



PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date: Thursday 6 June 2019

Time: 5.30 pm

Venue: Rennes Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business.

If you have an enquiry regarding any items on this agenda, please contact Howard Bassett, Democratic Services Officer (Committees) on 01392 265107.

Entry to the Civic Centre can be gained through the Customer Service Centre, Paris Street.

Membership -

Councillors Vizard (Chair), Wardle (Deputy Chair), Begley, Foggin, Moore, J, Newby, Oliver, Pattison, Pierce and Quance, I

Agenda

Part I: Items suggested for discussion with the press and public present

1 Apologies

To receive apologies for absence from Committee members.

2 Minutes

To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2019.

(Pages 5 -
8)

3 Declaration of Interests

Councillors are reminded of the need to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests that relate to business on the agenda and which have not already been included in the register of interests, before any discussion takes place on the item. Unless the interest is sensitive, you must also disclose the nature of the interest. In accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, you must then leave the room and must not participate in any further discussion of the item.

Councillors requiring clarification should seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer prior to the day of the meeting.

4 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 - Exclusion of Press and Public

It is considered that the Committee would be unlikely to exclude the press and public during consideration of the items on this agenda, but if it should wish to do so, the following resolution should be passed:-

RECOMMENDED that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting of the particular item(s) on the grounds that it (they) involve(s) the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

5 Questions from the Public under Standing Order 19

Details of questions should be notified to the Corporate Manager Democratic and Civic Support at least three working days prior to the meeting. Further information and a copy of the procedure are available from Democratic Services (Committees) (Tel: 01392 265115) and also on the Council web site - <https://exeter.gov.uk/councillorsfaq/>

6 Questions from Members of the Council under Standing Order 20

To receive questions from Members of the Council to appropriate Portfolio Holders.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

7 Housing Revenue Account - 2018/19 Budget Monitoring Report - Outturn

To consider the report of the Chief Financial Officer. (Pages 9 - 26)

8 People - 2018/19 Budget Monitoring Report - Outturn

To consider the report of the Chief Financial Officer. (Pages 27 - 36)

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE EXECUTIVE

9 Empty Homes Strategy - 2019-2022

To consider the report of the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager/Director (JY) (Pages 37 - 64)

10 Adoption of Hoarding Policy in Council Properties Policy

To consider the report of the Service Lead Housing Tenancy Services. (Pages 65 - 78)

Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee will be held on **Wednesday 26 June 2019** at 5.30 pm in the Civic Centre.

Find out more about Exeter City Council services by looking at our web site <http://www.exeter.gov.uk>. This will give you the dates of all future Committee meetings and tell you how you can ask a question at a Scrutiny Committee meeting. Alternatively, contact the Democratic Services Officer (Committees) on (01392) 265107 for further information.

Follow us:

www.twitter.com/ExeterCouncil

www.facebook.com/ExeterCityCouncil

Individual reports on this agenda can be produced in large print on request to Democratic Services (Committees) on 01392 265107.

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 2

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 7 March 2019

Present:

Councillor Wardle (Chair)

Councillors Foale, Holland, Owen, Pattison, Pierce, Robson and Vizard N

Apologies:

Councillors

Also present:

Director (BA), Service Lead Housing Needs & Homelessness, Service Lead Housing Assets, Principal Accountant Corporate, Technical Accounting Manager and Democratic Services Officer

In Attendance:

8

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of People Scrutiny Committee held on 10 January 2019 were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

9

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests were made.

10

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 19

None

11

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 20

None.

12

HRA BUDGET MONITORING TO DECEMBER 2018

The Technical Accounting Manager advised Members of any major differences, by management unit between the approved budget and the outturn forecast for the first nine months of the financial year up to 31 December 2018 in respect of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Council's new build schemes. An outturn update in respect of the HRA Capital Programme was also incorporated in the report in order to help provide a comprehensive financial update in respect of the Housing Revenue Account.

During this period, the total budget variances indicated that there would be a net deficit of £396,482 in 2018/19. This represented a significant movement of £3.7 million compared to the budgeted deficit of £4.1 million for 2018/19 with, most notably, £3.2 million attributable to a reduction in the revenue contribution required to finance in-year capital expenditure due to the extent of slippage in the programme. Delays with the St Loyes Extra Care scheme and LAINGS refurbishment accounted for a large part of this year's capital slippage. This meant that the HRA was forecast to take out £0.4 million from its working balance, rather than taking £4.1 million out of its working balance at the end of the financial year in order to balance its revenue account.

The current HRA Capital Programme showed a total forecast spend of £7,431,100 compared the £14,871,217 revised programme, a reduction of £7,440,117.

The Service Lead Housing Assets updated Members on progress with the extensive procurement programme and on the Mears contract specifically, the outstanding response repairs in respect of the latter having reduced from 200 in December 2018 to 86 currently. He confirmed that regular meetings were being held at a high level and on site with the Mears Management Team to ensure the continued effective delivery of all contract requirements and that the local Mears team were engaging effectively. He reported a good level of resident satisfaction being reported through the key performance indicators used to help manage the contract. Work was continuing on the procurement process for a new contract and, following a Stakeholder Day held with Members and staff on 28 February 2019, an options appraisal paper was being prepared which would evaluate all potential delivery models and propose the optimum service structure for the Council.

He reported that both the Extra Care Scheme and the Laings refurbishment should be delivered by Autumn 2020 and that it was the intention of continuing with the garden assisted scheme and the procurement of the service for 2019/20 had been completed. He outlined the features of the zero carbon energy project (Zebcat), confirming that EU funding had been secured, since the time of writing the report. Following the Government's decision to remove the HRA debt cap, officers and an advisory group of Members, were developing plans for the HRA's new-build programme including evaluating the potential of all sites with a report back to this Committee in due course.

People Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

13

PEOPLE BUDGET MONITORING TO DECEMBER 2018

The Principal Accountant advised Members of any material differences, by management unit between the approved budget and the outturn forecast for the first nine months of the financial year up to 31 December 2019 in respect of People Services. An outturn update in respect of the People Capital Programme was also incorporated in the report in order to help provide a comprehensive financial update in respect of the People Services budget.

The current forecast suggested that net expenditure would increase from the approved budget by a total of £94,000 after transfers from reserves and revenue contributions to capital. This represented a variation of 2.67% from the revised budget and included a supplementary budget of £580,000.

Members were advised that, with a largely full employment situation in Exeter, it was necessary to utilise temporary and agency staff but that it was important to

balance the cost of this with maintaining services. It was also noted that the Housing Needs team was now at full strength. In response to a Member's question regarding how empty homes were brought back into use, the Director (BA) advised that she understood that a report on the Empty Homes Strategy would be presented by the Environmental Health and Licensing Manager to this Committee.

People Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

14

HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY UPDATE

The Director (BA) introduced the presentation in the context of the Council having received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) funding of £481,600 for 2018/19 and £444,260 for 2019/2020.

The Service Lead, Housing Needs and Homelessness spoke to the presentation advising that the former Exeter and Teignbridge Five Year Joint Homelessness Strategy had been amended to separate action plans as a result of devolved management and independent housing advice structures. The presentation covered the Rough Sleeping Initiative eight work streams of the Night Shelter, Housing First Project, the Tenancy Ready Scheme, shared Housing Projects, resettlement from Hostel, discretionary placements, mental health clinics and a rough Sleeping Co-ordinator. Rough sleeping figures for Exeter and the South West were provided and he referred to additional funding streams for the Rapid Rehousing Pathway Fund including the funding of navigators to support individuals and funding for a Local Lettings Agency scheme with St. Petrocks charity and the Private Rented Access Fund for increasing access to private rented tenancies.

The Complex Lives Co-ordinator detailed the achievements of the Rough Sleepers Initiative referring to case studies. Because of the complexity of needs of many of the individual rough sleepers for whom housing was secured, the success rate was around one or two out of ten who did not revert to rough sleeping. She commended the work of the support workers at the Night Shelter, reporting that it was regrettable that the year two funding did not include funds to continue with an additional hostel resettlement worker at Gabriel House.

The achievements and future plans of the Homelessness Strategy were set out, the revised Strategy to concentrate on delivering a strategy for Exeter and identifying what is needed to reduce homelessness in the city over the next two years, consultation on which would commence in the Spring with statutory partners, providers and Exeter's voluntary sector as well as departments within the Council to ensure that there is support across the city for the future. Members commended the Homelessness Team on the work undertaken and urged officers to look at further ways of publicising this work which would better inform the public.

The Service Lead Housing Needs and Homelessness explained the local connection criteria which were based on MHCLG guidance emphasising that the City Council did not passport homeless people to other areas. Responding to queries, he referred to how the service responded to those presenting themselves as homeless including those from outside the area and it was noted that any potential consultation on the local connection criteria with other partners including the Devon Partnership NHS Trust and Devon County Council was likely to be independent of general consultations regarding the revised Homelessness Strategy.

Details of the Duty to Refer including figures were provided. Briefing of organisations would continue including work with the A&E department to identify ways in which they can make referrals, contacts with Exeter GP's and a roadshow

with Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care. Additional support to manage referrals from the prison was also being planned through dedicated navigator posts.

Members thanked officers for the informative and comprehensive presentation.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.03 pm)

Chair

DRAFT

Agenda Item 7

REPORT TO: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING: 6 June 2019
REPORT OF: Chief Finance Officer
TITLE: 2018/19 HRA Budget Monitoring Report – Outturn

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

No

1. What is the report about?

To advise Members of any major differences, by management unit, between the approved budget and the outturn for the financial year up to 31 March 2019 in respect of the Housing Revenue Account and the Council's new build schemes.

An outturn update in respect of the HRA Capital Programme is also incorporated into this report in order to help provide a comprehensive financial update in respect of the Housing Revenue Account.

2. Recommendations:

That Members of People Scrutiny Committee note the content of this report in order to be satisfied that prudent steps are being taken to address any areas with significant variances, as highlighted in this report.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

The Housing Revenue Account is a statutory account and local housing authorities have a duty to keep an HRA in accordance with proper accounting practices and to review the account throughout the year. Members are presented with a quarterly financial update in respect of the HRA and this is the final update for 2018-19.

4. What are the equality and diversity impacts of this decision?

As this report does not call for a decision, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

5. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

The financial resources required to deliver both housing services to Council tenants and to invest in new and existing housing stock during 2018-19 are set out in the body of this report.

6. Section 151 Officer comments:

The outturn performance demonstrates the impact that the capital programme has on budgeting for the Housing Revenue Account. Delays in significant projects have a significant impact on the Account, however work is now underway on the major schemes. The medium term financial plan does provide for the working balance to reduce over the period.

7. What are the legal aspects?

The Housing Revenue Account is framed by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. This Act created the ring-fence and the structure within which the HRA operates and covers

the detailed operation of the HRA, including the credits (income) and debits (expenditure) which make up the account.

8. Monitoring Officer Comments:

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

9. Report Details:

HRA FINAL ACCOUNTS TO 31 MARCH 2019

9.1 Background to the HRA

The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) records expenditure and income relating to council dwellings and the provision of services to tenants. Housing authorities have a statutory duty to maintain a HRA account, which is primarily a landlord account, in order to account to their tenants for income and expenditure on council housing separately from other functions and services of the Council.

9.2 Key Variances from Budget

The 2018-19 financial year has ended with an overall net deficit of £186,889. This represents a significant movement of £3.9m compared to the budgeted deficit of £4.1m for 2018-19 with, most notably, £3.2m relating to a reduction in the revenue contribution required to finance in-year capital expenditure due to the extent of slippage in the programme. Delays with the Extra Care scheme and LAINGS refurbishment account for a large part of this year's capital slippage.

A projected under-spend of £3.7m has previously been reported People Scrutiny Committee as part of the quarterly budget monitoring updates. The variances in the final quarter of the financial year have therefore resulted in further savings of £0.2m. The reasons for this and the main deviations from budget for the financial year are set out below. Please also refer to Appendix 1.

Budget Heading	Forecast Outturn Budget Variance at Quarter 3 (Under)/Overspend	Actual Budget Variance (Under)/Overspend
Approved Budgeted Deficit		£4,097,145
Budget Variances by Management Unit:		
Management Costs	(£57,000)	(£170,875)
Officer Responsible: Service Lead – Housing Tenancy Services & Service Lead – Housing Assets		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• £100K additional consultancy costs in respect of procurement, as part of a Council-wide action plan to strengthen procurement arrangements. A temporary HRA Procurement Manager has developed a procurement strategy focused on housing assets including full compliance of all contracts and contract management capacity building within existing teams.• (£30K) savings in employee costs, partly due to two temporary IT System Officers starting in August, in order to help implement the new Housing Management system and a vacant Older Persons Property Services Officer post.		

- (£61k) Reduced support service recharges to Housing General Management. However, this is partially offset by an additional legal services recharge to Housing Customers in accordance with timesheet information.
- (£40k) Staff training on the new Housing Management System will be deferred until next financial year, ahead of its planned implementation in early 2020.
- (£45k) Saving in respect of resident involvement, as significant spend has been pending a review of the existing Resident Involvement Strategy. The appointment of a temporary Resident Involvement Officer from mid-February will support the co-ordination, development and delivery of both resident involvement and community development services.
- (£86k) Reflects a combination of smaller savings arising from; the updating of a range of tenant and leaseholder handbooks being deferred to 2019/20, additional income from solar panel installations and an accounting adjustment to the bad debt provision for sundry HRA debts.

Housing Customers	(£23,000)	(£86,573)
-------------------	-----------	-----------

Officer Responsible: Service Lead – Housing Tenancy Services

- (£38k) Savings in employee costs due to vacant posts within the Housing Customers team
- (£35k) The cost of decanting tenants to enable asbestos removal works to be undertaken were lower than anticipated, as two flats were set up to enable a rolling decant to take place in-line with planned works, rather than decanting all tenants simultaneously.
- £62k Additional recharge from legal services in respect of right-to-buy applications and tenancy management matters, which is partially offset by a reduction in time recharged to Housing General Management.
- (£19k) An amalgamation of various minor forecast savings including bank charges, stationery and communal cleaning costs.
- (£57k) Additional income in respect of service charges from leaseholders and council tenants, right to buy administration fees, leasehold flat transfer fees and recovered court costs.

Sundry Land Maintenance	(£81,000)	(£107,270)
-------------------------	-----------	------------

Officer Responsible: Service Lead – Housing Tenancy Services & Service Lead – Housing Assets

- (£87k) A new Tree Manager and Technical Officer (Trees) started in August. Tree works in 2018/19 were therefore lower than budgeted due to the appointments mid-way through the year and allowing time for officers to prioritise works and resolve access issues.
- (£21k) Savings in respect of the Garden Assistance Scheme following lower inflationary rises in contract costs and a lower level of initial cultivations to prepare gardens in advance of moving to the scheme.

Repairs and Maintenance Programme	(£360,000)	(£348,218)
-----------------------------------	------------	------------

Officer Responsible: Service Lead – Housing Assets

This represents a combination of forecast under/overspends, most notably due to:

- (£175k) Planned asbestos removal works to flats were delayed, as two flats made available to temporarily decant tenants were required for other urgent tenant decants, including those affected by fire damage. A lower level of asbestos surveys have also been undertaken as they are largely driven by the kitchen and bathroom replacements programmes, which have been placed on hold for part of the year due to contractor issues.
- £197k Overspend in repair to void properties. Whilst the number of void properties for the year was below recent annual averages, a large number of properties required significant levels of work to return them to a lettable standard. Additionally, an increased level of asbestos survey and removal costs were incurred as the opportunity to carryout whilst properties are empty was taken.
- (£102k) Saving in electrical remedial works, partly due to two vacant Electrician posts. A contractor is planned to be appointed to undertake remedial works arising from electrical testing, which are planned to start in June.
- (£146k) Saving in respect of routine service and maintenance contracts, which predominantly relates to savings in the gas servicing contract. Servicing and associated boiler repair costs have been saved, due to the extent of boiler replacements and that servicing will be due in 12 months' time.
- (£400k) A new contractor for external painting and low maintenance works in respect of flats was appointed from 1 October. An underspend has occurred due to the transition period between the main contractors and mobilisation of the new contractor, for this reason a supplementary budget will be requested to carry forward the budget into 2019/20.
- £250K As reported at Quarter 3, an overspend in respect of general reactive repairs occurred due to a targeted reduction in overdue jobs (from 800 down to less than 100) and additional repairs identified by the Housing Customer Relation Officers following routine property inspections; both assisted by the recruitment to Surveyor posts to oversee the repairs.

Revenue Contribution to Capital	(£3,196,550)	(£3,196,550)
---------------------------------	--------------	--------------

Officer Responsible: Service Lead – Housing Assets

- The amount of revenue monies required towards financing the HRA Capital Programme in 2018-19 has reduced by £3.2m, from £7.2m to £4m.

In March 2014 Executive approved a £2.7m contribution towards the St Lovies Extra Care scheme, which was profiled to be required in 2018-19 but delays to the scheme will mean that significant spend will not take place until 2019-20.

Planned investment in existing stock is also lower than anticipated, predominantly due to delays in the LAINGS project, contractor issues and new contractor mobilisation.

Rents	£100,000	£102,985
Officer Responsible: Service Lead – Housing Tenancy Services & Service Lead Revenues, Benefits and Customer Access		
• A £70k reduction in dwelling rents relates to delays in letting the new units at Chester Long Court. It was anticipated that the units would be fully let during 2018/19. However, the final Building Control inspection identified additional fire safety works, which meant that lettings did not start until December 2018. All units are now let.		
• A £30k reduction in rents relates to garages at Thornpark Rise and Anthony Road that were cleared and sold to Exeter City Living Ltd during the year. Garages at Bovemoors Lane were also cleared ahead of their intended sale in 2019/20 to the new housing development company.		
Capital Charges	£173,887	£173,887
Officer Responsible: not applicable (statutory accounting charge)		
• Depreciation charges are higher than budgeted due to a rise in the valuation of council dwellings.		
Depreciation is a real cost to the HRA as it represents the amount of money which needs to be set aside in the Major Repairs Reserve to provide for future capital works or to repay debt.		
Housing Assets	(£147,000)	(£144,766)
Officer Responsible: Service Lead – Housing Assets		
• (£38k) savings in employee costs due to various vacant posts within the Housing Assets team during the year, including Service Lead – Housing Assets, two 18 month fixed term contract Fire Safety Implementation officers and an Electrician, partially offset by the recent appointment of a Void Surveyor and a Health & Safety Compliance Officer.		
• (£45k) Stock condition surveys will re-commence in the 2019/20 to supplement the extensive stock condition survey undertaken by consultants last year, in order to achieve 100% coverage. The condition surveys will be performed by the surveyors, rather than external consultants, enabling a saving to be reported.		
• (£48k) £8k per property was budgeted for the decant of tenants in ten LAINGS properties to facilitate a major demolish and re-build programme. Two properties have naturally become void since the budgets were approved resulting in a £16k saving. A further saving of £32k is reported in respect of decants from LAINGS properties, as works will be focused on those properties that are already empty, avoiding the need to decant tenants until later 2019.		
• (£11k) Plans to undertake office improvements and purchase furniture are pending the outcomes of the agile working pilot. For this reason a supplementary budget will be requested in 2019/20 for implementing agile working within the HRA.		
Interest	(£110,000)	(£132,876)
Officer Responsible: Service Lead – Housing Tenancy Services & Service Lead – Housing Assets		
• Reflects additional interest receivable on HRA balances (Working Balance,		

Major Repairs Reserve and capital receipts). Combined forecast revenue and capital underspends in 2018-19 have resulted in higher than anticipated HRA balances and interest rates also increased from 0.90% to 0.95%.

Total budget variances	(£3,700,663)	(£3,910,256)
2018/19 HRA deficit		£186,889

9.3 HRA Working Balance

The total budget variances for 2018-19 have resulted in a deficit of £186,889, which will be transferred from the HRA working balance, as set out below.

The HRA Working Balance represents amounts set aside to help facilitate service improvements, repay debt or to provide investment in the stock in future financial years.

Movement	2018/19
Opening HRA Working Balance, as at 1/4/18	£10,212,244
Deficit for 2018/19	(£186,889)
Balance resolved to be retained (HRA contingency)	(£4,000,000)
Balance Available, as at 31/3/19	£6,025,355

9.4 Supplementary Budgets

There is a requirement for supplementary budgets in 2019/20 as the HRA has identified at the end of the year a number of revenue budgets that have not been spent but where a commitment is required in the following financial year.

It is therefore proposed that supplementary budgets totalling £973,400 identified in Appendix 2 are submitted to Executive for approval and added to the 2019/20 budget.

9.5 Major Repairs Reserve

Under self-financing Councils are expected to set aside some of their income each year into the Major Repairs Reserve, in order to ensure appropriate provision is made towards financing future capital works or to repay debt. The balance held in the reserve at the end of the financial year is set out below:

Movement	2018/19
Opening Major Repairs Reserve, as at 1/4/18	£11,169,004
Revenue monies set aside during 2018/19	£3,180,337
Amount used to finance capital expenditure during 2018/19	(£94,109)
Balance, as at 31/3/19	£14,255,232

9.6 HRA Debt

In October 2018 the Government also formally removed the HRA debt cap, which restricted the amount of borrowing stock-holding local authorities could have for the purposes of the HRA. The lifting of the 'debt cap' means that local authorities are now able to borrow for housebuilding in accordance with the Prudential Code.

As at 31 March 2019, the HRA's borrowing remains at the former 'debt cap' level of £57,882,413, as no new borrowing has been undertaken.

The Director and Service Leads for the HRA are working with an advisory group of Members to develop plans for the HRA's new-build programme, which seeks to make use

of the new freedom to borrow and approval will be sought through the normal decision making committee cycle.

9.7 HRA Capital Programme

The 2018-19 HRA Capital Programme was last reported to Scrutiny Committee – People on 7 March 2019. Since that meeting the following changes have been made that have decreased the programme.

Description	2018/19	Approval / Funding
HRA Capital Programme	£14,871,217	
Budgets deferred to future financial years	(£7,458,417)	Executive 9 April 2019
Overspend Declared	£18,300	Executive 9 April 2019
Revised HRA Capital Programme	£7,431,100	

9.8 HRA Capital Expenditure

The total amount of HRA capital expenditure for 2018-19 was £6,197,257, which equates to 83.4% of the revised approved capital programme (as set out above). The nature of capital investment in the financial year comprised:

HRA Capital Expenditure	£
Capital investment in existing stock	4,115,327
Capital investment in the provision of new council homes	2,081,930
Total HRA Capital Expenditure	6,197,257

A detailed list of HRA capital budgets and actual expenditure is set out in Appendix 3.

9.9 HRA Capital Financing

The total HRA capital expenditure for 2018-19 will be financed as follows:

HRA Capital Finance	£
Major Repairs Reserve	94,109
Revenue Contribution to Capital	4,000,000
Capital Receipts	524,625
External Grants/Contributions	1,578,523
Total HRA Capital Financing	6,197,257

The impact on the capital resources available to the HRA over the next 3 years is set out in Appendix 4.

9.10 Capital Variances from Budget

The details of key variances from budget are set out below. The Service Lead – Housing Assets will be able to provide further details in respect of the capital programme, if required.

Scheme	Overspend / (Underspend)
Officer Responsible – Planned Repairs Lead Central Heating & Boiler Replacement Programme	£116,548
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System failures rose sharply in the last three months and parts for certain boilers have become obsolete. In particular, Saunier Duval and Glow-worm boilers are failing earlier than previously anticipated. The life expectancy of 	

boilers will be reviewed as part of the next budget setting cycle so that budgets can be realigned with patterns of demand. The reported overspend equates to an additional 92 boiler replacements during 2018/19 with a large number of these boilers in 3 and 4 storey buildings necessitating the need for scaffolding.

Officer Responsible – Planned Works Lead COB Wave 2 – Rennes House Car Park	(£26,682)
---	-----------

- A saving is reported following payment of the final account. The cost of the additional fire prevention works, as identified by the final building control inspection, were lower than expected including a saving in the cost of smoke vents and associated works. Along with savings in the main contract.

Scheme	Budget slipped to future years
Officer Responsible – Planned Works Lead LAINGS Refurbishment	£216,732

- The main contractor has been on site since February, removing asbestos and stripping out the ten empty properties ready for the demolition to commence. Drainage investigations are underway for the seven occupied properties that will form phase 2 of the project. The overall project is scheduled for completion in June 2020 and the budget has been re-profiled accordingly.

Officer Responsible – Planned Works Lead Structural Repairs	(£60,694)
---	-----------

- Additional structure repairs were undertaken in 2018/19 in respect of drainage repairs, whilst monitoring for structural movements continue. Enabling works resulting from fire damage were also undertaken, ahead of planned significant structural repairs to three fire affected properties in 2019/20.

Officer Responsible – Service Lead Housing Extra Care Scheme	£625,187
--	----------

- The piled foundation work has been completed on site and the main contractor has now moved onto the substructures work, which will be completed in August 2019, before moving onto the installation of the concrete frame. The scheme is scheduled for completion in September 2020 and the budget has been re-profiled accordingly.

Officer Responsible – Service Lead Housing & Service Lead – Housing Assets Estate Regeneration	£391,457
--	----------

- In March 2017 the Council received £1.295m Estate Regeneration funding, in order to progress four HRA sites to the pre-construction stage. The funding for two of the HRA sites has been spent and delivered the required outcomes, however the timetables for Vaughan Road and Clifford Close will run into 2019/20.

10. COUNCIL OWN BUILD FINAL ACCOUNTS TO 31 MARCH 2019

The Council's own build properties at Rowan House and Knights Place form part of the overall Housing Revenue Account, but separate income and expenditure budgets are maintained in order to ensure that they are self-financing.

10.1 Key Variances from Budget

The 2018-19 year has ended with an overall net surplus of £17,912, which will be transferred to the COB working balance. This represents a minor increase of £1,282 compared to the budgeted transfer to the working balance of £16,630. Please refer to Appendix 1 for more details.

11. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

The Housing Revenue Account contributes to two key purposes, as set out in the Corporate Plan; help me find somewhere suitable to live and maintain our property assets.

12. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

It is not permissible for the HRA to go into an overall financial deficit position, it is therefore important to ensure that an adequate level of HRA balances is maintained as a contingency against risks. The HRA resolve to retain a working balance at no less than £4 million to mitigate against financial risks.

13. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

The revenue service costs for the year have helped the HRA provide tenancy management services and maintain the condition of council dwellings, which has a positive impact on the health and well-being of Council tenants. In the delivery of services, housing officers are able to identify and manage issues relating to safe-guarding, vulnerabilities and community safety.

In terms of capital expenditure, the 2018-19 capital programme has enabled enhancements to existing dwelling stock to be undertaken and help support the provision of new housing, both of which will have a positive impact on those in housing need.

14. Are there any other options?

No

DAVE HODGSON
Chief Finance Officer

Author:
Michelle White

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

Contact for enquiries:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 2.3
(01392) 265275

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 1

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT
REVENUE OUTTURN

APRIL 2018 TO MARCH 2019

Code	APPROVED BUDGET	QUARTER 3 FORECAST OUTTURN	2018-19 OUTTURN	VARIANCE SINCE QUARTER 3	OVERALL VARIANCE TO BUDGET	VARIANCE TO BUDGET
	£	£	£	£	£	%
85A1 Management	1,270,275	1,213,275	1,099,400	(113,875)	(170,875)	(13)
85A2 Housing Customers	1,393,120	1,370,120	1,306,547	(63,573)	(86,573)	(6)
85A3 Sundry Lands Maintenance	561,710	480,710	454,440	(26,270)	(107,270)	(19)
85A4 Repairs & Maintenance Programme	6,312,360	5,952,360	5,964,142	11,782	(348,218)	(6)
85A5 Revenue Contribution to Capital	7,196,550	4,000,000	4,000,000	0	(3,196,550)	(44)
85A6 Capital Charges	3,006,450	3,180,337	3,180,337	0	173,887	6
85A7 Housing Assets	1,653,960	1,506,960	1,509,194	2,234	(144,766)	(9)
85A8 Rents	(19,127,090)	(19,027,090)	(19,024,105)	2,985	102,985	(1)
85B2 Interest	1,829,810	1,719,810	1,696,934	(22,876)	(132,876)	(7)
85B4 Variance in Working Balance	(4,097,145)	(396,482)	(186,889)	209,593	3,910,256	
Net Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	

Working Balance 1 April 2018 10,212,244 31 March 2019 10,025,355

COUNCIL OWN BUILD SITES

Code	APPROVED BUDGET	QUARTER 3 FORECAST OUTTURN	2018-19 OUTTURN	VARIANCE SINCE QUARTER 3	OVERALL VARIANCE TO BUDGET	VARIANCE TO BUDGET
	£	£	£	£	£	%
H005 Management	32,670	31,930	31,983	53	(687)	(2.1)
H006 Rowan House	(10,350)	(10,350)	(10,924)	(574)	(574)	5.5
H007 Knights Place	(58,400)	(59,020)	(59,640)	(620)	(1,240)	2.1
H008 Interest	6,070	6,070	6,335	265	265	4.4
H009 Capital Charges	13,380	14,330	14,334	4	954	7.1
Variance in Working Balance	16,630	17,040	17,912	872	1,282	7.7
Net Expenditure	0	0	0	0	0	

Working Balance 1 April 2018 256,943 31 March 2018 274,855

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 2

Supplementary Budget Requests 2019/20

Cost centre	Purpose	Amount (£)
H004	Training	10,000
H004	Mobile devices and other IT associated with roll out of agile working	20,000
H004	Remote offices set up costs - connected with agile working	25,000
H004	Design, printing & postage - re consultation on new tenancy agreements and tenants handbook	20,000
H042	Office furniture & alterations - connected with agile working	35,000
H047	Balance remaining in respect of the STAR survey	4,900
H047	St Thomas Space Project - mobile resource (youth bus)	8,500
H050	Asbestos removal in respect of communal areas	50,000
H057	Low maintenance and painting - 2018/19 contract	400,000
H068	Decant & site clearance costs in respect of disposals to Exeter City Living (Vaughan Road)	400,000
Total for the HRA		973,400

This page is intentionally left blank

**2018-19
CAPITAL OUTTURN**

	2018-19 Capital Programme	2018-19 Spend	2018-19 Budget to be Carried Forward to Future Years	TO 2019/20	TO 2020/21	TO 2021/22	TO 2022/23	2018-19 Programme Variances Under ()
	£	£	£					£
HRA CAPITAL								
EVERYONE HAS A HOME								
Z4212	Adaptations	370,975	367,562	3,413	3,413			0
Z4703	Estate Improvements	60,695	46,408	14,287	14,287			0
Z4705	Programmed Re-roofing	0	57,899	(57,899)	(57,899)			0
Z4718	LAINGS Refurbishments	305,930	89,198	216,732	65,740	150,992		0
Z4719	Kitchen Replacement Programme	659,950	640,639	19,311	19,311			0
Z4721	Balcony Walkway Improvements	22,000	21,043					(958)
Z4724	Bathroom Replacements Programme	463,760	455,201	8,559	8,559			0
Z4729	Door Replacements (including Outbuildings)	122,000	83,558	38,442	38,442			0
Z4742	Fire Precautionary Works to Flats	28,530	25,581					(2,949)
Z4743	Communal Area Improvements	97,893	77,571	20,322	20,322			0
Z4745	Structural Repairs	44,280	104,974	(60,694)	(60,694)			0
Z4755	Rennes House Structural Works	145,000	181,300	(36,300)	(36,300)			0
Z4758	Common Area Footpath/Wall Improvements	159,366	126,953	32,413	32,413			0
Z4763	Soil Vent Pipe Replacement	0	10,535	(10,535)	(10,535)			0
Z4764	Electrical Central Heating	36,935	32,700	4,235	4,235			0
Z4768	Fire Safety Storage Facilities	50,000	56,215	(6,215)	(6,215)			0
Z4802	Electrical Re-wiring	550,250	491,861	58,389	58,389			0
Z4903	Central Heating and Boiler Replacement Programme	560,000	676,548					116,548
Z4906	Communal Door & Screens	100,000	50,284	49,716	49,716			0
Z4909	Fire Risk Assessment Works	70,000	36,243	33,757	33,757			0
Z4910	Loft and Cavity Insulation	5,000	0					(5,000)
Z4914	Re-roofing Works Shilhay	164,800	171,932					7,132
Z4915	Window Replacements	161,300	199,294	(37,994)	(37,994)			0
Z4916	Replacement Housing Management System	121,220	107,909	13,311	13,311			0
Z4918	Zebcat Project	5,000	3,918	1,082	1,082			0
HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT TOTAL		4,304,884	4,115,327	304,332	153,340	150,992	0	0
OVERALL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT TOTAL		7,431,100	6,197,257	1,320,976	1,895,434	(574,458)	0	0
COUNCIL OWN BUILD CAPITAL								
Z3214	COB Wave 2 - Rennes Car Park	344,865	318,183					(26,682)
Z3215	Newport Road	0	(960)					(960)
Z3220	St Loyes ExtraCare	1,500,000	874,813	625,187	1,350,637	(725,450)		0
Z4751	Acquisition of Social Housing - Section 106	493	464					(29)
Z3201	Acquisition of Social Housing - Open Market	524,600	524,629					29
Z5101	Estate Regeneration - Heavitree (COB Wave III)	89,574	89,574					0
	Estate Regeneration - Heavitree (Clifford Close)	141,956	15,471	126,485	126,485			0
	Estate Regeneration - Heavitree (Vaughan Road)	321,320	73,056	248,265	248,265			0
	Estate Regeneration - Heavitree (South Street)	203,408	186,701	16,707	16,707			0
COUNCIL OWN BUILD TOTAL		3,126,216	2,081,930	1,016,644	1,742,094	(725,450)	0	0
OVERALL HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT TOTAL		7,431,100	6,197,257	1,320,976	1,895,434	(574,458)	0	0
87,137								

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 4

HRA AVAILABLE RESOURCES

HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT	2018-19 £	2019-20 £	2020-21 £	2021-22 £	2022-23 £	TOTAL £
CAPITAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE						
Usable Receipts Brought Forward						7,704,749
Major Repairs Reserve Brought Forward						11,169,004
Other HRA Sales	830,000	1,224,500	0	0	0	2,054,500
RTB sales	2,542,089	650,000	500,000	500,000	400,000	4,592,089
Surrender back to DCLG - pending investment in replacement affordable housing	0	(2,033,542)	0	0	0	(2,033,542)
Major Repairs Reserve	3,180,337	3,224,210	3,224,210	3,224,210	3,224,210	16,077,177
Revenue Contributions to Capital	4,000,000	5,696,550	3,100,000	4,500,000	3,400,000	20,696,550
External contributions	20,726	592,424	0	0	0	613,150
Grant funding - Estate Regeneration Funding	364,801	391,456	0	0	0	756,257
Grant funding - Zero Energy Buildings Project	0	216,000	0	0	0	216,000
Commuted sums	1,192,996	3,784,244	1,736,617	0	0	6,713,857
Total Resources available	12,130,949	13,745,842	8,560,827	8,224,210	7,024,210	68,559,791
CAPITAL PROGRAMME						
HRA Capital Programme	7,431,096	25,022,556	15,319,050	10,470,156	8,920,408	67,163,266
Reported slippage - Quarter 3	(1,320,976)	1,895,434	(574,458)	0	0	0
Reported (under)overspends - Quarter 3	87,137					87,137
Total Housing Revenue Account	6,197,257	26,917,990	14,744,592	10,470,156	8,920,408	67,250,403
UNCOMMITTED CAPITAL RESOURCES:						
Usable Receipts Brought Forward	7,704,749	10,552,213	5,105,536	2,818,168	2,418,168	7,704,749
Major Repairs Reserve Brought Forward	11,169,004	14,255,232	6,529,761	2,633,364	787,418	11,169,004
Resources in Year	12,130,949	13,745,842	8,560,827	8,224,210	7,024,210	49,686,038
Less Estimated Spend	(6,197,257)	(26,917,990)	(14,744,592)	(10,470,156)	(8,920,408)	(67,250,403)
Uncommitted Capital Resources	24,807,445	11,635,297	5,451,532	3,205,586	1,309,388	1,309,388
WORKING BALANCE RESOURCES:						
Balance Brought Forward	10,212,244	10,025,355	5,468,590	5,245,876	4,012,847	10,212,244
HRA Balance Transfer - Surplus/(Deficit)	(186,889)	(386,815)	(222,714)	(1,233,029)	25,674	(2,003,773)
Revenue Contributions to Capital - slippage		(3,196,550)				0
Supplementary budgets to be requested		(973,400)				(3,196,550)
Balance Carried Forward	10,025,355	5,468,590	5,245,876	4,012,847	4,038,521	4,038,521
Balance Resolved to be Retained	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)	(4,000,000)
Uncommitted HRA Working Balance	6,025,355	1,468,590	1,245,876	12,847	38,521	38,521
TOTAL AVAILABLE CAPITAL RESOURCES	30,832,800	13,103,887	6,697,408	3,218,433	1,347,909	1,347,909

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 8

REPORT TO: PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting: 6 June 2019
Report of: Chief Finance Officer
Title: 2018/19 Budget Monitoring Report – Outturn

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

This report advises Members of any material differences, by management unit, between the 2018/19 approved budget and the outturn for the financial year up to 31 March 2019 in respect of People Scrutiny Committee.

An outturn update in respect of the People Capital Programme is also incorporated into this report in order to help provide a comprehensive financial update in respect of the People Scrutiny Committee Budgets.

2. Recommendations:

That Members of People Scrutiny Committee note the content of this report in order to be satisfied that prudent steps have been taken during the year to address any areas with significant variances, as highlighted in this report, and note the actual cost of delivering services for this Committee in the 2018/19 financial year.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

Local authorities have a statutory duty to set and monitor their budgets during the year and to take any actions necessary because of potential overspending or potential shortfalls in income. Members are therefore presented with a quarterly financial update in respect of People Services and this is the final report for 2018/19.

4. What are the equality and diversity impacts of this decision?

As this report does not call for a decision, an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

5. What are the resource implications including non financial resources

The financial resources required to deliver People Services during 2018/19 are set out in the body of this report.

6. Section 151 Officer comments:

Whilst there has been an overspend in respect of the People Committee, this is due to a change in accounting requirements rather than the performance of Services. Therefore no action is required from the Committee. Overall Services across the Council have underspent by £2.149 million, although much of this is in respect of two items – the successful RAMM Business Rates appeal, which is now being challenged by the Valuation Office and the transfer of the Valley Parks to Devon Wildlife Trust, which completed in May. Taking into account all other income and expenditure, the transfer from the working balance is £1.708 million lower than budget, leaving the working balance at £4.395 million.

7. What are the legal aspects?

Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2003 provides the legislative framework for the process of setting and managing budgets. In particular, Section 28 of the 2003 Act requires local authorities to monitor their budgets during the financial year.

8. Monitoring Officer's comments:

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

9. Report Details:

Revenue Final Accounts to 31 March 2019

- 9.1 The 2018/19 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting has introduced a new method of calculating bad debt provision, which are now classified as loss allowances. The purpose of the change is to ensure that prudent provision is made for possible future losses because the debtor could default on payment. Across council services, the impact of the change is broadly cost neutral, however the loss allowance relating to commercial properties has reduced by £138k, for housing properties has reduced by £46k and for the recovery of overpaid housing benefits has increased by £177k. The impact of these changes are shown against each of the services, however it does not reflect a change in the performance of debt recovery, just an estimate of credit risk.

9.2 Key Variations from Budget

The final outturn has been calculated and the report below highlights the major differences by management unit from the approved annual budget after adjusting for supplementary budgets.

The total variance for the year shows a deficit of £52,858 after transfers from reserves, as detailed in Appendix 1. This represents a variation of 1.5% from the revised budget.

- 9.3 The significant variations (greater than +/- £30k) by management unit are:

Budget Heading	Forecast Outturn Budget Variance at Quarter 3 (Under)/Overspend £	Actual Budget Variance (Under)/Overspend £
Forecast Budget Variances by Management Unit:		
Housing Needs	(72,500)	(72,049)

Responsible Officer: Interim System Lead, Housing Needs

The underspend on pay reflects the lead-in time for fully recruiting to the new Housing Needs structure approved by Executive in February 2018. Recruitment proved a significant challenge primarily due to it coinciding with the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act. This meant the team was very busy preparing beforehand and in the aftermath of the Act going live in April 2018 which also triggered a strong market demand for experienced housing needs staff which impacted on recruitment across the country including the South West area. The service is now at 95% of the structure with just two remaining posts under recruitment this month. Therefore, this underspend represents a one-off in-year saving to the General Fund.

Private Sector Housing	(21,500)	(37,188)
-------------------------------	----------	----------

Responsible Officer: Environmental Health and Licensing Manager

The underspend reflects the capitalisation of officer time in respect of Disabled Facility Grants and Warm Up Exeter, which can be met from the Better Care Fund in accordance with proper accounting practice.

General Fund Housing - Property	0	41,658
--	---	--------

Responsible Officer: Service Lead Housing Assets

The Housing Needs team have recently reassessed and re-banded a large number of households in Private Sector Leased (PSL) properties in order to create some move-on out of temporary accommodation. This provided an opportunity to handback some PSL properties with financially onerous lease agreements, which has led to a rise in handback costs in the last three months alongside a reduction in rental income. Although this represents an in-year overspend, it will achieve future revenue savings due to ending leases with favourable terms to the landlord.

Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access	0	129,388
---	---	---------

Responsible Officer: System Lead Revenues, Benefits & Customer Access

As described above in 9.1 due to a new method of calculating the bad debt provision the loss allowance relating to the recovery of overpaid housing benefits has increased by £177k, across the council the impact of this change is broadly cost neutral.

Before accounting for this movement the service made an overall saving of £47k:

- £9k of this was due to savings in pay while vacancies were being filled
- £38k was due to variances against the housing benefits budgets, this represents a variance of 0.1% against the £35m budget.

10. Capital Budget Monitoring – Outturn

To advise members of the financial performance in respect of the 2018/19 People Capital Programme.

10.1 Revisions to the People Capital Programme

The 2018/19 Capital Programme was last reported to Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee on 28 March 2019. Since that meeting the following changes have been made to the programme.

Description	£	Approval/Funding
Capital Programme, as reported to Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee, 28 March 2019	1,275,260	
Budget Deferred to 2019/20 & Beyond at Quarter 3	(594,000)	Approved by Council 16 April 2019
Revised Capital Programme	681,260	

10.2 Performance

The People Capital Programme is detailed in Appendix 2. The appendix shows a total spend of £470,294 in 2018/19 with £120,454 of the programme deferred until 2019/20.

10.3 Capital Variances from Budget

No issues concerning expenditure have arisen since 31 December.

10.4 Capital Budgets Deferred to 2019/20

Schemes which have been identified as being wholly or partly deferred to 2019/20 and beyond are:

Scheme	18/19 Budget £	Budget to be Deferred £	Reason

Disabled Facility Grants	401,180	86,942	A variety of awareness activities have taken place, including articles in the Citizen to increase accessibility to these grants. Work has also been undertaken to reduce end to end time with respect to stair lift applications and to remove barriers to people having such adaptations made. A communications plan has been drafted to increase awareness further and it is anticipated that grant take up will be higher in 2019/20.
Temporary Accommodation Purchase	108,670	89,203	Final refurbishment works will take place in 2019/20.

11. How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

People Services contribute to three key priorities, as set out in the Corporate Plan: providing value-for-money services, leading a well-run council and building great neighbourhoods.

12. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

Areas of budgetary risk are highlighted to committee as part of the quarterly budget monitoring updates.

13. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

The revenue service costs reported to this Committee help support the provision of temporary accommodation, housing advice, licensing of houses of multiple occupation, new affordable housing within the City and the administration of housing benefits. All these services have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of residents, in particular those in housing need.

In terms of capital expenditure, the 2018/19 capital programme helps facilitate disabled adaptations and provide loans to return properties to a habitable standard. The capital schemes have a positive impact of the health and wellbeing of residents.

14. Are there any other options?

No

DAVE HODGSON
Chief Finance Officer

Authors:

Nicola Matthews-Morley and Michelle White

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:

None

Contact for enquiries:

Democratic Services (Committees)

Room 2.3

(01392) 265275

PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2018/19 BUDGET MONITORING REPORT - OUTTURN

	APPROVED BUDGET £	OUTTURN £	TRANSFERS TO / (FROM) EARMARKE D RESERVES £	ADJUSTED OUTTURN VARIANCE £	QTR 3 ADJUSTED FORECAST VARIANCE £
HOUSING NEEDS	975,340	892,258	11,032	(72,049)	(72,500)
AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT	196,270	187,319	0	(8,951)	0
PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING	116,030	78,842	0	(37,188)	(21,500)
SUNDRY LANDS MAINTENANCE	89,980	89,980	0	0	0
GF HOUSING - PROPERTY	235,530	277,188	0	41,658	0
REVENUES, BENEFITS & CUSTOMER ACCCESS	1,901,290	2,068,018	(37,340)	129,388	0
NET EXPENDITURE	3,514,440	3,593,605	(26,308)	52,858	(94,000)

This page is intentionally left blank

APPENDIX 2

2018/19 CAPITAL MONITORING TO 31 MARCH 2019

Scheme	2018/19 Capital Programme	2018/19 Spend	2018/19 Budget to be Carried Forward to 2019/20 and Beyond	2018/19 Programme Variances (Under)/Over
	£	£	£	£
PEOPLE				
<i>HELP ME FIND SOMEWHERE TO LIVE</i>				
Disabled Facility Grants	401,180	314,238	86,942	
Warm Up Exeter/PLEA Scheme	92,380	79,431	12,949	
Wessex Loan Scheme	79,030	57,158	21,872	
Temporary Accommodation Purchase	108,670	19,467	89,203	
PEOPLE TOTAL	681,260	470,294	210,966	0

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 9

REPORT TO PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 6 June 2019

REPORT TO EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: 9 July 2019

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Date of Meeting: 23 July 2019

Report of: Environmental Health and Licensing Manager

Title: Empty Homes Strategy 2019 - 2022

Is this a Key Decision?

No

* One that affects finances over £1m or significantly affects two or more wards. If this is a key decision then the item must be on the appropriate forward plan of key decisions.

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council.

1. What is the report about?

1.1 This report sets out the new 2019-2022 Empty Homes Strategy including key objectives, actions and methodology of achieving them.

2. Recommendations:

2.1 That People Scrutiny supports the adoption of the 2019-2022 Empty Homes Strategy.

2.2 That Executive supports the adoption of the 2019-2022 Empty Homes Strategy.

2.3 That Council adopts of the 2019-2022 Empty Homes Strategy.

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

3.1 It is best practice to have an empty homes strategy and this one sets out:

- Clear targets which can be measured;
- Links with other departments to provide a joined up housing service;
- The potential to increase revenue through the use of new homes bonus.

4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources.

4.1 Accurate identification and reporting of empty homes has positive financial implications for the Council in two main forms. Firstly through New Homes Bonus, the central government grant paid to local authorities for newly created or returned to use units of housing. Secondly through Council Tax, in terms of ensuring that properties are correctly registered and therefore paying the right level of council tax e.g. properties

empty for longer than two years should be paying 150% council tax, but are not always correctly registered. Empty homes work contributes significantly to ensuring these sources of income are maximised through both its case work and data management.

- 4.2 This strategy can be met from existing resources. Where additional resources may be required in the future a business case will be made. This might have implications for legal work which could be recouped via legal action.

5. Section 151 Officer comments:

- 5.1 There are no additional financial requests for council to consider in this report. However, Members should note the positive financial benefit that arises from this work. Both Council Tax and New Homes Bonus form significant sources of funding for the Council. This is of course on top of the benefit of providing additional homes for households in the City.

6. What are the legal aspects?

- 6.1 There are a range of enforcement powers that will be used to improve the condition of empty homes and ultimately bring them back to use. These are detailed in Appendix A of the Empty Homes Strategy. An increase in use of these powers, will have an impact on the resources in the legal team, or the use of external legal specialists where required due to a lack of internal capacity.
- 6.2 Where the council intervenes in arranging the renovation works on one or more long term empty homes, adhering to the procurement policy will be needed for the works to be carried out. Whether or not these works are arranged on a case by case basis, or properties are bundled into a larger contract, may have an impact on procurement and thresholds.
- 6.3 Procurement of a managing agent may be required for properties subject to an Empty Dwelling Management Order, if these cannot be managed by the council's Housing Department.

7. Monitoring Officer's comments:

The report correctly identifies that in order to achieve policy objectives, the Council may have to resort to using all/some of the enforcement powers available to it. The legal cost/resource implications have not been calculated as part of this report.

All legal work which may be generated as a result of this new policy must be referred to the in-house legal team, who may decide to externalise it where there is insufficient in house resource to cope with this additional work.

8. Report details:

- 8.1 Empty homes in the City lead to issues relating to anti-social behaviour, are unattractive and a waste of potential housing which could be better utilised.
- 8.2 At the end of 2018, Exeter City Council had 403 long term empty homes and approximately 1000 households registered on Devon HomeChoice looking for accommodation in Exeter. When taken as a proportion this represents 0.76% homes in Exeter being classed as long term empty. This is below the average for England which is 0.82%.

- 8.3 As a result of these issues the Council has identified a number of empty properties in the City. Data is provided to the Government on properties which are ‘unoccupied and substantially unfurnished’ for a period of longer than 6 months.
- 8.4 The Empty Homes Strategy’s over-arching aim is “***To bring Exeter’s empty homes back into use as lived in homes***”
- 8.5 An action plan contained within section 5 of the Strategy sets out 3 objectives:
- Objective 1: Bring empty homes back into use to increase the supply of quality, affordable housing in the city
- Objective 2: To continue to raise awareness and address issues relating to empty homes and to provide advice
- Objective 3: Improve the quality of neighbourhoods by identifying and tackling the issues associated with empty homes
- 8.6 The aims of dealing with empty homes in the City will be to
- Reduce the overall number of empty properties
 - Minimise the anti-social behaviour associated with empty homes
 - Recover the costs of enforcement action where possible
- 8.7 Exeter City Council has a range of tools and powers available including voluntary and enforcement options. These involve teams from across the council and some of the options will involve building effective partnerships with external organisations. These tools and powers will be further explored and developed and barriers to their use challenged.
- 8.8 The council’s Environmental Health and Licensing Manager chair’s a Private Property working group which contains officers from other departments in the council and other agencies such as the Police and Fire Service, to identify long term empty homes, in particular those causing a problem, and bring them back to use.
- 8.9 The strategy seeks to set an increasing annual target of bringing empty homes back into use. The increasing target over a number of years reflects the complexity and labour intensity of working with owners who are often hard to trace, difficult to engage, vulnerable and/or wilfully obstructive.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council’s Corporate Plan?

- 9.1 Bringing empty homes back into use will contribute to the council’s new Corporate Plan 2018-2022 which sets out the key priorities for the city and the direction of travel in terms of addressing priorities including:
- Promoting health and active lifestyles
 - Tackling congestion and accessibility
 - Building great neighbourhoods

- 9.2 Specifically, empty homes work will impact the Council's key priorities, helping to deliver homes that are secure, affordable and healthy in a balanced and connected to great neighbourhoods that supports wellbeing and reduces social isolation.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

- 10.1 The main risk of achieving this strategy is through the complexity and labour intensity of working with owners who are often hard to trace, difficult to engage, vulnerable and/or wilfully obstructive. Therefore achieving the targets set out in the Strategy over the 2019-2022 period may be challenging.
- 10.2 The dedicated Empty Homes resource consists of one full time Empty Homes Officer and one part time Housing Development Assistant. Both staff are currently on temporary contracts. Should the decision be made not to continue with this dedicated resource, then it will be difficult to achieve the strategy.

11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

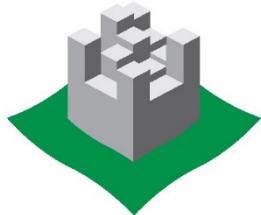
- 11.1 The new strategy will have a positive impact on neighbourhoods by returning empty homes to occupation, thus reducing homelessness and the incidence of anti-social behaviour, fly tipping and vermin problems etc. frequently associated with empty properties.
- 11.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment forms Appendix B of this report.

12. Are there any other options?

- 12.1 There is no statutory duty to have an Empty Homes Strategy or to devote resources to the area. However it is recognised that the work not only delivers outcomes in its own right in proactively helping to maintain and create great neighbourhoods, but also benefits the wider community and provides an income source to the Council's General Fund via the New Homes Bonus and Council Tax receipts.

Elaine Oliver
Empty Homes Officer

Contact for enquires:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 2.3
01392 265275



Exeter
City Council

Empty Homes Strategy

2019 - 2022

Contents

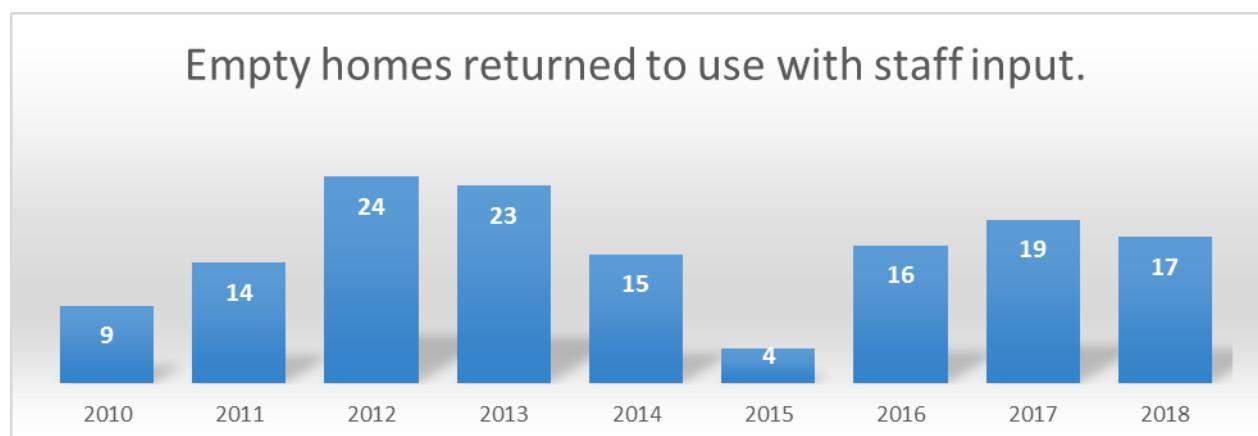
1	Introduction	3
2	About Empty Homes	5
3	Policy Context	6
4	Our Approach to Empty Homes	7
5	Empty Homes Tools	8
6	Delivering the Strategy	9
7	Action Plan	11

Appendices

A	Enforcement Legislation Summary	14
B	Glossary of Terms	16
C	Useful Websites	17

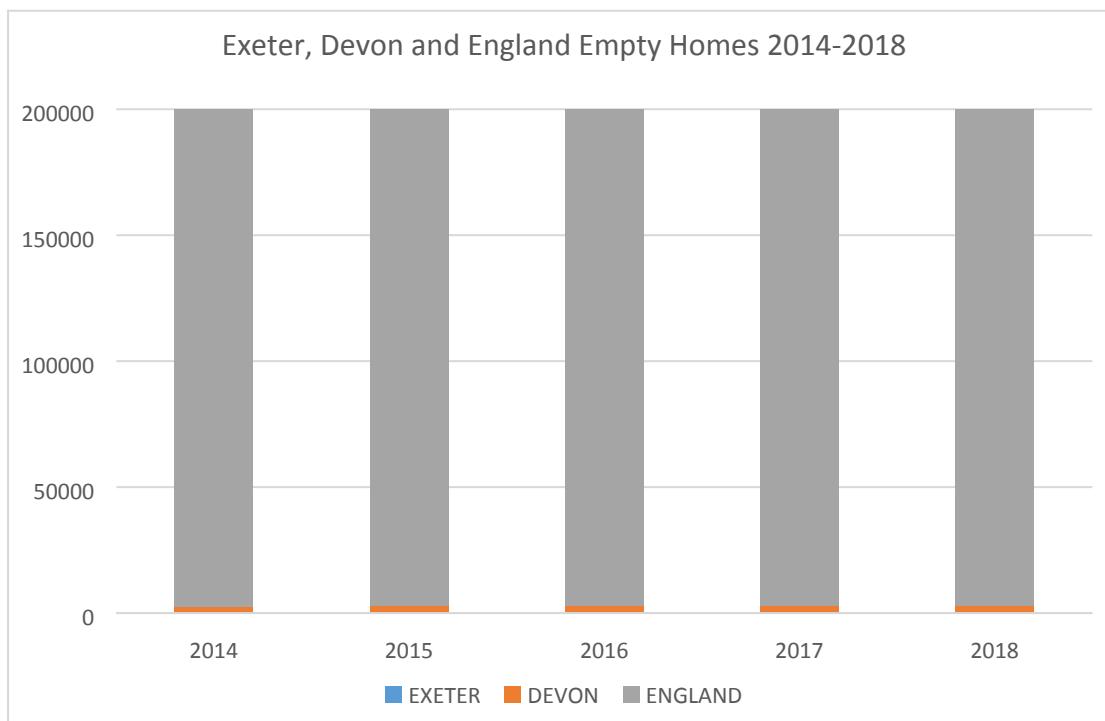
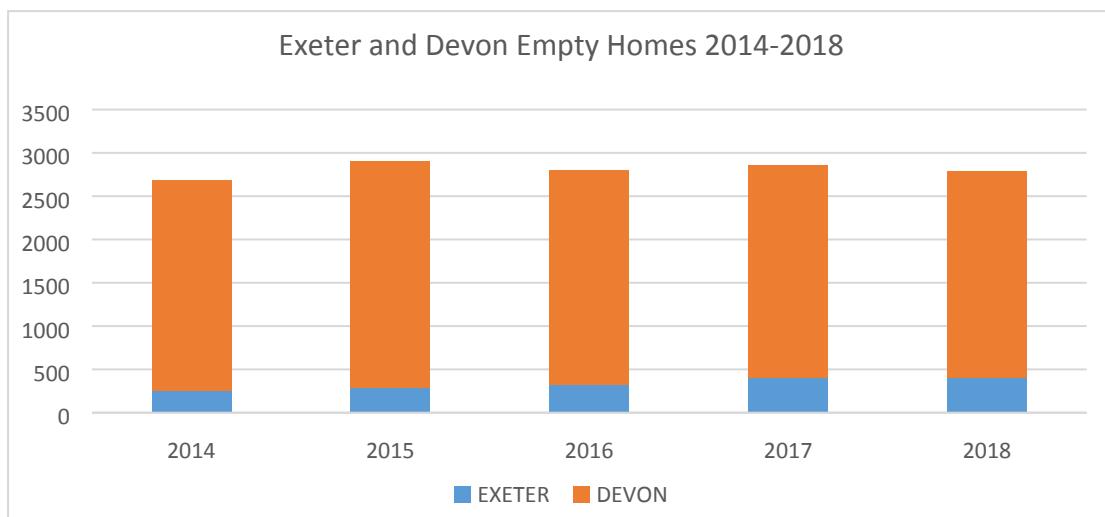
1. Introduction

- 1.1 Nationally a shortage of housing may give rise to increased homelessness and difficulty for some in accessing affordable accommodation. Where property lies empty this can impact the lives of people in the neighbourhood and can be a magnet for anti-social behaviour. Bringing empty homes back into use will help improve the quality of housing and neighbourhoods and help to provide more affordable homes.
- 1.2 This revised Empty Homes Strategy builds on the last strategy (2014-2017) and sets out how the council will continue its work to reduce the number of empty homes in Exeter from 2019 until 2022.
- 1.3 Since commencing this work in 2010 the Council has supported owners to return over 140 empty homes back into use.



- 1.4 This updated strategy takes into account current demographic data, stakeholders' views on our empty property work and recent legislative changes.
- 1.5 Since the last Empty Homes Strategy 2014 – 2017, the number of long term empty homes in Exeter has increased, a trend which has been reflected nationally in the 2017? 2018 figures for England.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
EXETER	258	292	326	403	400
DEVON	2429	2610	2471	2448	2384
ENGLAND	205,821	203,596	200,145	205,293	216,186



Source: council tax base (CTB) Table 615

- 1.6 The annual council tax reporting form (CTB1) completed, in October 2017, calculated the number of long term empty homes in Exeter was 430. When taken as a proportion this represents 0.76% homes in Exeter being classed as long term empty. This is below the average for England which is 0.82%.

2. About Empty Homes

- 2.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) describes problematic empty homes as dwellings that are inactive in the housing market and have been empty for more than 6 months. There are broadly two main types of empty homes: transactional and long-term empty.
- 2.2 Transactional empty homes are generally empty for up to six months, usually due to a change in tenant or ownership and are part of the normal cycle of people moving house. The vast majority of these empty homes do not require any involvement from the council to bring them back into use.
- 2.3 In some instances, a property may be empty or appear empty, but is not classed as empty. A property does not have to be used all the time to be classed as occupied. For example, if it is:
- A second home or a holiday home;
 - A property which is part of a wider regeneration programme and could be in the process of being developed or marked for demolition;
 - A property which has pending planning permission, could be waiting refurbishment or could be waiting for new occupants to move in;
 - A property which appears empty due to an overgrown garden or through lack of maintenance or repair but which is in fact occupied;
 - A property where a for sale/to-let board or where contractors equipment is evident could demonstrate that a property is in the process of being brought back into use;
 - One where the owner is living elsewhere to provide or receive personal care as a result of illness, infirmity or disablement.
- 2.4 Long term empty homes are properties that are empty for more than 6 months. These are identified through Council Tax records. Properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over two years are classed as long-term empty dwellings and attract a premium increasing the amount of council tax payable on the property.
- 2.5 Homes that have been empty for more than six months usually have an underlying problem and when homes have been empty for more than two years, it is likely that, without intervention, they will stay empty and decline. Long term empty homes can become run down, fall into disrepair, have overgrown gardens and blight the surrounding homes and neighbourhood. They can also become a hub for crime and may attract vandalism, anti-social behaviour, as well as becoming a target for arson. Neighbouring occupants may be particularly dissatisfied and may find their house value has diminished or may be difficult to let or sell.
- 2.6 There are many reasons for homes being left empty, some are easily categorised, and other circumstances are more complex with owners having their own individual reasons for keeping their property empty.
- 2.7 Long-term empty homes can fall into a state of disrepair and become dangerous as well as having a negative environmental and community impact. A coordinated and sustainable approach can deliver an increase in housing supply, improve standards and reduce the number of empty homes. Returning an empty property to use is usually a significantly more cost effective option than redeveloping. This strategy sets out Exeter City Council's commitment to bringing empty homes back in use by adopting a proactive approach to supporting owners to help return their property to use.

- 2.8 There are a number of challenges associated with the task of returning empty homes back into use:
- a) **Ownership disputes** can make it difficult or impossible to establish who the owner is. Court proceedings and divorce settlements can also delay the occupation of a property.
 - b) **Personal owner circumstances** may prevent them from being able to bring a property back into use. For example, they may not have the funds or capacity to renovate or sell a property.
 - c) **Disappearance of owners** can make it time consuming and expensive for the council to trace owners. Even after finding the individual(s) concerned, they may be unwilling to engage with the process.
 - d) **Maintaining property security** to ensure empty homes don't fall victim to acts of vandalism, arson or squatting due to their often vulnerable condition.
 - e) **Intentional empty homes** are kept empty either for no specific reason, or for unreasonable purposes by the owners who simply do not have any intention to occupy the property.
 - f) **Over shop homes** often used for storage and classed as the owner as part of the business but not used as such. Often there is no suitable access for separate living accommodation.
 - g) **Investment portfolios** for individuals or companies seeking to make money on a rising market or as part of a pension.
 - h) **Housing for older people** such as retirement villages and those with age restrictions, due to their nature, have fewer potential buyers and may remain empty for longer depending on market conditions.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. There is no national empty homes strategy and there has been no specific funding from central government since the Empty Homes Community Grants Programme 2012-2015 at which time the Government said that the £216 million of funding provided was intended to "provide a push in the right direction" and that there were no plans to provide additional funding.
- 3.2 Council Tax Premium – In tackling the issue of empty homes, local authorities have to make best use of the council tax long-term empty premium. Since 2013, local authorities in England have had the power to charge a council tax premium of up to 50% on properties that have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for two years or more. This premium is in addition to the usual council tax charge that applies to the property. The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) and Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 enacted on 1 November 2018 enables the following:
- From April 2019, increasing that premium up to a maximum of 100%.
 - From April 2020, where a property has been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 5 years or more, increasing the premium further up to a maximum of 200%

- From April 2021, where a property has been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for 10 years or more, applying a premium up to a maximum of 300%
- 3.3 New Homes Bonus - Launched in April 2011, the New Homes Bonus (NHB) was introduced as an incentive for local authorities to encourage housing growth in their area and to reward additional housing supply. It is calculated annually and has become the measure for the national empty homes figures.
- 3.4 From the local policy context empty homes is highlighted in the Exeter City Council Housing Strategy 2016-2020 and links with the Exeter City Council Homelessness Strategy 2016-2021 with the aim of providing a joined up approach to delivering housing for the city.
- 3.5 With the number of people accessing the city there is an ever increasing demand on housing and the pressure to increase supply is considerable. Along with associated factors such as the economy the issues facing the local housing market include:
- A shortfall in homes being built;
 - House prices increasing;
 - Sales decreasing;
 - Affordability of both renting and buying;
 - In excess of 1,800 Exeter households registered with a social housing need on Devon Home Choice;
 - Reductions in Government grant to Housing Associations to bring forward new affordable housing;
 - Large developers are slowing down build programmes to control supply to the market;
 - Diminishing housing development opportunities due to developer preference for student accommodation.
- 3.6 Bringing empty homes back into use will contribute to the council's 2018-2022 Corporate Plan which sets out the key priorities for action which are:
- Promoting health and active lifestyles
 - Tackling congestion and accessibility
 - Building great neighbourhoods

4. Our Approach to Empty Homes

- 4.1 The Council will contribute to the prevention of term by responding to enquiries about empty homes from the public, undertaking social media campaigns, participating in local landlord events and forums, and through promotions on the council website.
- 4.2 The Council will take a pro-active and preventative approach to homes becoming empty over the long term by the early identification of empty homes and taking assertive action to try to locate owners and provide advice and support to owners to assist in getting homes back into use. This will include a range of advice and support including grant funding assistance where appropriate.
- 4.3 Agree actions will be monitored to ensure empty homes are brought back into use within appropriate timescales and where other interventions have failed enforcement action will be taken.

5. Empty Homes Tools

5.1 There are a range of tools available to support and encourage home owners to bring properties back into use. These are:

5.2 Value Added Tax (VAT) Arrangement

There is provision through the VAT system for an owner renovating a long term empty home and having the work undertaken by a contractor to pay reduced VAT. The Council can provide a letter to confirm a home has been long term empty.

5.3 Empty home loans

Exeter City Council provides funding for home improvement funds managed through a contract with Wessex Resolutions CIC. This is a consortium of 20 local authorities who pool funding to create a long term fund for home improvement loans with interest and investment profits creating the sustainable funding pipeline.

5.4 Empty home loans can be used whether the house is going to be sold or let and the Wessex Resolutions representative will discuss which loan solution is best suited to individual circumstances. Wessex Resolutions are able to provide low-cost loans to cover various types of work, such as:

- Disrepair or structural issues;
- Damp and mould growth;
- Electrical rewiring;
- Thermal upgrading such as windows;
- Boiler work and insulation;
- Improvements to kitchens or bathrooms.

5.5 Matchmaker scheme

The Council can help owners of empty homes to try and find potential buyers. The Empty Property Matchmaker Scheme brings together the owners of empty homes in Exeter and private individuals, investors and developers who want to purchase empty homes in the city.

5.6 This scheme helps owners in a number of ways because there are:

- No fees: free service for seller/buyer;
- Bypasses estate agent;
- Reduces cost to sellers as no need to renovate before selling;
- Reduces cost to buyer due to any disrepair;
- Simple process for seller/buyer;
- Choice to pursue offers or not.

5.7 To date four matchmaker requests have been made to the scheme.

5.8 Garden clearance scheme

This is a new scheme was introduced in 2018 in response to owners and landlords needing a reliable means of clearing gardens and provides access to chargeable Council services to assist homeowners with clearance plans as part of agreed action plans. Six home owners have accessed this scheme since it started.

5.9 Formal enforcement actions to tackle empty homes

Where informal advice, guidance and support has failed or if there is an imminent risk to public health and/or safety the council will consider enforcement options. The options available include, but are not limited to:

- **Enforced Sale** – Allows the council to force the sale of a property to recover debts owed to the council that are registered as a charge on the property.
- **Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO)** – Enables the council to secure occupation and responsible management of some privately owned houses and flats that have been empty for two years or more, as well as being actively used for antisocial purposes.
- **Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPO)** - Enable the council to purchase and sell an empty property for the purpose of providing housing accommodation or facilities connected to housing accommodation

5.10 No formal enforcement action has yet been taken by the Council/

5.11 A summary of the range of enforcement powers that are available to the council are described in **Appendix A**. All enforcement action will be taken in accordance with the council's Enforcement Policy.

6. Delivering the Strategy

6.1 The strategic aim is to bring Exeter's empty homes back into use as lived in homes. There are 3 key objectives:

Objective 1: Bring empty homes back into use to increase the supply of quality, affordable housing in the city by:

- Using negotiation and enforcement action to bring long term empty or homes causing problems back into use;
- Working with Wessex Resolutions CIC to promote home loans to owners of empty homes to help with renovation, selling or letting;
- Develop a suite of innovative approaches to bring homes back into use, both as interim measures and longer term solutions such as a Deposit Guarantee scheme for owners of empty property or schemes where the Council or other registered social landlord manages property letting on behalf of a landlord

Objective 2: To continue to raise awareness and address issues relating to empty homes and to provide advice by:

- Fostering and maintaining relationships with owners of empty homes to inform them of the schemes available to help them bring their homes back into use;
- Improving the information available on the council's website;
- Promoting available services and prevent homes from becoming empty in the first place;
- Maintaining and enhancing effective working relationships with the private sector, registered social landlords and other stakeholders such as the Police and Fire Service.

Objective 3: Improve the quality of neighbourhoods by identifying and tackling the issues associated with empty homes by:

- Adopting both proactive and reactive approaches to identifying, prioritising and monitoring long term empty homes to ensure that no more than 1% of homes is empty and unused for more than six months

6.2 Our previous experience in bringing empty homes back into use has taught us that our strategy must contain a combination of incentives and sanctions to be successful. The key mechanisms for achieving our objectives will be to:

- Carry out regular audits to identify and prioritise empty homes, maintain records of empty homes and work to bring homes back into use through co-operation with the owners;
- Advise and assist property owners who would like to let their property;
- Ensure enforcement powers are fully utilised where co-operation with owners fails;
- Redevelop empty homes acquired through enforcement;
- Work in partnership across the council and external partners to coordinate action to bring empty homes back into use.

6.3 The leadership for the delivery of the strategy will be the Private Sector Housing Team integrated within Environmental Health and Licencing in 2018. The more integrated working will support or a wider range prevention and enforcement opportunities.

6.4 Key internal partners will include:

- Council Tax to Council Tax Billing and Collection
- City Development
- Finance
- Legal

6.5 Key external partners will include:

- The Community Safety Partnership
- Developers
- Housing Associations
- Registered Providers
- Wessex Resolutions CIC.

6.6 Delivery of the strategy will be financed through existing resources. Where appropriate and available, bids for resources from the Government will be made.

6.7 The delivery of this strategy will be measured against the aims and objectives set out above and in the accompanying Action Plan throughout the strategy period. Internal monitoring of statistics will be used to measure input in to homes returned to use and the annual Council Tax statistical return will be used to monitor the number of empty homes in Exeter.

7. Action Plan

1. Bring empty homes back into use and increase the supply of quality and affordable housing in the city			
Action	Lead	Timescale	Outcome
Undertake a feasibility study of whether it is possible to develop or procure a Deposit Guarantee Scheme, Council Letting Scheme, Grant Funding Scheme or Lease and Repair Scheme for owners.	Empty Homes Officer. Environmental Health Licensing Manager.	September 2019.	Contribute to target of empty homes brought back into use: 2019 – 25; 2020 – 30; 2021 – 35; 2022 – 40.
Encourage take-up of the Empty Property Matchmaker Scheme.	Empty Homes Team	Ongoing.	Contribute to target of empty homes brought back into use per year.
Implement appropriate joint working practice and protocol with other council departments including: Council Tax to Council Tax Billing and Collection, City Development and Housing Needs.	Empty Homes Team.	December 2019.	Formal procedures in place.
To discuss with Council Tax to Council Tax Billing and Collection further measure that can be taken under The Rating (Property in Common Occupation) a Council Tax (Empty Dwellings) Act 2018 regarding properties that have been empty for over 5 and 10 years.	Environmental Health Licensing Manager	December 2019	Policy adopted.
Renew of Environmental Health Enforcement Policy to ensure tools for delivery with problematic empty homes.	Environmental Health Licensing Manager	Under review.	Policy adopted.
Adopt an engagement and assistance approach with owners and escalate only if necessary to the use of formal powers.	Empty Homes Team.	Ongoing.	Contribute to the annual targets.
Review the use of planning conditions to avoid creating homes and neighbourhoods which remain vacant through the use of the Exeter City Council Local Plan and the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESP).	Empty Homes Team. Senior Environment Technical Officer.	December 2020.	Formal procedures in place.
Review Empty Homes Strategy 2019 - 2022	Empty Homes Officer.	December 2022.	Revised strategy adopted.

2. To continue to raise awareness and address issues relating to empty homes and to provide advice			
Action	Lead	Timescale	Outcome
Develop a communication plan to ensure the Empty Homes Strategy is widely circulated and publicised.	Empty Homes Officer. Private Sector Housing Officer.	30 April 2019.	Increased number of residents and stakeholders aware of the strategy leading to increased uptake of empty homes schemes.
Foster and maintain relationships with owners of empty homes to inform them of the schemes available to help them bring their homes back into use.	Empty Homes Officer. Housing Development Assistant.	Ongoing.	Increased uptake of empty homes schemes.
Participate in landlord forums and landlord accreditation events to promote the various schemes available to bring empty homes back into use.	Empty Homes Officer. Private Sector Housing Officer.	Ongoing.	Increased uptake of empty homes schemes.
Develop, review and regularly maintain empty property pages on the council's website.	Empty Homes Officer.	Ongoing.	Improved traffic/feedback in relation to the content of the website.
Develop and maintain effective working relationships with the private sector, registered providers of housing and other stakeholders such as the Police and Fire Service.	Empty Homes Officer. Private Sector Housing Officer.	Ongoing.	Number of new cases of empty homes referred to the council by other.
Update reports on current empty homes situation and review action plans.	Empty Homes Officer. Principal Environmental Health Officer.	March 2020. March 2021. March 2022.	Report prepared for committee.
Multi agency meeting to discuss and risk assess empty homes.	Empty Homes Officer. Private Sector Housing Officer.	31 March 2019.	Meeting established with Terms of Reference.
Contribute to regional and national committees on empty homes policy and procedures.	Empty Homes Officer. Principal Environmental Health Officer.	As they occur.	Number of meetings attended and consultation responses made.
Promote and encourage the installation of energy efficiency measures in the retrofit of empty homes and advise of funding schemes available.	Empty Homes Officer. Housing Development Assistant.	Ongoing.	Take up of energy efficiency measures.

3. To improve the quality of neighbourhoods			
Action	Lead	Timescale	Outcome Measures
Adopt a proactive and reactive approach to identifying, prioritising and monitoring empty homes and ensure appropriate enforcement action is taken in relation to their condition where legislation permits.	Empty Homes Officer. Principal Environmental Health Officer.	Ongoing.	Formal procedures in place, including a risk assessment and prioritisation methods. Maintain and improve on <1% of housing as empty homes.
Establish procedures and systems to maintain an accurate database of empty homes in the city.	Empty Homes Officer. Housing Development Assistant.	31 October 2019.	Formal procedures in place.
Utilise council tax records and other sources to develop and maintain a database of homes that have remained empty for over 6 months.	Empty Homes Team.	Ongoing.	Formal procedures in place
Explore the use of GIS mapping of empty homes.	Empty Homes Officer. Environmental health Technical Officer.	31 March 2019	Trends in empty homes identified to enable effective targeting of resources.
Ensure 95% of non-secure empty homes to be secured against unauthorised entry within 48 hours of notice expiration.	Empty Homes Team. Environmental health Officer (Public Sector Housing). Principal Environmental Health Officer.	Ongoing.	Empty homes secured reducing risk of squatting, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour.
Seek innovative new ways to provide additional options for owners.	Empty Homes Officer. Principal Environmental Health Officer.	Ongoing.	Production of new options.
Development of individual action plans for all properties over two years empty.	Empty Homes Officer.	As properties become empty in excess of two years.	Plans developed.

Appendix A: Enforcement legislation summary

Problem	Legislation	Power granted
Dangerous or dilapidated buildings or structures	Building Act 1984 ss77 & 78	To require the owner to make the property safe (Section 77) or enable the Local Authority (not London) to take emergency action to make the building safe (Section 78).
	Building Act 1984 s79	To require the owner to repair ruinous or dilapidated buildings seriously detrimental to an area.
	Housing Act 2004 Part I	Under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System local authorities can evaluate the potential risks to health and safety arising from deficiencies within homes and take appropriate enforcement action.
Unsecured homes (where it poses the risk that it may be entered or suffer vandalism, arson or similar).	Building Act 1984, s78 Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982, s29	To allow the Local Authority to fence off the property. To require the owner to take steps to secure a property or allow the Local Authority to board it up in an emergency.
Blocked or defective drainage or private sewers.	Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, s35	To require the owner to address obstructed private sewers.
	Building Act 1984, s59.	To require the owner to address blocked or defective drainage.
	Public Health Act 1961, s17.	To require the owner to address defective drainage or private sewers.

Problem	Legislation	Power granted
Vermin (where it is either present or there is a risk of attracting vermin that may detrimentally affect people's health).	Public Health Act 1961, s34 Prevention of Damage by Pests Act, s4 Public Health Act 1936, s83. Environmental Protection Act 1990, s80. Building Act 1984, s76.	To require the owner to remove waste so that vermin is not attracted to the site, destroy any infestation and remove any accumulations prejudicial to health.
Unsightly land and property affecting the amenity of an area	Public Health Act 1936, s83 Town and Country Planning Act 1990, s215. Building Act 1984, s76.	To require the owner to remove waste from the property (see above). To require the owner to take steps to address a property adversely affecting the amenity of an area through its disrepair. To require the owner to address unsightly land or the external appearance of a property.
	Anti-social Behavior, Crime and Policing Act 2014. Community Protection Notices	To prevent an owners persistent, continuing or unreasonable behaviour having a negative impact on the local community's quality of life
Recovery of debts against a property	Law of Property Act 1925, ss101 & 103	To apply for an order of sale of the property to recover council tax debts or debts secured as a legal charge after work in default carried out
Homes empty for over 2 years and causing nuisance in the community	Housing Act 2004 ss133- 183	To apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order (EDMO) to enable the local authority to take over the management of eligible empty homes, to bring them back into use.
Long-term empty homes where no traceable owners, or where all efforts to return the property to use have been exhausted	Housing Act 1985 s17	To seek to acquire a property under a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

Appendix B: Glossary of Terms

	Definition
Affordable Homes Programme	The HCA investment programme aiming to increase the supply of new affordable homes in England. The majority of the new programme will be made available as Affordable Rent with some for affordable home ownership, supported housing and in some circumstances, social rent.
Affordable Housing	Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing, provided to specified eligible households whose needs are not met by the open market.
Affordable Rent	Social housing where rent is charged at up to 80% market rents. The tenancies can either be flexible tenancies or lifetime tenancies. Affordable Rent homes are not subject to the rent restructuring policy that applies to social rented housing.
MHCLG	The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government- is the government department responsible for national housing policy
HCA	Homes and Communities Agency. The national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England
Flexible Tenancy	Fixed term tenancy for a minimum of 2 years with a built in review period
Housing Association	Independent, not-for-profit organisation providing affordable housing
Lifetime Tenancies	Either Secure (council) or Assured tenancies (registered provider).
Market Rent	This refers to private sector rent levels. The rent levels used in this document are sourced from the GLA Rents map and use Valuation Office Agency data. Registered Providers will calculate market rent based on the RICS guidance " <i>Market Rent: a guide for providers of Affordable Rented housing</i> "
Registered Provider	Government funded not-for-profit organisations that provide affordable housing. They include housing associations, trusts and cooperatives.
Social Housing providers	Provider of subsidised social housing below market rent, including the council and other registered providers such as housing associations.
Social Rent	Rents which are kept low through state subsidy, to approximately a third of market levels. The social housing sector is currently governed by a strictly defined system of rent control to ensure that rents are kept affordable.

Appendix C: Useful websites

Age UK:

www.ageuk.org.uk/

Association of Residential Letting Agents (ARLA)

www.arla.co.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau (Exeter):

www.exetercab.org.uk/

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP):

www.dwp.gov.uk

Devon & Somerset Fire and Rescue Service

www.dsfire.gov.uk

Devon County Council:

www.new.devon.gov.uk/

Exeter City Council:

www.Exeter.gov.uk

Empty Homes Network:

www.ehnetwork.org.uk

Empty Homes – national charity:

www.emptyhomes.com

Homes and Communities Agency:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/homes-and-communities-agency

Joseph Rowntree Foundation:

www.jrf.org.uk

Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-housing-communities-and-local-government

Rethink Mental Illness:

www.rethink.org/

Shelter:

www.shelter.org.uk

Valuation Office Agency:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/valuation-office-agency

Wessex Resolutions CIC:

www.wessexresolutions.org.uk/

This page is intentionally left blank

Title: Empty Homes Strategy 2019 - 2022 – Equality Impact Assessment

Introduction

At the end of 2018, Exeter City Council had 403 long term empty homes and approximately 1000 households registered on Devon Home Choice looking for accommodation in Exeter. When taken as a proportion this represents 0.76% homes in Exeter being classed as long term empty. This is below the average for England which is 0.82%.

Empty homes in the City lead to issues relating to anti-social behaviour, are unattractive and a waste of potential housing which could be better utilised. As a result of these issues the Council has identified a number of empty properties in the City. Data is provided to the Government on properties which are 'unoccupied and substantially unfurnished' for a period of longer than 6 months.

The Empty Homes Strategy's over-arching aim is to bring Exeter's empty homes back into use as lived in homes. An action plan contained within section 5 of the Strategy sets out 3 objectives:

Objective 1: Bring empty homes back into use to increase the supply of quality, affordable housing in the city

Objective 2: To continue to raise awareness and address issues relating to empty homes and to provide advice

Objective 3: Improve the quality of neighbourhoods by identifying and tackling the issues associated with empty homes.

The aims of dealing with empty homes in the City will be to reduce the overall number of empty properties, minimise the anti-social behaviour associated with empty homes and recover the costs of enforcement action where possible.

Exeter City Council has a range of tools and powers available including voluntary and enforcement options. These involve teams from across the council and some of the options will involve building effective partnerships with external organisations. These tools and powers will be further explored and developed and barriers to their use challenged.

Exeter City Council is committed to reducing the number of Empty Properties in order to deliver homes that are secure, affordable and healthy in a balanced and connected to great neighbourhoods that supports wellbeing and reduces social isolation.

Lead officer: Elaine Oliver, Empty Homes Officer

Service Manager: Simon Lane, Environmental Health and Licensing Manager

Stakeholders: Residents, Elected Members, Property Owners, Residents and Businesses

For each of the areas below, an assessment has been made on whether the policy has a **positive, negative or neutral impact**, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation are included. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Protected characteristic/ area of interest Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers asylum seekers etc.)	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
Disability (as defined by the Equality Act - a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This can include mental health conditions, long term illnesses such as cancer and HIV, cognitive issues, learning disabilities and sensory impairments)		The Empty Homes Strategy applies equally to all residents of Exeter irrespective of disability. Our strategy does not specifically look to bring empty homes back into occupation for the use of disabled persons. Whether a property is suitable for disabled persons or not depends on the type of property and individual requirements. Where the reason for the property being empty maybe	

		linked to the need for adaptations, owners will have access to information concerning the disabled facilities grant.	
Sex/Gender	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
Gender reassignment	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions)	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual)	There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.		
Age (children and young people aged 0 – 24, adults aged 25 – 50, younger older people aged 51 – 75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).		<p>Empty properties negatively affect all age groups. Where owners of empty properties are elderly we will offer advice and assistance.</p> <p>Owners who are in care are not pursued via enforcement action, nor are properties under probate. Elderly people may be more sensitive to the fear of</p>	

		<p>crime that empty properties are known to engender.</p> <p>Improvements stipulated by us consider hazards for the over 60s who are classed as a vulnerable age group. The hazards likely to affect both younger and older age groups are taken into consideration where opportunities arise for us to be involved in the improvement of empty homes.</p>	
Community relations		<p>We believe that the new strategy will have a positive impact on areas of deprivation as properties that are improved will result in additional accommodation, less Anti Social Behaviour and increased sale prices.</p>	
Human Rights	<p>There is no evidence to suggest that the strategy would have a potential impact on this characteristic.</p>		

Actions identified as a result of the impact assessment (these should be SMART):

Action	Lead	By when	

	Equality Impact Assessment Report Questions checklist
--	--

1.	<p>Describe the piece of work you are assessing and the reason it is being carried out. Are you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Making a strategic budget proposal○ Developing a new policy, strategy or project○ Reviewing and revising a policy, strategy or project○ Reviewing a function or a service○ Restructuring a service. <p>Include any options appraisal and if you have a preferred option explain why.</p>
2.	What are the timescales for completing the work? What committee deadlines do you have to meet?
3.	What are the aims and objectives of the work? How do these link to wider council or strategic objectives.
4.	Who will be the main beneficiaries of the piece of work and in what way? All people in Exeter? Council staff? A specific stakeholder group? A combination of these?
5.	What data do you have on how different groups would be affected by the work?
6.	What research studies or reports have been carried out in other areas of the country or nationally that provide information about the likely impact of your work on equality groups?
7.	What consultation has taken place or is planned with customers (individuals and groups) from equality groups?
8.	What does the consultation indicate about any differential positive or negative impact(s) of this piece of work?
9.	If there are gaps in your previous or planned consultation and research are there any experts/relevant groups that can be contacted to get further views or evidence on the issues? If so please explain who they are and how you will obtain their views.
10.	If you have indicated there is a negative impact on any group, is that impact Legal; Intended; of high or low impact?
11.	If you identified any negative impact that is of low significance, can you minimise or remove it? If so how?
12.	Could you improve the strategy/policy/project's positive impact and if so how?
13.	How do you intend to continue monitoring the impact of this strategy/policy/project?
14.	If there are gaps in your evidence base, do you need to carry out any further research about the likely impact of your work on equality groups?

	<p>There might be a time delay here as you will need to get the results of your consultation before you can continue working your way through the questions.</p>
15.	As a result of this assessment and available evidence collected, including consultation, what if any changes do you need to make to the strategy/policy/project?
16.	Will the changes planned ensure that the negative impact is: Legal; Intended; of low impact?
17.	What monitoring/evaluation/review process have you set up to check the successful implementation of the strategy/policy/project?
18.	How will this monitoring/evaluation further assess the impact on the equality groups/ensure the strategy/policy/project is non-discriminatory?
19.	Please provide an action plan showing any recommendations that have arisen from the assessment and how you plan to take them forward. Are your actions SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based).
20.	When will you next review this work and the impact assessment?

Agenda Item 10

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PEOPLE, EXECUTIVE, Council
DATE OF MEETING: 6th June 2019 and 11th June 2019
REPORT OF: Service Lead – Housing Tenancy Services
TITLE: Adoption of Hoarding in Council Properties Policy

Is this a key decision?

Yes

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Executive

1. What is the report about?

This report sets out the draft policy in relation to Hoarding in council properties.

2. Recommendations:

That Members of Scrutiny Committee - People support and Executive recommends to Council to approve:

- 2.1** The adoption of the Hoarding in Council Properties Policy (set out in appendix a).

3. Reasons for the recommendation:

- 3.1** Hoarding is becoming more of a prevalent issue in both the social and private housing sector and presents a number of risks, these include:

- A number of fire risks such as the increased the risk of a fire in property as the materials hoarded are often highly flammable and can impede the Fire and Rescue Service particularly when the material blocks doors and windows
- it increases the risk of accident and harm to the tenant and any other households members
- it can compromise the health and safety of neighbours and the wider community. This is especially the case where the tenant occupies a flat and/or where the material hoarded encourages infestations of mice or insects
- it can lead to increased repairs and structural damage to properties (as tenants will often neglect the property, not report repairs or allow access to the property)
- it causes significant costs in terms of management and clearance/repairs to the property once vacated.

- 3.2** Hoarding can be a complex area of work and under the Equality Act 2010 people who hoard or clutter would be considered to have a protected characteristic and is a recognised mental illness.

- 3.3** Having a hoarding policy will give officers clear guidelines of how they are to approach this challenging area of work.

- 4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources**
- 4.1** There are no resource implications as this would be part of tenancy management work carried out by the housing officers.
- 5. Section 151 Officer comments:**
- 5.1** There are no financial implications for Council to consider.
- 6. What are the legal aspects?**

The Policy makes clear that where the Council has not been successful in working with the tenant to effect the necessary changes in behaviour, the Housing Service will take appropriate enforcement action in connection with any breaches of the tenancy agreement. Ultimately this may result in the Tenant losing their home.
- 7. Monitoring Officers comments:**

This report raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.
- 8. Report Details:**
 - 8.1** Whilst carrying out regular property and tenancy inspections of our council properties Housing Officers have identified hoarding to various degrees in a number of properties. There are currently 48 live cases where we are still addressing the issue with the tenant. Of these 6 are assessed as having significant levels of hoarding where intense housing management is ongoing.
 - 8.2** Many people collect items at some point or even throughout their lives. However, there are a percentage of people for whom collecting becomes an unmanageable pattern of behaviour. Hoarding disorder is a recognised mental health problem. It occurs where a person's pattern of collecting items becomes excessive and unmanageable, impacting on their daily life and social activities. Approximately 2 to 5 percent of the UK's adult population may be hoarders. Hoarding behaviour does not favour a particular gender, age, ethnic background, socio-economic status, educational/occupational history or tenure.
 - 8.3** Compulsive hoarding occurs when:
 - a person acquires items excessively
 - they are unable to dispose of these items, which may have little meaning or value to others
 - the items are stored chaotically and clutter rooms, so they cannot be used effectively for their intended purpose
 - this impacts negatively on the person (physically and psychologically)
 - 8.4** Hoarding can be exhibited by people who have other issues that might make them vulnerable, for example anxiety, depression or obsessive compulsive disorders, or it can follow on from a traumatic experience.
 - 8.5** People who hoard can:
 - show an unusual and strong emotional connection with material things
 - have difficulty in organising or prioritising items
 - experience anxiety or distress at getting rid of items

- 8.6 The impact of hoarding can create significant management problems and requires long term input and support in order to resolve effectively. It is best approached through multi-agency working because of the potential impact for the wider community and other public services. Action is needed to both ensure the safety and wellbeing of the tenant and to secure the long term condition of the home.
- Hoarding poses a number of risks as set out in 3.1 of this report.
- 8.7 Through our regular property visits and tenancy inspections the Council has been able to reduce the risk as we are aware of the properties where hoarding occurs and officers taking proactive steps to address. There is also an agreement with the fire service for their safeguarding officer to visit properties we identify as there being a risk and take steps to reduce these (additional smoke alarms for example).
- 8.8 Active intervention to enter a property and make safe is likely to be required where the hoarding includes food stuff, waste or animals to a degree that poses a statutory nuisance or health and safety risk. However, taking only an enforcement approach does not directly help the tenant; instead it is likely to exacerbate their anxiety and distress leading to continued and increased hoarding, a lack of trust and engagement with housing staff in the future. Ideally we would develop a person-centred approach that helps the tenant to identify and understand and change unhelpful patterns of thoughts and behaviour that's leads them to hoard. In a recent report the Chartered Institute of Housing believe this is likely have a long term beneficial impact for the tenant and help prevent or reduce hoarding in the future. Although this can be resource intensive it delivers benefits including costs by reducing the number of repairs, clearance costs and other additional work required when the property becomes empty.
- 8.9 As the housing provider the Council is the agency with the most significant investment in the property apart from the tenant and it is important that we play a key role of addressing serious hoarding in our properties. We will look to continue to develop our in house expertise for housing officers to address hoarding and raise awareness for all staff who come into contact with tenants in their homes including contractors. It may be that the complexities of a case require the use of specialists organisations when it comes to serious hoarding. The council currently uses a professional organisation in the most extreme cases along with other support agencies.
- 8.10 The Hoarding policy sets out how we use this policy in conjunction with other key policies such as the Anti-social Behaviour and Safeguarding Policy. A more detailed procedure and guidance will be provided for housing officers in order to equip them to tackle cases of hoarding.
- 8.11 This Policy has been written in line with good practice and current relevant legislation. Unless there any changes to such legislation beforehand, the Policy will be reviewed every three years.
- 8.12 This policy is supported by a procedure for officers which is attached to this report as appendix b. With the escalation process and management of

hoarding issues we have avoided being overly prescriptive on when specific action is taken and refer more to the actions we can take. This is because different circumstances requiring us to be flexible in our approach. In making our decisions a lot would depend on the level of clutter, circumstances of the tenant and type of property (flat or house etc.).

If we were to escalate having to use legal actions to either remove the items or repossess the property this would require a court order and we are reliant on the courts to agree this sanction. As both the policy and procedure state hoarding at its extreme level is considered a mental health issue and therefore the tenant has protected characteristics. This needs to have been taken into account when considering our approach. It is likely a judge would have expected us to have offered significant levels of support and even moved the tenant to another property to reduce the risk before taking any other action more punitive action.

9. How does the decision contribute to the Council's corporate plan?

- 9.1 The content of this report is consistent with the following corporate objective of providing high quality, value for money services, being a well-run council and building great neighbourhoods.

10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

- 10.1 It is essential that officers of the housing team have clear guidelines and an understanding of how to tackle issues of hoarding in our properties. The greater risks are listed in 3.2 of this report. The introduction of this policy will reduce the risks.

11. What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

Please refer to appendix c the Equality Impact Assessment.

12. Are there any other options?

- 12.1 It would be possible to rely on the anti-social behaviour policy to deal with matters relating to hoarding. However, this would not allow for a more flexible and solution based approach to effectively tackle hoarding. Also if possible this would allow tenants to remain in their home as long as they can adhere to the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement.

Service Lead – Housing Tenancy Services

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)
Background papers used in compiling this report:-

Contact for enquiries:
Democratic Services (Committees)
Room 2.3
01392 265275

This page is intentionally left blank

Hoarding

Hoarding can be described as collecting and being unable to discard excessive quantities of goods or objects. It is a recognised mental illness and has a protected characteristic under the Mental Health Act. Many people collect objects, but in some cases the problem can be so severe that it can become a health & safety concern for the resident or others.

You may have to liaise with Environmental Health where the hoarding is causing or is caused by people who are not our tenants, i.e. leaseholders, in privately rented or owner occupied housing.

Hoarding may apply to the properties themselves, private gardens or the communal areas of flats. A different approach will be required for each location. There is not a typical hoarding situation but the following should be followed in most cases:

- If the hoarding is at such an extent that the structure of the building is unsafe.
- There is an imminent risk to life due to materials hoarded.
- There is an imminent risk to others.

1. A hoarding issue can be brought to our attention through many different variants such as:
 - Tenancy visits
 - Repair visit/Gas service
 - Complaint from neighbours
 - External agency contact
 - Fire Service initiatives
2. See also the clutter rating <http://clutter-image-ratings.pdf>
3. Check the tenancy file (on CAPITA) to see if there are any previous reports of hoarding tendencies if we are not already aware of any being raised, and to see if there are any agencies involved with the tenant.
4. Where the tenant is already engaging with a support service, make contact with and work alongside this existing arrangement.
5. Where the tenant is not currently engaged, but appears willing to accept assistance, try to arrange floating support to work with them for a limited period. Floating support maybe offered even if other support measures are in place.
6. Where support is offered and refused, it is important to note this on CAPITA as this may be crucial evidence later if legal action is required.
7. Arrange a joint meeting of agencies if this hasn't already been done.
8. Adding a warning marker to speak to the HO on CAPITA is a good way of keeping track of people who have a tendency to hoard if they should move property. It also advises people visiting the property that there is a recognised person with hoarding tendencies as this can often impact on repairs.

9. HO to set up a joint agency meeting with agencies which may be relevant to the case such as Adult Services, Environmental Health, Fire Service, Mental Health, to ensure the case is dealt with by the correct person(s) and to ensure that the individual receives the support they need.

Clearance

1. Where the tenant is willing to engage, it may be possible to help them to plan and manage their own clearance or engage with an organisation that can assist them.
2. To aid with clearance, you may need the assistance of a specialist team. Each case will be assessed individually as to whether a referral is required.
3. There may be some cases where ECC will pay for the clearance of the property. In order for this to occur, the following criteria must be met:
 - The property causes a serious risk to life.
 - The individual does not have the capacity to make decisions or understand the decisions they need to make.
 - The individual does not have the capability to clear the items due to disability or impairment.
 - Apparent and assessed lack of financial resources.
4. If the property is causing a serious risk to life and the tenant has the capacity and capability then the cost for clearance will be recharged to them. This will have to be reviewed on a case by case basis in conjunction with the HOTL.

Note: Enforced removal of items is often considered to be a short-term solution as in some cases tenants whose properties are cleared go on to collect further items and the whole process needs to be repeated. This continuation of the hoarding could be a symptom of an untreated mental health condition.

For advice look at:

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/obsessive-compulsive-disorder-ocd/index.shtml>
<http://www.ocdaction.org.uk/>
<http://www.helpforhoarders.co.uk/>

For Animal Hoarding – see [HPM animals.docx](#)

Leaseholders (or their tenants) who are hoarders

Similar rules apply to leaseholders as tenants. If the leaseholder (or their tenant) is found to be hoarding then liaise with colleagues in Environmental Health. A joint operation with them might be the most appropriate way forward to deal with such issues.

Equality Impact Assessment - To be completed using the checklist of questions at the end of the table

Title of work being assessed: The adoption of the Hoarding in council Properties Policy

Introduction

This policy outlines Exeter City Council's (ECC) Housing Services approach identifying and dealing with hoarding and clutter in Council properties. The policy sets out why hoarding is considered a problem and what the risks are to the residents in and around the property where it is occurring and to ECC.

Within the policy it refers to tenancy management, health and safety, safeguarding, partnership working, tenancy enforcement and equality and diversity.

Lead officer: Lawrence Blake

Service Manager: Lawrence Blake

Stakeholders: Environmental Health, Policy Unit and Housing Assets Compliance team.

For each of the areas below, an assessment has been made on whether the policy has a **positive, negative or neutral impact**, and brief details of why this decision was made and notes of any mitigation are included. Where the impact is negative, a **high, medium or low assessment** is given. The assessment rates the impact of the policy based on the current situation (i.e. disregarding any actions planned to be carried out in future).

High impact – a significant potential impact, risk of exposure, history of complaints, no mitigating measures in place etc.

Medium impact –some potential impact exists, some mitigating measures are in place, poor evidence

Low impact – almost no relevancy to the process, e.g. an area that is very much legislation led and where the Council has very little discretion

	Neutral	Positive	Negative
Protected characteristic/ area of interest			
Race and ethnicity (including Gypsies and Travellers; migrant workers asylum seekers etc.)	Little or no impact as hoarding is not restricted to one particular ethnicity or tenure.		
Disability (as defined by the Equality Act - a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This can include mental health conditions, long term illnesses such as cancer and HIV, cognitive issues, learning disabilities and sensory impairments)		<p>By not dealing effectively with hoarding there is an increased risk of fire. It is possible that a person with a disability may have restricted mobility and as such could not exit a property or block of flats in the event of a fire. By effectively tackling hoarding the risk of fire is reduced and this would be a positive impact.</p> <p>There is also the impact of hoarding on other vulnerable residents possibly living in the same block as a hoarder. They would be subject to the same risks although the council has fitted individual fire doors to each unit within blocks to mitigate this risk.</p>	<p>If a tenant with a physical disability was the hoarder it is possible working with them towards the removal of the clutter may prove problematic. Officers would need to ensure reasonable adjustments were made.</p>
Sex/Gender	Little or no impact as hoarding is not a higher risk in one particular gender or sex.		

Gender reassignment	Little or no impact as hoarding is not a higher risk amongst people who have transitioned from one gender to another		
Religion and belief (includes no belief, some philosophical beliefs such as Buddhism and sects within religions)	Little or no impact as hoarding is not restricted to any particular religion or beliefs.		
Sexual orientation (including heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual)	Little or no impact as hoarding is not restricted to any sexual orientation.		
Age (children and young people aged 0 – 24, adults aged 25 – 50, younger older people aged 51 – 75/80; older people 81+; frail older people; people living with age related conditions. The age categories are for illustration only as overriding consideration should be given to needs).		By not dealing effectively with hoarding there is an increased risk of fire. It is possible that an elderly persons may have reduced mobility and as such could not exit a property or block of flats in the event of a fire. By effectively tackling hoarding the risk of fire is reduced and this would be a positive impact.	When working with a more elderly tenant that is a hoarder the removal of clutter may prove problematic from a practical point of view (physically moving items out for example). Officers would need to ensure reasonable adjustments were made.
Community relations			Whilst a tenant that is a recognised hoarder maybe assessed as having mental health issues and be considered as having a protected characteristic ECC has a wider obligation to the

			community in particular tenants and leaseholder residing in the same block where there is an increased risk of a fire. This is mitigated by the fitting of fire doors to each flat, regular property inspections and working in partnership with hoarding specialist and adult social services to take positive steps to resolve the issue.
Human Rights			
<u>Actions identified as a result of the impact assessment (these should be SMART):</u>			
Action	Lead	By when	

	Equality Impact Assessment Report Questions checklist taken from the EQIA Toolkit – please note this is for reference purposes only. Not all questions will need to be answered in full.
1.	<p>Describe the piece of work you are assessing and the reason it is being carried out. Are you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Making a strategic budget proposal ○ Developing a new policy, strategy or project ○ Reviewing and revising a policy, strategy or project ○ Reviewing a function or a service ○ Restructuring a service. <p>Include any options appraisal and if you have a preferred option explain why.</p>
2.	What are the timescales for completing the work? What committee deadlines do you have to meet? June Scrutiny and Executive
3.	What are the aims and objectives of the work? How do these link to wider council or strategic objectives. The provision of high quality, value for money services, being a well-run council and building great neighbourhoods.

4.	Who will be the main beneficiaries of the piece of work and in what way? All people in Exeter? Council staff? A specific stakeholder group? A combination of these? The residents of Council homes and leaseholders and staff.
5.	<p>What data do you have on how different groups would be affected by the work?</p> <p>We have visited all of our properties and have knowledge of where hoarding is currently occurring. We also have access to national statistics in relation to hoarding. Studies have indicated that hoarding behaviour does not favour a particular gender, age, ethnic background, socio-economic status, educational /occupational history or tenure.</p>
6.	What research studies or reports have been carried out in other areas of the country or nationally that provide information about the likely impact of your work on equality groups?
7.	<p>What consultation has taken place or is planned with customers (individuals and groups) from equality groups?</p> <p>The chartered institute of housing studies conclude that hoarding is not the preserve of any group of people.</p>
8.	What does the consultation indicate about any differential positive or negative impact(s) of this piece of work?
9.	If there are gaps in your previous or planned consultation and research are there any experts/relevant groups that can be contacted to get further views or evidence on the issues? If so please explain who they are and how you will obtain their views.
10.	<p>If you have indicated there is a negative impact on any group, is that impact Legal; Intended; of high or low impact? I</p> <p>The negative impact will be negated by the use of impact assessments and individual EQIA's on each case as action is taken</p>
11.	If you identified any negative impact that is of low significance, can you minimise or remove it? If so how?
12.	<p>Could you improve the strategy/policy/project's positive impact and if so how?</p> <p>The policy will have a positive impact ensuring a consistent and effective understanding of our policy in relation to hoarders.</p>
13.	<p>How do you intend to continue monitoring the impact of this strategy/policy/project?</p> <p>This will be carried out during the 3 yearly reviews of the policy.</p>
14.	If there are gaps in your evidence base, do you need to carry out any further research about the likely impact of your work on equality

	groups?
	There might be a time delay here as you will need to get the results of your consultation before you can continue working your way through the questions.
15.	As a result of this assessment and available evidence collected, including consultation, what if any changes do you need to make to the strategy/policy/project?
16.	Will the changes planned ensure that the negative impact is: Legal; Intended; of low impact?
17.	What monitoring/evaluation/review process have you set up to check the successful implementation of the strategy/policy/project?
18.	How will this monitoring/evaluation further assess the impact on the equality groups/ensure the strategy/policy/project is non-discriminatory?
19.	Please provide an action plan showing any recommendations that have arisen from the assessment and how you plan to take them forward. Are your actions SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based).
20.	When will you next review this work and the impact assessment? 3 years