

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet Housing Committee – 21 January 2026

Housing Improvement Programme

Accountable member:

Cllr Flo Clucas, Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services

Accountable officer:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

Executive summary

This report provides a quarterly update on the Council's Housing Improvement Programme. The programme brings together the actions required to demonstrate compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards. This update summarises progress across the four consumer standard action plans, highlights key issues and mitigations, and sets out the forward plan for the next quarter.

Across the four action plans, there are 256 actions.

122 actions are recorded as complete (48%), including 92 complete with evidence supplied.

111 actions are in progress, and 23 actions are not started.

The programme continues to make positive progress, with a clear increase in completed and evidenced actions since December. Delivery remains focused on closing remaining actions and strengthening evidence maturity, supported by programme board oversight.

The programme remains deliverable, provided evidence completion and action plan refresh activity continues at pace.

Recommendations

1. That the Cabinet Housing Committee notes the progress reported in this update.
2. That the Cabinet Housing Committee notes the planned areas of focus for the next quarter, particularly continued evidence completion and assurance activity.

1 Background

1.1 This report provides an update to the Committee on the Council's Housing Improvement Programme.

1.2 The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 introduced strengthened consumer regulation, including new consumer standards that came into effect on 1 April 2024. From that date, the Regulator of Social Housing moved from a reactive regime focused on serious detriment to a proactive model of regulation and inspection.

1.3 The Council is now subject to inspection by the Regulator. Following inspection, landlords receive a grading from C1 to C4, where C1 indicates full compliance and effective delivery of outcomes and C4 indicates significant failings and serious regulatory concern.

1.4 In response, the Council established a Housing Improvement Programme led by the Director of Governance, Housing and Communities. The programme is designed to secure compliance with the consumer standards and provide assurance to Members, tenants and leaseholders, with the ambition of positioning the Council for a C1 assessment.

2 Governance

2.1 The Housing Improvement Programme is overseen by the Housing Improvement Team, which operates as the programme board. The board comprises subject matter specialists, workstream leads, and the programme project manager, and meets monthly to:

- review progress against each workstream action plan
- consider risks, issues and interdependencies
- confirm alignment with the Council's digital road map, supported by the Head of Digital Development and the Programme Office

2.2 The programme is structured around four workstreams aligned to the consumer standards:

1. Safety and Quality
2. Transparency Influence and Accountability
3. Neighbourhood and Community
4. Tenancy

2.3 Each workstream is led by a designated officer who is accountable for:

- delivery of the workstream action plan
- maintaining a clear and consistent evidence base to support inspection readiness
- reporting progress through monthly highlight reporting to the programme board

2.4 From January 2026, quarterly update reports will be presented to this Committee, including:

- key highlights from the previous quarter
- progress against actions expressed as a percentage
- key risks and issues

2.5 Updates will also be provided directly to the Tenant Panel and Leaseholder Panel to support ongoing engagement and scrutiny.

3 Progress against the road map

Appendix 1 summarises the current position across the four workstreams, including headline completion and progress to date. Evidence collation and validation continue to be supported through a consistent programme approach, including common standards for evidence naming, storage, and sign off.

Appendix 2 provides an overall programme status summary across all workstreams, setting out the total number of actions and completions to support effective member scrutiny.

3.1 Safety and Quality

- There are 63 actions in the Safety and Quality action plan.
17 actions are recorded as complete, including 14 complete with evidence supplied. 38 actions are in progress, and 8 actions are not started.
- Key deliverables in progress include confirming the Category 1 and Category 2 HHSRS position, strengthening safety governance, and completing data products to support Decent Homes and stock condition reporting.

- Work is also progressing policy and process evidence that demonstrates consistent service delivery and learning from outcomes.
- A programme of work on aids and adaptations is under way, including improved recording, a reviewed register of adaptations, and clearer communications and training for staff and contractors. This work supports both service quality and tenant outcomes.
- Repairs and maintenance evidence remain in a focus area. The workstream is strengthening the audit trail for responsive repairs, voids, and planned programmes to ensure documentation demonstrates delivery, resident experience, and continuous improvement.

3.2 Neighborhood and Community

- There are 48 actions in the Neighborhood and Community action plan. 24 actions are recorded as complete, including 11 complete with evidence supplied. 22 actions are in progress, and 2 actions are not started.
- Estate and estate-based activities continue to progress well, with momentum on inspection activity, local presence, and joint working with contractors. The workstream is consolidating evidence for estate inspections, service standards, and follow-up actions.
- Evidence to demonstrate delivery of cleaning and maintenance schedules has been completed and recorded.
- Work to update and evidence that the domestic abuse policy is in progress. Linked work on safeguarding and a broader wellbeing policy is scheduled later in the year, alongside continued staff awareness activity.

3.3 Tenancy

- There are 56 actions in the Tenancy action plan. 27 actions are recorded as complete, including 15 complete with evidence supplied. 24 actions are in progress, and 5 actions are not started.
- Priority work continues with data and processes relating to aids and adaptations, including improved matching of adapted properties, clearer pathways for assessment and referrals, and improved recording of outcomes.
- The workstream is strengthening performance and KPI reporting so that it demonstrates tenant outcomes, including sustainment, arrears prevention, downsizing support and access to advice and support pathways.

3.4 Transparency Influence and Accountability

- There are 89 actions in the Transparency, Influence and Accountability action plan. 54 actions are recorded as complete, including 52 complete with evidence supplied. 27 actions are in progress, and 8 actions are not started.
- Key focus areas include maintaining and evidencing tenant engagement arrangements, ensuring information about landlord services is complete and accessible, improving performance information and reporting, and ensuring policies and communications reflect fairness, respect, and support for diverse needs. A small number of action lines are being finalised as part of the current refresh to ensure clarity of ownership and scope.

4 Key issues and mitigations

Evidence of completion: A small number of actions are recorded as complete where evidence is in the process of being uploaded or cross referenced. Each workstream maintains an evidence log and consistent folder structure, with programme oversight to support validation and closure in a consistent way.

Data quality: Several actions depend on reliable asset, tenancy, and engagement data. The programme continues to align dependencies with the digital roadmap and data improvement activity, including clear ownership for data validation and reporting products.

5 Next steps

- Continue to monitor progress of actions through the programme board
- Increase the proportion of actions complete with evidence supplied, prioritising higher risk and inspection critical areas
- Prepare for internal assurance activity and any planned external validation, including mock inspection readiness work

6 Key risks

See Appendix 3 for the current risk assessment and mitigations.

Report author:

Claire Hughes, Director of Governance, Housing and Communities

claire.hughes@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

- **Appendix 1:** Actuals and Expected Completion
- **Appendix 2:** Road map progress summary
- **Appendix 3:** Risk assessment

Completion Percentage by Workstream

Appendix: 1 Actuals and Expected Completion

Workstream	Total actions	% complete Dec 2025 (actual)	% complete Jan 2026 (actual)	Expected % complete Mar 2026	Expected % complete Apr 2026	Expected % complete May 2026
Safety and Quality	63	25%	27%	45%	60%	75%
Neighbourhood and Community	48	44%	50%	70%	85%	100%
Tenancy	56	25%	38%	60%	75%	90%
Transparency, Influence and Accountability	89	37%	61%	80%	90%	100%
Programme overall	256	33%	48%	65%	78%	90%

Appendix 2 – Road map progress summary

Workstream	Total actions	Complete evidence supplied	Complete evidence to be supplied	In progress	Not started	Percent complete to date (January 2026)
Safety and Quality	63	14	3	38	8	27%
Neighbourhood and Community	48	11	13	22	2	50%
Tenancy	56	15	12	24	5	48%
Transparency, Influence and Accountability	89	52	2	27	8	61%
Total	256	92	30	111	23	48%

Notes:

- Complete includes actions recorded as complete with evidence supplied and complete with evidence to be provided.
- In progress includes all non-complete actions that are not recorded as not started.

Appendix 2 Risk assessment

Ref	Risk	Owner	Impact	Likelihood	Score	Response	Controls and mitigating actions	Deadline
1	Insufficient evidence of compliance with the consumer standards could result in regulatory intervention	Director of Governance Housing and Communities	4	3	12	Reduce	Workstream evidence logs are in place and are reviewed through the programme board. A consistent folder structure and evidence checklist is being applied across workstreams. Targeted support is being provided to close evidence gaps and validate inspection readiness.	Ongoing
2	Member oversight and reporting not maintained could lead to non compliance with the Transparency Influence and Accountability standard.	Director of Governance Housing and Communities	2	2	4	Accept	Quarterly reporting cycle established. Updates also provided to Tenant Panel and Leaseholder Panel.	Ongoing
3	Misalignment with the digital roadmap could result in missed dependencies and delays	Director of Governance Housing and Communities	2	2	4	Accept	Digital lead attendance at programme board. Dependencies logged and reviewed monthly.	Ongoing
4	Action plans not kept current could lead to inaccurate reporting and reduced inspection readiness	Director of Governance Housing and Communities	3	3	9	Reduce	Rebaselining exercise for overdue actions. Escalation of exceptions. Consistent progress update standard across workstreams.	February 2026