



Notice of Meeting of

TENANTS' STRATEGIC GROUP

Monday, 25 September 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	Councillor Marcus Barr	Jessie Bunn
Kevin Hellier	Councillor Fran Smith	Ivor Hussey
Samantha Rickward	Councillor Federica Smith Roberts	

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 19th of September 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 14th September 2023

AGENDA

Tenants' Strategic Group - 6.00 pm Monday, 25 September 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 held on 24 July 2023 (Pages 5 - 8)

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the Tenants' Strategic Group held on 24th of July 2023

4 Engagement Group updates (Pages 9 - 14)

To receive an update.

5 Voids Completion Report (Pages 15 - 26)

To note the report.

6 2023/24 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 1- April - June 2023 (Pages 27 - 36)

To note the report.

7 Tenant Satisfaction Measures Presentation (Pages 37 - 48)

To receive and note the presentation.

8 Directorate Report- Senior Management (Pages 49 - 56)

To note the report.

9 Any other Business

The Chair to consider any other business.

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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, 24 July 2023 at 6.00 pm

Present:

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

Alex Akhigbemen

Cllr Marcus Barr

Jessie Bunn

Kevin Hellier

Ivor Hussey

Samantha Rickward

Cllr Fran Smith

11 Apologies for absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies received from Paul Cram and Federica Smith- Roberts.

12 Welcome from the Chair - Agenda Item 2

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

13 Minutes from the previous meeting - Agenda Item 3

The minutes from of the previous meeting held on the 27th of March were approved, noting out of all our insecure tenancies the 90% turn into secure tenancy.

14 Engagement Group Updates - Agenda Item 4

The Chair gave an overview of the various engagement groups and their activities noting the comment about the Capital Programme Monitoring and for a report to come to a future meeting.

15 Finance Out-turn Report - Agenda Item 5

The Managing Accounting Reporting Lead gave an overview of the Financial Outturn Position 2022/2023 highlighting the key points, the housing revenue accounts (HRA) is an overspend £227k, the depreciation overspends of £1.420m relates to a combination of technical accounting, Capital Debt repayment the underspend of £1.021m was a strategic financial decision to offset the adverse variation on depreciation. The maintenance overspends of £455k relates to the ongoing repairs and maintenance the tenancy management overspend of £339k increase of staffing costs. The unearmarked reserves are projected to be £2.986m which is above the recommended minimum and the actual spend on the HRA Capital Programme during 2022/23.

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

- Concerns about the overspends.
- The risks and Concerns of the overall position on the Housing Revenue Accounts.
- The comparison of previous years to this current year overspends.
- The costing of the national vehicles and general wear and tear of the vehicles.
- The £42m savings that Somerset Council need to make is this a part of the Housing Revenue Accounts. It was confirmed that those savings are not part of the ringfenced HRA.

RESOLVED that the reported was noted.

16 Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code self assessment - Agenda Item 6

The Senior Case Manager for Customer resolution team gave an overview of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code- Self Assessment update highlighting the key points. The Housing Ombudsman self-assessment against the complaint handling code to ensure our complaint handling remains in line with the requirements set out and makes this information accessible. The Code acts as a point of reference for residents and tenants supporting to help provide guidance on

what should be expected from their landlord. The Housing Ombudsman acknowledges that there may be reasons why a landlord is unable to fully comply with the Code for reasons which are beyond their control. For example, as a local authority landlord, our complaints handling falls under the Council's Complaints Policy. A few areas of non-compliance were identified in the June and September assessment, due to the Housing Directorate being bound by the wider, Somerset West and Taunton Complaints Policy and IT systems. The information accessible as part of the recently created Somerset Council website; Adding the Housing Ombudsman details to the website. To ensure that residents are aware of how to access the Complaints Policy through alternative formats. Ensure the Self-Assessment and Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code have links to access on the website,

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

- The not compliant with mandatory code section 5.1 and best practice code section 5.13 has there been a decrease at the first stage. It was confirmed that performance has fluctuated. Figures are reported to the TSG quarterly.

RESOLVED that the report was noted.

17 Communication Plan - Agenda Item 7

The Housing Strategy Officer gave an overview on the Housing Revenue Accounts Communication Plan, which has been developed with tenant involvement, highlighting the key areas the service has begun to implement a proactive communications plan that will elevate the quality of our outward communication to Somerset Council residents, tenants will receive newsletters via email every month. Tenant portal where residents can report, update details and have communication with staff. Communication Champions and publication panels to embed the new ways of working across the Council, the panel will include staff and customers to seek live experience of neurodiversity. Social media to communicate with residents posting key information. Improvements to the website ensuring information is accessible for the audience and the tenant handbook will be available online.

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

- How the newsletter will be communicated.
- Will the Communication Plan be going to Full Council meeting in the future.

RESOLVED that the report was noted.

18 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 Housing Directorate since the last TSG meeting.

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

- To have the acronyms in full in reports.
- The support mechanisms in place to support staff of the Council in relation to serious incidents.
- The waiting list for face-to-face counselling for staff once they start the process.
- Tenants living arrangements when individual circumstances change.

RESOLVED the report was noted.

19 Any other Business - Agenda Item 9

None were discussed.

(The meeting ended at Time Not Specified)

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CHAIR



Tenants' Strategic Group –25th September 2023

Engaged Tenant Group Update - September 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 recently had another resignation from a long-standing member who has completed 30 years and feels it is now time for someone else to have the opportunity. We are hoping that one more member will be joining in October this will take the Group to (9). They have met at Taunfield meeting hall and had three applications for the Estate Improvement Fund to enhance our estates, with two Estate Officers attending these meetings to secure the funding.

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.

In the last meeting two applications for funding from the Estate Improvement fund was considered by the group. Agreed to fund a Patio at Trinity Road flats so that the residents can enjoy their garden. Also agreed funding for bench and outside tap at Lane Estate.

The group also assessed one application for the Child Youth Initiative Fund: They had further questions which have now been answered.

VOIDS

Purpose

To review the turnaround times for VOIDS, to understand the challenges and to ensure that our homes are meeting the lettable standard.

Update

This Group has reached completion and conclusion report is agenda item 5, to be discussed in this meeting.

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 met at Duke Street and Wellesley Street, Jack Mount from Grounds maintenance also attended so that decisions and discussion could be made during the meeting. The original engaged tenants in this group have resigned and therefore, Wayne Hobson and Brian Wyatt have taken up the roles in this group. Pictures and areas were discussed, and Stephen Boland spent time updating the new members. There have been some improvements planned for both areas; to enhance the approach to the flats and to plant more plants on the verge in Wellesley Street, the group are waiting for quotes from Jack Mount before proceeding. Two bug hotels have been installed behind the school for the school children to observe.

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.

Update

The group meets every 2 months to review the Damp & Mould Action Plan and to ensure that it is on track for delivery. In the last meeting the group decided that it wanted to attend 3 activity days over the summer holidays to draw attention to Damp & Mould and provide a service where tenants could speak to surveyors and log any Damp and Mould that they had. These activity days were held at Halcon, Priorswood and Wellington, a surveyor, scheduler, tenant rep and engagement officer attended each event. A colouring competition for the children was held which was very popular with over 20 entries at the Wellington event alone. Leaflets regarding Damp & Mould were distributed and we had several queries, 6 referral and 1 thank you for the work already carried out.

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 is due to end in October 2023.

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

Three contract managers have been appointed, with the first one commencing Monday 21st August. The following two will commence Monday 4th September.

We have one more liaison officer to appoint.

Kitchens

Novus contract expires beginning of October, with their last openings 1st week of September. The tender process has now been completed for the next four years. Tenders currently being evaluated with the intention to appoint three contractors to commence pilots during November. The objective is to complete 400 kitchens this financial year.

Bathrooms

Novus contract expires beginning of October, with their last openings 1st week of September. The tender process is currently ongoing. Tenders are due to be submitted 29th August with the intention to appoint three contractors to commence

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pilots during December. The objective is to complete 200 bathrooms this financial year.

Roofing

Contract progressing well, annual target 400 roofs.

Windows & Doors

Nationwide are the contractor , first installs due to commence 28th August.

Heating

Liberty have been appointed , first four pilots due to commence beginning of September.

Fire Doors

CLC are the current contractor . Their contract expires March 2024.

Electrical testing

Testing programme ongoing MD are the contractor. Access is proving to be difficult.

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 of these 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 a couple of tenants in the procurement of a new contractor for our void properties.

Update

Wayne Hobson and Livi Mongare met with the procurement consultant and undertook a survey to establish the needs of the tenant. This is now complete.

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

At the time of writing this report, the group had not had their first meeting.

4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

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

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

6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

7. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

Name of Contact Officers: Sharon Yarde

Telephone number: 07818529194

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



Tenants' Strategic Group – 25th September 2023

VOIDS Group outcome report

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Communities

Report Authors: Sharon Sloan and Wayne Hobson (Tenants Action Group Chair)

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

The report is to update the Tenants Strategic Group on the outcomes of the VOIDS Group.

2. Background

This group was set up to address the time it takes to turn VOIDS around and to ensure that all properties are let in line with the lettable standard. The group finished in June 2023.

3. Findings

3.1 During the lifetime of the VOIDS Group, the following has been achieved:

- Understanding of issues when properties are handed back in an extremely poor condition. Please see appendix 1-photos
- Delays with asbestos specialists accessing properties.
- The costs involved in making some of these properties habitable.

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

1. Ensure properties are up to the lettable standard before re-letting.
2. Understanding the issues where there are delays in having properties ready for re-letting.

Both objectives, have been achieved.

3.3 12 properties were inspected and all met the lettable standard.

4. Considerations

4.1 Discussed moving boilers to make more room, decided too expensive.

4.2 Discussed completing capital works programme e.g kitchen and bathrooms whilst VOID, decided that this was not viable because it would delay the tenant from moving in. Agreed better to have the VOID turned around quicker and do the capital works as part of programme, once tenant has moved in.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Capital Works work together with VOIDS more urgently to complete works.

5.2 Continue to use local contractors where able as they are quicker to respond to any issues.

5.3 Emphasise to new tenants that the lettable standard must be adhered to for both parties the landlord and the tenant

5.4 Ensure leaving well visits are conducted.

5.5 All employees visiting properties for any reason must feedback if there are issues in any home.

5.6 Continue to monitor the properties that are left in appalling conditions, how many and the cost implications? Were the leaving well visits completed?- Suggest setting up a new group in TAG to monitor this.

5.7 To request that the group continues to work with the VOIDS team on an ad-hoc basis to ensure that standards do not slip.

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

6. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

7. 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

8. Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

9. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

Name of Contact Officers: Sharon Sloan

Telephone number: 01823 217528

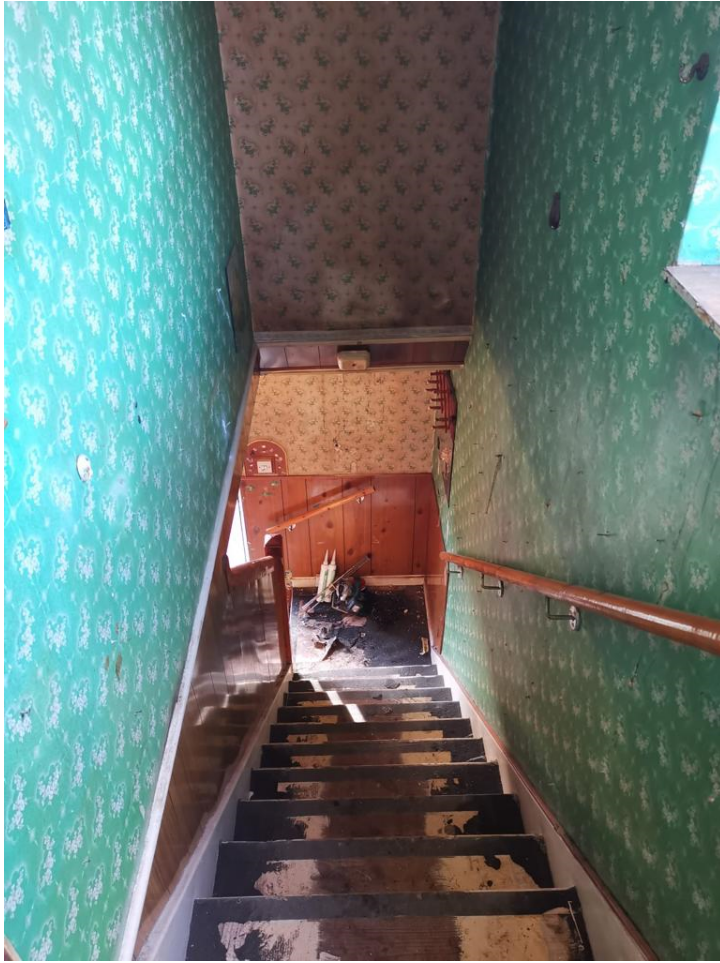
Email addresss: Sharon.sloan@somerset.gov.uk

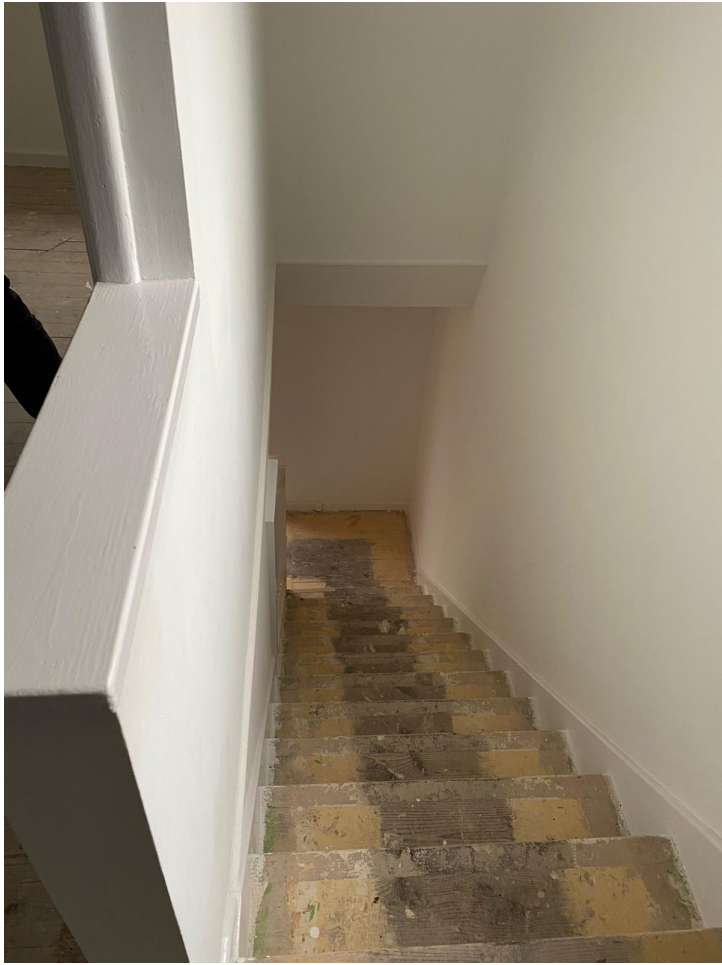
APPENDIX 1:



















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Tenants' Strategic Group – 25th September 2023

2023/24 Housing Performance and Finance Report Quarter 1, April - June 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 the housing performance through key performance measures and financial information for the first quarter of 23/24 (April-June 2023).

2. Recommendations

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note content of the housing performance scorecard and finance report for quarter 1 (April – June 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 July 2023 covering the performance in Q4 (Jan-March 2023). This report covers the first quarter of 2023/24 April to June.
- 3.2** This report introduces 8 new measures to ensure that TSG are sighted on our early performance against 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 25 indicators have targets, 15 are green (on target or better), 4 are red (off target but targets are 100%) and 6 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	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Customer					
% of stage 1 complaints closed in 10 working days (as per policy HRA) (TSM CH02)	93%	80%	83%	57%	96%
NEW – All HRA(Housing Revenue Account) Complaints relative to the size of the landlord per 1000 homes.			3.4	4.47	4.65
NEW – Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales.	93%	80%	79%	56%	96%

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 may wish to consider removing the original measure from future reports?

8.1.2 Our complaints performance fell during May and recovered in June. During periods of leave or unfilled vacancies it is not always possible to provide cover for every employees investigation duties in relation to complaints and daily priorities. Difficult decisions regarding priorities are made and complaints timescales extended. Complaints responses are managed and provided but may not be within timescale.

8.2 Customer - Lettable Standard Satisfaction

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Customer					
% of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property	90%	85%	100%	100%	100%

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.

April 2023: 17 properties let, (14 responses, 14 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

May 2023: 21 properties let, (5 responses, 5 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

June 2023: 25 properties let (21 responses, 21 satisfied or very satisfied), 100% satisfaction

Performance is exceeding target.

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 next May 2023 reports 76% satisfaction which repeats the result obtained in May 2022.

8.4 Customer – compliments

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Customer					
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	3	9	7

8.4.1 We have been receiving a steady number of compliments and the total for the year to date ending June 2023 is 19.

8.5 Customer – Overall Satisfaction

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Customer					
Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM Results)	77%	75%	77% from 2022	76% from May 2023	76%

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 will be presented to TSG in September.

8.6 Customer – Call Statistics

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Customer					
Average wait time in the repairs queue	00:01:00	00:05:00	00:02:48	00:02:16	00:01:59
% of abandoned calls in the repairs queue	10%	13%	9%	6%	5%
Average wait time in the housing estates and tenancy queue	00:01:00	00:05:00	N/a	00:03:12	00:03:32
% of abandoned calls in the housing estates and tenancy queue	10%	13%	N/a	10%	13%

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.

8.6.2 After the formation of the new Somerset Council the Council standard was set as 5 minutes average wait time. The previous standard stated for SWT was 60 seconds. The gap between the two standards is large. Homes In Sedgemoor set a target of 80% calls answered in two minutes (other providers in the area, Magna 80% answered in three minutes, . We would like to using the target 80% of calls answered

in two minutes to allow closer benchmarking to Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS) . We are seeking approval from TSG for this.

8.6.3 The call abandonment rate remains on target in our repairs area but is amber in tenancy and estates.

8.6.4 Customer Service Performance over the last quarter has improved consistently 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	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Rent Recovery					
True current tenant arrears at the end of the month%	2%	2.2%	2.84%	3.07%	2.03%
Total number of all evictions			1	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 improved in June 2023. Performance was poor due to technical problems with payment systems, payments were stuck in suspense and not allocated to rent accounts. Current performance is “top quartile” and almost on target (Housemark Pulse Q1).

8.8 Supported Housing

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Supported Housing					
Sheltered housing - % of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans	98%	97%	98.5%	98.5%	98.6%

8.8.1 Our performance is on target.

8.9 Lettings and Voids

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Lettings and Voids					
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to key)	45.9	50.5	53	59	62

8.9.1 Our void turn-around times are not on target. There are a number of reasons why performance is not good here (currently third quartile). These include a high proportion of properties left in poor condition by the previous tenant, and the number of properties where improvements have yet to be undertaken (e.g. new kitchen installed within capital programmes) and additional works are therefore required at void stage to meet our Lettable Standard. A number of new capital programmes are being procured to accelerate progress on delivery, and there is an improvement plan

being developed to bring renewed focus to reduce overall relet times and bring greater focus to cost per void.

8.10 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Housing Repairs					
Completion of housing emergency repairs within 24 hours	100%	99%	99%	96.8%	95.8%
Completion of housing non-emergency repairs within timescale agreed with tenant (TSM RP02)	93%	90%	93%	90.1%	92.5%

8.10.1 Our performance is short of target in May and June for completion of non-emergency repairs, however we have increased our target to 93% from 90% last year to stretch our performance. Top quartile performance (Housemark 2022/23 is 93.78%)

8.10.2 The underlying data used to populate this KPI has been investigated and an administrative failure in inputting correct completion dates into the Housing system (Open Contractor) has been identified. It is not possible to correct these within the system, but all of the June housing emergency repairs were completed within the 24 hours target. Training has taken place to mitigate against the risk of this issue reoccurring. Top quartile performance in Housemark 2022/23 is 99.05% so our target is above this at 100%.

8.11 Tenancy Management

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Tenancy Management					
Total New ASB cases in the month	No target	No target	4	6	7
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month	No target	No target	9	6	0
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month	No target	No target	56	56	63
Number of new ASB cases reported per 1,000 properties	No target	No target	0.72	1.07	1.25
NEW Anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents per 1,000 properties	No target	No target	0.18	0.18	0.36
Number of safeguarding referrals	No target	No target	8	10	1

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 1.87 for number of “new ASB cases reported per 1000 properties”. Our performance is therefore top quartile.

8.11.2 **Safeguarding** – We currently raise low numbers of safeguarding referrals to Somerset Council. This quarter we have made 19 referrals.

8.11.3 Where we do have concerns, we will frequently help to address these through a multi-agency approach to provide the required support and interventions to the affected households. Awareness and training in the Council has taken place to ensure that all incidents are identified and managed within policy.

8.12 Compliance

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber Threshold	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-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%		84.56%	87.42%	91.2%
% 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%		99.75%	99.49%	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%		99%	100%	100%
% of passenger lifts and through floor lifts with annual and 6 monthly service and inspection complete (TSM BS06)	100%		93%	100%	100%
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 certificates where a programme is on track to achieve 100% compliance during this financial year.

8.13 Asset Management

Indicator	Target 2023-24	Amber	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-23
Asset Management					
NEW – Target % Non-Decent Homes Compliance (TSM)	1%	4%	5.69% (94.31%)	5.86% (94.14%)	6.2% (93.8%)
NEW – Percentage of properties EPC C or above			N/a	N/a	67.5%

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 slipped slightly due to two factors, namely properties falling into 'disrepair' (i.e. past the timeframe for replacement components based upon the Decent Homes Standard), and delays in delivery of capitalised major works. The latter issue is due to procurement pressures,

and resource challenges for both internal contract management and contractor availability.

8.13.1 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 also are not clear on the decency standard 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	Apr-23	May-23	Jun-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	69	69	69

8.14.1 There have been 69 new homes completed since April 2019 to 30th June 2023. There have been 4 more homes handed over at North Taunton plus one property purchased since July. The next 6 quarters will see 41 new homes at North Taunton complete plus up to 31 homes acquired by the HRA.

The development of 54 new homes in Minehead is progressing well with the contractors currently erecting block work. The demolition and development of NTWP phase B&Ci is going out to tender and a contract for the procurement of the main contractor. The regeneration at Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats has progressed well with Wordsworth Drive Flats nearly empty with only one tenant awaiting decant.

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 June 2023).

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

Revenue Budget	Forecast to budget	Green
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 abode by the accounting regulations and ensure that cross subsidy does not occur. Whist 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 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.

9.5 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 Bill passing through parliament which will require several changes to home safety, tenant satisfaction measures, complaints handling, a new inspection regime for social landlords which will increase resource requirements.

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:

9.8 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for 2023/24 onwards is £122.606m (subject to approval). This consists of Major improvement works programme 2023/24 and new build and acquisitions programme over the next seven years.

9.11 Each year the Council is required to produce a Statement of Accounts. The Statement of Accounts for each council is available to read by everyone and links are provided in the annual accounts, download section of the website.

9.12 The HRA business planning process is currently taking place with a draft being available in November 2023. A report to full council will be presented in February 2024 including Rent and Service Charge setting, 30 year business plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and annual budget 2024/25. Discussions will be held with the TSG on the draft report.

Democratic Path:
Tenants Strategic Board – 25th September 2023

Reporting Frequency: Quarterly

Contact Officers

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- **Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey**
- **May 2023 Summary for TSG**

25th September 2023



**Somerset
Council**

Results at a glance

Key Metrics Summary W1 2023/24



71% Well maintained home



71% Easy to deal with



82% Safe home



58% Listens & Acts



76% Repairs - Last 12 months



75% Keeps you informed



74% Time taken - Last repair



75% Treats fairly & with respect



59% Communal areas clean & well maintained



31% Complaints handling



71% Positive contribution to neighbourhood



55% Grounds maintenance



86% Neighbourhood as a place to live



74% Estate services



54% Anti-social behaviour

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 301 completed interviews, 246 GN, 53 SH, 2 ExC. 256 from Taunton and 46 from Wellington.

Topline Results

Overall satisfaction is 76%.

Overall satisfaction has decreased by 1% since November. It is exactly the same as May last year.

86% thought that their neighbourhood was a good place to live (same as previous survey).

82% thought that their home was safe compared to 83% in November 2022.

Increased Satisfaction

- Neighbourhood (up 1%) – currently 86%
- Communal areas (up 1%) – currently 59%
- Positive contribution to the neighbourhood (up 1%) - currently 71%

Decreased Satisfaction

- Well maintained home (down by 8%) – currently 71%
- Safe Home (down by 1%) - currently 71%
- Anti-social (down by 9%) – currently 54%
- Grounds maintenance (down by 9%) - currently 55%
- Easy to deal with (down by 4%) – currently 71%
- Estate Services (down by 1%) - currently 74%
- Repairs (down by 5%) – currently 76%
- Time taken to repair (down by 5%) – currently 74%
- Listening to tenants (down by 4%) – currently 58%
- Treating tenants fairly & with respect (down by 7%) – 75%
- Keeping tenants informed (down by 5%) – currently 75%
- Complaints Handling (down by 23%) - currently 31%

Please note that the complaints TSM question is: How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Somerset West and Taunton Council Housing Services' approach to complaints handling?

It does not differentiate between a formal complaint or when a tenant thinks they have complained, i.e mentioned it to their Tenancy Case Manager. When we checked none of those that answered the question had actually made a formal complaint.

Areas of Improvement

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

- ASB
- Communal Areas
- Grounds Maintenance
- Listening to tenants
- Complaints

Interesting findings

- Only 11% of tenants expressed an interest in becoming more engaged with the council
- 67% of our tenants use the internet regularly and 33% do not access the internet.
- Older age group tenants are consistently more satisfied than General Needs tenants

National Context

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%.

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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
The average score for complaints was 36% - this shows that nationally tenants are dis-satisfied

What's next?

- Our colleagues will talk to you 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, we must keep an emphasis on our repairs service and communication.

**Time to hear from our colleagues,
please ask questions afterwards.**



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Somerset Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – 25th September 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

Director's Team

- NTWP (North Taunton Woolaway Project) has completed six new homes with more under a four-week notice period. Phase A (47 homes) will be completed this year and phase B & Ci demolition contract is now progressing through

procurement. The service has submitted a bid to Homes England for £5m. Somerset Council's bid is the first bid received nationally by Homes England for their new Regeneration fund. If successful, this fund will help the Housing Revenue in relation to future schemes. Seaward Way, Minehead is progressing well with a recent community drop in arranged for 19th September 2023.

- 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.
- The service is progressing at pace with a low carbon retrofit Strategy and Delivery plan. The In-house housing service has retrofit grant – ECO4, Social Housing and Decarbonisation Fund Waves (SHDF) 1 & 2. Works has commenced on all programmes through surveys. The SHDF wave 1 & 2 pilot to replace windows, additional loft insulation, LED lighting, boiler controls and mechanical ventilation commenced mid-September. A number of schemes are progressing using ECO4 funding with planning permission being prepared for a number of schemes using External Wall Insulation. Another scheme is agreed with Photo Voltaic Panels and additional loft insulation. A show house in Wellington is being prepared and there will be opportunities for tenants to visit in the new year.
- 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 of all 10,000 homes.
- The Consultation for the new council structure has now concluded and refinements to the staff structures are being made with the housing service preparing for a restructure in Autumn. 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

- Emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs are being undertaken, and performance is improving in these areas. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to recruit to vacant trade roles.
- 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 in the future.
- 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 shortly due to go out to tender for external contractor support for major voids, when required, to ensure we meet our KPI targets.
- Our materials supply chain process has been expanded to all trade areas and we are evaluating efficiency and effectiveness of this process change.

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 completed a joint Building and Resident health and Safety Assurance Framework with Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS) and are reviewing lessons to be learnt from each other's experiences.
- We have recently completed a property safety compliance assurance audit undertaken by an external independent specialist consultancy practice, Savills. We are awaiting their full report, but initial feedback is positive and we look forward to implementing recommendations to improve service delivery further.
- A fire safety audit is underway, and we expect to have a formal report to feedback to TSG by the next meeting.
- We continue to undertake our Electrical Inspection programme with the main contractor delivering the programme and support from our in-house electrical team.
- We are continuing to use our iAuditor software to undertake compliance data collection for emergency lighting visual inspections, fire door inspection, fire safety housekeeping 'sterile communal area' checks (flat block inspections), water risk assessments in dwellings and fire risk assessments.
- We continue to undertake a range of procurement activities to deliver compliance programmes, particularly in relation to fire safety programmed works.
- Weekly compliance meetings continue to carefully monitor and manage all these safety critical areas.

Capital Programmes

- A range of capital work programmes continues on-site; including kitchen and bathroom replacements, replacement fire doors, windows, and roofing. However, it should be noted that, due to reduced contractor and internal project management resource availability, some programmes are being delivered at a slower rate than originally anticipated and an increased volume of work will therefore be required later in the financial year.
- Additional recruitment has been undertaken in the team, with two new Interim Contract Managers recently taken on to facilitate the increased programmes of work due.
- Procurement activities also continue, including review of required capital programme works needed to meet the Decent Homes Standard (DHS), incorporating our Retrofit aspiration.

Asset Management

- The service has recruited two graduate recruits who are adding capacity to the asset management service and two additional surveyors have joined for a short period to support the service purchase 31 units for the Local Authority Housing Fund. The service is working with Homes in Sedgemoor to reassure the council and tenants of the low risk of Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC).
- The service continues to carry out many 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 remain a high priority for the service and properties requiring these works have been identified and placed in the capital programme.

Housing and Communities Team

Supported Housing (extra care and sheltered)

- We have had a number of tenants whose family members have been wanting/having to stay with them, due to family breakdown. There is no doubt that the cost of living is placing everyone under additional pressure. Whilst our tenants are wanting to support their family members, they have also reported that this is stressful and costly for them too, as it impacts upon their personal income. We have been working with other colleagues in Housing Options and Social Care to ensure that families are getting the appropriate support and housing advice.
- We have been involved in resolving several neighbour disputes. Our tenants often live within close proximity to each other and can be disturbed by each

other's day-to-day noise and movements (doors closing shut, furniture being moved etc.). Often the person causing the noise hasn't been aware of the impact on their neighbour and in some cases, tenants have reported a problem in their property, which staff have been able to report into maintenance for fixing.

- We continue to represent our tenants and the Council's Landlord function, at a variety of multi-disciplinary meetings. Often our staff have discovered a tenant is in need of support and help when going about their usual day-to-day business. When we have a tenant who is struggling to live independently, this can also impact on others living around them. Staff make referrals for specialist help and support. Adult Social Care and Health service colleagues are able to offer tenant's support, but sometimes they refuse help, which then impacts on their ability to sustain their tenancy. This is why staff providing ongoing contact and representation at multi-disciplinary meetings is important and aids steps to be taken to enable the tenant to understand the need to engage with professional help and services and sustain their tenancy.
- The team have received training in 'Total Mobile' and are now using it to support them in their work. Total Mobile links to Open Housing and allows staff to access information on tenants whilst they are out and about, There are also several forms which can be accessed and completed, including the trusted assessor form, which staff use regularly to arrange aids and adaptations for tenants.
- The whole team are now back in work, but we have had some leave absences over summer, which the remaining team members have covered.

Lettings

- Customer satisfaction remains very high with both the lettable standard of the property and the process of letting the properties with many positive comments being received from new tenants by the service.
- The team remains settled
- The teams' Home Moves Plus project officer has retired, He will be sadly missed. The project is on course to meet the target set by EDF and recruitment will commence soon to replace him.
- In the first week of September the first properties to be advertised from the North Taunton regeneration project will be advertised on home finder Somerset. (HFS). They consist of 16 flats.

Income

- Debt and Benefit surgeries have started again following the summer break. Priorswood is now held on the 1st Monday of each month and the link centre is every other Thursday (alternate to CA)
- The team have now started to submit applications for the Housing Hardship Fund. The fund aims to support council tenants experiencing financial hardship who are struggling or unable to pay their rent by providing short term assistance. Existing tenants can be awarded up to £1,000 towards any existing rent arrears.

- A member of the Rent Recovery team is leaving the organisation on 15th September 2023, this will see the team reduced to 4 Rent Recovery Officers. We will now be starting the recruitment process to fill this vacancy.

Tenancy/Estates & ASB

- The estates team have experienced high demand over the last few months and have been drawn into a number of complex cases that have required and continue to require significant officer input. We are currently recruiting two agency staff to replace officers that left earlier in the Summer and this will help alleviate some of the pressures and allow us to catch up with workloads. Management discussions are taking place to look to build more permanent staffing into the Tenancy structure, pending affordability to reflect the day to day demands the service faces. The normal challenges of Summer holidays, sickness and a recent occurrence of Covid cases has also added to capacity challenges.
- 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. This came to a head over the last few weeks. We had several serious incidents occurring daily and there has been public disorder in the evenings which the Police have attended and arrested the culprits. We are aware that Social Services are engaged and providing support, however behaviours are not improving and this continues to have a serious detrimental impact on the community. We are consulting a barrister to support us tackle this anti-social behaviour cases and are seeking injunctions as well as discussing a case for possession. We are now actively formalising statements and case notes so that the barrister can progress this case. The community who are usually very tolerant and robust have come forward to give statements, so this is very telling that the community have had enough of the anti-social behaviour that these children are causing.
- In addition to this we have had several other very serious anti-social behaviour cases that we are dealing with; and the team are currently under pressure to get these court ready.
- Youth crime has settled down in the Priorswood area, this is due to the main culprits being taken out of the community and we are aware that the main perpetrator is due to attend Court in the next few weeks for an unprovoked knife attack on a member of community.
- The experience that the anti-social behaviour team are gaining from working with the barrister will help to improve their confidence and learning and set out how they now move forward when preparing for future cases.

Housing Performance Team

- We continue to support the work of the Tenants Strategic Group (TSG) and Tenants' Action Group and the subgroups. We have agreed a comprehensive training plan for TSG group members for 2023 and membership of ARCH as well as TPAS.

- Two electronic newsletters have been sent to our tenants who have email addresses. A hardcopy newsletter will be sent to sheltered, extra care tenants and those who have requested large print twice a year.
- The damp and mould group for tenants continues to meet and is supporting the progression of the Damp and Mould Action Plan. The group has attended 3 in person events. Behind the scenes considerable work has taken place to set up new triage processes in our software and these will go live by end of September.
- The Low Carbon Working group has continued to meet with a new focus on communication.
- We are continuing to collectively work with Homes in Sedgemoor on local government reorganisation workstreams.
- The first tenant satisfaction survey has taken place in May 2023 and results will be reported to TSG in September 2023
- We continue to strive for improvement in our complaint handling and are facing challenges in our response times. The Housing Ombudsman has not investigated any complaint made against us since April 2023.
- Open Housing the new housing management software went live 27th July 2022. The texting (SMS) option has been used 3 times to advertise the Damp and Mould in person events. The review of the proposed tenant portal continues and options outside of the Capita solution are being considered to ensure best quality and functionality in the tenant portal but this will delay its launch.

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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