

Guildford Borough Council

Report to:	Executive
Date:	27 th February 2025
Ward(s) affected:	All
Report of Strategic Director of:	Housing, Communities & Environment
Report Author:	Annalisa Howson, Assistant Director of Housing
Email:	Annalisa.howson@guildford.gov.uk
Lead Executive Member:	Cllr Julia McShane
Email:	Julia.McShane@guildford.gov.uk
Status:	Open
Key decision:	Yes

Review and Approval of Housing Policy: Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy

1.0 Executive Summary

This report seeks approval of the revised Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy which sets out the offer to secure tenants and resident leaseholders who need to temporarily move out of their home in order for repairs to be undertaken. The policy also sets our responsibilities and actions for officers who support these moves.

This policy will apply to all secure tenants (including those on introductory or flexible tenancies) and Council's resident leaseholders who need to temporarily move out of their current home for repairs to be undertaken.

2.0 Recommendation to Executive

That Executive:

- a) Approve the proposed Alternative Accommodation (Decant) policy at Appendix 1.
- b) Delegate any minor amendments to the Policy to the Assistant Director of Housing in consultation with the Leader and Lead Councillor for Housing.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

To ensure that the Housing Department has documented policies to support tenants during the provision of alternative accommodation (decant) process. Temporary moves can be very disruptive to tenants. This policy therefore seeks to minimise that disruption and sets out the types of accommodation which might be offered as well as the payments which can be made to ensure that the tenant is not financially disadvantaged.

4.0 Status of Report

This is an open report.

5.0 Strategic Priorities

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

6.0 Background

- 6.1 This is a revised policy which updates and replaces the previous version, incorporating changes to reflect current legislation, best practices, and the evolving needs of residents.
- 6.2 The Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy outlines Guildford Borough Council's approach to relocating residents temporarily or permanently when properties are uninhabitable due to planned works, emergencies, or redevelopment. It ensures compliance with legal requirements, provides financial and practical support for decanting, and prioritises minimal disruption to residents. The policy includes provisions for needs assessments, consultation, suitable alternative accommodation, compensation for costs incurred, and measures to ensure fairness, transparency, and efficient use of resources. It applies to eligible tenants and leaseholders but excludes temporary accommodation residents and service occupiers. Regular reviews will ensure alignment with legislation and resident needs.

7.0 Options

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 Tenant Engagement Group (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 TEG:

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.
- 8.5 The policy was presented to members of the Housing Operations Board (HOB) for their comments. The policy has been updated to include the feedback received.

Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy comments HOB:

Section 2 – Policy Statement - 2.1 updated to include due to fire or flood.

Section 6 – Needs Assessment - 6.2 updated to include aids and adaptations requirements.

Appendix A – Updated and includes mail redirections and curtains.

9.0 Key Risks

9.1 The primary risks associated with implementing the Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy include:

- Tenant refusal to relocate, potentially delaying repairs or redevelopment.
- Delays in identifying and securing suitable alternative accommodation.
- Financial pressures on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) if costs exceed forecasts.
- Legal challenges if tenants perceive the policy or its application as unfair or inadequate.

Mitigation strategies include clear communication with tenants, contingency planning for alternative accommodation, and regular financial monitoring.

10.0 Legal and Governance Implications

The Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy complies with the statutory requirements of the Housing Act 1985 and associated regulations, including tenants' rights to consultation, suitable alternative accommodation, and compensation. Legal risks, such as disputes over relocation or compensation, will be managed through clear governance processes and adherence to legal standards.

11.0 Financial Implications

The costs of implementing the policy, including alternative accommodation, Home Loss payments, and disturbance allowances, will be funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). While the policy is designed to operate within current budget provisions, the financial impact will be monitored to ensure pressures are managed effectively.

12.0 Human Resources Implications

The implementation of the Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy will require adequate staffing to manage decant cases, including tenant communication, support, and liaison roles. Existing staff may need additional training to handle the complexities of the process, with resource allocation reviewed as needed.

13.0 Equality and Diversity Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been conducted to ensure the Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy aligns with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The policy has been designed to accommodate the needs of vulnerable tenants, including those with disabilities, and to prevent adverse impacts on any protected characteristic group.

14.0 Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

The Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy aligns with the Council’s sustainability goals by prioritising energy-efficient temporary accommodation wherever possible. Efforts will also be made to minimise the environmental impact of the decant process, such as reducing transportation requirements and ensuring waste from repair works is managed sustainably.

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

Equality Impact Assessment for Alternative Accommodation (Decant) Policy

17.0 Appendices

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