



Notice of Meeting of

TENANTS' STRATEGIC GROUP

Monday, 27 November 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

Ivor Hussey

Councillor Federica Smith-
Roberts

Councillor Marcus Barr

Kevin Hellier

Samantha Rickward

Councillor Fran Smith

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Democratic Services team on 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 Tuesday the 21st November 2023 at **5pm**.

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.

Issued by (the Proper Officer) on 16th November 2023

AGENDA

Tenants' Strategic Group - 6.00 pm Monday, 27 November 2023

1 Apologies for Absence

To receive apologies.

2 Welcome from the Chair

To receive a welcome from the Chair.

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

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Tenants' Strategic Group held on Monday 25th September 2023.

4 Engagement Group Updates (Pages 9 - 14)

To receive an update and note the report.

5 TAG Annual Report (Pages 15 - 20)

To note the report.

6 Flooding Review (Pages 21 - 24)

To note the report.

7 Update from Chris Hall

To receive an update from the executive director of community services.

8 Q2 (July-Sept) Performance and Finance Report (Pages 25 - 36)

To note report.

9 The Directorate Report-Senior Management (Pages 37 - 46)

To note the report.

10 Any other Business

The Chair to consider any other business. To note the “special meeting” for budget, rent and service charge setting on 15th January 2024.

Informal Meeting

30 Year Business Plan & Housing Revenue Account (HRA)



Minutes of a Meeting of the Tenants' Strategic Group held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Monday, 25 September 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present:

Luke Manning (Chair)
Colin England (Vice-Chair)

Cllr Marcus Barr

Jessie Bunn

Kevin Hellier

Ivor Hussey

Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

Cllr Fran Smith

20 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies received from Samantha Rickward and Alex Akhigbemen.

21 Welcome from the Chair - Agenda Item 2

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through the housekeeping announcements.

22 Minutes from the previous meeting held on 24 July 2023 - Agenda Item 3

The minutes from of the previous meeting held on the 24th of July were approved noting the following action points from the last meeting including communal bin areas and fire regulation and the consideration when new building develop. The 10% of tenancy and to have examples of this.

23 Engagement Group updates - Agenda Item 4

The Chair gave an overview of the various engagement groups and their activities.

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

- Representatives on the Tenant Strategic Group
- Working with Wellington Town Council on some of the issues.
- Recruitment to the tenant Strategic Group.

RESOLVED to note the report.

24 Voids Completion Report - Agenda Item 5

The Case Manager for Housing Customer team gave an overview of the Void Group highlighting the key points: the lifetime of the Voids group and the following that had been achieved, understanding of issues when properties are handed back in an extremely poor condition. Delays with asbestos specialists accessing properties, the cost involved making some of these properties habitable.

The objectives for the group and expected outcomes were as follows ensure the properties are up to the lettable standard before re letting, understanding the issues where there are delays in having properties ready for re-letting. Both objectives were achieved.

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

- That some of the bathrooms are extremely out of date.
- Unsuccessful work carried out and distrust in contractors.
- How many properties do live west look after.
- To deliver 6 monthly inspections on the property.

RESOLVED the report was noted.

25 2023/24 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 1- April - June 2023 - Agenda Item 6

The Case Manager lead for Housing Customer experience gave an overview of the housing performance and Finance report quarter 1 April-June 2023 highlighting the following points 8.1 Customer complaints has been added as part of the Tenant satisfaction measure introduced by the social housing regulators complaint data is

requested in slightly different format. 8.6.2 the wait time on customer call statistics and the approval of the Tenant Strategic Group to agree the wait time to be a standard 2 minutes. Tenancy management, in the graph on the compliance and highlighting the new points added.

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

- Under the tenancy management on anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents a defined approach to understand what this includes.
- To have an update on the void's improvement plans.
- The 13% of abandon calls and agreed the 2-minute approach to answer the telephone.
- No reports of Anti-Social behaviour in June.
- The completion of housing emergency repairs in 24 hours at 95.8% what about the 4.2%.

RESOLVED to note the report.

26 Tenant Satisfaction Measures Presentation - Agenda Item 7

The Case Manager lead for Housing Customer experience gave an overview of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey highlighting the key points from a PowerPoint presentation. The 82% of Safe homes and 86% as neighbourhood as a place to live. A regulatory requirement since April 2023 with the data being reported April 2024, two surveys results being completed every six months. The overall satisfactions being reported at 76% with a decrease by 1% since November. The increase and decrease in satisfaction, the areas of improvements including ASB, Communal areas, ground maintenance, listening to tenants and complaint. The interesting findings from the survey only 11% of tenants expressed an interest in becoming more engaged with the Council. 67% of tenants use the internet and 33% do not have access to the internet. The Housemark shows that satisfaction has steadily fallen over the last 2 years, on average a fall of 5% since the pandemic. Therefore, a 1% fall in overall satisfaction at SWT should not be unexpected. Acuity report that amongst the 50 landlords that they work with, the average overall satisfaction is 72%. Our overall satisfaction is 76%. When comparing the 50 landlords that Acuity work with, Somerset Council has reported a higher-than average satisfaction score in the following areas: Well-maintained home, safe home, repairs, time taken to report a repair, positive contribution to the neighbourhood, kept informed. The average satisfaction score for ASB was 59%- this shows that nationally tenants are dis-satisfied and the average score for complaints was 36% - this shows that

nationally tenants are dis-satisfied. The next steps include colleagues will talk to the tenant strategic group about the improvement plans in their area of business. The council needs to put in an Action plan to address the areas of improvement. The Action Plan will need to be documented and evaluated in TSG meetings. Acuity tell us that the main drivers for Customer Satisfaction are tenant's homes being well maintained and being treated fairly and with respect and therefore, Somerset Council must keep an emphasis on the repairs service and communication.

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

- Somerset employees being granted a license for communal land.
- To have a break down summary for the areas of improvements such as communal areas and ground maintenance.
- More communication about grounds maintenance such as grass cuttings due to the Council prioritises of a greener, more sustainable Somerset to understand why some areas may not have had grass cut.
- The deterioration of flats in areas that has already been raised previously and continues to deteriorate rapidly causing more problems and this could have been addressed prior.

Resolved to note the presentation.

27 Directorate Report- Senior Management - Agenda Item 8

The report updated the Tenant Strategic Group on the work being undertaken and the progress made by the Case Manager Lead for Housing since the last TSG meeting.

RESOLVED the report was noted.

28 Any other Business - Agenda Item 9

(The meeting ended at Time Not Specified)

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CHAIR



Tenants' Strategic Group –27th November 2023

Engaged Tenant Group Update – November 2023

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

Report Authors: Sharon Yarde

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

To inform the Tenants Strategic Group of the work being carried out by the tenant engagement groups within Somerset Council.

2. Recommendations

For the group to acknowledge for reference

3. Update from our Engagement Groups

TENANTS' ACTION GROUP (TAG)

Purpose

To encourage a strong partnership between Council staff, the Tenants' Strategic Group, Councillors (particularly the Portfolio Holder and Shadow Portfolio Holder), and Tenant Representatives To support the Council to engage and empower tenants

and to represent the interests of tenants of the Council. To focus on community and neighbourhood issues and give the Council feedback on how it can improve its services. Consult with housing services and make recommendations for improvement. Provide feedback to the Tenants' Strategic Board on issues arising from meetings and to allocate funds to appropriate community projects.

Update

TAG have had another member voted onto the Group and a further new person that would like to be voted on at the next meeting this takes the group to nine members. Applications for the Estate Improvement Fund to enhance our estates, are still coming to the group and they have agreed to fund a further two projects which will mean over 50% of the budget has been allocated.

Leycroft Grove continues to be on the agenda and appears to be moving in the right direction now, work has started, drainage put in and some pathways. The Chair is meeting with Stephen Boland to look at progress each month.

The group also assessed two applications for the Child Youth Initiative Fund: They had further questions which have now been answered and the group have agreed funding for this application, however declined the other application.

SPARKLE funding has been agreed to purchase Christmas presents for children who would otherwise not have one.

VOIDS

Purpose

To review the turnaround times for VOIDS, to understand the challenges and to ensure that our homes are meeting the lettable standard. To also understand if leaving well visits are being conducted where properties are left in an appalling condition and the costs involved in getting these properties back to the lettable standard.

Update

This will be conducted by four members of the TAG group: Brian Wyatt, Sally Mitchell, Catherine Jarvis and Christine Smith. Meeting with Ollie Warcup and Tony Knight has been completed and void viewing dates booked.

GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Purpose

To work with the grounds maintenance team and Stephen Boland to ensure that the service provided complies with the Grounds Maintenance Schedule. To address the

comments about grounds maintenance made in the last Tenant Satisfaction Measures and to make grounds improvements in our communities.

Update

The group have met again at Holway and Moorland Place further enhancements were agreed and the need to fund hedgehog houses as the work agreed may disturb resident hedgehogs. This group also went through their action tracker to keep on top of outstanding items. The group are working well with Jack Mount and Stephen Boland, and we will be taking photographs of the changes as they happen which we will be able to share in the spring.

DAMP AND MOULD (Members from both TAG and TSG)

Purpose

To monitor the implementation of the Damp and Mould Action Plan. To ensure that it is delivered as promised within a reasonable time scale. The group meets every 2 months.

Update

The group would like to organise some evening events in community halls for tenants to be able to come and discuss damp and mould and anything else that can be taken away and looked at after. The group decided to put this on hold until the housing structure has been announced and will discuss in the next meeting January 2024.

LOW CARBON/COMMS (Members from TAG and TSG and new tenant representatives)

Purpose

To help create the Low Carbon strategy and a communication strategy. Understand retrofit and how it is achieved.

Update

The Low Carbon strategy was taken to full council and agreed in December 2022. A draft of the Communication strategy was reviewed by the group on 24th May and their approval was given. This group was key in putting these 2 strategies together.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING

Purpose

To ensure that the Capital Programme is on track to deliver. Sam Rickward is the elected Capital Programme Monitor who meets with Nigel Loxton.

Update

Resources

All 3 new appointments for contracts managers now in post. Currently interviewing for Resident Liaison Officer. We have completed interviews for two graduates and will hopefully be able to appoint soon.

Kitchens

Novus have now finished their contract, there will be snags to complete. 3 contractors now appointed for new framework. We have prestart meetings with a view to mobilise asap. The intention is to get 3-4 kitchens completed by each as pilot properties before Christmas.

The 3 contractors are Bell Group. LCB Group, and Church farm maintenance.

Bathrooms

The tenders have been agreed and 3 contractors have been chosen. The intention to have 3-4 pilot properties completed by Xmas.

Roofing

Progressing well, DR Jones have currently added another team to speed up progress.

Windows & Doors

Nationwide now progressing well, their intention is to complete 10 properties a week going forward. This maybe a big ask, as some of this relies on Assets giving them the information required.

Heating

Liberty are now installing the pilot properties. When we are happy with their quality they can proceed with the programme.

Fire Doors

CLC will be coming to an end of their contract in December.

Electrical testing

Progressing well, the intention is to try and be 100% compliant by December.

Procurement

Pending Tenders, Fire doors, Electric heating, communal flooring, Planned decorations.

TENANCY AGREEMENT MEETING

Purpose

To look at the tenancy agreement in conjunction with Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS) and change where necessary. Sam Rickward from Somerset Council and Craig Green from HiS meet with Simon Lewis and a core group of managers to 'walk through' their current Tenancy Agreement and suggest constructive changes.

Update

A cross working group from Somerset Council Housing and Homes in Sedgemoor has met twice to review the Tenancy agreement and identify areas where this should be refined to allow us to issue a new joint tenancy agreement. We have had tenant input from a member of TSG for both meetings. Further work now needs to take place to propose a suitable set of words and then to consult tenants more widely on the proposed updates and to consider and take account of any feedback. We will be seeking input from Legal Services to agree the best pathway to approve and adopt the new tenancy agreement.

VOIDS CONTRACTOR PROCUREMENT

Purpose

To involve tenants in the procurement of a new contractor for our void properties.

Update

Wayne Hobson and Livi Mongare are meeting with Barabara Bottomley, Ollie Warcup, David Carpenter and Michael O'Halloran to look at proposed options.

COMMUNAL CLEANING PROCUREMENT GROUP

Purpose

To involve a couple of tenants in the procurement of a new contractor for a new cleaning contract in communal areas.

Update

Livi Mongare and Luke Manning are involved in this project, the first meeting is scheduled for November.

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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Somerset Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – Date

Name of Report

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Communities

Report Authors: :

1. Purpose of the Report

To inform TSG of TAG's activities during 2022-2023

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



Tenants' Action Group – Annual Report 2022 -2023 to the Tenants' Strategic Group

3.1. Introduction

The Tenants' Action Group have been meeting bi-monthly face to face throughout the year.

The TAG (Tenants Action Group) meetings are structured and have continued to mirror TSG (Tenants Strategic Group), meeting at 1pm for a light lunch to look at the actions from the previous meeting, the previous minutes and discussing applications for grant funding. Then the Agenda is covered from 2pm until 4pm. This has allowed more time to discuss other items in more detail.

We had the Annual General Meeting in October, and the Chair was voted back in, Livi Mongare was elected as vice chair.

We have recruited a new member to the group this year and a member has returned after taking a break during COVID. This takes the total to 8 members, we are continuing to recruit additional members.

4. Work Undertaken

4.1 Damp and Mould. The Chair of TAG is continuing his involvement with the Damp and Mould group, which has continued to support with the updated action plan following on from the Housing Ombudsman update. This group will continue to monitor until all the actions have been completed.

4.2 Estate Walkabout's (Estate Officers)

Members raised concerns over the letters that were being sent out for the block inspections. The letter was updated by members of the Tenants Action Group and agreed by the Estate Officer Management Team. This updated letter is now being used with forthcoming dates to give Tenants as much notice as possible of the walk-a-bouts.

Julie Sabey attended a TAG meeting to give the members an insight into how the role has changed and the issues that they are now dealing with, causing huge workloads for the team.

Fiona Davies also attended a meeting.

Chair of TAG is concerned there are not enough Estate Officers, and he will continue to check the workload of all Estate Officers.

4.3 Leycroft Grove Estate Improvement Groundworks

Chair raised concerns over the progress of the improvement project that had been planned at Leycroft Grove, with £100k previously reported to have been put aside for the project.

This project has now started, and the Chair is monitoring the progress with Stephen Boland meeting bi-monthly at Leycroft Grove.

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

4.4 Funding through the Estate Improvement Fund

A fund of £10k held by the group dedicated to improving neighbourhoods and community spaces, usually on recommendation from Officers. In February, the Group were asked to support the council and take a reduction in budget to £5000, which they agreed to following a vote.

In the last financial year, the group funded four projects and Sparkle at a total cost of £1336.92. Please see section 5 for more information.

4.5 Funding for Local Community Projects through the Youth Initiative Fund

A fund of £20k held by the group, available via grant applications of up to £3k to support organisations and projects which seek to improve the lives, health and wellbeing of people aged 0 - 25 years old whose families are tenants of Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and to help such organisations and projects to become sustainable and more self-sufficient. The Group were asked to support the council and take a reduction in budget to £15k which they agreed to following a vote.

The group assessed 5 applications to the Youth Initiative Fund and subsequently distributed a £3k grant to 4 local organisations and a £600 grant to another.

- **North Taunton Partnership** – Funding for youth activities in Priorswood including PRIDE in Priorswood.
- **Crimestoppers** - The programme 'What Would You Do?' includes working with 9–10-year-olds through drama-based workshops and performance, the project is an early intervention to grooming for gang crime (including county lines), online safety, healthy relationships, mob mentality and Child (sexual and criminal) exploitation.
- **Neroche Woodlanders** – Wild Explorers is an outdoor Parent Toddler group based in a woodland setting in the Blackdown Hills. We provide transport for families from Taunton to our Forest School site near Staple Fitzpaine and participants then enjoy a two-hour session of woodland activities, games, refreshments, and lots of opportunities for free play.
- **Wellington Counsellors CIC** -. Providing counselling for young people.
- **Churches Together in Wellington** – Free event for families in wellington for the children including bouncy castle and BBQ.

4.6 Grounds Maintenance

Darren Hill attended two meetings for the group with updates and introduced Nick Watkins and Jack Mount. Moving forwards the group are looking to work more closely with Jack and Stephen Boland looking at specific areas.

4.7 Development of the Group

The Chair and Vice Chair attended the recent TPAS conference with members of TSG. Members are committed to widening their awareness of key issues in the sector by attending upcoming training courses over the next year.

Various articles have been posted in Tenants' Newsletters to attempt to raise awareness of the group and their activities and to encourage new members to join. The Chair has done several articles, having visited some of the causes to see the work they are doing, to raise awareness of the CYIF (Child Youth Initiative Fund) fund and the magnificent work that is going on in our communities. Over the next year the Housing Performance team will continue to work with TAG to publicise their activities and help to recruit new members to bring the group back up to full membership of 10 members.

4.8 VOIDS

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

5. Financial Summary

The total budget assigned for 2022-23 was £44,300. This was subsequently reduced to £24300.

Name of Fund	Allocated Budget	Allocated Funds	Total Expenditure
Youth Initiative Fund	£20,000/£15000	CYIF projects	£12600
Estate Improvement Fund	£10,000/£5000	Garden table and chairs Gazebo and seeds Plants Community Lunch Sparkle	£836.92 £500
Other	£14,300/£4300	Expenses – meeting travel and training	£2670.15
Total Expenditure	£44300//£24300		£16607.07

6. Looking ahead

Over the upcoming year the group will:

- Continue to monitor the progress of the Leycroft Grove improvement works, receiving regular updates from the Capital Works Manager.
- Continue to work with the Council to monitor the Estates Officers and workload.
- Participate in more task groups such as the Damp and Mould start and finish group.
- Voids - The group will complete its work and meet to put together a report for TSG.

7. Ongoing areas of concern for scrutiny by TAG

Leycroft Grove – Continue to monitor this.

Capital Works Programme – Ensuring it is delivered.

Estate Officers – workload and support.

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

8. Conclusion

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

9. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

10. 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.

11. Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

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

12. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

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

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Somerset Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – 27th November 2023

Name of Report:

Interim Lessons learnt from recent flooding of HRA properties in Wellington

Report Authors: Simon Lewis, Head of Housing, Income and Tenancy Management;
Ian Candlish, Head of Housing Property

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

During an evening of the week commencing 18th September, heavy rain resulted in localised flooding that affected 19 HRA (Housing Revenue Account) properties in Wellington, primarily 17 bungalows at Bovet Street, as well as two houses at Oaken Ground.

The Housing Service provided a response on the night to support affected tenants, which included sandbagging of properties, clearance of drains, making properties safe, assurance and support for tenants and decanting tenants from 5 properties into hotels.

Since this date we have continued to provide comprehensive support to all of the households to ensure the properties have been properly cleaned, dried out, repaired and made good and the tenants have been supported, through what has been a very traumatic time for all affected.

2. Lessons Learnt

What went well:

- Excellent response on the night and during the following days, where officers were on the ground daily, supporting every affected household

- Excellent cross-working between Property Services and Tenancy Services, coordinating our support to tenants
- Supportive and caring approach which was customer focussed and empathetic.
- Elected to cover the costs of carpet replacement and removal of furniture during cleaning, as many tenants would have struggled to afford this.
- Officers went above and beyond, many volunteering and working anti-social hours and showing agility and flexibility to find solutions
- Dehumidifiers were provided to all properties early in the process and we committed to pay excess heating and electricity costs for their use.
- Creative support solutions identified for complex tenants bringing in other agencies as needed. For example, one very elderly tenant was partially sighted and had support needs and needed decant; we also had examples of people with significant hoarding and other tenants struggling with their mental health – all of whom required sensitive support to meet their needs.
- Regular communication with those displaced and with their properties being prioritised to be made ready to return.
- Daily project meetings taking place and communications to tenants, with people on site every day meant our communications was clear and frequent.
- We identified a cost effective, empathetic contractor to undertake the removal and cleaning works required for each property.

What could have gone better:

- Having a clear process, allocated coordinator and allocation of resource for a significant event like this, including backfill / reprioritisation of work from the start and ensuring a rota of officer to avoid burn-out.
- Better anticipation of the sheer amount of work this would entail.
- Ability to get hold of Deane Helpline and for them to bring in support was limited.
- A wider list of officers available for call out in an emergency, particularly when bad weather is forecast.
- Needed a single point of contact to be responsible for identifying works required. In practice actions were being identified by officers on the ground and being phoned in by tenants which duplicated work.
- Understanding of insurance arrangements and earlier involvement of the Council's insurance agency (note self insurance requires service to take all responsibility for works and repairs)
- Ability to secure temporary accommodation was a significant challenge and needs to be easier
- A necessity to have professional, accredited cleaning and sanitisation of properties earlier in the process, which is certified.
- Necessity for dry certificates to evidence that property is dried.
- Few tenants had contents insurance and we require clearer principles on what the HRA will pay for when tenant does not have contents insurance – for future cases. This needs to align to a hardship policy and fund. Note our current position sends out mixed messages.
- A clearer position on when we would insist on a decant, normally when the property or a person is at risk by staying in their home. Most incidents where water has entered a property will require a decant.

- Clearer guidance on our position when tenant refuses to leave or to use dehumidifiers, or for contaminated carpets to be removed. Legal Services has advised that a signed disclaimer would not suffice.

3. Follow-up to Incident

We have held two lessons learnt meetings with a cross-section of staff and services involved in the incident and are developing a flowchart setting out the ideal process flow for future flooding incidents. We also intend to adapt this for other similar events such as fire. The process flowchart will be accompanied by prompt lists for staff involved in future incidents to aid them in what is required.

We will be concluding this work with an action plan to follow-up and resolve some of the issues identified (many of which have been set out above) and will get this approved by HSMT (Housing Senior Management Team).

A separate meeting has taken place with Property Services to identify properties and addresses that are prone to flooding to agree appropriate mitigation measures that can be put in place to reduce the risk of future flooding and / or limit the extent of damage caused. This includes improvement to drainage, guttering and downpipes and engagement of specialist flood consultants to assess other measures. This will include requests to colleagues in Highways to ensure sufficient maintenance of drains which are prone to causing our properties to be flooded.

Somerset Council and Wellington Town Council has organised a Wellington Flood Drop In event on 22nd November from 4pm to 7pm to hear from those affected and to capture any further insights and lessons from this event.

4. Recommendations

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note the report and the progress being made to improve our approach to responding to flood incidents and to provide any comments and questions.

3. Background and Full details of the Report (insert here)

As set out above

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. However there could be some that come out of the final lessons learnt actions and plan once adopted.

6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

There may be equality impacts on decisions taken as a result of the final lessons learnt actions and impact assessments can be made if appropriate at this time.

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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Tenants' Strategic Group – 27th November 2023

2023/24 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 2, July - September 2023

This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Report Authors: Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager) and Kerry Prisco (Management Accounting and Reporting Lead)

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

This report provides an update on housing performance through key performance measures and financial information for the second quarter of 23/24 (July-Sept 2023).

2. Recommendations

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note content of the housing performance scorecard and finance report for quarter 2 (July – Sept 2023). Provide feedback in relation to measures that are being reported including “new, amended, deleted measures”. Provide feedback on the proposed change to target in average call response times.

3. Background and Full details of the Report

- 3.1** The Housing Performance Scorecard is a tool to measure our performance in key areas. The scorecard was last presented to Tenants' Strategic Group (TSG) in September 2023 covering the performance in Q1 (April-June 2023). This report covers the second quarter of 2023/24 July to September.
- 3.2** This report includes the (data) Tenant Satisfaction Measures which the regulator will ask us to submit in March 2024. The total number of measures reported is 35, the breakdown of measures is as follows:

Customer 10 (2 new), Rent Recovery 2, Supported Housing 1, Lettings and Voids 1, Housing Repairs 2, Tenancy Management 6 (1 new), Compliance 10 (3 new), Asset Management 2 (2 new), Development 1.

3.3 27 indicators have targets, 16 are green (on target or better), 6 are red (off target but targets are 100%) and 5 are amber.

4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

5. Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications?

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 impact assessment linked with this report

7. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

There are no data protection implications linked with this report

Performance Report

8. Customer

8.1 Customer – Complaints

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Customer					
% of stage 1 complaints closed in 10 working days (as per policy HRA)	93%	80%	87%	79%	65%
NEW – All HRA(Housing Revenue Account) Complaints relative to the size of the landlord per 1000 homes.	2.27	3.93	4.47	5.19	5.01
NEW – Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales. (CH02)	93%	80%	92%	86%	86%

8.1.1 As part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) introduced by the Social Housing Regulator complaints data is requested in a slightly different format. We have added the two TSM measures alongside the % of complaints closed in 10 working days. TSG requested all three measures be retained in the report (September 2023 meeting).

8.1.2 Customer Resolution team have been capturing monthly data relating to extended complaints since April 2023 and we are confident that our management of complaint extensions and how we communicate these to our residents complies with the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code and our Complaints Policy. However, in previous reports, we have not reported the data showing extended complaints as part of our performance indicators. We are therefore reporting statistics at their “worst performance” (not including permitted extensions). Indicator CH02 includes permitted extended complaints, the stage 1 measure does not.

8.1.3 Although our data shows higher numbers of complaints, our targets are based on Pulse 2021/2 data and therefore should be revisited once 2022/3 benchmarking is available. We apply the Housing Ombudsman Code to expressions of dissatisfaction and log complaints strictly which may increase our numbers. The quality and timeliness of our responses to date has resulted in no live Housing Ombudsman investigations since April 2022.

8.2 Customer - Lettable Standard Satisfaction

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Customer					
% of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property	90%	85%	100%	100%	93%

8.2.1 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.

July 2023: 29 properties let, (29 responses, 29 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

August 2023: 28 properties let, (12 responses, 12 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

September 2023: 24 properties let (14 responses, 13 satisfied or very satisfied), % satisfaction

Performance is exceeding target. Comments from surveys in August include how a tenant with depression is feeling much better and how they are “having more good days than bad now they have a family home”. Changes we were able to make in the garden have “lightened the house and mood” of the new tenant and finally a tenant who is “very very happy with the property and the positive impact on their lives”.

8.3.1 Customer - Repair Satisfaction

8.3.1 This matter was discussed in the TSG meeting September 2022 where it was felt the electronic survey method was not robust enough. We are investigating a software and telephone survey solution. A software solution will ideally integrate with our housing system and carry out repair surveys however we are also we are discussing costs and feasibility of telephone surveys through an independent company.

8.3.2 Satisfaction with repairs formed part of the pilot Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey completed in May 2022, November 2022, May 2023 by an independent company. The TSM question focuses on repairs in last 12 months. 76% of customers surveyed in May 2022 and 81% surveyed in November 2022 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 most recent survey May 2023 reports 76% satisfaction which repeats the result obtained in May 2022.

8.4 Customer – compliments

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Customer					
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	5	5	2

8.4.1 We have been receiving compliments and the total for the year to date ending September 2023 is 31. The average is 5 per month and September and April are the lowest months to date.

8.5 Customer – Overall Satisfaction

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Customer					
Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM Results)	77%	75%	76% from May 2023	76% from May 2023	76% from May 2023

8.5.1 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% during 2022-23.

8.5.2 Results from the first survey in 2023-24 were obtained in May 2023, 76% satisfaction. This will be combined with the result in November 2023 to give the result for the year. To provide context, the Housemark Pulse results for the first quarter of the year show 70% a median and 80% as upper quartile. A report presenting all TSM survey results was presented to TSG in September 2023 and will be reported again after the next survey.

8.6 Customer – Call Statistics

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Customer					
Average wait time in the repairs queue	00:01:00	00:05:00	00:02:18	00:02:10	00:03:08
% of abandoned calls in the repairs queue	10%	13%	7.10	5.90	9.10
Average wait time in the housing estates and tenancy queue	00:01:00	00:05:00	00:05:19	00:06:27	00:03:27
% of abandoned calls in the housing estates and tenancy queue	10%	13%	20.10%	24.60%	10.90%
NEW % of calls answered within two minutes	80%	75%	N/a	N/a	N/a

8.6.1 Following a request in the January 2023 TSG meeting, the statistics for call handling on repairs and housing estates call queues were included in this report from Quarter 3 2022-23. In September 2023 TSG agreed to include a new measure to allow benchmarking with HiS (target of 80% calls answered in two minutes), this will be reported from Q3 of 2023-24.

8.6.2 . The organisation's (Somerset Council) agreed target for calls waiting to be answered is 5 minutes and for no more than 10% calls to be abandoned, we were unable to achieve this target in July and August due to increased volumes of flooding and Council Tax recovery calls. We have however made significant improvements during September. The 1 minute target was previously set under Somerset West and Taunton Council and is not a target the Somerset Council call centres are currently resourced to meet. To bridge the gap between the 1 minute target previously applied and the 5 minute target currently applied we suggested the additional benchmarking measure referred to in paragraph 8.6.1 above. Overall customer satisfaction from our in call surveys is at 84% with 75% of calls being resolved at the first point of contact.

8.6.3 Customer Service Performance over the last quarter has improved despite several challenges due to the formation of the new Council, the Customer Services and Housing management teams meet regularly to review performance and identify training needs. The Housing phone lines are given priority over general calls to ensure the standard or performance remains within target as much as possible.

8.7 Rent Recovery

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Rent Recovery					
True current tenant arrears at the end of the month%	2%	2.2%	1.84%	1.85%	1.84%
Total number of all evictions			0	1	0

8.7.1 The performance in rent arrears is now being measured by the Housemark indicator "true current arrears". Performance in this area has improved since June 2023. Current performance is "top quartile" and on target (Housemark Pulse Q1 2023 2.2).

8.8 Supported Housing

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Supported Housing					
Sheltered housing - % of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans	98%	97%	98.6%	98.6%	98.6%

8.8.1 Our performance is on target.

8.9 Lettings and Voids

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Lettings and Voids					
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to key)	45.9	50.5	48	58	44

8.9.1 Our void turn-around times are back on target in September.

Lettings team staffing remains very stable, we have lost our Home Move plus officer (HMP) Paul Hadley at the end of August, the downsizing is a service we still offer our tenants however that is being done by the team who are already working to capacity. Recruitment into the HMP role is to go through the recruitment process. The project is on target and remains in budget.

Work demand in the team is very high, the North Taunton flats to be allocated through Home Finder Somerset have recently been advertised - 16 flats attracted over 800 applications. Having shortlisted the new properties a viewing day was arranged when 16 flats were viewed the over whelming response was very positive with good feedback being received on the standard size and general quality of the flats. Sadly, the reletting of these flats has been delayed due to a "highways" issue which has caused additional works and delays to the incoming tenants.

Void turnaround times have remained a focus for the voids/lettings team. The figures are in line with the year-on-year average. They do fluctuate month to month and this can be due to a small number of complex voids. This month performance is better, but we know returns in October to similar levels to August due to work related to the new homes. Customer satisfaction with both the lettable standard and the standard of the process being administrated is very high.

A report is being taken to HSMT on 21st November to propose focus for improvement work on Lettings and Voids, and we are finalising a specification for a new contractor to pick up extra work which will help address capacity to tackle the volume of voids we receive.

8.10 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Housing Repairs					

Completion of housing emergency repairs within 24 hours	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%
Completion of housing non-emergency repairs within timescale agreed with tenant (TSM RP02)	93%	90%	93.4%	96.0%	97.9%

8.10.1 Our performance is on target in both emergency and non-emergency repairs this quarter.

8.11 Tenancy Management

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Tenancy Management					
Total New ASB cases in the month	No target	No target	11	14	19
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month	No target	No target	16	2	12
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month	No target	No target	73	85	92
Number of new ASB cases reported per 1,000 properties	2.08	3.5	1.97	2.5	3.4
NEW Anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents per 1,000 properties	No target	No target	0.36	0.54	0.54
Number of safeguarding referrals	No target	No target	8	19	15

8.11.1 ASB - We would like the numbers to be as low as possible. Housemark Pulse benchmarking data shows top quartile in Q1 is 2.07 number of “new ASB cases reported per 1000 properties for English Councils and ALMO (the top quartile for the sector is 1.87 for the sector). Our performance is therefore top quartile for July for English Councils and ALMO. The increase in cases in September is due to more low level neighbour and noise nuisance being reported. Two factors have contributed to this increase. We have encouraged staff to log cases within the ASB module rather than through other routes, September was a warmer month which normally increases the noise nuisance cases reported.

8.11.2 It should be noted that an error was identified in the numbers reported last month when the data was not picking up cases that were opened and closed in the same month (so under-reporting cases and closed cases). This has been rectified and we have corrected previous months data.

8.11.3 Definition of Hate Crime was requested at the last meeting of TSG. A working definition is “Any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards someone based on a personal characteristic”. A hate incident is when the victim or anyone else thinks an incident, such as bullying or abuse, was motivated by hostility or prejudice based on disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

8.11.4 Safeguarding – We currently raise low numbers of safeguarding referrals to Somerset Council. This quarter we have made 19 referrals. Since August, we have seen an increasing number of referrals from our Homelessness Teams in relation to

safeguarding, the Homelessness Team are managing these cases. There is also greater awareness and reporting of these concerns which is important.

8.12 Compliance

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Compliance					
% of housing dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate (LGSR) (TSM BS01)	100%		100%	99.98%	100%
NEW – % of housing dwellings with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)	100%		92.39%	93%	94%
% of housing communal areas with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)	100%		100%	100%	100%
% of communal areas with all asbestos safety checks complete	100%		100%	100%	100%
% of communal areas with a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) in place and FRA Review complete (where applicable)	100%		100%	100%	100%
% of communal areas with periodic water safety equipment checks complete	100%		100%	100%	100%
% of passenger lifts and through floor lifts with annual and 6 monthly service and inspection complete (TSM BS06)	100%		100%	100%	50%
NEW – Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out. (TSM BS02)	100%		100%	100%	100%
NEW – Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out. (TSM BS04)	100%		100%	100%	100%
Carbon Monoxide Alarms	100%		100%	100%	100%

8.12.1 We are pleased to report 100% compliance for the indicators above, except for electrical safety and through floor lifts.

8.12.2 Electrical safety certificates show month on month improvements and a programme is on track to achieve 100% compliance during this financial year.

8.12.3 The 50% result in lift service and inspection is due to two properties with through floor lifts and not passenger lifts. One property was appointed beyond its anniversary date. This is now complete (11/10/2023). The other property is part of North Taunton project and the tenant is being decanted so the lift is to be removed ahead of demolition.

8.13 Asset Management

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Asset Management					
NEW – Target % Non-Decent Homes Compliance (TSM)	1%	4%	6% (94%)		5.93% (94.07%)

NEW – Percentage of properties EPC C or above	100% by 2030		68%	N/a	68%
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8.13.1 The Decent homes measure will be reported as part of the TSM measures to the regulator at the end of the year. Decent homes percentage has improved slightly by 0.07% this represents 15 properties. Contracts for the replacement of components are being finalised and those with decent homes elements will be prioritised.

8.13.2 The % of properties with EPC C or above will remain targeted at 100% EPC C by 2030 as per the strategy. There is no need for milestones until circa 2025/2026 when the final waves of grants will start to emerge, our data will be much more accurate, our capital programme will be making inroads into SAP scores through better 'U' value specifications of replacement heating, windows, doors and loft insulation. We are also not clear on the future requirements of the new decency standard which is pending release, and which may require social landlords to achieve a certain rating, and by default the government will need to enable this through subsidy or rent setting freedoms.

8.14 Development

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	July-23	Aug-23	Sept-23
Development					
Number of SWT/Inhouse service HRA new home completions since April 2019 (inc new HRA homes RSAP/LAHF)	1000 by 2049	20 per year	74	78	81

8.14.1 There have been 81 new home completion April 2019 to 30th September 2023. The number of acquisitions is set to increase significantly as a result of Rough Sleeper Accommodation Funding and Local Authority Housing Fund. The Local Authority Housing Fund will increase the HRA stock by 31 units over two years and at no cost to the HRA. In 2023/2024 NTWP has completed 6 properties and will complete a further 47.

The development of 54 new homes in Minehead is progressing well with some handovers anticipated this year. The demolition contractor for NTWP phase B&Ci and Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats has been selected and is proceeding to formal contract appointment.

9. Executive summary of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Finance report (2023/24 Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring as at Quarter 1).

Executive Summary

9.1 This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council’s Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2023/24 (as at 30th September 2023).

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

Revenue Budget	Forecast overspend of £2.44m	Red
General Reserves	£12.049m forecast balance = favourable compared to £3.722m minimum requirement	Green
Earmarked Reserves	£258k opening balance	Green

9.3 The HRA is a ring-fenced account which must abide by the accounting regulations and ensure that cross subsidy does not occur. Whilst self-financing has provided some flexibilities, the HRA is heavily regulated which restricts income growth and increase cost pressures.

9.4 The HRA has set a balance budget for 2023/24 however areas of risk for the will year relate to **economic operating environment** and the impact this may have on any variation from the forecasts assumed when setting the budget, for example the cost of borrowing for the refinancing of debt, pay awards, cost of materials and utilities, etc.

9.5 In addition, there are risks associated with **regulatory and compliance** requirements. For example, changes are expected during the year in relation to the Regulator of Social Housing’s decent home standard where the cost impact is unknown, as well as a new Act which places new emphasis on customer safety, quality of accommodation, engagement, communication and greater evidence of listening to our tenants. New tenant satisfaction measures are now established and reported on.

9.6 From an **operational** perspective, the risk here relates to the levels of demand from our tenants for support and service, for example for debt and benefit advice, repairs and maintenance on their properties, and the number and condition of void properties. This is a very reactive service based on the needs of the tenants.

9.7 The headline estimates for **capital** costs are:

1.8 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for 2023/24 onwards is £122.606m. This consists of £32.208m of new schemes approved for 2022/23 plus £90.397m approved budget carry forward.

1.9 The current forecast outturn is an underspend of c£4.6m for the Major & Improvement Works. The Social Housing Development schemes will be delivered over the next eight years, with the profiled budget for 2023/24 reporting an underspend of c£491k.

Democratic Path: Finance report is reported to Resources Scrutiny and Community Scrutiny and Executive committee meetings and Tenants Strategic Board – 27th November 2023.

Reporting Frequency: Quarterly

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Somerset Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – Monday 27th November 2023

Directorate Report

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Communities

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 May 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

Regeneration

- NTWP (North Taunton Woolaway Project) is the first scheme in the country to receive Homes England Regeneration funding. The Council will receive £5m additional subsidy for phase A, B and Ci. Homes England have congratulated the service on such as strong bid and were particularly impressed with the initiatives which are being delivered in addition to the building of new affordable homes. There were over 800 bids on Homefinders for the 21 flats which are shortly being handed over. The handover has unfortunately been delayed due to the need to complete work to the highway. This has caused some concern from customers waiting for their new home.
- The contract for the demolition of Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats is close to being signed. Only household awaits decanting, and a property has been identified.
- Seaward Way/Rainbow Way, Minehead is progressing well with a recent community drop in event seeing around fifty families visiting the scheme and supported with registration on Homefinder.
- The Regeneration at Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent flats continues to progress well with only one tenant awaiting decant at Coleridge Crescent and only the shop tenanted at Wordsworth Drive. The team has recently been working to make the site more secure following a spate of thefts. The demolition contract procurement is progressing and will see the two blocks demolished next year.
- The housing service is leading the acquisition of 31 homes in the County which will be held in the Housing Revenue Account. These properties will be let to Refugees and Asylum Seekers for the first tenancy with flexibility for future years to let as General Need Homes. The homes are 100% funded by the Local Authority Housing Fund and other subsidy available to the council. To date four homes have been purchased with fifteen more in conveyancing. Customers will have a secure tenancy agreement.
- The service is progressing with a low carbon retrofit Strategy and Delivery plan. The In-house housing service has several retrofit grants including ECO4, Social Housing and Decarbonisation Fund Waves (SHDF) 1 & 2. The SHDF grants are funding surveys, new components as well as five graduate recruits in the housing service. 350 properties are in the pipeline for energy works.
- The service has commenced its budget planning for 2024/2025 and is reviewing its 30-year business plan. The business plan is very important as it projects the costs of the council's core landlord services as well as funds for capital programmes and new build. The Business plan covers the expenditure for all 10,000 homes.
- The service has delayed the consultation on its new structure. It is hoped to consult on the new structure shortly. The TSG will receive a presentation on the new housing structure.
- The Housing Strategy team are writing two important strategies which are the Somerset Housing Strategy and Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. Both strategies will be complete prior to March 2025.
- Although recent affordable housing completions in the County by Registered Social Landlords and private developers have been quite good the future pipeline is low. Although the government has announced some changes to ecology

requirements which could unblock some developments there is insufficient detail about this change to understand if more homes can be approved by planning.

Housing Property Team

Responsive Repairs and Void Repairs

- Performance for emergency responsive repairs is being maintained at 100%, and non-emergency responsive repairs continues to improve and is within our set target of 93%. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to recruit to vacant trade roles and we are liaising with the Recruitment team to seek a resolution to this issue.
- Responsive repair request call-handling is currently still being taken by call-handlers within the Corporate Customer Service team, although we are reviewing options for how this key activity may best be provided as part of our staff restructure proposals.
- We continue to develop and implement activities within our Repairs Service Improvement Plan (RSIP), including improving IT systems (e.g., job diagnosis and appointments, trades scheduling, contractor portal, etc.).
- We continue to undertake void repairs to meet our Lettable Standard and are maintaining a 100% target for new tenants to be satisfied with the lettable standard of their new home. We are about to go out to tender for external contractor support for void repairs to ensure we can meet our KPI (Key Performance Indicators) void turnaround targets.
- Our materials supply chain process is now fully embedded and operating well.

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 now received Savills' Property Safety Compliance Assurance Audit Report which is overall positive. We are developing an Action Plan to implement their recommendations to further improve in this area and ensure we continue to meet legislative changes.
- The Fire Safety Audit is now complete and we are awaiting their draft report. We will provide feedback to TSG once we have received this and agreed a management response.
- Our Electrical Inspection testing programme has notably increased our compliance percentage in this area.
- We continue to undertake a range of procurement activities to deliver compliance programmes, particularly in relation to fire safety programmed works.
- Weekly compliance meetings are ongoing to carefully monitor and manage all these safety critical areas.

Capital Programmes

- Our Capital Programme team are delivering our electrical inspection testing programme with both the main contractor delivering the programme and support from our in-house electrical team. We are now looking to increase this further by implementing a consumer unit replacement programme, although this has been delayed by the lead-in time for National Grid to schedule contractor switches needed prior to our being able to commence works.
- A range of capital work programmes continues on-site, including kitchen and bathroom replacements, replacement fire doors, windows, re-roofing, and environmental improvements.
- 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

- We are undertaking option appraisals to enable the purchase of 31 units funded by the Local Authority Housing Fund.
- We have undertaken a desktop review of our properties that potentially contain Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) and have passed this information to SC colleagues in the Corporate Assets team who are arranging on-site surveys to confirm whether this is present.
- The service continues to carry out energy surveys which are required to understand pathways to Zero Carbon and which low energy funding regime properties are best placed in. These surveys are influencing the capital investment programme.
- The service is working on the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) and 30-year investment plan which will feed into future budgets and the 30-year Business Plan. Ensuring homes meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) remains a high priority for the service and properties requiring these works have been identified and placed in the capital programme.
- We are undertaking option appraisals for potential disposal of existing properties in the HRA which no longer serve as appropriate homes for our tenants.
- Stock condition surveys, and validation surveys (i.e. checking that works identified for programmes of replacement in the near future require the works to be undertaken now) are progressing with pace, which enable us to prioritise those most in need of upgrading, smooth the programmes to improve our financial planning, reduce the number of remedial repairs required and meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard (DHS).

Housing and Communities Team

Sheltered and Extra Care Housing

- The team have all attended the 'Managing Conflict' training which ran recently.
- The team has been impacted by covid type illness over the past month.
- There has been a flood at Bovet St, which significantly affected 17 homes. Kath Jones, the allocated Case Manager has been a star and worked tirelessly to support tenants through what has been a stressful and upsetting time. Unfortunately, many tenants did not have insurance due to the cost. The whole team has been supporting by taking on additional work in Kath's patch and supporting her on the ground, ensuring; tenants had a safe alternate place to stay; had help to remove damaged items; keeping them up to date re: the drying out and sanitising process etc. Our maintenance team have also been amazing and Housing Options has supported us to book alternate accommodation where needed. The flood has been very overwhelming for all involved and we have repeatedly gone beyond our landlord responsibilities to support our tenants. This has included providing replacement carpets for tenants without insurance, removing damaged belongings, benefits check to ensure tenants are claiming their entitlement, liaising with other services and businesses to ensure our most vulnerable tenant could be appropriately housed. There are still some weeks to go, but we look forward to seeing the tenants back in their homes and getting on with their lives.
- Despite the flood and reductions to staffing due to planned leave and sickness, the team have worked incredibly hard to continue to provide a 'normal' service to our tenants although this has, at times, had to be reduced. The team has continued to deal with sign ups, leaving wells, completing annual reviews, estates check and dealing with complaints.
- I have begun meetings re: the 'digital switchover,' which is planning the work that will need to be undertaken for Lifelines to be replaced to keep up with the changes taking place in 2025.
- I am continuing to be in regular contact with the contact centre managers, to ensure that calls are routed to the right person, for the quickest response/reply.

Lettings

- Customer satisfaction remains high with both lettable standard of the properties and the lettings process. Positive feedback has been received.

"Very satisfied my depression whilst not cured is way better i have many more good than bad days now it has made such a difference to us all it is now a family home thank you."

"Very satisfied. we are so much more settled as a family the change has had a massive positive impact on all of us the children are so much more

independent – my son has slept in his own room, the first time in years from the day we moved in. We are very settled and very grateful.”

- North Taunton viewings and lettings went very well. Sadly, delays have been incurred to the moving in dates caused by a highways issue. This has impacted badly on those tenants moving into the new regeneration flats. North Taunton regeneration team are dealing with this delay. Teamwork between the lettings team, the regeneration team and the estate team helped making the allocation of these properties, a smooth piece of work.
- The Lettings team have supported the sheltered housing team in identifying potential properties that could have been used as decamp properties for Bovet Street flood victims at this point none of those have been used.
- “Sensitive let” tags have been used to support allocations in ASB (Anti-social behaviour) affected areas in order that we can reduce the impact of ASB on those communities.
- The Lettings Estates and Regeneration team have worked collaboratively to deal with all Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge crescent tenants the last tenant to be moved out of the regeneration area is moving into their new home in November 2023.
- No recruitment of the HMP (Home Mover Plus) officer has taken place at this stage, although downsizing is still a service offered to our tenants.
- The Lettings team remains settled work demand is remarkably high case officers carrying more than 25 cases against a normal figure of between 13 and 15.

Income

- 14 Hardship Applications have now been approved totalling £11,136 one further application is waiting for approval. The team has identified other tenants who they will now be working with to complete applications to apply for the funding. So far, we have not refused any applications.
- The Debt and Benefit Officers are involved with several complex benefit claims, which can be very time consuming, they are working hard to resolve these issues to get the best outcomes for our tenants.
- Due to having reduced staffing in the Rent Recovery team, the existing 4 Rent Recovery Case Managers are now working at maximum capacity to ensure the account on the vacant “patch” are being actioned each work and that those tenants are not falling further into arrears.

Tenancy/Estates & ASB

- Casework continues to remain high for both areas of the team. Many of enquiries we have noted are from our more complex customers who require immediate solutions to their issues, but this is just not always possible.
- We have secured an outright 56-day possession order against a sole tenant (male) in the Wellington area. This male has for several years caused serious anti-social behaviour due to his behaviour when drinking.
- We have been dealing with a succession case where a male succeeded the tenancy but not the property (due to it being an under-occupation case). A Trial took place in May 2023; and we were expecting the warrant to be executed in October however the tenant appealed and there will be a further court hearing later this month.
- The antisocial behaviour team is supporting a new case in Wellington related to a teenage boy with undiagnosed mental health issues who has been targeting his neighbours and the local community. Neighbouring families have been tolerant, but behaviours have escalated, and they now believe it is out of control. Serious incidents have occurred which have included him physically targeting their property (smashing windows and doors) and causing substantial damage to vehicles. We are working closely with our multi-agencies partners to find a resolution including the police and Childrens Social Care. If a solution is not able to be found, then we will need to instigate legal action against the tenancy.
- We have been working closely with a new tenant who has had to flee harassment and intimidation from the neighbour; this is a serious hate crime. The family have gone back into the homeless system; whilst they can secure other accommodation in another area; this has affected the sole tenant and his three young children. We are now waiting on the Police investigating this matter; we have been advised by our legal team that they need to provide us with evidence before we can act against the tenants that have done this. We will keep challenging the Police to do this as we are still waiting on an outcome. Our legal team have advised that without the Police involvement it will be one word against the other. We have been advised that the tenant endured racism; has had his windows shot at; and was financially exploited by them.
- Anti-social behaviour at Moorland Road – we have reported previously on this and the issues we have been experiencing, particularly with two teenage children on the estate. We have had some positive outcomes with Children’s Social Services removing one of the perpetrators to short-time respite until a permanent placement can be found. The other remains at home but has an injunction against her which was obtained by the Police; this is being closely monitored. We have held off from submitting our court case whilst this continues to have settled down the girl's behaviour; but we are ready to take immediate court action if any further nuisance/anti-social behaviour becomes known or is linked to her. We are keeping the community informed of this.
- Also, we are again dealing with another aggressive tenant; he has had a restraining order against a member of our team; last week very offensive graffiti was found with our team member named and the Police have secured CCTV footage which identifies the culprit. A statement has been given to the Police and I believe that they will be proceeding to arrest this tenant over the next few days. If there are charges brought against him this may give us the opportunity to take legal action against him.

- We have now been successful in recruiting two temporary officers for a three-month period to assist with the heavy workload, and until we have overcome the job evaluation issues to recruit permanently. One Case Manager started this week and the other will start in the next two weeks. This will involve some induction period and then we will be expecting them to be able to take some of the pressure from the rest of the team.

Housing Performance Team

- Supporting and enabling the work of the Tenants Strategic Group (TSG) and Tenants' Action Group and the subgroups is a key focus for our team. We have agreed a comprehensive training plan for TSG group members for 2023 and membership of ARCH as well as TPAS. Training is underway, training from the HQN (Housing Quality Network) in relation to the consumer standards has taken place along with other sessions.
- The process designed through the Damp and Mould group for tenants has gone live in our software and this work continues to support the progression of the Damp and Mould Action Plan.
- The Low Carbon Working group has continued to meet with a new focus on communication.
- Collectively we are continuing to work with Homes in Sedgemoor on local government reorganisation workstreams.
- We are starting to prepare for the second tenant satisfaction survey in November 2023 and results will be reported to TSG, the results from May 2023 were reported in the September meeting. We have also submitted data to Housemark, our benchmarking organisation, to understand how our TSM (tenant satisfaction measurement) data compares to other providers.
- We continue to strive for improvement in our complaint handling and are facing challenges in our response times, however Housing Ombudsman has not investigated any complaint made against us since April 2023. Complaints performance is reporting to TSG through the performance quarterly reports and again in more detail in the complaints annual report to TSG.
- We have listened to tenant concerns, and we are keen to improve how we communicate as a service with customers. This year we have opened several communication channels with tenants including online newsletters, tenant liaison officers in our capital works teams, texting and we will use a system called voicescape shortly to reduce abortive telephone calls. We have also noticed your calls are now being answered quicker and there are fewer callers ringing off. We are enhancing our website content which will provide more electronic contact to housing. The service has enjoyed using new formats to share information including video and quick survey opportunities embedded in articles. We agree with tenants that we can go further still, and we are current proposing and costing a dedicated in-service communication team. The service remains committed to introducing a tenant's portal to allow tenants to self-serve 24/7 and we are keen to have a social media presence. proposal is being finalised to streamline repair call handling to take a repair and book a

repair within the same call. We hope that tenants have noticed a change and agree that communication is moving in the right direction. We look forward to doing even more.

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

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