

Housing Improvement Programme Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting:	Housing Improvement Programme Board (HIPB)
Venue:	Committee Room 1 (and hybrid via Teams as required/agreed)
Date:	23 rd April 2026
Time:	16:30-18:00

Member Attendees: Cllr Rob Lillis (Cllr RL) – Chair & Programme Member Sponsor, Cllr Warren Gibson (Cllr WG) – Vice Chair & Deputy Leader of the Council, Cllr Kate Knott (Cllr KK) – Board Member, Cllr Dave Blackwell (Cllr DB) Leader of the Council and Board Member, Cllr Jamie Huntman (Cllr JH) – Board Member,

Officer Attendees: Angela Hutchings (AH) – Project Sponsor, Ian Butt (IB) - Project Sponsor, Lance Wosko (LW) - Section 151 Officer, Angela Law (AL) - Monitoring Officer

Guests: Chris Stratford (CS) Programme Director, Steve Colk (SC) - Interim Head of Housing Technical Services, Michael Lerpiniere (ML) - Interim Head of Housing Management, Hannah McNally (HM) – Project Manager, Leigh Donegan (LD) – Administrator, Rebecca Outram (RO) – Policy Officer, Damian Roche (DR) – HQN, Tom Beeson (TB) – (Housemark), Ben Brook (BB) – AD, Policy Performance and Customer

Apologies: Linda Curtis (LC) – Compliance Manager, Cllr Grace Watson (Cllr GW) – Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Ref	Item	Lead
1.	Welcome, Introductions & Declarations of interest Apologies received	Chair
2.	Housemark - TB of Housemark gave an overview of Housemark membership and how Castle Point can utilise their data and insight tools to strengthen service performance and regulatory assurance. - Housemark collects monthly and annual benchmarking data on areas such as repairs, safety, complaints, ASB, costs and satisfaction to create insight reports and trend analysis across the sector. - Other landlords are utilising data insights to improve services through better communication with tenants, predictive analytics, stronger data governance customer journey mapping. - Utilising benchmarking data will allow members and tenants additional information to hold officers to account on the performance of housing services. - A membership kick off meeting with Housemark is scheduled for June.	
3.	Housing Improvement Programme update <i>Housing Management System update:</i> Phase 1 original go live date of 1 May has been extended to 15 May. The extension is due to issues with the automated Housing Benefit (HB) file upload and spurious reference number generation. The issues are being worked through by the HMS Project Manager and MRI as a priority. The system will need to be run and tested to ensure all functioning as should be prior to go live. All other aspects of MRI are functioning appropriately.	

ACTION: Ensure all staff are suitably trained and confident with troubleshooting aspects of MRI prior to go live.

SC, LW

Housing Ombudsman case review:

- This section is confidential to protect the identity of individuals who have raised a case with the Housing Ombudsman. The following minutes cover discussions from this agenda item that do not contain any identifiable information.
- The Housing Ombudsman have huge backlog of cases. Cases are taking on average 6 to 8 months to assign and commence investigation. Investigations can take a significant amount of time to conclude.
- Castle Point Borough Council have 16 cases on the Housing Ombudsman portal. 13 cases were opened by the Housing Ombudsman in 2025 and 3 in 2024. 1 case (from April 2024) has been closed and a determination made however remains open on the Housing Ombudsman portal.
- Of the 16 cases, 10 relate to repairs or damp and mould, 3 to antisocial behaviour, 1 to Housing Options, 1 to staff conduct and 1 to governance/compliance.
- All 16 cases relate to historical issues that date back before the service review and in the time when the previous repairs contractor was managed by a third party.
- Current assessment of lessons learnt has identified that Stage 2 complaints responses need to be improved and Castle Point Borough Council need to take more ownership of service failings where we cannot provide evidence, rather than attempt to defend gaps in records.
- For full transparency and ongoing learning, going forward, when the Housing Ombudsman issue a case determination or conclusion, a full report will be provided to the HIPB, detailing root cause, lessons learned and agreed points of action.

ACTION: Provide full reports on outcomes and lessons learnt to HIPB for each case determination or conclusion that is received from the Housing Ombudsman. First report to be provided in May 2026. Further reports will be done on an ad hoc basis according to when a determination is issued by the Housing Ombudsman.

ML

Resident Engagement update:

- A second meeting with engaged tenants and leaseholders was held the morning of 23 April to discuss the agreed engagement framework and next steps. The tenants and leaseholders present remain enthusiastic about continued engagement with the Council and provided constructive influence on how to better engage with a wider audience.
- The scrutiny of Housing services was discussed as a key focus for the Council. Scrutiny exercises will be conducted in the form of a task and finish group. Four scrutiny topics for 2026–27 were agreed with the tenant and leaseholder group to be carried out as follows:
 - Q1 Complaints
 - Q2 Communication
 - Q3 Neighbourhoods

	○ Q4 Repairs. It was agreed that repairs is a key area of focus for tenants and leaseholders however with the new repairs and maintenance contractor having only started at the beginning of April and clearing a backlog of cases, the repairs scrutiny exercise will be conducted in Q4 to allow the new contractor to fully embed into service delivery. • The recruitment campaign to recruit to the groups/panels within the approved engagement framework will commence on the 4 May and run for 4 weeks. Interviews and final confirmation of positions will take place in June. All Housing officers are to be made aware of the campaign to support recruitment. • Following questions from members regarding potential low recruitment numbers due to historic distrust, if we are unable to fully man groups/panels then there are options to either start small or merge groups with the aim to build. • The results of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) 25/26 survey have been received. Officers are analysing the data to further understand what our tenants and leaseholders are telling us in order to tailor our services accordingly. This work will be supported by the tenant and leaseholder led task and finish scrutiny groups. Compliance update: • There has been a significant drop in Water Risk Assessment (WRA) compliance. During compartmentalisation and stock condition surveys, 39 blocks were found to contain water tanks that were not previously known and recorded. All blocks have been inspected and WRAs scheduled for completion by the end of May. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has been kept informed of this drop in compliance and is satisfied with the Council's actions to address. • As of 31 March, there were 110 outstanding HHSRS actions identified by the stock condition surveys. These actions do not pose any immediate life-threatening concerns and relate to capital works or complex repairs such as full roof replacements. ACTION: Provide update on Water Risk Assessment compliance status to May HIPB. Programme update: • An in-person meeting with the Regulator is scheduled for 14 May to discuss status of the Housing Improvement Programme. The pace of improvement to C1 is to be agreed but is expected to increase. • Senior members will be meeting with officers to discuss and review the proposed draft transition plan prior to meeting with the Regulator. • Reporting of programme milestones will recommence in June 2026 following feedback from the Regulator. ACTION: Recommence programme milestone reporting to HIPB.	LC/SC
4.	AOB Next meeting: 28th May 2026	All