

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cabinet Housing Committee – July 2026

Consumer Standards Housing Improvement Programme Update

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 the Cabinet Housing Committee with an update on progress against the Council's Housing Improvement Programme, which supports compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards.

Since the previous Cabinet update in April 2026, the programme has continued to make strong progress. Overall completion has increased from 69% to 82%, with 250 of 304 actions now complete. The programme has moved from implementation into a phase of embedding improvements and maintaining regulatory compliance through ongoing assurance and evidence reviews.

Work has also commenced to prepare for forthcoming regulatory changes, including implementation of the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) and incorporation of the Competence and Conduct Standard into the Consumer Standards Programme ahead of the anticipated changes in October 2026.

The Regulator of Social Housing also held its annual engagement meeting with senior officers in June 2026, providing an opportunity to discuss progress and future regulatory priorities.

Recommendations:

Cabinet Housing Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made in delivering the Housing Improvement Programme.
2. Note the continued improvement in compliance across all 5 regulatory standards.
3. Note the programme's transition into an assurance and continuous improvement phase.

4. Note the work underway to prepare for implementation of the STAIRs Standard and the Competence and Conduct Standard.
-

1. Background

- 1.1. The Housing Improvement Programme was established to support compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards and to prepare the Council for proactive regulatory inspection. The programme supports the Council's ambition of achieving a C1 regulatory judgement.
- 1.2. Since the previous Cabinet report, the Housing Improvement Programme has expanded to include the Rent Standard, increasing the scope of the programme to 5 regulatory standards. Delivery has continued across all workstreams, with a growing focus on maintaining compliance, embedding completed improvements into business as usual and strengthening the evidence base to support ongoing regulatory assurance.
- 1.3. Work has also commenced to prepare for the implementation of the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) and the Competence and Conduct Standard, ahead of the anticipated regulatory changes later in October 2026.

2. Main Context

- 2.1. The Housing Improvement Programme now comprises 304 improvement actions across the five regulatory standards. Since the previous Cabinet update, overall programme completion has increased from 69% to 82%, with 250 actions now complete. During this period, a further 40 actions have been completed, reducing the number of actions in progress from 79 to 47 and the number of actions not yet started from 12 to 7. This demonstrates continued progress in delivering the programme while embedding improvements across housing services.
- 2.2. The programme is increasingly focused on sustaining compliance through regular evidence reviews rather than simply completing actions.
- 2.3. **Safety and Quality Standard**
Progress has increased from 47% to 67% since the previous Cabinet update. The remaining actions are primarily longer-term strategic improvements focused on strengthening asset management, property compliance and regulatory assurance. Only three actions have yet to commence, with the remainder either in progress or completed.
- 2.4. **Tenancy Standard**
Progress has increased from 85% to 97% since the previous Cabinet update, making the Tenancy Standard the Council's highest performing workstream. The remaining two actions relate to longer term strategic improvements, with all other actions now complete.

2.5. Rent Standard

Since being incorporated into the Housing Improvement Programme, progress against the Rent Standard has increased from 56% to 83%. The remaining three actions are focused on completing the final elements of implementation, with most governance arrangements, supporting processes and evidence now in place.

2.6. Neighbourhood and Community Standard

Progress has increased from 70% to 79% since the previous Cabinet update. The remaining actions primarily relate to longer term improvements to neighbourhood services, estate management and community engagement, which will continue to be delivered over the coming months.

2.7. Transparency, Influence and Accountability

Progress has increased from 79% to 87% since the previous Cabinet update, with a further thirteen actions completed. The remaining twelve actions are focused on embedding service improvements, strengthening governance arrangements and maintaining the evidence required to demonstrate ongoing compliance.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1. Over the next quarter, the Housing Improvement Programme will focus on completing the remaining improvement actions, maintaining compliance through quarterly and annual evidence reviews, and embedding completed improvements into business as usual. Alongside this, work will continue to implement the Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) and incorporate the Competence and Conduct Standard ahead of the anticipated regulatory changes later in 2026. The programme will also continue to monitor emerging regulatory developments and sector best practice to ensure the Council remains well prepared for future regulatory requirements.
- 3.2. The remaining actions are primarily longer-term improvements that will continue to be delivered through the Council's established governance arrangements.

4. Key risks

- 4.1. Although significant progress has been made, a number of strategic risks remain. These include maintaining a robust evidence base to demonstrate ongoing regulatory compliance, delivering the remaining longer term improvement projects within agreed timescales, implementing forthcoming regulatory requirements, and ensuring completed improvements remain embedded through effective governance and assurance arrangements. These risks continue to be monitored through the Housing Improvement Programme governance framework.

Report author:

Kerryann Pitter, Housing Improvement Project Manager
kerryannpitter@cheltenham.gov.uk

Appendices:

- i. Risk Assessment

Appendix 1: Risk Assessment

Risk ref	Risk description	Risk owner	Impact score (1-5)	Likelihood score (1-5)	Initial raw risk score (1 - 25)	Risk response	Controls / Mitigating actions	Control / Action owner	Deadline for controls/ actions
R1	If completed actions are not regularly reviewed and supporting evidence is not maintained, then the Council may be unable to demonstrate ongoing compliance during regulatory inspection.	Consumer Standards Programme Lead	5	3	15	Reduce the risk	Undertake quarterly and annual evidence reviews, maintain the evidence library, and monitor progress through the Housing Improvement Board.	Consumer Standards Programme Lead	Ongoing
R2	If the STAIRs Standard and Competence and Conduct Standard are not implemented within the required timescales, then the Council may not be fully prepared for forthcoming regulatory requirements.	Director of Governance, Housing and Communities	4	3	12	Reduce the risk	Develop implementation plans, allocate action owners, monitor progress through the Housing Improvement Board, and review delivery against published RSH guidance.	Consumer Standards Programme Lead	October 2026
R3	If the remaining strategic improvement projects are delayed, then the Council may be unable to demonstrate continuous improvement and sustained compliance with the Consumer Standards	Housing Improvement Board	4	3	12	Reduce the risk	Monitor delivery of the remaining strategic improvement projects through the Housing Improvement Board and escalate delays through established governance arrangements.	Relevant Service Managers	March 2027