

North Yorkshire Council

Housing and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 11 June 2025 commencing at 10.00 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

Committee Members present: Councillor Malcolm Taylor in the Chair; plus Councillors Karl Arthur, Caroline Dickinson, Kevin Foster, Richard Foster, John Mann, Bob Packham, Stuart Parsons, Yvonne Peacock, Clive Pearson, Kirsty Poskitt, Dan Sladden, Phil Trumper, Steve Mason and Steve Shaw-Wright

In attendance: Councillor Carl Les

Officers present: Nic Harne, Andrew Rowe, Jo Ireland, Victoria Young, Imogen Downie, Will Boardman, Hannah Heinemann and Kim Robertshaw

Other Attendees: Ms Amanda Griffiths

Apologies: Councillors John Ritchie, Nigel Knapton and Matt Walker

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

53 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Councillor Nigel Knapton,
- Councillor Matt Walker - substituted by Councillor Steve Mason,
- Councillor John Ritchie - substituted by Councillor Steve Shaw-Wright.

54 Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 March 2025

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 March 2025 be taken as read and confirmed by the Chair as a correct record.

55 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Karl Arthur declared an interest in the housing related items on the agenda as a Director of a Property Management Company in Selby.

Councillor Malcolm Taylor declared an interest in Agenda item 10, as a shareholder of Scarborough Athletic Football Club.

56 Public Participation

Ms Amanda Griffiths attended the meeting remotely via TEAMS to present her submitted public statement as follows:

‘As a NYC tenant whose local authority owned home has been deemed unfit for human habitation due to category 1 HHSRS hazards caused by damp and mould, I was unsurprised by the Regulator for Social Housing C3 judgement due to serious consumer standards failings: ‘a lack of reliable information about the condition of its homes, a failure to meet some aspects of landlord health and safety requirements, a

lack of reliable information to support its understanding of and response to the diverse needs of its tenants, and limited and inconsistent meaningful opportunities for tenants to influence and scrutinise its services’.

It may assist the members to know that I am one of the 105 housing disrepair claimants with an active case against my landlord. I instructed legal representation due to my landlords knowledge of the poor condition of my home and matters remaining unresolved for over 15 years. In mid-July 2023 I was decanted from my primary home for the second time due to failed repairs, and for remedial works that were intended to take 9 weeks. However I remain in prolonged temporary accommodation almost 2 years later. To add to this wretchedness the decant property, which is a recently ‘refurbished’ void, is also in a state of disrepair, with rainwater cascading down bedroom walls and toxic black mould due to my landlords refusal to carry out repairs. Ultimately I am in the unenviable position of having 26 years lived experience of the unsuitable social housing conditions in the Selby District, that in my case culminated in entirely avoidable legal action.

During the Pre-Action Process, to my dismay I learned that tenants exercising the legal right to independent expert witness inspections that seek an understanding of the condition of their homes, are intentionally subjected to landlord cultural maladministrative practices. The harmful, unprofessional focus on institutionally accepted systemic abuses of power diverts resources from working to meet regulatory standards. However, if my landlord prioritised respectful engagement with tenants whose homes are in disrepair, they would develop insights into the real-world context of the challenges to those directly impacted, whilst acquiring a more accurate understanding about what stock condition surveys fail to capture, and why tenants resort to legal action. They would also gain a better understanding of tenants diverse needs from a first person perspective.

Reliance on data-driven approaches is insufficient to capture the true scale of the human impact of material failures. Especially where tenant participation is extremely limited. Improvement to both the Safety and Quality Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard must begin with a revised approach that broadens tenant engagement, taking a wider range of views into account. Firsthand knowledge is integral to shaping both policy and practice. Therefore forging new ideas with those who ask provocative questions is crucial. The rapid improvement my landlord aspires to achieve only occurs when policymakers generate evidence that reveals how policies are working, whether they are fair and equitable, and how they play out in tenants lives. It’s vital that meaningful tenant engagement includes diverse views with critical voices to increase scrutiny of landlord policies, services and strategies. This would identify areas for improvement and promote accountability, ensuring the focus is consistently on landlord/tenant relationships, delivery of decent homes and regulatory standards outcomes.

None of this is rocket science. Nevertheless until there is a willingness to pro-actively engage with wider groups of tenants, the aim to achieve a C2 regulatory grade cannot be realised. Unless there is radical reform to comply with the consumer standards, and a commitment for meaningful tenant engagement, the only fast track journey NYC are on is in the direction of the Regulators forewarned C4 judgement.’

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing thanked Ms Griffiths for her statement and confirmed that in light of the on-going disrepair claim, he was unable to comment on her individual circumstances. However, he expressed gratitude for her feedback, acknowledging the problems she had experienced. He also confirmed his intention to reach out to Ms Griffiths outside of the meeting to try and find a solution to the problems she had experienced.

He went on to note that Ms Griffiths' statement highlighted the very real impact on the lives of tenants when social landlords get things wrong, and that the points raised within the statement around the impact of poor housing conditions and the need for meaningful tenant engagement to inform the strategic planning were very well made.

Andrew Rowe recognised the position inherited by the new Council was challenging and the consequence of several factors including in some areas the lack of investment into homes. The former district Councils were simply not sighted on the scale of the challenge or their level of non-compliance against the required consumer standards. They had no long-term investment plan. Data around stock condition and levels of decency was inadequate. There were gaps in information around compliance with health and safety requirements and opportunities for meaningful engagement by tenants were limited.

Acknowledging the scale of the challenge and the council's non-compliance against the consumer standards, he confirmed that North Yorkshire Council was absolutely committed to turning the situation around quickly. He referenced the C3 regulatory judgement that followed the Council's own self-assessment and self-referral last year and confirmed the new Council had adopted a new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan that set out ambitious levels of future investment into Council homes over the next 30 years. He noted the adoption of a bold improvement plan and strategy, that included a host of actions to ensure future compliance with the Regulatory Standards, including an on-going programme of stock condition surveys, activity to address gaps in data around health and safety compliance and a whole new strategy around tenant engagement and involvement. He confirmed additional funds of around £2M had been set aside within the business plan to support the Councils journey towards compliance, which included a bolstered approach to tenant engagement.

Andrew Rowe also drew attention to the additional funds that had been levered in from the Governments Social Housing Decarbonisation Programme and the Council's ambitious programme to fully retrofit and revamp over 1600 of its homes over the next few years. He confirmed the investment was being targeted at those homes in most urgent need of intervention, many of which were likely to be in the former Selby District Council area.

He confirmed that aligned to all of those changes, was a push to change the culture of the Council as a landlord, suggesting the Council was committed to putting tenants at the heart of everything it did, listening to the views of tenants, both through the on-going tenant satisfaction survey and through opportunities for one-to-one engagement, including the new tenant scrutiny arrangements and panels. He confirmed that future strategy and planning would absolutely be informed by both the data held on homes, and the views and needs of tenants.

Finally he confirmed that the Council's planning was informed by learning from complaints and how to improve when things went wrong. With that in mind he offered to personally visit Ms Griffiths in her home over the coming weeks to hear about her experience as a Council tenant over many years and get a better understanding of her views on the changes that could be made to improve going forward.

The Chair thanked Ms Griffiths for her contribution to the meeting and the work of the Committee, noting it would help inform their consideration of future agenda items.

57 Housing Improvements & Regulatory Update

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development providing an update on progress made toward compliance with the requirements of the Social Housing (Regulation Act), and oversight of the Councils Housing Improvement Strategy and Performance Framework in advance of their consideration by the Executive Member.

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing introduced the report drawing attention to

the improvement plan and performance indicators. He confirmed there were ongoing monthly meetings with the regulator and that the position had improved in the last six months with the Council no longer being in danger of being categorised as C4.

Members considered the individual workstreams and noting the benchmarking data against other councils. It was also noted that:

- 20 tenants had volunteered to become members of the Tenants Panels.
- four new surveyors had been employed to assist in the ongoing work to have stock condition surveys completed by September 2026.
- Fire risk assessments were now up to date.
- There had been lots of in house training on complaints handling.
- All repairs were now going through one system.
- A single case management system was now in place for ASB reporting.
- Allocations were now being delivered through one system
- An audit of rents was ongoing.

Members recognised the key challenge was around data and governance. In particular the difficulties of retrieving data from the legacy councils.

Attention was drawn to the Housing Improvement Strategy at Appendix B, with a focus on the clear timeline for the improvement journey. It was confirmed that Phase I was now complete, moving to Phase II, with an expectation that Phase III would be completed by March 2027.

In response to members' questions, it was confirmed:

- The Council had £40m in funding available to achieve energy efficiency level C3 in all properties.
- There were appropriate checks and balances in place to monitor the performance of Home Choice Lettings who administered allocations on behalf of the Council.
- The Council was working towards being up to date with its programme of Electrical Safety Inspections.
- Any excess generation from solar panels was fed back into the grid and the income it generated was passed to the tenant.

Councillor Kirsty Poskitt raised the issue of the lived experience for tenants in Selby suggesting it that for some it was poor and that improved communication with those tenants was required. It was agreed that Tenants needed a better understanding of the new Council's commitment to improve tenant conditions, and it was confirmed that this message was being delivered via a number of methods.

Resolved – That the Regulatory Update be noted..

58 Housing Performance & Service Improvement Annual Report

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development presenting the annual review of performance, complaint handling and service improvement of North Yorkshire Council's landlord services.

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing introduced the report which outlined the council's performance as a landlord in both the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and in compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code, both of which were statutory data returns.

Attention was drawn to Section 17 of the report at Appendix A detailing the tenant satisfaction measures that enabled the council to benchmark against the performance of

other councils. It was noted the Council was currently average.

Member also considered the data on complaint handling at section 21 of the report. It was noted the Council was receiving around 40 complaints a month and that nationally, complaints to the Ombudsman were increasing rapidly.

Resolved – That the Annual Review be noted.

59 Lettable Standard Task Group Review - Draft Final Report

Considered – The draft final report arising from the Lettable Standard Task Group review detailing the Task Group's recommendations and their associated implications.

Councillor Bob Packham introduced the report drawing attention to the key decision points at paragraph 3.14 of the report, which had been agreed by the Task Group as within the scope of the review. He provided an outline of the work undertaken and thanked officers for their support. Finally, he drew attention to the review recommendations.

Other members of the Task Group commented on their positive experience of undertaking the review and again thanked officers.

Attention was drawn to the review conclusions, specifically the lack of historical data on void property works and their associated costs from the legacy council's, and the difficulty that had created in regard to fully understanding the financial implications associated with the review recommendations. It was noted that this had led to the Task Group's final recommendation that a review of the revised policy be undertaken in a year's time to assess the effectiveness of void property works and understand the actual costs associated with voids. It was noted that this would require the collection of appropriate data in the first year, as detailed in paragraph 9.3 of the report.

Councillor Steve Mason questioned the council's building insurance, and it was confirmed that the Council did not make claims for damage done by tenants to individual properties. They did however recharge tenants for any deliberate or malicious property damage. It was also confirmed the council currently had three separate building insurance policies.

The Chair thanked the Task Group members for their work on the review, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The draft final report be noted, and the review recommendations endorsed for presentation to the Executive Member for Culture, Arts & Housing.
- ii. That a review of the revised Lettable Standard be added to the Committee's work programme for September 2026.

60 Draft Compensation Policy

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director Community Development presenting a draft Tenant/Leaseholder Compensation Policy, intended to manage compensation claims, ensure compliance with legal standards and provide clarity for housing tenants, leaseholders and officers of North Yorkshire Council.

Vicky Young – Service Improvement Manager, introduced the report and drew attention to the proposed discretionary compensation matrix, which set out indicative payment amounts based on levels of impact and responsibility.

It was noted that both the Selby and Harrogate legacy councils had such a Policy in place but in Richmondshire claims had been settled at the discretion of officers.

Members discussed the proposed maximum payment of £750 and agreed there needed to be room for discretion to allow for an evidence-based exception. Members also questioned the support offered to vulnerable tenants who would be entitled to compensation but needed support going through the process.

Overall Members agreed a framework needed to be in place but with a degree of discretion available.

Resolved – That the draft Tenant/Leaseholder Compensation Policy be endorsed for presentation to the Executive Member for Culture, Arts & Housing

61 Draft Disrepair Policy

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director Community Development presenting a draft Disrepair Policy, intended for implementation to manage reports of disrepair and legal disrepair claims, ensuring compliance with legal standards and providing clarity for tenants and officers of North Yorkshire Council.

Vicky Young – Service Improvement Manager, introduced the report and confirmed the Council was restrained by legislation on this Policy. She also drew attention to rise in no win no fee third party solicitor claims targeting Local Authorities and noted that once they became involved it was difficult to reach a resolution.

It was confirmed there were in-house repair teams in place but that the majority of repairs were undertaken by contractors. This involved having an oversight of their work and holding their performance to account.

Members raised the issue of good communications with tenants being key including providing regular updates for outstanding repair work, and officers provided an overview of the methods currently used. Members agreed that disrepair claims needed to be managed effectively, quickly and robustly with a published procedure that was clearly communicated with tenants. It was therefore

Resolved – That the draft Disrepair Policy be endorsed for presentation to the Executive Member for Culture, Arts & Housing

The first part of the meeting concluded at 11:28am, and the meeting reconvened at 12:30pm.

62 Scarborough Football Ground Update

Considered – A presentation on the condition of Scarborough Athletic Football Club pitch. Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure, Archives and Libraries talked members through the presentation providing an overview of the defects, the long term options for pitch replacement, and the impact on the football club and other users.

Nic Harne, Corporate Director for Community Development confirmed the council was seeking suitable remediation from the original contractor as the current pitch was still under warranty.

It was noted that the Council's preferred technical option would deliver a FIFA quality pitch, which was the requirement set to enable SAFC to continue to play at their current level in the league. If that could not be achieved, then the council would proceed with option 3 (as detailed in the presentation).

Members discussed possible funding avenues for raising the required £3.2m which included finding sponsorship, using 106 monies, crowd funding etc. They also

questioned whether the original contractor had delivered other works for the legacy Scarborough Borough Council which might require reviewing, or whether there were other questionable liabilities inherited from the legacy Council. In response, Jo Ireland confirmed the issues with the pitch had come to light through the work undertaken as part of the Strategic Leisure Review and that issues with other facilities, if they existed would have become known in the same way.

Members also discussed the economic development linked to the football club and its ground, and the benefits it afforded residents in the Scarborough area.

Having considered the next steps and the proposed recommendations due to go to the Executive on 17 June 2025, it was

Resolved – That the update on the condition of Scarborough Athletic Football Club pitch and proposed way forward, be noted.

63 Leisure & Culture Performance Update

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development providing an overview of current performance trends for Culture and Leisure Services and seeking feedback on a range of performance indicators.

Jo Ireland, Assistant Director for Culture, Leisure, Archives and Libraries introduced the report that provided an overview highlights and challenges for the 2024-25 year. In particular, the challenges around:

- Extracting data from a number of systems. It was confirmed that work was ongoing to introduce one system.
- Whitby Pavilion, and the need to increase the number of events held annually.

Members were pleased to note the increased business for the Open air theatre and noted the economic benefits it had brought. They also noted that the weight management service had been brought back in-house, and discussed the opportunities for joint working with the National Parks.

Having considered the data in Appendix A, Members agreed that a clearer set of metrics needed to be developed to aid in measuring culture and leisure related outcomes and impact.

Resolved – That the performance update for Culture and Leisure Services be noted.

64 Homeless & Rough Sleeping Draft Strategy

Considered – a detailed presentation on the Council's draft Homeless and Rough Sleeping Review & Strategy 2025-30, provided by Kim Robertshaw - Head of Housing Needs.

The presentation provided an overview of the four themes of the draft Strategy, together with the key challenges, opportunities and aspirations.

Members noted the priorities associated with each theme (as detailed in the presentation slides) and the planned next steps which included consultation with partners and stakeholders.

It was confirmed that the Strategy was an amalgamation of current working practices, setting the strategic direction for homelessness and rough sleeping services across North Yorkshire.

Members discussed a number of positive examples in the divisions where support had been provided to a rough sleeper. By way of feedback, Members' suggested the Strategy should include more focus on older people, given that the number of older people affected by homelessness appeared to be increasing. They also agreed the strategy was missing any mention of Member engagement and Members role in supporting the Strategy.

Resolved – That:

- i. The draft North Yorkshire Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2025-2030 be noted.
- ii. Members feedback be fed in to the consultation process.

65 Joint Venture Development - Verbal Update

Considered – a verbal update on the Council's development of a Joint Venture vehicle to support the Council's ambition to deliver 802 new affordable homes per annum as set out in Housing Strategy 2024-2029.

Hannah Heinemann – Head of Housing Delivery and Partnership provided the update confirming the Council was now ready to seek in principle approval to enter in to a Limited Liability Partnership to form a housing delivery vehicle to contribute to housing delivery growth.

She also provided a brief overview of the benefits a joint venture approach would deliver and of the initial sites likely to be considered suitable for joint venture development.

It was noted that a report seeking approval in principle to creating a Joint Venture limited liability partnership and to entering into preferred bidder stage, was scheduled to go to the Executive on 17 June 2025.

Resolved – That the progress update on developing a Joint Venture vehicle be noted.

66 Work Programme 2025/26

Considered – The Committee's work programme for the 2025-26 municipal year presented by the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

Members took account of the discussions on previous agenda items and agreed to add the following to their work programme:

- i. A further update on the Joint Venture for their next meeting in September 2025.
- ii. That a review of the revised Lettable Standard be undertaken in September 2026.

Resolved – That the work programme document be updated as above.

67 Date of Next Meeting - 23 September 2025

The meeting concluded at 1.50 pm.