

Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy

2025 – 2028

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This strategy sets out how Guildford Borough Council (GBC) will engage residents in high-rise buildings on safety decisions. Our residents' safety is paramount. The council undertakes safety decisions to ensure measures are in place to deliver a safe environment. Residents have essential knowledge on their building's day-to-day operation. The council recognises and values their insight.
- 1.2. GBC is committed to engaging residents on building safety decisions to ensure residents are:
 - Informed.
 - Feel empowered to voice their thought.
 - Confident that the council will act on their concerns.
- 1.3. The Building Safety Act 2022 grants residents and homeowners more rights, powers, and protections to ensure homes across the country are safe. The Act covers all properties but has additional requirements for higher-risk buildings. This strategy solely focuses on high-rise buildings, which are considered higher risk. It seeks to give residents more say on how their building is kept safe and raise safety concerns directly to the accountable person. A high-rise building is defined as being at least 7 floors or 18 metres high and contains at least 2 residential units, including flats on top of buildings that are used for other purposes.
- 1.4. GBC manages four high-rise buildings in the borough:
 - Bedford House (63 homes), situated on top of a multi-storey car park.
 - Friary House (61 homes), situated on top of the Friary Centre shopping centre.
 - Bishops Court (40 homes), a block of flats, 9-floors high.
 - Mount Court (40 homes), a block of flats, 9-floors high.
- 1.5. For the purposes of this strategy, 'resident(s)' refers to all those living in council-owned high-rise buildings. This includes tenants, leaseholders and all family members of tenants living in the property.
- 1.6. Leaseholders will receive safety updates relevant to their obligations, ensuring they are informed about any responsibilities they hold regarding building safety. Additionally, they will be consulted on any service charge implications arising from safety improvements, with clear communication on costs and the decision-making process.

2. Resident Empowerment and Participation

- 2.1. GBC is committed to having meaningful communication with residents that allow them to have their voices heard on building safety decisions. To empower residents and inspire them to contribute through engagement opportunities, the council will;
- Keep residents informed about building safety decisions and are made aware of the measures put in place to keep them safe from fire and other structural incidents.
 - Maintain a safe environment for residents and implement safety decisions in consultation with residents.
 - Make it easier for residents to contact us and ask questions or raise concerns and feel confident they will be taken seriously.
 - Ensure our resident engagement activities are suited to meet the specific needs of the residents of each block and actively encourage their feedback.
 - Engage annually with both tenants and leaseholders from high-rise buildings to discuss safety decisions and allow residents to raise safety concerns in-person with GBC staff.
 - Help promote and raise awareness of current resident associations running within each of the high-rise buildings.
- 2.2. The council understands not every decision will suit every high-rise building, each will have their own unique settings and individuals will need to be accommodated for in different ways. By listening to the residents of each block and identifying the needs of those that live there, the council can make more informed decisions.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.0.1. The Housing Compliance Team in partnership with the Neighbourhood Housing Team and Resident Engagement Officer will lead on resident engagement activities, which will be overseen by the Assistant Director of Housing.
- 3.0.2. The Building Safety Act 2022 emphasises the importance both the landlord and the resident have in promoting safety and reducing risks. For clarity the roles and responsibilities of both parties have defined below.

3.1. Landlord Responsibilities

GBC has a duty to keep residents safe in line with the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022. As a landlord, the council will:

- Conduct regular safety assessments and inspections
- Provide clear instructions on emergency procedures
- Respond promptly to safety concerns raised by residents
- Keep residents informed about the decisions and actions taken.

3.2. The type of safety decisions the council undertakes

GBC will consult and share information with residents on:

- Evacuation policies for each individual block (either 'stay put' or 'simultaneous' evacuations)
- The importance of fire resisting doors
- Emergency escape route and lighting
- Combustibles in communal areas and means of escape
- E-Bikes and E-Scooters
- Electrical safety
- No smoking policies
- Risk Assessments for the building (including: fire assessments and asbestos assessments)
- Types of fire alarms in place
- Security of the building, including CCTV arrangements
- Legionella
- Gas Safety
- Lift Operation Safety.

3.3. Resident responsibilities

As part of residents' responsibility, they must in accordance with their lease terms and their statutory duties under the Building Safety Act 2022 help maintain a safe environment for themselves, neighbours, and their visitors by:

- Avoiding damaging, removing, or tampering with essential safety features like fire doors, signage, sprinklers, or smoke alarms. Any damages should be reported immediately through the report a repair channels.
- Refraining from activities that could heighten or create risks, such as causing fire hazards by leaving combustible items in communal areas, overcrowding the hallways, or by work that might compromise fire safety or structural integrity.

You can also help us to keep you safe by letting us know when your situation changes, for example, if your health starts to deteriorate to a point which would affect your ability to exit the building in an emergency.

4. Communication Plan

4.1. What residents can expect from us

- 4.1.1. The type of information residents can expect to be informed with are derived from the Building Safety Act 2022, Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, Housing Act 2004, Electricity at Work Regulations 1989, The Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012, Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Act Order 2005, Fire Safety (England)

Regulations 2022 and Fire Safety Act 2021, Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 and The Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. This communication will include:

- The safety measures in place in the building and current guidance
- What to do if there is an emergency
- What residents need to know about specific safety features including fire doors, and smoke, heat and carbon monoxide alarms
- How and when residents should isolate their gas or electrical supply
- How to report a repair or problem with a safety feature
- The safe use, storage and charging of mobility scooters, E-bikes and E-scooters within the building
- How residents can contact us to ask questions, raise concerns or make a complaint
- How they can contribute to building safety decisions
- Acknowledgment of the contributions from residents and provide them with timely updates from any actions
- How to contact the Building Safety Regulator for independent advice
- The outcome of building safety decisions and processes, i.e. communal wall reports
- Any changes to our Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy and how to access this document.

4.2. How the council will communicate with residents

4.2.1. GBC will provide regular, accessible opportunities for residents to raise questions or concerns. To ensure the council communicates with as many residents as possible, a wide range of engagement methods will be used, these include:

- Text message or telephone calls
- Email
- Online via our website and social media
- Hand-delivered newsletters, leaflets, letters and flyers
- Posters and large format signage
- Digital and physical noticeboards
- Door knocking
- Resident meetings and coffee mornings
- Surveys and questionnaires, by post and digitally
- Planned engagement sessions and events
- Translation of any of the communication to non-English speakers.

4.2.2. In addition to these methods, the council recognises residents have different communication needs and preferences and aspires to make sure all residents can understand the information given to them and can communicate with the council to the best of their ability. GBC uses the information held about residents to identify those who require additional support and actively promote the translation and interpreting services available. GBC staff will receive engagement training to

ensure we address tenants with respect and fairness and uphold our commitment to high standard customer service.

4.3. What the council asks residents about

- 4.3.1. The council will send out surveys and questionnaires asking for feedback on the building's safety features, to ensure residents have a meaningful voice and can raise any concerns they have. Any feedback received is reviewed and acted upon accordingly, with any changes that are implemented as a result, fed back to residents.
- 4.3.2. The council will also deliver consultations to involve residents in how improvement works to their building will be carried out, giving them a role in the decision-making process of their building.
- 4.3.3. To continuously update GBC's understanding of the composition of the residents in each of the high-rise buildings, engagement activities are completed to ensure any specific needs that may impact a resident's ability to live safely in their building are identified. The engagement sessions are also used to ask residents about their ability to self-evacuate in the event of an emergency and carry out Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) to keep records updated.
- 4.3.4. The council ensures relevant information is shared with the local fire and rescue service, which plays a key role in reviewing PEEPs and advising on the suitability of evacuation strategies. This partnership ensures that emergency responders have the necessary information to support residents effectively during an incident.
- 4.3.5. PEEPs are reviewed at least annually or sooner if a resident's circumstances change. The council also ensures that PEEPs are readily accessible for use in an emergency, providing the local fire and rescue service with up-to-date details on residents requiring assistance. Where appropriate, residents with significant mobility or safety concerns are referred to the Housing Advice and Allocations team for rehousing advice.

5. Governance

- 5.1. The council records all information received and presented at engagement activities to demonstrate it is actively listening and fulfilling its responsibilities as a landlord. The recording of engagement activities also allows the council to pass on the residents' feedback to the relevant teams to resolve any outstanding issues.
- 5.2. To ensure transparency and accountability the engagement activities, including details of resident concerns, actions taken from meetings, and outcomes from their feedback will be monitored and reviewed to identify trends or reoccurring issues.

- 5.3. Residents are provided with feedback through various channels, including meetings, letters, posters, social media, and news articles, to show how their input has been considered and acted upon.
- 5.4. All personal information received from residents when carrying out engagement activities is collected and stored in line with the General Data Protection Regulation. You can read the council's full privacy statement, here:
 - [privacy statement](#)
- 5.5. There will be instances where the council will not be able to share information with residents where the sharing of data will compromise the safety of the building or the privacy of an individual or resident.
- 5.6. Any building safety-related complaints are formally received are directed to GBC's Complaints Resolution Officer for investigation and will be assigned to the relevant member of staff for action as needed. These are monitored in line with building safety requirements and the council's complaints process.
- 5.7. The council will ensure this strategy complies with the relevant legislation such as the Building Safety Act 2022 and any future guidance issued.

6. Monitoring and Reviewing

- 6.1. The strategy's success will be measured off the targets set in the action plan which has been developed from this strategy. The council has worked closely with residents to create a strategy that meets their needs and adheres to the Building Safety Act 2022 requirements.
- 6.2. The strategy's implementation and action plan will be led by Resident Engagement Officer and the Compliance Team who will work together to provide reports to the Housing Operations Board to be monitored. The reports will then be shared with residents of the high-rise buildings at the following engagement activity.
- 6.3. The council will carry out recorded engagement sessions with residents of each of the high-rise buildings between 12 - 18 months. The frequency of visits will depend on the level of previous engagement, the needs of the residents who currently live there and the known number of fire incidents over the previous 12 months. Amongst other things this will enable the Council to keep the methods for promoting participation under review.
- 6.4. In addition, the council will share regular information using the various communication channels and deliver impromptu engagement that may be needed in response to other factors (such as a fire in the building or customer complaint or feedback).

7. Conclusion

- 7.1. This strategy guides Guildford Borough Council in engaging residents on safety matters in high-rise buildings. By providing regular information and opportunities for feedback, the council can ensure residents are kept up to date with key safety information and have the ability to influence safety decisions for the betterment of their building and other residents.

8. Equality and Diversity

- 8.1. We are committed to ensuring that all residents have an equal opportunity to engage with and influence the services that affect them. Our approach is rooted in promoting inclusivity and celebrating the diversity of our communities. To achieve this, we will:
- **Remove Barriers to Participation:** Tailor engagement methods to ensure they are accessible to all residents, including those with disabilities, language barriers, or limited digital access.
 - **Promote Representation:** Proactively engage underrepresented groups, including younger residents, minority communities, and leaseholders, to ensure their voices are heard.
 - **Foster Inclusive Engagement:** Provide a range of engagement options, including digital, face-to-face, and hybrid methods, to suit the diverse needs and lifestyles of our residents.
 - **Monitor and Report on Equality:** Use data to regularly review how well our engagement activities reflect the makeup of our communities and take action to address any gaps.
 - **Celebrate Diversity:** Recognise and celebrate the unique contributions of all communities, using their insights to shape services that are equitable and inclusive.
- 8.2. By embedding equalities and diversity into our engagement strategy, we aim to build a housing service that reflects and responds to the needs of all our residents, creating a sense of belonging and shared purpose.