Asset Management Delivery Strategy

2026-2031

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Introduction

This Asset Management Delivery Strategy establishes the delivery models, workforce arrangements, procurement approach, contract management framework, and governance mechanisms that will underpin the delivery of repairs, maintenance, compliance, and capital investment services across the Authority's housing stock. It provides a clear framework for resource deployment, commissioning and procurement, contract management, and service delivery, ensuring value for money, regulatory compliance, service resilience, and positive outcomes for residents, while supporting market diversity, local economic benefit, and social value.

The strategy supports statutory obligations, regulatory standards, and budget frameworks by establishing delivery models that promote value for money, social value, workforce development, and the effective deployment of resources across housing services.

At the end of the financial year 2025/26 our housing stock consisted of **27,781 properties**.

- 26,817 of these properties are managed by Sandwell Council and 964 by the Riverside Group housing association (see below).
- There are also freeholder of buildings in which there are 1,370 leasehold properties across the borough.
- In addition, we have 141 properties used for temporary accommodation and an additional 196 for supported housing.

For Riverside-managed homes, the Council pays a Unitary Charge (management fee), which covers the full range of housing services including housing management, responsive and planned repairs, capital works, grounds maintenance, caretaking and associated staffing. Riverside procure and manage their own contractors to deliver these services on their behalf.

As delivery models evolve, the Council will maintain strong client-side oversight to ensure contractual arrangements are effectively managed, monitored and governed. This will include appropriate commercial, technical and operational resources to oversee contractor performance, quality assurance, financial management and service outcomes. Where larger contractual arrangements are adopted, delivery models will be supported by clear governance structures, risk management arrangements and business continuity measures to ensure services remain resilient and responsive to resident needs.

The document is underpinned by the Sandwell Housing Service Code of Conduct, which establishes the professional behaviours, ethical standards, and accountability expected of all staff, managers, contractors, and partners involved in delivery. The Code applies equally to in-house services and outsourced provision, ensuring a consistent standard of behaviour and resident experience across all delivery models. Delivery undertaken by Riverside is subject to Council oversight through established governance arrangements, including partnership Asset Management meetings and internal audit assurance processes.

The Housing Service Code of Conduct forms a core foundation of delivery, ensuring that all repairs, maintenance, and investment activities are delivered in a way that is customer-focused, inclusive, accountable, collaborative ('One Team'), and ambitious.

The accompanying action plan provides a clear roadmap for the future commissioning, procurement, and delivery of Asset Management services. It focuses on driving efficiency through the ongoing review of delivery arrangements, strengthening contract management, reducing duplication, optimising resources, and securing value for money. In doing so, it will consider the most appropriate mix of delivery models across the housing stock, while promoting service resilience, market diversity, local economic benefit, and continuous improvement in performance and resident outcomes.

A review undertaken in 2024 identified opportunities to improve efficiency, performance, and value for money across Asset Management through strengthened contract management, better resource utilisation, and more effective commissioning and delivery arrangements. The review highlighted the need for a strategic framework to guide service delivery, ensuring internal resources are utilised effectively and complemented by external providers where additional capacity, specialist expertise, innovation, or economies of scale can be achieved. It also established a clear direction for future procurement and delivery arrangements that support service resilience, market diversity, local economic benefit, and continuous improvement, while recognising the distinct operating models of Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs), which may deliver services directly, access Council services, or procure independently through their own supply chains.

Context

The environment in which social housing Asset Management services are delivered has become increasingly complex, shaped by economic pressures, market conditions, and significant regulatory reform. Persistently high inflation, elevated interest rates, and rising construction costs continue to impact the affordability of repairs, maintenance, and capital investment. At the same time, national rent policy limits income growth, placing greater emphasis on efficiency, prioritisation, and value for money within Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plans.

The construction and maintenance market is experiencing sustained capacity and skills pressures, with shortages across key trades and increased competition for labour. These conditions are influencing how social landlords structure procurement, the scale and duration of contracts, and decisions about the balance between external contractors and Direct Labour Operatives (DLOs). A more strategic and commercially informed approach to procurement and delivery is increasingly necessary to secure capacity, manage risk, and maintain service continuity.

Regulatory reform has strengthened expectations are service quality, accountability, and landlord oversight. The Regulator of Social Housing's proactive Consumer Standards regime places greater emphasis on the outcomes experienced by residents, including the safety and quality of homes, the timeliness and effectiveness of repairs, transparency, and accountability. Compliance with these standards applies across all Asset Management activity, regardless of whether services are delivered in-house or through external contractors, reinforcing the need for robust contract management, performance monitoring, and clear lines of accountability. Regulatory focus on competence and conduct reinforces the need to embed behavioural standards through the Housing Service Code of Conduct across all delivery models.

The Procurement Act 2023 also introduces a new legislative framework for public sector procurement, placing increased emphasis on transparency, competition, and value for money, while providing greater flexibility in how contracts are designed and awarded. For housing Asset Management, this influences how works are packaged, how suppliers are engaged an how social value, workforce development, and delivery resilience are built into contracts. The Act supports longer-term and more collaborative contracting approaches, where appropriate, but also requires stronger commercial governance and capability to manage risk effectively.

Whilst future procurement activity may seek to align complementary workstreams to improve efficiency, reduce duplication and strengthen accountability, the Council will continue to support a diverse supply chain. Procurement approaches will seek to create opportunities for local SMEs, specialist providers and community-based organisations where appropriate, recognising their important contribution to service delivery, economic growth and social value outcomes.

Alongside these changes, national priorities such as building safety, decarbonisation, and housing growth continue to compete for limited resources and delivery capacity. These pressures require social landlords to make balanced and evidence-led decisions about both investment and delivery models.

This Asset Management Delivery Strategy has been developed in response to this national context. It provides a framework for aligning procurement, the retention/use of DLO, contract management, and delivery arrangements with regulatory expectations, market conditions, and financial constraints, ensuring that services remain safe, compliant, and resilient while delivering value for money within the HRA Business Plan.

The increasing focus on building safety, retrofit activity, energy efficiency and emerging technologies also creates new workforce challenges. Maintaining a skilled workforce, investing in training and apprenticeships, and developing future technical capability will therefore remain important considerations when determining future delivery models.

Key Achievements

Since the 2024 service review and the implementation of a continuous improvement programme, the Asset Management Service has delivered significant efficiencies and service improvements across financial management, repairs delivery, procurement, contract management, and social value. Key achievements include:

Strengthened financial control, identifying a £540,848 invoice variance and delivering £57,522 in savings.

Recovered and processed over £2 million in backlogged payments, improving audit and contract management.

Protected budgets through the management of over £1 million in year-end accruals and the transfer of eligible expenditure from Revenue to Capital budgets, ensuring the appropriate use of resources and improved financial forecasting.

Improved right-first-time repairs from 62% to 83% through full rollout of controlled van stock.

Delivered key contracts and maintained services through procurement challenges, including damp and mould, gas, roofing, scaffolding, materials and smart technologies.

Extended critical contracts (Gas, Water, Damp and Mould) to ensure continuity of essential services.

Digitised frontline operations with full mobile access to risk assessments and method statements via Keymas, our warehouse management system.

Delivered tangible community benefits through Council contracts, including 31 local jobs, 10 apprenticeships and £24k+ investment in local facilities.

Supported vulnerable residents and communities, creating £16.8k of value for care leavers and engaging 130+ residents in community safety initiatives.

Built strategic partnerships to address local skills shortages and strengthen workforce development.

Supported local communities through Social Values initiatives, including distribution of toys, bleed kits and defibrillators.

Embedded Social Value into procurement (30% weighting), generating £26k+ of additional value at no cost to the Council.

You can read more about what Social Value means and find some great examples on our website here.

Background

The Asset Management function delivers repairs, maintenance, servicing and investment to Sandwell's social housing stock.

Historically, Capital Investment and Repairs functions have not been distinct work areas and with a lack of stock condition data, intelligence-based investment programmes have not been developed. This has led to an increase in responsive repairs, with an increased pressure on resources to repair and maintain worsening stock with a finite resource.

This, compounded by additional legislation around damp and mould, building safety and compliance increased demand for the inhouse resources to deliver, detracting the emphasis away from being able to manage responsive repairs. The service was supported by 90+ contracts that were not effectively managed, and a large volume of contracts were non-compliant or at risk of being non-compliant.

In 2024, the service was restructured into four teams which allowed each distinct team to prioritise their own function and work collaboratively to provide residents with efficient, quality and safe homes whilst maximising value for money.

- Repairs and Maintenance
- Capital Investment
- Building Safety and Compliance
- Contracts and Commercial

A detailed and comprehensive Housing Transformation and improvement Plan was created in 2024, across the housing service which clearly sets out the short to medium term improvement required for each service area. This strategy supports the implementation of the changes resulting from the Improvement Plan within Asset Management.

Alongside operational reform, the Housing Service Code of Conduct has been introduced to embed consistent professional standards, behaviours and accountability. This ensures that improvements in structure and systems are matched by improvements in how services are delivered to residents.

Scope and Delivery Objectives

This delivery strategy applies to the planning, commissioning, delivery, and oversight of repairs, maintenance, capital investment, and aids and adaptations across the Council's housing stock. It encompasses all works required to keep homes safe, secure, compliant, accessible, and well maintained, including responsive repairs, planned maintenance, capital investment programmes, energy efficiency improvements, and adaptations to meet residents' needs.

It sets out how the Council determines the most appropriate delivery model, ensures value for money, and maintains effective oversight of quality, performance, cost and compliance.

For Riverside-managed stock, services are delivered via a fully outsourced model funded through a Unitary Charge, with Riverside responsible for procurement and management of their contractors. The Council retains strategic oversight through structured governance and performance monitoring arrangements.

The strategy also applies to Council-owned properties used as temporary accommodation, ensuring that repairs, maintenance, and investment arrangements support safe, suitable, and well-managed accommodation for households placed by the Council.

Delivery Objectives

- Strengthen in-house resource capability by upskilling the workforce and creating opportunities to deliver quality, efficient services.
- Maintain a robust workforce plan that supports succession planning, skills development, and long-term service resilience.
- Develop a flexible and adaptable workforce capable of responding to changing service demands, emerging priorities, and fluctuations in workload.
- Engage external contractors to provide specialist expertise and additional capacity where required.
- Maximise value for money by aggregating contracts to deliver economies of scale and efficiencies.
- Strengthen contract management to drive effective performance, accountability, and continuous improvement.

This strategy should be read alongside the Asset Management and Compliance Strategy, which establishes the Council's long-term priorities and objectives for managing housing assets, meeting housing need, fulfilling legal obligations, and supporting sustainable communities. Whereas the Asset Management and Compliance Strategy defines what the Council wants to achieve, this Delivery Strategy sets out how those objectives will be delivered through appropriate delivery models, workforce arrangements, procurement, contract management, and governance.

In particular, this strategy supports the Asset Management and Compliance Strategy by:

- Ensuring delivery arrangements support statutory compliance through effective workforce capability and contract management.
- Providing a clear framework for deciding between in-house delivery and external contracting.
- Ensuring value for money is achieved through informed procurement decisions and robust performance management.
- Supporting consistent service delivery by clearly defining roles, responsibilities and accountability across internal teams and external providers.

All staff, contractors, and delivery partners must align with the Housing Service Code of Conduct, ensuring services are delivered professionally, transparently, accessibly, and with respect. The Code will be embedded within contract requirements, service standards, and performance management arrangements across all delivery routes.

The Council will embed the Code across all Asset Management activity by:

- Ensuring all staff and contractors demonstrate customer-focused behaviours.
- Embedding ethical decision-making in operational and commercial activity.
- Providing transparent communication to residents.
- Using feedback and complaints to drive improvement.
- Ensuring consistent service standards across DLO and contractors.

Strategic Purpose

This strategy supports the Council Plan by setting out how housing repairs, maintenance and investment are delivered, ensuring services are efficient, financially sustainable and provide value for money, while supporting local employment and maintaining service quality.

The purpose of this strategy is to:

- Provide assurance of the future role of the Direct Labour Operatives (DLO), demonstrating the Council's commitment to a skilled and sustainable local workforce.
- Provide assurance that the delivery model is flexible, effective and efficient, enabling services to respond to demand while ensuring budgets are controlled.
- Deliver a consistent, evidence-based approach to contracting services where specialist skills, capacity or market solutions are required.
- Provide assurance that the procurement approach secures efficiencies in cost, reduces duplication and supports proportionate contract management.
- Strengthen client-side capability by realigning resources to improve contract oversight, inspection and audit of third-party delivery, ensuring quality of work and value for money.

Delivery Model for Repairs

The Council's Direct Labour Operatives (DLO) plays a central role in the delivery of Asset Management services, in providing a responsive, reliable, and resident-focused repairs service. The DLO supports the Council's wider corporate priorities around local employment, skills development, and social value, while providing greater control over service quality, safety, and performance. The DLO operates in line with the Housing Service Code of Conduct and plays a key role in role-modelling behaviours including respect, empathy, communication, and accountability.

Strategic Role of the DLO

The Asset Management Delivery Strategy positions the DLO as a cornerstone of the Council's delivery model, complementing externally procured services. It supports a balanced approach that combines in-house expertise with external capacity, ensuring value for money, service quality, and alignment with corporate priorities. The DLO also provides an important source of organisational resilience, allowing the Council to retain core operational capability, support emergency response requirements and maintain direct oversight of service quality and resident experience. The role and scale of the DLO will continue to be reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose and aligned with resident needs, market conditions, and regulatory expectations.

Delivering Responsive Repairs

The Council's Direct Labour Operatives (DLO) are mainly responsible for delivering responsive, urgent, and emergency repairs across the housing stock, enabling the Council to respond quickly and effectively to resident needs and statutory obligations, including the timely investigation and remediation of damp and mould issues. As a Council-operated service, the DLO provides critical in-house capacity, allowing resources to be deployed flexibly in response to fluctuating demand, service pressures, and emergency situations.

Maintaining a strong in-house capability provides resilience in a challenging market, reduces reliance on external suppliers for core services, and supports compliance with regulatory expectations, including Consumer Standards relating to service quality, safety, and timeliness. As a directly employed service, the DLO is aligned to the Council's values and behaviours, with a locally based workforce that understands the needs of tenants and residents, as well as the characteristics of the local housing stock. This flexibility, local knowledge, and ability to respond to changing demands underline the DLO's role as a fundamental component of the Council's housing repairs and maintenance service.

Investing in Local Employment and Skills

The Council is committed to investing in its workforce through the DLO by supporting local employment, apprenticeships, and training pathways. This includes a strong focus on developing local skills for local people, creating accessible opportunities for residents to enter employment and build long-term careers within the organisation. This includes developing trade skills, with an increasing emphasis on multi-skilling to enable employees to undertake a broader range of repairs activity, improving flexibility, efficiency, and responsiveness across the service, alongside supervisory capacity to ensure the workforce remains adaptable and capable of meeting future demands. Through structured development and progression pathways, including multi-skilling initiatives, the DLO enables employees to upskill over time and move into more senior or specialised roles, strengthening organisational capability and resilience from within. This includes developing future skills required to support retrofit programmes, decarbonisation activity, new technologies and changes in heating and energy systems. Workforce development will continue to evolve to ensure the service has the skills, knowledge and capacity required to meet future housing investment priorities. These commitments align with the Council's broader economic and social objectives and support the long-term sustainability of housing services.

Workforce Planning and Back-Office Support

Effective delivery of DLO services relies not only on front-line operatives but also on skilled back-office teams, including scheduling, contract management, compliance, and performance monitoring. The strategy recognises the importance of workforce planning across both operational and support functions to ensure capacity, capability, and resilience. This includes succession planning, training, and the use of modern systems to support efficient service delivery. The Council will continue to review workforce capacity, skills requirements and service demand to ensure the DLO remains adaptable and capable of responding to changing operational and regulatory requirements.

Working with Local Suppliers and the Wider Market

While the DLO provides core service delivery, it operates alongside a wider supply chain of local and regional contractors. The Council is committed to maintaining strong relationships with local suppliers, using procurement and partnership approaches that support small and medium-sized enterprises where appropriate. This blended delivery model enables flexibility, supports market resilience, and ensures the Council can respond to fluctuating demand and specialist requirements.

Delivery Model for Building Supplies

Strategic Role of Building Supplies

Within the Asset Management Delivery Strategy, the Building Supplies function is positioned as a strategic enabler rather than a purely operational service. It underpins effective delivery models, supports compliance and performance outcomes, and ensures that both in-house and external delivery partners operate efficiently, consistently, and in line with corporate and regulatory expectations. Value for money is embedded through strategic stock management, integration with long-term capital planning, and alignment of materials procurement with the Council's financial and operational objectives.

Building Supplies also supports a more integrated Asset Management approach by working closely with Repairs and Maintenance, Capital Investment and Building Safety and Compliance teams to ensure materials planning supports responsive repairs, cyclical maintenance programmes, planned investment activity and compliance workstreams. This helps improve forecasting, supports value for money and ensures resources are aligned with Asset Management priorities.

Procurement and Supply Chain Management

Building Supplies play a key role in translating procurement strategies into day-to-day delivery. This includes managing framework arrangements and supply contracts, standardising materials where appropriate, and working with suppliers to secure competitive pricing, continuity of supply, and compliance with quality and safety standards. Examples of value for money include leveraging long-term framework agreements, utilising standardised materials to reduce cost variation, and consolidating supplier contracts to achieve bulk discounts for Sandwell Council. Effective management of Building Supplies supports value for money and helps mitigate risks associated with supply chain volatility.

Cost Control and Governance

The Council's Building Supplies function supports financial control by improving stock management, reducing waste, and providing transparency over material usage and costs. This enables better forecasting, supports contract and DLO performance monitoring, and strengthens overall commercial governance within Asset Management services. Value for money is achieved through reduced material wastage, accurate stock forecasting, and clear cost tracking that helps Sandwell Council prioritise spend effectively.

Supporting Local Supply Chains and Sustainability

Through procurement and supplier engagement, the Building Supplies function will support wider Council objectives, including the use of local suppliers, ethical sourcing, and environmentally sustainable products. Standardisation and responsible sourcing also support decarbonisation objectives and whole-life cost reduction. Examples of value for money include sourcing locally to reduce delivery costs, using environmentally friendly materials that lower long-term maintenance expenses, and supporting local employment while achieving best price.

Right First Time Delivery

A key strength of the Council's delivery model is its focus on delivering repairs right first time. This is supported through effective workforce deployment, mobile working technology, and the close integration between the Repairs and Building Supplies teams.

The Building Supplies function plays a critical role in achieving this outcome by maintaining stock availability, managing vehicle stock, and providing operatives with timely access to the materials and components required to complete repairs during the first visit wherever possible. This improves productivity, reduces delays, minimises repeat visits, and contributes to better performance against Consumer Standards for repairs quality and timeliness.

Building Supplies supports this approach through digital stock control systems and effective inventory management, ensuring materials are available when needed while maintaining strong financial controls, audit assurance, and value for money.

This approach is embedded within the repairs service and supports the delivery of an efficient, responsive, and resident-focused service.

Delivery Model for Capital Investment

Strategic Role of Capital Investment

Capital Investment is a critical component of the Council's Asset Management function, ensuring housing assets remain safe, compliant, sustainable and capable of meeting the current and future needs of residents. Through planned investment, the Council protects the long-term value of its housing portfolio, reduces future maintenance liabilities, improves resident outcomes and supports the delivery of wider corporate priorities.

Investment programmes will increasingly be informed by verified stock condition information, compliance intelligence, component lifecycle data and asset performance information, ensuring resources are directed towards properties and components presenting the greatest operational, financial or compliance risk. This supports a more proactive and evidence-led approach to investment planning whilst ensuring resources are targeted effectively.

The Capital Investment Team acts as the Council's strategic client function, translating Asset Management priorities into deliverable programmes and ensuring investment decisions align with the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan, the Asset Management and Compliance Strategy and wider Council objectives.

Strategic Programme Delivery

The Capital Investment Team is responsible for developing, planning and overseeing long-term investment programmes across the Council's housing stock. This includes maintaining the Decent Homes Standard, replacing ageing components, improving building safety, enhancing energy efficiency, and supporting the long-term sustainability of housing assets.

Investment priorities are informed by stock condition intelligence, asset performance data, regulatory requirements, resident needs and corporate objectives. The team develops investment strategies and programmes aligned with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, ensuring capital resources are targeted where they will deliver the greatest value, reduce future liabilities, and improve outcomes for residents.

Working across the Asset Management service, the team coordinates investment priorities with repairs, compliance, building safety and retrofit activities, helping to maximise asset performance and support the Council's wider housing objectives.

Delivering Long-Term Value

Capital investment is not solely about replacing components or delivering construction projects; it is a long-term investment in the quality, sustainability and resilience of the Council's housing assets.

Through strategic planning, effective procurement, robust contract management and strong governance, the Council will ensure investment programmes deliver value for money, improve resident satisfaction, support decarbonisation objectives and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the housing portfolio.

Within this Delivery Strategy, Capital Investment is positioned as a strategic enabler of asset performance and housing quality, helping to ensure that residents live in safe, high-quality homes while protecting the Council's assets for future generations.

Procurement and Delivery Approach

The scale, complexity and specialist nature of capital investment programmes require a delivery model that combines strong client-side leadership with the expertise, capacity and innovation available within the external market.

The Council will therefore utilise externally procured contractors to deliver major investment programmes whilst retaining strategic control, programme oversight and performance assurance internally. Where larger strategic contracts are utilised, procurement processes will consider contractor financial resilience, operational capacity, resource availability, supply chain arrangements, mobilisation proposals and business continuity measures. This will help ensure delivery partners can sustain service delivery throughout the life of the contract and minimise risk to residents. Procurement activity will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's Procurement Strategy and will seek to establish long-term partnerships with capable contractors able to deliver multiple workstreams efficiently and consistently.

Where appropriate, programmes will be packaged to maximise economies of scale, reduce procurement duplication, improve supply chain resilience and strengthen contractor accountability. The Council will seek delivery arrangements that encourage innovation, support local economic growth, create employment and apprenticeship opportunities and generate measurable social value outcomes. Future procurement activity will also seek to maintain opportunities for local SMEs and specialist contractors through subcontracting opportunities, specialist work packages, social value commitments and market engagement activities, helping to support a diverse and resilient local supply chain.

Where strategic contracts are awarded to a single provider, appropriate contingency arrangements will be established to support service continuity in the event of contractor underperformance, financial instability or business failure.

By adopting a strategic procurement approach, the Council aims to secure improved commercial outcomes, greater cost certainty and enhanced service performance across all capital investment activity.

Contract Management and Performance

Effective contract management is fundamental to the successful delivery of capital investment programmes.

The Capital Investment Team will provide robust commercial and operational oversight of all contracted activity, ensuring delivery partners perform against agreed standards for quality, safety, customer experience, social value, programme delivery and financial performance.

This will be supported through dedicated client-side contract management, commercial management, technical inspection and quality assurance resources responsible for monitoring performance, validating delivery outcomes, assuring quality standards and reviewing cost performance.

Performance frameworks will include regular contract review meetings, quality inspections, resident satisfaction monitoring, invoice validation, contract compliance reviews and financial monitoring. Where performance falls below agreed standards, formal improvement plans, escalation procedures and contractual remedies will be applied in accordance with contract requirements.

Governance, Assurance and Risk Management

The Council will maintain strong governance arrangements to ensure capital investment programmes are delivered safely, effectively and in accordance with agreed priorities.

The Capital Investment Team will oversee programme risks, monitor financial performance, ensure compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and provide assurance that investment resources are being used effectively. Governance arrangements will support transparent decision-making, effective budget management and clear accountability for programme outcomes.

This approach enables the Council to respond proactively to changing regulatory requirements, market conditions and emerging asset risks whilst maintaining confidence that investment programmes remain aligned with strategic objectives.

Procurement and Contract Management

Due to the scale, complexity and specialist nature of capital works, programmes are delivered through externally procured contractors. The Capital Investment Team acts as the Council's client function, responsible for defining scope, procuring partners, managing commercial arrangements, and overseeing delivery.

The Council's contracting approach focuses on establishing strategic partnerships with capable contractors able to deliver large-scale, multi-disciplinary programmes. Through effective contract management, the team ensures delivery against agreed standards for quality, cost, safety, customer service, social value, and programme performance.

Performance, Assurance and Governance

The Capital Investment Team provides oversight and assurance across all capital investment activity to ensure programmes are delivered effectively and in accordance with approved objectives.

This includes monitoring contractor performance, managing programme and financial risks, validating quality standards, and ensuring compliance with statutory, regulatory, and health and safety requirements. Governance arrangements provide clear accountability, effective decision-making, and assurance that investment resources are being used efficiently and deliver the intended outcomes for residents.

Delivery Model for Building Safety and Compliance

Strategic Approach

The Council will adopt a safety-first approach to managing its housing stock, ensuring full compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements and prioritising resident safety. The Building Safety and Compliance function provides both operational delivery and strategic oversight, aligned to the Asset Management and Compliance Strategy and the Housing Improvement and Transformation Programme.

The Council's Building Safety and Compliance team consists of highly competent and qualified staff that support the building safety and compliance of the Council's housing stock. This internal expertise enables the Council to retain key functions such as Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) in-house, providing greater assurance, consistency of approach, and direct control over quality and risk. Other specialist works and activities will continue to be selectively outsourced where this provides access to additional capacity, technical expertise, or best value.

The delivery model clearly defines the roles of internal teams and external providers to ensure effective governance, accountability, and value for money. Core compliance functions will be retained in-house where this provides the greatest level of control and assurance, supported by external provision where specialist expertise or additional capacity is required. In doing so, the Council will actively work with local suppliers and the wider market to promote competition, support local economic growth, and ensure a resilient and responsive supply chain.

Internal Delivery Model

The Council maintains a competent and qualified in-house Building Safety and Compliance team, including the Building Safety Team and Fire Safety Team, providing specialist in-house expertise across a range of compliance and fire safety activities.

This approach ensures strong client-side control, consistent standards, effective risk management, and the ability to respond to regulatory and operational changes. The team is responsible for compliance assurance, risk management, commissioning and overseeing works, performance monitoring, and resident engagement in relation to building safety. Retaining FRAs in-house strengthens assurance processes and enables timely review and action in response to identified risks.

The Council will continue to retain and develop key in-house compliance functions where this provides appropriate assurance, resilience and value for money.

External Contractor Support

External contractors will be used to deliver specialist compliance works and additional capacity. In line with the wider procurement strategy, the Council will move towards fewer, higher-value, longer-term contracts combining related workstreams.

These contracts will cover:

- **Fire safety compliance works**, including installation, inspection, replacement and maintenance of fire doors, fire stopping, compartmentation, and associated fire protection measures.
- **Mechanical and electrical (M&E) compliance services**, including servicing, maintenance, testing, repair and replacement of electrical systems, heating systems, ventilation, lifts, lighting and other building services.
- **Building fabric and environmental works**, including roofing, cladding, rainwater goods, drainage systems, water hygiene and water safety compliance works.
- **Building Safety Act compliance works** across all in-scope purpose-built residential blocks, including works required to maintain regulatory compliance, address identified risks and support the Council's building safety responsibilities.

Contracts will be structured around in-scope purpose-built blocks to ensure flexibility in response to regulatory change. This approach supports economies of scale, reduces contract volumes, and improves performance and accountability.

The Council will also seek to engage a mix of national and regional providers alongside local suppliers where appropriate, ensuring access to specialist expertise while supporting the local economy. A strong and diverse supply chain will help to improve resilience, incentivise performance, and ensure value for money.

Strategic Use of Consultancy

Specialist consultancy support will be used to complement internal expertise, particularly where independent advice, benchmarking, or service development is required. Current short-term arrangements will be reviewed to establish longer-term strategic partnerships where appropriate.

Consultancy will support policy development, benchmarking, governance, and performance improvement. This includes work to review and develop internal Service Level Agreements (SLAs), ensuring services are clearly defined, measurable, and aligned to HRA principles of transparency and value for money.

Integration and Governance

The Building Safety and Compliance function operates as part of an integrated delivery model alongside the DLO, Capital Investment, and Contracts and Commercial teams. Clear delineation between in-house and contracted services ensures efficient use of resources and strong accountability.

The Housing Health and Safety function will continue to support Asset Management through assurance activity, incident investigation, compliance monitoring and the promotion of safe systems of work across both internal and contracted services.

Delivery is supported by established governance arrangements, performance monitoring, and audit. Ongoing improvements to data systems and resident engagement will support compliance assurance and continuous improvement, ensuring the service remains effective and aligned with regulatory expectations.

Strategic and Policy Alignment

Overview

The Asset Management Delivery Strategy provides the operational framework for delivering the objectives set out within the **Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy 2025–2030**, ensuring the Council's homes, buildings, garages, land, and communal assets are managed safely, sustainably, and efficiently.

The Asset Management Delivery Strategy is aligned with the Council's wider strategic objectives, regulatory obligations, and service delivery commitments. It provides the framework through which investment, compliance, resident engagement, performance management, and financial planning are coordinated to ensure homes remain safe, sustainable, and fit for the future.

The strategy supports delivery of the Asset Management and Compliance Strategy, the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, the Housing Services Code of Conduct, and relevant legislative and regulatory requirements. Together, these frameworks ensure that investment decisions are evidence-based, resident focused, financially sustainable, and aligned to the long-term needs of both residents and the housing portfolio.

Sandwell Council Plan 2024-2027

Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan 2023-2053	Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy 2025-2030	Housing Services Code of Conduct	Relevant legislative and regulatory requirements

Asset Management Delivery Strategy 2026 -2031

Supporting Policies and Procedures

This section sets out how the Council will align Asset Management delivery with compliance and building safety requirements, resident engagement, performance monitoring, financial planning, and broader housing service objectives to ensure continuous improvement and value for money.

Compliance and Building Safety

The strategy supports the delivery of the Housing Asset Management and Compliance Strategy through a safety-first approach, ensuring:

- 100% compliance across all landlord safety areas.
- Digital management of compliance and building safety records.
- Robust fire risk assessments and mitigation measures.
- Proactive inspection and testing programmes.
- Clear communication with residents on safety matters.

Resident Engagement

The strategy supports the Tenant Engagement Strategy, ensuring residents are central to Asset Management decision-making through:

- Tenant satisfaction surveys and feedback.
- Tenant scrutiny and engagement panels.
- Pre and post work feedback.
- Transparent communication on investment priorities and programme delivery.

This approach ensures residents are heard, respected, and able to influence the services they receive.

Repairs and Maintenance

The strategy aligns with the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy, supporting the delivery of:

- Safe and compliant homes.
- Timely, high-quality repairs and maintenance services.
- Resident-focused service delivery.
- Service improvement informed by resident feedback.
- Value for money through efficient and effective use of resources.

Procurement Strategy and Contracting Policy

Where Asset Management services are delivered through external contractors, consultants, or suppliers, the Council will utilise appropriate procurement routes to secure efficient, compliant, and value-for-money outcomes. Procurement activity will be undertaken in accordance with Council policies and procedures, supported by Corporate Procurement and Legal Services to ensure strong governance, transparency, and legislative compliance.

Delivery arrangements may include framework agreements, long-term partnering contracts, Dynamic Purchasing Systems (DPS), NEC4 and JCT contracts, and Council-approved procurement routes and standard contract forms.

In line with the Procurement Act 2023, the Council's procurement approach seeks to maximise public benefit, secure value for money, and maintain transparency and integrity throughout the procurement lifecycle. To support these objectives, Asset Management will continue to review opportunities to align related workstreams into fewer, larger, and longer-term contracts where appropriate.

This strategic approach is expected to deliver:

- **Economies of scale** through greater purchasing power, improved commercial leverage and more competitive pricing.
- **Reduced procurement and administration costs** through fewer procurement exercises, simplified contract management, and streamlined financial processes.
- **Improved performance and accountability** through standardised specifications, consistent KPIs, enhanced reporting, and clearer supplier responsibilities.
- **Greater operational efficiency** through improved collaboration, reduced duplication, faster service delivery, and a better customer experience.
- **Enhanced compliance and assurance** by supporting health and safety requirements, regulatory standards, audit requirements, and the Regulator of Social Housing's expectations for economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and value for money.
- **Stronger social value outcomes** including local employment, apprenticeships, community benefits, and opportunities for local supply chains.
- **Increased innovation and capability** through access to larger suppliers with established systems, digital solutions, decarbonisation expertise, and investment capacity.

Through strategic commissioning, effective contract management, and collaboration with procurement and legal services, the Council will seek to achieve long-term value, sustainable service delivery, and improved outcomes for residents and communities.

Financial Planning

The strategy supports the priorities of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan, ensuring investment decisions are informed by:

- A 5-30 year Asset Management Plan.
- Stock condition and lifecycle data.
- Balanced planned, reactive, capital and compliance expenditure.
- Affordability and borrowing capacity assessments.
- Annual budget reviews reflecting asset need and regulatory change.

Housing Services Code of Conduct

The strategy is underpinned by the Housing Services Code of Conduct, which sets out the standards of professionalism, behaviour, customer service, communication, and accountability expected from staff, contractors, and partners.

Whilst the Asset Management Delivery Strategy defines what will be delivered, the Housing Services Code of Conduct defines how services will be delivered, ensuring they are resident-focused, transparent, accessible, and aligned with regulatory expectations.

Performance Management

Performance will be monitored through a range of measures, including:

- Asset Management performance dashboards.
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).
- Customer Satisfaction Levels.
- Delivery of planned maintenance and capital programmes.
- Energy efficiency improvements.
- Repairs and maintenance KPIs.
- Compliance performance.
- Budget and financial performance.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Council is committed to ensuring that the delivery of Asset Management services is inclusive, fair, and accessible to all residents. We recognise that inequalities in housing conditions can disproportionately affect certain communities, including people with protected characteristics, and will seek to address these through the planning and delivery of services.

This strategy embeds equality, diversity, and inclusion across all aspects of Asset Management delivery, including responsive repairs, planned maintenance, capital investment, and compliance activity. This applies equally to services delivered by the Council's Direct Labour Operatives (DLO) and external contractors.

The Council is also committed to developing a skilled, diverse, and inclusive workforce through fair recruitment, training, apprenticeships, and progression opportunities, ensuring employees are equipped to meet the needs of our communities.

All procurement, commissioning, and contract management arrangements will require suppliers to meet the Council's equality and inclusion expectations. Contractors and delivery partners will be expected to demonstrate inclusive employment practices and deliver services that are accessible and responsive to residents' needs.

The Council will continue to monitor and review how effectively Asset Management services meet the needs of diverse communities, supporting continuous improvement and helping to reduce inequalities while improving outcomes for residents.

Reasonable Adjustments

The Council is committed to ensuring that residents with disabilities are able to access Asset Management services on an equal basis and without disadvantage. In delivering repairs, maintenance, compliance, and investment programmes, the Council recognises its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to remove barriers and support inclusive service delivery.

This commitment applies across all delivery routes, including services provided by the Direct Labour Operatives (DLO) and external contractors. Delivery models, contract specifications, and service standards will require appropriate consideration of individual needs, ensuring that residents receive a consistent and high-quality service wherever it is reasonably practicable to do so.

Reasonable adjustments may involve changes to standard practices, communication methods, scheduling, or the way works are carried out, depending on individual circumstances. There is no fixed or prescriptive approach; adjustments will be agreed through engagement with the resident and tailored to their specific needs. The Council will not make assumptions about what adjustments may be required and will ensure that staff and contractors are supported to respond appropriately.

Through this strategy, the Council seeks to embed accessibility and inclusion into Asset Management delivery, ensuring that all residents experience services that are fair, responsive, and aligned with corporate standards for quality and customer care. Further detail is set out in the Council’s Reasonable Adjustments Policy.

Risk Management and Governance

Key risks include:

- Health and Safety non-compliance.
- Contractor underperformance or financial failure.
- Cost inflation and supply chain disruption.
- Inaccurate data or system failures.
- Increasing demand on the DLO.
- Workforce recruitment and retention challenges.
- Skills shortages and an ageing workforce in key trade and technical disciplines.
- Insufficient workforce capacity to respond to changing service demands and regulatory requirements.
- Over-reliance on a small number of strategic contractors.
- Insufficient client-side capacity to effectively manage complex contractual arrangements.
- Failure to achieve contracted social value commitments.

Mitigation measures:

- Robust governance.
- Regular audits.
- Back-up contractors and frameworks.
- Clear escalation pathways.
- Investment in data and digital systems.
- Workforce planning, including succession planning and talent development.
- Investment in apprenticeships, training and multi-skilling programmes to build workforce resilience.
- Regular review of workforce capacity, skills requirements, and recruitment needs.
- Development and implementation of a workforce strategy to support recruitment, retention, career progression, and future service requirements.
- Business continuity arrangements and contingency planning for critical service delivery.
- Financial monitoring and due diligence of key contractors.
- Dedicated client-side contract management, commercial and assurance resources.
- Independent audit and assurance reviews where appropriate.
- Monitoring and versification of social value commitments.

Governance:

- Procurement and Oversight Board.
- Asset Management Senior Leadership Team Meetings.
- Joint Housing Management Team – feeding into the Housing Improvement Plan.
- Tenant Panels – resident feedback and scrutiny.
- Scrutiny Panels.
- Annual report to Cabinet/Committee on performance and investment.

Review Cycle

This Asset Management Delivery Strategy will be:

- Reviewed annually.
- Updated every 3-5 years or sooner if regulatory or financial conditions change.
- Supported by detailed operational plans and evolving stock condition data.