

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Estate Improvement Policy

Review due: January 2027

1. Introduction

1.1 Housing Services has an annual Estate Improvement budget to enable specific additional improvements to Council owned housing estates and blocks of flats.

2. Aim

2.1 The aim of this policy is to:

- Identify upgrades to communal parts beyond our day-to-day management of areas, using a transparent process that involves residents and benefits them.
- Invest in enhancing bio-diversity on our housing estates.
- Involve residents in the management and improvement of their estates and neighbourhood.
- Publicise estate inspections and encourage resident involvement.

3. Scope, definitions and legislation

3.1 Estate Improvements are an opportunity to improve the appearance of blocks, roads or an estate and can help improve residents' quality of life.

3.2 As the budget is funded by the Housing Revenue Account all proposals must benefit Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) tenants and the improvement should be on Housing land.

4. Suitable Proposals

4.1 Some suitable projects are likely to be (not an exhaustive list);

- Community gardens and landscaping
- Railings and other new security features
- Bike or buggy stores and racks
- Bin shed/enclosures
- Tables and benches
- Pathways
- Installation of solar panels
- Recycling facilities
- Cycle storage
- Parking improvements

4.2 Approval of projects is subject to land ownership, building regulations and planning permission being considered.

All proposals are considered on a case-by-case basis.

5. Submitting a Proposal

5.1 Proposals can be made by RBC tenants and leaseholders, Councillors and Council Officers.

5.2 All suggestions should be made to the relevant Area Housing Manager in the Tenancy Services team, who will review the application and put forward a proposal.

5.3 The following will be taken into account when considering each proposal:

- Urgency of work
- Anticipated cost of the proposal
- The scope for the proposal to be funded from another source
- Benefits of the proposal, including the number of residents who would benefit from it
- Feedback from tenants impacted by the proposal
- Severity of issue that proposal aims to address
- Other projects that have been undertaken or are currently in progress in the location
- Ongoing cost of maintenance and upkeep of the improved area and whether this has an impact on service charges.

5.4 RBC will complete an inspection when considering a proposal request.

A panel comprising Head of Housing Technical Services, Head of Housing Services & Business Planning, Head of Tenancy Services and impacted tenants (if applicable) will consider any proposal.

All impacted tenants will be informed as to the outcome of their proposal following the Panel meeting to consider requests received.

5.5 Although a preliminary decision will be made at this meeting, further investigation could mean a scheme is not feasible, due for example, to Planning restrictions, actual cost of delivering the scheme, extent of benefit, lack of resident support for proposal following consultation.

All impacted tenants will be kept informed of any developments with their proposal, as it progresses.

5.6 Due to the limited budget available and the scale of preparations required, not all proposals may be taken forward immediately. They may need to be deferred to the following year and a programme of improvements will be established.

6. Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement

6.1 Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement ensures we understand our residents' expectations, so we can deliver services according to their needs and priorities.

6.2 We will work with residents to help shape how services are provided and to ensure they can hold us to account.

6.3 Runnymede Council tenants have been consulted in the preparation of this policy.

7. Monitoring and performance management

7.1 We aim to review this policy in three years to ensure it reflects current legislation and latest examples of best practice.

7.2 The Estate Improvement Budget will be monitored to ensure that the policy is fair, that expenditure is not disproportionate in one area and that schemes can be brought forward to ensure parity.

7.3 A 3 year plan will be drawn up to ensure that all areas are considered for improvements and officers and tenants are encouraged to bring schemes forward in unrepresented areas.

7.4 The Head of Tenancy Services will have responsibility for the management of the Improvement Budget.

7.5 The Housing Panel will consist of a minimum of 2 officers and will be convened within 7 working days of a proposal being made.

8. Equalities Implications

8.1 In producing this document an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out.

8.2 An EIA is a way of assessing the impact, or likely impact, that a particular policy, procedure or decision will have on particular groups. This is used to assess whether in making the decision whether the Council has complied with its public sector equality duty under S149 of the Equality Act 2010 (as amended) to; eliminate discrimination and any other conduct that is prohibited under this act and to advance equality between those who share a protected characteristic.

8.3 The screening found a full impact assessment is not required. As time goes on and projects are considered, data will be available on who was positively and negatively affected by decisions made.

9. Related strategies/Documents

RBC's Climate Change Strategy
Information on the Planned Capital Programme

10. Version Control

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
V1	November 2023	First draft completed	January 24	Abigail Travers	Housing Committee