

# Guildford Borough Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Housing Operations Board
<b>Date:</b>	15 January 2025
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	All
<b>Report of Strategic Director of:</b>	Housing, Communities & Environment
<b>Report Author:</b>	Annalisa Howson, Assistant Director of Housing
<b>Email:</b>	Annalisa.howson@guildford.gov.uk
<b>Lead Executive Member:</b>	Cllr Julia McShane
<b>Email:</b>	Julia.McShane@guildford.gov.uk
<b>Status:</b>	Open
<b>Key decision:</b>	No

## Review & Approval of Housing Policies

### 1.0 Executive Summary

A number of housing policies are outdated and need comprehensive reviews to align with current legislation and regulations. This report introduces the new Decant policy which will be referred to the Executive for approval.

### 2.0 Recommendation to Housing Operations Board

The Housing Operations Board is invited to consider the Decant Policy and pass on any comments to the Council's Executive.

### 3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

3.1 To ensure that the Housing Department has documented policies to support tenants during the provision of alternative accommodation (decant) process.

### 4.0 Status of Report

4.1 This is an open report.

### 5.0 Strategic Priorities

5.1 This report supports the Council's priority "A more inclusive Borough" – identifying residents' needs and shaping services.

## **6.0 Background**

6.1 Guildford Borough Council (GBC) is committed to providing effective and efficient services while meeting all legal and contractual obligations.

6.2 The Housing Department has commenced a programme of work to review existing housing policies to ensure that housing services are being delivered in line with guidance and legislation, to respond to internal audit actions, and to provide the service with a firm foundation to deliver effective landlord services.

### **Summary of Policy**

6.3 The updated Alternative Accommodation (Decant) policy outlines our approach to support tenants during temporary or permanent relocations due to emergencies, major works, or demolitions.

6.4 The Alternative Accommodation (Decant) policy sets out how GBC will assist tenants who have to move out of their homes on a temporary or permanent basis, either due to an emergency situation, where there are planned major works, or as a result of demolition.

6.5 The Capital Programme includes several large programmes that will require tenants to be moved either temporarily or permanently.

6.6 The reviewed policy ensures that decants are carried out in a clear, consistent manner and carried out in an efficient and equitable manner.

6.7 The Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy is attached as (Appendix 1). The policy covers emergency decant, temporary moves, and permanent moves due to refurbishment and/or repairs. The policy details the support and assistance that residents can expect to receive from the Housing Department.

## **7.0 Options**

7.1 No other options were considered as this report is to seek approval on the new and reviewed policies to meet legislative and regulatory requirements.

## **8.0 Consultation**

8.1 Providing a range of meaningful opportunities for tenants to influence and scrutinise the landlord's strategies, policies, and

services is a requirement of the Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standard.

8.2 Consultation with TEG members on the Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy yielded positive feedback, highlighting the clarity and comprehensibility of the policies.

8.3 The feedback on the policy was positive with comments on the clarity and that they were easy to understand.

#### Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy comments:

Amendments have been made to the draft policy following the consultation. The following amendments have been made for clarity:

#### Section 6 – Needs Assessment – Clarity of tenure & rent:

- If the property is demolished, the resident will receive an alternative property with the same security of tenure as previously enjoyed.
- Residents will continue to pay their current rent under their existing tenancy.

8.4 Members of TEG agreed with one reasonable offer and that GBC will assess each case on its merit.

### **9.0 Key Risks**

9.1 If the policies are not adequately communicated and implemented, it can lead to incorrect application of the policies, financial loss, and reputational damage on individual cases.

### **10.0 Legal and Governance Implications**

10.1 The Council must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998, ensuring that policies do not discriminate against individuals with protected characteristics.

### **11.0 Financial Implications**

11.1 There are no financial implications.

### **12.0 Human Resources Implications**

12.1 The Government's Equality Impact assessment has been considered when reviewing the work being done to make sure we are compliant with the new regulations. As the Government's

assessment states, equality considerations were taken into account throughout the development of the new consumer standards. The work being done by the Housing service puts all groups of tenants at the heart of what we do, understanding that we need to evidence that services are accessible to and offered in ways that meet the needs of those with protected characteristics.

### **13.0 Equality and Diversity Implications**

13.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications.

### **14.0 Climate Change and Sustainability Implications**

14.1 There are no implications for Climate Change and Sustainability arising from this report.

### **15.0 Next Steps**

15.1 Once policies are approved, training will be provided to officers.

15.2 The policies will be published on the Council's website.

### **16.0 Background Papers**

16.1 None

### **17.0 Appendices**

17.1 Appendix 1 – Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy

### **Report clearance progress:**

Finance	Jo Knight	2 January 2025
Legal & Governance	Michael Elford	20 December 2024
Human Resources	Francesca Chapman	19 December 2024
Equalities	Ali Holman	24 December 2024
Strategic Director	Julian Higson	6 January 2025