

# Guildford Borough Council: Housing Improvement Plan

19 September 2024

Key: Completed/in place, On track, Not Started

Leadership						
Ref	Actions	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Governance Mapping	RAG & progress update
H1	Develop an improvement plan for Housing with a particular focus on leadership, cultural change, tenant engagement, building and tenant safety, compliance, staff training, procurement and budget monitoring.	Complete	1	Strategic Director Housing, Communities & Environment	CGSC 15 May Council 23 July	
H2	Introduce performance management culture, including more comprehensive monthly compliance reporting and assurance, and regular review by CLB and Scrutiny. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To review KPIs and monitor key decisions, risk logs and improvement plans at directorate management meeting.</li> <li>Ensure regular monitoring reports including the risk register, voids, budget monitoring and contract awards reviewed at least quarterly by directorate management teams, with non-compliance tackled swiftly.</li> </ul>	May 24	2, 3, 7 and 21	Assistant Director of Housing	Corporate Performance Monitoring: Overview & Scrutiny (resources)  Housing Operations Board	
H3	Refresh the Housing Strategy, in partnership with stakeholders and residents to help align housing service plans to wider aspirations for Guildford Borough Council's people and places, and the Social Housing Regulation Act. Ensure the Corporate Strategy feeds into the Housing Strategy and vice versa.	December 24	4 and 5	Assistant Director of Housing	Housing Operations Board TBC Full Council TBC	New Housing Strategy & Enabling Manager started end of August 2024.  Corporate Strategy approved July 2024
H4	Ensure a permanent Joint Strategic Director of Housing is in place and has adequate time to devote to Housing, amongst their other priorities.	Summer 2024	8 and 9	Chief Executive	Joint Senior Staff Committee	Permanent Strategic Director for Housing, Communities and Environment in post.  Currently, the SD is supporting Planning and Regeneration due to a vacancy. The new SD of Economy, Planning & Place will be starting in November.
H5	Review the entire Housing staffing structure and ensure that it is fit for purpose, is robust and has the necessary capacity and skills. Ensure all job profiles are up to date and reflect organisational and service needs.	Phase 1 June 24 Phase 2 December 24	10 and 16	Assistant Director of Housing	TBC	Phase 1 complete: pivotal roles recruited to in compliance & repairs: Phase 2 will be a comprehensive

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						review, and currently scoping HR requirements for review.
H6	Agree a Corporate Vision and Values and ensure that this is reflected and fully embedded within Housing. Ensure a 'golden thread' approach exists so that the Corporate Strategy feeds into the Housing Strategy, and in turn, feeds into team plans and Appraisal Targets	December 24	11 and 12	Assistant Director of Strategy & Corporate Services	Corporate Strategy, 23 July Council	Values discussion featured at all housing staff event June 2024 and embedded into performance appraisals
H7	Introduce a performance culture. Ensure all housing staff have regular 121s, annual appraisals, with clear work-based and behavioural targets, with 6 monthly reviews and development plans.	September 24	13 and 27	Assistant Director of Housing	n/a	Commenced, will align with Corporate performance management Meeting with Housing & HR – Learning & OD: 18 <sup>th</sup> September Housing service SharePoint site in development
H8	Undertake a skills and qualifications audit for the housing team and ensure that senior housing managers and housing executives hold professional qualifications and if they do not, support them to obtain these qualifications.	October 24	14 and 15	Assistant Director of Housing	n/a	New Housing Strategy & Enabling Manager leading this work
H9	Ensure all permanent jobs are reflected within the Establishment and match with the specified staffing budgets.	Completed	17	Assistant Director of Housing	n/a	
H10	HR and Housing Service Recruitment panel members to consider references as part of the recruitment process for permanent, agency and interim candidates. (HR to retain references on file for 2 years)	Completed	18	Assistant Director of Housing	n/a	This is now standard.
<b>Governance and culture</b>						
Ref	Actions and status	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Governance Mapping	RAG & progress update
H11	Develop a skills requirement audit that identifies the minimum levels of procurement and financial management knowledge required for roles across the organisation, with an associated training programme to help all staff in relevant roles meet the requirements.	Training to be complete Dec 24	20	Assistant Director of Strategy & Corporate Services	n/a	Initial discussions with HR. New Housing Strategy & Enabling Manager leading on work.
H12	Engender a 'no blame' learning culture within a framework of staff taking personal accountability and responsibility and within a performance culture.	July 24	25	Assistant Director of Housing	n/a	Open discussions at Housing Away Day. Updated Corporate Whistleblowing Policy which has been embedded into Housing practices.

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H13	Encourage staff to come forward with continuous improvements, innovation and creativity whilst adhering to Good Governance and following due process.	July 24	26	Assistant Director of Housing	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Away morning: June</li> <li>• Housing Volunteers group &amp; engagement with Housing workstream leads for ideas.</li> <li>• Improvement Champions Group for staff to be involved with wider council improvements.</li> <li>• Housing away afternoon – October</li> <li>• Feedback part of 1:1s &amp; appraisals</li> </ul>
NEW	Review and update our terms of reference for Housing-related Boards and Group meetings	Jan 2025		Assistant Director of Housing	CLB Hot Topics 09/09/24 (internal)	<p>Terms of reference for the following groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing Operations Board (Executive Working Group)</li> <li>• Tenant Engagement Group (constitution, not formal TOR)</li> <li>• Agreed 09/09/24: Corporate Health and Safety Group: to include Asbestos, Fire Safety, Legionella</li> </ul>
<b>Finance, Budget &amp; the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)</b>						
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Actions and status</b>	<b>By when?</b>	<b>SOLACE Para</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Governance Mapping</b>	<b>RAG &amp; progress update</b>

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H14	Ensure the team follow, comply, monitor and report on procurement, contract procedure and financial rules in all work areas. Ensure all reports requesting investment, major procurement and financial expenditure include a robust business case. Ensure the HRA, Capital and General Fund (Housing) revenue budgets have detailed breakdowns. Ensure there are inbuilt financial checks and balances, with Purchase Order and procurement monitoring.	June 24  December 24	6, 28, 29, 31, 32, 34 and 57	Assistant Director of Housing	Housing Operations Board: HRA Business Plan and budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Set up monthly budget monitoring meetings</li> <li>Shared contract and procedure rules</li> <li>Identified in staff appraisals to attend required training.</li> <li>Procurement training for Housing Staff</li> </ul> Procurement Awareness incl. Contract Procedure Rules: October 1st Procurement Act Workshop - Housing training: October 8th
H15	Ensure sufficient HRA experienced Accountants support the Housing Service.	September 24	30		n/a	Savills re-procurement completed July 24 Meeting with Savills 23 <sup>rd</sup> September on HRA business plan review and training to appropriate staff
H16	Recruit permanent procurement staff.	September 24	33		TBC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Interim Head of Procurement started June 24.</li> <li>Housing service has dedicated procurement resource within corporate procurement.</li> <li>Permanent staff will be part of the Finance team structure review- delayed until after October</li> </ul>
NEW	Review Housing GF budgets to ensure correct appropriation between GF and HRA. Move predominantly HRA budget areas into HRA. Where services are provided to other council services, these budgets are managed and commissioned by the service.	April 2025		TBC	Housing Operations Board: HRA Business Plan and budget	Agreed at Housing service budget challenge session – September 2024. Work with Finance & Housing will be ongoing for next April.

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Back-log of Voids (Empty Properties)						
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H17	The inspections pre and post-works to be undertaken by Guildford Borough Council surveyors. Appoint permanent surveyors	December 24	37 and 38	Assistant Director of Housing		All works over £1000 post-inspected.  Ongoing challenges with surveyor recruitment.
H18	Undertake a service review of the key to key void process with cost benchmarking and best practice.	December 24	39 and 40			Initial meetings taken pace.  Exploring options for independent facilitator to support service review.
Leaseholds and Leaseholders						
Ref	Actions	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Governance Mapping	RAG & progress update
H19	To review leaseholder regulations and services and prepare for new Leasehold Reform Bill. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Process map the work of the leasehold team; so that new members of staff clearly understand what needs to be done, and where files are stored, etc.</li> <li>Comprehensive leasehold review to be scoped. Including refresh processes, clear roles and responsibilities and ensure adhered to processes</li> </ul>	December 24	41, 42, 44, 45 and 46	Assistant Director of Housing		Leasehold lead attended leasehold reform awareness session to develop future responsibilities.
H20	Ensure appropriate accountancy support for Leaseholder Service Charges. An accountant with financial responsibility for Leasehold Service Charges.	September 24	43	Assistant Director of Finance		Leasehold lead working with Finance and created a service charge project team.
H21	To undertake an audit and review of all HRA leasehold property let to RPs and charities. Will establish leasehold register, review earlier communication/decisions and confirm next steps.	September 24	47, 48, 49	Assistant Director of Housing		In progress.
North Downs Housing and other Local Authority Companies						
Ref	Actions and status	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Governance Mapping	RAG & progress update
H22	Undertake a review of North Downs Housing.	July 2024  Ongoing	50, 51	Strategic Director Housing, Communities & Environment	Executive Shareholder and Trusts Committee	Paper on NDH: <a href="#">Executive Shareholder and Trusts committee 8 August</a>

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						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next steps for the committee: Procurement of a suitably qualified company to carry out a review into the most effective governance structure of North Downs Housing</li> <li>• Review includes a detailed options appraisal into the future operation of NDH – including options to wind up the company or to continue operations in a commercially viable manner</li> </ul>
<b>Compliance &amp; Decision Making</b>						
Ref	Actions and status	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Governance Mapping	RAG & progress update
H23	Ensure Key Decision reports concerning contracts are presented to the Executive for decision and appear on the Forward Plan.	May 2024	52	Assistant Director of Housing	<a href="#">Forward Plan for Guildford</a>	<p>Housing Managers monitoring procurement and contract renewals</p> <p>Housing SMT forward plan developed to map report pathways.</p>
H24	Prepare for the Procurement Act 2024.	September 24	54	Assistant Director of Finance		<p>New Head of Procurement in post, drafting Corporate Procurement Strategy.</p> <p>Procurement Training for Housing staff. Training will include housing related contract case study.</p> <p>Housing staff involved in the drafting of new Procurement toolkit for staff.</p> <p>Procurement created Commercial Network for all staff.</p>

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						Procurement Act 2023 is delayed until 24 February 2025, but the council will not delay its preparations.
H25	Ensure that Urgency Powers are only used in exceptional circumstances and that the Strategic Director for Housing ensures that the Monitoring Officer agrees that the Urgency Powers are warranted on a case-by-case basis and that there is full constitutional compliance.	May 2024	55	Strategic Director Housing, Communities & Environment		
H26	Ensure that all Procurement requirements are followed, and that Housing works closely with the Corporate Procurement Team and Legal Services.	May 2024	6 and 56	Assistant Director of Housing		Regular meetings with Housing & Procurement.
H27	Set out Planned Housing Works with associated costs reviewed quarterly for progress on planned works and actual to projected costs.	March 25	58	Assistant Director of Housing		Developed a draft planned works programme, and will form part of HRA review.
<b>Housing Software Systems</b>						
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H28	Upgrade the Housing Software System and ensure it interfaces with the Corporate Finance System, Business World and Housing Applications	2027	61	Strategic Director Housing, Communities & Environment	TBC	Project mandate in draft for housing senior management review. After this, it will be circulated to various teams for comment: ICT, Procurement, Legal, Finance, Strategy & Performance.
<b>Complaints</b>						
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Actions and status</b>	<b>By when?</b>	<b>SOLACE Para</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Governance Mapping</b>	<b>RAG &amp; progress update</b>
H29	Clarify and review the Complaints Process ensuring it is a simple and clear process, which puts customers at its heart.	Complete	63	Assistant Director of Communications & Customer Services	Adopted by Chief Executive in consultation with lead councillor 24.04.24	Complaints Policy updated in April 2024, in line with HO code.
H30	Analyse complaints and identify themes; so that service and policy improvements can be made.	June 24	64	Assistant Director of Housing	Annual complaints report: Housing Operations Board 31.07	Review complete and service improvements identified

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Agency Staff						
Ref	Actions and status	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Governance Mapping	RAG & progress update
H31	Review recruitment, induction and management of all agency staff. To ensure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the relevant software system (Business World) flags when contracts should be reviewed.</li> <li>all agency staff have the references, relevant and necessary qualifications and experience</li> <li>all agency staff disclose if related to or know existing permanent and/or agency staff and councillors</li> <li>all staff policies apply to agency and permanent staff.</li> </ul>	June 24	65, 66, 67 and 68	Assistant Director of Strategy & Corporate Services	n/a	HR review on agency staff Agency staff do follow key policies as part of induction. Relationship policy now in place.
Housing Data, Corporate Property & HRA Land Data						
Ref	Actions and status	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Governance Mapping	RAG & progress update
H32	To ensure all HRA land and assets are documented and listed.	March 25	70 and 71	Assistant Director of Housing		Asset management strategy project mandate is drafted and with internal stakeholders for comment.  Initiated work with Procurement & initial market engagement with suppliers.
H33	Housing to liaise with Corporate Assets and Property Team to ensure that maintenance & repairs of Housing garages and Housing car parks are undertaken by the most effective and appropriate services	December 24	72	Assistant Director of Housing		Started – planning stage
Preparation for and Compliance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2024						
Ref	Actions and status	By when?	SOLACE Para	Owner	Governance Mapping	RAG & progress update
H34	Prepare for and comply with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. Develop data management, improvement plan and processes to adhere to legislative and regulatory requirements with reference to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RSH consumer standards</li> <li>H&amp;S compliance,</li> <li>Tenant Satisfaction Measures</li> <li>Building Safety compliance</li> </ul>	Spring 2024  Ongoing	53, 73, 74 and 76	Assistant Director of Housing		Housing Away Morning June 24, October 24.  HQN conducting external assessment against Consumer Standards.



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						Following RJ, ongoing engagement with the Regulator of Social Housing to meet standards.
H35	Strengthen and document engagement with tenants and broaden and refresh the representation of TEG (The Tenant Engagement Group).	July 24  (now ongoing)	75	Assistant Director of Housing	<a href="#">Tenant Engagement Group</a>	3 TEG sessions have taken place: Introduction to Improvement Plan, vision for TEG & 3 year plan. Shared Regulatory Judgement with TEG. TEG receive monthly email updates on Improvement Plan TEG Constitution in place
H36	Consider commissioning a Social Housing Management Peer, or independent Review for Consumer Standards.	Completed	77	Assistant Director of Housing		HQN conducting external assessment against Consumer Standards