

Report to: Council



Date of Meeting 13 May 2026

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Annual report of the Housing Review Board

Report summary:

The 2025–26 year has been defined by significant strategic activity, regulatory scrutiny, and operational improvements across East Devon District Council's (EDDC) housing services. With growing demand for high-quality, affordable homes and heightened national expectations around consumer housing standards, the Housing Review Board (HRB) has continued to play a critical governance role, shaping policy, overseeing performance, and ensuring accountability to tenants and communities.

This report summarises the key activities, performance indicators, challenges, and forward plan priorities for the HRB during the 2025–26 municipal year.

Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes No

Policy Framework Yes No

Recommendation:

That Council note the work that the Housing Review Board has undertaken during the 2025-26 civic year.

Reason for recommendation:

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

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Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Assets and Economy
- Communications and Democracy
- Council, Corporate and External Engagement
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism
- Environment - Nature and Climate
- Environment - Operational
- Finance
- Place, Infrastructure and Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities

Equalities impact Low Impact

Climate change Low Impact

Risk: Low Risk; .

Links to background information [Committee details - Housing Review Board - East Devon](#)

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
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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 Housing Review Board (HRB) met regularly throughout the year attended by councillors, tenant and community representatives and key officers.

The Board provided oversight on:

- Housing performance indicators
- Financial monitoring
- Strategic housing delivery plans
- Tenant engagement and scrutiny outcomes
- Compliance with new consumer regulation standards

The Chair of the Housing Review Board was Councillor Sarah Chamberlain, with Councillor Simon Smith as Vice Chair. The Board welcomed new tenant representative Sid Forde onto the Board,

as well as new councillors, Councillor Helen Parr, Councillor Roy Collins and Councillor Mike Goodman.

1. Regulatory Environment and Compliance

In July 2025, the Regulator of Social Housing issued its first formal consumer regulatory judgement for EDDC, awarding a C2 grade, indicating that while many requirements were being met, improvement was needed in all four consumer standards.

Key findings included:

- 90% of council homes had undergone a stock condition survey within the last three years.
- 7% of the homes assessed did not meet the Decent Homes Standard, prompting the council to refresh its investment planning.
- The inspection involved direct observation of HRB meetings and engagement with tenants, officers, and portfolio holders, evidencing the Board's central role in consumer regulation.

This was presented to the HRB in July and the HRB monitored the implementation of improvement actions following this judgement throughout 2025–26.

2. Policy reviews

A number of policy reviews were conducted and presented to the HRB during the year. These included:

- Antisocial behaviour
 - Electrical safety
 - Housing repairs and Awaab's Law
 - Radon
 - Domestic abuse
 - Possession of Council homes and garages
 - Mutual exchange
 - Income management
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3. Key Performance Areas

3.1. Tenancy services

3.1a. Rent Collection

- Rent collection performance remained strong and stable, above the target of 98%, placing EDDC among the top 25% of social landlords nationally in rent collection.
- Out of £22.6 million possible rental income, only £307,000 (1.4%) remained in arrears—performing within target and placing EDDC among the top 25% of social landlords nationally in rent collection.

3.1b. Estate management & sheltered housing

- Antisocial behaviour cases reported declined during the year.

- Tenancy visits were a joint objective for the estate management and sheltered housing teams. Some improvements were required but improvement was anticipated through the successful recruitment of outstanding posts in the estate management team.
- The communities team ran 18 hubs each week, as well as a garden competition, Resident Connect Festival, Community Initiative Fun, and seven community festive hubs

3.2. Property & Assets

3.2a. Repairs

- There was continuous improvement in tenant satisfaction with time taken to complete repairs and the percentage of repairs completed within the target timescales increased.
- There was an increase in the percentage of tenants who felt their home was well maintained.
- The number of repairs calls was on a continuous downward trend.

3.2b. Compliance

- Compliance was in a strong position

3.2c. Planned works

- A programme of works was delivered in preparation for the implementation of Awaab's Law.
- The requirement for planned works increased as the service moved towards a 'whole property' approach to the delivery of planned works. This reduced repair costs and minimised disruption for customers
- Management of empty homes (voids) – empty council homes continued to be a significant and operational focus.
 - Average relet times reduced significantly.
 - Number of homes unavailable for letting dropped, reflecting operational improvements

3.3 Housing complaints

- There was a continued trend of improvement in complaint response times throughout the year.
- The approach to complaint handling was continuously reviewed using an operational action plan.

These improvements demonstrate meaningful progress in turnaround efficiency and income protection, both of which the HRB monitored closely through the year.

4. Strategic Housing Delivery

One of the most significant strategic developments in 2025–26 was the continued progress on EDDC's ambitious plan to deliver 500 new social homes within the next five years through an equal mix of building on Council owned land and acquisitions through partnerships with private developers: The purpose of the Build and Buy plan was to maximise the use of Council assets, address housing need and support the Council's strategic objective of having a supported and engaged community that had the right homes in the right places with the appropriate infrastructure. This was to be funded through the Housing Revenue Account.

This programme aligns with the district's long-term commitment to:

- Increasing availability of affordable housing
- Reducing homelessness and housing pressure
- Modernising and decarbonising the housing stock
- Strengthening community resilience

The HRB received updates on financing, site appraisal, and strategic partnerships connected with this programme.

5. Housing Strategy 2025–2030

Throughout 2025–26, the HRB was consulted on and contributed to the emerging East Devon Housing Strategy 2025–2030, which underwent public consultation ahead of final approval.

Key themes of the strategy include:

- Improving housing quality and safety
- Ensuring health-driven housing policies
- Enhancing affordability and supply
- Strengthening tenant engagement
- Tackling inequalities through better housing conditions

The HRB's role included reviewing consultation findings and shaping the strategy's final priorities.

6. Financial Overview

Housing finances remain ring-fenced, ensuring that fluctuations—such as void rent losses—do not impact wider council budgets, including planning, waste, and recycling services.

The HRB reviewed financial monitoring reports covering:

- Revenue and capital outturn positions at the end of the financial year 2024/25.
 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) balances and budget
 - Capital programme delivery
 - Planned maintenance and compliance investments
 - Revenue spending on housing operations
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7. Tenant Engagement

The HRB's work was strengthened by:

- Observations from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, referenced in the regulatory inspection.
- Continued integration of tenant feedback into housing operations and policy development.
- Public access to meetings, livestream availability, and publication of reports, agendas, and minutes via the council's website.

8. Key Challenges

The 2025–26 year presented several challenges:

- Meeting the requirements of the Decent Homes Standard across all properties
- Addressing the remaining 7% of homes needing upgrades to meet modern quality and safety expectations
- Continuing to reduce void losses in a context of ageing stock and complex refurbishment needs
- Delivering ambitious new housing development during financially constrained times
- Responding to increased regulatory scrutiny following the July 2025 inspection

9. Priorities for 2026–27

The HRB has identified the following priorities moving into the next municipal year:

Strategic Priorities

- Accelerate delivery of the 500-home social housing plan
- Finalise and begin implementing the Housing Strategy 2025–2030

Operational Priorities

- Reduce void rent losses toward benchmark levels
- Continue reducing re-let times through process improvement and investment
- Sustain high rent collection performance

Regulatory Priorities

- Deliver the improvement plan addressing the Regulator's C2 judgement
- Strengthen tenant influence and accountability mechanisms

10. Conclusion

The Housing Review Board has had a productively challenging year, balancing day-to-day operational oversight with strategic vision and the need to respond to heightened consumer regulatory expectations. Despite challenges, significant progress was made in reducing void losses, maintaining strong rent collection, and advancing housing strategy and development plans.

The Board remains committed to ensuring East Devon residents have access to safe, affordable, and high-quality homes, and will continue to work collaboratively with tenants, officers, councillors, and statutory bodies to deliver on this mission in 2026–27.

Financial implications:

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

Legal implications:

There are no legal implications.