

Cabinet Housing Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 24 September 2025

Present:

Councillors:

Glenn Andrews, Dr Cathal Lynch, Julian Tooke (Chair) and Suzanne Williams (Vice-Chair)

Coopteers:

Elizabeth Mawdsley, Ian Mason

Also in attendance:

Councillors:

Rowena Hay

Officers

Claire Hughes (Director of Governance, Housing and Communities), Paul Leo (Interim Director Housing Transformation), Olivia Underhill (Customer Services Manager) and Matt Ward (Head of Housing Services)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Flo Clucas, Councillor Jan Foster and Agnieszka Wisniewska.

Councillor Cathal Lynch acted a substitute.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Public and Member Questions

One public question had been submitted; the response was taken as read.

Question from Mr Gary Clarke

Will the Housing Committee confirm, with reference to any existing records or policies from 1 January 2020 to the present, whether there are any plans or intentions to package, transfer, or sell any part of the Council's housing stock, including the approximately 4,800 properties managed by Cheltenham Borough Homes, to pension funds, private equity firms, or other third parties? If no such plans exist, will the Committee commit to issuing a formal, public declaration within 30 days, confirming that this housing stock will remain under the Council's direct ownership, control, and management, with no such proposals under consideration? If such plans do exist, what are the specific details of these proposals, including when they were last discussed, and how do they align with the Council's duties under the Housing Act 1985 to manage its housing stock for public benefit?

Response from Councillor Julian Tooke, Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee

Thank you for your enquiry. The Cabinet Housing Committee is not aware of any plans to package, transfer, or sell any part of the Council's housing stock. In line with the Council's Constitution decisions on the disposal or exchange of land or property is reserved for the Cabinet Member (where the value is between £10,000 and £500,000) or the Cabinet as a whole (where the value is over £500,000). As this decision falls outside of the authority of the Committee, it would be inappropriate to issue a formal, public declaration on this matter. You are welcome to write to the Cabinet Member for Housing or submit your question to the full Council.

Mr Clarke was not present to ask a supplementary question.

4 Appointment of Leasehold Representative

Elizabeth Mawdsley was UNANIMOUSLY elected as Leaseholder Representative for the Committee.

5 Minutes of the last meeting

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2025.

RESOLVED THAT The minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2025 were signed as a correct record.

6 Director Briefing (Verbal)

Objective: An update from the Director of Governance, Housing and Communities on key issues which may be of interest to the Cabinet Housing Committee.

The Director of Governance, Housing and Communities addressed the Committee and highlighted that:

- Five appointments have been made since the Committee last met which will bring structure and balance to the teams after a period of change:
 - Resource Planning Team Leader who will manage the team who allocate jobs and make appointments with customers.
 - Operations Manager Responsive repairs with overall responsibility for the Repairs and Voids Service.
 - Operations Manager Technical Investment who will manage the planned and programmed maintenance.
 - Head of Regulatory Compliance with overall responsibility for all compliance.
 - Project Manager for the Housing Improvement Programme.
- The self-assessment against the Consumer Standards has been completed and has been submitted to the Housing Quality Network who are carrying out an independent review to provide assurance that the approach taken and actions identified are correct. That review will be conducted throughout October and will inform the further development of the housing improvement action plan which will be presented to the Committee and shared with tenants and leaseholders in November.
- The annual report to tenants for 2024/25 will be published online in the next few days. Printed copies will be available at offices and will include information on how you can acquire copies translated into the three most common languages locally for the first time.
- Voids (empty properties) are down 14% since July – there are 118 standard re-let Voids, 15 of these are currently with the letting team, with work ongoing for the remaining 103. On average 20 new Voids are received per month and since April 2025 an additional 118 properties have come through as new Voids. Predominantly Voids are split into two categories being Majors and Minors. Minor Voids are now the focus of an in-house Voids Team who are working at a rate of around 8-10 properties per week. With regards to Major Voids, we now have three active contractors appointed and are starting work on these Voids – 28 are being worked on currently with an expected average conservative turnaround of 8 weeks.

7 Proposed Performance Framework and Performance Data for August 2025

Objective: To provide the Committee with key performance information relation to voids, arrears, day to day repairs, ASB and property compliance.

The Director of Governance, Housing and Communities introduced the report and highlighted that it provided a proposed framework to be used moving forwards. She thanked the Governance, Risk and Assurance Manager for her work preparing the framework. She explained that the framework provides a suite of KPIs that will be reported on a monthly basis and shared with the Compliance Monitoring Group which is composed of officers and the Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee. It also includes how exceptions will be reported.

The Director of Governance, Housing and Communities highlighted the following compliance matters:

- Of the four new high-risk actions reported at 3.1.4, three have now been completed. The remaining outstanding high-risk action will be added to the compartmentation contract which is due to start in mid-October. Five of the seven new medium risk actions have now been completed and we are working with experts to find solutions for the two outstanding, more complicated actions.
- Legacy risk actions are currently still recorded in the old spreadsheet method (new actions have been inputted into a more-automated system that allows reports to be run immediately). Legacy actions have reduced from 49 to 42, as 7 actions relating to fire doors have been completed.
- At the Chair's request a detailed breakdown of risk actions has been included at appendix 5 to show actions by block, what is happening and what mitigations are in place. Actions 1-6, 10, 22, 24 and have now been completed. The report reflects a point in time and will be updated regularly.
- A new scorecard format has also been included to quickly and clearly show where we are compliant, non-compliant and what actions need to be followed up.
- The KPIs included in appendix 6 are being shared with the Committee for the first time. In the future it will move to look more like the scorecard.

The Chair thanked the Compliance Team for the work carried out to ensure that data collection, consistency, and system have improved, providing better reports that are needed for the Committee. Providing better data and processes.

The Committee's discussion raised the following points:

- The fire doors scheduled to be fitted in September have now been fitted.
- An inspection took place at a leaseholder property when it was meant to be limited to tenant properties. The contractor was not aware they were carrying out tests beyond their remits and revealed that fire doors are not compliant, which the leaseholder is now responsible for resolving. There is a consistent theme of blind spots around leaseholders which officers have noted.
- Quality assurance checks will be carried out by the Head of Regulatory Compliance, once they have taken up the post, and the Governance, Risk and Assurance Manager, supported by the council's data analyst. The outcomes of these checks will be shared with the appropriate meeting for scrutiny.
- It was noted that the report shows that arrears are increasing. As mentioned at a recent meeting a lot of tenants are experiencing issues following their migration to Universal Credit and are ending up in arrears despite doing everything right. The arrears position is ahead of target and the arrears are currently lower than the same point last year. Work to do in regards to the report as the correct targets need to be entered, the next report will include these.
- Currently the spike in homelessness applications has not been explored in regards to what is driving the increase. Exceptions will identify issues that can be discussed with managers responsible for that information to explore the matter, ideally this would have happened prior to the meeting. We are currently still streamlining the data collection and reporting process. We will ensure this information is provided by the appropriate manager before the next meeting.

The Committee UNANIMOUSLY approved the recommended performance framework process and noted the compliance information.

8 Housing Complaints and Compliments Report - Quarter 1

Objective: To provide an overview of housing related complaints and compliments, identifying key areas of dissatisfaction and areas for learning and service improvement.

The Customer Services Manager introduced the quarter 1 complaints and compliments report. She noted that nationally complaints numbers have increased, which shows that more tenants are accessing the complaints process. Since the last report to the Committee, the Complaints Handling Code self-assessment has been completed and was compliant in all areas. It has been submitted to the Housing Ombudsman and uploaded on the housing service website. Additional resource has also been recruited within the complaints service to support the Complaints Officer.

The Committee's discussion raised the following points:

- It would be beneficial to provide data over time in the learning framework applied chart to establish whether the figures are improving or worsening. It was noted that results do fluctuate but the team are aware where focus needs to be on improvement.
- It was noted that there had been 12 complaints relating to the quality of work in quarter 1 and concerns were raised that this was due to the absence of routine post-inspections and contractor work not being monitored. It was confirmed that there had been issues with contract management due to resource shortages and a lack of the particular skill set needed to manage contractors. A skills gap analysis is being carried out at the moment. A lot of work has been carried out on how contractors are procured in the last few months to ensure they are appointed through robust processes. For example, the three new contractors appointed recently to work on voids are being given a smaller number of jobs initially to allow an assessment to be carried out of their strengths and issues that need to be addressed. Should significant issues be identified then we may stop using that contractor. The new contracts agree a rate but does not commit the council to a specific number of jobs, they also include a framework for how performance will be monitored.
- It was noted that leaseholders are experiencing similar issues and are being charged for repeated call outs where repairs are not completed and where contractors have not really been fit for their role. The Head of Housing Services will discuss this matter with

the Leasehold Representative to confirm whether they are financially liable where repairs are not completed and how they can ensure they are receiving value for money.

- The importance of complaints was highlighted in driving improvement and holding contractors to account. It was confirmed that a meeting has been held with a contractor to discuss complaints and further meetings are scheduled.
- It was highlighted that repeated visits to repairs without noticeable progress or evidence of work being carried out erodes tenants trust and may make them less likely to engage with the service or ensure the service is good.
- Concern was raised that the service may be being charged for visits where no action is taken.
- It was noted that the numbers in the report tend not to match exactly as the 10-day response target often falls across periods.

9 Housing Risk Register

- 1. Objective:** To review the strategic risks relating to housing from the Council's Risk Register.

The Director of Governance, Housing and Communities introduced the report to the Committee. She highlighted that:

- The score for risk 'CH1 - Housing Revenue Account' has increased to reflect the end of year position reported to the Committee in July.
- The score for risk 'CH3 - Stock Condition Data' has decreased to reflect that over 70% of stock conditions have now been completed. It was noted that outstanding surveys are primarily due to lack of access to properties. Legal advice is currently being sought on how to engage with these tenants. Work is also now being carried out on the data from the surveys to develop the planned maintenance programme.

The Committee's discussion raised the following points:

- It was highlighted that the Leaseholder Panel have raised financial concerns around when fees for large work across properties will fall, particularly in a time of great financial vulnerability. They were assured that engagement activities are planned for both tenants

and leaseholders as the planned maintenance programme is developed.

- Concerns were raised around the conversion of flats back into one property which could impact the housing waiting list. As this related to privately owned properties it was agreed that this did not fall under the remit of the Committee and would instead be discussed at an alternative forum.

10 Updates from the Tenant and Leaseholder Panels

Objective: To highlight the ongoing activities of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panels and provide an additional opportunity for tenant and leaseholder voices to be heard.

The leaseholder representative updated the Committee on the recent activity of the Leaseholder Panel, she explained that the key themes that had emerged from their discussions were:

- A focus on repairs and maintenance and concerns around response times, communication received, confusion between tenant and leaseholder properties, and the expectation they must be present with little opportunity to negotiate times.
- Contractor accountability and performance review in terms of responsive maintenance.
- Service charges and transparency around costs and how fees are calculated, especially with cost of living an issue. There is concern around S20 notices for large repairs and a perception that costs are unfairly passed to leaseholders. Whilst this is not the case the costs do often seem incredibly unreasonable in terms of quality and scope of work carried out.
- The Panel would like to see accessible breakdowns of how fees are arrived at with plain English summaries available on request to ensure the wider leaseholder network are able to understand the documents.
- Earlier engagement and understandable timelines around major works and planned maintenance would be useful to allow leaseholders to make informed decisions and reduce the feeling of threat from upcoming fees.
- Communication is a key theme across all these issues, especially as it often seems focused on tenants. There has been inconsistency on how information is received, and it is important

that formats are accessible. A review of communication is scheduled in the future.

The Committee's discussion raised the following points:

- The Leaseholder Representative's comments were welcomed. It was noted that S20 is a legal process that needs to be followed. Work has already been carried out to make the descriptions of service charges more detailed. Officers would like to work with the Leaseholder Forum to review the notices before they are issued and raise observations. The team also encourages leaseholders to contact them and let them know if work isn't carried out or is unsatisfactory, and are happy to offer support through the S20 process. It is hoped that in the future this can be a more proactive offer. An advisory audit of the S20 process is being carried out which should provide recommendations for improving the service.
- Whilst there are observation opportunities, for example in relation to cyclical decoration, it was noted that respondents hadn't heard back within the time frame and the responses eventually received seemed to be dismissive. There is work to be done on improving this observation process.
- It was highlighted how valuable it was to directly hear from leaseholders so that we can adapt services.

11 Review of the Housing Committee Forward Plan

The Housing Committee Forward Plan was noted.

12 Items to be referred to Cabinet

There were none.

13 Briefing Note - Housing Sector Insight

Objective: To provide the Committee with an overview of recent developments in the housing sector and provide opportunities for horizon scanning.

The Committee's discussion raised the following points:

- The council are signatories to the remediation acceleration plan for three 11m blocks that have had cladding issues identified. Work has already been carried out to ensure safety but a bid will be put in to fully replace the cladding.

