

## SWT Tenants Strategic Group

Monday, 24th January, 2022,  
6.00 pm

Webcasting - Virtual Meeting

**Somerset West  
and Taunton**

**Members:** Alex Akhigbemen (Chair), Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Colin England, Kevin Hellier, Ivor Hussey, Luke Manning, Samantha Rickward, Cllr Mark Lithgow, Cllr Lloyd and Cllr Francesca Smith

### Agenda

- |                                       |                 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Apologies                          |                 |
| 2. Notes from previous meeting        | (Pages 3 - 6)   |
| 3. Performance and Finance Report Q 2 | (Pages 7 - 14)  |
| 4. Capital Programme update           | (Pages 15 - 18) |
| 5. Wordsworth Drive briefing          | (Pages 19 - 28) |
| 6. Directorate Report                 | (Pages 29 - 34) |
| 7. AOB                                |                 |



**ANDREW PRITCHARD**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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## SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 22 November 2021

Present: Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Colin England, Kevin Hellier, Ivor Hussey, Luke Manning, Samantha Rickward, Councillor Mark Lithgow and Councillor Janet Lloyd

Officers: James Barrah, Ian Candlish, Richard Burge, Simon Lewis, Stephen Boland, Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager), Bryony Cole, Sharon Yarde (Housing) and Tracey Meadows

Also Present: Councillor Brenda Weston and Wayne Hobson (Chair TAG)

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

### 23. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Alex Akhigbemen (Chair) and Chris Brown

### 24. **Notes from previous meeting including action points**

The notes from the previous meeting including action points were agreed.

### 25. **Directorate Report - Director and Assistant Directors**

The group considered the Directorate report on work being undertaken and progress made by the Housing Directorate since the last TSG meeting in September 21.

Details of the report  
(summarised)

- HRA New Homes, Housing Strategy and Housing Enabling;
- Housing Property Team;
- Capital Programmes;
- Asset Management;
- Housing and Communities Team;
- Housing Performance Team;

Comments/queries from the group included;  
(summarised)

- Why were we setting up a new HRA Account from day one if we were all going to be one Council? *Due to legalities there was not enough time to 'stitch everything up' in the time frame. We would also like to consult with*

*tenants, this would also take time to achieve. There was lots of work to be completed over a number of years and was still up for discussion;*

- *Concerns with void challenges; we are running a workshop to see if we can improve that side of things;*
- *We should run some incentive workshops to encourage people to apply for work at SWT. We were looking at the job evaluation process to see if we can encourage people to apply for roles in SWT;*
- *Concerns with the capital programme, zero carbon compliance and retro fit. There were two big areas now that relied on retro fit, these were Heating systems and the installation programme. A retro fit working group was being set up to look at the whole area;*
- *Clarification sought on how the tenants scheme to down size was working. This scheme was really well received and was going well;*
- *Concerns with the ongoing ASB cases; an update on this will be discussed on the AOB item;*
- *What had been learnt from the Mystery Shopper exercise that took place in Customer Services? The exercise highlighted a few improvements that need to be made so we will give this time to embed and then do the exercise again to see if the Customer contact had improved;*

The report was noted

## 26. **TAG Annual Report - Wayne Hobson, Chair TAG**

The Chair of the Tenants Action Group gave an update on the Annual Report 2020-21

The report included;  
(summarised)

- Estate Walkabout's;
- Leycroft Grove Estate Improvement Groundworks;
- Funding through the Estate Improvement Fund;
- Funding the Local Community Projects through the Youth Initiative Fund;
- Development of the Youth Initiative Fund;
- Development of the Group;
- Involvement in the newly established Damp and Mould Task Group;
- Financial Summary

The Chair stated that despite the challenges presented over the past year, the group had continued stay connected through their online meetings. Over the next year, TAG was committed to increasing their membership and reinstating a more active role, working with the Council to improve their services, and continuing to support as many local projects as possible through funding opportunities. He also thanked the Housing Performance team for their support and advice.

Comments, questions from the group included;  
(summarised)

- Were there any group posters with the TAG Logo on it to encourage tenants to get involved ? *posters will be distributed to areas stating what we are and what we do;*
- Were that tenant group meetings only held in Taunton? *We are intending to go around the Taunton area to promote ourselves;*

James Barraah thanked the Chair for all the work that the group were continuing to do and was happy to support them in the future.

The report was noted.

## 27. **Customer Service Report - Richard Burge**

The Customer Services Manager, Richard Burge gave an update on the Customer Service Report, Quarter 1 & 2 included in the agenda.

Comments/question from the group included;  
(summarised)

- Concerns that the Council Office in Wellington was still shut after 2 years? *There was no decision yet for opening this office due to lack of staff at this present time;*
- Concerns that the Customer Service staff were not trained on what was an emergency for tenants who call out of hours. *The out of hours helpline was manned by the Deane Helpline and they should all be aware of what is an emergency in out of hours call outs;*
- Concerns with the call abandonment rate;
- With regards to the mystery shopper exercise, what have you learnt from this? *The feedback that we have received is that customers waited to long on the phone. Staff members did not have access to Academy, all staff now have access and are trained on this;*
- Was the Academy system now up to date? *A patch was applied and the system was now up to date;*
- Were there details on the Wellington Office door for contact details whilst this office was shut? *All contact details were posted on the door for customers stating contact details for queries;*

The report was noted.

## 28. **AOB**

Verbal update report from Stephen Boland regarding the outstanding Anti-social Behaviour figures.

A table of figures circulated to the group at the meeting detailed the number of current and outstanding ASB cases.

Reported that there had been an increase in ASB and crime with Officers threatened with assault which had been challenging.

The guidance for Help with anti-social behaviour for social housing tenants was updated by the Local Government on the 8 November 2021. The information aimed to make it easier for social housing tenants to know how to get help to tackle anti-social behaviour. It set out the powers, roles and responsibilities of the different local organisations so tenants knew where to get help in their situation as many local organisations, including the Police, local authorities, and social housing landlords had different powers, roles and responsibilities to help support victims.

Comments/queries from the group included;  
(summarised)

- What happens when the ASB is coming from a privately owned home? *We can make interventions to try and resolve the matter through mediation between the homeowner and the Council tenant or we can take the homeowner to court for breach of conveyancing conditions;*
- Tenants feel that they had not had any support from the Council as their lives had been made a misery by ASB. *Unless the perpetrator responded positively to intervention, we needed to follow a process. We did support victims of ASB keeping them informed of the progress made before all interventions were exhausted and the perpetrator taken to court;*
- A process to move this procedure along quicker was needed;

The report was noted.

(The Meeting ended at 8.24 pm)

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Tenants Strategic Group – 24 January 2022

### 2021/22 Housing Scorecard Quarter 2

This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing

**Report Author: Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager) and Kerry Prisco (Management Accounting and Reporting Lead)**

#### 1 Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides an update on the housing performance through key performance measures and financial information for the second quarter of 21/22 (July-Sept 2021).

#### 2 Recommendations

2.1 To note content of the housing scorecard for quarter 2 (July-September) 2021.

#### 3 Housing Scorecard

3.1 The Housing Scorecard is a tool to measure our performance in key areas. The scorecard was presented to Tenants’ Strategic Group in September 2021 covering the performance in Q1 2021 (April-June). This report covers the second quarter of 21/22.

3.2 Over the last 18 months Covid has had a significant impact on some areas of our performance, but we can now see a pathway to returning to full and normal service delivery however demands on the service remain high and increasing.

3.3 This report covers a total of 18 measures. Customer 5, Rent Recovery 2, Supported Housing 1, Lettings and Voids 1, Housing Repairs 2, Tenancy Management 4, Compliance 2, Development 1.

#### 3.4 **Customer**

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Customer</b>					
% of complaints closed in 10 working days (as per policy)	100%	95%	80%	69%	75%

Improvement in complaint response times has fluctuated due to significant service pressures, staff sickness and leave where it has not been possible to investigate and close all complaints within the 10 working day deadline. Extensions that are agreed are

not reflected in the figures. September saw a recovery in performance in this indicator.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Customer</b>					
% of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property	85%	82%	100%	92%	100%

During July, August and September 2021 we “let” 20, 25 and 23 properties respectively. Satisfaction surveys are sent to all new tenants. Satisfaction remains high, a small dip was experienced in August where we received 13 responses and 12 were satisfied or very satisfied. This is still well above target. In July we had 11 responses all either satisfied or very satisfied and similarly in September 13 responses responded with either satisfied or very satisfied.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Customer</b>					
% of tenants satisfied with most recent repair	85%	78%	100%	84%	90%

We continue to use an electronic questionnaire sent to repair customers as soon as the repair completes. There is a technical problem (currently being fixed) that prevents up to date mobile numbers populating this area of the system but where we can send surveys we do so. Over the three months 24, 37 and 32 responses were received. Results returned indicate high levels of satisfaction except for a small dip in August. It is encouraging to note that those who choose to respond are responding positively.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Customer</b>					
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	6	5	9

We have been receiving a steady number of compliments recorded formally since July 2020.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Customer</b>					
Overall tenant satisfaction (STAR results)	82%	81%	83%	83%	83%

Our STAR survey during November/December 2020 recorded 83% tenancy satisfaction overall. This is an improvement on our satisfaction rating recorded in 2018 which was



81% and exceeds the target of 82%. Two years ago, our target was to improve satisfaction and we have achieved that in our latest survey.

### 3.5 Rent Recovery

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Rent Recovery</b>					
Income collected as a % of rent owed excluding arrears brought forward	99%	98%	92.94%	98.85%	98.90%
Total number of all evictions	n/a	n/a	0	0	1

The performance decreased in July but has recovered in the two following months. Rent arrears at the end of September 2021 were reported as £653,502 which is 2.5% of rents owed.

There have been 2 evictions since April 2021, both are due to rent arrears.

### 3.6 Supported Housing

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Supported Housing</b>					
Sheltered housing - % of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans	100%	99%	99.0%	99.2%	99.1%

Our performance continues at just below 100% reporting 99%. We are confident that vulnerable tenants are receiving regular contact based on a current assessment of their need.

### 3.7 Lettings and Voids

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Lettings and Voids</b>					
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to key)	44	48	50.3	53	56.4

This performance indicator is widely used by housing providers, and the target has been set to reflect national best practice however many providers are reporting increasing voids turnaround times. There remains a higher proportion of major voids (which are properties requiring extensive work prior to relet). Our minor voids re-let time is nearer

target at 46.8 days). Detailed analysis has taken place in terms of the reasons for the delays and in each case (where longer times are reported) there are valid and varied reasons for those delays. Reasons for the delays range from delays allocating extra care properties, shortage of electrical contractors, awaiting asbestos surveys. The proportion of dwellings vacant but available to let was 0.35% which is top quartile performance against other providers taking part in “Pulse” benchmarking.

### 3.8 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Housing Repairs</b>					
Completion of housing emergency repairs within 24 hours	100%	95%	100%	100.00%	99.60%

Data for this indicator is taken from Open Contractor software system (which is used to hold repair jobs against the core property database). As reported in March and July, this data is unfortunately temporarily not currently available for non emergency repair reporting purposes. A detailed validation process has established that there are a number of data and software issues which are being progressed with our software providers we hope to be able to report this data as soon as possible. We are confident that this is a data reporting issue and that our service delivery of repairs in the context of Covid restrictions remains good.

It should, however, be noted that all housing emergency repairs have continued to be undertaken during the Covid lockdown periods and there are no backlog emergency repairs outstanding. To support this view a manual exercise to reconcile the emergency jobs is now ongoing and has confirmed 100% attendance for emergency jobs. The 99.6% reported in September represents one property that had its emergency repair completed 15 minutes late.

It should also be noted that internal housing non-emergency repairs were placed on hold during the latest Covid lockdown period and that a backlog of these jobs has therefore inevitably arisen. MD group have been contracted to assist clearing the backlog.

### 3.9 Tenancy Management

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Tenancy Management</b>					
Total new ASB cases in the month	n/a	n/a	10	9	12
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month	n/a	n/a	0	0	3
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month	n/a	n/a	60	69	78
Number safeguarding referrals	n/a	n/a	3	1	1

**ASB** - These figures represent “high level” ASB cases opened and closed in the month. We are content with our performance in this area but ideally would like the numbers to be as low as possible. Work has commenced to start recording lower-level nuisance/ASB cases so that these can be reported and provide a more detailed picture of nuisance/ASB on estates.

During the November Tenants’ Strategic Group meeting more detailed data was reported in response to requests for more data showing the number of ASB cases open over 3, 6 and 12 months. It is acknowledged that we have seen an increase in the number, complexity and severity of ASB cases over the last 12 months.

**Safeguarding** – We currently raise low numbers of safeguarding referrals to Somerset County Council. This quarter we have made 5 referrals. Where we do have concerns, we will frequently help to address these through a multi-agency approach to provide the required support and interventions to the affected households. We are launching awareness and training in the Council to ensure that all incidents are identified and managed within policy (this was delayed due to trainer falling ill with Covid).

### 3.10 Compliance

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Compliance</b>					
% of housing dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate (LGSR)	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
% of communal areas with a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) in place and FRA Review complete (where applicable)	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

We are pleased to report 100% compliance in these areas.

### 3.11 Development

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Jul-21	Aug-21	Sep-21
<b>Development</b>					
Number of SWT HRA new home completions since April 2019	1000 by 2049	20 per year	62	62	62

62 new homes have completed since April 2019, the performance indicates this cumulative number of homes built. Contractors are now onsite delivering 47 new properties in North Taunton. In June 2021 planning permission was secured for 54 new homes at Seaward Way in Minehead.

## 4 **Finance Performance (to be updated if finance is to be included)**

- 4.1 This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2021/22 (as at 30 September 2021).
- 4.2 The current HRA Revenue Budget forecast is a projected overspend of £566k.
- 4.3 The revenue position is under significant pressure as it continues to be affected by the ongoing impact of COVID and operating within an environment of economic recovery. The service has a backlog of responsive and planned maintenance and compliance works to be undertaken. Costs are escalating in terms of materials, staffing, compliance, and servicing costs. Future financial pressures are still to be confirmed in terms of staff pay award, income collection, cost of implementing regulatory changes, and the cost of implementing a unitary authority. A thorough analysis of risks and uncertainties facing the HRA has been undertaken and careful monitoring of these will continue for early indications of further financial pressures.
- 4.4 There is currently sufficient capacity in general reserves to cover new in-year pressures identified to date and the current forecast outturn position.
- 4.5 The unearmarked reserves are projected to be £2.493m which is £492k above the recommended minimum balance of £2m.
- 4.6 Whilst best endeavours to forecast with as much accuracy as possible we have seen a historical change in forecasts each quarter and to year end. However, it is essential that action is implemented in the remainder of this year to control spending to reduce the forecast overspend and maintain adequate reserves. The housing senior management team are currently working through options to see what can be done to contain the overall position.
- 4.7 The HRA Capital Programme has a total approved budget of £118m. The profiled

budgeted spend for 2021/22 is £29m and this is currently forecast to underspend in the year by £11.5m due to slippage of costs/works into 2022/23.

- 4.8 The earmarked reserves opening balance is £1.1m. Of this £869k has been returned to general reserves to mitigate in-year budget pressures. A further £175k is being proposed to be returned to general reserves.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Housing Briefing – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021**
- **Tenants Strategic Board – 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**Reporting Frequency: Quarterly**

**Contact Officers**

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# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Tenants Strategic Group – Jan 24<sup>th</sup> 2022

### Report Title: Capital Works Programme Update

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Housing

Report Author: Laurence Hughes

#### 1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

*The purpose of this report is to give a status update to the Tenants Strategic Group (TSG) on the Capital Works Programme. To illustrate the current operational & financial positions of the project, discuss the challenges and barriers to progress, and explore solutions to these issues.*

#### 2. Recommendations

*The Tenants Strategic Group is asked to note this report and are invited to ask questions.*

#### 3. Background and Full details of the Report

##### Contents

- Programme Overview
- Operational Performance, Budgets, Statistics
- Challenges to Programme Delivery
- Possible Solutions
- Any Questions?

##### 3.1 Programme Overview

- June 2021 – SWT employed designated Capital Work Manager.
- Remit – To focus exclusively on accelerating procurement & operational delivery of the Capital Works Programme.
- Provide Senior Management Team with accurate data/status reports.
- Review systems & procedures.
- Recruit & re-structure Capital Works Dept.

### 3.2 Key Capital Works Programmes 2021/22 (including 20/21 Slippage)

<b>Project</b>	<b>Budget Forecast</b>	<b>Anticipated Volume</b>	<b>Current Status</b>
Kitchen	£455k	97	On site
Bathroom	£200k	59	On site
Roofing	£470k	48	On Site
Windows	£1,464k	582	On site
Heating (Gas)	£685k	152	On site
Heating (Electric)	£192k	69	Procurement
Doors	£193k	351	On Site
Facia & Soffits	£791k	512	On site
ASHP	£554k	69	On Site
Door Entry	£588k	31	On Site
Insulation	£847k	565	On Site
Fire Doors	£200k	143	On Site
Emergency Lighting	£887k	212	On Site
Ventilation	£50k	166	On Site
Environmental Improvements	£383k	-	Procurement
Electrical Testing	£1,670k	2887	On Site
Water Mains	£100k	-	Site Surveys
Meeting Halls	£35k	-	Awaiting Brief
Garages	£95k	-	On Site/Site Surveys
Unadopted Areas	£150k	-	Procurement



### 3.3 Challenges and solutions to Programme Delivery

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Solution</b>
Covid 19	Very little delivery of programmed works during 20/21	Slippage works added to 21/22 programmes
Covid 19	Tenant access, workforce continuity	Try to convince tenants works are safe to proceed. Constantly revising Covid risk assessments.
Asset Data	Inaccurate data	Open Assets now being populated with accurate stock condition information
Procurement Delays	Key projects procured late in financial year.	Majority of projects now mobilised.
Material & component delays	Continues to have impact on programme delivery	Good communications and forward planning mean we can re-task programmes where possible.
Staff retention / recruitment	Team lost key personnel and has been under resourced	Recruitment process almost completed
Tenant Access	Access issues. Significant refusal levels	Close liaison with estates officers
Tenant Engagement	Not clearing personal belongings prior to works commence	Close liaison with estates officers

#### 4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate) N/A

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

#### 5. Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications directly to do with this report?

Please see table 3.2 above for Budget Forecast information. These programmes are to be funded through approved budgets.

#### 6. Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

There are no equality & diversity implications directly to do with this report

#### 7. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

There are no data protection implications directly to do with this report

#### 8. Will other Council Meetings receive this report?

This report is being presented to Tenants' Strategic Group only.

#### Name of Contact Officers: Laurence Hughes

Telephone number: 07984 354554      Email address: L.hughes@somersetwestand taunton.gov.uk



## **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

### **Report to Community Scrutiny – 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022**

#### **Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats Regeneration, Taunton**

**This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member  
Councillor Francesca Smith**

**Report Author: Chris Brown, Assistant Director Development & Regeneration, Ian Shoemark, Project Manager**

#### **1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats Regeneration includes two SWT blocks of flats and an SWT owned garage site. Wordworth Drive Flats contains a shop, 11x2 bed SWT apartments and a private leasehold apartment. Coleridge Crescent contains 4x2 bed SWT apartments. There are 13 garages on the site. A map of the regeneration can be found at Appendix A.
- 1.2 The report proposes that the Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats no longer provides the quality of accommodation, in terms of decency and thermal efficiency, which SWT tenants should expect and which the Council strive to provide.
- 1.3 SWT considered four investment options before concluding that the two blocks have reached the end of their life and costs to the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to bring the two blocks to an appropriate standard for the next sixty years does not provide reasonable value to the Council and to the HRA Business plan.
- 1.4 The report recommends the decanting of the Wordsworth Drive Flats should commence in April 2022 with the award of Homefinder Gold band status to the ten tenants. The awarding of Gold band status to tenants will maximise the rehousing opportunities available to the tenants through Homefinder and maximise the opportunities open to the tenants through SWTs Decant Policy. In addition, the negotiation and purchase of one leasehold property will progress and agreement will be reached with the shop for its closure.
- 1.5 The report recommends the decanting of Coleridge Crescent Flats commences in April 2023 with the awarding of Homefinder Gold band to the four tenants.
- 1.6 The report proposes that the properties/blocks are secured and then demolished to minimise any blight or nuisance to residents. The Housing Directorate currently believe that the garages can remain and continue to be let until an alternative use for the site is agreed.

#### **2. Recommendations**

2.1 The is asked to consider the following recommendations:

- (a) To approve the decanting of tenants from Wordsworth Drive Flats with the awarding of Gold band status in April 2022 to support tenants secure alternative suitable accommodation.
- (b) To approve the decanting of tenants from Coleridge Crescent Flats with the awarding of Gold band status at a time to be determined by the Director of Homes and Communities in conjunction with the portfolio holder for Housing.
- (c) To approve the purchase through mutual consent one leasehold property at Wordsworth Drive flats and compensate the owner in line with statutory compensation requirements.
- (d) To note officers will agree the closure date and compensation with the shop lease to ensure Wordsworth block is available for demolition.
- (e) To approve the demolition of Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats at a time to be determined by the Director of Homes and Communities in conjunction with the portfolio holder for Housing.
- (f) Officers to return to the Council with options for the future use of the site.

### 3. Risk Assessment

3.1 Below are the main risks relating to the proposal:

Risk	Score out of 25 based on probability x impact	Mitigation
Poor consultation may result in resistance and disconnection from tenants	10	Careful planning is required and consultation with all parties simultaneously (tenants, leaseholders, shop leasee). Keep residents and stakeholder informed
Limited alternative accommodation for tenants	10	Officers have analysed the availability of alternative accommodation to support the decanting of tenants. 2 bed properties are in high demand however there is thought to be sufficient turnover of homes to allow for decanting customers within 12 months of them being awarded gold band. Officers are conducting Housing needs assessments to understand the needs of customers and to explore any preferences or opportunities for downsizing or alternative accommodation for example sheltered housing.
The structural quality of the block deteriorates faster than anticipated.	6	An agreed monitoring regime has been agreed with specialist engineers to ensure the structure of the block is considered and any changes identified. A number of additional surveys are taking place and investment in barriers and garage access are taking place. A third-party fire safety assessment has been commissioned.

Risk	Score out of 25 based on probability x impact	Mitigation
Tenants experience on going poor property quality of homes and thermal efficiency as they await to be decanted	10	Tenants' will continue to benefit from SWTs comprehensive compliance, repair and maintenance service as they await a new home. It is recognised that that the properties thermal efficiency combined with electric heating means some customers are in fuel poverty. It is proposed that the directorate introduce a winter payment for tenants to reduce the impact of heating costs as they await decanting. A contract for damp and mould cleaning will be let to help manage any problems which arise.
Loss of rent revenue for SWT	15	The decanting of the two blocks will reduce the income from rent to the HRA. The HRA business plan has calculated and reflected the loss of rent and the cost of decant and demolition within its December 2021 review. It is assumed the garages will remain let until a new purpose for the site is agreed. The decanting of the two blocks will be phased to manage rent loss. The site will provide an opportunity for income through sale or new rental income.
Inability to purchase the leasehold unit	6	The Council is experienced at negotiating the purchase of owner occupier properties in regeneration schemes. Should purchase through mutual consent not be possible officers will return to the Council with proposals requesting the commencement of a compulsory purchase order (CPO). Officers do not currently believe a CPO will be required and currently enjoy a positive dialogue with the leaseholder.
Inability to resolve the shop lease	8	SWT is in dialogue with the shop leasee and are progressing through the corporate asset management team the ending of the lease and the compensation due. It is assumed that the shop closure will increase the vulnerability of the building and the security plan will reflect the challenge.
Site security before, during or after decanting	15	A number of mitigation measures will need to be agreed to ensure the site is secured and the community remain safe. Regular inspections of the site will need to be maintained and good communication with tenants and the community to help them report any concerns will be important. The demolition of the flats at the earliest opportunity is seen as important to reduce blight and limit any potential anti-social behaviour. Following demolition, a management regime will be put in place to maintain the space prior to sale or redevelopment.

Risk	Score out of 25 based on probability x impact	Mitigation
Covid, Brexit, market uncertainty	10	There are a number of external factors which continue to create difficulties when delivering projects in a timely way. SWT and other landlords has experienced challenges in securing contractors and materials to delivery projects in the most timely and economic way. This scheme requires a significant amount of resources from within the authority and therefore is reliant on internal capacity being available.

#### 4.0 Background and full details of the report

- 4.1 The properties have been recognised as poor for a number of years and this has led to a series of reports being commissioned to understand the most appropriate investment option.
- 4.2 Kendal Kingscott completed a report in March 2021 following an initial stock condition survey report from Curtin's. The report was inconclusive about the quality of the structure and unable to make a recommendation as to the best way forward.
- 4.3 The Kendal Kingscott report suggested commissioning a detailed appraisal of the condition and life expectancy of the concrete frame and associated elements, including testing the concrete condition.
- 4.4 The Curtin's concrete analysis report was received November 2021. The report has highlighted a number of concerns relating to the quality of the concrete and the condition and limited volume of steel reinforcement. As a result of the Curtin's report the building is deemed safe however as the engineers were unable to confirm a 20-year life for the building it is considered that the building is close to the end of its expected life. SWT has put in place a number of actions to monitor the building until demolition is undertaken.
- 4.5 Prior to receiving the most recent engineer's report officers had hoped that an investment option may be possible, and these properties were place in the Wave 1 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) bid to attract subsidy for the investment. However, as the properties will not be retained Officers are working to prepare alternative properties to substitute in the wave on programme should the council be awarded the fund.
- 4.6 Options considered for the blocks
- 4.7 Following Curtin's concrete report in November 2021 Officers carried out an option appraising which included the following alternative options:
- Do Nothing
  - Retention and investment (7 -60 years)
  - Phased decant of the blocks over two years without capital investment.
  - Phased decant of the blocks over seven years with capital investment.

- 4.8 Officers concluded that a phased decant of the blocks over two years without capital investment is the preferred option of officers both on economic and safety grounds.
- 4.9 The phase decant of the blocks over two years will require resources to:
- Carry out a limited amount of additional surveying and remediation work plus an inspection regime.
  - Decant 15 tenants (total circa £165k)
  - Support boarding up/security, disconnections, additional cleaning regime and additional tenancy support.
  - The purchased one leasehold property.
  - Provide compensation to the shop lease for being unable to extend the shops lease
  - Support a limited winter fuel payment for SWT customers due to inadequate thermal efficiencies, electric heating systems and the lack of an investment solution to create an affordable solution.
  - Demolition costs
- 4.10 The HRA business plan has also recognised the loss of rental income within its December 2021 review.
- 4.11 The housing service is working on the understanding that the garages can continue to be let until an alternative proposal for the sites use is brought forward.

## **5 Links to Corporate Strategy**

- 5.1 In 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and committed to working towards achieving carbon neutrality and climate resilience by 2030.
- 5.2 Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent flats cannot achieve low or zero carbon standards without excessive pressures being placed on the HRA Business Plan. The additional investment in the structure of the homes means that demolition is a more effective means to support the Council's strategic objective.
- 5.3 In 2023 the District will be adsorbed into one Unitary Somerset Authority. The Council and the Housing Service remains responsible for its statutory duties and therefore the decisions of this report are within the responsibilities of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Director of Homes and Communities.

## **6 Finance / Resource Implications**

- 6.1 Members are being asked to approve a capital budget to fund the Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats Regeneration. This scheme will support the Council's aspiration to provide thermally efficient and decent affordable homes by ending the life of these substandard assets.

- 6.2 A thorough investment appraisal of this project has been undertaken and the costs associated with the decanting and demolition of these two blocks has been reflected in the HRA Business Plan review December 2021.
- 6.3 The December 2021 Business Plan review has received independent professional advice to provide further assurance that the regeneration project is deliverable within the overall 30-year business plan.

## **7 Legal Implications**

- 7.1 No legal issues to report.

## **8 Climate and Sustainability Implications**

- 8.1 Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent flats cannot achieve low or zero carbon standards without excessive financial pressures being placed on the HRA Business Plan. The additional investment in the structure of the homes means that demolition is a more effective means to support the Council's strategic climate change objective.
- 8.2 The properties were assessed as EPC E and therefore in the 10% worst performing SWT council homes as measured against SAP/EPC criteria.

## **9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)**

- 9.1 There are no safeguarding or community implications.

## **10. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 10.1 An Equality Impact assessment can be found at appendix B (To Follow).

## **11 Social Value Implications**

- 11.1 The procurement process will consider the benefit contractors can contribute in terms of social value in particular local labour, use of local contractors and supply chain.

## **12. Partnership Implications**

- 12.1 No partnership implications identified.

## **13. Health and Wellbeing Implications**

- 13.1 Very low carbon homes which are well insulated, have good levels of airtightness and use ventilation systems are considered healthy homes. The properties at



Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent do not possess low carbon qualities and the construction techniques continue to encourage cold bridging which is a significant contributory factor for damp and mould in homes.

#### **14. Asset Management Implications**

- 14.1 The regeneration through demolition of the flats is seen as the best value for the Council's assets. The creation of a development site provides the council with an opportunity to improve its assets or receive a capital receipt.

#### **15. Data Protection Implications (if any)**

- 15.1 No data protection considerations.

#### **16. Consultation Implications (if any)**

- 16.1 Consultation has begun with the tenants, leaseholder, shop leasee and the Ward Member. There has been some support and very little concern raised from tenants to the loss of their current accommodation and tenants have welcomed the chance to consider alternative affordable housing through Homefinder. Currently the Council enjoy a good relationship with the leaseholder and both parties are keen to pursue purchase by mutual consent. The shop leasee has been surprised by the Council's position and discussions continue to take place over the date and timing of the lease end.
- 16.2 Communication with tenants and all other parties will continue to be critical as the regeneration proposals are progressed.

#### **17.1 Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)**

*Scrutiny will consider this report 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022*

Democratic Path:

- Tenants Strategic Group – 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022
- Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022
- Cabinet/Executive – 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020
- Full Council – Not Required

Reporting Frequency:  Once only     Ad-hoc     Quarterly  
 Twice-yearly     Annually

Appendix A	Map of the Regeneration Area
Appendix B	Equality Impact Assessment (To follow)

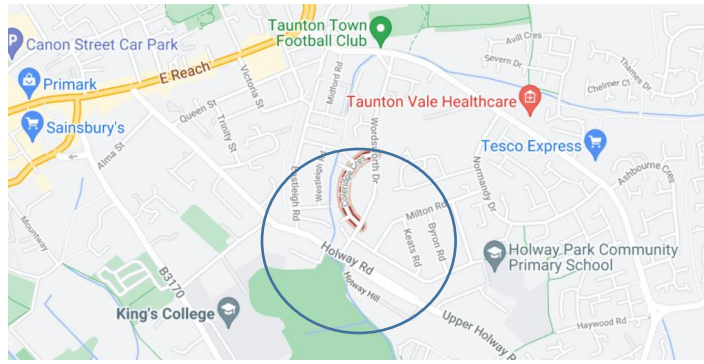
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Appendix A

Map of the Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats Regeneration Area, Taunton.







## **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

### **Tenants' Strategic Group – 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

#### **Directorate Report**

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Housing.

Report Authors: Assistant Directors and Housing Performance Manager

#### **1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report**

The report is to update the Tenants' Strategic Group on work being undertaken and progress made by the Housing Directorate since the last TSG meeting in November 2021.

#### **2. Recommendations**

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note this report and are invited to ask questions.

#### **3. Background and Full details of the Report**

##### **Housing Development and Regeneration Team**

##### **HRA New Homes, Housing Strategy and Housing Enabling**

- NTWP Phase A build is progressing and negotiations on the contract for Phases B and Ci will commence in January. A delivery programme for Phase E refurbishment is being finalised and a grant application has been submitted. Should the planning application be successful, a contractor will be appointed in the Spring and a steady refurbishment programme will commence. The Council is waiting to see if it has been successful in being awarded Social Housing Decarbonisation Funding to help support this scheme.
- The Seaward Way development in Minehead will commence on site in January. Site security, welfare facilities and groundwork will be the first work elements.

- The planning applications for the zero carbon affordable housing schemes on various sites in Taunton was submitted and should be considered by planning committee in February/March. These schemes include a phosphate mitigation strategy which the service is hopeful will meet Natural England and the Local Planning Authorities requirements. If the mitigation strategy is approved the service will accelerate its programme of investment in septic tank replacements to create more phosphate credits.
- The service was successful in a bid for RSAP(Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme) to part fund 12 units of accommodation to support the Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy and delivery plan.
- The service is leading the thinking of the Council's HRA low carbon retrofit strategy. This work is gaining momentum and over the next 12 months a strategy and a financial and delivery plan to support it will emerge. SWT has submitted a grant request (as part of a consortium bid), under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave one and the service propose to submit a much more ambitious wave two bid in Spring. Successful retrofit will require significant tenant involvement to permit access to carry out works, understand fuel use before and after improvements and act as champions to develop confidence for other customers.
- Sixteen apartments at Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent have unfortunately reached the end of their life. The properties are failing on decent homes and thermal efficiency standards and the structure of the buildings are of insufficient quality to merit investment. The service has engaged with the 14 tenants, a leaseholder and the shop and a report is making its way through the Council's decision-making process to support the recommendation.
- New affordable housing in the district is set to see a higher-than-average number of properties completed this financial year. The pipeline of new units is currently at its strongest in the west of the district, which is unaffected by the phosphate mitigation planning requirements.
- The Housing Enabling team are also preparing the district for the impact of First Homes which is a Government initiative to increase low-cost home ownership.

### **Housing Property Team**

#### **Responsive Repairs and Void Repairs**

- Both emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs continue to be undertaken, with all Covid precautions in place.
- Emergency repairs are all being delivered within our defined timescale (24 hours from logging).
- There remains a backlog of non-emergency repair jobs, although this is reducing following the use of external contractors. We are reviewing further procurement options for additional external contractor support.
- Void repairs are also being carried out, although returning the properties back to our Lettings team promptly remains a challenge.

- We are still actively seeking to recruit skilled tradespersons for our in-house activities and we are reviewing payment levels (via benchmarking and job evaluation). We are also considering a 'job-fair' event.

### **Property Safety Compliance**

- All property safety compliance checks and works continue to be undertaken, again with all Covid precautions in place.
- These include gas safety checks (LGSR's), water risk assessments and remedial works, electrical inspections (EICR's), asbestos surveys and re-inspections, fire risk assessment and remedial works, fire safety checks, and lift and stair-lift checks and remedial works.
- We have appointed an independent third party consultant to undertake sample quality audits of heating and electrical works (both in-house and for external contractors) and will be implementing this approach fully in the next few months.
- Weekly review meetings are being held to carefully monitor and manage all safety critical areas.

### **Capital Programmes**

- Progress on Capital Work programmes has increased, in particular with kitchen and bathroom replacements, emergency lighting, additional electrical testing, and window replacements.
- Procurement activities remain at a high level, including flooring replacement to communal areas of flat blocks.
- Recruitment for a number of vacant staff positions is being undertaken.

### **Asset Management**

- Post 'go-live' work on our Capita Open Assets module continues, including the development of reports (e.g. Decent Homes position) and further data-loading and checking from stock condition and energy surveys.
- Accelerated programmes of Stock Condition Surveys and Energy Assessments continue to take place, with support from external consultants.
- Detailed capital work programme planning is actively being undertaken, as well as a review of their financial impact on our long-term Business Plan.

## **Housing and Communities Team**

### **Extra Care Housing**

- SWT and Care staff are taking precautions to protect tenants from the additional Covid risks.

### **Sheltered Housing**

- As directed, staff are working from home where possible, but sign-ups etc. are continuing as usual.

## Lettings

- Lettable Standard has been to HMST and is due to be forwarded to TSG shortly for their consideration. A further meeting with the TAG will take place in early 2022
- 282 properties have been re-let YTD- April -November.
- Customer satisfaction year-to-date is running at 98%. Recent feedback received includes comments such as “I am very satisfied with the whole process”.
- Compliments have also been received about individual Lettings team members, one being “Debbie James and Georgina Farebrother were lovely - nothing was too much trouble, really very helpful.”
- Home Moves Plus project continues to make best use of SWT housing stock the project is still on course to achieve the target figures well in advance of the target date. 89 bedspaces have currently been freed up which amounts to 34 households. The current pipeline contains work involving the potential of returning two 6 bed properties and one 5 bed property to SWT.
- Voids turnaround times are still adversely affected by Shortages of SWT trades staff and supply chain issues within the construction industry. However, ‘major voids’ have been reduced from a year-to-date high of 80 days to the current figure of 67.

## Income

- The team sent Christmas texts to those tenants in arrears on 24<sup>th</sup> November and 20<sup>th</sup> December, reminding them that they need to pay over the Christmas period. The team will continue to work in accordance with the “Lean Process” to reduce the arrears, whilst continuing to support our tenants.
- An agency member of staff left the team on 16<sup>th</sup> December and another is due to leave on 7<sup>th</sup> January. We are actively seeking to replace both team members, but this does mean a reduction in the capacity of the Rent Recovery team from five to three officers until the roles can be filled. Existing officers will be working hard to mitigate the impact this has on our tenants and our rent recovery.
- We continue to work to let our vacant garages are currently working on a plan to rent more of our garages. We are also looking into other options for advertising the garages to see if we can increase the uptake.
- The team continue to work well within the changing environment of covid, they are mindful of tenants’ needs and ensure they are using the correct PPE.

## Tenancy/Estates & ASB

- Both teams will be reviewing working arrangements in line with the recently announced change in COVID measures.
- We are reminding staff to work in line with the previous lockdown measures to ensure that staff and customers alike remain safe, (for example phoning before visiting anyone face to face in their home to check that they are well and free from COVID symptoms, and wearing PPE).



- We hope to keep all our activities ongoing with minimum disruption.
- The Tenancy/Estate team is gearing up to recruit to two permanent posts that have been filled by temporary staff for some considerable time. Adverts are due to go live this week, with a view to the successful applicants starting in the New Year.
- We have also had another permanent member of the Tenancy/Estate team give notice to leave at the end of December. We will therefore be considering three full time positions.
- The ASB team are actively pursuing three difficult ASB cases into court and this is generating a high amount of administration in preparing the necessary paperwork for the legal team.
- In addition, the ASB team are busy testing Open Housing and ensuring that the system is ready in time for going live.

### **Housing Performance Team**

- A Senior Complaints Case Manager started in post to assist with improving complaints responses and outcomes.
- We have undertaken a deeper look into our complaints performance and compared that with Homes in Sedgemoor.
- The Christmas newsletter to tenants and leaseholders has been designed, printed and sent.
- The Tenants' Action Group have agreed to fund a kiosk (touch screen internet access) at Priorswood Place.
- The Children and Youth Initiative Fund awarded by the Tenants' Action Group has started to receive applications. Applications will be assessed in the new year.
- The "reporting a repair" online form is currently in the draft stages with our business analysts.
- The work to deliver a "tenant portal" which will provide tenants with online access to rent balances and other information will start in the new year.
- We continue to submit Pulse data monthly so that we can benchmark our performance with other housing providers.
- The second meeting of the "damp and mould" working group has taken place.
- A review of our Housing Policies has commenced with the HQN (Housing Quality Network), the review will include rewrite and introduction of new policies where required.
- TAG (Tenants' Action Group) has continued to meet, in person in December and virtually in January.

#### **4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)**

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

**5. Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications directly to do with this report?**

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 implications directly to do with this report

**7. Are there any Data Protection Implications?**

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

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