

Public Document Pack

Mid Devon District Council

Homes Policy Development Group

Tuesday, 13 August 2019 at 2.15 pm
Exe Room, Phoenix House, Tiverton

Next meeting
Tuesday, 1 October 2019 at 2.15 pm

Those attending are advised that this meeting will be recorded

Membership

Cllr R J Dolley (Chairman)
Cllr Mrs E M Andrews
Cllr J Cairney
Cllr D R Coren
Cllr L J Cruwys
Cllr W J Daw
Cllr C J Eginton
Cllr Mrs I Hill
Cllr S J Penny

A G E N D A

Members are reminded of the need to make declarations of interest prior to any discussion which may take place

- 1 **Apologies and Substitute Members**
To receive any apologies for absence and notice of appointment of substitutes.
- 2 **Declaration of Interests under the Code of Conduct**
Councillors are reminded of the requirement to declare any interest, including the type of interest, and reason for that interest, either at this stage of the meeting or as soon as they become aware of that interest.
- 3 **Public Question Time**
To receive any questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and replies thereto.
- 4 **Minutes (Pages 5 - 12)**
Members to consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 18 June 2019.

- 5 **Chairman's Announcements**
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 6 **Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme** *(Pages 13 - 16)*
To receive a report from the Group Manager for Housing Services providing an update on work relating to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.
- 7 **Performance and Risk first quarter 2019/20** *(Pages 17 - 24)*
To receive a report from the Director of Operations providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2019/20 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.
- 8 **PI in relation to Voids (to receive and discuss a recommendation from the Audit Committee)**
At its meeting on 25th June 2019 the Audit Committee discussed performance information in relation to the average number of days to re-let a council property. Following discussion, a recommendation was made to the Homes Policy Development Group. The minute from that meeting is as follows:
- The average number of days to re-let council owned properties was considered to have a very challenging target of 14 days. Consideration was given as to the current amount of resource that was being utilised in trying to achieve this target and whether this target could be reviewed in light of the need to prioritise resources in what were very challenging financial times.
- It was **RECOMMENDED** that the Homes Policy Development Group be requested to look at this target and review the best use of available resource in this area.
- Accordingly the Homes Policy Development Group are asked to consider this recommendation and to report back to the Audit Committee.
- 9 **Presentation on Private Sector Housing**
To receive a presentation regarding the work in this area.
- 10 **Overview of the Housing Service** *(Pages 25 - 36)*
To receive a briefing paper from the Group Manager for Housing Services on the structure of the Housing Service and the functions for which the housing teams are responsible.
- 11 **Homelessness** *(Pages 37 - 48)*
To receive a briefing paper from the Group Manager for Housing Services providing an overview of how the Council works to prevent and manage homelessness.

- 12 **Devon Home Choice: Housing Needs Assessment Framework and Choice Based Lettings Scheme** *(Pages 49 - 54)*
To receive a briefing paper from the Group Manager for Housing Services providing information on the Devon Home Choice scheme and how it is used in Mid Devon.
- 13 **Housing Sector Update** *(Pages 55 - 62)*
To receive a briefing paper from the Group Manager for Housing Services providing information on the latest developments relating to social housing.
- 14 **Identification of items for the next meeting**
The Group are asked to note that the following items are already listed in the work programme for the following meeting:
- Performance and Risk
 - Financial Monitoring
 - Corporate Asbestos Policy
 - Tenancy Policy review and Tenancy Strategy
 - Hoarding Policy
 - Pets and Animals Policy
 - Harrassment Policy
 - Allocations Policy and Procedures
 - Homelessness Strategy
 - Income Management Policy
 - Deposit and Advance Rent Scheme
 - Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy
 - Compensation Policy
 - Housing Sector update

Note: This item is limited to 10 minutes. There should be no discussion on the items raised.

Stephen Walford
Chief Executive
Monday, 5 August 2019

Anyone wishing to film part or all of the proceedings may do so unless the press and public are excluded for that part of the meeting or there is good reason not to do so, as directed by the Chairman. Any filming must be done as unobtrusively as possible from a single fixed position without the use of any additional lighting; focusing only on those actively participating in the meeting and having regard also to the wishes of any member of the public present who may not wish to be filmed. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film

proceedings is asked to advise the Chairman or the Member Services Officer in attendance so that all those present may be made aware that is happening.

Members of the public may also use other forms of social media to report on proceedings at this meeting.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to discussion. Lift access the first floor of the building is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available. There is time set aside at the beginning of the meeting to allow the public to ask questions.

An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, or if you would like a copy of the Agenda in another format (for example in large print) please contact Sarah Lees on:

Tel: 01884 234310

E-Mail: slees@middevon.gov.uk

Public Wi-Fi is available in all meeting rooms.

MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 18 June 2019 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

J Cairney, D R Coren, L J Cruwys,
W J Daw, R J Dolley, C J Eginton, Mrs I Hill
and S J Penny

Apologies

Councillor

Mrs E M Andrews

Also Present

Councillors

S J Clist and R L Stanley

Also Present

Officers

Andrew Pritchard (Director of Operations), Andrew Jarrett (Deputy Chief Executive (S151)), Joanne Nacey (Group Manager for Finance), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), Mark Baglow (Group Manager for Building Services), Simon Newcombe (Group Manager for Public Health and Regulatory Services), J P McLachlan (Principal Accountant), Michael Parker (Housing Options Manager), Lisa Harber (Neighbourhood Team Leader), Helen Carty (Housing Policy Officer) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN (CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL IN THE CHAIR)

RESOLVED that Cllr R J Dolley be elected Chairman of the Group for the municipal year 2019/20.

2 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED that Cllr W J Daw be elected Vice Chairman of the Group for the municipal year 2019/20.

3 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs E M Andrews

4 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

All members of the Group stated that they had received correspondence with regard to item 8 on the agenda, Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme.

5 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Ms Ali Dominy stated in relation to item 8 on the agenda, Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme, that she and her husband were the landlords of a house in Cullompton that has, since the autumn of 2017, been home to a family from Syria who were fleeing the horrors and destruction of war, a family who have been given this life saving and life changing opportunity by Mid Devon District Council decision to take part in the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in which they and we thank you all so much. It was with great sadness that Mid Devon's commitment to take five families seemed to stall after the first two in 2017. This we were told was due to a lack of private landlords having suitable properties, so it was with pleasure that we had heard that Anthea had come forward with the offer to purchase a house to facilitate another family being offered a home. Like ourselves, Anthea took the route of involving Mid Devon District Council from the start and so chose a house that was suitable in an area that would also be suitable. All seemed to be going well until at the last moment Anthea was told that Mid Devon had changed their mind and would not be taking any more families on the resettlement scheme. It was obviously a cruel blow particularly as Anthea had gone so far down the line of purchase with the approval of the Council.

When we were asked to have a look at the report issued in preparation of this meeting we were confused and concerned about paragraph 4.3 in the report that states that the work with the existing landlords, us being one of them has been extensive. This really hasn't been the case. The report quotes concerns about possible issues that were raised before the first families arrived but did not accurately reflect the actual situation of the last two years. The report talks about consideration being given to the need for support that would need a minimum of two weekly visits by one or more officers. It also talks about twice weekly visits in the early months. We are pleased to say that both of these concerns proved unnecessary. Certainly there were initial visits required to welcome and settle the family and run through procedures but talking to those involved in our house and also those involved with the other Syrian family in Mid Devon we believe that two visits per family was all that was ever required.

As landlords we look after the maintenance of the property, Mid Devon are our tenants so as with any landlord/tenant relationship, we would expect them to leave any problems to us. Indeed we are more than happy to say that during the time that Mid Devon have rented the house from us, to our knowledge any problems with the house have been sorted out by us with no involvement from Mid Devon. There is a tireless band of volunteers who work with the families. We spoke to the lady who volunteers with our family in Cullompton, she is also involved with the family in Bradninch. She confirmed after setting up the property, Mid Devon had no further involvement with the families. All support is supplied by volunteers from the Refugee Support Group of Exeter.

We are all aware that things are unbelievably difficult for those juggling priorities within the housing services department of Mid Devon. However the commitment made by Mid Devon District Council to be part of the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was a humanitarian decision of importance and should be honoured. Anthea and other volunteers are committed to make it happen. In 2018/19 the report states that there were 599 homeless approaches in Mid Devon, amid this vast number we are talking about one family. This is not a policy that is going to open

flood gates to a tsunami of extra commitment, its one house and one family and one that comes with funding and volunteers. With this in mind surely Mid Devon can see their way to honouring their commitment to provide a vulnerable family, who have been through more than we can ever imagine, a safe home.

Laura Conyngham, also in relation to item 8 on the agenda stated that, it was heartening to see new faces in this Council and on this committee and we hope for a new approach. Mid Devon as you have heard already has two families, one in Bradninch and one in Cullompton. As well as the moral imperative Mid Devon are part of this nationally funded scheme. Are councillors aware of the cultural wealth that a Syrian family will bring to our community?

Anthea Duquemin stated that she lived in Bradninch and that she would like to ask a question about the marginal differences it would make to the total work of the council's housing team if it accepts one more family under the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme? The Council made a pledge in 2017 to accept up to 5 families under this scheme and at the time it didn't seem like a lot but for those of us in the district who care a lot about being part of a community that makes this sort of commitment we felt very very positive about this. I understand there has been a change since that time and that the officers who are part of the housing team are having to work harder than they were before. However, since that time, as we know, the Council has already resettled two Syrian displaced families and in order to do that quite a lot of the tasks that were identified at the time that the scheme was originally discussed have already been undertaken so the scheme is already set up and ready to operate. We understood that until February this year the reason we couldn't have more families here was because there weren't enough private landlords ready to offer their houses for this scheme. Therefore, the house we are talking about in Crediton and which was chosen specifically for this scheme was chosen according to the directions we were given by the Council so that it would be suitable for a family and its already been approved. So lots of the work has already been done. In the discussion paper it says that twice weekly visits by Council officers are needed initially for a family at the start of their resettlement, I can accept that might be the case but as Ali says, how long does that go on for and really in the light of everything that the housing team do, what is the marginal difference of bringing in one more family? Particularly if you weigh up the additional amount of work for the housing officers against what it means for the family that is resettled and for those of us that really want to be part of a community that makes this sort of contribution.

Gerald Conyngham stated that he was the convenor of Welcoming Refugees in Crediton Group. I sent you all a letter as I wanted you to get a proper briefing beforehand. I just want to say that we did welcome the decision made by Mid Devon District Council in 2017. It was really great, we were overjoyed at the decision to take up to 5 families. Since then it has been really difficult to try to get private landlords, they can get more rents commercially than from people on housing benefit. So it was absolutely wonderful when we heard about this house and we were very upset when the decision was taken not to continue. We totally understand the pressure of homelessness, it is a big issue we are concerned about in Crediton. We understand that fully but we hope a way can be found going forwards. There is an alternative way that other councils use whereby they do it through an agency and they actually manage the house direct. I realise that also involves a bit of work but ultimately it would be less time consuming. What we are really saying is that we very much hope

that you will look at this again and reconsider your decision so that we can welcome a family into Crediton.

Natalia Letch stated that she represented an organisation called the 'Crediton International and Cultural Organisation'. We started in 2009 so we are not new in the business. We run free English lessons for migrant workers at the moment but refugees can also join our wonderful group. We have an advice centre, we have been trained by CAB and we run all sorts of social events like meeting with the Police if there are some hate crime issues. We also do a lot of cultural events like sharing food skills and special international crafts. Crediton is used to that, we are building this bridge between non English speakers and the host community and we certainly can welcome these people and we will be looking after them, so my question is would you consider that we can take a lot of this responsibility from you and only occasionally in very very serious cases would you need to be involved?

Ros Reeves, again speaking in relation to item 8 on the agenda stated that she also came from Crediton. Ever since she had volunteered at the Calais camp about three years ago I have wanted to be part of a group to rehouse a family here in Mid Devon. So, I am asking you, would you agree with us that there is a moral imperative for our communities to reach out to just this one family given the horrors endured by these people and our Government's own scheme to help councils achieve this. We have worked so long and hard to comply with the council's requirements and have come so close to being able to offer this house to a Syrian family only to see it disappear. It is tragic for us but most of all for a refugee family.

The Chairman thanked those who had spoken for their input and questions and stated that they would be addressed during discussion of the item.

6 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

7 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman had no announcements to make.

8 SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME (SVPRS) (00:18:30)

The Group had before it a report * from the Group Manager for Housing Services updating it on the provision of housing for Syrian Refugees in Mid Devon.

The Chairman opened the discussion by stating that he had a lot of sympathy for the families involved and he congratulated those that had tried to help and who had worked so hard up until now.

The Director of Operations briefly outlined the contents of the reports.

Consideration was given to the following:

- The advantages and disadvantages of using a third party agency one being that the liability would still rest with the Council as they would own the tenancy. A lot of negotiations took place behind the scenes before a family was housed and there was only so much a charity or third party could be asked to do.
- The positive and welcoming nature of the Crediton community.
- CHAT being prepared to help set up and support these families.
- The legal obligations of the Council.
- The implications on the housing options team following the introduction of the Homelessness Act which placed extra responsibilities on councils in terms of its statutory obligations and a requirement to have to work with all eligible applicants regardless of any priority need. There was work that the team had to undertake statutorily and there was work that they didn't, participation in the resettlement scheme was not a statutory obligation. The local authority needed to act lawfully with limited resources.
- The need for a 'can do' attitude and a full appreciation of the challenges faced by Syrian families.
- A similar resettlement programme had existed for the Vietnamese Boat People back in the 1980's. One family had been rehoused in Tiverton but they had not stayed having felt isolated and preferring to move north where other Vietnamese families were living.

It was **AGREED** that the issue be brought back to the next meeting having taken on board the representations made and investigations taken place regarding the following:

- a) What could be achieved by working with a third party or parties such as CHAT and;
- b) How other local authorities were managing to resettle families given that they were also required to comply with the Homelessness Act and would be experiencing the same time constraints.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

9 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT FOR 2018/19 (00:44:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Operations providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2018/19 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The officer summarised the key highlights throughout the year which fell under the housing area. This included mention of the fact that 4 new housing units had been completed in November 2019 and 6 in March 2019. 26 units at Palmerston Park were due for completion in the autumn of 2019.

The Housing Department were congratulated for an excellent set of results and wished for this to be passed back to the wider team.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

10 REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2018/19 (00:49:08)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the revenue and capital outturn figures for the financial year 2019/20. The report also contained recommendations to the Cabinet which would be presented to them at their meeting on 27 June 2019.

The Deputy Chief Executive (S151) outlined the contents of the report and drew the Group's attention to the following areas:

- The external auditors were currently undertaking an audit of the 2018/19 accounts and their work was progressing well.
- The General Fund outturn for 2018/19 showed an overall underspend of £19k.
- The Council had managed to transfer some funds to ear marked reserves due to several factors including some additional payments in relation to New Homes Bonus.
- The Council had changed the way it financed the vehicle fleet making sure that it got better value for money.
- The General Fund reserve was held at 25% of the operational budget.
- Financial Monitoring presented to each Policy Development Group throughout the year had been very accurate.
- Investments had performed well.
- In December every single unit in Market Walk had been occupied although it was acknowledged that rents had been low.
- The Council Tax collection rate for 2018/19 was 97.8% demonstrating how effective the Revenues section had been in collecting the annual charge in extremely challenging economic times.

The Group were presented with a budget position paper summarising the key areas within the housing area. Particular mention was made of the following:

- Private Sector Housing was showing a variance of £59k. This had occurred as a result of receiving a rogue landlord grant. The intention was transfer to this to reserves for future years.
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) investment income had performed very well helped by a Bank of England rate change in December 2018.
- Staff vacancy savings in the Repairs and Maintenance area.
- Savings on the gas servicing contract.
- An underspend on the estates budget.
- The ongoing detrimental effect on the HRA of Right to Buy (RTB).
- The need to look at the overall budget position rather than just individual cost centres.

The following was requested to take place:

- a) That a precise breakdown of the budget position with regard to the Crediton building be circulated to all members of the Group.

- b) That some training with regard to finances in this area be provided to the Group before the next meeting and certainly before budget considerations were brought before it.

The Group congratulated the Finance team on an excellent set of results and wished for this to be conveyed to the wider team.

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

11 **HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) ASSET POSITION (01:12:43)**

The Group Manager for Building Services provided the Group with a presentation on the asset position of the Housing Revenue Account.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The pressure on the HRA of Right to Buy and the inflexible nature of the Government's stance on this issue.
- On average there were 25 RTB's per year.
- The Council's responsibility to provide social housing.
- The lack of financial incentive to build properties.
- In order to maintain the housing stock it was vital that the Council collected all the rent that was due to it.
- Replacement kitchens and bathrooms would need to be prioritised.
- It was a priority of the Housing Department to reduce the numbers on the housing waiting list wherever it could. This was managed through Devon Home Choice system which categorised tenants in terms of their housing need.

The Group requested that they receive information with regard to Council owned garages; how many were fit to be let and how many were in a state of disrepair for example? Also, how many garages were let to charities at a reduced rate? It was explained that information could be provided as long as it was of a general nature and did not relate to specific lets.

12 **HOUSING UPDATE REPORT (01:46:09)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a briefing paper from the Group Manager for Housing providing a written briefing on the latest developments relating to social housing.

The Neighbourhood Team Leader briefly outlined the contents of the report with reference to:

- The Hackett Review
- A new deal for social housing with the development of key performance indicators and how these could help tenants to hold their landlords to account.
- Recent regulatory judgements demonstrating how important it was for Registered Providers to be compliant with both legislative and regulatory requirements.
- The consultation in relation to a new five year Rent Standard.

- Yarlington (a housing association) had announced that they were exploring options to form a partnership.
- Tenure Reform and the drive to simplify the tenancy process especially in relation to flexible tenancies.
- Leasehold Reform.
- Welfare Reform

Note: * Report previously circulated; copy attached to the signed minutes.

13 **START TIME OF MEETINGS (01:53:47)**

It was **AGREED** to continue to hold meetings of the Group at 2.15pm for the remainder of the municipal year.

14 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (01:55:25)**

In addition to the items already listed in the work programme for the next meeting, the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme was also requested to be on the agenda.

(The meeting ended at 4.15 pm)

CHAIRMAN

HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 13 AUGUST 2019

SYRIAN VULNERABLE PERSONS RESETTLEMENT SCHEME

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Simon Clist
Responsible Officer: Mrs Claire Fry, Group Manager for Housing Services

Reason for Report: To provide an update on work relating to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and in particular to research:

- What could be achieved by working with a third party or parties such as CHAT and;
- How other local authorities are managing to resettle families given that they are also required to comply with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and are likely to be experiencing the same time constraints

RECOMMENDATION: That Members note the report and that the content informs further discussion about the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and any decision-making regarding further action

Financial Implications: The Council recharges Devon County Council for the work required to deliver housing management services to those housed by the scheme. The Resettlement Co-ordinator working with Refugee Support Devon is also funded through the scheme. The Council's duties associated with homelessness are funded through the General Fund.

Legal Implications: There is no statutory duty for the Council to participate in the resettlement programme.

Risk Assessment: The use of private sector accommodation to house Syrian refugees could result in the Council having to continue paying rent in respect of a home if the tenancy fails or is ended, for whatever reason, as the agreement specifies that the let is for a minimum of 5 years.

Equality Impact Assessment: Single people are not housed due to the fact that it was agreed that the Council would work with families. A household may include individuals of different ages and different generations. Potentially, those who identify as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) may be disadvantaged due to the decision to only house families although it is recognised that families may reflect all different sections of society. Those housed through the scheme may experience isolation as their religious and cultural needs cannot necessarily be met in rural areas. The support provided by Council Officers and the Refugee Support worker is designed to mitigate the risk of this.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Council is working in partnership with Devon County Council and other agencies in connection with this scheme. This work involves support to ensure safeguarding and protection for vulnerable people.

Impact on Climate Change: Whilst Officers will endeavour to plan their work in advance in order to minimise environmental impact, there will be times when they

have to visit refugee families in order to respond to a pressing matter. In such cases, this work must take priority and will involve an unplanned journey to and from a property which cannot necessarily be organised to coincide with other visits elsewhere within the District.

1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 At the last meeting of the Policy Development Group (PDG) on 18 June 2019, Members considered a report on issues relating to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (SVPRS) and asked Officers to liaise with other local authorities and partners. The aim of this was to research other options with regard to the management of properties used to accommodate refugee families, to inform further discussions about the SVPRS and how any accommodation secured for use through the scheme could be managed.
- 1.2 Following this request, Officers have liaised with the Communities team at Devon County Council (DCC), which co-ordinates the SVPRS work across the County, and five other second tier authorities working in Devon. They have also liaised with one Town Council located within the District and with two unitary authorities, one District Council, and one County Council, all located in the South West. In addition, DCC has provided information about a scheme operating in a neighbouring County. Officers have also spoken with the Manager of Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT).

2.0 Securing Properties

- 2.1 In Mid Devon, the Council is currently using two properties for the SVPRS and the model in operation involved the Council signing lease agreements with the landlords. These existing leases were initially agreed for a two year period, with the ability to extend for a further two years.
- 2.2 Whilst this model offers some reassurance to landlords who may wish to support the scheme, due to the fact that it offers a guaranteed income stream over a longer period, it means that, in practice, the Council may have to cover the costs associated with a protracted void period or periods. This may be the case should the chosen refugee family decide at a late stage that they do not wish to be relocated; or if, once settled, they opt to move on to alternative accommodation. The Council could also be held liable for any tenant damage. Although the scheme is funded by the Home Office and there may be a potential to reclaim these costs, other local authorities operating outside of Devon do not contract with landlords directly, in order to minimise risk.
- 2.3 The decision to sign leases with landlords was informed by a desire to offer long-term security to landlords who agreed to participate in the scheme, in order to make it a more attractive proposition. In other areas, it has been hard for local authorities to find landlords willing to make properties available for refugees due to the buoyancy of the private rented sector, resulting in increased rental income being available if the property were to be rented on the open market.
- 2.4 In other areas, refugee families are expected to sign tenancy agreements with the landlords of available properties. This being on the understanding that

they are provided with a translation of relevant documents, and that an interpreter is present whilst the formalities associated with the letting are completed. In such models, the Councils generally contract with third party agencies in respect of the day to day housing management of each property.

- 2.5 A unitary authority has advised that it pays landlords two months' rent and the Council Tax due for the same period, in advance, and also the deposit, in order to secure a property for the scheme. In addition, it pays any rent due during any void periods between one tenancy and another. The deposit goes back to the family at the end of the tenancy to help them to secure future accommodation. That Council has noted that families often move on after a period of adjustment; they source their own alternative accommodation in the private rented sector if they feel that it might better meet their needs in relation to their employment, cultural requirements and friendship groups.
- 2.6 Elsewhere, another unitary authority commits to meeting any void costs for up to three months and to paying the deposit. It allows the tenants to retain the deposit at the end of the tenancy. It does not accept any liability with regard to the property, with keeping it secure during void periods or with making good tenant damage. It does not meet any costs associated with Council Tax.
- 2.7 Another neighbouring local authority uses direct lets between landlord and refugees; and supports this arrangement by paying rent in advance to secure the property, and to cover any void periods. It will pay for a longer period if the arrival of the refugee family is delayed, for whatever reason. It pays the rent and the deposit direct to the landlord.
- 2.8 DCC co-ordinates regular meetings of the second tier authorities which provide accommodation for those refugees resettled through the SVPRS.

3.0 **Tenancy Management**

- 3.1 There is no imposed model regarding how properties should be managed in Devon.
- 3.2 DCC has confirmed that the operation of the SVPRS in the County may be tailored to meet individual circumstances in each second tier authority area. There is an acceptance that there will be different policies and procedures used by each local authority. Research has shown that some other Housing Options teams within Devon are responsible for managing the homes used by refugee families; however, in others areas, the tenancy and property management is contracted out.
- 3.3 One neighbouring authority has contracted the management of the homes to the housing association which owns and manages its own housing stock which was transferred following a voluntary large-scale transfer; and two others use an agency which is run by one of them. This provides a full property management service to private landlords, for a fee. In such cases, any management fees can be claimed back through the scheme.
- 3.4 The existing landlords currently working with the Council in Mid Devon to deliver homes through the SVPRS are very supportive of the refugee families

living in their homes. If, for whatever reason, a landlord, due to their own personal circumstances, was unable to provide the same level of assistance, it is likely that this could have an impact upon the work needed to manage the property and the tenancy and this would impact management costs.

4.0 Specialist Support for Families

- 4.1 DCC has contracted with a specialist agency to provide support to the families housed in Devon through the SVPRS. This agency provides help with a whole range of issues and also co-ordinates voluntary work with each family. The families housed through the scheme are exceptionally vulnerable and it is important that they are not made to feel overwhelmed by a large number of people trying to engage with them. Support must be managed and the third party agency is well-placed to organise this. It should be noted that any volunteers planning to befriend any of the refugees will need to have their criminal records verified by way of a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and the agency applies for these.
- 4.2 Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT) has provided the following statement: "CHAT always seeks to work in partnership with other organisations to make sure that people in need of support in the Mid Devon community are assisted with their housing and tenancy issues. We can offer short or long term advice and support by working with the clients and associated organisations directly based on their individual needs."

5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 Members are asked to note the report and agree any further actions, as appropriate, under the circumstances.

Contact for more Information: Mrs Claire Fry, Group Manager for Housing Services, tel: 01884 234920, email: cfry@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Councillor Simon Clist, Cabinet Member for Housing, Leadership Team

List of Background Papers:

HOMES PDG
13 AUGUST 2019

PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT FOR 2019-20

Cabinet Member Cllr Simon Clist, Cabinet Member for Housing
Responsible Officer Director of Operations, Andrew Pritchard

Reason for Report: To provide Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2019/20 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

RECOMMENDATION(S): That the PDG reviews the Performance Indicators and Risks that are outlined in this report and feeds back any areas of concern to the Cabinet.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Corporate Plan priorities and targets are effectively maintained through the use of appropriate performance indicators and regular monitoring.

Financial Implications: None identified

Legal Implications: None

Risk Assessment: If performance is not monitored we may fail to meet our corporate and local service plan targets or to take appropriate corrective action where necessary. If key business risks are not identified and monitored they cannot be mitigated effectively.

Equality Impact Assessment: No equality issues identified for this report.

Impact on Climate Change: No impacts identified for this report.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Appendix 1 provides Members with details of performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for the 2019-20 financial year. The PDG is invited to suggest measures they would like to see included in the future for consideration.
- 1.2 Appendix 2 shows the section of the Corporate Risk Register which relates to the Economy Portfolio. See 3.0 below.
- 1.3 Appendix 3 shows the profile of all risks for the Economy at present.
- 1.4 All appendices are produced from the corporate Service Performance And Risk management system (SPAR).

2.0 Performance

- 2.1 Regarding the Corporate Plan Aim: **Build more council houses:** Palmerston Park is due for handover of all 26 units in August 2019.
- 2.2 Regarding the Corporate Plan Aim: **Facilitate the housing growth that Mid Devon needs, including affordable housing: Bringing Empty homes into use** has already exceeded the annual target. **Number of affordable homes delivered** is below target as at 30 June.
- 2.3 Regarding the Corporate Plan Aim: **Planning and enhancing the built environment: Performance Planning Guarantee determined within 26 weeks** was just below target at 99% but all 4 speed and quality measures were well above the required target. These are all reported quarterly.
- 2.4 Local Plan update: the Planning Service is preparing draft main modifications to respond to the Planning Inspector.
- 2.5 Regarding the Corporate Plan Aim: **Other:** all measures are either on or above target except for **Average days to re-let** which was just outside the target of 14 days.
- 2.6 Housing performance remains in the top quartile compared with HouseMark.

3.0 Risk

- 3.1 Risk reports to committees include strategic risks with a current score of 10 or more in accordance. (See Appendix 2)
- 3.2 Operational risk assessments are job specific and flow through to safe systems of work. These risks go to the Health and Safety Committee biannually with escalation to committees where serious concerns are raised.
- 3.3 The Corporate risk register is regularly reviewed by Group Managers' Team (GMT) and Leadership Team (LT) and updated as required.

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

- 4.1 That the PDG reviews the performance indicators and risks for 2019-20 that are outlined in this report and feeds back any areas of concern to the Cabinet.

Contact for more Information: Catherine Yandle, Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security ext 4975

Circulation of the Report: Leadership Team and Cabinet Member

Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Monthly report for 2019-2020
 Arranged by Aims
 Filtered by Aim: Priorities Homes
 For MDDC - Services

Key to Performance Status:

Performance Indicators:

No Data

Well below
target

Below target

On target

Above target

Well above
target

*

Indicates that an entity is linked to the Aim by its parent Service

Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Priorities: Homes

Aims: Build more council houses

Performance Indicators

Title	Prev Year (Period)	Prev Year End	Annual Target	Apr Act	May Act	Jun Act	Jul Act	Aug Act	Sep Act	Oct Act	Nov Act	Dec Act	Jan Act	Feb Act	Mar Act	Group Manager	Officer Notes
<u>Build Council Houses</u>	2 (3/12)		26	0	0	0										Angela Haigh	

Aims: Facilitate the housing growth that Mid devon needs, including affordable housing

Performance Indicators

Title	Prev Year (Period)	Prev Year End	Annual Target	Apr Act	May Act	Jun Act	Jul Act	Aug Act	Sep Act	Oct Act	Nov Act	Dec Act	Jan Act	Feb Act	Mar Act	Group Manager	Officer Notes
<u>Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)</u>	18 (1/4)		100	n/a	n/a	22	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a		Angela Haigh	
<u>Deliver homes by bringing Empty Houses into use</u>	26 (3/12)		72	17	33	42										Simon Newcombe	

Aims: Other

Performance Indicators

Title	Prev Year (Period)	Prev Year End	Annual Target	Apr Act	May Act	Jun Act	Jul Act	Aug Act	Sep Act	Oct Act	Nov Act	Dec Act	Jan Act	Feb Act	Mar Act	Group Manager	Officer Notes
<u>% Decent Council Homes</u>	99.7% (3/12)		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%										Angela Haigh	
<u>% Properties With a Valid Gas Safety Certificate</u>	99.73% (3/12)		100.00%	99.78%	99.82%	99.91%										Angela Haigh	
<u>Rent Collected as a Proportion of Rent Owed</u>	97.09% (3/12)		97.00%	91.55%	99.90%	97.66%										Angela Haigh	
<u>Current Tenant</u>	1.29% (3/12)		2.50%	1.10%	0.87%	1.11%										Angela Haigh	

Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Priorities: Homes

Aims: Other

Performance Indicators

Title	Prev Year (Period)	Prev Year End	Annual Target	Apr Act	May Act	Jun Act	Jul Act	Aug Act	Sep Act	Oct Act	Nov Act	Dec Act	Jan Act	Feb Act	Mar Act	Group Manager	Officer Notes
<u>Arrears as a Proportion of Annual Rent Debit</u>																	
<u>Dwelling rent lost due to voids</u>	0.70% (3/12)		0.70%	0.50%	0.50%	0.48%										Angela Haigh	
<u>Average Days to Re-Let Local Authority Housing</u>	16.1days (3/12)		14.0days	14.0days	14.5days	14.6days										Angela Haigh	

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Print Date: 30 July 2019 14:30

Homes PDG Risk Management Report - Appendix 2

Report for 2019-2020

For Homes - Cllr Simon Clist Portfolio

Filtered by Flag: Include: * Corporate Risk Register

For MDDC - Services

Not Including Risk Child Projects records, Including Mitigating Action records

Key to Performance Status:

Mitigating Action:

Milestone
Missed

Behind
schedule

On / ahead
of schedule

Completed
and
evaluated

No Data
available

Risks:

No Data (0+)

High (15+)

Medium (6+)

Low (1+)

Homes PDG Risk Management Report - Appendix 2

Risk: Homelessness Insufficient resources to support an increased homeless population could result in failure to meet statutory duty to provide advice and assistance to anyone who is homeless.

Service: Housing Services

Mitigating Action records

Mitigation Status	Mitigating Action	Info	Responsible Person	Date Identified	Last Review Date	Current Effectiveness of Actions
Completed and evaluated	Computer System	New ICT system for recording homelessness data procured.	Claire Fry	05/09/2017	13/05/2019	Fully effective (1)
Completed and evaluated	Staff Support	Officers are trained and knowledgeable and the structure of Housing Options team to be reviewed to build resilience. Homelessness strategy to be reviewed early 2018.	Claire Fry	22/06/2017	13/05/2019	Fully effective (1)

Current Status: Medium (12)

Current Risk Severity: 4 - High

Current Risk Likelihood: 3 - Medium

Service Manager: Claire Fry

Review Note: The risk assessment remains the same, levels of workload remain challenging but grant funding has been awarded by MHCLG to the Council and we are currently working up proposals to extend work with rough sleepers.

Homes PDG Risk Management Report - Appendix 2

Risk: Reputational re Council Housing Stock Failure in handling a disaster/mistake properly

Service: Housing Services

Mitigating Action records

Mitigation Status	Mitigating Action	Info	Responsible Person	Date Identified	Last Review Date	Current Effectiveness of Actions
Completed and evaluated	Proactive Working	Dynamic system of fire risk assessment being adopted to minimise risk of a disaster. Tenancy Home Checks enable us to identify issues in homes; and communal inspections and Neighbourhood Walkabouts enable us to identify issues in communal areas which could result in a disaster.	Claire Fry	05/09/2017	13/05/2019	Fully effective(1)
Completed and evaluated	Staff Support	Trained staff who are knowledgeable and have a comprehensive suite of housing related policy and procedures in place. These include procedures in case of disaster.	Claire Fry	05/09/2017	13/05/2019	Fully effective(1)

Current Status: Medium (10)

Current Risk Severity: 5 - Very High

Current Risk Likelihood: 2 - Low

Service Manager: Claire Fry

Review Note: Risk assessment remains the same. We are monitoring this area of work closely due to the fact that there is a vacancy in the Neighbourhood Team. Once recruited we will give the new officer appropriate training and support. In the meantime, other members of the team are covering the workload which includes management of health safety of on our estates.

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Risk Matrix Homes Appendix 3

Report For Homes - Cllr Simon Clist Portfolio Current settings

Risk Likelihood	5 - Very High	No Risks	No Risks	No Risks	No Risks	No Risks
	4 - High	No Risks	1 Risk	No Risks	No Risks	No Risks
	3 - Medium	No Risks	1 Risk	1 Risk	3 Risks	No Risks
	2 - Low	No Risks	No Risks	2 Risks	2 Risks	3 Risks
	1 - Very Low	No Risks	No Risks	No Risks	2 Risks	3 Risks
		1 - Very Low	2 - Low	3 - Medium	4 - High	5 - Very High
		Risk Severity				

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HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 13 AUGUST 2019

OVERVIEW OF THE HOUSING SERVICE

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Simon Clist
Responsible Officer: Mrs Claire Fry, Group Manager for Housing Services

Reason for Report: To provide a written briefing on the structure of the Housing Service and the functions for which the housing teams are responsible

RECOMMENDATION: Members to note the report

Financial Implications: The activity of the Housing Service spans both the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is ring fenced and subject to specific financial controls.

Legal Implications: Service delivery funded by the General Fund encompasses the prevention and management of homelessness; and the administration of the housing register. There are many statutory obligations associated with these activities arising from provisions of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Tenancy management is funded through the Housing Revenue Account. The tenancy agreement defines the Council's relationship with tenants and sets out the rights and responsibilities of both parties. This takes account of legal and regulatory requirements. The Housing Act 1985, the Localism Act 2011 and the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 contain many provisions which must be taken into account by the Housing Service.

Risk Assessment: Failure to meet statutory obligations relating to homelessness could result in judicial review which could prove costly. Such an outcome also has the potential to impact the reputation of the Council in a negative way.

The landlord service has approximately 3000 homes in management which represents a huge investment. Failure to provide an effective tenancy management service has the potential to result in failure to meet legal and statutory obligations including those relating to health and safety issues, tenancy fraud, and potential negative publicity in the event of, for example, serious anti-social behaviour leading to residents on an estate feeling stigmatised. Failure to collect rental income could impact the ability to fund necessary management and maintenance activities.

Equality Impact Assessment: As stated, the Council has a number of statutory obligations arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and therefore all those presenting as homeless to the Council must be assessed regardless of the section of society from which they come to see whether or not the duties apply. Failure to treat homelessness clients who are eligible fairly, could result in judicial review.

The Council uses the Devon Home Choice scheme to manage the Housing Register. The use of the needs assessment framework in all cases helps to ensure that the

scheme is consistent, open and transparent, and monitoring reports are available which demonstrate this.

The Housing Service uses the Devon Home Choice scheme to allocate and let homes in the retained housing stock and in this way no one case is given any more or less favourable treatment than any other.

There is a suite of housing related policies. The use of these helps to ensure that service delivery is consistent, fair and transparent. There is a regulatory requirement for registered providers of social housing to tailor their service to meet the needs of the tenants and the Housing Service requests diversity data from tenants to enable compliance to be monitored.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Homes are a priority for the Council and this includes increasing supply in the District and also ensuring that those homes in our ownership are managed efficiently and effectively.

Impact on Climate Change: The housing service has actively invested in energy efficiency; extensive use of solar PV and air source heat pumps already exists. The ongoing circa £170M 30 year maintenance programme has a significant focus on ensuring energy efficiency. Where sustainable options are available they are utilised; however, it is acknowledged that where there is a significant cost differential that plays heavily in the choices made.

We recognise that the provision of sustainable communities is important. As part of our commitment to meeting the provisions of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard within the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing, the Council offers a menu of involvement which provides opportunities for tenants to get involved in service delivery. Tenants scrutinise the work of the Service and are also involved in the development of our newsletter which is published periodically. We use this and social media to promote sustainability and therefore publish information relating to a variety of topics including fuel efficiency, recycling and healthy living.

Officers sometimes have to respond to emergencies such as those associated with the prevention and management of homelessness and also those arising from serious incidents of anti-social behaviour. In such cases, safeguarding concerns will take priority in order to minimise risk and it is accepted that the ability to manage such issues effectively may have an environmental impact which would not occur if work can be planned in advance and managed in a more co-ordinated way.

1. Introduction/Background

- 1.1 The teams which report to the Group Manager for Housing Services include the Housing Options team which delivers the work required to support the functions of the Council as the Strategic Housing Authority, as required by the Housing Act 1996. In this role, the Council must take action to manage and to prevent homelessness; to manage a housing register which takes account of housing need; and to work with other providers of social housing in an enabling role.
- 1.2 The Group Manager for Housing Services is also responsible for housing management in relation to the Council's retained housing stock. Several teams work together to provide services to the tenants of homes in our ownership. The Group

Manager for Building Services has responsibility for ensuring that these homes are kept compliant with the Decent Homes Standard.

1.3 A structure chart is shown at appendix 1.

2. The Strategic Housing Functions

2.1 Homelessness

2.1.1 These functions are funded through the General Fund. The prevention and management of homelessness and the provision of a housing register are both statutory obligations. Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPs), including the Council in the landlord role, are expected to co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing functions and their duties to meet identified local housing needs. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties, and through meeting objectives in nominations agreements. In the enabling role, the Housing Service liaises with RPs to help them to deliver more homes and therefore to increase the supply of new housing available to those in housing need.

2.1.2 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was implemented in April 2018. The Act introduced a number of significant changes to the way in which those approaching the Council as homeless, or at risk of homelessness, must be assessed. It also introduced a number of new duties which have significantly increased the amount of work required in relation to each case. In summary, the legislation introduced four new duties:

2.1.2.1 An extension of the period "threatened with homelessness" from 28 to 56 days

2.1.2.2 A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible applicants threatened with homelessness, regardless of priority need

2.1.2.3 A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants, regardless of priority need

2.1.2.4 A new "duty to refer"

2.1.3 People found to be homeless, or at risk of homelessness, must be issued with a personal housing plan which sets out how they can work with the Housing Service to resolve their homelessness issues. In accordance with this, they may be required to take some specific action. If they fail to do so, the Council may decide to end any duty to that household.

2.1.4 The Housing Service recently secured some additional monies from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to support work with rough sleepers. One bid was co-ordinated by Teignbridge District Council on behalf of four Districts. Using this funding stream, the Housing Service will be employing a Navigator to work closely with those who are sleeping rough, or at risk of rough sleeping. Another successful bid involved some joint working with East Devon District Council. The funding received as a result of this is to be used to deliver an outreach service for rough sleepers in both Districts; and to provide intensive support to enable a small number of those who are sleeping rough to move into settled

accommodation.

2.1.5 The budget for this area of work is:

Housing & homelessness advice	£78,160
Housing options staff	£241,100
Total	£319,260

2.2 Devon Home Choice

2.2.1 Devon Home Choice (DHC) is a partnership involving all the local authorities and all the RPs which work in Devon. It provides a framework for assessing housing need. This is used in all cases so that any decisions are fair, open and transparent.

2.2.2 In accordance with the scheme, those in housing need are banded according to their level of need. There are five bands, with those in Band A having the greatest housing need. Those with descending levels of priority for rehousing are placed into Bands B to E.

2.2.3 Housing applicants are able to bid for homes which are advertised on a weekly basis by RPs which work in Mid Devon and elsewhere. When the advertising period closes, the RP which has advertised the property as available for letting, reviews the shortlist. The shortlist shows every applicant who has bid for the home in ascending order of priority for rehousing. Therefore, those in Band A will appear at the top of the shortlist. RPs then work through the list to discount those applicants for whom the property would not be suitable and allocate it to the first suitable household working down. Length of time on the housing register is taken into account when households all in the same band bid for a property. The household that joined the earliest will take priority.

2.2.4 Line management responsibility for keeping the Housing Register updated lies with the Housing Options Manager. With regard to the homes in our management, which form the retained stock, the Voids and Allocations Officers in the Neighbourhood Team within Housing Services allocate these homes. For more information, please refer to the Devon Home Choice website at: <https://www.devonhomechoice.com/>

3 The Landlord Service

3.1 As at 20 May 2019, the Council had 3,000 homes in management:

HRA Stock as at 20/05/2019

	General Needs	Accessible	Total
Houses	1,400	0	1,400
Bungalows	476	532	1,008
Flats	456	136	592
	<u>2,332</u>	<u>668</u>	<u>3,000</u>

3.2 The Housing Revenue Account budget summary 2019/20 is in appendix 2.

- 3.3 “Accessible” homes are those let to tenants with vulnerabilities including those arising from age or from other special needs.
- 3.4 The remainder of the housing stock is known “general needs” accommodation.
- 3.5 122 flats have been sold under the Right to Buy scheme and are now leasehold.
- 3.6 The Social Housing Green Paper, “A New Deal for Social Housing” was published in 2018 and contains the Government’s proposals to reform regulation relating to social housing. Currently, RPs have to comply with the provisions of the regulatory framework which is operated by the Regulator for Social Housing (the RSH). This framework contains a number of consumer and a number of economic standards. Currently, the home, tenant involvement and empowerment, the neighbourhood and community standard and the tenancy standard, which are all consumer standards, apply to the Council. The rent standard, an economic one, is being amended so that it will also apply to the Council in due course.
- 3.7 The Green Paper contained a number of core themes:
- 3.7.1 Ensuring homes are safe and decent
 - 3.7.2 Effective resolution of complaints
 - 3.7.3 Empowering residents and strengthening the regulator
 - 3.7.4 Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities
 - 3.7.5 Expanding housing supply and supporting home ownership
- 3.8 Following a restructure which was implemented last year, the Housing Service operates a system of specialist teams to deliver tenancy management (Appendix 1). There is an income team dedicated to collecting rent and other sundry debts and a voids and allocations team to ensure that empty homes are re-let as quickly as possible. These teams are supported by two Community Housing Support Officers whose role is to work with tenants and prospective tenants to help them to sustain their tenancies and to minimise any financial distress. The Neighbourhood Team Leader for this team also manages the work relating to tenant involvement.
- 3.9 The second Neighbourhood Team Leader is responsible for estate management and this includes work relating to fire safety, other health and safety issues, nuisance and anti-social behaviour, tenancy fraud and general tenancy management. This post-holder also manages a caretaker and the Telecare Officers who deliver the Council’s Lifeline Service, which is a service accounted for within the General Fund.
- 3.10 The Housing Service has a Housing Finance and Performance Team which is responsible for rent accountancy. The team also provides suites of reports used to manage performance. The two Systems Administrators who support the integrated electronic housing management system are managed by the Housing Finance and Performance Manager. Responsibility for managing applications under the Right to Buy scheme also lies with this team.

- 3.11 The Housing Business Support team also leads on garage management and meetings, collates information for new tenants and manages telephone queries.
- 3.12 The Housing Service uses a number of different tenancies. The Tenancy Policy sets out the circumstances in which different tenancies will be used. Generally, new tenants are offered an introductory tenancy lasting one year before moving onto a flexible tenancy of 5 years duration. However, the length of tenancy can be varied in certain circumstances and the Housing Service can also offer prospective tenants a secure, or lifetime, tenancy if there is a vulnerability, which can be evidenced. Existing tenants moving into our homes have to be offered a tenancy with a similar level of security as that where they lived previously.
- 3.13 The Housing Service has an adopted suite of policy which is available to view on the Housing web pages <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/housing/council-housing/strategies-and-policies/> In the event of any complaints relating to service delivery, managers will review the case to check that policy has been followed.
- 3.14 The performance of the Housing Service is closely monitored and detailed information is published on the Council's website on a monthly basis. Performance compares well with that of other RPs.
- 3.15 The turnaround time for void properties was 15 days against a target of less than 14 days. Although outside target, this put the Housing Service into the top quartile when compared to other providers using the Housemark benchmarking service. The top quartile includes all those providers who are achieving a turnaround time of 17.96 days or less.

3.16 Maximising Income

- 3.16.1 In order to maintain the revenue stream, Officers work to clear policy and procedures <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/114980/income-management-policy.pdf> . They use an integrated housing management system to manage debt and this prompts escalating actions as a debt increases or an arrangement is missed. Tenants are expected to pay rent on time. This means that it is due at the beginning of the week. Therefore, if tenants opt to make payments on a periodic basis, such as fortnightly or monthly, it is due at the beginning of each period and not the end.

3.17 Neighbourhood Management

- 3.17.1 The Neighbourhood Officers in the Estates Team undertake regular neighbourhood walkabouts every six months. The dates for these estate inspections are published in advance so that Councillors, tenants and other stakeholders can participate.
- 3.17.2 The objective of these inspections is to identify areas on our estates which are in need of attention or improvement; and to ensure that tenants and other private occupiers are made aware of their responsibilities regarding estates management. These inspections also allow Officers to speak with tenants with a view to increasing tenant involvement.
- 3.17.3 In accordance with the relevant policy,
<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/85031/neighbourhood-management-policy-v3->

[september-2018.pdf](#) neighbourhood walkabouts allow Neighbourhood Officers to identify:

3.17.3.1 Breaches of tenancy

3.17.3.2 Grounds maintenance issues

3.17.3.3 Repairs

3.17.3.4 Any health and safety issues including trip hazards

3.17.3.5 Security issues, including those relating to fences/ boundaries and security doors

3.17.3.6 Tenancy issues including those relating to property condition, property improvements, untidy gardens and pets

3.17.3.7 Anti-social behaviour, including graffiti/ vandalism, drugs, abandoned cars, fly tipping

3.17.3.8 Issues relating to communal areas, car parks and garages

3.17.4 Those Neighbourhood Officers responsible for estate management also undertake Tenancy Home Checks and the Tenancy Inspection Policy applies. <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/191652/tenancy-inspection-policy-v18.pdf> In accordance with this policy, officers will make unannounced inspections at properties. They will check that tenants are complying with the terms and conditions of their tenancy agreements. The visits enable officers to increase our knowledge about those who are living in our homes; and to provide support to those tenants who may need it by signposting or referring them to other agencies which can help.

3.18 Fire Safety

3.18.1 The Housing Service has a clear policy relating to fire safety in communal areas, which is available to view on our webpages. We operate a zero tolerance policy on belongings in communal areas in order to minimise the fire risk. Our policy was drafted in consultation with the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service. In accordance with the policy, officers working in Public Health undertake fire risk assessments at each block on a regular basis. <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/344294/mddc-fire-risk-in-communal-areas-policy.pdf>

3.19 Tenancy Fraud

3.19.1 The Housing Service needs to ensure that homes are available for those who need them the most. Tenancy fraud is a crime under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. Prospective tenants have to provide photo identification before a home can be let to them. Tenants are encouraged to report tenancy fraud and the Housing Service is committed to taking action against those who have obtained housing by making a false or misleading statement. Other work, including that undertaken as part of the Tenancy Home Checks also helps support our approach.

The Housing Service also works in partnership with other agencies in relation to tenancy fraud and is a member of the Devon Tenancy Fraud Forum.

3.20 Anti-social Behaviour

3.20.1 The Housing Service is committed to preventing, investigating, recording and monitoring incidents of anti-social behaviour on our estates in accordance with our policy. <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/1184/asb-policy-v1-4-approved-by-pdg-160615.pdf> Officers will investigate and evaluate all incidents received and take appropriate action. They will categorise complaints according to the level of risk and if they are deemed to be of low level, they will recommend mediation. Those cases which involve a clash of lifestyle and other nuisance arising from neighbour disputes will be assessed as being of low risk and therefore non-urgent.

3.20.2 Officers work in partnership to manage and to resolve more serious complaints. The Housing Service is involved in many multi-agency partnerships including Early Help, Youth ASB and others which respond to issues relating to domestic violence and safeguarding.

3.20.3 The Housing Service has a pets and animals policy and, in accordance with this, tenants are expected to seek written permission to keep a pet at their property. <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/85030/pets-and-animals-policy-v45-approved-at-pdg-160615.pdf>

3.21 Tenant Involvement

3.21.1 The RSH expects the Housing Service to offer opportunities to tenants to get involved in the work of the Council as a landlord. This includes offering them a chance to scrutinise performance, to influence policy and to participate in decision-making regarding how housing-related services are run. The Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard also requires the Housing Service to tailor service delivery to meet the needs of tenants; and to have an approach to complaints which is clear, simple and accessible. This approach must ensure that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly. <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/345683/ti-strategy-220518-final.pdf> <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/345682/tenant-involvement-policy-final.pdf>

3.22 Complaints

3.22.1 All complaints received by the Housing Service are dealt with in accordance with the corporate Complaints and Feedback policy. <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/your-council/customer-services/customer-feedback-and-complaints/> This is a two-stage process. If, once the original decision has been reviewed, the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can escalate their complaint. Complaints relating to the strategic housing functions of the Council need to be referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Complaints related to service delivery associated with the landlord service can be referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service. However, if a complainant wishes, they can refer the matter to a Designated Person before taking this action. The Designated Person can be an MP, a local Councillor or a Tenant Panel. The role of the Designated Person is to try to resolve disputes between landlords and tenants. The Designated Person may decide to refer the issue to the

Housing Ombudsman Service. Alternatively, the complainant themselves can refer the matter eight weeks after the Housing Service has sent the final response.

4 Recommendation

4.1 Members to note the report.

Contact for more Information: Mrs Claire Fry, Group Manager for Housing Services, tel: 01884 234920, email: cfry@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Councillor Simon Clist, Cabinet Member; Leadership Team

List of Background Papers:

Link to Housing Act 1996:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/contents>

Link to Council tenancy agreements:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/housing/council-housing/strategies-and-policies/tenancy-agreements/>

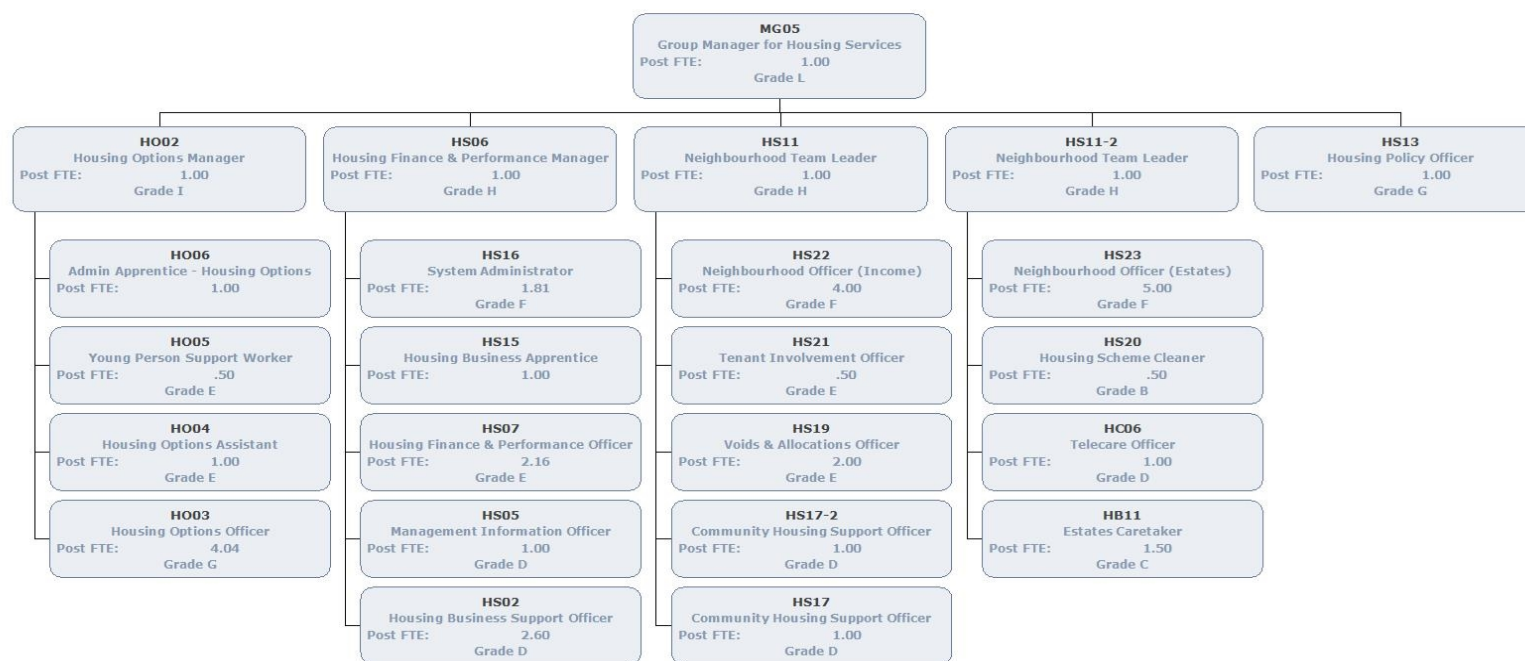
Link to Housing policies:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/housing/council-housing/strategies-and-policies/>

Link to Housing Ombudsman Service website:

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/>

Housing Services Structure



Creation Date 28/06/2019

Appendix 2

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET SUMMARY 2019/2020

Description	Code	2018/2019	Movement	2019/2020
		Annual Budget		Annual Budget
		£	£	£
Employee Cost	1000	2,409,300	212,250	2,621,550
Premises	2000	187,970	6,800	194,770
Transport	3000	224,840	41,670	266,510
Cost Of Goods And Services	4000	7,891,170	(532,990)	7,358,180
Income	7000	(13,151,700)	162,330	(12,989,370)
TOTAL NET DIRECT COST OF SERVICES		(2,438,420)	(109,940)	(2,548,360)
Net recharge to HRA	5000	1,447,160	123,950	1,571,110
Capital Charges	6000	991,260	(14,010)	977,250
NET BUDGET		-	-	-

Direct Costs Detail	2018/2019	2019/2020	Movement	+/- %
	Annual Budget	Annual Budget		
	£	£	£	
<u>Income</u>				
SHO01 Dwelling Rents Inc	(12,118,490)	(11,977,170)	141,320	-1.2%
SHO04 Non Dwelling Rents Inc	(584,130)	(564,870)	19,260	-3.3%
SHO07 Leaseholders' Ch For Serv	(21,640)	(21,640)	-	0.0%
SHO08 Contributions Towards Exp	(41,470)	(27,720)	13,750	-33.2%
SHO10 H.R.A. Investment Income	(59,000)	(83,000)	(24,000)	40.7%
SHO11 Misc. Income	(19,350)	(7,350)	12,000	-62.0%
<u>Services</u>				
SHO13A Repairs & Maintenance	3,120,450	3,174,000	53,550	1.7%
SHO17A Housing & Tenancy Services	1,415,540	1,732,360	316,820	22.4%
<u>Accounting entries below the line</u>				
SHO29 Bad Debt Provision	25,000	53,000	28,000	112.0%
SHO30 Share Of Corp And Dem	194,590	199,100	4,510	2.3%
SHO32 H.R.A. Interest Payable	1,165,610	1,178,580	12,970	1.1%
SHO34 H.R.A. Trf To/From EMR	2,448,470	1,676,350	(772,120)	-31.5%
SHO36 H.R.A. R.C.C.O.	130,000	-	(130,000)	-100.0%
SHO37 Capital Receipts Res Adj	(26,000)	(26,000)	-	0.0%
SHO38 Major Repairs Allowance	2,101,000	2,285,000	184,000	8.8%
SHO45 Renewable Energy Transactions	(169,000)	(139,000)	30,000	-17.8%
NET DIRECT TOTAL	(2,438,420)	(2,548,360)	(109,940)	4.5%

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HOME POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 13 AUGUST 2019

HOMELESSNESS

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Simon Clist
Responsible Officer: Mrs Claire Fry, Group Manager for Housing Services

Reason for Report: To provide an overview of how the Council works to prevent and manage homelessness

RECOMMENDATION: Members to note the report

Financial Implications: The prevention and management of homelessness is accounted for within the general fund and there are budgets set aside to support this work. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has provided additional funding to the Council in relation to this in recent years but this funding is not guaranteed going forward. The Council has recently been involved in successful bids for monies from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government associated with initiatives to reduce rough sleeping.

Legal Implications: The housing functions relating to the prevention and management of homelessness are statutory obligations. The Housing Act 1996, as amended by other legislation including the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, applies.

Risk Assessment: Failure to meet statutory obligations relating to the prevention and management of homelessness could result in judicial review which could prove costly. Such an outcome also has the potential to impact the reputation of the Council in a negative way. In addition, housing applicants may ask a housing authority to review certain aspects of their decisions, and, if they remain dissatisfied following this, they can appeal to the county court on a point of law.

Equality Impact Assessment: As stated, the Council has a number of statutory obligations arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and therefore all those presenting as homeless to the Council must be assessed regardless of the section of society from which they come to see whether or not the duties apply. Failure to treat homelessness clients fairly could result in judicial review. The Council requests diversity information from clients but this is not always forthcoming.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Work to prevent homelessness is a priority for the Council

Impact on Climate Change: Officers sometimes have to respond to emergencies associated with the prevention and management of homelessness. In such cases, safeguarding concerns will take priority in order to minimise risk and it is accepted that the ability to manage such issues effectively may have an environmental impact which would not occur if work can be planned in advance and managed in a more co-ordinated way.

1 Introduction/Background

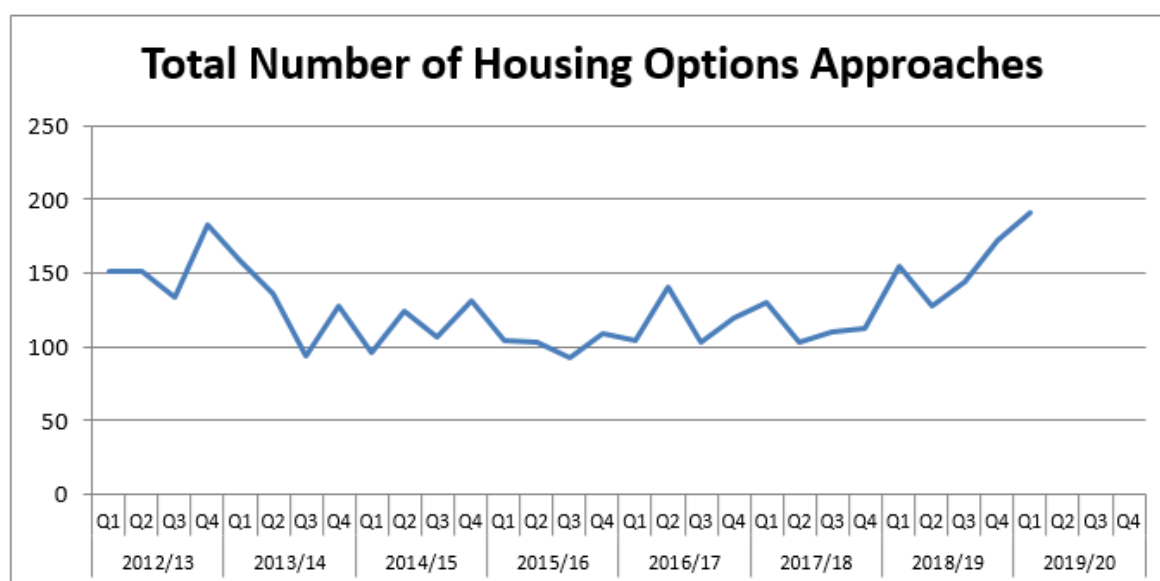
- 1.1. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was implemented with effect from April 2018 and brought about significant changes to the way that homelessness must be prevented and managed.
- 1.2. The existing legislation arose from the Housing Act 1996 which was amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. In accordance with this, anyone who was homeless could approach the local authority for advice. The Council was obliged to provide accommodation to those in a priority group which included those who were vulnerable due to age or medical issues, or those with dependent children. There was no obligation to provide accommodation to those who did not fall into one of the priority groups.
- 1.3. In accordance with the provisions of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, the Council is duty bound to make investigations if someone at risk of becoming homeless approaches for assistance. If it is established that there is a threat of this, then the Council has a statutory obligation to work with that person for 56 days in order to prevent them from becoming homeless. This may include helping them to find alternative accommodation.
- 1.4. After the expiry of the 56 days, and if the household becomes homeless, the Council is obliged to work to relieve the homelessness for a further 56 days. The new legislation was introduced with the aim of ensuring that more prevention work is undertaken and therefore there is a duty on local authorities to work with clients to develop personal housing plans. These plans set out what both parties need to do to ensure that the client moves on to settled accommodation. These plans may include reference to the liaison required between the Council and the existing landlord, for example. However, they may also include actions for the client such as the need to contact local lettings agencies in order to find suitable alternative accommodation in the private sector. The Council may end the duty to the client if they fail to do what is required of them in line with the personal housing plan.
- 1.5. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 also introduced a “duty to refer” which means that certain external agencies must refer people or households which they believe to be at risk of homelessness. In accordance with this, registered providers of social housing will refer cases where possession action is pending or where there is an eviction date in the diary to enable the Housing Options team to work to prevent that homelessness.
- 1.6. The new legislation also introduced more opportunities for homeless clients to appeal decisions made in relation to their cases.
- 1.7. Responsibility to prevent and manage homelessness lies with the Group Manager for Housing Services. The Housing Options Manager has direct line management responsibility for the work and the Officers in the Housing Options team offer a holistic service with the emphasis firmly on prevention.
- 1.8. There are 4.04 full time equivalent (FTE) Housing Options Officers and one Young Person’s Support Worker, who works 18.5 hours per week (0.5 FTE). Work relating to young people and the prevention of homelessness of people in this age group is part funded by Devon County Council.

- 1.9. The Council implemented new software to help deliver the new duties and Officers use this to record all action taken. The software contains a reporting mechanism and Officers pass back relevant information as required to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

2 Budgetary Pressures

- 2.1 The new duties associated with the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 have significantly increased the workload of the team. There has also been a subsequent knock-on effect on our expenditure on temporary accommodation. The Council has a number of units of accommodation in the retained stock which have been set aside for use as temporary accommodation. However, if this is unavailable, due to the numbers of people already being accommodated, Officers are obliged to book clients into bed and breakfast accommodation. Notwithstanding the cost, using this type of accommodation is very much a last resort.

2.2 Homelessness Approaches



3 The Housing Service runs a Deposit and Advance Rent Scheme (DARS).

- 3.1 The DARS enables Officers to provide an interest free loan, repayable on a monthly basis until the debt is cleared, as an option to those who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. A loan made using the DARS often provides a cheaper option than placing someone into temporary accommodation. The average DARS loan is around £1,200 and this is repayable over five years.
- 3.2 It should be noted that it can be difficult to recover monies owed by clients who may sometimes be very vulnerable and who may be experiencing financial distress for a variety of reasons.
- 3.3 When someone applies for assistance because they are about to become, or are, homeless, the priority for Officers in the Housing Options team is to work to assist the household concerned to remain in their existing home. This may involve

negotiating with the landlord and offering mediation, or repayment plans, if they are in rent arrears. In addition, Officers will offer the applicant access to the DARS, if necessary, because this has the potential to enable them to secure alternative accommodation. However, the current unrecovered debt associated with the DARS scheme is in excess of £250,000 and as such DARS is under review. There can be no assumption of its future use or availability as it is a cost pressure to the General Fund.

4 Partnerships and Joined Up Working

- 4.1 The Council works in partnership with other housing authorities in Devon in order to prevent homelessness and to reduce the number of rough sleepers.
- 4.2 The Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership involves all authorities in Devon and Cornwall and delivers a consistent approach to the prevention and management of homelessness across the peninsula, and this also includes the Devon and Cornwall Rough Sleepers Partnership.
- 4.3 The Partnership has agreed joint protocols and policies and also arranges training to ensure that Officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge and understanding to enable them to work effectively.
- 4.4 The Council was involved in a successful bid to secure funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, available for two years from April 2017, together with other neighbouring authorities, under the Trailblazers initiative. As a result, Julian House provided an outreach service to the District from April 2017 to March 2019.
- 4.5 In addition, the Trailblazers funding was also used to set up a project at Exeter and Channings Wood prisons to assist those people due for release with resettlement. An online service for those at risk of homelessness was also implemented to enable them to seek advice online. The funding also contributed to the development of a hospital discharge service at the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital.

4.5.1 The Navigator Bid

- 4.5.1.1 Five authorities, including the Council, were able to secure monies to support work with rough sleepers or those at risk of rough sleeping from the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding stream provided by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This funding is time limited and will only be available for this financial year, meaning that the Council has no certainty about the availability of further funding to support this work in the future, after 31 March 2020.
- 4.5.1.2 This will enable the continuation of the work previously undertaken by Julian House which was funded through the joint Trailblazer bid that ended on 31 March 2019. Prior to this new funding stream, Julian House investigated the reports received through the StreetLink service (discussed further in 4.7) by visiting the District once a week.

- 4.5.1.3 The Council is hosting a full time worker (a navigator) throughout 2019/20 to provide an outreach service for rough sleepers, or those at risk of rough sleeping, in the District.
- 4.5.1.4 The navigator will play a crucial role in the resettlement of rough sleepers, providing a comprehensive service to a caseload of clients who are currently sleeping rough or who have a recent history of rough sleeping in Mid Devon. The aim will be to build trust and to provide person centred advocacy and support, which enables clients to navigate pathways and to progress towards a life away from the streets, therefore reducing rough sleeping within the Mid Devon area.

4.5.2 The Rough Sleeping Initiative bid

- 4.5.2.1 Working with East Devon District Council, the Council obtained further grant funding to support work with those who are sleeping rough, or who may be at risk of sleeping rough. This funding was also obtained from the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding stream made available by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. It is also limited to the financial year 2019/20 and currently there have been no announcements as to whether or not it will continue past March 2020.
- 4.5.2.2 The aim of the bid was to secure additional monies to boost the service provided by the navigator and, in addition, to support those who may be at risk of rough sleeping.
- 4.5.2.3 The challenge is to ensure that engagement is meaningful and that clients are supported to seek housing options which they will be able to sustain going forward.
- 4.5.2.4 The funding has also been awarded to support the development of a service which provides extensive, tailored support to homeless people with complex needs. A key part of our approach will be to work with other agencies to ensure that clients are receiving all the support which they need to enable them to sustain a tenancy.
- 4.6 Officers also liaise with other agencies including the Department of Work and Pensions, which administers the Universal Credit scheme. Other advice agencies which support the work undertaken by the Housing Options team include Citizens Advice and Age UK.
- 4.7 StreetLink is a non-profit organisation managed and delivered by Homeless Link in partnership with St Mungo's. It is principally funded by MHCLG with additional funding from other Government agencies. Streetlink operates a service which enables members of the public to report any rough sleepers. Streetlink alerts the Council to any incidences of rough sleeping and these are all investigated by our own staff.
- 4.8 The Council funds a service, known as Wiser£money, which is based in Phoenix House and which is designed to provide local welfare assistance to those residents experiencing exceptional financial difficulty. Navigate Community Interest Organisation provides this service which is free, confidential and tailored to meet individual needs. There is provision for money and debt

advice, help with income maximisation and signposting and referral to other support agencies, as required. The Council has a contract with Navigate which will come to an end in April 2021. After that a decision will have to be made in relation to the continuation of the service and, if this is agreed, a procurement exercise will be required.

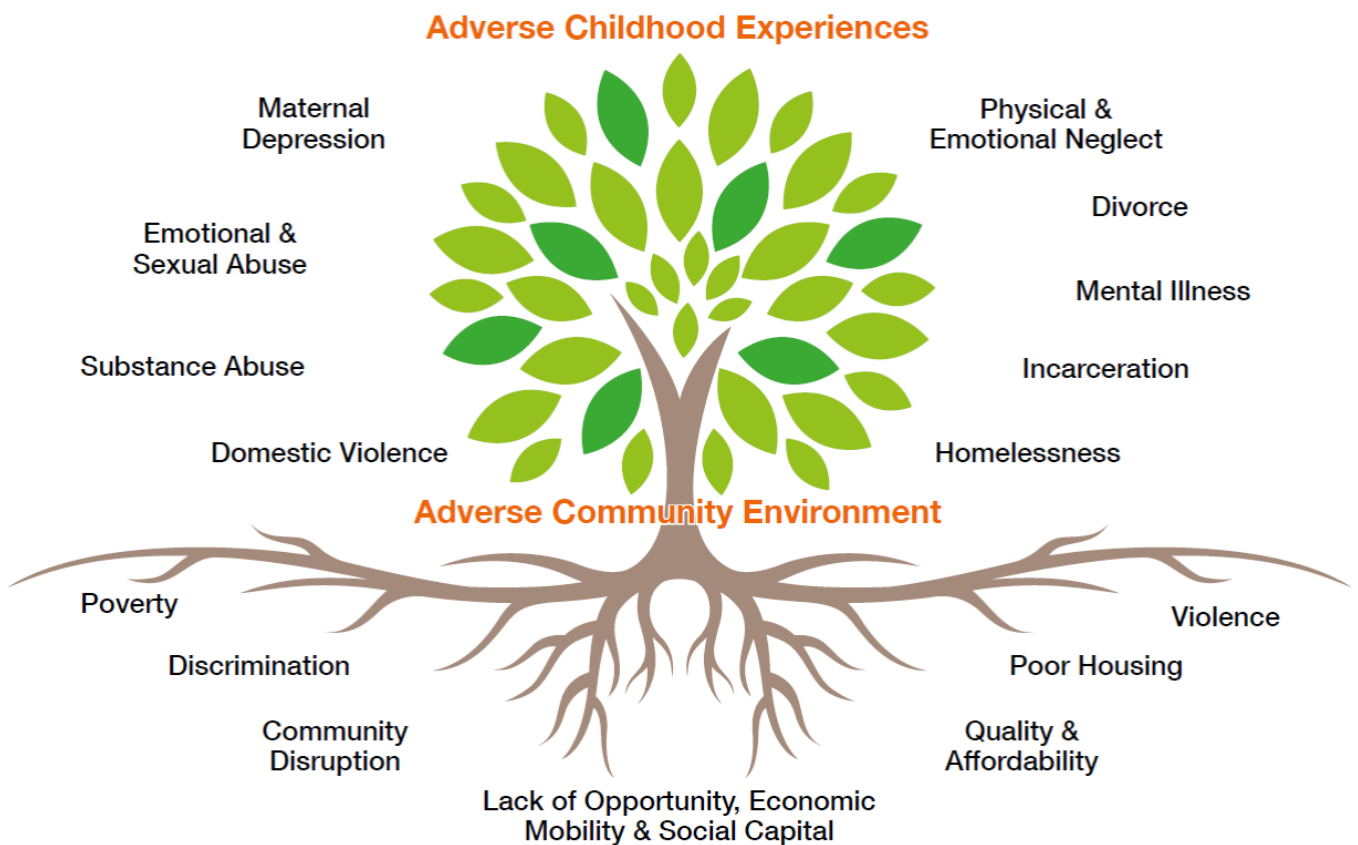
- 4.9 The Churches Housing Action Team (CHAT) is an important partner based in Tiverton. Advisors at CHAT liaise with the Housing Options team regarding clients they are supporting. CHAT runs the foodbank in Tiverton and working in conjunction with the Wiser£money scheme, delivers local welfare assistance and provides emergency food packs to rough sleepers. In Mid Devon, CHAT also assists rough sleepers with seeking accommodation and helping them to secure homes in the private sector. In addition, there is a shower available at their office and the charity will also wash clothes for those who have no other means of doing this. CHAT receives grant funding from the Council and the existing award covers the period to the end of March 2020.

5 Rough Sleeping

- 5.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has set a target to reduce rough sleeping by half by 2022 and to end it completely by 2027.

6 Service Delivery

- 6.1 Adverse childhood experiences may impact health in a negative way. It is important that those delivering services designed to prevent and manage homelessness understand the associations between these experiences and negative health outcomes. The risk of homelessness is increased for those who have had adverse childhood experiences and work to identify the risk of this and to mitigate it, is important with regard to delivering improved access to a range of opportunities for clients.



Adapted from Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. *Academic Pediatrics*. 17 (2017) pp.S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011

- 6.2 Family breakdown, in particular, is considered to be a key contributor to homelessness and therefore the Housing Service is endeavouring to build better links with Social Services, which is a first tier local authority responsibility. Drug and alcohol issues, together with mental health factors, also appear to contribute. The Housing Options team has good working relationships with a range of other agencies which can help to support work with a wide range of clients. Information relating to the cause of the homelessness amongst those who present for assistance by the Council is shown in Annex A.
- 6.3 Our Housing Options Officers are trained to work closely with clients to enable them to fulfil the requirement to undertake a detailed assessment of each case. This engagement allows Officers to identify any adverse childhood experiences which may have impacted the adult or adults in the household, and also those which may be affecting any children. A multi-agency approach enables these negative impacts to be addressed and for appropriate support to be identified to ensure that the household is better able to sustain a tenancy going forward.
- 6.4 The Housing Options Team may discharge the duties to homeless clients by arranging accommodation for them in the private sector. Therefore, it is not the case that homelessness enables clients to gain higher priority for social housing. Under the Devon Home Choice scheme (DHC), which the Council uses to manage housing allocations, where it is possible and appropriate to find private rented accommodation for households who are assessed as being homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless (under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) their applications will be placed in Band D. The DHC scheme has 5 bands, known as A to E. Those with

greatest priority for rehousing are placed into Band A. Bands B to E are used for other cases in descending need for priority.

- 6.5 Where it is not considered possible and appropriate to find private rented accommodation for households who are assessed as being homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless (under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) their applications will be placed in Band B.
- 6.6 There are some exceptions as to why it might not be possible or appropriate to house homeless clients into homes in the private sector and these include where someone needs an adapted home; or where the household needs a home of a size or type not available in the private sector in the local area.

7 The Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)

- 7.1 The Council works in partnership with all the other authorities in Devon and Cornwall to agree a Severe Weather Emergency Protocol which has two aims. First, it is designed to ensure that no one dies on the streets due to extreme cold or severe weather. It should also ensure that every effort is made to engage with rough sleepers and to encourage them to work with support services during the winter months i.e. from 1 November to 31 March. Extreme cold is defined as when the Met Office has forecast that the temperature will be at zero or below for three consecutive nights. Severe weather is defined as when the Met Office issues a red warning for the local area in relation to rain, snow or wind. Local authorities may activate the protocol when there are amber warnings and the Council usually does in these circumstances.
- 7.2 The Council is therefore committed to providing shelter to rough sleepers during the winter months.
- 7.3 The protocol operates outside of the usual eligibility and entitlement frameworks which govern access to housing. In line with the provisions of it, we are obliged to identify and to target those who are rough sleeping.
- 7.4 If a rough sleeper cannot be persuaded to access accommodation, we must provide them with information about the health risks associated with sleeping out during severe weather. We must also monitor their wellbeing and continue to offer support, provisions and information on services available to assist them. We are also obliged to give consideration to their mental capacity working in partnership with the Police and other services.

8 Social Housing

- 8.1 Social housing is limited in Mid Devon. The Council has approximately 3,000 units of accommodation and other Registered Providers (RPs) have approximately 1,289. During 2018/19, 270 general needs homes were let in Mid Devon and a further 40 accessible homes, which are those available to those people with vulnerabilities by virtue of age or other special need.

9 Supply of Homes in the Private Sector

- 9.1 The Private Sector Housing Team, which reports to the Group Manager for Public Health and Regulatory Services, works to bring empty homes back into use. There are many complex reasons as to why homes fall out of use. These may include poor property condition, complex probate issues, a slow housing market or the location of the property in a rural location or on an unadopted road. If a property is empty for more than 2 years, it is deemed to be empty on a long term basis.
- 9.2 The Council can assist owners to bring their properties back into use and this includes facilitating a loan. There are also powers that enable the Council to purchase a home on a compulsory basis in extreme cases.

10 Disabled facilities grant – Better Care Funding

- 10.1 The delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant programme is mandatory and a statutory function of the local housing authority. The delivery of this function is governed by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
- 10.2 In 2015 the government introduced the Better Care Fund (BCF) in an attempt to bring health and social care together in an integrated way. The BCF is a combination of government funding from the Department of Health and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government and includes the grant allocation for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

11 Homelessness Strategy

- 11.1 Local authorities are required to have homelessness strategies which contain a review of the situation in the local area and an action plan setting out how they will address any specific issues which exist in their areas. The Council's existing homelessness strategy is due for review and it is hoped that the revised draft will be brought to the PDG for discussion and decision later this year.
- 11.2 A number of stakeholders have been consulted and priorities identified as part of the review and this work will inform the future direction of the strategy.

12 Recommendation

- 12.1 That Members note the report.

Contact for more Information: Mrs Claire Fry, Group Manager for Housing Services, tel: 01884 234920, email: cfry@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Councillor Simon Clist, Cabinet Member for Housing, Leadership Team

List of Background Papers:

Annex A – Homeless Approach Reasons (P1e Reporting for 2012-2017).

	2012/2013				2014/2015				2014/2015				2015/2016				2016/2017				2017/2018			
Homeless Reasons: All approaches)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
0. Emergency	0	0	1	0	2	3	0	1	3	0	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	1
1. Parents no longer willing or able to accommodate	19	24	27	24	19	17	7	16	16	16	12	23	14	22	17	6	11	13	22	12	19	15	12	11
2. Other relatives or friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	22	16	10	17	20	20	16	21	7	8	14	17	10	7	4	11	6	10	6	7	7	8	12	5
3. Non-violent breakdown of relationship with partner	25	20	13	31	22	15	15	10	5	10	15	16	12	12	7	14	14	22	7	13	14	8	10	10
4. Violence																								
a. Violent breakdown of relationship involving partner	2	5	7	8	5	7	12	7	7	10	3	9	10	8	7	8	6	7	11	7	7	7	7	4
b. Violent breakdown of relationship involving associated persons	1	1	2	0	3	4	0	1	0	2	1	1	4	2	1	5	4	2	4	1	2	2	2	3
c. Racially motivated violence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	3	0
d. Other forms of violence	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	0	2	1	1	4	4	2
5. harassment, threats or intimidation																								
a. Racially motivated harassment	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
b. Other forms of harassment	1	0	0	1	0	1	1		0	1	2	4	2	0	0	0	5	0	0	6	4	0	0	5
6. Mortgage arrears (repossession or other loss of home)	4	7	2	11	5	4	2	2	1	1	2	1	0	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
7. Rent arrears on :																								
a. Local authority or other public sector dwellings	6	13	14	4	8	10	4	4	1	3	2	1	3	4	4	4	1	7	3	1	1	2	0	2
b. Registered Provider dwellings	1	1	6	1	2	2	0	2	0	0	1	2	2	0	1	4	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	0
c. Private sector dwellings	3	0	3	2	0	1	1	2	0	3	1	2	4	4	5	8	3	7	3	12	3	0	3	4
8. Loss of rented or tied accommodation due to :																								
a. Termination of assured shorthold tenancy	23	27	10	43	31	20	21	34	22	26	21	18	18	13	5	13	9	24	11	21	15	13	11	23
b. Reasons other than termination of assured shorthold tenancy	10	11	6	7	10	4	6	15	12	16	9	15	7	9	10	11	17	20	10	9	9	8	12	16
9. Required to leave acc. provided by the Home Office as asylum support	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10. Left an Institution or LA care:																								
a. Left prison/on remand	0	1	4	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	1	1
b. Left hospital	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	2	2	5	1	0	0
c. Left other institution or LA care	2	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	1	0	2
11. Other reason for loss of last settled home																								
a. Left HM Forces	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
b. Other reason	29	24	26	33	28	25	8	9	20	27	18	19	13	13	21	17	27	20	17	25	37	32	32	23
Total	151	151	133	183	158	136	94	127	96	124	104	131	104	103	91	109	104	140	103	119	130	103	110	112

Homeless Approaches Main Reason for loss of Settled Accommodation.

	2018-2019				TOTAL	2019-2020	TOTAL
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4		Q1	
Approaches During Quarter (Approach Date)	155	128	144	172	599	191	191
of which main reason for loss of settled home							
Domestic abuse	12	10	8	14	44	14	14
End of private rented tenancy – assured short-hold tenancy	21	23	29	33	106	32	32
End of private rented tenancy – not assured short-hold tenancy	4	2	3	-	9	1	1
End of social rented tenancy	6	3	10	13	32	2	2
Eviction from supported housing	3	1	1	2	7	1	1
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	15	13	18	20	66	14	14
Fire or flood / other emergency	1	-	1	-	2		0
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	3	1	1	4	9	4	4
Left institution with no accommodation available	3	2	1	-	6	1	1
Non-racially motivated / other motivated violence or harassment	2	1	1	-	4	1	1
Other	15	17	16	13	61	12	12
Property Disrepair	-	1	1	-	2		0
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	13	16	17	9	55	17	17
Mortgage Repossession	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Not stated	57	38	37	63	195	91	91
					599		191

HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 13 AUGUST 2019

DEVON HOME CHOICE: HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK AND CHOICE BASED LETTINGS SCHEME

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Simon Clist
Responsible Officer: Mrs Claire Fry, Group Manager for Housing Services

Reason for Report: To provide a written briefing on the Devon Home Choice scheme and how it is used in Mid Devon

RECOMMENDATION: PDG Members to make a decision as to whether or not to pursue options to remove Band E from the scheme used in Mid Devon.

Financial Implications: Management of the Housing Register is a strategic housing activity and there is a budget set aside within the General Fund to support this work. The Devon Home Choice scheme is funded by each of the local authorities with housing responsibilities in Devon, including the two unitary authorities Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council, and also by registered providers of social housing (including the Council) which make a payment in respect of each property advertised through the scheme.

Legal Implications: Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996 regulates the allocation of social rented housing by local authorities. Part 6 was amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, and, with effect from 18 June 2012, by the Localism Act 2011. Local authorities are not under a duty to maintain a housing register but are required to have an allocation scheme for determining priorities between applicants for housing which sets out the procedure to be followed when allocating housing accommodation.

There is a regulatory requirement for registered providers of social housing to co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing functions and their duties to meet identified local housing needs. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties, and through meeting objectives in nominations agreements.

Risk Assessment: Failure to run a housing register that is transparent could result in complaints from people who feel that they have been unfairly disadvantaged and this could result in reputational damage. In addition, a housing applicant can seek a judicial review, if a housing allocation policy is unlawful or discriminatory.

Equality Impact Assessment: Devon Home Choice provides an assessment framework which is used to ensure that all requests for rehousing are managed in the same way, ensuring that no one housing applicant is treated any more or less favourably than any other. Diversity data is requested from housing applicants and is recorded so that it can be monitored.

Those who have special needs, (which may include disabilities, a low level of literacy or mental health issues) may be disadvantaged because the Council expects housing applicants to apply for housing online but a key strategy to combat this is for our Housing Options Assistant will visit people at home, if necessary, in order to assist them with the completion of the application form.

The Council can also set up auto-bids which enable bids to be placed on suitable properties in an applicant's areas of preference without them having to go into the system themselves. Those people who are not used to using online services, or who live in areas where broadband coverage is poor, may also be disadvantaged but the auto-bid system can be used to mitigate this, too. In addition, the Management Board (See section 3.6) has recently authorised expenditure to develop a video which will be available online which will provide an overview of the scheme and how to use it. Officers will be able to use the computers in the reception area at Phoenix House to show the video to clients who may have trouble comprehending how the system works.

The Management Board monitors reports relating to performance on a regular basis with a view to checking engagement, and periodically monitors the results of satisfaction surveys which often highlight relevant issues. There is an annual review of the scheme and any changes necessary to mitigate the impact of any issues identified can be implemented.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Corporate Plan states that homes are a priority for the Council.

Impact on Climate Change: The housing service has actively invested in energy efficiency; extensive use of solar PV and air source heat pumps already exists. The ongoing circa £170M 30 year maintenance programme has a significant focus on ensuring energy efficiency. Where sustainable options are available they are utilised; however, it is acknowledged that where there is a significant cost differential that plays heavily in the choices made.

We recognise that the provision of sustainable communities is important. As part of our commitment to meeting the provisions of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard within the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing, the Council offers a menu of involvement which provides opportunities for tenants to get involved in service delivery. Tenants scrutinise the work of the Service and are also involved in the development of our newsletter which is published periodically. We use this and social media to promote sustainability and therefore publish information relating to a variety of topics including fuel efficiency, recycling and healthy living.

Officers sometimes have to respond to emergencies such as those associated with the prevention and management of homelessness and also those arising from serious incidents of anti-social behaviour. In such cases, safeguarding concerns will take priority in order to minimise risk and it is accepted that the ability to manage such issues effectively may have an environmental impact which would not occur if work can be planned in advance and managed in a more co-ordinated way.

1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1. Local authorities are required to have allocation schemes which give "reasonable preference" to certain categories of those in housing need. In addition, housing can only be allocated to those who are "qualifying persons", in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 1996. The statutory guidance issued in June 2012 provides direction on the factors which affect eligibility and qualification. Housing

authorities are required to have regard to this in exercising their functions under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.

- 1.2. Historically, local authorities held housing waiting lists but since 2010 they have been expected to operate choice based lettings schemes. This way of letting homes represented an alternative approach to the management of housing allocations which had previously been based on the award of points to those in housing need. Previous schemes set out the basis on which additional points would be awarded and those with the most points generally had the highest priority for rehousing.
- 1.3. The shift from this model of awarding priority to the choice based system was driven by a desire to offer more choice; to tackle social exclusion; to support the creation of sustainable communities and to encourage the effective use and management of social housing. The model was based on a scheme which had been used in Delft, a city in the Netherlands, in the late 1980s, and which was viewed as being very successful at delivering the desired outcomes.
- 1.4. The Localism Act 2011 gave local authorities more freedoms with regard to decision-making relating to qualifying applicants who could register for rehousing. Whilst councils are required to give “reasonable preference” to some people as defined in the statutory guidance, they can manage the housing waiting list in such a way as to support any local priorities. Therefore, they can refuse to accept applications from those who are not in housing need.
- 1.5. Local authorities are also expected to have a tenancy strategy which must be shared with all the registered providers of social housing which work in their areas. These strategies must provide guidance to those registered providers. Since the Council has retained housing stock, the landlord service is a registered provider and is therefore required to have due regard to the tenancy strategy. Our tenancy strategy is available to view on the webpages of the Housing Service. It is due for review and it is hoped that the revised draft will be available for discussion and decision at a future meeting of the Homes Policy Development Group (PDG) later this year.
- 1.6. In addition, local authorities are expected to have regard to their homelessness strategies when preparing or modifying their housing allocation schemes.
- 1.7. It should be noted that, since 2012, successive Governments have issued further statutory guidance relating to qualification criteria. This includes reference to local connection and armed forces personnel, and to eligibility for social housing post-Brexit. In addition, there has been a consultation on improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse and it is understood that there will be changes to the qualification criteria to ensure that those who have experienced domestic abuse can be supported.

2.0 Choice Based Lettings Schemes

- 2.1 In a choice based lettings scheme, the priority for rehousing is based on a system which should be easily understood.
- 2.2 Vacant properties are advertised on a regular basis and information on those who can apply for each home should be included on the adverts. Housing applicants are expected to apply for specific properties which meet their needs in terms of bedroom

size and location; if successful, their circumstances are verified by the landlords. Officers for those landlords assess the eligibility of the housing applicant according to their own published eligibility criteria. If there are several households with high priority which are all banded in the same group, then those which have been registered for rehousing on the housing register the longest will be given priority.

- 2.3 Properties are advertised for a limited period, often a week, and after the closing date, landlords will assess the applicants who have applied to live in that home. They will rank applicants according to housing need and, in most cases the household with the greatest priority according to their allocations scheme will be offered the property.
- 2.4 Landlords are expected to publish the outcome of the bidding process in the interest of openness and transparency and this will demonstrate the level of demand for that property.

3.0 Devon Home Choice

- 3.1 The Council works in partnership with the other local authorities in Devon to deliver a choice based lettings scheme known as Devon Home Choice (DHC). All the other registered providers which operate in the Districts, and the two unitary authorities, which work across Devon are also involved in the scheme as partners.
- 3.2 The Devon Home Choice scheme includes an assessment framework which contains detailed criteria against which housing need is determined. The circumstances of all housing applicants are considered in accordance with this framework and they are then placed into one of five bands, according to need, in descending order of priority.
- 3.3 The bands range from Band A, where someone is in urgent need of rehousing (usually due to threats of violence or for medical reasons), to Band E, which is also known as the band of no housing need.
- 3.4 When allocating a home, we will ensure that applicants have a need for the type of home which they have bid for. This is in order to ensure that the Housing Service makes the best use of stock. If the property has adaptations, it would only be let to someone who had a need for the type of accommodation being offered. Landlords are also required to verify the local connection of housing applicants, if required.
- 3.5 The Council has an allocations policy which is available to view on the webpages of the Housing Service. This is currently under review and the revised draft will be available for discussion and decision at a meeting of the Homes Policy Development Group later this year. The current allocations policy states that the Council uses the Devon Home Choice scheme to assess housing need and to allocate our own housing stock. It notes that the Devon Home Choice scheme is very prescriptive and that it sets out how registered providers will give preference to certain applicants by labelling adverts. The Council's allocations policy explains when the preference labels will be used and sets out the method to be used to validate each label. Labels are defined.
- 3.6 The Council is a member of the Management Board which oversees the work of the two Officers employed to manage Devon Home Choice. These Officers are

employed by Exeter City Council on behalf of the partnership. It should be noted that the Partnership Agreement is reviewed annually and that the Group Manager for Housing Services has delegated authority to sign this.

- 3.7 The number of households in housing need in Mid Devon as at 31 March 2019 was as follows (from Devon Home Choice Quarterly Monitoring Report (April 2019):

Band	Number
A	0 (0%)
B	110 (13%)
C	262 (30%)
D	503 (57%)
Total A to D	875 (100%)
E	1018

Note: the percentages quoted above exclude Band E.

- 3.8 Other strategic housing authorities within Devon have stopped registering cases where the applicants have no housing need; Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Torbay Council. The Devon Home Choice scheme is flexible enough to accommodate this and other changes made by local authority partners; and the ICT system can be amended to suit the needs of individual local authority partners. These authorities have removed Band E from their schemes and this remains an option for Mid Devon District Council.

4.0 Recommendation

- 4.1 Members are asked to make a decision as to whether or not to pursue options to remove Band E from the scheme used in Mid Devon

Contact for more Information: Mrs Claire Fry, Group Manager for Housing Services, tel: 01844 234920 email: cfry@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Councillor Simon Clist, Cabinet Member for Housing; , Leadership Team

List of Background Papers:

Allocation of Accommodation: Guidance for Local Housing Authorities in England (June 2012)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allocation-of-accommodation-guidance-for-local-housing-authorities-in-england>

Devon Home Choice website:

<https://www.devonhomechoice.com/>

Link to Housing Services policies:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/housing/council-housing/strategies-and-policies/>

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HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 13 AUGUST 2019

HOUSING UPDATE REPORT

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Simon Clist
Responsible Officer: Mrs Claire Fry

Reason for Report: To provide a written briefing on latest developments relating to social housing

RECOMMENDATION: Members to note the report

Financial Implications: None arising from this report

Legal Implications: None arising from this report

Risk Assessment: None arising from this report

Equality Impact Assessment: None arising from this report

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Homes are a priority for the Council and this includes increasing supply in the District and also ensuring that those homes in our ownership are managed efficiently and effectively

Impact on Climate Change: The housing service has actively invested in energy efficiency; extensive use of solar PV and air source heat pumps already exists. The ongoing circa £170M 30 year maintenance programme has a significant focus on ensuring energy efficiency. Where sustainable options are available they are utilised; however, it is acknowledged that where there is a significant cost differential that plays heavily in the choices made.

We recognise that the provision of sustainable communities is important. As part of our commitment to meeting the provisions of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard within the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing, the Council offers a menu of involvement which provides opportunities for tenants to get involved in service delivery. Tenants scrutinise the work of the Service and are also involved in the development of our newsletter which is published periodically. We use this and social media to promote sustainability and therefore publish information relating to a variety of topics including fuel efficiency, recycling and healthy living.

Officers sometimes have to respond to emergencies such as those associated with the prevention and management of homelessness and also those arising from serious incidents of anti-social behaviour. In such cases, safeguarding concerns will take priority in order to minimise risk and it is accepted that the ability to manage such issues effectively may have an environmental impact which would not occur if work can be planned in advance and managed in a more co-ordinated way.

Introduction/Background

Members previously agreed that it would be helpful to receive a regular briefing on matters relating to housing.

Matters relating to fire safety and cladding continued to dominate the housing press, especially in June, which marked the second anniversary of the fire at Grenfell Tower.

In addition, there was a fire in a block of flats in Barking on 9 June 2019 which was widely reported. Although the cause is still being investigated, there are suggestions that a barbeque was responsible. 20 flats were destroyed and a further 10 were affected by heat and smoke damage. The block had wooden balconies and there were some housing association properties affected. (BBC, 2019)

The Council does not have any high rise blocks in our stock and therefore discussions relating to this type of housing stock and associated issues are not relevant to the situation in Mid Devon. For this reason, this report will not contain any other references to these matters.

The Right to Buy

6,000 tenants of housing associations in the Midlands successfully applied to participate in the voluntary Right to Buy pilot but more than half of these have failed to buy their home or have had their applications cancelled. Exactly 6,000 tenants were successful following the ballot which ran for a month between August and September last year. A Freedom of Information request to Homes England showed that 2,262 of the tenants had failed to submit an application; 912 tenants had had their applications cancelled either by their landlord or by their own accord. This means that 2,826 applications are open on the Homes England database. (Barker, 17 May 2019).

Only a very limited amount of the £200 million set aside to support the scheme has been spent since it was launched last year. £10.2 million, or 5%, has been paid out to associations taking part in the pilot. Only 181 sales have been completed by 10 June 2019. However, it is understood that there are several hundred more applications in the system and at the formal offer stage. Tenants making use of the scheme to buy their home must complete their purchase before next Spring. (Barker, 12 July 2019)

The Government had anticipated that around 3,000 homes would be sold and that the £200 million fund would pay for the discounts.

According to Government statistics (Gov.UK, 2019) Right to Buy sales (of Council houses) fell 23% in the last quarter of 2018/19, with 2,612 homes being sold through the policy from January 2019 to March 2019, down from 3,396 sold during the same period during 2017/18.

Local authorities received approximately £219.7 million from Right to Buy sales, 16% lower than the £262.4 million received during the same quarter the previous year. The average receipt for each dwelling sold during quarter four from January 2019 to March 2019, was £84,100. This compares to £82,800 in the same quarter during 2017/18.

There were 1,406 dwellings started on site or acquired (as part of the Right to Buy replacement policy) in quarter 4 of 2018/19, which was 13% lower than the number of dwellings started or acquired in the same quarter of the previous year.

It can be seen that each property sold is not necessarily being replaced with a new home.

Universal Credit

Five lone parents and their children lost challenges against the Government's benefit cap at the Supreme Court in London on 15 May 2019. They were challenging the £20,000 annual limit on welfare payments on the basis of human rights but the judgment, which was delivered after the Panel had considered the case for 10 months, said that the evidence had persuaded all seven justices that the cap had a major impact on lone parents with children under school age because it was "difficult for them to go out to work". However, it did not breach the human rights of either the parents or the children although it was acknowledged that the limit had an "often harsh" effect on single parents. (Inside Housing, 17 May 2019)

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be asking benefit claimants in Harrogate to volunteer to switch directly from the old benefits system to Universal Credit. This authority is piloting the first phase of the managed migration to Universal Credit and claimants will be asked to opt in to the new programme at work focused interviews at job centres. Only a small number of people are expected to be volunteering in the pilot starting in July, possibly on 17 July. (Barker, June 2019)

It should be noted that MPs are still yet to vote on the Universal Credit regulations which would allow the government to start moving people over from the legacy welfare system. The Universal Credit (Managed Migration) Regulations 2018 bill was withdrawn from Parliament on 14 January. Managed migration will move people currently claiming up to six benefits, including Job Seekers Allowance and Housing Benefit, through the old system, to single, monthly payments with Universal Credit.

Regulation

A supported housing association was found to have breached three consumer standards. The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) found that Westmoreland Supported Housing Association, which houses adults with learning and physical disabilities, had some homes which were found to be in disrepair, cold and lacking in basic utilities. It is understood that large numbers of gas safety checks and fire risk assessments were overdue and that the housing association had provided inconsistent information on health and safety, resulting in the breach of the homes standard. The housing association was also criticised for its handling of a set of evictions, where tenants said that they had advised that they would be made homeless if forced to move out. (Inside Housing, May 2019)

The Star survey, which is the most widely used tenant satisfaction survey is being reviewed. Housemark, the benchmarking organisation, is consulting on the way in which this is operated following the publication of the Social Housing Green Paper: "A New Deal for Social Housing". (Inside Housing, 24 May 2019). Changes to the way in which social housing is regulated are expected as a result of indications given in the Green Paper and it is expected that benchmarking will be used to monitor

performance of landlords by the regulator in a way that it has not been previously. The Council is a member of Housemark.

The Regulator for Social Housing (RSH, 2019) has written to all stock owning Councils reminding them of their health and safety obligations. This was in response to two Councils having breached the Home Standard. This letter said that: "This letter is a reminder to local authorities that the consumer standards apply to them and that while we currently only consider information that is referred to us, this does not diminish the obligation on local authorities to comply with the standards." It was widely felt that this letter was sent in response to a number of health and safety issues which had been identified in Council housing stock.

One such case involves stock belonging to four Councils operating in East Kent. The Health and Safety Executive is investigating after East Kent Housing (EKH) which manages approximately 17,000 homes on behalf of these authorities was found to have failed to undertake gas safety checks in up to 924 homes, although the organisation said that 384 had expired gas certificates on the date in question. EKH is an arms' length management organisation (ALMO) which manages the homes on behalf of the Councils. It has issued an apology to residents.

Members can be reassured that the Council is delivering excellent performance in relation to gas safety and that this is being monitored closely by senior managers as a matter of routine. Information relating to performance is published monthly and available to view on the housing pages of the Council's website. We have an eleven month cyclical programme of regular gas safety inspections and are currently in the process of moving to the new MOT system in accordance with regulation 36a of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (as amended).

An ongoing investigation by the East Kent Internal Audit Partnership has also found some potential non-compliance relating to fire, lift, electrical and legionella safety there. Canterbury Council, which owns 5,107 homes managed by EKH is set to consult with its tenants "as soon as practicable on withdrawal from EKH" although it has recognised that if the other Councils do not wish to terminate their involvement with the ALMO, the costs associated with this could be high. (Barker, 12 July 2019).

The Council has implemented a regular schedule of inspections relating to fire risk, legionella and asbestos. There are also periodic checks of the electrical installations in our homes which are undertaken on a five yearly basis and the one lift in a communal area is inspected three to four times annually. These programmes of inspection mitigate the risks arising from health and safety issues.

Housing Associations

LiveWest, a large South West housing association (created following a merger between Knightstone Housing and DCH, previously known as Devon and Cornwall Housing Association), boosted its surplus by 15% last year. It has 36,000 homes and it made an £81 million operating surplus in 2018/19, up from £69 million in the previous year. (Barker, 24 May 2019)

Homelessness

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 was introduced in April 2018 and placed new responsibilities on Councils to help homeless people or those threatened with homelessness. Statistics released by the Government in May (MHCLG, May 2019) relating to England as a whole showed that the number of people in temporary accommodation on 31 December 2018 had increased from 79,720 on the same date in 2017 to 83,700. It is thought that the new legislation which places greater emphasis on helping people for a longer period to alleviate their homelessness has had an impact.

The statistics were informed by full or partial returns from 322 out of the 326 local authorities (including the Council) in England (a 98.8% response rate).

The data also showed that between October and December 2018, 61,410 households were individually assessed and owed a prevention or relief under the new statutory homeless duties.

Housing Supply

The Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee has launched an enquiry into the effectiveness of the Government's current approach to boost social and affordable rented housing. This will include looking at funding for promoting new building projects, and how to "encourage local authorities and housing associations to increase provision". (Parliament UK, May 2019)

Council Housing

The Housing Minister, Kit Malthouse, gave an interview to Inside Housing and said that more than 10 local authorities which had previously sold all of their stock were hoping to build more housing of their own. Since the borrowing cap for Councils was removed last year, it should be easier for those with no homes in their management to obtain the necessary funding needed to enable them to deliver new homes.

The Council has opted not to take on more debt in light of the fact that any additional borrowing achieved by taking on more loans would extend liabilities and would still have to be repaid.

Bristol City Council has agreed to work as a partner with Legal and General (L&G) to redevelop a city centre site and will build 500 homes, office space, and a hotel. 40% of the homes will be affordable. (Curry, 2019).

The 100th anniversary of the Housing, Town Planning &c. Act (known as the 'Addison Act') 1919 which received royal assent in the July of that year was widely reported in July. This was the first housing act and in recognition of this, our Tenant Involvement Officer has visited a tenant who recently celebrated her 100th birthday, to interview her about her life and her experience as a Council tenant. The interview will be published in the next edition of our tenant magazine, Housing News 4 U.

Recommendation

That Members note the report.

Contact for more Information: Mrs Claire Fry, Group Manager for Housing Services, tel: 01884 234920, email: cfry@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: Cabinet Member seen and approved [yes/no – Councillor Simon Clist name of Cabinet Member], Leadership Team seen and approved [yes/no]

List of Background Papers:

Barker (17 May 2019), Half of tenants drop out after VRTB ballot, Nathaniel Barker, Inside Housing, 17 May 2019

Barker (24 May 2019), South West HA boosts surplus, Nathaniel Barker, Inside Housing, 24 May 2019

Barker (June 2019) Government: volunteers for first UC switch needed, Nathaniel Barker, Inside Housing, 14 June 2019)

Barker (12 July 2019), Fresh safety issues emerge at Kent ALMO, Nathaniel Barker, Inside Housing, 12 July 2019

Barker (12 July 2019), Just £10m used in VRTB pilot, Nathaniel Barker, Inside Housing, 12 July 2019

BBC (2019), Barking fire, barbeque may have caused blaze at flats, 10 June 2019
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-48583829>

Curry (2019), Bristol and L&G to deliver 500 homes, Rhiannon Curry, Inside Housing, 5 July 2019,

Gov.UK (2019), Right to Buy Sales in England: January to March 2019
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810184/Right_to_Buy_sales_in_England_2018_to_2019_Q4.pdf

Inside Housing (17 May 2019), Single parents lose benefit cap challenges in court, Inside Housing, 17 May 2019

Inside Housing (24 May 2019), HA breaches standards, Inside Housing, 24 May 2019

Inside Housing (24 May 2019), Star survey method under review, Inside Housing, 24 May 2019

MHCLG (May 2019), Statutory Homeless, October to December 2018, Quarter 4, England, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Housing Experimental Statistical Release, 24 May 2019
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/804329/Statutory_Homelessness_Statistical_Release_October_to_December_2018.pdf

Parliament UK (May 2019), Committee launch inquiry into long-term delivery of social and affordable rented housing, Commons Select Committee, 31 May 2019

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/housing-communities-and-local-government-committee/news/long-term-social-housing-inquiry-launch-17-19/>

RSH (May 2017), Regulator of Social Housing

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/802481/Letter to LAs - RSH consumer standards -](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/802481/Letter_to_LAs_-_RSH_consumer_standards_-_May_2019.pdf)

[_May 2019.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/802481/Letter_to_LAs_-_RSH_consumer_standards_-_May_2019.pdf) 17 May 2019

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