



Housing Committee

Wednesday, 20 September 2023 at 7.00 pm

Council Chamber - Civic Centre

Members of the Committee

Councillors: M Nuti (Chairman), J Hulley (Vice-Chairman), M K Cressey, M Darby, S Dennett, R King, I Mullens, N Prescott, M Smith and S Williams

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).**
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Runnymede Borough Council**Housing Committee****Wednesday, 7 June 2023 at 7.30 pm**

Members of the Committee present: Councillors M Nuti (Chairman), J Hulley (Vice-Chairman), M K Cressey, M Darby, S Dennett, S Jenkins (In place of S Williams), R King, I Mullens, M Smith and P Snow (In place of N Prescott).

Members of the Committee absent: None.

In attendance: Councillors S Whyte.

1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2023 were confirmed and signed as a true record.

2 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

3 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

4 Boilers in Floral House

Further to the report at the March 2023 Committee, the Corporate Head of Housing reiterated the need to replace the existing boiler in Floral House IRL. There was provision in the budget for this to take place, and the building was already relatively energy efficient, coming in at an energy efficiency rating of C, which was the desired standard for all 3,000 of the Council's housing units by 2030.

Of the four options to replace the boiler, a like-for-like replacement of a gas boiler was the only one without unbudgeted costs, and was the only option that would not increase residents' fuel bills should usage remain unchanged.

The proposed fabric measures to improve energy efficiency were unbudgeted, and would not take the property beyond its current C energy efficiency rating.

In response to a Member's query, the Corporate Head of Housing confirmed that the other three IRLs in the borough not discussed at the previous two Housing Committees all had storage heaters, whilst due to the need to go out to tender any fabric first measures were unlikely to be in place by the coming winter.

A Member highlighted that should Committee approve the installation of a gas boiler then offsetting would need to be part of the strategy in order to achieve carbon neutrality, and suggested that the Council's Environment & Sustainability Committee took this on as a case study to see what measures would be achievable. The Committee was supportive of this suggestion.

Whilst officers' initial recommendation was to instal additional fabric measures alongside a new gas boiler, which would primarily be cavity wall and loft insulation, the Committee asked officers to consider whether the amount proposed would be better spent across the

entire housing stock. This would be reported back at the next meeting as part of the Asset Management Plan.

Resolved that:

- A. A new gas boiler would be installed in Floral House to reduce emissions from the scheme and reduce residents' fuel bills.**
- B. A further report would come back to Housing Committee to advise on whether it would be appropriate to expend £95,000 on insulation measures at Floral House or across the whole housing estate.**
- C. Refer Environment & Sustainability Committee to carry out a test study on what carbon offsetting measures could be undertaken.**

5 Building Safety Act Update

The Housing Services Compliance Manager advised that the aim of the Act was primarily to improve building safety, particularly in high-rise buildings following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, setting a new standard for accountability, transparency and resident well-being.

Resident engagement was also emphasised in the Act, with building owners required to develop and implement a resident engagement strategy that sought resident feedback on safety related decisions. A draft strategy relating to Surrey Towers was currently out for consultation, whilst a building safety case report was also being prepared and would be presented to the next Housing Committee.

The Housing Services Compliance Manager added that an additional surveyor was being sought to ensure that building safety elements were adequately covered and addressed. This would require Housing Committee's recommendation to Corporate Management Committee for approval.

The Corporate Head of Housing confirmed that he was hopeful that a suitable candidate would be identified based on the requested salary band.

Resolved that –

- A. Committee noted the additional obligations placed on landlords as a result of the Building Safety Act 2022 and Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022**
- B. Committee noted it would receive an update on the Housing Service's work to submit a Building Safety Case to the new regulator at the September 2023 meeting of the committee.**
- C. Recommended an addition to the Housing staff structure – the appointment of a Compliance Surveyor – to the Corporate Management Committee to agree the new post at its next meeting in June 2023.**

6 Establishing a Housing Systems Team

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning advised Committee that after many years of limited investment the Housing Department was coming to the end of phase 2 of an extensive upgrade of existing systems and implementation of new modules to provide the services required by tenants and the Regulator of Social Housing.

The Housing Service Area Plan for 2023 approved by committee in March 2023 included a growth item of £50,000 for these modules and officers were seeking permission to enter

into a contract with the current provider NEC to implement these modules, which fell into five distinct areas: -

1. Housing Advice
2. Housing Allocations
3. Tenancy and Leaseholder management
4. Income Collection
5. Technical Services

The proposal would create a centralised team with increased capacity and generic roles that could support all the system modules and income streams.

Corporate Management Committee approval would be required due to the need for additional posts on the establishment using the £135,000 provision set aside in the HRA Revenue Budget and Business Plan for 2023/24.

A Member sought clarification on the impact of removing the Homelessness Officer from the staff structure, and was advised by the Head of Housing Services & Business Planning that this post had initially been created from the Homelessness Reduction Act but remained unfilled based on the caseloads of existing staff being manageable. However, this would be kept under review and a request would be made to Committee in future in the unlikely event there was a need to re-establish the role.

Resolved that –

Housing Committee recommended to Corporate Management Committee:

i. The business case for:

a. The purchase and implementation of the Anti-Social Behaviour and Customer Service Modules (as contained within the Housing Service Plan for 2023/4 and Capital Programme) to be funded from HRA Revenue Reserves

b. The establishment of a centralised Business System and Revenue function as contained within the Housing Service Plan for 2023/4

ii. The release of:

a. £50,000 provision set aside in the Capital Programme and Business Plan for this purpose.

b. £135,000 provision set aside in the HRA Revenue Budget and Business Plan for this purpose.

7 Runnymede Borough Council's Home Improvement Policy

The Corporate Head of Housing reported that the Ombudsman had recommended that the Council's Adaptation Policy, approved in 2021, should adopt a tenure neutral policy. It was therefore intended that the Home Improvement Policy would supersede this following a public consultation.

It was added that this was likely to have resource implications owing to the increased volume of applications and greater chance of approval, which could in-turn have cost implications. This would be kept under review.

A Member asked about potential risks of working in partnership with Woking Borough Council given their well-documented financial troubles, and was advised that the HomeLink Handyperson service was a Surrey County Council grant and not dependent on Woking's

own finances.

Resolved that –

Members approved the proposed Home Assistance Policy and the move to a tenure neutral service for residents, led by the Home Improvement Agency.

8 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Update

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on every local authority to develop and publish a Homelessness Strategy, with rough sleeping added to the original remit by government in light of the rise in homelessness.

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning commented that the council's current strategy was approved by Committee in 2019, and the report provided an update on the strategy's action plan for years four and five. A refreshed strategy would be brought to Committee in March 2024.

Despite the low levels of rough sleeping in the borough there was an increasing cohort of single adults with complex needs who do not meet the priority need threshold under which the Council would be responsible for accommodating them. However these individuals still require high levels of support to relieve or prevent homelessness, and the Housing department were currently recruiting for a Housing Navigator to work with rough sleepers to identify pathways into housing and establish channels with the agencies who would provide them with vital support.

Resolved that:

Committee noted the update on the Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019-24

9 Housing CCTV Policy Update

The Corporate Head of Housing advised that the policy set out where requests for CCTV within the domestic dwellings of the Council's housing stock would be approved.

The policy would enable the housing service to enforce breaches of policy and legislation. The policy had been discussed at a Member Working Party, and a consultation had recently concluded where only one response had been received.

Under normal circumstances residents would be expected to adhere to rules such as no CCTV covering the area outside of their property – and privacy zones could be created to help achieve this – and exceptional circumstances would be treated on a case by case basis.

A Member was keen to ensure that the policy dovetailed with the Tenancy Agreement, and the Corporate Head of Housing confirmed that the Tenancy Agreement was currently being revised, and legal advice would be sought on the proposed wording to ensure that surveillance was covered.

When asked about the enforceability of the policy, particularly in the context of the volume of Ring doorbells and CCTV at residential properties, the Corporate Head of Housing felt that sufficient resources were currently in place, and remedies would be sought in consultation with colleagues from Legal services.

Resolved that:

Committee acknowledged the results of the consultation with stakeholders and approved the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) Policy for Council Housing Estates.

10 Housing Estate Improvement Policy

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning reported that there had historically been a limited budget for estate improvements, with additional works being carried out through the reactive and planned maintenance programmes.

The proposed policy and an increased budget would enable a more focussed and planned approach to estate improvements that would enable residents to be involved in the process and would give more priority to communal areas and estate environments.

Proposals could be put forward by council tenants and leaseholders, Councillors and Council Officers and would be considered using set criteria and decisions on programme will be made by a panel of senior officers to ensure consistency.

Officers were seeking approval to go out to consultation with a view to bringing a final policy back to September's Committee.

The Committee Vice Chair emphasised that Councillors would play a key role in promoting and proposing areas within their wards that would benefit from the policy, and officers would work on a mechanism to ensure Councillors were aware of the policy and what was in the pipeline.

Resolved that:

Members approved an 8 week consultation exercise with tenants and leaseholders on the draft Estate Improvement Policy

11 Garage Allocation Policy Consultation

The Corporate Head of Housing reported that garages played a key role in the Council's income, with some £800k in revenue generated on an annual basis. A formal policy for how those 1,014 garages were being let was now being sought, with key emphasis on how garages were allocated and prioritised.

Whilst the policy was already in operation, a consultation exercise was being requested with a view to approval of a final policy being sought at a future Committee.

In response to a Member's concern about many modern vehicles being too large for traditional garages, the Corporate Head of Housing stated that changing the terms and conditions to incorporate general storage would severely affect usage, with many insurers not covering belongings in garages.

It was added that the Council let garages on certain conditions and if those conditions were not adhered to then it would be the other party who would be liable should any instances occur. Enforcement of the policy does occur, particularly where intelligence is received to state they were not being used for their intended purpose and it was causing an inconvenience to local residents/businesses.

Resolved that:

Committee approved the consultation exercise on the garage policy.

12 **Private Rented Sector Offer**

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning advised that the Localism Act 2011 introduced offers within the Private Rented Sector as a lawful means of discharging a homelessness duty.

Where possible homelessness would be prevented or relieved through an offer of a private sector tenancy, thereby avoiding the need for individuals to go into temporary accommodation which was both costly and disruptive.

A recent consultation with stakeholders, which included targeted contact with applicants who had approached the Council as homeless, as well as current applicants on the Housing Register had seen 191 views to the dedicated webpage and a short questionnaire which 6 people completed.

As a result of the consultation a change would be made to the process where applicants would be asked to sign to confirm that have had the policy explained to them.

Resolved that:

Members approved the private rented sector offer.

13 **Surrey Towers Local Lettings Policy**

The Corporate Head of Housing advised that the report proposed an amendment to the Council's allocation policy for Surrey Towers, primarily owing to the lower demand for properties, resulting in empty property voids taking longer to let and impacting on rental income.

The Local Lettings Policy would see all properties advertised in the normal way, with additional options to provide an additional bedroom and then actively seek out key workers.

A Member highlighted that antisocial behaviour was often cited as a reason for low uptake of properties, and a number of disparate matters needed to be addressed to improve the reputation. Officers added that the policy was not intended to provide a quick fix for social issues, but would provide more flexibility for the management of the Council's housing stock and would be reviewed after one year.

The Corporate Head of Housing reported that a consultation event had been held with residents to promote the policy, whilst prospective residents would need to be made aware of the potential to have to pay more in social size criteria.

Resolved that:

Members approved the Local Lettings Policy.

14 **Housing Damp & Mould Policy**

The policy set out how the Council would deal with instances of mould and damp, and Head of Housing Technical Services advised that it was aimed to take a proactive approach, and set out specific guidance to ensure that damp and mould was managed effectively.

The main aim was to ensure that tenants had a safe home to live in, and any damp and mould was managed effectively so to not cause any long-term damage to the structure of the building.

Open lines of communication with residents would be key to the success of the policy, and all actions would be captured on the NEC housing system. It was concluded that the policy was recommended for immediate approval without any consultation due to the potential for significant health and safety risks associated with damp and mould.

The Corporate Head of Housing added that it was heavily publicised on the Council's website and via newsletters about the need for residents to report cases of damp and mould, and monitoring took place of previous reports at properties to check that the issue had not reoccurred.

Resolved that:

Members approved the Housing Damp and Mould Policy

15 Safer Streets Update

The Corporate Head of Housing reminded Committee that the Council had received a Home Office grant to reduce antisocial behaviour on the Garfield Road estate, on condition that the amount was match funded by the Council.

Some £67k had so far been spent on crime prevention measures, whilst the children's charity Eikon had been commissioned for prevention and diversion work, with contracts expected to be signed imminently.

16 Housing Quarter 4 2022/23 Performance

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning reported on the current performance information for the Housing Service, including Corporate key performance indicators and those that were required by the Regulator of Social Housing.

This comprised re-let times, Decent Homes standard and rent arrears. Bed & breakfast accommodation was significantly higher than previous updates, and this was primarily due to the volume of cases of single people with a history of mental health problems and substance misuse. Bed & breakfast has been utilised in these cases to ensure they were not homeless whilst a more permanent solution was found for them.

A Member asked about the trajectory of achieving Decent Homes standard for the entirety of the housing stock. The Corporate Head of Housing advised that the number had improved from 41% in January 2021 to under 25% non-compliance now. It was hoped to achieve 98% compliance by March 2027 and further details would be in the Asset Management Plan coming to September's Committee.

In response to queries about continuing to spend money on Parkside properties, it was advised that no decision had been made to cease spending on properties in light of the potential redevelopment, and officers would not be recommending this given that many components in properties in Parkside were coming to the end of their life, and in the event of redevelopment being approved some properties would still have some ten years to wait until being redeveloped.

17 Complaints Analysis

The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning advised that all complaints about the housing services were logged and monitored in line with the Housing Complaints policy and dealt with at Head of Service level. Where appropriate compensation is offered within the remit of the Compensation Policy.

There had been an increase in the number of complaints received between April 2022 and

March 2023 (48) compared with the same period in the previous year (31). In addition, a slightly higher proportion of these complaints had been upheld, which was highly likely to be linked to increased communications with tenants on how to complain. Due to the relatively low level of formal complaints no trends had been identified.

When investigating complaints, there was a requirement on managers to consider making recommendations for service improvements such as revised procedures or staff guidance. Complaints continued to be analysed at management team meetings.

Whilst acknowledging that complaint numbers were relatively low in the context of 3,000 properties in the Council's housing stock, a Member was keen to establish whether this could be partly attributed to a lack of resources. The Head of Housing Services & Business Planning felt it was more down to occasional examples of staff not showing sufficient compassion when contacting residents about rent arrears. The Committee Chair advised Members to study Standards & Audit Committee papers for a more in-depth breakdown of complaints across the borough.

18 **Parkside Regeneration Update**

The Housing Development Manager reported on the outcome of the multi-disciplinary Building Consultancy, with the chosen contractor coming out with both the highest score and lowest bid. Many of the roles they had been asked to cover would be done so internally within their practise.

The Housing Development Manager highlighted an error within paragraph 2.6 of the report, which should have highlighted RIBA stages 1-3 rather than RIBA stage 1 repeated three times. The conclusion of each of these stages would be the decision gateway for Councillors, with identified budget only released at the conclusion of the previous stage in the process. The first key milestone would be January 2024, which would report on the feasibility and viability of the scheme.

Density and design discussions were also underway to be reported back to a future Committee.

The Corporate Head of Housing acknowledged slippage in progress compared to previous expectations, this was largely down to the tender exercise taking longer than expected. Residents continued to be kept up to date via both the dedicated website and newsletters.

19 **Standing Order 42**

Standing Order 42 proformas 1,015 (Local Authority Housing Fund) and 1,020 (Safer Streets Funding Release) were noted.

A Member queried the accuracy of whether the eight homes purchased through the Local Authority Housing Fund contributed towards the Council's target of 125 new affordable homes within five years. Following consultation with the Committee, the Committee Chair agreed to remove these homes from the overall target.

20 **Exclusion of press and public**

By resolution of the Committee, for the reasons set out in the agenda, the press and public were excluded from the remainder of the meeting during the consideration of the remaining matters under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information as set out in Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

21 Procurement Request for Roofing and Rainwater Goods Contractor

The Head of Housing Technical Services advised that Committee were being asked to approve a procurement exercise to secure a primary contractor to replace roofs and rainwater goods over the next five years. This aligned with the Asset Management Plan and the tender would be issued by open tender expected to be completed within two months.

Upon completion of the tender exercise Committee approval would be sought on the appointment of the chosen contractor.

Resolved that:

Members approved the procurement for the replacement of roofs and rainwater goods over the next five years, which was budgeted for in the 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account and the 30-year Business Plan.

(The meeting ended at 10.02 pm.)

Chairman

Report title	2023 REVIEW OF HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2026 (HOUSING)
Report author	Andy Vincent, Corporate Head of Housing/Simon Allen, Head of Housing Technical Services
Department	Housing
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	
Reasons for exemption	

Purpose of report:

To recommend to a committee

Synopsis of report:

The Housing Asset Management Plan 2021-2026 sets a vision for the maintenance of the Council's Housing Asserts "*making our homes and environment fit for the future.*"

The plan is focused on:

- Achieving and maintaining homes at the government's 'Decent Homes Standard'
- Charting the delivery of the service's key climate change objective of "ensuring all Council homes have a C energy efficiency rating as a minimum by 2030".
- Delivering the Council Housing New Build Programme
- Investment in Runnymede's older persons accommodation
- Ensuring that other assets are maintained effectively.

Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Asset Management Plan highlights the Council's aspirations for its housing stock over the next 3 years:

- Good quality homes
- New council owned homes
- Environmental sustainability
- Properties that are safe and where risks are managed
- Investment into our retirement living accommodation
- A wider review of our assets.

The plan details the investment identified to support each of the aspirations, plus the other asset types where investment over the life of the plan is required. Additional investment has been identified in a number of areas as part of the annual review of the plan.

Progress against the actions identified within the plan are summarised.

Recommendations:

To recommend that Housing Committee members continue to support the aspirations set out within the plan and the investment identified to support their delivery.

To recommend that members identify the progress made against the actions contained within the plan and consider the additional actions required for effective long-term delivery of the plan.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 The development of a Housing Asset Management Plan is designed to ensure the effective management of the Council's housing assets.
- 1.2 The plan is focused on ensuring the delivery of the Decent Homes Standard across all the homes owned by Runnymede Borough Council, delivery of the Council's Climate Change Strategy action plan, delivery of additional Council owned homes, investment in Runnymede's older persons accommodation and ensuring that other assets are maintained effectively.

2. Strategic Aims

- 2.1 The Housing Asset Management Plan highlights Runnymede Borough Council's aspirations for the management of its housing assets over the next 3 years.
- Good quality homes
 - New council owned homes
 - Environmental sustainability
 - Properties that are safe and where risks are managed
 - Investment into our retirement living accommodation
 - A wider review of our assets

The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the aspirations continue to reflect those of the Council and to enable delivery to be closely monitored.

3. 2023 Annual Review

- 3.1 The following actions have been completed since the plan was presented to Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Committee in March 2021:

Action	Timescale for completion	Update
We will work with members and tenants to develop a Runnymede standard.	November 2021 Complete	A Runnymede Investment Standard was presented to and agreed by the Housing Committee in January 2022

In 2021/22 we plan to implement a new asset management software system to enhance the quality of information we are able to provide in relation to the condition of our assets and to model scenarios around energy performance.	September 2022 Complete	A new Asset Management System went live on 11 July 2022. An Energy Assessor Module was implemented in August 2022
We will continue to undertake an annual rolling programme of 10% stock condition appraisal of our stock – to validate existing data and to ensure any alterations to our properties are captured.	15% completed in 2021/22	
In August 2022 we will establish the costs associated with achieving a C rating as a minimum for all our housing stock.	August 2022 Complete	Complete – see Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund bid report to Housing Committee in September 2022
A garage strategy will be delivered to support the Asset Management Plan in 2021/22.	November 2022 Complete	A garage strategy was presented to the June 2022 Housing Committee – the full strategy was approved by the November 2022 Housing Committee
We plan to come forward as soon as possible with proposals as to how we intend to meet the future heating needs of Floral House and Beomonds.	September 2022	Complete See Housing Committee report to March and June 2023 committee
Identify the location of estate paths and the costs associated with maintaining them	October 2022	Complete See September Housing Committee report on estate paths

3.2 Six actions either remain outstanding or have been added into the plan:

Action	Timescale for Completion	Update
Survey all garages and forecourts to establish a maintenance plan for the stock to be retained.	March 2025	An initial 14 sites will be surveyed by November 2022 Complete
During the life of this plan we will develop a Council Housing Heating Plan which will identify how Council owned homes will be heated in the longer term.	March 2025	

We will review our stock condition questionnaire to ensure when undertaking annual surveys, we capture additional information regarding the condition of the communal parts of our estate – including estate paths	November 2022	Our stock condition questionnaire has been reviewed and captures additional information on communal areas. We will do some additional work to ensure we are capturing the condition of estate paths
Survey all flats block with entry systems, undertake a tenant survey to establish whether residents wish to retain a system and establish a replacement programme.	March 2024	
Consult with residents at Lasswade Court regarding keeping the playground. Consider removing playgrounds at the end of their life.	March 2023	
Complete the review of the Housing tree stock. Devise a management plan.	December 2022	A report to the September 2023 committee sets out the intention to audit all trees on RBC communal land

4. Policy framework implications

- 4.1 The Housing Asset Management Plan links to other key strategic documents. The document sits underneath the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan identifying how the maintenance of the Council's Housing Assets is linked to the strategic objectives of the Housing Landlord Service and the wider objectives of the Council.

5. Resource implications

- 5.1 The Housing Asset Management Plan 2021-2026 identifies the investment into the Council's Housing Assets over the next 3 years. It therefore references considerable levels of spending (approximately £35 million).

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 A significant number of legal obligations are placed on social landlords. There are legal requirements to meeting specific health and safety obligations on for example, fire, gas, electrical, water safety and asbestos management.
- 6.2 Obligations are also placed on landlords to ensure compliance with the Decent Homes Standard, plus meet requirements published by the Regulator of Social Housing – specifically the Home Standard [Home Standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk).
- 6.3 The adoption of a Housing Asset Management Plan allows for clarity as to the objectives which need to be achieved to meet the various statutory obligations which

apply. Such a Plan also helps create a framework for the effective management of stock over a fixed period of time.

7. Equality implications

- 7.1 The Housing Asset Management Plan details the levels of investment planned for Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Assets over 3 years. The plan does not detail the process for delivering that investment.
- 7.2 Delivery will be undertaken through tendered contracts where the contractor's approach to ensuring equality of access will be assessed as part of the award process. Take up of improvement work will also be monitored, to ensure that different parts of the community are able to benefit from the various improvements to their homes.

8. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 8.1 The Housing Asset Management Plan sets out three commitments on environmental sustainability:
- Energy Performance (minimum energy performance of our stock at a C energy efficiency rating by 2030)
 - Commencement of work to deliver 125 additional units by 2026, these homes will be built to a high energy efficiency rating (A) and include alternative heating sources to gas where appropriate.
 - Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Service will invest in its 'refuse areas' at flat blocks to promote recycling. This supports the corporate objective of Enhancing our Environment by reducing the amount of waste going to landfill and will limit costs to the HRA of excess general waste.

9. Other implications

9.1 Consultation Strategy

The Housing Service will keep this plan under review. The service will engage with its tenants via its newsletter and consultation mechanisms to ensure that the aspirations articulated within this plan remain relevant to the tenant population. Any material changes to the themes and priorities will be brought back to the Housing Committee as part of the annual review of the plan.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 It is recommended that Housing Committee members continue to support the aspirations identified within the Asset Management Plan.

11. Background papers

Decent Homes Standard:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance>

Housing Asset Management Plan 2021-26

Making our homes and environment fit for the future

March 2021



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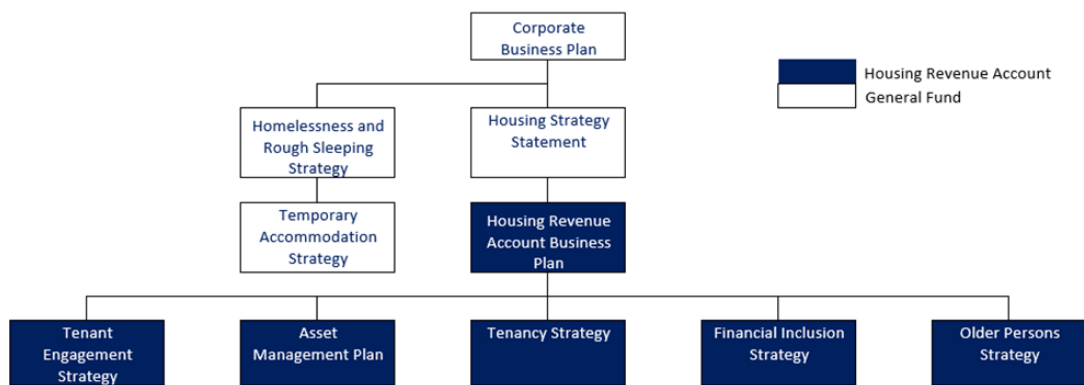
Appendices20

Appendix 1 Details of the ‘Decent Homes’ Housing Capital Programme 2023-2026 20

Details of the investment in property attributes by year20

Purpose of the plan

The Asset Management Plan sits within a framework of other key strategic documents.



The plan identifies the key capital programmes of work for Runnymede Borough Council’s Housing Service over the next 5 years. Day to day maintenance activity is not referenced in detail within this plan as it is a responsive service not driving the long-term enhancement of the Council’s assets.

Business Context

Runnymede Borough Council’s Housing Revenue Account owns 2850 properties.

The age, construction type, heating system, energy performance of these properties drives much of the need for investment in our assets.



Delivery of 'Decent Homes' also is a key driver of this investment strategy. This is dealt with in detail within the delivery of *Good Quality Homes* section of the plan.

Age of the Housing Stock by Decade

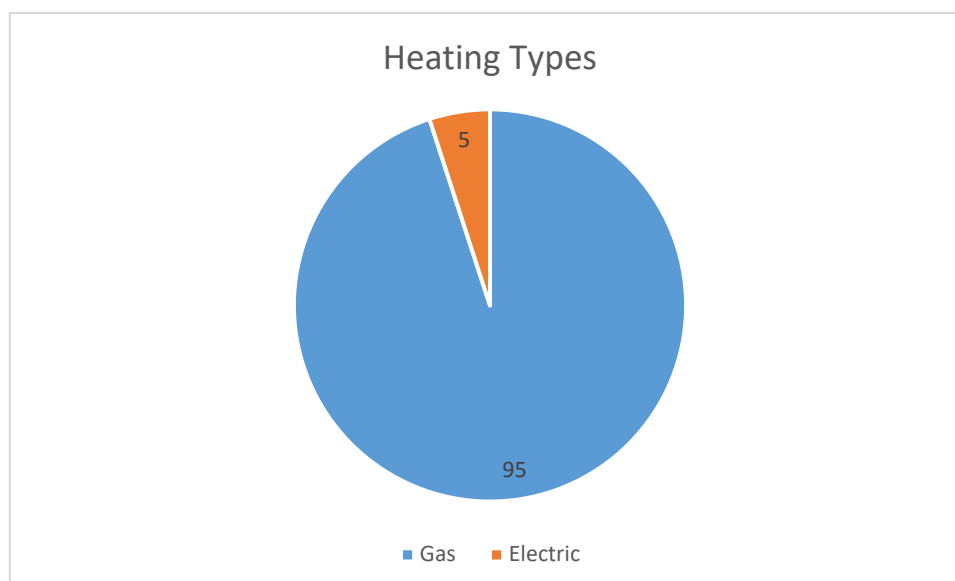
Built	1930/39	1940/49	1950/59	1960/69	1970/79	1980/89	1990/99	2000/10	2010
%	9.01%	13.34%	23.63%	19.06%	11.99%	16.25%	5.29%	0.00%	1.42%

Heating types used within the Housing Stock

The vast majority of our homes are gas central heated via a conventional type of boiler or similar. The average age of boilers within the stock was 22 years in September 2021, in September 2022 is 13 years and in September 2023 12 years.

134 of our 2850 homes are not gas centrally heated primarily where there is no gas supply to the block, or a gas fired boiler supplies electric heaters.

We are developing a 'Heating Strategy' for our stock for March 2025. This will consider how we transition away from gas central heating and what action we should take to upgrade our electric heating.



Garage Stock

The Council own and manage 1214 garages which are spread over 102 sites. The construction is typical in that they are brick built with corrugated sheet roofing much of which contained asbestos.

The Housing Service has developed a Garage Strategy to manage improvements to the garage stock and to consider alternative use for some of the less viable sites. Progress against this strategy is reported to the Council's Housing Committee in November annually.



Strategic Context

This work in many cases supports other key strategic objectives of the Council as a whole or the Housing Service within the Council.

Links to the Corporate Plan

The Asset Management Plan supports the following Corporate Business Plan themes:

Climate Change

The objectives identified within this plan will serve to enhance the built environment by delivering over £50m worth of investment in the Council's 2850 homes.

This plan also delivers estimated reductions in carbon emissions of 1447 tonnes annually* (by March 2030) with the improvement in the energy efficiency performance of the Council's housing stock. The plan also seeks to reduce the amount of waste from Council owned homes going to landfill.

*This is based on data from 1016 properties where the CO2 rating exceeds C in January 2021 – performing at a C rating by 2030.

Revived and Prosperous Economy

This plan sets out details of significant investment in the homes owned by Runnymede Borough Council. This investment will help enhance the economy within the Runnymede borough, particularly with the focus on utilising local businesses to deliver the investment needed in the Council's housing stock.

Empowering our Communities

Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Service will engage with its tenants and leaseholders over the delivery of this plan. It will offer choice where possible in design of for example kitchen units, tiles etc. as well as offering flexibility in the delivery of the plans – seeking to accommodate tenants and leaseholders' availability and working patterns.

Ultimately the delivery of the plan seeks to maximise satisfaction with the improvement work – building on the positive relationship the Council has with its tenants and leaseholders.

Health and Wellbeing

The links between housing and health are well established (ref: https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/post/postpn_371-housing_health_h.pdf). Improving the condition of Council owned homes will positively impact on the health of tenants/leaseholders



The Aims of the Asset Management Plan

Runnymede Borough Council's Asset Management Plan highlights the Council's aspirations for its housing stock up to March 2026 and identifies the key work streams for ensuring effective delivery.

This plan will deliver: -

Good quality homes

Council homes that meet Runnymede's Quality Standard. This standard has been developed alongside tenants and Councillors

New Council owned homes

Additional new Council owned homes in response to the need for more affordable housing provision within the borough.

Environmental Sustainability

Improvements in the energy performance of our existing Council housing stock and new homes built to industry leading energy performance standards.

Properties that are safe and where risks are managed

This plan will focus on ensuring sufficient resources for delivering compliance in areas such as fire, gas and electrical safety, asbestos management and removal and legionella testing.

Investment into our Independent Retirement Living accommodation

We have developed plans to refurbish communal parts of our retirement living stock and enhance our alarm call systems to make them fit for the next 20 years.

We are currently consulting on our plans with residents, procuring the necessary contractors with a view to commencing improvement activity in March 2024.

A wider review of our assets

This implementation of this plan will be reviewed annually by the Council's Housing Committee to ensure delivery is being monitored and that commitments made can be updated and additional data added into the document.



Our route to delivery

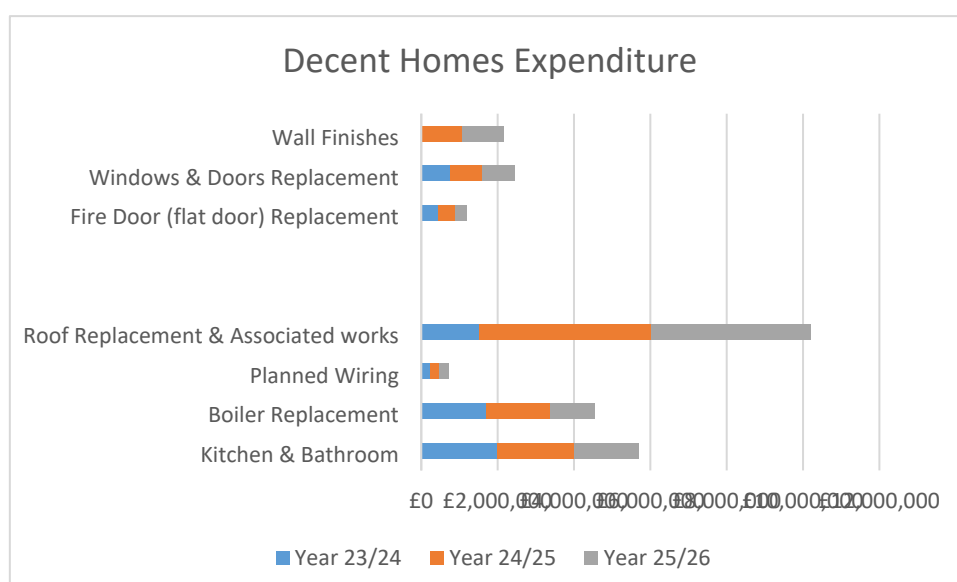
Good quality homes

We want to go beyond the delivery of the ‘Decent Homes’ standard and have therefore created a standard that aligns with the Council’s aspirations for the provision of a quality housing stock.

The Runnymede Investment Standard will enable us to deliver both energy performance improvements alongside Decent Homes work, maximising the delivery of reductions in carbon production in the usage of the Council’s housing assets.

[https://democracy.runnymede.gov.uk/documents/g706/Public reports pack 12th-Jan-2022 19.30 Housing Committee.pdf?T=10](https://democracy.runnymede.gov.uk/documents/g706/Public%20reports%20pack%2012th-Jan-2022%2019.30%20Housing%20Committee.pdf?T=10)

Our existing investment for the improvement of our housing stock over the next five years can be seen below (further details of the breakdown of the investment by property attribute can be seen in appendix 1): -



Below is the percentage of our stock meeting the Government’s Decent Homes Standard at the end of each financial year and the number of properties failing the standard provided we follow our projected expenditure projections.

March) performance over the next 3 years being as follows. Total non-decent Properties	687	684	309
DH %	77%	77%	90%
Year	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26

We will also continue to ensure that requests for adaptations to our homes are prioritised – 26.3% of RBC’s stock is adapted. £200,000 per annum has been allocated within our Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to support adaptations to Council owned homes (uplifted by inflation annually).

This is largely a demand driven service – we have recently refreshed our Home Assistance Policy and Procedure, to ensure that only appropriate properties are being adapted.

Some adaptations requested will overlap with the Council’s Decent Homes programme. Budget provision has been made to replace and upgrade bathrooms within the Council’s social housing stock; funding is also available for wet rooms/wet floor showers within the adaptations budget.

Within these budgets there will be some savings due to this overlap. These savings may be significant over 5 – 30 years.

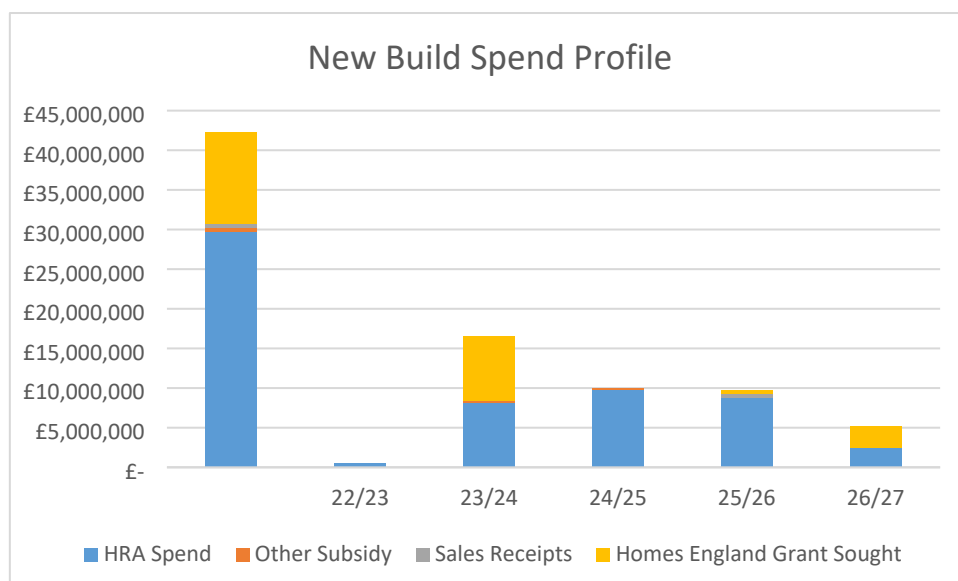
New Council owned homes

Our Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2021-2051 has identified £25 million over the next 5 years (2021-2025) for the provision of new affordable Council owned homes.

We anticipate this will equate to approximately 125 new homes being commenced within the borough and owned by Runnymede Borough Council.

We commit to ensuring that these homes are built to a high energy performance standard (energy efficiency rating of A). We also commit to ensuring the provision of the infrastructure for charging points to support electric vehicle charging to future proof schemes and to support the long-term aim to promote environmental sustainability.

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan identifies the level of resources available for the delivery of new homes for each year over the next 5 years: -



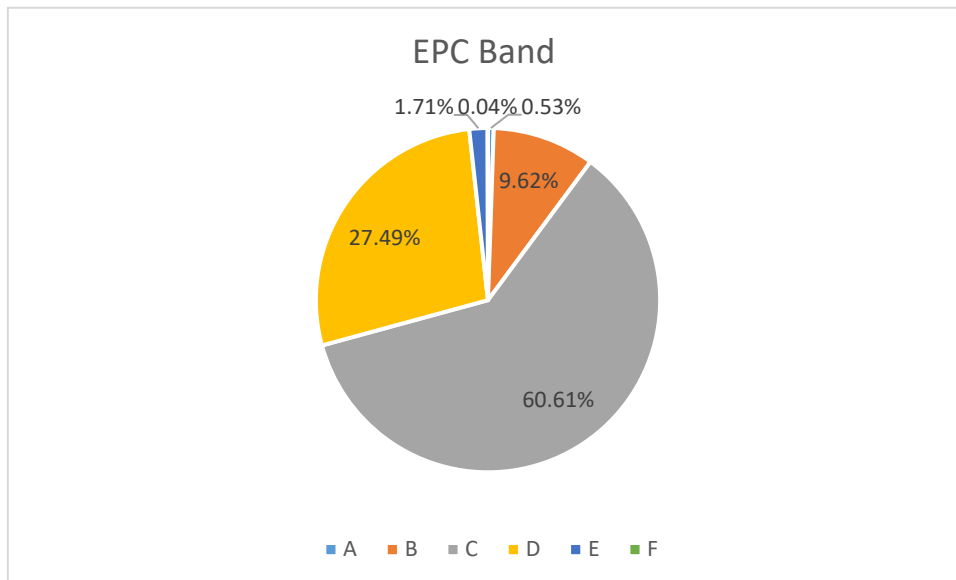
A delivery programme has been devised to manage the delivery of new homes. Sites currently include: -



- 2-2A Guildford Road
- Holly Close
- Dunkirk and Ripley Avenue
- Parkside

Promoting Environmental Sustainability

The energy performance of our housing stock is set out below: -



We estimate the cost of achieving a C energy efficiency rating for our homes to be £8.9m - £9.2m (January 2021).

We have been successful in being awarded a government Green Homes Grant to assist us to enhance the energy performance of our housing stock. So far this has delivered over £1.4m of additional investment in our stock.

We also supported this investment with an additional £400,000 of measures ourselves.

We are working on an ECO4 grant submission which will see up to £850,000 of measures undertaken to our homes.

Unfortunately we were unsuccessful for our application to the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave 2. Submitting an application enhanced our knowledge the measures required to achieve a C energy performance rating and the cost associated with them.

We intend to submit a bid for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave 3 when details are published.

We plan to ensure that the energy performance of all our homes achieves a C rating by 2030 in line with 'Cutting the cost of keeping warm – a fuel poverty strategy for England'.

This links to our Financial Wellbeing Strategy by helping to address fuel poverty; reducing costs associated with achieving ‘adequate’ levels of heat with our homes.

The costs associated with achieving the goal of ensuring our homes are a C energy performance rating or above by 2030 are set out below: -

£8.9m - £9.2m in total

£1.8m from Green Homes Grant LAD1

£3.7m from Decent Homes related work

£850,000 from ECO 4

£2.9m – £3.3m currently unfunded

Non-traditional construction types do not deliver a C energy performance rating in the Runnymede Borough; these are listed below: -

The non-traditional construction types in the ‘Parkside’ regeneration area have been units taken out of this list (102 units in RBC’s ownership).

Construction Type	Construction Methodology	Number of units
BISF 1947-50	Precast concrete with steel frame. No cavity wall	8
Cornish 1947 - 1960	Type 1 pre-cast reinforced concrete panel walls at ground floor level and second storey accommodation within in a timber framed mansard roof. Type 2 Cornish Units are generally two storey residential properties with pre-cast reinforced concrete external walls over both storeys.	18
Orlit 1945-1960	precast concrete frame structure, externally clad with 2-inch reinforced concrete hollow blocks.	36

Heating types

The vast majority of the housing stock owned by Runnymede Borough Council operates gas central heating. A number of commercial gas heating systems also exist within our Independent Retirement Living accommodation. These heat multiple dwellings.

The life expectancy of these units are as follows: -

- Heatherfields was built in 1972 and the lifecycle of the boiler is circa 15 years, Pumps 5 to 15 years, Plate Heat Exchangers. We plan to upgrade this boiler in 2024/25.
- Floral House was built in 1987 and the lifecycle of the Boilers is 15 years, Pumps 5 to 15 years and Hot water cylinders – 20 to 25 years. We plan to upgrade this heating system in 2024/25.
- Bemonds was built in 1972 and was totally refurbished in 2015 and as part of that refurbishment the boiler and associated items were also upgraded. The heating system is due to be replaced in 2035.

The remaining two independent living accommodation building are serviced by electrical heating which is separate for each dwelling.

Our current plans for the provision of heating systems to our tenants consist of upgrading boilers at the end of their life to more efficient systems.

ACTION 2

During the life of this plan we will develop a Council Housing Heating Plan which will identify how Council owned homes will be heated in the longer term.

Newly built homes are required to be ‘off gas’ by 2025. Although this requirement does not apply to existing homes this is pointing a direction where gas cannot be assumed to be the preferred heating type during the late 2020s and early 2030s.

Properties that are safe and where risks are managed

Policies and work schedules exist for managing compliance issues.

A specific example is the Fire Risk Management Policy, which describes the Fire Risk Assessment processes. This ensures that high, medium, and low risk sites such as Surrey Tower and our Independent Retirement Living Accommodation and all blocks of flats with a communal area have an annual Fire Risk Assessment.

Actions identified following Fire Risk Assessments are then prioritised into high, medium, and low as set out in the example below.

Risk Rating	Qty	Target Completion
High	2	1 Months
Medium	5	3 Months
Low	3	12 Months
Management High	1	1 Month
Management Low	0	12 Months
Recommendation	0	Unlimited

A suite of performance indicators also ensure that effective management of compliance is being undertaken by Runnymede Borough Council’s Housing Service – these are reported to the Housing Committee 5 times per year.



See the indicators below: -

Health & Safety compliance	KPI Target
Gas Safety	
No. of CP12 certificates out of target at any given time	0
Electrical	
% of stock with valid safety EICR certification	100%
% of emergency lighting tests completed against target	100%
Asbestos	
% of stock with a valid asbestos survey	100%
Fire Risk Assessment	
% of inspections completed in target	100%
Water Management	
% of water management inspection test undertaken	100%
Passenger Lifts	
% of inspections undertaken against programme	100%
Accidents Reporting	
Number of RBC RIDDOR reportable incidents	0
Number of days lost to accidents and incidents	0

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2021 – 2051 identifies the costs associated with fire remediation work, electrical rewires, asbestos encapsulation and removal, fire alarm upgrades (including digital switch over) and replacement and upgrading of emergency lighting. The cost of the work over the next 3 years exceeds £1m.

This plan will focus on ensuring sufficient resources for delivering compliance in areas such as fire, gas and electrical safety, asbestos management and removal and legionella testing.

Investment into our Independent Retirement Living accommodation

We want our retirement living accommodation to provide first class facilities for its residents.

In September 2021 we sought approval from Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Committee for our Housing Services - Older People Strategy. This strategy sets out a vision for the future of our Independent Retirement Living stock and wider housing services for older people; to provide: -

1. First class older persons accommodation with modern facilities, that is highly sought after



2. High quality onsite support promoting independence, tackling isolation, and maximising resident's health and wellbeing
3. A clear pathway into older persons accommodation with assistance where required
4. A partnership with Surrey County Council's Adult Social Care services to ensure residents receive the 'right' care services where they are required
5. Accommodation outside of Independent Retirement Living that meets the needs of older people

To support this strategy £1.7m has been identified within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan over the next 3 years to support the enhancement of facilities within Independent Retirement Living and the upgrading of alarm call systems (including enabling a switchover to digital calling which will be required by 2025).

A wider review of our assets

This plan has identified the need to review the service we provide to older people living in general needs or Independent Retirement Living accommodation and to consider the viability of non-traditional construction types particularly where they do not facilitate the delivery of medium levels of energy performance.

This plan will also initiate a wider review of our housing assets.

A review of the service's temporary accommodation requirements has been completed and the number of units identified for temporary accommodation will reduce significantly – to better match demand.

This plan has initiated the development of a Garage Strategy which will take a long-term view to ensure the effective management and maintenance of our garage stock.

Other areas of asset management activity

There are a number of other areas where management of Council assets require capital investment.

Lifts

The management and maintenance of lifts is a key area where investment needs planning based on the life expectancy of the lift. Runnymede Borough Council has 8 lifts in its housing owned dwellings. Enclosed is a list of the lifts with their installation dates.



Item	Site Address	Lift type	Manufacturer	Stops	Duty load	Installed
Runnymede Borough Council-Housing Lifts						
1	Bemonds, Herriot road, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 9DT	Hydraulic Passenger	Stannah	2	375 Kg (3 persons)	2014
2	Floral House, Fox Lane South, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 9EE	Hydraulic Passenger	Stannah (Hydro-elite mod) Rear	4	630 Kg (8 persons)	2002 (mod)
3	Floral House, Fox Lane South, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 9EE	Hydraulic Passenger	Stannah Centre	3	630 Kg (8 persons)	1997
4	Heatherfields, New Haw, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 3PE	Hydraulic Passenger	Liftec	2	375 Kg (3 persons)	2011
5	Darley Dene Court, Garfield Road, Addlestone KT15 2NU	Hydraulic Passenger	H&C warden	3	630 Kg (8 persons)	1982
6	Grove Court, The Grove, Egham, Surrey TW20 9QJ	Hydraulic Passenger	Guideline	3	630 Kg (8 persons)	2012
7	Surrey Towers, Garfield Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2NH	Traction Passenger	D&A (ILE controller)	16	630 Kg (8 persons)	1999
8	Surrey Towers, Garfield Road, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 2NH	Traction Passenger	D&A (ILE controller)	16	630 Kg (8 persons)	1999

Resources have been identified within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to support the maintenance and replacement of lifts. Over the next 3 years this equates to £1,000,000.

Surrey Towers lifts will be replaced in 2023/24 with two additional lifts being upgraded 2024/25 (Darley Dene and Floral House).

Aerials

Some communal aerials within flat blocks and Independent Retirement Living accommodation cannot support the most up to date digital television services. Work to upgrade these systems will commence in 2026 with approximate £200,000 investment over the following 4 years.

Communal Areas

The Housing Service would benefit from additional information to support the management of communal areas of our social housing stock (these include; outdoor walkways, communal staircases, interior landings, communal paths etc.)

ACTION 4

We will review our stock condition questionnaire to ensure when undertaking annual surveys, we capture additional information regarding the condition of the communal parts of our estate – including estate paths.

Door Entry Systems

Work has been identified where door entry systems need upgrading. This has been built into the business plan - at a cost of £200,000 over the next 5 years.

ACTION 5

Survey all flats block with entry systems, undertake a tenant survey to establish whether residents wish to retain a system and establish a replacement programme.

Footpaths

£2.8m is identified within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan for the maintenance and upgrade of property paths (paths to individual properties).

A significant number of 'estate' footpaths are also owned and managed by the Housing Service within Runnymede Borough Council. Investment in upgrading a number of these paths is also identified within our plans. £200,000 has been identified to improve the condition of footpaths in 2023/24 with further capital resources to be identified for future years.

Playgrounds

The Housing Service own 5 playgrounds; at: -

- Bemonds
- Lasswade Court
- Middlesex Court
- Oaklands Court
- Sussex Court

£45,000 is being invested in the Bemonds playground in 2023/24

The playground at Lasswade Court is due to be removed in 2023/24 and relocated as it is underused.

Investment will also be made into the Middlesex Court playground in 2023/24.



Refuse Areas

Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Service will invest in its 'refuse areas' at flat blocks to promote recycling. This supports the corporate objective of Enhancing our Environment by reducing the amount of waste going to landfill and will limit costs to the HRA of excess general waste. Our environmental budget has been increased to £200,000 annually to enable expenditure on environmental improvements, such as refuse areas, parking, additional landscaping etc.

Trees

Runnymede Borough Council is due to undertake a survey of its tree asset in 2023/24. This will inform an updated tree maintenance programme and provide further clarity over cyclical inspections and zoning of tree stock.

Resources set aside within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan to support tree maintenance is £150,000 over the next 5 years.

ACTION 6

Complete the review of the Housing tree stock in 2023/24. Devise a management plan.

Key Contractors

It is essential for the successful delivery of this plan that key contracts are in place.

The Council's programme of contractor recruitment is focused on ensuring value for money for the authority and its tenants and leaseholders, the delivery of quality products and services, recruitment of local contractors to benefit the local economy and ensuring where services are not meeting required standards provisions exist to either terminate the contract or enforce its clauses.

Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement

Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Service is committed to working alongside its tenants and leaseholders to ensure the effective delivery of the services described within this plan.

The Housing Services is also committed to offering tenants as much choice as possible in relation to the improvement activity they receive (for example on kitchens, doors, bathrooms etc)

Contractors employed to deliver key programmes of work will be expected to employ resident liaison offices to ensure tenants are engaged in the delivery of the improvement activity as possible.

Runnymede Borough Council will also seek to go further than the requirements of the Leasehold and Commonhold Act 2002 when engaging with its leaseholders over the proposed improvement activity.



Risk Management

Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Service published a comprehensive set of risks and mitigation measure in its annual Business Centre Plan.

The table below identifies the risks associated with management of the Council's assets (as reflected in the annual Service Area Plan).

Ref	Risk/ Issue description	Impact/ consequences if the risk were to happen or the issue materialises
HR3	Failure to comply with regulator's code - and new definition of the 'Decent Homes Standard'	Reputational damage to the Council if inspected by the regulator Financial consequences for not being compliant Concern regarding the quality of service being delivered to tenants and leaseholders
HR4	Claims for disrepair from tenants against the Housing Service	Tenants living in homes which are in poor condition Financial compensation to tenant paid Reputational damage to the Council
HR5	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 meet Council's responsibilities leading to death or injury, where the Council is held liable for this or damage to property
HR6	Failure to achieve compliance on electrical testing within the year commitment	Risk of properties which have not been tested

HR8	Contracts are not properly procured	Liability for breach of contract law and breach of EU procurement rules. Complaints from contractors/prospective contractors. Non-compliance with health and safety legislation with potentially fatal risk to residents and staff. Breach of RSH regulations. Accusations of collusion. No value for money audit.
HR9	Data collated/ reported may be inaccurate.	Inaccurate data has the risk of misleading Members, Officers, the public and other stakeholders, and could potentially result in alternative decisions being made.
HR14	Critical member(s) of staff unable to attend work	Essential functions not covered
HR15	Regeneration of HRA stock not achieved	Non-traditional properties not replaced and continue to deteriorate. The deterioration will require higher levels of investment or wider regeneration
HR16	New development not achieved	New, additional provision not delivered. Abortive costs. Increased need for TA if suitable housing offers cannot be made 1-4-1 money not used within government timescale
HR17	New IT system not procured	Current system not fit for purpose and it will not be possible to carry out planned service improvements
HR18	Council Garages not maintained	Rental income falls and asset depreciation



HR19	Asset Management Plan is not fit for purpose	Operational and financial decisions are based on poor/incorrect data
HR25	Staff safety	Issues associated with lone working Dealing with potentially violent tenants and tenants who are unknown to the service
HR26	Contract Management	Contracts with outside organisations not being managed in line with contract terms or the contract management framework
HR27	Inability to recruit to key roles	Key personnel are missing from the service This places greater pressure on existing staff It also impact performance
HR28	Unauthorised alternations to Council owned properties by tenants	Alterations have been made to Council owned properties without permission incurring legal fees to enforce and cost to put right
HR30	Rising costs exceeding income	Costs for the service are rising above income Costs particularly for energy and building materials are exceeding in percentage rise in income
HR31	Tree Management	Health and safety risks associated with RBC's tree stock is understood and managed Resources are in place to ensure risks can be addressed when identified



Appendices

Appendix 1 Details of the 'Decent Homes' Housing Capital Programme 2023-2026

Details of the investment in property attributes by year

S No.	Key Elements/Contracts	Year 23/24	Year 24/25	Year 25/26	Total Budget
1	Kitchen & Bathroom	£2,000,000	£2,000,000	£1,700,000	£5,700,000
2	Boiler Replacement	£1,695,000	£1,695,000	£1,160,000	£4,550,000
3	Planned Wiring	£240,000	£240,000	£240,000	£720,000
4	Roof Replacement & Associated works	£1,507,500	£4,522,500	£4,187,500	£10,217,500
5	Fire Door (flat door) Replacement	£450,000	£450,000	£300,000	£1,200,000
6	Windows & Doors Replacement	£750,000	£850,000	£850,000	£2,450,000
7	Wall Finishes	£0	£1,083,000	£1,083,000	£2,166,000
	Total yearly Projected spend	£5,442,500	£8,457,500	£7,287,500	£21,187,500

Report title	Request to approve the Housing Balcony Safety Policy
Report author	Maggie Ward
Department	Housing
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	Not applicable
Reasons for exemption	Not applicable

Purpose of report:

To recommend to a committee approval of the Housing Balcony Safety Policy.

Synopsis of report:

Housing Committee considered at the January 2023 committee meeting the proposed balcony safety policy. A request was made at the January meeting to conduct consultation with impacted tenants to establish their view of the policy – and specifically to consider the proposal to ban smoking on balconies.

This is due to the anti-social impact of smoking on neighbouring balcony users and to limit the resultant cigarette litter falling from balconies.

The policy has the following objectives: -

- **Safe use of balconies**
- **Fire risk management on balconies**
- **Balcony inspection regime**

Recommendation(s):

That Housing Committee members approve the proposed Housing Balcony Safety Policy.

1. Context and background of report

1.1 Balcony safety is outlined in the existing Housing Tenancy Agreement.

Tenancy Agreement

7.1 Our responsibilities for Health and Safety

(f) You must not keep any portable oil or bottled-gas appliance, or fuel for such

appliances, in your home which includes storerooms, private and public balcony space. You must not keep any dangerous or flammable goods materials or substances in your home, apart from those used for general household purposes.

(j) You must not use any form of barbecue on your balcony or on any shared area including balconies, entrance halls or staircases.

7.5 General Safety

(b) You must not store or leave any rubbish or items that could cause a nuisance or danger in your home, on your balcony, in your garden, shared areas or in any shed or garage you have been allowed to use. If you do, we will ask you to remove any items causing an obstruction, nuisance or danger. If you do not do this within a reasonable period of time, we may dispose of them without further notice, and you will have to pay our reasonable costs for doing this. We may also take action against you for breach of tenancy.

9.5 General Nuisance and Behaviour

- *Throw items from your balcony or window.*

- 1.2 Due to the risks associated with balcony safety it is considered to require its own policy.
- 1.3 The Policy does not impose additional conditions to those in the Tenancy Agreement but identifies specific dangerous behaviours and practices and informs tenants of the Council's obligations.
- 1.4 The policy has been discussed at the Housing and Enabling Member working group on 13th December 2022. A draft policy was presented to the Housing Committee in January 2023 – where permission was given to undertake tenant consultation with tenants impacted by the policy.

2. Report and, where applicable, options considered and recommended

- 2.1 In April, Runnymede Borough Council began consultation with residents on the Balcony Safety Policy. The purpose of this policy was to mitigate fire and safety risks.
- 2.2 We asked for residents' views on what restrictions should be put in place on smoking on balconies:-

Emails sent: 174

Replies: 40 (23% response rate)

83% were non-smokers

15% were smokers

3% prefer not to say

40% stated that smoking should not be allowed on any balcony.

50% stated that smoking should not be allowed on a balcony if it causes a nuisance to other residents.

10% stated that smoking should not be allowed on a balcony which is adjacent to or directly above or below another home.

All of the residents who commented that smoking should not be allowed on a balcony were non-smokers.

Of the residents who commented that smoking should not be allowed if it causes a nuisance to others, 65% were non-smokers, 30% were a smoker, and 5% would prefer not to say.

Open responses asked for restrictions and limitations, such as enforcing ash trays and cigarette butts being thrown onto communal grounds.

- 2.3 The vast majority of respondents to the survey concluded that smoking should not be allowed on balconies, specifically if it causes a nuisance. Smoking does cause a nuisance when cigarette smoke is blown from one balcony to another.
- 2.4 Following the consultation it is proposed that the policy be amended to state that smoking is not allowed on any Runnymede Borough Council owned balcony. This position will be communicated to leaseholders.

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 This policy relates to all Housing Revenue Account stock and is one of a suite of Health and Safety policies designed to ensure compliance with legislation and mitigate risk to Council tenants and assets.

4 Resource implications

- 4.1 The implementation of this policy will be managed within existing resources.
- 4.2 Some enforcement action will be taken by the Tenancy Services Team. When the Health Act 2006 was introduced, which **prohibited smoking in** certain premises, it required limited enforcement; it is anticipated that this policy will be adopted by the majority of tenants following clear communication.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 As indicated in the report the use of balconies on buildings can present a range of health and safety risks e.g., the possible activities carried out on balconies such as barbecues, the types of items which could be placed on balconies and even simple issues such as objects held whilst leaning on a balcony.
- 5.2 As a landlord of properties which have balconies it is both appropriate and sensible that the Council seek to adopt a policy which provides clear guidance on how balconies should be used. Such a policy will enable safe practices to be promoted.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 The Equalities Group has been consulted and a full impact assessment is not required as this new policy is being put in place to have a positive impact on all

tenants and promotes health and safety with tenants who have access to a balcony within their property. There is no evidence that tenants with any of the nine protected characteristics will be negatively impacted by this policy.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 It is not anticipated that this policy will have any beneficial environmental implications.

8. Other implications – consultation

8.1 All tenants who currently occupy homes with balconies have been consulted on this policy.

8.2 This policy primarily deals with health and safety issues in relation to the use of balconies.

8.3 Consultation focused on proposals around smoking on balconies and two options were presented to respondents.

9. Timetable for Implementation

9.1 If this policy is approved by Housing Committee in September it will be communicated to tenants – via the Housing web pages, the tenant’s newsletter and reminders on rent statements to impacted tenants.

10. Background papers

- Report to the Housing Committee meeting in January 2023

11. Appendices

- Amended Balcony Safety Policy to reflect the consultation responses

RUNNYMEDE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Balcony Safety Policy

DRAFT

Review due:

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy applies to all properties owned or managed by Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) that have a balcony.

1.2 This policy outlines the safe use of balconies.

2. Aim

2.1 The aim of this policy is to ensure;

- Safe use of balconies
- Fire risk management on balconies
- Balcony inspection regime

2.2 This policy provides a framework for how balconies will be managed and what is expected of residents.

3. Scope, definitions and legislation

3.1 The legislation that applies to this policy are;

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Housing Act 2004
- Anti Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014

4. Tenants' Obligations

4.1 In line with the Tenancy Agreement tenants must keep their home, including its fixture and fittings, clean and in good condition. To ensure balcony safety tenants are obliged to regularly check the surfaces, flooring, glass, and railings of their balcony, to make sure they are safe and not in need of repair.

It is the responsibility of the tenant to report any defects so they can be repaired within a timescale relative to any Health and Safety considerations.

4.2 When letting a property with a balcony the door to the balcony will be lockable and two keys will be provided. A restrictor will be installed to the window if it is not present as part of the design. It is the responsibility of the tenant to ensure that the door is locked or a window restrictor is engaged if there are small children in the property.

4.3 It is important to keep balcony decking clean to remove algae or dead leaves which could make the balcony surface slippery.

4.4 If the balcony also serves as a fire escape for other flats, items must not be stored on the balcony, which would prohibit escape in the event of a fire.

4.5 Tenants may not do the following

- Store items on their balcony – **permissible items are: Fire resistant table or chairs.**
- Try to clean the outer face of the balcony's window glass by reaching over

- Fix additional timber or combustible screening or flooring on the balcony (includes artificial grass or similar)
- Fix anything to the external elements of the building/balcony
- Allow anyone to climb or lean over the balcony or leave children unattended on the balcony
- Force anything in-between or connect anything to the railings
- Use the balcony as a barbecue area or use any other appliance that emits a naked flame or intense heat
- Allow pets to foul on the balcony

5. Fire Risk Management

5.1 Balcony fires can happen any time however, they are more common during the summer months. There are steps that can be taken to minimise the risk.

5.2 Tenants must keep their balcony clear at all times of flammable and dangerous items including:

- Gas canisters, barbecues, and patio heaters
- Glass bottles or mirrors
- Paints, oils, or paint thinners
- Upholstered furniture, wood, plastic, or combustible materials
- Balcony covers including artificial grass

5.3 Smoking is not allowed on a balcony.

6. The Council's Responsibilities

6.1 The Council is responsible for repairing and maintain the structure and outsides of its properties. The Council will inspect balconies annually to ensure they are safe to use.

6.2 If any items that shouldn't be stored on the balcony are seen at any time, the Council will provide written notice to the owner(s) of the item(s) to allow them to be removed. If items are not removed within the required timescale the council will remove them and recharge the tenant.

7. Consultation, communication and training

7.1 RBC will provide clear and comprehensive advice and information to residents, with an aim for a single point of contact.

7.2 All residents with a private balcony will be consulted on this policy. The majority of people who responded to the consultation were non-smokers who were in favour of a smoking ban as smoking on balconies causes a nuisance to non-smokers using nearby balconies.

8. Monitoring and performance management

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

8.2 Overall monitoring and review of this policy will be undertaken in consultation with staff, the Runnymede Council Residents Association, Surrey County Council ASC, Runnymede Community Services team and other relevant partners and stakeholders.

9. Equalities Implications

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

9.2 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, 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.

9.3 The screening found that a full impact assessment is not required

9. Related strategies/Documents

Tenancy Agreement

10. Version Control

Version Number	Date Amended	Comments	Date Approved	Author	Approved By
V1	March 22	First draft created		Maggie Ward	

Report title	Review of Housing Allocation Scheme
Report author	Maggie Ward Head of Housing Services & Business Planning
Department	Housing
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	Not applicable to public policy
Reasons for exemption	Not applicable to public policy

Purpose of report:
For information

Synopsis of report:
The Council has a statutory responsibility to publish a Housing Allocation Scheme which it last did in June 2021. This report advises members of the intention to review some of the discretionary elements of the current scheme which will be subject to a statutory consultation.

Recommendation(s):
Members note the commencement of the review of the Housing Allocation Scheme

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 Every Local Authority in England is required to have a Housing Allocations Scheme to meet their statutory obligations, to be fair and transparent, whilst making the best use of limited social housing stock. The Council have a degree of flexibility in how we frame the allocations scheme, so long as it is in accordance with the legislation, government guidance and applies reasonable preference to specified groups.
- 1.2 The Housing Allocations Scheme was approved by Housing Committee in June 2021 and this is the current working policy.
- 1.3 Allocations schemes are regularly reviewed to take account of legislation and local housing need.
- 1.4 The main piece of legislation underpinning the allocation of social housing is the Housing Act 1996, Part VI (as amended). The legislation requires Local Authorities to publish an allocation scheme for determining priorities and defining the procedures to be followed in allocating social housing. The Council may allocate housing in such a manner as it considers appropriate, subject to the specific provisions in Part VI of the Housing Act 1996.

1.5 The Localism Act 2011 allows councils to better manage their waiting lists and tailor allocation priorities to meet local needs and circumstances. The Council will also take account of the Equalities Act 2010 in framing the scheme.

2. Report

2.1 The Housing Allocation Scheme was last reviewed in 2021. The scheme in operation is legally compliant, there have been no applicable changes in legislation since its approval by the Committee in June 2021 and it is not expected that this review will lead to significant changes.

2.2 This review is an opportunity for members to consider the impact of the scheme and whether changes are required to the elements of the scheme which are not legislated but give scope for the Local Authority to define specific qualifying criteria and determine the priority awarded to applicants.

2.3 The current Housing Allocation Scheme is attached at Appendix A.

2.4 A table summarising the main elements of the scheme and areas for consideration is attached at Appendix B.

2.5 The current Local Connection criteria is 3 years employment or residing within the borough. The current housing crisis and high housing costs within the borough result in people who have lived in the borough for a significant period having to seek accommodation out of the borough and even if this is for a short period, that can result in the loss of the local connection. This requirement could be less restrictive and officers are recommending that consideration be given to a more flexible requirement for residence such as 3 years out of the last 5 to address the possibility of a temporary move or a move as no accommodation is available within the borough, with residents losing the right to remain on or join the Housing Register. There are provisions within the Scheme for those that are placed out of borough in fulfilment of other statutory duties to protect their local connection.

2.6 The calculation of bedroom need is at the discretion of the Local Authority and currently Runnymede has a generous policy which leads to more households being calculated as requiring 3, 4 and 5 bedroom properties.

2.7 In the current Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities, the Secretary of State takes the view that the bedroom standard is an appropriate measure of overcrowding for allocation purposes and recommends that all housing authorities should adopt this as a minimum. The bedroom standard allocates a separate bedroom to each:

- married or cohabiting couple
- adult aged 21 years or more
- pair of adolescents aged 10-20 years of the same sex.
- pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex.

2.8 Currently the Runnymede scheme allocates a room to each child over 16 which is more generous than some local authorities. Woking and Reading allocate a room to an 18 year old, Elmbridge gives a separate room to a child over 16 where the same sex sibling they might share with has an age difference of more than 10 years as do

Spelthorne. Surrey Health has a joint scheme with Accent Housing which has the same bedroom allocations as our current scheme.

- 2.9 The current rules for receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal credit only require two children under the age of 10 to share regardless of sex and a change to the Runnymede Scheme would not impact on any benefit entitlement.
- 2.10 The current scheme disqualifies people with a housing debt over £100 and this includes Council Tax or rent arrears. The Government encourage Local Authorities to have a proportionate approach to existing tenants subject to the reduction for an empty room so this may disadvantage tenants seeking to downsize. There may also be tenants in private rented accommodation that cannot afford their current rent or those with debts to their landlord that the Council is not aware of as it will not appear on any credit search. There is an opportunity to allow applicants with a low Housing debt which is being managed to access the Housing Register whilst payments are being maintained.
- 2.11 An important requirement of the introduction of a new Allocations Scheme is consultation with stakeholders, which will include relevant Council Officers, elected Members, Registered Providers, Surrey County Council, housing support agencies, and the public. Subject to approval to consult being granted by the Committee, the views of stakeholders will be sought in a consultation process that will last eight weeks.
- 2.12 Proposed amendments to the policy and the potential impact of these will be supported by data on the outcomes of the current policy and proposed changes. This will form part of the consultation documentation.
- 2.12 It is proposed that a draft policy is brought to this Committee in November 2023 with formal consultation to take place following this and the results of the consultation and a revised scheme to be brought to Committee in March 2024

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 This review of the Housing Allocation Scheme will be carried out with regard to the Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy as well as the Tenancy Strategy, Decant Policy, and Equality Strategy.

4 Resource implications

- 4.1 The review will be carried out within existing staffing resources.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 Housing authorities are required by section 166 [Housing Act 1996](#) to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities, and for defining the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation; and they must allocate in accordance with that scheme (section 166A Housing Act 1996). All aspects of the allocation process must be covered in the scheme, including the people by whom decisions are taken. In the Secretary of State's view, qualification criteria form part of an allocation scheme.

- 5.2 All housing authorities must have an allocation scheme, regardless of whether they own housing stock and whether they contract out the delivery of any of their allocation functions. When framing or modifying their scheme, authorities must have regard to their current tenancy and homelessness strategies.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact assessment will be carried out on the prospective changes to the scheme.

7. Environmental

- 7.1 None identified

8. Timetable for Implementation

- 8.1 A reviewed document to be brought to this Committee in November 2023 seeking permission to commence a statutory consultation.

9 Appendices

- Housing Allocation Scheme 2021
- Scheme Summary and Areas for Review

Housing Allocation Scheme

June 2021

Runnymede Borough Council
Runnymede Civic Centre
Station Road
Addlestone
Surrey
KT15 2AH
www.runnymede.gov.uk



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Housing Act 1996 (as amended) requires every local authority to develop and publish an allocation scheme. This document sets out Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Allocation scheme.
- 1.2. In view of the demand for social housing in the Borough of Runnymede, the Council believes that priority should be given to those applicants who have a real and enduring commitment to the Borough and that this will also help build a stronger local community. The Council believes that having a local residence connection, whether this is achieved through residing in the Borough, working here or by reason of some other circumstance provided for in this Scheme, will help achieve those aims.
- 1.3. The scheme is designed to outline who is eligible and qualifies to register for an allocation of social housing. There is significant demand for social housing in Runnymede and not everyone will be entitled to a social home.
- 1.4. We have developed our scheme to give preference to those groups with the greatest level of need to move, as set out in legislation. The scheme defines the priority awarded based on each individual case and sets out the procedure we will follow when allocating social homes to applicants.
- 1.5. Acceptance onto the register is not an immediate housing solution and does not guarantee an offer of accommodation. If urgent housing assistance is required, the applicant will need to contact the Council's Housing Solutions Team.

Aims of the scheme

- 1.6. This Allocation scheme has been devised to ensure that access to social housing supports the corporate strategic aims of the Council, reflects current legislation, and takes into account the limited supply of social housing in the borough.
- 1.7. The Allocation Scheme aims to treat all applicants for social housing in a fair, equitable and transparent manner. The scheme is designed to offer most applicants some degree of choice in the accommodation that they express a preference for, such as the location. However, this must be balanced with the needs of all applicants, the need to create sustainable communities and the need for the Council to make the best use of the limited social housing stock.
- 1.8. The specific aims of the scheme are to:
 - Meet statutory obligations.
 - Ensure the best use of social housing stock.
 - Ensure social housing fraud is addressed and dealt with robustly.
 - Meet the aims of the Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy.

- Provide housing applicants with a fair and transparent system by which they are prioritised for housing.
- Promote successful and sustainable tenancies.
- Ensure that priority is given to those with the greatest need for social housing.
- Promote and develop sustainable communities.

2. The Legislative Framework

- 2.1 The main pieces of legislation underpinning the allocation of social housing is the Housing Act 1996, Part VI (as amended), the Equality Act 2010 and the Localism Act 2011. The legislation requires Local Authorities to publish an allocation scheme for determining priorities and defining the procedures to be followed in allocating social housing. The Council may allocate housing in such a manner as it considers appropriate, subject to the specific provisions in Part VI of the Housing Act 1996.
- 2.2 In accordance with S.159 (4B) of the Act (as amended by the Localism Act 2011) the allocation scheme includes transfer tenants with reasonable preference. The scheme has been written with consideration for the legislation as well as the Government’s code of guidance ‘Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England (2020)’ and ‘Providing social housing for local people: Statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England (2013)’.
- 2.3 In accordance with S.166A (3) to (8) Housing Act 1996, the Council will give ‘Reasonable Preference’ to people with high levels of assessed housing need. The scheme has been developed with regards to these provisions, as well as the following statutory regulations:
- Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, and other relevant legislation.
 - Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997
 - Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002
 - Children’s Act 2004, sections 10 and 11
 - Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006
 - Housing Allocations – Members of the Armed forces 2009
 - Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012
 - Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012
 - The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015

- Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse in refuges or other types of temporary accommodation statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England, 2018
- Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces Statutory Guidance 2020
- The Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020
- Domestic Abuse Act 2021

2.4 In framing and reviewing this Scheme, arrangements have been made under which the views of Surrey County Council have been sought, considered and where appropriate implemented having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young persons.

2.5 The Council has also had regard to existing case law, the Council's Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Strategy, the Council's Tenancy Strategy, and the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant when devising this scheme.

Definition of an Allocation

2.6 For the purposes of Part VI of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), a housing authority allocates accommodation when it:

- Selects a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by that authority
- Nominates a person to be a secure or introductory tenant of accommodation held by another housing authority
- Nominates a person to be an assured tenant of accommodation held by a Private Registered Provider

2.7 The term 'assured tenant' includes a person with an assured shorthold tenancy. 'Secure tenant' includes a person with a flexible tenancy granted under s.107A of the Housing Act 1985¹.

Additional Preference

2.8 The Council can give additional preference to particular groups of people who have a reasonable preference, if they have urgent housing needs. The Code of Guidance for the Allocation of Social Housing sets out examples that the authority should consider, for example those who need to move urgently because:

- Of a life-threatening illness or sudden disability.
- They are severely overcrowded, and this poses a serious health hazard.
- They are homeless as a result of violence or threats of violence.

¹ Inserted by s.154 of the Localism Act 2011

Deciding between applicants

- 2.9 When prioritising between applicants who fall within reasonable or additional preference categories, legislation sets out three factors that may be considered by the local authority when creating its allocation scheme. These are:
- a) The financial resources available to a person to meet her/his housing needs - for example the Council can give less priority to an owner occupier or an applicant who is financially able to secure alternative accommodation.
 - b) Any behaviour of a person or a member of her/his household which affects her/his suitability to be a tenant – for example the Council could give less priority to an applicant who has breached their tenancy agreement through their antisocial behaviour.
 - c) Any Local Connection (within the meaning of the homelessness legislation (s. 199 of the Housing Act 1996)).

3. Who is Eligible for Social Housing

- 3.1 The Council must consider if the application is 'eligible' for an allocation of social housing in accordance with the legislation. Eligibility will be assessed at both the initial application stage and again when considering an applicant for an allocation of housing.

Ineligible

- 3.2 Any applicant regarded by the Council as ineligible to join the Housing Register because they are subject to immigration control or not habitually resident, will be given written notification of the decision, outlining the reason for it and the facts on which the decision was made. The applicant has the right to request a review of this decision, see section 14.
- 3.3 The statutory provisions of the legislation set out that the Council must exclude from their allocation scheme people who are ineligible for social housing. A person may not be allocated accommodation under Part VI if he or she is a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation under s.160ZA of the Housing Act 1996. There are two categories for the purposes of s.160ZA:
- i. A person subject to immigration control - such a person is not eligible for an allocation of accommodation unless he or she comes within a class prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State (s.160ZA(2)), and
 - ii. A person from abroad other than a person subject to immigration control - regulations may provide for other descriptions of persons from abroad who,

although not subject to immigration control, are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of accommodation (s.160ZA(4)).

3.4 Persons from abroad are not eligible to join the Housing Register who are:

- Subject to immigration control and have no resource to public funds; or
- Excluded by regulations made by the Secretary of State; or
- Not habitually resident in the United Kingdom (UK); or
- Who are required to leave the UK by the Secretary of State.

3.5 Specifically, the Secretary of State has determined that the following groups are not eligible to join the Council's Housing Register because of their immigration status:

- A person registered with the Home Office as an asylum seeker.
- A visitor to the UK (including overseas students) with limited leave to enter or remain in the UK granted on the basis that they will not have recourse to public funds.
- A person who has a valid leave to remain in the UK, which carries no limitation or condition and who is not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area. The Common Travel Area is the UK, the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man, and the Republic of Ireland.
- A sponsored person who has been in this country less than five years (from date of entry or date of sponsorship, whichever is the later) and whose sponsor(s) is still alive.
- A person who is a national of a European Union (EU) country that is subject to immigration control.
- A person who is a national of a non-European Economic Area country that has ratified the European Convention on Social and Medical Assistance (ECSMA) and/or the European Social Charter, but is not lawfully present in the UK (i.e. does not have leave to enter or remain or is an asylum seeker 11 with a temporary admission) and/or is not habitually resident in the Common Travel Area.
- A person who is in the UK illegally or who has overstayed their leave to remain.

Habitual Residence Test

3.6 Applicants who have been resident in the Common Travel Area continuously for the two years prior to their housing application are likely to be habitually resident. The term 'habitual residence' is intended to convey a degree of permanence in the person's residence in the Common Travel Area. Where two years continuous residency have not been established (visits abroad for holidays or to visit relatives may be disregarded), the Allocations Team will need to make further enquiries to determine whether the applicant is habitually resident.

3.7 Where two persons apply jointly for housing, at least one of the applicants must be eligible.

Eligible

- 3.8 The regulations setting out which classes of persons from abroad are eligible for an allocation of social housing are the [Allocation of Housing and Homelessness \(Eligibility\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(SI 2006 No.1294\)](#) ('The Eligibility Regulations').

The following categories of persons do not require leave to enter or remain in the UK:

- i. British citizens.
- ii. Certain Commonwealth citizens with a right of abode in the UK.
- iii. Irish citizens, who are not subject to immigration control in the UK because the Republic of Ireland forms part of the Common Travel Area with the UK which allows free movement.
- iv. EEA nationals, and their family members, who have established citizens' rights in accordance with Part 2 of the Withdrawal Agreement, i.e. those who were residents and exercised a right to reside in the UK derived from European Union law or any provision under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, and those who were frontier working, before 31 December 2020. Whether an EEA national (or family member) has exercised a particular right to reside in the UK or rights to be treated as a frontier worker will depend on their circumstances, at that time. For example, whether the EEA national is, for the purposes of the [Immigration \(European Economic Area\) Regulations 2016](#) ('The EEA Regulations') (as preserved by the savings provisions) a jobseeker, a worker, a self-employed person and so on.
- v. Persons who are exempt from immigration control under the Immigration Acts, including diplomats and their family members based in the UK, and some military personnel.

Joint tenancies

- 3.9 Under section 160ZA (1)(b), a housing authority must not grant a joint tenancy to two or more people if any one of them is a person from abroad who is ineligible. However, where two or more people apply and one of them is eligible, the authority may grant a sole tenancy to the person who is eligible. In addition, while ineligible family members must not be granted a tenancy, they may be taken into account in determining the size of accommodation which is to be allocated.

Existing Social Housing Tenants

- 3.10 The eligibility provisions do not apply to applicants who are already secure or introductory tenants or assured tenants of a Private Registered Provider.

4. Qualification

- 4.1 This section sets out the criteria that must be met for an applicant to qualify for social housing. The decision on whether a person is a qualifying person will be made by the Allocations Team. Any decision as to whether a person is a qualifying person has a statutory right of review, see section 14.
- 4.2 To be a qualifying person to join the Housing Register, the applicant must:
- i) Be eligible for an allocation of social housing (see Section 2).
 - ii) Be over 16 years of age (and, in the case of 16 or 17 year olds, non-dependent).
 - iii) Have a local connection to Runnymede, as defined in section 4.3.
 - iv) To not be disqualified, as defined in section 4.36.

Qualifying persons

4.3 Local Connection

- 4.4 An applicant can only join the Housing Register if they have a local connection to the Borough of Runnymede. A local connection means that the applicant meets one of the following groups:

a) Residence

Those where any permanent member of the applicant's household has a local connection with the Borough of Runnymede because s/he has lived in the Borough for the last three years consecutively

In calculating 3 years, the Council may disregard any period or periods together not exceeding 3 months in total at the date of application if it has reasonable grounds for believing that such period or periods of absence were forced upon the applicant through no fault or choice of their own.

b) Working

Those where any permanent adult member of the applicant's household is working or making some other significant community contribution, such as unpaid or voluntary work equivalent in terms of hours to paid work (as defined below), or being a recognised carer for an elderly or disabled adult or child, in the Runnymede Borough, which means that s/he:

- i) has been and is in continuous employment for more than three years (although not necessarily with the same employer), or
- ii) has been and is in continuous self-employment for more than 3 years

Employment and self-employment mean in paid full-time or part-time employment for 16 hours per week or more. Where working hours fluctuate, an average will be taken over the last 12-month period. The main place of employment and activity must be within the Borough of Runnymede. It is not sufficient, for example, for only the head office to be based in Runnymede.

c) Unique health or welfare need

Where any permanent member of the applicant's household has a connection with the Borough of Runnymede because they have a current and ongoing unique welfare and/or health reason for living in the Borough which can be evidenced by professionals supporting the household currently.

Unique means that the care/support is unique to specific health services in the Borough of Runnymede, and cannot be provided anywhere else, including where the applicant currently lives. Support from friends or relatives living in the Borough is not a ground for exceptional need if support is already, or can be, achieved where the applicant currently resides, whether through professional/statutory services, or informal support which may involve travelling. Exceptional and specific health care will have to be evidenced by health professionals currently engaged with the applicant and may be assessed by an Independent Medical Advisor. This ground is meant for exceptional and unique circumstances only.

- 4.5 In 4.4 (a-c) above, a permanent member of the household means someone who can evidence that they reside with an applicant on a full-time basis, as set out in section 9, and has no legal interest in another property, either in the private or social sector. This will need to be evidenced through required verification, and where not supplied will result in the household member not being included on an application until such time that they fulfil the requirements of being a permanent member.

Situations where no local connection will be established

- 4.6 An applicant will not establish a Local Connection with the Borough of Runnymede if s/he is in one of the following classes:

i. Where the applicant has been placed in temporary accommodation in the Borough of Runnymede by another Local Authority in exercising their duties under homelessness legislation, or in discharging their homelessness duty. This includes all types of tenure, including bed & breakfast accommodation for any length of time.

ii. Where an applicant has been placed in a bail hostel or other offenders' interim supported scheme in the Borough of Runnymede.

iii. Where an applicant is a full or part-time student studying in the Borough of Runnymede, from out of area, and without any other Local Connection qualification.

iv. Where an applicant has been placed into supported accommodation within the Borough of Runnymede from another local authority/agency, where no Local Connection to this borough existed at the time of the placement. A Local Connection

to the Borough of Runnymede will not be established during the supported placement.

v. Where an applicant has a court order for a child residency arrangement with a parent or other responsible adult, but where they do not fulfil the Local Connection criteria in this scheme. The Council is not bound by court orders made in respect of child residency orders.

vi. Where an applicant has been admitted to hospital within the Borough of Runnymede, and where no other Local Connection qualification criteria is met. This includes where an applicant is discharged from the Abraham Cowley Unit at St Peter's Hospital.

vii. Where an applicant is in any other interim accommodation that is not a recognised supported accommodation scheme operated by partners working with the Council under contracted arrangements.

viii. Where an applicant is residing in any type of holiday let, for example a bed and breakfast or temporary let for holiday purposes.

Exceptions to local connection qualification

- 4.7 Exceptions may include, but not exhaustively, the situations described below. Individual cases will be considered by the Allocations Team and documentary evidence may be required.

British Armed Forces

- 4.8 British Armed Forces personnel who fall into categories below are exempt from the local connection qualifying criteria:
- Armed Forces personnel who are currently serving in the armed forces and those who have served in the armed forces in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing, except for those who have been dishonourably discharged.
 - Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where the bereaved spouse or civil partner will shortly no longer be entitled to reside or is no longer entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or partner.
 - Existing or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to their service.
 - Divorced, separated spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces living in armed force accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence who will shortly be no longer entitled to reside or are no longer entitled to reside in accommodation.

- 4.9 The Council requires proof of Armed Forces status. This proof should be official confirmation of current employment, discharge papers, or other proof such as confirmation provided by the Royal British Legion.
- 4.10 The definition of 'regular' and 'reserve' forces will reflect the definition set out in section 374 of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

Applicants seeking Independent Retirement Living/Sheltered Housing

- 4.11 Some applicants seeking independent retirement living accommodation may be exempt from the local connection qualifying criteria.
- 4.12 Single applicants aged 55 and over, and couples where the youngest person is aged 55 and over, who do not meet the qualification criteria as set out in section 4.1 – 4.5, but who have a family member that has lived in the borough for the last three continuous years, will be able to join the Housing Register. These applicants will only be considered for independent retirement / sheltered housing and will not be considered for any other accommodation (section 8.25 – 8.35). The age to qualify for most Independent Retirement Living properties in the borough is 60 with a small number of properties accessible at 55.
- 4.13 A family member for these purposes means a mother, father, brother, sister or adult son or daughter. Other family members such as step-parents, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, or uncles may be considered where there is evidence of a sufficiently close link in the form of frequent contact, commitment, or dependency. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.14 All applicants who are accepted onto the Housing Register under this criterion will be placed into band E, regardless of individual housing need. An applicant will only qualify for a different banding once they satisfy the local connection criteria as set out in section 4.3.

The Right to Move

- 4.15 The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 states that Local Connection criteria must not be applied to existing social tenants who seek to move from another local authority district in England and who have a need to move for work related reasons to avoid hardship.
- 4.16 Applicants without a qualifying local connection as set out in 4.3, that wish to join the Housing Register in Runnymede are able to do so, if they can evidence that they are a social tenant that needs to move (as opposed to a wish to move) and that failure to meet that need would result in hardship.
- 4.17 The work undertaken (or offered) cannot be short-term, marginal in nature or ancillary to work in another district. Voluntary work is also excluded. The Council will need to consider whether work is regular or intermittent. Contracts of less than 12

months may be considered to be short term and therefore excluded. Work of less than 16 hours a week would be considered marginal in nature. The level of earnings is also relevant. An apprenticeship undertaken as part of an Apprenticeship Agreement will qualify as 'work' so long as the contract is for at least 12 months.

4.18 The Council will consider the following factors when establishing if there is a need to move:

- The distance and/or travel time between work and home.
- Is the applicant able to take up an offer of work within Runnymede or continue to work in Runnymede from their existing home.
- The availability of transport.
- Any medical condition or childcare affected if the applicant could not move.
- The nature of the work and whether similar opportunities were available more locally.
- The length of the employment contract.
- If failure to move would lessen opportunities to improve the applicant's employment circumstances e.g. promotion.
- Evidence of contract and genuine intention to take up an offer of work.
- The type of hardship and significant negative impact if the applicant were not to take up the offer of work or continued work.

4.19 Verification will be required to evidence that the work or job offer is genuine and therefore, the following documents will be required:

- Employment contract
- Formal offer letter
- Acceptance letter
- Wage slips and bank statements
- Tax and benefit information
- Location of work i.e. homebased/office based

4.20 The Council also reserves the right to remove an application with Right to Move priority. This would apply where there have been properties available to bid for, but the applicant has either not bid for a property within three months of the priority being awarded or has unreasonably refused an offer of accommodation following a successful bid.

Care leavers

4.21 Care leavers who have lived in the borough continuously before they were provided with accommodation by Surrey Children Services. Some of this residency must have occurred before the age of 16 years. Supporting documentation must be provided.

4.22 Applicants who are young people, aged 16 to 21 years old, who have been placed in supported housing outside of the Borough of Runnymede, will retain their Local Connection in order to assist them with 'move-on' rehousing options. The placement will have been made by the appropriate agency and cannot be an informal arrangement. This must be notified to the Council at the start of the placement and any changes notified also.

Homeless Prevention

- 4.23 Where an applicant has a defined local connection as set out in section 4.25 and they have been assisted by the Council with privately rented accommodation outside of the borough, through a rent deposit / rent in advance scheme endorsed by the Council (to prevent homelessness), they will be assessed as retaining a local connection whilst they remain in that accommodation.
- 4.24 Where an applicant is placed in supported housing (to prevent homelessness), either in borough or not, by the Council and/or other public agencies such as the Community Mental Health Team, they will be assessed as having a local connection only where they met the following local connection qualification at the time of placement.
- 4.25 The local connection qualification at time of placement is:
- The applicant has resided in the Runnymede Borough for six out of the last 12 months or three out of the last five years
 - Or the applicant has a mother / father / brother / sister resident in the borough continuously for the last five years and still resident
 - Or the applicant is employed in the borough.
 - Other special reason agreed by the Senior Officer prior to the placement.
- 4.26 Any rehousing options will be determined by the outcome of the Part VII homelessness enquiries and will not automatically result in the offer of social housing. Where no housing duty arises under Part VII, the Housing Register application will be removed. Where a main housing duty arises under Part VII, the application will be handled under the Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme detailed under section 12.1 -12.10 of this scheme.

Domestic Abuse

- 4.27 The Council recognises that victims of domestic violence and abuse often suffer physical and/or mental health issues as a result of their experiences and the medical assessment will take these fully into account.
- 4.28 Where, for example, applicants are fleeing domestic abuse or other serious violence for whom returning to their area of origin would place them at serious risk, and there is third party evidence that can be verified of the risk for example from a statutory agency such as the Police, Probation, Adult Social Care and Children's Services. The information will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and a decision made on whether the exemption on the Local Connection rules should be granted.
- 4.29 Domestic violence and abuse include any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to, psychological, physical, sexual, financial, and emotional abuse.

Witness Protection Scheme

- 4.30 Applicants referred through the Witness Protection Scheme do not need to fulfil the local connection criteria. Proof is required to show compliance with other local qualification criteria on income, rent, Council Tax and anti-social behaviour.

Exceptional Circumstance

- 4.31 Where the applicant provides documentary evidence (that can be verified) that they have an exceptional circumstance which establishes a local connection to the borough. The decision and reasons on whether a local connection has been established will be recorded.

Assessing Reasonable Preference without fulfilling the Qualification Criteria

- 4.32 The Council's Allocation Scheme must give Reasonable Preference to applicants who fall into the categories as set out under the Legal Context section at the beginning of this document, for example, those owed a part VII duty by any local authority. The Council cannot automatically reject an applicant who does not qualify under Local Connection criteria but who may still fall into a Reasonable Preference group for housing need.
- 4.33 Applicants who apply to Runnymede without a local connection, but consider that the reasonable preference criteria may apply, can indicate this on the Application Form.
- 4.34 Applicants who are owed a reasonable preference but who otherwise have no particular housing need, or who are statutorily homeless and have been provided with suitable temporary accommodation, will generally be awarded Band E but may be considered for a discretionary uplift.
- 4.35 A Senior Officer has the power, to be exercised on a case-by-case basis, to award a discretionary uplift by which an applicant normally falling within Band E is to be placed in a higher band. This power may only be exercised:
- (a) Where the Senior Officer is satisfied that it is in the Council's financial or other strategic interests to award a discretionary uplift, or
 - (b) Otherwise in exceptional circumstances. Exceptionality is to be judged for these purposes by comparison with the circumstances of others applying to the Council for rehousing and any other factor the Senior Officer considers relevant.

Disqualified Persons

- 4.36 Subject to exceptions (granted by a Senior Officer on the basis of exceptional or unforeseen circumstances), only an applicant with a local connection, or where a local connection exemption applies, can be a qualifying person.
- 4.37 This section sets out the criteria that will apply to all applicants, regardless of whether they had previously met the qualification criteria above. This could result in the applicant not being considered a qualifying person and therefore unable to join or

remain on the Housing Register. This may, in exceptional circumstances, be waived by a Senior Officer.

Applicants living outside of the UK

- 4.38 Applicants living outside of the UK will not qualify to join the Housing Register. Applicants who are eligible by virtue of their immigration status who are seeking accommodation in the UK, and who are likely to qualify for housing in Runnymede should seek advice on their housing options prior to their arrival in the UK.

Financial resources

- 4.39 Only applicants with a net income that does not exceed the thresholds below will be allowed to join the Runnymede Housing Register:-

- i. Single or couple households with a household net income of £30,000 or more per year
- ii. Family households with a household net income of £50,000 or more per year

- 4.40 For the avoidance of doubt, a family household is defined as a household that is not a single person or a couple. A household income will take into account the income of all household members, including non-dependents. The Council wishes to recognise the difference in applicants supporting dependents and those not supporting dependents within their households. Income will also include all sources of income for the household, including (but not limited to) benefits, grants, student finance and earned income.

- 4.41 These income ranges will be reviewed periodically in line with Central Government Directive and legislation.

Property ownership

- 4.42 The Code of Guidance for Allocations recommends that local authorities should avoid allocating social housing to people who already own their own home. This will apply and only in exceptional circumstances will a Senior Officer exercise their discretion to allow an applicant onto the Housing Register where:

- i. Applicants, either jointly or solely, who own property either in the UK or abroad which they could reasonably be expected to reside in or liquidate to resolve their own housing difficulties.
- ii. Applicants who have exercised the Right to Buy and have disposed, gifted, sold the property, will be disqualified for five years from the date of disposal, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Assets / capital / savings

- 4.43 All applicants regardless of tenure, with capital / savings / investments in excess of £16,000. This is in line with DWP criteria for eligibility for Housing Benefit. An exception will be made for transferring social tenants downsizing their current

accommodation in circumstances where such accommodation would become available to the Council for reletting.

- 4.44 Separate procedures apply for applicants seeking Independent Retirement Living who are over 60 years of age. Applicants who are over 60 years of age are able to have assets of up to £55,000.
- 4.45 Those applying for extra care housing are exempt from the £16,000 assets threshold as they can have up to £23,250 in savings. An applicant with this amount in savings or less is eligible to receive financial support towards their care.

Social housing tenants without an identified housing need / on a probationary tenancy

- 4.46 Applicants who are already suitably housed in social housing without an identified housing need according to this scheme will not be able to join the Housing Register. This applies to Runnymede Council tenants and tenants of Registered Providers of social housing.
- 4.47 All applicants who are on probationary or introductory tenancies are disqualified from joining the Housing Register except in exceptional circumstances.

Behaviour – deception and fraud

- 4.48 Those where the applicant is seeking, or has previously sought, to obtain accommodation by making a false or misleading statement or by withholding relevant information or by failing to inform the Council of any material change in circumstances. These applications will be referred to the Council's Corporate Fraud Team for full investigation and may lead to prosecution.
- 4.49 Those where the applicant has an unspent conviction (under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) for housing or welfare benefit related fraud.
- 4.50 Those where the applicant has obtained a tenancy by deception and/or tenancy fraud i.e. subletting a social home without permission. All applications will be referred to the Council's Corporate Fraud Team who will undertake investigations, which may lead to prosecution.
- 4.51 In all cases, applicants will be excluded for a minimum period of five years. Applicants who have been convicted of fraud or deception will be disqualified from the Housing Register indefinitely.

Behaviour – anti-social or criminal behaviour

- 4.52 Applicants, including members of their household, who are engaging in anti-social behaviour (ASB) or criminal activity or where there is evidenced ASB or criminal activity in the last 12 months from the date of application and where improvement cannot be evidenced by professionals engaged with the applicant or applicant's household. There is no time limit for disqualification on ASB grounds and the Council

will seek evidence of continuing behaviour improvement before considering a new application.

- 4.53 Applicants who have an unspent conviction (under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) where the Council assesses that the nature of an ex-offender's conviction may make them unsuitable to be a tenant. The Offender Manager will be required to provide information, including offence details and engagement with probation services, so that an assessment can be made. All applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Where the Council assesses that an applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant, the applicant will be disqualified from the Housing Register until their conviction is spent.
- 4.54 Applicants, including members of their household, who have engaged in unacceptable housing related conduct that makes the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples:
- a. Anti-social behaviour
 - b. Illegal or immoral behaviour, including involvement in substance misuse
 - c. Threats of and / or use of violence
 - d. Racial abuse / violence
 - e. Domestic abuse / violence
 - f. Hate crime
- 4.55 There is no time limit for disqualification on these grounds and the Council will seek evidence of continuing behaviour improvement before considering a new application.

Behaviour – poor housing related conduct

- 4.56 Applicants who have been served a formal warning or a notice due to breaching the terms of a tenancy, whether social housing or private rented, within the past five years. Evidence from previous landlords / agencies will be considered. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date of the breach.

Housing-related debt

- 4.57 Applicants who have a housing-related debt of over £100, whether under a social housing or private tenure. A non-exhaustive list of debt includes:
- i. any outstanding rent owed to a current or former landlord
 - ii. any sundry debt owed to Runnymede Council, for example rechargeable repairs or funds issued to applicants for former rent bond deposits and rent in advance
 - iii. any debts owed due to an overpayment of Housing Benefit
 - iv. any arrears of Council Tax owed to any Local Authority
- 4.58 Applicants will be disqualified until the debt is satisfied, except in the most exceptional circumstances that can be evidenced and will only be approved by a senior officer.

Households under a duty from another Local Authority

- 4.59 Applicants placed in the Borough of Runnymede by another Local Authority in exercising their duties under Part VI or Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, except where reasonable preference must be given to those owed a Part VII duty under s.166A(3) by any local authority.

Worsening of circumstances

- 4.60 Applicants who give up a home that they owned, rented, shared, or had rights to but chose to leave or dispose of within five years of an application being made. This includes 'gifting' a home to friends and/or relatives, both within and outside the UK, where they could have reasonably been expected to reside, or to sell, using the proceeds to resolve housing difficulties. Housing advice should always be sought before giving up a property or rights to a property. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date that the applicant gave up their home.
- 4.61 Applicants who have given up a social housing tenancy within the past five years. This was not due to unaffordability / violence / threats of violence / harassment / anti-social behaviour / domestic abuse / hate crime, or any other similar danger to life and welfare. If the applicant does give such a reason for giving up their tenancy, this will need to be clearly evidenced by bank statements and/or professionals engaged with the applicant. Evidence from the previous social landlord will also be considered. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date that the applicant gave up their social tenancy.
- 4.62 In sections 4.60-4.61, this includes giving up accommodation due to relationship breakdown.
- 4.63 Applicants who have disposed of capital, savings, or an asset in value in excess of £16,000 within five years of the date of their application which they could reasonably have been expected to use to resolve their housing difficulty. This includes gifting or transferring money to children or a family member.
- 4.64 Applicants who deliberately overcrowd their home, either with or without the objective of obtaining priority for social housing. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date that the applicant overcrowded themselves.
- 4.65 Applicants who deliberately move to a home which was clearly unaffordable, either with or without the objective of obtaining priority for social housing. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date that the applicant moved into the unaffordable home.

5. Who can apply

Applicants aged 16 or 17 years

- 5.1 Applicants need to be at least 16 years of age, and not dependent on a parent or other guardian, to be accepted onto the Housing Register, provided that they are eligible and qualify. However, their application will need to be jointly assessed by the Council and Surrey County Council's Children's Services or Youth Support Service before an offer of accommodation can be made. A suitable guarantor will need to be identified if the young person is offered a tenancy who will then hold the tenancy in trust until the applicant is 18 years of age.

Joint applications

- 5.2 Joint applications can be made by married couples, partners, or civil partnerships. Siblings who are over 16 years of age can also apply jointly if the Council decides this to be a reasonable household, see section 9.2 – 9.7. The Council will not accept any other form of joint application.

Applications from Members of the Council, staff members and their relatives

- 5.3 Any application to the Housing Register from Members, employees of the Council or associated persons must disclose their status/relationship on the Application Form. These applications will be assessed in the usual way, but allocation of housing will require specific approval from the Head of Housing.

One application only

- 5.4 Applicants can only be part of one household and will only be accepted on one application.

6. Fraud

- 6.1 The Council takes its responsibility to make proper use of public resources very seriously and all applications are investigated to ensure assessments and decisions are accurate. The Council will therefore verify applications and the supporting information that has been submitted.
- 6.2 The Council takes a strong approach to dealing with fraudulent applications and works in partnership with the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) to identify illegitimate applications.
- 6.3 Applicants who own property but rent it out will be expected to reclaim the property under lawful process so that they can re-occupy. This will apply to properties that are owned outright, gifted to an applicant or still under a mortgage loan process and to properties where an applicant's family may currently be residing.

False or misleading information

- 6.4 It is the duty of the applicant to bring any material change in their circumstances, which might affect either their entitlement to rehousing by the Council, or their priority for rehousing, to the attention of their Housing Officer. If the applicant is unsure whether a change in circumstances is material or not, they should discuss this with the Allocations Team.
- 6.5 It is a criminal offence if an applicant or anyone acting on their behalf, knowingly or recklessly makes a false statement, withholds information, or fails to disclose a change of circumstances relevant to an application.
- 6.6 Where an applicant is found to have given false information, their application will be removed, and they will be disqualified from re-joining the Housing Register for a minimum of five years. In addition, where an applicant has been convicted of fraud, they will be disqualified indefinitely. Where a fraudulent application is detected, the Council may consider initiating criminal proceedings to prosecute.
- 6.7 If an applicant obtains social housing by deception, the Council or registered provider landlord may seek possession of a tenancy granted as a result of a false statement.

Notifying the Council of a suspected fraudulent approach

- 6.8 If a member of the public is aware or suspects that an applicant may have withheld information or provided false or misleading information, then they should notify the Council's Fraud Team:

Email: fraud@runnymede.gov.uk

Phone: 01932 830821

7. How to apply

- 7.1 Applicants must be eligible (section 3) and qualify (section 4) to be accepted onto the Housing Register. For information on how social housing tenants can apply for a transfer, please see section 7.7 – 7.15.

Registration process

- 7.2 All applications to join the Housing Register must be made online through the Council's Housing Online Portal with no exception. Advocates can apply on an applicant's behalf with their permission.
- 7.3 The Council will assist those who are unable to complete the online Application Form, either over the telephone, by helping the applicant use the computer in the Civic Centre reception area or making a home visit in exceptional circumstances.

- 7.4 Online registration will include a pre-assessment process. If an applicant is ineligible to access the Housing Register or if they do not qualify in line with this scheme, they will be signposted to alternative housing options.
- 7.5 Once pre-assessment is complete, should the applicant be eligible and a qualifying person, they will be asked to watch a **Housing Register video** and then continue with the rest of the form. Applicants can complete the Medical Form at the end of the application form if there is a medical condition, disability or welfare need the applicant would like considered.
- 7.6 At the point of application to the Housing Register, applicants do not need to provide any documentation unless requested to do so. See section 11.37-40 for further details.

Options for existing Social Housing tenants

Runnymede Borough Council Tenants

Applying for a Transfer

- 7.7 Existing tenants of the Council can apply to the Housing Register for a transfer by creating a new application through their housing online portal, where their needs for re-housing will be considered.
- 7.8 Tenants cannot apply for a transfer if they have an introductory/starter tenancy. Discretion may be used in exceptional circumstances, with the decision taken by a Senior Officer.
- 7.9 To be accepted onto the register, tenants will need to demonstrate that they have an identified housing need and therefore a need to move. As with all other applications to the register, the Council will assess whether the application falls into one of the reasonable preference categories. If the tenant does not, then the application will be refused, and advice will be given on other housing options, such as mutual exchange (Section 7.19 – 7.20).
- 7.10 Tenants applying to the Housing Register for a transfer will need to meet the qualifying criteria set out in Section 4.1 – 4.35.
- 7.11 Tenants will be subject to the disqualification criteria as set out in Section 4.36 – 4.65, although exceptional circumstances will be considered by a Senior Officer. Therefore, tenants who have housing related debt or who have significantly breached the terms of their tenancy may be disqualified from joining the register. For further detail on the disqualification criteria, please see section 4.
- 7.12 Tenants who are accepted onto the Housing Register can bid for suitable properties advertised in the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme. There may be occasions when a direct offer of accommodation will be made, for example if the tenant requires a specific type of property i.e. due to their disability (Section 12).

- 7.13 A request for a transfer can also be refused if the Council considers that the tenant has not satisfactorily maintained their current accommodation or has caused significant damage to it as evidenced by formal warnings and/or notice. The Council may make this decision as part of the initial assessment of the application, following information provided by the Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team. The tenant will therefore be disqualified from joining the register.
- 7.14 The decision to refuse a transfer can also be taken following a property inspection visit to the tenant's home, after the tenant has placed a shortlisted bid on an advertised property. The tenant will then be by-passed for this accommodation if their home is in poor condition. The application will be placed on hold for an initial period of three months, to allow time for the tenant's home to be brought up to standard.
- 7.15 In all cases, the Council will consider the vulnerability of the tenant and work in partnership with other services to offer support.

Local letting plan

- 7.16 Tenants may be invited to join the register if there is a local lettings plan in place which could be relevant to them. See section 11.15 for local letting plans.

Tenants under-occupying their homes

- 7.17 Priority will be given to those tenants on the Housing Register who are under-occupying their home and would like to transfer to smaller accommodation. These tenants are referred to as 'downsizers' and are placed into Band B.
- 7.18 Available family sized properties are in short supply, so giving priority to downsizers will free up this accommodation and make best use of the Council's stock. These tenants may also be adversely affected by the under-occupancy charge or would find a smaller property easier to manage.

Mutual Exchange

- 7.19 Existing Council tenants will be encouraged to consider moving by mutual exchange as a means of resolving their housing difficulties. Tenants can register with Home Swapper <https://www.homeswapper.co.uk/> to look for other social housing tenants in the UK to swap their homes with.
- 7.20 The Council has a separate Mutual Exchange Policy. Moves facilitated via a mutual exchange scheme do not fall within Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 and therefore are not part of the Allocation Scheme.

Emergency Management Transfers

- 7.21 Existing tenants who believe they have an emergency reason to move can apply to the Council's Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team for assistance. The team will assess whether such a move is necessary. A decision on the transfer request will be made by the Housing Services Manager in agreement with the Allocations Team.

- 7.22 The tenant will need to apply to the Housing Register if they have not already done so. The applicant will be placed into Band A and the household's housing needs will be assessed so that a direct offer of suitable accommodation can be made. There will only be one suitable offer of accommodation and this will be based on the household's needs at the time.
- 7.23 If the tenant refuses the offer, they are entitled to request a review of the suitability and The Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team will undertake the review to determine if it is a suitable offer. If the decision is that the offer is found to be suitable, the emergency management transfer status will be removed, and the application returned to the original banding. Where an application had not previously been made, the application will be reassessed and will either be awarded the appropriate band in accordance with this scheme or removed.

Tenants who need to decant their property

- 7.24 Tenants may need to move either temporarily or permanently for the following reasons:
- Whilst major works are undertaken to the property
 - Their home is due for demolition
 - There is a Compulsory Purchase Order for refurbishment or development of their home
- 7.25 These moves are referred to as 'decants'. Temporary decants do not fall within Part VI of the Housing Act 1996. Temporary decants will therefore be managed by the Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team and so an application to the Housing Register is not required.
- 7.26 Applicants that are required to permanently decant from their home will be dealt with under the Council's Decant Policy. This requires the applicant to join the Housing Register where a band A will be awarded. Applicants who have been accepted for a permanent decant will be made one offer of accommodation only.

Options for other social housing tenants

- 7.27 This section refers to social housing tenants who are not Runnymede Borough Council tenants.
- 7.28 These tenants can apply to their landlord for a transfer. They can also apply to the Council's Housing Register and will be treated as a 'Registered Provider (RP) transfer'.
- 7.29 Such tenants cannot apply for a transfer if they have an introductory/starter tenancy. Discretion may be used in exceptional circumstances, with the decision taken by a Senior Officer.
- 7.30 As with Runnymede Council tenants, other social housing tenants will need to demonstrate that they have a need to move. If no such housing need is identified, then the application will be refused, and advice given on other housing options.

- 7.31 These social housing tenants will be subject to all the qualification and disqualification rules. Information will be sought from the landlord regarding the conduct of the tenancy.
- 7.32 These tenants are expected to satisfactorily maintain their home in order to be made an offer of accommodation. If information from the landlord confirms the property is in poor condition or has been significantly damaged, the tenant would be disqualified from the Housing Register or their bid on a property by-passed. The application could be placed on hold for an initial period of three months. This will allow time for the property to be brought up to standard.
- 7.33 In all cases, the Council will consider the vulnerability of the tenant and work in partnership with the landlord and other services to offer support.
- 7.34 A tenant with an emergency reason to move will need to apply to their landlord, who will assess whether a management move can be granted. The landlord will also be responsible for decanting any tenants who need to move on either a temporary or permanent basis.
- 7.35 Priority Band B may be given to social housing tenants who are under-occupying their home if their landlord agrees to offer the Council the resultant vacancy, over and above the nomination's agreement.

Reciprocal Arrangement

- 7.36 A reciprocal arrangement is where one social landlord rehuses a tenant from another housing association or Council on the understanding that the landlord that has rehoused the applicant will, at some stage, be offered a property by the other landlord for someone from their Housing Register.
- 7.37 Runnymede Council will consider a reciprocal move in the following circumstances:
- Where the applicant is fleeing violence, including domestic abuse and it is unsafe for them to continue living in their current Council area
 - Where there are exceptional management reasons for requiring a move e.g. when a tenant from another Council area is to be a witness in criminal proceedings and needs to be moved for their own protection
 - Where a request for assistance is made through the mobility scheme for rehousing victims of domestic abuse in accordance with procedures agreed by the Surrey Borough and Districts.
 - Where it considers that there is a realistic prospect of being able to nominate a suitable household from the Housing Register to a property in the referring landlords area.
- 7.38 Reciprocal arrangements will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances and where the referring landlord is unable to intervene to mitigate the risk to the household or where they are unable to house the applicants themselves.

- 7.39 Before any agreement is given to a reciprocal arrangement, a full written report detailing the circumstances of why the applicant requires a move and in particular the reasons why a move to the Borough of Runnymede is appropriate. The Housing Allocation Team will require written commitment from the current landlord that an applicant in housing need from Runnymede Council's Housing Register will be housed within a reasonable time period.

8. Assessment of Applications

Initial Assessment of application

- 8.1 The online registration process will assess an applicant's housing need according to the information electronically input by the applicant. A banding priority will be awarded on this basis, in line with this Scheme. The Council can override any automated assessment if there is an exceptional need to do so.
- 8.2 Applicants who do not have a local connection but submit an application for a reasonable preference assessment, will be assessed in the usual way. Please see section 2 for a definition of reasonable preference.
- 8.3 If the Council is satisfied that the application meets the eligibility/qualification criteria, not be disqualified for any reason, and the information provided appears accurate, then the application will be approved and placed into a priority band. The applicant will receive written notification of this, together with the application reference number and details of how the Choice Based Lettings Scheme works. The applicant will then be able to place bids on suitable properties.

Providing information and documentation

- 8.4 If the Council is not fully satisfied with the application, then it will not be approved until further requested information or documents are provided. Applicants have 28 calendar days to provide the requested documents. A decision will then be made on whether the application can remain on the register or be removed.

At the time of applying to the register

- 8.5 At the initial assessment stage of the application, applicants may be asked to provide additional information or documents. Examples of this include:
1. To establish if local connection should be awarded due to exceptional circumstances. The applicant will need to provide relevant and current documentation from health and/or social care professionals.
 2. The applicant may need to provide a more accurate address history to establish a local connection to the borough with regards to residency.
 3. To establish a local connection to the borough by employment or self-employment. The applicant may need to provide payslips, the most recent P60 and/or bank statements. Those who are self-employed will need to provide business accounts and/or tax returns.

4. To establish who is reasonably considered to be part of the household. Applicants may be asked to provide further detail as well as official documentation, such as to confirm the long-term residency of children if this is unclear.
 5. To assess whether there is a need to move on health/disability/welfare/hardship grounds if the Medical Form has been completed. Applicants will need to provide recent documentation from health professionals to support their current medical or disability related needs. Documents should be dated within the last six months. More information regarding this can be found in Section 8.12 - 8.16.
 6. Any other information the Council deems is necessary to make an assessment of need.
- 8.6 Failure to respond to a request for information within 28 calendar days will result in the application being removed. This decision will be notified to the applicant in writing, advising of the right to request a review.

At the verification stage of the process

- 8.7 Applicants will need to provide further documents at the later verification stage, if the Council is actively considering them for an offer of accommodation. This is to verify the applicant's identity, address, and particular circumstances so that the Council can be satisfied that the applicant fulfils the criteria as set out in this Scheme. See Section 11.37 – 11.41 for more information.

Other documents and information that may be required

- 8.8 The Council may request supporting information and documentation from other services to confirm the type of accommodation that might be suitable for an applicant.
- 8.9 Written professional opinion may also be sought on whether the applicant is able to live independently and to enquire if there are any known risk issues. This information will be considered before any offer of accommodation is made.
- 8.10 The Council will also need to be informed if there are any on-going support needs and how these will be addressed, to ensure that any tenancy offered is sustainable.
- 8.11 Examples of these requests include:
1. Information from the Care Leavers Service to confirm that an applicant is ready to move to independent accommodation
 2. Information from housing support providers to confirm that an applicant is ready to move-on from supported accommodation into independent accommodation
 3. Information from Occupational Therapy Services recommending the type of accommodation that would meet an applicant's needs
 4. Risk assessments

Medical, Welfare and Hardship Assessment

- 8.12 Applicants who would like their medical needs, disability, hardship or welfare to be considered will need to complete a Medical Form. The Council may contact the applicant to request supporting information from health/social care professionals which is required within 28 calendar days.
- 8.13 Supporting medical and/or welfare information needs to be current and less than six months old. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain this information. The Council will not contact health professionals to seek this information and nor will it pay for reports or letters to be provided.
- 8.14 The Council may seek the opinion of an Independent Medical Advisor. This opinion or recommendation will be used to help the Council decide whether any priority can be awarded to an application on the basis of a medical need, including grounds relating to a disability. This opinion can also be obtained to recommend the type of accommodation that would meet an applicant's needs. The Council makes the final decision on all such cases.
- 8.15 The Council, in its assessment, will decide whether an applicant, or one or more members of the household, has a need to move. This is on the basis that their current accommodation is unsuitable on the grounds of ill health, welfare concerns, or a disability where the housing conditions are directly contributing to ill health and well-being. The Council will need to decide how urgent the need to move is on this basis and award the appropriate banding for the application.
- 8.16 The Council will notify the applicant in writing of the decision made in relation to the assessment of their health/welfare needs or needs relating to a disability. There is a right to a review of this decision.

Change of circumstances

- 8.17 Applicants will need to complete an online Change of Circumstances Form if there is any material change in circumstances that could affect priority for housing. For example:
1. A change in address either for the applicant or any other household member
 2. Any additions to the family or any other person joining the application
 3. Anyone included on the application who has now left the household
 4. Any change in income and/or savings for the applicant and any non-dependents included on the application
 5. Any medical or mobility needs which could affect the type of accommodation needed
 6. Any welfare needs which could affect the type of accommodation needed.
- 8.18 If the Council is aware of a change in circumstance but a Change of Circumstances Form has not been submitted, then the applicant will not be considered for an offer of accommodation.

- 8.19 Failure to declare a change in circumstance could lead to the application being removed from the Housing Register. The Council will decide if any non-declaration is an attempt to knowingly withhold information in order to obtain social housing. The Council will take appropriate action as outlined in Section 6.
- 8.20 If the Council is satisfied that the applicant has genuinely forgotten to provide updated information, then the applicant will be considered for an offer of accommodation subject to their reassessed priority.

Annual review

- 8.21 The Council carries out automated reviews of Housing Register applications on an annual basis, from the initial date of application. The applicant will be asked to confirm whether there are any changes in their circumstances and if they would still like to remain on the Housing Register.
- 8.22 The applicant is expected to respond to this request by logging into their online Housing Register application. If the applicant fails to do so within 21 days, then a reminder will be sent. If this is also not responded to within a further 28 days, then the application will be removed from the Housing Register.
- 8.23 If the applicant later decides they would like to remain on the Housing Register, then they will need to complete a new Housing Register Application Form which will be assessed from the new date of application.
- 8.24 Applicants will be notified in writing of the decision to remove their application from the Housing Register. They will be informed of their right to request a review of this decision.

Independent Retirement Living

- 8.25 The Council has Independent Retirement Living Schemes, otherwise known as sheltered housing. The Council also nominates to retirement schemes managed by Registered Providers in the borough.
- 8.26 To be considered, an applicant will need to apply to the Council's Housing Register. This also applies to Council tenants wishing to transfer. Only those over the age of 55 will be considered for Council owned schemes, while some Registered Providers may accept those over the age of 50. Applicants under retirement age will need to demonstrate that they have a health or welfare need for this type of supported accommodation.
- 8.27 Applicants aged 55 and over, without a local connection to the borough, will only be considered for Independent Retirement Living accommodation, if they can demonstrate that a close family member has a local connection to the borough. A family member for these purposes means a mother, father, brother, sister or adult son or daughter. Other family members such as step-parents, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, or uncles may be considered where there is evidence of a sufficiently close link in the form of frequent contact, commitment, or dependency. This will be assessed on a case by case basis.

Extra Care Housing

- 8.28 There is one Extra Care Housing Scheme in the borough, which is managed by a Registered Provider. The scheme comprises 56 self-contained flats with access to an on-site care team and a 24-hour emergency response call system.
- 8.29 As part of the nomination's agreement, there is a local lettings plan which sets out the specific qualification criteria for this scheme.
- 8.30 To be considered, an application will need to be made to the Housing Register, which will be assessed in the usual way. The applicant will need to demonstrate a need for this supported accommodation and therefore a referral from Adult Social Care will be required. The Council will alert the multi-agency Allocations Panel of the application.
- 8.31 The panel will meet regularly to recommend on the suitability of applicants for the scheme. The panel will comprise representatives from the Registered Provider, Adult Social Care, and the Council. It is envisaged that there will be assessed applicants waiting for a vacancy to arise.
- 8.32 Following the recommendations of the panel, the Registered Provider will make an offer of accommodation if the nomination is accepted or provide reasons for rejecting the nomination. Any appeals or disputes will be dealt with by the Registered Provider and any negative decisions put in writing to the applicant.
- 8.33 The Council may advertise vacancies on its Choice Based Lettings Scheme if it is decided to let the property as sheltered housing. This will only arise if there are no suitable applicants and the panel have made every attempt to identify applicants with a care need.
- 8.34 The above processes is likely to apply to any future Extra Care Housing Schemes that are developed within the borough.

9. Property Size

- 9.1 The size of accommodation that an applicant requires will depend on the size and composition of the applicant's household, based on those deemed reasonable to be counted as part of the household. The Council will need to be satisfied that any such person is likely to be a long-term member of the household and therefore included into the bedroom need calculation.

Assessment of household composition

- 9.2 The Council will assess who should be treated as part of the applicant's household. This would normally be members of the applicant's immediate family who usually reside or could be reasonably expected to reside with the applicant. Any other person or persons will only be accepted as part of the applicant's household in circumstances in which it is reasonable for that person or persons to reside with the applicant. This will normally exclude lodgers or anyone subletting from the applicant.

A person may not appear on more than one Housing Register application at the same time.

- 9.3 It is unlikely that an adult child or parent wishing to return to live together would be considered as a reasonable household where they have lived independently and are able to continue to do so. Where a parent or child wish to live together, medical evidence will need to be provided to indicate why this would be appropriate.
- 9.4 When a decision has been reached on who can be included as part of the applicant's household, there will be a further test to assess whether this residency will be ongoing, and the person or persons treated as permanent household members.

Permanent members of the household

- 9.5 Except in exceptional cases, the Council defines a permanent member of the household as someone who has resided as part of the household for at least the last 12 months and this has been their sole residence. The applicant will need to provide evidence of this which will be considered by the Council. In conjunction, the Council also needs to be satisfied that this residency is permanently on-going and that it is reasonable for this person or persons to be residing with the applicant. Where children have joined a responsible adult and have been included onto their application, please see section 9.12 – 9.23.
- 9.6 A written decision will be provided if it is deemed that a person is not a long-term member of the household or reasonably expected to reside with the applicant. The letter will advise of the right to request a review.
- 9.7 Exceptional circumstances where the 12-month residency criteria may not be required, are likely to constitute exceptional health or welfare needs and will be determined by a Senior Officer. These will need to be evidenced by independent professionals working with the household.

Bedroom need calculation

9.8 The Council will allocate bedroom need as follows:

Size of Household	Bedroom Need Requirement
Single applicant over 18 years of age, including those who are pregnant	Studio or one bedroom
Couple (including those who are pregnant) with no children as permanent members of the household	One bedroom
Every other adult couple included as part of the household, including those	One bedroom

who are married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting	
Any other person aged 16 years and over, who is a permanent member of the household	One bedroom
Any two children of the same sex aged under 16 years (both permanent members of the household).	One bedroom
Any two children of the opposite sex aged under 10 years (both permanent members of the household)	One bedroom
Carers who do not live with the applicant but provide overnight care to a permanent member of the household (Section 9.10)	One bedroom

9.9 The bedroom calculation refers to all children in the household, including stepchildren and children living as part of a blended family.

9.10 The Council will not offer accommodation which contravenes the above allocation of bedrooms unless there are exceptional reasons to do so. This means that the Council will not knowingly under-occupy or overcrowd a property.

Bedroom needed for carers

9.11 An applicant may request that an additional bedroom is needed for support from carers who do not reside with them but may need to stay overnight. The applicant will need to provide evidence of this, including medical information from a health professional involved in their care, evidence of carers benefits being received and written information from Adult Social Care stating that regular overnight care is essential. The Council will consider this information and provide the applicant with a written decision, which will advise of the right to request a review.

Need for separate bedrooms

9.12 An applicant may request that a separate bedroom is needed for a household member who would normally be expected to share a bedroom. The applicant will need to provide independent, supporting information from professionals which the Council will consider. The Council will assess the extent of the health, disability and/or welfare needs and how this affects day to day activities and sleep. Opinion may be sought from an Independent Medical Advisor, but the Council will ultimately make the final decision. If a decision is made that separate bedrooms are needed, then the Council will advise of the possible housing costs implications.

Fostering and Adoption

- 9.13 The Council will consider an applicant's request for an extra bedroom to accommodate a prospective foster or adoptive child. The Council will weigh up the risk that the application to foster or adopt may be unsuccessful (which could lead to any offered property being under-occupied). The Council will not include a prospective child as part of the long-term household unless there is a formal agreement in place with Surrey County Council. This would need to be for an imminent placement that will be on-going for 12 months or more. Written confirmation of this will be required from a senior officer at Surrey County Council's Fostering Service.
- 9.14 The Council will not accept informal or interim placement arrangements as an adequate reason to award an extra bedroom. The Council will offer full housing options and advice to the applicant as appropriate.
- 9.15 A foster child who is already part of the applicant's household will be taken into account when assessing the number of bedrooms, the household needs. We may be able to consider an additional bedroom for foster children who cannot share with children from the family unit. If the foster child has not resided with the applicant for 12 months, then evidence will need to be provided to confirm that this is a formal arrangement and will be on-going for 12 months or more. Written information will be required as set out above.

Shared parental care

- 9.16 An applicant may include a child in their Housing Register application who does not reside with them all the time. The care of the child may be informally shared between separated parents, meaning that they stay with each parent on a regular basis. The Council will assess these applications to determine where the child's prime residence is. For example, where does financial dependency lie (including which parent claims child benefit), who is the child dependent upon for daily care, as well as social factors such as where the child goes to school.
- 9.17 If it is determined that the child's prime residence is not with the applicant, then the child will not be considered a long-term member of the household and so not included in the bedroom need calculation. There is a shortage of social housing, so the Council needs to ensure it makes the best use of any accommodation it offers.
- 9.18 The Council will consider any court directives with regards to shared custody arrangements for children. However, it should be noted that a family court order which refers to residence and accommodation arrangements is not binding upon the Council with regard to provision of accommodation. It is for the Council to determine whether priority or additional bedroom entitlement should be given in respect of shared custody.
- 9.19 Only in the most exceptional circumstances, would the Council consider a child to need accommodation with a second parent for the purposes of Housing Register applications, when they already have access to social housing with their other parent

as it is not for the local authority to provide two social homes to children. Applicants in these circumstances will be offered full housing options and advice.

Children placed with responsible adults

- 9.20 The Council will not recognise additional bedroom need for applicants where placements have been made informally by Surrey County Council's Children's Services. Under section 27 of the Children Act 1989, the Council will work in partnership with partner agencies in these matters.
- 9.21 The Council will only recognise additional bedroom need where it is satisfied that permanent arrangements are formally in place and where Children's Services have notified the Council of the case in advance.
- 9.22 Permanent arrangements can be demonstrated by a court order, defining who the child/children will reside with as a responsible adult and under what circumstances. If this is not in place, then the Council will consider formal correspondence from a senior officer at Surrey County Council's Children's Services (to include their contractors or any other authority with responsibility for children under a statutory duty or otherwise), stating the current situation and likely long-term arrangements. In making its decision, the Council will also consider how long the children have resided with the applicant and the evidence that has been provided of this. Consideration will also be given to whether the children have accommodation available to them with the other parent. Only in the most exceptional circumstances, would the Council consider a child to need accommodation with a second parent when they already have access to social housing with their other parent as it is not for the local authority to provide two social homes to children. Applicants in these circumstances will be offered full housing options and advice.
- 9.23 The Council does not offer a respite service whereby it facilitates accommodation placements for assessment of Children's Service's service users, pending a decision to place a child/children in an applicant's care or not. It is the responsibility of Children's Services to find suitable placements for this function.
- 9.24 The Council is not bound by court orders made in relation to the residence of children and expects Children's Services to work in partnership with the Council in all cases.

10. Banding

Determining Priority

- 10.1 Following assessment, an applicant will be placed into the highest band which reflects their need for housing. The bands are A, B, C, D and E, with Band A being the highest priority for housing and Band E being the lowest.
- 10.2 The banding assessment does not allow for movement between bands unless there is an assessed change of circumstances that meets the criteria for a higher or lower

band. It is not possible to move from one band to another simply through time accrued on the Housing Register.

- 10.3 When an application is re-assessed to a higher or lower band, the priority registration date will be the date on which the new banding assessment is made. Accrued time in other bands will not be recognised and applicants will be prioritised by the date they have been placed within a band.
- 10.4 In exceptional circumstances, a Senior Officer may alter the applicant's banding and priority within a band.
- 10.5 If an applicant's banding assessment is to be altered following a review decision, then it will be backdated to the date of the review decision.
- 10.6 Where there is more than one applicant within the same band for an offer of accommodation, priority will be determined by the priority registration date. The applicant with the earlier priority registration date will have the greatest priority. If this date is the same, a Senior Officer will decide which applicant has the greatest priority.

Banding	Criteria	Housing Need – Full description
Band A: Emergency need to move	Emergency medical or disability	a) Where an applicant's medical condition is expected to be terminal within a period of twelve months and re-housing is required to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care. b) The applicant's health is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening. c) The applicant is unable to access their accommodation due to reasons relating to the medical or disability needs of the applicant and requires re-housing into accommodation suitable for their use. d) The applicant's accommodation is directly contributing to the serious deterioration of the applicant's health and the condition of the property cannot be brought up to a required standard within a reasonable period – usually 6 months.
	Statutory Overcrowding	The applicant has been assessed by the Council's Environmental Health Team as statutorily overcrowded (as defined by the Housing Act 1985), provided that any overcrowding is not a result of deliberate actions or failure to adhere to housing advice.
	Welfare & Hardship	a) Emergency need to move determined by the Council and authorised by a Senior Officer.

Band A: Emergency need to move		<p>b) Applicants who need to move due to domestic abuse / actual violence or threats of violence / extreme harassment / intimidation / hate crime. This may include where a move is necessary to protect a witness to criminal acts and would normally be recommended by the Police and must be authorised by a Senior Officer.</p> <p>c) Exceptional circumstances due to significant problems associated with an applicant's occupation of a dwelling, and there is a high risk to them or their household's safety if they remain in the dwelling / area.</p>
	Statutory succession	Where an applicant has succeeded to a Runnymede Borough Council tenancy but is required to move to a smaller property.
	Release of an adapted property	Where a Runnymede Council tenant or other social housing tenant will release an adapted property where the tenant does not require adaptations and is willing to move to a suitable non-adapted property. The released adapted property will then be available for re-letting by the Council or through a nomination, to an applicant in need of this accommodation.
	Private rented sector properties unfit or unsanitary	<p>a) Applicants in the private rented sector living in dwellings where all three of the following criteria are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Council has determined that the property poses a Category 1 Hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, and ii. The Council is satisfied that the problem cannot be resolved by the landlord within six months, and iii. as a result, continuing to occupy the accommodation will pose a considerable risk to the applicant's health. <p>b) Applicants in the private rented sector living in dwellings where a statutory notice has been issued by the Council's Environmental Health Department that the property is unfit and is to be demolished under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This assessment does not include mobile homes unless there is a composite need on medical and / or welfare grounds and is evidenced by health professionals. • The Council operates a procedure for assessing the applications of mobile home owners whereby an inspection is required by the Council's Environmental Health team followed by a full

Band A: Emergency need to move		housing options appraisal of the applicant's financial circumstances including their ability to buy or rent in the private market. This must happen before consideration is given to qualify to join the Housing Register. If there is a financial capability to buy or rent an applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register as the financial qualification criteria will apply.
	Major works or demolition	<p>a) Where a Council tenant must move permanently, because of major works to their current property, or where their property is due for demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order for refurbishment or redevelopment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These applicants are referred to as 'decants' and the Council has a separate Decant Policy • Applicants will be offered rehousing options suitable for their housing needs under this Scheme and this may be different in size to their current property. This will be based on their current and permanent household and will not include lodgers or any other non-permanent members of the household.
	Emergency Management Transfers	<p>Where an emergency transfer is approved for a Council tenant, where approval has been agreed by the Housing Solutions Manager or Homelessness, Housing Advice & Allocations Manager.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full details of why a transfer is needed must be provided by the Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team and authorised by the Housing Services Manager in the first instance. • Applicants will be offered rehousing options suitable for their housing needs under this Scheme and this may be different in size to their current property. This will be based on their current and permanent household (see Section 9) and will not include lodgers or any other non-permanent members of the household. • The applicant will be made one suitable offer of accommodation, and refusal will result in a reassessment to their original band if there was an existing live transfer application at the time of the management transfer request. New applications would be assessed and banded or removed in accordance with this Allocations Scheme.

Band B: Urgent need to move	Overcrowding	Where a household is lacking two bedrooms in their home and the overcrowding is not deemed to be deliberate. The bedroom calculation (under para 9.8) will be used to determine if bedrooms are lacking.
	Applicants living in unsatisfactory housing lacking basic facilities	<p>a) Applicants without access at all to any of the following facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kitchen • Bathroom • Inside WC • Hot or cold water supplies <p>b) Applicants who occupy a private rented property which is in disrepair or unfit for occupation and is subject to a Prohibition Order. In addition, recovery of the premises is required to comply with the Order as defined by s. 33 of the Housing Act 2004.</p> <p>c) Where an authorised officer from the Council has determined that a private rented property contains one or more serious Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System and there is no prospect of the issues being remedied in a period of time that the Council considers reasonable</p>
	Urgent medical or disability	<p>Where an applicant's housing is unsuitable for urgent, but not life threatening, medical reasons, or due to their disability, who do not qualify for Band A assessment, but whose housing conditions directly contribute to causing serious ill health. Section 8.12 – 8.16.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs to be exceptional whereby the health care is unique to a specific health service in the Borough of Runnymede and cannot be provided anywhere else including in the area where the applicant currently lives. • Support from friends or relatives living in the Borough is not a ground for welfare if support is already or can be achieved in the current Borough the applicant resides in, whether through professional services or informal support which may involve travelling.

Band B: Urgent need to move		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceptional and specific health care will have to be evidenced by health professionals currently engaged with the applicant and will be assessed by the Council's Independent Medical Advisor. • This ground is meant for exceptional and unique circumstances only.
	Welfare & Hardship	<p>Where an applicant's current accommodation is causing hardship and an urgent move is required to receive care or support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs to be exceptional whereby the health care is unique to a specific health service in the Borough of Runnymede and cannot be provided anywhere else including in the area where the applicant currently lives. • Support from friends or relatives living in the Borough is not a ground for welfare if support is already or can be achieved in the current Borough the applicant resides in, whether through professional services or informal support which may involve travelling. • Exceptional and specific health care will have to be evidenced by health professionals currently engaged with the applicant and will be assessed by the Council's Independent Medical Advisor. • This ground is meant for exceptional and unique circumstances only.
	Under occupation	<p>Where a Runnymede Council tenant or other social housing tenant, living in the Borough of Runnymede is under-occupying their home and by moving will release a family home for re-letting.</p> <p>The Registered Provider landlord will need to agree that the vacated property will be offered to the Council for nomination by the Council, outside of established Nominations Agreements. This is a discretionary process for non-Runnymede Council tenants and will be authorised by a Senior Officer.</p>
	Qualification under the Homelessness Reduction Act	<p>Applicants where it has been determined that they qualify for a Section 195 Prevention Duty or a Section 189B Relief Duty, in accordance with the Part VII, Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Applicants will only remain in this band for the duration of the duty owed and if they are fully engaged with their personalised housing plan to explore all avenues to resolve their housing difficulty.</p>

	Non-successor with a priority need	Where a person is living in an RBC property as a non-successor and is in priority need (Section 189) as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This is a decision for the Housing Solutions Team to make and the applicant is expected to fully engage with the Housing Advice Team to explore all housing options to move.
Band C: Medium priority to move	Homeless households	Homeless households owed the main homeless duty by Runnymede Borough Council under section 193(2), will not be able to bid and one suitable direct offer of accommodation will be made.
	Armed forces	Serving Armed Forces Personnel occupying Service Living Accommodation, who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. has already engaged with the Council's Housing Advice team, and ii. have been served with a Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Living Accommodation (usually six months prior to discharge), and iii. have failed to secure alternative accommodation and face potential homelessness within 56 days.
	Rough Sleepers	Applicants where it has been verified by the Council that they are sleeping rough in Runnymede and meet the local connection rules for homeless purposes (Section 4.25).
	Parental eviction – at home for over 12 months	A priority need household as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act, as amended (section 189) who was at threat of homelessness but has been able to remain in the parental home for over 12 months since the initial threat of homelessness. This will need to be approved by the Housing Advice Team. Applicants will need to complete a Change Circumstances Form to highlight this which will trigger the assessment.
	Move on from Care (Surrey County Council)	A care leaver (LAC) is ready and prepared to move to independent settled housing, which may be in the social or private rented sector, and both of the following criteria apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The care leaver possesses the life skills to sustain a tenancy including managing a rent account, and ii. The care leaver has been assessed for a support package, and one is in place. <p>It is the responsibility of Surrey County Council (SCC) to ensure that a Housing Register application has been completed by the care leaver. SCC will need to obtain the agreement with the Council regarding move on at least six months before a move is needed, to allow time for the</p>

Band C: Medium priority to move		application to be assessed. SCC will also need to ensure that the relevant information, including up to date pathway plans are submitted to the Council for assessment. This will prevent a homeless approach by a LAC to whom SCC have a continuing duty towards and to ensure the best opportunities for rehousing options are available within set timescales. SCC are also required to adhere to the current SCC Young Person (YP) Protocol.
	Move on from supported accommodation	<p>Applicants from supported accommodation, under contracted arrangements, who are ready to move-on following a satisfactory move-on report being submitted by the care provider / landlord.</p> <p>The report will need to satisfy the Council that the applicant is ready to move onto general needs housing and sustain a tenancy independently. If the Council is not satisfied that the applicant is ready to move to independent general needs housing, then further supported housing must be considered. If the applicant is not ready to move on, the application will remain in Band E, and no offers of accommodation will be made.</p>
	Medium medical or disability or welfare need	Where an applicant or a permanent member of an applicant's household (currently residing with the applicant) is assessed as having an identified reason to move on the basis of their health or welfare need to move or grounds relating to a disability. Their housing is considered unsuitable for non-urgent medical reasons, or due to their disability, and is directly contributing to causing ill health (Section 8.12 – 8.16).
	Hardship	<p>The applicant has some other compelling (but not urgent) need to live in Runnymede which, if not met, will cause on-going hardship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting evidence will be required from relevant and qualified health professionals and is the responsibility of the applicant to provide. It must be current, relevant, and specific to an applicant or a member of their permanent household's condition, who is currently living with them. The Council will not request or pay for any supporting evidence. The Council will consider all recommendations from health professionals but will make the final decision as to the assessment of an application. Supporting evidence must be less than 6 months old at the time of any request submitted.

	Overcrowding	Where a household lacking one bedroom in their home and the overcrowding is not deemed to be deliberate. The bedroom calculation set out in para 9.8 will be used to determine if a bedroom is lacking.
	Reasonable preference – no local connection, exceptional need	Applicants without a Local Connection to the Borough, but who have been assessed as having an exceptional or emergency need to move, as authorised by a Senior Officer (4.32 – 4.35).
Band D: Identified priority to move	No priority need and/or intentionally homeless	a) Applicants who are intentionally homeless, within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) following the negative decision issued by the Runnymede Housing Advice Team. b) Applicants who have been assessed as homeless but not in priority need within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended
	Adult children / siblings sharing family home	Adult children (aged 16 years and over who are no longer dependent on a parent/guardian) living with parents / guardians / family members, or adult siblings living together, in overcrowded accommodation or where there is inadequate space. Consideration will not be given to how a family chooses to use the space within a property.
	Shared facilities – unique welfare need	An applicant is living in accommodation where the facilities are shared with non-relatives, and there is a unique and/or exceptional welfare need which renders this unsuitable. This does not include adult children living in family homes or adult siblings living in a family home or shared home. (Note - sharing facilities does not count as a factor in deciding if an application should be moved to a higher band).
	Low medical or disability need or welfare	Where it is identified that there is a need to move on the grounds of health, welfare needs or due to a disability. This need is deemed to be low, meaning that although the housing situation could certainly be improved, the accommodation is still considered to be suitable (8.12 – 8.16).
	RBC Non-successor with no priority need	Where a person is living in an RBC property as a non-successor and is not considered to be in priority need as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The applicants should seek housing assistance from the

		Housing Advice Team to explore all available housing options, which will include the private rented sector.
Band E: Low priority to move	Adult children seeking to leave the family home	<p>Adult children (aged 16 years and over who are no longer dependent on a parent/guardian) living with parents / guardians / family members, or adult siblings living together, without any statutory overcrowding or welfare issues, other than a desire to access independent accommodation.</p> <p>Consideration will not be given to how a family chooses to use the space within a property.</p>
	Move on from Care	<p>Applicants who are Looked After Children (LAC) currently in a residential, foster placement or other supported placement, whereby Surrey County Council has the statutory duty towards and where no agreement is in place with the Council to plan move-on accommodation.</p> <p>The originating area can only be Surrey for the purposes of rehousing.</p> <p>Offers of accommodation in the private rented sector will be offered as move-on accommodation where available.</p> <p>Once agreement is in place for move-on accommodation, which should be at least six months before, an application will be reassessed to a Band C.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of Surrey County Council to provide up to date information for the purposes of applications and move-on accommodation for those young people in their care.</p> <p>Applicants will not be able to bid whilst in this band</p>
	Armed forces	<p>a) Serving Armed Forces personnel who are not due to be discharged for the foreseeable future. These applicants will not need a Local Connection to the Borough.</p> <p>b) Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Armed Forces, where the bereaved spouse or civil partner will shortly no longer be entitled to reside or is no longer entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or partner</p>

Band E: Low priority to move		c) Separated spouses of Serving Armed Forces personnel who have or have not been asked to leave Military of Defence accommodation
	Move on from supported accommodation	<p>Applicants from supported accommodation, under contracted arrangements, where the Council has not received a satisfactory move-on report by the care provider / landlord.</p> <p>Applicants, who have been placed in supported housing outside of the Borough of Runnymede, will retain their Local Connection in order to assist them with 'move-on' rehousing options (4.25 – 4.26).</p> <p>The applicant must have been referred to the supported placement outside of the Borough by the Housing Advice Team at Runnymede Borough Council.</p> <p>Applicants will be unable to place bids on properties. If the Council is satisfied that the applicant can live independently, the applicant will be placed in Band C and one direct offer of accommodation will be made.</p>
	Refusal of offers / failure to view	<p>a) Applicants who have refused to accept two reasonable offers of accommodation within the last 12 months. This also applies to those who fail to view a property without a reasonable cause. The Allocations Team will decide if an offer is reasonable (13.17 – 13.23).</p> <p>b) Applicants moving on from care placements or supported housing who have refused their one, suitable offer of accommodation.</p>
	Right to move	Applicants applying under the Government's Right to Move initiative, assessed on a case-by-case basis following authorisation from a Senior Officer (4.15 – 4.20).
	Independent Retirement Living	Applicants aged 55 years and over without a Local Connection, who have a family member currently residing in the Borough of Runnymede and has done so for the last three years. This only applies to applicants wishing to access independent retirement living only (4.11 – 4.14).
	Private Rented Sector	Applicants living in private rented sector accommodation, as a lodger, or on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or similar, and is adequately and suitably housed.
	Reasonable preference – no local connection	Applicants assessed as falling into one of the Reasonable Preference groups but without a Local Connection to the borough of Runnymede (as defined in this Scheme, Section 3). In addition, there is either no housing need or they are statutorily homeless and have been provided with suitable temporary accommodation (4.32 – 4.35).

11. How properties are let

- 11.1 The Council operates a Choice Based Letting Scheme whereby properties are advertised, and applicants can place bids thereby affording applicants a degree of choice as to any accommodation to be offered to them. This does not apply, however, to homeless households owed the main housing duty, who will only be eligible for one direct offer (11.3).
- 11.2 All social housing properties available to the Council including Registered Provider accommodation can either be advertised through the Council's Choice Based Lettings Scheme or made as a direct offer to an applicant. A Senior Officer approves the selection of properties for direct offers.
- 11.3 Homeless households owed the main homeless duty by Runnymede Council under section 193(2) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, will be unable to bid on any properties. Instead, they will be made a direct offer as their final Part VI offer, under the Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme. Further information can be found in Section 12.1 – 12.10.
- 11.4 Homeseekers and those applying for a transfer from social housing accommodation will be able to express an interest in a property through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme by placing a bid. There may be occasions however when a property is selected to make a direct offer to an applicant. This could be for the following reasons:
1. Where the property has specific adaptations
 2. Where it will make best use of the housing stock
 3. For community safety reasons
 4. For emergency management moves
 5. For reasons of public protection
 6. Where the move will facilitate a chain of lets releasing another property which the Council has a particular need of (usually involving under occupiers)
 7. Where the property is deemed to be hard to let or to minimise the time that the property is empty
 8. Any other reason as authorised by a Senior officer.

Local Lettings Plans

- 11.5 From time to time, the Council will adopt Local Lettings Plans for new housing developments or for other new schemes. A Local Lettings Plan could also be applied to an existing scheme or to an area of the borough.
- 11.6 Section 166A(6)(b) of the Housing Act 1996 enables housing authorities to allocate accommodation to people of a particular description, whether or not they fall within the reasonable preference categories. This is on the basis that overall, the authority can demonstrate compliance with the requirements of s.166A (3), in that the

allocation scheme gives additional preference to those in the reasonable preference categories.

- 11.7 The aim of a Local Lettings Plan is to ensure the new residents integrate well to form a cohesive, safe, and sustainable community;
- Promote residents' satisfaction with their homes and neighbourhood.
 - Minimise the time that properties are empty
 - Ensure that the needs of local residents and the wider community are reflected within the development.
 - To create mixed, balanced sustainable communities.
 - Or where schemes are aimed at applicants with particular needs, for example, the Extra Care Housing Scheme or Independent Retirement Living Schemes
- 11.8 Local Lettings Plans for developments/existing stock of up to 50 units will be agreed by a Senior Officer.
- 11.9 Local Lettings Plans for developments/existing stock of over 50 units will be considered and approved by a Council Committee. An Equality Impact Assessment Screening will be compiled as part of the plan.
- 11.10 Local Lettings Plans will state whether they apply only to initial lettings or for subsequent lettings as well.

Letting properties through the Choice Based Lettings Scheme

Advertising Properties

- 11.11 An advert will be shown on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme via the Housing Online portal on the Council's website, for those properties that are selected for advertising. This will comprise a photograph of the outside of a property on the road or of a comparable property but not the actual property. The number/name of a property will not be provided.
- 11.12 Information will be provided about the property to enable the applicant to make an informed decision. This will include:
- The type of property
 - The rent
 - Any adaptations that have been carried out
 - The floor level
 - Whether there is a lift
 - If there is level access
 - The number of bedrooms

- The minimum and maximum number of people in the household that the property is suitable for
 - Whether there is use of a communal or enclosed garden
 - If pets are permitted
- 11.13 Some properties may be restricted to certain groups of applicants and this will be stated in the advert. For example, if the property is within an Independent Retirement Living Scheme and there is a minimum age requirement.
- 11.14 The Council will make every effort to include all appropriate information on the property adverts but cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies or omissions. It is the responsibility of the applicant, to satisfy themselves at the point of viewing a property, whether they wish to accept the offer.
- 11.15 The Council may withdraw an advert if at any time it becomes aware of certain property features that may affect who the property is suitable for. For example, if it becomes known that the property is adapted and suitable for someone with limited mobility. The property will then be re-advertised with the correct information. If the Council chooses not to re-advertise the property in such an instance, then it will filter the shortlist to prioritise bids from applicants who would benefit from these special features.

Bidding

- 11.16 Applicants who are able to bid on advertised properties in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme will be able to have up to three live bids at any one time. There is a detailed guidance on how applicants can place bids available online at [Being offered a social housing tenancy - Runnymede Borough Council](#).
- 11.17 Applicants are expected to place bids on properties that they believe meet their needs and in areas where they are prepared to live. If a bid leads to an offer of accommodation, the applicant will be expected to accept the offer unless there are valid reasons not to do so.
- 11.18 The length of time a property is advertised can vary but this will be for a minimum of 48 hours. Properties may be advertised on any day of the working week. The closing date and time will be clearly marked on the advert. Applicants should regularly visit the Choice Based Lettings Scheme website to search for recently advertised properties.
- 11.19 Applicants can set up an alert to be notified when a property becomes available in the area of choice that they have specified, and an email will be sent to their specified email address. Applicants are required to be proactive and apply for all properties that may be suitable for their needs. An applicant can be set up to auto-bid where failing to do so would result in hardship for the customer. The applicant will not be able to bid themselves when auto-bid is in place.
- 11.20 Bids logged through auto-bid will be considered as an offer so applicants must clearly specify the areas in the Borough where they are able to live and provide

evidenced reasons to explain why they can't live in other certain areas of the Borough.

Requirement to bid

- 11.21 Applicants are required to place bids on suitable properties within a given timeframe.
- 11.22 The Housing Register's aim is to provide housing to those in the greatest need. If applicants do not bid on suitable properties that meet their needs, then their need for housing is questionable. Waiting for the ideal property to become available does not suggest a strong need to move.
- 11.23 Therefore, where properties have been advertised that would meet the applicants housing needs, but an applicant fails to place a bid on a suitable property within a six-month period, they will automatically be set to auto-bid. Preference for a particular property type will not be considered for auto-bidding. Auto-bid will be set up for all areas in the borough that are suitable as well as all property types. Applicants who then fail to take up a suitable offer following an auto-bid, will be treated as refusing the offer if there are no valid reasons to refuse.

Considering the bids for a property

- 11.24 Once the bidding deadline on a property has ended, the Council will consider those bids on a shortlist to determine who to offer the property to.
- 11.25 As a general rule, applicants who have placed a bid will be prioritised in band order and within each band by the effective date, subject to any other preferences or restrictions set out in the advert.
- 11.26 In some situations, the property will not be considered for the highest banded applicant who has bid. Shortlisted applicants can be by-passed/overlooked at this stage.
- 11.27 The reasons for bypassing applicants could include:
1. Where it is known that the applicant has not informed the Council of a material change in their circumstances.
 2. Where the applicant has not provided the required verification to approve their application.
 3. The applicant has bid on a property that only working households or accommodation for specific key workers can be considered for.
 4. The household size does not match the requirement detailed in the advert.
 5. The ages of the applicant or those in the household does not match that detailed in the advert.
 6. The property has adaptations that are not required by the applicant.
 7. The property is deemed to be unsuitable for the applicant. This could be for health, welfare, or risk issues.
 8. If the Council considers on available information that the applicant is not ready for independent living with or without a support package in place.

9. The applicant does not match specific criteria as set out in the advert. This could be because of a Local Lettings Plan which has been adopted for specific areas/schemes to ensure communities are balanced. Priority will be given to those who match the criteria.
10. If it is known that the applicant or household members have a recent history of evidenced anti-social behaviour. This could lead to the application being disqualified from the Housing Register.
11. The applicant has current or former rent arrears and/or other debts with any social housing landlord and where these are not being satisfactorily re-paid. The amount owed would need to be more than £100. This could lead to the application being disqualified from the Housing Register.
12. The applicant has council tax arrears of more than £100. This could lead to the application being disqualified from the Housing Register.
13. The applicant is a social housing tenant and has not maintained their accommodation to the standard that the Council considers to be acceptable. See Section 7.13 – 7.14 for more detail.
14. The applicant has an outstanding offer of accommodation available to them which has not been resolved. For example, this could be an offer of social, private rented accommodation or supported housing.
15. There is an indication that a fraudulent application may have been made or that accurate information was deliberately withheld. The applicant will be bypassed as further enquiries will need to be made and a decision taken about whether to remove the application.
16. The applicant does not meet the specific criteria that some Registered Providers and charitable housing providers have built into their allocations policies or rules. These usually relate to ages of applicants or areas of residence. These requirements will usually be displayed in the advert.
17. In exceptional circumstances where a strategic let is required. An applicant may not be considered suitable for a property due to housing management reasons. For example, an applicant who has a history of substance dependency may not be suitable for a property in an area where the landlord is aware that there are already a number of other residents with similar issues.
18. The advert may be withdrawn because the property is urgently needed for a direct offer to a particular applicant or because it was advertised before the previous tenant had moved out of the property and they have rescinded their notice.

Enquiries into applications from social housing tenants

- 11.28 Enquiries will be made with the respective landlord as to how the applicant has conducted their social housing tenancy and evidence will be sought.
- 11.29 Enquiries will be made to establish the following:
 1. The level of any current and/or former rent arrears, including any sundry debts
 2. If the property has been maintained to a satisfactory condition and has not been significantly damaged, see Section 7.13 – 7.14.
 3. If there has been a serious breach of tenancy within the last five years. To include:

- Anti-social behaviour
- Illegal or immoral behaviour, including involvement in substance misuse
- Threats or actual violence
- Racial abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Hate crime
- Criminal conviction
- Refusal to co-operate with essential health and safety inspections of the property, including gas safety checks.
- Any other serious breach of tenancy, evidenced by enforcement action i.e. a notice, community protection warning and/or notice, injunction etc

11.30 We will visit Runnymede Council tenants to assess the condition of the property.

11.31 The Council will consider the vulnerability of the tenant when deciding if the applicant should be bypassed due to the condition of their current accommodation. The Council will also decide whether the housing application should be suspended, meaning that no further bids can be placed during this time.

11.32 This would allow the tenant time to bring the property up to the required standard. The Council will work with support services and the landlord to enable this. An application could be put on hold for an initial period of six months, where the condition of the property would be re-assessed. If the condition remained unsatisfactory, then the housing application would remain suspended for a further three months and reviewed again.

11.33 If the Council decides to bypass the applicant or to suspend their application due to the condition of the property, then this will be put in writing. There will be a right to request a review of this decision.

Provisional offer of accommodation

11.34 The shortlist will be reviewed following the above enquiries. The Council will then contact the top three applicants on the shortlist to determine whether they would like to proceed with the property. A greater number of applicants may be contacted to minimise the time a property is empty or where a strategic let is needed.

11.35 Applicants will be given all the property details except for the property name or number. The highest placed applicant on the shortlist will be informed of their status. Those that are placed second and third will also be informed of this and advised that they could be offered the property if the first applicant refuses the offer or if it is unable to go ahead.

11.36 Bids for a property will be treated as an applicant's agreement to be offered the property and a refusal of an offer at any point following the closure of the bidding cycle will be deemed as a refusal. Applicants in second and third for a property may be offered the property at short notice. See section 11.24 -11.27.

Verification of applications

- 11.37 If the applicants would like to proceed, then they will be asked to provide satisfactory documentation to verify their identity and circumstances. This is to ensure that only those applicants who meet the terms of this scheme are offered accommodation.
- 11.38 Applicants will be given 48 hours in which to provide this information. Failure to do so, will result in the application being bypassed. This could be treated as a refusal if the applicant does not respond.
- 11.39 The documents that are required:
- Proof of identity for all members of the household including photographic identification such as passport or driving licence for those who will be the named tenants. Birth certificates will suffice for children in the household.
 - Additional proof to confirm eligibility if required.
 - Proof of income for the applicants and all non-dependent members of the household. Payslips for the last three months will be required.
 - Certified copies of business accounts if applicant is self-employed.
 - Last three months banks statements for all members of the household to confirm savings amount.
 - Benefit award letters (Child Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Income Support, Universal Credit (UC), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) etc).
 - Proof of address for the past five years for the applicants and non-dependent members of the household. This will need to be official correspondence such as utility bills, Council Tax bills etc.
 - Employment contract or other official documentation if the applicant is self-employed to confirm that the applicant works in the borough if local connection has been awarded on this basis.
 - Copy of the current tenancy agreement if applicable.
- 11.40 All applications are then referred to the Council's Fraud Team who will carry out further checks to ensure that the applicant fulfils all requirements as set out in the scheme.
- 11.41 Applicants at this stage can be bypassed for the offer of accommodation due to the following reasons:
- i. The applicant is not considered to be eligible for an allocation of social housing.
 - ii. The applicant does not fulfil the local connection criteria on the basis of residence or employment/self-employment within the borough or for exceptional circumstances. The applicant is not therefore considered to qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.
 - iii. The applicant has an income higher than the thresholds for single/couple and family households and there are not considered to be exceptional circumstances. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed. The applicant will be given advice about other housing options, such as low-cost home ownership.

- iv. The applicant has savings/assets higher than that specified in the scheme and there are not considered to be any exceptional circumstances. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed. The applicant will be given advice about other housing options, such as low-cost home ownership.
 - v. The applicant owns a property either in the UK or abroad, which they could reasonably be expected to reside in or liquidate in order to resolve their own housing difficulties. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.
 - vi. The applicant has given up a home that they owned, rented, shared, or had rights to but chose to leave or dispose of, within the last five years. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.
 - vii. The applicant has disposed of significant assets within a given time frame, which could have been utilised to resolve the applicant's housing difficulties.
 - viii. The applicant has been assessed as deliberately causing overcrowding in their home. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.
 - ix. The applicant has been assessed as deliberately moving to a home which was clearly unaffordable. The applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register and the application will be removed.
 - x. There is an indication that a fraudulent application may have been made or that accurate information was deliberately withheld. The applicant will be bypassed as further enquiries will need to be made and a decision taken about whether to remove the application.
 - xi. The applicant has not provided the documents within the timescale and there are no mitigating circumstances to justify the delay. Without the documentation, the Council is unable to confirm the applicant's circumstances. Failure to engage will be treated as a refusal.
 - xii. Any other information that the Council becomes aware of as detailed in the reasons for bypassing applicants in section 11.27.
- 11.42 The shortlist will be reviewed following any applicants that have been bypassed.
- 11.43 Following satisfactory verification checks, the highest banded applicant, taking into account the effective date, will be invited to view the property. See section 13 for more information about this and for details on what happens after the viewing.

12. Lettings made directly

- 12.1 Not all lettings are made through the Choice based Lettings Scheme.

Homeless households who are owed a Section 193(2) main duty – Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme

- 12.2 All homeless households who are owed a Section 193(2) main duty are made one suitable offer. This could be either an offer of accommodation in the private rented sector or in social housing as the final Part VI offer.
- 12.3 Main Duty accepted homeless households will not be able to bid on properties in the Choice Based Lettings Scheme. Instead, they will be made one, direct offer of accommodation under the Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme.

Areas of preference

- 12.4 Homeless households accepted as owed the main housing duty, as with all applicants to the Housing Register, will be asked where they would like to live within the borough on the Housing Register Application Form. If the applicant is not already on the Housing Register, then they will be asked to apply at the point they are accepted as being owed the main duty and issued with their section 184 decision letter.
- 12.5 These stated preferences will be taken into account when considering the household for an offer of suitable accommodation. However, it should be noted that there is no guarantee that the Council will be able to provide accommodation in these areas unless there is an overriding reason to do so. In discharging the homeless duty under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended), in so far as is reasonably practical, we will secure accommodation within the Borough.

Considering housing needs

- 12.6 Information relating to the housing needs of the household will be assessed so that a suitable offer of accommodation can be made. This will include an assessment of medical/disability needs as well as welfare needs as set out in the Allocation Scheme. If there are restrictions on the property that can be offered, such as floor level, type of property or the location, then this will be explained to the applicant before an offer of accommodation is made.

Verification of circumstances

- 12.7 The applicant will be expected to provide documentation to verify their circumstances, which will also be referred to the Council's Fraud Team for further enquiries. These documents will be requested when the main duty is accepted. An offer of social housing will not be made until the documents have been received and verified.
- 12.8 The applicant will need to provide the following within 48 hours:
- Proof of identity for any new members of the household
 - Additional proof to confirm eligibility if required
 - Proof of income and savings for the applicants and all members of the household. The last three months' bank statements would usually be acceptable.

- 12.9 If the applicant is not provided with settled accommodation within that three-month period, then additional, up to date bank statements will be requested.
- 12.10 Applicants are required to satisfactorily maintain any temporary accommodation provided and must not owe more than £100 in housing related debt or Council Tax.

Other households who may receive Direct Offers of accommodation

- 12.11 It is not only homeless households who are owed a main duty that will receive a direct offer. A direct offer could be made to other households for the following reasons:
- i. Where the property has specific adaptations
 - ii. Where it will make best use of the housing stock
 - iii. For community safety reasons
 - iv. For emergency management moves
 - v. For reasons of public protection
 - vi. Where the move will facilitate a chain of lets releasing another property which the Council has a particular need of (usually involving under-occupiers)
 - vii. Where the property is deemed to be hard to let
 - viii. For moves to the Extra Care Scheme
 - ix. For certain moves to Independent Retirement Living Schemes
 - x. Those who are ready to move on from supported housing
 - xi. Any other reason as authorised by a Senior Officer
- 12.12 In all cases, the applicant's needs will be fully assessed under the Allocation Scheme so that a suitable offer of accommodation can be made. The applicant's preferred areas for where they would like to live will also be considered but may not be able to be accommodated.
- 12.13 Supporting information will need to be provided for those who feel they have a health, disability or welfare need so that this can be fully assessed. If there are health issues, a recommendation will be made about the floor level and type of accommodation that will meet the household's needs.
- 12.14 Direct let's may be made to applicants who are tenants of Registered Providers. The Council will require the subsequent vacancy of the applicant to be offered to the Council for nomination, outside of any existing Nominations Agreement. The Council will work flexibly with Registered Providers both within and outside of the Borough of Runnymede, to widen the choice of properties available and to address specific issues.
- 12.15 All decisions to make a direct offer will be made by a Senior Officer.

Those moving-on from supported accommodation

- 12.16 Applicants living in supported housing schemes will be unable to bid under the choice-based lettings scheme and will be made a direct offer of accommodation instead. This will be one suitable offer of accommodation only.
- 12.17 A placement within a supported housing scheme is intended to be on a temporary basis, with a transition to more settled accommodation when the resident has been equipped with the skills required to maintain an independent tenancy. The Council will consider supporting information from the housing/support provider and will only offer accommodation to those it deems ready to move-on.
- 12.18 A direct offer of suitable accommodation will enable a planned move-on from the scheme. It will ensure that best use is being made of the supported housing units and that those who no longer require the support, move-on from the scheme, freeing up vacancies for those who would benefit.

13. Viewings, refusals and accepting a tenancy

Viewing the offer of accommodation

- 13.1 Applicants will be invited to view the offer of accommodation so that an informed decision can be made about whether to accept it. All applicants are strongly encouraged to attend a viewing. At this stage, the Council will issue a formal offer of accommodation in writing.
- 13.2 In the case of joint applicants, both should attend the viewing. The applicant cannot arrange for a representative to view on their behalf, although it is permitted for a representative or an advocate to attend with the applicant. Notice will need to be given to the Council of this.
- 13.3 The final decision to accept or reject an offer of accommodation can only be made by the applicant(s). The Council will not discuss an offer of accommodation with anyone else unless there is written permission to do so.
- 13.4 Applicants cannot informally view a property while building or maintenance works are being carried out due to health and safety implications. Viewings will only be by prior appointment and when accompanied by an officer of the Council. The Council will not be held responsible for the safety of anyone entering the property without an accompanied viewing appointment.
- 13.5 If the applicant first offered the property refuses it, then the property will be offered to the applicant with the next highest priority subject to the criteria in Section 11.37 - 11.41.

Refusal of an offer of accommodation

- 13.6 Applicants who have successfully bid for a property and either chosen to refuse it or refuse or fail to view the property, without a reasonable cause, will only be entitled to one further offer of suitable accommodation. This does not apply to homeless

households owed the main duty, those moving on from supported accommodation, emergency management transfers or decant. They are entitled to one suitable offer only. See Sections 12.2 – 12.3 and 12.16 – 12.18.

- 13.7 Upon viewing an offer of accommodation, the applicant will be given a reasonable period of time in which to accept or refuse the offer. This will usually be 24 hours but can be extended to 48 hours if the applicant is considered vulnerable and there are mitigating circumstances. This is to be agreed with a Senior Officer.
- 13.8 If the applicant does not provide their written reasons for refusing an offer of accommodation within the agreed timescale, then the Council will still deem this as a refusal.
- 13.9 Applicants can refuse an offer of accommodation without viewing it, but this is strongly advised against. Applicants who fail to view the property without a reasonable cause, will also be treated as refusing the offer.
- 13.10 The Council will then need to decide whether the refusal is reasonable, Section 13.17 – 13.30.
- 13.11 Applicants who fail to respond to contact from Officers or those who initially engage but fail to provide the required documentation within the prescribed timescale, will also be treated as refusing the offer.
- 13.12 All of the above applies to all applicants on the Housing Register.

Homeseekers and Transfer tenants who refuse

- 13.13 These applicants will need to provide in writing their reasons for refusing an offer of accommodation. These will be considered by the Allocations Team. Applicants can provide additional, supporting information but this will need to be provided at the time of the written refusal so that it can be considered.
- 13.14 The Council may make enquiries into the reasons for refusing so that an informed decision can be made. The applicant will be verbally notified of the Council's decision where possible within 24 hours of receiving the written refusal details.
- 13.15 The Council's decision will be put in writing to the applicant, also advising that there is a right to request a review. If the offer is considered to be suitable, then the applicant will be given 24 hours in which to reconsider and accept the offer.
- 13.16 Failure to accept the offer within the time period will result in the application being placed into Band E and the property being offered to another applicant.
- 13.17 The reassessment to Band E will also mean a new registration date for that applicant and the loss of accrued time on the Housing. The application will remain in Band E for 12 months.
- 13.18 It is the responsibility of the applicant to complete a Change of Circumstances Form to request reassessment after the 12-month period. The Council will not be

responsible for any extended time in this banding due to an applicant's failure to request a reassessment.

- 13.19 Emergency Management transfer tenants in Band A who refuse one suitable offer of rehousing (where they have an existing transfer application live at the time of the management transfer request), will return to their original banding. Transfer applications not previously on the Housing Register will have their application re-assessed and banded according to their need.

Refusals under the Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme

- 13.20 Homeless households owed the main duty have the right to accept the offer of accommodation and request a review on its suitability under Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended. This would mean that if the review finds that the property is suitable, the accommodation will still be available to them. These applicants will be strongly advised to take up this right.
- 13.21 Households may decide not to accept the offer of accommodation. They will need to provide in writing their reasons for refusing within 24 hours of viewing the property. This will be considered by the Housing Advice Team. Applicants can provide additional, supporting information but this will need to be provided at the time of the written refusal.
- 13.22 The Council may make enquiries into the reasons for refusing so that an informed decision can be made. The applicant will be notified of the Council's decision within 24 hours of receiving the written refusal details.
- 13.23 The Council's decision will be put in writing to the applicant, also advising that there is a right to request a review. If the offer is considered to be suitable, then the applicant will be given 24 hours in which to reconsider and accept the offer. After this time the property may not be kept available to the applicant.
- 13.24 Failure to accept the offer within this period will result in the Council discharging its statutory homeless duty. No further offers of accommodation will be made and the application will be removed from the Housing Register. The Council will serve a notice to quit on the applicant to leave the temporary accommodation, which will result in County Court proceedings and an order of costs being pursued, should the applicant remain in the accommodation beyond the date the Notice to Quit expires.
- 13.25 The Council will owe the applicant an advice and assistance duty only and it will be the responsibility of the applicant to secure alternative accommodation.
- 13.26 Where there are dependent children in the household, the Council will inform Surrey County Council's Children's Services of the discharge of duty and work with them to assist the family.

Reviews under Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 as amended

- 13.27 Homeless households are advised in writing of the right to accept the offer and then request a review on its suitability under Section 202 of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). In addition, households have the right of appeal to the County Court under Section 204.
- 13.28 Applicants will be able to move into the accommodation whilst the review is being undertaken.
- 13.29 If homeless households choose to refuse the offer of accommodation and not move in, they can still request a review on suitability. **The offer of accommodation will not remain available to them and will be offered to another household.**
- 13.30 If the review decision determines that the offer of accommodation was in fact unsuitable, then a further offer of accommodation will be made.

Accepting a tenancy

- 13.31 The applicant will be asked to confirm that they accept the offer of accommodation. At this stage, the Council will advise when the property is likely to be ready to move into and advise the applicant to make arrangements for the anticipated move. Arrangements will then be made for the tenancy agreement to be signed.
- 13.32 It is likely that there will only be a short period of time between accepting the offer and starting the tenancy, unless there are exceptional circumstances that prevent this, which have been agreed by a Senior Officer.

Rent in advance

- 13.33 In line with the Council's Rent Policy, applicants will be required to pay up to four weeks rent in advance at the sign up. This will also include the proportion of rent due for any days up to the first Monday of the tenancy, which will be detailed in the offer letter.

Applicants leaving Temporary Accommodation

- 13.34 Once an applicant has signed the tenancy agreement and has the keys for their new home, they are expected to leave their temporary accommodation and return all keys without delay. Applicants will be responsible for ongoing rent until the keys are returned.
- 13.35 Applicants are expected to leave the temporary accommodation in good condition, with all personal possessions and furniture removed. Failure to do so could result in costs being re-charged to the applicant.

Transfer tenants

- 13.36 Once a transfer tenant has accepted the offer of accommodation, the Allocations Officer will send a Tenancy Termination Form to be completed. Applicants are required to give at least one weeks' notice on their current home. A longer notice period can be given but once the new tenancy has started, the applicant will be liable for rents on both properties.
- 13.37 It is expected that tenants will leave their council property in good condition, with all personal possessions and furniture removed. Failure to do so could result in costs being re-charged to the tenant.

14. Review, Complaints and Discretion

Requesting a review

- 14.1 The Council will notify an applicant in writing of any decisions that are made on their application. The decision letter will clearly set out the reasons for the decision and outline the applicant's right to request a review. Applicants have the right to request a review of one or more of the following decisions:
- Ineligibility to join the waiting list
 - Disqualification
 - The banding awarded
 - Removal from the list
- 14.2 Removal from the list may include circumstances where there are reasonable grounds for believing that an applicant has been bypassed for a specific property due to a failure to consider a material factor, or consideration of an immaterial factor, or otherwise due to administrative error.
- 14.3 Applicants are encouraged to discuss their circumstances with a member of the Allocations Team in the first instance, so that a clear explanation can be given regarding the reasons of the decision in accordance with the Scheme.
- 14.4 Should an applicant be dissatisfied with a decision reached on their application, they are able to request a review which will be processed in accordance with the review procedure.

Review procedure

- a) The applicant will be notified in writing of any decisions made in respect of their application stating their right of review.
- b) If an applicant wishes to seek a review, they must request a review of a decision within 21 days of being notified of the decision. Reviews requested outside of the 21 day limit may be considered in exceptional circumstances.
- c) The review request should be made in writing and should clearly outline the reasons why the applicant considers the decision to be wrong. The applicant is invited to

provide any additional information and evidence they wish to be considered as part of the review. The review request can be submitted by a representative on the applicant's behalf, although we will need explicit consent from the applicant to discuss the case with anyone other than the applicant. If the applicant requires assistance to submit their review request in writing this will be provided.

d) Requests for review should be sent to:

Housing Allocations Team
Runnymede Borough Council
Civic Centre
Station Road
Addlestone
Surrey
KT15 2AH

Email: housingallocations@runnymede.gov.uk

- e) Should an applicant wish to make verbal representations, as well as written submissions, the applicant will be able to do so. The applicant should indicate a wish to discuss the review verbally in the formal review request.
- f) The review will be carried out by an officer who is senior to the person who made the original decision.
- g) The review will be considered on the basis of the Councils Allocation Scheme, any legal requirements, and all relevant information. This will include all information provided by the applicant since the original decision was made and any other relevant developments, such as advice from medical and/or other specialist advisors.
- h) The deadline for completing the review is 56 calendar days from receiving the request, however, there may be some occasions where this takes longer. Should this be the case the applicant will be notified of any extension and the reasons for this.
- i) Applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of the review. The letter will set out the reasons for the decision.
- j) This review response is the final decision and there is no further internal review stage.

14.5 Should the applicant have any new material information, for example a new medical diagnosis or medication, they are able to submit a Change of Circumstances Form.

Making a Complaint

- 14.6 Should an applicant be dissatisfied with the outcome of any decision that carries a right to a review (Section 14.1), the applicant should, in the first instance, request that this decision is reviewed in accordance with the review procedure.
- 14.7 Applicants can use the Council's formal complaints procedure to make a complaint about the Allocation Scheme or if they are dissatisfied with the service that they have received.
- 14.8 All applicants who make a complaint will be treated fairly and objectively. A written reply to any complaint received will be sent within the timescales set out within the Council's Complaints Procedure, which is available online at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/comments-complaints-and-compliments>

Senior Officer's Discretion

- 14.9 Where this Scheme includes a power vested in a Senior Officer to award any additional priority, grant any benefit or waive any requirement, that power shall be exercised by the Homelessness, Housing Advice & Allocations Manager, or authorised deputy and, unless otherwise provided for in this Scheme, will be exercised having regard to all the circumstances of the case as well as the general circumstances of others applying to the Council for rehousing.

15. Right to information, Data Protection & Confidentiality

Right to Information

- 15.1 All applicants have the right to request information about their application, including whether they are entitled to any reasonable preference (Section 2) for housing and when suitable housing may be offered. This is to enable them to assess how their applications is likely to be treated and whether they are likely to secure suitable housing.

Data Protection

- 15.2 Data collected from applications for housing is processed in accordance with EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018. For the purpose of the Act, Runnymede Borough Council is the "Data Controller" and is responsible for the information held.
- 15.3 Applicants, when making an application for housing, agree for the Council to share information with and to request information from relevant agencies and departments, both within and outside of the Council, in order to assess and verify the application. This may include credit reference agencies, current or former landlords, government departments or health and/or social care providers.

Confidentiality

- 15.4 Information received in relation to an application will be treated in confidence in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act 2018. Confidential information held about customers will not be disclosed to third parties apart from:
- Where it is necessary to process the application
 - Where the individual has consented to the disclosure
 - Where the Council is required in law to make the disclosure
 - Where the disclosure is made in accordance with a recognised Information Sharing Protocol
 - For reasons of public protection
 - Otherwise in accordance with our Privacy Notice at <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/article/19597/Departmental-Privacy-Notices?p=1>

16. Equal Opportunities Monitoring and Review of the Scheme

- 16.1 In line with its Equality Policy, the Council is committed to ensuring its Scheme, procedures and service, in the letting of property are non-discriminatory and that all customers are able to access the service especially taking account of any vulnerability or other specific needs, and also the needs of different groups protected by Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.
- 16.2 Applicants are invited to indicate if they wish to make use of the Council's translation and interpretation services, or if they require other special services as a result of a visual impairment, hearing difficulties or other disability. Confidential interview facilities are provided at the Civic Centre. There is full access to the Civic Centre for wheelchair users. Home interview services are available for applicants who are elderly or who experience mobility difficulties or have other vulnerabilities.
- 16.3 The Council will seek to ensure that its Allocation Scheme is being operated in a manner that is fair to all sections of the community regardless of nationality, ethnic origin, marital status, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/ maternity and religion. The information provided will be kept confidential and treated with respect. The Council believes it is important to understand the different communities who apply for housing and it is only by asking these questions can the Council check that it is operating a fair system.
- 16.4 All applicants for housing or re-housing will be asked to provide equalities information. Provision of this information will not be obligatory and not a requirement for acceptance of an application. However, such information will help the Council monitor the number and types of equality groups seeking support and therefore applicants will be strongly advised to provide this information. Equalities records will be monitored regularly to ensure properties are being offered and allocated fairly.

- 16.5 Allocation policies and any changes to them will be reviewed regularly to ensure they do not operate in ways that discriminate against or disadvantage any group.
- 16.6 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed on the entirety of this scheme and a copy is available on request.

Review of the Scheme

- 16.7 This Scheme is subject to regular review, and where the Scheme requires changes which are minor in nature, or where the changes are required urgently for legal reasons, or changes in government policy and / or legislation, these changes will be approved by the Chair / Vice Chair of the Housing Committee.
- 16.8 Subject to the urgency of the change, any major change required to the Scheme will be subject to full public consultation.

Scheme Summary and Areas for Review

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review
Eligibility	Eligibility is set within legislation and generally relates to the status of the person with restrictions for people not habitually resident or not eligible for public funds.	Conforms to legislation	No changes anticipated
Qualification Local Connection	<p>The Localism Act 2011 amended Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 to enable housing authorities to better manage their housing waiting list by giving them the power to determine which applicants do or do not qualify for an allocation of social housing. Authorities will be able to operate a more focused list which better reflects local circumstances and can be understood more readily by local people. It will also be easier for authorities to manage unrealistic expectations by excluding people who have little or no prospect of being allocated accommodation.</p> <p>There are exceptions to any locally applied qualifying criteria for members of the Armed Forces and Reserve Forces and social tenants required to move for work reasons, care leavers placed out of the borough</p>	<p>a) Residence Those where any <u>permanent</u> member of the applicant's household has a local connection with the Borough of Runnymede because s/he has lived in the Borough for the last <u>three years consecutively</u> In calculating 3 years, the Council may disregard any period or periods together not exceeding 3 months in total at the date of application if it has reasonable grounds for believing that such period or periods of absence were forced upon the applicant through no fault or choice of their own.</p> <p>b) Working Those where any <u>permanent</u> adult member of the applicant's household is working or making some other significant community contribution, such as unpaid or voluntary work equivalent in terms of hours to paid work (as defined below), or being a recognised carer for an elderly or disabled adult or child, in the Runnymede Borough, which means that s/he:</p>	<p>Proposal to amend this to 3 years out of the last 5. Residents of Runnymede living in the private sector or experiencing a change of circumstances such as relationship breakdown can find it hard to secure affordable accommodation in the borough or other circumstances such as employment may lead to them leave the borough for a period but they will be very unlikely to establish a local connection elsewhere.</p> <p>This can result in decades spent within the borough and a loss of local connection for a short period elsewhere.</p>

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review
		<p>i) has been and is in continuous employment for more than three years (although not necessarily with the same employer), or ii) has been and is in continuous self-employment for more than 3 years Employment and self-employment mean in paid full-time or part-time employment for 16 hours per week or more. Where working hours fluctuate, an average will be taken over the last 12-month period. The main place of employment and activity must be within the Borough of Runnymede. It is not sufficient, for example, for only the head office to be based in Runnymede.</p> <p>c) Unique health or welfare need Where any permanent member of the applicant's household has a connection with the Borough of Runnymede because they have a current and ongoing unique welfare and/or health reason for living in the Borough which can be evidenced by professionals supporting the household currently. Unique means that the care/support is unique to specific health services in the Borough of Runnymede, and cannot be provided anywhere else, including where the applicant currently lives. Support from friends or relatives living in the Borough is not a ground for exceptional need if support is already, or can be, achieved where the applicant currently resides, whether through professional/statutory services, or informal support which may involve travelling.</p>	

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review
		<p>Exceptional and specific health care will have to be evidenced by health professionals currently engaged with the applicant and may be assessed by an Independent Medical Advisor. This ground is meant for exceptional and unique circumstances only.</p>	
<p>Qualification Financial Resources</p>	<p>Legislation permits Local Authorities to give less priority according to resources available</p>	<p>Current financial limits</p> <p>Single or couple households with a household net income of £30,000 or more per year</p> <p>Family households with a household net income of £50,000 or more per year</p> <p>Assets / capital / savings</p> <p>4.9 All applicants regardless of tenure, with capital / savings / investments in excess of £16,000. This is in line with DWP criteria for eligibility for Housing Benefit. An exception will be made for transferring social tenants downsizing their current accommodation in circumstances where such accommodation would become available to the Council for reletting.</p> <p>4.10 Separate procedures apply for applicants seeking Independent Retirement Living who are over 60 years of age. Applicants who are over</p>	<p>Members may want to consider that with current market house prices and rents within the borough that these levels could be raised.</p> <p>The current IT system does not capture the details and incomes of applicants who are rejected due to their income level at the initial stage so data is not currently available on this.</p> <p>The current rise in private sector rents may indicate that more working people will struggle to afford this even with an income over £50,000.</p> <p>Traditionally the guide for housing costs is one third of total income. The link to the Local Housing Allowance for a 3 bedroom home in most of Runnymede is here</p> <p>The 3 bedroom rate equates to £1,346 but there are very few properties advertised currently for</p>

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review
		<p>60 years of age are able to have assets of up to £55,000.</p> <p>Those applying for extra care housing are exempt from the £16,000 assets threshold as they can have up to £23,250 in savings. An applicant with this amount in savings or less is eligible to receive financial support towards their care.</p>	<p>under £1800 and many 3 bedroom need households are being served notice by landlords either of a large increase in rent or to terminate the tenancy.</p> <p>A rent of £1800 would indicate a need for income higher than £50,000.</p> <p>It might be appropriate to have a different level of income for bedroom need rather than a flat rate for childless households or families.</p> <p>These income thresholds impact mainly on households with two full time lower income workers and incentivise denial of a partner with income.</p>
Reasonable Preference	<p>In accordance with S.166A (3) to (8) Housing Act 1996, the Council must give 'Reasonable Preference' to people with high levels of assessed housing need.</p> <p>The scheme has been developed with regards to these provisions, as well as the following statutory regulations:</p> <p>Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, Homelessness</p>	<p>(a)people who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7);</p> <p>(b)people who are owed a duty by any local housing authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) (or under section 65(2) or 68(2) of the Housing Act 1985) or who are occupying accommodation secured by any such authority under section 192(3);</p> <p>(c)people occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions;</p>	No changes anticipated

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review
	<p>Reduction Act 2017, and other relevant legislation.</p> <p>Allocation of Housing (Procedure) Regulations 1997</p> <p>Allocation of Housing (England) Regulations 2002</p> <p>Children’s Act 2004, sections 10 and 11</p> <p>Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006</p> <p>Housing Allocations – Members of the Armed forces 2009</p> <p>Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012</p> <p>Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012</p> <p>The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015</p> <p>Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse in refuges or other types of temporary accommodation statutory guidance on social housing allocations for local authorities in England, 2018</p> <p>Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces Statutory Guidance 2020</p> <p>The Immigration and Social Security Coordination (EU Withdrawal) Act 2020</p> <p>Domestic Abuse Act 2021</p>	<p>(d)people who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including any grounds relating to a disability); and</p> <p>(e)people who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or to others).</p>	

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review
Additional Preference	This term is used within the Housing Act 1999 to define groups of people who must be given “additional preference” within the scheme	<p>The scheme must be framed so as to give additional preference to a person with urgent housing needs who falls within one or more of paragraphs (a) to (e) above (reasonable preference groups) and who –</p> <p>(i) is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person’s service,</p> <p>(ii) formerly served in the regular forces,</p> <p>(iii) has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person’s spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or</p> <p>(iv) is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person’s service.</p>	No changes Anticipated
Transfer Applicants Housing Related Debt	<p>Government Guidance on Allocation Schemes</p> <p>1.7 Authorities should consider the importance of giving social tenants who underoccupy their accommodation appropriate priority for a transfer. This will be important in light of the measure in the</p>	<p>Housing Related Debt</p> <p>Applicants who have a housing-related debt of over £100, whether under a social housing or private tenure. A non-exhaustive list of debt includes:</p> <p>i. any outstanding rent owed to a current or former landlord</p>	Consideration to be given to raising this amount where the applicant is subject to a SSSC benefit reduction for unused bedrooms, the rent is currently in payment with an arrears arrangement and they are not bidding on smaller properties if

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review
	<p>Welfare Reform Act 2012 which reduces Housing Benefit entitlement for working age social sector tenants who under-occupy their property (measured in accordance with the Local Housing Allowance size criteria) 2. Authorities should also consider whether there are other provisions that might make it more difficult for under-occupiers to move, such as a prohibition against tenants with minor rent arrears transferring, and the scope for removing or revising these in relation to underoccupiers.</p>	<p>ii. any sundry debt owed to Runnymede Council, for example rechargeable repairs or funds issued to applicants for former rent bond deposits and rent in advance iii. any debts owed due to an overpayment of Housing Benefit iv. any arrears of Council Tax owed to any Local Authority Applicants will be disqualified until the debt is satisfied, except in the most exceptional circumstances that can be evidenced and will only be approved by a senior officer.</p>	<p>available, or have refused a suitable offer of a smaller property.</p> <p>Whilst actively bidding applicants will be supported to apply for Discretionary Housing Payments.</p>
<p>Anti-Social behaviour</p>	<p>1996 Housing Act S167</p> <p>Allows the Allocation Scheme to have disqualification for:</p> <p>This subsection applies to a person if the authority are satisfied that—</p> <p>(a)he, or a member of his household, has been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make him unsuitable to be a tenant of the authority; and</p> <p>(b)in the circumstances at the time his case is considered, he deserves by reason of that behaviour not to be treated as a member of a group of people who are to be given preference by virtue of subsection (2).</p>	<p>Applicants, including members of their household, who are engaging in anti-social behaviour (ASB) or criminal activity or where there is evidenced ASB or criminal activity in the last 12 months from the date of application and where improvement cannot be evidenced by professionals engaged with the applicant or applicant's household. There is no time limit for disqualification on ASB grounds and the Council will seek evidence of continuing behaviour improvement before considering a new application.</p> <p>Applicants who have an unspent conviction (under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974) where the Council assesses that the nature of an ex-offender's conviction may make them unsuitable to be a tenant. The Offender Manager will be required to provide</p>	<p>No changes anticipated however it should be noted that there are an increasing number of applicants with complex needs for whom there are no housing options other than social housing even where there is a history of involvement with the criminal justice system and anti-social behaviour.</p>

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review
		<p>information, including offence details and engagement with probation services, so that an assessment can be made. All applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Where the Council assesses that an applicant is unsuitable to be a tenant, the applicant will be disqualified from the Housing Register until their conviction is spent.</p> <p>Applicants who have been served a formal warning or a notice due to breaching the terms of a tenancy, whether social housing or private rented, within the past five years. Evidence from previous landlords / agencies will be considered. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date of the breach.</p> <p>Applicants, including members of their household, who have engaged in unacceptable housing related conduct that makes the applicant unsuitable to be a tenant. The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Anti-social behaviour b. Illegal or immoral behaviour, including involvement in substance misuse c. Threats of and / or use of violence d. Racial abuse / violence e. Domestic abuse / violence 	

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review								
		<p>f. Hate crime</p> <p>Applicants who have been served a formal warning or a notice due to breaching the</p> <p>Applicants who have been served a formal warning or a notice due to breaching the terms of a tenancy, whether social housing or private rented, within the past five years. Evidence from previous landlords / agencies will be considered. Applicants will be disqualified from the Housing Register for five years from the date of the breach</p>									
<p>Bedroom Entitlement</p>	<p>In the current Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Authorities the Secretary of State takes the view that the bedroom standard is an appropriate measure of overcrowding for allocation purposes and recommends that all housing authorities should adopt this as a minimum. The bedroom standard allocates a separate bedroom to each:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • married or cohabiting couple • adult aged 21 years or more • pair of adolescents aged 10-20 years of the same sex. • pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex. 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="922 772 1189 855">Size of Household</th> <th data-bbox="1189 772 1473 855">Bedroom Need Requirement</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="922 855 1189 995">Single applicant over 18 years of age, including those who are pregnant</td> <td data-bbox="1189 855 1473 995">Studio or one bedroom</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="922 995 1189 1193">Couple (including those who are pregnant) with no children as permanent members of the household</td> <td data-bbox="1189 995 1473 1193">One bedroom</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="922 1193 1189 1385">Every other adult couple included as part of the household, including those who are married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting</td> <td data-bbox="1189 1193 1473 1385">One bedroom</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Size of Household	Bedroom Need Requirement	Single applicant over 18 years of age, including those who are pregnant	Studio or one bedroom	Couple (including those who are pregnant) with no children as permanent members of the household	One bedroom	Every other adult couple included as part of the household, including those who are married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting	One bedroom	<p>This is generous compared to neighbouring authorities. There is increasing pressure on larger family homes as the incidence of applicants requesting separate rooms for children (from 3 years of age) due to disabilities including extreme behaviours.</p> <p>The majority of new social housing in the borough is developed through planning obligations and is predominantly 2 bedroom flats. It could be beneficial for both applicants and the Council in its statutory duties if those could be allocated to households with older children of the same sex.</p>
Size of Household	Bedroom Need Requirement										
Single applicant over 18 years of age, including those who are pregnant	Studio or one bedroom										
Couple (including those who are pregnant) with no children as permanent members of the household	One bedroom										
Every other adult couple included as part of the household, including those who are married, in a civil partnership or cohabiting	One bedroom										

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position		Review
		Any other person aged 16 years and over, who is a permanent member of the household	One bedroom	It could reduce the time significantly for households in the private sector to access social housing.
		Any two children of the same sex aged under 16 years (both permanent members of the household).	One bedroom	
		Any two children of the opposite sex aged under 10 years (both permanent members of the household)	One bedroom	
		Carers who do not live with the applicant but provide overnight care to a permanent member of the household (Section 9.10)	One bedroom	
Choice	<p>1996 Housing Act S166A</p> <p>The scheme must include a statement of the authority's policy on offering people who are to be allocated housing accommodation—</p> <p>(a) a choice of housing accommodation; or</p>	<p>The Council operates a Choice Based lettings Schemes which enables applicants to bid for properties for which they meet the requirements.</p> <p>Where an applicant refuses offers their priority will be reduced.</p> <p>a) Applicants who have refused to accept two reasonable offers of accommodation within the last 12 months. This also applies to</p>		No change anticipated.

Criteria	Relevant Legislation or Guidance	Current Position	Review
	(b)the opportunity to express preferences about the housing accommodation to be allocated to them.	<p>those who fail to view a property without a reasonable cause. The Allocations Team will decide if an offer is reasonable.</p> <p>b) Applicants moving on from care placements or supported housing who have refused their one, suitable offer of accommodation.</p>	

Banding	Criteria	Housing Need – Full description
Band A: Emergency need to move	Emergency medical or disability	<p>a) Where an applicant’s medical condition is expected to be terminal within a period of twelve months and re-housing is required to provide a basis for the provision of suitable care.</p> <p>b) The applicant’s health is so severely affected by the accommodation that it is likely to become life threatening.</p> <p>c) The applicant is unable to access their accommodation due to reasons relating to the medical or disability needs of the applicant and requires re-housing into accommodation suitable for their use.</p> <p>d) The applicant’s accommodation is directly contributing to the serious deterioration of the applicant’s health and the condition of the property cannot be brought up to a required standard within a reasonable period – usually 6 months.</p>
	Statutory Overcrowding	The applicant has been assessed by the Council’s Environmental Health Team as statutorily overcrowded (as defined by the Housing Act 1985), provided that any overcrowding is not a result of deliberate actions or failure to adhere to housing advice.
	Welfare & Hardship	<p>a) Emergency need to move determined by the Council and authorised by a Senior Officer.</p> <p>b) Applicants who need to move due to domestic abuse / actual violence or threats of violence / extreme harassment / intimidation / hate crime. This may include where a move is necessary to protect a witness to criminal acts and would normally be recommended by the Police and must be authorised by a Senior Officer.</p> <p>c) Exceptional circumstances due to significant problems associated with an applicant’s occupation of a dwelling, and there is a high risk to them or their household’s safety if they remain in the dwelling / area.</p>
Band A: Emergency need to move	Statutory succession	Where an applicant has succeeded to a Runnymede Borough Council tenancy but is required to move to a smaller property.
	Release of an adapted property	Where a Runnymede Council tenant or other social housing tenant will release an adapted property where the tenant does not require adaptations and is willing to move to a suitable non-adapted property. The released adapted property will then be available for re-letting by the Council or through a nomination, to an applicant in need of this accommodation.
	Private rented sector properties unfit or unsanitary	<p>a) Applicants in the private rented sector living in dwellings where all three of the following criteria are met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Council has determined that the property poses a Category 1 Hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, and ii. The Council is satisfied that the problem cannot be resolved by the landlord within six months, and

Band A: Emergency need to move		<p>iii. as a result, continuing to occupy the accommodation will pose a considerable risk to the applicant's health.</p> <p>b) Applicants in the private rented sector living in dwellings where a statutory notice has been issued by the Council's Environmental Health Department that the property is unfit and is to be demolished under the provisions of the Housing Act 2004.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This assessment does not include mobile homes unless there is a composite need on medical and / or welfare grounds and is evidenced by health professionals. • The Council operates a procedure for assessing the applications of mobile home owners whereby an inspection is required by the Council's Environmental Health team followed by a full housing options appraisal of the applicant's financial circumstances including their ability to buy or rent in the private market. This must happen before consideration is given to qualify to join the Housing Register. If there is a financial capability to buy or rent an applicant will not qualify for the Housing Register as the financial qualification criteria will apply.
	Major works or demolition	<p>a) Where a Council tenant must move permanently, because of major works to their current property, or where their property is due for demolition or Compulsory Purchase Order for refurbishment or redevelopment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These applicants are referred to as 'decants' and the Council has a separate Decant Policy • Applicants will be offered rehousing options suitable for their housing needs under this Scheme and this may be different in size to their current property. This will be based on their current and permanent household and will not include lodgers or any other non-permanent members of the household.
	Emergency Management Transfers	<p>Where an emergency transfer is approved for a Council tenant, where approval has been agreed by the Housing Solutions Manager or Homelessness, Housing Advice & Allocations Manager.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full details of why a transfer is needed must be provided by the Housing & Neighbourhood Services Team and authorised by the Housing Services Manager in the first instance. • Applicants will be offered rehousing options suitable for their housing needs under this Scheme and this may be different in size to their current property. This will be based on their current and permanent household (see Section 9) and will not include lodgers or any other non-permanent members of the household.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant will be made one suitable offer of accommodation, and refusal will result in a reassessment to their original band if there was an existing live transfer application at the time of the management transfer request. New applications would be assessed and banded or removed in accordance with this Allocations Scheme.
Band B: Urgent need to move	Overcrowding	Where a household is lacking two bedrooms in their home and the overcrowding is not deemed to be deliberate. The bedroom calculation (under para 9.8) will be used to determine if bedrooms are lacking.
	Applicants living in unsatisfactory housing lacking basic facilities	<p>a) Applicants without access at all to any of the following facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kitchen Bathroom Inside WC Hot or cold water supplies <p>b) Applicants who occupy a private rented property which is in disrepair or unfit for occupation and is subject to a Prohibition Order. In addition, recovery of the premises is required to comply with the Order as defined by s. 33 of the Housing Act 2004.</p>

Band B: Urgent need to move		c) Where an authorised officer from the Council has determined that a private rented property contains one or more serious Category 1 hazards as defined by the Housing Health & Safety Rating System and there is no prospect of the issues being remedied in a period of time that the Council considers reasonable
	Urgent medical or disability	<p>Where an applicant's housing is unsuitable for urgent, but not life threatening, medical reasons, or due to their disability, who do not qualify for Band A assessment, but whose housing conditions directly contribute to causing serious ill health. Section 8.12 – 8.16.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs to be exceptional whereby the health care is unique to a specific health service in the Borough of Runnymede and cannot be provided anywhere else including in the area where the applicant currently lives. • Support from friends or relatives living in the Borough is not a ground for welfare if support is already or can be achieved in the current Borough the applicant resides in, whether through professional services or informal support which may involve travelling. • Exceptional and specific health care will have to be evidenced by health professionals currently engaged with the applicant and will be assessed by the Council's Independent Medical Advisor. • This ground is meant for exceptional and unique circumstances only.
	Welfare & Hardship	<p>Where an applicant's current accommodation is causing hardship and an urgent move is required to receive care or support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This needs to be exceptional whereby the health care is unique to a specific health service in the Borough of Runnymede and cannot be provided anywhere else including in the area where the applicant currently lives. • Support from friends or relatives living in the Borough is not a ground for welfare if support is already or can be achieved in the current Borough the applicant resides in, whether through professional services or informal support which may involve travelling. • Exceptional and specific health care will have to be evidenced by health professionals currently engaged with the applicant and will be assessed by the Council's Independent Medical Advisor. • This ground is meant for exceptional and unique circumstances only.
	Under occupation	Where a Runnymede Council tenant or other social housing tenant, living in the Borough of Runnymede is under-occupying their home and by moving will release a family home for re-letting.

		The Registered Provider landlord will need to agree that the vacated property will be offered to the Council for nomination by the Council, outside of established Nominations Agreements. This is a discretionary process for non-Runnymede Council tenants and will be authorised by a Senior Officer.
	Qualification under the Homelessness Reduction Act	Applicants where it has been determined that they qualify for a Section 195 Prevention Duty or a Section 189B Relief Duty, in accordance with the Part VII, Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017. Applicants will only remain in this band for the duration of the duty owed and if they are fully engaged with their personalised housing plan to explore all avenues to resolve their housing difficulty.
	Non-successor with a priority need	Where a person is living in an RBC property as a non-successor and is in priority need (Section 189) as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). This is a decision for the Housing Solutions Team to make and the applicant is expected to fully engage with the Housing Advice Team to explore all housing options to move.
Band C: Medium priority to move	Homeless households	Homeless households owed the main homeless duty by Runnymede Borough Council under section 193(2), will not be able to bid and one suitable direct offer of accommodation will be made.
	Armed forces	Serving Armed Forces Personnel occupying Service Living Accommodation, who: i. has already engaged with the Council's Housing Advice team, and ii. have been served with a Certificate of Cessation of Entitlement to Occupy Service Living Accommodation (usually six months prior to discharge), and iii. have failed to secure alternative accommodation and face potential homelessness within 56 days.
	Rough Sleepers	Applicants where it has been verified by the Council that they are sleeping rough in Runnymede and meet the local connection rules for homeless purposes (Section 4.25).
	Parental eviction – at home for over 12 months	A priority need household as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act, as amended (section 189) who was at threat of homelessness but has been able to remain in the parental home for over 12 months since the initial threat of homelessness. This will need to be approved by the Housing Advice Team. Applicants will need to complete a Change Circumstances Form to highlight this which will trigger the assessment.
	Move on from Care (Surrey County Council)	A care leaver (LAC) is ready and prepared to move to independent settled housing, which may be in the social or private rented sector, and both of the following criteria apply: i. The care leaver possesses the life skills to sustain a tenancy including managing a rent account, and

Band C: Medium priority to move		<p>ii. The care leaver has been assessed for a support package, and one is in place.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of Surrey County Council (SCC) to ensure that a Housing Register application has been completed by the care leaver. SCC will need to obtain the agreement with the Council regarding move on at least six months before a move is needed, to allow time for the application to be assessed. SCC will also need to ensure that the relevant information, including up to date pathway plans are submitted to the Council for assessment. This will prevent a homeless approach by a LAC to whom SCC have a continuing duty towards and to ensure the best opportunities for rehousing options are available within set timescales. SCC are also required to adhere to the current SCC Young Person (YP) Protocol.</p>
	Move on from supported accommodation	<p>Applicants from supported accommodation, under contracted arrangements, who are ready to move-on following a satisfactory move-on report being submitted by the care provider / landlord.</p> <p>The report will need to satisfy the Council that the applicant is ready to move onto general needs housing and sustain a tenancy independently. If the Council is not satisfied that the applicant is ready to move to independent general needs housing, then further supported housing must be considered. If the applicant is not ready to move on, the application will remain in Band E, and no offers of accommodation will be made.</p>
	Medium medical or disability or welfare need	<p>Where an applicant or a permanent member of an applicant's household (currently residing with the applicant) is assessed as having an identified reason to move on the basis of their health or welfare need to move or grounds relating to a disability. Their housing is considered unsuitable for non-urgent medical reasons, or due to their disability, and is directly contributing to causing ill health (Section 8.12 – 8.16).</p>
	Hardship	<p>The applicant has some other compelling (but not urgent) need to live in Runnymede which, if not met, will cause on-going hardship.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting evidence will be required from relevant and qualified health professionals and is the responsibility of the applicant to provide. It must be current, relevant, and specific to an applicant or a member of their permanent household's condition, who is currently living with them. The Council will not request or pay for any supporting evidence. • The Council will consider all recommendations from health professionals but will make the final decision as to the assessment of an application. • Supporting evidence must be less than 6 months old at the time of any request submitted.

	Overcrowding	Where a household lacking one bedroom in their home and the overcrowding is not deemed to be deliberate. The bedroom calculation set out in para 9.8 will be used to determine if a bedroom is lacking.
	Reasonable preference – no local connection, exceptional need	Applicants without a Local Connection to the Borough, but who have been assessed as having an exceptional or emergency need to move, as authorised by a Senior Officer (4.32 – 4.35).
Band D: Identified priority to move	No priority need and/or intentionally homeless	a) Applicants who are intentionally homeless, within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) following the negative decision issued by the Runnymede Housing Advice Team. b) Applicants who have been assessed as homeless but not in priority need within the meaning of Part VII of the Housing Act 1996, as amended
	Adult children / siblings sharing family home	Adult children (aged 16 years and over who are no longer dependent on a parent/guardian) living with parents / guardians / family members, or adult siblings living together, in overcrowded accommodation or where there is inadequate space. Consideration will not be given to how a family chooses to use the space within a property.
	Shared facilities – unique welfare need	An applicant is living in accommodation where the facilities are shared with non-relatives, and there is a unique and/or exceptional welfare need which renders this unsuitable. This does not include adult children living in family homes or adult siblings living in a family home or shared home. (Note - sharing facilities does not count as a factor in deciding if an application should be moved to a higher band).
	Low medical or disability need or welfare	Where it is identified that there is a need to move on the grounds of health, welfare needs or due to a disability. This need is deemed to be low, meaning that although the housing situation could certainly be improved, the accommodation is still considered to be suitable (8.12 – 8.16).
	RBC Non-successor with no priority need	Where a person is living in an RBC property as a non-successor and is not considered to be in priority need as defined by Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended). The applicants should seek housing assistance from the Housing Advice Team to explore all available housing options, which will include the private rented sector.

Band E: Low priority to move	Adult children seeking to leave the family home	<p>Adult children (aged 16 years and over who are no longer dependent on a parent/guardian) living with parents / guardians / family members, or adult siblings living together, without any statutory overcrowding or welfare issues, other than a desire to access independent accommodation.</p> <p>Consideration will not be given to how a family chooses to use the space within a property.</p>
	Move on from Care	<p>Applicants who are Looked After Children (LAC) currently in a residential, foster placement or other supported placement, whereby Surrey County Council has the statutory duty towards and where no agreement is in place with the Council to plan move-on accommodation.</p> <p>The originating area can only be Surrey for the purposes of rehousing.</p> <p>Offers of accommodation in the private rented sector will be offered as move-on accommodation where available.</p> <p>Once agreement is in place for move-on accommodation, which should be at least six months before, an application will be reassessed to a Band C.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of Surrey County Council to provide up to date information for the purposes of applications and move-on accommodation for those young people in their care.</p> <p>Applicants will not be able to bid whilst in this band</p>
	Armed forces	<p>a) Serving Armed Forces personnel who are not due to be discharged for the foreseeable future. These applicants will not need a Local Connection to the Borough.</p> <p>b) Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Armed Forces, where the bereaved spouse or civil partner will shortly no longer be entitled to reside or is no longer entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their service spouse or partner</p> <p>c) Separated spouses of Serving Armed Forces personnel who have or have not been asked to leave Military of Defence accommodation</p>
Band E: Low priority to move	Move on from supported accommodation	<p>Applicants from supported accommodation, under contracted arrangements, where the Council has not received a satisfactory move-on report by the care provider / landlord.</p> <p>Applicants, who have been placed in supported housing outside of the Borough of Runnymede, will retain their Local Connection in order to assist them with 'move-on' rehousing options (4.25 – 4.26).</p> <p>The applicant must have been referred to the supported placement outside of the Borough by the Housing Advice Team at Runnymede Borough Council.</p>

		Applicants will be unable to place bids on properties. If the Council is satisfied that the applicant can live independently, the applicant will be placed in Band C and one direct offer of accommodation will be made.
	Refusal of offers / failure to view	<p>a) Applicants who have refused to accept two reasonable offers of accommodation within the last 12 months. This also applies to those who fail to view a property without a reasonable cause. The Allocations Team will decide if an offer is reasonable (13.17 – 13.23).</p> <p>b) Applicants moving on from care placements or supported housing who have refused their one, suitable offer of accommodation.</p>
	Right to move	Applicants applying under the Government's Right to Move initiative, assessed on a case-by-case basis following authorisation from a Senior Officer (4.15 – 4.20).
	Independent Retirement Living	Applicants aged 55 years and over without a Local Connection, who have a family member currently residing in the Borough of Runnymede and has done so for the last three years. This only applies to applicants wishing to access independent retirement living only (4.11 – 4.14).
	Private Rented Sector	Applicants living in private rented sector accommodation, as a lodger, or on an Assured Shorthold Tenancy or similar, and is adequately and suitably housed.
	Reasonable preference – no local connection	Applicants assessed as falling into one of the Reasonable Preference groups but without a Local Connection to the borough of Runnymede (as defined in this Scheme, Section 3). In addition, there is either no housing need or they are statutorily homeless and have been provided with suitable temporary accommodation (4.32 – 4.35).

Report title	Building Safety Act Preparation
Report author	Andy Vincent/Stephan Steiner
Department	Housing
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	
Reasons for exemption	

Purpose of report:

To evidence to Housing Committee members the preparedness of the Runnymede Borough Council Housing Service for the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022.

Synopsis of report:

In June 2023 a report was prepared for Housing Committee outlining the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022 and the work the service is undertaking to ensure the requirements of the act are met.

The report highlighted the need to prepare a Building Safety Case for the building in scope of the act (Surrey Towers) and registered to the new Building Safety Regulator by 1st October 2023.

Alongside this a Tenant Engagement Strategy relating to building/fire safety for Surrey Towers will also be submitted to the regulator.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Housing Committee note the work done to prepare the Building Safety Case for Surrey Towers and delegate authority to the Corporate Head of Housing to approve and authorise submission of the case to the regulator.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 In June 2023 a report was prepared for Housing Committee highlighting the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022.
- 1.2 The report identified the need to prepare a Building Safety Case for in scope dwellings by 1st October 2023 and register the report to the new Building Safety Regulator.
- 1.3 Alongside the Building Safety Case the Housing Service will also submit a Tenant Engagement Strategy for building/fire safety matters.

1.4 Currently Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Service has one dwelling in scope of the act – Surrey Towers in Addlestone which is over 18 meters in height.

2. Report

2.1 A summary of the Building Safety Case for Surrey Towers is provided in appendix 1 of this report.

2.2 The Building Safety Case highlights the fire safety measures within the building, supported by a Fire Strategy – developed in conjunction with Frankham RMS Consultancy our Fire Safety Advisors and Fire Risk Assessor provider.

2.3 The Building Safety Case also details work undertaken within the building to ensure the Fire Strategy can operate effectively. This includes the recent compartmentalization work and replacement of fire doors and side panels.

2.4 A Fire Risk Assessment is completed for the building annually (this is based on RBC's Fire Safety Policy). An assessment was completed in July 2023. This identified.

- 1 High Risk
- 5 Medium Risk
- 17 Low Risk

2.5 The high-risk action was in relation to an abandoned shopping trolley, and sofa found within the communal passageway at the time of the survey. It was however mentioned that housing keeping within the block is good. These items were immediately removed.

2.6 In context to the actions highlighted above, timescales attached are –



Risk Assessment Ratings

ACTIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

Definition of priorities (where applicable):

Urgent	Very High (P1X)	Reserved exclusively for issues that present an immediate, clear and present danger to occupants in the premises. Item considered to be very likely to occur and to have a very high impact to a single person or people onsite if not immediately resolved. The client must be made aware of the nature of the issue whilst the assessor remains onsite. All practical means and measures should be implemented to resolve the issue with immediate effect.	Target completion 24 hours
Very Strongly Recommended	High (P1)	Immediate actions required or if it is not feasibly practical to immediately resolve the issue, it is strongly recommended that a written program be put in place for resolving the issue and remedial measures put in place to control risk in the meantime. Considerable resources should be provided to resolve this.	Target completion 3 months
Strongly recommended	Medium (P2)	It is essential that efforts are made to reduce the risk in the short/medium term. Risk reduction measures, which should take cost into account, should be implemented within a defined time period.	Target completion 12 months
Recommended	Low (P3)	Action required in the longer term, some resources allocated and a program put in place	Target completion 18 months
Advisory	Advisory (P4)	Advisory, or no immediate action necessary. However, this will be best practice, so the item should be addressed when time or resources allow.	

3. Policy framework implications

- 3.1 The Housing Service Area Plan 2023/24 identifies that work is required by the team to prepare for the implementation of the Building Safety Act 2022.

H001	Legislative/ Regulatory Change	Housing Maintenance and Technical Services	Building safety act fund
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- 3.2 A briefing was given to the Housing and Enabling Member working group in September 2022 on the requirements of the new legislation.
- 3.3 Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Service also have a suite of policy documents which relate to the requirements of the act; including a Health and Safety Policy, Fire Safety Policy, and Tenant Engagement Strategy.

4 Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 Compiling the Building Safety Case and Tenant Engagement Strategy for Surrey Towers has had a small impact on existing budgets. To register the building is £251.00 and no further costs are anticipated at this stage.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 As mentioned in previous reports, the Building Safety Act 2022 (the "Act") has amended Part 4 of the Building Act 1984 and has brought in new duties for

landlords, especially for landlords of buildings deemed “higher risk”. Surrey Towers comes under this definition and its Landlord therefore is required to comply with the legislation. Section 65 defines a “higher-risk building” and section 72 the “Accountable Person” who will be responsible under the Act to actively manage building safety risks. Section 78 requires Higher Risk Buildings to be registered ; section 83 requires an assessment of the building safety risks of the building followed by the production of a safety case report (sections 85 & 86) to be sent to the Regulator (the Health & Safety Executive), which this report deals with.

- 5.2 Breach of the duties is an offence, enforced by the Regulator under section 98. Following breaches, Compliance Notices can be served on the Accountable Person, requiring remedial of the breach; breach of a Compliance Notice is an offence which can be tried either in the Magistrates’ Court or the Crown Court and includes imprisonment at both levels, showing the importance put on compliance.
- 5.3 As the Building Control Authority, the Council and all its departments should be showing the way and should be comply with the new legislation as soon as it is possible.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 The Building Safety Case has no equality implications as it relates to the fire safety measures within Surrey Towers.
- 6.2 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for the Tenant Engagement Strategy. The strategy seeks to ensure effective communication with all residents of the building on fire safety. Consultation with residents has been conducted to ensure this happens in the way residents prefer.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1 The Building Safety Act requires landlords of qualifying dwellings to demonstrate that effective fire safety measures are in place and that they are being protected and enhanced over the lifetime of the building.
- 7.2 Ensuring protection is in place protects the environment that residents of Surrey Towers live in.

8. Other implications

- 8.1 **Risk Management:** this report is designed to identify and limit the ‘health and safety’ risk to residents.
- 8.2 A risk within the Housing Service Area Plan has been identified in relation to health and safety.
- 8.3 Measures within this report will serve to mitigate this risk.
- 8.4 **Consultation:** residents at Surrey Towers have been consulted on the proposed Tenant Engagement Strategy around building/fire safety – see June 2023 report.
- 8.5 Additional measures have been put in place to communicate the ‘stay put evacuation’ strategy to residents.

9. Timetable for Implementation

9.1 Building Safety Cases must be logged to the Building Safety Regulator by 31 September 2023.

10. Background papers

- Report to Housing Committee on preparations for the Building Safety Act - [DRAFT AGENDA REPORT COVER SHEET \(runnymede.gov.uk\)](https://runnymede.gov.uk)

11. Appendices

- Draft Building Safety Case for Surrey Towers.

Building Safety Case Report: Surrey Towers, Addlestone [DRAFT]

Executive Summary:

The purpose of this Building Safety Case Report is to provide an overview of the safety measures, risk assessments, and management systems in place at Surrey Towers located in Addlestone. The report aims to assess the building's compliance with relevant safety regulations and identify any potential risks or areas for improvement.

Building Information:

Name: Surrey Towers

Location: Addlestone, United Kingdom

Building Type: Residential Tower

Construction Date: 1965

Number of Floors: 16

Number of Units: 93

Regulatory Compliance:

Surrey Towers complies with all relevant building and safety regulations, including but not limited to:

Building Regulations

Fire Safety Order

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

Fire Safety Measures:

4.1 Fire Detection and Alarm Systems:

Surrey Towers is equipped with a fire detection and linked alarm system installed on each floor, including common areas and residential units.

The system is tested (weekly, quarterly and annually), maintained, and inspected by certified professionals to ensure proper functioning.

4.2 Emergency Exits and Escape Routes:

The building has clearly marked emergency exits and escape routes, providing residents with safe and efficient evacuation paths in the event of a fire or emergency.

Escape routes are well-maintained, free from obstructions, and adequately illuminated.

4.3 Fire Suppression Systems:

Surrey Towers has no automatic sprinkler system installed.

Structural Safety:

5.1 Structural Integrity:

Surrey Towers underwent a comprehensive structural assessment by qualified engineers to assess its stability and integrity.

The assessment confirmed that the building's structure meets the required safety standards, ensuring the safety of its occupants.

5.2 Regular Inspections and Maintenance:

The building management conducts routine inspections and maintenance checks on the structural elements of Surrey Towers, addressing any identified issues promptly and effectively.

A maintenance log is maintained to document all inspections, repairs, and upgrades, ensuring transparency and accountability.

Risk Assessment and Mitigation:

6.1 Fire Risk Assessment:

A thorough fire risk assessment has been conducted for Surrey Towers, identifying potential fire hazards and implementing appropriate control measures.

The assessment includes a review of fire safety procedures, training programs, and the identification of high-risk areas within the building.

6.2 Mitigation Measures:

Fire safety training programs are regularly conducted for residents, ensuring they are aware of evacuation procedures and fire prevention measures.

Weekly inspections and testing of fire safety equipment, such as AOVs (Automatic Air Vents), are carried out to ensure they are functional and accessible.

Management Systems:

7.1 Building Management Team:

Surrey Towers has a dedicated building management team responsible for the day-to-day operations and safety of the building.

The team includes trained professionals who oversee maintenance, safety inspections, and resident communication.

Onsite caretaking team and Housing Area Manager.

7.2 Safety Reporting and Incident Management:

A robust reporting and incident management system is in place to encourage residents and staff to report safety concerns, incidents, or near-misses promptly. We have started resident consultation events and have a specific dedicated email for fire safety concerns. Residents have access to their NEC One Account which they can report repairs and matter of concern.

Reported incidents are thoroughly investigated, and corrective actions are taken to prevent future occurrences. In conjunction, we undertake an annual Fire Risk Assessment and quarterly fire door visual check along with the annual invasive door surveys.

Conclusion:

Based on the assessment conducted, Surrey Towers in Addlestone demonstrates compliance with relevant building and safety regulations. The building incorporates various fire safety measures, structural integrity protocols, and a comprehensive risk assessment framework. The management team is committed to ensuring the safety of all residents.

Draft Fire and Building Safety Engagement Strategy

July 2023

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Introduction

This strategy explains how we will engage and involve residents about the safety of their home. We have worked with residents to develop this strategy, by hosting events, paper and online surveys, and during improvement works. This was to ensure we meet residents' requirements when understanding building and fire safety, and their expectations in terms of communication when they raise concerns and or would like to be involved.

Aims

- Ensure residents are empowered to play an effective role in ensuring their building is and continues to be, safe.
- Set out how information relating to the building and its management will be provided.
- Clarify both residents' and landlords' responsibilities to ensure residents' homes remain safe.
- Identify how we will assess the effectiveness of the Resident Engagement Strategy.
- Clarify when residents will be consulted on for decision about the building.

There are four main strands to how we will engage with residents around building safety:

- Sharing information
- Responsibilities
- Action to take in an event of a fire
- Measuring success

Sharing information

How and where information will be shared

Runnymede Borough Council consulted with residents on how and where information will be shared to ensure that we target residents' most preferred way of communication, and information is most effectively accessible to them.

We recognise the importance of the platform and use of all avenues to ensure that information has the best chance of being read and understood.

These platforms will include:

- At sign up
- New tenant visit
- Dedicated webpages
- Notice boards on every floor
- Emails
- Leaflets and letters
- Pop in sessions to talk about building safety
- Residents' groups where building safety is a regular agenda item.

Should any changes occur to any fire and safety-related topics, including contracted work, we will update the residents through several appropriate communication routes detailed above. The contact info information for both the Engagement & Inclusion Officer and Compliance Team will be provided, should a resident have concerns or would like to discuss details with them further.

We recognise that some of those living in our Independent Retirement Living schemes may prefer non-digital engagement methods. We currently hold bi-monthly meetings in our schemes and will use them to address any changes or answer questions. We also provide quarterly newsletters tailored to each scheme, and any updates will be included in this. Each scheme has a full-time scheme manager whom they can raise safety concerns to, and 24/7 access to Safer Runnymede in the event of an emergency.

Should a serious issue arise within Surrey Towers, we will update residents monthly. This will include any interim safety measures we have put in place, remedial works and further investigation that are required. These updates may be in the form of meetings, noticeboards, updates on our website, newsletters, leaflets and/or letters.

A fire action notice will be installed on each floor of the building. These confirm whether the building has a delayed evacuation strategy in the event of a fire. Information will be co-branded with Surrey Fire and Rescue to add weight to messaging.

We will encourage residents to get involved in making decisions relating to the safety of their buildings. We are currently recruiting for a residents' group for Surrey Towers, where fire safety will be a regular agenda item. Residents will be regularly invited to the meeting, and if they would like to be continuously involved, they can contact the Housing Engagement & Inclusion Officer. Residents can contact them directly at listening@runnymede.gov.uk.

Clear and accessible information

We will provide all residents with the information they need to help them understand the precautions that are in place to mitigate potential fire and building safety risks. We are committed to ensuring information is clear and concise, without jargon and simplifying complex information. We will work with our Resident Readers to review our work to help ensure this.

Information will be provided in different formats on request, such as Braille, large print, or in another language, to ensure all residents have access to this information.

When talking with the residents of Surrey Towers, residents explained they would like to know:

- About the building, including what measures we have in place to mitigate potential fire and building safety risks.
- The responsibilities residents have to reduce fire and building safety risks.
- Who is responsible for safety in Surrey Towers, including the Accountable Person and how to contact them?
- How to raise a complaint or give feedback, and how it is dealt with thereafter.

The following information will also be available on our website, and available on request to residents:

- Engagement Strategy for Building and Fire Safety
- Full fire risk assessment
- The Building Safety Case for Surrey Towers

Advice and support

Access to advice and support is essential to developing residents' confidence, but also to act as a third-party verification to know that we as landlords are keeping the building safe.

Residents will have access to support both internally and externally, including:

- Engagement & Inclusion Officer
- Area Housing Manager
- Compliance team
- Caretakers
- Surrey Fire and Rescue
- Housing Ombudsman
- Building Safety Regulator

We are also looking at setting up a residents' group for Surrey Towers, who can act as advocates for building safety.

How to contact these support links will be provided through regular communications, outlined in section 1.1.

If a resident feels their concerns have not been resolved or addressed, they can follow our formal complaints process to escalate the issue. This information will be regularly circulated, and included in the Fire and Building Safety guide.

Responsibilities

As landlords, we are responsible for keeping buildings and their occupants safe. However, residents have a role to play too, which is why it is important we work together.

We recognise that this is not just about keeping residents safe but making them feel safe too. We will aim to improve communication and landlord and resident relationships to build trust.

This is why it is important residents have a clear understanding of what we as landlords are responsible for and what action we take to ensure residents are safe in their homes.

Landlord responsibilities

- Compliance testing and frequency
- Undertaking an annual fire risk assessment of tenant's homes
- Quarterly fire door inspections

All residents in high-risk stock will be visited and their personal circumstances assessed to see if they are classed as vulnerable and need assistance to evacuate in case of an emergency. The vulnerability information will be shared with Surrey Fire and Rescue with permission from the resident, enabling Surrey Fire and Rescue to identify and evacuate vulnerable people if a major incident occurs. Any Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) Runnymede Borough Council will implement across the high-risk stock.

This will occur annually; therefore, residents are responsible for making us aware if a new vulnerability develops which may affect their ability to evacuate. How to contact us will be included in regular communications, please refer to the Sharing Information section.

Resident responsibilities

We will ensure residents are empowered to play an effective role in making sure that their building is safe. Tenants are responsible for ensuring that they do not create a hazard in their home, for example by storing flammable items on their balcony, by blocking fire escapes, and to be aware of safety measures including the evacuation plan for their building. All resident responsibilities will be included in communication sent to residents.

Residents also play a key role in identifying and reporting hazards that may impact the safety of the building. This may include seeing their neighbour who may not be acting responsibly. We would encourage a resident to remind their neighbours of their responsibility as a resident to keep the building safe, or if they're comfortable to do so to report it to Runnymede Borough Council.

Residents have access to contacting our Compliance team on firesafety@runnymede.gov.uk which includes our Accountable Person. Residents will also have the contact details for their Area Housing Manager and the Caretaking team will be available at Surrey Towers on a regular basis. Information will be displayed in communal areas, both inside and outside the building, and included in the regular communication to residents.

Action to take in the event of a fire

Surrey Towers operate a stay put plan. The action for residents should take in the event of a fire, is displayed on the back of their front doors. We are also installing a Fire Action Notice on every floor in the communal hallways to increase the chances of this information being read and understood.

Understanding the 'stay put' plan

Runnymede Borough Council operate a stay put policy in the event of a fire occurring in a block, which is an approach endorsed by Surrey Fire and Rescue. We recognise that we have a role to play in preparing residents for a possible evacuation. Fire Action Notices will be provided to all residents in Surrey Towers, and opportunities to raise awareness will be provided in various formats as indicated in the section "How and where information will be shared".

Residents will also be able to ask questions on the delayed evacuation through contacting the Council or Surrey Fire and Rescue.

Mitigating potential fire risks

We receive information from Surrey Fire and Rescue on incidents related to Council owned properties. We will treat the information as valuable insight into types of incidents that are

reported by residents. Runnymede will use this information to amend campaigns and information for residents.

All Fire Risk Assessments are undertaken by an independent fire risk assessor who is part of the Fire Protection Association.

Measuring success

Once this strategy is in place, we will conduct an annual review on how effective it has been with engaging with residents.

We will produce a survey for residents to complete. One way of getting the surveys out and encouraging participation will be during our annual inspections of residents' fire doors.

The survey will aim to measure how informed residents feel about building and fire safety and whether their feeling of safety has improved. When engaging with residents about this strategy, we asked these questions so we can compare data to see if there's been an improvement.

In the interest of continuously improving, we will invite residents to contribute new ideas on what information they would like to know about the safety of their building, and how we can make this information more accessible.

We will commit to reviewing feedback from our residents to ensure we continuously improve the service and the communication we provide to them.

We plan to begin recording how many safety concerns are reported to the Council. This may include if bicycles are in communal areas or if residents are having BBQs on balconies. We would aim for there to be a decrease in reports to understand how educational and engaging our communications has been.

For all information contained within this document contact:

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www.runnymede.gov.uk

DATE

Report title	Review of the Older Persons Strategy
Report author	Andy Vincent, Corporate Head of Housing
Department	Housing
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	Not applicable
Reasons for exemption	Not applicable

Purpose of report:
To recommend to a committee

Synopsis of report:

The Housing Services Older Persons Strategy was approved by Runnymede Borough Council’s Housing Committee in September 2021.

The aims of the strategy are as follows: -

- 1. First class older persons accommodation with modern facilities, that is highly sought after.**
- 2. High quality onsite support promoting independence, tackling isolation, and maximising resident’s health and wellbeing.**
- 3. A clear pathway into older persons accommodation with assistance where required.**
- 4. A partnership with Surrey County Council’s Adult Social Care services to ensure residents receive the ‘right’ care services where they are required.**
- 5. Accommodation outside of Independent Retirement Living that meets the needs of older people.**

Resources have been identified to support the implementation of the strategy.

The strategy includes an action plan to ensure its delivery. An update against the action plan is included in Appendix 1 within this report.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the progress in delivering the Housing Services Older Persons Strategy

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 Older people are a key constituency to whom the Housing Service provide services.

Many older people have been tenants of Runnymede Borough Council for a considerable length of time.

Property Type	TENANTS OVER 65		TENANTS 65 & UNDER	
	Number of Tenants	Average Length of Tenancy (years)	Number of Tenants	Average Length of Tenancy (years)
General Needs	654	30	1,887	11
IRL	165	8	37	3
Both GN & IRL	819	25	1,924	11

- 1.2 Housing services specifically for older people are largely provided in the form of Independent Retirement Living accommodation and support.

Support for older people is also provided to assist households where appropriate to downsize into Independent Retirement Living accommodation (a link to the Moving with Support Policy is provided here [Housing policies – Runnymede Borough Council](#))

- 1.3 Some general needs (GN) accommodation has been designated for older people. It is essential that this accommodation and the communities in which they are located are appropriate and work is undertaken to minimise the potential for a 'clash of lifestyle' with other age groups.

2. Aims of the Housing Service Older Persons Strategy

- 2.1 The following aims are articulated within the Housing Service - Older Persons Strategy: -

1. First class older persons accommodation with modern facilities, that is highly sought after.
2. High quality onsite support promoting independence, tackling isolation, and maximising resident's health and wellbeing.
3. A clear pathway into older persons accommodation with assistance where required.
4. A partnership with Surrey County Council's Adult Social Care services to ensure residents receive the 'right' care services where they are required.
5. Accommodation outside of Independent Retirement Living that meets the needs of older people.

2.2 The strategy sets out an action plan for delivery of the above aims. Progress against these aims is reported back to the Housing Committee annually. Appendix 1 identifies the actions within the plan and progress against each.

3. Consultation

3.1 Extensive consultation with a host of stakeholders on the proposed vision contained within the strategy was undertaken in July and August 2021.

Further engagement has been undertaken with residents on designs for the refreshed accommodation – further sessions are planned for January 2024.

4. Policy Framework Implications

4.1 Housing Service Area Plan 2021/22:

H12	Development of an Older Persons Strategy looking at the Council's Housing Assets and Support Services	Corporate Head of Housing Head of Housing & Business Planning Head of Housing Technical Services Housing Services Manager Community Services	Review the future of the existing IRL schemes to ensure they remain viable. The communal areas of IRL schemes are improved – dementia issues are addressed. Digital alarm call systems introduced. Floating support services with digital support plans
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5. Resource implications

5.1 Resources have been identified to support the implementation of this strategy. The refreshed Housing Asset Management Plan 2021-2026 identifies the following to support the strategy.

“To support this strategy £1.7m has been identified within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan over the next 5 years to support the enhancement of facilities within Independent Retirement Living and the upgrading of alarm call systems (including enabling a switchover to digital calling which will be required by 2025).”

6. Legal implications

6.1 There are many legal requirements placed upon social landlords in undertaking their landlord function. Additional requirements are placed on landlords who deliver support services to older people. These are set out in the Part 1 of Care Act 2014 which places an emphasis on Local Authorities to seek to prevent the need for the provision of care and support to ‘vulnerable’ people and the Local Government Act

2000 which launched the supporting people regime and many of the current practices around the provision of support to 'vulnerable' people.

7. Equality implications

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment of the potential impact of the Housing Services – Older Persons Strategy has been undertaken to demonstrate the positive impact the introduction of the strategy on inclusivity and accessibility.

8. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 8.1 The impact of the Older Persons Strategy will be to improve the physical environment in and around Runnymede Borough Council's Independent Retirement Living accommodation. It will facilitate an upgrading of the alarm call equipment within our Independent Retirement Living accommodation to ensure that it can make digital calls.
- 8.2 It has led to a modernisation of the support service and will ensure, where appropriate, support is in place to enable tenants/residents to downsize into Independent Retirement Living accommodation.
- 8.3 Plans are in place to upgrade the heating systems in two of the Council's Independent Retirement Living Schemes and to improve the energy performance of the accommodation.

9. Other implications

- 9.1 The consultation undertaken to compile and implement this strategy was undertaken in line with the Council's Consultation Strategy principles:
- A Consultations should have a clear purpose and start at an appropriate stage.
 - B Consultations should take account of the groups being consulted.
 - C Consultations should be clear and concise.
 - D Consultations should last for a proportionate amount of time.
 - E Responses to consultations should be published in a timely fashion and facilitate Scrutiny.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1 A Housing Services Older Persons Strategy was devised in 2021 setting out a plan for improving the physical environmental within Runnymede Borough Council's Independent Retirement Living accommodation and enhancing the support service for residents.
- 10.2 The purpose of this report is to update Housing Committee members on progress in delivering the strategy and to identify timescales for further enhancement work.

11. Background papers

Housing Committee Report in September 2021 approving the Housing Older Persons Strategy

democracy.runnymede.gov.uk/Data/Housing_Committee/20210908/Agenda/Agenda.pdf

Moving with Support Policy

[Housing policies – Runnymede Borough Council](#)

12. Appendix I Delivery Action Plan

Aim: *First class older persons accommodation with modern facilities, that is highly sought after*

Physical work to upgrade our Independent Retirement Living Accommodation will commence in the Spring 2024. Work is proceeding on the designs for the accommodation, consultation with tenants and procuring suitably qualified contractors.


Consultation with residents took place in May 2022 on initial designs; further consultation is planned for January 2024.

Below are some examples: -


2.0 CONCEPT - INTERIOR ENHANCEMENTS

2.1 Material Considerations

Wall Finishes: Redecorate throughout in accordance with the correct colour contrast LRV requirements for those who are visually impaired and to provide Dementia friendly environment. Develop a base palette which can be used throughout all future homes with the option of accent colours to help with wayfinding and orientation within the building based around the theme of nature. Applying an accent colour per wing provides identity and definition that residents can relate to. It can be limited in it's use to avoid becoming overbearing, but will provide wayfinding and landmark identity as to which wing you are in.




Feature Wall: Provides focus to a communal area by providing a feature wall with a textured wall covering and contained with a fireplace or display unit to give a central point in the space.




Floor Finishes: Upgrade to a modern luxury wood effect vinyl and suitable Dementia friendly carpets with consideration to providing suitable threshold profiles to reduce trips and falls.

Door Finishes: Remove dark doors and handrails and replace with a light timber finish to provide more of a domestic and warm feel. Bedroom doors can be painted to suit a colour theme and in accordance with the correct colour contrast LRV requirements for those who are visually impaired and to assist in providing Dementia friendly environment.



RIBA Stage 0 Report




Lighting Considerations: Proficient lighting should be provided if there is no natural light available. Spaces should be well lit with both overhead and wall lighting.



Lighting Considerations: Proficient lighting should be provided if there is no natural light available. Spaces should be well lit with both overhead and wall lighting.

Annotations in rendering: New raised ceiling with modern LED strip lighting feature, Appropriate artwork, Wayfinding/signage, Built in shelving with modern strip lighting, Accent wall to focal area, Modern furniture in place of brick water feature, New flooring, New doors and architraves, New Dementia friendly hand rails to replace existing dark wood version.

Location: Darley Dene Entrance Area

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2.0 CONCEPT- INTERIOR ENHANCEMENTS

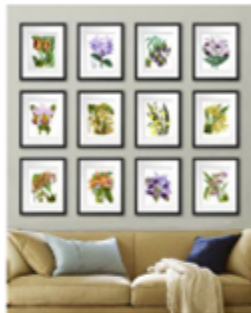
RIBA Stage 0 Report

2.2 Furniture Fixings and Equipment Considerations

Furniture: Using modern non institutional chairs, tables and display units will provide a classic timeless aesthetic to communal areas. Selected upholstery fabrics should be robust and easily cleanable with the correct fire ratings for use in a communal setting which are appealing and tactile for residents to enjoy.



Textiles: Provide soft furnishings and window treatments which are robust and suitably selected to be Dementia friendly in terms of patterning and textures but equally adding to the feel of a modern and interesting interior.



Artwork: Provide points of interest and meaningful reminiscence in communal areas and along any long stretches of corridors. Ensure this is done without creating a cluttered feel including providing pictures and artwork to create focal points within display units or open shelving. Themes can work well and are easily changeable if quick release frames are purchased. Consider themes such as local history/places of interest or nature and seasons.

Signage: Develop a clear signage and way finding strategy which includes

- Pictorial interpretation of room usage
- Large bold text
- Good contrast between lettering and background
- Fixed to door rather than wall
- Fixed at lower height of 1.2m



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Aim: High quality onsite support promoting independence, tackling isolation, and maximising resident's health and wellbeing

A review of the support planning documentation is complete. The new support planning IT module has also been introduced. This system will generate significant efficiencies in the provision of housing related support – and will reduce the need to hold sensitive information locally.

Publicity material, including a tenant's scheme handbook has been reviewed, plus the Independent Retirement Living section of the RBC website has been refreshed.

<https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/help-find-home/independent-retirement-living>

A staff handbook is also complete, reflecting best practice within the industry.

An accreditation assessment (by EROSH) of the support provided in Independent Retirement Living took place week September 2022, resulting in the service receiving independent accreditation. A further assessment by EROSH of the service will be conducted in September 2023.

Aim: *A clear pathway into older persons accommodation with assistance where required*

Our Moving with Support Policy was presented to the September 2022 Housing Committee which details the support RBC will offer to older people wanting to move into Independent Retirement Living or into smaller accommodation.

Aim: *A partnership with Surrey County Council's Adult Care Services to ensure residents receive the 'right' care services where they are required*

The relationship with Surrey County Council Adult Care Services is improving. Meetings have been held with them to promote the Independent Retirement Living service at Runnymede Borough Council.

Further work is still required to document the process of moving on from Independent Retirement Living into Extra or Residential Care Accommodation although this is well underway.

Aim: *Accommodation outside of Independent Retirement Living that meets the needs of older people*

A Local Lettings Plan has been put in place to restrict access to some accommodation for older people. Additional sites will be identified; the needs of older people need to be balanced against the needs of all parts of the community.

Report title	Parkside Regeneration Update
Report author	Mark Bawden, Housing Development Manager
Department	Housing
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	Not applicable
Reasons for exemption	Not applicable

Purpose of report:
For information

Synopsis of report:

- 1. Review of project plan and structure.**
- 2. Update regarding the progress of the project and actions taken.**
- 3. Update on the appointment of Legal advisors.**

Recommendation(s):
This report is for information only.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 On 18th October 2022 Housing Committee resolved to recommend that Full Council approve a budget to appoint consultants to progress the Parkside Regeneration project through RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) stages 1 to the completion of stage 3. On 20th October 2022 Full Council approved the budget. At the completion of RIBA stage 3 it is anticipated that Planning Permission will be achieved.
- 1.2 A procurement exercise was carried out, supported by Runnymede’s internal Procurement Team and with the assistance of Star, an external procurement consultancy. On 1st June 2023 Ridge and Partners, construction consultants, were appointed. The full detail of their appointment is extensive but can be summarised as encompassing those actions required to prepare a Planning Application. The planned scheme must be deliverable from both a physical and financial perspective.
- 1.3 This report updates Members on the progress of the project since the last update to Housing Committee held on 7th June 2023 and, for new members of the committee, sets out the project plan and governance arrangements.

2. Project Plan and Structure

- 2.1. Construction projects typically follow the stages set out in the RIBA Plan of Work. The full detail of the RIBA stages is set out in Appendix 1 (RIBA Plan of Work 2020). In summary the stages are.
 - Stage 0: Strategic Definition
 - Stage 1: Preparation and Brief
 - Stage 2: Concept Design
 - Stage 3: Developed Design
 - Stage 4: Technical Design
 - Stage 5: Construction
 - Stage 6: Handover and Close Out
 - Stage 7: In use
- 2.2. The Parkside Regeneration project plan follows this standard methodology which provides logical decision gateways where approval will be sought from Housing Committee before moving from one stage to the next.
- 2.3. Currently we are working through stage 1. Committee members approved a Brief for the project in October 2022 (Appendix 2 - Parkside Brief October 2022). Working with our Architects and other specialists the brief is being refined, with studies of the local area informing the direction of travel. We start from a position of hoping to achieve all of the aims within the Brief, although acknowledgment must be made to the fact that as the project develops, priorities may need to be set as some aims might not be feasible or viable.
- 2.4. Stage 1 also includes undertaking feasibility studies and site surveys. These will provide information regarding flood risk, utility locations, ecology, topography, local heritage, transport, residential noise. As an example, Ridge are already in contact with the Environment Agency regarding the flood risk, which is one of the main risks to the project.
- 2.5. A project programme has been produced showing how Ridge will provide the required information for stage 1 so that an end of stage report can be presented to a Special Housing Committee on 6th December 2023, if not before. At this point Members will be presented with the revised and honed brief, information regarding what is likely to be feasible, a project programme and a projection of the cost of the project.
- 2.6. Architects from Ridge and Officers from the Housing team have met with The Corporate Head of Planning, Economy and Built Environment to discuss the early direction of travel. The flood risk is identified as an area for scrutiny. Conversations about density suggest that a higher number of homes than was originally discussed may be possible, which would help to make the project financially viable and provide further, much needed, housing. Further details will be provided to Members regarding this at the end of stage 1 report.
- 2.7. At the end of stage 1 we will not know the answers to all questions regarding what will be possible. Further design work and surveys will be required, but a lot more information will be available. Continuing the example from paragraph 2.4, whilst we will have a better understanding of the flood risk at the end of stage 1, we are unlikely to know exactly what the solution will be.
- 2.8. Members will be presented with a recommendation and a decision will be sought to determine whether to proceed with the project to RIBA stage 2. Below is a timetable, updated from the last report in June, that provides greater detail regarding what will be reported at the end of each stage, before requesting approval to move on to the next.

RIBA Stage	Completion	Report	Report
Stage 1	October/ November 2023*	December 2023* (possibly before)	Findings of feasibility reports and site investigations. Recommendations to update the Brief as a result of findings. Project programme. Budget update. Recommendation regarding results.
<u>Stage 1 Decision Gateway.</u> Proceed to stage 2?			
Stage 2	18 October 2024	TBC	Present architectural concept. Further update on strategic approach to constraints (e.g., flooding and overhead powerlines). Cost plan and exploration of delivery options. Planning advice. Recommendation regarding results.
<u>Stage 2 Decision Gateway.</u> Proceed to stage 3?			
Stage 3	11 April 2025	TBC	Details of planning application prior to submission, setting out approach to delivery. Recommendation regarding planning application and delivery route.
<u>Stage 3 Decision Gateway.</u> Submit Planning Application? Proceed with preferred delivery option?			

*Please note that these dates have been brought forward. All other dates remain the same as was reported in June 2023.

3. Policy framework implications

3.1. The Housing Development Strategy 2021-2016 set a target to deliver 125 new Council homes. Whilst the timescales mean that this is unlikely, the Parkside Regeneration may contribute towards this target. The principles set out in the Housing Development Strategy are incorporated into the Parkside Regeneration brief, i.e., highly desirable and energy efficient properties.

4. Resource implications/Value for Money

4.1. None. This report is for information only.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1. Legal Services have assisted Housing in the procurement of firm of external solicitors called Freeths to provide external legal advice on the areas listed below (the cost of which will be taken from the already approved budget),
- Due Diligence
 - Land Assembly
 - Planning
 - Compulsory Purchase Orders (if required)
 - Biodiversity Net Gain
 - Energy Generation and Management
 - Construction and Procurement
- 5.2. The appointment of Freeths has been made through the Public Contract Regulations 2015 compliant EM Law Services framework.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1. Policy EE9 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan sets out when biodiversity net gains are required.
- 7.2. A balance would need to be sought between the cost of construction and the energy performance of any new development.
- 7.3. It is intended that a majority of development would replace poor housing stock with modern, fit for purpose homes.
- 7.4. Large parts of Site B (Parkside) and Site F (Heathervale Way) are within a flood zone 3a (high probability of flooding). Specialist flood consultants are assessing the regeneration area to mitigate flood risks.

8. Other implications

- 8.1. We are in the process of updating the Communications Plan alongside Ridge, who will facilitate the continued community engagement with us.

9. Timetable for Implementation

- 9.1. Not applicable, this report is for information only.

10. Background papers

None.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 - RIBA Plan of Work 2020
Appendix 2 - Parkside Brief October 2022



RIBA Plan of Work 2020

The RIBA Plan of Work organises the process of briefing, designing, delivering, maintaining, operating and using a building into eight stages. It is a framework for all disciplines on construction projects and should be used solely as guidance for the preparation of detailed professional services and building contracts.

Stage Boundaries:

Stages 0-4 will generally be undertaken one after the other.

Stages 4 and 5 will overlap in the **Project Programme** for most projects.

Stage 5 commences when the contractor takes possession of the site and finishes at **Practical Completion**.

Stage 6 starts with the handover of the building to the client immediately after **Practical Completion** and finishes at the end of the **Defects Liability Period**.

Stage 7 starts concurrently with Stage 6 and lasts for the life of the building.

- Project Strategies might include:
- Conservation (if applicable)
 - Cost
 - Fire Safety
 - Health and Safety
 - Inclusive Design
 - Planning
 - Plan for Use
 - Procurement
 - Sustainability

See *RIBA Plan of Work 2020 Overview* for detailed guidance on **Project Strategies**

Planning Note:

Planning Applications are generally submitted at the end of Stage 3 and should only be submitted earlier when the threshold of information required has been met. If a **Planning Application** is made during Stage 3, a mid-stage gateway should be determined and it should be clear to the project team which tasks and deliverables will be required. See *Overview* guidance.

Procurement:

The RIBA Plan of Work is procurement neutral – See *Overview* guidance for a detailed description of how each stage might be adjusted to accommodate the requirements of the **Procurement Strategy**.

Information Exchanges

at the end of the stage

- ER Employer's Requirements
- CP Contractor's Proposals

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Strategic Definition	Preparation and Briefing	Concept Design	Spatial Coordination	Technical Design	Manufacturing and Construction	Handover	Use
	← Projects span from Stage 1 to Stage 6; the outcome of Stage 0 may be the decision to initiate a project and Stage 7 covers the ongoing use of the building. →							
Stage Outcome at the end of the stage	The best means of achieving the Client Requirements confirmed If the outcome determines that a building is the best means of achieving the Client Requirements , the client proceeds to Stage 1	Project Brief approved by the client and confirmed that it can be accommodated on the site	Architectural Concept approved by the client and aligned to the Project Brief The brief remains "live" during Stage 2 and is derogated in response to the Architectural Concept	Architectural and engineering information Spatially Coordinated	All design information required to manufacture and construct the project completed Stage 4 will overlap with Stage 5 on most projects	Manufacturing, construction and Commissioning completed There is no design work in Stage 5 other than responding to Site Queries	Building handed over, Aftercare initiated and Building Contract concluded	Building used, operated and maintained efficiently Stage 7 starts concurrently with Stage 6 and lasts for the life of the building
Core Tasks during the stage	Prepare Client Requirements Develop Business Case for feasible options including review of Project Risks and Project Budget Ratify option that best delivers Client Requirements Review Feedback from previous projects Undertake Site Appraisals No design team required for Stages 0 and 1. Client advisers may be appointed to the client team to provide strategic advice and design thinking before Stage 2 commences.	Prepare Project Brief including Project Outcomes and Sustainability Outcomes , Quality Aspirations and Spatial Requirements Undertake Feasibility Studies Agree Project Budget Source Site Information including Site Surveys Prepare Project Programme Prepare Project Execution Plan	Prepare Architectural Concept incorporating requirements and aligned to Cost Plan , Project Strategies and Outline Specification Agree Project Brief Derogations Undertake Design Reviews with client and Project Stakeholders Prepare stage Design Programme	Undertake Design Studies , Engineering Analysis and Cost Exercises to test Architectural Concept resulting in Spatially Coordinated design aligned to updated Cost Plan , Project Strategies and Outline Specification Initiate Change Control Procedures Prepare stage Design Programme	Develop architectural and engineering technical design Prepare and coordinate design team Building Systems information Prepare and integrate specialist subcontractor Building Systems information Prepare stage Design Programme Specialist subcontractor designs are prepared and reviewed during Stage 4	Finalise Site Logistics Manufacture Building Systems and construct building Monitor progress against Construction Programme Inspect Construction Quality Resolve Site Queries as required Undertake Commissioning of building Prepare Building Manual Building handover tasks bridge Stages 5 and 6 as set out in the Plan for Use Strategy	Hand over building in line with Plan for Use Strategy Undertake review of Project Performance Undertake seasonal Commissioning Rectify defects Complete initial Aftercare tasks including light touch Post Occupancy Evaluation	Implement Facilities Management and Asset Management Undertake Post Occupancy Evaluation of building performance in use Verify Project Outcomes including Sustainability Outcomes Adaptation of a building (at the end of its useful life) triggers a new Stage 0
Core Statutory Processes during the stage:	Strategic appraisal of Planning considerations Planning Building Regulations Health and Safety (CDM)	Source pre-application Planning Advice Initiate collation of health and safety Pre-construction Information	Obtain pre-application Planning Advice Agree route to Building Regulations compliance Option: submit outline Planning Application	Review design against Building Regulations Prepare and submit Planning Application See <i>Planning Note</i> for guidance on submitting a Planning Application earlier than at end of Stage 3	Submit Building Regulations Application Discharge pre-commencement Planning Conditions Prepare Construction Phase Plan Submit form F10 to HSE if applicable	Carry out Construction Phase Plan Comply with Planning Conditions related to construction	Comply with Planning Conditions as required	Comply with Planning Conditions as required
Procurement Route	Traditional Design & Build 1 Stage Design & Build 2 Stage Management Contract Construction Management Contractor-led	ER	ER	ER	ER	ER CP	ER CP	ER CP
Information Exchanges at the end of the stage	Client Requirements Business Case	Project Brief Feasibility Studies Site Information Project Budget Project Programme Procurement Strategy Responsibility Matrix Information Requirements	Project Brief Derogations Signed off Stage Report Project Strategies Outline Specification Cost Plan	Signed off Stage Report Project Strategies Updated Outline Specification Updated Cost Plan Planning Application	Manufacturing Information Construction Information Final Specifications Residual Project Strategies Building Regulations Application	Building Manual including Health and Safety File and Fire Safety Information Practical Completion certificate including Defects List Asset Information If Verified Construction Information is required, verification tasks must be defined	Feedback on Project Performance Final Certificate Feedback from light touch Post Occupancy Evaluation	Feedback from Post Occupancy Evaluation Updated Building Manual including Health and Safety File and Fire Safety Information as necessary

Parkside Regeneration

Overarching Principles/ Brief

Site specific requirements should be viewed alongside the site plan (Parkside Regeneration Sites Sept 2022.pdf).

	Topic/ Theme	Aim/ Criteria/ Objective	Benefit
1.0 Tenure			
1.1	Property design	Tenure blind across the development.	Ensure balanced community.
1.2	Provision of affordable housing	Replacement of existing social rented homes plus agreed minimum uplift expected. Other affordable tenures acceptable as well as providing private rented and shared ownership options.	Ensure balanced community. Income to support viability of regeneration scheme.
1.3	Provision of enabling market sale housing	Open Market Sale units to help support other regeneration goals.	Ensure balanced community. Income to support viability of regeneration scheme.
1.4	Provision of a new Independent Retirement Living (IRL) scheme	Replace Heatherfields IRL scheme with a new scheme. Not necessarily on the site of the current scheme. New scheme to exemplary standards, ensuring it is dementia friendly	Ensure balanced community. Replace scheme which includes some hard to let studios.
2.0 Construction and Specification			
2.1	Sustainability	All options for delivering highly sustainable buildings will be considered including Modern Methods of Construction (MMC), A fabric first approach will be used to achieve a balance between low carbon usage and low running costs for residents (EPC A). High insulation values coupled with building orientation to make the most of solar gain. Technologies such as Photovoltaic (PV) Panels, Air Source Heat Pumps and Ground Source Heat Pumps considered – potentially utilising Heathervale Park.	Contribution towards aims of the UK's Clean Growth Strategy to achieve EPC rating of C on properties before 2035. Move towards reducing carbon.
2.2	Secure by Design	Secure by Design – fully compliant, low-level lighting for communal parking areas.	Quality of life for residents. Preventative need for multi-agency resources.
2.3	Utilities	Ensure good water pressure whilst installing technologies to reduce water usage. Ensure services are future proofed where possible.	Quality of life for residents. Environmental advantages.
3.0 Layout			
3.1	The current road layout will remain	The current roads across Parkside/Braeside will remain largely as they are.	To save on infrastructure costs.

3.2	Electricity infrastructure	Options regarding the overhead HV pylons are being explored. Designs will need to either work around the pylons or take advantage of their removal as further information becomes available. Assuming no need for improvements no changes are proposed to the electricity sub-station.	To find a balance between high infrastructure costs and making the most of the site's potential.
3.3	Views and amenity	Where possible properties should make the most of views of the canal (taking account of the Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area, see 8.1) and across the park. Communal private amenity space for flats should be provided immediately adjacent to flats.	More desirable properties. Protection of Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area.
3.4	Wayfinding	Scheme should be pedestrian-led, and vehicle route through site to have variation in layout and surface to encourage slower vehicle speeds and increase safety for pedestrians; consider desire lines for pedestrian routes through scheme. Cycle paths and storage should encourage their use.	Reduction in carbon. Safer streets. Health benefits.
3.5	Community connections	Maximize opportunities for residents to have informal contact both within the scheme and with residents outside the scheme – careful placing of front doors and front gardens, communal planting/growing areas.	Balanced community.
4.0 Type of homes			
4.1	Typology	Houses to a maximum of 3 storeys. Flats to a maximum of 5 storeys bordering onto Heathervale Park. Houses to have traditional gable roofs, with regular roof forms, although accommodation within roof area would be considered, along with potentially imaginative roof height design.	Balance of maximising number of homes against density.
4.2	Size of homes	Should reflect the needs of those on the Housing Register, those that need Shared Ownership or other types of affordable home ownership as well as market intelligence for Open Market Sale units.	Contributing to meeting local housing need. Balanced community. Maximise income to support other aims.
4.3	Accessibility	All units to meet M4(2) Accessible and Adaptable dwellings as well as 5% M4(3) Wheelchair User dwellings considering local housing need, potentially across tenures.	Contributing to meeting local housing need. Balanced community. Provision of rarely available accommodation. Compliance with Policy SD7 of RBC Local Plan.
4.4	Space standards	Units to meet Nationally Described Space Standards so that one-bedroom homes can accommodate 2 people, two-bedroom homes have sufficient room to accommodate 3 to 4 people and three-bedroom homes can accommodate 5 or more people.	Best use of accommodation. Reduce likelihood of overcrowding. Quality of life for residents.
4.5	Design	Mix of external designs taking inspiration from the wider Runnymede vernacular.	Attractive site in keeping with surroundings. Quality of life for residents.

		Financial benefits of repetitive construction observed. All properties to be designed to evoke pride of place, being desirable in their appearance whilst maximising the aesthetic of the area.	Cost savings.
5.0 Amenity			
5.1	Private amenity space	Houses with back gardens minimum 11m depth, and with a small front garden to provide defensible space, gardens to be bounded by low height one-metre-high fencing to increase neighbour interaction. Enclosed bin stores, including for houses, accessible for collection.	Properties secure by design. Community cohesion. Quality of life for residents. Clothes drying areas. Reduced fire risk with omission of balconies. Reduction in litter and unsightly proliferation of bins.
5.2	Share amenity space	Green spaces and landscaping to integrate with park as well as canal frontages. Landscaping designed to encourage pedestrian and cycle journeys over car usage. Innovations in biodiversity	Make best use of natural beauty of area. Encourage reduction in carbon use with travel. Increased road safety. Biodiversity net gain required for planning permission.
5.3	Provision of a new community building	Seek funding opportunities to allow the provision of a building to support the community. Either a multi-use space or specific use building depending on the views of the community and viability of its delivery.	Community cohesion. Revenue opportunity. Holistic approach with public and third sector to support health and wellbeing.
6.0 Vehicles and bicycles			
6.1	Car parking	1 car parking space per one-bedroom property increasing to 1.5 car parking spaces for two+ bedroom properties inclusive of visitor spaces – or as required by the current adopted Parking Guidance Supplementary Planning Document. Should be in discrete areas (i.e., not large bland areas) and to incorporate mature soft landscaping/parking.	Encourage reduction in carbon use with travel. Aesthetically pleasing landscaping. Planning Policy compliance.
6.2	Cycle storage	Minimum of 1 cycle storage space per home – or as required by the current adopted Parking Guidance Supplementary Planning Document.	Encourage reduction in carbon use with travel. Crime reduction.
6.3	Cycle paths	Should allow access throughout the area, connecting to existing road network.	Encourage reduction in carbon use with travel.
6.4	Bus travel	Collaborative approach with local bus service provider to encourage use of bus travel.	Encourage reduction in carbon use with travel.
7.0 Sustainability and Technology			
7.1	Sustainability	High standards of environmental practice, sustainable drainage; electric charging parking points for vehicle numbers to be recommended by architects; plus provide infrastructure for charging	Contribution towards aims of the UK's Clean Growth Strategy to achieve EPC rating of C on properties before 2035.

		throughout the scheme to facilitate future expansion of charging points.	Move towards reducing carbon. Encourage reduction in carbon use with travel.
7.2	Technology	Smart homes, all with high-speed broadband, and digital capability for receiving public information about local bus services, local activities, and private information such as smart meter etc. Consideration of “internet of things” solutions for boiler/ heating maintenance and works prevention as well as other home information.	Desirable homes that meet modern expectations. Promotion of other services. Reduction in avoidable contacts. Savings in property maintenance. Better quality homes.
8.0 Environment			
8.1	Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area	Requirement to protect, conserve and where possible enhance the adjacent conservation area, including views in and out.	Potential to benefit conservation area. Planning Policy compliance.
8.2	Flooding	Designs will need to take account of constraints caused by flood zone in balance with Biodiversity Opportunity Area.	Flood mitigation. Planning Policy compliance.
8.3	Biodiversity Opportunity Area	Designs and flood measures will need to take account of the BOA.	Reducing environmental impact. Planning Policy compliance. Environmental gains.
9.0 Policies			
9.1	Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Planning Policy Framework and Guidance. The Runnymede 2030 Local Plan. Runnymede Design SPD 2021 SPDs including but not limited to Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area 2008, Affordable Housing, S106 Contributions, Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI). (Housing) Development Strategy 2021-2026 Older Persons Strategy 2021-2023 	Planning and Housing Policy compliance.

Below are aims for specific sites that do not apply across the whole of the regeneration project.

9.0 Replacement IRL Scheme			
9.1	Provision of a new Independent Retirement Living (IRL) scheme	Replace Heatherfields IRL scheme with a new scheme. Not necessarily on the site (Site C) of the current scheme.	Ensure balanced community. Replace scheme which currently includes some hard to let studios.
9.2	IRL design	Properties that are desirable to downsizers. Incorporating Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) principles and ensuring it is dementia friendly.	Encourage residents to downsize, freeing up family homes for those that need them.

9.3	Size of homes	Minimum one-bedroom (no studios/ bedsits) up to one-bedroom plus (to include a hobby/ study area/ somewhere for occasional guests to stay). Properties will need to meet the minimum internal space standards in line with Policy SL19 of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan.	Additional desirability. Quality of life. Planning Policy compliance.
9.4	Communal areas	Communal areas should allow for residents to meet and partake in sociable activities.	Community cohesion. Additional desirability. Quality of life.
9.5	External	Landscaped gardens. Consideration of sensory garden for residents diagnosed with dementia.	Community cohesion. Additional desirability. Quality of life.
9.6	Technology	User friendly scheme that makes best use of technology to ensure resident welfare.	Preventative repairs. Ability for residents to raise alarm if required. Safeguards in place to protect residents.
9.7	Mobility	Secure storage and charging for mobility scooters will be included.	Additional desirability. Quality of life.

10.0 Static homes, car park and Scout hut at Heathervale Way (Site F)			
10.1	Consideration of best use of land	Consult residents regarding options to replace static homes with new properties, re-develop area but retain static homes or a hybrid approach that incorporates both static homes and new properties.	Ensure balanced community. Improved accommodation. Community cohesion. Quality of life.
10.2	Assess need for car park	Consider residential re-development of car park area.	Balance of maximising number of homes against density. Income to support viability of regeneration scheme.
10.3	Explore options for Scout hut	Consider moving Scout hut to elsewhere, potentially within new community facility, and replacing current (Site F) hut with residential properties.	Balance of maximising number of homes against density. Income to support viability of regeneration scheme.

11.0 Heathervale Recreation Ground and Allotments (Sites G & H)			
11.1	Retain open spaces for future use	Only temporary work considered.	Community cohesion. Quality of life.
11.2	Assess potential for Ground Source Heat Pumps	Consider whether the temporary closure of some of the park or allotments could result in the land being used for sustainable heating solutions such as GSHPs. A district heating system could allow RBC to become the energy provider, reducing costs for residents and providing income to the authority.	Contribution towards aims of the UK's Clean Growth Strategy to achieve EPC rating of C on properties before 2035. Move towards reducing carbon. Reduced bills for residents. Reduce fuel poverty.

			Increased income for RBC.
11.3	Explore options for Biodiversity Net Gain	Use open spaces to increase biodiversity over the whole site.	Environmental gains. Planning policy compliance.
11.4	Flood measures	Explore options for using the open spaces to assist with flood mitigation.	Flood mitigation. Environmental gains. Planning policy compliance.

12.0 Garage site (Site I)			
12.1	Consider best use of garage site	Site constraints (Public ROW and entrance to park, size, location of HV pylon) mean not suitable for residential re-development. Consideration given to whether this site could accommodate plant required for Ground Source Heat Pump (if this option is progressed) or an alternative community use.	Enable sustainable heating. Retention of access to park. Removal of unsightly garages.

Report title	Performance Report
Report author	Angela Horsey, Business Development Manager
Department	Housing
Exempt?	No
Exemption type	N/A
Reasons for exemption	

Purpose of report:

To provide information on the results of the Key Performance Indicators and Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Synopsis of report:

This report provides the results of the Key Performance Indicators and Tenant Satisfaction Measures (management information) for quarter one. It also provides an update on plans to collect Tenant Satisfaction Measures (perception) via a tenant satisfaction survey.

Recommendation(s):

This report is for information only.

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1 This report informs Members of the results of the Key Performance Indicators for the first quarter of 2023/24.
- 1.2 The Regulator of Social Housing requires social landlords to collect Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). These comprise 12 Tenant Perception Measures and 10 Management Information measures. This report also includes the results of the Management Information measures for quarter one and provides an update on plans to collect Tenant Satisfaction Measures (perception) via a tenant satisfaction survey.

2. Performance Results

2.1 Table 1 Key Performance Indicators: Results for Quarter 1

	CKPI	Target	Result Q1
H1 RP02(1)	Proportion of non-emergency repairs completed within target timescale	90%	79%
RP02(2)	Proportion of emergency repairs completed within target timescale	100%	89%
H2	Average number of calendar days to re-let a void property (excludes major works voids).	25	56
H3	Satisfaction with the overall reactive repairs service received (% of total number of responses returned).	90%	89%
H4	Number of households in B&B for more than 2 weeks per quarter	Max 4 in any quarter	2
H5	Rent arrears of current tenants as a percentage of rent due - cumulative result.	2%	1.76%
H6 RP01	Proportion of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	23%	22.50%
H7 BS01	Proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out	100%	99.96%
H8	Percentage of stock with a valid safety certification Electrical Installation Condition Report.	100%	100%
H9	Number of outstanding high risk Fire Risk Assessment actions	0	0
BS02	Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out	100%	100%
BS03	Proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out	100%	84%
BS04	Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out	100%	100%
BS05	Proportion of homes for which all required communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out	100%	100%
H10 NM01	Number of anti-social behaviour cases opened per 1,000 homes	N/A	4.5
CH01	Number of stage one and stage two complaints received per 1,000 homes	N/A	2.10
CH02	Proportion of stage one and two complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales	100%	100%

- 2.2 The new contract for reactive maintenance and void works started in April. The disappointing results for the first quarter was mainly due to the additional use of sub-contractors – and difficulty obtaining from them whether the work has been completed and within what timescale. We are assured by the lead contractor that, although not evidenced, this reported position does not reflect actual performance. Along with some technical issues with integrating IT systems, this will be monitored closely and dealt with through contract management to improve this position.
- 2.3 Progress is being made on asbestos compliance as part of the capital investment in the housing stock and programme of work to reach the Decent Homes standard.
- 2.4 At the end of quarter 1, one property did not have a valid gas safety certificate. This has since been remedied.
- 2.5 The results for rent collection and use of emergency bed and breakfast accommodation are particularly pleasing.

3. Tenants Satisfaction Survey

- 3.1 At the meeting of this committee in March 2023, Members were advised that Officers planned to procure the services of a contractor to undertake a large-scale tenant satisfaction survey of tenants during 2023. This would be compliant with the specific technical requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing in collecting the 12 Tenant Satisfaction Measures on perception with housing services. The results must be submitted from April 2024 (the Regulator has not yet set a deadline for this).
- 3.2 Following a tender process in line with the Council's procedures, a contractor has been procured to undertake the regulatory compliant tenant satisfaction survey. This is expected to take place during the autumn. An update on this project will be presented to the next meeting of this committee.

4. Resource implications/Value for Money

- 4.1 No resource implications have been identified. A budget has been identified for the tenant satisfaction survey.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 No legal implications have been identified. Submission of Tenant Satisfaction Measures is a regulatory requirement of the Regulator of Social Housing.

6. Equality implications

- 6.1 No equalities implications have been identified.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

- 7.1 No environmental, sustainability or biodiversity implications have been identified.

8. Background papers

- 8.1 [\(Public Pack\)Agenda Document for Housing Committee, 08/03/2023 19:30 \(runnymede.gov.uk\)](#)

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