



Notice of Meeting of

**TENANTS' STRATEGIC GROUP**

**Monday, 25 March 2024 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

Samantha Rickward

Councillor Fran Smith

Councillor Marcus Barr

Kevin Hellier

Abbie Johnson

Councillor Federica Smith-Roberts

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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](mailto:democraticserviceteam@somerset.gov.uk) by **Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024 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 Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

# **AGENDA**

## **Tenants' Strategic Group - 6.00 pm Monday, 25 March 2024**

### **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 - 10)**

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Tenants' Strategic Group held on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024. The TSG are to hold a vote for potential new member Stephen Tate to join the group.

### **4 Engagement Group Updates (Pages 11 - 16)**

To receive an update on activities of Engagement Groups.

### **5 Directorate Report (Pages 17 - 24)**

To note the report.

### **6 Q3 (Oct-Dec) Performance and Finance Report (Pages 25 - 34)**

To note the report.

### **7 November and annual TSM summary presentation (Pages 35 - 48)**

To note the presentation.

### **8 Flooding action plan and conclusion Report (Pages 49 - 54)**

To note the report.

### **9 TSG Terms of Reference discussion and vote**

To discuss any potential changes to Terms of Reference and to vote if required.

## **10 Any other Business**

The Chair to consider any other business.



Minutes of a Meeting of the Tenants' Strategic Group held in the JMR Room, Deane House, Belverdere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Monday, 22 January 2024 at 6.00 pm

**Present:**

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

Cllr Marcus Barr  
Ivor Hussey  
Samantha Rickward  
Cllr Fran Smith

Jessie Bunn  
Abbie Johnson  
Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

**Officers In attendance:**

Chris Brown  
Ian Candlish  
Bryony Cole  
Simon Lewis  
Kerry Prisco  
Sharon Sloan  
Sharon Yarde  
Clerk: Josh Barrett

**39 Apologies for Absence** - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from Alex Akhigbemen, Shari Hallet and Kevin Hellier.

**40 Welcome from the Chair** - Agenda Item 2

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and went through the housekeeping announcements. Steven Tate was observing as a potential new member of the group.

**41 Minutes from the previous meeting** - Agenda Item 3

The minutes from the previous meeting held on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were approved.

RESOLVED.

#### **42 Engagement Group Updates - Agenda Item 4**

The Chair went through an update from the various engagement groups. A summarised update can be found below:

- TAG AGM went ahead 11<sup>th</sup> January 2024. The rest of the meetings have been planned in for the Calander year.
- Leycroft Grove continues to move in the right direction with drainage work put in and some pathways. The Chair meets with Stephen Boland on a monthly basis for an update on progress.
- VOIDS group plan to conduct leaving well visits, these plan to begin later in January.
- Damp & Mould group will be organising events in community halls for tenants to be able to discuss issues. These events will be discussed at the next meeting in February 2024.
- The Low Carbon group has come to an end, 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.

#### **43 New Housing Structure - Agenda Item 5**

Chris Brown – Service Director of Housing gave an update on the New Housing Structure. A presentation was shown detailing the below: (summarised)

HRA Structure has been split into 3 functions:

##### **HRA Business function (9,700 Homes)**

New but small function to coordinate HRA responsibilities across the 10,000 homes.

Responsibilities include - HRA Business Plan, ICT investment across the service, direct debits, regulation and returns, assets, RtB, Rent and service charge setting, ALMO client role, development, council returns in relation to regulation and compliance, HRA Governance.

##### **Inhouse Service (Ex SWT) (5700 homes)**

New structure to deliver ever improving Core Property and Tenancy Management Services – Customer journey and Comms, income management, capital programme (decent homes/net zero), tenancy management/ASB, compliance, repairs, voids & Lettings.

Staff retain T&Cs and pay scales (new recruitment SC Pay Scales & JDs)

Increased staff numbers, greater resilience (over 200 HRA staff)

Small changes to some line management, movement of staff from SLA into the service, 1 x at risk post, 2 x seconded posts, several vacancies for recruitment.

### **Homes In Sedgemoor (ALMO) (4000 homes)**

No change, annual negotiation of fees and capital programme

A timeline was also shown which detailed a plan for staffing the structure. The group were also shown proposed staffing for the structure.

After the presentation was shown a discussion between the group was had and the following points were raised and discussed (summarised):

- The self-service portal that was previously discussed where tenants could report issues.
- Funding delay caused by financial issues.
- Funding and length of time graduates are employed.
- The length of time it takes the council to fill VOIDS.
- Disability grant payments in the business plan.

The group were satisfied with the answers given by the officers.

RESOLVED report noted.

## **44 HRA 30-year business plan - Agenda Item 6**

Kerry Prisco – Account Management & Reporting Lead talked through a presentation on The HRA 30 Year Business Plan. A summary of key points can be found below:

- One business plan for all stock
- 19 years additional comfort
- Scenario tested.
- Challenging targets
- Change of emphasis – Net zero and current stock
- Recognises ever stronger regulation.

Once the presentation had concluded the group raised and discussed the following points (summarised):

- How the interest rates in the business plan were calculated.
- General positive feedback about the plan.

#### **45 Directorate Report - Senior Management - Agenda Item 7**

Chris Brown – Service Director of Housing gave an update on the Directorate Report -Senior Management. The group asked to see the Senior Management Fire Report which was agreed this would be shared with the group.

Once the update was given the group raised and discussed the following points (summarised):

- Timescale of stock condition surveys and how this can be improved.
- The Chair gave positive feedback regarding the Church Farm contractor that recently did property work.
- Disposals and the plan for disposals. In the future could the reasoning of why disposals are taking place please be brought to the group.

RESOLVED The Report was noted.

#### **46 Budget Setting 2023-24 and fees and charges. - Agenda Item 8**

Kerry Prisco – Management Accounting and Reporting Lead, talked through a presentation regarding Budget Setting 23/24 and fees and charges. A summary of key points can be found below:

The rent setting proposal is below:

- An increase of 7.7% (CPI+1%) to
  - General Needs social housing rents
  - Sheltered and Extra Care housing rents
  - Shared Ownership properties.
- An increase of 7.7% on affordable rental tenures, with the rent being reviewed at relet based on 80% of open market rent capped at the LHA rate.
- The **continuation of rent flex** at relet for new tenants within the **West of the**



**Council** / in-house service. This will be levied at basic rent plus 5% for general needs tenants and 10% for sheltered and extra care tenants.

- The **introduction of rent flex** at relet for new tenants within the **North of the Council** / part of Homes In Sedgemoor. This will be levied at basic rent plus 5% for general needs tenants and 10% for sheltered and extra care tenants.

The fees and charges proposal are below:

**Homes in Somerset (HiS):** Charged based on actual costs.

**Homes in Somerset (HiS):** The introduction of a new 10% service charge management fee.

**In-House:** An increase in Service Charges for tenants in the West, managed by the In-House Service, of:

- (a) 7.7% for Grounds Maintenance and the Support / Sheltered Housing and Extra Care accommodation services,
- (b) 6.8% for the Piper Lifeline service,
- (c) other charges based on actual costs incurred laundry, heating, communal areas, communal door entry systems,
- (d) no change to the communal utilities charge,
- (e) a new charge for exceptional street cleaning,
- (f) sewerage will increase in line with the Wessex Water increases for 2024/25 once known

An increase of 7.7% for garage rents.

An increase of 6.7% on temporary accommodation daily rates.

An increase of 6.7% for Meeting Hall hourly rental rates.

An increase of 6.7% for Guest Room charges.

Once the presentation was concluded, the group raised and discussed the following points (summarised):

- Homes in Sedgemoor and their knowledge of the proposal.
- Extra help and support for people struggling with rent payments.

The group were happy with the answers given.

RESOLVED – report was noted.

#### **47 Any other Business - Agenda Item 9**

The Chair asked for any other business, and it was confirmed that none was raised. It had been agreed that all presentations be emailed to the group. The meeting was

closed by The Chair.

**(The meeting ended at 7.45 pm)**

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**CHAIR**



# Somerset Council

**Tenants' Strategic Group –25<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

**Engaged Tenant Group Update – March 2024**

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**

The potential TAG member decided that due to personal circumstances she was unable to join, therefore the group remains with eight 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 project which will mean over 50% of the budget has been allocated. 3 further CYIF applications were assessed in February, 2 were awarded and 1 was declined. £18,000 out of a budget of £20,000 has been allocated this financial year.

Leycroft Grove continues to be on the agenda and the group have met with Chris Baxter (Tenancy Case Manager) Dan Mancini (Tree specialist) and some residents on two occasions to discuss planting in the area. The Chair is meeting with Stephen Boland to look at progress each month.

### **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. This group is temporarily on hold because both Somerset Council Leads have been and are on long-term sickness.

### **GROUNDS MAINTENANCE**

#### **Purpose**

To work with the grounds maintenance team and Stephen Boland to ensure that the comments about grounds maintenance made in the last Tenant Satisfaction Measures and to make grounds improvements in our communities.

#### **Update**

Hedgehog houses have been installed in Holway and Moorland Place. Wayne Hobson and Livi Mongare have arranged a meeting with Jack Ripley at Priorswood Primary School to discuss how they can use the small amount of funding from Travis Perkins (a social value contribution pot ). 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 has been on hold until the Housing Structure was announced and the Repairs Manager returned. The Group met on 8<sup>th</sup> March and said a fond farewell to Mike Parsons who is leaving at the end of March 2024.

### **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**

We currently have 3 contract managers and have 1 more to recruit. We have 1 Liaison officer and 2 further positions to be recruited. The graduate post has been filled.

#### **Kitchens**

Novus have now finished their contract. The 3 contractors are Bell Group, LCB Group, and Church farm maintenance. 100 kitchens have been completed and signed off since January 2024. Between 16 and 20 kitchens are being completed every week.

#### **Bathrooms**

The chosen contactors are: Church Farm Maintenance, LCB Group, and DR Jones  
Over 25 bathrooms have been fitted since January 2024.

#### **Roofing**

More than 400 roofs have been completed this financial year.

### **Windows & Doors**

Nationwide now progressing well, their intention is to complete 10 properties a week going forward. Over 240 properties have had windows fitted this financial year.

### **Heating**

Liberty have installed the pilot properties. 22 heating systems have been fitted to date.

### **Fire Doors**

CLC has come to an end of their contract. Currently in negotiations to secure a new contractor.

### **Electrical testing**

Progressing well, the intention is to try and be 100%, currently 95% compliant due to access issues.

### **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. This group has been temporarily been put on hold.

## **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. The

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Repairs Manager has been unavailable and therefore, this work has been temporarily suspended.

### **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 group are currently looking at preparing for a tenant consultation before they can go ahead with securing a budget and procurement. The group have met twice since the last TSG meeting and work is progressing well.

#### **4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)**

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

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#### **5. Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications directly to do with this report?**

There are no financial implications directly to do with the recommendations in this report.

#### **6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?**

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

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

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

Name of Contact Officers: Sharon Yarde

Telephone number: 07818529194

Email address: sharon.yarde@somersetcouncil.gov.uk

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**Tenants' Strategic Group – Monday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

## **Directorate Report**

This matter is the responsibility of Cllr Federica Smith Robert Executive Member for Communities

Report Authors: Heads of Service and Housing Performance Manager

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

The report is to update the Tenants' Strategic Group (TSG) on work being undertaken and progress made by the Housing Directorate since the last TSG meeting in January 2024.

### **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**

## **HRA Growth and Business Function**

- The last couple of months have been remarkably busy finalising and presenting the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) business plan and rent setting proposals to full council. We are incredibly pleased that the full council supported the 30 recommendations in the report including the capital programme, a single development programme for the HRA, rent and service charges and the 30-year business plan.
- The approved business plan is ambitious with efficiencies required and income to be maximised including a reduction of void times, more accuracy in service charge setting and improved collection of s20 leasehold charges.
- The HRA business plan is a single plan for all council homes including those in the West previously Somerset West and Taunton properties and those in the North previously Sedgemoor District Council properties managed by Homes in Sedgemoor.
- A single development plan for the HRA will see 448 homes purchased or built over the next five years. If the service outperforms the business plan more development will be proposed.
- Schemes at Oxford Inn and 24 units of modular construction now have the funding to progress and the HRA is appropriating 4 homes from the general fund in Martock.
- The business plan has included investment to achieve Net Zero on its current stock before 2050. This significant investment will see more investment in tenants' homes and a bigger annual capital programme. The capital programme for 2024/2025 is £18m for the inhouse service.
- Members received the HRA reports with enthusiasm and many positive comments were shared by members including a number which encourages the HRA to reach further into the East and the West of the County.
- The recruitment and embedding of this overarching HRA team are taking time primarily due to the approval of job descriptions and the recruitment process.
- The service provides the client monitoring function for Homes in Sedgemoor (The Council's Arm's Length Management Organisation)
- The service is responsible for service level agreement with general fund colleagues for Shops, Adaptations, grants to the HRA and strategic HRA finances and shortly some Net Zero delivery.
- The main contract for building NTWP Phase B and Ci has been agreed by members and demolition will start imminently at North Taunton and Wordsworth Drive/Coleridge Crescent. Boarding has now been erected at Wordsworth Crescent.
- Seaward Way/Rainbow Way, Minehead is progressing well, and a second community drop in event was well supported.
- 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 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.
- The council is considering a second phase which could see an additional 30 units acquired plus some new build homes over 2 years.

## **Property Team**

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

- The team are currently short staffed, both for the trades area and office support. Arrangements are in place to help manage workloads, but this is likely to affect future performance indicators and may lead to an increase in complaints for this service area.
- The most recent available data at the time of writing this report for repairs performance, January 2024, shows we met the target for both emergency responsive repairs and non-emergency responsive repairs.
- Responsive repair request call-handling is currently still being taken by call-handlers within the Corporate Customer Service team. However, we continue to plan for this activity to be taken 'in-house' within the Housing Directorate in the future (thus allowing a smooth 'one and done' appointment-based service offer to the customer).
- We continue to develop and implement activities within our Repairs Service Improvement Plan (RSIP). This includes improving IT systems, and we have launched an Open Contractor project review to develop the system and enable improved future service delivery.
- We continue to undertake void repairs to successfully meet our Lettable Standard. Procurement activities for external contractor support for void repairs are ongoing.
- Our materials supply chain process continues to operate well overall, with regular review of the Core list. We are also in discussions with the supplier regarding their Social Value offer.

### **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.
- The Fire Safety Audit by SWAP (Southwest Audit Partnership) is now complete and we are implementing the agreed management actions contained within their final report.
- Our Electrical Inspection testing programme continues to improve compliance in this area, with the latest data showing 95.09% (see Capital Programme section below for further details).
- A procurement exercise for fire doors, compartmentalisation, and fire safety works (following Fire Risk Assessment recommended actions) is being undertaken.
- Weekly compliance meetings, together with monthly reports to the Executive team, are ongoing to carefully monitor and manage housing property safety.

## **Capital Programme**

- Our Capital Programme team continues to deliver our electrical inspection testing programme with both the main contractor delivering the programme and support from our in-house electrical team. A consumer unit replacement programme has commenced, including National Grid installing contractor switches.
- The accelerated programme of kitchen and bathroom replacements has commenced with three new contractors and is progressing well.
- 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.
- Following approval of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) and 30-year investment plan, detailed lists of properties requiring capital works are in place to ensure homes meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS).
- 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, 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).

## **Income and Tenancy Management Team**

Across some of the teams we currently have a few vacancies, due to sickness absence of staff (for a range of reasons) as well as challenges that are slowing up the recruitment of new staff into vacant positions, due to sign-off processes required through Somerset Council. We are working with HR to support people back into work from sickness and are also progressing sign-offs as quickly as possible, through support from the Director to prioritise key posts through the sign-off process.

## **Sheltered & Extra Care Housing**

- We are undertaking closer working with Adult Social Care and Health Commissioners to help streamline the Extra Care Housing allocation process. This has led to the addition of extra 'panel meetings' to agree suitable placements and care packages for new tenants. A particular focus is on ensuring applicants have an up-to-date care assessment in place.

## **Lettings**

- We continue to advertise and relet properties.
- Preparations are being made for the letting of the new council homes in Minehead.
- We are working on consolidating our reporting mechanisms and business intelligence reports to develop one clear picture of where every property is within the voids cycle, from temporary accommodation, through to demolitions, new builds and standard voids. This will help us better report on performance and prioritise properties for turn-around.

## **Income**

- We have introduced a new phone system for Rent Recovery called Voicescape. This system is an outbound calls system, we are still in the first few weeks of using this for Rent Recovery, the officers are finding it helpful, and we have received valuable feedback from some of our tenants who have been contacted using the system.
- The Debt and Benefit team is providing bespoke reports to tenants who are struggling financially and need help in maximising eligible benefits, discretionary housing payments and in some cases consolidating debts. This service has proved invaluable to many tenants and helped ensure they are able to retain their tenancies and manage their finances.
- We will be sending our Universal Credit claimants a text the week of 25<sup>th</sup> March to remind all tenants that they need to update their Housing Costs on their UC claim. We have found this to be successful in the past. The team will all be helping those most vulnerable tenants who are unable to complete the update themselves.

## **Tenancy/Estates & ASB**

- On 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 Stephen Deakin took retirement so the team wished him well. Stephen had been with the team for over 5 years so will be missed.
- The team continue to be busy with enquiries and daily tasks; along with a noticeable increase in having to project manage complex vulnerable customers. These customers are having to be decanted out so that extensive repairs (replacement kitchen, heating, bathrooms, damp, and mould works). These customers need in-depth support which is time consuming.
- The team have recently dealt with a serious mental health case, where the tenant was reporting repair issues whilst hallucinating; the Case Manager recognising the signs was able to refer into the community mental health team who have responded and been able to provide support. The tenant is now

getting support and the case manager is working to resolve related tenancy issues so that the tenant's property and possessions will be safe when she returns to the address.

- On the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024 a serious assault took place in one of our properties in Coronation Close. The tenant had invited friends over when one attacked the other causing serious harm. A few days later we were advised that the victim sadly passed away. The tenant was questioned and released. A man has been remanded in custody for the attack and is a council tenant from another address. We are attempting to meet with him in prison to progress getting his tenancy terminated.
- The ASB team have prepared and served a Community Protection Notice (CPN) on a tenant in Eastwick Road, due to their dogs constantly barking. We have attempted to work with the residents and offered advise; complaints continued and working with our legal team we have now served this notice. We are closely monitoring the situation.
- We are also preparing court documents for a neighbour nuisance case where the tenant has threatened to harm his neighbours. The perpetrator is currently on remand in prison due to the serious nature of the last incident. We have, over the last year, attempted to provide support for the perpetrator but due to drug and alcohol misuse his behaviour becomes very chaotic and we believe he poses a serious threat to others.
- The team have now carried out three lettings under the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) programme for displaced families and these have gone well with the families settling in quickly.
- A house on Dorchester Road sustained extensive fire damage in the early hours of Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024; the family were able to get out of the property safely and are staying in temporary accommodation until we can find a suitable 3-bedroom house for them to decant into whilst their home is repaired.

## **Housing Performance Team**

### **Tenant Engagement**

- 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 2023/2024 and membership of ARCH (Association of Retained Council Housing) as well as TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service). Our engaged tenants have already attended 7 training sessions.
- Another interested tenant wishing to join TSG attended in January and has submitted his application to join.
- The tenants action Group met in February and approved 2 CYIF applications and 1 Estate Improvement fund application.
- Collectively we are continuing to work with Homes in Sedgemoor on local government reorganisation workstreams and tenant engagement. We continue to meet regularly.

- We have completed the annual 2023/2024 TSM (Tenant Satisfaction Measurement) survey, the results will be reported to TSG in March and submitted to the regulator in April.
- We have also submitted data to Housemark, our benchmarking organisation, to understand how our TSM (tenant satisfaction measurement) data compares to other providers.
- There has been long-term sickness in the Tenancy Engagement team since January 2024, capacity reduced to 50%.
- There were 4 tenant engagement activities in February and 6 in March 2024

### **Complaint Handling and Performance**

- We have been focussing on providing complaint handling training and support to the service areas to enable us as a directorate to better understand what our residents are telling us, and to be able to use this feedback to help us learn from the complaints we receive.
- The Housing Ombudsman have recently released a revised Complaint Handling Code, which comes into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Although we have self-assessed and reported our performance against the Code since its inception in 2020 (and shared this with TSG and online); from 1<sup>st</sup> April it will be a mandatory requirement to report the outcome of this assessment to the Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman. We have carried out a self-assessment against the Code and are working on actions we need to take, to ensure compliance with the new Complaint Handling Code by 1<sup>st</sup> April. We will share our findings with TSG at a future meeting.
- Since the last report, the Housing Ombudsman has decided to investigate one complaint made against us. We have provided our full report to the Ombudsman and await their determination on this case. It is noteworthy that this is the only Housing Ombudsman complaint we have received for investigation since January 2022, which is against the sector trend of increasing Ombudsman complaints.
- We were able to assess our performance against our registered provider peers through a bespoke presentation that was provided by Housemark, our benchmarking organisation. We were pleased to see that we are doing well in many areas, and to ensure continued access to such rich data we will continue to submit monthly data to Housemark.

### **Housing Comms**

- In response to TSM survey comments about the difficulty of getting through to the right person with calls being passed from person to person, we have created a new intranet to better share information. This should help with identifying who is the responsible officer for a piece of work making handoffs smoother and passing enquiries onto the right team and person.
- Tenants' Newsletter continues to have a high level of engagement that puts us in the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile of performance for government newsletters in the UK.
- First printed & posted Sheltered & Extra Care newsletter delivered.

- Work progressing well on the plan to improve communication on the capital works programmes. A small pilot of providing residents and contractors with information packs has been undertaken, we are also working to revamp the
- letters sent through the capital works programme to make the key information easier to identify.
- Continue to have good engagement with the videos we produce.

#### **4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)**

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

#### **5. Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications directly to do with this report?**

There are no financial implications directly to do with the recommendations in this report.

#### **6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?**

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

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

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

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## **Tenants' Strategic Group – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

### **2023/24 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 3, October to December 2023.**

**This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Smith Roberts, executive lead member for communities.**

Report Authors: Claire Reed (Case Management Lead, Performance and Improvement) 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 third quarter of 2023/24 (October to December 2023).

#### **2. Recommendations**

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note content of the housing performance scorecard and finance report for quarter 3 (October to December).

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

The Housing Performance Scorecard is a tool to measure our performance in key areas. The scorecard was last presented to Tenants' Strategic Group (TSG) in November 2023 covering the performance in Q2 (July to September 2023). This report covers the third quarter of 2023/24 October to December 2023.

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.

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	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Customer</b>					
% of stage 1 complaints closed in 10 working days (as per policy HRA) (TSM CH02)	93%	80%	71%	68%	29%
All HRA Complaints relative to the size of the landlord per 1000 homes.	2.27	3.93	5.37	3.93	2.68
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales.	93%	83%	87%	86%	87%

8.1.2 As part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) introduced by the Social Housing Regulator, complaints data is now reported to show the % of all complaints that are answered within the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code timescales. This measure includes all complaints which were closed within policy timescales, and any complaints that were extended in line with the Code.

8.1.3 A decision was made in December to extend all stage 1 complaints which fell due over the Christmas and New Year period by an additional 10 working days, in recognition of the service having skeletal staff over the festive period. Although this affected the percentage of complaints responded to within policy timescales for December, all residents were contacted in advance and advised of a new response date, and 87% of complaints overall in December were responded to within the extension timescales in line with the Complaint Handling Code.

8.1.4 Complaint numbers fell during quarter 3, but this is typical towards the end of the calendar year based on previous years' data. The new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code which will become statutory as from April 2024 states that complaints should be welcomed and a higher number of complaints should not cause concern, as it demonstrates that residents feel they are able to bring complaints to their landlord and know they will be listened to, and the complaint acted upon.

## 8.2 Customer - Lettable Standard Satisfaction

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Customer</b>					
% of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property	90%	85%	100%	N/A	N/A

8.2.1 These surveys are undertaken on the phone. The number of new lets each month for quarter 3 are below:

October 2023: 30 properties let, (5 responses, satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

November 2023: 48 properties let.

December 2023: 42 properties let.

8.2.2 Tenant satisfaction data was not available during November and December 2023 due to key staff absence.

## 8.3 Customer - Repair Satisfaction

8.3.1 Work continues to investigate 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 forms part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey completed in May 2023 and November 2023, by an independent company. The TSM question focuses on repairs in last 12 months. 76% of customers surveyed in May

2023 and 79% surveyed in November 2023 were satisfied with the repair carried out in their home in the last 12 months. The combined result was 78% which is above median of 76% (comparison with other landlords by Acuity). Results were reported to TSG in March 2024 and will be submitted to the Regulator in April 2024.

### 8.4 Customer – compliments

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Customer</b>					
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	6	2	4

8.4.1 We have been receiving compliments and the total for the year to date ending December 2023 is 43. Formally recorded compliment volumes in the service have dropped from 2022/23, and so we are currently looking at ways in which compliments are recorded to ensure this data is accurately captured.

### 8.5 Customer – Overall Satisfaction

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Customer</b>					
Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM Results)	77%	75%	76%(May 23)	73% (Nov 23)	73% (Nov 23)

8.5.1 During 2023 we have surveyed twice using an independent company, called Acuity, once in May and again in November to obtain our statistical sample. The combined May and November results show an overall satisfaction of 75% for the year.

8.5.2 Results from the last survey in 2023-24 were obtained in November 2023, 73% satisfaction. 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 March 2024 and will be reported again after the next survey in May 2024.

### 8.6 Customer – Call Statistics

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Customer</b>					
Average wait time in the repairs queue	00:01:00	00:05:00	00:02:49	00:03:19	00:04:06
% of abandoned calls in the repairs queue	10%	10%	9%	11.4%	13%
Average wait time in the housing estates and tenancy queue	00:01:00	00:05:00	00:02:54	00:02:36	00:03:36
% of abandoned calls in the housing estates and tenancy queue	10%	10%	10%	11%	13%
<b>NEW</b> Percentage of calls answered within 2 minutes	80%		56%	51%	TBC

8.6.1 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. Although waiting times in the repairs queue for quarter 3 remain within the amber threshold, call waiting times increased by between 31 and 69 seconds over the course of the quarter. Consideration is currently being given to look at how we can manage incoming repair calls to improve this service to tenants.

8.6.3 Call waiting times to the housing estates and tenancy queue in quarter 3 have reduced by more than half in comparison to July and August 2023 (quarter 2). This quicker response time has resulted in the percentage of calls being abandoned into the housing estates and tenancy queue dropping by more than half of the abandonment rate for July and August.

8.6.4 Customer Service performance continues to improve, and 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	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Rent Recovery</b>					
True current tenant arrears at the end of the month%	2%	2.2%	1.67%	1.58%	1.96%
Total number of all evictions			0	0	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 continued to improve since June 2023.

## 8.8 Supported Housing

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Supported Housing</b>					
Sheltered housing - % of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans	98%	97%	98.2%	97.2%	97%

8.8.1 Our performance in this area has dipped slightly from quarter 2, but not significantly; remaining within our amber target threshold. This slight drop in performance is attributed to sickness levels within the team putting remaining resource under pressure.

## 8.9 Lettings and Voids

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Lettings and Voids</b>					
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to key)	45.9	50.5	56	57	62

8.9.1 Our void turn-around times have not met the targets set for quarter 3, although they have remained a focus for the Voids and Lettings team.

8.9.2 The team has had to deal with long-term absence from key members of staff.

## 8.10 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Housing Repairs</b>					
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%	98.5%	98.1%	98.1%

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	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Tenancy Management</b>					
Total New ASB cases in the month			17	16	8
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month			18	11	25
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month			90	94	78
Number of new ASB cases reported per 1,000 properties	2.08	2.29	3.04	2.86	1.43
Number of safeguarding referrals			10	8	4

**8.11.1 ASB** - Somerset Council ASB satisfaction 61% Nov 2023 (Acuity) - Top Quartile for 20 LAs, and 2nd quartile for Acuity 75 landlords.

The higher number of ASB cases previously reported in quarter 2 have continued into quarter 3, which are likely to be a result of ensuring that cases are logged within the ASB module rather than through other routes. ASB reduced during December which could be attributed to festive cheer and a focus on family time.

**8.11.3 Safeguarding** – We currently raise low numbers of safeguarding referrals to Somerset Council. This quarter we have made 22 referrals which is a significant drop from last quarter when we made 42 referrals. This fall will partially reflect a real drop

in cases during that quarter but also a reduction in reporting over the December / Christmas period. As with antisocial behaviour, we normally experience increased cases during the Summer months and summer holiday period and then a reduction over the winter months.

## 8.12 Compliance

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Compliance</b>					
% of housing dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate (LGSR) (TSM BS01)	100%		100%	100%	100%
% of housing dwellings with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)	100%		94.12%	94.24%	94.24%
% of housing communal areas with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)			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%		83.33%	100%	100%
Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out. (TSM BS02)	100%		100%	100%	100%
<b>NEW</b> – 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 continue to demonstrate a month-on-month improvement and a programme is on track to achieve 100% compliance during this financial year.

8.12.3 As reported in our quarter 2 update, figures for lift service and inspection dropped to 50% in September due to two properties with through floor lifts and not passenger lifts. The impact of this was felt into quarter 3 (October) after one property service and inspection was completed during this month, increasing the non-compliance figure for October to 83%.



### 8.13 Asset Management

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Oct-23	Nov-23	Dec-23
<b>Asset Management</b>					
Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	57	226	344	350	357
Target % Non-Decent Homes Compliance (TSM)	1%	4%	6.09%	6.12%	6.25%
Percentage of properties EPC C or above					68%

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 decreased slightly from quarter 2 into quarter 3. 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

8.14.1 The North Taunton Woolaway Project is progressing well, we have completed 36 of the new homes with the remaining 11 due to complete by the end of March 2024. There will be highway works outstanding as Equans are leaving site in March and these will be picked up by the new contractor. Approval to Appoint the new build contractor for future phases is being considered by Executive on 6 March 2024, but to various standstill requirements, the name of the new contractor is embargoed until 27 March 2024. The demolition contractor for Phase B, Ci and Di has been appointed and demolition will commence on 11 March with the site being hoarded.

The development of 54 new homes in Minehead is progressing well with some handovers anticipated during the Spring, and the whole scheme completed by Autumn 2024.

The demolition contractor is also undertaking the demolition of Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats. Demolition is due to start in April 2024.

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

Executive Summary



39.1 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 31st December 2023).

9.2 The headline estimates for revenue costs are:

Revenue Budget	<u>Forecast</u> overspend of £275k	Amber
General Reserves	£11.774m forecast balance = favourable compared to £3.722m minimum requirement	Green
Earmarked Reserves	£258k opening balance	Green

9.3 The forecast outturn variance position has improved since the Q2 position (of an overspend of £2.074m) mainly due to a new projected underspend on interest payments and reduced forecast spend on repairs and voids maintenance.

9.4 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.

9.5 The HRA has set a balance budget for 2023/24 however areas of risk for the year will relate to the 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.

9.6 In addition, there are risks associated with regulatory and compliance requirements. For example, changes are expected during the year in relation to the decent home standard where the cost impact is unknown, as well as a Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 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.

9.7 From an operational perspective, the challenge 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.

9.8 The challenge also relates to revenue and capital investment to ensure homes achieve higher safety standards, tenants are engaged and influence their services and the service is able to deliver core services to increasingly high standards. The risk here relates to improve services within capped HRA income.

9.9 The headline estimates for capital costs are:

9.10 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for 2023/24 onwards is £125.919m. This consists of £32.208m of new schemes approved for 2023/24 plus £90.397m approved budget carry forward and a supplementary budget of £3.314m.

9.11 The current forecast outturn is an underspend of £7.735m 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.£500k.

**Democratic Path:** Finance report is reported to Resources Scrutiny and Community Scrutiny and Executive committee meetings and Tenants Strategic Board – 25th March 2024.

**Reporting Frequency: Quarterly**

**Contact Officers**

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- **Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey**
- **November 2023 and Annual Summary for TSG- 25th March 2024**



**Somerset**  
Council

# Results at a glance

## Key Metrics Summary W2 2023/24



**74%** Well maintained home



**83%** Safe home



**79%** Repairs - Last 12 months



**75%** Time taken - Last repair



**69%** Communal areas clean & well maintained



**66%** Positive contribution to neighbourhood



**82%** Neighbourhood as a place to live



**68%** Anti-social behaviour



**72%** Easy to deal with



**63%** Listens & Acts



**81%** Keeps you informed



**79%** Treats fairly & with respect



**33%** Complaints handling



**79%** Grounds maintenance



**82%** Estate services

# What is it?

- A regulatory requirement since April 2023 (data will be reported April 2024).
- Completed every 6 months (May & November).
- The 2 survey results put together give us the annual figures to submit to the regulator.
- 23 questions, including the 12 TSM questions set by the regulator.
- There were 313 completed interviews, 257 GN, 52 SH, 1 ExC, 3 Temporary Accommodation. 263 from Taunton and 50 from Wellington.

# Topline Results

Overall satisfaction is 73%. (73.48%)

Overall satisfaction has decreased by 3% since May.

Only one area scored less than 60%, in the last survey there were 5 areas that scored less than 60%.

There are more areas showing an increase in satisfaction than a decrease. Satisfaction increased in all areas except for two (overall satisfaction and neighbourhood). 86% thought that their neighbourhood was a good place to live (same as previous survey).

83% felt that their home is safe

# Increased Satisfaction

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- Well Maintained Home 3%
- Safe 1%
- Repairs 3%
- Time taken to repair 1%
- Communal areas 10%
- ASB 14%
- Grounds Maintenance 24%
- Estate Services 8%
- Listening to tenants 5%
- Treating Tenants fairly & with respect 4%
- Keeping tenants informed 6%
- Complaints Handling 2%
- Easy to deal with 1%

# Decreased Satisfaction

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- Overall satisfaction 3%
- Positive contribution to the neighbourhood 5%
- It is a great achievement to only see decreased satisfaction in only 2 areas



# Areas of Improvement

- The key themes coming from the comments are residents would like improved communication with their landlord in general, also noting accessibility/language barriers. In relation to the repairs service, residents would like to see improvements to the timescales for completing repairs, outstanding/forgotten repairs being completed and an overall improvement to the day-to-day repairs service.
- ASB
- Complaints Handling
- Communal areas
- Grounds Maintenance
- Listening to tenants

All of the areas above have improved since the last survey in May 2023 but still require improvement.

# Interesting findings

- Only 14% of tenants expressed an interest in becoming more engaged with the council
- 65% of our tenants use the internet regularly and 30% do not access the internet (approx 1,800).
- Older age group tenants are consistently more satisfied than General Needs tenants

# Annual Summary 2023

## Satisfaction with measures 2023/24



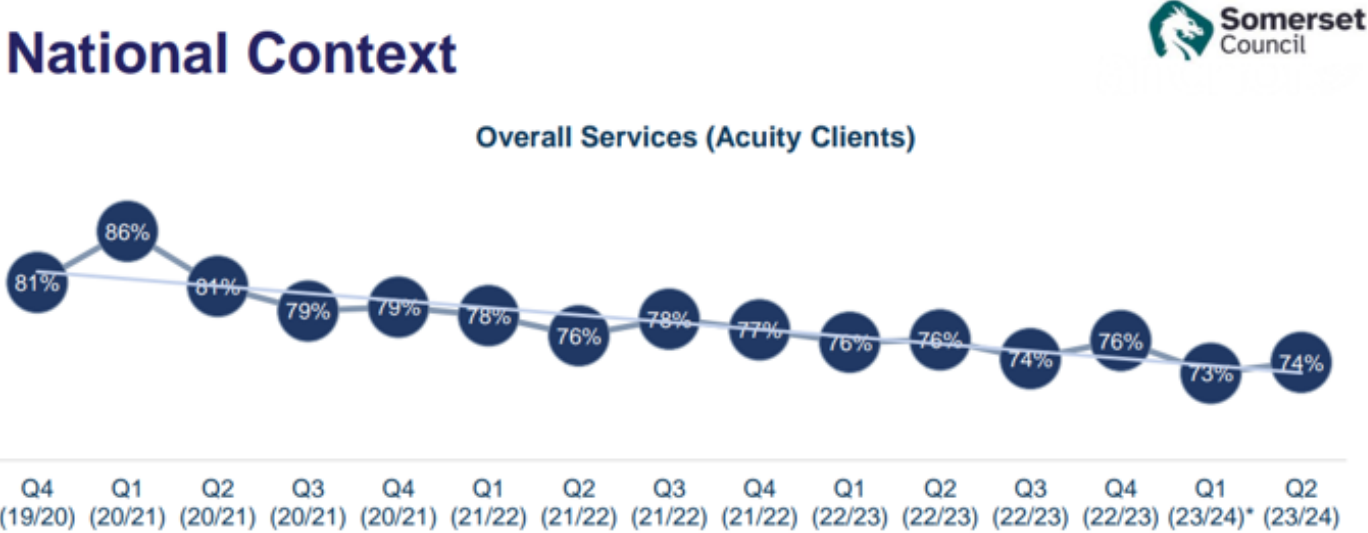
# Year on Year Change

	2022/23	2023/24	Change
Overall satisfaction	77%	75%	-2%
Well maintained home	75%	73%	-2%
Safe home	81%	82%	2%
Repairs - Last 12 months	79%	78%	-1%
Time taken - Last repair	78%	75%	-3%
Communal areas clean & well maintained	57%	64%	6%
Positive contribution to neighbourhood	70%	69%	-1%
Neighbourhood as a place to live	83%	84%	1%
Anti-social behaviour	64%	61%	-3%
Easy to deal with	76%	72%	-4%
Listens & Acts	62%	60%	-2%
Keeps you informed	79%	78%	-1%
Treats fairly & with respect	82%	77%	-5%
Complaints handling	59%	32%	-27%
Grounds maintenance	60%	67%	6%
Estate services	73%	77%	4%

# National Context

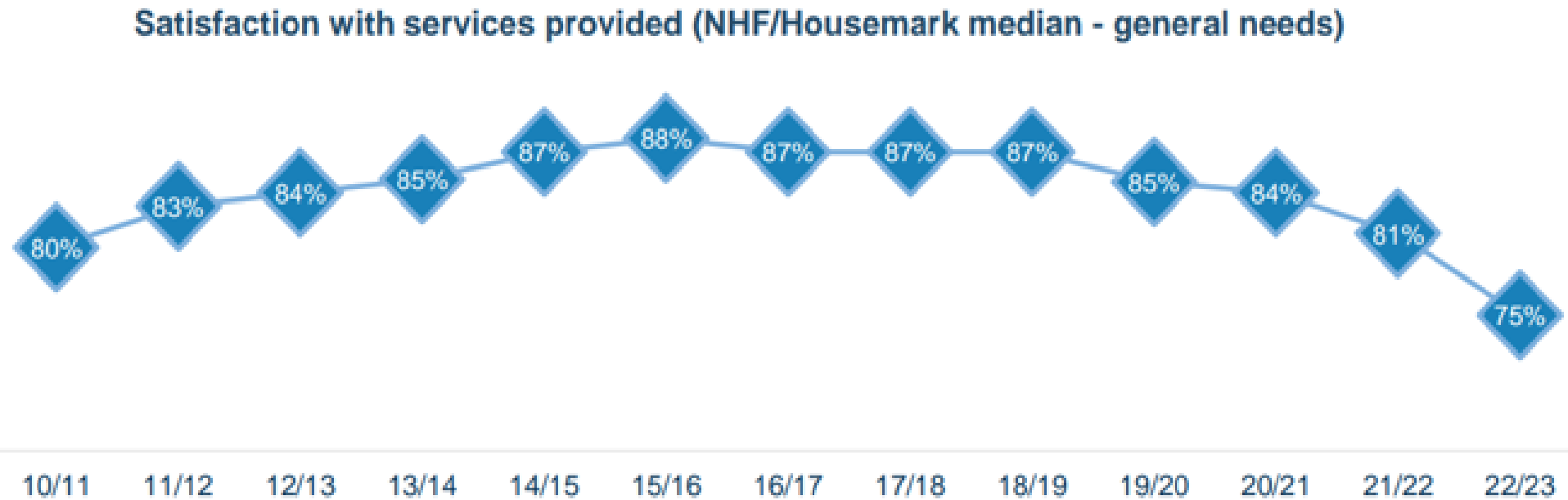
When compared to Acuity's other council clients, Somerset council scores above median in all areas with 10 out of 12 areas falling in the top quartile which shows a good level of service compared to other councils.

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This shows that amongst Acuity clients, overall satisfaction has continued to decline. Somerset Council have scored 1% more than acuity's average.

# National Context



Housemark members have also seen a decline in satisfaction since 2019. Somerset Council's overall satisfaction is the same as Housemark.

# What's next?

- The council needs to continue with their Action plan to address the areas of improvement.
- To carry on with the Grounds Maintenance Focus Group because Grounds maintenance Grounds maintenance increased 24% from 55% in May to 79% in November. It is the highest it has been since 2013.
- 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, we must keep an emphasis on our repairs service and communication.

# Thank you for listening

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## Tenants' Strategic Group – 25/3/24

### Name of Report:

### Final Lessons learnt from recent flooding of HRA properties in Wellington

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

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

During an evening of the week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023, 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.

A report was brought to Tenants' Strategic Group on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 providing an overview of lessons learnt. The group were 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.

Tenants Strategic Group have now requested to see the final product from this piece of work. This comprises of a flow-chart and action plan.

#### 2. Reminder of findings from Interim Report

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 and next steps**

We held lessons learnt meetings with a cross-section of staff and services involved in the incident and developed 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.

[Guidance - Flooding Visio.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Accompanying this flow-chart was an action plan which was approved by HSMT. A separate meeting took 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.

The Action Plan set out the following actions:

## Action Plan as at February 2024

Action	Owner	Target Date	Progress
List of Contacts/ Directory, including the 'Next Level Up' for Duty Managers and Kilkenny	SM	15/3/24	KF merging our two rotas together. SL to then ensure this is added to Somerset Council directory and this to be shared with all our duty managers
Create accommodation providers list including those for pets and the approved providers	TK	Tbc	TK currently off work, but will set new target date on return
Create contact list of Housing staff who consent to being called out for additional support if needed	SL	Complete	This has been shared with Civil Contingencies to make available as part of action 1.
Obtain clarity on how Duty Manager can trigger Civil Contingencies (e.g. rest centre) if needed	SL	Complete	Flowchart updated to show this. Duty Officer can request to speak with CCU Duty Manager to discuss wider civil contingencies support, through Kilkenny line.
Agree principle for additional DLO staff to be paid on call when amber/ red weather alerts	IC	In progress	Principle agreed – implementation underway.
Obtain clarity on powers to decant & potential change to Tenancy Policy	SB	Complete	We have obtained legal advice and cannot enforce a decant, but need to try and persuade
Permanent placement of 4x4 vehicle at DLO	OW	Complete	This has been relocated to Depot
Vehicle on standby with sandbags for emergencies	OW	Complete	A compromise with vehicle always available and pallet of sandbags ready to load on
Create a dedicated line for staff to return calls to Kilkenny to ensure access AND establish principles of Kilkenny booking & paying for accommodation if required as they have P card	SL	Complete	G Allgood has confirmed that P Cards are in place and that new line is now in place and operational
Create 'Safety & Compliance checklist' for Snagging Co-ordinator	OW	Complete	Uploaded to document site

Check position on insurance for transferring tenants in Council vehicles during emergencies (e.g. to hotel or rest centre)	IC / OW	Ongoing	Insurance position checked – Risk Assessment being produced. Confirmation that this is allowed, assuming appropriate risk assessments in place. OW to write a generic risk assessment for this scenario
Advocate to ASC EDT service to support SC tenants by booking hotel accommodation on behalf of Housing on night of incident (rather than Duty Mgr needing to)	SL	Ongoing	ASC have said they are unable to resource this but I have appealed and asked that this decision be revisited
Source more dehumidifiers (Depot has limited supply)	OW	Complete	Facilities Management have a number they can loan out, plus we have other contractors who can provide these
Source contract for contamination testing and cleaning / sanitisation and dry certificate	OW	In progress	OW is chasing this up through Procurement
Check whether contents insurance can be included for all tenants and included within service charge	SL	Complete	Checked. No, this is not possible
Roll out procedures and training to Duty Managers, new people on rota, Civil Contingencies and Kilkenny	SL / SB	Complete	
Create Flood Incident SharePoint Site to store documents.	SL / CD	Complete	<a href="#">Guidance - Flooding Response - All Documents (sharepoint.com)</a>
Collate suite of letters from last incident for flooding sharepoint site. <a href="#">Guidance - Flooding Response - All Documents (sharepoint.com)</a>	FD	Complete	Letters added
Add list of meeting halls and locations to Sharepoint Site, to use in case of emergencies	FD	Complete	<a href="#">Meeting Halls (sharepoint.com)</a>
Consider whether guest rooms can be brought back into use as possible sources of	IC	In progress	Option appraisal process underway

accommodation in emergency (i.e. survey and undertake cost analysis)			
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**4. Recommendations**

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note the Flow Chart and progress on the Action Plan 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 quantifiable financial implications known yet in relation to the recommendations in this report. However, there will be some capital costs that come as a result of the related work to put in place flood mitigation measures to properties at risk. This will be considered and added to the Capital programme which is approved through the normal budget-setting process.

**6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?**

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

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

There are no data protection implications directly to do with this report

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