

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**18 March 2026**

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

The Housing & Leisure Overview & Scrutiny Committee recognized the Council's role and remit as a social landlord, including policy review, service improvement and governance arrangements to ensure compliance with the regulation of social housing. The Committee also oversees housing strategy, homelessness and housing needs, the delivery of affordable housing, private sector housing renewal, cultural services and the Council's responsibilities as a provider of leisure services.

Since my last statement to Council, the Committee has met twice. On 1 December 2025 the following items of business were considered:

- Library Strategy – Mid-Term Review
- Leisure Service Performance Update
- Active North Yorkshire Membership & Pricing Review
- Joint Venture Development Update
- Draft Asset Management Strategy
- Draft Tenancy Agreement & Tenancy Policy
- Draft Right to Buy Policy
- Lettable Standard Review – Implementation Update
- Q2 Housing Improvement & Regulatory Update
- Complaints Update

The Committee reviewed the mid-term findings of the 2020–2030 Library Strategy and endorsed several proposed updates. We acknowledged the continued value of library services and recorded our thanks to volunteers across the county, noting in particular the King's Award recently presented to Newby and Scalby Library.

The Committee received bi-annual performance data on leisure and culture services, focusing on the ongoing leisure outreach programmes provided mainly by volunteers, and welcomed their invaluable contribution in delivering community-based services.

The Committee received an overview of the emerging countywide pricing model for Active NY leisure facilities being developed for the range of leisure facilities across the county. We considered the principles behind it, alongside the findings from a recent customer survey. Having received a detailed presentation, we:

- welcomed the proposed virtual membership offer, noting the benefits it will bring to residents living in the more rural parts of the county, which will include access to online classes and healthcare services.
- acknowledged the potential for pricing changes for some customers, recognized it would be necessary in order to finance future service developments and further invest in the council's facilities.
- discussed the potential barriers to increasing the number of new customers i.e. the quality of equipment and restricted opening hours at some sites.
- 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
- suggested that further consideration be given to concessions for North Yorkshire Council staff, and ancillary services such as on-site parking, vending machines and cafes

Members received an update on progress toward establishing the Housing Joint Venture and noted the current status of the negotiations. We agreed to add a performance review of the Joint Venture 12 months after its incorporation to our future work programme.

The Committee considered a draft strategy and two draft policies. We noted the draft Asset Management Strategy and the ongoing tenant consultation 2ecognized2 the findings would likely inform some final amendments to the draft prior to its approval. In regard to the draft Tenancy Agreement & Tenancy Policy we discussed succession rules and the need for a register of adapted properties, and in regard to the draft Right to Buy Policy, we raised queries round eligibility and evidence requirements.

The Committeee welcomed the update on the implementation of the recommendations arising from its previous scrutiny review of the Lettable Standard and were pleased to note that most recommendations had now been fully implemented.

The Committee also received its usual performance updates focusing on Housing Improvement & Regulatory (Q2) and complaints. We were pleased to note the progress against the Social Housing (Regulation) Act requirements, and the ongoing overall improvement in complaints handling since the revised policy had been introduced. However, whilst we noted that the council's response and resolution of complaints was being done satisfactorily, we also noted the increase in the number of complaints across all areas and the drop in compliance with timescales from Quarter 1. The Committee agreed to keep a watching brief on those.

At our most recent meeting on 3 March 2026. The following items of business were considered:

- Tenants Panel Engagement Update
- Complaints Update
- Q3 Housing Improvements & Regulatory Update
- Shared Ownership Policy
- Renters' Rights Act 2025 & Introduction to emerging Empty Homes Strategy
- Cultural Strategy Update
- Draft Work Programme 2026–27

The Committee welcomed Tenant Panel members and discussed collaboration opportunities, including their involvement in the committee's planned year one review of the new Lettable Standard. We also noted the Panel's recent work looking at complaints handling and the progress against the implementation of the recommendations arising from their review.

We reviewed a draft Shared Ownership Policy, noting some areas were still under development, including alignment with leasehold processes and provided feedback to inform the final draft.

Members considered the new statutory enforcement duties of the Renters' Rights Act 2025 required from May 2026 and noted the associated resource implications.

There was significant debate about the scale of empty homes across the county. Whilst we 2ecognized that from a housing perspective, dealing with long term empties is mostly a discretionary function (as opposed to the increasing range of statutory duties it must comply with), and that the council currently has limited (or no) resource, we did agree there should be some focus on enforcement and the potential use of CPOs.

We therefore agreed to establish a task group to undertake a scrutiny review on the issue over the summer with the purpose of making recommendations to help inform the development of a strategy, even if the resulting strategy only sets out what the Council can and cannot do going forward.

The Committee received a year-one Cultural Strategy progress update, noting achievements across cultural programmes, events, and heritage projects, and ongoing work to support creative organisations and volunteers.

Again, the Committee received its usual performance updates focusing on Housing Strategy Monitoring (Q3) and complaints. We discussed progress toward Social Housing Regulation Act compliance and the Council's Housing Improvement Strategy. In regard to complaints, we noted the similar position to Q2 and the ongoing work to address the drop in compliance with timescales.

Finally, the Committee considered its draft Work Programme for 2026–27 and agreed several amendments based on its discussions at the meeting and ongoing countywide developments.

COUNCILLOR STEVE SHAW-WRIGHT