

Homes Policy Development Group

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

Next meeting
Tuesday, 18 March 2025 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](#)

Meeting ID: 374 873 594 459
Passcode: fkQvUL

Membership

Cllr C Adcock
Cllr J Cairney
Cllr A Glover
Cllr F W Letch
Cllr N Letch
Cllr S Robinson
Cllr H Tuffin
Cllr C Connor

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 7 - 16*)
To consider whether to approve the minutes as a correct record of the meeting held on 10th September 2024.
- 5 **Chair's Announcements**
To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.
- 6 **Devon Housing Commission Report**
To receive a presentation from a representative of Exeter University.
- 7 **Performance Dashboard Quarter 2** (*Pages 17 - 18*)
To receive both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account Performance Dashboards for the previous quarter.
- 8 **Medium Term Financial Plan - General Fund (GF)** (*Pages 19 - 46*)
To receive a report from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) providing options to update the 2025/2026 budget for consideration / approval.
- 9 **Housing Initiatives Plan Update** (*Pages 47 - 88*)
To receive a report from the Head of Housing and Health providing an update on activities and initiatives undertaken by the Housing Initiatives Officer and Housing Options Team relating to homelessness prevention and to introduce the need to develop a new homelessness policy.
- 10 **Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Tenant Compensation Policy Update**
(*Pages 89 - 118*)
To receive a report from the Head of Housing and Health providing an updated Tenant Compensation Policy.
- 11 **Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Service Standards Update** (*Pages 119 - 138*)
To receive a report from the Head of Housing and Health. The previous service standards were adopted in 2016 and are due for review. This

review has been further prioritised following recent publication of the new consumer standard and the requirement to ensure our published standards are consistent with this.

12 **Review of Mid Devon Housing Asset Management Strategy** (Pages 139 - 162)

To receive a report from the Head of Housing and Health reviewing the existing Asset Management Strategy which has been undertaken to bring the document up to date in the context of the new consumer regulation regime including the statutory consumer standards. It also brings the Strategy in line with the new MDDC Corporate Plan for 2024-28 which includes relevant housing objectives.

13 **Variation to the Standard Tenancy Agreement Project Plan**

To receive a verbal update from the Head of Housing and Health.

14 **Appointment of Co-Opted Tenant Members** (Pages 163 - 170)

To receive a report from the Head of Housing and Health providing some context around a proposal to recruit 3 tenants of Mid Devon Housing (MDH) to the Homes Policy Development Group.

15 **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:

- Performance Dashboard for Quarter 3
- Chair's Annual Report for 2024/2025
- Tenant Involvement Strategy
- Right to Buy Policy (NEW)
- Tenancy Management Policy (REVISED)
- Revised Tenancy Agreement
- MDH Safeguarding Adults at Risk, Children and Young People Policy (NEW)
- Tenancy Strategy
- Q3 Service Delivery Report
- Verbal update on Tenant Satisfaction Measures

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

Stephen Walford

Chief Executive

Monday, 11 November 2024

Guidance notes for meetings of Mid Devon District Council

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 the Council experience technology difficulties at a committee meeting the Chairman may make the decision to continue the meeting 'in-person' only to conclude the business on the agenda.

1. Inspection of Papers

Any person wishing to inspect minutes, reports, or the background papers for any item on the agenda should contact Democratic Services at Committee@middevon.gov.uk

They can also be accessed via the council's website [Click Here](#)

Printed agendas can also be viewed in reception at the Council offices at Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, EX16 6PP.

2. Members' Code of Conduct requirements

When considering the declaration of interests and their actions as a councillor, Members are reminded of the requirements of the Members' Code of Conduct and the underpinning Principles of Public Life: Honesty; Integrity; Selflessness; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Leadership.

The Code of Conduct can be [viewed here](#):

3. Minutes of the Meeting

Details of the issues discussed, and recommendations made at the meeting will be set out in the minutes, which the Committee will be asked to approve as a correct record at its next meeting. Minutes of meetings are not verbatim.

4. Public Question Time

Residents, electors or business rate payers of the District wishing to raise a question and/or statement under public question time are asked to provide their written questions to the Democratic Services team by 5pm three clear working days before the meeting to ensure that a response can be provided at the meeting. You will be invited to ask your question and or statement at the meeting and will receive the answer prior to, or as part of, the debate on that item. Alternatively, if you are content to receive an answer after the item has been debated, you can register to speak by emailing your full name to Committee@middevon.gov.uk by no later than 4pm on the day before the meeting. You will be invited to speak at the meeting and will receive a written response within 10 clear working days following the meeting. Notification in this way will ensure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible

5. Meeting Etiquette for participants

- Only speak when invited to do so by the Chair.
- If you're referring to a specific page, mention the page number.

For those joining the meeting virtually:

- Mute your microphone when you are not talking.

- Switch off your camera if you are not speaking.
- Speak clearly (if you are not using camera then please state your name)
- Switch off your camera and microphone after you have spoken.
- There is a facility in Microsoft Teams under the ellipsis button called “turn on live captions” which provides subtitles on the screen.

6. Exclusion of Press & Public

When considering an item on the agenda, the Committee may consider it appropriate to pass a resolution under Section 100A (4) Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 that the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the basis that if they were present during the business to be transacted there would be a likelihood of disclosure of exempt information, as defined under the terms of the Act. If there are members of the public and press listening to the open part of the meeting, then the Democratic Services Officer will, at the appropriate time, ask participants to leave the meeting when any exempt or confidential information is about to be discussed. They will be invited to return as soon as the meeting returns to open session.

7. Recording of meetings

All media, including radio and TV journalists, and members of the public may attend Council, Cabinet, PDG and Committee meetings (apart from items Media and Social Media Policy - 2023 page 22 where the public is excluded) you can view our Media and Social Media Policy [here](#). They may record, film or use social media before, during or after the meeting, so long as this does not distract from or interfere unduly with the smooth running of the meeting. Anyone proposing to film during the meeting is requested to make this known to the Chairman in advance. The Council also makes audio recordings of meetings which are published on our website [Browse Meetings, 2024 - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#).

8. Fire Drill Procedure

If you hear the fire alarm you should leave the building by the marked fire exits, follow the direction signs and assemble at the master point outside the entrance. Do not use the lifts or the main staircase. You must wait there until directed otherwise by a senior officer. If anybody present is likely to need assistance in exiting the building in the event of an emergency, please ensure you have let a member of Democratic Services know before the meeting begins and arrangements will be made should an emergency occur.

9. WIFI

An open, publicly available Wi-Fi network is normally available for meetings held in the Phoenix Chambers at Phoenix House.

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MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 10 September 2024 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors

S Robinson (Chair)
C Adcock (Vice-Chair), J Cairney, C Connor, A Glover, F W Letch, N Letch, and H Tuffin

Also Present

Councillors

E Buczkowski, J Buczkowski and G Czapiewski

Also Present

Officers

Stephen Walford (Chief Executive), Simon Newcombe (Head of Housing & Health), Mike Lowman (Building Services Operations Manager), Sophie Richards (Customer Engagement Officer, Mid Devon Housing) and Sarah Lees (Democratic Services Officer)

Councillors

Online

J Lock and D Wulff

Officers Online

Dr Stephen Carr, Carole Oliphant and Laura Woon

21 APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

There were no apologies for absence.

22 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions from members of the public.

23 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT

No interests were declared under this item.

24 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2024 were approved as a correct record of the meeting and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

25 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair had the following announcements to make:

1. The Annual Report to Tenants was an impressive document and should be celebrated. She had a hard copy which she could let colleagues see.
2. Zed Pod new homes in Cullompton had received an award, this needed to be celebrated.
3. The forthcoming occupation of properties at St. Georges Court in Tiverton by Mid Devon Housing (MDH) tenants also needed to be acknowledged.

26 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN - GENERAL FUND (GF) (00:09:00)

The Group had before it a report * from the Deputy Chief Executive (S151) presenting the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which covered the period 2025/26 to 2028/29 and took into account the Council's key strategies (i.e. the Corporate Plan, Business Plans, Treasury Management Plan, Asset Management Plan, Work Force Plan and Capital Strategy) and demonstrated it had the financial resources to deliver the Corporate Plan.

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

- The MTFP covered a period from 2025/26 to 2028/29. Normally this would be a 5 year plan but were currently awaiting greater clarification from the new Government and the Chancellor's budget announcement on 30th October 2024. The 5th year will be added following this.
- The MTFP focussed on a framework of principles those being:
 - (i) General Fund Reserves
 - (ii) Optimise Income Generation
 - (iii) Allocation of Revenue Resources
 - (iv) Allocation of Capital Resources
- The MTFP built on a number of assumptions around inflation which were shown in Appendix 1.
- Overall the result of pressures on the budget left a £1.2m gap rising to 4m by year 4 if the Council took no action.
- Over the summer officers had looked at options which had been RAG rated as red, amber, green in terms of risk and deliverability.
- If the green and amber savings were accepted this would reduce the £1.2m gap down to £400,000
- All Policy Development Groups would be asked to look at possible savings which would then be presented to Cabinet.

Discussion took place regarding:

- Control over Building Control fees was limited but there were some discretionary areas that could be looked at.
- The effect of a brand new government elected very recently and as yet still to outline its direction in terms of local government funding. There was some certainty emerging regarding waste and some positive consultation in relation to the Planning fees. There was genuine concern however, regarding recent statements made by the Prime Minister about the forthcoming budget needing

to be 'painful'. As yet there had also been limited commentary around the issue of Right to Buy which was unsettling.

The Group **NOTED** the following:

1. The updated MTFP for the General Fund covering the years 2025/26 to 2028/29;
2. The principles and the approach to balancing the General Fund Revenue Budget outlined in paragraph 6.2 be endorsed;
3. The emerging budget pressures included within Appendix 3;

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that:

The Round 1 Budget Proposals as set out in Appendix 4a be approved.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

27 **PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD Q1 (00:25:00)**

The Group were presented with, and **NOTED**, two slides showing performance information in the housing area both under the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.

The following was highlighted:

- The performance rating for MDH net-zero Modern Methods of Construction homes was red. This related to the nature of housing delivery in that it was not smooth across the year. Net zero properties would be added to the portfolio shortly. There were just two complaints not responded to within the relevant timescales, and justification for these was provided.
- The HRA development programme being a live and evolving plan.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- A significant number of families on the Devon Home Choice waiting list (Bands A-C) had been housed in quarter 1. This was a remarkable achievement.
- Annual figures were shown in relation to Capital Outturn, a full review would be undertaken of the development programme in the next quarter.

28 **REVIEW OF MID DEVON HOUSING HOARDING POLICY (00:33:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Housing & Health reviewing the Mid Devon Housing Hoarding Policy.

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

- The complexities involved in dealing with a tenant displaying hoarding behaviour. Their environments were often chaotic and dangerous in terms of potential trips and falls, fire risks, sanitary and hygiene arrangements being compromised.
- There was a need to understand the underlying causes in each case and to be as supportive to the tenant as possible. This was a complex process involving many different agencies.

Consideration was given to the following:

- How it was discovered that a tenant was hoarding? It was explained that this was sometimes discovered as a result of a routine visit by a Neighbourhood Officer, a contractor dealing with a repair issue, a tenant themselves could reach out, family members could bring it to the attention of the Council or neighbours could report it. There were a number of ways hoarding came to light.
- Co-Regulation with the consumer regulation regime. Members themselves had a role to play in addressing the issue, particularly those on the Policy Development Group by holding to account the policy used to tackle such issues. There needed to be scrutiny, curiosity and interest in this area so that the approaches used towards handling it were sensible, supportive and appropriate. Members needed 'oversight' of all approaches.
- There had been some success stories involving a lot of effort and energy on everybody's part. A multi-agency approach involving the expertise of mental health colleagues was crucial. The levels of difficulty involved however should not be underestimated, often a tenant needed years of counselling to engage in an action plan fully. Every hoarding case was different and many in this position were initially resistant to outside help. Time needed to be spent building up a tenants confidence and working with them at an appropriate pace.
- It was recognised that there was a difference between being a hoarder and having a home that was just cluttered.
- Mental health services being oversubscribed and long waiting lists.
- Possible services available to help people de-clutter such as providing extra wheelie bins or sacks. This could be explored further especially dispensation for additional waste containers or black sacks temporarily to support those that are managing a hoarding issue.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

The updated MDH Hoarding Policy and Equality Impact Assessment contained in Annexes A and B respectively be adopted.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

29 **MID DEVON HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE POLICY (NEW) (01:03:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Housing & Health presenting a new policy with regards to Mid Devon Housing Repairs and Maintenance.

This was an amalgamation of 5 or 6 other policies and an attempt to bring them altogether under one umbrella. It was hoped that the new policy would also bring clarity to tenants.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The need to inform neighbours, if possible, if significant repair and maintenance works were to be carried out such that would impact them in terms of a communal access to and from their own properties. Some sort of warning would be helpful. It was confirmed that this could be added to the procedure going forwards where possible.
- The definition of the different types of repair and what constituted as a 'minor repair' and where the tenant was responsible was listed in each tenant handbook.
- Assistance was offered for those tenants who could not undertake minor repairs (such as changing a light bulb) themselves. It was stressed that this was only offered on a cost recovery basis not to make a profit in any way.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

It recommends to Council that the new MDH Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Equality Impact Assessment be adopted.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Reason for the decision

As set out in the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

30 **REVIEW OF MID DEVON HOUSING ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT PLAN (01:10:00)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Head of Housing & Health presenting a revised Mid Devon Housing Asbestos Management Plan.

The following was highlighted within the report:

- There were stringent legal requirements in relation to asbestos management. Asbestos was not always dangerous in itself but it needed to be monitored carefully. Some blue and brown asbestos was extremely dangerous and contractors were used to dispose of this if it was found to be present in Mid Devon's housing stock.
- It was explained that there would always be the potential for hidden asbestos.

Consideration was given to:

- The contractors used were stated in the policy, this was a legal requirement.
- The word 'encapsulate' used within the report meant to 'enclose' or to 'clearly mark'.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that:

The updated MDH Asbestos Management Plan be adopted.

(Proposed by the Chair)

Reason for the decision

As set out within the report.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

31 **MID DEVON HOUSING SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT FOR QUARTER 1 2024-2025 (01:19:00)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Head of Housing & Health providing a quarterly update to Members on the activity undertaken by Mid Devon Housing, including some relating to enforcement.

The following was highlighted:

- There was currently a gap in the data around Tenant Satisfaction Measures perception survey results. This was purely related to a timing issue, this data would be provided next time following the first round of the tenant survey.
- Last year MDH undertook a single survey, this would be increased to three this year and four going forwards.
- Void turnaround times continued to be under pressure.
- Recruiting trained staff continued to be a problem with the lowest number of retained staff in ten years.
- Repairs would always be prioritised and the health and safety of tenants would always come before anything else.
- The Council was currently holding 22 development voids. Existing tenants needed to be decanted and this took some time.
- The Council was still managing to achieve a 97% occupancy rate, this included properties used for temporary accommodation by general fund where there was a greater turnover of occupants hence more void periods.
- MDH recently received a number of queries from the Regulator of Social Housing on its safety approach to electrical testing following the submission of the last years Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) management data. They had a long list of questions but had gone away being satisfied that the Council was doing what it should to protect tenants and was compliant with requirements.

Discussion took place with regard to:

- Councillors needed to know where voids were being 'turned over'. It was explained that sometimes this happened quite quickly and that to inform Members each time might be a challenge, however, it might be possible to produce a short monthly update report to Members. This would be explored. However, it was stressed that the location of each void could not be publically advertised for obvious reasons.
- The definition of void categories was set out in the Voids Management Policy available online including the Decent Homes voids.
- MDH tried to get every major repair completed whilst a property was void so that there was minimal upheaval for incoming tenants.
- Loss of rent and repair costs needed to be weighed up. 'No win, no fee' disrepair claims had a part to play and could potentially cost the Council millions of pounds if issues such as damp and mould were not addressed as a priority, therefore treating conditions such as this whilst a property was void was vital to ensuring its future safe occupancy.
- It was noted that for the first time a performance report had been brought to the PDG showing a 100% gas safety check compliance.
- Officers would use a number of methods to survey tenants, not just by telephone.
- The Group requested a breakdown of the survey results once they were available.
- The question in relation to the TSM specifically on complaints handling. It was recognised as the most challenging as often what happened was that responses to this survey question ends up being obviously influenced by the fact a tenant has made a complaint and their reaction to the outcome of their complaint which may not always be objective in terms of how effective the handling process was understandably. It was potentially a bit of a false measure. It would be interesting to analyse the national position with regard to this question in the future and benchmark data.

Note: * Report previously circulated.

32 **DOWNSIZING WORKING GROUP VERBAL UPDATE (01:49:00)**

The Chair of the Working Group, Cllr A Glover, provided the Group with a brief update on the work undertaken so far. This included the following information:

- There had been an initial meeting to bring Members up to speed and the project had been scoped.
- Terms of Reference had been agreed and the next steps were:
 - There would be Tenant consultation and focus groups (different channels and approaches to maximise reach). It was hoped the output would be a clearer understanding of what motivated and would work for tenants (not just financial incentives). Officers would share that consultation with the Working Group.
 - The Working Group would obtain information from DHC partners on the take up of their current incentive schemes. This would lead to a better

understanding of what was / was not working well for partner local authorities regionally.

33 **TENURE REFORM & TENANCY AGREEMENT PROJECT PLAN - VERBAL UPDATE (01:56:00)**

The Customer Engagement Co-ordinator provided the Group with a verbal update on the Tenancy Reform & Tenancy Agreement Project plan.

This included the following information:

Flexible tenancies

- On the 9th July, Cabinet had approved the recommendation from the Homes PDG to halt the use of flexible tenancies. Since this date, no new flexible tenancies had been issued to new tenants.
- All current flexible tenants would be rolled on to a periodic secure tenancy when their fixed term ended.

Tenancy agreement terms and conditions

- When the original project plan was completed unfortunately there was not enough time factored in for complete legal oversight, and that, combined with a reduction in the number of meetings for the Homes PDG has resulted in the terms and conditions presentation being pushed to the November meeting.
- At the November meeting, depending on legal oversight, officers were hoping to bring the variation i.e. the new terms and conditions, along with a request that the Homes PDG recommends to Cabinet that the Section 103 as required by the Housing Act 1985 commences. This means, it will be recommended that MDH go out for consultation, and this will run after the December Cabinet meeting. MDH were pushing this to go live when the Council returned after Christmas as it was not desirable to have a consultation running when the office was closed and tenants could not contact the Council. The consultation would run for 28 days and would also go out to Members and partners at the same time. The results of the consultation would be presented at the Homes PDG in March 2025 with the hope that Cabinet approves them in April 2025. There were a few more steps to follow in line with the Housing Act 1985 with regards to sending notice of variation letters to secure and introductory tenants and there needed to be a 4 week wait between sending these and the implementation date which meant MDH would plan to go live with the new tenancy agreement from early June 2025.

The Group were reassured that the consultation would use a number of methods including face to face conversations, leaflets, online access, focus groups and drop in sessions.

The Group **NOTED** the update.

34 **DEVON HOUSING COMMISSION REPORT (02:01:00)**

The Head of Housing & Health provided the Group, by way of presentation, with the key highlights and recommendations arising from the Devon Housing Commission Report.

This included the following:

- A quote from Lord Best, Chair of the Devon Housing Commission regarding the '...real housing crisis in this county'.
- What the Housing Commission was and who had hosted this work.
- How they had conducted their work.
- Who the commissioners were and who they had been supported by.
- Their 7 key findings in terms of what had caused this housing crisis.
- A number of recommendations to central government.
- Devon strategic level recommendations.
- Local level recommendations.
- How well placed Mid Devon was to deliver on these recommendations.
- What was next in terms of local ambition and wider opportunities?
- Other recent housing reports looking at the social housing crisis.

It was requested that the presentation be circulated to the Group after the meeting and that the Devon Housing Commission Report be brought back to the next meeting for further discussion and debate with potential for the Group to make recommendations into Cabinet if they wish to do so.

35 IDENTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR THE NEXT MEETING (02:33:00)

The items already listed in the work programme for the next meeting were **NOTED**.

It was explained that the 'Housing Strategy' was dependent upon the new government being clearer on certain influencing factors such as Right to Buy, and funding for affordable housing delivery therefore, it was likely that this would be moved on to a future meeting until such time as a meaningful document could be brought before Members underpinned by government direction.

A brief discussion took place regarding the importance of the Devon Housing Commission Report and the need for this Group to analyse it more closely in relation to local recommendations and to feed back its thoughts and comments to the Cabinet. This Report would therefore be on the agenda for the next meeting and would be one of the first items discussed so as to give it the necessary time and focus it needs.

(The meeting ended at 5:00pm)

CHAIR

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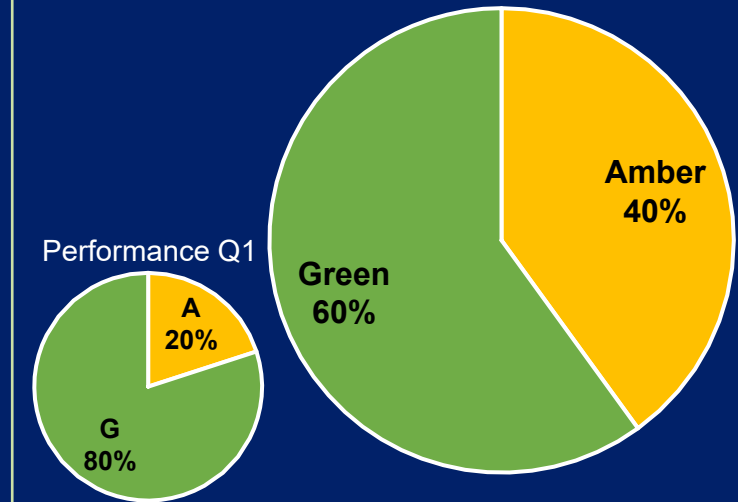
Homes PDG Performance Dashboard (General Fund) – Quarter 2 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Providing support to those experiencing homelessness	100 %	100 %	G
Applicants on the Devon Home Choice waiting list (Band A-C)	514	N/A	
Households in Hotels (Current)	16	N/A	
Households placed in interim or temporary accommodation this quarter	78	TBC	
Home Improvement Loans sanctioned (YTD)	8	10	G
Private rented sector improvements (YTD)	6	10	G
Private sector housing service requests response rate (Av. YTD)	94.5 %	95 %	A
Unoccupied and unfurnished empty homes (Current)	437	N/A	

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
Homes PDG – Projected Outturn	£415k	£402k	A
Spend on external interim and temporary accommodation (Q2)	£74,948	N/A	

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Homes for Ukraine Scheme	4 (No change)

Overall Performance Q2



In Focus

Support has been provided to all those presenting to the Council as homeless. This is 618 households in the financial year to date, higher than at the same point in 2023/24 (423 households).

The risks associated with the Homes for Ukraine scheme have been well managed and all actions are completed. New actions are currently being developed based on any residual risks.

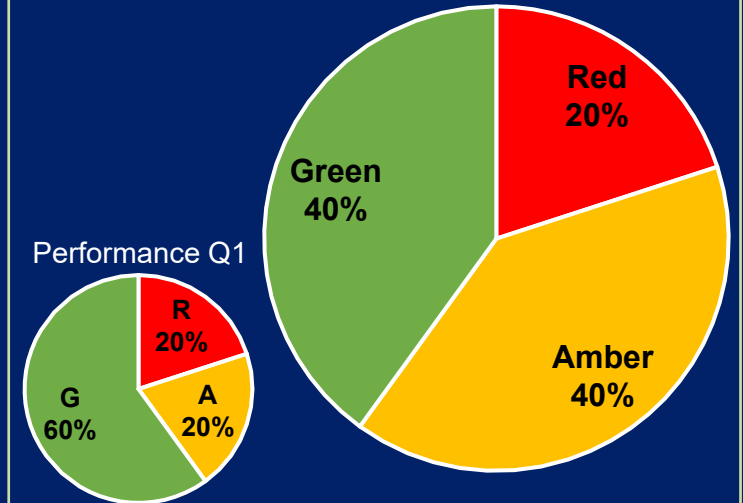
Homes PDG Performance Dashboard (HRA) – Quarter 2 2024/25

Performance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
MDH Satisfaction that the home is safe (TSM – TP05)	n/a	70 %	
MDH Delivery of new Social Housing (YTD)	44	100	R
New MDH net-zero MMC properties (YTD)	0	50	R
Tenant satisfaction with the overall repairs service (TSM – TP02)	n/a	70 %	
Market delivery of new affordable homes (YTD)	n/a	94	
MDH Overall tenant satisfaction (TSM - TP01)	n/a	TBD	
MDH Complaints responded to within Complaints Handling Code timescales (TSM-CH02; Average YTD)	97.5 %	100 %	A
MDH Antisocial behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (TSM – NM01; YTD)	5.76	TBD	
MDH Housing stock occupancy rate (YTD)	96.8 %	97 %	A
MDH Routine repairs completed on time (Average YTD)	99 %	95 %	G
MDH specific tenant engagement events (YTD)	63	100	G

Finance Measures	Performance	Annual Target	RAG
HRA – Projected Outturn	(£315k)	£0	G
HRA – Projected Tenant Income (Outturn)	(£14,641k)	(£14,641k)	G
HRA – Projected Capital Outturn	£10,244k	£15,447k	A
HRA – Capital Slippage % of development projects (Current)	22%	0 %	A

Corporate Risk	Risk Rating (Trajectory)
Housing Crisis	12 (No change)

Overall Performance Q2



In Focus

100% of housing complaints were responded to within the relevant timescales during Q2.

Housing stock occupancy rate has dipped below the target of 97%. A detailed report was presented to Scrutiny committee on 28 October. There are currently a number of long term development voids awaiting demolition and redevelopment.

The Housing crisis risk is likely to be positively impacted by the Government budget announcements. Time is needed to fully understand the impact on this risk.



Report for: Homes Policy Development Group (PDG)

Date of Meeting:	19 November 2024
Subject:	Medium Term Financial Plan – General Fund (GF)
Cabinet Member:	James Buczkowski – Cabinet Member for Governance, Finance and Risk
Responsible Officer:	Andrew Jarrett – Deputy Chief Executive (S151)
Exempt:	N/a
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Appendix 1 – MTFP Position per PDG Appendix 2 – Capital Programme (GF) Appendix 3 – HRA MTFP summary position

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

To present to Member's options to update the 2025/26 Budget for consideration / approval.

Recommendation(s):

That Members of the Policy Development Group consider the contents of this report and make any proposals it feels appropriate to Cabinet for approval.

Section 2 – Report

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The main purpose of the MTFP is to show how the Council will strategically manage its finances in order to support the delivery of the priorities detailed in the Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028 and future years beyond that plan.
- 1.2 The first element of this meeting will cover a refresh of the service areas relevant to each PDG updating members of the movements during the process

to date in setting the 2025/26 Budget (**see Appendix 1**). This can include a brief Q&A session to ensure members are clear of their responsibilities and potential additional budget options. This report considers the development of budget options, proposes further options to continue towards balancing the 2025/26 Budget.

- 1.3 This report also introduces an indicative Capital Programme for the General Fund for consideration (**see Appendix 2**). The indicative HRA development programme is still being evaluated and will be brought to the December Cabinet for consideration.
- 1.4 For the Homes PDG, there is an opportunity to review the HRA MTFP position as recently outlined to Cabinet (**see Appendix 3**). Views are sought on the forecast and options to balance the 2025/26.
- 1.5 Finally, this report provides an update on the 2024 Autumn Budget including potential implications for MDCC. Note, these will only be fully known once greater information is received from Government, some of which is expected within November through the Local Government Finance Policy Statement and the full Financial Settlement closer to Christmas.
- 1.6 The Council has a legal requirement to set a balance budget and needs to ensure its overall costs are affordable i.e. they can be funded through income and planned short-term use of reserves. Members therefore need to take the necessary decisions and actions to manage net spending within affordable limits.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 On 17 September, the first draft MTFP covering the period 2025/26 to 2028/29 for the General Fund was presented to Cabinet. This estimated a funding shortfall of £1.2m in 2025/26 rising to £4.0m by 2028/29. This number is derived without any remedial action and is a cumulative figure – i.e. if the £1.2m is found to balance the 2025/26 position, the overall budget gap will reduce to £2.8m. Initial options were included for consideration that could reduce that £1.2m shortfall in 2025/26 to £390k.
- 2.2 Following consideration by the various PDG’s during the September round of meetings, Cabinet agreed the majority of those options on 15 October, potentially reducing the shortfall down to £431k subject to further development of some options.

Original forecast Shortfall	£1,196k
Plus: Appendix 1 – proposed Green and Ambers	+ £725k
Less: Appendix 2 – proposed Green and Ambers	(£1,531k)

Revised recommended forecast Shortfall	£390k
Proposals made at the meeting:	
Plus:	
Appendix 1 row 7 Proposed increase to Climate Change Budget	£100k
Appendix 1 row 11 Proposed increase to Planning Enforcement Budget	£100k
Appendix 2 row 8 Let's Talk MidDevon Saving – rejected	£11k
Less:	
Appendix 2 row 23 Lease more space commercially within Phoenix House	(£50k)
Appendix 2 row 24 Property capturing benefits from CRM system	(£30k)
Appendix 2 row 26 Refresh out of date leases	(£10k)
Appendix 2 row 35 Additional Pre-App Planning Income	(£40k)
Appendix 2 row 37 Additional income generated from Planning Engagement in EUE proposals.	(£10k)
Appendix 2 row 44 Recover Waste set up costs from new housing developments	(£20k)
Appendix 2 row 54 Leisure Potential income from advertising on Apps	(£10k)
Revised forecast Shortfall	£431k

2.3 During the October Cabinet, the above budget options outside of the proposed Green and Amber options were recommended to be developed. The following is an update on these options:

Pressures – Appendix 1 (October Cabinet)

Both of the investments into Climate Change and Planning Enforcement are welcomed.

Savings – Appendix 2 (October Cabinet)

- **Row 8 “Let’s Talk MidDevon” – (£11k);**

This platform is being successfully used by Mid Devon Housing in particular who are increasing visits to the hub where it is an important part of its wider tenant engagement strategy.

The annual residents’ survey is currently live, with a requirement for those responding on line to sign up to the community engagement hub.

This saving option was rejected by Cabinet on 15 October 2024.

- **Row 23 Lease more space commercially within Phoenix House – (£50k);**

This proposal is currently on hold whilst Phoenix House is revamped and the identified space is occupied. It is recommended to defer consideration of this until 2026/27.

- **Row 24 Property capturing benefits from CRM system – (£30k);**

Work has not yet begun to integrate the new CRM system within this service, as the benefits are currently greater for other service areas. It is recommended to defer consideration of this until 2026/27.

- **Row 26 Refresh out of date leases – (£10k);**
Work is ongoing to ensure leases are kept up to date and particularly rent charges reflect the latest valuations. Recommended inclusion in the 2025/26 budget.
- **Row 35 Additional Pre-App Planning Income – (£40k);**
Demand for this service continues to grow. Recommended inclusion in the 2025/26 budget.
- **Row 37 Additional income generated from Planning Engagement in EUE proposals – (£10k);**
The project continues to progress. Recommended inclusion in the 2025/26 budget.
- **Row 44 Waste Recover set up costs from new housing developments – (£20k);**
The project continues to progress with further research and legal advice required on how the scheme would be utilised and applied by MDDC. Once obtained this will inform the level of extra income that could be gained. At time of writing, this is not being considered for inclusion in the 2025/26 Budget but will be discussed further at the next Service Delivery and Continuous Improvement PDG in December.
- **Row 54 Leisure Potential income from advertising on Apps – (£10k).**
The use of Apps continues to grow within the service. Recommended inclusion in the 2025/26 budget.

2.4 Following further review, the above recommendations have the following impact on the 2025/26 budget shortfall.

Proposed forecast Shortfall	£431k
Plus:	
Appendix 2 (October Cabinet) – remove the following options	
Row 23 Lease more space commercially within Phoenix House	£50k
Row 34 Property capturing benefits from CRM system	£30k
Row 44 Recover Waste set up costs from new housing developments	£20k
Revised forecast Shortfall	£531k

3.0 Ideas that need more consideration to identify possible financial benefit

3.1 In addition, the section of Appendix 2 titled “Ideas that need more consideration to identify possible financial benefit” were requested to be developed further and feedback to Cabinet.

Savings – Appendix 2

- **Row 55 Review planned maintenance spend**
The maintenance requirement for 2025/26 is currently being assessed with external assessors used to inform the maintenance programme. The

financial implication of this will be considered later in the budget setting process.

- **Row 56 Reduce Contact Centre hours to match opening hours**
A reduction in contact centre hours could be considered which could potentially save up to £50k. This would act as a lever for those who can transact with us digitally moving to that mechanism. Savings would not be achievable until 2026/27 due to the lead-in time and off-setting costs for realigning resources.

- **Row 57 Invest in GovTech / CRM to migrate from NEC portal for self-serve solution.**
Revenues & Benefits already offers a customer portal in which they can 'self-serve'. Technically has moved on as such further investment in more automated processes is required to allow customers to 'self-serve', with potentially up to 80% of transactions to be automated. Changes such as these also help support Mid Devon's digital ambitions.

The cost of the change will be supported by 'EMR' and not replacing staff, changes in the ways customers communicate with use via phones and email will also help with channel shift.

Customers who cannot self-serve will be assisted as they are already.

This option will take time to implement and therefore the financial implications are not being considered for the 2025/26 Budget.

- **Row 58 Inclusion of new Extended Produce Responsibility grant payment**
The government confirmed that this is expected to be implemented in 2025/26. As yet, there is no indication of associated funding or service expectations. The government announcement suggested that EPR will be treated as 'new money' for 2025-26 but it may be netted off in the finance settlement in future years. Therefore, it is currently envisaged that this additional funding will not form part of the 2025/26 Budget but will replace the Shared Saving Agreement with DCC due to end in 2026/27. The financial implication of this will be considered later in the budget setting process.

- **Row 59 Maximise the use of S106 funding**
Mid Devon Housing now have new legal flexibilities to use affordable housing monies alongside other funding. As result it will be modelling the use of this funding within its updated MTFP to support its pipeline of development schemes. This may offset a limited amount of other borrowing within the Housing Revenue Account. The benefits to the General Fund are also being considered. The financial implications of this will be considered later in the budget setting process.

- **Row 60 Potentially sell services, or provide training to other organisations**

This is a longer term option that cannot be implemented in time for the 2025/26 budget. Members to consider which service areas they feel are most suitable for this proposal for potential inclusion in future year's budgets.

- **Row 61 Cease Printing committee papers and fully utilise ModGov.**
The Council uses ModGov to facilitate public meetings, however it also offers a printed set of papers. If the printed ceased, the saving would be c£4k. Currently this is not seen as a viable proposition.
- **Row 62 Improve procurement to potentially achieve savings**
With the introduction of the new (delayed) procurement regulations, and a more proactive approach to procurement could potentially achieve lower cost increases, or even deliver savings on goods and services. This is a longer term option that cannot be implemented in time for the 2025/26 budget, but will be considered in future year's budgets.
- **Row 63 Possible reduction in Pension Contributions from 2026/27.**
The change in Pension Contributions are updated every three years following an actuary's valuation of the fund. There is little/no influence the council can have on the contribution rate. However, since the last valuation, the fund has increased which potentially could lead to frozen or reduce contributions from 2026/27. This will be considered in future year's budgets.
- **Row 64 Reduce general printing**
Work is ongoing to ensure general printing is minimised and any saving is negligible, but will be considered in future year's budgets.

3.2 In summary, the above options are being considered / developed, but are not expected to have a significant impact on the 2025/26 Budget, although some could lead to savings in future years.

4.0 2025/26 Budget Options – Further Development

4.1 The remainder of the savings approved on 15 October have also been further reviewed and the following are recommended to be adjusted, or removed:

Pressures – Appendix 1 (October Cabinet)

- **Row 7 Proposed Reduction in Planning Income – £150k**
Based on the latest Quarter 2 forecast, planning income may not fall as much as originally projected. However, the announcements included within the Autumn Budget may impact the housing market, so an adjustment to this reduction of £50k is proposed.

Savings – Appendix 2

- **Row 14 Possible adjustment to estimated Fuel saving – (£50k)**

Based on the latest Quarter 2 forecast, and the latest announcement in the Autumn Budget to continue to freeze fuel duty, it is forecast that fuel savings could increase by £50k.

- **Row 15 Possible adjustment to estimated Utilities saving – (£150k)**
The latest prices from October 2024 have recently been received from Laser. The financial implications are currently being forecast and will be brought forward once complete.
- **Row 20 Possible adjustment to estimated Council Tax income (£50k)**
Based on the proposed Council Tax Taxbase to be approved at Cabinet on 12 November, and a potential referendum limit of 3% as has been the case for the previous 3 years, the forecast income will be £77k lower than previously forecast. This is due to previous over optimistic assumptions.

It should be noted that 2025/26 will include the additional income generated from the increased premiums on 2nd homes approved during the last budget. However, it was also proposed that these additional sums, of circa £50k, are earmarked to support additional housing projects.

- **Row 21 Possible adjustment to estimated Business Rates income – (£50k)**
Based on the latest Quarter 2 forecast and announcements included within the Autumn Budget, it is expected that income from Business Rates will vary from the original forecast. This will be considered later in the budget setting process.
- **Row 25 Possible adjustment to Financial Contribution or Transfer of Assets to Town / Parish Councils – (£60k)**
Although discussions continue, we are yet to reach a position of agreement on increased contributions or asset transfer, therefore this £60k savings is at risk of not being achieved.
- **Row 38 Forward Planning Review service costs/delivery – (£29k)**
Following further review this has been identified as a duplicate saving, and therefore needs to be removed.
- **Row 43 Possible adjustment to Recycling Income – (£100k)**
Based on the latest Quarter 2 forecast, it is projected that income from recycling could be further increased by £100k. Note this is a very volatile income stream, but current projections indicate this is achievable.

Row 52 Possible adjustment to Leisure Income – (£34k)

Based on the latest Quarter 2 forecast, it is projected that income from Leisure could be further increased by £100k.

4.2 Based upon the above explanations, the following adjustments to the remaining budget shortfall are recommended:

Revised recommended forecast Shortfall (para 2.4 above)	£531k
Less:	
<u>Appendix 1 (October Cabinet)</u> Possible Adjustment to Row 10 Reduction in Planning Income	(£50k)
<u>Appendix 2 (October Cabinet)</u> Possible Adjustment to Row 14 Estimated Fuel saving	(£50k)
Possible Adjustment to Row 43 Recycling Income	(£100k)
Possible Adjustment to Row 52 Leisure Income	(£100k)
Plus:	
<u>Appendix 2 (October Cabinet)</u> Adjustment to Row 20 Council Tax income	£77k
Possible Adjustment to Row 25 – Contribution from Town Councils	£60k
Remove Row 38 Forward Planning Review service costs/delivery	£29k
Revised forecast Shortfall	£397k

5.0 New / Further Options being considered

5.1 Further work is still ongoing with officers to bring forward additional savings to move this forward towards a balanced budgetary position. Key areas of focus are:

- Revisiting income assumptions / demand
- Business Rates and Council Tax
- Conclusion of discussions with Town Councils
- Staff vacancy target
- Detailed follow up of announcements made in the Autumn Budget
- Government Funding Settlement (Mid-December)
- Finalisation of the Capital Programme and the financing implications

6.0 Capital Programme – General Fund

6.1 The Overall Capital Programme will include new bids for capital funding to support new programmes as well as ‘rolling’ approvals from current and prior year’s Capital Programmes.

6.2 The draft Capital Programme will be reviewed/challenged by the Capital Strategy Asset Group (CSAG) prior to the proposed final programme being brought forward for approval in February.

6.3 Generally, the bids are restricted to replacement equipment, largely based upon health and safety requirements in the leisure centres, new ICT kit, income generation schemes, economic regeneration schemes or invest to save bids.

- 6.4 At this time, only the General Fund Capital Programme is available. The HRA Capital Programme is being considered and will be brought forward to the December Cabinet.
- 6.5 **Appendix 2** provides a revised spend profile for the current approvals based on Quarter 2 forecasts. It also provides a summary of the new bids received from services areas for the new 2025/26 – 2029/30 Capital Programme. In February, Member's will be asked to approve the Year 1 programme and note the indicative future years
- 6.6 The table below, shows the forecast capital expenditure position during the life of the MTFP. This is based upon limited information on the sources of potential funding, particularly in late years. Therefore at this time, the overarching assumption is any unfunded element of the programme is covered through external borrowing. This will be refined and updated as we move through the MTFP timeframe.

	2025/26 £k	2026/27 £k	2027/28 £k	2028/29 £k	2029/30 £k	Total £k
Existing Programme	10,968	15,373	14,452	1,834	1,382	44,009
New Bids	926	1,249	868	1,043	708	4,744
Overall Capital Requirement	11,894	16,622	15,320	2,877	2,090	48,803

- 6.7 In terms of associated funding, the availability of capital receipts are based on a prudent basis, with no major asset sales factored into the model. Similarly, prudent assumptions are included for the availability of Capital Grant to help mitigate some of the proposed costs. If additional receipts are generated, or grant received, the capital prioritisation list could be revisited to bring forward new schemes into the programme or decrease any borrowing requirement.
- 6.8 Currently any revenue contribution to the Capital Programme is limited to funding held within Earmarked Reserves (i.e. Sinking Funds). No additional use of the New Homes Bonus grant is planned to fund elements of the Capital Programme. Ultimately, any outstanding funding requirement after utilising revenue contributions, reserves and any external funding sources will need to be funded through Prudential Borrowing.
- 6.9 The Council currently operates a policy of “internal borrowing” whereby it utilises its cash balances rather than undertaking new loans. It is recommended that the Council continues to maximise its use of internal borrowing rather than seeking to fund projects through new external borrowing whilst cash balances remain above £10m. However, given the scale of the proposed Capital Programme, internal borrowing will not be sufficient to fund all bids. Therefore, the Council will need to carefully consider how best to fund the capital funding

requirements.

7.0 HRA Medium Term Financial Plan

- 7.1 The HRA is a ring-fenced account within Mid Devon's financial accounting system. This means that a balanced budget must be set each year including all income and expenditure pertinent to the Council's landlord function and excluding all other income and expenditure (since this would be captured as part of the General Fund budget).
- 7.2 The Council continues to undertake valuable benchmarking work in conjunction with Housemark. These findings are then used to inform the budget setting process. In doing so, MDCC are able to better identify their position in relation to other authorities in the sector and identify areas for improved efficiency.
- 7.3 The overall HRA budget has been constructed on a detailed line-by-line examination of expenditure and income, having regard to last year's outturn, this year's forecast position and the on-going improvement of the housing service.
- 7.4 Some items of expenditure can be defined quite accurately whilst others require managers to exercise business judgement based upon their experience, particularly in the case of new commitments. Where such judgement has been applied, the proposals before Members are based upon realistic assumptions.
- 7.5 The main changes for the 2025/26 budget can be summarised as follows:

Expenditure:

- An assumed pay award for 2024/25 equivalent to 3%;
- Pension Contribution rate remaining at 19.0%;
- An assumed inflationary increase in contractor and materials spend against the current year budget;
- Additional provision for essential repairs and maintenance and other legislative requirements.

Income

- An inflationary increase of 3% (based on CPI +1%) is projected on existing rents. This is linked to September CPI which was recently announced at 1.7%, therefore this forecast will need to be refined slightly;
 - An assumed reduction in Garage rents and Garage plot ground rent income as the development programme develops the land. At present the budget assumes no change to the weekly charge;
 - Decreased interest yields on balances held.
- 7.6 The overall rental income was materially affected by the Government's previous policy to reduce Rents by 1% each year for four consecutive years and in

2023/24 by the government cap of 7% when inflation was over 11%. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) have confirmed councils and housing associations will be able to increase their social housing rents by September's Consumer Price Index figure plus 1% across the 5-year MTFP period. However, the sector continues to call for a 10-year rent settlement to give greater financial certainty for tenants and landlords.

- 7.7 Currently there is no financial provision for recent announcements during the last few weeks and comments emanating from the labour party conference regarding the future of Right-to-Buy, changes to rent setting and new energy efficiency requirements. These are currently being assessed.
- 7.8 Previous legislation on Right to Buy means that we would normally sell several properties per year. However, based on the amendments to the scheme set out in the Autumn Budget, this is likely to fall.
- 7.9 Similarly, we forecast that we will have a number of void properties during the year. We have a prudent forecast of voids across the year this is based on an assessment of current void numbers in line with previous years. This number included properties held to facilitate new development.
- 7.10 It has been deemed as prudent to maintain the HRA reserve balance at £2,000k and it is expected to remain so throughout 2024/25. At the start of 2024/25, other HRA revenue reserves totalled £21,330k. This included the following notable balances:
- £13,943k in the Housing Maintenance Fund (HMF);
 - £746k in the Renewable Energy Fund (REF); and
 - £189k for future decarbonisation works. It is intended that any expenditure funded from the REF monies be used on renewable energy schemes.

In addition there is also the PWLB repayment fund which is being built up in order to repay the loan taken out to originally buy the stock in 2012. This currently stands at £5.928m.

- 7.11 The budget summary for the 2025/26 HRA is shown in **Appendix 3**. It will continue to provide for an enhanced housing service which will allow for more capital investment and additions to our existing stock. Current estimates place the HRA budget gap at £168k for 2025/26 rising to £3,092k over the MTFP timeframe. Note these projections use a number of assumptions that will be finalised over the coming few weeks.
- 7.12 The ambition to build a significant number of new properties continues across the 5-year Medium Term Financial Plan. The prospect of building new social housing raises the issue of significant future capital financing requirements.

Budget at assumed interest rates of circa 5% is included within the future years of the MTFP to finance the build of a number of new highly efficient (zero carbon) modular buildings, subject to securing sufficient funding. Members are reminded that the constraint on increasing stock is still an issue of affordability, not the access to borrowing.

8.0 Autumn Budget Announcements and their potential impact

8.1 On the 30 October 2024, the first ever female Chancellor of the Exchequer gave her first Autumn Budget statement. As trailed, it was a significant budget with many proposals included that ultimately are forecast to raise taxation by £40bn.

8.2 There were some significant announcements for local government and district councils. The main headlines were:

- Departmental revenue budgets will increase by 1.5% in real terms across the spending review period. However, there are also 2% departmental productivity, efficiency and savings targets included for next year.
- 3.2% real-terms increase in Core Spending Power (CSP) for the whole sector in 2025-26. This will include £1.3bn additional grant funding, of which at least £600m will be directed to social care.
We have currently modelled a 2% increase in the grants included within the Core Spending Power. Note the CSP includes a notional increase in Council and Business Rates, which could well more than offset the remaining 1.2% uplift to match the above inflation 3.2% sector increase. It is understood that this funding will be allocated through a new approach, therefore, we cannot currently assess whether there is any benefit in this announcement.
- The Budget was silent on Council Tax referendum limits but the sector continues to lobby hard for the referendum principles to stay at 2.99% for Districts.
The implications of this are set out above.
- £233m new funding for homelessness prevention. This will be in addition to the £1.3bn grant funding.
The headline announcement is welcomed, however greater detail is required to understand if this will be added to existing grants, or will be allocated through a bidding process, or whether this funding might be one-off or come with additional requirements. It is hoped that this clarity is announced within the Local Government Finance Settlement. This could be beneficial for the 2025/26 budget. There is still a clear need for a longer-term plan to tackle the root causes of homelessness, especially by increasing the supply of genuinely affordable housing.

- £1bn to extend the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments into 2025-26.
Again, this headline announcement is welcomed and will be of benefit to residents of the district.
- £1.1bn new funding through implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme for recycling.
The headline announcement is welcomed, however greater detail is required to understand how this funding will be allocated and whether this funding might come with additional requirements. It is expected that this clarity will be provided within November.

8.3 In addition, there were other announcements which will also benefit local government, including:

- There were positive measures to support councils with affordable housing:
 - £500m increase to the Affordable Homes Programme in 2025-26.
This could be beneficial for the HRA development programme that has previously benefitted from this funding source. It is a bid based grant, so there is no guarantee that our bid(s) would be successful.
 - Right-To-Buy: councils will be permanently allowed to retain 100% of receipts locally and discount levels will revert to pre-2012 levels from 21st November.
The maximum discount on RTB sales would reduce from £102,400 to £30,000 (applicable in South West region). This is good news for retaining stock, but means that RTB receipts income will also be reduced. We would like the Government to go further and expect it to announce further reform to Right-To-Buy in the coming months, including on eligibility criteria and better protection for newly built council homes.
 - Five-year rent settlement for social housing landlords: rents will rise by Consumer Price Index +1% each year during the period. Following the consultation, it is possible this timeframe could be expanded to 10 years.
The certainty is welcomed.
 - Preferential Public Works Loan Board borrowing rates for local authorities to build social housing will be extended to March 2026.
This could potentially be beneficial for the HRA development programme, although the rates will still be more expensive than borrowing internally, so a longer term view is being considered.

- There were key announcements which will affect councils as employers:
 - Employer national insurance (NI) contributions will increase by 1.2% to 15% from April 2025. The threshold for paying this will decrease to £5k per year.
For MDDC, the additional cost is modelled at c£400k (c£300k GF, c£100k HRA). However, an allowance has also been included within the Chancellor's estimates to protect the public sector from this additional cost. There are not yet any details available on how the government intends to do this, but it is therefore assumed that this will be cost neutral for the Council.
 - National Living Wage will increase by 6.7% to £12.21. Minimum wage for 18- to 20-year-olds will increase by 16% to £10 per hour. *Our lowest SCP has moved to just above NMW and our apprentices are paid above the government rate. However, this will have a knock-on impact on our grading structure to ensure the lowest grades "keep up" with these increases.*
- There were also other generic announcements:
 - Delivering hundreds of local energy schemes to help decarbonise the public estate through the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, with over £1 billion of funding over three years.
Note the Council did not qualify for the latest PSDS scheme as we do not have buildings within older heating systems.
 - Taking the first step towards a Warm Homes Plan, committing an initial £3.4 billion towards heat decarbonisation and household energy efficiency over the next three years.
Similarly, there is limited benefit from the most recent wave of social housing decarbonisation funding to our housing stock as the vast majority of our homes have an EPC rating of C or above, meaning we are on track to meet the 2030 requirement.
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund has been extended for 2025-26 at a reduced level of £900m, a 40% decrease on the current year. It is not yet clear whether this funding will continue to be allocated directly to district councils in two-tier areas.
We will need to assess any likely grant allocation and how to maximise the benefits from it.
- Reforms to Business Rates continue to be considered.
 - The small business multiplier in England will be frozen for a fifth consecutive year at 49.9p, while the standard multiplier will be uprated by CPI in March 2025. There could be more, new, categories of multiplier in future years.

This continues to make a complex system even more complex. However, potentially it could yield additional income.

- A lower 40% relief for Retail, Hospitality and Leisure properties will be in place in 2025-26. Permanently lower multipliers will be implemented for these properties from 2026/27.
Although the relief is reduced and we will collect more tax directly from these companies, the offsetting compensation through S31 Grant will reduce. Therefore, this is not expected to impact our bottom-line.
- Government is silent on a business rate reset, and when this would be implemented.
This was originally due in 2020 so is long overdue. However, the implication of a reset may not be advantageous.
- A consultation has been launched on
 - Changes to the system to support investment, including assessing efficacy of Improvement Relief and the impact of loss of Small Business Rates Relief on expanding to a second property.
 - Adopting a 'General Anti-Avoidance Rule' for business rates in England and review recent measures to discourage avoidance.
 - Digitalising Business Rates changes will be implemented by place by March 2028.
- On wider funding reform:
 - The Government signalled it will reform the local government funding system after 2025/26 and will carry out a broader redistribution of funding to better reflect local need (previously known as Fair Funding) through a multi-year settlement from 2026/27.
The fair funding reforms were originally announced in 2016 and are long overdue. However, there is no clarity on what these reforms might be and their impact on MDDC. Whilst a multi-year settlement is welcomed as it provides a greater degree of certainty, the funding within them needs to be sufficient to enable good quality services to be delivered.
 - The Government has signalled its intention to embark on local government reorganisation to deliver "efficiency savings". It will set out more detail in the English Devolution White Paper, likely to be published in late 2024.
We await the white paper to understand any implications.

- 8.4 The Government is expected to publish a finance policy statement in mid/late November to set out the key decisions and principles for the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement. The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement is still anticipated in mid-December. This will set out the detail of funding allocations for individual councils.
- 8.5 Overall, the funding package for local government is better than many expected and it contains some good news for district councils. However, it remains unclear how much of the new grant funding will come to district councils and whether the funding package will deliver a real-terms increase for districts.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 Although progress continues to be made to balance the 2025/26 Budget, there remains a reduced shortfall to be mitigated. Therefore, all possible options to increase income or reduce costs must be considered.
- 9.2 There remains a number of areas where greater clarity from Government, or indeed local circumstances, that will impact on the 2025/26. Many of which are now in corporate or non-service areas. Updates and any new budget options will be brought forward for consideration over the next few months in the run in to setting the 2025/26 budget in February 2025.
- 9.3 Members will appreciate that all budget options will require political support and therefore if some suggestions are deemed to be unacceptable then other savings will need to be proposed. Members should indicate where these alternatives should be sought.

Financial Implications

By undertaking regular reviews of the MTFP the Council can ensure that its Corporate Plan priorities are affordable. The implications of the budget gap are set out within the paper. Many areas require greater clarity, particularly around national funding and possible changes to Government Policy. Therefore a number of key assumptions underpin the reported position, which will be refined as greater clarity is received through the budget setting process.

Legal Implications

None directly arising from this report, although there is a legal obligation to balance the budget. There are legal implications arising from any future consequential decisions to change service provision, but these would be assessed at the time.

Risk Assessment

The MTFP makes a number of financial assumptions based on a sensible/prudent approach, taking account of the most up to date professional advice that is available. These continue to be kept under review and updated where necessary.

Impact on Climate Change

The allocation of resources will impact upon the Council's ability to implement/fund new activities linked to climate change, as the MTFP sets the broad budgetary framework for the Council over the coming years. However, some provision has already been included in the base budget. Significant investment is currently forecast within the Capital Programme, however this will be dependent upon full options appraisals and levels of Grant funding available.

Equalities Impact Assessment

No implications arising from this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) sets out the financial resources available to deliver the Council's ongoing Corporate Plan priorities.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 8 November 2024

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 8 November 2024

Chief Officer: Stephen Walford

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

Date: 8 November 2024

Performance and risk: Dr Stephen Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 8 November 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Andrew Jarrett – Deputy Chief Executive (S151)

Email: ajarrett@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 234242

Background papers:

- 2024/25 Budget
- 2024/25 Qtr. 2 Budget Monitor

Service Unit	Direct Costs Detail	2024/25 Annual Budget £	Net MTFP Adjustment £	Round 1 Net Pressures / (Savings) Identified £	Provisional 2025/26 Budget £	Increase / (Decrease) £	Increase / (Decrease) %
	Cabinet						
SCM01	Leadership Team	590,066	499,915	-	1,089,981	499,915	84.7%
SCM02	Corporate Functions	75,920	10	-	75,930	10	0.0%
SCM03	Corporate Fees	257,940	20	77,000	334,960	77,020	29.9%
SCM06	Pension Backfunding	660,210	23,610	-	683,820	23,610	3.6%
SFP01	Accountancy Services	552,210	2,930	(20,000)	535,140	(17,070)	-3.1%
SFP02	Internal Audit	98,550	-	(15,000)	83,550	(15,000)	-15.2%
SFP03	Procurement	152,330	750	-	153,080	750	0.5%
SFP04	Purchase Ledger	59,665	180	-	59,845	180	0.3%
SFP05	Sales Ledger	59,010	10	-	59,020	10	0.0%
SHR01	Human Resources	533,660	12,350	(30,000)	516,010	(17,650)	-3.3%
SHR02	MDDC Staff Training	15,000	-	(5,000)	10,000	(5,000)	-33.3%
SHR03	Payroll	62,710	10	-	62,720	10	0.0%
SIT01	IT Gazetteer Management	89,270	240	-	89,510	240	0.3%
SIT03	IT Information Technology	1,175,880	(31,350)	198,000	1,342,530	166,650	14.2%
SLD01	Electoral Registration	200,450	970	(11,000)	190,420	(10,030)	-5.0%
SLD02	Democratic Rep And Management	562,475	11,110	-	573,585	11,110	2.0%
SLD04	Legal Services	333,434	500	-	333,934	500	0.1%
SRB01	Collection Of Council Tax	560,670	2,840	-	563,510	2,840	0.5%
SRB02	Collection Of Business Rates	(83,000)	1,750	-	(81,250)	1,750	2.1%
SRB06	Debt Recovery	114,750	20	-	114,770	20	0.0%
TOTAL CABINET PDG		6,071,200	525,865	194,000	6,791,065	719,865	11.9%
	Community, People & Equalities PDG						
SCD01	Community Development	120,225	-	-	120,225	0	0.0%
SES01	Emergency Planning	52,010	-	-	52,010	0	0.0%
SES03	Community Safety - C.C.T.V.	42,730	-	-	42,730	0	0.0%
SES04	Public Health	3,750	-	-	3,750	0	0.0%
SES16	ES Staff Units/Recharges	728,280	380	-	728,660	380	0.1%
SES17	Community Safety	2,500	-	-	2,500	0	0.0%
SES18	Food Safety	(18,034)	-	-	(18,034)	0	0.0%
SES21	Licensing	48,760	1,430	-	50,190	1,430	2.9%
SES22	Pest Control	-	-	-	-	0	#DIV/0!
SES23	Pollution Reduction	1,350	-	-	1,350	0	0.0%
SPS07	Public Transport	(25,259)	-	-	(25,259)	0	0.0%
SRB03	Housing Benefit Admin & Fraud	217,030	3,250	-	220,280	3,250	1.5%
SRB04	Housing Benefit Subsidy	63,000	-	-	63,000	0	0.0%
TOTAL COMMUNITY, PEOPLE & EQUALITIES PDG		1,236,342	5,060	0	1,241,402	5,060	0.4%

Service Unit	Direct Costs Detail	2024/25 Annual Budget £	Net MTFP Adjustment £	Round 1 Net Pressures / (Savings) Identified £	Provisional 2025/26 Budget £	Increase / (Decrease) £	Increase / (Decrease) %
Economy & Assets PDG							
SCD02	Economic Development	70,413	5,100	-	75,513	5,100	7.2%
SCP01	Parking Services	(732,427)	17,940	(57,000)	(771,487)	(39,060)	-5.3%
SPS01	Asset Management	539,720	840	-	540,560	840	0.2%
SPS05	Administration Buildings	313,830	31,610	(75,630)	269,810	(44,020)	-14.0%
SPS06	MDDC Depots	511,478	13,140	49,440	574,058	62,580	12.2%
SPS09	Property Services Staff Unit	832,500	590	(30,000)	803,090	(29,410)	-3.5%
SPS11	Public Conveniences	19,920	1,670	(6,000)	15,590	(4,330)	-21.7%
SPS12	GF Properties Shops/Flats	(303,620)	3,510	(10,000)	(310,110)	(6,490)	-2.1%
SPR06	Economic Development	379,030	120	(62,000)	317,150	(61,880)	-16.3%
TOTAL ECONOMY & ASSETS PDG		1,630,844	74,520	(191,190)	1,514,174	(116,670)	-7.2%
Planning, Environment & Sustainability PDG							
SPR01	Building Regulations	(6,120)	(5,240)	-	(11,360)	(5,240)	85.6%
SPR02	Enforcement	105,611	20	100,000	205,631	100,020	94.7%
SPR03	Development Control	283,130	1,250	90,000	374,380	91,250	32.2%
SPR04	Local Land Charges	(38,880)	90	-	(38,790)	90	0.2%
SPR09	Forward Planning	300,670	130	(29,000)	271,800	(28,870)	-9.6%
SPR11	Regional Planning	180,000	(27,000)	-	153,000	(27,000)	-15.0%
SPS03	Flood Defence And Land Drain	26,032	-	-	26,032	0	0.0%
SPS04	Street Naming & Numbering	6,970	-	-	6,970	0	0.0%
SPS13	Climate Change	170,620	20	100,000	270,640	100,020	58.6%
TOTAL PLANNING, ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY PDG		1,028,033	(30,730)	261,000	987,663	(40,370)	-3.9%
Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement PDG							
SCS20	Customer Services Admin	20,700	-	-	20,700	0	0.0%
SCS22	Customer First	794,420	840	-	795,260	840	0.1%
SES02	Cemeteries	(126,548)	890	-	(125,658)	890	0.7%
SES05	Open Spaces	260,331	1,000	(60,000)	201,331	(59,000)	-22.7%
SES24	Environmental Enforcement	149,739	180	-	149,919	180	0.1%
SGM01	Grounds Maintenance	564,189	2,350	(7,500)	559,039	(5,150)	-0.9%
SRS01	Recreation And Sport	983,303	45,100	(271,810)	756,593	(226,710)	-23.1%
SWS01	Street Cleansing	576,632	2,370	-	579,002	2,370	0.4%
SWS02	Waste Collection	310,100	15,450	(148,000)	177,550	(132,550)	-42.7%
SWS03	Recycling	1,535,780	10,730	(247,500)	1,299,010	(236,770)	-15.4%
SWS04	Waste Management	378,010	580	-	378,590	580	0.2%
TOTAL SERVICE IMPROVEMENT & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT PDG		5,446,656	79,490	(734,810)	4,791,336	(655,320)	-12.0%
Homes PDG							
SES15	Private Sector Housing Grants	9,225	40	-	9,265	40	-0.4%
SHG03	Homelessness Accommodation	392,535	8,320	(79,000)	321,855	(70,680)	-18.0%
TOTAL HOMES PDG		401,760	8,360	(79,000)	331,120	(70,640)	-17.6%
Net Direct Services Costs		15,814,835	662,565	(550,000)	15,656,760	(158,075)	-1.0%

Service Unit	Direct Costs Detail	2024/25 Annual Budget £	Net MTFP Adjustment £	Round 1 Net Pressures / (Savings) Identified £	Provisional 2025/26 Budget £	Increase / (Decrease) £	Increase / (Decrease) %
	Net Recharge to HRA	(1,957,080)	(58,340)	-	(2,015,420)	(58,340)	-3.0%
	Capital Financing	812,700	59,079	-	871,779	59,079	7.3%
	Net Service Costs	14,670,455	663,304	(550,000)	14,783,759	113,304	0.8%
SIE06	Interest Receivable	(1,058,774)	430,025	(100,000)	(728,749)	330,025	31.2%
SIE03	Interest Costs	351,510	-	-	351,510	0	0.0%
SIE24	Transfers To / (From) Earmarked Reserves	(840,619)	662,329	20,000	(158,290)	682,329	81.2%
	Net Budget Requirement	13,122,572	1,755,658	(630,000)	14,248,230	1,125,658	8.6%
SIE11	Business Rates	(4,421,735)	(188,400)	(50,000)	(4,660,135)	(238,400)	-5.4%
SIE08	Council Tax	(6,968,476)	(371,094)	(50,000)	(7,389,570)	(421,094)	-6.0%
SIE10	Un-Ringfenced Grant Funding	(1,732,361)	-	(35,000)	(1,767,361)	(35,000)	-2.0%
	Total Funding	(13,122,572)	(559,494)	(135,000)	(13,817,066)	(694,494)	-5.3%
	Annual Shortfall	0	1,196,164	(765,000)	431,164	431,164	

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Area	Sub Area	Project Title	Existing Budgeted	2024/25 Outturn	Forecast 2024/25	Adjustment to	New Budget	REVISED Capital	Spend Profile for Remaining Indicative Capital Programme						
			Capital Programme	Forecast as at Qtr 2	Slippage into future			Programme	Programme 2025/26 -	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total
			2024/25 - 2028/29		years			Previous Capital	2029/30	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
			£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's								
General Fund															
Leisure	Lords Meadow Leisure Centre	Reception infrastructure	160	160	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure	Culm Valley Sports Centre	CVSC - Remodelling of Ground Floor	204	-	-			204	30	174	-	-	-	-	204
Leisure	Culm Valley Sports Centre	Leisure - Improved Disabled Toilet facilities - CPT	75	43	-	32		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Leisure - Improved Disabled Toilet facilities - CPT	16	16	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure	Leisure - Other	All leisure sites replacement management/site access system (Hardware Element)	200	200	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other MDDC Buildings	Phoenix House	Building Mgmt System for Heating Control	103	60	43			43	43	-	-	-	-	-	43
Other MDDC Buildings	MDDC Depots	Land acquisition for operational needs	2,000	-	-	2,000		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other MDDC Buildings	MDDC Depots	Depot Design & Build - Waste & Recycling	3,750	250	-			3,500	3,500	-	-	-	-	-	3,500
Other MDDC Buildings	MDDC Shops/Industrial Units	36 & 38 Fore Street including Flat above structure & cosmetic works	197	-	-	197		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
HIF	HIF Schemes	CA719 Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road (HIF)	29,757	3,100	10,116		2,643	29,300	4,000	12,600	12,700	-	-	-	29,300
Other	General Car Parks	West Exe South - Remodelling - additional parking spaces	90	-	-			90	90	-	-	-	-	-	90
Other	Parks & Play Areas	Open Space Infrastructure (incl Play Areas)	35	-	-			35	35	-	-	-	-	-	35
Other	ICT Projects	Server hardware/software Citrix Replacement	270	-	-	50		220	-	-	-	220	-	-	220
Other	ICT Projects	VM/Storage Area Network	260	-	-	120		140	-	-	-	140	-	-	140
Other	ICT Projects	Server farm expansion/upgrades	67	248	-	181		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	ICT Projects	UPS Replacements	85	-	-	55		30	-	30	-	-	-	-	30
Other	Other Projects	Land drainage flood defence schemes - St Marys	50	-	-			50	50	-	-	-	-	-	50
Other	Other Projects	Cemetery Lodge - Structural solution for damp	62	-	-	62		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Other Projects	Land drainage flood defence schemes - Ashleigh Park Bampton	87	-	-			87	87	-	-	-	-	-	87
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	ATP replacement (50% share with DCC)	220	-	-			220	220	-	-	-	-	-	220
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	CHP - Replacement future energy saving project	180	350	-	170		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Wetside resin floor replacement	90	-	90			90	90	-	-	-	-	-	90
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Learner pool floor replacement	100	-	-	100		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Chemical/Salt Storage at back of building - Associated plant to go with this	60	45	-	15		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure	Lords Meadow Leisure Centre	Wetside resin floor replacement	90	-	90			90	90	-	-	-	-	-	90
Leisure	Lords Meadow Leisure Centre	Chemical/Salt Storage at back of building - Associated plant to go with this	60	41	-	19		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure	Culm Valley Sports Centre	ATP replacement (50% share with DCC)	210	-	-			210	210	-	-	-	-	-	210
Leisure	Culm Valley Sports Centre	Fitness Studio renewal of equipment	150	145	-	5		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Leisure	Culm Valley Sports Centre	Replacement skate park (poss relocation)	350	-	-			350	200	150	-	-	-	-	350
Other MDDC Buildings	Other - Climate Change/Net Zero	All Fleet - Vehicle live monitoring for CO2 emissions	115	115	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other MDDC Buildings	Other - Climate Change/Net Zero	MSCP - Solar carport and additional security	600	-	-			600	600	-	-	-	-	-	600
Other MDDC Buildings	Other - Climate Change/Net Zero	Additional electric car charging points	80	80	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other MDDC Buildings	Other - Climate Change/Net Zero	Market Walk - Solar Panels	200	-	-			200	200	-	-	-	-	-	200
Other MDDC Buildings	Phoenix House	Cooling options Air Handling Unit	150	-	-			150	150	-	-	-	-	-	150
Other MDDC Buildings	MDDC Depots	Diesel Tank	65	65	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Other Projects	EUE Community Centre	-	-	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other MDDC Buildings	MDDC Depots	Property Leasing - Carlu Close	1,330	1,330	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other MDDC Buildings	Public Conveniences	Westexe Rec Toilets - Replacement	160	-	-	160		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	DFG and other private sector grants	3,000	871	-	321	550	3,000	600	600	600	600	600	600	3,000
Other	General Car Parks	LED upgrade	65	-	-			65	65	-	-	-	-	-	65
Other	General Car Parks	LED lighting replacement	20	-	-			20	20	-	-	-	-	-	20
Other	General Car Parks	Becks Square resurfacing & lining	30	-	-			30	30	-	-	-	-	-	30
Other	Parks & Play Areas	Widen Riverside Path	20	-	-			20	20	-	-	-	-	-	20
Other	Parks & Play Areas	Fencing end of life	125	-	-			125	125	-	-	-	-	-	125
Other	Parks & Play Areas	Rubber floor tile replacements	100	-	-			100	100	-	-	-	-	-	100
Other	ICT Projects	Laptop/Desktop Refresh	500	80	-		200	620	100	140	120	120	140	620	-
Other	Other Projects	Baler	500	500	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Other Projects	PDA's for cabs - Recycling, Trade and Ground	150	150	-		60	60	60	-	-	-	-	-	60
Other	Other Projects	Fire Safety Measures	200	200	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Other Projects	Shared Prosperity Fund - Year 3	232	232	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	Other Projects	Rural England Prosperity Fund - Year 2	672	672	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	GF Vehicles	Vehicle leasing - Caretaking Services	30	29	-	1		33	33	-	-	-	-	-	33
Other	GF Vehicles	Vehicle leasing - Street Cleansing	410	163	-		401	648	135	192	-	105	216	648	-
Other	GF Vehicles	Vehicle leasing - Refuse	1,655	935	-		188	908	-	729	125	54	-	908	-
Other	GF Vehicles	Vehicle leasing - Trade Waste	330	209	-		122	243	-	243	-	-	-	243	-
Other	GF Vehicles	Vehicle leasing - Recycling	390	163	-		48	275	56	85	37	35	62	275	-
Leisure	Leisure - Climate Change/Net Zero	EVLC - Building Fabric - Insulation improvements	260	-	-			260	-	260	-	-	-	-	260
Other	Other Projects	Tiverton Market Paving - Permanent Solution	200	-	-			200	-	200	-	-	-	-	200
Leisure	Lords Meadow Leisure Centre	ATP replacement (no dual use)	200	-	-			200	-	-	200	-	-	-	200
Leisure	Leisure - Climate Change/Net Zero	MLMC - Building Fabric - Insulation improvements	200	-	-			200	-	-	200	-	-	-	200
Leisure	Leisure - Climate Change/Net Zero	CVSC - Building Fabric - Insulation improvements	200	-	-			200	-	-	200	-	-	-	200
Other MDDC Buildings	Other - Climate Change/Net Zero	MDDC commercial property building fabric improvements	240	-	-			240	-	-	240	-	-	-	240
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Exe Valley Capital Works	200	-	-			200	-	-	-	100	100	200	-
Leisure	Lords Meadow Leisure Centre	Lords Meadow Capital Works	200	-	-			200	-	-	-	100	100	200	-
Leisure	Culm Valley Sports Centre	Culm Valley Capital Works	200	-	-			200	-	-	-	100	100	200	-
Other	ICT Projects	Hybrid Screen replacements	70	-	-		70	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	ICT Projects	Audio/Video replacement for Phoenix House	140	10	-		10	-	-	-	-	170	-	-	170
Other MDDC Buildings	Phoenix House	Etarmis - Security Swipe - (linked to security project)	40	11	29			29	29	-	-	-	-	-	29
Other	Other Projects	Fire Dampeners - Corporate sites	37	37	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	HMO Scheme 1	26	-	-			-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	HFU Scheme 3 - 15 Temple Crescent	14	41	-		27	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Area	Sub Area	Project Title	Existing Budgeted Capital Programme 2024/25 - 2028/29	2024/25 Outturn Forecast as at Qtr 2	Forecast 2024/25 Slippage into future years	Adjustment to Previous Capital Programme	New Budget Required	REVISED Capital Programme 2025/26 - 2029/30	Spend Profile for Remaining Indicative Capital Programme						
			£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total	
									£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	HFU 4 Coldridge Rd	33	41	-	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	HFU 30 Temple Crescent	34	24	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	HFU - 9 Hammett Road	4	13	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	HFU - 68 Belmont Road	4	10	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	HFU - 67 Knightswood	9	57	-	48	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	HFU - 8 Hillcrest	3	16	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Other	GF Vehicles	Vehicle leasing - Grounds Maintenance	100	-	-	-	54	154	-	-	-	90	64	154	
General Fund Subtotals			52,522	10,738	10,368	-	2,103	4,329	44,009	10,968	15,373	14,452	1,834	1,382	44,009

Area	Sub Area	Project Title	Comments	Total Project Budget Approval						Spend Profile for NEW Indicative Capital Programme						
				2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Total	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	Beyond 2029/30	Total
				£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's	£000's
General Fund Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Soft Play at Exe Valley Leisure Centre	knock through of reception / offices and staff area to pen up the space and introduce 2/3 story soft play centre. Work to include relocation of staff room and office to existing office adjacent to studio. 'training room' relocated to rugby club hire arrangement across the road.	-	500	-	-	-	500	-	30	170	300	-	-	500
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Roofing Structure and mansafe	Replace Mansafe equipment on roof	50	-	-	-	-	50	50	-	-	-	-	-	50
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Tennis Court Resurfacing	Resurface existing tennis courts	20	-	-	-	-	20	20	-	-	-	-	-	20
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Replace Main Pool Filters	Replace main pool filters	-	-	-	100	-	100	-	-	-	100	-	-	100
Leisure	Lords Meadow Leisure Centre	Replace Main Pool Filters	Replace main pool filters	-	-	-	100	-	100	-	-	-	100	-	-	100
Leisure	Lords Meadow Leisure Centre	Extension to building on land of skate park at Lords Meadow	To utilise the land the skate park vacates to extend the footprint of Lords Meadow Leisure Centre and increase the gym size. With potential for a self access entry point and technology to accommodate.	600	-	-	-	-	600	30	470	100	-	-	-	600
Leisure	Leisure - Other	Pool Pods - Submersible platforms for disabled	LM and EV Pool pods - The Pool pod is a submersible platform lift which enables disabled people or people with restricted mobility to safely access public swimming pools in a dignified manner. Funding opportunities are sometimes available	70	-	-	-	-	70	70	-	-	-	-	-	70
Leisure	Exe Valley Leisure Centre	Fitness Studio renewal of equipment	Exe Valley Gym equipment replacement & Modernisation. Re-allocate some equipment to LMLC if extended	-	300	-	-	-	300	-	300	-	-	-	-	300
Leisure	Lords Meadow Leisure Centre	Fitness Studio renewal of equipment	Lords meadow gym equipment replacement, possibly reduced dependant upon reallocation of EV equipment	-	-	200	-	-	200	-	-	200	-	-	-	200
Leisure	Culm Valley Leisure Centre	Fitness Studio renewal of equipment	Lords meadow gym equipment replacement, possibly reduced dependant upon reallocation of EV equipment	-	-	-	200	-	200	-	-	-	200	-	-	200
Other MDDC Buildings	Phoenix House	Phoenix House - CCTV Replacement	End of Lifecycle / Chinese Tech.	65	-	-	-	-	65	65	-	-	-	-	-	65
Other MDDC Buildings	MDDC Depots	Baler conveyor replacement	Baler conveyor replacement	150	-	-	-	-	150	150	-	-	-	-	-	150
Other MDDC Buildings	MDDC Depots	Baler Floor (to be replaced every 5 yrs)	Baler Floor (to be replaced every 5 yrs)	-	-	-	-	30	30	-	-	-	-	30	-	30
Other	General Car Parks	Replace Car Park paying machines in the District	Car Park paying machines in the District	-	-	-	-	85	85	-	-	-	-	85	-	85
Other	Parks & Play Areas	Open Space Infrastructure (incl Play Areas)	To refurbish end of life play areas/ equipment to retain and enhance facility where appropriate - working with Town and Parish where possible to rationalise supply and promote disposal. Closures will reduce revenue costs and may realise capital receipt	100	100	100	-	-	300	100	100	100	-	-	-	300
Other	Parks & Play Areas	Upgrade Park Lighting	To replace/ enhance existing and provide new 'street' lighting in the Councils parks to reduce fear of crime of users and surveilance of and deter anti-social behaviour	100	-	-	-	-	100	100	-	-	-	-	-	100
Other	ICT Projects	Network Switch/ Firewall/ Wifi Refresh (ALL Sites)	Hardware Refresh	-	-	-	125	125	250	-	-	-	125	125	-	250
Other	ICT Projects	Server & Storage Hardware Refresh	Replacement For Servers and Storage Area Network in Phoenix house (Disk storage)	-	-	-	-	250	250	-	-	-	-	250	-	250
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	Capitalised staff resource to deliver Private Sector Housing Grants	Direct staff costs for the delivery of the programme	148	148	148	148	148	740	148	148	148	148	148	-	740
Private Sector Housing	Private Sector Housing	Survey costs to deliver the Private Sector Housing Grants	Cost per survey paid to MDH for specialist surveyor, include survey, plans and SOW	20	20	20	20	20	100	20	20	20	20	20	-	100
Other	Other Projects	Lendology Loans	To provide a wider range of loans than available at present. To include bringing empty homes back into use, replacement septic tanks, and energy efficiency works	100	-	100	-	100	300	50	50	50	50	50	50	300
Other MDDC Buildings	Public Conveniences	Newcombes Meadow Toilet Block	Redevelopment of toilet block	-	100	-	-	-	100	50	50	-	-	-	-	100
Other	Other Projects	Tiverton Public Realm Enhancement Project	Phase 1: Visitor Signage Phase 2: Tiverton Masterplan Enhancements	74	-	-	-	-	74	43	31	-	-	-	-	74
Other	Other Projects	Tiverton Pannier Market - new stalls and storage	Creation of new stalls and storage on east and west side pig-pens and improvement works	-	-	80	-	-	80	-	-	80	-	-	-	80
Other	Other Projects	Crediton Public Realm Enhancement	Phase 1: Waymarking: Pedestrian/Visitor Signage Phase 2: Public Realm Works	80	-	-	-	-	80	30	50	-	-	-	-	80
General Fund Subtotals				1,577	1,168	648	693	758	4,844	926	1,249	868	1,043	708	50	4,794

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
HRA MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2025-26 TO 2029-30

	2024-25	Infl	2025-26	Infl	2026-27	Infl	2027-28	Infl	2028-29	Infl	2029-30
	£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%	£
Employee costs											
Base salary budget	4,217,650		4,344,180		4,474,505		4,608,740		4,747,002		4,889,412
Other Employee costs	-		-		-		-		-		-
<i>Inflation base</i>	4,217,650	3.0%	4,344,180	3.0%	4,474,505	3.0%	4,608,740	3.0%	4,747,002	3.0%	4,889,412
Total in year cost	4,217,650		4,344,180		4,474,505		4,608,740		4,747,002		4,889,412
Premises costs											
Base budget	292,550		497,590		522,820		548,800		575,560		603,130
Utilities	115,550		10,000		10,000		10,000		10,000		10,000
Other cost pressures	75,000		-		-		-		-		-
Savings	-		-		-		-		-		-
<i>Inflation base</i>	483,100	3.0%	507,590	3.0%	532,820	3.0%	558,800	3.0%	585,560	3.0%	613,130
Total in year cost	483,100		507,590		532,820		558,800		585,560		613,130
Transport related costs											
Base budget	282,930		297,080		311,930		327,530		343,910		361,110
Cost Pressures	-		-		-		-		-		-
<i>Inflation base</i>	282,930	5.0%	297,080	5.0%	311,930	5.0%	327,530	5.0%	343,910	5.0%	361,110
Total in year cost	282,930		297,080		311,930		327,530		343,910		361,110
Supplies and services											
Base budget	2,960,840		2,951,380		3,413,950		3,584,650		3,763,880		3,952,070
Cost Pressures	(150,000)		300,000		-		-		-		-
<i>Inflation base</i>	2,810,840	5.0%	3,251,380	5.0%	3,413,950	5.0%	3,584,650	5.0%	3,763,880	5.0%	3,952,070
One off costs	-		-		-		-		-		-
Total in year cost	2,810,840		3,251,380		3,413,950		3,584,650		3,763,880		3,952,070
Support services	1,956,920	3.0%	2,015,628	3.0%	2,076,096	3.0%	2,138,379	3.0%	2,202,531	3.0%	2,268,607
Total gross expenditure	9,751,440		10,415,857		10,809,301		11,218,099		11,642,883		12,084,329
Rents , fees, charges and Other Income											
Housing Rents	(14,710,680)		(15,152,000)		(15,986,010)		(16,740,290)		(17,398,750)		(17,965,930)
Income increases - Growth in units	-		(433,100)		(312,400)		(198,900)		(92,400)		(50,000)
Income Reductions-Units lost through Right-to-Buy	-		85,600		88,100		90,800		93,500		96,300
Garage and Garage Ground Rent income	(407,960)		(368,686)		(333,339)		(301,527)		(272,897)		(247,129)
Other Income	(871,460)		(906,460)		(897,579)		(820,984)		(755,192)		(698,615)
<i>Inflation base</i>	(15,990,100)	3.0%	(16,774,646)	3.0%	(17,441,229)	3.0%	(17,970,902)	3.0%	(18,425,738)	3.0%	(18,865,374)
One off initiatives	-		-		-		-		-		-
Total in year cost	(15,990,100)		(16,774,646)		(17,441,229)		(17,970,902)		(18,425,738)		(18,865,374)
NET COST OF SERVICES	(6,238,660)		(6,358,789)		(6,631,927)		(6,752,803)		(6,782,855)		(6,781,045)
Capital Financing	1,262,700		1,075,482		1,247,002		1,362,178		1,361,623		1,361,600
Interest Payable (PWLB)	1,164,690		1,190,080		1,417,260		1,771,445		1,910,116		1,840,571
Interest Payable HRA to GF	37,300		34,869		32,377		29,816		27,185		24,481
Interest Payable (finance leases)	20,320		20,500		20,500		21,900		61,000		64,400
Contribution to Capital - MRA	2,635,000		2,892,700		2,892,700		2,892,700		2,892,700		2,892,700
Renewable energy surplus	152,340		144,400		137,180		130,320		123,800		117,610
Affordable Rent surplus	-		158,215		162,962		162,962		149,333		149,333
Principal adjustment	916,310		960,635		1,016,223		1,073,458		1,132,386		1,193,061
Transfers to sinking funds	50,000		50,000		50,000		50,000		50,000		50,000
Indirect costs/reserve transfers	6,238,660		6,526,881		6,976,204		7,494,779		7,708,143		7,693,756
Annual (Surplus) / Savings to be found	0		168,092		344,277		741,977		925,288		912,711
Cumulative (Surplus) / Savings to be found	0		168,092		512,369		1,254,346		2,179,634		3,092,345

Assumptions:

- 1 Salary inflation in line with General Fund assumptions
- 2 Utilities costs assumed a general uplift
- 3 Transport costs assumed inflationary increase only
- 4 Supplies & Services budget increase in 2025/26 provides additional provision for essential repairs and maintenance and other legislative requirements.
- 5 General Fund recharges assumed in line with GF forecast
- 6 Rents assumed an assumed inflation uplift of CPI +1%
- 7 Capital Financing will need to be revised based upon the updated Capital Programme and funding assumptions.
- 8 Other 'Below the Line' items will be updated in subsequent iterations of the MTFP

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Report for: Homes Policy Development Group

Date of Meeting:	19 th November 2024
Subject:	HOUSING INITIATIVES PLAN UPDATE
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Simon Clist - Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader
Responsible Officer:	Simon Newcombe – Head of Housing and Health
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Annex A - Housing Initiatives Plan Annex B - LAHF Members Presentation 11/6/24

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

This report provides an update on activities and initiatives undertaken by the Housing Initiatives Officer and Housing Options Team relating to homelessness prevention, and to introduce the need to develop a new homelessness policy.

Recommendation(s):

- 1. That the PDG notes the updated Housing Initiatives Plan as set out in the report and Annexes A and B attached.**

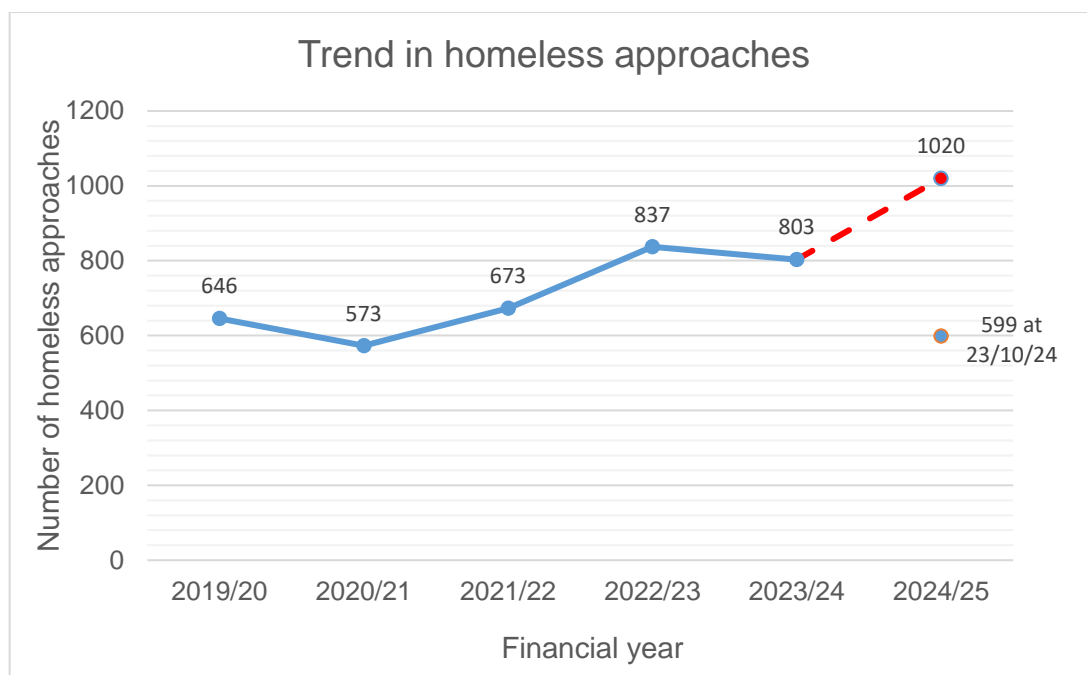
Section 2 – Report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Homeless Prevention & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025 provides insight into the complexities surrounding Homelessness in Mid Devon and gives a summary of the legislative background. The document highlights the increase in homeless approaches to the Council and sets out the likelihood that this trend would continue. The published document can be viewed on the Mid Devon website:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/media/206529/homelessnesstrategy2020-25.pdf>.

- 1.2 As predicted, the increase in homelessness approaches has continued and the below illustrates the trend since the strategy was introduced.



- 1.3 The Strategy introduced four agreed objectives for the Council's focused work in this area which offered the opportunity for developing the existing service. The Strategy objectives are:

- Minimising rough sleeping;
- Maximising prevention activities and outcomes;
- Increasing accommodation options; and
- Improving health and wellbeing by supporting those with complex needs.

- 1.4 In order to meet the aims of the strategy, in 2022 a new Housing Initiatives Officer post was introduced. The role has a wide-ranging remit, spanning all of the above strategy objectives. This includes investigating ways to provide accommodation options, enhance partnership working, and review emerging issues in order to propose projects and schemes to deal with those issues.

2 Housing Initiatives plan

- 2.1 A draft Housing Initiatives (HI) plan was developed at the introduction of the post, giving direction to some of the key activities. This plan feeds into the successful Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) bid. The Council were awarded three years of funding to deliver a specific package of projects between 2022/23 - 2024/25.
- 2.2 A copy of the HI plan can be found in Annex A. It provides an overview of the aims of the service and directly links to the plan that was developed for the RSI

bid. These plans have been kept under constant review and regularly updated as different schemes have become available and priorities have changed.

- 2.3 Section 3 of this report outlines the main achievements against the plan and any new opportunities that have become available.

3 Achievements to date

Temporary accommodation project - HMOs

- 3.1 Two empty former Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) properties have been purchased to provide temporary accommodation for both rough sleepers and homeless individuals. The Housing Initiatives Officer has been responsible for the management of these projects.
- 3.2 The properties required significant renovation to enable them to be used to their full potential and to meet the decent homes standard. One of them was made temporarily safe to provide limited bed spaces and income while the other building was renovated.
- 3.3 The full renovation of the first HMO was completed in June 2024. The property provides six en-suite rooms with a fully equipped kitchen including individual fridge and cupboard space. The property has been fully re-wired, with a new door entry system for security and a fire alarm system along with fire protection measures. The property has been fully decorated, and furnished along with access to a renovated communal, outside space. Open days were organised to allow both Councillors and the neighbours to view the transformation and ask questions about its use and management. The property has been fully in use since July 2024.
- 3.4 The second full renovation is currently underway, which, subject to planning, will provide eight en-suite rooms and temporary accommodation for up to 10 people.

Local Authority Housing Fund delivery

- 3.5 In 2023 a new funding opportunity presented itself that had been unknown when the initial work plans were outlined.
- 3.6 The Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) (Round 1) provided an allocation to local authorities to purchase properties for the purposes of temporary accommodation for a specific cohort of people.
- 3.7 The Council were awarded funding to purchase 10 properties in total. The Housing Initiatives Officer has managed this project by finding 10 empty family sized homes to purchase and renovate of 10 empty homes to be made available for displaced Ukrainian nationals and Afghan refugee families.
- 3.7 The aim of the project is to prevent homelessness within this cohort and provide temporary accommodation for wider use in the future.

- 3.8 A presentation of the LAHF project was given to the PDG on 11th June 2024 a copy of which has been included at Annex B.
- 3.9 All 10 properties have been fully renovated and are now complete.

Financial assistance for tenants

- 3.10 In February 2023, an updated Housing Assistance Policy was adopted that was split into two parts. Part One refers to the Better Care Fund and the grants available to help disabled and vulnerable people, but for the first time Part Two was introduced to cover the assistance available to prevent homelessness.
- 3.11 As part of the policy development the Housing Initiatives Officer reviewed the scope of the existing Deposit and Rent Scheme (DARS) and provided recommendations for the changes implemented in the policy.
- 3.12 As a result of this work the following assistance was included in the adopted policy:

Home Start Grant - A one off grant to help those that are moving out of an unsustainable housing situation into the private rented sector. This grant can be used to cover, the deposit for the applicants first suitable private rented home, rent in advance as required, and top up to initial rent shortfall while benefits or wages are being organised.

Home Start Loan (also known as DARS) – A loan to cover the deposit for the applicants private rented home, rent in advance as required, and top up to initial rent shortfall while benefits or wages are being organised. As this is a loan the applicant will be required to make monthly repayments.

Rent Arrears Grant – A grant to support households in the private rented sector who find themselves in rent arrears. The aim is to help those households on low incomes avoid eviction from their homes by using the grant to pay the rent arrears and prevent homelessness. If a private tenant has accrued rent arrears as a result of circumstances beyond their control then they may be eligible to apply for this grant.

Landlord Incentive Grant – A grant to encourage landlords in the private rented sector to accept tenants that do not have a reference, may have been homeless or rough sleeping, or evicted from another rented property.

- 3.12 Alongside the overarching Housing Assistance Policy, this role also developed procedures and implementation processes for the Homes for Ukraine Ukrainian Guest Grants. These are similar to the above and assist displaced Ukrainian nationals leaving host placements in Mid Devon to secure private rental accommodation.

Landlord engagement

- 3.13 The successful annual Landlord Networking Event was first introduced in November 2017. There were three events in total until 2020 when events had to be paused due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 3.14 The landlord networking event will be reintroduced for 2025, however as an interim approach we have collaborated with other local councils on the annual Rent Smart Devon Event for Devon landlords in 2024. This has enabled Mid Devon to be represented across the private rented sector and maintain communication with local landlords.
- 3.15 In addition we have continued to ensure that both national and local campaigns are supported, encouraging landlords and managing agents to regulate themselves, reducing the reliance on formal intervention. Topics of recent publications of the Pin Point news-bite bulletins include GDPR for landlords and Gas Safety week. The publications can be viewed on the Councils website: [Pin Point news-bites for landlords - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/pin-point-news-bites-for-landlords) . There are 365 landlords signed up to receive these online bulletins.

Energy Efficiency grants and advice

- 3.16 A delivery method has been established allowing the Council to participate in the ECO4 Flex element of the Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme.
- 3.17 This enables more Mid Devon residents to benefit from flexible routes into funding for energy saving measures. This not only works towards energy efficiency aims but helps occupants to reduce their energy bills. More information can be found at [ECO4 - Flexible Eligibility - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/eco4-flexible-eligibility).
- 3.18 To date the Council has authorised 130 ECO Flex declarations for a range of energy efficiency measures.
- 3.19 The Council is also part of the Energy Saving Devon partnership, delivering other grant programmes such as the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2) for residents within the Mid Devon area.

4 Next steps

- 4.1 The initiatives plan is a dynamic document that is being used to focus resources to meet the wider housing aims as detailed within the Corporate Plan. The following outlines the planned areas of focus up to March 2026:

Homelessness Policy - As the existing homelessness strategy comes to an end in 2025 there is a need to review its aims and achievements, and to incorporate updated initiatives into a new policy. The aim is to bring a draft policy forward in March 2026.

LAHF Round 3 – Funding has been allocated to us to provide two more family homes for temporary accommodation. This must be delivered by March 2026 and the team are working to acquire two new-build properties.

Former HMO project – Ensure the delivery of the second former HMO property. We are aiming to have this ready for occupation by October 2025.

Landlord Event – Reintroduce the successful Mid Devon Landlord Event for May 2025.

Review Housing Assistance Policy and Debt Recovery – Specifically looking at the types of assistance provided for homelessness and our approach to debt recovery.

Empty Homes – To review the schemes and incentives available to encourage empty homes back into use as an affordable housing option.

Financial Implications

The Homelessness Prevention Grant is available specifically to deliver initiatives to prevent homelessness and is being utilised to support these activities.

2024/25 is the final year of the funding provided by the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) which is being utilised to deliver existing projects.

There may be a potential requirement for capital funding to support future property purchase projects.

Legal Implications

The Council have a statutory duty to deliver a homelessness function under Section 182 of the Housing Act 1996, the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homeless Reduction Act 2017. Other significant areas of legislation are The Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Children Act 2004 and the Health & Social Care Act 2012.

Due to the complex nature of the homelessness duties, a statutory Homeless Code of Guidance for Local Authorities has been issued which provides full details of associated legal responsibilities, a copy of which can be found on the Gov.uk website: [Homelessness code of guidance for local authorities - Download this guidance - Guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities).

Risk Assessment

The activities associated with this report and the wider housing options service are linked to Corporate Risk numbers CR4 – Homes for Ukraine Scheme, CR11 – Cost of Living Crisis, and CR12 – Housing Crisis. All the activities detailed in this report are aimed at reducing the risks identified.

Impact on Climate Change

Collaboration with the wider energy partnerships aligns with Council climate change objectives. Where appropriate, the renovation works under the various projects have improved the energy performance of the properties, thereby reducing the carbon footprint of the home.

Equalities Impact Assessment

This report is for noting and therefore there are no policy decisions that have an impact on equality. An EIA will be undertaken as and when policies and strategies mentioned in the report are taken forward for decision.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

This report directly relates to the Homes theme within the Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 11.11.24

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 11.11.24

Chief Officer: Simon Newcombe

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

Date: 29 October 2025

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 01 November 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Tanya Wenham - Operations Manager for Public Health and Housing

Options or Simon Newcombe – Head of Housing and Health

Email: twenham@middevon.gov.uk / snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers: None

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Housing Initiatives Plan 2023/24 - 2025/26

Review 30/9/2024

1. Temporary Accommodation (TA)					
Activity	Objective	Time frame	Measure of success	Budget	Progress
1.1 Purchase of two former HMO properties for temporary accommodation	To provide temporary units of accommodation and reduce reliance on B&B	End of 2022	Properties purchased	EMR	Complete
1.2 Renovation of the Belmont Road property	Provide six bedrooms available for use as TA	February 2024	Six bedrooms available for use/occupied	EMR	Complete
1.3 Renovation of the St Paul Street property	Full renovation of property to provide eight units of TA in total	March 2024	Eight bedrooms available for use/occupied	EMR	Updated time frame due to planning. New completion date of October 2025.
1.4 Identify management approach for the properties	To have competent day to day management of the TA		Well managed HMOs, and other TA to reduce B&B costs	GF	Restructure of Housing Options. Accommodation team now in place to manage TA. Resources to be kept under review as number of properties increases.

1. Temporary Accommodation (TA)					
Activity	Objective	Time frame	Measure of success	Budget	Progress
1.5 Set up processes for the management of the TA	To ensure that processes are aligned with legal responsibilities such as ASB, tenant welfare, health and safety.	March 2025	Legal requirements are being met and properties are well managed	GF	New Senior Accommodation Officer role in place and developing the processes.
1.6 Organise contracts for cleaning, fire alarms, gas certs etc	Contracts are in place to enable effective management of the TA and occupants	March 2025	Local contractors offering value for money are procured and offering a quality service	GF	Currently utilising the existing contracts with MDH. Considering whether alternative provisions for the HMOs is required.
1.7 Organise SLA/process for repairs, maintenance and void turnaround	To ensure that properties are safe and well maintained.	June 2024	Units are not void for too long		Audit recommendation. Behind schedule. Draft document currently being considered.
1.8 Utilising Local Authority Housing Fund property for TA	To ensure properties under this funding scheme are utilised as TA when unallocated to target groups	ongoing	Properties are not void for too long.		All properties now complete and ready for occupation. Procedure in place to ensure the properties are available for the target group first and then utilised as general TA as an interim measure until

1. Temporary Accommodation (TA)					
Activity	Objective	Time frame	Measure of success	Budget	Progress
					the properties are required by the target group again.
1.9 Look for opportunities to purchase other empty homes for use as TA	Provide more in house TA and reduce B&B spend	Ongoing	Additional properties added to the portfolio for TA use. Reduced B&B spend	TBC – none identified	10 properties purchased using LAHF Round 1 funding to support Ukrainian guests and Afghan refugees. LAHF Round 3 funding now available to provide 2 new build properties for TA and Afghan re-settlement. Beyond LAHF there is currently no funding available to progress this objective.
1.10 Review agreements and fees between us and B&B providers	Ensure consistent availability of rooms if required in an emergency and reduce spend on B&B	March 2025	Local options available Recued spend on B&B Reduced need to place people outside of the district	GF	Not yet started

2. Private Rental Initiatives					
Activity	Objective	Time frame	Measure of success	Budget	Progress
2.1 Set up private sector leasing scheme	Increase the supply of private rented accommodation that is affordable.	Draft product for decision December 2023 Launch from April 2024	Properties brought back into use More affordable private rented homes available	TBC - None identified	Delayed due to the delivery of other projects. Extended timeframe of Autumn 2025
2.2 Work with owners of empty homes to utilise them as private rented accommodation	Increase the supply of private rented accommodation.	Ongoing	Number of empty homes brought back into use by type e.g., as owner occupied/as private rented/ as HMO	TBC - None identified	Stalled due to other initiatives requiring delivery.
2.3 Deliver annual landlord event either locally and/or jointly with other Devon districts.	To improve the relationship between the Council and private sector landlords	Ongoing	Minimum of one event delivered or supported per year.	GF	Involvement in and attendance at the Devon wide Rent Smart event held in Exeter. Mid Devon Event to be re-introduced in 2025.
2.4 Landlord training – either host or develop relevant training, in person or online.	Ensure existing private rented accommodation meets legal obligations and is in good condition	Not started	One per year		No progress has been made with this objective due to other projects.

2. Private Rental Initiatives					
Activity	Objective	Time frame	Measure of success	Budget	Progress
2.5 Regular engagement with Landlords through newsletters and information bulletins	To engage and consult with private sector landlords, building on relationships and encouraging compliance	Ongoing	Seven per year	N/A	Pin Point news bulletins continue to be issued. Currently 365 subscribers Approx. 4 Pin points per year plus other activities such as events and press releases.
2.6 Identify projects for further development that meet the service objectives	Consider the housing needs assessment and identify any additional schemes to meet the housing need at the time. To include encouraging HMO as an option, engage with agents etc.	Ongoing	Appropriate projects are brought forward as and when funding allows		Ongoing but recent examples include the LAHF Round 1 and Round 3 that were mobilised quickly following funding announcements.

3. Homelessness Prevention					
Activity	Objective	Time frame	Measure of success	Budget	Progress
3.1 Conduct an annual review of Housing Assistance Policy	Ensure policy is current and covers the needs of the service users	By the end of Q3	Number of grants awarded Number of homelessness/rough sleeping preventions Number of rough sleepers assisted	RSI funding 2022-25 22/23 £17,000.00 23/24 £17,000.00 24/25 £17,000.00 Homelessness prevention grant	Policy was adopted in February 2023, but the review did not take place in January 2024 as expected. Review due in January 2025
3.2 Review uptake of landlord incentives available under the Housing Assistance Policy	Review performance of assistance available to incentivise landlords, identifying changes and opportunities to improve access to private rented sector	End of Q4	Number of private rented tenancies supported Number of evictions prevented	As above	As above
3.3 Review uptake of other grants under the Housing Assistance Policy. Particularly those that help the	Review performance of assistance available to help occupiers remain safely in their homes and identify opportunities	Annual at the end of the financial year	Number of grants that have helped someone to remain safe in their own home	BCF	Ongoing delivery of the Better Care Fund programme, however a review against the suggested measures of success has not been undertaken.

3. Homelessness Prevention					
Activity	Objective	Time frame	Measure of success	Budget	Progress
person to remain safe in their home			Number of people where eviction has been prevented Number of people where an application for DHC or going into care has been avoided		
3.4 Develop opportunities to engage with private sector tenants to maintain tenancies	Ensure that tenants have the skills and tools to maintain tenancies, avoiding arrears and avoidable ASB.	Not started	Number of tenancies sustained Number of people engaged		Not started yet

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Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) & Homes for Ukraine (HfU) Update

Public Health and Housing Options

Homes PDG presentation - 11th June 2024



Presentation Contents

- Homes for Ukraine update
- An overview of the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)
- MDDC approach
- Project Delivery
- Allocations process and support
- Case study
- LAHF - Round 3
- Contact information

Homes For Ukraine Update

- The scheme has been running since March 2022.
- The number of new arrivals has slowed down.
- Currently there are 69 guests in 41 host placements in Mid Devon.
- The Government have extended the hosting scheme to 3 years.
- Support for guests is provided by the Housing Options team. CHAT were assisting up until the end of March 2024.
- To date 40 Guest Grants paid to cover deposit and rent in advance where households are moving from host placements, or one of the temporary properties, to PRS accommodation. Furniture grants also available to help set up their first settled home in the UK.



Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF)

The fund was introduced by DLUHC to help alleviate homelessness as a result of the Homes for Ukraine Scheme.

Funding is made up of two elements, across two years; 2022/23 and 2023/24.

Main element: £1,122,000 for 9 family homes (2-3 beds)

- Funding equates to 40% of the mean property value - average £82,000 grant per property – to be used to cover capital costs.
- Additional £20,000 per property towards renovation costs.
- Properties to be used for Ukrainian guests leaving a hosting arrangement, unable to access the PRS or in unsustainable temporary accommodation.

Bridging element: £205,608 for 1 large (4+ bed) home

- Funding equates to 50% of the mean property value - average £185,608 grant per property – to be used to cover capital costs.
- Additional £20,000 per property towards renovation costs.
- The Strategic Migration Partnership (SMP) will allocate the home to an Afghan family currently residing in Home Office bridging accommodation.

LAHF - Overview

- The properties purchased under this project are designed to provide **additional** housing outside of the Housing Revenue Account.
- They are for emergency use by those in the UK under Homes for Ukraine to prevent the cohort going into hotel placements.
- This ring-fenced accommodation allows the council to *prevent* homelessness – usually occupants of temporary or emergency accommodation would be approaching the Council as homeless.
- Access to the new properties is on a temporary basis. Where a family is moved into the accommodation they will continue to be assisted to find long term private rented housing, or another host placement as soon as possible, enabling the temporary accommodation to be available for the next household in need.
- The properties are a long term asset for the Council and will eventually be used as general temporary accommodation.

LAHF - MDDC Approach

- Aim to bring empty properties back into use by purchasing from the open market or by direct contact with empty home owners at fair market price.
- Main town locations selected for access to amenities and transport links.
- Focus on ex-council homes or those in an area close to MDH stock for ease of management by Housing Options Team/Repairs Team.
- Prevent empty homes from causing nuisance to neighbouring properties.
- Bring properties in a poor condition up to a decent homes standard:
 - Condition and safety - rewiring, asbestos removal, general repairs
 - Energy efficiency - new central heating systems and insulation
 - Update facilities - kitchen and bathroom replacements.
- Ensure properties provide a long term, sustainable option.



Delivery milestones

25 th January 2023	Proposal submitted to DLUHC
07 March 2023	Cabinet approval
20 th March 2023	First two purchases agreed
June 2023	First property occupied
27 th March 2024	Last purchase completed (10 properties in total)



Property 1

- Tiverton, close to the local school.
- 2 double bedrooms
- Dual aspect living room with potential to form 3rd bedroom if required.
- Inefficient electric storage heating was upgraded to high efficiency Quantum storage heaters.
- The property needed a new electric consumer unit but later we discovered a full rewire was needed.



Property 2

- Silverton; great location to commute to Exeter or Tiverton for work.
- Leasehold flat where MDDC already own the freehold of the block.
- 2 bedroom ground floor flat providing accommodation on one level with a walk in shower.
- Only decoration and new carpets were required.
- The first family to occupy this flat have already moved on to settled accommodation and another family are due to move in soon.



Property 3

- Tiverton – local school and shop nearby.
- This property had two large bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs with an additional bedroom and bathroom extension on the ground floor. The large bedroom was split into two creating a 4 bedroom, 2 bathroom property – ideal to meet the bridging element of the funding.
- Remaining work – new kitchen & bathrooms, rotten floor repairs, flat roof replacement.
- The Strategic Migration Partnership are very happy that this will make a lovely home for one of their families when completed in the summer.





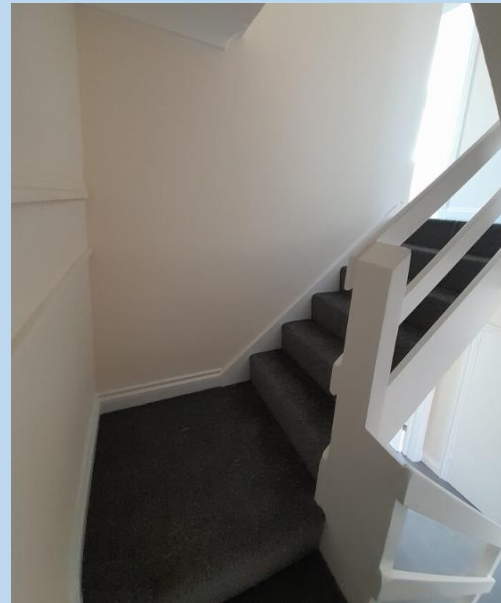
Property 4

- Tiverton - Central location within walking distance of amenities.
- A generous two bedroom maisonette situated above Council owned shops within a terrace of other HRA properties.
- Very minor works were required and the property was occupied quickly.



Property 5

- A large well proportioned property which had been formerly used as a private house in multiple occupation(HMO).
- The landlord decided to give up management of the property and we negotiated its purchase.
- The internal areas and garden were in need of refurbishment.
- Once works began we discovered the condition of the bathroom floor in particular was worse than expected.
- The property now provides flexible accommodation of 3 to 4 bedrooms and could accommodate a large family, or in the future has potential to be returned to use as a HMO.





Property 6

- A good size 3 bedroom house with the benefit of off road parking at the front.
- A new central heating system was needed but the plumber exposed undersize 5mm gas pipes under the floorboards... and some very suspect solder!
- This work then disturbed the flooring which needed to be renewed.
- The property was completely redecorated.
- The rear garden decking was very slippery so this was replaced with a new patio. Upon removing the decking a blocked drain was discovered and a new drain gully is needed.
- Fencing was added to protect the drop from the grass onto the patio.



Property 7

- A large three bedroom home in Cullompton within walking distance of the school and town.
- A new front door was fitted to replace the original.
- Some other works to bring the property up to a safe standard will be completed along with general decoration and we hope to have this property ready for occupation by the end of the summer.



Property 8

- Tiverton
- A terraced property with two double bedrooms and off road parking. As the bedrooms are large this can accommodate a family of 4 or 5.
- Repairs to the front porch and fascia are needed as well as a new rear gate and some fencing.
- Inside we have only needed to replace the bannister but this has led to the landing carpet also needing some repair.
- This property should be ready for occupants at the end of July.



Property 9

- Cullompton - another large family property.
- This property had been empty for a while needing repair and modernisation throughout, which has begun.
- There are three large bedrooms, a large living room and a kitchen/diner with a utility area.
- The renovations are more extensive and will take a bit longer, so we expect to have this ready for occupation during September.



Property 10

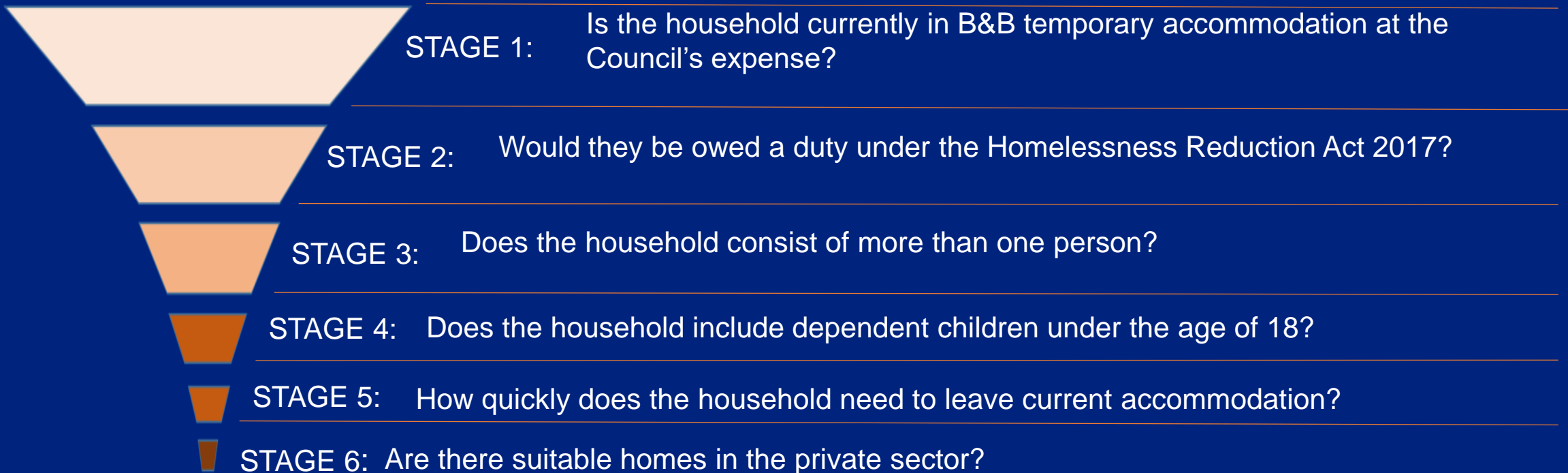
- Tiverton
- A good size three bedroom home.
- New carpets have been fitted.
- The kitchen is being redesigned to make better use of the space and provide a dining area.
- We expect to have this ready for occupation during September.



Allocations Process

Housing Options officers will carry out a complete housing assessment and provide a Personal Housing Plan for the household. Whilst the family are in one of the temporary homes we will work with them, signposting to employment opportunities and assisting them to secure settled accommodation.

Where multiple Ukrainian households approach the service at the same time, the officers will consider several factors when allocating these properties:



Case Study – The ‘S’ Family

- Mr and Mrs S and their two school age children are a Ukrainian family who arrived in the UK in January 2023.
- The family were hosted for 6 months under the HfU scheme, but the arrangement sadly ended through no fault of the family, as the host became ill and unable to continue hosting.
- In July 2023 the family moved into the first property purchased under this scheme – a two bedroom house which we had rewired, updated and re carpeted.
- The children were able to stay in the same school.
- Officers assisted the family to claim housing benefit, council tax relief and engage with utility providers.
- The security of having a home gave confidence to begin looking for employment. Both Mr and Mrs S secured employment within a short period of time.
- As a result of our assistance the family have now secured their own housing in the private sector and have expressed their gratitude for all our help and assistance.
- This property is now available for the next family in need.



LAHF - ROUND 3

- We have received an initial indication from DLUHC that a funding allocation of £282,000 will be available to provide two new family homes.
- The round 3 funding grant is also made up of two elements, across two years; 2024/25 and 2025/26, and is to provide general temp accommodation as well as resettlement accommodation.
- The aim is to purchase temporary accommodation for families owed a homeless duty and to provide a home for those under the Afghan resettlement scheme.
- Due to the election DLUHC have issued a statement to say there is a delay with the programme and they are applying additional considerations. This means we are yet to be allocated this funding.

The next steps

- Three of the properties within this project are currently occupied.
- Three are having kitchens and bathrooms replaced.
- The remainder are in the finishing stages and due to be ready for occupation in the next couple of months
- LAHF 3 – awaiting news from DLUHC and the MOU.
- We are already investigating new projects ready for the release of this funding.

Questions?



Who to contact?

Please send all temporary accommodation enquiries to: ta@middevon.gov.uk

Housing Options enquiries to: homeless@middevon.gov.uk



Sarah Thomas
Housing Options Manager
sthamas@middevon.gov.uk



Samantha Barnett
Housing Initiatives Officer
sbarnett@middevon.gov.uk

Wider service management queries and escalation:



Simon Newcombe
Head of Housing and Health
snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk



Tanya Wenham
Operations Manager for Public
Health and Housing Options
twenham@middevon.gov.uk

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Report for: Homes Policy Development Group

Date of Meeting: 19th November 2024

Subject: **MID DEVON HOUSING (MDH) TENANT COMPENSATION POLICY UPDATE**

Cabinet Member: Cllr Simon Clist Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader

Responsible Officer: Simon Newcombe – Head of Housing and Health

Exempt: None

which are Exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Wards Affected: All

Enclosures: Annex A – Tenant Compensation Policy
Annex B – Tenant Compensation Policy Equality Impact Assessment

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

The policy was last approved in January 2022, and has become due for review after 3 years.

Since the current compensation policy was adopted the Housing Ombudsman (HO) has issued guidance notes to Registered Providers that relevant policies should provide redress to restore a person to the position they would have been in had the service failure not occurred.

In line with the HO guidance the revised policy sets out compensation payments that are fair, consistent and proportionate whilst recognising that each case will be considered on its individual merits.

The Council has also recently received specific guidance and recommendation from the HO in respect of compensation for the additional cost of temporary heaters.

These guidance updates were timely with the rolling review date of the policy and the policy has been updated as set out below.

Recommendation:

- 1. That the PDG recommends that Cabinet adopt the updated MDH Tenant Compensation Policy and Equality Impact Assessment contained in Annexes A and B respectively**

Section 2 – Report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Mid Devon Housing (MDH) aims to provide excellent service to its tenants at all times, however, we recognise that there will be occasions when our tenants may suffer some disadvantage, inconvenience or loss as a result of our actions or mistakes and that in some instances, financial compensation or a goodwill gesture may be the most appropriate form of redress.
- 1.2 Under the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) requires all Registered Providers to ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly. Furthermore, the HO expects Registered Providers to have a redress scheme in place.
- 1.3 The RSH regard councillors as responsible for ensuring overview that providers' businesses are managed effectively and that providers comply with all regulatory requirements. As such, members should be satisfied MDH are complying with the relevant current consumer standards and requirements regarding tenant compensation as set out above.

2 Policy Review and Changes

- 2.1 MDH have had a redress and tenant compensation scheme in place through the adopted current and previous compensation policy for a number of years. The policy review found the current policy to largely fit for purpose, nonetheless some amendments are now required as set out below.
- 2.2 As a result of an investigation by the HO into compensation paid to a tenant who had had temporary heaters installed it was determined that MDH were liable for the daily usage of the heaters. Our current Policy stated 'Tenants will be compensated for the daily use of each heater provided'.
- 2.3 The revised Policy now states that 'MDH will consider reimbursing tenants for any out of pocket expenses as a result of having to use temporary heaters whilst their heating issue is being resolved. We may request proof of these out of pocket expenses' This amendment ensures that the policy is transparent for

tenants that we will reimburse them for an increase in their expenditure, if that occurs, for using the temporary heaters.

- 2.4 The revised Policy now also includes details of the updated Regulatory Framework including the new mandatory consumer regulation standards alongside mirroring wording within the updated HO guidance and context so there is clear alignment.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the revised Policy will be reviewed after 5 years instead of 3 to align it with all MDH policy reviews.

3 Performance 2023-2024, Monitoring and Reporting

- 3.1 During 2023-24 we offered £10,327.93 in compensation and goodwill gesture payments (GWG).
- 3.2 £6,692.93 compensation was accepted and £369.66 GWG payments were accepted. Not everyone accepted their offer of redress.
- 3.3 In total 51 residents/tenants were offered compensation/GWG but only 43 accepted.
- 3.4 The highest amount we paid to a tenant in one go was £1,123.00, this payment was accepted. The highest amount we offered that was not accepted was £1,050.00.
- 3.5 Such payments are always made in accordance with adopted policy and are reviewed and monitored on a regular basis. This is undertaken through rolling reporting and monthly meetings between the complaints officer and the Head of Housing and Health alongside wider, pan-service performance management meetings.
- 3.6 Going forward, data and details of compensation and GWG payment information (on a non-case specific basis) will be reported as part of meeting the wider transparency requirements of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. This will be achieved through inclusion in the annual MDH complaints reports produced under the HO Complaints Handling Code.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 Tenants and members of the Homes PDG were invited to comment on the draft policy between 1st September and 1st October 2024.
- 4.2 No queries or concerns were raised during the consultation.
- 4.3 Despite no response to the consultation from tenants, it is important that tenants are fully aware of the updated policy. To this end, should the policy be adopted, MDH will proactively signpost the policy on our webpages/Facebook pages and in the next tenant newsletter. Where relevant, particularly in relation to queries, service requests or complaints we will also ensure specific tenants or other stakeholders are also aware of the updated policy as required.

5 Safeguarding and Vulnerable Tenants

- 5.1 MDH recognises that there are some circumstances whereby a tenant's disability, language or cultural background may make it more difficult for them to understand or exercise their rights as set out in this policy and associated regulations. We tailor our service to support such tenants.
- 5.2 The provision of the discretionary compensation section allows the housing repairs service to consider the additional impact of disability, language barriers, cultural background or any other vulnerability factors.

6 Recommendation

- 6.1 In accordance with the above, the following recommendation is made:
- 6.2 That the PDG recommends that Cabinet adopt the updated MDH Tenant Compensation Policy and Equality Impact Assessment contained in Annexes A and B respectively.

Financial Implications

The financial implications will be contained within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and adequate budget provision in place back on trend and current levels of compensation payments.

Legal Implications

It will be necessary to ensure that the Tenant Compensation Policy addresses all the legal obligations the Council has as a Landlord under within the parameters of the Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994, the Housing Act 1985 and the Leasehold Reform, Housing and Urban Development Act 1993.

Risk Assessment

There are risks that without a policy compensation may not be awarded in a consistent and fair way and that tenants may not feel that they have been treated with fairness and respect.

The ombudsman expects local authorities to have a compensation policy which provides fair and proportionate redress to tenants (contract-holders) where there are shortcomings in the provision of services. The policy should reduce the risk of complaints and/or court action in relevant matters where the facts are not in dispute.

Successful implementation of this policy could help to reduce customer dissatisfaction, and upheld complaints, by empowering tenants to exercise their rights to claim compensation appropriately as service requests.

MDH has a service improvement programme to address common sources of claims and drive up the quality of service provided.

Impact on Climate Change

This Policy has no impact on Climate Change

Equalities Impact Assessment

Mid Devon Housing collects data on the diversity of tenants and endeavours to tailor services to meet the needs of all tenants. Our housing estates must be accessible to those with disabilities and we have in place a regular schedule of inspections to ensure that all safety issues are identified and rectified as soon as possible. Information provided by MDH is available in alternative formats, upon request, in order to ensure that all those living on our estates understand the rights and responsibilities of the Council as a landlord, and tenants and other residents, individually.

The Equalities Impact Assessment for this draft, updated policy specifically is attached to this report in Annex B.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The Tenant Compensation Policy will be key to managing our council homes and tenancies effectively whilst meeting broader regulatory requirements to redress tenants for loss and mistakes caused by the landlord. As such it supports the wider Homes priority within the current Corporate Plan

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 11.11.24

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 11.11.24

Chief Officer: Simon Newcombe

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

Date: 28 October 2024

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 01 November 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Simon Newcombe – Head of Housing and Health

Email: snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers: Current Tenant Compensation Policy: [MDH Tenant Compensation Policy \(middevon.gov.uk\)](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/tenant-compensation-policy)



Tenant Compensation Policy

This policy was produced in 2024 and is version 2.0

This policy was adopted by Cabinet on xxxx

Review Frequency: MDH will review this Policy every 5 years and as required to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues. However the Head of Housing and Health is given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Policy as required by legislative changes, formal guidance or local operational considerations

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Mid Devon Housing (MDH) aim is to provide an excellent service to its tenants at all times, however, we recognise that there will be occasions when our tenants may suffer some disadvantage, inconvenience or loss as a result of our actions or mistake and that in some instances, financial compensation or a goodwill gesture may be the most appropriate form of redress.
- 1.2 This policy applies to tenants or residents of MDH. It covers both discretionary compensation, which relates to loss, damage or inconvenience due to a service failure and statutory (obligatory) compensation.
- 1.3 Each case will be considered on its individual merits and discretion and common sense will be applied, while promoting consistency. MDH will take responsibility for any detriment or damage caused to an individual or their property and belongings by a third party (contractor) working on MDH's behalf.

2 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aims of the Tenant Compensation Policy are:
 - To ensure a clear, fair and transparent approach to compensation for all tenants and residents;
 - To ensure consistency when calculating compensation;
 - To provide guidance on how and when compensation can be claimed;
 - Record and pay compensation promptly;
 - Monitor compensation payments and spend.
- 2.2 The objective is to provide tenants and residents of MDH with clear guidelines on when compensation will be paid and what factors will be considered when calculating payments.

3 Regulatory Framework and Context

- 3.1 Under the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) requires that all registered providers must ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly.
- 3.2 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) regard councillors as responsible for overview that providers' businesses are managed effectively and that providers comply with all regulatory requirements.
- 3.3 Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 has impacted the regulatory framework for social housing and introduced a new proactive, consumer regulation regime focussed on meeting the needs of tenants. One aim of the legislation and regime was to ensure that providers of social housing, such as the Council treat is tenants with respect.

- 3.4 These new standards are there to ensure people feel safe and secure in their homes, can get problems fixed before they spiral out of control, and see exactly how well their landlord is performing giving tenants a stronger voice.
- 3.5 As part of the new consumer regulation regime the RSH introduced a series of 22 mandatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services. These measures include those applicable directly to building safety as well as those based on tenant perception surveys setting out tenant’s views on our performance.
- 3.6 The TSM’s associated with this Policy are:
- TP01 – Overall Satisfaction
 - TP08 - Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect
 - TP09 - Satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling of complaints

4 Related and Relevant Policies

- 4.1 MDH is governed by legislation and good practice relating to the payment of compensation. This is used to decide when and how much compensation will be payable. Compensation payable under legislation includes:
- Right to Repair –Housing Act 1985 (the “Housing Act”) and Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994 (the “Right to Repair Regulations”)
 - Right to Compensation for Improvements – -Housing Act and the Secure Tenants of Local Authorities (Compensation for Improvements) Regulations 1994 SI 1994/613
 - Home Loss and Disturbance payments – Land Compensation Act 1973 as amended
- 4.2 The following should be read in conjunction with this Policy:
- Corporate Complaints and Feedback Policy
 - MDH Repairs and Maintenance Policy
 - MDH Decant Policy

5 Compensation Considerations

- 5.1 MDH strive to provide excellent standards of service for our residents. We acknowledge that when these standards are not met, tenants can be inconvenienced or distressed, or have suffered a loss as a result of our action or inaction and that in some instances, compensation may be the most appropriate remedy.
- 5.2 Compensation is not automatic and will not apply where the service failure or mistake has not caused any inconvenience and has been easily and quickly remedied. The level of compensation should be reasonable, justifiable and proportionate to reflect value for money for all MDH tenants or residents.

5.3 Each case will be considered for compensation on an individual basis and take into account all relevant known circumstances and supporting evidence. All reports of loss or inconvenience will be investigated and where appropriate, compensation offered. Factors that should be taken into consideration when the level of compensation or goodwill gesture are calculated include:

- Costs that have been incurred by the resident that would not otherwise have been incurred including time and trouble, distress and inconvenience caused and out of pocket expenses;
- The level of stress or distress caused as a result of an action or inaction that has led to the claim of compensation. This will include the severity of the distress, the length of time involved and the number of people affected;
- The amount of inconvenience experienced by the tenants and how much effort was required by them to resolve the problem.

5.4 If the tenant has contributed to the failure in the service, when there have been problems gaining access for example, reserves the right to charge tenants for missed appointments.

5.5 Any compensation or goodwill gesture awarded must be appropriate and proportionate. To ensure consistency in the levels of compensation paid, the matrix in clause 8.19 sets out the maximum values that should be awarded. These amounts are based on the level of our responsibility and the impact on the resident. They are in line with guidance on compensation and redress, issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

6 Mandatory Compensation

6.1 MDH have a statutory duty to compensate tenants in the following cases:-

- Right to Repair;
- Tenant Improvements;
- Disturbance and Home Loss Payments;
- Right to buy.

The details of which are set out below.

Right to Repair Scheme

6.2 Right to repair scheme for council tenants

Tenants (secure and introductory) can use the right to repair scheme to get small repair jobs done quickly. Only repairs that cost less than £250 are covered by the scheme and only if they are specified defects. These are known as “qualifying repairs”. MDH can look at the repair to check it qualifies.

The tenants cannot use the right to repair scheme if MDH:

- Decides that fixing the problem would cost more than £250;
- Is not responsible for the repair.

Tenants also cannot use the scheme if they do not allow the MDH access to their home to inspect or fix the problem.

Tenants should report a repair to MDH as soon as they can. After the tenant reports the repair MDH will give to the tenant:

- information if the repair is covered under the scheme
- an explanation of the tenant's rights under the scheme
- contact details of the contractor who will do the repair (the contractor could be MDH itself)
- Information about the time and date to be home to let the contractor in

Repairs must be done within 1, 3 or 7 working days, depending on how urgent the problem is. The table below sets out the qualifying repairs and the prescribed period for the repairs to be completed

Qualifying Repairs:

Qualifying repairs (provided it costs less than £250 to repair)	Prescribed period (in working days)
Total loss of electric power	1
Partial loss of electric power	3
Unsafe power or lighting socket, or electrical fitting	1
Total loss of water supply	1
Partial loss of water supply	3
Total or partial loss of gas supply	1
Blocked flue to open fire or boiler	1
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 31 st October and 1 st May	1
Total or partial loss of space or water heating between 30 th April and 1 st November	3
Blocked or leaking foul drain, soil stack or (where there is no other working toilet in the house) toilet pan	1
Blocked sink, bath or basin	3
Tap which cannot be turned	3
Leaking from water or heating pipe, tank or cistern	1
Leaking roof	7

Qualifying repairs (provided it costs less than £250 to repair)	Prescribed period (in working days)
Insecure external window, door or lock	1
Loose or detached bannister or hand rail	3
Rotten timber flooring or stair tread	3
Door entry phone not working	7

If the repair works are not done in time the tenant can request in writing that the authority use a different contractor. So where MDH is the first contractor and fails to complete the works in time the tenant can require a different contractor to MDH to do the repair works

A new time limit (see the prescribe periods in the above table) starts after MDH receives the tenant's request for MDH to arrange a replacement contractor. There are prescribed rules as to when the new time limit starts- see regulations

Time limits can be suspended if the works cannot be done because of circumstances beyond MDH's control or the contactor's control

Tenants can claim compensation if the second contractor does not do the repair within the new time limit. Tenants can get £10 compensation with a further £2 a day for every extra day the repair is not fixed, up to a maximum of £50. If there are rent arrears, compensation is deducted from the arrears.

If the contractor does not turn up to do the work by the last day of the time limit the tenant should let MDH know. Arrangements will be made for another contractor to carry out the works

Tenant Improvements

6.3 Secure tenants may have the right to be compensated for improvements that they carry out to their property. The compensation is only paid for certain types of improvement and can only be claimed at the end of the tenancy

6.4 Qualifying improvements that may be eligible for compensation are:

- bath or shower;
- wash hand basin;
- toilet;
- kitchen sink;
- storage cupboards in bathroom or kitchen;
- kitchen work surfaces;
- central heating or water heating;
- thermostatic radiator valves;
- insulation of pipes, water tank or cylinder;
- loft or cavity wall insulation;
- double glazing, secondary glazing or other window replacement;

- draught proofing of external doors or windows; or
- re-wiring or the provision of power and lighting or other electrical fittings including smoke alarms, security measures (excluding burglar alarms).

6.5 Internal decoration does not qualify for compensation.

6.6 Prior permission from MDH must have been obtained for a 'qualifying' improvement, and it must be made clear at the time of requesting permission that it would qualify as an improvement. For example, a kitchen may be on the list as a 'qualifying improvement', however MDH reserves the right not to deem it an 'improvement' if the materials used were not compatible with Council standard materials, fixtures and fittings. It is important that the tenant seeks advice, prior to work commencing, as to whether MDH would class it as a 'qualifying improvement'. Tenants can claim for the cost of materials and labour costs, but not for appliances or their own labour. The amount payable can be up to £3000 though claims under £50 will not be considered.

6.7 Payments will be adjusted for undue wear and tear or if any defects to the improvement exist at the end of the tenancy. Compensation is worked out based on the notional life of the improvement, divided by the cost of the improvement, minus the number of years left.

$$C \times \left(1 - \frac{Y}{N} \right)$$

- C = Cost of Improvement
- N = Notional life of improvement
- Y = Number of years since completion

6.8 Compensation will not be paid to tenants who have exercised their Right to Buy or where the tenancy ends as a result of a Court Order for possession.

6.9 Any compensation will be paid at the end of the tenancy and will be offset against any sums owed to MDH.

6.10 Tenants can enquire about compensation at any point during their tenancy, but should apply for compensation at the same time as giving notice to end the tenancy. Tenants have 14 days from the end from the end of the tenancy to make a claim. The tenant will need to supply:

- Name and Address;
- Details of improvements;
- Evidence of permission obtained;
- Evidence of cost of improvements; and
- The dates the improvement works started and finished.

- 6.11 For more information on compensation for tenant improvements, please visit:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/landlord-and-tenant-law-compensation-for-tenants-improvements

Disturbance and Home Loss Payments

- 6.12 A home loss payment may be available where a person is displaced from a MDH Dwelling in consequence of:
- a) The compulsory acquisition of an interest in the dwelling;
 - b) The carrying out of any improvement to the dwelling or of redevelopment on the land;
 - c) The making of an order for possession ground 10 or 10A in Part II of Schedule 2 to the Housing Act 1985.

A home loss payment is limited to those persons with a specific qualifying status (as set out in section 29 of the Land Compensation Act 1973) such as freeholders, leaseholders, tenants (including secure and introductory tenants and certain licensees. A spouse or a civil partner with home rights under the Family Law Act 1996 may also claim.

The person claiming must have been in occupation of the dwelling for a minimum of one year ending with the date of the displacement.

The homeless payment must be claimed by the applicant and must be claimed within six years of displacement.

The amount is set by the Land Compensation Act 1973. At the date of writing this policy the amount is in the case of an owner, 10 percent of the market value of the interest to a maximum of payment of £63,000, in all other case the amount is £6,300

- 6.13 Decanting is the term used to explain the process when residents are required to move from their homes due to works being carried out that cannot be carried out whilst they are in residence. This includes when a resident has to move because their home is due to be demolished or disposed of, and when extensive structural or intrusive works are required. Please see our Decants policy for more details.
- 6.14 A disturbance payment is also available in the same circumstances as a home loss payment. A disturbance payment is an additional amount representing “to compensate a residential occupier for reasonable expenses in moving from the house or land” This includes removal costs and the costs of setting up in a new home. There is no maximum specified for the payment and each case must be judged on its facts.

Right to Buy

6.15 Tenants who have made an application to buy their home are entitled to claim compensation if the sale has not completed within our statutory timescales, as a result of our inaction.

6.16 Tenants will need to:

- Issue a Notice of Delay to officers giving one month in which to resolve the delay; and
- Issue a further Operative Notice of Delay if the delay is not resolved within a month.

6.17 Financial compensation - We will deduct the sum of the weekly rent amount x the delay period. For instance, if the rent is £78.60 a week and there has been an 8-week delay, we would take £78.60 x 8 =£628.80 off the final purchase price.

7 Discretionary Payments

7.1 Examples of where discretionary payments may be applicable could include:

- Poor complaint handling;
- Delays in providing a service e.g. in undertaking a repair;
- Failure to provide a service that has been charged for;
- Temporary loss of amenity;
- Failure to meet target response times;
- Loss of use of part of the property;
- Failure to follow policy and procedure; or
- Unreasonable time taken to resolve a situation.

7.2 We know how important it is to tenants that we help them to maintain their home and fix repairs as quickly as possible. When considering paying discretionary compensation, due to our action or inaction, we will consider:

- Distress, dissatisfaction or inconvenience caused to the tenant by our action; and
- Financial loss suffered by the tenant due to our actions.

- 7.3 Each claim for compensation is on an individual basis, taking into account all relevant circumstances, where documents and evidence have been supplied. If evidence has been requested and is not supplied, claims may not be considered.
- 7.4 Financial compensation may be appropriate for:
- Loss of amenities or rooms; or
 - If we are unable to complete a responsive repair within the set response times, in operation at the time, the tenant may have to cope without the use of amenities and/or rooms. In such cases, compensation may be awarded and will be calculated on the amount of rooms which are unable to be used and the amount of rent payable.
- 7.5 In some circumstances it may not be possible to carry out a repair to heating systems during the first visit due to the availability of spare parts, or the system is beyond economical repair. In such circumstances we will provide tenants with temporary heaters. MDH will consider reimbursing tenants for any out of pocket expenses as a result of having to use temporary heaters whilst their heating issue is being resolved. We may request proof of these out of pocket expenses. Where it is difficult to demonstrate additional energy usage as a result of use of temporary heating, and in many cases there is not an additional cost, but there is a reduction in thermal comfort and convenience, we may look to make a discretionary offer.
- 7.6 Tenants can claim compensation for financial loss if a pre-arranged appointment that has been confirmed is broken by a member of staff or one of our contractors. On such occasions we will pay a fixed amount of compensation up to £20, except in exceptional circumstances which are beyond the control of the Council, its officers, or appointed contractors.
- 7.7 We may ask tenants to provide evidence if they have suffered a financial loss including utility bills or receipts for unexpected expenses. We will use our discretion for small amounts such as having a meal out as the tenant had no access to electrics to cook a meal.
- 7.8 Tenants will not be eligible for compensation if the tenant was advised that the appointment would not be kept 24 hours before the appointment and an alternative appointment was arranged within a mutually acceptable timeframe.
- 7.9 Tenants are advised to have home contents insurance however tenants can claim compensation for accidental damage to their personal belongings caused by our contractors or staff. Tenants may be eligible for compensation if they do not have insurance but they will be required to provide us with photographic evidence and proof of the value of the loss.
- 7.10 We may, at our discretion, issue compensation to tenants as a result of decorations, furniture or personal items being damaged due to neglect by a member of staff or a contractor acting on our behalf, where it can be reasonably proven.

- 7.11 We may decide that through our actions or inaction, we have caused a tenant to experience distress, upset or inconvenience and as such may look to compensate them for this. We do not compensate for loss of earnings, but may consider, for example, that if a tenant had to take time off work, that this was an inconvenience. We may make a payment due to a service failure or missed appointment but this is dependent on individual circumstances.
- 7.12 If a good will gesture is offered managers should aim to tailor it to the individual and base each offer on the particular circumstances of the case.
- 7.13 We reserve the right to choose, sometimes even without acceptance of fault, to offer a gesture of goodwill. This can take the form of a physical token or financial gesture. Such gestures of goodwill will be considered on a case by case basis, but should not normally constitute more than a value of £250. However, there may be occasions when this amount may be exceeded but this will be at the discretion of MDH.
- 7.14 Our tenant may have had to go to extensive time and trouble to persuade us to revise our decision or recognise their complaint. In this instance it is appropriate to pay compensation in recognition of our inaction. If we have failed to follow our processes within the permitted timescales, tenants may be entitled to compensation or a goodwill gesture.
- 7.15 The Complaints Officer may authorise compensation, up to a maximum of £250. Higher payments must be authorised by a manager.
- 7.16 Compensation payments for delay and distress will be made based on the level of MDH's responsibility for the loss or inconvenience and the impact on the resident.
- 7.17 On occasions, MDH has the right to use discretion when awarding an amount, other than that stated in the matrix.
- 7.18 Discretionary payments include:
- Unacceptable delays in providing service which have resulted in serious distress or inconvenience to the tenant;
 - Unacceptable responses to uphold or partially uphold complaints which have caused distress, dissatisfaction or inconvenience;
 - Where a tenant has incurred additional costs as a result of a failure in service.
- 7.19 MDH may offer an apology in place of financial compensation. MDH may offer a lower financial payment dependant on the individual's circumstances and how they have been impacted. The matrix sets out the *maximum* payment that can be made:

	Impact on Tenant			
Level of Mid Devon Housing Responsibility	No Impact	Low Impact	Medium Impact	High Impact
None	£0	£0	£0	£0
Partial	£0	£25	£175	£250
Full	£10	£50	£250	£500

Low impact: The complaint has been upheld but there has not been significant inconvenience or distress caused. The impact has been no more than a reasonable person could be expected to accept and the compensation is a token in acknowledgement of MDH’s responsibility.

Medium impact: Inconvenience and/or distress has clearly been caused as a result of a failure in service. A repeated failure of a low impact event could result in the impact being increased to a medium impact.

High impact: A serious failure in service has taken place. This could either be due to the severity of the event or a persistent failure has occurred over a prolonged period of time or an unacceptable number of attempts to resolve the complaint have failed.

Goodwill gestures: Any member of staff is able to offer a goodwill gesture to residents who have received a poor service or have suffered inconvenience. Payments should take into account the level of stress, anxiety, frustration, uncertainty and inconvenience caused. This will include the severity, length of time, number of people affected and their individual circumstances. If a tenant wishes to accept a compensation offer, they should do so within 30 days of the offer, unless otherwise agreed. After this time, it will be up to the investigating officer’s discretion whether the offer is still available or a further review is required.

7.20 Accepting an offer of compensation at a stage 2 complaint does not prevent the Tenant escalating their complaint to the Housing Ombudsman if they feel that complaint has not been resolved to their satisfaction.

8 Situations where compensation will not be considered

8.1 There are certain circumstances where compensation will not be considered and these include:

- Claims for personal injury;
- Claims for damage caused by circumstances beyond MDH's control (e.g. through storm or flooding); or
- Problems caused by a third party not working for MDH.

8.2 Compensation would not normally be paid where any damage is covered under contents insurance. However where damage has been caused directly as a result of the actions or omissions of MDH or our contractors, consideration will be given reimbursement without the need for the tenant to make a claim at further inconvenience and cost to themselves where the facts are not in dispute.

8.3 MDH will not consider a claim of compensation where:

- The loss or damage was caused by a tenant, household member or visitor and includes failure to report a repair promptly or keep an appointment;
- The fault was unforeseeable and/or caused by a 3rd party or MDH had no control over it, such as a water leak from a neighbouring property;
- Possessions are lost, stolen or damaged through no fault of MDH;
- Items which have been unavoidably damaged by improvement works, such as installation of central heating which has unavoidably left holes in the flooring to accommodate new pipework;
- Service failure or damage is the result of extreme or unforeseen conditions such as weather; or
- Loss of the supply of gas, electricity or water which is outside of MDH's control.

8.4 Financial compensation would not be offered if the complainant had done any of the following:

- Failed to provide us with any information requested;
- Caused an unreasonable delay in any part of the process;
- Been abusive or threatening to our staff; or
- Rejected a transfer offer which we consider reasonable.

9 Payments

9.1 Claims for compensation or a goodwill gesture, due to service failures can be made via a service request before it reaches a stage one complaint. The relevant Office or Service Lead will decide on a case by case basis the most appropriate way to pay compensation. If the tenant owes money to MDH, the compensation will be credited directly to their rent account.

- 9.2 MDH may not use compensation to pay a debt if the compensation is meant to be used for a specific purpose, e.g. to replace a damaged item. However, if part of the compensation awarded is for distress or inconvenience, MDH may use this part to offset any debt.
- 9.3 If a tenant feels that the compensation payment offered has not been considered in line with this policy, they have the right to use MDH's Complaints Procedure.
- 9.4 If a tenant accepts an offer of compensation, they must notify us within 30 working days of the offer. If the tenant fails to notify us of their acceptance, we reserve the right to withdraw our offer of compensation.

10 Appeals/Disputes

- 10.1 Tenants have a right to dispute or appeal the compensation decision if they feel that MDH has not met its legal or statutory requirements, or if there is evidence that there has been a service failure.
- 10.2 Disputes can be dealt with informally by phone, email or letter, should a Tenant wish to discuss this with their Neighbourhood Officer or a Repairs Officer. Disputes can be formally dealt with as a service request. First time disputes or appeals cannot be dealt with as formal complaints in the first instance.

11 Complaints

- 11.1 We try to get things right the first time and when we do, we would love people to let us know. It's great for us to receive positive comments or feedback, so if people wish to complement our staff for doing a great job, we would love to hear from them.
- 11.2 If things do go wrong the Council is committed to:
- Dealing with complaints and comments quickly and effectively; and
 - Using complaints, comments and compliments to review and improve our services
- 11.3 When tenants contact us to tell us they are dissatisfied with the service we have provided, we will offer them the choice to have an informal conversation to see if we can put things right quickly, without the need for a formal investigation.
- 11.4 The Housing Ombudsman Service advise that a complaint must be defined as:

'an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents'.

- 11.5 Where a tenant considers that the council has given a poor service or has got something wrong, they may tell a member of staff in the first instance. This does not need to be treated as a formal complaint (unless the complainant asks us to do so) and may be resolved 'there and then' by way of an apology or plan of action. Any comments provided will be used to take appropriate action, or give information.
- 11.6 If a tenant does not want to do this or is unhappy with the response, they may make a formal complaint, which can escalate from stage 1 or stage 2 if they are still not satisfied with the response. Having been through stages 1 and 2 and they are still not satisfied, the tenant may contact the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- 11.7 MDH's complaints procedure is detailed on Mid Devon District Council website: [Feedback and Complaints](#)

12 Equality Impact Assessments

- 12.1 MDH complete an equality impact assessment each time we develop or review a policy, procedure or service. The assessment is to help us make sure our decision making is fair and does not present any barriers or disadvantage to customers from any protected group (including disability) under the Equality Act 2010.

Equality Impact Assessment

Purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment process:

The Equality Act (2010) introduced the [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) requiring public bodies to give due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

Consideration must be given to the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act (2010). Assessments should consider relevant evidence relating to persons with protected characteristics in relation to assessments of potential impact.

The purpose of an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is to ensure that policies, functions, plans or decisions (hereafter referred to as 'policy/ decision') do not create unnecessary barriers for people protected under the Act. Where negative impacts are identified these should be eliminated or minimised, and opportunities for positive impact should be maximised. An EIA is not required for a decision in relation to an individual.

Screening is a short exercise to determine whether a policy/ decision is relevant to equalities, and if so, whether a full EIA should be conducted.

Section 1: Equality Impact Assessment Screening

Title and description of the policy/ decision:	MDH Tenant Compensation Policy		
Job title of the person(s) undertaking the assessment:	Policy Officer		
Council service:	Mid Devon Housing		
Date of assessment:			
What are the aims, purposes, objectives and proposed outcomes of the policy/ decision?			
<p>To meet our requirements as a landlord to comply with the Regulator's framework for social housing and in particular, the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.</p> <p>This policy applies to tenants or residents of MDH. It covers both discretionary compensation, which relates to loss, damage or inconvenience due to a service failure and statutory (obligatory) compensation.</p>			
Who may be affected by the policy/ decision?	All MDH Tenants		
How have stakeholders been involved in the development of the policy/ decision? E.g. a consultation exercise	Tenants and Members of the Homes PDG were consulted between 01 September & 01 October 2024		
Will there be scope for prompt, independent reviews and appeals against decisions arising from the policy/ decision?	Yes		
To which part(s) of the Public Sector Equality Duties is the policy/ decision relevant:			
	Yes	No	Details
1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Advance equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Foster good relations between different groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Which of the protected characteristics is the policy/ decision relevant to?

Tick and briefly describe any likely equalities impact (positive, negative, or neutral)

Characteristic	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Comments
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Older people are more likely to suffer health problems such as dementia, hearing and sight loss and therefore are more likely to have difficulties in claiming compensation.

Characteristic	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Comments
				To mitigate this, officers will provide assistance to tenants to do this and enquiries/applications from relatives/carers/support workers of tenants can be made.
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	A tenant with disabilities may have more difficulties in conveying their reasons for claiming compensation. To mitigate this, as above, officers can provide assistance for anyone having difficulties. Enquiries and applications on behalf of a tenant can be considered, with their consent.
Religion or Belief	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Race	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Some tenants of a different nationality do not speak, read or write English as their first language and may face difficulties in claiming compensation. To mitigate this, enquiries and applications can be made by relatives/advocates for tenants and officers will use translation and interpretation services, where needed
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Pregnancy/ maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Marriage and Civil partnership*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

*Applies only to Employment and the duty to give regard to the elimination of discrimination.

Decision by Head of Service to recommend this policy/ decision for an Equality Impact Assessment?

Yes

If the answer is “Yes”, please continue to the Section 2 and complete the Equality Impact Assessment. If the answer is “No”, please give a brief reason here.



EIA Screening Complete

Section 2: Equality Impact Assessment

Evidence and Consultation

What existing sources of information have you gathered to help identify how people covered by the protected characteristics may be affected by this policy/ decision? E.g. consultations, national or local data and/or research, complaints or customer feedback. Please identify any gaps in the available information that might make it difficult to form an opinion about the effect of the policy on different groups.

The policy applies to tenants of MDH all regardless of age. MDH will utilise a variety of methods to engage with tenants of all ages.

The policy provides a fair and transparent approach to the application of compensation payments to tenants. It is acknowledged that those with physical or learning disabilities may require additional support to be actively involved and therefore MDH will take steps to ensure we are inclusive and consider potential barriers. We recognise that there will be occasions when our tenants may suffer some disadvantage, inconvenience or loss as a result of our actions or mistake and that in some instances, financial compensation or a goodwill gesture may be the most appropriate form of redress.

Tenants were invited to comment on the Tenant Compensation policy between 01 September & 01 December 2024

Please complete this table for all the Protected Characteristics. If you have identified any negative impacts you will need to consider how these can be justified or where possible mitigated either to reduce or remove them. (Please add rows where needed)

Potential Impacts/ Issues Identified/ Opportunities identified	Mitigation required (action) or Justification	Lead Officer and target completion date	What is the expected outcome from the action?
Sex			
None			
Age			
None			
Disability			
None			
Religion or Belief			
None			
Race			
None			
Sexual Orientation			
None			

Gender Reassignment			
None			
Pregnancy/ maternity			
None			
Marriage and Civil partnership (Applies only to Employment and the duty to give regard to the elimination of discrimination)			
N/A			

Please provide details of arrangements to monitor and review the policy/ decision and any mitigating actions or actions to promote equality:

MDH will review this Policy every 5 years and as required to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues. However the Head of Housing and Health is given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Policy as required by legislative changes, formal guidance or local operational considerations

Please state where the EIA will be published (e.g. on the Mid Devon District Council website):

Mid Devon Housing Website

=====

Equality Impact Assessment Sign off

For completion by Head of Service

Are you prepared to agree and sign off the EIA?

Yes **No**

If "No", provide details of why and next steps:

Name: Simon Newcombe

Job Title: Head of Housing and Health

Date: 23 October 2024



Report for: Homes Policy Development Group

Date of Meeting: 19th November 2024

Subject: **MID DEVON HOUSING (MDH) SERVICE STANDARDS UPDATE**

Cabinet Member: Cllr Simon Clist Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader

Responsible Officer: Simon Newcombe – Head of Housing and Health

Exempt: None

which are Exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Wards Affected: All

Enclosures: Annex A – MDH Service Standards 2024 -2029

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

Under the new statutory Transparency, Influence and Accountability consumer standard published by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), registered providers are required to communicate with tenants and provide information so that tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account. This includes making tenants aware of the services and standards of service they provide, and the different ways in which tenants can contact their landlord.

The previous service standards were adopted in 2016 and are due for review. This review has been further prioritised following recent publication of the new consumer standard and the requirement to ensure our published standards are consistent with this.

Recommendation:

- 1. That the PDG agree and note the updated MDH Service Standards 2024-2029 as attached in Annex A**

Section 2 – Report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The current Service Standards were published in 2016 and since then a new regulatory regime has been introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing. This has included a revised set of Consumer Standards launched in April 2024 that all registered providers must adhere to.
- 1.2 Under the new Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard specific reference is made to providing tenants with our service standards and there is a need to ensure alignment with this standard going forward.

2 Review of the Service Standards

- 2.1 All our standards are already contained within our published policies and are readily available to tenants.
- 2.2 The Service Standards collate all the published service standards into a single comprehensive document. It provides a framework for staff which sets out the standard of service they are expected to deliver as well as informing tenants and leaseholders of the service they can expect to receive in a straightforward and more accessible way.

3 Proposed changes

- 3.1 The service standards have been revised to reflect the consumer standard requirements of the regulator. Whilst transparency consumer standard sets out requirements for providing clear information to our tenants, all the consumer standards are applicable and our service provision (and therefore the standards we follow) must meet the overall requirements across this consumer regulation framework. As such, the service standards document is divided into four areas to mirror the each consumer standard: Tenancy Standard, Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, Neighbourhood & Community Standard and Safety and Quality Standard.
- 3.2 The layout of the existing service standards has also been adapted to make the document more user friendly including new sections that do not feature in the existing standards document. Some service standards have remained unchanged whilst others have been re-worded to ensure the narrative of the updated document fully aligns with the expected outcomes of the most relevant consumer standard reference document as is also reflected in a number of recent adopted MDH policy updates.
- 3.3 The service standards have been further updated to provide clear information to staff, tenants and other stakeholders about what they can expect from MDH in terms of the services we provide. This also brings the overarching summary

of our service standards in line with new wording and clarity around responsibilities set out in recent MDH policy updates.

- 3.4 The revised document therefore provides a current, clear point of reference which can be used by tenants when involved in the scrutiny of performance.
- 3.5 It also provides clear guidance on the service that tenants can expect if they wish to report a complaint of service failure.
- 3.6 The service standards have previously been scheduled to be reviewed every two years. In future, these will be reviewed in conjunction with tenants to reflect any legislative requirements and/or other guidance or good practice. It is expected that these will be reviewed as minimum every five years in future to align, where possible, with related policy reviews and updates. For this reason it is proposed to publish the document as the 'MDH Service Standards 2024 - 2029'.

4 Consultation and adoption

- 4.1 Tenants were invited to comment on the draft Service Standards between 1st October and 31st October 2024
- 4.2 Members of the Homes PDG were invited to comment on the draft Service Standards between 1st and 31st October 2024
- 4.3 No comments or concerns were raised by tenants or members.
- 4.4 Despite a lack of response to consultation, it is important that tenants are fully aware of the updated Service Standards. To this end, should the standards be adopted, MDH will proactively signpost the Service Standards on our webpages/Facebook pages and in the next tenant newsletter. Where relevant, particularly in relation to queries, service requests or complaints we will also ensure specific tenants or other stakeholders are also aware of the updated standards as required.

5 Safeguarding and vulnerable tenants

- 5.1 MDH records details of all vulnerable tenants to enable us to support their needs. This includes making reasonable adjustments in dealing with vulnerable tenants so that they are comfortable when we interact with them and are not excluded from accessing our services.
- 5.2 The Service Standards make specific reference to the ways in which we will deal with vulnerable tenants and describes the way in which tenants will be treated.

6 Recommendation

- 6.1 As a summary of existing standards, updated by separate policy reviews this document does not put forward new policy or performance standards and therefore does not require formal Cabinet or Full Council adoption. It is a public facing summary document that seeks to develop and improve the transparency

of our housing service delivery in line the new regulatory regime. Consequently, the recommendation is for the PDG to agree and note only.

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

6.3 That the PDG agree and note the updated MDH Service Standards 2024-2029 as attached in Annex A.

Financial Implications

This report on its own does not give rise to any financial implication but implementation of the activities set out in the policy will have cost implications.

However, these will either be met from existing resources and funding or require separate business cases and appropriate approval to progress.

The Council's HRA revenue and capital budget and medium-term financial plan for 2023-28 supports the activities required to maintain the Council's housing stock and manage our tenancies.

Legal Implications

As a registered provider (RP) of social housing, the Council is obliged to take account of the standards contained within the revised regulatory framework which is administered by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). This states that RPs should communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants and leaseholders can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account.

Risk Assessment

Failure to have Service Standards in place would put the Council in breach of the regulatory framework. Failure to have adequate arrangements in place for tenants and leaseholders to be made aware of the Standards they can expect from us could result in the Council failing to meet its statutory and contractual obligations.

Impact on Climate Change

This report leads to no impact on climate change

Equalities Impact Assessment

Mid Devon Housing collects data on the diversity of tenants and endeavours to tailor services to meet the needs of all tenants. Our housing estates must be accessible to those with disabilities and we have in place a regular schedule of inspections to ensure that all safety issues are identified and rectified as soon as possible. Information provided by MDH is available in alternative formats, upon request, in order to ensure that all those living on our estates understand the rights and responsibilities of the Council as a landlord, and tenants and other residents, individually.

This MDH Service Standard is not a new policy. It is a summary of standards published in a number of existing, adopted MDH policies which have been separately subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

We will work closely with our tenants to ensure they feel safe, secure and happy in their homes. This aligns with the overarching Homes priority within the Corporate Plan 2024-2028.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett
Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151
Date: 11.11.24

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leiburne
Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 11.11.24

Chief Officer: Simon Newcombe
Agreed by or on behalf of the Chief Executive/Corporate Director
Date: 31 October 2024

Performance and risk: Steve Carr
Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager
Date: 01 November 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Simon Newcombe – Head of Housing and Health
Email: snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk
Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers:

Current service standards:
[our-service-standards-august-2016.pdf \(middevon.gov.uk\)](#)

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Service Standards 2024 -2029

These Standards were produced in 2024 and is version 3.00

These document was endorsed by the Homes Policy Development Group in November 2024. Each policy referenced within this document has been separately adopted by Cabinet, information for which is held on each policy document.

Review Frequency: MDH will review these Standards every 5 years and as required to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues. However the Head of Housing and Health is given delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Standards as required by legislative changes, formal guidance or local operational considerations.

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Introduction

Welcome to Mid Devon Housing (MDH) Service Standards. Our Service Standards cover all aspects of our housing service and inform you of what you can expect from us as a tenant or leaseholder.

Our Service Standards are divided into four areas:-

- Safety and Quality Standard
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
- Tenancy Standard

We will review our Service Standards, in conjunction with our tenants, every five years. We will inform you how we have performed over the course of a year in our Annual Report.

As part of the new consumer regulation regime the Regulator of Social Housing introduced a series of 22 mandatory Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) creating a new system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services. These measures include those applicable directly to building safety as well as those based on tenant perception surveys setting out tenants' views on our performance.

We will publish your responses regarding TSMs annually.

We are happy to receive feedback from you about our Service. If you feel we have not met our obligations, or if you want to make a complaint or compliment about our Service, please let us know. There are a variety of ways to make contact with us which include:

- Telephone: 01884 255255;
- Online: www.middevon.gov.uk;
- Email: customerservices@middevon.gov.uk or htenancy@middevon.gov.uk;
- Visit: Phoenix House, Phoenix Lane, Tiverton, Devon EX16 6PP;
- Post: send us a letter to the above address; or
- Completing a "Have Your Say" form which can be obtained from the Council office's;
- Via your MyMidDevon account;
- Via the Council's social media pages.

Safety and Quality Standard

We will provide safe and good quality homes and landlord services to tenants.

Homes Safety

MDH has set out how we manage the safety of our homes and fulfil all the statutory duties associated with safety that are required of us in relation to:

- Gas Safety Checks;
- Electrical Safety Checks;
- Fire Risks in Communal Areas and Flats;
- Asbestos Management;
- Water Safety Checks;
- Lift Safety Checks; and
- Solid Fuel Appliances.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Damp and Mould

MDH wants to take every reasonable action to identify, remedy and provide advice on damp and mould in Council homes in order to ensure a safe, healthy and comfortable environment for our residents, as well as to protect the fabric of our buildings.

Our approach to delivering a fit for purpose damp and mould service is to:-

- Provide clarity on the ways in which tenants can report such issues;
- Provide staff with the ability to understand what is going on by giving them tools to aid diagnosis;
- Ensure that tenants are treated in a fair and consistent way;
- Comply with statutory, regulatory, legislative and contractual requirements and good practice;
- Focus on working in partnership with tenants ensuring that a safe and healthy internal environment is possible;
- Allow MDH to undertake effective investigations and implement all reasonable remedial repair solutions and improvements to make eradication of damp and mould possible;
- Ensure that tenants have access to and/or are provided with comprehensive advice and guidance on managing and controlling damp, mould and condensation;
- Maximise the available budgets and ensure that they are used effectively and efficiently to deal with damp, mould and condensation problems;
- Ensure that the fabric of our property is protected from deterioration and damage resulting from damp, mould and condensation; and
- Identify where financial hardship may be a factor in damp or mould, in order to be able to signpost tenants to the right financial or tenancy support.

Recharges

MDH wants to take fair but firm action to ensure that all debts relating to rechargeable repairs are collected to cover MDH costs.

Our approach to managing recharges and explaining:-

- Under what circumstances we recharge tenants;
- When we would decide not to recharge a tenant; and
- How to recover overdue chargeable repairs.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Void Management

MDH will ensure that properties which become void are re-let as quickly and efficiently as possible, with due regard to the needs and requirements of outgoing and incoming tenants and the need to maintain our properties to the agreed, safe lettings standard whilst retaining a sustainable stock and Housing Revenue Account.

We will do this by:-

- Ensuring compliance with our regulatory framework and that our properties are safe;
- Ensuring that properties are re-let to an appropriate standard;
- Balancing the need to ensure maximum occupancy of homes and minimum void re-let times with the needs of tenants;
- Ensuring our void periods are used as part of an overall asset management approach that is as efficient as possible to deliver works required as cost-effectively as possible; and
- Enabling new Council homes to be built in line with our overarching Housing Strategy.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Aids and Adaptations

Our approach to providing aids and adaptations for tenants, or eligible household members, who have a disability or are suffering from long term ill health, is to help them remain and live independently in the home and is designed to make best use of the housing stock. Our policy on this is available to read on our webpages or upon request. It is recognised that, in some instances, the existing accommodation may no longer be suitable to support the needs of the household and alternative accommodation may need to be provided.

In addressing the identified and assessed needs of our tenants, or eligible household members, we aim to ensure that we comply with the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Housing Act 1985.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Improvements to Council Properties

Our approach to responding to requests from tenants, leaseholders or freeholders for permission to carry out alterations or improvements to their property is available to read on our webpages or upon request. Any improvements made must be fully funded at the expense of the household and we will take a robust approach towards dealing with unauthorised alterations or improvements which have been carried out and identified.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Repairs and Maintenance

MDH recognises that the efficient and effective repair and maintenance of its housing properties is an important service to tenants and leaseholders and an essential part of a much wider asset management function.

The framework enabling the delivery of an effective maintenance service which fulfils our statutory obligations, protects council assets, and offers value for money is available to read on our webpages, or upon request.

We will respond to repair problems in an efficient and helpful way. Most repairs are carried out by our own repair operatives but we sometimes use specialist contractors. If this happens we will tell you the name of the contractor.

Our Office staff will:

- Answer calls promptly; and
- Be polite, honest and helpful.

Anyone working in tenant's homes will follow certain rules of behaviour:

- Treat you and your household with respect and always behave in a professional way;
- Consider any tenant vulnerabilities and make reasonable adjustments if required;
- Introduce themselves and show photo identification before entering;
- Explain what they are going to do and discuss how this will affect you or your household;
- Protect belonging from damage, dust and paint;
- Make sure materials and tools do not cause a danger to anyone;
- Keep you informed about how the work is progressing;
- Clear rubbish from the home at the end of each working day;
- Make sure electricity, gas and water are connected at the end of the day; and
- Be dressed appropriately for the type of work they do.

We will carry out regular checks to make sure we provide a good standard of service by selecting a number of completed repairs on a random basis. We will also contact tenants by telephone to find out what they thought about our service. Our inspectors check twenty percent of all jobs for the standard of workmanship either by telephoning the tenant or visiting the home to look at the repair.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section on the Council's [website](#) or upon request.

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

We will be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account. We will work with you to shape our services and monitor our work.

Our complaints process will resolve issues promptly, politely and fairly and we will provide you with the information required so that you can easily make a complaint.

Service Delivery

We will:

- Be committed to the principles of openness and transparency and for this reason we will ensure that our policies are well publicised;
- Provide services in line with current policy, regulatory and legislative requirements;
- Ensure that you are made aware if there are any operational matters which impact upon our ability to operate our policies and that this information is given to tenants and stakeholders;
- Carry out service reviews to ensure that our services continue to be efficient and effective;
- Publish and have readily available a copy of our Service Standards so you know the standard of service to expect from us;
- Publish our performance in our Annual Report and on the Council's website;
- Listen to your feedback to improve services; and
- Review our policies in accordance with legislative and regulatory changes and good practice.

Customer Service

We will:

- Provide a range of different contact methods, you can call into our offices, phone, email or write to us, or use online services;
- Provide a range of different ways you can communicate with us;
- Foster good relations with people when providing services to eliminate discrimination and to promote equal opportunities;
- Ensure that our staff are polite, friendly, helpful and listen to your enquiry;
- Treat you with fairness and respect;
- Respond to the diverse needs of our tenants, adapting our approach if reasonable to do so;
- Ensure that publications are available in standard and alternative formats;
- Ensure that our offices comply with legislative requirements for disabled access;
- Provide telephone interpretation services and arrange interpreters on request, including sign language;
- Train staff in diversity and safeguarding issues;
- Refer you to other agencies when we cannot assist or if it will be beneficial to you;
- Provide a duty officer to deal with your query if the member of staff you wish to speak with is absent from their desk; and
- Introduce ourselves and wear an identification badge when we greet or visit you.

Tenant Involvement

There are a number of ways you can get involved with MDH at a level that suits you. This is available to read in the MDH [Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#) section on the Council's website or upon request. We will provide you with key information on how we will consult with you and use your views to influence the way MDH delivers its services.

MDH will ensure that:-

- You have access to information about housing policies and related services;
- You will be consulted on issues that affect your home;
- You will be encouraged to participate in decisions that affect the services you receive;
- We regularly review how well tenant participation is working;
- We will give all residents the opportunity to get involved at a level that suits them and engage in ways that are accessible;
- We promote good practice and innovative ideas for encouraging and sustaining tenant involvement;
- We provide residents with the option to comment on policy, service improvements and any proposals that may affect them;
- We support our residents to meet their obligations and develop their activities;
- We make training and resources available;
- We provide an expenses scheme to cover reasonable costs arising from getting involved with the work of MDH;
- We offer you a range of opportunities to be involved in issues that interest you; and
- You have the same opportunities as everyone else if you want to be involved.

We are aware that there are groups of residents that are often under-represented in tenant participation. We will look to develop different ways to involve residents so that groups of people

are not excluded. We will do this by raising awareness of involvement opportunities through our media platforms such as Facebook, Let's Talk Mid Devon, newsletters and our website. We will also discuss tenant involvement during our sign-up process for new tenants.

Complaints

We will:

- Have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly;
- Publish clear guidelines on how to report a complaint, the procedure followed, timescales and what you can do if you are still unhappy with the outcome of a complaint;
- Provide you with information on how we have used complaints to improve our services;
- Publish information about complaints each year, including the number, nature and outcome of the complaints;
- Learn lessons from your complaint;
- Include details of how to contact either the Housing Ombudsman Service or Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman in our response to a complaint;
- Monitor, evaluate and report complaints to the relevant working groups on a regular basis; and
- Annually self-assess against the Housing Ombudsman Service Complaint Handling Code.

For stage 1 complaints we will:-

- Acknowledge the complaint within 5 working days of the complaint being received;
- Provide details of who will be investigating your complaint and when you can expect a response;
- Investigate the complaint and provide a response within 10 working days of the complaint being logged;
- If for any reason your complaint is going to take longer, keep you up to date on our progress and give you a clear timeframe for when a response will be provided;
- Make a decision on the evidence obtained;
- Communicate the outcome of the investigation; and
- Take action to put things right where they have gone wrong.

For stage 2 complaints we will:-

- Acknowledge your escalation to stage 2 within 5 working days of being received;
- Establish whether the stage 1 investigation was adequately thorough and impartial;
- Establish, if any fault was found, whether things have been put right;
- Provide details of who will be investigating your complaint and when you can expect a response;
- Investigate the complaint and provide a response within 10 working days of the complaint being logged; and
- If for any reason your complaint is going to take longer, keep you up to date on our progress and give you a clear timeframe for when a response will be provided.

Vulnerable Tenants

MDH aims to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to access and benefit from our service. MDH realises that for some service users who may be vulnerable, barriers can exist which may prevent participation.

MDH is committed to making sure our services can be easily accessed by tenants with complex and/or additional needs.

At MDH, one of our objectives is to ensure that our vulnerable tenants receive the services and assistance they require to sustain their tenancy. To achieve this, we will:-

- Identify a tenant who may have a vulnerability and/or support need;
- Record any vulnerabilities on the housing management system;
- Use all available information to identify if a tenant is vulnerable;
- Take account of known vulnerability factors in the provision of services and in decisions around tenancy management and enforcement;
- Assist vulnerable tenants in accessing additional services that they may need;
- Record any known representatives who act as a 'delegated authority' or with a power of attorney or other care givers who may act on the tenants' behalf;
- Consider any additional needs due to the vulnerability and where appropriate vary our service delivery to ensure vulnerable residents still receive the same level of service;
- Make appropriate referrals to tenancy sustainment services, such as CHAT (Churches Housing Action Team) or support agencies, based on our local knowledge of resources and the needs of the tenant, where appropriate to do so; and
- Make reasonable adjustments when an appropriate request is made.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Income Management

We will:

- Provide advice and support if you are experiencing difficulties with paying your rent and/or charges;
- Investigate all cases of rent arrears after a missed payment by making early contact with you;
- Offer a variety of ways to pay your rent and charges;
- Give you a minimum of 4 weeks' notice of any proposed increase or decrease of rent or charges;
- Provide clear details of the rent and/or service charges for individual properties at the time of signing your tenancy agreement;
- Encourage you to contact us at any point during your tenancy if you are worried about maintaining your rent payments;
- Provide advice on how to apply for benefits or help with housing costs;
- Provide quarterly rent statements and at any other time when requested;
- Make arrangements wherever possible to help you pay your rent arrears over a reasonable agreed period;
- Decide what appropriate action we will take when you owe us money, which could include legal action;

- View eviction as a last resort where other debt recovery action has failed;
- Provide an estimated final rent account balance when you give us notice to end your tenancy; and
- Make referrals to supporting agencies.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Neighbourhood and Community Standard

We keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with your homes in a safe, clean and secure environment. We engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.

Anti – Social Behaviour

We will:

- Work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB);
- Publish a policy and procedures which explain how we work to prevent and address ASB;
- Explain how we work with agencies to prevent and tackle ASB in areas in where we own properties;
- Respond to reports of harassment, neighbourhood nuisance or ASB in accordance with our published policy and procedures;
- Provide you with a named officer who will lead and handle your case;
- Investigate complaints of ASB and nuisance in accordance with our published policy and procedures;
- Agree an action plan with you and regularly review the actions taken;
- Tailor action plans to take account of the circumstances of each case;
- Make best use of the remedies available;
- Involve vulnerable tenants, reporting parties and those reported, to resolve ASB problems;
- Deal with all reports of harassment and hate crimes efficiently and sensitively;
- Provide support, either directly or through other agencies to victims, witnesses and those causing ASB;
- Work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle ASB;
- Inform you before we close your case and ask for feedback on how we have dealt with it and the outcome;
- Use our computerised system to manage our ASB cases and provide reporting information on the types and location of ASB complaints. This will enable us to direct our resources more appropriately and effectively;
- Use the tools and legal remedies available to prevent and resolve ASB;
- Include clear statements about your rights and responsibilities in our tenancy agreement;
- Help you to consider all of the housing options available to you in cases where it has been agreed by the Police it is unsafe for you to remain in your home; and
- In cases of domestic abuse, racial harassment and hate crime we will carry out, within 24 hours, any emergency repairs needed to ensure your home is secure.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Neighbourhood Management

We will tell you about our approach to managing our estates with the help of our tenants and residents to keep our neighbourhoods clean, safe and secure and where people want to live.

We will:-

- Provide residents with a named Neighbourhood Officer;
- Conduct regular neighbourhood inspections of communal areas and ensure that they are well maintained, tidy and free from graffiti;
- Work in partnership with the Police and other services to help keep our estates free from ASB, harassment and hate crime;
- Conduct fire risk assessments in blocks of flats to identify and address fire risks;
- Ensure communal areas are well maintained;
- Ensure that grounds maintenance work is carried out to the required standard;
- Make residents are aware of their responsibilities, both in relation to their property and neighbourhood;
- Consult with our tenants to identify improvements and work together to address local priorities;
- Identify areas that need improvements and undertake measures to resolve them;
- Promote tenant involvement opportunities, activities and events to help develop and support vibrant communities;
- Investigate all acts of vandalism and graffiti and appropriate action will be taken against all known perpetrators of vandalism;
- Remove offensive graffiti within 1 working day and non-offensive graffiti within 7 working days of being notified;
- Consider proposals to install CCTV or camera doorbells where appropriate to do so;
- Listen to and work with you to improve our estates;
- Work with you to avoid and resolve tenancy breaches;
- Support you to maintain your home and sustain your tenancy; and
- Carry out a post-tenancy visit after a mutual exchange has taken place.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/procurement-policies-and-strategies)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Pets and Animals

We will tell you about our approach to keeping pets and animals. This is set out on our webpages and is available upon request. MDH understands the benefits that responsible pet ownership can bring. Owning a pet or animal can be life enhancing and we recognise that it can have a positive impact on physical health and mental well-being.

Our aim is to provide a pet-friendly and common-sense approach to tenant requests to keep a pet or animal. We will review all applications if a tenant is able to responsibly, and safely, keep a pet or animal without causing a nuisance or ASB to other residents living in the community.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section (under Help and Support/Policies and strategies) on the Council's website or upon request.

Tenancy Standard

We aim to be fair and transparent in the way we offer a tenancy, let our homes and offer housing advice. We will take into account the housing needs of tenants and potential tenants.

Tenancy Management

We will set out our approach to providing an efficient and effective tenancy management service to our tenants.

We will provide details of:

- The types and lengths of tenancies MDH offer;
- The circumstances which determine the type of tenancy that will be offered;
- How a tenancy can be brought to an end;
- Changes to tenancies; and
- MDH approaches to tenancy management, tackling tenancy fraud and tenancy sustainment.

MDH is committed to helping tenants to maintain their tenancy and offers a variety of ways to support tenants in achieving a successful tenancy.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk/procurement/policies-and-strategies)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Letting our properties

We will:

- Arrange and carry out a pre-void inspection at your property before you move out, where possible;
- Inform you of any repairs that you have to carry out before you move and the amount you will be recharged if you do not carry out this work;
- Advise of when and where you need to return the keys to your home when the tenancy ends;
- Advertise your property, where applicable through the Devon Home Choice Scheme;
- Minimise the time that properties are empty between each letting. We aim to re-let homes within published timescales;
- Provide you with the contact details of your Neighbourhood Officer when you sign up for your tenancy;
- Publish on our website the contact details of your Neighbourhood Officer;
- Provide a tenancy agreement and an information pack which will be explained to you when you sign up for your tenancy; and
- Explain clearly your rights and responsibilities as a tenant when you sign up for your tenancy.

Allocations

We will:

- Publish clear guidance to our approach to tenancy management, including interventions to sustain tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions and tackling tenancy fraud;
- Use Devon Home Choice Scheme to advertise our vacant homes;
- Provide you with affordability documents at your viewing to enable you to make an informed decision about whether to accept the offer of a property;

- Allocate our properties in accordance with published policies;
- Offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community and to make the best use of our housing stock;
- Arrange and carry out accompanied viewings at an agreed time with you; and
- Arrange for you to attend a meeting to sign your tenancy and collect your keys.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH section ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk)) on the Council's website or upon request.

Mutual Exchange

We will:

- Provide an opportunity to exchange your tenancy with that of another tenant, by way of internet-based mutual exchange services;
- Take reasonable steps to publicise the internet-based mutual exchange service that we subscribe to;
- Provide reasonable support for you to access the mutual exchange service we subscribe to when you do not have access to the internet;
- Agree or deny all mutual exchange applications within 42 days;
- Notify all applicants in writing the result of their application; and
- Arrange for the necessary health and safety checks to be completed prior to the exchanging of properties.

MDH will ensure that tenants who wish to mutually exchange are aware of any implications to their tenancy, such as:

- Any rent changes;
- Any changes between security i.e. secure or assured status;
- Any implications on the Right to Buy; and
- Responsibility to keep in repair any non-standard fittings and fixtures that you have decided to retain.

The full Policy is available to read in the MDH ([Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](https://www.middevon.gov.uk)) section on the Council's website or upon request.

Right to Buy

We will provide you with a balanced view on the expectations and restrictions which may occur when you exercise your right to buy.

We will inform you of:-

- The circumstances in which the Right to Buy can and cannot be exercised;
- The exceptions to the Right to Buy;
- The procedure for claiming to exercise the Right to Buy;
- The price payable for the dwelling-house by a tenant exercising the Right to Buy;
- The options available to you in relation to solar panels if fitted on your property;
- The delay notice procedures for landlords and tenants as set out in sections 140, 141, 153A and 153B of the Housing Act 1985;

- The fact that initial costs are likely to be incurred by a secure tenant exercising the Right to Buy, with specific reference to costs in respect of:
 - Stamp duty.
 - Legal and survey fees.
 - Valuation fees and costs associated with taking out a mortgage.
- The fact that a secure tenant will likely have to make regular payments as an owner of a dwelling-house, with specific reference to payments in respect of:
 - Any mortgage or charge on the dwelling-house.
 - Building insurance, life assurance, and mortgage payment protection insurance.
 - Council tax.
 - Water, sewerage, gas, electricity, and other utility services.
- The risk of repossession of the dwelling-house if regular mortgage payments are not made; and
- The fact that in order to keep the property maintained and in good repair, the owner of the dwelling-house will be likely to have to incur expenditure, which may include payment of service charges in respect of major works.

We will:

- Inform you about any costs you should consider when buying your home;
- Let you know that non-urgent repairs are paused during the Right to Buy process;
- Provide help and advice on any matters relating to the purchase of your home under the Right to Buy Scheme (this cannot be legal advice – you will need to take such advice from an independent solicitor);
- Confirm if you are eligible to buy your home within 4 weeks of receiving your application;
- Instruct our Valuer to make an appointment before visiting your home;
- Issue you an offer price for your home within 8 weeks for freehold properties or within 12 weeks for leasehold properties;
- Give you 12 weeks to appeal against the valuation to the independent district valuer, once you have received your offer; and
- Liaise with our Legal team to make sure that the completion of your sale is carried out efficiently.



Report for: Homes Policy Development Group

Date of Meeting: 19 November 2024

Subject: **REVIEW OF MID DEVON HOUSING ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

Cabinet Member: Cllr Simon Clist Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader

Responsible Officer: Simon Newcombe – Head of Housing and Health

Exempt: None

which are Exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) as it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Wards Affected: All

Enclosures: Annex A – Asset Management Strategy

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

Mid Devon Housing (MDH) has a requirement to understand the condition and demand of the housing stock and other buildings it is responsible for, by establishing the current position, identifying future maintenance costs as well as providing new homes to meet demand. This strategy sets out how this will be achieved during the financial years 2025-2029.

This is a review of the existing Asset Management Strategy and has been undertaken to bring the document up to date in the context of the new consumer regulation regime including the statutory consumer standards as set out within the report and background papers. It also brings the Strategy in line with the new MDDC Corporate Plan for 2024-28 which includes relevant housing objectives.

Recommendation:

- 1. That the PDG recommends to Cabinet that the updated MDH Asset Management Strategy attached in Annex A be adopted**

Section 2 – Report

1 Introduction

1.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) regulates registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing able to deliver and maintain homes of appropriate quality that meet a range of needs. MDH must comply with the Consumer Standards set out by the Regulator.

1.2 This Asset Management Strategy, and the maintenance programmes that flow from it are aligned with these Consumer Standards as well as the aims of The Council's Corporate Plan. The aims of the Strategy are as follows:

- Achieve an EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) C rating for all of our homes by 2030
- Provide approximately 400 new low carbon homes by 2030
- Deliver upper quartile performance of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures to include meeting our legal obligations relating to health and safety compliance
- Manage disrepair proactively within the existing financial framework
- Identify and deliver our maintenance programmes, while developing the local economy
- Manage the HRA retail units and achieve a balanced budget
- Manage the garages and achieve a balanced budget

1.3 Under housing legislation including the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, the RSH take co-regulatory approach. In the context of a local authority registered provider such as MDH this means:

- Councillors are regarded as responsible for ensuring that providers' businesses are managed effectively and that providers comply with all regulatory requirements
- Providers must support tenants to shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold officers and councillors to account

This is important context in the determination and adoption of new or updated policy or plans and monitoring of compliance and performance.

1.4 This is a whole document update of the previous Strategy:

- Reformatting in line with current policy and strategy templates for MDH
- Alignment of sections and relevant narrative / strategic aims with the new consumer standards and Corporate Plan 2024-28
- Cross-reference with new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) including specific repair and building safety metrics

- Updated to reflect current context on number of relevant key assets (circa 3,000 homes, >1,000 garages and 15 retail units)
- New voids management section and update in line with the most recent adopted Voids Management Policy 2023
- Updated Section 5.0 with present MDH Policy Framework and current performance metrics (as per quarterly service reporting into the Homes Policy Development Group)

2 Consultation and Review

- 2.1 As an internal strategy setting out MDH aims and how they will be met there is no requirement for tenant consultation. Nonetheless, having an up to date Asset Management Strategy provides assurance to tenants and members (through co-regulation) that we are giving appropriate high-level priority to meeting our legal duties and ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of tenants in our properties.
- 2.2 There are a series of policies within the overarching Housing Revenue Account (HRA) policy framework that are relevant to the delivery of this Strategy for which tenant consultation has been undertaken. These policies are listed within section 5.0 of the document.
- 2.3 The Strategy will be kept under continuous review to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The Head of Housing and Health also holds delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Strategy as required by legislative changes, formal guidance or local operational considerations.
- 2.4 Where material or significant amendments are required the Strategy will receive a full review and be brought back to the Homes PDG and Cabinet for consideration. Unless a formal review is required sooner, the Strategy will be reviewed in five years and will align where relevant with a new Corporate Plan.

Financial Implications

MDH is obliged by the RSH, Financial Regulations and Corporate Plan to deliver value for money within the HRA budget.

The financial forecasts are taken from Integrator, the asset maintenance database, which are smoothed to both deliver the works, fit with the available budgets and avoid any significant spikes in future expenditure.

Overall, the HRA 30-year business plan is currently under review and being updated to ensure MDH continue to provide assurance of a sustainable, compliant and safe housing stock in the long-term and meet the overarching asset management aims set out within the Strategy.

Legal Implications

As a registered provider of social housing, the Council is obliged to take account of the standards contained within the revised regulatory framework which is administered

by the RSH as well as The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and other building safety legislation. This places a duty on MDH to maintain legal compliance within its housing stock.

There are further overarching legal responsibilities under the new consumer regulation regime regulated by the RSH as set out in the report.

Risk Assessment

The principal risk is failing to limit costs due to additional works and delivery of the Strategy. The performance of the individual work streams within the strategy will be monitored monthly and corrective action will be taken where performance falls below any Key Performance Indicator.

Impact on Climate Change

The environmental impact has been considered as a part of the developing the strategy. This includes specific objective regarding EPC standards and new net-zero homes within the HRA stock.

Equalities Impact Assessment

All staff have received Equality and Diversity awareness training and all policies underpinning this Strategy have been subject to EIAs to ensure the public sector equality duty is met.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

To contribute towards meeting our obligations relating to Health and Safety and by contributing to the Decent Homes Standard.

Homes are a priority for the Council and in the context this Strategy this includes supporting the delivery of several key objectives including ensuring our tenants feel safe, secure and happy in our homes as well as delivering new affordable social homes and maintaining the existing stock to the highest standards.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 11.11.24

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 11.11.24

Chief Officer: Simon Newcombe

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

Date: 4 November 2024

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 07 November 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Mike Lowman, Operations Lead for Building Services or Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing and Health

Email: mlowman@middevon.gov.uk / snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers:

RSH Consumer Standards Code of Practice

[Consumer Standards Code of Practice](#)

RSH Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Technical Requirements

[TSM Technical Requirements \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Mid Devon District Council Corporate Plan 2024-28

[corporate-plan-2024-2028 -final.pdf](#)

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Mid Devon Housing

Housing Revenue Account

Asset Management Strategy

2025 – 2029



Revision – August 2025

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1.0 Introduction

Mid Devon Housing is Mid Devon District Council's Housing Service; responsible for the management of the Council's housing stock of 2957¹ dwellings 1037² garages and 15³ retail units.

This Strategy comes at a time of significant change with the introduction of new legislation and regulation, growing customer expectation and the issues of disrepair; combined with the global challenges affecting the climate and the economy.

MDH acknowledge that some of its homes are coming to the end of their effective lifespan and a decision has to be made on their future. The decision to either dispose or demolish them also provides an opportunity to invest in additional more energy efficient replacements. This will provide better housing for our residents; however it also brings the risks with investing in new technologies and increased pressures on our financial plans, both now and in the future.

We also understand the impact that housing makes on health and wellbeing and the need to work more closely with other stakeholders to define a proactive approach to solving some of the issues that are experienced locally.

The basis of an effective asset management strategy is understanding the condition, need and demand of the stock to establish our current position, identify current and future maintenance costs as well as provide new homes to meet demand for the future.

¹ Stock level at 1 April 2024

² Garage stock at 1 April 2024

³ Retail units at 1 April 2024

2.0 Strategic Context

The Regulator of Social Housing regulates registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector, able to deliver and maintain homes of appropriate quality that meet a range of needs. MDH must comply with the Consumer Standards set out by the Regulator.

This Asset Management Strategy, and the maintenance programmes that flow from it are aligned with this and the aims of Mid Devon District Council's Corporate Plan which are:-

Planning, Environment & Sustainability - To be a leader and pioneer of best practice so new innovation and thinking is at the heart of the services we deliver and informs our planning policies.

Community, People & Equalities - Involving and engaging with our communities, ensuring everyone is treated with equity and respect, and protecting our most vulnerable.

Homes - Delivering new affordable and social homes annually, improving and maintaining the existing stock to the highest standards.

Economy & Assets - Growing the district economy and increasing returns from our assets.

Service Delivery & Continuous Improvement - Providing high quality and efficient services to support and improve the lives of people in Mid Devon.

MDH is aiming to create sustainable communities, manage our neighbourhoods, shared spaces, retail units and homes, provide safe and well-maintained homes and treat tenants with fairness, courtesy and respect

Our aim is to achieve an EPC C rating for all of our homes and provide an additional 400 low carbon homes by 2030, achieve high levels of Tenant Satisfaction Measures, while providing safe and well maintained homes and retail units within the existing financial framework.

2.1 Financial Context

MDH is obliged, by the Corporate Plan, to deliver value for money within the budgets.

Rather than Zero Based Accounting, MDH uses a Budget Based Accounting approach to set its future budgets; following detailed budget setting each year the 30 year financial plan is reviewed, updated and adapted to suit the budgets available. The asset management forecasts taken from integrator drive the business plan, but these forecasts are smoothed to both deliver the works, fit with the available budgets and avoid any significant spikes in future expenditure.

Procurement is a critical area for the delivery and improvement of value for money for MDH. As a result MDH rely on MDDC to assist with the delivery of some procurement, but the majority is carried out by Building Services with the intention of meeting our objectives and Corporate Aims.

It is important to consider that any capital cost of a major repair or improvement will have an impact on revenue in the future as it will need to be maintained, serviced and repaired; our budgets will also need to reflect these costs.

2.2 Location

MDH operates solely within the geographical area of MDDC with the majority of its properties being located within the three larger towns and the surrounding areas of Tiverton, Cullompton and Crediton. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of the stock is located in rural areas, often as part of small developments.

The tables below show the distribution and concentration of MDH dwellings and garages

Table 1 Geographic Location of MDH Housing Stock

Location	Number of Bedrooms						Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Tiverton	312	514	381	25	0	1	1233
Crediton	104	86	94	1	0	0	285
Cullompton	92	113	77	1	0	0	283
Other/rural	304	521	321	10	0	0	1156
							2957

Table 2 Geographic Location of MDH Garages

Location	Number of Garages
Tiverton	517
Crediton	40
Cullompton	127
Other/rural	353
Total	1037

3.0. Key Asset Management Activities

There is a broad range of activities associated with Asset Management and the service team is split into three operational areas as follows:

- Responsive repairs contractors and internal Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) providing the responsive repair requirements, disabled adaptations and commercial work for both the Council Homes, Public Sector as well as some planned improvement and minor work delivery.
- Planned Maintenance using internal and external providers, delivering both Capital and Revenue improvement over the long term, including Compliance, Cyclical programmes, Void improvements, Retail Unit management and updating the asset database using information from surveyors.
- Development and disposal to identify potential properties and sites for regeneration, sale or new build; using either offsite construction or some small scale traditional build units.

The services work closely together towards achieving the optimal balance of responsive repairs, cyclical maintenance, planned maintenance and development, taking into consideration the impact on the resident, the property, time and cost.

4.0 Strategic Aims

This strategy has been developed around the following objectives, which have been developed in consultation with tenants, Councillor's and staff at MDH. Our ambition is to:-

- achieve an EPC C rating for all of our homes by 2030
- provide approximately 400 new low carbon homes by 2030
- deliver upper quartile performance of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures to include meeting our legal obligations relating to health and safety compliance
- manage disrepair proactively within the existing financial framework
- Identify and deliver our maintenance programmes, while developing the local economy
- manage the HRA retail units and achieve a balanced budget
- manage the garages and achieve a balanced budget

4.1 Achieving and EPC C rating for all our homes by 2030

MDH do not have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for all of its homes, but Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) ratings are available; a SAP rating of 69 or above is equivalent to an EPC-C. On the 1 July 2024 MDH currently had 801 homes with a rating below this level, equivalent to 27% of its stock. See Table 3 below

Table 3 EPC Rating and Equivalent SAP Rating

EPC Rating	Equivalent SAP Rating	MDH Stock Numbers
A	92-100	129
B	81-91	727
C	69-80	1383
D	55-68	439
E	39-54	259
F	21-38	16
G	0-20	3
	Total	2956

The measures required to bring the remaining properties to a SAP rating above 69 by 2030 include topping up the insulation within the loft and walls, upgrading the heating with more efficient systems, when the existing systems reach the end of their lifecycle, installing renewable technologies and ensuring we are providing residents with good energy advice and signposting them, where needed, to specialist organisations.

Despite installing these measures, there will still be properties that would not achieve an EPC rating of C or above. These include those where the tenant's refuse the works and those that are difficult to heat combined with a prohibitive cost to maintain and provide the remedial measures. Included within these later properties are the 42 non-traditional Woolway Homes as well as other non-traditional and some traditional homes.

A medium term decision has been made to either redevelop or replace these with modular or traditional homes that will have an EPC-A rating. There is also the option of selling a very small number on the open market and reinvesting the capital in new housing.

Table 4 Objectives and timescales for delivery of EPC-C

Objective	Timescale
Improving energy efficiency in our homes (Warm efficient homes) (to incorporate the move to SAP band C by 2030)	Year 1 Improving our energy data to hold at least the min data set for all properties. Training across the surveying and repairs team to record and update our energy dataset
	Year 2 Identify an improvement programme to deliver the required measures by 2030.

	Procure any works Access grant funding,
	Year 3 - 5 Deliver the retrofit programmes and redevelop properties across band D and below

4.2 Providing 400 Low Carbon Homes by 2030

MDH is committed to the Council’s corporate objective of building more Council homes and have plans to provide approximately 400 new energy efficient homes by 2030, the majority of these being zero carbon modular homes but also a number of MMC homes that can be built by the DLO or local SME’s In addition to this we have budget approved to buy back a number of homes that were sold under the RTB scheme each year with properties that we already have the structural responsibility and properties that offer the chance of additional units within its footprint taking preference. With these ‘Buy Backs’ we are able to utilise our 1:4:1 receipts to achieve approximately a 40% reduction in purchase price. The proposed sites identified for this development programme are a mixture of green and brown field, as well as a proposal to replace existing Council homes that have reached the end of their lifecycle, characterised by being significantly more expensive to maintain than to replace.

There are both Micro and Macro challenges to the programme, including acquiring some of the land, obtaining planning permission, legislation, project management, the provision of funding as well as building cost inflation, interest rate uncertainty, changing government policy and global supply tensions. But there is a high demand for these homes within Mid Devon and the Micro challenges will be managed to ensure the development programme provides value for money.

Table 5 Objectives and Timescales for delivery or new homes.

Objective	Timescale
Provide 400 new low carbon homes by 2030	Year 1 2023 - 2024 Contracts established and potential developments sites identified
	Year 2 2024 - 2025 Deliver a limited number of modular homes and carry out the design and procurement for a small number of traditional build homes.
	Year 3 – 8 2025 - 2030 Deliver the development programme within the budget.

4.3 Achieve high levels of the individual Tenant Satisfaction Measures

In April 2023 the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) created a new system for assessing how social housing landlords in England provide good quality homes and services. As a key part of this they introduced revised consumer standards, setting out what MDH have to provide and the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) are part of the reporting regime for these standards. Other tests for meeting the standards in full will be met through a 4-yearly cyclical RSH inspection process of all large landlords including MDH.

There are a total of 22 Measures that are a mix of tenant perception survey and landlord management data and report.

The TSM's are broken down into Overall Satisfaction, Keeping Properties in Good Repair, Maintaining Building Safety, Respectful and Helpful Engagement, Effective Handling of Complaints and Responsible Neighbourhood Management. Where TSMs are based on perception satisfaction surveys we will aim to achieve upper quartile performance nationally. Where these are measured by the landlord and relate to good repair or building safety then we will meet legislative requirements including 100% targets as required. More information is provided in Section 5.

Table 6 below sets all of the TSMs MDH are required to report and cover most of our daily work as a registered housing provider.

Table 6 Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Measured by Landlord	Measured by doing Tenant Perception Surveys
	TP01: Overall Satisfaction
RP Keeping Properties in Good Repair	
RP01: Properties that do not meet the decent homes standard	TP02: Satisfaction with Repairs
RP02: Repairs completed within target timescale	TP03: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair
	TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained
BS - Maintaining building safety	
BS01: Gas safety checks	TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe
BS02: Fire safety checks	
BS03: Asbestos safety checks	
BS04: Water safety checks	
BS05: Lift safety checks	
Electrical Safety Checks	
Percentage of communal areas meeting the required standard	
Respectful and helpful engagement	
	TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them

	TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
	TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect
CH - Effective handling of complaints	
CH01: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints
CH02: Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	
NM - Responsible neighbourhood management	
NM01: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained
	TP11: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
	TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour

4.3.1 Keeping Properties in Good repair

As at April 2024 the Decent Homes levels within MDH stock was at over 99%, which has been achieved and maintained by targeting non decent homes with capital and revenue funding via Building Services. All of our works programmes are recorded on Integrator, our asset database, which also records information on HHSRS, Decent Homes, Asbestos and EPC's/Sap information.

In 2024/25, Fire Risk Assessment work that was previously contracted internally to Public Health Services within in the Council has been bought back into MDH under direct management control. As a result, a replacement role of a Specialist Officer has been put in place who will have the responsibility of carrying out Stock Condition Surveys, Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme inspections, Asbestos condition inspections, Water Safety collation and Fire Risk Assessments on a rolling basis ensuring that the data in integrator is continually updated.

4.3.2 Responsive repairs

The responsive repairs team are continuing to prioritise the upskilling of operatives, surveyors and neighbourhood officers to ensure a better quality of service. An increased number of Multi-Skilled operatives will ensure that tenants should continue to receive great response times for technical inspections, a clearer specification for follow on works and more jobs capable of being completed first time.

4.3.3 Maintaining building safety

MDH has always invested heavily in the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of its residents; as well as compliance, including the Management of Asbestos, Gas Safety Checks, Fire Risk Assessments, Water Safety Checks, Lift Safety Checks, Electrical Safety Checks and Solid Fuel appliance servicing. Not only are these Tenant Satisfaction Measures, but they are also a legal requirement. With the introduction of the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 the Regulator of Social Housing will be able to make regular inspections to ensure that Registered Social Housing Providers are meeting their obligations

4.3.3.1 Gas Safety

MDH have 2218¹ properties containing appliances that require an annual gas safety check, which is a requirement of the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 as amended. In addition to a Landlord's Gas Safety Record (LGSR), the appliances that MDH own are also serviced. Residents own appliances are given a visual inspection. The compliance rate for LGSR's is currently at 100%², which is the benchmark for gas servicing.

Our gas servicing contractor has a portal to allow us full access to their programming and LGSR's giving full visibility of the compliance with any property, which will continue in the future.

^{1,2} Properties with gas appliances at 31 July 2024

4.3.3.2 Fire Safety and Fire Risk Assessments

MDH currently has 98 communal areas that need a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) which need to be kept under review and updated when there are any significant changes, not only to the building but also to the risks and the hazards. If there are no changes a FRA will still need to be refreshed; in the case of MDH's purpose built flats this would need to be done every two years.

MDH will adopt the recommendations of any FRA's and incorporate the recommended works into the capital programme, which has a budget allocated to it. There is also a revenue element to this work to cover the continuing testing, servicing and maintenance of the smoke and fire alarm systems within these communal areas.

In addition to these systems, every home has a hard wired smoke alarm and heat detector with those properties that have a gas or solid fuel appliance also having carbon monoxide detectors. There is also a programme in place to test the carbon monoxide detectors when the appliances are serviced.

4.3.3.3 Asbestos Safety

MDH complies with the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 (CAR) prior to having works carried out to a property by having a survey carried out to let the contractor know where and what type of asbestos is within a property. In addition to this all new tenant's are provided with similar details prior to moving into their new home.

Despite this there are approximately 550¹ homes that do not have an asbestos management sample survey of their homes, which are due to be carried out between April 2024 and March 2026 by an external asbestos surveying company. Meanwhile existing survey data and the MDH asbestos register assumes asbestos to be present based on duplicate property data and other surveys to ensure all potential asbestos risks are identified and managed accordingly.

MDH will also be undertaking a rolling programme of asbestos inspections to update integrator on the condition as part of its ongoing management as well as providing our staff with regular training.

The Asbestos Management Plan was reviewed and formally updated in 2024 and will remain under cyclical review in future.

¹ Outstanding 31 July 2024

4.3.3.4 Water Safety, Legionella

MDH complies with the Approved Code of Practice relating to the Control of Legionella bacteria in water systems; having carried out a risk assessment and regular testing of those properties where there is a potential risk. Water systems are classified as either High, Medium and Low risk.

The properties with a potential risk are being reduced by removing the water storage or other risks completely and there is a programme and budget in place to manage these works. In 2017 there were 116 High risk systems and 846 Medium risk systems with the remaining stock being Low risk. Since then, 100% of High risk systems have been removed and of the 176 Medium risk systems that remain there is a continued programme to remove all of these by 2029. In the meantime, we will continue with annual legionella tests and other any additional reactive monitoring plus risk assessments as required to ensure the systems are safe. Consequently, from 2029 onwards all stock will be classified as having Low risk systems requiring no or minimum further review and testing in future.

4.3.3.5 Lift Safety

MDH currently has one lift, but this number will rise with the purchase of St Georges Court. Lifts are serviced every three months with any recommendations implemented and a budget available for this work annually.

4.3.3.6 Electrical Safety

There is a legal requirement to carry out an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) to both dwellings and communal areas every five years with regulations pending requiring a full EICR at the same frequency. MDH has implemented this cyclical programme and will achieve the target.

100% of our stock will have a full EICR no older than 5-years by 2027, likely in advance of a compliance date set out in proposed regulations

MDH also recognise that inspection and identification of remedial works should also help to reduce the number of responsive electrical repairs.

4.3.3.7 Radon

MDH has had a risk assessment carried out and has implemented a programme of surveys and remedial works of those properties that require it. This programme is due to be completed in 2027 and there is a budget identified for these surveys and remedial works.

4.3.3.8 Door Entry Systems

Although this does not affect compliance it is related to security and resident wellbeing. MDH have 47 door entry systems located at the entrance to the communal areas of flats through the district. There is a budget in place for servicing, maintenance and renewal of these systems.

4.4 Manage Disrepair proactively within the financial framework

The Pre Action Protocol for housing disrepair is a set of guidelines designed to help tenants and landlords resolve the issue of disrepair. It is designed to avoid litigation, but is being used by some legal firms on a no win no fee basis, with the intention of claiming their costs via compensation for tenants. Some Registered Social Housing Providers are setting aside a significant amount of their annual capital budget to cover the cost of these claims.

MDH received its first legal disrepair claim under the housing disrepair protocol in 2019; to the beginning of August 2024, a total of 41 claims have been received.

MDH generally robustly defends these claims and it is believed that this has led to MDH receiving significantly fewer claims compared with other Registered Social Housing Providers (RPs). To date, one claim has been settled in the tenant's favour, whilst two have been settled in the MDH's favour.

However there is a general trend of an increasing number of claims, especially from 2022 onwards. This may be due to greater public awareness, more robust legislation, and increased advertising by legal firms that specialise in this practice.

There was a noticeable increase in claims following the case of Awaab Ishak, who died due to mould in a social housing property. This received widespread media coverage in late 2022 and may have raised awareness among tenants about the dangers of damp and mould. Another factor may have been the introduction of the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, which included Awaab's law, relating to health and the minimum timescales to respond to a report of a repair, along with the increasing awareness that this has brought.

Although this may appear as a concern, it is also an opportunity to be proactive; carry out our development programme as well as undertake additional inspections or surveys with the appointment of the Specialist Officer and to implement any improvement programmes, aimed at addressing disrepair and improving response times before a claim escalates.

In the medium to long term it is anticipated that MDH will adjust to the new legal requirements and there should be a period where these claims will stabilise before decreasing as the anticipated improvement and development programmes progress.

It will be crucial to prioritise proactive maintenance and early intervention to address damp and mould issues before they escalate into legal claims. Investing in regular inspections, upgrading building materials, and enhancing tenant communication channels will be key to complying with Awaab's Law and reducing long-term liabilities. By improving the overall quality of housing stock and ensuring prompt responses to disrepair complaints, we can not only minimise the risk of legal action but also enhance tenant satisfaction and reduce the future burden of claims.

4.5 Identify and deliver our maintenance programmes while developing the local economy

Integrator is used to plan the future works programmes and the quality of the information within integrator is crucial to be able to plan and deliver the maintenance programmes in the coming years; if the information is inaccurate, our forecasts will also be inaccurate.

Previously, the information has been updated periodically; in the future a specialist officer will be employed to carry out a rolling programme of 20% of the stock per year. The specialist officer will be covering the Stock Condition Surveys, The Housing Health and Safety Rating Scheme, Asbestos inspections, Fire Safety and EPC's.

Integrator produces our works programmes based on the age, condition or form of the component that needs to be replaced, but this is also reinforced with evidence from our operatives, surveyors, and our responsive repairs officers.

Procurement and delivery of the works is managed by Responsive Repairs, Commercial and Planned Maintenance with annual budgets of approximately £2.9m Capital and £1.25m¹ of Revenue. The underlying objective behind the procurement of these programmes is to achieve value for money, while developing the local economy by encouraging businesses to tender for the works that cannot be delivered internally.

In addition to the above budgets MDH receives approximately £160,000.00 annually, from the contract with Anesco for the Solar PV panels, which is ring-fenced to be invested in renewable technologies.

¹Budgets for 2024-2025

4.6 Voids Management

Void properties are an integral part of the overall asset management of our council homes by MDH.

Voids management requires a careful balancing act between meeting the pressure of social housing demand and ensuring safe, well maintained homes that meet legal standards where tenant/resident welfare is prioritised.

There are further opportunities for property decarbonisation and retrofitting together with potential development sites for new, additional Council homes at properties sited on large plots which can often only be accomplished when properties are empty. Delivering on these opportunities makes a significant contribution toward meeting several core objectives for the Council within our Corporate Plan and Housing Strategy.

As a Registered Provider of housing, we must also comply with the mandatory Decent Homes Standard as set out in 4.3.1 and the consumer Safety and Quality Standard set by the RSH.

This legislation and associated mandatory standards cover what social landlords must be achieving in all their properties in respect of decency, modernisation, repair and safety.

The consumer Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard also set by the RSH forms a further part of the regulatory framework for social housing and is relevant to the standards the Council sets and publishes for re-letting its properties and what incoming tenants can expect.

The MDH lettable standard is available on the MDH pages of the Council website.

The Council has adopted a detailed Voids Management Policy which is also available as above. This defines voids, sets out our policy objectives and performance targets. The overarching target is for MDH to ensure 97% occupation of stock on a rolling basis which includes dwelling stock used for general needs, non-general needs and properties allocated to the general fund Housing Options team. Voids do not apply to non-dwelling properties and assets.

Within this context we will review all voids and classify whether they are standard, major, decent or development voids as set out in the policy. This is determined by the level and nature of the works required with specific turnaround targets against each. The development voids will be properties where there are potential opportunities for redevelopment and additional Council Homes on larger or more accessible plots. Some of these voids will also be older, concrete pre-fabrication types such as Cornish and Woolaway units which are also approaching end-of-life where modernisation costs to meet Decent Homes standard in the future in order to extend property life-span by 10-20 year are a poor investment in comparison to new build replacement.

Consequently, development voids may be demolished and cannot be offered for secure tenancies. They will then be held as longer—term voids whilst feasibility studies and planning applications undertaken. Until these voids are demolished they remain as technical voids on our accounting and voids performance reporting and where possible short-term uses are explored on non-secure licensed accommodation basis including temporary homeliness accommodation where fit-for-purpose.

Occasionally, it may be recommended that a dwelling in our stock that becomes voids is disposed of. This may be for a multiple reasons including remote location, property isolation, lack of housing demand, property archetype, lack development opportunities and investment required to bring the property up to the Decent Homes standard. As a non-private registered provider, whilst there is no formal requirement to notify the RSH of any dwelling disposal this will be subject to a formal CSAG (Corporate Strategic Asset Management Group) process to determine asset management recommendations for future use. Any capital receipt will be reinvested and ring-fenced to the HRA

and where possible, priority will be given for using this receipt to support a wider development programme.

4.7 HRA Retail Units

MDH have recently adopted the management of the 15 retail units owned by MDH and are currently in the process of having all leases renewed where applicable to ensure clear guidelines around rent and repair responsibility are highlighted . As with the other HRA properties these assets will be added into our Housing system and included within any relevant Planned maintenance programme going forward although works will only be carried out at any change of tenancy as tenants will have all responsibility for repairs to the properties.

The rental income from these retail units will now be approximately £115,000.00 annually.

4.8 HRA Garages

The 1037 garages that MDH rent provide an annual income of approximately £390,000.00 set against a modernisation and maintenance expenditure of £150,000.00. This provides a net income of £240,000.00 that is reinvested into these sites or can be used on other HRA properties.

MDH will continue to invest in the maintenance and improvement of the garages to ensure this income continues. There is a rolling 5-year improvement programme in place for all garages. This commenced in 2023 and runs to 2028 with the following focus:

- Areas of high demand / waiting lists
- Areas of occupancy above 50%
- Size and construction of the garages makes them suitable for modern use
- Additional benefits such as the removal of asbestos containing material

Where garage (and related ground rent plots) are not suitable for continued use and/or modernisation then these will be held as potential development or disposal sites and be subject to a formal CSAG (Corporate Strategic Asset Management Group) process to determine asset management recommendations for future use.

5.0 Wider MDH Policy Framework and Performance Reporting

There a range of MDH policies that support and provide detail on the delivery of this Asset Management Strategy, including:

- Aids and Adaptions Policy
- Damp and Mould Policy
- Homes Safety Policy
- Tenant Alternations and Improvements to Council Property Policy
- Recharges Policy
- Voids Management Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- CCTV Policy
- Garage, Ground Rent Plot and Car Parking Spaces Policy
- Asbestos Management Plan

- Service Standards
- Decant Procedure

Asset Management Performance is monitored and reported through quarterly updates to the Mid Devon District Council Homes Policy Development Group (HPDG). This follows specific performance targets largely defined within individual policies and our published service standards. TSMs are also subject to formal annual returns to the RSH and wider annual performance data is including in a range of tenant communications including annual reports, quarterly newsletters, ad-hoc social media posts and campaigns.

The present HPDG reporting covers the following measures and targets:

Table 7 HPDG reporting from 2024/25

Measure	Target
All Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs, as prescribed by RSH) including Asbestos checks	Upper quartile nationally for perception surveys and as required by legislation for good repair and building safety
Decent Homes Standard	100%
Emergency Repairs completed on time	100%
Urgent Repairs completed on time	95%
Routine Repairs completed on time	95%
Repairs completed first visit	95%
Gas safety checks	100%
Fire Risk Assessments completed	100%
Electrical safety checks (full EICRs)	100% by 2028
Water safety checks (Legionella)	100%
Voids – occupation of MDH stock	97%

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Report for: Homes Policy Development Group

Date of Meeting:	19 November 2024
Subject:	APPOINTMENT OF CO-OPTED TENANT MEMBERS
Cabinet Member:	Cllr Simon Clist Cabinet Member for Housing, Assets and Property and Deputy Leader
Responsible Officer:	Simon Newcombe – Head of Housing and Health
Exempt:	N/a
Wards Affected:	All
Enclosures:	Annex A – Proposed Co-opted Tenant Job Description

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)

This report provides some context around tenants of Mid Devon Housing (MDH) being members of the Homes Policy Development Group and a proposal to recruit three suitable independent tenant members to the PDG. The purpose is to enable a more formalised mechanism for an established tenant voice and greater tenant scrutiny during the development of MDH policies and the consideration of housing service performance given the inherent impact matters have on our residents.

All major Registered Providers (RPs) of social housing, including MDH, are required to achieve the outcomes of the statutory consumer standards published by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). One of these standards is the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard which sets out that RPs should foster a strong culture throughout their organisation of fairness, courtesy and respect, where tenants are listened to and can trust their landlord. This standard also sets out specific tenant engagement requirements including ensuring there is genuine consideration of tenants' views which must be at the heart of RPs different levels of decision-making about the delivery of landlord services.

Councillors of RPs should therefore assure themselves that tenants' views have been actively sought and considered as part of their decision-making about their organisation's landlord services.

Whilst MDH already undertake a wide range of tenant engagement activities an internal review of compliance with consumer standards and an independent consumer regulation compliance health check earlier in 2024 have identified opportunities to improve. Specifically, there is a need to formalise tenant engagement in the policy development and performance assurance. This can best be achieved through MDH tenants being co-opted to the Homes Policy Development Group.

Recommendations:

That Homes Policy Development agree:

- 1. To recommend that Cabinet recommends to Full Council the appointment of three Co-Opted Tenant Members to sit on Homes Policy Development Group until April 2027;**
- 2. To recommend that Cabinet recommends to Full Council to delegate to the Head of Housing and Health in conjunction with the Cabinet Member for Housing Assets and Property the appointment of each Co-Opted Tenant Member.**
- 3. To Recommend to Full Council to delegate to the Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer) to make the necessary amendments to the constitution, including the amendment to the scheme of Members Allowances to include a special responsibility allowance for this position(s).**

Section 2 – Report

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Homes Policy Development Group (PDG) is a key part of the overall governance of MDH and the overall co-regulation framework whereby members consider and recommend the adoption of policy in terms of the delivery of our housing services. It also receives and considers further important information with regard to service standards, performance and risk. Combined, this a cornerstone in the provision assurance that MDH are meeting the requirements of the statutory consumer regulation regime overseen by the RSH including confidence that our tenants voices are being heard and taken into account.
- 1.2 Four core consumer standards form part of the wider consumer regulation regime, of which the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard specifically sets out required outcomes for RPs in terms of our engagement and involvement with our tenants in the following thematic areas which are integral to the role of the PDG:
 - Fairness and respect
 - Diverse needs
 - Engagement with tenants
 - Information about landlord services
 - Performance information

- Complaints
- Self-referral

- 1.3 With specific regard to engagement and information, the standard requires RPs to foster a strong culture throughout their organisation of fairness, courtesy and respect, where tenants are listened to and can trust their landlord. This standard also sets out specific tenant engagement requirements including genuine consideration of tenants' views which must be at the heart of RPs different levels of decision-making about the delivery of landlord services. This may include, for example, in relation to recommending new or updated housing management policies for adoption, the setting of service standards, agreeing responsive repair targets and setting performance targets for different landlord services.
- 1.4 Tenants' views can be gathered in different ways. Boards or councillors of RPs should assure themselves that tenants' views have been actively sought and considered as part of their decision-making about their organisation's landlord services.
- 1.5 Whilst MDH currently undertake a wide range of tenant engagement activities through a dedicated strategy, with regard to policy development and performance tenant input is largely ad-hoc through rolling consultations and tenant engagement channels such as social media, tenant newsletters and other communications. Consultation response levels are mixed and assurance that the voice of tenants has been heard is consequently not always robust. An internal review of compliance with consumer standard and an independent consumer regulation compliance health check earlier in 2024 have identified opportunities to improve and formalise tenant engagement in the policy development and performance assurance context through having MDH tenants co-opted to the Homes Policy Development Group.
- 1.5.1 One of the recommendations from the independent consumer regulation health check report (February 2024) was that consideration to be given to the appointment of several independent tenant members to the relevant housing policy and performance governance committee, notably through the creation of a separate sub-committee of the PDG. In light of this recommendation, the Head of Housing and Health together with the Director of Legal, People & Governance (Monitoring Officer) have identified that co-opting members onto the existing Homes PDG is a more effective way of achieving greater tenant engagement for the following reasons:
- Is inclusive and involves all members of the PDG
 - Does not result in a duplication or potential dilution regarding the review and debate on all relevant MDH policy and performance matters
 - Retains the existing role of the PDG and does not unduly extend the democratic decision making process and timeline
 - Is the most cost-effective and most efficient option to set up and support

- 1.6 A particular challenge for RPs is attracting independent tenant members with the relevant experience of our landlord services and an ability to take a wide viewpoint from the perspective a broader tenant cohort. This challenge can sometimes be greater given the broad geographical nature of our mixed town and rural housing stock and diversity of tenants. Therefore, the MDH tenant involvement team and the Head of Service are working to identify suitable tenants who have already demonstrated a willingness to engage with MDH and have provided input and positive engagement on previous policy or other landlord consultations. Furthermore, consideration will be given to diversity of tenants who may therefore be able to provide as wide and valid range of views to the PDG within the limitations of three co-opted spaces.
- 1.7 The Council's ability to co-opt members onto a committee or PDG derives from the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. Section 13(1) of the 1989 Act says that a co-opted member of a committee established under Section 102 of the Local Government Act 1972 (i.e. a committee discharging the functions of the Council) must be a non-voting member. It is for the Council to decide on the term of office of any such co-opted member.
- 1.8 The Constitution outlines the composition of the Homes PDG together with the requirements and quorum of membership. If an additional Co-opted Tenant Member is approved then the Constitution will be required to be amended accordingly i.e. number of members 'plus up to three Independent Tenant Members' and the Quorum for the Homes PDG is 'not inclusive of the Independent Member(s)'. Also adding in that 'the Independent Tenant Member(s) (who shall not be a Member of the Council) is appointed to 'provide MDH tenant experience and a tenant voice to the Homes PDG in respect of proposed MDH policies, plans, performance and standards and shall have no voting rights'. Similarly, the scheme of Members Allowances will be required to be updated to include reference to a special responsibility allowance for the Co-opted Tenant Member(s) of the Homes PDG.

2 Independent Tenant Member

- 2.1 Subject to approval, the role for three Independent Tenant Members will be advertised to all tenants and leaseholders during January and February 2025 and would seek candidates that should:
- Be a current MDH tenant or leaseholder for at least 6-months
 - Be able to interpret and analyse housing information and data with a view to asking probing questions to reach rational conclusions
 - Be a critical thinker and seek to uphold accountability
 - Be confident in fully and proactively participating in the consideration of matters before the Homes PDG at its public meetings
 - Be a good listener, fair and objective in their approach.
- 2.2 In order to be eligible to apply for the position, applicants must not:
- be a Councillor or Officer of any of the Council or have been so in the preceding 12 months prior to appointment

- be related to, or a close friend of, a Councillor or Senior Officer of the Local Authority
 - have been convicted of any offence
 - be an undischarged bankrupt
 - have significant business /contractual dealings with the Council
 - have a proven history of vexatious and/or frivolous complaints at the Council
 - be in arrears with Housing Rent, Council Tax, Business Rates or have other outstanding debts owing to the Council.
- 2.3 It is proposed that MDH will advertise the posts and set out that fixed annual fee (dependant on the Council) will be paid to the successful post holders. It is proposed that three regular persons from those recruited by MDH in conjunction with the Cabinet Member will attend Mid Devon District Council's Homes PDG, but should they be unavailable for any particular meeting, no substitute will be provided.
- 2.4 If Members are minded to approve the appointment of an independent member(s) to Mid Devon District Council, it is recommended that the allowance be set at £500 per annum, which is equivalent to the co-opted Independent Member of Audit Committee and the Standards Independent Person.
- 2.5 More information for potential Co-opted tenants is provided in the form of an informal 'job description' for the role attached in Annex A.
- 2.6 MDH are seeking to work with tenants to create one or more tenant associations that may operate across the whole tenant group or in a more community, place based context. This work forms part of the emergent wider tenant engagement strategy and will take some time and resource to put in place to embed successfully, therefore subject to further consideration and potential approval once options have been refined further. Nonetheless, post April 2027 following a review of co-opted arrangements such a tenant association may provide a different, more independent mechanism to seek co-opted tenants in the future.

Financial Implications

There will be a small financial impact through the need to remunerate three Independent Tenant Members for their time carrying out the role for the Homes PDG and it is recommended that the level of remuneration be set at £500 per annum, which is equivalent to the Co-opted Independent Member of Audit Committee and the Standards Independent Person. This cost will be met from within the existing Housing Revenue Account budget framework.

Legal Implications

The legal implications are contained within the report detail.

Risk Assessment

The proposed post should help the Council recognise and address risk of non-compliance with the statutory consumer regulation standards applicable to MDH.

Impact on Climate Change

There are no Climate Change implications anticipated as a result of this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

There are no equalities implications anticipated as a result of this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

The proposed post should help the council deliver the corporate plan.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 11.11.24

Statutory Officer: Maria De Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 11/11/24

Chief Officer: Simon Newcombe

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

Date: 30 October 2024

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 01 November 2024

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing and Health

Email: snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers: none

The Role and Responsibilities of MDH Tenant Representatives Co-opted on the Mid Devon District Council Homes Policy Development Group

Introduction

Mid Devon District Council is governed by a Cabinet model. The Cabinet is supported by Policy Development Groups (PDGs) which have a specific function to develop and review policies within their remit and to provide overview on the services provided including service standards and performance. The Homes PDG remit covers all aspects of Mid Devon Housing (MDH).

MDH encourages tenants who are interested in the work of the Homes PDG to apply to be co-opted on to the PDG in order that there is representation from the communities that it serves.

This is a role for tenants and leaseholders who can help us focus on tenants and leaseholders priorities, making sure that your rent and service charges are being well spent, council homes are maintained, your neighbourhood is a safe and nice place to live and focus on general housing issues.

The role involves reviewing information, data, questioning and influencing policy as well as the day to day business decisions that affect all tenants and leaseholders. The role is to be an 'advocate' for all tenants and leaseholders. This is not an opportunity to discuss your individual issues but to address issues that concern all tenants.

Tenant representatives do not require 'qualifications' but will be required to attend all meetings of the Homes PDG, of which there are 4 per year, to ensure that it is fulfilling its purpose and that tenants voices can be heard and taken into account. They may be offered a chance to participate in any working groups that the Homes PDG may establish.

Tenant representatives do not have voting rights on the Homes PDG but will be encouraged to provide the voice of our tenants. They must accept and share collective responsibility for the decisions taken by the Homes PDG and the recommendations it makes to the Cabinet.

Tenant representatives will be co-opted to the Homes PDG for a period of 1 year, after which time they can apply again.

Duties

- Always act in the best interests of MDH, its tenants and staff
- Accept collective responsibility for decisions, policies, and strategies
- Attend (in person at Phoenix House or on line) and be well prepared for meetings of the Homes PDG
- You feel able to prepare for the meetings by reading committee reports, financial and statistical information, and relevant paperwork (the preparation often requires several hours work).
- You will need access to a computer and broadband to join our meetings remotely and view documents in advance

- You are confident in using a computer, email, working with documents and websites
- Contribute effectively to discussions and decision making
- Exercise objectivity, care and attention in fulfilling your role
- Take part in (no-cost) ongoing training and other learning opportunities
- Respect and maintain confidentiality of information
- Treat others with respect and foster effective working relationships within the Homes PDG and between the Homes PDG and MDDC staff
- You must be able to recognise the need for confidentiality for certain agenda items, which may only be discussed with others, with our prior permission

Eligibility

You must be a current MDH tenant or leaseholder over 18 years of age and have been an MDH tenant or leaseholder for at least six-months.

In order to be eligible to apply for the position, applicants must not:

- be a Councillor or Officer of MDDC or have been so in the preceding 12 months prior to appointment
- be related to, or a close friend of, a Councillor or Senior Officer of the Local Authority
- have been convicted of any offence
- be an undischarged bankrupt
- have significant business/contractual dealings with MDDC
- have a proven history of vexatious and/or frivolous complaints at MDDC
- be in arrears with Housing Rent, Council Tax, Business Rates or have other outstanding debts owing to MDDC

What MDH offers Tenant Representatives?

Tenant representatives will receive remuneration of £500 per annum which is to compensate them for their time and effort in the role.

MDH offer Tenant representatives a dedicated staff resource to ensure that they are fully supported to carry out the role, this can include training and practical assistance if required.

The opportunity to make a difference in improving local housing services for residents in your community.