

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

8 July 2025
5.00 - 7.14 pm

Present: Councillors Robertson (Chair), Bird, Griffin, Lokhmotova, Martinelli, Tong

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

In attendance: Councillor Katie Porrer

Officers: Kate Grigg (Resident Engagement and Performance Manager), Samantha Shimmon (Assistant Director of Housing and Health – Board Member), Matthew Stickley (Interim Committee Manager)

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

2x/1/HAC Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

It was noted that alternates were not provided for in the Terms of Reference but that the Board might consider this in future.

2x/2/HAC Declarations of Interest

Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives were deemed to have a standing interest by virtue of their appointment. No further declarations were made.

2x/3/HAC Minutes

As this had been the inaugural meeting of the Housing Advisory Board, there were no previous minutes.

2x/4/HAC Public Questions

In response to questions, the Clerk confirmed that meetings of the Housing Advisory Board were public meetings under the Local Government Act 1972 and subject to Access to Information rules, including that members of the

public had a legal right to attend and record proceedings provided the meeting was not disrupted.

2x/5/HAC Housing Advisory Board Terms of Reference

The Board considered the draft Terms of Reference.

Key issues raised by Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives included:

- Terminology should have consistently stated *Housing Advisory Board (HAB)*.
- **Independent members (3.2/3.4):** concern was expressed that three-year appointments might be too long; wording on tenancy breaches should not have penalised tenants for Universal Credit administrative failings.
- **Secretariat (3.6/8.1):** concern was expressed regarding the capacity of the Resident Engagement Team (then at 3 days per week plus 2.5 days for Open Door). Secretariat support should not have fallen solely on existing RE staff.
- **Co-option (3.8):** tenant/leaseholder reps should have selected replacements via the approved election procedure, with HAB then formally co-opting.
- **Training and communication (3.10/3.12):** digital communication requirements needed clarification; provision of equipment should have been considered to avoid excluding potential reps.
- **Work programme (3.16):** it was requested that elected reps be able to request items for inclusion.
- **Chairing (6.2):** co-chairs were to be elected annually to allow wider participation; four years was to be a maximum term only.
- **Allowances (8.5):** the existing three-tier allowance system was to remain until review; monthly expense claims were considered impractical.
- **Tenant/leaseholder communications (10.3):** provision should have been made for non-digital communication.

Discussion:

- Officers advised that three-year terms for independents reflected sector norms, though none were then proposed.
- Secretariat support was to be provided by the Communities team, not solely the Resident Engagement Manager.
- Chairs would be elected annually, with four years as a maximum.

- Digital participation would support hybrid meetings but would not mandate exclusive digital communication.

Decision: The Board agreed to adopt the Terms of Reference subject to the above amendments.

2x/6/HAC Meeting Venue for the Housing Advisory Board

- Meetings were to rotate between community centres, subject to accessibility.
- Storey's Field Centre was excluded as it had no nearby council tenants.
- Hybrid participation was to be supported via portable "Owl" equipment.
- The Board agreed to meet on **Mondays at 5.30pm**, avoiding clashes with other committees.

2x/7/HAC Housing Performance Report 2024-25

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health introduced the report, which summarised performance for the 2024/25 year across key areas including compliance, operational delivery, tenant satisfaction measures, and complaints.

The Board discussed the report in detail and raised the following points:

- **Benchmarking:** Members questioned whether the comparator peer group, which included large East of England housing associations, was appropriate. It was suggested that comparator local authorities and providers of a similar stock size would offer more meaningful benchmarking.
- **Compliance Data:** Members sought clarification of the two charts on page 15. It was confirmed that the first related to electrical testing (EICRs) and the second to the completion of actions arising from those inspections. On fire risk assessments (page 16), members noted that the low figure reflected actions being completed, but they requested that the number of assessments scheduled also be included for context.
- **Damp, Condensation and Mould (DCM):** Members asked whether the causes of damp and mould were being properly addressed. Officers confirmed that updated policy information was available on the Council's website.
- **New Builds:** Concerns were raised regarding tenant satisfaction with new builds, particularly the issue of unexpectedly high utility bills. The

Board asked officers to investigate the cause, with heating networks suggested as a possible factor.

- **Targets:** Members queried whether targets should be adjusted where performance consistently exceeded the set threshold, so that higher standards could be aimed for.
- **Non-Decent Homes:** It was noted that the figure reported for non-decent homes did not include cases where tenants refused works. Members emphasised the need to distinguish between refusals and non-access cases in future reporting. It was also clarified that underspend was not the cause of non-decency.
- **Service Charges:** The Board requested more detailed reporting on service charges, including information on arrears where payment plans were in place.
- **Contractor Performance:** Members expressed concerns about the performance of the Council's contractor, particularly citing negative feedback in relation to contractor handovers.

The Board welcomed the report and asked that future iterations reflect the above points to provide clearer, more comprehensive information.

8a Policies: Regulatory Compliance and Tenant Engagement

The Board considered the draft policy covering the "big six" safety areas.

Comments:

- It was agreed that information from external managing agents (e.g. Warwick Estates) needed to be fully incorporated in compliance reporting.
- Regulatory frameworks should have addressed district heating networks.
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) should have extended beyond sheltered housing and been resourced appropriately, potentially integrated into the forthcoming tenant census.

2x/9/HAC Policies: Rent and Service Charge

The Board considered the draft policy.

Comments:

- Annual reporting should have included a breakdown of stock by rent type (social, affordable 60%, affordable 80%).
- Data on tenancies subject to rent convergence should have been provided.

- It was clarified that the policy was owned by Housing but implemented by Finance, with Cabinet agreement required for overarching rents.
- Annual reporting of net changes in council housing stock was requested.

2x/10/HAC Housing Revenue Account Improvement Plan

The Board considered the draft HRA Improvement Plan.

- Members requested that Housing Advisory Board representatives be explicitly included in relevant web content and publicity materials.
- It was noted that the plan referenced anti-social behaviour (ASB) and domestic abuse as lower priority areas; officers explained this was because the Council already performed strongly in these areas.
- Members also noted the job descriptions for the Resident Engagement Manager and Officer posts and emphasised the need to ensure adequate resources for the resident engagement function.

2x/11/HAC Annual Workplan for Housing Advisory Board

The Board considered its future work programme.

- Members requested that future reports include work on the implementation of **Awaab's Law** and consideration of wider housing hazards, such as cold and heat.
- It was agreed that a report on **housing risks** would be brought to the December 2025 meeting.
- Members asked for a review of **lessons learned from new build programmes**, including snagging and contractor handover processes.
- The Board wished to be involved in specific officer projects, with the exception of specialist fire compliance work.

2x/12/HAC Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 7.14 pm

CHAIR

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