

Report to: **Housing Review Board**

Date of Meeting: 26 March 2020

Public Document: Yes

Exemption: None

Review date for release None



Subject: **Regulator's review: Neighbourhood & Community Standard**

Purpose of report: To undertake a self-assessment of current service delivery against the Neighbourhood & Community Standard as set out within the Social Housing Regulator's Home Standard.

Recommendation: **To note the contents of the self-assessment document as set out at within the report**

Reason for recommendation: To ensure the Housing Service is meeting all regulatory requirements as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing. The Housing Review Board is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Social Housing Regulator's standards in the absence of any current proactive mandatory performance monitoring from the Regulator.

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Portfolio Holder: Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Homes and Communities

Financial implications: To be completed by Finance.

Legal implications: There are no legal implications identified at this time.

Equalities impact: Low Impact

Climate change: Low Impact

Risk: Comments
High Risk

There are high risks associated with not meeting the Regulator's Standards with the Regulator having powers under the Localism Act 2011. The Regulator's role is to investigate only when there are reasonable grounds to suspect there is actual or serious detriment to tenants as a result of a failure to meet one or more of the consumer standards. Powers can be used if there is evidence that a consumer standard has been breached and, as a result, there are reasonable grounds to suspect that:

- The failure has resulted in a serious detriment to tenants, or
- There is a significant risk that, if no action is taken by the Regulator, the failure will result in a serious detriment to the provider's tenants.

The legislation specifies that the Regulator must exercise its functions in a way that minimises interference and is proportionate, consistent, transparent and accountable.

Links to background information:

Link to [Council Plan](#): Choose Priorities and delete what not appropriate.
Outstanding Place and Environment
Outstanding Homes and Communities

Report in full

1 Introduction

1.1 The Neighbourhood & Community Standard sets out minimal requirements for what must be achieved in terms of neighbourhood management, local area co-operation and how we deal with anti-social behaviour so that we provide safe and clean areas where tenants can live.

1.2 The standard requires that we keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes we own clean and safe, that we will work in partnership with our tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so. We must co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where we own properties.

1.3 We are also required to work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where we own homes.

2 Neighbourhood management

2.1 The standard states that providers shall consult with tenants in developing a published policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes. This applies where the registered provider has a responsibility for the condition of that neighbourhood, and the policy shall include any communal areas associated with the homes.

2.2 We publish our intentions in respect of maintaining and improving neighbourhoods within which our housing is situated within the Housing Service Plan which is reviewed and updated on a yearly basis. Consultation with tenants is a part of the process behind developing the plan which takes place prior to it being brought before the Housing Review Board for approval. Examples from the current year's plan are:

- Encourage and promote the use of community orchards
- Continue to promote and address social isolation and loneliness amongst our residents
- Conduct a review of the Littleham Together project
- Deliver a strength based community development project at St Pauls in Honiton
- Deliver 30 events in partnership with HALFF charity (changing lives through food)

2.3 Examples from the Housing Service Plan 2020/21 are:

- Implement Phase 2 of the #inhoniton project by working with tenants in Honiton to identify areas we can leave wild or re-wild. Explore the potential for Nature Recovery Networks and wildlife improvement corridors on Housing land.
- SWITCH groups to make bug hotels with Countryside to encourage learning and appreciation of the natural world.

- Identify areas of Housing land that are being used by residents without permission and ensure the appropriate signage is posted at all entrances and exits to prevent future claims of easements over our land.
- Invest in the improvement of the communal areas on housing estates, including tree planting and encouraging a greater diversity of wildlife.

3 Local area co-operation

3.1 The Regulator requires that registered providers shall identify and publish the roles they are able to play within the areas where they have properties, and co-operate with local partnership arrangements and strategic housing functions of local authorities where they are able to assist them in achieving their objectives.

3.2 While this statement has clearly been written with housing associations in mind, our Housing Strategy 2016-2020 states as a priority that ‘we will work in partnership with our colleagues and other organisations’ and that ‘we will actively involve tenants in all aspects of the service following the Resident Involvement Strategy’.

3.3 The Housing Strategy also states our commitment to ‘organise events to build relationships with and earn the trust of residents living on our estates, and we do this by:

- Delivering programmes and events for young people, families, sheltered tenants and working age people across our tenanted areas
- Creating repeated opportunities for residents of estates and locks of flats to make new links with each other
- Providing opportunities for residents to meet together and with local services, to help local people help themselves,
- Work to prevent social isolation within our elderly residents such as running IT lessons I our community centres and supporting the activities of the Men’s Shed
- Working with residents to identify local community needs and facilitating activities to enable and empower them to meet their needs
- Working in partnership with support agencies and other groups to improve the health and wellbeing of all residents across the district and to ensure residents feel safe in their communities
- Working to tackle fraud of all kinds
- Developing and adopting a Mental Health Strategy for Housing so that we can better support and understand the needs of an increasing number of tenants with complex needs.

4 Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

4.1 The Regulator requires that social housing providers shall publish a policy on how they work with relevant partners to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in areas where they own properties. This information is contained within our Anti-Social Behaviour Policy which was authorised by the Housing Review Board in March 2018 and describes how we work with partners (and as members of the East Devon & Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership) to deliver a proportionate, reasonable, fair and flexible response to anti-social behaviour in the district.

4.2 More detail of what is required, and how we satisfy each requirement, is provided in the table below.

Compliance	How we achieve it
That tenants are made aware of their responsibilities and rights in relation to ASB	<p>Terms of tenancy agreement drawn to the attention of tenants at tenancy sign-up.</p> <p>Tenants Handbook given at sign-up.</p> <p>New Tenant Visit at 6 week point to check they have everything they need from us, and discuss terms of tenancy agreement.</p>

	<p>Articles in Housing Matters magazine published three times a year to tenants.</p> <p>Messages on social media.</p>
<p>Strong leadership, commitment and accountability on preventing and tackling ASB that reflects a shared understanding of responsibilities with other local agencies</p>	<p>ASB Policy reviewed regularly by Landlord Services Manager and associated process updated accordingly with Tenants & Communities Manager.</p> <p>5 dedicated Estate Management Officers covering a patch each across the district to deal with nuisance and ASB matters.</p> <p>Weekly case meetings to review cases with officers and monthly meetings with Housing Solicitor at Housing Matters Forum, attended by officers from across Housing teams.</p> <p>Joint training with officers from other corporate services on legal processes.</p> <p>Members of the Devon Fraud Forum that works together to tackle social housing fraud, sharing expertise across the county.</p> <p>Members of the East Devon & Mid Devon Community Safety Partnership and regular meetings with EDDC funded Community Safety Officer.</p>
<p>A strong focus exists on preventative measures tailored towards the needs of tenants and their families</p>	<p>Attend Youth Vulnerability/ASB Group meetings with Police and Social Services, East/Mid Devon Locality Partnership meetings which works to improve the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Devon.</p> <p>Founder members of the East Devon Mental Health Group which meets with mental health teams and GPs in the district to improve lines of communication and provide training and understanding of the needs of our customers across both services.</p> <p>5 dedicated Community Development Workers who run strength based projects designed towards the needs identified by communities themselves.</p> <p>Attendance at Local Action Groups with Police, Community Safety Officer, local stakeholders to discuss hot spots and joint interventions to prevent further ASB from occurring.</p>
<p>Prompt, appropriate and decisive action is taken to deal with ASB before it escalates, which focuses on resolving the problem having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available</p>	<p>Upon receipt of a complaint or anti-social behaviour report we will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record the complaint. • Acknowledge and respond to the complaint, initially this will usually be

	<p>by the Housing Officer for the area. If the problem is serious and/or continues after initial action has been taken the case will be referred to the Legal Services team.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview the complainant and develop an initial action plan, in consultation with the complainant where known, to investigate the problem. • Consider whether mediation is appropriate and, if so, offer this to the complainant and then to the other party involved in the problem(s). • Investigate as far as possible every complaint, even when reported anonymously, unless the case is to be referred to mediation. • Take timely, effective and consistent action to tackle the problems by utilising the range of measures available to us. This will include working with our partner agencies. <p>If mediation is considered inappropriate or is refused the action plan will usually involve assisting us by gathering further evidence of any further incidents or ongoing problems. This is likely to involve the complainant keeping a diary of further incidents which will enable us to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess objectively the level of the problem. • Assess the success of any action we take. • Build a case for further action. • Take further action. <p>Where necessary action will be taken under one of the related strategies, policies, procedures and legislation:</p> <p>Anti-social Behaviour, Crime & Policing Act 2014 Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 East Devon Safer Community Anti-social Behaviour Strategy Housing Act 1996 EDDC Domestic Abuse Policy Possession of Council Homes/Garages Policy</p>
<p>All tenants and residents can easily report ASB, are kept informed about the status of</p>	<p>ASB can be reported in person, in writing, by telephone, by email or through a third party. Our process requires the case officer to keep</p>

<p>their case where responsibility rests with the organisation and are appropriately signposted where it does not</p>	<p>the complainant informed regularly of progress on the case and actions taken, although this may not be possible where the complaint was received anonymously.</p> <p>It is important that issues are reported to us promptly so that we can offer the appropriate advice and support to people being affected from an early stage, take prompt action in dealing with the issues, solve minor issues before they become more serious, and very serious incidents can be dealt with swiftly to protect the neighbourhood from suffering as a consequence of the ASB.</p> <p>Where necessary we will use a range of legal tools such as warning letters and cautions, injunctions, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts or repossession proceedings to achieve a satisfactory outcome, and engage professional witnesses, external process servers, external specialist legal representation and barrister's opinion or representation as necessary.</p> <p>Where the behaviour, nuisance or ASB is taking place outside our areas of jurisdiction we will signpost the complainant to the correct and responsible agency accordingly.</p>
<p>Provision of support to victims and witnesses</p>	<p>We visit victims and witnesses personally and offer support required by the individual. As a minimum this will entail making sure they fully understand the process, what will happen next and what will be required of them should the case be escalated. We will keep in contact offering further support for the duration of the case which can be anything from helping provide some extra security on their property to moving out of the area completely on the rare occasion that the circumstances require it.</p>