

SWT Tenants Strategic Group

**Monday, 30th January, 2023,
6.00 pm**

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

[SWT MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

**Members: 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. Welcome from the Chair | |
| 3. Minutes from previous meeting | (Pages 3 - 8) |
| 4. Directorate Report | (Pages 9 - 18) |
| 5. Repairs Service Improvement Plan Presentation | (Pages 19 - 28) |
| 6. Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey Results | (Pages 29 - 38) |
| 7. Any other business | |



**ANDREW PRITCHARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. At the start of the meeting the Chair will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being recorded and webcast. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected during the recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's policy. Therefore unless you are advised otherwise, by entering the Council Chamber and speaking during Public Participation you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of the sound recording for access via the website or for training purposes. If you have any queries regarding this please contact the officer as detailed above.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions. There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions. Speaking under "Public Question Time" is limited to 3 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes and you can only speak to the Committee once. If there are a group of people attending to speak about a particular item then a representative should be chosen to speak on behalf of the group. These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

If you would like to ask a question or speak at a meeting, you will need to submit your request to a member of the Governance Team in advance of the meeting. You can request to speak at a Council meeting by emailing your full name, the agenda item and your question to the Governance Team using governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Any requests need to be received by 4pm on the day that provides 1 clear working day before the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting itself). For example, if the meeting is due to take place on a Tuesday, requests need to be received by 4pm on the Friday prior to the meeting.

We are now live webcasting most of our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, but you can also access them on the [Somerset West and Taunton webcasting website](#).

The meeting rooms, including the Council Chamber at The Deane House, are on the first floor and are fully accessible. Lift access to The John Meikle Room (Council Chamber), is available from the main ground floor entrance at The Deane House. The Council Chamber at West Somerset House is on the ground floor and is fully accessible via a public entrance door. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are available across both locations. An induction loop operates at both The Deane House and West Somerset House to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

Full Council, Executive, and Committee agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Governance and Democracy Team via email: governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please email: governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 28 November 2022

Present: Luke Manning (Chair)

Alex Akhigbemen, Paul Cram, Colin England, Kevin Hellier, Ivor Hussey, Samantha Rickward, Janet Lloyd and Francesca Smith

Officers: Shari Hallett, Claire Reed (Housing), Sharon Yarde (Housing), Roxanne Mclean, Stephen Boland, Chris Brown, Ian Candlish, Kevin Alexander, Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager), Simon Lewis and Kerry Prisco and Tracey Meadows

Also Present: Councillor Brenda Weston

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

68. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Jessie Bunn and Cllr Mark Lithgow and James Barrah.

69. **Notes/action points from previous meeting**

Action points;

- Point 1 – The group felt that the Tenancy Case Managers were still not doing their job correctly. No introductions were being made when they walked the estates and tabards stating who they were, were not worn. The group stated that they would like this to be looked at again.
- Point 2 – Residents had reported to the group that they had received letters regarding the ‘estate walkabouts’, but these letters did not state timings for the event. Please can this be investigated as some tenants do wish to talk to their tenancy Case Manager.

A group member stated that he had received a letter informing tenants that there would be an estate walkabout of his sheltered housing building. The letter stated that if the tenants required to speak to the Officer, they were asked to make an appointment and not interfere or talk to the Officer whilst they were performing this walk about.

The Assistant Director of Housing and Communities stated that he was unaware of this procedure and not the standard set by Officers. He apologised and said that this was not acceptable as you should be able to walk up to and speak to the Officer and ask questions. This would be investigated and reported back to the group.

The group member also requested that a report of the findings from the block inspections about should be supplied to the tenants. *These reports should be*

shared with the tenants within one week of the estate walkabout. We will look into why this was not being shared and report back to the group.

An update was requested on how the drop-in centres were performing and how many people had come in to use them. *The findings of the drop-in centres would be reported back to the group.*

- Action point 11. Issues with the communal light still not working at Kelway Road. Reported that a meeting with the tenant and Officer would be held to discuss this issue.

70. **Directorate 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.

During discussion of this item the following comments/questions were raised; (summarised)

- Concerns with the report stating the increasing challenge in meeting affordable housing need in the district and specialist accommodation; *we were delivering high numbers of affordable housing compared to historic numbers. However, we are worried that the future projections were low due to phosphate challenges and the viability for private sector developers because of inflationary factors, the costs of materials and less money available within the schemes which could put pressure on the number of affordable housing units that could be delivered;*
- Would the new Capita system be easily integrated with the new Council? *We have not yet mapped to the Council's system. We will look at this and report back to the group;*

The Tenants' Strategic Group noted the report

71. **Tenants Action Group (TAG) Report**

The Tenants' Action Group Annual Report stated that 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.

During discussion of this item the following comments/questions were raised; (summarised)

- Regarding grounds maintenance, could TAG confirm that they were happy with what grounds maintenance were doing and were there any issues to take back to Darren Hill? *TAG confirmed that they were happy with this;*

The group thanked the TAG group for the report and for the work that they were doing.

72. **Q2 Performance**

The 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).

During discussion of this item the following comments/questions were raised; (summarised)

- What would happen if there is an overspend at the end of the financial year (in relation to moving into the new Unitary Council)? *The process is the same as any other year in that any overspend would have to be funded from general reserves, the current position is okay in that any overspend could be funded from existing general reserves, and that the balance of general reserves at the end of the financial year would remain above the minimum balance required;*
- On the report it states that we have made 20 safeguarding referrals to the County Council largely related to concerns for adults who required care and support needs. How long did it take to get a referral? *Staff raise concerns within the Housing Directorate, and we have safeguarding champions who log these incidents. We have been rolling out training to staff to ensure that staff are aware of issues. This has resulted in more referrals coming forward, some of these are not strictly safeguarding and do not meet the safeguarding criteria. An assessment by Adult Social Care will take about 6 weeks;*
- Regarding Lettable Standards, how soon after a tenant takes over a property, do you ask for this information and why were the response so low ? *This is undertaken within a month of the tenant taking over their tenancy. We have tried different methods to try to contact tenants. We will now go back to contacting tenants by telephone as this seems the most preferred way. This will be taken as an action point and reported back to the group;*

The TSG noted 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).

73. **Housing Ombudsman Self-assessment update**

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

During discussion of this item the following comments/questions were raised; (summarised)

- Could you confirm that responses to complaints were always in writing and not in a text or by phone? *Yes, this is always in writing the complainant could have received a phone call to discuss but the formal response is always in writing;*
- Would we get to see the new policy before it goes live? *We have been working with a group of Officers to draft at the new Somerset complaints policy which would cover all the services for the new Somerset Council. Clarification was needed on whether this document would be circulated to the wider Somerset Customer Panel of which Paul Cram is now a member, but the document can be circulated for comment to the TSG. This would be brought back to the group;*
- Councillor Weston who represented Priorswood Ward raised concerns over literacy issues for tenants who were raising complaints and could not read replies. Were there other mechanisms for making sure that those who struggle are informed in the way they should be? *If a tenant had a literacy issue, we would hope that they would make that clear as part of logging that complaint. Tenants can also log complaints by telephoning us, they do not have to write in. if tenants made us aware of literacy issues, we would accommodate this. Tenants could also nominate an advocate to contact us on their behalf. We will take this away and see how we can build further improvements into our procedure and report back to the group;*

The TSG noted the report.

74. **Housing Directorate 6 monthly complaints report**

The 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. This data gives the Housing Directorate the opportunity to review complaints received with the view to explore, trends, correlation, and improvements.

During discussion of this item the following comments/questions were raised; (summarised)

- Stage 1 complaints, in the first quarter the graph stated 21 complaints, in the second quarter it was 41. That was a total of 62 in 6 months was there

any reason for the increase? *Letters were sent to tenants in August regarding gaining access to properties for compliance checks (Asbestos). We received several complaints regarding the wording and the content of the letter. The letters were sent to tenants who had not responded to two previous letters and were more strongly worded, this did result in us being able to gain access to more properties. We quickly recognised that this was causing an issue and upset to some tenants so when the next batch of letters were sent regarding Asbestos checks, we revised the wording to make sure that we were handling things slightly more sensitively. To date we have not received any further complaints regarding the wording of the letters;*

- Concern was raised regarding when communications from tenants turning into a complaint and at what stage in the process did this become apparent? *We will bring an interim report to the group so that the group can delve into these details of the trends and reasons on why tenants were complaining;*

The TSG noted the report

75. **Capital Programme 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.

During discussion of this item the following comments/questions were raised. (summarised)

- The reported stated; 'Aligned with the Capital Programme are specific initiatives to improve the thermal efficiency of the housing stock and reduce energy consumption for residents' was this taking into account the grants that you were receiving from Eon etc, or would this be on top of your figures? *These grants were not on top of our figures;*

The TSG noted the report

76. **AOB**

One of the group stated that there were issues with parking on the residential area of Hope Corner Lane. He was advised to contact his Ward Member and Highways at Somerset County Council for these issues.

(The Meeting ended at 7.11 pm)

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – Monday 30th January 2023

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

- The service is progressing at pace a low carbon retrofit Strategy and Delivery plan. Members approved 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. A tenant low carbon retrofit group continues to meet and is focusing on the theme of timely communication with tenants during retrofit and capital investment programmes.
- SWT has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with E-ON which pledges £20m of energy company obligation for SWTs ECO4 Neighbourhood Fuel Efficiency Project. This fund will see some of the worst energy performing council homes and some private home, where owners qualify, improved by two EPC bands which will see a significant reduction in fuel usage to keep

their homes warm. The project is timetabled to start in February and run for four years. A single contractor is delivering works funded by E-On.

- SWT has been awarded SHDF (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund) Wave 1 funds and has made a substantial bid for Wave 2 funds. SWT will be informed if it has been successful in being awarded wave two funding in February. The funding will run for two years.
- SWT will let the first two new build SWT low carbon homes zero carbon at North Taunton in February. These dwellings are the first of 49 low carbon homes delivered in the next 12 months at Phase a North taunton Woolaway Project (NTWP). The council remain close to signing a contract for Phase B and Ci contract which will deliver 51 new low carbon affordable homes.
- Brick work at Seaward/Rainbow Way in Minehead is commencing and a consultation event for local people was held in January. 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 at Rainbow Way off Seaward Way will provide a variety of property types and be zero carbon. The scheme will complete in 2024.
- 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.
- 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 council was awarded £750k through the government Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme to accelerate the new provision round three including the purchase of six homes and refurbishment of six other for the Housing First model of accommodation. Eight of the twelve units have been completed and let.
- 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).
- Performance levels for responsive repair requests (now being taken by a cohort of specialist repair call-handlers within the Corporate Customer Service team) has recently been challenged by maternity leave and sick leave within that team. This has led to a reduction in the previously improved performance levels reported, albeit there still remain less abandoned calls, faster answering, and more accurate detailed work orders being raised than was being achieved prior to the change in approach. We are reviewing this position carefully, including evaluation of required staffing levels, and introducing 'overflow' of calls to repairs schedulers when available.
- Our Repairs Service Improvement Plan (RSIP) has been further developed and many activities are being progressed. However, progress to improving ICT systems (e.g. job diagnosis and appointments, trades scheduling, contractor portal, etc.) and further review of available reporting functionality have been hampered by a corporate 'change freeze' to existing IT systems prior to LGR Vesting Day on 1st April 2023.
- We continue to undertake void repairs to meet our Lettable Standard and are seeking to streamline external contractor support to meet property performance turnaround targets.
- Following an external Materials Supplies Audit, we have progressed with implementing an updated imprest van stock and have also undertaken a stocktake of our stores.
- We are progressing with implementation of an improved materials supply chain process, although again this has been affected by the current corporate 'change freeze' to existing IT systems.

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.
- The new contract to undertake outstanding electrical inspections (EICR's) and associated remedial works is progressing well. We have streamlined the process to make appointments and have increased focus on 'hard to access' properties.
- We have implemented new iAuditor software to assist with compliance data collection for emergency lighting visual inspections, fire door inspection, fire

safety housekeeping 'sterile communal area' checks (flat block inspections), water risk assessments in dwellings and fire risk assessments.

- Additional procurement has taken place, including air source heat pump (ASHP) servicing, and extension of our stair-lift contract.
- We have mobilised a new radon monitoring contract.
- A street lighting safety assessment survey programme has been undertaken.
- Installation of alarms as required under the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendment) Regulations 2022 has been completed.
- We have appointed Savills to undertake an independent review of our compliance activities, together with helping us develop a Building and Resident Health and Safety Strategy for the new Council.
- Weekly compliance meetings continue to carefully monitor and manage all of these safety critical areas, and an update report has recently been presented to the Audit Committee.

Capital Programmes

- A range of 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. As previously noted however, available contractor resource remains a challenge and accordingly some programmes will not be completed by the end of this financial year – the balance of any outstanding works will be completed during the 2023/24 financial year.
- Procurement activities also continue, including review of required capital programme works needed to meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS), incorporating 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 staff member off sick who will hopefully return to work in January 2023.
- The team continue to complete the fire/evacuation compliance checks and risk assessments for tenants who might struggle to evacuate themselves. We have several tenants identified needing to be moved, and they are receiving support with this.
- Bi-monthly estates and compliance checks continue. Unfortunately, staff have identified some tenants complying with the sterile building's expectations on the day the checks are completed, then putting mats etc. back out, once the checks are completed. This is being challenged and in the new year tenants will have details of the week the checks will take place, rather than the day and time.
- Compliance work is ongoing to relocate bin stores and scooter charging points in a safer location for tenants.
- The team have had several very complex and time intensive cases running. This has included; a tenant who needed to be sectioned due to the threat they were posing to others and themselves; a tenant with significant health and support needs discharged from hospital with no daily Carer support available for a week (no Carer was available); a property where there are concerns for possible drugs dealing/County Lines involvement; long-standing noise issues affecting neighbours sleep and quality of life and tenants with significant self-neglect.
- The team have also had to respond to several floods. In some cases, tenants haven't had anyone to stay with and we have had to accommodate them elsewhere, which has involved sourcing furniture, kitchen items etc. to enable them to have some 'normality' whilst the works are completed (usually takes 3-5 weeks).
- Fire doors – several tenants have reported challenges with the newly fitted fire doors (too heavy and difficult to open and very fast closing, a result). These are being adjusted to meet the tenants needs, but also enable them to live independently.
- Within sheltered housing and extra care, we have a regular turnover of tenants. We often have problems ending tenancies where the tenant has no next of kin. This can result in us having to take legal steps to take possession of the property, which takes additional time and finance, and delays to the

voids work and re-letting. We are keen to develop some agreements where Adult Social Care are involved, for them to be able to end tenancies.

- Business as usual continues day-to-day; sign ups, leaving wells, completing annual reviews, estates and block checks, ad-hoc calls and emergencies, referrals to specialist help and support, Deane Help Line Rota etc.
- Staff have been receiving training for the new IT systems, as part of the move to Unitary.
- Our Capital Works team have been able to complete some low-level shower tray installations for several tenants, which has resulted in tenants having better and safer access to their shower facilities. Unfortunately, tenant's requiring a change to a wet room are still being affected by the Somerset Independence Project covid backlog and delays.
- A fire drill has been held with staff at Kilkenny Court. Deane Helpline staff are based there too and took part. Plans are continuing for another drill, to involve tenants.
- The national Carer recruitment issue is affecting Carer services within Somerset and within our extra care schemes. Staff numbers are limited, and the Care Provider has also had to bring in agency staff to cover shifts. This is a concern, now and in the longer term, which we have raised with the Commissioners of the service.
- The national Social Worker recruitment issue is also affecting services within Somerset. We have made referrals to Adult Social Care, and whilst they have acknowledged that the tenant reaches the threshold for help and support, there can be a 8-12 week wait for people to be seen. This has resulted in the team being under strain having to respond to ongoing issues and concerns for the tenant(s) concerned. We have raised our concerns about this work being above and beyond a usual Landlord role and responsibility, but staff are doing what they can to try and keep people safe.

Lettings

- Customer satisfaction remains very high Year to date average of 93% Tenants Action Group (TAG) visited properties to be returned to tenants after Voids works completed. They commented positively on the standard of the properties being returned and will feed this back to tenants.
- Team is now back to full strength after some staff time off through family bereavements.
- 3 tenants remain at Wordsworth Drive flats. Regular meetings with project team to move this forward.
- Home Moves Plus project is ahead of target.
- Local Lettings plan being written for North Taunton regeneration project and Seaward Way. Still work in progress.
- Lettings policy in progress additional work required on the above two items. Still work in progress.
- 22 properties let in December. YTD figure of 179 which give a monthly average of 22.3.
- Average relet days of 26 days for a Minor Void set against a target of 31 days.

- Average relet days of 41 for a Major void set against a target of 44 days

Income

- The Rent Recovery Officers are working through our Lean Process for those tenants who failed to make payments over the Christmas period to ensure those tenants make up the missed payments.
- Court applications for Rent Recovery case which are now being applied for are not going to be heard until dates in March, so there is a delay on these with the court.
- The team are continuing to look at all options for tenants who are struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. This includes applying for DHP's, any grant funding available, referrals to CA and to the Debt and Benefit Officers

Tenancy/Estates & ASB

- Unfortunately, we have not been successful in shortlisting any candidates for the role of Tenancy and Estates Case Manager. Although we had 7 applicants, we felt that they did not meet the desired level to interview. We will readvertise this position in the next two weeks. We will continue using the temporary member of staff that we have in post until we can successfully recruit.
- The team are still dealing with high volume of enquiries.
- The team prior to Christmas were dealing with several staff absences due to colds/flu and this did have a knock-on effect with managing workloads
- Last month we reported on the Suspended Possession Order obtained against a tenant; we have now received further complaints about similar anti-social behaviour and are now pursuing an eviction warrant against the tenant.

Housing Performance Team Housing Performance Team (Shari Hallett)

- It continues to be an incredibly busy time for the team, staff absences due to illness and workload demands are being juggled every day.
- We continue to support the work of the Tenants Strategic Group and Tenants' Action Group. On the 24th November 2022 we held third joint tenant meeting with Homes in Sedgemoor, specifically to engage tenants on LGR. The next meeting is planned for the 28th February 2023.

- 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.
- The Low Carbon Working group for tenants had their first meeting in July and has had meetings each month. The agreed outcomes agreed for the group have been achieved but the group has continued to meet with a new focus on communication.
- A group of involved tenants has started a mystery shopper exercise.
- The tenants' Christmas newsletter has been posted and we are researching new ways to produce the newsletter from April 2023. Work will need to begin now if changes are to be made in April 2023.
- We are collectively working with Homes in Sedgemoor on local government reorganisation workstreams.
- Our performance in managing complaints continues to improve. Response times on stage 1 complaints has increased from an average of 54% between April and July, to over 85% every month since. The team are working hard to thoroughly investigate complaints, to provide our tenants with great quality and comprehensive replies within the prescribed ten working days.
- 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. The Somerset Council Complaints Policy was shared in December 2022. The policy will proceed to Executive in January 2023 for approval.
- Our Tenant Satisfaction Survey report from November 2022 and the comments have been received and we will report to TSG in January 2023. Alongside the report we also received 260 comments which are being individually analysed and responded to where requested including 66 call backs.
- 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 February subject to any ICT freeze or restrictions imposed as a result of moving over ICT platforms to the new council. 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.

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

Name of Contact Officers: Shari Hallett

Telephone number: 07557 003944

Email address: s.hallett@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Somerset West and Taunton

Update for Tenant Strategic Group
30th January 2023

Repairs Service Improvement Plan

Page 20

Day to day operations	Review and amend repairs ways of working
Stock and materials	Getting materials to the job Imprest van stocks
IT systems	Overall approach to repairs IT systems
Fleet management	Fleet & Use of Electric Vehicles
Health and Safety	Safety of staff, tenants and public

Day to day operations

- Reviewed and changed call handling
 - Call abandonment rates were 28%, since October <10%
 - Investment in software to improve job identification
 - Upcoming ability to book appointment in call reporting repair
- Review and change to materials supply
- Amended Performance Indicators to ensure more effective oversight of work by contractors (and more to come here)

Stock and Materials

- Contract with Procurement for Housing
- Work with Travis Perkins to supply materials
- Less time travelling to suppliers
- Materials delivered direct to job where possible
- Vans stocked with a range of supplies specific to trade to reduce unwanted time away from jobs

IT systems

- Locator Plus to correctly identify and log jobs into Open Housing
- Ability to book appointment at first port of call
- Review of scheduling solutions to ensure effective deployment of trades staff
 - Understanding solutions deployed by other housing providers
 - Make recommendations to improve current arrangements
- Contractor Portal to have better real time visibility of outside contractors, monitor appointments and work flow

Fleet Management

- Replacement of fleet ongoing
- Move to EV where possible to do so
- Monitoring of speed and driver behaviour

Health and Safety

- Installation and use of health and safety app 'Assure'
- Daily van checks
- Task specific risk assessments and dynamics risk assessments
- Specific training for issues such as asbestos
- Contractors have same health and safety obligations and must provide RAMS for each task

Challenges

- Long lead in times for vehicles
- IT change freeze
- External software company's availability
- Recruitment and retention

Questions



Contacts

Somerset West
and Taunton

Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey-November Summary for TSG

16th January 2023

What is it?

- Like a mini STAR survey (will be regulatory requirement from April 2023)
Done every 6 months, pilot done in May 2022 and was repeated in November 2022
23 questions, including the 12 TSM questions in areas such as; Overall services ,The home, Neighbourhood (including estate, ASB and Grounds maintenance), repairs and Customer Contact
- There were 301 completed interviews, 250 GN, 49 SH and 2 EC, 254 from Taunton area and 47 from Wellington.

Results

- Overall satisfaction has risen by 2% since May. The May result was 75.7% (shown as 76%) and in November it was 77.4 (shown as 77%). The difference, therefore, is 1.7% which has been rounded up to 2% in the report. The increase may not seem much but during a time when Housemark say that satisfaction within the industry is declining, an increase is an achievement.
- Overall satisfaction is 77%.
- 83% thought that their home was safe. There is no comparison as this is a new TSM question from November 2022.
- Repairs increased by 10%, from 71% to 81%. Better than 2020 when it was 78%.

Areas with increased satisfaction

Overall satisfaction (up 1%) - currently 77%

Page 32
Neighbourhood (up 5%) – currently 85%

Grounds Maintenance (up 7%) – currently 64%

Estate Services (up 5%) – currently 76%

Repairs (up 10%) – currently 81%

Time taken to complete a repair (up 3%) – currently 79%

Keeping tenants informed (up 2%) – currently 80%

Areas with decreased satisfaction

There were only 4

- Well maintained home (down by 4%) – currently 75%
 - Anti-social (down by 2%) – currently 63%
 - Easy to deal with (down by 1%) – currently 75%
 - Complaints Handling (down by 7%) - currently 54%
- ❖ Please note that the complaints TSM question is: *How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Somerset West and Taunton Council Housing Services' approach to complaints handling?*

It does not differentiate between a formal complaint or when a tenant thinks they have complained, i.e mentioned it to their Tenancy Case Officer. Stage 1 formal complaints response times have improved by 26% since May.

Identified areas of improvement

Our customers tell us they are unsatisfied in the following areas:

30% are unsatisfied with the upkeep of communal areas (down 3%)

22% are unsatisfied with the way complaints are handled (up 2%)

22% are unsatisfied with grounds maintenance (down 7%)

26% are unsatisfied with the way SWT deals with ASB (up 1%)

25% are unsatisfied with the way SWT listens to views and acts upon them (remains the same).

Interesting findings

- Only 11% of tenants expressed an interest in becoming more engaged with the council
- 72% of our tenants use the internet regularly and 28% do not access the internet, up 20% from last survey in May 2022
- SH tenants are consistently more satisfied than GN tenants
- Wellington tenants are generally more satisfied than Taunton tenants
- Male tenants are generally more satisfied than female tenants (7% more)
- Grounds maintenance has seen a 4% increase which is an indication that the Grounds Service review headed up by Simon Lewis is having success.
- Significant increase in repairs-10% which would indicate that our new reporting a repair process that has been put in place by Scott Weetch has been successful.

National Context & Annual figure

- Housemark shows that satisfaction has steadily fallen over the last 2 years, on average a fall of 5% since the pandemic. Therefore, a fall in satisfaction at SWT should not be unexpected.
- Acuity report that they have seen an average satisfaction score of 76% amongst 30 of their landlord clients over the last year.
- When the May and November TSM surveys are put together, the overall satisfaction for the year is 77%.

What's next?

- Acuity tell us that the main drivers for Customer Satisfaction are tenant's homes being well maintained and being treated fairly and with respect.
- Therefore, we must keep an emphasis on our repairs service and communication.
- There is currently a Repairs Service Improvement Plan to address this.
- The Low Carbon Group have continued to meet with a new focus on communication to address this.
- We also need to keep reviewing the following areas:
- Anti-social behaviour, complaints and communal areas.

Thank you for listening