

North Yorkshire Council

Housing and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 3 March 2026 commencing at 10.00 am at County Hall, Northallerton.

Committee Members present: Councillor Steve Shaw-Wright in the Chair; plus Councillors John Ritchie, John Cattanach, Caroline Dickinson, Bob Packham, Stuart Parsons, Yvonne Peacock, Clive Pearson, Kirsty Poskitt, Dan Sladden, Roberta Swiers, Phil Trumper and Matt Walker.

Officers present: Andrew Rowe, Jo Ireland, Sarah Thompson, Victoria Young, Lucy Tyne and Lynn Williams

Apologies: Councillors Nigel Knapton and Greg White

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

96 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Greg White and Nigel Knapton. Councillor Nigel Knapton was substituted by Councillor Caroline Goodrick.

97 Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 December 2025

Resolved – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2025 be taken as read and confirmed by the Chair as a true record.

98 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

99 Public Participation

No public questions or statements were received.

100 Tenants Panel Engagement Update

The Chair welcomed members of the Tenants Panel to the meeting. Sarah Thompson, Tenant Involvement Manager introduced the report and the Tenant Panel members fed in their views on their previously completed review of the Council's Complaints procedure, and on the potential for future joint working between the Panel and the Committee.

Attention was drawn to the recommendations arising from the Tenants Panel recently completed review on the council's Complaints procedure detailed in Appendix A, alongside the actions arising from those recommendations and the progress update on their implementation.

Members of the Committee went on to discuss with the Tenant Panel members future opportunities for working together and ways in which that may happen. In particular they were keen to see tenant panel member involvement in any future Task Group review work.

Reference was made to the Committee's intention to revisit their completed review of the council's Lettable Standard once the new Standard had been in place for a year.

Members were keen to follow up on their review and to consider the data gathered in the first year of the new Standard's implementation, to ensure it was fit for purpose.

Noting the Tenant Panel's interest in this planned review, it was agreed that the Committee would seek their involvement at the appropriate time.

The Chair thanked the Panel members for their attendance and their interest in contributing to the future work of the Committee, and it was

Resolved: That the Tenant Panel Engagement Updated be noted.

101 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 but there were still ongoing challenges around compliance with the agreed timescale for stage 1 complaints.

Attention was drawn to the higher number of complaints being generated from the Harrogate area. Members were pleased to note an additional complaints handling administrator was now in place and the ongoing overall improvement in complaints handling since the revised policy had been introduced. They were also reassured by the officer's confidence that the right complaints were now coming to the service.

It was confirmed that the ongoing stock condition survey work was leading to an increase in complaints relating to the time being taken to address the survey findings. Officers confirmed that any urgent repairs were prioritised, with other works being added to the planned programme of works.

Andrew Rowe, Assistant Director for Housing confirmed that ambitious targets that had been set, which would require more resources if they were to be met. It was noted that part of the challenge was dealing with complex mental health issues.

Members suggested:

- Tenants would benefit from a more personalised approach, with tenants being given a named officer to contact.
- It would be helpful if future performance updates contained some pictorial data.
- Complaints should be categorised e.g. vulnerable, elderly or disabled tenant.

In response, it was confirmed:

- The Council provided bespoke interventions where required
- Data was being built up through the tenant consensus work enabling issues around levels of vulnerability to be identified.

The Chair thanked officers for the update, and it was

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

102 Q3 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 findings from a recent consultant inspection that had led to a mini restructure – it was agreed that the report on the inspection findings would be circulated to Committee members.
- The number of data gathering systems still in use leading to questions around the resilience of the data they provide. The need to accelerate the pace of moving to a new integrated system was noted.
- The intention to move towards being more in line with how a Housing Association works, including the introduction of an Improvement Board.
- The Council's Voids Management Action Plan – Members requested a future update on voids management.

Members noted the seven individual workstreams that made up the Improvement Plan and the progress to date, and questioned whether extra funding could be sourced to speed up the work. In response it was confirmed that the HRA was in a healthy position the issue was more about capacity.

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

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

103 Shared Ownership Policy

Considered – A report of the Corporate Director for Community Development presenting a draft Shared Ownership Policy for the Committee's consideration and comment.

Imogen Downie, Housing Policy & Strategy Officer introduced the draft Policy and Members noted that the draft policy remained under development, which included work to align it with the Leasehold Policy, and to resolve outstanding issues such as Section 106 requirements.

Officers responded to Members questions around:

- Taking back ownership of a property and buy-back arrangements
- The implications associated with leasing agreements and Section 106 monies – Members suggested a standard 106 Agreement was needed for the whole county
- The potential for building more shared ownership properties
- The need for more flexibility in the criteria
- The difficulties associated with geographical restrictions

It was also noted that it was intended to use feedback from shared owners through the planned tenant focus group to inform any final amendments to the draft Policy before it was presented to the Executive Member for approval.

Resolved - That:

- i. The draft Policy and planned next steps be noted.
- ii. The Committee's feedback on the draft Policy be used to inform the final draft of the Policy.

104 Presentation on Renters' Rights Act 2025 and the Council's Emerging Strategy on Empty Homes

Members received a presentation on the implications for the Council of the new Renters Rights Act legislation, and the council's emerging strategy on Empty Homes.

In regard to the new legislation, Lynn Williams, Head of Housing Renewals talked members through:

- The timeline for implementation
- Its potential impact on the Council and the financial implications
- The work undertaken to date in readiness for 1 May 2026 when the Council's statutory duty to enforce the legislation would begin, and the work still ongoing
- The resource implications

Members noted that in regard to tenancy agreements, the legacy position inherited was poor / patchy. They also noted

- The potential loss of single property private landlords leading to an increase in the number of people needing housing.
- The current reactive approach that focussed on responding to complaints - Members discussed the pros and cons of a targeted approach and welcomed its planned introduction.

In regard to the council's emerging Strategy for Empty Homes, Members acknowledged the scale of the issue and given the cost to the council of empty homes, discussed whether the work on them should be prioritised over other areas of activity. Attention was drawn to the resources that would be required to decrease the number of empty properties across the county, and the knock on effects on other housing related work if the council's resources were reapplied to achieve that aim.

Attention was also drawn to the key options in regard to the future use of enforcement and incentives, and the need for evidence of a staged approach. Members suggested more consideration should be given to compulsory purchases and it was confirmed that enforced sales would be a less risky option for the Council.

Members requested a further update on Empty Homes for their next meeting on 10 June 2026, and it was

Resolved – That the Committee views on the council's emerging Strategy for Empty Homes be noted and used to inform the ongoing work to develop that Strategy.

105 Cultural Strategy Update

The Committee received a detailed presentation on the Cultural Strategy from Danielle Daglan, Head of Culture & Archives, which provided a year one progress update on its implementation.

Attention was drawn to:

- A number of attractions that had been brought back in-house from a third-part Trust
- The Strategy's contribution to all five of the council's key themes, through its existing work and its continuation of legacy arts and cultural development embedded in many North Yorkshire communities.
- The council's commitment to review the strategy yearly with partners to reflect on progress, celebrate successes and shape future priorities.
- The findings from the first yearly review completed in December 2025
- The North Yorkshire towns that had registered to participate in the first 'UK Town of Culture' competition with its £3m prize to deliver a change or development programme.
- The planned year-long events and activity programme to celebrate 400 years since Scarborough's designation as a seaside spa resort.
- The ongoing Museums in Schools programme taking place across Scarborough, and other ongoing community activities across the county.
- The range of exhibitions and events that had taken place across the county in the last year.
- The continued mapping of creative and cultural organisations across North Yorkshire

to identify areas requiring intervention and support.

- The joint working with the council's Localities and Communities teams, and externally with partner organisations.
- The sector learning, development & networking events held throughout the year.
- The ongoing work to support volunteers working in cultural venues and archive teams.
- The ongoing work to develop a digital Creative Hub.
- The work planned for year two of the Strategy.

The Committee went on to discuss:

- The potential for introducing a Tourism Tax
- The challenges around the upkeep and proper maintenance of Knaresborough Castle
- The sustainability of council-owned cultural buildings and listed buildings

The Chair thanked officers for their detailed update, and it was

Resolved – That the presentation on year one of the Cultural Strategy be noted.

106 Draft Work Programme 2026-27

Considered – The draft work programme for the coming 2026-27 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:

- An update on the development of an Empty Homes Strategy for their next meeting in June 2026.
- An update of Voids Management for a future meeting in 2026-27.

Resolved – That the Committee's work programme for 2026-27 be updated as above.

107 Date of Next Meeting - 10 June 2026

The meeting concluded at 12.50 pm.