Corporate Property Strategy

2026



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1. Introduction

1.1 Harborough District Council is committed to managing its property portfolio efficiently and effectively providing a proactive approach to meet the expectations of its residents and customers. Property forms a vital part of service delivery and it's essential that the council achieves the best use of its property assets by having an innovative approach to property management that fully engages the interaction between people, property and technology.

This involves rationalising the amount of accommodation the council and partner organisations occupy both within the main headquarters of The Symington Building along with the remainder of the portfolio, to provide the right property in the right place and at the right cost, to meet the challenges facing its services.

In order to achieve this, property ownership and use must be planned over the long term through establishing clear corporate and service strategies. In this way its contribution to service delivery can be focused, and priorities for maintaining and developing opportunities for capital investment managed effectively.

1.2 Strategic property management is the process which aligns business and property strategies ensuring the optimisation of an organisation's property in a way which best supports its business goals and objectives.

1.3 This strategy provides a high-level framework for how the council will manage its property, in line with the council's corporate plan.

2. The Council's Property Portfolio

2.1 The council's current portfolio consists of over 250 properties and includes:-

Operational properties
- The Symington Building (part)

Residential properties
- Temporary accommodation properties

Parks & Recreation Grounds

Car Parks

Allotment Sites

Commercial
- The Symington Building (part)
- Harborough Innovation Centre
- Harborough Enterprise Centre
- Harborough Indoor Market
- Doddridge Road offices

Leisure Centres
- Harborough Leisure Centre
- Lutterworth Leisure Centre (leasehold)

Other Public Open Space
- Tin House Farm Lots 1,2 & 3
- Environmental Depot

Cemeteries & Burial Grounds

Public Toilets

2.2 These assets include places for people to work, visit and socialise and may also raise income to support the delivery of services. They also include amenity land, such as open landscaped areas and legacy plots forming parts of adopted roads. There are a number of residential properties to fulfil temporary accommodation requirements.

2.3 In addition, there is a depot that is used for the provision of the environmental services contract (Waste, Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance) and is provided by the contractor as part of the environmental services contract. A new site has been identified and acquired (Tin House Farm Lot 2) which will be developed to provide a depot to the incoming contractor from April 2027.

3. Corporate Property Strategy

3.1 The primary objective of the corporate property strategy is to support and enhance the district's public services and facilities, through effective property management, ensuring a sustainable and prosperous district now and for the future.

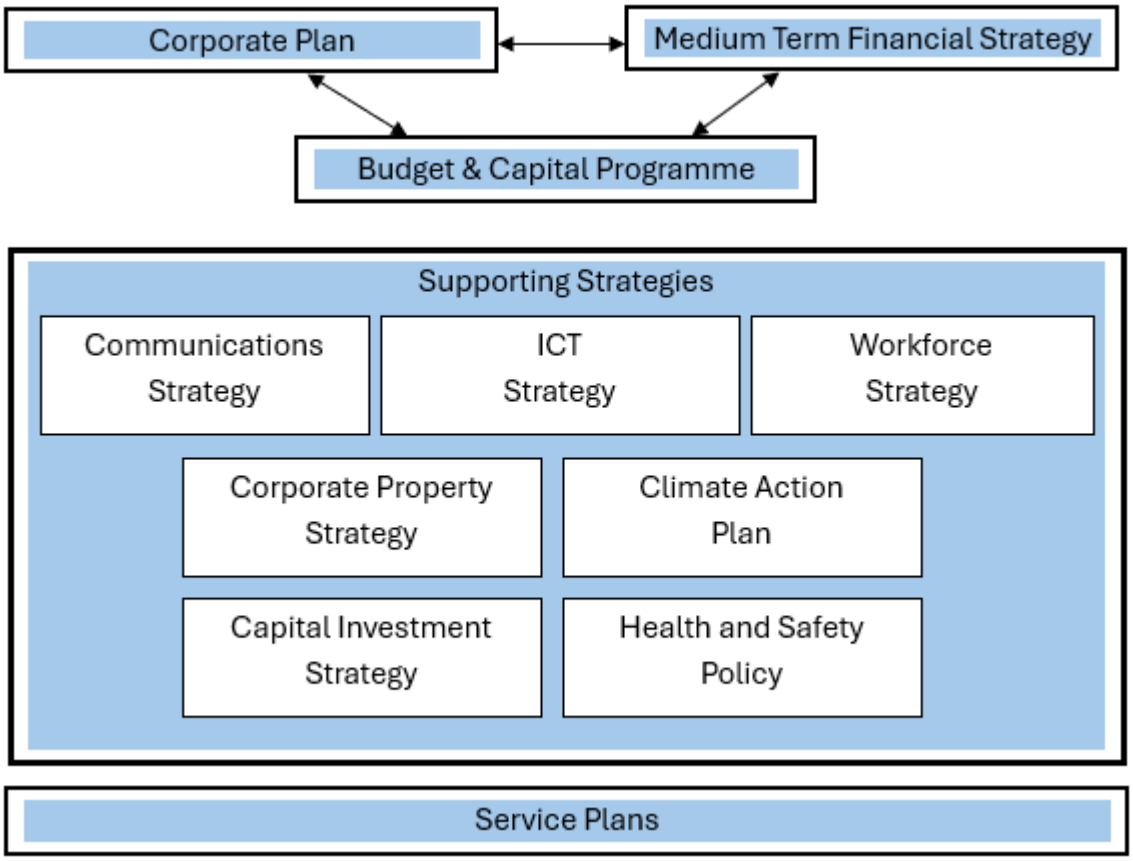
3.2 The strategy guides all property decisions to ensure that the portfolio continues to be managed strategically, efficiently and sustainably, and that the council can plan for and adapt to change. The key principles of the strategy are:

- property will be held as a corporate resource, and will only be held or acquired to support service delivery, and/or for social benefit except in certain exceptions, which may include property:
  - held or acquired to generate income (either now or in the future), subject to the ongoing business case for retention being demonstrated;
  - required to achieve a regeneration objective; and
  - required for future service provision;
- capital receipts from the sale of land and property will be allocated to fund priorities identified in the council's capital programme;
- the council will consider a Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) environmental assessment rating of good and excellent as options for all new building proposals;
- new buildings will be sustainable based on life cycle costs and not solely on initial capital outlay; and
- the council will regularly check whether its properties are suitable for service delivery, add social value and/or generate revenue, comparing suitability, condition and investment requirements to decide whether they should be retained.

4. Links with the Council's Other Plans

4.1 Property changes have long lead-in times, emphasising the need for good forward planning.

4.2 The corporate property strategy is an integral part of business planning as outlined below.



Corporate Plan

4.3 The council's corporate plan is the key document that sets out the council's vision, priorities and shapes the capital investment, identifying the key activities that will enable the council to adapt its service provision to meet the challenges of a changing community need.

4.4 Corporate Plan 2022 – 2031 vision is 'working with our communities, we will build a future for the people of Harborough district that gives them the best life chances and opportunities through':

Place & Community – Community leadership to create a sense of pride in our place.

Healthy Lives – Promoting health and wellbeing and encouraging healthy life choices.

Environment & Sustainability – Creating a sustainable environment to protect future generations.

Economy – Supporting businesses and residents to deliver a prosperous local economy.

4.5 Each priority area has a comprehensive set of supporting actions and plans which will contribute to their delivery.

4.6 Service plans are updated annually to reflect key activities in the councils corporate plan.

Budget & the Medium-Term Financial Strategy

4.7 The council has developed a rolling 3-year medium term financial strategy (MTFS) and capital programme to ensure that there is an effective and efficient use of resources that will address the council's priorities. Each year the Director of Resources (&S.151 Officer) will produce guidance on the funding available, and development and prioritisation of its capital programme in accordance with the council's constitution.

4.8 Property has already contributed to achieving savings and generating income and is expected to continue to play a full part in achieving future savings/income including appropriate charging for the use of council property.

Capital Investment Strategy

4.9 The council's capital strategy is adopted by council in February each year and outlines the approach to the use of capital resources to deliver the council's objectives.

5. Supporting Policies, Procedures and Guidance

5.1 The corporate property strategy is underpinned by a number of procedures and policies to ensure best value for money and social value from property in serving the strategic priorities of the council.

5.2 These procedures and policies may be reviewed more frequently than the corporate property strategy. Procedures tend to be governed by council's constitution, in particular its financial procedure rules. They do not apply to acquisitions under compulsory purchase.

Property Acquisition and Disposal Procedures

5.3 These procedures support the financial procedure rules and associated guidance, and emphasise transparency and consistency, aiming to optimise benefits from the effective purchase, subsequent management or disposal of the council's property. Within this framework the policy will help ensure the council achieves best value, acts within the appropriate legal framework in a demonstrably fair and open manner and considers whole life costs.

5.4 The procedures also establish the principle that the council will not adopt open spaces without funding being available for their maintenance, unless there are exceptional circumstances which will be considered on a case by case basis without precedent.

Community Asset Transfer Policy

5.5 This sets out the procedure for the transfer of property to community groups under the relevant legislation and guidance from Government.

Voluntary & Community Sector Accommodation Policy

5.6 This policy provides for the general principle that lettings of council owned properties to the voluntary and community sector organisations (VCS) need to be on formal, commercial terms (licence/lease/tenancy), and at current market values. It also sets out the procedure to apply for a concession where it is considered that the VCS organisation is unable to afford the full market rent but could provide maintainable benefits to the community to support the council's objectives.

Property Risks & Compliance Procedure

5.7 The property team's role is to ensure the council meets its statutory obligations, eliminating property risks wherever possible or reducing them to a safe and acceptable level. As a landlord (within the context of the lease agreement) and an employer, the council has obligations to provide a safe environment for its staff and property users.

5.8 This process begins by assessing whether significant risks exist and their extent and then putting in place appropriate action plans for the management and/or removal of those risks.

5.9 The management of high-level property risk includes that associated with asbestos, legionella and fire safety and extends to the testing and maintenance of items such as electrical equipment, gas testing, lifting equipment, etc.

6. The Council's Approach to Property Management

6.1 The council operates a 'Corporate Landlord' model which provides a clear framework for the management of its property, founded on the basic principles that:

- it is a corporate resource available to support the delivery of all services;
- its use is based upon clear and justified need emanating from service plans;
- its occupation is managed through the introduction of identified service levels and clear expectations and responsibilities of both corporate landlord and occupier (within the context of any lease/licence provisions);
- challenge and review of its use and performance is seen as a positive approach to ensuring that it is fit for purpose and that retention, investment and utilisation is focused on the needs of the community and the council's objectives;
- all property related reports are prepared in a collaborative way with the corporate landlord's views clearly stated through the corporate property officer; and
- property users have an obligation to reduce running costs.

6.2 This approach gives the council

- strategic control of its properties;

- a corporate and collaborative approach to review and change of use; and
- an integrated and shared use of premises, facilities management and maintenance, development and refurbishment.

6.3 The corporate landlord will take the responsibility for providing a consistent approach to:

- acquisition and disposal;
- space standards and usage;
- health & safety in buildings;
- repair and maintenance;
- the management of asbestos;
- security, caretaking and cleaning;
- disabled access requirements;
- insurance – buildings and building works, in conjunction with the finance team; and
- energy efficiency and sustainability issues.

7. Approach to Sustainable Buildings and Climate Emergency

7.1 The council's property management objective is to reduce energy consumption, utility costs and consequential greenhouse gas emissions thereby reducing the council's carbon footprint and its adverse impact on the environment.

7.2 This strategy is consistent with the council's climate action plan, progress on which is reported annually, together with the council's carbon emissions inventory.

7.3 At each stage of a property transaction (e.g. acquisition, investment, development or maintenance) the property team will, where relevant, advise (directly or through consultants) on:

- whole life costs;
- material specification to reduce environmental impact;
- reducing the environmental impact of (sub)contractors' transport on the environment;
- efficient water uses and reuse;
- achieving Government energy use targets on non-domestic public sector buildings; and
- an evaluation of the transaction's contribution to sustainability and addressing the climate emergency.

7.4 The council will seek opportunities through transformation to continuously improve and adapt services around changing needs of customers and staff.

8. Building Maintenance

8.1 Property is a core resource, and needs to be;

- **'fit for purpose'** – contributing to effective service delivery in terms of location, condition, suitability, accessibility, design and layout and meeting statutory requirements;
- **'efficient'** –in the way that property is used i.e. flexibly and in support of new ways of working; and
- **'sustainable'** – both in environmental and financial terms so that it supports the work of the council and its partners as circumstances change.

8.2 Delivering this will involve:

- **decisions** on improving or replacing properties;
- **targeting available resources** on 'core' properties - those that the council considers it needs to retain in the medium to long term, to reduce any backlog in maintenance and to rebalance spending to best practice of 30:70 reactive to planned maintenance;
- **working in partnership** with other organisations and local communities to maximise/optimise the use of property for the benefit of the people of the district of Harborough;
- **addressing both the causes and the effects of climate change** to reduce the council's carbon footprint;
- **ensuring** maintenance is co-ordinated with other projects to minimise impact on users of the facilities and maximise synergies;
- **ensuring** we have rolling set of condition surveys to all our properties.

8.3 The level of funding for reactive and planned maintenance is approved by council annually through the budget process, agreeing with finance the classification of revenue and capital expenditure.

8.4 Maintenance budgets are managed corporately allowing funds to be directed to corporate priorities identified through condition surveys and site specific priorities.

8.5 The condition of buildings will be assessed by condition surveys at least once every 3 years for core assets and every 5 years for non-core assets.

8.6 Building maintenance includes:

- retaining the property in a condition suitable for its use/function;
- preventing deterioration and failure, to extend its life;
- restoring physical condition to a specified standard;
- recovery from structural and service failure; and
- partial equivalent replacement of building components.

8.7 Work excluded from building maintenance includes:

- improvements and upgrading to meet new service capacity or function;
- refurbishment to new condition to extend the capacity of the property;

- improvements and upgrading to newly acquired properties to enable service delivery;
- capital replacement of major components to extend the capacity or useful life of the property;
- upgrading to meet new statutory requirements (additional budget bids will be made where required);
- operational tasks to enable occupancy and use (e.g. cleaning, security, waste removal;
- supply of utilities (energy, water and telecommunications);
- major restoration as a result of natural and other disasters;
- demolition of redundant buildings; and
- erection of temporary structures.

8.8 For leased and/or joint use buildings (whether the council is landlord or tenant), responsibility for maintenance is determined by the provisions of each relevant agreement.

8.9 Works that are considered an 'enhancement' of a property will be capitalised following agreement with finance.

8.10 Maintenance plans will be priority rated as follows:

- P1 - Urgent work to prevent immediate closure of properties/buildings and /or remedy a serious breach of legislation and /or high risk to health & safety.
- P2 - Essential work required within two years to prevent serious deterioration of building fabric or service and/or remedy to minor breach of legislation and /or minor risk to health & safety.
- P3 - Desirable work required within 3 to 5 years to prevent deterioration of building fabric or service and/or address a low risk minor breach of legislation and /or minor risk to health & safety.

9. Leasing and Licencing Property as Landlord or Tenant

9.1 Where the council is taking a lease or licence on property, the matter must be referred to the property team (Estates Officer) for negotiations of heads of terms and management of the transaction process to ensure the proposal and terms are in the council's best interest, are in accordance with current market practise and meet statutory requirements and associated guidance.

9.2 In all cases where the council is leasing or licencing property, whether as landlord or tenant, heads of terms are to be negotiated by the property team. Approval of those terms lies with the corporate property officer and, where relevant, with the relevant portfolio holder, cabinet or council according to the council's constitution.

9.3 The property team will advise to the corporate property officer on:

- the term of lease (including the timing and terms of any break options);
- the occupational costs (rents, rates etc);
- rent review periods where relevant;
- maintenance & dilapidations obligations;

- insurance obligations; and
- any other obligations relevant to the approval process.

9.4 There are separate lettings strategy & guidance notes for Harborough Innovation Centre and Harborough Enterprise Centre. The Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) accommodation policy sets out the specific arrangements for letting council owned property to the VCS.

9.5 The council is obliged under section 123 of Local Government Act 1972 to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable in its property dealings. All lease transactions (whether as landlord or tenant) will be agreed at the then current market rent, taking into account usual concessions granted.

9.6 When vacating or disposing of a leasehold building, any dilapidations liability will be negotiated by the property team in accordance with the provisions of the lease and any relevant legislation. Legal will be consulted by the property team in the matter of any statutory or contractual notices to be served or received.

10. Data Management

10.1 The council's asset register and other property information is held on a corporate database with associated documents linked to each asset.

10.2 The property team and finance are responsible for providing the necessary data to keep the information up to date.

11. Performance Management and Monitoring

11.1 Corporate plan action for the review of existing council property will be collated on an annual basis, with monthly progress updates which will be included on the Pentana portal.

11.2 A range of local performance indicators will be introduced to allow monitoring and review on a regular basis by the property team.

12. Key Issues and Areas for Change and Development

12.1 The key actions and practices to support change and development can be summarised as follows:

- continue to challenge property utilisation, suitability, location, retention and sustainability.
- maintain and, where appropriate, upgrade office environments in line with corporate requirements, and industry good practice.
- identify and address maintenance and compliance issues as identified in the property condition surveys.