

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

12 November 2025

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR OF THE HOUSING & LEISURE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Housing & Leisure Overview & Scrutiny Committee scrutinises the Council's role and remit as a social landlord, including policy review; service improvement; and governance arrangements to help ensure compliance with provision and regulation of social housing. In addition, those housing services for which the Council is responsible, including housing strategy; homelessness and housing needs; the delivery of affordable housing as well as private sector housing renewal. It also scrutinises cultural issues and the Council's role as a provider of leisure services.

Since the Chair's last statement to Council in July 2025, the Committee has met once on 23 September 2025 to consider the following items of business:

- Leisure Investment Strategy Update
- Annual Review of Libraries
- HRA Policy Framework – Progress Update
- Housing Improvements & Regulatory Update
- Complaints Update
- Grounds Maintenance Task Group Scrutiny Review Verbal Update

The Committee received a presentation on the Leisure Investment Strategy which included an overview of its associated workstreams, and a summary of the financial modelling for each of the proposed four Active Wellbeing Hubs (AWBs) and the remaining retained sites included in the Strategy. Overall, we welcomed the Investment Strategy noting the wellbeing benefits gained from leisure activities. In response to the public interest in the future of Richmond Pool, we considered the emergency repair work planned, and the longer term planned investment in the site. We also drew attention to the gaps in the provision of leisure facilities across the county.

The annual review of Libraries highlighted the Service's achievements over the year. Recognising that community libraries are a community asset contributing to residents' wellbeing, we were pleased to note the excellent service being provided to residents and the work of library staff and volunteers.

The HRA Policy Framework update drew our attention to the progress that has been made to deliver a range of new/harmonised strategies/policies for the new council. Recognising the scale of the outstanding work required, we identified a number of policies we would like to undertake a more in depth Task Group scrutiny review of, and these have been added to our work programme.

The update on progress made toward compliance with the requirements of the Social Housing (Regulation Act) included an overview of the seven workstreams and the ongoing stock condition survey programme. We are particularly interested in the ongoing work around the Council's adoption of long term empty properties, with the next step being an options appraisal, and we have added an update on this to our future work programme.

We were pleased to note the ongoing overall improvement in complaints handling since the revised policy was introduced, and that the council's response and resolution of complaints is being done satisfactorily. The majority of complaints are related to landlord services, and the picture in relation to the time taken to resolve repairs is improving.

Finally, we received a verbal update on the ongoing task group scrutiny review of Grounds Maintenance which highlighted the difference in current provision and standards across the three legacy stockholding areas. We noted the Task Group's planned next steps with the review

intention of identifying a suitable financially sustainable specification for grounds maintenance works across the county.

The Committee's next formal meeting is on 1 December 2025.

COUNCILLOR SAM GIBBS (Chair)