

SWT Tenants Strategic Group

Monday, 28th March, 2022,
6.00 pm

**Somerset West
and Taunton**

The John Meikle Room - The Deane
House

[SWT MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

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

Agenda

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Apologies | |
| 2. Notes from previous meeting | (Pages 3 - 8) |
| 3. Directorate Plan- presentation by James Barrah | (Pages 9 - 20) |
| 4. Performance & Finance report Q3 - Shari Hallett and Kerry Prisco | (Pages 21 - 28) |
| 5. Tenant Satisfaction measures and Star survey - Shari Hallett | (Pages 29 - 36) |
| 6. Directorate Report | (Pages 37 - 44) |
| 7. AOB | |



ANDREW PRITCHARD
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 24 January 2022 held via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Alex Akhigbemen (Chair)

Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Kevin Hellier, Ivor Hussey, Luke Manning,
Samantha Rickward, Mark Lithgow, Janet Lloyd and Francesca Smith

Officers: James Barrah, Chris Brown, Ian Candlish, Shari Hallett (Housing
Performance Manager) and Tracey Meadows

Also Present: Councillor Brenda Weston

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

29. Apologies

Apologies were received from Colin England

30. Notes from previous meeting

Notes from the previous meeting were approved.

Proposed by Ivor Hussey and seconded by

31. Performance and Finance Report Q 2

2021/22 Housing Scorecard Quarter 2

The report provided an update to the group on the housing performance through key performance measures and financial information for the second quarter of 21/22 (July-Sept 2021)

Comments/questions from the group included; (summarised)

- Clarification was sought on the Customer satisfaction indicator with regards to the 100% tenant satisfaction levels; *Over the three months 24, 37, and 32 responses were received this would be classed as 100% if all responses were good. A response rate indicator detailing the breakdown would be included in the text for the next report:*
- Concerns that satisfaction survey forms were sent out via mobile phone. If tenants did not have a mobile phone could this be sent via paper? *The survey was sent to a valid mobile number which then provided a link to the electronic survey. These surveys were not available in paper form at present. The comments would be taken away to see what could be put in place and reported back to the group;*
- Clarification sought on who performed the Sheltered Housing reviews? *Review's would be performed by the Sheltered Housing Officers. They*

would go through various questions/concerns with the tenant and if a referral was needed, this would be organised for the tenant;

- With regards to ASB cases, how are you content with just three cases closed in the month of Sept 21?; *most cases were extremely complex and could sometime involve a number of households and multi agencies and these cases could not be resolved hurriedly. Further information if required would be provided to reassure the group of our confidence in our performance figures;*
- How many ASB cases had been open for a year? *This data would be reported back at the next meeting;*

The report was noted with actions.

32. **Capital Programme update**

Capital Works Programme update

The report was to give a status update to the Tenants Strategic Group on the Capital Works Programme. To illustrate the current operational and financial positions of the project, discuss the challenges and barriers to progress, and explore solutions to these issues.

Comments/questions from group members included:

(summarised)

- Concerns that tenants were not convinced that staff coming into their properties to perform planned works were Covid compliant. Also concerns that Tradesman were turning up for planned visit and the tenant had not being informed or prepared for the intended works to be carried out; *We will investigate the option of using a tenant liaison officer role to liaise with tenants making sure that the tenant was up to date for when planned works were taking place and allaying tenants concerns;*
- Concerns with the Capital Works Programme figures discrepancies from the previous meeting; *At the beginning of the year the original budgets were set which included slippage from last years work that did not get done so there was always going to be a discrepancy between the original budget and slippage from last year. Numbers on the current table were forecasted for this financial year and at the end of March and then the balance would feed into the next financial year;*
- There did not seem to be any projects planned to replace the septic tanks that were not fit for purpose; *We were in the process of looking at the 18 septic tanks that we managed. We intended to invest in 3 next year. When the programme was finalised, we would bring this back to the group and circulate the tanks that we would be investing in;*
- Was there a Capital Works Programme budget for outdoor buildings, i.e. brick built sheds. This should be also be tabled so that we know where the monies were being spent; *The PPM (pre planned maintenance) budget projects would cover this;*
- Were there any challenges and solutions to programme delivery. Were the supplies coming from abroad? *We were most impacted by fire proof slabs*

being delayed caught up in Brexit and being stuck in containers. The main issues were getting into properties to start the job;

The report was noted with actions.

33. **Wordsworth Drive briefing**

Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent Flats Regeneration

Comments/queries from group members included: (summarised)

- Concerns that the garages were not incorporated in the overall development at this stage; *A new access route was being proposed from the rear of Coleridge Crescent for the next few years. In the short term none of the garages for tenants or the rental aspect would be lost;*
- Would tenants have the right to return to their properties? *There would be no right to return as it was such a long a gap and a much smaller development;*
- Were there issues with the team trying to decant two regeneration projects at the same time? *There will be a little bit of a clash with these projects. The next decanting phase in North Taunton will be in about 18 months' time. A Housing Needs survey will be completed in the first instance with residents supporting the projects and believe that they could have a better home;*
- Would you consider moving the residents to be decanted to the finished properties in North Taunton? *This development would help some tenants, the customer would have the choice and would be supported if they wanted to move there;*
- Concerns with the tenant's choice of properties on Homefinder and the lack of properties that they wished to bid for; *the tenants that were decanting would be given Gold Band status. They would have to compete with other tenants to bid on what suited them most;*
- Comments from a group member stated that she had been through this process as she was a tenant who was decanted from a property in the north Taunton project area. She stated that there was a lot of support from the Homefinder team and the north Taunton project team who offered support and guidance which made a difference through a difficult process. She also wished to thank Chris Brown and his team for going over and above to make the process as painless as possible;
- Concerns that the decanted residents bidding on Homefinder had to compete with others, these residents should be given priority over others; *Gold banding on Homefinder would allow tenants to bid on the exact property for their needs in a reasonable amount of time. Discussions with the group on Homefinder would be on the agenda for consideration in the future;*
- Concerns with the already lack of housing stock and the flats not being replaced; *After three surveys on these blocks it was decided that the properties in this area had reached the end of their useful life so we did not*

have any choice but to lose them. 349 new properties would be built over the next few years with the build programme;

The report was noted.

34. **Directorate Report**

This report was to update the Tenants Strategic Group on work being undertaken and progress made by the Housing Directorate since the last meeting of the TSG in November 21.

Detailed discussions around unitary would be brought back to the group when we had something substantial to report.

Comments/questions by the group included:

- Capital Programme, would all windows now be triple glazed? *this would be checked and reported back to the group;*
- What was the policy for moving into a bigger unit due to fostering? *This information would be in the Homefinder policy. We would look at this and report back the details;*

35. **AOB and actions arising from the last meeting**

Actions arising from the last meeting;

- Officers to look at the classification of vulnerability;
- Get a check list from Customer services re: vulnerability;
- Add response rate to Performance report for Customer questionnaires;
- Out off 66 outstanding ASB cases, how many are over 12 months old (clasify into 3,6,12 as before);
- Ensure that all contractors follow the same Covid protocols, masks and wipe down;
- Circulate the list of Septic tanks to be invested in;
- Bring Septic Tank programme back to TSG later in the year;
- Chair to give Laurence Hughes specific concerns re: outbuildings;
- Check whether window replacements are double or triple glazed;
- To look into the Homefinder policy re: fostering;

(The Meeting ended at 7.53 pm)

Housing & Communities

Our Directorate Work Plan – 2022/23

Housing and Communities

Key Achievements 21-22

Replaced our choice-based lettings system and our mutual exchange system and launched the new software to our customers

Reviewed our Safeguarding Policy and provided refresher training for staff

Set up two Community Pantry schemes to provide access to quality food to those in need

Reviewed allocation of Voluntary and Community sector grants to meet local priorities and gained approval through Full Council

Good success on our Homemoves Plus initiative – helping 33 households to downsize, helping move 49 people into more appropriate accommodation and freeing up 83 bedspaces in much needed larger units.

Strategy, Development and Regeneration

Key Achievements 21-22

Started to build 47 more new homes in North Taunton

Produced a regeneration plan for Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent flats

Completed the affordable housing demand study

Completed the garage site review

Supported the creation of the Homeless Reduction Board which has been set up to ensure better future support for vulnerable customers

Produced a delivery plan for single homeless accommodation and successfully attracted in excess of £1m grant funding for new accommodation

Housing Property Key Achievements 21-22

Reduced the non-emergency responsive repairs backlog following Covid lockdowns, and achieved 100% of emergency responsive repairs completed on time

Implemented a new Assets database which holds component condition data for all of our properties

Set up a Damp and Mould 'task and finish' group with involved residents

Implemented third party audit inspections to support and provide further assurance on the delivery of key property compliance activity for electrical and gas safety checks and replacement installations

Completion of a successful NICEIC audit of our in-house electrical team

Housing Performance, Finance and ICT

Key Achievements 21-22

Reviewed and stress tested our housing business plan with independent advice

Trained our staff to write good complaints responses to our customers, appointed Senior Case Manager to

begin work to understand root cause of complaints and capture learning

Provided refresher training to our staff to ensure that we keep customer care our priority

Started closer liaison with our customer services team to improve our customer journey

Undertook extensive work to build our Open Housing software which will go live during 2022/3

Supported the creation of sub groups to support the work of our Tenants' Strategic Group and Tenants' Act

Group e.g. damp and mould working group.

Completed successful third party audit of rent policy, calculation and implementation.

Our Customers

White Paper Action Plan

Complete the self-assessment of SWT Housing against the white paper requirements, producing an action plan to support the assessment.

Customer Experience

Improve our customer experience by improved call handling, customer journeys, service responsiveness and complaints processing in order to increase satisfaction and reduce complaints.

Deliver Single Homeless Accommodation Solutions

Deliver new supply solutions to support the single homeless accommodation strategy and help a successful decanting of Canonsgrove. The solution will include 18 units of RSAP funded Housing First accommodation.

CCTV Improvement Plan

Deliver an improvement plan for CCTV which rationalises our offer, improves quality and value for money.

Community Pantries

Increase the number of Community Pantries available across the district to at least 4.

How we work

HRA Policy Consolidation

Review, rationalise and consolidate HRA policy documentation to develop a suite of policies and procedures that comply with Housing regulatory requirements and meet recognised best practice

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Open Housing Software Go Live

Go live with new Open Housing software across SWT Housing ensuring all staff on one software platform.

Our Homes

Asset Management Strategy

Review, update and implement Housing Property Asset Management Strategy, including strategic land review to ensure delivery of required capital receipts.

Responsive Repairs Review

Review responsive repairs service delivery process, produce Improvement Action Plan and implement agreed actions.

Building Safety Bill

Review proposed Housing Property related requirements contained within the Building Safety Bill and implement.

Retrofit Funding, Strategy and Delivery

Propose to Full council a low carbon HRA retrofit strategy and delivery plan, March 2023 .Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund wave one delivery and wave two substantial bid Summer 2022.

New Homes and Regeneration

New Homes in North Taunton

Deliver new homes to support the regeneration of North Taunton, 47 new completes to practical completion by spring 2022 and phase completion by 2023 (on P1 list). Enter contract to deliver phase B and Ci for 51 new homes.

New Homes at Seaward Way

Progress construction of 54 new council owned zero carbon homes at Seaward Way, Minehead. Completion Autumn 2023

Regeneration at Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent

Successfully decant and demolish 15 HRA properties at Wordsworth Drive and Coleridge Crescent by Summer 2023

Maximising income

Service Charge Review

Undertake service charge and subsidy review of HRA rented and leased accommodation to ensure charges are transparent and work on a full cost recovery basis where appropriate and to ensure our subsidies are affordable to the business. Develop and deliver resultant action plan.

Supply Chain Review

Review supply chain for responsive and void repairs service within Housing Property and implement agreed actions

Phosphate Credit Investment

Generate phosphate credit through investment in HRA assets (subject to the HRA approach being a recognised mitigation strategy)

Maximise HRA Income

Maximise current income to the HRA through strong performance of void properties, rent arrears and garage lets. Generate new income from grant subsidy, and commercialisation opportunities.

Open Contractor Financial Process

Implement improved Open Contractor financial process

Housing Revenue Account – Financial Strategy.

Implement financial strategy to deliver HRA savings requirements built into 22/23 and 23/24 budget to improve financial resilience and sustainability of business plan to include undertaking further scenario planning and risk mitigation planning for business plan.

Our People

Directorate People Plan

Deliver people plan outcomes deliverable during the year with emphasis on wellbeing, training development and talent management.

Preparation for Unitary Authority

Housing Revenue Account tasks in preparation for Unitary authority, tasks include Single 30-year Business Plan, Policy regularisation e.g., Rent Policy. To include closer working with Homes in Sedgemoor.

Full participation in Non HRA related service alignment workstream activity to deliver agreed product list.

Safe handover of statutory and compliance related responsibilities e.g. General Fund landlord compliance.

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants Strategic Group – 28th March 2022

2021/22 Housing Scorecard Quarter 3

This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Report Author: Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager) and Kerry Prisco
(Management Accounting and Reporting Lead)

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the housing performance through key performance measures and financial information for the second quarter of 21/22 (October to December 2021).

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note content of the housing scorecard for quarter 3 (October-December) 2021.

3 Housing Scorecard

- 3.1 The Housing Scorecard is a tool to measure our performance in key areas. The scorecard was presented to Tenants' Strategic Group in January 2022 covering the performance in Q2 2021 (July-September). This report covers the third quarter of 21/22.
- 3.2 Over the last 18 months Covid has had a significant impact on some areas of our performance including backlogs in work, but we can now see a pathway to returning to full and normal service delivery however demands on the service remain high and increasing.
- 3.3 This report covers a total of 18 measures. Customer 5, Rent Recovery 2, Supported Housing 1, Lettings and Voids 1, Housing Repairs 2, Tenancy Management 4, Compliance 2, Development 1.
- 3.4 **Customer**

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Customer					
% of complaints closed in 10 working days (as per policy)	100%	95%	44%	51%	48%

During this quarter there was a notable decline in complaint response times which have suffered due to significant service pressures, volume of complaints, staff sickness and

leave where it has not been possible to investigate and close all complaints within the 10 working day deadline. Extensions that are agreed are not reflected in the figures.

It is worth noting that the volume of complaints has increased across the sector creating further pressure on capacity to respond on time. We note a 41% increase in complaint numbers to the end of January 2022. The Housing Ombudsman report covering October to December 2021 shows an increase 53% in the volume of enquiries and complaints received compared to the same quarter in 2020. In SWT November saw the highest number of complaints received during the month (43 Nov 2021 28 Nov 2020).

A detailed report into response rates by team has been completed and actions are in place to improve response times. The result of this work can be seen in January's figure of 68%.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Customer					
% of new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property	85%	82%	100%	100%	86%

During October, November and December satisfaction surveys were conducted with all new tenants. Satisfaction remains high. Survey results are from 19 tenants who responded "satisfied or very satisfied" in October, 23 in November and 14 in December.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Customer					
% of tenants satisfied with most recent repair	85%	78%	90%	86%	93%

We continue to use an electronic questionnaire sent to repair customers as soon as the repair completes. There is a technical problem (currently being fixed) that prevents up to date mobile numbers populating this area of the system but where we can send surveys we do so. We are also investigating other software to improve our survey distribution as we don't have resource to manually complete surveys (satisfaction with repairs will form part of the wide STAR/TSM survey completed later this year). Over the three months Oct-Dec 2021 29, 28 and 16 responses were received.

At the TSG meeting in January we were asked to specify numbers of surveys going out, this is not available retrospectively but in January 282 surveys were sent and 28 responded with 85% satisfaction (which is 9.9% response rate).

Results returned indicate that we are exceeding target for our levels of satisfaction where surveys are completed (it is acknowledged that not all tenants are currently receiving surveys it is restricted to mobile users with access to internet via their phone). It is encouraging to note that those who choose to respond are responding positively.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Customer					
Number of compliments received	n/a	n/a	5	9	12

We have been receiving a steady number of compliments recorded formally since July 2020.

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Customer					
Overall tenant satisfaction (STAR results)	82%	81%	83%	83%	83%

Our STAR survey during November/December 2020 recorded 83% tenancy satisfaction overall. This is an improvement on our satisfaction rating recorded in 2018 which was 81% and exceeds the target of 82%. Two years ago, our target was to improve satisfaction and we have achieved that in our latest survey. We will survey again during 2022.

3.5 Rent Recovery

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Operations					
Rent Recovery					
Income collected as a % of rent owed excluding arrears brought forward	99%	98%	98.84%	98.74%	101.14%
Total number of all evictions	n/a	n/a	0	0	0

The performance is back on target by December 2021. Rent arrears at the end of December 2021 were reported as £724,499.70 which is 2.7% of rents owed.

There have been 2 evictions since April 2021, both are due to rent arrears.

3.6 Supported Housing

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Operations					
Supported Housing					
Sheltered housing - % of tenants receiving annual reviews of support plans	100%	99%	99.0%	98.8%	98.8%

Our performance continues at just below 100% reporting 98.8% (this shortfall represents 11 tenancies). We are confident that vulnerable tenants are receiving regular contact based on a current assessment of their need.

3.7 Lettings and Voids

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Operations					
Lettings and Voids					
Average re-let time in calendar days (key to key)	44	48	64.8	60.7	43.9

This performance indicator is widely used by housing providers, and the target has been set to reflect national best practice however many providers are reporting increasing voids turnaround times. There remains a higher proportion of major voids (which are properties requiring extensive work prior to relet).

A plan to improve turn around times is in place and includes:

- Strengthening our approach with departing tenants to ensure they leave the property clean and tidy
- Providing decoration packs for able-bodied tenants, rather than undertaking full redecoration to let the property quicker
- Investigating how we streamline the asbestos process to reduce delays due to surveys and works
- Implementation of the voids module on Open Housing which will allow improved performance management of the overall voids process
- Look to undertake major capital works as part of the capital programme where possible, after the tenant moves in, rather than during the void. This will also be more cost effective through economies of scale.
- We will undertake a 'deep dive' review with Homes in Sedgemoor to compare approaches and share best practice
- Explore voids inspections and scheduling software that can lead to a more efficient inspection and scheduling of trades staff into the properties and flag up capacity issues to allow earlier resolution.

The target of 44 days was set in December 2020 for the current financial year and was based on Quarter 2 Housemark metrics that showed a median performance of 44.5 days for District Councils that held housing stock at that time. Since then, Housemark data showed that the District Council average void turnaround time had increased to 49.8 days by Quarter 4 of 2020/21 (and no doubt has continued to further increase this year) due to scarcity of key trades people and supply problems and sickness rates due to Covid.

The Housing Management team also reviews wider performance indicators to give a rounded view of performance with respect to letting of properties. The Pulse statistical data for September 2021 places us in the top quartile for the indicators "Proportion of dwellings vacant, but available to let", and only marginally outside of top quartile performance for 'Proportion of social homes let', so our performance overall does give us some confidence that although improvement is required, we are not significantly out of step with other Housing Providers.

3.8 Housing Repairs

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Operations					
Housing Repairs					
Completion of housing emergency repairs within 24 hours	100%	95%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Data for this indicator is taken from Open Contractor software system (which is used to hold repair jobs against the core property database). As reported, this data is unfortunately temporarily not currently available for non emergency repair reporting purposes. A detailed validation process has established that there are a number of data and software issues which are being progressed with our software providers we hope to be able to report this data as soon as possible. We are confident that this is a data reporting issue and that our service delivery of repairs in the context of Covid restrictions remains good.

It should, however, be noted that all housing emergency repairs have continued to be undertaken during the Covid lockdown periods and there are no backlog emergency repairs outstanding. To support this view a manual exercise to reconcile the emergency jobs is now ongoing and has confirmed 100% attendance for emergency jobs.

It should also be noted that internal housing non-emergency repairs were placed on hold during the latest Covid lockdown period and that a backlog of these jobs has therefore inevitably arisen. MD group have been contracted to assist clearing the backlog.

3.9 Tenancy Management

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Operations					
Tenancy Management					
Total new ASB cases in the month	n/a	n/a	9	6	4
Total number of ASB cases that were closed in the month	n/a	n/a	21	10	0
Number of ASB cases open on the last day of the month	n/a	n/a	66	62	66
Number safeguarding referrals	n/a	n/a	2	0	1

ASB - These figures represent “high level” ASB cases opened and closed in the month. We are content with our performance in this area but ideally would like the numbers to be as low as possible. Work has commenced to start recording lower-level nuisance/ASB cases so that these can be reported and provide a more detailed picture of nuisance/ASB on estates.

During the November Tenants’ Strategic Group meeting more detailed data was reported in response to requests for more data showing the number of ASB cases open over 3, 6 and 12 months. It is acknowledged that we have seen an increase in the number, complexity and severity of ASB cases over the last 12 months.

In the January meeting TSG requested more information on our current open cases, this will be reported to the TSG as an action point response but in summary - January 2022 open cases were 39 (10 of which have been open for more than 12 months and detail is will be provided as part of the action point response).

Safeguarding – We currently raise low numbers of safeguarding referrals to Somerset County Council. This quarter we have made 3 referrals. Where we do have concerns, we will frequently help to address these through a multi-agency approach to provide the required support and interventions to the affected households. We are launching awareness and training in the Council to ensure that all incidents are identified and managed within policy (this was delayed due to trainer falling ill with Covid).

3.10 Compliance

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Operations					
Compliance					
% of housing dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate (LGSR)	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
% of housing communal areas with a valid electrical safety certificate (EICR)	100%	n/a	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

We are pleased to report 100% compliance in these areas.

3.11 Development

Indicator	Target 2021-22	Amber Threshold	Oct-21	Nov-21	Dec-21
Operations					
Development					
Number of SWT HRA new home completions since April 2019	1000 by 2049	20 per year	62	62	62

62 new homes have completed since April 2019, the performance indicates this cumulative number of homes built. Contractors are now onsite delivering 47 new properties in North Taunton. In June 2021 planning permission was secured for 54 new

homes at Seaward Way in Minehead and we started on site January 2022.

4 Finance Performance

- 4.1 This report provides an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the financial year 2021/22 (as at 31 December 2021).
- 4.2 The current HRA **Revenue Budget** forecast is a projected overspend of £354k.
- 4.3 The revenue position remains under significant pressure as it continues to be affected by the ongoing impact of COVID and operating within an environment of economic recovery. The service has had a backlog of responsive and planned maintenance and compliance works to deliver. Costs have escalated in terms of materials, staffing, and servicing costs. Future financial pressures are still to be confirmed in terms of staff pay award, income collection, cost of implementing regulatory changes, and the cost of implementing a unitary authority. A thorough analysis of risks and uncertainties facing the HRA has been undertaken and careful monitoring of these will continue for early indications of further financial pressures.
- 4.4 Whilst best endeavours to forecast with as much accuracy as possible we have seen a historical change in forecasts each quarter and to year end. However, it is essential that control over spending continues to reduce the forecast overspend and maintain adequate reserves.
- 4.5 Since the Q1 report the housing senior management team have taken steps to better control expenditure, to undertake the capitalisation of some improvement works' costs and to maximise income to try to contain and reverse our overspend position. For example, voids performance is starting to improve, and an additional 50 garages have been let in recent months. Since the Q2 report there has been ongoing movements in the projections in particular some below the line treasury and corporate changes, which have had a mixture of positive and negative impacts on the forecast. The overall trend from Q1 to Q3 is a slightly improved position.
- 4.6 Members will be aware that budget setting for 2022/23 has been challenging, where some budgets required re-basing especially around repairs and maintenance, and consequently the service will be pursuing efficiency targets into next financial year and beyond. Whilst steps will continue to be taken to further control our 2021/22 forecast, it is also acknowledged that some solutions will take some time to deliver and that we are operating at a higher operating costs base particularly in the short term which has influenced our in year position.
- 4.7 There is currently sufficient capacity in general reserves to cover new in-year pressures identified to date and the current forecast outturn position.
- 4.8 The **unearmarked reserves** are projected to be £2.708m which is £708k above the recommended minimum balance of £2m.

- 4.9 The **earmarked reserves** opening balance is £1.1m. Of this £1.044m has been returned to general reserves to mitigate in-year budget pressures.
- 4.10 The HRA **Capital Programme** has a total approved budget of £118m. The profiled budgeted spend for 2021/22 is £29m and this is currently forecast to underspend in the year by £16.257m; £13.332m due to slippage of work into 2022/23 and £2.925m budget to be returned.

Democratic Path:

- **Housing Briefing – 1st March 2022**
- **Tenants Strategic Board – 28th March 2022**

Reporting Frequency: Quarterly

Contact Officers

Name	Shari Hallett and Kerry Prisco
Direct Dial	01823 219425
Email	s.hallett@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants Strategic Group – 28th March 2022

2021/22 Housing Tenant Satisfaction Measures and STAR Survey

This matter is the responsibility of Councillor Smith, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Report Author: Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager)

1 Executive Summary

1.1 This report provides:

- Awareness of the TSM (tenant satisfaction measurement) requirement from RSH which is currently in consultation and our preparations for TSM formal submission.
- Awareness of next steps in relation to STAR survey due to be undertaken in SWT by the end of 2022.

2 Recommendations

2.1 To note and comment on content of the report in particular recommendations below paragraphs 2.2 through to 2.5.

2.2 We propose to use the TSM (tenant satisfaction measurement) survey questions and replace the STAR survey questions that were due to be asked of tenants by December 2022. Two six monthly pilot surveys are proposed using 12 perception questions plus at least three additional questions. The final questions list to be agreed with HSMT (Housing Senior Management Team) but this will include the TSM question set which is found appendix D for information.

- a) The initial survey will cover TSM measures and meet technical requirements of [TSM consultation document \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) Annex 2 with the addition of our own questions. The second survey will use the agreed measures once the TSM consultation finishes and the regulator publishes its final question set.
- b) Tenant Newsletter will advise tenants that we will use “Acuity” as our survey provider and calls will be made to tenants during May and November of 2022.

2.3 A separate leasehold survey to be developed in conjunction with Leasehold Officer (based on previous STAR questions) and costed.

3 Background

- 3.1 SWT have historically completed the STAR survey every two years. This was last completed Dec 2020 and is next due by end of 2022. This has historically been completed with all tenants and leaseholders.
- 3.2 The RSH have published their consultation document (link appendix A) for the introduction of Tenant Satisfaction Measures. 22 measures 12 of which are perception measures (see Appendix A – TP1-TP12).
- 3.3 The requirement is for an annual survey (4.16 of the guidance) of tenants including low cost ownership but excluding leaseholder (4.14 of the guidance see Appendix b) but does includes temporary social housing (9.6). The requirement comes into force 1/4/2023. April 2023-March 2024 will be the first year of TSM data collection. Summer 2024 will be the submission of first year of data. The reporting year runs 1st April -31st March with year end meaning reporting the position as at 31st March (as per LAHS and LADR). Draft timetable appendix C below.
- 3.4 The future of STAR survey is not known but it is likely to be replaced by the TSM which will be an annual regulatory return.
- 3.5 Boards and governing bodies of local authority registered providers are to ensure TSM calculated accurately and in accordance with regulatory requirements.

4 Findings

- 4.1 There is a requirement for SWT to be prepared for TSM and be ready to:
 - Collect and report data in accordance with requirements
 - Report perception data
 - Submit to regulator
 - Publish data in timely, clear and easily accessed by tenants – including survey approach. (Regulator will also publish.)
 - Meet our own requirement to consult tenants either through STAR or other means.
- 4.2 Quotations have been sought from Acuity for 1/4ly and 6 monthly surveys. Costs for 15 question surveys are comparable. 1/4ly surveys are completed by HiS and reported to their board 6 monthly. HiS report that quarterly surveying is onerous and only reported to their board 6 monthly. 6 monthly pilot surveys are being suggested at SWT as it will give us our first baseline in May 2022 followed by November 2022.

Quarterly timescales of surveys

ACTION	Data file provided	Telephone fieldwork (2 weeks)	Quarterly outputs: topline results and online	Quarterly outputs: written report
Q1 22/23	25 April 22	3 to 14 May	16 May	27 May
Q2 22/23	25 July	1 to 13 August	15 August	26 August
Q3 22/23	24 October	1 to 12 November	14 November	25 November
Q4 22/23	23 Jan 23	1 to 11 February	13 February	24 February

6 monthly timescales of surveys

ACTION	Data file provided	Telephone fieldwork (2 weeks)	Topline results and online	Written report
W1 22/23	2 May	9-21 May	23 May	3 Jun
W2 22/23	7 Nov	14-26 Nov	28 Nov	9 Dec

- 4.3 The RSH (regulator for social housing) regulatory approach is that TSM data will be one source of assurance alongside a number of other sources. They do not intend to use TSM data in isolation to enforce compliance with consumer standards (6.8).

5 Considerations

- 5.1 The TSM are new measures, an annual survey end of 2022-3 may be too late to understand and respond to survey responses before having to collect for RSH. A six monthly pilot survey gives us one base line response in May and a follow up in November 2022 (which can include questions that may change after the consultation, final questions planned summer 2022). Normally surveys are conducted once every two years, so this will also show us our resource requirements of completing surveys more frequently, as well as new annual cost.
- 5.2 SWT have a number of important priorities to progress during 2022-3 as set out in Directorate Plan therefore further action planning on a quarterly basis may not be best use of resources during 2022-3. The pilot will also show if annual survey is sufficient.
- 5.3 RSH propose that leaseholders are not part of this collection. Budget currently is only sufficient to cover costs for tenants and funding will need to be established for formal consultation with leaseholders.
- 5.4 The satisfaction measures will not include specific Development, Enabling, Strategy, Homefinder or Homeless perception. Our development activities will reflect in our satisfaction scores in relation to neighbourhoods and quality of the home once tenanted properties. The regulator acknowledges that the TSM are not intended to cover all aspects of a registered provider's performance.
- 5.5 Recommendations shown in para 2 above.

Democratic Path:

- Housing Briefing – 1st March 2022

- Tenants Strategic Board – 28th March 2022

Reporting Frequency: Ad-hoc report

Contact Officers

Name	Shari Hallett
Direct Dial	01823 219425
Email	s.hallett@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Appendix A

[TSM consultation document \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Theme	Code	Issue
Overall satisfaction	TP01	Overall satisfaction
Keeping Properties in Good Repair	RP01	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard
	RP02	Repairs completed within target timescale
	TP02	Satisfaction with repairs
	TP03	Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair
Maintaining Building Safety	BS01	Gas safety checks
	BS02	Fire safety checks
	BS03	Asbestos safety checks
	BS04	Water safety checks
	BS05	Lift safety checks
	TP04	Satisfaction that the home is well maintained and safe to live in
Effective Handling of Complaints	CH01	Complaints relative to the size of the landlord
	CH02	Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code
	TP11	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of complaints
	TP12	Tenant knowledge of how to make a complaint
Respectful and Helpful Engagement	TP05	Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
	TP06	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
	TP07	Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect
Responsible neighbourhood management	NM01	Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord
	TP08	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean, safe and well maintained
	TP09	Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
	TP10	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of anti-social behaviour

Appendix B

- 4.14 Where relevant, TSM data must be collected for low cost rental accommodation (LCRA) and low cost home ownership accommodation (LCHO). These terms are defined in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 (the Act)⁶. Due to our regulatory remit, we propose that leasehold⁷ homes are not included within the TSM data. We are also proposing that any homes that are non-social housing, or only social housing by virtue of legacy⁸ provisions in the Act, are not included in the TSMs. For the purposes of this document, the term 'tenant' refers to any resident of LCRA or LCHO homes owned by a provider.

Appendix C

Proposed timing	Anticipated activity
3 March 2022	TSM consultation closes. Responses submitted after that date may not be considered.
March 2022 – Summer 2022	The regulator analyses and considers consultation responses. Any drafting changes to the TSM documents would be made at this stage ¹³ .
Summer 2022	The regulator publishes a decision statement, ¹⁴ together with a final version of the regulatory
Autumn 2022 - Spring 2023	Registered providers prepare systems for the collection of TSM data.
1 April 2023	Regulator's requirements (i.e., the TSM documents) come into force.
April 2023 - March 2024	Registered providers collect first year of TSM data.
Summer 2024	Registered providers submit their TSM data to the regulator for the first year.
Autumn 2024	The regulator aims to publish registered providers' TSM data.

- 10.5 For the reasons given, it is proposed that transactional surveys would not be permitted for the calculation of these TSMs. We understand that some registered providers find value in carrying out transactional surveys for their own information and we think it is important to make clear that they would remain free to collect in this way for their own use.

Appendix D

TSM		Survey question wording
TP0 1	Overall satisfaction	‘Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by [your landlord]?’
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied
TP0 2	Satisfaction with repairs	‘Has [your landlord] carried out a repair to your home in the last 12 months?’
		Response options: Yes / No
		If yes, ‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the repairs service you have received to your home from [your landlord] over the last 12 months?’
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied
TP0 3	Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	‘Has [your landlord] carried out a repair to your home in the last 12 months?’
		Response options: Yes / No
		If yes, ‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the time taken to complete your most recent repair after you reported it?’
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied
TP0 4	Satisfaction that the home is well maintained and safe to live in	‘Thinking specifically about the building you live in ... How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that [your landlord] provides a home that is well maintained and safe for you to live in?’
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied + Not applicable / don't know
TP0 5	Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the extent to which [your landlord] listens to your views and acts upon them?’
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied + Not applicable / don't know
TP0 6	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	‘How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way [your landlord] keeps you informed about things that matter to you as a tenant?’
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied + Not applicable / don't know

TP0 7	Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following "my landlord treats me fairly and with respect"?'
		Response options: Strongly agree to Strongly disagree + Not applicable / don't know
TP0 8	Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean, safe and well maintained	'Do you live in a building with communal areas, either inside or outside, that you share with other people who live in the building?
		Response options: Yes / No
		If yes, 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that [your landlord] keeps these communal areas clean, safe and well maintained?'
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied + Not applicable / don't know
TP0 9	Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	Lead option: Thinking about what your landlord does to improve your
		neighbourhood as a place to live...'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the extent to which [your landlord] makes a positive contribution to your neighbourhood?'
		Alternative option: 'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?'
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied + Not applicable / don't know
TP1 0	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of anti-social behaviour	'How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with [your landlord]'s approach to handling anti-social behaviour?'
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied + Not applicable / don't know
TP1 1	Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of complaints	How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with [your landlord]'s approach to complaints handling?'
		Response options: Very satisfied to Very dissatisfied + Not applicable / don't know
TP1 2	Tenant knowledge of how to make a complaint	'To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following 'I know how to make a complaint to [my landlord] if I am not happy with the service I receive'?'
		Response options: Strongly agree to Strongly disagree + Not applicable / don't know

Additional questions for NPS score, ground maintenance, would you be interested in getting involved, how would you like to be informed of new housing initiatives (understand communication preference).

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – 28th March 2022

Directorate Report

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Housing.

Report Authors: Assistant Directors and Housing Performance Manager

1. Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

The report is to update the Tenants' Strategic Group on work being undertaken and progress made by the Housing Directorate since the last TSG meeting in September 2021.

2. Recommendations

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note this report and are invited to ask questions.

3. Background and Full details of the Report

Housing Development and Regeneration Team

HRA New Homes, Housing Strategy and Housing Enabling

- North Taunton Woolaway Project (NTWP) Phase A is progressing with progress on blockwork up to first floor. Equans/Engie continue to

reprofile works to minimise delays caused because of disruption to the material supplies. Immediate highway permissions have been resolved allowing progress on one subphase and permit a road closure. Phase B and Ci decant and buy backs are progressing and the team have successfully purchased the last private dwelling in phase B. The contract for phases B and Ci is being finalised over the next quarter and demolition is timetabled to commence in May. A planning application has been submitted for Phase E, which is the refurbishment phase, and a Social Housing Decarbonisation

Fund grant application has been awarded to help support the cost of these low carbon retrofit homes. It is hoped to appoint contractors for phase E in Spring and for works to start in late Spring.

- The 54 home zero-carbon development at Seaward Way, Minehead, commenced in January. The zero-carbon exemplar scheme which has been featured as a case study in the Good Homes Alliance good practice guide will be complete by October 2024.
- Planning applications for the zero carbon affordable housing schemes, on various sites in Taunton, have been submitted to the local planning authority. These schemes include a phosphate mitigation strategy which is supported by Natural England and the Environment Agency. If the mitigation strategy is approved by the local planning authority the approach could be repeated and create sufficient phosphate credits to support 1000 new homes.
- The service is progressing at pace a low carbon retrofit strategy and delivery plan. The strategy will be considered by the Council late 2022/2023 however the principles will influence a significant SWT Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2 grant application. SWT has been awarded SHDF Wave 1 funding to support a low carbon retrofit of council homes. The three pillars of the emerging strategy are engaging and supporting our customers, fabric first and then, over time, replacing fossil fuels with renewable heat and power provided via onsite, communal, or grid-based systems. The relationship between fuel poverty and low carbon retrofit will be explicitly considered within the strategy.
- New affordable housing in the district is set to see a higher-than-average number of properties completed this financial year. The pipeline of new units is currently at its strongest in the west of the district, which is unaffected by the phosphate mitigation planning requirements.
- The Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy and delivery plan was approved by Full Council in October and Officers are supporting the delivery of new homeless bedspaces through several partners and direct council supply. The council has been awarded £750k through the government Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme to accelerate the new provision.
- The Housing Enabling team are preparing the district for the impact of First Homes which is a government initiative to increase low-cost home ownership.
- We continue to deliver the Hinkley Point C Housing Programme, working with partners to drive forward 11 key areas of work. This programme is providing new bed space in the district and support to vulnerable customers affected by the change in the housing market because of the uplift of workforce at HPC. A housing needs assessment has recently concluded and discussed with Stogursey Parish Council. SWT is facilitating the Council develop a plan to address the affordable housing need. The service has appointed the Citizens Advice Service to extend its debt and money management service throughout the district and increase its outreach work.

Housing Property Team

Responsive Repairs and Void Repairs

- Emergency and non-emergency responsive repairs are being undertaken.
- Emergency jobs are being delivered within our defined timescale (24 hours from logging).
- There remains a backlog of non-emergency jobs. This is reducing following the use of external contractors, and we are continuing with procurement of further external support.
- Void repairs are also being undertaken, although returning the properties back to our Lettings team promptly remains a challenge. This is primarily due to delays in asbestos surveys and works, and the availability of electricians.
- We are also investigating software options to schedule and plan void works to help us improve efficiency in this area.

Property Safety Compliance

- All property safety compliance checks and works continue to be undertaken, despite resource challenges. These include gas safety checks (LGSR's), water risk assessments and remedial works, electrical inspections (EICR's), asbestos surveys and re-inspections, fire risk assessment and remedial works, fire safety checks, and lift and stair-lift checks and remedial works.
- Additional contractors have been engaged to undertake further electrical inspections (EICR's) and associated remedial works continues.
- Property safety compliance procurement activities also continue, with recent tenders including further electrical inspections (EICR's), and additional asbestos management surveys and extending renewing contracts for the coming financial year taking us forward to unitary.
- Weekly compliance and additional review meetings are being held to carefully monitor and manage all these safety critical areas.

Capital Programmes

- Capital Work programmes continue to be undertaken, with recent contracts commencing including roofing and ventilation.
- Procurement activities also continue with recent tenders including fire-safe flooring to flat block communal areas.
- Recruitment for vacant staff positions is underway, with one role now recruited to and shortlisting undertaken for another.

Asset Management

- Following the Open Assets module of our Capita software system going live, post go live work is now underway, including the further development of a suite of bespoke reports and testing of data and functionality following additional data-loading from stock condition and energy surveys.
- Accelerated programmes of Stock Condition Surveys and Energy Assessments continue to take place.
- Capital work programme planning (for both the 2022/23 financial year and forward plans) is being undertaken in conjunction with the Capital programme team.

Housing and Communities Team

Supported Housing (extra care and sheltered)

The officer team has been impacted by Covid, so delivery is concentrating on key tasks:

- The sign-up of new tenants.
- Supporting tenants who are returning home from hospital.
- Health and safety compliance checks at our two extra care schemes including: Kilkenny Court and Lodge Close.
- Carrying out “trusted assessor” visits for those vulnerable tenants who are in urgent need of aids and adaptations to support them within their home.
- Carrying out health and safety checks at sheltered housing schemes.
- Responding to general customer enquiries reported via the service’s Firmstep computer system; and
- Responding to Deane Helpline issues where the tenants have not responded to their usual monitoring call out.

Lettings

- The Lettable Standard document has now been to HMST and was discussed with Tenants Action Group on 21st January 2020. Work continues to develop the TAG voids viewing properties when they are returned to SWT (Somerset West & Taunton), prior to them being relet. Training will be required for Tenants Action Group members on health and safety. Next meeting on 31st March
- 304 properties have been re-let year to date (April to January).
- Customer satisfaction (year to date) is running at 98%. Monthly figure of 93% 31 properties were re-let in January.

Income

- We now have a full team of Rent Recovery case managers. The team continue to work in accordance with the Lean Process and are engaging with tenants to reduce their arrears.
- The Debt and Benefit Officers are now holding surgeries again. They are held in Priorswood Resource Centre every other Tuesday and The Link Centre every Thursday. We will be monitoring how well these are used and will be looking for other venues in the future.
- We are discussing a plan to engage with our tenants for the updating of their rent in Universal Credit in April, it is likely we will send text messages and put information on social media as well as supporting our vulnerable tenants on a 1-2-1 basis.

Tenancy/Estates & ASB

- We have been successful with our recruitment in January and have offered three candidates positions within our Tenancy and Estate Teams. We anticipate all three will be in post by the middle/end of March. This will be the first time since transformation that we have a full permanent team in place and will give us the best possible start for the new financial year.
- Due to the recent extreme weather, we have dealt with a family whose property was damaged by a large tree that was on neighbouring land; we co-ordinated our efforts with our other colleagues in repairs and open spaces and the landowner and within four days the property was deemed to be structurally sound for the family to return.
- The team are also noticing that as we are moving out of Covid that several vulnerable tenants are having to be safeguarded, due to self-neglect and serious mental health issues. This work does take time as we must work closely with a range of multi agencies partners to ensure that we get the right support plans in place for the tenant to continue to sustain their tenancies.
- The team are now working to being 100% compliant with sterile blocks.
- As a team we have now seen a dramatic drop in complaints about the service and we hope to continue making improvements for this to continue to be the case.
- ASB - In January, the team closed over 30 outstanding cases; and currently working with 39 open cases – 10 of which have been ongoing for longer than 12 months. One of the cases is being progressed into Court and the ASB Case Manager is working closely with SHAPE legal. The others are complex neighbour nuisances' cases with two or more households involved.

- The team are also actively working with our multi-agency partners to address the youth gang culture that has been ongoing in Taunton for several months. We are engaging with our families and the children social services getting the tenants and the youths involved to sign up to acceptable behaviour contracts which is a non-legal method of getting them to change their behaviour. These contracts are then monitored closely by the multi-agency partners.

Housing Performance Team Housing Performance Team (Shari Hallett)

- We continue to support the work of the Tenants Strategic Group and Tenants' Action Group.
- The Tenants' Action Group met to consider grant applications and will be making their awards shortly from their Child and Youth Initiative Fund.
- Posters have been designed and distributed inviting new members to join the Tenants' Action Group, articles also appear in every newsletter.
- A "kiosk" (screen with internet access) has been funded for the Priorswood Community Centre; installation date scheduled for March 2022.
- The damp and mould group for tenants continues to meet and make progress.
- The tenants' spring newsletter is being designed ready to print and arrive on doorsteps in March.
- Internally we continue to support the meetings that provide us good governance of our activities e.g., programme meeting, performance meeting, risk meeting, etc.
- Our assessment against the white paper has commenced
- Monthly House mark Pulse data is submitted so that we can benchmark with other housing providers.
- We are working with Homes in Sedgemoor on local government reorganisation workstreams.
- The policy review work with the HQN (Housing Quality Network) has commenced.
- We have received the final report from Abri Employment Support Services (formerly known as Inspired to Achieve) who have provided employment support to Somerset West and Taunton tenants from February 2016 until January 31st, 2022. They have received 668 referrals to the scheme over 6 years and have engaged with 440 tenants. Over the six years there have been 135 employment outcomes for SWT tenants.
- The Somerset West and Taunton Community employment hubs offer bespoke individual support towards work for anyone whether employed, unemployed or facing redundancy or those who wish to upskill or thinking about a career change. The scheme that Abri was running has now been passed to the SWT Community Employment Hubs which are coordinated up by Georgie Bowden and Lolanda Tocco and supported by a team of trained volunteers. We are planning to have 5 new hubs open for face-to-face appointments in Wellington, Taunton, Priorswood and Halcon by the 17th April. The Youth Hub is already operational in Minehead (16-25 yr. olds). Throughout covid the

Hubs have been providing support via online and telephone and this will continue in addition to the face to face (appointment) sessions

4. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

5. Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications directly to do with this report?

There are no financial implications directly to do with the recommendations in this report

6: Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

7. Are there any Data Protection Implications?

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report

Name of Contact Officers: Shari Hallett

Telephone number: 07557 003944

Email address: s.hallett@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

