

# Housing Strategy 2021-2026



WOKING BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Housing Strategy 2021 – 2026

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## Foreword

I am very pleased to introduce Woking Borough Council's Housing Strategy 2021-2026, setting out our vision for housing in the borough and identifying objectives and strategic priorities to meet the current and future housing needs of the local population.

Whilst this strategy has been developed in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has an overall focus on achieving an increase in the supply of affordable housing and continuing to provide high quality housing services in Woking.

This is an exciting time for housing in the Borough as we look to bring our landlord services back in-house next year. Good quality, decent and affordable homes can contribute immeasurably to health and wellbeing and, as a forward thinking authority, we will be working with partners and other agencies on innovative models of affordable housing delivery. Our focus is not only on solutions to housing issues but, more holistically, also on resident wellbeing and helping people to live safe and independent lives through a range of accommodation options.

The Housing Strategy is supported by the Council's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, Housing Allocations Policy and Health and Wellbeing Strategy and seeks to concentrate on developing affordable housing while making the best use of the existing stock; improving the customer journey across the service; and enabling residents to fulfil their potential.

This is an ambitious strategy that embraces the challenges facing Woking Borough Council as we work towards providing safe and affordable housing. These are challenges we are determined to address and overcome in order to ensure Woking remains a vibrant, inclusive, sustainable and healthy place to live and work.

I would like to thank all staff, residents, partners and other interested parties who have contributed towards the development of this strategy, and look forward to its implementation and positive impact going forward.

Councillor Debbie Harlow - Portfolio Holder for Housing

# 1. Introduction

Welcome to Woking Borough Council's Housing Strategy for 2021 - 2026, a strategy geared towards providing safe, affordable, high quality homes and working to ensure that the residents of Woking thrive. This is an important document for the Council, recognising that housing plays a major role in the health, social, environmental and economic well-being of everyone who lives in the borough.

Woking is changing and has seen significant development in recent years. With its outstanding transport links and access to attractive green spaces, Woking is a popular place to live. However, the success of the area does bring with it challenges. House prices in the Borough are well above the national average leading to affordability issues for local people and key workers.

This strategy demonstrates the Council's ambition for, and commitment to, more affordable housing provision over the next 5 years that is high quality, managed well and provides opportunities for people and communities to develop and prosper. With major changes coming in how the Council manages its housing stock, the Strategy also conveys the Council's commitment to engaging residents in the future delivery of its housing services.

This strategy is intended to be a live document with opportunities to update action plans annually. This is to ensure that Woking Borough Council is responding to emerging legislation and policies and the challenges and opportunities that arise over the next 5 years.

## 2. About Woking Borough

Woking Borough is situated in the heart of Surrey, just 25 miles from central London. As well as being close to the capital, the borough is located 15 and 20 miles from Heathrow and Gatwick respectively, making it a very popular and attractive place to live.

The population of Woking is 100,793 based on mid-year estimates (ONS) 2019, a 12.2% increase since 2001. Most residents live in Woking's well defined urban area and 80% of residents refer to "Woking" as their town or nearest town. The borough is 60% green belt and the town itself is surrounded by open countryside, including thousands of acres of woods and heathland across Horsell Common.

Key facts about housing in Woking include:

- As at February 2021, the average house price in Woking was £420,792, which is nearly double the national average of £250,341.
- According to the ONS, the number of households in Woking was 39,460 in 2018 and this is projected to increase by 1.1% in 2028 to 39,900 households.
- In Woking, as of March 2020, full-time employees could typically expect to spend around 10.17 times their workplace-based annual earnings on purchasing a home. This is significantly higher than the national average of 7.84. The median gross annual workplace-based earnings in Woking is £39,325.
- In Woking, the number of people on Universal Credit was 6,889 as at 11 March 2021, which has increased from 6,060 in August 2020.
- As at 1st April 2021, there were a total of 1,108 applicants on Woking's Housing Register. The Housing Register shows that the greatest need is for 1 bed units at 41%, but there is also a significant need for 2 and 3+ bed homes at 31% and 28% respectively.
- The Council owns 3,370 dwellings (inclusive of shared ownership and temporary accommodation dwellings), plus a further 83 Thamesway Housing Limited (THL) dwellings managed by New Vision Homes (NVH) - to which WBC is able to nominate persons from the Housing Register. In addition, there are approximately 2,050 housing association properties in the Borough and a further 100 THL properties (which are affordable but not managed by NVH).

Further details on housing in Woking can be found in the Council's regular [Housing Facts and Figures report](#).

### 3. Achievements

As the Council embarks on its next strategy, it is important to reflect on its housing achievements over the last 5 years. Key successes include:

- In September 2020, the Council achieved Investment Partner status with Homes England, meaning it is pre-qualified to bid for funding towards affordable housing developments. Through this, the Council secured grant funding towards the Hale End Court Extra Care Housing scheme in Old Woking, which is due to complete in autumn 2021.
- The Council has committed to a multi-million pound regeneration project to transform the centre of Sheerwater into a thriving, sustainable community and an attractive new neighbourhood. The scheme will deliver 1,200 new homes, of which almost half will be affordable homes. The first 92 homes will be completed this summer.
- In the past 2 years, the Council has built 11 new, high quality council homes with exceptionally high levels of insulation. The homes follow a fabric first approach, which are estimated to reduce carbon emissions by 50%. The Council has also converted 7 disused common rooms into affordable homes with some being fully wheelchair accessible.
- The Council has delivered 2 new self-contained, modern temporary accommodation schemes (providing 47 units), as well as renovating the existing temporary accommodation schemes.
- As part of the Covid-19 pandemic response, the Council has worked with York Road Project to accommodate over 160 homeless people under the Government's 'Everyone In' initiative and is committed to continue supporting them. To assist this, the Council secured funding for move-on accommodation and staffing costs to support rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping as part of the Government's Next Steps Accommodation Programme. The Council now has a new team dedicated to supporting rough sleepers and finding move-on accommodation in order to reduce and eliminate rough sleeping.
- The Council set up a Selective Licensing scheme in the Canalside ward to raise the standard of private rented accommodation. 865 licences have been issued under the scheme, with 52% of properties visited being improved following inspection.
- Since October 2017, 338 private rented properties have joined the Council's Let's Rent service which assists homeless households find a new home.
- Since 2016/17, 227 empty homes have been brought back into use.
- Over 97% of the Council's housing stock meets the Decent Homes standard in 2020/2021. In addition, the energy efficiency of Council owned homes has risen over the past 4 years to 69.1% in 2020/21.
- Thameswey Housing, the Council's housing company, have launched its innovative Earn Your Deposit scheme to help aspiring home owners to buy their own home.



## 4. Policy Context

### *National Policy*

The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally-prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced, including for the delivery of affordable homes. The NPPF includes a definition of affordable homes, which is supplied in **Annexe 1**, and includes affordable housing for rent; starter homes; discounted market sales housing; and other affordable routes to home ownership.

A [Social Housing White Paper](#) was published by the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government on 17 November 2020, presenting a charter of seven commitments social housing residents should be able to expect from their landlord. The overarching themes are building and resident safety, and resident voice.

[The Housing Act 1996, Part 7](#), is the primary legislation governing homelessness. It has seen several changes over the years but the most recent, fundamental and far-reaching are the amendments brought about by the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#). This introduced new requirements to "Prevent" and "Relieve" homelessness and came into force on 3rd April 2018. The Act represents a strategic change from the Housing Options model to an emphasis on improving how the Council engages with and supports its customers. The focus is on developing a more holistic approach to preventing and resolving homelessness by further developing Personal Housing Plans (PHPs). The main aim is to increase early interventions, which achieve more sustainable outcomes for customers.

The Government has committed to halving rough sleeping by 2022 and eliminating it completely by 2027. In the [Spending Review 2020](#) the Chancellor confirmed an additional £254 million of resource funding to tackle rough sleeping and homelessness. The Government also committed £87 million of capital funding in 2021/22 to support the delivery of long-term accommodation for rough sleepers. Subsequently, a further £310 million [Homelessness Prevention Grant](#) was announced, taking the total resource funding for rough sleeping and homelessness in 2021/22 to over £750 million.

The [Welfare Reform Act 2012](#) introduced a wide range of reforms with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 aimed at reducing public expenditure on benefits and using the welfare system to incentivise people into employment. A number of these have had an impact on homelessness and the availability, and sustainability, of affordable housing. The key elements of reform included:

- Local Housing Allowance (LHA) reductions, including total LHA caps and the limiting of LHA to the 30th percentile of market rents.
- Benefit Cap - limiting the maximum benefits that a family can receive.
- Spare Room Subsidy ('Bedroom Tax') reduces housing benefit entitlement to social housing tenants considered to be under occupying their homes.
- Shared Accommodation Rate limit applied to single young people up to the age of 35.
- Transfer of responsibility for Social Fund payments to local authorities and to Council budgets.

- Disability Benefit changes and the replacement of Council Tax Benefit with local Council Tax support, reducing benefit income to a wide range of working age adults.
- Introduction of Universal Credit to provide a single streamlined benefit paid to residents directly rather than to their landlords. Full Service Universal Credit went live in Woking Borough in October 2018.

### **Local Policies**

The Council's vision "**towards tomorrow today**" is supported by a statement of intent about shaping the Borough's future, comprising a number of value aims under the three key thematic areas of **People, Place and Us** (the organisation), as follows:

- **People** - working to improve the health and wellbeing of our community;
- **Place** - creating a sustainable community which has a strong identity and is a place where people want to be;
- **Us** - looking ahead and, along with our partners, seeking opportunities to shape and improve the services provided to the community.

More details on the vision, aims and above mentioned themes can be found on the Woking Borough Council [website](#). A new Corporate Plan has been adopted for 2021/22, with a 5-year Corporate Strategy planned from next year following extensive resident engagement.

The Council's "[Preventing Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020- 2024](#)" sets out how it will work with partners to address homelessness in the Woking Borough and support residents in housing crisis. Actions will be targeted at delivering on the following four strategic priorities:

1. To prevent homelessness and offer early help
2. To provide a range of accommodation options
3. To support vulnerable residents through partnership working
4. To reduce rough sleeping.

Woking Borough Council's [Housing Allocations Policy](#) outlines how the Council allocates social and affordable rented properties and makes nominations to Housing Associations within the borough.

A comprehensive Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Woking, within the framework of the North West Surrey Integrated Care Partnership (NWSICP), is also currently being developed. It will focus on health creation and how its policies and decision making on all matters can support the creation of healthy and resilient communities in Woking.

This is a challenging time for housing, with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic being acutely felt and local house prices remaining out of reach for many. There remain several consultations, strategies and policy papers that are in the process of being set out by Government that will play a part in shaping the future. This Strategy outlines how the Council will work in partnership with others, and maximise resources to meet the targets set out in its Local Development Framework (LDF), '[Woking 2027](#)' and [Core Strategy](#) with regards to housing provision in the Borough.



## 5. Strategic Priorities

The Council has identified five strategic priorities for housing over the next five years, which are as follows:

1. To provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs;
2. To prevent homelessness and help those in housing need;
3. To help people to achieve independence and wellbeing;
4. To deliver an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders;
5. To enhance choice, standards and quality within the private rented sector.

The next sections will elaborate more on these strategic priorities, including identifying key actions that will be undertaken over the life of the strategy.

### **1.1 Strategy Priority 1 - To provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs**

Good quality, decent and affordable homes contribute significantly to health and wellbeing. Woking has an acute need for more affordable housing of all types, sizes and tenures and the demand for affordable housing far exceeds supply, with local people finding it increasingly difficult to afford to stay in the Borough. This strategic priority focuses on delivering suitable housing for residents that is truly affordable and meets local needs.

There is a need for a range of property and tenure types within the supply of affordable housing. Whilst the greatest need evidenced on the Council's Housing Register is for smaller homes, applicants are waiting longer for larger properties. 191 households are also registered for shared ownership schemes in the Borough, but there have been no new schemes for over two years, showing a gap in the local market. With affordable homes being so scarce, it is vital that the Council makes the best use of existing stock, including encouraging and supporting tenants to downsize when they no longer need a family-sized home.

Woking Borough Council's policies require all new housing development to contribute towards the delivery of affordable housing. However, since 2019/20, only 57 new build affordable homes have been delivered in Woking. When combined with relets of existing stock, there are typically only 100 affordable homes being let each year to applicants on the Housing Register. These figures clearly demonstrate the stark shortage of affordable homes and the resulting long waiting times faced by applicants.

One of the key difficulties facing development in Woking is the shortage of developable land. Woking is a relatively small borough, with 60% of land being designated as green belt. The proximity of Woking to London, and its other excellent transport connections, mean that developers are attracted to Woking and there is also competition over land use between commercial and residential development.

Much of Woking's recent development is concentrated in the town centre to promote economic growth and to protect the green belt. However, such sites attract high land values which in turn reduces the viability of affordable housing within the schemes. It is therefore essential that the Council maximises other land and funding opportunities to meet its

annual target of 102 affordable housing units per year. The Council will seek to prioritise social rented homes where possible.

The Council is looking at strengthening relationships with housing association partners to achieve 100% affordable housing schemes, as well as taking advantage of its recent success in securing Investment Partner status with Homes England. As a result of this, the Council has successfully secured grant funding to help deliver a new extra care housing scheme, Hale End Court, and intends to bid for funding for other pipeline schemes. The Council will also explore new funding models, such as “income-strip” finance.

**Over the next 5 years, the Council will:**

- Deliver at least 510 new affordable homes, including through working in strengthened partnership with Thamesway, Registered Providers and developers, as well as identifying new-build opportunities on council-owned land.
- Ensure all new homes, including all affordable homes, are built to a high quality standard in accordance with the policies of the Core Strategy, as well as the Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and national space standards.
- Explore alternative funding sources for new affordable homes, including accessing more Homes England funding through the Council’s Investment Partner status.
- Deliver the multi-million pound regeneration of Sheerwater, providing high quality homes and a thriving and sustainable community.
- Update the Council’s Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to account for national policy changes and to improve (where possible) its processes for securing affordable housing.
- Undertake a strategic review of the Council’s temporary accommodation portfolio to identify any future development opportunities.
- Look for opportunities arising from the asset management strategy and property review to develop more affordable housing.
- Review the Council’s incentives scheme to further encourage tenants who are under-occupying Council homes to move to smaller homes.
- Meet the need for 22 new Gypsy and Traveller pitches already identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Assessment up to 2027.

**1.2 Strategic Priority 2 - To prevent homelessness and help those in housing need**

Homelessness and poor housing can have a profound effect on people’s lives. It has a detrimental effect on health and wellbeing and reduces life opportunities.

The Council has a legal duty to provide services to people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, with a strong focus on prevention and tackling root causes. Successful homelessness prevention has been the main aim of Woking’s Housing Options approach for many years and it will need to remain so with the added duties under the [Homelessness Reduction Act 2017](#). The team use a range of other tools to prevent and address

homelessness, including family mediation, home visits, negotiation with landlords, landlord incentives, prevention funding to help with rent arrears and floating support.

Approximately 400 homeless applications are assessed each year. As the number of Council-owned properties has reduced through the Right to Buy, and waiting times for social housing have increased, the Housing Options team has increasingly focused on providing homeless households with suitable homes in the private rented sector. There are a number of challenges facing the Council and its partners, so it is crucial that all stakeholders continue to work together to tackle homelessness by exploring new opportunities and finding new ways of working.

In the coming months, it is predicted that the number of people experiencing homelessness and requiring temporary accommodation will increase due to the lasting impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. When the temporary eviction ban is lifted and the furlough scheme ceases, homelessness is expected to spike. The Council's new temporary accommodation will help to meet this demand locally, but it is essential that the Council continues to secure more properties through its "Let's Rent" scheme.

The 'Everyone In' initiative was introduced to keep rough sleepers safe during the pandemic. As part of the 'Everyone In' government initiative, approximately 15,000 people nationally who were sleeping rough, in unsafe communal settings or at imminent risk of rough sleeping were placed into emergency accommodation during the Covid-19 pandemic. This included the Council and local charity, York Road Project, accommodating over 160 people in Woking. Funding has been secured to assist the Council source long-term accommodation and ensure a lasting positive legacy from the pandemic.

In recent years, the Council has been increasingly reliant on the use of Bed & Breakfast accommodation (B&B), a limited number of shared-facilities temporary accommodation (TA) properties and Council-owned properties within the Sheerwater regeneration area to house those who find themselves homeless. The Council is working towards reducing the number of households placed in B&B, particularly outside the Borough. The aim is to undertake a strategic review of the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to identify any future development opportunities.

In 2020, the Council adopted a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which included the following four priorities:

- To prevent homelessness and offer early help.
- To provide a range of accommodation options.
- To support vulnerable residents through partnership working.
- To reduce rough sleeping.

**Over the next 5 years, the Council will:**

- Continue to prevent homelessness using a range of tools available, including the Housing Options Floating Support Service and outreach services.
- Further develop Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) to become more holistic and with regular reviews/updates.
- Reduce the number of households placed in B&B, particularly outside the Borough.

- Develop and implement an Exit Strategy for households living in temporary accommodation within the Sheerwater regeneration area.
- Maintain Housing representation and participation at multi-agency meetings.
- Support vulnerable residents through partnership working with local partners, including York Road Project, Women's Support Centre, Citizens Advice Woking, Your Sanctuary, local foodbanks, Surrey County Council, Woking MIND and JobCentre +.
- Arrange and co-ordinate an annual Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy meeting.
- Provide suitable move-on accommodation for rough sleepers who have been accommodated during the Covid-19 pandemic and prevent their return to the streets.
- Provide new premises for the York Road Project.
- Work with identified landlords in the private rented sector to provide accommodation for rough sleepers.

### **1.3 Strategic Priority 3 - To help people to achieve independence and wellbeing**

Access to good quality housing and support services is key to the Council's preventative strategies to enable vulnerable people to live successfully and independently in the community. Woking Borough Council's focus is on supporting customers not just to resolve their housing issues, but also encouraging them to improve their health and wellbeing. Partnership working with other statutory and voluntary agencies is key to achieving this objective. A new Health and Wellbeing Strategy is currently being developed alongside this Housing Strategy to ensure that the priorities and resulting action plans are aligned.

Brockhill extra care is a unique housing scheme, located in Goldsworth Park, designed to meet the needs of frail or vulnerable people living in Woking. Brockhill provides 49 homes and is currently the only extra care housing scheme in the Borough, resulting in a continual waiting list. Due to the high demand for extra care housing, the Council has commissioned a new scheme in Old Woking, Hale End Court. This new scheme is due to be completed in autumn 2021 and will provide an additional 48 apartments, of which 12 will be for tenants needing care. Unlike other schemes, both Brockhill and Hale End Court provide 24/7 personal care to help those with additional support needs to remain as independent as possible. These schemes enable residents to also benefit from services such as on-site meals, a hair salon, day activities and chiropody.

In addition to these extra care schemes, the Council owns nine sheltered housing schemes. This accommodation is typically for applicants aged 60+ but could also be for applicants with a physical disability or mobility issues who would benefit from the facilities of a sheltered scheme, such as regular support visits. A new sheltered accommodation scheme is planned as part of the Sheerwater regeneration.

As well as the designated housing schemes, the Council offers a range of support services designed to promote ongoing independence and wellbeing. The Council's Independent

Support service works in partnership with other external agencies to offer support to anyone who needs it, regardless of tenure. This team works closely with the Council's housing team to ensure that tenants are able to maintain their tenancy agreements, and to provide a direct link to other vital Council services.

Woking Borough Council offers advice, support and assistance for disabled adaptations in a resident's home to allow them to continue to live independently. Residents and their families who are looking at potential aids and adaptations are able to visit the Woking Independence Show Home (WISH) to view and try out different equipment, including smart technology. At the WISH, there is a fully integrated Careline equipment display which features door alarms, bed sensors and pill dispensers. The Council's Careline team work closely with health and social care to ensure the most appropriate alarms and sensors are used to promote independence at home. Furthermore, the Woking Safer Living and Independence Consultancy Clinic (SLICC) enables residents to discuss minor and major home adaptations and get advice on how to adapt daily routines to increase independence at home.

An essential part of living well at home is having access to nutritious meals. The Council's community meals service offers this and the delivery person can also signpost to other services and look out for deterioration in a resident's health or the condition of their property. Homesafe Plus tailors all of the existing borough services, including community meals, to provide immediate support after hospital discharge. It aims to reduce pressures on local NHS services by facilitating a timely discharge, reducing preventable hospital admissions and helping patient's access support provided by local authorities.

The Council is also looking at the possibility of implementing a local Homeshare scheme. This scheme would enable an older householder with a spare room to be matched with a younger person who will provide an agreed amount of support in exchange for sociable and affordable accommodation. This helps older people stay independently at home for longer; provides affordable accommodation at a time of record housing shortages and high rent; and builds stronger and more resilient communities.

**Over the next 5 years, the Council will:**

- Help people to live safe and independent lives by offering a range of specialist accommodation options, which includes extra care housing and sheltered housing.
- Continue to work in partnership with a range of health and social care colleagues.
- Continue to offer a range of support services that help vulnerable residents to remain living independently and safely in the community, regardless of tenure.
- Complete the development of Hale End Court Extra Care Housing Scheme in Old Woking and the new sheltered housing scheme in Sheerwater.
- Work with Surrey County Council to identify and address the future housing needs of older people, people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable persons.
- Positively encourage older transfer applicants, who wish to downsize from family-sized accommodation into one of the sheltered schemes.

- Continue to investigate the establishment of a local Homeshare scheme to match someone needing an affordable home with someone who has a spare room (in return for help around the house and companionship).

#### **1.4 Strategic Priority 4 - To deliver an improved housing service to our tenants and leaseholders**

Woking Borough Council owns over 3,300 social rented homes, plus a further 458 leasehold properties. The Council is committed to ensuring its tenants and leaseholders enjoy good quality housing and are more actively involved in shaping these services going forward.

As the 10-year contract with New Vision Homes (NVH) draws to an end in March 2022, the Council has approved a hybrid model for the future, with Housing Management and Asset Management Services being brought back in-house and the repairs and maintenance contracts re-tendered. This will mark a major shift in the way the Council's housing services are delivered and was strongly supported by tenants and leaseholders when consulted. The objectives are to improve the customer journey across the Housing Service, ensure there is clearer accountability in decision making and deliver a value for money service.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Survey in August 2020 highlighted a number of areas that need improving including repairs and maintenance, dealing with anti-social behaviour and maintaining the appearance of the Council's housing estates. The Council is committed to addressing these issues and to involving residents in the future delivery of these services through a new Resident Engagement Strategy. The first step in this process has been to launch a regular newsletter - Woking@Home - that has been sent out to all tenants and leaseholders. Going forward, the Council wants to create more opportunities for residents to get involved, including through tenant panels/boards, estate inspections and the rollout of its new online engagement platform.

As part of this aim to increase resident involvement, the Council will be working to increase the quality and volume of correspondence with leaseholders, allowing leaseholders to have a greater say about where they live as well as supporting leaseholders with their current lease and their future plans.

Last year, the Council launched its new Housing IT system and further phases of this are planned over the next year. It is envisaged that the system will bring together all aspects of the housing service into one system. A key priority for the new system is the increased capacity for customer's to self-serve through a new online housing register application process and a tenant's portal.

Over 97% of the Council's housing stock meets the Decent Homes Standards. The Council plans to develop a long-term Asset Management Strategy to prioritise works based on stock condition information, as well as looking at improving the appearance of our estates and meeting future carbon reduction targets. The tragic events at Grenfell Tower highlighted the importance of compliance, regulatory standards for health and safety and fire safety. These will continue to be key priorities for the Council when agreeing its future asset management plans.

With social housing being so scarce, it is vital that the Council makes the best use of its housing stock. Whilst the majority of applicants on the Housing Register need smaller properties, the waiting times for larger family homes are longer, as these properties



turnover less frequently. As at February 2021, 411 (12.2%) of the Council's housing stock was under-occupied, but only 37 of these households were registered for downsizing. The Council intends to work with tenants who are currently under-occupying and support them to downsize by offering them attractive opportunities and incentives, which will in turn free up homes that are in high demand.

**Over the next 5 years, the Council will:**

- Bring housing and asset management services back in-house and re-tender the repairs and maintenance contracts, with a strong emphasis on customer service and first-time fix.
- Explore future opportunities to further increase the use of local labour and local businesses in the delivery of the service.
- Produce a guide for leaseholders, detailing the rights that a leaseholder has, information on how to access advice, the Council's processes and procedures that can affect leaseholders and the responsibilities of both the leaseholder and landlord.
- Ensure that leaseholders are updated annually about future plans for major works to their block, including a cost estimate.
- Maintain properties at a minimum of the Decent Homes Standard.
- Strive to improve and maintain the appearance of the Council's housing estates.
- Rebuild the Council's relationship with its tenants and leaseholders and increasingly involve them in shaping its service offer.
- Carry out a detailed consultation with leaseholders on major works to blocks, allowing leaseholders to be directly involved with where they live.
- Constantly seek to improve all housing services through the greater use of benchmarking data and resident feedback.
- Ensure that the Council's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour is effective, robust and fair.
- Improve the customer journey, including offering greater self-serve options through the new integrated IT system.
- Increase the focus on tenancy sustainment to maximise income collection and support positive outcomes for tenants.
- Improve energy efficiency amongst Council-owned stock through routine maintenance programmes and new development schemes.

## **1.5 Strategic Priority 5 - To enhance choice, standards and quality within the private rented sector**

Woking Borough Council is committed to improving the standards and increasing access to homes in the private rented sector to meet local needs. Legislative changes, as set out in the [Housing and Planning Act 2016](#), have expanded the Council's responsibilities (i.e. with regard to rogue landlords and licensing for houses of multiple occupation, and ensuring that private rented properties meet the revised standards around energy performance and room sizes).

The Council's Housing Standards Team work with private landlords to ensure that private rented housing stock is safe, good quality and maintained to a high standard within legislative framework. The Council is committed to prioritising compliance and fire safety, including working with property owners to ensure any cladding issues are remediated in a timely manner.

Woking Borough Council's [climate emergency action plan](#) focuses on reducing, and eventually eliminating, its carbon footprint. The Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery scheme was launched in August 2020 and an additional £300m has been allocated to the scheme. The Council already has an allocation from this scheme and has bid in the second funding round to enable retrofits to be carried out within low-income households.

The Council is committed to improving the standard of private rented properties and the health and wellbeing of tenants. Since 2018, Canalside Ward (parts of Maybury and Woking Town Centre) has been part of a pilot selective licensing scheme. The Canalside ward was identified due to 44% of homes in the ward being private rented properties, compared to the national average of 19.6%, and the higher frequency of prosecution cases taken against private landlords in this area. Consequently, private landlords or their managing agents in this ward are required to have a license for each private rented property. As at March 2021, there were 865 homes licensed in Canalside under the selective licensing scheme. The pilot was for five years and the priority now is to review the impact of the scheme on raising standards, in order to establish the future of selective licensing in the borough.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO's) are a vital source of housing in the private rented sector. They traditionally provide housing at the more affordable and transient end of the housing market. The Council's focus on HMO's is to ensure that there is a level playing field for landlords and that properties are safe, well managed and of a good standard. There are currently 80 HMO's licensed in Woking Borough. Various forms of advice and assistance are available to landlords to improve their properties and, where necessary, enforcement action will be taken. The next step is to focus on identifying HMOs that are not licensed to ensure these become compliant.

Empty homes are recognised as a wasted resource, particularly in areas such as Woking where there is such a high demand for all types of housing. Houses that are left unoccupied can quickly fall into disrepair and impact local neighbourhoods. Bringing empty properties back into use can benefit individual owners, potential occupiers, businesses and the wider community. As at April 2021, Woking had 433 long term empty properties, with 105 of these lying empty for more than 24 months. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significantly

detrimental impact on the team's ability to work towards addressing this. Woking Borough Council intends to renew its efforts in this area and bring a minimum of 40 empty properties back into use through negotiation, using enforcement action as a last resort.

The Council's [Let's Rent](#) service procures private rented properties for households that are homeless or threatened with homelessness and supports tenancy sustainment. The service has been expanded this year to assist Rough Sleepers or those at risk of Rough Sleeping. Let's Rent enables the Council to accommodate homeless households more quickly into long-term accommodation than through the Housing Register and in turn discharge its homeless duties. The service provides landlord incentives and advice and support to tenants and landlords. As at March 2021, there were 80 households on the waiting list. The Council will continue to promote this service with the ambition to secure more accommodation, including through further joint working with Thamesway Housing.

**Over the next 5 years, the Council will:**

- Seek to improve conditions in the private rented sector through negotiation and enforcement (where required).
- Improve knowledge of the location and condition of HMOs through street surveys and other records.
- Review publications, advice and assistance for landlords of HMOs, and develop a publicity plan to maximise compliance with mandatory licensing requirements.
- Conduct an impact assessment of the Canalside Selective Licensing Scheme and use this evidence to inform the decision on the future direction when the current scheme ends in March 2023.
- Continue to prioritise fire safety, including working with property owners to ensure any cladding issues are remediated in a timely manner.
- Continue to develop and promote the Council's "Let's Rent" schemes to secure more accommodation for homeless households, including through further joint working with Thamesway Housing.
- Bring a minimum of 40 empty properties back into use through negotiation, using enforcement action as a last resort.
- Work with Action Surrey to access and promote the £6.2 million Green Homes Grant.
- Maintain and improve working relationships with Lettings Agents and Landlords, including holding a yearly Private Sector Landlord Forum to disseminate best practice.
- Review the IT systems for Private Sector housing to deliver a more efficient and customer-friendly service.

- Organise training with Tenants and Landlords, ensuring they are aware of and fully compliant with the latest legislation to ensure high standards in the private rented sector in Woking.

## **2. How will the Council monitor progress?**

Progress against the Housing Strategy will be monitored by the respective teams within Housing Services and Planning, with additional monitoring provided through the Housing Task Group. This group comprises of seven Members of the Council representing all Groups on the Council based on proportionality. The Elected Members are appointed annually by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in May, with the Chair and Vice-Chair being appointed annually at the first meeting of the Housing Task Group.

The Task Group feeds into the development of a range of housing strategies and policies, while also monitoring the performance and delivery of key housing projects. The members of the Task Group report on a regular basis to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and any proposals from the Task Group are reported to the Council's Executive, normally following consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

An Action Plan will be developed with partners to sit alongside this Strategy following the consultation. The Action Plan is intended to be a live document, which will be subject to continuous review and updating to ensure it remains effective and current. Updates will be published on the Council's website.

## ANNEXE 1 – Housing Strategy Action Plan

### Strategy Priority 1 - To provide well designed, high quality homes that are affordable and meet local needs

No.	Commitment	Actions/Milestones	Lead Officer	Risks	Status
1.1	Deliver at least 510 new affordable homes, including through working in strengthened partnership with Thamesway, Registered Providers and developers, as well as identifying new-build opportunities on council-owned land.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete affordable housing developments at Hale End Court and Rydens Way in 2021/22</li> <li>• Complete affordable housing development at Bonsey Lane in 2022/23</li> <li>• Seek to maximise affordable homes through the planning process</li> <li>• Work with active Registered Providers to bring forward affordable housing schemes, such as, Portugal Road.</li> </ul>	Strategic Housing and Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of development finance.</li> <li>• Lack of developable land.</li> <li>• Development viability</li> <li>• Changes to Government policy.</li> </ul>	
1.2	Ensure all new homes, including all affordable homes, are built to a high quality standard in accordance with the policies of the Core Strategy, as well as the Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and national space standards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Housing and Development Team to comment on all affordable housing proposals</li> <li>• Ensure Council-led schemes meet or exceed our own and national design standards</li> <li>• Seek to incorporate higher sustainability standards in our own developments.</li> </ul>	Strategic Housing and Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to Government policy</li> </ul>	
1.3	Explore alternative funding sources for new affordable homes, including accessing more Homes England funding through the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore income-strip finance as a means of delivering additional affordable homes</li> <li>• Bid for Homes England</li> </ul>	Strategic Housing and Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Untested models</li> <li>• Lack of Government funding</li> </ul>	

	Council's Investment Partner status.	funding for Rydens Way and Bonsey Lane sites			
1.4	Deliver the multi-million pound regeneration of Sheerwater, providing high quality homes and a thriving and sustainable community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Purple phase in 2021/22.</li> <li>• Commence Red, Yellow and Copper phases in 2021/22.</li> </ul>	Sheerwater Regeneration Project Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Land assembly/CPO</li> <li>• Supply chains</li> </ul>	
1.5	Update the Council's Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document to account for national policy changes and to improve (where possible) its processes for securing affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Planning Policy team to review SPD in 2021/22.</li> </ul>	Strategic Housing and Development Manager  Planning Policy Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes to Government policy</li> </ul>	
1.6	Undertake a strategic review of the Council's temporary accommodation portfolio to identify any future development opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the review by Summer 2024.</li> </ul>	Strategic Housing and Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Demand for temporary accommodation too high to consider alternative site use</li> </ul>	
1.7	Look for opportunities arising from the asset management strategy and property review to develop more affordable housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an Asset Management Strategy for our Council-owned stock by December 2022.</li> <li>• Identify potential development sites resulting from this by Summer 2023.</li> </ul>	Strategic Housing and Development Manager  Housing Asset Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resources</li> <li>• Lack of suitable sites</li> </ul>	
1.8	Review the Council's incentives scheme to further encourage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an officer working group to review the Council's</li> </ul>	Strategic Housing and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of family homes available</li> </ul>	



	tenants who are under-occupying Council homes to move to smaller homes.	<p>incentives package by December 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage with tenants by March 2022 to better understand what would compel them to downsize.</li> </ul>	Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resources</li> </ul>	
1.9	Meet the need for 22 new Gypsy and Traveller pitches already identified in the Gypsy and Traveller Assessment up to 2027.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Allocation of land for 23 Gypsy and Traveller pitches through the Site Allocations DPD, expected to be adopted in 2021 (taking into account delivery to date, the remaining need up to 2027 is 18 pitches).</li> </ul>	<p>Strategic Housing and Development Manager</p> <p>Planning Policy Manager</p>	Possibility that site allocations may not be delivered as expected (the SADPD sets out potential actions to take if that occurs)	

## Strategic Priority 2 - To prevent homelessness and help those in housing need

No.	Commitment	Actions/Milestones	Lead Officer	Risks	Status
2.1	Continue to prevent homelessness using a range of tools available, including our Housing Options Floating Support Service and outreach services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to bid for funding when available to strengthen our floating support offer</li> </ul>	Housing Solutions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of resources if numbers increase following removal of safety net during pandemic.</li> </ul>	
2.2	Further develop Personal Housing Plans (PHPs) to become more holistic and with regular reviews/updates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure PHPs are in place and reviewed with the clients at least every 3 months.</li> </ul>	Housing Options Team Leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of resources if numbers increase following removal of safety net during pandemic.</li> </ul>	
2.3	Reduce the number of households placed in B&B outside the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open our new temporary accommodation scheme in summer 2021 to reduce reliance on B&amp;B.</li> </ul>	Housing Solutions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More people requiring B&amp;B accommodation as a result of Covid-19 and removal of safety measures such as ban on possession proceedings</li> </ul>	
2.4	Develop and implement an Exit Strategy for households living in temporary accommodation within the Sheerwater regeneration area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prioritise the rehousing of remaining 40 households living in Sheerwater temporary accommodation based on the development phasing.</li> <li>Open new temporary accommodation scheme by</li> </ul>	Housing Solutions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not enough accommodation available.</li> <li>Benefit cap</li> </ul>	

		<p>Summer 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure more Let's Rent Homes.</li> </ul>			
2.5	Maintain Housing representation and participation at multi-agency meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All relevant multi-agency meetings to be attended by teams as far as possible.</li> </ul>	<p>Housing Solutions Manager</p> <p>Housing Options Team Leaders</p> <p>Housing Allocations Team Leader</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workload too heavy to attend.</li> </ul>	
2.6	Support vulnerable residents through partnership working with local partners, include York Road Project, Women's Support Centre, Citizens Advice, Your Sanctuary, local foodbanks, Surrey County Council, Woking MIND and JobCentre+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to offer Outreach Advice Service at key local venues (e.g B&amp;B, Refuge, YRP).</li> <li>Continue to joint fund CAW Court Desk.</li> <li>Continue to work closely with NVH to increase the focus on tenancy sustainment.</li> <li>Ongoing work with WBC support teams e.g Family Support, Independent Living, Sheerwater Resident Engagement Team.</li> <li>Mental Health &amp; Housing Support Worker recruited jointly and employed by MIND.</li> </ul>	Housing Solutions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of funding</li> <li>Not enough resources</li> </ul>	
2.7	Arrange and co-ordinate an annual Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rough Sleeping Coordinator to arrange at least one partnership meeting a year.</li> </ul>	Housing Solutions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other agencies no longer participate.</li> </ul>	

2.8	Provide suitable move-on	• Continue to secure more	Housing	• Lack of	
<b>Strategic Priority 3 - Helping older people and people with disabilities to achieve independence and wellbeing</b>					
<b>No.</b>	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Actions/Milestones</b>	<b>Accommodation Lead Officer</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Status</b>
3.1	Help people return to the streets.	• Offer two extra	Government funding to Housing Solutions	• Ongoing private rentals	
		acquire additional flats for former rough sleepers.		• Private rentals too expensive. • Lack of affordable homes.	
2.9	Provide new premises for the York Road Project	• Work with York Road Project to secure a site to deliver a new modern night shelter facility.	Housing Solutions Manager	• Funding • Lack of suitable sites	
2.10	Work with identified landlords in the private rented sector to provide accommodation for rough sleepers.	• New Private Sector Lettings Navigator to continue to recruit to new landlords willing to accommodate those with a history of rough sleeping. • Review our landlord incentives	Private Sector Housing Manager	• Landlords not willing to let to rough sleepers • Not enough accommodation available • Accommodation unaffordable. • Incentives not enough to encourage landlords. • People return to the streets.	

	independent lives by offering a range of specialist accommodation options, which includes extra care housing and sheltered housing.	<p>schemes by Autumn 2021</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to offer nine sheltered accommodation schemes</li> <li>• Continue to operate specialist panels to ensure appropriate specialist accommodation matched to client needs</li> </ul>	<p>Manager</p> <p>Housing Allocations Team Leader</p>	<p>from SCC providing onsite care</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring good representation from partner organisations on panels</li> </ul>	
3.2	Continue to work in partnership with a range of health and social care colleagues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To continue to be an active member of NW Surrey Alliance partnership</li> <li>• Continue to work with Woking MIND to offer Housing and Mental Health Support Worker</li> <li>• Continue to work with YRP to identify older rough sleepers</li> <li>• Ensure older rough sleepers engage with health and wellbeing professionals</li> <li>• Floating Support Team to continue to work/liaise with ASC colleagues</li> <li>• To restart multi-agency Hoarding Task Group</li> </ul>	<p>Health and Wellbeing Manager</p> <p>Housing Solutions Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff priorities and demands. Resources unable to keep up with changes in Health and Social Care</li> <li>• ICP/SCC and government funding/grants reduced or withdrawn</li> </ul>	
3.3	Continue to offer a range of support services that help vulnerable residents to remain living independently and safely in the community, regardless of tenure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Housing Assistance Policy by Autumn 2021</li> <li>• Support the Frailty Pathway including Active Surrey targeted falls prevention programme pilot by exploring how social</li> </ul>	<p>Homelink Manager</p> <p>Health and Wellbeing Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff priorities and demands</li> <li>• Resources unable to keep up with changes in Health and Social Care</li> <li>• ICP/SCC and government</li> </ul>	

		<p>prescribers can refer into the programme by Summer 2021.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore the extension of the falls responder service beyond Careline clients with NWS Alliance by April 2022</li> <li>• Explore with other partners (e.g. SECamb and reablement) how their services can benefit from Homesafe Plus services with callers diverted to Falls Responder Service where appropriate</li> <li>• Update Living Well leaflets to include all services available to Woking residents which can support independent living by April 2022</li> <li>• Work with partners to increase utilisation of the Woking Independent Show Home by April 2022</li> </ul>		<p>funding/grants reduced or withdrawn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WBC financial pressures</li> </ul>	
3.4	Complete the development of Hale End Court Extra Care Housing Scheme in Old Woking and the new sheltered housing scheme in Sheerwater.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete Hale End Court Extra Care in September 2021</li> <li>• First tenants due to move in during October 2021</li> <li>• Complete new sheltered housing scheme in Sheerwater during 2023/2024</li> </ul>	Strategic Housing and Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Construction delays</li> <li>• Construction costs pressures</li> </ul>	
3.5	Work with Surrey County Council to identify and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to work in partnership with Surrey</li> </ul>	Director of Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of developable land</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>	



	address the future housing needs of older people, people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable persons.	<p>Housing Needs Managers and Surrey Chief Housing Officers groups to keep abreast of needs studies being conducted by SCC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate and support SCC with any Woking specific proposals.</li> </ul>			
3.6	Positively encourage older transfer applicants, who wish to downsize from family-sized accommodation into one of the sheltered or Extra-Care schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an officer working group to review the Council's incentives package by December 2021</li> <li>Engage with tenants by March 2022 to better understand what would compel them to downsize.</li> </ul>	Housing Solutions Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued shortage of family sized accommodation</li> <li>Inefficient use of existing stock</li> </ul>	
3.7	Continue to investigate the establishment of a local Homeshare scheme to match someone needing an affordable home with someone who has a spare room (in return for help around the house and companionship).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building upon previously completed feasibility study, develop a business case for a local Homeshare scheme by December 2022</li> </ul>	Strategic Housing and Development Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of suitable partner organisation</li> <li>Unclear demand</li> <li>Initial set up costs</li> <li>Concerns over sharing in context of Covid-19 pandemic</li> </ul>	

**Strategic Priority 4 - Making better use of all existing housing by improving the standard and quality of management**

No.	Commitment	Actions/Milestones	Lead Officer	Risks	Status
4.1	Bring housing and asset management services back in-house and re-tender the repairs and maintenance contracts, with a strong emphasis on customer service and first-time fix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing to be brought in house on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022</li> <li>Issue Tender Documents for responsive repairs and voids in August 2021.</li> </ul>	<p>Director of Housing</p> <p>Housing Asset Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of key staff Procurement is delayed, leading to no service provision on 01/04/2022</li> <li>Procurement delays</li> <li>Costs tendered are not sustainable</li> </ul>	
4.2	Explore future opportunities to further increase the use of local labour and local businesses in the delivery of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All contracts are being reprocured, allowing for all local companies to submit interest</li> <li>Social value elements to scoring criteria</li> </ul>	Housing Asset Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stringent checks required to avoid a conflict of interest</li> <li>Smaller contractors may not be able to meet the demand volumes</li> </ul>	
4.3	Produce a guide for leaseholders, detailing the rights that a leaseholder has, information on how to access advice, the Council's processes and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaseholders guide to be produced, incorporating guidance on the Section 20 process, by March 2023.</li> </ul>	<p>Housing Management (from 2022)</p> <p>Housing Asset Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing leaseholders may fully understand their obligations</li> </ul>	

	procedures that can affect leaseholders and the responsibilities of both the leaseholder and landlord.				
4.4	Ensure that leaseholders are updated annually about future plans for major works to their block, including a cost estimate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All stock condition data to be fully up-to-date by November 2021</li> <li>• Stock condition data to be priced to provide cost estimates in January 2022.</li> </ul>	Housing Asset Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accuracy of cost estimates</li> <li>• Timescales for works subject to change.</li> <li>• Estimates will not include any items arising from Leaseholder consultation</li> </ul>	
4.5	Maintain properties at a minimum of the Decent Homes Standard.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete all 2021-22 Decent Homes programmes works by December 2021</li> <li>• Programmes for 2022 and beyond to be developed</li> </ul>	Housing Asset Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Substantial budgets may be required in the short to medium term</li> <li>• HRA budget constraints</li> </ul>	
4.6	Strive to improve and maintain the appearance of the Council's housing estates.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnership working with Serco and others to continue</li> <li>• Input to Council-wide procurement of grounds maintenance contract for April 2023 onwards</li> </ul>	Housing Asset Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HRA budget onstraints</li> </ul>	
4.7	Rebuild the Council's relationship with its tenants and leaseholders and increasingly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a tenant and leaseholder area through Engagement HQ by March 2022.</li> <li>• Rollout at least 3 newsletters to tenants and leaseholders</li> </ul>	Resident Engagement Team Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of volunteers</li> </ul>	

	involve them in shaping its service offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>each year.</li> <li>Grow the number of involved tenants sitting on our panels</li> </ul>			
4.8	Carry out a detailed consultation with leaseholders on major works to blocks, allowing leaseholders to be directly involved with where they live.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When a major refurbishment project for a block is ready to commence, a draft specification and set of options will be produced for informal consultation with leaseholders ahead of issuing the statutory Section 20 consultation. This will take effect after April 2022.</li> </ul>	Housing Asset Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requests from Leaseholders may contradict corporate objectives</li> <li>Extended consultation could delay projects</li> </ul>	
4.9	Constantly seek to improve all housing services through the greater use of benchmarking data and resident feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The new Repairs service will benchmarked against Housemark KPI's (amended to reflect the Woking service). This will allow for a comparison of performance against over 300 other providers.</li> <li>A resident feedback facility will be developed through Engagement HQ.</li> <li>From 2022, review approach to the annual survey.</li> </ul>	All Senior Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KPI benchmarking does not always allow 'like for like' comparison.</li> <li>Unrealistic expectations</li> </ul>	
4.10	Ensure that the Council's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review ASB policy by March 2023.</li> </ul>	Housing Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff resources</li> </ul>	

	effective, robust and fair.				
4.11	Improve the customer journey, including offering greater self-serve options through the new integrated IT system and access to digital solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A resident feedback facility will be developed through Engagement HQ</li> <li>• Tender Documents for Asset Management workstreams include the provision of integrating contractor IT systems with WBC systems, allowing a more direct communication method</li> <li>• Tender Documents for Asset Management workstreams include improved service standards, based on resident feedback</li> <li>• Continue to improve new Tenants Portal on OpenHousing system.</li> </ul>	All Senior Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all tenants and leaseholders can use IT solutions and self-serve</li> </ul>	
4.12	Increase the focus on tenancy sustainment to maximise income collection and support positive outcomes for tenants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the Council's approach to income collection and tenancy sustainment by July 2023.</li> </ul>	Housing Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff resources</li> </ul>	
4.13	Improve energy efficiency amongst Council-owned stock through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Void specification has been amended to include provision of low energy lighting and new loft</li> </ul>	Housing Asset Manager Strategic Housing and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Works to improve properties to Band C or above are not financially viable without government funding</li> </ul>	

## Strategic Priority 5 - Enhancing choice, standards and quality within the private rented sector

No.	Commitment	Programmes and new development schemes	Actions/Milestones	Lead Officer	Risks	Status
5.1	Seek to improve conditions in the private rented sector through negotiation and enforcement (where required).		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All licensed HMOs to be inspected within the lifetime of the licence.</li> <li>• EPC surveying of the entire stock ongoing and due for completion in summer 2021</li> <li>• Selective Licensed properties</li> <li>• Ensure service requests are responded to and property conditions improved where required.</li> <li>• Support Officers to be trained to undertake basic property inspections, increasing team capacity.</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity of the Housing Standards Team and Legal Team.</li> <li>• Tenants and landlords awareness of Housing Standards assistance.</li> </ul>	
5.2	Improve knowledge of the location and condition of HMOs through street surveys and other records.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote the HMO online reporting tool.</li> <li>• Discussions to take place with the Elections, Council Tax and Housing Benefit Departments to identify possible HMOs.</li> <li>• Encourage other Departments to</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of general public, landlords and tenants awareness of the 'Report it' tool.</li> <li>• Access to other Department records to be agreed.</li> </ul>	

		inform Housing Standards of possible HMOs when they come across them.			
5.3	Review publications, advice and assistance for landlords of HMOs, and develop a publicity plan to maximise compliance with mandatory licensing requirements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity plan is ongoing and a regular newsletter is sent to landlords and Letting Agents.</li> <li>• Complete full review of WBC Website information and leaflets.</li> <li>• Consider further joint working with NRLA.</li> <li>• Hold at least one landlord forum per annum (once restrictions allow but may be held online).</li> <li>• Continue joint working with Private Sector Housing Let's Rent service.</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity of other teams to assist with promotion.</li> <li>• Identifying landlords not already known to WBC is difficult.</li> </ul>	
5.4	Conduct an impact assessment of the Canalside Selective Licensing Scheme and use this evidence to inform the decision on the future direction when the current scheme ends in March 2023.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspect at least 50% of Selective Licensed properties by March 2022.</li> <li>• Confirm licence conditions are met and improve property conditions by negotiation or enforcement as required.</li> <li>• Analysis of property conditions and numbers improved by April 2022.</li> <li>• Produce impact assessment and proposals by July 2022 and take to CLT, HTG and Committees.</li> <li>• If the scheme is to be renewed then a public consultation of 10 weeks is required from September 2022.</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property inspections not completed on time and lack of data to review the scheme due to delays caused by the pandemic restrictions.</li> <li>• Until properties are inspected the level of work required to improve is not clear and may exceed capacity within the team.</li> <li>• Very short timescales to review and consult due to delays caused by pandemic restrictions.</li> </ul>	
5.5	Continue to prioritise fire safety, including working with property owners to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Await outcome of bids by high rise building freeholders for Government Building Safety Fund for remediation</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding uncertainties and delays</li> </ul>	

	ensure any cladding issues are remediated in a timely manner.	<p>of non ACM buildings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue close working with Surrey Fire &amp; Rescue Service and training within the team.</li> <li>• Continue HMO and Selective Licensing inspections to identify any non-compliant properties, which will be addressed.</li> </ul>	Manager		
5.6	Continue to develop and promote the Council's "Let's Rent" schemes to secure more accommodation for homeless households, including through further joint working with Thamesway Housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity plan is ongoing and adverts have appeared in the Woking Magazine and Woking News &amp; Mail.</li> <li>• Review WBC Website information and leaflets.</li> <li>• Hold monthly meetings with Thamesway Housing to discuss current tenancies and opportunities for Let's Rent.</li> <li>• Review Letting Agent incentives.</li> <li>• Offer enhanced Rough Sleepers landlord incentives following award of MHCLG funding.</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity of other teams to assist with promotion.</li> <li>• Availability of properties at or close to LHA levels.</li> <li>• Prospective tenants often have debt and cannot pass affordability checks.</li> <li>• Prospective tenants with more complex support needs require more intensive support to maintain a tenancy and more support to the landlord to accept them.</li> </ul>	
5.7	Bring a minimum of 40 empty properties back into use through negotiation, using enforcement action as a last resort.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empty Homes Questionnaires to be sent out every other month and followed up.</li> <li>• Review Empty Homes Plan by March 2022.</li> <li>• Top 10 long term premium empty properties to be prioritised for intensive casework by March 2022.</li> <li>• Team to undertake appropriate training.</li> <li>• Empty Homes Working Group with</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Long term intensive casework required with slow results.</li> <li>• Ensuring other priorities do not overtake Empty Homes work.</li> <li>• Enforcement action and working group relies on the capacity of other Departments with different priorities.</li> </ul>	



		other WBC teams to be established and to meet quarterly to tackle top 10 long term premium empty properties by March 2022.			
5.8	Work with Action Surrey to access and promote the £6.2 million Green Homes Grant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Green Homes Grant has ended and has been replaced by the 'Sustainable Warmth Competition and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund'. To be delivered via Local Authorities and preferred contractors.</li> <li>Local Authority Delivery (LAD) 2 to be delivered by December 2021 to assist social and private landlords raise energy efficiency in their homes.</li> <li>LAD3 and Home Upgrade Grant phase 1 (HUG1) applications due 18<sup>th</sup> June 2021 with delivery up to March 2023.</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short application and delivery timescales.</li> <li>Low uptake from private landlords.</li> <li>Identifying properties with low EPCs and low income households.</li> </ul>	
5.9	Maintain and improve working relationships with Lettings Agents and Landlords, including holding a yearly Private Sector Landlord Forum to disseminate best practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider further joint working with NRLA.</li> <li>Hold an annual landlord forum (once restrictions allow but may be held online).</li> <li>Further joint working with Housing Standards.</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficulties identifying landlords not already known to WBC to attend.</li> <li>General reticence from Letting Agents to work with households affected by homelessness.</li> </ul>	
5.10	Review the IT systems for Private Sector housing to deliver a more efficient and customer-friendly service.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Open Housing Private Sector Housing module to be reviewed by December 2021.</li> <li>SharePoint functionality to be reviewed if Open Housing is not fit</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited functionality for PSH module for Let's Rent due to bespoke nature of the service.</li> </ul>	

		for purpose by March 2022.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Currently no provision for Empty Homes.</li> </ul>	
5.11	Organise training with Tenants and Landlords, ensuring they are aware of and fully compliant with the latest legislation to ensure high standards in the private rented sector in Woking.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-Tenancy training to be piloted in August 2021.</li> <li>Training for landlords to be explored and rolled out by summer 2022.</li> <li>Regular newsletter to be sent via Housing Standards.</li> </ul>	Private Sector Housing Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prospective tenants reluctance to attend training.</li> <li>Landlord reluctance to attend training.</li> <li>Ongoing funding availability</li> </ul>	

## **ANNEXE 2 - National Planning Policy Framework - Affordable Housing Definition**

**Affordable housing:** housing for sale or rent, for those whose needs are not met by the market (including housing that provides a subsidised route to home ownership and/or is for essential local workers); and which complies with one or more of the following definitions:

**a)** Affordable housing for rent: meets all of the following conditions: (a) the rent is set in accordance with the Government's rent policy for Social Rent or Affordable Rent, or is at least 20% below local market rents (including service charges where applicable); (b) the landlord is a registered provider, except where it is included as part of a Build to Rent scheme (in which case the landlord need not be a registered provider); and (c) it includes provisions to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for the subsidy to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision. For Build to Rent schemes affordable housing for rent is expected to be the normal form of affordable housing provision (and, in this context, is known as Affordable Private Rent).

**b)** Starter homes: is as specified in Sections 2 and 3 of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and any secondary legislation made under these sections. The definition of a starter home should reflect the meaning set out in statute and any such secondary legislation at the time of plan-preparation or decision-making. Where secondary legislation has the effect of limiting a household's eligibility to purchase a starter home to those with a particular maximum level of household income, those restrictions should be used.

**c)** Discounted market sales housing: is that sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.

**d)** Other affordable routes to home ownership: is housing provided for sale that provides a route to ownership for those who could not achieve home ownership through the market. It includes shared ownership, relevant equity loans, other low cost homes for sale (at a price equivalent to at least 20% below local market value) and rent to buy (which includes a period of intermediate rent). Where public grant funding is provided, there should be provisions for the homes to remain at an affordable price for future eligible households, or for any receipts to be recycled for alternative affordable housing provision, or refunded to Government or the relevant authority specified in the funding agreement.

## ANNEXE 3 - Glossary

<b>Affordable housing</b>	Affordable housing includes social rented, affordable rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. It can be a new-build property or a private sector property that has been purchased for use as an affordable home.
<b>Affordable rent</b>	Affordable rent is no more than 80 per cent of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
<b>Choice Based Lettings</b>	Choice based lettings schemes allow applicants on the housing register to bid for suitable properties that interest them, rather than the council selecting households from the housing register and matching them to a vacancy.
<b>Decent Homes Standard</b>	<p>A Government standard used to measure the condition of housing stock. The Government defines a home as 'decent' if it meets all of the following four criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing</li> <li>• Is in a reasonable state of repair.</li> <li>• It has reasonably modern facilities and services.</li> <li>• It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort</li> </ul>
<b>Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)</b>	A means-tested grant to help disabled applicants with adaptations and improvements in their home.
<b>Discount market sale</b>	Sold at a discount of at least 20% below local market value. Eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. Provisions should be in place to ensure housing remains at a discount for future eligible households.
<b>Dwelling</b>	A self-contained 'substantial' unit of accommodation, such as a building, part of a building, caravan, houseboat or other mobile home.
<b>Emergency accommodation</b>	Short-term housing for individuals with an urgent need, for example, bed and breakfast hotels and hostels.
<b>Extra care housing</b>	Extra care housing is a form of sheltered housing that provides a higher level of support.
<b>General needs housing</b>	General Needs Housing applies to general family housing and dwellings for singles and couples. The accommodation is normally provided in self – contained bungalow, house, flat or maisonette form.

<b>Gypsy and Traveller Assessment</b>	An assessment that aims to provide a robust assessment of current and future need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople accommodation.
<b>Help to buy</b>	Help to Buy is the Government umbrella name/brand for a range of assisted home ownership products, including equity loans, an ISA and shared ownership.
<b>Houses in Multiple Occupation</b>	A House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) is a dwelling that is occupied by more than one household who share basic amenities such as WC, washing, cooking and food preparation facilities. Categories of HMO include Bedsits, Shared house, Household with lodger, Bed and Breakfast, and Converted house.
<b>Housing Association</b>	Housing associations provide homes for people who need support, including older people needing support or care and disabled people who need homes with adaptations.
<b>Housing Benefit</b>	Housing Benefit is money that the government gives to people with no income or very low incomes to pay for part or all of their rent.
<b>Housing Need</b>	Housing need is defined as the number of households who lack their own housing or live in unsuitable housing and who cannot afford to meet their needs in the market.
<b>Housing register</b>	<p>The housing register is a list of households waiting for an allocation of social housing. The applicants on the housing register are placed into one of four priority areas based on the information they submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Band A – Emergency need to move</li> <li>• Band B – Urgent need to move</li> <li>• Band C – Identified housing need</li> <li>• Band D – Low or reduced housing need</li> </ul>
<b>Housing revenue account (HRA)</b>	The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) records expenditure and income on running a council's own housing stock and closely related services or facilities, which are provided primarily for the benefit of the council's own tenants
<b>Independent Living</b>	The Council's independent living schemes offer self-contained accommodation for residents with identified support needs
<b>Intermediate Rent</b>	Homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.

<b>Local Housing Allowance</b>	Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is a housing-related benefit that helps low-income tenants pay their rent when renting a home from a private landlord.
<b>Market Housing</b>	Market housing is defined as private housing for rent or sale where the price is set in the open market.
<b>Modern Methods of Construction</b>	'Modern Methods of Construction' (MMC) is a wide term, embracing a range of offsite manufacturing and onsite techniques that provide alternatives to traditional house building.
<b>Overcrowding</b>	A household is overcrowded if it has fewer bedrooms than it needs to avoid undesirable sharing, based on the age, sex and relationship of household members.
<b>Right to Buy</b>	Right to Buy allows most council tenants to buy their council home at a discount.
<b>Section 106 agreement</b>	A <b>Section 106</b> is a legal agreement between an applicant seeking planning permission and the local planning authority, which is used to mitigate the impact of your new home on the local community and infrastructure.
<b>Shared ownership</b>	Shared ownership homes are provided through a housing association. They work by offering first-time buyers a share of the property ownership. A share of between 25% and 75% can be bought, with rent paid on the remaining share.
<b>Sheltered accommodation</b>	Sheltered housing is accommodation specifically designed for older people (or younger disabled people) to allow them to live independently.
<b>Social rent</b>	The Government's rent policy for Social Rent is typically between 50 and 60 per cent of market rents
<b>Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)</b>	An assessment of future housing requirements in an area.
<b>Supported accommodation</b>	Supported housing is any housing scheme where housing, support and sometimes care services are provided to help people to live as independently as possible in the community.
<b>Temporary accommodation</b>	Temporary accommodation is given to people who don't have a permanent home. This accommodation could be bed and breakfast accommodation in emergencies.
<b>The index of Multiple Deprivation</b>	The index of Multiple Deprivation, commonly known as the IMD is the most widely used of the indices of Deprivation and ranks every small area in England from 1(most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived are). These small areas are known as Lower-layer Super Output Areas (small areas designed to be of similar

	population size with an average of approximately 1,500 residents or 650 households.
<b>The index of Multiple Deprivation - 'Barriers to Housing and Services' domain</b>	This indicator falls into two sub-domains: the Geographical Barriers Sub-domain, which relates to the physical proximity of local services, and the Wider Barriers Sub-domain which includes issues relating to access to housing such as affordability.
<b>Universal credit</b>	Universal Credit is a government benefit system, replacing six existing benefits with one overall payment.