

South Hams Executive



Title:	Agenda
Date:	Thursday, 3rd June, 2021
Time:	11.00 am
Venue:	Repton Room - Follaton House
Full Members:	<p style="text-align: center;">Chairman Cllr Pearce</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Vice Chairman Cllr Bastone</p> <p><i>Members:</i> Cllr Hopwood Cllr Hawkins Cllr Baldry Cllr Holway</p>
Interests – Declaration and Restriction on Participation:	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest not entered in the Authority's register or local non pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda (subject to the exception for sensitive information) and to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on an item in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
Committee administrator:	Democratic.Services@swdevon.gov.uk

1. Minutes

to approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 26 May 2021

To follow

2. Urgent Business

brought forward at the discretion of the Chairman;

3. Division of Agenda

to consider whether the discussion of any item of business is likely to lead to the disclosure of exempt information;

4. Declarations of Interest

Members are invited to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting;

5. Public Question Time

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a period of up to 15 minutes is available to deal with questions submitted to the Council in accordance with the Executive Procedure Rules;

6. Executive Forward Plan

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7. Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update

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8. Devon Home Choice Policy Changes

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9. Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 21/22

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10. Reports of Bodies: Overview & Scrutiny Committee Meeting - 1 April 2021

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PUBLIC QUESTIONS AT EXECUTIVE MEETINGS

The Council has agreed that 15 minutes should be set aside at the beginning its monthly Executive meetings to allow members of the public to ask questions.

Any member of the public who wants to raise a question at a meeting should:-

- (a) submit the question in writing to Democratic Services (Democratic.Services@swdevon.gov.uk) by 5.00 pm on the Monday prior to the Executive meeting. This will allow a detailed answer to the question to be given at the meeting. If advance notice of the question cannot be given, the Chairman of the meeting has the discretion to allow questions on matters which are felt to be urgent;
- (b) ensure that normally questions are no longer than 50 words in length;
- (c) ensure that the question does not relate to a specific planning matter (this is specifically excluded from the public question time);
- (d) ensure that the question relates to something over which the Council has some control and is suitable to be considered, ie, that it is not derogatory to the Council; or relates to matters which the Council could consider confidential; or is substantially the same as a question which has previously been put in the past six months.

For any further advice on questions for Executive meetings, please contact Democratic Services (Democratic.Services@swdevon.gov.uk)

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SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL: EXECUTIVE LEADER'S FORWARD PLAN

This is the Leader of Council's provisional forward plan for the four months starting June 2021. It provides an indicative date for matters to be considered by the Executive. Where possible, the Executive will keep to the dates shown in the plan. However, it may be necessary for some items to be rescheduled and other items added.

The forward plan is published to publicise consultation dates and enable dialogue between the Executive and all councillors, the public, and other stakeholders. It will also assist the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panel in planning their contribution to policy development and holding the Executive to account.

Local authorities are required to publish updated forward plans on a regular basis. The Plan is published in hard copy and on the Council's website (www.southhams.gov.uk)

The Executive currently consists of five Councillors. Each has responsibility for a particular area of the Council's work.

Leader of the Council – Cllr Judy Pearce

Deputy Leader – Cllr Hilary Bastone

Lead Executive Member for Health and Wellbeing – Cllr Jonathan Hawkins

Lead Executive Member for Environment – Cllr Keith Baldry

Lead Executive Member for Customer Service Delivery – Cllr Nicky Hopwood

Further information on the workings of the Executive, including latest information on agenda items, can be obtained by contacting Democratic Services on 01803 861105 or by e-mail to democratic.services@swdevon.gov.uk

All items listed in this Forward Plan will be discussed in public at the relevant meeting, unless otherwise indicated with *

Portfolio Area	Report Title and Summary	Lead Member / Officer	Documents to be considered in making decision	Date of Decision	Consultees and means of Consultation
Homes	Title: Homelessness Strategy – Annual Action Plan Purpose: To consider a report that presents the Annual Action Plan that underpins the Council’s Homelessness Strategy.	Cllr Bastone / Issy Blake	Report of the Head of Housing, Revenues, and Benefits	3 June 2021	
Environment	Title: Improving Biodiversity Through Effective Grounds Maintenance Purpose: To seek adoption of a revised business plan following on from the Grounds Maintenance review.	Cllr Baldry / Sarah Moody	Report of Business Manager – Case Management	3 June 2021	
Council	Title: Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy Update Purpose: To present a report which gives an update on progress against delivery of the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy	Cllr Pearce / Drew Powell	Report of Director of Governance and Assurance	3 June 2021	
Homes	Title: Devon Homes Choice Policy Purpose: To agree some recommended revisions to the Devon Homes Choice policy.	Cllr Bastone / Issy Blake	Report of the Head of Housing, Revenues and Benefits	3 June 2021	
All	Title: Draft Corporate Strategy Purpose: To consider a report that seeks to recommend to Council approval of the draft Corporate Strategy.	Cllr Pearce / Senior Leadership Team	Report of the Senior Leadership Team	July 2021	
Council	Title: Section 106 Agreement Expenditure Purpose: To consider a report that outlines the latest position in respect of Section 106 Agreement Expenditure.	Cllr Bastone / Lisa Buckle	Report of the Section 151 Officer	July 2021	
Health and Wellbeing	Title: Dartmouth Public Space Protection Order Purpose: To approve the draft Public Space Protection Order for Dartmouth.	Cllr Hawkins / Ian Luscombe	Report of the Head of Environmental Health	July 2021	
Health and Wellbeing	Title: Leisure Update Purpose: To consider a report that seeks to present a Leisure Update to the Executive.	Cllr Hawkins / Chris Brook	Report of Director of Place and Enterprise	July 2021	

Homes	<p>Title: Development Management / Planning Enforcement Service Review</p> <p>Purpose: To consider a report that presents a Service Improvement Plan for the approval of the Executive.</p>	Cllr Bastone / Steve Mullineaux	Report of the Deputy Chief Executive	July 2021	
Council	<p>Title: Annual Report</p> <p>Purpose: To consider a report that seeks to recommend to Council approval of the Council's Annual Report.</p>	Cllr Pearce / Neil Hawke	Report of the Head of Strategy and Projects	July 2021	
Council	<p>Title: Regeneration and Investment Strategy</p> <p>Purpose: To consider a report that presents a draft Regeneration and Investment Strategy.</p>	Cllr Pearce / Chris Brook	Report of Director of Place and Enterprise	September 2021	
Council	<p>Title: Medium Term Financial Strategy for the five years 2022/23 to 2026/27</p> <p>Purpose: To set the strategic intention for all of the different strands of funding available to the Council. This brings together all known factors affecting the Council's financial position and its financial sustainability, to provide a long term financial forecast.</p>	Cllr Pearce / Lisa Buckle	Report of S151 Officer	September 2021	
Homes	<p>Title: Community Housing Projects Update</p> <p>Purpose: To present a report which gives an update on the Community Housing Projects</p>	Cllr Bastone / Chris Brook	Report of Director of Place and Enterprise	October 2021	
Council	<p>Title: Write Off Report for Quarters 1 and 2</p> <p>Purpose: The Council is responsible for the collection of: Housing Rents, Sundry Debts including Housing Benefit Overpayments, Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates. The report informs Members of the debt written off for these revenue streams.</p>	Cllr Bastone / Lisa Buckle	Report of Strategic Finance Lead	October 2021	

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Report to: **Executive**

Date: **3rd June 2021**

Title: **Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update**

Portfolio Areas: **Cllr Judy Pearce**

Wards Affected: **All**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: **NA**

Author: **Drew Powell** Role: **Director of Governance and Assurance**
Adam Williams **Climate Change Specialist**

Contact: **Email: drew.powell@swdevon.gov.uk, adam.williams@swdevon.gov.uk**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Executive notes the progress against delivery of the adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council declared a Climate Change and Biodiversity Emergency on 25th July 2019 and committed to develop an action plan.
- 1.2 A draft Action Plan was subsequently adopted on December 19th 2019 and the Council resolved to develop a Strategy Framework and consult on the Plan.
- 1.3 The Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy and an updated Action Plan were developed, presented, and adopted at Council on 17th December 2020.

2. Background

- 2.1 At Full Council on 17th December 2020, Members considered an updated Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy, containing both a framework and an action plan.

- 2.2 It was noted that the Action Plan will be a continually evolving document and that delegated authority would be granted to the Director of Governance and Assurance, in consultation with the lead Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity, to make revisions to the Plan as and when deemed necessary.
- 2.3 The Action Plan has been updated and includes suggestions brought forward by Members and through the Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Forum.
- 2.4 In addition, it was resolved on the 17th December 2020 that performance against the Action Plan would be monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel on a six-monthly basis.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The report sets out progress to date on delivery of the action plan in line with the adopted strategy.

4. Progress Update

- 4.1 Appendix 1 contains a tabulated version of the Action Plan with the latest position on each individual action, new actions, and changes to actions marked in red.
- 4.2 Key progress has been made in the following areas since January;
 - a. Secured an additional £600,000 in Green Homes Grants, through Phase 1b. We are forecasting 90 installs, a combination of Air Source Heat Pumps and External Wall Insulation. The deadline for spending the previously awarded phase 1a grant has been extended from 31 March 2021 until the end of August 2021 in recognition of a range of supply chain challenges.
 - b. Increased the Member Sustainable Community Locality Fund by £3,000 each for use on local Climate Change and Biodiversity Projects. A web based application scheme is being developed with the Customer Improvement Team to make it easier for Members and the public whilst also reducing officer administration time. This is due to go live in June 2021.
 - c. Climate Change and Biodiversity Newsletters have continued to be produced and released monthly.
 - d. A further two Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Forum meetings have been organised and held, focusing on housing retrofit, seeking views on our Climate Change Crowd-funder eligibility Criteria, as well as inviting a guest speaker from CoCars to discuss shared transport. At the latest meeting, the Forum expressed interest in an area wide survey to gauge interest in shared EV's and bikes, we will be working with CoCars to arrange a survey which the Forum will promote in their networks.

- e. Our Community Forum work has recently been featured as a case study by the Local Government Association <https://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies/developing-community-forum-help-tackle-climate-change-and-increase-biodiversity> and we have been invited to present at the Sustainable Earth Conference organised by Plymouth University in June 2021. Appendix 2 contains a summary of notes from all Community Forum meetings to date.
- f. Collaborated on a Carbon Foot-printing public campaign with Carbon Savvy, North Devon Council, Torridge District Council and West Devon Borough Council called 'Lifestyle Spring Clean'. We are awaiting full figures from the campaign, but in terms of our social media engagement, our posts reached 23,464 people; 394 people engaged with the posts directly.
- g. Applied for £99,000 funding from the Government's Natural Environment Investment Readiness Grant in partnership with the AONB unit (as lead bidder) and Ambios (Sharpham Estate).
- h. Commissioning a feasibility study into EV charging, solar and battery storage on our car parks, and exploring the potential for direct energy feed to nearby assets as part of the scope.
- i. Recommended to Council to approve a capital expenditure programme of £170,000 to upgrade rapid charging capabilities at Totnes Depot and network upgrades at Follaton House to facilitate Fleet EV transition. This was detailed in the report to the Executive on 22nd April 2021 (Minute E.85/20).
- j. Additional funding for Off Street Residential Charging secured for the following car parks;
 - a. North Street, Totnes
 - b. Steamer Quay, Totnes
 - c. Lower Union Road, Kingsbridge
 - d. Duncombe Park, Kingsbridge
- k. We are working on process reviews to align Climate Change ambitions across the organisation.
- l. Refined and developed the Crowdfunder platform, it will be called South Hams Climate and Biodiversity Action Fund, and will be launched in June 2021 alongside a facility to administer small direct cash grants through our Liberty Create Platform.
- m. Contributing to the Devon Citizens' Assembly as a member of the project team.
- n. Saved through 'agile' since January 2021 an estimated 300,000 miles of travel, leading to a saving of 106tCO₂e¹ (Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent).

¹ Travel emissions including well to tank emissions

5. Plans for short term (next 6 months)

- 5.1 The Action Plan will continue to be worked on alongside development of the Council's new Corporate Strategy. Integrating carbon reduction and increasing biodiversity will be embedded within the strategic approach.
- 5.2 Over the next six months we will expect to see a final version of the Devon Interim Carbon Plan which will trigger an update of our own action plan, bringing in actions from the wider Devon work as well as its performance monitoring indicators.
- 5.3 The following key pieces of work will be developed in the short term;
 - a. Grounds Maintenance Review – increasing biodiversity through our land management. Subject of a report to Executive in July 2021.
 - b. Scoping work underway on a replacement of vehicle fleet with EV and associated infrastructure (non-waste fleet).
 - c. Feasibility work on cycle schemes / active travel.
 - d. Bids under the Local Authority Treescapes Fund and Urban Tree Challenge.
 - e. Fully update the website to include a tabulated version of the Action Plan, Climate Change related reports to Council, and links to the Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Forum.
 - f. Further public engagement campaigns with Carbon Savvy
 - g. Undertaking an Energy Audit of our buildings to inform retrofit work and what fabric measures are needed.
 - h. Carbon Literacy training for ELT and SLT
 - i. Discussions with the Woodland Trust regarding potential investment.
 - j. Increasing PR around what we are doing outside of the monthly e-bulletins, developing a plan with Communications.

6. Proposed Way Forward

- 6.1 The Executive is recommended to note the updates provided within this report and Appendix 1, and support the progress made so far with a view to being provided a further update in six months' time.

7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	N	There are no direct legal implications arising from this report
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>There is funding of £600,000 available within the Emergency Climate Change Projects Earmarked Reserve, to fund projects and initiatives within the Council's adopted Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan.</p> <p>An amount of £400,000 was approved at Council on 13th February 2020 (Minute CM71) and a further £200,000 at Council on 11th February 2021 (Minute CM37/20).</p> <p>On an annual basis, the Council's auditors issue an opinion on their Value for Money conclusion for the Council.</p> <p>For the 2019-20 year, Grant Thornton has reported to the Council's Audit Committee, on 15th October 2020, that they have issued an unqualified opinion on the Council's Value for Money arrangements and that they have concluded that the District Council has proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.</p>
Risk	N	
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Wellbeing, Homes, Climate Change and Biodiversity
Equality and Diversity	N	No direct implications
Safeguarding	N	No direct implications
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	No direct implications
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	The provision of energy efficiency measures will have a positive impact

		on the health, safety and wellbeing of the households.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 - South Hams District Council's Climate Change and Biodiversity Action Plan Update

Appendix 2 - Community Forum notes

Reference	Name	Latest Update
Energy		
1.1	Investigate procuring truly renewable energy.	Opportunity to generate solar over car parks being explored.
1.2	Explore forming a non-profit green energy company and understand the capacity of renewable energy generation in the area.	Beginning to develop understanding in LA owned ESCO's (energy service companies). PCC have previously done a feasibility study around HMNB Devonport. Ener-vate have worked with other councils, such as Eastleigh BC, webinar organised by Energy Hub set out that the indicative costs incurred by other Councils have been in the region of £90k in consultancy to set up ESCo.
1.3	Allocate sites for renewable energy, in particular strategic scale solar and wind for both commercial and community energy development.	Preliminary work underway and brief developed ready for tender
1.4	Identify options for how smart renewable heat, power generation and storage could be considered when the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan are reviewed.	Pre-feasibility work identified as next step. Discussion with LEP and Growth Hub being progressed to identify a funding source for it to be commissioned at the appropriate time.
1.5	Aim for a Higher result in the energy performance certificates	Secured additional Green Homes Grant money through the Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 1B. A total of approx £1,000,000 being targeted through this scheme with additional funding from the Better Care Fund for ECO top-ups.
1.6	Promote and administer grants for home insulation, efficient heating systems and sustainable energy sources for owner-occupied and tenanted properties.	Ongoing as per 1.5. Community Forum have been briefed and asked to help promote where possible
1.7	Explore opportunities for the Local Authority to support the Government energy efficiency scheme to create local jobs.	No progress yet
NEW ACTION 1.8	Local Energy Support	Insert under 'Activity' - 1. Council to actively support the Local Energy Bill 2. Support local energy groups through the South Hams Climate and Biodiversity Action Fund on Crowdfunder platform. 3. Investigate business rates reductions for farmers who wish to use land for renewable energy production in excess of the needs of

		the farm. Council to meet with NFU to ascertain apatite and support needs
Sustainability		
2.1	Introduce differential changes to parking permits and in car parks e.g. Higher carbon emission vehicles pay more.	No progress yet
2.2	Ensure new housing developments are much more walking and cycling friendly.	Ongoing
2.3	Better bus provision and strategic park and ride facilities to reduce traffic in towns (R&R Plan action 1.9)	Beginning to work on as part of the wider Placemaking strategy around public transport and Active Travel
2.4	Increase uptake of cycling in South Hams. & Support and encourage green travel methods for tourists to our coastal natural environment. A different type of tourism (R&R plan action 2.9)	Beginning to work on as part of the wider Placemaking strategy around public transport and Active Travel. (action to refer to this emerging work) Input into the Governments consultation on the Future. SW Cycle Forum being formed, supported by Sustrans, DCC, DNPA, PCC and the community groups. First meeting of public sector partners in July.
2.6	Promote the use of recycled and Sustainable construction materials through input at planning stage for new developments.	Ongoing
2.7	Monitor and review policies to reduce the carbon footprint of new developments (Policies DEV32, DEV33, DEV34)	Ongoing
2.8	Investigate adaption and resilience methods for new developments.	Discussion on this topic at JLP Board in April
2.9	Review the potential for District Energy Networks in the District and invest in housing energy-saving measures.	Proposed to merge action with action 1.4
2.10	As part of JLP review consider an Article 4 Direction that removes permitted development rights on class Q barn conversions.	To be progressed with JLP Team
2.11	Allocate sites for renewable energy, in particular strategic scale solar and wind for both commercial and community energy development.	To be progressed with JLP Team
2.12	Lobby for changes to the National Planning Policy Framework or any such replacement to prioritise carbon reduction target over housing targets.	Responses to recent Planning White Paper completed as well as input into the Future Homes Standard Consultation

2.13	Maximise local and closed-loop recycling to minimise transport impacts and valorise waste materials.	NEW Activity - Support and encourage Community Small-Scale Anaerobic Digesters through assistance and guidance to access the BEIS Rural Communities Energy Fund or Crowdfunder
2.14	Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans to ensure the provision of EV charging points where parking spaces are provided in new developments.	Ongoing
2.15	Local Plans to ensure new developments are designed with filtered permeability to promote sustainable travel.	Ongoing
2.16 (corrected, shown as 2.19 in December Version)	Explore installing electric car charging points in car parks. (AMEND to widen scope for any future on-street residential projects to ensure any DCC bids properly represent town and parish councils)	Instructed APSE Energy to conduct a feasibility study for further EV charging points, solar above car parks and battery storage.
2.19 (corrected, shown as 2.20 in December Version)	Make use of funding opportunities to provide employment and community assets across the District, particularly where the market is unlikely to provide this, to minimise the need to travel for access to services (DELETE 'access to services')	no progress NEW Activity Support and promote training opportunities for trademark and retrofit, this has already taken place this year with a recent government scheme where tradesmen could apply for free or subsidised training under the Green Homes Grant skills training competition scheme. Council to continue to identify and promote opportunities and support the building of a local supply chain
2.20 (corrected, shown as 2.21 in December Version)	Rationalise bottle banks in South Hams.	update from Waste pending
2.21 (corrected, shown as 2.20 in December Version)	Investigate the creation of a new EP policy to ensure the correct use of litter bins potentially reducing collection need.	update from Waste pending
2.22 (corrected, shown as 2.21 in December Version)	The Council will support the principles proposed through the English Waste Strategy regarding the Extended Producer Responsibility. The principles support a circular economy approach which will be funded by producers and will lead to better packaging design, improved recycling and	update from Waste pending

	better consumer awareness of what can be recycled.	
NEW ACTION - 2.23	Support and encourage use of shared EV's, cycles and E-couriers	Discussions have taken place with CoCars who are currently looking to widen the number of locations. Their registration of interest pages have been shared among Community Forum members to circulate among their networks and CoCars were invited to the Community Forum Meeting held on 28th April 2021. Organising a District wide survey with CoCars
NEW ACTION - 2.24	Support and encourage 'reuse and repair cafes' and initiatives such as 'Share Shed'	Insert under 'Activity' - 1. Support existing and new facilities through Crowdfunder and smaller direct cash grants 2. Promote existing facilities through communications activity 3. Produce educational material to spread awareness of the benefits of reuse, repair and share
Biodiversity		
3.1	Securing tree planting through development proposals and Biodiversity Net Gain from new development including pushing the new Defra Biodiversity Metric 2.0 at pre-app and for new applications.	The requirement for submission of a completed Metric calculation is now a requirement for new planning applications as reinforced by the JLP SPD evidencing Biodiversity Net Gain of 10% (or mechanism of securing this offsite). A 'minors' Metric is anticipated soon from Defra which officers will review with a view to use if appropriate.
3.2	Support more approaches by communities for tree planting on our land where there aren't any trees and is consistent with the land use and not likely to lead to conflict with neighbours or conflict with the outcomes from the Devon Nature Recovery Network Mapping project (DNRN) (i.e. right trees in the right place).	Officers continue to liaise with Town and Parish Councils and community groups to incorporate planting on Council sites. Recently there has been planting on sites within Totnes, Ivybridge, Ermington, Yealmpton. Officers are also liaising with Town Councils on potential for an application (with DCC as higher-tier Authority) to the Local Authority Treescapes Fund, and also for separate town bids to the Urban Tree Challenge Fund, in an effort to increase tree cover in our towns.

3.3	Develop and adopt a more biodiversity/environmentally conscious Grounds Maintenance procedure (also linked to R&R action 2.6 and 2.7)	A report will be presented to the Executive Committee in July 2021 detailing a more biodiverse conscious approach to Grounds Maintenance and seeking Member endorsement.
3.4	Pushing tree planting agenda within Neighbourhood Plans (allocating spaces for woodland creation and sustainable management). Supporting mapping of local ecological networks/corridors within Neighbourhood Plans.	Mapping work ongoing, expected reporting timescale August for first issue.
3.5	Ring-fencing and promoting a % of Members grant schemes (SCLF/Localities Fund) towards tree planting schemes for community groups, Town and Parish Councils, or money towards a 'Tree Planting grant scheme'	Member SCLF has been increased by £3k for use on Climate Change and Biodiversity projects locally. Web based application development in progress
3.6	Develop and adopt a Natural Environment Design Guide to support Development Management proposals – establishing the importance of street trees in urban/built environment proposals, trees in new hedge lines, and tree/woodland planting as part of on-site public open space provision.	this is now an Draft Interim Devon Carbon Plan proposal (action F2) - Develop a Biodiversity Net-Gain Supplementary Planning Document that can be adopted by local planning authorities
3.7	Natural coastal and flood management approaches to increase carbon sequestration, reduce erosion, and deliver improved catchment management.	Collaborated with the AONB unit and Ambios on an application for £99k under the Natural Environment Investment Readiness Grant. Expecting decision around August 2021.
3.8	Investigate the potential to apply a % management fee to offsite compensation/Biodiversity Net Gain payments (via s106) to part-fund a new/existing role (there will be an additional pressure) in terms of findings sites to delivery this offsite habitat creation (which the LA could either buy and manage or work in partnership with another, e.g. DWT, RSPB).	At present it is considered that the requirement for offsite compensation/Biodiversity Net Gain payments may be less than anticipated. Nonetheless, where appropriate a management fee will be applied to cover offsite contributions/arrangements where they would incur officer input and this secured by s106. As a new approach, there continues to be evolution and learning as more Authorities start to adopt such arrangements. It is anticipated that with other LPAs in Devon, a common approach will be agreed to assist developers, applicants and LPAs.

3.9	New development led by South Hams to be exemplar (e.g. Building with Nature, bird and bat boxes, good design with GI, etc.)	Ongoing
3.1	Support the Forestry Commission in planting 20 Hectares of woodland throughout South Hams.	Involvement with PCC Forestry Commission bid for mass Tree Planting around Plymouth Urban Fringe, partially in South Hams
3.11	Contribute to the creation of a Devon Nature Network and assist with the recovery of Devon's biosphere.	Ongoing
3.12	SHDC engages with members of the public and farmers to look at alternatives to using herbicides and pesticides (in particular glyphosate).	Ongoing
Capability and Engagement		
4.1	Raise awareness of Climate Change and Biodiversity issues as part of a communication strategy involving newsletters, web updates and social media activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ran a Carbon Footprint/Lifestyle Campaign with Carbon Savvy, North Devon Council and Torrridge in March - Monthly Newsletters continue to be created and publish, subscriber counts have risen from 226 in October 2020 to 409 as of April 2021
4.2	Volunteer/support collective action via community groups and provide time and resourcing to Town and Parish Councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - attendance at Sustainable South Hams - Community Forum continues to meet bi-Monthly, in February comments were taken on the Crowdfunder Eligibility Criteria and in April Co-Cars were in attendance where shared vehicle use was promoted and encouraged the Community to register an interest for new locations.
4.3	Key steps for change: 100 significant cross cutting actions we can all do (to be populated at a later date)	No progress yet
Other Updates		
	Crowdfunder set up	Due to go live in June
	Joining forces with Torbay Council to obtain bespoke Carbon Literacy Training for ELT/SLT to begin to embed climate change understanding across the organisation.	Training expected to take place in late May, June and July
	Fleet review taking place	Capacity to do this secured through staffing changes

	Conducting preliminary Service reviews to align CC&B activity into decision making	Reviews taking place as they come forward
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South Hams Climate Change and Biodiversity Community Forum Summary

9/12/2020

Discussed and agreed Terms of Reference

Dave Sexton gave a presentation on the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme project

Adam Williams presented the Climate Change and Biodiversity Strategy which was followed by Q&A

18/02/2021

Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme – ideas for how we can work with the Community to deliver funding for current and future grants

- **ACTION** - Dave to send paragraph of the scheme to the forum to be circulated – save money and be green messaging

Proposed Crowdfunder Eligibility Criteria – As part of the expenditure of our Climate Change and Biodiversity earmarked reserve, we proposed at Council in December that some of this could be delivered through Crowdfunder for match funding. The forum considered a draft set of criteria and the process for views and discussion.

- It's very broad to attract as many projects as possible
- Should include some examples of what has already been done or examples of what the council are expecting – link up with South Dartmoor, Exeter and Plymouth Community Energy companies for case studies
- SN – with the TAPT Fund Parish's could apply together and link up for money – could multiple parishes or community groups could apply together and raise the threshold above £4000?

Future Public Engagement Week and Forum involvement– details to be provided during the meeting about what became the Lifestyle Spring Clean campaign

- Engagement week with Carbon Savvy – further information was distributed after the meeting
- **ACTION** – Forum members to help promote

28/04/2021

Co-Cars – Mark Hodgson from Co Cars was in attendance to discuss what they do and how they work.

- Forum interested in a survey with Co-Cars to capture information on electric cars and bikes and the demand in the district
- Adam to link up with Mark to do a survey of South Hams District, once it's ready we will circulate with the group.

Practical action - Discussion about practical action that the Forum wish to do and what we can do to help.

- The district councils website doesn't have much on it
 - Website changes are to be updated asap. Strategy isn't very visible on the website but we are trying to get it changed
- on the action plan can you include areas that the Parish Councils could look into
- Adam will send out the strategy & action plan and Forum will consider what actions they can help with to be discussed at the next meeting

Amendments to terms of reference – external publication of names and key actions

- Everyone present agreed to the amendments subject to confirm with the group what they would like to be shared

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **3rd June 2021**
Title: **Devon Home Choice Policy Changes**
Portfolio Area: **Homes / Cllr Hilary Bastone**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: NA

Author: **Stephanie Rixon** Role: **Senior Housing Specialist**

Contact: **01822 813570** email: stephanie.rixon@swdevon.gov.uk

Recommendations:

That, with effect from 1 July 2021, the Executive agrees the policy changes to Devon Home Choice.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Devon Home Choice has been the joint housing register for all local authorities in Devon since 2009. To support the delivery of Devon Home Choice there is a common policy, which has a requirement to be agreed by each Local Authority and Registered Provider Partner individually.
- 1.2. As a result of public and partner consultation on a number of proposed changes this report recommends adopting these changes with effect from the 1st of July 2021. This consultation was circulated to members for reference and concluded in February 2021.
- 1.3. The pending changes are outlined in section 4 of this report. The full policy can be found at www.devonhomechoice.com

2. Background

- 2.1. It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to have allocation schemes which give "reasonable preference" to certain categories of

those in housing need. In addition, housing can only be allocated to those who are "qualifying persons", in accordance with the provisions of the Housing Act 1996.

Statutory guidance was issued in June 2012 regarding the factors which could affect eligibility and qualification. Housing authorities are required to have regard to this in exercising their functions under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996.

Local authorities are expected to have regard to their homelessness strategies when preparing or modifying their housing allocation schemes. The partnership working of Devon Home Choice operates closely with our homelessness prevention focussed model in line with this strategy. Our Homelessness Strategy is also available to view on the council webpages.

Devon Home Choice operates a Choice Based Lettings approach to allocations. This places people in a level of priority based on their circumstances and properties are then allocated according to priority and the length of time they have been in that level of priority. Customers check the website each week and express an interest in up to 3 properties per week that meet their housing needs. This system places the customer at the centre of the process allowing them to have control over the properties they are offered.

While the joint register has a shared policy there are some localised differences. In South Hams we have retained our own allocations policy. This allows us to allocate properties in a rural location (and not covered by a section 106 agreement) to people in housing need with local connection to that parish, then cascading to the wider area. This ensures that we are able place community at the centre of our allocations approach alongside housing need.

A report on the performance of Devon Home Choice will shortly be presented to the overview and scrutiny panel.

2.2. Proposed Changes:

Proposal 1: That applicants who are lacking 2 bedrooms be allowed to bid for homes 1 bedroom larger than their current home working on the understanding that while still not ideal this could significantly improve a families circumstances, health and wellbeing.

- This proposal was agreed in respect of 4 and 5 bedroom homes only:
 - o Households with a 4 bedroom need who are currently living in homes with 2 bedrooms will be allowed to bid for homes with 3 bedrooms.
 - o Households with a 5 bedroom need who are currently living in homes with 3 bedrooms will be allowed to bid for homes with 4 bedrooms.
- Homes will still be subject to a maximum occupancy level and allocation will still be at the discretion of the landlord.

- Applicants housed in a home smaller than their calculated bedroom need will be allowed to re-apply to the register but their band and band start date would be reset.

Proposal 2: That 4 and 5 bedroom homes are advertised using the maximum number of occupants as a restriction rather than the bedroom need. This is to enable greater flexibility to meet varied applicants needs with use of housing stock.

The Local impact of Proposal 1 and 2:

In South Hams we currently have 8 households on the register who are lacking 2 bedrooms with a 4 bedroom need or above (1 x 6bed, 5 x 5 bed and 2 x 4 bed need). The waiting times vary from less than a year to over 6 years for a 5 bed property. Over the last 2 years there have been 15 4 bedroom properties advertised in South Hams, 10 of these were new builds including 8 in the Sherford scheme. There have been no 5 or 6 bedroom properties advised during the same period. By allowing applicants to bid on smaller homes it should improve the households overall health and wellbeing by reducing the level of overcrowding but to a lesser degree.

Proposal 3: That a new question is added to Section 1 (Housing need criteria), and a corresponding indicator or banding on the application to identify applicants who are interested in Rent to Buy or Build to Rent properties.

- This requires a new question to be added to the application form but **does not require any change to the policy.**

Local impact of Proposal 3:

This a procedural change allowing the applicant to flag an additional housing option, locally this could increase the awareness of different housing options.

Proposal 4: That the paragraphs in the policy relating to the use of Health and Wellbeing panels (3.19.14 and 3.19.15) be reviewed and amended in line with what is actually being done.

- Revised wording has been agreed by the Board.

Proposal 5: That paragraph 2.2.5.9 of the policy, which is under the section detailing the types of tenancies not applying under DHC is re-worded to make it clearer that applicants who currently have an introductory or probationary tenancy can apply to the register.

Local impact of proposal 4 and 5:

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure greater clarity of the meaning of the policy wording which should deliver greater consistency for officers making assessments and property allocations. The clearer the wording the less open to

interpretation the policy is. This does not constitute a significant change in the policy and therefore the impact will be minimal.

Proposal 6: That Band C for 'Children under 8 above the third floor' is not awarded in blocks of flats where improvement works have been carried out, including windows fitted with restrictors, which would mean that the flats would be suitable for households with children under 8.

- Other hazards or health risks can be considered for affected applicants.
- This will follow in line with a national approach and assist in final offers. Landlords are able to determine restrictions on the advert.
- It was agreed that this band reason should be removed from the policy. Any existing applications which have Band C for this reason only will retain their current band.
- Where required landlords should carry out person-based risk assessments.

Local impact of proposal 6:

There are no properties matching this criteria in this area therefore this policy change does not directly impact allocations made within our district.

Proposal 7: That we allow some priority for members of household left in use & occupation after death of tenant and cannot succeed tenancy.

- The proposal is agreed on the criteria that the applicant has been resident at the property for 12 months and approaches the relevant LA once Notice has been given, with an application made and the LA having confirmed that an interim duty to accommodate is triggered. Once met, the Applicant may then be awarded Band B.

Local impact of proposal 7:

This will increase the chances of applicants in this situation moving on more quickly and makes best use of the available housing stock.

Proposal 8: That the reference to Category 1 hazards in the Band B reason for severe overcrowding be amended so that it is not a blanket award of Band B

- The recommendation from the group including Environmental Health colleagues was that there should be no change to the policy of awarding Band D to Cat 1 overcrowding hazards.
- The Board agreed that the policy wording should be changed to confirm that Band B will only be awarded for Category 1 Hazards where the household is lacking 2 bedrooms.

Local impact of Proposal 8:

This changes clarifies that the applicant must be lacking 2 bedrooms to be considered for Band B, rather than the previous wording which did not specify. This is intended as clarification only and not a significant policy change so the local impact should be minimal.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1. The Executive are asked to agree the adoption of the proposed changes to the Devon Home Choice Policy.
- 3.2. The impact of the changes to the policy will be monitored by both the operational group and the Board and any significant difficulties or barriers will be reported in a further review.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1. The changes proposed do not attach a financial implication. The cost to make and implement the changes to the software is included in the £1000 annual contribution that we already pay.
- 4.2. South Hams is a member of the Devon Home Choice partnership, and as a result the changes need to be adopted by all Local Authority and Registered Provider partners. The aim of Devon Home Choice is to offer choice for people seeking housing and the ability to move within Devon. A common scheme across Devon that is transparent, easy to understand and accessible to all to ensure fairness and consistency. The local allocations policy, cross border move audits, our Local Allocations Policy and specific S106 planning conditions ensure a priority to be in place for applicants with local connection to the area, in particular the more rural areas where there are limited amounts of social housing.

If we are unwilling to adopt these changes it is likely we would have to leave the partnership and set up our own system of allocation. As a non-stock holding authority we would likely return to a nomination arrangement with our partner landlords (currently in all but exceptional circumstances all properties are allocated through Devon Home Choice). Typically this is in-between 65%-80% of all homes available with the rest retained by the RP (and likely to remain advertised through Devon Home Choice) Our residents would be required to register on 2 schemes to ensure they were able to apply for all suitable homes. In addition to this, leaving Devon Home Choice will affect the current partnership working with specialist schemes for supported accommodation and extra care housing working through Devon Home Choice to assist some of our more vulnerable applicants. The practicalities of securing Registered Provider Buy In beyond the previously agreed nominations agreement would be unlikely due to the replication of work required and the unlikely possibility that we could offer the same value for money as Devon Home Choice due to being solely liable for the running costs.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. That members recommend the adoption of the proposed changes to the Devon Home Choice Policy.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, and the Localism Act 2011 provides the legislative framework for the allocation of social housing. While local authorities are not legally required to provide a housing register they must provide a framework for prioritising and allocating social housing.
Financial	Y	<p>No additional funding is sought at this time.</p> <p>The total cost (which is funded through property adverts) of the software is: Year 1: £29,002 Year 2: £29,727 Year 3: £30,470</p> <p>Our only cost associated with the register is a FTE at Level 7 and a £1000 contribution which the additional funding is raised by Registered Providers paying £25 per advert to advertise their properties on the Website.</p> <p>The joint register offers an efficient and customer led approach to managing the housing register, delivering on customer service and value for money.</p>
Risk	y	Failure to provide a framework for the prioritisation of applicants and allocation of social housing would be a failure to meet statutory requirements. Failure to implement the changes proposed would require us to give notice on the contract (12 months) and establish an independent register. The cost of this would be significant as outlined above.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	The Devon Home Choice Policy is checked by an independent specialist housing barrister when any fundamental changes are made to ensure that meets all the legislative requirements. None of the

		proposed changes were considered significant enough for this to warranted on this occasion.
Safeguarding	Y	The changes made address any safeguarding impacts for each change.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	The Devon Home Choice Policy contains detailed information about relevant offending and other relevant disorderly conduct. The decision to operate a Choice Based Lettings system is to help communities thrive by enabling people choice over where they want to live.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	The prime objective of the Devon Home Choice Policy is to assist people with securing sustainable, safe long term accommodation which is vital to improving the health and wellbeing of people living in the area.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices: Local Lettings Allocation Policy Appendix 1

Background Papers:

None

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SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL ALLOCATION POLICY

South Hams District Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone.

This policy and all associated documentation and leaflets can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format or in any other languages, on request.

December 2017

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SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL ALLOCATION POLICY

1 Scope of the policy

- 1.1 This Local Allocation Policy sets out how the Council will deal with specific local issues outside of the Devon wide Choice based lettings system called Devon Home Choice. The document also sets out 'exceptions' to the Devon Home Choice Scheme i.e. where the Council will allocate outside of the scheme.
- 1.2 In exceptional circumstances South Hams District Council reserve the right to depart from any aspect of this policy. Any decision to depart from the policy will be taken by the Community of Practice Lead for Housing, Revenues & Benefits in conjunction with the lead Executive Member for Customer First.
- 1.3 Homes delivered in the Dartmoor National Park, on exception sites or on Community Led schemes are controlled by very specific needs in a particular parish. The criteria for these schemes will be set out within the Section 106 Agreement relating to the specific site.
- 1.4 The Devon Home Choice Policy is a separate document and should be read in conjunction with this policy.

2 Introduction

- 2.1 South Hams District Council (SHDC) no longer holds any housing stock, having transferred the entire stock to various Registered Providers (RPs) in 1999.
- 2.1 Devon Home Choice is the model adopted by the Council, and RPs operating within the District, to allocate housing through this jointly operated Choice Based Lettings Scheme.
- 2.2 Devon Home Choice covers all 10 Devon Authorities including Plymouth and Torbay, enabling applicants to apply across Devon for vacant properties.
- 2.3 SHDC coordinates Devon Home Choice within South Hams and maintains the common housing register for all partners operating within the area.

- 2.4 Registered Providers label, advertise and let their properties. They have their own allocation policies and will verify applicants details to ensure they meet their criteria.
- 2.5 This policy document sets out:
 - a. the common policies adopted by all partners within Devon Home Choice
 - b. Council specific policies, and
 - c. exceptions to the Devon Home Choice Scheme

3 Statement of Choice

- 3.1 South Hams District Council is committed to offering the greatest choice possible in the allocation of housing within the District, whilst ensuring that such choice is compatible with ensuring that housing goes to those with the greatest need.
- 3.1 Within this it must be recognised that there is very high demand for affordable housing in the South Hams and that this demand cannot currently be fully met from available resources. Consequently, more often than not, only those in the greatest housing need are likely to obtain suitable accommodation, which means that the degree of choice will always be limited.
- 3.2 South Hams District Council is also committed to extending choice to homeless households as far as is compatible with the effective use of council resources and the need to reduce the use of temporary accommodation. (paragraphs 5.1 – 5.5 of this policy which set out our policy relating to homeless households).

4 COMMON POLICIES

Devon Home Choice

- 4.1 By joining the Devon Home Choice partnership all partners have agreed to the Devon Home Choice Policy.
- 4.1 The Devon Home Choice Policy document sets out in detail how the scheme will operate, how applicants will be prioritised and how properties will be let.
- 4.2 The Devon Home Choice Policy forms the best part of the Council's allocation policy, being the document which sets out the fundamental principles upon which the scheme is based.

- 4.3 The Devon Home Choice Policy is a separate document and should be read in conjunction with this policy.
- 4.4 South Hams District Council reserves the right to deviate from this policy in exceptional circumstances. Any decision to depart from this policy will be taken by the Community of Practice Lead for Housing, Revenues and Benefits along with the Executive member for Customer First.
- 4.5 Homes which are delivered through Dartmoor National Park, through the Village Housing Initiative (VHI) or on exception sites within South Hams are controlled by specific legal criteria relating to housing needs in a particular Parish. These criteria will be detailed in the Section 106 agreement.
- 4.6 Housing developments for the Over 60s are excluded from the Local Allocation Policy.

HOUSING ACT 1996

- 4.7 The Housing Act 1996 as amended requires all Councils to give 'reasonable preference' in their allocations schemes to groups in high housing need such as the homeless, those who need to move on welfare and medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they can move to a particular locality within the district. However guidance states that Local Authorities can take into account local pressures with regard to this.
- 4.8 Further guidance was issued in August 2012 in relation to the armed forces stating that local allocation policies should not be utilised for this group in certain circumstances, this is explained in detail in paragraph 5.15.

5 COUNCIL SPECIFIC POLICIES

- 5.1 The Council has specific duties to meet local housing needs and to meet the needs of the homeless. This section sets out the Council's policies in this respect and how they operate alongside the Devon Home Choice Policy.

Homeless Households

- 5.1 If the Council accepts a statutory duty to re-house a homeless household they will be placed in the High Housing Needs Band (Band B) in accordance with the Devon Home Choice Policy.

- 5.2 Homeless households will be offered the same degree of choice as other applicants for a period of 6 weeks after being accepted as homeless.
- 5.3 If bids have not been made for suitable accommodation within the 6 week period (and suitable vacancies have been advertised) then the Council will bid on behalf of the homeless household, for all suitable vacancies that arise, until the household is offered a property.
- 5.4 If no suitable vacancies occur within the first 6 weeks, the period of choice will be extended by a further period of up to 6 weeks.
- 5.5 Refusals of accommodation by homeless households will be considered in accordance with the Homelessness Code of Guidance.

Assisting Vulnerable Households

- 5.7 To ensure vulnerable households, who do not have any support network, are able to access Devon Home Choice and bid for properties the Council will activate the automatic bidding process, this will be done with the applicants consent.
- 5.8 Regular checks will be made on “non-bidding” households to identify households who may need our support. When a household has been identified, and with their approval, bids will be made by Council staff on their behalf.
- 5.9 A copy of the Automatic Bidding Procedure is detailed in the Devon Home Choice Policy.

Local Housing Needs

- 5.10 Whilst choice will be extended as widely as possible, certain housing schemes may only be let to applicants with a local housing need
- 5.11 In very rural villages with general needs rented housing stock owned by a Registered Provider of less than 100 properties, preference will be given to local households, provided they have an existing housing need i.e. bands A - D. For the purposes of clarity this is everywhere in South Hams apart from:
 - Dartmouth
 - Ivybridge
 - Kingsbridge
 - Totnes
 - South Brent
 - Areas where specific lettings plans apply – Salcombe, Kingston, Stoke Fleming

- 5.12 Schemes delivered in the Dartmoor National Park and exception sites within South Hams will be controlled by very specific criteria relating to needs in a particular parish. These criteria will be set out within the S106 Agreement relating to the specific site.
- 5.13 Other larger sites enabled through the planning process within South Hams will allow 50% of all new rented affordable housing to be allocated to those in bands A – D with a local connection to the town. For the avoidance of doubt this will be schemes in Dartmouth, Ivybridge, Kingsbridge and Totnes.
- 5.14 For the purposes of clarity a household has a connection with the Parish/Town in any of the following circumstances:-
- (i) The person has lived in the parish/town for 3 out of the 5 years preceding the allocation.
 - (ii) The person has immediately prior to the allocation lived in the parish/town for 6 out of 12 months preceding the allocation
 - (iii) Immediate family have lived in the parish/town themselves for 5 years preceding the allocation. For avoidance of doubt The Local Government Association guidelines define immediate family as parents, siblings and non-dependent children.
 - (iv) The person has permanent employment in the parish/town with a minimum contract of 16 hours per week which has continued for the 6 months preceding the allocation without a break in employment of more than 3 months such employment to include self-employment. This should not include employment of a casual nature
 - (v) Any periods of (ordinary) residence of the person in the Parish/Town * (definition see appendix 1)

ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL

- 5.15 Further guidance issued in August 2012 in relation to the armed forces stated that where housing authorities utilise local connection policies they must not apply them to the following persons:
- a) those who are currently serving in the regular forces or who were serving in the regular forces at any time in the five years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing
 - b) bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation

- following the death of their service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service
- c) current or former members of the reserve forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness, or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service

TENANTS INCENTIVE SCHEME

- 5.15 One of the priorities in the Homes Strategy is to maximise the use of existing social housing stock including maximising family sized accommodation by offering a financial incentive where appropriate. The Council can offer payments to households to move to a more appropriate property in terms of size. This policy is a separate document and can be read in conjunction with the allocations policy.

6 EXCEPTIONS TO DEVON HOME CHOICE

Supported Housing Schemes

- 6.1 It is inappropriate to advertise vacancies in certain supported housing schemes as they have been developed to meet very specific needs.
- 6.2 The allocation process for such schemes will be agreed outside this allocation policy between Housing, Social Services and the RP and will be developed to meet the very specific needs of the client and sensitively manage the lettings of the scheme.
- 6.3 List of supported housing and Extra Care schemes exempt from Devon Home Choice within South Hams:-

Westville, Kingsbridge
St Barnabas Project, Dartmouth
Highland Villa, Ivybridge
Belmont Villa, Ivybridge
Redworth Terrace, Totnes
Douro Court, Ivybridge
Bishops Court, Newton Ferrers
Quayside, Totnes

See Separate Lettings Policies for the above.

Meeting the needs of the physically disabled

- 6.4 Properties that have been adapted for the disabled will be labelled to ensure the property is let to an applicant with the need for this type of accommodation *e.g. preference will be given to an applicant with the need for a level access shower.*
- 6.5 However, there are occasions when the needs of a disabled household cannot be met within the general housing stock and a specific property needs to be built.
- 6.6 In such circumstances close liaison will take place between the Council, Social Services and the Registered Provider to ensure the property is built to meet the specific needs identified. In this case the property will not be advertised through the Devon Home Choice Scheme but will be allocated through Devon Home Choice as a direct match.

7 GENERAL

Publicity

- 7.1 This policy is a formal Council document and is not intended to be used as a publicity document.
- 7.2 Full details of the Devon Home Choice Scheme and the Council's policies will be produced in leaflet format and on the Council's website in a user-friendly format.

Diversity and Equal Opportunities

- 7.3 South Hams District Council is committed to reflecting the full diversity of the community it serves and to promoting equality of opportunity for everyone.
- 7.4 This policy and all associated documentation and leaflets can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format or in any other languages, on request.

Policy Review

- 7.5 The Devon Home Choice scheme and Policy are regularly reviewed and any changes are implemented only after majority agreement amongst all Devon Home Choice partners
- 7.6 The Council's allocation policy will be monitored regularly and reviewed and updated annually and in conjunction with new developments.

Appendix 1

*Definition of Ordinary Residence

The overriding principle in determining a person's ordinary residence status is that people who have an appearance of need for community care services should not be denied assessment or subsequent service provision while that ordinary residence status is being disputed with another authority.

If the Department decides to supply or fund a service while awaiting the outcome of disputed ordinary residence, this decision should be clearly taken without prejudice. Any contractual arrangements entered into should reflect the temporary nature of the decision. This decision must be clear to the other authority, and staff with support of their managers should ensure that at no stage does the Department appear to have assumed responsibility when the situation is just being held until the matter is resolved.

There is no statutory definition of ordinary residence nor any statements about minimum residency periods, owning a house or holding a tenancy in a particular place. Making a judgement about ordinary residence involves questions of fact and degree, takes account of time, intent and continuity and has to be balanced with each individual's circumstances.

Where referral information indicates some doubt about where a person is ordinarily resident, further information will clearly be needed. For example if a person was receiving services or was living in a residential home before arriving in the county or still has a house in another county, this should alert the referral taker to a potential ordinary residence issue.

If someone has been funded in residential care by another LA, that LA retains responsibility unless or until there is a break in funding. This would usually be because the service user has moved into independent accommodation or has become self-funding.

If someone has been funded in residential care by another LA and there is a change in the care provided or the facility closes, the funding authority is responsible for a review of the service user's needs and also for continued funding, except where as in 5 above, the service user has moved into independent accommodation or has become self-funding.

At this stage staff must offer no commitment and assume no responsibility on behalf of the Department; decisions about a person's ordinary residence status should be made by the team manager following investigation.

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **3rd June 2021**
Title: **Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 21/22**
Portfolio Area: **Homes / Cllr H Bastone**

Wards Affected: **all**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: NA

Author: **Sophie Cobbledick** Role: **Senior Housing Specialist**
Stephanie Rixon Role: **Senior Housing Specialist**

Contact: **01803 861441**
01822 813570
email: Sophie.cobbledick@swdevon.gov.uk
Stephanie.rixon@swdevon.gov.uk

Recommendations:

That the Executive approves the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2021/22 be adopted with effect from the 1st April 2021.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Members will recall the adoption of the 2017-22 Homelessness Strategy. The document is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2. The review of the 2020/21 Action plan has been completed and summarised in appendix 3.
- 1.3. The draft 2021-22 Action plan is attached as appendix 4 and details the proposed actions for the Strategy's fifth and final year.

2. Background

- 2.1. It is a statutory requirement of the Homeless Act 2002 for each Local Authority to have a homeless strategy, which reviews homelessness and its causes locally, and the plan to tackle and prevent homelessness in their area. It is also a requirement that the Authority will consult with the

public or Local Authorities, voluntary organisations or other as they consider appropriate. Whilst it is not a requirement to consult on the annual action plans we would normally consult on the content of the annual action plan as part of our annual Homelessness Forum with our stakeholders and partners. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 our annual forum could not take place in 2020 the action plan therefore relies on more informal consultation and some of the feedback that we received as part of our wider housing strategy consultation during the winter months

- 2.2. The South Hams and West Devon Joint Homelessness Strategy was adopted in 2017 and included a requirement to produce an annual Action plan and to report to members annually on progress against the previous year's action plan.
- 2.3. Members will appreciate the need to respond effectively to emerging trends and developments as a result of the Covid19 pandemic. The action plan has been structured to take into account the need for flexibility in the face of our communities changing needs. A good example of this is the use of temporary accommodation. As per the attached review we saw a significant decrease in the use of temporary accommodation during 20/21 but as we begin to emerge from Covid 19 restrictions we have already seen significant increases in this number.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1. The Executive are asked to approve the adoption of the 2021-2022 South Hams & West Devon Homeless Strategy Action Plan.
- 3.2. This strategy completes its 5 year life cycle in April 2022. A full review of homelessness and the actions achieved will be completed together with a new 5 year plan.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1. Some of the actions may require funding. It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a prevention of homeless grant from central Government. This is likely to remain at least until 2022. We are not making any request for additional funding to deliver this strategy.
- 4.2. The extension to the Homemaker contact and the increased costs attached to the provision of temporary housing as a result of Covid 19 have been met through grant received from central government.
- 4.3. Members will note that our financial advice service was contracted to Homemaker for 2018/19. The contract value is £40,000 over two years split equally between South Hams and West Devon. Following the successful delivery of the contract the tender has been extended for a further year. Additional funding has enabled us to expand the service to take into account the difficulties caused by the Covid19 pandemic.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. That members recommend the adoption of the 2021-22 Action Plan.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	It is a legal requirement of the 2002 Homeless Act to have a homeless strategy
Financial	Y	<p>No additional funding is sought at this time.</p> <p>It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a prevention of homeless grant from central Government (South Hams receives £169,191 for 21/22). As most of the Actions are designed around homeless prevention and early intervention, the larger costs of temporary accommodation and rehousing will wherever possible be negated. This by far not only offers the best service for the customer but is the most efficient in terms of the Local Authority.</p> <p>Further to this Members will remember when the sale of the Shires properties was agreed by council it was confirmed and agreed that the funding from those sales was to be reinvested in temporary accommodation that better suits the needs of our customer base. The final property is due to exchange shortly. We will be bidding to match fund our investment and purchase up to six one bed properties for use of homeless households, primarily rough sleepers. The properties will be committed for this use for the next 30 years.</p>
Risk	N	
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	The public consultation on the Strategy was reflective of the local demographic.
Safeguarding	Y	As the Homeless Strategy Action Plan concerns work with very vulnerable people and one of the priorities is around Health and Wellbeing, the corporate safeguarding policy will underpin the work of officers who regularly work with homeless households.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	Devon & Cornwall Police contributed to the development of the strategy and will remain significant partners during the delivery of relevant actions in the action plan.
Health, Safety	Y	The prime concern for the Strategy is around

and Wellbeing		tackling and preventing homelessness which in turn is designed around improving the health and wellbeing of people living in the area.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Homeless Strategy 2017-2022

Appendix 2 Rough Sleeping strategy 2019 -2022

Appendix 3 2020 – 2021 Homelessness Strategy review

Appendix 4 Draft South Hams & West Devon Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2021-22

Background Papers:

None

South Hams & West Devon Homelessness Strategy





2

Foreword

Cllr Lois Samuel

Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing, West Devon Borough Council



I am proud to introduce the first Joint Homelessness Strategy for South Hams and West Devon.

The aims and objectives we have set in this strategy build on the progress we have made in the past five years of preventing homelessness in West Devon for 1060 households.

In a predominantly rural area such as West Devon, homelessness can easily go undetected. However, it is a very real problem for many of our residents, who face the challenge of poor quality housing, lack of affordable housing or problems with their own health, which means general needs housing is not always appropriate.

We recognise the complexities and challenges that many of our most vulnerable people face when dealing with homelessness. The four priorities set out by this strategy will ensure West Devon Borough Council, together with South Hams District Council, can help people overcome these difficulties enabling them to lead lives where they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Cllr Hilary Bastone

Portfolio Holder for Customer First, South Hams District Council



This strategy represents a continuation of the partnership working between South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council and sets out our ambition to further tackle homelessness in our areas.

Since 2012, 1169 households have had their homelessness prevented in South Hams due to interventions put in place by the District Council. This strategy further cements our commitment to homeless prevention and sets some ambitious actions as to how we will do this.

Lack of social housing, high costs of the private rented sector and lack of supported accommodation make the South Hams a challenging place for anyone experiencing homelessness. Working in partnership with West Devon has allowed shared learning and opportunity for best practice, which in turn improves the service we are able to offer people.

Homelessness can happen to anyone, at any time and through this strategy we aim to ensure that people are given the access to help when they need it, where they need it and for as long as they need it.

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Introduction



The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to review homelessness, and the influencing factors that cause homelessness, and to develop a strategy which addresses the findings of the review.

The Homelessness Strategy is required to:

- ◆ Address the levels of homelessness now, and the factors likely to impact on future levels of homelessness, through accurate profiling of the area
- ◆ Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or may become, homeless
- ◆ Provide services that help to prevent people from becoming homeless. This will include a review of their effectiveness and the identification of new opportunities to support prevention of homelessness
- ◆ Ensure that through effective partnership, working support services can be accessed for those people who are, or who may become, homeless – or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again
- ◆ Promote a cultural change so that homelessness is viewed in a wider context than just lack of accommodation

This Homelessness Strategy sets out the strategic aims for South Hams District Council and the Borough of West Devon. Central to this strategy is the belief that people should have settled homes, which will enable them to build settled lives. The overarching aim of this strategy is to prevent homelessness. It is hoped that this will be achieved by building on our already successful prevention focussed model, and by increasing our focus on the single homeless and housing for the under 35's.

The 2017-2022 strategy has been designed to address the changes in national policy; reductions in public spending; changing demography in the area; the impact of the government's 2013 Welfare Reform Act and the Localism Act 2012 on local people.

With Council spending power continuing to decline, South Hams and West Devon have radicalised their approach to service delivery across both Councils. It is central to the success of this strategy that the opportunities presented to us, as part of our new ways of working, are maximised, and that high quality processes are put in place. This will ensure that every contact made will count, in our drive to improve the quality of lives and homes within our communities.

This strategy details our commitment to provide straightforward and effective advice and assistance to those affected by homelessness. The varying factors which contribute to homelessness and to housing instability are complex and interlinked. People facing homelessness are often vulnerable; they may be experiencing, for example, poor health, loss of income and/or relationship breakdown. The importance of effective partnerships, with both statutory and voluntary sector organisations, is recognised as essential in ensuring a holistic approach toward homelessness, with the aim of achieving the best possible outcome for those affected.

The previous South Hams Homeless Strategy covered the period 2008 -2013, whilst in West Devon this was incorporated within a wider housing strategy series which ceased in 2010. Latterly objectives relating to tackling homelessness have formed part of the South Hams and West Devon joint Council-wide Connect strategy 2011-15.

We will continue to review progress around these previous strategies but, as we face the challenges of the future, we will primarily be looking ahead to the opportunities that joint working can offer. A full review of this strategy can be expected in 2022, complemented by an annual refresh of the action plan and progress made to date.

In the last five years, over a thousand households have been prevented from becoming homeless in both West Devon and South Hams. We are keen to continue this good work and believe this strategy sets out our plan to achieve this, while seeking to address the reduction in resources and the impact of welfare reforms.

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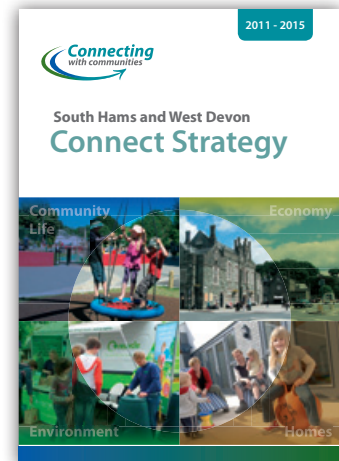
Progress to Date

The last adopted document setting out the Councils' commitment to tackling homelessness formed part of the Joint Connect Strategy 2011-2015.

The priorities were to:

- ◆ Improve housing options and choices for vulnerable people
- ◆ Ensure Devon Home Choice is able to meet local housing needs within the new policy framework
- ◆ Prevent homelessness
- ◆ Raise awareness of housing options

These four priority areas were complemented each year with a delivery plan as to how these would be achieved.



Improving Housing Options and choice for vulnerable people

- ◆ Our Money Advice Project assisted 241 people in 2015 across South Hams and West Devon and brought an additional £121,743.65 in previously unclaimed benefits and other entitlements. This enabled people who had struggled to pay their rent and day-to-day bills with the means by which to do so.
- ◆ No Second Night Out has seen 75 people accommodated in South Hams and 33 in West Devon, since we launched this initiative in 2013. This has enabled us to minimise rough sleeping in our area and prevented people, new to the streets, becoming entrenched in the street lifestyle.
- ◆ We have assisted Revival Life in the provision of an emergency cold weather rest centre in Totnes. This ensures that on the coldest and most inclement nights of the winter, no-one needs to sleep on the streets.
- ◆ We have increased our in-house letting agency to 47 properties in South Hams and have been able to prevent homelessness, while increasing the supply of good quality, affordable, private rented accommodation.
- ◆ We have completed sanctuary scheme security upgrades to 20 properties in South Hams and 9 properties in West Devon, to ensure survivors of domestic violence could remain in their own home.
- ◆ Jointly with Devon County Council and other Devon Districts, we have developed a young person's homeless protocol to ensure that the needs of young people are best met. By focusing on early intervention work, this has contributed to low numbers of youth homelessness and young people being taken into care.

Ensuring Devon Home Choice is able to meet the local housing needs within the new policy framework

- ◆ In 2015/16 207 general needs properties were let through Devon Home Choice in South Hams. An additional 36 were let to people requiring sheltered accommodation. In West Devon, there were 136 general needs homes and 31 sheltered properties.
- ◆ Of this figure, 7 new tenants had been previously homeless or threatened with homelessness in South Hams and 37 in West Devon
- ◆ Both Councils further underpinned the need to address local needs, in rural areas with less than 100 units of affordable housing, by prioritising people with a local connection through our allocations policy.

Preventing Homelessness

- ◆ Since 2012/13, 1169 households have avoided homelessness in South Hams and 1060 in West Devon.
- ◆ Since 2011, no families have been placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for longer than 6 weeks in either West Devon or South Hams
- ◆ By working proactively with the County Council, we have been able to offer bespoke advice on options for young people. Until recently, this was delivered by a dedicated, in-house, Young Person's worker.

Raising Awareness of Housing Options

- ◆ We have established a multi-agency Health and Wellbeing Panel to discuss individual cases, and to ensure the best solution to their housing crisis.
- ◆ A successful advertising campaign, with detailed information, was targeted to people affected by welfare reform. Everyone affected by the spare room subsidy rate was offered an appointment with a Housing Advisor.
- ◆ Trained Housing Advisors have been in regular attendance at Council Connect events, to raise awareness of options and the importance of early intervention.



The Strategic Context

The Legal Framework

The Housing Act 1996

Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act is still the overarching piece of legislation used by councils in determining the way in which they respond to homelessness. The Act has since been amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, which has included notable changes in the way Councils use temporary accommodation, with greater emphasis on the role of prevention. The 2002 Act is also where the requirement to publish a Homelessness Strategy was introduced.

The Localism Act 2011

This Act, in effect, brought an end to the automatic entitlement of a homeless household to be offered a social housing tenancy following the acceptance of a full homeless duty under the 1996 Housing Act.

The Care Act 2014

The Care Act set a strong expectation that agencies would work together to protect children, young adults and people with care and support needs, who were at risk of abuse and neglect, and who, due to those care and support needs, were unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse and neglect.

Housing and Communities Act

This new Act of Parliament makes widespread changes to housing policy.

It introduces legislation to allow:

- ◆ The building of 200,000 starter homes which will be available to first time buyers, between the ages of 23 and 40, for sale at 20% below market prices.
- ◆ The extension of the right to buy, to include housing association properties.
- ◆ The Act also includes a package of measures to help tackle rogue landlords in the private rented sector.

This includes:

- Allowing local authorities to apply for a banning order to prevent a particular landlord / letting agent from continuing to operate when they have committed certain housing offences
- Creating a national database of rogue landlords/letting agents, which will be maintained by local authorities
- Allowing tenants or local authorities to apply for a rent repayment order, where a landlord has committed certain offences (for example ignoring an improvement notice). If successful, the tenant or the authority may be repaid up to a maximum of 12 month's rent.

National Policy

In 2011 The Government produced a report 'Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England' that identified homelessness as a key priority. Two reports were produced by a Ministerial Working Group on homelessness in 2011 and 2012. Eight government departments including Health, Work and Training, as well as Housing, were brought together with local authority and voluntary sector partners, to consider ways to end rough sleeping (No Second Night Out 2011). In 2012, the second report built on the progress of the first and focused on ways in which services could jointly prevent, wherever possible, a household reaching a homelessness crisis point. (Making Every Contact Count 2012.)

No Second Night Out – A vision to end Rough Sleeping July 2011

Piloted in London, No Second Night Out was rolled out nationally to assist in helping homeless people, through the creation of a 'single service offer'. Its purpose was to ensure that everyone would have access to some form of help.

This, in some cases, involved a reconnection to a place where a person had a local connection, or working with other providers to find a solution to rough sleeping. It was designed to address the needs of deep-rooted rough sleepers, often the hardest to engage with. It was also intended to stem the flow of new rough sleepers, by offering a safety net before they themselves became rooted in a street lifestyle.

Funding was available for a short period of time and there were some local successes. However, this initiative has had little impact on our rough sleeper figures locally, although it was successful in achieving steady numbers rather than an increase.

Making Every Contact Count – A joint approach to preventing homelessness August 2012

The aim of Making Every Contact Count was to ensure, wherever possible, that any contact with any local agency, by vulnerable families and individuals, was seen as effective and meaningful.

The report posed 10 Local Challenges to Local Authorities and both South Hams and West Devon pledged their commitment to these. While acknowledging there is, already, good progress under these challenges, the Joint Homelessness Strategy will build on this and ensure that they remain key to our continuing commitment to prevent homelessness.

The 10 Local Challenges are to:

- ◆ Adopt a Corporate Commitment to prevent homelessness, which has buy-in across all local authority services
- ◆ Actively work in partnership with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
- ◆ Offer a Housing Option Prevention Service, including written advice, to all clients
- ◆ Adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative

- ◆ Have Housing Pathways agreed, or in development, with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
- ◆ Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
- ◆ Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- ◆ Have a homelessness strategy, which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness that is reviewed annually, so that it is responsive to emerging needs
- ◆ Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in bed and breakfast accommodation
- ◆ Not place any families in bed and breakfast accommodation, unless in an emergency, and then for no longer than 6 weeks

The Community House Building Fund

The Community House Building Fund was announced at the end of last year. This is a fund of £60 million pounds nationwide, with £20 million being directed to the South West. The South Hams was granted £1.8 million to assist with the development of community led housing schemes. The first half of this money has been paid to the local authority and the remainder will be paid once the government has approved our spending plans.

The properties delivered through this fund or any community led scheme should be affordable for people to rent or buy in perpetuity and meet the local needs. A plan is being formulated at present as to how to spend this fund. If the government approve of the ways in which we will spend this money, it is hoped that the South Hams will be eligible for future funding over the next four years.

The white paper which has just been published references this fund when working with Local Communities.

Regional Picture

Devon County Council

Devon County Council has invested £2.5 million in countywide homeless prevention contracts. These provide a total of 3,300 support hours per week, through ten independent support providers to, on average, 450 people,.

South Hams and West Devon have been placed in a locality based 'Southern Hub' together with Teignbridge District Council. The Southern Hub receives 15% of the total support hours for Devon.

Due to a lack of supported accommodation in both South Hams and West Devon, assistance is provided through 'floating support' rather than linked to where an individual is living. While this has its benefits, some high needs groups, such as those experiencing problems relating to substance misuse, mental health, offending behaviour or deep-rooted rough sleeping, remain challenging to accommodate in general needs accommodation.

Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership

All ten Devon and Cornwall Authorities are committed to working together to improve the consistency and quality of housing options and advice services across the two counties. Held up nationally as an example of good partnership working, the partnership has enabled shared policy and practice development, while also yielding opportunities for Government funding in the form of grants for rough sleeping, debt advice, youth homelessness and working with the private sector.

Local Policy

Tenancy Strategy South Hams and West Devon

The Localism Act 2011 places a duty on all local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy that sits alongside its Housing Strategy and Allocations Policy. The strategy is required to set out what Registered Providers of Social Housing should take into consideration when making decisions about their individual tenancy policies. As the Council no longer has any housing stock, this strategy outlines how we expect Registered Providers, with affordable housing in the area, to respond to the relevant changes introduced by the Act.

In accordance with the Localism Act, this strategy sets out:

- ◆ The kind of tenancies Providers should offer
- ◆ The circumstances in which Providers should grant a tenancy of a particular kind
- ◆ Where the tenancy is for a fixed term, the recommended length of the term
- ◆ Circumstances in which the Provider should grant a further tenancy, on the ending of the existing tenancy

Our Plan

Our Plan identifies the corporate priorities of the Councils, and is reflected in the emerging spatial policies within the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP).

The challenges of ensuring equitable access to good quality housing are well known in rural areas. The JLP will include policies that seek to deliver an appropriate mix and type of new housing, in locations that are well connected to established services and facilities, and at prices that cater for all incomes. The JLP will have strategic objectives that seek to: improve access to housing; reduce the affordability gap; reduce health inequalities related to housing; reduce fuel poverty and positively responding to identified housing needs.

South Hams and West Devon Joint Asset Strategy

The Council's adopted asset strategy identifies the delivery of a limited number of residential properties in the medium term, as determined by the following actions and data:

- ◆ Gather intelligence on housing need using; members, parishes and communities, supported by official data, in order to prioritise residential development by the Council
- ◆ To commence a limited programme of housing development on existing council land, that is appropriate to the site, (i.e. both open market and affordable) using a strategy of re-investment based on a mixture of rental and disposal.

The Review

The Local Picture

- As of 30 September 2016, there were 43,239 dwellings in South Hams and 25,403 in West Devon. Of the number in South Hams, 3,878 are second homes, 470 are empty, with an additional 54 empty for 2 years or more, and 127 are uninhabitable. In West Devon there are 534 second homes, 295 empty properties, a further 37 empty for 2 years, and 52 properties that are uninhabitable. (Source - Council Tax Base, 14th October 2016)
- In the year 2015/16, the number of affordable homes in South Hams was 4659, and in West Devon this was 2350 (this includes 50 units of extra care accommodation). In this same year, 60 affordable homes were built in South Hams and 32 in West Devon.
- The proportion of minority ethnic groups living in South Hams equates to 1.7% of the population and 1.6% in West Devon (Source 2011 Census). With regard to homeless applications, as a percentage 5.3% were made in SH by minority groups and 1.6% in WD.
- Average house price in South Hams is £331,625 – land registry and the average house price in West Devon is £239,160 (Source - Land Registry)
- Of the 204 households who had their homelessness prevented by South Hams District Council in 2015/16, 68 related to rent arrears or reasons of unaffordability. In West Devon, of the 282 cases of homelessness the Council was able to prevent, 65 of those households also approached for reasons of rent arrears or unaffordability. This has followed the same trend in South Hams since 2012/13, while in West Devon there has been less consistency, with relationship breakdown, parental/family eviction and private sector tenancies ending with notice, all being in high proportions.
- In 2015/16, 26 households approached South Hams as homeless, of which 11 had the full homeless duty accepted, while in West Devon, 58 applications were made and 17 of these were accepted.
- Of those accepted as homeless in South Hams, 82% were households with children or expectant mothers and 18% were single vulnerable adults. In West Devon, 53% of accepted households had dependent children or an expectant mother, with 47% single vulnerable adults.
- As of 31 March 2016, there were 7 households in temporary accommodation in South Hams and 11 in West Devon. This was a slight increase on the same date in 2015.
- The number of properties let through Devon Home Choice in 2015/16 was 243 in South Hams and 167 in West Devon. Of this, seven were allocated to people to prevent them becoming homeless, or where the Council had accepted a homelessness duty, to rehouse them in South Hams, while in West Devon this figure was 37.
- In South Hams the rough sleeper estimate for 2015 was nine - an increase of one on the previous year and in West Devon this figure was zero, a reduction of two on the previous year's figure.

How the Strategy was developed



Homelessness is a key issue within three of our identified corporate priorities – Homes, Communities and Wellbeing.

This strategy has been developed through a Joint Member Task and Finish Group, who have worked together to consider the progress we have made in tackling homelessness, within our areas, and the key challenges we have to come. The Group have been instrumental in setting the priorities for this Strategy and the formulation of the Year One Action Plan, informed by the evidence base.

Throughout the process of the review, we have looked carefully at the people who currently access our services. This strategy does not seek to create a specific service plan to address the needs of each vulnerable group. We have successful existing services developed in partnership that we will continue to improve. However, the Strategy and Action Plan reflects gaps in services or additional services we wish to offer which will improve how we tackle homelessness in our area.

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The original Task and Finish group was made up of the following members. A Member group focused on the delivery of this strategy will continue to meet to review progress on the Action Plan.

Member	Council
Cllr Brown	South Hams
Cllr Cuthbert	South Hams
Cllr Green	South Hams
Cllr Hawkins	South Hams
Cllr Leech	West Devon
Cllr Samuel	West Devon
Cllr Yelland	West Devon

The Strategy went out to public consultation from the 13th December 2016 to the 13th February 2017. The Consultation sought the views from both partner organisations and the public.

We used the following methods of consultation:

- ◆ Online survey
- ◆ Press releases
- ◆ Outreach events at Okehampton, Tavistock, Totnes, Dartmouth, Lee Mill & Kingsbridge at high footfall sites.
- ◆ One to one sessions with rough sleepers at Burke Road Drop-in
- ◆ Emails to Partner organisations (both voluntary and statutory), all Town & Parish Councils, other Devon Authorities and all partner landlords
- ◆ All elected members.

The Key Priorities for the Homelessness Strategy

The review of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon has identified four key priorities to reduce and prevent homelessness. These form the basis of this strategy and the annual Action Plan. These are:



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There is overlap and a proven relationship between these areas. However, in order to continue to build on the solid track record of preventing homelessness in South Hams and West Devon, it is necessary to start to tackle some of the root causes of homelessness, in order to make meaningful differences not only to a person's homeless situation, but the reasons why they arrived there in the first place. By continuing to be pro-active and work alongside our partners, we stand the best chance of reducing homelessness and improving people's chances in life.

This strategy comes at a very challenging time for all local authorities, as continuing budget pressures mean some tough choices on how best to target reduced resources in the most meaningful way. With this in mind, we have formulated an action plan which, we consider, is both realistic and achievable while recognising our changing position.



Priority 1: Understanding the true cost of homelessness

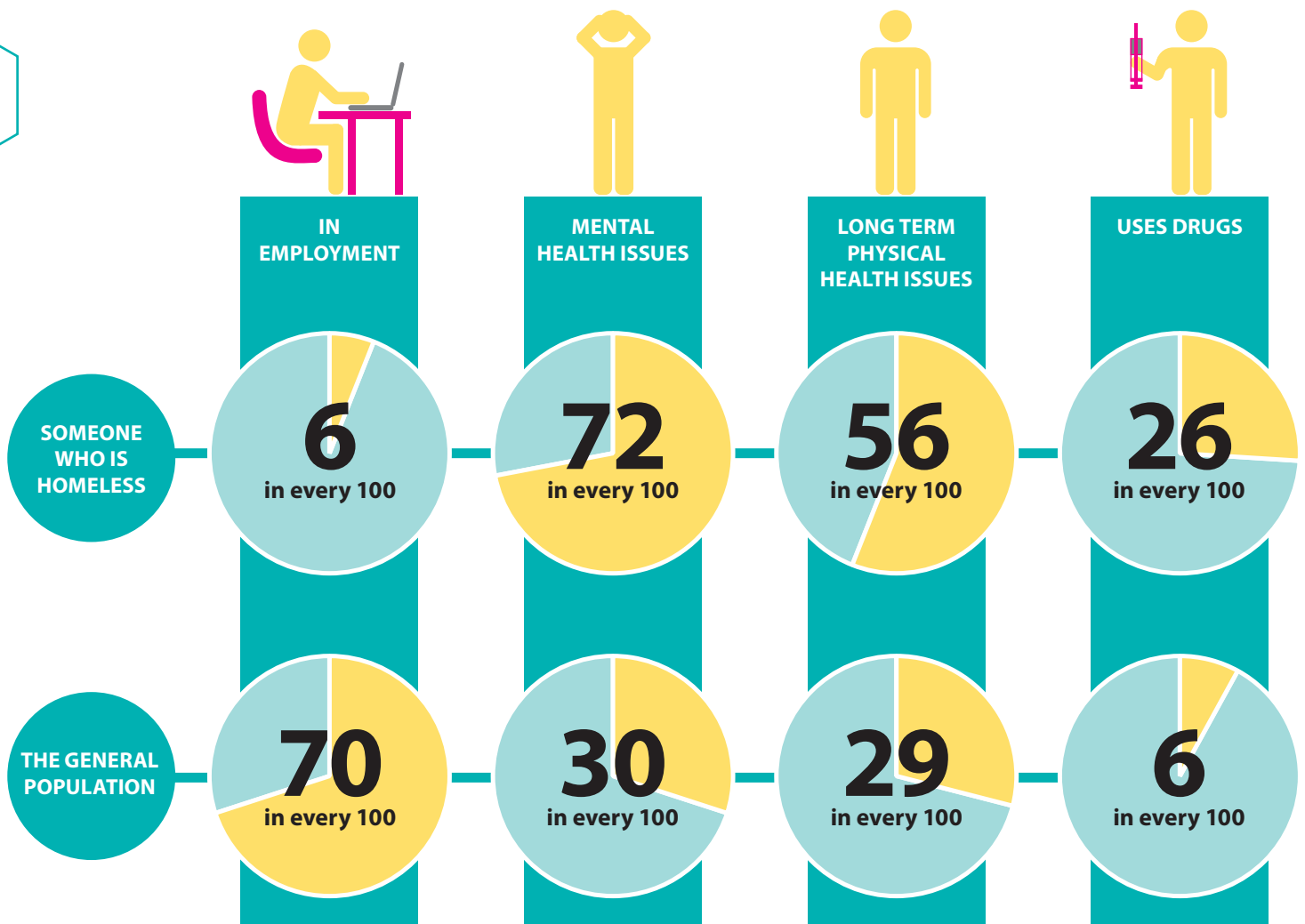
Not having a home can make it harder for individuals to find a job, stay healthy and maintain relationships. (Homeless Link)

The review highlighted a need to create a solid evidence base, about the true cost of homelessness and how its long term impact can be measured more fully. Our findings were informed by data from all statutory and voluntary agencies and localised to South Hams and West Devon.

To meet this priority we will:

- Ensure we establish a solid evidence base which informs practice across all sectors and clearly illustrates the true cost of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon.
- Monitor the impact of welfare reform, and ensure that this informs future strategic priorities
- Recognise the continuing pressures on the Councils' budgets and how best to target resources in the most meaningful way
- Ensure partnerships with other agencies demonstrate value for money
- Ensure access to good quality financial advice to help tackle poverty, poor quality housing and homelessness

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Priority 2: Access to Services

While we recognise the importance of face-to-face interaction in building rapport, trust and confidence, we also recognise that, increasingly, people who are able to resolve their own housing issues would like to access services in a different way. We would like to ensure that people who are able to resolve their own situation are given access to good quality advice, so that they have every opportunity to remedy their situation, independently.

Of course, the very nature of homelessness means a large proportion of the people requiring housing advice and homeless services will be vulnerable. Disclosures they may need to make to staff are often upsetting and traumatic and some, as a result, choose not to make contact, or do so, too late. Through improving partnership working, we have a real opportunity to make a difference to the lives of people who have struggled to engage with the Council in the past.

In addition to external partnership working, the Council has been through a significant service transformation project, which has been successful in breaking down artificial departmental barriers and restraints. It is because of this, that we are in a position to design a multi-service approach, based on the needs of the customer. This will strip out duplication and inefficiencies, while at the same time collectively offering people the services they need, at a time and place they need them most, without the need to repeat the details of, what is often, a distressing course of events.

To meet this priority we will:

- Offer advice and assistance in a range of formats, so the customer can choose how they communicate with their Council
- Ensure our most vulnerable customers are able to access advice services effectively
- Work with partners to ensure that we are able to offer services at the time and place our customers need them most
- Readily and regularly consult with our customers and stakeholders to make sure we get our services right



Priority 3: Access to Housing

The review highlighted the need to improve the supply and quality of affordable accommodation, with the largest number of people needing assistance with homelessness and housing advice, doing so for reasons of unaffordability. Changes to the benefit system, brought about by welfare reform, have had a significant effect on the lives of homeless people in South Hams and West Devon. To ensure we tackle these challenges, it is important to look at wider housing solutions in order to continue to meet needs, while also looking to the future in order to prepare for the further challenges which welfare reform will bring.

The need to 'do things differently' can be compounded in the South Hams by our rough sleeper count. Although a very small proportion of the people requiring assistance because of homelessness become rough sleepers, there is a small population in Totnes where we recognise that access to traditional housing is a step too far. There needs to be an acceptance of offering help in a new way to maximise opportunities for people who have disengaged from traditional society.

The review also highlighted how successful the South Hams in-house social letting agent had been at preventing homelessness, in an area of high demand and high costs. As of the 30 September 2016, there were 47 properties managed by the Council. This has prevented scores of families from requiring temporary accommodation and we are keen to expand the model in South Hams to take on single person's accommodation and extend the scope of the scheme into West Devon.

To meet this priority we will:

- Increase the supply, standard and options for people who face homelessness within our area
- Develop innovative options for our Rough Sleeper Community
- Continue the downward use of temporary accommodation for homeless households

Priority 4: Health and Wellbeing

South Hams and West Devon both recognise the importance of wellbeing for people living in our communities, and as a result, it is one of our key corporate priorities. Tackling homelessness takes more than just the provision of a house, if we are to maximise the opportunities for our most vulnerable residents.

The health inequalities of homeless people can be evidenced in a national health audit undertaken in 2014 by Homeless Link and The Department of Health. This showed that 41% of homeless people reported a long-term physical health problem (compared to just 28% of the general population) and 45% had been diagnosed with a mental health problem (compared with 25% of the general population) (Source – The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health Audit Results 2014)

Often, poor health, addictions and unhealthy lifestyles mean that people are unable to secure, and maintain, accommodation for themselves or their families. We recognise our supporting role as a protector of public health and the importance of working, in partnership, to effectively meet and support the needs of vulnerable people in South Hams and West Devon.

To meet this priority we will:

- Work in partnership with our voluntary and statutory sectors to holistically address people's needs as fully as possible.
- Ensure we adequately protect and safeguard the most vulnerable members of our community
- Enable early help, to avoid crisis and tackle homelessness at its root cause.

How the Homeless strategy and Delivery Plan will be monitored

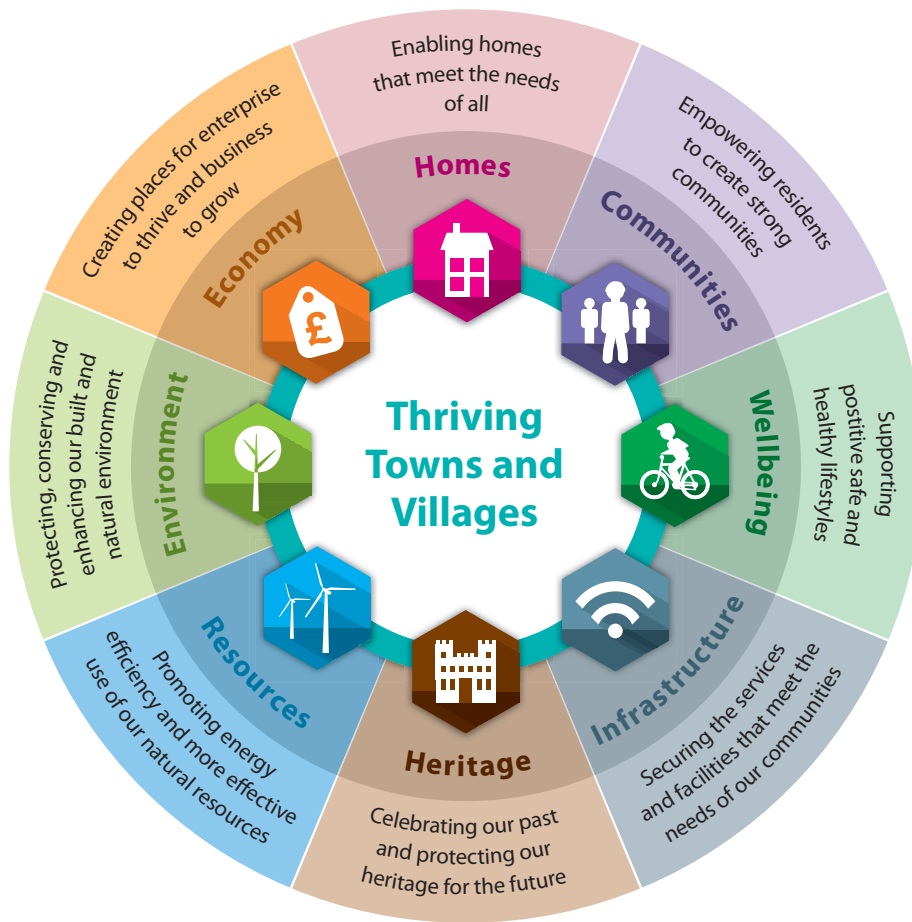
The life of this homeless strategy is intended to be five years.

Annually we will publish our progress to date and a refreshed Action Plan.

The delivery of the Action Plan will rely on the resources of both Councils and their partners, working together to achieve positive outcomes, for people in South Hams and West Devon.

It is proposed that the established Task and Finish Group, will continue as a Homelessness Steering Group to monitor progress against the priorities and the formulation of Years 2-5 of the Action Plan for this strategy. This will ensure an ongoing conversation, to keep the strategy relevant and ensuring that local people continue to have a voice through their elected representative.





Working together



South Hams
District Council



West Devon
Borough
Council

South Hams & West Devon Rough Sleeper Strategy



The purpose of the strategy

This Rough Sleeper Strategy will be delivered and monitored alongside the Homelessness Strategy.

South Hams and West Devon will build on the current work that has minimised the incidences of rough sleeping within the area. We will adopt a robust approach to all forms of rough sleeping in the two Local Authority areas and aim to reduce the number of people sleeping rough by 50% by the end of 2022 and ensure that no one has to sleep rough by 2027.

It is common for the council to be perceived by people sleeping rough as enforcers and historically the level of engagement that we are able to achieve with rough sleepers has been low. There has always been an open offer of accommodation for rough sleepers through our No Second Night Out principles and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. In recent years these schemes have been increasingly successful at providing longer term accommodation for rough sleepers. However, for some rough sleepers with complex support needs it has proved difficult for them to maintain this accommodation and ultimately some of these accommodations fail.

South Hams and West Devon are committed to providing a service to rough sleepers that responds quickly to their changing needs, promotes independence and self-worth and is delivered in a client centred way.

To achieve more sustainable positive outcomes for people sleeping rough we will focus on the key targets of the South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy.



2019 - 2022

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Working together



South Hams
District Council



West Devon
Borough
Council

Understanding the true cost of Homelessness

To fully understand the true cost of homelessness we need to ensure that we are working from a solid evidence base.

To meet this priority we will:

- ◆ Increase our knowledge of the number of people sleeping rough by building on the annually required rough sleepers estimate by introducing a quarterly rough sleeper estimate. This will ensure that the service delivery can respond more quickly to need.
- ◆ Continue to work with partnership agencies to ensure that we are taking account of information from a wide sphere of organisations who have contact with or knowledge of rough sleepers to maximise our knowledge base. We will monitor these working arrangements to ensure that they continue to offer good value for money.

Access to services

The very nature of homelessness means a large proportion of the people requiring housing advice and homeless services will be vulnerable and may need additional support to enable them to access services.

To meet this priority we will:

- ◆ Introduce an intensive outreach service to enable the council to talk to rough sleepers in their own environment, build rapport and a working relationship to enable them to navigate the services that are available. This service will reflect an holistic approach focusing on addressing barriers to accessing and maintaining accommodation including; access to health care, benefits, support and meaningful occupation.
- ◆ Link this provision in with our continued work with partners to identify true rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleeping. Enabling us to provide appropriate support to assist them to become ready to access accommodation, increasing our focus on early intervention where possible.
- ◆ Work with the Prison Navigator to ensure that we work to prevent homelessness for people being released from prison and intervene early to identify any support needs and help them access the support they need.
- ◆ Continue to work with StreetLink to ensure that a clear reporting mechanism remains in place for members of the public to let us know about people sleeping rough.
- ◆ Remain committed to the Shared Young Persons Protocol that was developed in partnership with Devon County Council to ensure early intervention and a homeless prevention approach to engaging with young people.
- ◆ Continue to provide a Housing Options service that offers tailored advice to everyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness. The focus of the team's work will continue to be on early intervention and homelessness prevention wherever possible.

Access to Housing

Housing options for those with a history of rough sleeping need to be innovative and reflect the needs of the individual. The Local Authority seeks to achieve this through the provision of multiple housing options which will be tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

To meet this priority we will:

- Ensure that the focus of the outreach support is to encourage rough sleepers to access accommodation and to ensure that they are equipped with the support and resources to maximise their chances of success.
- Introduce a supported housing scheme rooted in the Housing First Principles specifically targeted at entrenched rough sleepers.
- Continue to work with our partners to refer into supported accommodation and rehabilitation accommodation ~~to~~ as part of the recovery process where appropriate.
- Continue to provide accommodation to people sleeping rough under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol wherever possible and to build on this contact with people sleeping rough to encourage them to consider longer term housing options.
- Continue to adhere to the principles of No Second Night out by offering emergency accommodation to people who are verified as rough sleeping.
- Remain committed to working with rough sleepers to access the most suitable accommodation for their needs including assisting rough sleepers to access private rented and social housing where appropriate.

3

Health and Wellbeing

Tackling homelessness takes more than just the provision of a house, if we are to maximise the opportunities for our most vulnerable people. Often, poor health, addictions and unhealthy lifestyles mean that people are unable to secure, and maintain, accommodation for themselves or their families.

To meet this priority we will:

- Introduce a Tenancy Ready training scheme which will help prepare people sleeping rough for the significant changes and responsibilities involved in sustaining accommodation and maintaining good standards of health.
- Utilise the services engaged with the Multi Agency Hub to support delivery of an holistic service offer to those rough sleeping focused on recovery to enable the individual to thrive. To include; Mental Health Services, Drug and Alcohol Support Services and Adult Social Care
- Promote the long term benefits and cost avoidance of developing a high quality outreach program with partner agencies and statutory services including Mental Health Team, Drug and Alcohol Support agencies and GP's to enable rough sleepers the opportunity to access the health care they need.

Monitoring Our Progress

The strategy actions will be monitored in conjunction with the Homelessness strategy, reviewed on an annual basis and the strategy will undergo a full evaluation in the 2022 at the end of the life of the Homelessness Strategy.

In addition to this we will increase the annual estimate to a quarterly estimate to ensure that we have up to date information available to assess the success of the strategic aims.

We will record detailed information regarding the rough sleepers that we interact with including detailed information about their support needs and their journey to enable to better shape the services that we offer.

Appendix 3

Background

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to review homelessness, and the influencing factors that cause homelessness, and to develop a strategy which addresses the findings of the review.

Our 2017-2022 Homelessness Strategy for South Hams and West Devon has been designed to address changes in national policy, reductions in government spending, changes in demography in the area and the impact of the 2013 Welfare reform Bill, 2012 localism Bill and 2017 Homelessness Reduction Act.

The Key Priorities for the Homelessness Strategy

The review of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon identified four key priorities to reduce and prevent homelessness. These are:

- Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness
- Access to Housing
- Access to Services
- Health and Wellbeing

These four key priorities form the basis of the strategy and the annual Action Plan. Our 2021-2022 Action plan has been developed following a review of the progress made to date on our existing 2020-21 Action plan.

Progress to date

The review of the 2020/21 Action Plan demonstrates the positive progress made against our targets for the year. At this stage in the delivery of our strategy, many projects that have been established now form part of our ongoing work. Whilst we can confirm that good progress has been made on the actions for the year certain elements of our action plan have been hampered by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and our delivery of services has needed to flex to support both new ways of working and emerging trends and issues relating to the impact of the virus.

Review of 2020/21 Action Plan

Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness

- In the year 2020/21 373 Households were prevented from becoming homeless in South Hams and 244 in West Devon.
- Our Money Advice Contract assisted 203 households across South Hams and West Devon in the financial year 2020/21. The contract was expanded in April 2020 to provide additional support hours for those impacted upon by Covid. The combined contracts achieved in excess of £ £216,598 in previously unclaimed benefits and other entitlements.

- We have achieved a reduction in the number of 650 nights (30%) in nightly paid temporary accommodation for South Hams and a 1081 (46%) decrease in West Devon.
- Zero rent arrears across the portfolio of properties managed by SeaMoor lettings.
- Interactive self-service webpages established detailing all support services available across the area in addition to national support groups. Training delivered to CST to enable access for those calling in requiring information.
- Ongoing data collection and cross referencing with previous years to support recovery planning and identify trends.
- True impact of Covid 19 on worklessness and accommodation sustainment yet to be seen. Adaptations made to the case management system to enable capture of Covid related homelessness to enable identification of targeted support opportunities.
- Dedicated landlord support web pages still under construction to be completed by the end of 2022.
- Quarterly rough sleeper counts and rapid response project is enabling an accurate picture of current need.
- Robust review of methodology and support provision available to ensure equitable access to Devon Home Choice for BAME households.

Access to Services

- Increased early identification of those at risk of homelessness through improved joint working with the 3rd sector. Over 200 referrals made into the homelessness service by organisations not under a duty to refer.
- Appointment of a Vulnerable Persons Officer – improving communication opportunities internally and externally to improve identification of those requiring Local Authority services and those approaching the Local Authority requiring holistic support.
- Communication with landlords improved across commercial letting agent sector through frequent contact and evidenced positive outcomes following joint working.
- Rapid response to temporary changes made to eviction legislation through contact with all park homes and most commercial letting agencies to ensure new guidance was understood and implemented.

Access to Housing

- Established Perpetrator accommodation and support offer Pilot for those perpetrators **Page 72** with Integrated Offender

Management support services. Accommodation provision enables focussed work on pattern changing and long term recovery and improvement in family dynamics. Creates an opportunity for better outcomes for victims and families who may otherwise have had to flee their homes.

- Review of leasehold arrangement for the 6 Bed HMO leased in response to Covid has revealed that the management model is successful and an option for future investment. Lease costs required by the property provider rendered continuation of the lease to be unworkable and alternate properties are currently being sought.
- Pressures of Covid 19 on property management and turnover has resulted in no properties being made available for the housing first programme through Livewest. 18 properties have been secured either for Housing First or for more settled accommodation with landlords in the private sector and 17 secure via Devon Home Choice.
- Rough sleeper count sustained at 1 South Hams and reduced from 1 to zero in West Devon.
- The total number of rough sleepers supported into long term housing was 25 in South Hams and 12 in West Devon.

Health and Wellbeing

- The tailored Multi Agency Hub brings together relevant professionals such as the Mental Health Team, Drug and Alcohol support services and Probation to enable us to deliver targeted support and streamlined referrals to get better outcomes for rough sleepers.
- Feasibilities studies commenced into the provision of specialist housing for those with learning difficulties in partnership with Devon County Council.
- Through the Disabled Adapted need panel and Health and Wellbeing we have been using the data from Devon Home Choice to identify households in high and medium housing need that have specific housing requirements. This information is shared with the Affordable Housing team who are looking to integrate these properties into new development plans. The panel has now been extended to include Occupational Therapists to ensure that all possible solutions are being considered for these households. In 20-21 the number of households assisted by the panel to resolve their complex housing problems was 9.

Actions to be rolled over as incomplete:

- Homelessness forum – booked for mid March 2020 but cancelled due to pandemic. Options for future forum formats to be considered.
- Landlord Bulletin – 1st edition created early this year. Dissemination paused due to conflicting guidance released relating to renters in response to the Covid 19 Pandemic. Instead officers and specialists delivered bespoke advice around changes made as a result of Covid 19. All 'park home' establishments contacted to ensure compliance and to reduce the risk of homelessness. Additionally, registered landlord, private landlords and agencies contacted to ensure Covid regulations around eviction were understood and adhered to.

Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2021-22

Understanding the True cost of homelessness

- Ensure there is a solid evidence base which informs, across all sectors, the true cost of homelessness in South Hams & West Devon.
- Monitor the impact of welfare reform, to inform future strategic priorities
- Recognise the continuing pressures on Council's budgets and how best to target resources in the most meaningful way, ensuring partnerships with other agencies demonstrate value for money.
- Ensure access to good quality money advice, to help tackle poverty, poor quality housing and homelessness

HSU1	Monitor ongoing financial hardship and worklessness trends as a result of the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic to ensure that support is targeted effectively.	Effective targeting of support
HSU2	Establish and promote landlord information pages on our website including information on referral routes for Landlord requiring support with managing tenant issues.	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation. Reduction in repeat service users
HSU3	Maintained mapped data on locally available support and promote available support services.	Effective targeting of support and reduction of cost to LA
HSU4	Use 2021 Census data to create an accurate picture of the area demographic.	Effective targeting of support and reduction of cost to LA
HSU5	Continue to monitor the reasons for approach following Covid19 pandemic to enable early intervention and build on our prevention focused approach.	Effective targeting of support and reduction of cost to LA
HSU6	Maintain the current low levels of rent arrears for tenants of the SeaMoor lettings scheme through the appropriate targeting of support.	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation
HSU7/RS	Review the past 5 years of work undertaken as part of the 2017-22 Homelessness strategy to prepare for the 2022-2027 Homelessness Strategy	Effective targeting of support and reduction of rough sleeper numbers

Access to services

- Offer advice and assistance in a range of formats, so the customer can choose how they communicate with their Council
- Ensure our most vulnerable customers are able to access advice services effectively
- Work with partners to ensure that we are able to offer services at the time and place our customers need them most

- Ensure we are readily and regularly consulting with our customers and stakeholders to make sure we get our services right.

HSS1/RS	Maintain strong links with the 3 rd sector and other professional groups to ensure that learning is shared relating to emerging needs across our community.	Increased early intervention and homeless prevention work
HSS2	Continue to encourage local groups to access training opportunities to promote effective safeguarding activity and early homeless prevention within these groups.	Increased early intervention and homeless prevention
HSS3	Provide focussed small group consultation opportunities to service users and professionals to prepare for the publication of the 2022-2027 Homelessness Strategy	Maintenance of partnership working and effective consultation
HSS4	Publish and maintain accurate advice and information pages for Landlords on our website.	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation
HSS5	Develop interactive online communication options for landlords.	Improve communication with landlord to increase early identification of homelessness
HSS6 /RS	Deliver intensive bespoke support to those rough sleeping which is focused on breaking down barriers in accessing a wide range of services to aid recovery.	Maintain low numbers of rough sleepers
HSS7	Improve partnership working with local schools in the form of bespoke training/information sharing annual forums to ensure vulnerable children and families are equipped to access services both in the statutory and voluntary sector.	Increased early intervention reduction in Youth and family homelessness

Access to Housing

- Increase the supply, standard and options for people who face homelessness within our area
- Develop innovative options for our Rough Sleeper Community
- Continue the downward use of temporary accommodation for homeless households.

<u>HS1</u>	Define and implement a key worker waiting list for SeaMoor properties' . .	Reduction in cost of temporary accommodation
<u>HS2</u>	Establish a Housing Company in the form of a Community Benefit Society to enable and	Increase in availability of

	increase provision of affordable housing across our community.	affordable homes.
<u>HS3</u>	Use the Health & Wellbeing Panel to accurately identify barriers to accessing housing for those in medium housing.	Reduction of those in high housing need on housing register
<u>HS4/RS</u>	Continue to develop the Housing First model, alongside other housing options, to ensure options are bespoke to the needs of those rough sleeping or at risk of rough sleeping.	Reduction in Rough Sleeper estimated count
<u>HS5</u>	Continue to build the SeaMoor property portfolio to increase access to the private rented sector for those on mid to low incomes.	Increase in new properties under the a management of SeaMoor Lettings
<u>HS6/RS</u>	Deliver targeted support to those in temporary accommodation and rough sleeping to enable faster identification of suitable private rented and social housing options.	Reduction in the cost of temporary accommodation
<u>HS7</u>	Continue to develop bespoke and high quality temporary housing solutions in West Devon through the Springhill project	Reduction in the cost of temporary accommodation
<u>HS8</u>	Work with MHCLG to identify if potential bid under RSAP could help deliver 6 Housing First properties through a match funded grant for the purchase. Match funding to be meet by SHDC using the previously agreed Shires sales money.	Reduction in the cost of temporary accommodation.

Health & Wellbeing

- Work in partnership with our voluntary & statutory sectors to holistically address people's needs, as fully as possible.
- Ensure that we adequately protect & safeguard the most vulnerable members of our community
- Enable early access to help, to avoid crisis and tackle homelessness, at its root cause.

<u>HSW2</u>	Work with DCC to develop and publish the 'Domestic Abuse Strategy' for Devon – to include provision of accommodation with support.	Early identification of need and
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		prevention of homelessness.
<u>HSW3</u>	Work with Devon County Council to develop bespoke housing options for those with Learning Disabilities to ensure high level of quality housing and care provision.	Improved future planning for service delivery and reduction in housing needs due to H&W.
<u>HSW4</u>	Create a joint working protocol with Adult Services to target issues around hoarding and self-neglect in the home.	Early identification of need and prevention of homelessness.
<u>HSW5</u>	Continue to develop the perpetrator recovery programme for perpetrators of Domestic abuse wishing to access accommodation and pattern changing support.	Increased wellbeing of customer as a result of the most appropriate Intervention
<u>HSW6</u>	Make better use of available data from available sources such as Devon Home Choice, DFG records and partnership working RPs to predict future housing needs and inform future housing development.	Proactive approach to predicting housing trends and identifying future need.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL,
HELD REMOTELY VIA TEAMS, ON
THURSDAY, 1 APRIL 2021**

Panel Members in attendance:			
* Denotes attendance		∅ Denotes apology for absence	
*	Cllr L Austen	*	Cllr H Reeve
*	Cllr J P Birch (Chairman)	*	Cllr J Rose
∅	Cllr M Chown	*	Cllr P C Smerdon (Vice Chairman)
*	Cllr S Jackson	*	Cllr B Spencer
*	Cllr J McKay	*	Cllr J Sweett
*	Cllr D M O'Callaghan	∅	Cllr D Thomas
*	Cllr J T Pennington		

Other Members also in attendance:
Cllrs V Abbott, K J Baldry, H D Bastone, J Hawkins, N A Hopwood, K Kemp, T Holway, J A Pearce, R Rowe, and B Taylor

Item No	Minute Ref No below refers	Officers in attendance and participating
All		Chief Executive; Deputy Chief Executive; Director Strategic Finance; Director of Governance & Assurance; Democratic Services Manager; Monitoring Officer; Head of Strategy and Projects; Business Manager – Specialists; Business Manager – Case Management; Senior Specialist - Parking; and Democratic Services Specialist

O&S.46/20 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 25 February 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

O&S.47/20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be considered during the course of the meeting but there were none made.

O&S.48/20 PUBLIC FORUM

In accordance with the Public Forum Procedure Rules, the Chairman informed that no questions had been received for consideration.

O&S.49/20 EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Panel was presented with the most recently published Executive Forward Plan. In accordance with the Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rules, the Chairman asked for scope and intent of the following reports:

a) Planning and Planning Enforcement Improvement Plan

The Lead Executive Member proceeded to inform that a number of Members had raised concerns over the planning enforcement service and, on occasion, the planning service. The Council and the shared officer team had been stretched considerably during the last 12 months of the Pandemic and through the three lockdowns. The planning and planning enforcement team had adapted well to working from home but the pressures of additional childcare and home schooling had reduced capacity, over the same period the Council had received a 12% increase in planning applications and a 30% increase in planning enforcement cases.

Following consultation with the Leader, the lead Executive Member, and the Chief Executive, officers had been asked to carry out a service review and put together an improvement plan for both services. The improvement plan would focus on delivering improvements for both services in the following key areas;

- Performance
- Quality
- Customer and member satisfaction
- Communication

It would also look at the services that support the functions such as legal, internal consultees and the new IT system that was planned and the benefits it may bring.

It was intended that officers would present the draft Plan to the Executive and, subject to its approval, would recommend that the Overview & Scrutiny Panel scrutinise the delivery of the actions and subsequent improvements that would be delivered.

b) Motorhome Strategy

The lead Executive Member outlined that this report would go before the Executive at the next meeting on 22 April 2021. If the strategy was approved, it would increase use of car parks for overnight stays in the South Hams area. The report was still in draft form with consultation of Members, and would look at a maximum stay of two nights with no return within 48 hours and only those vehicles with on-board facilities, cost would be discussed at the Executive meeting, but signage was acknowledged as important. In addition, an off street parking order amendment would be required. This strategy would improve local tourism and local spend, and potentially extend the length of the tourist season. The Lead Member confirmed that the Council was consulting with other neighbouring Local Authorities to look at best practice.

c) Electric Charging Points in Council Car Parks

The Panel was advised that a supplier had just been appointed, which would be Scottish Power. Officers would be meeting with Scottish Power on 13th April 2021 to discuss electric charging points provision across the South Hams area. Although charges would be set by Scottish Power, South Hams District Council would recoup a small charge from Scottish Power and the cost of the parking space would be covered. A review conducted by APSE Energy would look at all options available, including solar panels, and all South Hams District Council assets, including car parks. The time frame was dependent on Devon County Council, with a schedule of works to be outlined in April's meeting with Scottish Power.

O&S.50/20 **SECTION 106 AGREEMENT MONITORING UPDATE REPORT**

The lead Executive Member gave an update on the report, outlining that some money remained unspent and unallocated. A new officer would be starting in May 2021 who would alter current reporting and internal systems to give increased clarity for Members. There would be a detailed report presented to the Executive in the summer detailing progress on individual projects.

Following questions from several Members, the Chairman updated that he had held a meeting with officers, and, in light of his discussions, it was his intention to **PROPOSE** an additional recommendation (as outlined in part 4 below). This addition was subsequently **SECONDED** then voted on and added to the recommendations.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel note:

1. The current position on Section 106 funding (as set out in Appendix A of the presented agenda report);
2. The current processes in place for monitoring and administering Section 106 Agreements and funding;
3. That a report will be brought to an Executive meeting in the summer detailing progress against the individual projects funded by section 106 monies;
4. That in the report to the Executive, it be requested that the following be addressed:
 - i) The setting up of a register of S106 agreements that is accessible to all Members;
 - ii) The availability of S106 agreements to Members other than by reference to the planning application website;
 - iii) The register and/or list of S106 agreements be formatted on a ward-by-ward basis;

- iv) A six monthly report to Members on the position/status of the S106 agreements relating to their wards;
- v) The extent of the monitoring in respect of S106 agreements in those cases where developments have been completed somewhat back; and
- vi) The need to conduct an audit upon the completion of a development to ensure that the developer has complied with all its S106 obligations.

O&S.51/20 **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY LOCALITY FUND - UPDATE**

The Leader then introduced a report which provided the Panel with an update on the use of the Sustainable Community Locality Fund by Members during the 2020/21 financial year. The Leader outlined that the spend was only midway through its term and that Members had just received an additional £3,000 for Climate and Biodiversity projects.

An additional recommendation was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** that acknowledged the unprecedented pressures currently felt by local communities and therefore an increase of £500 to the Locality Fund for the year 2021/22 was proposed. This would be the first increase since 2015/16, bringing the allocation to £2,500 per year. During the debate on the additional recommendation, some Members commented that some funds were underspent and therefore there was no need for additional funds. Some Members felt this was not a decision for the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. When put to the vote, this amendment was declared **CARRIED** on the casting vote of the Chairman.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Panel:

1. note the update on the Council's Sustainable Community Locality Fund and adopts the planned actions at Sections 5.1(a) and 5.1(b) of the presented agenda report; and
2. **RECOMMEND** to the Executive that each Member receives a further £500 in recognition of the need and the importance of the Localities Fund and the difference it can achieve. The £15,500 necessary for the 2021/22 to be funded from the New Homes Bonus Reserve.

O&S.52/20 **LGA MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Monitoring Officer presented the Panel with a report that outlined the proposed new Model Code of Conduct which had been developed by the Local Government Association (LGA).

It was then:

RECOMMENDED

That the Panel **RECOMMEND** to Council that the draft Code, (as set out in Appendix C of the attendant report), be adopted from the date of the Annual Council.

O&S.53/20 ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

The Monitoring Officer updated the Panel on the number of standards complaints that had been received by the Council. Since the report was written, the Council had received two more which brought the total to 21 for the year. This was similar to previous years. It was highlighted that in the past year complaints had become more complex resulting in a longer time to resolution. No standards panel had had to be called, however it was noted that there had been an increase in complaints about bullying, particularly of town and parish clerks. Therefore, the Monitoring Officer had written to all Towns and Parish Councils to outline their duty of care to their respective Clerks. There had also been an increase in the number of complaints which were identified as attempts to use the standards process as a means to challenge unpopular decisions. Legal Services would be arranging training for all Members particularly as training last year had been limited due to pandemic impacting on resources and the difficulties of arranging training under Covid regulations.

Following questions from some Members, the Monitoring Officer confirmed he intended to comply with the outstanding issues in Appendix A of the attendant report and to have increased liaison with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. The Monitoring Officer would bring any necessary reports to the Panel for review. Further to this, an additional amendment was **PROPOSED** and **SECONDED** and when put to the vote declared **CARRIED**.

One Member asked that it be noted in the minutes that during training it had been highlighted that it was legal to verbally assault someone within Council meetings. He wished it to be noted that this Council was choosing not to follow this and that all Members would be expected to show respect to each other at formal meetings.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel note the contents of the report and adopt the recommendation in respect of training at Section 2.12 of the presented agenda report and request the Monitoring Officer to take action in respect of items 5, 11, and 15 at Appendix A of the presented agenda report.

O&S.54/20 TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES: FEEDBACK FROM OUTSIDE BODIES – CONCLUDING REPORT

In line with the request from the Panel to report on Council's representation on outside bodies (Minute O&S.42/20 refers), Cllr Spencer (in his capacity as Chairman of the Task and Finish Group) updated on the resultant report. In so doing, he thanked the Group for its efficient and speedy actions in concluding the review on the prescribed timeline.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the conclusions of the Feedback from Outside Bodies – Task and Finish Group (as set out at Sections 3.5.1 to 3.5.6 in the attendant report) be approved.

O&S.55/20 2021/22 PANEL WORK PROGRAMME – INITIAL THOUGHTS

The Chair and Vice Chair had met with the Leader, the Deputy Leader, and the Chief Executive to discuss the work programme for the forthcoming municipal year. This meeting had resulted in the work programme as outlined in the attendant report. The Leader clarified that a report would be brought to Executive on the 22nd April 2021 which would set out an indicative timeline and process for the development and adoption of the Council's Corporate Strategy. This strategy would ultimately be decided by presented to a Full Council meeting for approval.

Further to the previous item, (Minute ref O&S.54/20), the Outside Bodies report would now be added to the draft work programme, with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel meeting dates for the coming year would be presented to the Annual Council meeting on 20th May 2021 for approval.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the 2021/22 Programme be adopted, subject to inclusion of an Annual Report on Outside Bodies being scheduled for early in the 2022 Calendar Year.

(Meeting started at 10:00 am and concluded at 11:48 am)

Chairman