

Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Thursday 24 July 2025

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Sally Taylor (Chair), Adronie Alford and Laura Janes

Other Councillors: Councillor Frances Umeh (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness)

Officers:

Richard Shwe (Director of Housing)

John Hayden (Assistant Director, Repairs)

Aaron Cahill (Housing Policy Strategy Lead)

Clare Dorning (Head of Homelessness Prevention Assessment)

Liam Oliff (Committee Coordinator)

Prior to the commencement of the substantive agenda items, the Committee was required to appoint a Chair for the meeting due to the apologies submitted by Councillor Jacolyn Daly, who was the regular Chair. Councillor Laura Janes nominated Councillor Sally Taylor. Cllr Adronie Alford nominated herself. A vote was taken and Councillor Sally Taylor was appointed Chair for this meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies submitted by Councillors Jacolyn Daly and Asif Siddique.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd April 2025 were agreed to be accurate.

4. HOUSING REPAIRS SERVICE UPDATE

John Hayden (Assistant Director – Repairs) introduced the report which provided an update on key areas, noting that 91% of repairs were completed on time, with strong performance from contractors. Damp and mould cases were largely resolved within target, and voids management saw 626 properties returned to stock, with 88% meeting turnaround targets. A new disrepair protocol was introduced in January 2025 which reduced legal claims and improved case handling. Further improvements included preventative maintenance, a reduction in drainage callouts, and new initiatives such as estate action days and enhanced customer engagement. Procurement for services from 2027 had commenced, with a focus on long-term stability and retrofit goals.

Councillor Adronie Alford enquired as to why a PowerPoint presentation had not been provided for the meeting. Richard Shwe (Director – Housing) responded that the intention had been to ensure the report itself was the primary focus. Councillor Frances Umeh (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness) added that the reports had been submitted in advance for members' consideration.

Councillor Adronie Alford questioned the increase in damp and mould cases between April 2024 and April 2025. John Hayden explained that the rise was due to proactive home checks, which had identified issues that had not necessarily been reported previously.

Councillor Adronie Alford queried why the performance target had been set at 91% rather than 100%. John Hayden stated that while the service was striving to achieve 100%, there were occasions when timeframes were missed. He added that some houses were recalled when residents had expressed dissatisfaction with the quality.

Councillor Adronie Alford requested a more detailed breakdown of tenant satisfaction figures. John Hayden advised that the figures were externally measured through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and noted that the highest satisfaction had been recorded under TP08. He confirmed that performance was improving.

Councillor Adronie Alford highlighted that TP03 had recorded a satisfaction rate of 59%. John Hayden acknowledged this and stated that improvements were ongoing and expected to continue.

Councillor Adronie Alford asked what new improvements had been introduced, noting that visits had always been carried out, and were not necessarily an improvement. John Hayden clarified that the increased visits were specific to housing repairs. He added that efforts were being made to improve the customer journey, including reducing the disconnect between residents and officers and offering weekend appointments for some households. He added that when appointments were missed, residents were informed and, where appropriate, vouchers were issued as compensation.

Councillor Laura Janes reported that 291 cases of damp and mould had been recorded and asked whether any hotspots had been identified, along with plans to address them. John Hayden confirmed that trends had been identified, with varying causes. Where repeat issues were found, Tier 2 works, such as the installation of ventilation systems, were introduced. He also noted that resident education was being provided to help prevent recurrence. Councillor Sally Taylor proposed that the damp and mould data be revisited at a future meeting.

Councillor Frances Umeh noted that the last repairs update had been provided two years ago, and this report highlighted progress since that time. She mentioned that there had been changes in officers and the formation of a cross-departmental team focusing on damp and mould. She reported that 1% of homes had damp and mould cases, all of which had been treated within the required timeframe.

It was agreed that a more comprehensive paper on tenant satisfaction measures would be brought to a future meeting for further discussion.

5. HOUSING PROVISION IN HAMMERSMITH AND FULHAM FOR PEOPLE OVER THE AGE OF 55

Richard Shwe and Aaron Cahill (Housing Policy Strategy Lead) introduced the report which provided an overview of the types of housing available to residents aged 55 and over in Hammersmith and Fulham. It included background information and analysis of national, regional, and local policy and strategy. The report concluded with a SWOT analysis, informed by the research undertaken on housing for over-55s in Hammersmith and Fulham. This analysis highlighted the positive provision of housing for older residents by the Council, the opportunities to shift perceptions of this housing type, and the challenges relating to supply. Discussions with Members regarding the content of the report and the accompanying SWOT analysis were intended to inform the Council's Older People's Housing Strategy for 2026–2031.

Councillor Sally Taylor referred to discussions around housing for residents aged 55 and over, noting that the life expectancy in the area was far higher.

Councillor Adronie Alford commented that the term "sheltered housing" gave the wrong impression and suggested that it should be presented in a way that made older people feel positive about moving there. She raised concerns about the suitability of certain sites and identified locations that could potentially be redeveloped.

It was noted that sheltered schemes had previously been outlined in a printed booklet, and Councillor Adronie Alford recommended that a hard copy should still be provided.

Councillor Adronie Alford asked about the relationship with housing associations, particularly in relation to older residents, and highlighted the lack of options for those wishing to downsize into smaller accommodation.

Councillor Frances Umeh emphasised that rebranding work was required to change both the name and the perception of sheltered housing. She mentioned the role of the sheltered housing forum group in helping to improve services, particularly in relation to repairs. It was noted that while information was available online, the booklet had received useful feedback and remained a valuable resource. Partnership working with housing associations was also discussed. Richard Shwe (Director – Housing) acknowledged that further work was needed with housing associations and confirmed that this would be addressed over the next six months.

Councillor Adronie Alford observed that residents often preferred to remain with their existing housing associations and that transitions to other types of housing were not always well supported. Councillor Frances Umeh noted this point.

Councillor Laura Janes commented on the importance of terminology and suggested that the concept of "autonomy", commonly used in health contexts, should be incorporated into the language used. Richard Shwe agreed that this was a good idea and confirmed that it would be considered. It was emphasised that the strategy should not be left unimplemented and that delivery must be ensured.

Councillor Sally Taylor requested that vacancy rates for residents aged 55 and over be broken down for further analysis. Aaron Cahill (Housing Policy Strategy Lead) confirmed that a detailed analysis would be provided.

Councillor Laura Janes stated that a range of housing options was important and that support for people to remain in their own homes should be clearly outlined. Richard Shwe reported that work was ongoing with colleagues in Public Health and Adult Social Care, and that from April 2025, the service would be responsible for adaptations. He added that when a unit had been made accessible, consideration should be given to allowing other disabled residents to use it, rather than removing adaptations unnecessarily.

Councillor Adronie Alford raised concerns about delays in adapting units and noted that contractors often lacked understanding of how adaptations should be carried out. Richard Shwe responded that whole life cycle costs needed to be considered, taking into account both the project and the resident's needs. He acknowledged that services sometimes implemented what they believed to be appropriate, which might not align with residents' actual requirements.

Councillor Sally Taylor asked whether close working relationships existed with occupational therapy teams. Councillor Frances Umeh confirmed that the service did work with relevant experts.

Richard Shwe stated that more in depth data would be brought back for review in six months' time.

6. HOMELESSNESS UPDATE

Clare Dorning (Head of Homelessness Prevention) introduced the report which outlined that during 2024/25, 3,000 households approached the

Council as homeless, of these, 547 households were placed in temporary accommodation (TA), with a total of 1,511 households in TA by 31 March 2025—a 4% increase on the previous year. The TA budget faced significant pressure, with a forecasted overspend of £7.7 million, later reduced to £6.4 million through mitigation measures. An action plan was implemented to reduce new entries into TA, lower costs, and increase move-on into settled housing. Efforts to prevent homelessness included early intervention and support into private rented accommodation. In 2024/25, 290 households were rehoused into permanent accommodation, accounting for 43.8% of lettings.

Councillor Adronie Alford expressed concern about siloed working and hoped that improvements were being made in this area. She referred to the 3,000 individuals who had approached the service, noting that only 500 had been identified as in priority need. Clare Dorning clarified that approximately 3,000 individuals had presented as being at risk of homelessness. However, temporary accommodation was only provided to those who were imminently at risk or who had specific needs. Of those who approached the service, around 500 were assessed as being in priority need.

Councillor Adronie Alford raised the issue that with such high numbers, individuals in both priority need and non-priority categories were competing for the same private rented accommodation. Clare Dorning confirmed this and explained that significant time was spent engaging with the private rental market. She noted that a Private Landlord Forum had been established to introduce the council's approach and build relationships, ensuring landlords were aware of the council's intention to engage constructively.

Richard Shwe added that the council was taking a proactive approach, aiming to prevent homelessness before it occurred. He highlighted the importance of educating residents on available options and working with private landlords to explore solutions. He also noted that the council was seeking additional government funding by demonstrating the effectiveness of its current initiatives.

Councillor Sally Taylor remarked that the demand for accommodation continued to exceed supply and that the end of this issue was not yet in sight. She referred to the fact that LBHF was working with landlords to defer evictions for a year and asked whether this was just delaying the inevitable or if it helped provide a long-term solution for families. Clare Dorning stated that many tenancies initially began with a two to three-year term, which led to a good proportion of success. She emphasised the importance of trust and confidence in these arrangements, noting that where relationships worked well, tenancies were often extended. She also explained that the council could offer rent in advance, rather than in arrears, to help mitigate the risk of homelessness.

Councillor Adronie Alford asked about the typical length of stay in temporary accommodation. Richard Shwe responded that this varied, with an average of 8 to 10 years in Hammersmith & Fulham. He acknowledged that where placements extended beyond five years, the term "temporary accommodation" was no longer appropriate. Councillor Adronie Alford suggested that the terminology should be revised to reflect the reality of

longer-term placements. Richard Shwe confirmed that the council was exploring this issue with government, which was also reviewing the terminology. Councillor Sally Taylor noted that “temporary” could have different interpretations depending on the context.

Councillor Adronie Alford asked what would happen if a private rented sector tenancy, offered as a main housing duty, was lost. Clare Dorning explained that if the tenancy had been supported and was lost through no fault of the tenant within two years, the household could reapply for assistance.

Councillor Laura Janes enquired about the potential impact of the Rent Reform Act on the borough. Clare Dorning responded that the legislation was wide-reaching and primarily concerned with enforcement and regulation within the private rental market. She noted that it would introduce new considerations for households being served with notice, which could affect homelessness presentations. Councillor Laura Janes suggested that the reforms could help reduce the need for temporary accommodation. Richard Shwe agreed and added that the changes would enable more enforcement action against rogue landlords. He highlighted the role of the Private Rental Service in supporting tenants and encouraging them to engage with the council. Councillor Frances Umeh emphasised that the reforms would be essential for protecting renters.

7. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the dates of future meetings:

- 5 Nov 2025
- 3 February 2026
- 20 April 2026

Meeting started: 7:00pm

Meeting ended: 8:19pm

Chair:

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