Housing Engagement Board

Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting

held on Tuesday, 15 September 2026

from 6pm to 7.30pm

Online – Teams Meeting

Attendees: Cllr John Batchelor – Chair
Vivienne Till (Elected Tenant Representative) – Vice-Chair
Cllr Heather Williams
Cllr Richard Stobart
Peter Campbell (SCDC – Head of Housing)
Jim Watson (Elected Tenant Representative)
Margaret Wilson (Elected Tenant Representative)
Michael Luffman (Elected Tenant Representative)
Julie Fletcher (SCDC – Services Manager – Housing Strategy)
Geoff Clark (SCDC – Services Manager – Tenancy and Estates)
Eddie Spicer (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Assets) (online)
Dave Armitage (SCDC – Resident Involvement Team Leader)
Bronwen Taylor (SCDC – Resident Involvement Officer) – Secretariat

Apologies: Patti Hall (Elected Residential Leaseholder Representative)
Amy Stock (Elected Tenant Representative) – no apology received

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at 6.04pm. He especially welcomed Cllr Richard Stobart, who replaced Cllr Eileen Wilson, to his first meeting. He thanked Cllr Wilson for her contribution to the Board.

Apologies were received from Patti Hall.

Bronwen Taylor advised that Laura Nelson had resigned from the Board and that the co-option vacancy for a replacement had been advertised on our website. She added that we had received four applications.

The Chair referred to the Terms of Reference document included in the pack for noting.

Margaret Wilson referred to page three of the agenda pack, under Point 4 – Membership. She said that when we co-opt a member they may not always be from the applicable area and suggested the word “from” in the fourth bullet point be changed to “for”.

The Board agreed with the amendment.

Action: Bronwen Taylor

2. Quorum

The meeting was quorate.

3. Minutes of Previous Meetings – 22 June 2026

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meetings held on 22 June 2026.

Margaret Wilson referred to the third paragraph in item 4.5 – Elected Tenant / Residential Leaseholder Representative Guide and suggested that the words “terms of reference” be in inverted commas to reflect that it was an item.

The minutes of the meeting were approved by the Board as a true reflection of the meeting subject to the above amendment.

Action: Bronwen Taylor

3.1 Matters Arising from the meeting held on 22 June 2026

Item 3 – Minutes of Meetings – 15 January 2026

Action: Bronwen Taylor to amend the minutes as follows:

- Page 4 – under the heading “Reaching Every Tenant Policy” – point 4 – remove the word “with” as it had been repeated

Report back: The minutes have been amended accordingly.

For noting.

Item 4.3 – Communal Room Service Charges

Action: Geoff Clark to invite Cllr Williams to the upcoming meeting and provide feedback on the outcome.

Report back: This item would be taken forward as part of the Communal Room Charges Policy which would be looked at in due course.

Cllr Williams asked if a meeting had been held as she had not received an invitation to any meetings and if there was any feedback from the meeting.

Geoff Clark advised that a meeting had been held however only Ivor Grant had attended. He added that he had recently sent an email to the tenants with information of the charges and that he would forward it to Cllr Williams. He said that he would arrange another meeting to discuss any further issues that arose from the information.

Cllr Williams said she thought it was strange that an action item to invite her to the meeting had not been actioned and that an alternate route had been taken.

Margaret Wilson agreed with Cllr Williams and said that Cllr Williams was not included in the email invitation. Margaret Wilson said that when she received the invitation, the date and time were not visible as her laptop was not compatible with the format. She said that she would like to see the day-to-day accounts for the communal halls, such as what happens to the money, what is spent, who justifies it, who authorises it, and when are we supposed to be consulted about what happens in our communal rooms. She added that she did not want to see the budgets, forecasts, etcetera.

Cllr Williams said she would like to see the information and that looking at the Communal Room Charges Policy “in due course” was very vague as there was no time frame.

Julie Fletcher reported that we were currently reviewing the Rent Setting Policy and that part of that may answer some of the queries in terms of what had been raised in respect of Service Charges. She said there may be confusion between service charges and communal room fees and expenditure. She added that we had a first draft of the Rent Setting Policy which was currently being reviewed internally after which we would set up a meeting with the tenant Policy Panel to review the policy before taking it through to Cabinet. Once the Rent Setting Policy had been approved, we would start working on the Communal Room Charging Policy, which would probably be early next year.

Action: Geoff Clark

Item 4.5 – Elected Tenant / Residential Leaseholder Representative Guide

Action: Dave Armitage to look at creating a document to provide clarity on the role of councillors on the HEB.

Report back: Dave Armitage was in the process of drafting a document.

For noting.

Item 4.8 – Approval of Service Plan

Action: Julie Fletcher to ensure that tenants were included in the consultation of the Lettings Policy when it was due for review.

Report back: A more comprehensive review of the Allocations Partnership was expected following Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and was likely to include public consultation. Whilst the Allocations Policy sits outside Landlord Services and was therefore not subject to the HRA policy review process, HEB members would be informed of any future consultation opportunities and invited to provide individual comments or collective feedback where appropriate.

For noting.

Item 6.1 – Meeting Times

Action: Julie Fletcher to look at suitable dates to hold some HEB meetings in the evenings to accommodate members who worked.

Report back: The September and February meetings would be held in the evenings if convenient for the Board.

For noting.

4. New Matters

4.1 Local Government Review (LGR)

Peter Campbell reported that since the agenda pack was produced, the government had announced that the local government organisation had been frozen and we did not know whether that meant that it would be amended, abandoned or if timescales had changed. He said that there was no further detail at present but gave an undertaking that once we had some clarity, we would give a proper update to members and tenants.

Peter Campbell referred to the work that we were doing with the City using Savills and 4OC and said that this was a multi-stage piece of work. He said Stage One was the “as is” stage, looking at how we and the City work at the moment and was scheduled for completion at the end of October. He added that the information would be presented to members of the HEB either at a future HEB meeting or a special purpose meeting.

The Chair said that it was clear that the government was saying that local government reorganisation would still go ahead and that it had been put on hold for a year, with no elections planned for next year but planned for 2028.

Cllr Williams said she believed that other local authorities had commissioned an independent body to take account of the tenant voice as part of the LGR process and asked if we would do the same.

Margaret Wilson said although she had wanted to have this point as an agenda item requested by a tenant representative, she was advised that Peter Campbell would be talking about LGR and to raise her comments in answer to this point. She said she wanted to draw the HEB's attention to the Regulator of Social Housing’s pamphlet dated 1 April 2024, and in particular Paragraph 2.2.6. She read the relevant legislation verbatim, as below, to ensure that it was recorded in the minutes.

Specific Expectations

a) Be fair and accessible
b) Provide tenants with adequate time, information and opportunities to consider and respond
c) Set our actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term, and
d) Demonstrate to affected tenants how the consultation responses have been taken into account in reaching a decision

Margaret Wilson said that she thought now was the ideal time to appoint an independent consultant body who would represent tenants’ perspectives whilst there was a short moratorium on the LGR as the two landlords had already engaged consultants.

Peter Campbell said that he had no problem in agreeing to that piece of work in principle, however, once we had more information from the government about when it would be restarting and what the LGR boundaries for Cambridgeshire would look like, we would look at appointing an appropriate contractor.

Action: Peter Campbell

4.2 Recruitment Protocol

Julie Fletcher referred to the documents included in the pack and advised that we had previously involved tenant representatives in the interview process of some staff, and that this document was to formalise how we do that, the expectations from both officers and tenant representatives and making sure that we were aligned to our corporate processes and policies in terms of recruitment. She added that this would apply to Grade six and up.

Margeret Wilson referred to page 25 of the agenda pack, heading 2. Scope and said that that the word “were” in the last sentence of the second paragraph should read “where”. She said that she did not think this process was more transparent because tenant representatives were only involved in the interview process and they were not involved in the short-listing process as this was done by the system. She said she felt that by using this method, they were being excluded from the entire process and considered it a retrograde step.

Julie Fletcher advised that only officers had access to the system and therefore the ability to shortlist but was clear that this was done by Officers and not the system using AI to automatically shortlist.

Cllr Williams agreed with Margaret Wilson and said that there were other ways for shortlisting involvement, such as printing all the applications.

Julie Fletcher explained that where a large number of applications were received, she would not consider it reasonable or practical to ask the tenant representatives to review and score every application. By way of example, it was noted that 65 applications were received for a previous role. It was further explained that where only a small number of applications were received it may be appropriate for all applicants to be shortlisted for interview.

Julie Fletcher emphasised that this approach was not intended to influence the outcome of the recruitment process or engineer a single shortlisted candidate. Rather, it was designed to ensure a fair and effective recruitment process that secures the best candidate for the role. The proposal represents a practical solution that maintains tenant involvement in the interview stage, while recognising the operational challenges of involving them in the shortlisting process.

4.3 Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Consumer Standards – Quarter 1 Performance Reports

Julie Fletcher referred to the documents included in the pack and advised that this was the first meeting using the new reporting format which provided more in-depth information. She said that we had provided a headline report in terms of our overall assessment and that we were doing really well in terms of our compliance. She added that there were a few areas, such as complaint response times, which needed to be closely monitored.

Margaret Wilson referred to page 33 of the agenda pack, under Relets Performance and said that the use of the word “void” was not supposed to happen. She added that it was much easier to read all the data and understand the report, being much more streamlined, and she thanked the officers.

Cllr Williams referred to page 58 of the agenda pack, in the table of Complaint Themes and asked for more information and examples of Staff Conduct. She asked if it included contractors. She said that there were examples of compliments so to keep a balance, there should be examples of complaints.

Eddie Spicer said that it did include contractors. He said complaints ranged from contractors not wearing shoe protectors in properties to a tenant feeling that a member of staff was being rude.

Julie Fletcher said that we could provide more information. She added that it did not reflect how many of the 11 complaints were upheld and how many were not, and said that that would be helpful information to include.

Action: Julie Fletcher

4.4 Tpas National Tenants Conference – Feedback Report

The Chair referred to the report from Margaret Wilson, who together with Vivienne Till and Jim Watson attended the Tpas National Tenants Conference in Nottingham on 14 and 15 July 2024 and thanked her for the interesting report.

Margaret Wilson said that she wanted to highlight that the housing regulator looked for evidence that tenants influence was transformed into actions and that South Cambridgeshire District Council was very forward thinking and were good landlords. She added that these conferences were really excellent for helping tenant representatives see how other councils, housing associations, landlords and tenants interacted with each other and how they achieved change for everybody’s benefit.

5. Standing Items

5.1 Forward Plan

Julie Fletcher referred to the Forward Plan in the pack and went through the items that would be included on the next HEB meeting agenda.

The Chair said that Local Government Reorganisation needed to be added back on the document.

Julie Fletcher said that as soon as we had more information, it would be added.

Cllr Williams suggested that it would be helpful to have a workshop in order to have more effective meetings and to get the best from this Board. She said that she felt that this was not the best environment for some people to be able to communicate.

The Chair said that he would take what Cllr Williams said on Board.

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 8 July 2026. He referred to the notes from the meetings held on 17 March and 8 July 2026 for noting.

Jim Watson said that the meetings were always useful and that SP Landscapes were doing a good job. He added that due to the drought, grass cutting had been stopped for a number of weeks.

The Chair asked what would happen to the money saved.

Geoff Clark said that it would be used for tree surgery and other ground maintenance type work.

Margaret Wilson asked how the updating of the maps was progressing.

Geoff Clark advised that we recognise that the landscaping plans were drafted over 10 years ago, and that it was important to make sure that they were accurate and that the contractor knew their obligations. He said that any discrepancies noted and reported on formal estate inspections were being updated.

Geoff Clark reported that the next contract that we would be reviewing was the Lifeline Monitoring Contract which would be a joint procurement contract with Cambridge City Council. He said that we were currently reviewing the tender documents to make sure that

we use best practise and that all current requirements were met. He said that tenant representatives would be invited to be a part of the tender exercise which would include the scoring around quality and price.

6. Any Other Business (AOB)

6.1 Board Involvement

Cllr Richard Stobart said he had enjoyed the meeting and that he found Margaret Wilson's Tpas report very interesting. He added that he had had a pre-meeting with Julie Fletcher and that he was looking forward to contributing more to future meetings.

6.2 Compliment

Margaret Wilson said that she would like to commend the Resident Involvement team for arranging coffee morning meetings with the tenants at the various communal buildings. She said she found the meetings useful and she thanked the team.

6.3 Invitation to Spend Time with the Property Services Team

Eddie Spicer said that he had extended an invitation a couple of times in the past to tenant representatives to spend time with his team to get a better understanding of what they did, however, he had had no uptake on it. He asked if anyone would be interested.

Cllr Williams asked if he had sent out an email as she did not recall seeing one about dates. She asked Eddie Spicer if he could circulate some dates and times.

Eddie Spicer asked who would be interested in spending time with his team.

Margaret Wilson said that she had expressed interest and had also not received an invitation. She added that she thought they would get shown around an empty property before work was done, which had also not materialised.

Eddie Spicer said that that was part of the Relets Standards Scrutiny project.

Margaret Wilson said that it was something different that was going to be done in June 2026 or possibly last year and they were going to be invited to a property that was recently vacated to see what sort of work would need to be done.

Eddie Spicer said that he would arrange a visit to an empty property.

Action: Eddie Spicer

7. Meeting Dates

The Chair referred to the meeting dates as follows:

- 10 November 2026 – Tuesday (Venue to be confirmed / Teams meeting)
- February 2027 (Venue to be confirmed / Teams meeting)

Cllr Williams asked that all meetings be in person as she did not think that this online meeting was successful. She added that she already had three council meetings on 10 November 2026 and asked for confirmation of dates as soon as possible.

Peter Campbell said that the November 2026 meeting should be held in the afternoon and not the evening as it would be getting dark earlier. He added that he would be on leave in November 2026.

The Chair said that the agreement was that the meetings would alternate between the afternoon and the evening.

8. Closing

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

The meeting ended at 7.05pm.