

Cannock Chase Council
Minutes of the Housing Board
Held on Wednesday 28 January 2026 at 10:00am
In the Esperance Room, Civic Centre, Cannock

Present:

Board Members:

Councillors:

S. Thornley	Leader of the Council and Chair of the Housing Board
S.J. Thornley	Housing and Corporate Assets Portfolio Leader
P. Haden	Housing and Corporate Assets Shadow Portfolio Leader

Tenant and Leasehold Members:

B. Murphy	Council tenant
G. Pace	Council tenant

Independent Members:

L. Cunnett	Homes Manager, Tamworth Borough Council
S. Johnson	Director of Governance and Legal, Walsall Housing Group
A. Kenny	Former Executive Director of Property, Housing Plus

Also Present:

Officers:

T. Clegg	Chief Executive
G. Stott	Deputy Chief Executive-Place
C. Forrester	Deputy Chief Executive-Resources & S151 Officer
N Samrai	Head of Housing and Corporate Assets
R. Frumenzi	Housing Maintenance Manager
L. Tandy	Housing Services Manager
H. Campbell	Tenancy Services Manager
A. Charlesworth	Assistant Housing Property Services Manager
J. Morgan	Assistant Housing Services Manager
M. Berry	Democratic Services Team Leader

31. Apologies

Apologies were noted for N. Howells, Tenant Member.

32. Previous Minutes and Action Tracker

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 5 November 2025 were agreed and the action tracker noted.

33. Housing Services Improvement Plan

The Deputy Chief Executive-Place advised that work on the new 30-year business plan was an ongoing process and would be picked up in more detail as part of the budget update later in the meeting. 69% of the stock condition survey was complete with the aim to achieve as close to a 100% as possible by the end of the summer. This work fed into the refresh of the plan and the overall budget.

In response to a query from an Independent Member as to whether contact had been made with those tenants where their properties could not be accessed to complete the surveys, the Deputy Chief Executive-Place advised that 100% of properties had been visited and officers were looking into what options were available to access the remaining ones.

In response to a Councillor as to whether the Council was in a vulnerable position if items such as gas tests/checks were not able to do be done because of this, the Deputy Chief Executive-Place advised that all gas and electric surveys were completed (see performance information), this issue related to the stock condition survey only.

(The Deputy Chief Executive-Resources arrived at the meeting at this point.)

A Tenant Member raised it was their understanding that difficult to contact tenants were now being reached, and so queried if it was possible to correlate how many had been contacted. The Deputy Chief Executive-Place advised those figures could be provided separately.

In response to a query from a Councillor regarding the actions on pages 7 and 18 of the improvement plan that were showing as more than three months behind schedule, the Deputy Chief Executive-Place advised these would be picked up later in the meeting as part of the budget update.

The updated improvement plan for quarter 3 2025/26 was noted.

34. Key Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicators - Quarter 3 2025-26

The Deputy Chief Executive-Place advised that all compliance rating KPIs were 100%, including those that linked to the earlier question regarding electrical safety checks.

The Housing Maintenance Manager advised that the re-let times for voids were higher than wanted but a lot of work had been going on during quarter 3 and there was confidence that the figure would come down moving forward.

In response to a query from an Independent Member as to what were defined as major upgrades, the Housing Maintenance Manager advised that these included works were several upgrades were required, which included kitchens, bathrooms and electrics etc. So far this year, circa 50% of the voids works had been classed as major, but it was felt that the team was getting on top of this and managing them. The Assistant Housing Services Manager further advised that the Council followed a standard definition for voids works as set by HouseMark.

In response to a query from another Independent Member as to whether the major voids were outsourced, the Housing Maintenance Manager advised that 8 had been outsourced so far this year. Most would be done in house, but external resources used where required.

The Head of Housing and Corporate Assets advised that the team had recently gone through the HQN voids toolkit to identify any gaps and pick up actions across the allocations and repairs teams to ensure properties were being provided to the right tenants as quickly as possible. The Housing Maintenance Manager further advised that he met with the allocations team weekly to ensure handovers were being done at the right time.

The Deputy Chief Executive-Place raised that the amount of work done by the relevant teams had to be recognised, and whilst the indicator was still showing as behind target, the figure continues to come down. The team had done a lot of work to review policies etc. and were having to work against specific criteria and definitions, along with benchmarking against the sector and other providers.

The Housing Maintenance Manager further raised that some voids were quick hits rather than major ones which would also help to improve the overall figure by identifying such properties early and taking the necessary action.

Proposed Indicators for 2026/27

The Assistant Housing Services Manager advised that the proposed indicators for 2026/27 had been amended following feedback from HouseMark and the service was moving away from using the corporate template.

An Independent Member referred to the proposed indicator for the proportion of homes that did not meet the Decent Homes Standard at year end with a target of 2% and queried why the target was not set at 0% (excluding refusals) so as to meet the requirements of the Safety and Quality Standard. In response, the Assistant Housing Services Manager advised that tenant refusals were excluded and there was a greater knowledge of the position because of the stock condition survey work. Based on available data, 2% was considered to be a good estimate and this figure would decrease over time. The year-end calculation would be available after 31 March 2026.

In response to a query from a Councillor as to whether the Council was vulnerable if it was not meeting the minimum regulatory requirements, an Independent Member advised could depend on what regulatory rating the service was aiming for.

The Q3 2025/26 key performance indicators and the proposed 2026/27 indicators were noted.

35. Compliance Update

An Independent Member congratulated the team on the gas servicing work performance and raised that in respect of external validation of electrical works, it was important to have third-party validation in place. The Assistant Property Services Manager advised that it was planned to procure checks for gas and electrical works as a joint exercise in the new financial year.

In response to another Independent Member as to what progress was being made on residents' Person Centered Fire Risk Assessment (PCFRA) in respect of fire safety, the Assistant Housing Property Services Manager advised that work was being discussed with the Tenancy Services Team.. The Tenancy Services Manager confirmed that recording of who is living in our stock is difficult and requires the tenant and leaseholders to inform the Council. However, vulnerability information about tenants living in properties with communal areas is available on the Housing management system and from the tenancy profile survey.

In response to a further question from the Independent Member on how tenants were doing in terms of updating on changes to occupancy, the Head of Housing and Corporate Assets advised that a tenancy profiling exercise was currently underway, with a 52% return rate so far. There was a difficulty around getting the data into the system as this would be a manual exercise, and so additional resource support would need to be provided.

The Tenancy Services Manager further advised that part of the issue was knowing who was living in the properties and who was prepared to share the required information. This was easier to do in the sheltered schemes as on-site staff were available.

In response to a query from another Independent Member as to when the remaining 98 fire safety actions were likely to be completed, the Assistant Housing Property Services Manager advised that a contractor would be secured in the next few months to support required work in respect of replacement fire alarms etc. and so the work was aimed to complete in the next financial year. Additionally, building safety officers were also in place to help identify and address issues earlier.

In response to a query from a Tenant Member as to what was meant by properties having 'received' an asbestos management survey and what were the results of that survey, the Assistant Housing Property Services Manager replied that the team could look to pull together information on which properties had asbestos and to what level.

The Tenancy Services Manager further replied that when a tenant signed up, they received an asbestos report in their pack which set out whether asbestos was present, what control measures were in place and any plans for additional works. The Housing Maintenance Manager also advised that a new survey was always produced before a tenant moved into a property as this was picked up as part of the void works.

The compliance update 2025/26 was noted.

36. Awaab's Law Response and Damp and Mould Update

Awaab's Law Update

An Independent Member noted that a lot of good work had been done in this regard which provided a lot of assurance that the matter was being taken seriously by the Council. In response, the Housing Maintenance Manager advised that every case coming through was being managed and the team was being proactive to source new cases. Some improvements were still however needed in terms of the NEC IT system.

In response to a query from a Councillor as to whether inspections were done on an individual tenant basis or whether the whole stock was planned to be done, the Housing Maintenance Manager advised that issues were being picked up as part of the stock condition survey, through the tenant profiling work, visits to properties by staff and contactors and by residents contacting the Council directly.

A Tenant Member raised that lifestyle problems of tenants in some properties could cause issues which were out of the hands of the Council but had to be dealt with. In response, the Housing Maintenance Manager advised that the Council had a landlord responsibility to its tenants to deal with issues and so provided guidance and information on what tenants could do to help themselves look after their properties.

An Independent Member raised that the team had done really well on this work and was ahead of the curve in taking action, with a lot of work being done that probably was not recognised in the information presented today with different teams working together.

In response to a query from another Independent Member as to when the real-time tracking tool would be rolled out in respect of engagement with tenants and ensuring clear reporting channels, the Housing Maintenance Manager advised that the NEC IT system was being built better with some changes made this week on the reporting, which would help with development of the tracking tool.

Another Independent Member noted that as a result of Awaab's Law, housing providers were not allowed to say that lifestyle factors could be taken into account, and so sought assurance that the Council was not doing this. In response, the Housing Maintenance Manager confirmed this was the case, instead referring to contributing factors and ensuring the team moved away from the 'lifestyle' mindset.

In response to a query from the Deputy Chief Executive-Place as to whether an increase in complaints had been seen on damp and mould cases since Awaab's Law came in, an Independent Member advised that for their organisation there had been an increase in complaints, but less of a spike for damp and mould cases. There had however been an increase in complex complaints, particularly ones that were AI generated.

Another Independent Member noted that the AI generated complaints were a challenge for everyone and difficult to manage. Whilst their own organisation had not seen an increase in complaints, there had been an initial knee-jerk panic which caused issues. There had also been a need to determine what was a damp or mould/disrepair issue or a matter related to Awaab's Law.

The Head of Housing and Corporate Assets advised that an in-house discussion was needed about the use of AI to responds to complaints.

A Councillor noted that the increase in reported damp and mould issues was also possibly a result of 'unethical' solicitor firms posting on social media.

The Awaab's Law and Damp and Mould performance figures updates were noted.

37. Housing Revenue Account Budgets

The Deputy Chief Executive-Resources talked through the Housing Revenue Account Budgets and Capital Programmes 2025/26 to 2028/29 reports which were to be considered by Cabinet on 29 January:

- The proposed budget was a holding one at the moment and as discussed at the previous meeting, officers were looking at how to try and fund the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) going forwards.
- The stock condition survey data needs further analysis, and work was needed with external partners to get a new business plan up and running.
- The proposed budget was therefore based on the existing business plan and a planned rent increase which was in line with legislation.
- The HRA budget summary set out proposed income, expenditure, Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) and working balance changes for the period 2026-2029.
- Sufficient funds were available to manage the current revenue needs within the HRA.
- Key assumptions for 2026-29 were the pay award, dwelling rent increases and anticipated Right to Buys.
- Table 3 of the report set out major changes to budgets, with specific reference drawn to the repairs backlog funding, disrepair settlements funding and damp and mould tenancy support funding.
- Appendix 1 of the budget report set out full figures for the proposed HRA budgets for 2025-2029.
- Appendix 1 of the capital programme report set out the estimated availability of HRA capital resources for 2025-2029, with specific reference drawn to the total capital resources, proposed capital expenditure and the carried forward amount for each financial year.
- Appendix 2 of the capital programme report set out the list of proposed items to be funded from the capital programme for the period 2025-2029 and the amount of unallocated resources available.

In response to a query from an Independent Member as to whether the proposed spending was based on the stock condition survey, the Deputy Chief Executive-Resources advised it was based on historical information, although some elements had changed in consultation with managers.

In response to a query from a Councillor as to how the proposed HRA budgets sat within the context of the wider budgets to be considered by Cabinet and full Council in the next few weeks, the Deputy Chief Executive-Resources advised that the General Fund and HRA budgets and capital programmes were due to be considered by the Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee later that day, Cabinet the day after and then full Council in two weeks' time.

A Tenant Member noted the figures were projected expenditure, and sought clarity if there was a mechanism for future years for the Council to say it had less funding available and so would need to reduce its expenditure accordingly.

The Deputy Chief Executive-Place advised that the current model was based on old data with a static financial position. There was a need to undertake fundamental reviews of the structure and operation of the HRA. A no-borrowing model was the preferred position, but this might depend on the outcome of the full stock condition survey and other policy decisions on the HRA. Proposed rent increases and service charges would be seen as a negative impact for tenants but would provide significant income to help deliver the required changes.

In response to a query from an Independent Member as to whether any consideration had been given to the potential impact of rent convergence, the Deputy Chief Executive-Place advised that it had been considered but no specific view taken as it was unknown at this stage what would be happening.

The Tenancy Services Manager further advised that modelling had been done depending on what levels the convergence was set at. For £1 per week, it would take up to 18 years for all properties to achieve formula rent, and £2 per week would be circa 8.5 years. Furthermore, as part of the introduction of service charges, an additional rent uplift may need to be looked at.

In response to a query from another Independent Member as to whether historically the budgets had included 'nice-to-have' items such as fencing, and whether there was a requirement to provide this, the Deputy Chief Executive-Place confirmed that this was the case, particularly around the types of fencing that had to be provided.

(The Deputy Chief Executive-Resources left the meeting at the end of this item.)

38. Resident Engagement - Tenant and Leaseholder Review Panel (Scrutiny) - First Report

The Assistant Housing Services Manager advised that this item had been brought to the Board to provide assurance that the Council was listening to the tenant voice and that the work of the Housing Service was being scrutinised.

The TLRP report was noted.

39. Local Government Reorganisation

The Chief Executive delivered a presentation on local government reorganisation (LGR) that covered:

- Recap of key activities so far.
- Current position.

- Options to be consulted on.
- Reasons for preferred option.
- Next steps and issues for further work.

The Chief Executive noted concern that as part of LGR, housing stock would get lost in the new organisation and so there was a need over the next two years to ensure the HRA was in the best position as possible for transfer to the new authority.

In response to a query from a Tenant Member as to where LGR would leave the Housing Board, the Chief Executive advised that it was hoped LGR would become part of the work of the Board to help make sure that the HRA was fully considered as part of the development of the new authority. The Board would still be relevant for new structures and discussions with new councillors and chief executive about how it would feature in the new structure.

In response to a query from an Independent Member as to who would generate the proposed savings target of £29 million, the Chief Executive replied that this was based on what the Government said it wanted to see achieved, so the modelling had been done on that basis.

The Chair noted the biggest anxiety was around the amount of work required and the staff resource that needed to be redirected to support this work without impacting on normal service delivery.

The Chief Executive noted that from Autumn 2026, the Government would be issuing section 24 notices to councils going through LGR which would limit what those councils could make decisions on and spend money on.

The Deputy Chief Executive-Place raised that the resource and capacity concerns were correct, but there had to be an appreciation that the Council ran many regulatory services which it was statutorily required to deliver, and so whilst resource needed putting into LGR, this could be above the Council's regulatory and legal requirements.

The Chief Executive further raised that the Council was now finding recruitment and retention of staff more difficult as local government was becoming a less attractive field to come into.

In response to a query from an Independent Member as to whether there had been any involvement in the taskforce established by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Chief Executive confirmed that this was the case, with local governance structures agreed within the last week. Staffordshire had in place a leaders' board, chief executive group and workstreams focused on specific aspects of LGR.

40. Forward Agenda

The main agenda items for the next meeting were agreed as follows:

- KPIs / performance update (standing item)
- Housing Services Improvement Plan (standing item)
- Self-assessment against the consumer standards
- Review of the Housing Board's performance and fulfilment of its terms of reference.

41. Any Other Business

The Tenant Members raised that they had discussed their role on the Board, noting that they did not have the qualifications or specific experience of other Board members but did not want to be seen as troublemakers.

The Chair advised that he did not see them as troublemakers and that their role was more of a critical friend to raise concerns on behalf of tenants if it was felt the Council was not doing what it was meant to for residents.

An Independent Member noted that the Tenant Members had raised an important point, but from a governance perspective, one of the really important things was for the Board to have 'lived experience' from people involved who had the knowledge and experience of being tenants, so the role of tenants' representatives was very important to the Board.

The Tenant Members further raised that they did not just want to come across as rubber stamping decisions and not asking questions, but an added complexity for them was that they could not raise individual issues at Board meetings, which meant it was difficult to provide examples to support discussions.

42. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 27th May 2026, 10am, Esperance Room, CCDC.

The meeting closed at 12:07pm.