

SWT Tenants Strategic Group

Monday, 24th May, 2021,
6.00 pm

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

**[SWT VIRTUAL MEETING WEBCAST
LINK](#)**

Members: Alex Akhigbemen (Chair), Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram,
Colin England, Kevin Hellier, Ivor Hussey, Luke Manning,
Corrine McMyllor, Samantha Rickward, Livi Mongare, Cllr
Mark Lithgow, Cllr Janet Lloyd and Cllr Francesca Smith

Agenda

- | | |
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| 1. Notes from previous meeting | (Pages 3 - 8) |
| 2. Apologies | |
| 3. Directorate Report | (Pages 9 - 18) |
| 4. Impact of Covid on Housing Staff | (Pages 19 - 24) |
| 5. Fire Remedial Work Programme | (Pages 25 - 30) |
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**JAMES HASSETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 22 March 2021 held via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Councillor Alex Akhigbemen (Chair)

Councillors Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Ivor Hussey, Corrine McMylor, Livi Mongare, Cllr, Mark Lithgow, Cllr Janet Lloyd and Cllr Francesca Smith

Officers: James Barrah, Chris Brown, Ian Candlish, Simon Lewis, Michelle Hall, Kerry Prisco, Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager), Sharon Yarde (Housing) and Tracey Meadows (Democracy and Governance)

Also Present: Councillor Weston

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

32. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dennis Galpin and Kevin Hellier.

33. Notes from previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on the 25 January 2021 were approved.
Proposed by Cllr Lloyd.

34. Directorate Report

The Group considered a comprehensive report presented by James Barrah (Director of Housing and Communities), Chris Brown (Assistant Director – Development and Regeneration), Ian Candlish (Assistant Director, Housing Property), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director, Housing and Community Development), Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager)

Comments / questions from group members included;

- For the lateral flow testing, would our staff be able to self-test for Covid instead of going over to the Blackbrook Leisure Centre? *We have put in an application for this on the Gov website and are just waiting to see what happens with our request for front facing roles;*
- With regards to Stronger Somerset and the One Somerset proposals are there any advantages/disadvantages with either of these proposals in terms of housing services? *There is a difference between the east and west side of the County. On the west side we have ourselves and Sedgemoor who have retained stock. On the east side the stock had been transferred many years ago. Whichever model is successful there will still be a concentration of social housing and social housing business on the west side that would need to address and continue to operate that with HRA Ring Fence and all those things that will still apply. Therefore the scale of that business would be more significant for an east-west split so for a West unitary with that entity would have more prominence and a very*

local presence for those communities by the staff that we have in the activities that we undertook in the community whereas for a one unitary model you could see that it's of less significant because it gets a little bit more diluted in a much larger entity. There were overlaps we want to make to support our customers so the more vulnerable customers in particular linking with the current County Council services, adult social care and children's services and those principles would still apply and would need to be strong so that we are able to join up effectively across the public sector and across both unitary models would allow us to do this;

- *HRA - Zero Carbon Pilot, why was the procurement process not successful? Last year we aimed to deliver 50 0 carbon home, there had been a lot of learning done from the pilots and the specification which was developed for that pilot had been used the Seaward Way tender which had just gone out to the market so it's already operating as a pilot in delivering some real useful thinking and useful documentation. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in a procurement process for volumetric modular supplier. There were a number of reasons why this failed, a key reason seemed to have been the ability of the volumetric modular industry to be able to deliver zero-carbon homes, air tightness and other issues were quite a challenge. Unfortunately we were unable to find another contractor but we did go out and see a number of contractors and visited their factories but we thought that the market was still not mature enough for us to use that process so we were now turning to using traditional construction of Panel I systems and other modern forms of construction;*

The Director of Housing and Communities gave his personal thanks to the group members on behalf of the whole team for all their hard work.

Recommended that the group note the content.

35. **Q3 HRA Finance Report**

The group considered a Financial Monitoring report as at Quarter 3 (31 December 2020)

Comments from the group included;

- *The savings of 421k in salaries. I am assuming this is what we are going to be using to fund the extra for void repairs and capital works? There has been an underspend on salaries, about 400k, the main reason for this is because we had a new structure put in place. This financial unit took a time to go through a recruitment process to fill these positions. In terms of how we are going to use that underspend or overspend in any other areas surplus funds would go into general reserves that could then be called upon to fund any one offs or ease pressures in any financial years;*

Recommended that the group note the content.

36. **Laxton Road update - Powerpoint presentation**

A Powerpoint presentation was presented to the group on the Laxton Road Housing Project, Kingston Black Court – Flats 1-8

Comments/questions from board members included;

- I am very impressed with these flats, they are social rentable and they are a bonus for us as a Council;
- Will there be lockable bicycle storage? *There are 6-8 lockable bike sheds for these properties to use;*

Recommended that the group note the content.

37. **Election Results**

The Terms of Reference for the Tenant's Strategic Group state that elections should be held every 3 years. Therefore, an election is due so that newly elected members can start on 1st April 2021.

The online application form was removed from the website on 9th February 2021 with 11 applications received. All applications were checked against the eligibility criteria, 1 of the applications did not fulfil the eligibility criteria and was declined. This left 10 applications for 10 available spaces and therefore an election was not required. All successful applicants have agreed to join and comply with the Terms of Reference of the group.

The new group will take effect from 1st April 2021. The members will be as follows:

Alex Akhigbemen
Paul Cram
Corrine McMyllor
Jess Bunn
Kevin Hellier
Ivor Hussey
Samantha Rickward
Stephen Smith
Luke Manning
Colin England

The board stated that they would like to take this opportunity to thank former members, Livi Mongare and Dennis Galpin for all their hard work and for the support they have given the group over the years. They will be greatly missed and we wished them well.

38. **Scorecard**

2020/21 Housing Scorecard as at January 2012

Comments/questions from the group included;

- Concerns that there were 2 evictions during Covid; *unfortunately the tenancy process was not adhered to so in this rare circumstance we have had to evict tenants. It should be noted that before this process we look to Cllr Smith as Portfolio holder to ask if she has any concerns;*
- Concerns that the report (Rent Recovery 3.5 in the agenda pack) contained only Red and Green indicators, why was there no Amber in regards to the assessment?
Stated that the threshold for this would be revisited with regards to the indicators and would be reported back to the board;
- Was there any reason on why we are behind on the annual review which had to take place? *We are a few behind with this and come April we would have caught up;*
- What sort of areas does the complaints process cover? Regarding ASB, could we have a total of how many complaints were not resolved and it would be helpful to know how many long term cases we have ongoing? *This could be across the whole service. It could be about Homelessness to littering. We would be happy to look at a measure to look at outstanding ASB cases each month. We are also looking at implementing a satisfaction measure for ASB. This would be sent to the person who made the complaint to see how satisfied they were on us handling their complaint;*
- Letting Standard, we only looking at 85%, why not 100%; *we are looking at targets for 21/22 in relation to other targets and will look for the group to see if this needs to be changed, it should be noted that 100% would set us up to fail. We will look at this and get back to you;*
- What is the time scale on an action plan coming out of the compliance indicator? *We are currently on blocks of 100% now so that is good news. As we do more assessments we find more actions;*

Recommended that the group note the content of the housing scorecard.

39. **STAR summary of final results**

Reported on the update of the STAR summary of final results. Determined that In February a webinar from Acuity was delivered to all Housing Managers within the Housing Directorate. This informed them of the results in an easy to understand format so that they could share the findings with their teams. 42 “flags” from Acuity which were individual matters that needed to be looked into as a result of the survey. All 42 flags have been dealt with.

At the end of February we received a “Tenant Friendly” version of the STAR survey. This version has been referred to in the Spring Edition of the Housing Newsletter and will be posted on our website for our tenants to view.

Recommended to the group to note that, the tenant friendly STAR survey report would be available on the website and that there would be an action plan of improvements that would be made as a result of the survey results and feedback.

(The Meeting ended at 7.51 pm)



Housing Directorate Report to Housing Tenants' Strategic Group

24th May 2021

Director of Housing and Communities Introduction

Since the last report, the team have been busy undertaking our end of financial year processes to close our accounts. It has been a challenging year financially with some significant swings due to the impact of Covid but we are broadly on budget for the year which is good.

Our substantial project to replace our current Housing Management ICT system is now in full swing with project team in place, kick off meeting taking place and system configuration work underway to prepare for implantation. There is a long way to go on this project and it will require significant input from people across the service but we are taking steps to backfill gaps as they arise. The project will last well over a year and an exact go live date will be established in due course.

Housing Development and Regeneration Team

The team continues to deliver new affordable homes directly by the Council or through partnerships. The team through its direct delivery, enabling and strategic work have been identifying and progressing opportunities to support the most vulnerable in the district, in relation to their housing and support needs.

Housing Strategy

- Somerset Homeless Reduction Board – A successful first meeting of this County wide strategic group was held in April. The group will meet regularly to identify how best to bring about better futures for some of the County's most vulnerable customers. This will include opportunities to introduce new commissioning arrangements for support services.

- Single Homeless Accommodation Strategy - The Executive supported a draft strategy in March. The strategy included the following vision: *'Rough sleeping in SWT will end by 2027, and all single homeless people shall have access to a client centred service that will provide excellent coordinated support within a range of appropriate self-contained accommodation options that can flex according to changing demand'*. The Housing Regeneration and Development function and Homeless service are working closely with partners to deliver the accommodation to support the strategy.
- Hinkley Point C Housing Strategy – The delivery of the strategy is progressing and the current programme will continue until Autumn 2022. The programme contains 13 Housing projects designed to support vulnerable customers and their housing needs and help mitigate some of the housing market pressures caused by a large temporary workforce working within the district.
- Housing Demand Study – The Housing Strategy team will shortly conclude its study on housing demand including general need, special need and homelessness. This will be shared for discussion and it will then inform a supply delivery strategy.

HRA New Homes

- Zero Carbon Pilot including the Oxford Inn – The Development team are progressing zero carbon through a more traditional approach and have appointed architects to progress the five sites through planning. The planning process requires phosphate mitigation to be identified which will delay the progress of the schemes.
- Seaward Way, Minehead – The scheme has submitted its planning application which will be considered by the Planning Committee shortly. The procurement of a contractor commenced in March and bids will be received in May for assessment. This scheme will be zero carbon and delivered by Autumn 2023.
- North Taunton Woolaway Project – The contract documentation for phase A works is nearing completion. Engie are the main contractors and the time scales reflect the complexity of design, the need to ensure value for money in a very uncertain and risk averse development market and the due diligence required for this large contract. The contract also includes a commitment to build low carbon homes. The team and Engie are simultaneously progressing the design and costings for future phases. Tenants and owners in phase B of the project continue to be supported in looking at their rehousing options.

Housing Enabling

- The Gascony Hotel Minehead - The team successfully worked with YMCA Dulverton Group to provide 18 new units for homeless customers in Minehead. These new homes will replace some of the temporary accommodation provided as part of the 'everyone in' government directive. It provides a significant contribution towards the Council's

ambition to end rough sleeping. The team have worked with a number of colleagues to submit a new grant funding request to government for an additional 15 units of accommodation.

- New Affordable Housing Supply – We continue to work with Housing Association partners and developers to maximise affordable homes in the district. It is expected that 2021/2022 will see a peak in new affordable home completions, with over 300 units predicted.
- The team continue to track and consider Government announcements in relation to affordable homes including considering the Government's statement in relation to a new low-cost affordable housing product called 'First Homes'.

Housing Property Team

Following the end of the COVID-19 lockdown, we have resumed services to all areas of activity in the Housing Property team. We have reviewed our Risk Assessments and Method Statements (RAMS) to ensure the ongoing safety of our staff and residents as these works recommence. Specific updates on each of these work areas are as follows:

Responsive Repairs and Void Repairs

- Both emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs are now being undertaken, although the hold placed on non-emergency internal responsive repairs during the lockdown period has led to a backlog of these works. We continued to log all requests for these repairs during COVID and are now making contact with residents to arrange appointments. Plans for tackling the backlog are being implemented, including both additional resources for the in-house trade team and the use of an external contractor. MD Group have been engaged as the external contractor and will start completing backlog repairs during May 2021. We have updated our website, Facebook, sent an electronic email to housing subscribers, and will include an article in our next tenants' newsletter.
- Void repairs continued during the service reduction period, albeit with revised working practices to ensure staff were kept safe. These works continue in line with the appropriate RAMS.

Property Safety Compliance

- All property safety compliance checks and works continued during the COVID service reduction period, including gas safety checks (LGSR), water risk assessments and remedial works, electrical inspections (EICR), asbestos surveys and re-inspections, fire risk assessment and remedial works & fire safety checks, and lift and stair-lift checks and remedial works. Again, these works continue in line with the appropriate RAMS.
- An internal audit on housing compliance governance and reporting processes has recently been carried out. This had an objective '*To provide assurance that housing compliance governance and reporting processes are adequately designed and operating effectively*'. This provided an assurance opinion of 'reasonable', with seven priority actions to be completed. We are developing a plan to undertake these actions.

Capital Programmes

- All internal capital programme works were placed on hold during the COVID service reduction period. We have now recommenced these programmes and are looking to complete the works as soon as possible. The contractual and financial impact of the situation has been evaluated, and we are making the necessary arrangements to deal with this situation.
- Many of the capital works programmes planned to be undertaken during 2020/21 have not been completed. We have therefore put plans in place to increase the level of capital programmes to be delivered in 2021/22, although it should be noted that delivering this volume of works will be very challenging. We are looking to recruit additional capital programme staff resources to assist with delivery of these programmes.
- The 2021/22 capital programme, combined with slippage from the 2020/21 programme, will total over £14m. All these works will need to be delivered in 2021/22 and will include major programmes such as:
 - Kitchens – c. £2.1m
 - Bathrooms – c. £1m
 - ASHP's – c. £1.4m
 - Heating improvements – c. £1.9m
 - Insulation and ventilation – c. £0.6m
 - Door entry systems – c. £0.4m
 - External doors – c. £0.2m
 - Fascias and soffits – c. £0.3m
 - Environmental improvements – c. £0.1m
 - Water main replacement works – c. £0.1m
 - Roofing – c. £0.5m
 - Windows – c. £1.4m
 - Property Health and Safety works (Inc. fire safety) – c. £2.0m
 - Special Projects (e.g., major refurbishment, external works, structural works, etc.) – c. £0.9m
- Additional procurement for a range of new capital contracts is also being undertaken, including for a number of the above list of work-streams.

Asset Management

- Stock Condition Surveys and Energy Assessments were placed on hold during the COVID service reduction periods. These surveys have now restarted, including use of additional external resources to accelerate these programmes to improve data in these areas. This will facilitate future capital work programme planning and help us to develop our energy efficiency/affordable warmth programmes of work.
- We are also working to implement the Open Assets module of our Capita software system. We are currently configuring the underlying tables, data cleansing and undertaking user acceptance testing (UAT). We anticipate this module will go live by August 2021.

Housing and Communities Teams

Extra Care Housing

- Way Ahead Care (commissioned by Somerset County Council) staff and Extra Care tenants have been a priority for COVID vaccinations, with many having now had their 2nd injection. All staff continue to work in COVID-safe ways, to minimise risks.
- Lettings are still being undertaken.
- SWT staff continue to complete the weekly on-site Health and Safety checks.
- Gardening and maintenance work has been taking place.
- SWT staff can meet tenants within the communal areas, or visit them in their home where essential.

Sheltered Housing

- The Sheltered Housing team continue to make welfare calls to tenants, updating the annual reviews.
- Staff have been undertaking home visits where necessary; for example, for tenants who have partial hearing, learning disabilities or where using the telephone presents an additional challenge.
- Aids and adaptations assessments, tenancy sign ups, installation of lifelines and responding to neighbour disputes is all taking place, to maintain business as usual.

- Many sheltered tenants have reported that they have had their first vaccination, with a second planned. Some tenants are keen to return to 'normal' life and others are reporting feeling anxious about getting back out and about. Staff are supporting tenants to have phased returns to build their confidence, involving family and friends for support.
- During all visits, staff wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and are required to follow the relevant risk assessment guidance, which has been regularly updated and reviewed.
- The Sheltered Housing team continue to run the Deane Helpline rota, to follow up on concerns arising from calls made to sheltered tenants by the helpline.
- Gardening works have been able to continue to take place and emergency repairs have also been completed.
- We are planning for the meeting halls to start to re-open in mid-June as the lockdown ends. Preparations will be taking place in the coming weeks.

Lettings

- The Home Move Plus project continues to develop well.
- Paul Hadley the Homeless Plus Officer is currently working with 60 households which is a 100% increase on the March report. He has now helped 18 households to downsize. This is a further 11 since we reported in March.
- We are halfway to the project target of 100 bed spaces released in the 18-month project. We have already achieved 46 bed spaces within a seven-month period.
- The recent housing newsletter article produced positive responses. An article in the next housing newsletter will focus on our more mature service users (the 60+ age group) to consider contacting the Homeless Plus officer.
- Some great feedback that we received from one service user was *"I have given your details to my neighbour as she was very interested in downsizing after I told her how smooth the process was, she told me she has been waiting years to downsize but can never get any help."*
- The Lettings team are working more closely with occupational therapists to assist families who are in need of adapted properties or require adaptations to their existing home. We are currently working with a family who we have helped to move from a four-bed property into smaller, more appropriate accommodation. This has allowed us to market the four-bed, adapted property and enabled those in desperate need to achieve a more fulfilling existence.
- The Lettings team are looking to work in a more normal pre-COVID way, taking a more non-pandemic approach to work. We have reinstated the weekly voids meetings where we work closely with the Voids team to plan works and reduce turnaround times.
- Pre-void inspections have been reinstated, which in turn will help in the marketing and advertising of SWT properties on the Homefinder Somerset website.
- Since the last report in March, we have relet 64 properties in a six-week period. Of those tenants that have responded we are averaging a 91% satisfaction rate of the standard of the property let to them.

Income

- Our Debt and Benefit Team have worked hard to support our tenants at the start of the financial year to update Universal Credit claims with the new rent figures for the year ahead. They continue to support our tenants with benefit claims of all types to maximise their incomes.
- Due to the work needed on the new Open Housing project, we have some reduced capacity within the Rent Recovery team. We are working hard to mitigate the effects this will have on the performance of the team and we are committed to ensuring that the new system works correctly for us. This will enable us to manage rent recovery in a positive way.
- The review of the garage rent recovery process has been delayed slightly, however this will be concluded within the next couple of months. The new process will be set up in Open Housing ready for the go live date.
- We continue to review our “Lean” rent recovery process and make any changes as necessary to help and support our tenants. This includes changes which are made to the court process.
- Over the forthcoming months we have several policies to complete, these include:
 - Debt and Benefit Policy
 - Rent Recovery Policy
 - Garage Rent Recovery Policy.

Tenancy and Anti-Social Behaviour Teams

- The teams are currently facing unusually high sickness which has caused delays to the ongoing projects whilst we prioritise the most urgent cases and attempt to keep the day-to-day customer service running.
- We will recruit temporary cover to help manage workloads in ASB where we have several cases that we are progressing to court.
- There had been a dip in the number of complaints coming into the service, however this has once again increased. Although this is disappointing, in the sector generally tenant's expectations have increased and this increase is largely due to the temporary reduction in staffing which we will address.

ASB Team

- The ASB team are keeping busy with a high caseload. Several of these cases have been served with a Notice of Seeking Possession and we are now reviewing them as further complaints have been received. We will be looking to review this with our legal representative with possible court action being taken.
- The team are working on streamlining workflows over the coming months to improve efficiency. We have now drafted satisfaction standards and will be looking at tenant's feedback on all closed cases.
- We are also going to record low level nuisance/ASB that is dealt with by the Estate Team so that we can accurately record the levels that we are dealing with across the borough.
- External training events need to be rearranged due to COVID and some sickness. These will be rearranged. The team will be researching further training as this will be required for their own personal development and to enable the organisation to regain a strong insight in good practice across the sector.
- We are moving forward with getting delegated powers to use Community Protection Notices (CPN) for persistent noise nuisance cases and will pilot this on one of our current cases.

Tenancy/Estate Team

- We continue to work on developing a new Tenancy and Estate Management Policy. The team have been working on understanding the gaps in our service area which will put them in a better position to ensure that processes are put in place, providing transparency and consistency from all the Case Managers.
- A proposal for the 'skip days' has now been developed and we are looking to finalise this shortly. We will ensure that we have enough help and support for these days and that Link Power are available to make certain that the event is successful.
- We have developed a backlog of mutual exchanges due to Covid and the recent lockdowns. Following the lifting of lockdown we have made the decision to prioritise the work of surveyors and repairs officers on catching up on repairs work that was also affected by lockdown, but plan to restart mutual exchanges soon. We currently have 26 applications which we need to progress.

Housing Performance Team

Since our last report in March 2021 we have completed the following key pieces of work:

- We have analysed over 1000 comments from the STAR survey along with the results. We have produced an action plan which will be presented to Tenants' Strategic Group during this meeting.

- Attended kick off and board meetings connected with the new housing software implementation (Open Housing).
- Inducted new members of the Tenants' Strategic Group prior to their first meeting at the end of May, supporting use of online technology where needed.
- Produced the draft forward plan for Tenants' Strategic Group.
- Supported our managers to consult our Tenants' Strategic Group on policy documents.
- Supported our Tenants' Action Group to assess grant applications for Youth Initiative Fund and award £12k of funding (activities were delayed due to Covid temporarily halting meetings).
- Supported the responses to complaints within the 10 working day deadline.
- Collated a detailed complaint report based on the first three months of data.
- Started to review how we can improve our complaints process. There is a corporate review planned for June.
- Continued our development of website forms and pages, which we will report upon during this meeting.
- Started an in-depth assessment against the consumer standards part of the white paper.
- Internally we continue to ensure that regular governance meetings are held to oversee and manage the activities of the housing directorate e.g., programme management, finance, performance and risk meetings.
- Started work on spring newsletter content to tenants and leaseholders.
- Set up and held first meeting of internal Engagement Focus Group within SWT to establish best practice.

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – Monday 24th May 2021

Impact of Covid on Staff in the Housing and Communities Directorate

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Cllr F Smith.

Report Author: Suzie Rea (People Business Partner)

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

This report is to summarise the impact of Covid 19 on staff within the Housing Directorate at Somerset West and Taunton Council since lockdown restrictions were announced, specifically around productivity and sickness absence.

2. Recommendations

Members of the Tenants' Strategic Group are asked to note and comment on the report content.

3. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

Not applicable.

4. Background and Full details of the Report

Please see report below.

5. Links to Corporate Strategy

The report supports the Somerset West and Taunton strategic themes “a transparent and customer focused council” and “homes and communities”.

6. Finance / Resource Implications

Not applicable.

7. Legal Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

8. Climate and Sustainability Implications (if any)

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the report.

9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

11. Social Value Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

12. Partnership Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

13. Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

14. Asset Management Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

15. Data Protection Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

16. Consultation Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

17. Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)

Not applicable, report for note and comment of Tenants' Strategic Group.

Democratic Path:

- Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No
- Cabinet/Executive – No
- Full Council – No

Reporting Frequency: Ad-hoc - Yes

Contact Officers

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Tenant Strategic Group – May 2021

Impact of Covid on Staff in the Housing and Communities Directorate

Introduction

This report is to summarise the impact of Covid 19 on staff within the Housing Directorate at Somerset West and Taunton Council since lockdown restrictions were announced, specifically around productivity and sickness absence.

Background

Somerset West and Taunton Council closed its places of work on 23 March 2020 and with immediate effect all office based staff moved to remote working. All staff were given access to a laptop or PC and Microsoft Teams was rolled out within the first six weeks and became the primary platform for meetings, calls and general contact. Since then most office-based staff have continued to be based primarily at home, with exceptions made for those unable to do so due to personal reasons (eg mental health issues or lack of space for a safe work space).

Trades Staff

The Repairs and Maintenance Team have continued to work throughout, prioritising emergency repairs and ensuring void properties continue to be turned around for relet. This was despite a significant reduction in staff capacity during the first lockdown, with a number of staff shielding or caring for young children or vulnerable family members.

Productivity

Although no specific measures of productivity have been conducted, responses from recent council-wide staff surveys show that overall, staff were working more hours (partly due to lack of commuting time) and were more productive. The majority continue to feel satisfied working from home with most now having a dedicated workspace.

Sickness Absence Levels

Average number of days sickness per employee for the whole Council:

April 2019 to March 2020: **11.6 days per person**

April 2020 – March 2021: **5.8 days per person**

Average number of days sickness per employee for the Housing Directorate:

April 2020 – March 2021: **5.6 days per person**

Days lost due to Covid 19: **306** days in total including vaccine side effects – this is 9.16% of all sickness for the year at a cost of £35,704.

Days lost due to Covid 19 in the Housing Directorate – **0.6** days per person

This shows significant decrease in the number of days lost to sickness compared to the previous year. The days lost to Covid-related sickness are comparable to those lost due to coughs/colds/flu in previous years so overall have not impacted the cost of sickness significantly.

The figures are in line with national data measuring sickness levels across all sectors, where the lowest levels of sickness since 1995 were recorded in 2020, 14% of which were attributed to Covid19.

Next Steps

- Continue to monitor sickness absence levels and reasons
- Continue to offer our package of wellbeing support and resources to staff
- Ensure risk assessments and DSE assessments are carried out on home working spaces and offer additional equipment and resources to ensure that staff continue to be able to carry out their work at home
- Continue to monitor our risk assessments for staff working in people's homes to ensure that staff and residents are kept safe during the Covid pandemic

Fire Remedial Work Programme Report

Report Author: Adam Evans, Compliance Manager

Report Date: 24th May 2021

Purpose of the Report

This report provides an updated position to the Tenant Strategic Group for the main landlord health and safety property compliance fire remedial actions/works following Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) and validation surveys.

Background

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted upon our ability to progress with a number of the required actions. As well as resourcing issues (both internally, and for contractors), obtaining access from some vulnerable tenants who have been shielding or are anxious about allowing people into their homes during the latest lockdown continues to create difficulties in maintaining compliance in some areas. However, we have continued to validate our activities throughout the latest lockdown and have made considerable progress in many categories and areas of fire remedial actions.

A review of all compliance areas, including fire safety, against every property for which Somerset West and Taunton Council has property compliance responsibility has been undertaken. This review has led to improved data, resulting in an updated property compliance database which provides an improved monitoring capability for this activity, and an increased level of assurance on performance.

Fire Risk Assessments

Article 9 of the RRFSo2005 requires that a responsible person must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to which relevant persons are exposed for the purpose of identifying the measures they need to take. To satisfy this requirement, we undertake fire risk assessments to all properties deemed as non-domestic, including the communal areas of domestic buildings.

A programme of new Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) has recently been completed and resulting recommended remedial actions logged. In addition, following recommendations within FRA's to undertake further validation to check compliance of existing fire doors, these have been undertaken and have established a need to develop a further programme of replacement doors.

The following table provides an update of the current position in relation to fire risk assessments:

Property Account Type	Number of Properties	Number Inspected	Percentage Compliant
HRA - Blocks	323	323	100%
HRA – Meeting Halls	18	18	100%
HRA – Guest Rooms	10	10	100%
HRA - Commercial	4	4	100%

Internal Audit

An internal audit on Housing Compliance Governance and Reporting Processes has recently been carried out. This had an objective 'To provide assurance that housing compliance governance and reporting processes are adequately designed and operating effectively'. This provided an Assurance Opinion of 'Reasonable', with seven priority actions to be completed. We are developing a plan to undertake these actions, however none of them directly relates to fire safety concerns, indicating a robust approach is being taken to ensuring fire safety for our residents.

Fire Safety Actions

Considerable progress has been made in relation to fire safety actions in the past year, despite the difficulties outlined above due to the Covid pandemic. At the beginning of 2020 there were 5421 outstanding fire safety actions and, as can be seen in the table below, this has now reduced to 1968. However, it should be noted that the number of outstanding actions changes as the recommended remedial actions from the latest FRA's are received, as these will supersede previous FRA's. As works are undertaken to resolve existing remedial actions, and potentially additional recommended remedial actions are added from new FRA's (e.g. due to changes in legislation or best practice), then this becomes, in effect, a moving target.

Remedial actions have been grouped into themes/fire risk categories as reported in the table below and this depicts the current position of action outstanding and overdue:

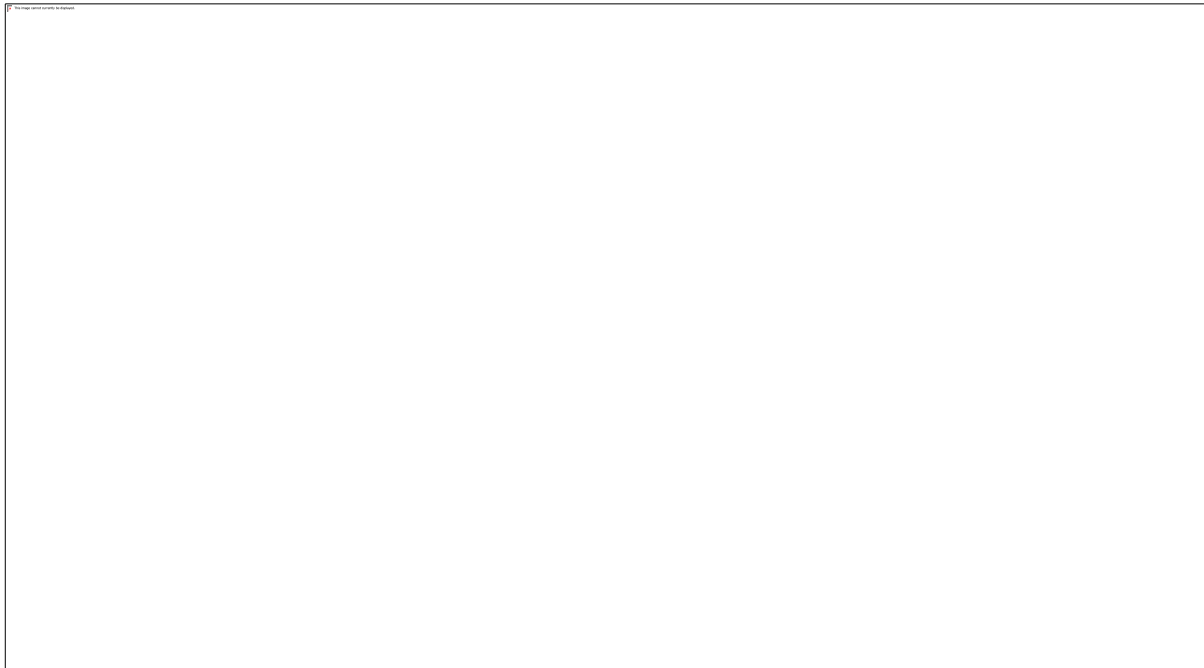
Remedial Action Type	Number of Outstanding Actions	Number of Overdue Actions
Bin Store	1	1
Communal Fire Doors	191	97
Compartmentalisation*	167	18
Compliance Management	57	12
Detection and Alarm	228	5

Electrical Improvement	259	80
Emergency lighting	160	8
Fire Signage	151	18
Flat Entrance Fire Doors	403	127
Flat Store Fire Doors	27	9
Flooring	21	21
Housekeeping	1	1
Means of Escape	16	0
Repairs, Testing and Maintenance	120	10
Tenancy Management	166	15
Total	1968	422

* A fire compartment is a building or part of a building comprising one or more rooms, spaces or storeys constructed to prevent the spread of fire to or from another part of the same building or an adjoining building. This is achieved through the provision of fire resisting walls and floors and will include special measures to address any openings in the compartment lines, such as doors, glazing, service penetrations and ductwork. The wall or floor must remain functional for the duration of the designed fire resistance period. The compartment wall or floor should not crack or develop holes that allow flames, smoke or hot gases to pass through it. Fire compartmentation is required for both life safety and property protection purposes. It is required for life safety purposes when protecting or sub-dividing escape routes. Fire compartmentation provides occupiers of the building additional time to evacuate before escape routes are potentially compromised by the spread of smoke and fire. It will also decrease the danger which the Fire and Rescue Services may be exposed to. It is required for property protection purposes as it will limit spread and attempt to contain the fire to the location it has originated. In some instances, automatic fire suppression systems such as a sprinkler system may be provided where necessary to reduce the rate and growth of fire which may also impact on permitted maximum compartment sizes. Fire compartmentation is achieved by use of fire resisting construction and cavity barriers, with any fire stopping if necessary.

All remedial actions raised from FRA's are validated and all required works actioned by the Property Compliance team, Housing Property team and the Housing team. These actions have been added to a programme of works which are being actively progressed.

The following chart demonstrates this year's performance on FRA remedial actions:



Note: The number of outstanding Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) actions has increased by 1242 following the recent accelerated programme of FRA's undertaken. However, the number of overdue actions has decreased by 311 despite this, due to a redeployment of resources within our Housing Property team during the recent lockdown period.

The remedial actions within each category are placed into work streams and delivered via various internal departments, procured specialist contractors and/or major capital investment programmes. As an example there are approximately two thousand fire doors (safety devices) within our housing portfolio, which will be subject to a comprehensive capital replacement programme. There are currently 621 fire doors which require some form of remediation as identified by our FRA programme, which will be incorporated in to a procured capital replacement programme due to its large scale specialist nature and required accreditation.

The changes to current fire and building safety legislation and revised testing requirements of fire rated products has led to a national review post-Grenfell. As a responsible social landlord we have, and continue to, survey and validate current arrangements, including product reviews to ascertain we continue to meet the required changes.

The table below has been aligned to the remedial categories applied to the work-streams and a wider investment programme:

Work Streams	Number required	Current Status
Bin Store	6	Feasibility Study
Communal Fire Doors – Capital works programme	300	Procurement of Specialist
Compartmentalisation	167	Procurement of Specialist
Compliance Management	57	Review – Landlord and Compliance Specialist
Detection and Alarm	228	Specialist Contractor
Electrical Improvement – Capital Works	259	Procurement
Emergency lighting – Capital Works	160	Procurement
Fire Signage	151	Maintenance team
Flat Entrance Fire Doors – Capital works Programme	1561	Procurement of Specialist
Flat Store Fire Doors – Capital works Programme	200	Procurement of Specialist
Flooring – Capital works programme	339	Procurement Contractor
Housekeeping	1	Tenancy Management Team
Means of Escape	16	Review – Landlord and Compliance Specialist
Repairs, Testing and Maintenance	120	Maintenance Team/Contractors
Tenancy Management	166	Tenancy Management Team
Total	3726	

As indicated above the majority of current actions relate to legislative changes for example: electrical improvement and emergency lighting works have occurred due to Wiring Regulations and changes within the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 where plastic fastening clips and conduit are no longer approved due to the potential of melting in the event of fire and impeding means of escape. These works have been grouped and procured to be delivered in a wider capital investment programme as part of the housing blocks refurbishment works. This procurement is currently out to tender.

The same has been applied to all fire doors (safety devices) within the housing portfolio, hence why there are 1510 more door actions taking account of the wider capital programmes of delivery than those identified within fire risk assessments.

An initial pilot programme of composite fire door installations has been undertaken. This programme identified an issue of the non-availability of a BSEN1634 certified composite door small enough for installation to a number of our door openings and also the related need to the ‘close off’ the door cavities. The full programme has therefore now changed the specification to the supply and installation of timber doors.

Timber doors are considered to future proof the Council due to the 'nominal' status of the doors. They also enable the doors to be maintained by the council's maintenance team presenting an opportunity to reduce the future cost of maintenance/replacement. The requirement for Secure by Design standards has been maintained as has the aesthetic need for a visually attractive front door design. The fire door programme has been procured and a contract programme for 2021/22 is being agreed with the contractor.

Other categories are also included, for example the delivery of flooring replacements within our communal areas, following previous fire actions in removing floor coverings under fire safety. We have 21 fire actions to be included in the capital investment programme where we have a requirement of an additional 318 for replacement.

Other works have been identified for specialist contractors, primarily due to the type of work required, accreditations and competences required within each specialist field.

Summary

The outstanding FRA actions remain an important priority for the Compliance team to progress and work is being undertaken across all of the required work-streams. Remedial actions in the capital programme will be progressed during 2021-22. We will report progress on their completion to the internal weekly compliance meetings, quarterly update reports to the Audit Committee and to this group as required.

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – Monday 24th May 2021

Website Improvements

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Cllr F Smith.

Report Author: Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager)

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

At the last meeting the Chair of the meeting requested a report summarising website improvements. The report has been compiled to demonstrate improvements made since end of October 2020 and to provide information to members of the group.

2. Recommendations

Members of the Tenants' Strategic Group are asked to note and comment on the report content.

3. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

Not applicable.

4. Background and Full details of the Report

Please see report below.

5. Links to Corporate Strategy

The website pages produced by Housing and Communities support the Somerset West and Taunton strategic themes “a transparent and customer focused council” and “homes and communities”.

6. Finance / Resource Implications

Not applicable, website improvements have been made by members of the Housing Performance Team.

7. Legal Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

8. Climate and Sustainability Implications (if any)

No direct carbon/environmental impacts arising from the recommendations.

9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)

Not applicable, website meets accessibility criteria and can be navigated by customers using screen readers.

11. Social Value Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

12. Partnership Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

13. Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

14. Asset Management Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

15. Data Protection Implications (if any)

Not applicable.

16. Consultation Implications (if any)

Data from the STAR survey 2020 was used to initiate some of the improvements in this report.

17. Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)

Not applicable, report for Tenants' Strategic Group.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – No**
- **Full Council – No**

Reporting Frequency: ☐ Ad-hoc

Contact Officers

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Housing and Communities

Website progress report

1. Introduction

The Housing Directorate started to reform in July 2020. By the end of October 2020 the Housing Performance Team was staffed and work on the website could start alongside other priorities.

2. Background

The current website for Somerset West and Taunton went live when the new council was created April 2019. At that time services were merged into one area called “customer” and there was not a “housing directorate”. This influenced how webpages were created.

With the newly created Housing Directorate, it is possible to take ownership of specific pages and post up our own content as part of the Somerset West and Taunton Council website. Our website must be compliant with accessibility standards and fully usable to those who may be unable to see and using screen reader technology or have other disability. This means that pictures are very limited and details on each page are kept uniform.

3. Improvements

The Housing Performance Team have made a number of improvements and changes which are summarised below:

3.1 Page updates

We have been working on checking and updating our housing webpages. This work will be ongoing; however, contacts have been established within departments for this to become a smoother process in future. A few of the larger alterations completed have been listed below.

- Checking and update of all pages
- Sheltered housing - update of information and officers.
- Duty to refer - An update to this process has taken place (see below) and so the webpage was altered to support this.
- Tenant engagement page - Updated to include new TSG members.

3.2 New content

We have been working with various teams to create new content for the website and there have been a number of new pages created in the last 6 months including:

- Stay safe and warm this winter (now unpublished but will go up again next year)
- TSG election (now offline again)
- Downsizing webpage
- Star survey results webpage
- Capital works programme
- Covid-19 housing advice
- Electrical safety (private landlords)
- Housing newsletter
- Annual report to tenants
- Estate inspection schedules for both General Needs and Sheltered Housing

(Screen captures of screens are shown)

Capital works programme

As a social housing landlord Somerset West and Taunton council are working to continually improve our housing through our Capital Works programme. This is a programme of home improvements that are both ongoing and planned for the near future. You can see an outline of some of our plans listed below.

Please be aware that due to Coronavirus the dates and contractors for these works are subject to change.

Kitchen Replacements

In line with constant updates to our asset data following recent and ongoing stock condition inspections we are currently undertaking kitchen upgrade and replacement works in our older properties. This programme currently has no proposed completion date due to the every changing data we gather but is run on a yearly programme.

Contractor: Mi-Space

Estimated renewal date: 31/12/2020

Bathroom Replacements

In line with constant updates to our asset data following recent and ongoing stock condition inspections we are currently undertaking bathroom upgrade and replacement works in our older properties. This programme currently has no proposed completion date due to the every changing data we gather, but is run on a yearly programme.

Contractor: Mi-Space

Estimated renewal date: 31/12/2020

Window Replacements

Due to changing regulations, standards and improvements with regards to the manufacturing of windows we are currently embarking on a long term investment programme to replace the current windows within our housing. This work is also part of our plan to help reduce the carbon footprint of our properties in line with government guidelines.

Contractor: Wirekin Windows

Estimated finish / Renewal date: 31/03/2021

Related pages

- [Council and social housing](#)
- [Improving your home](#)
- [Improvements and repairs](#)

Covid-19 Housing advice

Council tenants

Following the lockdown announcements, a review of essential services has taken place in line with current government guidance and consideration of the rising number of positive Covid-19 cases in our area. Our priority is to keep our customers and staff safe during this period and as such there are some services that are altered or we will not be providing, please see the service area drop downs below for up to date information about how we are currently operating.

Repairs and maintenance	▼
Supported housing tenants	▼
Support with rent payments	▼
Use of meeting halls	▼
Planned works and programmes	▼
Tenant support	▼
Lettings	▼
Homelessness and Homefinder Somerset	▼
Development and regeneration	▼

To ensure we can continue to offer services throughout this Covid-19 period we are asking all tenants to please adhere to the following requests below:

- If anyone in your household is self-isolating with symptoms or has tested positive with Coronavirus you must let us know in advance of our teams arriving at your house.
- We will do our best to call ahead on the day of your repair to confirm our arrival time.
- We will ask you and all members of your household to isolate in another room while we complete work in your home.
- Please ensure you follow the two-meter social distancing rules whilst we are in your home.
- If you do not follow these requests when we arrive our staff will make the decision not to complete the visit and you will need to reschedule.
- If you do not follow these requests and your service request is an emergency, we will look to isolate the problem from outside of the property where possible.

Related pages

- [Housing repairs](#)
- [Paying your rent or service charge](#)
- [Universal credit](#)
- [Test and Trace Support Payment](#)

Your views

Somerset West and Taunton

Somerset West and Taunton Council - Tenant Satisfaction Survey 2020

About the survey

In November 2020, many of you took part in an important survey.

The survey focused on how happy you are with the way Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) delivers key services and maintains your homes. The survey was anonymous and carried out by an independent market research company - Acuity Research & Practice.

The survey was carried out by telephone interviews.

A total of
506
tenants took part.



Thank you to all of you who took part!

This report contains key results from the survey in respect of tenants' opinions about their homes and the services received.

If you would like to find out more information about the survey or how to get involved please contact Sharon Yarde
S.Yarde@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

3.3 Emails

We send regular (quarterly) emails to residents and non-residents who provide their email address via the website, sending them links to the newsletter and relevant articles. The screen shot below shows you the style of the email that is sent.



3.4 New processes

3.4.1 Contact my housing team - Firmstep form / webpage

Looking at our STAR survey feedback and considering the customer journey we realised that contacting the right officer was not straightforward. We recognised the need for our tenants to be able to easily see who their designated housing officers were and wanted to create a lookup for tenants to use on our website.

We have developed a form called “contact my housing officer” that can be used to route enquiries to the relevant Case Manager (housing officer). The form has been live since the end of March and we will examine data to show its effectiveness in July. The data will show if any areas of the business could be dealt with by Customer Contact at first point rather than waiting to be routed to Housing Case Managers.

Home Services

Housing Team contact request

[Before you begin](#) [Enquiry details](#) [Your details](#)

Use this form to request contact from Somerset West and Taunton Housing Team if you have enquiries relating to:

- your tenancy
- your rent (including debt and benefit enquiries)
- Council-owned garages

Do not use this form to:

- [request a repair](#)
- [make a complaint](#)
- ask about [Homefinder](#) or [housing options](#)

What do you wish to contact us about? *

Garages

Residential properties

However, as we were starting to design this process, we realised that what would be even more useful, with benefits to tenants, our customer contact team and our case managers, would be to create a new contact form that makes contact easier and tells our tenants who their officers are. The housing performance and business analyst teams worked together to produce this new form that can be used via our SelfService portal and by customer contact when taking phone calls. So far we have had great feedback and will review effectiveness.

As an extension of this work, we also created a new webpage called contact my housing team as a one stop shop on the website to help our tenants and customers get into contact with the right team. Each area has a short service description and contact method clearly linked from the webpage. Below you can see a screen shot showing a few of the entries.

Contact my housing team

We have information available across our website on a number of areas in housing, you'll find the links to the pages below, if your query can't be answered on our website we will be happy to help. In order to get in touch with the right members of our team please see which contact method is most appropriate for your query below, alternatively you can call Somerset West and Taunton on [0300 304 8000](tel:03003048000) and speak to our customer contact team.

Who are my housing team?

We want our tenants to know who their designated Tenancy Management or Sheltered Housing and Rent Recovery Case Managers are. Use our new [housing team contact form](#) and enter your address to see who the case managers are for your property and to contact them, see below for more information on how our team can help.

Tenancy management and sheltered housing

Our tenancy management team can help you with: general needs housing enquiries, succession and assignments, tenancy sign ups, new tenancy visits, mutual exchange applications and enquiries, keeping pets, subletting, ending a tenancy, annual tenancy checks, estates inspections, block inspections, parking issues, untidy gardens, tenancy fraud and anti-social behaviour.

You can contact your Tenancy Management or Sheltered Housing Case Manager using the [housing team contact form](#). Please only use this form for housing queries if you are an existing tenant, all other enquiries should be made using the [general enquiries](#) form.

Reporting anti-social behaviour

You can find out more about anti-social behaviour on our [anti-social behaviour](#) page.

To report ASB please use the [housing team contact form](#). You can use this form to report both low level ASB and neighbourhood nuisance as well as serious cases of anti-social behaviour. Please only use this form for housing queries if you are an existing tenant, all other enquiries should be made using the [general enquiries](#) form.

Related pages

- [Antisocial behaviour](#)
- [Housing options and homelessness](#)
- [Council garage](#)
- [Paying your rent or service charge](#)
- [Housing repairs](#)

3.4.2 Duty to refer – The housing options team got in contact with us to make some changes to their webpage following a streamlining of their duty to refer process. The new process allows organisations with a duty to refer to create their own Jigsaw accounts and to follow the process of their referral all the way through, reducing double handling of information and saving time for our officers.

Homelessness duty to refer

Under the Housing Act 1996 (as amended) some public authorities must notify the local authority's housing advice department of anyone they consider may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless within 56 days.

The authorities that must do this are:

- prisons
- youth offender institutions
- secure training centres
- secure colleges
- youth offending teams
- probation services (including rehabilitation companies)
- Jobcentre Plus
- social services authorities
- emergency departments
- urgent treatment centres
- hospitals providing inpatient care

Before making any referral you must have permission from the individual to send the referral along with their contact information, and have allowed them to identify which authority in England they wish to be referred to.

If you are one of the listed authorities and are working with a client who is homeless or threatened with homelessness, please visit the [Jigsaw website](#) and complete a referral, subject to their consent being received. Once the referral has been received, you will be able to review it's progress via your account.

Agencies other than those specified are still able to refer to an authority if they are aware of a person or persons threatened with homelessness within 56 days - or actually homeless - using the duty to refer form.

More information can also be found on the [duty to refer homelessness](#) GOV.UK website

Related tasks

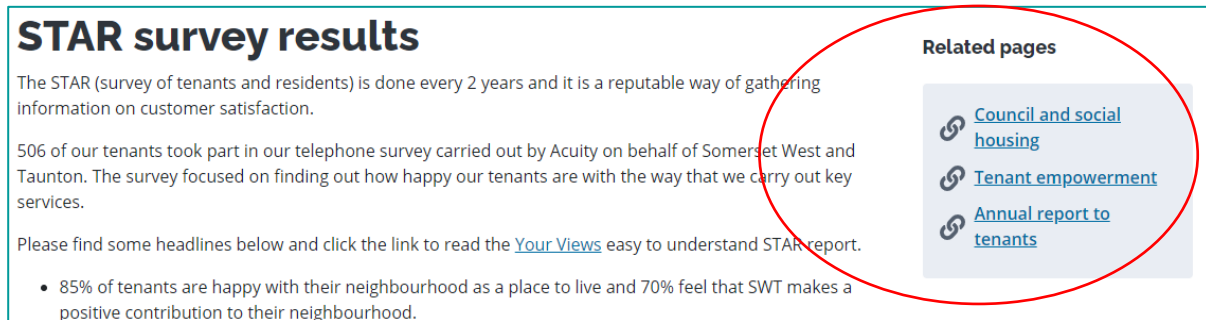
[Homelessness](#)

Related pages

- [Check your housing choices](#)
- [Emergency housing](#)
- [Homelessness Reduction Act](#)
- [Homelessness support](#)
- [Housing options](#)

3.5 Background improvements

- We have created better links between relevant pages to help visitors to the website find where they need to go or other pages they might be interested in.



STAR survey results

The STAR (survey of tenants and residents) is done every 2 years and it is a reputable way of gathering information on customer satisfaction.

506 of our tenants took part in our telephone survey carried out by Acuity on behalf of Somerset West and Taunton. The survey focused on finding out how happy our tenants are with the way that we carry out key services.

Please find some headlines below and click the link to read the [Your Views](#) easy to understand STAR report.

- 85% of tenants are happy with their neighbourhood as a place to live and 70% feel that SWT makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood.

Related pages

- [Council and social housing](#)
- [Tenant empowerment](#)
- [Annual report to tenants](#)

- We have been expanding our knowledge and understanding about accessibility requirements of the website, working with Ian Groves and consulting gov.uk resources. This is particularly poignant for housing in terms of PDF accessibility, as we do have several PDF documents linked to our webpages and it is important that they meet the expected criteria and are suitable for those using screen readers or other accessibility aids.

4. Next Steps

- We await the new housing computer software and that will allow us to launch a Portal to residents. This will be at the final stage of the new computer software delivery as the software has to be running first before the portal can launch. It is likely to be live in around 18 months depending on progress with the software.
- The contact my housing officer form will help route enquiries whilst we wait for delivery of the portal. Whilst we use this form we will collate data about the contact my housing officer form usage and use that data to examine where we can improve our offer e.g. training customer contact officers to assist at first contact or providing online means of completing items.
- Examine how best to provide an online method of reporting repairs. In the past this has not been effective for our residents who reported the repair online. Residents had to be contacted again for more information or to arrange an appointment. There are options that can be delivered through the portal in 18 months but we are also exploring options that could be set up in the interim period.

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenant's Strategic Group Meeting – 24th May 2021

STAR Update/ Action plan –*Please note for information purposes only*

Report Author: Sharon Yarde, Housing Customer Experience Lead

Background

The Star (survey of tenants and residents) was done at the end of 2021 and we received the report from Acuity in January 2021. A tenant friendly version was received and posted to our website in February 2021. Acuity collated over 1,000 comments from our tenants during the survey and these comments, along with the statistical data from the STAR report have been fed into an action plan to address the findings highlighted in the STAR report.

Current update

An action plan report was taken to Housing Senior Management Team meeting on 29th March by Sharon Yarde. During this meeting it was agreed that the following areas would be investigated in this order. The priority order was based upon the number of comments, Acuity's recommendations and whether a programme of works was already in existence, for example there is a current programme of regular block inspections to address number 4.

- 1) Communication-easy to deal with us
- 2) ASB
- 3) Repairs
- 4) Communal areas
- 5) Damp & Mould

It was agreed that due to the size of this action plan it would be actioned in bite size chunks starting with number 1 – “Communication”.

To address communication, we have already completed the following actions:

- Created a “contact my housing officer” form online. This went on live on 30th March and we will review its success in July 2021.
- Agreed a standard of 5 working days for all queries created via this form.
- Published names and patch details of responsible officers in the newsletters (Autumn, Winter and Summer issues). Direct Telephone numbers were published in the Housing Newsletter for arrears officers. (Spring issue).
- Reviewed our Firm step groups to streamline the routing of calls to the correct officer.
- New structure includes 2 new distinct case managers for each tenant (arrears and tenancy).
- Arranged for photographs of Case managers to be included in the Estate Inspection letters to our tenants so that they can be easily identified when out and about on our estates. Suggested by our Tenants' Action Group upon.

Agreed Action Plan for Communication- Lead: Sharon Yarde supported by Amy Maggs

- Investigate how many queries are dealt with at first point of call, do Customer Services staff require up skilling, what hold music options are there.
- Investigate whether it is feasible to publish direct lines.
- Mystery Shopper activity – to involve the Tenants’ Action Group.
- Arrange a customer service refresher course for all customer facing staff within the Housing Directorate- Unconditional Positive Regard refresher.
- Introduce a Customer Portal so that tenants can view rent accounts and engage online. Likely that we will use Capita for this, this project is currently being led by Karen Penfold and will be introduced in approximately 18 months’ time. There are facilities to pay rent and contact your housing office online.
- Introduce logging repairs online – currently liaising with Business Analysts to create an online form for this to address the “gap” between now and the introduction of the portal.
- To assess against the “check list”: i.e. is there a policy, procedure, standards, scorecard, KPI for communication.

Going Forward

Open for questions from the group during the meeting on 24th May 2021

To focus on action plan for communication before starting an action plan for ASB. To present an action plan for ASB to TSG when communication element is complete.

Democratic Path: N/a for information only

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – No**
- **Full Council – No**

Reporting Frequency: ☐ Once only ☒ Ad-hoc ☐ Quarterly

☐ Twice-yearly ☐ Annually

Contact Officers

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Direct Dial	07818 529194		
Email	s.yarde@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk		

Tenants' Strategic Group Proposed Forward Plan

Date	Proposed Agenda Items
19 July 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate Report • Finance Closedown Report • Performance Report (performance until March 2021) • Development update report • Audit Committee Compliance Report • ASB report / CPN orders • Lettable standard
27 September 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate Report • Finance Report Q1 • Performance Report Q1 • North Taunton Update • Tenant Action Group
22 November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate Report • Rent and service charge increase
24 January 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directorate Report • Finance Report Q2 • Performance Report Q2

*Items may need to move to align with timings of Council committee meetings

