

## SWT Tenants Strategic Group

Monday, 27th March, 2023,  
5.45 pm

**Somerset West  
and Taunton**

### [SWT MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

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

### Agenda

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| 1. Apologies                         |                 |
| 2. Welcome from the Chair            |                 |
| 3. Minutes from previous meeting     | (Pages 3 - 6)   |
| 4. Q3 Performance and Finance Report | (Pages 7 - 18)  |
| 5. Damp and Mould                    | (Pages 19 - 34) |
| 6. Capital Programme                 | (Pages 35 - 42) |
| 7. Directorate Report                | (Pages 43 - 50) |
| 8. AOB                               |                 |



**ANDREW PRITCHARD**  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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## SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 30 January 2023

Present: Luke Manning (Chair)

Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Colin England, Kevin Hellier, Ivor Hussey, Samantha Rickward, Cllr Mark Lithgow, Cllr Janet Lloyd and Cllr Francesca Smith

Officers: James Barrah, Stephen Boland, Ian Candlish, Shari Hallett, Simon Lewis, Sharon Yarde, Chris Hall, Adam Evans, Stephen Boland, Scott Weetch and Tracey Meadows

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

77. **Apologies**

No apologies were received.

78. **Welcome from the Chair**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

79. **Minutes from previous meeting**

**Action points from previous meeting**

Action points

Point 1 – Concerns raised again regarding Estate Walkabout letters still not been received by tenants.

Point 2 – concerns raised with regards to the drop-in surgery. Reported that in December several people have been seen queuing at a drop-in centre waiting to see an Officer who they believe did not turn up for the session. The group stated that as a group, the drop-in centre needed to be promoted as not all tenants felt comfortable speaking about their issues on the telephone and wanted to speak to Officers face to face.

Point 3 – Repairs action plan from a previous meeting. Concerns raised that employees working in tenants' properties were charging their power tools whilst working in that property without permission. At present we were in a cost-of-living crisis, electricity was not cheap and those tenants on a pre-payment meter did not necessarily have a funds on their meter. The attitude of some of those employees stating that the tools did not cost a lot to charge was not acceptable. All tools should be charged before embarking on work in tenants' properties. *All staff were reminded of their responsibilities in respect of charging tools.*

## 80. Repairs Service Improvement Plan Presentation

The Repairs Services improvement Plan was presented as a slide presentation with the following subjects;

- 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;

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

- With regards to the monitoring of speed and driver behaviour for Fleet Management, is this something that you were monitoring anyway or has there been complaints regarding speeding. How will this be monitored?  
*There was a tracker withing the vehicle that not only confirms your location but also records the speed that the vehicle is traveling. This was part of our ongoing commitment to the Health and Safety programme;*
- Can you explain how Customer Service staff are qualified to diagnose and send out the correct repair's team member for a repair. At present, an employee is sent out to assess the problem and then a repair is organised;  
*We have a piece of equipment called 'Locator Plus' is a tool that helps to diagnose repairs via visual and written prompts. You can talk with staff in the moment to go through a range of various probabilities regarding your query. This will help to prevent duplicate visits for tenants with regards to a site visit to identify and solve the issue. If the call cannot be diagnosed over the phone, this would need a site visit;*
- Concerns that fleet vans were still turning up to properties with only one person in the van. This is causing issues for residents and parking. Please could this be looked at;  
*We will have a look at this as part of driver behaviour and awareness;*
- Concerns with fleet vehicles parking over the pavement's causing obstruction pedestrians;  
*The message will fed back to our drivers to make them aware of parking on pavements;*
- Could the Council take up an apprenticeship scheme instead of taking on outside contractors?  
*This has been done in the past with mixed success. This would be really a positive thing going forward and we would continue to commit to looking at this in the future;*

The report was noted.

## 81. 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.

James Barrah welcomed and introduced Chris Hall who has been appointed as the new Director for Communities in the new Council.

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

- Clarification was sought on whether all the Councils were now linked together with regards to rent increases ? *The rent increases have been consolidated and would be applied the same adhering to the Government cap of 7%. The base rents would be slightly different, depending on the location and history of that property;*
- The first builds at North Taunton are due to be let in February. Has the rent for these properties being set yet? *If we let them in this financial year we will utilise the rents for the remaining. The rent for 2323 will increase from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April onwards;*
- Has the repairs backlog being cleared or were there still challenges to this? *Currently there were no backlogs post Covid;*

The Tenants' Strategic Group noted this report.

## 82. **Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey Results**

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey was 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

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

- Did we know why tenants in the survey were not satisfied with the grounds maintenance as the number's quoted were low? *We were meeting with the open spaces team to look at our Service Level Agreement and working with tenants to understand their issues. The TAG group were also looking to form a sub-group to look at grounds maintenance going forward;*
- A group member sought clarification on the results of the telephone survey company that had called. Was the figure stated just the tenants that had been called and what proof did you have that these figures were not made up? *This was investigated and the company did ring you twice but*

*only on one survey. Periodic Excel spreadsheets were returned so there was no reason to doubt that the results were correct;*

- A member of the group stated that the grass in his sheltered housing complex was the best that it had looked in 6 years with regular cuts; *Happy that this was a good new story. The TAG group noted that there was a good standard overall with grounds maintenance;*
- As a tenant, you get a letter if you do not keep your garden tidy. There were overgrown hedges and so-called 'wild areas' in the town which were untidy and unkempt which did not look inviting. If you do not keep the public areas tidy, how do you expect the tenants to look after their own gardens?
- One the customer satisfaction survey regarding complaints handling was, or are you able to consider telephone hang ups where tenants were trying to make a complaint but could not get through? *This was reflected in the tenant survey feedback, and we do acknowledge that there was a high call abandonment rate;*

The report was noted.

83. **Any other business**

The group requested that all tables are printed out on A3 to enable group to view without difficulty.

(The Meeting ended at 7.12 pm)

# Somerset West and Taunton Council

## Tenants Strategic Group – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023

### 2022/23 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 3, October – December 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 third quarter of 22/23 (October - December 2022).

#### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note content of the housing scorecard for quarter 3 (October to December 2022). The executive summary of the HRA finance report (2022/23 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 3).

#### 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 November 2022 covering the performance in Q2 (July-September). This report covers the third quarter of 2022/23 October to December.
- 3.2 This report covers a total of 27 measures. Customer 9 (4 additional this quarter), 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. An additional four call answering measures were requested by TSG in the November meeting and these have been added to the customer section.
- 3.3 19 indicators have targets, 11 are green (on target or better), 6 are red (off target but targets are 100%) and 2 amber.

#### 3.4 **Customer**

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Customer</b>					
% of <b>stage 1</b> complaints closed in 10 working days (HRA as per policy)	100%	95%	91%	89%	60%

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

Our complaints performance has remained high in October and November but has decreased in December. We are experiencing complex and multi-faceted complaints and often these have required extended response times which cannot be reflected in the figures above. Christmas also is a time when staff take leave and complaints may take slightly longer to investigate (there is limited cover available and day to day priorities have to be covered first). Considerable effort is being put into the investigation at stage one which is much more demanding of our resources but when we review performance at the end of the year we hope to report a lower number of stage 2 and ombudsman complaints as a result. We have also been managing vacancies being carried in key positions in the service which puts further pressure on complaint handling.

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Customer</b>					
% of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property	85%	82%	87.50%	100.00%	93.00%

During October, November and December, 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.

October 2022: 27 properties let, (16 responses, 14 satisfied or very satisfied), 87.5% satisfaction

November 2022: 12 properties let, (11 responses, 11 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

December 2022: 22 properties let (15 responses, 14 satisfied or very satisfied), 93% satisfaction

Performance is meeting target.

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

This matter was discussed in the TSG meeting September 2022. We will stop “officially”



reporting this transactional metric until a new survey 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 and November 2022 by an independent company. 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). The TSM question focuses on repairs in last 12 months. 76% of customers surveyed in May and 81% surveyed in November were satisfied with the repair carried out in their home in the last 12 months. The combined result was 79% which is above median of 75% (comparison with other landlords by Acuity). Results were reported to TSG in January 2023. The next survey will be in May 2023.

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Customer</b>					
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	6	16	11

We have been receiving a steady number of compliments and the total for the year to date (end December 2022) is 84.

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Customer</b>					
Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM results)	77%	75%	76%	77%	77%

During 2022 we have surveyed twice using an independent company, (as a TSM “tenant satisfaction measure” pilot), once in May and again in November to obtain our statistical sample. The combined May and November results indicate an overall satisfaction at 77%. A decline of 5% landlord satisfaction is reported by Housemark across the sector, however we are pleased to have been able to meet our target and improve on the interim result of 76% in May. Our next survey will take place May 2023.

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Customer</b>					
Average wait time in the repairs queue	60 Seconds	?	00:01:58	00:01:41	00:03:32
% of abandoned calls in the repairs queue	10.00%	?	8%	8%	13%
Average wait time in the housing estates and tenancy queue	60 Seconds	?	00:05:42	00:03:35	00:03:27
% of abandoned calls in the housing estates and tenancy queue	10.00%	?	22%	16%	13%

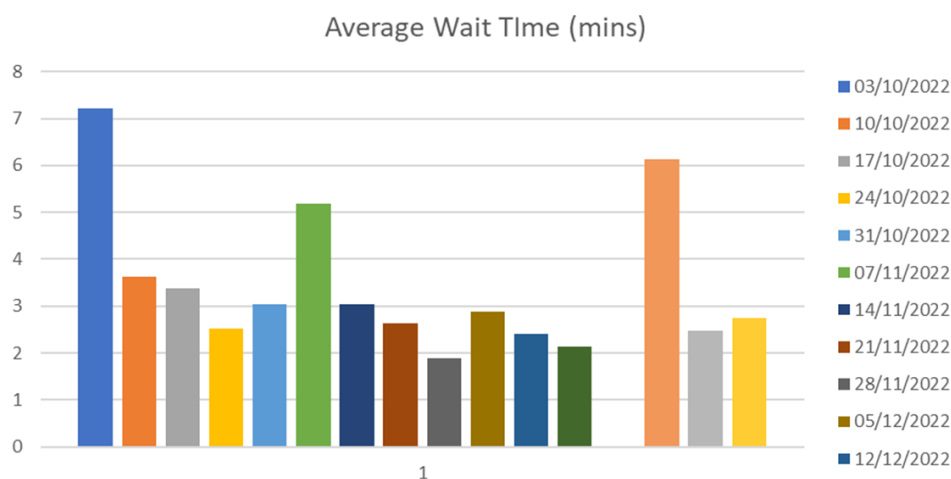
Following a request in the January 2023 TSG meeting the statistics for call handling on repairs and housing estates call queues are now included in this report. These statistics are considered by the corporate Scrutiny and Executive Committee, but we are also happy to report these here.

The customer contact function is part of the Internal Operations directorate and not directly managed by Housing Directorate. Internally a council target of 60 seconds for call wait times was set for all council lines and 10% for abandoned calls. This is an ambitious target when compared to other organisations where it is not uncommon to be waiting longer than 5 mins, which would make our performance mostly “green”. An amber threshold was not corporately set this year as it was felt this was pass/fail. New call waiting times for Somerset Council will be set at 5 minutes (call durations have become longer due to more customers calling us than visiting since Covid, longer call durations and complexity of calls).

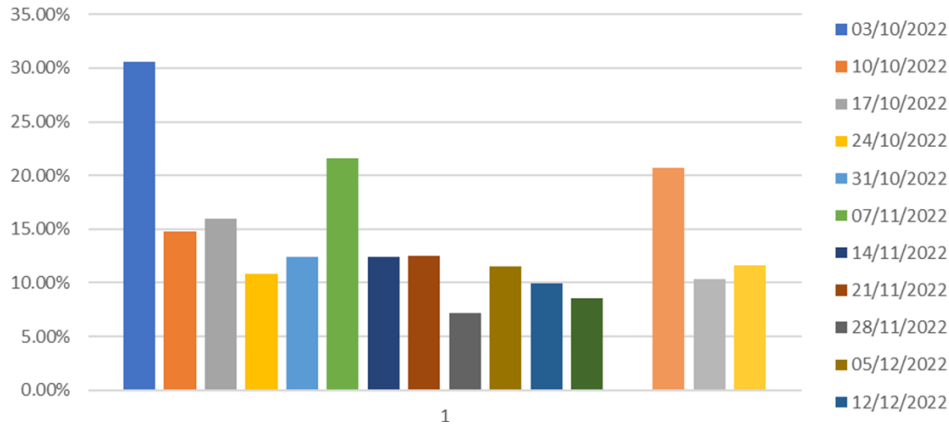
Dedicated repair staff were moved to answer only repair calls in October 2022. The call wait and abandonment times improved as a result, however staff shortages and turnover in a small team mean fluctuations in staffing have a great effect on the call performance. It should however be remembered these are averages and during certain times of the day performance is improved. We do also offer tenants an online reporting tool for non-urgent repairs. Work continues to ensure call wait and abandonment times are kept as low as possible.

A solution was put in place for Housing Estate calls, but this has not been successful in resolving wait and abandon times. A new solution is being trialled from February 2022 where housing estate calls have priority over other calls and progress within will be monitored (in relation to housing and other council services).

Charts below show variations in average wait times and abandonment rates each week.



### Abandonment



Our tenant representatives completed a mystery shopper exercise recently and the results show an improvement on the last exercise which is encouraging. We acknowledge the current challenges which are in part due to an overly ambitious target, however improvements have been made and can be built upon.

The average wait time was 2 minutes 30 seconds compared with an average wait time of 5 minutes and 7 seconds last time.

Customer Service Assistants were able to help and resolve 100% of the calls made.

100% reported that the customer service representative gave their name.

100% said the customer service representative was polite and helpful.

Two calls were promised call-backs, and these happened within an hour.

73% very satisfied compared to 50% last time

13% were satisfied compared to 25% last time

13% were partly satisfied compared to 16.7% last time

0% were not at all satisfied compared to 8.3% last time

### 3.5 Rent Recovery

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Rent Recovery</b>					
True current tenant arrears at the end of month %	2.72%	3.02%	2.53%	2.60%	2.88%
Total number of all evictions	n/a	n/a	1	2	1

The performance in rent arrears is now being measured by the Housemark indicator “true current arrears”. Performance in this area slipped off target in December which is a challenging month for rent arrears. The rent arrears figure at end of December was £780,006.

Although rent arrears as a percentage is slowly increasing, this is reflective of the very challenging financial climate we are in and is also being mirrored across the housing sector. Our performance for rent arrears when compared to Pulse benchmarking data in December 2022 shows we are above the median of 3.10% and therefore better than

average.

There have been 4 evictions from October 2022 - December 2022 due to rent arrears.

### 3.6 Supported Housing

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Supported Housing</b>					
Sheltered housing - % of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans	98%	97%	99.10%	98.90%	98.90%

In the December 2022 Performance meeting a new target of 98% (changed from 100%) was proposed and agreed. This is due to 100% not ever being achievable due tenants being in hospital, and properties being void when the annual review falls due. This target is now reflected above, and our performance is on track.

We are confident that our procedures ensure that vulnerable tenants are receiving regular contact based on a current assessment of their need.

### 3.7 Lettings and Voids

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Lettings and Voids</b>					
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to key)	44	53	54	53	41

We are pleased to report that our void turn around times are back on target in December 2022 having slipped slightly above target due to high numbers of voids in October and November 2022.

### 3.8 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Housing Repairs</b>						
Completion of housing emergency repairs within 24 hours	100%	100%	95%	98.10%	99.70%	99.20%

Data for this indicator is taken from Open Contractor software system (which is used to hold repair jobs against the core property database). Whilst progressing the Repairs Improvement Plan, we have examined our reporting methodology for emergency and non-emergency repairs. We have widened the report so that it includes all emergency jobs issued to contractors and other trades, which were not previously included. The figures reported since April now reflect this. Where we have not achieved 100% it is due to 24-hour repair deadlines being missed by short periods of time and repairs have been completed the next day in consultation with the customer.

The asset management service has produced a Damp and Mould Action Plan which

includes significant contributions from the Tenants Damp and Mould working group including a new D&M leaflet which has also supported the wording in our website and tenants' handbook. There are 52 actions of which 12 are complete, 14 are in progress and on schedule, 12 are behind time and 14 have yet to reach their start by date. The actions behind time are primarily relating to the production of a new D&M procedure linked to the repair's procedure.

### 3.9 Tenancy Management

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Tenancy Management</b>					
Total new ASB cases in the month	n/a	n/a	11	11	13
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month	n/a	n/a	7	23	2
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month	n/a	n/a	52	40	51
Number of new ASB cases reported per 1,000 properties	n/a	n/a	1.79	1.79	2.11

**ASB** - These figures represent “high level” ASB cases opened and closed in the month. We would like the numbers to be as low as possible. Benchmarking data shows median performance is 1.85 cases per 1000 in December 2022. Our performance is better than the median performance in October and November but four cases were reopened in December which has caused our performance to be lower than median. For context 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile is 3.12 in December 2022; even with slippage we are still close to median.

**Safeguarding** – We currently raise low numbers of safeguarding referrals to Somerset County Council. This quarter we have made 30 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	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Compliance</b>					
% of housing dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate (LGSR)(TSM BS01)	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	99.98%
% of housing communal areas with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)	100%	n/a	99.46%	99.46%	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%	100.00%
% of communal areas with all periodic water safety equipment checks complete	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	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%	100.00%
Carbon Monoxide Alarms			100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

We are pleased to report 100% compliance the indicators above, except gas safety. The slippage was due to one property having a hybrid system air source heat pump and gas boiler combination appointed beyond its anniversary date. This was resolved in January when work was scheduled in agreement with the tenant.

The electrical safety in communal areas was off target due to Newton Road Meeting Room and guest room requiring an EICR. This was late due to staff shortages and rescheduling. All was back on target in December 2022.

### 3.11 Development

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
<b>Development</b>					
Number of SWT HRA new home completions since April 2019 linc new HRA homes RSAP/LAHF)		20 per year	62	62	62

62 new homes have completed since April 2019. The next three quarters will see 47 new homes at North Taunton complete. The development of 54 new homes in Minehead is progressing well with the contractors currently erecting block work. The demolition and development of NTWP phase B&Ci has been impacted on by the withdrawal of Equans, SWTs contractor, from new work in the South-West of England. The team are reprocurring a contractor to progress this priority regeneration scheme. The Oxford Inn planning application was approved, and a preferred contractor has been identified. Unfortunately, due to market inflation since the original approval the service is preparing a new supplementary budget approval report.

#### **4. Executive summary of the HRA Finance report (2022/23 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 3).**

The full finance report will be presented to the following elected committees, Community Scrutiny on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022, Executive 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023. Papers are therefore in the public domain.

##### **Executive Summary**

1.1 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 31 December 2022).

1.2 The headline estimates for revenue costs are: Revenue Budget £91k forecast underspend Green General Reserves £3.134m forecast balance = favourable compared to £2m minimum requirement Green Earmarked Reserves £54k opening balance Green

1.3 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.

1.4 The Q1 forecast outturn position reported an overspend of £745k. In response to this variance the Senior Management Team undertook 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 focused on essential spend only where possible in order to bring the position back to budget. There were also 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. This resulted in an improved position report at Q2 of an overspend of £330k.

1.5 The Senior Management Team have continued to monitor spend closely and explore options to bring the position back to budget. The Q3 forecast outturn position reports an underspend of £91k. This has been achieved mainly by an increase in investment income as a direct result of a reduction in spend on the capital programme and increasing interest rates, capitalisation of material costs and a reduction in central recharges. These have offset the main financial pressures including depreciation charges, the recently agreed national pay award, the rising cost of materials for void and general repairs, and tenancy management costs.

1.6 Whilst forecasts have been updated and management continue to control the overall position to remain within budget, the final outturn position may still present further underspends or variances to budget. This will be carefully monitored over the next few months by management and the final outturn position will be reported to Members.

1.7 The level of General Reserves has improved providing the service with some resilience to mitigate the risk of an overspend or additional pressures. However, in light of the volatile nature of the business these levels may not be sufficient, and a more secure reserves position will need to be maintained in future years.



1.8 The HRA Capital Programme has a total approved budget of £110.9m. The profiled budgeted spend for 2022/23 is £36.447m and this is currently forecast to underspend in the year by £15.892m; £15.627m due to slippage of work into 2023/24 and net budget of £266k budget to be returned.

**Democratic Path:**

- **Tenants Strategic Board – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**Reporting Frequency: Quarterly**

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## **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

### **Tenants Strategic Group – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

Damp & Mould Start and Finish Group outcome report

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Housing

Report Author: Luke Manning / Sharon Yarde

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

The report is to update the Tenants Strategic Group on the outcomes of the Damp & Mould Start and Finish Group.

The Tenants Strategic Group is asked to note this report and are invited to ask questions and agree/disagree with the recommendations.

#### **2. Purpose of Report**

To report back to the Tenants' Strategic Group the outcomes of the Damp and Mould Start and Finish Group. To request that the group continues to meet as a new group with an amended ToR (Appendix 1).

#### **3. Background**

This start and finish group was set up in response to the increasing awareness of the prevalence of damp and mould in social housing, due to the exposure of this issue on national television and a report issued by the Housing Ombudsman in October 2021. The group was due to end in December 2022.

### 3.1 Findings

During the lifetime of The Damp and Mould Group Start and Finish Group, the following has been achieved:

- Have own surveyor for D&M in repairs (Mike Parsons)
- Created an inspection form for surveyors to use
- Staff using 3 new pieces of technology, humidity and temp reader, moisture metre and Thermal meter.
- The surveyors and managers in repairs have undertaken a day course with Safeguard UK to better understand Damp and Mould.
- Surveyors have completed a certified qualification, level 3 surveyor in dampness.
- Putting humidity reader in all void properties
- Found a treatment solution, thermal panels which will be installed in void properties if required and used to treat ongoing cases.
- Damp and Mould Leaflet
- Draft Damp and Mould procedure
- Abolished triage for Damp and Mould at Customer service stage
- Better repair approach
- Scrutiny/monitoring of the Capital works programme
- New website page with boiler instructions

The objectives for the group and expected outcomes were as follows:

1. Produce a database which enables us to evaluate the most effective approach to reducing the incidence of damp and mould.
2. Understanding of best practice for dealing with damp and mould, and incorporate into our procedures.
3. Develop a new procedure for dealing with damp and mould.
4. Produce updated guidance for tenants in various accessible formats.

5. Monitor and review progress of how effectively cases of damp and mould are resolved, and produce a final report on the work of the group.

All of the objectives, except number 1 have been achieved.

Despite the original objectives of the Group (except for 1) being met, Damp and Mould is an ongoing problem that the Ombudsman has asked all landlords to address. In response to this SWT have put together a Damp and Mould Action Plan headed by Chris Brown.

The Action Plan includes 51 actions, categorised into 10 headings. The production of a database is included in this action plan.

### 3.2 Considerations

During the time of the Group the Chair changed several times. This was because James White (Repairs Manager) left SWT, in his absence, Stephen Boland was asked to step in, Paul Clifford took back the chair appointment and when he left, Stephen Boland was asked to step in again. Due to this and group members absence, the November meeting did not take place until January 2023. Therefore, the group ran from November 2021 -January 2023.

To be effective, The Damp and Mould Action Plan needs to be implemented and followed.

### 3.3 Recommendations

That the Damp & Mould Start and Finish Group ends and the new Damp and Mould Action Plan Task Group continues to meet every other month with a new ToR (appendix 1) until such time that the Damp & Mould Action plan has been fully implemented. The group will monitor the progress of the Damp and Mould Action Plan and help with the delivery of the action plan where required.

To continue to monitor the Capital Works Programme.

### 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?**

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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

Appendix A - New ToR for the group

Name of Contact Officers: **Sharon Yarde**

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Appendix a

## **Damp and Mould Action Plan Task Group Terms of Reference**

### **Introduction**

This group has been set up in response to the implementation of the Damp and Mould Action Plan, led by Chris Brown.

### **Purpose**

The Group's purpose is to monitor the implementation of SWT's Damp and Mould Action Plan. To ensure that is delivered as promised within a reasonable time scale. To continue to monitor the Capital Programme by a nominated representative (Sam Rickward) and to help deliver the Damp and Action Plan where required.

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### **Objectives**

- To ensure the effective delivery of the Damp and Mould Action Plan

## **Membership**

Colin England – TSG

Samantha Rickward - TSG

Luke Manning - TSG

Ivor Hussey – TSG

Wayne Hobson – TAG

Maintenance Manager-Chair

Mike Parsons – Specialist Surveyor, Responsive Repairs

Stephen Boland – Specialist, Housing Landlord

Sharon Yarde - Customer Experience Lead

Sharon Sloan - Case Manager, Housing Customer Experience

In the absence of a staff member, a representative from their area should attend.

## **Chairing of the Meeting**

The group will nominate a tenant member to work closely with the chair and between them they will chair the meeting.

## **Frequency**

Meetings will be held 2 monthly.

Expected Duration of Meetings

90 – 120 minutes.

## **Format**

Members will be invited to each meeting and given a timescale to submit items for the agenda.

Agenda items will be agreed with the Chair of the group prior to the meeting.

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Meetings should not be cancelled or postponed except in very exceptional circumstances. Where postponement is necessary, an agreed date of the next meeting should be made and announced as soon as possible.

Submissions of suggested agenda items will only be considered if there is:

- A sufficiently detailed reason for request for inclusion in the agenda.
- A clear definition of what needs to be debated, discussed or shared.

Once the agenda items have been agreed, a copy will be circulated to the members prior to each meeting.

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## **Record Keeping and Administration**

- Agendas will be prepared in a standard template.
- The minutes will record issues raised, decisions reached, proposed actions and timescales. Copies of the minutes will be recorded by the Housing Performance team and promptly provided to Group members.
- The group will be chaired by a tenant member.
- The group will be non-political.
- The group may invite other SWT staff or external experts to join meetings where additional insight, advice or learning would be helpful.
- The group will report recommendations to the Housing Senior Management Team for authorisation
- The group will report on outcomes to the Tenants' Strategic Group at the end of the 12 month period

Expected Behaviours

- All group members agree to adhere to the Code of Conduct

## **Outputs**

- To ensure the effective delivery of the Damp and Mould Action Plan

## **Working Group Code of Conduct**

1. It is your responsibility to attend all meetings arranged by the group to advance the project, and to arrive at those meetings on time.

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2. If you can't attend a meeting of the group, you should send your apologies to the Housing Performance team as soon as possible and consider providing your input in written form and giving this to the Housing Performance team prior to the meeting.



3. Only one person will speak at a time and everyone in the group will be given the opportunity to speak.

4. Any conflict of interest must be declared to the Group at the start of the meeting.

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5. Speakers will keep to the subject under discussion.

6. Members will be open and honest in their dealings and show respect for other members, the use of discriminatory or abusive language will not be tolerated.

7. You have the right, naturally, to challenge other's opinions but this must be done respectfully in a non-aggressive way.

8. Members will agree to respect the confidentiality of information provided to them.

9. When you agree to undertake a task that has been assigned to you, you must work to the agreed deadline since failure to do so could impede the progress of the whole project.

10. No member of the Group should behave in a way likely to bring the reputation of the Group into disrepute.



## **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

**Tenants' Strategic Group – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**Name of Report – Damp & Mould Action Plan update**

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

Report Authors: Chris Brown

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

The report is to update the Tenants' Strategic Group on progress of the Damp & Mould Action Plan since its approval in January 2023 by officers and the Tenants Damp and Mould Working Group in March.

### **2. Recommendations**

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

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

A tenants Damp and Mould Working Group has been meeting for twelve months and has helped the Council place a spotlight on the issue of Damp and Mould. The national spotlight was also focused on Damp and Mould towards the end of 2022 with the tragic death in Rochdale of Awaab Ishak where Damp and Mould was considered to be a contributory factor in his death.

As a result of national and customer concerns the service has reviewed its approach to Damp and Mould and identified an action plan, appendix 1. The action plan contains a number of themes aimed at responding in a timely and appropriate way to case of damp and mould and seek proactive approaches to invest in advance of problems being reported. The action plan includes six key areas of focus which are;

1. Review Current Practices
2. Create a Policy Statement and Procedure
3. Awareness Raising & Communication
4. Reporting, data lodging and proactive interventions
5. An enhanced role for Asset Management
6. Ownership and Monitoring

The service has completed a review of its current practices and compared its practice against the housing ombudsman's recommended best practice. The Council has also responded to the Minister in December on the Council's position in relation to Damp and Mould. The officer review and the work of the Tenants working group has led to the production of the Damp and Mould Action Plan. The tenants working group endorsed the action plan at its meeting 3<sup>rd</sup> March.

The Council has now agreed a new Damp and Mould policy statement which reads;

*'The Council is committed to providing safe and dry homes which meet high standards of repair, allowing tenants to enjoy where they live.*

*We operate both a proactive and reactive approach to damp and mould. We use our knowledge of our properties to reduce instances of damp and mould, and respond in a timely way to our tenants' concerns through our maintenance and repair services. Our robust internal procedures and effective communication help us to deliver our commitment.*

*The Council recognises the requirement to comply with our statutory obligations, including the Landlord and Tenant Act (1985), Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act (2018) and the Decent Homes Standard'.*

The action plan contains fifty-two actions of which about half rely on the production of a new procedure capable of tracking reports of damp and mould from the first report through to a successful closure of a case. This new procedure is essential in order to track cases and produce information to generate performance reports or key performance indicators (KPIs).

The procedure is taking slightly longer than anticipated to produce due to the various software system which are involved in each repair. A senior officer group will also meet frequently to have oversight of Damp and Mould cases. Once established the lead officer will be able to feedback progress and KPIs to the tenants Working Group at their meetings.

The Tenants Working Group's new Damp and Mould leaflet is now being used when visiting homes. The language developed by the group has also been used within the new tenants' handbook and the wording for the new Somerset Council's webpage on Damp and Mould.

Training is being rolled out with a number of officers booked onto a Housing Health and Safety Rating System courses in Spring and more courses will follow.

Some of the more innovative proposals include the training of officers who enter homes the most, primarily the gas team, to carry out a simple ten point check list including asking questions to the tenant and making observations in reference to Damp and Mould and disrepair. The Tenants Working Group has offered to support officers develop around five questions and five observations to create this practical checklist.

Since January twelve of the fifty-two actions of the plan have been completed. Fourteen actions are partially complete and eleven are behind schedule. Those behind schedule primarily relate to the development of a new damp and mould procedure. Fifteen actions are not yet due to commence.

#### **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?**

The Damp and Mould Action Plan will require resources, and these will be found from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The service is working through any revenue costs associated with staffing commitments and an initial annual capital sum has been created for investment to ventilation. However, within the current medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and in the grant funds the Council is receiving there is significantly more funding to help make properties more thermally efficient and improve ventilation.

**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 data protection implications of this report.

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No	Theme	Task	Link to Ombudsmans Spotlight report	Owner	Lead	Start Date	End Date	Status	Comments
1a	Review of current practices	Review current practices and respond to Ministers questions	1	JB	JB	01/11/2022	31/01/22	Complete	One off
1b	Review of current practices	Housing Managers to be provided with and confirm read Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Report (26 good practice messages)	Jan-26	JB	CR	19/01/2023	13/02/2023	Partial (50%)	One off
2a	Policy Statement & Process	Produce a D&M Policy Statement as an amendment to the repairs policy	1, 2, 26	CB	CR/SW/RP/HH	19/01/2023	25/02/2023	Complete	One off then BAU
2b	Policy Statement & Process	Complete the Repairs Action Plan.	3, 5, 12, 13,	IC	SW	01/10/2022	?		One off then BAU
2c	Policy Statement & Process	Produce a D&M Proceedure and flow chart as an amendment to the repairs procedure and flow chart	1, 2, 26	IC	CR	09/01/2023	28/02/2023	Commenced but will require additional time and service alignment	One off then BAU
2d	Policy Statement & Process	D&M process and flow chart to be created as an amendment to the Repairs Proceedure and Flow chart to include customer contact points and tenant expectations in terms of engagement, feedback and engagement as their repair progresses	13, 17, 18	IC	SW/CR	see 2c	see 2c	Current practice has been mapped, a number of recommendedn dation need	One off then BAU
2e	Policy Statement & Process	All D&M reports regardless of who reports (tenant/officer) will be logged on xxx system (schedulers?Open Housing?).	5, 7, 12, 13	IC	SW/CR/HH/RMc	see 2c	see 2c	Initial report to be coded to 112024. Process needs embedding	One off then BAU
2f	Policy Statement & Process	All D&M logged repairs will be logged by call centre and schedulers.	5, 12, 13	IC	SW/CR/HH/RMc	see 2c	see 2c	Action amended - Call centre briefed, embed the process	One off then BAU
2g	Policy Statement & Process	Repairs process flow chart D&M amendment to clarify when independent specialist advice is required and contractors will adopt SWTs customer engagement requirements as expressed in contract documents	15, 16, 21, 24	IC	SW/CR	see 2b, 2c	se 2b, 2c		One off then BAU
2h	Policy Statement & Process	Review Complaints, compensation policy to ensure it covers D&M (Repair failure)	18, 19, 24, 25, 26	SH/IC	CR	19/01/2023	25/01/2023	Complete	Review only
2i	Policy Statement & Process	Produce a disrepair process and flow chart as an amendment to repairs process and flo chart	17, 24	SH/IC	CR	see 2c	see 2c	Partial	One off standard practice

3a	Awareness Raising & Communication	Complete the reform of Call Centre efficiency - repair call answering, correct recording of customer request, correct forwarding to schedulers, D&M category	2, 3	IC/SL	SW/HH	Ongoing		Ongoing	Ongoing activity
3b	Awareness Raising & Communication	Place Policy Statement on SWT Website	2, 3	SH/IC	CR	25/01/2023	03/02/2023	Complete	One off
3c	Awareness Raising & Communication	Promotion and training on Repair/D&M procedure and flow chart	2, 3	All	ADs/CR	28/02/2023	01/05/2023		One off then BAU
3d	Awareness Raising & Communication	Produce a D&M information leaflet (TAG produced leaflet)	2, 3	SH	CR/SS	01/01/2023	25/01/2023	Complete	One off
3e	Awareness Raising & Communication	Promote D&M messages in tenancy handbook	2, 3	SL/SH	SB/CR	01/01/2023	10/02/2023	Complete	One off
3f	Awareness Raising & Communication	Develop capacity to provide alerts on various matters inc. D&M - Portal pop ups, customer care scripts, messages on satisfaction cards, strap lines on letters and emails	2, 3	SH	?	17/01/2023	01/11/2023		NEW
3g	Awareness Raising & Communication	Promote routes for reporting repairs and D&M. Where there is a instance of damp and mould this should be reported as a repair and dealt with as a responsive repair.	2, 3, 18	IC	CR	see 2c	see 2c	see 2c	One off then BAU
4a	Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey)	Gas team to be trained in HHSRS and D&M identification and assessment.	4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 20	IC	RP/DS	01/03/2023	01/08/2023	Will be mainly in second HHSRS training post May 2023	NEW
4b	Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey)	Asset surveyors/validators to be trained in HHSRS and D&M identificaion and assessment	4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 20	CB	DS	01/03/2023	01/08/2023	HHSRS Training May 2023 (16 staff)	NEW
4c	Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey)	Compliance team (those who enter properties) to be trained in HHSRS and D&M.	4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 20	IC	AE/DS	01/03/2023	01/08/2023	HHSRS Training May 2023 (16 staff)	NEW
4d	Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey)	Repairand Asset Surveyors to be trained in HHSRS and D&M identification and assessment	4, 5, 7, 15, 16, 20	IC	RP/DS	01/03/2023	01/08/2023	HHSRS Training May 2023 (16 staff)	NEW
4e	Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey)	On line hand held/phone based 10 point property checklist to be used on all property inspections/gas visits by trained HHSRS Gas engineers, asset surveyors and caompliance team. Checklist to include D&M visual and tenant question. The 10 point check may also include a check on the efficiency of the kitchen and bathroom ventilation to ensure compliance with building regs part F. Tenant groups to help create the 10 point checklist.	5, 12, 13	IC/CB	RP/DS/AE	01/04/2023	01/09/2023		NEW
4f	Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey)	D&M process and flow chart to include requirement for adjacent properties to be assessed for D&M following an accepted case of D&M. Existing data will be acceptable if no more than 6 months old and or data from live property humidity monitoring. Asset management will use reports to understand patens of investment required.	4, 5, 12	IC	CR/RMc	see 2c	see 2c	see 2c	One off then BAU
4g	Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey)	On line D&M awareness training to be available for housing and call centre staff	4, 5, 7, 12, 15	IC	SW/CR/HH/RMc	see 2c	see 2c	see 2c	One off then BAU
4h	Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey)	Repair Reporting procedure to claify how HHSRS cat 1 & 2 hazards are to be logged by HHSRS qualified staff.	4, 5	IC	SW/CR/RMc/HH	see 2c	see 2c	see 2c	NEW
4i	Reporting, data lodging and proactive intervention (damp & mould assessment/survey)	Policy statement and reporting arrangement for Damage, Repair and Damp and Mould to be developed as a procurment document. Maintenance and compliance contractors sign up to reporting as part of contact T&Cs, likewise tenant engagement and vulnersble customer statements.	15, 16	IC/CB	MO'H/C R/DS/KA	see 2c	see 2c	see 2c	NEW

5a	Repair, Voids, Maintenance and Capital Investment - Responsive Repairs/Voids	Tool box talk and more focused training to cover - Repair procedure/flow chart, D&M, Disrepair ammendments and complaints process	4, 5, 7, 12, 15	IC	RP/OW/CR	see 2c	see 2c	see 2c	BAU
6a	Repair, Voids, Maintenance and Capital Investment - Voids	Void works to be specified in line with Asset Management requirements and Low Carbon Retrofit standards inc pathway to zero carbon architype studies	10	CB/IC	OW/DS	01/02/2023	01/05/2023	see 2c	One off then BAU
7a	The role of Asset Management	Introduce remote monitoring technology as part of Major works investment and retrofit - target 500 units by 2025 - product agreed 01/04/2023, product roll out 01/05/2023	4, 5	CB	DS/WL	01/02/2023	31/03/2025	3 pilots to take place - Oake/NTWP/ Disrepair & D&M cases	NEW
7b	The role of Asset Management	Investment assumptions re properties for disposal and regeneration to be assumed to be status quo in MTFP and budgets for repair not reduced in advance of demolition or sale	6	CB	DS/CC	01/02/2023	01/03/2023	Complete	One off then BAU
7c	The role of Asset Management	All mutual exchange applications to ensure the mutual exchange procedure is followed and that incoming tenants are informed of any work planned for the property and the timing of the works.	9	SL	SB/DS	01/02/2023	01/03/2023	Complete but need embedding	BAU
7d	The role of Asset Management	Retrofit investment to comply with the Low Carbon Retrofit Strategy and Delivery Plan and inparticular the 'pathways to zero carbon architype studies' and their recommendations in relation to ventilation systems	10	CB	DS/CB/IS	01/02/2023	BAU	Ongoing and capacity required for embedding	BAU
7e	The role of Asset Management	Asset management will hold and approve all specifications for M&E components, retorfit, heating, heating controls, remote monitoring, insulation, decent homes components regardless if these components are for capital investment, compliance, void or repair.	10	CB	DS	01/03/2023	BAU	Ongoing and capacity required for embedding	NEW
7f	The role of Asset Management	PAS Surveys/assessments and design will inform asset management proposals for investment where there is grant funding.	10	CB	DS	01/09/2022	BAU	Ongoing and capacity required for embedding	BAU
7g	The role of Asset Management	Block investment plan will be developed to ensure a whole building approach is applied when investment is being planned	10	CB	DS	01/01/2023	01/09/2023		One off then BAU
7h	The role of Asset Management	All HRA procurements should include at the tender stage the councils policy on tenant engagement, support to vulnerable customers	22	CB	DS/KA	see 2c	see 2c	See 2c	One off then BAU
8a	Regeneration	Officers to promote service BAU during regeneration programmes and encourage repair reporting inc D&M	6	CB	DS/JW	01/02/2023	01/02/2023	Complete but need embedding	BAU



9a	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	D&M leads for each AD area RP (Repair), DS (Asset Investment), SB (Tenancy Advice). One officer will be nominated as lead and two will deputise	18	IC/CB	RP/DS/SB	01/04/2023	BAU		NEW
10a	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	D&M leads will review D&M cases monthly - Repair, Asset Investment, Tenancy Advice	18	IC/CB	RP/DS/SB	01/04/2023	BAU		NEW
10b	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	Tenanats receiving works will be surveyed following works for satisfaction, Surveys will permit types of repair to be quantified separely and satisfasaction understood	11	IC	RP/KA	01/04/2023	BAU		One off then BAU
10c	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	All stage 1 D&M complaints to be reported at H	3, 11, 18, 19	IC/SH	RM	01/02/2023	BAU	To commence March 2023	One off then BAU
10d	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	All disrepair cases reported to Performance Board and HSMT	5, 11	IC/SH	RM	01/02/2023	BAU	To commence March 023	One off then BAU
10e	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	Number of D&M reports to be reported to Performance Board each month	12	IC	RP	01/04/2023	BAU		One off then BAU
10f	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	Number of accepted D&M cases to be reported to Performance Board each month	12	IC	RP	01/04/2023	BAU		One off then BAU
10g	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	Number of resolved D&M to be reported to Performance Board each month	12	IC	RP	01/04/2023	BAU		One off then BAU
10h	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	Number of D&M cases referred to external specialists	21	IC	RP	01/04/2023	BAU		One off then BAU
10i	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	Number of missed repair appointments (inc D&M) to be reported to Performance Board each month	14	IC	RP	01/04/2023	BAU		One off then BAU
10j	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	Number of void properties identified with D&M to be reported to Performance Board each month	12	IC	OW	01/04/2023	BAU		One off then BAU
10k	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	Review TSG performance report to include D&M stats/performance along with other repair stats/performance	8	SH	ADs	01/06/2023	BAU		One off then BAU
10l	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	Tenants D&M Working Group to monitor Action Plan at each meeting and receive updates	8, 11	IC	?	01/02/2023	01/01/2024	Principle agreed CB attended 3.3.23	One off then BAU
10m	Ownership, Monitoring Service Performance, KPIs	D&M to be placed on the risk register - score to be agreed following understanding of performance	12	IC	CR	01/02/2023	BAU	Complete	One off then BAU



**Somerset West and Taunton Council**

**Tenants' Strategic Group – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

**Name of Report – Capital Programme – Major Works Programme 2023-2024**

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

Report Authors: Chris Brown & Darren Stone

**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 January 2023.

**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**

Introduction

The Asset Management team are responsible for identifying stock investment need to achieve decency and progress the Council's low carbon retrofit strategy. This report provides details of the services 2023/2024 Major Works Programme. It is proposed to prepare a similar report annually each November. In future years the programme should include greater detail and addresses relating to compliance and planned works to ensure alignment with the capital programme, better customer service and provide houses and blocks with packages of component replacement to reduce customer disruption and prelims.

The Asset Management Team is transforming aspects of their work to ensure sufficient insight into the condition of homes and the components being used by the Directorate when carryout major works, void works, compliance, and maintenance.

Currently the Directorate does not have consistency in the components being installed or specification be used.

The Asset Management team consider they should have oversight in all components and the specification of components to ensure c5700 council homes and c400 leasehold properties are maintained efficiently with consistency of product, aligning investment packages and a no regrets approach. It is the case that compliance and voids are being required to do more as the capital programme is failing to invest in a timely way in component renewal. The team will host more meeting with compliance, void, capital programme and void colleagues to encourage consistency.

### 2023/2024 Major Works Programme

Asset Management maintain data bases and recommend annual investment budgets based on Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and 30-year business plan assumption. Table One contains the major works programme for 2023/2024. The value of this programme is £8,720,660 to be delivered directly by the capital delivery team plus £5,000,000 to be delivered by E-On/JJ Crump and contract managed by the Development and Regeneration team. Table one can be translated easily into KPIs for the Performance Board (or Programme Board) to allow tracking of the 2023/2024 programme. This information should also translate to help manage budget performance.

The major works programme is the largest element (80%) of the capital programme, excluding the new build programme. 20% of the capital programme is made up of compliance components, capitalised void works, environmental and other miscellaneous works. The budget for works outside the Major Works Programme is £2,272,250.

The asset management team have provided the following information to the capital team in order for the Capital Team to consult tenants and deliver works. The Capital Programme team have access via SharePoint to the following information:

- Component Type
- Number of homes to receive the component.
- Specification for the component
- Address list inc. any properties which would fail the Council's Decent Homes Standard by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 (most but not all properties have been verified in advance, the aim is to ensure the address list is fully verified in advance for future years)
- A reserve list of addresses which can substitute properties which fall out of the programme due to works being no longer required or refusals.
- Appointed contractor.

New features of this year's Major Works programme include:

- Significant funding for surveys in order to better align decent homes funding with retrofit needs and grant.
- Instruction to the capital programme to test/renew ventilation as part of the kitchen and bathroom programme.
- A wrap around fabric package (loft insulation plus boiler controls/LEDs) when boilers and windows are replaced where properties are EPC D.
- A capital budget for the renewal of ventilation to support and damp and mould action plan.
- A small budget for mobility scooters/environmental works.
- Piloting of remote monitoring (Oake, NTWP new build, Disrepair Claims, grant funded properties) - (a paper on this will follow).

### 2022/2023 Budget/Component Slippage

The 2022/2023 budget has progressively reduced its spend forecast during the year. This was primarily due to five key factors;

- Failure to survey and verify homes in a timely fashion,
- Procurement needs,
- Capital team capacity,
- Poor contract performance by some contractors; and
- Revisions of specification due to the integration of low carbon retrofit into the Decent Home's standard.

The Asset Management team has reprofiled the delivery dates for components and the MTFP to ensure funding is available to replace components in years 2024-2027. The realignment will mean a larger programme in future years and retain pressure on the void service to manage stock failures in greater numbers than would be ideal.

If no additional slippage takes place in quarter 4 the Council will have between 6%-3% non-decent homes (TBC). The addresses of any non-decent homes will remain a priority in the 2023/2024 programme. The 2023/2024 programme also includes all properties which would fall out of decency on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. If the 2023/2024 programme is delivered the service will have 100% of its homes achieving the decent homes standard April 2024.

### Grants and Subsidy

The asset management team have attracted grants and subsidy which will support the delivery of decent homes and retrofit works. The grants will place additional pressure on the Asset Management Team and Capital Programme Team as timely delivery and reporting is essential to claim funds. The grants/subsidy are:

- SHDF Wave 1 Awarded = £419,924 inc. £80,000 Revenue – Spend required by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023

- SHDF Wave 2 Bid = £2,522,000 inc. c£300,000 Revenue – Award to be announced February 2023 and spend to take place 2023/2025
- ECO4 E-ON/JJ Crump Neighbourhood Fuel Efficiency Programme - £20,000,000 pledge 2023/2027 with 8 schemes identified for 2023/2024

If the grants are delivered the HRA will benefit in excess of £1,000,000 over the next twelve months and benefit c£5,000,000 unbudgeted retrofit works reducing future liabilities.

### Risks and Uncertainties

There are a number of risks which must be addressed/mitigated in order to deliver timely stock investment including:

- Asset data to be placed in Open Assets
- Greater capacity to analysis data and create packages of works based on evidence.
- Verification of property lists to take place in advance of programme setting.
- Contract management capacity in the Capital Programme team to reflect the scale of programme.
- Standardisation of components and specification between Major Works, Compliance, Repairs, New Build and Voids
- Early Communication with tenants on the annual programme
- Greater awareness and skills relating to ventilation, PAS Assessments, no regrets.

#### **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 data protection implications directly to do with this report.

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**Table One – Capital Programme Major Works**

	Component/Title	2023/2024 Budget	Target number of units/ component	Inc non decent units (SWT standard)	Additional reserve addresses provided /available	Contractor in place	2024/2025 Budget
1	HRA C Major Repairs Capital Programme	£0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£0
2	HRA C Major Repairs Capital Programme/Surveys	£350,000	438	N/A	N/A	Yes, new procurement seeking VfM	£150,000
3	HRA C Kitchens	£2,126,700	438	41	101 (3)	Yes, ends 17/10/2023 but has 2x12 month extensions	£2,126,700
4	HRA C Bathrooms	£994,700	226	41	70 (3)	Yes, ends 17/10/2023 but has 2x12 month extensions	£994,700
5	HRA C Roofing	£1,515,000	152	10	152	Yes, ends 6/10/2025 but has 2x12 months extensions	£1,515,000
6	HRA C Windows	£1,575,000	250	212	250	Yes (may 23), ends 2028 with extensions	£2,000,000
7	HRA C Heating Improvements	£1,219,200	254	138	244 (24)	No, procurement in progress.	£1,219,200
8	HRA C Doors	£165,000	103	47	240 (25)	Yes (may 23), ends 2028 with extensions	£165,000
9	HRA C Fascia's and Soffits	£0	N/A	N/A	N/A	Inc with roofing	-
10	HRA C Air Source Heat Pumps	£0	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	-
13	HRA C Insulation and eco wrap around works	£1,500,000	TBC	TBC	TBC	Yes JJ Crump ends July 2023 with 12 month option to extend. Will need a further procurement.	£500,000
14	HRA C Ventilation (excluding ventilation installed during bathroom and kitchen replacement) and Remote monitors	£50,000	TBC (c83)	N/A	TBC	Ends January 2024 with a further 12 month extension option.	£50,000
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£9,495,600</b>					<b>£8,720,600</b>
36	ECO4 - E-On	£5,000,000	Projects 1-8				£5,000,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£14,495,600</b>					<b>£13,720,600</b>



**Table Two – Capital Programme Major Works, Compliance, Voids, Vehicles, Other**

	Component/Title	2023/2024 Budget	Target number of units/ component	Inc non decent units (SWT standard)	Additional reserve addresses provided /available	Contractor in place	2024/2025 Budget
1	HRA C Major Repairs Capital Programme	£0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	£0
2	HRA C Major Repairs Capital Programme/Surveys	£350,000	438	N/A	N/A	Yes, new procurement seeking VfM	£150,000
3	HRA C Kitchens	£2,126,700	438	41	101 (3)	Yes, ends 17/10/2023 but has 2x12 month extensions	£2,126,700
4	HRA C Bathrooms	£994,700	226	41	70 (3)	Yes, ends 17/10/2023 but has 2x12 month extensions	£994,700
5	HRA C Roofing	£1,515,000	152	10	152	Yes, ends 6/10/2025 but has 2x12 months extensions	£1,515,000
6	HRA C Windows	£1,575,000	250	212	250	Yes (may 23), ends 2028 with extensions	£2,000,000
7	HRA C Heating Improvements	£1,219,200	254	138	244 (24)	No, procurement in progress.	£1,219,200
8	HRA C Doors	£165,000	103	47	240 (25)	Yes (may 23), ends 2028 with extensions	£165,000
9	HRA C Fascia's and Soffits	£0	N/A	N/A	N/A	Inc with roofing	-
10	HRA C Air Source Heat Pumps	£0	N/A	N/A	N/A	No	-
11	HRA C Door Entry Systems	XX012H	£286,250	TBC by Compliance	N/A		£286,250
12	HRA C Community Alarms	XX016H	£155,120	TBC by compliance	N/A		£0
13	HRA C Insulation and eco wrap around works	£1,500,000	TBC	TBC	TBC	Yes JJ Crump ends July 2023 with 12 month option to extend. Will need a further procurement.	£500,000
14	HRA C Ventilation (excluding ventilation installed during bathroom and kitchen replacement) and Remote monitors	£50,000	TBC (c83)	N/A	TBC	Ends January 2024 with a further 12 month extension option.	£50,000
15	HRA C Kitchen rep'd due to dam (voids)	£150,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£150,000
16	HRA C Bathroom rep'd due to da (voids)	£80,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£80,000
17	HRA C Underground Drainage	£50,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£50,000
18	HRA C Environmental Improvement/ mobility scooter storage	£50,000	Prioritisation	N/A	N/A		£50,000
19	HRA C Electrical Testing (EICR)	£250,000	TBC by compliance	N/A	N/A		£250,000
20	HRA C Sewerage Treatment Plant	£125,000	TBC by Dev and Reg on behalf of Asset Management	N/A	N/A	No	£100,000
21	HRA C Unadopted Areas	£100,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£100,000
22	HRA C Scaffolding	£0	N/A	N/A	N/A		-
23	HRA C Water - Planned Maint	£25,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£25,000
24	Radon Remediation	£35,000	TBC by compliance	N/A	N/A		£35,000
25	HRA C Water - Safety Compliance	£66,000	TBC by compliance	N/A	N/A		
26	HRA C Fire Safety Works Commun	£150,000	TBC by compliance	N/A	N/A		£150,000
27	HRA C Meeting Halls	£20,000	Responsive & prioritisation	N/A	N/A		£20,000
28	HRA C Garages	£20,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£20,000
29	HRA C Shops	£10,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£10,000
30	HRA C Asbestos Works	£300,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£300,000
31	HRA C Building Services Vehicle	£0	N/A	N/A	N/A		£266,000
32	IT	£10,000	N/A	N/A	N/A		£10,000
33	Transformation	£100,000	N/A	N/A	N/A		£0
34	HRA C Aids and Adaptations	£70,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£70,000
35	HRA C DFGs	£300,000	Responsive	N/A	N/A		£300,000
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>£11,406,600</b>					<b>£10,992,850</b>
36	ECO4 - E-On	£5,000,000	Projects 1-8				£5,000,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£16,406,600</b>					<b>£15,992,850</b>



## **Somerset West and Taunton Council**

**Tenants' Strategic Group – Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 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 February 2023.

#### **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. 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.
- 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 award of the fund will be known in March.

- SWT has completed the first two new build SWT low carbon homes at North Taunton. These dwellings are the first of 49 low carbon homes delivered in the next 6 months at North Taunton (NTWP). The council is reprocurring a contractor for phase B&C due to the main contractor pulling out of new contracts in the South West.
- A consultation event at Rainbow Way, Minehead was held in January. The scheme is progressing well with brick work, using large porotherm blocks, allowing a speedy build to first floor level. The 54 units at Rainbow Way off Seaward Way will provide a variety of property types and be zero carbon.
- 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.
- Despite the volatility of the housing market the district has seen a higher-than-average number of affordable homes 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 others 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 April 2025.
- The Housing Strategy Team continue to work hard with partners to improve the services for vulnerable adults. The team are helping influence the integrated care system through the Health and Wellbeing Board and the Integrated Care Partnership. Working with Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) the team are identifying better ways for health, care and housing services to work together for the benefit of customers.

## **Housing Property Team**

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

- Emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs are being undertaken, largely within our defined timescales.
- We are continuing to monitor performance levels for responsive repair requests (now being taken by a cohort of specialist repair call-handlers within the Corporate Customer Service team) and have now introduced an 'overflow' of calls process to repairs schedulers when available. Nevertheless, this remains an area of challenge to ensure calls are answered within the corporate SLA.
- We continue to develop and implement activities within our Repairs Service Improvement Plan (RSIP). However, progress to improving ICT systems (e.g. job diagnosis and appointments, trades scheduling, contractor portal, etc.) and further review of available reporting functionality is still being delayed by a corporate 'change freeze' to existing IT systems prior to LGR Vesting Day on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.
- We continue to undertake void repairs to meet our Lettable Standard and have commenced a new procurement exercise for external contractor support.
- We have completed an update on the Materials Supplies Audit previously undertaken, including implementing an updated imprest van stock.
- 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, lift and stair-lift checks and remedial works, and radon monitoring.
- We have recently procured an independent specialist consultant (Savills) to undertake an overall desktop Property Safety Compliance Audit. This will act as a key opportunity to measure our progress as we approach Vesting Day into Somerset Council. They have indicated we have effective systems in place and, following their undertaking a detailed review of our data sources, have confirmed they have found no areas of concern relating to our compliance records. However, their audit has reaffirmed our need to ensure we continue to focus on Electrical Inspections (Electrical Inspection Condition Reports – EICRs) and Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) servicing. We are undertaking a range of activities to achieve this as a key priority.
- We are using our new iAuditor software to undertake 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.

- We have undertaken a review and update of our compliance policies and procedures.
- Additional procurement has taken place to deliver compliance programmes, including emergency exit release switches to door entry systems on communal doors, fire alarm systems to extra-care schemes, and an extension to the third-party independent audit process for certification of gas systems and electrical inspections.
- We have produced a Building and Resident Health and Safety Strategy (as required by the new Building Safety Act).
- 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)**

- Bi-monthly estates and compliance checks continue, and we are working with colleagues to ensure that bin stores and any scooter parking is located in the safest locations possible. Most communal hallways are clear when inspected, but staff regularly remind some tenants to remove their personal items/arrange for items to be removed.
- The team continues to have several very complex and time intensive cases running including cases related to County Lines, self-neglect, hoarding and significant mental health where we are working hard to support the tenant. Unfortunately, some of our tenants with complex needs are not easily persuaded to engage with the appropriate support and services and this can take some 'hand holding' by our staff to introduce and persuade them to engage with these services.
- The team are liaising well with the mental health teams that are supporting tenants who have had had mental health breakdowns and need to be accommodated within their wards due to significant mental illness. We meet with them to support them to return home, when and where appropriate and support them to end their tenancy where they will be moving to a more specialist provision. This engagement and support is often challenging and upsetting both for the tenants and staff.
- We have completed the paperwork for a 'Domestic Homicide Review', which will begin in the next few weeks, regarding one of our tenants who died.
- We regularly have deaths where there are no known next of kin, which can make ending the tenancy challenging and time-consuming. We have to ensure that tenants rights and property are protected until the necessary processes are in place for us to take back possession of the property. Our officers make enquiries with tenants during their annual review about next of kin to ensure this information is up to date for when it is required.
- We continue focussing on compliance work and are arranging for all the communal lofts to be emptied and secured/kept empty.
- We are liaising with Deane Helpline to be prepared for digital switchover in 2025 to ensure that all tenants have working equipment after this date.
- The team have been referring tenants who have damp and mould to have the areas treated and to provide advice and support.
- 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. The team has struggled with capacity in the past few weeks due to some sickness

## **Lettings**

- Customer satisfaction remains very high with both the Lettable standard of the property and the process of lettings the properties. The satisfaction surveys

via QR did not gain much traction the uptake was low. A manual system is now back in operation which affords a further opportunity to engage with tenants and gain valuable feedback.

- A further 34 properties have been let since the date of the last report.
- Average turnaround times per void is currently 37 days.
- Relet for a Minor void is 30 days against a target of 31 days.
- Relet for a Major void is 56 days against a target of 44 days.
- Since October 2022 478 properties have been let through HFS of which 153 were SWT properties accounting for 32%
- SWT have 3,815 applicants registered on HFS.
- An SWT 2-bed house will attract an average of 205 bids.

## **Income**

- Due to staff absence within the Debt and Benefit service, we are running at half capacity for at least 6 weeks. We will therefore be prioritising those tenants who are already in rent arrears and those new tenants who need support at the start of the tenancy to prevent them falling into arrears. We will then be prioritising other work in accordance to need and making referrals to CA and other support agencies, as necessary.
- The rent recovery officers continue to support tenants to reduce their rent arrears in accordance with the Lean Recovery process.
- We are working with a number of tenants who have very complex needs, these cases can be very time intensive.
- The team will continue to sign post to any grant funding which may be available for tenants to help with their rent arrears and also to help with the cost of living.



## **Tenancy/Estates & ASB**

- The Estates Team have now introduced a new Tenants Handbook. We are really pleased with the new handbook and hope that it will be of interest and useful to all our new tenants. We are also preparing a new version in preparation for vesting day.
- We are pleased that we have also been able to recruit a temporary Tenancy/Estates Case Manager, so we are back to having a full team. We will be looking to recruit for a permanent member of staff in April.
- We are now reporting that during the last few weeks we have experienced some serious anti-social behaviour. Resulting in two tenants being reprimanded in custody and another being sectioned. These extreme cases are becoming more frequent; as well as the concern for our other customers this is impacting on our staff and how they go about conducting the day-to-day work. We have also had to prepare two reviews from the Domestic Homicide safeguarding team.
- In the current climate we may not be always so visible to our tenants when working on the estates; we have also improved our lone working procedures.

## **Housing Performance Team Housing Performance Team (Shari Hallett)**

- It continues to be an incredibly busy time for us all with no sign of pressures relenting.
- We continue to support the work of the Tenants Strategic Group and Tenants' Action Group. On the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 we held 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 is supporting the work of the Damp and Mould Action Plan and has already produced a new policy statement, webpage and leaflet.
- The Low Carbon Working group has continued to meet with a new focus on communication.
- A group of involved tenants have completed a mystery shopper exercise and we have presented the outcome to the group.
- The tenants' Spring newsletter has been posted and we are researching new ways to produce the newsletter from April 2023 (there will be printed and electronic versions).
- We are collectively working with Homes in Sedgemoor on local government reorganisation workstreams.
- The policy review work started with the HQN is concluding, we are continuing to review policies that have been produced.

- We continue to strive for improvement in our complaint handling and have been able to maintain an average of 83% of stage 1 complaint investigations completed and responded to within standard since the beginning of October 2022. The Housing Ombudsman has not investigated any complaint made against us in this financial year to date, although they have advised landlords that they are currently around six months behind in their own workloads and investigations.
- Open Housing the new housing management software went live 27th July 2022. We are now finalising the texting (SMS) option, the tenant portal which we hope to be live in the next few months 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

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