



Scrutiny Panel Meeting:

Friday 26 June 2026

11.30 am – 1.30 pm

St Helens Central CEN 003

Panel members in attendance

Redacted

Other attendees

Cath Murray-Howard (CMH)	Chief Operations Officer
Jo Aston (JA)	Operations Manager for Safeguarding
Beth Houghton (BH)	Safeguarding Advisor
Donna Bradley (DB)	Service Lead for Safer Estates
Annmarie Flynn (AMF)	Tenant Voice Team Leader
Georgina Birkenhead (GB)	Tenant Involvement Officer

Apologies:

Redacted

NB: The meeting was not quorate

Minutes

Agenda Item No	Subject	Action
1.	Introductions, background, welcome and housekeeping.	
2.	Minutes and Matter Arising: Agreed as a true record of the meeting no matters arising. Election of tenant chair for Scrutiny is deferred to next panel meeting, Friday 7 August.	GB: Add election of tenant chair to agenda for Scrutiny panel meeting 07.08.26
3.	Recommendation Actions Monitoring Log: SO17: There has been a change in administration at St Helens Council. Action to stay on. SO18: The Hub/Chatbot, action to stay on and management to be invited after October to discuss progress. SO28: Under One Roof Video, to invite Heidi Hewitt to September's meeting to discuss the use of Synthesia to produce a video for the choice-based lettings applications process. SO58: The Vulnerability and Reasonable Adjustment Policy, to bring back to panel in August. SO91: Action to remain on RAML. Terrie Wood to be invited to September's panel meeting to discuss progress. SO92: Block Champions: To be trialed at the North Liverpool Pilot. Action to remain on RAML. SO109: TPAS Accreditation, KD and HS volunteered to support application process.	AF to invite Heidi Hewitt to attend 25 September panel meeting to discuss creation of 'application and bidding Under One Roof' video GB to include Vulnerability & Reasonable Adjustment Policy on agenda for Scrutiny Panel 07.08.26 GB to invite Terrie Wood to panel 25.09.26 to update members on quality assurance forms AF to arrange TPAS accreditation working group meeting including

	S118: Tenant Inspection Retrofit, action to stay on with the plans for a recruitment drive to inspect all 13 retrofit sites. S121: Tenant Chair for Scrutiny, to remain on RAML and on the agenda for August Panel meeting. S123: Service Charge Update: To remain on RAML until Warrington and St Helens review complete. Actions agreed as completed: SO52, SO54, SO85, SO93, SO94, SO96, S103, S110, S112, S113, S117, S119, S122 and S124	panel members – August 26 GB: Add election of tenant chair to agenda for Scrutiny panel meeting 07.08.26 GB: to move RAML actions SO52, SO54, SO85, SO93, SO94, SO96, S103, S110, S112, S113, S117, S119, S122 and S124 to complete.
4.	Cath Murray-Howard: Chief Operating Officer Management Update i) Torus Landlord Leadership Changes Following PW departure, the following temporary leadership arrangements are now in place: ○ Cath Murray-Howard will support Jan Calland with Neighbourhoods and North Liverpool Pilot ○ Margaret Goddard will support Dean Wall and Kelly Tasker, covering The Hub; Customer Resolution & Tenant Voice; Allocations & Lettings; Income Collection and Safer Estates. ○ Kate Shone will support Annmarie Robertson on the Support Network. ii) Liverpool Pilot (North Liverpool) • Pilot 1 underway, led by Charlotte Stenhouse. • Aim to develop tenant representatives on each estate to strengthen engagement. • Acknowledge that green and communal spaces need improvement. • HMS, Assets and Torus Foundation are all on board. • Void garden clearance one focus • ASB – recent walkabout identified issue with residents scared to tell Torus what’s	CMH: to include North Liverpool Pilot Update in future management updates to Scrutiny

	happening. Pilot will work even more closely with police on implementing a pilot '<i>call it out</i>' approach Members asked whether Torus provide security. CMH advised only in very limited instances e.g. for very big blocks of flats a concierge may be provided or where there are serious and ongoing ASB issues may be provided for limited period while being resolved. • HMS and Assets: trying new ways of working with joint walkabouts and named officers for the pilot. • Trying new things on allocations and income collection Goal is to identify those things which work and find a way to roll these out to all of our homes and estates. Members welcomed the new approach and requested updates as the pilot progresses. iii) LOC Update • Tenant LOC member PW and Leaseholder LOC member RH have come to the end of their LOC tenure. Actively seeking new recruits. • Gas Safety: strong performance with fewer than 9 gas services out of time. • Stock Condition Surveys: strong performance on numbers completed. Members commented work required to test accuracy of stock condition data. Example given of a letter received advising new kitchen required, but kitchen was replaced recently and in good order. • Damp & Mould: Awaab's Law. Progress made in advance of phase 2 which comes into effect 27 October 2026. • Void Properties: Strong turnaround time of on average 19 days. • Customer Hub: Specialist call handlers now in place for repairs, rents, and ASB to increase first time query resolution. • Disrepair Claims: Claim cold callers need to be dealt with effectively. HS: We have had cold callers on our local estate claiming to be from Torus.	AF to advise Dave Gerwitz of members concerns regarding accuracy of data and seek assurance of data accuracy testing. AF: To request Jude Knight article in next Customer Update advising customers
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	iv) Complaints Still work to be done to resolve more stage 1 complaints and reduce the number progressing to stage 2. Reviewing learning to better understand the drivers of this. Emma Roberts will discuss this at the next Customer Resolution Panel.	to check identification on anyone claiming to be from Torus. ER: to bring learning regarding cases progressing to stage 2 and Housing Ombudsman to next CR Panel meeting.
5.	Donna Bradley, Service Lead, Safer Estates: Qualtrics ASB Survey DB asked for members views on what questions should be included in the new Qualtrics anti-social behaviour transactional satisfaction text survey. DB to increase the number of surveys completed it needs to be short but still gather the information to help improve the service to customers. Feedback from previous surveys indicates that customers are often satisfied with the way their case has been handled but are less satisfied with the outcome. Aim is for new survey to better distinguish between satisfaction with case handling and case outcome, for a more accurate understanding of the customer experience. General Feedback: Members requested a change from the Very satisfied; satisfied; neutral; dissatisfied, very dissatisfied measure, to a more user friendly Happy; unhappy; neither; very unhappy measure. Members also asked for “neutral” to be removed from the answer options as it could cause confusion. Current question: How satisfied are you with the time taken to respond to your case Panel suggested ‘Were you happy with the time taken to respond?’ HS: You could ask “How long do you think it <i>should</i> take?” to understand whether	

	expectations are realistic when considering satisfaction with case handling and outcome. Current question: Did you feel listened to and were you treated fairly and with respect? KD: Can we split this into two as may be satisfied with one element but not the other. HS: Proposed adding 'what could we have done better' for a more qualitative understanding of drivers of dissatisfaction?	GB: to share current and proposed questions with all members as the meeting was not quorate. Members' feedback on revisions by 30.06.26 to allow amendments to be made prior to going live on 03.07.26.
6.	Domestic Abuse (DA) & Harmful Practices Policy Review: Jo Aston and Beth Houghton. JA: Explained why Torus has this policy, which sits within a group of 12 related 'safeguarding' policies across the organisation. DA is the largest category of abuse affecting adults, with an estimated one in four women and one in seven men experiencing DA. Children living in households where domestic abuse occurs are now recognised as victims in their own right. Torus has a dedicated Domestic Abuse Housing Team, available to all Torus tenants, in the Torus Support Network. JA advised members on how the policy is implemented with mandatory DA training at three levels for all staff including Board members so they can identify and respond to disclosures of DA. Training level is dependent on role and responsibilities and renewed every three years. HS: What level of training would be needed for the rents team? JA: Level 2 training for rents to identify DA coercive / controlling behaviour including financial abuse. Officers would escalate suspicions and disclosures using our ABC process for investigation by trained officers. KD: I would be more likely to disclose to HMS operatives who are more likely to be in my home. JA: HMS operatives receive Level one training.	

	KD: Need more than level one training as they are frontline staff. JA: HMS operatives are trained to identify not investigate domestic abuse. They may pick up indicators such as numerous lock changes, damage to homes etc. They would then escalate concerns through our ABC process for investigation by trained officers. KD: Are HMS trained to deal with children too? JA: Yes, not to investigate only to identify and escalate. JA: Torus is part of the Domestic Abuse Alliance, is gold accredited with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA), Respect which deals with male victims. We have a network of 30 Domestic Abuse Champions across the Torus group. We focus on DA internally during 16 Days of Action in November. Torus Domestic Abuse Steering Group is led by Cath Murray-Howard and Safeguarding Assurance is led by Kate Shone meeting quarterly. KD: Does this cover the elderly and transgender people? JA: Yes, services are open and available to all. Panel members in attendance suggested policy revisions. To be sent out to the rest of the panel for consideration as meeting not quorate.	GB: To share policy to panel members not in attendance for feedback by 30.06.16 as meeting not quorate.
7.	Tenant Inspection Report: Warrington Fly Tipping AF: Tenant Inspectors report identifies issues with behaviour and the look of estates. Inspectors found Neighbourhood team works well in areas inspected. Beyond fly-tipping, inspectors reported issues with overgrown gardens and trees, cracked pavements are also a cause for concern.	

	Torus is currently spending over 4 million pounds a year on fly tipping, the report suggests the need for a dedicated fly tipping team. HS: Local councils offer bulky waste collection services but due to the expectations (eg can't get wet or be stored outside) and cost, people aren't using it. Members welcomed the report and offered the following suggestions for improvement: The current 20-working day removal timeframe felt too long as the longer fly-tipping is there the more likely someone will add to the 'pile'. Discussions on revised timeframe ranged from 5 to 14 working days. On reflection members agreed that quicker removal may add to the 'habit' of fly-tipping as people become used to someone else taking responsibility for removing their bulky waste. Members felt that fly tipping is a personal responsibility but felt that Torus should do more to educate tenants on this responsibility. Members also felt that Torus should use their strategic meetings with local councils to hold them to account for failures in waste disposal and fly-tipping enforcement. Members felt that the letters Torus use could be seen as shouty and judgemental and need to be reviewed. HS: Torus consider offering a proactive bulky item collection instead of reactive fly tipping removal as this may save money. KD: Merseyside Recycling Waste could be used as a sub-contractor?	GB: To request feedback on Fly-tipping Tenant Inspection Report from members not in attendance. AF: to incorporate member recommendations into Fly-tipping report for discussion with Torus service areas before inclusion in Scrutiny Review Action Plan.
8.	Any Other Business: No Access Process:	

	AF: LOC have asked that Scrutiny Panel review the "no access" process to better understand the barriers and reasons why access to properties cannot be gained. It was noted that findings and recommendations would need to be reported back to the LOC in October 2026. Members agreed to add this to the Scrutiny Workplan for 2026 /27 and hold a joint Special Scrutiny Review session with the Repairs and Maintenance Panel members before 17 July 2026. Torus Assets and Neighbourhoods teams will also attend. • Use of First Aid in Gorsuch House and Winifred House in St Helens HS: advised that tenants in the above flats have been advised they can't use First Aid. Requested an investigation to provide an explanation to tenants.	GB: To arrange a joint special session with the Scrutiny Panel and Repairs and Maintenance Panel before 17 July 2026. AC: To seek advice from St Helens Neighbourhood team why tenants have been advised they cannot use first aid.
	Date and Time of Next Scrutiny Panel Meeting Friday 7th August 11.30am - 1.30pm	