



Somerset Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – 23rd September 2024

2024/25 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 1, April to June 2024.

This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Smith Roberts, executive lead member for communities.

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1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

This report provides an update on housing performance through key performance measures and financial information for the first quarter of 2024/25 (April to June 2024).

2. Recommendations

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note content of the housing performance scorecard and finance report.

3. Background and Full details of the Report

The Housing Performance Scorecard is a tool to measure our performance in key areas. The scorecard was last presented to Tenants' Strategic Group (TSG) in May 2024 covering the performance in Q4 (January to March 2024). This report covers the first quarter of the new financial year 2024/25.

4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

5. Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications?

There are no financial implications directly to do with the recommendations in this report.

6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

There are no equality impact assessment linked with this report.

7. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

There are no data protection implications linked with this report.

Performance Report

8. Customer

8.1 Customer – Complaints

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Customer					
% of stage 1 complaints closed in 10 working days (as per policy HRA) (TSM CH02)	90%	80%	92%	65%	64%
All HRA Complaints relative to the size of the landlord per 1000 homes.	4 (Benchmark)	2.8 (Benchmark)	3.01	3.90	3.54
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales.	95%	90%	94%	77%	60%

8.1.2 Complaint handling response times within the remit of our Complaints Policy and the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code have dropped significantly since quarter 4. This is attributed to staff resourcing within the service areas and a lack of capacity in service managers being able to respond to our complaints in a timely manner. We are currently reviewing our approach to complaints handling so that we can be confident we are providing the best service to our residents and remain compliant with the Complaint Handling Code.

8.1.3 Complaint volumes dropped in the first two months of quarter 1, but we were able to source this to an IT issue with how residents could record housing complaints on our website. The problem has now been rectified and we have started to see complaint volumes return to expected numbers.

8.1.4 We received three new Housing Ombudsman investigations in the first quarter of 2024/25, some of which were escalated by the resident in 2022. The Housing Ombudsman Service is transparent in that they have a backlog of cases and are only just starting to recruit enough staff to work through older cases.

8.2 Customer - Lettable Standard Satisfaction

8.2.1 We have been unable to capture this data during quarter 1 due to staff vacancies.

8.3 Customer - Repair Satisfaction

8.3.1 Work continues to investigate a software and telephone survey solution. A software solution will ideally integrate with our housing system and carry out repair surveys however we are also we are discussing costs and feasibility of telephone surveys through an independent company.

8.3.2 Satisfaction with repairs forms part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey completed by an independent company called Acuity. The TSM question focuses on repairs in last 12 months. 76% of customers surveyed in May 2023 and 79% surveyed in November 2023 were satisfied with the repair carried out in their home in the last 12 months. The combined result was 78% which is above median of 76% (comparison with other landlords by Acuity). This figure was submitted to the regulator and reported to TSG in March 2024. The figure for the TSM survey carried out in May 2024 was 77%.

8.4 Customer – compliments

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Customer					
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	4	3	5

8.4.1 Formal complaint numbers have increased in quarter 1 on quarter 4 of the previous year, rising from 8 to 12. However, we recognise that a lot of compliments are not recorded formally and we continue to work on creating a new process to ensure compliments are captured and staff are given feedback to accurately reflect when there has been great service.

8.5 Customer – Overall Satisfaction

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Customer					
Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM Results)	75%	70%	74% (May survey)	74% (May survey)	74% (May survey)

8.5.1 During 2023 we have surveyed twice using an independent company, called Acuity, once in May and again in November to obtain our statistical sample. The combined May and November results show an overall satisfaction of 75% for the year.

8.5.2 In the last TSM survey in May 2024 satisfaction was 74%. To provide context, the Housemark Pulse results for the first quarter of the year show 70% a median and 80% as upper quartile. A report presenting all TSM survey results will be presented to TSG in September 2024 and will be reported again after the next survey in November 2024.

8.6 Customer – Call Statistics

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Customer					
Average wait time in the repairs queue	00:01:00	00:05:00	00:05:22	00:06:09	00:04:13
% of abandoned calls in the repairs queue	10%	10%	12%	17%	11%
Average wait time in the housing estates and tenancy queue	00:01:00	00:05:00	00:06:20	00:07:57	00:08:24
% of abandoned calls in the housing estates and tenancy queue	10%	10%	18%	13%	26%

8.6.1 Call waiting times to the repairs line have marginally improved towards the end of this quarter, with the wait time dropping below 5 minutes for the first time since January 2024. However, managing the volume of calls into the service continues to be a challenge as call waiting times for tenancy and estates remained over 5 minutes throughout the quarter.

8.6.2 Customer Services and Housing management teams meet regularly to review performance and identify training needs. The Housing phone lines are given priority over general calls to ensure the standard or performance remains within target as much as possible, although this is inevitably affected if there is staff absence.

8.7 Rent Recovery

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Rent Recovery					
True current tenant arrears at the end of the month%	1.90%	2.2%	1.33%	1.48%	1.28%
Total number of all evictions			1	0	1

8.7.1 Performance of recovery of current tenant arrears continues to remain strong, and we have consistently hit the Housemark top quartile in performance in this area for many months. Success has been attributed to the stability, experience and hard work of the team in this area who have been able to successfully build a good relationship with tenants.

8.8 Supported Housing

8.8.1 We are unable to provide data on the percentage of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans due to key staff absence.

8.9 Lettings and Voids

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Lettings and Voids					
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to key)	45.9	50.5	74	75	69

8.9.1 Our void turn-around times continue to be a challenge for the service, and this continues to be a focus of the Voids and Lettings teams. We are consistently around the third quartile when benchmarked against our peers (Housemark, local authority or ALMO landlords with less than 10,000 units). Consideration is being given at a senior level as to how we can improve in this area.

8.10 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Housing Repairs					
Completion of housing emergency repairs within 24 hours	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%
Completion of housing non-emergency repairs within timescale agreed with tenant (TSM RP02)	94%	90%	97.7%	98.7%	98.7%

8.10.1 Our performance remains consistent throughout this quarter and is on target in both emergency and non-emergency repairs.

8.11 Tenancy Management

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Tenancy Management					
Total New ASB cases in the month			15	9	17
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month			21	7	2
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month			82	84	99
Number of new ASB cases reported per 1,000 properties	2 (Benchmark)	2.5 (Benchmark)	2.68	1.61	3.04
Number of safeguarding referrals			5	5	6

8.11.1 ASB - Somerset Council ASB satisfaction 56% May 2024 (Acuity) - Top Quartile for 20 LAs, and 2nd quartile for Acuity 75 landlords.

The number of new ASB cases in the month dropped in May but rose again in June. ASB cases are generally higher in the warmer months as people spend more time outside. However, numbers of ASB against Housemark performance data remain low.

8.11.2 Safeguarding – The number of safeguarding referrals remains low, totalling 16 for the quarter. This is down from 23 in Q4 2023/24 and 22 in Q3. As with antisocial behaviour, we normally experience increased safeguarding referrals during the summer months and summer holiday period and then a reduction over the winter

months so it will be interesting to see if this figure increases again in the next quarter.

8.12 Compliance

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Compliance					
% of housing dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate (LGSR) (TSM BS01)	100%		100%	100%	100%
% of housing dwellings with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)	100%		95.67%	95.69%	96.14%
% of housing communal areas with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)			99.45%	100%	100%
% of communal areas with all asbestos safety checks complete	100%		100%	100%	100%
% of communal areas with a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) in place and FRA Review complete (where applicable)	100%		100%	100%	100%
% of communal areas with periodic water safety equipment checks complete	100%		100%	100%	100%
% of passenger lifts and through floor lifts with annual and 6 monthly service and inspection complete (TSM BS06)	100%		100%	100%	100%
Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out. (TSM BS02)	100%		100%	100%	100%
Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out. (TSM BS04)	100%		100%	100%	100%
Carbon Monoxide Alarms	100%		No Data	No Data	99.95%

8.12.1 We are pleased to report 100% compliance for the indicators above, except for electrical safety.

8.12.2 Electrical safety certificates continue to demonstrate a month-on-month improvement. EICR performance is however continuing to head in the right direction, albeit slowly.

8.13 Asset Management

Indicator	Target 2024-25	Amber Threshold	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24
Asset Management					
Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard			290	310	311
Target % Non-Decent Homes Compliance (TSM)	0.5%	1%	5.07%	5.40%	5.44%
Percentage of properties EPC C or above			No Data	No Data	No Data

8.13.1 The percentage of non-decent homes has continued to reduce over the past six months and this continues to be a focus for the team.

8.13.2 The % of properties with EPC C or above will remain targeted at 100% EPC C by 2030 as per the strategy. There is no need for milestones until circa 2025/2026 when the final waves of grants will start to emerge, our data will be much more accurate, our capital programme will be making inroads into SAP scores through better 'U' value specifications of replacement heating, windows, doors and loft insulation. We are also not clear on the future requirements of the new decency standard which is pending release, and which may require social landlords to achieve a certain rating, and by default the government will need to enable this through subsidy or rent setting freedoms.

8.14 Development

8.14.1 The North Taunton Woolaway Project is progressing well, we have Phase A, 47 new low carbon homes. Equans are now completing the landscaping and public spaces areas. Demolition of Phase B and Ci is practically complete and Classic Builders have been appointed as the main contractor for Phases B and Ci and will take possession of the site on 30th September 2024. Phase A has been awarded the Michelmores Residential Project of the Year (36 homes and over) Award and the Insider South West. Insiders Residential Affordable Housing Scheme Award.

Due to some delays with availability of labour and materials, the 54 zero carbon homes at Rainbow Way Minehead have been slower completing than anticipated. The first 12 houses are now being snagged, and are on Homefinder and being allocated currently, with first occupations by end of September. The remaining 9 houses will complete during September/October. The 33 apartments are due to complete in November to January, dates to be confirmed, with the whole scheme completed in Q4 24/25.

Demolition of Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats has taken place.

9. Executive summary of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance report as at Quarter 1 (30 June 2024).

9.1 This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2024/25 (as at 30 June 2024).

9.2 The headline estimates for revenue costs are:

Revenue Budget	Forecast overspend of £2.359m	Red
General Reserves	£11.823m forecast balance = favourable compared to £3.722m minimum requirement	Green
Earmarked Reserves	£209k opening balance	Green

9.3 The significant reasons for the variance being reported include:

Dwelling Rental Income: an under recovery of £819k mainly due to higher levels of voids on general needs and temporary accommodation categories of provision.

Repairs and Maintenance: an overspend of £1.443m on voids repairs due to increased demand and the poor condition of returned properties.

Supervision and Management: an underspend of £424k relating to vacancies within a number of different teams including new roles within the new operating structure

Insurance Premiums: an overspend of £312k due to increased premiums on the new insurance contract for the new council impacted in part to inflation on rebuild costs.

9.4 The HRA is a ring-fenced account which must abide by the accounting regulations and ensure that cross subsidy does not occur. Whilst self-financing has provided some flexibilities, the HRA is heavily regulated which restricts income growth and increase cost pressures.

9.5 The HRA has set a balanced budget for 2024/25 however areas of risk for the year will relate to **regulatory and compliance** requirements. There are seven big compliance areas and the regulations are continually being updated. For example, changes are expected during the year in relation to Fire Safety and Damp & Mould, and there are new national concerns with regards to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), where the cost impact is unknown. Furthermore, the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places new emphasis on customer safety, quality of accommodation, engagement, communication and greater evidence of listening to our tenants. We have seen significant increases in our costs related to regulatory and compliance requirements and the risk remains high that further increases will come.

9.6 From an **operational** perspective, the challenge here relates to the levels of demand from our tenants for support and service, for example for debt and benefit advice, repairs and maintenance on their properties, and the number and condition of void properties. This is a very reactive service based on the needs of the tenants. Additionally, as other services face budget pressures (social care, police, ambulance, mental health services, addiction services etc) the levels of complexity and demand increases and can require additional cost and resource to service this and meet our tenancy management responsibilities.

9.7 There are risks associated with the **economic operating environment** and the positive or negative impact this may have on any variation from the forecasts assumed when setting the budget, for example the cost of borrowing for the refinancing of debt, pay awards, cost of materials and utilities, etc. We continue to work in a very buoyant

market for skilled workforce and materials and cost pressures continue to present a challenge.

9.8 The headline estimates for **capital** costs are:

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for 2024/25 onwards is £92.896m. This consists of £35.579m of new schemes approved for 2024/25 plus £57.317m approved budget carry forward.

The budget has been profiled to reflect the estimated timing of costs for the approved schemes, with £60.189m profiled to be spent in 2024/25 with the balance of £32.707m projected forward into future years. The current forecast outturn is to budget.

Democratic Path: Finance report is reported to Resources Scrutiny and Community Scrutiny and Executive committee meetings and Tenants Strategic Board – 23rd September 2024.

Reporting Frequency: Quarterly

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