

Mid Devon District Council (MDDC) Homes Policy Development Group Chairs Report for 2023-24

In May 2023 I was honoured to be elected to the office of Councillor representing Clare and Shuttern Ward of MDDC, my first public appointment. As a new Councillor, it was with some trepidation I accepted the nomination for the role of Chairman of the Homes Policy Development Group (PDG).

However, following the excellent new councillor training programme and with reassuring support from the Clerk, Sarah Lees, in facilitating the meetings and ensuring that all members had the information they needed in good time, it has been a positive experience. Council officers have produced and presented excellent policy documents and reports for review by the PDG and members of the group have engaged effectively in the process. I thank them all for their professionalism and hard work.

There have been five Homes PDG meetings since the May 2023 elections and a full programme of work. Eight new or updated policies developed by Officers were recommended to Cabinet (and duly adopted) on:

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Neighbourhood Management
- Damp and Mould
- Recharges
- Tenancy Inspection
- Garages and Parking Space
- Homes Safety
- Pets and Animals

The PDG has also received and noted reports or briefings on

- Revenue and Capital Outturn - MDDC's General Fund and the separate Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- Service Delivery
- Complaints Handling
- Homes for Ukraine
- Voids Management
- Savings options for the 2024-5
- Tenant Involvement and Engagement Strategy Action Plan
- Consultation on potential Fees to the Regulator for Social Housing (disputed)
- Neighbourhood Management
- Performance dashboard
- Detailed report on Damp and Mould Focus by MDH, following the proposed introduction of Awaab's Law.
- Flexible tenancies – a working group of PDG members was formed in November 2023.

One constant theme that has demanded a great deal of officer attention has been the introduction of the new regulatory regime for social housing developed by the Government in the wake of the Grenfell disaster including the collection of data for 22 Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

The Tenure Review Working Group set up in November 2023 is reviewing plans for Flexible Tenancies being developed by MDDC as an alternative to traditional 'lifetime' tenancies in order to facilitate the more optimal allocation of Council homes to tenants.

Looking to the future, Mid Devon Homes (MDH) faces the challenge of meeting increased regulatory demand from Government in the face of costs increasing with inflation and restricted ability to increase revenue.

It's a major concern that, in common with most local authority areas, there is a severe shortage of homes for social rent in Mid-Devon: there are around 1600 applicants on the MDH waiting list. Also, the continuation of 'Right To Buy' tends to deplete stocks while not providing sufficient revenue to replace homes sold.

To begin to tackle the shortfall in supply, MDH has an ambitious 5-year plan to increase its stock of housing. Where possible, existing MDH-owned sites will be developed, or re-developed where housing has become obsolete. Many of the new homes will be built using a modular approach, which has many benefits: notably predictability of cost, the low impact on neighbourhoods due to rapid installation onsite and a level of energy efficiency that will eliminate energy poverty for the tenants and greatly reduce carbon emissions. MDH has recently launched its 'Development Hub' web site,

<https://letstalk.middevon.gov.uk/mdh-development-hub>

where information can be found on all current and future development sites across the District.

Finally, once again I thank the PDG Members and the professional MDDC staff, who continue to work hard to make the Homes PDG an effective forum for maintaining and improving homes provision and related services within MDDC.

Cllr Chris Adcock

Chairman

Homes Policy Development Group

19th March 2024