CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL

OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday, 8th October, 2026 at 7.00 pm in The Guildhall, St Peter's Place, Westgate, Canterbury

Present:	Coouncillor Pat Edwards (Chair) Councillor Beth Forrester Councillor Mike Bland Councillor Dane Buckman Councillor Jean Butcher Councillor James Flanagan Councillor Liz Harvey Councilllor Alex Ricketts Councillor David Thomas Councillor Clare Turnbull (present as a substitute)
In attendance	Councillor Pip Hazelton, Cabinet Member for Housing

Officers:	Pippa Tritton	-	Democratic Services Officer
	William Hicks	-	Director for Place
	Sue Brown	-	Homeless Policy and Programme Manager
	Tracy Chambers	-	Head of Housing & Community
	Gary Peskett*	-	Strategic Housing Manager

(*present for part of the meeting)

313 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Heaver, Mellish, Old and Jeanette Stockley.

314 **SUBSTITUTE COUNCILLORS**

Councillor Turnbull was present as a substitute for Councillor Heaver.

315 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

In relation to Item 7, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Plan to end Homelessness, Councillor Flanagan made a voluntary announcement that he was a co-opted member of Canterbury Housing Advice Centre (CHAC).

316 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

It was noted that there were no public speakers registered for the meeting.

317 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2026**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2026 were agreed as a true record.

318 **TENANCY POLICY AND TENANCY STRATEGY**

The Housing Strategy Manager introduced the report which advised that approval had been granted by Management Team in May 2026 to consult on the principles of a draft Tenancy Strategy and Tenancy Policy.

The draft documents represented a light touch refresh of the versions adopted by Council in December 2020 and had been updated to reflect changes in national housing policy, legislation, regulatory requirements and Council policy. The amendments were minor, with most of the existing content retained.

The Chair advised that comments would be considered by Cabinet when making its final decision on the Draft Housing Strategy on 7 December 2026.

Councillors debated the report and made comments, with clarification provided by the Housing Strategy Manager where required:

- Officers were thanked for the work undertaken.
- Concern was expressed that changes in the wider housing market, particularly the impact of the Renters' Rights Act and changes affecting private landlords, could reduce the availability of private rented accommodation within the district.
- It was suggested that the new council receive a report after the May elections reviewing the impact of the new tenancy policies and wider housing market changes.
- Officers advised that the effects on the private rented sector were more appropriately considered through the Housing Strategy but confirmed that a future progress report could be brought forward if requested.
- Clarification was sought on the status of the Tenancy Strategy and the extent to which Registered Providers were required to comply with it.
- Officers advised that while the Council was required to produce a Tenancy Strategy, Registered Providers were not legally required to follow it. The strategy was intended to influence good practice and reflect the legislative framework governing social housing.
- Members suggested that the Tenancy Policy should more explicitly reference the support available to tenants before enforcement action was taken, including benefit advice and tenancy sustainment services.
- Questions were raised regarding provisions allowing tenancies to be ended on change of income grounds and whether this could place some households at financial disadvantage.
- It was suggested that references to domestic abuse within the Tenancy Policy should more clearly distinguish between perpetrators and victims/survivors and better align with existing legislation and the Tenancy Strategy.
- Officers advised that much of the wording reflected statutory requirements and housing legislation and therefore could not be significantly altered. However, consultation feedback regarding tenancy sustainment and support services would be considered before finalising the documents.
- Assurance was provided that the Council’s objective was to support tenants in sustaining their tenancies wherever possible.

- Concern was expressed regarding the low consultation response rate, whether consultation invitations had reached the intended recipients, and the reliance on electronic communication.
- Questions were raised regarding the use of generic email addresses, monitoring of engagement and opportunities to improve future consultation responses.
- Officers confirmed that over 600 consultation invitations had been issued across a wide range of organisations, statutory consultees, parish councils, community groups, registered providers and members of the public.
- It was acknowledged that consultation databases may require review and that future engagement should be more targeted and make better use of tenant contact information.
- Councillors welcomed the positive feedback received through the Residents' Engagement Panel and suggested that direct communication with tenants could be considered for future consultations.
- Questions were raised regarding the potential impact of flexible tenancies offered by Registered Providers and whether some tenants could be disadvantaged compared with Council tenants.
- Officers advised that most Registered Providers operating in the district offered assured tenancies and therefore tenants were unlikely to be significantly disadvantaged.
- It was confirmed that no specific assessment had been undertaken regarding potential disadvantage arising from tenancy types, although officers could seek further information from Registered Providers operating in the district.
- Clarification was sought regarding succession rights and how tenants and family members were informed about succession provisions.
- Officers advised that only one statutory succession was permitted and that relevant information was provided when a succession was formalised.
- Questions were asked about the promotion of crisis and resilience support and other forms of tenancy sustainment assistance.
- Officers advised that tenancy sustainment services were covered by supporting housing management policies which sat beneath the Tenancy Policy framework.
- Members sought clarification regarding engagement with Registered Providers, including circumstances where social housing stock was sold or transferred.
- Officers advised that Registered Providers generally consulted the Council regarding stock disposals and were expected to have arrangements in place to protect affected tenants.
- Questions were raised regarding support available to tenants affected by domestic abuse.
- Officers outlined the Council’s work towards Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation and highlighted the range of support available, including tenancy sustainment services, reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring authorities, trained housing officers and homelessness assistance where required.
- Assurance was provided that the Council sought wherever possible to enable domestic abuse survivors to retain their tenancy and access appropriate support.
- Clarification was sought regarding the impact of forthcoming legislative changes on the Canterbury Lettings Agency.
- Officers advised that the agency operated as a managing agent rather than as a landlord and already worked primarily with assured tenancies, meaning legislative changes were unlikely to have a significant impact.

- Officers accepted that future consultation exercises could benefit from more targeted use of tenant contact information, including postal communications where appropriate.
- Officers emphasised that existing Council tenants were not disadvantaged by the proposed revisions and noted that the decision not to offer new flexible tenancies represented an improvement in security for future tenants.

The Chair advised that comments would be forwarded to Cabinet for consideration as part of its deliberations on the report.

The report was NOTED.

319 **HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY AND PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS**

(Councillor Flanagan made a voluntary announcement that he was a co-opted member of Canterbury Housing Advice Centre (CHAC).)

The Head of Housing and Community introduced the report which set out the vision and priorities for Canterbury City Council to prevent homelessness, reduce rough sleeping, improve outcomes for vulnerable residents and meet statutory duties through the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Homeless Action Plan.

Following the introduction, Councillor Pip Hazelton, Cabinet Member for Housing addressed the committee. She highlighted the increasing pressures contributing to homelessness and rough sleeping across the district and noted that whilst the Strategy would not resolve those issues, it formed an important part of a wider partnership approach to addressing them.

Councillors debated the report and made comments, with clarification being provided by the Head of Housing and Community where required:

- Members welcomed the report and thanked officers for the clear and comprehensive strategy.
- It was noted that Members would welcome greater detail on how the strategy would be delivered, including timescales, responsibilities, funding arrangements, and performance monitoring.
- Clarification was sought regarding how delivery of the strategy would be monitored and overseen through existing Council arrangements and it was suggested that this could be explained more clearly within the document.
- It was suggested that the strategy could include a simple flowchart or supporting information setting out how homelessness cases were managed, including referral, assessment and allocation processes.
- Officers advised that the strategy provided the high-level framework required by Government and that a detailed action plan would be developed through a strategic partnership group.
- Officers confirmed that the action plan would identify responsibilities, target dates and accountability arrangements, and agreed to provide greater clarity regarding governance arrangements.
- Members welcomed the inclusion of rural housing issues within the strategy and highlighted growing housing pressures within rural communities.
- It was emphasised that engagement with parish councils would be important when developing outreach events and advice sessions within villages.

- Concern was expressed regarding the limited availability of social rented housing in some rural areas and the challenges faced by rural workers and young people seeking to remain within their communities.
- Members highlighted the decline in traditional tied and rent-free accommodation provided to agricultural workers and the impact this could have on future housing need.
- It was suggested that opportunities for affordable housing delivery through rural exception sites could be explored further.
- Members highlighted the relationship between planning policy and rural housing need and suggested closer engagement with planning services on these issues.
- Officers agreed to consider the comments raised regarding rural housing issues and to discuss relevant planning matters with colleagues.
- It was suggested that parish councils could play a greater role in identifying residents who may be at risk of homelessness and in supporting early intervention.
- Members noted that parish councils often lacked knowledge of homelessness services and referral pathways and suggested that training and guidance could be provided. Officers welcomed the suggestion and agreed that greater partnership working with parish councils could support homelessness prevention work.
- Questions were raised regarding the potential use of modular housing schemes to provide additional temporary accommodation.
- Concerns were also raised regarding the impact of development viability assessments on the delivery of affordable housing.
- Members queried whether the strategy adequately reflected the housing pressures arising from prison releases.
- Officers advised that a range of housing options, including modular housing and property acquisition, were being explored to increase accommodation provision.
- Officers confirmed that work was already taking place with local prisons to identify individuals at risk of homelessness on release and to provide support before discharge.
- It was noted that opportunities to strengthen these arrangements further were being considered, subject to available resources.
- Clarification was sought regarding the process for reporting rough sleeping, including in rural locations.
- Officers advised that concerns could be reported through StreetLink and that outreach teams would investigate reports and seek to engage with individuals requiring support. Officers would recirculate details of StreetLink to councillors.
- Concern was raised regarding an apparent increase in veterans seeking housing assistance and the importance of ensuring effective signposting and support for veterans at risk of homelessness.
- Questions were raised as to whether partner organisations had experienced an increase in approaches from veterans facing housing difficulties.
- Officers agreed to liaise with the Council's Veterans Champion and relevant partner organisations to review available information, consider whether additional support or signposting was required, and explore whether further reference to veterans should be included within the strategy.
- Members thanked officers for their comprehensive responses and welcomed the overall direction of the strategy.

It was proposed, seconded and when put to a vote unanimously agreed:

TO RECOMMEND (to Cabinet) the approval of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy and Homelessness Action Plan.

Record of voting
For the proposal (10): Councillors Mike Bland, Dane Buckman, Jean Butcher, Pat Edwards, Beth Forrester, James Flanagan, Liz Harvey, Alex Ricketts, David Thomas and Clare Turnbull.
Against the proposal (0)
Abstained/absent (0)

320 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

7pm, Thursday 5 November 2026.

321 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS TO BE DEALT WITH IN PUBLIC**

There was no business under this item.

322 **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

323 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS WHICH FALLS UNDER THE EXEMPT PROVISIONS OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 OR THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 OR BOTH**

There was no business under this item.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.15 pm