

Tenant Board Meeting
Wednesday 25th February 2026

Attendees:

Liz Perryman	Tenant Board Member (Chair)
Gerry Crease	Tenant Board Member
Stella Morris	Tenant Board Member
Sara Szczepanski	Tenant Board Member
Tony Cole	Tenant Board Member
David Coaley	Tenant Board Member
David White	Head of Housing Transformation and Regulation
Georgia Mecoy	Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator
Cllr Ruth Hendry	Housing Portfolio Holder (Babergh)
Cllr Richard Winch	Housing Portfolio Holder (Mid Suffolk)

Apologies

Paula Warren, Tim Riach, Kerry Lecomber

1. Declarations of interest

None to declare for the scrutiny project vote.

2. Action(s) from last meeting

- Cavendish & Minden external staircases – Deborah Fenton and David White to follow up on what is happening there and communication with tenants. Resident Liaison Officer will be contacting residents in the area. Due to the recent events in the area, we want the works to be completed and the scaffolding to be removed as soon as possible.
- Tenant Board to decide who will attend Overview and Scrutiny in April- Volunteers from Liz, Sarah and Dave. Liz Perryman reminded the Councillors that all members need to talk louder in meetings. There was a discussion to investigate how we can change rooms and meeting times to accommodate the Tenant Board when they attend.

Action: Invite Alicia Norman to a future meeting.

3. Rent Setting and Changes to the Rent Standard

David White Presented the slides as Jeremy Robbins (Housing Management Lead for Income and Sustainment) could not attend.

Background

- Rent is the key element of the Housing Revenue Account and as such needs to provide sufficient funding to run the Housing service
- Cost needs to at least keep pace with Inflation as costs of repairs, supplies and staff costs increase each year.
- The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is the lower of the two main measures of inflation. The other is the Retail Price Index.
- If rent does not keep pace with costs, services will eventually either decline in standard or be cut altogether.
- The Councils will make the ultimate decision on the rent increase proposed by officers this year. This is a key part of the Councils' responsibility to achieve balanced budgets.

Process

- BMSDC follows the process set out in the Rent Standard
- Rent is set for new financial year (6th April 2026)
- Formula is current rent + CPI + 1% The plus one percent is there to assist social landlords to properly maintain homes to decent standards and to meet H&S costs as well as building new homes.
- CPI (consumer price index) taken from September of the previous year. This was 3.8% in Sept 2025
- Rent increases this year will be 4.8% if approved.
- Service charges are recalculated using actual costs from the previous year, not bound by the rent formula, but are rarely higher.
- The Councils cannot raise the rent beyond this amount and cannot raise the rent within 12 months of an increase.

Timetable

- Cabinet discusses the proposed increase as part of annual budget setting (10/2/26)
- Councils agree budget and rent proposal BDC 24th Feb and MSDC 26th Feb.
- 4 weeks' notice is required so letters must go out by end February.
- Housing benefits are notified of change. Feb 2026
- Universal Credit recipients must notify DWP of the increase via the portal. BMSDC staff confirm this from our end when done. 6th April
- Direct Debits are amended by the income team and new payment schedules sent.
- Rent increases 6th April.

4. HQN Mock Inspection discussion

David White delivered the key findings from the HQN mock inspection

- The full presentation on HQN results is being delivered on the 28th February, once this has been delivered, we will share the results with Board
- Based on initial feedback we are expecting a C2 grading
- HQN were impressed that engaged tenants recognised how change had been made as a result of Tenant engagement activities and that tenants could see a difference in culture
- HQN noted that the Tenant Board spoke fondly of the council
- Recommendations will be given to the Board to improve their development. This includes having a Board pre-meet to give the Board time to review documents and more opportunity to challenge at the meetings.
- We are due to be inspected by the regulator by April 2027
- David thanks the tenants for being involved in the Mock Inspection

5. Mutual Exchanges

- Doug Stother, the New Head of Tenancy Management will be reviewing our Mutual Exchange policy. Tenants will be involved in reviewing this policy, and therefore information around Mutual Exchanges is being shared at Tenant Board.
- David White presented slides in Doug Stothers absence.

- These informational slides included information around the below and will be used for future training around Mutual exchange for Tenant Board members.
 - Definition of a mutual exchange
 - Eligibility
 - Procedure
 - Regulations
 - Tenant Responsibilities
 - Limitations of the scheme
 - What to expect post completion
- There was a discussion around in a Mutual Exchange there is always someone that benefits more than the other. David White recommended that tenants who are looking to exchange should visit the property and local area multiple times a day to ensure they are happy with the property.

6. Scrutiny Forward Plan

- Georgia Mecoy Presented
- The Tenant Board will need to vote on 2 (min) or 3 (max) scrutiny projects for the period of April 2026- March 2027.
- A recap on TSM and Transactional data for 25-26 was presented in which the worse performing areas are Voids, New lettings, ASB, Complaints and Communal Areas.
- Georgia handed over to the Tenant Board to discuss the council's performance over the previous year and what projects they would like to do as a result of their findings.
- The Board stated that the low performance in ASB and Complaints should improve when the scrutiny action plans for these areas are completed. Board will continue to monitor this performance.
- It was discussed by the Board that they have regularly seen data showing poor voids performance. Additionally, the board have also seen a significant increase in cost to void works. The Board understands that we are now post inspecting 100% of void works.
- Cllr Winch and Cllr Hendry agree and support the idea of completing a scrutiny project on voids and agree the importance
- It was discussed that we can review other Local Authority methods, Stella Morris said she will come back to the group with Anchor Housing's procedure.
- It was discussed that if a project was completed on Voids, it would be significantly bigger than other projects completed, and therefore Board should consider completing 2 projects instead of 3.
- **Vote: 6/6 members voted to complete a scrutiny project on Voids in 26/27**
- Planning for this project will commence in the April Meeting.
- It was raised that the Board would like to complete a project on contract management and procurement. This is due to the number of contracts the council have and how many are frequently replaced in the Compliance Team.
- David White advised that the Board should consider being more specific, as contract management and procurement is an extremely large area to scrutinise.
- Tenant Board decided to invite an officer from this area to the meeting to understand where improvements can be made before they vote on this project.

Action: Invite Richard Spencer to discuss contract management with the Board

Any other Business

- Liz Perryman thanked David White for his great work over the years and his dedication to improving tenant engagement and the Board. The Board thanked David and wished him luck in his new role at Basildon Council.

-----Meeting closed: 19:27-----