

Councillor Arthur Coote, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Equalities

Report to Full Council – Tuesday, 14 July 2026

Repairs and Maintenance Service

The Council successfully delivered the insourcing of its Housing Repairs and Maintenance service, bringing it back under direct control on 1 April 2026 as planned. This was achieved through a well-governed programme structure supported by a cross-council project board and multiple coordinated workstreams, covering HR, finance, procurement, service delivery and IT. The transition was completed safely with no interruption to tenants, supported by effective TUPE transfer of staff, rapid recruitment to boost capacity, and early mobilisation of resources and operational processes. Strong stakeholder engagement, including with tenants and the Regulator for Social Housing, has underpinned confidence in the approach and ensured transparency throughout implementation.

Early performance following insourcing shows clear and positive improvement in both service delivery and customer experience, with particularly strong performance on emergency and urgent repairs. There has also been a notable reduction in complaints, alongside qualitative feedback indicating improved tenant satisfaction. In addition to increased responsiveness, the quality of repairs has improved, with a greater focus on resolving root causes and reducing repeat visits. These early indicators demonstrate that bringing the service in-house is delivering the intended benefits of greater control, responsiveness and service quality.

The next phase focuses on stabilising and strengthening the service to ensure long-term sustainability and continuous improvement. Key priorities include delivering the first phase of the service improvement plan as part of the wider Uttlesford Housing Futures transformation programme, implementing a dedicated repairs management system, enhancing performance reporting, and maintaining strong engagement with tenants and stakeholders.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Project

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) project has made substantial progress in delivering retrofit and energy efficiency improvements to Council owned housing stock, supported by a combination of £3.8m external grant funding and significant Council capital investment. Following early delays caused by the original contractor declining to proceed, the Council acted decisively to re-procure delivery arrangements in early 2026, securing new contractors and a revised programme. Despite time constraints and the need to scale back the original ambition, works have been completed at 82 properties eligible for grant funding, with a further 47 properties completed, underway or scheduled using Council funding.

Performance of the programme reflects both delivery success and learning. The project is expected to deliver substantial outcomes for participating households, including significant reductions in energy consumption, carbon emissions and energy costs for tenants. However, overall delivery has been impacted by external and operational challenges including contractor withdrawal, tight grant funding deadlines, and the need to respond to varying tenant circumstances and engagement levels. Notwithstanding these challenges, the Council has achieved around a 50% reduction in per-property delivery costs through market engagement and revised specifications, representing improved value for money and enabling more efficient use of future capital investment.

The technical learning and robust application of best value will be applied alongside commitments to decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures to be detailed in the forthcoming Housing Asset Management, Development and Growth Plan and the 30-year Housing Revenue Account business plan. The final numbers are still being tallied and bills settled, but it can be confidently said that around half of the original number of properties have been improved at approximately half of the original budget, with the rest of the funding originally identified returning to the UDC capital pot for future spend – and future spend on such works will benefit from the learning from this initiative of how to deliver the outcomes for little over half of the original estimated unit cost, setting us up well for the future. Environmental benefits and reduced bills for residents will need to be in before they can be assessed and reported retrospectively.

Delivery of the Housing 30 Year Business Plan

As part of the ongoing development of the Housing Asset Management, Development and Growth Policy and associated plans, the approach to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan (BP) has been carefully structured to ensure financial viability and sustainability over the next 30 years. The key elements of this approach are as follows:

1. **Financial Viability:** The HRA Business Plan (BP) for 2026–56 ensures that housing management and growth ambitions are financially sustainable, maintaining reserves at prudent levels.
2. **Investment Framework:** The Policy employs a data-driven, tiered decision-making framework (Tier 1 – invest, Tier 2 – review, Tier 3 – dispose/remodel) to guide housing asset investments, ensuring compliance with standards.
3. **Funding Sources:** Investments will be funded through diverse sources, including rental income, major repairs reserves, prudential borrowing, retained Right to Buy receipts, and grants, ensuring a robust financial foundation.
4. **Regulatory Compliance:** The HRA BP aligns with current regulations, including the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the new Decent Homes Standard, ensuring the Council meets its statutory obligations.

5. **Decarbonisation Commitment:** The plan commits to achieving EPC Band C by 2030 and outlines a pathway to net-zero carbon by 2050, integrating sustainability into all housing developments.
6. **Stakeholder Engagement:** The development of the HRA BP has involved significant engagement with tenants and stakeholders, ensuring their needs and priorities are reflected in investment decisions.
7. **Next Steps:** Following Cabinet endorsement, Council will be asked to adopt the HRA BP in Autumn 2026. The Council will regularly review the HRA BP to reflect changing conditions and regulatory requirements

Uttlesford Housing Futures Transformation Programme

In May, we launched the Uttlesford Housing Futures Programme. The Uttlesford Housing Futures programme brings together a broad range of housing improvement activities under a single governance framework, enabling the Council to plan, monitor and deliver its priorities with greater clarity, accountability and assurance. It has been designed to improve outcomes for tenants while ensuring the Council is well prepared for regulatory inspection and future organisational change.

The programme focuses on eight key objectives:

1. strengthening landlord compliance and assurance with the current and emerging new regulator consumer standards;
2. improving customer experience and tenant engagement;
3. increasing the delivery of new council homes;
4. establishing an effective in-house repairs service;
5. developing a skilled and supported workforce;
6. improving systems and data;
7. protecting the financial sustainability of the Housing Revenue Account;
8. and preparing for Local Government Reorganisation.

Supported by the Transformation & Projects Service, delivery of the programme is structured through a clear set of coordinated workstreams, covering all aspects of housing services including repairs, asset management, compliance, customer experience, workforce development, digital and data, finance and governance. This structure ensures that improvements are delivered in a joined-up and manageable way, with clear ownership and accountability.

Underpinned by robust governance, the UHF programme positions the Council to deliver better services for residents today, while building a strong and resilient housing function for the future.

