



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 12 JUNE 2025 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T:

Councillor O'Neill – Chair
Councillor Deepak Bajaj (Vice Chair)

Councillor Cutkelvin
Councillor Kitterick
Councillor Singh Sangha

Councillor Gopal
Councillor Pickering
Councillor Zaman

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12. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mahesh and Councillor Gregg. Councillor Kitterick substituted for Councillor Gregg.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

The Chair asked members to declare any interests in proceedings. It was noted that Councillor Kitterick originally called in the decision but was now taking place of a member of the commission.

14. CALL-IN OF EXECUTIVE DECISION LGSCO REPORT OF MALADMINISTRATION CAUSING INJUSTICE (HOUSING) - MS X

The Monitoring Offer submitted a report informing the Commission that the Executive decision, taken by the Assistant City Mayor for Housing on 22 May 2025 relating to responses to two of the seven recommendations in the LGSCO Maladministration Report. This had been the subject of a 6-member call-in under the procedures at Rule 12 of Part 4D, City Mayor and Executive Procedure Rules, of the Council's Constitution.

The Chair invited the proposer of the call-in, Councillor Kitterick, to present the reasons for the call in. This was deferred to the seconder of the call-in, Councillor Porter and the following points were raised:

- Where the Council had been found at fault in cases of maladministration, it should be reported to Full Council and this was recommended in the LGSCO report.
- Under law, when a household was made homeless, they should only be in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for 6 weeks which was exceeded.
- When temporary accommodation was provided, the tenant should be advised of their right to appeal and the Council failed to do this.
- The complainant identified a property in the private sector that was suitable and would remove them from temporary accommodation. The Council failed to respond initially and then responded stating it would be too expensive.
- The cost of keeping a family in Bed and Breakfast accommodation compared to the cost of using Private Rented Accommodation was questioned.
- It was acknowledged that there had been a housing crisis, however it was not acceptable for individuals and households to be in the situation of Ms X.
- It was queried whether every option had been explored by the Council to avoid injustice.
- It was noted that it's rare for a case to be taken to this level and be considered by the Ombudsmen.
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The Chair invited the Deputy City Mayor for Housing, Economy and Neighbourhoods and Director of Housing to respond. As part of this, the Housing Head of Service and Head of Law provided a presentation, and the following points were noted:

- There was unprecedented demand for housing and the numbers who presented as homeless.
- The national picture of housing and homelessness needed to be considered as context for the consideration of the complaint.
- The report dated back to January 2023- May 2024.
- Compliance with all the recommendations was considered, but respectfully declined to comply with the two noted.
- The key findings from the report which were acknowledged, included
 - Failure to send appropriate communications delays in accepting main housing duty when relief duty expired.
 - Failure to notify the customer of their statutory right to request a review of the accommodation provided.
 - Delays in responding to the customers concern around suitability of accommodation and offering alternative accommodation.
 - Failure to move customer to self-contained accommodation after six weeks in B&B accommodation.
- The Council was found not to be at fault in relation to its initial decision to place Ms x in a refuge and the help to secure Private Rented Accommodation.
- Recommendations that have been actioned from the report include:
 - Written apology to the customer for the distress caused by the faults identified.

- Symbolic payment of £500 to acknowledge the distress caused by the failure.
 - Training for Officers.
 - Review template letters.
 - Action plan to reduce families in B&B over 6 weeks.
 - The reasons for the non-payment included:
 - Acknowledged the Regulations around length of stay in temporary accommodation dated back to 2003, meaning it is out of touch with the current context.
 - This was a national crisis including the impact of international forces beyond Local Authority control. The penalty was deemed unfair to the Local Authority and the taxpayers of Leicester.
 - Other complainants could look for compensation which may lead to unbalanced budgets. Over the last 12 months, the estimated cost to the Council was in the region of £500k.
 - Nationally, the estimated cost could equate to £6 million.
 - Payments could risk the serving of S114 causing detrimental impact and loss of services for the local people of Leicester
 - There had been unprecedented overdemand for housing and systemic shortage of housing which was a national crisis.
 - The Council had invested tens of millions to fix the problem, exposing Local Authorities to pay such large figures in compensation would likely hinder attempts to address the problem.
 - The Council publicised the findings from the LGSCO via various media outlets and a public interest report in November 2024.
 - Other Local Authorities made contact to discuss and consider the Council's position it has taken.
 - The Council acknowledged the recommendations and accepted the determinations detailed in the report. It led to further training and learning being implemented at strategic and operational levels.
- As part of the response, it was highlighted that:
- There had been a concerted effort to increase temporary accommodation with an increased investment of £45 million including the sourcing of over 225 units, plus 125 new leases and recruitment of staff to strengthen the divisions response.
 - More affordable housing was being delivered currently than in previous 17 years and the Council on track with partners to deliver over 1,500 units of new Affordable housing.
 - All the levers were being pulled to assist those requiring help, including utilisation of additional Government funding for Private Rental Accommodation for those in the homelessness process.
 - This challenge was being met head on, but it continued to be a challenge in the context of the local and national picture.
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The Deputy City Mayor for Housing, Economy and Neighbourhoods stated that she was proud of what had been achieved but acknowledged that no division is not perfect, and they were not burying their heads in the sand around the challenges faced. Lessons were learnt from this report and the division reflected on what could be improved and many of these issues came to

Housing Scrutiny.

As part of discussion by members, it was noted that:

- The LGSCO recommendations were welcomed by members of the commission.
- Monthly meetings were in place to review the Action Plan.
- Investment continued into self-contained temporary accommodation.
- Numbers residing in B&B had reduced from 188 to 17 households.
- A professional consultant with experience in Homelessness Training had been engaged. Training was ongoing with a full day of learning being delivered to officers. A refresher module should become available and criteria guidance sheets were being created.
- Key deliverables had been outlined in line with best practice and team leaders were meeting on a quarterly bases to review.
- Previous issues with staffing levels were referenced, with significant work currently going into staff retention.
- Failed historical deals, such as the Jamie Lewis purchase, were mentioned by members, regarding lack of housing supply and the need for more scrutiny.
- Disappointment was expressed by members in relation to vacant properties at the Hospital Close site, particularly in light of the housing emergency of 2022.
- Other members were satisfied that LGO recommendations had been implemented successfully. It was noted that Bed and Breakfast accommodation did not meet the needs of families and individuals, but this was intended to be a temporary measure. It was felt that it would be best to reinvest finances into protecting the long-term plans, rather than offering compensation.
- There was some discussion surrounding statutory instruments and whether corresponding Ombudsman regulations, being over 20 years old, were no longer considered suitable. It was clarified that this reference (relating to time periods spent in temporary accommodation) was intended to provide context, not to 'add less weight' or disregard any recommendations.
- It was recognised that housing issues were likely to remain a problem in the long-term, and there was a need to recognise the changing landscape.
- The scrutiny commission would have continued opportunities throughout the municipal year to monitor and discuss matters concerning temporary accommodation and homelessness.

The Chair asked who was in support of the call-in going to Full Council of which 2 members were. The Chair asked for those in favour of the call-in being withdrawn and 5 of 7 attending members voted in favour of it being withdrawn.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the call-in be withdrawn.

ACTIONS:

- For the LGSO findings on homelessness presentation to be circulated to members.

15. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 18.35.