

Minutes of: **Housing Advisory Board**

Date of Meeting: 6 January 2026

Present: Councillor L FitzGerald (in the Chair)
 Councillors I Gartside, B Ibrahim, D Green and A Booth

Also in attendance: Sian Grant, Director of Housing, Kimberley Partridge, Head of Neighbourhoods, Stepping Stone Projects, Claire Rogan, Head of Performance, Improvement and Assurance, Amanda Mullen, Kate Waterhouse, Executive Director (Strategy & Transformation), Kimberley Ryan-Dooner, Ella Crookes, Bryan Simpson, and Chloe Ashworth, Democratic Services

Public Attendance: No members of the public were present at the meeting.

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Cummins and Tenant Representatives.

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 19th November 2025 are approved as a correct and accurate record.

4 TENANTS VOICE FORUM UPDATE REPORT

The Board received a verbal update from Kimberley Ryan-Dooner, Tenant Engagement Manager, on behalf of the Tenant Voice Forum (TVF), alongside the resubmitted report.

The report highlighted concerns about communication standards and performance reporting.

Key requests in the report included:

- Formal approval process for tenant communications.
- Establishment of a Comms Review Group.
- Monthly performance data in a simple, easy-to-read format.

The report outlines that the TVF expressed that performance information is not always accessible or easy to read, making it difficult to compare month-on-month data. They requested summaries and formats that support deeper dives into service areas. Members were informed an officer is reviewing the housing communications strategy; some documents are currently in PDF format, which limits accessibility and comparability. Claire Rogan confirmed a request has been submitted to the DDaT team to create user-friendly dashboards for deep dives. This will take time, but interim measures will be explored to help tenants navigate data. Members discussed the use of subgroups to investigate specific issues such as performance reporting.

It was agreed:

1. The Housing Advisory Board notes the TVF request and recommendations.
2. Officers to review how to achieve the correct corporate tone and update templates.

3. Audit current communication methods and frameworks, with TVF feedback incorporated.
4. Corporate Communications to standardise key communications in collaboration with TVF.

5 SERVICE PLAN DELIVERY UPDATE

Sian Grant, Director of Housing provided an overview of the Service Plan Delivery Update.

Members discussed performance and were advised Simon Farnworth, Data and Intelligence Lead, Housing will bring a further update regarding performance back later in the calendar year.

Members discussed the update provided at the last meeting in relation to building safety from Ben Tunncliffe, Head of Housing Compliance. Bryan Simpson sought assurances in relation to compliance as he was not present at the last HAB meeting where Ben Tunncliffe, Head of Housing Compliance attended and gave a detailed update regarding recruitment for compliance roles which is now complete, with all posts expected to be filled by the end of February.

Members discussed how 2025-2026 has focused on reviewing processes; and next year will be more about delivery. Members discussed how HAB will monitor progress and measure changes in outputs. There was a proposal for a single consolidated action plan that pulls all information together; Members were advised that drafts will be brought back for review.

It was agreed that:

1. Members noted the update and endorsed continued monitoring.
2. A consolidated action plan will be developed and shared with HAB for feedback.

6 HEAT NETWORK REGULATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

Claire Rogan, Head of Performance, Assurance and Improvement gave the Board an overview of the heat network regulations, maintenance requirements, and the associated action plan.

Members asked whether the new regulations have caused additional expenditure or simply formalised existing practices. Claire confirmed that the changes aim to improve transparency on communal heating systems, address known issues, and ensure fairness for tenants.

Financial implications and costs will be included within the capital spend and management fee budgets. A separate line in the investment programme will be presented to Cabinet in February.

It was agreed that:

1. Members noted the update and supported the delivery priorities outlined in the report.

7 HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY REVIEW

Amanda Mullen, Homelessness and Housing Manager presented the review of the 2022–2025 Homelessness Strategy and outlined priorities for 2026 onwards.

Members discussed the Homeless Partnership membership and their roles and it was requested that all Housing Advisory Board Members should be sent the information following the meeting. Members requested a structure chart showing all streams and sectors involved, including the following services: Probation, Prison services, Asylum and immigration and The Red Cross.

Members raised concern about temporary accommodation pressures. Approximately 1,000 people currently seeking three-bedroom homes. Members queried how this will be addressed in the Housing Needs Assessment and how it links to new regulations. Amanda Mullen, confirmed that Bury has an RP (Registered Provider) partnership to encourage development locally. Typically, the Council secures 100% nomination rights in perpetuity, meaning properties will be let through the Bury Housing waiting list.

It was agreed that:

- Members endorsed the proposed priorities for the new strategy.
- Additional information and structure chart to be circulated before the next meeting.

8 ANNUAL RENT INCREASE

The Board received an information report outlining the proposed Housing Revenue Account (HRA) rent and service charge increases for 2026–27. Sian Grant, Director of Housing provided an overview of the report which proposed rent is increased to 4.8%, based on the Government's CPI (September) + 1% formula. The increase forms part of the Government's 10-year rent policy and is intended to support ongoing investment in housing stock, maintenance, and service delivery.

The report also provided an update on the Government's intention to reintroduce Rent Convergence, potentially applying an additional uplift (£1–£2 per week) for properties below formula rent. Details are expected towards the end of January 2026, with potential implementation no earlier than April 2026.

Members noted that the HRA faces financial pressure with rent-setting decisions directly impacting viability and investment capacity. Letters to tenants will explain increases and signpost support for those struggling with affordability. With rent increase letters to be issued by end of February 2026.

It was agreed that:

1. The Board noted the current position and the forthcoming Cabinet decision on the proposed rent and service charge increases for 2026–27.

COUNCILLOR L FITZGERALD
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 7.00 pm)

