

**HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP  
15 MARCH 2022**

**MID DEVON HOUSING DELIVERY REPORT AND UPDATE**

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

**Reason for Report & Recommendation:** To provide an update to Members on tenancy and building services performance and activity within Mid Devon Housing.

**Recommendation: That Members note the report**

**Financial Implications:** The activity of the landlord service, known as Mid Devon Housing (MDH) is accounted for with the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is ring fenced and subject to specific financial controls.

**Budget and Policy Framework:** Policies agreed by the Homes Policy Development Group govern the work of the landlord service. The HRA is funded in large part by rental income and therefore maintaining the revenue stream must be a key priority for the Housing Service. Nonetheless, this report makes no budget or policy recommendations.

**Legal Implications:** The Housing Act 1985 applies with regard to the management of Council housing. The relationship with tenants is set out in our Tenancy Agreement. This details the rights and responsibilities of both parties including those obligations relating to repairs. The tenancy agreement also takes account of other relevant legislation including that which amended the original Housing Act, the Localism Act 2011 and the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

**Risk Assessment:** The Council has approximately 3,000 homes in management which represents a huge investment. Failure to provide an effective housing management service has the potential to result in failure to meet legal and statutory obligations including those relating to health and safety issues, repairs obligations tenancy fraud, and reputational issues which could result in our tenants feeling stigmatised. Failure to collect rental income could impact the ability to fund necessary management and maintenance activities.

**Equality Impact Assessment:** There is a suite of housing related policies. The use of these helps to ensure that Service delivery is consistent and fair. These are subject to ongoing review with the aim of more closely aligning them with the regulatory standards as set out in the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing. There is a regulatory requirement for registered providers of social housing to tailor their service to meet the needs of the tenants and the diversity data is requested from tenants at sign up to enable compliance to be monitored.

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

**Impact on Climate Change:** We recognise that the provision of sustainable communities is important. As part of our commitment to meeting the provisions of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard within the Regulatory Framework, the Council offers a menu of involvement which provides opportunities for tenants to get involved in Service delivery. We will be reviewing our offer to tenants with regard to their involvement in the running of the Housing Service and as part of this we will be looking at ways to allow people to get involved online thereby reducing travelling expenses. We use social media to promote sustainability and publish information relating to a variety of topics including fuel efficiency, recycling and healthy living.

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

## 1.0 Introduction/Background

- 1.1 Mid Devon Housing (MDH) has approximately 3,000 homes in management. Responsibility for repairs and maintenance lies with the Operations Manager for Building Services. The Operations Manager for Housing Services oversees work relating to income recovery, tenant engagement, and tenancy and estate.
- 1.2 The bringing together of the Building and Housing Services together into a single service creation of the MDH brand demonstrates that the two sides of the business are working more closely together now. As such, following a recommendation, at the last PDG member agreed there was benefit in received a combined housing service report going forward on a quarterly basis under a single MDH report.
- 1.3 As a registered provider of social housing (RP), the Council is also required to adhere to the provisions of the regulatory framework for social housing (GovUK, 6 April 2017 and Social Housing White Paper November 2020) and this applies to all areas of the landlord service. There is a requirement to put tenants “at the heart of everything that we do” and this commitment to a new combined service will facilitate this, taking into account that relevant policies and procedures apply to all the teams working to deliver services to MDH tenants.
- 1.4 Further influencing how we report service performance going forward are the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). The proposed TSMs would provide data about social housing landlords’ performance and the quality of their services. This is intended to help tenants hold their landlord to account and help RSH in its future consumer regulation role, as part of implementing the package of changes to consumer regulation set out in the Social Housing White Paper.
- 1.5 TSMs will apply to all social housing landlords, including local authorities, housing associations and other registered social housing providers and the consultation is running between 9 December 2021 and 3 March 2022. As result of this a new format for reporting our overarching performance in the

future will be informed by the consultation outcomes and remains in development presently.

1.6 The consultation sets out 22 proposed TSMs for consultation across the five themes in the White Paper:

- keeping properties in good repairs
- maintaining building safety
- effective complaints handling
- respectful and helpful tenant engagement, and
- responsible neighbourhood management.

1.7 Our monthly performance document contains some data which relates to these indicators and this is posted on the Council's webpages as a matter of routine. However, there is an expectation that the metrics will have to be expanded to ensure that the Council is able to collect, publish and submit information about performance against the TSMs to the RSH in line with expectations as defined by statutory guidance and legislation. This will sit alongside any local reporting such as may be defined by our corporate or MDH level priorities.

## 2.0 Enforcement activity and priorities

2.1 The Neighbourhood team is divided into two and the Estates team is responsible for delivery of performance associated with the responsibilities set out in the Neighbourhood and Community Standard.

2.2 The service business continuity plan was partially implemented at the end of August 2021. There were work-force issues and these continued throughout most of Quarter 3, which covered the period from 1 October 2021 until the end of December 2021. These issues, which arose from sickness and turnover of staff, continued until November 2021. Two very experienced staff left the team during the autumn with one leaving the employment of the Council altogether and the other moving into a new role within the Housing Service. Replacements were recruited and started in post during the latter part of the quarter.

2.3 This had an inevitable impact upon service delivery. It should be noted that a temporary staff member was recruited to undertake the neighbourhood walkabouts which were diarised for the autumn in order to mitigate this. In the past, stakeholders including local residents, were invited to attend the inspections on our estates but since the start of the pandemic, the invitation has only been extended to Ward Members.

2.4 It is fair to say that the Estates team worked in a very reactive way during Quarter 3 and that this is reflected in the statistics shown in Annex 1. The team prioritised work relating to safeguarding, issues arising from serious anti-social behaviour and health and safety concerns. This conclusion is supported by the evidence in Annex 2 which show that 7 safeguarding referrals (7) were made to all agencies during the quarter. Safeguarding activities can be

very time-consuming with attendance at 'Team Around the Family' meetings and other multi-agency meetings.

2.5 Staff in the Income team continue to reach out to those tenants experiencing financial difficulty, trying to work with them in a collaborative way in order to support them to sustain their tenancies. Officers will commence possession action in line with policy and procedure if all attempts to work with tenants are fruitless. However, it can be noted in Annex 1 that the team served fewer notices of seeking possession during Quarter 3 than they did earlier in the year.

2.6 The team was also impacted by workforce issues. There was a vacancy arising from one experienced officer being successfully recruited to a more senior role and the other team members covered the vacancy until another experienced officer joined the Council from another social landlord. The team has also experienced issues arising from sickness but managed to maintain good performance through the quarter, with combined rent arrears standing at 2.1% at the end of December (reduced to 1.94% at the start of February).

### 3.0 Performance information

3.1 At the last meeting of the PDG, it was agreed that Members should receive a future quarterly service delivery report covering the combined activities of both housing and building services under a single Mid Devon Housing report. The last meeting of the PDG was held during Quarter 3 (1 October 2021 until 31 December 2021) and therefore reported on Quarter 2 (1 July 2021 until 30 September 2021).

3.2 The decision to receive a future quarterly service delivery report covering the combined activities of both housing and building services in a single MDH report was made when the reporting templates were still set to collect data relating to income recovery, and tenancy and estate management only. A new format is in development which will encompass data relating to the performance relating all areas of the business.

3.3 An initial, interim format for reporting performance on the Building Services side of MDH is set out herein and will be developed further to report on performance across all teams in the Service starting from Quarter 4 (from 1 January 2022 until 31 March 2022).

3.4 Commencing in the new reporting year for 2022/23 onwards, subject to the conclusions of the Government consultation on the key TSMs, we will finalise a consistent performance template. Within the uncertainties in awaiting a formal outcome to the consultation the exact timeline will be kept under review but the earliest we are likely to be in a position to present a finalised, updated format and set of metrics will be for performance within Quarter 2 22/23, reported during Quarter 3 in autumn of this year.

3.4 In the meantime, Members are asked to note the following performance information which shows how the different teams are performing in relation to managing tenancies, income and keeping the homes in our management safe and well maintained.

- Annex 1 – Tenancy enforcement activities
- Annex 2 – Tenancy safeguarding activities
- Annex 3 – Building repairs and maintenance

3.5 It should be noted that the Decent Homes Standard is also currently under review and that it is likely to be expanded to include decarbonisation and further safety measures under the provisions of the Social Housing White Paper.

3.6 The Home Standard within the regulatory framework for social housing contains certain obligations and expectations which relate to a number of safety measures. The Council must adhere to these. The RSH has found maladministration and serious detriment to tenants in several high profile cases where the provisions of the Home Standard were breached. The importance of good data records is key to delivering good performance with regard to asset management. Poor record keeping and overdue surveys and assessments can result in advertent breaches of the Home Standard.

3.7 The combined MDH service uses an integrated electronic housing management system and asset management tool. It also works in partnership with a gas contractor which maintains their own independent records. This should offer some assurance to Members and other stakeholders with regard to compliance with the requirements of the Home Standard. It should be noted that it is good practice for RPs to report any identified breaches to the RSH as soon as possible after they come to light in order to show an openness and willingness to keep tenants safe.

#### 4.0 **Safeguarding Activities**

4.1 Annex 2 of the report shows work undertaken in connection with safeguarding. This is the responsibility of all staff in MDH who all receive relevant training to enable them to identify and escalate any concerns which they may become aware of. The Estates team leads on work with other agencies relating to safeguarding and it should be noted that another case involving domestic violence was opened in Quarter 3.

4.1 As previously noted, there were 7 referrals made to safeguarding agencies and the majority of these would have been made by the Neighbourhood Officers in the Estates team.

#### 5.0 **Recommendation**

5.1 Members are recommended to note the report.

**Contact for more Information:** Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing email: [snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk).

#### **Circulation of the Report:**

Members of the Homes PDG

Cllr Bob Evans, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services  
Leadership Team  
Corporate Management Team  
All Operations Managers  
Legal Services

**List of Background Papers:**

The Regulatory framework for social housing:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards>

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

Regulator for Social Housing, Consultation on Tenant Satisfaction Measures, 9 December 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulator-of-social-housing-consults-on-tenant-satisfaction-measures>

## Annex 1 – Tenancy enforcement activities

<b>Neighbourhood &amp; Community Standard – Housing Revenue Account – Estates Team</b>						
	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Fraud cases opened	0	0	0		0	
Fraud cases referred to an external investigator	0	0	0		0	
Acceptable Behaviour Agreements signed	2	1	0		3	
Good Neighbourhood Agreements signed	2	0	0		2	
Community Protection Notice warnings issued	0	0	0		0	
Community Protection Notices issued	0	0	0		0	
Possession Actions commenced on grounds of ASB	0	0	0		0	
Closure Orders – obtained	0	0	0		0	
Injunctions sought	0	0	0		0	
Evictions on grounds of anti-social behaviour/ other tenancy breach	0	0	0		0	

<b>Income Recovery – Housing Revenue Account – Income Team</b>						
	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>YTD</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Current rent arrears at quarter end %	1.53	1.46	2.10		-	Target <5%. Dwellings and garage rents. Above pre-pandemic levels but below projections and better than sector COVID-19 average
Notice of Seeking possession served	35	23	13		71	
Judgement obtained	1	0	0		1	
Warrants issued	0	0	0		0	
Evictions on grounds of rent arrears	1	1	0		2	

## Annex 2 – Tenancy safeguarding activities

Neighbourhood & Community Standard – Housing Revenue Account						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Domestic abuse cases opened	1	1	1		3	
Domestic abuse cases referred to Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)	0	0	0		0	
Safeguarding referrals made (to all agencies)	2	7	7		16	

### Annex 3 – Building repairs and maintenance

Home Standard – Housing Revenue Account – Building Services Team						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Decent Homes Standard %	99.9	99.7	99.7		99.7	Target 100%. The delay in modernisations contracts last year due to COVID-19, as well as self-isolation requirements this year has impacted on this, however, good progress is being made on catching up. Some will not meet standard due to tenant refusal of non-statutory upgrades and repairs e.g. replacement of solid fuel heating systems and will await a void opportunity
Emergency repairs completed on time %	100.0	100.0	100.0		100.0	682/682 repairs. Target 100%
Urgent repairs completed on time %	99.7	99.2	99.3		99.4	1033/1040 repairs. Target 95%
Routine repairs completed on time %	98.7	98.4	98.4		98.5	3577/3632 repairs. Target 95%
Repairs completed first visit %	98.7	98.7	98.8		98.8	Target 95%
Gas safety checks %	99.4	99.4	99.5		99.4	Target 100%. Remaining 0.6% (13 properties) relate to those with refused access for a number of reasons, which are being dealt with by our contractor and Gas Database administrator. We continue to take a firm but sensitive approach to balance people's concerns surrounding COVID-19 and gas safety
Fire risk assessments %	100.0	100.0	100.0		100.0	Target 100%. Communal areas and systems (98 blocks of flats)
Asbestos safety checks %	99.7	99.9	99.8		99.8	2552/2558 properties with asbestos checked/resurveyed. Target 100%.
Water safety checks (Legionella) %	99.1	99.5	99.3		99.3	267/269. Target 100%
Number of void properties at quarter end	n/a	52	34		-	At Dec 21: 24 routine voids, 4 held for redevelopment, 3 undergoing decarbonisation works, 2 major upgrades, 1 awaiting possession

