

Runnymede Borough Council

Service Area Plan 25/26

Housing

FINAL COMMITTEE APPROVED

Approvals

Approved by CLT: 11/12/2024

Approved by Service Cttee: 05/03/2025



Service Area Plan for Financial Year 2025/26

Service Area: Housing

Corporate Head of Service: Maggie Ward

Supported by: Angela Horsey, Simon Allen, Iqvinder Sokhal, Daniel Lloyd, Ellie Slade

Version: FINAL

The priority and focus for service areas for 2025/26 must be demonstration of ongoing continuous improvement, delivery of savings or income generation opportunities and realisation of benefits to align with the MTFs and address the Council's budget gap. This is alongside delivery of core activity.

Initiatives that are agreed to come forward from the Savings and Efficiency programme and the rolling programme of Service Reviews will be prioritised in relevant service area plans and progress monitored during the year.

The Activities of the Housing Business Unit are split between the General Fund Activities of Homelessness, Housing Advice, maintenance of a Housing Register and Allocation of social housing in the borough and management of Runnymede Council's social housing stock which is held within the Housing Revenue Account.

In recent years social landlords have been subject to increased regulation due to the failure to maintain standards across the sector and a new inspection regime was introduced in April 2024. The Regulator of Social Housing has established new Consumer Standards with a focus on resident safety, satisfaction, transparency and involvement. The workstreams within the 2025/26 Housing Service Area Plan represent a comprehensive strategy to address areas where the Council has identified improvements are needed to meet those standards in full.

Mission statement

We are committed to continuous improvement of the housing services we provide – be that support for homeless households, the allocation of social housing, management of Council properties, our repairs service, the provision of adaptations, resident engagement and improvements to Council owned homes.

We aim to provide quality, empathetic, and compassionate housing services. We want to get services right first time and put things right as quickly as possible if they go wrong.

We want to build trust by listening more to the views of service users and by being clear about what we can and cannot deliver.

Achieving the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards and increasing resident satisfaction will drive our culture, service planning, performance management and investment priorities.

Service Information

Service Area: Housing

Service Area 1:	Housing Solutions Service
Service Area 2:	Housing and Neighbourhood Services
Service Area 3:	Housing Maintenance and Technical Services
Service Area 4:	Business Development and Policy Section
Service Area 5:	Systems & Revenue Team
Service Area 6:	Housing Development Programme

Description of Service (1) Housing Solutions Service

Main Purpose:

- To deliver an excellent customer focussed Housing Solutions Service that is compliant with relevant legislation and statutory guidance.
- To work to prevent homelessness, and to take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants.
- To ensure that all applicants seeking housing advice receive empathetic tailored housing solutions aligned with legislation, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Housing Allocations Scheme.
- Allocation of social housing in accordance with legislation.

Key functions 2025/26

- Administration of the online Housing Register (1096 applicants registered as at 4th November 2024).
- Allocation of social housing under the Housing Act 1996 Part VI within the Council stock (136 new tenancies in 2023/24) plus nominations to Registered Providers (120 successful nominations in 2023/24).
- Administration of Downsizing scheme (9 households downsized in 2023/24) and promotion of best use of the housing stock.
- Partnership working with Housing Associations including liaison on nominations and new Affordable Rent properties
- Homelessness and Housing Advice provision duties compliant with legislation (238 homelessness applications and 739 approaches for housing advice in 2023/24).
- Personalised Housing Plans provided as part of each homeless application.

- Homeless prevention 58 preventions (average of 49% cases prevented in 2023/24)
- Working closely with Surrey County Council on health and housing protocols to facilitate joint and effective partnership work

Tenancy Sustainment

- Referrals made and liaison meetings held with supported housing providers, hospitals, charities
- Surrey wide protocols for vulnerable groups
- Management of Magna Carta Lettings in order to maximise private rent housing opportunities and promote the option of housing within the private rent sector (22 new private rented tenancies started in 2023/24).
- Continuation of our Housing Led scheme with close liaison with the supported house providers to effectively respond to any issues at the earliest opportunity
- Responding to the needs of those rough sleeping to support them off the streets, in accordance with our No Second Night Out Policy. 26 individuals assisted out of a perpetual cycle of rough sleeping and 'hidden' rough sleeping in 2023/2024
- Attendance at various fora e.g. representing Surrey at Strategic Management Board and representing RBC at MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) and MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and strategic groups e.g. NW Surrey Domestic Abuse Forum and Strategic Housing Group for Young People Partnership working including regular liaison with SCC regarding care leaver move on and ensuring care leavers are on the housing register.
- Carry out reviews of statutory homelessness decisions and decisions relating to suitability of accommodation under the Housing Act 1996 (20 s.202 reviews with 3 overturned, 1 s.204 appeal in 2023/24).

Description of Service (2) Housing and Neighbourhood Services

Main Purpose: To maximise the rent collection for each of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) homes and General Fund garages; to support the Council's tenants in sustaining their tenancies and to take proportionate action when tenancy obligations are breached.

Key functions

- Rent collection (Annual debit of over £21m for current tenants in 2023/24, DIYSO properties and ground rent).
- Tenancy management (2853 HRA properties in management in April 2023).
- Management of Independent Retirement living (IRL) schemes and supporting residents to maintain their independence and reduce social isolation.
- Dedicated tenancy sustainment and financial inclusion case work; and referral to and liaison with partner agencies.
- Administering rent recovery policy, making County Court possession applications and court advocacy.
- Garage rent collection for garages (£719,000 in 22/23).
- Tenancy Audits, management of fixed term tenancies and changes to tenancies e.g. requests for joint tenancies, succession etc.
- Estate inspections and improvements.
- Estate caretaking and cleaning of communal areas.
- Responding proactively to complaints about anti-social behaviour caused by council tenants and working closely with Community Safety Partners in problem resolutions

- Responding to reported cases of Domestic Abuse and engaging with Safeguarding referrals to statutory agencies.
- Processing Right to Buy applications (11 in 2022/23).
- Liaison with DWP to address welfare reform and Universal Credit issues.
- Working to promote anti-fraud activities and investigating suspected social housing fraud, including allocations, sub-letting and RTB fraud.
- Signing-up new tenancies and managing introductory and fixed term tenancies through a schedule of home visits.
- Mutual Exchanges (23 in 2022/23).

Description of Service (3) Housing Maintenance and Technical Services

Main Purpose:

- To manage and deliver a statutorily compliant and cost-effective repair and maintenance service for nearly 3,000 Council owned and managed homes plus leasehold properties, communal areas and over 1,000 garages.
- The team provides a comprehensive property maintenance service across all the tenure types that fall within its responsibility. This includes liaising with tenants and the technical and administration functions associated with maintaining properties, including the procurement of various contracts and contract management frameworks to delivery services.
- Conversion and adaptation of Council properties to make best use of the housing stock and as appropriate for disabled people.
- Decarbonisation of HRA assets that do not meet an EPC rating of C
- Risk management processes for disrepair claims

Key functions

- Asset management.
- New contract procurement and contract monitoring of existing.
- Management of day to day, responsive repairs and maintenance carried out by contractors (£1,563,700 on Demand Maintenance, void repairs, and decoration allowances in 2023/24).
- Pre and Post Inspection of void properties and oversight of void works carried out by contractors.
- Stock condition surveys to commence in 2024 for a period of five years at 20% per year, to include HHSRS bandings.
- Planned and Cyclical Works - £652,900.00
- Capital projects to ensure compliance with Decent Homes standard 24/25 £6,650,788
- Health and safety compliance including fire risk assessments, electrical safety, gas certification, management of asbestos, water hygiene, Energy Performance Certificates etc.
- Compliance with Building Safety Bill
- Unplanned major work e.g., fire, flooding to properties.
- Adaptations for disabled RBC tenants and their households (£200,000 in 2024/25).
- Mould and Damp case work
- Tree management.

- Decarbonisation of HRA Stock

Description of Service (4) Business Development and Policy Section

Main Purpose: Monitoring, developing, and supporting the work of the Housing Department, with an emphasis on continuous improvement.

Key functions:

- Performance monitoring, benchmarking, and data analysis.
- Submission of statutory and regulatory returns and statistics.
- Strategies, policies, and procedures.
- Tenant and leaseholder engagement including web content, newsletters, consultation and participation initiatives.
- Production of Tenant & Leaseholder Newsletters
- Tenants Annual Report
- Monitoring Complaints and feedback and implementing learning from these.
- Promoting and enabling opportunities for new affordable housing (67 new units of affordable housing delivered through planning obligations in 2022/23).
- Partnership working with Registered Providers including provision of leases for supported housing schemes.
- Equalities and Data protection.

Description of Service (5) Systems & Revenues Team

Main Purpose: To ensure that the Housing Business Unit has an IT system able to manage all its services and ensure legislative and regulatory compliance. To provide an income collection service for the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund Housing services ensuring that all income streams are maximised and managed within standard processes subject to regular audit

Key Functions

- To be responsible for the formulation and delivery of the Housing Business Unit's IT Strategy and to support the delivery of the Council's IT Strategy
- Provide a comprehensive integrated digital solution for the Housing Business Unit
- Responsible for ensuring compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations in all IT systems and operations within the department.
- Provide income services for rent collection (system managed accounts, direct debit collections, reconciliations, debit raising), recharges, leaseholder charges (including major works), court costs, service charges and other debts.
- Provide income management for the Housing Service, ensuring the financial systems balance each week, including all adjustments, reconciliations and interface with the Housing Benefit System.
- To annually implement rent increases and make legally compliant notifications to tenants of any changes by the statutory deadline.
- To annually calculate the estimated leasehold service charges for all HRA leaseholders & then follow up with the actual charges in accordance with the leases
- Leasehold management, sales & lease extensions, including the collection of service charges
- Manage the former tenant arrears collection, rechargeable repairs & any other sundry debts.

- Provision of operational performance monitoring information from the NEC system and any other systems used in Housing operations.
- To project manage the implementation of new modules and external integrations with the supplier, ensuring all new releases of software are subject to the appropriate testing, timely implementation and training as required.

Description of Service (6) Housing Development

Main Purpose:

- Ensuring all new properties will be built or refurbished to an approved standard,
- Developing sustainable, low maintenance homes which are affordable for the residents to occupy,
- Delivery of the target for new homes (125 by September 2026),
- The use of innovative construction methods, where appropriate,
- To make sure that value for money is achieved on all schemes and the financial viability of any proposal is rigorously assessed,
- Putting plans in place so that the type and size of properties (including accessible properties) that are acquired or development addresses evidenced local need,
- Ensuring Larger schemes will provide low-cost homeownership opportunities where possible.

Key functions:

- Create and review a strategy to deliver new council homes in line with the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Asset Management Plan as well as other corporate strategies.
- Seeking and assessing potential new development sites.
- Appoint and manage consultants to advise upon and assist with the delivery of the Council's housing development programme.
- Providing co-ordination between corporate services including Procurement, Finance, Legal, Planning and Asset Management & Property Services in the production of Affordable Housing.
- Liaison and negotiation with Homes England, private developers, Registered Providers and others to lever in maximum resources.
- Providing and monitoring information and data relating to local housing markets and local housing needs to ensure that the priorities set for development schemes adequately reflect this need, including for example size, type, location and tenure mix.
- Develop new Council housing that uses modern techniques to ensure quality, cost and time measures are fulfilled.
- Acquire properties and arrange for their renovation where required.
- Liaison with Elected Members, residents and other stakeholders to promote sustainable affordable housing development in the Borough.
- Appointment and management of construction companies to deliver excellent new council homes.
- Produce financial appraisals for potential development sites, assessing payback periods and cashflow. Liaison with Finance to monitor the HRA Business Plan.

Planned Activities



Housing

Total number of planned activities

45

Types of Activities

Project

18

Review

9

One-off

17

New Core Activity

1

Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
Project	Development Site H021 housing scheme	Economic Development	31 July 2023	31 July 2023	31 December 2027	In progress
Project	Development Site H033 housing scheme	Economic Development	31 July 2023	31 July 2023	31 January 2028	In progress
Project	Development Site H061 housing scheme	Health and Wellbeing	01 July 2025		31 October 2026	Not started
Project	Ensure tenants and leaseholders can recycle	Climate Change	01 May 2024	01 May 2024	31 March 2027	In progress
Project	EPC C rating by 2030	Climate Change	01 January 2022	01 January 2022	31 March 2027	In progress
Project	Fire Safety Works Surrey Towers	Health and Wellbeing	01 December 2024	01 December 2024	31 March 2026	In progress
Project	IRL Improvements	Health and Wellbeing		01 July 2023	31 March 2027	In progress
Project	Lift Replacement at Surrey Towers	Health and Wellbeing	01 March 2025		31 March 2026	Not started
Project	Local Paths Investment	Health and Wellbeing	03 April 2023	01 October 2023	31 March 2026	In progress
Project	NEC Housing Phase 3	Organisational Development	18 September 2023	18 September 2023	30 November 2025	In progress
Project	NEC Upgrade phase 4 Migration of data and Implementation of Compliance Dashboard	Organisational Development	01 October 2024	01 October 2024	31 August 2025	In progress
Project	NEC Upgrade phase 4 Task Manager	Organisational Development	01 March 2025		31 March 2026	Not started
Project	Parkside Regeneration (RIBA 0-4)	Economic Development	01 March 2022	01 March 2022	30 April 2026	In progress
Project	Surrey Towers Roof covering and deck	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2025		31 March 2026	Not started
Project	Tenancy Agreement Refresh	Empowering Communities	01 March 2023	03 April 2023	30 September 2025	Paused
Project	Tenants Handbook Refresh	Empowering Communities	01 May 2023	26 July 2023	31 December 2025	Paused
Project	Tender for Estate Services	Economic Development	01 May 2024	01 May 2024	30 November 2026	In progress
Project	Window Replacement Surrey Towers	Health and Wellbeing	01 December 2024	01 December 2024	31 March 2026	In progress

Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
Review	Garage Strategy Review	Economic Development	01 January 2025	01 June 2022	31 December 2025	Not started
Review	HRA stock roof survey and programme of works	Health and Wellbeing	01 January 2025		31 March 2027	Not started
Review	Leaseholder Charges	Organisational Development	01 April 2024	01 April 2024	30 November 2025	In progress
Review	Manage programme of key strategies, policies and procedures 25/26	Organisational Development	01 April 2025		31 March 2026	Not started
Review	Private Rented Sector Offer Policy	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2025		30 June 2025	Not started
Review	Review Downsizing Process	Organisational Development	01 November 2025		30 November 2025	Not started
Review	Review of all HRA charges that are not rent	Economic Development	01 September 2024	01 September 2024	31 May 2025	Not started
Review	Review of Rent Setting	Economic Development	01 January 2025		30 September 2025	Not started
Review	Rough Sleeping No Second Night Out Policy	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2025		30 June 2025	Not started

Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
One Off	Council Heating Plan	Climate Change	01 April 2025		30 April 2030	Not started
One Off	Customer Insight Strategy	Organisational Development	01 March 2025		31 August 2025	Not started
One Off	Financial Inclusion Strategy Action Plan	Economic Development	01 April 2025		31 March 2026	Not started
One Off	Former Tenant Debt Collection process	Economic Development	01 April 2025		31 August 2025	Not started
One Off	Housing Allocation Scheme	Organisational Development	01 August 2024	01 August 2024	30 June 2025	In progress
One Off	Implement additional transactional surveys	Empowering Communities	01 March 2024		31 December 2025	In progress
One Off	Implement the contract management framework for internal services	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2025		31 March 2026	Not started
One Off	Introduce a Tenant Incentive Scheme	Health and Wellbeing	01 January 2025		30 November 2025	Not started
One Off	Leaseholder Handbook	Empowering Communities	01 April 2024	01 April 2024	31 July 2025	In progress
One Off	Partnership Scheme with Life Housing	Health and Wellbeing	01 September 2024	01 September 2024	01 September 2025	In progress
One Off	Partnership Scheme with Riverside Housing	Health and Wellbeing	01 November 2024	01 November 2024	31 July 2025	Not started
One Off	QMS Roll-out	Organisational Development	01 April 2025		30 September 2025	Not started
One Off	Review of Independent Retirement Living	Organisational Development	01 February 2025		31 October 2025	Not started
One Off	Self Assessment	Empowering Communities	01 April 2024	01 April 2024	31 March 2027	In progress
One Off	Stock Condition Survey and asset data review	Health and Wellbeing	01 January 2025		31 March 2027	Not started
One Off	Tender of Minor Works contract	Economic Development	01 January 2025		31 August 2025	Not started
One Off	Tree Survey (HRA)	Health and Wellbeing	01 December 2024	01 December 2024	31 October 2025	In progress

Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
New Core Activity	Rechargeable repairs and discretionary works process	Economic Development	01 April 2025		31 March 2026	Not started

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