

**Report for:** HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

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Date of Meeting:	11 June 2024
Subject:	<b>MID DEVON HOUSING (MDH) SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT FOR Q4 AND OUTTURN 2023-24</b>
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Simon Clist, Cabinet Member for Housing and Property
Responsible Officer:	Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing and Health
Exempt:	None
Wards Affected:	All wards
Enclosures:	Annex A: Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) – performance data for 2023-24: Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4 and end of year outturn  Annex B: Tenancy Enforcement Activities – performance data for 2023-24: Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4 and end of year outturn  Annex C: Rent Recovery – performance data for 2023-24: Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4 and end of year outturn  Annex D: Building Repairs and Maintenance – performance data for 2023-24: Quarters 1, 2, 3, 4 and end of year outturn

**Section 1 – Summary and Recommendation(s)**

This report has been presented in support of a previous commitment to provide a quarterly update to Members on activity undertaken by Mid Devon Housing (MDH), including some relating to enforcement.

It also contains relevant information relating to performance as measured in line with the guidance relating to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) requires registered providers of social housing (RPs) to provide

a report on a set of TSMs which includes perception and performance data, and 2023/24 is the first year in which MDH and all other providers have to do so.

The aim of this report is to provide an update on relevant data which includes some which is required as part of the TSM submission, where available, in order to provide assurance. It is hoped that the data will also provide some indication of the final outturn expected at the end of the year.

### **Recommendation(s):**

**That the PDG notes the outturn performance for Quarter 4 and end of year 2023/24 as provided in Annexes A, B, C and D**

## **Section 2 – Report**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1. MDH manages approximately 3,000 homes located across the District.
- 1.2. This report provides a summary of activity and performance for Q4 ending 31 March 2024 and the previously reported data for Q1, Q2 and Q3 for comparison.
- 1.3. In accordance with this, data for Quarters 1, 2, 3 and 4 including the overall end of year outturn for 2023-24 is provided in the following Annexes:
  - Annex A: Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)
  - Annex B: Tenancy Enforcement Activities
  - Annex C: Rent recovery
  - Annex D: Building Repairs & Maintenance

### **2 Assurance requirements and reporting**

- 2.1 RPs are now required by the RSH to provide effective assurance to Members and this should include relevant, updated performance data relating to service delivery.
- 2.2 The RSH takes a co-regulatory approach which means that Councillors are responsible for ensuring that MDH is meeting their standards. There are currently five consumer standards, although following the implementation of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act these are about to be changed, once a review has been concluded. Currently, RPs such as MDH are expected to have due regard to the required outcomes and specific expectations as set out in these standards, which are:
  - The Safety and Quality Standard
  - The Tenancy Standard
  - The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
  - The Neighbourhood & Community Standard

- 2.3 The Rent Standard, an economic standard, also applies and MDH is required to have regard to this.
- 2.4 Councillors also have a responsibility to ensure that MDH is being open and accountable with regard to how the organisation meets its objectives. In line with the principles of co-regulation, RPs are also required to support tenants so that they can shape and scrutinise service delivery and hold Councillors to account.
- 2.5 Performance data recorded in support of the TSMs is shown in the report. The aim is to ensure that Members can be reassured that data is being collected. Some of the data in this report will be included in the data submission which will be made to the RSH during the first part of 2024-25.
- 2.6 Perception data to inform our return to the RSH, in line with the new regulatory requirement, is collected annually although MDH may review our approach to this. Information collected by a third party contractor during the latter part of 2023 from all tenants has been analysed. The information has been used to inform a new service improvement plan.
- 2.7 During the survey, individual tenants were given an opportunity to provide limited feedback in response to some questions and were able to do this anonymously, if they wanted. Many tenants chose to give their name and address and Officers are now following up any service requests or complaints received in this way.
- 2.8 This work was procured by a partnership involving MDH and two other local authority providers with retained housing stock. As a result, there will be opportunities for local benchmarking alongside national benchmarking once all RSH has collected all relevant data and it has been published, provided that all partners wish to participate in this.
- 2.9 Work is now ongoing with regard to a procurement process involving all three local authorities in respect of the survey required this year, 2024/25.
- 2.10 In January 2024, MDH commissioned an external review of compliance against the regulatory framework. The findings of this have been used, together with the analysis of the data collected during the perception survey, to inform an understanding of necessary service improvement. The insight gained has informed the development of a draft MDH Impact Improvement plan currently under consultation with MDH staff, which contains a number of actions. This plan takes into account resourcing, legislative and regulatory requirements and good practice and this plan has been shared with managers within MDH ahead of being disseminated more widely for consultation with staff and other stakeholders.

2.11 The work of different MDH teams is shown in the annexes as set out below. Information is provided on key areas of work. It is important for Members to be reassured that the homes in management are safe and secure and to understand how teams are performing in relation to certain indicators relating to tenancy and estate management. There are legislative and regulatory requirements which RPs must adhere to. However, it is also important that service delivery also takes account of MDH's own policies and good practice.

2.12 This service delivery report sets out the following specific data:

- 12 performance data TSMs
- 10 perception survey data TSMs (annual survey data)
- Tenancy enforcement data
- Rent collection and debt data
- Full repairs data including Decent Homes
- Voids data (metrics determined by updated Voids Management Policy)

2.13 The TSMs include three measures designed to demonstrate how RPs are performing with regard to service delivery in connection with complaints. If a tenant remains dissatisfied following the conclusion of their complaint, they can escalate that complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). In the new regulatory framework, recently introduced, the role of the HOS has been expanded. Every year, RPs must undertake a review of compliance against the Complaints Handling Code, issued by the HOS. This has recently been reviewed by the HOS and there is now a requirement to submit an annual complaints performance and service improvement report to the PDG, in support of this. This report is on the agenda for this this meeting.

2.14 In addition, it should be noted that there is a Memorandum of Understanding between the HOS and the RSH which allows the transfer of information with the aim of ensuring that any regulatory failings associated with service delivery as performed by RPs are identified and dealt with in the most appropriate way.

2.15 MDH provides a detailed report on complaints data and key issues of learning to inform service improvement on an annual basis. The latest annual report is provided as a separate agenda item for this meeting. As required, this report will be published on the section of the website relating to complaints alongside the response of the PDG and the Cabinet to this.

### **3 Performance and context**

3.1 Annexes A to D contain comments and informative narrative on performance provided against specific metrics and there is further context provided below.

- 3.2 In the absence of TSM benchmark data, which will be available once all RPs have submitted relevant information nationally, the results of the satisfaction survey obtained as part of the pilot exercise undertaken during late 2022 has been published alongside some indicators for comparative purposes. When the national data is published, a further report will come to this PDG showing how MDH compares with other organisations nationally.
- 3.3 In the meantime, MDH will focus on any TSM results where the score was 60% or less. The actions required to address any issues arising from this review of the data will be fed into the wider MDH Impact Improvement Plan.
- 3.4 A total of 2,830 tenants were eligible to respond to the survey. The total sample size achieved was 625. The methodology used by our contractor was done in line with the relevant regulatory requirements. Mixed methods were used to collect the responses with the following results:
- Postal survey 187
  - Telephone survey 100
  - Online response 338
- 3.5 The contractor has provided some data relating to the representativeness of the full tenant profile:

<b>Full tenant profile</b>		
<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Flex tenancies	440	16%
Intro to flex	38	1%
Intro to secure	88	3%
Secure	2,264	80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,830</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Property Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Bungalow	969	34%
Flat/maisonette/bedsit	536	19%
House	1,320	47%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,825</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Under 24	52	2%
25-54	1,194	42%

55+	1,584	56%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,830</b>	<b>100%</b>

3.6 The representativeness of the survey respondent profile, as also provided by the contractor, were as follows:

<b>Respondent profile</b>		
<b>Tenure</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Flex tenancies	85	14%
Intro to flex	11	2%
Intro to secure	17	3%
Secure	510	82%
Unknown	2	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Property Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Bungalow	224	36%
Flat/maisonette/bedsit	115	18%
House	283	45%
Unknown	3	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Under 24	8	1%
25-54	249	40%
55+	366	59%
Unknown	2	0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>100%</b>

3.7 MDH team leaders meet with senior managers on a monthly basis to discuss performance against a range of indicators across the business. This delivers a greater understanding and insight and ensures that performance is routinely monitored which in turn delivers an understanding of any pressures. This informs the allocation of resources, as appropriate.

## **4 Building Services**

- 4.1 Performance relating to Building Services is dependent upon having a full complement of operatives who have the necessary skills to manage the workload. Unfortunately, there were some challenges with regard to recruitment last year due to prevailing market conditions. This, combined with long term sickness, can have an impact on the ability of the team to manage the priorities. For this reason, priority was given to completing the most urgent works to ensure that they were completed on time, as well as to those routine repairs having the most impact upon tenants. Similar issues also affected the administrative team responsible for processing repairs requests. Taking these resourcing issues into account, managers are satisfied that with the level of performance, especially as targets have been met, although, there is, of course, always room for improvement to ensure that 100% of repairs are completed on time.
- 4.2 Customer satisfaction with planned maintenance remains strong despite some challenging performance issues associated with a very limited number of contractors.

## **5 Building Services – Voids Specific**

- 5.1 The team which manages this work has been busy this year managing a large number of voids in both the housing revenue account and on behalf of the general fund strategic housing functions. The condition of the properties being returned has, on occasions, been poor, and it is a combination of these factors which has impacted the ability of the team to achieve set targets. Standard and major voids have been prioritised in order to ensure that the supply of available homes is maintained. However, some work, including that relating to decarbonisation, has taken longer than hoped due to external resourcing issues and therefore the target relating to the turnaround time for these properties was missed.

## **6 Tenancy and Estate Management**

- 6.1 The Neighbourhood team works in partnership with other agencies to manage tenancy-related issues and those on the MDH estates, including anti-social behaviour. The team was impacted again by the loss of one officer responsible for this area of work at the end of Quarter 4. A new Officer has been recruited and will commence work at the beginning of May 2024. Annex 2 shows performance with regard to some of the tools available to the team. Many of these can be used to support the management of reports of nuisance and anti-social behaviour.
- 6.2 In line with good practice, our Officers will endeavour to resolve any issues reported at an early stage. This can involve a range of options, including

partnership working, informal mediation undertaken by team members and referrals for formal mediation. Therefore, the statistics in the annex do not always reflect the extent of the work which is required when managing nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

- 6.3 Please note that there was an error in the report relating to Quarters 2 and 3. An explanation has been provided in the comments relating to tenancy enforcement activities. An additional Acceptable Behaviour Agreement had been actioned during Quarter 2, which has now been input. This was missed due to user error when inputting the action into our recording system. The report in Annex B has been corrected to reflect this.
- 6.4 With regard to fraud, tackling this is a priority. Tenancy fraud can encompass many issues, but if someone is living in a home where they do not have a right to be, that has an impact on the availability of that property for a household in greater housing need. For this reason, Officers will be proactive about investigating any concerns and making the necessary referrals for further investigation and action.

## **7 Income Collection**

- 7.1 It is pleasing to note that the Neighbourhood team was able to reduce the level of debt attributed to current dwelling tenants during the year. At the end of the first quarter, the debt stood at 2.48% of the annual rent debit, and at the end of the year, it stood at 2.21% of this. This was well within target, too.
- 7.2 When managing rent arrears, the team endeavours to work closely with the tenants involved. The aim is to offer an empathetic and supportive approach to encourage individuals to speak to the team about any financial issues they may be experiencing. Referrals for debt counselling and money advice are offered. The aim is to create a culture whereby all tenants are able to pay their rent; and, to this end, the team will offer realistic arrangements to facilitate the payment of rent arrears in instalments.

## **8 Recommendation**

- 8.1 The following recommendation is made:

**That the PDG notes the outturn performance for Quarter 4 and the end of year outturn 2023-24 as provided in the Annexes A, B, C and D.**

## **Financial Implications**

MDH activity is funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The HRA is ring fenced and subject to specific financial controls. The Housing Ombudsman Service



(HOS) charges a mandatory membership fee based on the number of homes in the management of the registered provider (RP) of social housing.

### **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 an RP and therefore is required to comply with the regulatory framework operated by the RSH. The regulatory framework has been reviewed. The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard contains provisions relating to the management of complaints. There is also a requirement for MDH to manage complaints in accordance with the Complaints Handling Code (the Code) which is issued by the HOS. Landlords are expected to self-assess against the Code. Landlords are required to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvement. Following publication of the Social Housing White Paper in late 2020, the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, has now been implemented and gone into statute. New regulations are expected in relation to some of the key provisions set out in the White Paper.

### **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.

Finally, 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. This regulator has new powers to impose performance improvements and potentially fine registered providers where performance is poor and/or adequate assurance is not provided.

### **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.

Our “Getting to Know You” project has been designed to refresh our knowledge relating to the diversity of our tenants and over the next two years, we will be surveying them in an effort to better understand their needs.

### **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:** Paul Deal

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151

**Date:** 31 May 2024

**Statutory Officer:** Maria de Leburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 31 May 2024

**Chief Officer:** Simon Newcombe

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

**Date:** 13 May 2024

**Performance and risk:** Steve Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 24 May 2024

**Cabinet member notified:** Yes

### **Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers**

**Contact:** Simon Newcombe, Head of Housing and Health

Email: [snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk](mailto:snewcombe@middevon.gov.uk)

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#### **Background papers:**

Mid Devon Housing Strategies and Policies:

[Procedures, Policies and Strategies - MIDDEVON.GOV.UK](#)

The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing:

[Regulatory framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Tenant Satisfaction Measures:

[Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code:

[Complaint Handling Code | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housing-ombudsman.org.uk)