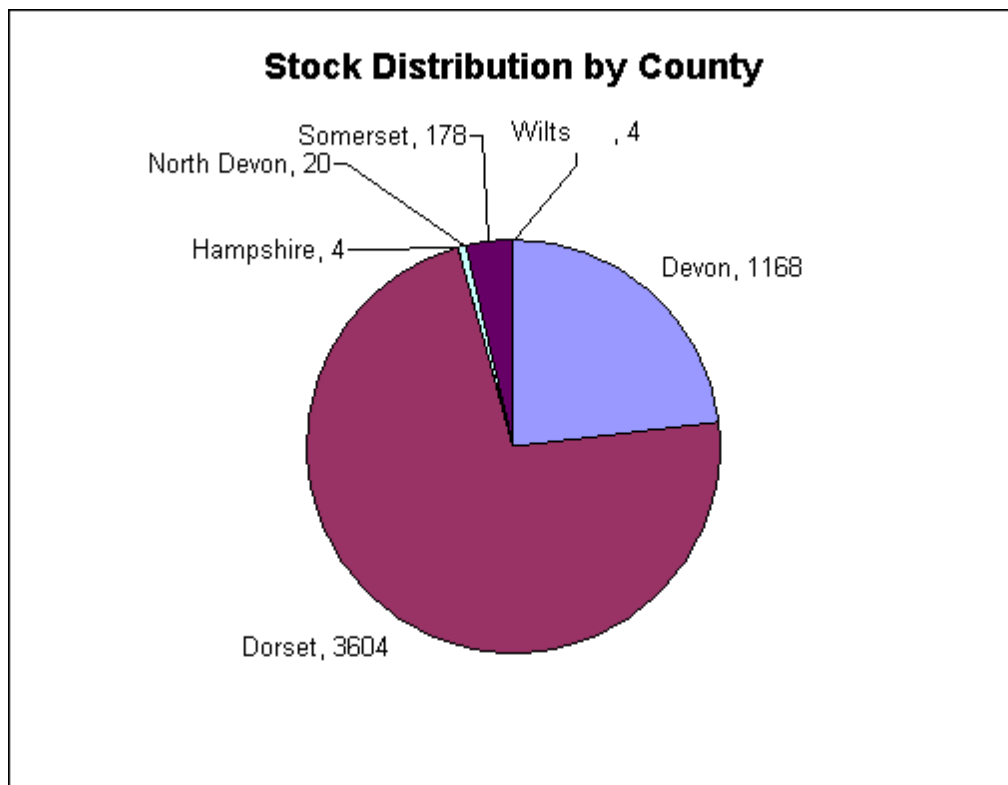
Stock Type	Signpost Housing Association	Signpost Care Partnerships	Total
General Needs Housing	3959	0	3959
Independent Living	582	0	582
Supported Housing	56	379	435
Total	4597	379	4976



Distribution by County

(Keystone Data - October 2010)

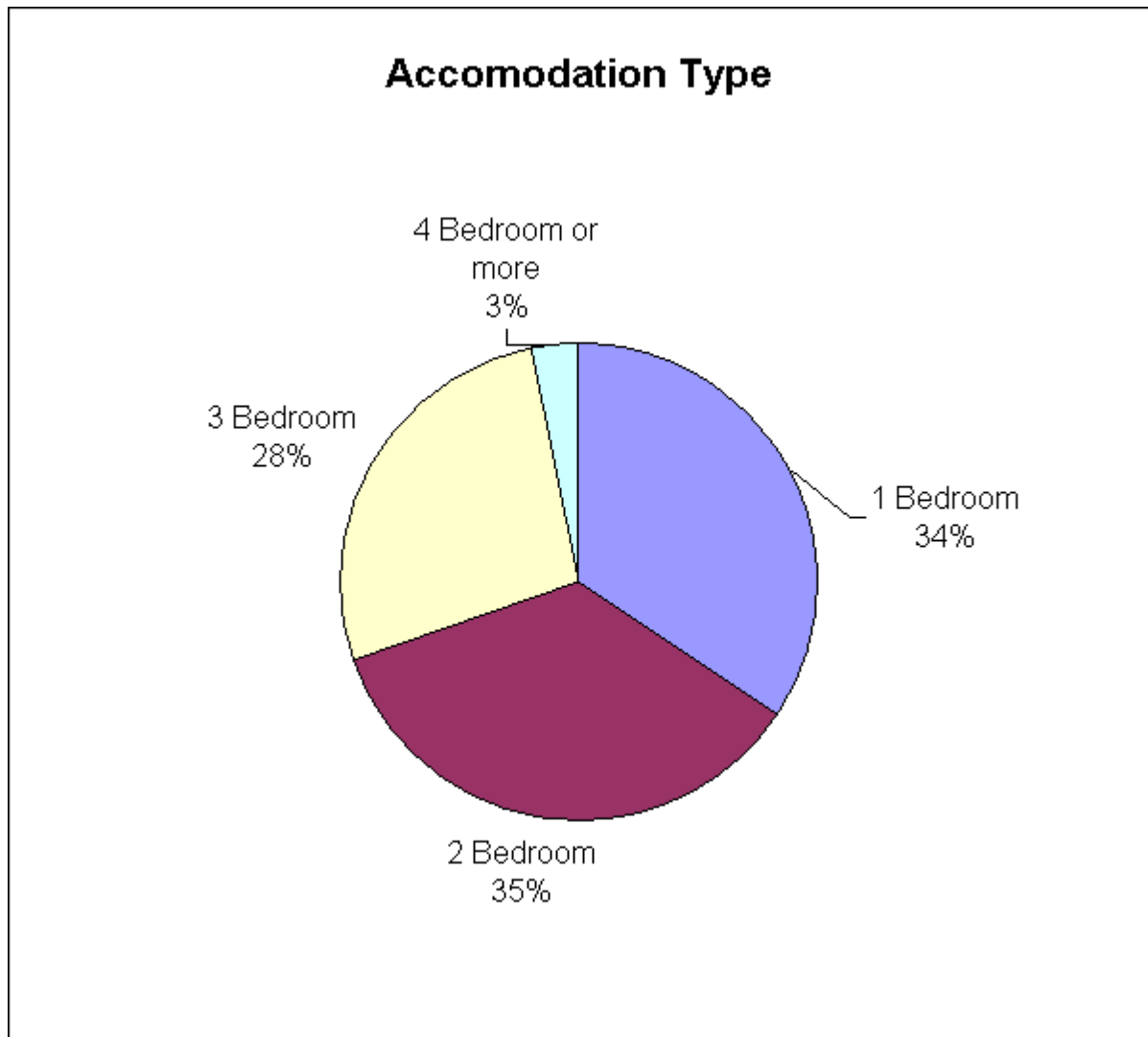
County	SCP	SCP LEASED IN	SHA	SHA LEASED IN	Total
Devon	84	28	1045	11	1168
Dorset	139	116	3332	17	3604
Hampshire			4		4
North Devon			20		20
Somerset	12		148	18	178
Wilts			4		4



Types of Accommodation

(Keystone Data - October 2010)

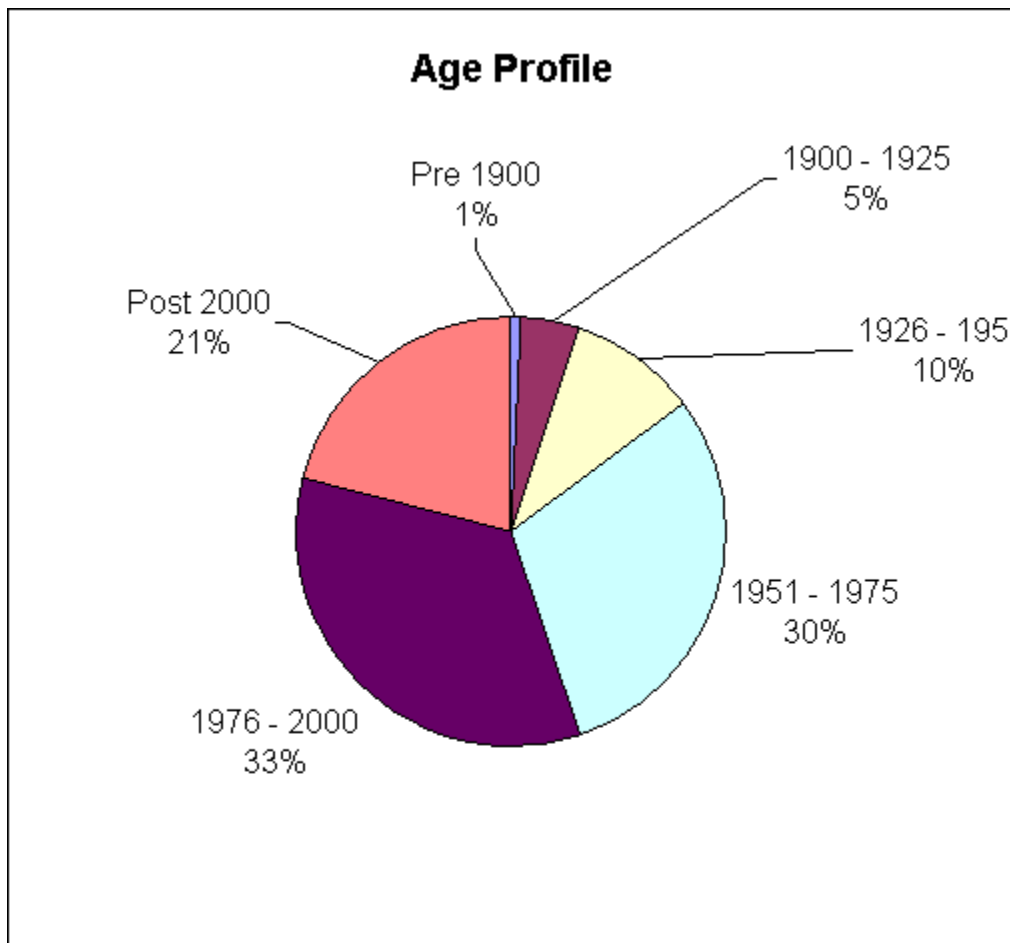
	No. of Bedrooms	SCP	SCP LEASED IN	SHA	SHA LEASED IN	Total
1 Bedroom		177	124	1392	22	1715
2 Bedroom		20	19	1685	18	1742
3 Bedroom		14	1	1349	6	1370
4 Bedroom or more		24	0	125	0	149



Age Profile of Stock (Dwellings)

(Keystone Data - October 2010)

Age	SCP	SCP LEASED IN	SHA	SHA LEASED IN	Total
Pre 1900	10	7	20	2	39
1900 - 1925	43	52	130	1	226
1926 - 1950	11	11	442	16	480
1951 - 1975	21	27	1423	4	1475
1976 - 2000	54	41	1602	8	1705
Post 2000	96	6	934	15	1051
Total	235	144	4551	46	4976

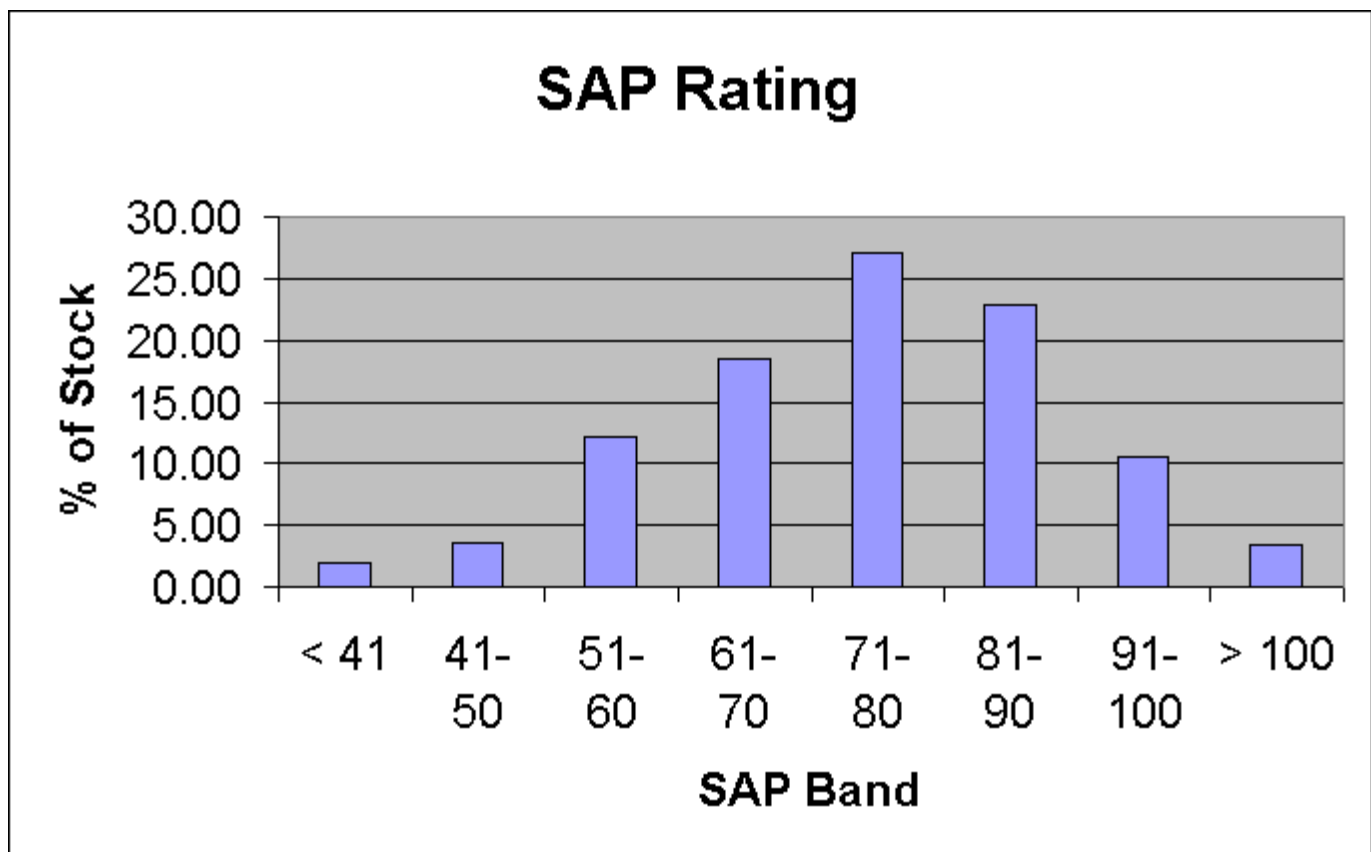


SAP Rating of Housing Stock

(Keystone Data - October 2010)

SAP data available for 3726 dwellings. Of these, the SAP ratings are distributed as follows:

SAP Band	No. of dwellings	% of Stock
< 41	72	1.93
41-50	132	3.54
51-60	452	12.13
61-70	688	18.46
71-80	1012	27.16
81-90	854	22.92
91-100	390	10.47
> 100	126	3.38
Total	3726	100.00

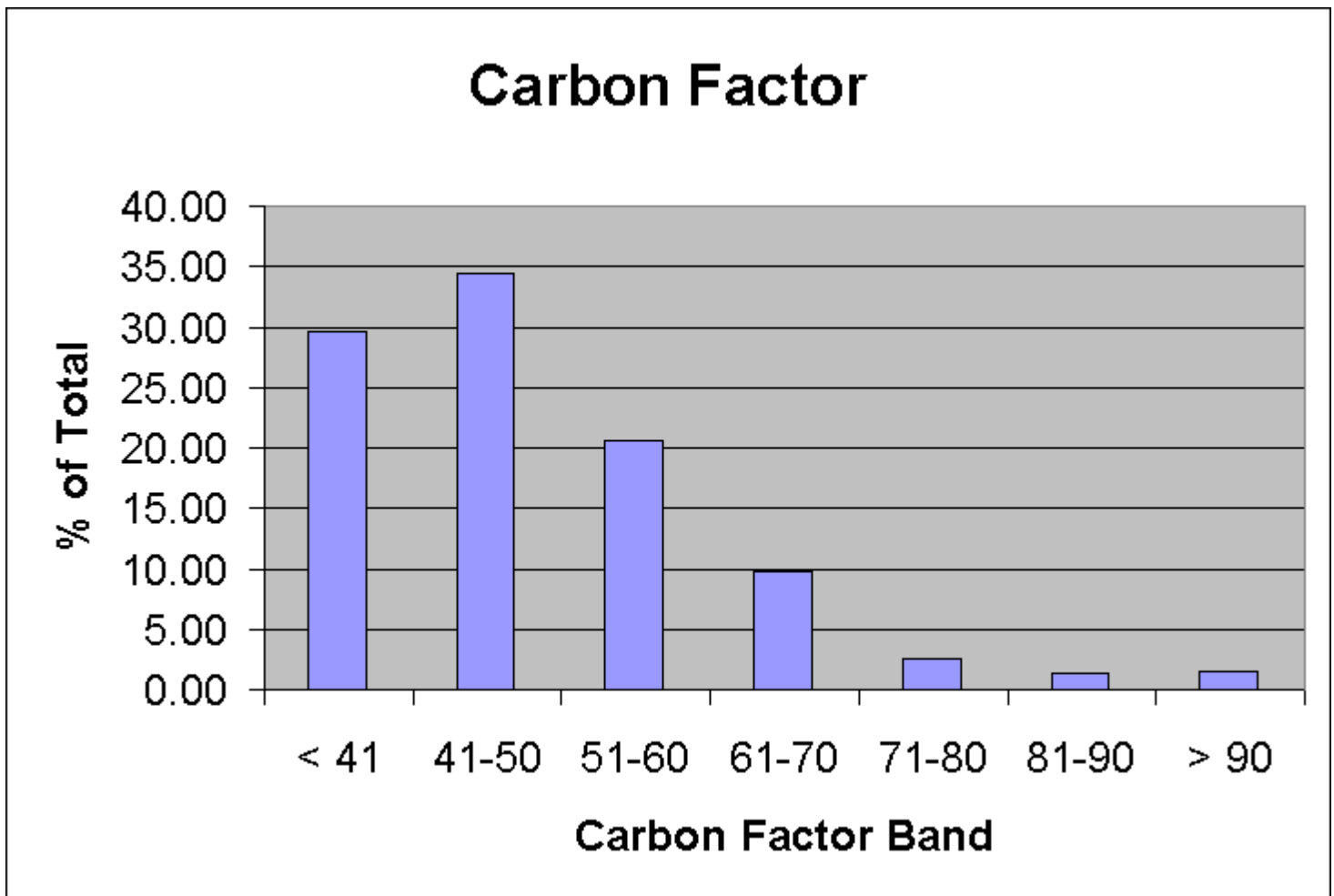


Carbon Factor of Housing Stock

(Keystone Data - October 2010)

Carbon Factor data available for 3726 dwellings. Of these, the CF ratings are distributed as follows:

Carbon Factor Band	No of Dwellings	% of Total
< 41	1105	29.66
41-50	1284	34.46
51-60	769	20.64
61-70	365	9.80
71-80	96	2.58
81-90	49	1.32
> 90	58	1.56
Total	3726	100.00



Note: Carbon Factor = $CO_2 / (TFA + 45)$

Where: CO_2 is the CO_2 emissions in kg/year and TFA is total floor area in m².

The stock includes 46 'non-traditionally' constructed properties. These comprise:

- Cornish (5)
- Woolaway (1)
- Airey (31)
- Swedish (9)

These properties will be subjected to additional structural condition assessments. This data, when combined with other stock condition information, will be assessed and if appropriate will be subjected to additional detailed options appraisal.

3.2 Related Assets

In addition to dwellings, Signpost is also responsible for a number of assets related to dwellings, for example garage blocks, play areas and forecourts. There are 762 garages and 9 play areas.

Signpost has already undertaken a strategic review of these non-dwelling assets and several under utilised sites have already been redeveloped. Garages and garage blocks will continue to be assessed with respect to their sustainability, utility and contribution to their environment. In some instances redevelopment or change of use will be considered to provide a balanced environment, which enhances estate appearance and provides appropriate facilities.

Where not essential to the operational delivery of housing or to the provision of future development opportunities, related assets such as roads and paths will continue to be assessed and, where possible, transferred to the appropriate adopting authority.

The rural nature of some stock means that Signpost is also responsible for 52 sewage treatment plant installations. Work is currently underway to improve these to adoptable standards before passing responsibility for their ongoing maintenance to the appropriate adopting authority. This short-term investment should reduce long-term liability.

This awareness of environment will assist Signpost to help deliver 'decent neighbourhoods' as well as 'Decent Homes'.

3.3 Issues Affecting the Stock

The following key issues have been identified as requirements and as potential risks:

- 1) Decent Homes - A government standard to be met by 2010 then maintained beyond 2010. This issue is discussed in later sections.
- 2) People and Demographics - The aspirations and diverse needs of residents and prospective residents are key to the strategy. It is essential that residents are involved and engaged in consultation as the Asset Management Strategy is implemented, as there is risk associated with their ability to exercise choice in

terms of property type, tenure and location. Aspirations, ethnic and cultural preferences, demographics and other social factors can significantly influence the demand for property and the resulting re-investment required. The processes for addressing this are outlined in Part C.

- 3) Signpost's Aims and Objectives - There will be risks associated with the aims and objectives outlined previously and how Signpost operates as a business within the community. Signpost recognises the need to manage and mitigate risk and processes have been devised to achieve this.
- 4) Funding - As a large scale voluntary transfer organisation Signpost Housing Association's funding was originally determined by the transfer business plan and its subsequent revisions. There are defined categories to which investment can be directed and also the manner in which the business will be regulated and monitored. There are risks associated with these aspects and also the changing nature of political directives over time.
- 5) Community - Signpost operates across the south west, although most of the stock is located in North Dorset. As an important contributor to the community Signpost operates with a strong sense of community spirit and with care to the effect that its day to day business has on people's lives. There will be risks associated with other landlords and providers of social housing both in terms of general needs housing stock and other amenities.

In determining the Asset Management Strategy each of these risk areas has been considered.

3.4 Decent Homes

Decent Homes is a Government led initiative, introduced in 2000. All housing owned by registered social landlords within England must be brought up to this Standard by 2010.

Signpost is committed to delivering Decent Homes by this deadline and then maintaining that standard. This will be done by programming re-investment works in accordance with the forecasts in the stock condition database, as part of a wider programme. Decent Homes will therefore be delivered as a by-product of effective works planning, founded from an ethos of pre-planned and programmed 'just in time renewals' as promoted by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in their Decent Homes and stock condition survey guidance.

Signpost recognises that Decent Homes is a 'minimum standard' and acknowledges the House of Commons Select Committee recommendation (2004) that registered social landlords should aspire and plan for 'decency plus'. In other words a better standard that also takes account of the views and aspirations of residents, as defined by the Signpost Standard.

The Decent Homes Standard, if followed in accordance with the strict definition, allows for some housing component failures whilst still being compliant with the

standard. Signpost will however, take a holistic view of all the criteria under the Standard and adopt a strategy to renew components on an individual basis as required and not solely to meet theoretical decency targets.

The stock condition survey carried out by Savills indicated that, as of April 2005, 518 dwellings were deemed 'non-decent' in accordance with the definition in the ODPM February 2004 Decent Homes Standard.

The vast majority of these non-decent issues have now been corrected and a programme of continuous assessment and correction is in place which uses the "live" data in the Keystone database.

3.5 Priority Re-investment Issues

The stock condition data indicates that the stock is currently in good condition, although a programme of work is required to maintain this position over a 30 year business plan term.

The priority issues for re-investment are kitchens and boilers within the first 10 years; and the following work comprising the highest value items over the full 30 year term:

- Heating and boilers;
- Kitchens;
- Bathrooms;
- Windows; and
- Roofs.

The profile reflects a 'maintenance' position rather than a stock requiring significant repair and improvement.

The forecast of works required to meet the Decent Homes Standard indicate that the criterion in which most failures are found is that for disrepair. A failure in this category is realised when major components are both old and in poor condition.

3.6 Housing Needs

Whilst Signpost's stock is located within many local authority areas, the demand, or need for housing share common issues.

Signpost works closely with local authorities, contributing to local strategies to help deliver a 'joined up' service that is targeted at meeting the needs of a wide range of people. Particular care is taken to ensure that new development addresses identified need in appropriate locations.

Local authorities and supporting people teams produce regular housing needs and support assessments in their role establishing local area housing strategies. In addition to reviewing this valuable source of information, Signpost also assesses

need by analysing applications for accommodation. Signpost's response to housing needs considers factors such as:

- Supply of properties and demand for them;
- Local Authority Housing Needs Studies and Housing Strategies; and
- Supporting People Strategies.

Housing needs within Signpost's geographic area of operation are dominated by a requirement for 'general needs' rented accommodation.

For SHA, most need equates to family accommodation, for which there is good demand, although there are pockets of low demand, for example some sheltered studio accommodation.

For SCP, most need equates to single person, self contained accommodation. The need for desirable, affordable, homes is augmented as a result of high local property prices and a shortage of affordable private rented accommodation.

There is also a requirement for flexible accommodation that can easily be adapted for an expanding family or ageing occupancy, in accordance with the principles of 'lifetime homes'.

All authorities within Signpost's area of operation report increasing levels of homelessness and increasing waiting lists. This emphasises the need to develop more affordable housing as well as the need to maintain the existing housing assets in good condition.

3.7 Sustainable Re-investment

Signpost recognises that care needs to be taken not to re-invest in poor performing areas at the expense of all others, nor should high risk re-investment occur without due consideration, option appraisal and piloting (on the basis that re-investment needs may not be the root cause of the poor performance).

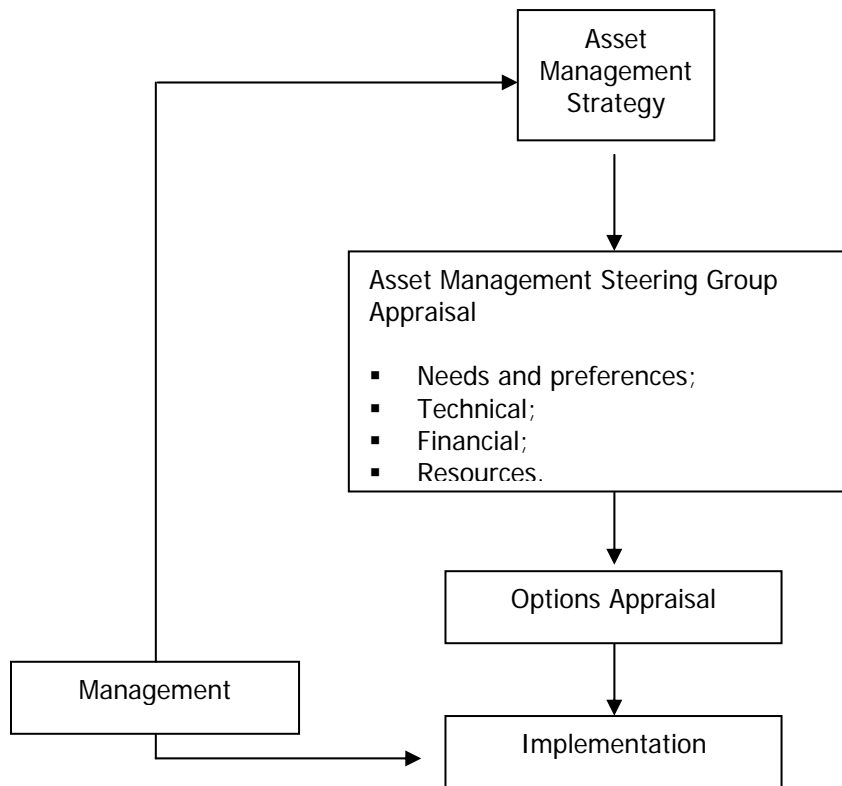
Re-investment is therefore prioritised and with a bias towards those units that are deemed to be of low risk and high demand.

Signpost will form an Asset Management Steering Group to assess, establish and monitor:

- Standards (the Signpost Standard)
- Materials (Specifications and resident choice)
- Work Programmes
- Re-investment priorities
- Business Plan integration

The Asset Management Steering Group will analyse the performance of the stock, as illustrated below, compare this with the re-investment requirements and target re-

investment at the stock that are intermediate (peripheral) performers, with a view to making them well performing.



3.8 Repairs and Maintenance Context

Signpost's stock is located within the south west of England. Whilst this is an area of low to medium demand for construction related services, there are limited skilled resources. A wide geographical spread, and in some instances remoteness, increases travel times and thus results in high costs.

Signpost works hard to establish good long term working relationships with reliable contractors and other parts of the supply chain. These activities are monitored and driven via the Value For Money Strategy.

Signpost Services are an important partner in terms of delivering work that represents value for money and minimising liability to pay Value Added Tax. The relationship with Signpost Services is defined within the Framework Agreement.

Signpost recognises that care must be taken to ensure that the actual costs incurred in commissioning work to the agreed Signpost Standard are reflected in the Asset Management Database and Business Plan projections.

3.9 Repairs and Maintenance Principles

The need to undertake work arises either through pre-planning, or in reaction to immediate requirements. Whilst budgets for 'reactive' works can be set in advance, the precise scope and nature of the works required cannot be readily defined. Signpost's responsive and void works budgets fall under the 'reactive' category, whereas all other work is pre-planned.

Signpost propose to undertake more works using pre-planned methods with an aspiration to achieve a target of not less than 85% pre-planned versus 15% reactive, unless the stock is new (less than 15 years old) in which case low levels of pre-planned work are anticipated. This exceeds the Audit Commission's recommended threshold of 70% v 30%.

Signpost proposes to meet this ambitious target by increasing the amount of work undertaken in a pre-planned way over time, with regular analysis of performance standards until such time as a sustainable balance is reached.

Pre-planned work occurs under one of three budgetary headings (cyclical maintenance, improvements and planned maintenance); these are explained in more detail below.

Pre-planned contracts have several advantages including:

- Ability to be reviewed and agreed in the context of agreed re-investment priorities and via the Asset Management Steering Group;
- Better value through economies of scale by securing better prices for components when many are ordered versus 'one off' purchases;

- Better consistency of component used, which is good for subsequent repairs and material performance assessments; and
- Helps to provide effective communication and consultation through the use of contract resident liaison staff and the issue of informative newsletters.

The requirement for cyclical maintenance, including the servicing of gas appliances, is derived from attribute and servicing records held within the Asset Management Database.

The requirement for improvements or planned maintenance (component renewals) is also derived from the Asset Management Database, which is informed by the stock condition surveys and feedback on completed works. The repairs programme is based on predictions for major repairs or component renewals on a pre-planned and programmed 'just in time basis'. In other words components should not be renewed well ahead of schedule (lifecycle + assessment of actual condition), nor should they be renewed too late (i.e. when they compromise the property or when they may impose an undue burden on responsive repairs).

'Just in time' is a best practice principle promoted by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in their guidance (Collecting, Managing and Using Housing Stock Information – a good practice guide)

3.10 Responsive Repairs

Responsive repairs are ad hoc and one off repairs to deal with an immediate problem. They include work such as fixing a plumbing leak, or replacing a loose roof tile.

In some circumstances larger repairs are carried out from this budget, although Signpost recognises the need to avoid 'double counting' with the projections made under other budgets.

Repairs that are not Signpost's responsibility or which arise through the unreasonable actions of a third party will be recharged accordingly.

Signpost will minimise the amount of works undertaken through responsive repairs. Therefore no major works or component renewals should be financed by this budget, unless they represent an unforeseen and significant health and safety issue, in favour of adding such works to large scale planned contracts.

Through better planning Signpost aims to let more works in a pre-planned way, thus moving works away from a responsive approach. This will encourage better value for money through savings in economies of scale. Consistency of product and standards will also be improved through adherence to the Signpost Standard and the robust monitoring processes that apply to pre-planned contracts.

To ensure that undue expenditure is avoided and that records are appropriately maintained, the responsive and void team will have (read-only) access to the stock

condition data and the programmes of work that are being derived from it. This enables them to make rational decisions about the requirement to undertake repairs and gives the ability to advise a resident (or prospective resident) that works will be undertaken within a defined time period.

To encourage efficiency and a better service Signpost has adopted the use of a composite schedule of rates, contained within a partnering contract. This helps to reduce repair action time, administration and management costs, whilst providing an auditable pre-priced expenditure trail, aimed at delivering best value.

3.11 Works to Vacant Properties

These “Voids works” are those which are undertaken on a property which has become vacant and which need to be completed before the property can be offered to a new tenant. Typical works include statutory testing of gas and electrical systems, as well as the works required to make the property fit for incoming residents.

The extent of works undertaken is defined within the Void Standard.

Signpost wishes to minimise the amount of time that any dwelling is unoccupied in order to expedite the provision of homes and to maximise revenue income. Therefore turn-around times should be as short as possible, with a target of not more than 10 working days for the actual works to be undertaken.

While the properties are vacant essential tests and works will be undertaken to ensure that the dwelling is statutorily fit, safe, clean and that any residual rubbish has been cleared, subject to the recharge of the former resident.

Unless required for reasons of health and safety, major works or component renewals shall not be undertaken while a property is vacant and will be added to a pre-planned programme of similar works that benefit the entire neighbourhood in an even-handed way, rather than ‘pepper-potting’ works to suit re-letting. This will also help to reduce the time that properties are vacant. Where appropriate, the opportunity may be taken to undertake catch-up works previously declined by the former resident.

Prospective residents will be given information about forthcoming programmes of work and planned improvements to their homes.

To help support new residents, Signpost Housing Association offers a discretionary decoration voucher scheme, whereby they may obtain materials from local suppliers to improve the internal decorative order of their homes.

3.12 Cyclical Maintenance

Cyclical maintenance comprises the regular servicing of mechanical and electrical plant, such as boilers and Cyclical Decoration (external painting together with pre-painting repairs).

Cyclical maintenance occurs at regular pre-defined intervals, for example boiler servicing annually and external painting once every 6 years.

Due to the specialist nature of servicing works, Signpost has established a series of measured term partnering contracts to provide the required works over a number of years.

The testing and servicing of gas appliances and electrical installations provides a valuable source of data to help inform the projected renewal dates for these components.

In respect of redecoration works, three areas are involved:

1. External parts, such as windows, doors and render;
2. Internal common parts such as common stair lobbies; and
3. Internal areas of short stay supported housing.

To ensure that components due for renewal are not redecorated just prior to renewal, no order to redecorate can be raised if the confirmed renewal date is within 6 years 'the six year rule'.

Example:

- Windows to be renewed in 3 years time = redecoration prohibited.
- Soffits and fascias to be renewed in 8 years time = redecoration allowed.

In addition to redecorations, the exterior of each dwelling is fully assessed on the same 6 year cycle as part of the same contract. All minor items of un-actioned repair such as broken roof tiles, damaged or uneven paving etc. are repaired. This 6 year overview contract helps to ensure that the stock remains wind and weather-tight and in good overall condition. It also helps to reduce the number of responsive repairs required, to mitigate any potential health and safety problems, to reduce redecoration costs when renewals are imminent and to maximise the lifecycles of external components.

The external overview contract also provides an opportunity to update stock condition survey data and to validate the Asset Management Database's projections for major planned works (renewals).

To facilitate an even and regular distribution of work the stock is divided into 6 areas of broadly equivalent stock numbers. Work then rotates around these 6 areas until the cycle is complete.

To ensure that geographical areas are not over-loaded with work, major works contracts are typically off-set by 180°, for example if the external overview contract is operating in area 1, then kitchen renewals may be being undertaken in area 4.

3.13 Planned Maintenance

The majority of Signpost's expenditure is through large-scale planned works contracts.

Signpost propose to undertake more works using pre-planned methods with an aspiration to achieve a target of not less than 85% pre-planned, if this proves to represent a sustainable, best-value proportion.

Signpost has developed more long-term partnering contracts for some elemental work and these have proved to be successful in reducing costs and increasing service standards, examples include the kitchen and bathroom contracts.

Specifically consideration is being given to developing partnering term contract arrangements for the following work groupings:

- High-level (roofs, chimneys, soffits/fascias/gutters etc.);
- External fabric (external cyclical + repairs);
- Windows;
- Doors;
- Plumbing (bathrooms and water supplies);
- Thermal (insulation and heating);
- Kitchens;
- Electrical; and
- Asbestos (prior to works).

When combined with the cyclical contracts, a comprehensive 'suite' of long-term partnering arrangements will exist to attend to most demands of the stock.

This approach encourages good working arrangements with suppliers and contractors and also helps to reduce the requirement to regularly produce specifications, thus enabling works to start on site sooner and staff to concentrate upon proper planning and the key aspects of delivery:

- Health and Safety;
- Time;
- Quality; and
- Cost.

3.14 Improvements

Improvements are defined as the provision of housing components that are not currently fitted.

Some improvements are required to ensure that the Decent Homes Standard is met, including the installation of heating where none exists, or adding insulation to appropriate levels. Others may be termed 'aspirational' and include the installation of beneficial components, such as smoke detectors, or provide for other work such as environmental enhancement or the re-modelling of hard to let dwellings.

Signpost has set aside a Tenants Amenities budget, which is managed by a Tenants Forum Committee, to enable tenants, either individually, or collectively, to apply for funding to carry out a specific improvement to their home or local environment. This budget has, for example, been used for play area and environmental improvements.

The programming of estate improvements and external works will be designed to co-ordinate with the expenditure of partner organisations, such as local authorities, to maximise the benefits of regeneration in an area (joined-up re-investment).

The majority of improvements that are needed are associated with the housing stock transferred from North Dorset District Council, although when new properties are acquired some require improvements to bring them up to the Signpost Standard, by for example improving loft insulation.

3.15 Disabled Adaptations

Signpost recognises its social responsibility to provide adaptations and facilities for disabled people and to comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

An annual budget is made available to carry out minor adaptation work, such as installing hand rails and ramps, up to a value of £1,500 including Value Added Tax. In addition, support is provided to enable individual residents to apply for disabled facilities grants, where the value of the works exceeds the £1,500 threshold.

Other work may include improvements in accessibility to common areas of blocks and publicly accessible spaces, following an options appraisal.

Through new developments, specific properties for people with disabilities will be provided and converted property will be allocated appropriately to those with special needs.

3.16 Asbestos Management

Following implementation of an Asbestos Management Policy and the introduction of the Control of Asbestos at Work Regulations 2002, Signpost acknowledges that regular surveys and sampling must be undertaken in order to maintain a register and inform management plans.

At present Signpost has a register based upon type 2 testing surveys of a sample of the stock, common parts and vulnerable areas. Signpost proposes to collect type 2 survey information for all dwellings over time and to continually manage and maintain

the register, which will form part of the Asset Management Database. The testing programme will be undertaken in advance of works that may affect asbestos containing materials.

Asbestos containing materials will be managed in accordance with Signpost's Asbestos Management Policy. In principle all high risk asbestos containing materials will be removed where possible. Medium risk asbestos containing materials are to be removed as a first option and protected or remediated if removal is not practicable. Low risk asbestos containing materials, such as garage roof sheets, will be managed and left in-situ pending renewal of components on programme. Where removal is not practical, the material may be left and managed, such as where textured ceiling finishes and floor tiles are retained in a property.

No work is permitted to commence without prior reference to the asbestos register. Where the register is incomplete or inconclusive, appropriate testing must be undertaken. Prior to any work starting, appropriate notification to the Health and Safety Executive must be made, along with the adoption of appropriate precautions by qualified, licensed, contractors.

Signpost is currently implementing an extension to the Asset Management Database which will add an Asbestos Management Module. Asbestos data held in the database will be linked to relevant internal and external systems that require asbestos information (e.g. job cards, housing management system etc.) The data will also be made available to residents via website and will be included in communications with residents (e.g. when a permission for alterations is raised).

3.17 Energy

Signpost believes that all residents have a right to affordable warmth and that adverse environmental impact should be reduced by the utilisation of energy efficient systems.

Where reasonable to do so, Signpost aims to improve the stock to the maximum possible energy rating through the use of efficient heating and effective insulation.

Signpost aims to increase the energy rating, measured through the Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP2005), of all stock to at least 60, with an average target score of 75. This compares with a current average score of 66.4.

The selection of energy efficient materials will be defined in the Signpost Standard. They include for example:

- The installation of full gas central heating, or an alternative where no gas is available;
- The use of efficient condensing boilers;
- The installation of double glazing;
- The installation of cavity wall insulation;
- The improvement of loft insulation to 250mm thickness; and

- Proper insulation of hot water cylinders and pipework.

In addition Signpost encourages the use of low energy light fittings and provides residents with energy saving ideas in newsletters, on the web-site and through other information sources.

Signpost seeks grants to supplement programmes of work and energy efficiency initiatives whenever possible.

3.18 Stock Survey and Data Management

Signpost has gathered data for a number of years on a rolling programme of stock condition surveys. The results of these surveys have been input on the Asset Management Database (Keystone) along with historic works records and attribute records. This provides a comprehensive single data source for condition information, works programmes, renewals and cyclical maintenance history.

The format for gathering and maintaining survey data and the functionality of the Asset Management Database has recently been reviewed to enable Signpost to have the best access to modern and well maintained data upon which planning decisions are made.

The Asset Manager has a key role on the Asset Management Steering Group, providing information and proposing programmes based on need and logical groupings. The Asset Manager also undertakes a 'monitoring' role of the delivery teams to make sure that programmes and budgets are being adhered to and that all work undertaken is recorded, including any essential elemental renewal undertaken by the responsive team. The role also includes the management of the Signpost Standard, the asbestos register and an awareness of new initiatives and possible funding sources such as grant availability for energy efficiency schemes.

The sample stock condition survey is improved by an ongoing programme of survey inspections (20% per year on a rolling basis) by trained Signpost staff and feedback from contract works, such as the external cyclical overview contract and data obtained from cyclical gas and electrical testing contracts.

The Asset Management Database is used to provide high level information, such as 30 year business plan forecasts, energy assessments as well as detailed work programmes and proposed contract works.

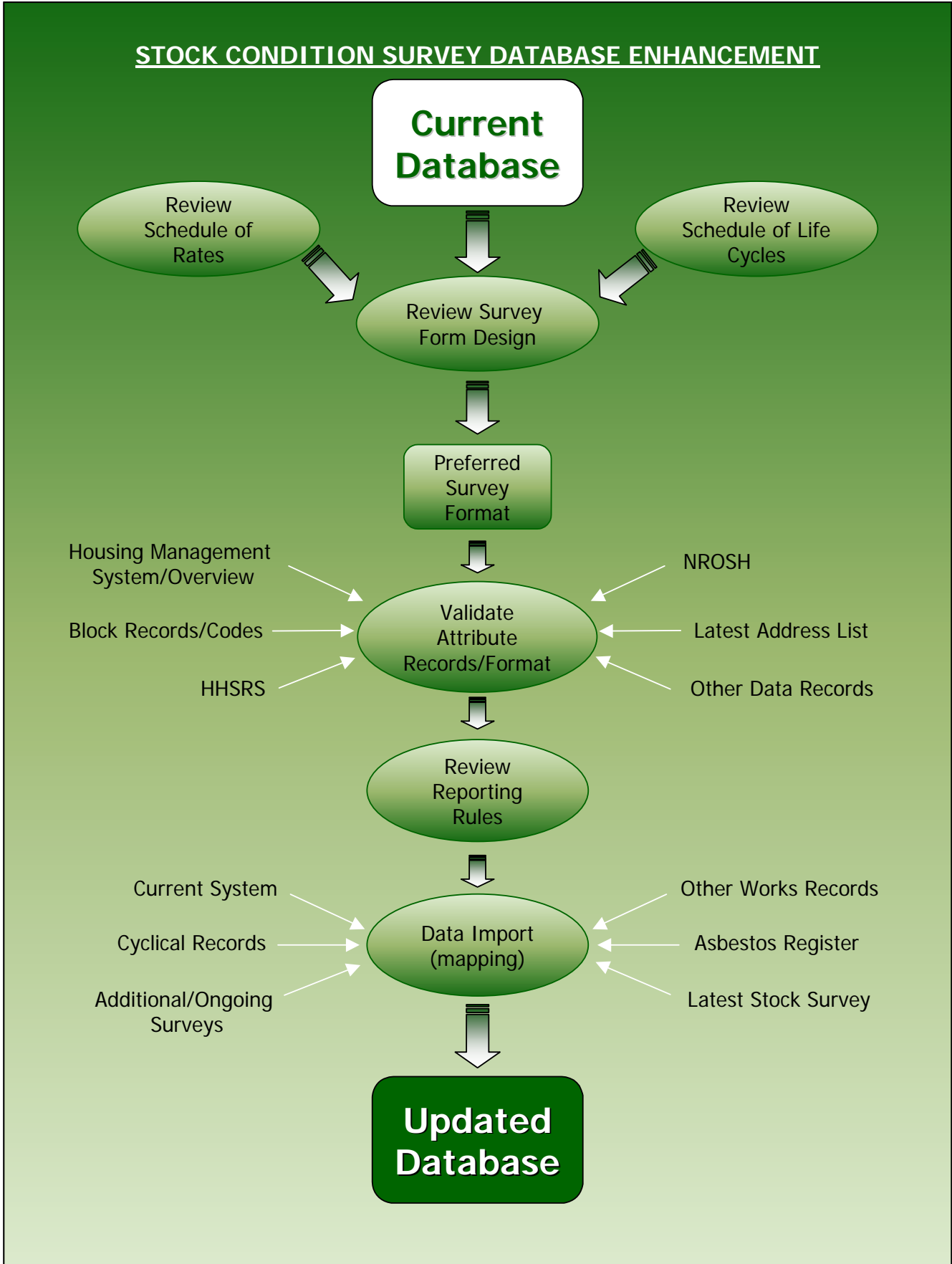
No planned programmes are committed until the requirement for works has been validated on site and the approval of the Asset Management Steering Group obtained. In some circumstances the on-site validation process results in planned work being deferred to follow the 'just in time' ethos.

The Asset Management Database is used to carry out regular assessments of dwellings against the Decent Homes Standard. This data is utilised by the Asset

Management Steering Group as it monitors and reviews the portfolio of projects towards Signpost objectives.

Stock survey and data management procedures are currently being recorded and developed into a quality management system. This will include procedural guides and will form the basis for the future training and development of staff.

The process adopted in enhancing the Asset Management Database is illustrated on the following diagram:



3.19 Funding Position/Parameters

Signpost's finances are reflected in its Business Plan. The Business Plan takes account of many factors including income and expenditure requirements.

The requirements for repairs and maintenance are assessed with reference to the forecasts of the Asset Management Database, which is informed by the stock condition surveys and feedback on completed works.

Signpost recognises the importance of maintaining the source data and in the associated schedule of rates and lifecycles, in conjunction with the Signpost Standard and procurement results, as these directly inform the Business Plan.

There are a number of constraints imposed on the Business Plan, including:

- Borrowing limits;
- Funding availability;
- Sustainability;
- Rent levels;
- Government policy;
- Legislation;
- Housing Corporation standards;
- Governance implications;
- Market-place/costs (e.g. salary levels and works costs);
- Grant availability/eligibility; and
- Efficiency targets (Gershon agenda).

The Business Plan will therefore be reviewed and will take account of this Asset Management Strategy.

3.20 Re-Investment Priorities - Proposed Schemes

Subject to the sustainability of the properties involved the following schemes are proposed:

Affordable Warmth: Signpost's scheme aims to provide all residents with a home that is affordable to heat. Signpost will fit energy efficient boilers, upgrade existing central heating systems, supply and lay additional insulation to lofts, hot water cylinders and cavity walls to reduce residents heating bills. Signpost will be helping residents maximise the benefits and grants available for energy efficiency measures and publicise energy advice to eradicate fuel poverty. Signpost will carry out this work as part of its approach on 'sustainability'.

Double Glazing: The majority of Signpost's stock already has double glazing, although this programme will be completed, especially to bring recently acquired properties up to a modern, energy efficient, standard.

Sheltered Schemes: Signpost will be renewing and upgrading warden call systems in sheltered schemes for older people, so that Signpost can maintain an emergency 24-hour response for the personal safety and security of these residents.

Estate Improvements: Resurfacing of forecourts and pathways to sheltered schemes to enable older people to have independent lifestyles and to help prevent falls, maintaining safety outside the home. Innovative works to remove the fear of crime and alleviate problems of anti-social behaviour to communal areas within estates. Signpost, in conjunction with its partners, aspires to reduce crime against person and property in conjunction with wider regeneration initiatives.

External Overview: Signpost will be renewing roofs, rainwater goods, soffits and fascias. The external overview contract will maintain the external envelope and external areas in good condition.

Safety: Signpost will be maintaining the smoke detectors installed to every home and rewiring to modern standards. This scheme will ensure that the electrical systems in homes are up to date and safe. Homes should also have sufficient plug sockets to suit a modern lifestyle.

Kitchen and Bathroom Renewal: Signpost will be installing new kitchens and bathrooms and will upgrade associated plumbing facilities on a partnering basis with local contractors.

Responsive Repairs: Signpost will deliver a cost effective responsive repairs service to the published standards.

Cyclical Maintenance: Signpost will carry out a cyclical programme of works including a 6 year rolling external repair and painting programme, annual servicing of gas appliances, servicing of mechanical and electrical plant and equipment, including lifts and fire detection systems, and a 10 yearly programme of testing and upgrading electrical installations.

Disabled Facilities Adaptations: Signpost will continue to provide minor adaptations, such as the provision of handrails and other works below £1,500 in value, on a demand led basis. Major adaptations will continue to be undertaken through local authority sponsored disabled facilities grants.

3.21 The Signpost Standard

In order to promote consistency in the work that is procured and to clearly define the aspirations of the key stakeholders, Signpost has recorded specifications and material selections as well as policy standards.

Signpost is currently reviewing and amending the 'Signpost Standard'.

This document comprises 4 sections:

- 1) General standards and objectives, including broad policy statements;
- 2) An output specification, by component, for use with the non-technical stakeholders including residents and housing management staff;
- 3) A detailed specification including British Standard and other references based on the industry standard National Building Specification; and
- 4) Signpost policies including asbestos, waste, environmental and elemental groupings.

The Standard is being further enhanced to reflect the aspirations of the residents in the context of affordability and the Business Plan. The Standard will be reviewed and amended in an inclusive way and in consultation with key stakeholders.

The Standard and the costs of work arising are regularly reviewed by the Asset Manager to ensure that database predictions used to inform business planning and works programming are correct.

3.22 Project Appraisal and Evaluation

Signpost must ensure that the re-investment in the housing stock provides maximum benefit and best value for residents, within sustainable parameters. Having identified the priority issues and core objectives, each of the intended investment projects must be appraised and ratified against the strategy to ensure adherence with Signpost's objectives.

An appraisal and evaluation process will be developed, through which each project will be assessed. Where re-investment is determined not to be in alignment with the objectives of the Business Plan or this strategy, then alternative solutions such as redevelopment, demolition, disposal or any other available routes may need to be considered.

The process will be implemented by the Asset Management Steering Group, and will include consideration of issues such as:

Technical Appraisal:

- 1) Define strategic position;
- 2) Data;
- 3) Whole life costing;

- 4) Standards;
- 5) Consultation.

Financial appraisal:

- 6) Funding source;
- 7) Impact of re-investment on finances;
- 8) Cash flow requirements.

Risk Appraisal:

- 9) Identify risks (internal and external);
- 10) Quantify risk (scale);
- 11) Manage risk.

3.23 Procurement

Signpost is constantly developing reviewing and challenging comprehensive re-investment plans to ensure that those properties needing works receive them in a timely fashion. These plans allow for slippage and other fluctuations in the market place and the availability of resources generally.

Signpost already has developed, and is in the process of developing more long-term, 'Egan compliant' partnering contracts. These term contracts allow both a planned maintenance scheme to be developed for specific areas (roads and estates) as well as 'one-off' installations to be ordered by the responsive repair team, as the need arises. Signpost's procurement strategy may be found at Appendix 5.

Signpost has considered elemental versus packaged works approaches for procurement. Given the time necessary to develop a true partnering relationship and ethos, Signpost has set out to develop the elemental procurement options in a partnering format and then to extend these to other packages of investment required in the stock. Signpost will review and monitor its procurement performance annually.

Signpost Housing Association and Signpost Care Partnerships will deliver the majority of its planned, cyclical and responsive maintenance works through a partnered approach with the in house contracting arm, Signpost Services Ltd.

There is a clear advantage for Signpost in taking this approach, due to the significant VAT savings that can be made by using Signpost Services.

These partnering arrangements will undergo external scrutiny to ensure that best value is being achieved, and will be closely monitored at all levels, including the Boards, to ensure that they are delivering to the appropriate quality and service standards.

The arrangements with Signpost Services are set up using comprehensive Service Level Agreements, setting clear quality and service standards and enabling ongoing monitoring to take place.

In addition to developing longer term partnering arrangements with Signpost Services, Signpost is also investigating the development of longer-term supply chain arrangements.

Discussions are currently underway with a range of builders merchants to provide a comprehensive supply chain management solution. Primarily delivered through Signpost Services, the aim is to have one supply chain company meeting all of Signpost's needs across planned, cyclical and responsive maintenance.

By focusing on one supply chain partner, systems and processes can be simplified and streamlined, common specifications across work areas can be delivered and longer-term efficiencies can be achieved. This approach will also ensure that value for money and innovation are achieved in the longer-term supply and management of building materials supporting the delivery of planned, cyclical and responsive maintenance works.

Where required to do so Signpost will seek interested partners by advertising in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU), the procurement publication for major services and projects.

Signpost's organisational structure is based on this type of procurement strategy and in accordance with best practice guidelines.

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

4.1 Our aims

The associations aim to ensure that there will be no discrimination or unfair treatment on the grounds of gender (and gender reassignment status), background (e.g. gypsies and travellers, asylum seekers), race, colour, ethnic or national origin, faith, sexual orientation, marital/civil partnership status, age, disability, social position, politics, trade union membership or social disadvantage. We aim to ensure that everybody is treated equally and has equal opportunity to receive the services and employment opportunities we offer.

There are many barriers to equality of opportunity, ranging from overt prejudice to unwitting ignorance of different lifestyles and needs. Some of these barriers - such as those based on ethnicity, gender and age - have been subject to primary legislation.

However there are other barriers that have not been subject to such primary legislation. These barriers exclude groups within society from capitalising fully on those opportunities and services available to the population as a whole. These have contributed to, amongst other things, pockets of lower educational attainment and poor health prospects.

The associations have developed a positive action culture through which achievement of equality is a key thread to our business, underpinning everything we do. To achieve this we set clear objectives for all of our services, regularly measure our performance and take positive action to deal with any imbalances we find. We will work to ensure that further appreciation of issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded throughout the organisation.

This stance is defined in Spectrum Housing Group's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy (GCE115PO) which covers all aspects of resident involvement including membership of and participation in the various governance structures, panels and committees.

4.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

To address any discrimination or unfair treatment on the grounds of gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, social position, politics, trade union membership or social disadvantage, the associations are committed to:

- ensure that no group in society is less likely than another to be housed or recruited by us
- ensure that everybody is treated equally and has equal opportunity to receive the services we offer such as housing advice, repairs and rent collection
- ensure that the services we provide, are carried out fairly
- ensure that our governance structures and customer representation

- bodies are open to all members of the communities we serve
- taking positive action to deal with any imbalances we find
- promoting our commitment to equality and diversity
- support other organisations and individuals to develop their approach to equality and diversity through sharing experience and learning opportunities
- working closely with partners and agencies to achieve these aims.

4.3 Financial Exclusion

Financial exclusion is a position in which people may not have knowledge of or access to appropriate, financial products and services. This could be due to limited financial literacy and capability on the part of the consumer, in order to manage their money effectively.

In recognising that many of the associations residents may be affected by financial exclusion, and that this can have a detrimental impact on day-to-day living and quality of life, the associations are committed to promoting financial inclusion, tackling financial exclusion and enhancing the financial capability of its residents.

Promoting financial inclusion is about ensuring that all our residents have equal access to appropriate financial services and support, including the skills, knowledge and understanding of how to make best use of what is available, helping them to manage their money, plan for the future and deal with any financial problems.

The associations' approach to financial inclusion is covered in a separate strategy document – The Financial Inclusion Strategy SOPOPS375ST.

Following consultation with residents and stakeholders, this strategy sets out a number of objectives. These are expressed as the following themes:

- establish the extent of financial exclusion amongst our residents
- work strategically with partner local authorities and external agencies on financial inclusion
- sustaining tenancies
- providing money advice
- reducing fuel poverty
- addressing worklessness.

5. Sustainable Communities

5.1 Our aims

Safe, clean, well designed and cohesive communities are a key building block in all communities, and their provision is important in tackling exclusion.

Sustainable communities are places where people want to live and work now and in the future. They should meet the diverse needs of current and future residents, and be sensitive to their environment and contribute to a high quality of life.

In seeking to establish sustainable communities, the associations will:

- ensure that our lettings processes are transparent and understandable to all groups in the community including those with specific language requirements or learning disabilities
- work with our partner local authorities to create local lettings policies that aim to promote balanced and sustainable communities
- support the establishment and operation of Choice Based Lettings schemes
- promote the concept of sustainable communities to our existing customers and their neighbours
- work closely with partners and agencies to achieve these aims.

5.2 Community safety and anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour impacts on people's lives and can have a negative impact it can have on a communities reputation. In helping to create and maintain safe communities, the associations will:

- ensure that community safety and dealing effectively with ASB are clearly identified as a part of our core objectives at all levels in the organisation
- involve our customers in the development, implementation and monitoring of our ASB policies, procedures and the local agreements we develop to deal with issues which affect them
- develop preventative approaches to ASB and to explore options to promote positive behaviour
- provide a clear method for people to report ASB cases and to provide them with encouragement and support to do so
- ensure that our policies and procedures are responsive and support victims of and witnesses to ASB
- provide a timely and proportionate response to reports of
- use proportionate enforcement action to protect individual communities
- publicise our actions, as appropriate
- make clear that any form of ASB is unacceptable and that persistent or aggravated ASB will carry sever penalties
- provide and/or facilitate support for vulnerable residents to help them

- sustain their tenancies
- work closely with partners and agencies to achieve these aims.

The associations' approach to anti-social behaviour is covered in a separate policy document – the Anti-social Behaviour Policy SOPOP266PO.

5.3 Community development

Many communities in which the associations work are already well established and function well.

However, we recognise that even in these circumstances there is often a need to provide support to local residents to sustain this position. Consequently, where appropriate, the associations will:

- support the work of residents, and others to create community groups and associations
- provide funds to support the establishment of these groups
- provide funds and opportunities for training and capacity building
- explore other sources of funding to support projects
- provide opportunities for residents and other stakeholders to be involved in the development and management of our services
- develop regular community and estate inspections with local residents and stakeholders
- ensure that its estates are maintained to a high standard agreed with and monitored by residents
- provide funds to improve
- work with our development colleagues on new developments to achieve balanced communities through the use of mixed tenure homes
- work with residents to ensure that they have the support they need to sustain their tenancy at difficult times in their lives
- work closely with partners and agencies to identify initiatives to which we can contribute
- promote the use of Acceptable Behaviour Contracts.

5.4 Measures of success

The key measures of success for this strategy are:

- lettings performance that reflects communities we serve, as recorded in the annual EDI audit
- high levels of satisfaction with our communities as places to live
- high levels of satisfaction with the handling of ASB
- high levels of satisfaction, as recorded in the annual customer satisfaction survey.

5.5 Strategic goals

- 1st/2nd quartile customer satisfaction

- Achieve a minimum of 2 star accreditation from the Audit Commission for our Community and Estate Management Service.

6. Asset Management Strategy Implementation

This section deals with the implementation plans and methodologies for the Asset Management Strategy.

In addition to the implementation and methodologies this section also sets out the processes for monitoring and reviewing projects within a portfolio to ensure consistency with the overall aims and objectives of Signpost and alignment with the Business Plan.

6.1 Resources

Signpost has reviewed its organisational structure to ensure its proper alignment in the context of a client orientated housing repairs and maintenance section. Posts have been identified and resources obtained in order that Signpost is suitably resourced to implement and manage the Asset Management Strategy objectives.

Signpost's repairs and maintenance responsibility includes resident communication, consultation, contract development, tendering and administration, works identification and supervision.

Pre-planned maintenance (major works) is the largest spend area of re-investment and has the greatest impact on other aspects of the client-side service as outlined in Part B. The structure that has been put in place by Signpost has sufficient resources to manage all categories of work, with specialist support provided by external consultants as and when required.

Staff are encouraged to seek professional qualifications and to adopt 'life long learning' as a personal development goal. Regular briefings and reviews of staff roles and responsibilities by managers helps to ensure that they remain aware, effective and focused on delivery of their key functions.

Signpost aims to maximise the benefits available by collective team working, propagated by a clear understanding of objectives and individual responsibility.

When identified, skills gaps are addressed through targeted and relevant training.

The finances required to meet the programme are set following reference to the stock condition forecasts, the programme proposed by the Asset Management Steering Group and widespread consultation. These are detailed within Signpost's Business Plan.

6.2 Asset Management Database

Signpost employs the Keystone Asset Management Database and is currently expanding this system to include a comprehensive Asbestos Management System.

The Asset Management Database is regularly updated to ensure that the address file is consistent with the Orchard housing management system.

The Asset Manager will be responsible for ensuring that the Database is maintained up to date, including:

- The management and improvement of survey records;
- The replacement of extrapolated records with 'actual' surveys; and
- Updating of 'works undertaken' records from all procurement routes.

The Asset Management Database forms the cornerstone of the Asset Management Strategy, and provides data and information for individual programmes as well as the Business Plan.

Signpost is endeavouring to survey 100% of the stock on a rolling programme (20% a year).

6.3 Implementation Plans and Methodologies

Supporting information on re-investment requirements arises from the Asset Management Database. The Asset Manager reviews and maintains stock condition data and produces proposed programmes for work designed to meet the re-investment requirements of the stock, including delivery of key initiatives such as Decent Homes, within logically grouped projects.

Individual requirements and proposed programmes are then reviewed by the Asset Management Steering Group by project appraisal and evaluation. Once agreed they form an implementation plan.

Implementation plans will shape the future of the stock and may be seen as an important sub-set of the Asset Management Strategy, providing a portfolio of projects designed to meet the requirements of the organisation's strategy and key objectives.

Signpost will develop a plan for asset management implementation that identifies the required re-investment to bridge the gap between the current and intended future condition of the stock. Part of the implementation plan will require a 'gap analysis' to determine the approach needed and the work required. This will be informed by data contained within the Asset Management Database and will be aligned to the overall Asset Management Strategy and Business Plan, judged against key performance criteria and the agreement of the Asset Management Steering Group.

The following issues will be considered:

- Previous investment and other historic information relating to the particular project area;
- The aims and objectives of projects and alignment to the overall objectives of the Asset Management Strategy;
- Risk analysis in connection with each specific project;

- Details of the programme for delivery including key milestones and resources required to facilitate completion on time;
- Budgetary impact and comparison with agreed schedule of rates and the Business Plan;
- Consultation requirements and intended processes and the agreement of key performance indicators at the outset of the programme;
- Compliance with the Signpost Standard;
- On completion of the project a summary project evaluation and lessons learnt for future projects; and
- The Procurement Strategy (Value for Money Strategy and Framework Agreement).

6.4 Commitment to Existing Service Standards

Signpost has a comprehensive range of customer standards and policies including:

- Repairs and improvement works;
- Reporting repairs procedure;
- Customer Care;
- Customer feedback and compensation;
- Resident Involvement;
- Enforcement of Conditions of Tenancy;
- Harassment and anti-social behaviour.

These policies and standards have been developed in partnership with residents and include reporting and monitoring arrangements. Signpost will build on these policies and procedures and ensure service standards are in place for all areas of service.

6.5 Role of Boards and Service Delivery

Signpost has adopted a number of policies and protocols to ensure the effective running of its Boards. These include:

- Company Rules (IPS Constitution);
- Code of Conduct;
- Standing Orders;
- Tenure of Office Policy;
- Protocols for the selection and election of Board Members; and
- Financial Regulations.

Boards are committed to ensuring all members are effectively trained to undertake the duties of a Board Member.

Board Members undergo appraisals to ensure that their individual training needs are addressed.

Boards regularly monitor and review the performance of Signpost through regular performance reports.

Boards will ensure that performance is regularly reported to residents through the annual report and through the Tenants Forum.

Signpost is committed to a process of continuous improvement that includes regularly reviewing governance arrangements, training requirements and assessment of Board performance.

The Boards endorse the National Housing Federation's Governance, Competence and Accountability Code 2004, and undertakes annual governance health-checks.

In summary, through good governance, the Boards ensure that Signpost is well run, remains financially solvent and sustainable, is a top performing organisation, and delivers excellent services to the community that it serves.

The Boards embrace the six core principles of good governance, contained in the Good Governance Standard for Public Services:

1. Focussing on the organisation's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and users;
2. Performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles;
3. Prompting values that underpin good governance and upholding these through behaviour;
4. Taking informed, transparent decisions within a framework of controls;
5. Developing the capacity of the governance team to be effective; and
6. Engaging stakeholders and making accountability real.

6.6 Working in Partnership

Signpost is committed to working in partnership with all stakeholders.

By tackling issues in partnership and not in isolation, Signpost aims to benefit from the range of advantages outlined by Sir John Egan and other commentators.

Signpost has applied the principles of partnering with a number of works contractors and applies the ethos to all. Forms of contract have been supplemented with partnering charters and associated agreements.

Signpost recognises that the principles of partnering, if correctly implemented and nurtured over time, pay dividends by way of improving service standards, reduced requirement for administration and the reduction of direct costs through long-term relationships and economies of scale across the supply chain.

Signpost will therefore apply the ethos and principles of partnering to future procurements, whilst ensuring probity and value for money.

7. Monitoring and Review Processes

As a portfolio of projects is undertaken Signpost has identified the need to ensure that there are suitable monitoring and review processes in place such that the successful outcome of a particular initiative is closely monitored and its achievement of the business objectives realised.

The process will review the actual deliverables and outcomes of a project and compare these against the objectives as set out in the implementation plan. These processes will be instigated both during and at the completion of the project through regular progress reports, meetings, feedback to key stakeholders and the Asset Management Steering Group, and through the pre-defined project process established by Signpost.

As part of the monitoring and also implementation plans, there will also be risk mitigation and contingency plans in place such that when problems occur their impact on the overall delivery of an initiative is minimised. The lessons learnt from such instances will be fed back into the Asset Management Strategy to reduce the likelihood of their occurrence in future projects.

It will be essential to the long-term success of the Asset Management Strategy that such lessons learnt and other information is regularly communicated between all the key stakeholder groups and that feedback from users, including residents, is considered and incorporated into future plans.

7.1 Performance Monitoring and Best Value

Signpost embraced Best Value in 2000 defined in the Value for Money Strategy. Signpost carries out two formal reviews per year, in order to examine and alter services across Signpost as appropriate. A Best Value Steering Group co-ordinates progress, outcomes and recommendations from all reviews, these are then approved by the Boards and implemented over a defined period with regular updates.

The organisations objectives tie in with the Government's Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) inspection process and the current efficiency agenda with the emphasis on improving services at little or no cost but by adding value for money.

As well as Best Value, Signpost undertakes regular 'STATUS' surveys (at least every three years) and uses model questions in order to assess key services that are provided to residents. These form part of Signpost's annual report to tenants. The outcome of the survey is analysed and an action plan formulated that is agreed by the Board and will be implemented with input from residents through the Resident Involvement Strategy.

In addition, Signpost has a well established resident involvement framework including a reading group, a policy improvement group, the Tenants Forum and representation

on Boards. All policy formulation and review involves residents and feedback is given directly to Boards. Signpost's Tenants Compact has been in place since 2004.

7.2 Benchmarking Performance

Signpost strives to promote excellence in Housing Services provided through reviews and benchmarking with other organisations.

Regular reporting against key performance indicators is an integral part of Signpost's working and further comparisons are sought through benchmarking locally on policy and procedural matters as well as utilising the services of the Housemark and Check-Mate benchmarking clubs.

Housemark analyse and publish performance data on an annual basis. This enables Signpost to compare performance with a number of similar sized organisations in relation to costs per property managed and costs per employee.

Signpost uses Housemark and STATUS surveys to compare resident satisfaction in relation to its repair service.

Evidence of benchmarking is provided to the Boards at regular intervals.

Signpost will monitor good practice development and will disseminate to staff, Board Members and residents representatives, regular updates on inspection reports and other good practice briefings.

7.3 Performance Intervention

Signpost undertakes an annual risk review with direct input from Board members. The risk strategy has been developed over a number of years with the involvement of the Strategic Management Team and Divisional Directors.

This strategy provides a clear and structured approach to managing risk, and links our key Business Plan objectives to both strategic and operational risks. This approach is underpinned by the use of a risk management system, utilising risk trees, which allow controls and performance indicators to be identified for each risk. The Strategic Management Team, Committees and Boards are then able to closely monitor these risks.

Key issues that are closely monitored include:

1. Performance against agreed performance indicators;
2. Effectiveness in dealing with performance shortfalls;
3. Resident satisfaction levels;
4. Progress towards meeting the Decent Homes target;
5. Maintenance of effective standards of governance; and
6. Complaints handling.

Part of the strategy is the Business Continuity Plan, which clearly sets out what would be the course of action in the event that the main Signpost Office were to become inoperative.

Signpost has a clear programme of audit reviews, both internal and external. As well as focusing on financial aspects, specialised audits are undertaken in areas Signpost identifies as having potential weaknesses. This represents a proactive approach of “prevention rather than cure” that mitigates the need for management intervention.

Signpost also has a comprehensive set of standing orders setting out how Signpost is controlled and run. Included within these are a number of measures whereby intervention can be speedy and appropriate to deal with specific issues. In consultation with the Chair of the relevant Board, the Chief Executive has delegated authority to intervene into matters when necessary.

7.4 Monitoring

An action plan has been developed to clearly set out how the strategy will be delivered. This plan is:

Specific
Measurable
Agreed
Realistic
Time Bound

Whilst the Asset Manager has the key responsibility for the delivery of the Asset Management Strategy, the action plan also identifies the individual responsible for leading on each area of the strategy.

Progress against the targets in this strategy is monitored, as follows:

1. By the Boards in April of each year;
2. By the Strategic Management Team on a 6 monthly cycle; and
3. By the Group Director of Operations in monthly ‘one to one’ meetings with the Asset Manager.

7.5 Future of the Asset Management Strategy

Signpost recognises that the Asset Management Strategy is a dynamic document that will develop over time. Implementation of programmes of work, changing needs, and the realisation of business objectives will require the Asset Management Strategy to be ‘live’. It will therefore continuously evolve.

The strategy will adapt to a number of influences, including:

- Changing need;
- Changes in legislation and regulation;
- Changes in aspirations;

- Changes in corporate objectives; and
- Changes in funding regimes.

The Asset Management Strategy will be formally updated alongside each revision of the Business Plan.

There are a number of enhancements to the Asset Management Strategy that Signpost will seek to implement. These are summarised in the Action Plan attached as Appendix 1 and are supported by the observations and recommendations arising from a “Mock Inspection” conducted by external inspectors in May 2009.

Appendix 1

Action Plan

Appendix 2

Stock Condition Survey Validation Report (September 2008)

Appendix 3

Five Year Plan / 30 Year Forecast

Appendix 4

Terms of Reference for the Asset Management Steering Group

SIGNPOST HOUSING ASSOCIATION AND SIGNPOST CARE PARTNERSHIPS

ASSET MANAGEMENT STEERING GROUP

TERMS OF REFERENCE

PURPOSE

To oversee and scrutinize the planning and delivery of investment in properties owned and managed by Signpost Housing Association and Signpost Care Partnerships.

DEFINITIONS

Responsive Maintenance

Ad-hoc, one-off repairs of a re-active nature to deal with an immediate problem. Up to the value of £500 per job.

Cyclical Maintenance

A programme of repair and maintenance work that is undertaken on a periodic basis to ensure a property is maintained in good condition.

Planned Maintenance

A programme of major repair and/or improvement work undertaken to renew major components ensuring that properties are maintained to a modern day standard.

Void Works

Works undertaken to a property, which has become vacant due to a tenant moving out, which needs to be completed before the property can be offered to a new tenant.

Leased-In

Refers to a flat or unit that we have a leasehold interest in, or own, but do not have a freehold interest in the building.

MEMBERSHIP

Group Director of Operations – Chair
Asset Manager
Divisional Director – SHA
Divisional Director – SCP
Divisional Director - SSL
Group Financial Controller
Board Member
Tenant Representative

Development Representative, as required.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

Every three months to coincide with the production of quarterly management accounts.

SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

To review the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy.

To establish if proper contractual and structural and systems relationships are in place to deliver an effective repairs' service.

To oversee the planning of each companies annual repairs' budgets and outline 5 year planned investment programme.

To monitor repairs' performance against budgets, timescales and customer satisfaction targets.

To consider the future use of existing assets.

To consider any material variations against budgets and timescales.

To inform the development of a disposals' strategy and to review the implementation of that strategy.

To inform the development of a leased-in properties' strategy and to review the implementation of that strategy.

Appendix 5

Survey Methodology

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Signpost Housing Association (SHA) recognises that a systematic and thorough approach to Asset Management is a key tool in providing all of its customers with quality and well maintained homes.

Stock Data Gathering & Survey Methodology

Overview

Stock condition surveys are constantly being carried out to provide up to date information on the condition of Signpost's housing stock in terms of maintenance and repairs liability. Information is also collected at the same time to provide assessment details for Decent Homes, NHER and HHSRS assessments. Signpost's chief goal is to ensure all of its housing stock meets the Decent Homes Standard by 2010.

Signpost has committed to a rolling programme of Stock Condition Surveys covering approximately 20% of the housing stock owned or maintained by SHA and SCP per annum. This will ensure that all housing stock has relatively up to date stock condition information that can be used for future maintenance programmes and forecasts.

Properties are selected per month (up to the agreed target number) either by area, where current survey data is lacking in sufficient detail or is incomplete or where survey data has been identified as inaccurate or incorrect by other departments (Joint Repairs or Planned Maintenance Teams for example).

The information is used to populate the Asset Management Database (Keystone) which will provide future maintenance and repair programmes for the Planned Team and financial forecasts for future budgeting requirements.

Keystone holds data on all Signpost's (SHA & SCP) properties that the Association has a repairs liability on and a duty to maintain. This information is brought over from the Orchard Housing Management System via a bespoke interface and is updated regularly as new properties are added at various intervals (New Build Developments and purchases).

This information covers such aspects as:

- i) Property Sequence number (UPRN)
- ii) Property Description type
- iii) Ward Code
- iv) Owner (SHA, SCP etc).
- v) Property address
- vi) Attribute Data
- vii) Current Due dates for Repairs

The survey data is collected and is assessed in the following way.

- Property list generated for surveys to be carried out.
- Residents are notified of proposed survey including date and time.
- Appropriate Survey type is selected from Keystone's Survey Manager tab.
- Current survey information on each selected property is retrieved from the Keystone Database and prepared to be downloaded to the allocated Surveyors PDA.
- Survey information is downloaded onto the PDA and the designated Surveyor carries out the survey updating all current data as well as obtaining any missing data the survey is requiring.
- On completion of the surveys the PDA uploads all survey data back into the Keystone Database. All surveys are checked and validated within the Survey Validation section of the Survey Manager's tab.
- Once the Surveyor is happy with the data it is returned to the main database ready to be used for numerous reporting and information purposes.

Other Surveys that are carried out to ensure data on all properties is full populated and up to date are as follows.

Unsurveyed – mainly new or recent properties brought over from the Orchard Housing Management system. A large percentage of the attribute information may be obtained from the Health & Safety files provided for New Build and major refurbishment schemes (Desktop Surveys). However on-site surveys will still be carried out.

Certain property archetypes where few of the total properties have been surveyed – Signpost has many different types of properties in its stock ranging from one bedroom flats to four bedroom houses, detached/semi, terrace etc. Keystone uses an extrapolation system which allows it to provide projected repairs and financial forecast's across all of its housing stock. However for this system to work well a larger percentage of each archetype is required to be fully surveyed.

Surveyed Properties but with little or no Survey data – Some base data information may have been uploaded for these types of properties when the Keystone database was first populated and now requires verification and expansion on the data currently held.

Surveyed Properties with little or no repair data – The required survey attribute data has been previously provided however no future repairs information has been given not allowing accurate future forecasts to be made and also providing miss information on the Decent Homes Assessment.

Surveyed Properties with multiple attribute data and/or repairs information –

Various anomalies of this type have been identified throughout the system and as part of data clarification, validation surveys of these types of property are required for certification. e.g. External wall finish to a property has Brick, Cladding, render and painted attributes. There will be cases where some properties will have more than one description for an attribute however these multiple attributes are more unlikely and either through the Surveyors knowledge (If validating the survey) or verification survey these anomalies can be removed from the system and increase the accuracy of the data.

Maintaining Stock Survey Data.

Its is essential that the Survey data held on Keystone is regularly updated and reviewed to ensure the accuracy of the future programmes and cost forecasts.

The results of these continual survey programmes allows the AMT to assess whether certain key components of a property, development or block are deteriorating at a greater rate then the recommended life cycles provided through the Decent Homes guidance. This will allow alterations to be made to future maintenance programmes to ensure these components do not result in the property failing the standard.

During the course of a year, any Signpost property will experience a number of visits from Signpost staff mainly to resolve reported repairs or problems by the tenant. Some of these will require an inspection by a Surveyor from the Joint Repairs Team. Other surveys will be carried out by the Planned Maintenance Team as and when the property is programmed to receive some major component replacement (Kitchen, Bathroom, door etc).

In any of these cases where a Surveyor requires to visit the property the AMT have developed a short survey sheet to allow survey data to be collected on some of the key components of a property whilst the Surveyor is on-site. This is returned to the AMT for updating Keystone and allowing the accuracy of the data to improve further. These regular update surveys are also an advantage by providing information that is related to the HHSRS assessments ensuring all potential hazards are actioned accordingly.