

Lancaster City Council

Council Housing Advisory Group (CHAG)

Date: 16 July 2026

Location: Lancaster Town Hall

Chair: Caroline Jackson

Attendees: Peter Jackson (Cabinet Member); James Watson, Suzanne Corner, Barbara Walker, Sharon Preston (Tenant Reps); Jo Wilkinson, Catherine Cunliffe, Bryony Bolton (LCC)

Apologies: Martin Bottoms (Cabinet Member); Jim (Tenant Rep); Gully (Partner organisation); David Holme (LCC)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Discussion

The Chair welcomed attendees and opened the meeting. Introductions were provided and members noted apologies received from a number of officers and participants who were unable to attend due to annual leave, alternative meetings or other commitments.

2. Declarations of Interest

Discussion

The Chair invited declarations of interest from attendees in relation to any agenda item. No declarations of interest were declared.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Discussion

Members reviewed the minutes and action log from the previous meeting. Existing actions were checked against the current agenda to ensure progress would be considered through relevant reports.

Particular reference was made to actions regarding:

- *Repairs monitoring;*
- *Communication improvements;*
- *TSM Action Plan progress;*

- *Previously raised repair concerns.*

Members were satisfied that outstanding issues had either been completed or were scheduled for discussion under later agenda items.

Decision

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

Actions

None.

4. Tenant Voice Update

Discussion

An update was provided on recent Tenant Voice activity and scrutiny work. Members noted that scrutiny activity continues to mature and that this represented the fourth scrutiny exercise undertaken by tenant representatives.

The scrutiny of the Grassland Management Service was discussed in detail. The panel reported significant disappointment that the nominated service representative was unable to attend, having advised shortly before the meeting that other commitments would take priority. No alternative officer was provided and members felt this undermined the scrutiny process and demonstrated a lack of respect for tenants who volunteer their time to participate.

The scrutiny panel also reported concern that there is currently no Service Level Agreement (SLA) or clear set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for grassland management. Members considered this a significant obstacle to effective performance monitoring and accountability.

Whilst frustrated by the circumstances, tenant representatives advised that the meeting remained productive and helped identify key areas for future investigation. There was agreement that future progress would require active engagement from the service area concerned.

Members also received feedback from the recent TPAS Conference attended by tenant representatives. It was reported that Lancaster City Council's approach to tenant scrutiny and co-regulation was viewed positively, with interest expressed by a national policy lead in using the Council's scrutiny work as an example of effective landlord-tenant collaboration.

A successful tenant team-building event was also reported. Members highlighted the value of strengthening relationships between tenant representatives and creating opportunities for wider engagement.

Conclusions

CHAG recognised the importance of constructive officer engagement within the scrutiny process and acknowledged the concerns raised by Tenant Voice.

Members welcomed external recognition of Lancaster's tenant engagement approach and wished to see scrutiny work continue to develop.

Actions

Action	Owner
Arrange meeting between Tenant Voice representatives and Councillor Paul Hart to discuss grassland management concerns.	Housing Service

5. Tenancy Audits – Outcomes and Information

Discussion

A detailed presentation was provided on lessons emerging from tenancy audits undertaken between April and June 2026.

Members heard that:

- 32 audits were undertaken.*
- Access was gained to 29 properties (91% success rate).*
- Most properties were assessed as being in good or fair condition.*
- A small number required additional intervention.*

A key finding was the discovery of significant numbers of previously unreported repairs and property concerns. Audits identified:

- Damp and mould issues in eight properties.*
- Repair concerns in seventeen households.*
- Numerous instances where tenants assumed the Council was already aware of problems and therefore had not reported them.*

Members considered the broader benefits of tenancy audits beyond tenancy verification. Officers emphasised that audits were generating valuable intelligence regarding:

- *Property condition;*
- *Vulnerability;*
- *Hoarding behaviours;*
- *Health and wellbeing concerns;*
- *Support needs;*
- *Tenancy sustainment risks.*

Discussion focused extensively on barriers to repair reporting. Tenant representatives highlighted challenges faced by older residents, particularly those who struggle with digital services or complex telephone menus. Members suggested further work should be undertaken with Customer Services when the new telephone system is procured.

Conclusions

Members welcomed the positive outcomes from tenancy auditing and recognised the programme as an important preventative intervention.

There was broad agreement that future communication campaigns should focus on encouraging tenants to report repairs promptly and clarifying reporting routes.

Actions

Action	Owner
<i>Continue monitoring repair reporting trends identified through tenancy audits.</i>	<i>Housing Management</i>
<i>Bring Customer Services and repairs reporting arrangements back to CHAG for further discussion.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>
<i>Consider further communications targeted at older tenants regarding repair reporting routes.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>

6. Mainway Tenant Move Learnings

Discussion

Members received a detailed report on lessons learned from the Bridge House decant programme within the wider Mainway redevelopment project.

The report outlined:

- *Consultation process undertaken with residents.*

- *Rehousing arrangements.*
- *Budget management.*
- *Delivery performance.*
- *Challenges encountered.*
- *Learning for future decants.*

The project successfully rehoused 20 households and was delivered just under budget. Strong partnership working between Housing Management, Lettings, RMS and contractors was highlighted as a key success factor.

Challenges included:

- *Reliance on a single lead officer.*
- *Supporting tenants with complex needs.*
- *Rehousing availability.*
- *Managing rent increases when tenants moved.*
- *Universal Credit transitions.*
- *Holding empty properties pending moves.*

Future learning emphasised the need for:

- *Earlier planning.*
- *Standardised documentation.*
- *Better financial discussions with residents.*
- *Registration of all affected tenants on the housing register in advance.*
- *Realistic move timelines.*
- *Wider staffing involvement.*

Conclusions

Members welcomed the learning exercise and agreed that the lessons identified should inform future Mainway decants and other supported move programmes.

Actions

Action	Owner
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Return report to CHAG once greater certainty exists regarding future Mainway phases.
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Housing Service

7. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Discussion

Members reviewed the housing performance scorecard and discussed key performance measures relating to:

- Current tenant arrears;
- Former tenant arrears;
- Re-let times;
- Void rent loss;
- Repairs performance;
- ASB performance;
- Tenancy visits.

Discussion focused particularly on:

- Continued strong rent collection performance.
- Progress in reducing re-let times.
- Challenges impacting repairs performance.
- Recruitment difficulties within repairs trades.
- Emerging improvements in recruitment activity.
- Resident perceptions of ASB service delivery.

Members acknowledged that ASB performance measures do not always reflect tenant experience and suggested further review of performance indicators in future.

Conclusions

Members found the KPI summary useful but requested visibility of the wider range of performance indicators monitored by the service.

Actions

Action	Owner
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<i>Present the wider KPI suite to a future CHAG meeting for review.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>
<i>Continue developing measures which better reflect tenant experience, particularly regarding ASB.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>

8. Equality and Diversity Work

Discussion

Members received an update on preparations for the forthcoming tenant census and equality profiling exercise.

Officers explained that regulator feedback identified weaknesses in available tenant profiling information and highlighted the need for a more complete understanding of tenant demographics and support needs.

Current gaps include understanding around:

- Disability;*
- Ethnicity;*
- Language requirements;*
- Religion;*
- Sexual orientation;*
- Gender identity;*
- Caring responsibilities;*
- Communication preferences.*

The census will support service planning, improve accountability and enable services to be better tailored to tenant needs. Members discussed communication methods and suggested using tenant groups and local community networks to promote participation.

Conclusions

Members supported the tenant census and recognised its importance in strengthening compliance with consumer standards and improving service delivery.

Actions

Action	Owner
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<i>Undertake tenant census and equality profiling exercise.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>
<i>Bring initial findings back to the next CHAG meeting.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>

9. Competence and Conduct Preparedness

Discussion

Members received an update on preparations for the Competence and Conduct Standard.

Officers outlined work underway regarding:

- *Knowledge, skills and behaviours framework;*
- *Performance management processes;*
- *Training and development arrangements;*
- *Housing qualifications;*
- *New Housing Code of Conduct.*

The Council has identified 19 relevant posts falling within qualification requirements. Five managers already hold the required qualification and future training will be supported partly through apprenticeship funding.

Members were reminded that tenants must be meaningfully involved in developing both the learning and development policy and Code of Conduct.

Conclusions

Members welcomed progress and recognised the significance of the new regulatory requirements.

Actions

Action	Owner
<i>Share draft Learning and Development Policy with CHAG.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>
<i>Continue development of Housing Code of Conduct and tenant consultation.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>
<i>Progress qualification programme and workforce planning.</i>	<i>Housing Service / HR</i>

10. You Said, We Did

Discussion

Members reviewed the updated "You Said, We Did" report which demonstrated how tenant feedback has influenced service changes and engagement activity.

Positive feedback was received regarding the development of Independent Living Voice and increased resident engagement across schemes.

Members suggested further refinement of reporting to provide clearer examples of outcomes achieved through tenant influence.

Conclusions

The report was welcomed as evidence that resident feedback is driving service improvement.

Actions

Action	Owner
<i>Refine future reporting format to make impacts clearer and more specific.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>

11. TSM Action Plan

Discussion

Due to time constraints, the detailed TSM Action Plan review did not take place.

Members were advised that the updated action plan had been circulated separately and any comments should be submitted directly to officers.

Conclusions

A more detailed discussion will take place at the next meeting.

Actions

Action	Owner
<i>Include TSM Action Plan as an early agenda item at the next CHAG meeting.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>

12. Inspection Update

Discussion

Members were advised that the outcome of the recent inspection remained subject to an embargo until 12 August 2026. As a result, no substantive discussion could take place at this meeting.

Conclusions

The outcome will be shared with tenants once publication restrictions are removed.

Actions

Action	Owner
<i>Share inspection findings with tenants following embargo expiry.</i>	<i>Housing Service</i>

13. Any Other Business

Discussion

Membership and Representation

Members discussed future membership arrangements for CHAG and opportunities for wider tenant participation.

There was recognition of the need to:

- Maintain continuity and experience;*
- Allow new members opportunities to participate;*
- Ensure appropriate inductions are provided;*
- Review confidentiality expectations and governance arrangements.*

Local Government Reorganisation

Members briefly discussed the announcement concerning Local Government Reorganisation. Reassurance was provided that council housing services and the Housing Revenue Account should continue to operate as business as usual. Tenant representatives indicated that the matter would likely generate questions at future engagement meetings.

Actions

Action	Owner
<i>Review CHAG Terms of Reference, membership arrangements and induction processes.</i>	<i>Housing Service / CHAG</i>

Include discussion on Local Government Reorganisation implications at a future tenant meeting.

*Housing Service /
Tenants Voice*

Next meeting: 30th October 2026 2pm. Lancaster Town Hall