

Minutes of:	HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD
Date of Meeting:	19 November 2025
Present:	Councillor C Cummins (in the Chair) Councillors A Booth, B Ibrahim and E FitzGerald Tenants Representatives - Stephen Walker, Julia Momen and Springs Tenant Representative
Also in attendance:	Simon Farnworth, Data and Intelligence Lead, Housing, Sian Grant, Director of Housing, Kimberley Partridge, Head of Neighbourhoods, Stepping Stone Projects, Steve Glazebrook, Head of Property, Claire Rogan, Head of Performance, Improvement and Assurance, Steph Boyd, Ahmed Ajmi, Kate Waterhouse, Executive Director (Strategy & Transformation) and Chloe Ashworth, Democratic Services and one member of the public.
Public Attendance:	Two members of the public were present at the meeting.
Apologies for Absence:	Councillor D Green, Jourdan-Stoles and Councillor I Gartside

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies are noted above.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd September 2025 are approved as a correct and accurate record.

4 EXTRA CARE HOUSING STRATEGY SIGN-OFF

Ahmed Ajmi and Stephanie Boyd provided an overview of the extra care housing strategy and compliance. The strategy aligns with other council strategies and national/local guidance. As part of the process officers reviewed several documents outlining principles, standards, and best practice.

Engagement undertaken included:

- Discussions with neighbouring authorities.
- Visits to extra care schemes.
- Targeted summer consultation with various networks.
- Input from council departments: Adult Social Care, Housing, Planning.
- Consultation with registered housing providers and voluntary sector organisations.

Members were advised that there is an ongoing 4-week public consultation which is currently live on council website and closes Friday 21st November 2025.

Members were informed that data analysis is taking place and the split of needs is between low, medium and high needs some will have dementia support however officers are looking at specialist schemes for dementia.

Councillor Cummins, Chair questioned how the Strategy will align with the review of sheltered accommodation and what is the timeline for sheltered accommodation. Members were advised that March 2026 is the timeline.

Members questioned whether schemes will be concentrated in certain areas or spread across the borough. Members advised the aim is to spread schemes across the borough, considering local identities, family and social networks.

It was agreed that:

1. The strategy is endorsed by the Housing Advisory Board for onward submission to Cabinet in January 2026.

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TENANTS VOICE FORUM UPDATE REPORT

Stephen Walker provided an overview on behalf of the Tenants Voice Forum.

The report was well received by members of the Housing Advisory Board.

An observation by a member was that the TVF reviewing policies is an effective mechanism to have in place and ensures collaborative working.

Officers asked how can staff improve presentation to help TVF members understand the policies.

It was agreed that the TVF could benefit with more people from different areas across the borough, along with the existing members but how this is co-ordinated is difficult where people have commitments to their local residents association.

Councillor Cummins, Chair highlighted barriers for people with low levels of digital knowledge especially in relation to the complaint's procedure. Members were advised training has taken place with the call centre and the timescale to review the case if twenty-four hours to review; if the matter has already been a service request it will go to the complaint's inbox, if not the request will be raised. Members were informed that it is early days and the training process with contact centre staff as the continue to recruit is essential.

It was agreed:

1. Councillor Cummins will attend the next Tenant Voice Forum meeting.
2. Members noted the update on behalf of the Tenants Voice Forum

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REPAIRS REVIEW UPDATE

The Housing Advisory Board received a report on the Repairs Review outlining findings and recommendations following a comprehensive service assessment. The review was informed by Ombudsman guidance, Altair's regulatory readiness check, and tenant feedback.

Members were informed that repairs are the largest driver of complaints and a key factor in tenant trust. However, current challenges include:

- Over-reliance on contractors (36% of spend; many without formal contracts).
- High proportion of emergency repairs (35% vs. industry norm of 12–18%).
- Inconsistent data use and lack of integrated IT systems.
- Issues with appointment scheduling and communication.

Whilst satisfaction levels are generally high (82% satisfied or very satisfied) delays and poor communication remain a concern. Members were advised that the action plan will be monitored by the Head of Repairs with key stakeholders convening to progress recommendations as set out in the report.

It was agreed:

1. Members agreed the report.

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KNOWING OUR TENANTS - UPDATE ON INFORMATION HELD & ANNUAL REPORT ON LETTINGS AND TERMINATIONS

Claire Rogan provided the Board with an overview of the 'Knowing Our Tenants' report which provided a detailed analysis of tenant demographics, engagement, and service needs across Bury Council's housing stock. It identifies gaps in data quality and completeness, which pose risks to service delivery, tenant satisfaction, and compliance with the Consumer Standards 2024.

Key points raised were:

- Tenant Profile: 15,794 residents; majority aged 35–64; under-representation of families with young children due to limited stock.
- Data Gaps:
 - 64% missing language preferences.
 - 95% missing literacy data.
 - Limited impairment and accessibility data; 82.9% of tenants with impairments lack tailored services.
- Engagement:
 - 733 tenancy visits completed; target 1,000 by year-end.
 - Low survey response rates (21.5% transactional, 14.6% perception).
- Digital Inclusion:
 - 300 tenants flagged as digitally isolated; likely underreported.

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the report.
2. Members agreed the recommendations as set out in the report.

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VOIDS AND ALLOCATION REPORT

Members received the Void and Allocation Report which provided a strategic overview of void trends in council-owned housing over six financial years (2019/20–2024/25), focusing on tenancy terminations, demographic patterns, property types, and operational performance. The report supports decision-making on housing strategy, resource allocation, and service improvement.

Members were informed that:

The total voids decreased by 50%, from 526 in 2019/20 to 266 in 2024/25, indicating improved tenancy sustainment. The primary cause was due to the death of tenants which remains the leading reason (31.5%), though numbers declined from 150 to 82 over the period.

Older tenants (63+) dominate deceased-related voids with the tenant base identifying as predominantly White British (84%). However, there are data gaps as 48% have an unknown marital status. Flats account for most voids, followed by semi-detached houses and bungalows. Re-let Times have Improved from 74 days to 55 days overall; bedsits remain problematic. Members discussed the importance of demographic data being known to support services for residents.

All areas across the borough show convergence in turnover rates, with deceased-related voids declining borough-wide. Housing needs identified were for general needs and mobility-adapted properties which dominate voids; extra care and wheelchair-adapted properties show minimal turnover.

It was agreed that:

1. Officers need to enhance succession planning to reduce delays and void periods.
2. The council should invest in accessible housing and review allocation strategies for mobility-adapted and sheltered properties.
3. Officers need to address bedsit challenges through redesign, repurposing, or marketing, and review local lettings policies.
4. To Improve data quality on tenant demographics to support strategic planning and equality monitoring.
5. Continue reducing re-let times by prioritizing high-demand property types and streamlining processes.

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HALF-YEAR UPDATE ON BUILDING SAFETY AND COMPLIANCE

The Board received an update on building safety and compliance, including progress on key statutory checks and Awaab's Law implementation:

Members were advised that gas safety checks are currently at 99.97% compliance; two properties overdue. Electrical Safety is currently transitioning to 5-year checks from November 2025; currently the Council is 95.95% compliant with 309 properties overdue due to access issues (down from 2,220 in 2023). Members were informed that a permanent Electrical Compliance Specialist has been appointed. In relation to fire safety the Board was advised that the new Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) programme commenced for 293 properties; 43% completed to date. Over 5,000 remedial actions identified, prioritised by risk, with sheltered schemes nearing completion.

Members were reminded that Awaab's Law came into force on 27 October 2025 covering damp, mould, and emergency hazards. New contractor (Bell Group) appointed; processes and training are now under review. Members were advised that 100% of emergency repairs made safe within 24 hours.

In relation to other compliance checks, Asbestos, lifts, and legionella are all at 100% compliance and a lift installation at Taylor House is due by 1 December 2025. Members were informed that recruitment is ongoing for Compliance Manager roles across Gas, Electrical, Fire, and Damp/Mould.

Members of the Board raised matters to be further considered and were informed to pick the instances up directly with officers to investigate further.

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the update
2. Board members to pick up any specific queries or issues directly related to individual properties with officers outside of the meeting.

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HALF-YEAR COMPLAINTS REPORT

Members were given a presentation on the complaint's performance for April–September 2025 which gave an overview of stage 1 complaints which were 64 (62 last year) and stage 2 complaints were at 23 (31 last year).

In relation to Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) there were 3 new investigations; 6 awaiting allocations (mostly relating to ASB and damp matters). Of which 4 decisions were issued:

- 1 ASB maladministration
- 2 repairs (non-maladministration)
- 1 damp & mould severe maladministration (Sept).

During the presentation members discussed the following themes:

Repairs & Follow-On Jobs: scheduling urgent repairs and preventing cancellations.

Customer Service & Communication: Improving escalation handling and recording reasonable adjustments.

Training regarding Customer handling: System training and contractor customer service.

Process Improvements: New tracker for multi-trade actions; better logging of damp reports.

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the update to the Board.

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QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE UPDATE (Q2)

Members were given a presentation on the Housing Performance for Q2 2025 which covered Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM). Members were informed that overall satisfaction improved to 73.96%, with notable gains in repairs satisfaction (76.64%) and home safety (77.11%). Areas for improvement are complaint handling (43.86%) and listening to tenant views (59.22%).

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the update.

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HALF-YEAR UPDATE ON IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Steve Glazebrook provided the Board with an update on the half-year improvement programme. The Board noted the Capital Budget for 2025/26 is £25.874m, with actual spend to 30 September 2025 at £2.862m (11.1%). A significant proportion of works are scheduled for October–March. A projected underspend of £3.678m is reported, mainly due to delays in carbon reduction works (£0.218m), planned maintenance (£1.020m), and new

build/acquisitions (£2.440m). Works are scheduled to build up from October/November with completion by March 2026, except some internal works continuing into early 2026.

It was agreed:

1. Members noted the update.

COUNCILLOR C CUMMINS
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 7.20 pm)