

North Yorkshire Council

Housing and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 1 December 2025 commencing at 10.00 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

Committee Members present: Councillor Sam Gibbs in the Chair; plus Councillors John Ritchie, John Cattanach, Caroline Dickinson, Nigel Knapton, Bob Packham, Yvonne Peacock, Clive Pearson, Roberta Swiers, Phil Trumper, Matt Walker, Greg White and Philip Broadbank.

Officers present: Melanie Carr, Carl Doolan, Andrew Rowe, Jo Ireland, Hazel Smith, Richard Mair and Ben Walker and Victoria Young

Apologies: Councillors John Mann, Stuart Parsons, Kirsty Poskitt and Dan Sladden

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

80 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors John Mann, Stuart Parsons, Kirsty Poskitt and Dan Sladden.

Councillor Dan Sladden was substituted by Councillor Phillip Broadbank.

81 Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2025

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2025 be taken as read and confirmed by the Chair as a true record, subject to the following amendments to Minute 70 – Declarations of Interest:

A number of declarations of interest were made in relation to Agenda Item 6 – Annual Review of Libraries, as follows:

- Councillor Bob Packham declared an interest as the Chair of Sherburn and Villages Library Management Group. He also declared his wife was the Chair of Sherburn and Villages Community Trust.
- Councillor Yvonne Peacock declared an interest as a member of the Upper Dales Community Partnership
- Councillor Phillip Broadbank declared an interest as a Trustee of Starbeck Library

82 Declarations of Interest

A number of declarations of interest were made in relation to Agenda Item 5 –Libraries Strategy Midterm Review, as follows:

- Councillor Bob Packham declared an interest as the Chair of Sherburn and Villages Library Management Group. He also declared his wife was Chair of Sherburn and Villages Community Trust.
- Councillor Yvonne Peacock declared an interest as a member of the Upper Dales Community Partnership
- Councillor Phillip Broadbank declared an interest as a Trustee of Starbeck Library

83 Public Participation

No public questions or statements were received.

84 Library Strategy - Mid-Term Review

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development seeking the Committee's views on the mid-term review and draft update of the current Library Strategy 2020-2030.

Hazel Smith, Head of Libraries attended the meeting to present the report, confirming the Strategy had been running for five years and the purpose of the review was to ensure it still reflected the needs of customers and remained aligned with national and local priorities.

Attention was drawn to the proposed changes made to the Strategy, as listed at paragraph 3.1 of the report. Members acknowledged the importance of the variety of services made available through the library service which were reflected in the Strategy

Members also recorded their thanks to the many volunteers working within the county's community libraries, and in particular noted the recent King's Award presented to Newby and Scalby Library for its voluntary service.

The Chair thanked the officer for the report and it was

Resolved – That the findings from the review be noted and the proposed changes to the Strategy be endorsed prior to their consideration by the Executive Member for Culture, Arts and Housing.

85 Active North Yorkshire Membership and Pricing Review

Considered – A presentation from the Corporate Director for Community Development providing an overview of the principles behind the pricing structure being developed for the range of leisure facilities across the county, alongside the findings from a recent customer survey.

Jo Ireland, Assistant Director for Leisure & Culture introduced the presentation confirming the importance of undertaking the review as part of the convergence of Leisure Services. She draw attention to the principles behind the review and some of the associated challenges.

Ben Walker, Commercial Development Manager for the Council talked members through the presentation slides, providing an overview of the current position regards membership and pricing structure at the Council's Active Leisure facilities across the county. He also drew attention to:

- The findings from a recent customer survey - Members noted the key priorities identified by customers i.e. the removal of contracts and the offer of flexible terms.
- The benchmarking of services against those of other similar operators
- The complexity of the current range of membership packages and the monthly income they generate
- The detailed financial modelling underway which would likely lead to price increases being proposed for some areas should the Council proceed with the preferred two-tier membership option
- The ongoing review to consider the standardisation of Pay As You Go rates
- The proposed removal of any historic 'Price for Life' membership arrangements and fixed-term contracts
- The range of memberships being proposed and the benefits each of those might bring

- The range of concessions being proposed and the proposal to raise the older persons concession to state pension age.
- The procurement underway for a new Leisure Management System
- The planned delivery of an improved Health and Wellbeing Service whilst remaining financially sustainable

Members welcomed the proposed virtual membership offer, noting the benefits it would bring to residents living in the more rural areas of the county. They noted it would include both access to online classes and healthcare services.

They also noted the potential for pricing changes for some customers that may arise as a result of the detailed modelling work currently underway, recognising it would be necessary in order to finance future service developments and further invest in the council's facilities.

In regard to swimming clubs, Jo Ireland confirmed the council's intention to work with existing clubs to ensure the continuing provision of swimming lessons. It was recognised that many were run by volunteers and provided a service to their communities that the Council may otherwise have to deliver. Jo Ireland also confirmed there would be a review of the Health and fitness classes being provided across the county, to ensure some equity in their provision and their quality of that provision.

Members discussed the potential barriers to increasing the number of new customers i.e. the quality of equipment and restricted opening hours at some sites. In response, it was confirmed that gym equipment was to be renewed at all sites, and where practicable opening hours would be increased. It was noted that some sites were already open 24/7. Members also questioned whether geographical data was held on existing customers recognising it would help clarify the distance some residents were travelling to access Leisure Services.

In regard to data collection on customers, Members recognised that some customers did not want to provide all their data just to be able to access a gym facility on a one-off PAYG basis, but they accepted there was still a need for some data collection for Health and Safety requirements, and induction purposes.

Members suggested officers further consider:

- Concessions for North Yorkshire Council staff
- Ancillary services such as on-site parking, vending machines and cafes

Members noted that in coastal areas 30% of residents were not engaging in any physical activities. They went on to consider ways to grow the service and recognised that the new LMS would enable the improved targeting of services and encourage greater levels of participation.

Overall, based on all of the information provided, Members accepted that the two-tier membership proposal offered a more balanced financial approach for now, but welcomed the potential to re-visit that approach in the future, recognising that not everyone in the Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon areas might be able to afford the proposed higher rate.

They also agreed to add a future update to the Committee's work programme post implementation, and it was

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development providing an overview of performance across the Leisure & Culture related services, with the exception of the Library Service.

Melanie Carr, Senior Scrutiny Officer presented the report, drawing attention to the data within the performance summary at Appendix A and the specific update on progress in relation to the Cultural Strategy's strategic priorities provided at paragraph 3.8 of the report.

Members noted the ongoing leisure outreach programmes provided mainly by volunteers and recognised the contribution of volunteers in delivering community-based services.

The Chair thanked officers for the update, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The performance data in Appendix A be noted
- ii. An annual update on progress against the Cultural Strategy's strategic priorities be added to the Committee's future work programme.

87 Joint Venture Development Update

Consider – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development providing a progress update on the development of the Joint Venture.

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing introduced the report which drew attention to:

- The reduction in the number of sites in the first tranche
- The addition of a site outside of Scarborough area to the first tranche(Sharphaw Avenue in Skipton)
- The need for further negotiation on the required legal documentation as part of the preferred bidder stage
- An overview of the timeline for completion of the outstanding work required before incorporation can be delivered.
- A proposal that the Committee undertake a future review of performance against the Joint Venture objectives listed in Appendix A of the report, 12 months after incorporation of the Joint Venture vehicle

It was noted that all of the affordable housing delivered through the Joint Venture would be added to Housing Revenue Account, and that Housing England grants would be sought where possible to support the Joint Venture.

Members welcomed the progress to date, and it was

Resolved – That:

- i. The current status of negotiations with regard to the Housing Joint Venture be noted
- ii. A performance review of the Joint Venture 12 months after its incorporation, be added to the Committee's 2026-27 work programme.

88 Draft Asset Management Strategy

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development presenting a draft Asset Management Strategy for the Committee's consideration, prior to its consideration by the Executive on 16 December 2025.

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing introduced the draft Strategy drawing attention to the two-week consultation currently ongoing with Involved Tenants and went on to discuss the measurable outcomes listed at paragraph 4.11 of the report, which were expected to be delivered by 2027.

Members noted that a large proportion of council homes did not meet the standard currently, and that the ongoing stock condition surveys were helping to identify those homes. It was confirmed that initially the focus had been on those homes suspected to need the most work, but the focus had now shifted to a more geographical approach.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and draft Strategy, and it was

Resolved – That

- i. A future update on progress against the Strategy's measurable outcomes be added to the Committee's work programme for Autumn 2026.
- ii. Future performance reports include data on the number of properties meeting the required standard.

89 Draft Tenancy Agreement & Tenancy Policy

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development, presenting a draft Tenancy Agreement and Tenancy Policy for the Committee's consideration in advance of their recommended sign off by the Executive Member for Culture, Arts and Housing on 14 January 2026.

Carl Doolan, Head of Housing Management and Landlord Services introduced the draft Tenancy Agreement and Tenancy Policy, drawing attention to the proposed amendments detailed in sections 4 and 5 of the report respectively.

Members noted the delayed commencement of the ongoing statutory consultation, which had prevented them from being able to consider the consultation findings as part of their consideration of the draft Agreement and Policy. In response, it was confirmed that the feedback from tenants had already highlighted a number of issues to be addressed, and Members asked that they be kept updated on the themes arising from the tenant feedback.

Members discussed issues around property succession and the potential for elements of discretion to be applied where it was considered to be appropriate. They also discussed the benefit of having a register of adapted properties, noting they would be identified through the ongoing stock condition survey work.

Overall, Members agreed both draft documents were appropriate and ready for consideration by the Executive Member for Culture, Arts and Housing

The Chair thanked officers for the report and draft Strategy, and it was

Resolved – That their views on the draft Tenancy Agreement and Tenancy Policy be shared with the Executive Member for Culture, Arts and Housing to inform his consideration of those documents.

90 Draft Right to Buy Policy

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development, presenting a draft Right to Buy Policy for the Committee's consideration in advance of their recommended sign off by the Executive Member for Culture, Arts & Housing on 10 December 2025.

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing introduced the draft Right to Buy Policy, drawing specific attention to two specific aspects of the proposed approach, as detailed at paragraph 4.9 of the report i.e. whether the Council should allow disposals of properties previously sold under Right to Buy subject to Section 157 restrictions where:

- a) a property had been marketed for at least 12 months at a realistic market value and no eligible local buyer has come forward
- b) the potential purchaser could evidence a confirmed offer of employment in the protected area?

In principle, Members agreed with the draft Policy but sought clarity on the following:

- Would there be an opportunity to expand on the 'local' restriction e.g. by a geographical measure i.e. 10 miles, or open it to 'North Yorkshire'?
- Would there be an opportunity to grant consent in certain cases (12 months marketing and/or offer of employment) but with a restriction that it should be the purchasers 'primary residence'?
- Could the Council stipulate the level of evidence needed in order to grant such consent? - the example of agricultural occupancy conditions was given as an equivalent and the level of information which must be submitted to satisfy that process.
- How many properties would it likely apply to?

They also noted that the statutory consultation had only just been completed on 28 November 2025, which had prevented them from being able to consider the consultation findings as part of their consideration of the draft Policy.

Officers agreed to seek legal advice on the queries raised by the committee and to include feedback on those queries in the Executive Member report.

The Chair thanked officers for the report and draft Policy, and it was

Resolved – That their views on the draft Right to Buy Policy be shared with the Executive Member for Culture, Arts and Housing to inform his consideration of those documents.

91 Lettable Standard Review - Verbal Update on Implementation of Recommended Monitoring Arrangements

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing provided a verbal update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from the Committee's previously completed scrutiny on the Lettable Standard.

It was noted that a majority of the recommendations had been addressed through their inclusion in the revised Standard, approved by the Executive Member for Arts, Culture and Housing in July 2025.

The remaining recommendation focussed on ensuring appropriate measure were in place to be able to monitor the implementation

It was noted that void periods were proving to be longer now as a result of the new Standard, and that voids were running at just over 4% of stock numbers. It was noted that in the longer term the situation would be helped by the completion of the stock condition survey work and the completion of the remedial works identified through that process.

The Chair thanked the officer for the update.

92 Q2 Housing Strategy Monitoring Report

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 an oversight of the Councils Housing Improvement Strategy and Performance Framework in advance of their consideration by the Executive Member.

Victoria Young, Housing Service Improvement Manager introduced the report drawing attention to the individual workstreams and the benchmarking data against other councils.

Members noted a number of actions shown as either overdue or at risk of delay – shown in tables 3, 4 and 7 in the report

Specifically in regard to the outstanding action in Table 7 i.e. ‘Review service charges to ensure clear policy, consistent charges, management in a fair and transparent manner and effective communication to tenants’, Members reiterated their intention to undertake a Task Group Review in support of that review.

It was confirmed the Council was now employing more contractors to address the backlog in repairs and the works identified as a result of the stock condition surveys.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director for Housing for the update, and it was

Resolved – That the Housing Improvement & Regulatory Update be noted.

93 Complaints Update

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development providing an update on complaints handling performance within the Housing Service.

Victoria Young, Housing Service Improvement Manager presented the report and confirmed the position was improving.

Members were pleased to note the ongoing overall improvement in complaints handling since the revised policy had been introduced, and that the council’s response and resolution of complaints was being done satisfactorily.

However, they also noted:

- The increase in complaints across all areas - the largest increase had been seen in the Harrogate area and work was underway to investigate why.
- The drop in compliance with timescales from Quarter 1
- The ongoing issues arising from push from some residents to ‘Keep Harrogate Local’

The Chair thanked officers for the update, and it was

Resolved – That the update on complaints handling performance within the Housing Service be noted.

94 Work Programme 2025-26

Considered – The work programme for the remainder of the 2025-26 municipal year presented by the Senior Scrutiny Officer.

Members took account of the discussions on previous agenda items and other developments taking place across the county and agreed to add:

- iii. A performance review of the Joint Venture 12 months after its incorporation
- iv. A future update on the implementation of the Homelessness Strategy

Resolved – That the above be added to the Committee's 2026-27 work programme.

95 Date of Next Meeting - 3 March 2026

The meeting concluded at 12.33 pm.