

Public Document Pack

Mid Devon District Council

Homes Policy Development Group

Tuesday, 23 May 2017 at 2.15 pm
Exe Room, Phoenix House, Tiverton

Next ordinary meeting
Tuesday, 18 July 2017 at 2.15 pm

Those attending are advised that this meeting will be recorded

Membership

Cllr Mrs E M Andrews
Cllr Mrs H Bainbridge
Cllr D R Coren
Cllr W J Daw
Cllr Mrs G Doe
Cllr R J Dolley
Cllr P J Heal
Cllr F W Letch
Cllr J D Squire

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 Election of Chairman

To elect a Chairman of the Homes Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2017/18.

2 Election of Vice Chairman

To elect a Vice Chairman of the Homes Policy Development Group for the municipal year 2017/18.

3 Apologies and Substitute Members

To receive any apologies for absence and notice of appointment of substitutes.

4 Public Question Time

To receive any questions relating to items on the Agenda from members of the public and replies thereto.

5 **Minutes** (*Pages 5 - 10*)

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2017 (copy attached).

6 **Chairman's Announcements**

To receive any announcements that the Chairman may wish to make.

7 **Performance and Risk Report for 2016-17** (*Pages 11 - 20*)

To receive a report from the Director of Operations providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2016/17 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

8 **Update on empty homes** (*Pages 21 - 26*)

To receive a briefing paper from the Public Health and Professional Services Manager providing an update on the progress of the empty homes project following the briefing in January 2017.

9 **Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) update** (*Pages 27 - 30*)

To receive a report from the Public Health and Professional Services Manager providing an update on the current position with the disabled facilities grant (DFG) programme.

10 **Section 106 on local connections - briefing paper (to follow)**

To receive a briefing paper from the Housing Options Manager (to follow).

11 **Update on the housing of Syrian Refugees**

To receive a verbal update from the Housing Options Manager on the situation regarding the housing of Syrian Refugees.

12 **Start time of meetings**

To agree the start time of meetings for the remainder of the municipal year.

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

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

- Fuel Poverty

- Revenue and capital Outturn Report for 2016/17
- Performance and Risk
- Financial Monitoring
- Tenancy Policy
- Compensation Policy
- Update on the Wessex Scheme

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

Stephen Walford
Chief Executive
Monday, 15 May 2017

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

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

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

An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter. If you require any further information, or

If you would like a copy of the Agenda in another format (for example in large print) please contact Sarah Lees on:

Tel: 01884 234310

Fax:

E-Mail: slees@middevon.gov.uk

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MID DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of a **MEETING** of the **HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP** held on 14 March 2017 at 2.15 pm

Present

Councillors Mrs E M Andrews, D R Coren, W J Daw, Mrs G Doe, P J Heal and J D Squire

Apologies

Councillors Mrs H Bainbridge, R J Dolley and F W Letch

Present

Officers Andrew Pritchard (Director of Operations), Claire Fry (Housing Services Manager), Michael Parker (Housing Options Manager), Roderick Hewson (Principal Accountant), Nicky Chandler (Auditor), Rosie Williams (Building Services Office Manager) and Sarah Lees (Member Services Officer)

68 **Apologies and Substitute Members**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mrs H Bainbridge, R J Dolley and F W Letch.

69 **Public Question Time**

There were no members of the public present.

70 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2017 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

71 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman had the following announcements to make:

- He introduced Andrew Pritchard, the new Director of Operations, to the Group.
- He informed the Group that this would be his last meeting as Chairman of the Group since he would be taking up the post of Chairman of the Council in May.

Councillor Mrs E M Andrews thanked the Chairman of behalf of the Group for his Chairmanship over the last few years and referred to his ability to be fair and to always allow everybody a chance to speak.

72 Meeting Management

The Chairman informed the Group that he would be rearranging the order of several items on the agenda as follows:

- Item 10, Rechargeable Service, would be taken as the next item of business.
- Item 11, Houses in Multiple Occupation, would be taken after the Private Sector fees and charges item since they were closely linked.

73 Rechargeable Service (00:05:00)

The Group received a presentation from the Building Services Office Manager outlining the key features of the Rechargeable Service which included the following:

- Record keeping had improved which had allowed for more repairs to be recharged.
- The Tenancy Agreement stated that there would be a charge for missed appointments. There were also warnings in the repairs handbook.
- The types of repairs that were recharged included the following:
 - Blocked toilets
 - Appliance faults
 - Call out for leaks
 - Installing own lights and showers
- Repairs were booked verbally by phone and a record kept of all attempted calls. Text messaging was also used.
- Customer First use a computer programme which helps them interact with tenants ringing the Council to report a fault. It provides scripts which enable officers to talk through an appliance check giving tenants every opportunity to avoid a rechargeable visit.

The Group were shown a list showing the type of repairs undertaken in recent months and the costs involved.

Discussion took place regarding:

- The handyman service which tenants could be referred to if they were elderly or unable to ask a family member or neighbour for help.
- The need for some flexibility whilst also managing expectations.

It was **AGREED** that a list of all repairs incurring a charge be sent to all Members.

74 Vulnerability Policy (0029:50)

The Group had before it a report * from the Housing Services Manager explaining the rationale for a new policy for the Housing Service relating to identifying and supporting vulnerable tenants.

The contents of the report were outlined and reference was made to the fact that it was important that all agencies working with the Housing Service knew how vulnerability was identified. It was explained that people could step in and out of vulnerability. The service had reviewed the support they provided to people coming to them via the homelessness route. The policy explained what services were

available to support vulnerable people, for example hearing loops, and the support offered to people with mental health issues.

Discussion followed with regard to:

- Statutory duties in relation to homeless people.
- The experience and professionalism of the Neighbourhood Teams who worked imaginatively and creatively to house and support people.
- The Housing Service worked very closely with the police and social services.
- Officers were trained on a regular basis on how to respond to vulnerable tenants in the most appropriate way.
- The need to make the best use of the housing stock.
- Temporary accommodation placements were monitored on a regular basis.
- The needs of neighbours were also taken into consideration wherever possible.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet recommends to Council the adoption of the new Vulnerability Policy.

(Proposed by the Chairman)

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

75 **Telecare Policy (00:52:40)**

The Group had before it a report * of the Housing Services Manager explaining the rationale for a new policy for the Housing Service relating to the lifeline alarm service.

It was explained that as at 23 February 2017, 1198 residents had signed up to the alarm service which had generated income in excess of £221k. However, it was about much more than an alarm system and included other equipment such as smoke detectors and large face watches which were all designed to encourage people to remain and live independently in their home. Charges were varied and the policy set out how the Housing Service responded to non-payment. Many tenants were vulnerable and there needed to be a tailored and sensitive approach.

The Group discussed the peace of mind provided to the family and friends of the tenant with an alarm system.

RECOMMENDED that the Cabinet recommends to Council the adoption of the new Telecare Policy.

(Proposed by Cllr W J Daw and seconded by Cllr Mrs G Doe)

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

76 **Private Sector Housing Fees and Charges (01:01:20)**

The Group had before it a report * from the Public Health & Professional Services Manager providing Members with the revised fees and charges for statutory and discretionary functions within the Private Sector Housing team. The Private Sector Housing team carried out duties to ensure that private accommodation met minimum

standards. In particular there were regulations for the licensing, management and use of houses in multiple occupation (HMO), carbon monoxide detectors, smoke alarms and hazards within the home.

The contents of the report were summarised and discussion took place with regard to the following:

- The range of enforcement options available.
- The Council was not looking to make a profit but to recover costs.
- New requirements as a result of new legislation.
- The benchmarking that had taken place with other Devon authorities.
- The rationale behind the proposed fees as a calculation of officer time.
- The seriousness of carbon monoxide poisoning and the Fixed Penalty Notices in relation to this.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet that the Private Sector revised fees and charges be approved.

(Proposed by Cllr D R Coren and seconded by Cllr Mrs G Doe)

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

77 **Houses in multiple occupation (01:21:05)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a briefing paper * from the Private Sector Housing Lead Officer providing an update on the current position with mandatory Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing. It also provided details on the expected legislative changes that were due in spring 2017 and the potential impact this would have on the service.

It was explained that the government was looking to extend the HMO regime. In Mid Devon there were currently 9 HMO licensed properties, however, the team were in the process of developing a project to identify potential licensable HMO's to ensure compliance with the legislation. Recently there had been a government consultation on extending the scope of the criteria for mandatory licensing and this had proposed the removal of the restriction around storeys allowing all HMO's with 5 or more people, forming 2 or more households with shared facilities regardless of the number of storeys to be included in mandatory licensing. The team were in the process of establishing what impact these changes would have on the number of properties that required a licence. The Group would be updated once more was known and the regulations had been released.

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

78 **Financial Monitoring - for the 9 months to December 2016 (01:30:15)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Finance, Assets & Resources presenting a financial update in respect of the income and expenditure so far in the year.

Key highlights within the report included the following:

- The General Fund was forecasted to be overspent by £64k with £31k of this falling under the remit of this Group.
- The largest variance related to some salary savings.
- The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was due to be underspent by £250k.
- The largest variance in the HRA related to savings due to restructuring of staffing across several teams as well as several smaller savings across operational budgets.
- Garage income was ahead of target.

Discussion took place with regard to publicising vacant garages and using the knowledge of Ward Members to identify vacant units in their own areas.

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

79 **Performance and Risk Q3 (01:37:55)**

The Group had before it, and **NOTED**, a report * from the Director of Corporate Affairs and Business Transformation providing Members with an update on performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for 2016/17 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

It was explained that the collection of rents continued to do well and the average number of days to re-let a property had reduced. There was one outstanding property where it had not been possible to check the validity of a gas certificate. This property was now considered to be abandoned. The Council was seeking possession for non-payment of rent. The gas meter associated with the property was located internally which meant that it was not possible to isolate the supply.

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

80 **Homelessness Reduction Bill - briefing paper (01:40:44)**

The Group had before it a briefing paper * from the Housing Services Manager and the Housing Options and Enabling Manager providing details regarding the Homelessness Reduction Bill 2016-2017 which had now completed its progress through the House of Commons and was shortly due to be debated in the House of Lords.

It was explained that when a person was homeless or threatened with homelessness, the Council were currently obliged to deal with them within 28 days of this happening. Under the new legislation the number of days would increase to 56 days. This had the potential to impact upon the resources available within the Housing Options team. Essentially the new legislation would place more of a responsibility on local authorities to tackle homelessness.

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

81 **Chairman Annual Report 2016/17 (01:44:10)**

The Group had before it a draft annual report * by the Chairman on the work of the Policy Development Group during 2016/17. There being no suggested amendments to the report it was **AGREED** that it would be included with the Council Summons for the meeting on 26 April 2017.

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

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

- Election of Chairman
- Election of Vice Chairman
- Performance & Risk outturn report for 2016/17
- Update on empty homes
- Update on the Wessex scheme
- Update on Syrian refugees
- Section 106 on local connections
- Disabled Facility Grant update
- Start time of future meetings

(The meeting ended at 4.05 pm)

CHAIRMAN

HOMES PDG
23RD MAY 2017:

PERFORMANCE AND RISK REPORT FOR 2016-17

Cabinet Member Cllr Ray L Stanley
Responsible Officer Director of Operations, Andrew Pritchard

Reason for Report: To provide Members with an update on performance against the corporate plan and local service targets for 2016/17 as well as providing an update on the key business risks.

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

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

Financial Implications: None identified

Legal Implications: None

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

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

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Appendix 1 provides Members with details of performance against the Corporate Plan and local service targets for the 2016-17 financial year.
- 1.2 Appendix 2 shows the section of the Corporate Risk Register which relates to the Homes Portfolio. See 3.0 below.
- 1.3 Appendix 3 shows the profile of all risks for Homes for this quarter.
- 1.4 All appendices are produced from the corporate Service Performance And Risk management system (SPAR).

2.0 Performance

- 2.1 Due to issues with the building contractor, there have been no new Council Houses built in 2016/17. However, a new contract has been agreed with a different supplier, and they have given completion dates on the outstanding projects in Birchen Lane and Palmerston Park, as 17/11/17 and 18/05/18 respectively.

- 2.2 The **Percentage of Properties with a Valid Gas Safety Certificate** has fallen below 100% as there are currently 3 properties where tenants are refusing access to the Council. However, all the cases have been referred to Legal services to obtain access.
- 2.3 The performance indicators for Rents show that the service has performed very well once again and the **Rent Collected as a Proportion of Rent Owed** was over 100% for the fourth consecutive month in March 2017.
- 2.4 **Rent Arrears as a Proportion of Annual Rent Debit** in March 2017 were 0.60%, against a target of 1% which is encouraging as it shows arrears have steadily reduced compared to the figures in January (0.95%) and February (0.94%).
- 2.5 Following a major exercise by the Private Sector Housing team of inspecting all those properties that had been empty for 2 years or more, a new revised **empty homes** plan was implemented from September 2016. This has proven to be extremely successful with 33 empty homes being brought back into use, against an annual target of 15 for 2016/17.
- 2.6 When benchmarking information is available it is included.

3.0 Risk

- 3.1 The Corporate risk register has been reviewed by Management Team (MT) and updated. Risk reports to committees include risks with a total score of total score of 10 or more. (See Appendix 2)

4.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

- 4.1 That the PDG reviews the performance indicators and risks for 2016-17 that are outlined in this report and feeds back any areas of concern to the Cabinet.

Contact for more Information: Catherine Yandle, Audit Team Leader ext 4975

Circulation of the Report: Management Team and Cabinet Member

Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Monthly report for 2016-2017
 Arranged by Aims
 Filtered by Aim: Priorities Homes
 For MDDC - Services

Key to Performance Status:

Performance Indicators:	No Data	Well below target	Below target	On target	Above target	Well above target
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* indicates that an entity is linked to the Aim by its parent Service

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Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Priorities: Homes

Aims: Build more council houses

Performance Indicators

Title	Prev Year (Period)	Prev Year End	Annual Target	Apr Act	May Act	Jun Act	Jul Act	Aug Act	Sep Act	Oct Act	Nov Act	Dec Act	Jan Act	Feb Act	Mar Act	Actual to Date	Head of Service / Date Manager	Officer Notes
Build Council Houses	14	14	30	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	0	n/a	n/a	0	0	Nick Sanderson	(Quarter 4) New contractor, Enelco Building Contractors (EBC) will take site possession of Palmerston Park and Birchen Lane on 22/05/17. the completion date for 4 Houses in Birchen Lane is 17/11/17 and for 26 houses at Palmerton Park it is 18/05/18. (AB)

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

Performance Indicators

Title	Prev Year (Period)	Prev Year End	Annual Target	Apr Act	May Act	Jun Act	Jul Act	Aug Act	Sep Act	Oct Act	Nov Act	Dec Act	Jan Act	Feb Act	Mar Act	Actual to Date	Head of Service / Date Manager	Officer Notes
Number of affordable homes delivered (gross)	27	27	80	n/a	n/a	16	n/a	n/a	19	n/a	n/a	27	n/a	n/a	49	49	Angela Haigh	(Quarter 1 - 4) The target was not met this year due to the stalling or delay on a number of residential developments. (AH)
Deliver 15 homes per year by bringing Empty Houses into use	8	8	15	0	1	2	3	5	5	5	10	17	21	25	33	33	Simon Newcombe	

Aims: Other

Performance Indicators

Title	Prev Year (Period)	Prev Year End	Annual Target	Apr Act	May Act	Jun Act	Jul Act	Aug Act	Sep Act	Oct Act	Nov Act	Dec Act	Jan Act	Feb Act	Mar Act	Actual to Date	Head of Service / Date Manager	Officer Notes

Corporate Plan PI Report Homes

Priorities: Homes

Aims: Other

Performance Indicators

Title	Prev Year (Period)	Prev Year End	Annual Target	Apr Act	May Act	Jun Act	Jul Act	Aug Act	Sep Act	Oct Act	Nov Act	Dec Act	Jan Act	Feb Act	Mar Act	Actual to Date	Head of Service / Manager	Officer Notes
<u>Local Plan Review</u>	n/a	n/a		n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Yes	Yes	Jenny Clifford	
<u>Number of Successful Homelessness Prevention Cases</u>	295	295	No Target - for information only	n/a	n/a	70	n/a	n/a	136	n/a	n/a	224	n/a	n/a	295	295	Angela Haigh	
<u>% Decent Council Homes</u>	100.0%	100.0%	100.00%	99.93%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	99.97%	99.97%	99.97%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	Angela Haigh, Nick Sanderson	
<u>% Properties With a Valid Gas Safety Certificate</u>	99.9%	99.9%	100.00%	99.86%	99.78%	99.91%	99.87%	99.82%	99.96%	99.68%	99.95%	99.95%	99.95%	99.95%	99.86%	99.86%	Angela Haigh	(March) As at 31 March 2017 there were three properties for which we did not have a valid gas certificate. All these cases were due to tenants not allowing us access and are currently with Legal Services who are trying to obtain access. (AH)
<u>Rent Collected as a Proportion of Rent Owed</u>	99.7%	99.7%	100.00%	95.52%	96.76%	97.31%	97.77%	99.76%	99.56%	99.66%	99.67%	100.52%	100.05%	100.08%	100.18%	100.18%	Angela Haigh	
<u>Rent Arrears as a</u>	0.7%	0.7%	1.00%	0.87%	1.00%	1.04%	1.08%	0.10%	1.02%	1.00%	1.00%	0.70%	0.95%	0.94%	0.60%	0.60%	Angela Haigh	

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Corporate Plan PI Report Homes																		
Priorities: Homes																		
Aims: Other																		
Performance Indicators																		
Title	Prev Year (Period)	Prev Year End	Annual Target	Apr Act	May Act	Jun Act	Jul Act	Aug Act	Sep Act	Oct Act	Nov Act	Dec Act	Jan Act	Feb Act	Mar Act	Actual to Date	Head of Service / Manager	Officer Notes
<u>Proportion of Annual Rent Debit</u>																		
<u>Dwelling rent lost due to voids</u>	0.75%	0.75%	no target - for information only	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	Angela Haigh	
<u>Average Days to Re-Let Local Authority Housing</u>	15.5days	15.5days	16.0days	21.9days	19.4days	18.3days	18.0days	17.6days	17.3days	16.6days	16.6days	16.5days	16.4days	15.8days	15.7days	15.7days	Angela Haigh	

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Homes PDG Risk Management Report - Appendix 2

Report for 2016-2017

For Homes - Cllr Ray Stanley Portfolio

Filtered by Flag:Include: * CRR 5+ / 15+

For MDDC - Services

Filtered by Performance Status: Exclude Risk Status: Low

Not Including Risk Child Projects records or Mitigating Action records

Key to Performance Status:

Risks: No Data (0+) High (15+) Medium (6+) Low (1+)

Homes PDG Risk Management Report - Appendix 2

Risk: Five year housing land Supply Risk: Housing land supply. Inability to demonstrate the required 5 year housing land supply (+20%) until Local Plan Review in place

Effects (Impact/Severity): Effects (Impact /severity):

- Receipt of speculative housing applications in unplanned locations with less community benefit and less infrastructure / coordination compared with allocated sites.
- Objections
- Pressure on major application appeal performance (Government indicator of quality of decision making). Risk of intervention: loss of fee and less local control over major application decision making.

Causes (Likelihood): - Lack of sufficient housing completions, housing market conditions.

Service: Planning

Current Status: High (15)

Current Risk Severity: 3 - Medium

Current Risk Likelihood: 5 - Very High

Head of Service: Jenny Clifford

Review Note: Found to not have sufficient housing supply at appeal. Mitigation principally via new Local Plan once adopted. Close monitoring of applications, decisions and associated appeal performance.

Homes PDG Risk Management Report - Appendix 2

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

It is likely that the new Homelessness Reduction Bill currently being read in Parliament will also have an impact on service demands in its current form.

Effects (Impact/Severity): - Dissatisfied customers and increase in complaints.
- This will involve an increase in officer time in dealing with Homelessness prevention and early intervention.
- Possible increase in temporary accommodation usage.

Causes (Likelihood): - Social and economic factors like the recession and mortgage repossessions increase the number of homeless.
- Lack of private sector housing.

Service: Housing Services

Current Status: High (16)	Current Risk Severity: 4 - High	Current Risk Likelihood: 4 - High
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Head of Service: Nick Sanderson

Review Note: Housing Options team keep up to date with case law updates and comply with legislation changes as and when required.

Risk: Impact of Welfare Reform and other emerging National Housing

Policy Changes to benefits available to tenants could impact upon their ability to pay. Other initiatives could impact upon our ability to deliver our 30 year Business Plan.

Effects (Impact/Severity):

Causes (Likelihood):

Service: Housing Services

Current Status: High (15)	Current Risk Severity: 5 - Very High	Current Risk Likelihood: 3 - Medium
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Head of Service: Nick Sanderson

Review Note:

Risk: Widespread fire in block of flats Fire in our multiple occupancy properties, could result in widespread damage, injury or even death

Effects (Impact/Severity):

Causes (Likelihood):

Service: Housing Services

Current Status: Medium (10)	Current Risk Severity: 5 - Very High	Current Risk Likelihood: 2 - Low
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Head of Service: Nick Sanderson

Review Note: The Corporate H & S Officer has now carried out Fire Risk Assessments in the common rooms at Broad Lane and Westfield Road.

Housing Caretakers inspect communal areas on a 5 week cycle, which includes checking fire exit doors and signage.

Any issues are reported to the relevant Neighbourhood Officer.

Risk Matrix Homes Appendix 3

Report
 Filtered by Service: Housing Services
 Current settings

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

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HOMES PDG
23 MAY 2017

UPDATE ON EMPTY HOMES

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Ray Stanley
Responsible Officer: Simon Newcombe, Public Health and Professional Services Manager

Reason for Report: To provide an update on the progress of the empty homes project following the briefing in January 2017.

RECOMMENDATION: To note the contents of this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The empty homes activity links directly to the aspirations of the corporate plan. In particular, Economy - Improving and regenerating our town centres by intervening in empty homes, and ensuring that flats over shops are safe for occupation; and Homes – Facilitating the housing growth that Mid Devon needs, including affordable homes by bringing empty homes back into use as housing across the various tenures including private rented, affordable rent and home ownership.

Financial Implications: There is a capital budget in place to support the empty homes activity which can be used to support more serious enforcement interventions such as compulsory purchase. This budget was not required during 2016/17, nonetheless it remains available in the current year and interventions of this nature may be required in the future where there is a lack of engagement from property owners. Capital outlaid for this reason, and also where urgent works in default are required to improve property conditions, can be recovered.

There is revenue income available to the Council generated from the New Homes Bonus (NHB). All properties bought back into use may qualify for the NHB and are included in our annual out-turn figures. As outlined in section 2.6, during 2016/17 some 33 empty properties were bought back into use as a direct result of interventions by the Private Sector Housing team (Public Health) under its empty homes plan. NHB calculations depend on what Council Tax band the property is in – taking an average – bringing 33 empties back into occupation generates around £30k per annum. Based on the current 6-year dowry this will deliver circa £180k overall.

Members will be aware that income generation going forward from 2017/18 will become tighter with the NHB only being payable once a 0.4% baseline has been reached with the dowry period falling to 5-years (reducing further to a 4-year dowry from 2018/19).

Bringing empty properties back into use therefore makes a positive net financial contribution to the Council's revenue budget in addition to the wider beneficial social, housing and regeneration impacts.

Legal Implications: In those cases where it is appropriate to take formal action the relevant legislation will be followed.

Risk Assessment: The risks associated with this activity are low. If the empty homes activity was not undertaken some properties would continue to come back into use naturally but the numbers would reduce.

Equality Impact Assessment: This activity relates to empty properties and any action taken is based on the circumstances of the property therefore there are no adverse impacts on individuals with protected characteristics.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This report is to provide a further update on empty homes activity following on from the briefing to the PDG in January 2017.

1.2 The briefing in January identified the following next steps:

- In 2017 the team will focus on the highest priority properties in an attempt to bring those back into use.
- In November an email to update all ward councillors on empty homes activity was sent out. There was also a request asking for information on any known empty properties that are causing problems in the community for the team to check our records and then visit and prioritise as necessary.
- The team will continue to review the empty property list held by council tax for any changes on a monthly basis.
- The properties that have been empty for 6 months to 2 years will also be mapped and visited in stages to be prioritised.

1.3 Progress on these actions is discussed in section 2.0 below.

2.0 Progress

High Priority Properties

2.1 13 properties have been a priority for action. In the previous report 12 were highlighted. An additional property was added to the list following a complaint about a property that was not on the original list. Details on the current position with each of these properties can be found in the table below. Specific address and ownership details have been omitted for data protection purposes.

Ward	Engagement from owner	Current position	Any further action required
Canonsleigh	No engagement from the owner	May need to be demolished	Formal visit required with owner
Lowman	Full engagement from the owner	Work is now ongoing expected to complete September 2017	Monitor and revisit in 6 months

Ward	Engagement from owner	Current position	Any further action required
Cranmore	Engagement from one of the owners	Probate issues to be dealt with	Monitor and revisit in 6 months
Westexe	Full engagement from the owner	Seeking planning permission expected to be in use January 2018	Monitor and revisit in 6 months
Cullompton North	Limited engagement from the owner	Unknown until revisited with owner	Further information to be formally requested to inform type of action to be taken. Also need to undertake a full inspection.
Cullompton North	Full engagement from the owner	Recently obtained planning permission. Expected to be in use January 2018	Monitor and revisit in 6 months
Cullompton South	Full engagement from the owner	Major redevelopment proposed. Need to discuss with the Economic Development team	Monitor and revisit in 6 months
Upper Culm	Full engagement from the owner	Work is now ongoing expected September 2017	Monitor and revisit in 6 months
Taw Vale	Full engagement from the owner	With solicitors considering potential use	Monitor and revisit in 6 months
Upper Yeo	Full engagement from the owner	Being used as a second home, lots of work required.	Monitor and revisit in 6 months
Taw	Limited engagement from the owner	Asked building control to get involved due to falling render onto the highway	Formal action to be taken in regard of this property and the neighbouring property, owned by the same person.
Taw	Limited engagement from the owner	As above	As above
Cadbury	Full engagement from the owner	Carried out works to improve the overgrown garden. Carrying out work to live in as own home. Work to start September 17	Monitor and revisit in 6 months

2.2 The rows highlighted in grey are those properties that require further intervention.

Councillor involvement

2.3 Following the email sent out in November there has been some contact from councillors regarding empty properties in their areas. The team have notified the relevant ward councillors that we are taking action on certain properties in their wards as detailed in the table above.

Reviewing the empty homes list

2.4 The team obtain a monthly update from Council Tax on the numbers of empty homes and any changes in the data are identified.

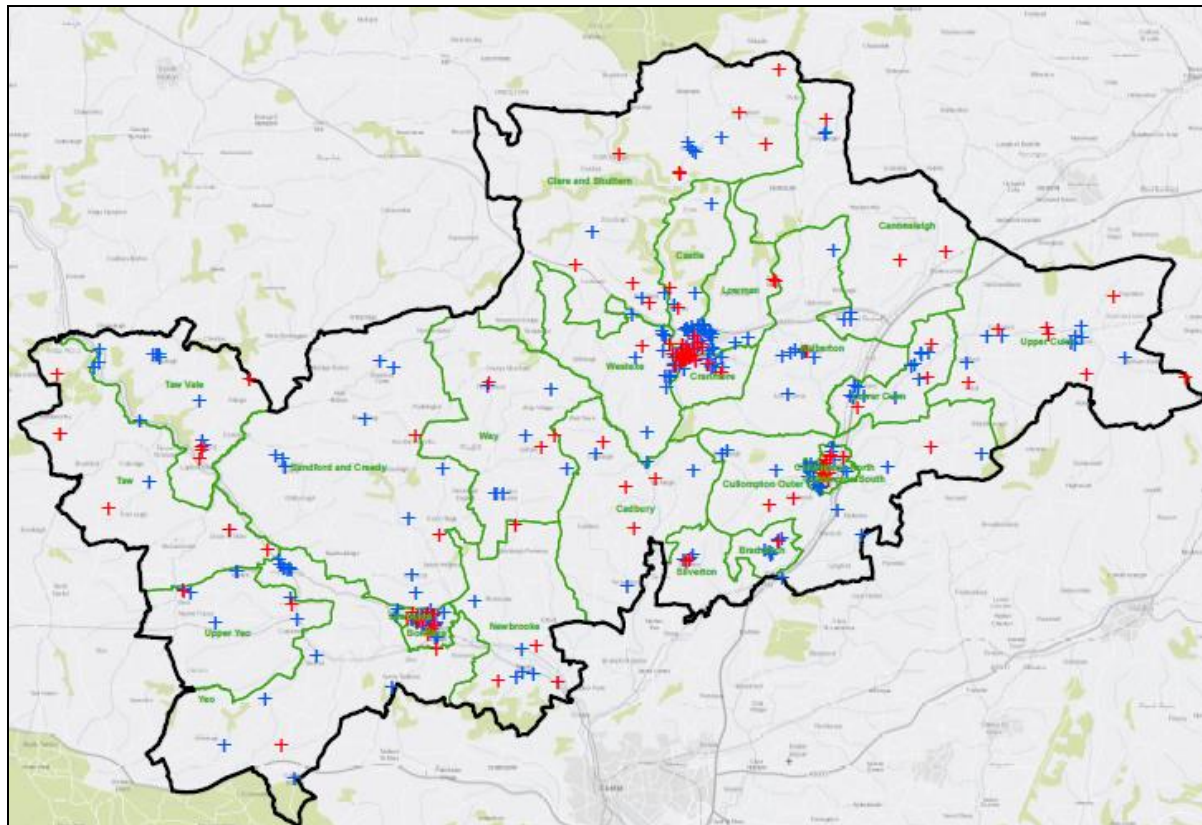
2.5 The focus for the team has been on the 13 properties identified as the highest priority however contact has been made with all 132 properties that have been empty for 2 years or more. Although the medium and low priority properties are not being considered for enforcement action at this stage they are being monitored and targeted through regular letters.

2.6 This activity has resulted in **33 homes** being brought back into use in 2016/17 against a target of 15.

Properties empty for 6 months – 2 years

2.7 These addresses have now been mapped and there are currently 776 properties that have been empty for more than 6 months.

2.8 Below is a copy of the current map that is available.



Map showing council tax data of all properties that have been empty for 6 months to 2 years or more as of September 2016 (+ 2 years or longer + 6 months to 2 years)

2.9 Working in partnership with the wider Public Health service, the team intends to visit these properties to prioritise them for action over the course of this year.

3.0 **Next Steps**

3.1 Over the course of the next 6 months the team will be concentrating on the following:

- Updating the empty homes plan;
- Introducing the empty homes task group to provide a focused and joined up response to enforcement;
- Procure a property auction partner to help empty home owners to sell their properties through auction and to assist us in selling properties where enforced sale procedures have been used;
- Visiting the 6 months to 2 years empty properties on an area by area basis.

Contact for more Information: Tanya Wenham, Lead Officer (Private Sector Housing), 01884 244610, twenham@middevon.gov.uk or Simon Newcombe (Public Health Manager), 01884 244615, snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the Report: **Cabinet Member**
 Director of Operations
 Leadership Team

List of Background Papers: None

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HOMES PDG
23 MAY 2017

DISABLED FACILITY GRANTS (DFG) UPDATE

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr Ray Stanley
Responsible Officer: Simon Newcombe, Public Health and Professional Services Manager

Reason for Report: To provide an update on the current position with the disabled facilities grant (DFG) programme

RECOMMENDATION: To note the contents of this report.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The provision of grants to adapt properties for disabled people to allow them to live independently in their homes links directly to the aspirations of the corporate plan. In particular, Homes – Facilitating the housing growth that Mid Devon needs, including affordable homes; and Community - Promote physical activity, health and wellbeing.

Financial Implications: Funding for the DFG programme is provided through a government allocation called the Better Care Fund. The allocation is administered to the County Council who are then responsible for distributing the funding to the District Councils. The allocation is currently sufficient to cover the local demand and therefore there should no longer be a need for the Council to add its own funding to top up the allocation as it has done historically.

Legal Implications: The Council has a statutory duty to administer the DFG programme under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Risk Assessment: The two main risks associated with the DFG programme relate to the funding. Failing to deliver the programme may result in funding being returned to the Better Care Fund; insufficient funds may result in the Council being unable to deliver its duty. The risk in both cases is considered low based on current performance.

Equality Impact Assessment: The Disabled facilities grant programme positively impacts on the protected characteristics of age and disability. It does not have an impact on the other protected characteristics as these are not taken into account as part of the eligibility criteria for a grant.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A number of changes have been made to the way in which the DFG programme is being administered by the private sector housing team and this report provides an update on the performance of the team.

2.0 Summary of changes

2.1 During the summer of 2016 the existing process was fully reviewed identifying areas where there was scope for streamlining and updating.

2.2 The main areas identified were:

- Review the method of providing referrals
- Review the fast track process
- Look at the option of requiring one quote to save time.
- Introduce a triage approach where a preliminary means test is issued to the client before the grant progresses. Once the form is returned, an initial means test is undertaken and the client is advised of the result so they can decide if they wish to go ahead.
- Introduce a surveyor to undertake site visits and produce plans and schedule for agreement by the council and client.
- Application form to be completed by an officer once all quotes and permissions have been received.
- Introduce a form for the client to complete to agree the works and identify the method of getting quotes.
- Agree with procurement the use of the Housing depot (Old Road) as an option with only one quote.
- Introduce a method of controlling the input of information into the system. Centralise a significant part of the process with one officer. Identify the elements that each person is responsible for so that officers are more familiar with the system. Introduce a part of the process conducted by the lead officer only to ensure the records are properly reviewed before approval.
- Notify land registry on completion of the grant when a charge needs to be added to the property, not before.

2.3 By October 2016 all the above points had been introduced and a new process was fully implemented. This included new forms, letters, and certificates. The grant conditions were updated to reflect the legislation and a new process with timelines was introduced. The surveying skills in the Housing building services were utilised to provide plans and schedules of work and a service level agreement put in place.

3.0 Performance

3.1 The success of these changes has been measured in respect of the time taken to complete different aspects of the grant process.

3.2 The table below shows the comparative performance for the time taken to deal with a referral when it is received to the point a valid application is made and the time taken to approve a grant once the application has been received.

There is a statutory time frame of 6 months to approve an application for a grant.

DFG performance monitoring – Timescales 2016/17

	October to March 2016/17*	April to September 2016	2016/17	2015/16
Average number of days/weeks from receipt of the client Statement of Needs (SON) (Occupational Therapist referral) to receipt of valid application	63 days/ 9 weeks	117 days/ 17 weeks	98 days/ 14 weeks	137 days/ 19.5 weeks
Average number of days from valid application to approval	3 days	8 days	5 days	7 days

*New procedures introduced October 2016

4.0 Budget

4.1 In 2016/17 the total government allocation for Mid Devon through the Better Care Fund for disabled facilities grants was £561,385. In common with all Devon district authorities it was agreed by the Mid Devon and Devon County Council that 10% of the allocation would be retained by the County Council for redistribution to those areas where there was additional demand.

4.2 This meant that Mid Devon received an allocation of £505,246. The private sector housing team spent and committed a total of £551,580 and therefore was able to apply for the 10% that had been retained and this has been successfully invoiced. In total the team committed 98% of the original allocation.

4.3 In 2015/16 the total government allocation was £590,000 and the team spent and committed only £360,000 which was 61% of the allocation. Therefore performance has significantly improved over the last year.

4.4 In 2015/16 61 referrals were received and in 2016/17 64 referrals were received. Therefore the difference in delivery is not related to a drop in demand but is likely to be as a result of the efficiency of the service at the time.

5.0 Conclusion and next steps

5.1 Overall the performance of the team in the delivery of the DFG programme has improved significantly over the last year. This has resulted in better customer service ensuring that all customers in need of an adaptation are being dealt with efficiently.

5.2 The Better Care Fund allocation for 2017/18 has now been announced as £614,684. We are working with Devon County Council and the other districts on a county wide housing assistance policy which considers alternative grants and assistance to help disabled people in a way that better meets the

priorities of the Better Care Fund (BCF). Once a draft has been agreed in principle this will be brought back to the PDG for discussion.

- 5.3 As a minimum we anticipate having adequate capital funding from the BCF to meet demand and therefore our statutory DFG administration duties.

Contact for more Information: Tanya Wenham Lead Officer (Private Sector Housing), 01884 244610 twenham@middevon.gov.uk or Simon Newcombe (Public Health Manager), 01884 244615 snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk

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