



Leicester
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: THURSDAY, 9 JULY 2026 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

Councillor O'Neill (Chair)
Councillor Agath (Vice Chair)

Councillor Bora
Councillor Chauhan

Councillor Gopal
Councillor Singh Sangha
Councillor Zaman

In Attendance:

Deputy City Mayor – Councillor Cutkelvin

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91. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Cllr Halford.

92. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

93. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

AGREED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Commission held on 21st April 2026 be confirmed as a correct record.

94. MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION 2026/27

The Membership of the Commission was confirmed as follows:

Councillor Molly O'Neill - Chair

Councillor Nags Agath – Vice Chair
Councillor Elaine Halford
Councillor Mohinder Singh Sangha
Councillor Syed Zaman
Councillor Yogesh Chauhan
Councillor Jayanti Gopal
Councillor Aasiya Bora

95. DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION 2026/27

The dates of the meetings for the Commission were confirmed as follows:

9 July 2026
7 September 2026
10 November 2026
18 January 2027
1 March 2027

96. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Commission noted the Scrutiny Terms of Reference.

97. CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the new municipal year.

The Chair reminded members that the Commission scrutinised Housing policy in the city, and that if there were any casework issues in their wards that were about specific individual enquiries, these should be addressed through the appropriate channels.

The Chair announced that some reports would be taken as read.

98. QUESTIONS, REPRESENTATIONS AND STATEMENTS OF CASE

It was noted that none had been received.

99. PETITIONS

It was noted that none had been received.

100. INTRODUCTION TO HOUSING

The Chair noted that the presentation had been sent out previously and invited members to ask questions or seek clarification on any aspect of the presentation.

No comments or questions were raised.

101. MR X VERBAL UPDATE

The Head of Housing provided a verbal update on Ombudsman case relating to Mr X & Ms X:

- It was highlighted that Mr X had complained to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). He argued that the Council had failed to provide sufficient support with his homelessness, his housing application and that it had also failed to provide suitable accommodation for him and his family.
- The Ombudsman report was formally published on 6th November 2025 and outlined a list of recommendations. Those recommendations were that the report be considered at the appropriately delegated committee of elected members, the Council apologised to Mr X for the faults identified and that two symbolic payments were made. One of £500 to Mr X for the distress and uncertainty caused and another of £3,525 for the distress caused to Mr X and his family by living in unsuitable B&B accommodation for longer than they should have done.
- It was noted that the Council had implemented all agreed remedies, including the combined payments of £4,025 which had been paid to the family via bank transfer.
- A separate case involving Ms X was also highlighted. It was detailed that Ms X complained to the Ombudsman that the Council had failed to provide sufficient support with her homelessness and failed to provide suitable accommodation for her and her children.
- The Ombudsman report was formally published on 14th November 2024 and outlined a list of recommendations. Those recommendations were that the Council was to send a written apology to Ms X, make a symbolic payment of £500 to acknowledge the distress and a further symbolic payment of £1,300 for the distress caused to the family for staying in B&B accommodation. In addition, a further £150 per month was to be paid to Ms X for every month her and her family remained in unsuitable accommodation. Finally, the Council was to review template letters used by the operational services and deliver training to front line Homelessness Officers. It was confirmed that all recommendation had been complied with and a total payment of £2,250 was paid to Ms X via bank transfer.
- It was explained that there were no outstanding recommendations or remedial actions remaining, and the cases were therefore regarded as closed from an operational and the Ombudsman's perspective.
- The Executive Member for Housing, Economy and Neighbourhoods reiterated the position made by a statement at full council. The ombudsman had made it clear that this was not setting a precedent for

other cases.

- The Director of Housing explained that as result of the ombudsman's verdict, he had requested a meeting with the ombudsman regarding the present situation of housing in the city. During the meeting the director detailed the homelessness situation and housing crisis which the ombudsman was not fully aware of. Following the meeting, the ombudsman understood the position of the Council and acknowledged the work done by the Council. The ombudsman accepted that the Council had done everything possible.

In response to questions and comments, the following points were made:

- Members asked for further clarity on the causes of the cases of Mr X and Mrs X. The Director of Housing explained that the issues went back to the pandemic, when the Council opted to house Leicester's homeless and the Council's commitment following the end of lockdown to keep them housed. This combined with increased Section 21 notices following the end of the pandemic lead to a sudden surge of homelessness cases for families. The Director highlighted that the Homelessness team had seen an increase of 200% in homelessness cases in the 10 years since 2023, many of these cases were families. The total lack of affordable housing in city was detailed, 50,000 of the rental accommodation within the city was private rented and only 3% of that was affordable for people on benefits or low wages. It was noted that this contributed to the council declaring a housing crisis in 2022. The Council had on many occasions a duty to house these people, but the Council's existing stock of temporary accommodation did not have the capacity, so many were put into B&B's. This situation led to many cases of the 6-week deadline being breached. In 2025, Full Council approved £45 million which was spent on 225 units and renting 125 more and again in 2026, a further £50 million was authorised to purchase more accommodation. As a result of these actions, a large number of people were moved out of B&B and into self-contained temporary accommodation and currently there were no breaches of the 6-week rule. However, there were still 700 families living in temporary accommodation and within those families, 1000 children. The Council had also launched the private renters sector strategy, worked with licensing to improve private accommodation and lobbied the government to increase the housing benefit level for private renting which they have done. The director stated that despite the hard work of the Housing Department, there was still a housing crisis and that it was a self-perpetuating issue which required constant attention.

- Members raised questions about the current situation of the Housing department and how the 6-month rule was currently being monitored. It was detailed that the Housing department had the Temporary Accommodation Team who handled the entire process and a Team Leader who monitored B&B cases daily and attempted to move them on as quickly as possible.

AGREED:

1. The verbal update was noted.

102. RENT ARREARS REPORT - APRIL 2025 TO MARCH 2026

The Director of Housing submitted a report on the annual rent arrears progress within the general housing stock.

The Head of Service attended the meeting to assist with discussions.

Key points included:

- It was highlighted that the total tenant rent arrears for general housing stock were £1.57 million compared to £1.7 million in the previous year. This represented a reduction of 8%. The rent collection rate was 98.96% which was exceptional, considering the backdrop of the cost of living.
- The team successfully administered £946,428.81 in Household Support Fund (HSF) awards which assisted tenants impacted by the cost-of-living crisis. The fund supported 1,500 households of this 600 were families, 200 had disabilities and 700 had complex vulnerabilities.
- The team used multi-channel communications to contact tenants. It was noted that the team conducted 120 phone calls, sent 100 emails and 100 letters a day to tenants. They also conducted 786 home visits in the last year.
- It was stressed that the improvements had been seen in several areas. The number of tenants who owed 7 or more weeks of rent had reduced from 477 to 285. The average arrears per debtor had reduced from £226 to £215 and the total value of arrears owed by the top 500 debtors had reduced from £440,000 to £424,000.
- At the end of March 2026, 10,482 tenants (which was 57% of council tenants) were claiming Universal Credit (UC) of that total, half were in rent arrears. A further 17% were on housing benefit. As UC was paid one month in arrears it was noted that there were usually technical rent arrears on some tenant accounts and tenants often had pre-existing

arrears when they applied for UC. The Income Support Team coordinated with partner agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Job Centre Plus to help mitigate rent debt and support tenants.

- There was a team of 8 Rent Management Advisors (RMA) who were responsible for supporting the most vulnerable tenants. As part of this role, the team helped tenants manage tenant benefit claims, helped set up email accounts and encourage tenants to undertake digital learning. The team handled just under 1000 referrals last year, with 75% coming from households with at least 1 vulnerability. At the time, 727 cases were successfully closed and 200 were ongoing. The RMA function resulted in the reduction of £524,000 in rent arrears and 77% of tenants have said that they increased in their confidence and ability to manage benefit claims.
- It was stressed that the housing department only sought possessions as a last resort. In the last year 90 cases were submitted to court for possessions which was 90% lower than pre-covid levels where on average 80 cases were submitted a month. Last year 5 tenants were evicted from council properties which was from 4 cases the previous year.
- The Head of Service commented that this figure was lower than the national average. The low evictions rate alongside the high collection rate of income underlined the hard work of the housing team and it was advised that there had been positive feedback from tenants.

In response to questions and comments, the following points were made:

- Members requested clarification as to why there was such a discrepancy between percentage of stock and rent arrears for Beaumont Leys, compared to other areas in the city. Officers commented that there was often a fluctuation in stock and arrears for areas and that it was often difficult to trend. Officers highlighted that there was often a spike in rent arrears during or just after the summer holidays. This was due to family expenditures increasing as the children were at home and then subsequently in the back-to-school period.
- Members also asked about the engagement process for tenants who went into arrears. It was detailed that tenants are supported throughout their tenancy. Officers engaged in pre-tenancy interviews with prospective tenants, assessed their needs and signposted them to further support, if they were eligible. The Housing team employed a hands-on approach to tenancy support and reached out to tenants the

second they went into arrears, by phone or with in person visits. The overall aim was to understand the situation of tenants and provide discretionary support if they were eligible.

- Members asked what processes were in place to enable officers to differentiate and focus on high need cases and how officers supported tenants with a language barrier. Officers advised that tenants were required to elaborate on their personal circumstances and provide accounts of their income and expenditure. It was noted that the full array of housing services was used to support tenants. Regarding language barriers, it was detailed that several officers in the department were fluent in other languages and the Housing department also utilised the support of the translation services team.
- Members sought further clarity on how serious arrears cases were handled. It was explained that the crisis and resilience fund would be utilised in cases which met the guidelines but there was some flexibility in certain cases. Officers explained that high arrears cases were highly scrutinised and evictions were only ever a last choice. The Housing team engaged in a multi-agency approach with all services involved and made numerous attempts to reach out to tenants and resolve the issue without evictions.

AGREED:

- 1) That members note the report.

103. ENVIRONMENTAL BUDGET 2026/2027

The Director of Housing submitted a Report outlining the amount of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding that will be invested on housing estates across the city in 2026/2027. This included the Environmental Budget.

The Head of Service, Housing Division attended the meeting to assist with discussions.

Key points included:

- It was explained that Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding was invested on housing estates across the city. It was estimated that over £3 million was allocated each year, which included the £200k for the Environmental Budget. The Environmental Budget was distributed across the three housing districts, this equated to roughly £66k for each ward
- The Housing Division contributed £1.1 million to the grounds maintenance service which looked after housing areas across the city,

this involved mowing the grass on housing land, cutting back shrubs and maintaining greenery. The Housing Division also contributed over £1.2 million towards the estate warden service. The teams of wardens maintained housing estates across the city with activities such as clearing rubbish and the removal fly tipping.

- In addition, the Housing Division invested £315k in the Neighbourhood Improvement Team which helped bring people back into employment, 6 to 12-month work placements were offered to 10 individuals.
- Consultation was carried out with tenants (including members of the Tenant's Scrutiny Panel), local ward Cllrs, and housing staff to identify possible proposals for environmental schemes. It was noted that the level of feedback for the year was much higher than in previous years. The full list of proposals was listed on Appendix 2 of the report.
- Due to restrictions of the budget, the proposals were prioritised based on various factors (See Appendix 3) such as cost, the need of funding in the area and whether the area in question had any Pride in Place funding allocated. These proposals were then scaled on a range of 5 and above as listed in the report.
- Various projects listed in the report were highlighted, such as the new benches and refurbishments at St Andrews Estate in Saffron ward, the demolition of garages and waste removal on Colhurst Way in Thurncourt ward and the introduction of new bins and pest control at various location in St Matthews in the Wycliffe ward.
- It was stated that as part of future proposals, tenants were required to submit a proposal between the price range of £1,000 and £20,000. This was to set tenants expectations on the scale of each project.

In response to questions and comments, the following points were made:

- Members praised the work detailed in the report.
- Certain members advised that they were unaware of the consultation process that was detailed in the report. The Head of Service advised that a letter was written to all ward councillors regarding the environmental budget and the engagement was ongoing. It was highlighted that ideas can be raised during patch walks or by responding to the emails and letters which are sent out.
- It was suggested by a member that presenting residents with a 'menu' of potential options would be beneficial and would give residents an idea of their choices. The Head of Service welcomed the suggestion but

caveated that there was slight differences in cost between wards due to the level of work required.

- Several questions were raised regarding possible deterrents for fly tipping and whether the perpetrators were residents or external. The executive member for housing stressed that the education and enforcement of fly tipping prevention was a broad issue that required the involvement of the whole city and not just the responsibility of the housing department. It was detailed that several comms programmes were being developed to highlight the Council's free bulky waste collection offer and the new changes regarding food waste that were due to be introduced in 2028. The executive member stated that she had been attempting the trial of a skip day as an easy solution to some of these issues but had encountered a degree of difficulty in arranging this. It was noted that this was something that the Council wished to trial and review its results.
- Members suggested that it would be beneficial for the council to work in partnership with local communities to help support the initiatives. The executive member detailed that several communities within Leicester had already taken ownership of their local area's upkeep and that the Council aimed to ensure that a good dialogue remained in these areas.

AGREED:

- 1) The report was noted.
- 2) Officers to consider creating a 'menu' of options available to residents.

104. MUTUAL EXCHANGE SWAP SCHEME

The Director of Housing submitted a report outlining the current Mutual Exchange Swap Scheme available to LCC Housing Tenants who have a secure tenancy.

The Head of Service, Housing Division attended the meeting to assist with discussions.

Key points included:

- The scheme helps to support tenant choice and mobility. There was a legal right for them to exchange homes.
- Feedback from complaints and reviews had shown that people wanted clearer information on the process. Therefore, improved communications throughout the process had been recommended, as well as a final property inspection from the tenant before the exchange

was completed.

- A swaptracker had also been launched. This was a self-service online tool to track the progress of the exchange.
- It was aimed to have information online, explaining the officer leads on processes and how people could contact officers.
- In 2025/26, 281 mutual exchanges were initiated by LCC tenants and 158 completed.

The reason for the lower completion rate was:

- Exchanges were refused following initial checks
- A party pulled out of an exchange part way through
- Tenancy breaches were identified that need to be rectified
- Major repairs had been identified which needed to be addressed
- The Tenants' Scrutiny Panel had wanted to strengthen communications and transparency.

In response to questions and comments, the following points were made:

- Tenants had a right to have issues in the properties repaired.
- The potential incentive was only available for those in overcrowded or underoccupied housing, so that better use could be made of the stock available.
- The Council were affiliated with the national scheme, therefore if people could find a suitable swap in another local authority, then such a swap could be feasible.
- Local Government Reorganisation could facilitate the council having more stock if boundaries expanded. In this instance, additional stock would be in areas such as Oadby, Wigston and Syston.
- It took 42 days to make a decision, but this could sometimes take longer as the decisions were sometimes conditional. Delays were often caused by issues around officer capacity.

AGREED:

- 1) That members note the report

105. TENANCY SCRUTINY PANEL ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26 AND THE ENGAGEMENT TEAM WORK PROGRAMME - APRIL 2026

The Director of Housing submitted a report providing the Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) Annual Report 2025/26 and the Engagement Team Work - Programme 2025/26.

The Chair outlines the TSP and noted that the commission was reported to regularly by them.

The Head of Service attended the meeting to assist with discussions.

Key points included:

- The TSP had a successful first year. The Annual Report highlighted how tenant involvement had helped services and how the engagement team had supported tenants.
- The report was largely for information and went over the work of the panel and noted which services had been improved. There was also evidence of increased accountability, future direction and continued partnership work.
- The work programme had been developed by structured overview.
- The report had been co-produced with the TSP, and the Chair of the TSP was happy with its content. The work programme had also been reviewed by tenants.

In response to questions and comments, the following points were made:

- In response to a query about the formation of the TSP and its engagement, it was explained that a strategy on engagement had been produced, and as part of this it had been aimed to increase tenant engagement, and part of this had been the establishment of the TSP. Tenants had been asked to volunteer at a conference in the city centre and the TSP had been established in March 2025 with around six to ten people. This had been promoted and publicised through a letter and through pop-up housing officers. Now 20 people participated on a regular basis, and attendance was monitored to check for underrepresentation. If underrepresentation was noticed from a particular area of the city, then the TSP was promoted in that area. The Chair added that there had been positive engagement the last time TSP members attended a Commission meeting.
- In response to a suggestion about having smaller scale activity on a particular estate, it was noted that this should be aspired to, however, there were budget constraints and competing priorities around support, investment, repairs and maintenance and the environmental budget. It was further noted that the latest tenants and residents' association had been in New Parks, and where people were involved, the Council had tried to enable it. Additionally, it was noted that five and a half posts had been added to help with pressures around additional work, however, there was no additional capacity.
- In response to a query on whether pop-up housing officers could maintain a level of service, it was noted that this was why the additional officers had been recruited. It was further added that it was necessary to look corporately at the delivery of services locally.

AGREED:

- 1) That members note the report.

106. WORK PROGRAMME

The Chair encouraged members to email her if there was anything they wished to be considered.

Members would be kept up to date on potential future site visits.

The Work Programme was noted.

107. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no other items of urgent business, the meeting ended at 19:09