

## Homes Policy Development Group

Tuesday, 19 March 2024 at 2.15 pm  
Phoenix Chambers, Phoenix House, Tiverton

Next meeting  
Tuesday, 11 June 2024 at 2.15 pm

**Please Note:** This meeting will take place at Phoenix House and members of the public and press are able to attend via Teams. If you are intending to attend in person please contact the committee clerk in advance, in order that numbers of people can be appropriately managed in physical meeting rooms.

**The meeting will be hybrid and an audio recording made and published on the website after the meeting.**

[To join the meeting online, click here](#)

### Membership

C Adcock  
J Cairney  
S Chenore  
A Glover  
C Harrower  
F W Letch  
N Letch  
S Robinson  
H Tuffin

### A G E N D A

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

- 1 **Apologies and Substitute Members**  
To receive any apologies for absence and notice of appointment of substitutes.
- 2 **Public Question Time**  
To receive any questions from members of the public and replies thereto.

- 3        **Declaration of Interests under the Code of Conduct**  
To record any interests on agenda matters.
- 4        **Minutes** (*Pages 5 - 12*)  
To consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024.
- 5        **Chairman's Announcements**  
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 6        **Government consultation on reforms to allocation of social housing** (*Pages 13 - 22*)  
To receive a report from Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing. On the 1st February, Baroness Scott (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Social Housing and Faith) wrote to all Council leaders setting out that government has launched a consultation seeking views on a series of reforms to how social housing is allocated in England. The consultation period closes on 26 March and the purpose of this report is to present a proposed response to the consultation on the proposed reforms and seek further guidance and views from the PDG on this response before it is provided.
- 7        **Performance Dashboard Q3** (*Pages 23 - 24*)  
To receive and discuss summary information reflecting performance in the Mid Devon Housing area for the previous quarter.
- 8        **Biodiversity Duty Report** (*Pages 25 - 28*)  
To receive a briefing paper from the Climate and Sustainability Specialist and the Director of Place and Economy stressing the need for all of the Council's operating areas to be fully aware of their responsibility in needing to meet the general biodiversity.
- 9        **MDH Service Delivery Report for Q3** (*Pages 29 - 50*)  
To receive a report from Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing providing a quarterly update to Members on activity undertaken by Mid Devon Housing (MDH), including some relating to enforcement.
- 10       **Garage / Asset Management presentation**  
To receive a Garage / Asset Management presentation from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing and the Operations Manager for Building Services.
- 11       **Tenant Satisfaction Measures perception survey and action plan update**  
To receive a short presentation on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) perception survey and action plan.

- 12 **Work Programme for 2024/2025** (Pages 51 - 56)  
To receive and discuss the draft Work Programme for the Homes Policy Development Group for 2024 / 2025.
- 13 **Chairman's Annual Report for 2023/2024** (Pages 57 - 58)  
To receive the Chairman's Annual Report for 2024/2025.
- 14 **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
  - Start time of Meetings
  - Income Management Policy
  - Hoarding Policy
  - Right to Buy Policy (New)
  - Housing Initiatives Plan (briefing)
  - Tenure Reform Working Group recommendations
  - LAHF update and approach to allocating homes (briefing)
  - Homes for Ukraine update
  - Performance Dashboard

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

**Stephen Walford**  
Chief Executive  
Monday, 11 March 2024

## Meeting Information

From 7 May 2021, the law requires all councils to hold formal meetings in person. The Council will enable all people to continue to participate in meetings via Teams.

If you want to ask a question or speak, email your full name to [Committee@middevon.gov.uk](mailto: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. Notification in this way will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible.

Residents, electors or business rate payers of the District may make a statement or shall be entitled to ask questions at a meeting which concerns the Council's powers / duties or which otherwise affects the District. If your question does not relate to an agenda item, the question must be submitted to the Democratic Services Manager two working days before the meeting to give time for a response to be prepared.

Please note that a reasonable amount of hardcopies at the meeting will be available, however this is a limited number. If you are attending the meeting and would like a hardcopy of the agenda we encourage that you notify Democratic Services in advance of the meeting to ensure that a hardcopy is available. Otherwise, copies of the agenda can be found on our website.

If you would like a copy of the Agenda in another format (for example in large print) please contact Sarah Lees on: [slees@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:slees@middevon.gov.uk)

Public Wi-Fi is available in all meeting rooms.

**MINUTES** of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 16 January 2024 at 2.15 pm

**Present**

**Councillors**

C Adcock (Chairman)  
J Cairney, S Chenore, F W Letch, N Letch,  
S Robinson and R Roberts

**Apologies**

**Councillors**

C Harrower and H Tuffin

**Also Present**

**Councillors**

D Broom, S J Clist and D Wulff

**Also Present**

**Officers**

Richard Marsh (Director of Place & Economy), Simon Newcombe (Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing), Paul Deal (Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change), Laura Woon (Democratic Services Manager) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

**Councillors**

**Online**

A Glover  
J Buczkowski

**Officers Online**

R Marsh (Director of Place), M Lowman (Building Services Operations Manager) and C Oliphant (Housing Policy Officer)

## 51 **APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

Apologies were received from Cllr H Tuffin and Cllr C Harrower who was substituted by Cllr R Roberts.

## 52 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The following statement and request was made by Mr Graeme Barnell (this was read out by the Chairman as Mr Barnell was unable to be present):

“At the meeting of MDDC Cabinet in August I asked for an explanation of the Council’s strategy relating to the delivery of affordable housing especially in addressing the very large historic shortfall in delivery against targets and the

challenges presented by the findings of local Joint Housing Needs Survey carried out by the Council as recently as 2022.

I also raised the issue again of the lack of any regular management reports setting out as KPIs the delivery of different forms of affordable housing against the target set by the Councils existing Housing Strategy and by the MDDC Local Plan. In reply to my questions Cllr Clist said that the delivery of affordable housing is a key priority for the new Council. He spoke about a new Housing Strategy being prepared by the Council to replace the existing Strategy (2021-25) and a new scorecard or performance framework that would address the shortcomings in reporting performance and allow regular updates on delivery.

I wrote to him after the meeting asking for his response in writing, but I did not receive an answer.

Please can I ask for an update on the Council meeting its current targets for the delivery of affordable housing to include a forecast for this financial year? Please can this reply include Year to Date and forecast figures for the delivery of affordable homes for rent and purchase by both the commercial and not for profit sectors. I would also appreciate an update on the advent of the new Housing Strategy mentioned by Cllr Clist in August.”

The following response was provided by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services:

My thanks to Graeme Barnell for his question in advance. I do have an update to the questions that he provided to the August Cabinet meeting. As he is aware the situation is always fluid with new opportunities coming along and obviously one or two issues with conditions beyond our control causing a delay. Obviously every opportunity, will be, and is, being grasped and for certain reasons they cannot really be discussed because they are of a financially discretionary nature and one doesn't want to highlight that. My answer to him is that in terms of affordable housing of all types provided by the market developers (and this information is collated and verified by the Forward Planning Team annually), 23 units were provided in the year 2022 - 2023 and the data for 2023 – 2024 will be available some time after 31 March 2024. With regard to Affordable Housing and new Council houses for social and affordable rent, Mid Devon Housing are on track to provide 60 new Council homes during the year 2023 – 2024. I will briefly outline them and can I perhaps caveat that by saying that it does in fact add up to 59 not 60, however, as with buy backs etc. one has to include plus one or minus one so we will call it 60 for instance and purposes:

- There are 3 at Beech Road, 6 at St. Andrews, Cullompton, 8 at Shapland Place, Tiverton, 1 at Allington Terrace, Morchard Road, 39 at St. Georges Court, Tiverton and potentially 3 buy backs, 2 look positive, 1 may be not so but that will come forward.

As regards the Housing Strategy update, this will be commenced in the spring of 2024 and will inform the wider new Corporate Plan underpinning key priorities around housing delivery and standards. Mr Barnell, you will be aware that if you look online at meeting agendas the new dashboards that come forward for the Homes PDG and the new Corporate Plan will be fairly self explanatory. Undoubtedly it will be something that the PDG will be reviewing throughout the year anyway.

I would also like to highlight that Mr Barnell is a very big advocate of a very successful and ambitious social rented housing programme and I can reassure him that both as a political group and as a Council we are too and we will do our level best to increase and accelerate delivery. Thank you.

### 53 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

No interests were declared under this item.

### 54 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

A question was asked as to when the Group might receive an update in relation to the Flexible Tenancies Working Group? It was confirmed by the Chairman of the Working Group, Cllr A Glover, that it would be possible to provide an update to the next meeting in March.

### 55 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman wished the Group a Happy New Year and thanked the officers for their work in providing reports to the meeting.

### 56 **MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - DRAFT BUDGET UPDATE FOR 2024 / 2025 (00:12:00)**

The Group received, and **NOTED**, a verbal update from the Corporate Manager for Finance, Property and Climate Change regarding the 2024/2025 budget position. This was based on the Medium Term Financial Plan report being presented to the Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

The following summary was provided:

- Savings of circa £1.644m had been identified as part of the budget setting process during recent months. These had been listed under the RAG rating system so as to identify red, amber and green risks.
- It was confirmed that staff savings would only be taken if a post became vacant, redundancies would not be a factor as part of this budget.
- As a result of a great deal of hard work by both staff and Members there was now only a shortfall of £150k as compared to a shortfall in December 2023 of £418k.
- Some of this was due to government announcements in December regarding the local government financial settlement and Council Tax and Business Rate changes.
- It was confirmed that it was not necessary to look to this Group for further savings in order to balance the budget unless they became relevant prior to the final draft budget being approved by Council next month.

A brief discussion took place with regard to some concerns about the amount of pressure put on staff when colleagues left in terms of workload. It was confirmed that the majority of vacancies were planned for and were not 'reactive', therefore allowing time to address

workload issues and relieve the pressure on the staff that remained. This issue was also being closely monitored by a number of staff working groups and the union.

## 57 **DEVON RESPONSE TO HOME OFFICE CONSULTATION OF REFUGEE CAP ON SAFE AND LEGAL ROUTES (00:22:00)**

The Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing provided the Group with a verbal update and brief presentation regarding the Devon response to the Home Office consultation on the refugee cap on safe and legal routes.

The following summary was provided:

- The Illegal Migration Act (July 2023) placed a duty on the Home Office to consult Councils on the development of a 'cap' on the number of people arriving in the UK via safe and legal routes.
- Parliamentary process would set the first cap in summer 2024, to be operational in 2025.
- Local authorities were expected to engage with partners to assess capacity in their area (this to be completed by Nov and Dec 2023).
- Two tier areas were expected to seek political agreement across County and Districts via Team Devon Leaders and Chiefs. This happened in Dec 2023.
- 'No response' was not an option.
- Government's stated aim was a well-managed migration system.
- Team Devon's view and recommendations were that these schemes save lives and Councils across the region want to respond positively.
- District Councils have looked at their capacity based on past performance, changing conditions and housing availability and have expressed concerns about the wider housing crisis and available accommodation.
- Devon County Council had been looking at services needed to resettle refugees and was concerned about (1) pressure on secondary school places and rising school transport costs (2) lack of access to resources to remove language barriers (3) zero capacity to support learners with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- NHS: worked with a range of partners to support the health and wellbeing needs of asylum seekers and refugees and would continue to do so.
- Community Sponsorship: Devon did community sponsorship well and was nationally recognised, there was potential to grow this model with support.
- Therefore the Team Devon Response to Home Office is to recommend the Devon 'cap' was set within a range of 20-26 households including 8 via Community Sponsorship. Mid Devon = 3.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- The myriad of 'routes' into the UK, some legal and the some not.
- The Team Devon position did not include Plymouth or Torbay unitary authorities.
- The already significant overspend Devon wide in terms of education spend and an incapacity to absorb anymore cost.
- The pressure would need to be managed but it would be very difficult.
- Complications and delays with the visa process.
- The speed with which the Home Office had placed this duty on local authorities and the fact that further guidance was still awaited.



- Community sponsors proactively worked to find accommodation, theirs was a different relationship with refugees and subject to different pressures and application processes.
- Government guidance was unclear and more funding was needed.
- Mid Devon had a voice through Team Devon who were working collaboratively and fostering a positive approach wherever possible.

## 58 **REVIEW OF THE MID DEVON HOUSING GARAGE, GGRP AND CAR PARKING SPACE POLICY (00:56:00)**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing regarding a review of the policy outlining the Mid Devon Housing (MDH) approach to renting out garages, garage ground rent plots (GGRP) and car parking spaces that it owned.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- This was a financial policy around rent setting, it was not a new policy. It reflected how the Government had wanted VAT to be treated. The HMRC had made lawful changes and local authorities were now required to update their policies to reflect these.
- As part of this review the policy had been better defined with greater priority given to blue badge holders and to people who lived in the same or adjoining street as the asset.
- As part of the review the rent payable by charities and not for profit organisations was investigated. It was due to different rates being charged for different organisations which had led to an administrative burden on the service. To bring consistency, the revised policy stated that garages, GGRP and Car Parking Spaces rented by charities and not for profit organisations would be charged at the same rate as MDH dwelling tenants with VAT added as required.

Discussion took place regarding a general need for Members to better understand the situation regarding Council owned garages, GGRP and car parking spaces for example, how many had it developed, how many had or were planned to be demolished, how many had or were planned to be improved? It was explained that this kind of information was already held by Mid Devon Housing (MDH) and this could be shared with Members providing an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the current situation and plans for the future. This was requested as part of a need for a better overall understanding of asset management. It was **AGREED** that a workshop / briefing would be set up to allow this information to be discussed alongside the next meeting.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the updated Garage, GGRP and Car Parking Space policy and Equality Impact Assessment contained in Annexes A and B respectively be adopted.

(Proposed by Cllr J Cairney and seconded by Cllr S Robinson)

### Reason for the decision

The administrative burden of renting garages remained a significant cost to offset against the rent generated. The aligning of rents for charities and not for profit organisations would help alleviate the financial costs in administering the policy. MDH also had to legally comply with the VAT Government and Public Bodies VATGPB8350 - Other local authority activities: housing and community projects: property improvement grants.

Additionally, failure to provide housing management staff with the appropriate policies could result in a less consistent and effective service and failure to collect rental income could impact the ability to fund necessary management and maintenance activities.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.

## 59 **NEW MID DEVON HOUSING HOMES SAFETY POLICY (01:10:00)**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing bringing forward a new policy in relation to Homes Safety. The Regulator of Social Housing was due to introduce a revised set of consumer standards as part of the new consumer regulatory framework by April 2024. The Safety and Quality Standard would replace the Home Standard and required landlords to provide safe and good quality homes and landlord services to tenants.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- Tenant safety was, and always had been, a key consideration across all the MDH policies.
- Some Tenant Satisfaction Measures now specifically related to safety and the Council were legally bound to report on these.
- Actual figures in relation to asbestos would be reported in the future rather than assumptions being made.
- Council's would need to be 100% compliant in terms of electrical testing by 2027/2028. MDH planned to be 100% compliant a year in advance of this date.
- The Group would be able to monitor this closely through the service delivery report presented to it on a regular basis.

Consideration was given to:

- Procedures in relation to gaining access to properties where this had been denied to MDH in the past were being strengthened. Charging for missed appointments and threatening court action where appropriate was helpful in this regard. It was important to be able to have access to Council owned property for necessary safety checks to be undertaken.
- There was a separate policy in relation to Damp and Mould due to the complexities involved, however, this was cross referenced with the new Homes Safety Policy.
- The Council was unlikely to be able to secure any further funding to support the impacts of the new inspection regime but would seek to access any funding should this be possible.

**RECOMMENDED** that Cabinet recommend to Council the adoption of the new MDH Homes safety Policy and Equality Impact Assessment contained in Annexes A and B respectively.

(Proposed by Cllr S Robinson and seconded by Cllr J Cairney)

Reason for the decision

The Council was an RP and therefore was required to comply with the regulatory framework operated by the RSH.

The policy ensured that MDH fully complied with its statutory obligations and that the safety of its residents was safeguarded including provisions set out in the draft new Safety and Quality Standard.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.

60 **REVISED PETS & ANIMALS POLICY (01:45:00)**

The Group had before it a report \* from the Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing outlining the Mid Devon Housing (MDH) approach to keeping pets and animals by its tenants and their household. It was stated that MDH understood the benefits that responsible pet ownership could bring. Owning a pet or animal could be life enhancing and it was recognised that it could have a positive impact on physical health and mental well-being.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- This policy had been due for review and touched almost every area of housing delivery. Historically Mid Devon had had a very strict approach but it was necessary to recognise the positive impact owning a pet had for some tenants.
- It was important that Neighbourhood Officers had a consistent policy that could be applied across all of its properties.
- The updated policy clarified the position regarding service animals and dangerous dogs where national legislation had recently changed.
- It was now a fairer policy providing greater clarity.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Dog breeding would need a licence and MDH worked closely with the Licensing Team thereby reducing opportunities for non-compliance with the policy.
- The vast majority of tenants with pets were very responsible.

**RECOMMENDED** to the Cabinet that the updated Pets and Animals Policy and Equality Impact Assessment contained in Annexes A and B respectively be adopted.

(Proposed by Cllr F Letch and seconded by Cllr s Robinson)

### Reason for the decision

The Council's tenancy agreement contained clauses relating to animals and pets which state that tenants should seek permission for most pets or animals and should ensure that they do not cause nuisance or annoyance to neighbours, or cause any damage to the property.

Note: \* Report previously circulated.

## 61 **IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (02:04:00)**

In addition to the items already listed in the work programme for the next meeting the following was requested to be on the agenda:

- A workshop / briefing regarding garages and asset management
- Biodiversity Duty Report
- 2024 / 2025 Work Programme
- Flexible Tenancies Working Group update
- Homes for Ukraine Scheme update
- MDH service delivery report for quarter 3

(The meeting ended at 4.25 pm)

**CHAIRMAN**



**Report for: Homes Policy Development Group**

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Date of Meeting:	19 <sup>th</sup> March 2024
Subject:	GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON REFORMS TO ALLOCATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Simon Clist Cabinet Member for Housing and Property
Responsible Officer:	Simon Newcombe - Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Enclosures:	Annex A – Baroness Scott letter to Leaders 1 <sup>st</sup> February 2024

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

On the 1st February, Baroness Scott (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Social Housing and Faith) wrote to all Council leaders setting out that government has launched a consultation seeking views on a series of reforms to how social housing is allocated in England. The consultation period closes on 26 March and the purpose of this report is to present a proposed response to the consultation on the proposed reforms and seek further guidance and views from the PDG on this response before it is provided.

Within the consultation, government recognise the vital role of social housing for families and our communities. It highlights that its proposed reforms seek to provide greater clarity of a national minimum expectation for qualifications tests whilst still allowing for local flexibility.

The proposed reforms have been reviewed against current local social housing allocation policy (Devon Home Choice) and with regard to any wider potential social housing implications.

## Recommendation:

**That the PDG notes the review set out herein and agrees this forms the basis of the proposed Mid Devon District Council response to the consultation.**

## Section 2 – Report

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The reforms which the government are seeking views on are summarised below through a series of new or updated tests:

**UK connection test** – requiring people to be a British citizen, Irish citizen, Commonwealth citizen with a right of abode, or EEA or Swiss citizen with equal treatment rights in matters of housing, or otherwise to have been lawfully resident in the UK for ten years, in order to be eligible for social housing.

Exemptions are being consulted upon for those arriving into the UK via safe and legal resettlement routes and the Ukrainian temporary visa schemes. The stated aim of this proposal is to allow for the allocation of more social homes to those with the strongest connection to the UK, while enabling the Government to continue to deliver its commitments to provide urgent humanitarian support.

**Local connection test** – preventing individuals from being allocated social housing if they have not had links to the local authority area for two years. The stated aim of this proposal is to ensure greater consistency across the country and ensure more local people can access social housing in the area they call home.

**Income test** – households earning above a maximum threshold (to be defined following responses to the consultation) would not qualify for social housing. It will not be applied to existing tenants and there will be no change to rights, tenures, length of tenancies or rents of existing tenants.

**Anti-social behaviour test** – disqualifying people who have unspent convictions for certain criminal anti-social behaviour offences, as well as certain civil orders, from social housing for a defined period.

**Terrorism test** – terrorist offenders with unspent convictions will not qualify for social housing unless excluding them would increase the risk to public safety.

**False statement test** – mandating a period of disqualification for those who knowingly or recklessly make false statements when applying for social housing.

- 1.2 The government indicate that through the proposals they are seeking to introduce greater consistency across the country to ensure more people can access social housing. Consequently, the reforms must be reviewed against current policy. Officers have consequently reviewed each specific reforms in the context of current county-wide Devon Home Choice (DHC) social housing allocation policy. The Council is a DHC partner alongside all 10 Local Authorities (LA) and 24 additional private registered providers of social housing.

- 1.3 The outcomes of the above review and any wider potential implications with regard to the proposals are set out in the proposed consultation response in Section 2.
- 1.4 The letter from Baroness Scott with an explanatory note was circulated to all members of the PDG in advance of this meeting on 7 February 2024. This invited comments from members in advance of the meeting to help shape the proposed response. One member provided a response expressing no specific concerns with the proposals.
- 1.5 Views have also been sought from Cllr Clist (as Housing Portfolio holder).
- 1.6 Whilst not directly part of the proposal, the consultation has set out to remind Local Authorities that the government is committed to a 'three strikes and you're out' expectation of social housing landlords, as set out in the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan published last year. This means that there is an expectation to evict tenants whose behaviour is disruptive to neighbours and jeopardises community cohesion. More information is provided in Section 3.
- 1.7 The full consultation proposal is attached in Annex 1.

## **2 Review against current DHC social housing allocation policy and other potential implications**

### **2.1 UK connection test**

The current DHC policy is fit for purpose but the proposal will provide further clarity to what is already in place.

### **2.2 Local connection test**

The current DHC policy allows for a local preference and is weighting towards this but does allow a person with no local connection to the LA to obtain housing subject to specific criteria. There are current exemptions in place legally for those fleeing domestic abuse and where care leavers are considered to have a local connection to each local authority in Devon irrespective of where they were placed in care if there were a responsibility of Devon County Council. Clarification is needed as to how the updated local connection test proposed will work alongside these existing legal provisions.

### **2.3 Income test**

This is already in place within DHC policy as follows:

- Households with a gross household income more than six times higher than the relevant Local Housing Allowance level prevailing in Devon are placed in E band (no housing need/lowest priority)
- Current capital savings and equity thresholds also apply:
  - General needs housing: £16,000
  - Sheltered/Older Persons housing: 1-bed self-contained £120,000 and 2-bed £130,000

## 2.4 **Terrorism test**

This is a new requirement not covered by current DHC policy. The policy would therefore require updating to reflect any legal changes. There are practical considerations and potential costs associated with unspent conviction checks which require clarification and would introduce additional steps/potential delays in the housing application and/or allocation process.

## 2.5 **False statement test**

Current DHC policy is already consistent with the introduction of a false statement test. The policy states that any applicant making false or misleading statement have their application refused or withdrawn from the DHC register and/or have any offers made withdrawn.

There are also provisions in place for fraud investigations and these may also lead to court action.

The proposal for a mandated period of time of disqualification is new and would therefore need to be incorporated into an update of the DHC policy to reflect any legal changes.

## 2.6 **Wider implications and considerations**

Several housing sector bodies have publically warned that the plans would amount to “further rationing of an already scarce resource”. However, given the relative alignment of current DHC policy with the proposals then the direct impact of these proposed changes locally is potentially not so severe.

These proposals will nonetheless not directly significantly address the housing shortage and the net loss of social rented homes since 2011 – more affordable housing is needed to address the housing crisis and alleviate pressures on allocation processes.

The new reforms will only apply to applicants and have no impact on existing tenants.

## **3 Anti-social behaviour (ASB)**

3.1 Whilst not a direct part of the proposed reforms at this stage, the government direction of travel on this issue is reiterated through the following statement in the consultation: ‘We are also committed to a ‘three strikes and you’re out’ expectation of social housing landlords, as set out in the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan published last year. This means that they will be expected to evict tenants whose behaviour is disruptive to neighbours and jeopardises community cohesion’.

3.2 Arguably therefore the message here is clear: play by the rules. If tenants of social housing choose not to, then they risk being not being prioritised for new social tenancies and it made easier to end tenancies on ASB grounds.



3.3 However, there is much that needs clarification which this consultation does not cover. In particular, there are several issues or concerns around how these plans might work in reality and what the legislation will look like. For example:

- What counts as a 'strike'?
- Who makes the judgement and what checks and balances are needed?
- Rights of appeal?
- How will this be consistent and proportionate?
- Will this adopt a trauma-informed approach and will any encouragement be given to understanding and potentially seeking to address the underlying causes of behaviour first before 'strikes' are issued?
- What will the impact be on homelessness especially if those 'de-prioritised' could be banned for several years from accessing social housing?
- How will people be 'de-prioritised' – for example will it become part of court possession process?
- Closure orders and proposals to make these mandatory grounds for disqualification (see below)

### 3.4 **Closure orders**

Working with colleagues in the police, we have on occasion utilised these orders to great effect to protect vulnerable tenants. By way of example, they have been utilised in cases of 'cuckooing' where the home of a vulnerable person is taken over by a criminal in order to use it to deal, store or take drugs, facilitate sex work, as a place for them to live and/or to financially abuse the tenant. Here, tenants have been very supportive of having such an order for their property as it gives them the 'permission' to say that the abusers are not allowed in their property and empowers them to call for the police or the council if they require support. Such orders also set out a clear outcome where supporting evidence is provided, thereby encouraging tenants to work with us.

In these cases, a move of the tenant to alternative accommodation may be an overall productive outcome and one which disrupts criminality and anti-social behaviour.

To implement a blanket disqualification for a tenant subject to a closure order would detract from the preventative and proactive elements of these orders. Tenants would be unlikely to support any such action if it risked their current tenancy or any future move. The policy proposal could therefore reduce the tools available to the council as a social landlord and undermine local crime reduction strategies.

## 4 **Recommendation**

4.1 In accordance with the above, the following recommendation is made:

1. That the PDG notes the review set out herein and agrees this forms the basis of the proposed Mid Devon District Council response to the consultation.

## **Financial Implications**

This report on its own does not give rise to any direct financial implication but implementation of the proposal may introduce additional administrative cost burdens, reflected in the review and proposed response.

## **Legal Implications**

This is a consultation on proposed legal changes. If implemented, the changes will be delivered by secondary legislation under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.

## **Risk Assessment**

See section 2 and 3.

## **Impact on Climate Change**

None directly arising from this report.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Not applicable.

## **Relationship to Corporate Plan**

Not applicable.

## **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

**Date:** 05 Mar 2024

**Statutory Officer:** Maria De Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 11 Mar 2024

**Chief Officer:** Simon Newcombe

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

**Date:** 29 February 2024

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 05/03/2024

**Cabinet member notified:** Yes

## **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing. Email: [snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk). Telephone: 01884 255255.



## Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

To: All Council Leaders in England

**Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE**  
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
for Social Housing and Faith*

***Department for Levelling Up, Housing  
and Communities***

2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Your reference:  
Our reference:

1 February 2024

### **Consultation on Reforms to Social Housing Allocations**

Dear Leader

I am writing to you to inform you that the government has launched a consultation seeking views on a series of reforms to how social housing is allocated in England.

Social housing is vital for families and communities, providing the long-term homes that help people put down roots to settle and thrive. I am grateful for the critical role that local authorities play in providing and allocating social housing.

This government is committed to increasing the supply of social housing. Under the Affordable Homes Programme, the government is investing over £11.5 billion to deliver more than 100,000 affordable homes, among them tens of thousands specifically for social rent. However, social housing will always be a finite resource. With over 1m households on waiting lists, we must interrogate how it is allocated and to whom.

Our proposals seek to provide greater clarity of a national minimum expectation for qualifications tests whilst still allowing for local flexibility. We want to make sure that all applicants and tenants benefit from a system that rewards responsible behaviour and prioritises local households.

The reforms which the government is seeking views on are:

- **UK connection test** – requiring people to be a British citizen, Irish citizen, Commonwealth citizen with a right of abode, or EEA or Swiss citizen with equal treatment rights in matters of housing under the Withdrawal Agreement, the EEA-EFTA Separation Agreement or the Swiss Citizens' Rights Agreement, or otherwise to have been lawfully resident in the UK for ten years, in order to be eligible for social housing. We are consulting on an exemption for those arriving via safe and legal resettlement routes and the Ukrainian temporary visa schemes. This will allow for the allocation of more social homes to those with the strongest connection to the UK, while enabling the Government to continue to deliver its commitments to provide urgent humanitarian support.

- **Local connection test** – preventing individuals from being allocated social housing if they have not had links to the local authority area for two years e.g., through residence or work. This will ensure greater consistency across the country and ensure more local people can access social housing in the area they call home where they need it, supporting people to put down roots and maintain links to family and community.
- **Income test** – households earning above a maximum threshold (to be defined following responses to the consultation) would not qualify for social housing. It will not be applied to existing tenants and there will be no change to rights, tenures, the length of tenancies, or rents of existing tenants.
- **Anti-social behaviour test** – disqualifying people who have unspent convictions for certain criminal anti-social behaviour offences, as well as certain civil orders, from social housing for a defined period.
- **Terrorism test** – terrorist offenders with unspent convictions will not qualify for social housing unless excluding them would increase the risk to public safety.
- **False statement test** – mandating a period of disqualification for those who knowingly or recklessly make false statements when applying for social housing.

The government does not believe that those who repeatedly commit acts of anti-social behaviour or have unspent terrorism offences should continue to access social homes whilst law-abiding individuals remain on waiting lists. The government wants to explore using legislation to amend existing grounds for eviction, or, if necessary, add a new ground for eviction for those who are convicted for a terrorist offence, unless removing the accommodation would increase public safety risks.

We are also committed to a 'three strikes and you're out' expectation of social housing landlords, as set out in the Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan published last year. This means that they will be expected to evict tenants whose behaviour is disruptive to neighbours and jeopardises community cohesion.

As experts in the day-to-day operation of how social housing is allocated, I would greatly value the insight and feedback both you and your housing teams will have on the proposals set out in the consultation. Your feedback will help us develop these proposals further and help to ensure they can be implemented in a way which works for you and your teams.

The department plans to hold engagement sessions with local housing authorities during the consultation period and officials will be in touch with details of these as soon as possible.

The consultation will run for eight weeks, ending on 26 March, and can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-reforms-to-social-housing-allocations>

For any enquiries about the consultation please contact [socialhousingallocationsconsultation@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:socialhousingallocationsconsultation@levellingup.gov.uk).

With every good wish,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jane", is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

**BARONESS SCOTT OF BYBROOK**  
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Social Housing and Faith*

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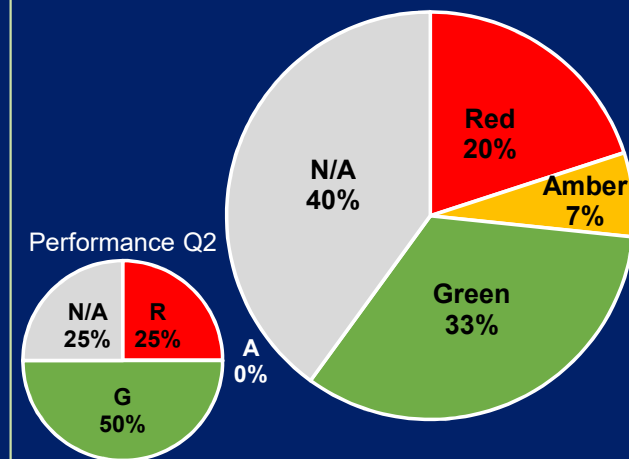
## Homes PDG Performance Dashboard (General Fund) – Quarter 3 2023/24

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Homelessness approaches – advice given (YTD)	601	800	G
Households in B&Bs (Current)	27	N/A	
Households placed in interim or temporary accommodation this quarter	102	TBC	
16/17 year olds and care experienced young adults owed a homeless duty (QTR3)	7	TBC	
Housing Assistance Policy (retrofit schemes; YTD)	1	N/A	
Homes made safe under the Housing Assistance Policy (YTD)	43	60	A
Home Improvement Loans sanctioned (YTD)	11	10	G
Private rented sector improvements (YTD)	15	10	G
Investigation of potential HMOs (Average YTD)	100 %	95 %	G
Private sector housing service requests response rate (Av. YTD)	81 %	95 %	R
Unoccupied and unfurnished empty homes (Current)	553	N/A	
Extra homes allocated Council tax bands and chargeable (YTD)	656	350	G

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Homes PDG – Outturn	£401k	£339k	R
Temporary Accommodation Costs	£533k	£410k	R
Spend on interim and temporary accommodation this quarter (Q3)	£104k	TBC	

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Homes for Ukraine Scheme	9 (No change)

### Overall Performance Q3



### In Focus

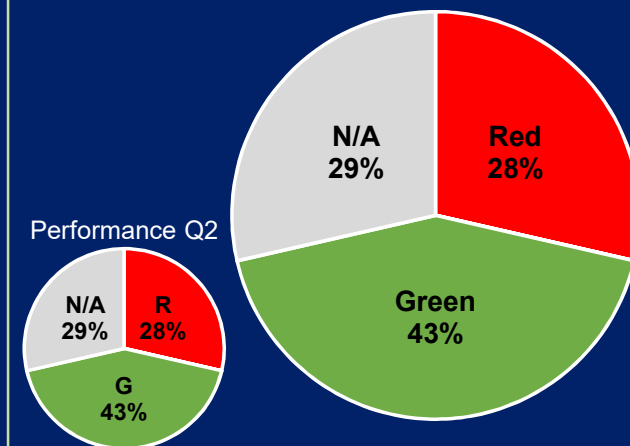
In Quarter 3, there were 102 households placed in interim or temporary accommodation: 59 households in hotels, and 43 households in the council's housing stock.

Performance for private sector housing service request response rate is likely higher than reported. Data cleansing in place from Q2. Performance in Q3 was 93%.

## Homes PDG Performance Dashboard (HRA) – Quarter 3 2023/24

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
MDH Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM - TP01)	n/a	TBD	
MDH Satisfaction that the home is safe (TSM – TP05)	n/a	TBD	
MDH Complaints responded to within Complaints Handling Code timescales (TSM-CH02; Average YTD)	87.8 %	100 %	<b>R</b>
MDH Antisocial behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (TSM – NM01; YTD)	9.81	TBD	
MDH Delivery of new Social Housing (YTD)	0	60	<b>R</b>
MDH Housing stock occupancy rate (YTD)	97.3 %	97 %	<b>G</b>
MDH Routine repairs completed on time (Average YTD)	98.9 %	95 %	<b>G</b>
MDH Facebook followers (% Increase; YTD)	30.6 %	25.0 %	<b>G</b>
MDH specific tenant engagement events (YTD)	88	30	<b>G</b>
Market delivery of new affordable homes (YTD)	n/a	94	
Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
HRA – Outturn	(£520k)	£0	<b>G</b>
HRA – Tenant Income	(£13,612k)	(£13,556k)	<b>G</b>
HRA – Capital Outturn	£7,406k	£22,004k	<b>R</b>
HRA – Capital Slippage % of development projects (Current)	61%	0%	<b>R</b>
Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)		
Housing Crisis	12 (No change)		

### Overall Performance Q3



### In Focus

During 2023, our in-house team, working with contractors has delivered:

- 107 kitchens
- 58 bathrooms
- 104 roofs
- 203 new boilers
- New windows to 250 homes
- 195 external doors
- Adapted 68 homes for disabled living
- Painted 336 homes

On track for 60 new MDH Council homes by 31 March 2024 - including first dedicated Care Leaver accommodation.



**Briefing Paper:**                   **Homes Policy Development Group**

Date of Meeting:                   19 March 2024

**Subject:**                           **The Biodiversity Duty**

Responsible Officer(s):   Jason Ball, Climate and Sustainability Specialist.  
Richard Marsh, Director of Place and Economy.

1.0     Introduction.

1.1     The Council’s statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity (habitats and species) is set out by the Environment Act 2021 and the amended Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act). This is known as ‘the biodiversity duty’. The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has published [guidance](#) on purpose and compliance.

1.2     The first consideration of what action to take with regard to this duty was carried out by Cllr Natasha Bradshaw, Cabinet Member for Climate Change, and a [Biodiversity Duty report](#) submitted to [Cabinet](#). Cabinet Decision [published here online](#). The next step is to develop a policy framework and action plan, in consultation with committees and teams across the Council.

1.3     The Council must:

- Consider what it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity.
- Agree policies and specific objectives based on its consideration.
- Act to deliver its policies and achieve its objectives.
- [Report on its biodiversity duty actions](#). (Defra has [guidance](#) on this.)

2.0     The approach to action and policy development.

2.1     The legislation’s explanatory notes (Part 6, section 102) carry key points:

- a) A requirement for public authorities to assess how they can take action to conserve and enhance biodiversity, and then to take these actions (beyond simply discharging its duties as the Local Planning Authority).
- b) The aim is to provide for the enhancement or improvement of biodiversity, not just its maintenance in its current state.
- c) To comply, a public authority must periodically consider the opportunities available across the full range of its functions. This represents a

proactive, strategic assessment of a public authority's functions, rather than considering each function in isolation.

- d) The Council may decide there is no action it can reasonably take that is consistent with the proper exercise of its functions. For example, if particular action is not possible within budget constraints, not good value for money, or it conflicts with other priorities. However, if there is action it can take, then it must decide how that action can be put into effect, through appropriate policies and objectives.
- e) It is possible the duty can be satisfied by adjusting existing policies and objectives, rather than requiring public authorities to introduce new policies or undertake new projects.

## 2.2 Committee contributions to the Council's action planning.

2.2.1 Action and policy development will be split into two separate streams: either matters within the Council's statutory Planning Policy making process and the statutory powers as a Local Planning Authority (LPA) largely governed and prescribed by national policy and through the work of the Forward Planning and Development Management teams; or items outside those functions, such as land management and its wider corporate operations.

2.2.2 Responsibility to deliver on the general biodiversity duty is shared across all Council operations. As such, this matter will be raised on agendas for all Policy Development Groups (PDGs) and, where within the jurisdiction of the LPA, the Planning and Policy Advisory Group (PPAG) to request input to the policy framework and action plan.

2.2.3 Cabinet has delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, the Director of Place and the Climate and Sustainability Specialist to develop a policy framework and action plan in consultation with staff and Council bodies as above, with recommendations to be brought to Cabinet.

2.2.4 Cabinet seeks to consider initial recommendations by the end of this Administrative year cycle (April 2024) to enable a plan to be finalised.

2.3 Examples of actions and policy areas that could be taken forward by different committee remits are provided below. Details may be developed later but some initial feedback at this stage will help shape the action plan.

2.3.1 Economy PDG: promote sustainable local food systems; promote environmental land management grants and partnerships; promote local investment in urban green space, habitat carbon sequestration (carbon banking) and biodiversity net gain (biodiversity banking); recognise / monitor the economic benefits of e.g. natural flood management schemes; promote green business schemes and innovations; include habitat gains in

major regeneration bids; support ecology training for key trades e.g. roofers and retrofitters (opportunity to conserve and enhance biodiversity value of built assets in Mid Devon).

- 2.3.2 Homes PDG: tenant engagement projects to help celebrate and monitor biodiversity on Council owned land; build enhancement targets into estate and asset strategy e.g. roost bricks, mowing regimes; basic ecology awareness training for key staff e.g. garden wildlife, bats, nesting birds.
- 2.3.3 Community PDG: review strategic grants to include biodiversity benefits; promote and monitor the health and wellbeing benefits of community and nature engagement activities; consider the community / social benefits of nature-based solutions for climate change e.g. natural flood management schemes, urban tree cover.
- 2.3.4 Environment PDG: monitor the effects of conservation management and less mowing regimes in cemeteries and green spaces; review management plans to ensure gains; strengthen tree policy; devise a tree strategy; engagement projects to help celebrate and monitor biodiversity on Council owned land; build enhancement targets into estate and asset strategy.
- 2.3.5 PPAG, Forward Planning and Development Management: build on the Biodiversity Net Gain work so far e.g. local policy, promote biodiversity banking; build on the ecological elements of the climate emergency interim planning policy statement (resources and practice); measure impacts / celebrate success of the Ecology Service Level Agreement; reinforce policy and practice around delivering the NERC Act duty and new Environment Act obligations such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) with service targets e.g. for number of non-BNG cases with gains conditioned, district tree cover, bat roost bricks installed in buildings, wildlife road crossings, dark zones, connectivity and areas permeable to wildlife movement.

**Cabinet member notified:** Yes.

**Report: Exclusion of the press and public from this item of business on the published agenda on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information.** No.

#### **Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Jason Ball, Climate and Sustainability Specialist: Email: [JBall@MidDevon.gov.uk](mailto:JBall@MidDevon.gov.uk) Tel: 01884 255255.

**Background papers:** Biodiversity statutory duty [report](#) submitted to [Cabinet 09 January 2024](#).

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**Report for:** HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

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Date of Meeting: 19 March 2024

Subject: **MID DEVON SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT:  
QUARTER 3 (Q3) 2023-24**

Cabinet Member: Councillor Simon Clist, Cabinet Member for  
Housing and Property

Responsible Officer: Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public  
Health, Regulation and Housing

Exempt: None

Wards Affected: All wards

Enclosures: Annex A: Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) –  
performance data for 2023-24: Quarters 1, 2 & 3

Annex B: Tenancy Enforcement Activities –  
performance data for 2023-24: Quarters 1, 2 & 3

Annex C: Rent recovery – performance data for  
2023-24: Quarters 1, 2 & 3

Annex D: Building Repairs & Maintenance –  
performance data for 2023-24: Quarters 1, 2 & 3

## **Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

This report has been presented in support of a rolling commitment to provide a quarterly update to Members on activity undertaken by Mid Devon Housing (MDH), including some relating to enforcement.

It also contains relevant information relating to performance as measured in line with the guidance relating to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) requires registered providers of social housing (RPs) to provide a report on a set of TSMs which includes perception and performance data, and 2023/24 is the first year in which MDH and all other large social landlords is required to do so.

The aim of this report is to provide an update on relevant data which includes some required as part of the TSM submission, where available, in order to provide assurance. It is hoped that the data will also provide some indication of the final outturn expected at the end of the year.

**Recommendation:**

**That the PDG notes the outturn performance for Quarter 3 2023/24 as provided in Annexes A, B, C and D**

**Section 2 – Report**

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 MDH has approximately 3,000 homes in its management located across the District.
- 1.2 This report provides a summary of activity and performance for Q3 ending 31 December 2023 and the previously reported data for Q1 and Q2 for comparison.
- 1.3 In accordance with this, data for Quarters 1, 2 and 3 in 2023-24 is provided in the following annexes:
  - Annex A: Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)
  - Annex B: Tenancy Enforcement Activities
  - Annex C: Rent Recovery
  - Annex D: Building Repairs & Maintenance

**2 Assurance requirements and reporting**

- 2.1 RPs are now required by the RSH to provide effective assurance to Members and this should include relevant, updated performance data relating to service delivery.
- 2.2 The RSH takes a co-regulatory approach which means that Councillors are responsible for ensuring that MDH is meeting their standards. There are currently five consumer standards, although following the implementation of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act these have been under review and revised standards were published on 29 February 2024 which come into effect on 1 April 2024. RPs such as MDH are required to have due regard to the outcomes and specific expectations as set out in these standards, which are now amalgamated into the following four consumer standards:
  - The Safety and Quality Standard

This requires landlords to provide safe and good-quality homes for their tenants, along with good-quality landlord services

- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
 

This requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so they can access services, raise concerns when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account
  - The Neighbourhood and Community Standard
 

This requires landlords to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods, and feel safe in their homes.
  - The Tenancy Standard
 

This sets requirements for the fair allocation and letting of homes, as well as requirements for how tenancies are managed by landlords
- 2.3 The Rent Standard, an economic standard, also applies and MDH is required to have regard to this.
- 2.4 From 1 April 2024, the RSH will also inspect large landlords, with 1,000 or more social homes at least once every four years to ensure they are meeting the consumer standards, consequently this will apply to MDH.
- 2.5 Councillors also have a responsibility to ensure that MDH is being open and accountable with regard to how the organisation meets its objectives. In line with the principles of co-regulation, RPs are also required to support tenants so that they can shape and scrutinise service delivery and hold Councillors to account.
- 2.6 Performance data recorded in support of the TSMs is shown in the report. The aim is to ensure that Members can be reassured that data is being collected. However, it also designed to provide an indication relating to the potential outturns at year end, which will be included in the data submission which will be made to the RSH during the first part of 2024-25.
- 2.7 The perception data to inform our return to the RSH, in line with a new regulatory requirement, is collected annually although MDH may review our approach to this. Currently, information collected by a third party contractor during the latter part of 2023 from all tenants is still being analysed. There is a separate briefing on the agenda for the meeting in relation to this.
- 2.8 This work was procured by a partnership involving MDH and two other local authority providers with retained housing stock. As a result, there will be opportunities for local benchmarking alongside national benchmarking once all RSH has collected all relevant data and it has been published.

- 2.9 At the end of January, MDH commissioned an external review of compliance against the regulatory framework. The findings of this will be used, together with the analysis of the data collected during the perception survey, to inform an understanding of necessary service improvement. This in turn, will provide an indication with regard to where resources should be prioritised going forward. The insight gained will inform the development of an improvement plan, which is currently a work in progress.
- 2.10 The work of different teams within MDH is shown in the annexes as set out below. Information is provided on key areas of work. It is important for Members to be reassured that the homes in management are safe and secure and to understand how teams are performing in relation to certain indicators relating to tenancy and estate management. There are legislative and regulatory requirements which RPs must adhere to. However, it is also important that service delivery also takes account of MDH's own policies and good practice.
- 2.11 This service delivery report sets out the following specific data:
- 12 new performance data TSMs
  - 10 new perception survey data TSMs (annual survey data)
  - Tenancy enforcement data
  - Rent collection and debt data
  - Full repairs data including Decent Homes
  - Voids data (metrics determined by updated Voids Management Policy)
- 2.12 The TSMs include three measures designed to demonstrate how RPs are performing with regard to service delivery in connection with complaints. If a tenant remains dissatisfied following the conclusion of their complaint, they can escalate that complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). In the new regulatory framework, recently introduced, the role of the HOS has been expanded. Every year, RPs must undertake a review of compliance against the Complaints Handling Code, issued by the HOS. This has recently been reviewed by the HOS and there is now a requirement to submit an annual complaints performance and service improvement report to the PDG, in support of this. This report will need to be published on the section of the website relating to complaints alongside the response of the PDG and the Cabinet to this. In addition, it should be noted that there is a Memorandum of Understanding between the HOS and the RSH which allows the transfer of information with the aim of ensuring that any regulatory failings associated with service delivery as performed by RPs are identified and dealt with appropriately.
- 2.13 MDH provides a detailed report on complaints data and key issues of learning to inform service improvement on an annual basis. The last annual report was discussed at the meeting of the PDG on 13 June 2023.



### **3 Performance and context**

- 3.1 Annexes A to D contain comments and informative narrative on performance provided against the metrics and there is further context provided below.
- 3.2 In the absence of TSM benchmark data, where possible, we have provided a Housemark benchmark instead. Alongside hundreds of other registered providers of social housing (private and local authority, large and small), MDH provides performance data to Housemark which is used to deliver its monthly Pulse reports on housing sector performance and trend. Whilst these reports are highly informative, the metrics used by Housemark may not be fully compatible with the Government TSMs or our local metrics in all instances so are best viewed as indicators rather than strict comparators.
- 3.2 Information relating to the annual satisfaction data collected in support of the Government's TSM return will be provided at the end of Quarter 4.

### **4 Building Services**

- 4.1 Resourcing issues have impacted performance relating to routine repairs during the last quarter. Managers have oversight of the issues and have been prioritising work in order to ensure that repairs to our properties are undertaken in preference to those required to communal areas. Generally, however, performance was really strong during Quarter 3.
- 4.2 Ensuring that our homes are safe and warm is a priority for MDH and performance relating to this area of work has been generally excellent with several relevant indicators showing that work has been on target during the year. With regard to asbestos safety checks, there is a programme of inspections which deliver the outcome required, that is, a more detailed understanding of the issues across all of the housing stock, by the end of 2026.

### **5 Building Services – Voids Specific**

- 5.1 MDH has plans to increase the number of homes in management by redeveloping parts of our estates, to deliver new homes for people in need. This means that some units have to be held to accommodate those being decanted to facilitate the new developments, whilst others have to remain empty pending demolition. This has an impact upon the performance figure.
- 5.2 There are other factors which need to be taken into account. Resourcing issues relating to staffing have been a particular challenge in recent months but some of these have now been resolved and it is hoped that performance will improve as a result. A high turnover of void units and the condition of the homes being returned once a tenancy ends are also important factors impacting performance. Some properties coming back as voids do not meet the Decent Homes Standard due to the fact that the outgoing tenant refused improvements during the term of their tenancy.

- 5.3 It should also be noted that MDH does not refuse to accept housing applicants on the basis that they do not meet the threshold as defined following a financial risk assessment. Other RPs do this and essentially this means that MDH has proportionally more vulnerable people with complex needs living in our homes than other providers. The evidence of this will be seen at the end of a tenancy when sometimes a property will not be in a good state of repair when possession is regained.
- 5.4 Performance improved during Quarter 3 with the average number of working days taken to re-let standard voids owned by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) being 34 at the end of the month. However, the yearly average relating to this indicator was impacted by the drop in performance during September when the figure was 153 days.
- 5.5 Despite the above pressures, the key overarching occupancy rate at the end of Quarter 3 remains above target at 97.32%.

## **6 Tenancy and Estate Management**

- 6.1 There were some resourcing issues in the Neighbourhood teams during Q3 and cover arrangements were implemented. The Estates team continues to work in partnership with other agencies to manage nuisance and anti-social behaviour in a proactive way to some serious cases.
- 6.2 Officers are also involved with the Early Help initiative designed to provide support to children and families enabling them to resolve any issues at an early stage before more targeted intervention by Social Services is required. In addition, the team works intensively with some particular tenants who are vulnerable, in an effort to help these people to better sustain their tenancies. Hoarding is increasingly being seen as an issue; such cases need a delicate and sensitive approach whilst the team work with the tenant and also try to draw in support from other agencies.
- 6.3 The team manages the reviews of flexible tenancies, and, as at the end of Quarter 3, there were 112 of these to be completed in line with legislative timescales; each of these reviews takes approximately 4 to 5 hours, including travelling time.
- 6.4 The Neighbourhood Team Leader is currently working with other colleagues to finalise the timetable for the Neighbourhood Walkabouts for 2024/25 and it is likely that the first tranche will be completed during June into July, with the second tranche taking place during the late Autumn. The dates, once finalised, will be published and Members will be notified.

6.5 The Neighbourhood Officers working to maximise the collection of income are delivering excellent performance given the challenging external environment and the ongoing cost of living crisis, with current dwelling rent arrears being 2.71% at the end of Quarter 3 against a target of 5%. The team tries to work with tenants, and enforcement action is the last resort in cases where all other attempts to elicit payment have failed. The Officers work closely with other colleagues in Revenues and Benefits as well as with support agencies including CHAT and Wiser£Money to achieve good outcomes for tenants experiencing financial-hardship.

## **7 Recommendation**

7.1 The following recommendation is made:

That the PDG notes the outturn performance for Quarter 3 2023/24 as provided in Annexes A, B, C and D

## **Financial Implications**

The activity of MDH is funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is ring fenced and subject to specific financial controls. The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) charges a mandatory membership fee based on the number of homes in the management of the registered provider (RP) of social housing. There was a recent consultation for the RSH to introduce its own mandated regulation fee, also based on the number of homes.

## **Legal Implications**

The tenancy agreement defines MDH's relationship with tenants and sets out the rights and responsibilities of both parties. This takes account of legal and regulatory requirements. The Council is an RP and therefore is required to comply with the regulatory framework operated by the RSH. The regulatory framework has been reviewed. The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard contains provisions relating to the management of complaints. There is also a requirement for MDH to manage complaints in accordance with the Complaints Handling Code (the Code) which is issued by the HOS. Landlords are expected to self-assess against the Code. Landlords are required to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvement. Following publication of the Social Housing White Paper in late 2020, the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, has now been implemented and gone into statute. New regulations are expected in relation to some of the key provisions set out in the Act.

## **Risk Assessment**

The Council has approximately 3,000 homes in management and the performance of MDH impacts upon the lives of many thousands of tenants and their families. This represents a huge responsibility and investment, consequently a major area of risk. Not providing an effective housing management service has the potential to result in

failure to meet legal and statutory obligations including those relating to health and safety issues, repairs obligations, tenancy fraud, and reputational issues which could result in our tenants feeling stigmatised. Failure to collect rental income could impact the ability to fund necessary management and maintenance activities.

Finally, a failure to provide adequate information on service performance for the purposes of governance and scrutiny is a specific area of non-compliance with the requirements of the RSH. This regulator has new powers to impose performance improvements and potentially fine registered providers where performance is poor and/or adequate assurance is not provided.

### **Impact on Climate Change**

None directly arising from this report.

### **Equalities Impact Assessment**

MDH has a collection of housing related policies. The use of these helps to ensure that service delivery is consistent and fair. These are currently being reviewed with the aim of aligning them more closely with the Regulatory Standards. There is a regulatory requirement for registered providers of social housing to tailor their services to meet the needs of tenants. MDH requests diversity data from tenants to enable compliance to be monitored. MDH is required to work with people from all sections of society and having an agreed policy ensures that all tenants and other stakeholders are treated in the same way with adjustments being made to meet their needs, as necessary. The Housing Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code which MDH adhere to also requires landlords to have an awareness of accessibility so residents are easily be able to access the complaints procedure via several routes.

Our “Getting to Know You” project has been designed to refresh our knowledge relating to the diversity of our tenants and over the next two years, we will be surveying them in an effort to better understand their needs.

### **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

### **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

**Date:** 05 Mar 2024

**Statutory Officer:** Maria De Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 11 Mar 2024

**Chief Officer:** Simon Newcombe

Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director

**Date:** 29 February 2024

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 05 March 2024

**Cabinet member notified:** Yes

#### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing

Email: [snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk)

Telephone: 01884 255255 via call back

#### **Background papers:**

Mid Devon Housing Strategies and Policies:

[Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing:

[Regulatory framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Tenant Satisfaction Measures:

[Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code:

[Complaint Handling Code | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

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## Annex A: Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) – performance data for 2023/24: Quarters 1, 2 and 3

Overall Satisfaction						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP01: Overall satisfaction	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator

Keeping Properties in Good Repair						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP02: Satisfaction with repairs	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator
TP03: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	N/A	N/A	NA			Annual Indicator
TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator
RP01: Proportion of Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	0.65%	0.76%	0.76%		0.76%	There are 22 properties that are outstanding, all of which are on a future list of works.
RP02: Repairs completed within target timescale	97.77%	99.47%	99.32%		98.85%	The number of repairs completed on time, whilst relatively high, are lower than target and lower than in previous years, which is reflective of ongoing staffing issues combined with a significant backlog. A number of long term positions have fortunately been filled, so we are

						currently in a 'bedding in' period. Following this, we expect to see an improvement in these completion times, especially for emergency and urgent repairs. The majority of failures relate to emergency or urgent communal repairs, which have taken a lower priority when compared with issues within properties themselves.
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Maintaining Building Safety						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator
BS01: Gas safety checks	99.87%	99.91%	100%		100%	Target 100% - On target
BS02: Fire safety checks	100%	100%	100%		100%	Target 100% - On target
BS03: Asbestos safety checks	77.68%	77.78%	77.75%		77.75%	There is a plan in place to carry out 300 surveys a year and reach the target of 100% by 2026
BS04: Water safety checks	100%	100%	100%		100%	Target 100% - On target
BS05: Lift safety checks	100%	100%	100%		100%	Target 100% - On target

Respectful and Helpful Engagement						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator
TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator

TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator
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Effective Handling of Complaints						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator
CH01: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	22	20	17		59	The number of complaints appears to be increasing year on year. MDH operates an open and transparent approach to complaints and uses them as a way to identify any necessary service improvements.
CH02: Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	96.88%	95.00%	98.00%		96.55%	Target 100% MDH is a relatively small landlord and occasionally experiences resourcing difficulties, which impacts performance; for example, when the Complaints Officer is on leave. The number of complaints has been increasing and therefore we have been exploring options to provide some additional support to the existing Complaints Officer. This should help to improve the customer experience and also to drive up performance in relation to this indicator.

Responsible Neighbourhood Management						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator
TP11: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator
TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	N/A	N/A	N/A			Annual Indicator
NM01: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	3.72	2.03	4.07		9.82	This is a new indicator which has been introduced in line with the Tenant Satisfaction Measure regime and actual results from other registered providers of social housing will be available for comparative purposes after the end of this financial year.

**Annex B: Tenancy Enforcement Activities – performance data for 2023/24: Quarters 1, 2 and 3**

<b>Neighbourhood &amp; Community Standard – Housing Revenue Account – Estates Team</b>						
	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Fraud cases opened	2	0	0		2	The Estates team are currently dealing with a number of very delicate and sensitive cases, some of which relate to vulnerable tenants with complex needs. The work required to prepare such cases where further action is planned can be quite extensive. There are several cases in the pipeline where possession or other enforcement action has been agreed as a way forward and where the Neighbourhood Officer is currently engaged with collating all relevant information.
Fraud cases referred to an external investigator	1	0	0		1	
Acceptable Behaviour Agreements signed	0	0	0		0	
Good Neighbourhood Agreements signed	0	0	0		0	
Community Protection Notice warnings issued	0	0	0		0	
Community Protection Notices issued	0	0	0		0	
Possession Actions commenced on grounds of ASB	2	0	0		2	
Closure Orders – obtained	0	0	0		0	
Injunctions sought	0	0	0		0	

Evictions on grounds of anti-social behaviour/ other tenancy breach	0	0	0		0	
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### Annex 3: Rent recovery – performance data for 2023/24: Quarters 1, 2 and 3

Income Recovery – Housing Revenue Account – Income Team							
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Target	YTD	Comments
Current dwelling rent arrears at quarter end %	2.48%	2.47%	2.71%			2.71%	<p>Target: &lt;5%</p> <p>Performance is impacted by the continuing migration from legacy benefits onto Universal Credit. Those in receipt of housing costs through Universal Credit receive them four weekly in arrears. Previously, when the majority of our tenants were in receipt of Housing Benefit, this was paid by Revenues and Benefits directly onto rent accounts as a rebate on a weekly basis.</p> <p>To put the current performance into context, it should be noted that the same figure at the end of Q3 in 2022/23 was 3.01%. The rent has increased since then so the amount to be collected has also gone up.</p>
Notice of Seeking possession served	52	89	72			213	<p>These notices will only be served in cases where the tenant has failed to take account of previous requests for contact or payment. The team adheres to the protocol designed to encourage tenants to remedy the breach of tenancy conditions arising from non-payment of rent. The protocol must be followed before any possession action can commence. The team will</p>

							continue to work with the tenant once any notice is served in an effort to support tenants to help them to sustain their tenancies.
Judgement obtained	5	4	6			15	Officers protect the interests of MDH by taking cases to the County Court. A judgement will compel a tenant to take action to bring their account back into line and Officers will monitor the account weekly with a view to checking this. In many cases, a tenant will comply with the terms of a Court Order and no further action is required.
Warrants issued	4	5	1			10	Eviction is seen as a very last resort and tenants are made aware of their right to seek a stay of execution if they contact MDH following the issue of a warrant. However, in some cases, where there is a persistent failure to engage and where the debt continues to rise, then Officers have no option but to move forward and seek a Warrant of Eviction from the Court, which makes an eviction lawful.
Evictions on grounds of rent arrears	3	1	2			6	The aim is to support tenants experiencing difficulties paying the rent, but occasionally people do not wish to engage, for whatever reason. It should be noted that in some cases, rent arrears is used as a ground for seeking possession of property because the case can be resolved more easily by so doing. It should be noted that in three cases during the year to date, action was taken in this way because two tenants had abandoned their properties and because another had moved to live with a partner elsewhere, leaving family members in occupation, who were causing anti-social behaviour and not keeping rent payments up to date.

#### Annex 4: Building Repairs and Maintenance – performance data for 2023/24: Quarters 1, 2 & 3

Homes and Neighbourhood & Community Standards – Housing Revenue Account – Building Services						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Decent Homes Standard %	99.35%	99.24%	99.24%		99.24%	Target 100%  There are 22 properties that are outstanding, all of which are on a future list of works.
Emergency repairs completed on time %	97.84%	100.00%	98.73%		98.80%	Target 100%  This figure is reflective of ongoing staffing issues. A number of long term positions have fortunately now been filled, so we are currently in a 'bedding in' period. Following this, we expect to see an improvement in these completion times, especially for emergency and urgent repairs. The majority of failures relate to emergency or urgent communal repairs, which have taken a lower priority when compared with issues within properties themselves.
Urgent repairs completed on time %	97.26%	98.79%	99.67%		98.69%	Target 95% - Above target
Routine repairs completed on time %	98.77%	99.58%	99.78%		99.37%	Target 95% - Above target
Repairs completed first visit %	99.44%	98.71%	99.74%		99.32%	Target 95% - Above target
Gas safety checks %	99.87%	99.91%	100%		100%	Target 100% - On target
Fire risk assessments %	100%	100%	100%		100%	Target 100% - On target

Water safety checks (Legionella) %	100%	100%	100%		100%	Target 100% - On target
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## Voids

Voids performance – Housing Revenue Account – Building Services and Allocations Teams						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Standard voids including temporary accommodation	64.10	72.68	38.00		59.21	Target 35 working days.  There are a number of major factors that are affecting our ability to achieve all of the void performance targets, they include record numbers of voids received, deteriorating standards of voids received, staffing shortages and redeployment and the processes involved around the development programme where we are having to hold a number of voids so that we can meet the expectations of tenants who we are moving from properties that will be demolished and the fact that the works involved in these voids are greatly increased.
Major voids	167.88	141.42	80.41		127.78	Target 55 working days  As above
Decent homes voids	101.67	101.36	110.73		105.11	Target 75 working days  As above
Development voids	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A	Target 1 calendar year  No comment required
Occupancy rate (whole stock)	97.60%	97.33%	97.32%		97.32%	Target 97% - Above target

						Despite the comments above we are still above the performance target set for occupancy even with the fact that we currently have 16 void properties that will be demolished in the near future.
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Definitions and targets as per adopted Voids Management Policy 2023

## WORK PROGRAMME - HOMES PDG 2024/2025

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
<b>11th June 2024</b>				
11.06.24	Election of Chairman			
11.06.24	Election of Vice Chairman			
11.06.24	Start time of Meetings			
11.06.24 2.07.24 (Cabinet)	<b>Income Management Policy</b> To receive the revised Income Management Policy.		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	
11.06.24 2.07.24 (Cabinet)	<b>Hoarding Policy</b> To receive the revised Hoarding Policy.		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	
11.06.24 2.07.24 (Cabinet) 17.07.24 (Council)	<b>Right to Buy Policy (New)</b> To receive the new Right to Buy Policy.		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
11.06.24	Housing Initiatives Plan (briefing)		Director of Place Tanya Wenham	
11.06.24 2.07.24 (Cabinet)	<b>Tenure Reform Working Group recommendations</b> To receive the recommendations of the Tenure Reform Working Group		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	
11.06.24	LAHF update and approach to allocating homes (briefing)		Director of Place Tanya Wenham	
11.06.24	Homes for Ukraine update		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	
11.06.24	Performance Dashboard		Director of Place Dr Stephen Carr	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
<b>6th August 2024</b>				
24.09.24	Draft General Fund and HRA budget for 25/26 (version 1)		Director of Place Paul Deal	
6.08.24 27.08.24 (Cabinet) 4.09.24 (Council)	<b>Repairs and Maintenance Policy (New)</b> To receive the new Repairs and Maintenance Policy.		Director of Place Mike Lowman	
<b>24th September 2024</b>				
24.09.24 15.10.24 (Cabinet)	<b>Tenure Reform and Changes to the Tenancy Agreement - Project Plan</b> To receive a project plan to tenure reform		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	
24.09.24 15.10.24 (Cabinet)	<b>Tenancy Management Policy</b> To receive the revised Tenancy Management Policy.		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
<b>19th November 2024</b>				
19.11.24	Draft General Fund and HRA budget for 25/26 (version 2)		Director of Place Paul Deal	
19.11.24	Performance Dashboard		Director of Place Dr Stephen Carr	
19.11.24 10.12.24 (Cabinet)	<b>Tenancy Strategy</b> To receive the revised Tenancy Strategy		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	
<b>14th January 2025</b>				
14.01.25 4.02.25 (Cabinet)	<b>Tenant Compensation Policy</b> To receive the revised Tenant Compensation Policy.		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	
14.01.25 4.02.25 (Cabinet)	<b>Housing Strategy</b> To receive the revised Housing Strategy.		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Theme	Officer Responsible	Comments
14.01.25 4.02.25 (Cabinet)	<b>Service Standards</b> To receive the Service Standards for Housing.		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	
<b>18th March 2025</b>				
18.03.25 1.04.25 (Cabinet)	<b>Tenant Involvement Strategy</b> To receive the revised Tenant Involvement Strategy.		Director of Place Simon Newcombe	
18.03.25	Performance Dashboard		Director of Place Dr Stephen Carr	
18.03.25	Chairman's Annual Report for 2024/2025			

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## Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) Homes Policy Development Group Chairs Report for 2023-24

In May 2023 I was honoured to be elected to the office of Councillor representing Clare and Shuttern Ward of MDDC, my first public appointment. As a new Councillor, it was with some trepidation I accepted the nomination for the role of Chairman of the Homes Policy Development Group (PDG).

However, following the excellent new councillor training programme and with reassuring support from the Clerk, Sarah Lees, in facilitating the meetings and ensuring that all members had the information they needed in good time, it has been a positive experience. Council officers have produced and presented excellent policy documents and reports for review by the PDG and members of the group have engaged effectively in the process. I thank them all for their professionalism and hard work.

There have been five Homes PDG meetings since the May 2023 elections and a full programme of work. Eight new or updated policies developed by Officers were recommended to Cabinet (and duly adopted) on:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Neighbourhood Management
- Damp and Mould
- Recharges
- Tenancy Inspection
- Garages and Parking Space
- Homes Safety
- Pets and Animals

The PDG has also received and noted reports or briefings on

- Revenue and Capital Outturn - MDDC's General Fund and the separate Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- Service Delivery
- Complaints Handling
- Homes for Ukraine
- Voids Management
- Savings options for the 2024-5
- Tenant Involvement and Engagement Strategy Action Plan
- Consultation on potential Fees to the Regulator for Social Housing (disputed)
- Neighbourhood Management
- Performance dashboard
- Detailed report on Damp and Mould Focus by MDH, following the proposed introduction of Awaab's Law.
- Flexible tenancies – a working group of PDG members was formed in November 2023.

One constant theme that has demanded a great deal of officer attention has been the introduction of the new regulatory regime for social housing developed by the Government in the wake of the Grenfell disaster including the collection of data for 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

The Tenure Review Working Group set up in November 2023 is reviewing plans for Flexible Tenancies being developed by MDDC as an alternative to traditional 'lifetime' tenancies in order to facilitate the more optimal allocation of Council homes to tenants.

Looking to the future, Mid Devon Homes (MDH) faces the challenge of meeting increased regulatory demand from Government in the face of costs increasing with inflation and restricted ability to increase revenue.

It's a major concern that, in common with most local authority areas, there is a severe shortage of homes for social rent in Mid-Devon: there are around 1600 applicants on the MDH waiting list. Also, the continuation of 'Right To Buy' tends to deplete stocks while not providing sufficient revenue to replace homes sold.

To begin to tackle the shortfall in supply, MDH has an ambitious 5-year plan to increase its stock of housing. Where possible, existing MDH-owned sites will be developed, or re-developed where housing has become obsolete. Many of the new homes will be built using a modular approach, which has many benefits: notably predictability of cost, the low impact on neighbourhoods due to rapid installation onsite and a level of energy efficiency that will eliminate energy poverty for the tenants and greatly reduce carbon emissions. MDH has recently launched its 'Development Hub' web site,

<https://letstalk.middevon.gov.uk/mdh-development-hub>

where information can be found on all current and future development sites across the District.

Finally, once again I thank the PDG Members and the professional MDDC staff, who continue to work hard to make the Homes PDG an effective forum for maintaining and improving homes provision and related services within MDDC.

Cllr Chris Adcock  
Chairman  
Homes Policy Development Group  
19<sup>th</sup> March 2024