

Briefing Note

Committee name: Cabinet Housing Committee

Date: 26 November 2025

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This note provides information to keep Members informed of matters relating to the work of the Cabinet or a committee but where no decisions from Members are needed.

If Members have questions relating to matters shown, they are asked to contact the officer indicated.

Government Strategy and Announcements

- a. The Government confirmed that Awaab's Law came into effect in England on 27 October. The new regulations require landlords to fix emergency hazards within 24 hours, investigate damp and mould within 10 working days, and make homes safe within five working days. Landlords must also consider vulnerable tenants' circumstances and offer temporary accommodation if homes cannot be made safe in time. Those who fail to comply face enforcement action, compensation orders, and legal costs.
- b. The Renters' Rights Bill received Royal Assent on the 27 October, making it the Renters' Rights Act and granting private renters a significant increase to their rights. As the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) press release highlights:
 - Landmark legislation will abolish Section 21 'no fault' evictions, ending a practice that has threatened thousands of renters with homelessness.
 - The Act will rebalance landlord-tenant relations across England as part of the government's Plan for Change.
 - The reforms will give renters the right to end tenancies with two months' notice, while protecting legitimate landlord interests through strengthened repossession grounds that support continued investment in the sector.
 - Other changes include applying the Decent Homes Standard and Awaab's Law to the private rented sector, abolishing blanket bans on tenants who have children or receive benefits, and cracking down on bidding wars.

Although it has received Royal Assent, the Government has yet to clarify how it will go about implementing the Bill and when. However, from 27 December local authorities will be able to make use of new investigatory powers granted to them in

the Act, including procedures for requesting information from landlords and other relevant persons, entering business and residential premises with or without a warrant, and seizing documents.

- c. The Government has issued a policy statement and an updated consultation response confirming a new regulatory Competence and Conduct Standard for social housing that will come into force in October 2026. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is directed to set the standard to ensure that providers professionalise services, strengthen culture and ensure tenants are treated with respect. There will be a three-year transition for providers with one thousand homes and a four-year transition for smaller providers. Registered providers must ensure that:
 - Senior housing managers have (or are working towards) an Ofqual level 4 qualification.
 - Senior housing executives have (or are working towards) a foundation degree or Ofqual level 5 qualification.
 - Providers must also adopt learning and development and conduct policies, embed codes of conduct, and give tenants meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise these.
 - Services providers (such as arm's length management organisations) who deliver all or the majority of core housing management functions will have a contractual obligation through management service agreements to ensure that relevant managers have, or are working towards, the required qualifications (this will not apply where a single function is delivered).
- d. Homes England have published new guidance for the Social and Affordable Homes Programme (SAHP), including a specification that three in five homes should be for social rent and information on how the funding can be used to support regeneration. The £39 billion fund aims to support the delivery of 1.5 million social and affordable homes during this parliament, including supporting an increase in council housebuilding, the delivery of specialist and supported housing, and the delivery of community-led and rural housing. The MHCLG also confirmed recently that £7 billion from the fund has now been allocated to six combined authorities.
- e. The Government has confirmed that new Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) will come into force for private registered providers of social housing in two stages from October 2026 and April 2027, aimed at improving transparency and helping tenants hold landlords to account. Stage 1 will require landlords to publish key information about how they manage homes, including spending, governance, performance, housing stock, and progress towards net zero. At stage 2 tenants or their nominated representatives will have a legal right to request further information on issues such as rent, repairs, service charges, safety, complaints, and estate management. Tenants dissatisfied with a landlord's response will be able to escalate complaints to the Housing Ombudsman, while the RSH will oversee compliance with the new requirements. Local authority landlords are currently not covered by the new regime, but the Government has pledged to extend Freedom of Information laws to cover their tenant management organisations as well.
- f. The Government has responded to the HCLG Committee's report on "The Funding and Sustainability of Local Government Finance", accepting most of the Committee's

recommendations and committing to wide-ranging reforms from 2026–27. However, in its response to the Committee’s recommendation on Local Housing Allowance (LHA), the Government confirmed that it has no plans to unfreeze LHA rates for 2025–26, instead prioritising funding for the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments to maintain existing levels of discretionary assistance for households most in need.

- g. The New Homes Quality Board has been selected to take over the Shared Ownership Code (a code of practice that registered housing providers can sign up to), with responsibility for its operations, governance and financial stability. The code was created in the Summer by the Shared Ownership Council to standardise best practice and consumer protection amidst warnings that the shared ownership model has too often failed to deliver genuinely affordable homeownership; leaving many buyers facing rising rents, uncapped service charges, complex leases and disproportionate repair costs.

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)

- h. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has published its corporate plan for 2025 to 2028, highlighting the challenging operating environment for social housing landlords, particularly risks to finance viability due to continuing tough economic conditions and the difficult demands of repairs and safety remediation works, new regulation and policy, and the need for new homes. Following consultation with their Board and colleagues, the corporate plan’s objectives are:
 - Driving improvement - deliver improved outcomes for current and future tenants of social housing through robust regulation of registered landlords.
 - Maintaining confidence - maintain stakeholder and investor confidence in social housing by sharing insight, research and analysis to enable landlords to respond appropriately to sector risks, challenges and opportunities and deliver more quality homes and landlord services.
 - Working with others - inform the development and delivery of effective social housing policy, by working with a range of stakeholders, including tenants and government.
 - Building the organisation - develop and maintain a diverse, skilled and engaged workforce, by creating an inclusive culture that enables continuous learning and having corporate functions and systems that support and enable effective regulation.
- i. The RSH has published the annual Sector Risk Profile, concluding that: *“The importance of governance is the key theme running through this report. Governance underpins both financial viability and the ability of landlords to provide better outcomes for tenants. Our governance requirements apply to private registered providers. But we have seen from our casework that local authorities can also learn from our regulation of governance. For example, delivering the outcomes of our consumer standards requires robust risk management, underpinned by comprehensive data on health and safety risks and the overall condition of tenants’ homes. Boards and councillors must use this information, alongside other sources such as feedback from tenants, to make strategic decisions about tenant services*

and repairs.”

The report discusses the challenges around providing safe and decent homes, the supply of new homes, the importance of data in delivering quality services, data integrity, rent setting, supported housing, energy efficiency requirements and net zero, insurance, fraud, ensuring financial viability, debt, fixed asset sales and diversification.

- j. The RSH has published its annual statistics showing that the social housing sector in England grew by nearly 38,000 homes in 2024-25 to around 4.5 million but also revealing a continued fall in traditional local authority owned social rent homes. The figures show:
- An increase of approximately 28,000 affordable rent homes and 13,900 low-cost home ownership properties overall.
 - A fall of just over 4,100 social rent homes (primarily driven by Right to Buy (RtB) sales). Local authorities recorded a net loss of around 7,000 social rent homes.
 - Private registered providers (PRPs) reported a net gain of nearly 2,900 homes and accounted for 83% of new affordable rent properties and 98% of low-cost home ownership completions.
 - 75% of PRPs homes have an EPC rating of C or above, up from 71% last year, and a further 19% are rated D.
 - During the year, 537,000 homes were surveyed, identifying 41,000 that did not meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS). More than 35,400 of these have since been remediated. A further 9,335 homes were excluded from having to meet DHS requirements due to circumstances which prevent or limit remediation works.
 - Average general needs social rents rose by 8% between March 2024 and March 2025, in line with the permitted limit. The average weekly rent stood at £113.69, ranging from £95.16 in the North East to £140.70 in London, with local authority rents remaining lower on average than those of PRPs.
- k. The RSH's analysis of the 2024-25 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) has shown that:
- 71.8% of tenants in low-cost rental accommodation (LCRA) are satisfied with the overall service from their landlords, an increase of 0.5% from the previous year.
 - 18% of tenants are fairly or very dissatisfied with their landlords.
 - Highest satisfaction drivers are satisfaction with overall repairs services (73.6%), satisfaction with their home being safe (77.6%) and that their landlord treats them with fairness and respect (77.9%).
 - Satisfaction with complaint handling remains low at 35.5%, an increase of 1% from the previous year.
 - Other areas of concern are satisfaction with approach to handling anti-social behaviour (59.5%), landlords listening to tenant views and acting upon them (61.6%), landlords making a positive contribution to the neighbourhood (64.6%), and maintenance and cleanliness of communal areas (66.7%).
 - Most landlords report full compliance on each building safety measure, with the vast majority of homes owned by large landlords having completed required gas (99.7%), fire (98.7%), asbestos (97.9%), water (97.9%) and lift safety checks (97.8%).

- Landlords are required to set target timescales for the end-to-end completion time for both emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs. Across the sector, a large majority of responsive repairs were recorded as being completed within these target timescales (79% of non-emergency, and 91% of emergency repairs at sector level). This was 2% higher than last year for both repair types.

Housing Ombudsman

- I. The Housing Ombudsman's Annual Complaint Review for April 2024 to March 2025 has found:
 - Complaints from social housing tenants about poor living conditions have risen by 43% in England.
 - Local authorities, as well as housing associations with between 1,000 and 10,000 homes, are struggling more than other landlords to provide timely responses to complaints.
 - The Ombudsman made 26,901 interventions, with 40% of compensation relating to leaks, damp and mould. It also made 2,007 findings of reasonable redress (over 800 more than 2023-24).
 - The Ombudsman also made 7,082 determinations, an increase of 30% from 2023-24.
 - While 71% of complaints made were upheld, it also identified evidence of improvements in the complaint handling process, including a 7% drop in the maladministration rate and 117 fewer severe maladministration failings.
- m. The Housing Ombudsman latest 'Learning from Severe Maladministration' report has focused on less-publicised areas of service failure such as subsidence, adaptations and rent accounts. The Ombudsman warns that while these "silent" severe maladministration cases may be less visible than those involving damp, mould or disrepair, their impact on residents' wellbeing and finances can be equally significant and damaging. While the specific complaint areas differ, the report identifies recurring systemic issues, including poor knowledge management, communication breakdowns, and prolonged inaction.
- n. The Housing Ombudsman has launched a revised special investigations process designed to help social landlords identify and resolve service failings earlier, strengthen accountability, and improve outcomes for residents without the need for a full investigation. The new process introduces a three-tier framework that allows the Ombudsman to intervene when a landlord is performing less well than others on key metrics derived from casework. The approach aims to foster earlier engagement, enabling landlords to detect issues and take corrective action before they escalate.

Research and Campaigns

- o. Ahead of the Autumn Budget, the Local Government Association (LGA) has called on the Government to expand access to the £2.5 billion low-interest loan fund originally earmarked for housing associations. They have argued that local authorities are well placed and should also be able to draw on the facility to accelerate council housebuilding and expand affordable housing supply. The

government-backed loans will be distributed through the newly established National Housing Bank. The LGA also urged that alongside other funding streams, the preferential borrowing rates for social housing through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) be made permanent to provide greater certainty to house building.

- p. UNISON's Housing Worker Survey for 2024-25, based on over 1,100 responses from housing staff employed by councils and housing organisations, has highlighted:
- 77% of housing staff reported high levels of stress, with four in five respondents saying pressures have worsened over recent years and 25% of respondents reporting taking time off due to stress.
 - 45% of respondents said they lack the necessary training for their jobs and 1 in 5 reporting having gone more than three years without health and safety training.
 - 57% reported being asked to take on duties outside their remit, with UNISON commenting that housing staff feel "unsafe, unsupported, and overstretched".
 - Nearly two-thirds of housing workers said they are looking for another job and more than half are considering leaving the sector altogether, with UNISON noting that over half of employers are struggling to fill roles and are turning to agency staff.
 - Of the 73% of respondents who are employed by councils, 43% reported earning between £30-40k, with almost 1 in 5 earning below the real living wage.
 - 72% of respondents reported experiencing violence at work in the last year, with 40% saying they were not adequately supported afterwards and 50% saying their employer had taken no steps to prevent repeat incidents.
 - The report also outlined that housing workers' top priorities are more funding for social rented homes, adequate funding for councils to house the vulnerable, ending the five-week wait for Universal Credit, reforming the private rented sector, and raising local housing allowance to cover average rents.

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