

## AGENDA FOR HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD



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**To: All Members of Housing Advisory Board**

**Councillors:** C Cummins (Chair), A Booth, D Green, B Ibrahim, E FitzGerald and I Gartside

Dear Member/Colleague

### **Housing Advisory Board**

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Housing Advisory Board which will be held as follows:-

<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday, 6 January 2026
<b>Place:</b>	Committee Rooms A&B
<b>Time:</b>	5.00 pm
<b>Briefing Facilities:</b>	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.
<b>Notes:</b>	

## **AGENDA**

**1 APOLOGIES**

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** *(Pages 3 - 8)*

The minutes from 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025 are attached for approval.

**4 TENANTS VOICE FORUM UPDATE REPORT** *(Pages 9 - 10)*

Report attached.

**5 SERVICE PLAN DELIVERY UPDATE** *(Pages 11 - 20)*

Report from Sian Grant, Director of Housing attached.

**6 HEAT NETWORK REGULATIONS AND ACTION PLAN** *(Pages 21 - 26)*

Report from Claire Rogan, Head of Performance, Assurance and Improvement attached.

**7 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW** *(Pages 27 - 50)*

Report from Amanda Mullen, Homelessness and Housing Manager attached.

**8 ANNUAL RENT INCREASE** *(Pages 51 - 54)*

Report from Darrell Campbell, HRA Finance Business Partner attached.

<b>Minutes of:</b>	<b>HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	19 November 2025
<b>Present:</b>	Councillor C Cummins (in the Chair) Councillors A Booth, B Ibrahim and E FitzGerald Tenants Representatives - Stephen Walker, Julia Momen and Springs Tenant Representative
<b>Also in attendance:</b>	Simon Farnworth, Data and Intelligence Lead, Housing, Sian Grant, Director of Housing, Kimberley Partridge, Head of Neighbourhoods, Stepping Stone Projects, Steve Glazebrook, Head of Property, Claire Rogan, Head of Performance, Improvement and Assurance, Steph Boyd, Ahmed Ajmi, Kate Waterhouse, Executive Director (Strategy & Transformation) and Chloe Ashworth, Democratic Services and one member of the public.
<b>Public Attendance:</b>	Two members of the public were present at the meeting.
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	Councillor D Green, Jourdan-Stoles and Councillor I Gartside

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## 1 APOLOGIES

Apologies are noted above.

## 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

## 3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025 are approved as a correct and accurate record.

## 4 EXTRA CARE HOUSING STRATEGY SIGN-OFF

Ahmed Ajmi and Stephanie Boyd provided an overview of the extra care housing strategy and compliance. The strategy aligns with other council strategies and national/local guidance. As part of the process officers reviewed several documents outlining principles, standards, and best practice.

Engagement undertaken included:

- Discussions with neighbouring authorities.
- Visits to extra care schemes.
- Targeted summer consultation with various networks.
- Input from council departments: Adult Social Care, Housing, Planning.
- Consultation with registered housing providers and voluntary sector organisations.

Members were advised that there is an ongoing 4-week public consultation which is currently live on council website and closes Friday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025.

Members were informed that data analysis is taking place and the split of needs is between low, medium and high needs some will have dementia support however officers are looking at specialist schemes for dementia.

Councillor Cummins, Chair questioned how the Strategy will align with the review of sheltered accommodation and what is the timeline for sheltered accommodation. Members were advised that March 2026 is the timeline.

Members questioned whether schemes will be concentrated in certain areas or spread across the borough. Members advised the aim is to spread schemes across the borough, considering local identities, family and social networks.

It was agreed that:

1. The strategy is endorsed by the Housing Advisory Board for onward submission to Cabinet in January 2026.

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## TENANTS VOICE FORUM UPDATE REPORT

Stephen Walker provided an overview on behalf of the Tenants Voice Forum.

The report was well received by members of the Housing Advisory Board.

An observation by a member was that the TVF reviewing policies is an effective mechanism to have in place and ensures collaborative working.

Officers asked how can staff improve presentation to help TVF members understand the policies.

It was agreed that the TVF could benefit with more people from different areas across the borough, along with the existing members but how this is co-ordinated is difficult where people have commitments to their local residents association.

Councillor Cummins, Chair highlighted barriers for people with low levels of digital knowledge especially in relation to the complaint's procedure. Members were advised training has taken place with the call centre and the timescale to review the case if twenty-four hours to review; if the matter has already been a service request it will go to the complaint's inbox, if not the request will be raised. Members were informed that it is early days and the training process with contact centre staff as the continue to recruit is essential.

It was agreed:

1. Councillor Cummins will attend the next Tenant Voice Forum meeting.
2. Members noted the update on behalf of the Tenants Voice Forum

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## REPAIRS REVIEW UPDATE

The Housing Advisory Board received a report on the Repairs Review outlining findings and recommendations following a comprehensive service assessment. The review was informed by Ombudsman guidance, Altair's regulatory readiness check, and tenant feedback.

Members were informed that repairs are the largest driver of complaints and a key factor in tenant trust. However, current challenges include:

- Over-reliance on contractors (36% of spend; many without formal contracts).
- High proportion of emergency repairs (35% vs. industry norm of 12–18%).
- Inconsistent data use and lack of integrated IT systems.
- Issues with appointment scheduling and communication.

Whilst satisfaction levels are generally high (82% satisfied or very satisfied) delays and poor communication remain a concern. Members were advised that the action plan will be monitored by the Head of Repairs with key stakeholders convening to progress recommendations as set out in the report.

It was agreed:

1. Members agreed the report.

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## **KNOWING OUR TENANTS - UPDATE ON INFORMATION HELD & ANNUAL REPORT ON LETTINGS AND TERMINATIONS**

Claire Rogan provided the Board with an overview of the 'Knowing Our Tenants' report which provided a detailed analysis of tenant demographics, engagement, and service needs across Bury Council's housing stock. It identifies gaps in data quality and completeness, which pose risks to service delivery, tenant satisfaction, and compliance with the Consumer Standards 2024.

Key points raised were:

- Tenant Profile: 15,794 residents; majority aged 35–64; under-representation of families with young children due to limited stock.
- Data Gaps:
  - 64% missing language preferences.
  - 95% missing literacy data.
  - Limited impairment and accessibility data; 82.9% of tenants with impairments lack tailored services.
- Engagement:
  - 733 tenancy visits completed; target 1,000 by year-end.
  - Low survey response rates (21.5% transactional, 14.6% perception).
- Digital Inclusion:
  - 300 tenants flagged as digitally isolated; likely underreported.

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the report.
2. Members agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

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## **VOIDS AND ALLOCATION REPORT**

Members received the Void and Allocation Report which provided a strategic overview of void trends in council-owned housing over six financial years (2019/20–2024/25), focusing on tenancy terminations, demographic patterns, property types, and operational performance. The report supports decision-making on housing strategy, resource allocation, and service improvement.

Members were informed that:

The total voids decreased by 50%, from 526 in 2019/20 to 266 in 2024/25, indicating improved tenancy sustainment. The primary cause was due to the death of tenants which remains the leading reason (31.5%), though numbers declined from 150 to 82 over the period.

Older tenants (63+) dominate deceased-related voids with the tenant base identifying as predominantly White British (84%). However, there are data gaps as 48% have an unknown marital status. Flats account for most voids, followed by semi-detached houses and bungalows. Re-let Times have Improved from 74 days to 55 days overall; bedsits remain problematic. Members discussed the importance of demographic data being known to support services for residents.

All areas across the borough show convergence in turnover rates, with deceased-related voids declining borough-wide. Housing needs identified were for general needs and mobility-adapted properties which dominate voids; extra care and wheelchair-adapted properties show minimal turnover.

It was agreed that:

1. Officers need to enhance succession planning to reduce delays and void periods.
2. The council should invest in accessible housing and review allocation strategies for mobility-adapted and sheltered properties.
3. Officers need to address bedsit challenges through redesign, repurposing, or marketing, and review local lettings policies.
4. To Improve data quality on tenant demographics to support strategic planning and equality monitoring.
5. Continue reducing re-let times by prioritizing high-demand property types and streamlining processes.

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## HALF-YEAR UPDATE ON BUILDING SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE

The Board received an update on building safety and compliance, including progress on key statutory checks and Awaab's Law implementation:

Members were advised that gas safety checks are currently at 99.97% compliance; two properties overdue. Electrical Safety is currently transitioning to 5-year checks from November 2025; currently the Council is 95.95% compliant with 309 properties overdue due to access issues (down from 2,220 in 2023). Members were informed that a permanent Electrical Compliance Specialist has been appointed. In relation to fire safety the Board was advised that the new Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) programme commenced for 293 properties; 43% completed to date. Over 5,000 remedial actions identified, prioritised by risk, with sheltered schemes nearing completion.

Members were reminded that Awaab's Law came into force on 27 October 2025 covering damp, mould, and emergency hazards. New contractor (Bell Group) appointed; processes and training are now under review. Members were advised that 100% of emergency repairs made safe within 24 hours.

In relation to other compliance checks, Asbestos, lifts, and legionella are all at 100% compliance and a lift installation at Taylor House is due by 1 December 2025. Members were informed that recruitment is ongoing for Compliance Manager roles across Gas, Electrical, Fire, and Damp/Mould.

Members of the Board raised matters to be further considered and were informed to pick the instances up directly with officers to investigate further.

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the update
2. Board members to pick up any specific queries or issues directly related to individual properties with officers outside of the meeting.

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## HALF-YEAR COMPLAINTS REPORT

Members were given a presentation on the complaint's performance for April–September 2025 which gave an overview of stage 1 complaints which were 64 (62 last year) and stage 2 complaints were at 23 (31 last year).

In relation to Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) there were 3 new investigations; 6 awaiting allocations (mostly relating to ASB and damp matters). Of which 4 decisions were issued:

- 1 ASB maladministration
- 2 repairs (non-maladministration)
- 1 damp & mould severe maladministration (Sept).

During the presentation members discussed the following themes:

Repairs & Follow-On Jobs: scheduling urgent repairs and preventing cancellations.

Customer Service & Communication: Improving escalation handling and recording reasonable adjustments.

Training regarding Customer handling: System training and contractor customer service.

Process Improvements: New tracker for multi-trade actions; better logging of damp reports.

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the update to the Board.

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## QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE UPDATE (Q2)

Members were given a presentation on the Housing Performance for Q2 2025 which covered Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM). Members were informed that overall satisfaction improved to 73.96%, with notable gains in repairs satisfaction (76.64%) and home safety (77.11%). Areas for improvement are complaint handling (43.86%) and listening to tenant views (59.22%).

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the update.

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## HALF-YEAR UPDATE ON IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Steve Glazebrook provided the Board with an update on the half-year improvement programme. The Board noted the Capital Budget for 2025/26 is £25.874m, with actual spend to 30 September 2025 at £2.862m (11.1%). A significant proportion of works are scheduled for October–March. A projected underspend of £3.678m is reported, mainly due to delays in carbon reduction works (£0.218m), planned maintenance (£1.020m), and new

build/acquisitions (£2.440m). Works are scheduled to build up from October/November with completion by March 2026, except some internal works continuing into early 2026.

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the update.

**COUNCILLOR C CUMMINS**  
Chair

**(Note: The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 7.20 pm)**

## Briefing Note

To	Housing Advisory Board
From	Tenant Voice Forum
Subject	Tenant Voice Update
Purpose	To update HAB on key discussions, priorities, and actions arising from TVF meetings
Decision required	For information
Status	Not confidential

### Communication & Engagement

TVF have received feedback from a wider tenant base regarding recent Housing Service communications:

- Overuse of abbreviations
- Tone and language perceived as inappropriate
- Multiple messages with little or no meaningful content
- Tenants receiving communications despite opting out

#### **Key concerns:**

TVF identified that current Communications are not consistently hitting the right tone or audience, which reduces trust and engagement.

TVF requests the following:

- **Approval process** – introduce a formal review and sign-off process for all tenant communications
- **Comms Review Group** – establish a group to check tone, language, and content before messages are issued.
- **Team Training** – refresh training on clear, tenant focused communication standards
- **Quality Assurance in CX system** – while the uptake of CX is positive, ensure quality and relevance before sending.

### Performance

TVF would like performance information to be shared in a clear, easy-to-read format so everyone can understand it and makes it easier for us to spot patterns and trends, which we can then look at more closely and ask questions about.

#### **TVF request the following starting next year –**

- monthly data for each key service area (repairs, complaints, allocations) to be shared in a simple format, showing the last 12 months' results, an average over time and the targets for each service and if they are being met.
- a dedicated performance session to better understand how data is collected, measured, and reported. This will help us learn what the figures mean, how targets are set, and how we can effectively challenge and scrutinise performance information.

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Report to	Housing Advisory Board	
Date	06/01/2026	
Agenda No. & Title	No. 5	Housing Services Service Plans 2025/26 – update on progress
Purpose of the Report	To update the Housing Advisory Board on the progress of the Housing Service Service plan for 2025/26	
Status	For Assurance	
Author	Sian Grant, Director of Housing	
Report Contract	Name: Sian Grant Email: sian.grant@bury.gov.uk Tel:	
Appendices	Appendix one – Housing Services Service Plan 2025/26 Appendix two – Homelessness Service Plan 2025/26	
Background Documents	None	
Recommendation/s	<b>It is recommended that the HAB discuss and note t progress of the service plans for 2025/26</b>	
Strategic Objectives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Satisfied Tenants <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality Homes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> United Communities	
Risk Implications	Poor tenant satisfaction Unsafe, insecure and non compliant Homes Failure to meet governance requirements for STH and BC stock Increased homelessness Increased use of B&B accommodation	
Mitigations/ controls	A number of controls are in place to manage these risks including; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant satisfaction surveys</li> <li>• Performance management</li> <li>• Stock condition surveys and an ongoing capital programme</li> <li>• Internal and external audit programmes</li> <li>• B&amp;B elimination plan</li> </ul> A key mitigation is our service plan which includes actions to improve key areas of the service to meet tenant expectations and increase tenant satisfaction and to ensure compliance with the regulatory	

	standards.
Financial / VFM Implications	There are none specifically as a result of this report. All costs associated with actions are included in the budget for the year. Where reviews identify additional cost implications these will be subject to a business case to ensure value for money of any proposals.
Regulatory/ Governance/ Legal Implications	<p>The housing service service plan will ensure we are compliant with the RSH regulatory standards, specifically the consumer standards including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The neighbourhood and community standard</li> <li>• The safety and quality standard</li> <li>• Tenancy standard</li> <li>• Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard</li> </ul> <p>The Homelessness Service Plan will ensure we meet our statutory obligations under the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and continue to work to prevent homelessness in Bury.</p>
Assets and Liabilities	No direct impacts as a result of this report
Resource Implications	The service plan is fully resourced. Where reviews identify additional capacity is required to deliver any improvements these will be subject to a business case.
Customer Impact	<p>Actions within the service plan have been influenced by tenant feedback through the tenant satisfaction measures, complaints and transactional surveys. They have also been informed by tenant involvement in specific areas of the service such as anti social behaviour.</p> <p>The service plan and the actions contained within it aim to improve the quality of the housing services provided to tenants and to increase satisfaction with our services.</p>
EDI Implications	An equality impact assessment has not been carried out for the service plan. Where individual actions within the plan require an equality impact assessment such as policy changes and service reviews these will be brought to HAB at the appropriate time.
Sustainability and Environmental Implications	The service plan includes actions that will improve both the energy efficiency of our properties and improve the local environment and neighbourhood.

	Performance against these actions will be reported to HAB as part of the quarterly service plan updates.
Privacy/Data Protection	Not applicable to this report.
Colleague Impact	The service plan provides clarity to colleagues both in housing services and the wider council about the priorities for the service during 2025/26. The service plan forms the basis for individual PDRs and objective settings. The high level service plan has been shared with housing colleagues at a all staff briefing held on 21 <sup>st</sup> May 2025. More detailed information for each service will be shared with teams at their team meetings.
Stakeholder Communications and Reputational Impact	The service plan has been shared with corporate colleagues as part of the annual service planning process. The service plan will help inform our communications strategy and plan over the next 12 months. We are currently working with communication colleagues on developing this strategy.
Next Steps	<p>The next steps;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Year end reporting to HAB</li> <li>• Development of 2026/27 service plans</li> </ul>

## 1. Introduction

1.1 Working with tenants and colleagues we have developed a vision statement and objectives for the housing service which links back to the Council's Let's Strategy. This is set out below;

Let's do housing!		
Satisfied tenants	Quality homes	United communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bury Housing Services puts people and their wellbeing first. How people feel about the homes we provide for them matters to us.</li> <li>▪ We want our tenants to feel safe and secure, warm and welcome, healthy and happy in their homes and a valued part of their local community.</li> <li>▪ We go above and beyond as a landlord, creating homes that people love.</li> <li>▪ We work hard to offer the right advice at the right time, to help people get housing that suits their needs and to prevent people becoming homeless.</li> <li>▪ We couldn't do this without our passionate, trained and committed teams, who</li> </ul>		

embrace our people-first focus through the work they do every single day.

## 2 2025- 2026 Service Plan

2.1 Our 2025-2026 Bury Housing Services plan and the Homelessness Service Plan build on our vision, enhancing the delivery of high-quality housing services while overseeing compliance with the latest consumer regulations, ensuring that all aspects of tenancy management, building safety, and asset management meet the highest standards. The homelessness service plan also ensures we effectively deliver our statutory homelessness duties.

2.2 The table below sets out the progress against the key actions in our service plan.

RAG	Number
Complete	3
On target	19
At risk	4
Overdue	6
Will not start in 20-25/26	3
	35

Service area	Key actions	Date by	Progress
Housing and Neighbourhoods	• Carry out a review of our Independent Living Service.	March 2026	Review has been carried out and actions from the review are now being rolled out including motion sensors in all schemes.
	• Continue to build on our ASB service.	March 2026	ASB action plan reviewed and new plan in place Housemark ASB accreditation process started.
	• Review our tenancy support offer.	Dec 2025	Not yet started. Will be moved to 2026/27
	• Continue to support care leavers but ensuring this priority group is reflected in our Management Move policy.	Sept 2025	Management Move policy reviewed and new draft policy developed. Currently with TFV for review

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Housing Management operating model with staff and tenants.</li> </ul>	Dec 2025	Review has been carried out. New roles with HR to evaluate.
Asset management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an asset management strategy to ensure investment in and effective use of our housing assets and to ensure we provide healthy homes.</li> </ul>	March 2026	This has been delayed to 2026/27
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of homes that meet EPC C or above.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Wave 3 Warm Homes; Social Housing bid successful with £2.2m secured. Work on site to deliver 2025/56 EPC programme.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a 3 year indicative capital programme.</li> </ul>	December 2025	Indicative 3 year programme has been developed and included in the business plan. Sense check is being carried out on programme to ensure risks and any gaps are captured.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver the 25/26 capital investment programme.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Programme on site and being delivered. Forecasting slippage of £1.9m into 2026/27
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out a rolling programme of stock condition and retrofit properties to ensure we fully understand the condition of our homes.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Programme being carried out but resourcing and no access remain barriers. Surveyor recruitment currently underway with agency in place to bridge the gap.
Repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out of review of the repairs service to improve efficiency, effectiveness and</li> </ul>	March 2026	Review of repairs service complete and reported to HAB with action plan

	tenant satisfaction.		
Building safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Permit to work process. Inc customer works.</li> </ul>	Oct 2025	Delays due to compliance team being recruited. Action needs review once new compliance team are in place.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Put in place and deliver plan to reduce overdue EICRs.</li> </ul>	June 2026	Revised target to June 2026 in line with five year legislative changes. All recruitment to team has been completed with new staff starting in Jan 2026.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop the QA/QC function/process within the building safety team.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Process in place for Gas delivered by ICON. ICON will be conducting EICR audits from March 2026.
Performance, Assurance and Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out a review of our approach to complaints and our complaint handling culture and implement recommendations.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Approach to complaints reviewed and a number of changes have been made to the service including how complaints are identified and recruiting two complaints investigators. Assessment against Housemark Complaints accreditation has commenced.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review of tenant engagement strategy and develop and implement a tenant engagement action plan.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Not yet started
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the quality of the data we hold on our tenants and use data in service delivery / decision making.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Review of data completed and reported to HAB. Action plan in place to improve data quality and use of data.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a customer service charter for housing services.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Customer charter not yet started. Joined Institute of Customer Service and will be carrying out surveys in Jan/Feb 2026 to assess customer and staff views on customer service.

Corporate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the development of the 30 year HRA business plan.</li> </ul>	Feb 2026	3 year investment programme developed and shared with Abovo. Revenue budget costed and shared with Abovo. Some unknowns remain - rent convergence. Meeting scheduled 27th November. Business plan position required for December/ Jan for discussion with leadership and members. Budgets required for Feb 2026 Cabinet
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the development of HRA management accounts and monitor to ensure budgetary control.</li> </ul>	Oct 2025	HRA management accounts developed and monthly reporting in place
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve our approach to procurement including developing a contracts register and a procurement pipeline.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Procurement pipeline for investment programme developed and delivered. Repairs and compliance procurement pipeline being developed with some procurement complete for compliance. procurement complete for compliance. Contracts register being developed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and improve use of QL and integrated systems in delivering housing services and providing actionable data.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Desktop review complete. Transformation lead in place since September. Programme defined and programme board and workstreams up and running. Proposal received from Aareon for QL upgrade to SAAS. Cabinet approval required for costs – scheduled for Jan 2026.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carry out a training needs analysis linked to the regulatory requirements for professional standards training.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Learning and developed officer being recruited for housing. TNA started for housing staff. Survey on qualifications carried out.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete review of STH Ltd and implement agreed outcomes.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Campbell Tickell have completed review and outcome reported to Cabinet and agreed to close STH. In process of recruiting consultant to support closure.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Housing Communication Strategy which supports the delivery of both internal and external housing Service Comms goals whilst aligning with the wider council Comms plan.</li> </ul>	Sept 2025	Consultant support to develop strategy in place and draft strategy being developed.
Homelessness and housing advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the target operating model for the service.</li> </ul>	Dec 2025	Service currently being reviewed. How grants are used to fund the service is currently being mapped and strategy to use reserves being developed. Review of management structure currently ongoing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and shape the Homeless Prevention Strategy 25/26 onwards</li> </ul>	March 2026	Homelessness strategy currently being developed and co-produced with partners and service users. Strategy away day in February to agree final priorities based on research and feedback.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce the backlog of Housing Applications.</li> </ul>	Oct 2025	Data cleanse of waiting list is now complete. Additional resources have been put in place to support the team address the backlog of applications and this is now reducing.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of lease and repair properties. (10 in 25/26)</li> </ul>	March 2026	Completed on 2 family properties. 6 in pipeline and currently with legal and further 6 to be brought on line in new year
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the amount of PRS move on for singles and families.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Increase in the amount of move on PRS being used for both families and singles with a number PRS tenancies being used each month.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope and initiate a long-term commissioned accommodation scheme via a partner.</li> </ul>	March 2026	Huntley and Silver street both up and running as long term commissioned temporary accommodation. Further initiatives being explored including a social enterprise project with Cornerstone
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement GM Refugee welcome pack</li> </ul>	July 2026	This is ongoing and under review due to changes as a result of asylum reform
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop community navigator role.</li> </ul>	Aug 2026	Complete and navigator role developed and recruited to
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve website and social media resources for prevention .</li> </ul>	Sept 25	Work ongoing to add advice aid to the website as a source of information and advice around prevention.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver B&amp;B elimination plan.</li> </ul>	March 2026	B&B elimination plan in process. No families currently in B&B over 6 weeks Reduced families in B&B from 48 to 21. Additional funding received from MHCLG to carry out an occupancy audit / support reduction in use of B&& accommodation and increase prevention



Report to	Housing Advisory Board
Date	25/06/2025
Agenda No. & Title	6 Heat Networks
Purpose of the Report	<p>To inform the Board about upcoming regulatory changes under the Heat Networks Regulations 2025 and their impact on Bury's housing schemes that operate communal heating systems. From January 2026, heat networks will be regulated by Ofgem, requiring us to meet the same consumer protection, technical, and transparency standards as traditional energy suppliers.</p> <p>The paper outlines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What heat networks are.</li> <li>• Key changes in legislation and regulatory expectations</li> <li>• Schemes with Heat Networks in Bury.</li> </ul>
Status	For information
Author	Claire Rogan
Report Contact	<a href="mailto:c.rogan@bury.gov.uk">c.rogan@bury.gov.uk</a>
Appendices	Heat Network report
Background Documents	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/heat-networks">Heat networks regulation is coming</a> Ofgem <a href="https://www.gov.uk/guidance/heat-networks">https://www.gov.uk/guidance/heat-networks</a>
Recommendation/s	Delivery Priorities in report.
Corporate Plan Objective	The Heat Networks standards support the Bury Net Zero Carbon Neutral Strategy 2038
Risk Implications	Energy Ombudsman penalties for non compliance.
Mitigations/Controls	Delivery priorities and progress documented in the report. Appointment of an independent specialist provider to manage on behalf of Bury Housing Services.
Financial and Value for money implications	To be reviewed and reported back to board once underway.
Regulatory/	The energy Ombudsman expectations as highlighted in the report. ,

governance and legal implications	there are penalties associated to noncompliance.
Assets and Liabilities	
Resource Implications	Not yet identified
Customer Impact	Clearer comms to tenants about billing, improved protection for tenants, set standards for dealing with disruptions to heat networks. Long term , more reliable systems, fair pricing and compliance with a national standard.
EDI Implications	This report does not have a negative impact from an EDI perspective but does help us to identify how we can be more representative of our tenant demographic in relation to vulnerable tenants in our schemes.
Sustainability and Environmental Implications	Heat networks contribute by: reducing carbon emissions, improving energy efficiency, supporting net zero goals and futureproofing housing stock, ensuring they are compliant.
Privacy/Data Protection	
Colleague Impact	Potentially a ruse in complaints work, reporting against KPI's and the management of the contractor to ensure compliancy. .
Stakeholder Communications and Reputational Impact	Clear messaging is critical for all stakeholders. Changes in costs /billing or service disruption if not explained could result in complaints. There is an opportunity to engage with the TVF, tenants who have heat networks and HAB to explain this further and plan for the future together. Communications need to manage expectations making it clear what tenants can expect and what their rights are.
Next Steps	Delivery Priorities in report.

## Bury Housing Services - Heat Networks.

### Introduction

A heat network supplies heating and hot water from one central source to multiple homes or buildings through a network of insulated pipes carrying hot water or steam. Bury Housing has 6 communally heated residential sites.

### What's Changing?

The Heat Networks Regulations 2025, introduced under the Energy Act 2023, will bring full regulation of heat networks across Great Britain.

From January 2026, Ofgem will regulate heat networks, treating Bury Housing Service as authorised energy suppliers. This means we must meet the same standards as traditional energy companies in key areas:

- How customers are billed
- Customer service standards
- Complaints handling
- Protections for vulnerable consumers

Further guidance can be found here. [Heat networks regulation is coming | Ofgem](#)

### Impact on Bury

This legislation directly affects our housing schemes that operate heat networks. From January 2026, these schemes will need to comply with Ofgem's requirements.

Schemes with heat networks:

1. Waverley Place
2. Peachment Place
3. Redbank
4. Taylor House
5. Clarks Hill
6. Harwood House

### Regulatory Expectations and Our Response

1. Register All Heat Networks with Ofgem
  - Expectation: All heat networks must be registered with Ofgem by the compliance deadline.
  - Our Position: Completed – all Bury schemes operating heat networks are registered.
2. Consumer Protection
  - Expectation: Mandatory membership of the Energy Ombudsman Alternative Dispute Resolution scheme; complaints resolved within 8 weeks; escalation to Ombudsman if unresolved.

- Our Position: We have registered with the energy ombudsman and have drafted a complaints policy statement in line with the guidance.
- Next Steps: Incorporate specific Ombudsman guidance into our existing Complaints Policy. Publish on our website.

### 3. Guaranteed Standards

- Expectation: Compensation for outages and service reliability failures; clear standards published.
- Our Position: Compensation expectations identified in guidance.
- Next Steps: Add a dedicated Heat Networks section to the Bury Housing Services Compensation Policy. Publish on the website.

### 4. Technical Standards

- Expectation: Compliance with Heat Network Technical Assurance Scheme (HNTAS) for performance and metering.
- Our Position: KPI framework in development to monitor compliance.
- Next Steps: Implement regular performance tracking and reporting against HNTAS standards. Review frequency of submission to the regulator.

### 5. Fair Pricing & Transparency

- Expectation: Bills based on actual consumption; clear tariff breakdown; advance notice of changes.
- Our Position: Appointment of Chirpy Heat to support management and ensure compliance.
- Next Steps: Review billing processes and tariff communication to align with Ofgem requirements. Ensure communications with all stakeholders is clear and transparent, understanding how we communicate with vulnerable tenants and by doing so avoid unnecessary complaints.

### 6. Support for Vulnerable Customers

- Expectation: Maintain a priority register; provide rapid response for heat loss incidents.
- Our Position: Vulnerability data is captured in QL, a data cleanse exercise is in development designed to capture key information including vulnerability.
- Next Steps: Target sheltered schemes for data collection and ensure priority register is complete and regularly updated.

## **Resource & Financial Implications.**

There will be financial costs associated to metering upgrades and improvements to heat networks. A review of our heat networks will be delivered by Chirpy Heat and will provide us with a compliance roadmap, the detail of which will be reported to the board.

## **Appointment of Chirpy Heat**

In October we appointed Chirpy Heat, an independent heat network specialist, dedicated to helping us manage, and operate compliant, efficient, and reliable communal heating systems. Chirpy Heat are in the process of undertaking a Regulation Readiness Review, this will help guide our overall approach.

Heat networks maintenance is managed by the Compliance team with investment and feasibility delivered via the Capital Investment team. The Finance team will oversee the Heat Network billing. Complaints associated to Heat Networks will be managed by the complaints team. We will monitor demand as we begin to deliver against the new standards.

## **Delivery Priorities**

- Audit heat networks for compliance gaps and develop a compliance roadmap. (2026)
- Implement Guaranteed Standards. (by 2027)
- Publish standards, Complaints and Compensation Policies.

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Report to	Housing Advisory Board
Date	06/01/2026
Agenda No. & Title	Add agenda item no <b>Homeless Strategy Review</b>
Purpose of the Report	Update the board of the current position of Bury Councils Homeless Strategy Review and share key finding. To also provide the key recommendations that have identified throughout this review and agree the priorities for the 2026 onwards strategy.
Status	Discussion
Author	Amanda Mullen
Report Contact	a.mullen@bury.gov.uk
Appendices	
Background Documents	Homeless Strategy data review report
Recommendation/s	For the board to agree the priorities recommended within this report
Corporate Plan Objective	<input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied Tenants <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Homes <input type="checkbox"/> United Communities
Risk Implications	Choose an item.
Risk Controls and mitigations	N.A
Assets and Liabilities	N.A
Resource Implications	N.A
Customer Impact	N.A
EDI Implications	N.A
Sustainability and Environmental Implications	N.A

Privacy/Data Protection	
Colleague Impact	
Stakeholder Communications and Reputational Impact	
Next Steps	

## Briefing Note

	
<b>To:</b>	Housing Advisory Board
<b>From:</b>	Amanda Mullen, Manager, Homelessness and Housing Options
<b>Date:</b>	12/12/2025
<b>Report Subject:</b>	Review of the Homeless Strategy 2022-2025

### 1. Introduction

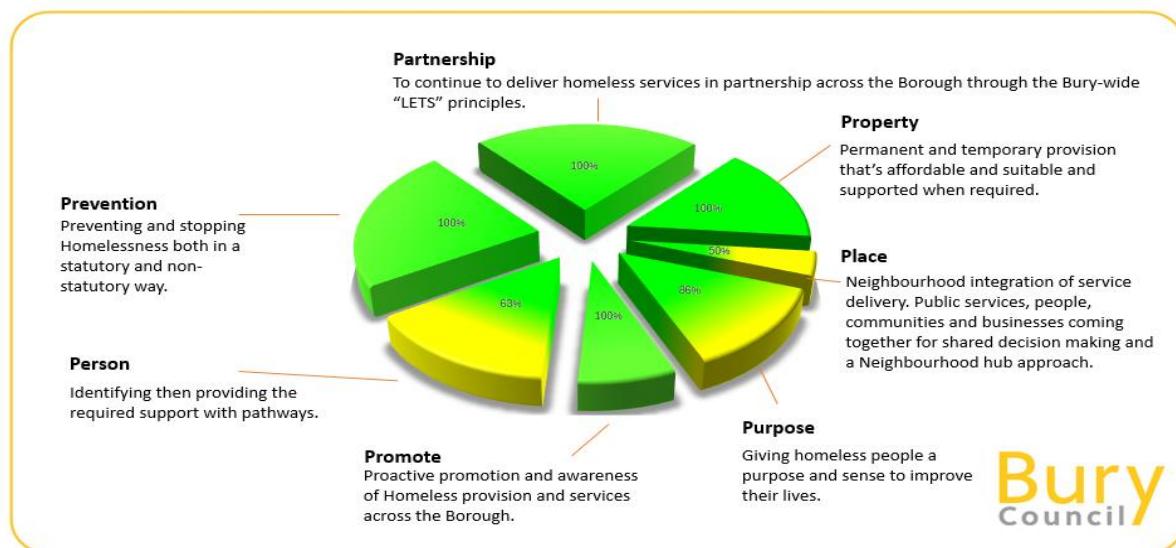
- 1.1 Bury Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a homelessness strategy. The current strategy, implemented in 2022, expired in October 2025. Before developing a new strategy, a comprehensive review of the actions outlined in the existing strategy must be undertaken,
- 1.2 In February 2025, a project group comprising relevant professionals was established to review the current strategy and develop the strategy for 2026 onwards. The group conducted a comprehensive data audit on homelessness covering the period from April 2022 to March 2025, incorporating both internal and external service data and outcomes. This work was guided by six strategic priorities, known as the "6 Ps": Prevention, Property, Person, Promote, Partnership, and place
- 1.3 Alongside the comprehensive data audit, a communication plan was developed, and three stakeholder engagement events were arranged with our partner agencies to review the outcomes achieved under the current strategy and to co-produce the next strategy.

**1.4** In addition to this work, the project actively engaged with individuals who had experienced homelessness through a customer survey and a series of community workshops. These activities ensured that their voices were heard, allowing their experiences to inform and shape the future priorities and actions Bury Council should pursue.

**1.5** This report provides a summary of the data review undertaken over the past year, highlighting what has been achieved, areas where progress has fallen short, the changing demands of homelessness, and the future priorities identified through stakeholder feedback and data analysis.

## 2. Review findings

**2.1** When reviewing the strategy's six priorities, the chart below illustrates the percentage of overall achievement within each area. Specific targets were set under each priority. For example, under *Prevention*, there was a strong commitment to developing a prison discharge pathway and hospital discharge meetings. Under *Property*, the focus was on commissioning accommodation for single individuals aged 18-35 in response to COVID-19 and the "Everyone In" initiative. Further details on outcomes achieved in these areas can be found in the background document, *Bury Homeless Strategy Review*.



**2.2** Although the review confirmed that many actions had been completed, we held a stakeholder engagement event with members of the Bury Homeless Partnership and the Homelessness and Housing Options Service to gather their views on the

strategy's effectiveness. A maturity assessment was used to analyse feedback from both events, which revealed that stakeholder perceptions of achievement differed from the earlier findings. This demonstrates that even when targets are met within a strategy, further work may still be required in those areas (see below).

**What our Stakeholders believe has been achieved and what still needs to be done?**

- We conducted a maturity assessment with the Bury Homeless Partnership and the Homeless and Housing Options Service. Members ranked each area "Getting Started, Making progress, Maturing or Matured". The Partnership has made significant progress in delivering the aims of the 2022–2025 strategy with all areas being ranked "making progress" or above
- The Maturity assessment established that the strategy had achieved the actions set out under Partnership, Place, Property and Purpose but identified a need to further invest in the promotion of homelessness services and ensuring that pathways and services are Person centred

**2.3** Following the stakeholder engagement events, we conducted a Lived Experience People Survey in Bury to gain a deeper understanding of the demographics, personal journeys, and service interactions of individuals and families who have experienced homelessness. This initiative was driven by a commitment to capture the voices of those directly affected and to inform future the future strategy design with real world insights. In addition to the survey, the service delivered face-to-face workshops with customers who had experienced homelessness. Below are the findings from those who have lived in experience.

## Summary of the People Survey and Co-production Feedback

The survey and co-production feedback reveal that homelessness in Bury is driven by a complex interplay of factors; including relationship breakdowns, financial hardship, and systemic barriers. Many individuals reported that temporary housing solutions are often inadequate, and the journey toward stability is both emotionally and physically exhausting. Support services vary significantly across different demographics, underscoring the need for inclusive, trauma-informed approaches.

Co-production sessions highlighted gaps in life skills support and called for more robust pathways to independence. Digital exclusion was identified as a barrier to accessing housing, with suggestions for app-based solutions to improve accessibility. Concerns were also raised about the rigidity of rough sleeper verification processes, with a call for more collaborative approaches.

Service users consistently expressed a desire to be treated with respect and individuality, and to be actively involved in shaping solutions. Top priorities identified include increasing the availability of recovery housing, ensuring fairer access to housing, and repurposing empty buildings. Additional needs include the provision of mentors with lived experience, simplified systems, and greater recognition of non-housing-related challenges that impact homelessness



**2.4** The section below highlights some of the key outcomes achieved throughout the 2022–2025 homelessness strategy, during which Bury Council commissioned support services and accommodation for individuals at risk, homeless, or rough sleeping. The review demonstrates that without these services, homelessness and rough sleeping in the borough would have been significantly worse.

## Non-statutory Accommodation and Service Provision

- As part of Bury Council's Homelessness Strategy 2022–2025, key pledges were set out within its vision, including the commissioning of accommodation and support services to meet statutory requirements and prevent homelessness using local and regional grant funding. In addition to delivering these commitments, the Council successfully mobilised services beyond statutory and commissioned provision.
- These achievements were made possible through strong cross-departmental collaboration and partnership working with internal teams and external agencies. Without these efforts, homelessness and rough sleeping levels in the borough would have been significantly higher.
- This overview demonstrates the critical role these services have played and evidences the need to continue and strengthen this work moving forward. This is the Key findings and recommendations for this area.

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Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP/NSAP)

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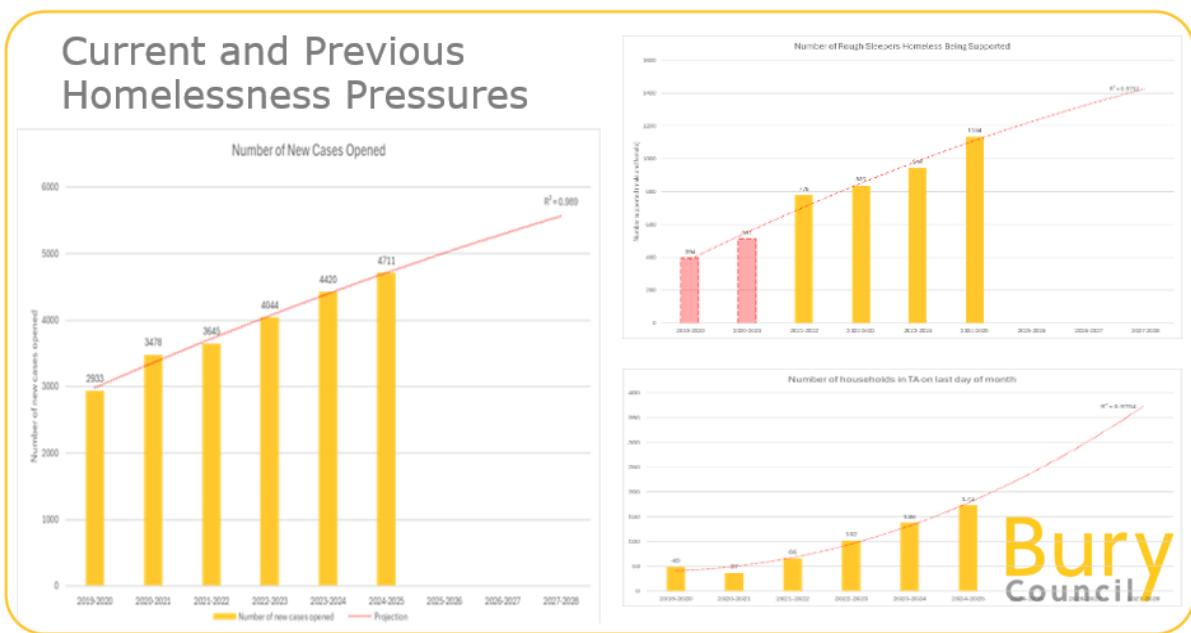
Safe Accommodation

Young Persons accommodation

### 3.1 Homelessness data 2022-2025

3.2 As part of the review, the project group conducted an in-depth analysis of homelessness data covering the period from April 2022 to March 2025. This work aimed to identify trends and increases in homelessness influenced by various environmental factors during that time, including the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery, the introduction of renter rights, rising rough sleeping, asylum and immigration pressures, and the national bed and breakfast accommodation crisis

3.3 The graphs below provide an overview of the rising demand for homelessness support, rough sleeping, and temporary accommodation placements. They also include future projections, illustrating the potential impact on the borough if demand continues to increase under a "do nothing" approach



3.4 Demand for Bury Council's Homeless Advice Service rose sharply due to the cost-of-living crisis and changes in Private Rented legislation, while staffing remained static. This placed pressure on services and led to increased use of interim accommodation and rough sleeping. Although statutory homelessness cases slightly declined in 2024-2025 (cases opened by the service), data shows that more people contacted the Homeless Assessment Service for support. These customers contacted the service once but did not respond to follow-up communications from the Homelessness team, resulting in their cases being closed. Data shows an increase in cases being closed due to lack of contact, a trend also confirmed by the GMCA Stocktake Report. It has been projected that demand may rise to 5,600 contacts by 2027-2028: an 18.9% increase from 2024-2025, if homelessness

trends continue to be the same.

- 3.5** Following a significant rise in homelessness presentations, Bury Council expanded its supply of temporary accommodation in 2024–2025 by acquiring additional dispersed units. However, by 2023, existing accommodation could no longer meet growing demand. As a result, the use of bed and breakfast (B&B) placements peaked at 58; the highest recorded for the borough. This increase was linked to a rise in cases where a homelessness duty was owed, alongside limited staffing capacity to deliver early prevention work. Consequently, Bury was issued a B&B elimination plan by the MHCLG.
- 3.6** Bury Council as of September 2025 have 222 households in temporary accommodation (401 children) 109 families in dispersed stock, 26 singles and 24 families in bed and breakfast accommodation. 56 families in pay nightly accommodation and 8 singles in council commissioned service.
- 3.7** It is forecasted that if there was a "do nothing attitude" and the council continue to place an average of 15 families in per month, with only 8 families leaving temporary accommodation per month on average, in three years the Council will need an additional 109 properties, on top of the current 110 dispersed and 8 commissioned.
- 3.8** Rough sleeping has risen significantly across the borough in recent years, with the highest numbers recorded in 2024. This mirrors regional and national trends, with the majority of those affected being males aged 30–45, including individuals recently granted leave to remain after leaving NASS accommodation. If current trends were to continue, rough sleeper supported by the team has been projected to increase to 1452 in 2027-2028 compared to 1134 in 204-2025 this is a 28.4% increase.
- 3.9** Bury Council's Asylum and Immigration Service leads on Home Office programmes including Homes for Ukraine, Afghan Relocation, and dispersed accommodation. The team works with GM partners and Serco to support asylum seekers and ensure safe integration. Once individuals receive leave to remain, they become eligible for resettlement support, particularly those issued with a Notice to Quit (NTQ). In 2023–2024, NTQ cases rose due to fast-track asylum decisions and the government's plan to close contingency hotels placing additional pressure on local services, with further demand expected.
- 3.10** While Bury's Private Rented Service has had some success, it has not eased the pressure on homelessness prevention or move-on from temporary accommodation. Strengthening engagement with landlords is essential to improve access to housing options. Affordability remains a major barrier, with high upfront rent expectations limiting placements. Financial incentives are available, but uptake is low, though HMOs have helped single people. Looking ahead, the Renters Reform Bill may affect current schemes, creating further uncertainty and challenges in securing landlord participation.

#### **4 Shaping the future Homeless strategy**

**4.3** The information below summarises the voices of our stakeholders and customers, captured through numerous face to face engagement events. These insights ensure that the key issues identified with homelessness in the borough and the recommendations provided are embedded within the future homelessness strategy

## Summary of Staff and Stakeholder Feedback

### Families:

Improve the quality and safety of temporary accommodation, prioritising family-friendly spaces with privacy and cooking facilities. Repurpose empty homes and explore new build agreements for social housing. Tailor support to individual family needs with wraparound services, mentoring, and life skills training. Assign one advocate per family to reduce stress and ensure continuity, especially in cases of domestic abuse. Strengthen early intervention by spotting warning signs like rent arrears or school issues and improve cross-agency communication. Reduce stigma around support services and increase public awareness through schools and translated materials. Integrate housing, health, education, and social care with single points of contact and shared systems.

### Singles:

Build trust through consistent staffing, respectful communication, and expanded outreach especially with peer mentors who have lived experience. Improve access to basic amenities and reduce stigma by renaming foodbanks as community shops. Simplify service language, use explainer videos, and introduce digital tools like empathetic AI chatbots. Create clear pathways to stable housing with goal-setting, follow-up, and support for practical barriers like transport and banking. Strengthen service integration through cross-sector training, stable staffing, and designated crisis roles. Support people with complex needs through tailored plans, embedded mental health workers, and hub-style accommodation. Provide dual-purpose housing for domestic abuse and substance misuse, with a single advocate to reduce trauma. Ensure veterans and LGBTQ+ individuals are supported with dignity and inclusive practices.

## Summary of Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement

Work with statutory and non-statutory partners to develop early prevention sign posting in hubs and schools

Improve the post homelessness offer to sustain tenancies and build independence

Further training for person-centred and trauma-informed training led by people with lived experience

**Inclusive and accessible support for all homelessness customers**

Increase supply of Housing and provide suitable temporary accommodation

Early prevention from homelessness

Raising awareness of homelessness to school, colleges and wider community

### Key Issues Identified:

- Lack of Life Skills Support: Service users feel unprepared for independent living. Current systems are overwhelming and risk setting people up to fail. There is a strong need for more recovery accommodation where individuals can live and learn in a safe, supported environment.
- Digital Barriers to Housing Access: Many struggle to bid for properties due to limited internet access and mobile data. An app-based solution was suggested to guide users through the process.
- Rough Sleeper Verification: The current process is seen as too strict, often leaving individuals in unsafe situations just to be "seen" and verified.
- Respect and Individuality: Service users want to be treated as individuals, not as part of a one-size-fits-all approach. They value consultation and co-production and want services to listen to their lived experiences of addiction, substance misuse, and offending.

### Top 3 Priorities Identified:

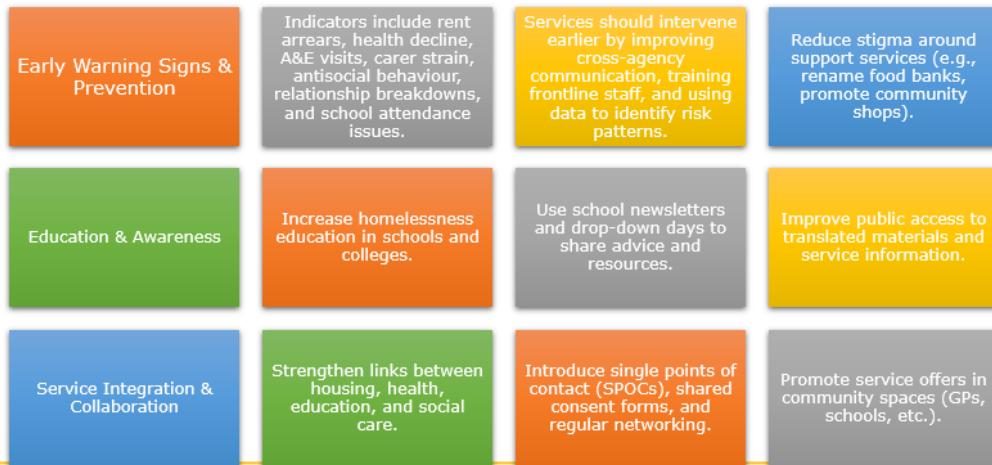
- More recovery houses.
- Fairer housing access e.g. first come, first served.
- Repurposing empty buildings for accommodation.

### Additional Suggestions:

- Increase access to mentors and buddies with lived experience.
- Simplify processes current systems involve too many hoops to jump through.
- Recognise that while housing is a major barrier, it is not the only one.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

Members of the Bury Homeless Partnership were provided with promoting questions that enabled conversation and debate about what is needed for the future of the strategy. Key cohorts were identified as important to include; young people, veterans, victims of domestic abuse, those with complex needs and refugees. Key areas of focus were identified:





## 5 Further works

- 5.1** Through this comprehensive review of the homelessness strategy incorporating key data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and co-production, we have identified emerging trends, existing gaps, and current pressures, which will inform the key objectives for Bury Homeless strategy 2026 onwards
- 5.2** The project group has also undertaken a literature reviews, including the new government homelessness and children in poverty strategy, Renters Right Act, Bury Councils Domestic abuse strategy as well as looking at regional and national homelessness data
- 5.3** As part of the strategic commitment to reduce inequalities and improving outcomes for vulnerable families, alongside this strategy, the Homelessness Accommodation Support Service has developed a three-year plan to reduce reliance on bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation. This aligns with the Ministry of Housing's B&B Elimination Plan, introduced in January 2025, and supports the Council's wider priorities around sustainable growth and improving lives.
- 5.4** It should also be noted that the new Bury Homelessness Strategy will align with the forthcoming Bury Council Housing Strategy, which is currently under review and being shaped for future implementation.

## 6 Key recommendations for Bury Homelessness strategy priorities for 2026 onwards

- Priority One, Strengthen our prevention offer
- Priority Two, Providing more suitable, safe accommodation and affordable accommodation.
- Priority Three, Reduce rough sleeping in the borough
- Priority Four, Improving support for a better quality of life

## **7 Next Steps**

- 7.1** A further workshop will be held in February 2026, providing key services with the opportunity to review the strategy report and its recommendations. During this session, services will collaborate to agree pledges against each of the agreed priorities, ensuring that homelessness is recognised as a shared responsibility across all partners.
- 7.2** Once the workshop has concluded, the strategy will be formally drafted and shared with partners and senior leadership for review and approval. It will then be submitted to Cabinet for final sign-off.
- 7.3** Following sign-off, a working group will be established to lead the development of a three-year action plan, led by the Homelessness and Housing Options Service in partnership with internal and external stakeholders.

## Briefing Note

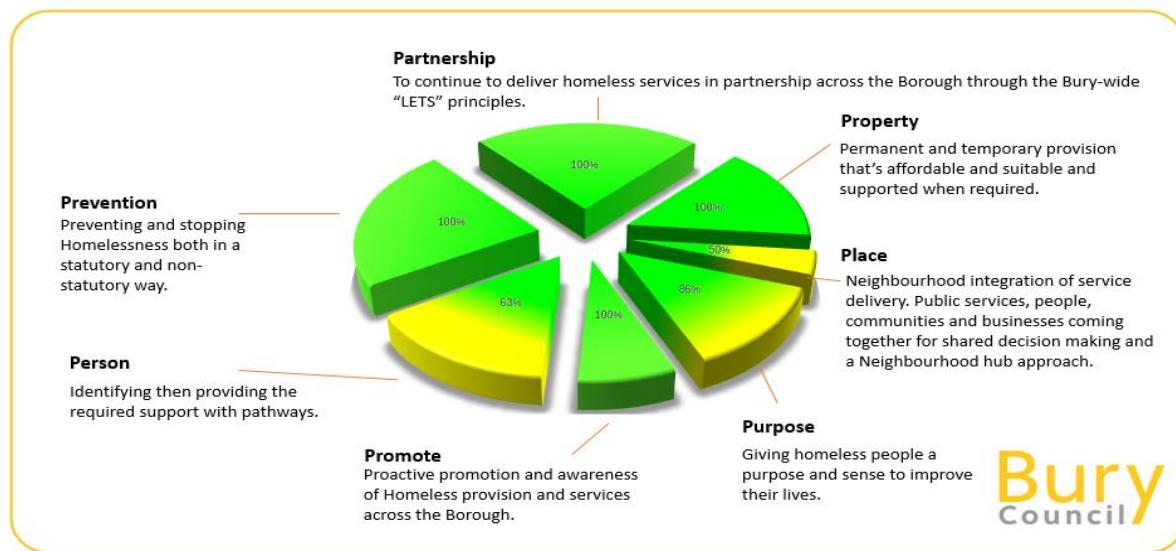
		Bury Council
<b>To:</b>	Housing Advisory Board	
<b>From:</b>	Amanda Mullen, Manager, Homelessness and Housing Options	
<b>Date:</b>	12/12/2025	
<b>Report Subject:</b>	Review of the Homeless Strategy 2022-2025	

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2

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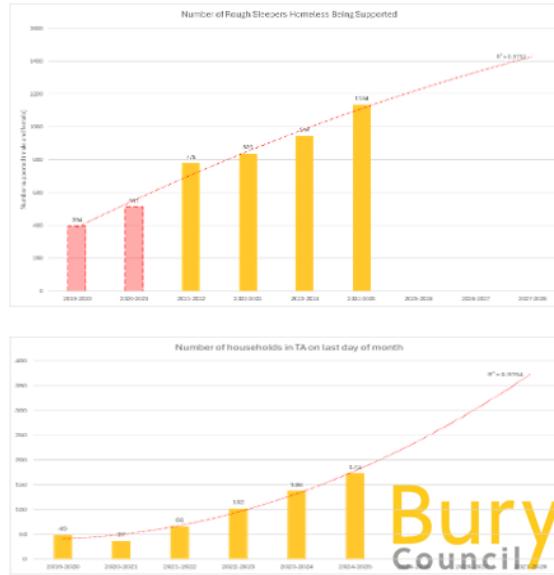
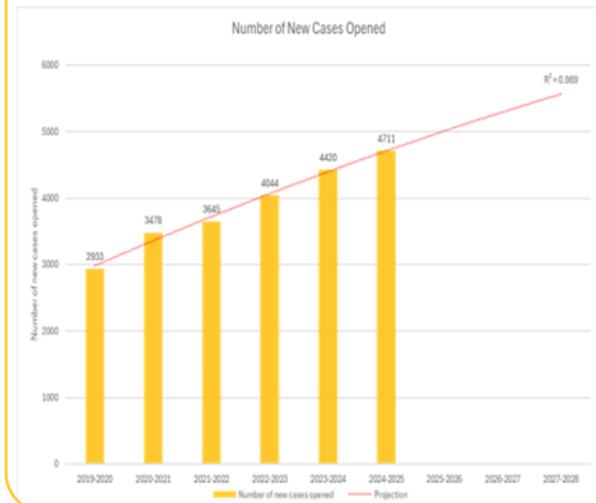
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## Current and Previous Homelessness Pressures




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- 3.7** It is forecasted that if there was a "do nothing attitude" and the council continue to place an average of 15 families in per month, with only 8 families leaving temporary accommodation per month on average, in three years the Council will need an additional 109 properties, on top of the current 110 dispersed and 8 commissioned.
- 3.8** Rough sleeping has risen significantly across the borough in recent years, with the highest numbers recorded in 2024. This mirrors regional and national trends, with the majority of those affected being males aged 30-45, including individuals recently granted leave to remain after leaving NASS accommodation. If current trends were to continue, rough sleeper supported by the team has been projected to increase to 1452 in 2027-2028 compared to 1134 in 2024-2025 this is a 28.4% increase.
- 3.9** Bury Council's Asylum and Immigration Service leads on Home Office programmes including Homes for Ukraine, Afghan Relocation, and dispersed accommodation. The team works with GM partners and Serco to support asylum seekers and ensure safe integration. Once individuals receive leave to remain, they become eligible for resettlement support, particularly those issued with a Notice to Quit (NTQ). In 2023-2024, NTQ cases rose due to fast-track asylum decisions and the government's plan to close contingency hotels placing additional pressure on local services, with further demand expected.
- 3.10** While Bury's Private Rented Service has had some success, it has not eased the pressure on homelessness prevention or move-on from temporary accommodation. Strengthening engagement with landlords is essential to improve access to housing options. Affordability remains a major barrier, with high upfront rent expectations limiting placements. Financial incentives are available, but uptake is low, though HMOs have helped single people. Looking ahead, the Renters Reform Bill may affect current schemes, creating further uncertainty and challenges in securing landlord participation.

#### **4 Shaping the future Homeless strategy**

- 4.3** The information below summarises the voices of our stakeholders and customers, captured through numerous face to face engagement events. These insights ensure that the key issues identified with homelessness in the borough and the recommendations provided are embedded within the future homelessness strategy

## Summary of Staff and Stakeholder Feedback

### Families:

Improve the quality and safety of temporary accommodation, prioritising family-friendly spaces with privacy and cooking facilities. Repurpose empty homes and explore new build agreements for social housing. Tailor support to individual family needs with wraparound services, mentoring, and life skills training. Assign one advocate per family to reduce stress and ensure continuity, especially in cases of domestic abuse. Strengthen early intervention by spotting warning signs like rent arrears or school issues and improve cross-agency communication. Reduce stigma around support services and increase public awareness through schools and translated materials. Integrate housing, health, education, and social care with single points of contact and shared systems.

### Singles:

Build trust through consistent staffing, respectful communication, and expanded outreach especially with peer mentors who have lived experience. Improve access to basic amenities and reduce stigma by renaming foodbanks as community shops. Simplify service language, use explainer videos, and introduce digital tools like empathetic AI chatbots. Create clear pathways to stable housing with goal-setting, follow-up, and support for practical barriers like transport and banking. Strengthen service integration through cross-sector training, stable staffing, and designated crisis roles. Support people with complex needs through tailored plans, embedded mental health workers, and hub-style accommodation. Provide dual-purpose housing for domestic abuse and substance misuse, with a single advocate to reduce trauma. Ensure veterans and LGBTQ+ individuals are supported with dignity and inclusive practices.

## Summary of Partnership and Stakeholder Engagement

Work with statutory and non-statutory partners to develop early prevention sign posting in hubs and schools

Improve the post homelessness offer to sustain tenancies and build independence

Further training for person-centred and trauma-informed training led by people with lived experience

**Inclusive and accessible support for all homelessness customers**

Increase supply of Housing and provide suitable temporary accommodation

Early prevention from homelessness

Raising awareness of homelessness to school, colleges and wider community

**Key Issues Identified:**

- Lack of Life Skills Support: Service users feel unprepared for independent living. Current systems are overwhelming and risk setting people up to fail. There is a strong need for more recovery accommodation where individuals can live and learn in a safe, supported environment.
- Digital Barriers to Housing Access: Many struggle to bid for properties due to limited internet access and mobile data. An app-based solution was suggested to guide users through the process.
- Rough Sleeper Verification: The current process is seen as too strict, often leaving individuals in unsafe situations just to be “seen” and verified.
- Respect and Individuality: Service users want to be treated as individuals, not as part of a one-size-fits-all approach. They value consultation and co-production and want services to listen to their lived experiences of addiction, substance misuse, and offending.

**Top 3 Priorities Identified:**

- More recovery houses.
- Fairer housing access e.g. first come, first served.
- Repurposing empty buildings for accommodation.

**Additional Suggestions:**

- Increase access to mentors and buddies with lived experience.
- Simplify processes current systems involve too many hoops to jump through.
- Recognise that while housing is a major barrier, it is not the only one.

## Key Findings and Recommendations

Members of the Bury Homeless Partnership were provided with promoting questions that enabled conversation and debate about what is needed for the future of the strategy. Key cohorts were identified as important to include; young people, veterans, victims of domestic abuse, those with complex needs and refugees. Key areas of focus were identified:

<b>Early Warning Signs &amp; Prevention</b>	Indicators include rent arrears, health decline, A&E visits, carer strain, antisocial behaviour, relationship breakdowns, and school attendance issues.	Services should intervene earlier by improving cross-agency communication, training frontline staff, and using data to identify risk patterns.	Reduce stigma around support services (e.g., rename food banks, promote community shops).
<b>Education &amp; Awareness</b>	Increase homelessness education in schools and colleges.	Use school newsletters and drop-down days to share advice and resources.	Improve public access to translated materials and service information.
<b>Service Integration &amp; Collaboration</b>	Strengthen links between housing, health, education, and social care.	Introduce single points of contact (SPOCs), shared consent forms, and regular networking.	Promote service offers in community spaces (GPs, schools, etc.).



## 5 Further works

**5.1** Through this comprehensive review of the homelessness strategy incorporating key data analysis, stakeholder engagement, and co-production, we have identified emerging trends, existing gaps, and current pressures, which will inform the key objectives for Bury Homeless strategy 2026 onwards

- 5.2** The project group has also undertaken a literature reviews, including the new government homelessness and children in poverty strategy, Renters Right Act, Bury Councils Domestic abuse strategy as well as looking at regional and national homelessness data
- 5.3** As part of the strategic commitment to reduce inequalities and improving outcomes for vulnerable families, alongside this strategy, the Homelessness Accommodation Support Service has developed a three-year plan to reduce reliance on bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation. This aligns with the Ministry of Housing's B&B Elimination Plan, introduced in January 2025, and supports the Council's wider priorities around sustainable growth and improving lives.
- 5.4** It should also be noted that the new Bury Homelessness Strategy will align with the forthcoming Bury Council Housing Strategy, which is currently under review and being shaped for future implementation.

## **6 Key recommendations for Bury Homelessness strategy priorities for 2026 onwards**

- Priority One, Strengthen our prevention offer
- Priority Two, Providing more suitable, safe accommodation and affordable accommodation.
- Priority Three, Reduce rough sleeping in the borough
- Priority Four, Improving support for a better quality of life

## **7 Next Steps**

- 7.1** A further workshop will be held in February 2026, providing key services with the opportunity to review the strategy report and its recommendations. During this session, services will collaborate to agree pledges against each of the agreed priorities, ensuring that homelessness is recognised as a shared responsibility across all partners.
- 7.2** Once the workshop has concluded, the strategy will be formally drafted and shared with partners and senior leadership for review and approval. It will then be submitted to Cabinet for final sign-off.
- 7.3** Following sign-off, a working group will be established to lead the development of a three-year action plan, led by the Homelessness and Housing Options Service in partnership with internal and external stakeholders.



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Report to	Housing Advisory Board
Date	06/01/2026
Agenda No. & Title	8 <b>HRA Rent Increase 2026-27</b>
Purpose of the Report	For information report outlining current position in relation to potential Rent Increase for 2026-27.
Status	For information
Author	Darrell Campbell - HRA Finance Business Partner (Interim)
Report Contact	Darrell Campbell D.Campbell@bury.gov.uk
Appendices	n/a
Background Documents	n/a
Recommendation/s	The meeting should note the potential rent and service charge increases for 2026-27 to be agreed by Cabinet in February 2026
Corporate Plan Objective	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Satisfied Tenants <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Quality Homes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> United Communities
Risk Implications	Insufficient resources to ensure HRA remains viable and able to deliver investment in homes and service to tenants
Risk Controls and mitigations	HRA business planning in place Rent increases in line with RSH rent standard
Assets and Liabilities	Not applicable
Resource Implications	The decision to approve the rent increase in February 2026, will determine the level of resources available to the HRA to deliver on the ambitions of Cabinet and tenants.
Customer Impact	The rent increase will impact on those tenants who pay their own rent these tenants will need to find the additional money to pay their rent from their income. We will ensure that all tenants are aware of support available to them if they will struggle to pay the additional rent.
EDI Implications	

Sustainability and Environmental Implications	N/A
Privacy/Data Protection	N/A
Colleague Impact	N/A
Stakeholder Communications and Reputational Impact	Rent increase letters will explain the rent increase to tenants. These can include information on support available if struggling to pay.
Next Steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet paper in February 2026 to sign off rent increase</li> <li>• Rent increase letters sent by end Feb 2026.</li> </ul>

## Housing Rent Increase 2026-27

### Introduction

This note gives a brief overview of the current position in relation to the rent increase to be proposed for 2026-27, and likely proposed increases in related service charges and garage rents. In addition, a brief explanation is provided on the Government's proposed commitment to the re-introduction of Rent Convergence, and the potential implications of this for Bury's HRA.

### Rent Increase 2026-27

The proposed rent increase for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) in the financial year 2026-27 is set at 4.8%, based on the CPI + 1% formula. The rent increase is calculated using the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as at September of the previous year plus 1%, resulting in a 4.8% increase for the 2026-27 financial year. This formula is part of a ten-year plan agreed upon by the government, which aims to ensure that rents remain affordable while allowing for necessary investment in the housing stock. The increase is intended to support the management and maintenance of council properties, ensuring that they meet safety and quality standards. It also aims to provide adequate resources for investment in housing improvements and to address the financial challenges faced by the council in maintaining its housing stock.

### Rent Convergence

Back in 2002 the then Labour Government introduced the rent convergence policy, the intention was to bring rents in social housing into alignment over a ten-year period, to ensure consistency in rent levels across the country, and address historic variations in social rents. However, the policy was never consistently applied and was abandoned by the previous government in 2015.

The sector has been lobbying ever since for the policy to be re-introduced, to provide additional resources to the sector that would have been available if all properties had been allowed to reach their formula rent.

If as had been expected the policy had been re-introduced as part of the Chancellor's budget announcements, the policy would see social rents currently below "formula rent" increase by an extra amount (either £1 or £2 per week), over and above the CPI plus 1% limit. Bury in common with a lot of authorities was in a position where a significant proportion of its stock had not achieved convergence when the policy was abandoned. It is estimated that the policy would need to be reinstated at an extra £2 per week for at least the next ten years to bring social rents back in line with formula rents, and it is estimated that that could eventually bring in an additional circa £4m per annum for the HRA, once convergence is achieved.

However, although confirming that the government was still committed to the re-introduction of the policy in her November 2025 budget statement, the Chancellor stated that the details of that re-introduction would not now be published until January 2026. We will need to wait and see what is announced, but it is also possible that they might delay the re-introduction until the following April. This would make some sense as not only is inflation estimated to be lower by then, but an introduction in January would give authorities very little time to turn round building in the changes, testing systems and getting rent letters out to tenants in time for the new financial year.

### **Conclusion**

We now know that the base rent increase for 2026-27 in line with government policy will be proposed at 4.8%. At this stage we don't know what the implications will be in relation to rent convergence, but we should get more clarity on that issue in January 2026.

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