

Agenda for Housing Review Board Thursday, 24th April, 2025, 10.00 am

Members of Housing Review Board

A Bailey, C Burhop, S Chamberlain (Chair), M Martin, S Smith (Vice-Chair), S Clake, R Robinson, J Brown and T Dumper

Venue: Council Chamber, Blackdown House, Honiton, EX14 1EJ

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(or group number 01395 517546)

Monday, 14 April 2025



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- 1 Minutes of the previous meeting (Pages 3 - 8)
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Declarations of interest
Guidance is available online to Councillors and co-opted members on making [declarations of interest](#)
- 4 Public speaking
Information on [public speaking](#) is available online
- 5 Matters of urgency
Information on [matters of urgency](#) is available online
- 6 Confidential/exempt item(s)
To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the press) have been excluded. There are no items which officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.
- 7 Housing Review Board forward plan (Pages 9 - 10)
- 8 Housing staffing update (Pages 11 - 15)
- 9 Housing performance report - quarter 4 (Pages 16 - 25)
- 10 Resident involvement strategy - progress on objectives (Pages 26 - 31)
- 11 Housing policy review - Succession policy (Pages 32 - 43)
- 12 Website redesign - housing pages (Pages 44 - 46)
- 13 Annual report of the Housing Review Board (Pages 47 - 51)

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[Decision making and equalities](#)

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EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of the meeting of Housing Review Board held at Council Chamber,
Blackdown House, Honiton, EX14 1EJ on 30 January 2025**

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.05 am and ended at 12.20 pm

29 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2024 were agreed.

30 Declarations of interest

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Jenny Brown, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Honiton Town Council.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Sarah Chamberlain, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Employed by Exeter City Council in the housing department.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Steve Gazzard, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Tenant of East Devon District Council.

Declarations of interest.

Councillor Tim Dumper, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Member of Exmouth Town Council.

Declarations of interest.

Rob Robinson, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Tenant of East Devon District Council.

Declarations of interest.

Rosemary Dale, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Sheltered housing tenant of East Devon District Council.

11. Housing performance report - quarter 3.

Councillor Tim Dumper, Affects Non-registerable Interest, Non-remunerated director of a firm that worked closely with Acuity.

31 Public speaking

There were no members of the public registered to speak.

32 Matters of urgency

There were none.

33 Confidential/exempt item(s)

There were none.

34 **Housing Review Board forward plan**

The Director – Housing and Health presented the forward plan and advised members that the forward plan acted as a reminder of agenda items to come forward to future meetings. The forward plan had been derived from previous meetings and requests, as well as the housing service plan. Service managers were currently reviewing realistic timeframes against each topic. Members were reminded that they could add further reports and topics for discussion to the next forward plan by either informing herself or the Democratic Services Officer

The Director – Housing and Health advised the Board that the report on the individual garden maintenance scheme had been delayed due to staff illness, but would be brought to the next meeting of the Housing Review Board. The April Board meeting would also include reports on an update on the review and replacement of Home Safeguard equipment within the housing stock, a review of progress on the Resident Involvement Strategy and an initial draft of the Tenancy Strategy.

35 **Housing Service staffing update**

The Assistant Director – Housing (Regulated Services) gave the Board an update on the housing service staffing. He reported that he had been permanently appointed to the post of Assistant Director – Housing (Regulated Services). The Corporate Lead for Property and Assets role had gone out to advert and it was hoped that an appointment to this post would be made by mid March 2025.

A request was made for a written staffing update report and for an up-to-date housing structure chart outlining the key strategic roles. A request was also made for information on the number of officers employed across the housing service and the turnover rate. It was noted that although some of this organisational information was provided to councillors at Personnel Committee this was not readily available to all members of the Housing Review Board and that it was not housing service specific.

36 **Housing finance report**

The Director of Finance's report presented the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2025/26 relating to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the financial monitoring and outturn forecasting versus budget of the current financial year to the end of December 2024. Recommendations from the Housing Review Board would be presented back to Cabinet in February 2025 to finalise the 2025/26 budget proposals to recommend to Council.

The HRA recorded expenditure and income on running the council's own housing stock and related services or facilities, which were provided primarily for the benefit of the council's own tenants. The HRA was a ringfenced account within the General Fund with strict legal and accounting rules to maintain separation from the General Fund. The HRA must always remain in surplus, and this must be considered when setting each year's budget and when planning for the future.

The HRA consisted of capital and revenue elements. Capital was typically asset enhancing items such as kitchens, bathrooms, windows etc or a project of more minor works to multiple properties. Revenue was typically low-level repairs and maintenance with regards to spend on assets plus staff and service costs, overheads etc. The Council

was allowed to borrow to fund capital expenditure, but not revenue without specifically required central government permission.

The initial budget presented to the Housing Review Board was a roll over budget from the previous year, with few changes from 2023/24. The 2023/24 HRA outturn and capital spend far exceeded the expectations that were included within that year's budget, requiring the contribution of all HRA earmarked reserves and adding an additional £2.5m to the HRA's borrowing requirement in order to maintain the £3.1 adopted level of the HRA balance. Therefore, shortly after the start of the current financial year it was established that the proposed 2024/25 budget was insufficient to meet the needs and demands of the housing service and provide the investment required to ensure regulatory compliant homes. A revised budget was approved by Council in July 2024.

During the 2024/25 financial year there had been numerous significant budget movements within the HRA (virements) which in effect had transferred significant sums from revenue to capital. This was the result of the underlying works included within the revised budget being scrutinised in detail within the regular collaborative financial management framework which had been established. This had been presented and where necessary approval given through HRA financial monitoring reports to committees. The 2024/25 budget figures presented for comparison in the report were those which were currently being reported, and monitored against in 2024/25.

Areas explained to and discussed by the Board included:

- Revenue budget.
- Income – the primary sources of income for the HRA were rents on dwellings, garages and other income including service charges.
- Repairs and maintenance – this included all major expenditure which fell into the revenue category and was segregated into general and responsive repairs and maintenance, and planned repairs and maintenance. The vast majority was covered by the integrated asset management contract (IAMC) with Ian Williams Ltd. The budgeted spend had increased by £0.05m, which could be attributed to the inflationary increase on the price per property payment under the IAMC.
- Supervision and Management – this covered a wide variety of costs related to the management and administration of council-owned housing. Key types of expenditure included all HRA direct staffing costs, property management costs, and external services and overheads. The budget for supervision and management as a whole for 2025/26 had decreased by £0.29m from 2024/5 (this factored a full staffing establishment); the most notable was a £0.12m decrease in employment costs and a £0.2m decrease in overheads/recharges.
- Capital charges – changes to the bad debt provision and depreciation/major repairs reserves/revenue contribution to capital.
- HRA financing. This was split into three areas:
 - Debt financing – the 2025/25 financing charges had increased by £0.47m
 - Interest income – the 2025/26 budget included an income amount of £0.24m.
 - Movement in reserves – this wouldn't continue in 2025/26 as all revenue and capital spend had been correctly allocated. There was an agreed annual contribution to be made to the HRA balance each year of £0.25m to reinstate the HRA balance to the adopted level of £3.1m.

The 2025/26 budget now bought a balanced budget. However, the HRA continued to face significant financial pressure in the immediate and longer term. This was from a range of factors including historic underinvestment, increased consumer and regulatory standards, general inflation, restrictions in rent increases, net zero expectations, disrepair claims, complaint resolution, high void and decant costs and other issues. Similar cost pressures were being seen in other stock holding local authorities. The

housing teams were thanked for their hard work in achieving efficiencies and savings in year.

It was noted that the proposed capital programme amounted to a significant investment in the Council's housing stock. This investment would result in a substantial level of additional borrowing and an increase in the overall HRA debt burden. The servicing of this debt would be met from within the HRA revenue budget and therefore create further pressure on revenue in future years. This additional interest expense burden would need to be offset by efficiencies, savings and income generation through strategic asset disposals. The longer-term revenue implications of capital investment would be modelled as part of the Business Plan review to ensure the HRA remained a going concern.

In response to a question about which properties were being sold under the Right to Buy scheme, the Director of Finance explained that the Council could not control which properties were sold, but would provide data on numbers sold in the next HRB finance report. Information was also requested on planned kitchen and bathroom works, as well as other planned capital expenditure that did and did not go ahead.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet approve the draft revenue and capital estimates and the financial modelling element presented is noted, subject to suitable key performance indicators being introduced for the Housing Review Board to be able to monitor major capital repair expenditure.

37 **Electrical compliance audit**

The Director of Finance presented the electrical compliance SWAP audit report to the Housing Review Board. SWAP (internal audit) undertook an audit of housing electrical safety, their audit report reflected the conditions seen during fieldwork which took place in early 2024. The report stated that prior to and during the review, there had been significant officer turnover in housing. The officers interviewed had now either left the council or changed role, and a new management team had been appointed. A specific Electrical Compliance Surveyor had been appointed and was working with the Assets Management Team to address concerns around the previous issues with electrical compliance records and data recording in addition to addressing issues with contractors who were not delivering against contract agreements.

The Director of Finance's report had previously been presented to the Audit and Governance Committee on 27th November 2024, and this committee would receive a further update from SWAP on the progress on the implementation of the recommendations. It was considered appropriate that the Housing Review Board were made aware of this report and satisfied itself that appropriate progress against the recommendations were made.

Housing had agreed to complete nine actions by 1 April 2025. Officers have completed one action, and work had already started on four other actions. The Housing Review Board requested that they see a list of the nine actions being referred to and that a progress report be added to the July meeting on the forward plan.

RECOMMENDED: that Cabinet approve that the Housing Review Board receive a progress report on the nine actions referred to in the SWAP housing electrical safety report at the July meeting Housing Review Board.

38 **Housing performance report - quarter 3**

The Housing Review Board were presented with key performance indicators (KPIs) for quarter three of 2024/25. The Assistant Director Housing (Regulatory Services) gave a presentation which summarised the performance and actions being taken to improve performance where targets were not being achieved. He remarked that it was an evolving report and welcomed feedback from members.

Discussion and clarification included the following points:

- Income collection – performance in this area had been excellent.
- Income lost through void properties was reducing.
- The number of re-let days had reduced by 48 days compared to quarter 2 performance, and had reduced by over 115 days from the average relet time at the end of the 2023/24 financial year.
- Compliance performance was high.
- Ian Williams were completing their repairs within target. However, there was a large discrepancy between the Council's data and that of the contractors. Works were ongoing to address this issue within One Housing, but this was a manual process that needed to be carried out by officers in partnership with the contractors. During the meeting the Assistant Director Housing (Regulatory Services) answered a number of questions relating to signing off major works and voids, the number of jobs recalled and clarification on how jobs were classified.
- Complaints handling still required some improvement. Although response times for stage one complaints had reduced (from 31 days at the beginning of the year to 13 days in quarter three), officers recognised the improvements that needed to be made in relation to improving the stage 2 complaint response times. This increase was largely due to the reduction in senior level officers to review the cases, sign-off on judgements and provide full responses.
- Tenant satisfaction measures – there had been an increase in seven of the twelve measures since quarter two, including some statistically significant changes. The tenant satisfaction surveys were carried out independently by an external company.

The performance report demonstrated the incredible hard work across the housing teams and the scale and pace of improvement.

During his presentation the Assistant Director Housing (Regulatory Services) gave the Board some examples of good news stories from the rental team, from the allocations team and void manager, and from the planned works and adaptations team. He also showed the Housing Review Board images of sewerage treatment plant upgrades, an overgrown void property garden, void clearance and a kitchen makeover.

It was noted that although community work was not included in the KPIs there were eight community hubs across the district that were a lifeline to some. They were accessible to all members of the public, not just EDDC housing tenants and provided hot meals and cold weather supplies such as blankets, hats and thick socks.

Those present thanked the Assistant Director Housing (Regulated Services) for his excellent report and congratulated the teams involved for the tremendous continuous improvement. Tenants generally felt that things were improving, but there was still a lack of communication. There was a danger in the housing service moving at pace, but forgetting to inform tenants of what was being done.

RESOLVED: that the Housing Review Board note performance at the end of quarter three, 2024/25.

Attendance List

Board members present:

Councillor Christopher Burhop
Councillor Sarah Chamberlain (Chair)
Councillor Melanie Martin
Councillor Simon Smith (Vice-Chair)
Sara Clarke, Independent Community Representative
Rob Robinson, Tenants
Councillor Jenny Brown
Councillor Tim Dumper
Rosemary Dale, Tenant

Councillors also present (for some or all the meeting)

I Barlow
C Brown
R Collins
P Faithfull
S Gazzard
D Ledger
S Westerman

Officers in attendance:

Sarah James, Democratic Services Officer
Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer
Emma Congerton, Assistant Director Statutory Housing
Simon Davey, Director of Finance
Tracy Hendren, Chief Executive
Darren Hicks, Interim Tenancy Services Manager (Regulated Services)
Les Joint, Property and Asset Delivery Manager
Andrew King, Assistant Director for Housing (Regulated Services)
Liam Reading, Assistant Director - Housing Programmes, Investment and Development
Giles Salter, Solicitor
Catrin Stark, Director of Housing and Health
Rob Ward, Accountant
John Taylor, Property and Asset Manager
Gareth Wallace, Home Safeguard Project Lead
Lynsey Williams, Housing Sustainment and Resettlement Service Manager

Councillor apologies:

Councillor Aurora Bailey
Rachel Browne, Tenant

Chair

Date:

Housing Review Board Forward Plan

Work for scoping and/or allocation to the Forward Plan

Proposed date	Topic
Meeting 1 24/25 1 st August 2024	Housing Performance Report for Quarter 4 23/24 Housing Allocations Policy Update Financial Overview Housing Ombudsman; Statutory Complaint Handling Code Results of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) Recruitment of Tenant Members of Housing Review Board Annual Tenant Event (Update, no paper required) Group Terms of Reference (Discussion, no paper required)
Meeting 2 24/25 7 th November 2024	Housing Performance Report for Quarters 1 & 2 (24/25) Housing Acquisition and Disposal Strategy HRA Position Statement Financial Monitoring Report (month 6)
Meeting 3 24/25 30 th January 2025	Housing Performance Report for Quarter 3 (24/25) (standing item) Staffing and Recruitment Update (standing item) Finance Report (standing item) Review of Individual Garden Maintenance Scheme and proposed service Electrical Compliance Audit: Outcome and Resulting Action Plan Workshop: Sheltered Housing Review Home Safeguard Technology and Digitalisation
Meeting 4 24/25 24 th April 2025 Pre-Election Period	Housing Performance Report for Quarter 4 (24/25) (standing item) Staffing and Recruitment Update (standing item) Finance Report (standing item) Review of progress on the objectives of the Resident Involvement Strategy Succession Policy Temporary Accommodation Procurement and Allocation Progress on Website Re-design
FY 2025/26	
TBC/ Meeting 1	Housing Asset Management Strategy Update
TBC/ Meeting 1	Five-year investment and delivery plan (housing delivery 2024- 2029)
TBC/ Meeting 2	Review and Replacement of Home Safeguard Equipment within Housing Stock.
TBC/ Meeting 2	Review and Implementation of digital capabilities for tenants.
TBC / Meeting 2	Housing's Domestic Abuse Policy

TBC/ Meeting 3	Investment plan for Housing Revenue Account play-sites
TBC/ Meeting 3	Management of leasehold properties and service charges
TBC / Meeting 4	Review of the Contract with StreetScene Services for Estate Management (communal cleaning and grounds maintenance)
Workshops / Briefings Requested for HRB Members	
TBC/Before Meeting 2	Presentation and workshop on Sheltered Housing Review
<p>Note that following the recommendations from the Centre of Governance and Scrutiny Report- the forward plan for this Committee will be aligned to the forward plans for other Scrutiny Committees and this will then link directly into the Cabinet Forward Plan. All above topics will then be aligned to the most appropriate meeting.</p> <p>Review/creation of Policy and Strategy documents as required will also appear on the Forward Plan.</p>	

Report to: Housing Review Board

Date of Meeting 24 April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Housing Staffing Update – April 2025

Report summary:

This report provides key staffing updates for the Housing Service, and provides an up-to-date structure chart for key roles and service management across the Housing Service.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

(1) That the Housing Review Board note the content of this report.

Reason for recommendation:

This report is for noting only; no decisions required.

Officer: Andy King, Assistant Director for Housing (Regulatory Services)

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☐ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy
- ☐ Finance and Assets
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; N/A

Links to background information N/A

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☐ A supported and engaged community
 - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services
-

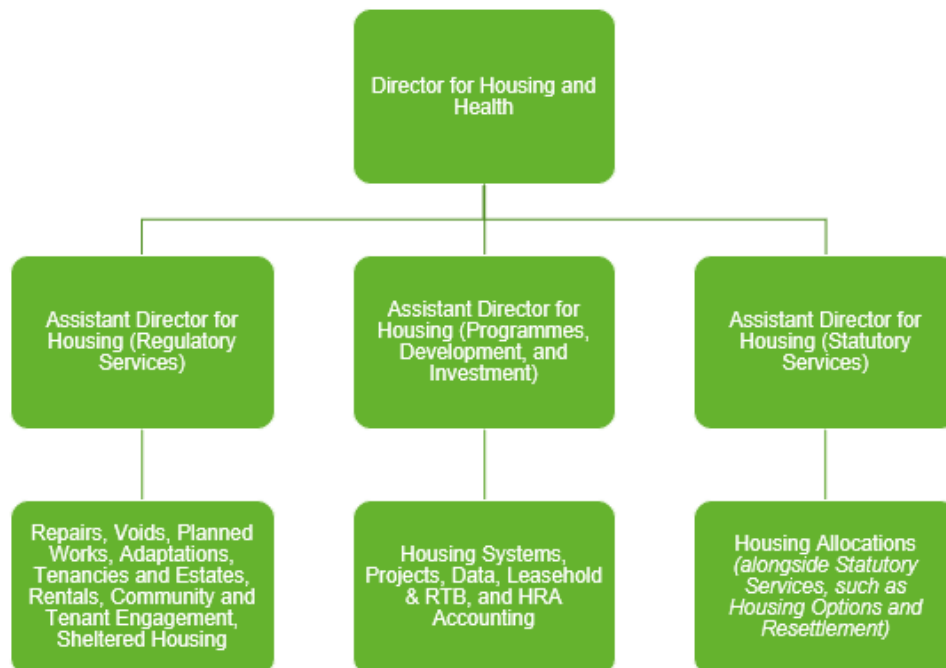
Report in full

1. Recruitment Update

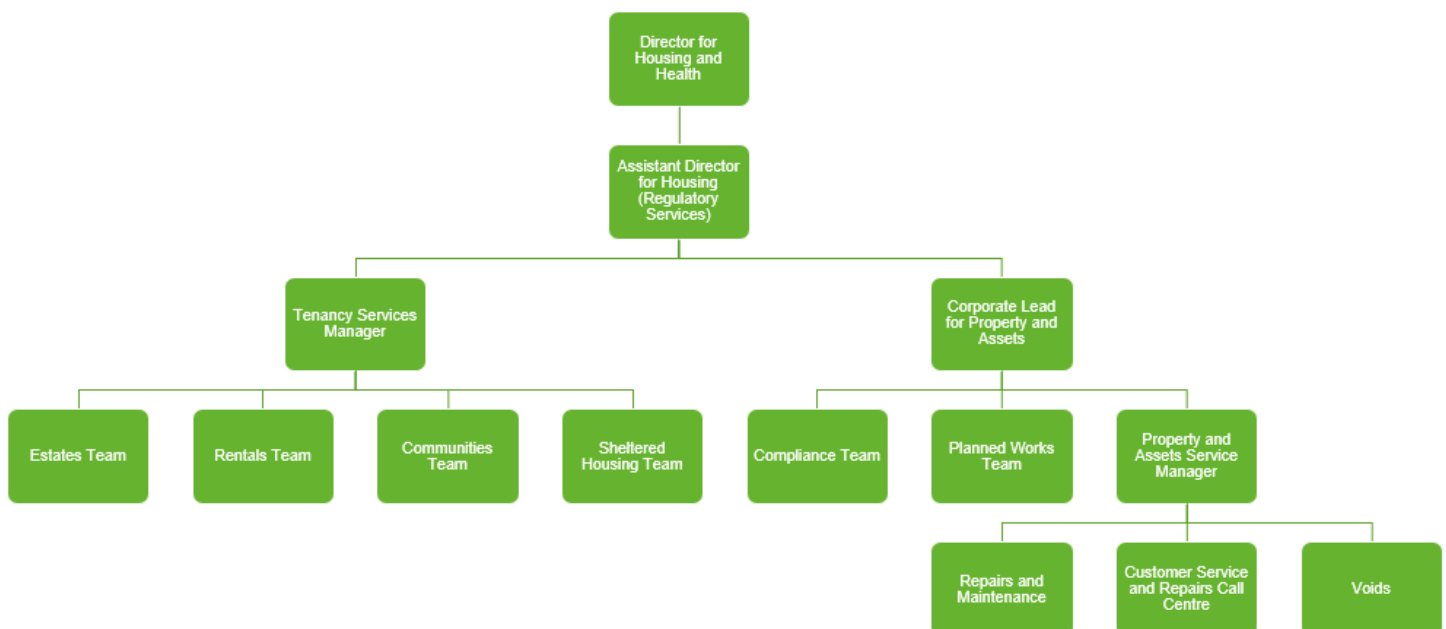
- 1.1. As noted in my previous update, we have recently undergone recruitment for the role of 'Corporate Lead for Housing Property and Assets'. This role will report into the Assistant Director for Housing (Regulatory Services), and will have responsibility for overseeing our property and asset functions, including:
 - Day-to-day Repairs
 - Planned Works and Adaptations
 - Voids
 - Compliance
- 1.2. I am very pleased to say that we have been successful in our recruitment to this role, and Nathan Muggeridge joins us on 22nd April. Nathan brings with him a wealth of experience in strategic asset management and planning, as well as local authority housing. We are very excited to welcome him to the team.
- 1.3. With this appointment made, we are now beginning the process of recruiting permanently to other posts within the property and assets teams, some of which are vacant, others that have been temporarily filled. We are pleased to be bringing further stability and permanence to the teams and the service area.

2. Housing Structure

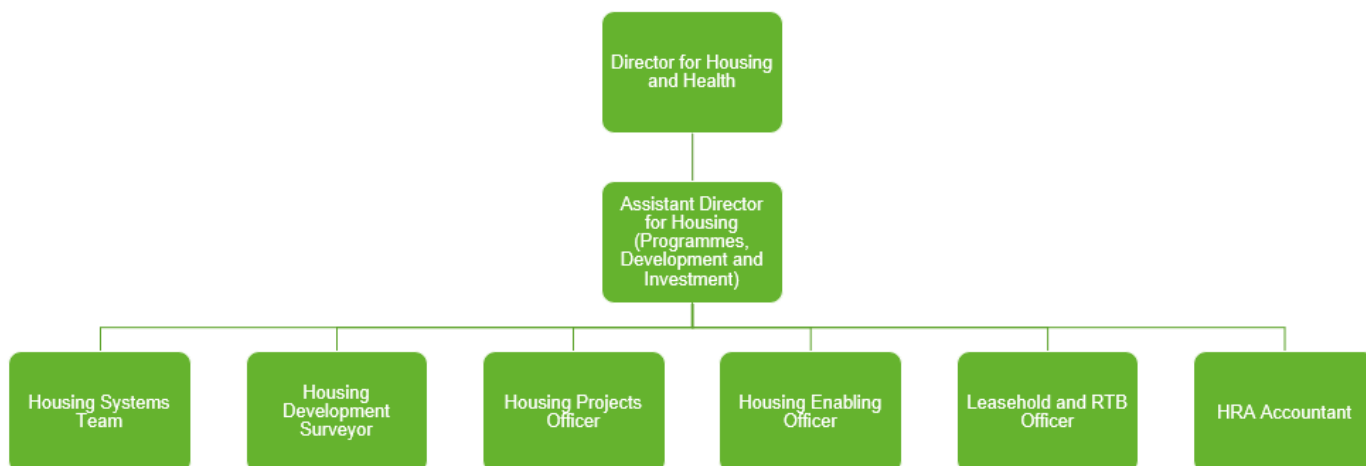
- 2.1. The function of the Housing Service covers everything that sits within the Housing Revenue Account. This can be identified as any function within the Council that is involved in the direct delivery of our Regulated Housing (Council Housing Stock).
- 2.2. All direct delivery functions for our Housing Service fall under the remit of Catrin Stark, our Director for Housing and Health (amongst other responsibilities).
- 2.3. The various teams and service areas then sit between three Assistant Directors; The Assistant Director for Housing (Regulatory Services) [Andy King], the Assistant Director for Housing (Statutory Services) [Emma Congerton], and the Assistant Director for Housing (Programmes, Development, and Investment) [Liam Reading].
- 2.4. This is demonstrated in the following Housing Senior Leadership Team Structure Chart:



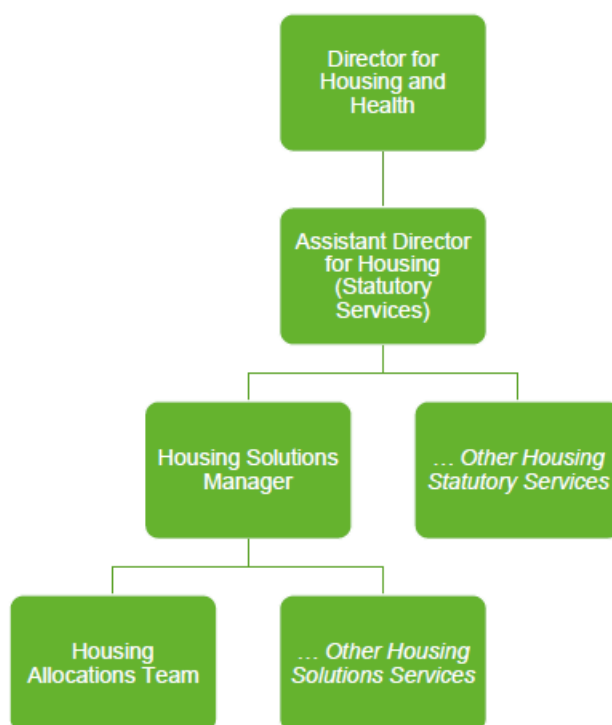
2.5. The majority of the day-to-day operational functions sit with the Assistant Director for Housing (Regulatory Services). Whilst the Property and Assets structure is evolving with the appointment of our new Corporate Lead for this area, this is currently how the structure for Andy King's area looks:



2.6. The following outlines the overarching structure for Liam Reading's team (the Assistant Director for Housing (Programmes, Development and Investment)):



2.7. Finally, the following outlines the HRA related functions under our Assistant Director for Housing (Statutory Services), Emma Congerton:



2.8. The following table provides the names of key managers within the Housing Service:

Role	Name
Director for Housing and Health	Catrin Stark
Assistant Director of Housing (Regulatory Services)	Andrew King
Assistant Director of Housing (Programmes, Development and Investment)	Liam Reading
Assistant Director of Housing (Statutory Services)	Emma Congerton
Corporate Lead for Housing Property and Assets	Nathan Muggeridge

3. Staff Turnover

3.1. At January's meeting, members of the HRB requested that we provided data on staff turnover within the Housing Revenue Account. Unfortunately, HR have confirmed that they are currently unable to manipulate our data in that way, but have confirmed that they provide reports on the overarching data for the whole Council.

3.2. However, I am able to tell you that we are currently holding around 12 vacancies across the HRA. Some of these roles are out for active recruitment, some are occupied by interim staff whilst work is undertaken to review the role or permanently recruit, and others are under consideration for removal from our structure to support with savings and efficiencies across the HRA.

Financial implications:

The staffing updates and structures given in this report are within the approved budget

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications.

Report to: Housing Review Board

Date of Meeting 24 April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Housing Performance Report – Q4 2024/25

Report Summary

The following report outlines the Housing Service's performance through quarter 4 of FY 2024/25. Noting that at the time of writing the report, not all year end activities have closed, therefore some data is partial or subject to change once year end activities are completed.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

The Housing Review Board receives the report and our performance at end of quarter 4, 2024/25.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure the Housing Review Board have assurance around service delivery, performance and compliance with our health & safety responsibilities. To enable the Board to scrutinise and challenge the performance of the housing service.

Officer: Andy King, Assistant Director for Housing (Regulatory Services),
Andrew.king@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☐ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy
- ☐ Finance and Assets
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ Better homes and communities for all
- ☐ A greener East Devon
- ☐ A resilient economy

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in this report.

Legal implications:

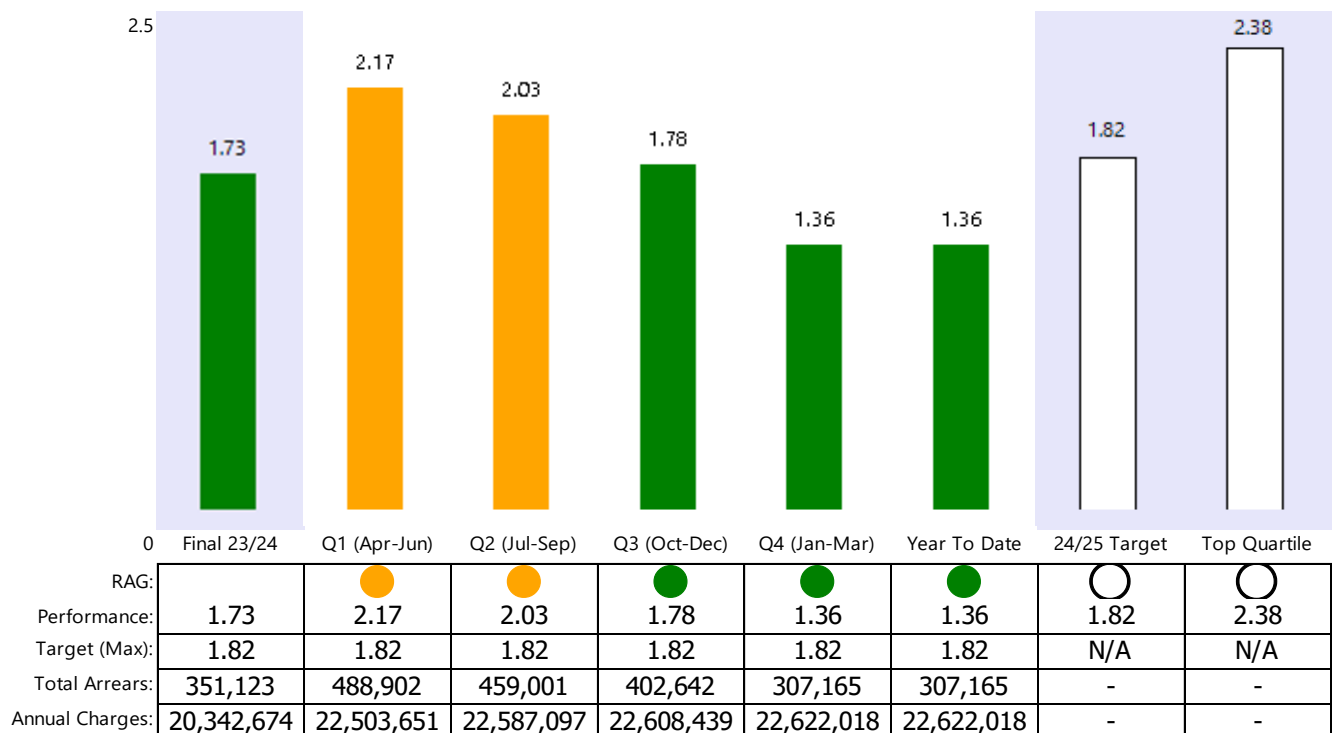
There are no legal implications on which to comment.

1. Understanding This Report

- 1.1. The data presented in this report is colour coded in a traffic light system. Green means we are meeting or exceeding our targets, amber that we are close to target, and red means we are outside of target.
- 1.2. Targets are set annually and are our benchmark for where we would like our performance to be.
- 1.3. Top Quartiles are the benchmark figures from Housemark, which tells us whether or not we are in the top 25% of best performing landlords.
- 1.4. The 'Final 23/24' data shows us where our performance was at the end of the last financial year, which gives us an indication of how we are doing compared to last year's performance.

2. Income Collection

- 2.1. Infographic; Rent arrears of current tenants as a % of annual rent debit:

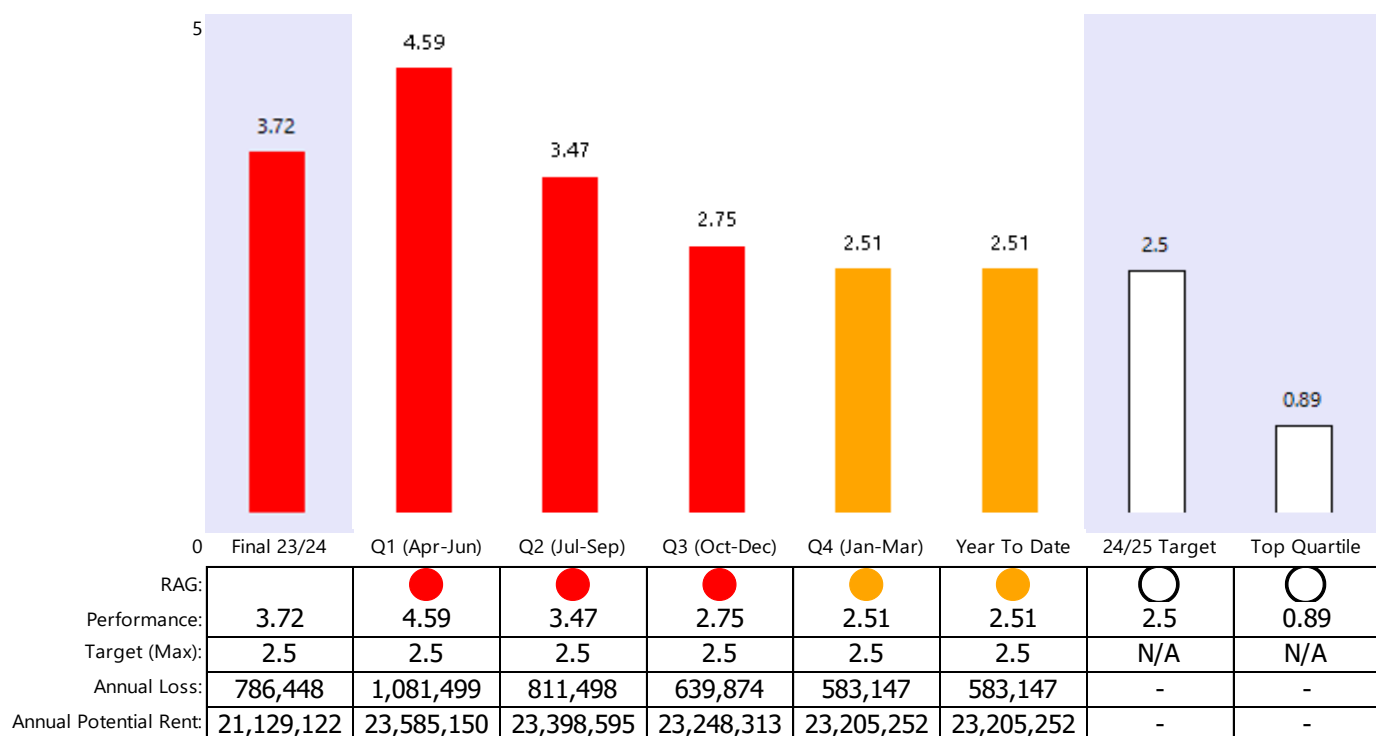


- 2.2. The key indicator for our performance in relation to Income is the Council's rent arrears for current tenants as percentage of the annual rent we should be receiving.
- 2.3. If all of our current tenants paid 100% of their rent and service charges this financial year, we would receive a total income of £22,622,018.

- 2.4. At the end of Quarter 4, you can see that we have a current rent arrear figure of £307,165, which equates to 1.36% of the total income we could receive from our current tenants. Whilst of course we would like all of our tenants to be paying all of their rent and charges, it is expected by all landlords that for various reasons there will be those tenants who cannot or do not meet with their obligations to pay.
- 2.5. Our target for rent arrears is to be at, or below, 1.82%. Therefore, the figure of 1.36% is extremely positive and demonstrates high performance from our Rentals team.
- 2.6. The top quartile for this area is 2.38%, therefore you can see that we are firmly seated as performing in the top 25% of landlords nationally and are beating this industry benchmark by over 1%.
- 2.7. You will also see that we finished FY 23/24 well within target at 1.73%, and performance has improved further this financial year. Anecdotally, we often see a small increase in rent arrears in Q4, linked to a knock-on effect from the festive period where tenants have prioritised other expenditure above their rents. However, this year we have continued to reduce rent arrears throughout Q4.
- 2.8. Strong income collection performance is important to us as it gives us assurance around the level of income we can expect to generate year on year, giving us greater assurance around our budget setting and plans for investment and expenditure.
- 2.9. The Year to Date (YTD) figure for Income Collection is reported as a snapshot in time (ie, the most up to date figure at the time the report was ran). This is because the income collection figure is a cumulative figure throughout the year.
- 2.10. You may note that some of the previous quarter's figures have altered from past reports. This is due to a number of factors, including where we have reimbursed tenants for credits on their accounts, have followed debt write-off processes, or have made manual adjustments to people's accounts (which occur for a variety of operational purposes).

3. Income Lost Through Void Properties

- 3.1. Infographic; % of rent lost through properties becoming vacant:



3.2. Aside from rent lost through current tenant's arrears, the other key area of risk to our income collection each year is when our properties become void (empty).

3.3. All landlords plan for a level of turnover in their properties and we know that homes will be vacant whilst void repairs are carried out and therefore not generating income for us.

3.4. Unexpected levels of void loss can cause issues for our budgets and investment in our stock, so it is important that we balance the cost of bringing a property back to a lettable standard with the rent we will lose if we do not relet the property in a timely fashion.

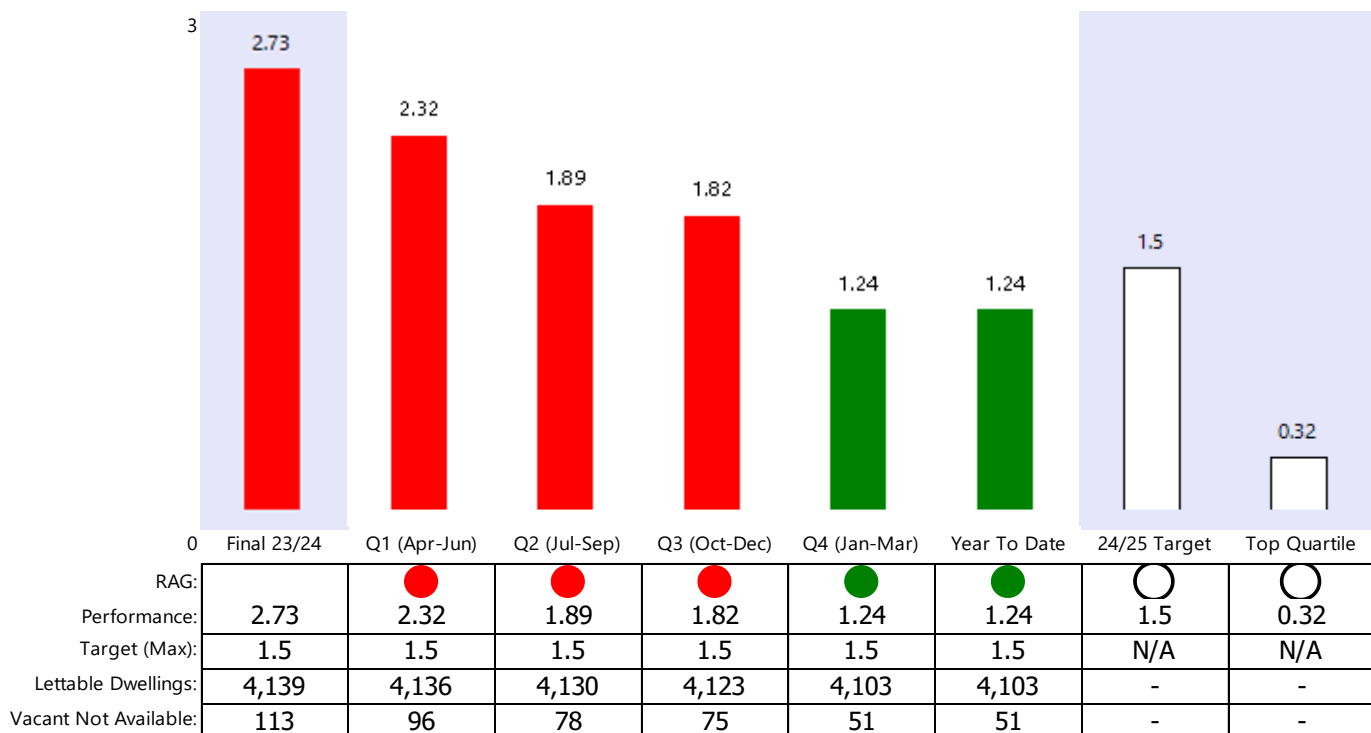
3.5. We can see that void loss spiked in quarter 1 of this year, however it has vastly reduced, bringing our Q4 void loss figure to 2.51%. This is just 0.01% above our target of 2.5%. This figure is far removed from the performance at the end of the last financial year, and is testament to the focus this area has been given and the work brought in by Officers.

3.6. Our void loss does continue to be significantly higher than the top 25% of landlords nationally, but the Housing Service and the HRB are aware of the challenges we have faced in this area and the journey we have been on to improve performance. Our target takes into account our stock profile and condition, and level of turnover, which will be significantly different to those landlords achieving top quartile performance.

3.7. The quarterly % figure is calculated by taking what the annual loss would be if those properties remained empty for the whole year, divided by what our annual potential rental income could be, times by 100 to get the percentage figure. This is why the Year to Date (YTD) always mirrors the last quarter on the report as this is the most up to date calculation that takes into account actual rent lost, and potential rent lost if those properties remain vacant combined.

4. Properties Vacant and Not Available to Let

4.1. Infographic; % of self-contained dwellings vacant and not available to let:



4.2. Paired with the business need for us to be able to reliably target ourselves with an acceptable level of rent loss, is the need to manage the turnover of our vacant stock and try to ensure reduced numbers of vacant properties held by us at any one time. These two performance indicators naturally go hand in hand.

4.3. At the end of quarter 4 we had 4,103 lettable dwellings within the Housing Service. Of these, 51 were vacant but not ready to be let. This is a decrease of 45 from Q1 and 62 from the end of FY 2023/24! (It should be noted that the lettable dwellings figure can fluctuate over the year for a number of reasons, including disposals, right to buy, acquisitions, and properties taken out of management).

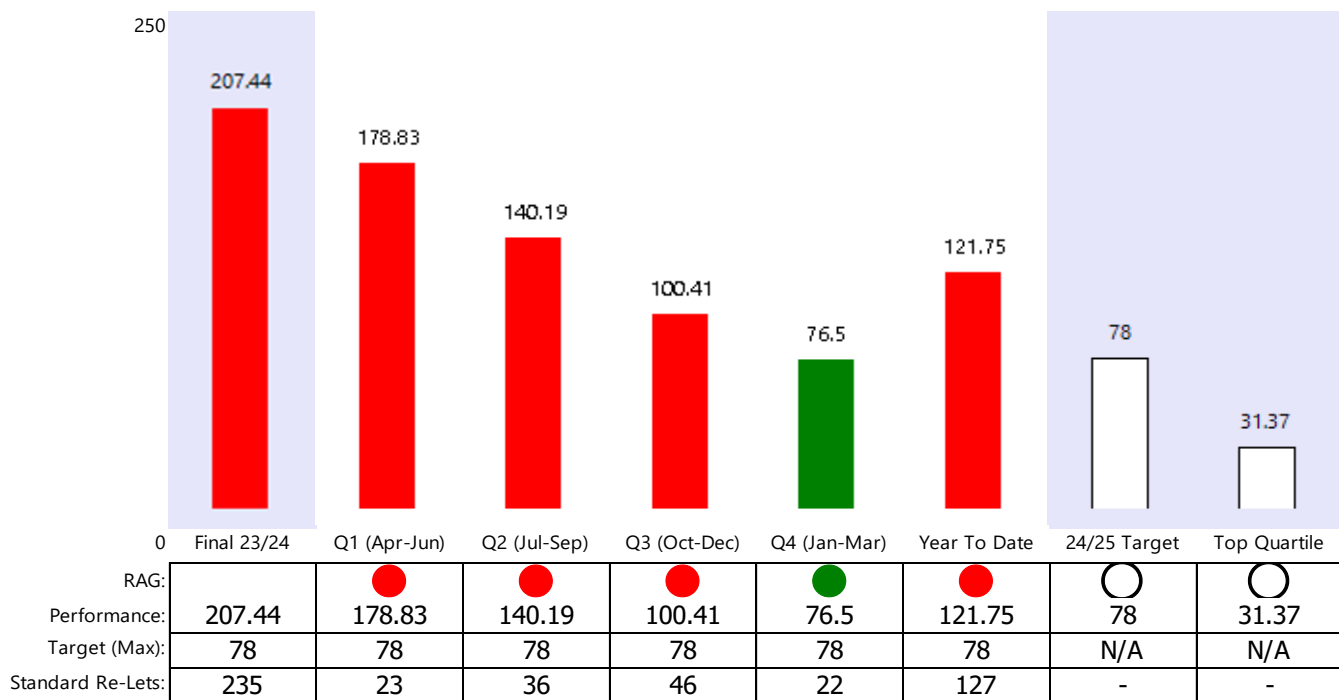
4.4. The 51 vacant, but not available to let, properties at the end of quarter 4 amounts to 1.24% of our stock. This brings us within our target 1.5%, and is a 1.49% improvement on performance at the end of the last financial year. This is an incredible achievement and to be celebrated, bringing us within target for the first time in a number of years.

4.5. Whilst we endeavour to have as few void properties at any one time, this figure should also be read in tandem with the data on how long it is taking us to relet our properties. This is because the number of void properties we have does not mean that these are the same void properties month on month. The following section explores our performance in relation to relet times.

4.6. The Year to Date (YTD) figure is reported as a snapshot in time (ie, the most up to date figure at the time the report was ran). This is because the figure is a cumulative figure throughout the year.

5. Average Days to Relet Homes

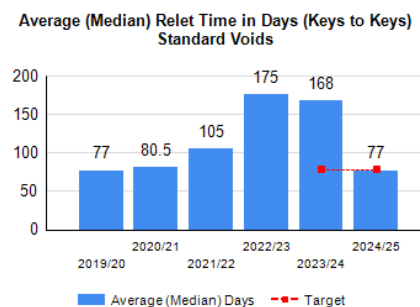
5.1. Infographic; Average days to relet a social housing dwelling (standard):



5.2. At the end of Q4, the average number of days between a property becoming void and being relet is 76.5 days, bringing our whole year average down to 121.75 days. Q4's performance is a vast reduction of over 130 days from the average relet time at the end of FY 2023/24. Whilst year end activities may cause alterations to these final figures, Q4's performance is demonstrating an exceptional shift in how we are managing our void properties.

5.3. Our target is to bring our relet times within 78 days or less. Whilst our year average is outside of this target, Q4 brought us within target for the first time and we are continuing on the downward trend, demonstrating the best performance in this area than we have for the past couple of years.

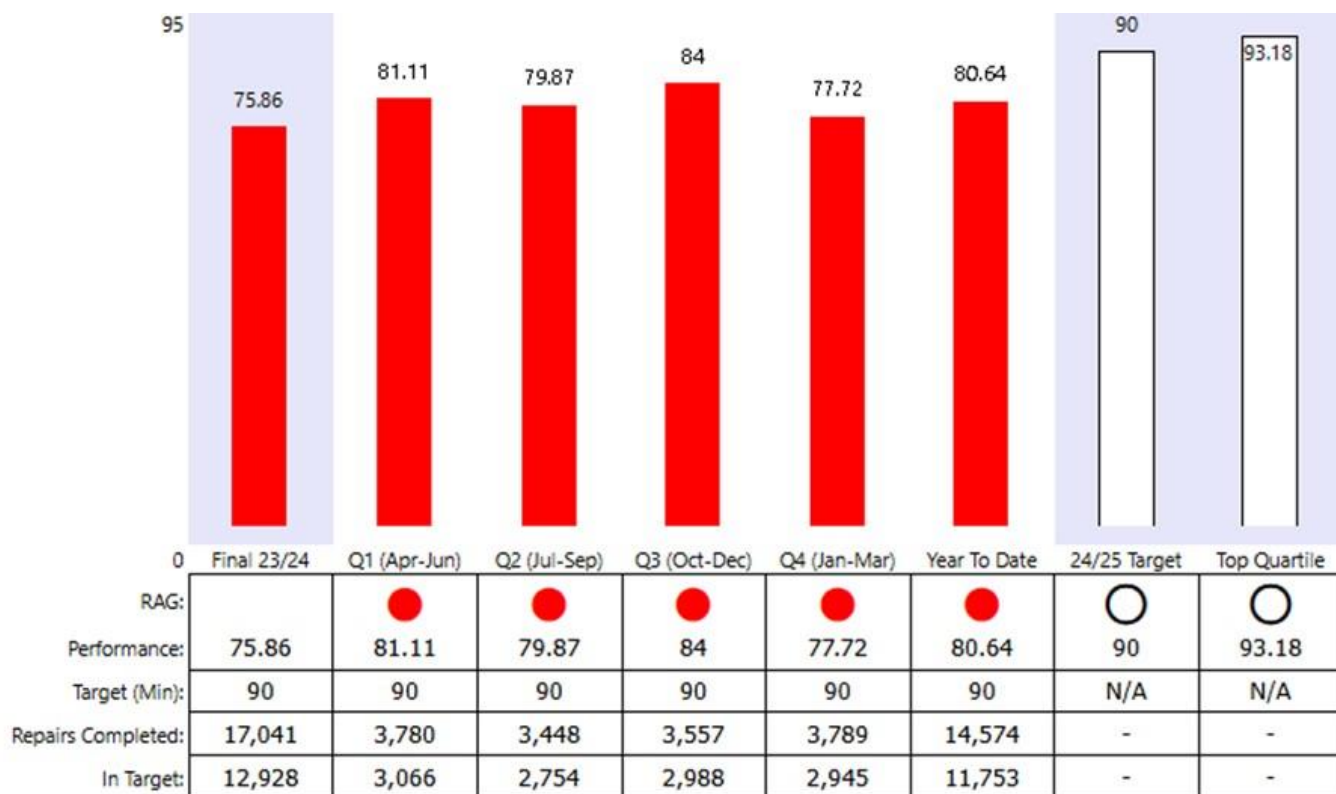
5.4. It should also be noted that as we continue to clear long-term voids, the average days to relet will continue to be skewed by these properties but this will improve as the backlog reduces. Presenting the median can statistically 'smooth' out the extreme cases giving a 'clearer' picture of average relet times. The chart on the right shows you that this year we have achieved a median of 77 days, which is just within our target of 78 days!



5.5. The Year to Date (YTD) figure is an average across the year so far.

6. Repairs Completed in Target

6.1. Infographic; % of repairs completed within target:

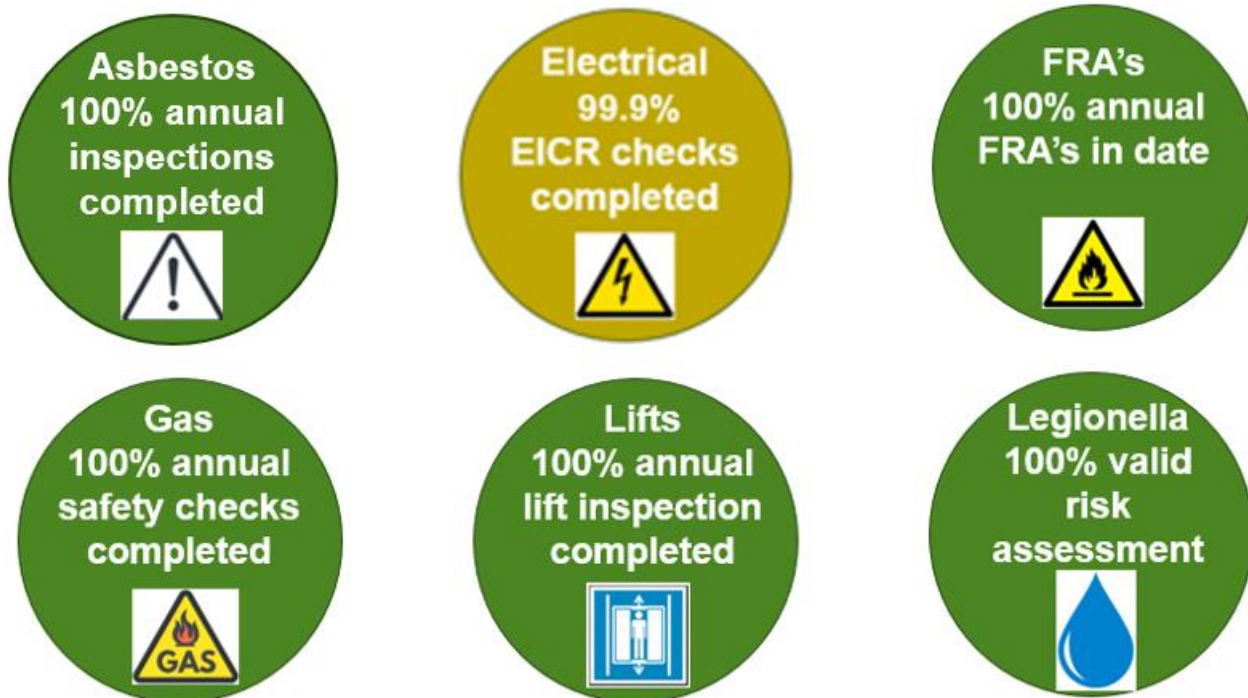


6.2. Last quarter, we noted that there is a large discrepancy between our data and our contractors in terms of the level of works completed within target. We believed that our data was significantly skewed due to issues with our WIP (works in progress) and therefore opted to present you with the contractor's data whilst our WIP was aligned. This work is all but complete on the Ian Williams contract, however it has not altered our system's performance data in the way we expected. As using third party data for a second quarter in a row would not provide the transparency we have always striven for, EDDC data is being presented above. Both Ian Williams and Liberty Gas have been made aware of our concerns and it has been highlighted that this needs further imminent review. Meetings have been requested with our contractors and the new Corporate Lead for Housing Property and Assets in the coming weeks to further understand the issues presenting here and provide a resolution.

6.3. Over the course of the year, 14,574 repair jobs have been completed across both contractors.

6.4. Of these, a combined target completion rate of 80.64% has been achieved. Despite our concerns about the data variations between systems, it is pleasing to see a near 5% increase in performance when compared to the last financial year.

7. Compliance

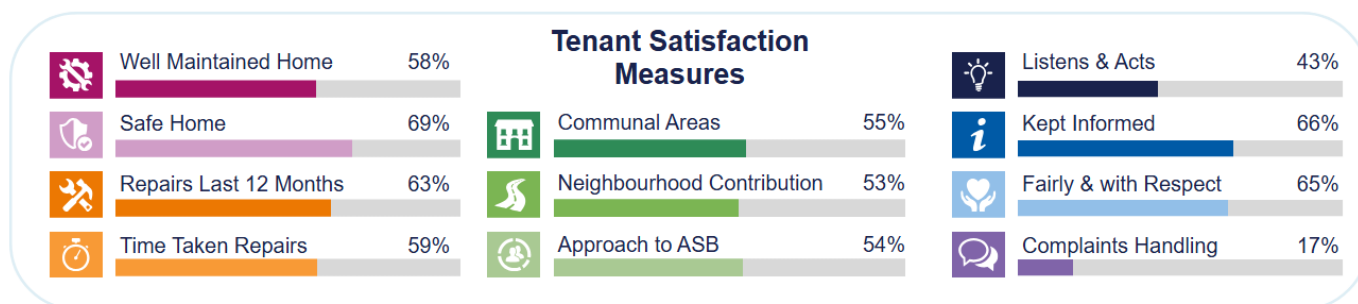
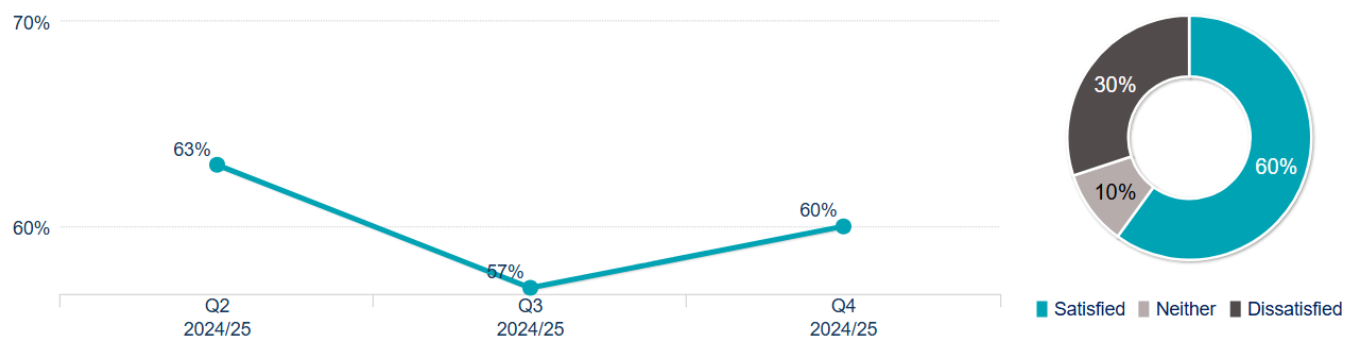


- 7.1. As a landlord, there are a number of checks, inspections, and risk assessments that we are required to carry out. All of these are annual, apart from our Electrical EICR's which are completed at each property every 5 years on a rolling programme.
- 7.2. 100% of the qualifying properties have received their Gas Check, FRA (Fire Risk Assessment), Asbestos Inspection, Lift Check, and Legionella Risk Assessment.
- 7.3. 99.9% of the electrical checks due this year have been completed, with just one property outstanding at this time. This is an incredible achievement given the difficulties we sometimes face gaining access to some of our homes.

8. Tenant Satisfaction Measures

- 8.1. The following shows the headline results of our Q4 TSM Survey. We are yet to receive the full and final report, so there may be some final adjustments to these figures, however they give a strong indication of how we have performed at the close of the financial year:

Overall Satisfaction



8.2. The below analysis details each category questioned in the TSM Survey, showing how this compares between this year and the previous year's survey results:

	23/24 (%)	24/25 (%)	Difference between 23/24 and 25/26 (%)	23/24 Benchmark (%)
Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with the overall service from their landlord	52.7	60	7.3	72.3
Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their home is well maintained	46.4	58	11.6	72.2
Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their home is safe	57.3	69	11.7	78.7
Proportion of respondents who have received a repair in the last 12 months who report that they are satisfied with the overall repairs service	51.5	63	11.5	74.5
Proportion of respondents who have received a repair in the last 12 months who report that they are satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair	46	59	13	70
Proportion of respondents who report making a complaint in the last 12 months who are satisfied with their landlord's approach to complaints handling	20.2	17	-3.2	34
Proportion of respondents who report that they agree their landlord treats them fairly and with respect	56.2	65	8.8	78.2
Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps them informed about things that matter to them	44.1	66	21.9	71.4
Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	39.2	43	3.8	61
Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood	36.6	53	16.4	64
Proportion of respondents with communal areas who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained	39.1	55	15.9	66
Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with their landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour	36.4	54	17.6	57.6

8.3. At the end of the financial year, we are seeing that overall satisfaction with our housing service is at 60%. This is an increase of 7.3% from the previous year.

8.4. This trend of increased satisfaction continues across the piece, with notable large increases in the following areas:

- Satisfaction that we keep our tenants informed – 21.9% increase.

- Satisfaction in our handling of anti-social behaviour – 17.6% increase.
- Satisfaction in our contribution to neighbourhoods – 16.4% increase.
- Satisfaction with time taken to complete repairs – 13% increase.

- 8.5. This year's benchmark data is not yet available, therefore we have provided the previous year's benchmark data as a sense checking tool. We can see that in many areas we are closing the gap on our performance vs the sector average, and once this years benchmark data is available we will present back to the HRB.
- 8.6. Complaints handling is the only area of the TSM that we have not improved. This tends to be the lowest performing measure for all landlords, which can be seen in the 23/24 benchmark figure of 34%. Achieving high scores in this area is statistically unlikely, as many people who submit a complaint will be hard-pressed to be satisfied unless their complaint is upheld. However, we know that this is an area where we are not performing to the standard we expect, with complaint responses taking longer to provide. This is largely due to capacity in reviewing, editing and approving complaint responses and in the last few weeks additional resource has been brought in to help plug this gap. I am confident is stating in this report that I know we will see vast improvements in this area in the coming months, and am certain this will be reflected in the TSM results as we move into the next financial year.

Report to: Housing Review Board

Date of Meeting 24th April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Resident Involvement Strategy 2023 -2027 (RIS) - an assessment on progress

Report summary:

This report looks at the progress made against the strategic priorities identified in the Resident Involvement Strategy since it was adopted by Cabinet in January 2024, and our plans to further strengthen tenant engagement.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

- (1) That the Housing Review Board note the content of the report, and the progress made against the strategic priorities and objectives outlined in our Resident Involvement Strategy.

Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the Housing Review Board are kept up to date with the progress and work undertaken in key areas of the Housing Service.

Officer: Rebecca Meakin, Communities Team Manager, Rmeakin@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☐ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy
- ☐ Finance and Assets
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; .

Links to background information

- [Resident Involvement Strategy 2024-27 | East Devon District Council](#)
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tenant-involvement-and-empowerment-standard>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards>
- <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>
- <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/landlords-info/complaint-handling-code/complaint-handling-code-202>
- https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/5.48%20Engaging%20and%20empowering%20tenants%20in%20council-owned%20housing_05.pdf 4/

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ Better homes and communities for all
 - ☐ A greener East Devon
 - ☐ A resilient economy
-

Report in full

1. Background – Development of the Resident Involvement Strategy

1.1 The Resident Involvement Strategy (RIS) was approved by cabinet in January 2024. The Strategy was produced after extensive consultation with staff, stakeholders, involved tenants and non-involved tenants. This included focus groups, interviews and online surveys. This provided confidence that the direction outlined in the final document was a fair representation of the issues and challenges residents faced, and their priorities for improvement. Some of the key messages from that consultation were:

- A more diverse of residents needs to be involved
- We need to increase the variety of ways for our residents to get involved
- The focus of formal resident involvement groups needs to improve
- Performance information and reports need to be presented to residents in a clear and concise format
- Training needs to for involved residents should be identified and met
- More attractive incentives should be offered to involved residents

1.2 Our Resident Involvement Strategy 2023 -2027 outlines 5 main objectives. These are:

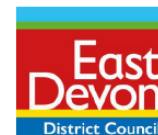
1. To understand more about the people who live in our homes.
2. To improve the value of our tenant engagement
3. To increase the diversity of our involved tenants
4. To improve our communication and consultation with tenants
5. To value our involved tenants, volunteers, and communities

2. Current Structure of Resident Involvement:

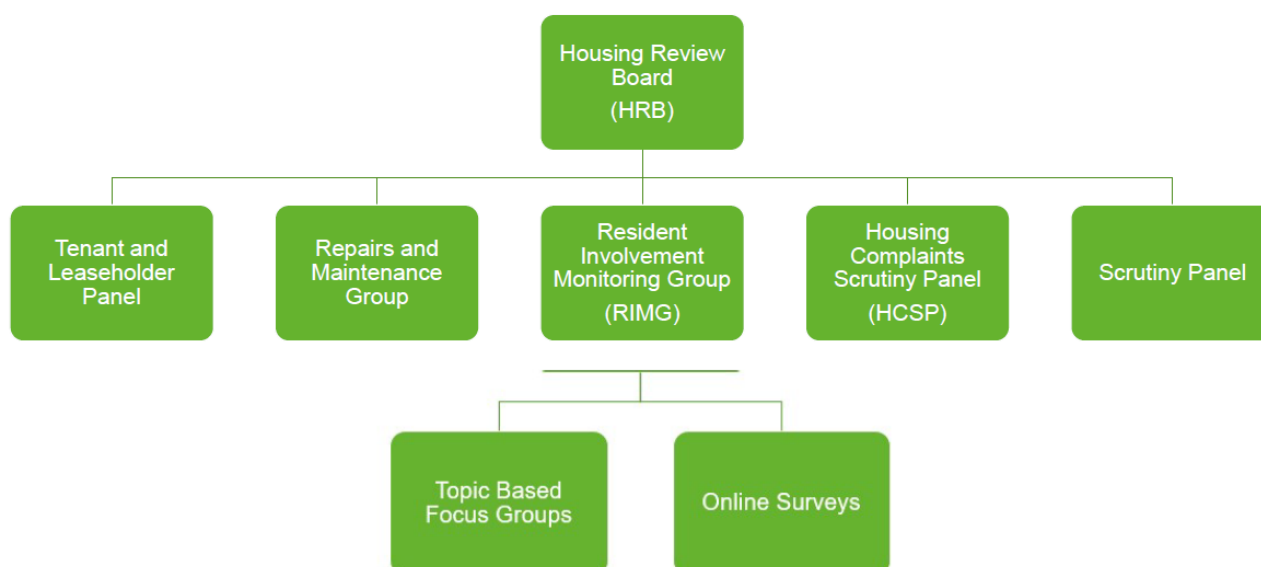
2.1 We have 72 active involved tenants.

2.2 We provide at least 9 different ways, including Resident Involvement panels and groups to help residents voices to be heard.

2.3 The below outlines how our various tenant scrutiny groups feed into policy, process and reporting, and, therefore, ultimately the Housing Review Board:



Tenant Scrutiny Structure



3. Relationship with Housing Regulatory Framework

3.1 The Housing Regulatory Framework contains four consumer standards and a related code of practice. The four standards are: safety and quality; neighbourhood and community; tenancy; and transparency, influence and accountability.

3.2 The standard on transparency, influence and accountability mirrors the focus of the RIS, with its key themes covering engagement with tenants, fairness and respect, complaints, diverse needs and performance information. However, there is a strong expectation that good resident engagement is to be central to the delivery of each standard with the guidance highlighting the need to ensure that tenants have meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise landlord's strategies, policies and services.

3.3 Alongside the work of the Regulator, the work undertaken by the Housing Ombudsman is also feeding into these processes. The Ombudsman has published 3 Spotlight Reports on Damp and Mould, Knowledge & Information Management, and Noise; offering detailed insight into common areas of service failure and maladministration across social housing providers. These documents offer rich insight into resident experiences of dealing with their landlord and work is underway to embed the recommendations made into practice.

4. Progress on the Resident Involvement Strategy Aims and Objective

4.1 The RIS has five main objectives, linked to 28 aims. These set out an ambitious programme of work to be delivered over 3 years. The summary below demonstrates some of the significant areas of progress.

4.2 Aim one: Understanding more about our residents.

4.2.1 This objective focuses on building a clearer picture of who our residents are and to get a better understanding of their service needs through surveys, tenancy visits and partnership working and partnership working. We will also get to know how tenants prefer to be contacted and the best ways for them to get in touch with us. We will also promote equality within our service delivery and remove discrimination or barriers that we find. To support this, we have this year:

- Carried out over 1000 tenancy visits
- Drafted a 'getting to know' survey
- Undertaken Pepper Potted Housing Analysis to gather data surrounding our more remotely placed properties, to enable us to formulate a strategy to offer any additional support those tenants may require help.
- Reviewed TOR for each resident involvement group
- Created a training plan for involved Residents

4.3 Aim two: Improving the value of our resident involvement.

4.3.1 This objective focuses on making sure the time our residents give up helping us make changes and improvements is valued and impactful, giving them training and the skills they need to get the most out of their experiences working with us. To make sure the time spent with officers is productive and possible and to make sure our involved residents understand what is expected of them and what they can expect from us in return. We must make sure we are sharing information with tenants concisely and that it is easy to understand. We will also strive to tell our residents what happens or changes because of their input. To support this, we have this year:

- Drawn up an involved residents training schedule, some examples of that training are, chairing skills, intro to scrutiny, effective challenging and questioning, equality and diversity, understanding Tenant satisfaction measures
- Worked with involved residents to draw up a revised constitution for our resident involvement groups and review TOR for each group.

4.4 Aim three: Increasing the diversity of our tenants

4.4.1 This objective focuses on ways in which we identify which groups of residents are not currently sharing their idea and experiences with us. We will develop targeted plans to improve our relations with those residents and encourage more of them to become involved, by making greater use of social media and online methods to make it easier for younger and working residents to have their say. To support this, we have this year:

- Recruited new members through community activities and engagement
- Created a new online Resident Involvement Hub.
- Promoted the positive outcomes of our resident involvement on our website
- Started to review and improve our tenant welcome packs

- Created a new 6 weekly residents newsletter to replace our current quarterly Housing Matters magazine, in order to keep residents better informed and to reach better demographic of residents.

4.5 Aim four: Improving our communication and consultation with residents.

4.5.1 This objective focuses on ways we will find out how our residents would like us to contact them and how they would prefer to speak to us. We will tailor our services to meet these preferences where possible and make greater use of online methods to consult with our residents, to make it easier for them to have their say. To support this, we have this year:

- Added information about consultation with residents into HRB reports
- Created a new online Resident Involvement Hub
- Drafted a 'getting to know' survey
- Improving the information, we provide to residents is jargon free
- Implementation of a digital inclusion programme

4.6 Aim five: Value our involved residents, volunteers and communities

4.6.1 This objective focuses ways we can reward involved residents and volunteers for their time and consider whether more needs to be done in this area to encourage others to take part. We will look at different regions within our district to check that all are represented and included in our service delivery. To support this, we have this year:

- Worked with the tenant conference committee to provide a resident connect event
- Drafted a 'getting to know' survey
- Created a new online Resident Involvement Hub
- Annual Volunteers cream tea as a way of thanking our volunteers

5. Monitoring Impact

5.1 Since the launch of the RIS in January 2024, we have made some great progress fulfilling our commitment to this strategy within the context of the action plan that covers a number of years, and we recognise there remains much more to do.

5.2 The approach to resident engagement is central to our wider service improvement journey and one of the ways we measure improvement is via the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) which are used by the Regulator for Social Housing to measure tenant satisfaction.

5.3 We are starting to see improvements in some TSMs. The key ones that relate to the RIS are:

5.3.1 "Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them". In the 2023-24 TSM survey, we achieved a satisfaction rate of 39.2% in this area. In 2024-25, satisfaction in this area rose by almost 4% to 43%.

5.3.2 "Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps them informed about things that matter to them". In the 2023-24 TSM survey, we achieved a satisfaction rate of 44.1% in this area. In 2024-25, satisfaction in this area rose by a significant 21.9%, to 66%.

5.4 In the year ahead, we want to create more opportunities, to hear directly from residents, with reviews of policy and procedures and resident scrutiny projects and reports. We hope to launch our resident 'getting to know you' survey, so we can build a clearer picture of who our residents are and get a better understanding of their service needs. We hope to drive forward our plans to encourage more residents to become involved by offering incentives for their time and commitment.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations in this report.

Legal implications:

The legal framework is set out within the report and there are no other issues on which to comment.

Report to: Housing Review Board

Date of Meeting 24 April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Housing Policy Review

Report summary:

The Housing Succession Policy has been reviewed and Housing Review Board approval is being sought.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That members note and approve the updated Housing Succession Policy.

Reason for recommendation:

That the Council has up to date policy ensuring that housing successions are managed effectively.

Officer: Andrew Mitchell, Housing Solutions Manager, amitchell@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☐ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy
- ☐ Finance and Assets
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk

Links to background information Click here to enter links to background information; appendices online; and previous reports. These must link to an electronic document. Do not include any confidential or exempt information.

Link to Council Plan

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
 - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services
-

Report in full

The Housing Succession Policy has recently been reviewed and updated in order to it up to date. The policy is included in this report in appendix A.

Any amendments to the policy have been listed on the policy document. In particular, a new section has been added to the Housing Succession Policy to incorporate guidance on tenancy assignments to add clarity in this area. This was felt necessary due to the number of assignments the team have processed. Based on figures over the past two years the Housing Allocations team process an average of 41 succession requests over a year and 21 assignments.

Internal and external consultation has been carried out during the process of reviewing the policy. Residents have been consulted through the Resident and Leaseholder Panel meeting on 11th March 2025.

Financial implications:

The amendments to the policies do not create any financial implications on which to comment.

Legal implications:

The legal framework is set out within the report and requires no further comment.

Appendix A

Housing Succession Policy

Issue details	
Title:	Housing Succession Policy
Version number	Version 2.0
Officer responsible:	Housing Solutions Manager
Authorisation by:	
Authorisation date:	

History of most recent Policy Changes – Must be completed			
Date	Section	Change	Origin of change (eg change in legislation)
14.01.25	2.4.1	Wording amended for relevant job title from Housing Enabling and Allocations Manager to Housing Allocations Manager	Wording (job title)

14.01.25	2.4.16	Wording change from 'highest band' to 'appropriate band'	Wording
26.02.25	2.6.1	Wording amended from 'Head of Housing Services' to 'Housing Solutions Manager'	Wording (job title)
21.01.25	2.7	Section added to incorporate guidance on tenancy assignments	Additional section
14.01.25	2.10.1	Wording amended for relevant job title from Strategic Lead-Housing, Health and Environment to Director of Housing and Health	Wording (job title)
14.01.25	2.10.2	Wording amended for relevant job title from Housing Needs and Strategy Manager to Housing Solutions Manager	Wording (job title)

1 Why has the council introduced this policy?

To ensure that succession is dealt with consistently and in line with current legislation

2 What is the council's policy?

2.1 Policy statement

2.1.1 This policy sets out how East Devon District Council ('the Council') will deal with succession in respect of secure tenancies created before 1 April 2012 and how the change in the law affects successions to secure and flexible tenancies created on or after 1 April 2012

2.1.2 Succession is the transfer of a tenancy following the death of a sole or joint tenant. The rights of tenants to succeed secure and flexible tenancies are set out in Section 87 of the Housing Act 1985

2.1.3 The Localism Act section 160 introduced amendments to the legislation which redefines who can succeed to a tenancy before or after 1 April 2012.

The key objectives of the Succession Policy are:

- To investigate and respond promptly and sensitively to applications for succession.
- To allow only one succession in line with the provisions of the Housing Act 1985, as amended by the Localism Act 2011.
- Offer guidance and clarification to tenants on the circumstances where succession will be granted or refused.
- Making best use of council stock

2.2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply

Succession is the statutory process by which a husband, wife, civil partner, close family member (defined by statute) can become the Council's tenant after the death of the tenant to whom the tenancy was granted. There can be only one succession. On the termination or death of the succeeding tenant the tenancy will come to an end.

2.2.1 For secure tenant(s) who were granted a tenancy prior to 1 April 2012, a qualifying **successor** is:

- a tenant's partner-either spouse or civil partner
- another qualifying family member of the tenant
- the remaining joint tenant provided that the deceased tenant was not a successor themselves.

2.2.2 For secure or flexible tenants who were granted a tenancy post 1 April 2012, a qualifying **successor** is:

- a tenant's partner or spouse in occupation for at least 12 months prior to the date of death provided that the tenant was not a successor themselves

2.2.3 Schedule 8 section 41 of the Civil Partnership Act 2004 has amended the Housing Act 1985 to allow succession to persons who have been living with the deceased tenant as a civil partner or as though they were civil partners. There is no requirement for a civil partnership to have taken place.

2.3 Applying for succession

Following the loss of a family member we understand this may be a very distressing time for you. However, the checks we make and questions we ask are necessary for us to make the right decision about the tenancy. The case may be put on hold if you do not attend interviews if requested or send us the information we need to process your application.

2.3.1 If you believe you have the right to succession you need to contact the Housing Service as soon as possible but within 28 days of the date of death of the tenant to put the Council on notice that it is your desire to remain at the property.

2.3.2 You will be asked to complete a 'Request for succession' application form which lists the evidence you will be required to supply to evidence your relationship to the deceased and the length of time you have lived at the property.

2.3.3 Our officers will commence our investigations which will include contacting other organisations and agencies, and teams within the Council to confirm any information you supply. This may include Department of Work and Pensions and our Council Tax and Housing Benefits Teams.

2.4 Housing Succession Policy (How the Council will consider you application)

- 2.4.1 The Housing Allocations Manager ('the Manager') will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the policy.
- 2.4.2 Any person who wishes to make a claim for the right to succession following the death of a tenant must make a claim within 28 days from the death of the tenant. However, the Manager may grant an extension of time in special circumstances.
- 2.4.3 The Housing Allocations Team will, where possible, investigate and respond to an application for succession within ten working days of receipt of a written application for succession. Estates Management officers may be asked to comment on an application.
- 2.4.4 A successor will be granted a tenancy on the original terms of the tenancy agreement (including the payment of any rent arrears).
- 2.4.5 Where tenancies are secure, successions by qualifying family members are protected by law (statutory successions). As statutory successions do not create a new tenancy, the existing rent charge will continue to apply to a successor.

Joint tenancies (for all secure tenancies before or after 1 April 2012)

- 2.4.6 Where a joint tenant exists and one of the tenants dies the tenancy automatically continues and the surviving joint tenant becomes a sole tenant. They retain all the rights and obligations of the tenancy (including any rent arrears or credit). There is no further automatic right of succession.

A spouse/civil partner (for all secure tenancies before or after 1 April 2012 and for flexible tenancies after 1 April 2012)

- 2.4.7 On the death of a sole tenant, who is not a successor, the tenancy will pass to the tenant's spouse or civil partner.
- 2.4.8 The spouse/civil partner must have occupied the property as his or her only or principal home for at least 12 months prior to the tenant's death.
- 2.4.9 Where a spouse/civil partner of the tenant makes an application to succeed the tenancy they would need to provide formal proof of marriage/partnership and residency at the property at the time of the tenant's death.

Non spouse/family member successions (for tenancies granted before 1 April 2012 only)

2.4.10 On the death of a sole tenant, where there is no spouse or civil partner to succeed, a member of the tenant's family may do so providing that s/he has been residing in the property as his/her only or principal home throughout the period of twelve months ending with the tenant's death and providing that the original tenancy was granted prior to 1 April 2012.

2.4.11 A family member (defined in s113 Housing Act 1985) includes a tenant's parent, grandparent, child, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, stepchild. This shall include relationship by adoption but not foster children.

2.4.12 An application by a person qualified to succeed to the tenancy would need to be supported by formal proof of residence at the property for a period covering the entire twelve months prior to the death of the tenant. Formal proof that the Council will require to see includes:

- copy of the death certificate
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) Benefit documents (Housing, employment, disability etc.)
- Council Tax statements
- Bank statements
- Utility bills
- Medical information (12 month registration with a local GP)
- Drivers licence (demonstrating registration at the property for 12 months)
- A current passport (for identification)
- Pay slips, income tax documentation
- Electoral registration
- Any other documents/information the Council deems necessary to evidence the necessary 12 month period of occupation of the property as sole or principal home.
- An applicant may also be asked to produce evidence of their five year housing history (including any periods of imprisonment)

It is essential that the applicant is able to provide proof of the entire 12 month period prior to death of the tenant and not just part of it. The applicant may also be required to attend an interview.

It is important to note that the Manager will make the decision on a number of pieces of evidence provided, and not take into account single pieces of evidence supplied. Therefore, utility bills can be provided as part of the evidence, but not as sole evidence.

2.4.13 In cases where the original tenant was granted the tenancy prior to the 1 April 2012 and where there is more than one eligible successor and agreement cannot be reached between them as to who should succeed to the tenancy, the Manager will select a successor to the tenancy. In making this decision the Manager will consider factors including the wishes of the original tenant(s), care of children suitability, and any other issue relevant to the application. The applicant making the request will need to provide substantiating evidence and information to prove they qualify.

2.4.14 Where a succession is granted to a non-spouse/family member but the property is larger than would be reasonably required by the successor the Council will use Ground s15 and

15A of the Housing Act 1985 and serve a Notice Seeking Possession and requiring the successor to move to smaller or more suitable accommodation. The notice will be served no sooner than 6 months after the death of the previous tenant and not later than 12 months after the death if the successor remains in a property that is considered under occupied or has been adapted for a tenant with specific physical or mental health needs.

The Council will make one reasonable offer of accommodation. The Council can seek possession of the property after 6 months if the successor has not agreed to move to suitable alternative accommodation.

2.4.15 Circumstances where the council may decide the tenant will have to move will be made on a case by case basis. The decision will be made on the following points:

- The property will be under occupied.
- The property is for those with a support need.
- The property is adapted for the needs for a disabled person
- The property is not affordable
- Any additional information that we become aware of.

2.4.16 Where succession is granted, but the successor is required to move to more suitable accommodation the Housing Allocations team will aid the move by banding the successor in the appropriate band or make the successor a direct offer of what is considered to be a suitable accommodation.

Anti-social behaviour

2.4.17 Where an applicant for succession has been involved in anti-social behaviour including being the subject of a civil injunction or acceptable behaviour contract linked to his/her occupation of the property or received a criminal caution, the Council will not consider the application and will seek possession of the property in line with the Tenancy Agreement.

2.5 Moving to a different property

2.5.1 Where an occupier (with the exception of the surviving spouse/civil partner) succeeds to a secure tenancy on the death of the previous tenant the Council may seek to move the tenant to a more suitable property using Ground 15A Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985.

2.5.2 Statutory succession to a secure or flexible tenancy entered into after 1st April 2012 only applies to a spouse or civil partner of the deceased tenant living at the premises at the time of death. Other resident family members do not have the right to succeed.

2.6 The Council's Discretionary Policy

Circumstances where there are no automatic rights of Succession

2.6.1 Where the death of a sole tenant leaves someone in the property who does not have a legal right to succeed to the tenancy, Housing Allocations will consider granting a tenancy in certain circumstances at that, or an alternative, property (if the current property would be under-occupied or not be suitable to meet their current need) at the discretion of the Housing Solutions Manager in accordance with appropriate section of Devon Home Choice.

You will be considered for re-housing if you:

- are named on the tenancy agreement as an occupant
- are a resident carer, including those who have given up their own home to provide care to the deceased tenant.
- have accepted responsibility for any dependants of the tenant and need to live with them in order to fulfil that responsibility
- an adult child with a disability, particularly where the property has been adapted to meet your needs
- have always lived with the tenant
- have no other housing alternative

and are one of the following:

- vulnerable (as defined by homelessness legislation)
- a parent to dependent children and a move will cause hardship
- have been living with the deceased tenant continuously for 20 or more years and will face hardship in securing alternative accommodation

2.6.2 Where a tenant has died, and there are other people/persons still residing in the property who are not entitled to succeed to the tenancy EDDC will work with the Housing Allocations and Housing Options Teams and the Estates Management Team having regard to:

- A meeting with the Housing Options team will be arranged who will investigate whether the occupant is in priority need under Homelessness legislation, taking into consideration the following points
- The length of time the applicant has shared the tenant's home
- The circumstances in which the applicant moved into the property
- The vulnerability and health needs of the applicant
- The housing need and the resources of the applicant
- The financial resources of the applicant
- The likely effect of any decision by EDDC not to exercise its powers on health, safety or wellbeing of the parties and of any relevant child.

2.6.3 Where a priority need is found under Homelessness legislation the Council may use its discretion to assist with moving the occupant to more suitable accommodation either within its own stock or into the private sector.

2.6.4 When a discretionary tenancy is offered and the property is not suitable for the need of the applicant the Council will assist the occupant to make an application on the Housing Register (Devon Home Choice) so they can bid on properties more suitable for their needs. During this time the Council may make a reasonable offer of accommodation.

2.6.5 For applicants who do not fall into the above category they will be given appropriate advice and assistance to find alternative accommodation. During this time the file will be handed over to our Estates Management Team who will serve notice to commence eviction proceedings to return the property into housing stock.

2.6.6 The Council will automatically seek possession of a property where it is clear that a succession applicant has:

- deliberately or recklessly concealed their occupation of a property, for example collusion in benefit fraud which is a criminal offence,
- a record of anti-social behaviour at the property,
- criminal convictions for supply of drugs, domestic abuse, violent crime, etc., at the property,
- where an applicant cannot evidence that he/she had committed himself/herself to the deceased tenant in a manner akin to marriage or civil partnership. For example, where they had been careful to claim benefits separately or had failed to declare the existence of the applicant as being in occupation as sole or principal home. (They should have made a public affirmation of their relationship, such as to display commitment to the outside world.) An example of this could be joint names on Council Tax records

2.6.7 While we consider your application for a discretionary tenancy you must pay charges for living in the property. This is known as a “use and occupation” charge, it will not be considered to be rent demanded under a formal contractual tenancy agreement. If you do not pay it or fall into arrears then you will be asked to leave the property as soon as possible. The Estate Management team will serve a trespass notice at the property. If you do not move out within a reasonable time then the Council will commence legal action to take possession of the property and will seek its legal costs against you.

2.7 Tenancy Assignments

2.7.1 ‘Assignment’ is the legal term used when a tenant passes on their secure tenancy to another eligible person or ‘assignee’. Tenants can only assign their tenancy with the approval of the Council.

2.7.2 Tenants must get approval and comply with a number of rules before an assignment is agreed:

- Tenants must be the original tenant. If they took over the tenancy because the previous tenant died or if the previous tenant succeeded their tenancy it is not likely that the tenancy will be able to be passed on again.
- The person (called ‘the assignee’) that the tenant wishes to pass their tenancy on to must be eligible. An assignee is eligible if they would be able to inherit the tenancy if the tenant died. This is the joint tenant, their husband/wife or civil partner, the tenant’s partner (including same sex partner) or certain other members of the tenant’s family. Family members that are considered eligible are:
 - Parent
 - Grandparent
 - Child
 - Grandchild

- o Brother
- o Sister
- o Uncle
- o Aunt
- o Nephew
- o Niece
- o Half brother
- o Half sister
- o Foster child
- o Both the tenant and the assignee must be living at the property and it must be their sole or principal home. Unless the assignee is a joint tenant, their husband/wife or civil partner must be able to prove they have been living with the tenant in their home for at least the past 12 months.
- o The tenancy can only be passed to one person.

2.7.3 The tenant will need to supply the following documents:

- Completed 'request for assignment of tenancy' form and form of authority/consent.
- Proof of the tenant's and the assignee's identity (eg birth certificate, current passport etc)
- Proof of the assignee's relationship with the tenant (eg birth and/or marriage certificates proving they are the tenant's partner or mother or niece etc)
- Proof that the tenant and the assignee live in the property now.
- Unless the assignee is the joint tenant, the tenant's husband/wife or civil partner then they will have to show they have been living with the tenant for 12 months by providing at least five separate and different items of official paperwork (eg benefit paperwork, bank statements, utility bills etc)

2.7.4 Upon approval of the assignment, the Council will contact both the tenant and the assignee to facilitate the formal transfer of the tenancy. On the date the tenancy is passed to the assignee, they will become liable for the rent and all other tenancy conditions from this date.

2.7.5 There are a number of reasons why the Council may not allow the tenant to pass their tenancy to another person:

- The tenant received their tenancy when the previous tenant died or if they passed in on to the tenant.
- If there is a court order against the tenant then the tenant will have lost the right to pass the tenancy on to somebody else, in addition to other rights.
- If the tenant has caused anti-social behaviour or harassment the Council may be in a position to refuse the tenant's request.
- If the tenant is currently in the process of buying the property or moving to another property.

2.7.6 The tenant will be required to clear their rent account. If they are not able to clear any arrears the Council will only allow the tenant to pass on their tenancy if they make an

agreement, acceptable to the Council, to clear their debt by instalments. Alternatively, the assignee can agree to take responsibility for the arrears.

2.7.7 If the tenant leaves the property and has no intention to return, the security of their tenancy is lost. If the tenant gives keys to somebody else, even if that person may have been entitled to take on the tenancy, the Council will consider them to be an unauthorised occupier and will take legal action to evict the person and take back possession of the property. While the person remains in the property until we receive the keys, we will charge them for its use and occupation.

2.7.8 Tenants can apply to assign their tenancy by contacting the Housing Allocations team via email housingallocations@eastdevon.gov.uk or by phone 01395 517469.

2.8 Appeals

2.8.1 Any person(s) who are dissatisfied with a decision made concerning their application for succession should discuss that matter in the first instance with the Housing Allocations Manager. If they are still dissatisfied, then the complaint will be dealt with through the Council's complaints policy.

2.8.2 The Council will always advise potential applicants for succession to seek independent legal advice.

2.9 Equality and Diversity

2.9.1 The Housing Service recognises that it operates in a community with very wide social diversity. It is committed to providing equal opportunities and valuing diversity.

2.9.2 We aim to treat all customers fairly, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.

2.9.3 Full details of the Services' approach is set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy.

2.10 Responsibility

2.10.1 The Director of Housing and Health retains the overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

2.10.2 The Housing Solutions Manager is responsible for the operational delivery of this policy and the associated policies and procedures. This includes responsibility for monitoring and reviewing, staff awareness and training, policy development and communication to tenants.

3 Policy Administration

Appendices and other relevant information

N/A

Links related Policies/Strategies, Procedures and Legislation

EDDC Tenancy Policy

EDDC Housing Allocation Policy

Devon Home Choice Policy

Data Protection

The EDDC Data Protection Policy provides further information on how we store and use personal information.

All our privacy notices can be found on the EDDC website (<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/access-to-information/data-protection/privacy-notices/>)

Policy consultation

Resident and Leaseholder Panel

Policy review

Responsible Officer: Housing Solutions Manager

Review Date: 1st April 2029

Report to: Housing Review Board

Date of Meeting 24 April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Website Re-design – Housing Pages

Report summary:

This report sets out our ongoing plans to review and improve the Housing section of the EDDC website to better meet the needs of council tenants and residents of East Devon.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

1. That members note the report

Reason for recommendation:

This report is for information only

Officer: Tim Laurence-Othen, Housing Projects Officer

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☐ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☐ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy
- ☐ Finance and Assets
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Medium Impact

One of the main drivers behind the website project is to improve the accessibility of our webpages. We will be completing an EIA with residents both at the start and end of the process as one way to measure our progress in this area.

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; N/A

Links to background information N/A

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
 - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☒ Financially secure and improving quality of services
-

Report in full

1. Background

- 1.1 We have recently carried out an exercise within the housing service to review all of our webpages to ensure that the information contained within them is accurate and reflects current practice.
- 1.2 Our communities team have also taken steps to make their pages more accessible to tenants, through better page design and use of language to ensure that the information contained within those pages is clear and easy to understand. You can see an example of this on their pages (<https://eastdevon.gov.uk/housing-and-homelessness/existing-council-tenants/community-development/>).
- 1.3 We have also created a more streamlined homepage for our section, making it easier for people to access information relevant to them, and have trained more staff to become web authors so that each team has at least one person who is able to edit webpages directly.
- 1.4 This report sets out our next steps to redesign our whole section of the EDDC website to improve accessibility and streamline our pages to make navigating our site easier and quicker for tenants and residents.
- 1.5 EIA will follow; engaging with resident groups to complete comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment as part of the consultation and engagement process.

2. Website improvement plan

- 2.1 The Housing and Homelessness webpages are split into 5 distinct areas;
 - i. Existing Council Tenants
 - ii. Homelessness
 - iii. Find a Home
 - iv. Private Sector Housing
 - v. Resettlement
- 2.2 We have decided to focus on our Existing Council Tenants section initially. We are prioritising this section as we have an obligation as a Social Landlord to make access to both information and services easily accessible to our tenants, and our website is a key tool for delivering this.

- 2.3 A project team has been set up to develop and deliver our improvement plan, and we intend to work with tenants and staff throughout the project. With that in mind, we will be inviting members of HRB to participate as part of this.
- 2.4 We are intending to completely redesign our pages with the user in mind; why are tenants visiting our website; how easy can we make it for them to get the information they need; are we providing content that our tenants want and need to see?
- 2.5 We will be looking to run a series of tests on our current website, replicating the user's journey through our website in a number of hypothetical scenarios to establish how easy it is to navigate our site to find information and whether there are any gaps/omissions. This work will not only inform how we develop the new website design, but also serve as an audit on our current site so that interim improvements can be made right away.
- 2.6 At the same time, we will be talking with tenants and frontline staff to establish what the most common reasons for accessing our website are, and what the user experience currently is for tenants so that we can ensure our improved site reflects the needs of customers.
- 2.7 As the new site develops, we will be engaging further with tenants by asking them to review initial designs, and assist us in testing the new site for useability, amongst other things. We also intend to keep HRB informed of progress, both as part of the regular meeting schedule and through direct communication updates via email.
- 2.8 We are still at the early stages of this project; this report is to inform members that this work is beginning and we will keep members informed of our progress over the coming months.

Financial implications:

There are no direct financial implication arising from this report

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications

Report to: Housing Review Board

Date of Meeting 24 April 2025

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A



Annual report of the Housing Review Board

Report summary:

To review the work of the Housing Review Board during the 2024-25 civic year.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes ☒ No ☐

Policy Framework Yes ☒ No ☐

Recommendation:

That Cabinet and Council note the work that the Housing Review Board has undertaken during the 2024-25 civic year.

Reason for recommendation:

To inform the Board, Cabinet and Council of the work of the Housing Review Board.

Officer: Alethea Thompson, Democratic Services Officer, athompson@eastdevon.gov.uk

Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- ☐ Climate Action and Emergency Response
- ☐ Coast, Country and Environment
- ☒ Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- ☒ Communications and Democracy
- ☐ Economy
- ☒ Finance and Assets
- ☐ Strategic Planning
- ☒ Sustainable Homes and Communities
- ☐ Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

Equalities impact Low Impact

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Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; .

Links to background information .

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- ☒ A supported and engaged community
 - ☐ Carbon neutrality and ecological recovery
 - ☐ Resilient economy that supports local business
 - ☐ Financially secure and improving quality of services
-

Report in full

The Housing Review Board

The remit of the Board covers:

- Advising the Cabinet on the Council's landlord activities and functions affecting tenants and leaseholders;
- Maintaining an active involvement in the on-going review of the options for the future ownership and management of Council owned homes, and to make recommendations;
- Promoting good practice and overseeing service improvements;
- Monitoring performance on core housing management activities and reporting to the Cabinet;
- Preparation of the Housing Revenue Account budget and Business Plan;
- Promoting tenant and leaseholder involvement and implementation of the Resident Involvement Strategy;
- Consulting with the Resident Involvement Monitoring Group, who liaise with tenant groups and representatives;
- Encouraging good practice in relation to equality and diversity issues, and ensuring that the needs of vulnerable tenants are satisfied;
- Advise on any other matters affecting the Council's landlord duties and responsibilities.

The Board has continued in its role of introducing service improvements and monitoring throughout the year, liaising with the Resident Involvement Monitoring Group as appropriate.

The Chair of the Housing Review Board was Councillor Sarah Chamberlain, with Councillor Simon Smith as Vice Chair. The Board welcomed two new tenant representatives onto the Board, Rosie Dale and Rachel Browne, as well as two new councillors, Councillor Jenny Brown and Councillor Aurora Bailey.

The terms of reference of the Board were amended to better align with the membership of the other scrutiny committees; membership now comprised of seven councillors, five co-opted tenants and two independent community representatives. The frequency of Board meetings was also amended from five to four per year to better align with quarterly performance information.

Words from the Chair

I wish to thank everyone in the HRB staff and members for their continued support over the last 12 months. Whilst we have had challenges we have also come a long way in our achievement, here's to another great year ahead.

Some examples from the HRB work programme are summarised below:

1. Staffing updates

The Board received regular updates on senior housing personnel. A review of the service had been undertaken to ensure the right people were in the right roles. Resources had been reviewed in line with the demands on the service to ensure that the service was adequately staffed. The number of staff across the teams had remained similar, with changes of staffing

being at higher level. Through the year there had been a reduction in staffing costs due to a number of agency staff becoming permanent.

During the year a new Director for Housing and two new Assistant Housing Directors were appointed. A housing staff structure chart outlining the key strategic roles was produced and circulated to members in January 2025.

2. Tenant recruitment to the Housing Review Board

In August the HRB considered and approved an updated tenant representative job description and application form. Officers carried out a programme of recruitment efforts, resulting in the appointment of two new tenant representatives onto the Board in 2024.

3. Housing Revenue Account financial monitoring reports

Throughout the year the Board received finance reports. The accountant's report provided the Housing Review Board with current draft financial figures for the housing revenue account (HRA) and housing capital programme for the 2024/25 financial year. Producing a HRA was a statutory function for Councils who managed and owned their housing stock and was therefore a key document for the Board to influence.

An outturn deficit for 2023/24 was reported to the Board in August 2024. It was proposed that this deficit be covered from earmarked reserves and borrowing. This position of significant increase in spend with a reduction in income had previously been highlighted to members and was of concern. Many of the issues facing EDDC's HRA were reflective of national issues and pressures.

During 2024 there was a HRA financial review, revised budget and sustainability plan put into place and monitored by the Board.

Increased flexibilities for 2024/25 and 2025/26 on Right to Buy receipts were announced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on 30 July 2024. Funding all Right to Buy acquisitions with 100% capital receipts would enable the Council to utilise this limited window of opportunity and also provide the funding required to immediately address areas of risk without impacting the previously agreed and budgeted borrowing needs.

In January 2025 the Board received the 2025/26 draft revenue and capital budgets relating to the HRA as well as outturn forecasting versus budget of the current financial year to the end of December 2024. During the 2024/25 financial year there were numerous significant budget movements within the HRA, which in effect had transferred significant sums from revenue to capital. This was the result of the underlying works included in the revised budget being scrutinised in detail within the regular collaborative financial management framework that had been established. The 2025/26 budget approved by the Board was now a balanced budget, however the HRA continued to face significant financial pressure in the immediate and longer term.

4. Draft Housing Revenue Account and Capital Budgets 2025/26

The draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2025/26 was a key document for the Board to influence. The annual HRA was underpinned and influenced by the HRA business plan, which needed to be updated with revised financial modelling once the housing condition survey work was finalised.

The draft 2025/26 budget was seen as an interim solution whilst restructured teams bedded in which could also result in the re-organisation of budgets but within the same financial envelope. All planned expenditure would be met from available income. The HRB were aware that it may be necessary to undertake a reallocation of budgets or the use of additional reserves to meet

priorities in the financial year to reflect the findings of the housing stock condition survey but at present it was considered there were sufficient resources available. The budget had been prepared to maintain council homes to a high standard, with significant sums maintained for major repairs and day to repairs. All proposed capital expenditure would be funded from the HRA. The Housing Review Board would be updated on any reallocations.

The draft budget presented to the Board in January 2025 assumed an increase in rents of 7.7%.

5. Performance dashboard and repairs and voids performance

The Board received key performance indicators and compliance dashboard at each meeting, and actions that were being taken to improve performance where targets were not being achieved were outlined. The performance reports encapsulated complaints data as well as tenant satisfaction measures. As a result of the Board's concerns regular reports and presentations outlined the Council's approach to improving performance across its housing repairs contracts and in the management of empty Council homes. This included progress made and actions being taken to further improve performance. By the end of 2024-25 the number of empty homes continued to reduce month on month and void turnaround times were also decreasing. Tenants were being surveyed quarterly rather than annually and seven of the twelve tenant satisfaction measures (TSM) had increased. Compliance was high. Income collection was excellent. Good progress was also made on reducing complaints, mainly due to staffing changes and implementing dedicated resources. Officers recognised the need to continuously improve in complaints handling and meet the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code.

Data from the stock condition survey would inform the Asset Management Strategy and the Investment Plan for the next five years, which would improve the overall decency of the Council's homes and therefore impact the Council's position on responsive repairs.

6. Complaints

In August 2024 the Board received the Housing Ombudsman self-assessment and complaints policy and procedure, which had been updated to ensure compliance with the updated code produced by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Compliance with complaint response times remained a challenge for the housing service, but this was being kept under review, with a focus on driving improvement.

7. Housing allocations policy

In August 2024 the Housing Review Board were provided with and asked to approve an updated housing allocations policy. The policy had been amended to reflect relevant changes originating from legislation, the Consumer Standard, recommendations from an Ombudsman case and a previous HRB report focussing on downsizing. Also included was confirmation of criteria for allocating sheltered accommodation.

8. Acquisitions and disposal policy

In November 2024 the Housing Review Board were asked to approve the adoption of a Strategic Acquisitions and Disposals Policy for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) property portfolio. The introduction of the policy would enable the efficient and effective management of the Council's housing stock and other assets. The policy would form part of a comprehensive asset management strategy for the HRA and was being introduced to provide a framework for any acquisitions or disposals that might be required in advance of the adoption

of an asset management strategy, to assist in the effective management of the Council's housing stock. The strategic acquisitions and disposals policy aimed to align with the broader housing strategy and Council's priorities of addressing the housing needs of residents whilst ensuring sustainable financial management of the HRA.

9. Electrical compliance audit

Following an internal (SWAP) electrical compliance audit on housing electrical safety, the Housing Review Board requested that the nine actions referred to in the audit report be provided to them and that they receive a progress report on implantation of the SWAP recommendations to be completed by 1 April 2025.

Financial implications:

All financial implications are contained within the body of the report.

Legal implications:

There are no substantive legal issues to be added to the report.