

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Report Title	Housing Asset Management Strategy 2026-31	
Meeting / Date	Cabinet, 2 December 2025	
Cabinet portfolio	Councillor Ahsan Khan, Deputy Leader (Housing and Regeneration)	
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Wards affected	None specifically	
Public access	Open	
Appendices	1. Housing Asset Management Strategy 2. Equalities Impact Screening Report 3. Sustainability Implications Matrix 4. Resident consultation "You said, we did" response	

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the new Housing Asset Management Strategy (HAMS) 2026 - 2031. The strategy outlines the council's approach to managing, maintaining, and investing in its housing stock over the next five years, with a focus on building safety, meeting the Decent Homes Standard, sustainability, resident satisfaction, and financial resilience. It supports the delivery of the Housing Strategy 2024–2029 adopted by full council in April 2024 and aligns with Mission Waltham Forest, including tackling the housing crisis and working towards achieving net zero.
- 1.2 The development of the HAMS is a key component of the council's Improvement Plan submitted to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). It addresses issues related to the Decent Homes Standard and drives the broader transformation of housing repairs and asset management services, ultimately improving outcomes for tenants.
- 1.3 Resident consultation on this new strategy ran from 13 October 2025 to 12 November 2025.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - 2.1.1 Approve the proposed Housing Asset Management Strategy 2026-31 attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

- 2.1.2 Delegate Authority to the Strategic Director of Place, in consultation with the Portfolio Lead Member for Housing & Regeneration and Corporate Director of Governance and Law, to enable rapid amendment to the strategy for the inclusion of any new regulatory requirements as they arise.

3. Background

- 3.1 The HAMS 2026-2031 is a key strategic document in supporting the transformation of the Housing Assets service. The HAMS builds on the work carried out over the last 12 months in developing new policies and procedures for both repairs and compliance to ensure a robust set of policies and procedures are in place. This includes new policies for the six key compliance safety areas (Fire, Gas, Electrical, Lifts, Asbestos and Legionella), new repairs and damp and mould policies, and a new damp and mould procedure.

- 3.2 The purpose of the HAMS is to:

- Set out priorities for the next five years (2026-2031) for managing, maintaining and investing in the council's housing assets. This will ensure they support the needs of current and future residents.
- Define key investment principles for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Investment programme to maintain and improve the council's housing stock in the short-term and into the future.
- Provide a delivery plan and set out the outcomes the council is aiming to achieve over the lifetime of the strategy.

- 3.3 The HAMS is a document of strategic importance to the council, which demonstrates our approach to managing and investing in its housing stock, delivering the outcomes set out in Mission Waltham Forest, the council's Housing Strategy 2024-2029, Capital Investment Strategy 2023/24-2033/34 and Housing Revenue Account Medium Term Financial Plan. It also reflects the outcomes delivered and learnings from the previous Asset Management Strategy 2019-2024.

- 3.4 Several changes to the content and structure of the strategy have been made reflecting feedback received from housing industry experts, the Housing Quality Network (HQN), who supported the council during the Regulator for Social Housing inspection process. The changes also draw on best practice examples from other local authority asset strategies.

3.4.1 Vision and Strategic Principles

- 3.5 The council's vision is for all residents to have a home that is healthy, safe and comfortable and which supports physical and mental wellbeing and enables residents to thrive. The HAMS sets out the following strategic principles to achieve this vision:

- Compliance and Safety: Ensure all council owned homes are safe and compliant with the latest regulatory standards.

- Sustainability and Retrofitting: Achieve EPC rating of C on at least 90% of homes.
 - Data-Driven Decision Making: Use integrated data systems to assess asset performance and inform investment decisions.
 - Tenant Well-being and Engagement: Improve satisfaction through effective repairs service and resident involvement in decision making.
 - Financial Sustainability: Make best use of council resources, delivering objectives within available capital budgets.
- 3.6 Reflecting the lessons learnt from the previous strategy, the changes to the regulatory and market context, and the current financial constraints, the proposed strategy signals a new approach.
- 3.7 Given the successful completion of the Building Safety Works programme, which has addressed the fire safety risks in the council's higher-risk (18m plus) blocks, the focus will shift to managing structural risk, together with fire safety of the council's 11-18m blocks. There will also be an increasing focus on addressing decent homes performance.
- 3.8 In relation to increasing housing supply, delivery will shift away from direct delivery by the council and focus on estate regeneration through partnerships with private developers and funders, supported by property acquisitions.
- 3.9 Risk Management and Governance
- 3.10 This strategy and the supporting capital programme span multiple years, involve high levels of investment and have wide-ranging objectives. A key requirement in the successful delivery of the strategy will be balancing the various risks which are inherent in a programme of this scale, some of which are outside of the council's control.
- 3.11 The HAMS includes a section on the council's approach to risk management, and governance, highlighting key risks and mitigations, how decisions will be made and performance monitored.
- 3.12 Conclusion
- 3.13 The council has made significant progress in a number of areas:
- Addressing fire safety issues associated with its 18m plus higher-risk blocks.
 - Developing and implementing new policies and procedures to improve the repairs and compliance service.
 - Completing the re-structure of the Housing Assets team to improve capabilities and capacity of the team to improve the repairs service
- 3.14 These improvements helped the council achieve a C2 rating for the inspection carried out by the RSH. However, to maintain and improve this rating to a C1, a number of improvements are needed, which will be the focus of the next HAMS, specifically:

- 3.15 Decent Homes performance.
- Improving repairs performance in relation to the timeliness of repairs.
 - Improving resident satisfaction with the repairs service and condition of their homes.
- 3.16 These improvements are required in the context of increasing financial pressures and more stringent and changing regulatory requirements. There is also a risk that should performance deteriorate, particularly in relation to decent homes and repairs, the RSH could downgrade the council.
- 3.17 The HAMS, supported by new repairs and compliance policies and procedures, is a key document in setting out the council's commitment and approach to delivering these improvements, as well as continuing to meet the council's safety and compliance obligations.
- 3.18 To deliver the new strategies, policies and procedures developed, a new Housing Assets Team structure has been implemented to boost capability and capacity within the planned works, responsive repairs and strategic asset management teams.
- 3.19 A key focus for the next 12 months will be to recruit to the new positions and embed the new policies and procedures within the Housing service and with contractors.

4. Options & Alternatives Considered

- 4.1 No other options considered as the development of the HAMS is a key component of the council's Improvement Plan submitted to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The strategy aims to address issues related to the Decent Homes Standard and drive the broader transformation of housing repairs and asset management services, ultimately improving outcomes for residents.

5. Council Strategic Priorities (and other National or Local Policies or Strategies)

- 5.1 This strategy supports the delivery of the council's Housing Strategy 2024–2029 and aligns closely with Mission Waltham Forest, including tackling the housing crisis and working towards achieving net zero.
- 5.2 The outcomes outlined in the strategy align closely with the outcomes already agreed by full council in the Waltham Forest Housing Strategy, in particular the key outcome that every home in the borough is safe, healthy and affordable to live in.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Resident Influence and Accountability Panel (RIAP)

- 6.2 On 30 April 2025, a summary of the new HAMS was presented to the Resident Involvement and Accountability Panel (RIAP), outlining its structure, key content, and proposed investment priorities. These priorities were informed by delivery during the previous strategy period, the current strategic context, and the regulatory framework. Feedback from the panel stressed the importance of ensuring that public spaces within council housing estates are safe and accessible.
- 6.3 Lead Member
- 6.4 Updates on performance and key issues are provided at the monthly Repairs Task and Finish Group meetings chaired by the Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Housing and Regeneration (Lead Member) and attended by the Strategic Director of Place and the Corporate Director of Housing. The Lead Member has been briefed on the contents of the strategy.
- 6.5 Regulator of Social Housing
- 6.6 Asset management, particularly in the context of decent homes and repairs performance was within the scope of the inspection carried out by the RSH. In response, the council submitted an improvement plan outlining the actions taken, including the development of a new Housing Asset Management Strategy, aimed at improving decent homes performance. A central recommendation from the inspection was to ensure the new strategy incorporates lessons learned from the previous one.
- 6.7 Repairs Partnering Contractors
- 6.8 Engagement on the draft HAMS has been carried out with the council's repairs contractors, Aston Group and Morgan Sindall Property Services (MSPS). As part of this process, MSPS provided a Strategic Appraisal of repairs demand and performance for the five-year period covering the previous Asset Strategy. The findings have directly informed the development of the new strategy.
- 6.9 Resident Engagement on the new strategy
- 6.10 Further resident engagement on the draft HAMS was carried out over a four-week period between 13 October and 12 November 2025, which comprised of:
- Uploading the strategy on to Let's Talk, the resident consultation platform asking for feedback via an online survey
 - Carrying out two focus group sessions with residents.
 - Telephone interviews
- 6.11 The engagement programme has been publicised through digital newsletters targeted at council tenants and leaseholders. It has also been advertised through wider borough Residents E-News, the Housing Service's and Tenant and Resident Association's WhatsApp channels, and social media. 86 residents provided their feedback on the strategy.
- 6.12 Key points raised by residents during the consultation were:

- Ensuring sufficient support for vulnerable residents and residents with disabilities.
- Holding contractors to account for repairs performance, particularly where standards are not met.
- Involving residents more in decision making and holding the council to account.
- Clearer governance and decision making.
- More transparency as to why certain properties have been prioritised for investment.
- Delivering more value for money.
- More clarity on what Decent Homes means for the council's existing housing stock.
- Ensuring biodiversity is safeguarded when major works are carried out

6.13 Further detail on the comments received, and amendments made to the strategy in response to comments is provided in Appendix 4.

7. Implications

7.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk

7.1.1 The HRA 10-year Business Plan includes £216.150m in the Capital Programme over the five-year period of the strategy (2026/27 to 2030/31). This was approved by Cabinet in February 2025 and is summarised in the following table:

HRA Capital Programme 2026/27 to 2030/31

	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total
Schemes	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
Property Services						
Main Programme	32,136	33,100	33,762	34,437	35,126	168,561
Disabled Adaptations	766	766	766	766	766	3,830
Total Property Services	32,902	33,866	34,528	35,203	35,892	172,391
Regeneration						
Marlowe Road	123	-	-	-	-	123
Avenue Road	625	625	625	-	-	1,875
Total Regeneration	748	625	625	-	-	1,998
Appropriations						
Priory Court	39,261	-	-	-	-	39,261
Total Appropriations	39,261	-	-	-	-	39,261
Other Schemes						
Contingency	500	500	500	500	500	2,500
Total Other Schemes	500	500	500	500	500	2,500
Grand Total	73,411	34,991	35,653	35,703	36,392	216,150

- 7.1.2 The Main Programme budget of £168.561m over the five years covers the council's compliance, building safety, decent homes and sustainability priorities within the Asset Management Strategy. A key priority is for all homes to reach decent homes standard by 2030 and due to the low level of reserves the capital programme was re-prioritised to invest in existing stock over new housing delivery. The main capital programme includes an investment of £58m in decent homes from which the proposals set out in the Asset Management Strategy will be met. No additional budget is being sought at this stage. Investment in each workstream within the main programme is summarised as follows:

Main Capital Programme	Total budget 2026/27 – 2030/31 (£'000)
Decent Homes	58,000
Compliance	45,000
Building safety /Fire	20,200
Planned maintenance	23,361
Sustainability	10,000
Resources / professional fees	12,000
Total	168,561

- 7.1.3 There is a risk that more stringent regulatory requirements and general/construction cost inflation may create pressures against the capital budget. These will be managed through the annual HRA Business Plan by reprioritising towards statutory priorities (decent homes, compliance, building safety), reprofiling works, and pursuing external grants.
- 7.1.4 The annual review of the HRA business plan will provide the opportunity to revise the capital programme budgets and consider any on-going pressures on revenue budgets. Following the announcement in June 2025 of the ten-year rent settlement, rents will increase by CPI plus 1% from April 2026. The settlement will provide a level of stability and certainty in the long-term financial planning of the HRA business plan with the potential to increase the capacity to invest in the Council's housing stock, support the Council's strategy to increase the minimum reserve position and strengthen the resilience of the HRA. In addition, proposals to re-introduce rent convergence, which would allow rents that are currently below the prescribed "formula rent" to be increased by an additional amount each year, could further enhance HRA income and support the Council's priority to improve its homes.
- 7.1.5 Government is expected to announce how rent convergence will be implemented and by how much in the 2025 Autumn budget, at which time the implications for the HRA Business Plan will be assessed.

7.2 Legal

- 7.2.1 There are legal requirements for maintaining social housing, keeping it free from hazards and in a reasonable and state of repair. The Regulator of Social Housing also sets out in its consumer standards the outcomes that landlords must deliver. Details of some of the key legislation is set out in the strategy.

7.2.2 By implementing the HAMS, the council is taking steps to minimise the risk of legal challenge and/or enforcement action by the Regulator in the future. It also aims to manage the risk of tenants claims for disrepair by tackling the causes of such claims.

7.3 Equalities and Diversity

7.3.1 The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

7.3.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and suggests that no negative outcomes will arise for groups with protected characteristics. Several of these groups are overrepresented in social housing in Waltham Forest, therefore this work is expected to have a positive impact by delivering improvements to quality and safety of homes. This includes care leavers as Waltham Forest Council offers secure tenancies to all care leavers.

7.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)

7.4.1 The Housing Asset Management Strategy delivers significant positive impacts across health, wellbeing, climate, and community safety. It supports Marmot principles by improving housing quality, reducing fuel poverty, and creating healthier, safer environments. Sustainability benefits include energy efficiency, biodiversity enhancements, and climate resilience measures. Crime prevention is embedded through secure design and community engagement. Potential negative impacts such as disruption due to works will be mitigated through effective resident engagement. A Sustainability Matrix is included in the appendix to this paper.

Health and wellbeing

7.4.2 Delivering the outcomes set out in the HAMS will help ensure that residents are living in safe and healthy homes. The strategy has been developed to improve the condition of residents' homes and public spaces and will have a positive impact on mental and physical health.

7.4.3 A key driver of the strategy is to improve decent homes performance, by targeting investment where standards are not being met, through both the planned works programme and responsive repairs service.

7.4.4 This will be supported by maintaining up to date and accurate information on the condition of the council's housing stock, including health and safety risk hazards. Where high risks are identified (such as damp and mould), they will be addressed in accordance with the council's repairs policies and procedures.

- 7.4.5 The strategy is supported by other council policies and procedures that have been developed to improve the repairs service, including the new Repairs and Damp and Mould policies.

Climate change

- 7.4.6 Domestic energy contributes almost half of the borough's total carbon emissions. One of the six priorities of the strategy focuses on sustainability and retrofit, in particular its focus on improving the energy efficiency of council homes to reduce carbon emissions as well as to help reduce energy bills for our residents.

- 7.4.7 The strategy makes some progress towards net-zero carbon by 2030 targeted by Waltham Forest's Climate Action Plan. However, more momentum is needed to reach net-zero. Increased funding and cross-departmental support will enable accelerated emissions reductions in this essential area. This could be allocated to additional energy saving measures during routine works, installing more energy efficiency measures and decarbonisation improvements unlocked through increased funding. The Warm Homes Local and Social Housing programmes have the potential to expand with more funding announcements anticipated. In the case of the Social Housing Fund, increases in available grants will contribute to reducing Council emissions if additional match funding can be secured.

Crime and disorder

- 7.4.8 One of the key priorities of this strategy is estate regeneration, which includes investment in public realm and communal areas, such as estate paving, estate roads and boundary walls, fences, garages and store sheds, decorations to communal areas, improved lighting and CCTV to combat anti-social behaviour.

- 7.4.9 By investing in resident-led physical improvements to the built environment, we can help create safer, more welcoming neighbourhoods. Resident-led improvements will help foster a greater sense of security and wellbeing for residents, while building the long-term resilience of local communities, and contributing to the Council's mission to ensure everyone can feel safe in their homes and neighbourhoods.

Council Infrastructure

- 7.4.10 A new Target Operating Model for the Housing Assets team was launched on 1 August 2025. The model seeks to strengthen the council's capability and capacity across the repairs and compliance teams through the creation of dedicated planned works and responsive repairs team.

- 7.4.11 While the new target operating model will boost internal capacity and capabilities once all the posts are filled, procurement of additional external expertise will be necessary to support council officers, particularly in relation to managing fire and structural safety risks.

Background Information (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None.