

# REPORT TO CUSTOMER SERVICE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting: Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026

## PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S REPORT TO SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

### COUNCILLOR MARINA ASVACHIN – HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

#### **1. Issues relating to achieving the Council's published priorities**

##### **Housing Need**

The service continues to strengthen homelessness prevention by providing assessment and tailored support, including access to temporary accommodation where required. A report provided to Scrutiny on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026 provides significant updates on the amount of change underway nationally with the publication of the Plan to End Homelessness (Dec 2025) and the extensive preparation underway locally to address our entrenched city-wide problems.

##### **Social Housing**

Tenant satisfaction and neighbourhood engagement remain key priorities, with visible improvements delivered through a range of activities including a Tenant Voice Spotlight on damp and mould which is improving communication and engagement with tenants and response rates to proactive and reactive repairs. Our monitoring of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures shows steady improvements in most areas

##### **Customer Services**

The modernisation of our Customer Services continues through the delivery of the aims of the Digital Customer Strategy.

#### **2. Update or commentary on any major ongoing programmes of work**

Considerable work is underway, detailed in the 5<sup>th</sup> February Homelessness Prevention Strategy update to Scrutiny, aiming to shift the focus from crisis response to preventing homelessness occurring in the first plane. This is requiring a transformation of the way we are commissioning temporary and supported accommodation and respond to the needs of rough sleepers. It is also requiring significant changes to the way we organise and deliver services ourselves. Preparations are also underway to meet the new duties of the Renters Rights Bill and the Supported Accommodation Act.

Significant work continues to enhance the quality of council housing through investment in energy efficient homes and a responsive approach to repairs and maintenance. **The attached presentation shared with the Regulator for Social Housing at our first annual visit provides an overview of our current performance.** A revised Social Housing Asset Management Strategy is being developed by officers which includes plans for more frequent tenant engagement and this will include a survey of tenant experience of living in Passivhaus standard homes.

Customer Services led the successful implementation of a new telephony system with enhanced customer relationship management technology which is now being deployed. This includes call back and enhanced call waiting data. The introduction of MyExeter account has progressed well with over 21,000 signups since April.

We anticipate a rise in new accounts from March when Council tax data will be included in MyExeter. The enhanced data available from the new telephony system (CX1) is providing detailed intelligence about call handling and response times and plans are underway to address service areas with the longest waits e.g. Housing Repair: Housing Need and Council Tax, by better integration through the main customer services centre.

### **3. Issues that may impact services delivery/financial performance/future budget requirements**

The introduction of three-year funding settlement especially in relation to Homeless Prevention Grant is welcomed however the ring-fenced grant included is less than anticipated. Funding for temporary accommodation is excluded from the ring-fenced grant and the notional amount allocated within the wider formula is also less than anticipated however the overall funding allocation for the council is higher than anticipated and can address this shortfall and is addressed in the budget being put forward for member approval in February.

A public consultation will begin later in the year on Customer Service Standards and the outcome from this consultation will be brought forward in due course. This will include any increase in staff resources anticipated to meet proposed Customer Service Standards.

### **4. Potential changes to services/provisions being considered**

The council is exploring enhanced digital pathways through the MyExeter platform to streamline customer interactions and reduce delays.

Consideration is being given to the potential relocation or redesign of the Customer Service Centre to improve accessibility and create a more welcoming and functional environment for residents.

There is ongoing work to expand tenancy sustainment and early intervention services to reduce homelessness presentations and reliance on temporary accommodation.

Key service policies, including those relating to safety, tenancy and safeguarding, are being reviewed and updated in response to regulatory requirements and resident feedback.

### **5. Other matters the Portfolio Holder wishes to raise with the Scrutiny Committee**

Tenant satisfaction has risen to 76%, and maintaining this positive trajectory remains a central focus.

Engagement is being strengthened through initiatives such as Tenant Focus Week and wider co-production activities across neighbourhoods.

Workforce capacity pressures continue to affect homelessness services, customer contact operations and maintenance teams.

The council continues to work closely with voluntary organisations, support providers and housing partners, recognising that collaborative approaches are essential to sustaining effective homelessness prevention and support services.