

Cabinet Housing Committee Minutes

Meeting date: 1 June 2026

Present:

Councillors:

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

Coopteers:

Ian Mason, Lizzie Mawdsley and Agnieszka Wisniewska

Also in attendance:

Claire Hughes (Director of Governance, Housing and Communities), Helen McEgan (Operations Manager - Technical & Investment), Jo Rea (Health and Safety Officer), Nicky Ricketts (Property Compliance Manager), Gemma Rowberry (Head of Regulatory Compliance), Matt Ward (Head of Housing Services) and Jay Whewell (Property Compliance Manager)

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Jan Foster and Arthur Snell.

Councillor Suzanne Williams acted as a substitute.

2 Declarations of interest

There were none.

3 Appointment of Vice Chair

This item was deferred.

4 Public and Member Questions

One public question had been received, with a written response published on the website:

1. Question from Ian Mason, Tenant Representative to the Chair of the Cabinet Housing Committee

Following recent reports in the local press, could I request clarification of the plans for the Housing Offices in the Hester's Way Resource Centre?

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

Thank you for the question.

As you are aware Hesters Way is currently used as office space by some of our housing staff. However, it is not operated in a way which provides the most effective accessibility for our tenants and is not open to the public.

Therefore, we are currently reviewing the provision with a view to developing a model which provides enhanced access to our services. At this stage we are considering options such as a surgery/drop in based model, where staff will be available directly within local communities. This approach would remove the need for tenants to travel to central locations and ensure that our tenants are at the centre of what we do.

As a council and landlord, we must remember that we need to be where people need us to be, even if that is not always where is most convenient for us and this will be at the forefront of the new model.

Once we have a more detailed proposal, we will consult tenants and leaseholders.

Supplementary Question

He was made aware that this story had been in local newspapers, and many tenants had asked him about it. His two primary concerns are the Skills Hub, which runs in the building, and the fact that Hester's Way is rated as in the top 20% of areas of deprivation in the country within the indices of deprivation report released annually. He highlighted that he has always been a great advocate for the Skills Hub, which do fantastic work helping tenants have access to training and helping them into employment. He is reassured from the answer that there is a similar idea that the services should be accessible in that community, and it is important that there is a presence there. There is a huge amount of social housing in the area and many vulnerable tenants who need to be able to access the service.

Prior to the pandemic, CBH used to have a small reception office downstairs in the Hester's Way Resource Centre, where people could go anytime during the working week to address issues. It was well used and he had felt it was a bad idea at the time that it was being closed rather than reopened. Recently he has been introduced to the new intercom system and know that staff are very good at coming down to people but is far from convinced that 80% of residents actually know it is there. Not

sure that the 20% that do are comfortable about shouting their business down a microphone in a public lobby. Asks that when considering the future of the site, the council make sure they retain a presence in the community and make those services accessible to the people that need them.

Director of Governance, Housing and Communities Response

It is currently the intention to retain the Skills Hub at Hester's Way and the council are currently negotiating the terms. As pointed out, the Hester's Way office is not particularly accessible to tenants. Whilst there is an intercom system there, it is not somewhere people can pop in and have a conversation and actually really be engaged. So, the idea behind this is absolutely not about taking anything away, it is about making things better and more accessible. We are looking to have more locations and there will definitely be one in the locality. Although it might not be within the Resource Centre, it is not going to be far away. The council are currently looking at venues and there will be more locations where people can go. This is about making it more accessible, having staff there that are actually available for tenants to come in and see rather than having to come into an office and press a button and hope that someone comes and answers it. It isn't about taking anything away; it is actually about making improvements.

5 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st April 2026 were approved as a true record.

6 Director Briefing (if required) (Verbal)

The Director of Governance, Housing and Communities addressed the committee and provided the following updates:

- Introduced Nicky Ricketts who had joined the council as the new fire manager three weeks before, and as the person responsible for fire compliance will be reporting to the committee regularly.
- Met with the internal auditors earlier in the day who will shortly commence with the programme of internal audits of compliance. They will be looking at three or four areas this year and then will review the remaining areas next year. This will then be carried out on a continual cycle in line with best practice and will provide independent assurance that the council is doing the right things within compliance.
- The following day officers are due to attend the annual engagement meeting with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). If anything comes out of the meeting that the committee needs to be aware of, they will be informed.
- All sales have now been agreed on the shared ownership properties at Regency Village. The team have done a great job completing this work in house, so no money has been lost to estate agent fees.
- Work on the three five-storey blocks that had been previously identified as needing some external works has now commenced. Unfortunately, Homes England rejected the funding bid for the work on the basis that the buildings

measured 10.5m high instead of 11m. This has been brought up with Cheltenham's MP, Max Wilkinson, and he will be taking that forward. Hopefully this may lead to a change but, if not, this will need to be funded from within the capital programme this year.

- The new Competency and Conduct Standard comes into force in October 2026. Part of the Standard is around tenant engagement on staff behaviours – to identify what tenants and leaseholders think are the behaviours that staff should be displaying. Tenant and leaseholder consultation is scheduled over the summer on conduct and behaviours. There will also be consultations around venues for the locations of the new surgeries and on what people believe the council is doing well and what are areas that could still be improved. Information about these consultations will be included in the next issue of the Tenant Voice and appearances will be made at events over the summer.

7 Housing Asset Management Strategy

Objective: To provide the committee with the Housing Asset Management Strategy for sign off for consultation.

The Operations Manager Technical and Investment addressed the committee and highlighted the following:

- The Housing Asset Management Strategy is currently in draft form. If the text is approved by the committee, it will be put into a more visual and polished format with the marketing team, so that it can be taken out for consultation.
- The purpose of the strategy is to ensure that the housing stock is well managed and fit for purpose. It is looking over the next five-year period from 2026 to 2030, and it provides context in the document, including stock profiles showing the age and breakdown of the stock that the council hold, as well as a position statement as of April 2026.
- When the strategy is brought back to the committee for final sign-off that position statement will be updated to the most up-to-date version.
- Consultation will be carried out with key stakeholders including elected members, tenants and leaseholders. A link will be provided for people to respond to with a questionnaire asking whether the council are looking at the right priorities.
- Five key priorities have been developed based on issues already identified, that will help the council to achieve their ambitions:
 - o Safety and compliance – which covers delivery against the compliance strategy and the housing improvement programme, learning from data, and scrutinising performance.
 - o Making informed decisions and actions, including completing stock conditions, getting the planned maintenance programme up and running, and developing a disposal policy using various metrics.
 - o Decent, healthy and energy efficient homes, including funding from the Warm Homes Fund, continuing the successful delivery of energy efficiency measures and achieving a minimum energy efficiency

standard of EPC C by 2030 in line with the government's target. Addressing the new Decent Homes Standard which includes the introduction of smart technology as well as thermal comfort in measuring energy performance. A feasibility assessment will be completed into installing solar PV as part of the roofing programme.

- Aligning homes with housing need, including bringing in ratings for properties in line with Gloucestershire's accessible housing register, building on the sheltered housing review which was undertaken in 2018 and establishing a new acquisitions programme.
- Establish a development and regeneration programme, including reviewing all development opportunities from council owned land, developing a plan for pre-fab properties on the Reddings estate, maximising S106 opportunities to add new stock, reviewing the council's approach to sheds and garages (currently a high area of concern from tenants living in flats, who are being asked to move items out of communal areas).

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- A couple of concerns were raised from a leaseholder perspective, particularly around the disposals policy. Understand this is positive from a tenant perspective as they will be re-housed into a newer property, but for a leaseholder they will be losing a flat or house that they have bought. It was confirmed that leaseholders will be involved in the consultation process and development of the disposals policy.
- Following a question on the protections available to leaseholders, it was confirmed that the policy would adhere to any legislation that is in place. In cases where a decision is made to demolish a block of rented flats, there is a statutory requirement to offer people a home loss payment with clear directions on what they are entitled to. Those renting are also prioritised for rehousing on the waiting list. As a process it takes a long time.
- The policy will also look at houses, bungalows and individual dwellings. The process in this case is more straightforward as there are a number of long-term void houses that require decisions on whether it is cost effective to spend upwards of £100k on them or whether they should be disposed of and the capital receipts used to acquire a new, more modern property that will last for the next 50 to 70 years. These different strands will be gathered together within the disposals policy.
- In the context of legislation and regulation and alignment with the private rented sector, it will soon be unlawful to let properties with an energy rating below EPC C. Officers confirmed that they would confirm the number of properties that fall within this category.
- Data on how many empty homes are within Cheltenham across all tenures in Cheltenham are held within the strategic housing function rather than the landlord service area.
- The graph included underneath the housing revenue account (HRA) and stock profile highlights how little house building has taken place over the last

30 years. It's concerning how little this can address the 2,500 people waiting on the housing register.

- It was noted that Housing First has 12 places currently in Cheltenham for people who have failed tenancies in the past. As this has been working well it was suggested that an increase in the number of places available should be considered in the future.
- It was highlighted that there is a real need for supported housing for younger adults as there is not very much provision for that within Cheltenham.
- During a recent tour with officers of the Monkscroft estate, the amount of planned works that need to be done and the priorities for the people living there were discussed. Whilst it would be nice to have beautifully painted houses, the need for security measures to prevent undesirable people accessing the estate were highlighted. It was stressed that the input of conversations like this are extremely valuable and is why the consultation is so important.
- A lot of local authority housing has been lost to right-to-buy and right-to-acquire. A surge of applications was seen after the government substantively reduced the maximum discount in November 2025. However, that has now tailed off. If a good development programme and acquisition programme is developed this will certainly help housing numbers in the long term.
- Whilst the strategy currently talks about the climate emergency within its framing, it was suggested that it was equally important to highlight the cost-of-living crisis and the problems with energy security and energy costs. Properly insulated homes will benefit tenants against all these matters.
- It was recommended that prioritising the elderly who have trouble keeping warm or those stretched most financially, to have warmer homes would be brilliant, if possible. It was noted that the council is quite fortunate as the majority of the stock is already at EPC C or above, so anything that can be done above that will help everybody. Making sure all properties are at an EPC C within the next 5 years is an overall priority, but the schedule can be reviewed to ensure vulnerable people are prioritised within that.
- For the consultation a reading age of no more than nine or ten will be used to ensure people understand the document and feel properly involved.
- The importance of listening to tenants was highlighted and the work carried out by teams already was praised. The introduction of hubs for tenants around Cheltenham was also raised as a positive development as it will allow open conversations to take place about what tenants' need and ensure their voice is heard.
- Once the consultation, subject to suggested amendments, has taken place the strategy will be brought back to the committee for review and recommendation to Cabinet for final approval.

The Cabinet Housing Committee approved the Housing Asset Management Strategy (2026-2030) subject to amendments for consultation.

8 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Submission 2025/26

Objective: To provide the committee with an opportunity to review the TSM submission for 2025/26

The Director of Governance, Housing and Communities addressed the committee and highlighted the following:

- Social housing landlords are legally required to capture and report Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) annually. The data covers the period up to March 2026. Following collection of the results the data will be published to see how the council is performing nationally against everybody else.
- The complaints numbers show what appears to be a significant jump but that is a national trend, rather than unique to Cheltenham. It reflects the move to a position where complaints are being listened to and learning from complaints is actively published on the CBC website. It is also worth noting that the TSM relating to the perception of the complaints process is skewed by the input of those who have not been through the process; and by people who are unhappy with the outcome of their complaint rather than the process itself. To ensure that feedback is received from those who have experienced the process, a targeted group session was held and was very beneficial.
- TSMs relating to tenant perception measures, which reflect how tenants feel about the council's services, have improved since last year. Given the instability brought by the transition it has been delightful not to see a dip in customer service scores and the improvement is a credit to the staff who have kept the wheels turning during some challenging times.
- These figures will be submitted to the RSH through the NROSH+ platform, which once figures are collated and published, will allow the council to assess how we are performing compared to the national figures.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- Officers will confirm number of colleagues in the anti-social behaviour team in writing. There is currently one vacancy within the team, which is being reviewed at the moment with a view to establishing the way forward.
- The Tenant Handbook has been reviewed by the Tenant Panel and is now available via the CBC website. Copies can be provided to people who do not have access to the internet, and alternative formats are available. A separate Leaseholder Handbook is also available.
- It was suggested that it would be useful to include details of sample sizes and response rates, and significance testing be carried out. This might lead to some slightly different conclusions being reached.

Agnieszka Wisniewska left the meeting.

9 Compliance Performance Data

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

The Head of Regulatory Compliance addressed the committee and highlighted the following:

- She introduced the Committee to Jay Whewell and Nicky Ricketts, who are the new property compliance manager and fire safety manager respectively. The housing team has been through a significant amount of change, particularly within the compliance team. The team has grown from two to seven and there is now a dedicated team for fire safety. Currently reviewing potential management of areas that have previously been managed by other teams within the business.
- The data in the report covers the period up to the end of April. Since the report was published the May compliance report has been run and the following changes have occurred:
 - o As of the end of April there were six overdue gas services, one of these has now been completed, and the five that are remaining are all sat within the legal process due to access issues.
 - o Of the six high-risk fire actions that were reported overdue, three have now been completed. The two outstanding legacy fire door actions have now been fitted and certification has been received. There is now a dedicated fire door inspector within the team who will be inspecting these doors to ensure that they are fitted correctly, and contractors are working to a high standard. This will add an extra layer of assurance.
 - o As of the end of April, the report said that there were 83 overdue fire actions. Whilst this sounds worrying, it is not as bad as it first appears. The team have identified where the problems are which allows them to address them. They also have an understanding of where issues are generated by the computer systems used. For example, one of the systems only reports issues as 'in date' or 'overdue', so does not reflect where work is in progress. The data and information is currently being analysed to identify what is in progress and what is preventing actions from being completed. The team are working hard to close these actions using a priority risk-based approach. The new fire safety manager will also be reviewing the fire risk assessment action schedule, the fire door inspections and fire safety as a whole.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- The way fire actions (whether urgent, high-risk, medium-risk or low-risk) are reported from the system means that they are reported as 'not applicable' rather than compliant or non-compliant. Where actions are overdue, they are technically non-compliant. In other areas where there are links to TSMs the scorecard report links to compliance, whereas in this case it is additional information inputted from another report. The fire actions are reported in more detail to the committee in line with good practice, but the assessment itself follows requirements that include a compliant or non-compliant judgement.
- Whilst the council is prohibited by the covenants of leases from requiring boiler, electric, or gas servicing certification from leaseholders, they do

encourage leaseholders to carry out these checks. Literature is being issued to leaseholders (although this is not legally enforceable), and discounted gas servicing checks are offered by the council contractor. Where leaseholders are subletting properties, they do have the same requirements as private landlords to provide up-to-date gas and electric certificates. The leasehold team are also in the process of checking whether or not the health and safety legislation overrides the covenants in the leases. Information will also be provided via the annual billing correspondence to leaseholder.

- A high-risk fire action relating to a combustible item requiring removal from a bin store area was noted. The officer explained that this related to a scooter that was not owned by any resident. Substantive checks were required to make sure it had not been stolen. Now these have been completed removal will be arranged.

10 KPI Performance Data

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 addressed the committee and highlighted the following:

- Work is being carried out on the KPI dashboard to bring it into alignment with the compliance dashboard. This should enable the committee to track the data more easily in future reports.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- The council is subscribed to Housemark which enables an element of benchmarking of the KPIs. However, there is not enough consistency in what KPIs are monitored or how they are reported to allow full benchmarking to take place. Once the work on the KPI report is completed, then another piece of work will be carried out to review potential benchmarking. Where there are good reasons to record these KPIs in a specific way then it may be better to forego benchmarking, to ensure the data is what is needed by the council. However, if there are standard KPIs then it would be sensible to follow these unless there is a reason not to.
- Work is continuing on reducing the void numbers. As discussed previously there had been a significant backlog of properties requiring work whilst a procurement review took place to ensure everything is being done correctly. The team are working closely with contractors, and the number has been dropping steadily each month. However, as on average 23 new voids are received each month this improvement is not always clearly visible in the figures. At the end of April there were 111 standard relets. Void work was carried out on 304 properties in the last financial year which is a substantive amount. There are currently 61 major voids which are all currently procured out to contractors, whilst minor voids are managed in-house, which has been provided with some additional resource through agency workers and within the existing budget. Some day-to-day operatives who predominantly work on

damp, mould and condensation, will also be redirected to voids during the quieter summer months. These measures should hopefully bring the numbers of minor voids down. Due to regular turnover, there will always be void properties, but it is hoped that this can be maintained at a healthy balance of between 40 and 50 properties. The team will also continue to work closely with the housing options and tenancy management teams, to respond in an agile way to emergency homelessness cases. A void rent loss target of 2% for the year ahead has been established to keep everything on track. The committee thanked the team for all their hard work to address this issue.

- The committee also thanked the team that has been helping tenants reduce their arrears for the important work they are doing. They have helped tenants recover £200k and enabled them to access the help and the benefits that they are entitled to.

11 Housing Complaints and Compliments Report - Quarter 4 and Annual 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 Director of Governance, Housing and Communities addressed the committee and highlighted the following:

- The report includes the annual figures for complaints and compliments for the whole of the financial year, and a more detailed report on quarter 4.
- Since the report was written the Complaints Policy has been reviewed by the Housing Ombudsman and only seven minor changes were recommended. The Ombudsman has confirmed that they are happy with the way the council are handling complaints and are comfortable that it is compliant with the Complaints Handling Code.
- There was a period of time due to resourcing issues that complaints were being handled centrally, but it is now intended that this will be transferred back to service areas from 1 September. This puts responsibility back onto service areas and will ensure that they are learning from their own complaints.
- On the CBC website details of the learning from the year have been published. There is also detail in the annual report of what is currently being worked on, and key themes that have emerged from complaints. These have included:
 - o Issues with callbacks, so an additional member of staff has been brought in to support the kitchen programme.
 - o Meetings have also been held with contractors to address issues around communication and ensure they are aware of the council's expectations.
 - o Issues were identified with follow-up works and tenants not being aware of what was happening with their repairs. So, processes have been put in place to ensure that these updates are being provided.

- The page addressing compliments for the work teams have been doing was highlighted.
- Working on collecting a complainant profile so a deep dive on complaints can be carried out. A meeting has been scheduled to review whether any particular group is being represented disproportionately within the complaints process. This will also include data around property type, as well as personal details including age range and disability status amongst others.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- Profiling information could be very helpful as it may identify gaps in knowledge for certain groups.
- The Tenant Representative noted that he had been shown the information available on the QL system for repairs he had himself reported to see how they are managed and had been impressed by the breadth of information available. He thanked John Clements and Aston Stevens for meeting with him to review this. He highlighted that the level of information provided by in-house teams is often missing from repairs carried out by contractors, leaving colleagues unable to communicate effectively with tenants about their repairs. It was suggested that as contracts are renegotiated requirements are included to ensure the flow of more detailed information to the council.
- Officers noted that the team are dealing with thousands and thousands of jobs each year and work with a large number of contractors. They highlighted that the TSMs are now showing a positive change in direction and an increase in both satisfaction and performance times since 2023. They agreed that communication remains an issue so even where processes are in place and a contractor has been advised to do something, it is important that the tenant is kept informed of progress. They highlighted that they will continue to look for ways to improve this service.
- Particular issues relating to the mechanism for reporting complaints for a block, rather than individual property, was raised. Communication around this was highlighted as a cause of frustration for the Leasehold Representative. The officer explained that if repairs are under £250 then this is included within the annual service charge bill sent to leaseholders for the previous year. These letters do encourage customers to contact the team if they have any queries and in-house work is fully documented with photographs. Following the annual billing this year there were barely any inquiries hopefully showing that the service has improved. For any repairs over £250 a section 20 consultation process will take place. Unfortunately, due to the numbers involved it is not always possible to communicate with all residents in a block, due to the cost implications.
- Where repairs are escalated to the planned investment team, which often involves working with contractors, work is being undertaken to improve the flow of information and communication. Part of this improvement will involve the extensions of PDAs (personal digital assistants), which allow those attending repairs to update instantly and take photographs, to the planned investment team. As the team have monthly meetings with contractors, they

will then be able to upload information directly to QL and ensure everything is clearly recorded. It will also mean items, like referrals from building surveyors, will be included in the workflow.

12 Housing Services Health and Safety Report

Objective: To review health and safety activity that has been undertaken during the period, whether it was successful, and identify current tasks and challenges being faced.

The Health and Safety Officer addressed the committee and highlighted the following:

- The report summarises the key health and safety related activity for quarter 4, which has included progress in policy development, training, system improvements and workplace safety.
- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) policy was approved by Cabinet on the 14 April and has now been shared with housing colleagues, with training carried out. During the quarter water safety, asbestos, first aid, and ladder safety training has also been provided.
- Operational improvements to the T100 safety management system have been made to better support building service colleagues to complete health and safety tasks and checklists.
- Following some recent unacceptable customer behaviour incidents experienced in the Municipal Offices, including from customers visiting housing colleagues, the team have sought advice from the Gloucester crime prevention team who have undertaken a site inspection. They were able to provide several observations and offer some potential improvements, and the team are now delivering a programme of measures to enhance building safety for colleagues. This has included improved customer signage and the presence of a security guard in the Municipal Offices.
- During quarter 4 there were no reportable RIDDOR (reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences regulations) incidents. There were eight incident reports with some colleagues experiencing minor injuries, including three road traffic incidents and one fire incident. The highest number of incidents related to unacceptable customer behaviour which led to the actions taken above. Customer conflict training has also been provided to colleagues in frontline roles. For the whole year there were 55 reports of unacceptable customer behaviour.
- Road traffic incident levels fluctuated during the year, and some proactive steps have been taken, including the delivery of the RoSPA driving training assessment course to two members of the building services team who are now competent to assess colleagues and support safety improvements.
- A review of trends over the past four years (April 2022 – March 2026) has shown increases in minor injuries and road traffic incidents during 2025/26. There was also a notable rise in house fires compared to previous years. This has required measures including the introduction of an E-Bike Battery policy.

This rise is in line with national trends of an increased use of lithium battery technology.

- Incidents continue to be reviewed and monitored by the health and safety team and key themes will be reported through the housing compliance monitoring group. The health and safety team are now investigating reporting improvements.
- Peter Adams has joined CBC as Director of Health, Safety and Operations and is currently working to define key priorities for the health and safety function to develop a structured program of work aimed at driving improvements in overall health and safety across the council.

The committee's discussion raised the following points:

- At this point it is difficult to tell whether the E-Bike Battery policy has been effective as it is still quite new but the team will continue to monitor the impact. Agreed that the number of fire incidents is concerning. The next issue of the Tenant Voice will include a feature on contents insurance to highlight its importance as unfortunately, despite peoples' best efforts, fires do happen. It is also worth noting that not all fires are the result of lithium batteries. The most recent fire is still under investigation, but it may have been caused by rodents damaging wires.
- Poor behaviour towards staff is not tolerated. Recently there have been incidents where the police have been involved and criminal charges have been brought. There are a range of different interventions available, for example, people are put on a contact restriction which may mean they are not allowed to visit offices or are only allowed to contact a named individual. The rising trend of incidents is concerning but the council always respond to them robustly.

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.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Panel updates were taken as read.

The Leaseholder Representative explained that the Leaseholder Forum had continued to meet and are currently scheduling a meeting to continue their scrutinies.

The Tenant Representative noted that he will be attending a meeting of the Improvement Panel on the 7 July.

14 Review of the Housing Committee Forward Plan

Review of the Aids and Adaptations Policy was added to the July meeting.

15 Items to be referred to Cabinet

There were none.

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.