

Date: 25 October 2013  
Contact number: 01395 517525 (group number 01395 517546)  
E-mail: [athompson@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:athompson@eastdevon.gov.uk)



To: Members of the Housing Review Board:  
(Councillors Pauline Stott (Chairman), Susie Bond,  
Douglas Hull, Jim Knight, Peter Sullivan.  
Tenant/leaseholder representatives Sue Saunders (Vice  
Chairman), Mike Berridge, Victor Kemp, John Powley, Pat Rous.  
Independent community representatives Julie Adkin, Rob Finch)

East Devon District Council  
Knowle  
Sidmouth  
Devon  
EX10 8HL

Other Members of the Council for Information  
Members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel  
Members of the Tenant Representative Group  
Chief Executive  
Deputy Chief Executives

DX 48705 Sidmouth

Tel: 01395 516551

Fax: 01395 517507

[www.eastdevon.gov.uk](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk)

**Meeting of the Housing Review Board**  
**Thursday, 7 November 2013 at 6.00 pm**  
**Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth**

The above meeting will be held in the Council Chamber at East Devon District Council Offices, Knowle, Sidmouth, to consider the matters detailed on the agenda below.

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting.

- There is a period of 15 minutes at the beginning of the meeting to allow members of the public to ask questions.
- The Chairman has the right and discretion to control questions to avoid disruption, repetition and to make best use of the meeting time. The Chairman is entitled to interrupt the speaker to ask for their question to be put.
- In addition, the public may speak on items listed on the agenda. After a report has been introduced, the Chairman (Leader of the Council) will ask if any member of the public wishes to speak and/or ask questions.
- All individual contributions will be limited to a maximum period of 3 minutes – where there is an interest group of objectors or supporters, a spokesperson should be appointed to speak on behalf of the group.

This meeting is being recorded for subsequent publication on the Council's website. Audio recording is permitted by press representatives and members of the public from the public area, subject to their notification to the Chairman prior to the start of the meeting of a wish to record all or part of that meeting. If you are exercising your right to speak during Public Question Time, but do not wish to be recorded, please inform the Chairman who will instruct those taking a recording to cease while you speak.

Should anyone have any special needs or require any reasonable adjustments to assist them in making individual contributions, please contact Alethea Thompson (contact details at top of page). A hearing loop system will be in operation in the Council Chamber.

Councillors and members of the public are reminded to switch mobile phones to silent during the meeting.

## **AGENDA**

<b>PART A</b>	<b>Page/s</b>
1 <b>Public question time</b> – standard agenda item (15 minutes) Members of the public are invited to put questions to the Board through the Chairman. Councillors also have the opportunity to ask questions of the Chairman and/or Portfolio Holders present during this time slot. Members of the public are given priority at this part of the agenda.	
2 To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Review Board held on 5 September 2013.	5 - 15
3 To receive any apologies for absence.	
4 To receive any declarations of interests relating to items on the agenda.	
5 To consider any items which, the Chairman thinks, should be dealt with as matters of urgency because of special circumstances. (Note: such circumstances need to be recorded in the minutes; any individual wishing to raise a matter under this item is requested to notify the Chairman before the meeting).	
6 To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the press) have been excluded. There is one item which Officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.	
7 Housing Review Board forward plan.	Head of Housing 16 - 17
8 Home Safeguard rebranding exercise.	Housing Support 18 – 20 Services and Home Safeguard Manager
9 Voids – response to Tenant Scrutiny Panel.	Housing Needs and 21 – 41 Strategy Manager
10 Devon Home Choice update.	Housing Needs and 42 – 43 Strategy Manager
11 Review of downsizing policy.	Housing Needs and 44 – 46 Strategy Manager
12 Energy company obligations.	Housing Needs and 47 - 50 Strategy Manager
13 Housing Revenue Account budget monitoring report.	Housing Accountant 51 - 59
14 Benchmarking survey results.	Head of Housing 60 - 63
15 Community Development	Tenant & 64 - 67 Communities Section Leader

16	<b>The Vice Chairman to move the following:-</b>	67
	“that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description set out on the agenda, is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B).”	
17	Affordable housing acquisition proposal.	68 - 78
	Housing Enabling Officer	

## **Decision making and equality duties**

- The Council will give due regard under the Equality Act 2010 to the equality impact of its decisions.
- An appropriate level of analysis of equality issues, assessment of equalities impact and any mitigation and/or monitoring of impact will be addressed in committee reports.
- Consultation on major policy changes will take place in line with any legal requirements and with what is appropriate and fair for the decisions being taken.
- Where there is a high or medium equalities impact Members will be expected to give reasons for decisions which demonstrate they have addressed equality issues.

## **Members and co-opted members remember!**

- You must declare the nature of any disclosable pecuniary interests. [Under the Localism Act 2011, this means the interests of your spouse, or civil partner, a person with whom you are living with as husband and wife or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners]. You must also disclose any personal interest.
- You must disclose your interest in an item whenever it becomes apparent that you have an interest in the business being considered. Make sure you say what your interest is as this has to be included in the minutes. [For example, ‘I have a disclosable pecuniary interest because this planning application is made by my husband’s employer’.]
- If your interest is a disclosable pecuniary interest you cannot participate in the discussion, cannot vote and must leave the room unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Council’s Monitoring Officer or Standards Committee.

## Getting to the Meeting – for the benefit of visitors



The entrance to the Council Offices is located on Station Road, Sidmouth. **Parking** is limited during normal working hours but normally easily available for evening meetings.

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The following buses all terminate at the Triangle in Sidmouth. From the Triangle, walk up Station Road until you reach the Council Offices (approximately ½ mile).

**From Exeter – 52A, 52B**

**From Honiton – 52B**

**From Seaton – 52A**

**From Ottery St Mary – 379, 387**

Please check your local timetable for times.

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The Committee Suite has a separate entrance to the main building, located at the end of the visitor and Councillor car park. The rooms are at ground level and easily accessible; there is also a toilet for disabled users.

**For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546**

## **EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the Housing Review Board held at Knowle, Sidmouth on 5 September 2013**

**Present:**

Councillors:

Pauline Stott (Chairman)  
Susie Bond  
Douglas Hull  
Jim Knight  
Peter Sullivan

Co-opted Tenant Members:

Sue Saunders (Vice Chairman)  
Victor Kemp  
John Powley  
Pat Rous

Co-opted Independent Community Representative:  
Rob Finch

Officers:

Sue Bewes, Landlord Services Manager  
Emma Charlton, Housing Projects Officer  
Jane Reading, Tenant & Communities Section Leader  
John Golding, Head of Housing  
Giles Salter, Solicitor  
Janet Taylor, Housing Allocations Manager  
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer  
Mandy White, Accountant

**Also Present:**

Councillors:

Paul Diviani – Leader  
Jill Elson - Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities  
Stephanie Jones – Deputy Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities

Tenants:

Mike Berridge  
Olwyn Denyer – Tenant Scrutiny Panel  
Eric Howard – Tenant Scrutiny Panel  
Sylvia Martin – Tenant Scrutiny Panel  
Roger Pell – Tenant Scrutiny Panel

**Apologies**

Councillors:

Christine Drew  
Martin Gammell

Co-opted Independent Community Representative:  
Julie Adkin

The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 8.15pm.

**\*15 Public question time**

There were no questions raised by members of the public.

The Chairman welcomed new tenant member John Powley to his first meeting of the Housing Review Board. She also welcomed Mike Berridge who had expressed an interest in filling the remaining tenant/leaseholder vacancy on the Board, and had attended the meeting as an observer. Members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel were also welcomed. All those present were invited to introduce themselves.

Councillor Douglas Hull raised concerns over some new doors which had been installed as part of the door replacement scheme in Millwey Rise, Axminster. There had been a number of incidents including broken glass and letter boxes and telephone lines had been disconnected. He asked the Head of Housing how much officer time had been spent rectifying this and why the damage had occurred in the first place. The Head of Housing replied that it had been a significant door replace programme and contractors had been sourced through Advantage South West. There had been problems at six properties, all of which had been rectified and remedial works carried out. Council officers had spent about two hours visiting the site and speaking to the contractor. Although there had been some inconvenience to the tenants concerned, the Council had incurred no extra costs.

**\*16 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Housing Review Board held on 20 June 2013, were confirmed and signed as a true record, subject to John Powley's name being amended to show that he was not a member of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

The Head of Housing advised the Board that the Council was very close to completing the contract to purchase a shared house in Exmouth (minute 10, 20/06/13 refers). He updated members that following legal advice it would not be appropriate to offer a licence but that tenants would be issued with a two year flexible tenancy agreement.

**RESOLVED:** that the Housing Review Board fully supports the Housing Service in the purchase of a shared house in Exmouth and the granting of a two year flexible tenancy agreement to new tenants of the property.

**\*17 Declarations of interest**

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Minute number</b>	<b>Type of interest</b>	<b>Nature of interest</b>
Rob Finch	26	Pecuniary	Employed by Devon & Cornwall Housing Association.
Rob Finch	30	Pecuniary	Employed by a competing housing association.
Sue Saunders		Personal	Sheltered housing tenant.
Peter Sullivan		Personal	Sheltered housing tenant.
John Powley		Personal	Sheltered housing tenant.

**\*17 Declarations of interest (cont'd)**

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Minute number</b>	<b>Type of interest</b>	<b>Nature of interest</b>
Douglas Hull		Personal	Sister lives in a Council owned property.
Jim Knight		Personal	Daughter lives in a Council owned property.

**\*18 Exempt Information**

**RESOLVED:** that the classification given to the documents to be submitted to the Housing Review Board be confirmed. There was one item which Officers recommended should be dealt with in Part B.

**\*19 Housing Review Board forward plan**

The Head of Housing presented the forward plan.

The Vice Chairman raised concerns of the Tenant Representative Group (TRG) about the Danby House/Exebank site in Exmouth and expressed a wish to encourage Devon County Council (DCC) to take action.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities advised the Board that she had been in touch with the leader of DCC who had promised that the DCC Asset Management Team would consider the site. However, she had received no update. DCC needed to work together with EDDC because of its adjacent land interest and as a potential development partner.

**RESOLVED:** that the forward plan be noted.

**20 Tenant Scrutiny Panel report on the voids process**

The Chairman welcomed members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP). Roger Pell, Chairman of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel introduced the Panel members and presented their report. He explained who the Panel were and what they did, and then why they had chosen to scrutinise the voids process. The TSP developed a scoping paper which outlined the areas to explore and set boundaries to ensure they retained focus. They then agreed the methods the TSP wanted to use to complete its investigations.

Overall, the TSP found the voids process to be very positive and working reasonably well. EDDC was meeting its target turnaround time for voids. EDDC compared reasonably with others in the sector when it came to the length of time a property was void.

The Council was spending more than others in the sector on void repairs and void management, mainly due to the age of the homes and refitting new kitchens and bathrooms during the void period. However, the Panel found that the overall voids/lettable standard needed clarification to avoid ambiguity.

## 20 **Tenant Scrutiny Panel report on the voids process (cont'd)**

Currently tenants were given no choice as to the date and time of accompanied viewings. The Panel felt that there needed to be a balance between the need to let homes as quickly as possible in order to collect the rental income, and the need for tenants to be able to fit the viewings into their daily lives. Staff needed to take time with tenants to ensure that they gave sufficient information in the most appropriate way for each prospective tenant.

The report concluded that the voids process was very positive and working reasonably well. Target times were met and staff genuinely seemed to care about the process and tenants. The Panel's three main recommendations were:

- The void/lettable standard to be clarified and made more specific.
- Tenants should be given clear information on the work to be undertaken on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at the start of their tenancy.
- Tenants to be given a choice over dates and times of viewings.

These recommendations were then broken down into a number of sub recommendations.

The TSP was thanked for their report which the Board agreed was very useful and coherent. The report was welcomed and the Panel's work and level of scrutiny was appreciated.

A request was made to consider providing car parking where feasible when a property became void. It was noted that this would make the voids process longer.

The Head of Housing thanked the Panel for its report and stated that he would like to come back to the Board and invite the TSP along, with a revised void procedure. A compromise needed to be sought on the speed of the turnaround of a void property and greater opportunity for tenants to view it prior to letting.

**RECOMMENDED:** that a revised voids procedure be brought back to a future meeting for consideration by the Housing Review Board and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

## \*21 **Housing Revenue Account review – one year on**

The Head of Housing's report considered research and a recent report from Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) and The Smith Institute on the impact of the reform of social housing finance and the self-financing initiative a year after the introduction of the scheme. The radical change in local authority landlord finances was intended to bring new freedoms and flexibilities in moving away from the housing subsidy system and the research report looked at how effective this had been.



**\*21 Housing Revenue Account review – one year on (cont'd)**

The key results of the research showed:

- Officers were, on the whole, satisfied with HRA reform.
- The building of new homes was a priority in HRA business plans.
- A majority of local authority landlords saw investment in new or existing stock as more of a priority than reducing HRA debt.
- Most officers were confident in the success of their business plans but there were clear challenges.
- Officers believed that they had more resources available for council housing as a result of the reforms.
- The debt cap was highly criticised.
- The removal of the ring fencing of HRA funds was strongly opposed.

On behalf of the Board the Chairman thanked the Head of Housing for his report.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities advised the Board that they would have some very important decisions to make in the future. There was a need to provide more affordable accommodation in the district, particularly for households downsizing and tenants needing extra care in their homes. She then went on to thank and congratulate tenants for enabling 99.5% of rents to be collected and contributing towards the extra HRA surplus.

**RESOLVED:** that the contents of the report be noted.

**\*22 Rent management review**

The report of the Rental Manager looked at the new rent calculation scheme announced in the recent government spending review and what possible effects this would have on the Housing Revenue Account 30 year Business Plan.

The report explained the history of rent restructuring introduced by the then Department of the Environment Transport and Regions (DETR). The scheme began in April 2002 and had 4 key objectives. A rent formula was devised so that social rents would reflect:

- The size, condition and location of properties.
- Local earnings, to take account of affordability.
- Property size.

The new rent calculated by the formula was called the 'target rent' and each property then had two rents, an actual rent and a target rent. The next stage of the scheme was to achieve convergence of the actual and target rents. This involved moving the actual rent to converge with the target rent over a ten year period. Rents were calculated using Retail Price Index (RPI) plus half of one percent, plus a maximum uplift of £2.

From 2015/16 the Government has announced that there would be a new rent calculation scheme, with rents now being calculated using the formula of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus one percent for ten years. The new rent increase formula did not have a mechanism to move the actual rent towards the target rent over and above the rent increase to achieve convergence. At present the Council had 899 properties that would not achieve convergence by March 2016.

**\*22 Rent management review (cont'd)**

It was anticipated that if the performance of CPI remained similar to the previous 10 year period then the Business Plan would be largely unaffected.

It was noted that since the introduction of a 'bedroom tax' some tenants (40-50) were not making regular rent payments. It was feared that this could become worse when all the benefit changes came into effect. Provision had been made in the Business Plan for bad debt. Welfare reforms and the Business Plan would be kept under review.

**RESOLVED:** that the contents of the report be noted.

**\*23 HRA financial monitoring report 2013/14 – month 4 July**

The Board received a report from the Housing Accountant giving a summary of the overall financial position on the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), HRA Capital Programme and the Business Plan for 2013/14 at the end of month four (July 2013). Regular monitoring would highlight any areas of concern or unforeseen expenditure in the HRA and associated capital programme and enable corrective action to be taken as required. Any significant variances would be reflected in the Business Plan.

Current monitoring indicated that:

- The Housing Revenue Account Balance would be maintained at or above the adopted level.
- The position on the HRA Business Plan remained in a healthy position.

**RESOLVED:** that the variances identified as part of the HRA revenue and capital monitoring process up to month four be acknowledged.

**24 Draft annual report to tenants 2012/13**

The HRB was asked to comment on and approve the draft of the annual report to tenants 2012/13, which was circulated with the agenda papers. The report outlined the background and content of the report and highlighted key changes from last year's annual report. The report was drafted by the Housing Projects Officer, with input from housing staff and tenants. Some information was still awaited from the HouseMark benchmarking report. Other groups consulted on the document included the East Devon Readers Panel, the Tenant Reading Panel and the Tenant Representative Group. Some excellent feedback had been received.

The Board discussed in detail whether the annual report should be sent to all tenants, and if so, in what format. The options considered included:

- Sending a full version of the report to every tenant with the December edition of the Housing Matters magazine.
- Including a summary of the report in Housing Matters, or adding a supplementary leaflet giving a summary of the report when posting the magazine in December. Tenants would be informed that a full version of the report would be available on line and information given on how to access the internet. A full version of the report would also be available on request.
- To make the report only available online, with paper copies on request.

24 **Draft annual report to tenants 2012/13 (cont'd)**

It was also agreed that the annual report should be promoted to all East Devon District Councillors as it highlighted the tremendous amount of good work the Housing Service was doing. Producing an annual report was a good discipline for officers to go through as a means of being accountable to tenants and reporting performance against local standards.

- RECOMMENDED:**
- 1 that any suggested changes are incorporated into the report before it is published on the Council's website in October.
  - 2 that a summary of the report be produced and distributed with the Housing Matters magazine in December 2013.
  - 3 that tenants be advised that a full hard copy of the annual report would be available on request.
  - 4 that information be provided to tenants on how and where they could access the report on the internet.
  - 5 that feedback be requested on this approach for producing and distributing the annual report to tenants.

25 **Car parking improvement schemes update**

The Housing Needs and Strategy Manager's report provided the HRB with an update on the implementation of the car parking improvement schemes approved by the Board in January 2012. Officers had been progressing implementation of appropriate schemes following consultation with tenants where necessary. A note showing progress was presented to the Board in November 2012.

The Board noted car parking improvements that had been completed, schemes that had not been progressed (along with reasons why) and schemes that were currently in progress. The Head of Housing updated the Board with an objection received from South West Water (SWW) in relation to the St Gregory's Court scheme in Seaton concerning works close to a water main. EDDC would now need to go back to SWW to negotiate a compromise.

The Board considered a proposal for improved parking at a (Council owned) garage site in West Underleys, Beer. Parking spaces could be rented to residents and provide an income stream to the HRA. Officers had concerns about the ongoing parking problems in the area that required resolution by Devon County Council.

A request was made for Bucknall Close, Branscombe to be reviewed as residents believed that two designated parking spaces each had been allocated to some of the properties. It was agreed that tenants would be consulted before any formal feasibility study would be undertaken in Beer or Branscombe.

25 **Car parking improvement schemes update (cont'd)**

- RECOMMENDED:**
- 1 that the progress made by officers implementing approved car parking improvement schemes be noted.
  - 2 that consideration be given to the off road parking proposal at West Underleys, Beer following consultation with Council tenants in the vicinity.
  - 3 that car parking at Bucknall Close, Branscombe be reviewed.

26 **Garage review update**

The Housing Needs and Strategy Manager's report updated Board members on progress on the agreed actions following the report to the HRB on 6 September 2012 on the garage review undertaken by the Task and Finish Forum (TaFF).

During the TaFF a number of garage sites with potential for housing development were identified. All of the proposed development opportunities in the report could be used to add housing units to the Council's existing housing stock and these were explained in further detail. A number of garage sites had also been approved for sale.

The garages at Jerrard's Close, Honiton were raised as a concern as they appeared to be in poor condition. Members felt that if these were allowed to deteriorate before they were demolished it would create a negative effect on the appearance of the area. A request was made to reconsider the site. It was also suggested that the three ward members be asked for their suggestions for the area.

- RECOMMENDED:**
- 1 that the progress made by officers in implementing the proposals agreed by the Housing Review Board on 6 September 2013 be noted.
  - 2 that the actions identified in the report be agreed.
  - 3 that a budget of £50,000 be approved to undertake the feasibility, scheme design and other necessary works to progress a programme of housing developments on some of the garage sites.

\*27 **Repairs performance monitoring report**

Consideration was given to the Housing Needs and Strategy Manager's report which set out the day to day repairs (including voids) performance. The report provided detailed performance information for the period April 2012 – March 2013. Maintaining and improving tenants' homes was a core landlord activity and an area in which the Council and contractors' performance had a direct impact on tenants' quality of life and enjoyment of their homes.

**\*27 Repairs performance monitoring report (cont'd)**

The report provided information on the number of repairs reported and undertaken; the speed, quality of service, and tenant satisfaction levels. A consistent level of good performance and high tenant satisfaction had been achieved throughout the year. The responsive day to day repairs contract had been retendered and the Housing Service had dealt effectively with one contractor's performance that was below expectations.

The report concluded that although performance was good there was room for improvement in contractors' performance. The Service would continue to monitor contractor performance and seek continuous improvement to ensure contractors met expectations fully and provided the service tenants required.

The Head of Housing advised the Board that he would be presenting a report at a future meeting on repairs appointment times. This would suggest that there would be two appointment times:

- A four hour response for emergency repairs.
- For all other repairs the tenant and contractor would arrange an appointment time at their mutual convenience.

The Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities congratulated staff involved with the recent arson attack in Kay Close, Exmouth.

**RESOLVED:** that the performance on responsive repairs to Council homes set out in the report be noted.

**28 Grounds Maintenance Task and Finish Forum - interim report**

The Landlord Services Manager's report presented an interim statement on the work of the Grounds Maintenance TaFF and included a series of recommendations for the Board's consideration. It was necessary to seek the Board's approval of the recommendations in order that further work on the subject could continue, and the full review of the grounds maintenance service be completed in line with the Housing Review Board's expectations.

Members agreed that identifying, re-measuring and cataloguing all the housing areas maintained under the grounds maintenance service would be a very useful exercise. A specification would need to be drawn up for this work which would go out to tender. A report would then be brought back to the Board.

**RECOMMENDED:** 1 that the level of tenant involvement with the service be increased by:

- a) ensuring that there were always opportunities for tenants as well as staff to be involved in estate walkabouts.
- b) training tenants to be 'green inspectors'.
- c) setting up a new Service Review Group to look at grounds maintenance or to extend the remit of the Estate Management Service Review Group to cover this area – the Landlord Services Manager to explore the options further.

28 **Grounds Maintenance Task and Finish Forum - interim report (cont'd)**

- 1 d) ensuring that tenants are always involved in any changes to the service, prior to implementation.
- 2 that the HouseMark 'photobook' be used to record and improve the appearance of housing estates.
- 3 that the Council considers charging properties sold under the Right to Buy scheme an 'estate rent' charge and to seek legal advice on this.
- 4 that the Landlord Services Manager investigates joining the HouseMark estate management benchmarking club.
- 5 that the Council's website be used to give information about the level of grounds maintenance provided, the service tenants could expect and about when the service was/would be carried out.
- 6 that newly designated Village Green land at Littleham, Exmouth be removed from the Housing Revenue Account and the Council asked to consider whether it wished to retain the land or relinquish it to Exmouth Town Council or Littleham Residents' Association.
- 7 that a budget be provided from the Housing Revenue Account to identify and re-measure and catalogue all the housing areas maintained under the grounds maintenance service.
- 8 that garden licences be reviewed, in terms of the land they were on, the purpose of the licence and the fee charged.

\*29 **Quarterly performance indicator report – quarter 1 2013/14**

Consideration was given to the quarterly performance indicator report for quarter 1 of 2013/14.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted.

\*30 **Exclusion of the Public**

**RESOLVED** that under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description set out on the agenda is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B).

31 **Axminster affordable housing offer**

The Housing Enabling Officer's report informed the Board that following on from the successful acquisition of 11 new homes last year, the Council had been approached again to see if would be interested in offering on a further 9 properties that were currently being constructed. They comprised four homes for rent and five as shared ownership.

The report advised the Board on the business case behind the attempt to acquire additional affordable homes, which was consistent with the Homes and Communities Plan and the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Chief Executive be given delegated authority to acquire new affordable homes on terms and conditions to be agreed, and if necessary, be given leeway to increase the offer by a further £12,000.

Chairman .....

Date .....

## HOUSING REVIEW BOARD – FORWARD PLAN

This forward plan identifies reports and other agenda items for future meetings of the Housing Review Board. It is also intended to assist agenda management and act as a reminder of items to come forward to future meetings.

<b>Report title</b>	<b>Meeting date</b>	<b>Author</b>
Voids - response to Tenant Scrutiny Panel	November 2013	Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Devon Home Choice review	November 2013	Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Review of Downsizing policy	November 2013	Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Energy Company Obligations	November 2013	Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Home Safeguard rebranding exercise	November 2013	Support Services Manager
Community Development update	November 2013	Landlord Services Manager
Financial Monitoring report	November 2013	Housing Accountant
Benchmarking survey results	November 2013	Head of Housing
Telecare services	TBC	Home Safeguard Manager
Danby House/Exbank – DCC updated proposals	Reliant on DCC timetable	Head of Housing
<b>Quarterly performance reports and regular report</b>		
Responsive repairs	Quarterly report	Asset and Property Manager
Letting of Council homes/voids	Quarterly report	Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Devon Home Choice	Quarterly report	Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Rent management	Quarterly report	Landlord Services Manager
Systems Thinking leading & lagging measures	Quarterly report	Head of Housing
New Tenants Survey		
Forward Plan	Every meeting	Head of Housing
Formal Complaints	Annual report	Housing Needs and Strategy Manager
Benchmarking survey	Annual report	Head of Housing
Evaluating the achievements of the Board	Annual report	Head of Housing



Board Members can propose agenda items during meetings/debates that can be included on the Forward Plan for future meetings, or outside the meetings with the agreement of the Chairman and Vice chairman.

Meeting dates – 9 January 2014; 6 March 2014; 8 May 2014.

**Report to:** **Housing Review Board**

**Date of Meeting:** 7 November 2013

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None



**Agenda item:** 8

**Subject:** **Proposals to rebrand the Home Safeguard Service**

**Purpose of report:** This report is an introduction to a presentation that will be given as part of this agenda item. The purpose of both the report and the presentation is to consult with members of the Housing Review Board on proposals for a new Home Safeguard logo.

**Recommendation:** **To approve a new Home Safeguard logo in order to better reflect what the service delivers**

**Reason for recommendation:** As part of the need to increase income across the service it is recognised that the current logo could be improved. This will link directly to a revised Home Safeguard marketing strategy that will set out the service aspirations over the next 5 years.

**Officer:** Amy Gilbert  
Housing Support Services and Home Safeguard Manager  
Direct Dial: 01395 512537  
[agilbert@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:agilbert@eastdevon.gov.uk)

**Financial implications:** Financial implications are not stated in the report but it is assumed that as Home Safeguard is a General Fund service, any costs will be borne by the General Fund not the Housing Revenue Account.

**Legal implications:** The issue of a trademark has been raised with the instructing officers and this should be followed through with further legal advice once brand identity has been sorted as it is important to protect East Devon commercial identity. Legal Services to follow up and advise.

**Equalities impact:** Low Risk  
Report covers aspect of selling the service, not linked to equalities outcomes.

**Risk:** Low Risk  
The report and linked presentation will cover proposals to change the logo of Home Safeguard for purposes of marketing, this is deemed to be a change of low risk.

**Links to background information:** None

**Link to Council Plan:** Living in this Outstanding Place.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Home Safeguard service has been offering a wide range of services to customers for over 26 years. Although part of the housing service, Home Safeguard is somewhat unique in terms of the range of functions it delivers. These are set out as follows:
- Installation and Monitoring of pendant alarms to provide 24/7 re-assurance to residents across the district - such services can be delivered to anyone living in the District
  - Monitoring of the Council's Sheltered Housing properties
  - Monitoring of a number of corporate sites, such as local charities- e.g. Abbeyfield
  - Delivery of the Council's Out of Hours Service
  - Delivery of Teignbridge District Council's Out of Hours Service
- 1.2 For the past 3 years the service has successfully achieved the Telecare Services Association (TSA) charter mark to reflect how the service is meeting the sector's external code of practice. This accreditation has given us the ability to market the service to corporate customers (private units with multiple units attached) which has seen a steady rise in income. Accreditation means we are subject to an annual inspection that involves an external body scrutinising all elements of the service we deliver.
- 1.3 In terms of installing alarms into people's own homes, we receive on average 35-40 requests for the service per month, due to the nature of the customer base that have the service we lose around about the same number per month.
- 1.4 All customers of the service pay a charge for the service, this covers the following:
- The rental of the base unit and a pendant alarm
  - The monitoring of the unit 24 hours a day
  - Repairs/ upgrades to the unit as and when required
  - An annual data check to ensure information is up to date.
- 1.5 Over the past few years there has been a surge of technological advancements in community alarms which has seen the need for the service to keep up to date with developments in the sector, such developments are often referred to as Telecare and Telehealth.
- 1.6 Telecare is a term used to describe the growing range of sensors available that are designed to keep people safe in their homes. Although a pendant alarm is a form of telecare, other more advanced telecare devices include fall detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, intruder alarms and bed occupancy sensors.
- 1.7 Over the past few years Home Safeguard has broadened its range of telecare devices available to residents so we are offering a wider range of sensors to promote and assist in encouraging and assisting people to live at home safely.

## **2 Current Marketing approach**

- 2.1 Due to the sensitivities involved with regard to the Council placing too much emphasis on aggressive marketing, a soft touch approach to marketing has been applied in the past. Our current approach involves making the most of any free/low cost opportunities to market the service. Examples of this are talks to local community groups and attendance at various events throughout the district.
- 2.2 We are building links within the sector to ensure that partner agencies are in a position to promote the service. This includes close working with hospital discharge teams, district nurses and local care agencies. It is recognised that such work needs to be expanded.
- 2.3 We have a basic leaflet that we use as the main source of advertising the service, and we ensure the leaflet is in place at various outlets through the district including all hospitals, doctors' surgeries and community hubs throughout the district.
- 2.4 We are seeing an increase in competition for our service with various companies offering the same services attempting to build their customer base in East Devon. Such companies are seeing us need to work harder to ensure that residents of East Devon know we exist and we are ensuring residents have the choice to consider our service over competitors.
- 2.5 Home Safeguard is proud to be a local service employing local staff who know the area. We believe this is a key part of why customers choose our service over national competitors. We aim to capture this element as part of our new logo.

## **3. Future**

- 3.1 In order to strengthen our position in the market, we are proposing to relaunch the identity of Home Safeguard as it currently exists. We intend to do this in a variety of ways including the launch of a new logo to represent the service.
- 3.2 As part of looking at a new marketing strategy, we have recognised that the current logo is tired and in need of modernisation.
- 3.3 We recently consulted with a group of residents of East Devon which included current customers of the service over our future proposals for marketing the service. The group provided some excellent feedback to our plans to strengthen our position and recognised some key elements that could improve the current look of the service.
- 3.4 The launch of the new logo will form a key element of the new Home Safeguard Marketing Strategy that is currently being produced. The Strategy will focus on exactly how we intend the service to be grown over the next 5 years and will set out in detail plans to advance services that it currently offers to customers.
- 3.5 Members are invited to take part in the interactive presentation that will be delivered by James De Leiburne, Senior Graphics Designer.
- 3.6 The presentation will take members on a journey from where we currently are to where we intend to be in the future.

**Report to:** **Housing Review Board**

**Date of Meeting:** 7 November 2013

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None



**Agenda item:** 9

**Subject:** **Voids Management – A response to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel report on Voids**

**Purpose of report:** This report sets out an Officer response to the report on voids presented to the Board on 5 September 2013. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) undertook a review of the void process and made a number of recommendations. Members asked for a further report with a revised void procedure to be presented. The recommendations in the TSP report are at Annex A. A response to each of the recommendations has been provided. Some issues require further consideration and these are outlined in the report.

**Recommendation:** **Members are asked to:**

- 1. Consider the response by Officers to the recommendations made by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel at Annex A.**
- 2. Agree the recommendations set out in paragraph 2.3 to the report.**

**Reason for recommendation:** To bring back to the Board a report on the recommendations made by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel presented to the meeting on 5 September 2013 about the current number and type of empty properties available during the quarter and the length of time taken to relet the properties.

**Officer:** Dennis Boobier, Housing Needs and Strategy Manager  
[dboobier@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:dboobier@eastdevon.gov.uk)

**Financial implications:** Financial implications have been indicated in the report where known. None of these are currently included in the 2013/14 budget.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications on which to comment.  
Giles Salter 17-01-13

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

**Links to background information:** • None

**Link to Council Plan:** Living in this Outstanding Place.

## Report in full

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel have scrutinised the subject of voids management and presented their findings and recommendations to the Board on 5 September 2013. Members asked for a further report on the subject following careful consideration of the report, with a revised void procedure.

### 2. Response to recommendations on Voids made by the TSP

- 2.1 The report by the TSP is at **Annex A**. A response by Officers has been made against each recommendation in the 'response by officers' column.
- 2.2 The recommendations that have been accepted have been incorporated in the void procedure. Some of the recommendations need further consideration or have financial implications and this is considered in detail in Annex A. The recommendations that have not been accepted or are already considered to be covered in the current void procedure are also highlighted at Annex A.
- 2.3 The three key recommendations are considered below in detail:

- (1) The void/lettable standard to be clarified and made more specific.

The lettable standard is specific to East Devon Homes. All landlords have a 'standard' which they bring their homes up to prior to letting. In some cases that standard is to undertake the necessary legal safety checks on gas and electricity before letting only. Others like East Devon Homes have a standard that includes undertaking improvements and bringing homes up to the decent home standard.

Most landlords prioritise turning around voids quickly and undertake any improvements or major repairs after the tenant has moved in. This is primarily to minimise rent loss due to the property being empty.

The TSP has asked that the lettable standard be reviewed to ensure it is clear and unambiguous and understood by everyone.

**Recommendation:** To set up a tenant and member led group to review the void lettable standard. The group could include representatives from those who have recently become tenants. A survey of new tenants could also be undertaken.

- (2) Tenants to be given clear information on the work to be done on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at start of their tenancy in writing.

This issue is very much linked to paragraph 2.3.

**Recommendation:** That this recommendation is considered by the tenant and member led group.

- (3) Tenants to be given choice over dates and times of viewings.

The opportunity to view the property is already part of the void procedure. We give potential tenants who have been offered a property the opportunity to have an

accompanied viewing on Tuesdays and Wednesdays each week. There are three time slots – 9.30am; 11.30am; and 2.30pm on each of those days in each of the two contract areas.

The limiting factor is capacity of the contractor and the Void and Allocation Officer. Although it is feasible for each Maintenance Surveyor to be available in their area (four areas in district), the contract supervisor for MD or Skinners covers two areas, as does the Void and Allocation officer.

It is important to note that the 'accompanied viewing' serves two purposes. One is to allow the potential new tenant the opportunity to view the property and decide whether to accept the offer of housing; but more importantly it is to allow the technical staff and the contractor to decide what essential work needs doing and how quickly the property can be relet. This area of work has been the subject of a Systems Thinking review.

**Recommendation:** To continue with the current arrangements set out above.

- 2.4 Members asked for the provision of car parking to be considered at the time the property is empty. There are occasions when car parking is an issue, for example a void property at Hillside, Buckerell was provided with off road parking because of the difficulties caused parking vehicles on the narrow public highway. Maintenance Surveyors do consider essential parking issues when they are deciding what work should be done at a void property and they will continue to do so
- 2.5 Members asked for a revised void procedure to be presented. It is suggested at this stage that Members consider this report and the recommendations at Annex A before revisions to the void procedure are made. The current void procedure will be revised following this meeting.

### **3. Current Cost of Void Works**

- 3.1 The cost of void works is made up of a number of elements including repair works; improvements such as new kitchen, bathroom and heating systems; electrical works; gas safety check; asbestos survey and associated works; and occasionally disabled adaptations. On average we have 250 voids per year.
- 3.2 In addition there is rent loss due to voids. In 2012/13 this was £190,000. From April – July 2013 the rent loss is £90,000. The expectation is that rent loss will increase this year because of the increased length of time voids are taking to be relet and the increase in the number of voids this year compared to 2012/13.

3.3 The cost of void works can be identified as follows, some of this is estimated:

	£
➤ Repair work	1,113,920
➤ Electrical works	382,115
➤ Doors (10)	12,000
➤ Heating systems (10)	50,000
➤ Kitchens (80)	240,000
➤ Bathrooms (20)	40,000
➤ Asbestos survey	30,000
➤ Asbestos work	70,000
➤ <b>Total</b>	<b>1,938,035</b>

3.4 The average cost of void works is £7,750. Our average rent is £76 per week. This means that on average it will take 2 years of rent payments to cover the cost of void works.

#### **4. Possible increase in void costs as a result of implementation of TSP recommendations**

4.1 Until the void lettable standard has been reviewed and any additional work such as changes to cleaning or garden works is identified, it is not possible to estimate all the additional costs to void works. However, some key issues identified by TSP can be costed.

4.2 The sure-stop alternative to the stopcock will cost an estimated £50 each (£30 materials and £20 labour) – total cost £12,500 per year.

4.3 The moving of electrical fuse boxes to help older or disabled tenants will cost an estimated £400 each – assume work only in sheltered housing and tenants with disability -100 units per year – total cost will be £40,000 per year.

4.4 The internal decoration of a general needs (GN) void property is estimated to cost an average of £3,000 per property. Assuming an average of 150 properties the cost would be around £450,000. A number of GN void properties are decorated internally at present. It is estimated that to decorate all GN void properties would cost an additional £350,000 per year.

4.5 The TSP has identified some additional work that they would like to see done on void properties. The work above is considered to be reasonable additional work to undertake while the property is void. However, an additional £400,000 in the COT budget will need to be provided to enable this work to go ahead in 2014/15.

4.6 Members should note that further costs may be identified following the review of the void lettable standard.





*SCRUTINISE*  
*PERFORMANCE*  
*ANALYSE*  
*NEGOTIATE*  
*NETWORK*  
*EVALUATE*  
*REPORT*  
*SUPPORT*

## Tenant Scrutiny Panel Report

# THE 'OUTS AND INS' OF THE VOIDS PROCESS

July 2013

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## Introduction

### Who we are:

We are the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, known as 'Spanners', made up of 5 tenants and chaired by Roger Pell.

'Spanners' stands for:

- Scrutinise
- Performance
  - Analyse
    - Negotiate
    - Network
      - Evaluate
      - Report
      - Support

### What we do:

We investigate our chosen topics and report recommendations to the Housing Review Board on our findings. Whilst we are independent of the council, we liaise with officers and tenants to gain information. This enables us to give a balanced perspective to support the Housing Service to regulate and improve its performance.

### Why we chose to scrutinise the voids process:

We considered a range of topics – including those recommended by staff and the Tenant Representative Group - and eliminated those that were going through a process of internal review. We examined performance information and considered value for money as well. Residents often see empty properties and wonder why it appears to take a long time to 'let' them. Voids fitted well within these criteria and so was selected as our next scrutiny project.

## How we did our investigations

We developed a **plan**<sup>1</sup> (scoping paper) which outlined the areas to explore and set boundaries around the topic to make sure we stayed focused.

We then agreed which methods we wanted to use to complete our investigations. This included:

- Work shadowing Tenancy Sustainment Officers at various void properties at different stages
- Interviewing tenants, staff and contractors
- Undertaking a staff survey
- Examining the voids standard and voids procedure documents
- Speaking to new tenants
- Examining the new tenants satisfaction survey
- Reviewing the welcome pack and Tenant Handbook
- Examining Housemark benchmarking data and comparing our Voids Standard with Exeter City New Homes Property Standard

During the work shadowing phase we visited a total of 19 properties, at different stages along the process. We had hoped to follow several properties through from start to finish but this did not occur. We feel that there were some properties where timescales moved very quickly and we did not always get notified of the next stage. Also we did not want to hold up the process. However we feel that those properties which we did visit, a mix of sheltered and general needs, houses, flats and bungalows, gave us a good overview as to how the process was working and on which we could make comments.

Copies of all our findings can be found in our evidence box file.

It was decided not to include Devon Home Choice and allocations in this scrutiny investigation.

This scrutiny investigation took us ten months to complete. All recommendations are based on evidence provided by officers, contractors and tenants. It may be that there is information that we were not made aware of, which may impact on our findings.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A

## What we found

Overall, we found the voids process to be very positive and working reasonably well. EDDC is meeting its target turn around time for voids. The staff involved seem to genuinely care about the process and the tenants. Tenants (and the Panel) have commented on the friendliness of all staff involved. We compare reasonably to others in the sector when it comes to the length of time a property is void.

Whilst we are spending more than others in the sector on void repairs and void management (and we understand this is largely due to the age of the homes and fitting things like new kitchens and bathrooms during the void period) we find that the overall voids/lettable standard is a bit vague and needs clarification to avoid ambiguity. Occasionally this led to tenants being given different messages regarding what would be done to the property from staff<sup>2</sup>.

Currently tenants are given no choice as to the date and time of accompanied viewings<sup>3</sup>. Whilst we understand the need to let homes as quickly as possible in order to collect the rental income, there needs to be a balance between this and the need for tenants to be able to fit the viewings into their daily lives – this will also give more time for staff to be able to complete paperwork.<sup>4</sup>

Staff need to remember that some tenants will be looking at their potential new home through rose-tinted glasses which means they may not take in or may misunderstand the information given. Staff need to take time with tenants to ensure they give this information at a speed and in a way which works best for the prospective tenant<sup>5</sup>.

Our key recommendations include:

- Void/lettable standard to be clarified and made more specific
- Tenants to be given clear information on the work to be done on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at start of their tenancy in writing
- Tenants to be given choice over dates and times of viewings

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<sup>2</sup> Void process visits

<sup>3</sup> Staff interview

<sup>4</sup> Staff survey

<sup>5</sup> Tenant interviews and staff survey

## Our recommendations

Further recommendations	Response by Officers
<p>1.1 Revise the current Void/Lettable Standard so that there is no ambiguity as to meaning in line with our detailed review (see Appendix B)</p>	<p>Agreed clearer, shorter, more focussed standard required for clarity for both staff and tenants.</p> <p><b>Recommend working party of tenants, members and staff to review void lettable standard.</b></p> <p>Could include recent 'new' tenants on group and undertake a survey of new tenants. Submissions or interviews with technical staff and examples of good practice can be considered. It is important to focus on what is appropriate for East Devon Homes and tenants. A balance between meeting expectations, meeting legal/technical standards, and the cost of work needs to be considered. Anything is possible, but at a cost!</p> <p>System thinking tells us that if we get the lettable standard right then the contractor can be instructed to undertake all work to meet this standard. This may eliminate the requirement for the Maintenance Surveyor and may not require a detailed specification for each void.</p>
<p>1.2 East Devon staff (and tenants) to carry out a percentage of spot checks at the end of the void period to ensure the standard is being maintained.</p>	<p>This is already being done.</p> <p>Both the contractor and Maintenance Surveyors undertake inspections. The contractor to ensure the work they were asked to do has been completed. The Maintenance Surveyor post inspects all voids to make sure the contractor has done everything that was specified and the property is upto a lettable standard. In addition, the Voids and Allocation Officer visits the property with the tenant at start of tenancy to hand over the keys to the property. A visual inspection is undertaken by the tenant and VAO to ensure the tenant is happy with the property.</p> <p>All voids are post inspected by contractor, VAO and Maintenance Surveyor. Payment of invoice signed off by Maintenance Surveyor</p> <p><b>Recommend Maintenance Surveyor signs off void lettable standard as met.</b></p>

<p>1.3 Develop a detailed specification for the standard of cleaning similar to that in the Exeter City Council leaflet to include within the Voids/Lettable Standard.</p>	<p>Existing standard includes 'cleaning' of property. To do more may cost more.</p> <p><b>Recommended that this issue is considered as part of review of void lettable standard</b></p>
<p>1.4 Ensure this is given to the cleaners and spot checks need to be carried out to verify the standard is being upheld.</p>	<p>The cleaners are the same contractor who does the repair work to void property. Whatever is agreed would become an instruction to the contractor and if standard not met we would not pay.</p> <p>Post inspection by Maintenance Surveyor should be sufficient.</p>
<p>1.5 Develop a detailed specification for the standard of gardens at the end of the void period</p>	<p>Gardens are tenant responsibility.</p> <p>During void works we normally ensure it is free from rubbish and items that may be dangerous</p> <p>If work is required to remove rubbish or undertake landscaping or other work to bring garden up to void standard then the outgoing tenant should be recharged.</p> <p><b>Recommend that this is considered as part of review of void lettable standard</b></p> <p>This may help officers to enforce tenancy conditions if garden in reasonable condition when let.</p>
<p>1.6 Move electric fuseboxes and stop cocks so that they are easily accessible to tenants and are disability-friendly</p>	<p>The electrical safety check is undertaken on all void properties.</p> <p>Could provide a 'sure-stop' (stopcock) in kitchen as part of void works – easy to use – there is a cost</p> <p>Electric fusebox is not always accessible for tenants – again cost of moving and where do you put it without it getting in way of provision of kitchen units.</p> <p><b>Recommend that this is included in void lettable standard and funded in 2014/15.</b></p>

<p>1.7 Decorate general needs homes to similar standard as sheltered homes</p>	<p>The cost of fully decorating GN voids is estimated to be in excess of £500,000. We currently undertake decoration in some voids and therefore the additional cost to do this in every void is £350,000.</p> <p>Could specify make good and decorate fully or could make good and undercoat only. We could give tenant choice at accompanied viewing as some new tenants may wish to decorate themselves. We could consider giving vouchers for cost of paint only to those new tenants who choose to paint themselves.</p> <p><b>Recommendation is to decorate all void properties</b></p> <p>This would allow us to enforce the tenancy agreement condition that requires the tenant to keep the property in good decorative order.</p>
<p>1.8 Provide 'buggy stores' and a safe place to recharge electric disability scooters in blocks of flats</p>	<p>Adaptation Policy states this is tenant responsibility. The tenant needs to consider storage and any other work such as widening footpath when considering purchase of a mobility scooter. The cost of recharge batteries must be borne by tenant.</p> <p><b>Recommended that the provision of buggy stores is not undertaken on individual properties.</b> The tenant should consider how they will store their buggy and recharge battery at time of purchase. This will be the same for sheltered housing bungalows. However, in the case of blocks of flats it is important that tenants do not store their buggy in communal areas and this should be enforced.</p> <p><b>Need to consider the provision of buggy store for tenants of sheltered housing and general needs blocks of flats on a 'block' basis and where the cost of provision is reasonable. Tenants should be expected to rent storage area and pay for cost of electricity to recharge battery.</b></p>
<p>1.9 Ensure that parts required are easily accessible and that no delays to work occur as a result of issues with suppliers, for example current kitchen supplier</p>	<p>Already working with contractors and Moores to get this right. Situation has improved since July 2013.</p>



<p><b>2.0</b> Tenants to be given clear information on the work to be done on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at start of their tenancy in writing</p>	<p>At accompanied viewing new tenant is informed of works that will be done. It is difficult to provide tenant with details of everything that is being done. Most tenants are really only interested in the key issues around kitchen, bathroom, decoration, carpets and when will the keys be ready.</p> <p>Checking telephone survey of new tenants, this is not an issue of concern.</p> <p><b>Recommended that copy of void lettable standard be given to new tenant</b></p>
<p><b>2.2</b> Provide tenants with guideline floor plans and measurements in order to give an idea of room size. It should be made clear that these measurements should not be used to order carpet or other floor coverings</p>	<p>We already give details to tenants who ask. Opportunity for tenant to gather this information at accompanied viewing or can be provided by VAO if requested.</p>
<p><b>2.3</b> Provide a leaflet similar to the one produced by Exeter City Council. This leaflet should reflect our voids standard</p>	<p>It is possible to provide void lettable standard in leaflet form once the review is complete and the standard has been revised.</p> <p><b>Recommended that the leaflet is produced followign the review of the void standard</b></p>
<p><b>2.4</b> Ensure the information given to tenants by all staff is consistent by training staff on the voids standard and other important housing policies such as communal cleaning and grounds maintenance.</p>	<p>Usually only VAO dealing with new tenant over the 4-6 week period of the void. These two members of staff are the contact for new tenants.</p> <p>Agreed they need to be fully aware of these policies and further information on communal cleaning and grounds maintenance is being provided by the Estate team</p>
<p><b>2.5</b> Use the recommended checklist and leaflet to explain to tenants what will be done to their new home during the void period. Make sure that time is taken to explain this clearly and ensure tenants have understood.</p>	<p>Is this not a repeat of 2.0? This is already done.</p>

<p><b>2.6</b> Make sure staff are clear about important housing policies such as communal cleaning and grounds maintenance. Tenants will then know what East Devon will do and what their responsibility is once they have moved into their home, so they do not feel misled.</p>	<p>Is this not a repeat of 2.4</p>
<p><b>2.7</b> Use the Tenancy Agreement and Tenant Handbook to explain tenants' rights, entitlements and responsibilities. Make sure that time is taken to explain this clearly and ensure tenants have understood.</p>	<p>This is already done during the comprehensive tenants sign up process. This normally takes between 30-45 minutes to complete and includes input from the rental team and Housing Benefit is required.</p>
<p><b>2.8</b> Clarify the garden areas in relation to all properties especially blocks of flats. Ensure tenants are clear when they move in which piece of garden is their responsibility, or whether they are communal gardens.</p>	<p>This is a contentious issue. This needs to be considered by the Landlord Services Manager and possibly referred to Grounds Maintenance TAFF.</p> <p>Ideally all 'garden' linked to a block of flats is communal and is not designated for a specific tenant or flat. However, individual agreements with tenants over the years have allowed communal gardens areas to be used by one tenant and this is an historical issue that needs to be addressed.</p> <p><b>Recommended that the Landlord Services Manager/Grounds Maintenance TAFF deal with this issue</b></p>
<p><b>2.9</b> Give tenants a copy of electrical safety certificate. Alert tenants to the fact that the current energy supplier is British Gas but they can change supplier if they wish</p>	<p>Tenants are told there gas supplier is British Gas.</p> <p><b>Recommended that the tenant with a copy of the electric safety certificate</b></p>

<p><b>3.1</b> Provide a choice of times for the accompanied viewings, including weekends and evenings</p>	<p>See paragraph 2.3.2 in report.</p>
<p><b>3.2</b> Ask tenants moving into sheltered accommodation if they wish the Mobile Support Officer to be present at the accompanied viewing</p>	<p>MSO's are invited to every accompanied viewing. Not all choose to attend.</p>
<p><b>3.3</b> Provide tenants with a named member of staff to contact for information and advice regarding their move</p>	<p>The Void and Allocation Officer perform this function and introduce themselves at the accompanied viewing.</p>

DRAFT

<p><b>4.1</b> Identify criteria where flexibility can be used with regard to rent payment, for example, at the beginning of a tenancy where a tenant might be struggling to pay outgoing rent on a previous property, or at the end of a tenancy, where the tenant has died</p>	<p>The Council is already very flexible with rent payment periods and tenants can claim HB at two properties if eligible and applied for.</p>
<p><b>4.2</b> Review Welcome Pack in line with our detailed review (<b>see Appendix C</b>)</p>	<p><b>Recommend the tenant and member led group review welcome pack as well as void lettable standard</b></p>
<p><b>4.3</b> Research why 50% of tenants responding to the New Tenants Telephone Survey had issues with their homes within four weeks of moving in</p>	<p>Yes. A worthwhile exercise.</p> <p><b>Recommended that the Information and Analysis Officer conduct a survey of new tenants to clearly understand the ‘repair’ issues they experience early on in their tenancy.</b></p>
<p><b>4.4</b> Mobile Support Officer to introduce themselves to new sheltered residents during their first week of occupancy to make sure emergency information is given and recorded on the system</p>	<p>Already done.</p>

## Conclusion

This was our second scrutiny activity and focussed on a service being provided by the council. There was much more work involved but we are getting more experienced in the scrutiny techniques needed and are growing as a scrutiny group.

We learned a lot about the challenges involved in delivering this housing service and hope that our recommendations help to address some of these.

We are pleased to find there are positive practices to balance our recommendations. We found the voids process to be very positive and working reasonably well, with target times met and staff who genuinely seem to care about the process and tenants.

To recap, our top three recommendations are:

1. Void/lettable standard to be clarified and made more specific
2. Tenants to be given clear information on the work to be done on their new home and the standard they can expect the property to be in at start of their tenancy
3. Tenants to be given choice over dates and times of viewings

We are pleased to recommend this report to the Housing Review Board.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following for their contribution and support during this project:

- Officers of the council who supported us, allowed us to shadow them and patiently searched for information in answer to our questions
- Tenants, Contractors and staff who took part in our surveys and interviews
- Trafford Hall for the free training

A special thank you goes to the Housing Needs Team and Emma Charlton for their patient help in facilitating this project

## Appendix A - Scoping paper

### Tenant Scrutiny Panel : Review of Voids – procedures and efficiency

<b>BROAD TOPIC AREA</b>	Review of procedures relating to re-lets and voids
<b>SPECIFIC AREAS TO EXPLORE</b>	<p>Void Management</p> <p>Pre let visits</p> <p>Tenant visits (accompanied)</p> <p>Review Tenant welcome pack</p> <p>Length of time empty</p> <p>Tenant feedback – survey</p> <p>Void repairs / maintenance</p>
<b>AREAS NOT COVERED</b>	<p>Devon Home Choice: ease of access / landlord interaction with system</p> <p>Allocations</p> <p>Repairs system</p> <p>Routine maintenance any works not directly concerning re-lets</p> <p>Complaint system</p> <p>Garden maintenance (grass cutting)</p>
<b>DESIRED OUTCOMES</b>	<p>Attend visits and observe procedures</p> <p>Review, observe and recommend</p> <p>New tenant survey, staff interviews and contractors</p> <p>Look for and comment on improvement in current procedures etc</p> <p>Cut out duplication and waste</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Attend visits and observe procedures</li> <li>2. Review system and procedures</li> </ol> <p>Look at systems to improve income flow</p> <p>Value for money</p>
<b>WHO SHOULD BE CONSULTED TO OBTAIN EVIDENCE</b>	<p>New tenants – survey, questionnaire</p> <p>Contractor's staff</p> <p>Mystery shoppers</p>

## Appendix B – Review of Voids/Letable Standard

Number in specification	Comment
1. Visual inspection of exterior	Feel repairs should be done to steps and footpaths Need to fit grills over outside drains
2. Security	Don't feel that all windows are checked – eg Property 11 Also Panel feel double glazing units should be replaced if seals have been broken and condensation between panes
3. Electrical specification	Need to add into the specification that extractor fans in bathrooms and kitchens should be checked and where missing fitted in appropriate location. Specification to be updated to the current minimum standards required.
7. Fittings and fixtures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Contractors need to be made aware that specification says 'smooth to touch' in several places – at meeting did not seem to be aware of this and was not always the case for properties visited</li> <li>ii. specification needs to be clearer as to whether the 3m run of worktops is one continuous run or can be broken up</li> <li>iii. Panel found that not all units are left clean (Properties 1 &amp; 11)</li> <li>iv. Specification doesn't say anything about a space for a cooker</li> <li>v. Specification should say that if gas supplied to property then fittings for both gas and electric cookers should be put in kitchen</li> <li>vi. Panel feel that specification should say that new toilet seats should be fitted</li> <li>vii. Specification says toilets and baths free from limescale but panel feel this is not always the case</li> </ul>
8. Decorative order	Says 'walls prepare ready for re-decoration' but feel needs more explanation about this – fill holes, smooth etc In light of changes to the way we are 'labelling' properties and recent decommissioning need to look again at which properties will be re-decorated prior to reletting. Perhaps all properties into which an older person or disabled person is moving in should be redecorated?
9. Cleaning	Panel would like to see a separate, detailed specification for the standard of cleaning similar to that in the Exeter City leaflet. This needs to be given to the cleaners and spot checks need to be carried out to check standard being upheld. Panel would like to see nicotine stains all removed (use steam cleaners?)

## Appendix C – Review of the Welcome Pack

Original list	Current welcome pack (7/3/13)	Recommendation	Priority
Welcome Letter	Not included	New letter to be drafted and included in pack	1
Information about the local area (including details about doctors, dentists etc)	Not included	Sheet of local information to be put together for each area	2
Info on a leaflet to say where to find this infoServices into and within your home	Included	Leaflet on how to switch to another provider to be drafted and included in pack	1
Easy Reference Card for Repairs & Maintenance	Not included – but information in Tenant Handbook	Key phone numbers etc to be collated onto laminated card for easy reference	1
Refuse and recycling leaflet	Not included	Leaflet to be included	3
The Tenants Charter	Replaced by Tenant Handbook	No change required	
How to get involved with the Housing Service	Not included – but information in Tenant Handbook	No change required	
Housing Customer Charter Right to Repair leaflet Right to compensation leaflet Housing Benefit/Council Tax benefit claim form Home Safeguard leaflet Leaflet on dispersed alarm service Booklet on low cost home insurance	This information is now in the Tenant Handbook and/or Annual Report	No change required	
Advice on damp, condensation and mould problems Leaflet	Included	No change required	
Local 'handy pages' directory (if available for area)	Not included	No change required	
Copy of latest Housing Standard or Partnership News newsletter	Housing Matters included	No change required	
Tenant Participation Agreement	Now the Tenant and Council Partnership Agreement - in the Annual Report	No change required	



Original list	Current welcome pack (7/3/13)	Recommendation	Priority
	Flyer about Introductory tenancies	No change required	
	Leaflet on Heating Systems and controls	No change required	
	Annual Report	No change required	
	Home Focus	No change required	

DRAFT

**Report to:** **Housing Review Board**

**Date of Meeting:** 7 November 2013

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None



**Agenda item:** 10

**Subject:** **Devon Home Choice – Policy Update**

**Purpose of report:** Devon Home Choice is our adopted housing allocations policy. The Devon Home Choice Board undertook a review of the allocation policy used across Devon to prioritise housing applications and to let social housing. The result of the review is that a number of changes to the Policy are being implemented from 1 October 2013.

**Recommendation:** **Members are asked to endorse the changes to the Devon Home Choice policy.**

**Reason for recommendation:** To update members on changes to the Devon Home Choice policy.

**Officer:** Dennis Boobier

[dboobier@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:dboobier@eastdevon.gov.uk)

**Financial implications:** There are no financial implications.

**Legal implications:** The recommendation is in line with current national housing policy guidance and legal advice as explained within the report.

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

**Links to background information:**

- [http://www.devonhomechoice.com/Data/ASPPages/1/216.aspx#Policy\\_Procedures](http://www.devonhomechoice.com/Data/ASPPages/1/216.aspx#Policy_Procedures)

**Link to Council Plan:** Living in this outstanding place

## Report in full

### 1. Introduction

1.1.1 Devon Home Choice is our sub-regional allocations policy for social housing used by local authorities and a significant number of the Registered Providers working in the County. The Devon Home Choice Board has approved a number of changes to the policy for the allocation of social housing. The key changes are as follows (the paragraph numbers refer to the relevant paragraph in the DHC Policy document):

1.2 Clarification that people (applicants) can only be on one application (paragraph 2.3).

1.3 Clarification that the financial assessment applies to the household rather than just the main applicant (paragraph 2.6).

- 1.4 A change to the way households accepted as homeless could be banded (e.g. they could be placed in Band B or Band D depending on whether their temporary accommodation is short stay or long term and 'settled'). This does not apply if the applicant has served in the forces in which case their application will be placed in Band B (paragraph 3.5 & 3.7).
- 1.5 Clarification that households will only be assessed as under occupying their current home if they have at least one vacant bedroom (paragraph 3.5).
- 1.6 People who have been approved as a foster carer or for adoption by an independent agency used by Devon Social Services will also have their applications placed in Band B (paragraph 3.5).
- 1.7 A maximum of one additional bedroom will be provided for foster carers or people seeking to adopt (paragraph 3.5).
- 1.8 A new category in Band C for people who have served in the UK armed forces with urgent housing needs, where their application would otherwise have been placed in Band D (paragraph 3.6).
- 1.9 Changes to the wording to reflect legal advice on the sections of the policy confirming that people who have served in the forces in the last 5 years are excluded from the local connection provisions of our policy (paragraph 3.9).
- 1.10 Changes made following legal advice to confirm the priority awarded to people who have served in the forces (paragraph 3.10).
- 1.11 Change in the age that people are assessed as needing their own room from 21 back to 16 (paragraph 3.17). Members may remember that the age was changed following the Localism Act 2011. It was anticipated at that time that Government would make changes to other policy areas that had age criteria e.g. HB Legislation/guidelines. This has not happened and the DHC age change to 21 years is causing confusion with applicants and how their bedroom need is assessed. The change is approved to bring DHC in line with other related housing policy criteria.
- 1.12 Clarification that Band B for housing defects will only be awarded where the defect cannot be resolved by standard Environmental Health enforcement action (paragraph 3.20).
- 1.13 Confirmation that the 6 week limit on homeless/ prevention cases to bid applies from when applicants are first assessed and not 6 weeks in each category (paragraph 4.11).

## **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the changes to the DHC Policy.

**Report to:** **Housing Review Board**

**Date of Meeting:** 7 November 2013

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None



**Agenda item:** 11

**Subject:** Downsizing Policy Review - Options for Change

**Purpose of report:** A review of our Downsizing policy has been carried out and this report presents options for consideration following an increased demand for downsizing due to the spare room subsidy rules (Bedroom Tax). At this stage it is proposed we continue to provide financial incentives to encourage tenants to downsize.

**Recommendation:** Members are asked to:

1. Agree to maintain the existing policy and current budget level in 2014/15.
2. Agree to restrict the financial assistance given to repeat applicants who wish to downsize to one application in five years.
3. Allow Officers to continue to apply the policy flexibly to maximise the number of tenants who wish to downsize.

**Reason for recommendation:** Members to consider the options for changing the Downsizing policy and provide financial savings.

**Officer:** Dennis Boobier, Housing Needs and Strategy Manager  
[dboobier@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:dboobier@eastdevon.gov.uk)

**Financial implications:** £75,000 is included in the current year's budget for downsizing payments. Budgets for 2014/15 are currently being prepared and, if the recommendation is approved, £75,000 will be included again.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications relating to the change of policy.

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

**Links to background information:** • None

**Link to Council Plan:** Living in Outstanding Place.

## Report in full

1. Following changes in welfare benefits a number of Landlord's have reviewed their downsizing policy and the financial incentive they provide to tenants to move to smaller homes.

2. We have undertaken a 'desk top' review of our Downsizing policy and Members will see below a comparative table showing the key factors/financial incentives provided by East Devon Homes and other landlords in Devon and elsewhere in the Country.

Landlord	Financial incentive offered	Standard Amount	Plus extra for each bedroom	Cash Incentive for mutual exchange	Type of property incentive offered for
East Devon District Council	Yes	£1500	£500	No	Sheltered or General by prior agreement
Mid Devon District Council	Yes	£1250	No	No	All
Exeter City Council	Yes	Up to £2000	No	No	All through-out uk
Moray Council	Yes	£1500	£400	No	All
Southlake's Housing	Yes	Up to £1000	No	No	All
West Lancashire Borough Council	Yes	Up to £1500	No	£250 terms apply	Only sheltered
Spectrum Housing	Yes	Up to £1200	No	No	All
Aberdeen City Council	Yes	£1000	No	No	All apart from sheltered
DCH Group	No	£0	£0	No	N/A
Sovereign	No	£0	£0	No	N/A
Guinness Hermitage	No	£0	£0	No	N/A

3. In Mid Devon, they have revised their scheme to a flat rate to ensure they remain in budget and maximise the number of downsizers. Exeter City Council are currently considering revising their scheme to a flat rate to cover removal costs only and meet the demand of those under occupying and affected by welfare reforms to remain within allocated budget.
4. Some Landlords are revising their schemes to focus resources on those who are downsizing because they are under occupying and are affected by reductions in housing benefit as a result of the introduction of spare room subsidy/under occupancy rules. Some RP's such as DCH Group, Sovereign and Guinness Hermitage do not offer any incentives, as they believe the welfare reforms are incentive enough to encourage tenants to downsize. Other landlords limit their schemes to expenses incurred, with a cap on expenditure and ask for receipts.

5. In 2012/13 we approved 24 transfers where tenants received a financial incentive. In addition we approved 13 mutual exchanges for tenants who wished to downsize in some cases because they were affected by the spare room subsidy rules. Since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 we have approved 20 transfers and 14 mutual exchanges that have either taken place or are in progress. There has been an increase in tenants wishing to move within general needs accommodation.
6. We reviewed our Downsizing policy on 9 September 2010 and provided improved financial incentives to encourage more tenants to downsize. The Housing Allocation Assistant's role over the last two years has been to proactively encourage and support tenants downsizing. This has resulted in a large increase in the numbers of downsizing compared to previous years. The number of three bedroom family housing is well above expectation and this allows existing overcrowded tenants to transfer to larger homes.
7. As the welfare reforms only came into effect on 1 April 2013 there is no published comparative study or statistics available. A number of landlords are reviewing their policies in order to either make their budgets go further or meet the demands of tenants who are under occupying their home and affected by welfare reforms.
8. At this stage, we should continue to
  - a. Provide the same level of financial incentive,
  - b. Proactively encourage tenants to downsize,
  - c. Provide support where required to help tenants downsize, and
  - d. Maximise the numbers of family housing available for reletting.
9. Members are asked to approve a change to the existing policy adopted on 9 September 2010. To restrict the opportunity to downsize and receive the financial award to one application within a 5 years period. We have recently had requests to downsize from tenants who have previously downsized e.g. from 3 bed house to 2 bed flat, who have then asked to downsize to one bedroom flat.
10. Members are asked to agree to maintain our current policy with one change – see paragraph 9 above, and to undertake a further review in 12 months when we may have more information on the affects of welfare reform and the impact on people who are under occupying. In the meantime we should maintain our current budget and our current policy to maximise the number of tenants downsizing.

**Report to:** Housing Review Board

**Date of Meeting:** 7 November 2013

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None



**Agenda item:** 12

**Subject:** Green Deal – ECO Funding - Proposals to improve the energy efficiency and thermal insulation of the housing stock.

**Purpose of report:** Members agreed to monitor the development and implementation of the Green Deal and to consider any change to our agreed approach at a future date. The proposals to access funding from Energy Company Obligation (ECO) earlier this year has provided an opportunity for East Devon Homes to access funding to help improve the energy efficiency and thermal insulation of our homes. The report proposes a partnership with SSE to take forward a pilot proposal for a small number of our “off gas” properties in rural areas to find out the level of funding that could be available. There is no financial commitment or obligation for us to go any further than assessing around 300 of our homes and understanding more clearly the level of funding that could be provided by SSE.

**Recommendation:** Members are asked to agree to Officers progressing feasibility work with SSE to clarify the funding available through ECO that the Council could access.

**Reason for recommendation:** The Board agreed to monitor development and implementation of the Green Deal and to consider any change to our agreed approach at a future date. The introduction of the ECO obligation on the energy companies has created an opportunity to access funding that the Council could use to help subsidise its energy efficiency and thermal insulation work to the housing stock.

**Officer:** Dennis Boobier, Housing Needs and Strategy Manager  
[dboobier@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:dboobier@eastdevon.gov.uk)

**Financial implications:** There are no financial implications at this stage other than officer time which is already included in the budget.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications on which to comment at the feasibility/evaluation stage however legal services will advise as and when the project moves on and any potential partners have been identified which may require procurement advice.

Giles Salter-17-10-13

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

**Links to background information:** • <http://www.greendealcentral.com/files/GreenDealCentral-CouncilGuide.pdf>

**Link to Council Plan:** Living in this Outstanding Place.

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 Reports on the Green Deal and electricity generating technology were presented to Members in March 2012 and November 2012.
- 1.2 Members agreed to monitor the implementation of the Green Deal proposals and to not permit tenants to make improvements to their home through the Green Deal and to focus on the delivery of our improvement programmes. Members also agreed to consider any change to this approach at a future date if opportunities became available.
- 1.3 The introduction of the Energy Companies Obligation (ECO) is one such opportunity that the Board should now consider.

## **2. What is ECO?**

- 2.1 The ECO is an energy efficiency programme that was introduced at the beginning of 2013. It replaces two previous schemes, the Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) and the Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP).
- 2.2 ECO places legal obligations on the larger energy suppliers to deliver energy efficiency measures to domestic energy users. It operates alongside the Green Deal and is intended to provide additional support in the domestic sector, with a particular focus on vulnerable consumer groups and hard-to-treat homes.
- 2.3 Under the rules of ECO, energy suppliers are obliged to help improve the energy efficiency of their domestic customers' buildings in three distinct areas:

### **Carbon Emissions Reduction Obligation**

Under the Carbon Emissions Reduction Obligation, energy companies must concentrate efforts on hard-to-treat homes and measures that cannot be fully funded through the Green Deal. Solid wall insulation and hard-to-treat cavity wall insulation are the primary areas for focus under this target. Other insulation measures and connections to district heating systems are also eligible if they are promoted as part of a package that includes solid wall insulation or hard-to-treat cavity wall insulation.

### **Community Obligation**

Under the Carbon Saving Community Obligation, energy companies must focus on the provision of insulation measures and connections to domestic district heating systems supplying areas of low income. This target has a sub-target, which states that at least 15 per cent of each supplier's Carbon Saving Community Obligation must be achieved by promoting measures to low income and vulnerable households living in rural areas.

### **Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation**

Under the Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation, energy suppliers are required to provide measures which improve the ability of low income and vulnerable households (the 'Affordable Warmth Group') to heat their homes. This includes actions that result in heating savings, such as the replacement or repair of a boiler for example.

## **3. Devon wide Proposals**

- 3.1 Devon LA's have been looking at the Green Deal and how they might collectively assist households (primarily private) in the County, with this initiative. A review was started in November 2012.



- 3.2 The purpose of the “options review” process was to determine the most appropriate response to Green Deal/ECO for the county of Devon through a countywide partnership of LAs supported by the Energy Saving Trust. The process started in Nov 2012 with an assumption that LAs would engage with Green Deal/ECO in one of three roles identified by Government – Provider, Partner or Advocate. However, as the partnership’s learning advanced, it was clear that there was a spectrum of potential engagement possibilities.
- 3.3 At the end of March 2013, the review concluded that the procurement of an ECO delivery partner would be the most appropriate solution for Devon and Torbay – Plymouth has made alternative arrangements. By early July 2013 a procurement specification had been developed and agreed by the remaining 10 LA partners. The key features of this specification are as follows;
- **Procurement Route** – competitive process resulting in an SLA/MoU with legal conditions around data, logo/branding, KPIs, quality and customer service. This procurement has been deemed to be a nil value “contract”. No funding will be provided to the successful applicant.
  - **Exclusivity** – one provider is being sought.
  - **Provider Type** – selected from the Big 7 power companies and main contractors with access to ECO funding. The value of the “contract” is expected to exceed £18m annually as this is the pro rata share of the expected national expenditure by obligated power companies for Devon and Torbay.
  - **Service Required** – ECO measures plus an option for provision of Green Deal.
  - **Management Model** – fully managed by the provider.
  - **Scope** – Private Sector Housing plus. There is an opportunity to include housing association and public sector housing stock but many of these organisations are already negotiating their own deals.
- 3.4 The present position is that the partnership is at the procurement stage and is being led by Devon County Council on behalf of the partnership. A Memorandum of Understanding for the partnership has been developed by Torbay and signed by all partners. Tenders have been received from six applicants and two have been asked to attend a formal interview and presentation of their submissions to the evaluation panel at the beginning of October. It is hoped that the successful supplier will be notified later in October 2013 and then it is hoped that the first delivery of the scheme will be early 2014. This project has been developed in order to pull in significant amounts of the ECO funding to Devon and provide energy efficiency measures primarily in the private housing stock, but this could also include the social housing stock.
- 3.5 Members should note that although there is an option for landlords of social housing (Exeter, Mid Devon and East Devon) to join the partnership it is primarily aimed at the private sector. The procurement process is aimed at zero funding by Councils and may not provide a holistic approach to dealing with energy efficiency, thermal insulation, provision of improvements, and dealing with fuel poverty among our tenants. At this stage it is proposed that East Devon Homes do not join the partnership. At the time of writing, Exeter and Mid Devon ‘Landlords’ have not committed to joining this partnership and are exploring their own solutions to accessing ECO funding.

#### **4. Progress on accessing ECO funding opportunities**

- 4.1 Officers have been investigating the opportunities for partnering with an energy company to access ECO funding. There are a limited number of other ‘agencies’ who are also able to access ECO funding and these have been considered also.

- 4.2 Each of the energy suppliers and other agencies has a legal obligation to hit targets for carbon savings. They achieve those targets by funding energy efficiency work and the Government has set up a requirement for the companies to provide £1.3bn a year to do this.
- 4.3 As well as replacing CERT and CESP, the ECO focuses on two areas; energy efficiency in hard to treat homes and reducing fuel poverty.
- 4.4 It is not absolutely clear what parts of the ECO funding East Devon Homes may be eligible for, however, it is clear that the ECO funding that would have previously supported CERT is not available to social housing landlords. Working with a preferred partner who is able to clearly understand our housing stock and our holistic approach to dealing with energy efficiency, fuel poverty and thermal insulation in our properties will help us maximise the ECO funding we can access.
- 4.5 Officers have been working with MD Building Services Ltd (one of our responsive repair contractors) and were introduced to a partner they had been working with in other local authority areas – Corgi Carbon Solutions Ltd. We have also met with SSE an energy supplier to better understand ECO and what may be available to East Devon Homes.
- 4.6 Our preferred option at this stage is to progress with SSE a proposal they have made to help us understand our housing stock; where we should focus our attention; and what the ECO funding might be for a specified number of properties. This would allow us to evaluate options for implementing any works, and assess the options for funding other improvements to individual properties to ensure we provide a holistic solution that maximises the energy efficiency and thermal insulation benefits to the property and reduces the use of energy by the tenant. At this stage there is no financial liability to East Devon Homes.
- 4.7 The first phase involves the completion of a spreadsheet that identifies “off gas” properties in rural areas. A sample of 150 solid fuel and 150 electric will be selected. This will enable these properties to be surveyed and a calculation for the carbon assessment of works to be made. SSE will then be able to compile an offer for East Devon Homes to consider. This will show the amount of funding that SSE can provide for the 300 properties and the work they will fund. There is no commitment for East Devon Homes to go any further.
- 4.8 At this stage it will be possible for us to consider whether any other improvements could be made to the property which will need to be funded by East Devon Homes.
- 4.9 If we decide to proceed, then an agreement will be developed, agreed and signed. Pre contract meetings will be held and “preferred” contractors will need to be agreed. The “preferred” contractor could be one or both of our existing responsive repairs contractors.
- 4.10 A further report will be presented to Members at a future meeting before proceeding beyond the feasibility/evaluation stage and prior to any agreement being signed.

**Report to:** **Housing Review Board**

**Date of Meeting:** 7 November 2013

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None



**Agenda item:** 13

**Subject:** **HRA Financial Monitoring Report 2013/14 - Month 6 September**

**Purpose of report:** This report gives a summary of the overall financial position on the Housing Revenue Account, HRA Capital Programme and the Business Plan for 2013/14 at the end of month six (September 2013).

Regular monitoring will highlight any areas of concern or unforeseen expenditure in the HRA and associated capital programme and enable corrective action to be taken as required. Any variances will be reflected in the Business Plan.

Current monitoring indicates that:

- The Housing Revenue Account Balance will be maintained at or above the adopted level.

The position on the HRA Business Plan remains healthy.

**Recommendation:** **That the variances identified as part of the HRA revenue and capital monitoring process up to month six be acknowledged.**

**Reason for recommendation:** The report updates the Board on the overall financial position of the Housing Revenue Account and Business Plan following the end of each month and includes recommendations where corrective action is required for the remainder of the financial year.

**Officer:** Mandy White Accountant Ext 2357

[awhite@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:awhite@eastdevon.gov.uk)

**Financial implications:** Details are contained within the report.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications requiring comment.

Giles Salter 17-10-13

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

Current monitoring indicates that the HRA and Business Plan balances are being maintained at or above the adopted levels. In compiling this report we have looked at all large, high risk and volatile budget areas. Predicted spending patterns have been linked to operational activity and all material budgets have been subject to thorough risk assessments by operational managers and finance staff. Any continuing variances in spending patterns will be considered and incorporated into the Business Plan.

Links to background information: • [Housing Revenue Account Business Plan](#)

Link to Council Plan: Funding this Outstanding Place.

## Financial Monitoring Report 2013/14 – To Month 6 September

### 1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this monitoring report is to update members of the Board on the overall financial position of the Housing Revenue Account and Business Plan following the end of month six.

### 2. Housing Revenue Account Position

2.1 A summary of the predicted over and under spends to the year end is shown below:

	Variation at Month 6 £000	Predicted Outturn Variation £000
No further variations have been identified	0	0
Variations from month 4	231	231
<b>Total variations</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>231</b>

2.2 The following table shows the original budget surplus set for the year and the total variations as identified above, which are likely to affect the budget to give a revised budget surplus for the year.

	£000
<b>Original Budget surplus</b>	<b>(1,696)</b>
Supplementary estimate for feasibility studies for potential developments on garage sites (HRB 05/09/13)	50
Month 6 predicted net (under)/overspend to year end	231
<b>Predicted Budget Surplus</b>	<b>(1,415)</b>

Appendix A gives a more detailed breakdown of the HRA budgets and actual expenditure and income to date.

- 2.3 These variations will have the following effect on the Housing Revenue Account Balance:

	<b>£000</b>
<b>Housing Revenue Account Balance (01/04/13)</b>	<b>(2,970)</b>
Predicted budget surplus as above	(1,415)
<b>Predicted HRA Balance (31/03/13)</b>	<b>(£4,385)</b>

The recommended level for the HRA balance has been agreed at £2.1m (£500 per property). The current balance is well above the recommended level and will be used for further investment in the housing stock, to offset any adverse effects of Welfare Reform and to ensure sufficient funds are available to make the first repayment of principal on the self-financing loans due in 2014/15.

In addition £1.710m is held in a volatility reserve.

### 3. Capital Programme Position

- 3.1 The following table shows the HRA Capital Programme totalling £1.425m and the expenditure to date. Capital receipts and a S106 receipt will be used to fund part of this sum with the balance to be met by a revenue contribution from the HRA.

<b>HRA Capital Programme Summary</b>	<b>Budget £000</b>	<b>Spend to date £000</b>
New Housing IT System	350	3
Major improvements/extensions/loft conversions to existing dwellings	175	25
Off street car parking	50	0
Re-modelling of sheltered schemes	200	99
Social Services Adaptations	200	107
Purchase of HMO in Exmouth	450	0
<b>Total Programme</b>	<b>1,425</b>	<b>234</b>

- 3.2 The following table shows the capital receipts received in the year to date and how those receipts must be used.

<b>Capital Receipts</b>	<b>£000</b>
Sale of council houses/flats	(967)
Sale of land/garages	(77)
<b>Total capital receipts received</b>	<b>(1,044)</b>
Allocation of receipts:	
Retained for provision of new social housing	(577)
Retained for funding other HRA capital expenditure	(292)
Paid to HM Treasury	(175)
<b>Total capital receipts allocation</b>	<b>(1,044)</b>

There have been 12 Right to Buy sales and 11 garage sales completed so far this year. Under the terms of the agreement we've signed with the government which enables us to retain Right To Buy receipts, we must commit to spend those receipts within a rolling 3 years or they have to be paid over to the government with interest. Currently we are required to spend £3.1m on the provision of new social housing by 30 September 2016 of which £0.930m can be funded from retained receipts.

#### **4. HRA Business Plan**

- 4.1 Appendix B shows the Business Plan Operating Account which reflects the above changes in 2013/14 and the subsequent impact on balances for future years.

## APPENDIX A

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL  
REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2013/2014

SUMMARY OF HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT  
Period to 30 September 2013

	2013/2014			Service	2013/2014	2013/2014
	Budget					
	Original	Revised	Year to Date		Actual	Variance
	£	£	£	£	£	
				<b>INCOME</b>		
1	(17,200,000)	(17,200,000)	(8,600,010)	Gross Property Rent including Garages	(8,606,331)	(6,321)
2	(65,000)	(65,000)	(50,000)	Other Rents & Income	(66,234)	(16,234)
3	<b>(17,265,000)</b>	<b>(17,265,000)</b>	<b>(8,650,010)</b>	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>(8,672,565)</b>	<b>(22,555)</b>
				<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
				<b>Repairs &amp; Maintenance</b>		
4	2,203,570	2,403,570	1,256,930	General	1,438,313	181,383
5	998,000	998,000	489,060	Special Works	292,866	(196,194)
				<b>Supervision &amp; Management</b>		
6	2,602,020	2,633,020	1,718,680	General	1,689,835	(28,845)
7	885,680	935,680	747,820	Special	682,058	(65,762)
8	243,470	243,470	144,100	Other Expenditure	135,121	(8,979)
9	6,932,740	7,213,740	4,356,590	<b>Total Management &amp; Maintenance</b>	4,238,193	(118,397)
10	0	0	0	Adjustment to Bad Debt Provision	0	0
11	2,155,900	2,155,900	0	Depreciation - dwellings	0	0
12	78,190	78,190	0	- other	0	0
13	5,150,000	5,150,000	2,574,960	Major Repairs Account	2,180,380	(394,580)
14	(2,155,900)	(2,155,900)	0	Transfer to Major Repairs Reserve	0	0
15	<b>12,160,930</b>	<b>12,441,930</b>	<b>6,931,550</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>6,418,573</b>	<b>(512,977)</b>
16	<b>(5,104,070)</b>	<b>(4,823,070)</b>	<b>(1,718,460)</b>	<b>NET COST OF SERVICE</b>	<b>(2,253,992)</b>	<b>(535,532)</b>
17	(36,130)	(36,130)	0	Interest on Balances	0	0
18	2,569,200	2,569,200	0	Principal & Interest Payable (PWLB loans)	(27,727)	(27,727)
19	(90)	(90)	(50)	Interest on Council House Sales (mortgages)	(36)	14
20	<b>2,532,980</b>	<b>2,532,980</b>	<b>(50)</b>		<b>(27,763)</b>	<b>(27,713)</b>
21	<b>(2,571,090)</b>	<b>(2,290,090)</b>	<b>(1,718,510)</b>	<b>NET OPERATING EXPENDITURE - Deficit / (Surplus)</b>	<b>(2,281,755)</b>	<b>(563,245)</b>
22	875,000	875,000	0	Revenue Contribution to Capital Expenditure	0	0
23	<b>(1,696,090)</b>	<b>(1,415,090)</b>	<b>(1,718,510)</b>	<b>Deficit / (Surplus) for the Year</b>	<b>(2,281,755)</b>	<b>(563,245)</b>
				<b>BALANCES</b>		
24	(2,717,227)	(2,969,563)	(2,969,563)	Balance b/f	(2,969,563)	0
25	(1,696,090)	(1,415,090)	(1,718,510)	Deficit / (Surplus)	(2,281,755)	(563,245)
26	<b>(4,413,317)</b>	<b>(4,384,653)</b>	<b>(4,688,073)</b>	<b>Balance C/F</b>	<b>(5,251,318)</b>	<b>(563,245)</b>

**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL  
REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2013/2014**

**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - DETAILED STATEMENT  
Period to 30 September 2013**

2013/2014			Service	2013/2014			Comments	
Budget				Actual	Variance	Committed		
Original	Revised	Year to Date						
£	£	£	£	£	£			
<b>INCOME</b>								
1	(16,800,000)	(16,800,000)	(8,400,010)	SB	Gross Property Rents	(8,399,665)	345	!
2	(400,000)	(400,000)	(200,000)	SB	Garage Rents	(206,666)	(6,666)	
3	(65,000)	(65,000)	(50,000)	SB	Other Rents and Income	(66,234)	(16,234)	service charges, garden licences, IGM
4	<b>(17,265,000)</b>	<b>(17,265,000)</b>	<b>(8,650,010)</b>		<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>(8,672,565)</b>	<b>(22,555)</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>REPAIRS &amp; MAINTENANCE</b>								
<b>Repairs and Maintenance - General</b>								
5	1,550,270	1,750,270	905,290	DB	<b>Response Maintenance</b>	1,084,551	179,261	! incl £60k Connaught settlement + anticipated overspend £140k
<b>Programmed Maintenance</b>								
6	15,450	15,450	7,740	DB	Communal Areas	663	(7,077)	
7	0	0	0	DB	Fire Extinguishers	0	0	
8	10,000	10,000	4,980	DB	Emergency Lighting and Fire alarms	75	(4,905)	
9	80,000	80,000	40,020	DB	Solid Fuel Appliances	28,708	(11,312)	
10	400,000	400,000	224,980	DB	Gas Appliances - Servicing	275,292	50,312	! timing
11	35,000	35,000	17,520	DB	Lift Maintenance	13,416	(4,104)	
12	<b>540,450</b>	<b>540,450</b>	<b>295,240</b>		<b>Total Programmed Maintenance</b>	<b>318,154</b>	<b>22,914</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Cyclical Maintenance</b>								
13	100,000	100,000	49,980	DB	External Painting Programme	24,122	(25,858)	
14	0	0	0	DB	Extras to Painting Programme	8,870	8,870	!
15	0	0	0	DB	Gutter Repairs	777	777	!
16	12,850	12,850	6,420	DB	Interior Decoration	1,839	(4,581)	
17	112,850	112,850	56,400		<b>Total Cyclical Maintenance</b>	<b>35,608</b>	<b>(20,792)</b>	<b>0</b>
18	<b>2,203,570</b>	<b>2,403,570</b>	<b>1,256,930</b>		<b>Total Repairs and Maintenance - General</b>	<b>1,438,313</b>	<b>181,383</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Repairs and Maintenance - Special Works</b>								
19	100,000	100,000	49,980	DB	Adaptations For Disabled	30,262	(19,718)	
20	0	0	0	DB	Water Service Renewal	7,156	7,156	!
21	0	0	0	DB	Window Renewal	1,133	1,133	!
22	2,000	2,000	1,020	DB	Woodworm Treatment	1,633	613	!
23	55,000	55,000	17,520	DB	Dampness Eradication & Condensation	76,800	59,280	!
24	100,000	100,000	49,980	DB	Carbon Management Programme (loft insulation)	16,448	(33,532)	!
25	20,000	20,000	10,020	DB	Improvements Voucher Scheme	10,539	519	!
26	3,000	3,000	1,500	DB	Sanctuary Scheme	1,561	61	!
27	40,000	40,000	19,980	DB	Asbestos Works	47,978	27,998	!
28	20,000	20,000	10,020	DB	Structural Works - Subsidence	11,382	1,362	!
29	3,000	3,000	1,500	SB	Grant Via Tenant Participation	402	(1,098)	
30	0	0	0	DB	External Light	0	0	
31	15,000	15,000	7,500	DB	Energy Performance Certificates	9,564	2,064	!
32	20,000	20,000	10,020	DB	Path Repairs	16,619	6,599	!
33	10,000	10,000	4,980	DB	Soundproofing	0	(4,980)	
34	5,000	5,000	2,520	DB	Minor Schemes	0	(2,520)	
35	50,000	50,000	25,020	DB	Fire Safety Works	4,434	(20,586)	
36	10,000	10,000	4,980	DB	Flat Roof Repairs	4,646	(334)	
37	10,000	10,000	4,980	DB	Chimney Repairs	25,070	20,090	!
38	15,000	15,000	7,500	DB	Fence Programme	14,618	7,118	!
39	20,000	20,000	10,020	DB	Replacement Floors	1,197	(8,823)	
40	500,000	500,000	250,020	DB	Schemes to be identified per Stock Condition Surv	11,424	(238,596)	
41	<b>998,000</b>	<b>998,000</b>	<b>489,060</b>		<b>Total Repairs and Maintenance - Special Works</b>	<b>292,866</b>	<b>(196,194)</b>	<b>0</b>



**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL  
REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2013/2014**

**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - DETAILED STATEMENT**

	2013/2014			Service	2013/2014			Comments
	Budget				Actual	Variance	Committed	
	Original	Revised	Year to Date					
	£	£	£	£	£	£		
				<b>SUPERVISION &amp; MANAGEMENT</b>				
				<b>Supervision &amp; Management - General</b>				
1	1,616,430	1,616,430	816,790	Employees	782,258	(34,532)		vacancies
2	94,130	125,130	125,040	Premises	129,072	4,032		! insurance premiums £31k
3	104,090	104,090	54,940	Transport	52,515	(2,425)		
4	134,880	134,880	68,440	Supplies & Services	74,320	5,880		!
5	1,150,660	1,150,660	1,150,660	Support Services	1,150,660	0		
6	3,100,190	3,131,190	2,215,870	Total Expenditure	2,188,825	(27,045)		
7	(2,000)	(2,000)	(1,020)	Income	(2,820)	(1,800)		
8	3,098,190	3,129,190	2,214,850	Net Expenditure before Recharges	2,186,005	(28,845)		
9	(496,170)	(496,170)	(496,170)	Recharges	(496,170)	0		
10	<b>2,602,020</b>	<b>2,633,020</b>	<b>1,718,680</b>	<b>Net Supervision &amp; Management - General</b>	<b>1,689,835</b>	<b>(28,845)</b>	<b>0</b>	
				<b>Net Expenditure Analysis by Cost Centre</b>				
11	595,270	626,270	601,340	JG General Operational Management	600,629	(711)		insurance premiums £31k
12	252,720	252,720	198,040	JG Head of Housing	196,808	(1,232)		
13	794,480	794,480	472,780	SB Landlord Services	476,793	4,013		!
14	641,580	641,580	390,290	DB Housing Needs & Strategy	381,309	(8,981)		
15	737,950	737,950	498,980	DB Asset & Property	478,877	(20,103)		vacancies
16	20,950	20,950	19,450	SB Council House Sales	18,982	(468)		
17	4,300	4,300	4,160	DB Sewage Treatment Works	4,291	131		!
18	50,940	50,940	29,810	SB Communal Areas Cleaning	28,316	(1,494)		
19	3,098,190	3,129,190	2,214,850	Net Expenditure before Recharges	2,186,005	(28,845)		
20	(496,170)	(496,170)	(496,170)	Recharges	(496,170)	0		
21	<b>2,602,020</b>	<b>2,633,020</b>	<b>1,718,680</b>	<b>Total Analysis by Cost Centre</b>	<b>1,689,835</b>	<b>(28,845)</b>	<b>0</b>	
				<b>Supervision &amp; Management - Special</b>				
22	46,160	46,160	28,830	SB Community Centres	28,034	(796)		
23	10,000	10,000	4,980	DB Choice Based Lettings	3,476	(1,504)		
24	0	0	0	SB Targeted Families Programme	(2,133)	(2,133)		
25	327,170	327,170	323,650	SB Maintenance of Grounds	320,620	(3,030)		
26	30,430	30,430	17,810	SB Play Areas	6,904	(10,906)		
27	40,000	40,000	19,980	SB Estate Management	(35)	(20,015)		
28	10,000	10,000	4,980	SB Noise Nuisance Issues	0	(4,980)		
29	2,000	2,000	1,020	SB Anti Social Behaviour	0	(1,020)		
30	410	410	200	SB Caretaking & Window Cleaning	205	5		!
31	32,000	32,000	16,020	SB Communal Areas Lighting	13,014	(3,006)		
32	24,000	24,000	12,000	SB Communal Areas Heating	7,070	(4,930)		
33	3,240	3,240	3,240	SB Tenants' Conference	2,741	(499)		
34	0	50,000	10,720	DB New Build Feasibility	9,210	(1,510)		HRB 05/09/13 supp estimate £50k
35	15,000	15,000	15,000	JG ASW Procurement	13,935	(1,065)		
36	10,000	10,000	4,980	SB Decommissioning Costs	3,416	(1,564)		
37	5,000	5,000	2,520	JG Business Plan Update	0	(2,520)		
38	8,960	8,960	6,550	SB District Offices running expenses	10,147	3,597		!
39	321,310	321,310	275,340	SB Mobile Support Officers	265,454	(9,886)		
40	<b>885,680</b>	<b>935,680</b>	<b>747,820</b>	<b>Total Supervision &amp; Management - Special</b>	<b>682,058</b>	<b>(65,762)</b>	<b>0</b>	

**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL  
REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2013/2014**

**HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT - DETAILED STATEMENT**

2013/2014				Service	2013/2014			Comments
Budget			Year to Date		Actual	Variance	Committed	
Original	Revised	£						
	£	£	£		£	£	£	
	<b>OTHER EXPENDITURE</b>							
1	13,080	13,080	7,540	DB	Sewerage - Repairs, Maintenance & Emptying	6,074	(1,466)	
2	38,050	38,050	26,320	SB	Tenant Participation	32,966	6,646	!
3	5,150	5,150	2,580	SB	Tenant Scrutiny	1,459	(1,121)	
4	2,000	2,000	1,020	SB	Storage	1,085	65	!
5	2,600	2,600	1,620	SB	Honiton -38 St Pauls Road Heathpark	852	(768)	
6	9,750	9,750	4,860	SB	Community Development Work	3,141	(1,719)	
7	5,000	5,000	2,520	SB	Minor Management Schemes	1,110	(1,410)	
8	20,000	20,000	10,020	DB	Road Repairs	3,590	(6,430)	10,000
9	1,000	1,000	480	SB	Signs on Estates	735	255	!
10	3,000	3,000	1,500	DB	Off Street parking - Grants to Tenants	2,036	536	!
11	8,000	8,000	4,020	DB	Other Expenses (pest control, eviction expenses)	8,122	4,102	!
12	3,000	3,000	1,500	DB	Gully Cleansing	422	(1,078)	
13	29,940	29,940	24,920	DB	Tree Felling and Planting	23,559	(1,361)	
14	5,000	5,000	2,520	DB	Landscaping	1,396	(1,124)	
15	75,000	75,000	37,500	DB	Removal Expenses (downsizing)	32,831	(4,669)	
16	400	400	180	DB	Private Water Supplies - Service & Maintenance	0	(180)	
17	15,000	15,000	7,500	SB	Removal of Rubbish	8,864	1,364	!
18	7,500	7,500	7,500	SB	Best Value - Housemark	6,879	(621)	
19	<b>243,470</b>	<b>243,470</b>	<b>144,100</b>		<b>TOTAL OTHER EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>135,121</b>	<b>(8,979)</b>	<b>10,000</b>
					<b>MAJOR REPAIRS ACCOUNT</b>			
20	200,000	200,000	100,020	DB	Central Heating	367,693	267,673	!
21	800,000	800,000	400,020	DB	Gas Appliance Replacement	69,063	(330,957)	375,000
22	150,000	150,000	75,000	DB	Electrical Updating	54,708	(20,292)	
23	250,000	250,000	124,980	DB	Roofing Renewal	93,910	(31,070)	
24	1,000,000	1,000,000	499,980	DB	Replacement Kitchens	229,128	(270,852)	610,000
25	600,000	600,000	300,000	DB	Replacement Doors	122,450	(177,550)	440,000
26	400,000	400,000	199,980	DB	Replacement uPVC fascias etc	78,694	(121,286)	268,000
27	300,000	300,000	150,000	DB	Replacement Bathrooms	642	(149,358)	60,000
28	250,000	250,000	124,980	DB	Electrical Works on COT	356,422	231,442	!
29	1,200,000	1,200,000	600,000	DB	COT: Other Expenditure	807,670	207,670	!
30	<b>5,150,000</b>	<b>5,150,000</b>	<b>2,574,960</b>		<b>TOTAL MAJOR REPAIRS ACCOUNT</b>	<b>2,180,380</b>	<b>(394,580)</b>	<b>1,753,000</b>
								high number of COTs at start of year

**APPENDIX B**

**East Devon DC  
HRA Business Plan  
Operating Account**  
(expressed in money terms)

Year	Income				Expenditure										Net Operating (Expenditure) £,000	Provision for repayment of loans £,000	Transfer from/ (to) MRR £,000	RCCO £,000	Surplus (Deficit) the Year £,000	Surplus (Deficit) b/fwd £,000	Interest £,000	Surplus (Deficit) c/fwd £,000	
	Net rent income £,000	Other income £,000	Misc income £,000	RTB Admin £,000	Total income £,000	Managmt. £,000	Depreciation £,000	Responsive & Cyclical £,000	Revenue spend £,000	Other Revenue £,000	Cost of HRA £,000	Rebates £,000	Misc expenses £,000	Total expenses £,000									Capital Charges £,000
1	2013.14	16,485	767	0	13	17,265	(3,569)	(1,156)	(3,401)	(243)	0	0	0	(8,370)	(2,564)	6,332	(5)	(4,072)	(675)	1,380	4,680	35	6,095
2	2014.15	17,119	414	0	13	17,545	(3,676)	(1,153)	(3,955)	(250)	0	0	0	(9,034)	(2,563)	5,948	(580)	0	(309)	5,059	6,095	129	11,283
3	2015.16	17,768	424	0	13	18,205	(3,966)	(1,151)	(4,069)	(256)	0	0	0	(9,261)	(2,559)	6,385	(1,029)	0	(8,096)	(2,741)	11,283	149	8,690
4	2016.17	18,334	437	0	13	18,784	(3,900)	(1,148)	(4,186)	(262)	0	0	0	(9,496)	(2,562)	6,726	(1,490)	0	(3,889)	1,348	8,690	140	10,178
5	2017.18	18,888	450	0	13	19,351	(4,017)	(1,145)	(4,306)	(275)	0	0	0	(9,737)	(2,541)	7,073	(1,310)	0	(4,030)	1,733	10,178	166	12,076
6	2018.19	19,439	464	0	13	19,916	(4,137)	(1,143)	(4,430)	(275)	0	0	0	(9,986)	(2,521)	7,409	(1,567)	0	(4,176)	1,646	12,076	193	13,916
7	2019.20	19,992	478	0	13	20,483	(4,261)	(1,140)	(4,558)	(282)	0	0	0	(10,242)	(2,485)	7,746	(1,917)	0	(4,326)	1,503	13,916	220	15,639
8	2020.21	20,552	492	0	13	21,057	(4,389)	(1,137)	(4,689)	(289)	(5)	0	0	(10,510)	(2,459)	8,088	(2,259)	0	(4,479)	1,349	15,639	245	17,233
9	2021.22	21,122	507	0	13	21,641	(4,521)	(1,135)	(4,824)	(297)	(6)	0	0	(10,782)	(2,410)	8,448	(2,619)	0	(4,751)	1,078	17,233	267	18,578
10	2022.23	21,706	522	0	13	22,241	(4,656)	(1,132)	(4,963)	(304)	(8)	0	0	(11,063)	(2,349)	8,828	(2,889)	0	(4,916)	1,023	18,578	286	19,888
11	2023.24	22,305	538	0	13	22,855	(4,796)	(1,129)	(5,085)	(312)	(9)	0	0	(11,330)	(2,277)	9,248	(3,268)	0	(6,133)	(73)	19,888	297	20,011
12	2024.25	22,920	554	0	13	23,487	(4,940)	(1,126)	(5,231)	(319)	(10)	0	0	(11,627)	(2,190)	9,670	(3,718)	0	(6,336)	(384)	20,011	297	19,925
13	2025.26	23,552	570	0	13	24,136	(5,088)	(1,124)	(5,381)	(327)	(11)	0	0	(11,932)	(2,087)	10,116	(4,160)	0	(6,545)	(608)	19,925	294	19,611
14	2026.27	24,201	587	0	13	24,802	(5,241)	(1,121)	(5,536)	(336)	(11)	0	0	(12,245)	(1,967)	10,590	(4,675)	0	(6,759)	(844)	19,611	288	19,055
15	2027.28	24,868	605	0	13	25,486	(5,398)	(1,118)	(5,696)	(344)	(12)	0	0	(12,568)	(1,829)	11,089	(5,247)	0	(6,979)	1,683	19,055	298	21,036
16	2028.29	25,553	623	0	13	26,189	(5,560)	(1,116)	(5,859)	(353)	(14)	0	0	(12,901)	(1,756)	11,532	(5,837)	0	(7,210)	1,464	21,036	319	21,819
17	2029.30	26,257	642	0	13	26,912	(5,727)	(1,113)	(6,028)	(361)	(14)	0	0	(13,243)	(1,673)	11,996	(6,361)	0	(7,443)	1,294	21,819	329	22,442
18	2030.31	26,979	661	0	13	27,653	(5,899)	(1,110)	(6,201)	(370)	(14)	0	0	(13,594)	(1,576)	12,483	(6,895)	0	(7,676)	1,088	22,442	337	22,888
19	2031.32	27,722	681	0	13	28,416	(6,075)	(1,106)	(6,380)	(380)	(16)	0	0	(13,959)	(1,464)	12,993	(7,428)	0	(7,910)	(92)	22,888	343	23,139
20	2032.33	28,484	701	0	13	29,199	(6,258)	(1,105)	(6,563)	(389)	(16)	0	0	(14,331)	(1,336)	13,531	(8,063)	0	(8,145)	(1,988)	23,139	332	21,483
21	2033.34	29,268	722	0	13	30,003	(6,445)	(1,102)	(6,752)	(399)	(17)	0	0	(14,716)	(1,135)	14,152	(8,735)	0	(8,379)	(1,767)	21,483	309	20,025
22	2034.35	30,073	744	0	13	30,830	(6,639)	(1,100)	(6,946)	(409)	(18)	0	0	(15,112)	(910)	14,808	(9,413)	0	(8,609)	(2,075)	20,025	285	18,235
23	2035.36	30,899	766	0	13	31,679	(6,838)	(1,097)	(7,146)	(419)	(18)	0	0	(15,518)	(660)	15,500	(10,137)	0	(8,842)	(2,400)	18,235	256	16,091
24	2036.37	31,749	789	0	13	32,551	(7,043)	(1,094)	(7,352)	(430)	(20)	0	0	(15,938)	(387)	16,226	(10,911)	0	(9,074)	(2,749)	16,091	221	13,562
25	2037.38	32,621	813	0	13	33,447	(7,254)	(1,091)	(7,563)	(440)	(21)	0	0	(16,370)	(83)	16,995	(12,742)	0	(9,307)	6,396	13,562	251	20,210
26	2038.39	33,517	838	0	13	34,368	(7,472)	(1,089)	(7,781)	(451)	(22)	0	0	(16,815)	(77)	17,476	(14,529)	0	(9,542)	5,827	20,210	347	26,383
27	2039.40	34,438	863	0	13	35,313	(7,696)	(1,086)	(8,004)	(463)	(23)	0	0	(17,272)	(80)	17,963	(16,363)	0	(9,787)	5,960	26,383	440	32,784
28	2040.41	35,384	889	0	13	36,285	(7,927)	(1,083)	(8,234)	(474)	(23)	0	0	(17,742)	(80)	18,463	(18,153)	0	(10,032)	6,097	32,784	638	39,419
29	2041.42	36,354	915	0	13	37,283	(8,165)	(1,081)	(8,471)	(486)	(24)	0	0	(18,227)	(81)	18,975	(20,042)	0	(10,277)	6,236	39,419	638	46,293
30	2042.43	37,352	943	0	13	38,307	(8,410)	(1,078)	(8,715)	(498)	(25)	0	0	(18,726)	(82)	19,499	(21,937)	0	(10,522)	6,377	46,293	742	53,412

**Report to:** **Housing Review Board**

**Date of Meeting:** 7 November 2013

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None



**Agenda item:** 14

**Subject:** Benchmarking of housing costs and performance

**Purpose of report:** We are a member of HouseMark and participate in their housing benchmarking project.  
This report presents the results of a cost and performance benchmarking exercise using last financial year's data. The report compares us with our peers in a number of key areas of housing management service delivery. The data relates primarily to 2012/13 although the report also shows our costs and performance in 2011/12 as a comparison.

**Recommendation:** The Housing Review Board is invited to consider and comment on the results of the benchmarking survey.

**Reason for recommendation:** For the Board to see our costs and performance set against our peers and gain an appreciation of the relationship between cost and performance.

**Officer:** John Golding Head of Housing Ext 2364  
[jgolding@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:jgolding@eastdevon.gov.uk)

**Financial implications:** There are no financial implications.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications requiring comment.

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk

**Links to background information:**  [HouseMark summary of benchmarking results – Annex 1.](#)

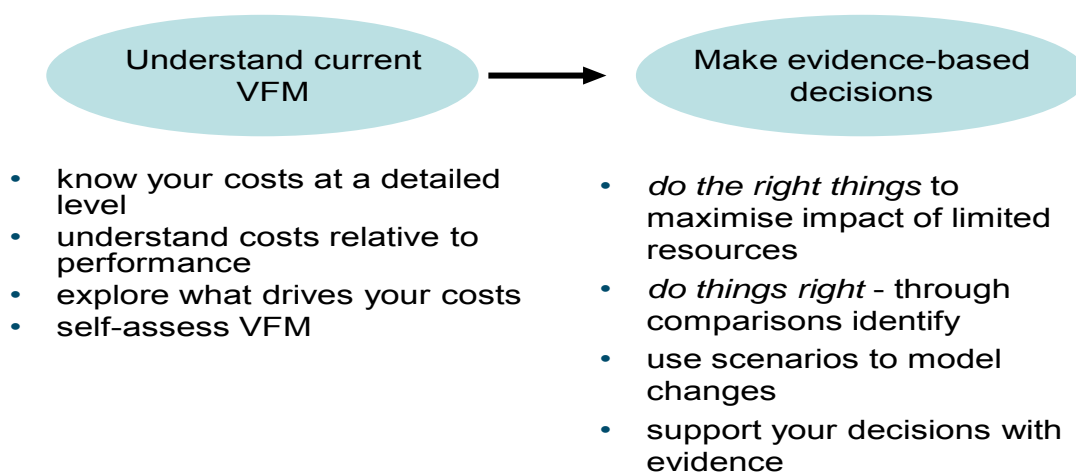
**Link to Council Plan:** Living in an Outstanding Place.

## **Benchmarking results for 2012/13**

1.1 Benchmarking has been used as an improvement tool for some considerable time and we have been members of the HouseMark Benchmarking family for several years. HouseMark have produced a useful benchmarking tool which ensures that we are comparing 'like with like' in relation to housing management activities. Having said that some of the peers in the survey are much larger local authority landlords and the data set includes some housing associations.

- 1.2 A few months ago we submitted our data to populate the benchmarking tool and a number of other social landlords did the same. This enabled HouseMark to produce the report reproduced in [annex 1](#). A further report will be issued in the future when all participants have had the time to populate the benchmarking spreadsheet.
- 1.3 The introduction to the report provides a useful context touching on some of the wider financial, political and social issues that are impacting on housing organisations. There is also a useful explanation of the purpose of benchmarking and how to make best use of benchmarking data. The slide below illustrates some of the benefits of benchmarking in value for money terms.

## HouseMark – an essential VFM tool



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- 1.4 The report is able to compare performance over two years because we participated in this exercise last year. There has been a noticeable improvement in many areas since we completed the exercise last year, although the results do not always show good and bad as there are reasons behind the scores. This is where the sophistication of having a combined performance and cost benchmarking approach makes the whole exercise more useful than a simple ranking of either one of these factors.
- 1.5 Another key table in the report is the summary showing cost and quality key performance indicators for 2011/12 and 2012/13 with a traffic light system of scoring.
- 1.6 The benchmarking results are useful in raising awareness of a particular issue and often require some further analysis. It is also helpful in seeing how other similar organisations are performing and questioning why we are different. Reproduced below is a summary table from the report.

The following summary table has been provided provide a high level overview of the relationship between cost and performance across the main business activities for which we hold data. Each of these business activities is explored in more detail in subsequent sections of the report. Please note that the cost information shown on the left of the table is based on the total cost of each service, including allocated overheads.

Efficiency Summary for East Devon DC						
Business Activity	Cost KPI	Cost KPI Quartile		Quality KPI	Quality KPI Quartile	
		East Devon DC (2012/2013)	East Devon DC (2011/2012)		East Devon DC (2012/2013)	East Devon DC (2011/2012)
Overheads	Overhead costs as % adjusted turnover			Overhead costs as % direct revenue costs		
Major Works & Cyclical Maintenance	Total CPP of Major Works & Cyclical Maintenance			Percentage of tenants satisfied with the overall quality of their home (GN & HfOP)		
				Percentage of dwellings that are non-decent		
Responsive Repairs & Void Works	Total CPP of Responsive Repairs & Void Works			Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs and maintenance (GN & HfOP)		
				Average number of calendar days taken to complete repairs		
				Average re-let time in days (standard re-lets)		
Housing Management	Total CPP of Housing Management			Percentage of tenants satisfied with the service provided (GN & HfOP)		
				Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases resolved successfully		
				Current tenant rent arrears as % of rent due (excluding voids)		
Estate Services	Total CPP of Estate Services			Percentage of tenants satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live (GN & HfOP)		

Quartile Key							
	Upper Quartile	Middle Upper	Median	Middle Lower	Lower Quartile	N/A	No Data
Valid dataset							
Small dataset							

The traffic light indicators use the convention that high performance and low cost are green (upper quartile). However, it is acknowledged that average or higher than average costs might be perfectly acceptable, or even desirable, where this is consistent with furthering your business objectives and/or can be justified in terms of performance and/or user satisfaction.

1.7 A number of factors stand out from the results including:

- High levels of tenant satisfaction;
- Our relatively low overheads as a percentage of turnover and direct costs;
- High satisfaction with anti-social behaviour case handling;
- High cost of void works;
- Relatively low percentage of responsive repairs completed on time;
- High proportion of urgent responsive repair jobs;
- Low cost of housing management per property;
- Low level of rent arrears.

- 1.8 There are areas that warrant a closer examination. For example, we know that we place a high proportion of responsive repair jobs in the urgent categories to provide tenants with a fast service. As a consequence contractors are more likely to miss the 'stretch' targets. Also our relatively high expenditure on void properties is probably explained by the fact that our properties are older than some of our peers and we take the opportunity to perform a full modernisation prior to reletting.
- 1.9 Service managers have received a presentation on the results of the benchmarking survey and whilst we have a good set of results managers have been invited to consider what the survey is saying and understand the relationship between cost and performance.
- 1.10 A further set of results is expected later in the year which compares our performance with other South West based Registered Providers.
-

**Report to:** Housing Review Board  
**Date of Meeting:** 7 November 2013  
**Public Document:** Yes  
**Exemption:** None



**Agenda item:** 15

**Subject:** Community Development

**Purpose of report:** This report explains the valuable work that our Community Development Team undertakes and brings the Housing Review Board up to date with the different activities and events carried out over the last 12 months. It advises on the progress being made to improve our 14 Community Centres and the role of Community Development Worker appointed to carry out that work, and how we might expand the programme.

**Recommendation:** **To inform the Housing Review Board of the Community Development activities already undertaken, and to request that the Housing Review Board approve the recommendation to recruit an additional Community Development Worker, and to increase the annual Community Development budget by £10,000.**

**Reason for recommendation:** We are very proud of our Community Development Workers and the work they do to help bring communities together. We see the need for Community Development on our estates increasing over the coming months and want to have our Community Development team adequately equipped and resourced to be able to take on this much needed work.

**Officer:** Jane Reading 01395 516551 ext 2236  
[jmreading@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:jmreading@eastdevon.gov.uk)

**Financial implications:** There is no budgetary provision in the current financial year for the additional Community Development Worker requested, however the cost could be met from the HRA balance which is currently being maintained at well above the recommended level. If the recommendation is approved the additional costs will be included in the 2014/15 budget which is currently being prepared.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications on which to comment.

**Equalities impact:** Medium Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk  
Reduced or low level engagement with young people living on our housing estates. Risk of breakdown in communication between families and young people and the services they require.  
Risk of young people being out on the streets rather than taking part in positive activities.

**Links to background information:**

- [http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/item\\_15\\_hrb\\_090910\\_community\\_development\\_youth\\_report.pdf](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/item_15_hrb_090910_community_development_youth_report.pdf)
- [http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/combined\\_hrb\\_agenda\\_011211.pdf](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/combined_hrb_agenda_011211.pdf)
- [http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/combined\\_hrb\\_agenda\\_080312.pdf](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/combined_hrb_agenda_080312.pdf)



- [http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/combined\\_hrb\\_agenda\\_100113.pdf](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk/combined_hrb_agenda_100113.pdf)
- [http://www.devonhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/East\\_Devon\\_Locality\\_Health\\_Improvement\\_Plan\\_201213.pdf](http://www.devonhealthandwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/East_Devon_Locality_Health_Improvement_Plan_201213.pdf)

**Link to Council Plan:** Achieving thriving, balanced communities.

## 1. Background

1.1 There are currently two part time permanent Community Development Workers (youth) working three and four days per week. A third full time temporary officer was recruited in November 2012 to carry out the recommendations made by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel to improve our 14 community centres, to raise the standard, get them fit for purpose, promote greater community use and increase revenue, and spend one day each week on community development work.

The officers work with communities in a range of ways including:

- The very successful SWITCH project in Axminster and Exmouth
- Arranging and running community festivals and fun days
- Recruiting, training and supporting community volunteers
- Supporting and adding value to other groups such as Youth Clubs
- Promoting Community Development by giving talks to interested groups

1.2 SWITCH projects are run on the Millwey estate in Axminster and Littleham estate in Exmouth. These highly successful clubs have been running for nearly two years in Axminster and more than three years in Littleham. The clubs in both areas run for one evening each week during term time with each club running two sessions. The main objective of the clubs is to take children and young people off the streets and into a safe environment to play, relax, learn new skills, gain confidence and meet friends.

1.3 Axminster SWITCH runs two clubs, one for young people aged 7 – 11 years and another for young people aged 11 – 14 years, each session regularly attracts around 10 children. In addition to the usual SWITCH activities that include access to the internet to carry out homework, games such as table tennis and creative art, the young people attending this club enjoy preparing, cooking and then eating fresh healthy food. This has more recently been supported by Health and Local Food for Families.

1.4 Exmouth SWITCH provides two clubs, one for those aged 12 – 16 years and the other club for the 18+ age group. The first club is always very well attended and often attracts 30 young people. The later club tends to have around five people most weeks. The young people take part in similar activities as those enjoyed by the Axminster club. The older age group have an interest in music and dance and have worked with professional musicians and performed at Exmouth festival.

1.5 Three successful community festivals and eight fun days were held over the summer period. Record numbers of local people enjoyed the festivals, over 300 in Exmouth and 500 in Honiton. In addition to the usual fun and games, these festivals promote local community groups with the different groups running their own stalls and games and raising funds to enable them to continue the work they do. Fun days were held mainly in rural areas for local young people in the outlying villages. Fun days aim to get the local children and young people out into the fresh air to enjoy creative activities such as working with wood, making and playing games and learning circus skills.

- 1.6 The Community Development Workers recruit and train volunteers to work in the local community. Volunteers register with SWITCH and come along to the clubs and work alongside the Community Development Workers to gain experience and skills. Skills gained through volunteering are good to include on a CV. This is an area we would like to develop in the future.
- 1.7 Youth and other clubs ask the Community Development Workers to support their work and activities. This is an area of work in demand where the Community Development Workers are able to add value to events being run, such as on the Heath Park estate in Honiton litter pick days. Families spend a few hours cleaning up the estate in the morning, have a barbecue lunch and then as a reward the children are entertained and taught circus skills by the Community Development Workers. Other groups supported over the last 12 months include “Party in the Park” in Seaton, Thelma Hulbert Art Gallery in Honiton and “Millwey Community Centre user group open days”.
- 1.8 The Community Development Workers are regularly asked to give presentations about their work to other local groups and organisations. Recently one of the workers was asked to give a talk at Bicton College for Community Action South West and all three took part in the recent “Working together for the future of East Devon” event held at the Knowle.
- 1.9 In the last 12 months the role has expanded with the Community Development Workers becoming pivotal to the Targeted Families Support project, by sitting on the practitioners groups and recently one of the Community Development Workers being the only professional one young mum was willing to engage with. This necessitated the Community Development Workers taking the role of lead practitioner and working with other agencies to secure a home and support the family in turning their life around.
- 1.10 The Community Centre project is nearing completion. All but two of the 29 recommendations have either been completed or are near completion. Community Centres now look very different to how they did 12 months ago. The centres are all fit for purpose and are clean, tidy, well equipped, and all compliant with current Health and Safety and Fire regulations and a pleasure to use. A new booking process is in place and more bookings are being made by local people and groups. The community centres are still a long way from being cost neutral but they are now bringing communities together and serving the local people they were originally intended for. Bookings for centres have increased significantly over the last 12 months, Millwey Community Centre is still the most used with spaces for new bookings few and far between.

## **2. The future**

- 2.1 You will recall receiving the report in March 2012 from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and agreeing to an additional Community Development Worker to work initially to carry out the recommendations made in the report. Once completed this post was to be made permanent and the role to be expanded to include overseeing community centres and to work with the existing Community Development Workers. This post will include project work and new initiatives, such as work with the Royal Marines, more work in rural areas, organising jobs fayres, exploring if there is a need for SWITCH in Honiton and other areas and recruiting, training and supervising community volunteers.
- 2.2 We want to expand the Community Development work already undertaken which is predominantly with young people under the age of 21 years and move towards a holistic approach working with the family. We are aware of health and wellbeing evidence that action is needed in some areas of the district to support existing

projects in working with families affected by emotional health, self harm, obesity and alcohol abuse. In addition:

- We want to target areas where we have evidence of a need for community development, these include the more rural and outlying parts of our district.
- We want to build on the life skills and healthy lifestyles skills work carried out to encourage healthy eating, exercise and healthy balanced diets.
- We want to work with our tenants of all ages to help with digital inclusion and to help equip them for work and find employment, support parenting skills by working with the Children's Centres and other agencies to run parenting classes and support parents and young people to gain skills such as cooking from scratch and budgeting.
- We are keen to do more intergenerational work to bring all age groups in the community together and help eliminate some of the perceptions about the different age groups.

We will do this by linking with local employers and working in partnership with other organisations such as LED (Leisure East Devon) and Devon County Council.

2.3

To do this we will need to:

- Make the post of Community Development Worker with specific responsibilities for Community Centres permanent; and
- Recruit a fourth Community Development Worker with wider remit to engage with the whole family. This will cost £31,735 based on scale 6 salary, and includes National Insurance and Superannuation.

## **Item 16**

### **Exclusion of the Public**

The Vice Chairman of the Committee to move the following:-

“that under Section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as exempt information, of the description(s) set out on the agenda is likely to be disclosed and on balance the public interest is in discussing this item in private session (Part B)”.