

Public Document Pack

Mid Devon District Council

Homes Policy Development Group

Tuesday, 16 March 2021 at 2.15 pm
Remote meeting

Next meeting
Tuesday, 25 May 2021 at 2.15 pm

**Important - this meeting will be conducted and recorded by Zoom only.
Please do not attend Phoenix House. The attached Protocol for Remote
Meetings explains how this will work.**

<https://zoom.us/j/96932499453?pwd=dG1OQTRsZDFtMWQ1TVpnUHhOczBLQT09>

Meeting ID: 969 3249 9453
Passcode: 664648

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Meeting ID: 969 3249 9453
Passcode: 664648

Membership

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

AGENDA

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 **Protocol for remote meetings** *(Pages 5 - 12)*
To note the protocol for remote meetings.
- 3 **Public Question Time**
To receive any questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and replies thereto.
- 4 **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.
- 5 **Minutes** *(Pages 13 - 22)*
Members to consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 19 January 2021.
- 6 **Chairman's Announcements**
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 7 **Performance and Risk** *(Pages 23 - 38)*
To receive a report from the Operations Manager for Performance, Governance and Health & Safety providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2020/21 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.
- 8 **Financial Monitoring** *(Pages 39 - 42)*
To receive the month ten financial monitoring report.
- 9 **Devon Home Choice Policy Review** *(Pages 43 - 66)*
To receive a report from Operations Manager for Housing Services and the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing. The Management Board of the Devon Home Choice scheme has undertaken a consultation on proposed changes to associated policy and procedures and this report provides more information about this. Individual local authority members of the scheme have been asked to approve the adoption of these changes.
- 10 **Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code - review of compliance** *(Pages 67 - 72)*
To receive a report from Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing. The Housing Service was required to

undertake an assessment against the Complaints Handling Code published by the Housing Ombudsman Service and to publish the outcome before 31 December 2020. This report contains information on this exercise and an update on the service improvements identified as a result of the findings.

11 **Housing Delivery Update Report** (*Pages 73 - 82*)

To receive a report from the Operations Manager for Housing Services and the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing an update to Members on enforcement and other activity undertaken by Officers in the Housing Service.

12 **Chairman's Annual Report for 2020/2021** (*Pages 83 - 84*)

To receive the Chairman's Annual Report for 2020/2021.

13 **Identification of items for the next meeting**

Members are asked to note that the following items are already identified in the work programme for the next meeting:

- Election of Chairman
- Election of Vice Chairman
- Performance and Risk
- Financial Monitoring
- Fees and Charges Report – Private Sector Housing (tbc)
- Briefing on the Social Housing White Paper 2020: The Charter for Social Housing Residents
- Housing Services Delivery Report
- Start time of meetings

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

Stephen Walford
Chief Executive
Monday, 8 March 2021

Covid-19 and meetings

Meetings will not be held in person at Phoenix House until the Covid-19 crisis eases. Instead, the meetings will be held remotely via Zoom and you will be able to join these meetings via the internet. Please see the instructions on each agenda and read the Protocol on Remote Meetings before you join.

If you want to ask a question or speak, email your full name to Committee@middevon.gov.uk by **no later than 4pm on the day before the**

meeting. This will ensure that your name is on the list to speak and will help us ensure that you are not missed – as you can imagine, it is easier to see and manage public speaking when everyone is physically present in the same room. Notification in this way will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible.

If you require any further information, please contact Sarah Lees on:
slees@middevon.gov.uk

Mid Devon District Council - Remote Meetings Protocol

1. Introduction

The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations permit remote attendance in Local Authority meetings.

Remote attendance is permitted as long as certain conditions are satisfied. These include that the Member is able to hear and be heard by the other Members in attendance. Also, being able to hear and be heard by any members of the public entitled to attend the meeting (in line with the public participation scheme). A visual solution is preferred, but audio is sufficient.

This also relates to members of the public attending the meeting also being heard.

The regulations are clear that a meeting is not limited to those present in the same place, but includes electronic, digital or virtual locations (internet locations, web addresses or conference call telephone numbers).

2. Zoom

Zoom is the system the Council will be using for the time-being to host remote / virtual meetings. It has functionality for audio, video, and screen sharing and you do not need to be a member of the Council or have a Zoom account to join a Zoom meeting.

3. Access to documents

Member Services will publish the agenda and reports for committee meetings on the Council's website in line with usual practice. Paper copies of agendas will only be made available to those who have previously requested this and also the Chair of a virtual meeting.

If any other Member wishes to have a paper copy, they must notify the Member Services before the agenda is published, so they can arrange to post directly – it may take longer to organise printing, so as much notice as possible is appreciated.

Printed copies will not be available for inspection at the Council's offices and this requirement was removed by the Regulations.

4. Setting up the Meeting

This will be done by Member Services. They will send a meeting request via Outlook which will appear in Members' Outlook calendar. Members will receive a URL link to click on to join the meeting.

5. Public Access

Members of the public will be able to use a weblink and standard internet browser. This will be displayed on the front of the agenda.

6. Joining the Meeting

Councillors must join the meeting early (i.e. at least five minutes before the scheduled start time) in order to avoid disrupting or delaying the meeting. Councillors should remember that they may be visible and heard by others, including the public, during this time.

7. Starting the Meeting

At the start of the meeting, the Member Services Officer will check all required attendees are present (viewing the participant list) and that there is a quorum. If there is no quorum, the meeting will be adjourned. This applies if, during the meeting, it becomes inquorate for whatever reason.

The Chair will remind all Members, Officers and the Public that **all microphones will be automatically muted**, unless and until they are speaking. This prevents background noise, coughing etc. which is intrusive and disruptive during the meeting. The Hosting Officer will enforce this and will be able to turn off participant mics when they are not in use. Members would then need to turn their microphones back on when they wish to speak.

8. Public Participation

Participation by members of the public will continue in line with the Council's current arrangements as far as is practicable. However, to ensure that the meeting runs smoothly and that no member of the public is missed, all those who wish to speak must register **by 4pm on the day before the meeting**. They should email their full name to Committee@middevon.gov.uk. If they wish to circulate their question in advance, that would be helpful.

At public question time, the Chair will invite the public by name to speak at the appropriate time. At that point, all public microphones will be enabled. This means that, to avoid private conversations being overheard, no member of the public should speak until it is their turn and they should then refrain from speaking until the end of public question time, when all microphones will be muted again. In the normal way, the public should state their full name, the agenda item they wish to speak to **before** they proceed with their question.

Unless they have registered, a member of the public will not be called to speak.

If a member of the public wishes to ask a question but cannot attend the meeting for whatever reason, there is nothing to prevent them from emailing members of the Committee with their question, views or concern in advance. However, if they do so, it would be helpful if a copy could be sent to Committee@middevon.gov.uk as well.

9. Declaration of Interests

Councillors should declare their interests in the usual way. A councillor with a disclosable pecuniary interest is required to leave the room. For remote meetings, this means that they will be moved to a break-out room for the duration of this item and will only be invited back into the meeting when discussion on the relevant item has finished.

10. The Meeting and Debate

The Council will not be using the Chat function.

The Chair will call each member of the Committee to speak - the Chair can choose to do this either by calling (i) each member in turn and continuing in this way until no member has anything more to add, or (ii) only those members who indicate a wish to speak using the 'raise hand' function within Zoom. This choice will be left entirely to the Chair's discretion depending on how they wish to manage the meeting and how comfortable they are using the one or the other approach.

Members are discouraged from physically raising their hand in the video to indicate a wish to speak – it can be distracting and easily missed/misinterpreted. No decision or outcome will be invalidated by a failure of the Chair to call a member to speak – the remote management of meetings is intensive and it is reasonable to expect that some requests will be inadvertently missed from time to time.

When referring to reports or making specific comments, Councillors should refer to the report and page number, so that all Members of the Committee have a clear understanding of what is being discussed at all times.

11. Voting

On a recommendation or motion being put to the vote, the Chair will go round the virtual room and ask each member entitled to vote to say whether they are for or against or whether they abstain. The Member Services Officer will announce the numerical result of the vote.

12. Meeting Etiquette Reminder

- Mute your microphone – you will still be able to hear what is being said.
- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- Speak clearly and please state your name each time you speak
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.

13. Part 2 Reports and Debate

There are times when council meetings are not open to the public, when confidential, or "exempt" issues – as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 – are under consideration. It is important to ensure that there are no members of the public at remote locations able to hear or see the proceedings during such meetings.

Any Councillor in remote attendance must ensure that there is no other person present – a failure to do so could be in breach of the Council's Code of Conduct.

If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Member Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, remove them to a break-out room for the duration of that item. They can then be invited back in when the business returns to Part 1.

Please turn off smart speakers such as Amazon Echo (Alexa), Google Home or smart music devices. These could inadvertently record phone or video conversations, which would not be appropriate during the consideration of confidential items.

14. Interpretation of standing orders

Where the Chair is required to interpret the Council's Constitution and procedural rules in light of the requirements of remote participation, they may take advice from the Member Services Officer or Monitoring Officer prior to making a ruling. However, the Chair's decision shall be final.

15. Disorderly Conduct by Members

If a Member behaves in the manner as outlined in the Constitution (persistently ignoring or disobeying the ruling of the Chair or behaving irregularly, improperly or offensively or deliberately obstructs the business of the meeting), any other Member may move 'That the member named be not further heard' which, if seconded, must be put to the vote without discussion.

If the same behaviour persists and a Motion is approved 'that the member named do leave the meeting', then they will be removed as a participant by the Member Services Officer.

16. Disturbance from Members of the Public

If any member of the public interrupts a meeting the Chair will warn them accordingly. If that person continues to interrupt or disrupt proceedings the Chair will ask the Member Services Officer to remove them as a participant from the meeting.

17. After the meeting

Please ensure you leave the meeting promptly by clicking on the red phone button to hang up.

18. Technical issues – meeting management

If the Chair, the Hosting Officer or the Member Services Officer identifies a problem with the systems from the Council's side, the Chair should either declare a recess while the fault is addressed or, if the fault is minor (e.g. unable to bring up a presentation), it may be appropriate to move onto the next item of business

in order to progress through the agenda. If it is not possible to address the fault and the meeting becomes inquorate through this fault, the meeting will be adjourned until such time as it can be reconvened.

If the meeting was due to determine an urgent matter or one which is time-limited and it has not been possible to continue because of technical difficulties, the Chief Executive, Leader and relevant Cabinet Member, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, shall explore such other means of taking the decision as may be permitted by the Council's constitution.

For members of the public and press who experience problems during the course of a meeting e.g. through internet connectivity or otherwise, the meeting will not be suspended or adjourned.

19. Technical issues – Individual Responsibility (Members and Officers)

Many members and officers live in places where broadband speeds are poor, but technical issues can arise at any time for a number of reasons. The following guidelines, if followed, should help reduce disruption. Separate guidance will be issued on how to manage connectivity – this paragraph focusses on the procedural steps. Joining early will help identify problems – see paragraph 6.

- Join public Zoom meetings by telephone if there is a problem with the internet. Before all meetings, note down or take a photograph of the front page of the agenda which has the necessary telephone numbers. Annex 1 to this protocol contains a brief step-by-step guide to what to expect
- Consider an alternative location from which to join the meeting, but staying safe and keeping confidential information secure. For officers, this may mean considering whether to come into the office, subject to this being safe and practicable (childcare etc.)
- If hosting a meeting via Zoom (briefings etc.), consider creating an additional host when setting up the meeting. The additional host can step in if the main host has problems – remember that without a host, the meeting cannot close and any information on the screens will remain on view
- Have to hand the telephone number of another member or officer expected in the meeting – and contact them if necessary to explain the problem in connecting
- Officers should have an 'understudy' or deputy briefed and on standby to attend and present as needed (and their telephone numbers to hand)
- For informal meetings and as a last resort, members and officers may be able to call another member or officer in the meeting who can put the 'phone on loudspeaker for all to hear – not ideal, but it ensures some degree of participation and continuity

- Member Services will hold a list of contact details for all senior officers

Phone only access to zoom meetings

(Before you start **make sure you know the Meeting ID and the Meeting Password**) – Both of these are available on the agenda for the meeting

Call the toll free number either on the meeting agenda or on the Outlook appointment (this will start with 0800 --- ----)

(Ensure your phone is on 'speaker' if you can)

A message will sound saying *"Welcome to Zoom, enter your meeting ID followed by the hash button"*

- **Enter Meeting ID followed by #**

Wait for next message which will say *"If you are a participant, please press hash to continue"*

- **Press #**

Wait for next message which will say *"Enter Meeting Password followed by hash"*

- **Enter 6 digit Meeting Password followed by #**

Wait for the following two messages:

"You are currently being held in a waiting room, the Host will release you from 'hold' in a minute"

Wait.....

"You have now entered the meeting"

Important notes for participating in meetings

Press ***6** to toggle between **'mute' and 'unmute'** (you should always ensure you are muted until you are called upon to speak)

If you wish to speak you can **'raise your hand'** by pressing ***9**. Wait for the Chairman to call you to speak. The Host will lower your hand after you have spoken. Make sure you mute yourself afterwards.

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 19 January 2021 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

R J Dolley (Chairman)
Mrs E M Andrews, J Cairney, S J Clist,
D R Coren, L J Cruwys, Mrs C P Daw,
C J Eginton and S J Penny

Also Present

Councillors

G Barnell, R M Deed, R Evans and B G J Warren

Also Present

Officers

Jill May (Director of Business Improvement and Operations), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Claire Fry (Housing Services Operations Manager), Catherine Yandle (Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security), Ian Chilver (Group Manager for Financial Services), Mike Lowman (Building Services Operations Manager), Michael Parker (Housing Options Manager) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

42 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no apologies for absence although it was reported that Cllr D Coren would be arriving late to the meeting.

43 **REMOTE MEETING PROTOCOL**

The protocol for remote meetings was noted.

44 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions from the members of the public present.

45 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

Cllr Mrs E Andrews declared a personal interest in that she is a council tenant.

46 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2020 were approved as a correct and accurate record of the meeting.

47 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He had attended the Economy Policy Development Group in the previous week where the same finance reports were discussed which would be discussed today. These were difficult times and some tough decisions would need to be made regarding the budget for next year.
- The Group were reminded that there would be an all Member briefing at 5.30pm that evening to do with Mid Devon District Council as a landlord, the Housing Revenue Account and Social Housing.

48 **PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT (00:08:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2020/2021 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

The contents of the report were outlined with particular reference to the following:

- The report included key performance indicators up to the end of December 2020.
- 71 empty homes had now been brought back into use which was above target.
- Landlord engagement and support actions, under the area of Private Sector Housing, now stood at a figure of 12.
- Homelessness had reduced slightly but safeguarding issues remained a high priority during the ongoing pandemic.

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

49 **FINANCIAL MONITORING (00:14:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a month 8 financial monitoring report * which was presented by the Group Manager for Financial Services.

Key highlights within the report were listed as follows:

- Month 8 reporting showed a forecast improvement of £131k which now indicated a surplus of £109k.
- The uncertain times that we were living with and how the figures could fluctuate.
- Any surplus monies would be added to reserves to support any future gaps in budget.
- The Medium Term Financial Plan and estimates of budget gaps for future years.
- November saw a second period of lockdown which from a financial perspective stalled the recovery in service activity and therefore income.
- The income compensation scheme was active and the first payment of £530k relating to return period April to July had been received. The second return (August to November) had been accelerated and submission was currently in progress.
- A further £53k had been received in furlough monies for November.

- The variances outlined within the report.
- Month 8 reporting for the Housing Revenue Account which showed a forecast reduction in the deficit by £34k to £324k.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Corporate Management – 3RDL fees being in relation to the recruitment of new Directors and an element of legal fees.
- ‘Garage tenancy - new lets’ had not been occurring during the pandemic. It was explained that this had been due to the need to physically handover keys. A safer method of doing this had needed to be sought and a review of the process had taken place in December. Lets had recommenced this month.
- Why the HRA was currently in a deficit position to the tune of £324k? It was explained that this related to costs in relation to the settlement of an historic contract dispute which was subject to a confidentiality agreement. An indication of the costs in relation to this was given as £624k and had this not occurred the HRA would have been in a surplus position at this point.
- A question was asked as to why there had been a salary overspend in the Property Services area. The Group Manager for Financial Services explained that he did not have the information to hand but would provide a written response to the Group following the meeting.

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

50 BUDGET 2021/22 UPDATE (00:28:00)

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) reviewing the revised draft budget changes. This had been previously considered by the Cabinet on 7 January 2021 and the Group was asked to discuss any changes that it may require prior to the formal recommendation of the budget proposals to Cabinet and Council in February.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- The current snapshot of where the council was at the current time, the deficit had reduced from circa £3m down to £490k but there was a lot more work to do.
- Key movements and assumptions shown within the report highlighting, the Funding Settlement which included details regarding the Government Income Protection Scheme, New Homes Bonus and the Lower Tier Service Grant. In addition adjustment has been made to the provision relating to the pay settlement.
- The ongoing unknown impact of the pandemic on the budget.
- Members were invited to highlight any areas of saving which they thought may contribute to closing the budget gap and so be worthy of further investigation.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The proposals shown within the report in relation to 3 weekly waste savings. However, it was pointed out that the trial in relation to this would not begin until June 2021 and would last 3 months, outcomes were not known yet. No decision had been made in relation to this and a number of options would be

placed on the table before a final decision was made. However, the finance team had been tasked with bringing forward potential savings within the budget report and this was what they had done. Final approval of the budget would be given by full Council in February.

- It was noted that HRA recharges would be adjusted in the final draft budget to account for some minor additional changes and so align general fund and HRA budgets.
- There may or may not be a staff pay adjustment in the coming year. The result of any discussions or negotiations regarding this were not known yet but the finance team had assumed a small increase of 0.5% for budget purposes.

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

51 **DRAFT 2021/2022 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) (00:47:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing presenting proposals for the second draft of the Housing Revenue Account for 2021/22.

The contents of the report were outlined with reference to the following:

- The HRA was ring fenced and legally required to be kept separate from the General Fund (GF).
- The HRA had not suffered as extensively as the GF due to the pandemic receiving the majority of its income from rents. Rental income had been maintained but risks in relation to this going forwards were acknowledged within the report.
- There had been a small improvement in dwelling rents relating to the annual CPI increment.
- The HRA investment income figures were reflective of the general state of the financial markets at the moment.
- There has been recognition of further savings within Repairs and Maintenance of £146k, largely relating to a restructure which included the redevelopment budget.
- Cleaning company costs had been adjusted for.
- Falling interest rate adjustments had taken place.
- Overall, the HRA budget, like the GF, had to balance.

Consideration was given to:

- The “rent written off” figure and the “write offs recovered” were discussed. Further information regarding these values as a % of total outstanding debt was made. The Group Manager for Financial Services stated that he would be able to provide a written response after the meeting when he had the necessary information to hand.
- Non dwelling rental income being down on what was expected – what proportion of this was due to garages not being re-let? The Group Manager again stated that he would provide a written response in relation to this question.
- Interest on previous loans and the effect of this on the HRA? More information in relation to this would be provided after the meeting.

- The Group requested that the written responses be supplied to Member Services who would then circulate them to the whole Group.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the rent increase proposed and the other budget proposals for 2021/2022 be approved.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

Reason for decision:

A balanced and realistic budget must be set for 2021/2022 in order to maintain a sustainable Housing Revenue Account with adequate investment for necessary maintenance.

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

(ii) Cllr Coren arrived to the meeting half way through the discussion and therefore did not take part in the vote.

(iii) Cllrs L Cruwys and S Clist requested that their abstention from voting be recorded.

52 **CONDITION AND FUTURE USE OF COUNCIL OWNED GARAGES (01:01:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing and the Building Services Operations Manager providing an update to Members on the current garage stock situation, with plans for modernisations and opportunities for change of use/redevelopment, and the adoption of a 6 year rather than the existing 12 year planned maintenance programme.

The following was referenced within the report:

- There had been an annual budget of £75k to support a planned maintenance programme of the council's garage stock. Overall occupancy was currently at 70% although of the 199 garages that had been modernised 83% were now occupied.
- The report provided an annexe showing all garage sites, exact occupancy rates and the condition of each site.
- A number of garages had been identified as having the potential for alternative uses.
- There was an opportunity to bring forward increased occupancy and income by doubling the rate of modernisation and reducing this from a 12 yearly to a 6 yearly planned maintenance programme. There was capacity within the Building Services team to meet this programme but not if it were to be shortened to fewer than 6 years

Consideration was given to:

- Many garages were now too small for the size of modern cars.
- The garages at Eastlands in Hemyock were not shown within the annexe as they were ground rent plots.
- Significant problems with asbestos and how it was to be dealt with safely.

- Increasing number of voids over recent years and the effect of this on income.
- The Group appreciated the work that had gone into the report.
- The very poor state of repair of many garages with vegetation growing inside and out.
- Derelict garages within the Cranmore Ward.
- The dangers presented to children and families living near to some of these garages.
- The importance of the need to keep Ward Members updated and involved with any garage plans going forwards. Also, for Ward Members to bring particular issues to the attention of the neighbourhood teams so issues could be addressed.
- It was confirmed that Members would be involved in the consultation process, as of course, would tenants.
- The possibility of demolishing some garages and providing social housing or parking bays would be explored.
- A programme of garage maintenance and modernisation would be provided for the whole of the district not just one particular part of it.
- A 6 yearly programme was realistic and could be achievable.
- The possibility of providing one large garage rather than 2 small ones was discussed as was the provision of electric charging points.
- Key considerations would be demand, conditions and suitability for development. Some sites may not be suitable for development. Each site would need to be assessed individually.
- In considering the recommendation, the Group discussed whether the stated 'maintenance' programme also included 'modernisation'? The Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and housing stated that it did, they were part and parcel of the planned programme and the Leader of the Council confirmed that when the recommendation came forward to the Cabinet, approval would be considered on that basis.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the adoption of a 6 yearly planned garage maintenance programme by bringing forward budgeted funds from future years be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr L Cruwys and seconded by Cllr S Clist)

Reason for the decision:

In order to recommend the adoption of a 6 yearly planned garage maintenance and modernisation programme by bringing forward budgeted funds from future years.

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

53 **GRASS VERGES LOCATED ON HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT REPORT (01:58:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing setting out a policy / procedure relating to a decision making framework which was agreed at the meeting of the Grass Verges Task and Finish Group held on 11 November 2020.

The work of the Task and Finish Group was explained. The Chairman of the Task and Finish Group provided the following summary of the discussions that had taken place:

- He thanked the Members and officers who had worked hard to try and ascertain what was needed.
- Initially there had been discussions about viewing all 180 maps showing the areas of land in question. This had felt like an impossible task, he had therefore spent time with the Operations Manager for Housing trying to understand the true scale of the problem. It had transpired that issues existed in a few areas only and related to areas which were part owned by private individuals and partly rented by council tenants. Individuals from each group had had their own ideas about how grassed areas were to be dealt with. A procedure was needed to help resolve queries going forwards.
- He had also spoken to Cllr Eginton on this issue who had a deal of knowledge in this area.

Discussion took place regarding:

- There were specific issues in Shobrooke which this procedure may not be helpful in resolving.
- Site visits were very difficult during the pandemic.
- 'One size did not fit all' and a review would be needed in the near future to see if the procedure was working. It was confirmed that the procedure would be reviewed in 12 months time.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the following be approved:

- a) The procedure shown at Appendix A which is designed to ensure that the conflicting needs of stakeholders are taken into account when residents make requests regarding different maintenance arrangements/agreements relating to the upkeep of grass verges and other grassed areas on the housing estate.***
- b) An increase in the Environmental Improvement Budget to £10,000 and a review of the procedures relating to it to ensure that it can be better used to support initiatives designed to encourage greater biodiversity.***

(Proposed by Cllr C Eginton and seconded by Cllr R Dolley)

Reason for the decision:

In order for a policy / procedure to be in place which provides a decision making framework for officers within the Estates team to use when considering requests made by different stakeholders.

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

- (ii) A proposal to defer a decision until there had been some further dialogue with the necessary parties involved was not supported.

54 **HOUSING STRATEGY UPDATE (02:16:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing an update to Members of the Group on the development of a revised corporate Housing Strategy.

It was explained that the report set out the preliminary work that had been completed in the development of an updated Housing Strategy. This would set out those opportunities and challenges in respect of several key delivery functions; housing delivery, enabling and renewal/standards alongside housing needs and homelessness.

Consideration was given to:

- The proposed approach appearing to contain a well structured set of proposals and the need to progress this in a post Covid world.
- It was also sensible to include climate change and eco / green considerations in relation to any projects.
- The Strategic Housing Needs Assessment was vital so as to look at all housing tenures, not just affordable housing.
- The Corporate Manager for Property, Leisure and Climate Change would be leading on the carbon work and was a member of the Project Board as well as the newly appointed Climate Change Officer. There would be a range of experts addressing this key part of the strategy.

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

55 **HOUSING HOMELESS PEOPLE DURING THE PANDEMIC (02:27:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Operations Manager for Housing Services providing more information about how the Housing Options Team had been working to resolve homelessness during the pandemic.

The contents of the report were summarised by the Operations Manager with an emphasis on safeguarding homeless individuals being a high priority within the Housing Service.

The Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services and Deputy Leader wished to place on public record his thanks to the Operations Manager and her team for the magnificent job they had undertaken and were continuing to undertake on behalf of Homeless people during the pandemic. He explained that a lot of work took place behind the scenes and that the sheer nature of the work involved emotional individuals and subjects.

The Group also wished for their thanks to be taken back to the team.

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

56 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (02:46:00)**

No additional items were identified for the next meeting other than those already listed in the work programme.

However, it was requested that all Members receive a regular email update on relevant matters within the Housing and Property Service areas, especially during the current time. This was especially helpful to the Homes Policy Development Group Members.

(The meeting ended at 5.00 pm)

CHAIRMAN

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HOMES PDG
16 MARCH 2021

PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT

Cabinet Member Cllr Bob Evans, Cabinet Member for Housing
Responsible Officer Catherine Yandle, Group Manager for Performance, Governance and Data Security

Reason for Report: To provide Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2020/21 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.

The PDG is invited to review the targets suggested for 2021/22 against the Corporate Plan Performance framework and recommend their approval to Cabinet. (Appendix 4)

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 2020-21 financial year.
- 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 Homes at present.
- 1.4 All appendices are produced from the corporate Service Performance And Risk management system (SPAR).

2.0 Performance Appendix 1

- 2.1 Regarding the Corporate Plan Aim: **Deliver Housing:** The targets for annual housing completions of most types have been updated to reflect the Local Plan targets. These are reported quarterly or annually so no change from the last report.
- 2.2 Regarding the Corporate Plan Aim: **Private Sector Housing: Bringing Empty homes into use** is well above target, funding may not continue beyond 21/22.
- 2.3 Regarding the Corporate Plan Aim: **Council Housing:** all measures are either at or just below target. In terms of gas servicing compliance this has been affected by Covid 19 and we currently have 13 properties with expired LGSR's. First Time access is less than 55%.
- 2.4 Regarding the Corporate Plan Aim: **Support and grow active tenancy engagement:** The tenant census had a good response. Work has commenced on analysing the results with a view to developing an action plan in 21/22.
- 2.5 Mid Devon District Council is launching a Call for Sites process to inform a new Local Plan for Mid Devon. The development potential of sites put forward during the Call will be assessed by local authority officers and a panel of representatives from the housing and economic development industries. The conclusions will be published in a 'Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment' (HELAA). The HELAA will form part of the evidence base for a new Local Plan for Mid Devon.

Targets

- 2.6 The targets for the next financial year against the Corporate Plan Performance framework will need to be approved by Cabinet at their meeting on 8 April. The proposals are attached as appendix 4.

3.0 Risk

- 3.1 Risk reports to committees include strategic risks with a current score of 10 or more in accordance with the Risk and Opportunity Management Strategy. (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 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 2020-21 that are outlined in this report and feeds back any areas of concern to the Cabinet.

- 4.2 The PDG is invited to review the targets suggested for 2021/22 against the Corporate Plan Performance framework and recommend their approval to 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

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Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Monthly report for 2020-2021
 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: Deliver 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>Net additional homes provided</u>	n/a	n/a	393	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		Jenny Clifford, Simon Newcombe	
<u>Self Build Plots</u>	n/a	n/a	5	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	n/a	1	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	n/a		Jenny Clifford	
<u>Gypsy & Traveller Pitches</u>	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a		Jenny Clifford	
<u>Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)</u>		133	94	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a		Jenny Clifford	
<u>Build Council Houses</u>	26 (9/12)	26		n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a		Andrew Busby,	(Quarter 4) We have bought back 1 RTB property (CY)

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Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Priorities: Homes

Aims: Deliver 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
																Simon Newcombe	
<u>Number of Homelessness Approaches</u>	n/a	n/a	721 for 2019/20	n/a	n/a	125	n/a	n/a	289	n/a	n/a	433	n/a	n/a		Simon Newcombe	

Aims: Community Land Trusts

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>Community Land Trusts Assisted</u>	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	1	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	n/a		Jenny Clifford	(Quarter 3) Initial advice provided to Wessex Group for the Sampford Peverell Community Land Trust (TP)

Aims: Private Sector 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>Deliver homes by bringing Empty Houses into use</u>	120 (10/12)	138	72	1	9	26	31	34	44	59	60	71	78			Simon Newcombe	
<u>Houses in Multiple Occupation</u>	n/a	n/a	100%						100%	100%	100%	100%	98%			Simon Newcombe	(September) Covid meant inspections did not recommence until July. Therefore no data for

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Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Priorities: Homes

Aims: Private Sector 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>(HMOs) investigations</u>																	April - June. However have caught back with backlog by end of September so currently 100% for year to date (SN)
<u>Landlord engagement and Support</u>	n/a	n/a	9	n/a	n/a	4	n/a	n/a	8	n/a	n/a	12	n/a	n/a		Simon Newcombe	(Quarter 3) x3 pin point x1 webinar (TW)

Aims: Council 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>% Complaints Responded to On Time</u>	100.0% (9/12)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%				Simon Newcombe	
<u>Tenant Census</u>	n/a	n/a	34%	n/a	n/a	34%	n/a	n/a	34%	n/a	n/a	34%	n/a	n/a		Simon Newcombe	
<u>% Emergency Repairs Completed on Time</u>	100.0% (9/12)	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%				Simon Newcombe	
<u>% Urgent Repairs Completed on Time</u>	100.0% (9/12)	100.0%	95.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%				Simon Newcombe	

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Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Priorities: Homes

Aims: Council 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>% Routine Repairs Completed on Time</u>	100.0% (9/12)	99.3%	95.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	98.4%	99.8%	100.0%	100.0%	99.5%				Simon Newcombe	
<u>% Repair Jobs Where an Appointment Was Kept</u>	99.8% (9/12)	98.9%	95.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.8%	100.0%	99.0%	99.7%	100.0%	100.0%	99.3%				Simon Newcombe	
<u>% Properties With a Valid Gas Safety Certificate</u>	99.78% (9/12)	99.82%	100.0%	99.6%	99.4%	98.9%	98.9%	99.2%	99.4%	99.5%	99.5%	99.5%				Simon Newcombe	

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Homes PDG Risk Management Report - Appendix 2

Report for 2020-2021

For Homes - Cllr Bob Evans 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	In progress	Completed and evaluated	No Data available
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Risks:	No Data (0+)	High (15+)	Medium (6+)	Low (1+)
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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
In progress	Multi-skilled Staff	Due to an increase in homelessness approaches more applicants with complex needs are coming through the system that require far greater staff attention than normal. In order to mitigate this, staff are expanding their training around mental health, drug and alcohol awareness, and safeguarding, in order to create a more multi-skilled and adaptable workforce. This may require a greater	Claire Fry	21/12/2020	30/12/2020	In progress (2)

Homes PDG Risk Management Report - Appendix 2						
Mitigating Action records						
Mitigation Status	Mitigating Action	Info	Responsible Person	Date Identified	Last Review Date	Current Effectiveness of Actions
		allocation of resources as homelessness increases.				
Completed and evaluated	RSI funding	The number of homeless approaches and the number of rough sleepers in the District are both likely to increase as a result of the economic instability and the current outbreak of Covid19. Our success in obtaining up to £6,400 in RSI funding to deliver services during the cold weather means that we can adapt to this increased caseload and better carry out early intervention and prevention options to aid rough sleepers and prevent returning to the streets.	Claire Fry	21/12/2020	30/12/2020	Fully effective(1)
Completed and evaluated	Staff Support	Officers are trained and knowledgeable and the structure of Housing Options team reviewed to build resilience.	Claire Fry	22/06/2017	30/12/2020	Fully effective(1)
In progress	Temporary Accommodation	With the rise in homelessness applicants, the	Claire Fry	21/12/2020	30/12/2020	In progress (2)
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Homes PDG Risk Management Report - Appendix 2

Mitigating Action records

Mitigation Status	Mitigating Action	Info	Responsible Person	Date Identified	Last Review Date	Current Effectiveness of Actions
		overall cost of homelessness provisions will increase and therefore there is a need to make use of existing stock as temporary accommodation, as opposed to more costly alternatives such as bed and breakfast.				

Current Status: High (16)

Current Risk Severity: 4 - High

Current Risk Likelihood: 4 - High

Service Manager: Claire Fry

Review Note: The score for this risk remains the same, as a result of the pandemic there is a need to safe-guard rough sleepers as much as possible. The economic impact of the pandemic is likely to result in increased approaches from people who may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. In addition, there could be a reduction in the number of homes available in the private rented sector.

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Risk Matrix Homes Appendix 3

Report For Homes - Cllr Bob Evans Portfolio Current settings

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

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KPI	Agreed 2020/21 target	Proposed 2021/2020 target	Rationale
Net Additional Homes delivered	393	393	Link to Housing Delivery Test and monitoring of Local Plan delivery
Affordable Homes delivered	94	94	Target derived from Local Plan
Build Council Houses	None	20	11 infill etc. Pods 3 Beech rd
Self build plots delivered	5	5	Target derived from Local Plan
Gypsy & traveller pitches delivered	2	2	Target derived from Local Plan
Empty Homes brought back into use	72	72	Subject to Housing strategy and further funding being agreed
HMOs investigations	100%	100%	All potential informed of investigated
Landlord Engagement	9	9	Increased emphasis post Covid
Homeless Approaches	None	None	Responsive, actual reported
Tenant Census	34%	Develop Action Plan	Census complete now analysing results
% Properties With a Valid Gas Safety Certificate	100%	100%	Statutory Target
Complaints responded to on time	100%	100%	Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code
Emergency Repairs	100%	100%	Other Councils >95%
Urgent Repairs	95%	95%	Other Councils >95%
Routine repairs	95%	95%	Other Councils >95%
Repairs appointments kept	95%	95%	Other Councils >95%

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Mid Devon District Council
Financial Monitoring Verbal Update
2020/21 Jan / Month 10

1. General Fund

This will be the final reporting period prior to presentation of the 2020/21 Outturn Report to Cabinet in June. It has been an extraordinary year due to the impact of Covid 19. Financially the Council has suffered significant service disruption with resultant income losses. The response from Government has evolved as the crisis necessitated, with little warning, including the provision of various levels of Covid grant funding. The unpredictability has frustrated our forecasting; and this will continue, not least with the interpretation/calculation risk we have previously discussed particularly with respect to the Income Compensation Scheme.

Month 9 – Dec 20 £k	Month 10 – Dec 21 £k	Movement £k
89	46	(43)

The Month 10 reporting indicates a forecast improvement of £43k and now indicates a deficit of £46k.

The third lockdown persists as expected so income losses were already largely forecast although there have been some small adjustments. The Council continues to participate in the Job Protection Scheme with a further £74k claimed for January (YTD = £471k). The January claim largely relates to officers working in the leisure centres which remain closed. Despite the speculation, it is not certain when this lockdown may start to be relaxed but it is clear that the leisure centres will not reopen this (financial) year.

To recap MDDC has received £1,197k in non-ring fenced Covid funding (including £39k late last year); is awaiting £775k being the second submission under the Income Compensation Scheme prior to the final reconciliation for the year in May (forecast - £1.650m); and will benefit under the Collection Fund Compensation Scheme with the NDR element yet to be finalised.

The table below shows how the monthly movement breaks down between budget lines. To be concise, the table only includes service areas where the forecast has moved between December and January. For these service lines, it extracts the variance value which is funded from ear marked reserves as this will not contribute to the overall (surplus)/deficit movement.

General Fund Summary £K	Full Year Variance				M10
	M9	EMR	Bridge Other	Total	
Cllr Bob Deed					
Corporate Management	8		38	38	46
Cllr Colin Slade					
Grounds Maintenance	(78)		(3)	(3)	(81)
Waste Services	63		7	7	70
Cllr Dennis Knowles					
Environmental Services incl. Licensing	(60)		(4)	(4)	(63)
IT Services	42	(5)	(22)	(27)	14
Recreation And Sport	1,485		(2)	(2)	1,483
Cllr Andrew Moore					
Revenues And Benefits	(201)		(34)	(34)	(234)
Car Parks	535		(17)	(17)	518
Cllr Bob Evans					
General Fund Housing	38	(155)	5	(150)	(112)
Cllr Richard Chesterton					
Planning And Regeneration	246		(34)	(34)	212
Cllr Mrs Nikki Woollatt					
Legal & Democratic Services	(17)		(2)	(2)	(19)
All General Fund Services		(160)	(68)	(227)	
Interest Payable on Other Activities	(340)		(4)	(4)	(344)
Interest Receivable on Investments	(177)		(16)	(16)	(193)
Transfers into/(from) Earmarked Reserves	1,169	160	(0)	160	1,329
Total Budgeted Expenditure		0	(88)	(88)	
Covid19 Income Compensation Scheme	(1,700)		50	50	(1,650)
Total Budgeted Funding		0	50	50	
Forecast in year (Surplus) /	89	0	(38)	(38)	51

Deficit		
General Fund Reserve 31/03/20	(2,251)	(2,251)
Forecast General Fund Balance 31/03/2021	(2,162)	(2,200)

Therefore those items not funded by EMRs and which contribute to the month on month deficit movement are as follows:

- Corporate Management - £38k:
 - Officer TUPE costs - £38k
 - 3RDL professional fees - £7k
 - Other small cost savings – (£7k)
- Grounds Maintenance – Staff costs - (£3k)
- Waste Services - £7k:
 - Garden waste permit sales reduced over performance - £6k
 - Recycling income reduced under performance – (£22k)
 - Street Cleansing income re Grand Western Canal part year – £5k
 - Staff costs including agency - £28k
 - Additional Covid 19 costs (vehicle hire & PPE) – (£14k)
 - Fuel savings – £4k
- Environmental Services – licencing income reduced under performance due to Covid – (£4k)
- IT – (£22k):
 - Reduced additional maintenance costs due to delays implementing voice over Skype – (£3k)
 - Software costs - £8k
 - Salary savings – (£7k)
 - Retained consultancy to cover vacancies re technical support for R&B – (£20k)
- Recreation & Sport – (£2k):
 - Further cost centre savings due to closures – (£5k)
 - Covid 19 income losses adjustment - (£7k)
 - Salary costs – £10k
- Revenues & Benefits – (£34k):
 - Reduced agency requirement to manage Covid 19 grant administration – (£39k)
 - Other staff costs - £5k
- Car Parks – (£17k)
 - Adjustment to P&D income losses arising from Covid 19 – (£13k)
 - Adjustment to off street parking fines arising from Covid 19 – (£4k)

- General Fund Housing – Homelessness debt review and write off - £5k
- Planning and Regeneration – (£34k)
 - Development management income reduced under performance due to Covid – (£36k)
 - Development management vacancy management savings - £2k
- Legal & Democratic – Sale of electoral register – (£3k)
- Interest payable – Reduced cost of borrowing as no new loans required in 2020/21 – (£4k)
- Interest Receivable on Investments – (£16k)
 - Interest on 3RDL loan drawdowns – (£5k)
 - CCLA dividend exceeding expectations – (£11k)
- Income Compensation Scheme – adjustment to reflect reduced income loss expectations - £50k

2. HRA

	Month 9 – Dec 20 £k	Month 10 – Jan 21 £k	Movement £k
Forecast (Surplus) / Deficit	230	37	(193)

Month 10 reporting shows a forecast reduction in the deficit by £193k to £37k.

The reasons for this movement is as follows:

- Rental income reduction due to void levels increasing during the pandemic amendment – £5k
- Staff costs reduced savings (DLO & Development Team) - £35k
- Increased non staff savings in planned maintenance – (£83k)
- Reduced non staff savings in responsive and voids - £12k
- Fuel usage savings reduction - £22k
- DLO recharge (revenue and capital) under recovery improvement – (£100k)
- DFG under recovery improvement – (£20k)
- Tenancy services additional staff savings including sewage maintenance, communal roads and warden services – (£64k)

HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 16 MARCH 2021

DEVON HOME CHOICE POLICY REVIEW

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Bob Evans, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Homes & Property Services

Responsible Officer: Mrs Claire Fry, Operations Manager for Housing Services/Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing

Reason for Report and Recommendation: The Management Board of the Devon Home Choice scheme has undertaken a consultation on proposed changes to associated policy and procedures and this report provides more information about this. Individual local authority members of the scheme have been asked to approve the adoption of these changes.

Recommendation: Members are recommended to agree the proposed changes to the Devon Home Choice scheme and to request that the Cabinet adopts them

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. Although the proposal policy changes do not impact upon this, for clarity, currently, strategic housing authorities, of which there are 10 in Devon including MDDC, pay £1k each to support the functioning of the scheme and all landlords pay £25 advertisement fee per property. The budget is reviewed by the Management Board including a representative of MDDC (Claire Fry) on a quarterly basis.

Budget and Policy Framework: There are no direct budget implications arising from this policy review. The Devon Home Choice Policy sets out the Devon housing authorities' collective social housing scheme which determine priorities, and details the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation as required by the Housing Act 1996. More information is provided under Legal Implication and within the report.

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.

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 our Housing Options Assistant will assist those with no internet access with the completion of the application form and updating their circumstances when necessary.

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. There is a video which is available on line which provides an overview of the scheme and how to use it

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: None directly arising from this policy update. In wider terms, the ICT system used to administer the Devon Home Choice scheme is a cloud-based one. The Council encourages anyone wishing to register for rehousing or those wishing to update their existing application to do so online, thus reducing the need for paper. The Council does not carry a stock of printed application forms but will provide support to those who do not have internet access by assisting them with making applications or updating existing applications over the telephone. Previously, home visits were undertaken as necessary but these have been suspended since the start of the pandemic.

1. 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. 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 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.
- 1.4 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 this will be undertaken during the project to consolidate housing-related policies which is planned as part of the service improvement programme. Members have been briefed on this programme previously.
- 1.5 In addition, local authorities are expected to have regard to their homelessness strategies when preparing or modifying their housing allocation schemes.
- 1.6 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.

2 Devon Home Choice

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 The aims of DHC, as stated in the policy document, are to provide:
 - Choice for people seeking housing and the ability to move within Devon
 - A common scheme across Devon that is transparent, easy to understand and accessible to all

2.3 DHC provides a common:

- Application form
- Housing register
- Approach to assessing housing need and awarding priority
- Approach to advertising available properties

2.4 The DHC 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.

2.5 The bands range from Band A, where someone is in urgent need of rehousing (usually due to serious threats of violence or for medical reasons), to Band E, which is also known as the band of no housing need.

2.6 When allocating a home, in common with those of other landlords which work within the scheme, our Officers 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.

2.7 The Council has an allocations policy which is available to view on the webpages of the Housing Service. It is due for review and this will be undertaken as part of the project to consolidate housing-related policies which is planned as part of the service improvement programme referred to within this report previously.

2.8 The allocations policy states that the Council uses the DHC scheme to assess housing need and to allocate our own housing stock. It notes that the DHC 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.

2.9 The Council is a member of the Management Board which oversees the work of the two Officers employed to manage DHC. 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 Operations Manager for Housing Services has delegated authority to sign this.

3 Consultation

3.1 The assessment framework provided by DHC has been reviewed on a number of occasions in recent years to ensure that any changes included in relevant legislation and statutory instruments were met, and in line with good practice. For example, changes arising from the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and associated Code of Guidance were implemented and also those

relating to the regulations relating to the allocation of social housing following the UK's exit from the European Union issued in 2019.

- 3.2 The Management Board at the meeting on 11 September 2020 agreed that a number of changes being proposed were significant and therefore a public consultation should be undertaken.
- 3.3 The consultation aimed to obtain feedback from (including but not limited to) statutory agency workers, voluntary agency workers, existing tenants of a DHC partner landlord (e.g. Mid Devon DC) and other DHC applicants
- 3.4 The questions contained within the consultation are shown in Annex 1.
- 3.5 In line with this decision, a consultation ran for 13 weeks from 1 November 2020 until 31 January 2021 on the DHC home page.
- 3.6 An appropriate message was added to the login pages of applicants together with a link to the consultation. In addition, a bulk email was sent to every active applicant on the register. A county-wide publicity strategy was agreed and on 23 November 2020, Members of the Council were advised about the consultation in the Weekly Information Sheet.
- 3.7 In line with the project plan, the consultation responses were analysed during February and the outcome of the consultation responses is due to be circulated to members of the Management Board on 1 March 2021 with the deadline for the policy review changes to be signed off at the meeting on 12 March 2021. The draft findings of the Management Board against each proposal as available ahead of the March meeting are set out in Section 4 below.
- 3.8 The Operations Manager for Housing Services will provide a further (verbal) update on the outcome of the consultation at the meeting of the Homes Policy Development Group on 16 March 2021.
- 3.9 The Management Board was planning to publish the new policy and the results of the consultation on the DHC website with effect from 1 April 2021 but the Operations Manager for Housing Services has made the DHC Management Board aware of the decision-making timetable of the Council and therefore the publication will be delayed until the Cabinet accepts or rejects any recommendations made by the Homes PDG.

4 The Proposed Changes

- 4.1 A list of the proposed changes to the DHC policy are shown in Annex 2. More information of each of these is provided below.
- 4.2 Proposal 1 relates to bidding for larger 1-bed properties where applicants are lacking 2-bedrooms.

It was suggested because currently there is a shortage of larger homes in Devon. As an illustration of this, the Council, as a landlord, only has 39 x 4 bedroom units, 1 x 5 bedroom unit and 1 x 6 bedroom unit. In the private

sector, families can make a choice as to whether or not to accept a home smaller than they need in practice because that home will offer more living space than their existing property. This proposal was based on this reasoning but it is not recommended for agreement by the Management Board.

- 4.3 Proposal 2 relates to a new question on the application form regarding housing need criteria.

This is recommended for agreement by the Management Board. It means that housing applicants will be made aware of home-ownership options which may be open to them as an alternative to social housing.

- 4.4 Proposal 3 relates to maximum occupancy of larger properties.

This arose due to the shortage of larger homes in the county. In many cases, the shortage of 6 and 7 bedroom homes available for large households is such that they may never be rehoused if the decision on an allocation is related to their bedroom need. However, many 4 and 5 bedroom homes can accommodate large households with the members of that household deciding how to make best use of the space available to them. Therefore, for example, in a family with several children, the largest bedroom may be used to accommodate four children in two sets of bunk beds. The Management Board is recommending agreement of this change.

- 4.5 Proposal 4 relates to occupancy of high-rise flats by younger children.

This will not apply in Mid Devon due to the fact that there are no large blocks of flats taller than 4 stories. However, the aim of this proposed change is to minimise the risk of serious injury or death to young children living in flats located above the third floor of a building. This was agreed in principle by the Management Board subject to a review of the current cases with this banding reason.

- 4.6 Proposal 5 relates to those household members who cannot succeed to a tenancy following the death of a tenant. It gives some priority for rehousing to such cases provided they have lived at the home for 12 months and that if they have approached the local authority, that the authority has confirmed that s188 duty to accommodate is triggered, in line with homelessness legislation.

As a registered provider of social housing, the Council has a tenancy changes policy which offers Officers some discretion in such cases. Where the death of a tenant leaves someone in the property without a right to succession, the Council may consider granting a tenancy, or offer a tenancy at an alternative property. However, the tenancy changes policy states that in exercising this discretion: "We will ensure that the Tenancy Policy, Allocations Policy and Devon Home Choice Scheme are not undermined".

The effect of proposal 5 is to ensure that those who may require rehousing due to the death of the tenant at the property where they have lived for at least a year have their circumstances assessed by the Council in its strategic role. This will ensure that they are given the option to bid for a property of the right size and type according to their needs. This does not mean that they

have to be homeless, just that they are required to approach the Council. In this way, the Council in its role as a strategic housing authority can monitor such cases including those arising in housing association stock. Priority for rehousing will be awarded as long as applicants make an attempt to engage with the Council and are proactive about searching for another home. Their options are therefore wider than if the landlord was seeking to identify alternative accommodation suitable for them from within their own stock.

This proposal is recommended for agreement by the Management Board.

4.7 Proposal 6 relates to management of financial risk.

It specifically relates to applicants who have rent arrears or have had rent arrears included in a Debt Relief Order or bankruptcy and there is a recommendation that a sanction is applied in these cases for a period of 2 years from the date of discharge of the debt. This is recommended for agreement by the Management Board.

4.8 Proposal 7 relates to the provision relating to the assessment of cases where there is severe overcrowding.

Rather than referring to 2 children in a household lacking a bedroom, the proposal suggests that the policy will be amended so that the reference is to 2 people and is recommended for agreement by the Management Board.

4.9 Proposal 8 relates to the award of priority for rehousing when hazards may be present in a home.

Environmental Health teams from different authorities were consulted. As a result of their recommendation, the Management Board agreed that there should be no change to the policy of awarding Band B (a high priority for rehousing) to those households which are so overcrowded as to mean that there is a Category 1 hazard (arising from the Housing Health and Safety Rating System – HHSRS) in relation to the overcrowding.

5 Recommendation

5.1 Members are recommended to agree the proposed changes to the Devon Home Choice scheme and to request that the Cabinet adopts them

Contact for more Information: Mrs Claire Fry, Operations Manager for Housing Services, tel: 01884 255255 (via callback) cfry@middevon.gov.uk or Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report:

Members of the Housing PDG
Cllr Bob Evans, Cabinet Member for Homes
All Leadership Team

All Corporate Management Team
Group/Operations Managers
Legal Services

List of Background Papers:

Devon Home Choice home page:

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

Mid Devon District Council housing-related strategies and policies:

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

Annex 1 – DHC Consultation Form (separate PDF doc)

Annex 2 – Proposed changes to DHC Policy

Proposal 1: That applicants who are lacking 2 bedrooms be allowed to bid for homes 1 bedroom larger than their current home.

Proposal 2: That a new question is added to Section 1 of the application form (Housing need criteria), and a corresponding indicator or banding on the application to identify applicants who are interested in Rent to Buy or Build to Rent properties.

Proposal 3: That 4 and 5 bedroom homes are advertised using the maximum number of occupants as a restriction rather than the bedroom need.

Proposal 4: That Band C for 'Children under 8 above the third floor' is not awarded in blocks of flats where improvement works have been carried out, including windows fitted with restrictors, which would mean that the flats would be suitable for households with children under 8.

Proposal 5: That we allow some priority for members of household left in use & occupation after death of tenant and cannot succeed tenancy.

Proposal 6: That we review the current policy around the registering, banding and letting of properties to applicants who have rent arrears or have had rent arrears included in a DRO or bankruptcy.

Proposal 7: That paragraph 3.5.3.1 of the policy (Band B for severe overcrowding) be amended to refer to 2 people lacking a bedroom rather than 2 children).

Proposal 8: That the reference to Category 1 hazards in the Band B reason for severe overcrowding be amended so that it is not a blanket award of Band B

DHC Policy Review Consultation Form

Devon Home Choice is a choice based letting scheme that covers the whole of Devon. It is a partnership between the 10 Devon local authorities and 23 housing associations operating in Devon.

Please note that although the consultation form is hosted by Exeter City Council this process is for all of the Devon Home Choice partners.

This consultation seeks views on the Devon Home Choice Policy and proposed changes which are due to come into effect from 1st April 2021. The consultation will be open from 1st November 2020 until 31st January 2021.

The Devon Home Choice Policy sets out the Devon housing authorities' collective social housing scheme which determine priorities, and details the procedures to be followed in allocating housing accommodation as required by the Housing Act 1996.

The consultation aims to obtain feedback from (including but not limited to) Statutory agency workers, Voluntary agency workers, existing tenants of a DHC partner landlord and Other DHC applicants.

The current policy wording and details of the proposed changes can be found at www.devonhomechoice.com/consultation. These changes have been proposed following an initial review of the policy by the Devon Home Choice partners. A paper version of the consultation form is available from your local authority on request.

The Devon Home Choice Policy must meet legislative requirements.

All feedback provided will be considered by the Devon Home Choice Management Board and the outcomes will be published on the website but please note that we will not be able to provide individual responses or feedback.

Section 1 - About you

1) Are you (please tick one):

- Statutory agency worker
- Voluntary agency worker
- Existing tenant of a DHC partner landlord
- DHC applicant
- Other

If you have answered this question 'Other' please provide details.

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2) If you answered question 1 either 'Existing tenant of a DHC partner landlord' or 'DHC applicant':

Which local authority area do you live in? (please tick one)

- East Devon
- Exeter
- Mid Devon
- North Devon
- Plymouth
- South Hams
- Teignbridge
- Torbay
- Torridge
- West Devon
- Outside Devon

3) If you are a DHC applicant, which local authority area are you seeking to live in? (please tick one)

- East Devon
- Exeter
- Mid Devon
- North Devon
- Plymouth
- South Hams
- Teignbridge
- Torbay
- Torridge
- West Devon

Conditional questions if question 1 is answered 'Statutory agency worker'
'Voluntary agency worker'

4) Which local authority area(s) do you work in? (please tick all that apply)

- East Devon
- Exeter
- Mid Devon
- North Devon
- Plymouth
- South Hams
- Teignbridge
- Torbay
- Torridge
- West Devon

Section 2 – Priority and how it is awarded

Applications on the Devon Home Choice register are awarded a band depending on their level of housing need and a bedroom need to determine the size of home which they will normally be eligible to bid for.

1) I understand how Devon Home Choice applications are prioritised/banded. *Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).*

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments *(optional)*.

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2) Devon Home Choice uses the 'bedroom standard' to assess the size of home applicants need (see section 3.18 of the policy). This means that children of the opposite sex can share a bedroom up to the age of 10, children of the same sex between the ages of 10 and 16 can share a bedroom and anyone over the age of 16 is allocated their own bedroom need.

Do you agree that this is a fair way of deciding the size of home applicants can bid for?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments *(optional)*

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3) Do you think that households who are lacking at least 2 bedrooms should be allowed some flexibility to decide which household members they are happy to share a bedroom (e.g that 2 siblings of the same sex over the age of 16 can share a bedroom)?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional).

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Section 3 – Rent Arrears

Applicants who have rent arrears or tenancy related debt above £500 will usually be placed in the No Housing need Band (E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in the Local Authority areas which do not register households with no housing need. Each case will be considered individually (see section 2.6.3 of the policy).

This sanction will apply unless:

- there are exceptional circumstances or
- they clear their debt or
- the landlord is satisfied that the applicant is entitled to an amount of benefit sufficient to clear the arrears or
- the applicant has shown a clear intention to pay. That payments are made in accordance with an agreed repayment schedule during a period of at least 3 months or
- there are exceptional circumstances relating to need.

(see section 2.6.4 of the policy).

Applicants who have had their rent arrears included in a Debt Relief Order, bankruptcy declaration or individual voluntary agreement (IVA) will still have their applications placed into Band E or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need, unless there is some additional and exceptional reason for not doing so.

Applicants with rent arrears or tenancy related debt to a social or private landlord that were accrued in the previous two years on their current or previous tenancy will not normally be offered a property. (section 2.6.2 of the policy).

1) It is reasonable to exclude those with rent arrears above £500 with no payment plan as it does not demonstrate a change of behaviour if they do not address former debt therefore increasing the chances of a risk of tenancy failure.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional).

2) It is reasonable to exclude applicants with rent arrears included in a Debt Relief Order (unless the debt has been paid in full) or Bankruptcy Order which includes Rent Arrears or Tenancy Related Debt for 2 years.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1	2	3	4	5
Completely agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Comments (optional).

3) Do you have any comments relating to applicants with rent arrears section of the policy?

- Yes
- No

(Please complete if you answered yes above)

Section 4 – Health and wellbeing

Health and wellbeing priority can be awarded if it is assessed that an applicant's health and/ or wellbeing is made worse by their current home, or lack of a home, or that an applicant's health means that their current home is unsuitable or if an applicant has health and wellbeing needs arising from domestic abuse (see section 3.19 of the policy).

There is a Health and Wellbeing Assessment Framework in the policy (see section 3.20 of the policy) which contains information on how an applicant's health and wellbeing priority is assessed. Local authorities will often request supporting evidence from a suitable medical or support professional to enable them to assess an applicant's needs.

1) I understand how priority (banding) for health and wellbeing needs is assessed.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

2) Do you have any comments relating to the provision of supporting evidence?

- Yes
- No

(Please complete if you answered yes above)

3) The Health and Wellbeing Assessment priority award criteria is fair.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional).

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Section 5 – Local connection

People who do not have a local connection to Devon are allowed to join the housing register but in most cases their application will be limited to Band D unless there are special circumstances (see section 3.9 of the policy).

1) I agree that applicants with no local connection should be able to join the Devon Home Choice register.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (optional).

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Some homes may be advertised on Devon Home Choice with a requirement that the successful applicant has a local connection to a specified area, or applicants who have a local connection may be prioritised over those who do not. This may be due to a planning requirement (called a Section 106 agreement), or a Local Lettings Plan, or because a local authority has reached their limit for moves between areas – these are referred to as cross border moves (see section 4.2 of the policy)

2) It is right that Devon Home Choice monitors ‘cross border moves’ between local authority areas and that a limit capped at 2% of lets for ‘cross border moves’ is reasonable (see section 64 of the procedures manual).

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely disagree) to 10 (Completely agree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

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Section 6 – Armed Forces

The Devon Home Choice Policy is compliant with the requirements of the Armed Forces Covenant and Government guidance on improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces (see section 3.10 of the policy).

The local connection provisions do not apply to members of the armed forces and some former service personnel. In addition, the local connection criteria will not be applied to divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence.

1) The exemption from local connection provisions should also be applied to the adult children of members of the armed forces who are no longer able to stay in the family home.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1	2	3	4	5
Completely agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Comments (*optional*)

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Section 7 – Domestic Abuse

Domestic abuse is unacceptable. Perpetrators of domestic abuse will not be eligible to register with Devon Home Choice. Some special provisions have been made within the Devon Home Choice policy to ensure that victims of domestic abuse are treated sensitively and fairly (see section 3.11 of the policy).

1) People who have served with a domestic abuse protection notice or order in the last 2 years will not be eligible to join the housing register. Do you agree that this is fair?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*)

Section 8 – Advertising and allocation of homes

Homes are advertised on Devon Home Choice from midnight on Wednesday until midnight on the following Monday. Applicants may bid for up to 3 homes per week.

At the end of each letting cycle applicants who have bid for a property will be prioritised, firstly by their band (e.g applicants in the High housing need band (Band B) will be listed above applicants in the Medium housing need band (Band C)) and secondly within each band in order of their band start date, with the applicant with the earliest band start date at the top.

Adapted or accessible homes may be prioritised by the accessibility need of the applicant (e.g applicants who require a wheelchair accessible home will be prioritised for that type of property over those who do not require a wheelchair accessible home). See section 62 of the Procedures Manual for more information on the shortlisting process.

1) I understand how applicants are prioritised for homes?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

2) Do you use the Devon Home Choice App to place bids?

- Yes
- No

Comments (*optional*).

3) Are you aware that you can set up property alerts to send you an email when a property which might be suitable for you is being advertised?

- Yes
- No

Comments (*optional*).

4) The Devon Home Choice Management Board may consider introducing flexible letting cycles. This may mean that some homes may be advertised whenever they become available and would not be advertised in accordance with the current advertising cycle (from midnight on Wednesday until midnight on the following Monday). This is something which I would like to see introduced.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1	2	3	4	5
Completely agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree

Comments (*optional*).

Section 9 - Reviews

Any applicant has the right to request a review of decisions taken in regard to their application (see section 4.21 of the policy).

1) I am aware of how an applicant can request a review of their application.
Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

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2) I understand the different roles of local authorities and landlords with regard to requesting a review.

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

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Section 10 – Proposed Change to the current policy

Following discussions and consideration by the Devon Home Choice Management Board it is proposed to make the following changes to the current DHC Policy:

1) That the Band C for applicants with children under 8 living above the third floor (see section 3.6.3 of the policy) is not awarded in blocks of flats with lifts where improvement works have been carried out which include windows having been fitted with restrictors. This would enable landlords to allocate

homes to applicants with young children in the future. Do you agree that the band reason should be removed in these circumstances?

Please select your answer below based on a scale of 1 (Completely agree) to 5 (Strongly disagree).

1 Completely agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly disagree
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Comments (*optional*).

Section 11 – General

1) Do you have any comments with regard the changes which are currently being proposed and which are detailed in the [proposed policy changes](#)?

- Yes
- No

(Please complete if you answered yes above)

2) Are there any banding reasons which you consider to be unfair? If yes please provide details.

- Yes
- No

(Please complete if you answered yes above)

3) Are there any other areas of the Devon Home Choice Policy which you think should be reviewed? Where possible please refer to the specific section of the policy.

Comments (*optional*).

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HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 16 MARCH 2021

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE COMPLAINTS HANDLING CODE – REVIEW OF COMPLIANCE

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Bob Evans
Responsible Officer: Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing

Reason for Report and Recommendation: The Housing Service was required to undertake an assessment against the Complaints Handling Code published by the Housing Ombudsman Service and to publish the outcome before 31 December 2020. This report contains information on this exercise and an update on the service improvements identified as a result of the findings. The report is for noting on the basis that the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services used his delegated authority to authorise publication of the findings ahead of the deadline.

Recommendation: Members are asked to note the report

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

Budget and Policy Framework: Policies agreed by the Homes Policy Development Group govern the work of the Housing Service

In line with the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard within the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing, registered providers of social housing are required to have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly. The Housing Service manages complaints in line with the Corporate MDDC Complaints and Feedback Policy.

Legal Implications: 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.

The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) was set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations which are registered with them.

Risk Assessment: Failure to publish the outcome of the self-assessment against the Complaints Handling Code by 31 December 2020 could have resulted in the HOS issuing a complaint handling failure order. Failure to manage complaints properly and in a timely way could result in reputational risk; the HOS now publishes the outcomes of complaints where there have been failures identified.

Equality Impact Assessment: There is a suite of housing related policies. The use of these helps to ensure that service delivery is consistent and fair. 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 and the environment are a priority for the Council and this includes ensuring that the retained stock is well-managed.

Impact on Climate Change: None directly arising from this update report. In wider terms, 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. We use social media to promote sustainability and publish information relating to a variety of topics including fuel efficiency, recycling and healthy living.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) takes responsibility for the investigation of complaints relating to housing service delivery associated with the Council's role as a social landlord.
- 1.2 The role of the HOS is being strengthened and the Charter for Social Housing Residents which was set out in the recent Social Housing White Paper contains information on the measures which will be taken by Central Government to achieve this. In the White Paper, which was published during Autumn 2020, there is a commitment to strengthen the power and resources of the HOS in Chapter 3. The aim as stated is to ensure that complaints made by tenants of social housing will be dealt with in a fair and prompt way.
- 1.3 The HOS has a set of dispute resolution principles and consider any complaints referred to them in accordance with these. They encourage landlords and residents to work together to resolve complaints at the earliest possible opportunity and recommend early, local, resolution as the best possible outcome.

2.0 The Complaint Handling Code

- 2.1 The HOS published a new Complaint Handling Code (the Code) in July 2020. This contains good practice and was designed to assist landlords with responding to complaints effectively and fairly.
- 2.2 On the HOS website, there is a statement setting out the benefit of the Code for housing association boards or equivalent governance including local Councillors. This notes that the Code supports culture setting and intelligence for assurance exercises, using complaint data alongside other management information to provide insight into the organisation.
- 2.3 The HOS also states that: "It is important for governance to understand the complaints their organisation are receiving and the impact of their complaint handling on residents."

- 2.4 The HOS has identified the need for landlords to have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. The Code refers to that person or team as the “complaints officer” and specifies some requirements which need to be met with regard to that role.
- 2.5 The Code states that Complaints officers should:
- Be able to act sensitively and fairly
 - Be trained to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents
 - Have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints
 - Have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly
- 2.6 The Code notes that residents are more likely to be satisfied with complaint handling if the person dealing with their complaint is competent, empathetic and efficient.
- 2.7 Social landlords were asked to undertake a self-assessment against the Code by 31 December 2020 and to publish the results. The HOS stated that non-compliance could result in the issuing of a complaint handling failure order.
- 2.8 The Housing Service undertook a review of compliance with the Code and this was published on the Council’s website before the deadline.
- 2.9 Publication of the assessment was authorised by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services who exercised delegated authority in relation to this decision. This was on the basis that a report on complaints would be added to the agenda for this meeting of the Homes Policy Development Group and that this would include more information on our approach to the management of housing related complaints, the self-assessment, outcomes and lessons learnt to provide an update to Members.
- 3.0 **The Management of Housing-Related Complaints**
- 3.1 Housing-related complaints are managed in accordance with the Corporate Complaints and Feedback policy.
- 3.2 In line with this policy, complaints are investigated by the relevant service manager. If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, the matter will be escalated to the relevant Operational Manager, the Officer with responsibility for the day to day running of services.
- 3.3 Housing-related complaints are currently administered by Officers in the Housing Finance and Performance team and records relating to the investigation are held in secure files. This is especially important due to the need for confidentiality if a complaint has been received about a particular staff member. Performance is monitored using the corporate customer relationship management (CRM) tool.

- 3.4 Those Officers responsible for investigating housing-related complaints need to interview all relevant individuals, check relevant records and review relevant policy and procedure to ensure that action taken was appropriate. The investigation must be open and transparent and the complainant should be notified about what has been reviewed as part of the work to look into matters raised.
- 3.5 Officers who are responding to housing-related complaints are expected to formally record any issues where lessons can be learnt. Quite often, a relatively small service improvement can reduce the risk of the same issues which impacted the complainant occurring again. As a result of this process, policy and procedure may be changed as a result of systemic failings which were only identified as a result of a complaint.
- 3.6 The monthly housing performance document which is published on the housing pages of the Council's website contains information on performance relating to complaints.
- 3.7 During the period from April to December 2020, 59 complaints were investigated at stage 1. They were all responded to on time although the target date for completion may have been extended in some cases to provide more time for investigation of matters raised.
- 3.8 Of these complaints, 34 were upheld. This equates to 57.6% of all those received and closed at stage 1. In comparison, 45.4% of those received were upheld during the same period in 2019. A willingness to uphold complaints can be seen as a commitment to delivery of an open and transparent complaints process. The HOS expects landlords to accept that mistakes have been made where appropriate and to review working practices to ensure that the same issues are unlikely to impact service delivery again.

4.0 The Self-Assessment Against the Code

- 4.1 As a result of the self-assessment undertaken to check compliance with the Code, it was noted that the Council's Corporate Complaints and Feedback policy met the requirements to a large extent.
- 4.2 However, a number of changes required to ensure full compliance with the Code were identified. These will be implemented in coming months. This project was delayed due to issues associated with conflicting priorities arising from the pandemic.
- 4.3 The corporate Complaints and Feedback policy will be amended. In addition, as we continue to develop our approach to tenant involvement, we will make some changes to give tenants more involvement in monitoring performance on complaints; and reviewing the effectiveness of any changes made as a result of issues identified through the lessons learnt process.
- 4.4 A major change required in line with the Code relates to the definition of a complaint. Officers have been made aware that complainants do not need to state explicitly that they wish to make a complaint in order for it to be treated

as such. The Corporate policy will be reviewed during 2021 to take this into account and a number of stakeholders will be involved, including staff. It is proposed to publicise a number of customer-related projects to our tenants with the intention of recruiting some volunteers to get involved.

- 4.5 Our self-assessment, as published on our webpages, also states that in order to deliver the requirements of the Code, training to those who are likely to receive or be involved in the investigation of complaints will be provided to enable them to correctly identify complaints.
- 4.6 However, it should be noted that all customer-facing staff have already been trained to respond to distressed and upset residents in all circumstances.
- 4.7 Subject to further discussions and agreement of the proposal to develop a “One Housing” Service bringing the Housing and Building Services into one combined landlord service, Officers will seek approval to increase the establishment to include a new post. The role will be known as the Complaints Officer and, if approved, this Officer would be responsible for investigating all complaints made in relation to the work of the Landlord Service. The self-assessment included reference to this.
- 4.8 In line with the Code, landlords are expected to investigate and respond to housing-related complaints within 10 working days. Our timescales for completion of investigations in our existing policy are slightly different giving a longer period in which to resolve complaints. It is proposed that relevant information is updated to advertise and to reflect the provisions of the Code and to show that if this is not possible, we will provide an explanation and a date by when the stage one response should be received. Landlords are expected to respond to the complaint within the next 10 days after that and not to exceed that target without good reason.
- 4.9 In order to achieve compliance with the Code, we are in the process of introducing an additional step as part of the procedure for responding to complaints. We are now issuing a “minded to” letter once the investigation is complete in order to inform complainants about the findings and the outcome of it; and to provide an opportunity for them to respond and to challenge any areas of dispute before the final decision.
- 4.10 The HOS expects landlords to publish more information about complaints which have been investigated including lessons learnt and going forward we will publicise more data and information on outcomes on social media and on our webpages.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 In line with the recommendation, Members are asked to note the report.

Contact for more Information: Mrs Claire Fry, Operations Manager for Housing Services, tel: 01884 255255 (via callback) cfry@middevon.gov.uk or Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report:

Members of the Housing PDG
Cllr Bob Evans, Cabinet Member for Homes
All Leadership Team
All Corporate Management Team
Group/Operations Managers
Legal Services

List of Background Papers:

The Social Housing White Paper: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, one of the Regulatory Standards operated by the Regulator for Social Housing: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenant-involvement-and-empowerment-standard>

The Complaint Handling Code, operated by the Housing Ombudsman Service: <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/>

The Council webpage containing the link to housing-related performance documents: <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/housing/council-housing/our-performance/council-housing-performance/>

The Council webpage containing information on the Corporate Procedure relating to complaints and feedback: <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/your-council/customer-services/customer-feedback-and-complaints/how-our-complaints-procedure-works/>

HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 16 MARCH 2021

HOUSING SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor Bob Evans
Responsible Officer: Mrs Claire Fry, Operations Manager for Housing Services/Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing

Reason for Report and Recommendation: To provide an update to Members on enforcement and other activity undertaken by Officers in the Housing Service

Members are asked to endorse the report.

Financial Implications: The activity of the Housing Service spans both General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is ring fenced and subject to specific financial controls. There are specific budgets set aside within the General Fund to enable the Council to meet statutory obligations associated with homelessness. Central Government makes some funding which is ring-fenced available to support this work. Furthermore, the Housing Service is currently in receipt of funding which was awarded as part of the Rough Sleeping Initiative which is used in connection with a number of projects which align with our own rough sleeping strategy.

Budget and Policy Framework: Policies agreed by the Homes Policy Development Group govern the work of the Housing Service. There are budgets set aside within the General Fund to finance work relating to homelessness and strategic rehousing. Additional funding to support work with rough sleepers has also been obtained in partnership with East Devon District Council for use this year. The HRA is funded in large part by rental income and therefore maintaining the revenue stream must be a key priority for the Housing Service.

Legal Implications: 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.

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.

Risk Assessment: The landlord service has approximately 3,000 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, a serious fire or 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.

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.

Equality Impact Assessment: There is a suite of housing related policies. The use of these helps to ensure that service delivery is consistent and fair. 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.

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.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: Homes and the environment are a priority for the Council and this includes increasing the supply of affordable homes in the District and also supporting and growing active tenant engagement.

Impact on Climate Change: None directly arising from this update report. In wider terms, 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. We use social media to promote sustainability and publish information relating to a variety of topics including fuel efficiency, recycling and healthy living.

With regard to the homes in our management, our repairs and improvements strategies are informed by the need to reduce carbon emissions; and the need to reduce fuel poverty is also a key consideration.

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 The rationale for this report is to show the range of work being undertaken across the Housing Service with regard to enforcement and safeguarding activity. The statistics contained in the appendices cover the period from September 2020 to December 2020 i.e. Quarter 3 of 2020/21
- 1.2 Annex 1 shows a summary of enforcement and other related activity and Annex 2 shows a summary of safeguarding activity undertaken in connection

with the wellbeing of tenants, members of their households or anyone else, regardless of whether they live on our estates, where a concern has been identified.

2.0 Enforcement Activity

- 2.1 The Regulator for Social Housing operates the regulatory framework which contains a number of standards which set out the required outcomes and specific expectations associated with the performance of registered social landlords (RPs).
- 2.2 The Neighbourhood and Community Standard contains provisions relating to the management of anti-social Behaviour and in line with these, RPs are expected to work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.
- 2.3 Neighbourhood Officers in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Estates team are responsible for managing nuisance and anti-social behaviour. This work can be resource-intensive involving as it does the need to investigate complaints, provide support to complainants, and to take appropriate action. Officers often experience conflicting demands when trying to resolve such cases and can find some of the delicate and sensitive issues with they may be called upon to manage, particularly challenging.
- 2.4 The report in Annex 1 shows the range of work associated with the management of anti-social behaviour under the heading: "Neighbourhood and Community Standard".
- 2.5 Members will note that there were three fraud cases identified during the third quarter of this year. Looking at the report, it would seem that the workload of the HRA Estates Team became more varied during the quarter. There were 6 Acceptable Behaviour Agreements issued and 2 Community Protection Notice warnings issued during the period.
- 2.6 The HRA Income Team has changed approach during the pandemic with the aim of supporting those who may be experiencing financial hardship to sustain their tenancies. This is important for many reasons but also supports the work of the Housing Options team which is responsible for the prevention and management of homelessness. Officers have adopted a more collaborative approach over the last 10 months. The aim is to ensure that those who are unable to pay their rent work with Officers from an early stage in order to obtain advice and support as appropriate. Our team is able to signpost and refer those in need to other agencies which can help. This includes CHAT and Citizen's Advice. They also make referrals for hardship grants and other help. In addition, they endeavour to create a payment culture by ensuring that any arrangements for repayment were realistic and achievable.
- 2.7 Therefore, formal enforcement activity has been reduced since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.
- 2.8 However, there was one warrant issued during the quarter. This related to a case which was heard in the County Court prior to Lockdown 1.0. The

Housing Service was awarded a possession order which was suspended. The Court ordered the tenant to make regular monthly payments but the tenant failed to make one which was expected. At the beginning of March last year, he was asked to make up the payment within 7 days with this request being made in writing. He failed to do so and Officers therefore applied for the warrant on 26 June 2020. An eviction date was scheduled for 7 December 2020. This was suspended and the bailiff appointment withdrawn due to ongoing restrictions and risks associated with Covid19.

- 2.9 The Housing Options team is responsible for managing temporary accommodation which is used by those who have presented as homeless. The Council has a number of statutory obligations to such people and this includes accommodating them whilst their circumstances are being investigated and assessed; and then, if a duty is owed, until such time as they can be rehoused.
- 2.10 During the pandemic, other individuals were accommodated as part of the initiative to minimise rough sleeping.
- 2.11 As shown in Annex 1, there were some evictions from temporary accommodation during the third quarter of 2020/21. These arose because the clients failed to use the rooms provided to them. In these cases, the commitment to provision of temporary accommodation was ended and this is recorded in our records as an eviction.
- 2.12 All Officers in the Housing and Building Services are required to escalate safeguarding issues, as appropriate, if there are any concerns about an individual, a member of their household or anyone else. This is in accordance with the corporate policy on safeguarding. Safeguarding issues can arise for many reasons and these may be associated with relationship breakdown, mental or other health issues, neglect and so on.
- 2.13 The HRA Estates team is the main point of contact for other agencies in relation to any safeguarding issues relating to tenants or anyone else, which have been escalated due to concern relating to risk of harm. The Neighbourhood Officers in that team will attend Team Around the Family (TAF) and other relevant meetings, as appropriate, on behalf of the Housing Service. As with enforcement activity, work relating to safeguarding can be very difficult and upsetting, and may involve inter-agency dialogue, joint working and involvement in many meetings. Officers are sometimes required to prioritise their work in order to ensure that they have the time available to manage cases where safeguarding is an issue. For this reason, activity relating to this work-stream has been included within this report; with an additional table demonstrating the extent of the current caseload.
- 2.14 11 safeguarding referrals were made during the quarter which is reassuring because it shows that Officers are acting to escalate any issues of concern.

3.0 Recommendation

- 3.1 Members are asked to endorse the report.

Contact for more Information: Mrs Claire Fry, Operations Manager for Housing Services, tel: 01884 255255 (via callback) cfry@middevon.gov.uk or Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report:

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Cllr Bob Evans, Cabinet Member for Homes
All Leadership Team
All Corporate Management Team
Group/Operations Managers
Legal Services

List of Background Papers:

The Regulatory framework for social housing:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/regulatory-framework-requirements>

Annex 1

Service Delivery - Enforcement Activity

Neighbourhood & Community Standard – Housing Revenue Account Estates team						
	Quarter1	Quarter2	Quarter3	Quarter4	YTD	Commentary
Fraud cases opened	2	0	3		5	3 x new cases being investigated for fraud
Fraud cases referred to an external investigator	1	1	1		3	1 x case referred to an external investigator
Acceptable Behaviour Agreements signed	0	2	6		8	
Good Neighbourhood Agreements signed	3	0	0		3	No new cases reported Q3
Community Protection Notice warnings issued	0	0	2		2	
Community Protection Notices issued	0	0	0		0	
Possession Actions commenced on grounds of ASB	3	0	4		7	4 x new cases in connection to extension of closure orders
Closure Orders – obtained	4	0	4		4	4 x new cases are extension of Closure Orders
Injunctions sought	0	1	1		2	Legal advice obtained. 1x case - collating evidence for civil injunction
Evictions on grounds of anti-social behaviour/ other tenancy breach	0	0	0		0	

Income Recovery – Housing Revenue Account Income Team						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Commentary
Notice of Seeking possession served	0	0	0		0	
Judgement obtained	0	0	0		0	
Warrants issued	2	0	1		3	Warrants issued are pending an eviction date due to the pause on evictions during the pandemic
Evictions on grounds of rent arrears	0	0	0		0	
Management of Temporary Accommodation - Housing Options team						
	Quarter1	Quarter2	Quarter3	Quarter4	YTD	Commentary
Evictions from temporary accommodation	6	1	6		13	These cases arose from the need to evict individuals who had threatened staff, caused nuisance to other residents or where the duty to accommodate had ended. Alternatively, where accommodation was not used.

Annex 2

Service Delivery - Safeguarding Activities

Neighbourhood & Community Standard – Housing Revenue Account Estates team						
	Quarter1	Quarter2	Quarter3	Quarter4	YTD	Commentary
Domestic abuse cases opened	10	0	10		20	Domestic Violence (DV) cases reported to the Neighbourhood Officers.
Domestic abuse cases referred to Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	5	9	5		19	5 x MDDC Cases referred by other agencies. None referred by MDDC Reports provided to MARAC for all cases
Safeguarding referrals made (to all agencies)	4	9	6		19	Q3 2 x cases referred to Adult Safeguarding Q3 4 x cases referred to General Practitioner (GP)

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Chairman's Annual Report 2020/2021

The aims and progress of the Homes Policy Development Group, like all other theatres of life have been stymied by the Covid Epidemic and its consequences; but where possible the Committee has tried to assist and improve. Progress on the future of the Council's garages has been initiated with better use of assets a priority.

The cutting and husbandry of grass verges and other verdant areas has also lead to much discussion and disparity of ideas; the working group for this thorny issue has striven hard for a solution to appease all views. The desire of our Committee plus and, many citizens of Mid Devon to assist with the Syrian Refugee Scheme were constrained by procedural and practical complications, good intentions being thwarted.

Homelessness during the pandemic seemed to have abated somewhat, but a long with an undersupply of social accommodation is a long term cause of concern.

Input from the General Public during the year was welcome; comment on finance and use Council's funds demonstrating the ideals of open and fair governance.

The efforts of every member on the Homes Committee have been appreciated, likewise the diligence and toil of all our officers; with special thanks to Sarah for her excellent guidance.

The events of the last 12 months could not have been foreseen but the effects may endure for many years. I fear more hard decisions lie ahead.

Ron Dolley
Chairman

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