

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

2 February 2026
Times Not Specified

Present: Councillors Robertson (Co-Chair), Bird, Gawthroe Wood, Lokhmotova, Martinelli, Tong.

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

In attendance: Councillor Porrer

Officers:

Assistant Director for Housing and Health: Samanthan Shimmon

Assistant Director for Homes and Commercial: Sean Cleary

Interim Property Compliance & Risk Manager: Michael Burch

Resident Engagement Manager: Kate Grigg

Chief Finance Officer: Jody Etherington

Asset Manager for Planned Works: Will Barfield

Democratic Services Officer: Matthew Hussey

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

26/1/HAB Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Griffin.

26/2/HAB Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

26/3/HAB Minutes

That subject to Councillor Blackburn-Horgan being included as present, the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

26/4/HAB Housing Performance Report – Quarter 3 2025-26

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health, presented the report in regard to the Housing Performance Report, Quarter 3 for 2025-26.

Members were informed that due to the current rent regulation work, enforcement action had been reduced whilst officers focused on the rent error issues. Whilst they continued to try and engage with tenants who were in arrears, the KPIs were predicted to continue rising until the team could continue with enforcement work.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health continued that the total rent and service charges lost due to voids, as at end of qtr. 3, amounted to £1.25 million. Included in this figure were properties set aside for redevelopment, any bulk handover of new build properties that were waiting to be let and those undergoing energy efficiency works.

She went on to say that most service charges were paid under an agreed payment plan, however, the Council currently had £39k of arrears where the case was with the legal team, and £19.5k where the leaseholder was deceased or the properties were being bought back for redevelopment, and £92k with no payment agreement in place.

In regard to Tenancy Audits, due to a significant rise in the workload coming into the Tenancy Management team, most of which was of an increasingly complex nature, as well as unforeseen resource shortages; the number of properties receiving tenancy audits had significantly reduced. It was likely that this would continue for the foreseeable future, and the Council would not be able to meet the 10% target this year. Discussions were on-going regarding a long-term solution for this. To date however, the team had provided 137 households with advice and support during and following a tenancy audit.

In response to questions, officers clarified that the Tenancy Audit had not been carried out fully and that a preventative approach would be undertaken going forward.

Members were informed that the void improvement process would include 'New Build' figures.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health continued that it took on average 16 days per void from when the operative entered the property to completion. If there was an influx of voids, subcontractors would be used which increased the average number of days for repairs to 30.6.

Members were notified that there had been difficulty letting the Meadows due to the local lettings plan as the properties were located on South Cambridgeshire land. Therefore, nominations had to have a local connection to South Cambridgeshire or to Cambridge, with 50% connected to Cambridge and 50% to South Cams.

In regard to compliance, officers had looked at blocks that required a fire assessment and if they were needed. The authority did not have any shared blocks and it was expected that the 4092 affected units that required a fire assessment would come down.

Members were informed that Local Authorities were legally only required to undertake fire risk assessments on blocks that were over 18 metres or those that were over 11 metres that had a simultaneous evacuation strategy.

Members proposed that a Risk Based Report be submitted to a future meeting.

In response to a question in respect of alterations made by residents, Members were informed that if the alterations were allowed, they would be reported to the surveyors. If the alterations were not allowed, the Council would work with tenants to rectify the situation. It was added that the Council could not force tenants to have decent homes works undertaken. If tenants refused entry the property would list as no access.

In reply to a question on actions required for any outstanding asbestos issues, the Interim Property Compliance & Risk Manager responded that 100% had been completed with 67.7% carried out within time. The 17 issues that were over had now been completed. He added that if a property had any asbestos, a Management Survey would be required. If the asbestos was undamaged or undisturbed it would be left in situ.

Members requested that a report in regard to how Cambridge City Council compared with other Local Authorities on the disrepair of its properties be submitted to a future meeting.

Resolved: (i) To note the report.

(ii) That the Interim Property Compliance & Risk Manager be requested to submit a Risk Based report to a future meeting.

(iii) That a report in regard to how Cambridge City Council compared with other Local Authorities on the disrepair of its properties be submitted to a future meeting.

26/5/HAB HRA Budget

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report, and presentation which provided an overview of the HRA Budget.

The presentation covered the following areas:

- Landlord Account for Council Homes
- Ringfenced Account – must be spent on landlord services
- 30 Year Business Plan
- Annual Rent Increase for 2026/27
- Rent Convergence
- Unavoidable pressures – City Services
- Budget Bids – City Services/Communities

The Chair commented that although the Board was still in its development stage, Members had struggled with the Budget Report submitted to Scrutiny and that it had been difficult to find the HRA element within the papers. She added that the Budget was extremely important and Members needed time to prepare for the meeting so that they could comment on the Budget.

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The Chief Finance Officer commented that the report submitted to Scrutiny was the complete Budget Report and that only the HRA element which affected tenants would be submitted to the Housing Advisory Board.

In response to a question in relation to rent convergence, officers replied that it had been decided that this would be remodelled to either £1 to £2 and would be a permanent loss of income.

In relation to how the 30 Year Business Plan would be impacted by after Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) which was scheduled to be completed by 2028, Local Authorities were still legally obliged to have a fixed budget in place until then. It was added that whichever council Cambridge City was combined with, which was likely to be South Cambridgeshire District Council, both HRA's would become one entity.

Members proposed that the following statement from the Housing Advisory Board be made to Cabinet by the Cabinet Member for Housing:

“That the Housing Advisory Board welcomes and supports the HRA Budget Proposals. We particularly endorse the Budget Bids, which represent an improved service for tenants and leaseholders.

Board Members also recognise the current financial pressures and thanks officers for putting together a balanced budget.”

Upon being put to the vote the majority of Members were in support of the proposal with one abstention.

Resolved: (i) To note the report.

(ii) That the following statement from the Housing Advisory Board be made to Cabinet Member for Housing:

“That the Housing Advisory Board welcomes and supports the HRA Budget Proposals. We particularly endorse the Budget Bids, which represent an improved service for tenants and leaseholders.

Board Members also recognise the current financial pressures and thanks officers for putting together a balanced budget.”

(iii) That officers be thanked for the report.

26/6/HAB Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy 2026-2028

The Resident Engagement Manager, submitted a report on the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy 2026-28 for those who lived in properties owned and managed by Cambridge City Council. The strategy responded to regulatory change, updated local priorities and resident feedback.

Members were informed that the strategy would be supported by the Annual Action Plan and that the proposed objectives: Embedded Resident Involvement Across Housing Services, Ensure Resident Involvement is Accessible and Inclusive, Enable an Empowered Resident Voice through involvement, and Listen, Learn and Improve, aligned with the previous strategy.

Members commented that in regard to the design and accessibility of the document, this should be supplied in large print, double line spacing and any use of acronyms should have their full title shown on the first time they are used in a document.

In response to a question on the 30 responses via Open Door for the strategy, except for one phone call, no other responses had been received and that the use of community event would be made going forward.

Resolved: (i) That the Report be noted.

(ii) That the Housing Advisory Board notes the strategy will be supported by an annual action plan, to be developed with the Board after the strategy is adopted.

(iii) That progress be reported annually to the Housing Advisory Board.

26/7/HAB Housing Improvement Plan Update

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

Members were informed that the Improvement Plan brought together actions identified through the service's self-assessment, external reviews, and the Regulator's inspection findings. These activities fell into three categories:

- Task – a one-off piece of work that could be delivered within current resource levels.
- Process review – a planned piece of work requiring input from both service representatives and supporting teams to evaluate current workflows and deliver efficiencies.
- Project – a piece of work that required input from several services to deliver a specific goal.

Members were informed that a number of key foundational actions had already been delivered, strengthening compliance, governance, reporting, and tenant involvement. Completed activities included:

- Further developing the Housing Advisory Board to strengthen tenant representation at a strategic level (May 2025)
- Agreeing a timetable for sharing key housing, health and safety, and compliance performance with stakeholders (Jun 2025)
- Strengthening oversight of strategy, risk and performance through work with the Cabinet Lead for Housing, Cabinet and Scrutiny (Jul 2025)
- Allocating the Cabinet Member for Housing as the responsible Member for complaints (Aug 2025)
- Completing an audit of the complaints 'Casetracker' system to ensure robust reporting to the Regulator (Sep 2025)
- Establishing a dedicated project team to review and update housing webpages content (Oct 2025)
- Securing Cabinet approval for delivering a five-year cyclical stock condition survey programme (Oct 2025)
- Reviewing damp, condensation and mould processes in preparation for Awaab's Law (Oct 2025)
- Establishing an interim reporting solution for damp, condensation and mould cases, in line with Regulator requirements and Awaab's Law (Oct 2025)

- Developing enhanced reporting mechanisms for fire-safety remedial actions (Nov 2025)

Resolved: To note the report.

26/8/HAB Lift report for Housing Advisory Board

The Asset Manager for Planned Works, presented the item on the lifts and lifting equipment in the Council's own housing stock, and provided reassurance that lifts and equipment were well-maintained and compliant.

Members were informed that the Council currently had a range of lifts and other lifting equipment in the housing asset portfolio. These included: 69 Passenger & platform lifts, 9 through floor lifts, 34 Hoists, 91 Stairlifts and other specialist baths/liftin equipment.

In regard to maintenance and servicing arrangements, lifts and lifting equipment on housing estates were subject to regular servicing and inspection. Contractual arrangements were in place so that lifts had planned servicing and maintenance carried out on a regular basis.

The Asset Manager for Planned Works advised that TSG Building Services sub-contracted lift servicing and maintenance to specialist sub-contractors. Most lifts were serviced by Direct Lift Company. From January 2026 all lifts installed in recent new building housing schemes will be serviced and maintained by Orona Lifts. Most of the Council's new building housing schemes were fitted with Orona lifts.

Members were informed that for compliance, lifting equipment must comply with the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1988 (LOLER). These required that lifts were subject to "thorough examinations" carried out by specialist contractors. This happened alongside regular servicing contracts.

The Council contracts "thorough examinations" to a company called HSB and these were procured via the Council's insurance team.

In the past 12 months, TSG Building Services had responded to 144 callouts for lift breakdowns. In addition, there had been five emergency call outs relating to people trapped in lifts.

Councillor Robertson (Co-Chair) commented that the Board wanted to see a list of breakdowns on the Ironworks Estate as the supply of replacement parts had become an increasing issue. He added that details such as how many days a lift was out of action would be useful.

The Asset Manager for Planned Works replied that currently such details for individual lifts had not been collate but it was possible. Inregard to the supply of replacement parts, lots were manufactured in Europe and could take time to source. He added that TSG had changed supplier to Orona, who it was hoped had a stock of service/replacement parts.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health commented that detailed information on lift breakdowns, the average time for repair, supply issues and iron works would need to be requested and submitted to the Housing Advisory Board in the new Municipal Year.

Resolved: (i) To note the report.

(ii) That a report with detailed information on lift breakdowns, the average time for repair, supply issues and Ironworks would need to be requested and submitted to the Housing Advisory Board in the new Municipal Year.

26/9/HAB Forward Plan & Scrutiny Work Programmes

The Board had before them the Forward Plan and the work programmes for both the Performance, Assets & Strategy and Services, Climate & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

The Chair thanked the Democratic Services Officer for providing hard copies of the Forward Plan and both Scrutiny Committee Work Programmes.

The Democratic Services Officer, suggested that going forward, the Board should have its own work programme that outlined future reports and meeting dates to enable the Board to plan its work.

Resolved: (i) That the report be noted.

(ii) That the Forward Plan and the work programmes for both the Performance, Assets & Strategy and Services, Climate & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committees be submitted to future meetings of the Housing Advisory Board.

(iii) That the Democratic Services Officer submit the Housing Advisory Board Work Programme to all meetings going forward.

(iv) That the following items be added to the Housing Advisory Board Work Programme:

- Terms of Reference – Next meeting
- New Builds - Future meeting
- Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy 2026-28 Annual Report – Future Meeting
- Lift breakdowns, the average time for repair, supply issues and iron works – Future meeting
- Risk Based Report - Future meeting
- Comparison Report on how Cambridge City Council compared with other Local Authorities on the disrepair of its properties – Future meeting
- Parking Strategy

Thanks to Councillor Robertson

Following the announcement that Councillor Robertson would be stepping down at the elections in May, the Housing Advisory Board expressed its sincere thanks for his many years of dedication to the residents of Cambridge, and for all of his hard work as the Co-Chair of the Housing Advisory Board since its creation.

The meeting ended at Time Not Specified

CHAIR