

AGENDA ITEM 6

QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS

1. Councillor White to ask the Leader of the Council:
Homes for Reading ‘No Fault’ Evictions

At Policy Committee on 17 December 2025, the Leader of the Council said that the Council, through Homes for Reading, was not using ‘no fault evictions’ to end residents’ tenancies, and to accuse them of doing so was both ‘incorrect and inappropriate’.

Since then, residents have contacted us to say that that is exactly what is happening, and that the Leader’s answer was misleading. They believe tenants of Homes for Reading Ltd, having being promised by the Council that these were their ‘forever homes’, are now being subject to claims for possession under section 21 of the Housing Act 1988.

Claims pursuant to section 21 Housing Act 1988 are referred to by everyone, including the press, the Labour Party manifesto on which the Leader of the Council campaigned, and the current government, as “no fault” evictions.

Will the Leader of the Council set the record straight? How many Section 21 possession claims have so far been issued to residents?

REPLY by Councillor Terry Leader of the Council.

As I acknowledged at Policy Committee in December, this Council gave long and difficult consideration to how to preserve the ongoing future of homes that were held by Homes for Reading Ltd. I and other councillors challenged officers on numerous occasions asking for a way to be found to enable families to stay in the Homes for Reading properties, if that was what they wanted. During the decision-making process, the Council considered all options to keep Homes for Reading tenants in their homes following the transfer.

However, legislation requires that residential properties that the Council own must be let as an allocation through the Council’s Housing Register, which ensures transparency in the lettings process and that all households in need of accommodation are treated fairly and consistently based on their assessed needs. Therefore, vacant possession is required to allow an allocation to take place to the applicants in greatest need on the Housing Register.

The business case for transferring these properties also set out that, in order to maximise the Council’s ability to afford the transfer of these properties into the Housing Revenue Account and not unduly impact on its responsibilities to maintain existing tenants’ services and maintenance of homes, the properties would need to be let to key workers only.

As I indicated, the report to Committee committed the Council to allowing tenants to stay in their properties until the end of their tenancies. This is different to how other landlords have typically behaved, using Section 21 to end a tenancy before the end of a lease.

In your previous question you said, “it has meant a Labour Council using no-fault evictions to throw families out of their homes”. I repeat, your characterisation of what has been happening is incorrect and inappropriate.

Once a tenancy has come to an end, and all other support, advice and help has been exhausted, it is entirely appropriate for Homes for Reading to use the only legislation available to it, Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, to enable it to deliver the agreed policy of this Council. This was a

difficult, but planned and consulted on, strategy to help maintain the long-term viability of those homes for local people.

I reiterate, the evidence demonstrates that the Council has been flexible, working with tenants to provide support and move people to new accommodation in an agreed way. The circumstances with which this has been applied has far exceeded the requirements in legislation and sought to continuously work with people well in advance of any notice to quit to help them plan their futures.

For absolute clarity, following the decision to close Homes for Reading, the company has issued 53 notices to tenants appropriately using Section 21. Of those, 33 tenants have moved voluntarily, with support as required into suitable alternative accommodation. 18 notices have not been complied with (to date) and have therefore been referred to the Legal Service to commence possession proceedings. We continue to work with and support those tenants. Two notices are yet to expire. Council officers continue to work with the tenants concerned to support them into suitable alternative accommodation.

The response to your question at Policy Committee on 17 December 2025 may not have been as clear to you as it might have been - and using the word 'incorrect' may not have been entirely accurate – but your definition of how Homes for Reading was using the only legislation available to it to take vacant possession of these properties, in order to end the financial risk to the whole of the Council and all of its services, was politically motivated and not in any way seeking to support or help the families affected; and I continue to refuse to accept your portrayal of this regrettable situation.