

## Terms of Reference

### Housing Advisory Board

The Housing Advisory Board (HAB) is a body of Tenant and Leaseholder representatives and Councillors which supports the Cabinet's decision-making process and performance. It is separate and distinct from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees which are responsible for the council's scrutiny functions and lead members. As an advisory group, it can provide non-binding advice, recommendations, and critical feedback to support Cabinet Members and decision-makers, helping to inform policy development and improve decision-making while remaining distinct from formal scrutiny or executive functions.

#### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 To provide advice and recommendations to decision-maker(s) regarding housing policies and initiatives, addressing community needs.
- 1.2 To review housing strategies and policies delegated to the Lead Member for Housing.
- 1.3 To serve as the main discussion forum between Cambridge City Council, its tenants and its leaseholders for all matters relating to the social landlord function (for example, effectiveness of current housing services, management and maintenance of stock, etc).
- 1.4 To advise and be consulted on issues that affect these responsibilities. Feedback and proposals from the HAB will be considered as part of the decision-making processes in line with the Council's Constitution, including by the Cabinet, individual Cabinet Members or Officers.
- 1.5 To monitor and consider community engagement and communication activity, both as part of the Housing Development Agency programmes as well as wider initiatives, for activity that most impacts tenants and leaseholders.

#### **2 Objectives**

- 2.1 The objectives of the HAB in relation to the interests of the Council's housing tenants and leaseholders, are to advise and make recommendations for the improvement of Cambridge City Council (CCC) housing services on behalf of all service users and tenants, including:
  - Playing a proactive role in ensuring tenant and leaseholder experience is at the forefront of decisions that impact them.
  - Acting as a critical friend, recommending improvements and ensuring the Council delivers high standard social housing services

- Ensuring the housing service is fair, equitable and tenant and leaseholder friendly
- Representing tenant and leaseholder priorities, and ensuring their views are an integral part of the decision process
- Ensuring the Council's housing service offers value for money, meets government regulatory standards and reflects the Council's business plan objectives

### **3 Membership**

3.1 The Housing Advisory Board will consist of:

- the Cabinet Lead Member for Housing (or a nominated substitute in their absence)
- six politically proportionate Councillors
- the Assistant Director for Housing and Health (a non-voting member) (or a nominated substitute in their absence)
- six elected Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives (a maximum of one of which is to be a leaseholder)

3.2 Where appropriate, the Board may appoint up to 2 Independent Members to serve a maximum of 1 year per term and only serving 2 consecutive terms. These independent members would be non-voting on any recommendations provided by the Housing Board.

3.3 Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives to the HAB will be elected every 4 years by city council tenants and leaseholders through a citywide ballot conducted by an independent organization, to ensure fairness and transparency.

3.4 Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives will be tenants or leaseholders of Cambridge City Council. Tenants in breach of their tenancy conditions and leaseholders in breach of their leasehold agreement will not be eligible to be or remain as a Board Member.

3.5 Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives terms of service will reflect the wider Tenant and Leasehold Engagement Strategy (refreshed in late 2025).

3.6 The Democratic Services team will provide secretariat support for the HAB.

3.7 The Lead Cabinet Member for Housing and Assistant Director for Housing and Health will be permanent members of the Housing Board.

- 3.8 If a Tenant or Leaseholder Representative leaves before the end of term, a new replacement will be co-opted until the end of the term. The Resident Engagement Team will advertise the Board opening and accept applications for suitable replacements. Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives will select replacements via a panel interview procedure. Once replacements have been selected, HAB will formally co-opt the new Members.
- 3.9 HAB members, except for the Assistant Director for Housing and the Lead Member for Housing, who fail to attend two meetings and fail to provide any apologies will forfeit their membership of the Board.
- 3.10 HAB members agree to use digital communications including video conference and shared facilities which may include MS Teams or a central document library where necessary. Meetings will primarily be held face to face with the option of online, if necessary. Digital equipment may be provided for Tenant or Leaseholder Representatives, to avoid exclusion.
- 3.11 HAB members agree to make available contact details with colleagues to facilitate work between meetings.
- 3.12 HAB members will attend training sessions where appropriate and where possible.
- 3.13 HAB members will read any material provided prior to attending the meeting
- 3.14 HAB members will be compliant with Cambridge City Council equality and GDPR policies.
- 3.15 All HAB members agree to abide by the Council's code of conduct and the Tenant and Leaseholder Code of Conduct.
- 3.16 The HAB will plan their annual work programme and may consider requests from Elected Representatives, Cabinet, Council, Overview and Scrutiny Committees or individual Councillors to investigate specific issues.

#### **4 Quorum**

*Note: a **quorum** refers to the minimum number of members required to be present at a meeting for it to be considered valid. This ensures that there is sufficient representation to conduct business effectively and that recommendations are not made by an unrepresentative minority.*

- 4.1 A meeting will only go ahead if at least half of the Tenant and Leaseholder representatives and half of all Councillors are present, as well as either the Lead Councillor for Housing or the Assistant Director of Housing. Independent members do not form part of the quorum. E.g. if there are 12 members in total, at least 3 Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives and 3 other members must attend, including either a Councillor or the AD of Housing. If there aren't enough people for a quorum, the meeting should be recorded as inquorate and any decisions made will need to be approved at the next meeting with a quorum.

## **5 Chairing Meetings**

- 5.1 Two chairs shall be elected, one by the Councillor HAB members and another by the Tenants and Leaseholders' Representatives. They will then take it in turns to chair the meetings.
- 5.2 Each Chair will deputise for the other in their absence.
- 5.3 Co-chairs will be chosen by their two relevant groups (Elected tenant and leaseholder representatives and Councillors) on an annual basis. This will give all Members an opportunity to take on the role.
- 5.4 The Chairs will liaise with officers and relevant others as necessary to plan for forthcoming meetings. Any HAB member can request to add items to the agenda. These should be submitted at least 4 weeks before the meeting.

## **6 Frequency of HAB Meetings**

- 6.4 The HAB will meet quarterly with a minimum of four quarterly meetings per year.
- 6.5 To meet the demands of projects and reviews, the frequency of meetings may be increased.
- 6.6 Board members are expected to attend every meeting; however, they must attend a minimum of three Board meetings per annum unless there are extenuating circumstances that have been agreed to by the Board.
- 6.7 The HAB may establish Working Groups to lead on specific activities, where there are council resources available to support such activities.
- 6.8 Working Groups could be internal tenant groups or external groups
- 6.9 Working Groups must report to the HAB at an agreed frequency

## **7 HAB Support**

- 7.4 Administrative support for the HAB will be provided by the Democratic Services team, who will publish agendas and papers and take minutes.
- 7.5 Minutes of the HAB meetings will be made available within four weeks of the meeting.
- 7.6 All new members will be provided with a handbook of key documents and undertake an induction programme and training.
- 7.7 Training requirements will be assessed, and a training programme will be developed, delivered, and regularly reviewed.
- 7.8 Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives will be eligible to claim an allowance twice a year at six-month intervals. Details about the allowances, how they are equated and claimed are held by the Resident Engagement team.

## **8 Access to Information**

- 8.4 The HAB will be provided with supporting documents a minimum of one week prior to each meeting.
- 8.5 Agendas will be published on the Council website a minimum of 5 working days before the meeting.
- 8.6 Minutes will be published on the Council website 4 weeks after a meeting takes place.
- 8.7 HAB can request additional data, reports and information to carry out their activities. Where appropriate information is not readily available, the HAB may request information reports (appropriate in scale and content subject to available resources) and / or invite officers or managers to meet with the HAB to provide additional information or insight.
- 8.8 All requests for information and evidence must be made via the Democratic Services team.
- 8.9 The HAB is a public meeting and will endeavour to ensure meetings are as accessible as possible.

## **9 Accountability**

- 9.4 The HAB meetings will be publicised on the Cambridge City Council website.
- 9.5 Minutes, agendas and meeting papers will be made available to the public on the Cambridge City Council website
- 9.6 Tenants and leaseholders will be able to ask questions to their Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives via email at resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk or non-digital communication.

## **10 10. Working Groups**

- 10.1 HAB can establish working groups to examine a time restricted specific purpose.
- 10.2 HAB may appoint not more than 2 Working Groups in any civic year.
- 10.3 Working Groups will be given a clear remit, be time limited and task focused and will report back to the HAB.
- 10.4 Working Groups set up by HAB, will carry out detailed work in relation to specific topics or issues. The HAB will decide which Working Groups are set up and what their terms of reference will be. These will include deciding the membership of the group and the proposed dates for reporting to the HAB.
- 10.5 Working Groups are informal bodies and will have no decision-making powers and will report to the HAB.
- 10.6 Working Groups will keep the HAB informed of their progress. They will

produce a report for consideration by the relevant HAB at the end of the review.

## **11 Reviewing the Terms of Reference**

- 11.1 These Terms of Reference were approved by Cllr Gerri Bird, Cabinet Member for Housing, and Samantha Shimmon Assistant Director for Housing, and ratified at a meeting of the HAB held on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026.
- 11.2 The Board will review the terms of reference regularly to ensure they reflect the duties and responsibilities of the Board.

Next Review: July 2027

