

SWT Tenants Strategic Group

Monday, 28th November, 2022,
6.00 pm

The John Meikle Room - The Deane
House

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

[SWT MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

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

Agenda

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| 1. Apologies | |
| 2. Notes from previous meeting | (Pages 5 - 8) |
| 3. Directorate Report | (Pages 9 - 16) |
| 4. Tenants Action Group (TAG) Report | (Pages 17 - 20) |
| 5. Q2 Performance | (Pages 21 - 28) |
| 6. Housing Ombudsman Self-assessment update | (Pages 29 - 52) |
| 7. Housing Directorate 6 monthly complaints report | (Pages 53 - 60) |
| 8. Capital Programme report | (Pages 61 - 64) |
| 9. AOB | |



ANDREW PRITCHARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 26 September 2022

Present: Councillor Luke Manning (Chair)

Councillors Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Colin England and Ivor Hussey

Officers: James Barraah, Ian Candlish, Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager), Simon Lewis, Kerry Prisco, Tracey Meadows and Sharon Yarde (Housing)

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

60. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Samantha Rickward, Alex Akhigbemen, Kevin Hellier, Cllr's Lithgow, Lloyd and Smith

61. **Welcome from the Chair**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

62. **Minutes from previous meeting**

Action/outstanding points raised from the last meeting that needed to be carried forward;

- Concerns that drop-in sessions were still not available for tenants to discuss concerns. We needed to get this right quickly to get tenants talking to you;
- How many voids were revisited;
- Star satisfaction survey;

63. **Q1 Performance Report and Finance Report 2022-3 Shari Hallett and Kerry Prisco**

Update on the 2022/23 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 1 April-June 2022

The report provided an update on the housing performance through key performances measures and financial information for the first quarter of 22/23 (April to June 2022)

During discussion of this item the following points/queries were raised (summarised)

- Concerns with discretionary spends and how we could curtail spending. Stated that SCC could take on some discretionary payments;
- Concerns with void turnaround times in the report, we still needed to improve on the current figures;
- Clarification sought on who signed off void properties to make sure that they were to a lettable standard;
- Clarity sought on whether an Office post inspect a repair once finished? ;
- Concerns with electronic questionnaires sent to tenants. Stated that people talking to people was the answer and soft wear should be secondary to that as a lot of tenants were getting excluded from these surveys;
- Concerns with the satisfaction figures stated in the report, figures not accurate;
- A smiley face option on an iPad would be a better option to not personalise the survey;

Recommendations

To note content of the housing scorecard for quarter 1 (April to June 2022). The executive summary of the HRA finance report (2022/23 Housing Review Account Financial Monitoring as a Quarter 1).

64. Directorate Report- All Assistant Directors

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

During discussion of these items the following comments/queries were raised; (summarised)

- Once the briefing note to inform new Members in the new Council what it was to be a stock owning Council and social landlord was available it should be brought to the STG for a better understanding on how Social Housing works; *Agreed that this would be brought back to the group;*

Recommendations

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note this report.

65. Tenant Satisfaction (TSM) presentation- Sharon Yarde

The PowerPoint presentation circulated to the group before the meeting detailed what the Tenant Satisfaction Measures covered and why.

Described that the survey was a regulatory requirement from April 2023 and completed every 6 months. 23 questions were asked including the 12 TSM

question in areas such as ; Overall service, The home, Neighbourhood (including estate, ASB and Grounds maintenance), repairs and Customer Contact

During discussion of these items the following comments/queries were raised; (summarised)

- Concerns raised on the survey for tenants that were not computer literate;
- Concerns raised with cold calling to older tenants. Hubs needed to be available for these tenants to contact the Council;
- Concerns raised from tenants that did not live in Taunton felt remote from the survey;
- Concerns raised with the wait times calling Customer Services. A separate number was needed for the repairs line;

Resolved that the report be noted.

66. **Any other business**

- Concerns raised that Case Managers were not following up issues raised by tenants; *specifics needed to identify issues raised;*

67. **Actions points**

- Liaise with Jess re: the Walkabout that may not have happened, investigate;
- On Estate Walkabouts please can Tenancy Case Managers introduce themselves to tenants and speak to them;
- Repairs Action plan to be brought to TSG in January Meeting by new Repairs Manager;
- In next Q2 performance Report, drop repairs survey measure;
- Confirm how many tenants do not have access to the website;
- Add Luke Manning to the next Joint Steering Group Meeting;
- James Barrah to provide TSG by e-mail with the LGR Briefing paper that he is doing;
- All TSG members to provide examples of where they consider their Tenancy Case Managers have not responded, need to know when and how contacted – ideally call ref or case numbers please;

(The Meeting ended at 7.35 pm)

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – Monday 28th November 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 September 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

- SWT are close to entering North Taunton Woolaway Project (NTWP) Phase B and Ci contract which will see 51 new homes in addition to an increased number of 49 homes being built for phase A. Some phase A dwellings will shortly be ready for handovers and these homes 2050 Zero carbon ready. Visits to the properties are being arranged for members of our Tenant consultation groups, staff and elected members as well as funders. Visitors will see both the quality and size of homes but also the low carbon and ecological credentials of the homes. The development is incorporating many features such as bird and bat boxes, bee bricks and hedgehog highways.
- Piling at Seaward Way, Minehead Homes has finished, and brick work will become visible above ground over the next few weeks. The brick work is using large porotherm blocks which will allow a speedy build to first floor level. The porotherm bricks are a honeycomb construction often used in very low

carbon passivhaus construction. The 54 units provide a variety of property types and will be zero carbon.

- Four applications will remain in the planning pipeline until agreed phosphate mitigation approaches are confirmed.
- Unfortunately, inflation and market conditions continue to create challenges for building and retrofitting homes. We recognise that the increased cost of building homes is no longer a risk but a reality and the HRA is addressing these challenges as it reviews its 30 year business plan.
- The service is progressing at pace a low carbon retrofit Strategy and Delivery plan. Members will consider the strategy and delivery plan in December. The Strategy seeks to place tenants at the heart of zero carbon retrofit and this has commenced with tenants influencing the strategy.
- SWT has been awarded SHDF (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund) Wave 1 funds and has made a substantial bid for Wave 2 funds. In addition, a significant Energy company obligation fund has been reserved by a large energy provider for a neighbourhood based ECO4 programme with the contract being finalised.
- The procurement of a contractor to deliver refurbishment to 37 Zero Carbon retrofit Council woolaway homes at NTWP phase E and Oake has been amended and advertised for the second time following insufficient market interest.
- Our Enabling Development team works with housing partners and our own development teams and through this we see an increasing challenge in meeting affordable housing need in the district and specialist accommodation. These challenges are significant to the impact of phosphates, the volatility in the market and although the district has experienced significant house price inflation these matters ultimately have an impact on scheme viability making them unable to support affordable housing provision.
- Despite the volatility of the housing market in the district has seen 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 Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy and delivery plan was approved by Full Council in October and Officers are supporting the delivery of new homeless bedspaces through several partners and direct council supply. The council has been awarded £750k through the government Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme to accelerate the new provision round three including the purchase of 6 homes for Home First, which is aimed at providing independent living for complex Rough Sleepers.
- The service continues to deliver the Hinkley Point C Housing Programme, working with partners to drive forward 11 key areas of work. This programme is providing new bed spaces in the district and support to vulnerable customers affected by the change in the housing market because of the uplift of workforce at HPC. The service has received circa £440k to start new projects and extend the delivery of some existing projects up to December 2023.

Housing Property Team

Responsive Repairs and Void Repairs

- Emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs are being undertaken.
- All emergency jobs are being delivered within our defined timescale (24 hours from logging).
- The responsive repair requests are now being taken by a cohort of specialist repair call-handlers. This has led to a significant improvement in performance (less abandoned calls, faster answering, and more accurate detailed work orders being raised).
- We have developed a detailed Repairs Action Plan (RAP) which includes a wide range of activities being progressed to further improve the customer journey and drive-in value for money. This plan includes improvements to ICT systems (e.g. job diagnosis and appointments, trades scheduling, contractor portal), review of available reporting functionality, review and implementation of an updated Disrepair Policy and monitoring system, review of imprest van stock, review of our COSHH Register and associated Risk Assessments, review of fleet requirements (including move to EV's), and continuing to develop our approach to damp and mould (working with tenants on a specific group to address the issue).
- Performance on completing void repairs to meet our Lettable Standard continues to improve, with targets being met for both minor and major voids. We are, however, continuing to require external contractor support to maintain this position.
- We have undertaken a stocktake and are reviewing our stores stock utilising a new module within our Open Contractor IT software.
- We have successfully recruited an experienced interim Maintenance Manager to lead the team.
- We are progressing with a review of our materials supply chain processes, including procurement of a framework consortium (Procurement for Housing) to partner within development of an option appraisal process.

Property Safety Compliance

- All property safety compliance checks and works continue to be undertaken. 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.
- Following a procurement exercise, a new contract has been mobilised to undertake outstanding electrical inspections (EICR's) and associated remedial works. Some additional contractor resource has been maintained, however, to facilitate prompt completion of this activity.
- Weekly compliance meetings, together with additional EICR review meetings, are being held to carefully monitor and manage all of these safety critical areas.

Capital Programmes

- Progress on several capital work programmes continues on-site; including kitchen and bathroom replacements, fire safety works (replacement fire doors, fire safety flooring and emergency lighting), roofing, replacement gutters and fascias, and door entry systems. It should be noted, however, that available contractor resource remains a challenge and accordingly some programmes may not be completed by the end of this financial year.
- Procurement activities also continue, including review of required capital programme works needed to meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS), as well as our Retrofit aspiration.

Asset Management

- The service has identified pathways to Zero Carbon for 12 of the Council's 14 main archetypes. The service is working to integrate low carbon retrofit investment with the decent homes and capital investment programme
- New energy surveys are complementing programmes of EPC, Stock Condition and validation surveys. This data will continue to enrich the services knowledge of its stock.
- Post 'go-live' work on the Open Assets module of our Capita software system is now underway, following the Open Housing implementation.
- The service is working with colleagues to refine the start to finish capital investment process from business planning through to delivery to updating data following investment. This work has particular focus on the tenant's journey.

Housing and Communities Team

Supported Housing (extra care and sheltered)

- The officer team has 1 p/t staff member off sick who is planning to return 14th Nov 2022, so normal service has returned to tenants.
- In addition to their usual duties, staff have been completing fire safety risk assessments on tenants who may struggle to safely evacuate themselves, if there was a fire. This is mainly tenants on upper floors. In cases where this would be a risk and no suitable remedies can be put in place, tenants are being offered a move. Where requested (and possible, depending on voids) we are trying to keep tenants within the same scheme, to enable them to continue to have close access to the people and services they know and rely on.
- Our 3-month temporary member of staff has completed his contract and reduced overdue reviews to a more manageable amount. Team members are being tasked on catching up with the remaining overdue reviews but needing to balance these with the additional fire safety work (as above).
- The team continue to complete the bi-monthly estates and block checks and have been identifying suitable locations for bin storage on several schemes, with compliance and assets colleagues, in line with Fire Risk Assessments. We have also been in contact with the Hydrographic Office re: their trees being cut back where they are bordering our schemes and been assured this will be completed by Xmas.
- Budget restrictions have limited our ability to replace new furniture at Heathfield meeting hall. We have therefore re-distributed and recycled unwanted tables and chairs from other sites, to make the halls as welcoming and tidy as possible.
- We continue to manage several complex situations with tenants who have substance dependency and self-neglect and hoard. Challenges faced by Adult Social Care in recruiting sufficient capacity has meant a significant waiting list for assessment and support, leading to greater pressure on Housing in trying to manage these complex cases.
- Covid and its impact on supply chains and workforce has resulted in delays for tenants referred to Somerset Independence Project works to get adaptations works assessed and delivered. We have been working alongside colleagues in our Capital Works team to find alternative solutions for tenants where appropriate, such as offering a very low-level step-in shower, as this is easier and lower cost to fit than installing a walk-in shower.
- Plans are in place to begin practice fire drills within our extra care schemes. As many of these tenants are quite unwell and a number have additional needs, we are working with the compliance team and on-site Carers to enable this to happen with as little disruption as possible.
- Our Supported Housing Manager attended the recent Tenant Action Group meeting. She (or a colleague) can be available for future meetings where the agenda requires this.

Lettings

- Team working well with Open Housing system;

- Staff are settled in their roles.
- 3 tenants from Wordsworth Drive have successful bid on SWT properties advertised through HFS. They will therefore decant from Wordsworth in the coming weeks.
- Home Moves Plus project is ahead of target.
- Local Lettings plan being written for North Taunton regeneration project and Seaward Way.
- Lettings policy in progress additional work required on the above two items.

Income Team

- The recruitment process is currently underway for a Rent Recovery Case Manager. Following an earlier round of recruitment, the appointed officer has now started her employment and is settling into the role well.
- We are currently in the process of organising our Christmas Rent campaign. We will once again use text messages for this as we have had positive results to this in the past. The 1st text will be sent on 23rd November and the 2nd will be sent on 19th December.
- The Debt and Benefit case managers continue to work with tenants to ensure they are claiming the correct benefits. They are also working hard to apply for grant funding wherever possible to help tenants with arrears and any other debts. The team are also reviewing DHP's which are coming to an end for some tenants to see if they would be eligible for any further award.

Tenancy/Estates & ASB

- The Estate Team are now going through a period of change – we recently lost 2 of our long-term temporary staff and now attempting to recruit new staff to these positions. This has a major impact on the team due to patch areas not being covered and time involved in the induction and training of new staff. We are expecting the first new Case Manager to be in post by week ending 4 November 2022.
- The introduction of Open Housing has highlighted that the team deal with a higher volume of enquiries coming in than other departments by a considerable amount. The team must balance this work with being out on the estates.
- Complaints have remained low in both service areas.
- The team are also noticing that the number of complex mental health cases are on the rise. The knock-on effect with a drop-in vital mental health service is starting to influence the workload as tenants are turning to us for additional support,
- We are noticing that the number of low-level neighbour nuisance is still increasing but we will continue to monitor the impact of this on the team.

- ASB team have recently had success by obtaining a Suspended Possession Order. The tenant has complex needs but has agreed to the Suspended Possession Order without going through a full trial hearing.
- We are waiting to enter Court to end an introductory Tenancy for anti-social behaviour. The delay has been down to SHAPE (our legal service) having to out source this case to another solicitor.
- We have seen an increase in the number of Notices of Seeking Possessions we are serving for anti-social behaviour. We have found that this does have a positive impact on most cases and tenants will amend their behaviour rather than risk losing their home.

Housing Performance Team Housing Performance Team (Shari Hallett)

- We continue to support the work of the Tenants Strategic Group and Tenants' Action Group. On the 24th November 2022 we will hold third joint tenant meeting with Homes in Sedgemoor, specifically to engage tenants on LGR.
- The damp and mould group for tenants continues to meet and has agreed a set of actions. The group has produced a new webpage which has been published. A report on the actions of the group will be produced after the next meeting.
- A new Low Carbon Working group for tenants has their first meeting in July and had meetings each month.
- A group of involved tenants will undertake a mystery shopper exercise.
- The tenants' autumn newsletter has been posted and our Christmas newsletter is being prepared.
- We are collectively working with Homes in Sedgemoor on local government reorganisation workstreams.
- The policy review work with the HQN (Housing Quality Network) continues and TSG (Tenants' Strategic Group) members will receive revised policy documents for comment prior to publication.
- Our headline Tenant Satisfaction Survey results (completed in May 2022) have been received and during November the second part of the survey sample will be completed.
- Open Housing the new housing management software went live 27th July 2022. We are now finalising the tenant portal which we hope to be live in December. The portal will give tenants direct access to rent balances, tenancy and personal details, repair history, view communication, view housing officers. It will also give links to make payments and raise repairs and other communications.
- We have published our assessment against the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (which was reported to the July meeting) on our website. Together with other councils we have ensured that the new Somerset Council draft complaint policy will cover Housing Ombudsman requirements. The policy will proceed to Executive in January 2023 for approval.

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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Tenants' Action Group – Annual Report 2021-22 to the Tenants' Strategic Group

1. Introduction

The Tenants' Action Group having been meeting bimonthly face to face throughout the year. We have met in Monkton Heathfield, Creedwell Orchard, Tauntfield Close, Moorland house as well as Deane House.

We have altered the way TAG meetings are structured, to mirror TSG, so the group are meeting at 1pm for a light lunch to look at the actions from the previous meeting and any other documents on the agenda and then start the meeting at 2pm until 4pm. This has allowed more time to discuss other agenda items in more detail.

Two members, who attended meetings together, have resigned from the group due to other commitments, this has now left 6 members in the group. They worked hard with the Council to develop services and distribute funding to help local communities.

2. Work Undertaken

2.1 Damp and Mould. The Chair of TAG is involved in this group, and they have established a review of current procedures for dealing with damp and mould and produced an updated procedure which ensures damp and mould issues are dealt with efficiently and effectively for our tenants. This group has achieved some improvements in training staff and have a new web page on the website for the tenants to use for help and advice with the added benefit of links to boiler instructions and a flow chart to follow for support, in fact this group have achieved a lot in the year it has been running. There will be a full report on achievements in January's meeting.

2.2 Estate Walkabout's (Estate Officers)

Members raised concerns over the prior notice for Estate Walkabouts and whether the information included in letters prior to walkabouts was clear and received in a timely manner to enable communities to be informed about who would be carrying them out, when and where. The subsequent action plan involved:

- Adding a photo of the staff member carrying out the walkabout to the letter
- Staff members carrying out Estate Walkabouts would be given a tabard to wear ensure they are clear and visible to community members
- TAG members would sign up to attend different walkabouts to ensure there was a representative present at each walkabout.

Due to Covid restrictions, some of these actions have been delayed. Recent patch changes have also meant that we were awaiting an updated Estate Walkabout schedule from the Tenancy team. Now this has been received TAG members will sign up to join walkabout. Photos have been added to prior notice letters however, there have been some inconsistencies with this therefore the group will continue to work with the council to improve this process over the coming year.

2.3 Leycroft Grove Estate Improvement Groundworks

Chair raised concerns over the progress of the improvement project that had been planned at Leycroft Grove, with £100k previously reported to have been put aside for the project. Chair and the group have continued to question the project start date and worked hard to ensure that these improvement plans are followed up on, emailing the Director of Housing and holding the Council to account to follow through on its promise for improvement works for this area.

- The project is currently on pause until approval is given from Highways at County Council – the Capital Programme Manager is chasing this as work cannot start until approval is received.

Monitoring of the Leycroft Grove project will continue to be on the agenda for the TAG in the upcoming year.

2.4 Funding through the Estate Improvement Fund

A fund of £10k held by the group dedicated to improving neighbourhoods via the purchasing of benches or other small items which improve community spaces, usually on recommendation from Officers.

In the last financial year, the group funded the kiosk in Priorswood at a cost of 2670 this was mainly due to COVID restrictions.

2.5 Funding for Local Community Projects through the Youth Initiative Fund

A fund of £20k held by the group, available via grant applications of up to £3k to support organisations and projects which seek to improve the lives, health and wellbeing of people aged 0 - 25 years old whose families are tenants of Somerset West and Taunton Council (SW&T) and to help such organisations and projects to become sustainable and more self-sufficient.

Despite the challenges presented by Covid, the group assessed 6 applications to the Youth Initiative Fund and subsequently distributed a £3k grant to 5 local organisations and a £1k grant to another.

- **North Taunton Partnership** – Funding for youth activities in Priorswood including PRIDE in Priorswood.
- **Somerset Art Works** - Funding to help run a programme of Family, School and Community Activities including creative activities for children and their families in Priorswood and Lyngford.
- **Escape Support Group** – Provides subsidised activities and outings for families with children with disabilities.
- **Escapeline** - Prevention of criminal and sexual exploitation of children by providing youth mentors

- **State Of Trust** – Provides access to arts and crafts including the materials for children.
- **Churches Together in Wellington** – Free event for families in Wellington for the children including bouncy castle and BBQ.

Development of the Youth Initiative Fund

It was agreed at a meeting that the name will be changed to Child Youth Initiative Fund (CYIF) as the funding is for any age up to 18. The online application form has worked well, and a meeting was held to look at improving it slightly in the next financial year.

2.6 Grounds Maintenance

We have just started to look for regular feedback from Darren Hill to the Chair and the Chair is going to join meetings to enable him to update TAG.

2.7 Development of the Group

Group members have attended training provided by TPAS on courses such as 'Damp and Mould webinar' and both The Chair and Vice Chair attended the recent conference in Solihull with members of TSG. Members are committed to widening their awareness of key issues in the sector by attending upcoming training courses over the next year.

Various articles have been posted in Tenants' Newsletters to attempt to raise awareness of the group and their activities and to encourage new members to join. Over the next year the Housing Performance team will continue to work with TAG to publicise their activities and help to recruit new members to bring the group back up to full membership of 10 members.

2.8 VOIDS

This Group have now started to visit VOID properties and are collating information on a form to ensure the properties are relet in a timely manner in line with the lettable standard. They are also looking at how the properties have been left by previous tenants as some are requiring far more work due to their condition. They will then produce a report for TSG.

3. Financial Summary

The total budget assigned for 2021-22 was £44,300.

Name of Fund	Allocated Budget	Allocated Funds	Total Expenditure
Youth Initiative Fund	£20,000	CYIF project	£16000
Sparkle		Presents for children at Christmas	£250
Estate Improvement Fund	£10,000	KIOSK in Priorswood	£2670
Other	£14,300	TPAS Subscription Expenses – meeting travel and	£4000

		training	
Total Expenditure			£22920

4. Looking ahead

Over the upcoming year the group will:

- Continue to monitor the progress of the Leycroft Grove improvement works, receiving regular updates from the Capital Works Manager.
- Continue to work with the Council to improve the Estate Walkabout process.
- Participate in more task groups such as the Damp and Mould start and finish group.
- Voids - The group have previously had some involvement in monitoring the Voids process and they reinstated it to pursue for a six-month period initially to ensure we are adhering to the lettable standard.

5. Ongoing areas of concern for scrutiny by TAG/TSG

Leycroft Grove – Continue to monitor this.

Capital Works Programme – Ensuring it is delivered.

Estate Officers – workload and support.

Grounds maintenance - Standard in some areas are still not acceptable.

5. Conclusion

The group have continued to stay connected through their face-to-face meetings and improve local communities and neighbourhoods through the distribution of funding. Over the next year, TAG is committed to increasing their membership and continuing with their active role, working with the council to improve their services, and continuing to support as many local projects as possible through funding opportunities. With the upcoming merger, The Chair can see that TAG will be even busier and good clear communication, between the authority and the tenants is vital to establishing trust.

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants Strategic Group – 28th November 2022

2022/23 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 2, July – September 2022

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 first quarter of 22/23 (July - September 2022).

2 Recommendations

2.1 To note content of the housing scorecard for quarter 2 (July to September 2022). The executive summary of the HRA finance report (2022/23 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2).

3 Housing Performance Scorecard

3.1 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 September 2022 covering the performance in Q1 (April-June). This report covers the second quarter of 2022/23 July to September.

3.2 This report covers a total of 23 measures. Customer 5, Rent Recovery 2, Supported Housing 1, Lettings and Voids 1, Housing Repairs 2, Tenancy Management 4, Compliance 7, Development 1. Additional compliance measures have been added to this report since Q1 in this report we have also added the new carbon monoxide measure to the compliance section.

3.3 16 indicators have targets, 9 are green (on target or better), 3 are red (off target but targets are 100%) and 4 amber.

3.4 Customer

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Customer					
% of stage 1 complaints closed in 10 working days	100%	95%	42%	85%	96%

This year we are reporting Housing Revenue complaints separately to those outside social housing in line with Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM).

We are pleased to report our performance has improved, reporting 96% in September (23 out of 24 complaints closed in timeframe). The overdue complaint was a complex complaint which had to be delayed to allow us to arrange a convenient visit with the resident. A personal visit was required due to a mental health condition. The complaint was upheld, actions agreed and completed.

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Customer					
% of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property	85%	82%	80.00%	100.00%	82.00%

During July, August and September, satisfaction surveys were conducted with all new tenants, these surveys are undertaken on the phone. In the March 2022 meeting of TSG the number of new lets each month was requested alongside this satisfaction percentage.

July 2022: 16 properties let, (5 responses, 4 satisfied or very satisfied), 80% satisfaction

August 2022: 29 properties let, (6 responses, 6 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

September 2022: 18 properties let (11 responses, 9 satisfied or very satisfied), 82% satisfaction

Any issues arising have been resolved or are in progress.

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold
Customer		
% of tenants satisfied with most recent repair	85%	78%

To obtain these results we use an electronic questionnaire link, sent to customers of our Repairs service as soon as the repair completes. The numbers of responses have been low and results are therefore not considered representative. This matter was discussed in the TSG meeting September 2022. We will stop “officially” reporting this metric until a new solution can be found.

Due to the numbers of repairs undertaken there is not sufficient staff resource to call all repairs to complete a survey. We currently do not have another survey solution available for transactional surveys but do have an alternative for perception surveys – see below. A survey tool called “Voicescape” is being investigated for feasibility on transactional surveys if agreed, funding will need to be found and an implementation plan will need to be produced.

Satisfaction with repairs formed part of the pilot Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey completed in May 2022. This provides representative data on this indicator (the survey is conducted on the telephone with a representative sample of customers by a third party company). 75% of customers surveyed in this perception survey are satisfied with the way SWT deals with repairs and maintenance. This survey will be repeated in November 2022 to complete the representative sample.

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Customer					
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	10	9	12

We have been receiving a steady number of compliments and the total for the year to date is 51.

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Customer					
Overall tenant satisfaction (STAR/TSM results)	77%	75%	76%	76%	76%

During 2022 we are surveying twice, as a TSM (tenant satisfaction measure pilot), once in May and again in November to obtain our statistical sample. The May survey results indicate an interim overall satisfaction at 76%. This result is disappointing, however a decline of 5% landlord satisfaction is reported by Housemark across the sector. We are examining the results of this survey and preparing an action plan to address points raised by survey respondents. We will repeat the survey again in November to complete the sample size and gain an overall result.

3.5 Rent Recovery

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Rent Recovery					
True current tenant arrears at the end of month %	2.72%	3.02%	2.77%	2.63%	2.59%
Total number of all evictions	n/a	n/a	0	1	0

The performance in rent arrears is now being measured by the Housemark indicator “true current arrears”. Performance in this area is currently on target, the rent arrears figure at end of September was £703,285.

There has been 1 eviction from July 2022 - September 2022 due to rent arrears.

We have recently undertaken a ‘deep dive’ review of rent recovery. Our performance is close to top quartile when compared to other housing providers and we have been able to refocus the team on rent recovery now Open Housing has been implemented. A proposal paper on ‘voice-scape’ - an automated calling and texting service is being reviewed by management in December to determine whether introducing this would lead

to more cost-effective and better performance to reduce arrears further.

3.6 Supported Housing

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Supported Housing					
Sheltered housing - % of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans	100%	99%	97.40%	96.70%	Data not available

Our latest performance data (at 1st November) shows us that only 6 households have not got any support plan in place yet and this is being addressed. We are aware that our performance has dropped for number of support plans reviewed in last 12 months and are now refocussing the team on this. Our priority over the past two months has been on ensuring all fire risk assessments and related actions have been progressed and this has meant less focus on reviews. We are confident that vulnerable tenants are receiving regular contact based on a current assessment of their need. The team have now had some staff return from sickness and increased capacity will allow us to bring performance back to 100% in the next quarter.

3.7 Lettings and Voids

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Lettings and Voids					
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to key)	44	53	44	51	38

We are pleased to report that our plans to improve turn-around times has brought us back to target performance by March 2022 and continues. During August times increased due to the number of major voids (properties requiring considerable repairs).

3.8 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Housing Repairs					
Completion of housing emergency repairs within 24 hours	100%	95%	100%	100%	100%

Data for this indicator is taken from Open Contractor software system (which is used to hold repair jobs against the core property database). As previously reported, this data is unfortunately not currently available for non-emergency repair reporting purposes. As part of our Repair Action Plan we are making data and software changes are being to enable accurate reporting of this non-emergency repair indicator.

3.9 Tenancy Management

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Tenancy Management					
Total new ASB cases in the month	n/a	n/a	11	16	17
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month	n/a	n/a	6	29 manually;9 Open Housing = 38	19
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month	n/a	n/a	57	38	54
Number of new ASB cases reported per 1,000 properties	n/a	n/a	1.92	2.80	2.98

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. Benchmarking data shows top quartile performance September 2022 is 2.3 cases or less per 1,000 (median performance is 3.97 cases), our performance is close to top quartile performance.

Safeguarding – We currently raise low numbers of safeguarding referrals to Somerset County Council. This quarter we have made 20 referrals. These are largely related to identifying higher levels of concerns for adults who require a ‘care and support needs assessment’ from Adults Social Care and this has driven our referrals up.

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. Awareness and training in the Council has taken place to ensure that all incidents are identified and managed within policy.

3.10 Compliance

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Compliance					
% of housing dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate	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%
% of communal areas with all asbestos safety checks complete	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%	100%	100.00%	100.00%	98.39%
% of communal areas with all periodic water safety equipment checks complete	100%	n/a	100.00%	97.37%	100.00%
% of passenger lifts and through floor lifts with annual and 6 monthly service and inspection complete (TSM BS06)	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	50.00%
Carbon Monoxide Alarms			100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

We have added the carbon monoxide indicator to show where carbon monoxide alarms have been installed in properties that require them (this programme was completed last year but is monitored). We are pleased to report 100% compliance all areas except lift and fire risk assessments.

Fire Risk Assessments in communal areas is 98.39% due to our contractors' attendance being delayed in July and August. This affected 8 buildings (one hall and seven communal areas). All risk assessments have now been completed by in house specialist.

Lift inspection percentage compliant is 50% due to one lift that cannot be inspected due to access issues as the resident is in hospital.

3.10 Development

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jul-22	Aug-22	Sep-22
Development					
Number of SWT HRA new home completions since April 2019		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 onsite delivering 47 new properties in North Taunton and 54 in Minehead. A planning application will be considered in November for 8 new homes in Halcon and a new planning application for two additional homes at North Taunton is being prepared.

4. Executive summary of the HRA Finance report (2022/23 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 2).

The full finance report will be presented to the following elected committees, Community Scrutiny on the 30th November 2022, Executive 21st December 2022. Papers are therefore in the public domain.

4.1 Executive Summary - This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2022/23 (as at 30 September 2022).

4.1 The headline estimates for **revenue costs** are:

Revenue Budget	£0.330m forecast overspend	Red
General Reserves	£2.712m forecast balance = favourable (though low) compared to £2m minimum requirement	Amber
Earmarked Reserves	£54k opening balance	Green

4.2 It is well reported that the economic situation is challenging with the cost of living crisis, high inflation, and rising interest rates. These factors will hit our communities and businesses, and the Council is also not immune as seen in the latest forecasts.

4.3 The Q1 forecast outturn position reported an overspend of £745k. The Senior Management Team have since undertaken a thorough and in-depth review of all budgets, updated projections based on mid-year information, requested services to manage inflationary pressures within services where possible (e.g. pay award, utilities and material costs) and driven a focus on essential spend only where possible in order to bring the position back to budget. There have also been some contractual delays on delivering capital schemes pushing spend into future years and a need increase reserve balances this year to provide budget flexibility and financial resilience in 2023/24 on the face of significant financial pressures.

4.4 The updated projected outturn position of a £330k overspend is still significant. This is mainly driven by depreciation charges, the recently agreed national pay award, void repairs and tenancy management costs.

4.5 It is important to note that this is mid-year forecast for the year with 6 months remaining until year end. This will be carefully monitored with updates reported to Members on a quarterly basis. The level of General Reserves does provide the ability to cover the current predicted overspend, if required, but does not provide resilience to mitigate the risk of any further significant overspend or additional pressures. Housing Management will continue to take steps to reduce and halt spend especially for discretionary activities, to help mitigate the current position, and to try to maintain a more secure reserves position.

4.6 Members will be aware that budget setting for 2022/23 was significantly 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.

4.7 Whilst best endeavours are used 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 to support the budget gap in 2023/24.

4.8 The HRA **Capital Programme** has a total approved budget of £109.4m. The profiled budgeted spend for 2022/23 is £36.347m and this is currently forecast to underspend in the year by £9.073m; £8.700m due to slippage of work into 2023/24 and £373k budget to be returned.

Democratic Path:

- **Tenants Strategic Board – 28th November 2022**

Reporting Frequency: Quarterly

Contact Officers

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Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – 28th November 2022

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code - Self-Assessment update

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

Report Author: Claire Reed, Case Management Lead – Housing Performance and Improvement

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

The report is to update the Tenants' Strategic Group on progress made since the report of July 2022 in relation to our compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's revised Complaint Handling Code and our most recent self-assessment against it.

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

As you will be aware, the Housing Ombudsman revised their Complaint Handling Code in April 2022 with a requirement that landlords under the Ombudsman scheme must be compliant with the amended Code by 1st October 2022.

We undertook our first self-assessment against the revised Code in June 2022, a copy of which was shared with TSG at the meeting on 25th July. Following this self-assessment, we were able to establish a compliance rate of 84% for the *mandatory 'must' requirements* and 74% for the *best practice 'should' requirements* of the Code.

The Housing Ombudsman acknowledges that there may be reasons why a landlord is unable to fully comply with the Code for reasons beyond their control, and it is acceptable to the Ombudsman for the landlord to explain in their self-assessment why compliance cannot be achieved in these circumstances. A few areas of non-compliance were identified in the June assessment, due to the Housing directorate being bound by the wider, overarching Somerset West and Taunton Complaints Policy and IT systems.

Although our regulatory obligation is to self-assess against the Code once a year, we felt that it was judicious for us to carry out a further assessment in September, in anticipation of the 1st October deadline. Carrying out this additional assessment has allowed us to evaluate the progress of the complaints work that we have been doing in recent months.

It is worth noting that we had previously committed to carrying out a self-assessment every six months, but this timeframe is currently under review and a decision will be made depending on the democratic route required for the new Complaints Policy. We will update TSG further in due course.

The most recent self-assessment has also allowed us to consider how housing complaints and the requirements of the Code will be incorporated into the new Somerset Council's Complaints Policy. The Performance team has recently submitted a housing complaints centric document (written in conjunction with the Complaint Handling Code) as part of the policy work that is ongoing under LGR. Our September self-assessment therefore considered the new policy, as well as Somerset West and Taunton's current Complaints Policy. It is critical that the requirements of the Regulator and the Ombudsman are accommodated in the new Complaints Policy, to guarantee our continuous compliance as we become one Council.

We are happy to share the results of the self-assessment that was carried out in September 2022. The completed copy of the most recent self-assessment document can be found at Appendix 1 and should be read in partnership with this report.

In line with the Code, the document has also been published to Somerset West and Taunton Council's website, here: [Self Assessment Form complaints \(somerwestandtaunton.gov.uk\)](#)

Findings of the self-assessment (September 2022):

Following the September self-assessment, we are pleased to report that the Housing directorate has increased compliance with the *mandatory 'must' requirements* of the Code to 92%. It is noteworthy that compliance would have stood at 97%, but for the wider Council policy and IT issues mentioned above which are beyond our control. Adherence with the *best practice 'should' requirements* of the Code has increased to 94%.

The areas of the Complaint Handling Code are where full compliance had not been achieved following September's self-assessment are set out below:

4. Complaint handling principles:

Code section	Mandatory (<i>m</i>) / best practice (<i>bp</i>)	Action
4.2	<i>m</i>	We are not able to add extra text to complaint acknowledgements as current Council IT system restricts characters. We are unable to comply with this part of the Code whilst part of SWT. The Housing Performance team are currently working on processes to provide detailed acknowledgements to complainants which will ensure compliance. The new triaging and IT system proposed as part of LGR will facilitate this. The timescale of this is out of our control as implementation is wholly dependent on the new IT system going live.
4.13	<i>m</i>	We are not able to comply with this clause of the Code as the Housing service currently sits under the wider Council's Complaints Policy, and timescales are not included. We have added a timeframe to the housing wording for the new draft policy that complaints must be escalated within six months. We are unable to give a timeframe on this point as it relies fully on the sign off of the new Complaints Policy but approval of the policy will provide compliance.
4.17	<i>bp</i>	Resources are available in the form of counselling and 'Care First' plus support from line management. We will consider the guidance available from the LGO on supporting staff who have been complained about and apply this to Housing to ensure staff are supported and engaged.

5. Complaint stages:

Code section	Mandatory (<i>m</i>) / best practice (<i>bp</i>)	Action
5.1	<i>m</i>	The current Complaints Policy and handling procedures are compliant (stating stage 1 is 10 working days) but we recognise we still have work to do in this area as our performance figures have not met our target. On this basis only, we marked this section as non-compliant in the self-assessment. The Housing Performance Senior Case Manager has been focussed on reducing complaint response times as her number one priority project.
5.13	<i>bp</i>	As 5.1, our Complaints Policy and procedures are compliant (stating stage 2 is 20 working days to respond) but our performance figures do not reflect this. We are committed to improving these figures through the Housing Performance team's work.

Note: In relation to code section 5.1 (responding to stage 1 complaints within 10 working days). It is important to highlight that our policies and procedures are already aligned with the Complaint Handling Code, which demonstrates compliance with this mandatory requirement. However, in September's self-assessment we recognised that our response times to stage 1 complaints remained inconsistent, and we were not meeting the standard that we would expect against the Code. We therefore felt that it would be disingenuous to state in early September that we were compliant with this mandatory part of the Code.

Additional resource in the Housing Performance team and the resolution of some of the staffing issues we had been experiencing in key positions since the Spring have allowed us to focus on our complaints response times as a priority. This work is currently the principal project of our Complaints Senior Case Manager.

We are delighted to be able to report that the response times for stage 1 complaints in August was 85% within the ten working day standard, and 96% in September. We are confident that we are making strong progress in this area that we will be fully compliant with section 5.1 and 5.13 by the time we next self-assess against the Complaint Handling Code.

We will provide a further report to TSG with an updated self-assessment following the sign off and implementation of the new Council's Complaints Policy.

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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Appendix 1 – Self-Assessment Form

This self-assessment form should be completed by the complaints officer and discussed at the landlord's governing body annually. Evidence should be included to support all statements with additional commentary as necessary.

Explanations must also be provided where a mandatory 'must' requirement is not met to set out the rationale for the alternative approach adopted and why this delivers a better outcome.

Section 1 - Definition of a complaint

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
1.2	A complaint must be defined as: <i>'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.'</i>	Yes	Complaints Policy does not specify residents or group of residents as policy is for all Council directorates. Covered under 4.1 4.2 in Complaints Policy. Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy

1.3	The resident does not have to use the word 'complaint' for it to be treated as such. A complaint that is submitted via a third party or representative must still be handled in line with the landlord's complaints policy.	Yes	4.3 in Complaints Policy Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy
1.6	... if further enquiries are needed to resolve the matter, or if the resident requests it, the issue must be logged as a complaint.	Yes	Stage 1 complaint process Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy (Put Things Right)
1.7	A landlord must accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.	Yes	Complaints Policy – section 4.2 lists examples/reasons for complaint. Website now includes this text. Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy
Page 32	A complaints policy must clearly set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered, and these circumstances should be fair and reasonable to residents.	Yes	Exceptions are listed in Annex 1 and section 5 of the Complaints Policy. LGR Complaints Policy complies – s4 in draft v3
	If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint, a detailed explanation must be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process and the right to take that decision to the Ombudsman.	Yes	We write to customers to explain so are compliant on this part. Website provides wording about right of appeal. Included in draft Housing Addendum to Somerset Council Complaints Policy

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
1.4	Landlords should recognise the difference between a service request , where a resident may be unhappy with a situation that they wish to have rectified, and a complaint about the service they have/have not received.	Yes	Section 5.1 and 5.2 of Complaints Policy talks about initial service requests. New LGR Complaints Policy complies in s4
1.5	Survey feedback may not necessarily need to be treated as a complaint, though, where possible, the person completing the survey should be made aware of how they can pursue their dissatisfaction as a complaint if they wish to.	Yes	Acuity advise residents of this when carrying out surveys on our behalf.

Section 2 - Accessibility and awareness

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
2.1	Landlords must make it easy for residents to complain by providing different channels through which residents can make a complaint such as in person, over the telephone, in writing, by email and digitally. While the Ombudsman recognises that it may not be feasible for a landlord to use all of the potential channels, there must be more than one route of access into the complaints system.	Yes	7.2 – 7.4 of Complaints Policy covers channels to raise complaints New LGR Complaints Policy complies in s7
2.3	Landlords must make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for all residents. This will detail the number of stages involved, what will happen at each stage and the timeframes for responding.	Yes	Policy online (pdf) had accessibility check before being published. Available in different formats upon request. Website wording reflects this. Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy
2.4	Landlord websites, if they exist, must include information on how to raise a complaint. The complaints policy and process must be easy to find on the website.	Yes	Corporate Website complies. Housing pages all link to complaints page. One to consider for when new Somerset Council website is created
2.5	Landlords must comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may need to adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual's needs. Landlords must satisfy themselves that their policy sets out how they will respond to reasonable adjustments requests in line with the Equality Act and that complaints handlers have had appropriate training to deal with such requests.	Yes	Equality statement separately on website (linked in 3.1 of Complaints Policy) Policy references – 3.1 (bullet point 7 & 8), 6.2, 6.3, 12.2 New LGR Complaints Policy complies s6 and wording included in draft Housing Addendum

2.6	Landlords must publicise the complaints policy and process, the Complaint Handling Code and the Housing Ombudsman Scheme in leaflets, posters, newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	Complaints Policy is on website. Website wording includes details of HO scheme and links to Code and self assessment. LGR - Will need to ensure this is done from 1st April 2023 to remain compliant We regularly provide details of HO scheme information in tenant newsletters, handbook, forward plan, annual reports etc. and we have set up a folder of evidence of this.
2.7	Landlords must provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.	Yes	As above, this is included in regular newsletters to tenants, online and evidence recorded.
2.8	Landlords must provide early advice to residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service throughout their complaint, not only when the landlord's complaints process is exhausted.	Yes	Stage 1 responses now include wording on this and where residents are contacted during complaints process, this information is provided to them. Website details that residents can access HO at any time during process.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
2.2	Where a landlord has set up channels to communicate with its residents via social media, then it should expect to receive complaints via those channels. Policies should contain details of the steps that will be taken when a complaint is received via social media and how confidentiality and privacy will be maintained.	Yes	Policy 7.4 complies Confidentiality covered in 2.1, 2.2 in Complaints Policy. Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy

Section 3 - Complaint handling personnel

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.1	Landlords must have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling to ensure complaints receive the necessary attention, and that these are reported to the governing body. This Code will refer to that person or team as the "complaints officer".	Yes	Council's Customer Experience Manager is current link officer to HO Customer Resolution team within Housing Performance take responsibility for all Housing complaints handling.
3.2	...the complaint handler appointed must have appropriate complaint handling skills and no conflicts of interest.	Yes	The Council's Customer Experience Manager and Housing Performance's Customer Resolution team attend regular CPD and training. Performance team engage with specific, relevant HO training. All Housing staff attended HQN complaints training and most attended customer service training Oct 2021

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
3.3	Complaint handlers should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be able to act sensitively and fairly • be trained to handle complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents • have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints • have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly. 	Yes	All Housing staff attended HQN complaints training and most (those managing complaints) attended customer service training Oct 2022 Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy

Section 4 - Complaint handling principles

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.1	<p>Any decision to try and resolve a concern must be taken in agreement with the resident and a landlord's audit trail/records should be able to demonstrate this. Landlords must ensure that efforts to resolve a resident's concerns do not obstruct access to the complaints procedure or result in any unreasonable delay. It is not appropriate to have extra named stages (such as 'stage 0' or 'pre-complaint stage') as this causes unnecessary confusion for residents.</p> <p>When a complaint is made, it must be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure within five days of receipt.</p>	Yes	<p>Included in draft Housing Addendum - we do not name a stage 0 but will use an unofficial 'put things right' stage with customer's agreement.</p> <p>Compliant – triaging is usually undertaken within two days at present. If anything is unclear in complaint, clarity is sought from customer.</p>
4.2	<p>Within the complaint acknowledgement, landlords must set out their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes the resident is seeking.</p> <p>If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.</p>	No	<p>Currently restricted with Council IT system character limitation which prevents us setting out understanding of complaint in acknowledgement.</p> <p>LGR - New triaging process and IT system proposed means we will be able to send more detailed acknowledgements so will ensure compliance. Process will be in place ready for new IT system go-live.</p>
4.6	<p>A complaint investigation must be conducted in an impartial manner.</p>	Yes	<p>All responses are checked by Housing Performance's Customer Resolution team.</p> <p>Covered by 3.1 of Complaints Policy (bullet points 2 & 6).</p> <p>LGR – covered in Complaints Policy in Fairness section (s2) and draft Housing Addendum</p>

4.7	<p>The complaint handler must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deal with complaints on their merits • act independently and have an open mind • take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest • consider all information and evidence carefully • keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter. 	Yes	<p>Covered by Complaints Policy in 3.1 (bullet points 2 & 6) and 12.1 to 12.3 Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy</p>
4.11	<p>Landlords must adhere to any reasonable arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication</p>	Yes	<p>All reasonable arrangements are considered and discussed with the complainant</p>
4.12	<p>The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • set out their position • comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made. 	Yes	<p>Escalating to stage 2 provides opportunity for resident to comment before final decision is made. Staff members who are complained about are spoken to by investigating manager at stage 2 for their position and comment.</p>
4.13	<p>A landlord must include in its complaints policy its timescales for a resident to request escalation of a complaint</p>	No	<p>Housing currently part of wider Council's Complaint Policy, and this is not covered so unable to comply. Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy – timeframe of 6 months</p>
4.14	<p>A landlord must not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints</p>	Yes	<p>When accepted at stage 1, complaint can proceed through full escalation process if requested or it is deemed appropriate. We do not have additional criteria to decline a complaint at stage 2. Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy</p>
4.15	<p>A full record must be kept of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage. This must include the original complaint and the date received, all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared.</p>	Yes	<p>Firmstep records complaint from cradle to grave. Customer Resolution team keep spread sheet records of all complaints. Customer data is retained in line with Council's data retention policy. LGR -Compliance will continue with new IT system</p>

4.18	Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint.	Yes	Unreasonable Customer Behaviour and Vexatious Complaints Policy covers this. Complaints Policy refers 14.1 & 14.2 Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy
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Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
4.3	Landlords should manage residents' expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic	Yes	We do not make assumptions until we have the full picture of the complaint and we have had the opportunity to investigate, but we will be clear with residents as to what we are able to do to resolve a complaint. We manage expectations through the stage 1 complaint.
4.4	A complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity, having assessed what evidence is needed to fully consider the issues, what outcome would resolve the matter for the resident and whether there are any urgent actions required.	Yes	Current policy 1.5 and 3.1 (bullet point 4, guiding principles) Put Things Right (informal stage) in draft Housing Addendum
4.5	Landlords should give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord where this is reasonable.	Yes	Complaints Policy 6.2 to 6.4 complies Included in LGR Complaints Policy s7 and draft Housing Addendum
4.8	Where a key issue of a complaint relates to the parties' legal obligations landlords should clearly set out their understanding of the obligations of both parties.	Yes	This is covered in the stage 1 response
4.9	Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors.	Yes	All responses are checked by Performance team to ensure compliance
4.10	Landlords should keep residents regularly updated about the progress of the investigation.	Yes	Performance team procedure documents reflect this. Complaints Policy provides agreed timescales (10 and 20 working days) and communication if extensions are required.
4.16	Landlords should seek feedback from residents in relation to the landlord's complaint handling as part of the drive to encourage a positive complaint and learning culture	Yes	TSM Satisfaction Survey – every 6 months. Senior Case Manager's project work includes customer satisfaction surveys (ties in with TSM)

Section 5 - Complaint stages

Mandatory 'must' requirements Stage 1

4.17	Landlords should recognise the impact that being complained about can have on future service delivery. Landlords should ensure that staff are supported and engaged in the complaints process, including the learning that can be gained	No	Staff have access to counselling services through work if required and are provided with support from line managers where needed. Currently an action for the Housing Performance Senior Case Manager to look at this in more depth in a complaints context.
4.19	Any restrictions place on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.	Yes	Each application of the policy is considered on a case by case basis and considers vulnerabilities and needs. Reference the Act is included in LGR Complaints Policy and draft Housing Addendum

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.1	Landlords must respond to the complaint <u>within 10 working days</u> of the complaint being logged. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.	No	Complaints Policy (and LGR) does state 10 working days for stage 1 complaints so our policy is compliant. Policy also covers communicating new deadlines with customers (annex 2 complaints process map). Work is ongoing work to improve response times as a dept. This is a priority for Senior Case Manager
5.5	A complaint response must be sent to the resident when the answer to the complaint is known, not when the outstanding actions required to address the issue, are completed. Outstanding actions must still be tracked and actioned expeditiously with regular updates provided to the resident.	Yes	Policy covers (under 9.5) and this is put into practice Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy. HP team keep an 'Outstanding Actions' log and follow these through with service area

5.6	Landlords must address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.	Yes	Housing Performance team gatekeep complaints to comply with this. Guidance and training (HQN) undertaken and future training planned with Council's Customer Services team.
5.8	Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage one in clear, plain language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions details of how to escalate the matter to stage two if the resident is not satisfied with the answer	Yes	Changes have been made to ensure that HP include this information on all stage 1 complaints now.

Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.9	If all or part of the complaint is not resolved to the resident's satisfaction at stage one it must be progressed to stage two of the landlord's procedure, unless an exclusion ground now applies. In instances where landlord declines to escalate a complaint it must clearly communicate in writing its reasons for not escalating as well as the resident's right to approach the Ombudsman about its decision.	Yes	No exclusions under policy. Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy

5.10	On receipt of the escalation request, landlords must set out their understanding of issues outstanding and the outcomes the resident is seeking. If any aspect of the complaint is unclear, the resident must be asked for clarification and the full definition agreed between both parties.	Yes	LGR - Work is ongoing with Housing Performance team to ensure we are compliant when the new IT system allows.
5.11	Landlords must only escalate a complaint to stage two once it has completed stage one and at the request of the resident.	Yes	Current Complaints Policy covers LGR Complaints Policy complies
5.12	The person considering the complaint at stage two, must not be the same person that considered the complaint at stage one.	Yes	Point 1.6 and annex 2 of policy covers. Usually a more senior member of staff considers at stage 2. Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy
5.13	Landlords must respond to the stage two complaint <u>within 20 working days</u> of the complaint being escalated. Exceptionally, landlords may provide an explanation to the resident containing a clear timeframe for when the response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason.	No	Policy does state 20 working days for stage 2 complaints. Policy covers communicating new deadlines with customers (annex 2 complaints process map). Marked as non-compliant only due to ongoing work to improve as a dept. This is a priority for Senior Case Manager

5.16	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage two in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions <p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the landlord has a third stage, details of how to escalate the matter to stage three • if this was the final stage, details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied. 	Yes	Carried out as standard at stage 2. Gatekeeping by HP team ensure this takes place.
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Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.17	<p>Two stage landlord complaint procedures are ideal. This ensures that the complaint process is not unduly long. If landlords strongly believe a third stage is necessary, they must set out their reasons for this as part of their self-assessment. A process with more than three stages is not acceptable under any circumstances.</p>	Yes	Two stage Policy in force

5.20	<p>Landlords must confirm the following in writing to the resident at the completion of stage three in clear, plain language:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the complaint stage • the complaint definition • the decision on the complaint • the reasons for any decisions made • the details of any remedy offered to put things right • details of any outstanding actions • details of how to escalate the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service if the resident remains dissatisfied 	N/A	
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Best practice ‘should’ requirements

Stage 1

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.2	If an extension beyond 20 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	Yes	Policy accounts for this under annex 2. Being considered by SCM as part of process review
5.3	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman’s contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord’s plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord’s response.	Yes	Included in our correspondence with the complainant if we are contacting them to request extension.
5.4	Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should consider any older reports as part of the background to the	Yes	Performance team gatekeeping complaints for Housing ensures historical records can be accessed

	complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident.		
5.7	Where residents raise additional complaints during the investigation, these should be incorporated into the stage one response if they are relevant and the stage one response has not been issued. Where the stage one response has been issued, or it would unreasonably delay the response, the complaint should be logged as a new complaint.	Yes	Separate issues raised as new complaint. Related issues are added into existing complaint but also logged for stats purposes on complaint handling.

Stage 2

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
5.14	If an extension beyond 10 working days is required to enable the landlord to respond to the complaint fully, this should be agreed by both parties.	Yes	Agreed in discussions between handling manager and complainant. Currently being considered as part of Senior Case Manager's project work to improve processes.
5.15	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response	Yes	Included in our correspondence with the complainant if we are contacting them to request extension.

Stage 3

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
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5.18	Complaints should only go to a third stage if the resident has actively requested a third stage review of their complaint. Where a third stage is in place and has been requested, landlords must respond to the stage three complaint within 20 working days of the complaint being escalated. Additional time will only be justified if related to convening a panel. An explanation and a date for when the stage three response will be received should be provided to the resident.	N/A	No third stage
5.19	Where agreement over an extension period cannot be reached, landlords should provide the Housing Ombudsman's contact details so the resident can challenge the landlord's plan for responding and/or the proposed timeliness of a landlord's response.	N/A	No third stage

Section 6 - Putting things right

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
6.1	Effective dispute resolution requires a process designed to resolve complaints. Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right.	Yes	Housing Performance as a central complaint handling team are impartial. Policy covers remedial action (8.1, 8.2 and 9.2-9.5) Marked as non-compliant only due to ongoing work to improve as a dept. This is a priority for Senior Case Manager

6.2	Any remedy offered must reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. A landlord must carefully manage the expectations of residents and not promise anything that cannot be delivered or would cause unfairness to other residents.	Yes	Redress Policy complies. Complaints Policy covers remedial action (8.1, 8.2 and 9.2-9.5) Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy
6.5	The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.	Yes	Complaints Policy covers remedial action (8.1, 8.2 and 9.2-9.5) Included in draft Housing Addendum to LGR Complaints Policy
6.6	In awarding compensation, a landlord must consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred, the time and trouble a resident has been put to, as well as any distress and inconvenience caused.	Yes	Redress Policy specifies quantifiable losses and statutory losses. Complaints Policy refers to Redress Policy (9.6,9.7)

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
6.3	Landlords should look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether anything needs to be 'put right' in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all residents.	Yes	Reporting and learning from complaints (13.1 – 13.6) in Complaints Policy refers. Senior Case Manager role includes project on learning from our complaints.
6.7	In some cases, a resident may have a legal entitlement to redress. The landlord should still offer a resolution where possible, obtaining legal advice as to how any offer of resolution should be worded.	Yes	Statutory payments covered in Redress Policy (section 4).

Section 7 - Continuous learning and improvement

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
7.2	Accountability and transparency are integral to a positive complaint handling culture. Landlords must report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints in their annual report and more frequently to their residents, staff and scrutiny panels.	Yes	Reports are provided 6 monthly and annual reports to Tenant Strategic Group, Housing Briefing, members and Senior Management. Regular updates in tenant and staff newsletters. 'You Said, We Did' on the website.

Best practice 'should' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
7.3	A member of the governing body should be appointed to have lead responsibility for complaints to support a positive complaint handling culture. This role will be responsible for ensuring the governing body receives regular information on complaints that provides insight to the governing body on the landlord's complaint handling performance.	Yes	Director of Housing and Portfolio Holder for Housing fulfil this role. Corporate Scrutiny Committee (15 Cllrs) who have sight of complaint reports.
7.4	As a minimum, governing bodies should receive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular updates on the volume, categories and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including compliance with the Ombudsman's orders Regular reviews of issues and trends arising from complaint handling, The annual performance report produced by the Ombudsman, where applicable Individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including where the Ombudsman made findings of severe maladministration or referrals to regulatory bodies. The implementation of management responses should be tracked to ensure they are delivered to agreed timescales. The annual self-assessment against the Complaint 	Yes	Compliant in that reports containing this information are provided 6 monthly to Housing Briefing (PfH) and TSG. Trends and learning currently included as a project for the Housing Performance Senior Case Manager. Compliant in that individual Ombudsman outcomes are shared with Councillors or Members if they have been involved with the complaint. Management responses are tracked through the Performance team. The self assessment document will be provided at least once a year.

	<p>Handling Code for scrutiny and challenge.</p>		
<p>7.5</p>	<p>Any themes or trends should be assessed by senior management to identify potential systemic issues, serious risks or policies and procedures that require revision. They should also be used to inform staff and contractor training.</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Performance team Senior Case Manager currently fulfils this role through HSMT. The Senior Case Manager is currently considering this as part of their project work.</p>

7.6	<p>Landlords should have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all employees that reflects the need to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have a collaborative and co-operative approach towards resolving complaints, working with colleagues across teams and departments • take collective responsibility for any shortfalls identified through complaints rather than blaming others • act within the Professional Standards for engaging with complaints as set by the Chartered Institute of Housing. 	Yes	<p>Complaints Policy (annex 2) refers to collaboration between service areas/directorates to resolve a complaint. Housing Performance coordinate complaints where investigations cross multiple areas.</p>
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Section 8 - Self-assessment and compliance

Mandatory 'must' requirements

Code section	Code requirement	Comply: Yes/No	Evidence, commentary and any explanations
8.1	Landlords must carry out an annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling remains in line with its requirements.	Yes	Commitment to complete self-assessment every six months
8.2	Landlords must also carry out a self-assessment following a significant restructure and/or change in procedures.	Yes	Self assessment carried out September 2022 for new Code compliance and to check content of draft LGR policy and addendum.
8.3	<p>Following each self-assessment, a landlord must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • report the outcome of their self-assessment to their governing body. In the case of local authorities, self- assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members • publish the outcome of their assessment on their website if they have one, or otherwise make accessible to residents • include the self-assessment in their annual report section on complaints handling performance 	Yes	<p>Document presented to Portfolio Holder – see action above at 7.3</p> <p>Once completed</p> <p>Assessments are included in 6 monthly and annual reports, newsletters, Housing Briefing 7.3</p>

**HOUSING DIRECTORATE
COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS
SIX- MONTH REVIEW
2022 - 2023**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report has been created using data extracted from our monthly reported Compliments and Complaints scorecard, this covers Quarter 1 (Q1) and Quarter 2 (Q2) between the months of April 2022 - September 2022.
- 1.2 This data gives the Housing Directorate the opportunity to review complaints received with the view to explore –
- Trends
 - Correlation
 - Improvements
- 1.3 Changes within the Customer Resolution Team has meant two new appointments (refocusing some existing roles), a Senior Case Manager, and a Case Manager as an additional full-time member of the team. The full team has been in post since the end of August 2022. In this time, you will see from reviewing the data that there has been an increase in complaints being answered and closed within standard time.
- 1.4 The Housing Ombudsman made changes to the way in which customers can access their service. These changes came into effect from the 1 October 2022, meaning that tenants would no longer have to contact a designated person or wait eight weeks before referring their complaint directly to the Housing Ombudsman, should they remain dissatisfied at the end of the complaint process. With this change we are expecting to see a higher number of cases be taken to the Housing Ombudsman for investigation.
- 1.5 With work underway for Somerset to become a unitary authority (LGR), replacing the current County Council and four District Council's, work is underway with Somerset County Council to put together a comprehensive Policy and Procedure for complaints.
- 1.6 With systems evolving through LGR, the department will likely use iCasework after April 2023 when receiving and responding to a Complaint or logging a Compliment.



- 1.7 This system will make working practices easier a few examples of how are listed below:
- Tracking the complaint through the complaint process
 - Storing Information
 - Comprehensive and accurate data overview, supporting reporting on complaints

2.0 Compliments

2.1 Positive comment's count, providing feedback on what has gone well and encouraging continual improvements over the last 6 months. The number of compliments received was 50 during Q1 and Q2 of this year.

2.2 The number of compliments is up on this time last year, where only 36 had been received at the same point this time last year.

Compliment Examples

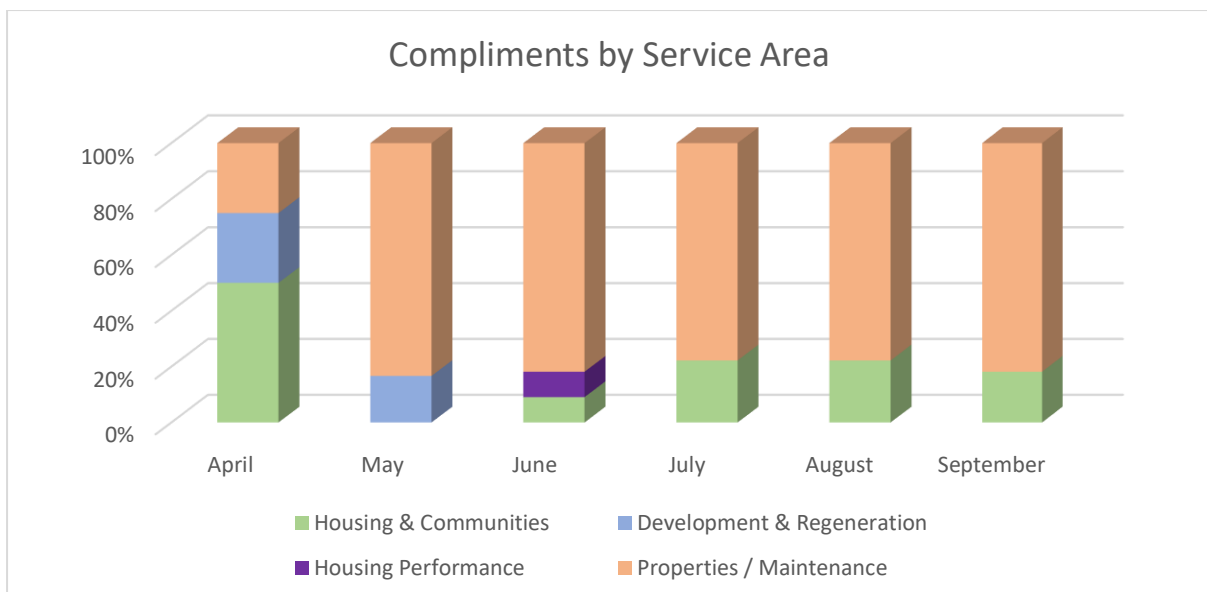
"We all sincerely thank you for all the time and dedication you designated us, in attempting to make life marginally better. I will personally remember your compassion towards my family for the rest of my days, it is a rarity."

Housing and Communities

"Plumbing team - tenant was overwhelmed with how good the service was. The two gents that attended were so respectful, professional and did a brilliant job. The service has been fantastic and she is ever so grateful for our assistance and support." Assets Team

"The young gentleman in a small white van in Eastwick Road, Taunton at 12.30 today. A huge thank you for stopping and getting my dogs safely off the road. I am so grateful" Responsive Repairs

2.3 The below graph shows compliments received across the service areas.



2.4 As you can see from the graph Properties and Maintenance received the highest total in their service area. This service area accumulates a higher number of both compliments and complaints.

2.4 Much of the feedback received relates to staff and how they have positively conducted themselves during interactions with the public. This is a credit to the work that we do as representatives for Somerset West and Taunton Council.

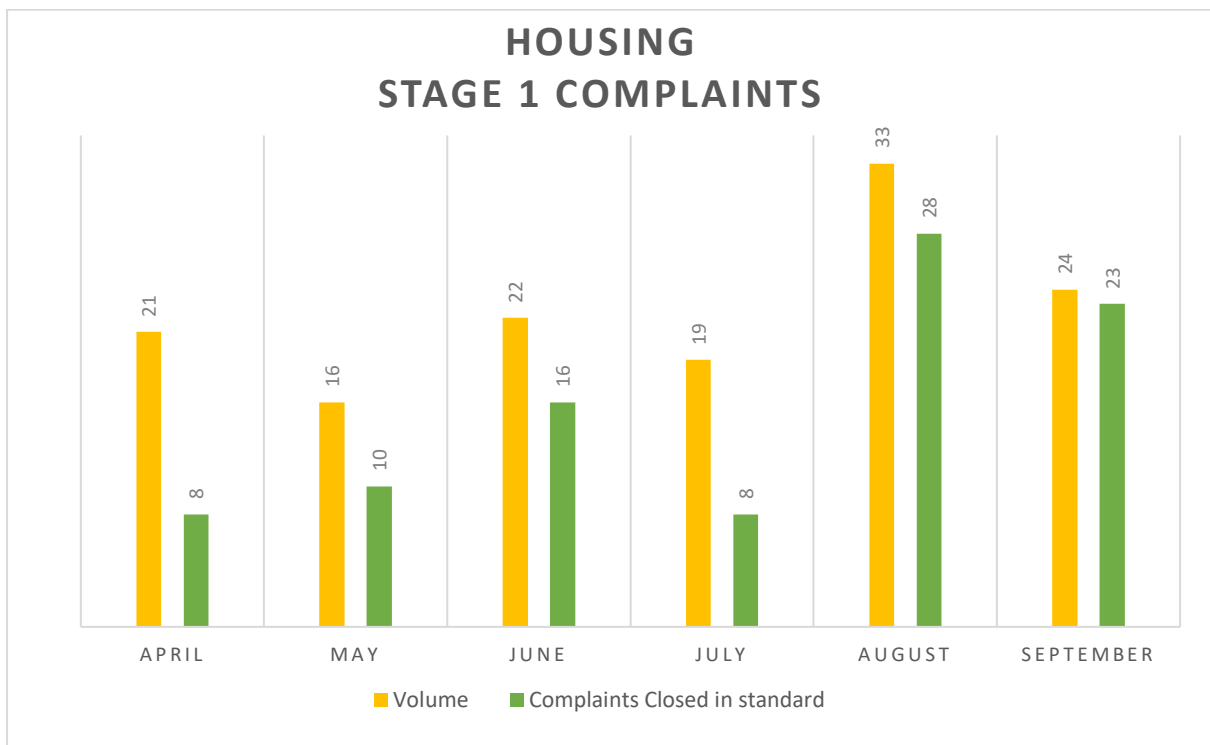
2.5 Work will be taking place to encourage services to pass on all compliments from their departments. We are aware that many compliments are received but are just not formally logged. Having this feedback is significant as it promotes positive morale, it provides feedback to departments giving managers the opportunity to see what is working well and what we are getting right.

3.0 Stage 1 Complaints: Volumes and Response Times

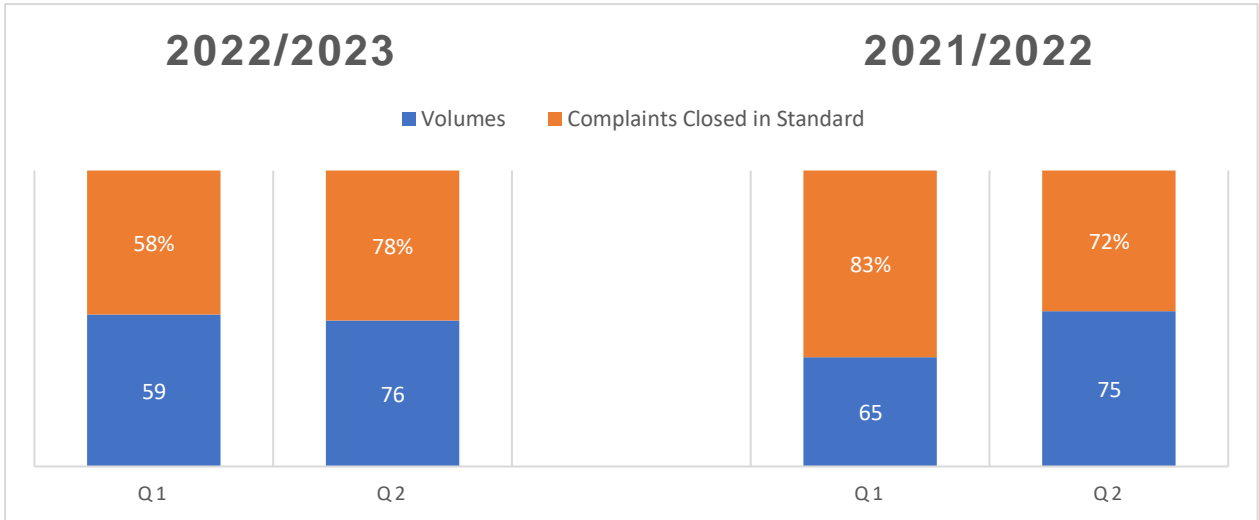
3.1 The number of complaints received between April 2022-September 2022 totals 155.

- 135 Stage 1 Complaints
- 20 Stage 2 Complaints

3.2 The graph below is reporting on volumes received and the number of complaints closed within 10 working days for Q1 – Q2 for stage 1 complaints.



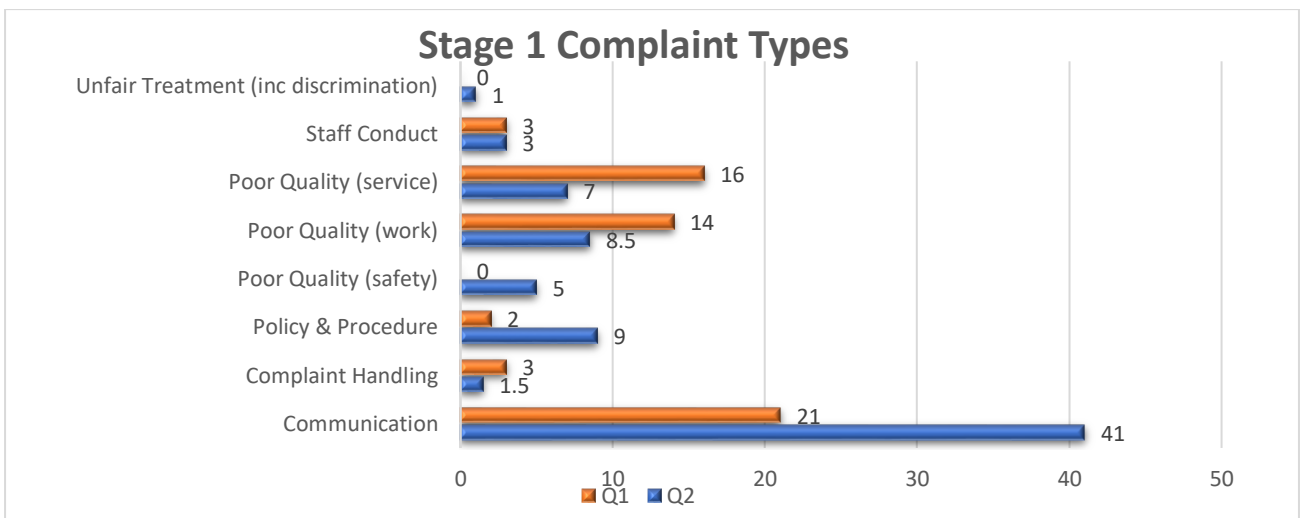
3.3 The below graph shows the comparison for stage 1 complaints received and responded to in standard for Q1 & Q2 in the first 6 months of the year.



3.5 The comparison for Q1 and Q2 in the first 6 months of this year shows a similar comparable to that of the previous year. The start of this year has been met with challenges, vacancies in key positions also leave has been a factor in complaints not being closed within standard.

3.6 HRA response times for complaints in standard have been 85% for August and 96% for September this year already. Changes have been implemented and we are confident that the customer resolution team will continue to support the service areas, so complaints are met within the timescale therefore minimising further escalation.

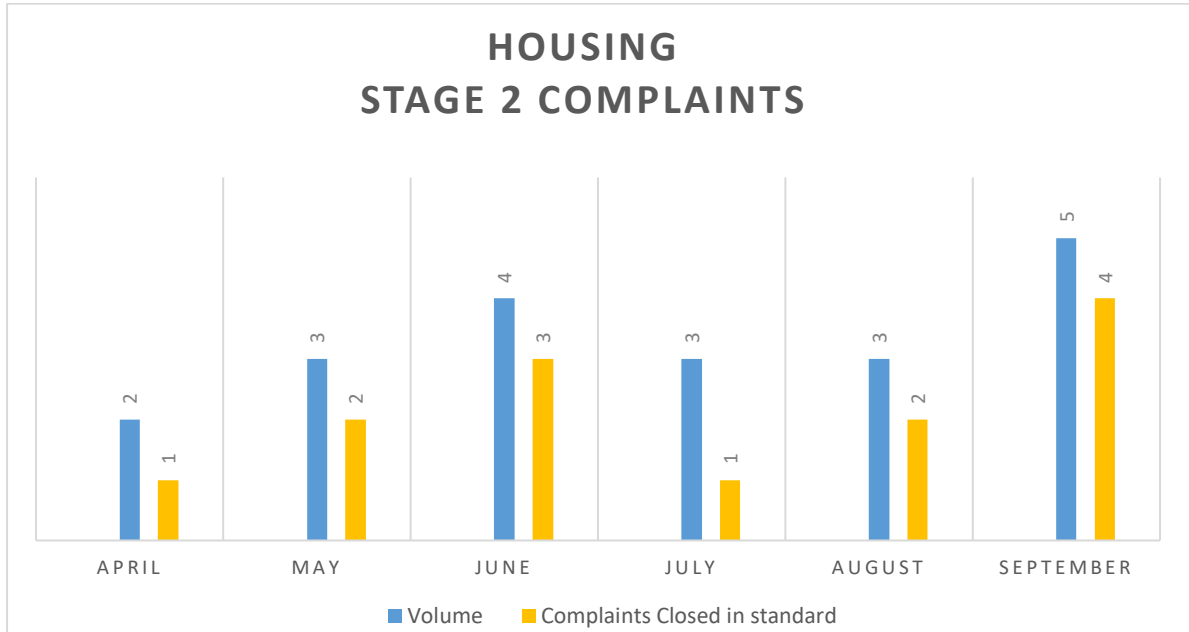
3.7 The stage 1 complaint types highlighted in the graph for Q1 and Q2 for this year below indicate what types of complaints have been received.



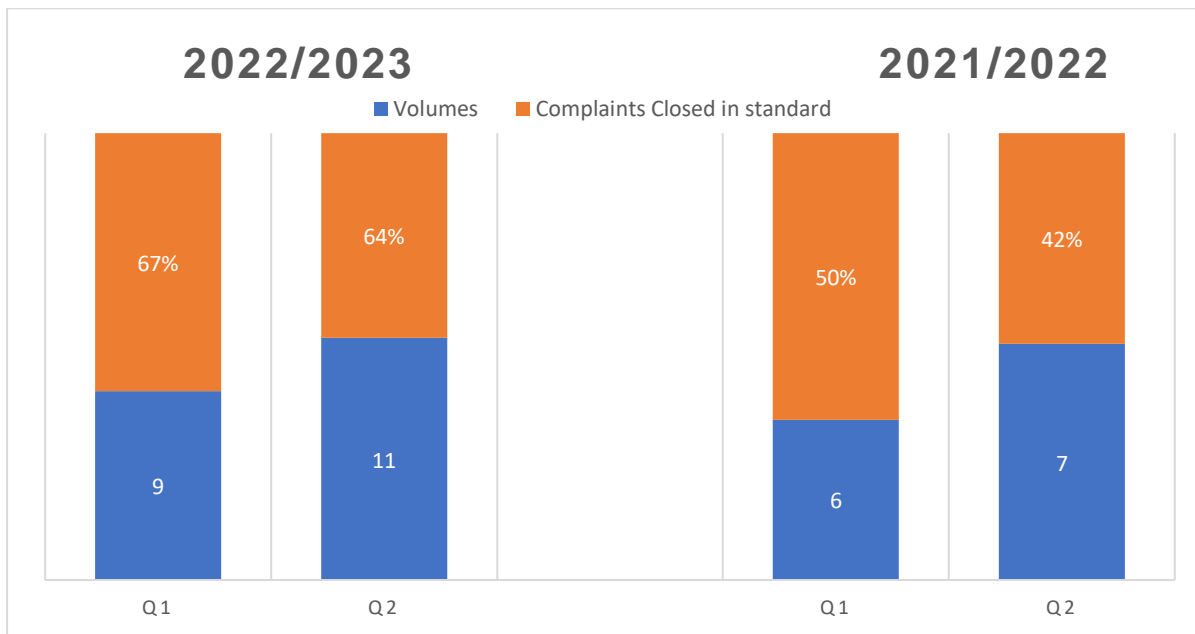
4.0 Stage 2 – Volumes and Response Times

4.1 At this point in the year from the 135 stage 1 complaints received there have been 20 that have been moved on to the second stage of the complaints process.

4.2 The graph below is reporting on volumes received and the number of complaints closed within 20 working days for Q1 – Q2 for stage 2 complaints

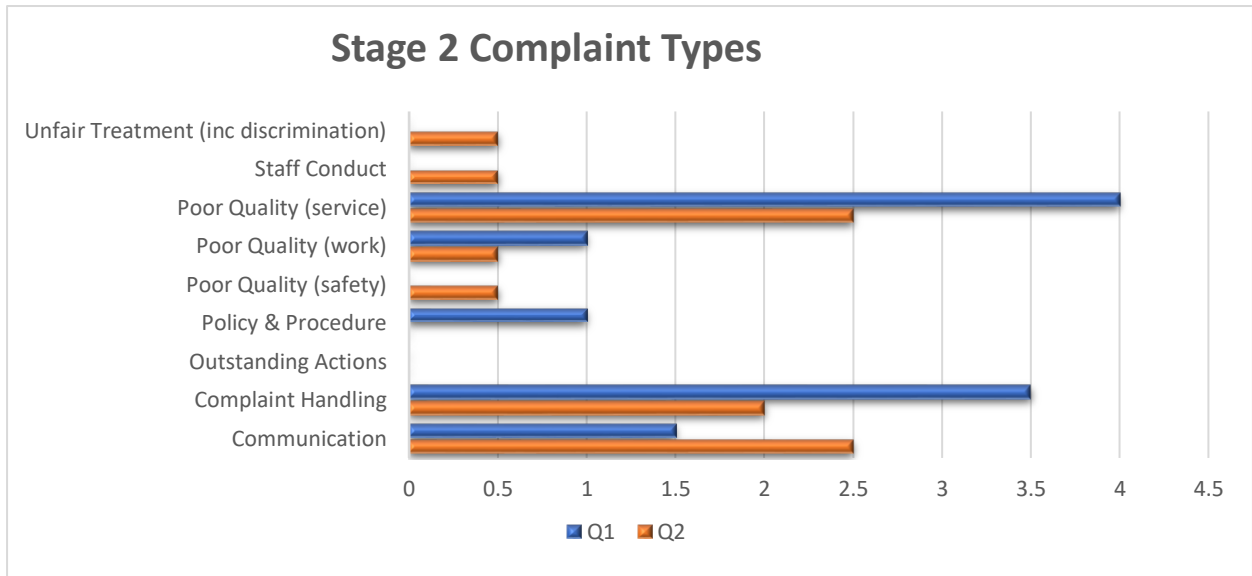


4.4 The below graph shows the comparison for stage 2 complaints received and responded to in Q1 & Q2 for the first 6 months of the year.



4.5 Although you can see that there has been an increase in the number of complaints escalated to a stage 2, it is encouraging that we have made improvements on last year in the time taken to reply within the 20 working days timeframe.

4.6 The below graphs indicate the complaint types received in Q1 and Q2 for stage 2 complaints.



4.7 Overall, the Housing Directorate upheld half of the stage 2 complaints received in Q2 for this year. From further analysis of the data, commonly complaints have been escalated as we haven't answered in full the enquires raised at stage 1. Poor Quality service generally relates to a let-down in the service provided. This will be addressed as part of our ongoing commitment to ensure that we have compliance within our Complaints Policy and the Housing Ombudsman's Code of Conduct.

4.8 The team will continue to work with the departments ensuring to get the complaint response right at stage 1, new working processes have been implemented to support this.

4.8.1 Amendments have been made to forms which are sent to officers answering a complaint received, the customer resolution team are bullet pointing the key points to answer to ensure that this has been included in the response.

4.8.2 For complaints received that are complex at day 6 of the complaint response an appointment is scheduled with the answering officer along with the customer resolution team to discuss progress of the response to the complaint, and if there is a need to extend the complaint deadline it can be discussed at this point in the complaint response.

We are confident that these changes will continue to see a decline in the number of complaints being escalated to stage 2 in the complaints process.

4.9 Over the next 6 months continued improvements will be monitored looking at complaint trends providing feedback to the tenant throughout the process of responding to a stage 2 complaint.

5.0 Housing Ombudsman Complaints

5.1 During both Q1 and Q2 no investigations have been received by the Housing Ombudsman.

5.2 An investigation took place for a case received by The Local Government Ombudsman relating to ASB – Noise Nuisance, the complaint received was upheld and remedy agreed. Work has been carried out to strengthen collaborative practices between Tenancy services and Environmental service procedures. Although this case was investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman as it relates to practices used by the Housing Tenancy team it has been mentioned for reference in this report.

5.3 Upon review of last years data, 4 Housing Ombudsman investigations had been received during the first 6 months of 2021/2022. This year, 2022/2023, has seen a reduction from the Ombudsman since this time last year. It is pleasing to note that with the work being implemented to improve the standard of complaint handling no further escalation has been required.

6.0 The next 6 Months

6.1 Projects which will be driven on over the next 6 months are listed below

6.1.1 **Response Times** - reducing the need to extend a complaint and answer within deadline.

6.1.2 **Complaint Responses** – providing comprehensive responses to a complaint received

6.1.3 **Tracking actions** - ensuring to make the improvements from lessons learnt and that the agreed outcomes have taken place.

6.1.4 **Tenants Panel** – working with the residents to create a scrutiny panel for complaints we would like to see this set up for April 2023 (with detailed plans drawn up to ensure feasibility)

6.1.4 **Working with Somerset County Council** – work will continue to have a robust Housing Complaints Policy ready for the new unitary Council, we are expecting that this will be signed off in early 2023.

6.2 As you can see from the data presented, the first six months of the year has seen improvements. With the number of complaints received reducing we are working to drive compliance and response over the next six months, we are looking forward to providing a full analysed annual report for 2022/2023 providing comprehensive figures for the year.

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – 28/11/2022

Capital Works Programme Update

This matter is the responsibility of the Portfolio holder for Housing.

Report Author: Kevin Alexander

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.

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

The Capital Works Team deliver a range of construction related projects to repair, replace or improve the building elements to SWT's Housing Stock and related assets. The table below provides a summary of the key projects, forecast expenditure and current status of the major workstreams.

Recently a review of the current projects and contracts has been undertaken and revised year-end forecasts have been produced, considering the current status of projects being developed, procurement arrangements and capacity within existing contracts.

In addition to the work to develop and deliver the objectives of the current years programme, work is already underway to prepare for future years, with a 5 year plan

being developed. This will aid SWT in planning and procurement activities, as well as giving residents more information about planned works to their homes and the choices available to them.

Project	2021/22 Budget £	2021/22 Spend £	Budget Carried Forward £	Total 2022/23 Budget £	2022/23 Forecast £	No. Units planned	Status
Kitchens	2,094,500	322,859	1,771,641	3,693,641	1,600,000	286	In progress
Bathrooms	1,019,760	114,093	905,667	1,412,667	750,000	188	In progress
Roofing	432,000	212,814	219,186	2,719,186	2,719,186	257	In progress. New Contract being mobilised
Windows	639,940	1,568,329	-	1,211,000	800,000	260	Specification and procurement being developed
Heating	877,500	647,540	229,960	1,577,960	280,000	56	Works start November 2022.
Doors	100,000	127,946	-	703,000	143,000	260 doors	Specification and procurement being finalised
Fascias & Soffits	309,200	694,365	-	192,000	37,500	Inc within Roofing	In progress
Door Entry Systems	400,000	96,544	303,456	360,456	360,456	TBC	In progress
Environmental Improvements	100,000	46,459	-	420,000	420,000	N/A	Leycroft Grove parking and remodelling
Fire Safety	1,755,967	315,329	1,440,637	3,573,637	3,573,637	All Blocks	Emergency lighting; fire doors; flooring; compartmentation works

Aligned with the Capital Programme are specific initiatives to improve the thermal efficiency of the housing stock and reduce energy consumption for residents. These include replacement windows and doors with increased thermal performance, and high efficiency replacement heating systems.

While there are many opportunities for SWT and its residents to have improved homes, there are also a number of challenges to delivery including increased costs from suppliers and contractors for materials and labour and a general shortage of resources who are able to plan, manage and deliver the works.

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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