

# Annual Report to Tenants

Sunner

Guildford Borough Council Housing Services



# Welcome to your Annual Report

A joint introduction from the Chair of the Tenants' Engagement Group and the Lead Member for Housing.



Alan Wood



### Cllr Julia McShane

Leader of the Council and Lead Portfolio Member for Housing

We're pleased to introduce this year's Annual Report to Tenants - a summary of how Guildford Borough Council's Housing Services performed over the past year, and how we're working together to make things better for residents.

596 tenants took part in the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) survey in 2024. The feedback was clear - while many residents are satisfied with their homes, there are areas where we need to improve. You told us repairs, communication, and complaint handling need more focus - and we agree.

That's why, working together, councillors, staff, and tenants have shaped a bold and detailed **Housing Improvement Plan**. This plan sets out how we'll improve the quality, safety of our housing services. It reflects national regulatory expectations, independent reviews, and - most importantly - what tenants have told us.

### So what have we done so far?

- We've introduced quicker and more accountable complaints handling, with early contact from officers and senior oversight of unresolved issues.
- We've invested in tackling damp and mould, with quicker inspections and action.
- A new Housing Operations Board and Tenants' Engagement Group ensures your elected councillors, tenant representatives and other stakeholders can monitor progress and performance.
- We're working closely with the Regulator of Social Housing comply with the highest standards of safety and regulation.

 We've also appointed an Independent Assurance Panel to hold us to account and support our journey of improvement.

### What's next?

We've refreshed our Housing Improvement Plan to focus on four key commitments to residents:

- 1. Safe and healthy homes
- 2. Better services
- 3. Genuine tenant voice and influence
- 4. A modern, resilient housing service

We know there is still a long way to go - but we are determined to improve. This Annual Report sets out where we are now and how we'll keep moving forward. The Tenants' Engagement Group continues to meet regularly, review services, and represent your voice. And councillors are fully committed to ensuring housing remains a top priority for Guildford.

If you'd like to get involved in shaping our housing services - or just want to share your views - we'd love to hear from you.

### Together, we are building a better housing service for Guildford.

With thanks

Alan Wood

Chair, Tenants' Engagement Group

Olfr Julia McShane

Leader of the Council and Lead Portfolio Member for Housing

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# **Our Vision and Values**



This year, we launched our Housing Improvement Plan, shaped by the values of Pride, Excellence, and Trust.

Our vision is simple: to provide safe, high-guality homes and services that residents can count on. We're working to make sure every home is well-maintained, fully compliant, and a place you're proud to live in.

We're improving how services are delivered-making them faster, more reliable, and easier to access, from repairs to estate management.

Residents are at the heart of these changes. We're creating more ways for you to get involved, share your views, and help shape the future of housing in your community.

Behind the scenes, we're modernising how we work; strengthening governance, improving efficiency, and building a housing service that works better for everyone

### How You Can Get Involved

We're always looking for tenants and leaseholders to help shape the services we provide. Whether you have a little time or a lot, there are lots of ways to get involved, including:

- Giving feedback on policies and plans
- Taking part in tenant panels or focus groups
- Joining estate inspections or service reviews
- Helping us improve communication with other tenants

### It's easy to sign up or find out more:



Fill in our online form:

www.guildford.gov.uk/tenantandleaseholderengagement



Email us: tenants.group@guildford.gov.uk



Call us: 01483 505050

Together, we can build stronger communities and better services.



As a registered provider of social housing, Guildford Borough Council is required to collect and report on Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) each year, in line with the standards set by the **Regulator of** Social Housing.

TSMs are designed to make landlord performance more visible and help tenants hold us to account. They include 22 measures in total:

- 10 management-based measures (e.g. repair times, safety checks)
- 12 perception-based measures based on direct feedback from tenants

### These cover five key themes:

- 1. Keeping homes in good repair
- 2. Maintaining building safety
- Respectful and helpful engagement 3.
- 4. Effective complaint handling
- 5. Neighbourhood management

Plus an overall satisfaction measure.

To ensure transparency, all data must be accurate, reliable and valid - giving tenants a true picture of how we're performing.

### How We Collected the Data

To ensure independence and accuracy, we commissioned Acuity Research & Practice, a specialist social housing research company, to carry out the TSM survey. The survey ran from **21 June to** 19 July 2024. A random sample of over 10% of tenants were contacted.







### **Overall satisfaction with** landlord services

As part of the survey, we also asked tenants how satisfied they are overall with the service we provide as a landlord.



This year, 61% of tenants told us they are satisfied overall.



Sector median (2023-24): 71.3%

While this shows there is room for improvement, your feedback is helping shape our priorities.

You can read more about how we're responding to your feedback in the sections that follow, including what we're doing to improve repairs, maintenance, tenant engagement, safety, and handling of complaints.

# Resident **Engagement:**

### Listening, Learning, and Acting Together

is already happening."

This comment from a resident highlights a concern we've heard often- and one we're working hard to address.

This year, we've taken important steps to strengthen how we work with our tenants and leaseholders, making sure your voices shape the services that matter most.

We've developed a new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy for 2025-2028, co-designed with residents through our Tenants' Engagement Group (TEG). This strategy puts residents at the heart of decisionmaking and sets out a clear plan for how we'll listen, involve, and act on your feedback.

### What We've Focused On:

- Improving communication so residents get clear, timely updates on services and decisions.
- Increasing opportunities for involvement, from walkabouts and workshops to codesign sessions and surveys.
- Making engagement more inclusive, . removing barriers for residents with disabilities, language needs, or limited digital access.

Ensuring accountability, with stronger resident-led scrutiny and clear reporting of tenant satisfaction data.



### **Our Tenants' Engagement** Group (TEG)

TEG continues to play a vital role in shaping and improving housing services. This year, they've:

- Scrutinised repairs performance, customer service, and anti-social behaviour processes
- Advised on policy reviews and helped shape service standards
- Supported resident involvement across estates and communities

### Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed



### What You Told Us

- Speed and quality of the **repairs service**
- Better complaints handling
- More visible and respectful **communication**

to-day service changes.

### You Said, We Did

We're committed to showing the impact of your input. From service changes to estate improvements, we'll continue to share regular "You Said, We Did" updates via newsletters, social media, and meetings.

Get involved! If you'd like to be involved in helping us improve services, let us know here www.guildford.gov.uk/tenantandleaseholderengagement or call: 01483 505050









The Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSM) highlighted key areas you care about:

- Opportunities to influence decisions that affect your homes and communities
- We're acting on your feedback through our Housing Improvement Plan and day-

# Responding to **Complaints**

Issue was resolved after I complained, so thank you for that."

They don't respond unless you chase three times. It's frustrating."

These contrasting views reflect what many of you have told us: while some complaints are resolved quickly and fairly, others take too long and require repeated chasing. We're working to close that gap-so every resident feels heard, respected, and responded to

We received 301 Stage 1 complaints about housing services in 2024/25 – an increase from 246 the previous year. While this reflects a rise in reported issues, it also shows that more residents feel confident using the complaints process.

Our complaints process has two stages and follows the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. At Stage 1, we aim to resolve concerns quickly and fairly. If you're not satisfied with the outcome, you can ask for the complaint to move to Stage 2, where it will be reviewed as an appeal by a senior officer not involved in the original decision.

This approach ensures your complaint is handled fairly, with a focus on resolution, learning, and accountability. Satisfaction with<br/>completionsImage: completion with<br/>image: completion with<br/>image: completion with<br/>image: completion with<br/>image: completion with<br/>completion with<br/>comp

Only 22% of residents were satisfied with how we handled their complaint in 2024/25, based on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey. While this reflects a sector-wide challenge, our score is below the national average, and improving this is a clear priority for the year ahead.

### **Our aims**

- We respond quickly and keep you informed
- We explain things clearly and take action
- We show we've listened and understand the issue

### How We Handled Your Complaints

In 2024/25, we received 301 Stage 1 complaints. Here's how we performed:









### What You Complained About

### The main issues were:



Failure to complete repairs

Service delivery

Communication delays

Most complaints were about Repairs and Maintenance

### Learning and Improvements

We've taken clear steps to improve how we respond to complaints and resolve issues early:

- Staff now contact residents **within 48 hours** of a complaint being allocated.
- Regular meetings with **repairs managers** help track open complaints.
- A new **Complaints Lead** was appointed to ensure consistency and learning.
- Stronger response procedures for damp and mould and vulnerable tenants.
- Senior Management Team review all
   unresolved complaints every two weeks.
- Updated policies: Repairs and Planned Maintenance

### Housing Ombudsman Cases

- We had 4 Ombudsman cases in 2024/25.
- 2 cases involved maladministration or service failure – we paid compensation.
- Other cases were resolved early or required no further action.

### Priorities for 2025/26

- Launch **quarterly complaints surveys** (with Acuity Research)
- Focus on **repairs performance** and communication
- Improve systems to track and update on repairs
- Share learning across teams and act on resident feedback
- Build a culture of listening, learning and improving

# Maintaining **Homes**

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Very happy with the recent repairsdone quickly and properly." The leak was patched but not properly fixed. Still waiting."

These comments reflect the range of experiences residents have had with our repairs service. Many of you have noticed real improvements—but we know there are still cases where we fall short

### Repairs and maintenance what you told us

We know how important it is to have a safe, warm, and well-maintained home. In this year's **Tenant Satisfaction Measures** survey:



## Repairs – How we performed this year

Over the past year, we completed more than 16,000 responsive repairs to tenants' homes. Here's how we did:

- 98.8% of emergency repairs were completed within priority timescales
- 80.1% of non-emergency repairs were completed on time
- The average time to complete a repair was 15.6 days

We know that while most repairs were completed on time, there's still room to improve—especially on nonemergency repairs. We're working to reduce waiting times and make sure every repair is completed quickly and efficiently.

We're working hard to improve how we handle and communicate about repairs, so that the experience is smoother, quicker, and more reliable for you.

### Decent Homes standard – Keeping your home in good condition

We're continuing to invest in making sure our homes meet the Decent Homes Standard. By the end of this year, over 90% of our homes met the standard.

Some homes will be marked as potentially nondecent next April, purely because of their age. We'll be checking these properties through our stock condition survey to see if they also need repairs or upgrades.

If any homes do fall below the standard, we'll include them in our 2025/26 investment programme to bring them back up to standard as quickly as possible.





### How we are improving

- We're reviewing how we manage repairs and maintenance so services are easier to access, more consistent, and better meet your needs.
- We're improving our voids process so empty homes are repaired and re-let more quickly and to a higher standard.
- We're carrying out a stock condition survey so we fully understand the condition of all our properties.
- We're developing a new Asset Management and Planned Maintenance Programme for 2026/27 to ensure long-term investment in your homes

### Empty homes – making progress

We're working hard to reduce the number of empty council homes (known as voids), which stood at 263 at the end of March 2025. We know that's still too high—especially when so many people are waiting for a home. That's why tackling empty properties and getting them ready to let is one of our top priorities for the year ahead.

We're working on speeding up repairs and lettings so more homes can be offered to those waiting.

We're also tackling long-standing empty homes. Some properties are being held for future regeneration or need major investment, and we've put new contracts in place to speed up repairs and reduce delays. Our priority is to bring more homes back into use quickly, reduce rent loss, and make the best use of our housing stock for those in need.

# **Tackling Damp and** Mould:

### Faster Action, **Better Results**



Damp issue was dealt with properly after a long wait." I've reported damp three times and no one has come to inspect."

These resident comments reflect the mixed experiences people have had when reporting damp and mould. While many cases are now being resolved more quickly and effectively, we know that delays and missed communication have caused frustration in the past—and we're working hard to change that.

This year, we've made major improvements to how we respond to damp and mould in council homes.

We now have a **dedicated Damp** and Mould team in place, focused on investigating and resolving cases quickly and thoroughly. We've also introduced a new casework management system, helping us track issues more effectively and keep residents

### What's Changed?

better informed.

• A specialist team now handles all reports, providing faster responses and targeted support.

- Our new system helps us manage and monitor every case from start to finish. ensuring no one falls through the cracks.
- We're working closely with residents to identify root causes and prevent issues from coming back.

### **Our Performance** (April 2024 – Mar 2025)

- 526 damp and mould cases reported and managed last financial year.
- 98.5% of inspections were completed within 10 working days, we are now consistently exceeding our 90% target.
- The average number of days to inspect is now just 4.8 days, well below our 10-day target.

These improvements mean we're not only responding faster, but we're also getting ahead of problems before they get worse.

### Looking Ahead

### We will continue to:

- Review and improve our damp and mould policy
- Use resident feedback to shape how we communicate and support households affected
- Work with tenants to develop a proactive programme of property checks and preventative maintenance

You can report damp and mould using our online reporting form at:

### www.guildford.gov.uk/ article/27336/Dealing-with-dampand-mould

Complete our quick and easy form www.guildford.gov.uk/reportarepair or Call Us on: 01483 505050 Press option 3, then option 1 for Repairs.

The same page also has **helpful** advice on how to manage damp and mould in your home and what support is available.

# **Keeping You Safe**



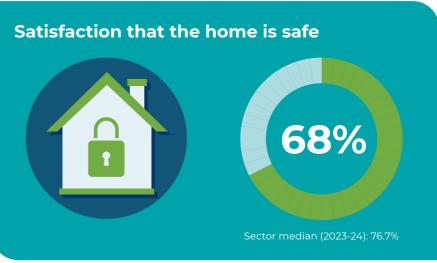
Felt reassured after the fire safety visit team was professional."

Still waiting on them to fix the communal door that doesn't lock."

These quotes show the balance we're aiming to achieve: while many residents feel safer thanks to our fire safety work, we know there are still issues—like broken doors or delayed repairs—that can undermine that sense of security. We're working to close that gap.

Making sure your home is safe is one of our most important responsibilities. We carry out a range of safety checks every year to make sure we meet legal requirements and keep you and your household safe.

In this year's Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey, 68% of tenants told us they feel their home is safe. While we're pleased that most tenants feel secure, we know there's more to do to give everyone that confidence.



### How we're performing on key safety checks:

Safety Measure		
Homes with a valid gas safety check		
Relevant buildings with a current fire risk assessment		
Homes with a current asbestos survey		
Homes with a current water safety risk assessment		
Buildings with current lift safety checks		
Homes with a valid electrical safety check (EICR)		
Communal areas with current electrical safety check (EICR)		



Our Performance		
99.7%		
100%		
100%		
100%		
100%		
83.8%		
78.6%		



We are making strong progress towards our July 2025 target of 100% compliance for both domestic and communal electrical safety checks. Domestic compliance has improved from 42% in July 2024 to 83.8% in May 2025, with contractor support in place to help reach the target. Communal compliance is on track for full completion.

These checks are carried out on a regular cycle, and we monitor them closely to make sure nothing is missed. Our goal is always 100% compliance, and we are working hard to reach and maintain that target in every area.

### What we're doing to improve

- Reviewing our safety communication to make it easier for tenants to understand what checks are due and when.
- Strengthening follow-up procedures when access is needed to carry out essential safety checks.
- Continuing to invest in building safety systems and compliance



# Neighbourhood and Community

The street looks better now that the bins are being managed."

Grass areas need more maintenance."

These comments highlight what many residents have told us: while some areas have seen real improvement, others still need more attentionespecially around grass cutting and open space upkeep.

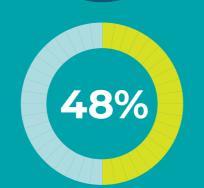
We want every resident to feel proud of their neighbourhood and confident that we'll take action when issues arise. This year, we've focused on improving communal areas, listening to your feedback, and providing the right support to help residents thrive in their homes and communities.

### **Estate Service- A Focus for Improvement**

Only 48% of residents were satisfied that communal areas are clean and well maintained — significantly below the sector median of 63.1%. You've also told us that communal repairs, grounds maintenance, and how we respond to issues in your neighbourhood are really important.

Satisfaction that commual areas are clean and well maintained





Sector median (2023-24): 63.1%

Staff and residents work together to suggest ideas — like:

- Flower bed improvements
- New bin stores
- Marked parking bays
- Other upgrades to communal areas

Projects under £2,000 can be fast-tracked. Larger ideas go to the Tenants' Engagement Group (TEG) for approval.

Got a suggestion? Email EstateManagement@ guildford.gov.uk

### Tenant Visits – A **Friendly Check-In**

Over the next two years, we're visiting all our council-managed homes. These visits are not inspections — they're a chance to check that:

- Your home is in good condition and safe
- Any repairs or issues are picked up
- · Your contact details are up to date
- You're receiving any support you might need

You'll be contacted in advance to arrange a time that suits you. If you have questions, get in touch with us at estatemanagement@ guildford.gov.uk or call 01483 505050.



We're taking action to raise

standards and make a visible

difference. Here's what we're doing:

inspections and walkabouts

Improving our response times

for communal repairs

• Investing in shared spaces

environmental budget

Developing local estate

tenant feedback

estate days

to getting them right.

We have a dedicated

Investing in Your

improvement plans shaped by

Listening through surveys and

We know these areas affect how

community, and we're committed

Environment – £50,000 for Local Improvements

environmental budget to make

cleaner, safer, and more attractive.

shared spaces on our estates

you feel about your home and

through our £50.000

Carrying out regular estate

### **Tenancy Sustainment –** Supporting You When Life Gets Difficult

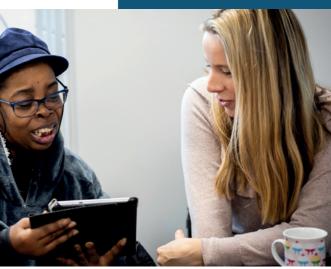
In April 2023, we introduced a Tenancy Sustainment Officer to help residents facing challenges like rent arrears, financial hardship, poor property conditions, or difficult personal circumstances. We've already supported many residents to stay in their homes and improve their situation.

### **One Success Story**

Last year, we helped a resident referred by our Independent Living Team who was facing multiple issues including arrears, hoarding, domestic abuse, and a bedbug infestation.

### With the right support, she:

- Was moved into temporary supported accommodation
- Had her property treated and cleared
- Received the benefits she was entitled to
- Set up a payment plan and opened her first bank account
- Secured a new permanent home and now lives safely and independently





### Satisfaction with anti-social behaviour handling



Sector median (2023-24): 65.1%

### Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

You told us that anti-social behaviour (ASB) is a concern, and only 43% of tenants were satisfied with how we handle it. We know that's not good enough - and we're taking action to improve.

When you report ASB, we will:

- Contact you within 48 hours
- Complete a risk and impact assessment
- Agree on your preferred outcome and how you'd like to be updated

### We're also:

- Reviewing our ASB policy to improve our response
- Working closely with the police and community safety teams on persistent cases

In 2024-25, we recorded 7.3 ASB cases per 1,000 homes, with no haterelated incidents.

### Sheltered and Supported Housing – Specialist Support Where It's Needed

Our dedicated teams support residents in both sheltered and supported housing:

- In supported housing, staff help people build skills, access health and employment services, and work toward independent living.
- In sheltered housing, staff ensure tenants feel safe, run social activities like coffee mornings, and keep everyone informed and connected.

We're proud of the work our teams do to support residents' wellbeing and community life every day.

# **Providing Homes for People in Need**



Grateful to have been rehoused after a difficult time."

There is a long waiting list to get on the property ladder."



These comments capture both the importance of securing a safe home and the reality of the pressure on housing supply. While many residents have been successfully rehoused, we know that for others, the wait can be long and frustrating.

Helping people in housing need access safe, secure, and affordable homes remains one of our top priorities. Every year, we support hundreds of households through the housing register, manage allocations fairly, and help those most in need - including people experiencing homelessness.

### Who's on the Housing Register?

As of 31 March 2025, there were 2268 households on our housing register, waiting for a home.

- 23% were transfer applicants, looking to move to a more suitable home.
- 77% were home seekers -

We know demand for social housing continues to grow, and we're working to improve how we allocate homes and make the best use of the stock available.

### **Tackling Long-Term Empty Homes**

We know it's frustrating to see council homes sitting empty when people need housing. As of April 2025, we had 200 voids, but numbers are starting to fall. We've put a Voids Improvement Lead in place and reviewed every property.

Some homes are under repair, some are held for regeneration,



everyone else in housing need.

### How many homes were let in 2024-25?

Over the past year, we let a total of 207 council homes, around 30% of these to existing tenants transferring to new homes.

Here's a breakdown by property size and type:

### **General Needs** Lets = 158

- Studio: 12
- 1-bed: 69
- 2-bed: 43
- 3-bed: 30
- 4+ bed: 4

### **Sheltered Housing** Lets = 49

- Studio: 17
- 1-bed: 23
- 2-bed: 9

This helps us understand how well we're meeting demand and where future investment is most needed.

and others need major investment. We're prioritising long-term voids - some empty since 2020 - to bring them back into use.

### We've:

- Relet 72 homes in three months
- Launched new contracts to speed up repairs
- Started clearing the backlog to reduce delays and rent loss

Bringing homes back into use is one of our top priorities.

# How we spend your rent

Happy as long as we can see where the money is going." Would be good to have clearer breakdowns on what we pay for."

Many residents have told us they want more transparency on how rent and service charges are spent. We've listened—and here's a clearer picture of how we used your money in 2024/25

### Income – Total £39.8 million | Expenditure – Total £17.7 million

Dwelling Rents: <b>£36.4m</b>	Responsive & Planned Maintenance: <b>£9.4m</b>
Garages & Shops: <b>£1.1m</b>	Tenant & Neighbourhood Services: £3.9m
Service Charges: £1.7m	Sheltered Housing, Strategic & Community Ser
Interest & Other Income: <b>£0.6m</b>	Debt & Other Items: <b>£1.0m</b>

### **Capital Investment**

£22.1 million was set aside for future capital investment in homes, including new build housing and essential major works. - nearly 50% of all HRA income - was invested for the future.

### How each £1 is spent



### Tenant & Housing Services 21p

Responsive & Planned Maintenance 24p

Major Repairs & New Build Reserve 49p

**Revenue Funding of** Capital (RFFC) 6p

### Investing in Quality Homes

To support our goal of 100% Decent Homes compliance, we prioritised:

- Urgent works through our Voids Programme
- Targeted Decent Homes upgrades
- Developing a new Asset Management Strategy (due Sept 2025)

### **Capital Spending**

In addition to day-to-day costs we've also made major long term investments in our homes through capital funding.

vices: **£3.5m** 

In 2024-5 we invested £7.1 million in long-term capital improvements, including:

- £6.3 million on major repairs and upgrades (such as kitchens, bathrooms, roofs. and windows)
- £481,000 on acquiring land and buildings for future development
- £320,000 on new build projects, including small sites to help tackle local housing need

# Our Housing Improvement Plan

Appreciate the

These comments reflect what many of you have told us: while some residents are starting to see real improvements, others still feel unclear about what's changing and when. We're committed to improving both our services and how we communicate about them.

We're now moving forward with a refreshed Housing Improvement Plan that focuses not just on governance and compliance but on the experience residents have everyday. It looks at the whole service—from how repairs are handled to how we communicate with you—so we can deliver the kind of day-to-day experience you expect and deserve.

### The updated plan is shaped by:

- Your feedback through surveys and complaints
- The real-world experience of our staff
- Independent insight from the Housing Quality Network
- Learning from other highperforming landlords

We're committed to sharing progress more clearly and regularly—so you can see the difference your voice is making

### What's New in the Plan?

We've set four main priorities to shape how we improve things going forward:

### 1. Quality, Safety & Compliance

- Keeping your home safe and well maintained
- Tackling damp and mould before it becomes a problem
- Making sure homes meet the Decent Homes Standard

### 2. Service Improvement & Delivery

- Faster repairs and quicker turnaround of empty homes
- · A stronger response to antisocial behaviour and domestic abuse
  - Improved services for leaseholders
- Cleaner estates

### 3. Resident Engagement & Empowerment

- Giving tenants more say in decisions about your home
- Quicker responses to complaints
- Involving you in shaping future services

### 4. Organisational Excellence & Modernisation

• Investing in better systems and technology

### How you can get involved

We want to hear from you. Whether through surveys, the Housing Operations Board, local estate inspections, or tenant panels, your voice shapes what we do.

Visit www.guildford.gov.uk/article/27367/Housing-improvementplan or email <u>www.guildford.gov.uk/Contact</u> to find out more.



- Using data to make smarter decisions
- Working with Waverley Borough Council to improve how we work

### What Does This Mean for You?

- A housing service that's more responsive and easier to contact
- · Safer, cleaner, and bettermanaged homes and estates
- · A stronger voice for tenants with more ways to get involved

We're committed to building a housing service that works with you and for you.

### Looking Ahead: **Our Priorities for 2025**

- 1. Improving Repairs and Maintenance: Reduce delays, improve quality, and address damp/mould.
- 2. Listening and Acting on Feedback: Embed tenant voice through the Housing Operations Board.
- 3. Better Complaint Handling: Ensure responses are timely, fair, and followed through.
- 4. Enhancing Communication: Improve call handling, introduce service updates.
- 5. Cleaner, Safer Neighbourhoods: Review estate services, address ASB hotspots.





Together, we can build stronger communities and better services."



Website: www.guildford.gov.uk/housing



Email us: www.guildford.gov.uk/Contact



**Call us:** 01483 505050