

HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD15 June 2026
5.15 - 7.50 pm

Present: Councillors Bird, Blackburn-Horgan, Davison, Haithcock, Martinelli and Smart.

Elected Tenant & Leaseholder Representatives: Diana Minns, Diane Best, Victoria Davies, Mandy Powell-Hardy, Isabella-Jowita Misk and Renata Wais.

Officers:

Assistant Director for Housing and Health: Samanthan Shimon

Resident Engagement Manager: Emily Downey

Democratic Services Officer: Matthew Hussey

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL

26/10/HAB Election of Co-Chair (Councillor)

Resolved: (i) That Councillor Haithcock be elected Co-Chair (Councillor Side) of the Housing Advisory Board for the ensuing Municipal Year.

(i) That Diana Minns be elected Co-Chair (Elected Tenants & Leaseholder Representatives) of the Housing Advisory Board for the ensuing Municipal Year.

26/11/HAB Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tong, Wade and Sean Cleary (Assistant Director, Homes & Commercial).

Councillor Smart attended as alternate for Councillor Wade.

26/12/HAB Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

26/13/HAB Minutes - 2 February 2026

That the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

26/14/HAB Welcome & Introduction to New Members

All those present introduced themselves.

Diana Minns (Co-Chair) welcomed new members Councillors Haithcock, Wade, and new Tenant Representatives Victoria Davies, Isabella-Jowita Misk and Renata Wais to the Housing Advisory Board.

26/15/HAB Appointment of Independent Member

Members discussed the possibility of appointing an Independent Member as permitted by the Terms of Reference (ToR).

Diana Minns (Co-Chair) commented that the ToR allowed for up to two independent members who could serve a maximum of one year per term and only serve two consecutive years. She added that independent members would have non-voting rights.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health commented that more governance arrangements could be seen on other Housing Advisory Board and that Independent Members would bring industry expertise, knowledge and third-party assurance. She added that a proper recruitment process would be required and that if appointed the independent members would be a critical friend to the Board. Also, Kirklees Council were also appointing independent members to its own HAB and a similar process could be used for Cambridge City Council.

Members would support the proposal if it strengthened the Board and if the Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives were in agreement.

In response to a question in regard to what expertise independent members would bring to the Board, the Assistant Director for Housing and Health responded that it would be down to the Board to agree on the criteria. She continued that they could be recruited on either a paid or voluntary basis. However, the Board would receive less experienced applicants if the Board decided on that model.

Diana Minns (Co-Chair) commented that there was a large number of Local Authorities taking back housing stock from Housing Associations. She continued that the board should look at its statistical neighbours on if they have independent members on their Boards. She went on to suggest that a further

written report on the appointment of Independent Members be submitted to the next meeting.

Resolved: That the Assistant Director for Housing and Health be requested to submit a written report to the next meeting on the appointment of Independent Members.

26/16/HAB Housing Advisory Board Terms of Reference

The Resident Engagement Manager submitted a report in regard to the proposed Housing Advisory Board (HAB) Terms of Reference for approval.

Members were reminded that the Housing Advisory Board (HAB) was created in May 2025 as an outcome of the council's governance review.

The HAB required a Terms of Reference to provide structure, purpose, and clarity for the Board, and would Act as the foundation document that defined their roles, responsibilities and operational framework.

The template for the Terms of Reference was shared by South Cambridgeshire District Council's Housing Board, and adjustments had been made by Cambridge City Councils Democratic Services team, to ensure it was applicable to the HAB. Since July 2025 HAB Members had had various discussions and input into the creation of this document. She added that Members of the Housing Advisory Board also met on 18th March to discuss the Board and make recommendations; these had been incorporated into the final document.

In response to a suggestion that a Tenant Representative be the sole chair the Board, the Assistant Director for Housing and Health replied that this was suggested at the formation of the Board. However, this was rejected by Councillors at the time and would now require a constitutional change.

In answer to a comment that it was difficult to disentangle the differences between the Board and a Scrutiny Committee, the Assistant Director for Housing and Health responded that the Board was no longer a scrutiny committee, it did however still scrutinise. She added that the Housing Advisory Board now had more responsibility especially in areas such as performance etc than it previously had.

Resolved: That the Housing Advisory Board Terms of Reference be approved.

26/17/HAB New Build Working Group – New Build Repairs and Maintenance After the Defects Period

The Resident Engagement Manager submitted a report which outlined the new Working Group to be established on the topic of council new-build repairs and maintenance after the defects period, and to confirm membership of the Working Group.

Members were reminded that at the previous meeting of the Housing Advisory Board (HAB), on the 2 February 2026 it was proposed by the Resident Representatives to form a Working Group focussed on issues arising for residents of new-builds.

In accordance with the Terms of Reference, Working Groups may be established by the Housing Advisory Board for the purpose of conducting an in-depth review and producing recommendations on any service, policy or issue relating to the social landlord function (for example, effectiveness of specific housing services, management and maintenance of stock, etc).

Resolved: (i) That the following Housing Advisory Board Members be appointed to the New Build Working Group:

- Councillors: Davison, Martinelli and Wade (TBC).
- Tenant & Leaseholder Representatives: Diana Minns, Mandy Powell-Hardy and Renata Wais.

(ii) That Resident Engagement Manager be requested to submit a report in regard to the Scope of the New Build Working Group.

(iii) That Resident Engagement Manager submit regular updates from the New Build Working Group at future meetings.

26/18/HAB Housing Improvement Plan - June Update

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health, presented the item on the Housing Improvement Plan (HIP) – June Update, which provided overall update on progress, an update on HIP Leadership, and the proposed next steps and identifying priority items.

Members were informed that the Housing Improvement Programme (HIP) set out a comprehensive programme of work to strengthen housing services in Cambridge. The HIP was developed following inspection findings and an

internal review of council policies, procedures, and systems. To achieve this goal, the HIP focused on four key areas: Regulatory Compliance, Data Management, Service Quality and Working with Tenants and Leaderships.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health, continued that overall, most actions in the HIP remained on track, with a growing number requiring further action as work continued. She added that there were inter dependences with data systems, council applications, and external contractors which had been identified.

In respect of the MRI Programme Review, the council was completing a large-scale IT systems review, alongside the HIP. The MRI System, also known as Orchard or Housing Enterprise held all council housing information related to asset management, repairs and tenancies. By reviewing the MRI Programme alongside the HIP, the service could establish where systems needed to be updated or improved to deliver the HIP priorities.

Members were informed that in regard to Programme Leadership, Sam Scharf, Director of the Councils Communities Group, had been confirmed as the Programme Sponsor for HIP. She added that sponsorship would bring together Housing Improvements, which included utilisation and optimisation of systems as well as any wider changes. Leadership across much of this programme would begin to be delivered jointly with South Cambridgeshire District Council, due to much of the change impacting our future Unitary position.

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health went on to say that the next steps included meeting planning and delivery with internal partners, and an update plan based on feedback from meetings and findings from the MRI programme review.

She concluded that with the forthcoming Local Government Re-organisation, it was important to ensure that HAB was on board and that discussions were already taking place with South Cambridgeshire District Council with a proposed joint board with HAB Chair involvement.

Members commented that the report included lost of acronyms without an explanation for their meaning and suggested that a glossary be included in future reports.

Councillor Smart commented that it was right to mention Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in the report, as tenants would be affected and should

be guided throughout the process as they were here to guide Councillors on the Board.

Resolved: (i) To note the report.

(ii) That a Glossary of Acronyms and their meaning be included in future reports.

26/19/HAB Housing Performance Report Year End 2025-26

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

Members were informed that the report included the 2025/26 headline data the Council would be submitting to Government (currently in draft form as it had yet to be audited), for our Tenant Satisfaction Measures; a combination of management information and tenant perception results from the 2025/26 survey. A more detailed report would be presented to HAB in September, including any actions proposed in response to these results.

In response to questions, the Assistant Director for Housing and Health responded that:

- It was unusual to find a high satisfaction rate for complaints regarding anti-social behaviour.
- If a complaint was not upheld, it would usually receive a low score.
- Evictions could take time to process.
- There was a dedicated webpage to report damp and mould.
- Tenants needed to report any issues as soon as they arose rather than letting any issues get worse.
- A new process had been introduced in May to deal with Voids and that a report would be submitted to the next meeting.

Diana Minns (Co-Chair) commented that tenants who worked had to take time off when a repair was carried out on the home and that more flexibility is required from the Council. Also, tenants should be updated on the progress on any repairs reported.

Mandy Powell-Hardy (Tenants Representative) commented that on her last 'Estate Walkabout' she had received lots of complaints from disgruntled residents on the service that they were received from the Council. Diana Minns (Co-Chair) added that it was important to get tenants onboard.

Resolved: (i) To note the report.

(ii) That a report on Voids be submitted to the next meeting.

26/20/HAB Rent Regulation Update

The Assistant Director for Housing and Health, presented a report in regard to the Rent Regulation Project including progress and communications with affected tenants and risks.

The Board were informed that the DWP had failed to decide as to whether they would pursue the Council for the housing benefit element of the tenants Universal Credit claim. The only decision to be made at present was which bank account the Treasury wished for the monies to be paid into, albeit this had not been given in writing. They also suggested an 'honesty pot' and implied a settlement figure would be discussed, but no further communication had been received. At present, the only written response received was an email to confirm this was with their key stakeholders and under review.

Also, the DWP development team had suggested that the Council use their system 'Searchlight' under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to investigate the legitimate claims. However, on application for an amendment to the MoU this was not supported by the legal team. They advised this was a moot point as to whether this fell under 'Housing Benefit' administration and for authority to decide. Currently, this was under discussion with the relevant stakeholders within Cambridge City Council as to whether it adequately complies the test.

Diana Minns (Co-Chair) enquired if past tenants would receive a refund if eligible.

The Board were informed that if past tenants believed that they were eligible for a refund they would have to apply and also provide evidence. She added that the Council had tried to ensure that those eligible would receive a refund.

Resolved: To note the report.

26/21/HAB Work Programme and Forward Plan & Scrutiny Work Programmes

The Democracy and Scrutiny Officer presented Members with the draft work programme and dates of meetings for 2026-27 and advised the programme would be appropriately amended and updated as resolved by the Committee below. The report also included the Forward Plan and the work programmes for both the Performance, Assets & Strategy and Services, Climate & Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committees.

Members proposed that going forward the start time of future Housing Advisory Boards be reverted to 5.30pm

Resolved: (i) That the Housing Advisory Board Work Programme be noted and approved.

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

- Appointment of Independent Members – Next Meeting
- New Build Working Group – Scope – Next Meeting
- New Build Working Group – Updates – Future Meetings
- Voids – Next Meeting

(iii) 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.

(iv) That going forward the start time of future Housing Advisory Boards be reverted to 5.30pm.

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm

CHAIR