

HOUSING STANDARDS BOARD (HSB)

Minutes

30th June 2025

2.00pm – 3.10pm

PRESENT:

Committee Members

Cllr David Carter (DC) – Chair

Leaseholder Standards Panel:

Annette Hogan (AH)

Frank Feldman (FF)

Tenant & Leaseholder

Representatives:

Property Standards Panel:

Selena Ellis (SE)

Tenancy Standards Panel:

Jane Steer (JS)

Lucy Cooper (LC)

Officers:

Zulfi Kiani-Mackintosh (ZKM)

Wayne Mitchell (WM)

Nathan Kitteridge (NK)

Bob Purton (BP)

		Action
1.	Welcome & Apologies Panel welcomed	
2.	Declaration of Interest None	
3.	<u>Minutes of the last meeting (2nd June 2025)</u> The minutes were agreed. JS asked if the group could be provided data on how much arrears are in affordable housing and temporary accommodation to private landlords. WM advised this could be provided.	<i>WM-Temporary accommodation information has been taken to panel- moving forward a breakdown will be</i>

	<p>On the housing needs and provisional care statistics, there were gaps where information had not been provided. WM advised these statistics are done by Housing Options so this could be raised with them, also the gaps could just be from the switch over to a new system. NK and WM will confirm this.</p> <p>JS asked whether changes were to be made to allow for verbatim minutes to be recorded from meetings. WM, NK and ZKM confirmed they were not aware of any plan for changes to be made in this regard.</p>	<p><i>provided for next panel meeting.</i></p> <p><i>Information was not in the last statistic. WM to send out the info in the next 10 working days.</i></p>
4.	<p><u>Cabinet Workplan 2024/25</u></p> <p>ZKM advised its on the agenda.</p>	
5.	<p><u>HSB Work Plan 2024/25</u></p> <p>Landlord survey and tenants satisfaction survey now completed and submitted. As part of the new requirements the information will be displayed on the website to view and information sent out to tenants.</p> <p>Safety update on agenda.</p>	
6.	<p><u>Performance Report</u></p> <p>AH queried the finance report- both columns seem the same. NK explained it is the same due to it being early in the financial year. Changes would show in period 6.</p> <p>If any queries to email ZKM to forward to Richard Criddle.</p>	

7. HTS Transformation Update.

WM provided a verbal update on the HTS Transformation report that was to be presented to Cabinet.

WM advised that:

- There had been a significant reduction in overdue repairs, over 1,000 roof and gutter repairs completed.
- Number of repairs remained very high, on average nearly 4 jobs per property. Key recommendation to be made to Cabinet to increase budget, to be resourced from HRA budget.
- Joint working was ongoing to improve void process and turnaround times
- There had been a reduction in overheads at HTS with number of senior staff leaving, and HRS Board reducing in size
- Some HTS staff have also relocated to the Civic Centre, with HOPS staff relocating to Mead Park, which is expected to improve collaboration.
- New repairs system expected to be ready for 1st September (slightly later than planned), which should enable better performance monitoring and reporting.
- New 'Solar Vista Software' was working well and was expected to help improve working practices. This software allowed for jobs to be reported/ logged by HTS, i.e fly-tipping, using GPS software to provide accurate locations.

JS asked how people would know if items had been located and reported, to ensure actions were taken. WM stated that jobs would be logged and given a job number, but the software should make items easier to locate.

	<p>WM advised that the full report was likely to be a confidential report as it may contain commercially sensitive information, which was why a verbal report was being provided. JS stated that as additional funding was to be provided from the HRA budget she believed the Board should have access to it.</p> <p>WM noted that this was part of ongoing and extensive changes that were taking place to transform both HTS and the council, and improve services provided.</p> <p>JS stated that improvements were required, and specifically referred to landscaping works, which she stated were appalling and that nothing was being done, and felt that residents were getting less than they did previously. JS also stated that she believed there was an issue with the HTS contract in relation to communal garden works. DC to investigate the communal garden maintenance.</p>	DC
8.	<p><u>Update on the Regulator of Social Housing</u></p> <p>WM provided a verbal update on the report to be provided to Cabinet, detailing the councils progress to address failings identified in Regulator of Social Housing judgement relating to Fire Safety.</p> <p>WM advised that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of May 2025 there were no outstanding Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs), meaning that all buildings requiring a had one in place. Old FRAs will become due every month and these will be monitored and actioned accordingly. • A total of 972 FRA tasks were completed in May 2025, increasing from 474 the previous month. The total number of actions outstanding had decreased from 13,250 in April to 12,745 at the end of May. 	

- The actions carried out in May had reduced the number of outstanding actions on high rise buildings from 1,577 to 1,052, whilst the number of outstanding actions in other building types have stayed broadly similar to their levels the previous month.
- Of the high risk actions, the highest proportion of overdue actions were in the low rise blocks, of which 993 were overdue.
- There were 467 overdue high risk actions in the high rise blocks, 53 in the medium rise blocks and 143 in the sheltered blocks.
- A number of measures were already in place to mitigate any risks to tenant safety in the interim, with 90% of tenants homes having heat, smoke and carbon monoxide sensors, with 64% on the AICO gateway system. In addition regular inspections were being carried out, a front door replacement programme was ongoing, and appropriate training was being undertaken,
- In relation to ongoing management of FRA tasks, the software system for tracking these was in the process of being reconfigured and would shortly be able to produce detailed reports showing the forecast closure of FRA tasks over future months. This would allow comparison with the actual completion of tasks and would be included monthly in this report.
- Contracts were being procured to address required actions, as well as to deliver this years capital programme, for which £10.5 million was earmarked for Fire Safety works on tower blocks.
- Of the £10.5 million, £3.2 million had been raised in orders and just under £1 million spent.

It was noted that the next monthly meeting with the Regulator was due the following day 1st July 2025. The Regulator understood that there was a process to go through to clear the backlog of FRA tasks but was very keen to see that the council prioritised tenant safety at

	<p>all costs and had put measures in place to mitigate the health and safety risks posed by any actions remaining outstanding. The council was working with the Regulator to go through the steps we were already taking to ensure that risks were minimised, and additional steps that we plan to introduce.</p> <p>DC asked how the council fared in comparison with other Councils in relation to the Consumer Standards WM explained that he understood that in general Housing Associations appeared to be fairing better, as they had been working under the Regulatory regime for longer period, but that a number of Councils appeared to be struggling.</p> <p>JS asks how everyone was managing with the additional demands. NK stated that 2 new members of staff had been recruited, HOP's manage the fire doors and third parties. BP advised that staff needed to be qualified and there is a shortage of them available due to demand.</p> <p>JS asked how the removal of items in flat lobbies would be maintained, and noted that while items like prams may be taken in for a week then put back outside. NK explained that the Legal team were looking into the available options to deal with such issues. BP added that the Resident Engagement Strategy would make it clear why the council were enforcing this. NK explains that photos were also taken as evidence with the notice.</p> <p>The recent Grenfell Tower documentary was raised by LC and she asked why the 'stay put' instruction was still in place as it was not safe. NK explained that this was still the instruction it is still recognised as the most effective safety strategy where there is a fire in the building that isn't inside your home. NK explained the principle that each flat is a compartmented box that allows the Fire Service sufficient time to arrive and</p>	
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	<p>make a decision on whether they need to begin a controlled evacuation or can prevent the fire from spreading. This approach failed in Grenfell Tower due to the presence of unsafe cladding which spread the fire. This is not on any of our blocks.</p> <p>BP explained that High Rise Buildings are defined as being over 18 meters, Harlow Councils are one story over this, therefore qualify. London flats are three times taller.</p> <p>Issue was raised as to whether there was a possibility that people were being told to leave items for the heavy squad in the wrong areas in flat blocks. NK explained the process is for Contact Harlow to discuss with the Housing Officer to decide a suitable area then that area is saved on record for future requests from other residents in the same buildings.</p>	
9.	<p><u>High Rise Building Safety Resident Engagement strategy</u></p> <p>Report read by ZKM- Handouts given and discussed. Already seen at joint panel and leaseholder panel. JS asked how residents will be heard, and who are the building safety liaison team. BP explained they are part of the Property Services team. Categories are in four areas and will work as a team. JS expressed her concerns that they are not a team. JS would like the word 'periodically' changed and meeting dates given, as with periodically the meetings could disappear. ZKM suggested Ad Hoc, although JS did not feel this was any better</p> <p>BP said it is a subject for further consideration. Strategy comes first and then would work through feedback.</p>	

	<p>ZKM explained guidance has been followed from central government.</p> <p>JS asked about the information being put into the block noticeboards/community noticeboards. She stated that she was aware that there were no staff authorised to put the information in them. ZKM to liaise with Dean James.</p> <p>Conversation around topic raised by JS that vulnerable people who stay in high rise properties should be required to contact the council. NK explained that they were classed as visitors and this information was not required under legislation.</p>	ZKM
10.	<p><u>Current Consultations</u></p> <p>None</p>	
11.	<p><u>AOB</u></p> <p>BP explained the new repairs policy that had previously been raised at Joint Tenancy and Property Panel and Leaseholder Panel. as previously mentioned in other panel meetings. It is designed to put repairs into plan. The document will be finished in a couple of weeks, and out for consultation late July, then to cabinet 19th/20th September.</p> <p>DC answered a raised query from the leaseholder panel meeting re the budget. DC to send to AH and to circulate at next LSP.</p>	DC

The Date of the Next meeting: 1st September 2025