

Council Housing Management Board

Thursday 30th October 2025

Meeting summary

Attendees:

(CW) Councillor Christine Warner – Chair and Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning
(ML) Councillor Martin Loftus – Shadow Member for Homes, Planning and Safer Communities
(VA) Victoria Albastroiu – Tenant Board member
(JW) Jo Worthington – Independent Board Member
(AB) Allan Batty – Senior Housing Policy Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council
(LH) Lucy Heath – Head of Housing, Cheshire West, and Chester Council
(AS) Anthony Spurway – Vice Chair - Tenant Board member
(PD) Paul Doughty – Independent Board member
(JL) Janet Lawton – ForHousing, Head of Housing Management Contracts
(KC) Karen Craig – ForHousing, Performance Lead, Housing Management Contracts
(HS) Holly Southern – Contract and Compliance Inspector, Cheshire West, and Chester Council
(NH) Nigel Hickmott – Tenant Board member
(SE) Stuart Ellis – Finance Manager, Cheshire West, and Chester Council

Apologies:

(RSH) Ria Siddall-Hardwick – Contracts Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Council
(BMc) Brian McGaw – Tenant Board member
(KK) Councillor Katie Kendrick
(KM) Councillor Keith Miller
(GD) Gemma Davies – Director of Economy and Housing, Cheshire West and Chester Council
(CS) Chloe Southall – Housing Policy Officer, Cheshire West and Chester Council

1. Welcome

The eighth Council Housing Management Board took place with Board members being welcomed by the Chair Councillor Christine Warner, Cabinet Member for Homes and Planning.

CW welcomed everyone and noted the following apologies: Councillor Katie Kendrick, Brian McGaw – Tenant Board member, Gemma Davies, Director of Economy and Housing and Ria Siddall-Hardwick – Contracts Manager, Cheshire West and Chester Council.

2. Matters arising from last meeting.

The Board discussed the matters arising from the last meeting with updates provided as follows:

Item arising	Update
All Board members to note the time and date of the next Board Meeting to be held on Monday 18 August.	Completed: Meeting arranged and attended. The Board was able to ask the Council's Head of Housing and the Strategic and Policy Lead for Council Housing a number of questions they had about the demobilisation of the Housing Management Contract the Council has with ForHousing.
All Tenant Board members to decide who they wish to nominate the as their tenant representative on the Member Transition Board.	Completed: VA has been nominated as the tenant representative from September-March with NH taking over thereafter.
LH to keep the Board fully informed of any further developments regarding the self-referral and seek Board sign off relating to the updates on performance provided to the Regulator.	Update: LH to provide an update as to the status of the 6 month Self-Referral Update Report.
Karen Craig to capture all changes to working practices etc as a consequence of complaints. At the last Board, it was explained that a detailed record has been developed however, a shortened version is now needed to help summarise the work being done in this regard.	Update: Due to conflicting demands i.e. dealing with the increase in the number of complaints, this action hasn't been progressed however, now there is the additional resource in this area, Karen will be able to revisit this and come up with a way of recording the data that is meaningful for the Board.

3. Cabinet Member Update

CW mentioned that following September Cabinet, the new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy had now been approved. The aforementioned strategy aimed to put tenants and leaseholders at the heart of decision making. CW explained that this new strategy would coexist with both the Council Housing Asset Management Strategy and the Together with Tenants Charter. These three strategic documents help set out how the Council will meet the needs of tenants and leaseholders and build on the pledges and commitments we have made in the Together with Tenants Charter.

CW gave an update on the Member Transition Board which aimed to keep Members informed on the progress being made in bringing the Housing Management Service back in-house.




4. Rent and Wellbeing Workshop

Craig Ellis, Wellbeing Manager and Louise Caldwell, Income Manager gave a presentation on how ForHousing collect tenants rents and provide debt management and wellbeing advice and support. Louise explained there are many reasons why tenants get into arrears however, the work her team do aims to send a message that tenants must prioritise the payment of their rent over all their other bills. Craig for his part explained that his team provide significant advice and support to tenants, Craig explained that his teams principal job was to ensure that tenants incomes were maximised so it is easier for tenants to pay their rent. Craig mentioned that many tenants were currently in the middle of being transferred from legacy welfare benefits to Universal Credit which according to the Government this was expected to complete in December 2025. Craig pointed out that this was likely to take longer as there were currently around 550 tenants who require moving from their legacy benefits to Universal Credit. Craig provided two case studies which explained how his team had supported tenants in addressing their rent arrears, stopping evictions taking place and claiming additional benefits to help with the cost of living.

5. Regulatory Compliance and Performance Board Report covering:

- **Contract Performance**

KC took the Board through the quarter 2 performance and confirmed that 4 Key Performance Indicators (KPI) had been met target, 3 were out of target but within tolerance and 4 were out of target and tolerance.

 On target	 Out of target but within tolerance	 Out of target and tolerance	Other (Data Only, Annual target)
4	3	4	2

KC mentioned that notable successes were around rent collection and repair response times with the rent collection figure for quarter 2 being 99.01% which was in the top quartile performance for the country.

Action: KC to carry out a deep dive into the tenant satisfaction measures and the underlying comments under the headline findings.

- **Stock Quality, Decency, Repairs and Maintenance and Adaptations update**

AB briefly provided an update on the latest performance in relation to the Stock Condition Surveying that was currently being undertaken. AB confirmed that around 67% of the stock had been surveyed to date and this was on track for completion by yearend. AB continued to explain that having up to date data was vitally important as this data would be used to decide what works needed to be carried out to the Council's homes over the coming years. AB mentioned that once all the stock condition surveys were complete, he will ask HQN to update the Council Housing

Asset Management Strategy. ML asked when AB thought the strategy update would take place to which AB replied that this would likely take place in April 2026. ML asked for clarification on the stock condition data percentages table in the Board report to which JL stated she would speak to her colleague Gareth Franklin and come back to ML.

Action: JL to seek clarification on the stock condition percentage data and let ML know of her findings.

6. Complaint Panel Update

AB provided a brief overview to the Board about complaints namely that complaint handling was continuing to improve and he was pleased to announce that both stage one and stage two complaints had been responded to within the required Housing Ombudsman guidelines. AB explained that the Complaints Panel will meet next week and will review the latest sample of complaints cases from Q2.

7. Policy and Strategy Update

As per the Cabinet Member Update, AB mentioned that the new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy had now been approved and was in the process of being launched. ML asked why the Damp and Mould Policy hadn't been listed in the Board Report given that all the other Building Safety Policies had been listed. AB explained that only those policies that had been reviewed in quarter 2 were listed, the Board may recall that the Damp and Mould Policy had been reviewed in quarter 1. AB explained that his colleague Chloe Southall, Housing Policy Officer had spent all of September reviewing all the policies in order to implement required changes for bringing the housing management service back in-house. AB confirmed that all 23 policies had now been updated and were ready to go live in April 2026.

8. Regulatory Framework Self-Referral update

LH gave an update to the Board following the Council making a Self-Referral to the Regulator of Social Housing on the grounds of potential non-compliance with the Safety and Quality Standard back in February this year. LH reminded the Board that the Regulator was satisfied that there were no reasons for concern however, they wished to be updated in three and six months' time. LH confirmed that back in May a three month update and in September a six month update was provided to the Regulator. LH thanked all staff involved for their help in this matter. LH confirmed that the Regulator is satisfied with the information provided following the Council's self-referral and with this in mind, LH asked that this agenda item now be closed going forward.

Action: AB to remove the Self-Referral Update from the agenda going forward.

9. Communal Areas Policy

AB explained that the Communal Areas Policy had now been widely consulted on following an initial consultation which took place at the beginning of the year. AB confirmed that using tenant data the Tenant Engagement Team had contacted every

tenant whose property had been fitted with an adaptation. The team had then spoken directly to each tenant and asked them whether they would be impacted negatively as a result of the Council adopting a zero tolerance approach to items being stored in communal areas. AB confirmed that of the 423 tenants consulted only 19 had a scooter which required storage, AB confirmed that discussions are currently taking place with these tenants to work out a solution. JL stated that the roll out of the policy will now take place in January 2026 to allow time for work solutions to be implemented for the 19 tenants as per above. AB explained that he would finalise the policy and send it through to CW for approval.

Action: AB to finalise the Communal Areas Policy and send through to CW for approval.

Action: CW to approve the final version of the Communal Areas Policy once received from AB.

10. Any other business

There were no other business items to discuss.

11. Next meeting

Is to be held on Thursday 29 January 2026.

Our council housing vision

“We aim to provide affordable homes of the right type and quality to meet the housing needs of those who are unable to meet their own needs in the housing market now and in the future. We will work in partnership to support our tenants to prosper and improve their wellbeing and ensure neighbourhoods and communities are sustainable, safe, and pleasant.”