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Surrey Retrofit Strategic Action Plan

2025 to 2028

Autumn 2025

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1. Executive summary

Retrofit is defined by the Centre for Sustainable Energy as referring to ‘any improvement work on an existing building to improve its energy efficiency, making it easier to heat, able to retain that heat for longer, and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.’ Wider definitions that consider the impacts of a warming climate may also include improvements to water use efficiency, cooling and other climate resilience measures, e.g. flooding protection, within the scope of retrofit.

The Surrey Retrofit Strategic Action Plan (the “Plan”) has been developed via the Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA). Surrey is one of four UK ‘localities’ participating in LARA, which is delivered by the MCS Foundation, a charity funded by Government to oversee the MCS standards scheme and which now has an expanded remit to drive innovation to accelerate building retrofit. LARA is funded by the MCS Foundation, the Greater Southeast Net Zero Hub and the Aurora Foundation. It takes place at a pivotal moment for the national retrofit sector, with full details of the Government’s Warm Homes Plan due in Autumn 2025.

In Surrey, the retrofit sector represents a £9bn market opportunity to 2050, directly supporting a potential almost 2,900 jobs, though with a skills gap of over 2,100 full-time roles in terms of the additional installers, (heat pump) engineers, electricians, assessors, and coordinators required to deliver the improvements at the scale required. This aligns with commitments in the [Surrey Skills Plan](#) which highlights ‘the need for green skills, particularly in technical roles’, as key to ‘capturing the inclusive economic growth potential of a greener economy’, and [Surrey’s Economic Future](#) outlines ‘Capturing the potential of a greener economy’ as one of its four priorities, to ensure Surrey institutions ‘remain at the leading edge’ to ‘drive new economic opportunities’.

In Surrey’s residential sector alone, there are almost 330,000 homes (65% of total) that have poor energy performance (energy rated D or below), and energy use in these homes is responsible for 30% of Surrey’s carbon emissions. A 66% reduction in emissions from housing is required by 2035 to reach Net Zero by 2050, as set out in Surrey’s [Climate Change Strategy](#) and aligned with the UK’s legally binding requirement under the Climate Change Act. At the same time, 41,800 Surrey households (8.4% of total) are in fuel poverty and home energy upgrades could provide much needed long-term improved outcomes for these households. More on Surrey’s unique local context can be found in the Appendix as well as in a Locality Assessment published alongside this Plan.

The Plan sets out a three-year roadmap to accelerate home retrofit across Surrey, uniting a range of local partners around a shared vision so that more can be achieved together. By establishing a strategic framework including a mission statement, key strategic goals, shared principles to live and work by, and outcomes to be targeted, the Plan provides a platform for coordinated, structured delivery, supported by good governance and oversight to ensure transparency and effective collaboration.

The Plan is a catalyst for action, not just on home energy efficiency, but for building a more resilient, prosperous, and inclusive Surrey. With coordinated leadership, collaborative delivery, and ongoing support from government, industry, and communities, Surrey can become a model for retrofit at scale, delivering real-world benefits for households, the local economy, and the environment.

2. Definitions

The terms used in this document are defined as follows:

Retrofit: Any improvement work on an existing building to improve its energy efficiency, making it easier to heat, able to retain that heat for longer, and replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.

‘Good’ or ‘deep’ retrofit: These terms may have different meanings in different contexts. For example, retrofit of a private rented sector property may be deemed ‘good enough’ in a regulatory sense if it enables the property to meet the minimum compliant energy rating in the sector at that time, but it may not be objectively a ‘good’ or ‘deep’ retrofit that makes the property low carbon or even affordable to run for the occupant. In the context of Surrey’s Climate Change Strategy, a ‘good’ retrofit is one that sets a home on a pathway to net zero by 2050. For consistency of measuring progress against the Plan, where the data is available, signatories may want to agree to measure ‘good’ or ‘deep’ against one or a combination of technical performance standards or other metrics.

Households ‘facing higher/lower barriers’: These terms are intended to capture a variety of household circumstances that mean different approaches are needed to support them under Goals 2 and 3. For Goal 2, an example household comprising one or more vulnerable, disabled, elderly, or digitally excluded members are likely to be ‘harder to reach’ by conventional means and therefore face ‘higher barriers’ to improving their homes. For Goal 3, households with middle-to-higher incomes are not the target of limited grant-funded schemes and may face ‘lower barriers’ overall to engaging with retrofit financially, though may still require a trusted finance option to unlock cash from their assets if they lack savings.

Interim Backbone Organisation: A dedicated entity to ‘hold’ the Plan and facilitate communication, coordination, and resource mobilisation among signatories aimed at achieving the Plan’s shared vision. The interim organisation will be succeeded by a new entity in the long-term.

Interim Steering Group: A dedicated governance committee providing oversight for implementing the Plan’s shared vision and made up of a representative group of organisations of at least one of each key stakeholder type, e.g. local authority, social landlord, community group, training provider, industry/business.

Place-based approach: A collaborative approach for addressing local issues in the long-term by working within a specific geographic area, physical setting and/or social context to understand and meet its unique needs. Often involves joint work across policy areas to address complex problems.

Systems-based approach: An approach that thinks about problems and solutions by considering the entire system in which they exist, rather than the system’s individual parts. By examining how different elements of the system interact, it informs where an intervention in the system, e.g. allocating funding towards a particular part, could be most transformative for the system as a whole, whilst also seeking to avoid unintended negative consequences.

Wider stakeholder network: Refers to the larger group of individuals and organisations with influence and/or impact over retrofit outcomes in Surrey who may not currently be involved in formal governance structures such as the Interim Steering Group.

Any other terms, acronyms or references are expanded on in the text of the Plan or in the accompanying Appendix.

3. The Surrey Retrofit Strategic Action Plan

The Plan sets out how Surrey can make progress in tackling carbon emissions from the heating and cooling of domestic buildings and the alleviation of fuel poverty. It's a plan to support growth within the green economy whilst creating skilled and well-paid jobs and making decisions that balance economic, social and environmental considerations. These themes are captured in the Vision and Mission and articulated in the Goals and Actions to achieve them.

The Plan was developed as part of the Local Area Retrofit Accelerator (LARA) project during Winter 2024/25 and Spring 2025. LARA takes a systems- and place-based approach to tackling retrofit, in a collaborative process bringing stakeholders together from across the retrofit system in Surrey to co-develop the Plan. It used theory of change methods including baselining and visioning to agree a set of actions expected to achieve goals that lead to desired outcomes which unlock benefits for communities.

More details on LARA and the co-creation of the Plan, and the full detail behind each Action and Goal, including context, assumptions, approach, resources required, links to other actions, proposed sequencing, strategic fit and expected beneficiaries, is provided in the Appendix.

The Plan is summarised in the 'House Plan' diagram in Figure 5. Figures 1-4 show each of the four strategic goals set out along with their associated actions.

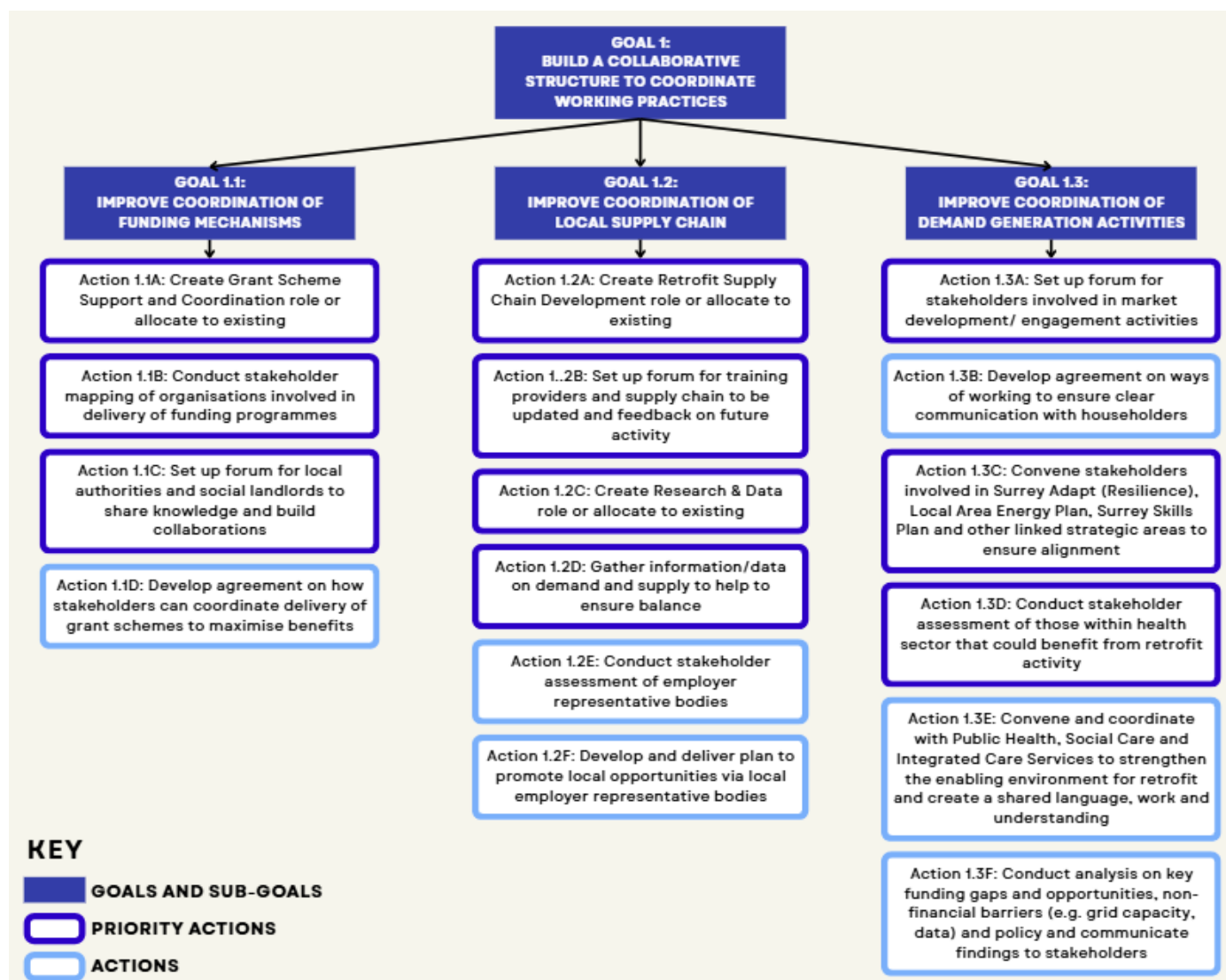


Figure 1: Goal 1

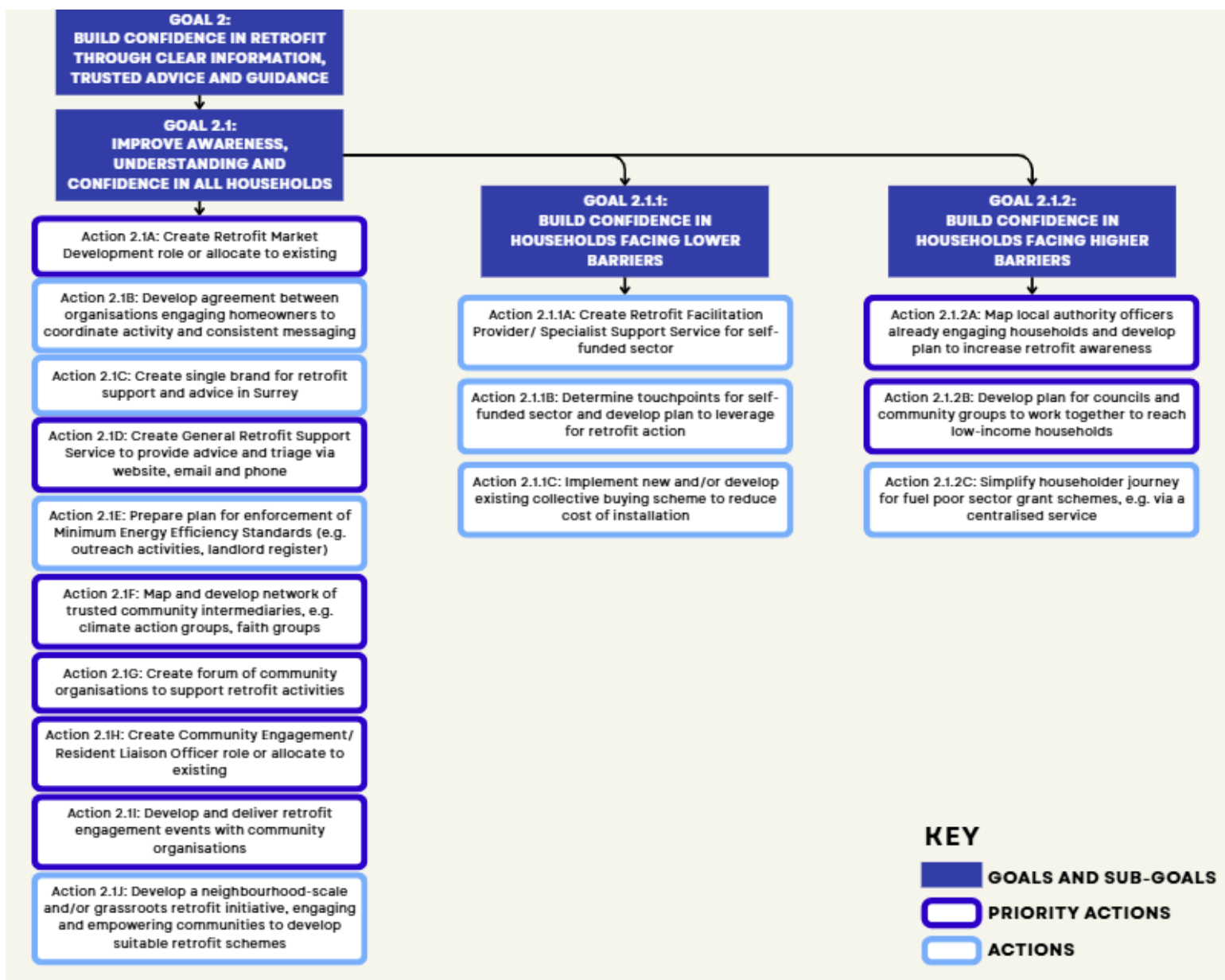


Figure 2: Goal 2

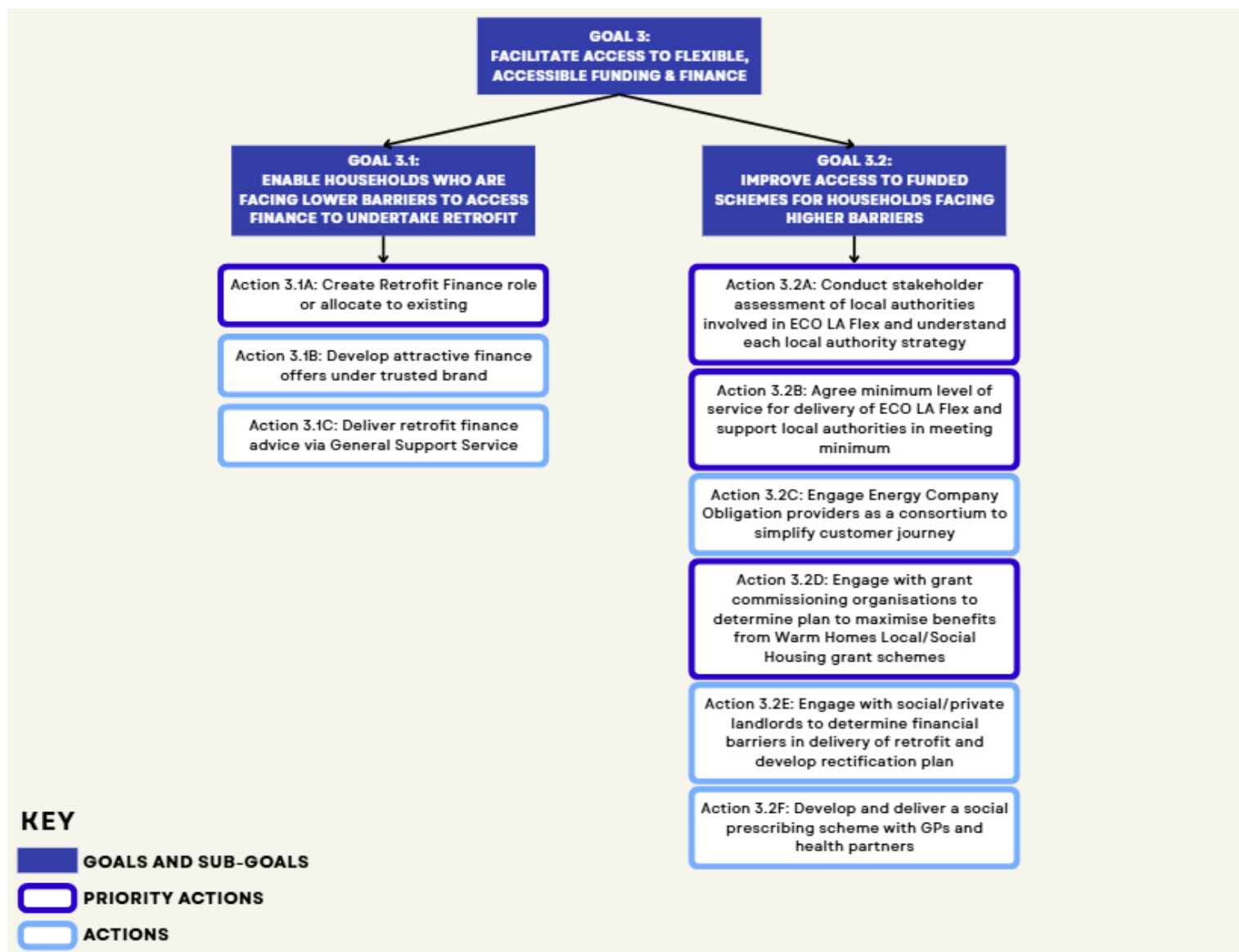


Figure 3: Goal 3

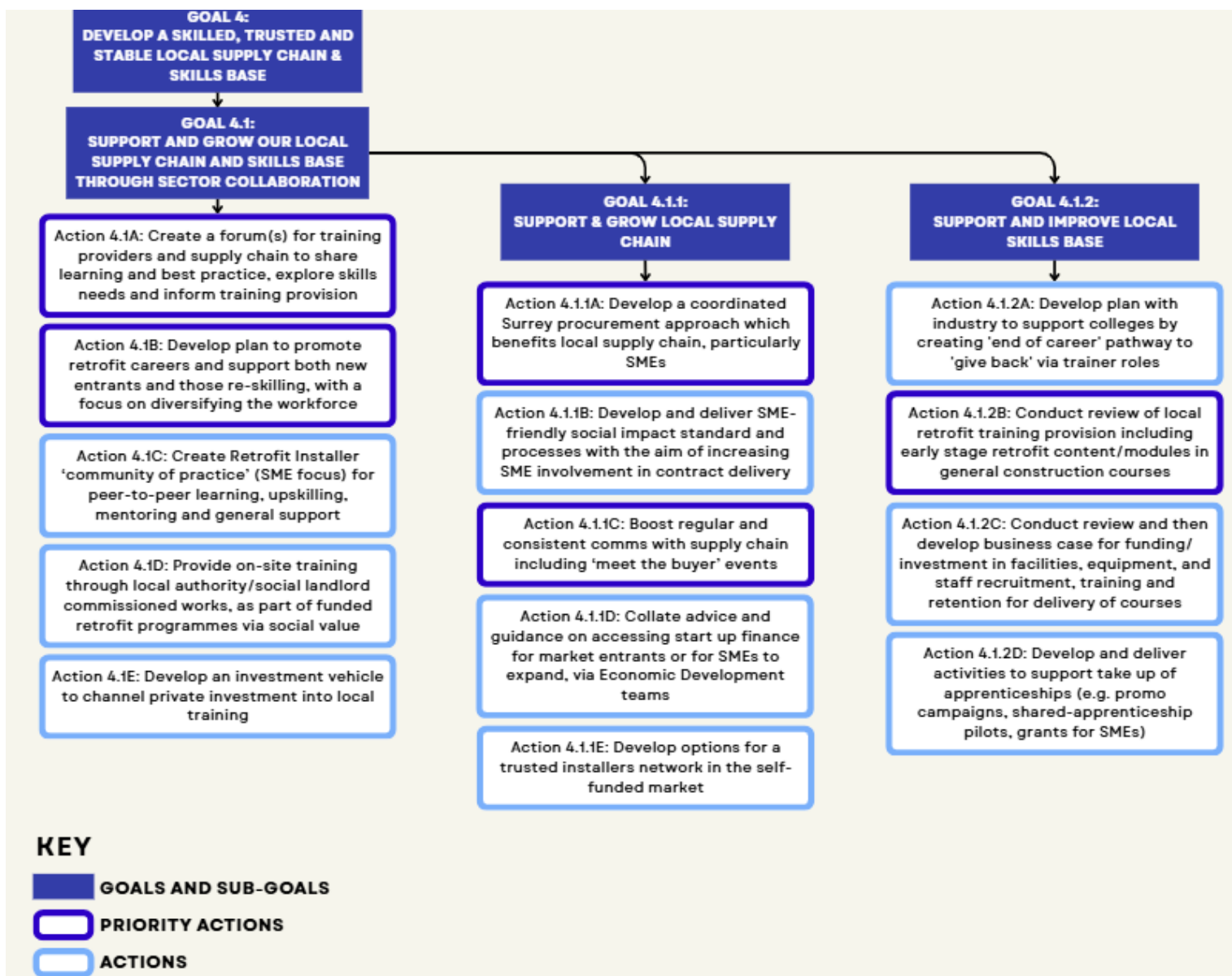


Figure 4: Goal 4

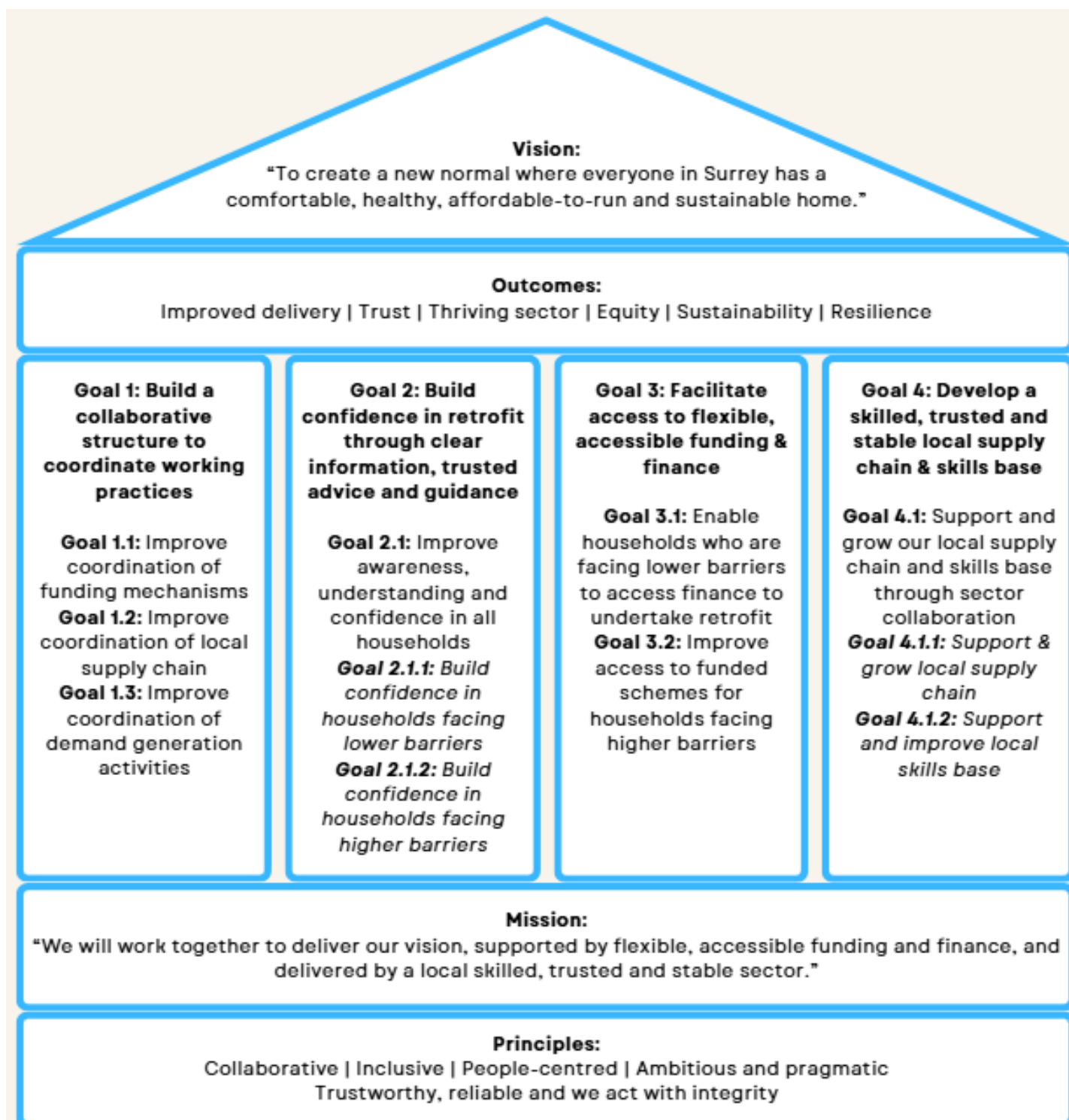


Figure 5: The 'House Plan', with the 'roof' representing the Vision and Outcomes, supported by the strategic Goals, and with the Mission statement and Principles providing the 'foundation'.

The Plan is endorsed by

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4. Vision & Mission

Vision: “To create a new normal where everyone in Surrey has a comfortable, healthy, affordable-to-run and sustainable home.”

Mission statement: “We will work together to deliver our vision, supported by flexible, accessible funding and finance, and delivered by a local skilled, trusted and stable sector.”

5. SWOT analysis summary

The Plan is underpinned by the comprehensive Locality Assessment and a Shared Understanding exercise that mapped the current state of the retrofit system in Surrey (as of Spring 2025). This includes identifying and recognising our county's unique Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats ("SWOT").

The SWOT provides a context for the Plan's recommended actions to sit within, addressing weaknesses while amplifying strengths, maximising opportunities and being prepared to mitigate the potential impact of threats. The full SWOT analysis is captured in the Appendix, along with detail under each recommended Action on how it directly links to and addresses the relevant SWOT elements identified in Surrey. The analysis is summarised here.

Strengths

Strengths include the collaborative networks already in place for instance between local authorities, community groups and training providers. Successful grant funding delivery in both private and social housing, strong homeowner demand for solar PV and battery measures along with small but growing numbers of new low carbon heating installations, and community-led energy advice initiatives all provide a platform for success.

Weaknesses

Weaknesses within our control to address involve a lack of cohesion between local stakeholders' plans, public hesitation to act, skills gaps and a lack of demand for retrofit courses. Those outside of our direct control include resource limitations, the unreliability of Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs), historically overly complex grant scheme eligibility requirements, a lack of compelling finance offers for the many homeowners without upfront capital to spend, inconsistent data and insufficient powers to support those in the private rented sector (PRS).

Opportunities

Opportunities identified include the latest round of strong grant funding allocations, growing consumer trust in established local brands, compelling case studies, building stronger relationships with social housing providers, promoting local quality jobs, promised EPC and PRS reforms, more insightful use of higher quality data, potential efficiencies resulting from Devolution, and the health and social care benefits of retrofit that could unlock new avenues for cross-sector working.

Threats

Threats stem from competing resource pressures, supply chain constraints, regulatory delays, inconsistent quality assurance regimes, and the urgency of climate change response. Misinformation and shifts in political backing or funding priorities could slow progress, so these will need to be carefully managed through effective governance and a clear, adaptable Plan.

6. Shared Principles

The following five core principles will guide all actions and commitments by signatories to the Plan. Any resulting governance agreements between signatories to the Plan will formally ensure they remain front and centre.

1: **Collaborative:** Actively work together, align efforts and share resources

2: **Inclusive:** All communities, sectors, and voices involved

3: **People-centred:** Designing solutions around residents' needs

4: **Ambitious and pragmatic:** Setting bold goals while delivering practical, achievable solutions that work locally

5: **Trustworthy, reliable and we act with integrity:** Building confidence through honesty and delivering on promises

7. Outcomes

The Plan is designed to deliver measurable improvements in the following areas:

Improved delivery – Effective partnerships, coordinated delivery, and expanded resources

Trust – Increase in collective understanding of the benefits of retrofit, with households confident that retrofit is worth the hassle, whilst supported by a coherent and consolidated group of reliable advice sources

Thriving sector – Sustainable growth of a suitably sized and skilled workforce that reflects the diverse communities it serves, with private investment unlocked at scale

Equity – More homes meet occupants' basic needs for health, comfort and affordability

Sustainability – More homes use energy efficiently with low carbon emissions

Resilience – Homes fit for changes in the future climate and environment

The outcomes are interdependent and will be collectively delivered across all Plan goals, reflecting the systems-based approach at the heart of this work. Progress will be monitored through a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which will be defined as part of the priority action to finalise the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework, a key requirement for determining what is working and what isn't (see **Section 9**).

We would expect the following may be part of the KPI suite:

- Increase in accessibility of trusted services, funding and finance, evidenced by socio-economic data of those accessing services
- Percentage increase in no. homes per year receiving 'good' or 'deep' retrofit (see definition in Section 2)
- Complaint volumes via delivered services
- Evidence of increased partnership working such as number of joint funding agreements, agreed ways of working, or attendance at forums
- Increased level of investment in retrofit
- Increase of people employed in retrofit careers
- Increase of accredited installers (e.g. MCS)
- Increase of MCS accredited low carbon technology installations per year
- Proportion of works carried out by 'local' installers and SMEs
- Numbers completing related training courses within Surrey
- Numbers of newly qualified securing relevant employment
- Reduction in fuel poverty
- Increase of community energy organisations and/or community owned renewables

- Average EPC rating increase across the Surrey region
- Decrease in carbon emissions from domestic properties
- Estimated household bill savings from installed measures
- Improved local housing-related health data

Some KPIs may rely on proxies where direct measurement is challenging, e.g. assessing 'effective partnerships'.

8. Goals

The following goals and sub-goals have been determined:

- 1. Build a collaborative structure to coordinate working practices**
 - 1.1. Improve coordination of funding mechanisms
 - 1.2. Improve coordination of local supply chain
 - 1.3. Improve coordination of demand generation activities
- 2. Build confidence in retrofit through clear information, trusted advice & guidance**
 - 2.1. Improve awareness, understanding and confidence in all households
 - 2.1.1. Build confidence in households facing lower barriers
 - 2.1.2. Build confidence in households facing higher barriers
- 3. Facilitate access to flexible, accessible funding & finance**
 - 3.1. Enable those who are facing lower barriers to access finance to undertake retrofit
 - 3.2. Improve access for households facing higher barriers to funded schemes
- 4. Develop a skilled, trusted and stable local supply chain & skills base**
 - 4.1. Support and grow our local supply chain and skills base through sector collaboration
 - 4.1.1. Support & grow local supply chain
 - 4.1.2. Support and improve local skills base

Goal 1: Build a collaborative structure to coordinate working practices

Rationale: This goal highlights a key aspect of the Plan: that collaboration and coordination can achieve better outcomes. The goal focuses on funding (1.1), supply chain (1.2) and demand generation (1.3) aspects of the system. The actions sitting under this goal work to put the structure in place for collaboration and coordination and keep it in place during the Plan's lifetime. The collaborative structures themselves, once set up, will need to be open to regular review to ensure inclusivity of stakeholders, voices and perspectives, and this principle should be enshrined in the respective Terms of Reference.

Assumptions: The goal assumes that, for a given input of resources, the collaboration of local stakeholders and effective coordination of their activities can indeed achieve increased scale and better outcomes. It assumes that each stakeholder will be able to identify and realise a benefit from working together, thus providing the motivation to ensure they deliver the relevant part(s) of the Plan. It also assumes that funding and other resources are key drivers for retrofit activity, that improvements to the supply chain can be made and that demand can be increased.

Goal 2: Build confidence in retrofit through clear information, trusted advice and guidance

Rationale: This goal reflects potential mistrust of retrofit measures and their benefits and conflicting or dishonest advice, and the fact retrofit isn't a normalised activity. The goal hopes to counter this through improving awareness

(2.1) and specific actions for those where retrofit is easier (2.1.1), due to economic and ownership conditions, and for those that are finding it more difficult (2.1.2).

Assumptions: The goal assumes that, through the provision of information and support, confidence can be grown, and action can be galvanized. Economic conditions will have a significant impact on the ability to deliver this goal. The goal also assumes that any short-term increase in demand resulting from the success of the actions that sit under this goal can be delivered by the existing supply chain or with minimal formal training.

Goal 3: Facilitate access to flexible, accessible funding & finance

Rationale: This goal highlights the need for economic stimulus to achieve market growth, whether that be from private investment or institutional funding. The sub-goals cover both the need to provide financial options for middle income households, whether they be products for those in a position to take on debt or other innovative non-debt products (3.1), and the need for long-term grant funding options for those most at risk of being left behind (3.2). For the former, the actions have a focus on ensuring finance options are attractive and low cost. For the latter, the focus is on existing funding schemes such as the Warm Homes Local Grant and the Energy Company Obligation, the latter being historically under performing and so would benefit from local improvement.

Assumptions: This goal assumes that some homeowners will take up finance offerings to undertake retrofit in their homes, hence an initial source of lending or other non-debt product may be advantageous to encourage scaling of the market. There is mixed evidence on households' appetite to take on debt for retrofit, with some successful case studies, therefore stakeholders will need to be sure of the rationale for any specific action. There is also the assumption that grant funding will be taken up by those eligible and actions in other areas of the Plan can support this by building trust and empowerment in communities.

Goal 4: Develop a skilled, trusted and stable local supply chain & skills base

Rationale: This goal helps to balance the demand-orientated actions under other goals by developing capacity within the supply chain (4.1). This is important to ensure quality of work delivered is high, technical performance gaps are minimised, benefits are realised, and households' confidence grows that their needs and aspirations will be fulfilled, thus increasing demand, which in-turn boosts supplier confidence to move into and grow in the sector, creating a virtuous circle of sustainable sector growth. The sub-goals highlight both the need to grow the local supply chain (4.1.1) and to support and improve the local skills base (4.1.2).

Assumptions: The goal assumes that a sector can be developed particularly when demand is developing from a low, grants orientated base. It also assumes that skills can be delivered by the local population and economy.

9. Priority Actions – moving from Plan to Implementation

The Plan provides a high-level list of actions to be completed to achieve each goal. These can be viewed in Figures 1-4 in Section 3, with full detail provided in the Appendix. Moving forwards, the high-level actions list will need to be developed with the input of stakeholders into a more detailed implementation plan and timeline, including identifying and plotting a roadmap to securing sustainable investment to close funding gaps.

Surrey stakeholders are already doing fantastic work in this growing sector, as outlined in the Locality Assessment and the detailed SWOT analysis in the Appendix, and the Plan will seek further early interventions to build on this work, refine and coordinate delivery models where it makes sense to, and scale successful approaches. Accordingly, several priority actions are to be completed as follows. Many of these can be completed well in advance of 1st April 2027, the first day of the new unitary authorities in Surrey post Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

1. (Interim) Backbone organisation

Timeline: September 2025 →

Effective implementation of the Plan requires it to be 'held' by one organisation, referred to as the 'backbone organisation'; a dedicated entity facilitating communication, coordination, and resource mobilisation among participating stakeholders aimed at achieving the Plan's shared vision. In the short term, the role of Interim Backbone Organisation will be taken on by Surrey County Council (SCC).

2. Set up interim steering group

Timeline: September 2025 →

To ensure democratic decision-making processes, an Interim Steering Group (the "Group") will be set up which will hold and steer the endorsement process for the Plan and progress the next steps to agreement of an implementation plan. The Group will be made up of one or more of each key stakeholder type. Terms of Reference have been drafted, and the Group's first meeting took place in October 2025.

The Group includes membership from SCC as interim backbone organisation; however, the Group need to steward the Plan's implementation progress during LGR such that the unitary councils that succeed SCC are prepared to take up the mantle of Interim Backbone Organisation(s) and grasp the opportunities presented by LGR. Not all the Plan's recommended actions are within the control of the local authorities, hence the Plan is to be co-owned and delivered by endorsing stakeholders, with oversight of the Group.

In the medium term, a successor governance structure and delivery vehicle (legal entity or other) will be constituted, replacing both the Interim Steering Group and the Interim Backbone Organisation(s) for the long-term. This entity will take the Plan forward at pace and deliver it in partnership with Surrey's new unitary councils, Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA), and other endorsing stakeholders. The Interim Steering Group will be responsible for agreeing, implementing and communicating this successor structure with a clear route explained on how the wider stakeholder network can contribute.

3. Warm Homes funding

Timeline: September 2025 →

Local authorities and social landlords across Surrey have secured around £28.3m funding from Government and match funding under the Warm Homes Plan. These programmes offer a significant opportunity to embed

collaborative and coordinated ways of working, in particular to maximise growth, experience and expertise in the local supply chain. Hence, they represent a cornerstone around which to build the Plan's implementation. This is represented by **Action 3.2D** in the Plan – see the Appendix for more information.

4. MEAL Framework

Timeline: November 2025 →

A key part of delivering the Plan is determining what is working and what isn't working, and developing amplification or rectification plans respectively, via a Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) framework, with progress against the Plan reviewed at least once per year. System change can be difficult to monitor and be confident of the connection between cause and effect. However, it is essential to understand whether a project or programme under the Plan is having the intended impact and report this to stakeholders and external bodies such as funders.

The Interim Steering Group will oversee the next steps to setting up the Plan's MEAL framework. Section 5.3 of the Appendix provides further information.

5. Data Management

Timeline: November 2025 →

Data can be important in developing the correct course of action and in determining performance of a given action. Processes will be put in place to ensure data is gathered and shared. **Action 1.2D** is an example of a priority action that seek to improve the use of data and insights derived from data.

6. Roles

Timeline (subject to change pending ratification timeline):

- Q1-2026 – Review capacity
- Q2-2026 – Draft job descriptions
- Q3-2026 – Recruit

A key aspect of the Plan is to establish dedicated roles to increase capacity and skills and drive forward the Plan's goals. These do not necessarily need to be new positions within an organisation and could be allocated to existing roles or recruited on a part time basis initially, dependent on funding and other factors. A priority action is for the backbone organisation to review capacity across the system and, working with stakeholders, determine job descriptions and where the role will sit. Some of the roles could be held by the same person or one role could be shared across roles across an organisation.

In an ideal scenario, the Plan includes the following roles:

- Grants Scheme Support & Coordination: Working to increase access to grants and coordinate delivery of schemes between stakeholders (**Action 1.1A**)
- Retrofit Supply Chain Development: Supporting development of the supply chain in terms of capacity and quality (**Action 1.2A**)
- Research & Data: Carrying out research activities and collating data on retrofit performance across the system (**Action 1.2C**)

- Retrofit Market Development: Supporting delivery of advice and support services to households across tenures (**Action 2.1A**)
- Community Engagement: Supporting work to engage with community organisations and manage activity (**Action 2.1H**)
- Retrofit Finance: Leading on work to deliver finance actions and coordinating activity across the system (**Action 3.1A**)

7. Forums

Timeline: January 2026 →

A key assumption of the Plan is that coordination and collaboration can enable more to be delivered for the same input. The Plan assumes that, to do this, bringing together stakeholders is an important action. To this end there are several actions relating to the setting up of forums and action groups. Their respective Terms of Reference should ensure forum membership is regularly reviewed to ensure inclusivity.

8. Other actions to prioritise

The full set of actions to prioritise over the next 12 months are highlighted in dark blue in Figures 1-4.

9. Conclusion: A Collective Commitment

The Surrey Retrofit Strategic Action Plan is not just a plan – it is a commitment to action, setting the foundation for lasting change in the way Surrey homes are adapted for a low-carbon, equitable and climate-resilient future.

Whilst commitment of resources is voluntary and non-binding, signatories to the Plan are expected to contribute to its implementation in the spirit of sustained collaboration and in the recognition that aligning resources and expertise where possible could and should yield greater outcomes.

The journey ahead will require collective determination and learning together to scale the most successful and innovative approaches and delivery models. The good news is that progress on several of the Plan's recommended actions is already underway, with stakeholders working in partnership to scale positive results.

Recent examples include the over 1,400 fuel poor private households receiving retrofit under Surrey's local authority-led grant schemes; the over 3,000 self-funded households installing rooftop solar via the Solar Together scheme; the combined over £28m secured to deliver the Warm Homes Plan in Surrey's private and social housing sectors; the over 2,000 households since 2024 that have received a home energy visit from trusted community intermediaries like Zero Carbon Guildford and Energy Action Redhill & Reigate; or the investments already being made in future retrofit training provision such as Brooklands College's new Low Carbon Centre.

From promising but uncoordinated first steps in recent years, the Plan provides a clear path forward – now it is up to all of us to work together to turn ambition into impact.

With governance structures in place, stakeholder relationships strengthened, and much more work to be done, Surrey now has the opportunity to demonstrate that we can come together to deliver meaningful results for people and planet. To create a new normal where everyone in Surrey has a comfortable, healthy, affordable-to-run and sustainable home.

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