

<b>Present:</b>	Councillor Gary Hewson ( <i>in the Chair</i> )
<b>Councillors:</b>	Alan Briggs, Natasha Chapman, Calum Watt and Loraine Woolley
<b>Independent Person(s):</b>	Mick Barber, Mike Asher, Sean Newton and Debbie Rousseau
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	Councillor Pat Vaughan, Councillor Liz Bushell and Caroline Coyle-Fox

**53. Confirmation of Minutes - 06 February 2025**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record.

**54. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**55. Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) Project Update (Verbal Report)**

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP), apologised for not having provided a written report on LTP activity for this meeting. He gave a verbal update which highlighted the Panel's continued work on a variety of projects with tenancy services, fire safety assurance, voids, garden assistance, maintenance, business management, estate inspections and resident involvement teams. He further advised:

- Mick Barber continued to attend Social Housing Quality Network Panel and ARCH committee meetings.
- It was hoped that ARCH would hold a conference in the city in the near future.
- LTP had been working with the Resident Involvement Team for the co-creation of a digital newsletter/magazine - HOME covering important updates, how to stay connected in communities, tips and advice, updates from Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) and more.
- Catch up meetings had been held with senior members of staff.

LTP Members were working hard to achieve outcomes of quality housing and quality of life in the city.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail. The following questions and comments emerged:

**Question:** Was Lincoln Tenant's Panel managing to retain and recruit new members?

**Response:** Yes, there continued to be a varied mixture of membership including older and younger members of the community serving on the panel over different periods of time. LTP was involved in various other community projects and received good feedback on its work.

**Question:** Would a link to the digital copy of Home Magazine that had always been sent to tenants be advertised online?

**Response:** An in-depth paper copy of the newsletter had been sent to Councillor Hewson as Chair of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee. The paper copy was very expensive to produce, therefore, an on-line link was available for those tenants with e mail addresses. They were invited to register to receive regular updates. The newsletter/magazine was also sent out with rent payment statements. Tenants were asked for feedback on what they thought about its content.

RESOLVED that the content of the verbal update be noted with thanks.

**56. Directorate of Housing and Investment Compliance Report -Six Monthly Update**

Martin Kerrigan, Fire Safety Assurance Manager:

- a. presented an update to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on City of Lincoln Council's (CoLC's) position regarding building safety compliance in relation to Housing stock; focussing on three of the 'Big 7' areas of building safety compliance including Electrical Safety, Water Supply (Legionella) and Gas Safety, as detailed at Appendix 1 to the officer's report
- b. reported that the compliance report was distributed to Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) on 21 February 2025 and discussed at a resident involvement meeting on 24 February 2025; comments received were responded to and the report was accepted
- c. advised that the Council monitored performance on our landlord responsibilities as a whole in the following areas
  - Fire Safety
  - Electrical Safety
  - Water Safety (Legionella)
  - Asbestos Management
  - Gas Safety
  - Lifts
  - Radon
- d. highlighted that at the meeting of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 8 August 2025, members requested a six-monthly update on performance related to building safety compliance, focussed on three of the six key areas to give an understanding of performance for all safety measures
- e. reported that overall performance would be monitored and shown by percentage of compliance and Risk Advisory Group (RAG) rated, this would then provide the method for future reporting to enable measurement of improvement and inform the Directorate of highlighted risk to allow for comment, direction and action
- f. explained that to assist the reader the areas of compliance, relevant legislation and landlord responsibilities, had been summarised to add context on each requirement to capture risk, mitigation and performance to complete the context and to allow for clear responses to questions arising
- g. highlighted performance against the indicator were RAG rated, as follows:
  - Green 😊: At target

- Amber 😊: Within 10% of target
- Red 😞: below 10% of target

h. summarised that from the Directorate of Housing and Investment compliance report the key issues identified relating to building safety compliance were:

- Increased timescales with getting injunctions and gaining access to properties that had an expired Landlord Gas Safety Certificate.
- Low access rates to complete Domestic Legionella Risk Assessments.

i. invited members questions and comments.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

Questions and comments received were responded to by officers as follows:

Question: The number of electrical inspections carried out was not at a par with gas inspections. Hopefully improvements could be made to performance figures and tenants informed we would be carrying out electrical testing.

Response: The Building Compliance Team were trying to get the message across to tenants that access to properties was required for electrical testing. Improvements were being made to the website and information sent out with the January rent leaflets regarding electrical safety, fire safety and asbestos awareness.

Question: What happened in the cases of the eleven dwellings that operatives could not access?

Response: Various action was taken including telephone calls, final warning letters, action via the Tenancy Services, and injunctions obtained through the Legal Team.

Question: Could the Council not get access to the rented properties it owned at all times?

Response: Immediate access could only be obtained if there was an imminent risk of danger to life or safety.

The Chair commented that the current performance targets should be supported with a summary by officers of the reasons behind why these targets were not being achieved.

Members referred to historical problems with gaining access to properties in some areas and a great deal of work behind the scenes to try to secure this.

Response: There were multiple problems and reasons why access could not be achieved. For example tenants passed away, or went into prison. It was an exhaustive process engaging with customers regarding compliance safety.

Question: In cases where access was denied was this due to more elective basis reasons?

Response: Yes there were severe mental health issues and complex cases.

Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing highlighted that once a court order was achieved to gain access to a property it remained in place for the lifetime of the tenancy.

RESOLVED that:

1. The next six-monthly update report be presented to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee around September 2025, focussing on Asbestos Management, Lifts and Radon. (Fire Safety 'was reported annually at Performance Scrutiny Committee.)
2. The content of the Directorate of Housing and Investment Compliance Report to the City of Lincoln Council's housing stock be noted.
3. Any additional reports required in the future be requested through the committee process.

**57. Tenancy Fraud Policy (Housing Tenants)**

Paula Burton, Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a. presented the reviewed Tenancy Housing Fraud Policy document to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee
- b. advised that following consultation with Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) in this area of work the following comments had been received:

- They found the policy easy to read and that it provided a clear understanding of preventing, identifying and acting on tenancy fraud.

LTP requested the following:

- On page 5, the start of the last paragraph to be reworded from "we accept" to "we understand" – this was updated
  - On the final page, a brief explanation for why references, legal frameworks, and regulatory framework was included, e.g. why was it important to the policy? – this was updated to be clearer
  - Adding a section in the policy that explained where an individual could get support either from the Council or from other extra support – this was not added because it related to procedures and information to the public, but it had been requested that the web page be updated to include this
  - On the website there was a link to different forms for reporting and these could be included – the link to the relevant web page was added
  - Adding a section for if you suspected someone/yourself as a victim of tenancy fraud then you could report it - this was not added because it related to procedures and information to the public, and it was already on the web page
- c. highlighted that as a Registered Provider of social housing, we had obligations under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 to identify and prevent tenancy fraud, it was also a requirement of the Regulator's Tenancy Standard that we made every effort to identify and prevent tenancy fraud
  - d. referred to the reviewed Tenancy Fraud Policy originally created in November 2020, found at Appendix A to the officer's report, which:
    - provided the legal and regulatory context for managing tenancy fraud

- made clear reference to measures we would take to identify, prevent and minimise the risk of tenancy fraud occurring
- reflected a clear intent that we would take decisive action where we had evidence that fraud had taken place, including supporting prosecutions

e. requested members' feedback on the content of the report.

Mick Barber, Chair of LTP, advised he was pleased to have been given the opportunity to review the Tenancy Fraud Policy for Housing Tenants which was a good document. It had been a pleasure working alongside officers.

Members commented on the content of the report, raising the following questions:

Question: When tenants signed up to a council property, did the relevant estate officer attend the 'sign-up' appointment to introduce himself/herself to the new tenant?

Response: Normally an officer from the Voids Team was in attendance, followed by a visit from the Housing Estate Officer within six-weeks' time.

Question: The new tenant should know who their housing officer would be when signing up to the property.

Response: There had been officer discussions around this matter. With the new IT system, housing officers would be able to access photo ID. Everyone received a six-week follow up visit.

Question: Why was ID taken from the tenant and not the residents moving in?

Response: The tenant was responsible for the tenancy agreement. The Housing Authority had limited rights over household members.

Comment: There could be a safeguarding issue, should the tenant sub-let to another person who may be a potential danger to others, hence the need for the housing officer to be aware of the tenant's identity when he visited the property.

Response: The Tenancy Agreement was discussed in great length with all new tenants at 'sign-up'. This included the strict rules around sub-letting.

Comment by LTP Chair: It was important for the Housing Officer to visit the property to make contact with the tenant and make sure there was no overcrowding.

Response: That was true. When visiting the tenant, all officers were always alert to any under/over occupancy.

RESOLVED that the contents of the Tenancy Fraud Policy for Housing Tenants be noted.

## 58. **Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 - 2024/25**

Lara Wells, Business Manager, Corporate Policy and Improvement:

- a) presented a report on performance indicators for the Directorate of Housing and Investment (DHI) for Quarter 3 of 2024/25 (October – December) which covered those measures related to the Council's responsibility as a landlord
- b) reported that Lincoln Tenant's Panel had been consulted about this report and their comments had been responded to by the relevant services, as detailed at paragraph 2.1 of the officer's report
- c) added that regular monitoring of the Council's performance was a key component of the Local Performance Management Framework and supported its ongoing commitment to continuous improvement of Council services
- d) confirmed that there were a total of thirty-three performance indicators monitored by DHI; an overview of performance for the third quarter of 2024/25 against such indicators was attached at Appendix A to the report
- e) explained that the template for Appendix A included performance 'direction of travel' information to aid interpretation of how performance fluctuated between quarterly reporting periods; benchmarking comparisons would be provided annually at each fourth quarter
- f) reported that during the third quarter of 2024/25, 16 performance measures had met or exceeded their agreed target, four had performed close to target and five had performed below target, the remaining measures were volumetric
- g) highlighted that of the 5 measures performing below target, one was a corporate measure related to call handling in the customer contact centre; this measure 'CS3' related to all calls received by the contact centre, and therefore included data not linked to Housing Services, and was also reported to Performance Scrutiny Committee
- h) explained that measure 'HSSC3' related to Anti-Social Behaviour and consisted of 16 sub-measures as detailed further within section 9 of the officers' report
- i) confirmed that sections 5 to 12 of the report highlighted the key conclusions drawn from Appendix A
- j) invited comments and questions from Members of the Committee.

Members discussed the content of the report, commented, asked questions and received relevant responses from officers as follows:

**Question:** Was the income from the approved former Victory Pub site on Boultham Park Road earmarked for spending later?

**Response:** The development would be completed by the end of May 2025 and hopefully occupied mid-summer.

**Question:** Performance targets in respect of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) were showing as green. It was noted as a serving Tenant's Panel representative on the Anti-Social Behaviour Group, and there were two ASB Groups in existence, one of these groups had closed some cases without the tenants' consent.

**Response:** The team in charge of generic housing complaints had become too busy. The ASB Housing Manager was now dealing with lower level ASB to assist

with workloads and was working well with the Public Protection and ASB Team to assess problems.

**Question:** Instances of ASB in relation to pets and animal nuisance had reached 29 cases by Quarter 3. Which cases had been resolved?

**Response:** It had been agreed that these new volumetric performance indicators would be reviewed by this Committee once every six months. The work programme for 2025/26 would be amended accordingly to include data on cases resolved.

**Comment:** Since the introduction of three housing officers in his Ward to cover ASB, Rent and Tenancy Management, the member in question had seen significant improvements in issues being addressed.

**Comment by Chair:** It would be helpful to see further information provided within this report with reasons why problems had been encountered which affected performance figures.

**Question:** Performance Indicator 22 in respect of percentage of complaints replied to within target time was shown as green, although we were being told average time to answer a call to Customer Services had increased.

**Response:** The figures were based on outturn in 2023/24 , however the officer would check the figures and advise members accordingly.

RESOLVED that:

1. Further information be provided to members as requested above.
2. The Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee Work Programme be amended for 2025/26 to include six monthly updates on number of cases resolved in respect of performance indicator HSSC 3: number of ASB cases by type.
3. The current performance outcomes during Quarter 3 of the financial year 2024/25 to date, be noted.

## **59. Financial Performance - Quarterly Monitoring**

Janine Mills, Principal Finance Business Partner:

- a) presented a report to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee with a summary of the third quarter's performance (up to 31 December 2024), on the Council's:
  - Housing Revenue Account
  - Housing Repairs Service
  - Housing Investment Programme
- b) sought approval for changes to the capital programme
- c) invited members of Lincoln Tenant's Panel to comment on the content of the report
- d) advised that although there were still a number of variables, which were subject to a level of uncertainty, based on the latest level of assumptions, at the end of the third quarter, provided information on the Council's:

- **Housing Revenue Account** — For 2024/25 the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) net revenue budget was set with a planned contribution from balances of £101,220, resulting in estimated general balances at year-end of £1,030,024, after allowing for the 2023/24 outturn position. The HRA was currently projecting a forecast underspend of £714,390, which would result in HRA balances of £1,744,414 as at the end of 2024/25 (Appendix A provided a forecast Housing Revenue Account summary). Although the forecast position was an underspend there were a number of significant variations in income and expenditure. Full details of the main variances were provided at Appendix B.
- **Housing Repairs Service** – For 2024/25 the Council's Housing Repairs Service (HRS) net revenue budget was set at zero, which reflected its full costs recovery nature. At quarter 3, the HRS was forecasting a surplus of £32,882 in 2024/25, an improvement of £50,136 since quarter 2, which had subsequently been repatriated to the HRA. Full details of the main variances were provided at Appendix D.
- **Housing Investment Programme** – The revised programme for 2024/25 amounted to £17.432m following the quarter 2 position. At quarter 3 the programme had been decreased by £0.20m to £17.411m as shown at paragraph 7.2 of the report. The overall expenditure on the Housing Investment Programme at the end of quarter 3 was £8.861m, which was 50.89% of the 2024/25 revised programme. This excluded expenditure relating to Western Growth Corridor, which was currently shown on the General Investment Programme (GIP), to be apportioned at year end (current forecast outturn £1.3m) as detailed at Appendix G of the report. A further £0.680m had been spent as at the end of January 2025, although this was still a low percentage of expenditure at this stage of the financial year, works had been constrained by the availability of contractors and billing of capital works.

e) invited members questions and comments.

Members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee considered the content of the report in further detail, asked questions and received relevant responses from officers as follows:

**Question:** Could officers give advice as to how the burden of increases in employers NI contributions would be met/balanced in the housing budget?

**Response:** Officers would look into this matter and report back to members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee under separate cover.

**Question:** Could officers advise whether the Aids and Adaptations budget was ring-fenced and provide figures for current forecast underspend?

**Response:** Officers would provide the requested information/figures to members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee under separate cover.

RESOLVED that:

1. Further information be provided to members as requested above.



2. The financial performance for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 December 2024 be noted with thanks.

## 60. Target Setting 2025/26

Lara Wells, Business Manager – Corporate Policy and Improvement:

- a) presented a range of proposed performance measures for the upcoming financial year 2025/26, intended to support Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee to effectively scrutinise the Council's role as a social landlord
- b) requested approval of the range of performance indicators as attached at Appendix A of the report for presentation to the Sub-Committee on a quarterly basis
- c) advised that there were a total of forty-one measures for the Sub-Committees consideration; a slight increase on the thirty-seven measures reported in 2024/25
- d) explained that the increase in the number of performance measures was largely due to the introduction of new national reporting requirements, and recognition that some of these reporting requirements added value to the Council's scrutiny process by providing context to support existing measures
- e) added that the new measures would be introduced in Customer Services in the next few weeks
- f) summarised the proposed changes to performance measures, proposed to be deleted and new measures as detailed at paragraph 3 of the report
- g) invited Housing Sub-Committees questions and comments:

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail, asked questions and received relevant responses as follows:

**Question:** Concerns were raised regarding the connection between our Control Centre and the Hamilton House Team. Did the out of hours emergency calls include assistance for homeless people?

**Response:** The Council had a statutory duty towards homeless people at any hour of the day. Lincare would contact the out-of-hours housing officer on-call to arrange temporary accommodation or somewhere to stay.

**Question:** In relation to performance measure 85A 'Percentage of allocation offers accepted first time, why wasn't the target set at 100%? What were the reasons why properties weren't accepted first time?

**Response:** Prospective tenants had numerous reasons why they didn't accept a property first time, perhaps due to it not being what they initially imagined it to be. The homeless legislation was different to the Allocations Policy.

**Comment:** by Lincoln Tenant's Panel Member – Concerns were raised about the assistance offered under the out-of-hours system and the length of time taken for the Call-Centre to answer calls beyond even the new target of 500 seconds proposed.

**Response:** The response from the out-of-hours service covered legislative responsibilities only. The target for customer call response time was not set by officers, however, the target had been amended to reflect the increase in call volumes and complexity.

**Question:** Did the figures for call time responses relate to housing calls only or all calls in general? It would be helpful to receive data on how many enquiries were resolved first time, also requested by members at Performance Scrutiny Committee

**Response:** The figures related to all calls.

**Question:** In relation to performance measure HSSC4: Percentage of properties at SAP rating C or above, when would work commence on bringing this desired outcome into operation?

**Response:** Hopefully this would come into operation by May-June 2025, once processed through Legal Services. There were approximately 200 properties affected.

**Question:** How many vacant garages were there in the Birchwood area?

**Response:** Officers would provide this information to members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee under separate cover.

Officers suggested that the new volumetric measures proposed in relation to the Lincare Control Centre were not a landlord function and should not be included in the performance targets listed at Appendix A for this reason.

RESOLVED that the performance measures proposed at Appendix A of the report be approved for inclusion in the quarterly performance reporting for 2025/26.

## **61. Housing Asset Management Strategy**

Michelle Hoyles, Housing Strategy Manager:

- a) presented the Directorate of Housing and Investment's draft Asset Management Strategy, and requested the Sub-Committee's feedback on the draft strategy in preparation for its progression to Executive for formal adoption
- b) highlighted that Outcome 2 within Section 5 of the Strategy document would be slightly updated
- c) reported that Lincoln Tenant's Panel (LTP) had provided feedback on the report stating they supported the content of the strategy and what the service was proposing to deliver, welcoming the strategy's format, finding it clear, easy and engaging to read, and suitable for tenants as its main audience
- d) added that LTP suggestions on the strategy's content, had been incorporated into the final draft presented to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee as appended to this report
- e) advised that In November 2023 the Council adopted its 30-Year HRA Business Plan, which sets out a series of core objectives, including:
  - Developing and improving core landlord services
  - Providing additional affordable housing
  - Regenerating our estates and neighbourhoods
  - Reducing our carbon emissions
- f) reported that alongside development of the Business Plan, the Housing Assets directorate had also developed a series of policies to support effective delivery of its services and there remained a gap in the directorate's governance 'golden thread'; an Asset Management Strategy had been

identified as a means of bridging this gap, and would help ensure the Council met the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards that were introduced in April 2024

g) highlighted that:

- The Strategy had been developed with tenants as its primary audience, with a more visual format and simplified content.
- It addressed all relevant parts of the Regulator's Consumer Standards, and each of the four outcomes was accompanied by an action plan that set out key activities the directorate would undertake to further enhance and improve the quality of the Council's homes and how it engaged with tenants throughout.
- The action plan also identified key activities the Council needed to undertake to ensure it continued to meet the requirements of the Building Safety Regulator.

h) confirmed that the lifespan of the Strategy was five years, both to coincide with Vision 2030 and in anticipation of the energy efficiency standards all landlords were required to meet by 2030, when all rented homes would be mandated to have a minimum EPC 'C' rating

i) requested members' feedback on the content of the report.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail, commented/raised questions and received relevant responses from officers as follows:

**Question:** An achievement of EPC rating of C or above for Council homes was very ambitious. Did this relate to all properties?

**Response:** There were 290 properties which required compliance to be achieved by the year 2030.

**Question:** Was it better to sell unviable properties and to build better?

**Response:** The Disposals Policy would be looked at later in the year. Officers would share further background information on the development of the Asset Disposals Policy with the member in question.

Officers were congratulated on the work in this field to date.

RESOLVED that the draft Asset Management Strategy attached as '**Appendix A**' to the report be noted, prior to its progression to Executive for formal adoption.

## **62. Change to Order of Business**

RESOLVED that the order of business be amended to allow Item 13 'Technology to Monitor Alarms and Sensors' to be considered in private as the next item of the agenda, following the Exclusion of Public and Press.

## **63. Exclusion of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

**64. Technology to Monitor Alarms and Sensors**

Matthew Hillman, Assistant Director, Asset Management, provided comprehensively information in respect of this agenda item entitled 'Technology to Monitor Alarms and Sensors', as detailed in the exempt report to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

RESOLVED that the recommendation to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee, as set out in the exempt report, be supported, for referral to Executive for approval.

**65. Re Admittance of Press and Public**

RESOLVED that the press and public be readmitted to the meeting for the remainder of business to be discussed in the public domain.

It was noted that there were no members of press and public present this evening.

**66. Report by Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing**

Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing:

- a) presented a report to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee covering the following main areas:
  - Homelessness
  - Tenancy Services
  - Voids
  - Housing Repairs
  - Housing Investment
  - Fire Safety
  - Additional Homes
  - Decarbonisation
  - Lincare Control Centre
- b) highlighted the major changes since his last report to this committee being the Regulator of Social Housing (ROSH) expansion to cover local authorities from 1 April 2024 and policy announcements by Government since last year's General Election
- c) invited questions and comments from Members of the Committee.

Members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee considered the content of the report in further detail. Comments and questions were responded to by the Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing and officers as follows:

**Question:** How many opportunities were given by operatives to attempt to gain access to Council properties for repairs ordered where there was no-one at home, or failure to answer the door?

**Response:** Operatives conducted three attempts to gain access to the property then the appointment was cancelled. A recharge proposal was being investigated to recover costs in such circumstances.

**Question:** If the Council failed to attend a repair appointment did the tenant receive compensation?

**Response:** This eventuality was covered under the Remedies Policy.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted with thanks.

**67. Work Programme 2025/26**

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a) presented a draft outline work programme for Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee for 2025/26 as detailed at Appendix A of her report
- b) highlighted that the work programme would be further populated in accordance with Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committees requests for topics of discussion and areas of preferred scrutiny to be used as a working document, added to or amended at members discretion at any time during the 2025/26 Municipal Year
- c) confirmed that the work programme included those areas for scrutiny linked to the strategic priorities of the Council and themed housing matters, to ensure that the work of the committee was relevant and proportionate.

RESOLVED that the content of the Work Programme for 2025/26 be noted, subject to the following additional item to be included on the agenda for Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee to be held on 11 June 2025:

- Discretionary Housing Payments Update – Follow Up Cases Awarded 30+months – Officers: Martin Walmsley, Laura Brown.