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# Guildford Borough Council

Report to:	Housing Operations Board
Date:	15 January 2025
Ward(s) affected:	All
Report of Strategic Director of:	Strategic Director of: Housing, Communities & Environment
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Status:	Open
Key decision:	No

## Housing Improvement Plan Update

### 1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The Housing Improvement Plan continues to make significant progress in addressing the priorities identified through the Solace Review and Independent Assurance Panel recommendations. Key achievements include leadership stabilisation, enhanced governance, compliance improvements, and the introduction of performance monitoring mechanisms.

1.2 A six-month update on the Housing Improvement Plan was presented to Full Council on 3 December 2024 and is included as a background paper in this report.

### 1.3 Key Achievements

- Leadership stabilisation
- A dedicated Programme Manager has been appointed, ensuring focused oversight.

- Progress in reducing the backlog of void properties.
- Governance improvements through the Housing Operations Board and Tenant Engagement Group (TEG).
- Enhanced complaints handling and improved compliance monitoring.
- Undertaken a regulatory assessment with HQN, the recommendations to be incorporated into the refreshed plan when final report received.

## **2.0 Recommendation**

### **That the Board notes:**

- 2.1 the progress made in the Housing Improvement Plan as outlined in this report.
- 2.2 the continued focus on key next steps, including addressing voids backlog, refreshing the plan with HQN recommendations, and completing the housing staffing structure review.

## **3.0 Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 It is essential to maintain transparent reporting and oversight of the Housing Improvement Plan to meet regulatory requirements and ensure progress is monitored effectively.
- 3.2 The recommendations ensure alignment with best practices and maintain momentum in addressing identified priorities.

## **4.0 Status of Report**

### **4.1 Open**

This report is classified as open and does not contain exempt information.

## **5.0 Strategic Priorities**

### **5.1 Alignment with Corporate Strategy**

The Housing Improvement Plan supports Corporate Strategy priorities by ensuring local people have access to decent, affordable

homes and fostering a resilient, well-managed council through improved governance, resident engagement, and service delivery

## **6.0 Background**

### 6.1 Leadership and Culture

- A permanent Strategic Director of Housing and Assistant Director of Housing are in place.
- Regular performance appraisals and engagement forums are fostering a collaborative culture.

### 6.2 Governance and Compliance

- Housing Operations Board and Tenant Engagement Group are operational.
- Key policies have been reviewed and updated.
- Governance and Procurement Training provided as outlined in the update.

### 6.3 Service Delivery

- Excellent progress has been made progressing towards achieving comprehensive health and safety property compliance around Fire, Legionella, Asbestos, Gas, Electrical and Lifts (FLAGEL). With new contractors working closely with the team. A dedicated Property Compliance system has been procured, which will embed robust delivery and reporting.
- Voids backlog has been reduced with new contractor and additional staffing resources.

## **7.0 Options**

7.1 Continue Current Progress: Maintain the existing approach and build on progress made.

7.2 Refresh Plan with New Priorities: Incorporate HQN recommendations and new actions and refresh the Plan.

## **8.0 Consultation**

- 8.1 Consultation on the new plan will go to the Tenant Engagement Group and the Housing Operations Board.
- 8.2 A full Communication & Engagement strategy for internal and external stakeholders including staff, residents and partners will be created as part of the Programme Refresh.

## **9.0 Key Risks**

- 9.1 Resourcing and Capacity: Recruitment challenges, especially for technical roles, continue to place pressure on interim staff. The upcoming staffing review will address these gaps.
- 9.2 IT Systems: Existing housing management systems are outdated, requiring manual workarounds. Procurement of a new system is underway but will be a long-term project.
- 9.3 Regulatory Engagement: The ongoing regulatory engagement and delivery of the Social Housing Regulation Act create additional workload and scrutiny
- 9.4 Expectations Management: Visible improvements in key areas like compliance, voids and complaints are helping rebuild confidence, but the scale of the improvement plan means progress will take time.

## **10.0 Legal and Governance Implications**

- 10.1 The Housing Improvement Plan aligns with statutory requirements under the Social Housing Regulation Act

## **11.0 Financial Implications**

- 11.1 Adequate resources are allocated to ensure delivery of the Housing Improvement Plan as part of HRA Business Planning.

## **12.0 Human Resources Implications**

- 12.1 There are no direct HR implications arising from this report

## **13.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

13.1 There are no direct Equality and Diversity Implications arising from this report

## 14.0 Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

14.1 There are no direct Climate Change or Sustainability Implications arising from this report

## 15.0 Next Steps

### 15.1 Comprehensive Review

- Conduct a full review of priorities and timescales.
- Refresh the plan to include HQN recommendations and newly identified actions.

## 16.0 Background Papers

6 Month Progress Update to Council: 3 December 2024 (Item 8)

## 17.0 Appendices

None

### Report clearance progress:

Finance	For information only not required	
Legal & Governance	For information only not required	
Human Resources	For information only not required	
Equalities	For information only not required	
Strategic Director	For information only not required	