

Guildford Borough Council

Report to: Housing Operations Board
Date: 12 March 2025
Ward(s) affected: All
Report of Strategic Director of: Housing, Communities & Environment
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Status: Open
Key decision: Yes

Housing Strategies 2025-2034

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The Housing Strategy and Homelessness Strategy have been reviewed and updated to ensure they align with current legislation, national policy changes, and local housing priorities. Following a comprehensive consultation process with residents, stakeholders, and partner organisations, the final drafts of both strategies have now been completed and are presented to the Housing Operations Board for comment.

The revised Housing Strategy provides a strategic framework for addressing housing supply, affordability, sustainability, and tenant engagement, ensuring that the council's approach remains responsive to evolving housing needs. The Homelessness Strategy has been strengthened to focus on prevention, early intervention, and multi-agency working, reinforcing the council's commitment to reducing homelessness and improving outcomes for those at risk.

Both strategies incorporate key themes and priorities raised during consultation, ensuring they reflect the views and concerns of residents and stakeholders. The accompanying reports outline the

final strategic priorities, proposed action plans, and implementation measures, as well as the next steps in the approval process.

- 1.2 Findings and recommendations by the SOLACE review identified areas for improvement and identified the need to develop the strategies. These new strategies are part of the framework to give the service direction, set actions for improvement and instigate future policy development.

2.0 Recommendation to Board

That the Board resolves to:

- 2.1 Pass on any comments in respect of the draft Strategies to the officers for consideration by the Council's Executive.
- 2.2 Support the draft Housing Strategy and the draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy to Council.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 Housing Strategy

While there is no statutory requirement for local authorities to produce a Housing Strategy, it is considered best practice to have a clear strategic framework outlining the council's housing policies, priorities, and objectives. A well-defined strategy ensures a coordinated approach to housing delivery, guiding decision-making, investment, and service improvements across the borough.

- 3.2 Homelessness Strategy

The Homelessness Act 2002 requires local authorities to have an up-to-date Homelessness Strategy that sets out how they will prevent and reduce homelessness. Given the changing policy landscape, increasing demand for services, and emerging challenges in homelessness prevention, a revised strategy is necessary to ensure a proactive and effective response.

3.3 Importance of Updated Strategies

Housing strategies provide a structured framework for policy development, ensuring housing services are delivered effectively and in line with local and national priorities. With the previous strategies now outdated and a housing service improvement programme underway, the introduction of updated strategies is essential. These documents will support service transformation, enhance resident outcomes, and align with the council's broader housing ambitions.

4.0 Status of Report

4.1 Open

5.0 Strategic Priorities

5.1 This report and its recommendations relate directly to GBC Corporate Strategy Priority 4: Decent and affordable homes and Priority 5: A Resilient and well-managed council.

6.0 Background

6.1 The Council's last Housing Strategy covered the period 2015-2020 and was adopted in February 2015. The last Homelessness Strategy covered 2018-2020 and was adopted in 2018. Following the adoption of a new Corporate Plan in July 2024, officers began planning a review of our housing strategies and developed new visions and priorities for each strategy.

6.2 In December 2024 a survey was opened asking for feedback on the draft visions and priorities for both housing strategies. The survey asked whether those completing the survey were a resident, worked in the borough, had family/friends in the borough or no connection, to best understand who was responding our survey. The survey was open until the end of January 2025.

6.3 Over 50 local groups and partner organisations were directly notified about the survey, as well as it being publicised on the Council's website and social media channels.

- 6.4 We had a total of 590 responses to the survey; the majority of those responding (90.43%) were residents in the borough, 33.43% of which also worked in the borough (57.02% lived in the borough but worked elsewhere). The remainder worked in the borough and had friends/family living here (1.97%) or were responding as no connection to the borough (2.81%).
- 6.3 The draft visions consulted on were 'Everyone has a home that meets their needs' (Housing Strategy) and 'To provide a high quality, responsive service where we support those at risk of or experiencing homelessness and rough sleeping at the earliest opportunity.' (Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy'. A separate report has been produced on the feedback received (see Appendix 1).
- 6.4 The draft priorities consulted on for the Housing Strategy were:
Priority 1: Deliver decent, sustainable homes people need and can afford,
Priority 2: Improve the quality, standard, safety and accessibility of our homes and housing services,
Priority 3: Preventing homelessness and rough sleeping and
Priority 4: Improving housing options and opportunities.
- 6.5 The draft priorities consulted on for the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy were:
Priority 1: Focus on early intervention and prevention,
Priority 2: Maximise options for those ready to move on,
Priority 3: Provide complete support to people who are homeless and dealing with challenging personal issues and
Priority 4: Work collectively with our partners to secure positive and sustained outcomes.

7.0 Options

- 7.1 Support the draft strategies to adoption to enable continued work on policy development and improvements.

This is the recommended option.

- 7.2 Defer the strategies for further review and development.

8.0 Consultation

- 8.1 Briefings with staff held to inform the development of the priorities and vision statements.
- 8.2 Focus group held with Tenant Engagement Group.
- 8.3 Online survey with key stakeholders and general public on vision statements and priorities.
- 8.4 The strategies were reviewed and endorsed by the Portfolio Holder.

9.0 Key Risks

- 9.1 If the strategies are not supported and adopted this could delay the progression of our improvement programme, policy development and other associated projects and work streams.
- 9.2 Fluctuations in the market, economy and policy landscape can influence costs of construction, investment and affordability which could impact our ambitions for the delivery of new homes. This could in turn impact what is available to help those in need of housing.
- 9.3 Delivery of some elements of the strategies are dependent on the continued availability of resources from external funding streams e.g. from Homes England. Future reductions in funding levels could impact upon the ability to deliver some of the targets contained in the Action Plan.

10.0 Legal and Governance Implications

- 10.1 **Housing Strategy:** There are no direct legal implications involved in relation to the housing strategy. It must be borne in mind however, that if a strategy is adopted it will be necessary for the housing authority to adhere to that strategy in order to avoid possible legal challenges should there be a departure from it.
- 10.2 **Homelessness Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy:** Under the Homelessness Act 2002, sections 1-4, a local housing authority must regularly undertake a review of homelessness in the Borough and in consultation with social services and other relevant organisations,

formulate and publish a local homelessness strategy. The authority has a duty to publish a new strategy every 5 years.

11.0 Financial Implications

11.1 There are no additional financial implication arising from adoption of the strategy. If the strategy is adopted, any actions arising from it will be funded by the Housing Revenue Account approved budget.

12.0 Human Resources Implications

12.1 No Human Resources implications identified.

13.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

13.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment have been completed during the development of each strategy. While no one area was identified as requiring specific consideration, the team are mindful of the needs of protected groups to provide equality to our communities.

It will also be necessary for the final decision-making body to have carried out PSED (Public Sector Equality Duty) assessment in accordance with Section 149 Equality Act 2010 and was considered in advance of any final decision to adopt the Strategy.

13.2 No Equality and Diversity implications identified.

14.0 Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

14.1 There are Climate Change and Sustainability implications in the report relating to the development of new homes. This is linked in with the council's priority for a more sustainable borough and the strategies support the council's ongoing efforts to mitigate climate change and promote sustainability.

15.0 Next Steps

15.1 The report will be presented to Executive Briefing on 19th March followed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Resources) on 15th April and Executive on 24th April.

15.2 It is anticipated that O&S and HOB will receive an update on progress in 12 months of adoption of the strategies.

16.0 Appendices

Appendix 1: [Housing Strategy 2025-2034](#).

Appendix 2: [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2034](#)

Appendix 3: [Response to the consultation on housing strategies vision and priorities January 2025](#)

Report clearance progress:

Your report will not be published by democratic services unless the below is completed and there is evidence of the correct clearance process.

This box must not be deleted and will be published with the report

Finance	Jo Knight	26.02.2025
Legal & Governance	Norman Joss	17.02.2025
Human Resources	Ali Holman	12.02.2025
Equalities	Ali Holman	12.02.2025
Strategic Director	Julian Higson	Insert date cleared