



Housing Committee

Wednesday, 11 January 2023 at 7.30 pm

Council Chamber - Civic Centre

Members of the Committee

Councillors: J Gracey (Chairman), J Hulley (Vice-Chairman), D Coen, M Cressey, M Darby, R Davies, S Dennett, P Snow, S Whyte, S Williams and Mrs J Hill for the purposes affecting Council housing tenants

In accordance with Standing Order 29.1, any Member of the Council may attend the meeting of this Committee, but may speak only with the permission of the Chairman of the Committee, if they are not a member of this Committee.

AGENDA

Notes:

- 1) Any report on the Agenda involving confidential information (as defined by section 100A(3) of the Local Government Act 1972) must be discussed in private. Any report involving exempt information (as defined by section 100I of the Local Government Act 1972), whether it appears in Part 1 or Part 2 below, may be discussed in private but only if the Committee so resolves.
- 2) The relevant 'background papers' are listed after each report in Part 1. Enquiries about any of the Agenda reports and background papers should be directed in the first instance to **Mr A Finch, Democratic Services Section, Law and Governance Business Centre, Runnymede Civic Centre, Station Road, Addlestone (Tel: Direct Line: 01932 425623). (Email: andrew.finch@runnymede.gov.uk).**
- 3) Agendas and Minutes are available on a subscription basis. For details, please contact Democratic.Services@runnymede.gov.uk or 01932 425620. Agendas and Minutes for all the Council's Committees may also be viewed on www.runnymede.gov.uk.
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The Chairman will make the final decision on all matters of dispute in regard to the use of social media audio-recording, photography and filming in the Committee meeting.

List of matters for consideration

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Part I

Matters in respect of which reports have been made available for public inspection

1. **Notifications of Changes to Committee Membership**
2. **Minutes** 4 - 8

To confirm and sign, as a correct record, the minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 16 November 2022 (Appendix A).
3. **Apologies for Absence**
4. **Declarations of Interest**

Members are invited to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests or other registrable and non-registrable interests in items on the agenda.
5. **Housing Service Area Plan 2023/24** 9 - 21
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16. **Exclusion of press and public**

Part II

Matters involving exempt or confidential information in respect of which reports have not been made available for public inspection.

Appendix A

Runnymede Borough Council

Housing Committee

Wednesday, 16 November 2022 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Committee present: Councillors J Hulley (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), D Coen, M Cressey, M Darby, R Davies, S Dennett, P Snow, S Whyte and S Williams.

Members of the Committee absent: Councillors J Gracey (Chairman).

335 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Special Committee held on 18 October 2022 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

336 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor J. Gracey.

337 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

338 Tenants' Satisfaction Survey

Throughout October tenants had the opportunity to complete an online satisfaction survey, to give their views on the landlord services provided by the Council.

The Corporate Head of Housing advised that this was the first survey of its type undertaken for ten years, and the 14 industry-standard questions asked were designed to enable benchmarking whilst being quick and easy to complete to encourage participation.

It was acknowledged that the survey was not statistically valid yet it gave a clear impression and direction of travel whilst setting a baseline for future surveys.

Whilst there had not yet been the opportunity to benchmark against other landlords, a report would be provided to a future member working party and subsequent committee setting out a proposed action plan based on the survey's findings.

The results of the survey were presented during the meeting. The committee was impressed with the response rate and reach of the survey, and even allowing for duplicate entries officers were confident that around 1,000 individuals completed it.

The survey was available through a number of social media channels, and the overall results revealed that tenants felt somewhat neutral about the service the Council provides, with room for improvement. Repairs & maintenance and communication with the Council were the top two themes touched upon by residents.

The vice chair thanked the housing team for the time spent on the survey, adding that when the regulation becomes an act of parliament this would become an annual survey.

339 Garage Strategy

The Housing Business Centre Plan 2022/23 commits the housing service to establishing a Garage Strategy. Following June's Housing Committee a consultation and appraisal of the fourteen worst performing sites had been undertaken.

The Corporate Head of Housing reported that work was ongoing with the Council's Assets and Regeneration team to work out which sites had development potential and which sites could be brought back into use in order to generate revenue for the authority.

Appraisals would continue on the remaining 68 sites, and annual updates would be provided to committee on the progress of the strategy.

Committee noted that anecdotally a high percentage of the garages were likely to be used for storage, partially due to modern cars having outgrown traditional garages.

The reason for the detailed analysis was because many of the sites did not have development potential, and therefore they would have to be judged on a case by case basis. Many of the sites were in isolated spots away from the main property, some of which had since been sold and subsequently very few of them lent themselves to better usage.

The Head of Housing Services and Business Planning confirmed there was one large garage site in the borough with development potential. A Member suggested putting any application through as outline planning application. It was added that the housing service did not benefit from the income of garage rentals – this went straight into the general fund – but any sites with development potential would be taken back by the housing service.

A Member highlighted bike lockers being popular and a good revenue generator, and the Corporate Head of Housing confirmed that all options would be considered for the sites, including sale if appropriate.

The Head of Housing Services and Business Planning explained the policy for renting out garages, with priority given to the resident who lives at the location, second priority a local resident, third priority a Runnymede resident, and if all of these options had been exhausted then consideration would be given to someone outside of the borough.

It was felt that automatically applying an uplift to the rental charges in line with inflation would have a detrimental effect due to the likelihood of it driving away potential renters. A Member would follow up with Assets and Regeneration in their capacity as a non-executive director about the prospect of following the example set out in parking charges by keeping fees and charges the same.

Resolved that –

- 1) Committee noted the consultation results and the outcome of the appraisal of the 14 lowest demand garage sites.**
- 2) Committee approved the Runnymede Garage Strategy.**

340 Private Rented Sector Offer Policy

The Head of Housing Services and Business Planning advised committee that the policy set out the Council's approach to discharging homeless duties owed to applicants into the private rented sector.

Where possible homelessness in Runnymede would be prevented or relieved through an offer of a private sector tenancy. Where immediate and suitable offers of accommodation could be found in the private sector these would be made to households threatened with

homelessness, thereby avoiding the need for them to go into temporary accommodation which is costly for both applicants and the Council and disruptive for households.

The use of the Private Rented Sector Offer policy ensures that properties are available through the Housing Register for households seeking to access social housing. In assessing the suitability of any offer the Authority will need to consider whether the applicant can afford the housing costs without being deprived of basic essentials such as food, clothing, heating, transport and other essentials specific to their circumstances.

Officers asked for approval for an 8 week consultation, noting that most people seeking assistance with their housing aspire to a social tenancy and do not willingly engage in the process of a private rented property. However, current and recent applicants would be consulted.

In response to a member's concern about the prospect of an A-level age student requiring to move and provisions for their education, the Head of Housing Services and Business Planning advised that given how relatively small Runnymede is education settings could be reached across the borough, and the same principle would apply for families with younger children in need.

A Member asked about the appeal process in the event that an offer of housing is refused given that no second offer is made. The Head of Housing Services and Business Planning advised that residents would always be encouraged to move in to the offer and then seek a review as the Council did not have enough properties to make two housing offers, whilst if that family had children a referral would automatically be made to Children's Services as a further safety net.

The Head of Housing Services and Business Planning advised a Member that only under special circumstances would a cross-border referral be accepted from another authority.

The Corporate Head of Housing advised that there were approximately 35 general needs properties across the borough that were currently empty, however they were all in the process of being repaired and reallocated rather than sat dormant. The waiting list of residents looking for new homes was currently around 1,200

Resolved that –

Committee approved a consultation exercise on the PRSO policy.

341 **IRL Communal Lounge Policy**

Following Committee approval in September a consultation exercise on the draft IRL communal lounge policy had recently concluded and no responses were received, which was felt recognised that residents felt the policy reflected what was already happening within the schemes.

Officers confirmed that the consultation was in the form of posters, website updates, briefings, and all residents had been spoken to in person by scheme managers.

The Council would soon begin investment in its communal lounges and it was desired to make them high class and inclusive environments.

The Corporate Head of Housing confirmed there would be no intention to prevent residents using kitchens for private events such as birthdays, but added that part of the upgrade would be to provide areas that are safe.

A Member suggested finding alternative sources of information when response rates to

consultations were low, such as intelligence from other Surrey authorities, however the Head of Housing Services and Business Planning confirmed that Adult Social Care were consulted extensively on the policy, whilst legislation was the driver for much of what was in the policy.

Resolved that –

Committee approved the Independent Retirement Living Communal Lounge Policy.

342 **Performance Report**

The Head of Housing Services and Business Planning informed Committee that continued improvement to void timescales were being seen and a significant number of properties were being returned within target.

The number of households in B&B was above target, partly due to the Council's no second night out policy, whilst there was an increasing number of single men with complex histories that require a multi-agency approach and recruitment is very difficult within the sector.

Whilst rent arrears were higher than this time last year the figure had reduced over recent weeks and was expected given the cost-of-living crisis.

Electrical and gas certification continue to be excellent with both currently at 100% compliance, whilst the 34 outstanding high risk FRA actions were inspection of fire doors which would be completed by the end of this quarter.

Following a request for the analysis of potential rent increases, the current rent settlement allows social landlords to increase their rent annually, by CPI plus 1% for 5 years. However a government consultation to limit increases was expected to announce that a 5% increase should be applied.

A Member asked about a potential scenario where a person does not qualify for the housing register when they have a housing need. Eligibility and qualification criteria, including financial threshold. This would be reviewed as part of the housing allocations scheme.

A Member highlighted an increase in ASB being high in their caseload, and was keen to encourage the implementation of a Joint Enforcement Team. Housing officers encouraged Members to notify them about any incidents of ASB, which would be followed up by the appropriate officer.

The Corporate Head of Housing reported that the Council were increasingly receiving presentations of people who straddle a range of complex issues such as mental health, alcoholism, etc. Whilst it is right that the Council are there to support them, housing such people in long-term accommodation was not possible with such challenging needs, which was why the short-term accommodation such as B&B was so high.

The Committee chair asked about engagement with the Regulator of Social Housing, and the Corporate Head of Housing confirmed that a letter had been submitted requesting that the notice was rescinded. Whilst electrical and gas safety was now at 100%, decent homes standard was also now extremely close to the desired 75%.

343 **Housing IT System Enhancement Update**

The Head of Housing Services and Business Planning reported that phase two of the IT system enhancement was nearing its conclusion and significant work had been undertaken

to specify each new module and then build and test it, a number of which were now in use.

There was no one-size-fits-all for the modules, it was needed to be specified how the Council wanted the system to look and how it would integrate with existing systems, This involved extensive building and testing.

At the conclusion of this phase additional modules would be under consideration to add to what had already been obtained, whilst a substantial amount of work was needed to coordinate with the communications suite to enable the sending of text messages, therefore lots of work on the efficiencies of the modules would remain under consideration.

(The meeting ended at 9.43 pm.)

Chairman

Housing 2023/24 Service Area Plan (Housing, Andy Vincent)

Synopsis of report:

This report provides an update on the delivery of the 2022/23 Housing Service Area Plan and a summary of this year's 2023/24 Service Area Plan for approval.

The full proposed Service Area Plan for 2023/24 can be found in Appendix A.

Recommendation(s):

- i) **Members approve the 2023/24 Housing Service Area Plan**
- ii) **Members note any business cases requiring growth are subject to approval by Housing Committee (or full Council depending on sums).**

1 Context and background of report

- 1.1 The annual business planning cycle for 2023/24 commenced with each Corporate Head of Service submitting any planned activity for the next Financial Year which requires growth.
- 1.2 In addition, in conjunction with the relevant Service Chair and Chair of Member Working Party, priority areas arising from corporate strategies have been agreed for the 2023/24 MWP work programme. These form the majority of the service area's planned activity for 2023/24.
- 1.3 Business cases for growth items have then been prepared either as outline documents (further refinement and more detailed exploratory work is required during 23/24 before a full business case can be developed), or final business cases. Final business cases will need to be approved by Housing Committee prior to release of any funds, therefore reports will be submitted for approval during 23/24 where at this stage, only outline business cases can be provided.
- 1.4 Subsequent to review of growth bids, Service Area Plans have been further developed to include planned activity that does not require growth, a Mission Statement to document a narrative of the service area's current position and its direction of travel over the lifecycle of the Corporate Business Plan, and a summary of each of the teams that form the service area and their business-as-usual activity and key statistics.
- 1.5 To ensure a 'golden thread' between Service Area Plans and team and individual plans, Corporate Heads of Service will use the planned activity to set team and individual objectives for 23/24.
- 1.6 Any projects identified as part of planned activity will be added to the project portfolio for 2023/24 and progress monitored and reported on a Quarterly basis to Corporate Management Committee as per the project management methodology.
- 1.7 The final non-corporate Service Area Plans go to their relevant service committee for approval first. A final approval is then sought from Corporate Management Committee approving the Corporate Action Plan (which is an amalgamation of all the

plans for the year). In addition, Corporate Management Committee is also asked to approve any business cases requiring General Fund growth because growth cannot be approved by a service committee with the exception of HRA expenditure up to £100,000 which can be approved by the Housing Committee. Any growth exceeding £250,000 will require the approval of full Council.

2 Key Achievements in 2022/23

2.1 The Housing Service Area Plan 2022/23 contained 28 actions; including: -

- Accreditation for the Support Services Function
- Achievement of ISO 9001 accreditation
- Development of a RBC Garage Strategy
- Delivery of the Older Persons and Tenant Engagement Strategies

2.2 Of these 19 are completed and 5 will be completed prior to the end of the financial year (March 2023)

- One has been postponed:
 - Procurement of work to Surrey Towers' roof
- Two are not complete:
 - Accreditation for the income collection service
 - Implementing service charges for the expanded caretaking service
- One will be completed in the new financial year:
 - A survey of RBC owned trees – see the Housing Service Area plan 2023/24

3 Housing Service Area Plan 2023/24

3.1 The full Housing Service Area Plan can be found in Appendix A. A summary is provided below.

3.2 Service Area 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 our own properties, our repairs service, the provision of adaptations, 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.*

3.3 Key new areas of work in 2023/24: -

- Work required to meet our obligations under the Building Safety Act
- Conduct a survey to identify the condition of trees on Housing owned land
- Undertake a tenant survey to enable the service to report on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Phase 3 of the Housing IT enhancement programme
- Housing Tenancy Agreement Review
- Increase to the Housing Discretionary Fund
- Investment in and upgrade of estate paths
- Upgrade of two boilers in our Independent Retirement Living accommodation
- Establishment of a central Housing Systems Team
- Piloting a Tenant Incentive Scheme
- Reviewing the RBC Tenants Handbook
- Seeking accreditation for a tenant engagement activity

4 Policy framework implications

- 4.1 This Plan supports the delivery of the Corporate Business Plan.
- 4.2 Specifically, those actions arising from Corporate Strategies that will be addressed in delivering the Service Plan can be seen in the Planned Activity list in Appendix A described as CBP Strategy Action in the Type of Initiative column.

5 Resource implications

- 5.1 The following proposed initiatives require growth to be able to be delivered:

Revenue

- Undertaking essential fire safety work
- Resources for an annual tenant satisfaction survey (STAR Survey of Tenants and Residents) - a business case on this initiative will be presented to the March Housing Committee **
- Phase 3 of the Housing IT enhancement programme **
- Review of the Housing Tenancy Agreement - a business case on this initiative will be presented to the March Housing Committee **
- Establishment of a Housing Systems Team
- Piloting a Tenant Incentive Scheme **
- Growing the Housing Tenants Discretionary Fund

Capital

- Improvement of estate paths
- Upgrade of boilers in two Independent Retirement Living schemes to air source heat pumps – rather than replacing with gas boilers **

** still subject to approval by Housing Committee

- 5.2 Provisional budgets for these schemes have been incorporated into the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and budgets will be released upon Committee approval for the schemes to progress.

6 Legal implications

6.1 There are a number of areas within the plan which address issues of compliance. Tenant Satisfaction Measures, preparation for the implementation of the Building Safety Act 2022 etc

6.2 The plan also seeks to strengthen the evidence that the service complies with the regulatory standards: -

The Economic Standards (Governance and Financial Viability and Value for Money are not applicable to a local authority landlord) :

- [Governance and Financial Viability Standard](#)
- [Value for Money Standard](#)
- [Rent Standard](#)

The Consumer Standards:

- [Home Standard](#)
- [Tenancy Standard](#)
- [Neighbourhood and Community Standard](#)
- [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard](#).

6.3 Under the provisions of the Housing Act 1985 local housing authorities are established and various powers are granted to local housing authorities to provide and manage housing accommodation they provide. The Service Plan is a document created by the Council which outlines the various actions it will take, in its capacity as a local housing authority, to manage the housing accommodation it provides. Whilst there is no legal requirement to create a Service Plan, such a document provides relevant information to enable the organisation and residents understand the tasks which will be undertaken over a fixed period of time.

7 Equality implications

7.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be conducted for projects impacting on tenants/residents being delivered as part of this plan.

7.2 This will ensure that any equality implications are identified and addressed before new initiatives are introduced.

8 Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

8.1 A number of actions within the Housing Service Area Plan 2023/24 seek to address environmental/sustainability issues. They are included within the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

They include: -

- New homes will be built to an EPC rating of A
- Develop a heating plan to help the service transition away from gas
- Reduce the amount of waste going to landfill

9 Other implications (where applicable)

9.1 A review of the service specific risks impacting on the service have been undertaken as part of compiling the Housing Service Area Plan.

- 9.2 The following risks have been identified impacting on the service:
- Housing Revenue Account income forecast not met
 - Reduction in the number of existing and new PRS opportunities to place households in private rented sector
 - Failure to comply with regulator's code - and new definition of the 'Decent Homes Standard'
 - Claims for disrepair from tenants against the Housing Service
 - Health and Safety requirements are not met within the Housing stock relating to fire risk control, asbestos management, legionella, gas and electrical safety, lifts, safe working practices within the housing stock and building safety in general.
 - Failure to achieve compliance on electrical testing
 - Ensure that vulnerable customers are protected from exploitation
 - Contracts are not properly procured
 - Data collated/ reported may be inaccurate.
 - Disclosure of personal data to someone who is not entitled to that data e.g. via telephone conversation or email
 - Loss of Council owned device containing personal data results in disclosure of personal data
 - Unauthorised access to Council systems which allows access to personal data
 - Failure to dispose of documentation containing personal data in a secure fashion results in disclosure of personal data
 - Critical member(s) of staff unable to attend work due to sickness
 - Regeneration of HRA stock not achieved
 - New development not achieved
 - New IT system not procured
 - Council Garages not maintained
 - Asset Management Plan is not fit for purpose
 - Temporary Accommodation portfolio does not reflect current need
 - A third caretaker is not appointed. Caretaking is not extended to 12 additional blocks.
 - Housing Allocations scheme is not fit for purpose
 - Failure to implement Homelessness Strategy
 - Fraud increases/is not tackled
 - Staff safety from working alone
 - Contracts are not being managed effectively
 - Inability to recruit to key roles
 - Unauthorised alternations to Council owned properties by tenants
 - The resource implications of support to refugees and asylum seekers
 - Rising costs exceeding income

10. **Conclusions**

- 10.1 A significant amount of work has been undertaken to move the service forward in 2022/23
- 10.2 Three accreditations have been achieved, it is hoped that the Regulatory Notice will be removed in January 2023, work is progressing on the Parkside Regeneration, a new repairs, maintenance, and voids contractor has been recruited and mobilised, the Housing IT system has been upgraded, a bid has been made to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund for funding to bring our Council owned properties up to a C energy efficiency rating etc.

10.3 23 additional service improvements are planned for 2023/24. These are focused on meeting the Council's key ambitions for the service:

- Optimising Income and Efficiencies
- Good Quality Housing
- New Council owned homes
- Review and modernise provision for older tenants
- Well managed neighbourhoods

(To resolve)

Background papers

Housing Business Centre Plan (Service Area Plan) 2022/23

<https://democracy.runnymede.gov.uk/documents/s3385/Housing%20Business%20Centre%20Plan%20202223.pdf>

**Service Area Plan for Financial Year 2023/24**

Business Unit: Housing

Corporate Head of Service: Andy Vincent

Version: 1.3 FINAL DRAFT

Approvals

Approved by CLT:	07/12/2022
Approved by Service Chair:	Date
Approved by Service Cttee:	Date

Service Area Narrative and 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 our own properties, our repairs service, the provision of adaptations, 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.

Business Unit:**Housing**

CHoS

Andy Vincent

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 Organisational Structure

[Link to the Council's Organisation Chart](#)

Budget Book Information

[Budget information 2022-23](#)

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 (1220 applicants registered as at 31st March 2022)
- Allocation of social housing under the Housing Act 1996 Part VI within the Council stock (178 new tenancies in 2021/22) plus nominations to Registered Providers (83 successful nominations in 202/22)
- Administration of Downsizing scheme (8 households downsized in 2021/22) 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 (199 homelessness applications and 702 approaches for housing advice in 2021/22)
- Personalised Housing Plans provided as part of each homeless application.
- Homeless prevention 54 preventions (average of 63% cases prevented in 2021/22)
- Tenancy Sustainment
 - Referrals made and liaison meetings held with supported housing providers.
- Surrey wide protocols for vulnerable groups (re-drafting of the 16 & 17 year olds and Leaving Care protocols commenced in 2021/22)
- Manage Magna Carta Lettings in order to maximise private rent housing opportunities and promote the option of housing within the private rent sector (36 new private rented tenancies started in 2021/22)
- Attendance at various fora e.g. representing Surrey at Strategic Management Board and representing RBC at MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference) and MAPP (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 none overturned, zero s.204 appeals in 2021/22).

Description of Service (2)

Tenancy 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 nearly £17m for current tenants, DIYSO properties and ground rent)
- Tenancy management (2843 HRA properties as at April 2022)
- 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
- Former tenant arrears collection
- Garage rent collection for garages (£686,000 in 2021/22)
- 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 (175 cases in 2021/22)
- Processing Right to Buy applications (19 in 2021/22)
- 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
- Setting 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 (24 in 2021/22)

Description of Service (3)

Housing 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 (£1,613,541 on Demand Maintenance, void repairs and decoration allowances in 2021/22)
- Inspection of void properties and oversight of void works carried out by contractors
- Stock condition surveys (500 in 2021/22)
- Planned and cyclical works (£708,220 in 2021/22)
- Major capital projects to ensure compliance with Decent Homes standard and upgrades including kitchen and bathroom replacements (817 improvements in 2021/22) and energy efficiency programmes (38 solar panels in 2021/22)
- 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 (£281,640 in 2021/22)
- Tree management

Description of Service (4)

Business Development and Policy Team

Main Purpose:

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

Monitoring,

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
- Complaints and feedback
- Promoting and enabling opportunities for new affordable housing (94 new units of affordable housing delivered through planning obligations in 2021/22)
- Partnership working with Registered Providers including provision of leases for supported housing schemes
- Equalities and Data protection

Service Area Plan for Year 2023/24

Business Unit: Housing



ID	Type of initiative	Service Area	Description of initiative	Outcomes / Deliverables	Priority	Additional growth required? Y/N plus indicative costs ££	Growth Y/N	HRA Revenue Growth ££K (sum or max given)	Capital Growth ££K (sum or max given)	Anticipated start date	Anticipated completion date
CC0 19	CBP Strategy Action	Housing	Upgrade all housing stock to EPC C rating by 2030	This work will be funded via existing capital programme, Green Homes Grants and the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.	Must - the initiative has to be done	Grant Funding required	Y			Jan-22	Mar-30
H001	Legislative/Regulatory Change	Housing Maintenance and Technical Services	Building safety act fund	One off fire safety works	Must - the initiative has to be done	Yes.	Y	20			
H002	Legislative/Regulatory Change	Housing Maintenance and Technical Services	Conduct a tree survey on HRA land (part of a corporate initiative)	H&S concerns to be addressed	Must - the initiative has to be done	TBC - needs to be costed based on whole organisation requirements. Some can be offset against HRA. (GF growth is £112.5K)	Y	TBC		Mar-23	Nov-24
H003	Service/efficiency improvement	Housing and Neighbourhood Services	Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR survey)	This is a statutory requirement from April 2023. RBC need to ensure it is providing responses to the tenant satisfaction measures. £15k ongoing	Must - the initiative has to be done		Y	15		Mar-23	Dec-23
HWB 034	CBP Strategy Action	Housing	Minimise the number of Council owned homes within Runnymede that are non-decent.	Compliance with the Housing Regulator's Homes Standard. 100% of homes being Decent planned for March 2027.	Must - the initiative has to be done	Planned programme budgeted in place - performance indicators in place monitoring spend and % of homes decent	N			Mar-21	Mar-27
HWB 041	CBP Strategy Action	Housing	Reduce problem debt amongst housing tenants. Develop and promote a savings culture amongst tenants. Promote the take up of education and employment amongst housing tenants to provide additional financial resilience.	See tenant incentive scheme below for growth	Should - the initiative should be done	These are objectives from the Housing Financial Well Being Strategy - also links to the tenant incentive scheme below for growth	N			Jan-22	Mar-27
HWB 038	CBP Strategy Action	Housing	Improvement in the condition of RBC's Independent Retirement Living + enhancements to the support service.	Upgraded IRL communal areas in line with the objectives established in the Housing Older Persons Strategy	Should - the initiative should be done	Depends on feasibility and design report	N			Sep-21	Mar-26
HWB 035	CBP Strategy Action	Housing	To ensure that the numbers of individuals sleeping rough within the borough are kept to a minimum.	Currently rough sleeping is zero within the borough. The homelessness no-second night out policy has set a clear expectation for the service	Should - the initiative should be done	This is an action from the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	N			Mar-19	Mar-24
HWB 037	CBP Strategy Action	Housing	Seek to minimise the time homeless households spend in temporary accommodation.	Processes within Housing Solutions are working well and numbers in temporary accommodation are low. This needs to be monitored constantly	Should - the initiative should be done	This is an action from the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy	N			Mar-19	Mar-24
CC0 20	CBP Strategy Action	Housing	All new homes to meet EPC A rating	This aspiration is set out in the Housing Development Strategy. This sets a standard for all new developments	Should - the initiative should be done	Built into budget for each new development so no growth.	N		TBC	Sep-21	Mar-26
CC0 21	CBP Strategy Action	Housing	Development of a Council Heating Plan to transition away from gas	This work will not start until March 2024	Should - the initiative should be done	Unidentified and uncosted	N			Mar-24	Apr-30
CC0 22	CBP Strategy Action	Housing	Reduction of waste to landfill	This is an ongoing process with tenants to maximise recycling rates	Should - the initiative should be done		N	TBC		Mar-21	Mar-30
H004	Service/efficiency improvement	Housing	Phase 3 of IT enhancements - NEC Housing (to include launch of Customer Services, ASB and Housing Advice (Homelessness) modules)	£50k on going - per annum for annual updates and new modules.	Should - the initiative should be done	Yes, £50K per annum (HRA revenue)	Y		50	Mar-23	Mar-24

ID	Type of initiative	Service Area	Description of initiative	Outcomes /Deliverables	Priority	Additional growth required? Y/N plus indicative costs ££	Growth Y/N	HRA Revenue Growth ££K (sum or max given)	Capital Growth ££K (sum or max given)	Anticipated start date	Anticipated completion date
Runnymede Boro	Legislative/Regulatory Change	Housing Solutions Service	Refresh the 2016 RBC tenancy agreement. This will involve updating clauses, reflecting best practice, independent legal advice & extensive consultation	A compliant and effective tenancy agreement £10K is requested as a one off to support a refresh	Should - the initiative should be done	Yes £10K (HRA revenue) 2023/24 only	Y	10		Mar-23	Mar-24
H006	Service/efficiency improvement	Housing and Neighbourhood Services	To respond to the cost of living squeeze - it is proposed that the housing discretionary hardship fund is increased	This proposal is designed to enable the service to support vulnerable tenants with the cost of living squeeze It is proposed to increase the fund from £50k - £75k as a one off	Should - the initiative should be done	Yes. £25K growth on existing budget as one off for 23/24. Goes back to £50K per annum in 24/25. To support cost of living measures	Y	25		Mar-23	
H007	Service/efficiency improvement	Housing and Neighbourhood Services	We have been advised by our provider that there are additional costs for the fraud contract Consider whether we wish to retain the service	This request reflects the additional cost of the fraud contract with our existing provider £10K ongoing	Should - the initiative should be done	Yes. £10K per annum to contribute to Fraud contract with Reigate/Banstead as costs have increased.	Y	10		Mar-23	
H008	Service/efficiency improvement	Housing Maintenance and Technical Services	We manage a considerable number of local paths. Many of these require investment It is proposed that capital is set aside to catch up with a backlog of investment and a programme is developed to proactive manage our estate paths	Upgraded estate paths with trip hazards removed	Should - the initiative should be done	Yes £200k per annum (capital expenditure) for the management of Housing's estate paths	Y		200	Procurement exercise to commence March 2023	
H009	Service/efficiency improvement	Housing Maintenance and Technical Services	Two boilers in our Independent Retirement Living require replacement. It is proposed that we replace these gas boilers in 2 x IRLs with air source heat pumps. This would support CBP Action CC021: Development of a Council Heating Plan to transition away from gas	Improved decarbonisation of heating IRLs	Should - the initiative should be done	Y. £250K budgeted to replace the boilers with a like-for-like gas boiler. Additional £250K growth to replace with air source heat pumps. (Additional 597K if ground source heat pump installed)	Y	0	250	Sep-23	Mar-24
H010	Staff / Resources	Housing and Neighbourhood Services	It is proposed to establish a centralised System and Business Support function This will support the development of the Housing Management System, bolster our debt recovery capacity and take on some essential administrative tasks. Much of this new team exist - this proposal is to bring existing staff into a combined team to increase resilience and to add a small amount of additional resource.	The resources currently within the Housing Business Unit for NEC system support, rent accounting, leaseholder management, service charges and invoice paying are not adequate to support the current business needs and ongoing system maintenance and development. There are a number of single points of failure that present a high risk to the business. This report proposes centralising these functions under a dedicated manager and creating additional posts to ensure that all the modules of the NEC Housing system are adequately supported and the financial functions of the department are appropriately managed. Impact if not implemented: May miss revenue that is due. Inefficient processes and impact on staff wellbeing	Should - the initiative should be done	Y. £140,359 revenue growth incl on costs	Y	140		Mar-23	ongoing
H011	Service/efficiency improvement	Housing and Neighbourhood Services	Developing a Tenant Incentive Scheme is a key part of the Housing Financial Wellbeing Strategy. This will be designed to deliver cost and efficiency savings for the service.	This is designed as a spend to save measure £10,000 ongoing	Could - the initiative could be done if time/resources allow	Yes. £10K per annum (HRA revenue). Spend to save initiative.	Y	10		Jun-23	Mar-24
H012	Service/efficiency improvement	Housing and Neighbourhood Services	The RBC tenants handbook needs refreshing. Particularly to reflect the policy and procedural changes that have been made over the last two years. Also modernising the look and feel of the handbook is essential	There will be some costs associated with refreshing the handbook Design work - £5,000	Should - the initiative should be done	Yes. £5K one off (HRA Revenue)	Y	5		May-23	Jan-24

ID	Type of initiative	Service Area	Description of initiative	Outcomes/Deliverables	Priority	Additional growth required? Y/N plus indicative costs ££	Growth Y/N	HRA Revenue Growth ££K (sum or max given)	Capital Growth ££K (sum or max given)	Anticipated start date	Anticipated completion date
H013	Staff / Resources	Housing and Neighbourhood Services	The role of the Senior Independent Retirement Living Manager needs looking at the refreshing. It is possible this will need to increased costs - but additional responsibilities for the Senior IRL Manager.	Modernising the role of Senior IRL Manager - clarifying responsibilities and role profile	Could - the initiative could be done if time/resources allow	£10,000 (incl on costs) from the HRA for additional salary revenue expenditure	Y	10		Mar-23	Jul-23
H014	Service/ efficiency improvement	Housing	RBC wish to seek accreditation for the tenant engagement work undertaken by the service. This is a key part of the Housing Tenant Engagement Strategy and reflects the work undertaken over the last 18months to engage more widely with our tenant population. We currently anticipate seek TPAS (tenant engagement) accreditation	Evidence of the progress RBC have made on tenant engagement + support with direction setting for further development	Should - the initiative should be done	N					