

Briefing Note

Committee name: Cabinet Housing Committee

Date: 1 June 2026

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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 has outlined its implementation plans for the Renters' Rights Act relating to social housing. Provisions regarding social housing provided by Private Registered Providers (PRPs) are set to come into force from October 2027, following the implementation of the Act in the private rented sector from 1 May 2026. The changes set to be implemented are:
 - All existing social housing assured tenancies provided by PRPs will move to assured periodic tenancies from this point, including social rent homes, affordable rent homes, intermediate rent homes, specialised supported housing, temporary accommodation, rent to buy products, and shared ownership.
 - Section 21 evictions will be abolished. Updated grounds for possession will apply.
 - Landlords will be able to use the Section 13A process to increase rent at any point in the first 52 weeks of a tenancy, and then no more than once every 52 weeks after that, provided they give at least one month's notice.
 - Unlike landlords in the private rented sector, PRPs will continue to be able to use rent review clauses to increase rent, as they do now, and where a rent review clause is used there will be no requirement to serve a Section 13A notice.
 - Annual limits on rent increases will continue to be set under the Regulator of Social Housing's Rent Standard, not through the Renters' Rights Act.
 - PRPs will be required to provide tenants with certain information in writing at the outset of tenancies. The Government will lay secondary legislation setting out what this must include.

To prepare for implementation, the Government published a consultation on a new

Tenure Direction to the Regulator of Social Housing earlier this month, which will run until the 28 May 2026. Whilst the Renter's Right Act does not apply to council owned social housing, local councils will be able to take enforcement action against landlords under the Act.

- b. In line with the Renters' Rights Act, a consultation has been launched to revise the consumer standard relating to social housing tenancies. The consultation will run to the 28 May, with a direction expected by October and implementation in 2027. The proposals seek to ensure tenancy regulation alignment with wider legislative changes and introduce a more outcomes-focused framework for landlords. Under the proposals:
- Social landlords would be expected to prioritise security, transparency, and fairness in tenancy management, rather than adhering to prescribed tenancy types.
 - The framework emphasises granting the most secure tenancies available, while balancing individual household needs, community sustainability, and efficient use of housing stock.
 - It also introduces new expectations around tenancy sustainment and ending tenancies, including requirements for landlords to be clear about possession grounds and to support tenants in securing alternative accommodation where moves are required.
 - It would also extend regulatory protections to all local authority-owned social housing, including stock outside of Housing Revenue Accounts.
- c. The government has published details of the Future Homes Standard, confirming the regulatory framework that will govern the design and construction of new homes. The standards are intended to ensure that homes will not require retrofitting to achieve net zero once the electricity grid decarbonises, with implementation beginning from March 2027 and transitional arrangements extending into 2028. Requirements include:
- Most new homes will need to include low carbon heating systems such as heat pumps, improved building fabric, and solar panels.
 - A new requirement for on-site renewable electricity generation in dwellings.
 - Updated guidance on ventilation, overheating, and heating systems, alongside strengthened requirements for Home User Guides and installation standards.
 - Existing performance metrics such as Target Emissions Rate and Fabric Energy Efficiency will continue.
 - No broad relaxations will be permitted on emissions standards, reinforcing the expectation that new homes will meet the required levels of performance.
 - Further areas of policy development will include a review of overheating regulations and ongoing work to address the gap between designed and actual energy performance.
- d. The final design of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) for the social rented sector has been confirmed. It will require all social homes to reach EPC Band C by 2030 and meet a second energy performance metric by 2039. The policy, part of wider efforts to reduce fuel poverty and improve housing quality, is expected to have financial and delivery implications for social housing providers. The

government's impact assessment estimates that implementation will cost the social housing sector £16.1 billion, including £6.6 billion for local authorities. The final framework allows providers flexibility to meet the standard through fabric improvements, smart readiness, or heating system upgrades, with a £10,000 per property spend cap for each phase to help manage costs and support phased delivery.

- e. The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DSENZ) has announced a £100 million top-up to the Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund (subject to final approvals). The increase is intended to increase energy security amid ongoing global conflict. The funding is expected to support 57,000 solar installations for social households during 2026-27. The announcement forms part of a broader package of measures which will help to decarbonise housing, including the accelerated rollout of renewable technologies and new measures to speed up the grid connections process. The Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband MP, described the changes as a doubling down on clean energy, which he argued is "*the only route to financial security, energy security and national security.*"
- f. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has announced a £2 million programme of pilot projects through the Social Housing Innovation Fund to strengthen tenant voice and engagement in social housing. There will be 20 schemes across England testing new approaches over the course of a year. The trials are intended to identify scalable models that can be rolled out more widely across the sector. The government has stated that the programme will prioritise engagement with underrepresented groups, including tenants with disabilities, those with limited digital access, and individuals affected by trauma, to ensure a broader range of voices are reflected in housing management and policy decisions.
- g. The Housing, Communities and Local Government (HCLG) Committee has published its report into temporary accommodation, as part of a wider inquiry into housing conditions in England across tenure. The report urges the government to take stronger and more immediate action to address poor conditions in temporary accommodation, warning that too many families are living in housing that is "so poor as to be unfit for human habitation" and makes a number of recommendations focused on improving standards. The report came in the same week that the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Households in Temporary Accommodation published its own report, highlighting that between October 2023 and September 2025 nearly 2% of all child deaths occurred among children who were homeless. Over the past six years at least 104 children (76 under the age of 1) have died with temporary accommodation indicated as a contributing factor to their vulnerability, ill health, or death. Of the 3,303 stillbirths and neonatal deaths recorded in 2024, in 91 cases the mother was experiencing homelessness or living in temporary accommodation during their pregnancy. Given its findings, the report outlines a range of recommendations for central and local government, including applying the Decent Homes Standard to temporary accommodation, reducing out-of-area placements, and prioritising pregnant women for appropriate housing.

Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)

- h. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has announced the immediate appointment of Jonathan Walters as its new Chief Executive. He previously served as Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Strategy within the organisation and its predecessor bodies.

Housing Ombudsman

- i. The Housing Ombudsman published its Business Plan for 2026 to 2027, setting out plans to increase landlord fees and prioritise the stabilisation of rising complaint volumes. The Plan confirms that the annual membership fee charged to landlords will rise from £8.03 in 2025-2026 to £9.64 in 2026-2027, reflecting ongoing growth in complaint volumes and the need to ensure the organisation remains financially sustainable. The Ombudsman states that the increase will be introduced through a phased approach following feedback from the sector.
- j. Complaints from non-tenants about how councils manage social housing, will now sit under the extended remit of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman under the Renters' Rights Act 2025. The change addresses a previous gap where individuals affected by council housing services, but not living within council housing, had no route to escalate concerns beyond local complaints processes. Complaints from tenants about their social landlord, including where that landlord is a council, will continue to be managed by the Housing Ombudsman. The change came into force on the 1 May 2026.

Research and Campaigns

- k. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) has published the UK Housing Review 2026. The report highlights:
 - Right to Buy (RtB) is the central driver of long-term structural change in the housing system, with much of the £62 billion in receipts generated not being reinvested into replacement homes. This has contributed to a reduction in total social housing stock from 6.8 million homes in 1981 to 5.2 million in 2023.
 - Over the same period, the proportion of households living in social housing has fallen from 31% to 17%.
 - 40% of homes sold through RtB now operate as private rented stock, often at higher rents than social housing levels, contributing to increased housing benefit expenditure and additional financial pressure on households.
 - Private rents are now at their highest recorded level as a share of earnings, at 36.1%.
 - Lettings to new social tenants have fallen by around a quarter in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland since 2014-15, reducing the capacity of the sector to respond to housing need and contributing to the rise in homelessness.
 - Constraints on councils, including the absence of direct subsidy, has contributed to the loss of council housing stock. This has been exacerbated over competing demands on social landlords, including investment in existing stock to meet safety, quality, and decarbonisation requirements.

The Review also highlights broader housing system challenges affecting social housing tenants and applicants. These include rising use of temporary accommodation, increasing levels of homelessness, and persistent issues with housing quality, including damp, mould, and energy inefficiency. Overcrowding is also increasing across both social and private rented sectors, while housing affordability and insecurity are linked to wider health and wellbeing outcomes.

- I. The latest performance data report from Housemark has shown a considerable rise in the number of emergency hazards being reported by social landlords. The data shows a median of 35.8 emergency hazard reports per 1,000 homes in February 2026 (compared to a median average of just 6.3 in January 2026) and the mean average of emergency hazards per 1,000 homes also increased to 48.9 (compared to 47.3). The report concluded that the increase is not being driven by a sudden deterioration in housing conditions but is more likely a result of landlords improving their reporting processes following the introduction of Awaab's Law in October 2025. The data also reveals that social landlords are maintaining a strong performance when handling hazards, with 96.3% resolved within 24 hours. However, a wider performance gap between operators persists, with some landlords reporting success rates as low as 25%.

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