

Report for:**HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP**

Date of Meeting:	08 August 2023
Subject:	MID DEVON HOUSING SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Simon Clist, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property Services
Responsible Officer:	Simon Newcombe, Corporate Manager for Public Health, Regulation and Housing
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	All Wards
Enclosures:	Annex A shows service activity and performance against specific indicators for Q1 for 2023/24. This is presented as agreed at the previous Homes PDG in June 2023. As such, changes have been made due to introduction of new, national performance metrics called Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) as well as the recently adopted Voids Management Policy

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation

The report sets out the performance and headline activity of the Mid Devon Housing (MDH) service for the first quarter (Q1) of 2023/24 using the updated reporting framework agreed at the previous Homes Policy Development Group (PDG).

Recommendation:

That the PDG notes the Q1 performance for 2023/24 as provided in Annex A

Section 2 – Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Mid Devon Housing (MDH) has approximately 3,000 homes in its management located across the District.
- 1.2 This report provides a summary of activity and performance by MDH for Q1 of 2023/24 (1 April - 30 June 2023).
- 1.3 At the previous PDG, members agreed to an updated reporting framework to ensure we are providing the correct information for 2023/24 onwards under the revised Regulatory Framework for Social Housing. This includes the newly implemented Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) standard. Further information on the Framework and wider regulatory changes were provided in the previous June PDG report.
- 1.4 In summary, it was agreed that the following revised performance metrics will be provided to the PDG on a quarterly basis. These cover both the new requirements and information previously reported for core areas of MDH performance not specifically covered by a TSM where members may felt this was informative. It also covers relevant new policy requirements for void properties.
 - 12 new performance data TSMs
 - 10 new perception survey data TSMs (annual survey data)
 - Tenancy enforcement data (as per historic reporting)
 - Rent collection and debt data (as per historic reporting)
 - Full repairs data including Decent Homes (minor amendments only)
 - Voids data (metrics determined by updated Voids Management Policy)
- 1.5 In accordance with the above, data for Q1 2023/24 is provided in Annex A.

2. Performance

- 2.1 Where possible, comments and informative narrative on performance are provided against each metric within Annex A.
- 2.2 All of the TSMs are new from 1 April 2023 with no annual reporting due to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) until after 31 March 2024. Furthermore, some of the TSMs require a tenant perception survey which will be completed later in 2023, therefore results for these are not yet available. Consequently, at this stage we do not have a full dataset for the new TSMs and any comparative national benchmark data cannot be provided yet by the RSH.
- 2.3 Once benchmarking has been completed by the RSH, we anticipate that our overall TSM satisfaction performance (measure TP01) and wider TSM performance, especially in relation to repairs, safety and complaints, will inform RSH priorities for provider inspections, with those performing worse likely to receive inspections earlier in the four-year cycle.

- 2.4 In the absence of TSM benchmark data, where possible we have provided a Housemark benchmark instead. Alongside hundreds of other registered providers of social housing (private and local authority, large and small), MDH provide performance data to Housemark which is used to deliver its monthly Pulse reports on housing sector performance and trend. Whilst these reports are highly informative, the metrics used by Housemark may not be fully compatible with the Government TSMs or our local metrics in all instances so are best viewed as indicators rather than strict comparators.
- 2.5 During Q1, overall performance against targets or benchmarks has been strong with the main exception of voids turnaround times. This is no reflection of the hard work or efficiency of the voids team or the wider service including allocations. Early quarter leave followed by unexpected vacancies in several trade roles has meant the service rightly placed a focus on safety and compliance in the existing stock and consequently shifted some resource away from the voids work temporarily.
- 2.6 As with many other housing providers, targets for our voids team also continue to be impacted upon by backlogs, relatively high volumes of void properties and the poor condition of properties being returned. We have updated and reintroduced pre-void inspections (managed tenancy end) by our Neighbourhood Teams which were suspended during Covid and during periods of high team vacancy rates in 2022/23. Staffing resource has now increased within these teams and these inspections should result in improvements in the condition of some returned properties.
- 2.7 In respect of the allocations end of the voids process, with a new voids and allocations officer now in post, the team are now planning on carrying out viewings at an earlier stage whilst the voids team are still onsite once safe to do so, which again is what used to happen pre-pandemic. This should result in properties being let more quickly going forward.
- 2.8 For standard voids where some comparable Housemark data is available, MDH performance for Q1 (63.97 days) compares reasonably nationally. The latest April only data from this source shows that MDH currently sit between the industry median figure of 45.9 days and the Quartile 3 figure of 68.4 days. Almost all landlords are reporting extended re-let times compared to pre-pandemic levels due to pressures set out above.
- 2.9 Efforts are ongoing around trade vacancies in what is unfortunately a highly competitive recruitment market with private sector remuneration and demand outstripping the public sector in key roles. These issues are presenting challenges to many registered providers and not just MDH. Nonetheless, specific roles in Building Services are currently subject to a policy compliant re-evaluation (grading) process and the service also continues to focus efforts on apprentice recruitment to grow our own teams.
- 2.10 Despite all of the above challenges, the level of activity achieved has meant the overall 97% occupancy target has been met, with 2.39% of current stock void and therefore 97.61% being occupied at the end of Q1

3. Recommendation

3.1 The following recommendation is made:

That the PDG notes the performance for Q1 2023/24 as provided in Annex A.

Financial Implications

The activity of Mid Devon Housing (MDH) is funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is ring fenced and subject to specific financial controls. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, however performance information must inform service delivery and ensure compliance where any required improvements may have subsequent financial implications.

Legal Implications

The tenancy agreement defines MDH's relationship with tenants and sets out the rights and responsibilities of both parties. This takes account of legal and regulatory requirements.

The Council is (and must be) a registered provider of social housing (RP) and therefore is required to comply with the regulatory framework operated by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). The framework has recently been updated with the inclusion of a new Tenant Satisfaction Measures standard, bringing the total number of consumer standards to five:

- Home Standard – quality of accommodation/safety, repairs and maintenance
- Tenancy Standard – how properties are allocated/exchanged and terms around tenure
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard – issues around neighbourhood and communal areas and anti-social behaviour
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard – customer service and complaints, tenant rights and involvement
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard – reporting against the TSMs, which cover information on areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints (from 1 April 2023).

This overarching framework sets the legal standards for the performance of registered providers. Under legal changes, the RSH now holds substantial new powers to intervene where failures to meet standards have caused, or could have caused, serious harm to tenants and/or where we have failed to put tenants at the heart of the service we provide. The RSH is also currently reviewing the overall framework and further changes or updates to the standards are likely.

There is also a requirement for MDH to manage complaints in accordance with the Complaints Handling Code (the Code) which is issued by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). Landlords are expected to self-assess against the Code. Landlords are also required to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvement which should positively impact on performance.

Following publication of the Social Housing White Paper in late 2020, the Social Housing Regulation Bill has just completed its course through Parliament and gained royal assent as the Social Housing (Regulation) Act on 20 July 2023. This landmark legislation will impact the regulatory framework for social housing and introduce the new overarching consumer regulation regime. The overall purpose of the legislation is to give tenants even greater protection and an enhanced say in service delivery and satisfaction.

Risk Assessment

The Council has approximately 3,000 homes in management and the performance of MDH impacts upon the lives of many thousands of tenants and their families. This represents a huge responsibility and investment, consequently a major area of risk.

Not providing an effective housing management service has the potential to result in failure to meet legal and statutory obligations including those relating to health and safety issues, repairs obligations, tenancy fraud and reputational issues which could result in our tenants feeling stigmatised.

Failure to collect rental income could impact the ability to fund necessary management and maintenance activities and/or the delivery of new housing into the MDH stock.

Furthermore, a failure to provide adequate information on service performance for the purposes of governance and scrutiny is a specific area of non-compliance with the requirements of the RSH. Under new powers granted by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, the RSH will be able to impose performance improvements and potentially fine registered providers where performance is poor and/or adequate assurance is not provided.

Overall, the delivery of an effective MDH housing service including the provision of new social housing is a key mitigation in respect of Corporate Risk 12: Housing Crisis which is currently judged at Risk Severity 4 / Risk Likelihood 3 (Status 12 / amber).

Impact on Climate Change

None directly arising from this report.

Equalities Impact Assessment

MDH has a collection of housing related policies. The use of these helps to ensure that service delivery is consistent and fair. These are currently being reviewed with the aim of aligning them more closely with the Regulatory Standards. There is a regulatory requirement for registered providers of social housing to tailor their services to meet the needs of tenants. MDH requests diversity data from tenants to enable compliance to be monitored.

MDH is required to work with people from all sections of society and having an agreed policy ensures that all tenants and other stakeholders are treated in the same way with adjustments being made to meet their needs, as necessary. The Housing

Ombudsman Service Complaints Handling Code which MDH adhere to also requires landlords to have an awareness of accessibility so residents are easily be able to access the complaints procedure via several routes.

Relationship to Corporate Plan

Homes and the Environment are a priority for the Council and this includes increasing the supply of affordable homes in the District and also supporting and growing active tenant engagement.

Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks

Statutory Officer: Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

Date: 25 Jul 2023

Statutory Officer: Maria de Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

Date: 25 Jul 2023

Chief Officer: Simon Newcombe

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

Date: 20 July 2023

Performance and risk: Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

Date: 21/07/2023

Cabinet member notified: Yes

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

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

Email: snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk.

Telephone: 01884 255255

Background papers:

Mid Devon Housing strategies and policies:

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

The Regulatory framework for social housing:

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

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/regulator-of-social-housing-to-introduce-tenant-satisfaction-measures-from-1-april-2023>

Complaint handling code

<https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/>

White Paper – The Charter for social housing residents

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-charter-for-social-housing-residents-social-housing-white-paper>

Annex A – MDH performance metrics for Q1 2023/24

Mandated Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

All 22 – quarterly (management data) and annual (perception surveys).

Overall Satisfaction						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP01: Overall satisfaction	N/A					Annual perception survey.

Keeping Properties in Good Repair						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP02: Satisfaction with repairs	N/A					Annual perception survey.
TP03: Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	N/A					Annual perception survey.
TP04: Satisfaction that the home is well maintained	N/A					Annual perception survey.
RP01: Proportion of Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	2.34%					No comparable benchmark presently. Nonetheless, the local target is 100% and performance is likely to be better than median data when benchmark information is available. 68 homes in total. The majority of these (50/68) are homes where the tenant has refused works to make them decent - typically window or heating upgrades. We still have to report these as non-decent even though tenants have the right to refuse non-safety related works. The remaining 18 are due to have works carried out at them this financial year.

Keeping Properties in Good Repair						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
						The HRA development programme also has a focus on properties approaching end-of-life for replacement alongside additional units. Typically these are Cornish or Woolaway units.
RP02: Repairs completed within target timescale	97.55%					Compares well to a Housemark industry national median (April 2023) of 83.9% and represents upper quartile performance. Although there have been some resourcing pressures MDH remains committed to delivering a high-quality repairs service that is consistently above industry average. This is important in terms of tenant well-being and safety and will positively impact wider tenant satisfaction measures.

Maintaining Building Safety						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP05: Satisfaction that the home is safe	N/A					Annual perception survey.
BS01: Gas safety checks	99.87					Compares closely to a Housemark industry median (April 2023) of 99.9%. See also Building Repairs and Maintenance below.
BS02: Fire safety checks	100%					At target/max compliance.
BS03: Asbestos safety checks	77.68%					Profile of activity means greater level of inspections in Q2 – Q4 so performance should increase across the year. With the survey programme underway this will complete the outstanding properties and have previous surveys or cloned data are in place for those remaining. Existing management controls are also in place for all properties with asbestos containing material. A number of these will also be properties that have had a Refurbishment and Demolition (R&D) Survey with samples being taken of any suspected asbestos containing materials where results are pending, therefore the checks cannot be reported as complete.

Maintaining Building Safety						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
						Any at risk and/or poor condition asbestos material is removed using specialist licensed contractors. Material otherwise safe is targeted and removed where possible during property void periods e.g. floor tiles beneath carpets. Overall, our policy and practice approach continues to safely manage asbestos and the number of properties with material is reducing year on year.
BS04: Water safety checks	100%					At target/max compliance.
BS05: Lift safety checks	100%					At target/max compliance.

Respectful and Helpful Engagement						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP06: Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	N/A					Annual perception survey.
TP07: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	N/A					Annual perception survey.
TP08: Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	N/A					Annual perception survey.

Effective Handling of Complaints						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP09: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints	N/A					Annual perception survey.
CH01: Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	22					No comparable benchmark presently. Nonetheless, as relatively small district level provider of housing, this is seen by the Housing Ombudsman, as on average, a reasonable amount for the quantity of MDH properties.
CH02: Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	83.08%					Stage 1 = 86.16% and Stage 2 = 58.33% Below target. Target of 95% missed due to staff absence (annual or sickness). However, changes to complaints triaging, utilisation of the complaints module within the new corporate CRM and return to normal staff resourcing should see this performance improve.

Responsible Neighbourhood Management						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
TP10: Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	N/A					Annual perception survey.
TP11: Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	N/A					Annual perception survey.
TP12: Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	N/A					Annual perception survey.

Responsible Neighbourhood Management						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
NM01: Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	3.72					Closely compares to a Housemark industry national median (April 2023) of 3.25 and well above the Quartile 3 figure of 5.11

Tenancy Enforcement Activities

Neighbourhood & Community Standard – Housing Revenue Account – Estates Team						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Fraud cases opened	2					Active monitoring of potential fraud continues with new cases opened during the quarter. One case has been resolved, upon investigation it was found a lawful succession had taken place. The other case identified concerns and as per below was referred to an external agency.
Fraud cases referred to an external investigator	1					Active monitoring of potential fraud continues with a new external referral during the quarter. MDH are of a view that a tenant is potentially attempting to fraudulently claim his father was part of his household, referred to specialist Plymouth Fraud Team with no outcome as yet.
Acceptable Behaviour Agreements signed	0					This continues the 2022/23 trend of lower returns in comparison to those under pre-2021 policy. It reflects new, early intervention and mediation policy and practice approaches to ASB that were successfully introduced as well as training for new team members. MDH won Resolve Team of The Year award for our work on tackling ASB. Furthermore, the management of serious anti-social behaviour can be delicate and tricky. There is a need to work in partnership with other agencies including the Police and those which work
Good Neighbourhood Agreements signed	0					
Community Protection Notice warnings issued	0					
Community Protection Notices issued	0					

Neighbourhood & Community Standard – Housing Revenue Account – Estates Team						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Possession Actions commenced on grounds of ASB	2					with vulnerable children, families and adults. Tenants must be given every opportunity to modify their behaviour and any action taken must be both reasonable and proportionate. The figures therefore do not reflect the amount of work undertaken during Q1 and improvements secured. Overall, this does reflect our emphasis towards working with the tenants/partners and our commitment to tackling anti-social behaviour. No decision to commence possession action is taken lightly.
Closure Orders – obtained	0					
Injunctions sought	0					
Evictions on grounds of anti-social behaviour/ other tenancy breach	0					

Rent recovery

Income Recovery – Housing Revenue Account – Income Team						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Current dwelling rent arrears at quarter end %	2.42%					Target: <5% Compares well to 2022/23 MDH outturn of 2.41%.
Notice of Seeking possession served	52					Slightly up on Q1 2022/23 (50). Our Income Team continue to work with our tenants to try and help them to reduce their arrears so that they do not lose their homes, but sometimes, regrettably, we have to take further action against some especially where the tenant refuses to engage and/or take support.
Judgement obtained	1					Same as Q1 2022/23.
Warrants issued	4					Above Q1 2022/23 (0).
Evictions on grounds of rent arrears	0					MDH outturn for 2022/23 for this last resort measure was just 4 evictions so none within a quarter is typical.

Building Repairs and Maintenance

Homes and Neighbourhood & Community Standards – Housing Revenue Account – Building Services						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Decent Homes Standard %	97.67%					<p>Target 100% Below target.</p> <p>68 homes in total. The majority of these (50/68) are homes where the tenant has refused works to make them decent - typically window or heating upgrades. We still have to report as non-decent even though the tenant have the right to refuse non-safety related works. The remaining 18 are due to have works carried out at them this financial year.</p> <p>The HRA MDH development programme also has a focus on properties approaching end-of-life for replacement alongside additional units. Typically these are Cornish or Woolaway type units.</p>
Emergency repairs completed on time %	96.05%					<p>Target 100%</p> <p>A small number of particularly complex emergency repairs with challenging material availability/stock have impacted Q1 performance alongside resourcing pressure. These pressures have resulted in some arrival times just outside of the 24-hour target response time. One failure (outside communal lighting) was attended on time however exceptionally poor weather prevented a safe immediate repair. Overall, a commitment to attend 100% of emergency and urgent repairs on time has kept this figure high.</p>
Urgent repairs completed on time %	97.03%					<p>Target 95% Above target.</p>
Routine repairs completed on time %	98.69%					<p>Target 95% Above target. Well above Housemark industry national median (April 2023) of 83.2% and represents upper quartile performance (see TSM RP02).</p>

Homes and Neighbourhood & Community Standards – Housing Revenue Account – Building Services						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Repairs completed first visit %	99.44%					Target 95% Above target.
Gas safety checks %	99.87%					Target 100% Above 2022/23 outturn (99.1%). Access remains difficult on a small number of properties preventing the 100% target being reached. Updated no-access procedures introduced in Q4 2022/23 are beginning to see improvement into 2023/24. Closely compares to a Housemark industry median (April 2023) of 99.9%. There are now just three properties that do not have an in date Landlord's Gas Safety Record (LGSR). We have started the legal process to gain access to two of these. Sadly the tenant of the remaining property passed away recently and we are waiting for the property to be returned to MDDC before carrying out the LGSR.
Fire risk assessments %	100%					Target 100% At target/max compliance.
Water safety checks (Legionella) %	100%					Target 100% At target/max compliance.

Voids*

Voids performance – Housing Revenue Account – Building Services and Allocations Teams						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
Standard voids including temporary accommodation	63.97					Target 35 working days. Below target. Early quarter leave followed by unexpected vacancies in several trade roles has meant the service has had to focus on safety and compliance in the existing stock (see above) and consequently shifted resource away from the voids team temporarily.

Voids performance – Housing Revenue Account – Building Services and Allocations Teams						
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD	Comments
						Furthermore, in common with other providers, targets continue to be impacted upon by backlogs, high volumes of void properties, and poor condition of properties being returned. Nationally this is between the median figure (45.9 days and the Quartile 3 figure of 68.4 days. All landlords are reporting extended re-let times compared to pre-Covid levels due to current workforce and material availability pressures.
Major voids	167.88					Target 55 working days See comments above. Major and Decent Homes voids have also been impacted upon by the amount of properties where the tenants have historically refused access for modernisations, meaning this needs to be done during the void period.
Decent homes voids	101.67					Target 75 working days See comments above.
Development voids	N/A					Target 1 calendar year and will reported post Q4 2023/24 As above.
Occupancy rate (whole stock)	97.61%					Target 97% Above target. Despite challenges in resourcing the voids team, the level of activity achieved has meant the overall occupancy target has been met, with only 2.39% of current stock void at the end of Q1.

* Definitions and targets as per adopted Voids Management Policy 2023