



Notice of Meeting of

TENANTS' STRATEGIC GROUP

Monday, 22 May 2023 at 6.00 pm

John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE

To: The members of the Tenants' Strategic Group

Chair: Luke Manning

Vice-chair: Colin England

Alex Akhigbemen

Jessie Bunn

Paul Cram

Kevin Hellier

Ivor Hussey

Samantha Rickward

Councillor Marcus Barr

Councillor Fran Smith

Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts

For further information about the meeting, including how to join the meeting virtually, please contact democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk.

All members of the public are welcome to attend our meetings and ask questions or make a statement **by giving advance notice** in writing or by e-mail to the Monitoring Officer at email: democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk by **5pm on Date Not Specified**.

This meeting will be open to the public and press, subject to the passing of any resolution under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A: Access to Information.

The meeting will be webcast and an audio recording made.

Issued by Scott Wooldridge on 11 May 2023

AGENDA

Tenants' Strategic Group - 6.00 pm Monday, 22 May 2023

1 Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence

2 Welcome from the Chair

3 Minutes from the previous meeting (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Somerset West and Taunton Council Tenants' Strategic Group held on 27 March 2023.

4 Engagement Groups Update

5 Introduction to the Housing Directorate (verbal report)

6 Performance Report for Quarter 4 2022/23 (Pages 9 - 18)

7 Tenants' Strategic Group Annual Meeting Plan (Pages 19 - 22)

8 Annual Complaints Report for 2022/23 including communications complaints deep dive report (Pages 23 - 38)

9 Housing Directorate Report (Pages 39 - 46)

10 Any Other Business

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SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 27 March 2023

Present:

Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Colin England, Ivor Hussey, Alex Akhigbemen, Sam Rickard, Cllr Mark Lithgow, Cllr Janet Lloyd and Cllr Fran Smith

Officers:

Stephen Boland, Chris Brown, Ian Candlish, Simon Lewis, Kerry Prisco, Sharon Yarde, Sharon Sloane, Darren Stone, Julie Sabey and Tracey Meadows

(The meeting commenced at 5.45 pm)

84. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Kevin Hellier, Luke Manning, Shari Hallett and James Barrah.

85. **Welcome from the Chair**

The Vice-Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

86. **Minutes from previous meeting**

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

87. **Q3 Performance and Finance Report**

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)

During discussion of this item the following comments/questions were raised

(summarised)

- A group member asked how long after a tenant had moved into a property were the satisfaction surveys sent out; *This would be a few weeks after the tenant had moved in. We can find out the frequency and report back;*
- Concerns were raised with the average wait time for the telephone repairs line; *We have had some issues with staffing levels, this has now been resolved with a dedicated team in place, we will continue to monitor as figures fluctuate daily;*

Resolved that the Group were asked to note 2.1 content of the housing scorecard for quarter 3 (October to December 2022). The executive summary of

the HRA finance report (2022/23 Housing Review Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 3).

88. **Damp and Mould**

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

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

(summarised)

- How has the data collection been collected, and are you able to identify areas where damp is more prevalent? *All points are covered in Appendix 1 -Damp and Mould Action Plan in your agenda pack;*
- Who owned the process of monitoring this work, was it repairs and management within housing? *A new group has also been set up which will include the Head of Asset Management, Repairs Lead, and specialist Housing Officer. These Officers will come together each month to see how we are performing and identify any problem areas. This would also capture any challenges and progress that we have made and be reported back to the performance board;*
- Will damp be remotely monitored? *monitors switches have been installed into our new builds to monitor how they were performing;*
- Will the data collection be inhouse only or do intend to join a national group as other groups may be looking to share information with other Councils; *A lot of the data will be collected by us initially and put into our own data systems;*
- The group members stated that they were pleased with the good work that this group has achieved;

Resolved that the Strategic Tenants Group were asked to note this report and were invited to ask questions and agree/disagree with the recommendations.

89. **Capital Programme**

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.

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

- Concerns raised regarding the Capital Programme. Stated that this programme needed a lot of work, and the data was out of date;
- Clarification sought on whether SWT were going to employ an independent person to inspect work carried out by outside contractors as the last roofing contract was finished very badly with no one checking the

finished product; *with regards to the data, this has been improving for three or four year's we have had an accelerated programme of stock there is not very much information coming out. The key programmes, kitchens, bathrooms are held as a fund as these works need doing. We have a new capital programme manager so there will be a review coming out shortly on how the new staffing structure will look;*

- *Concerns raised again with the lack of repairs to outbuildings on estates; the pre-plan maintenance and the external decks is being looked at. There are some survey works being done and we will look to incorporate that within the programme in the next few years;*

The group noted the report.

90. 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 January 2023.

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

- *Queries raised regarding the reviews from the domestic homicide safeguarding team. Was this something new? This is something that has been in place for some time. When a report of anti-social behaviour is reported within a property, the Police and other agencies would look to see whether this was preventable or whether any action could have been taken differently. This was systemic learning that we take as a result to see how we can improve our systems across Somerset. These reviews are published and can be viewed on the County Council Website;*
- *The report stated that there had been some serious ASB resulting in two tenants being reprimanded in custody and another being sectioned. What happens when you evict these tenants? There are sanctions that the ASB team can use to address these issues and that can result in tenants losing their tenancy, so legally if a tenant loses their tenancy, they can approach the homelessness service, that is not part of the HRA, it is part of the general fund service. The homelessness service would listen to the tenant and assess their homelessness. The household would then be tested to see if the family were vulnerable, another assessment would be taken to see if the family were intentionally homeless. If this was the case, we would not house them within Somerset West and Taunton. If children were involved, we would refer them to Children's social care for them to step in and take actions to make sure that the children were protected during any changes;*
- *What measures were you taking to improve Officer safety? In the team we have had discussions regarding lone working and Officer safety. The team now wear pendants that they can press to get support when they need it. We are also looking to put training in place for staff to keep them safe;*

The Tenants' Strategic Group noted the report.

91. **AOB**

The Vice-Chair thanked Cllr's Lloyd and Lithgow for all their support and input as members of the TSG. He also welcomed Cllr's Smith and Barr who will be taking their place from the 1 April.

Action points

- How long after a property is let is the tenant called?
- Ian Candlish to look and see whether outbuildings can be incorporated into the capital programme;
- Hope Corner Lane Block 16 need facias looked into and holes in the flooring;

(The Meeting ended at 8.30 pm)

Somerset Council

Tenants Strategic Group – 22nd May 2023

2022/23 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 4, January – March 2023

Lead Officer: Chris Brown – Service Director Housing

Report Author: Shari Hallett – Housing Performance Manager

Executive Member: Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts, Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture and Cllr Fran Smith, Associate Lead Member for Housing

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the housing performance through key performance measures and financial information for the fourth quarter of 22/23 (January-March 2023) and includes the end of year position.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note content of the housing scorecard for quarter 4 (January – March 2023) and the end of year position.

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 January 2023 covering the performance in Q3 (October-December). This report covers the fourth quarter of 2022/23 January to March.
- 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 20 indicators have targets, 11 are green (on target or better), 7 are red (off target but targets are 100%) and 2 are amber.

3.4 Customer

3.4.1 Customer - Complaints

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Year to Date
Customer						
% of stage 1 complaints closed in 10 working days (as per policy HRA) (TSM CH02)	100%	95%	84%	94%	64%	73%

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 improved January (84%) and February (94%) from 60% in December however during March performance was 64%. An uncompromising target of 100% this year means that performance improvements will not be reflected in the red, amber, green rating. A year end complaint report will be presented to TSG during the May meeting to look in detail at our complaints performance during the year.

The outturn figure is 73%.

3.4.2. Customer - Lettable Standard Satisfaction

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Year to Date
Customer						
% of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property	85%	82%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	94.77%

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, see below.

January 2023: 19 properties let, (14 responses, 14 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

February 2023: 15 properties let, (10 responses, 10 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

March 2023: 27 properties let (16 responses, 16 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

Performance is meeting target.

Outturn is 94.77% which is well above the 85% target.

3.4.3 Customer - Repair Satisfaction

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. This activity has been incorporated into our Repairs Service Improvement Plan (RSIP) and a range of options are being investigated to deliver this. We will keep TSG updated as this work progresses.

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.

3.4.4 Customer – compliments

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Year to Date
Customer						
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	11	9	13	117

We have been receiving a steady number of compliments and the total for the year to date ending March 2023 is 117.

3.4.5 Customer – Overall Satisfaction

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Oct-22	Nov-22	Dec-22
Customer					
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 be during May 2023.

3.4.6 Customer – Call Statistics

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23
Customer					
Average wait time in the repairs queue	60 Seconds	?	00:05:40	00:02:06	00:02:09
% of abandoned calls in the repairs queue	10.00%	?	21%	8%	11%
Average wait time in the housing estates and tenancy queue	60 Seconds	?	00:04:29	00:04:53	00:02:51
% of abandoned calls in the housing estates and tenancy queue	10.00%	?	17%	21%	15%

Following a request in the January 2023 TSG meeting, the statistics for call handling on repairs and housing estates call queues were included in the Q3 and this Q4 report. These statistics are considered by the corporate SWT Scrutiny and Executive Committee, but we are also happy to report these here.

The customer contact team have moved to a new telephone platform called “Genesys” and we are receiving the new reports from April 2023. The new reports show the % answered abandoned and average wait time per week so data is available for the new council call answering system.

The Housing Service meet Customer Contact Service monthly to discuss the performance in this area as well as agree actions that will lead to improvements to call handling in repairs and estates calls. We have seen a resulting improvement in call wait times over the year from changes made but performance is still fluctuating based on call volumes and staffing levels. We need to be clear on our service targets for the coming year. Corporately a 5-minute call wait time has been agreed.

3.5 Rent Recovery

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Year to Date
Rent Recovery						
True current tenant arrears at the end of month %	2.72%	3.02%	2.90%	2.38%	2.41%	2.41%
Total number of all evictions	n/a	n/a	0	1	3	11

The performance in rent arrears is now being measured by the Housemark indicator “true current arrears”. Performance in this area is back on target in February and March 2023.

The rent arrears figure at end of March 2023 was £647,260.

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 March 2023 shows we are above the median of 2.81% and below top quartile of 2.1% therefore better than average.

We are reporting 2.41% as the end of year figure.

There have been 4 evictions from January 2023 – March 2023 due to rent arrears. There have been a total of 11 evictions to in the year ending March 2023 (all relating to rent arrears).

3.6 Supported Housing

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Year to Date
Supported Housing						
Sheltered housing - % of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans	98%	97%	98.10%	98.20%	98.50%	97.73%

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. Performance during Jan-March is on track and the year-end position is 97.73% which is just slightly below the 98% target but is an achievement following the 6 months under target at the beginning of the year (due to staff shortages) followed by consistently hitting target in last 6 months.

3.7 Lettings and Voids

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Year to Date
Lettings and Voids						
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to ke	44	53	62	37	57	47

Our void turn-around times have fluctuated during the three months January to March 2023. Our year end average performance is 47 days which is amber performance reflecting that 7 of the 12 months of the year were on target performance. Voids

performance is subject to a number of factors, such as number of voids; proportion that are 'major' or 'minor'; number of temporary accommodation voids; and availability of contractors to undertake work that exceeds the capacity of the in-house team.

3.8 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Year to Date
Housing Repairs						
Completion of housing emergency repairs within 24 hours	100%	95%	100%	100%	99.8%	99.7%
Completion of housing non-emergency repairs within timescale agreed with tenant (TSM RP02)	90%	85%	88.80%	90.30%	88.50%	89.53%

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 repair deadlines being missed by short periods of time and repairs have been completed the next day in consultation with the customer.

In emergency repairs we have had green performance for 8 months of the year and amber 4 months, for non-emergency repairs we have had green performance for 4 months and amber for 8 months.

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 13 are complete, 24 are in progress and on target, 1 is behind target and 14 have yet to reach their start by date.

3.9 Tenancy Management

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Year to Date
Tenancy Management						
Total new ASB cases in the month	n/a	n/a	12	3	13	158
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month	n/a	n/a	5	6	23	122
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month	n/a	n/a	58	55	45	n/a
Number of new ASB cases reported per 1,000 properties	n/a	n/a	1.95	0.49	2.11	n/a
Number safeguarding referrals	n/a	n/a	9	8	8	81

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. Housemark Pulse benchmarking data shows median performance is 3.25 cases in March 2023 and top quartile is 1.64 our performance is better than average (the median performance).

Safeguarding – We currently raise low numbers of safeguarding referrals to Somerset Council. This quarter we have made 25 referrals (81 over the year). 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	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23	Year to Date
Compliance						
% of housing dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate (LGSR)(TSM BS01)	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
% of housing communal areas with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	99.89%
% of communal areas with all asbestos safety checks complete	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	99.91%
% 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%	99.87%
% of communal areas with all periodic water safety equipment checks complete	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	99.33%
% 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%	66.67%	93.06%
Carbon Monoxide Alarms			100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

We are pleased to report 100% compliance for the indicators above, except for a through floor lift service and inspection due to tenant not providing access to the property. This work has now been completed.

3.11 Development

Indicator	Target 2022 -23	Amber Threshold	Jan-23	Feb-23	Mar-23
Development					
Number of SWT HRA new home completions since April 2019 (inc new HRA homes RSAP/LAHF)	1000 by 2049	20 per year	66	66	66

66 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 creating a new approach to housing growth to ensure new council housing can be built to zero carbon standards whilst also being affordable to the business plan. The regeneration at Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats has progressed well with Wordsworth Drive Flats nearly empty with all tenants and the leaseholder either decanted or have offers and are awaiting their move.

4. Democratic Path:

- Tenants Strategic Board - 22 May 2023

Reporting Frequency: Quarterly

Contact Officers

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Somerset Council

Tenants Strategic Group – 22 May 2023

Tenants Strategic Group Meeting Annual plan

Lead Officer: Chris Brown – Service Director Housing

Report Author: Sharon Yarde

Executive Member: Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts, Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture and Cllr Fran Smith, Associate Lead Member for Housing

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the plan

The plan is to update the Tenants Strategic Group on the agendas for meetings for the forthcoming year.

2. Recommendations

The Tenants Strategic Group is asked to note this plan and are invited to make comments/suggestions to the forward plan. For amendment and approval.

3. TSG Meeting Annual Forward Plan

May Meeting	July Meeting
Key priorities for the year ahead-CB	Finance Out-turn report-KP
Annual Compliment and complaints report-CR & RM	Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling code-self assessment-CR
Q4 & year end Performance Report (Jan-Mar)-SH	Capital Programme Update-IC/DS
TSG Meeting Annual Plan-SY	Directorate Report-ALL
Directorate Report-ALL	Group engagement update-TSG CHAIR
Group engagement update-TSG CHAIR	Voids Outcome report
Informal	Informal
Eviction process workshop-SB&JS	

Training Plan for TSG-SY	
September Meeting	November Meeting
Q1(April-June) Performance and finance report-SH	TAG Annual report-WH
TSM results presentation-SY	Key messages re: the budget-CB
Communication Strategy-CB & SY	Q2 (July-Sept) Performance and Finance Report-SH&KP
Annual Report-SS	* Budget, Rent and Service charge setting 2024/2025)-may not be ready.
Directorate Report-ALL	Directorate Report-ALL
Group engagement update-TSG CHAIR	Group Engagement update-TSG CHAIR
Informal	Informal

January Meeting	March Meeting
Q2 Performance & Finance Report (July-Sept) -SH & KP	Q3 (Oct-Dec) Performance & Finance Report-SH
TSM Results Presentation - SY	Compliance Update-IC
Capital Programme 2024/2025	Repairs Update-IC & BB
HRA Budget 2024/2025 & Business Plan -KP & CB	Directorate Report-all
Directorate Report-all	Group Engagement Update
Group Engagement Update	
Informal	Informal

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* **Please note** that a special meeting can be held in December re: Budget, Fees and Charges if not ready for November meeting. Report-Kerry Prisco and Bryony Cole.

Each meeting will have a formal part which is web cast, followed by an informal part regarding a topic of interest.

Ideas for Informal agendas:

- Improving Communication and support and initiatives to help channel switch (advertising training and learning opportunities)
- Performance of subcontractors, management of subcontractors and capital programmes
- Service Charge changes (following further work with Altair);
- Rent collection innovations (e.g. VoiceScape);
- Business Plan (if we update it this year);
- Grounds Maintenance

Every meeting will have the following: Directorate Report & Group Engagement update.

TSG members can request subject reports to be added to this forward plan when required.

4. **Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this plan.

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 plan.

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

There are no equality implications directly to do with this plan.

Name of Contact Officers: Sharon Yarde

Telephone number: 07818529194 Email address: sharon.yarde@somerset.gov.uk

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**HOUSING DIRECTORATE
COMPLIMENTS & COMPLAINTS ANNUAL
REPORT
2022-2023**

Introduction

Complaints and compliments are reported monthly on the performance scorecard. This information is then taken to the Housing Senior Management Team (HSMT) and brought for review to the Housing Briefing every 6 months.

Following the implementation of the system iCasework improvements have already started to take effect, the service has the opportunity to review complaints when they are first received and take action to remedy at first point of contact. Work will continue over the next 12 months to provide a quick response to those complaints received where the remedy is an easy fix.

As the Customer Resolution team continue to use the new system we are looking forward to the opportunity of working closely with the Organisation to improve on tenant interactions and reporting on complaints.

The new Somerset Council Complaints Policy was effected on the 1 April 2023. This Policy provides a better service alignment with the Housing Ombudsman Code. It has provided clarity to improve working practices. Within the Complaint Policy section 12 which is specific to Housing you can find detailed content for Housing Complaints.

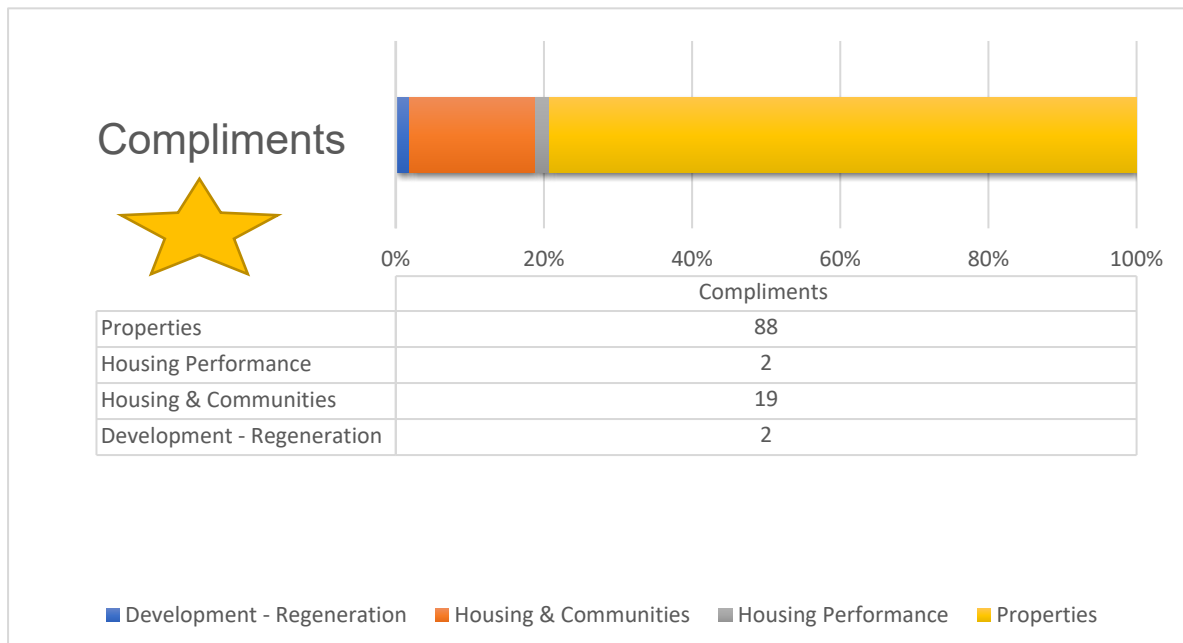
Shared below is a link to Somerset Council Complaints Policy

[SCC - Public - Somerset Council Complaints Policy v1.0 FINAL \(1\).pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Previously we would only contact the complainant in the initial stages of a stage 1 complaint if we didn't have enough information to investigate the complaint. As part of an ongoing commitment to improve complaint handling, all complainants are now contacted in the early stages of a stage 1 complaint investigation to discuss their complaint. We feel that this has improved our communication with complainants, and we are providing action to remedy complaints.

Compliments

The amount of compliments received this year totals 111, we value this positive feedback. There has been an 18% increase in the amount of compliments received from that of last year.



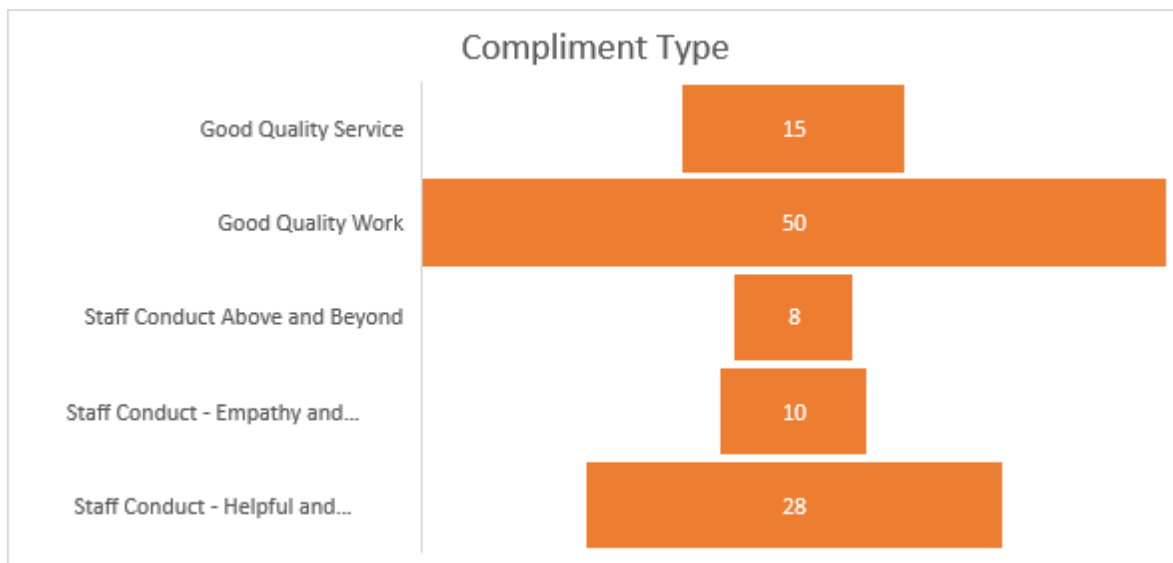
Testimonials

“Me and my family would like to say thank you for your help and support you have been exceptional and professional in the way you have guided us, you are a credit in your profession.”

“They did an excellent job in installing my shower, very professional and very happy with the service. Thank you.”

“I’d like to say a big thank you to both ladies for the support at another difficult period for us. They have helped relieve a bit of the pressure and have been a great help. Thank you from both myself and my husband.”

The graph below gives you a breakdown of the compliment types received;



It is encouraging that we have received almost half as many compliments as stage 1 complaints in the Housing Directorate. The majority of compliments reflect Good Quality Works followed by Staff Conduct – Helpful and Professional

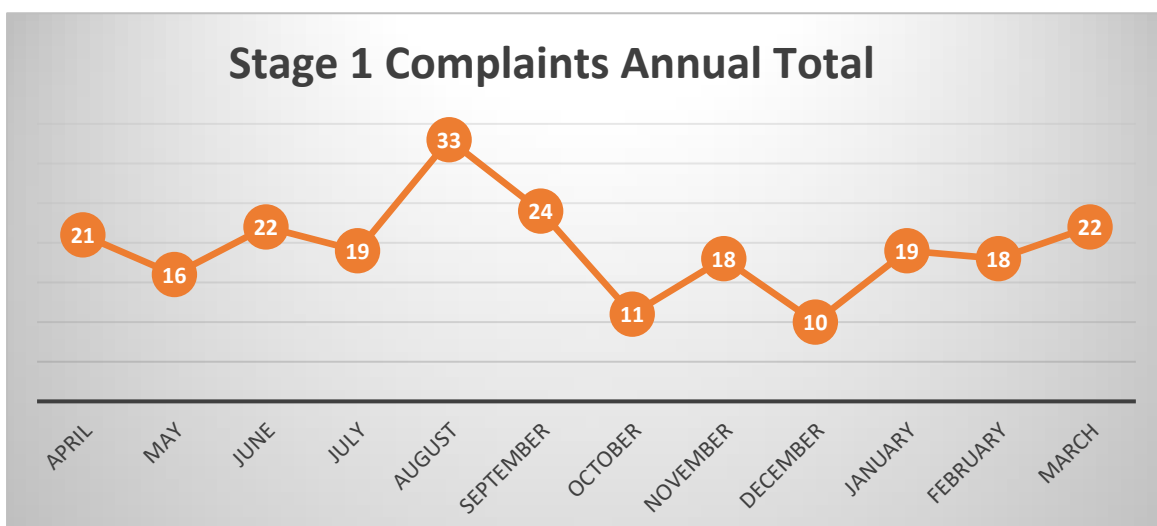
Stage 1 Complaints, Volumes and Response Times

The Housing Directorate received 270 complaints during 2022/23

Stage 1 Complaints 233

Stage 2 Complaints 37

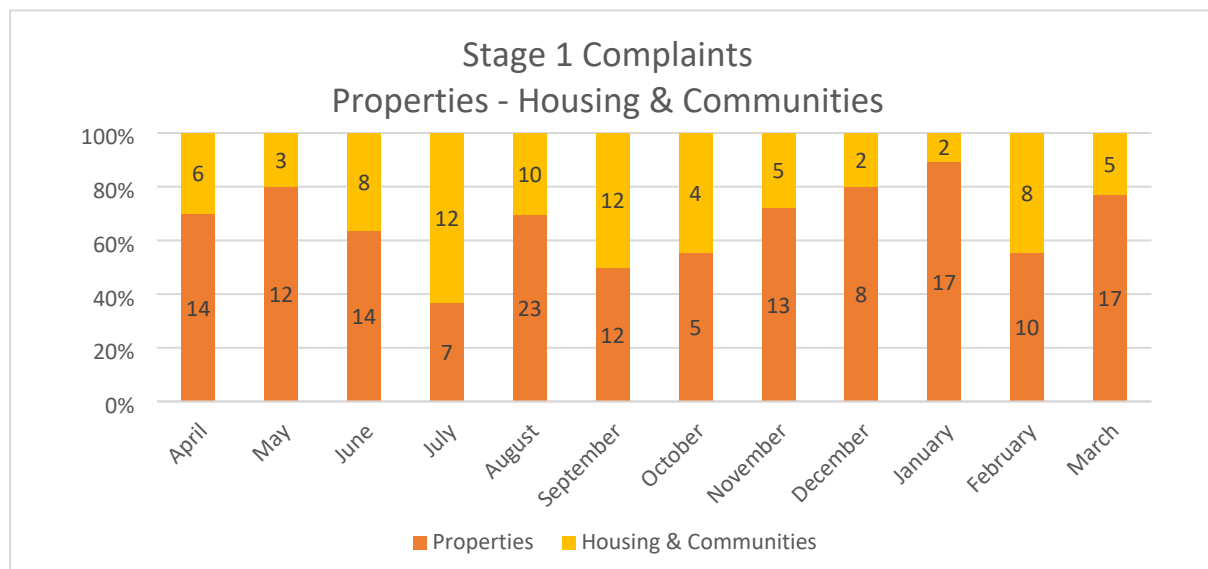
The graph below provides you with the total annual stage 1 complaints which have been received within the Housing Directorate



This year has seen a 30% decrease in the amount of complaints received over the year (331 stage 1 complaints closed in 2021/22). It is a reassuring that our complaint numbers have dropped. As a service we are regularly promoting how tenants can make a complaint, it is encouraging that we have still seen a reduction from the previous year.

Data which is presented from the Pulse report from Housemark provides a figure of a 78% increase in complaint volumes from early March across the sector which aligns with what the Housing Ombudsman is reporting. This is encouraging supporting data to show that complaints at stage 1 have decreased over the year within the Housing Directorate, contrasting the national trend.

The volume of complaints received in the Housing Directorate was for Properties and Housing & Communities, receiving 99% of the complaints accepted. The below graph indicates where the complaints have been received throughout the year between the service areas.

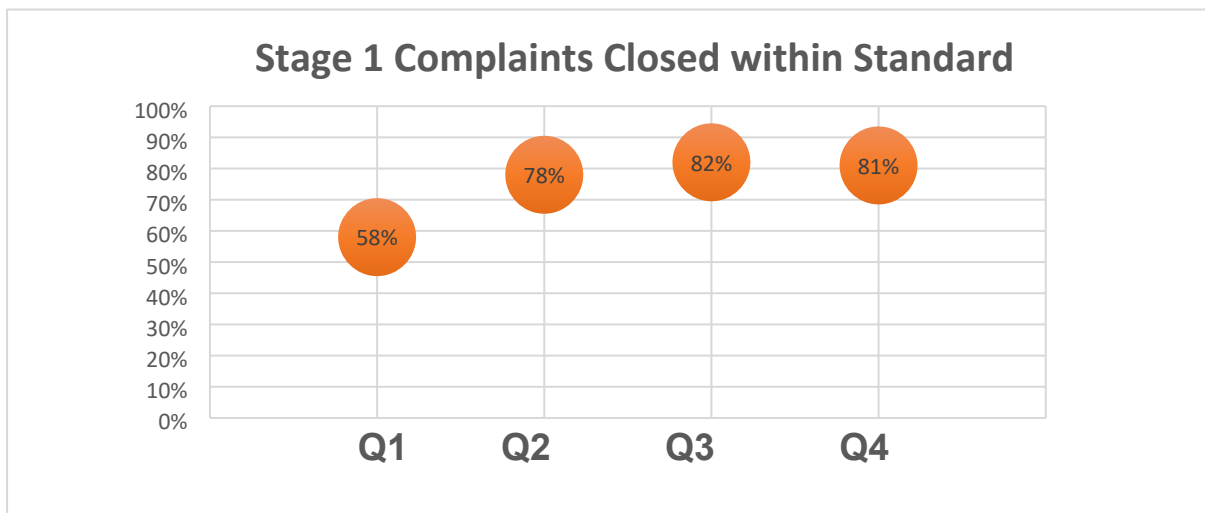


During the month of August there was an increase in complaints received within our Properties Compliance team. This was due to a number of letters sent to our tenants as we needed to undertake an asbestos survey. This feedback helped us to review and consider how we relay important information to our tenants. Following a further mailing of an amended asbestos survey letter in September, we did not receive any further complaints.

Complaint numbers have reduced at Stage 1 over the past 12 months, work has taken place to review jobs that have been raised incorrectly on an inhouse system Firmstep which totalled approximately 800. The Housing Performance team have worked to now action and remedy these incorrect jobs raised. Following this the team now monitor entered in error Firmstep cases regularly. This is to ensure that they are closed and actioned correctly. This may have stopped a communication from being unanswered and possibly preventing a complaint.

As a directorate, for the year we have responded to 73% of stage 1 complaints within the agreed 10 day timeframe. This figure is up from last year where it was 68% and previously 51% in 2020/21. It is reassuring that the numbers have improved.

The chart below indicates the complaints that have been closed in standard for Quarter 1 (Q1) – Quarter (Q4), you will see since the start of the year there has been progress.



Pulse data generated has shown progressions in the amount of stage 1 complaints that have been answered within the agreed timescales. It has confirmed that in Quartile 1 the data is reflecting 93% which is where we are aiming to continue improving to achieve this.

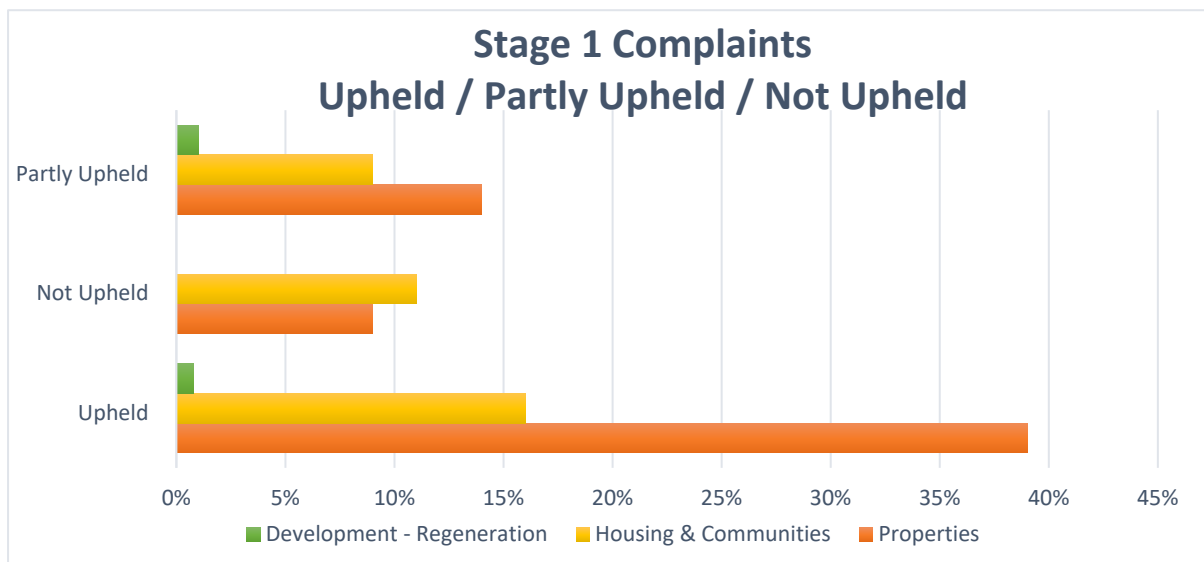
Stage 1, Complaint Outcomes

The below tables provide you with a comparison of stage 1 complaints that were upheld, not upheld, or partly upheld.

Of the volume of the complaints received;

Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes 2022/23 (%)		Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes 2021/22 (%)	
Upheld	56%	Upheld	47%
Partly Upheld	24%	Partly Upheld	29%
Not Upheld	20%	Not Upheld	24%

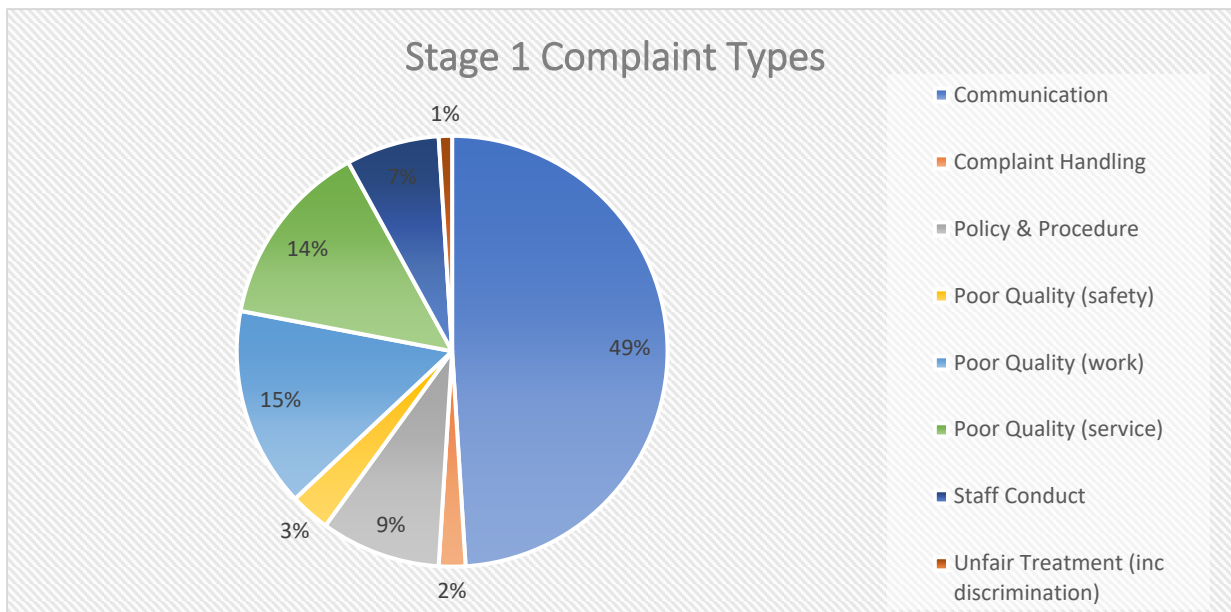
To further provide a breakdown of the service areas complaint outcomes a graph below has been provided;



The data shows that although there has been an increase overall to the amount of complaints upheld, there has been a decrease in the amount for the service areas separately, with Housing & Communities upholding 41% and Properties upholding 61% of complaints closed last year 2021/22.

Stage 1, Complaint Types and Trends

The chart below shows a breakdown of the complaint types that were received in the Housing directorate in 2022/23



To date communication is the highest complaint type with almost half of all stage 1 complaints received relating to communication with our tenants and leaseholders.

Staff conduct attributes to 14% of complaints received, this has seen a reduction since 2021/22 where it was recorded to reflect 18% of stage 1 complaints received. Personal accountability for individuals has been championed by the Housing Service, pressures in the previous year with new working practices during COVID could have caused tensions in the working environment as well as difficulties with the pressure to action the backlog of work. It is positive to note the reduction in these complaints.

Poor Quality Work and Poor Quality Service contributes to 29% of stage 1 complaints received. The Housing Performance team will be looking at more detailed analysis of the complaints received over the next year. Following the implementation of the new complaints system iCasework, new root causes will be captured to log a complaint.

The root causes categories are listed below;

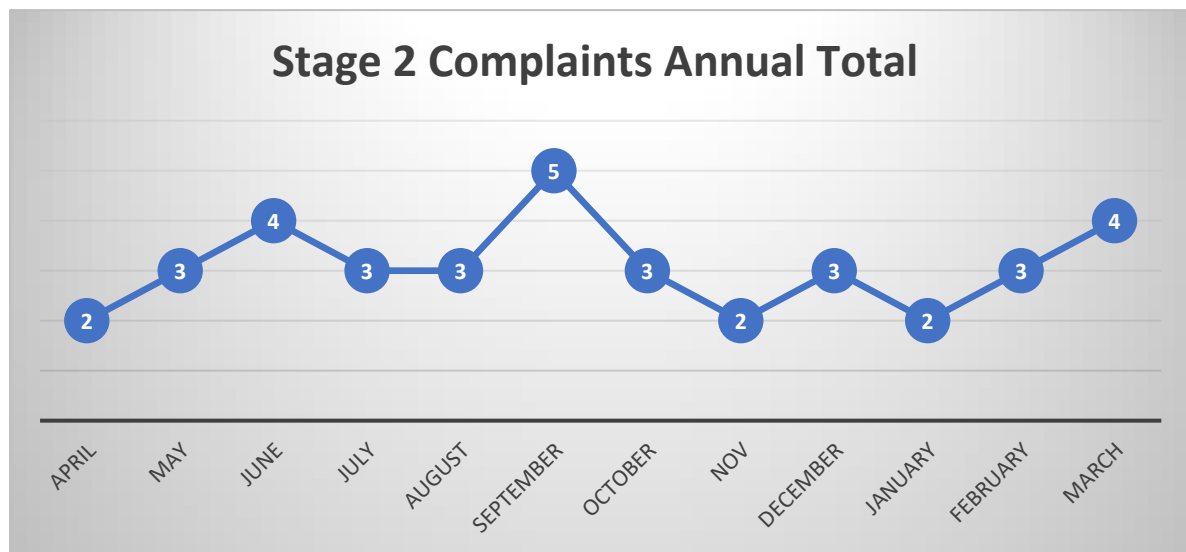
Communication
Service Quality
Payments or disputed charges cause
Service Failure
Staff Conduct Causes
Policy and Procedure
Legal and Regulatory

Further breakdown will provided in the 6 Month Complaint and Compliment Report

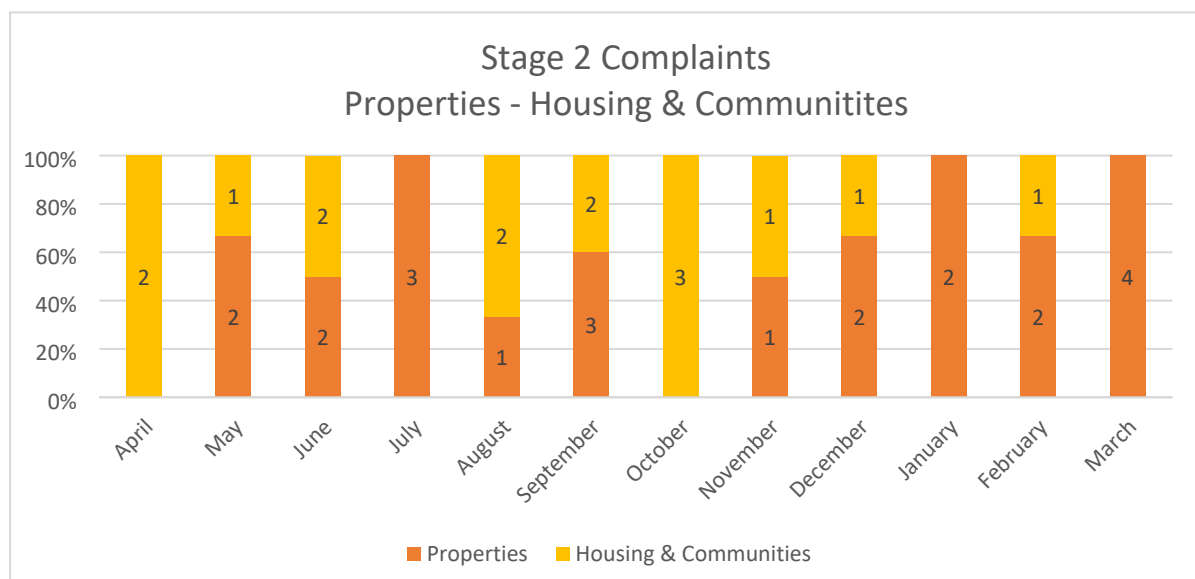
Stage 2 Complaints, Volumes and Response Times

This year the Housing Directorate has seen an increase in the amount of complaints that have been escalated to Stage 2.

Stage 2 complaints received 37

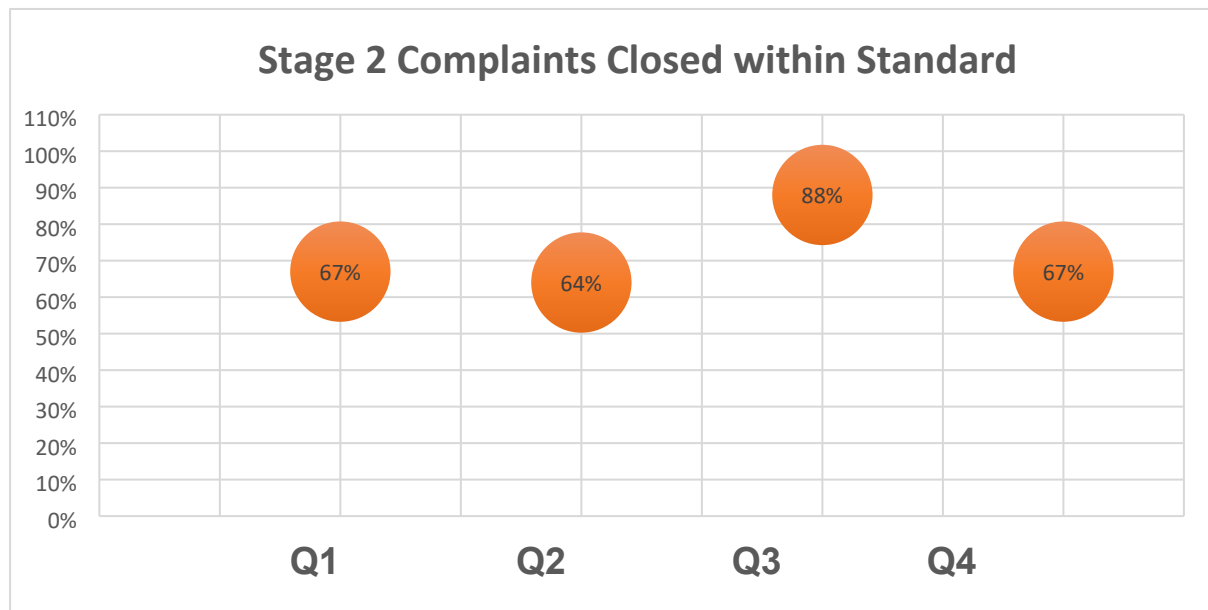


The volume of stage 2 complaints received has been further broken down in the graph below;



The Housing and Communities team received 15 stage 2 complaints with Properties receiving 22 for 2022/23. From the data presented where there is a spike in complaints being escalated there have been key staff vacancies in the Directorate.

The chart below indicates the complaints that have been closed in standard for Quarter 1 (Q1) – Quarter (Q4).



During the next 12 months the Housing Performance team will be working with the service areas, to collectively support getting stage 2 responses sent out within the agreed timescales of 20 working days.

Stage 2, Complaint Outcomes

Out of the 37 stage two complaints answered 16 were upheld, with 10 of these having their decision overturned following the stage 1 response.

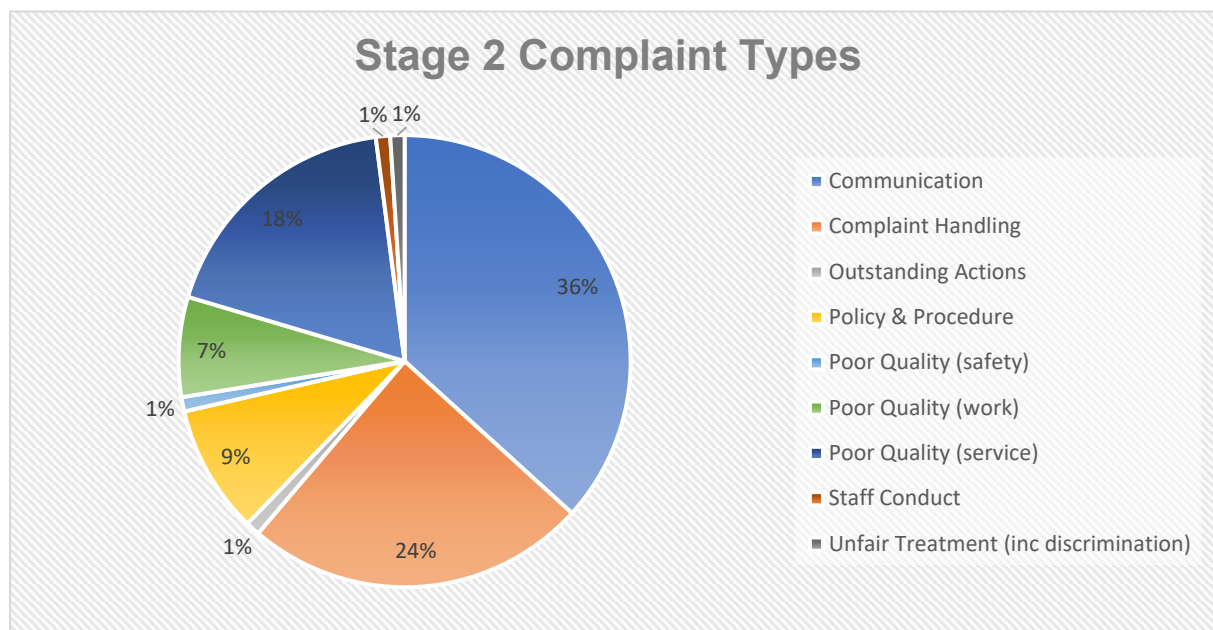
Stage 2 Complaint Outcomes 2022/23 (%)		Stage 2 Complaint Outcomes 2021/22(%)	
Upheld	43%	Upheld	41%
Partly Upheld	33%	Partly Upheld	32%
Not Upheld	24%	Not Upheld	26%

Work will continue over the next year to get the complaints right at stage 1 in the complaints process. Following the decline in the number of complaints received at stage 1, we are hopeful that with working on getting it right at stage 1 there will be a reduction for the need to escalate to stage 2.

Some complaints received relate to actions that have not been carried out as agreed within the complaint reply. Working practices have been put into place to track these outcomes. The Housing Assistant Directors will receive a monthly update of any agreed actions when not completed. We believe that this will also support a decline in the need to raise a complaint at stage 2.

Stage 2, Complaint Types and Trends

The chart below shows a breakdown of the complaint types that were received by the Housing directorate in 2022/23



To further provide analysis on the above the three highest complaint types have been listed below.

Communication – Complaint Handling – Poor Quality Service

As we continue to utilise the new complaint system and having more detailed root causes further analysis can help to seek improvements for the need to raise a complaint.

We have recorded tracking actions as part of the improvements that can be made with complaint handling.

Housing Ombudsman Service

In 2022/23 we did not receive any Housing Ombudsman complaint investigations.

In the previous year 2021/22, 5 cases were investigated by the Housing Ombudsman.

The department work in line with the codes of practice set out by the Housing Ombudsman, just recently reviewing the self-assessment, and making improvements to ensure compliance. Following the implementation of the iCasework system the service area now acknowledge all Housing Complaints received. This has meant that we have the opportunity to request clarification quicker and easier in line with the self-assessment.

The service regularly attends webinars and will keep up to date with spotlight reports, sharing this information with the service areas.

Opportunity to raise awareness of the Housing Ombudsman will continue over the next 12 months. We ensure that contact details are included at every step of the complaints process explaining that the Housing Ombudsman is on hand to help at any point.

With the changes to the democratic filter being removed we recognise that there is a possibility to see more complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman in the next year.

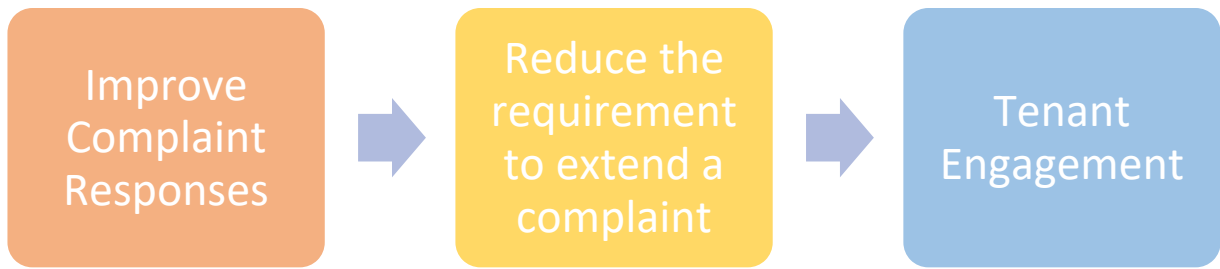
The Housing Ombudsman publish information on their website so that residents can see how their landlord is performing:

Link; HO Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman (housing-ombudsman.org.uk)
[Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

As mentioned already in this report; over the next year the service will look in more detail at learning from complaints to implement any improvements when applicable.

12 Month Forecast

Over the course of the next year below is the proposed action plan for continued growth and improvement within the Housing Directorate.

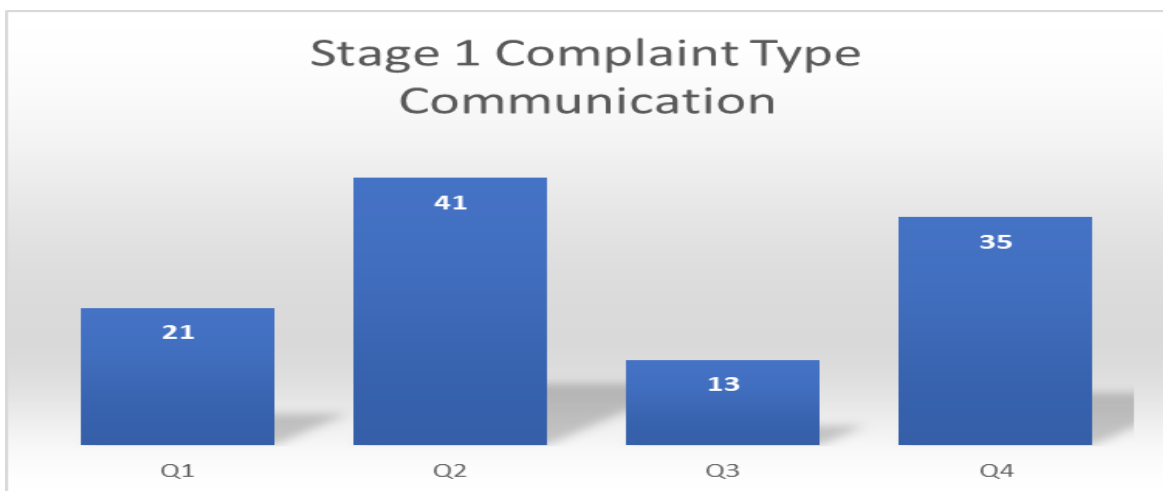


Positive work has started to implement, identified lessons learnt from complaints. The Housing Performance team provide this feedback to managers, who are taking proactive steps to make changes within their service areas where appropriate. We hope to continue with this trend moving forward.

Communication

Following the 6 Month Complaints Review it was requested that a further analysis on complaints received which are categorised within our communication option.

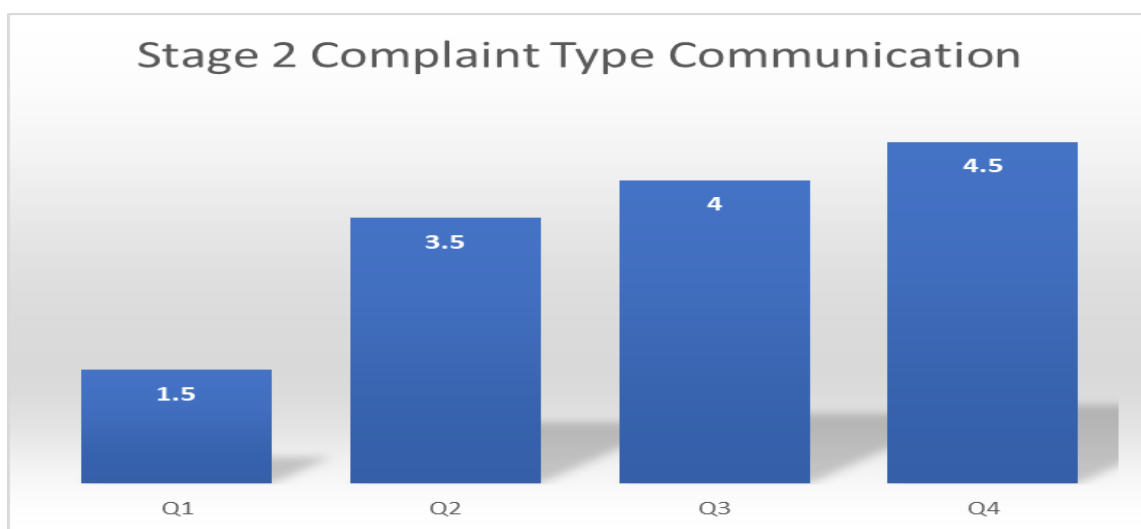
The below graphs indicate the number of complaints received and logged which relates to dissatisfaction with communication



Overall, 49% of complaints recorded at stage 1 have been categorised as failure to communicate.

To provide further review please see the below chart to further analysis this data

No response from the service area following request made	34
Contractor has failed to communicate	16
Poorly written communication	10
Missed Appointments	21
Waiting for an appointment	11
Incorrect Information provided	4
Other	14



Stage 2 complaints received and recorded as failure to communicate is 36%.

To provide further review please see the below chart to further analysis this data

No contact made to schedule agreed outcomes following stage one reply	4
No updates from the service area	5
Contractor has failed to communicate	4

Within the Housing Directorate advances are being worked on to improve communication with our tenants. Open Housing our inhouse system will include the function to text tenants with regular updates.

The online portal is currently being worked on to provide an option for the tenant to directly report their enquiries.

Conclusion

Over the next 12 months there will be many opportunities to support change within the team. This will provide the independence to steer the direction of complaint handling in the department.

This report highlights that there have been significant improvements in our management of complaints and there are some elements that we are doing really well.

We believe that we are heading in the right direction but recognise that there is still work to do. We have clear goals to strengthen our complaint handling and will continue to work hard to achieve this.

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Somerset Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – Monday 22 May 2023

Directorate Report

Lead Officer: Chris Brown – Service Director Housing

Report Authors: Housing Senior Management Team/ Shari Hallett – Housing Performance Manager

Executive Member: Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts, Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture and Cllr Fran Smith, Associate Lead Member for Housing

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 March 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 SC (Somerset Council) (ex SWTs) ECO4 Neighbourhood Fuel Efficiency Project. This project has surveyed the first 110 Council homes and is agreeing the specification with the Council for these council homes, the 1st project also included 80 private homes. Surveys are now taking place on the second and third projects which will consider cavity wall insulation on several street and External Wall Insulation on several Woolaway homes. The Woolaway homes are going to receive pull tests to understand if External Wall Insulation can be installed.

- SC (ex SWT) has been awarded SHDF (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund) Wave 1 and Wave 2 funds which will see 150 homes receive wrap around low carbon works as they receive new windows and other measures.
- SWT has completed the first two new build homes which are very low carbon homes. These NTWP (North Taunton Woolaway Project) dwellings are the first of 47 low carbon homes delivered in the next 6 months at North Taunton (NTWP). The council is reprocurring a contractor for phase B&C.
- 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. The first homes will be complete in Autumn.
- Unfortunately, inflation and market conditions continue to create challenges for building and retrofitting homes. The council 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 has supported Registered Providers who delivered c270 affordable homes during 2022/2023.
- 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 6 new homes will be held in the Housing Revenue account. The HRA is also seeking to purchase 31 units for refugees and asylum seekers using 100% grant over the next year.
- 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 housing service has received circa £440k to start new projects and extend the delivery of some existing projects up to April 2025.

Housing Property Team

Responsive Repairs and Void Repairs

- Emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs are being undertaken, with overall 2022/23 year-end performance for emergency responsive repairs at 99.7% (0.3% lower than our targeted KPI (Key Performance Indicators)) and non-emergency responsive repairs at 89.53% (0.47% lower than our targeted KPI). It should, however, be noted that an overall increase in responsive repairs volume of 7.8% in March from the average volume throughout the year impacted our ability to achieve the KPI targets. We are reviewing our required

trade resource and outsourced contracting arrangements to mitigate against future performance issues during peaks and troughs of repair request demand.

- We are continuing to monitor performance levels for responsive repair request call-handling. This is currently still being taken by call-handlers within the previous SWT Corporate Customer Service team.
- We continue to develop and implement activities within our Repairs Service Improvement Plan (RSIP). Key to this will be improving ICT systems (e.g., job diagnosis and appointments, trades scheduling, contractor portal, etc.) and we are working with IT colleagues to prioritise and progress this work.
- We continue to undertake void repairs to meet our Lettable Standard and have commenced a new procurement exercise for external contractor support for major voids, when required, to ensure we meet our KPI target.
- We have now commenced mobilisation of an initial pilot for our newly procured materials supply chain process.
- We have recently recruited to a permanent Maintenance Manager position.

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.
- An independent specialist consultant (Savills) has completed an overall desktop Property Safety Compliance Audit. They have concluded that we have effective systems in place and, following their undertaking a comprehensive review of our data sources, have confirmed they have found no areas of concern relating to our compliance records. However, they carried out a more detailed review of progress on compliance for Electrical Inspections (Electrical Inspection Condition Reports – EICRs (Electrical Installation Condition Report)) and Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) servicing and recommended that a prudent approach would be for SWT to 'self-refer' to the Regulator of Social Housing in relation to these workstreams. We have undertaken this 'self-referral' and the Regulator has subsequently written to advise that "We have now completed our consideration of this matter and I am writing to inform you of the outcome. That is, the regulator has found no breach of our standards at this time and therefore will be taking no further action at this time." We are, nevertheless, focussing on progressing to full compliance for these areas as soon as is possible.
- 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 will be reviewing our approach to IT system options for holding all property safety compliance data during 2023/24.

- We have completed updates to our compliance policies and procedures.
- We continue to undertake procurement to deliver compliance programmes, including fire safety flooring, fire door automation, and licensed asbestos removal.
- We have produced an Action Plan for implementation of our new Building and Resident Health and Safety Strategy.
- A training session has been undertaken with our engaged residents on property safety compliance to enable them to have a greater understanding on the subject, and to be able to monitor and scrutinise as a key part of their role.
- Weekly compliance meetings continue to carefully monitor and manage all these safety critical areas.

Capital Programmes

- A range of capital work programmes continues on-site; including kitchen and bathroom replacements, fire safety works (including replacement fire doors, and fire safety flooring), and roofing. However, it should be noted that, due to reduced contractor and internal project management resource availability, some programmes due to be finalised in 2022/23 have not been completed and these outstanding works will need to be 'slipped' into future programmes.
- 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 is carryout many energy surveys which are required to understand pathways to Zero Carbon and which funding regime properties are best placed in.
- The service is recruiting two graduates to support the function, analyse data and streamline systems.
- 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)

- There is significant works being undertaken within our extra care sites, to replace the communal floor covering. This work is very noisy and disruptive for the tenants and the Carers working on-site and Fay is supporting the tenants, keeping them informed etc. and liaising with the compliance team and contractors, as needed. As we have a tenant with noise sensitivity, we have requested additional support for them, liaising with the Carers and Adult Social Care.
- We have had a sad case where a tenant has been financially exploited by another tenant, including getting rid of all his belongings when he died, despite him having family as next of kin. Staff and the family have been liaising with the Police regarding this matter.
- The team are supporting the compliance team to deal with rubbish and belongings being left on schemes, which would present a fire risk, to get items cleared away/disposed of.
- Staff have done some excellent partnership working with Adult Mental Health colleagues, to resettle tenants who were admitted under a section, who are now well enough to return home.
- The team completed a 'Suicide Awareness' training course. Sadly, everyone in the team is personally familiar with cases of suicide, and the training was particularly challenging for some.
- The team also completed some 'reasonable adjustment' training, re: making all our services accessible to people with varying needs and disabilities.
- We have had several cases where tenants have reported that their adult children and grandchildren have temporarily moved in with them, due to domestic abuse and family breakdown. Staff are supporting these families and liaising with colleagues in Housing Options to support their family members to access appropriate housing. It appears that the financial strain everyone is feeling now is contributing to these situations.
- We have a possible eviction coming up and are working with colleagues in Adult Social Care and Housing Options to ensure that there are some alternate housing provisions available for the tenant concerned, if required.
- The possible 'Domestic Homicide Review,' which will begin in the next few weeks, regarding one of our tenants who died.
- We have some ongoing staff sickness, which we are covering from within the remaining team.

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. Many positive comments such as *“I love it very satisfied it has made such a difference.”*
- A further 42 properties have been let since the date of the last report. Performance fell in March due to some complex major void properties requiring heating upgrades and work on the water mains. We are also looking to source a new contractor to take on surplus major voids from the team.
- Average turnaround times per void in March was 57 days against a target of 44 days.
- Relet for a Minor void was 29 days against a target of 31 days.
- Relet for a Major void was 77 days against a target of 72 days.
- Team remains settled.
- HMP project continues to free up much need bed spaces.

Income

- The Debt and Benefit team are still running at reduced capacity due to sickness. We are continuing prioritise new tenants and those tenants already in rent arrears.
- The new Dynamic 365 system has caused significant difficulties for the rent recovery team due to payments direct from Universal credit, standing order payments and some post office payments not being transferred to the tenants rent accounts. The team are taking a very sensitive and supportive approach to rent recovery where we are unsure if the payments have been made. This issue is also affecting the wider council and we are working with other areas of the council to have this resolved as soon as possible.
- April has been a very busy month for Universal Credit verifications due to the Rent increase. Each UC (Universal Credit) claimant has to update their Housing Costs on their journal and then the team must verify this on a portal. This has been very time consuming for all the team, but they have all been verified by the completion date for each one.

Tenancy/Estates & ASB

- The team have now completed their planned works programmes for Estates inspections, block inspections and skip events for the new financial year which are now published on our website as well as in the next tenant's newsletter.

- Our first skip event of 2023/2024 in Hereford Drive was a successful event; with two large skips filled. The event was also supported by Link Power who were extremely helpful and added to the success of the day.
- We are still busy preparing court papers for the serious ASB cases that we have previously reported on. This is time consuming to ensure that we present the best possible case to get the desired outcome for the neighbours and the community.
- Youth crime is still a concern, with two youths that live in the Priorswood area. We are working closely with our multi-agency partners, but we are now going to be commencing legal action against the parents. This initially will be by way of serving a Notice of Seeking Possession and is currently with our solicitors.

Housing Performance Team Housing Performance Team

- We continue to support the work of the Tenants Strategic Group (TSG) and Tenants' Action Group and the subgroups. Following the creation of the new Somerset Council Cllr Fran Smith and Cllr Marcus Barr have been nominated to sit on the TSG.
- The spring newsletter has been sent in hardcopy to tenants with a letter explaining the new council and the frequently asked questions. These are also available on the website for reference.
- 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.
- We have arranged BIG 6 compliance training for our engaged tenants and a new Grounds maintenance group has been created to review and monitor the service delivery of Grounds maintenance.
- We are collectively working with Homes in Sedgemoor on local government reorganisation workstreams. There are seven new areas that have been agreed as ongoing work from April 2023
- Our agreed policies have been approved by the new council and we are continuing to review policies that have been produced and create any new ones required. TSG members are involved in this review. We will also start to review policies of Homes in Sedgemoor and Somerset Council with a view to aligning.
- We continue to strive for improvement in our complaint handling and have been able to maintain an average of 73% of stage 1 complaint investigations completed and responded to within standard over 2022-23. A full year complaint report will be presented to TSG. 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 and the tenant portal which has been paused due to an ICT freeze because 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**

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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