

Meeting of the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 5 February 2026, 2.00
pm



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL

Committee Members present

Councillor Lee Steptoe (Chairman)
Councillor Zoe Lane (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Emma Baker
Councillor Gloria Johnson
Councillor Bridget Ley
Councillor Charmaine Morgan
Councillor Tim Harrison

Other Members present

Councillor Ben Green

Cabinet Members

Councillor Virginia Moran, Cabinet Member Housing

Officers

Alison Hall-Wright, Director of Housing and Projects
Sarah McQueen, Head of Service, Housing
Mark Rogers, Head of Service, Technical
Phil Swinton, Head of Service (Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Housing Compliance)
Tom Amblin-Lightowler, Environmental Health Manager, Environmental Protection and Private Sector Housing
Suniel Pillai, New Builds Project Officer
Lucy Bonshor, Democratic Officer

The Chairman of the Committee stated that with the Committee's permission, he intended to change the order of the agenda. Members had been circulated with the proposed new agenda order and he asked if any Member objected to the proposed changes. No objections were received.

45. Public Speaking

There were no public speakers.

46. Apologies for absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Anna Kelly, who was substituted by Councillor Tim Harrison.

47. Disclosure of Interest

None disclosed.

48. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2025 were proposed, seconded and agreed.

49. Announcements or updates from the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Members or the Head of Paid Service

On behalf of the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Housing stated that housing enquiries from Councillors were recorded and the number of enquiries had reduced from 288 in 2024/25 to 144 in 2025/26 with two months of the year still to go. It was requested that any enquires made direct to any Cabinet Member or Officer in respect of housing should also be sent to housingenquiry@southkesteven.gov.uk to enable the enquiry to be given a reference number to enable the enquiry to be logged. One Member asked if multiple enquiries should be sent individually and made reference to a submitted enquiry that had four or five "questions". It was stated that the Head of Service (Housing) would look into this and respond back to Members.

Agenda reordered from that published originally

50. South Kesteven District Council Tenancy Agreement

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which detailed the review of the Tenancy Agreement which had been undertaken, it had last been reviewed in 2020. Several changes had been made and these were shown at paragraph 3.1 of the report and included changes to chapter headings and their content. Changes had been made to comply with current legislation, support the effective management of tenancies, properties and neighbourhoods and improve clarity and accessibility for tenants.

A workshop had been held with Members in September 2025 where proposed changes had been discussed in detail. Throughout the review and the revisions made, Council Officers from different departments had been consulted so the Cabinet Member for Housing asked the Committee to recommend the document to Cabinet for approval.

The following comments in respect of the document were made:

- Common themes reported by those accessing the Citizens Advice Bureau for advice related to information regarding how to contact the Council so could key contact details be reproduced on a card. It was noted that the Tenants Handbook contained all relevant information and if a tenant had lost their copy replacements could be made on request.
- It was noted that the SKyline magazine, was available to all Council tenants and regularly updated tenants with information.
- A question was asked about what had changed in respect of pets. It was noted that the heading had been changed to Pets and Animals with more clarity around permissions required.

The Tenancy Agreement was proposed, seconded and agreed for recommendation to Cabinet.

Recommendation

That the Housing OSC recommends the draft South Kesteven District Council Tenancy Agreement to Cabinet for approval.

51. New Asset Management Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report on the New Housing Asset Management Strategy. All social landlords are required to have an up to date asset management strategy which sets out how they will ensure that their properties remained safe, suitable, affordable and efficient in the long term.

An asset management strategy identifies the key priorities for the effective management of the Council's housing assets balancing tenants need with financial viability and provided a strategic framework for making decisions from repairs and improvements which ensured that Council's housing assets supported the wider corporate plan objectives.

The purpose of the Strategy was highlighted at paragraph 3.1 of the report. Consultation had been undertaken with the Housing OSC, the Housing Management Team and a resident workshop and online consultation had also been carried out, although the take had been poor with only three respondents.

The Assessment Management Strategy set out how the Council would ensure that properties remained safe, suitable, affordable and efficient in the long term improving the quality of homes and having governance structures in place.

Questions were asked about how the disabled adaptations budget was allocated from Lincolnshire County Council, to which both the Head of Service, Technical and the Head of Service, Housing responded.

A further question was asked about the replacement of bathrooms and kitchens and the numbers involved year on year to which the Head of Service, Technical replied.

Following comments made by the Committee the New Asset Management Strategy was proposed, seconded and recommended for approval to Cabinet.

Recommendation

That the New Asset Management Strategy was recommended to Cabinet for approval.

52. New Voids Policy

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which concerned a review of the Voids Policy. Social landlords needed a Voids Policy in place to manage properties between tenancies to minimise financial losses, maintain home quality and support a quick turnaround for new tenants.

The key considerations of the Policy were:

- Minimise the length of time a property is empty, and the amount of rental income lost.
- Let the property in a clean and safe condition that meets the Council lettable standard.
- Meets residents needs and maximises resident satisfaction.
- Provides value for money to the Council.

Social landlords must adhere to several regulations as listed in the policy. Lack of compliance could place a landlord at risk of prosecution or financial penalties and reputational damage.

Consultation on the policy had been carried out with the Housing OSC, the Housing Management Team, the Voids Team and residents had been consulted via a workshop and online.

Reference was made to the tenancy terms and conditions and it was highlighted that in instances of bereavement the Council gave 28 days.

Comments on the policy followed with the following being raised:

- Replacement of flooring - in some instances flooring had been asked to be kept by new tenants but on moving in the flooring had been removed. It was stated that flexibility needed to be managed better in some areas of the Policy, however in some cases it was for health and safety reasons that flooring had been removed.

- The improvement of turnaround times – it was noted that Internal Audit had requested that the Voids Policy be reviewed.
- Checking of components left behind in a property such as blinds – all components left behind would be checked from a health and safety perspective, anything that failed would be removed.

The improvement in the turnaround in the time taken to process void properties was wonderful to see and the Team should be congratulated on the work to reduce the vacant time period.

Members were thanked for their comments and it was proposed, seconded and recommended that the Voids Policy be submitted to Cabinet for approval.

Recommendation

That the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends the Voids Policy to Cabinet for approval.

53. Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Update

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the regular update report in respect of homelessness and rough sleepers in the District. The report highlighted the service pressures, partnership working and funding received. The report also highlighted the work undertaken by Change4Lincs, the outreach services, temporary accommodation levels and the continued focus on homelessness prevention.

During the winter period the Council in partnership with the Ark had again opened the Night Shelter. The shelter had opened on 10 November 2025 and had been accessed by 18 individuals whilst it had been open. Of these 12 had been successfully supported into more permanent accommodation through collaborative partnership working between South Kesteven District Council and Living Concepts. The cost of opening the Night Shelter had been £15,200, however if the Night Shelter had not been utilised the Council would have incurred approximately £27,000 in costs for nightly paid accommodation over the same period. The use of the Night Shelter had therefore delivered a significant cost saving in addition to the housing outcomes achieved.

One Member asked if the costs around homelessness were increasing or decreasing. The Head of Service, Housing stated that it was difficult to know until year end spending was known as it is a demand driven service.

Officers were thanked for including veteran numbers in the figures but a question was asked about whether any had been referred by the criminal justice system and whether any were homeless or on the streets.

The Head of Service, Housing stated that she would take the question away as she didn't currently have the information to hand, as each were assessed on a case by case basis.

The Director of Housing and Projects indicated that people were signposted to additional information and support available.

Thanks were given to the work undertaken in respect of the Night Shelter with reference being made to the homeless problem in Skegness and the option of supplying pods for the homelessness. The Head of Service, Housing stated that she was aware of the work being done in Skegness, however each area had different demands and when the temperatures rose there appeared to be less demand for accommodation like the Night Shelter, therefore it was felt that an all year provision would be less cost effective. The homelessness team had to balance the needs of the individual against the budgets available and anything that was put in place had to be cost effective. Further discussion followed in respect of those who were rough sleeping in tents and the complex needs that they had. The Chairman advised the Member who was interested in topic to talk directly with the Head of Service, Housing.

A comment was made in respect of the number of local properties used for the national resettlement scheme and what pressures this put on the Council's housing stock. It was noted that this figure was not part of the report before Members as the properties were managed by the Home Office and their collective contractors. Therefore it was not a duty placed on the Council.

Members noted the report.

54. New Build and Acquisitions Update

Members received a verbal update from the Cabinet Member for Housing on the new build and acquisition programme. The supply of housing continued to be a core corporate priority and the programme directly supported the Council's commitment to supplying homes that were safe, high quality, sustainable and suitable for resident's needs.

Larch Close, Grantham – Construction was moving forward, a short delay had been encountered in respect of a sewer diversion but this had been resolved and the development was on track for completion in December 2026.

Wellington Way, Market Deeping – Further ground investigations had found unforeseen conditions due to the historic use of the site. Additional remedial work would be required and a separate report would be going to Cabinet requesting an increase in the budget.

Toller Court, Horbling – The development was for a three accessible bungalows. Cabinet had awarded the contract at their meeting in January 2026. The scheme would incorporate low carbon heating, solar PV and EV charging.

Pipeline schemes were progressing at Kesteven Road, Stamford and Bourne Road, Colsterworth with design, development and early engagement further consultation was planned before the submission of planning permission.

The Council continue to take a hybrid approach combining construction with selective acquisitions where appropriate. Homes England funding had been secured to support future feasibility work.

The Lumby's Terrace sales were currently progressing with all properties under offer. Receipts would be reinvested in to replacement affordable housing. The housing pipeline was being actively managed and risks addressed through proper governance.

The report was for noting.

One Member questioned whether the Council had noticed an increase in costs given the current economy and whether this would have a “knock on” effect with regard to the spending that was available. The Member also asked about St Peter's House as he had been given various dates which had all now passed. The Director of Housing and Projects informed the Committee that she would bring a report back to Committee with regard to the St Peter's House property.

In relation to new builds it was stated that financial assessments were carried out before going out for procurement. All schemes currently had fallen within the budget estimate originally allocated, if this changed Members would be made updated accordingly.

One Member asked about parking in respect of the Kesteven Road development as the road was narrow and cars parked on the road causing obstruction. It was confirmed that the new units would have one or two parking spaces provided.

A further question was asked in relation to the properties that Lincolnshire County Council were disposing of and it was stated that Officers from South Kesteven District Council worked closely with Officers from Lincolnshire County Council and were aware of properties being offered for disposal.

A comment was made about the Wellington Way development and what was known about the site which had previously been an RAF base and the condition. It was confirmed that contaminated material needed to be removed from the site, options had been considered which had included removing one property from the development, but the costs involved would have been extensive as new consultation would have had to be carried out, new plans drawn up, new designs carried out, new planning permission applied for, It was more cost effective to remove the contaminated material.

The Director of Housing and Projects stated that when the financial assessment was carried out on the site, the additional budget required fell within the original budget allocated to the project so the scheme was still financially viable. The Committee were informed that processes had been changed to ensure all survey work was carried out on site before contracts were procured.

Members noted the update.

55. Housing Performance Data December 2025

The Director of Housing and Projects introduced the item which covered housing performance within the Housing Service, covering technical service, housing management and compliance.

The Head of Service, Technical went through that part of the report which covered his section highlighting key achievements and areas where improvements were required.

Repairs Call Handling

Call handling was all ahead of target. There had been a drop in call handling in December which was due to holidays and less days at work during the period.

Reactive Repairs – All Repairs

Productivity was down in December with a high number of repairs works in progress which was again down to less working days in December. A Member asked a question about this, to which the Head of Service, Technical responded that this was a seasonal “norm” which was to be expected. What they didn’t want to see was a significant increase in the number of overdue as this was an aspect that had been worked on over the last 18 months. It was expected that in January the figures would reduce. Reassurance was given to the Committee that emergency jobs were checked for completion regularly. Completion of all repairs jobs was down to 35 days which was a big improvement from the previous figures of 44 and 48. It was noted that the Council was getting quicker at carrying out repairs which was reflected in the TSM survey responses.

Reactive Repairs – In-House

There was a slight increase in the Work in Progress numbers and the non-emergency completion on times were just below target. Performance was fairly stable with the in-house repairs team which carried out most of the repairs.

Reactive Repairs – Sureserve

A number of repairs were being received in respect of heating and that was reflected within the Work in Progress and the number of overdue jobs. It was noted

that this was part of the seasonal “norms” that put pressure on the service and there was a drop in performance. Emergency performance was positive at 97% and figures were checked by Officers to ensure work had been completed. One of the jobs for the newly appointed Officer was to monitor and improve the completion of those jobs.

Reactive Repairs – Other Contractors

It was noted that new contractors were being mobilised but the figures before Members did not reflect the new mobilisation. Due to the low numbers involved if one job was late that had a big impact on the performance figures. Going forward these figures should reduce. Average time was reducing.

Damp and Mould

The new Damp and Mould Team had been established for some time and the results of the work could be seen in the data before Members. Weekly meetings took place to review performance which was reflected in the amount of green shown on the slide, especially as winter was the most challenging time for damp and mould issues and it reflected the amount of additional resources used.

Voids

There had been a sustained management of performance in respect of voids and that could be seen in the data before the Committee which had halved from 100 in March 2025 to 50 in December 2025. Housemark bench marking standard had been included on the slide. The Council was performing in line with the medium quartile. Currently it was 45 days for a standard void and 43 for the sector. It was noted that the Head of Service, Technical had an additional slide in respect of benchmarking with other Social Landlords and that would be circulated to Members.

Customer Satisfaction

This showed a positive performance, which when benched marked with Housemark showed the Council was in the medium quartile.

Planned Works

An improved position, delivered against our programme with a number of completions against planned works. The forecast was being reviewed to make sure the Council delivered against the targets set. Focus was being kept on kitchen, bathrooms and external refurbishment.

Asset Management

99% properties were classed as Decent Homes standard, with 24 properties being classed as non-decent which was the focus of work. Reviews were continually

being carried out and it was expected that the work on the non-decent properties would be completed by year end.

Stock Condition

It was noted that 9% of properties had a survey which was over five years old and that was due to being unable to gain access to properties to carry out surveys. Three attempts were made before support from housing was requested to try and gain access. It was hoped that by year end they would be close to 100%.

Members discussed the performance before them with comments being made in respect of the fantastic work undertaken by the Damp and Mould Team, whether the targets needed to be stretched, the overall improvement and the concerns around the repairs backlogs, the customer satisfaction response rate and risks around not completing stock condition surveys on time.

The Head of Service, Housing then presented the slides which covered Housing Services Performance.

Allocations and Lettings Call Handling

There was a dip in the number of calls in December due to holidays, but call handling was consistently hitting above the target of 90%.

Housing Options

Numbers in temporary accommodation had increased slightly in December, there had been a fall in the number of active homelessness cases. The Chairman commented about the lack of colour and the Head of Service, Housing stated that it was difficult to colour code targets around housing options and homelessness due to the inability to know who would be coming asking for help from the service. The number of successful homing outcomes had been added to the bottom of the slide.

Allocations

The number of housing register applications waiting for assessment had decreased, the checks carried out were stringent and therefore did take time as circumstances could range vastly with complex assessments required. The numbers were reducing gradually. The numbers within the Bands reflected what Officers expected to see at the different times of the year. It was noted that the data before Members was a snapshot at a specific time.

Tenancy Management

Reference was made to the number of Anti-Social Behaviour reports which did not reflect the number of cases. The number of RTBs had declined due to the changes in the RTB regulations. It was noted that the number of Tenancy Checks due could be colour coded to reflect the tolerances. MESNE was when a person was

occupying a property, liable for use and occupation charges, but was not a tenant. This could occur after an unsuccessful succession for example.

Members were reminded that a Glossary of Terms was attached at the end of the appendix.

Questions were asked about overdue checks and it was stated that these were in excess of the target, whether credit points in respect of time being in a particular Band were given, this was not the case, however applications received from veterans were prioritised within Bands. It was noted that relationships/partnership working with Housing Associations were very good and that there was a new Senior Officer in post which would hopefully strengthen that relationship. The Chairman indicated that an overview in respect of Housing Associations could be a future topic for the Committee.

➤ **Action**

That an overview of Housing Associations and the Council's relationship with them be an agenda item for a future meeting of the Committee.

Compliance

The Head of Service, Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Housing Compliance stated that compliance for legionella, asbestos, fire risk assessment, lifts and Smoke/CO were all at 100%. There had been a slight drop in gas but this was seasonal and to be expected. EICR was slowly improving however, it was noted that those who were non-compliant were new and it wasn't the same set of properties.

Fire Risk Assessments

Members were shown a slide showing the remedial actions in respect of Fire Risk Assessments (FRA). Although the slide showed outstanding actions of 603 the Head of Service, Health & Safety, Emergency Planning and Housing Compliance informed the Committee that this was now 504. From when the slide was published the medium actions had reduced from 118 to 115. 30% of the issues highlighted for action were in respect of new bin storage areas, there was nothing actually wrong with the building from a FRA, it was where a new bin store was to be located which needed to be determined and consultations needed to be carried out with residents. The remedial actions had reduced significantly since April 2025 with a colossal amount of work being carried out.

Housing Compliance – Gas Remedial Actions

Again Members were reminded that this was a relatively new addition to the performance data shared with Members. The total number of remedial actions currently outstanding was 35. None of the items shown were critical to life or property function.

Housing Compliance – EICR Remedial Actions

It was noted that C1 and C2 remedial actions were completed/made safe on site. The remedial actions outstanding related to non-urgent repairs or parts that needed replacing.

Members congratulated Officers on the work being undertaken. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that targets needed to be reviewed but that Officers had to be mindful of the budgets available so targets had to be realistic and within budget.

56. Tenancy Strategy

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented the report which detailed a draft Tenancy Strategy 2026-2031. The Council had a statutory duty under the Localism Act 2011 to have a Tenancy Strategy in place that gave a clear framework of how Registered Providers of social housing managed tenancy types, lengths and renewals. Key aspects of the Strategy were:

- Security and Stability for Tenants
- Best use of Housing Stock
- Consistency and Clarity
- Partnership Working
- Safeguarding, Equality and Domestic Abuse

The Strategy had been discussed at a Workshop with Members on 7 January 2026 and was currently open for public consultation which would close on 11 February 2026, details could be found on the Council's website.

One Member asked how many underoccupied houses the Council currently had. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that a Tenant Census would be undertaken over the coming months working with Acuity to collect data and identify who was living in the properties. Currently the Council relied on tenants to notify the Council if their circumstances had changed. The information would be available later on in the year.

A further question was asked in respect of speaking to other sections about individuals living at a property, it was noted that GDPR may come into that but the Director of Housing and Projects stated that she would have a conversation to see what could be shared having regard to GDPR.

➤ Action note

Check to see if there are any data sharing agreements in place with Council Tax Section.

A questions was asked about breaking down the information shown on page 34 of the agenda pack in relation to Grantham Southeast; however it was noted that this was 2021 census information but the Head of Service, Housing indicated that she would look into whether the information could be broken down further. It was noted that this would have cost implications to carry out this work which would not necessarily give an accurate figure.

The Cabinet Member for Housing reminded Members that costs and fees in respect of resourcing work in relation to HMO's was going to Council at the end of February 2026. The Member who had raised the issue indicated that there were two areas, the fees for HMO's and registering new properties and the quality of life for people living in HMO's and inspections.

The Director of Housing and Projects reminded the Committee that the Tenancy Strategy related to social housing not private sector housing which HMO's came under.

Further questions were raised about the content of the draft strategy in relation to the type of housing to which the Head of Service, Housing responded.

The draft strategy was proposed, seconded and agreed to be recommended to Cabinet for approval.

Recommendation

The Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends the draft Tenancy Strategy to Cabinet for approval.

(The meeting was adjourned between 15:46 – 16:00)

(Councillor Susan Sandall left the meeting at 15:45 and did not return)

57. Renters Rights Act

The Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the item which concerned the new Renters Rights Act 2025. An overview of the Act would be given by the Environmental Health Manager, Environment and Private Sector Housing. Those leading on this were Ayeisha Kirkham, Head of Public Protection and Tom Amblin-Lightowler, Environmental Health Manager, Environmental Protection and Private Sector Housing. The Renters Rights Act 2025 would bring about a substantial change to the Private Sector Housing and place a significant burden on the Council in its capacity as the local housing authority. It was implementing changes to tenancies and the way the sector operated.

The Environmental Health Manager, Environmental Protection and Private Sector Housing then went through the presentation with the Committee.

The Government had set out a Roadmap on how the Act was to be implemented as it was a vast piece of legislation.

- 27 December 2025 – New investigatory powers for Local Authorities e.g. asking for additional information from individuals operating in letting activity, also access to financial records, allowing entrance to businesses. Under the existing regime Local Authorities had no power to enter businesses. The new powers allowed access to businesses to seize documentation or ask for additional information. This related to offences under the Renters Rights Act and existing offences under the Housing Act 2004. It also extended Section 235 of the Housing Act 2004 which was for requests for documentation and powers of entry under Section 239. These were being looked at to see how they could be integrated in to existing activities.
- The bulk of the changes for Phase 1 would come into effect on 1 May 2026, this included tenancy changes.
- Late 2026 would be when the Private Rented Sector Database and Landlord Ombudsman came into effect although no dates had been given.
- Phase 3 around Decent Home Standard was due to come in 2035 together with Awaabs Law which already affected social landlords and the Council as a social landlord provider. This would have a significant impact on a very large scale and currently there was little detail on how this would be carried out.

Overall milestones that the Government had set were shown on the slide and could be accessed through the Government website: www.gov.uk.

Phase 1 included:

- Abolishment of Section 21s “no fault” evictions
- Introduction of Assured Periodic Tenancies
- Reform in respect of Possession grounds
- Limit rent increases
- Ban rental bidding and rent in advance
- Make it illegal to discriminate against renters
- Require landlords to consider pets
- Strengthen enforcement actions and rent repayment orders

It was an extensive overhaul and most would be the responsibility of the local authority to enforce which would increase the burden on the statutory function substantially. The key point was the abolishment of “no fault” evictions, Section 21 Notices to end a tenancy would be banned from 1 May 2026. It was noted that any in progress up to 1 May 2026 would be allowed to proceed to the courts as long as the period did not exceed six months, if this was exceeded the notices would become invalid and could not be enforced.

Also short, assured tenancies (6 – 12 months) would no longer be allowed with tenancies becoming open ended. Existing tenancies would have to be notified of the changes to their tenancy from the 1 May 2026 and this documentation was being produced by the Government to be provided by the landlord to the tenant.

Any tenancy signed after the 1 May 2026 would need to be written tenancies, currently in England no written statement of particulars was required, however this would be required from 1 May 2026 and conditions specified, information was awaited from the Government in respect of what was required to be included to comply with the Renters Rights Act 2025.

Existing possession grounds were being looked at with and existing grounds were being strengthened with work ongoing. Rent increases would be limited to once per year and would not occur in the first 12 month period. Two months' notice must be provided by the landlord and a template provided. Disputes in respect of rent would go to the residential property tribunal. Bans had been put in place in respect of rental bidding and paying rents in advance.

There was now no discrimination against renters and pets were to be considered by landlords where reasonable to do so. It was stated that relevant guidance in respect of this was due to be released in the coming weeks. Also the new Act strengthened enforcement and repayment orders with new legislation in place to ensure compliance.

Phase 2

This was expected late in 2026 although no date had been confirmed. Phase 2 had been broken down into two key components, the landlord and rental property database. Every landlord would need to be registered on the national portal, currently pilots were being undertaken in certain areas one of which was Plymouth. It was not known what this would look like as no details were available. Once this had been completed stage two would be rolled out for further public access. The database would include landlord details, property details and compliance documentation (gas, electrical and EPC certification). It was the local housing authority's duty to ensure that landlords accurately register their property. The Council was not the owners of the database but were the responsible authority for it being rolled out and ensure that landlords are registering on the database.

The second part of Phase 2 was the establishment of an ombudsman body to deal with disputes in the private rented sector. The Government would identify a scheme administrator and the Secretary of State would select which administrator will carry out the scheme. Once this was announced there would be a 12-18 month period to gear up for the administration, resources and staff etc. Stage 2 would be the rollout to landlords to be registered and was expected during 2028. It would be the local authority responsibility to ensure that landlords were members of the schemes.

Work was being done to get ready for the implementation. An Officers working group has been established for the service areas that are impacted by the Renters Rights Act to work together towards effective implementation. One key area included the Head of Service, Housing's area in terms on homeless applications for illegal evictions. Other areas were the Private Sector Housing Team who were leading on the Renters Rights Act and the statutory enforcement function. The Private Sector Housing Team would be recruiting new posts, pending budget

approval to help resource what would be a substantial amount of work that would be required.

Questions were asked in respect of the new burdens being placed on the local housing authority and whether the Government had provided funding to alleviate this burden to which both the Environmental Health Manager, Environment and Private Sector Housing and also the Director of Housing and Projects responded.

The Chairman stated it was the most significant piece of legislation that affected the housing rental sector in years and he asked that the Committee be kept updated when more information from Government became available.

Members noted the update.

58. Sheltered Housing Service Charge Review

The Cabinet Member for Housing presented a report which identified recommendations following an independent review of service charges at Sheltered Housing Schemes. The Committee was asked to note the progress made to date on the review of service charges and review the actions proposed to progress the review.

The charges were based on the facilities that were provided at the Sheltered Housing Schemes across the district.

Facilities could include:

- Communal rooms
- Laundry
- Community Heating Schemes
- Water and Sewerage

The Council did not have comprehensive usage data for the communal rooms or the laundry facilities; therefore it was recommended that a survey was undertaken with tenants to establish how the facilities were used and this would inform any decision taken in respect of the future provision. Due to the number of communal rooms it was recommended that a pilot review was undertaken to allow learning to be applied to other schemes not used in the pilot.

Members were referred to paragraph 2.7 of the report and the schemes listed to be part of the pilot review and the reasons for this selection.

The communal heating charge was recommended for review as energy costs had increased and the Council needed to ensure that the costs were being recovered from tenants for providing the heating such as corridors, communal rooms and flats with the district heating in place.

There were 24 guest bedrooms at 20 of the main Sheltered Housing Schemes. There was a lack of usage of these facilities and it was recommended that a survey was undertaken to find out why these weren't used to help inform any decision made in respect of the guest bedrooms in the future.

Results of the surveys undertaken would be reported back to the Committee in due course.

One Member questioned the letting of communal rooms by the Council, even though residents did pay a fee for a facility that they potentially couldn't use when it was hired out. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that she would be happy to include this within the review and the surveys undertaken.

Members noted the report.

59. Garage Sites Update

The New Build Project Officer briefly updated the Committee on the current position in respect of garage sites. All surveys in respect of the garages should be complete by the end of March 2026. It was expected that the surveys would come through mid-April where they would be looked at from a development perspective. Further feasibility studies would be undertaken using funding allocated from Homes England with proposals put through the planning application process.

A Member asked when the report would come before the Committee. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that a high level report was due to come to Committee on 31 March 2026. She informed the Committee that funding had been applied for from Homes England, sadly this had not been allocated, the Council had missed out by one point, but following communication with MHCLG, the Council had been allocated £180,000 which was being used to fund the garage site survey work. Following the survey work funding would be used to look at those sites which had the potential to be developed with feasibility studies being carried out using the funding.

A question was asked about the number of garage sites and it was stated that all 864 were being looked at to inform any future investment and decisions regarding those garage sites.

Members noted the update.

60. 2025/26 TSM Results presentation

The Director of Housing and Projects thanked the Chairman for allowing the extra item to be included on the agenda, a report would be coming to the next meeting of the Committee, but the Director wanted to share the results of the Tenants Satisfaction Survey (TSM) with the Committee especially as they reflected the amount of work being undertaken by the Housing Team.

The Director of Housing and Projects reminded the Committee that there was a mandatory requirement by the Regulator, placed on all Social Landlords to comply with the transparency, influence and accountability standard. The Council had chosen to undertake the TSM survey in two waves with one taking place earlier in the year and the results presented to the Committee in October 2025 and the second wave taking place in November 2025.

A reason for undertaking the TSM Survey in two waves was to monitor the additional work that was being undertaken in the repairs service and the tenant engagement service to see if the improvement were reflected in the tenant satisfaction measures.

Neighbouring authorities carried out their surveys at different times, quarterly, annually and some half yearly. What could often be seen was a spike in an improvement in the repair service in the summer months and a reduction in satisfaction with Anti-Social Behaviour and a reversal of these areas during the winter months. The Director of Housing and Projects wanted to see if this was reflected in the results and whether the improvements to services carried through to tenants satisfaction.

The results from the TSM Survey were submitted to the Regulator annually who produced a report that analysed the results from Social Landlords which have a thousand or more houses.

Acuity had undertaken the survey on behalf of the Council and had received 550 completed survey responses and 30 incomplete responses. The survey could be completed online which allowed for incomplete surveys to be submitted. 131 surveys were completed online with 451 completed by telephone. The Director of Housing and Projects indicated that she would query the figure with Acuity as it added up to 582 not 580.

There were 12 mandatory questions within the survey which allowed the Regulator to have consistent data to enable benchmarking with other landlords.

Members were then presented with a slide which showed a positive movement in 12 out of the 15 areas listed. A reduction was shown in communal areas, repairs in the last 12 months and the time taken to carry out repairs. It was noted that the repair data reduction was minimal.

The Director of Housing and Projects reminded Members that the Council had carried out an exercise earlier in the year where tenants had been asked to remove personal items which were stored in communal areas (bikes, pushchairs etc) due to fire risks. It was felt that the 8% reduction in communal areas was a result of this exercise but it would continue to be monitored. No high levels of complaints were received in respect of communal areas, but it was acknowledged that if you lived on the second floor you needed somewhere to store your bike and options were currently being looked at to improve storage facilities.

61. Work Programme 2025/26

The Chairman asked if Members had anything to add to the Work Programme other than the standing items listed. One Member asked about setting new targets and the Director of Housing and Projects indicated that a workshop could be arranged at which various policies and new targets could be discussed.

A further question was asked in respect of HMO's and the Chairman stated that this was to be discussed at Council at the end of February and depending upon what was reported, would influence whether the Housing OSC looked at it further. The Director of Housing and Projects stated that she would take the issue of monitoring HMO's and have a conversation with the relevant Officers to see what could realistically be implemented.

62. Any other business which the Chairman, by reason of special circumstances, decides is urgent

None.

63. Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 4:48pm.