

**Report for:** HOMES POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

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Date of Meeting:	18 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Subject:	<b>MID DEVON HOUSING SERVICE DELIVERY REPORT FOR Q3 2024-25</b>
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Simon Clist, Cabinet Member for Housing, Property and Assets
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 2024-25: Quarters 1, 2 and 3  Annex B: Tenancy Enforcement Activities – performance data for 2024-25: Quarters 1, 2 and 3  Annex C: Rent Recovery – performance data for 2024-25: Quarters 1, 2 and 3  Annex D: Building Repairs and Maintenance – performance data for 2024-24: Quarters 1, 2 and 3

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

This report is presented to support an ongoing commitment to provide a quarterly update to members of the Policy Development Group on activity undertaken by Mid Devon Housing (MDH), including some relating to tenancy enforcement.

It also contains relevant performance information 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/management data on a rolling annual basis.

TSM data has been previously provided on a first full-year basis for 2023-24. In year, management data for relevant TSMs is available and therefore provided for Q1 to Q3 2024-25, however the perception survey data is not yet available.

In total, three separate TSM perception surveys will be completed throughout 2024-25 and the results aggregated in accordance with the required RSH methodology once adequate data is available to meet sample size and reporting requirements. As such, no TSM perception survey results can be provided for this report. It is anticipated that draft results may be available during Q4 onwards and the final results must be in place for April 2025. These final results will form the next annual TSM perception survey data return to the RSH alongside the full TSM management data outturn for 2024-25 and will be shared at the next PDG meeting.

**Recommendation:**

**That the PDG notes the outturn performance for Quarter 3 2024/25 as provided in Annexes A, B, C and D**

**Section 2 – Report**

**1 Introduction**

- 1.1 MDH has approximately 3,000 homes in its management located across the District.
- 1.2 This report provides a summary of activity and performance for the third quarter of 2024-25 ending 31 December 2024. Q1 and Q2 results previously reported are provided for comparison.
- 1.3 In accordance with this, data for Q1-Q3 is provided within 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 Registered Providers (RPs) of social housing are required by the RSH to have effective governance procedures in place. This means MDH must provide relevant, updated performance data relating to service delivery to Members as part of its wider assurance process.
- 2.2 The RSH takes a co-regulatory approach. This means that Councillors are specifically responsible for ensuring that MDH meets the requirements set out in the broad social housing regulatory framework. Within this, there are currently four key consumer standards, recently updated through the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. MDH must have due regard to the specific outcomes and 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 comply with 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 and regulatory requirements. In line with the principles of co-regulation and the above consumer standards, RPs are also required to support tenants so that they can shape and scrutinise service delivery and hold the Council 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 and acted upon as required. As set out in the introduction, some of the data in this report will be included in the next annual data return made to the RSH during the first quarter of 2025-26 and shared at the next PDG meeting.
- 2.6 In line with the new regulatory requirements, TSM perception survey data will once be again be collected this year. For 2024-25, MDH have moved from one survey to three separate surveys in a change of approach away from a single, large winter survey as undertaken for the first TSM return for 2023-24 in order to obtain better, more representative data. The first surveys was conducted in August for two weeks and the second survey was completed over in autumn. Draft data may be available during Q4 and the final, verified data for the whole year will be available from April 2025. Going forward, it is intended to complete surveys every quarter/4 times per year with verified data, aggregated data continuing to be published and available after the year end.
- 2.7 In the perception surveys, individual tenants are given an opportunity to provide feedback in response to some questions and are able to do this anonymously. Many tenants choose to give their name and address and officers will follow-up on any service requests or complaints received. All surveys must be completed according to a legally defined RSH methodology by an independent survey organisation.
- 2.8 This work was procured by a partnership involving MDH and two other local authority providers with retained housing stock. There will therefore be opportunities for local benchmarking alongside national benchmarking once the RSH has collected all relevant data and it has been published, provided that all partners wish to participate in this.
- 2.9 Wider performance information is provided on key areas of work across different teams within MDH as set out in the attached annexes. It is important for Members to be reassured that the homes in our 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.

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

- 12 performance/management data TSMs
- Tenancy enforcement data
- Rent collection and debt data
- Full repairs data including Decent Homes
- Voids data

2.11 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, 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 was completed and reviewed for 2023-24 at a previous PDG meeting and the next such report for 2024-25 is due in June 2025.

2.13 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.

### **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 The RSH have not yet published any national detailed TSM benchmark data based on the 2023-24 return which would enable us to benchmark against comparative social landlords. A headline report was published in November 2024 which provides some comparison data however does not distinguish between all forms of social housing tenure, different stock sizes and types or between private and local authority providers. As such it is of limited use and more detailed information may not be available until after the 2024-25 return. When the 2024-25 data is available for MDH allowing us to have a sense of trend across the two consecutive yearly outturns and/or more detailed national data is published, a further report will come to this PDG setting out how MDH compares with other organisations across the TSM dataset.

- 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 have already been fed into the wider MDH Impact Improvement Plan. Preliminary data from the initial TSM perception surveys this year also indicates an improvement of scores across the board however caution needs to be exercised until the full yearly results have been obtained. Furthermore, the historic rent error issue reported to tenants in November 2024 may impact on some of the survey results, notably with regard to overall satisfaction.
- 3.4 MDH team leaders meet with senior managers and the Head of Housing 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. As previously reported, unfortunately, there continues to be challenges with regard to recruitment due to prevailing market conditions with service staffing levels in front-line roles at lowest point for around 10-years during Q1 and Q2. This, combined with long term staff sickness, can have an impact on the ability of the team to manage its priorities.
- 4.2 For the above reasons, priority continues to be 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 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.
- 4.3 Overall, our service priority is, and always has been, on keeping people safe, which we have been able to do by appropriately triaging and completing the most urgent repairs. Encouragingly, all repairs completed remains close to target and even if 100% of repairs could not be completed on time or at first visit, performance is upper quartile in comparison with the social housing sector average.
- 4.4 The service has taken steps through role re-evaluation and regrading to address some of the recruitment and retention issues and has recently recruited new building services trade roles during Q3. It will take time for new staff to join and be fully on-boarded before the benefits of any increased capacity will be

seen. Therefore, pressures will remain heading into Q4 but the positive benefits of this should start to be seen into 2025/26.

4.5 Customer satisfaction within planned maintenance remains strong despite some challenging performance issues associated with a very limited number of contractors.

4.6 Members will note from previous reports that we have an internal target to achieve 100% of all our properties holding a full management survey for asbestos which includes material sampling, alongside an additional requirement to have 100% of our properties holding a full electrical safety check ahead of potential regulatory changes. This does not mean our properties are not presently safe or properly assessed within the requirements of current safety legislation and the RSH. More information is given below.

#### 4.6 Asbestos Safety Checks

A management survey can, but does not always require a sample of a suspected asbestos containing material (ACM) to be taken; however the only way to 100% determine if a material contains asbestos is to take a sample and have this analysed. MDH want to be able to provide more accurate information so are only reporting on the number of properties where we have a management survey that has included samples.

Overall, MDH continues to hold a current asbestos register for all properties in our stock. This adopts a no-risk approach and makes conservative assumptions on the presence of ACM based on property design and age in specific areas of each building which may subsequently be confirmed or otherwise through sampling where the register will then be updated. This enables our tenants, staff and contractors to stay safe at all times and approach any works with the appropriate level of caution and risk management.

Where MDH do not have samples of an ACM that we want to work on then the suspected material is sampled and analysed. To avoid any doubling up on surveys, for a number of years we have been asking for management surveys with samples or sampling where required due to a more detailed refurbishment and demolition survey, which is only used for intrusive works, such as new kitchens and bathrooms.

As we modernise properties and/or undertake works during property void periods this will therefore result in ACM being removed from properties even where there is no specific safety reason for doing so (i.e. the ACM is safe and in good condition) and the register is updated accordingly.

Overall, this is a proactive risk-reduction approach where we can remove some properties completely from the register or reduce the scope of the register entry where some material is removed or it is confirmed as not being ACM.

#### 4.7 Electrical Safety Checks

Historically MDH carried out a Visual Inspection Report (VIR) every 5 years and an Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) every 10 years which is in line with current regulations as social housing is currently exempt from The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020, and we have historically reported compliance against these requirements.

However, it's expected that social housing properties will be brought in line with the private sector regulations soon with a minimum five-year transition period and the Government may introduce a new TSM for electrical safety.

As an EICR needs to be carried out every 5 years it would not be sensible to do lots at once. We therefore need to spread them out over a 5 year period which will equate to around 600 a year going forward, so in reality at the end of this year we will need to be around 50% and then 60% next year and so on. This will ensure we are fully compliant at the end of the transition period.

Until the regulations and a potential TSM has been confirmed we are not formally reporting data however MDH will continue with the roll out of EICRs and ongoing monitoring as set out above. Nonetheless, for assurance purposes it can be confirmed that as of January 2025 performance stood at close to 50% with additional external contractor resource supporting an increase in the number of inspection from Q4 onwards to ensure we stay on track and proactively meet the enhanced requirements.

#### 4.8 RSH review of 2023-24 TSM management data

As previously report, the RSH also undertook a regulatory review of our 2023-24 management data submitted within the previous TSM return. As part of this they sought further data and assurance with regard to our fire, asbestos and electrical safety performance and formally confirmed they were fully assured as to the MDH policy and approach in October 2024. Our approach proactive approach to electrical safety was recognised and will feed into the wider national review.

### **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.

5.2 There are a number of key factors that are continuing to affect our ability to sustain outcomes within the overall void performance targets, they include record numbers of voids received, deteriorating standards of voids received, staffing shortages and redeployment. Processes involved around the development programme are also impacting where we are having to hold a number of voids so that we can meet the expectations of tenants who we are moving from properties that will be demolished and the fact that the works involved in these voids are greatly increased

- 5.3 Notwithstanding the above, there has been between a significant improvement (reduced turnaround times) in the standard void category as set out in Annex D with Q3 being within target. Overall, stock occupancy remains significantly close to the 97% target.

## **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 (ASB). Following period of holding a vacancy in the team, a new Officer has been recruited commenced work during Q1 of 2024-25. This brought the team back up to full strength and Annex B 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 in particular, following training, the team are now equipped to deploy a wider range of ASB tool including formal Community Protection Warnings and Notices.
- 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 With regard to fraud, tackling this is also continues to be a priority with several cases opened in during Q1 and Q3. 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 has continued its strong work managing the level of debt attributed to current dwelling tenants whilst still sustaining tenancies. At the end of the Q3, the debt stood at 2.55%, comparable with the overturn for 2023-24 and better than the performance for the equivalent period last year (2.71%). This is also well within target. Just four evictions have come forward on the basis of rent arrears during the first two quarters of this year within none in Q3. Any potential evictions of tenants who have been historically overcharged rent have been put on hold until any repayment position is understood on a case by case basis. All other cases will be managed and proceed through our rent recovery process as usual.



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 3 2024-25 as provided in the Annexes A, B, C and D.

### **Financial Implications**

The activity of MDH 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.

### **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 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 are a priority for the Council and in the context of MDH service performance this includes supporting the delivery of several key objectives; investing in our homes, monitoring tenant satisfaction and ensuring our tenants feel safe, secure and happy in our homes.

### **Section 3 – Statutory Officer sign-off/mandatory checks**

**Statutory Officer:** Andrew Jarrett

Agreed by or on behalf of the Section 151 Officer

**Date:** 6 March 2025

**Statutory Officer:** Maria de Leiburne

Agreed on behalf of the Monitoring Officer

**Date:** 6 March 2025

**Chief Officer:** Stephen Walford

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

**Date:** 6 March 2025

**Performance and risk:** Stephen Carr

Agreed on behalf of the Corporate Performance & Improvement Manager

**Date:** 04 March 2025

**Cabinet member notified:** Yes

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

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

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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 \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

RSH Tenant Satisfaction Measures 2023/24 Headline Report November 2024

[\[Title\]](#)

Housing Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code:

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