

Housing Engagement Board

Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting

held on Thursday, 15 January 2026

from 2pm to 4pm

Online – Teams Meeting

- Attendees:** Cllr John Batchelor – Chair
Cllr Eileen Wilson
Cllr Heather Williams
Peter Campbell (SCDC – Head of Housing)
Amy Stock (Elected Tenant Representative)
Jim Watson (Elected Tenant Representative)
Margaret Wilson (Elected Tenant Representative)
Michael Luffman (Elected Tenant Representative)
Patti Hall (Elected Residential Leaseholder Representative)
- By Invitation:** Ivor Grant (Tenant Volunteer)
Julie Fletcher (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Strategy)
Geoff Clark (SCDC – Service Manager – Tenancy and Estates)
Eddie Spicer (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Assets)
Dave Armitage (SCDC – Resident Involvement Team Leader)
Bronwen Taylor (SCDC – Resident Involvement Officer) – Minute taker
- Apologies:** Vivienne Till (Elected Tenant Representative) – Vice-Chair
Laura Nelson (Elected Tenant Representative)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2.02pm.

2. Quorum

The meeting was quorate.

3. Minutes of previous Meetings – 25 September 2025 and 27 October 2025

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meetings held on 25 September 2025 and 27 October 2025. He thanked Vivienne Till for chairing the meeting on 27 October 2025.

Margaret Wilson referred to the use of the word “void” and said that it was previously agreed that it would not be used in documents.

Peter Campell explained that we would avoid using the word when it was a document produced by the council, however, when documents were produced by other parties, we would have to use the words used by them.

The minutes were approved by the Board as true reflections of the meetings, subject to the following minor amendments:

- Minutes of 25 September 2025 – item 4.1 – Water Meter Project – paragraph four – the word “effect” should read “affect”
- Minutes of 27 October 2025 – item 3 – Endorsement of Policies – paragraph two – the word “Councillor” be added before the word “Overview”

Action: Bronwen Taylor

3.1 Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 25 September 2025

The matters arising from the previous meeting are below for noting.

Item 4.4 – Special HEB Meeting – 29 October 2025

Action : As the Anti-Racism Charter anniversary event was being held on 29 October 2025, Bronwen Taylor is to look at an alternative date for the Special HEB Meeting.

Report back: The Special HEB meeting was held on 27 October 2025.

Item 4.5 – Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders – 2024 – 2025

Action: Gina Manderson to email a copy of last year’s report to the board.

Report back: A link to last year’s report was emailed to the board on 3 October 2025.

Copies of the 2024 – 2025 annual report were posted to all tenants and leaseholders on 9 December 2025.

Item 6.1 – Grounds Maintenance Maps

Action: Geoff Clark to check with the officer on how many grounds maintenance maps had been updated.

Report back: Five grounds maintenance maps had been updated in the last year. Geoff Clark said he would cover this topic in more detail under point 5.2 of the agenda.

4. New Matters

4.1 Endorsement of Policies

Julie Fletcher advised that the following draft policies, included in the agenda pack, had been reviewed by tenant volunteers and were to be endorsed by the Board before being presented to Cabinet for approval on 24 March 2026.

- Electrical Management Policy
- Tenancy Sustainment and Support Policy
- Reaching Every Tenant Policy

Electrical Management Policy

Julie Fletcher advised that due to new regulations, the policy had previously been postponed to take into account any new changes.

Margaret Wilson asked if a copy of the Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) would be given to tenants as was done with the gas safety report.

Eddie Spicer advised that under the new regulations a copy of the EICR report would be given to all new tenants, and from May 2026 all existing tenants would receive a copy of the most recent EICR.

Margaret Wilson referred to page 27 of the agenda pack, item 4.1, third bullet point in the policy and said that she thought the word “compliant” should read “compliance”.

Eddie Spicer clarified that the wording “compliant report” was quoted in regulations and therefore could not be changed.

Margaret Wilson also referred to the seventh bullet point and said that the wording “competent, skilled and well-trained staff internally” appeared a bit vague and thought it should read what their expertise covered, for example, “competent, skilled electrical staff”.

Julie Fletcher explained that it meant that any officer that went into a council home should be competent enough to identify an issue and report it accordingly but may not necessarily need the same skills / qualifications as other staff.

Margaret Wilson referred to page 28 of the agenda pack, item 6.2, and page 29 of the agenda pack, item 7.2 and suggested that the document remain in the third person, that is, change the word “you” to “tenants”. This was agreed.

As no further questions or issues were raised, the policy will be presented to Cabinet on 24 March 2026 for approval.

Tenancy Sustainment and Support Policy

Julie Fletcher advised that this was a new policy which combined all the additional support we provided as a service, in terms of helping tenants to remain in their property and to sustain their tenancies and covered all existing practices by including them into one comprehensive policy.

Margaret Wilson referred to page 38 of the agenda pack, the first bullet point and asked if “Visiting Support Service – for residents aged 65+” applied to all tenants or just sheltered tenants.

Geoff Clark confirmed that it applied to all tenants and that the policy would provide further clarity.

Margaret Wilson referred to page 43 of the agenda pack, item 1.1 and suggested using language that avoided stigma about tenants support needs.

Peter Campbell said he disagreed with her suggestion as the language used was to make it as inclusive as possible.

As no further questions or issues were raised, the policy will be presented to Cabinet on 24 March 2026 for approval.

Reaching Every Tenant Policy

Julie Fletcher advised that this was a new policy and that we were gathering information on the demographics of our tenants. She said that the policy aimed to track this data against service data we hold, identifying tenants with whom the service had had no contact with. She said the aim was to avoid missing vulnerable or isolated tenants.

As no further questions or issues were raised, the policy will be presented to Cabinet on 24 March 2026 for approval.

4.2 HQN Mock Inspection – Feedback

Peter Campbell gave a summary of the presentation which was given to members and tenants on 18 November 2025. He reminded the Board that the reason for the mock inspection by HQN was to prepare us for a real inspection from the Regulator of Social Housing and to check how well landlords met their standards and how this impacted on tenants. He reported as follows:

Strengths

- Tenants satisfied with SCDC as a landlord
- Housing stock generally good and compliant with Decent Homes Standard
- Repair satisfaction at 79%
- Strong partnership work on anti-social behaviour

Areas for Improvement

- Some policies still awaiting approval
- Need more detailed performance information for tenants
- Improve communication
- Improve household data collection
- Improve complaint handling systems

Peter Campbell said that we were developing an action plan and we had set up an internal working group to monitor progress in order to prepare for the real inspection which could be sprung on us with very little notice.

The Chair said that Cambridge City Council had had their inspection and asked if we had received feedback from them.

Peter Campbell said that the City were pleased to get a pass mark of C2 and we had met with them to understand what they did following their inspection, and we were learning from their approach. He added that we were sharing information with them and that they were learning from some of the things that we did well.

Jim Watson referred to a course on inspecting empty properties that he had attended and passed in 2010 and he asked if tenant volunteers would be called on to look at empty properties from a tenants perspective.

Peter Campbell said that the world had moved on a lot in the last 15 years and with the increase in regulation, it was unlikely that we would be using tenant representatives for

that purpose. He added that there was also a risk of people getting hurt or injured when unsupervised in empty properties.

Eddie Spicer said that Dave Armitage would be arranging for a small project group to look at the empty properties relet standards, however, due to the current shortage of staff in his team it had been delayed.

4.3 Adaptations

Margaret Wilson referred to a bungalow on her estate that had been adapted for a prospective disabled tenant however it was not suitable for the tenant so they did not move into the property. She added that she felt that an awful lot of money was being wasted and asked who recommended what adaptations were needed and paid for them for tenants with physical disabilities. She said she had raised this issue as she would like it on the agenda in order to have a proper look at adaptations.

Peter Campbell said that the Board could request a scrutiny of the adaptations process and then report back to this Board. He confirmed that they were paid through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). He added that qualified Occupational Therapists (OTs) advised on what adaptations needed to be made.

Margaret Wilson asked if the OTs were provided by the NHS or SCDC.

Peter Campbell said that they could be either NHS or SCDC or both.

Cllr Heather Williams agreed that it would be helpful having a report on adaptations to see what the demand was and how the demands were being met.

Action: Service Managers

4.4 Tpas Scrutiny Conference – 7 October 2025 – Feedback Report

The Chair referred to the Tpas Scrutiny Conference feedback report from Margaret Wilson who attended the conference and thanked her for an interesting and informative read.

Jim Watson said that he was disappointed that he did not attend as by the time the tenant representatives had been advised of the conference, there had been no spaces available.

Margaret Wilson said that the conference tickets had been sold out very quickly and that they had been placed on a waiting list.

Dave Armitage explained that we did not get much notice from Tpas and by the time the tenant representatives had confirmed their interest in the conference, tickets had sold out. He said that we were placed on a waiting list and that only one ticket had been available, and as Margaret Wilson was the first tenant representative to respond, she was booked on the conference. He added that notification by training providers of conferences varied.

5. New Matters

5.1 Forward Plan 2025 / 2026

Julie Fletcher referred to the Forward Plan included in the pack and went through the items planned for the coming months. She said that a special Budget Meeting would be arranged to go through the budget for 2026 / 2027 and that the following policies would be presented to Cabinet for approval in March 2026.

- Electrical Management Policy
- Tenancy Sustainment and Support Policy
- Reaching Every Tenant Policy

Julie Fletcher said that a Special HEB Policy Meeting may be arranged for February 2026 to endorse the following policies before they were presented to Cabinet for approval in March 2026.

- Fire Safety Policy
- Asbestos Policy
- Lift Safety Policy
- Compensation Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy

Julie Fletcher advised that the Pets Policy review had been delayed as it was not a high priority policy. She added that she would add the Adaptations Report to the Forward Plan as requested earlier in the meeting.

Jim Watson asked how many pets a tenant could have before it was deemed too many pets.

Julie Fletcher said that the Pets Policy would include this information however it would probably be based on individual circumstances, size and location of properties, etcetera.

Cllr Heather Williams suggested the Housing Engagement Board provide a feedback report to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Full Council as she did not think that Council members would know about the work of this Board.

The Chair said he thought it was a good idea.

Peter Campbell agreed and said that this board had only been elected in April 2025. He suggested feedback be given at next year's AGM, which was half-way through their four-year term on the Board and then again at the AGM at the end of their term.

Cllr Heather Williams said that her reason for raising it here was that the AGM was quite prescriptive and if we were going to bring it to the AGM at full Council, the Constitution would need to be amended to include a report from this group. She suggested speaking to democratic services, or the monitoring officer, or it could be a part of this Board's rules that a report would go to Full Council annually and not necessarily the AGM. She added that she felt that this was something that would be beneficial for members as a whole, and therefore the tenants across the district.

Margaret Wilson said that she agreed that it was a good idea and suggested reporting back every year, except the first year after tenant representative elections.

The Chair said that we would look at options on how to report back to council.

Action: Dave Armitage

5.2 Contracts Review Panel

Geoff Clark advised that regular meetings to discuss the landscapes contract were held with tenant volunteers and a representative from SP Landscapes, the last one being on 17 December 2025. He reported that they had had good discussions with SP Landscapes who confirmed that they were up to date in terms of the completed grass cuts for this current growing season and advised where they were in terms of the grass cutting schedule. He said as soon as the minutes from the meeting were completed, he would share them with the group and post them on the website.

Geoff Clark advised that Paul Bowman suggested conducting an estate inspection in the winter months as the feeling was that there could be different issues compared to the summer months. He added that the weather could be a challenge and there may not be an appetite to get together in the winter weather. He said that the contractor was prepared to join us on some of the estate inspections this year which would be helpful.

Margaret Wilson agreed that a winter inspection would be helpful as a lot of people park on grass which damages the grass and creates puddles.

Geoff Clark reported that they discussed adding the possibility of identifying wildflower and wild grass sites on the standard questionnaire sheets that were used for the inspections. He said that we had several across the district at the moment that we maintain, however, he thought that there was potential to add to them which would support some of the corporate measure we had around biodiversity and doubling nature.

Geoff Clark said they had a discussion on the grounds maintenance maps and that they were making alterations to them as and when they were identified. He said that they had had a more in-depth discussion about reviewing the maps on a whole, as the last time they were reviewed was several years ago, and that they would look at bringing in resources to review them to ensure they were accurate and up to date.

Jim Watson referred to report under item 3.1 of the agenda pack about the five maps that had been updated and said that he and the other tenant volunteer inspectors felt that there were a lot more maps that were not up to date.

Geoff Clark said that there were predominantly accurate, however things changed over time, and the maps were being altered as and when inconsistencies were identified.

5.3 Policy and Procedure Panel

The Chair referred to the notes from the policy meetings held on 7 October, 4 November and 6 November 2025.

Ivor Grant said a large number of policies had been reviewed in the second half of last year and that some actions required evidence of being completed. He said he would email his list to Dave Armitage.

Action: Julie Fletcher

5.4 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Review Panel

Margaret Wilson referred to the notes for Quarter 2 included in the pack and said that she had not attended the meeting due to a hospital appointment. She referred to point six of the notes, Communication Improvements, and said that she had met some tenants from another estate who shared the same concerns about communication received from SCDC.

The Chair thanked Margaret Wilson for her feedback.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Collection of Information from Tenants

Patti Hall said that sheltered tenants had complained about receiving emails from SCDC asking for personal information and were concerned that it was a scam. She added that she advised them to ignore the emails as the sheltered officer had been contacting them for this information and asked why we were doubling up on requesting information.

Peter Campbell said that the results of HQN's mock inspection showed that we did not hold sufficient information on our tenants and that we had discussed this at a previous meeting.

The Chair suggested that we made it clearer to tenants that this was an official communication and not a scam.

Julie Fletcher said that it was publicised in newsletters and magazine however she would investigate why both email and in-person collections happened simultaneously.

Eddie Spicer reported that we do not publicise too much as this could be an "open door" to scammers. He added that Patti Hall should not have told tenants to disregard the email but to rather contact the council to confirm it was a valid survey.

Patti Hall said that she had advised them to disregard the email as the sheltered officer would be getting the information from them.

Cllr Eileen Wilson suggested that local councillors were informed when communication such as this was sent to tenants.

Action: Julie Fletcher

6.2 Empty Properties Scrutiny

Margaret Wilson asked when the Empty Properties Scrutiny would be taking place.

Eddie Spicer said that as mentioned earlier, this project had been delayed to later in year due to staffing issues.

Margaret Wilson said that it would be helpful to new tenants to receive an information pack when moving into a property. She added that some tenants did not return all the keys of a property when moving out and it would be helpful for new tenants to receive a full set of keys when moving into a property.

Eddie Spicer said that he was developing detailed property specific packs which included information such as gas and electrical certificates, safety information, heating type, etcetera. He reported that when a tenant moved out of a property, all locks were changed and the incoming tenant would have new locks with a full set of keys, which was usually two or three keys per lock.

6.3 Communal Hall Accounts

Margaret Wilson said that the tenants that she saw the day before were specifically asking for communal hall accounts as they wanted to know where their service charges went. She added that they did not ask about the general service charge, however, that would also be helpful. She said that she would continue raising this issue until a proper resolution was reached.

Cllr Heather Williams said as this issue had been repetitively raised, could it be added to the next meeting agenda until the issue was resolved.

Geoff Clark said he would set up a meeting with the accountant, tenant representatives and councillors to discuss this issue.

Peter Campbell said that a report back would be provided to this Board to close this issue.

Action: Geoff Clark

7. Meeting Date for 2025 / 2026

The Chair referred to the meeting date for 2025 / 2026 as follows:

- 26 March 2026 (venue to be confirmed)

The Chair said that a special meeting may be held earlier to endorse some policies.

8. Closing

There being no further business to discuss, the Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

The meeting ended at 3.35pm.