

BUDGET SCRUTINY

Top challenges for delivering within Portfolio budget for 2026/27
Councillor Penberthy (Housing, Cooperative Development & Communities)



I. CHALLENGE I - HOMELESSNESS

Nationally and locally homelessness has increased significantly over the last few years. The continued impact of the recovery from COVID 19, cost-of-living crisis, rising interest rates and inflation, oversubscribed health, and wellbeing services, including the lack of affordable housing across all housing tenures has resulted in increased demand for housing services and temporary accommodation.

Wider legislation changes beginning in the last parliament with the Renters Reform Bill have had an impact on the housing market. The Renters Rights Act will end the use of section 21 "no fault" evictions and improve overall standards in the private rented sector. Over the last five years in the run up to these changes we have seen an increased proportion of landlords who are leaving the sector as they are not able to meet the requirements and associated costs. Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation improvements through the Domestic Abuse Act have increased our responsibilities. These combined legislation changes place further pressure on the availability and affordability of the private rented sector.

All these factors are combining to mean that more households are becoming homeless and needing to seek support from the Local Authority.

I.a. MITIGATIONS FOR CHALLENGE I - HOMELESSNESS

Deliver the Homelessness Transformation Plan. This will deliver a number of improvements that will holistically reduce demand for services. Programmes include:

- **Multiple Disadvantage** - Reduction in all forms of homelessness and rough sleeping by offering bespoke personalised and trauma informed interventions through a new Homelessness and MD Strategy and Action Plan
- **Prevent and Reduce Family Homelessness** - To prevent and reduce family homelessness by identifying risk early and coordinating support across housing, early help services such as family hubs, schools, and health
- **Prevent and Reduce Homelessness for Children and Young People** - strengthening early identification and a coordinated approach between Community Connections and Children's Social Care to prevent homelessness amongst children, young people and care experienced young people
- **Domestic Abuse** - This programme will expand and maintain safe accommodation in Plymouth so that victim/ survivors can access specialist supported temporary accommodation when needed. It aims to increase the quality and standards of refuge provision, shared housing and safe houses as well as monitoring take up of the Sanctuary Scheme in order that PCC can meet its statutory duty under Part 4 of the DA Act.
- **Increasing Temporary Housing Supply** - To expand and optimise the use of supported and temporary accommodation for people who experience homelessness, Working with partners to increase the flow of additional, appropriate units ensuring that the provision is low cost to PCC and reduces the reliance on B&B and other nightly paid accommodation.
- **Private Rented Sector** – Working with Landlords agencies we continue to support Private landlords by offering advice, support and training as we work through an implementation plan

to prepare the city for the Renters Rights Act. We continue to work on the safety, quality and availability of Private Rented Accommodation.

- **Increasing Affordable Housing Supply** – Continue to review the work of the Housing Sites Task Force which has looked at all potential housing sites across the city, that will feed into the new Local Plan. We have recently launched a Housing Market Recovery Plan to help stimulate the market and unlock allocated and stalled sites. Continue the future identification and release of surplus Council owned sites and where possible bid for Brownfield Land Release Funding to help unlock the sites for new housing. Engage with developers on market led schemes to secure affordable housing through planning gain. Continue to work with the Plymouth Housing Development Partnership (PHDP) and Homes England to maximise the new Homes England funding for affordable housing. Ensure affordable housing delivery is a significant part of the overall delivery of new homes as part of the regeneration of the city centre and New Town proposal.

2. CHALLENGE 2 – CORPORATE ESTATE

Challenge to maintain statutory areas of compliance across an ageing corporate estate due to FM capacity, skills shortages, and recruitment challenges.

The estate requires remedial actions to meet compliance standards (fire safety, asbestos, M&E testing) as part of the delivery plan.

Current FM team is not at full substantive staffing and has reliance on agency staff for critical roles (e.g., Asbestos Appointed Person).

Recruitment and skills difficulties for specialist roles (Fire Safety Advisor, surveyors, engineers) and retention risks due to market pressures exacerbate vulnerability.

2.a. MITIGATIONS FOR CHALLENGE 2 – CORPORATE ESTATE

- **Develop and delivery of FM Asset Management Strategy**

Asset Management Strategy will be commissioned to provide a clear framework for optimising the use, maintenance and investment in property and assets to support service delivery and financial sustainability. Outcome is to ensure assets are safe, efficient and aligned with strategic priorities.

- **Deliver FM Improvement and Recovery Plan**

Shift from reactive revenue spend to planned capital investment where possible.

Align funding with the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to ensure sustainability.

Ensure capacity to respond to unplanned needs / events.

- **Improve Contract Delivery and Management**

Strengthen governance through the Commercial and Contracts Manager role.

Challenge contractor performance and costs; introduce KPIs for compliance and quality.

Use term contractors for interim fire safety advice and explore strategic partnerships to address skills gaps.

3. CHALLENGE 3 - NHS FAIRSHARES FUNDING

Potential for reduction in NHS Fairshares funding – currently set at £800k would result in being unable to deliverable existing community empowerment programmes

3.a. MITIGATIONS FOR CHALLENGE 3 - NHS FAIRSHARES FUNDING

- **Secure ICB Funding Commitment** – Confirm verbal agreement to maintain £800k Fairshares funding for 2026/27.
- **Finalize Budget Breakdown** – Complete and submit full budget for ICB approval before year-end.
- **Manage VCSE Contract Risk** – Work closely with providers on annual contracts to mitigate redundancy risks during 2026/27 budgeting.
- **Maintain CE Management Funding** – Ensure team remains fully supported by the Public Health Grant.