

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board to be held in The Meeting Room, Kilkenny Court Extra Care Housing Scheme, Station Approach, Taunton on 20 August 2012 at 18:00.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 23 July 2012 (attached).
- 3 Public Question Time
- 4 Declaration of Interests. To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct. The usual declarations at meetings of the Tenant Services Management Board are set out in the attachment.
- 5 Report on Welfare Reform and Housing Benefit Changes. Report of the Corporate and Client Services Lead (attached).
Reporting Officer: Paul Harding
- 6 Report on Performance Indicators - Quarter 1 2012/13. Report of the Health and Housing Business Support Lead (attached).
Reporting Officer: Shari Hallett
- 7 Verbal Update on Halcon North Project. Report of the Housing Services Lead (verbal update).
Reporting Officer: Stephen Boland
- 8 Report on High Income Social Tenants: Pay to Stay Consultation. Report of the Housing Services Lead (attached).
Reporting Officer: Stephen Boland
- 9 Report on Housing (HRA) Capital Programme 2012/13. Report of the Housing Property Services Manager (attached).
Reporting Officer: Phil Webb
- 10 Report on Homefinder Somerset Annual Report 2011/12. Report of the Housing Services Lead (attached).
Reporting Officer: Stephen Boland

Tonya Meers
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

27 September 2012

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

If a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors or Tenant Services Management Board Members begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

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Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Corporate Support Unit on 01823 356414 or email r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk

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Tenant Services Management Board Members:-

- Mr D Etherington (Chairman)
- Mr M Edwards (Vice-Chairman)
- Councillor R Bowrah, BEM
- Councillor S Brooks
- Mrs J Bunn
- Mrs E Drage
- Mr D Galpin
- Mr I Gould
- Mrs J Hegarty
- Mr K Hellier
- Mr R Middleton
- Mrs T Urquhart

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 23rd July 2012 at 6pm in the Meeting Room, Parmin Close, Taunton.

Present: Mr Dustyn Etherington (Chairman), Mr Mark Edwards (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Enid Drage, Mrs Judith Hegarty, Mrs Jessie Bunn, Mrs Tammy Urquhart, Mr Robert Middleton, Mr Dennis Galpin, Councillor Robert Bowrah and Councillor Steve Brooks.

Officers: James Barrah (Health & Housing Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Phil Webb (Housing Manager, Property Services), Steve Esau (Property Services Manager, Maintenance), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Norah Day (Housing Estate Manager) and Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer)

Others: Councillor Jean Adkins, Councillor Fran Smith and Alan Murray (ALCHO General Manager for Contract with TDBC)

(The meeting commenced at 6.06pm)

1. Apologies

Kevin Hellier

Clare Hooper - Clare will not be standing as a board member due to family commitments. Tammy Urquhart was welcomed back to the board as a board member.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 19th June 2012 were taken as read and signed.

3. Public Question Time

The Chair of the Halcon North Tenants and Residents Association expressed the Association's comments in relation to the Draft Halcon North Resident Questionnaire and Information Sheet. The Association's comments were as follows:

- The questionnaire is too long.
- Confidentiality is an issue when the questionnaire is being completed on tenants/residents doorsteps.
- The Association would like the questionnaire to be left with the tenant/resident to be filled in privately and then returned.
- The Association would prefer if a member of the Tenant Services Management Board or Halcon North Tenants and Residents

Association accompanied TDBC staff when approaching tenants/residents to complete the questionnaire.

- Questions regarding property type, size and number of occupants are not necessary as TDBC should already have the information.
- Q 5 & 6 of the draft questionnaire needs to be re-worded to be directed at council tenants and to reflect the council's involvement with the estate.
- Would new housing be better quality? If the current properties are maintained properly, they are good quality housing.
- Doubts as to whether tenants/residents safety would be improved based on the architects 'concept' drawing which showed an increased number of smaller streets.
- Accurate wording is required for the number of council properties that will remain on the estate. Is it approximately 50 or up to 50?
- The Association requested timescales for the project be added to the proposal.
- The Association was pleased that the consequences of the proposal were clearly stated, with regards to how many council tenants could return to the area.

The Association stated they thought the documents were well written and clear and thanked officers for their hard work and commitment to involving tenants in the process.

During the discussion of this item, the Housing Portfolio Holder made the following comments:

- The Police are part of the consultation for the Halcon project to ensure a safer neighbourhood. The Police feel the current layout of Halcon is poor in terms of safety.
- All planning applications which would include Halcon would need to be seen as an improvement to receive approval.
- The previous drawing of the Halcon regeneration was an architects 'concept' and not a plan or an accurate representation of the designs for Halcon.
- It's the intention that there will be 50 council owned properties if Halcon regeneration proceeds.
- The timescales for the project would depend upon detailed planning if the project proceeds. It could be 8 and half years to do the whole area, with a different timescale for a phased approach.
- Tenants can complete and return the Halcon questionnaire in private if preferred.
- The council is not solely responsible for the condition of Halcon.

4. Declaration of Interest

The following members declared a personal interest as a council house tenants:

- Mr Dustyn Etherington

- Mr Mark Edwards
- Mrs Enid Drage
- Mrs Judith Hegarty
- Mrs Jessie Bunn
- Mrs Tammy Urquhart
- Mr Robert Middleton
- Mr Dennis Galpin
- Councillor Bowrah & Councillor Brooks both declared having family members who are council tenants.
- Councillor Brooks also declared he is a County Councillor.

The board requested that the existing declarations of interests are automatically recorded in the minutes at each TSMB meeting.

5. Gas & Other Heating Quarterly Monitoring Report

Alan Murray from ALCHO presented a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) report for the 1st quarter, including April, May and June 2012, and asked the board to suggest a format for future KPI reports.

The report showed that only 1 property was not covered by a current CP12 during the quarter, which was later obtained through legal action.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- The board congratulated ALCHO for 100% of voids servicing completed within the 14 day timescale.
- Does the 1st/2nd/3rd attempt include other things than refused access such as needing to revisit once a part has been obtained for a repair? -
 - *Yes, but ALCHO try to have stocked vans to reduce the need for revisits due to requiring parts.*
- What if tenants are on holiday, at work or in hospital? Is there appropriate notice before formal letters are received?
 - *ALCHO confirmed they start the process of renewing certificates 2 months before they expire. The board were also briefly reminded that the process for gaining access involves telephone calls, estate management and written communication.*
 - *ALCHO confirmed they are investigating evening and Saturday working as well as a new system which involves calling the next tenant once the previous survey is complete to provide a more specific time for an appointment. It was also confirmed that the gas supply can be 'capped' at properties where the tenant is for example in a long stay in hospital until a survey and new CP12 can be issued.*

The Property Services Manager, Maintenance advised the board that ALCHO are not responsible for the contract for communal heating and the contract for communal heating is being revised.

Resolved: to note the report and agree to receive quarterly updates in the current format.

6. Development and Social Housing Development Fund

The Social Housing Development Fund is a fund identified in the new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012-42. The Health & Housing Manager stated that a clear policy for building new properties, site selection and affordable rents etc is required.

Discussions have been held with partner organisations to learn skills and discuss purchasing some documents for a development manual. All of the partner organisations visited would be keen to be involved in joint schemes if the opportunity arose. The organisations visited include:

- Knightstone
- Magna
- Yarlinton
- Somer

The Health & Housing Manager and Housing Services Lead have visited approximately 40 potential sites for development. 5 have now been shortlisted and are going through a number of checks regarding ownership and servicing issues.

It was indicated that the broad plan for the 5 sites is to go forward with 1 being used for a Passivhaus development and 4 for traditional build. To reach this stage the sites would need to go through a notification process and discussions held with partners regarding viability.

The end of the process would be a clear indication of what can be achieved on each of the 5 sites for further consultation.

Contact has been made with Exeter City Council who have recently completed Passivhaus developments. The Health & Housing Manger has also visited the Home & Communities Agency office in Bristol and explained TDBC's intention to begin building.

It was explained that structural surveys and viability assessments are currently being undertaken at a number of TDBC garage sites. The Health & Housing Manager welcomed suggestions for potential development site from the board.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- Would new properties built be TDBC or Housing Association ownership?
 - *For small developments TDBC would own the new build properties, the housing associations would just be paid for their assistance and skills.*
 - *For large developments TDBC would need to be flexible over the % of ownership between council and housing association.*
- Would tenants be able to purchase the new build properties through their Right to Buy?
 - *Yes, tenants will still have the RTB for new properties but if they are purchased within 15 years of being built, full market value will be paid by the tenant.*
- Could TDBC focus on building sheltered housing that is exempt from the RTB?
 - *No, there are limited sites that would be suitable for sheltered housing.*
- Can TDBC use the Social Housing Development Fund for extending properties?
 - *The Portfolio Holder's preference is that the development fund be used to increase the number of properties.*
- In the broad plan, why would TDBC build more traditional build than Passivhaus?
 - *The numbers of traditional build or Passivhaus are not set but all new development would need to value for money and cost effective.*
- Would the Homes & Communities Agency provide funding for TDBC building plans?
 - *All of the HCA funding is allocated up to 2015, but TDBC would attempt to receive funding in the future.*
- Will TDBC develop its own skills for development?
 - *Yes, the Health & Housing Manager is visiting Somerset College on the 27th July 2012 to discuss skill development.*

Resolved: The board noted the update on development and the Social Housing Development Fund.

7. Updating of HRA Business Plan 2012-2042

Financial risks are raised with the debt associated with the HRA self financing and there is a need to establish clear governance around the business plan. An annual review will occur around budget setting each year.

A project group has been established with James Barrah as Project Lead and Rosie Reed as Project Manager to start review the business plan, the TSMB will be kept updated on the progress. Due to changes since April, the project group have the following issues to review:

- Componentisation
- Better interest rates
- Asset management database update
- Cost of IT provision
- Welfare Reform – higher debt provision
- RTB changes
- Downsizing/Transfer Removal Grants
- Council Tax provision for void properties
- Increasing Disabled Facilities Grants & Aids and Adaptations budgets
- Review introductory and flexible tenancies
- Social Housing Development Fund
- Tenants' Welcome Pack
- Environmental improvements – including additional parking on estates
- Sustainable energy fund
- Related assets (works to non dwellings)
- Heating replacement

During the discussion the Housing Services Lead explained the work currently been undertaken to look at underoccupying and to help those who want to downsize.

Resolved: The board noted the comments on the business plan review and requested a copy of the key issues.

8. Halcon North Project Questionnaire Update

Internal and external surveys of the properties at Halcon have been completed with the data in a raw state which is currently being collated to form a report. A final decision in the questionnaire will be made once all feedback is received, with the questionnaire sessions commencing a week after the letter is sent to Halcon residents.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- When will the report with the survey data be presented?
– *A specific date is not available at present but the report will be presented to Councillors in the Autumn.*
- Should door knocking with the questionnaire be completed by an independent organisation?
– *The board's opinion was divided on this issue but a compromise was agreed with tenant representatives who don't live in Halcon accompanying staff.*

Resolved: A tenant representative will be invited to accompany staff when completing the Halcon questionnaires.

9. Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference Feedback

Four Tenant Services Management Board members attended the 2012 TPAS conference in Birmingham and provided feedback on the conference. From the three reports presented the review of the conference was as follows:

- Travel to the conference was much easier by car and preferred by all to the train.
- The conference was well run and the facilities were of the highest standard.
- The opening session from TPAS was well done and highlighted TPAS future aims and objectives well.
- All delegates found their workshops useful and learnt from the content.
- The board members that attended felt proud of TDBC Housing Services and what it achieves.
- The conference is extremely useful for networking and meeting other tenants/housing professionals.

The board provided conference material to the Tenant Empowerment Team for staff and other board members to read.

Resolved: The board noted the feedback from the board members that attended the TPAS conference.

10. Annual Report to Tenants 2011/2012

The Tenant Empowerment Manager explained that it's time to produce the annual report to tenants for Housing Services achievements between April 2011 to March 2012.

The annual report is to be sent to tenants at the end of October/start of November and events to consult with tenants on the content of the annual report will be scheduled for the summer of 2012.

Feedback from tenants on the previous annual report indicated that 88% felt the calendar format was useful and 85% wanted to see the calendar format used for future annual reports.

The board supported the calendar format for this year's reports and felt that the previous cash/other incentive for tenants providing feedback for annual reports was useful and should be used again.

Resolved: The annual report for achievements in 2011-2012 should be in calendar format.

11. AOB

- Changes to Homefinder Somerset Allocations Policy

– The Housing Services Lead is attending a Homefinder Somerset Monitoring Board meeting on the 26th July 2012 and will provide feedback to the TSMB. It was confirmed that no changes will be made to the policy without consulting the TSMB.

- The board requested a future report on the contractor's progress of bathroom refurbishments.

- The Housing Manager, Property Services will provide a position statement at a future TSMB meeting.

- The board requested a report on current contracts.

- The Housing Manager, Property Services confirmed a list is currently being compiled that highlights what contracts are being done with timescales and any ongoing issues.

(The meeting ended at 8.25pm)



Welfare Reform & Housing Benefit Changes

Tenant Services Management Board

20 August 2012

Paul Harding
Corporate & Client Services Lead, TDBC

Purpose

This briefing is intended to raise awareness of the key changes coming from the Government's welfare reform agenda and how these will impact on our tenants and the HRA.

The presentation will take approx 25-30 mins with time at the end for questions.

Overview of Changes

2012 & 2013

- Increasing Non-dependant deductions

April 2013 changes

- Council Tax Benefit Abolished
- Maximum Benefit Cap
- Social Sector size criteria changes
- Empty Property Charges
- Council Tax Changes

October 2013 and beyond

- Universal Credit



Non Dependent Deductions

A Non-dependant is someone who normally lives with the Housing Benefit Claimant such as an adult son, daughter, relative or friend. (Boarders and sub tenants are not non-dependants).

10 year freeze on NDD reversed over 3 yrs - April 2011 - 2013

- Lowest HB NDD rates rise from £7.40 to £13.40
- Highest HB NDD rates rise from £47 to £90

Example : John is 44 years old and on Income Support. He receives £71pw Income. His rent is £70 pw. If he lives alone he will pay no rent. His working son Mark aged 20 comes to live with him. Due to Marks' earnings (£238 gross pw) a non-dependant deduction of £59.05 is applied to John's HB, meaning he now has to pay £59.05pw rent himself.

Non Dependent Deductions - Implications

- Higher incidence of adult children being asked to leave the family home (David Cameron recently suggested withdrawing HB from under 25's so if they are not working how do they pay for accommodation?)
- Increased demand for independent housing
- Higher risk and incidence of increasing rent arrears – reluctance for private landlords to accept benefit claimants, financial difficulties for social providers = poss rise in homelessness

Council Tax Support

The government has announced that it is reducing spending on Council Tax Support by 10 per cent and localising it, saving £490 million a year from 2013-14.

Currently Council Tax support is delivered through the national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme.

From 1st April 2013 CTB is being abolished. Instead Council's like TDBC have been told they must design a scheme to help those on low incomes pay their Council Tax.

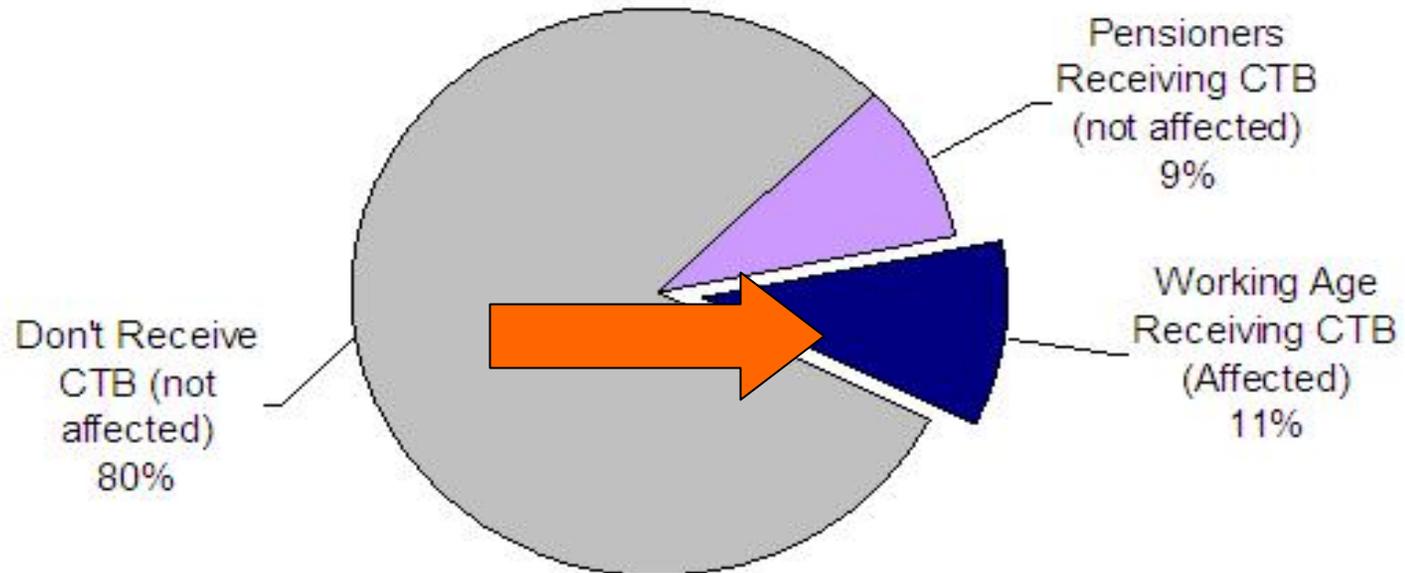
- No longer demand led (councils will be given fixed grant)
- In England, pensioners protected under national scheme,
- Estimated cuts of 20% in the level of support for working age claimants if the funding reduction is passed on.
- Many people who have never had to pay Ctax may have to start.

The final scheme must be adopted by the council before 31st January 2013 for introduction in April 2013.

Council Tax Support

Who's affected by abolition of CTB (TDBC)?

% of Council Tax Payers Affected by this Change



Council Tax Support

Our approach to designing the scheme



- Existing software suppliers will be unable to introduce hundreds of widely different schemes for Councils across the Country by 1st April 2013.
- They are proposing to use the current CTB software as the basis for calculating the Council Tax Support Scheme, but make several parameters within the current system customisable.
- We therefore propose to base the local support for working age citizens on the broad principles of the present CTB scheme.
- This methodology is known to the claimant, known to the staff administering the scheme, contains a number of equitable features which seem sensible to retain and carries the least risk in terms of software development.
- TDBC currently working with the other Somerset Districts to develop a Somerset reduction Scheme.

Council Tax Benefit Expenditure in England, 1997-08 to 2010-11

Year	Council Tax Benefit Expenditure*	Percentage change
	£m	%
1997-98	2,014	-
1998-99	2,046	2%
1999-00	2,103	3%
2000-01	2,151	2%
2001-02	2,250	5%
2002-03	2,384	6%
2003-04	2,746	15%
2004-05	3,040	11%
2005-06	3,230	6%
2006-07	3,385	5%
2007-08	3,471	3%
2008-09	3,672	6%
2009-10	4,095	12%
2010-11	4,299	5%

Source: DWP Expenditure Tables (outturn) 1997-08 to 2010-11

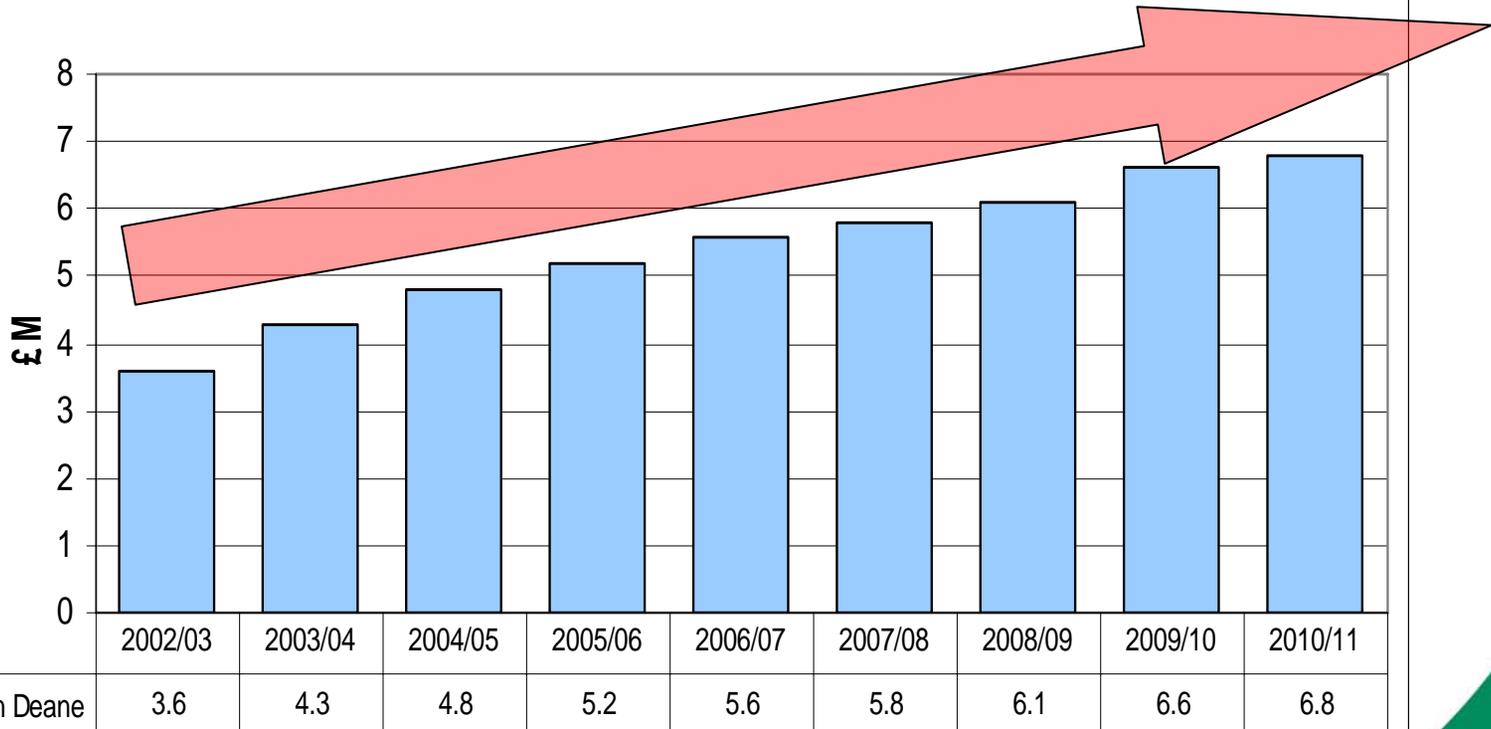
*figures rounded to the nearest thousand

Council Tax Benefit

Expenditure Trends

CTB Expenditure (£m) by Year - TDBC only

Source: http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/asd4/la_expenditure.xls



Maximum Benefit Cap



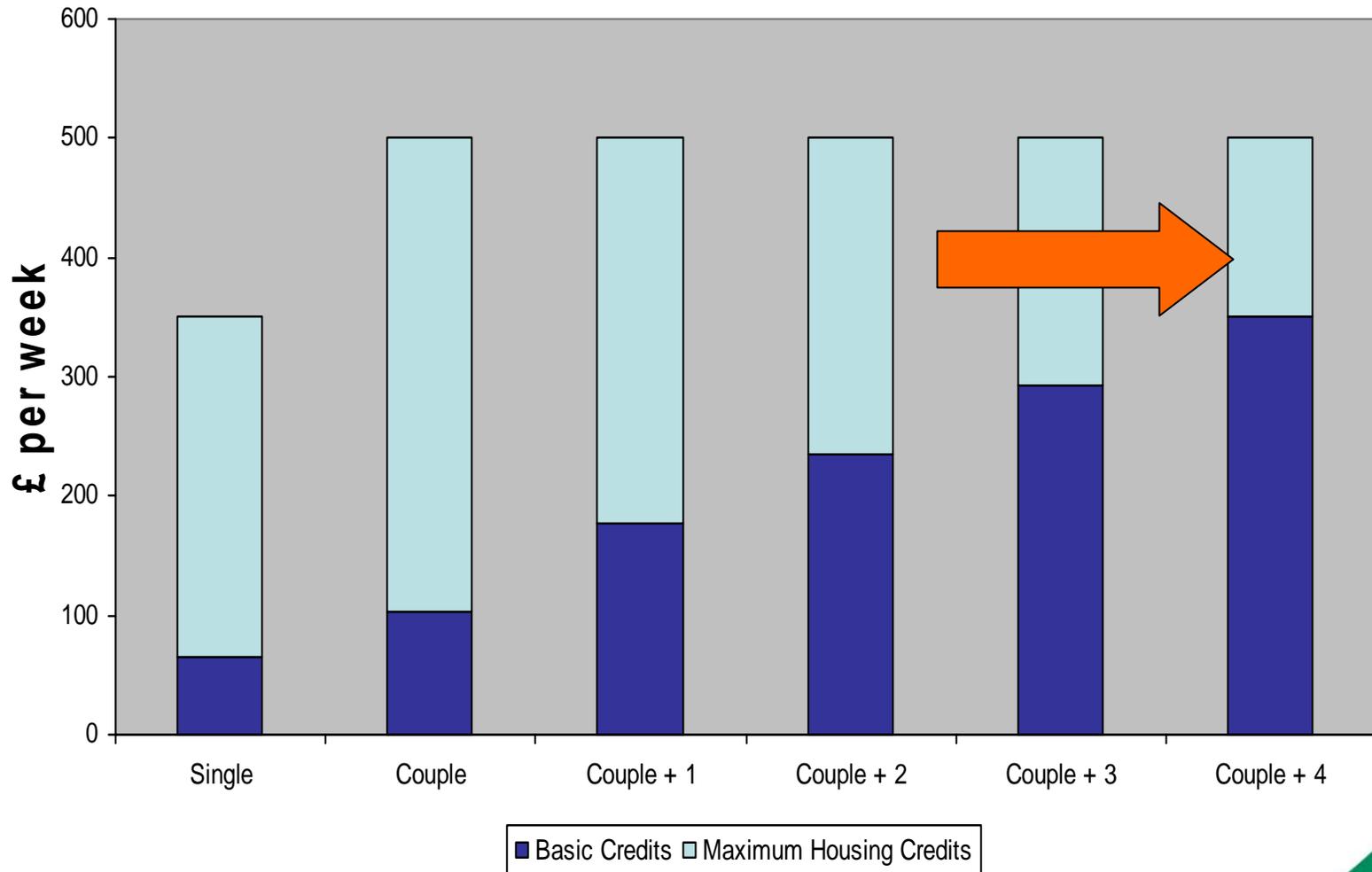
“No household will receive more in benefits than the average earnings of working households after tax”

- Only applies to out of work households
- Doesn't apply to disabled or pensioners
- Based on national average earnings.
 - £350/week for singles £500/week for couples and lone parents (current figs)

Who will the cap affect?

- Large families entitled to a significant amount of CTC / families in high rental areas
- Families with 4/5 children likely to see £12 / £40 per week shortfall applied to housing costs element of UC
- In TDBC we have 15 households in Council Accom who will be affected...so it isn't just about people living in mansions!

Impact of Maximum Benefit Cap



Social Sector Size Criteria Changes



- Affects working age households from 1 April 2013 (new and existing claimants)
- Size criteria not applied to people in receipt of Pension Credit who ironically are most likely to have spare bedrooms.
- Reduces max housing benefit entitlement by 14% for 1 bed under occupation and 25% for 2 or more.
- For Taunton Deane our Council house rents are between £70.76 and £102.33 for a 3 bed property. Therefore reduction would be **£9.91 - £17.69pw** for 1 bed under occupancy and **£14.33 - £25.58pw** for 2 bed under-occupancy.
- Assuming the tenant is single and aged over 25 on JSA they would have an income of £71.00 from which they will have to find this additional £9.91 to £25.58.
- DWP criteria per bedroom:
 - Every adult couple
 - Any other adult aged 16 or over
 - Any two children same sex under 16
 - Any two children regardless of sex under 10
 - Any other child aged under 16

Note - DWP do not allow for fostering or staying access

Council Tax reforms which might affect tenants and / or HRA

- Right to Pay Ctax by 12 instalments to be introduced and publicised, from 1st April 2013 although, default will however be 10, as now;
- Allow Councils to charge up to 100% Council Tax on properties undergoing major repair. Currently up to 12 months exemption. Impact on HRA (although very slight).
- Abolish the 12 months exemption relating to Empty dwellings under major repair but allow Council's to instead offer a discount of between 0% and 100% of the Ctax; Abolish the 6 month exemption for unoccupied and unfurnished properties. Instead allow Council's to offer a discount of between 0% and 100% of the Ctax during this period. Will impact HRA.

Universal Credit

– Main Features



- National Scheme administered by DWP
- Replaces: IS, WTC, JSA, HB, Child Tax Credit, ESA etc.
- Paid to working age claimants – monthly in arrears (inc housing support)
- Ambition - 80% plus of claims to be made online
- New work-related requirements / commitments / tough sanctions
- Success dependent on getting 300,000+ claimants back to work
- October 2013 new claims / change of circs will go onto UC
- All claims for housing support will move to UC by end 2017.
- Role of LA's ?

UC - Implications

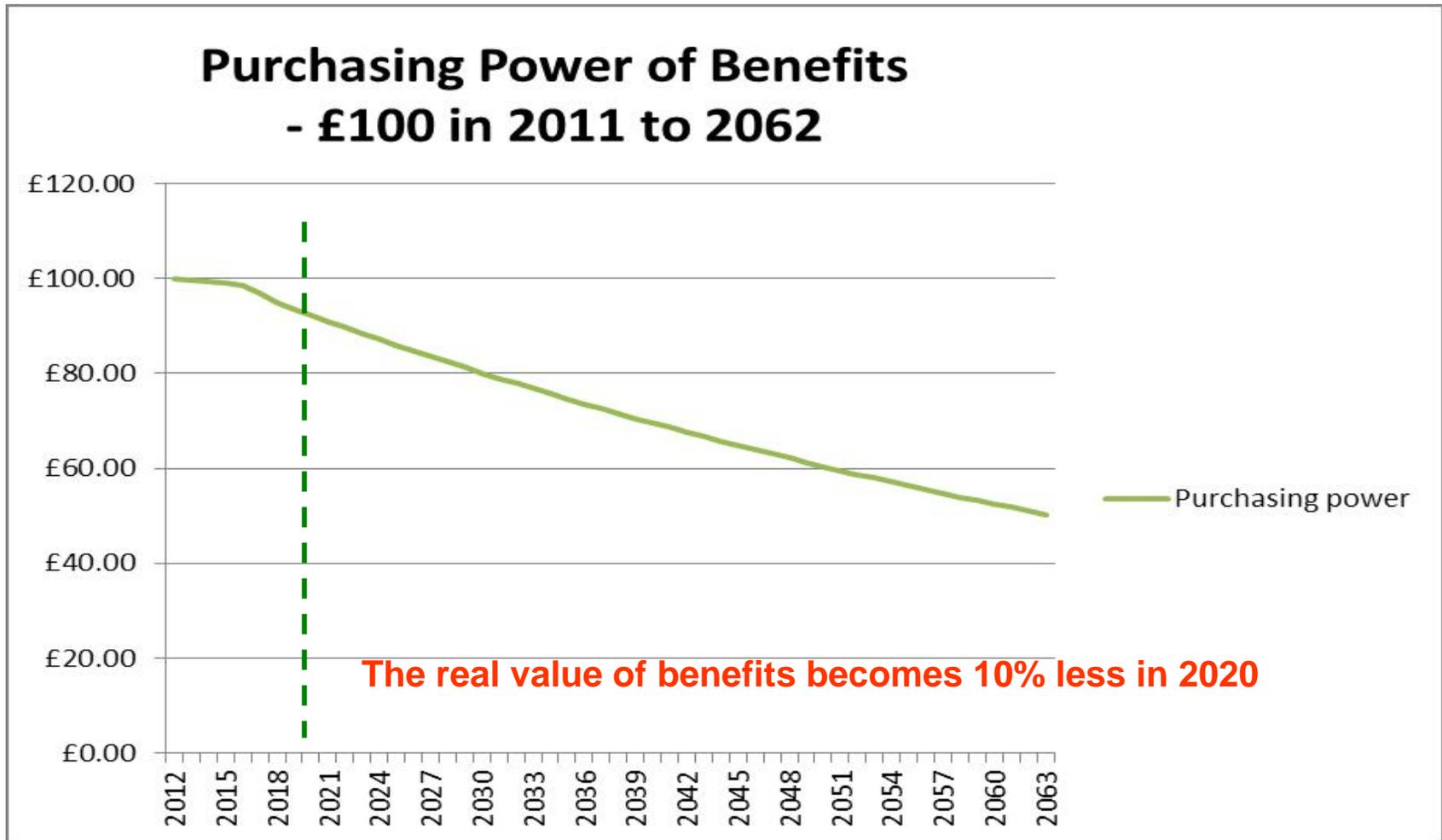
- Universal credit paid direct to claimant – major potential for rent arrears
- Direct payments will affect lending ability for registered providers
- 'Affordable rent' regime not considered, (higher rent from static income)
- People receiving multiple benefits may not have their rent covered!
- Self-Employed assumed to earn at least minimum wage
- Shared care, only one parent eligible to receive the child element of Universal Credit
- Incentive to work? Where are the jobs?
- A medical assessment for Disability Living Allowance from 2013 for new and existing claimants.
- For Councils – where we use benefits qualifying criteria for access to services (eg home care, free school meals , sports facilities) these criteria need to be reviewed for 2013/14.

Other



- Child Benefit withdrawn from higher rate taxpayers
- Tax Credits childcare costs reduced from 80 per cent to 70per cent
- Working Tax Credit hours change for couples
- Social Housing Landlords will be able to set rents between social and market levels for new tenants. They will also be able to offer fixed-term tenancies rather than agreements for life
- New rules on who can access waiting lists
- Treatment of mixed aged couples.
- Benefits increased by CPI rather than RPI.

The Erosion of Benefits Through CPI



Difference between RPI and CPI given by the OBR up to 2017 and then OBR longer term estimate of 1.4% after that.

So what does all this mean?



Tenants paying out more to the Council through

- Size criteria (less help meeting their rent costs)
- Increased non-dep deductions (less help meeting their rent costs)
- Benefit Cap
- Having to pay more for Council Tax (as a result of the ending of the demand lead CTB scheme)

Rent harder to collect / higher arrears through

- More rent due from more tenants (higher transaction costs)
- Housing assistance paid direct to tenant instead of to rent account!
- Welfare payments made monthly and not in line with rent cycle

Higher costs to the HRA through

- possible ending of void Ctax exemption

Lack of joined up thinking perhaps.....

- Working age tenants being penalised for under occupying their homes through size criteria but also being penalised through increased non-dependant deductions where they are making full use of their home!

Questions?



Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 20th August 2012

Performance Indicators Quarter 1 2012/13

Report of the Health and Housing Business Support Lead

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Adkins)

1. Executive Summary

Performance indicators play an important role in measuring how well Housing Services is performing, highlighting areas of strength and weakness and allowing services to be monitored and tailored to achieve their targets and objectives of providing the best possible service to tenants.

Performance indicators are reported on a quarterly basis and the report for Quarter 1 (1st April 2012 to 30th June 2012) of 2012/13 is attached (Appendix A).

2. Background

Performance indicators measure the performance of Housing Services in specific areas and provide important information on the key services TDBC provides. They allow TDBC to continually improve the services it delivers to tenants. The indicators cover operational issues in greater detail which highlight trends and assist in decision making and service development.

Both Councillors and officers use performance indicators in the form of regular reports to monitor performance. It is the intention of this report to propose that the use and publication of the reports is widened to those who use the services, i.e. tenants.

Members of the TSMB will note that the report (Appendix A) also contains information comparing TDBC's performance against other social landlords such as local authorities, Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations. Where no comparison information is available the columns have been deliberately marked "N/A".

3. Format of Performance Indicator Reports

A report is produced for each quarter (i.e. 3 months) of the financial year. Appendix A relates to Quarter 1 of 2012/13 - 1st April 2011 to 30th June 2011. The format of the report is:

- Column 1 – Measure – details what specific area of service is being monitored and what target has been set for the year.
- Column 2 – Measure Alert – highlights whether performance is on target, may not achieve target or will not achieve target. A system of “traffic lights” is used to denote the status against target, with green used to show the service area is meeting its target and red used to show it is off target. Members will note that a key to the Measure Alert is included at the top of the report.
- Column 3 – Actual – shows how the service has actually performed for the quarter.
- Columns 4 to 9 compare TDBC’s performance against other social landlords. This is commonly referred to as “benchmarking” and is undertaken by using the Housemark system. This system is used by over 231 social landlords and is a recognised scheme for housing throughout the country.
- Column 4 – Quartile - shows which quartile TDBC’s performance ranks against all councils nationally (who are registered to Housemark). Quartile 1 being the performance of the top (best performing) 25% of organisations.
- Column 5 – No. in sample – details the number of councils being compared nationally.
- Column 6 – TDBC rank – shows were TDBC rank in the number of organisations in the sample.
- Column 7 – Quartile - shows which quartile TDBC’s performance ranks against all housing providers nationally (who are registered to Housemark). Quartile 1 being the performance of the top (best performing) 25% of organisations.
- Column 8 – No. in sample – details the number of housing providers being compared nationally.
- Column 9 - TDBC rank – shows were TDBC rank in the number of organisations in the sample.

4. Proposed Timescales

Performance indicators are reported on a quarterly basis, i.e. every three months. Appendix A covers the periods April to June 2012. The remaining reports for this financial year will therefore relate to, July to September, October to December and January to March. It is proposed that the reports are presented to the TSMB on a quarterly basis as soon as the information has been collected (next report proposed for TSMB on 19th November).

5. Publication of Performance Indicators

As mentioned in Section 2 of this report it is proposed that it is made far easier for tenants to see how their landlord is performing. It is therefore suggested that performance indicators are published in a variety of methods including:

- Tenant newsletter
- TDBC website
- Posters in TDBC's offices, especially in reception areas and satellite offices.

6. Finance Comments

The cost of implementing the reporting of quarterly performance indicators can be met within our existing resources of staff and budget.

7. Legal Comments

There are no legal implications

8. Links to Corporate Aims

Although there are no specific links performance indicators, the indicators themselves support the corporate priorities.

9. Environmental Implications

There are no specific environmental implications.

10. Community Safety Implications

There are no specific community safety implications

11. Equalities Impact

Officers will be available to assist any tenants that may need specific help to fully access the quarterly reports and where required officers will visit vulnerable tenants to explain the performance indicators and then identify any specific needs.

Additionally information may be required in different formats such as:

- Large Font
- Audio Version
- Different Languages

12. Risk Management.

Risk management is not appropriate for this issue.

13. Partnership Implications

There are no partnership implications.

14. Recommendations

The Tenant Services Management Board is asked to:

- Note the report
- Comment on the specific targets and actual performance contained in Appendix A
- Comment on format of the quarterly performance report
- Agree on timescales for TSMB to receive further reports

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Health & Housing Services Scorecard Q1 2012/13

Housing HRA

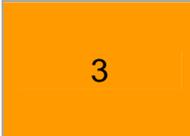
KEY TO ALERTS

	Planned actions are on course		Some uncertainty in meeting planned actions		Planned actions are off course
	Performance Indicators are on target		Some concern that performance indicators may not achieve target		Performance indicators will not achieve target

KEY TO QUARTILES

	1 st Quartile		2 nd Quartile
	3 rd Quartile		4 th Quartile

1. MANAGING FINANCES

MEASURE	MEASURE ALERT	ACTUAL	COMPARISON WITH ALL COUNCILS NATIONALLY			COMPARISON WITH ALL HOUSING PROVIDERS NATIONALLY		
			QUARTILE	NO. IN SAMPLE	TDBC RANK	QUARTILE	NO. IN SAMPLE	TDBC RANK
1. Housing Revenue Account Overall expenditure against budget		Forecast (£433,552) Variance £4,378	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2. Income Team Former tenant arrears as a % of annual rent debit Target = 5%		0.48%		24	4		130	14
3. Income Team Rent written off as a % of annual rent roll Target = 0.10%		0.04%		23	11		127	66
4. Income Team % of rent lost through dwellings being vacant Target = 2%		0.87%		27	11		144	56

5. Estate Management Team Rent collected as a % of rent owed including arrears b/f Target = 98.3%		94.84% This is a cumulative target we are striving to improve through the financial year	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6. Estate Management Team Rent collected as a % of rent owed excluding arrears b/f Target = 98.3%		100.54%	2	26	8	1	125	28

2. SERVICE DELIVERY – SATISFACTION

MEASURE	MEASURE ALERT	ACTUAL	COMPARISON WITH ALL COUNCILS NATIONALLY			COMPARISON WITH ALL HOUSING PROVIDERS NATIONALLY		
			QUARTILE	NO. IN SAMPLE	TDBC RANK	QUARTILE	NO. IN SAMPLE	TDBC RANK
1. Housing Services Tenants' satisfaction with landlord services overall Target = Top quartile performance status survey <i>Result from 2011 Status Survey, next survey planned for 2013</i> <i>Annual Housemark Indicator</i>		Top quartile performance achieved – 90%	1 (as at 2011/12)	21	1	2 (as at 2011/12)	188	61
2. Housing Services % of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account Target = Top quartile performance status survey <i>Result from 2011 Status Survey, next survey planned for 2013</i> <i>Annual Housemark Indicator</i>		General Needs – 73% Supported Housing – 78% Combined – 74%	1 (as at 2011/12)	18	3	2 (as at 2011/12)	179	88
3. Lettings Team % of tenants who have reported anti-social behaviour in the past 12 months, rating the help and advice given as excellent or good Target = 66%		75%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4. Lettings Team % of new tenants satisfied with the allocations and letting process Target = 86%		89%	3	7	5	4	48	38

5. Lettings Team % of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of property Target = 86%		89%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6. Repairs & Maintenance % of tenants satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service Target = 98%		97.5% We anticipate being back on target next quarter	1 (as at 2011/12)	20	1	1 (as at 2011/12)	222	13
7. Supported Housing % of tenants satisfied with the Sheltered Housing service Target = 86%		89% achieved in Status Survey April 2011 (Status Survey is completed every two years, next due April 2013)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
8. Supported Housing % of tenants satisfied with the Extra Care Housing service Target = 86%		This is collected annually in Sept/Oct, the 2011 satisfaction figure is 91.5%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
9. Satisfaction of Gas Servicing % of tenants satisfied with the Gas Service procedure Target = 90%		92.9%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

3. SERVICE DELIVERY – DECENT HOMES

MEASURE	MEASURE ALERT	ACTUAL	COMPARISON WITH ALL COUNCILS NATIONALLY			COMPARISON WITH ALL HOUSING PROVIDERS NATIONALLY		
			QUARTILE	NO. IN SAMPLE	TDBC RANK	QUARTILE	NO. IN SAMPLE	TDBC RANK
1. Asset Management % of homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes standard Target = 0.5%		0.02% 1 property out of 5966 is non decent (void property)	2 (as at 2011/12)	43	20	3 (as at 2011/12)	290	178
2. Asset Management Average SAP (energy efficiency) rating of housing stock Target = 70		66.08 Discussions with energy consultants to reassess the SAP ratings for low SAP value properties. Works are planned to improve energy performance of properties.	3 (as at 2011/12)	36	24	4 (as at 2011/12)	233	197
3. Asset Management % of dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate Target = 100%		99.98% 1 property without a valid gas certificate	2 (as at 2011/12)	48	15	2 (as at 2011/12)	326	131

4. SERVICE DELIVERY – MANAGE HOUSING STOCK AND MAINTENANCE SERVICE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE RESIDENTS

MEASURE	MEASURE ALERT	ACTUAL	COMPARISON WITH ALL COUNCILS NATIONALLY			COMPARISON WITH ALL HOUSING PROVIDERS NATIONALLY		
			QUARTILE	NO. IN SAMPLE	TDBC RANK	QUARTILE	NO. IN SAMPLE	TDBC RANK
1. Lettings Team % of closed ASB cases that were resolved Target = 66%		80%	4	19	17	4	48	38
2. Lettings Team Average re-let time (calendar days) Target = 21 days		21.92 This is slightly off target but represents an improvement on the last quarter performance by 1.59 days and an improvement on Q1 2011/12 which was 31.76 days	1	24	4	2	134	46
3. Lettings Team % of dwellings that are vacant but unavailable to let (this includes dwellings undergoing or awaiting major works, held for decant, illegally occupied or awaiting demolition) Target = 0.5%		0.05%	1	21	3	1	121	16
4. Lettings Team % of dwellings that are vacant and available to let Target = 0.5%		0.75% This is explained by the change in the way that sheltered properties are advertised, it is also a result of the number of refusals for sheltered accom. where the applicant cannot afford	3	21	15	3	123	76

		support charges. A further factor is the number of properties that are having to be re-advertised as a result of the previous statement.						
5. Repairs & Maintenance % of properties re-let that meet letable standard Target = 100%		Under development						
6. Lettings Team % of properties accepted on first offer Target = 98%		70.87% This represents a reduction of 7%, this is explained by the change in the way that sheltered properties are advertised, it is also a result of the number of refusals for sheltered accom. where the applicant cannot afford support charges. A further factor is the number of properties that are having to be re-advertised as a result of the previous statement.	2	12	6	2	79	30
7. Housing Services % of tenants on whom the landlord holds diversity information Target = 58%		50.38% This is a significant improvement given our base position 12 months or ago was very, very low. We continue to recognise the importance of tenant profiling information in developing our services	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

		and have plans in place over the next 12 months that will enable the service to capture a higher percentage of such data.						
8. Repairs & Maintenance Proportion of expenditure on emergency and urgent repairs to HRA dwellings compared to non-urgent repairs expenditure to HRA dwellings. Performance criteria = lowest Target = 15%		Under development						
9. Repairs & Maintenance % of repairs completed right first time Target = 96%		99.02%	Annual Housemark Indicator Available from Q4 12/13	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
10. Repairs & Maintenance Completion of repairs within priority target times: Emergency (within 24 hours) Target =98%		93.9% Work underway to address performance	4	23	20	4	175	160
11. Repairs & Maintenance Completion of repairs within priority target times: Urgent (within 3 working days) Target =94%		91.65% Work underway to address performance	4	23	21	4	162	149
12. Repairs & Maintenance Completion of repairs within priority target times: Non Urgent (up to 28 days) Target =85%		89.06%	4	23	20	4	168	159
13. Community Clean ups Number of events held, broken down by area	Alert not required	Six events: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaffinch Close • Blackdown Road 	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leycroft Road • Howard Road • Smithy • Outer Circle 						
14. Tonnage removed From clean ups, broken down by event	Alert not required	Awaiting information from Viridor	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
15. Events supported Number of events/activities put on or supported by the team, broken down by area	Alert not required	North Taunton: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Easter events • Jubilee Garden opened East Taunton: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Easter events • Jubilee event • Breakfast Club • Football Tournament 	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 20th August 2012

High Income Social Tenants: Pay to Stay – Department for Communities and Local Government Consultation

Report of Stephen Boland – Housing Services Lead

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

1.0 Executive Summary

This report describes key government proposals that social landlords should be able to require tenants in social rented housing on high incomes to pay higher rents.

Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) is invited to comment on the key proposals which will be included in the final response to the consultation that ends on 12th September 2012.

2.0 Introduction

On 13th June 2012 the Department for Communities and Local Government announced proposals that social landlords should be able to require tenants in social rented housing on high incomes to pay higher rents. The key consultation issues included:

- The income threshold above which high income tenants might be asked to pay a higher rent;
- What the higher level rent should be;
- Disclosure of income by tenants; and
- Whether the policy should be voluntary or compulsory for social landlords.

The full consultation document is attached as Appendix 1. The document can also be obtained by visiting the Communities and Local Government website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/paytostayconsultation>

3.0 Tenant Services Management Board response to the key proposals

At the 20th August 2012 TSMB meeting there will be an opportunity for Tenant Services Management Board members to share and agree their views on the proposals which will be incorporated into the final response to be made to government by Taunton Deane Borough Council.

4.0 Recommendation

It is recommended the Tenant Services Management Board:

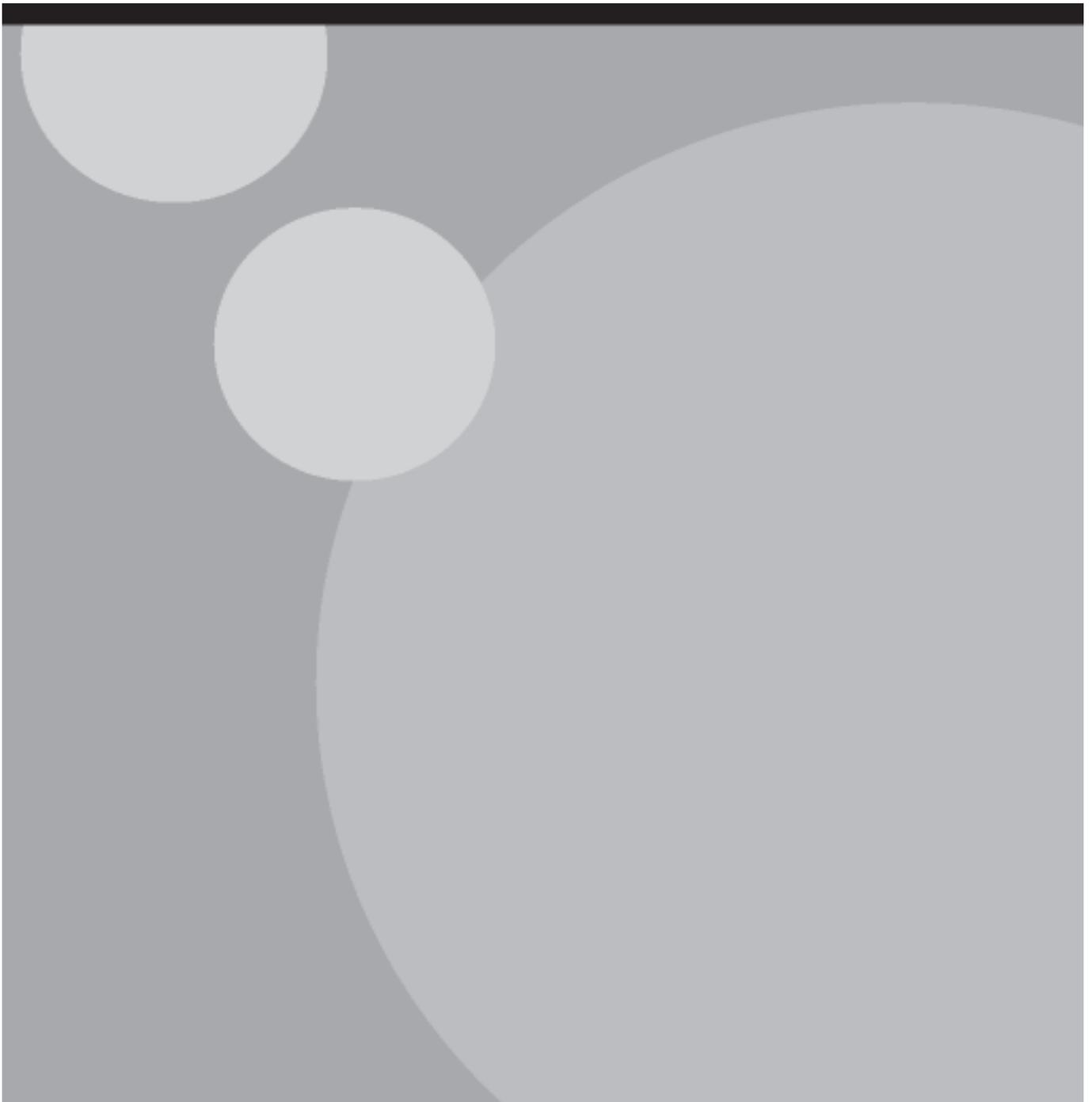
- Receive and note this report; and
- Consider and agree their final response to the consultation issued by the Department of Communities and Local Government – Higher Income Social Tenants – Pay to Stay.

Contact: Stephen Boland Housing Services Lead
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High Income Social Tenants

Pay to Stay Consultation paper





High Income Social Tenants

Pay to Stay Consultation paper

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This document/publication is also available on our website at www.communities.gov.uk

Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at:

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Introduction

1. In times of economic hardship it is more important than ever that social housing helps the most vulnerable in society. In November, the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister launched our radical new strategy for housing, *Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*¹. This includes major reforms to social housing that will give landlords far greater freedom to target their resources at those who need it for as long as they need it. In particular, our tenure reforms will allow social landlords to offer lifetime security where it is needed but also to set shorter terms for new tenants where that makes more sense. And reforms to social housing allocations will give councils the freedom to manage their own waiting list and allow them to give more priority to long-standing local residents.
2. In addition, our new statutory guidance on social housing allocations will make clear that we expect councils to avoid providing social housing to people who already own a property. We are also changing the law to ensure that former service men and women with urgent housing needs receive high priority on waiting lists, and to ensure that those who move from base to base do not lose their qualification rights.
3. However these reforms will not fully address the problem of precious social housing resources being occupied by high income households. The Government is committed to take action to tackle this problem and give social landlords the tools to target support at those who need it. Following on from the commitment made in the Housing Strategy² to tackle the problem of households earning high incomes who continue to occupy subsidised housing, we now propose to introduce a 'Pay to Stay' scheme whereby landlords could charge higher rents to tenants on high incomes who want to stay in their social homes.
4. This is an issue of principle and fairness. The Government believes that it is right that landlords should be able to require high income social households to pay a higher rent. This consultation invites views on how this policy could be delivered. The Government plans to bring forward more detailed proposals following this consultation.

¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2033676.pdf>

² 'Laying the Foundations, A Housing Strategy for England' p29, November 2011

The consultation process and how to respond

Topic of this consultation:	This consultation invites views on the proposal that social landlords should be able to require tenants in social rented housing on high incomes to pay higher rents.
Scope of this consultation:	The consultation invites views on how this proposal might be delivered. Specific delivery issues include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The income threshold above which high income tenants might be asked to pay a higher rent • What the higher level of rent should be • Disclosure of income by tenants • Whether the policy should be voluntary or compulsory for social landlords
Geographical scope:	England.

Basic information

To:	This consultation is aimed primarily at local authorities, registered providers of social housing, tenants and representative organisations. The Department will of course consider any consultation responses received from other interested bodies and individuals.
Body/bodies responsible for the consultation:	The Housing Growth and Affordable Housing Directorate in the Department for Communities and Local Government is responsible for this consultation.
Duration:	The consultation starts on 13 June 2012 and finishes on 12 September 2012.
Enquiries:	For further information on this consultation document please email [paytostay@communities.gsi.gov.uk] or telephone 0303 444 3724.
How to respond:	Consultation responses should be submitted by email to: [paytostay@communities.gsi.gov.uk] Or by post to: Pay to Stay Consultation Department for Communities and Local Government [Zone 1/D1]

	Eland House Bressenden Place London SW1E 5DU
After the consultation:	The Department for Communities and Local Government will publish a summary of the responses to the consultation.
Compliance with the code of practice on consultation:	This consultation document and consultation process have been planned to adhere to the Government code of practice on consultation. The period of consultation will be 12 weeks.

The case for reform

5. It is estimated that in social rented housing in England there are between 1,000 and 6,000 households where the Household Reference Person and partner have a combined income over £100,000 per annum; and 12,000 to 34,000 earning £60,000 or more.

Income threshold	% of top earners ³	Estimate of number of households	
		Low	High
£100,000	5%	1000	6000
£80,000	5%	2000	11000
£60,000	10%	12000	34000

6. Figures suggest that on average across England the economic subsidy provided by sub-market rents on social housing is worth an estimated £3,600 per annum. These subsidies are significant and the Government is concerned that they are unfair when provided to those on high incomes, both to taxpayers and to those in housing need on waiting lists. Social housing should go to those who genuinely need and deserve it the most. The Government believes that there is no case for very high earners to be benefiting from significant annual housing subsidies, even taking account of the case in favour of a mix of incomes in social housing. As the table above shows, our proposals target only the very richest, so any reduction in income mix is likely to be very minor. In a comparable move, the Government has already taken action to restore fairness by limiting Housing Benefit so that claimants are faced with the same types of housing choices as ordinary working families. This consultation considers options for tackling the situation so that tenants earning high incomes can be asked to pay more to stay in their homes.

Question 1: *Do you agree with the principle that very high earners living in social housing should pay higher than social rents?*

Delivering reform

7. The Government has taken forward a package of social housing reforms to provide greater freedom for social landlords to target support at those who most need it. In common with this approach, and with regard to rents, we therefore wish to focus on options that enable landlords to charge a higher rent to high-income households, by which we mean a single tenant earning at or above the agreed threshold or the two highest earning individuals whose joint income is at or above that threshold.

³ http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/income_distribution/3-1table-feb2012.pdf

8. While we wish to formulate a common policy for all social housing, the differing nature of the local authority and housing association sectors will necessitate some differences in approach.
9. For **local authorities**, central Government's current social rent policy establishes local authority rent increases according to a formula linked to the property rather than to the individual tenant's income. The Government's rental policy statements have the status of non-statutory guidance. Authorities have the flexibility to set rents at another level, or using another basis, if that appears to them more appropriate to local circumstances.
10. Nevertheless, many local authorities follow rent policy. To bring this new policy into effect, we would therefore issue supplementary guidance, setting out a framework for local authorities to charge certain Higher Income Social Tenants a higher rent. We would also revise published policy statements on rents in the local authority sector to include this change. (A draft illustration of a revised statement of local authority social rent policy is at [Annex A](#).) This approach would allow councils to choose to implement the policy according to local circumstances. Subject to feedback on this consultation, we propose to issue the supplementary guidance as soon as possible after the end of the consultation period. This would immediately give local authorities more support if they wanted to increase rents for high-income households.
11. **Private registered providers of social housing** are subject to regulatory controls on the level of rent they may charge and maximum annual rent increases. In order to allow housing associations to charge higher rents to high income households which meet the criteria specified above, the Secretary of State would need to direct the Social Housing Regulator to amend its standard on rent. The Secretary of State's direction and the resulting standard would be subject to statutory consultation. The detail of how this will work is more complex, and we are seeking your views on these issues in the section below.

Question 2: *Do you agree that this approach would be the best way of delivering additional flexibility for local authorities and private registered providers?*

Question 3: *What are your views on the guidance at Annex A?*

Question 4: *Do you think that landlords should be required to charge high income households a higher rent?*

12. There are a range of practical and, potentially, legal barriers that would need to be overcome in order to implement the Government's final proposals. These include decisions on the income threshold, the need for landlords to know about the income of the tenant, the level of rent that should be charged and the impact of income changes.

13. The key issues are set out below and your views are invited on them.

The income threshold

14. In setting the income threshold, the Government wants to strike the right balance without penalising aspiration or creating work disincentives. However, as has been shown in the debate around Welfare Reform, people believe it is wrong for hard working taxpayers to subsidise those who are easily able to support themselves. That is why we believe it is fair to seek views on possible options for an income threshold, and wish to hear views on the potential to set the threshold at £60,000, £80,000 or £100,000.
15. We consider that it is most likely that £80,000 or £100,000 would be the level which would best avoid perverse incentives. However, we believe there could also be a case for setting the threshold at £60,000, which would do more to achieve our aims in terms of fairness and is in line with the current maximum household income of £60,000 (or £74,000 in London) for access to Government funded affordable home ownership schemes, such as First Buy, in most parts of the country. Setting the threshold at £60,000 would therefore be consistent with the level below which people trying to get onto the housing ladder would be eligible to receive Government support to access housing.
16. We also invite comments on whether there is a case for setting the threshold below £60,000. The proposed policy could create disincentives to work, if people reduce hours worked in order to fall under a threshold, and thus avoid the higher rent levels we propose. There is increased risk the lower the threshold particularly where two tenants' incomes are taken account of.
17. Any incentive to reduce work, together with increased rents, could lead to higher benefit costs. The Government's policy is to maintain downward pressure on the welfare bill. We are keen, therefore, in setting the threshold to find a balance so the tipping point is not reached where avoiding triggering the threshold becomes a significant consideration.
18. While we remain open to views about whether there is a sound case for lowering the income threshold below £60,000, low income tenants are excluded from these proposals and the Government is committed to protecting the rents of those on low incomes and the vulnerable.

Question 5: *Do you consider that £60,000, £80,000 or £100,000 would be an appropriate threshold, avoiding the impacts referred to above?*

Question 6: *Could levels below £60,000 be considered without disadvantaging other households on low incomes or the vulnerable? Where should the line be drawn?*

Question 7: *At what level do you think the income threshold could start impacting on welfare or affecting work incentives?*

Question 8: *Should the policy apply only to those whose names are on the tenancy agreement?*

Question 9: *Should income other than pay be included in the threshold amount, such as Lottery windfalls or inheritances?*

Question 10: *Should certain groups be exempted from higher rents, such as disabled people, or pensioners? If so, please set out your reasoning.*

How high should rents for high income social tenants be set?

19. There is a very strong case to allow rents to be increased to full market rents for high income households. However, in the housing association sector, it may be problematic to immediately introduce market rents in view of the charitable status and objectives of providers; although, equally, charitable providers have a clear interest in avoiding giving support to those who do not need it. In this context we propose to look at these issues further and to encourage landlords to increase rents to 80% of market rents in the interim, with the aim of introducing full market rents for higher income tenants as soon as possible.

Question 11: *Do you agree that landlords should be able to charge 80% of market rates to high income households which meet the proposed criteria, that is an individual or two individuals with a high joint income?*

Question 12: *Would allowing landlords to charge full market rents be appropriate in your area in your view?*

Question 13: *Are there any practical barriers to charging full market rents?*

Question 14: *If the power to charge a higher rent was optional for landlords, would you be likely to make use of it?*

Disclosure of income

20. Social sector landlords currently have no powers to require tenants to disclose income for the purpose of setting their rents.
21. Linking rents to income would be breaking new ground. Our present view is that primary legislation will be required to enable landlords to access tenant income data if this policy is to be fully effective.
22. We intend to explore what such legislation might look like, with the aim of introducing it at a suitable opportunity. In the interim, we intend to

explore how we could support landlords by providing them with greater flexibility to charge higher rents to high income households; for example, through supplementary guidance for local authority landlords.

23. We also intend to fully explore timing issues including the “income” year to which the new rent should be applied. There may be arguments for introducing the higher rent based on either the previous year’s income, or the forthcoming year. Your views are invited on the period to which the new rent should apply.

Question 15: *Your views are invited on how we could best enable landlords to set higher rents to high income households in advance of any legislation.*

Question 16: *We would also welcome your views on the practicalities of requiring income disclosure; and specifically, what kind of mechanism would be needed and how this would best work.*

Question 17: *Do you already hold or have access to information about tenants’ income levels that could be used to support a “pay to stay” approach?*

Question 18: *Would you be likely to make use of any new statutory powers to require tenants to disclose their income?*

Question 19: *Should the income year be the tax year, the calendar year or a rolling year? Do you see difficulties with adjusting a tenant’s rent based on a previous year?*

Applying the policy to existing and new tenants

24. Existing local authority tenants are largely secure tenants under the Housing Act 1985, whose terms and conditions of tenure are set out in their tenancy agreements, which would have been agreed prior to the introduction of the policy proposed here. Local authority landlords are able to renegotiate tenancy agreements and they generally set rent levels each year, but not generally in relation to tenants’ incomes. Existing social tenants will have legitimate expectations of existing arrangements continuing, and would need to be given adequate notice of any proposed changes in rent levels. The high incomes of the affected tenants and their corresponding capacity to make alternative arrangements if needed would clearly be a major factor in determining the amount of notice that would be sufficient in particular cases.
25. The vast majority of tenants of private registered providers have assured tenancies under the Housing Act 1988. Usually rent increases are a matter for the terms of the tenancy. Such tenancies will often give landlords discretion to vary rents, subject to giving tenants adequate notice. However, if rent provisions in tenancies make promises as to the level of future increases, private registered providers would have to renegotiate those tenancies in order to charge existing tenants a higher

rent.

26. The position for new tenants should be more straightforward. There are reforms in the Localism Act to provide that local choice for social landlords and new tenancies moving forward. For new tenants with fixed term tenancies it may be possible at review time for agreement to be reached on a different level of rent suited to the tenant's circumstances. It may also be easier to make further adjustments where those circumstances changed.

Question 20: *What practical issues do you see in charging existing high income tenants a higher rent?*

Moves and income changes

27. A new system would need to be sufficiently sensitive to respond to changed circumstances quickly, for instance where a tenant's income was abruptly reduced due to a redundancy, a failed business, or where the tenant moved out; or conversely where a new partner moved in and income significantly increased.

Question 21: *How quickly could local authority and housing association rent processes respond to changed tenant circumstances? What issues might arise? For instance would there be a need to seek regular updates from tenants on their circumstances? Would this just be in relation to known high income social tenants, or all tenants?*

Tenant protections

28. Landlords may need to have a review/appeal mechanism so that tenants can challenge decisions to put them onto a higher rent. This would not need to be a statutory procedure, but could be introduced as an internal arrangement for each social landlord. We envisage that landlords will be able to make use of their existing internal and external complaint procedures for this purpose.

Question 22: *Is an internal appeal or complaint process the best way of allowing tenants to appeal against decisions to put them onto a higher rent? Are there existing appeal or complaint mechanisms within your structures that could be adapted for this purpose?*

Question 23: *Should there be a uniform set of rules across the social housing sector on how any appeals should be handled? If so, who should make these rules?*

Administrative implications and costs

29. Charging rents for some tenants on a different basis than the majority could create additional administrative work for the landlord, such as

collecting information on incomes, and assessing tenants to adjust rents where their circumstances change. However, the new policy also provides the opportunity for additional income generation and for ensuring that the valuable housing stock is being used effectively.

30. As noted above, the maximum amount by which private registered providers can raise social rents is controlled by regulation. We could amend these controls, via a direction to the Social Housing Regulator, in order to give providers the option to charge higher rents to high income households. This change could create additional costs for the Regulator. It would be up to the Regulator to decide how to monitor landlords' decisions to charge higher rents and how to monitor and enforce compliance with the amended regulatory standard.

Question 24: *What is your view of the administrative costs that might be incurred in implementing these proposals? What opportunities do you see for minimising additional costs?*

Question 25: *Do you have any comments about the regulatory implications of giving private registered providers these additional flexibilities?*

Use of increased rental income

31. Increasing rents for high income social tenants would lead to additional income for landlords. The extent of this additional income would depend on the income threshold, definition of income and to what level rents were increased. We welcome views on how the additional income generated should be used.

Question 26: *How should additional income generated by this policy be used?*

Treatment of historic grant

32. Where a provider converts a grant-funded social rent property to a higher rent, some or all of the grant might need to be recovered by the Homes and Communities Agency or reinvested by the provider in new affordable housing supply. There are already mechanisms in place to ensure that developing providers will reinvest the grant in providing new affordable housing, but non-developers may need to pay grant back to the Homes and Communities Agency. This could become more complicated if the property subsequently reverts back to social rent (e.g. if the high income household moves on or its circumstances change).

Question 27: *What are the practical implications of requiring grant reinvestment / recovery when a property moves to a higher rent (or reverts back to social rent)?*

Other issues

Question 28: *Are there any other issues you wish to raise?*

Annex A: Draft Supplementary Guidance to Local Authorities in Setting Their Social Rents

Charging a Reasonable Rent for High Income Social Tenants

This guidance supplements the social rent policy statement issued in December 2000, which set out the rent restructuring policy, and approach for social rents. This guidance should be read alongside the existing guidance.

The Government believes that it is right in principle that landlords should be able to charge high-income households a higher rent to stay in their social homes. The consultation paper 'High Income Social Tenants: Pay to Stay' set out our intention to give councils and housing associations new powers to charge social tenants a higher rent where the household income of a sole occupier, or the two highest earning individuals whose joint income is at or above a threshold of [figure to be determined. See 'Income Threshold' section of consultation document]. We are committed to helping social landlords take action to tackle the problem of scarce social housing resources being occupied by high-income households by giving them the tools to charge a 'Pay to Stay' rent.

Local authorities have existing statutory powers, under section 24 of the Housing Act 1985, to charge reasonable rents. Each local authority would need to consider whether charging a high income-earning tenant a higher rent was appropriate, but the Government considers the existing statutory powers should allow for Higher Income Social Tenants rents.

The limits we would expect to see applied to Higher Income Social Tenants Rents would be full market rent, with an increase in rent to 80% of market rents in the interim, plus annual increases of no more than the level of Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation plus 0.5%. However, the Government is proposing to move to enable these rents to be set at market rates as soon as possible.

At present there is no requirement for tenants to disclose their incomes to their social landlords. We have said we may consider bringing in primary legislation in due course to make income disclosure a requirement.

Authorities should consider whether in local circumstances they want to use this new flexibility to charge tenants in the high income category a higher rent.

Under this policy the key elements are:-

- The new rents should apply to tenants with incomes of [figure to be determined. See 'Income threshold' section of consultation document];

- The policy applies to an individual tenant earning [figure to be determined. See 'Income Threshold' section of consultation document], or the two highest earners in the household with a joint income of [figure to be determined. See 'Income Threshold' section of consultation document];
- Tenants on low incomes should continue to be protected from unreasonable rent increases;
- For now the rent increase should be a maximum of 80% of local market rates, but with full market rents for high earning social tenants as soon as possible.

Where a tenant ceases to be subject to a Higher Income Social Tenant rent, and remains in the property, we would expect that tenant to revert to the social rent that would have been charged on the property if a Higher Income Social Tenant rent had not been applied.

Housing (HRA) Capital Programme 2012/13

Item	Code	Budget	Units planned.	Units completed to date	Comments
Disabled Facilities Grant		£300,000	84	13	Annual budget to assist funding available for larger scale adaptation works for residents applied for through Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership.
Aids and Adaptations		£200,000	350	104	Annual budget available for smaller scale home aids and adaptations undertaken primarily by the DLO.
Soundproofing	800035	£20,000	1-2 properties p/a reactive.	0	Work will be undertaken if problems arise during the course of the year and occupancy is as such that works can practically be completed - ideally ground floor and first floor flats together.
DDA (Meeting Halls)	800036	£20,000			Work to upgrade meeting halls for Disability Discrimination Act compliance. Double programme as no work completed last year. Currently Heathfield Drive DDA and Fire Safety works.
Asbestos	800037	£50,000			Only essential removal or handling of asbestos becoming necessary due to other works. Responsive at voids or prior to other works.
Tenants Improvements Allowance	800038	£5,000	Reactive		Statutory entitlement for compensation for Tenants' improvements to properties when they vacate. Contingency required to cover statutory payments to tenants.
Door Entry Systems	800033	£75,000	25 schemes		Priority is on recommendation from the Estates Officers, usually on the grounds of items such as ASB. Historically priority was for sheltered schemes; now no longer the case. Total to fit is approx 300, 124 have been fitted so far. Increase programme to 25 schemes. Concentrating on Fire Safety issues this year.
IT Development	800032	£15,000			Annual amount set for system/hardware improvements or the like.
Windows	800025	£415,000	166	60	Our target is that all properties will be double glazed by Year End 12/13. 166 properties remaining @ approx £2500 per property. Could increase programme say another 100 units at 2.5K each = 250K
Roofing	800024	£960,000	120		The anticipated need from the data we have is for 1800 roofs over 5 years; this will be accelerated in later years This year 120 roofs @ approx £8000 Programme extended to Stoke St Mary.
Bathrooms	800023	£740,000	200	50	Continuing with bathroom refurbishment as we still have some more than 30 yrs old. Working with one contractors this year rather than the current three, to deliver 4 properties per week x 50 weeks = 200 @ approx £3700 each = £740,000. (The figure of £3700 includes for other ancillary works done at the same time).
Doors: Front Back	800027	£120,000	500		We have a priority list of 75 front doors that are all aluminium framed and glazed. We would aim to complete these in 2012/13 as they have energy conservation and security issues. Back doors on most of these properties are not such an issue as the properties also have an inner door. We have also allowed for replacement of 225 2XG (Ply panel) front doors. Price £400 per door. Programme increased to 500 units.
Heating	800026	£1,200,000	200		For this new heating installation contract we would target those properties with no heating first, then those with solid fuel as the main heat source and then properties of 3 and 4 bed size with only electric heating. Some of these properties are likely to need an individual gas storage facility 200 properties @ approx £6000
Fire Safety Works in Communal Areas	800028	£150,000		£90000 committed so far this year on 12 blocks.	This work is that which was identified as the higher priority within the TDBC Action Plan following the fire in the communal area to a block of flats in Dorchester Road. The Action Plan has been accepted by the Fire Service as a way forward. We aim to initially concentrate on the blocks similar to those in Dorchester Road but will roll the work out to other blocks as necessary at a later date.
Cladding	800029	£500,000			This is a separate stand-alone contract to combine external wall cladding and new double glazing to help combat continuing damp-related problems.
Fascias and Soffits	800030	£505,000	400		This is effectively backlog work that we have previously decided not to do within our external maintenance contracts as working at height for a small part of the works was inordinately expensive. We now have a need to move this work forward.
Air Source Heat Pumps	800031	£225,000	39	39	This work is the completion of installations at Polkesfield and Newberry's Patch where we successfully completed last year's pilot schemes. Additional addresses being identified. Stoke St Mary (15x5K=75K) Lillesdon (7x8K=56K) Need to confirm more detail.
Total		£5,500,000			

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 20th August 2012

Homefinder Somerset Annual Report – 2011/2012

Report of Stephen Boland – Housing Services Lead

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

1.0 Executive Summary

Homefinder Somerset is the Choice Based Lettings partnership between the five local housing authorities and all the major housing associations within Somerset.

Homefinder Somerset has been operating for a number of years and an annual report provides all partner landlords and other agencies with information on the progress and outcomes achieved during financial year 2011/12.

Tenant Services Management Board is asked to note this report.

2.0 Introduction and background information

The Homefinder Somerset Annual Report – 2011/2012 (see Appendix 1) summarises the outcomes of Homefinder Somerset in the financial year 2011/12.

The report contains:

- Statistics about the Housing Register in Somerset and the lettings made by social landlords over the course of the year;
- Background information about Homefinder Somerset and how the scheme works (Appendix 1 part A);
- Information about the Monitoring Board and its membership is (Appendix 1 part B); and
- A summary of the main changes introduced after a review during 2010/11 (Appendix 1 part C)

As well as monitoring the outcomes of choice based lettings, the Monitoring Board looks closely at the time it takes local authorities to process housing applications and the size of any backlogs in each Council. It does this because delays in processing can affect a household's housing choices. This year all five local

authorities were virtually 100% up to date with processing both manual and on line forms at the end of March 2012.

The sweeping changes and choices introduced by the coalition government since 2010, including the introduction of flexible tenancies and the ability to charge affordable rents, coupled with more proposed changes under the Government's welfare reform plans, means that the Homefinder scheme has continued to evolve and will need to do so for some time to come. We will continue to review the changes and adapt our approach to meet local needs where necessary, so that Homefinder Somerset continues to achieve the best outcomes for the 19,000 applicants currently seeking good quality, affordable homes in Somerset.

3.0 Recommendation

Tenant Services Management Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

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Appendix 1



homefindersomerset.co.uk

Annual Activity Summary Report

2011/12



Magna West Somerset tenants who found their brand new home in Wheddon Cross, West Somerset through HomefinderSomerset in 2011. Wheddon Cross is in Exmoor National Park.



homefindersomerset.co.uk

Your home, your choice

1.0 Statistical Report 2011/12

1.1 Registered Applicants

1.11 Under Homefinder Somerset there is one common register which can be broken down by local authority area with applicants assigned, for administrative purposes, to the most appropriate local authority area.

1.12 The table below shows the number of registered applicant households by local authority area at the end of the last three financial years. Applicant numbers have decreased by 15% in the last year. The decrease is mainly a result of the administering local authorities carrying out the annual renewal process every month on the anniversary of each application. This exercise invariably leads to applicants not returning forms and being cancelled from the system. The benefit of carrying out the exercise on a rolling programme is that it spreads the workload for local authorities and evens out the impact on the statistics.

Local Authority	31.3.12	31.3.11	31.3.10
Mendip District Council	3580	3517	3036
Sedgemoor District Council	4698	4752	3940
South Somerset District Council	5220	6996	5146
Taunton Deane Borough Council	3758	5221	4853
West Somerset Council	1361	1481	1741
Total of Local Authority	18617	21967	18716

Table 1 Number of Active Registered Applicants on 31.03.12

1.2 Percentage of Registered Applicants in Each Band

1.21 The chart below shows the percentage of registered applicant households in each band by local housing authority area at 31st March 2012. Across Somerset, only six households were in the emergency band on 31st March 2012 and so the small percentage does not register on this chart. 8% of households were in gold band (varying from 7.5% in West Somerset to 8% in South Somerset which had the highest number of approved homeless cases). 47% were in silver band and 45% were in bronze (varying from 39% in Mendip to 55% in West Somerset). Whilst the percentage in the bronze band has remained relatively stable between 2011 and 2012, the number of households in the gold band has increased by just over 1% while numbers of households in the silver band have decreased by just less than 1%. This could reflect an increase in higher housing needs, it could be a result of the higher percentage of silver band applicants that were housed this year or it could be an outcome of the policy changes.

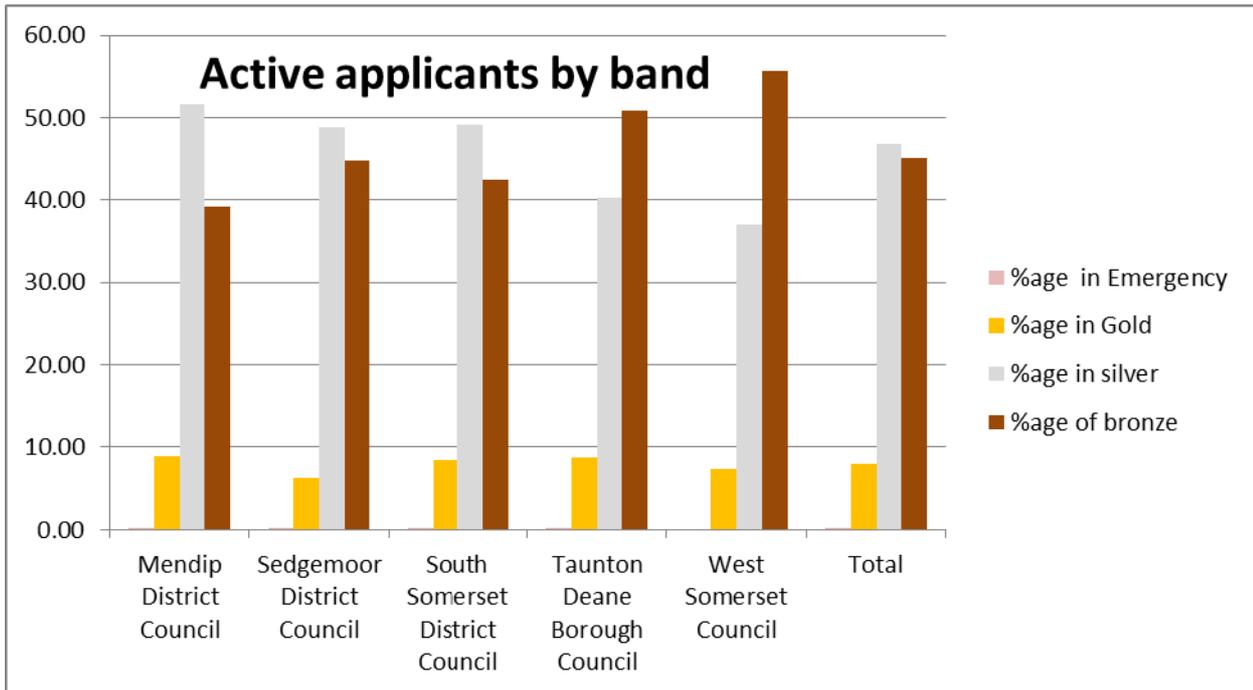


Table 2 Percentage of registered applicant households in each band by local housing authority area on 31.03.12

1.3 Ethnic Makeup of Registered Applicant Households

1.31 The table below provides details of applicants, by local authority, according to their ethnic origin on 31st March 2012. Excluding those applicants for whom we do not have ethnic details, 93.6% of applicants were white British and 5.08% were of black or minority ethnic origin. Later in this report there is a table showing accepted offers (lettings) by ethnic origin and this shows that a slightly higher percentage (5.31%) of lettings were made to applicants of a black or minority ethnic origin.

	Mendip District Council	Sedgemoor District Council	South Somerset District Council	Taunton Deane Borough Council	West Somerset Council	Total
Not completed	0.06	0.11	0.00	0.24	0.00	0.09
Any other group	0.34	0.23	0.40	0.24	0.44	0.32
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	0.03	0.15	0.12	0.13	0.07	0.11
Asian or Asian British Chinese	0.14	0.02	0.10	0.08	0.07	0.08
Asian or Asian British Indian	0.11	0.00	0.02	0.05	0.07	0.04
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
Black or Black British African	0.08	0.08	0.12	0.21	0.00	0.11
Black or Black British Caribbean	0.08	0.08	0.08	0.11	0.22	0.10
Mixed White & Asian	0.20	0.21	0.12	0.21	0.22	0.18
Mixed White & Black African	0.20	0.13	0.27	0.16	0.00	0.18
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	0.28	0.28	0.25	0.16	0.22	0.24
Other Arab	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.05	0.00	0.02
Other Asian or Asian British background	0.08	0.06	0.15	0.19	0.15	0.12
Other Black or Black British background	0.06	0.00	0.04	0.08	0.00	0.04
Other Ethnic Group	0.17	0.17	0.29	0.24	0.15	0.21
Other Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller	0.20	0.08	0.19	0.08	0.15	0.14
Other mixed background	0.20	0.21	0.17	0.08	0.00	0.16
Other white background	3.44	2.42	3.93	2.87	0.95	3.02
Refused	0.53	0.15	0.12	0.45	0.51	0.30
Unavailable	1.37	1.42	0.31	0.75	1.25	0.95
White English	88.55	91.25	89.12	90.26	92.66	90.04
White Irish	0.53	0.59	0.40	0.56	0.37	0.50
White Other British	3.38	2.32	3.80	2.79	2.49	3.05
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 3 Ethnic Makeup of Registered Applicant Households 31.03.12

1.4 Age Profile Information

- 1.41 The tables below show age profile information for Somerset in percentages. The Monitoring Board continues to monitor these statistics closely due to concerns about access, in particular that the system is largely computer based. Measures taken so far to assist with and improve access have included reducing the size of the application form by 50%; improving the labelling of adapted properties; continuing to promote the various other forms of practical assistance available, such as help to fill in forms; encouraging family, friends and support workers to assist older people, and the use of auto-bidding where broadband is not available or where older people have no other help or support available to them.
- 1.42 The Monitoring Board will continue to monitor these statistics closely, in particular non-bidding. The Monitoring Board has requested that Local Authorities and landlords review non-bidding amongst older people and has requested that contact is made with all older non-bidders during 2012 to assess the need for and to offer further support and assistance.

Age band	Mendip District Council	Sedgemoor District Council	South Somerset District Council	Taunton Deane Borough Council	West Somerset Council	Total
17-20	9.6	9.2	10.5	8.8	7.3	9.4
21-29	22.7	23.2	25.0	21.5	19.3	23.0
30-39	20.6	20.1	20.9	21.8	17.6	20.6
40-59	30.6	28.6	26.1	27.2	30.4	28.1
60+	15.8	18.3	16.7	19.6	24.7	18.1
Not known	0.6	0.6	0.9	1.0	0.8	0.8
Grand Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 4 Age profile of active applicants 31.03.12

	Mendip District Council	Sedgemoor District Council	South Somerset District Council	Taunton Deane Borough Council	West Somerset Council	Total
17-20	8.68	6.37	8.4	10.12	4.07	8.21
21-29	25.69	29.35	30.3	28.89	20.35	28.38
30-39	18.23	17.39	21.1	19.17	25	19.57
40-49	17.36	14.6	15.3	13.05	15.7	15.02
50 - 59	11.98	12.27	8.5	11.05	11.05	10.66
60+	18.06	20.03	16.4	17.71	23.84	18.17
Date of birth not known	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 5 Age profile of accepted offers between 01.04.11 and 31.03.12

	Mendip District Council	Sedgemoor District Council	South Somerset District Council	Taunton Deane Borough Council	West Somerset Council	Total 2011-12
17-20	10.7	7.7	9.7	9.9	6.2	9.2
21-29	28.1	32.6	35.2	35.3	22.9	32.9
30-39	20.7	23.9	25.2	24.1	20.6	23.7
40-49	23.5	17.8	16.2	15.3	22.4	17.6
50-59	9.0	8.8	8.3	8.6	11.7	8.8
60+	8.0	9.2	5.4	6.8	16.3	7.8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 6 Age Profile of Households Expressing an Interest in an Advertised Property between 04.04.11 and 01.04.12 (2011-12 advertising cycles)

	Mendip District Council	Sedgemoor District Council	South Somerset District Council	Taunton Deane Borough Council	West Somerset Council	Total
17-21	7.77	6.57	7.12	6.32	5.18	6.79
21-29	25.03	23.46	24.96	25.62	22.47	24.59
30-39	21.67	20.49	22.61	23.11	20.56	21.93
40-59	30.07	28.08	26.73	27.04	29.08	27.90
60+	15.21	21.18	18.26	17.71	22.45	18.53
Not Known	0.25	0.23	0.32	0.20	0.25	0.26
Grand Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 7 Age Profile of Households who have never Expressed an Interest in an Advertised Property between 01.04.11 and 31.03.12

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	Somerset
15-19	6.72	5.95	5.78	6.31	5.71	6.12
20-29	9.14	9.12	9.81	10.63	7.72	9.54
30-39	14.75	14.17	14.00	14.17	10.89	14.01
40-49	13.89	13.37	13.12	13.35	12.48	13.34
50-59	14.08	14.33	13.97	13.42	14.97	14.03
60+	22.41	24.70	25.04	24.21	33.38	24.84

Table 8 Census Data – 2001 Age Profile - Somerset

1.5 Property Adverts

1.51 The chart below details the total adverts placed by each landlord by local authority area in 2011/12. This ranged from only one or two adverts for landlords with low numbers of properties in Somerset through to Yarlington Housing Group with 1337 property adverts. This is an increase of 297, which is just over 7% on last year. This could be as a result of increased development activity, a higher turnover of properties or increased efficiency by landlords and in reality, is probably a combination of all of these factors.

	Mendip District Council	Sedgemoor District Council	South Somerset District Council	Taunton Deane Borough Council	West Somerset Council	Grand Total
Anchor Housing Association		2				2
Falcon Rural Housing Association		1		6	6	13
Flourish Homes	390					390
Guinness Hermitage	7	39				46
Habinteg Housing		2				2
Hanover					1	1
Hastoe HA	8		32			40
Homes in Sedgemoor		487				487
Jephson HA			124			124
Kennet Housing Society	3					3
Knightstone HA	51	24	13	42	6	136
Magna (West Somerset)		44		72	196	312
Magna HA Ltd			119			119
Places For People				28		28
Raglan HA Ltd	14	72	95	9	1	191
Redland HA				5		5
Sanctuary HA	10	18	77	21		126
Selwood Housing	2					2
SHAL		23	1	17		41
Signpost HA			39	2		41
Somer Community Housing Trust	7					7
South Somerset District Council			3			3
Southwestern Housing Society	1	21		3		25
Sovereign HA	4	98	3	45		150
Taunton Deane Borough Council				548		548
Taunton Heritage Trust				4		4
West Somerset Council					1	1
Western Challenge HA	3	4				7
William Sutton Homes			7			7
Wyvern Rural Housing Association	1		4			5
Yarlington Housing Group		186	1151			1337
Aster Communities	144					144
Grand Total	645	1021	1668	802	211	4347

Table 9 Property Adverts Placed by Landlords between 04.04.11 and 01.04.12 shown by Local Authority Area

1.6 Accepted Offers (Lettings)

1.61 The table below shows the number of accepted offers by landlords by band between 2011/12. In 2011/12, there were 3,143 accepted offers across Somerset, an increase of 395 (14%) on 2010/11 and 409 (15%) on 2009/10. 51% of accepted offers were to silver band applicants (an increase of 5% on 2010/11); 40% to gold (an decrease of 3% on 2010/11); 8% to bronze (a decrease of 1%) and 1% to the emergency band (no change). In comparison, silver band applicants made up 47% of the housing register; gold band 8%; bronze band 45% and emergency band less than 1%.

Landlord	Emergency	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Flourish Homes	0.19	5.25	6.90	0.80	13.14
Falcon Rural Housing Association	0.00	0.06	0.32	0.16	0.54
Guinness Hermitage	0.00	0.10	0.67	0.41	1.18
Habinteg Housing	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.03
Hastoe HA	0.00	0.38	0.80	0.13	1.30
Homes in Sedgemoor	0.06	3.40	6.33	0.57	10.37
Jephson HA	0.00	0.80	0.64	0.06	1.50
Kennet Housing Society	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.16
Kilmersdon Rural Housing Association	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.03
Knightstone HA	0.10	2.23	2.32	0.41	5.06
Magna (West Somerset)	0.10	1.72	3.60	0.86	6.27
Magna HA Ltd	0.00	1.34	0.99	0.00	2.32
Places For People	0.00	0.29	0.22	0.13	0.64
Raglan HA Ltd	0.06	1.78	2.23	0.13	4.20
Redland HA	0.00	0.13	0.03	0.00	0.16
Sanctuary HA	0.00	1.72	0.64	0.13	2.48
Selwood Housing	0.00	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.13
SHAL	0.00	0.57	0.70	0.10	1.37
Signpost HA	0.00	0.32	0.35	0.19	0.86
Somer Community Housing Trust	0.00	0.19	0.03	0.00	0.22
Southwestern Housing Society	0.00	0.29	0.60	0.22	1.11
Sovereign HA	0.03	1.53	1.37	0.13	3.05
Taunton Deane Borough Council	0.00	7.25	6.46	1.75	15.46
Western Challenge HA	0.00	0.19	0.06	0.00	0.25
William Sutton Homes	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.00	0.03
Wyvern Rural Housing Association	0.00	0.06	0.06	0.00	0.13
Yarlington Housing Group	0.22	10.24	15.37	2.16	28.00
Grand Total	0.76	40.06	50.81	8.37	100.00

Table 10 Number of Accepted Offers (Lettings) by Landlords by Band 01.04.11 to 31.03.12

1.7 Accepted Offers within the Gold Band

- 1.71 Of the 40% of accepted offers to gold band applicants, just under 44% of these were to homeless households (as opposed to being 16% of all gold band applicants on the register) which represents 17% of all accepted offers made.
- 1.72 Of the 40% of accepted offers to gold band applicants, 18% were to gold band under-occupiers (as opposed to being 47% of all gold band applicants on the register) which represents 7% of all accepted offers.

1.8 Mobility within and into Somerset

- 1.81 The table below shows the numbers of accepted offers by landlord and local authority area. It is an interesting table as it demonstrates the increased mobility and flexibility for applicants in being able to move between local authority areas. For example, Taunton Deane Borough Council let 25 homes to applicants from Sedgemoor, 22 from South Somerset, 7 from West Somerset and 3 from Mendip. It also shows that county-wide 195 applicants were housed from outside Somerset which equates to 6.2% of the total accepted offers (3143). Unfortunately, Homefinder does not allow us to monitor the mobility of Somerset residents leaving Somerset to be re-housed elsewhere as a result of choice based lettings schemes.
- 1.82 The last table shows accepted offers by ethnic origin and as mentioned earlier 5.31% of accepted offers were from applicants of a black or minority ethnic origin.

Row Labels	Mendip District Council	Outside Homefinder Somerset Area	Sedgemoor District Council	South Somerset District Council	Taunton Deane Borough Council	West Somerset Council	Grand Total
Aster Communities	352	20	13	23	4	1	413
Falcon Rural Housing Association			2		7	8	17
Guinness Hermitage	4		32	1			37
Habinteg Housing			1				1
Hastoe HA	18			22	1		41
Homes in Sedgemoor	10	31	243	9	27	6	326
Jephson HA	8	2	2	33	2		47
Kennet Housing Society	3	1		1			5
Kilmersdon Rural Housing Association	1						1
Knightstone HA	42	8	19	19	61	10	159
Magna (West Somerset)	4	22	19	5	41	106	197
Magna HA Ltd	3	5	3	62			73
Places For People			2	1	15	2	20
Raglan HA Ltd	21	9	32	55	13	2	132
Redland HA				1	4		5
Sanctuary HA	9	3	25	17	24		78
Selwood Housing	3			1			4
SHAL	3	2	21	3	13	1	43
Signpost HA	2		2	21	1	1	27
Somer Community Housing Trust	5	1		1			7
Southwestern Housing Society	2		28	2	2	1	35
Sovereign HA	7	2	30	15	40	2	96
Taunton Deane Borough Council	3	21	25	22	408	7	486
Western Challenge HA	4		2		2		8
William Sutton Homes					1		1
Wyvern Rural Housing Association	1			3			4
Yarlington Housing Group	34	68	89	622	62	5	880
Grand Total	539	195	590	939	728	152	3143

Table 11 Accepted offers between Homefinder Somerset Local Authorities by Landlord 01.04.11 to 31.03.12

	Mendip District Council	Sedgemoor District Council	South Somerset District Council	Taunton Deane Borough Council	West Somerset Council	Total
Any other group	0.17	0.16	0.30	0.80	0.00	0.35
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	0.17	0.00	0.30	0.13	0.00	0.16
Asian or Asian British Indian	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Asian or Asian British Chinese	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Black or Black British African	0.35	0.00	0.30	0.27	0.00	0.22
Black or Black British Caribbean	0.00	0.16	0.20	0.00	0.58	0.13
Mixed White & Asian	0.00	0.16	0.10	0.13	0.58	0.13
Mixed White & Black African	0.17	0.16	0.30	0.13	0.00	0.19
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.58	0.06
Other Arab	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other Black or Black British background	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.03
Other Asian or Asian British background	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Other Ethnic Group	0.17	0.47	0.50	0.13	0.00	0.32
Other Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller	0.17	0.00	0.10	0.13	0.00	0.10
Other mixed background	0.00	0.16	0.50	0.13	0.58	0.25
Other white background	4.86	4.19	4.10	2.66	0.58	3.72
Refused	0.17	0.00	0.10	0.27	0.00	0.13
Unavailable	0.87	0.78	0.10	1.20	1.74	0.73
White English	89.24	90.06	89.90	91.08	90.12	90.10
White Irish	0.35	0.78	0.20	0.53	0.58	0.45
White Other British	2.95	2.48	2.70	1.46	4.65	2.51
Blank	0.00	0.16	0.00	0.53	0.00	0.16
Grand Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Table 12 Accepted Offers by Ethnic Origin 01.04.11 to 31.03.12

Part A What is Homefinder Somerset?

When Homefinder Somerset was launched in December 2008 it was the first sub-regional county-wide Choice Based Lettings scheme in the South West. The work and commitment of all parties (five local authorities and over 30 housing associations) to agree and implement a unified scheme for the whole county was a considerable achievement.

Homefinder Somerset is a partnership of local authorities and housing associations who are working together to make the process of finding a home simple and transparent for all applicants looking for housing in Somerset. Anyone looking for social housing anywhere in Somerset only has to complete one application form and their needs will be assessed against the same clear set of criteria. Applicants are then able to use the Choice Based Lettings service to apply for homes that they are interested in. The scheme includes existing tenants who would like to transfer.

How the Scheme Works

Applicants complete the application form (usually on-line) and following assessment of their circumstances, they are placed into one of four bands, gold, silver, bronze or in a very small number of cases an emergency band. Once registered with Homefinder Somerset, applicants are advised of their banding, application date and personal reference number which enables them to bid for appropriate homes which are advertised on a weekly basis. The adverts appear on the Homefinder website and other media such as the telephone helpline. Advertising cycles are weekly beginning on Wednesday and closing on the following Sunday.

Applicants are only able to express an interest in properties for which they are eligible. (To express an interest for a property simply means to apply for that property.) There are a number of issues that affect the ability to do this:

1. Applicants are only able to express and interest for selected properties which match the needs of their household.
2. In some cases there may be age restrictions on a property. If this is the case it is clearly shown on the property advert using the appropriate symbols.
3. Properties may be labelled to give preference to certain applicants. For example, households accepted by one of the partner housing associations as homeless and in priority need.
4. Applicants are allowed to make up to three expressions of interest in each advertising period but can withdraw these and re-use them on another property up until the close of the advertising cycle.
5. A tenancy will not usually be given to applicants under the age of 18 years without a "guarantor".

Applications are banded according to the degree of their housing need and high need applicants are placed in the gold band, medium need applicants in the silver band and low need in the bronze band. Gold band applicants, for example, may be statutorily homeless or overcrowded, have a high medical need or live in a property in the private sector which has a high degree of disrepair. Silver band applicants reflect a medium level of housing need and for example may have a degree of overcrowding (lacking one bedroom in current

home), need to move for employment reasons or to give or receive support or have a medium medical need or disrepair of the current property. Applicants in bronze band will have a low or no housing need and for example will be generally adequately housed, be financially able to meet their own housing needs, have low medical, welfare or disrepair assessment or who perhaps own their own property but the home is not suitable for their needs.

The process adopted by landlords to make offers to successful applicants and let the properties is as follows. All expressions of interest received in any given advertising cycle are put in priority order to produce a list of eligible applicants for each property. Ordinarily preference is given to the applicant in the highest band and then with the earliest registration date. The landlord will complete any verification checks and if they are unable to offer the property to the applicant at the top of the list they will move to the next applicant and so on. The decision to reject particular applicants is made by the landlord on a case by case basis, for example many participating landlords will reject applicants who have a history of anti social behaviour or have a debt with their current or former landlord.

The Homefinder web site also displays information on the outcomes of previous advertising cycles, showing the number of expressions of interest received and the band and registration date for the successful applicant (but no personal data) against the addresses of previously advertised properties. Applicants can therefore gauge (by comparison with their own band and registration date) the types of properties and locations that they are more likely to be successful with and use their three expressions of interest in each cycle more effectively.

Part B The Homefinder Somerset Monitoring Board

The Monitoring Board was created to oversee the outcomes arising from the administration and development of the Homefinder Somerset Scheme on behalf of all the partner local authorities and landlords.

The Board is made up of representatives from each of the five local authorities and the five principal landlords in the county together with a further five places for representatives from the other participating landlords (a total of a maximum of 15 members). Two of the places on the Board are reserved for a representative of a special needs housing provider and a rural housing provider and there are also co-opted members.

During 2011/12 the Monitoring Board met four times. The Monitoring Board has a number of sub-committees and groups namely the Equalities and Diversity Sub-Committee and the Operational Group. During the period of the review, the Monitoring Board also set up a Review Group.

At 31st March 2012 the membership of the Monitoring Board was as follows:

Local Housing Authority Representatives:

David Jones, Taunton Deane Borough Council (Strategic Function) (Vice Chair)
Colin McDonald, South Somerset District Council (Past Chair 2009)
Jerry Milton, Sedgemoor District Council
Ian Timms, West Somerset Council (Past Chair 2011)
Jai Vick, Mendip District Council

Principal Landlord Representatives:

Christine Boland, Magna West Somerset Housing Association (Chair)
Stephen Boland, Taunton Deane Borough Council (Landlord Services)
Margaret Wright, Aster Communities
Nick Fry, Yarlinton Housing Group
Claire Tough, Homes in Sedgemoor

Other Landlord Representatives:

Kathryn Hemensley, Knightstone Housing Association
Shirley Evans-Jones, Hastoe Housing Association (Rural Provider)
Mary Firth, Barnabas Housing (Special Needs Provider)
Jane Vernoit, Mendip YMCA
Toni Beard Magna Housing Association (to be confirmed)

Co-options & Ex-officio:

Vacant, Commissioning Care and Support
Kirsty Larkins/Debbie Warr, South Somerset District Council (Chair, Operational Group)
Dave Baxter, Sedgemoor District Council (Chair, Equalities & Diversity Sub Committee)

Part C Summary of Key Changes arising from the Review of Homefinder Somerset

During 2010 a review group made up of all the Somerset Local Housing Authorities and a number of partner landlords undertook a review of the Homefinder Somerset scheme.

The review recommended some amendments to the policy, the application form and the system that is used to assess housing register applications and operates the Choice Based Lettings allocations process.

Key Policy Changes

1. An applicant's finances will be assessed to establish if they can meet their own housing needs – this assessment is based on whether an applicant is earning above average earnings for the Somerset area;
2. The assessment of the level of medical considerations has changed. Gold Band criteria will be reduced from Life Threatening to Serious medical conditions and the Silver Band criteria will be reduced from Significant to Moderate medical conditions. This will benefit applicants as the criteria have been 'reduced';
3. Households who match 4 or more Silver Band 'housing needs' will be awarded Gold Band status for cumulative housing need;
4. Tenants of Homefinder Somerset Partners, who live in Somerset and are required to relocate due to major rebuilding or renovation works, will be placed in Gold Band to facilitate the rebuilding/renovation works;
5. The priority previously given to households with children under 10 that have no access to an enclosed garden has been removed as a consideration for silver banding (so that these households do not have the same priority as applicants who are homeless);
6. Due to the shortage of Social Housing in the area, applicants with children who do not live with them permanently will not be entitled to any additional bedrooms (this previously only benefitted single applicants);
7. We have made it clearer within the policy when a property can be advertised with priority given to local applicants;
8. We have provided a clearer definition of 'local connection' which is based on that used for homelessness. This makes it clearer for applicants and officers what 'local connection' means in terms of the common allocations policy;
9. Homeless cases awarded Gold Band status that do not express an interest in suitable properties within 8 – 16 weeks may have automatic expressions of interest placed on their behalf by the relevant Local Authority for suitable properties – applicants will be consulted before this change is imposed;

10. In order to reduce the number of applicants refusing offers, applicants who refuse 3 formal suitable offers may be placed into Bronze Band for 3 months, this would exclude accepted homeless cases;

Key Application Form Changes

11. The length of the application form has been reduced by 50% from 56 pages to 27 pages. The form is now much simpler and focuses on the information required to assess their housing need only.
12. These changes are reflected both in the manual housing register form and the online housing register form available at www.homefindersomerset.co.uk

Key System Changes

13. There have been major changes made to the back office system to reflect the policy and application form changes.
14. Additional functionality has been added into the system in the property advert fields to enable landlords to better market properties.
15. Changes were made in anticipation of the affordable rents and flexible tenancies changes proposed in the Localism Bill, now contained in the Localism Act 2011.

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 20th August 2012 at 6pm in the Meeting Room, Kilkenny Court, Taunton.

Present: Mr Dustyn Etherington (Chairman), Mrs Jessie Bunn, Mrs Enid Drage, Mr Dennis Galpin, Mrs Judith Hegarty, Mr Robert Middleton, Mrs Tammy Urquhart, , Councillor Robert Bowrah and Councillor Steve Brooks.

Officers: Paul Harding (Corporate and Client Services Lead), Shari Hallett (Health and Housing Business Support Lead), Steve Boland (Housing Services Lead), Phil Webb (Property Services Manager), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Steve Clarke (Tenants Service Development Officer) and Emma Hill (Corporate Support Officer).

Others: Lisa Wychwood and Graham Vickery from Halcon North Tenants & Residents Association

(The meeting commenced at 6.01pm)

1. Apologies

Mr M Edwards

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd July 2012 were taken as read and signed.

3. Public Question Time

A representative of the Halcon North Tenants and Residents Association expressed a desire to draw attention to officers of Taunton Deane and Members of Board:-

1. That Tenants and Residents Association encouraged tenants and residents at a recent public meeting to complete and return the questionnaire starting today.
2. Also to mention reports of Asbestos in two houses in Moorland Road. It was asked if this was discovered during the property surveys.

Members of Board thanked the Tenants and Residents Association for their support and encouragement regarding the questionnaire. The Board advised that the second item would be covered by item 8 on the agenda and would be dealt with at appropriate point in the meeting.

4. Declaration of Interest

The following members declared a personal interest as a council house tenants:

- Mr Dustyn Etherington
- Mr Mark Edwards
- Mrs Enid Drage
- Mrs Judith Hegarty
- Mrs Jessie Bunn
- Mrs Tammy Urquhart
- Mr Robert Middleton
- Mr Dennis Galpin

- Councillor Bowrah & Councillor Brooks both declared having family members who are council tenants.
- Councillor Brooks also declared he is a County Councillor.

The board requested that the existing declarations of interests are automatically recorded in the minutes at each TSMB meeting.

5. Report on Welfare Reform and Housing Benefit Changes.

There was a presentation to raise awareness of the key changes coming from the government's welfare reform agenda and how these would impact on our tenants and the HRA.

The following scheduled changes over 2012 and 2013 include increasing Non-dependant deductions.

Also from April 2013 the below changes would include:-

- Council Tax Benefit Abolished
- Maximum Benefit Cap
- Social Sector size criteria changes
- Empty Property Charges
- Council Tax Changes
- From October 2013 and beyond, Universal Credit would be introduced.

For Non Dependent Deductions, there would be a 10 year freeze on NDD reversed over 3 yrs from April 2011 to 2013. The figures are as follows:-

- Lowest HB NDD rates rise from £7.40 to £13.40
- Highest HB NDD rates rise from £47 to £90

It is predicted a higher incidence of adult children being asked to leave the family home would lead to an increase in demand for independent housing. With the possibility of a higher risk and incidence of increasing rent arrears and a reluctance for private landlords to accept benefit claimants, financial difficulties for social providers = possible rise in homelessness

Council Tax Support

The government has announced that it is reducing spending on Council Tax Support by 10 per cent and localising it, saving £490 million a year from 2013-14. Currently Council Tax support is delivered through the national Council Tax Benefit (CTB) scheme.

From 1st April 2013 CTB is being abolished. Instead Council's like TDBC have been told they must design a scheme to help those on low incomes pay their Council Tax.

This is no longer demand led; councils will be given a fixed grant. Although, pensioners are protected under a national grant scheme, many people who have never had to pay council tax may have to start.

The final scheme must be adopted by the council before 31st January 2013 for introduction in April 2013.

Maximum Benefit Cap

The government have stated that no household would receive more in benefits than the average earnings of working households after tax. This doesn't apply to households temporary out of work and the disabled and pensioners.

This is based on national average earnings; for singles £350/week and for couples and lone parent's £500/week (these are current figures).

These are some of the areas affected by the cap; Large families entitled to a significant amount of CTC / families in high rental areas and families with 4/5 children are likely to see £12 / £40 per week shortfall applied to housing costs.

This benefit cap reduces max housing benefit entitlement by 14% for 1 bed under occupation and 25% for 2 or more.

Areas of the Council Tax reforms, which might affect tenants and/or HRA, are as follows:-

- Right to pay council tax by 12 instalments to be introduced and publicised.
- Allow councils to charge up to 100% council tax on properties undergoing major repair.
- Abolish the 12 months exemption relating to empty dwellings under major repair but allow council's to instead offer a discount of between 0% and 100% of the council tax.

Universal Credit

Some of the main features of the Universal Credit system are as follows:-

- National Scheme administered by DWP
- Replaces: IS, WTC, JSA, HB, Child Tax Credit, ESA etc.
- New work-related requirements / commitments / tough sanctions
- All claims for housing support will move to UC by end 2017.

The implications of universal credit are that it would be paid direct to the claimant. This could have the potential for major rent arrears. This direct payment could affect lending ability for registered providers.

Also this would affect parents who share the care of their children, meaning only one parent eligible to receive the child element of universal credit.

In addition, there will be a medical assessment for the Disability Living Allowance from 2013 for new and existing claimants.

Some additional implications with the introduction of Universal Credit would be as follows:-

- Child Benefit being withdrawn from higher rate taxpayers
- Tax Credit childcare costs reduced from 80 per cent to 70per cent
- Working Tax Credit hours changed for couples

In conclusion, this would mean a variety of implications for council tax payers. They would be the following:-

Council and private tenants paying out more to the council through size criteria, increased rent through non-dependent deductions, a benefit cap and also having to pay more for council tax

Rent harder to collect leading to higher arrears, in turn causing higher transaction costs. Also housing benefit being paid direct to the tenant instead of to their rent account, as well as welfare payments made monthly and not in line with the rent cycle.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- Member asked for confirmation relating to non-dependent deductions; as long as tenant tells the council about a boarder in their house, this would mean no deductions.
Officer said there was a benefit to having a boarder for tenants. The meaning of boarder is on single room not the whole house, which would be sub-letting.
- Members asked if you should declare having a boarder.
Officers said that tenants should declare it, as tenants would get 25% discount on Council Tax.
- Members asked if there was an incentive for down sizing.
Officers said there is currently a review of the policy and that Housing Services still has an incentive for down sizing. Currently, up to £2000, also housing services are looking at additional services including decorating, removals and help moving utilities.
- Members asked who would be charged for major works on council properties.
Officers said that the revenue would charge the HRA. Those empty properties could get 6 months allowance for free, and then at 6 – 12 months a 50% charge and over 12months 100% charge. This is only a rough idea.
- Members asked if disabled or carer allowance affected.
Officers said they were not aware of any change for carer's allowance but there would be a more robust assessment for disabled working age adults. Also looking to make the rules tougher for claimants.
- Members asked if council can ask for direct debts for Council Rent.
Officers said they were looking into multiple ways of paying rent. This includes looking at direct debts at any date in the month but the council need to look at the computer systems they use. Direct Debt not a tenancy condition.
- Members asked if direct debt could be a condition of the tenancy for those who continually don't pay.
- *Officers stated that very few tenants don't pay their rent on time in the Taunton Deane area. But officers want to include new measures to prevent this.*
- Members showed concerned over the number of people from outside of the county getting rented properties over local people after they have been priced out of areas such as London.
Officers felt that people moving into the Taunton area from larger places, are more likely to be from Bristol.
- *Officers asked what the board thought were a fair percentage rates for voids properties.*
- Members asked do the council charge void percentages by the day.
Officers said that the council don't charge by the day.
- Members asked if an incentive for leaving tenants who leave the properties in good state could be introduced.

Officers stated that the Members idea about incentive scheme for leaving tenants was interesting and they would look into it further.

- Members commented that a 3 month turn around period for void properties was a sufficient time period.
- Members asked what the scaled council charge would be for void properties.

Officer asked Members if the following charges would be agreeable; 0 – 3 months no charge, 3 – 6 months 50% charge and 6 – 12 months 100% charge. These charges would be across the board for both private and council.

Resolved that the officer's report be noted.

6. Report on Performance Indicators – Quarter 1 2012 /13.

Considering the report previously circulated, concerning the performance indicators play an important role in measuring how well housing services is performing, highlighting areas of strength and weakness and allowing services to be monitored and tailored to achieve their targets and objectives of providing the best possible service to tenants.

Performance indicators are reported on a quarterly basis and the report for Quarter 1 (1st April 2012 to 30th June 2012) has been produced.

Performance indicators measure the performance of housing services in specific areas and provide important information on the key services TDBC provides. They allow TDBC to continually improve the services it delivers to tenants. The indicators cover operational issues in greater detail which highlight trends and assist in decision making and service development.

Both councilors and officers use performance indicators in the form of regular reports to monitor performance. It is the intention of this report to propose that the use and publication of the reports is widened to those who use the services, i.e. tenants.

Performance indicators are reported on a quarterly basis, i.e. every three months. The Members of Board were asked to consider at what frequency they would like to receive the performance indicator reports. Officers proposed that the reports are presented to the Board Members on a quarterly basis as soon as the information has been collected.

Finance Comments

The cost of implementing the reporting of quarterly performance indicators can be met within the existing resources of staff and budget.

There are no legal, specific environmental, partnership or community safety implications on this specific topic. Although there are no specific links to performance indicators, the indicators themselves support the corporate priorities.

Equalities Impact

Regarding equality impacts, officers will be available to assist any tenants that may need specific help to fully access the quarterly reports and where required officers will visit vulnerable tenants to explain the performance indicators and then identify any specific needs.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- *Officers asked that Board Members discuss, which Key Performance Indicator they wish to report to the tenants and residents in the newsletter.*
- Members asked about when Taunton Deane would be replacing the tenants boilers as they are inefficient. Some tenants maybe waiting up to 7 years for a more efficient boiler.
Officers informed the Members that the reason this particular boiler being inefficient was due to it storing the water not heating it on demand. Taunton Deane are replacing the older style boilers as they go along.
- Members asked if there are plans to remove the electric storage heaters in tenants properties.
Officers said the removal of these would be done later.

Resolved that the:-

1. That the officer's report be noted.
2. The Board Members voiced the opinions on which ten Key Performance Indicators should be sent out to Tenants via the newsletter:-
 - Repairs and Maintenance
 - Rent Collection
 - Letting: Re-Letter (Voids)
 - Response times for repairs
 - Anti-Social Behaviour
 - Comparison to other Local Authority
3. The Board Members discussed and agreed timescales for further report as every quarter.

7. Verbal Update on Halcon North Project.

The Housing Services Manager gave a verbal update on Taunton Deane's Halcon North Project. The officer reported on the current activities of the project including the progress of the questionnaire.

The Officer informed the board that all residents had received the letter informing them about the questionnaire exercise happening over the next two weeks. Also eight estate officers were paired with tenant representatives and so far 65 questionnaires had been returned.

The Officer stated that no data or information was available at this time to be given to the Board Members. There would be a stakeholder consultation to include a wide range of agencies such as Police, Schools and Health Department. The board was informed that the Growth and Development Manager would be presenting the results and analysis of the main resident's questionnaire to the board on 17th September. The Officer would make enquires about board receiving an update on the stakeholder consultation.

The board were informed that the next step was to present this to the Community Scrutiny Committee on 9th October which would include the board's comments.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- A Board Member asked if the Board of Governors from the Schools would be invited to stakeholder consultation.
- Board Members asked if they could have an update on the result after this item had gone to Executive in October.

Resolved that the officer's report be noted.

8. Report on High Income Social Tenants: Pay to Stay Consultation

The report previously circulated was considered, that describes key government proposals that social landlords should be able to require tenants in social rented housing on high incomes to pay higher rents.

Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) is invited to comment on the key proposals which will be included in the final response to the consultation that ends on 12th September 2012.

Below are the Boards responses to the Key Proposals:-

1. Do you agree with principle that very high earners living in social housing should pay higher than social rent?
A. The Board Agreed with this and should be full market rent.
2. Do you consider that 60, 80 and 100 would be on appropriate threshold?
A. The Board agreed that a combined threshold split should £80,000 and £60,000.
3. Do you agree that certain groups should be exempt from the higher threshold?
A. The Board felt that if they have got the money they should not be exempt.
4. Do you agree that landlords should be able to charge 80% of market rates to high income households?
A. The board agreed with this 80% charge.
5. Would allowing Landlords to charge full market rents be appropriated in our area in your view?
A. The board agreed with this.
6. Do you consider the policy should be voluntary or compulsory for social landlords?
A. The Board felt flexibility on national as well as local basis.

The document can also be obtained by visiting the Communities and Local Government website: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/paytostayconsultation

Resolved that the:-

1. That the Officers report be noted.
2. The Board Members considered and agreed their final responses to the consultation questions.

9. Report on Housing (HRA) Capital Programme 2012/13.

Considered the spreadsheet previously circulated, concerning the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme for 2012/13. The officers gave a verbal explanation in relation to the previously circulated spreadsheet stating that programme of works planned for the coming months including the available budget. This is part of a 30 year business programme.

This programme of works includes a variety of types of contracts depending on the type of works being carried out.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- Board Member asked how the contracts would be delivered.
Officers stated that depending on the size of the contract, depends how the contract was actualised. Each contract specifies the deals included schedule and how much work to be completed.
- Board Member asked if there would be plan to remove and replace storage heaters.
Officers said there would be some investigation into those households that maybe able to have gas. Taunton Deane currently, looking into doing a deal with Transco for cheaper connections. For those homes that are unable to have gas, council will be looking into either updated versions of storage heaters or other alternatives such as Air Source Heat Pumps.
- Board Members brought to the attention to Housing Property Services Manager the reported Asbestos in Moorland Road and asked was found during the property surveys.
Officers reported that it was picked up during the property survey but these were one off's and not in all of the houses on Moorland Road.
- Board Member reported about problems with contractor 'Homesafe'. The contractor had no uniform and no ID as well as after they had finished, the Member had to clean up after them. The Member also had to push and negotiate with the contractor when getting a choice in glass and handles. The whole process felt rushed.
Officers said that those particular contractors are sub-contractors and these contracts are re-newed every three years. Officers noted the compliant and said that regardless it shouldn't be rushed.
- Board Member commented that they lived a conservation area and the replacement of doors and windows are affected but rules and restrictions, does this include Council Houses.
Officers said they would look into this matter.

Resolved that the officer's report be noted.

10. Report on Homefinder Somerset Annual Report 2011/12.

Considered the report previously circulated, concerning Homefinder Somerset which is the Choice Based Lettings partnership between the five local housing authorities and all the major housing associations within Somerset.

Homefinder Somerset has been operating for a number of years and an annual report provides all partner landlords and other agencies with information on the progress and outcomes achieved during the financial year 2011/12.

The Homefinder Somerset Annual Report – 2011/2012 summarises the outcomes of Homefinder Somerset in the financial year 2011/12.

The report contains:

- Statistics about the housing register in Somerset and the lettings made by social landlords over the course of the year;
- Background information about Homefinder Somerset and how the scheme works
- Information about the Monitoring Board and its membership is; and
- A summary of the main changes introduced after a review during 2010/11

As well as monitoring the outcomes of choice based lettings, the Monitoring Board looks closely at the time it takes local authorities to process housing applications and the size of any backlogs in each Council. It does this because delays in processing can affect a household's housing choices.

Currently on Homefinder Somerset, there are 3758 people registered and the number of the available vacancies per year stands at 548 properties.

Those registered are given a banding of Gold, Silver or Bronze. Officers looking at the statistics from the last year stated more people had been housed from the silver band.

Resolved that the officer's report be noted.

11. AOB

No further business was raised at this meeting.

(The meeting ended at 8.35pm)

