HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD 14 September 2026
5.30 - 8.40 pm

Present: Councillors Haithcock (Co-Chair), Bird (Cabinet Member), Blackburn-Horgan, Davison, Wade, Porrer and Whitmore

Elected Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives: Diana Minns (Co-Chair), Mandy Powell-Hardy and Renata Wais

Also present Councillor Nicmanis

Officers:
Assistant Director for Housing and Health: Samantha Shimmon
Resident Engagement Manager: Emily Downey
Democratic Services Officer: Sarah Michael

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

26/22/HAB Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Martinelli and Councillor Tong. Councillor Porrer and Councillor Whitmore attended as alternates. Apologies were also received from Sean Cleary, Assistant Director Homes and Commercial, and from Diane Best, Tenant Representative.

The Chair advised the Board that Victoria Davies had stepped down as Tenant Representative, and recruitment had begun for a replacement.

Councillor Davison advised the Board that they would be standing down as a Board Member, with Councillor Nicmanis due to take the vacant place.

26/23/HAB Declarations of Interest

Councillor Davison declared that they had become a private tenant since the previous meeting.

26/24/HAB Minutes - 15 June 2026

Matters arising from the minutes:

- Councillor Wade would become a member of the New Build Working Group.

Members noted the following corrections to be made to the text:

- Samantha Shimmon's name to be corrected on page 1.
- The word 'lost' to be changed to 'lots' in the 7th paragraph on page 5.
- The word 'ta' to be changed to 'a' in the first paragraph of 26/20/HAB on page 7.

The minutes of the meeting on 15 June 2026 were then approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

26/25/HAB Housing Performance Report Qtr 1 2026-27

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health presented the report and advised members of the following:

- Rent arrears remained an ongoing issue affecting performance, however a new system had been introduced which would automate reminder messages and payment links to tenants via text message. It would also allow tenants to chat with the team via text message to help prevent future issues.
- There had been a lot of focus on voids. Managing voids was a complex process involving multiple teams, who were jointly responsible for the process. The new process was introduced in May with some successes and some challenges. A workshop would take place to address these matters with all teams.
- A balance between managing voids in-house, while sub-contracting some of the major works to prevent longer void times, would be required.
- Recruitment had begun to appoint Housing Officers and Assistant Housing Officers to support tenancy audits. A new Tenancy Operations Manager had been appointed.

In response to Members' Questions, the Assistant Director for Housing and Health said the following:

- It would take 2-3 months for newly appointed officers to have an impact, depending on their level of experience. Training would be delivered by various team members to share the load and get new starters up to speed as quickly as possible.
- The workshop focussed on voids would improve communication between the teams jointly responsible for the voids process. A weekly voids

meeting was also taking place and Managers had oversight of the process.

- Acknowledged the importance of a pre-move visit to establish work required and that some voids were more of a challenge than others. A tenant would give four weeks' notice and the aim was to visit during week one, however it was usual for additional work to be identified once the property became vacant.
- The new technology being introduced for managing arrears should prevent the issue where a snapshot is taken at one point in the month which could show someone as in arrears, when they simply had a different payment schedule in place.
- Personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEP's) were not compulsory but were already in place in sheltered housing schemes. There was a desire to have them for all blocks of flats and tenancy audits could be a way to determine where they are needed. At present, the information on tenants was too limited to allow for this.
- There was currently no way of conducting out-of-hours repair visits as this required a more detailed workforce arrangement covering evening or Saturday working and a change to employment contracts. It could be possible to use a contractor to carry out such work, but this would require substantial contract management. The matter would, however, continue to be considered within the context of Local Government Reorganisation.
- With the introduction of Awaab's Law legislation, there was a requirement to remove the reported Damp, Condensation or Mould (DCM) hazard within 24 hours. This had been achieved in 25% of cases, rising to 95% when tenant unavailability was taken into account. There had also been some issues with a contractor and the regulator was aware of the data. Noted that some tenants did not necessarily want a visit within 24 hours, despite the legal requirement.
- The gap between reports of DCM and live cases was not a backlog. If the work required to address the underlying cause of the DCM was structural, it had to be programmed in and therefore remained live for longer. Monitoring could be challenging as every emergency case was different depending on property type, occupancy and any vulnerabilities.
- Individual staff members did not have targets for meeting DCM requirements as cases could be highly varied. The legislation was complex and would be expanded in November 2026.

Resolved:

i. To note the report

ii. To include the void loss target in future reports.

iii. That the Assistant Director for Housing and Health review the wording on the website regarding tenants could expect a visit following the submission of a DCM report.

iv. To provide information on how many DCM cases had been closed, alongside the ongoing and open cases.

v. To invite the Assistant Director for Homes and Commercial to the next Housing Advisory Board meeting to answer questions on DCM.

vi. To confirm with the Board what the scale of 0-1 related to when monitoring triage within 10 days.

vii. To obtain performance data on the new stores contract with Huws Grey, together with information on any spot-check process and share this with the Board.

26/26/HAB Housing Improvement Plan June Update

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health introduced the report and noted the following:

- A review of the Housing Improvement Plan (HIP) had been undertaken. Following the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) restructure, a self-assessment against the regulator's consumer standards was conducted and a detailed action plan was produced.
- A mock inspection was conducted in January 2025, with the actual inspection taking place in June 2025, and the subsequent reports from both informed the action plan. Completed actions were closed following the Board's approval at the last meeting.
- Business-as-usual actions continued to run in the background, with some project actions requiring more detailed management, and scoping was underway. Work was taking place with the corporate programme office to create the programme.
- There were no actions for the Board to consider, but 11 priority projects had been set out in the report.
- Software was being set up to help with introduction of Awaab's Law Part 2.

During discussion and in response to questions, Officers made the following points:

- Reminded the Board of the importance of encouraging tenants to send Awaab's Law reports to the dedicated email inbox and not to individual officers, as the 24-hour response period starts the moment the email is received. The address is condensation@cambridge.gov.uk
- A briefing session for ward councillors would take place on Awaab's Law Part 2, and the reporting process would be outlined.
- Tenants should also be supported to report their own repairs or complaints as it was helpful to have a first-hand account and the ability to start a dialogue. Reports should be sent to condensation@cambridge.gov.uk for damp, condensation and mould reports and repairs@cambridge.gov.uk for any other repairs as these were tracked and would lead to the creation of target times.
- Contact information was shared with tenants in their information pack upon moving into a property, on the City Council website, and in the 'Open Door' magazine three times per year. Reports could also be made via the tenants' portal.

Resolved:

i. To note the report.

ii. To distribute background information on Awaab's Law to the Board.

26/27/HAB Reasonable Adjustment Policy - August 2026

Councillor Davison left the meeting before this item was considered and did not return.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health presented the report and sought feedback from the Board on the revised policy.

The Board discussed the policy and provided the following feedback and comments:

- Queried whether the preferred means of communication for tenants had been considered, particularly for those with additional needs. Examples included the use of voice-to-text software, additional processing time during meetings, and allowing for delayed responses.
- Questioned what the literacy support would look like. Officers advised that this would involve signposting to services delivered by the voluntary and community sector.
- Suggested that the policy be referred to the Inclusion and Equity Panel for review.

- Queried the ways in which tenants could request a reasonable adjustment and whether an email address could be added to the policy, along with the possibility of out-of-hours appointments. Officers confirmed that a range of mechanisms existed to request adjustments including direct contact with Housing Officers or Estate Teams on site, scheduled home visits at a convenient time, and Community Engagement Days, which take place at weekends.
- Queried how often evidence would be required to support a reasonable adjustment request. Officers advised that historically, medical information had not been requested; however tenants now had the opportunity to disclose this information through the tenant census if they wished to do so.
- Queried whether it would be possible to ask questions regarding additional support needs at every interaction with a tenant and whether this information could be shared across council and wider neighbourhood services.

Resolved:

i. To note feedback from the Board and amend the policy accordingly.

ii. To investigate whether the report could be submitted to the Inclusion and Equity Panel for review.

26/28/HAB Rent Regulation Update

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health updated the Board on the report and said the following:

- The process of refunding rent payments had begun. All residents who made payment by direct debit and fell into Category 1 had received their refunds.
- Officers would visit any tenant aged over 65 or in receipt of a larger refund to reassure them that the refund was legitimate and not a scam.
- Bank verification software was required for those not in group one to ensure the funds reached the correct recipient.
- Work was underway with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) around Universal Credit, however they had not answered the Council's questions.

Councillor Bird noted her thanks to the team for their ongoing hard work on this matter.

Resolved: To note the report

26/29/HAB Tenant Satisfaction Measures Report

Councillor Porrer left the meeting during this item and did not return.

The Resident Engagement Manager presented the report and said the following:

- Tenants and leaseholders had been sent a survey between January and March, to which there had been 2,094 completed responses.
- Free-text responses had been analysed, and the most common themes were timeliness and responsiveness of the repairs service. Acknowledged that negative sentiment was often more prevalent as people are more likely to raise an issue if dissatisfied.
- The rating for staff conduct was positive.
- Leaseholders generally had a lower satisfaction rate; however the Council had less contact with them than tenants.
- Consultants had analysed the results and recommended five core areas of focus:
    1. Managing repairs expectations
    2. Learning from complaints
    3. Neighbourhood management
    4. Consider moving to a tracker survey
    5. How is the council using insight to improve services
- This year, the survey would move from an annual census style to a tracker model, with two surveys completed in the remaining two quarters.
- The Team would be focussed on communication and involving as many residents as possible, along with enabling scrutiny and communicating the actions taken in response to feedback.

During discussion, Board Members:

- Stressed the importance of Community Forums and regular engagement by Housing Officers to facilitate communication.
- Queried whether more services could be delivered closer to where people lived and whether a rolling programme of estate walkabouts could be implemented.
- Noted the low rate of tenant satisfaction with the handling of anti-social behaviour and queried whether the Housing team works with the Police and other agencies on this. Officers confirmed that the Housing team worked with partners, and that established processes were in place, but the housing team did not undertake patrols.
- Advised that there was regular communication with Community Support Officers.

- Queried what the Council could do to improve tenant satisfaction and whether notice boards and other methods could be used to share good news stories.
- Councillor Wade shared positive feedback from a tenant who had recently had a new kitchen installed and had described the improvements as life-changing.

Resolved: To note the report.

26/30/HAB New Build Working Group - Scope

Diana Minns (Co-Chair) presented the report and advised the Board of the following:

- Confirmed membership of the working group and noted the inclusion of Councillor Wade.
- Noted that Councillor Davison would step down from the group, to be replaced by Councillor Nicmanis.
- Updated the Board on progress since the last Housing Advisory Board (HAB) meeting, which had included the production of a scoping document that would be shared with the Board.
- A progress report would be presented to the next HAB meeting.

Resolved

i. To note the report.

ii. To distribute the scoping document to the Board following the meeting.

26/31/HAB Local Government Reorganisation - Oral Update

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health provided the Board with an update on Local Government Reorganisation, following the announcement by the Government to pause the process.

26/32/HAB Work Programme and Forward Plan & Scrutiny Work Programmes

The Democratic Services Officer presented the work programme.

Resolved to approve the programme as outlined.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

CHAIR