

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Tenants Strategic Group – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022

### 2021/22 Housing Scorecard Quarter 3

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 (October to December 2021).

#### 2 Recommendations

2.1 To note content of the housing scorecard for quarter 3 (October-December) 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 January 2022 covering the performance in Q2 2021 (July-September). This report covers the third quarter of 21/22.

3.2 Over the last 18 months Covid has had a significant impact on some areas of our performance including backlogs in work, 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	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Customer</b>					
% of complaints closed in 10 working days (as per policy)	100%	95%	44%	51%	48%

During this quarter there was a notable decline in complaint response times which have suffered due to significant service pressures, volume of complaints, 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.

It is worth noting that the volume of complaints has increased across the sector creating further pressure on capacity to respond on time. We note a 41% increase in complaint numbers to the end of January 2022. The Housing Ombudsman report covering October to December 2021 shows an increase 53% in the volume of enquiries and complaints received compared to the same quarter in 2020. In SWT November saw the highest number of complaints received during the month (43 Nov 2021 28 Nov 2020).

A detailed report into response rates by team has been completed and actions are in place to improve response times. The result of this work can be seen in January's figure of 68%.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Customer</b>					
% of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property	85%	82%	100%	100%	86%

During October, November and December satisfaction surveys were conducted with all new tenants. Satisfaction remains high. Survey results are from 19 tenants who responded "satisfied or very satisfied" in October, 23 in November and 14 in December.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Customer</b>					
% of tenants satisfied with most recent repair	85%	78%	90%	86%	93%

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. We are also investigating other software to improve our survey distribution as we don't have resource to manually complete surveys (satisfaction with repairs will form part of the wide STAR/TSM survey completed later this year). Over the three months Oct-Dec 2021 29, 28 and 16 responses were received.

At the TSG meeting in January we were asked to specify numbers of surveys going out, this is not available retrospectively but in January 282 surveys were sent and 28 responded with 85% satisfaction (which is 9.9% response rate).

Results returned indicate that we are exceeding target for our levels of satisfaction where surveys are completed (it is acknowledged that not all tenants are currently receiving surveys it is restricted to mobile users with access to internet via their phone). It is encouraging to note that those who choose to respond are responding positively.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Customer</b>					
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	5	9	12

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

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-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. We will survey again during 2022.

### 3.5 Rent Recovery

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Rent Recovery</b>					
Income collected as a % of rent owed excluding arrears brought forward	99%	98%	98.84%	98.74%	101.14%
Total number of all evictions	n/a	n/a	0	0	0

The performance is back on target by December 2021. Rent arrears at the end of December 2021 were reported as £724,499.70 which is 2.7% 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	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Supported Housing</b>					
Sheltered housing - % of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans	100%	99%	99.0%	98.8%	98.8%

Our performance continues at just below 100% reporting 98.8% (this shortfall represents 11 tenancies). 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	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Lettings and Voids</b>					
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to key)	44	48	64.8	60.7	43.9

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).

A plan to improve turn around times is in place and includes:

- Strengthening our approach with departing tenants to ensure they leave the property clean and tidy
- Providing decoration packs for able-bodied tenants, rather than undertaking full redecoration to let the property quicker
- Investigating how we streamline the asbestos process to reduce delays due to surveys and works
- Implementation of the voids module on Open Housing which will allow improved performance management of the overall voids process
- Look to undertake major capital works as part of the capital programme where possible, after the tenant moves in, rather than during the void. This will also be more cost effective through economies of scale.
- We will undertake a ‘deep dive’ review with Homes in Sedgemoor to compare approaches and share best practice
- Explore voids inspections and scheduling software that can lead to a more efficient inspection and scheduling of trades staff into the properties and flag up capacity issues to allow earlier resolution.

The target of 44 days was set in December 2020 for the current financial year and was based on Quarter 2 Housemark metrics that showed a median performance of 44.5 days for District Councils that held housing stock at that time. Since then, Housemark data showed that the District Council average void turnaround time had increased to 49.8 days by Quarter 4 of 2020/21 (and no doubt has continued to further increase this year) due to scarcity of key trades people and supply problems and sickness rates due to Covid.

The Housing Management team also reviews wider performance indicators to give a rounded view of performance with respect to letting of properties. The Pulse statistical data for September 2021 places us in the top quartile for the indicators “Proportion of dwellings vacant, but available to let”, and only marginally outside of top quartile performance for ‘Proportion of social homes let’, so our performance overall does give us some confidence that although improvement is required, we are not significantly out of step with other Housing Providers.

### 3.8 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Housing Repairs</b>					
Completion of housing emergency repairs within 24 hours	100%	95%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

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, 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.

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	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<b>Tenancy Management</b>					
Total new ASB cases in the month	n/a	n/a	9	6	4
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month	n/a	n/a	21	10	0
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month	n/a	n/a	66	62	66
Number safeguarding referrals	n/a	n/a	2	0	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.

In the January meeting TSG requested more information on our current open cases, this will be reported to the TSG as an action point response but in summary - January 2022 open cases were 39 (10 of which have been open for more than 12 months and detail is will be provided as part of the action point response).

**Safeguarding** – We currently raise low numbers of safeguarding referrals to Somerset County Council. This quarter we have made 3 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	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-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 housing communal areas with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)	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	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
<b>Operations</b>					
<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 and we started on site January 2022.

#### **4 Finance Performance**

- 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 31 December 2021).
- 4.2 The current HRA **Revenue Budget** forecast is a projected overspend of £354k.
- 4.3 The revenue position remains 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 had a backlog of responsive and planned maintenance and compliance works to deliver. Costs have escalated in terms of materials, staffing, 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 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 control over spending continues to reduce the forecast overspend and maintain adequate reserves.
- 4.5 Since the Q1 report the housing senior management team have taken steps to better control expenditure, to undertake the capitalisation of some improvement works' costs and to maximise income to try to contain and reverse our overspend position. For example, voids performance is starting to improve, and an additional 50 garages have been let in recent months. Since the Q2 report there has been ongoing movements in the projections in particular some below the line treasury and corporate changes, which have had a mixture of positive and negative impacts on the forecast. The overall trend from Q1 to Q3 is a slightly improved position.
- 4.6 Members will be aware that budget setting for 2022/23 has been challenging, where some budgets required re-basing especially around repairs and maintenance, and consequently the service will be pursuing efficiency targets into next financial year and beyond. Whilst steps will continue to be taken to further control our 2021/22 forecast, it is also acknowledged that some solutions will take some time to deliver and that we are operating at a higher operating costs base particularly in the short term which has influenced our in year position.
- 4.7 There is currently sufficient capacity in general reserves to cover new in-year pressures identified to date and the current forecast outturn position.
- 4.8 The **unearmarked reserves** are projected to be £2.708m which is £708k above the recommended minimum balance of £2m.

- 4.9 The **earmarked reserves** opening balance is £1.1m. Of this £1.044m has been returned to general reserves to mitigate in-year budget pressures.
- 4.10 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 £16.257m; £13.332m due to slippage of work into 2022/23 and £2.925m budget to be returned.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Housing Briefing – 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022**
- **Tenants Strategic Board – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

**Reporting Frequency: Quarterly**

**Contact Officers**

Name	Shari Hallett and Kerry Prisco
Direct Dial	01823 219425
Email	<a href="mailto:s.hallett@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk">s.hallett@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk</a>