

Together we are delivering your

New Somerset Council

All Members Briefings – Session 1

LGR Housing 1 – Housing Landlord Function sub-workstream

31 January 2023



Agenda:

Introductions and Purpose

30mins **Operating Context and Services**

20mins **Operating Models**

20mins **Our role in the Community**

20mins **The Customer's Voice**

Operating Context and Services

Approximately 4.4 Million social housing homes across England.

➤ **Three primary models for managing them:**

1. Owned and directly managed by the Council ('Retained Housing') (c. 1.6M homes)
2. Owned by the council but managed by a third party i.e., Arms Length Management Organisation or ALMO (c.326K homes). SDC (and SC) are the sole shareholders of Homes in Sedgemoor. Oversight by a Board of 9 customers/elected members/independents. Operates as a Not-for-Profit organisation
3. Housing Association (c.2.4M homes)

➤ **New Somerset Council will inherit models:**

- 1 (SWT) and 2 (Homes in Sedgemoor ALMO managing stock in Sedgemoor)
 - We operate within a regulated sector under the Regulator of Social Housing
 - Regulation is via a number of prescribed 'standards' and is currently under review

Operating Context and Services

Combined, this is a substantial housing business:

- 10,000+ homes in management (4% of housing stock in Somerset)
- c.18,000 customers being served
- £48M total income (draft budget 2023/24)
- 5,700 applicants on the waiting lists

Operating Context and Services

Core common services provided by both organisations include:

- Tenancy Management (income collection, lettings, anti-social behaviour)
- Repairs and Maintenance (day to day 'responsive' repairs, heating breakdowns)
- Capital/Planned Maintenance (component renewals such as new kitchens, bathrooms, roofs, windows, doors, heating systems)
- Customer Health & Safety and Property Compliance
- Customer Engagement
- Development and Regeneration
- Support Services (sheltered housing, benefits and welfare advice)

Operating Context and Services

Current operating challenges:

1. Enhanced regulatory environment (consumer standards and building safety)
2. Finance – High inflation, rent cap and uncertainty regarding future rent regime to sufficiently maintain stock
3. Decarbonisation agenda – affordability and skills
4. Sector-wide failures – Safety (Grenfell tragedy), Disrepair (Rochdale (black mould))

Comparisons between Operating Models

Homes in Sedgemoor

- Established 2007 – SDC wholly owned company
- Board – 9 Non-Exec Directors (3 independent, 3 customers , 3 Councillors)
- Audit and Risk Committee and Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC)
- Management Agreement – service specification and annual fee
- C. 85 staff
- Repairs and Maintenance contracted out
- Service largely self-sufficient but does rely on SDC for some support services such as ICT

Somerset West and Taunton

- In house service major part of current Housing Directorate
- Follows Council democratic process Audit and Governance Committee/ Scrutiny /Exec/ Council
- Tenants Strategic Group (8 elected tenants and 2 Councillors) and Tenant Action Group
- C. 180 staff
- Repairs and Maintenance mostly undertaken with in house trade workforce
- Directorate part of corporate model where it relies on support services such as finance/ICT /HR/Customer Services

Comparisons between Operating Models

Homes in Sedgemoor

- Single Focus business – less distraction and disruption from core purpose
- Independent identity
- Partial skills-based Board
- Speed and agility in decision making /procurement and change
- Does not provide all aspects of service e.g., Business Plan, Rent setting

Somerset West and Taunton

- Closer to local democracy /Council has direct control
- Easier integration with complimentary services e.g., Homelessness and Partners
- Broader perspective across communities /estates and tenure
- Undertakes all aspects of service

Our role in the Community

As a landlord, we have a strong and active role in our communities.

Responsibilities include:

- **Supporting our tenants:** tenancy issues (income and finances, settling in, accessing benefits, neighbourhood issues including asb; estate walkabouts)
- **Wider support and advocacy** – links to other services such as SIP (for adaptations to home, hoarding support); social care (care and support needs assessments); mental health support (SWT MIND referrals); commissioned 'money matters' service (Citizens Advice); mediation where required
- **Loneliness and health** – events and activities at meeting halls; community activities; flexercise classes; links to village agents
- **Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse** – we are often first to identify an issue. Strong engagement with One Teams; TAS; multi-agency meetings etc to engage partners to reduce risk and protect our families

Our role in the Community – Value Added

- We support a wide range of partnerships working in our communities
- SWT – Fund NTP and TEDT. Link Power – volunteers trained to work on estates (painting fences, tidying gardens, litter picks etc). We fund CAB and MIND, plus FUSE to support young people with arts and crafts and days out. Organise skip clean-up days.
- Community Events – Wacky Wednesdays (Wellington); Pride in Priorswood; Christmas Sparkle (presents for families) etc
- HiS – Community Exercise Programmes (through SASP funding)
- Seed Sedgemoor (£2m for arts & culture engagement across Sedgemoor)
- Cost of Living / Warm hubs in communities plus support of foodbanks
- Community Engagement Officers – to empower communities to lead local projects for themselves (Place based "Asset Based Community Development" approach)
- Support a range of community groups (e.g. Villages Together £1m Lottery bid)

Our role in the Community – Value Added – Other opportunities^{SL}

- Estate Improvements – Investment in schemes / roads, engaging with our tenants, parking schemes, recycling schemes, community gardens etc
- Employment support / CV writing/ volunteering – we signpost to different schemes at HiS and SWT employment hubs to support tenants
- Apprenticeship Opportunities e.g. North Taunton Regen project has provided 6 apprenticeships, 4 people into employment, 2 work experience placements and ran 5 construction job events
- HiS Digital training for tenants; and 'Strive' programme offering training to local entrepreneurs
- Small grants offered by both organisations through tenants panel to help local community groups.

The Customer's Voice



Regulation in Social Housing – Key Legislation & documentation

Regulator of Social Housing Standards

The Charter for Social Housing Residents (Nov 2020)

- The Social Housing (Regulation) Bill

The Regulator for Social Housing states:

“well-run and well-governed organisations need to have systems in place to listen to and engage with tenants, and to take prompt and effective action when tenants may be at risk.”

“I continue to urge all social housing providers to look at how accountable they are and how they can be more transparent with their tenants.”

Framework for Engagement and Customer Influence

- Formal Engagement
- Informal Engagement
- Customer Complaints
- Customer Surveys
- Customer Communication
 - Annual Report
 - Newsletters



Questions and Next Steps