

Consumer Standards Improvement Strategy

December 2025



Contents

Foreword 3

Executive summary 4

Background 5

Workstreams 7

Strategic objectives 8

Progress and milestones 10

Governance and feeding back to tenants 11

Measuring success 12

Links to key strategies 13

Foreword

As the councillor responsible for council housing, I welcome the Regulator of Social Housing's engagement with the council and its approval of this Consumer Standards Improvement Strategy.

The regulator's recent assessment confirmed what we had already identified through our own scrutiny and assurance activity: that there are areas of our landlord service where improvement is required.

It also recognised the council's openness in reporting concerns, the steps already taken to address them, and the constructive way officers are engaging to deliver change.

This strategy brings together the work underway across the housing service and sets out clearly how we will strengthen performance against the Consumer Standards.

It focuses on improving the quality of information we hold about our homes and our tenants, ensuring health and safety compliance is delivered consistently, strengthening accountability and oversight, and improving how we respond to tenants, including through complaints and engagement.

I am confident this strategy provides an accurate and realistic framework for improvement.

Importantly, it is supported by clear milestones and a separate action plan, to ensure progress is sustained and monitored.

However, we recognise there is more work to do.

To strengthen oversight, a dedicated Cabinet Advisory Committee for Housing has been established to provide ongoing scrutiny and challenge as the strategy is delivered.

The committee includes tenant representation, with two tenants sitting alongside councillors, ensuring tenant perspectives are embedded in governance and decision-making.

Members of the committee will continue to monitor progress closely, working with officers, tenants and the regulator to ensure improvements are delivered as intended.

This strategy reflects our commitment to learning from where we have fallen short and to making the changes necessary to ensure our landlord service is safe, transparent and well managed.

Cllr Pip Hazelton

Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing
Canterbury City Council



Executive summary

This strategy sets out Canterbury City Council's plan to address the improvements identified by the Regulator of Social Housing in its C3 Regulatory Judgement in October 2025.

It focuses on achieving compliance with all Consumer Standards, improving safety and quality, strengthening governance and delivering a tenant-focused service.



Background

We are a social housing landlord which owns and manages around 5,100 council homes across Canterbury, Whitstable, Herne Bay and surrounding rural areas.

Our stock represents approximately eight per cent of all homes in the district making the council the largest social housing landlord.

As a social housing Registered Provider and in accordance with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, we must provide evidence of compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) Consumer Standards which seek to ensure social housing landlords are providing good quality homes and services to tenants.

In 2024, we began a detailed self-assessment to review our performance against the Consumer Standards.

This review identified a few areas of concern, particularly around stock quality and decency, complaint handling, governance, our policy framework and weaknesses in our understanding of the diverse needs of our tenants.

As a result of these findings, we referred ourselves to the RSH.

Following a regulatory inspection in July 2025, we received a C3 grading from the RSH on 15 October 2025 as C3 by the RSH, which concluded we have serious failings requiring improvement to meet the standards.

We want to deliver the best service we can to our tenants and are committed to putting things right.

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Our housing promise pledges to:

- put tenants' safety at the heart of everything we do
- deliver a housing service that keeps tenants safe, listens and treats tenants with respect

We are also dedicated to doing our best to get things right first time and if we don't, we will fix it and learn from it.



We have developed this strategy and service improvement plan to address the issues identified including ensuring we have up-to-date stock condition data, strengthen health and safety compliance, and improve our responsiveness to complaints.

The plan also includes improving our adaptations services, better understanding of our tenants and enhancing tenant engagement.

This strategy and plan are overseen by a Cabinet Advisory Committee for Housing, which includes tenant representation, to ensure oversight of our progress and scrutiny.

The committee reports back to the council's Cabinet to ensure there is political accountability.

The council's Cabinet signs off the direction, priorities and control measures that will guide our work to meet the regulator's Consumer Standards.

This strategy:

- sets the council's objectives and how they will be achieved
- defines the strategic outcomes for our services and tenants
- sets out the priorities and key actions
- explains how it will measure improvements and track progress
- commits to sustaining improvements over the long term
- will help tenants, councillors and partners understand how we will deliver the improvements required
- will be reviewed regularly as officers work through service improvement under the supervision of the Cabinet Advisory Committee and tenant feedback

Progress so far

For every area in the regulatory judgement consideration has been given to the root cause, and an analysis has taken place of this.

Some of the key areas identified as root causes include:

- staffing and the requirement for more frontline staff
- current system usage and capabilities, the need to maximise use of existing system to improve delivery of service
- monitoring and oversight/scrutiny - being able to identify issues at an early stage and provide space for adequate scrutiny
- recording of information and client data

While developing this strategy and action plan, we have already started working on some of the gaps in assurance identified. Highlights include:

- reviewing staffing structures and increasing resources in key areas such as compliance, tenancy management, repairs, and maintenance
- bringing in an outside company to accelerate the completion of stock condition surveys
- reviewing our approach to tackling no access to our tenants' homes
- reviewing the skills and capacity of staff, and using this information to develop training plans that improve service delivery
- completing a review of the data collected about tenants to ensure this is fit for purpose and enables the council to adequately profile tenants and provide them with services to meet their needs



Workstreams

Below are the workstreams, with strategic outcomes.

Consumer Standards		Strategic outcomes (what will be achieved)				
Workstream 1: Safety and quality standard 		A. Assurance that all our homes and communal areas are safe and free from hazards B. Assurance all our properties meet the Decent Homes Standard C. A longer-term investment plan underpinned by comprehensive and recent stock condition survey information D. All contracts providing effective, efficient and timely services that meet the diverse needs of our tenants E. Assurance all tenants are aware of their right to access the adaptation services and adaptations are completed in a timely way				
		A. Assurance that we understand and meet our tenants' needs B. We will hold data on all tenants, where they disclose this, about their diverse needs, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs. C. Data will be used to monitor and ensure services deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants D. Improved complaints performance ensuring issues are addressed fairly, effectively and promptly in line with the housing ombudsman complaint handling code				
		A. Assurance that we are effectively dealing with antisocial behaviour (ASB) and tenants feel more satisfied with our response and actions B. We have an understanding of the levels of hate related ASB and the information is available for scrutiny by tenants, councillors and senior management				

Strategic objectives

We have four key strategic outcomes we aim to achieve and these are:

- improve the housing service to achieve compliance with all Consumer Standards
- embed change across the service to ensure sustainability and continuous compliance
- strengthen governance and transparency to ensure regular oversight and scrutiny
- achieve successful regrading of our assurance level and maintain this rating

Below are some of the key actions from the service improvement plan which has been designed to meet all the requirements of the RSH’s Consumer Standards.

Strategic outcomes	Key actions
Workstream 1: Safety and quality	
A. Assurance that all our homes and communal areas are safe and free from hazards	Adopt the Housing Asset Management Strategy
B. Assurance that all our properties meet the Decent Homes Standard	Complete the stock condition survey programme to inform investment plans based on complete and accurate data
C. A longer-term investment plan underpinned by comprehensive and recent stock condition survey information	Following completion of the full SCS programme, a rolling five-year survey cycle will be implemented to maintain accurate asset data
D. All contracts provide effective, efficient and timely services to meet the diverse needs of our tenants	Ensure properties meet the Decent Homes Standard using complete and accurate data from the stock condition surveys and Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) surveys
E. Ensure tenants are aware of their right to access adaptation services and adaptations are completed in a timely way	Ensure HHSRS actions from stock condition surveys are accurately reported and completed within required timescales
	Ensure we have a strategic approach backed up with robust processes for hard-to-access properties
	Carry out block inspections at the right frequency and ensure follow up actions are completed
	To adopt and publish the Reactive and Planned Maintenance Policy which will include information on repair timescales
	Ensure contractors deliver services in line with contract key performance indicators (KPIs)
	Ensure tenants are safe in their homes by improving and maintaining performance in gas safety, communal electrical testing, carbon monoxide, water safety, fire remedial works and lifts
	Improve oversight of tenant’s health and safety by increasing reporting to senior leaders and the portfolio holder
	Adopt and publish an adaptations policy setting out tenants’ rights to access adaptations and the respective responsibilities of Canterbury City Council and Kent County Council
	Ensure major adaptations are completed in line with set timescales

Strategic outcomes	Key actions
Workstream 2: Transparency, influence and accountability	
A. Assurance that we understand and meet our tenants’ needs and treat them with fairness and respect B. We will hold data on all tenants, where they disclose this, about their diverse needs, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs C. Data will be used to monitor and ensure services deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants D. Improved complaints performance ensuring issues are addressed fairly, effectively and promptly iin line with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code	Be more proactive in collecting data on tenants’ diverse needs Keep tenant information up to date, identifying tenant support needs and making reasonable adjustments needed to meet these to provide the best possible landlord service Review the performance information/data shared with tenants to allow them to have sufficient scrutiny of services Put in place more effective and timely complaint handling that responds proactively to tenants and resolves issues raised within our agreed timescales and in a way that meets the tenants' needs. This will also include contractor complaints Develop a positive complaints culture alongside established processes that provide insights to help facilitate continuous improvement in service delivery We will set measurable targets for improving complaint timeliness, data completeness and TSM performance, informed by the Action Plan KPI
Workstream 3: Neighbourhood and community	
A. Assurance that we are effectively dealing with antisocial behaviour (ASB) and tenants feel more satisfied with our response and actions B. We have an understanding of the levels of hate related ASB and the information is available for scrutiny by tenants, councillors and senior management	Review how improvements can be made to inform tenants of the progress of ASB and what support can be provided so that tenants feel satisfied with our approach to handling ASB Improve our response to dealing with hate crime including updating the website with how to report hate crime and provide oversight of hate crime through reporting Analyse ASB data to look at trends and improve the service response

Progress and milestones

Progress will be regularly monitored and overseen by the Cabinet Advisory Committee.

We will also provide feedback through the relevant tenant engagement groups and to tenants directly.

To monitor success and delivery of the strategic outcomes, key milestones have been set out.

Milestone 1: identify what needs to be done and have an action plan in place to fix the root cause with appropriate oversight

- Cabinet Advisory Committee set up
- improvement plan in place
- root cause analysis taken place for key areas

Milestone 2 – October 2026: all high-risk actions from the Regulator of Social Housing's judgement will have been completed

- root causes for all areas have been identified
- we will have surveyed or attempted to survey (minimum of two attempts) all our housing stock and put in place resources to undertake cyclical five-year condition surveys. We have a better understanding of our Decent Homes Standard and all hazards arising from the stock condition surveys will be included in the regular reports to senior management and councillors
- we will report on the level of decent homes
- strategies, policies and processes identified by the regulator for health and safety are in place
- effective governance is in place to scrutinise service delivery
- hate related ASB incidents can be reported by tenants and are appropriately recorded

- adaptations policy in place
- service standards for tenants are in place and published

Milestone 3 – April 2027: all high-risk actions set out in the regulatory judgement will have been achieved and the majority of the improvement plan actions have been completed.

- a programme of tenancy audits is in place and at least 10% are being completed each year, along with proactive data collection methods to improve the data held about tenants
- improved complaints performance and mechanism for contractor complaints oversight in place
- sustained improved performance in all compliance areas
- improvement of ASB handling
- review of KPIs has taken place
- improved timeliness of major adaptations
- more performance data will be available for tenants to view

Milestone 4 – December 2027: all actions will have been completed and there is a commitment to continuous improvement.

- we will have good stock and tenant data having surveyed all tenants for protected characteristics and reasonable adjustments
- there is appropriate governance and oversight of the services
- we understand our tenants and provide good quality services

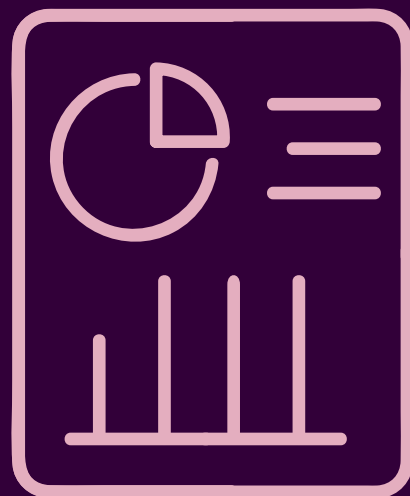
Governance and feeding back to tenants

To ensure the objectives are kept on track there will be regular monitoring of the strategic outcomes and reporting of progress to the Cabinet Advisory Committee for Housing.

The committee consists of elected members and tenant representatives to ensure effective oversight.

Regular feedback will also be supplied to tenants through the tenant newsletter sent twice yearly.

The improvement plan will be published on a quarterly basis with updates on the council's website.



Measuring success

We will measure success by:

- monitoring set KPIs against the plan with improved performance
- regular monitoring of the plan and actions completed within the required timescales
- feedback from the Regulator of Social Housing, resulting in the successful closure of Provider Improvement arrangements.
- improved Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM)
- successful internal audits
- We will seek assurance through a combination of an internal audit and external scrutiny



Links to key strategies

[Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028](#)

[Tenancy Strategy](#)

[Tenant Engagement Strategy 2026 - 2030](#)

[Housing Asset Management Strategy 2025 to 2029](#)

[Housing Strategy 2026 to 2030](#)

[HRA Business Plan 2019](#) (new plan in progress)

[Canterbury City Council Housing Allocations Policy](#)



