

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

6 October 2025

5.30 - 7.59 pm

Present:

Councillors Robertson (Co-Chair), Minns (Co-Chair), Gawthrope Wood, Griffin, Lokhmotova, Martinelli, Tong, Bird, Best and Powell-Hardy

Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives: Diane Best, Diana Minns (Co-Chair), Mandy Powell-Hardy,

In attendance: Councillor Katie Porrer

Officers: Samanthan Shimmon, Ben Binns, Matthew Stickley, Kate Grigg, Tony Stead, Brigitte Wilson

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

2x/13/HAB Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Harmony Birch (Tenant Representative).

Members commented on the issue of late papers being circulated to members, noting that Co-Chairs and colleagues had previously raised concerns about the lack of timely documentation and the misalignment between the Housing Advisory Board, Cabinet, and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee timetables.

2x/14/HAB Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2x/15/HAB Minutes

The Board discussed the impact of late papers on effective member participation, the circulation of minutes, and the scheduling of future meetings.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 July 2025 be agreed as an accurate record.

2x/16/HAB Public Questions

There were no public questions.

2x/17/HAB Strategic Procurement Pipeline for Repairs, Maintenance, and Compliance Contracts

Samantha Shimmon, Assistant Director for Housing and Health, presented the report, which the Board noted had been agreed by Cabinet on 25 September 2025 following consideration by the Performance, Assets and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In response to questions, officers clarified that the corporate report template did not currently include a section for consultation with tenant and leaseholder representatives, but officers would consider how such engagement could be more explicitly demonstrated in future reports.

The Board discussed the importance of tenant satisfaction as a clear and measurable indicator of service performance, as highlighted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Board further discussed the flexibility within contract specifications to adapt to evolving service requirements (e.g. changing compliance standards or priorities).

RESOLVED: To note the report.

2x/18/HAB North Cambridge Framework for Change

Ben Binns, Assistant Director for Development, presented the report, which the Board noted had been agreed by Cabinet on 25 September 2025.

In response to questions, officers clarified that extensive door-knocking and engagement had been undertaken to reach residents within the affected areas. It was noted that there was no direct link between market rents and social housing rents or service charges.

The Board discussed whether levels of resident engagement were likely to improve as proposals were further matured. The Board further discussed the demographic breakdown of consultation respondents, the rate of responses from leaseholder sub-tenants, and the expectations of residents, especially in the context of anticipated local government reorganisation. Officers agreed to provide follow-up data regarding leaseholder sub-tenants.

RESOLVED: To note the report.

2x/19/HAB Awaab's Law and Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

Brigitte Wilson, Delivery Assurance Manager, outlining the forthcoming implementation of Awaab's Law and the implications for the Council's Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy.

Officers confirmed that Awaab's Law, which forms part of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, will take effect from 27 October 2025. Phase One will introduce legally enforceable deadlines for addressing emergency hazards such as damp, mould, gas leaks, and structural collapse. Phases Two and Three, due in 2026 and 2027 respectively, will extend these requirements to include hazards such as fire risk, electrical faults, extreme temperatures, and hygiene-related issues.

Members emphasised the reputational and financial risks of non-compliance and the importance of ensuring adequate resources within the repairs and housing management teams.

2x/20/HAB Resident Engagement Strategy

Kate Grigg, Resident Engagement Manager, presented the item.

In response to questions, officers clarified that a final version of the strategy was planned to be brought back to the Housing Advisory Board and Cabinet in the new year, and that the draft included proposals for regular forums, surveys, and feedback loops with tenants and leaseholders.

The Board discussed the importance of a succession strategy for the Housing Advisory Board, with efforts to engage younger tenants for more balanced representation, the potential for pilot projects in specific estates or neighbourhoods to trial new engagement approaches, and the need to ensure that feedback is not only collected but visibly acted upon to maintain trust and momentum.

2x/21/HAB Housing Complaints

Tony Stead, Business Improvement Manager, presented the report.

In response to questions, officers clarified that a service failure referred to instances where works were not completed on time, where the works carried

out had worsened the issue, or where more serious issues had arisen. It was noted that the Housing Ombudsman had encouraged greater promotion of the council's complaints process, and that a complaint was considered resolved once the related work had been booked. In some cases, repair works were completed but related issues were subsequently incorporated into a wider programme of improvement works. Officers noted a minor increase in cases of damp, condensation, and mould. It was also clarified that complaints submitted without a prior service request were first treated as service requests rather than formal complaints.

The Board discussed whether there were identifiable patterns of service failures which, if addressed, could improve performance and reduce the overall number of complaints. Members also suggested that it would be useful to receive comparative data against previous years to assess trends and progress.

2x/22/HAB Housing Performance 2024-25

Samantha Shimmon, Assistant Director for Housing and Health, presented the report, noting that an appendix to the report provided the Performance Report for Q1 of the 2025-26 year.

In response to questions, it was clarified that complaints submitted without a prior service request were first treated as service requests rather than formal complaints.

The Board discussed whether there were identifiable patterns of service failures which, if addressed, could improve performance and reduce the overall number of complaints. Members also suggested that it would be useful to receive comparative data against previous years to assess trends and progress.

Prior to closing the meeting, the Board noted with sadness the passing of **John Marais**, a former Tenant and Leaseholder representative member of the Housing Scrutiny Committee, and expressed gratitude for his significant contributions over the years.

The meeting ended at 7.59 pm

CHAIR