



Leicester  
City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the  
HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMISSION

Held: Monday, 7 September 2026 at 5:30 pm

P R E S E N T :

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

Councillor Chauhan  
Councillor Gopal

Councillor Halford  
Councillor Singh Sangha

Councillor Zaman

In Attendance

Deputy City Mayor Councillor Cutkelvin

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**108 Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

There were no apologies for absence.

**109 Declarations of Interests**

Members were asked to declare any interests they may have in the business to be discussed.

No interests were declared.

**110 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

AGREED:

The minutes of the previous meeting held 9 July 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

**111 Chairs Announcements**

The Chair noted that due to time constraints, some reports would be taken as read.

**112 Questions, Representations and Statements of Case**

It was noted that none were received.

**113 Petitions**

It was noted that none were received.

**114 Update on the Housing Crisis Declaration and Refresh**

*The Chair suggested an agenda variance. The Update on the Housing Crisis Declaration and Refresh would be taken before the report on Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing; Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF).*

The Director of Housing submitted a report to the Commission which set out the progress on delivery of the Housing Crisis actions.

Key points included:

- In 2022, the Council declared a housing crisis. As part of this work Officers were keen to learn how the crisis manifested in Leicester and what issues the Council needed to lobby the government on. At the time, there was a recognition amongst Officers and the Executive member that no actions available to Council would solve the deep rooted and underlying issues of the Housing Crisis.
- The aim of the refresh was to provide an update on the progress made by the Council, the current national situation and refresh the priorities for the Council and Central Government. The Director of Housing emphasised that the Council met 15 of the 16 actions raised in 2022, while Central Government had completed 10 out of the 16 actions.
- On affordable homes delivery the Council had delivered a pipeline for the creation of 1500 homes between 2023 and 2027, invested £400 Million into affordable homes across the city and delivered 1,100 affordable homes with partners between 2019 and 2023. The Council took major action on temporary accommodation with the approval and creation of 225 units and the lease of 125 properties at the cost of £45 Million, and a further £50 Million was later allocated for the creation of another 250 units. The Director of Housing highlighted that this work had saved the Council £29 Million this year and would save the Council £36 Million in the following year.
- A large amount of work was carried out in the private rented sector. A live Private Rental Sector Strategy (PRSS) was implemented along with selective licensing in designated parts of the city and an improved offer for private landlords to encourage access to private rented properties. Along side this the Council had developed stronger working links and offers to PRS landlords This had led to progress, with a noted increase from 100 private lets in 2023 to 750 in 2026.

- Despite the hard work of the service, homelessness remained a key challenge for the Council. Between April 2025 and March 2026 over 1000 individuals were counted as rough sleeping and Leicester consistently recorded higher levels of long term rough sleeping compared to the regional and national averages.
- It was highlighted that there were currently 700 families and 400 individuals in temporary accommodation. The annual revenue cost of which had risen from £5 Million to £24 Million. There were 6,300 households on the housing register waiting list, 82% of those households were either homelessness or in overcrowded conditions and the supply and demand gap was stark. It was highlighted that last year over 2000 households were waiting for 2 bedroom properties and only 320 Council properties were let which equated to 15% of demand met. The waiting time for a 2 bed property in Leicester had more than doubled from 8 months to 18 months which clearly demonstrated the pressures. The private rental sector was unable to support with these pressures; it was noted that only 3% of the private rental housing was affordable for people who were on universal credit or low income.
- The core conclusion was clear, demand was rising faster than supply, affordability and delivery speed. The Director stressed that the only long term solution was a substantial and sustained increase in homes and that was why the new declaration proposed several aims to help achieve this.

In discussions with Members, the following was noted:

- The topic of fixed term housing tenancies was discussed, and members were keen to learn more about what this would entail. The Director of Housing explained fixed term tenancies was introduced as a legal option several years ago, and it was explored by the Council. The Council was aware that several of its properties were overcrowded while others were under utilised with spare bedrooms and space. The Council attempted to address some of these issues with mutual exchange schemes, but this was only a fraction of the number. Fixed term housing tenancies would allow better allocation of housing stock, but it would first have to go through political consideration.
- There was discussion around the current housing allocations policy and the priority bands used for people waiting on the housing register. It was stated that a review of the housing allocation policy was needed due to the scale and pressures that the service was experiencing. The current banding system was detailed by the lead Officers and the Deputy Mayor, and it was highlighted how Band 1 which was the top priority band had drastically expanded in recent years. Band 1 now contained a range of people from the homeless to tenants in overcrowded accommodation and in some cases, people had multiple issues which was not factored into the banding system. It was noted that changes are required to address these challenges. A re-evaluation of need was required, and proposals were to be brought to scrutiny for debate before changes were implemented.
- Members raised the topic of 'Right to Buy' and were interested to learn about the numbers sold and the money the Council received from the purchases. It was detailed that the Council sold between 200 and 400

properties a year, it was noted that once it was announced that the law was changing, there was a surge in applications. The Director of Housing stated that all money from the purchases was channelled back into creating new houses however this was not enough for the demand which was why the Council applied for the Homes England funding.

- The Chair commented on the increased waiting time for accommodation which had gone from 8 months for Band 1 in 2022, to its current waiting time of 18 months. The Chair wished for further clarification on the future of wait times and what changes the Officers expected to see moving forward. The Director of Housing clarified that the figure quoted was for 2 bed accommodations and that the figure for 3 and 4 beds was higher. While the Housing Department was doing all it could to create more housing and reduce the numbers on the register, there was still the underlying issue that Leicester was a confined city with limited land to build new houses. Over the next 10 years, the Council needed to create 36,000 units to meet demand but there was only enough land for just under 20,000.

The Chair moved that the report be endorsed. This was seconded by Councillor Agath and upon being put to the vote the motion was CARRIED.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Commission endorse the report.

#### **115 Increasing the Supply of Affordable Housing: Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)**

The Director of Housing submitted a report to the Commission on the fourth round of Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) funding. The report was taken as read. At the request of the chair, some of the key points of the report were detailed to the Commission by the Head of Housing:

- It was detailed that this was the fourth round LAHF which the Council had received to help support the delivery of temporary accommodation and resettlement in the city.
- This report was seeking approval to add extra money to the HRA capital programme in addition to the money received from the LAHF, to purchase an additional 56 homes over the next 4 years. The break down for these acquisitions was 15 in year 1, 10 in year 2, 23 in year 3 and then 8 in the final year. These were to form a part of the larger HRA acquisitions.
- The previous LAHF were detailed in the report, and it was noted that the report was due to go to the next Full Council.

In response to member questions and discussion, the following was noted:

- The Chair asked for clarification on the property acquisitions for this scheme and whether they were purchases rather than building projects. It was confirmed that the acquisitions were purchases of predominantly former council houses.

- Members commented on the cost of acquisitions and how the Housing Department planned to handle changes in market values. The Head of Housing advised that they had made some assessments of potential changes in the costs and that they were satisfied that they could make these purchases.
- Members further asked if any money had been set aside to refurbish or address any issues in the newly bought properties. The Head of Housing explained that these properties were being bought off the open market and that refurbishment would be minimal for most of them. However, a sum of £21,000 was set aside for each property to address any works that were required.

AGREED:

- 1) That members note the report.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.

## **116 Private Rental Sector Strategy**

The Director of Housing submitted a report to the Commission which set out the Council's strategic plans for undertaking work to improve the private rented sector (PRS) across the City of Leicester.

The Head of Regulatory Services presented the report.

Key points included:

- The report detailed the Council's Private Rental Sector Strategy (PRSS) for the year 2026-2031 and responded to the growing importance of the private rental sector in the city. It was estimated that there were 40,000 privately rented properties in the city, who catered to the needs of residents who could not gain access to social housing or home ownership.
- The Council faced increasing pressure from the rising homelessness demand, affordability challenges and poor housing conditions in the city. Nationally the Renters Rights Act was bringing in some of the biggest changes to the sector in a generation, which provided tenants with increased protection and introduced new duties and enforcement powers for Councils.
- There was a clear objective for the strategy, which was to improve housing standards in Leicester for the private rental sector for the benefit of tenants, landlords and the wider community. The strategy set out six high-level objectives listed on page 6 of the report (Appendix A) to help achieve the central objective. It was highlighted that each objective was supported by workstreams detailed in the report.
- The strategy aimed to take a balanced approach and not alienate landlords. It was acknowledged that most landlords wanted to provide quality accommodation and comply with legal responsibilities. Therefore, the scheme provided guidance and support to compliant landlords while taking

robust action against rogue, criminal and non-compliant landlords. Delivery of the strategy was overseen by Private Rental Sector Strategy Board, and progress was monitored through performance measures and regular reports to scrutiny.

In discussions with Members, the following was noted:

- Members were interested to learn of the impacts of the removal of Section 21 eviction notices. Officers commented that the prominent impact so far was a surge in Section 21 notices from landlords before the act came into effect. It was noted that there was a backlog of Section 21 cases going through the courts at the time. It was noted that nationally there was a 16% increase in Section 21 notices in the final year the Renter's Rights Act came into effect.
- Members were keen to learn how the Council was handling the new duties it had received as part of the Renter's Rights Act. The Head of Regulatory Services commented that the Council already had the Housing Standards Team and Selective Licensing team who dealt with problems in the private rental sector. So the new duties fitted well into the established work streams.
- Members were concerned about the possible impacts on landlords and whether the Council was concerned about landlords selling up their properties. It was explained that while the aim of the work was to improve standards of properties, they were keen to keep landlords on side and involved in the process. The work was a careful balance of managing the needs off all those involved.
- Clarification was asked about a section of the report that detailed Council support to accessibility works in the private rented sector. The Director of Housing commented that Central Government provided the Council with a grant each year as part of the Disabled Facilities Grant. The aim of this fund was to provide support to tenants living in private rented accommodation, the Council would conduct assessments on the property and decide what works were required, then it would either be completed by the Council or by the private contractors of the tenant's choosing.
- The Chair was keen to learn more about Selective licensing scheme, the progress made and how it worked with the Renter's Rights Act. It was explained that the licencing team was currently 4 years into a 5 year designation and had also received 83% of expected applications. As part of the work, they found several category 2 hazards which the landlords were required to improve. The Head of Regulatory Services noted that this showed that the team was operating in the right areas and making private rental properties safer. Regarding work with the Renter's Right's Act, it was noted that the scheme provided the Council with another useful tool in its toolkit to help tackle landlord malpractice.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.

- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.

## 117 **The Renters' Rights Act - Update Report**

The Director of Housing Submitted a report to the Commission which provided an update on the previous report provided in March 2026 regarding the Renters' Rights Act phase 1.

The Head of Regulatory Services and the Head of Service (Housing) presented the report.

Key points included:

- The reforms were implemented on 1 May and the report focussed on the experience so far and how the Council was managing its duties and responsibilities.
- The Act was being introduced in phases and there was a significant amount of preparation needed.
- A major aspect of the Act was the abolition of the Section 21 'no-fault' evictions. This had been replaced with Section 8, under which Landlords must have valid grounds for possession (set out in the report).
- There had been a move away from short-term tenancies towards periodic tenancies.
- Rent could only be increased once a year, and this could be challenged by the tenant.
- There were new rights for pets (set out in the report).
- There was a ban on rental 'bidding wars' i.e. accepting offers above the advertised price.
- The act impacted many services, but the main two were Housing and Regulatory Services.
- The main implications for Housing services were on Homelessness Prevention work and on management of private sector landlords.
- Phase 2 would come from late 2026. This would focus on new infrastructure and enforcement mechanisms and would be rolled out regionally.
- Landlords would need to register details and compliance info, for example on gas safety and electricity safety.
- The Landlord Ombudsman would address PRS Tenants' disputes from 2028
- Phase 3 would include the Decent Homes Standard with implementation expected to come in 2035 in for the PRS.
- There would be legally enforceable timeframes for addressing issues such as damp and mould in the private sector.
- Housing services had seen a significant increase in Section 21 applications up until the implementation of the act.
- There had been a number of new Section 8 notices, the service worked to ensure that they had been drafted accurately and legally, which most had. It was expected that Section 8 notices would build up as people became more confident and landlords used the new system more.

- The position was carefully monitored, and data was collected to better understand the system and provide government returns.
- It was aimed to understand and establish a clear picture of the demands on the services as implementation progressed.
- Throughout the run-up, operational and strategic boards had been in place to share intelligence between regulatory and housing services to ensure that enforcement action could be taken quickly.
- There had been an extensive communications and engagement programme, including a website update, landlord forums, and work with tenant representative organisations and letting agents.
- In terms of resources, there was new funding from the government to fund resources such as training and staff.
- Implementation had progressed largely as expected, and there were robust governance arrangements in place.

In discussions with Members, the following was noted:

- It was clarified that in terms of the monitoring of discrimination against pets, the service was reliant on people reporting said discrimination. It was further clarified that it was not unlawful to refuse a tenant owning pets, but landlords would need to consider the possibility and give reasons for refusal within 28 days.
- Bidding wars would also need to be reported, however, there was some proactive work on monitoring advertisements and looking at what was advertised compared to the actual tenancy agreed to.
- In terms of the handover of work for people being made homeless, if a person reported homelessness, the Hosing Service would seek to prevent that homelessness. For example, if it was due to a bad property, landlords would be worked with to make sure the property was safe and comfortable., this would be referred to Regulatory Services. If someone had a notice, this would be looked to be prevented, looking at the reasons and following the process and working with the landlord and tenant. Conversely, if Regulatory Services found serious issues with a property, they would make an urgent referral to support the people in the property.
- If a tenant considered their rent too high, i.e. higher than market value, they could challenge this through a property tribunal under Section 13, but only if the landlord proposed a further increase.
- Section 21 notices issued locally and accurately up until 30<sup>th</sup> April would still be progressing through the courts.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.

*Councillor Cutkelvin re-joined the meeting during the discussion of this item.*

## **118    Repairs and Maintenance Service Performance Update Report 2026**

The Director of Housing submitted a report to the Commission on the Repairs & Maintenance Service performance.

The report was taken as read.

In discussions with Members, the following was noted:

- In response to a query on staffing, it was noted that there was currently a national challenge on resources around work and experience. The Council worked with agencies on construction and there was an apprenticeship programme in place. Additionally, the recruitment team in the Council were worked with on a targeted approach, and five electricians had been taken on as a result.
- In terms of contractor use, contract management meetings were held monthly, and included a quality assurance process for issues such as safety standards. Contracts had exit strategies in place. The intention was to undertake procurement of a large contractor to consolidate our position to allow our staff to be more focused on responsive repairs.
- Resources were moved from existing priorities to see where they fit best. Emergency hazards were being met. Emergency hazards were attended to within 24 hours.

AGREED:

- 1) That members note the report.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.

## **119    Annual Complaints Report 2025/26**

The Director of Housing submitted a report to the Commission which provided an annual update on the Council's Corporate & Housing Complaints service.

The Head of Service in Housing presented the report.

Key points included:

- A complaint was defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, made about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the Council, Council staff, or those acting on behalf of the Council, affecting one or more residents.
- Issues brought to the attention of the service were initially treated as a service request.
- In 2025/26 787 Stage 1 Housing complaints were made, of which 63% were responded to within the timescale. Many challenges were encountered, often these were challenges that were seen nationally. Some of these challenges

- were due to the complexity of complaints and complaints written by AI, often involving multiple issues that were not always easy and clear to understand.
- If a tenant was not satisfied, they could escalate to Stage 2. 118 complaints were escalated to Stage 2 in the last year, and 67% of these were responded to within the timescale.
  - Tenants not satisfied after Stage 2 could escalate to the Housing Ombudsman. 57 complaints were determined by the Housing Ombudsman. Of these, 17 were seen to be minor service failures, 22 were cases of maladministration and one case of severe maladministration. This meant that 5% resulted in the Ombudsman determining maladministration. This was a low rate.
  - The most commonly upheld issues by the Ombudsman were related to communication, repairs, ASB and Estate management.
  - The Ombudsman made orders to pay compensation in 37 cases that totalled £8,227 with the highest individual compensation payment being £1,252.
  - To put the numbers into context, the Housing Division provided over 100,000 services each year and employed over 1000 people, so the fact that the Ombudsman only found fault in 40 cases was evidence of quality service provision. However, the complaints received would be learned from.
  - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints related to all other non-social housing services provided by the Council. 648 complaints came from this area 68% of which were responded to within the timescale. Of these, only 15 cases of the 648 were upheld in favour of the complainant.
  - Since April 2025, Repairs had been the area where most complaints had been received, largely in terms of time taken to complete repairs. More funding and resource had been given, and the process had been streamlined. Additionally, materials had been made more readily available and demand had been managed.
  - IT processes had been introduced to schedule repairs more effectively and quality control checks had been improved. Additionally, a complaints workshop had been run to identify learning and patterns. Information for tenants online had been improved and tenant pop-up sessions had been introduced.
  - In terms of vulnerable tenants, processes were in place, but the proper adjustments were not always made. This had led to the creation of the vulnerable person policy.
  - Complaints staff had been given training to ensure high standards across the team.
  - The Housing Ombudsman required the Council to have a self-assessment.
  - The survey was being modified so that it was clear that not every expression of dissatisfaction was counted as a complaint.
  - Ways for tenants to submit complaints were being worked on.
  - Challenges existed, but work was being done to improve service delivery and handle complaints.

In discussions with Members, the following was noted:

- The service was looking at modelling and how they could resource and automate. Complaints were all different so it was necessary to ensure that service areas responded and tailored responses were composed.

- The new IT system allowed provision of automated acknowledgements to manage expectations on timescales. It was necessary to look at resourcing and the modelling of the complaints team and what staff were needed.
- In terms of staffing, the team were stable, with 3.5 Complaints Officers and a Complaints Manager.
- In terms of Communications, a dedicated officer had been employed for communications with tenants. Additionally, Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) had been brought in who could inform the service on how to improve communications. It was also aimed to ensure that additional items to take forward were adopted. The senior officer from TPAS would be meet with to look at services and assess them, with a report being produced later in the year.
- IT systems had shortcomings, so the Council IT department were being worked with to build an in-house solution. This would allow the Council to raise cases on the system and accept complaints along with much better reporting. Officers would then allocate to the appropriate service areas and there would be coordination through a central log.
- It was clarified that the complaints that fell under the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman did not necessarily mean that they went to the Ombudsman. Only 5.9% went to the Housing Ombudsman.
- In terms of benchmarking, it was noted that the Council were a few percentage points behind the national average of around 75% of complaints responded to within the timeframe, but it was aimed to get actions in place to improve. It was hoped to be at 80% by next year, however, resources were needed to reach the desired targets, particularly with regard to getting IT systems in place.
- It was clarified that the figure for the payouts to the Ombudsman was the payout for the whole year.

AGREED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That comments made by members of this commission to be taken into account.

**120    Work Programme**

The work programme was noted.

**121    Any Other Urgent Business**

There being no further items of urgent business, the meeting finished at 19:18.