

## HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP 21 MARCH 2023

### MID DEVON HOUSING SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT

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

**Reason for Report & Recommendation:** To provide the regular, quarterly update to Members on enforcement and other activity undertaken by Mid Devon Housing. The report further presents how the pending changes to the Regulatory Framework for Housing and consumer-led regulation regime impact on service delivery reporting and performance information provided to members and tenants from 2023/24

**Recommendation: Members to note the report**

**Financial Implications:** The activity of the landlord service, known as Mid Devon Housing (MDH) is accounted for within 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 MDH. 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.

The new legislation arising from the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill which is due to be implemented later this year, will introduce changes to regulatory framework for social housing. Registered providers of social housing (RPs) such as MDH will be required to offer tenants increased opportunities to influence their work. Furthermore, the regulator for social housing (RSH) has already issued a statement setting out how they will implement a new system of performance monitoring which will commence in April 2023. This will require MDH to publish information against a set of performance indicators with effect from April 2024.

**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 which are set out in the regulatory framework for social housing. There is a regulatory requirement for RPs to tailor their service to meet the needs of the tenants and 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:** 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 Introduction

- 1.1 MDH has approximately 3,000 homes in management located across the District.
- 1.2 Annexes 1 to 3 in this report show performance against specific indicators during Quarter 3 of 2022/23 which ended on 31 December 2022.

## 2 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing and changes

- 2.1 As Members are aware, following the fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017, the Government is working to implement new legislation, as set out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Bill to ensure that the voices of tenants are heard by registered providers of social housing (RPs) such as the Council. Work has begun to reform the way in which the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) and the Housing Ombudsman work to ensure that the views of tenants are heard.
- 2.2 As part of this transformation strategy, the RSH has published how they will implement a new system for assessing the work of RPs with regard to the provision of good quality homes and services.
- 2.3 The consumer standards within the regulatory framework will be revised, increasing the number of these from four to six. The following themes will be covered by the new standards. The stated aim of the RSH is that these themes should set out the right outcomes expected of landlords to deliver for tenants.
  - Safety
  - Quality
  - Neighbourhood
  - Transparency
  - Engagement and accountability
  - Tenancy
- 2.4 The new standard designed to deliver transparency has been announced. This set out how landlords are required to make information accessible to tenants. It will be known as the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) standard and will require landlords to collect and to publish information on tenant satisfaction measures.

- 2.5 RPs will be required to undertake surveys of satisfaction and to publish this and other performance management information as a matter of routine, in line with the new standard. There is a requirement to collect this data with effect from April 2023 and to publish the results with effect from April 2024.
- 2.6 There will be 22 TSMs, covering five themes. Ten of these will be measured by RPs carrying out tenant perception surveys and the remainder will be based on performance data. The themes covered by the tenant satisfaction measures are as follows:
- Keeping properties in good repair
  - Maintaining building safety
  - Respectful and helpful engagement
  - Effective handling of complaints
  - Responsible neighbourhood management
- 2.7 As been provided previously to the PDG, a summary of these new TSMs is attached for information in Annex D.
- 2.8 MDH recently engaged a contractor to undertake a tenant perception survey and is now using the data gained to inform service improvements. A new contractor has been engaged for 2023/24 in partnership with two other Councils locally with retained stock (East Devon and Exeter) and will be collecting the data annually as required by the RSH in accordance with the prescribed methodology.
- 2.9 Work has begun on the creation of a new performance hub for MDH where performance information and perception survey data can be held and used to inform a dashboard which will be available to tenants to view. The aim of this will be to increase understanding of performance and to help with reporting and benchmarking.
- 2.10 The RSH also requires landlords to provide effective assurance to members with regard to performance relating to service delivery. The MDH approach to this will be reviewed as part of the ongoing work to deliver a performance hub, however, with regard to core assurance more information on proposed changes to our regular service delivery reporting is provided below. In the meantime, this report shows how different teams are performing generally in relation to key areas of work that will always have a level of relevance around managing tenancies, income and keeping the homes in our management safe and well maintained.
- 2.11 As a result of these regulatory changes and in particular the new TSMs, at the next PDG we will be coming forward with a new format of service delivery report to encompass these mandated performance metrics and seek to retain other information already provided for core areas not covered by a TSM but where tenants and/or member feel this performance information is helpful. This will form the basis for reporting on 23/24 performance onwards. The suggested for the updated service delivery report is set out below (quarterly data unless stated):
- 12 performance data TSMs
  - 10 perception survey data TSMs (annual survey data)
  - Tenancy enforcement data (as existing)

- Rent and debt data (as existing)
- Full repairs data including Decent Homes
- Voids data (metrics determined by updated Voids Management Policy)

2.12 The next service delivery report will also include final Q4 data and outturn for performance across 2022/23 under the existing reporting format for consistency.

2.13 Members of the PDG will also be able to use the new, draft updated service report format presented at the next meeting as an opportunity to consider whether there are further changes they wish to make regarding service performance and delivery information that they receive.

2.14 Whilst the new TSMs include three measures of complaints, as required, a separate in-depth annual report will be provided on complaints data and key lessons of learning in line with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. The next annual report will also be provided at the next PDG covering the full period 2022/23.

2.15 In the meantime, under the current reporting format the following 2022/23 Q3 data is provided:

- Annex A – tenancy enforcement activities
- Annex B – tenancy safeguarding activities
- Annex C – building repairs and maintenance

### **3 Performance activity**

#### **Tenancy teams**

3.1 Quarter 3 of this financial year was challenging in terms of staffing. The headcount is 24, which represents the equivalent of 20.84 full term employees. The turnover rate during the quarter was 12.5% with three experienced members of staff leaving to take up alternative positions elsewhere. We are currently in the process of repurposing the now defunct CSHO role, Community Support Housing Officers, to make use of the financial resource already in place, proposals for which are going forward to completion. We hope to have finalised the details of the proposed posts by the end of this financial year so that we have a full team and sufficient support in place for all Housing for 2023-2024.

3.2 MDH operates a specialist model of housing management and this means that there is a team specialising in income management. The voids and allocations team report to the same Neighbourhood Team Leader with the aim of supporting work to better sustain tenancies. The other Neighbourhood Team Leader is responsible for delivery of services related to tenancy and estate management by what is known as the Estates team. There was a high turnover of staff in the Income team during the quarter although staffing remained stable within the Estates team. The Income management team are now up to full strength so after the initial probation period is completed for all we hope to see a reduction in all arrears, current, former, leasehold etc.

- 3.3 The Neighbourhood Team has been shortlisted at the Resolve ASB awards for 'Team of the Year' due to be held in Birmingham on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and relevant members of the Team will be attending in person.

### **Repairs and Maintenance teams**

- 3.4 Within Building Services there are four separate teams each with a defined area of work, and although these teams are responsible for different areas they work collaboratively to ensure that we carry out any required works in the most efficient way.
- 3.5 **Responsive Team**, this team are responsible for all day to day maintenance jobs and are currently a team of 17 including 2 Apprentices and so far this year at the end of QTR3 they have completed over 5000 jobs with over 98.5% of these being completed within target.
- 3.6 **Planned Team**, this team of 6 are responsible for the management and supervision of the numerous modernisation works are carried out each year via individual contracts, these include works such as, Gas and Renewable servicing, Kitchen and Bathroom replacements, Re-roofing, window and door renewal and External painting. At the end of QTR3 all contracts are on target for the forecasted spend.
- 3.7 **Voids Team**, this team of 13 are responsible for all works that are needed for any property that becomes void including any works that are required to bring the property up to the 'Decent Homes Standard', this year has proven to be extremely challenging both in record numbers of Voids and the deteriorating condition of those returned.
- 3.8 **Commercial Team**, this team of 15 carry out works that include legislative works such as electrical, solid fuel and legionella testing and remedial works, Internal and External Major adaptations, Garage modernisations, Heating upgrades and replacements and are also nearing the completion of two new properties that are to be added to our housing stock. The team is currently on track to slightly exceed the projected income target of £2m, which is the highest it has ever been set.

## **4 Recommendation**

- 4.1 Members are recommended to note the report

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

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

Members of the Housing PDG  
Cllr Ashley Wilce, Cabinet Member for Housing  
All Leadership team  
All Corporate Management team  
Operations Managers  
Legal Services

**Further information:**

Mid Devon Housing strategies and policies:

<https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/mid-devon-housing/help-and-support/strategies-and-policies/>

National regulatory framework for social housing:

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

New TSMs:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-introduction-of-tenant-satisfaction-measures/outcome/tenant-satisfaction-measures-summary-of-rsh-requirements-accessible>

## Annex A

### 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   | 4         | 0         | 2         |           | 6          | There have been a number of fraud case begun this financial year which show that we are being proactive and during Feb 2023 a social media campaign will take place in order to highlight the impact of tenancy fraud and inviting people to report it.                           |
| Fraud cases referred to an external investigator                                       | 4         | 0         | 2         |           | 6          | These figures demonstrate that the teams are alert to the need to investigate fraud and to escalate as appropriate. Tenancy fraud deprives vulnerable people of affordable homes which is why all staff are given training on this.   |
| Acceptable Behaviour Agreements signed   | 0         | 1         | 0         |           | 1          | The Estates team are fully staffed now and gaining in experience but are still focussed on managing the priority areas of work in order to minimise risk to tenants and the organisation as a whole.  |
| Good Neighbourhood Agreements signed   | 0         | 0         | 0         |           | 0          |   |
| Community Protection Notice warnings issued  | 0         | 0         | 0         |           | 0          | Resourcing issues meant that the type of nuisance which can be addressed by means of these actions were given lower priority but now that the Estates team is fully staffed, we anticipate seeing more use of these tools going forward.  |
| Community Protection Notices issued  | 0         | 0         | 0         |           | 0          |   |
| Possession Actions commenced on grounds of ASB   | 0         | 0         | 0         |           | 0          | Work to manage serious anti-social behaviour has been ongoing over the year but did not result in any formal action to address issues being investigated although the close working relationship with the Police and other agencies resulted in joint working and other outcomes. |

|   |   |   |   |  |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| Closure Orders – obtained   | 0 | 0 | 0 |  | 0 |   |
| Injunctions sought  | 0 | 0 | 1 |  | 1 | We sought and gained an interim injunction without notice in order to protect staff, we currently await a court date for a hearing where we will seek to have this injunction agreed going forward. |
| 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 dwelling rent arrears at quarter end %                 | 2.42      | 2.56      | 3.01      |           |            | We now have a full Income management team in place, however, several members are still completing their probation period. Once more experience is gained we should see a decrease in all arrears, current, former, leasehold etc. Rent arrears continue to rise but over the quarter the number of current tenants claiming Universal Credit rose from 836 at the end of 2021/22 to 937 at the end of week 44, quarter 3. In December 2022, inflation hit a 40 year record high of 10.53% |
| Notice of Seeking possession served                            | 50        | 75        | 77        |           | 202        | These are being served to highlight to tenants that they have breached their conditions of tenancy and to prompt them to contact their Neighbourhood Officer to discuss their rent arrears.   |
| Judgement obtained   | 1         | 2         | 5         |           | 8          | Despite an increase in numbers, this fairly small number demonstrates how our team is trying to reach out to tenants and to engage with them in an effort to help them to sustain their tenancies.  |
| Warrants issued  | 0         | 3         | 2         |           | 5          | Eviction is a very last resort but sometimes needed as a way of resolving the issues or similar.  |
| Evictions on grounds of rent arrears                           | 1         | 1         | 0         |           | 2          |   |

## Annex B

### Tenancy Safeguarding Activities

| Neighbourhood & Community Standard – Housing Revenue Account                     |    |    |    |    |     |   |
|--|----|----|----|----|-----|---|
|  | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | YTD | Comments  |
| Domestic abuse cases opened  | 0  | 0  | 1  |    | 1   | Officers receive training and are able to identify any issues although none were reported during this quarter.        |
| Domestic abuse cases referred to Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) | 0  | 0  | 0  |    |     | Officers attend the MARAC to offer support and advice as necessary.   |
| Safeguarding referrals made (to all agencies)                                    | 0  | 3  | 1  |    | 4   | Safeguarding is an important part of housing management and that all our staff receive appropriate training to ensure |

## Annex C

### Building Repairs and Maintenance

| Neighbourhood & Community Standard – Housing Revenue Account |       |       |       |    |     |   |
|--|-------|-------|-------|----|-----|---|
|  | Q1    | Q2    | Q3    | Q4 | YTD | Comments  |
| Decent Homes Standard %                                      | 99.8  | 99.6  | 99.6  |    |     | Target 100%   |
| Emergency repairs completed on time %                        | 100   | 100   | 99.8  |    |     | Target 100% - 651/650 repairs.  |
| Urgent repairs completed on time %                           | 99.5  | 99.1  | 99.3  |    |     | Target 95% - 777/769 repairs  |
| Routine repairs completed on time %                          | 99.1  | 97.6  | 98.6  |    |     | Target 95% - 3604/3539 repairs  |
| Repairs completed first visit %                              | 99.4  | 99.3  | 99.4  |    |     | Target 95% - 4770/4743 repairs  |
| Gas safety checks %  | 98.93 | 98.61 | 99.28 |    |     | Target 100% - 2229/2213 - Access has been the main contributing factor to the lower than target performance |
| Fire risk assessments %                                      | 100   | 100   | 100   |    |     | Target 100%   |
| Water safety checks (Legionella) %                           | 99.9  | 99.8  | 99.6  |    |     | Target 100% - Access has been the main contributing factor to the lower than target performance.            |
| Number of void properties at quarter end                     | 59    | 55    | 44    |    |     | 59 in total less 9 held for development and 4 ready to let = 44   |

## Annex D

### Regulator of Social Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures

#### Overall satisfaction

TP01: Overall satisfaction

#### Keeping properties in good repair

TP02: Satisfaction with repairs

TP03: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair

TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained

RP01: Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard

RP02: Repairs completed within target timescale

#### Maintaining building safety

TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe

BS01: Gas safety checks

BS02: Fire safety checks

BS03: Asbestos safety checks

BS04: Water safety checks

BS05: Lift safety checks

#### 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

#### Effective handling of complaints

TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints

CH01: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord

CH02: Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales

#### Responsible neighbourhood management

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

NM01: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord

#### Key:

TP = measured by tenant perception surveys/12 TSMs

RP = repair data (MDH performance/management information)/2 TSMs

BS = building safety data (MDH performance/management information)/5 TSMs

CH = complaints handling data (MDH performance/management information)/2 TSMs

NM = neighbourhood management data (MDH performance/management information) – 1 TSM