

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

8 December 2025
5.30 - 7.40 pm

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

In attendance: Councillor Porrer

Officers:

Assistant Director for Housing and Health: Samantha Shimmon

Assistant Director for Homes and Commercial: Sean Cleary

Resident Engagement Manager: Kate Grigg

Deputy Democratic Services Manager: Claire Tunnicliffe

Democratic Services Officer: Matthew Hussey

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

25/23/HAB Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Lokhmotova, Martinelli and Harmony Birch (Tenant Representative).

25/24/HAB Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

25/25/HAB Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

25/26/HAB Public Questions

There were no public questions.

25/27/HAB Performance Report

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health, and Assistant Director for Homes and Commercial, presented the report in regard to the Housing Performance Report, Quarter 2 for 2025-26.

In response to questions, officers clarified that employing more staff to deal with rent arrears would not alleviate the issue if the rent arrears process could not be followed.

Members were pleased that the number of leaseholds in arrears had reduced but the report did not clarify how many it related to as that level of detail was not available.

In response to a question in relation to the recent protests by the Acorn Group on the use of bailiffs by the Council, the Board were informed that bailiffs would only be used for the collection of Council Tax. However, as a landlord, the Council would use debt collection agencies purely for tracing purposes such as refunds. It was also confirmed that the protest was in respect of debt and not possession.

In reply to a question on the length of payment plans, this assessed case by case and was usually around 18 months, although some plans had lasted 5 years.

In response to a query to what other Local Authorities Cambridge City Council was benchmarked against, Members were informed that this information would be included in the Annual Report.

In regard to the forecasted poor position for Q4, this was due to void loss and was not a position the authority wanted to be. Work was being undertaken, including regeneration proposals. Properties that were due to be demolished would show as void and needed to be set at zero rent. It was noted that the 'Void Improvement Project would review the void process and how it impacted upon KPI's.

Members were informed that voids would be assessed and if cost-effective would be used for temporary accommodation. Properties such as the flats on Ekin Road had lots of damp issues and would not be cost effective to bring back into use. Such properties would be knocked down and classified as a surplus asset.

The Housing Advisory Board supported the budget bid to give more resilience to Housing as currently staff were overworked.

In regard to complaints, it was noted from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, that many residents would class a repair as a complaint. Also, in respect of Anti-Social Behaviour, if reported and not dealt with straight away, people would then make a complaint.

Members proposed that a Task & Finish Group be established to look at areas around newbuilds and snagging etc.

Resolved: (i) To note the report.

(ii) That the Assistant Director for Housing and Health, and the Assistant Director for Homes and Commercial be requested to look at the feasibility of establishing a Task & Finish Group to look at areas around newbuilds and snagging etc.

25/28/HAB Regulation Inspection Grading

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health, presented the report, which provided an update on the Regulation Inspection Grading.

Members thanked everyone involved and that the Board needed their achievements to be passed onto residents.

In response to questions, officers clarified that the good news story was unfortunately not picked up in the local press, although they had been made aware.

Members were notified that a Stock Condition Survey was due to be launched, and that officers would ensure that the Council's specifications were fit for purpose. It was added that a Stake Holder Engagement event with a number of suppliers had been held, with approximately 30 to 40 companies in attendance. It was hoped that this would go live in April 2026.

Resolved: To note the report.

25/29/HAB Rent Regulation

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health, submitted a report on the Rent Regulation Project.

Members were informed that all current tenants had been sent regular updates letters regarding the progress of the project. Further, tenants who had emailed, former and current, had been sent a digital copy of the most recent updates. In the November letter, tenants were advised that they had been split into four groups: Group 1 Tenants who do not receive any form of housing related benefit; Group 2 Tenants who receive Housing Benefit only; Group 3 Tenants who receive both Housing Benefit and Universal Credit; and, Group 4 Tenants who receive Universal Credit only.

In response to questions in relation to former tenants being leaseholders under the Right to Buy scheme, Members were informed that current tenants would be prioritized.

In relation to tenants who had passed away, any money owing could be claimed by the estate and that claims forms were available on the website. Any claims would need to be evidenced.

Resolved: To note the report.

25/30/HAB Housing Improvement Plan

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health, presented the item on the Housing Improvement Plan.

In response to questions, officers clarified if asbestos is found in a property and deemed to be good condition, it would be left in situ. It was added that trained operatives were employed who understood the risks.

Members commented that the plan needed to be in sync with key decisions and that it would be useful if the Forward Plan and the work programs from both the Performance, Assets and Strategy and the Services, and the Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees be included in future agendas going forward.

Resolved: (i) To note the report.

(ii) That the Forward Plan and the work programs from both the Performance, Assets and Strategy and the Services, and the Climate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committees be included in future agendas going forward.

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm

CHAIR