

Runnymede Borough Council
Service Area Plan 24/25
Housing



Service Area Plan for Financial Year 2024/25

Service Area: Housing

Corporate Head of Service: Maggie Ward

Supported by: Simon Allen, Angela Horsey, Iqvinder Sokhal, Marl Bawden, Ellie Slade and Abigail Travers **Version:**
FINAL

Mission statement

We are committed to continuous improvement of the housing services we provide – be that support for homeless households, the allocation of social housing, management of Council properties, income collection, our repairs service, the provision of adaptations, resident engagement, improvements to Council owned properties etc.

We aim to provide quality, empathetic, and compassionate housing services. We want to get services right first time and put things right as quickly as possible if they go wrong.

We want to build trust by listening more to the views of service users and by being clear about what we can and cannot deliver.

We are delivering on many of the objectives in our corporate strategies – specifically in relation to climate change, health and wellbeing and community empowerment.

Service Information

Service Area: Housing

Service Area 1:	Housing Solutions Service
Service Area 2:	Housing and Neighbourhood Services
Service Area 3:	Housing Maintenance and Technical Services
Service Area 4:	Business Development and Policy Section
Service Area 5:	Systems & Revenues Team
Service Area 6:	Housing Development Programme

Description of Service (1) Housing Solutions Service

Main Purpose:

- To deliver an excellent customer focussed Housing Solutions Service that is compliant with relevant legislation and statutory guidance.
- To work to prevent homelessness, and to take reasonable steps to prevent and relieve homelessness for all eligible applicants.
- To ensure that all applicants seeking housing advice receive tailored housing solutions aligned with legislation, the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and the Housing Allocations Scheme.
- Allocation of social housing in accordance with legislation.

Key functions

- Administration of the online Housing Register (1210 applicants registered as at 1st December 2023).
- Allocation of social housing under the Housing Act 1996 Part VI within the Council stock (176 new tenancies in 2022/23) plus nominations to Registered Providers (120 successful nominations in 2022/23).
- Administration of Downsizing scheme (20 households downsized in 2022/23) and promotion of best use of the housing stock.
- Partnership working with Housing Associations including liaison on nominations and new Affordable Rent properties.
- Homelessness and Housing Advice provision duties compliant with legislation (277 homelessness applications and 768 approaches for housing advice in 2022/23).
- Personalised Housing Plans provided as part of each homeless application.
- Homeless prevention, 83 preventions (average of 62% cases prevented in 2022/23).
- Referrals made and liaison meetings held with supported housing providers, hospitals, charities.
- Surrey wide protocols for vulnerable groups.
- Management of Magna Carta Lettings in order to maximise private rent housing opportunities and promote the option of housing within the private rent sector (34 new private rented tenancies started in 2022/23).
- Building on our Housing Led scheme and responding to the needs of those rough sleeping to support them off the streets and out of cycle of perpetual homelessness. 3 properties purchased for complex rough sleepers with additional support.
- Attendance at various fora e.g. representing Surrey at Strategic Management Board and representing RBC at MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) and MAPPA (Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements) and strategic groups e.g. NW Surrey Domestic Abuse Forum and Strategic Housing Group for Young People Partnership working including regular liaison with SCC regarding care leaver move on and ensuring care leavers are on the housing register.
- Carry out reviews of statutory homelessness decisions and decisions relating to suitability of accommodation under the Housing Act 1996 (9 s.202 reviews with 1 overturned, no s.204 appeals in 2022/23).

Description of Service (2) Housing and Neighbourhood Services

Main Purpose: To maximise the rent collection for each of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) homes and General Fund garages; to support the Council's tenants in sustaining their tenancies and to take proportionate action when tenancy obligations are breached.

Key functions

- Rent collection (Annual debit of over £21m for current tenants in 2023/24, DIYSO properties and ground rent).
- Tenancy management (2853 HRA properties in management in April 2023).
- Management of Independent Retirement living (IRL) schemes and supporting residents to maintain their independence and reduce social isolation.
- Dedicated tenancy sustainment and financial inclusion case work; and referral to and liaison with partner agencies.
- Administering rent recovery policy, making County Court possession applications and court advocacy.
- Garage rent collection for garages (£719,000 in 22/23).
- Tenancy Audits, management of fixed term tenancies and changes to tenancies e.g. requests for joint tenancies, succession etc.
- Estate inspections and improvements.
- Estate caretaking and cleaning of communal areas.
- Responding proactively to complaints about anti-social behaviour caused by council tenants and working closely with Community Safety Partners in problem resolutions
- Responding to reported cases of Domestic Abuse and engaging with Safeguarding referrals to statutory agencies.
- Processing Right to Buy applications (11 in 2022/23).
- Liaison with DWP to address welfare reform and Universal Credit issues.
- Leaseholder queries.
- Working to promote anti-fraud activities and investigating suspected social housing fraud, including allocations, sub-letting and RTB fraud.
- Signing-up new tenancies and managing introductory and fixed term tenancies through a schedule of home visits.
- Management of annual rent and service charges.
- Mutual Exchanges (23 in 2022/23).

Description of Service (3) Housing Maintenance and Technical Services

Main Purpose:

- To manage and deliver a statutorily compliant and cost-effective repair and maintenance service for nearly 3,000 Council owned and managed homes plus leasehold properties, communal areas and over 1,000 garages.
- The team provides a comprehensive property maintenance service across all the tenure types that fall within its responsibility. This includes liaising with tenants and the technical and administration functions associated with maintaining properties, including the procurement of various contracts.
- Conversion and adaptation of Council properties to make best use of the housing stock and as appropriate for disabled people.

Key functions

- Asset management.
- Contract procurement and monitoring.

- Management of day to day, responsive repairs and maintenance carried out by contractors (£1,321,400 on Demand Maintenance, void repairs, and decoration allowances in 2023/24).
- Inspection of void properties and oversight of void works carried out by contractors.
- New Stock condition surveys to commence in 2024 at a rate of 20% per year.
- Planned and cyclical works (£616,500 in 2023/24).
- Major capital projects to ensure compliance with Decent Homes standard and upgrades including kitchen and bathroom replacements (563 improvements in 2023/24) and 548 boiler replacement.
- Health and safety compliance including fire risk assessments, electrical safety, gas certification, management of asbestos, water hygiene, Energy Performance Certificates etc.
- Unplanned major work e.g., fire, flooding to properties.
- Adaptations for disabled RBC tenants and their households (£200,000 in 2022/23).
- Tree management.

Description of Service (4) Business Development and Policy Section

Main Purpose: Monitoring, developing, and supporting the work of the Housing Department, with an emphasis on continuous improvement.

Key functions:

- Performance monitoring, benchmarking, and data analysis.
- Submission of statutory and regulatory returns and statistics.
- ISO 9001 certification to drive continuous improvement.
- Strategies, policies, and procedures.
- Tenant and leaseholder engagement including web content, newsletters, consultation and participation initiatives.
- Production of Tenants Annual Report
- Complaints and feedback.
- Promoting and enabling opportunities for new affordable housing (67 new units of affordable housing delivered through planning obligations in 2022/23).
- Partnership working with Registered Providers including provision of leases for supported housing schemes.
- Equalities and Data protection.

Description of Service (5) Systems & Revenues Team

Main Purpose : To ensure that the Housing Business Unit has an IT system able to manage all its services and ensure legislative and regulatory compliance. To provide an income collection service for the Housing Revenue Account and General Fund Housing services ensuring that all income streams are maximised and managed within standard processes subject to regular audit

Key Functions

- To be responsible for the formulation and delivery of the Housing Business Unit's IT Strategy and to support the delivery of the Council's IT Strategy

- Provide a comprehensive integrated digital solution for the Housing Business Unit
- Responsible for ensuring compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations in all IT systems and operations within the department.
- Provide income services for rent collection (system managed accounts, direct debit collections, reconciliations, debit raising), recharges, leaseholder charges (including major works), court costs, service charges and other debts.
- Provide income management for the Housing Service, ensuring the financial systems balance each week, including all adjustments, reconciliations and interface with the Housing Benefit System.
- To annually implement rent increases and make legally compliant notifications to tenants of any changes by the statutory deadline.
- Provision of operational performance monitoring information from the NEC system and any other systems used in Housing operations.
- To project manage the implementation of new modules and external integrations with the supplier, ensuring all new releases of software are subject to the appropriate testing, timely implementation and training as required.

Description of Service (6) Housing Development

Main Purpose: Provision of a Development function to increase the number of properties within HRA ownership.

Key functions:

- Ensuring all new properties will be built or refurbished to an approved standard,
- Developing sustainable, low maintenance homes which are affordable for the residents to occupy,
- Delivery of the target for new homes (125 by September 2026),
- The use of innovative construction methods, where appropriate,
- To make sure that value for money is achieved on all schemes and the financial viability of any proposal is rigorously assessed,
- Putting plans in place so that the type and size of properties (including accessible properties) that are acquired or development addresses evidenced local need,
- Ensuring Larger schemes will provide low-cost homeownership opportunities where possible.
- Create and review a strategy to deliver new council homes in line with the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and Asset Management Plan as well as other corporate strategies.
- Seeking and assessing potential new development sites.
- Appoint and manage consultants to advise upon and assist with the delivery of the Council's housing development programme.
- Providing co-ordination between corporate services including Procurement, Finance, Legal, Planning and Asset Management & Property Services in the production of Affordable Housing.

- Liaison and negotiation with Homes England, private developers, Registered Providers and others to lever in maximum resources.
- Providing and monitoring information and data relating to local housing markets and local housing needs to ensure that the priorities set for development schemes adequately reflect this need, including for example size, type, location and tenure mix.
- Develop new Council housing that uses modern techniques to ensure quality, cost and time measures are fulfilled.
- Acquire properties and arrange for their renovation where required.
- Liaison with Elected Members, residents and other stakeholders to promote sustainable affordable housing development in the Borough.
- Appointment and management of construction companies to deliver excellent new council homes.
- Produce financial appraisals for potential development sites, assessing payback periods and cashflow. Liaison with Finance to monitor the HRA Business Plan.

Planned Activities

Total number of planned activities
35

Types of Activities

Project
17

Review
3

One-off
10

New Core Activity
5

CBP / SAP Activities

CBP Activities
8

SAP Activities
27

Project						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
Project	Tenancy Agreement Refresh	Empowering Communities	01 March 2023	03 April 2023	31 July 2024	In progress
Project	Local Paths Investment	Health and Wellbeing	03 April 2023	01 October 2023	31 October 2024	In progress
Project	Tenant Engagement Accreditation	Empowering Communities	01 March 2023	27 April 2023	30 November 2024	In progress
Project	Tenants Handbook Refresh	Empowering Communities	01 May 2023	26 July 2023	31 January 2025	In progress
Project	Caretaker Service Charges	Economic Development	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
Project	Ensure tenants and leaseholders can recycle	Climate Change	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
Project	Introduce a Tenant Incentive Scheme if approved	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
Project	Garage Strategy	Economic Development	01 June 2022	01 June 2022	30 June 2025	In progress
Project	QMS Roll-out	Organisational Development	01 November 2022	01 November 2022	30 September 2025	In progress
Project	Ruxbury Road housing scheme.	Economic Development	01 August 2023	01 August 2023	01 March 2026	In progress
Project	IRL Improvements	Health and Wellbeing	01 September 2021	01 September 2021	31 March 2026	In progress
Project	Parkside Regeneration (RIBA 0-4)	Economic Development	01 March 2022	01 March 2022	30 April 2026	In progress
Project	Guildford Road housing scheme.	Economic Development	17 October 2023		01 July 2026	In progress
Project	Holly Close housing scheme.	Economic Development	31 July 2023	31 July 2023	04 January 2027	In progress
Project	Financial Inclusion	Health and Wellbeing	01 January 2022	01 January 2022	31 March 2027	In progress
Project	Dunkirk housing scheme.	Economic Development	31 July 2023	31 July 2023	01 July 2027	In progress
Project	EPC C rating by 2030	Climate Change	01 January 2022	01 January 2022	31 March 2030	In progress

Review						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
Review	Review Allocation Scheme		01 November 2023	01 November 2023	30 September 2024	In progress
Review	Review key policies	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
Review	Review/develop key procedures	Organisational Development	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started

One-off						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
One Off	IRL Manager Refresh	Organisational Development	01 April 2024		31 July 2024	Not started
One Off	Tenant Incentive Scheme	Empowering Communities	01 December 2023		10 September 2024	Not started
One Off	Cost of Living Response	Health and Wellbeing	01 October 2023		31 March 2025	Not started
One Off	Implement additional transactional surveys	Empowering Communities	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
One Off	Implement the contract management framework for internal services	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
One Off	Implement the Housing IT Action Plan	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
One Off	Improve the accessibility of services - language, sign language etc.	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
One Off	Produce refreshed Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	Health and Wellbeing	01 January 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
One Off	Tree Survey (HRA)	Environmental Sustainability	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
One Off	Council Heating Plan	Climate Change	01 April 2024		30 April 2030	Not started

New Core Activity						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
New Core Activity	Rough Sleeping	Health and Wellbeing	01 March 2019	01 March 2019	30 September 2024	In progress
New Core Activity	Reduction of waste to landfill	Climate Change	01 March 2021	01 March 2021	31 March 2030	In progress
New Core Activity	New Homes EPC A	Climate Change	01 September 2021	01 September 2021	31 March 2026	In progress
New Core Activity	Identify Non-decent Homes	Health and Wellbeing	01 March 2021	01 March 2021	31 March 2027	In progress
New Core Activity	Embed recharge collection	Economic Development	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started

Corporate Business Plan Activities						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
New BAU	Rough Sleeping	Health and Wellbeing	01 March 2019	01 March 2019	30 September 2024	In progress
Project	IRL Improvements	Health and Wellbeing	01 September 2021	01 September 2021	31 March 2026	In progress
New BAU	New Homes EPC A	Climate Change	01 September 2021	01 September 2021	31 March 2026	In progress
Project	Financial Inclusion	Health and Wellbeing	01 January 2022	01 January 2022	31 March 2027	In progress
New BAU	Identify Non-decent Homes	Health and Wellbeing	01 March 2021	01 March 2021	31 March 2027	In progress
Project	EPC C rating by 2030	Climate Change	01 January 2022	01 January 2022	31 March 2030	In progress
New BAU	Reduction of waste to landfill	Climate Change	01 March 2021	01 March 2021	31 March 2030	In progress
One Off	Council Heating Plan	Climate Change	01 April 2024		30 April 2030	Not started

Service Area Plan Activities						
Type of Activity	Title	Corporate Theme(s)	Plan start date	Actual start date	Plan due Date	Progress
Project	Caretaker Service Charges	Economic Development	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
One Off	Cost of Living Response	Health and Wellbeing	01 October 2023		31 March 2025	Not started
Project	Dunkirk housing scheme.	Economic Development	31 July 2023	31 July 2023	01 July 2027	In progress
New Core Activity	Embed recharge collection	Economic Development	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
Project	Ensure tenants and leaseholders can recycle	Climate Change	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
Project	Garage Strategy	Economic Development	01 June 2022	01 June 2022	30 June 2025	In progress
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One Off	Implement additional transactional surveys	Empowering Communities	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
One Off	Implement the contract management framework for internal services	Health and Wellbeing	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started
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Project	QMS Roll-out	Organisational Development	01 November 2022	01 November 2022	30 September 2025	In progress
Review	Review Allocation Scheme		01 November 2023	01 November 2023	30 September 2024	In progress
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Project	Tenant Engagement Accreditation	Empowering Communities	01 March 2023	27 April 2023	30 November 2024	In progress
One Off	Tenant Incentive Scheme	Empowering Communities	01 December 2023		10 September 2024	Not started
Project	Tenants Handbook Refresh	Empowering Communities	01 May 2023	26 July 2023	31 January 2025	In progress
One Off	Tree Survey (HRA)	Environmental Sustainability	01 April 2024		31 March 2025	Not started

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