

# Cabinet Housing Committee

## Minutes

Meeting date: 21 January 2026

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**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Glenn Andrews, Flo Clucas, Julian Tooke (Chair) and Suzanne Williams (Vice-Chair)

**Cooptees:**

Ian Mason, Lizzie Mawdsley and Agnieszka Wisniewska

**Also in attendance:**

John Clements (Operations Manager - Property and Communities), Gareth Edmundson (Chief Executive), Helen McEgan (Operations Manager - Technical & Investment), Kerryann Pitter (Project Manager - Housing Improvement Programme), Gemma Rowberry (Head of Regulatory Compliance), Justine Skitt (Tenancy Management Team Leader), Nick Such (Tenancy Services Manager), Olivia Underhill (Customer Services Manager) and Matt Ward (Head of Housing Services)

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### 1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillor Jan Foster.

### 2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

### 3 Public and Member Questions

One public question and one Member question had been submitted; the responses were taken as read.

**Question from Mr. Chris Cusick**

The bidding system is in place to allow a fair and equal process for everyone. It is also meant to ensure that those with a medical need priority have first access to suitable adapted properties. What circumstances would lead to the bidding system being circumvented and properties being given to people ahead of those at the top of the medical need list?

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

Thank you for your question.

I have spoken to the Housing Options team and they have explained that the homeseekerplus partnership are committed to advertising and making available as many vacant properties as possible through the system, however on occasion there may be a need for the local authority to be able to direct match to a property.

They outlined that there are a few reasons where the policy would enable this to happen and these would be in circumstances where, for urgent operational reasons, direct offers are made outside of normal policy banding and date order.

Some examples are:

- Over-riding social reason to move the household for safety reasons, as recommended by the Police, partner organisations, or as agreed through multiagency need and risk assessment panels.
- Those let to discharge statutory duties to Homeless applicants in certain circumstances.
- Properties required for existing tenants whose properties are subject to major works requiring them to vacate their own properties (either on a temporary or permanent basis).
- Extra-care vacancies and any supported accommodation where there is an applicant with a Care package that needs a specific property.
- Applicants who have succeeded to a tenancy or, in certain circumstances such as following the death of a family member, left in occupation but who need to move to alternative accommodation.
- Where a property has been adapted and meets the specific needs of a client.
- Applications subject to the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976.

### **Supplementary Question**

Is there an order of priority for the reasons given? In previous meetings it has been mentioned that accessibly adapted properties will be listed for people requiring those adaptations. Is there a reason that an accessibly adapted property would be offered to a tenant that does not require the adaptation?

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

The Chair invited the Head of Housing Services to respond.

The Head of Housing Services explained that he manages the lettings team and works closely with the housing options team. Both teams are aware of those on the waiting list needing adaptations. As a general rule properties with adaptations are advertised and priority is given to those that need those adaptations. However, sometimes this isn't the case depending on the level of adaptations in the property or

how long a property is likely to be empty before being matched with a suitable tenant. Properties are considered on a case-by-case basis against those on the waiting list in need of housing.

**Question from Councillor Stan Smith, Prestbury Ward**

As we have lots of residents and refugees within the town it has come to my attention that around this time, there are more than 130 homes vacant or unoccupied or in need of repair within (CBC) housing list.

Can you please tell me is this because of bringing (CBH) back into (CBC) or lack of funding?

With so many people on the housing list is it not possible that this maybe a priority.

This may help with some of the issues that some tenants have with downsizing or even upsizing.

Your thoughts on this matter would be appreciated, as I can then relate them back to my residents.

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

Thank you for your question.

I have spoken to officers regularly on this matter. They have acknowledged that there has been substantial delays in the turnaround times for our void properties. These delays were because of governance and legal issues which were identified following the transfer from Cheltenham Borough Homes.

There are several categories of voids with the main two being Major voids (these require substantive works such as new kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, plastering and decoration) and minor voids which require less works.

As a result of the issues identified, it was necessary to put a hold on all properties requiring major void works for some time, to ensure that the council was acting lawfully. Three contractors have now been appointed to deal with major voids allowing the inhouse team to focus on minor voids. As at the end of December 2025 the number of standard HRA voids was 122 properties.

It is recognised that the number of void properties changes from week to week as properties are completed and let, and standard terminations are also received each month. These are often from existing customers upsizing or downsizing within the council's stock. In addition to the regular natural flow of new terminations each month the council are also currently dealing with new properties to let from the large new build development at Regency Village. Whilst it is pleasing to be letting new

homes this development will also have an impact on void numbers as it has created movement between council properties.

The Housing Options team are also agile in their approach to deal with any urgent Housing cases. Officers will identify and bring forward any void required to resolve any urgent housing needs as a matter of urgency. Priority is also given under the countywide Homeseekerplus system (the housing waiting list) that gives priority to those wishing to downsize which in turn alleviates pressures on those that require larger homes.

I have been assured that all budgets and resources are in place to deal with the challenges that have been faced. Now that the issues have been resolved and with new contractors procured, officers are confident that work is progressing well to bring the number down to acceptable levels. Most recently and despite the Christmas period, 23 terminations were received but 33 properties were also let in December and the void rent loss had reduced from 2.71% at the end of November to 2.6%.

Void performance has been a key priority that Cabinet Housing Committee has been and will continue to monitor and receive regular updates upon.

#### **4 Minutes of the last meeting**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2025.

The Chair noted that the actions relating to the public question at the 26 November meeting, as captured within the minutes, have now been completed.

**RESOLVED THAT The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2025 were signed as a correct record.**

#### **5 CEO Briefing (Verbal)**

**Objective:** An update from the Chief Executive on key issues which may be of interest to the Cabinet Housing Committee.

The Chief Executive addressed the committee and provided the following updates:

- Have continued to proceed with key recruitments and have recently filled a senior supervisor post internally. The compliance team review has been completed, and three new posts have been advertised which are now at an interview stage. A review will be carried out of the technical and investment team, critical in terms of planned maintenance, to continue the recruitment journey.
- Would like to thank colleagues in the finance team who have recently published the draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget, which is now with tenants for consultation. These were slightly delayed following the tragic loss of the S151 Officer, Paul Jones. A new interim S151 Officer has now

joined the council, with significant local government experience, including other local authorities with HRAs.

- Christmas can be an incredibly challenging time for a lot of tenants and residents and wished to highlight the fantastic work teams do to support them during this time. 71 hampers were delivered to customers, and 58 presents were gifted to children who may not have received one this Christmas. Have also continued the school uniform initiative, which has helped 91 families with school uniforms.
- KPI figures around compliance continue to move in an inherently positive direction. The committee have set a clear expectation that health and safety and compliance should be the top priority. There are still a couple of areas remaining where the council is focusing on improving figures, which are highlighted within the reports.
- The proposals for local government reorganisation (LGR) were submitted at the end of November. Four councils supported a single unitary model, Gloucester City Council supported the greater Gloucester model, and CBC supported a two-unitary model on a broad east/west split. Central government is expected to open a consultation process with statutory partners in February which will run for six weeks, with a final announcement expected in the summer. Really positive partnership work is taking place across all authorities to prepare. From now until July this will cover activity to understand the baseline position, including mapping all properties and assets. From a housing perspective there are already strong housing partnerships in place which is helpful, and consideration is being given to ensuring that any transition to a future authority is smooth for residents so that they will hopefully not notice any difference.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- Asked the Chief Executive to offer the thanks of the committee to officers who contributed to make Christmas special for so many families and children. The Cabinet Member for Housing highlighted that meeting the children and giving them selection boxes was a tremendous experience. Thanks were also offered to tenants and leaseholders who were active in the support given to other tenants. It was noted that one tenant has already begun to collect easter eggs for the children.

## **6 Housing Improvement Programme**

**Objective:** To provide the Committee with a progress update on the Improvement Plan developed to resolve areas of non-compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards

The Project Manager – Housing Improvement Programme provided a presentation to the committee, which explained:

- The report provides a quarterly update on the housing improvement programme which brings together all activity required to demonstrate compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's (RSH) strengthened

Consumer Standards framework. The programme provides assurance to Members, tenants and the RSH that the council is meeting these standards with the ambition of being well positioned for a strong regulatory outcome.

- Across all four standards there are 256 improvement actions. As of January 2026 - 48% have been completed, 43% are in progress, and 9% are scheduled to begin. This represents a 15% increase in completion since December 2025, which reflects a strong uplift in delivery and evidence maturity. The programme remains on track and 70% of actions are now expected to be completed by mid-February.
- Progress by standard stands at:
  - o Transparency, Influence and Accountability – 61% complete, reflecting sustained work on tenant engagement, accessible information and performance reporting.
  - o Neighbourhood and Community – 50% complete with good momentum around estate inspections, cleaning standards and following up on actions.
  - o Tenancy – 48% complete with focus on improvements to adapted homes processes, tenancy support and outcome-based reporting.
  - o Safety and Quality – 27%, which is expected at this stage given the complexity and data intensive nature of this work stream, which remains a key focus for the programme.
- Moving into the assurance phase of the inspection readiness programme. A mock inspection with the Housing Quality Network (HQN) is scheduled to begin at the end of January, providing independent feedback. They will give a grade and recommendations for areas where further improvement is needed.
- The programme board continues to provide strong oversight of the progress, the risk, the evidence quality and the dependencies. The key is ensuring evidence is strong and consistent as activities are being delivered. This is being mitigated through consistent evidence standards, workstream evidence logs and targeted support to close remaining gaps. Data quality remains a dependency with ongoing alignment to the digital road map.
- Over the next quarter, focus will be on increasing the proportion of actions fully evidenced, prioritising higher risk areas, and maintaining inspection readiness.

## **7 Compliance Performance Data to 31 December 2025**

**Objective** To provide the Committee with key compliance performance data.

The Head of Regulatory Compliance addressed the committee and provided them with the following updates:

- Of the four gas certificates that were showing as overdue at the end of December, one has now been completed.
- Of the 62 overdue fire risk assessments (FRAs), 46 had been completed by the contractor but paperwork was outstanding. The majority of these reports have now been received. There are currently three overdue FRAs.

- The water hygiene risk assessment has been received from the contractor which means there are no overdue risk assessments in this area.
- Of the current fire risk actions:
  - o Seven high-risk actions relate to electrical installations and have now been completed with guidance from the national grid and contractor.
  - o There are 22 actions still to complete in relation to legacy fire actions.
  - o The three high-risk compartmentation actions have now been completed.
- This month's report also includes additional damp, mould and condensation (DMC) cases and the team are working towards creating a snapshot report that mirrors the compliance report. DMC cases are being dealt with in line with Awaab's Law, and there are currently no emergency hazards reported.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- DMC can be caused by a variety of issues including condensation, ventilation and the structure of a building. When a case is reported a surveyor is sent to assess the cause and the best way to rectify the problem. It was highlighted that it was positive that issues are being managed and there has not been the need to decant tenants.
- DMC figures are generated through the QL system, where cases are logged. Aiming to provide a more detailed report that will identify trends and cases as well. Will look into the specific issues raised by leaseholders.
- Currently 1100 properties are awaiting stock condition surveys. All tenants have been contacted at least three times by the contractor but they have not been able to gain access. A new approach is being pursued which will involve a surveyor attending on Saturdays, knocking on doors and leaving cards to show they have tried to gain access. Hopeful that this will enable surveying of a good proportion of the remaining properties. The proportion of homes with a completed survey has risen from 34% at the end of March 2025, to 80%.

## **8 KPI performance data for August - November 2025**

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

The Head of Housing Services addressed the committee and highlighted the following:

- Performance on voids is starting to turn following significant work on the backlog of properties. Three contractors have been procured to deal with major voids, allowing the internal team to focus on minor voids. The overarching KPI is void rent loss which has come down to 2.6% in December, from 2.71% in November.
- Whilst voids are also measured through an average relet time KPI, as properties are only included once work is completed, this KPI will worsen as more voids are returned to a lettable standard as the backlog is worked through.

- Whilst for a variety of reasons void numbers are naturally constantly moving, minor and major void works have been completed on 245 properties in 2025. There was a significant shift since September with the overall number of lettings outweighing terminations. There has been a challenge in recent months following the handover of the council's biggest new build development in Regency Village, as this has increased internal tenant transfers. This has been a positive development but has led to increased voids.
- Current void numbers stand at 122 properties – 65 are major voids (requiring kitchen and bathroom replacements, plastering, full redecoration, new heating systems etc.), 59 of which are currently with contractors. 43 are minor voids being managed by the internal team. The remaining 14 voids have recently been returned and are awaiting inspection.
- Tenancy management are working closely with the housing options team to allow voids to be brought forwards as a priority if they match the requirements for an emergency housing case.
- The rent collection KPI is performing ahead of target thanks to a proactive approach and the additional support provided to tenants, for example by the Benefits and Money Advice service. Currently rent collection is £265k ahead of target.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- It was requested that the new development at Regency Village (also known as Manor Road Swindon Village) be included separately in the next report if there are further delays. These properties are being allocated through the homeseekerplus system and will be a mix of transfers and new tenants. This has an impact on the existing resource.
- A jump in ASB cases was noted for November. Officers are not aware of any changes in reporting during this time that would have impacted these figures. Reasons for this change will be investigated and an update provided to the committee.
- As experienced by other councils with retained council housing, there are challenges relating to skills shortages. Contractors are also struggling with certain trades. Currently there are a number of vacancies, including four multi-skilled roles and two electricians. Many skills wish to be self-employed and currently not seeing large numbers of school leavers joining trades. The council is investing through apprenticeship and are working closely with Gloucestershire College. Would like to bring more apprentices in but need to ensure resources are in place to support them. Also working closely with HR to ensure that the great working conditions and pension schemes are highlighted during recruitment.
- As agreed at the last meeting the Chair has written to MPs for Cheltenham and Tewkesbury in relation to the issues with tenants falling into arrears due to Universal Credit. He will follow this up with them.

## 9 Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

**Objective:** To provide the committee with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Policy and Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) Policy for sign off and recommendation to cabinet for approval.

The Head of Regulatory Compliance introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Policy and explained that it outlines the 29 different types of hazards that are reportable under Awaab's Law, including excess cold or heat, fire and electrical hazards, hygiene and food safety issues. The policy also provides details of how hazards should be reported and dealt with and includes the specified time frames for acting upon those types of hazards. The second policy for consideration is the Damp, Mould and Condensation (DMC) Policy which outlines how DMC will be dealt with when it is reported by tenants, details of what can cause DMC and the council's commitment to rectify those issues within the specified time frames under Awaab's Law.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- In relation to the HHSRS Policy:
  - o It was queried why carbon monoxide is specified as being vulnerable to the over 65s, when it is equally deadly to everyone.
  - o It was noted that the responsible party for noise has not been included.
  - o In relation to falling on stairs it was suggested that the responsibility should be shared between the repairs team and estates team, as cleaning can provide slip hazards.
  - o It was explained that personal hygiene will be managed by the tenancy management team in situations where it is impacting on the building.
- In relation to the DMC Policy:
  - o Leaseholders will be covered by the policy in situations where the DMC is related to the structure of the building. The committee highlighted that they felt the policy should explicitly include a section on leaseholders.
  - o Concern was raised that the safety communications that will be issued may exclude leaseholders, particularly when it relates to building issues. DMC is a common trend that also affects leaseholders, and this information would be beneficial for them.
  - o It was felt that there were gaps in responsibility and accountability for mixed-tenancy blocks. A situation was raised where a leaseholder's DMC relating to missing insulation has not been resolved, as the hatch to the loft is in a tenant's property and access is being refused.
  - o It was suggested that the policy needs to be more explicit in terms of the recharge policy, particularly when structural damp is a cause.
  - o The policy's proactive approach to non-reporting was praised.
  - o It was noted that where issues have been treated but return seasonally this may reflect a deeper more persistent cause.

- It was recommended that the policy should specify what will happen in situations where tenants have refused to follow the advice provided. In a previous policy this was covered by section 11 which provided a defence for failure to comply with legal requirements where all reasonable endeavours have been taken to avoid it.

**Following consultation, the committee agreed that the policies would not be recommended to the Cabinet but that updated drafts should be brought to a future committee meeting for consideration.**

## **10 E-bike and Battery Policy**

**Objective:** To provide the committee with the E-Bike and Battery Policy for sign off and recommendation to cabinet for approval

The Tenancy Management Team Leader introduced the E-bike and Battery Policy to the committee. She explained that over the last two years there have been four house fires relating to charging in council owned properties. These fires risk tenants' safety, cause tenants' stress and cost a considerable amount of money. The policy aims to explain to tenants and leaseholders' key requirements when using these products along with signposting them to relevant guidance on how to use these items. The policy outlines how the policy will be monitored and what actions will be taken if this policy isn't adhered to. The policy also outlines how tenants and leaseholders can appeal or complain against any actions that are taken against this policy. This policy will be reviewed every 3 years or sooner if there is a relevant change in legislation. A communications campaign will also run alongside this policy through social media, the council's website and the Tenant Voice magazine to enforce the message to tenants and leaseholders.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- It is difficult to enforce this within properties so communicating the dangers that people may not be aware of is very important. The team were encouraged to make the tenant guide simple, pictorial, and eye catching, particularly to help tenants who may not have literacy. It was confirmed that the campaign will involve the comms team, ASB service and fire service.

**The committee voted unanimously:**

- 1. That the policy is noted by Cabinet Housing Committee.**
- 2. That the policy is recommended for approval by Cabinet.**

## **11 Q3 2025/26 Housing Complaints and Compliments Report**

**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 provided the committee with the complaints and compliments report for October to December. She highlighted that:

- The number of days taken to close complaints is reducing.
- There are now regular weekly meetings with one of the contractors in recognition of the complaints received around kitchen and bathroom replacements. These meetings have been very positive and, following a restructure, they are paying dividends.
- The Housing Ombudsman have advised us that as some properties are still owned by CBH there should be separate self-assessments submitted going forwards. This has been completed, and the self-assessment has been resubmitted. In quarter 3 there was one complaint from a CBH property and in the 2024-25 annual submission there were five complaints from CBH properties.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- Whilst an original decision was taken to wind up CBH as an organisation, this has not yet happened due to a number of finance questions which have tax implications that would impact finances. CBH still has ownership of some properties, but these are now managed by CBC.
- The continuing issue of no-win solicitors taking advantage of tenants was discussed, currently particularly in relation to disrepair claims. Tenants frequently do not then receive the full compensation they may be entitled to. Where possible the team do encourage tenants to take disrepair through the complaints process, but the final choice lies with the tenant.
- The total amount of compensation for the last quarter was £7.5k, all relating to repairs or planned maintenance. A figure for the year-to-date will be provided to committee members. The team use past cases as a guideline for where compensation should sit, to avoid maladministration.
- At the last meeting the contractor review process was discussed and there were a number of cases where planned repairs were not meeting satisfactory standards. The difficulty of monitoring communal areas was particularly noted. The new Operations Manager Technical and Investment has been attending meetings with managing directors of contractors, ensuring admin support is provided to make sure that regular minutes are taken and actions are revisited. Recruitment is continuing to this dedicated team which should drive further improvements.
- It was highlighted that feedback to tenants remains a priority. In relation to communal areas, it was noted that it would be beneficial to provide feedback to the person who initially made the report, so they can confirm that the repair has actually been completed. It would also be useful to have feedback loops for time scales and callouts to provide regular scrutiny.
- Specific recurring issues with communal door entry systems were discussed. These often need upgrading but currently there is not a contractor specialising in communal doors for the council. Currently working with procurement on the pipeline of future contracts and will be aiming to appoint a contractor. This should allow the creation of a planned maintenance programme to carry out phased replacements over the course of a year. Currently advertising for a

mechanical and electrical surveyor who would also be involved in managing door entry systems and overseeing the electrical contractor.

- There is a rolling planned improvement programme within communal areas, such as painting and decorating, and flooring. These usually occur approximately every seven years to maintain standards so that blocks do not get to the point where tenants and leaseholders need to raise complaints. These cycles will be considered as part of the review of the stock condition survey data.
- Currently we do not regularly survey customers after work has been carried out in communal areas. Ways of doing this are being considered, including making sure that information is provided through fire-rated notice boards within blocks. This would include cleaning information, fire inspections and a point of contact for each block. As understaffing is resolved the aim is to inspect more jobs to ensure they are satisfactory. Officers are also happy to investigate text satisfaction surveys in these areas.
- The committee requested that in relation to planned improvement works a more in-depth discussion be carried out through a briefing session or working group, to consider:
  - o Communal area works
  - o Communication with tenants and leaseholders
  - o Tenant and leaseholder feedback loops (including promotion of work that has been carried out)
  - o Satisfaction with external contractors (including contract management and service level agreements)
  - o Value for money.

## **12 Anti-Social Behaviour Improvement Programme - Update**

**Objective:** To provide the committee with an update on the progress of the ASB Improvement Project.

The Tenancy Services Manager provided the committee with an update on the ASB improvement programme. He highlighted:

- A new team member joined the ASB team in September following the completion of an apprenticeship between the council and Solace. The team member is fully embedded, showing the value in growing our own, and will be a real organisational star in the future.
- The additional resource has freed up vital hours in the week which has allowed the team to work more proactively. This has been supported by a move from three to four patches. Work has included partnership work with police in ASB hotspots, community drop-ins, and ensuring that our approach to ASB values the tenant voice in line with the Consumer Standards.
- The communication plan is moving on and there will be a focus on noise nuisance in the next issue of Tenant Voice. This will include tips on how to prevent noise, how to respond to it and what support the council can provide. This will be followed up with social media to ensure it reaches the widest possible audience.

- The team will also be supporting the E-bike safety campaign, and the team have carried out some key enforcement in this area over the last year.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- The team were thanked for their work. Managing ASB successfully makes a significant difference to the quality of life of residents.

### **13 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.

Both the Tenant Representative and Leaseholder Representative explained that they were scheduled to meet in the following weeks and would bring a fuller update to the next meeting.

### **14 Review of the Housing Committee Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan was noted, and the following additions to the meeting on 1 April 2026 were agreed:

- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and Damp, Mould and Condensation Policy

### **15 Items to be referred to Cabinet**

The committee recommended the following policy to Cabinet:

- E-bike and Battery Policy

### **16 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 briefing note was noted.

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