

South Hams Overview and Scrutiny Panel



Title:	Agenda												
Date:	Thursday, 24th November, 2016												
Time:	10.00 am												
Venue:	Cary Room - Follaton House												
Full Members:	<p style="text-align: center;">Chairman Cllr Saltern Vice Chairman Cllr Wingate</p> <p><i>Members:</i></p> <table style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td>Cllr Baldry</td> <td>Cllr Hopwood</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Birch</td> <td>Cllr May</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Blackler</td> <td>Cllr Pennington</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Brown</td> <td>Cllr Pringle</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Green</td> <td>Cllr Smerdon</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Hawkins</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Cllr Baldry	Cllr Hopwood	Cllr Birch	Cllr May	Cllr Blackler	Cllr Pennington	Cllr Brown	Cllr Pringle	Cllr Green	Cllr Smerdon	Cllr Hawkins	
Cllr Baldry	Cllr Hopwood												
Cllr Birch	Cllr May												
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Cllr Brown	Cllr Pringle												
Cllr Green	Cllr Smerdon												
Cllr Hawkins													
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:	Member.Services@swdevon.gov.uk												

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes

1 - 14

to approve as a correct record and authorise the Chairman to sign the minutes of the Panel held on 3 November 2016;

3. Urgent Business

brought forward at the discretion of the Chairman;

4. Division of Agenda

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

5. 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;

6. Public Forum

15 - 16

A period of up to 15 minutes is available to deal with issues raised by the public;

7. Executive Forward Plan

17 - 182

(a) Homeless Strategy (Lead Executive Member - Cllr Bastone)

(b) Devon Home Choice and Allocations Policy (Lead Executive Member - Cllr Bastone)

Note: If any Member seeks further clarity, or wishes to raise issues regarding any future Executive agenda item, please contact Member Services before 5.00pm on **Monday 21 November 2016** to ensure that the lead Executive Member(s) and lead officer(s) are aware of this request in advance of the meeting.

8. Fees and Charges 2017/18

(Lead Executive Member – Cllr Wright)

Report to follow

9. Quarterly Performance Measures

183 - 202

(Lead Executive Member – Cllr Hicks)

10. Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2016

203 - 216

(Lead Executive Member – Cllr Wright)

11. Task and Finish Group updates (if any)

217 - 250

(a) **Dartmouth Lower Ferry**; (Lead Executive Member – Cllr Gilbert)

(b) **Partnerships**; (Lead Executive Member - Cllr Ward)

(c) **Waste and Recycling**; (Lead Executive Member – Cllr Gilbert)

(d) **Events Policy**; (Lead Executive Member – Cllr Gilbert) and

(e) **Permits Review** (Lead Executive Member – Cllr Gilbert)

12. Actions Arising / Decisions Log

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13. Draft Annual Work Programme 2016/17

255 - 256

to consider items for programming on to the annual work programme of the Panel, whilst having regard to the resources available, time constraints of Members and the interests of the local community

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**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
HELD AT FOLLATON HOUSE, TOTNES ON
THURSDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2016**

Panel Members in attendance:			
* Denotes attendance		∅ Denotes apology for absence	
*	Cllr K J Baldry	*	Cllr D W May
*	Cllr J P Birch	*	Cllr J T Pennington
*	Cllr J I G Blackler	∅	Cllr K Pringle
*	Cllr D Brown	*	Cllr M F Saltern (Chairman)
*	Cllr J P Green	*	Cllr P C Smerdon
*	Cllr J D Hawkins	*	Cllr K R H Wingate (Vice Chairman)
*	Cllr N A Hopwood		

Other Members also in attendance:
Cllrs H D Bastone, I Bramble, J Brazil, R D Gilbert, M J Hicks, J M Hodgson, T R Holway, R Rowe, R C Steer, R J Tucker, L A H Ward and S A E Wright

Item No	Minute Ref No below refers	Officers in attendance and participating
All		Head of Paid Service, Executive Director (Service Delivery and Commercial Development) and Senior Specialist – Democratic Services
8	O&S.38/16	Senior Community Safety Officer, South Devon and Dartmoor Community Safety Partnership and Specialist: Community Safety, Safeguarding and Partnerships
9	O&S.39/16	Group Manager – Support Services / Customer First
10	O&S.40/16	Locality Manager
11	O&S.41/16	Specialist Manager
12	O&S.42/16	Group Manager – Commercial Services
13	O&S.43/16	Senior Specialist: Place and Strategy
16	O&S.46/16	Salcombe Harbour Master

O&S.34/16 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 6 October 2016 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

O&S.35/16 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. These were recorded as follows:

Cllr R D Gilbert declared a personal interest in agenda item 16: 'Beach and Water Safety' (Minute O&S.46/16 below refers) by virtue of owning a private beach that was not included on the list contained within Appendix 1 and remained in the meeting during the debate on this particular item.

O&S.36/16 PUBLIC FORUM

In accordance with the Public Forum Procedure Rules, no items were raised at this meeting.

O&S.37/16 LATEST PUBLISHED EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN

The Panel was advised that an updated version of the Executive Forward Plan had been published since the Panel agenda papers had been circulated. As a consequence, the Chairman made reference to the following changes:-

- The agenda items relating to Devolution and the Sherford Delivery Team would now be considered at a later date than the initially anticipated 1 December 2016;
- The Council Tax Reduction Scheme would now be presented to the Executive meeting on 1 December 2016;
- An agenda item relating to the Dartmouth Lower Ferry had been scheduled for consideration by the Executive at its meeting on 2 February 2016; and
- A Waste Review agenda item had been added to the Forward Plan for consideration at the Executive meeting on 9 March 2016.

In the ensuing discussion, the budget setting process was outlined and all Members were encouraged to submit their views as part of this exercise. However, in so doing, it was noted that any proposals that involved additional expenditure would need to illustrate how these would be funded.

O&S.38/16 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP

The Panel considered a report that provided Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the work of the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) as defined by Sections 19 and 20 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 and the Crime and Disorder (Overview and Scrutiny) Regulations 2009.

In the subsequent discussion, reference was made to:-

- (a) the annual CSP forum event that had been held at Rattery Village Hall. Some Members commended the success of this event which had been attended by over 50 residents and had been particularly well received;
- (b) the success of the Partnership. A number of Members felt that the CSP was doing an excellent job, but were of the view that there was scope for the Partnership to improve the methods in which it advertised and promoted itself;
- (c) the use of illegal highs. In citing the recent tragic loss of life in Totnes, the CSP representative advised that illegal highs were far too prevalent in the community and proceeded to outline some of the measures that were being undertaken to reverse this trend;

- (d) 'learn 2 live' events. The Panel was advised that these events were targeted at young people and were focused on all aspects of road safety. The effectiveness of these events was emphasised and the representatives confirmed that they would let Members have the details of future 'learn 2 live' events;
- (e) mental health awareness. The Panel was provided with a comprehensive response on the measures that the Partnership was involved in to combat mental health. In reply, a Member proceeded to state his support for the approach being followed by the CSP and, as a general point, his belief that central government needed to allocate greater expenditure in this regard;
- (f) the impact of reduced grant funding. Whilst there was no doubt that the reduced funding was having an impact, the CSP representatives informed that it was forcing the Partnership to continually consider innovative ways of working. In reply to a question, the representatives highlighted the importance of the annual grant awarded from the Police and Crime Commissioner, who had indicated that she greatly valued and recognised the prevention work undertaken by CSPs;
- (g) the benefit of Youth Workers. A Member highlighted the good work that was being carried out by the Youth Worker that had been funded by the Town And Parish (TAP) Fund process for the Northern area of the district. Indeed, such was the extent of this positive work that the Member suggested that the Youth Worker should be invited to provide a presentation to the wider membership. In response, the Chairman of the Panel and the Leader of the Council gave a commitment to consider this request.

In concluding the agenda item, the Chairman thanked the representatives for their attendance and reminded those present that, in his capacity as the Council's appointed Member on the Police and Crime Commissioner Scrutiny Panel, he was more than happy to relay any issues to it on behalf of Members and the CSP.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and that the comments expressed in the minutes above be taken forward.

O&S.39/16 TRANSITIONAL RESOURCES MONITORING REPORT

A report was considered that provided Members with an update on the impact on service areas of the temporary, fixed-term transitional resources that had been approved by the Council at its meeting on 30 June 2016 (minute 25/16 refers).

The Group Manager – Support Services / Customer First informed that overall performance was encouraging. However, the one area that was still giving him cause for concern was Development Management, which had seen a 12% increase in planning application numbers that had placed additional pressure on staff, who already had exceptionally high caseloads.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) A number of Members challenged the positive nature of the report, which they felt was in contradiction to the current perception of Council performance that was held by the public, town and parish councils and Members. In combating these comments, the Executive Directors made particular reference to:
- the time lag between actual performance improvements and these being realised by Members out in their respective communities;
 - genuine demonstrable improvements are being made;
 - officers working tirelessly to make the Transformation Programme a success and the general sense of negativity amongst Members being unhelpful.

The Leader of Council supported the views expressed by the Executive Directors and emphasised the point that there was a direct correlation between Member activity in their respective local wards and the nature of the correspondence received by the Council from these areas;

- (b) With regard to the likely impact upon the Council at the end of the transitional resource period, officers confirmed that, with the exception of Development Management, they did not anticipate that there would be a need for any further resources to be allocated in any other area. Specifically regarding the potential for additional resources in Development Management, it was felt appropriate that this matter be considered during the draft budget setting discussions at the joint meeting of the Panel and the Development Management Committee on 19 January 2017;
- (c) In providing an update on the new Council website, assurances were given that all Members would have the opportunity to test and provide feedback on it in the next few weeks. Following a rigorous testing exercise, it was anticipated that the new website would go live in December/January;
- (d) Officers highlighted the recent sessions held with town and parish clerks and confirmed that these had provided some particularly constructive feedback. Having reflected on these sessions, officers were of the view that the Council needed to consider methods of standardising the ways it worked with town and parish councils;
- (e) As a general point, some Members felt that the presentation and format of the monitoring report did not easily illustrate to the reader that it was a positive news story.

RESOLVED

That the monitoring report and the progress made to date be noted.

O&S.40/16 LOCALITY SERVICE PERFORMANCE

In light of a request made by the Panel at its meeting on 17 March 2016 (minute O&S.90/15 refers), a report was considered that provided a further review into the performance of the Locality Service.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- (a) Whilst one of the concerns that had necessitated this review was the role of the Locality Engagement Officers, a number of Members made the point that these had now been mitigated and the role was proving to be particularly effective. Furthermore, the work undertaken by the Mobile Locality Officers was also commended by Members;
- (b) A number of Members wished to recognise the efforts of the Locality Manager in making the Locality Service such a successful and effective operation.

It was then:

RESOLVED

That the performance of the Locality Service be noted and the Locality team be congratulated on the success of the operation.

O&S.41/16 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT: VERBAL UPDATE

The Specialist Manager provided a verbal update on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) that focused on three particular elements as follows:

1. Funding – the Panel noted that, in accordance with the Better Care Fund, central government was awarding additional monies towards DFGs. Since the Council now had 1.5 full time equivalent members of staff working on the delivery of DFGs, it was now in a position to make an application to the Better Care Fund for additional funding;

2. Management and performance – the officer confirmed that performance was improving and DFGs were currently being allocated at an average of just under 100 working days. Such was the extent of the performance improvements, it was felt that the Council target (average time between 65 and 70 days) was now attainable; and
3. The future – whilst there was always uncertainties regarding whether or not the Council would receive the full allocation of monies each year, the Panel was informed that there remained a clear demand that was now appropriately resourced. With regard to maximising value for money opportunities, the officer advised that there was scope to make greater use of procurement opportunities through joint working with other local authorities.

The Panel acknowledged the positivity arising from this agenda item and thanked the officer for his update.

O&S.42/16 **TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES**

(a) Dartmouth Lower Ferry

The Chairman advised that negotiations were currently ongoing with staff fully involved in the process.

(b) Partnerships

The Chairman highlighted that the next Task and Finish Group meeting was due to take place on 9 November 2016 and it was intended that the concluding report of the Group would then be presented to the next Panel meeting on 24 November 2016.

(c) Waste and Recycling

In providing an update, the lead Executive Member for Commercial Services made particular reference to the progress report that had been circulated to all Members earlier that week. In particular, the Member reminded those in attendance that the Task and Finish Group had accepted the consultants' findings and concluded that the round review would not reap the full benefits expected. Therefore, the Group had agreed that it would be more prudent to carry out a targeted review of aspects of the service that included re-balancing the current rounds.

In the ensuing debate, reference was made to:-

- (a) the ability for the Group to now move on and consider further service efficiencies. For clarity, it was confirmed that the Group was not proposing a large scale waste review, but was going to look at specific elements of the current service;

(b) the budgeting implications. A Member expressed his disappointment that the Council had built in a projected £120,000 saving from the service that had now proven to be unachievable. In accepting the point, other Members recognised the need for greater challenge (and assurance) in respect of whether a proposed saving was realistic before it was included in the budget proposals.

(d) Events Policy

The Group Chairman advised the Panel that a meeting had recently taken place and a further meeting was due to take place before the conclusions of the Group were presented to the next Panel meeting on 24 November 2016.

In light of a request, it was agreed that Members should send a list of organisations who they believe should be included in the direct consultation exercise to the Group Manager – Business Development and/or the Group Chairman.

(e) Permits Review

Members noted that two meetings had been held and the Group was intending to present its final report to the next Panel meeting on 24 November 2016.

O&S.43/16 ACTIONS ARISING / DECISIONS LOG

In presenting the latest log, the Chairman made reference to the questions related to the T3 area of Totnes in the Joint Local Plan (Minute O&S.25/16 refers). The Chairman reminded the Panel that, since the fifteen minute time slot had expired, he had invited the three questioners to send in any supplementary questions outside of that meeting.

Subsequent to this invite, the following supplementary questions had been received:

Supplementary Questions Received from Georgina Allen:

'Relating to question 1 - the question referred to taking T3 out of the Joint Plan; as we had already been told that T3 was the equivalent of the old plan, (Radio Devon interview with Cllr Hicks in the summer) then we know the details and that was what we are requesting removed. Could you please advise of the process how to do this and how to hand it over to the Neighbourhood Plan?'

'Relating to question 2 - you say that the T3 area is in the Joint Plan in order for it to be enhanced; the Neighbourhood Plan have confirmed that they would be interested in enhancing the square themselves and so would ask you to confirm if this would be possible. They also would like to enquire of the exact nature of the enhancement of the civic square in the last 20 years as paid for by SHDC, as they are not aware that any enhancement has taken place.'

'Relating to question 3 - Although you were not able to answer this question, I would like to include an answer from the Heritage Group to Cllr Vint's enquiry -

Dear Cllr Vint,

Thank you for your enquiry. Having checked our catalogue, and spoken to our Archivist Jan Wood, about this, it appears that we do not hold the original charter here. If it survives, it may be held at the National Archives.

However, we do have the following two items in our collection:

1) 1120Z/T/62 "Copy and translation of Patent Roll of 1376-1377 re Confirmation of Totnes Borough Charter at death of Black Prince" – this is a 19th century copy.

2) 1579A/1/2 "Translation of Henry VII Charter of Incorporation, including confirmation of Charter of 1206 making Totnes a free borough" – the original charter of incorporation dated from 1505, however this translation is much more recent (18th or 19th century) and consists of about 14 pages (some fragile).

These can be viewed in our searchroom, and if you are interested in visiting us you can find more information about this at

http://www.devon.gov.uk/.../record_office/inf.../visiting_us.htm <http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/councildemocracy/record_office/information_dass/visiting_us.htm> .

We can make copies of documents – prices for copies in the searchroom are 50p per sheet (for black and white, A3 or A4), or £1.50 for a colour A4 copies, £2.00 for colour A3 copies.

The first document consists of 2 pages – the first page contains a transcription of the latin, the second page is a translation – these could each be copied on to A3 sheets.

The second document is more fragile and so may require digital copying instead – as this is charged at £8 per image, you may like to view the document first as it may not all relate to the Totnes Charter. If you were to visit, the searchroom staff would be able to advise on the most appropriate method of obtaining a copy of this document."

'Relating to question 4 - I do not believe an answer to this question was given at the council meeting and so would be grateful for one now. If the town is to hold a referendum or poll concerning T3's inclusion in the Joint Plan would the council accept the result?'

'Relating to question 5 - Could the council please spell out the benefits to the South Hams area of selling the Central Area of Totnes?'

'Relating to question 6 - Could the council please explain the exact nature of the enhancement to T3 that is mentioned in the answer to the question. If a large proportion of the population don't consider building on the car parks and market square an enhancement, then maybe it shouldn't be considered.'

'Relating to question 7 - If the removal of T3 from the Joint Plan will not affect the five year supply, then why is it included. What is the rationale and reasoning behind its inclusion?'

'Relating to question 8 - the Neighbourhood Plan team as well our own district councillors are very worried that the Neighbourhood Plan would fail a referendum if T3 is included in the Joint Plan and I understand that that could put the Joint Plan at risk. Is it worth risking this just to include T3? It would make more sense to hand the entire area over to the Neighbourhood Plan so that there can be a full consultation on it followed by a referendum. What is your opinion on this?'

Supplementary Question Received from Lyn Szczepura:

'The current parking provision in the T3 area consists of the following individual car parks:

Civic Hall, 24 spaces, short term (of which, 2 disabled)

Heaths Nursery, 87 spaces, short term (of which, 4 disabled)

Nursery, 73 spaces, long term

Heathway No 1, 20 spaces, long term

Heathway No 2, 37 spaces, long term (of which, 2 disabled)

Heathway No 3, 11 spaces, long term, permit holders only.

These spaces are barely adequate and are regularly over-stretched on Market days and during the summer season. I am therefore seeking clarification on whether the number of parking spaces provided in the T3 area (including disabled parking) will be retained at this level, 252 in total, in perpetuity?'

Supplementary Question (and Comments) Received from Richard Szczepura:

Unfortunately the response given by Cllr Hicks does not answer my question.

*My original question was seeking clarification on whether housing completions includes small developments such as next to the Nursery car park, planning permissions granted includes small developments such as Paige Adams Road and windfalls includes the increase in proposed housing on the Brunel site. **Could you please answer this clarified question?***

I note that similar questions were lodged in the consultation process by Dr Woolaston MP ("..there needs to be greater clarity about windfall sites. Does this include single dwellings for example as well as exception sites?) and Cllr Vint ("Estimated dwelling are shown here (T4) as 62. There are actually plans for 99 if the McCarthy Stone proposals are included. This additional 37 may go some way to balance reduction in T3.").

I also have three supplementary questions which could not be taken at the meeting but, I was advised by the Chair, could be submitted after receipt of your response.

Q1. Can you give the number of housing completions, planning permissions granted and windfalls allocated to Totnes?

Q2. If the minimum housing numbers by settlement type and other delivery is adjusted in Table 1 of the JLP to match the stated requirement of 8700 can the delivery from towns be adjusted, pro rata, to 5008 and for Totnes to 1135 instead of 1246?

Q3. Can the housing numbers be adjusted to provide a more equitable distribution of percentage increase in population for each town, which in theory would allow a reduction of 366 dwellings in Totnes?

In response to these supplementary questions, the Chairman invited Cllr Hicks (as lead Executive Member for the Joint Local Plan) to read the following statement to the meeting:

“The following statement is addressed to all the many residents who have written, emailed and personally asked questions about the Joint Local Plan and the perceived implications for the centre of Totnes. It is an attempt to clarify the many misunderstandings which have occurred amongst residents in relation to the plans for the centre of the town, the area known in the plan as T3 and is specifically directed at answering the questions submitted to the SHDC Scrutiny meetings of 6 October and 3 November 2016.

Some background

Over the last twenty or so years, T3 has appeared in Local Plans, Core Strategy detail, the DPD etc., etc. and over that time there have been many changes to the town centre area. At the beginning of this period, the area concerned was, in the main, a nursery; Heath’s Nursery.

Many years later, the Nursery was purchased by the District Council and the transformation from the nursery area to its present form was initiated and facilitated by South Hams District Council. Over that time the individual parts of T3 – the Market Square, the various car parks, Leechwell Gardens, the Grove School etc., have been included in the overall plan for the town centre and there has always been an aspiration on the part of the District Council to protect and enhance these important town assets.

Currently the District Council (also the Local Planning Authority) is in the process of developing a new Local Plan. In order to help this process, a decision was made to create a Housing Market Area which incorporates South Hams, Plymouth City and West Devon Borough Councils and following that, a Joint Local Plan was formed by the three councils concerned.

Local Plans have a clearly defined purpose and a detailed format which, when completed, is required to satisfy a Planning Inspector as to area development strategy, specific policies covering various planning detail and meeting the specific housing need for the area.

At this stage, it should be noted, that the Plan (JLP) is for the whole market area, not any one geographical part of it.

Where are we now?

There are two formal consultations in the Plan process, they are called Regulation 18 and 19. Regulation 18 took place in the first quarter of 2016 and Regulation 19 will take part in the early part of 2017 and thereafter the plan will proceed to submission and, hopefully, approval.

T3

Because it has been included in various iterations of the Local Plan for some years, the planning judgement is that removing T3 from the allocated sites, will leave it vulnerable to approach by any developer. This would be due to the risk of an Appeal Inspector taking the view that, historically, the area was allocated. The Planning Authority would be hard put to it, to defend such a position.

A decision has been made to review the T3 area and consider whether the best way forward would be to retain it within the Plan and outline the Authority's wishes in terms of use i.e. the Market Square to be retained as such, Leechwell Gardens to be a dedicated community open space and the car parking to be evaluated with the assurance that numbers will be protected. This work is ongoing and decisions will be made before Regulation 19. These decisions are the responsibility of the Planning Authority.

We are grateful for all the comments, which we have received but stress that this is a work in process. You will all have another opportunity to comment at the Regulation 19 stage.

With particular reference to the questions raised by Dr Szczepura, whilst the points raised are no doubt accurate, unfortunately they are not relevant. The distribution of dwellings around the District is not simply a data-driven calculation. Key considerations include the location and overall sustainability credentials of the settlements and the availability and suitability of land for development. This includes consideration of a wide-range of factors including accessibility and environmental constraints. There is clearly a correlation between the sustainability of settlements and their population numbers but deciding how much development should be allocated to individual settlements involves much more than pro-rata calculation."

The following points were made on the remainder of the Log:-

- (a) A Member asked that the specific query on the number of apprentices working on-site on the Sherford development be followed up;
- (b) It was noted that a date for the meeting between the Economy Working Group and the Joint Local Plan Steering Group had still to be scheduled. In response to a request, it was agreed that (once confirmed) the date would be circulated to interested Members accordingly.

O&S.44/16 DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17

In consideration of its Annual Work Programme, the following points were raised:

- (a) It was noted that the Programme for 24 November 2016 meeting currently indicated three separate agenda items for: 'Customer Services: Six Month Update; 'Development Management (DM): Six Month Update'; and Quarterly Performance Measures. However, the Panel agreed that these items should be combined under the umbrella of the Performance Measures report, with Customer Services and DM related indicators being subject of 'deep dive' analysis;
- (b) The Panel agreed that an Empty Homes Strategy Update should be included on the Work Programme for the meeting to be held on 23 February 2017;
- (c) In respect of the potential to generate more income from local markets, it was noted that this had been raised by the Permits Task and Finish Group. As a consequence, it was likely that officers would be recommending to the Panel that a Task and Finish Group be established to investigate this matter in more detail.

O&S.45/16 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

It was then:

RESOLVED

That in accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in order to avoid the likely disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

O&S.46/16 BEACH AND WATER SAFETY

An exempt report was considered that reported the findings of the Beach Management Working Group on a particular matter related to Beach and Water Safety.

In the ensuing debate, there were two contradictory views raised. Whilst some Members expressed their concerns at the potential safety implications, other Members highlighted the proposed lengthy lead in time and their personal opposition to the principle whereby the Council was in effect subsidising private businesses.

Since particular concerns were raised over the potential removal of buoyage at selected locations, the Panel requested that a further update briefing paper on this particular aspect of the proposals be circulated to Members in April/May 2017. In the event of this paper raising further concerns amongst Members, then the Panel may decide to formally re-consider this issue at a future meeting.

It was then:

RECOMMENDED

That the Executive be **RECOMMENDED** to adopt the proposals outlined within paragraph 3.1.2 of the presented agenda report, with the exception of the removal of buoyage at selected locations, which would be subject to a further update briefing paper being circulated to Members in April/May 2017.

(Meeting started at 10.00 am and concluded at 12.40 pm)

Chairman

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PUBLIC FORUM PROCEDURES

(a) General

Members of the public may raise issues and ask questions at meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel. This session will last for up to fifteen minutes at the beginning of each meeting.

(b) Notice of Questions

An issue or question may only be raised by a member of the public provided that they have given written notice (which may be by electronic mail) to the Democratic Services Manager by 5.00pm on the Monday, prior to the relevant meeting.

(c) Scope of Questions

An issue may be rejected by the Monitoring Officer if:

- it relates to a matter within the functions of the Development Management Committee;
- it is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the district;
- it is offensive, frivolous or defamatory;
- it is substantially the same as a question which has previously been put in the past six months; or
- it requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

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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 1 December 2016. 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 Panels in planning their contribution to policy development and holding the Executive to account.

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

Members of the public are welcome to attend all meetings of the Executive, which are normally held at Follaton House, Totnes, and normally start at 10.00 am. If advance notice has been given, questions can be put to the Executive at the beginning of the meeting.

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

Cllr Hilary Bastone – lead Executive Member for Customer First

Cllr Rufus Gilbert – lead Executive Member for Commercial Services

Cllr Michael Hicks – lead Executive Member for Business Development

Cllr John Tucker – Leader of the Council

Cllr Lindsay Ward – Deputy Leader of the Council

Cllr Simon Wright – lead Executive Member for Support Services

Further information on the workings of the Executive, including latest information on agenda items, can be obtained by contacting the Member Services Section on 01803 861185 or by e-mail to member.services@southhams.gov.uk

All items listed in this Forward Plan will be discussed in public at the relevant meeting, unless otherwise indicated for the reasons shown

INDEX OF KEY DECISIONS

Service	Title of Report and summary	Lead Officer and Executive member	Anticipated date of decision

KEY DECISIONS:

For the purpose of the Executive Forward Plan, a key decision is a decision that will be taken by the Executive, and which will satisfy either of the following criteria:

‘to result in the local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the local authority’s budget for the service or function to which the decision relates

(For this purpose significant expenditure or savings shall mean:

Revenue – Any contract or proposal with an annual payment of more than £50,000; and

Capital – Any project with a value in excess of £100,000); or

to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority, in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer (or the Democratic Services Manager in his/her absence).

A key decision proforma will be attached for each key decision listed above.

OTHER DECISIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE EXECUTIVE

Service	Title of Report and summary	Lead Officer and Executive Member	Decision maker	Anticipated date of meeting
SLT	Sherford Delivery Team	SJ/Cllr Tucker	Council	Date TBC
Strategy & Commissioning	Devolution – Combined Authority Scheme	SJ/Cllr Tucker	Council	Date TBC
Strategy and Commissioning	Business Development Opportunities	DA/Cllr Hicks	Council	STANDING ITEM
Customer First	Council Tax Reduction Scheme - (Deferred from 20 October)	IB/Cllr Bastone	Council	1 December 2016
Strategy & Commissioning/Customer First	Draft Policy on Flying Drones from Public Open Space	LC&CB/Cllr Bastone	Council	1 December 2016
Support Services	Draft Budget Proposals for 2017/18	LB/Cllr Tucker	Council	1 December 2016
Support Services	Draft Capital Programme Proposals for 2017/18	LB/Cllr Tucker	Council	1 December 2016
Support Services	Treasury Management Mid Year Update 2016/17	LB/Cllr Wright	Executive	1 December 2016
Support Services	Write Off Report (Q1 and Q2 2016/17)	LB/Cllr Wright	Executive	1 December 2016
Customer First	Housing Benefit Risk Based Verification Policy	IB/Cllr Bastone	Council	2 February 2017
Support Services	ICT Strategy – (Deferred from 20 October)	MW/Cllr Wright	Council	2 February 2017
SLT	Local Authority Controlled Company – Final Decision	SJ/Cllr Tucker	Council	2 February 2017
Support Services	Revenue Budget Proposals for 2017/18	LB/Cllr Tucker	Council	2 February 2017
Support Services	Capital Programme Proposals for 2017/18	LB/Cllr Tucker	Council	2 February 2017
Customer First	Note and Approve the Emergency Planning & Response Arrangements	IL/Cllr Bastone	Council	2 February 2017
Customer First	Lower Ferry	HD/Cllr Gilbert	Council	2 February 2017
Customer First	Waste Review	HD/Cllr Gilbert	Council	9 March 2017
Customer First	Approval of Homelessness Strategy	IB/Cllr Bastone	Council	9 March 2017

*** Exempt Item (This means information contained in the report is not available to members of the public)**

SJ – Steve Jordan – Executive Director Strategy and Commissioning and Head of Paid Service

SH – Sophie Hosking – Executive Director Service Delivery and Commercial Development

LB – Lisa Buckle – Finance COP Lead and s151 Officer

HD – Helen Dobby – Group Manager Commercial Services

SM – Steve Mullineaux – Group Manager Support Services

IB – Isabel Blake – COP Lead Housing, Revenues and Benefits

LC – Lesley Crocker – Senior Specialist Media and Communications

CBowen – Catherine Bowen – Monitoring Officer

DA – Darren Arulvasagam – Group Manager Business Development

SLT – Senior Leadership Team

CB – Chris Brook – COP Lead Assets

TJ – Tom Jones – COP Lead Place Making



South Hams
District Council

Report to: **Overview & Scrutiny Panel**
Date: **24 November 2016**
Title: **HOMELESS STRATEGY 2017-2022 - PUBLIC CONSULTATION**
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**
Wards Affected: **all**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

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

Date next steps can be taken: Referral of recommendation to Executive 1 December 2016

Author: **Isabel Blake** Role: **Community of Practice Lead: Housing, Revenues & Benefits**

Contact: **Telephone /email: 01822 813551/Isabel.blake@swdevon.gov.uk**

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. To note the content of the draft homeless strategy 2017-2022**
- 2. To recommend to Executive that the homeless strategy 2017-2022 goes out to public consultation from 1 December 2016 – 1 February 2017**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. This report requests members to consider the draft South Hams & West Devon Homeless Strategy 2017-2022, in order that it can go out to public consultation, with a view to Full Council approval and adoption from the 1st April 2017.
- 1.2. The strategy considers the current position of each Local Authority and the progress each has made towards tackling and preventing homelessness in each area. It sets out the ambition for the next 5 years to build on this work and links to corporate priorities. It is complimented by 4 priorities which were developed as part of informal consultation with other agencies and a Joint Member Task & Finish group.

The 4 priorities are

- (1) Understanding the true cost of homelessness
- (2) Access to Housing
- (3) Access to Services
- (4) Health & Wellbeing

- 1.3. The 4 priorities each have their own action plan which will be refreshed annually, with progress to date and new actions for approval by Council.
- 1.4. The public consultation is proposed to run from the 1st December 2016 to the 1st February 2017. This allows all comments to be considered, ahead of anticipated adoption from the 1st April 2017.

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 causes locally and their plan to tackle and prevent homelessness in their area.
- 2.2. South Hams had a standalone homeless strategy which expired in 2013. Since that date it has become part of the corporate Connect Strategy (2011-2015) and progress against specific priorities of this strategy are reviewed in the draft Homeless Strategy. With the expiration of this Strategy, and ongoing work on "Our Plan" as an overarching Strategic Plan, it is timely to revisit a dedicated homeless strategy that underpins and informs some of the work this.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1. Members are asked to consider the draft Homeless Strategy so that public consultation can commence over the winter months. The opportunity to consult with both service users, stakeholders and other professional bodies as well as being able to consider the views of all Members will be through an online survey, specific consultation events in both areas and further work with other partner organisations. Feedback from informal consultation, and the organisations who assisted us through setting the priorities has been encouraging, and we have been able to include their views as part of our Action Plan for 2017.
- 3.2. The Consultation will ask 5 questions
 - Have you read the strategy?
 - Are you an organisation or an individual?
 - Have you ever been homeless?
 - Are the 4 themes we have identified as priorities the right ones for our area?
 - Please give your comments on the strategy.

We will also ask questions regarding equality and diversity in order to understand whether our consultation method was representative of people in our area wherever possible.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1. It is a statutory requirement to have a Homeless Strategy as set out in the Homelessness Act 2002.

- 4.2. There may be changes required to this strategy as part of the Homeless Prevention Bill, however as the Authority already offers a prevention-led service rather than one that is reactive, the plans to tackle and prevent homelessness as contained in the strategy are designed to strengthen wherever possible the effective work of early intervention.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 That Panel recommend to Executive that the draft joint Homeless Strategy 2017-2022 goes out for public consultation.
- 5.2 That the existing Member Task & Finish group reconvenes in February 2017 to consider the responses to the Public Consultation before the final Strategy is considered by Executive for approval to full Council and adoption from the 1st April 2017.

6 Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	Statutory Requirement of the Homeless Act 2002
Financial	N	Although some of the Actions have a financial implication, at this stage consent is sought for public consultation. It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a prevention of homelessness grant from central Government, and this is likely to remain at least until 2020. 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.
Risk	Y	By not having a Homeless Strategy the Council is in breach of the Homelessness Act 2002
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	As part of the consultation there will be an independent comprehensive equalities impact assessment. In between 2011- 2016 homeless applications by ethnic minority groups in South Hams equated to 5.3% of total applications (11/207). This is disproportionate with the percentage of ethnic minority groups which reside in the South Hams (1.7%). This trend will be closely monitored, and the Strategy as a whole will be rigorously assessed to ensure it adequately addresses the needs of all minority groups.

Safeguarding	Y	As the Homeless Strategy 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	Consultees of this strategy will be Devon & Cornwall Police and the Council's Community Safety Officer. The Police have already been consulted during the informal process and contributed to the action plan.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		The Consultation will seek opinions from the Community and professionals alike. The prime concern for the Strategy is around 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:

Draft Homeless Strategy 2017- 2022

Action Plan 2017-2018

Homeless Evidence Base South Hams & West Devon

Background Papers:

Foreword

Cllr Lois Samuel



I am proud to introduce the first joint homeless 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 many of our most vulnerable people face when dealing with homelessness and 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 to lead lives where they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Cllr Hilary Bastone



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 people are given the access to help when they need it, where they need it and for as long as they need it.

Introduction

The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to review homelessness and their causes locally, and to develop a strategy which addresses the findings of the review.

The Homelessness Strategy is required to address:

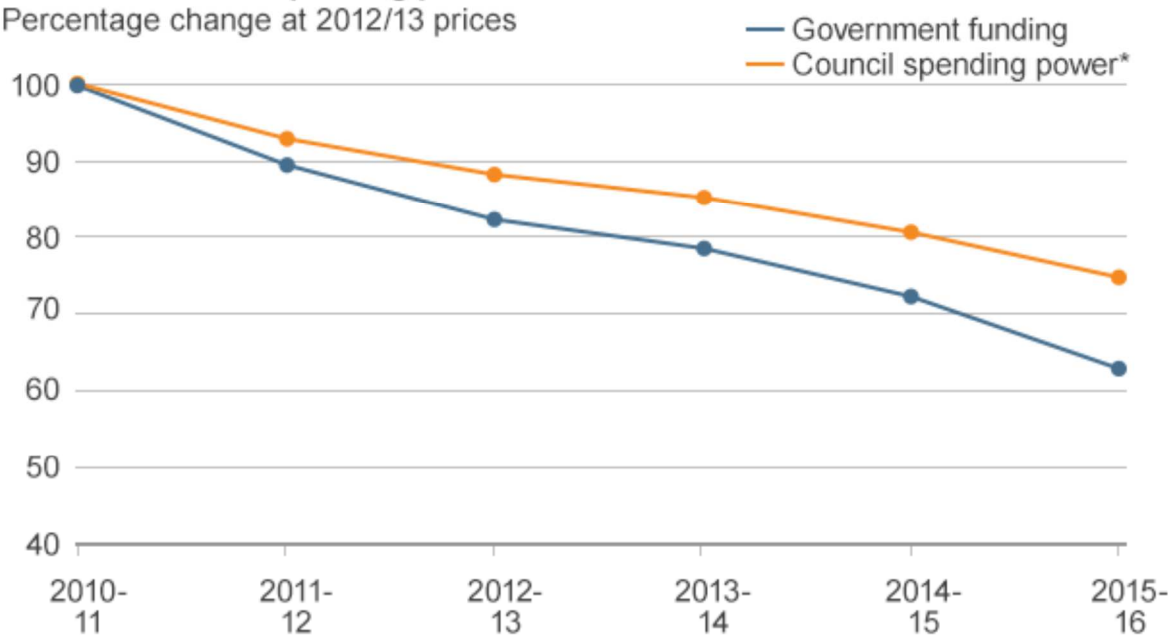
- The Levels of Homelessness now and the factors likely to impact on future levels of homelessness through accurate profiling of the area
- Ensuring there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or may become homeless
- The services that are provided to help to prevent people from becoming homeless. Including a review of their effectiveness and the identification of new opportunities to support prevention of homelessness
- Ensuring 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
- Promoting a cultural change so that homelessness is viewed in a wider context than just lack of accommodation

This Homeless Strategy sets out the strategic aims for the district of South Hams 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 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 and the impact of the government's 2013 Welfare Reform Bill and the Localism Bill 2012 on local people.

Decline in council spending power since 2010

Percentage change at 2012/13 prices



*Spending power includes government funding and council tax income

Source: National Audit Office. Department for Communities and Local Government, 2014

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 providing straightforward and effective advice and assistance to those affected by homelessness. A holistic approach to homelessness is central to the effective prevention of homelessness. The varying factors which contribute to homelessness and to housing instability are often complex and interlinked. People facing homelessness are often vulnerable, may experience poor health, loss of income and relationship breakdown, among others things. The importance of effective partnership working 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 first as part of a wider housing strategy series ceasing in 2010. Latterly objectives relating to tackling homelessness formed part of the South Hams and West Devon joint council-wide Connect strategy 2011 -15.

While we will review progress around these previous strategies, we will mostly be looking forward to the opportunity that joint working can offer, as we face the challenges of the future. A full review of this strategy can be expected in 2022, complimented by an annual refresh of an 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 do this, while seeking to address the reduction in resources and the impacts of welfare reform.

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:

- Improving housing options and choice for vulnerable people
- Ensuring Devon Home Choice is able to meet local housing needs within the new policy framework
- Preventing homelessness
- Raising awareness of housing options

These four priority areas were complimented 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 in 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 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 to provide an emergency cold weather rest centre in Totnes to ensure, 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 20 in South Hams and 9 in West Devon sanctuary scheme security upgrades 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 the needs of young people are best met, focusing on early intervention work, this has contributed to low numbers of youth homelessness and young people going 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, this was 136 general needs homes and 31 sheltered properties.
- Of this figure, seven were 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 had their homelessness prevented 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 neither 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, delivered until recently by an in-house dedicated young person's worker.

Raising Awareness of Housing Options

- We established a Health and Wellbeing Panel attended by multi-agencies to discuss individual cases, and the best solution to their housing crisis.
- A successful advertising campaign with detailed information was targeted to people affected by welfare reform with everyone affected by the spare room subsidy rate offered an appointment with a housing advisor.
- We put trained housing advisors 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 they respond to homelessness. The Act has since been amended by the Homeless Act 2002, which included notable changes in the way councils use temporary accommodation and greater

emphasis on the role of prevention. The 2002 Act is also where the requirement to publish a Homeless Strategy was introduced.

The Localism Act 2011

This Act in effect brought to an end the automatic entitlement of a homeless household to be offered social housing, as a result of the Council accepting 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 due to those care and support needs were unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse and neglect.

Housing and Communities Bill

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 obtainable 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 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 Foundation' 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 homeless 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 people come in with the creation of a 'single service offer' meaning everyone would have access to something.

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. Also, 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 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 good progress under these challenges already, this strategy will build on this and ensure that they remain key to our continuing commitment to prevent homelessness.

The 10 Local Challenges are:

- 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 homeless strategy which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness and 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

Regional Picture

Devon County Council

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

South Hams and West Devon have been placed in a locality based 'Southern Hub' together with Teignbridge. 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 this is delivered through 'floating support' rather than linked to where an individual lives. While this has its benefits, some high needs groups such as those suffering from 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 sets out 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, and 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, reducing the affordability gap, reducing health inequalities related to housing, reducing 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, 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 SH and 25,403 in West Devon. Of this 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 **xxxx** were made in SH by **minority groups and xxxx 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 household 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 2015, there were **xxx** households in temporary accommodation in South Hams and **xx** in West Devon. This was a reduction/increase on the same date in 2014.*

- 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 homeless 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 look at the progress we have made in tackling homelessness within our areas and the key challenges we have to come. They have been instrumental in setting the priorities for this Strategy and a formulation of the Year One Action Plan informed by the evidence base.

Through the process of the review, we have looked carefully at the people who currently access our services. This strategy does not seek to address the needs of every vulnerable group through a specific group action plan. We have sound, successful 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.

The original Task and Finish group was made up of the following members. Membership of any future group will be reviewed once the Strategy is adopted.

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 organisations also involved during informal consultation included the following:

- Citizens Advice
- Devon and Cornwall Police
- DCH

- Revival Life Ministries
- Westward Housing
- Young Devon

A period of formal consultation will follow.

The Key Priorities for the Homeless Strategy

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

These are:

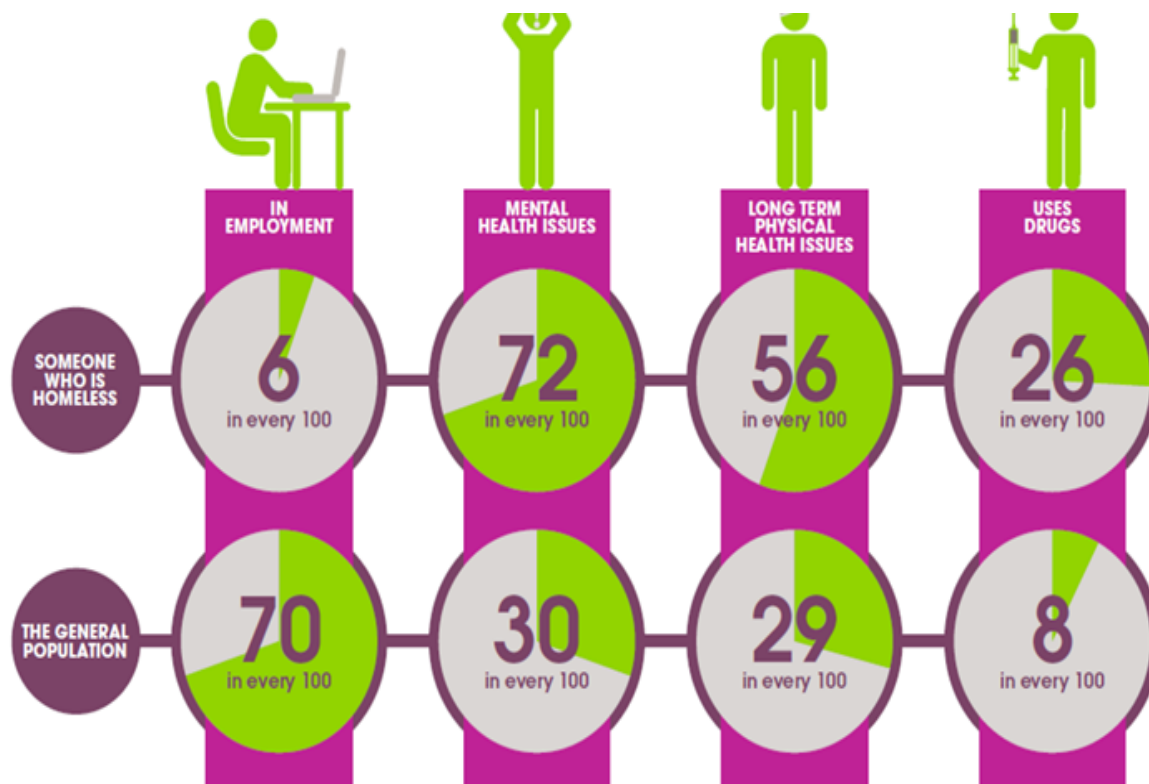
- Understanding the True Cost of homelessness
- Access to Housing
- Access to Services
- Health and Wellbeing

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 to make meaningful differences to not only a person's homeless situation, but the reasons they got 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 reducing resources in the most meaningful way. With this in mind, we have formulated an action plan which 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, informed by all statutory and voluntary agencies and localised to South Hams and West Devon about the true cost of homelessness and how the true impact can be measured in future more fully.

To meet this priority we will:

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

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. This Council would like to ensure that people who are able to resolve their own situation are given access to good quality advice so they have every opportunity to remedy.

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 ever make contact or do so too late. Through improving partnership working, we have a real opportunity to make differences in 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, 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 offering people collectively the services they need at a time and place they need them most, without the need to repeat 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 we are able to offer services at the time and place our customers need them most
- Readily and regularly consulting 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 impact heavily 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 to continue to meet needs, while also looking to the future at further challenges welfare reform will bring.

The need to 'do things differently' can be compounded in the South Hams with our rough sleeper count. Although a very small proportion of the people requiring assistance with homelessness become rough sleepers, there is a small population in Totnes where we recognise that access to traditional housing is a step too far and there needs to be 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

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 (25% of the general population) (Source – The unhealthy state of homelessness: Health audit results 2014)

Often poor health, addictions and unhealthy lifestyles mean people are unable to secure and maintain accommodation for themselves or their families. The Council recognises its 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:

- To work in partnership with our voluntary and statutory sectors to holistically address people's needs as fully as possible.
- To ensure we adequately protect and safeguard the most vulnerable members of our community
- To 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 for 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 Task and Finish Group, continue as a Homeless steering group to monitor progress against the priorities and the formulation of the Years 2-5 of the Action Plan for this strategy. This would ensure an ongoing conversation to keep the strategy relevant and ensuring that local people continue to have a voice through their elected representative.

2017/18 Action Plan

Priority 1 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 and ensuring partnerships demonstrate value for money.
- Ensure access to good quality money advice to help tackle poverty, poor quality housing and homelessness

PI	Action	Measure	By When
HSU1	To evaluate the successes of Council-funded initiatives such as money advice, and social prescribing and the impact they have had on homeless prevention	Increase in homeless prevention	April 2018
HSU2	To investigate the feasibility of adopting Shelters "Living Home Standard" to increase the quality of housing in South Hams & West Devon.	Increase in homeless prevention from households in unsuitable, defective accommodation who would otherwise have become homeless	April 2018
HSU3	To develop quality information on areas of welfare reform to ensure people are aware of any potential impacts in advance, and work with	Increased take up of discretionary housing payments, reduction in households becoming	April 2018

	them to provide effective financial planning for managing their home.	homeless due to lack of affordability.	
HSU4	To map existing partnerships within the Council and ensure focus is given wherever relevant and possible to activity around homeless prevention. Ensuring value for money and avoidance of duplication.	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation Reduction in repeat service users	April 2018

Priority 2 Access to Services

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

PI	Action	Measure	By When
HSS1	By using the Council's new operating model, work with teams in the locality to best support vulnerable people access services local to them but also in a setting in which they are comfortable and therefore more likely to engage	Increased early intervention homeless prevention work	April 2018 and ongoing through the life of this strategy
HSS2	Roll out of the new online housing benefit claim and use as an opportunity to better engage with our Landlords.	Reduction in homelessness as a result of rent arrears or unaffordability. Increase in homeless prevention	April 2018 and ongoing through the life of this strategy
HSS3	Train our partner organisations to be able to act as a first point of contact, equipping them with the knowledge, effective referral routes into the Council and building the trust and confidence with people needing help but choosing not to access it from the Council.	Increased homeless prevention, reduction in Reduction in Rough Sleeper estimated count	April 2018 and ongoing through the life of this strategy
HSS4	Re-establish a Homeless Forum in South Hams & West Devon to ensure a two-way conversation between ourselves and other organisations working with homeless people to	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation	Autumn 2017 and then bi-annually through the life of this strategy

	prevent people “slipping through the net”	Reduction in repeat service users	
HSS5	Re-establish a Landlords Forum in South Hams & West Devon to work with the sector to best meet the needs of their tenants, while supporting them access Council-wide Services	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation	Winter 2017 and then bi-annually through the life of this strategy
HSS6	Review all standard letters and leaflets to ensure we are using “Plain English” in all our information	Better understanding by the customer and a decrease in “failure demand”	Autumn 2017, reviewed annually.
HSS7	Redesign the web content for housing options and advice, increasing awareness & visibility, and directing customers who have the ability to “self-help” towards the best options for them	Reduction in homelessness and interventions required as people are able to resolve their own housing problem	Winter 2017 and throughout the life of this strategy

Priority 3 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.

PI	Action	Measure	By when
HS1	Review options of emergency and temporary housing, to ensure offers are tailored wherever possible to an individual's circumstance	Reduction in long term use of temporary accommodation	Autumn 2017
HS2	To introduce a direct lets scheme in West Devon for the management of privately rented properties and expand the scheme in South Hams	Reduction in temporary accommodation	Autumn 2017 and ongoing through the life of this strategy
HS3	To investigate the feasibility of a tiny houses project, incorporating the "housing first" principal for entrenched rough sleepers in South Hams	Reduction in Rough Sleeper estimated count	Autumn 2017
HS3	To work with other providers to ensure individuals are given the best chances possible to succeed in their tenancies, by promoting tenant education.	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation Reduction in repeat service users	Spring 2018 and ongoing through the life of this strategy
HS4	To work with RP's and private sector landlords to promote shared housing	Reduction in homeless and rough sleeping in this demographic	Spring 2018 and ongoing through the life of this strategy

	as a tenure of choice, particularly in the under 35's		
HS5	To develop a "crash pad" model for young single homeless people, to give them space while working proactively to wherever possible return them home.	Numbers of young people accepted a homeless or going into care. Numbers of young people in temporary accommodation	Autumn 2017 and ongoing through the life of this strategy

Priority 4 Health & Wellbeing

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

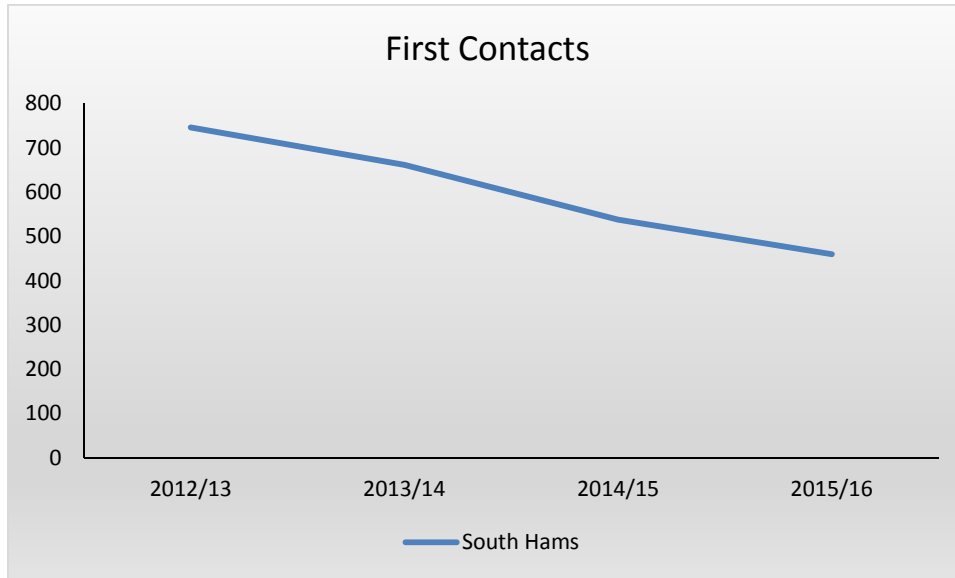
PI	Action	Measure	By When
HSW1	To develop a council vulnerable customer charter to ensure we embed the responsibility of our most vulnerable customers throughout the Council.	Increase in early intervention homeless prevention	Autumn 2018
HSW2	To extend the scope of the existing Health & Wellbeing panel to holistically address the housing needs of any individual including their need for a disabled facilities grant, or interventions around poor quality housing to be able to offer the best solution possible for those in housing need.	Increase in homeless prevention, low level homeless approaches as a result of hospital discharge, increased wellbeing of customer as a result of the most appropriate intervention.	Summer 2017 and ongoing through the life of this strategy
HSW3	Work in partnership with schools, to help equip young people for adulthood by delivering housing advice in schools to Year 11 students.	Sustained low levels of youth homelessness	Autumn 2018 and ongoing through the life of this strategy.

HSW4	To continue offering a No Second Night Out Service to people rough sleeping in our area	Reduction in new Rough sleepers	Autumn 2017 and ongoing through the life of this strategy.
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Homeless Strategy Evidence Base – South Hams

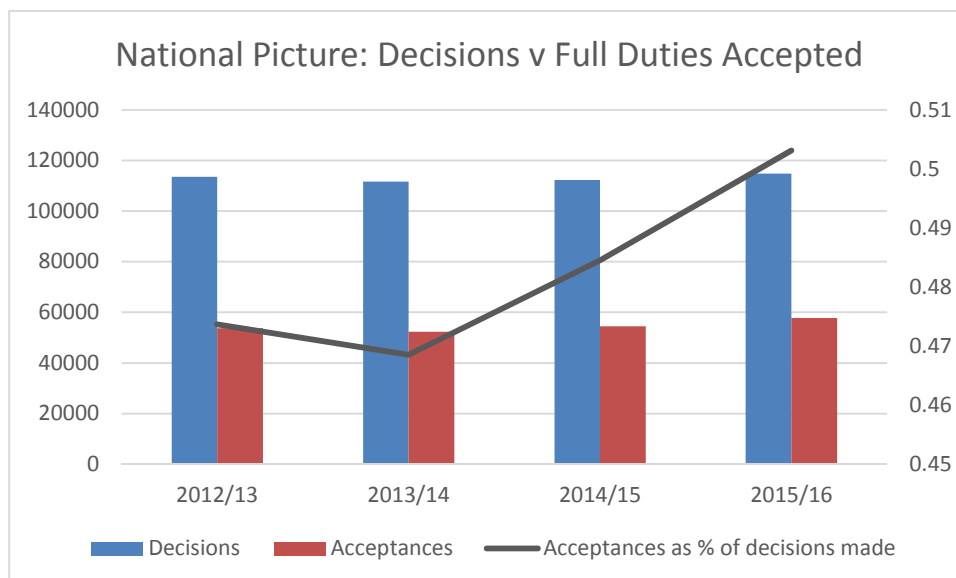
First Contacts

	1st Contacts
2012/13	746
2013/14	662
2014/15	538
2015/16	460

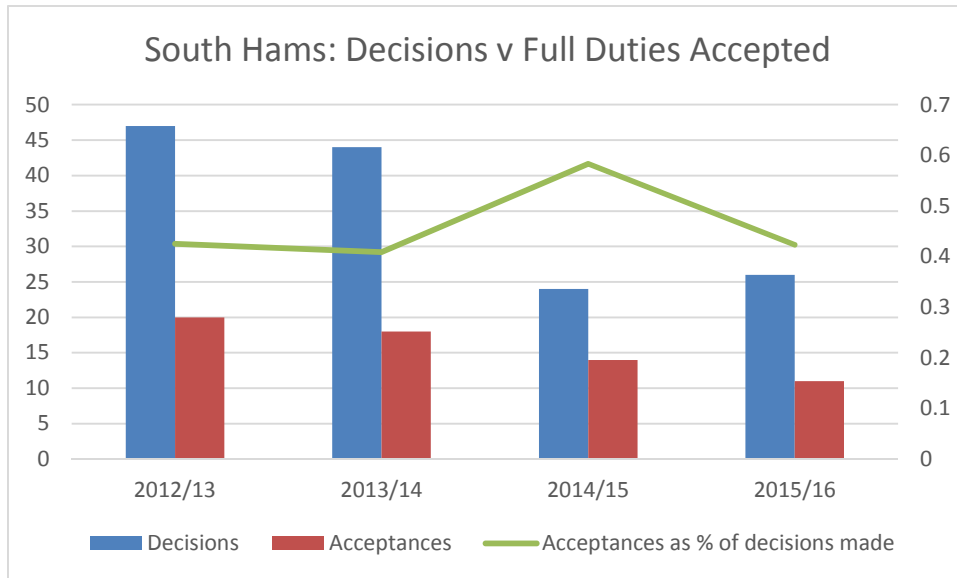


Homeless Applications/Acceptances

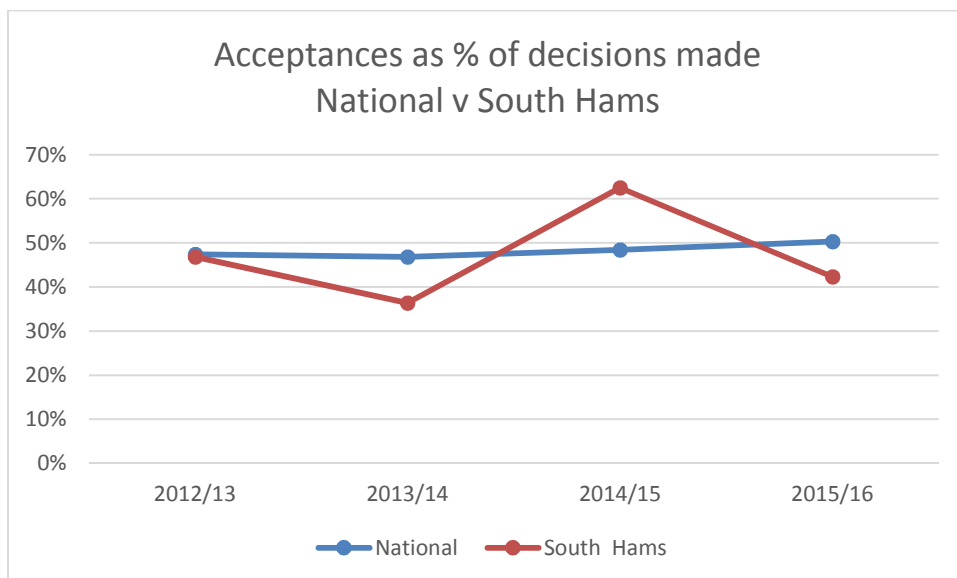
National Picture	Homeless Decisions	Full Duties Accepted	Acceptances as % of decisions
2012/13	113520	53770	47%
2013/14	111610	52290	47%
2014/15	112340	54430	48%
2015/16	114770	57740	50%



South Hams	Homeless Decisions	Full Duties Accepted	Acceptances as % of decisions
2012/13	47	20	47%
2013/14	44	18	36%
2014/15	24	14	63%
2015/16	26	11	42%



Acceptances as % of decisions made		
	National	South Hams
2012/13	47%	47%
2013/14	47%	36%
2014/15	48%	63%
2015/16	50%	42%

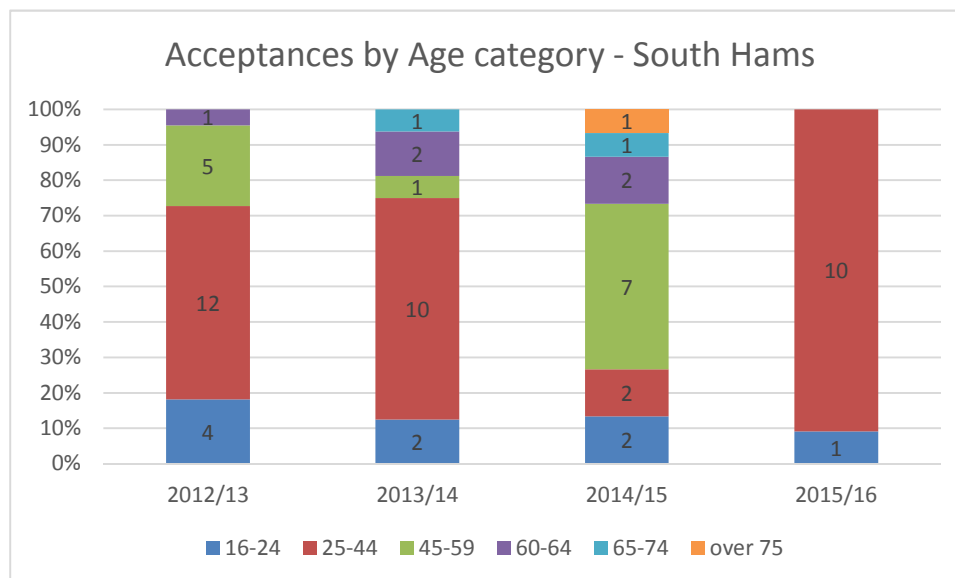


Homeless Decisions by Household type

	Families/Couple		Singles	
	Full Duty	Duty Not Accepted	Full Duty	Duty Not Accepted
2012/13	16	18	6	12
2013/14	9	11	7	11
2014/15	9	8	6	5
2015/16	7	0	1	8

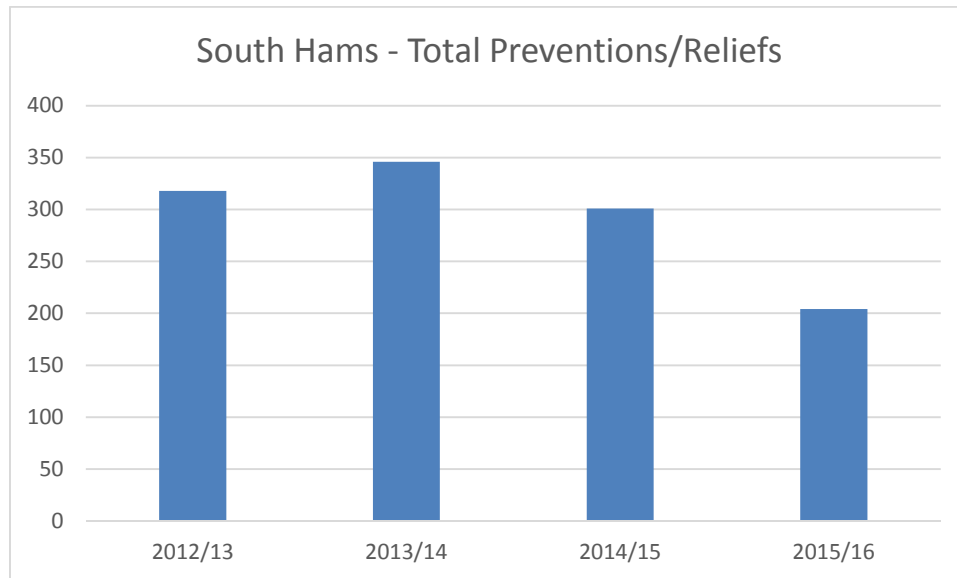
Acceptances by age category

	16-24	25-44	45-59	60-64	65-74	Over 75	Total
2012/13	4	12	5	1	0	0	22
2013/14	2	10	1	2	1	0	16
2014/15	2	2	7	2	1	1	15
2015/16	1	10	0	0	0	0	11



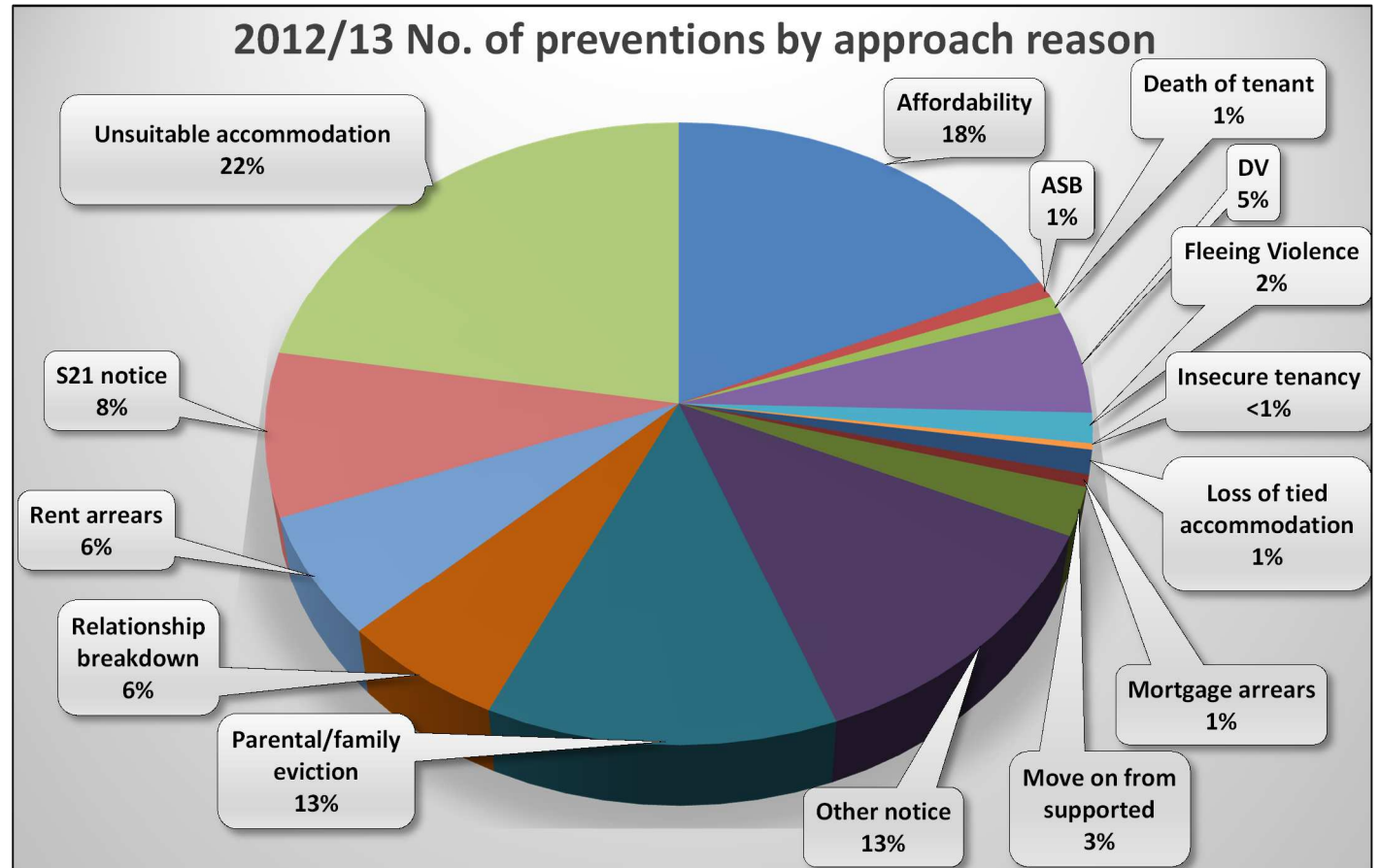
Homeless Preventions

	Homeless Preventions/Reliefs
2012/13	318
2013/14	346
2014/15	301
2015/16	204

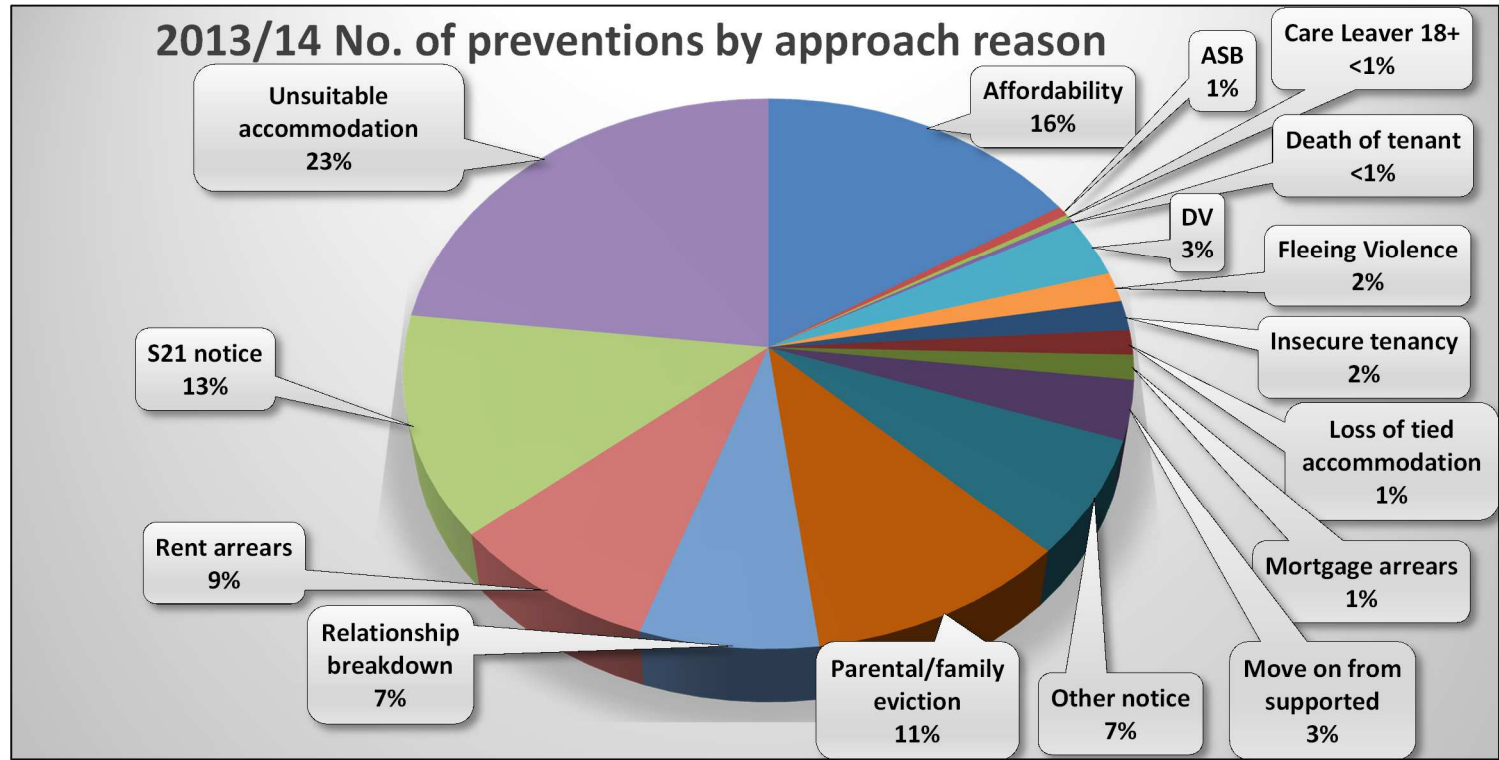


South Hams Prevention reasons for approach

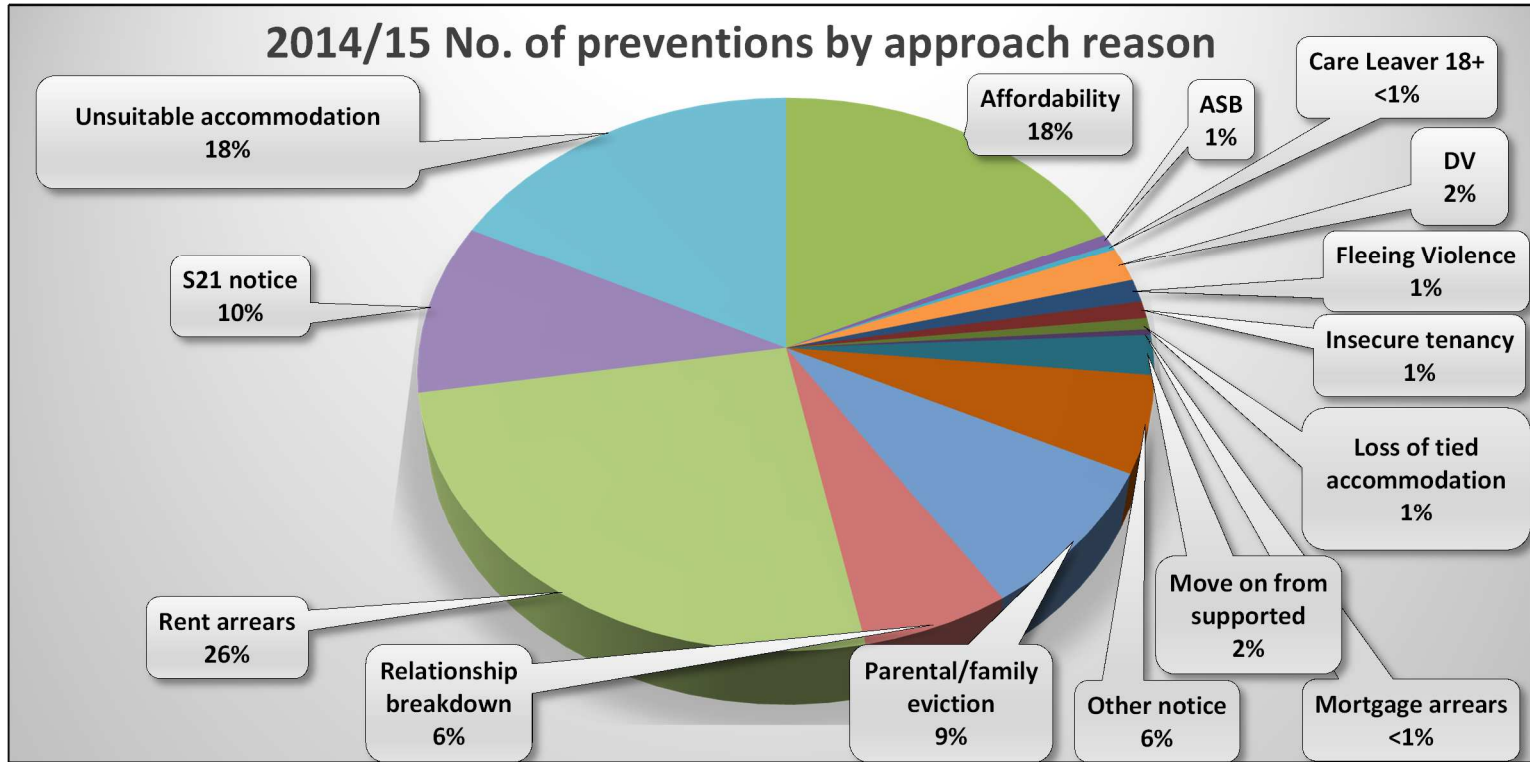
2012/13	
Reasons for approach	No. of preventions
Affordability	58
ASB	3
Death of tenant	3
DV	17
Fleeing Violence	5
Insecure tenancy	1
Loss of tied accommodation	4
Mortgage arrears	2
Move on from supported	8
Other notice	40
Parental/family eviction	40
Relationship breakdown	19
Rent arrears	20
S21 notice	27
Unsuitable accommodation	71



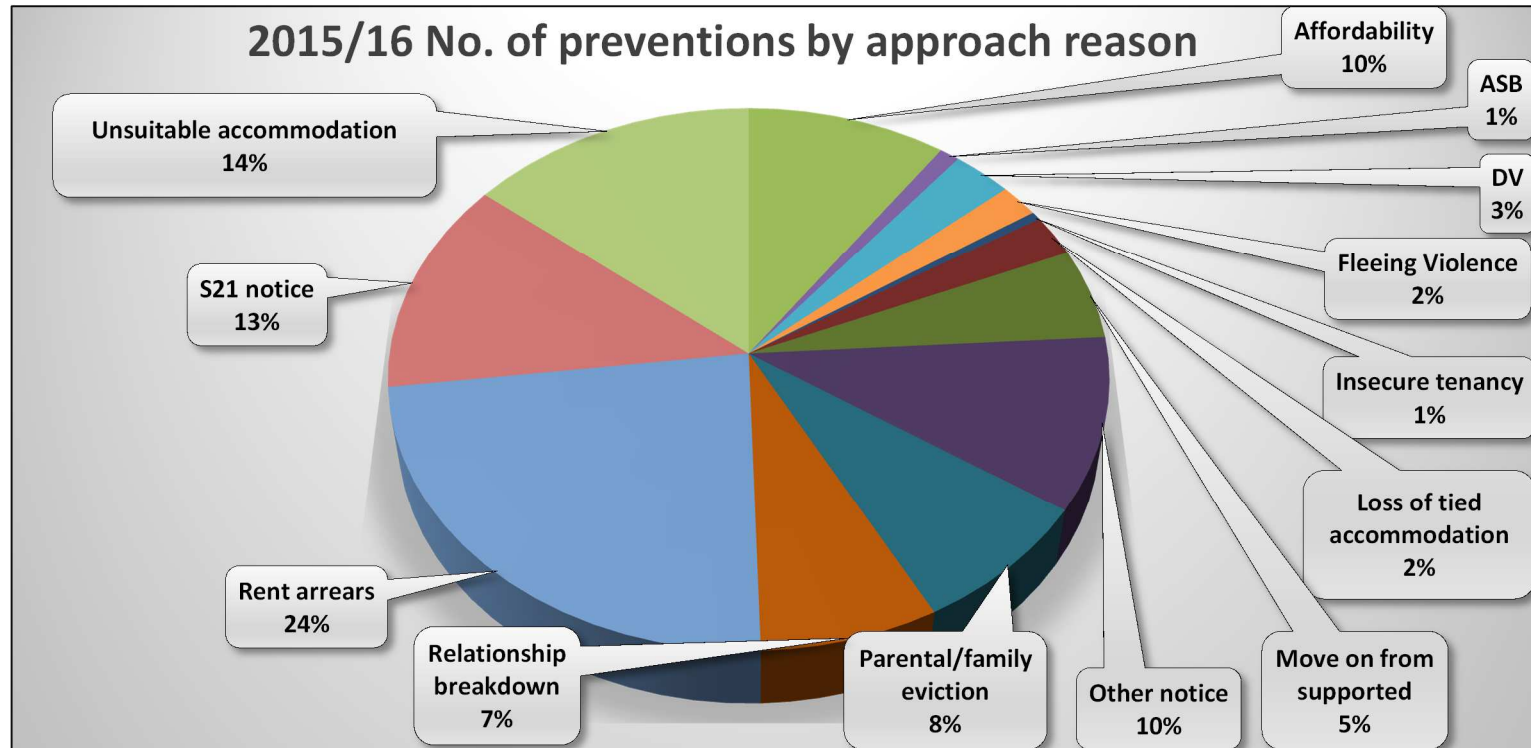
2013/14	
Reasons for approach	No. of preventions
Affordability	55
ASB	2
Care Leaver 18+	1
Death of tenant	1
DV	12
Fleeing Violence	6
Insecure tenancy	6
Loss of tied accommodation	5
Mortgage arrears	5
Move on from supported	12
Other notice	24
Parental/family eviction	37
Relationship breakdown	25
Rent arrears	30
S21 notice	45
Unsuitable accommodation	80



2014/15	
Reasons for approach	No. of preventions
Affordability	54
ASB	2
Care Leaver 18+	1
DV	6
Fleeing Violence	4
Insecure tenancy	3
Loss of tied accommodation	2
Mortgage arrears	1
Move on from supported	7
Other notice	17
Parental/family eviction	26
Relationship breakdown	18
Rent arrears	77
S21 notice	30
Unsuitable accommodation	53

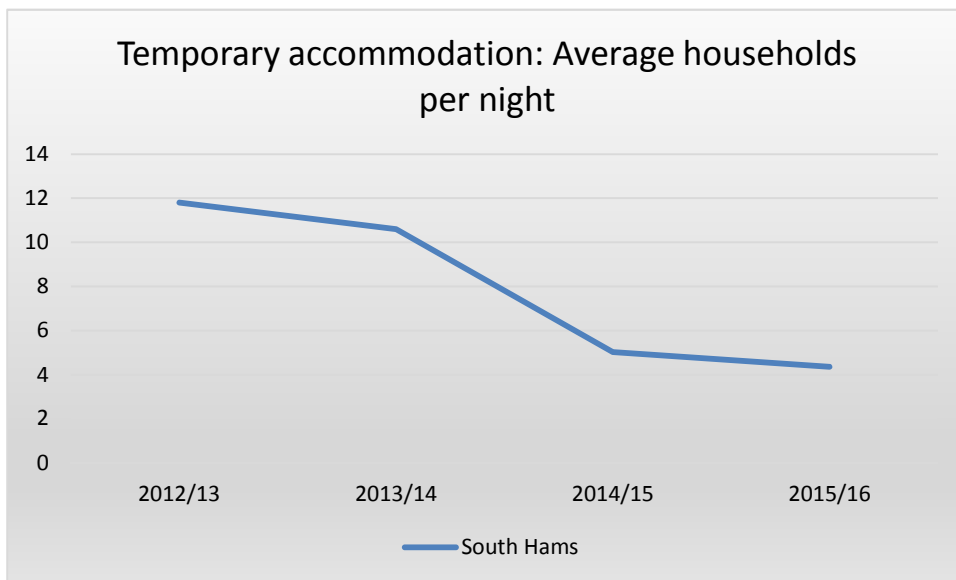
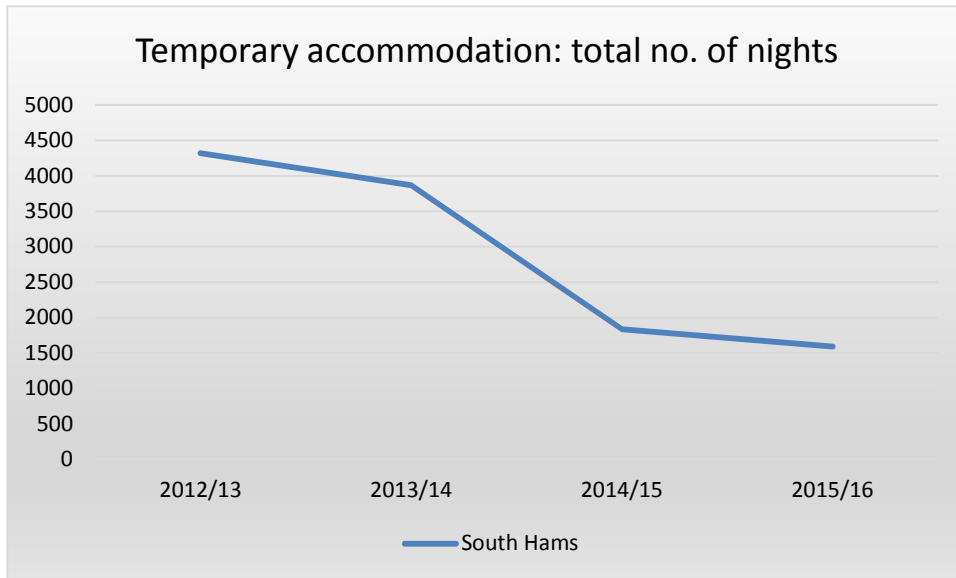


2015/16	
Reasons for approach	No. of preventions
Affordability	20
ASB	2
DV	6
Fleeing Violence	4
Insecure tenancy	1
Loss of tied accommodation	5
Move on from supported	11
Other notice	21
Parental/family eviction	16
Relationship breakdown	15
Rent arrears	48
S21 notice	26
Unsuitable accommodation	29



Temporary accommodation use

	Total nights of temp used	Average households in temp per night
2012/13	4320	11.80
2013/14	3867	10.59
2014/15	1836	5.03
2015/16	1590	4.36



Snapshot numbers in temp

	No. in temp on 31 st March
2014	10
2015	6
2016	7

Homeless acceptances by Priority Need Reason

South Hams	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Includes dependent children	14	8	7	10
Physical disability	4	5	2	1
Mental Illness	3	1	5	0
Expecting - no other children	1	1	0	0
Old Age	0	0	1	0
Fled due to violence	0	1	0	0

Youth Homeless Approaches

	South Hams
2013/14	7
2014/15	7
2015/16	11



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Comprehensive Impact Assessment

Homeless Strategy 2017-2022 Public Consultation

The draft homeless strategy will be comprehensively impact assessed as part of the public consultation.

Comprehensive Impact Assessment Template

Assessment being undertaken		Public Consultation on the draft Homeless Strategy 2017-2022.
Group:		Customer First
Service:		Housing
Name of Officer/s completing assessment:		Isabel Blake
Date of Assessment:		8th November 2017
1.	Why are you doing this CIA?	This Comprehensive Impact Assessment is completed on behalf of the impacts of going out to public consultation. An independent comprehensive impact assessment will be completed as part of the public consultation.
2.	What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?	To set out the Council's response to tackling and preventing homelessness in its area. This assessment will be based on the assessment of public consultation, a full impact assessment of the homeless strategy will be completed independently as part of the consultation.
3.	Who implements or delivers the above?	The COP lead for Housing, Revenues & Benefits and the Housing Specialist will be responsible for the delivery of the consultation Lead Members are Cllr Hilary Bastone for South Hams & Cllr Lois Samuel for West Devon.
4.	Equality and Diversity	The consultation will aim to give as many people and organisations the opportunity to give their views on the proposed strategy. This will be through an online survey and a series of events, press releases and one to one

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		interviews with service users.
5.	Safeguarding	The Homeless Strategy compliments the principles of the corporate safeguarding policy and is particularly concerned with services for vulnerable customers, which will be assessed as part of the comprehensive equalities impact assessment as part of the consultation.
6.	Information Management	Personal data is collected during the review as part of the consultation process. This will continue to be managed in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy which will reduce the risk of data security breaches and protect the Council's reputation.
7.	Community Safety/Crime and Disorder -	Consultees of this strategy will be Devon & Cornwall Police and the Council's Community Safety Officer. The Police have already been consulted during the informal process and contributed to the action plan.
8.	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	The Consultation will seek opinions from the Community and professionals alike. The prime concern for the Strategy is around tackling and preventing homelessness which in turn is designed around improving the health and wellbeing of people living in the area.

9.	Have the impacts identified in Questions 4 to 8 been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data ?	Evidence will be obtained through the independent comprehensive impact assessment and the responses of consultees.
10.	What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented?	The independent comprehensive impact assessment will be fully reviewed as part of the consultation review and any relevant findings used in the final strategy.
11.	Are there other implications not covered by this CIA that need to be considered?	None

Summary of Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications (These should be copied and pasted into your report)

Equality and Diversity	As part of the consultation there will be an independent comprehensive equalities impact assessment. In between 2011- 2016 homeless applications by ethnic minority groups in South Hams equated to 5.3% of total applications (11/207). This is disproportionate with the percentage of ethnic minority groups which reside in the South Hams (1.7%). This trend will be closely monitored, and the Strategy as a whole will be rigorously assessed to ensure it adequately addresses the needs of all minority groups.
Safeguarding	As the Homeless Strategy 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	Consultees of this strategy will be Devon & Cornwall Police and the Council's Community Safety Officer. The Police have already been consulted during the informal process and contributed to the action plan.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	The Consultation will seek opinions from the Community and professionals alike. The prime concern for the Strategy is around tackling and preventing homelessness which in turn is designed around improving the health and wellbeing of people living in the area
Other implications	

Report to: **Overview & Scrutiny Panel**
Date: **24 November 2016**
Title: **Allocation Policy and Devon Home Choice Policy Review**
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**

Wards Affected: **all**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

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

Date next steps can be taken:
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision)

Author: **Isabel Blake** Role: **Community of Practice Lead: Housing, Revenues & Benefits**

Contact: **Telephone/email: 01822 813551
Isabel.Blake@swdevon.gov.uk**

Recommendations:

- 1. To note the content of this report**
- 2. To recommend to Executive to remain in the Devon Home Choice partnership for the next 12 months**
- 3. To recommend to Executive, that within the next 12 months to complete a comprehensive review of alternative allocation delivery methods to evaluate whether the Devon Home Choice partnership remains fit for purpose**
- 4. To recommend to Executive to make no changes at this time to the South Hams Allocations Policy.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. This report asks the Panel to recommend to Executive to make no changes to the Devon Home Choice Policy at this time. However within the next 12 months, for Officers to come back to panel with examples of

alternative ways in which the Authority could manage housing need and people requiring affordable housing within the area. Review of the Allocation Policy will also inform the report, however no changes are required at this time.

2. Background

- 2.1. Devon Home Choice (DHC) has operated in South Hams since 2010. It is the Authority's current model of allocating affordable housing for rent in the District.
- 2.2. DHC is a partnership of all 10 Local Authorities in Devon and 25 Registered Providers. A common policy exists between partners with a banding system in use to assess housing need. In addition to this South Hams has its own local allocation policy which forms the basis on which units of affordable housing are allocated to people in housing need and or with a local connection. (Appendix 1)
- 2.3. The DHC policy was last reviewed at Overview & Scrutiny Panel on the 27th August 2015 with a recommendation that it again was reviewed in 12 months' time. Hence this report, setting out more detailed recommendations for the next 12 months.
- 2.4. As of the 1st July 2016 there were 1877 people on the South Hams Register. Of which 39% (738) were in no housing need Band E)

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	TOTAL	Band E	Grand total		
South Hams	0 (0%)	188 (17%)	243 (21%)	708 (62%)	1139	738 (39%)	1877		

This is an increase of 543, predominantly in Band E from the 30th July 2015.

Although Band E represents "No Housing Need" in South Hams homes are allocated to people with no housing need. In particular properties where there is a Section 106 criteria that they are let to local people. In the last quarter (1 July – 30th September) 10% of general needs and 75% of sheltered properties were allocated to people in no housing need.

- 2.5 Devon Home Choice is a choice based lettings system. Applicants on the register can apply for up to 3 properties a week that they wish to be considered for. This way of allocating affordable homes to rent remains the most common system nationally, however recently Councils in York, Rochdale and London Borough of Hounslow have indicated that they are ending their schemes and scrapping choice based lettings. As part of the proposed review over the forthcoming 12 months, the experiences of these authorities and their alternative delivery methods will be examined in detail.
- 2.6 Registered Providers in Cornwall are evaluating the experiences of Coastline Housing, who have not renewed their partnership with Cornwall and instead are operating their own choice based lettings system. Although Coastline is not a partner in Devon, if a provider with stock in Devon decided to join Coastline, it could mean they also chose to leave Devon Home Choice. This would have consequences for the partnership.
- 2.7 It is likely that any change to the system would represent a return to a nominations system, where each provider was not duty bound to allocate all properties through the Local Authority, or on housing need. In the case of the properties transferred from South Hams District Council to

DCH (previously Tor Homes) the agreement is that 75% of the properties are let in accordance with council policy, with the remaining 25% for DCH to allocate as they see fit. As they are now a regional Landlord, this may mean tenants rehoused in South Hams from elsewhere in Devon & Cornwall.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1. It is now timely to look at options available to ensure that wherever possible housing in South Hams goes to local people in the greatest housing need and that we continue to meet the statutory functions of the Housing Act 1996 (as amended)

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1. A report will come back to panel within 12 months detailing other options for the allocation of affordable housing to rent. This will draw on the experience of other Authorities, public consultation and consideration of advantages and disadvantages of staying in a partnership such as Devon Home Choice.

Proposed Way Forward

- 4.2. It is recommended that South Hams District Council make no changes to the existing Devon Home Choice Policy and to fully review the partnership within the next 12 months.
- 4.3. It is recommended that the South Hams Allocation Policy remains as is, and is reviewed in 12 months.

5. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	<p>The Localism Act 2011 allows Local Authorities to restrict access to its Housing Register and are no longer required to keep an “open register”</p> <p>The Council is bound by Part 6 of the 1996 Housing Act (as amended) to give “reasonable preference” to certain groups of people. These are as follows</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who are homeless • People occupying insanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions • People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds • People who need to move to a particular locality in the district of the authority, where failure to meet that need would cause hardship (to themselves or others)

		Both the Devon Home Choice Policy & The South Hams Allocations Policy meets these statutory requirements.
Financial		DHC remains low cost. An estimated £13k a year on a part-time member of staff and £1000 a year towards printing and software updates. The majority of costs are met by stock holding Authorities and Providers who advertise their properties. This is currently £25 a property which remains low cost in comparison to other schemes. As part of the review of the Devon Home Choice partnership, standalone products and partnerships will be considered, to ensure we continue to offer the service that meets the needs of our customer but also is efficient and offers value for money for the Authority.
Risk		If Members did not recommend continuing in partnership with Devon Home Choice, we are required to give 6 months' notice. It is important that the opportunity to look at all alternative options is given proper consideration and that any learning from Authorities considering different models can be included.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		Please see attached the Comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix 4)
Safeguarding		No direct safeguarding concerns with regard to this policy, however there are inbuilt processes and systems within the Devon Home Choice system to deal with our most vulnerable applicants
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No direct implications
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		Both the Devon Home Choice Policy and South Hams Local Allocations Policy give reasonable preference to people requiring housing due to Health, safety & Wellbeing.
Other implications		

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – South Hams Allocation Policy

Appendix 2 Devon Home Choice Policy

Appendix 3 Devon Home Choice Monitoring Report 30 September 2016

Appendix 4 Devon Home Choice Equality Impact Assessment

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.

**May 2013 (updated
November 2016)**

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SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL

LOCAL ALLOCATION POLICY

1 Scope of the policy

- 1.1 This Local Allocations 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 Housing Advice Manager in conjunction with the Executive Member or Housing and the Head of Customer Services.
- 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.
- 2.2 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
- 2.3 Devon Home Choice covers all 10 Devon Authorities including Plymouth & Torbay, enabling applicants to apply across Devon for vacant properties.
- 2.4 SHDC coordinates Devon Home Choice within South Hams and maintains the common housing register for all partners operating within the area.
- 2.5 RPs label, advertise and let their properties. They have their own allocation policies and will verify applicants details to ensure they meet their criteria

2.6 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.
- 3.2 Within this it must be recognised that there is very high demand for affordable housing in 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 4.2 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
- 4.3 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
- 4.4 The Devon Home Choice Policy is a separate document and should be read in conjunction with this policy

- 4.5 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 Revenue & Benefits in consultation with the Executive member for housing.
- 4.6 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.

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

- 5.2 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
- 5.3 Homeless households will be offered the same degree of choice as other applicants for a period of 6 weeks after being accepted as homeless
- 5.4 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

- 5.5 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
- 5.6 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 social rented housing stock of less than 100 properties, preference will be given to local households, provided they have an existing housing need ie bands A - D. For the purposes of clarity this is everywhere in South Hams apart from Dartmouth, Ivybridge, Kingsbridge, South Brent and Totnes.
- 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. 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

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

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 RP 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.

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Devon Home Choice



Policy Document

www.devonhomechoice.com



This policy can be made available in different formats (such as large print) or in other languages on request. Please contact your local authority housing team:

East Devon DC	(01395) 517469	www.eastdevon.gov.uk
Exeter CC	(01392) 265889	www.exeter.gov.uk
Mid Devon DC	(01884) 255255	www.middevon.gov.uk
North Devon DC	(01271) 388870	www.northdevon.gov.uk
Plymouth CC	(01752) 305496	www.plymouth.gov.uk
South Hams DC	(01803) 861234	www.southhams.gov.uk
Teignbridge DC	(01626) 361101	www.teignbridge.gov.uk
Torbay Council	(01803) 207126	www.torbay.gov.uk
Torridge DC	(01237) 428849	www.torridge.gov.uk
West Devon BC	(01822) 813600	www.westdevon.gov.uk

Devon Home Choice Policy

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1. Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Devon Home Choice is a choice based letting scheme that covers the whole of Devon.
- 1.1.2 This Policy explains how local authority and housing association homes across Devon will be let. The Policy sets out:
- How to apply for housing
 - Who is eligible for housing
 - How applicants will be assessed and prioritised
- 1.1.3 Devon Home Choice is a partnership between the 10 Devon local authorities and housing associations working in Devon.
- 1.1.4 All applicants are assessed in the same way, using the rules set out in this policy to ensure fairness and consistency.
- 1.1.5 Whilst all applicants are assessed in the same way, some partner housing associations may have different criteria to let their homes (for example the number of people that can live in a home of particular size etc). Where this is the case any differences will be made available on the Devon Home Choice website.

1.2 Aims of Devon Home Choice

- 1.2.1 The aims of Devon Home Choice are to provide:
- 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
- 1.2.2 Under Devon Home Choice there is a common:
- Application form
 - Housing register
 - Approach to assessing housing need and awarding priority
 - Approach to advertising available properties

1.3 The scheme in brief

- 1.3.1 Local authority and housing association homes available to let will be advertised every week. Households with active applications on the Devon Home Choice housing register can look at details of the homes, and apply for those that they are eligible for. This is called 'bidding', but it does not involve money.
- 1.3.2 The successful household will be selected from those that applied for a home based on:
- Whether they meet any preferences for particular types of applicant that may have been specified in the advert (see section 4.7 for further details)
 - The band in which their application has been placed, which reflects their housing need
 - Their band start date within that band

1.3.3 Devon Home Choice enables people to move within the county. This will greatly help people who need to move to get work or to benefit from support.

1.4 Statement of choice

1.4.1 The Devon Home Choice partnership believes in offering people seeking housing as much choice as possible. There is very high demand for affordable housing in Devon and the provision of choice has to be balanced with the need to ensure that housing goes to those with the greatest need.

1.4.2 Devon Home Choice has been developed to enable applicants to view the details of available properties across Devon, choose between them and bid for those properties for which they are eligible.

1.4.3 Whilst the aim of Devon Home Choice partners is to provide choice in the allocation of social housing in Devon, there will be a number of exceptional situations where this will not be possible. For example, where a landlord needs to make an urgent management move (see Appendix 1 – Definitions). In such cases the home will be let as a direct offer rather than being advertised through Devon Home Choice.

1.4.4 Devon Home Choice provides people seeking housing in Devon with an understanding of:

- Their level of priority
- The availability of accommodation which is suitable for them
- The level of demand for social housing in Devon
- Their likelihood of being successful
- Whether to seek alternative housing solutions

1.5 Equal opportunities: Ensuring access to Devon Home Choice for all

1.5.1 There are many benefits of Devon Home Choice to people seeking a home, but it does require them to be proactive. People need to:

- Find information on available homes
- Choose between homes
- Bid for homes

1.5.2 Evidence from some of the early Choice Based Letting schemes found that vulnerable¹ applicants could lose out.

1.5.3 A range of people may be vulnerable and need support to participate in Devon Home Choice. Vulnerability can be a variable state, and can occur at particular points in life such as bereavement. It can be temporary, or episodic and recurring due, for example, to mental distress. Or it can be ongoing or can increase over time.

¹ A vulnerable adult is defined as someone aged 18 or over, who is or may be in need of support (for example from Social Services, the Community Mental Health Team or a voluntary agency) by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

- 1.5.4 For this reason every applicant will be considered as an individual. Their needs will be assessed so as to identify the barriers they may face in participating in Devon Home Choice. Having identified the barriers we will then be able to put solutions in place. The potential barriers are set out in Appendix 3.
- 1.5.5 A range of measures have been put in place to ensure that everyone can share in the benefits that Devon Home Choice offers, and that applicants who are vulnerable do not miss out. These measures are set out throughout this Policy.
- 1.5.6 Due to the high demand for housing in Devon, we can only ensure fair access to Devon Home Choice. Even though some applicants may be classed as 'vulnerable' and need support to participate in Devon Home Choice, this will not necessarily reflect a high level of current housing need. Therefore, in reality, they may not have a high chance of securing a home.
- 1.5.7 Devon Home Choice must comply with the Equality Act 2010 (which consolidates a number of previous Acts and Regulations), as well as the Human Rights Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998
- 1.5.8 An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken on the initial Devon Home Choice policy. A further Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken on the revised policy.
- 1.5.9 Each of the organisations involved in the Devon Home Choice Partnership has an Equal Opportunities Policy to ensure that:
- Everyone has equal access to services
 - No one is discriminated against on the grounds of ethnic origin, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or for any other reason
- 1.5.10 Information on ethnicity is asked for as part of the allocation process. This will be used to monitor diversity and equality in the operation of the policy. Information on disability is collected in order that future needs for adapted homes can be assessed and that any home offered is suitable for the needs of the applicant.
- 1.5.11 Any allegations or concerns that an organisation has not acted appropriately have to be made directly to that organisation. All partner landlords have a complaints policy and an independent Ombudsman.
- 1.5.12 The following sections set out:
- How to apply for housing
 - How applications will be assessed
 - How properties will be advertised
 - How applicants can bid for available properties
 - How the successful applicants will be identified

2. Section 2: Access to housing

2.1 How to apply

2.1.1 Anyone wishing to bid for a home must apply to join the Devon Home Choice housing register. An applicant can register by any of the following methods:

- Online via our website at www.devonhomechoice.com
- By completing a paper application form, available from any of the Devon local authorities

2.1.2 An advocate (for example family, friend or support agency) can complete the application form on behalf of a vulnerable person. The applicant's signature will always be required. Where forms are completed online, the signature will be required when an applicant goes to view a property they are being offered.

2.1.3 The application form includes questions on whether applicants need any support complete the application form or to participate in Devon Home Choice. Local authority housing teams will provide assistance to those households who need support to complete the application form.

2.1.4 The application form will be available in different formats, for example large print upon request

2.1.5 Please note that some partners may require applicants to undertake a housing options and assessment interview before completing an application form.

2.1.6 Advice and information on applying for housing is available from local authority housing offices. See the list in appendix 2 for contact details.

2.2 What properties are covered by Devon Home Choice?

2.2.1 Most local authority and housing association homes will be advertised for let through Devon Home Choice. This will include:

- General needs housing
- Sheltered homes
- The majority of disabled adapted properties
- Homes being let at the new 'affordable rent' or that have a fixed term tenancy (e.g. for 7 years).

2.2.2 The only exceptions may be some highly adapted homes, which may be directly offered to a household with matching needs.

2.2.3 A number of participating Housing Associations were subject to nomination agreements with local authorities. These agreements were replaced by the introduction of Devon Home Choice. This was subject to agreement that a Housing Association makes at least the same number of homes available through Devon Home Choice as would previously have been covered by nomination rights, and that these homes are allocated according to the eligibility and lettings criteria set out in this Policy.

2.2.4 Staff who occupy accommodation belonging to partner landlords of Devon Home Choice as part of their employment who need to move once they retire will be allocated accommodation outside Devon Home Choice as a direct let.

2.2.5 **However the scheme does not apply to the following types of tenancies: -**

2.2.5.1 **Non-Secure tenancies or 'temporary accommodation'** – Any accommodation that is provided to meet an interim duty under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996.

2.2.5.2 **Specialist supported accommodation** – Accommodation providing support to particular groups of people, for example for young people or people with mental health problems

2.2.5.3 **Mutual exchanges** – If local authority or housing association tenants exchange properties with each other. Permission to undertake a mutual exchange is dealt with separately by individual partners.

2.2.5.4 **Temporary decants** – Secure or introductory tenants of a local authority or assured or assured shorthold tenants of Registered Providers who need to be moved temporarily whilst major work is carried out on their home.

2.2.5.5 **Demoted tenancies** - Following a successful application for a demotion order under sections 14 and 15 of the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003.

2.2.5.6 **Succession** – Where the secure tenant dies, the tenancy is a periodic one, and there is someone who qualifies for the tenancy by succession.

2.2.5.7 **Assignment** – Where tenancies are 'assigned' to another person or to a person who would be qualified to succeed to the tenancy

2.2.5.8 **Court order** – Where a court orders a tenancy to be disposed of/transferred to someone else under:

- The Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, s.24 (property adjustment orders in connection with matrimonial proceedings)
- The Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, s.17(1) (property adjustment orders after overseas divorce)
- The Children Act 1989, Schedule 1, paragraph 1 (orders for financial relief against parents)
- The Civil Partnership Act 2004, Schedule 8 (property adjustment orders in connection with civil partnership proceedings or after overseas dissolution of civil partnership, etc)."

2.2.5.9 **Introductory or probationary tenancies** – Where an introductory/probationary tenancy becomes a secure or assured tenancy, applicants do not need to re-apply.

2.2.5.10 **Family Intervention Tenancies** – Introduced by the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, Family Intervention Tenancies are a form of

residential tenancy without security of tenure. They may be offered by either a local housing authority or a housing association to anyone who is a tenant of a secure (or assured) tenancy subject to a possession order on the grounds of anti-social behaviour or domestic violence or anyone who (if they had a secure or assured tenancy) could have had such a possession order made against them.

2.3 Who can apply for housing?

- 2.3.1 Anyone over 16 years of age who is eligible may apply. This includes people who are already secure, assured, introductory or assured short-hold tenants of any of the member partner landlords.
- 2.3.2 Partner landlords may have different policies in dealing with persons under the age of 18 and for more details please contact the individual landlord.
- 2.3.3 Individuals can only be on 1 application. Where someone has an application in their own name (or with a partner) they cannot also be included as a household member (e.g. a non-dependent child) on another application.

2.4 Who is not eligible?

- 2.4.1 The Localism Act 2011 amended the Housing Act 1996 to redefine eligibility and introduced the concept of qualifying persons (see Section 2.5 below) .
- 2.4.2 The Localism Act (amending the Housing Act 1996) makes it clear that:
 - (1) A local housing authority in England shall not allocate housing accommodation:
 - (a) to a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by virtue of subsection (2) or (4), or
 - (b) to two or more persons jointly if any of them is a person mentioned in paragraph (a).
 - (2) A person subject to immigration control within the meaning of the Asylum and Immigration Act 1996 is ineligible for an allocation of housing accommodation by a local housing authority in England unless he is of a class prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State.
 - (3) No person who is excluded from entitlement to housing benefit by section 115 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (exclusion from benefits) shall be included in any class prescribed under subsection (2).
 - (4) The Secretary of State may by regulations prescribe other classes of persons from abroad who are ineligible to be allocated housing accommodation by local housing authorities in England.
- 2.4.3 Citizens of the United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland, Channel Islands and Isle of Man who have lived abroad for a number of years will have to pass the habitual residence test. They will not be eligible if they do not pass the habitual residence test.

- 2.4.4 The regulations setting out which classes of persons from abroad are eligible or ineligible for an allocation are the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 No.1294) ('the Eligibility Regulations').
- 2.4.5 Eligibility will be assessed at the time of application and again at the time of any offer of accommodation as advised Code of Guidance on allocation of social housing. Applicants need to be aware that eligibility at the time of application does not mean that they will necessarily be eligible at the time of any offer of accommodation, particularly if there has been a substantial gap of time between the two.
- 2.4.6 As stated above (para 2.4.2), the legislation prohibits a joint tenancy being granted where one member of the household is ineligible. However a tenancy can be granted to a person who is eligible where other members of their household are ineligible.
- 2.4.7 Households who are assessed as being eligible as defined above may be allocated social housing provided that they are accepted as qualifying persons (see below) by a Devon local authority.
- 2.4.8 People who are in doubt about whether they are eligible should seek detailed advice from their local authority's Housing Advice Team.
- 2.4.9 Applicants who have been denied the opportunity to register with Devon Home Choice or have had their priority reduced within Devon Home Choice will be informed in writing of:
- The decision and the reasons behind it
 - Their right to appeal and how to do this

2.5 Qualifying persons

- 2.5.1 The Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with the power to determine for themselves what classes of persons are, or are not, persons qualifying to be allocated social housing in their areas.
- 2.5.2 Households assessed by one of the Devon local authorities as being guilty of unacceptable behaviour **will not** be considered as a qualifying person.
- 2.5.3 This will apply where a Devon local authority is satisfied that the applicant, or a member of their household, have been guilty of unacceptable behaviour serious enough to make the applicants unsuitable to be a tenant.
- 2.5.4 This behaviour must normally have occurred in the previous two years (see below).
- 2.5.5 Examples of unacceptable behaviour could include households who have:
- Been evicted from a tenancy due to a breach of their tenancy terms and conditions
 - Abandoned a tenancy without giving notice to the landlord
 - Ended a tenancy after possession proceedings have been commenced, where they would otherwise have been evicted for any breach of that tenancy
 - Significant rent arrears or breach of tenancy obligations where no attempt is being made to repay the debt or remedy the breach (as a minimum it would be

normally be expected that applicants had agreed and kept to a repayment schedule and/ or not breached their tenancy obligations for at least 3 months)

- A significant history of anti social behaviour
- Used accommodation or allowed it to be used for immoral or illegal purposes
- Seriously damaged or neglected a property
- Committed domestic, racist or homophobic abuse against people living with them or against people in their local area.
- Knowingly given false or misleading information or withheld information that has been reasonably requested
- Been found to have unlawfully sublet a social housing tenancy, or to have obtained a social rented home falsely
- Been found guilty of benefit fraud
- Threatened, or perpetrated violence or abuse against members of staff of a Devon Home Choice partner organisation.

2.5.6 Cases will be considered on an individual basis. The following criteria will be applied in determining whether an individual or household should be denied the right to register with Devon Home Choice (as non-qualifying persons), because of their behaviour:

- There must be reliable evidence of violent or anti-social behaviour, domestic, racist or homophobic abuse
- The behaviour need not have led to possession, prosecution or other enforcement action by a statutory agency, provided that, on the balance of probability, the household is responsible
- In normal circumstances the behaviour concerned should have occurred within the last two years. In cases of a more serious nature, for example, those involving criminal prosecution, a longer time-scale may be appropriate.
- There must be reasonable grounds for believing that the behaviour could continue or be repeated. For example, the applicant may have issued threats or there might be a history of repeat offending.

2.5.7 The Devon local authorities do not set out to exclude certain types of people from the Devon Home Choice register. However we do seek to exclude certain types of behaviour. Where households are willing to address their behaviour their application will be reconsidered. For example if the unacceptable behaviour was as a result of addiction problems, an application may be reconsidered if the applicant can demonstrate that they have taken positive steps to address these problems.

2.5.8 Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Torbay Council have agreed that they do not consider households they assess as having no housing need as qualifying persons.

2.5.9 Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Torbay Council will therefore not register applicants that they assess to have no housing need, and who would otherwise have had their application placed in Band E.

2.5.10 Applicants living in the Exeter, Teignbridge and Torbay council areas who have been assessed as having no housing need, will not be able to register with another Devon local authority, unless they have a local connection to that area.

2.5.11 Torbay Council have introduced additional qualification criteria for applicants wishing to join the Devon Home Choice register in Torbay. Subject to the

exceptions listed below, applicants will only be able to join the Devon Home Choice register in Torbay if:

- They, or a member of their household, have lived in Torbay for 5 years
- Work in Devon. The Local Government Association guidelines define this as employment other than of a casual nature. For the purposes of this policy this will be defined as having had permanent work with a minimum of a 16 hour contract per week for the previous 6 months, and without a break in the period of employment for more than three months.
- Have family connections in Devon. The Local Government Association guidelines define this as immediate family members (parents, siblings and nondependent children) who have themselves lived in the area for five years.

2.5.12 The following groups are excluded from Torbay's additional qualification criteria:

- Any tenant of a Devon Home Choice partner landlord
- Members of the Armed Forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge
- Bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner
- Serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service
- Applicants assessed as having an Emergency (Band A) or High (Band B) housing need
- Applicants requiring Sheltered Housing
- Applicants who need to move to work in Devon, where they would otherwise need to travel more than 30 miles (each way) from home to their place of work. Work will be defined as having permanent employment with a minimum of a 16-hour contract per week.
- Existing social housing tenants in England who need to move to take up an offer of work. (Additional criteria may apply).
- Existing social housing tenants in Devon who wish to downsize
- Applicants who have family connections in Devon. The Local Government Association guidelines define this as immediate family members (parents, siblings and nondependent children) who have themselves lived in the area for 5 years.

2.5.13 As above, applicants living in Torbay for less than 5 years will not be able to register with another Devon local authority, unless they have a local connection to that area.

2.5.14 For further details please contact Torbay Council.

2.6 Applicants with Rent Arrears

2.6.1 As stated above, households with significant rent arrears that led to a local authority or housing association in the previous 2 years obtaining an outright possession order under section 84 of the Housing Act 1985 in relation to Grounds in Part 1 of Schedule 2 other than Ground 8 will normally be excluded from the Devon Home Choice register.

2.6.2 Applicants with rent arrears below this level to any social landlord, that were

accrued in the previous two years on their current or a previous tenancy, will not normally be offered a property.

2.6.3 Where an applicant, or a member of their household, has rent arrears to any social landlord above £500 their application will be placed in the No housing need band (E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need. Both will apply unless there are exceptional circumstances or until:

- They clear their debt, or
- The landlord is satisfied that the applicant is entitled to an amount of benefit sufficient to clear the arrears, or
- The applicant has shown a clear intention to pay. That payments are made in accordance with an agreed repayment schedule during a period of at least 3 months. In exceptional circumstances that period may be reduced with the agreement of the local authority, or
- If there are exceptional circumstances relating to need

2.6.4 Partner social landlords within Devon Home Choice have different policies relating to applicants with rent arrears. Whether a bid for home is accepted will therefore be subject to the policies of the each partner social landlord. More information is available from each Devon Home Choice partner.

2.6.5 Applicants with rent arrears to a private landlord will be considered on a case-by-case basis by Devon local authorities. Applicants who have rent arrears to a private landlord over £500 who have been (or would be) assessed as having accrued these rent arrears intentionally will be placed in the No housing need band (E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need. 'Intentionally' means that the applicant deliberately did something (or failed to do something) that resulted in the rent arrears. An act or omission in good faith on the part of the applicant will not be treated as deliberate if they were unaware of any relevant fact.

2.6.6 Applicants who have had their rent arrears included in a Debt Relief Order will still have their applications placed into Band E or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need, unless there is some additional and exceptional reason for not doing so.

2.6.7 The issue is not whether there is an enforceable debt, but whether or not the debt was accrued in the first place. This is similar to the situation with someone who has a debt relief order that covers credit card or other loan debts. The order would prevent the debt from being collected, but that would not mean that another lender would provide additional credit.

2.6.8 Partner local authorities in Devon Home Choice will review applications on request following the receipt of further information. This may include an applicant being able to demonstrate that there has been no further instance of such behaviour, and/or that they can show that they are engaged with support that will enable them to maintain a tenancy.

2.7 Applicants financial resources

2.7.1 Local authority and social landlord homes provided through Devon Home Choice are for people who are considered to have insufficient resources to meet their housing need.

2.7.2 The resources available to each household will be assessed to determine whether they are sufficient to meet their housing need.

2.7.3 Household Income

2.7.4 Households with a gross household income more than six times higher than the relevant Local Housing Allowance level prevailing in Devon at the time will normally be considered to be able to meet their housing need, through either renting privately or owner occupation. Such households will normally have their applications placed in the No housing need band (E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need.

2.7.5 Further information on the financial assessment and the Local Housing Allowance rates that apply across Devon is available in the Devon Home Choice Procedures Manual (available at: www.devonhomechoice.com/Usefulinformation). Information on Local Housing Allowance rates are also available at: <https://lha-direct.voa.gov.uk>.

2.7.6 The following types of income are fully disregarded:

- Attendance Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance

2.7.7 Capital, Savings and Equity

2.7.8 The capital, savings and equity available to a household will be assessed. If it is determined that a household can resolve their own housing need within their local housing market their application will normally be placed in the No housing need band (E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need. This assessment will be based on:

- The household's capital, savings and equity
- The size and composition of the household
- The local housing market (for example prices to buy or rent privately)

2.7.9 If a member of a household has a financial interest or owns any property and it is "reasonable" for them to reside at the property then their application will be placed in the No Housing Need band (E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need.

2.7.10 Local authorities will consider each case individually. Where an applicant has specific needs the financial thresholds for income and savings set out in the Devon Home Choice Procedures Manual will not apply if it is agreed that they could not meet their own housing needs on the private market. This will include households who own their own home. For example, the applicant has mobility needs that mean they require an accessible or specially adapted home that is either not available or affordable to buy or rent, or cannot be funded by a Disabled Facilities Grant.

2.7.11 Applicants can contact their local authority housing teams for details of how this

assessment is made.

- 2.7.12 An exemption from the financial assessment will apply if the applicant(s) is a tenant of a partner landlord in Devon Home Choice.
- 2.7.13 Local authorities will not take any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service into account when assessing whether they have sufficient resources to meet their own housing need (see also 3.10 below).
- 2.7.14 Partner social landlords within Devon Home Choice have different policies relating to the levels of income and other assets of those households that they will accommodate. Whether a bid for home is accepted will therefore be subject to the policies of the each partner social landlord. More information is available from each Devon Home Choice partner.
- 2.7.15 Applicants may be required to demonstrate that they can afford the rent on any prospective tenancy before being allowed to sign for it.

2.8 Which Devon local authority will manage an application?

- 2.8.1 When an applicant applies to Devon Home Choice one of the Devon local authorities will be responsible for assessing and managing their application. This will include:
- Issuing all correspondence
 - Addressing any enquiries
 - Assessing any health/ wellbeing or housing defect issues
 - Managing any reviews
- 2.8.2 For all applications received up until 4 March 2015 the local authority that managed an application was determined by asking applicants which local authority area they would prefer to live in. Whichever local authority was indicated managed the application.
- 2.8.3 Applications received from 5 March 2015 are managed by the local authority where the applicant lives.
- 2.8.4 Existing applications received up until 4 March 2015 will be unaffected, and will continue to be managed by the same local authority. This will only change if the applicant updates their address and the new address is in another local authority area in Devon.
- 2.8.5 Applications from households living outside Devon will continue to be managed by the local authority where the applicant said that they would prefer to live.

2.8.6 Where a Devon local authority has accepted a homelessness duty towards an applicant they will manage their application, regardless of which local authority area the applicant would prefer to live in.

2.8.7 It will be made clear that whichever local authority manages an application will not restrict where applicants can bid, or their chances of being housed in other local authority areas.

2.9 Who will make decisions about applications?

2.9.1 Applications to join the Devon Home Choice register will be managed by the local authority housing team. This will include organisations that have been formally appointed to carry out this function on a local authority's behalf.

2.9.2 The local authority housing teams will be responsible for:

- Processing applications
- Ensuring that all the required information is supplied
- Undertaking any initial verification of the information that is required (e.g. to confirm that the household is eligible to join the Devon Home Choice register)
- Assessing and awarding priority for some applicants seeking priority due to health and wellbeing and/or housing defect grounds (see Sections 3.12 and 3.13)
- Carrying out financial assessments of applicants (see Section 2.5)
- Notifying applicants of the outcome of their application
- Receiving review requests and processing these in accordance with the Policy
- Making enquiries necessary to make homelessness decisions
- Assisting applicants who are homeless to bid
- Setting up automatic bidding for homeless applicants who have not been bidding for homes (see Section 4.8)
- Discharging homelessness duties in accordance with the legislation and guidance
- Labelling properties to be advertised, working together with Housing Associations (see Section 4.5)
- Putting in place appropriate support for vulnerable applicants to participate in Devon Home Choice. This will involve working with a wide range of partner agencies,
- Monitoring the Devon Home Choice register to identify those applicants who, given their priority within Devon Home Choice, may soon be successful in bidding for a home, but who require a support package to enable them to live independently. It will be vital that such a support package is put in place, or can be arranged in an appropriate timescale that will enable an applicant to take up an offer of housing. This will require close partnership working between local authorities, housing associations and partner agencies.
- Reviewing details of applicants who have applied for homes and notifying the landlord of the applicant in the highest band who has the earliest band start date (**Note:** some Housing Associations may undertake this role. This will be set out in the Policy)
- Explaining the reasons why an applicant has not been selected for a home (when a local authority is the landlord of the home)
- Taking a decision to depart from the published policy due to exceptional situations (see Section 2.8)

2.9.3 Local authority Environmental Health teams will responsible for:

- Assessing and awarding priority for some applicants seeking priority due to housing defects

2.9.4 When an applicant is being considered for a home the landlord (either a local authority or Housing Association) will be responsible for:

- Undertaking a detailed verification of the information the applicant has supplied in order to ensure that they are eligible
- Providing the applicant with an opportunity to view the home (if it has been determined that they are eligible)
- Making a formal offer to an applicant
- Explaining the reasons why a formal offer is not being made

2.9.5 Multi-agency panels will be responsible for:

- Assessing some applicants whose health and wellbeing is affected by their current housing, and awarding priority
- Assessing whether applicants are ready to move-on from supported accommodation (see Definitions set out in Appendix 1)

2.10 Dealing with exceptional situations

2.10.1 In exceptional situations the Devon local authorities reserve the right to depart from any aspect of this Policy. As set out above, any decision to depart from the Policy will be taken by a local authority housing team.

2.10.2 The exercise of such discretion will be monitored to ensure that it is properly exercised within extremely limited bounds

3. Section 3: How is housing need assessed?

3.1 How is housing need assessed?

3.1.1 Once an application has been received it will be placed in the relevant Band detailed below depending upon the applicant's level of housing need, and whether or not the household has a local connection to Devon (see below).

3.2 How is priority awarded?

3.2.1 Whilst offering choice to applicants wherever possible, allocation schemes must still ensure that reasonable preference is given to applicants who fall into one of the following groups over those who do not:

- People who are homeless (within the meaning of Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002). This includes people who are intentionally homeless and those who are not in priority need
- People who are owed a (homeless) duty by ANY local authority under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the 1996 Act or who are living in accommodation secured by ANY housing authority under section 192(3). The letter detailing the outcome of a homeless application will specify whether 1 of these sections applies
- People occupying unsanitary or overcrowded housing or otherwise living in unsatisfactory housing conditions
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds including a disability
- People who need to move to a particular locality in Devon, where failure to move would cause hardship to themselves or others

3.3 Banding

3.3.1 The following section provides details of the bands into which applications are placed. The band in which an applicant's application is placed will be determined by their housing need as set out below.

3.3.2 Further details of the criteria are provided in the (See Appendix 1).

3.4 Emergency Housing Need (Band A)

3.4.1 Applicants will have their application placed in the Emergency housing need band (A) if their need for housing is assessed as so exceptional that they take priority over all other applicants.

3.4.2 Any application to be placed in the Emergency housing need band (A) must normally be submitted by an agency and not the applicant themselves. For example, if an applicant wants to move due to threat of violence, the police or an appropriate agency must contact a Devon local authority with evidence to support the request for an urgent move.

3.4.3 Applications to be placed in the Emergency Band will only be considered from applicants who are living within Devon. Applicants who are not living in Devon should approach their own local authority if they believe that they have an urgent housing need.

3.4.4 Individual local authorities will assess Emergency applications. Substantial evidence must exist before such priority is awarded.

3.4.5 The following are examples of the type of situations that would qualify:

- Urgent health/ wellbeing need: (See below)
- Emergency housing defect: (See below)
- To escape violence or threat of violence, serious harassment or a traumatic event where there is immediate and serious risk to a household living in Devon. The Police or another appropriate agency will usually provide supporting evidence that the risk exists. The person at risk may be the applicant, or another person who might be reasonably expected to reside with them.

For households at risk of violence or serious harassment etc. Band A will only be awarded where the local authority agrees that there are no appropriate housing options available (e.g. temporary accommodation, Sanctuary scheme etc), **and** where the risk can be managed at their current home.

Please note that cases of domestic violence and harassment that are not considered to be an emergency (e.g. the applicant(s) don't need to move urgently) will be considered and assessed by the local authorities under the homelessness categories (see 'Statutory homeless households' and 'Non Statutory Homeless Households

- National Witness Mobility Scheme: Where the Devon local authorities have accepted a household being referred under the National Witness Mobility Scheme.

3.4.6 Applicants will be given this priority for 4 weeks. If an Emergency housing need band (A) applicant does not make bids for suitable homes available through Devon Home Choice (or refuses a suitable offer of a property) they will have their status reviewed and may be placed in 1 of the other bands dependent on their need. In very exceptional circumstances an applicant will be allowed to remain in the Emergency housing need band (A) for longer than 4 weeks.

3.4.7 The decision to extend or remove the Emergency housing need band (A) status will be made by the local authority and will be based upon: -

- Whether a vacancy occurred during the 4-week period that met the declared needs of the applicant.
- The reasons why the applicant failed to apply for the property and whether the reasons were valid.

3.4.8 The Devon Home Choice Management Board will monitor the number of applications placed in the Emergency Band (Band A).

3.5 High Housing Need (Band B)

3.5.1 Statutorily Homeless Households

3.5.1.1 Wherever possible and appropriate local authorities in Devon will seek to assist households who are homeless to secure private rented accommodation. This reflects both the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, and the severe shortage of social housing.

3.5.1.2 Where it is assessed that it will be possible and appropriate to find private rented accommodation for households who are assessed as being homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless (under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) their applications will be placed in Band D (see below). This will normally include those households who have income or capital above the Devon Home Choice financial limits (see above).

3.5.1.3 Where it is not considered possible and appropriate to find private rented accommodation for households who are assessed as being homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless (under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) their applications will be placed in Band B.

3.5.1.4 Reasons why it might be considered not possible and appropriate to secure private rented accommodation include²:

- The household require an adapted home
- The household require accommodation of a type or size that is not available locally
- There is a lack of private rented accommodation available with tenancies of at least 12 months
- There is a lack of appropriate temporary accommodation available

3.5.1.5 Households in any of the following categories of person who are assessed as being homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless (under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) will have their applications placed in Band B:

- (i) is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service,
- (ii) formerly served in the regular forces,
- (iii) has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or

² Please note that this list is not exhaustive

- (iv) is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service.

3.5.2 Prevention of homelessness for applicants within Devon

3.5.2.1 Where this will avoid the applicant becoming homeless, and where the applicant would be accepted as being unintentionally homeless and in priority need

3.5.3 Severe overcrowding

3.5.3.1 This category includes applicants who:

- Currently lack 2 or more bedrooms given the size of their household, or
- Are lacking 1 bedroom but have 2 children that lack a bedroom. For example a couple with 4 same sex children in a 2 bed home, or a single parent with 2 children under 10 in a 1 bed home, or
- Have been assessed by the Environmental Health team of a Devon local authority as a Category 1 hazard due to overcrowding

3.5.4 Under occupying tenants of Devon Home Choice partner landlords

3.5.4.1 If the applicant is a tenant of a Devon Home Choice partner and wishes to move to a property with fewer bedrooms.

3.5.4.2 Please note that this priority will only be awarded where the applicant has at least 1 vacant bedroom within their current home.

3.5.5 High health/ wellbeing need

3.5.5.1 See below – Health & Wellbeing section

3.5.6 High Housing Defect

3.5.6.1 See below – Housing Defect section

3.5.7 Ready for move on from supported accommodation within Devon

3.5.7.1 Where the applicant is living in supported accommodation in Devon and a multi-agency Move-On Panel has confirmed that they are ready to move on. This will include young people leaving care who are assessed by the local authority or a multi-agency panel as ready for independent living. Note: Applicants living in supported accommodation who are not assessed as being ready to move-on to independent living will remain in the No housing need band (Band E), as they are adequately housed, unless they qualify for another band due to other needs (for example health and wellbeing needs). In those local authority areas that do not register households with no housing need applicants living in supported accommodation will only be registered when they have been assessed by the local authority or a multi-agency panel as ready for independent living

3.5.7.2 Where supported accommodation is being decommissioned, residents will only have their application placed in Band B for move-on if it is assessed that they are ready for independent living. Those applicants who are not assessed as being ready for independent living will have their application assessed by their local authority in line with the Devon Home Choice policy

3.5.7.3 There is no standard definition of supported accommodation. Local authorities will determine what they consider to be supported accommodation in their area. This will be based on those projects that the local authority works with to meet strategic needs.

3.5.8 Social need or to support the delivery of another service

3.5.8.1 This applies to applicants who, for exceptional reasons, fall outside of the rest of Devon Home Choice Assessment Policy, and need to be found secure alternative accommodation. This may include child risk or concern issues where children would otherwise be accommodated by social services.

3.5.8.2 This category includes applicants who are being considered by Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council or Torbay Council as prospective foster parents or for adoption, where a larger property is required in order for them to be approved. It will also include households who have been approved by an independent agency used by Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council or Torbay Council.

3.5.8.3 Households who are seeking to foster or adopt will also have the size of property they are assessed as needing increased by an additional bedroom. Please note that this is a maximum of 1 additional bedroom in order to be consistent with benefit rules.

3.5.8.4 Exceptional cases may also be considered where there is a combination of factors or special circumstances, which make the overall effect disproportionately worse than any of those factors might normally be assessed as being.

3.5.9 Effective management of social housing within Devon

3.5.9.1 This priority will be awarded in a number of situations set out below to aid the efficient management of social housing stock. Further detail is provided in Appendix 1.

- To release high need properties

As social rented housing is a scarce resource there will be times when it is not being used to its full potential. Re-housing will enable a 'high need' property to be released or to aid the wider management of the social rented housing stock.

This might include where applicants have no particular priority, but are occupying a property that is of a type in very limited supply and is needed to be returned to the stock of social housing for letting to meet an immediate and pressing need. An example would be a household occupying a property that has been extensively adapted, but where they have no further need of that type of accommodation. Given the need for accessible and adapted properties, it has been agreed that in such cases the household's Band Start Date will be backdated to the date they moved into that accommodation, to enable them to move as soon as possible.

- As a management tool to resolve issues affecting a block or estate

This priority may also apply where it was agreed as an appropriate solution to resolve an issue affecting a block or estate, but where all other tools available to the Social Landlord had proven ineffective.

- **Demolition**

This need is recognised where there is a programme of regeneration which will require the re-housing of households whose homes will be demolished. This will be awarded once the demolition plans have been confirmed by the applicant's social landlord.

- **Major works**

Applicants in social housing who require permanent alternative accommodation as a result of major works needing to be carried out on their home.

- **Staff of Devon Home Choice partners who occupy tied accommodation**

Staff of Devon Home Choice partner local authorities and housing associations who occupy tied accommodation and need to move upon retirement.

3.6 Medium Housing Need (Band C)

3.6.1 Medium health/ wellbeing need

3.6.1.1 See below

3.6.2 Lacking 1 bedroom

3.6.2.1 Applicants who currently lack 1 bedroom given the size of their household, where this is their permanent address. This may include applicants staying with friends/ family, but only where this is not a short-term temporary arrangement and where this has been declared for Council Tax purposes.

3.6.2.2 Applicants who are rough sleeping, have no fixed abode or are 'sofa surfing' with different friends/ family will be placed in Band D – see below.

3.6.2.3 As stated above, where there are 2 children who are lacking a bedroom applications will be placed in Band B.

3.6.3 Children under 8 years old living above the third floor

3.6.3.1 Where the applicant's household includes a child under the age of eight, offers of accommodation would not normally include properties above the third floor. This priority is awarded to reflect the difficulties that may be faced by applicants with young children who are living in accommodation above the third floor

3.6.4 Members or former members of the armed forces in urgent housing need

3.6.4.1 Applicants in the following categories of person who would otherwise have had their application placed in Band D:

- (i) is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service,

- (ii) formerly served in the regular forces,
- (iii) has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- (iv) is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service.

3.6.5 Moves for work

3.6.5.1 Applicants who need to move to work in Devon, where they would otherwise need to travel more than 30 miles (each way) from home to their place of work. Work will be defined as having permanent employment with a minimum of a 16-hour contract per week. Proof of employment will be required.

3.7 Low Housing Need (Band D)

3.7.1 No Permanent Home

3.7.1.1 This category includes households who are homeless (as set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996). This includes:

- Households who are assessed as being in priority need and unintentionally homeless where it is assessed that a private rented home is appropriate (see Band B above). This includes those households who have income or capital above the Devon Home Choice financial limits
- Households who are assessed as being in priority need and unintentionally homeless and have been provided with suitable temporary accommodation (for example a Private Sector Leased home)
- Households who are homeless (as set out in Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996) but where a duty has not been accepted by a Devon local authority towards an applicant under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 (the duty towards households who are in priority need and unintentionally homeless), and do not qualify for another band due to other needs (for example health and wellbeing needs).
- People who have no permanent address, including those people who are staying with friends/ family on a very temporary basis and this has not been declared for Council Tax purposes. Applicants who are staying with friends/ family on a more permanent basis and where this has been declared for Council Tax purposes, will have their applications placed in Band C – see above.

3.7.1.2 Households in any of the following categories of person who are assessed as being homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless (under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) will have their applications placed in Band B:

- (i) is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service,
- (ii) formerly served in the regular forces,
- (iii) has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- (iv) is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service.

3.7.2 Low health/ wellbeing need

3.7.2.1 See below

3.7.3 Shared facilities (for example toilet, bath, shower or kitchen)

3.7.3.1 Where an applicant has accommodation but shares facilities with other persons. This will include applicants living with family that are not part of

their household on their application, lodging or renting a room in a shared house with communal facilities.

3.7.4 Notice to quit

3.7.4.1 Where a private tenant has been served a valid notice to quit by their landlord. Evidence of the notice will need to be provided to demonstrate that the landlord genuinely intends to seek possession and the applicant will need to have been seen by a housing advisor.

3.7.4.2 This will only apply to households who would be assessed as non priority homeless and/or intentionally homeless under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002. Households who would be assessed as unintentionally homeless and in priority need who have been served a valid notice to quit will be placed in the High housing need band (B), under the 'Prevention of homelessness' category.

3.7.5 Local Priority

3.7.5.1 Households who meet a local priority agreed by the local authority managing their application. Any local priorities are set out below:

3.7.5.2 Teignbridge District Council will use this category to provide priority to households making a 'community contribution' in rural areas. This will apply where a member of a household is working in a rural area and seeking affordable housing there and they have been working 16 hours or more a week for minimum period of 12 months.

3.7.5.3 The Teignbridge Band D award for community contribution only applies in the rural area where the applicant is making the community contribution. Applicants will be considered as Band E if they bid for properties in any other areas.

3.7.6 Households with a housing need but no local connection to Devon

3.7.6.1 [See 3.9 below](#)

3.7.7 Households who have been assessed as having deliberately worsened their circumstances

3.7.7.1 Deliberate worsening of circumstances will arise where local authorities decide that an applicant has given up accommodation that was suitable for their needs where there was no requirement or obligation to do so. To reduce the likelihood of applicants moving into poorer accommodation in order to qualify for higher priority and quicker re-housing, applicants who are deemed to have deliberately worsened their circumstances will normally be placed in the Low housing need band (Band D).

3.7.7.2 This decision can be reviewed after 12 months.

3.7.7.3 Examples of deliberate worsening of circumstances might include:

- Selling a property that is affordable and suitable for an applicant's needs
- Moving from a secure Assured Tenancy to insecure, overcrowded accommodation with family or friends, where there is no good reason for this move

- Where there is evidence that it was reasonable that an applicant could have remained in their original accommodation

3.7.7.4 Where an applicant has little or no control over their move to alternative accommodation, this should not be considered as a deliberate worsening of circumstances.

3.8 No Housing Need (E)

3.8.1 Applicants with no housing need at the time of assessment. This will normally include the following:

- Applicants who live in a property that is adequate to meet their housing need in terms of property type, size and facilities.
- Applicants who do not meet the housing need criteria within any of the other bands (Emergency, High, Medium or Low housing need)

3.8.2 If an applicant has a financial interest or owns any property and it is “reasonable” for them to reside at the property then their application will be placed in the No Housing Need band (E).

3.8.3 As set out in the ‘Qualifying Persons’ section above, Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council and Torbay Council will not register applicants that they assess to have no housing need, and who would otherwise have had their application placed in Band E.

3.8.4 Applicants living in the Exeter, Teignbridge and Torbay council areas who have been assessed as having no housing need, will not be able to register with another Devon local authority, unless they have a local connection to that area.

3.8.5 Applicants living in the Teignbridge Council area who answer ‘No’ to all of the questions in Section 1 of the application form, thereby indicating that they do not have a housing need, will be prevented from completing the remainder of the online application. Applicants will be advised to contact Teignbridge District Council for housing advice.

3.9 No local connection to Devon

3.9.1 Applicants who have no local connection to Devon will have their application placed in either:

- The Low housing need band (D) if they are assessed as having a housing need (whether this be high, medium or low need), or
- The No housing need band (E) if they are assessed as having no housing need

3.9.2 Households applying to Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council or Torbay Council who have no local connection to Devon and are assessed as having no housing need will not be registered.

3.9.3 However exceptions to this will include where:

- They have been accepted by 1 of the Devon local authorities as statutorily homeless, and local connection has been waived for specific reasons such as the applicant is fleeing domestic violence
- They need to move to Devon to give or receive support where failure to do so would cause hardship
- There are special circumstances such as health or support needs that are only available within Devon
- An applicant has no local connection in any district within the United Kingdom, then they will be deemed to have a local connection to Devon

3.9.4 In such circumstances applicants will be banded in line with the above policy, regardless of the fact that they have no local connection to Devon.

3.9.5 To demonstrate a local connection (defined in Part VII of the Housing Act 1996) with Devon applicants will:

- Normally be resident in Devon. Local Government Association guidelines define this as having resided in the area for six of the last twelve months, or three out of the last five years, where residence has been out of choice. In line with the Housing and Regeneration Act (2008) service personnel who have been based and living in Devon will be considered to have local connection with Devon. Their local connection will be to the local authority area where they are based or where they have been assessed.
- Work in Devon. The Local Government Association guidelines define this as employment other than of a casual nature. For the purposes of this policy this will be defined as having had permanent work with a minimum of a 16 hour contract per week for the previous 6 months, and without a break in the period of employment for more than three months.
- Have family connections in Devon. The Local Government Association guidelines define this as immediate family members (parents, siblings and non-dependent children) who have themselves lived in the area for five years.

3.9.6 Applicants will be required to provide proof of their local connection to Devon before their banding is assessed.

3.9.7 A number of housing associations with homes in Devon operate across a wider regional or national area. Tenants of such associations may on occasion wish to transfer to Devon from outside the county, but will not meet the local connection criteria (e.g. they do not have a local connection to Devon). In such cases the local connection to Devon criteria shall not be applicable. In such circumstances the tenant will be placed in the band determined by their housing needs, in the same way as applicants with a local connection to Devon. They will then be able to bid for homes in the same way as other applicants.

3.9.8 Section 315 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 amended section 199 of the Housing Act 1996 so that someone serving in the Armed Forces will be able to establish a local connection through residence or employment in an area, in the same way as a civilian person.

3.9.9 The Localism Act 2011 provides local authorities with the power to decide who

qualifies for social housing. The Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 confirms that the local connection criteria cannot be applied to the following people when deciding who is, or is not, a qualifying person:

- (a) members of the Armed Forces and former Service personnel, where the application is made within five years of discharge
- (b) bereaved spouses and civil partners of members of the Armed Forces leaving Services Family Accommodation following the death of their spouse or partner (where the death was attributable, wholly or partly, to their service)
- (c) serving or former members of the Reserve Forces who need to move because of a serious injury, medical condition or disability sustained as a result of their service

3.9.10 The local connection to Devon criteria will not therefore be applied to any households set out in the above paragraph. This, in line with the guidance from Government, recognises the special position of members of the Armed Forces (and their families) whose employment requires them to be mobile and who are likely therefore to be particularly disadvantaged by local connection requirements; as well as those injured reservists who may need to move to another local authority district to access treatment, care or support.

3.9.11 Similarly, following the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015 that came into force on 20th April 2015, the local connection criteria cannot be applied to existing social tenants seeking to transfer from another local authority district in England who:

- (a) have reasonable preference under s.166(3)(e) because of a need to move to the local authority's district to avoid hardship, and
- (b) need to move because the tenant works in the district, or
- (c) need to move to take up an offer of work

3.9.12 If a home is subject to more specific local connection criteria however these will still apply to tenants of partner and other social landlords with no local connection to Devon, including those who need to move to Devon for work. For example Section 106 planning conditions that mean the home can only be let to someone with a local connection to a specific local area.

3.10 Members of the Armed and Reserve Forces

3.10.1 The local connection provision will not apply to members of the armed forces and some former service personnel etc (see above).

3.10.2 The Housing Act 1996 (Additional Preference for Armed Forces) (England) Regulations 2012 came into force in November 2012, requiring local authorities to provide additional preference to the following categories of person who fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories (see above) and who have urgent housing needs:

- (i) is serving in the regular forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service,
- (ii) formerly served in the regular forces,

- (iii) has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled, to reside in accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following the death of that person's spouse or civil partner who has served in the regular forces and whose death was attributable (wholly or partly) to that service, or
- (iv) is serving or has served in the reserve forces and is suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is attributable (wholly or partly) to the person's service.

- 3.10.3 The Devon local authorities have agreed to apply this new legislation by placing the application of the types of person set out in 3.10.2 in Band C, where they would otherwise have been placed in Band D. This ensures that such applicants are provided with additional preference over those applicants in Band D, who are provided with reasonable preference only.
- 3.10.4 Under Devon Home Choice Bands A, B and C are for applicants in the reasonable preference categories (see above) who the Devon local authorities have agreed to provide with additional preference, given their housing need.
- 3.10.5 After careful consideration of the legislation and the government's guidance on allocations, the Devon local authorities have agreed not to award respective priority to service applicants in Bands A, B or C over those who have not served.
- 3.10.6 Applicants who have served in the UK armed forces will continue to have their application placed in Band A or Band B where a Devon local authority assess that their housing need meets one of the categories of either band.
- 3.10.7 Households in any of the following categories of person listed in 3.10.2 who are assessed as being homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless (under Part VII of The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002) will have their applications placed in Band B.
- 3.10.8 The Devon local authorities have agreed not to award additional priority to serving or former service personnel who are assessed to have no housing need (e.g. where their application is placed in Band E). Similarly, former service personnel applying to Exeter City Council, Teignbridge District Council or Torbay Council who are assessed to have no housing need will not be registered.
- 3.10.9 As well awarding additional preference to serving and former members of the armed forces and their families in urgent housing need (see above), local authorities and landlords will agree locally whether to set aside a proportion of properties for former members of the Armed Forces under a local lettings policy (see also 4.7 below). Such a decision will be determined by locally agreed priorities and an assessment of the local housing market.
- 3.10.10 Local authorities will not take into account any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service into account when assessing whether they have sufficient resources to meet their own housing need (see 2.6 above).

3.11 Households with more than 1 need

- 3.11.1 Where an application has more than 1 need from different bands, the application

will be placed in the highest band.

3.11.2 No additional priority will be provided if a household has 2 or more needs from the same band.

3.12 Band Start Date

3.12.1 The band start date records the date they moved into a particular band, and/or whether they have received an advance on their application active date due to having two needs within the same band.

3.12.2 For those applicants whose circumstances have not changed their application active date and band start date will be the same.

3.12.3 At the launch of Devon Home Choice applicants who were on the housing register of 1 of the Devon local authorities or partner housing associations (including transfer lists) had their previous recorded date transferred across to Devon Home Choice register. Where an applicant was on more than 1 housing register or list within Devon the earliest date was the one that was transferred across to Devon Home Choice. All applicants had their priority re-assessed in line with the Devon Home Choice Policy.

3.12.4 Applicants who have bid for properties will be prioritised:

- Firstly by their band. For example those applicants in the High housing need band (B) will be listed above applicants in the Medium housing need band (C), and
- Secondly **within** each band in order of their band start date, with the applicant with the earliest band start date at the top.

3.12.5 If 2 applicants within the same band apply for the same property, it will be awarded to the 1 with the earliest band start date. In case two or more applicants within the same band have the same band start date, the applicant recorded as having the earliest time on that date on the Devon Home Choice register will be put forward.

3.12.6 Band start dates that will apply are as follows:

3.12.6.1 **Homeless applicants accepted under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996:** The date the applicant applied to the local authority as homeless.

Once a local authority has completed their enquiries and accepted that an applicant is unintentionally homeless and in priority need, the applicant will be placed in the High housing need band (Band B) or the Low housing need band (Band D) as set out above. Their band start date will be backdated to the date they applied as homeless.

Whilst the local authority is carrying out enquiries the applicant will be placed in the Low housing need band (Band D), unless their circumstances would place them in a higher band. For example if the applicant had been assessed as having a medium health/ wellbeing

need they would be placed in the Medium housing need band (Band C).

Note: If the homeless applicant was already placed in the High housing need band (Band B) or the Low housing need band (Band D) as a result of some other need (for example due to a high health/wellbeing need), their band start date remains the same and does not change to the date they made their homeless application.

3.12.6.2 General applicants (including existing local authority and housing association tenants)

The date the housing register application was received for assessment, or the date which was transferred at the launch of Devon Home Choice (see above)

3.12.6.3 Move on applicants (from Supported Housing):

Applicants living in designated 'supported' accommodation within Devon who have been assessed as ready for 'move-on' into independent accommodation will have their band start date backdated to either the date that they moved into the supported accommodation or the date they first became a homeless prevention case to a Devon local authority, whichever is the earliest.

3.12.6.4 Young people leaving care

Young people leaving care who are assessed by the local authority or a multi-agency panel as ready for independent living will have their band start date backdated to their 17th birthday

3.12.6.5 Underoccupying tenants of a Devon Home Choice partner landlord

The Devon Home Choice Management Board agreed as a result of the 2012 policy review that all underoccupying of Devon Home Choice partner landlords would have their application placed in Band B, regardless of how many bedrooms they are freeing up. This change was agreed because of the provisions set out in the Welfare Reform Act that would affect underoccupying tenants of working age. Previously tenants who had only been freeing up 1 bedroom had their application placed in Band C. It was agreed that the Band Start date for applications moved from Band C to Band B should remain the same.

3.13 People leaving prison

3.13.1 If an applicant is being held in custody pending trial or sentencing, or has to stay somewhere that is not their home as a condition of bail, they will remain in their previous band and keep their Band Start date for up to 52 weeks.

3.13.2 Similarly, if an applicant is sentenced to prison for up to 13 weeks they will remain in their previous band and keep their Band Start date.

3.13.3 If an applicant is sentenced to prison for more than 13 weeks they will be suspended from bidding. If the applicant wishes to remain on the Devon Home Choice register they, or their advocate, can contact their local housing team from

56 days prior to release to request that their application is re-activated, so that they can bid for homes. Any changes in circumstances will be taken into account when re-assessing the application. If an applicant's circumstances remain the same as they were before going to prison their application will remain in the same Band and retain the Band Start date.

- 3.13.4 People in prison can apply to the Devon Home Choice register. However their application will be placed in Band E (No housing need) in those local authority areas that register households with no housing need and they will be suspended from bidding until 56 days prior to release.
- 3.13.5 In those local authority areas that do not register households with no housing need people in prison will only be registered from 56 days prior to release, where it is assessed that the applicant has a housing need.
- 3.13.6 Please note that it is the responsibility of the applicant, or an advocate acting on their behalf, to contact their local housing team to confirm the release date is within 56 days. The local authority will then re-assess the application to determine the appropriate band, as set out above, given the applicant's circumstances when they leave prison.
- 3.13.7 Before any known offender is offered housing, full consultation will be undertaken with the relevant support agencies to assess the risk involved

3.14 Changes in circumstances

- 3.14.1 Applicants must provide information about their current housing situation so that the following can be assessed:
- The band they are placed in
 - What size, and where appropriate, what type of property they can bid for
- 3.14.2 Applicants must inform their local authority housing team of any changes in their circumstances straight away (such as any change of address or change in the composition of their household etc). This includes any change that may affect the priority which has been afforded to their application. .
- 3.14.3 Applicants have the right to apply for their priority to be reviewed if there is a material change of circumstances.
- 3.14.4 If a person successfully bids for a property and it is later found that the housing situation was different from the details provided when the application was made the offer might be withdrawn.

3.15 Moving bands following a change in circumstances

- 3.15.1 Applicants whose housing need changes will be reassessed. This may change the band their application has been placed in.
- 3.15.2 Those moving to a lower band because their need for housing has reduced will keep the same band start date to determine how high up that band they will be.
- 3.15.3 Those moving to a higher band because their need for housing has increased will

have their band start date changed to the date their change of circumstances request was received. This is so that applicants who have been in this high level of need for a long time will remain above applicants who have recently joined this band.

3.15.4 If it is accepted by 1 of the local authorities following a review that an applicant should have been placed in a higher band, their band start date will be backdated.

3.16 Notification

3.16.1 Once an application form has been entered online or received by a Devon local authority housing team it will be assessed and the information entered onto the Devon Home Choice register. The applicant will receive a letter confirming their application details within 20 working days of the local authority housing team receiving all of the required information.

3.16.2 All applicants will be notified of:

- The 'band' in which their application has been placed and brief details of why this decision has been made
- The size property the applicant is eligible for
- Their 'band start date'
- A unique reference number
- How their accessibility needs have been assessed
- Information on how Devon Home Choice works, including where to find information on available homes and how to bid
- Information on sources of further advice and assistance
- A reminder of the need to notify any change in circumstances immediately
- Information on the review procedure

3.16.3 Applicants will also receive notification of their application details within 20 working days if they have provided details about their change of circumstances.

3.17 Size of property

3.17.1 Applications will be assessed to determine the size of property that their household requires. A household is defined as "any other person who normally resides with the applicants as a member of his/her family or any other person who might reasonably be expected to reside with the applicant" (Housing Act 1996).

3.17.2 Under Devon Home Choice a separate bedroom is allocated to each:

- married or cohabiting couple
- adult aged 16 years or more
- pair of adolescents aged 10-15 years of the same sex
- pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of sex

3.17.3 Any unpaired person aged 10 to 15 years is paired, if possible, with a child aged under 10 years of the same sex or, if that is not possible, given a separate bedroom. The same applies to any unpaired child aged less than ten years.

3.17.4 Examples of the property sizes that households are able to bid for are set out below:

Size of Property	Who is eligible?
Bedsit (not sheltered)	Single people under the age of 35. Please note that different eligibility criteria apply to sheltered bedsits.
1 Bedroom	Single people or couples with no children Single people with regular access to children, but who do not normally live with them (see below)
2 Bedroom	Applicants with 1 child or who are pregnant Applicants with 2 children of the same sex (or different sexes but who are both under 10 years old)
3 Bedroom	Applicants with 2 children of different sexes, with at least 1 child over 10 years of age Applicants with 3 children Applicants with 4 or more children
4 Bedroom	Applicants with 4 or more children (where at least 1 of the children is a different sex to the others and, either that child or the youngest of the other children is at least 10 years old)

3.17.5 **Please note:** This is not an exhaustive list. Applicants with a large number of household members may require larger properties.

3.17.6 Given the severe shortage of larger homes, applicants assessed as needing a home with more than 4 bedrooms will be enabled to bid for 4 bedroom homes, wherever this does not lead to an overcrowding hazard and where this is in line with the landlord's allocation policy. This will be done by landlords when advertising 4 bed homes that can accommodate larger households (e.g. by setting the maximum bed need of applicants who can bid for homes to 5 or 6).

3.17.7 **Please note:** Individual landlords letting policies or local planning policies may affect the size of households that may apply for particular properties. Any such restrictions will be included in the property advert.

3.17.8 These property sizes will not apply to existing tenants of a social landlord who are seeking to move to a home that is at least 1 bedroom smaller. For example a single

person living in a 4 bedroom local authority or housing association home will be able to move into a 2 bedroom property. This is to make the most effective use of social housing and free up family accommodation.

3.17.9 Where households have particular needs (for example due to health issues) these will be taken into account in determining the size of property that they are eligible to apply for. For example, where the local authority or multi-agency health and wellbeing panel agree that an applicant requires a regular overnight carer they will be eligible for an additional bedroom.

3.17.10 Because of the very high demand for properties within Devon, additional bedrooms cannot be given to applicants who have children who do not normally live with them or who might reasonably be expected to live with them. This will normally be a permanent or regular arrangement and not a temporary agreement.

3.17.11 Such decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be determined by the local authority's decision as to which parent or guardian the child is dependent on in terms of their primary day-to-day care, and with whom the child would therefore be expected to ordinarily reside. One indication may be drawn, for example, by checking circumstances such as which parent receives the Child Benefit.

3.18 How is health and wellbeing priority awarded?

3.18.1 If an applicant needs re-housing because their health or welfare is being affected by their current housing they must complete a health and wellbeing assessment form.

3.18.2 Health and wellbeing priority is only awarded if a Devon local authority (or appropriate agencies working on their behalf) has determined that:

- An applicants health and/ or wellbeing is made worse by their current home, or lack of a home
- An applicant's health means that their current home is unsuitable e.g. they cannot manage stairs up to the bedroom or bathroom

3.18.3 Health and wellbeing priority **will not** be awarded in the following circumstances:

- Health problems that are not affected by housing or cannot be improved by moving
- Housing defects that can be rectified (these are covered below)
- Neighbour disputes
- Anti social behaviour³

³ The only exceptions will be cases where the local authority is satisfied that landlord, police, Anti Social Behaviour team, or Environmental Health etc have done everything possible to resolve the anti social behaviour. An example might be where the landlord has a possession order but there will be some time before the offender is evicted, and there is a need to move the victim to avoid any further impact on their health and wellbeing. Any cases will need significant evidence from landlord, police, Anti Social Behaviour team, or Environmental Health etc, and of the impact on the applicant's health and wellbeing.

- Homeless households who have been provided with temporary accommodation⁴
- Overcrowding
- Time-related medical problems (e.g. pregnancy-related problems or a broken leg)
- Disability of someone who is not on the Devon Home Choice application
- If the situation can be resolved by equipment or minor adaptations which are immediately available

3.18.4 Health and wellbeing priority will only be given if the applicant agrees to move to a more suitable home unless there are exceptional circumstances. For example, if an applicant cannot manage stairs they will only be considered for an accessible home or a bungalow, unless appropriate adaptations can be put in place (that aren't possible in the applicant's current home).

3.18.5 Applicants who require housing support to live independently will only be placed in the Emergency or High housing need bands as a result of a health and wellbeing assessment if an appropriate package of support has been put in place.

3.18.6 Applicants will not be placed in either the Emergency or High housing need bands unless supporting evidence is provided by a relevant health professional.

3.18.7 Each local authority, working together with partner agencies, will use the following guidelines for assessing health and wellbeing applications. This process can recommend access to a property size or type outside of the normal rules if there are special health or wellbeing needs.

3.18.8 Applicants are informed in writing of the outcome of their health and wellbeing assessment, and brief reasons explaining why the decision was made. If they disagree with the assessment there is a right to review but they must state the reasons for review in writing and provide any additional health and wellbeing evidence so the case can be reconsidered. The review procedure is set out below (see 4.20).

3.18.9 Each individual on the application with a health or welfare problem will be assessed. If there is more than 1 member of the household whose health and/or wellbeing is being affected by their housing, their application will be awarded the need relating to the severest problem.

3.18.10 Where an individual has more than 1 health and wellbeing need (for example physical and mental health problems), an assessment will be made of whether the combination of these factors should result in the person being placed in a higher band.

3.18.11 Where:

- Applicants have been placed in the Emergency housing need band as a result of a health and wellbeing assessment, this will be reviewed every 3 months
- Applicants have been placed in the High housing need band as a result of a health and wellbeing assessment, this will be reviewed every 6 months

⁴ Any health and wellbeing issues arising from temporary accommodation provided by a Devon local authority should be challenged on the suitability of the accommodation

- 3.18.12 The review will determine whether the level of priority is still appropriate. The review may involve a phone-call to the applicant and/ or support agency, or a home visit.
- 3.18.13 Applicants must inform their local authority housing team straight away of any changes in their circumstances, which mean that their health/welfare is further affected by their current housing. This includes any change that may affect the priority that has been afforded to their application. A further health and wellbeing assessment will then be undertaken.
- 3.18.14 A network of multi-agency panels is in place across the county. These panels provide the assessments on cases referred by housing officers. These cases will either be those that are likely to result in the award of high priority (e.g. either Emergency or High housing need bands) or require specialist input.
- 3.18.15 The make-up of the panels has not been prescribed but guidance has been provided on the types of agencies/ specialisms expected as a minimum. The panels use the framework, criteria and examples to make an assessment, thereby ensuring consistency across the county. The panels are able to co-opt people from particular specialisms to help decide particular cases

3.19 Health and Wellbeing Assessment Framework

3.19.1 Please note: 'Health' refers to both physical and mental health, people with learning disabilities etc.

3.19.2 A summary of why applications are placed in the different health and wellbeing categories is set out immediately below, whilst the tables that follow over the next three pages set out the criteria which staff will use to make an assessment.

- **Urgent/ Emergency health and wellbeing priority (Band A)**

The current accommodation is so completely unsuitable that should the applicant remain or return to it the affect on their health would be critical. This can only be averted by a move to alternative accommodation in the shortest time possible

- **High health and wellbeing priority (Band B)**

The housing situation is so severely affecting the applicant's health and well being that it is resulting in them being completely housebound, at risk of injury, relapse or unable to live independently. Alternative housing is required to prevent serious risks to their health and wellbeing.

- **Medium health and wellbeing priority (Band C)**

The housing situation is seriously affecting the applicant's health and wellbeing and is having an unacceptable impact on their ability to live independently. Alternative housing is required to prevent a significant and serious deterioration to their health and wellbeing.

- **Low health and wellbeing priority (Band D)**

The housing situation is having a negative impact on the applicants well being but it is not causing any significant deterioration to their health or ability to live independently.

- **No health and wellbeing priority (Band E)**

Whilst it is recognised that there may be a health and wellbeing issue, this is not affected by the current accommodation. The applicant's health and wellbeing would not be improved by a move to alternative accommodation. Therefore no housing need actually exists.

Criteria by which to make an assessment:

Urgent/ Emergency	High	Medium	Low	No
<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where there is a significant threat to life - Where there is a significant risk of serious and permanent injury and/or permanent disability - Where someone cannot be discharged from hospital because their home is, and will remain, permanently impossible to live in. 	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Someone who's housing has rendered them housebound and has little or no support available - Where a move would avoid the need for another service (e.g. Social Services) from having to provide a significant level of support. This might include for example residential care; overnight care provision, or other support with similar resource implications - Where a move would avoid the continued inappropriate use of residential care - Where someone is unable to return home (due to it's unsuitability) from residential care or supported housing 	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would be housebound, but where a sufficiently high level of support is available to enable them to get out of the house and reduce to a significant degree the impact of their circumstances 	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can access their home, but is unable to do so without appreciable difficulty, pain or other discomfort. Not completely housebound but there will be a significant reduction in the person's frequency of leaving and entering their home due to these circumstances. Often these cases may involve liaison with the Social Services team dealing with adaptations. Where adaptations are later provided and this improves the circumstances of the person concerned, then any earlier health/ wellbeing award should be removed and a new assessment carried out 	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobility issues (regardless of severity) where current property and locality unlikely to be bettered in terms of accessibility. - Where there is no perceived link between the current accommodation and a person's condition.

Criteria by which to make an assessment (Continued):

Urgent/ Emergency	High	Medium	Low	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where the applicant is prevented from having access to kidney dialysis, respiratory, or other similar essential equipment. This will normally apply where these circumstances are likely to prevent someone from remaining in their home for all or most of the time. Such a condition would be likely to be ongoing, rather than a temporary condition 	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where it is impossible for the person to use essential facilities within the home and no adaptation is possible - Inability to cope is solely and directly related to the housing situation. It is causing a breakdown in essential relationships and is requiring urgent mental health intervention - Where someone suffers with epilepsy or other conditions that cause frequent and unpredictable falls and all medical interventions to prevent them have been investigated. The layout of the accommodation, for example the number and nature of steps, stairs or other hazards is a major factor in increasing the risk of serious injury 	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can access their home, but is unable to access normal day-to-day facilities within it (e.g. bath/shower/toilet) without experiencing significant difficulty, pain or other discomfort. Where an adaptation is possible, practical and affordable this should always be pursued before any health & wellbeing priority is sought. If the adaptation is possible but will not be undertaken in the short term, this priority will be awarded in the interim. (The priority would be removed once the adaptation is undertaken) - The person is suffering from a mental illness and that situation has existed for a significant period of time, and is being exacerbated by housing. There is usually not only GP involvement, but also other specific mental health intervention. 	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mobility issues - where current property is suitable, but location is likely to have detrimental effect upon the individual, e.g. unable to access any transport, shops, or other essential services. - Mental health - where the layout, location, or environment around home is a contributory factor. These will frequently be less severe conditions. They are likely to be prescribed medication, but not often be in receipt of ongoing support other than from their GP. 	

Criteria by which to make an assessment – People needing to move to give or receive support:

Note:

- These criteria apply to the person requiring support, whether they need to move to receive support or a family member/ friend needs to move to provide support to them (please note that in the latter example the priority is given to the person who will be moving to provide support rather than the applicant with the health & wellbeing need).
- Each case would need to be reviewed to assess which areas are appropriate for an applicant seeking to move to give/ receive support to bid for. They will only receive any priority for this need for homes in the agreed area(s).

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Urgent/ Emergency	High	Medium	Low	No
	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applicant's or their immediate carer's health or safety are at risk unless they move to a location that enables family (or other significant support network, such as a support service, hospital or long established friend) to provide vital and support at least 3 times a week to minimise their risk. This support will avoid the need for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - residential care - hospital admission - a large use of social care - a breakdown in essential relationships and/ or urgent mental health intervention - The support is not available in their current location. 	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Applicant's independence would be significantly improved by living in a location that enables family (or other significant support network, such as a long established friend) to provide support at least 3 times a week to enable this. - The support is not available in their current location. 	<p>Will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quality of life would be greatly enhanced by living in a location that would allow family (or other significant support network, such as a long established friend) to provide social support at least 3 times a week. The support will enable for example the person to access transport, shops, or other essential services - The support is not available in their current location. 	

3.20 How is priority awarded due to housing defects?

- 3.20.1 An Environmental Health Officer may be asked to investigate the defects that are reported by an applicant where the problem might lead to the award of Emergency or High housing need bands. The main objective of the Environmental Health Officer is to help bring sub standard homes up to an acceptable standard.
- 3.20.2 Where a housing defect exists applicants are expected to have already raised the problem with the landlord in writing before an Officer visits. This will give the landlord the opportunity to carry out the necessary improvements before involving the local authority and possible enforcement action. Applicants should be made fully aware that if an Officer visits and identifies serious defects (Bands A and B) the officer is under a statutory duty to take appropriate steps to remedy the defects and this will involve contacting the landlord and/or agent.
- 3.20.3 Where applicants are living in a property in a poor condition where defects are a potential risk to the health and safety of occupants, priority will be awarded as follows. Please note that applicants will not receive any additional priority if remedial action is planned to rectify the defect(s). In such circumstances applicants may be re-housed temporarily if necessary until any works are complete. Priority will only be awarded where remedial action is not possible (or not possible within an appropriate timescale)
- 3.20.4 It should be noted that overcrowding is dealt with by other sections of the Devon Home Choice Policy (see Section 3.3: High housing need band & Medium housing need band) and is not covered by this section.

3.20.5 Emergency housing need band (Band A)

This will only be given in an emergency, on the recommendation of an Environmental Health Officer following a site visit. This will cover any defects in the property that cannot be remedied within an appropriate timescale, and where the most appropriate course of action would be to serve a Prohibition Order, Emergency Prohibition Order or to carry out emergency remedial works.

3.20.6 High housing need band (Band B)

This will only be given where an Environmental Health Officer has inspected the property and identified serious health and safety issues within the property and the most appropriate course of action would be to serve an Improvement Notice. These are most likely to be a Category 1 hazard and the Officer has a statutory duty to take appropriate steps to rectify the problem and will contact the landlord and/or agent. Priority will only be awarded where the housing defects cannot be resolved by standard enforcement action. Any priority will be removed when the hazard is rectified.

3.20.7 Local authority and Registered Social Landlord tenants

Tenants of local authorities and Registered Social Landlords will not

normally be given any additional priority due to disrepair. There are other policies and procedures that will be used by the individual landlord to assist where there is disrepair in these properties.

3.21 Review of the Devon Home Choice register

3.21.1 All local authorities in Devon will review the applicants on the housing register at least once every 3 years in order to:

- Confirm that the details on the register are still correct
- Check whether there have been any changes in an applicant's circumstances
- Confirm that the applicant wants to stay on the housing register.

3.21.2 If an applicant not identified as being vulnerable does not reply to either of the 2 review letters it will be assumed that housing is no longer required and the application will be cancelled. The applicant will have to apply again if they later want re-housing. In such cases an applicant will lose their previous band start date and their band start date will be determined by their fresh application.

3.21.3 Where applicants who have been identified as vulnerable do not reply to either of the 2 review letters, the local authority will seek to contact them again and/ or any advocate (e.g. family, friend or support agency) working with them. This is so that that vulnerable people are not removed from the register inappropriately. If this final attempt to contact the applicant and/ or their advocate fails their application will be cancelled.

3.21.4 Only in exceptional circumstances will an application be reinstated with the previous band start date. For example an applicant was in hospital and missed the review letters.

3.22 Cancelling applications

3.22.1 An application will be cancelled from Devon Home Choice in the following circumstances:

- At the request of an applicant
- Where an applicant does not respond to an application review, within the specified time limit
- Where a local authority or a Registered Provider has housed the applicant
- When a tenant on the housing register completes a mutual exchange
- Where the applicant moves and does not provide a contact address
- Where the applicant has died
- Where the applicant has not supplied the relevant information requested within 28 days

3.22.2 Where an applicant has been highlighted as potentially vulnerable, the local authority will contact the applicant, or agency that they are working with if appropriate, to check their circumstances before cancelling the application.

3.22.3 Any applicant whose application has been cancelled has the right to ask for a review of the decision.

3.23 Rejoining Devon Home Choice

3.23.1 Where an applicant wishes to re-join Devon Home Choice at a later date their new band start date will be determined by the date they re-apply. Their housing need will be reassessed and they be placed in the appropriate band as set out above.

4. Section 4: Applying for properties

4.1 Finding a home

4.1.1 Once applicants have received notification that they have registered with Devon Home Choice they can start applying for homes for which they are eligible.

4.2 Moves between local authorities in Devon

4.2.1 A key aim of Devon Home Choice is to provide people seeking housing with choice and the ability to move within Devon. For example to access work or move closer to support networks.

4.2.2 As set out below, some homes may only be advertised to certain groups of applicants. For example where planning conditions apply, or a home has particular adaptations. Any restrictions as to who is eligible for a particular property will clearly be set out in the advert. To maximise choice and potential mobility for applicants within Devon, anyone registered with Devon Home Choice will be able to apply for the remaining properties for which they are eligible (e.g. according to the number of bedrooms they need) .

4.2.3 In order to ensure that moves between local authorities do not adversely impact on 1 or more local authority areas, these moves will be monitored regularly by the Devon Home Choice board. In particular the following will be monitored:

- (A) The number of households moving into a local authority area who have no local connection with that area
- (B) The number of households moving out of that local authority area who have no local connection to their new local authority area
- (C) The balance between these figures (e.g. A – B)

4.2.4 Where the balance of these figures (C) accounts for 2% or more of the lets made within that local authority area in that period, homes in that local authority area may be labelled in the following period(s) so as to provide preference to applicants with a local connection to that particular local authority⁵. If no applicants with a local connection to the local authority bid for a home, applicants from other areas will be considered.

⁵ Unless a landlord specifically requests, and it is agreed by the local authority, that certain properties (e.g. hard to let properties) are advertised without a local connection preference.

- 4.2.5 When the balance of these figures (C) goes back below 2% of lets within that local authority area, homes in that local authority area will again be advertised without being labelled as preference to applicants with a local connection (unless this is required for another reason set out above or below).
- 4.2.6 Tenants of Devon Home Choice partner landlords are excluded from the calculation of, and any restrictions on, cross border moves. For the avoidance of doubt, following the Allocation of Housing (Qualification Criteria for Right to Move) (England) Regulations 2015, this includes those tenants who need to move between local authorities in Devon for work.
- 4.2.7 Existing tenants of other social landlords living outside Devon who need to move to Devon for work must similarly be considered for any homes advertised with a preference to applicants with a local connection to a particular local authority.
- 4.2.8 As stated above (Section 3.9) however, if a home is subject to more specific local connection criteria these will still apply to tenants of partner and other social landlords with no local connection to Devon, including those who need to move to Devon for work. For example Section 106 planning conditions that mean the home can only be let to someone with a local connection to a specific local area.

4.3 Accessing Information

- 4.3.1 We provide:
- The Devon Home Choice User Guide is available on the Devon Home Choice website. This explains what Devon Home Choice is and how it works. The guide will be sent to those applicants who cannot access the internet
 - A range of information on the Devon Home Choice website explaining how the scheme works and setting out the full range of housing options
 - Awareness raising sessions and training for councillors, parish councillors and partner organisations
- 4.3.2 We provide information in a range of different formats on request, for example:
- Large print
 - Braille
 - Information in a range of community languages
 - Use of symbols, pictograms and photos
- 4.3.3 Research has found that even though help and information was available in community languages in some choice based letting schemes, some applicants were unaware that it existed. We will work closely with both the Devon and Plymouth Racial Equality Councils, and other community organisations to ensure that we publicise the availability of information in a range of community languages and language line interpretation services appropriately and effectively.

- 4.3.4 We will test information with different groups of people to ensure that it is easy to use and understand.
- 4.3.5 Information will be available from a wide range of sources. For example:
- Local Authorities
 - Housing associations
 - Support agencies
 - Parish councils
- 4.3.6 As well as advertising available local authority and housing association homes, other housing options such as low cost home ownership opportunities and private rented homes will be included in Devon Home Choice. The tenure of a property will be made very clear. Information will be provided on people's rights in different tenures.
- 4.3.7 The key barrier preventing people in Devon from accessing social housing is the overall shortage of homes. Choice Based Letting in itself will not increase the number of available homes. However it is clear that Devon Home Choice will improve the way that homes are let. It will be made clear in all the information provided on Devon Home Choice that there is very high demand for social housing in Devon and that most of the people who register are unlikely to be successful and should therefore consider other housing options as well.
- 4.3.8 Despite this some applicants may have their expectations raised about getting housed (for example due to the fact that they will be able to see the available homes to let). This may impact on some groups who are encouraged to access the scheme, but do not have enough priority to be housed. Some applicants may find this more difficult than others, and may lack the knowledge or capacity to find other solutions to their housing need. All of the local authorities across Devon have developed a housing options approach to help such people. Staff will be able to discuss a whole range of options with applicants including private renting and low cost home ownership, as well as sources of support.

4.4 Advertising of properties

- 4.4.1 Homes are advertised each week in the following ways:
- Online at the Devon Home Choice website
 - On the Devon Home Choice Smartphone App, which is available to download from the Devon Home Choice website
 - On newsletters that will be widely distributed across Devon. Details of where newsletters can be collected are available from local authority housing teams
 - Personalised information will be sent to applicants who have been identified as vulnerable and who are in either the Emergency housing need, High housing need and Medium housing need bands
- 4.4.2 All documentation, adverts and the website will be fully accessible to

all community groups within Devon.

- 4.4.3 Homes are advertised on a weekly cycle, from 12.00 a.m. on Wednesday to 11.59 p.m. the following Monday. No homes are advertised on Tuesdays.

4.5 Property Descriptions

- 4.5.1 Properties advertised will include a photograph of the home and a full description. The description will include:

- Type of property
- Whether the home is being let at an 'affordable rent' or on a fixed term tenancy
- Any age restrictions
- Any special criteria (e.g. local letting plans/ sensitive lets)
- Number of bedrooms
- The maximum size of household that can apply (for example '3 bed, maximum 5 person house')
- Location of property (street & city/town/village)
- Floor level (if appropriate)
- Any adaptations (for example disabled facilities) – see further information below
- Access to the property (for example the number of steps, whether there is a ramp or lift)
- Type of parking (if any)
- Heating type
- Rent charged per week (& number of rent weeks per year)
- Any service charges
- Type of tenancy
- Information about the surrounding area (for example whether local shops and public transport are easily accessible)
- Services provided (for example warden, caretaker, cleaning)

4.6 Accessible Housing Register

- 4.6.1 Many applicants who register with Devon Home Choice have mobility issues that mean they require accessible accommodation. However, there is a shortage of such accommodation across Devon.

- 4.6.2 In order to make the most effective use of homes that meet the needs of people with mobility issues an assessment is made of:

- The accessibility need of each household registering with Devon Home Choice
- The accessibility of each property advertised through Devon Home Choice (e.g. whether they can meet the needs of applicants with

- 4.6.3 Depending on the assessment that is made applicants and properties will be assigned to one of the following accessibility categories:

Accessibility Category	Applicant requires property with the following/ Property can meet the needs of applicants with the following requirements:
Wheelchair Accessible	<p>Applicant requires fully wheelchair accessible accommodation, into and throughout the property.</p> <p>Applicant is likely to be a full time or regularly use a wheelchair for prolonged periods.</p>
Part Wheelchair	<p>Applicant requires wheelchair accessible accommodation.</p> <p>Applicant may only need to access essential facilities such as one bedroom, bathroom and kitchen.</p> <p>Wheelchair access to additional rooms such as other bedrooms is not essential, perhaps because a carer will meet some functions.</p>
Step-Free	<p>Applicant is able to mobilise but cannot use steps without close supervision and assistance.</p> <p>Applicants who use a wheelchair outside, but do not need one indoors, should normally be assessed as needing step-free accommodation. However applicants with a long term progressive condition who currently only use a wheelchair outdoors would be more appropriately assessed as needing a wheelchair or part wheelchair accessible home.</p> <p>Applicant will normally use a mobility aid (such as a walking stick or walking frame).</p>
Maximum of 3 steps	<p>Applicant is able to manage only up to 3 steps. Applicant will often require less specialist walking aids such a stick or crutch.</p>
General Needs	<p>Applicant does not have any severe mobility issues</p>

4.6.4 When a property is advertised the landlord will confirm the accessibility category of the property.

4.6.5 Where a property meets the needs of applicants with mobility needs (as set out above), the landlord will advertise the property with a preference to applicants who have a need for that type of accommodation (see 'Labelling properties' below).

4.6.6 Where a property is advertised with preference to certain groups as set out above, applicants in those specified groups will be considered before other applicants in higher bands and/ or with longer Band Start dates. For accessible homes this will be applied as follows:

- Wheelchair accessible and Part wheelchair accessible homes: The landlord or local authority carrying out the shortlisting will identify those applicants who have bid for the property with who have been assessed as needing a fully wheelchair or Part wheelchair accessible home in Band D or above (and have a local connection to Devon). They will then review each applicant and determine which applicant's needs will be best met by the property.
- Step free and Maximum 3 steps homes: The landlord or local authority carrying out the shortlisting will identify those applicants who have bid for the property with an with any accessibility need (from Full wheelchair to Maximum 3 steps) in Band C or above. They will then review each applicant and determine which applicant's needs will be best met by the property.

4.7 Labelling Properties

4.7.1 In some cases homes may be advertised to certain groups of applicants, or to provide preference to certain groups. This will be agreed locally between local authorities and partner landlords. Should there be any disagreement between local authorities and landlords as to how a home (or homes) should be advertised, they will seek to resolve this as set out in the Local Tenancy Strategy.

4.7.2 For example:

- Where a home meets the needs of people with mobility needs it will be advertised with preference to people who have those needs. This is to make the most effective use of accessible housing.
- Where, due to planning restrictions or a local authority's Allocation Policy, applicants are required to have a local connection to a particular area within Devon
- Where a preference is being given to existing tenants who wish to transfer, including those who wish to move to a smaller property
- Where a preference is being given to households who have been accepted as homeless by a specific Devon local authority (also see below – Section 4.9)
- Where a preference is being given to other groups such as:
 - o Working households, or
 - o Households who are making a positive community contribution o
 - o Former members of the regular UK armed forces.

4.7.3 Where a property is advertised with preference to certain groups as set out above, applicants in those specified groups will be considered before other applicants in higher bands and/ or with longer Band Start dates. See the Accessible Housing Register section above for more details of how accessible homes will be allocated.

4.7.4 There may also be occasions where 'local letting policies' need to be applied by Devon Home Choice partners.

4.7.5 Local letting policies may include a system to ensure a mix of household types, for example the number of children in order to

ensure that there are not too many within a particular area. Where agreements have been reached adverts will clearly state how such schemes will be allocated and the applicants eligible to bid.

- 4.7.6 Local letting policies may be introduced where a new estate has been built in order to help create a new community. Alternatively, a local letting policy may be required where there are issues that have occurred within an established community, and action is required to assist that community to become sustainable.
- 4.7.7 The decision to undertake a local letting policy will be made by the partners involved including the local authority's housing department.
- 4.7.8 Whilst being designed to reflect local needs, local letting policies will still be compatible with the aim of meeting housing need in Devon as well as the requirements of relevant 'Codes of Guidance.'
- 4.7.9 The use of local letting policies should not lead to vulnerable households being disadvantaged but lead to increased tenancy sustainability.
- 4.7.10 Further information can be obtained from the relevant local authority.

4.8 Sensitive letting – individual properties

- 4.8.1 Occasionally there may be a requirement to assist in dealing with issues that impact on a small, specific location that may be only 1 dwelling within an estate. This may be to:
- Reduce the concentration of certain needs groups which is impacting on housing management
 - Promote a more balanced community by seeking to select/not select households with particular characteristics
- 4.8.2 This will be agreed by a process between the local authority housing department and the housing association (where the local authority is not landlord itself).
- 4.8.3 The decision to apply particular requirements will be undertaken by the relevant Devon Home Choice Partners.
- 4.8.4 The success of this will be the sensitive matching of a household to the vacant home where some flexibility has been identified.

4.9 Bidding for a home

- 4.9.1 Where an applicant meets the criteria for a home set out in the advert they may bid for that home within the deadline given.
- 4.9.2 Applicants may bid for homes:

- Online at the Devon Home Choice website
www.devonhomechoice.com

- Using the Smartphone App, which is available to download from the Devon Home Choice website
- Using the automated telephone service (0845 402 7894), available in English and a range of other languages
- In person at the offices of any of the Devon local authorities

4.9.3 The staff within the Local authority housing offices will be available to explain to applicants how to bid. They will also encourage applicants to make use of all the bidding options available to them, so if their circumstances change, and one method will no longer be available to them, they will be able to use another. For example, if an applicant goes abroad on holiday, they may not want to use the automated telephone line as usual, but will be able to bid online through the website.

4.9.4 Advocacy bidding will be allowed to make use of existing networks of support from family, friends, neighbours, and support agencies. To bid an advocate will need the applicant's reference number and their consent to make a bid⁶.

4.9.5 Applicants who are unable to bid will be offered the opportunity for bids to be placed automatically on homes they are eligible for. These applicants will be identified in a number of ways:

- Through the application process
- Analysis of bidding patterns amongst high priority applicants
- A request from the applicant themselves⁷
- Representation from an agency.

4.9.6 Applicants can bid for 3 homes each week.

4.9.7 Please note that normal weekly advertising cycle may be altered over Xmas and New Year. This will be clearly advertised.

4.9.8 In the event that they have the highest band and earliest band start date for more than 1 home, applicants will be required to choose which home they wish to be considered for. In order to ensure effective housing management applicants will not be able to be considered for more than 1 home at any one time.

4.9.9 Applicants who apply and are put forward for sheltered housing will have their support needs assessed by a member of the local authority's or housing association's sheltered housing team.

4.10 Deadlines for Bids

⁶ When there is a formal advocacy role, for example from a Council team or another agency, a form will need to be signed by the applicant to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act.

⁷ Automatic bidding will only be available for those people who **cannot** apply themselves. It will not be available to those people who would reasonably be expected to bid for homes themselves (except for households who've been accepted as statutorily homeless and have not been bidding for homes).

4.10.1 Homes will be advertised each week. The advert will indicate the deadline by which time applications for homes must be received (normally this will be Monday at 11.59 p.m.). Any applications received after the deadline has been reached will not be considered.

4.11 Automatic Bidding

4.11.1 Households who have been accepted as statutorily homeless by a Devon local authority, those placed in the 'Prevention of homelessness' category and those assessed as being ready to move on from supported accommodation (all High housing need band) are expected to apply for all suitable homes advertised through Devon Home Choice each week. This will be monitored on a weekly basis by each of the Devon local authorities.

4.11.2 Homeless applicants, those threatened with homelessness and those assessed as being ready to move on from supported accommodation will be able to bid for properties across Devon, in common with other applicants.

4.11.3 Households in these three categories who have not been bidding for suitable homes will be contacted after 6 weeks. This will be to remind them of their responsibilities and to ensure that necessary support is in place to enable them to bid for homes. They will be advised that if they do not bid for all suitable homes from that point onwards that automatic bids will be submitted on their behalf.

4.11.4 If households in the three categories do not then bid for all suitable homes, or are refusing offers of accommodation for which they've bid, automatic bids will be placed on their behalf. Before automatic bids are placed the relevant local authority will carry out an assessment as to what type of property would be suitable. This may include location. Automatic bids will be limited to the local authority area managing the application.

4.11.5 Households who have been bidding actively but have been unsuccessful will not have automatic bids placed on their behalf. As long as households continue to bid for all available appropriate homes automatic bids will not be placed on their behalf. If however they stop bidding for 6 weeks or more automatic bids will be placed on their behalf.

4.11.6 Please note that 6 weeks will be the normal length of time applied but that the time period will be at the discretion of the local authority managing the homelessness application.

- 4.11.7 Those households placed in the 'Prevention of homelessness' category where it has not been possible to avoid them becoming homeless will remain in the High housing need band (B), if accepted as homeless by a Devon local authority. The 6 week period will be deemed to have commenced when they were placed in the 'Prevention of homelessness' category, regardless if they are later accepted as statutorily homeless (e.g. not 6 weeks in each category).
- 4.11.8 If an automatic bid is successful the household will be expected to accept the offer of accommodation unless there is good reason why they should refuse a property. Any 'unreasonable' refusal of such an offer will lead to a local authority discharging their duties under the homelessness legislation.
- 4.11.9 This requirement and the associated procedure will be clearly set out in the decision letter sent to households when they have been assessed as being statutorily homeless.
- 4.11.10 Where a Devon local authority is seeking to reduce the numbers of homeless households in temporary accommodation within its area, it will be able to advertise certain properties in its area as 'Preference to households who've been accepted homeless by xxx Council'. Where the local authority is not the landlord this will be subject to agreement with the housing association.

4.12 Selection procedure

- 4.12.1 Applicants who have bid for homes will be prioritised:
- Firstly by their band. For example those applicants in the High housing need band (Band B) will be listed above applicants in the Medium housing need band (Band C), and
 - Secondly **within** each band in order of their band start date, with the applicant with the earliest band start date at the top.
- 4.12.2 For each home advertised the successful applicant will be the one who is eligible for the home, meets any preferences that have been stated on the advert where appropriate, is in the highest band and has the earliest band start date.
- 4.12.3 Each successful applicant's details will be checked to ensure they are eligible for the home and that there has been no material change of circumstances since their banding was assessed. Only those applicants who meet the criteria can be offered the home.
- 4.12.4 Before making a final decision on the offer, the applicant will be able to view the property. As set out above, where an applicant has the highest band and earliest effective band for more than 1 home in any 1 week, they will be required to choose which home they wish to be considered for. In order to ensure effective housing management applicants will not be able to be considered for more than 1 home at any one time.
- 4.12.5 If an applicant confirms that they wish to be considered for a home

they will not be able to bid on any other further homes, whilst they are being considered. Any open bids that an applicant has on other homes will also be 'skipped' whilst they are being considered for a home.

- 4.12.6 Landlords will make contact with the applicant being considered for the property to arrange a time for them to view the property. This will normally be within 3 working days, but is at the discretion of the landlord depending upon the circumstances.
- 4.12.7 Partners in Devon Home Choice will be able to offer advice to applicants to help them make an informed choice. It will be important however that any guidance offered does not override an applicant's own choices.
- 4.12.8 Applicants offered a home will normally be expected to make a decision whether to accept the offer within 24 hours. Where an applicant requires additional support or time to make such a decision this can be offered by the local authority and/ or housing association, or a support agency.
- 4.12.9 Where applicants have indicated that they are working with a support agency and are happy for information to be shared with the agency, the support agency will be informed if they are being put forward for a property. This will enable the agency to offer support to the applicant in deciding whether to accept an offer.

4.13 Verification of eligibility

- 4.13.1 Local authorities will undertake an initial check and verification of the information supplied by an applicant when they apply to join the Devon Home Choice register.
- 4.13.2 When an applicant has bid for a home and they are in the highest priority band and have the earliest band start date, there will be a further check on their application (normally undertaken by the landlord) to ensure that they are eligible for the home.
- 4.13.3 If an applicant with the highest priority and earliest band start date is not considered to be eligible for a home this will be recorded on the Devon Home Choice website, together with the reason for this decision. This information will be accessible to the applicants themselves.
- 4.13.4 A more detailed verification and eligibility check will then be undertaken by the landlord of the home (either a local authority or Housing Association) before a formal offer is made.

- 4.13.5 There will be clear grounds for refusals or bypassing applicants by landlords agreed with partner landlords. A landlord will inform an unsuccessful applicant of the reason behind their decision. This may include suggested action that the applicant take in order to improve their chances of successfully finding a home through Devon Home Choice.
- 4.13.6 All offers of accommodation with landlords will be subject to the policies of the individual organisation. The landlord may require additional criteria to be met. Any additional criteria will be clearly set out in this Policy and in the advert.
- 4.13.7 Where it is found that an applicant's circumstances have changed from the information held on the Devon Home Choice register, or are incorrect, their application will be re-assessed. If this re-assessment finds that their priority band is reduced they will not be offered the property if they are no longer the applicant with the highest priority band. Cases may be referred to the relevant lead on fraud for the local authority managing the application.
- 4.13.8 The detailed verification check will include assessing whether applicants are still eligible for social housing (see Section 2.4) and qualifying persons (see Section 2.5). Applicants found to be ineligible or no longer a qualifying person since registering with Devon Home Choice will be removed from the register, and will not be offered the home.
- 4.13.9 The verification process will also involve a check on an applicant's rent account where appropriate. Applicants with rent arrears to a social landlord, that were accrued in the previous two years on their current or a previous tenancy, will not normally be offered a property. Those applicants with rent arrears above £500 will be placed in the No housing need band (Band E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need. Further details are set out above (see 'Applicants with rent arrears').
- 4.13.10 Applicants with rent arrears to a private landlord will be considered on a case-by-case basis by Devon local authorities. Applicants who have rent arrears to a private landlord over £500 who have been (or would be) assessed as having accrued these rent arrears intentionally will be placed in the No housing need band (Band E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need. 'Intentionally' means that the applicant deliberately did something (or failed to do something) that resulted in the rent arrears. An act or omission in good faith on the part of the applicant will not be treated as deliberate if they were unaware of any relevant fact. Further details are set out above (see 'Applicants with rent arrears').
- 4.13.11 If the verification process highlights issues (set out above) that lead to a reduction in an applicant's priority band, they will not be offered the property if they are no longer the applicant with the highest priority

band.

- 4.13.12 Applicants who have their priority reduced within Devon Home Choice will be informed in writing of:
- The decision and the reasons behind it
 - Their right to appeal and how to do this
- 4.13.13 Each applicant's circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis, for example if an emergency move is needed or serious harm would result then their priority may be maintained, enabling the move to progress. The tenant would be charged and expected to pay back the cost of any work needed to put right wilful damage or neglect.
- 4.13.14 Transfer applicants need to check with their landlords on the criteria they should meet before being offered a transfer to alternative accommodation. Social landlords can prevent a transfer in certain situations, for example if the applicant has outstanding rent arrears.
- 4.13.15 Partners in Devon Home Choice reserve the right to prevent an offer going ahead where the home is not considered to be suitable for the applicant.
- 4.13.16 This may include issues of public safety, risk, or sustainability of the tenancy. An offer may not be made or may even be withdrawn if the support needs of the applicant are such that the landlord, in consultation with the local authority deems that the applicant will be unable to maintain an independent tenancy. This decision may also be informed by the input from other partner agencies involved in a case.
- 4.13.17 In these circumstances there must be a sufficient care or floating support package available to ensure that the tenancy is likely to be successfully maintained.

4.14 Refusals

- 4.14.1 A refusal of a property is considered to have occurred if the applicant has viewed the property and that an offer has been, or would have been, made.
- 4.14.2 If an applicant decides to refuse an offer of a home it will be offered to the applicant who is eligible and has the next highest band and/or earliest band start date and, where appropriate, meets any preferences specified on the advert.
- 4.14.3 Applicants who have been accepted as statutorily homeless by a Devon local authority are also able to refuse an offer of a home that they have applied for a period of 6 weeks without penalty. Any refusal that they make during this time will not affect the duty owed to them by the local authority.
- 4.14.4 After this 6 week period applicants who have been accepted as statutorily homeless by a Devon local authority are still able to exercise choice through Devon Home Choice, to apply for those

homes they feel meet their needs. However after 6 weeks, if they refuse an offer of accommodation, the refusal will be referred to the local authority managing the case. They will investigate whether or not the refusal is 'reasonable' and inform the landlord within 24 hours. If the refusal is 'reasonable' then the second placed applicant will be made an offer of the home. However, if the refusal is deemed 'unreasonable' then the applicant will be advised by the local authority that their duty will be discharged and the applicant re-offered the home.

- 4.14.5 Homeless applicants will also be advised that if they refuse an offer, the home will be offered to another household with the next highest band and/or earliest band start date who applied. Rather than refusing an offer of accommodation, homeless households will therefore be advised to accept the offer and request a review of suitability once they have been accommodated. Further advice and information is available from each of the Devon local authorities.
- 4.14.6 If an Emergency housing need band (A) applicant refuses a suitable offer of a property through Devon Home Choice, they will have their status reviewed and may be placed in 1 of the other bands dependent on their need. In very exceptional circumstances an applicant will be allowed to remain in the Emergency housing need band (A) for longer than 4 weeks.
- 4.14.7 Applicants who refuse a number of homes that they have bid for and been offered will have their case reviewed by the local authority managing their case. They will be offered advice and assistance to take part in Devon Home Choice effectively. If it is found that they continue to refuse what are considered to be suitable homes they will have their priority reduced to the No housing need band (Band E) or removed from the Devon Home Choice register in those local authority areas which do not register households with no housing need.

4.15 Feedback

- 4.15.1 An important part of Devon Home Choice will be to provide feedback on properties that have been let.
- 4.15.2 Personalised feedback will also be available to each applicant on the 'My CBL' section of the Devon Home Choice website to let them know the outcome of their applications for properties. This will help to inform any future choices they make about applying for homes. Feedback will also be available from local authority housing teams.
- 4.15.3 This information will help applicants understand where properties are more likely to become available and their chances of success.

4.16 Difficult to let properties

- 4.16.1 If a vacancy cannot be filled through Devon Home Choice then the property can be let in anyway deemed appropriate by the landlord. This may include re-advertising the property and removing any

restrictions previously attached, or making a direct offer.

4.16.2 Details (for example the number, type and location) of properties that are difficult to let will be monitored each quarter. Information will be fed into the Devon Home Choice Management Board.

4.17 False information

4.17.1 Applicants who knowingly or recklessly make a statement which is false, or knowingly withhold information in connection with their application is guilty of a criminal offence. Anyone found guilty of such an offence may:

- Have their application refused or withdrawn from the Devon Home Choice register
- Have any offers made withdrawn
- Be prosecuted by members of Devon Home Choice. This could lead to a large fine or imprisonment, and may also lead to legal action for the possession of any accommodation found to have been obtained by deliberately allowing false information to be used.

4.17.2 All landlords in this agreement are committed to taking legal action against any applicant found to have gained a tenancy based on false information in their application form.

4.17.3 Any applications where there are concerns that the applicant has knowingly or recklessly made a statement which is false, or knowingly withheld information should be reported to the relevant lead on fraud for the local authority managing the application.

4.18 Data Protection

4.18.1 In accordance with our responsibility under the Data Protection Act 1998, all applicants are made aware when they apply that their personal information will be held and may be shared with other Devon Home Choice Partners and Landlords for the purpose of consideration of an offer of accommodation being made.

4.18.2 All personal information will be processed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998,

4.18.3 Applicants have the right to inspect personal information held about them under Section 7 of the Data Protection Act 1998. Applicants may also correct any inaccurate information held about them.

4.18.4 Personal information will not be shared with external individuals or organisations unless there is a legal obligation to do so.

4.19 Policy review

4.19.1 The Devon Home Choice scheme is reviewed annually. The Devon Home Choice Management Board will agree any changes that need to be made to the policy and/ or operation of the scheme as a result of

the policy review.

4.19.2 Changes will only be made to the Devon Home Choice policy following the annual review, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. new government legislation etc).

4.20 Reviews

4.20.1 Any applicant has the right of review of the following decisions:

- They have been denied the right to register
- The priority and band start date they have been awarded
- They have had their priority reduced
- A decision not to allocate a property for which the applicant has bid and has the highest priority and earliest band start date
- Their application has been cancelled
- That they have been assessed as having deliberately worsened their own circumstances

4.20.2 Once an applicant has been notified in writing of the band in which they have been placed, or their ineligibility, they will have a right of review against the assessment. Requests for reviews must be submitted in writing, to the local authority housing office within 21 days of the date on the notification letter and include the reason why the applicant believes their banding or ineligibility is wrong together with any additional information that the applicant believes is relevant.

4.20.3 Requests for reviews of a decision not to allocate a property for which the applicant has bid and has the highest priority and earliest band start date should be submitted to the landlord that has taken the decision.

4.20.4 All requests for reviews for any of the other reasons listed above must be submitted in writing to the local authority housing office.

4.20.5 Where an applicant requests a review of their priority awarded as a result of a health & wellbeing assessment:

- If the original decision was taken by the local authority, a senior officer in the local authority who played no part in the original assessment will carry out a review of the case and respond in writing, to the applicant within 56 days of the receipt of the request for review letter
- If the decision was made by a multi-agency panel, the review will be carried out by a multi-agency panel in another area of Devon. A response will be provided to the applicant in writing within 56 days of the receipt of the request for review letter

4.20.6 The local authority or landlord will acknowledge the review request within 7 days. A Senior Officer who played no part in the original assessment will carry out a review of the case and respond in writing, to the applicant within 56 days of the receipt of the request for review letter. Following the review, the applicant will be informed in writing of the outcome together with the reasons for the decision.

4.20.7 If an applicant is dissatisfied of with the merits of a decision on review they are advised to seek advice from a solicitor or the Citizens Advice Bureau etc.

4.20.8 Any complaints regarding the operation of the scheme should be directed initially to a local authority housing office. Details of applicants, allocations and complaints will be monitored in relation to diversity to ensure equality of access.

4.21 Monitoring

4.21.1 Effective monitoring is in place and will be regularly reviewed to ensure that Devon Home Choice is accessible, and is working as fairly and effectively as possible.

4.21.2 The monitoring system includes information on:

- The participation and outcomes for vulnerable groups
- The number of applicants stating that they wish to be supported (for example with completing the application form or with bidding), why, and how this support was provided
- Applicants who have been awarded a high priority (for example Emergency, High or Medium Housing Needs Bands) but haven't been bidding or haven't been bidding effectively. This will be followed up to assess the reasons why and whether any additional support is required
- How applicants have accessed information on available homes
- How applicants have bid for homes
- How long applicants who have been accepted as statutorily homeless take to move into permanent accommodation
- The number of applicants who have been bypassed or refused by partner landlords, and the reasons for these decisions
- The occasions when, and reasons why local authorities have used their residual discretion to depart from of the Policy due to exceptional circumstances
- The number and type of homes diverted by partner landlords for lettings outside Devon Home Choice, and the reasons for this

4.21.3 A range of questions have been included on the application form that will enable equal opportunities monitoring. This information will help reveal whether there are certain groups within the community who are not accessing information about Devon Home Choice and not participating in the scheme.

4.21.4 As with any monitoring it will only serve a purpose if the results are used effectively to develop and further improve Devon Home Choice to ensure that applicants who are vulnerable do not lose out.

4.21.5 Similarly good practice from other schemes and guidance from central government will be incorporated into Devon Home Choice.

4.22 Partnership working

4.22.1 A wide range of agencies across the statutory and voluntary sectors

work with people who may require support to participate in Devon Home Choice.

- 4.22.2 Local authorities monitor the housing register to identify those applicants who, given their priority within Devon Home Choice, may soon be successful for a property, but who require a support package to enable them to live independently. It will be vital that such a support package is put in place, or can be arranged in an appropriate timescale that will enable an applicant to take up an offer of housing. This requires close partnership working between local authorities, housing associations and partner agencies.
- 4.22.3 Research has shown that Choice Based Letting schemes have not always engaged well with partner agencies. Many support agencies have not been fully aware of how schemes work and therefore have not been well placed to support the applicants they work with to participate. It will be important that we continue to work, on an ongoing and regular basis, with a wide range of agencies to raise awareness of Devon Home Choice in order:
- That partner agencies are aware of how Devon Home Choice works, and are able to support applicants to participate
 - That understanding of the scheme is not lost with changes in staff
 - That the scheme is developed taking on the views of applicants who may require support to participate and the agencies who work with them
- 4.22.4 We recognise that all agencies, statutory and voluntary, have pressures on their time and resources. As a result not all agencies will be able to assist in supporting applicants to participate in Devon Home Choice. However it is only through an open and honest discussion with partner agencies that this will become apparent.
- 4.22.5 As well as explaining how Devon Home Choice works it will be important to ensure that partner agencies are given a realistic view of the demand for social housing in Devon, and information on the full range of housing options. This will be achieved through briefing and training events, and information produced specifically for support agencies. This will help to make sure that applicants who may require support do not build unrealistic expectations that they will be successful, and that they are guided through all housing options.
- 4.22.6 Each week local authorities email or send out details of the available homes to partner agencies and advocates across the county.

4.23 Training

- 4.23.1 Ongoing training will be provided to ensure that staff in local authorities, housing associations and other partner organisations are:
- Able to identify applicants who may require support to participate
 - Able to put in place the support required
 - Fully making use of the resources to help vulnerable applicants

5. Appendix 1: Definitions

5.1 Efficient management of social housing stock within Devon (High housing need band [Band B])

5.1.1 This priority will be awarded in a number of situations set out below to aid the efficient management of social housing stock.

- **To release high need properties**

As social rented housing is a scarce resource there will be times when it is not being used to its full potential. Re-housing will enable a 'high need' property to be released or to aid the wider management of the social rented housing stock.

This will include:

- 'High need' property
Where the re-housing of a tenant or household would assist with the better use of social rented housing. This might include where applicants have no particular priority, but are occupying a property that is of a type in very limited supply and is needed to be returned to the stock of social housing for letting to meet an immediate and pressing need. An example would be a household occupying a property that has been extensively adapted, but where they have no further need of that type of accommodation. Given the need for accessible and adapted properties, it has been agreed that in such cases the household's Band Start Date will be backdated to the date they moved into that accommodation, to enable them to move as soon as possible.
- Persons left in occupation
If a person is left in occupation after the death of a tenant, they will usually be expected to leave the property and find their own home. Where a tenancy is ended by the tenant it is the tenant's responsibility to ensure that the property is handed back to the social landlord.

There are some exceptions to this: -

- Upon the death of a social tenant, if person(s) left in the home are legally entitled to be a 'successor', then the situation will be dealt with in accordance with the law. Sometimes this may mean that they are able to stay and in others it may mean that they are offered an alternative home
- When a social tenant leaves the home and ends the tenancy, there are some cases in which a potential 'successor' may qualify as above
- A 'Carer left in Occupation'. A person will only be seen as a 'Carer' when there is clear medical evidence of that care being essential and that the applicant has been providing care
- Where the person left in the home has been living there for most, if not all, of their lifetime and has been dependant upon the tenant for support. If as a result they have become

vulnerable and less able to find their own home, then they may be made an offer of accommodation. The age, length of residence, life skills and experience of the person left in the home will be the deciding factors.

- **As a management tool to resolve issues affecting a block or estate**

This priority may also apply where it was agreed as an appropriate solution to resolve an issue affecting a block or estate, but where all other tools available to the Social Landlord had proven ineffective.

A decision on these grounds would normally only be made where leaving the particular household in their existing property would seriously and negatively impact upon the quiet enjoyment of the tenant or neighbouring residents. Where agreed it should normally be seen as part of a package of support measures for that particular household, but only rarely would it be the only support measure being employed to achieve a solution. Typically it will arise out of a multi-agency strategy.

It should not be used as an alternative to enforcement action for anti social behaviour, nuisance, or any other breaches of tenancy.

A completed Devon Home Choice application form will accompany all such requests. The applicant will be able to identify their own preferred housing solutions in the normal way, however it will need to be recognised that where restrictions are made as to the type or location of properties which may be acceptable, that this may well reduce the prospects of such accommodation becoming available.

- **Demolition**

This need is recognised where there is a programme of regeneration which will require the re-housing of households whose homes will be demolished. This will be awarded once the demolition plans have been confirmed by the applicant's social landlord.

- **Major works**

Applicants in social housing who require permanent alternative accommodation as a result of major works needing to be carried out on their home.

- **Staff of Devon Home Choice partners who occupy tied accommodation**

Staff of Devon Home Choice partner local authorities and housing associations who occupy tied accommodation and who need to move upon retirement. This will not apply to staff who need to move because they have found a new job, resigned or been dismissed.

This will only apply to those members of staff of Devon Home Choice partners who occupied tied accommodation on or before 31 December 2009 when Devon Home Choice goes live.

traumatic event (Emergency housing need band [Band A])

- 5.2.1 In exceptional circumstances it will be appropriate to support the removal of households from the risk that they are facing by remaining in their current home. This will assist in ensuring that the household does not become homeless for this reason. The decision will be subject to regular reviews and could lead to the status being withdrawn if there is a change in circumstances.
- 5.2.2 This need will be awarded to applicants where there is immediate risk to the household, and usually with evidence from the police or another appropriate agency. The person at risk may be the applicant, or another person who might be reasonably expected to reside with them.
- 5.2.3 The purpose of this need is the removal of applicants from the risk that they are facing.
- 5.2.4 The definition of this risk will be where the person concerned is suffering from violence or threats of violence that are likely to be carried out. This would need to be an **imminent** threat of significant physical or mental harm to the applicant or a member of their household.
- 5.2.5 Band A will only be awarded where the local authority agrees that there are no appropriate housing options available (e.g. temporary accommodation, Sanctuary scheme etc), **and** where the risk can be managed at their current home.
- 5.2.6 Where the request relates to anti social behaviour, it will only qualify where there is a serious risk of physical or psychological harm to the applicants due to violence or anti social behaviour. It will also need to be clear that the landlord or appropriate agency have tried all approaches to prevent such behaviour within their anti social behaviour policy.
- 5.2.7 Harassment is defined as personalised, deliberate, unwanted acts of violence (verbal or physical) or other behaviour that is designed to cause harm or damage to people or property which is suffered by individuals or groups. This may include harassment on the grounds of age, disability (including HIV status) faith or belief, gender, race, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, or specific individual or family circumstances.
- 5.2.8 To achieve this level of priority there must be a significant assessed level of harassment and a consequent risk to the household, and that this cannot be reduced or resolved to an acceptable level within a reasonable timescale.
- 5.2.9 This is likely to arise where either there is an immediate risk to the household or where there has been prolonged harassment that is causing a serious impact on the well-being of the household.

5.3 Move-on from supported accommodation (High housing needs band [Band B])

- 5.3.1 Applicants assessed as ready to move-on (see below) from supported accommodation, and who have exhausted all other options, will be placed in the High housing needs band (Band B). This will include young people leaving care who are assessed by the local authority or a multi-agency panel as ready for independent living.
- 5.3.2 The Move-On Panels (see below) will have the flexibility to place an applicant in the Emergency housing needs band (Band A) in exceptional circumstances.
- 5.3.3 Applicants who are assessed as ready to move-on from supported accommodation will have their band start date backdated to either the date that they moved into the supported accommodation or the date they first became a homeless prevention case to a Devon local authority, whichever is the earliest.
- 5.3.4 Applicants living in supported accommodation who are not assessed as being ready to move-on to independent living will remain in the No housing need band, as they are adequately housed, unless they qualify for another band due to other needs (for example health and wellbeing needs).
- 5.3.5 In those local authority areas that do not register households with no housing need applicants living in supported accommodation will only be registered when they have been assessed by the local authority or a multi-agency panel as ready for independent living
- 5.3.6 Young people leaving care who are assessed by the local authority or a multi-agency panel as ready for independent living will have their band start date backdated to their 17th birthday.
- 5.3.7 Applicants who have moved into supported accommodation from another local authority area will be deemed to have a local connection with their original local authority area.
- 5.3.8 A network of panels across the county undertake the assessment of whether an applicant is ready to move-on from supported accommodation. Whilst there may be some variation in how these panels are made up, they work to common criteria by which to undertake the assessment.
- 5.3.9 The criteria will include ensuring that supported accommodation providers and applicants have worked together to:
- Demonstrate that the applicant is ready for independent living, for example by meeting all the outcomes set out in the applicants support plan; the completion of a programme such as Practical Housing Units; and ensuring that an applicant is involved in meaningful activity (for example, employment, training, education, volunteering etc)
 - Exhaust all other housing options (for example private renting)

5.3.10 Where required, it will need to be demonstrated that an appropriate package of support is in place.

5.3.11 Applicants living in supported accommodation who are not assessed as being ready to move-on to independent living will remain in the No housing need band, as they are adequately housed, unless they qualify for another band due to other needs (for example health and wellbeing needs).

5.4 Overcrowding (High housing need band [Band B] or Medium housing need band [Band C])

5.4.1 Overcrowding refers to the situation where there are not enough bedrooms to satisfactorily accommodate the number of people that make up a household.

5.4.2 The Severe Overcrowding category (Band B) includes applicants who:

- Currently lack 2 or more bedrooms given the size of their household, or
- Are lacking 1 bedroom but have 2 children that lack a bedroom. For example a couple with 4 same sex children in a 2 bed home, or a single parent with 2 children under 10 in a 1 bed home, or
- Have been assessed by the Environmental Health team of a Devon local authority as a Category 1 hazard due to overcrowding

5.4.3 Where a household is assessed as lacking 1 bedroom given their household size, they will be placed in Medium housing need band (Band C). As stated above, where there are 2 children who are lacking a bedroom applications will be placed in Band B.

5.4.4 The best use should be made for the bedroom resources available so that, for example, a bedroom used for storage should be counted as a bedroom.

5.4.5 The number of bedrooms required for households of different sizes is set out in the [Size of property](#) section above. The following assessments will normally be made under Devon Home Choice about the ages and sex of children who can share a bedroom, or who need separate bedrooms (except in exceptional circumstances):

- 2 children of the same sex (up to 16 years of age) can share a bedroom
- A boy & girl who are both under 10 years old can share a bedroom
- A boy & girl, where at least 1 is over 10 years old need separate bedrooms

5.4.6 No additional priority will be awarded for overcrowding if there is evidence that the overcrowding is deliberate.

5.5 Prevention of Homelessness (High housing need band [Band B])

5.5.1 This need is awarded in order to avoid the applicants becoming homeless, where this will lead to a full homelessness duty being made

and potential use of emergency or temporary accommodation.

- 5.5.2 The household must meet the following criteria:
- They are eligible for assistance and social housing
 - They have a live application held with Devon Home Choice
 - They are threatened with homelessness within 56 days
 - They have been interviewed by a Devon local authority's Housing Department and that their circumstances been verified
 - The homelessness prevention approach has been followed and it has not been possible to either stop the loss of accommodation or to assist in the securing of alternative accommodation. **Note:** If there are other options that can be successfully used to meet their housing need then this need will not be awarded
 - It can be shown that the applicants concerned would be owed a full homelessness duty were they to make such an application and by allowing this priority to be used it is clear that a Devon local authority will avoid the need to provide temporary accommodation, or incur other avoidable use of public funds
- 5.5.3 This may include people who have fled domestic violence and are resident in a refuge or safe house.
- 5.5.4 It may also include prisoners who are due to be released within 56 days, have no accommodation to move to and meet the above criteria.
- 5.5.5 There will be a time limit of 1 month placed on this need after which the application will be reviewed.

5.6 Social need or supporting delivery of another priority service (High housing need band [Band B])

- 5.6.1 This need applies to applicants whom, for exceptional reasons, fall outside of the rest of Devon Home Choice assessment framework, and need to be found secure alternative accommodation.
- 5.6.2 This may include child risk or concern issues where children would otherwise be accommodated by social services.
- 5.6.3 This category includes applicants who are being considered by Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council or Torbay Council as prospective foster parents or for adoption, where a larger property is required in order for them to be approved. It will also include households who have been approved by an independent agency used by Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council or Torbay Council.
- 5.6.4 Households who are seeking to foster or adopt will also have the size of property they are assessed as needing increased by an additional bedroom (please note that this is a maximum of 1 additional bedroom in order to be consistent with benefit rules).
- 5.6.5 Exceptional cases may also be considered where there is a combination of factors or special circumstances which make the overall effect disproportionately worse than any of those factors might

normally be assessed as being.

5.6.6 This should not be used to prioritise applicants who could be assessed under the Health and Wellbeing Assessment process set out above, or whose problems relate to such issues as overcrowding that are assessed and banded separately.

5.6.7 Requests for acceptance into the above need should be referred to a Devon local authority's Housing Department.

5.7 Urgent Management Move

5.7.1 In exceptional circumstances partner landlords within Devon Home Choice may need to make an urgent management move and allocate a home outside of Devon Home Choice. Situations when a landlord might need to make an urgent management move include:

- To escape serious violence or the threat of serious violence
- To escape serious harassment
- To resolve issues affecting a particular area or block

5.7.2 The situations will be such that an immediate move is required.

6. Appendix 2: Devon Home Choice Partners

6.1 Local authorities

<p>East Devon District Council Council Offices Knowle Sidmouth Devon EX10 8HL</p> <p>T: (01395) 517469 E: devonhomechoice@eastdevon.gov.uk W: www.eastdevon.gov.uk</p>	<p>Exeter City Council Civic Centre Paris Street Exeter Devon EX1 1JN</p> <p>T: (01392) 265881 E: devonhomechoice@exeter.gov.uk W: www.exeter.gov.uk</p>
<p>Mid Devon District Council Phoenix House Phoenix Lane Tiverton Devon EX16 6PP</p> <p>T: 01884 255255 E: devonhomechoice@middevon.gov.uk W: www.middevon.gov.uk</p>	<p>North Devon District Council Civic Centre North Walk Barnstaple Devon EX31 1EA</p> <p>T: 01271 388870 E: customerservices@northdevon.gov.uk W: www.northdevon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Plymouth City Council Housing Options Floor 3 Ballad House West Hoe Road Plymouth PL1 3BJ</p> <p>T: 01752 305496 E: housingneeds@plymouth.gov.uk W: www.plymouth.gov.uk</p>	<p>South Hams District Council Follaton House Plymouth Road Totnes Devon TQ9 5NE</p> <p>T: 01803 861234 E: devonhomechoice@southhams.gov.uk W: www.southhams.gov.uk</p>

Local authorities

<p>Teignbridge District Council Forde House Brunel Road Newton Abbot Devon TQ12 4XX</p> <p>T: 01626 361101 E: devonhomechoice@teignbridge.gov.uk W: www.teignbridge.gov.uk</p>	<p>Torbay Council Town Hall Castle Circus Torquay TQ1 3DR T: 01803 208723 E: https://forms.torbay.gov.uk/HousingEnquiry W: www.torbay.gov.uk</p>
<p>Torridge District Council Riverbank House Bideford Devon EX39 2QG</p> <p>T: 01237 428700 E: devonhomechoice@torridge.gov.uk W: www.torridge.gov.uk</p>	<p>West Devon Borough Council Kilworthy Park Tavistock Devon PL19 0BZ</p> <p>T: 01822 813600 E: devonhomechoice@westdevon.gov.uk W: www.westdevon.gov.uk</p>

6.2 Registered Providers operating in Devon

<p>Affinity Sutton 12 Elstree Way Borehamwood Herts WD6 1JE</p> <p>02082357000 www.affinitysutton.com</p>	<p>Aster Communities Genesis Building Office 37 235 Union Street Plymouth PL1 3HQ</p> <p>0333 400 8222 www.astercommunities.co.uk</p>
<p>Cornerstone Cornerstone House Western Way Exeter EX1 1AL</p> <p>01392 273462 mail@cornerstonehousing.net www.cornerstonehousing.net</p>	<p>DCH The Mount Paris Street Exeter Devon EX1 2JZ</p> <p>0300 123 8080 www.dchgroup.com</p>
<p>Falcon Rural Housing Ltd Falcon House 3A South Street Wellington Somerset TA21 2NR</p> <p>01823 667343 www.falconruralhousing.com</p>	<p>Guinness Hillfields House (Ground Floor) Matford Court Sigford Road Exeter EX2 8NL</p> <p>01392 822900 www.guinnesspartnership.com</p>
<p>Hanover Housing Society Hanover House 1 Bridge Close Staines Middlesex TW18 4TB</p> <p>01480 475069 www.hanover.org.uk</p>	<p>Hastoe Housing Association Ltd Fleur de Lis Middlemarsh Street Poundbury Dorchester Dorset DT1 3GX</p> <p>0845 601 8865 southwest@hastoe.com www.hastoe.com</p>
<p>Magna Housing Association Hollands House Poundsbury Road Dorchester Dorset DT1 1SW</p> <p>01305 216000 hollands@magna.org.uk www.magna.org.uk</p>	

Registered Providers operating in Devon

<p>Magna West Somerset St Peter's House Bridge Street Williton Somerset TA4 4NR</p> <p>0800 138 6107 westsom@magna.org.uk www.magnaws.org.uk</p>	<p>North Devon Homes Westacott Road Barnstaple Devon EX32 8TA</p> <p>01271 312500 webresponse@ndh-ltd.co.uk www.ndh-ltd.co.uk</p>
<p>Plymouth Community Homes Plumer House Tailyour Road Plymouth PL6 5DH</p> <p>Tel: 0800 694 3101 www.plymouthcommunityhomes.co.uk</p>	<p>Sanctuary Leat House Tavistock Street Roborough Plymouth Devon PL6 7BD</p> <p>0800 083 9283 www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk</p>
<p>South Devon Rural Housing Association Ltd South Devon House Babbage Road Totnes Devon TQ9 5JA 01803 863550 info@southdevonrural.com www.southdevonrural.com</p>	<p>South Western Housing Society Eastbridge House Pill Road Rooksbridge Axbridge Somerset BS26 2TN 0845 290 3366 info@swhs.org.uk www.swhs.org.uk</p>
<p>Sovereign South & West Unit 2 Orchard Court Heron Road Sowton Industrial Estate Exeter Devon EX2 7LL</p> <p>01392 888000 enquiries@sovereign.org.uk www.sovereign.org.uk</p>	<p>Spectrum Housing Spectrum House Grange Road Christchurch Dorset BH23 4GE 01392 361122 www.spectrumhousing.co.uk</p>

Registered Providers operating in Devon

<p>Stonewater</p> <p>For former Jephson tenants: 450 Woodlands Court Ash Ridge Road Bradley Stoke Bristol BS32 4LB</p> <p>For Raglan tenants: Unit 4 Vincent Court 89 Soundwell Road Staple Hill Bristol BS16 4QR</p> <p>0800 011 6420 https://www.stonewater.org/</p>	<p>Tamar Housing Society</p> <p>Mayflower House Armada Way Plymouth PL1 1LD</p> <p>01752 250902 http://www.tamarhs.org/</p>
<p>Teachers' Housing Association Ltd</p> <p>Rugby Chambers 2 Rugby Street London WC1N 3QU</p> <p>020 7440 9440 enquiries@teachershousing.org.uk www.teachershousing.org.uk</p>	<p>Teign Housing</p> <p>Millwood House Collett Way Newton Abbot TQ12 4PH</p> <p>01626 322722 info@teignhousing.co.uk www.teignhousing.co.uk</p>
<p>Westward Housing Group</p> <p>Templar House Templar's Wharf Collett Way Newton Abbot TQ12 4PH</p> <p>0300 100 1011 www.westwardhousing.org.uk</p>	<p>Yarlington Housing Group</p> <p>Lupin Way Yeovil Somerset BA22 8WN</p> <p>01935 404 500 www.yhg.co.uk</p>

7. Appendix 3: Potential barriers to participating in Devon Home Choice

There are considered to be five key areas where applicants may face barriers participating in Devon Home Choice (these lists are not exhaustive):

7.1 Accessing information

7.1.1 Some applicants may have difficulty accessing information because they:

- Have literacy problems
- Don't speak English as their first language
- Have a chaotic lifestyle
- Have negative perceptions of the service and likely the outcome
- Don't know about the scheme or where to find information or support
- Are visually and/ or hearing impaired
- Have learning difficulties
- Have mobility issues
- Are geographically isolated
- Currently live outside Devon
- Have mental health issues
- Are suffering a crisis
- Don't have access to the internet

7.2 Completing the Application Form

7.2.1 Some applicants may have difficulty registering for Devon Home Choice because they:

- Have literacy problems
- Don't know how to register and/ or where to get information
- Are visually impaired
- Don't have access to the internet

7.3 Bidding for homes

7.3.1 Some applicants may have difficulty bidding for homes because they:

- Have a chaotic lifestyle
- Have learning difficulties
- Are visually and/ or hearing impaired
- Are geographically isolated
- Have mental health problems
- Have literacy problems
- Don't speak English as their first language
- Don't have access to the internet

7.4 Decision making

7.4.1 Some applicants may have difficulty deciding whether to bid for a property or accepting an offer because they:

- Lack general life skills
- Lack confidence
- Have a chaotic lifestyle
- Have learning difficulties
- Have mental health problems

7.5 Appeals

7.5.1 Some applicants may have difficulty in making an appeal (for example if they don't agree with the band they've been placed in) because they:

- Lack general life skills
- Lack confidence
- Have a chaotic lifestyle
- Have a learning difficulties
- Have mental health problems
- Don't know that they are able, or how, to appeal

Devon Home Choice
Quarterly Monitoring Report
(Oct 2016)



Introduction

This report provides the latest key information from Devon Home Choice and covers 1st July 2016 to 30th September 2016.

Households registered with Devon Home Choice

The total number of households in housing need (Bands A to D) fell from 19,627 in July 2016 to 19,202, a decrease of 2.2% compared to an increase of 0.6% during the previous quarter.

The reduction was largely the result of a 14% fall in the numbers in Bands A-D in Plymouth, where the number in Band D fell by 30%. Mid Devon and North Devon also saw slight reductions whilst all other areas saw increases.

Across Devon 20% of households in housing need are in Band B ranging from 10% in North Devon to 29% in West Devon.

The percentage of the overall applications which are in Band E fell from 34% to 32%. This was again the result of a reduction of 38% in the numbers in Band E in Plymouth.

Table 1: Number of households in housing need (Bands A to D) as at 1 July 2016

	Band A		Band B		Band C		Band D		Total	Band E	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		No.	%
East Devon	0	0%	276	19%	449	31%	710	49%	1,435	1,556	52%
Exeter	8	0%	540	18%	748	25%	1,757	58%	3,053	5	0%
Mid Devon	0	0%	167	19%	259	29%	452	51%	878	883	50%
North Devon	1	0%	143	10%	410	28%	902	62%	1,456	1,811	55%
Plymouth	3	0%	1,430	25%	2,058	36%	2,182	38%	5,673	2,603	31%
South Hams	0	0%	188	17%	243	21%	708	62%	1,139	738	39%
Teignbridge	0	0%	439	21%	645	31%	1,027	49%	2,111	0	0%
Torbay	6	0%	349	16%	560	26%	1,278	58%	2,193	0	0%
Torrige	0	0%	193	22%	290	33%	407	46%	890	932	51%
West Devon	1	0%	108	29%	94	25%	171	46%	374	425	53%
Total	19	0%	3833	20%	5756	30%	9594	50%	19,202	8,953	32%
July 2016	9	0%	3,882	20%	5,460	28%	10,276	52%	19,627	10,290	34%

Note: The percentages given for Bands A – D refer to the proportion of households in housing need who are in that Band (e.g. 20% of all households in housing need across Devon are in Band B). The percentage given for Band E refers to the proportion of households in Band E of all those registered (e.g. 32% of households registered across Devon are in Band E).

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The greatest need across all local authority areas remains for one bedroom properties, (Table 2) with 56% of applicants requiring one bedroom. This is down from a figure of 58% in the previous 2 quarters.

Table 2: Bedroom need of applicants in housing need (Bands A to D) as at 3 October 2016

	1 Bed		2 Bed		3 Bed		4 Beds +		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
East Devon	808	56%	389	27%	139	10%	99	7%	1,435
Exeter	1,883	62%	672	22%	321	11%	177	6%	3,053
Mid Devon	478	54%	223	25%	114	13%	63	7%	878
North Devon	796	55%	356	24%	168	12%	136	9%	1,456
Plymouth	3,137	55%	1,400	25%	744	13%	392	7%	5,673
South Hams	711	62%	259	23%	106	9%	63	6%	1,139
Teignbridge	1,074	51%	637	30%	247	12%	153	7%	2,111
Torbay	1,219	56%	580	26%	249	11%	145	7%	2,193
Torridge	472	53%	233	26%	119	13%	66	7%	890
West Devon	190	51%	112	30%	55	15%	17	5%	374
Total	10,768	56%	4,861	25%	2,262	12%	1,311	7%	19,202

Table 3 and Chart 1 below show the numbers on the register in housing need (Bands A to D) in each local authority area by quarter.

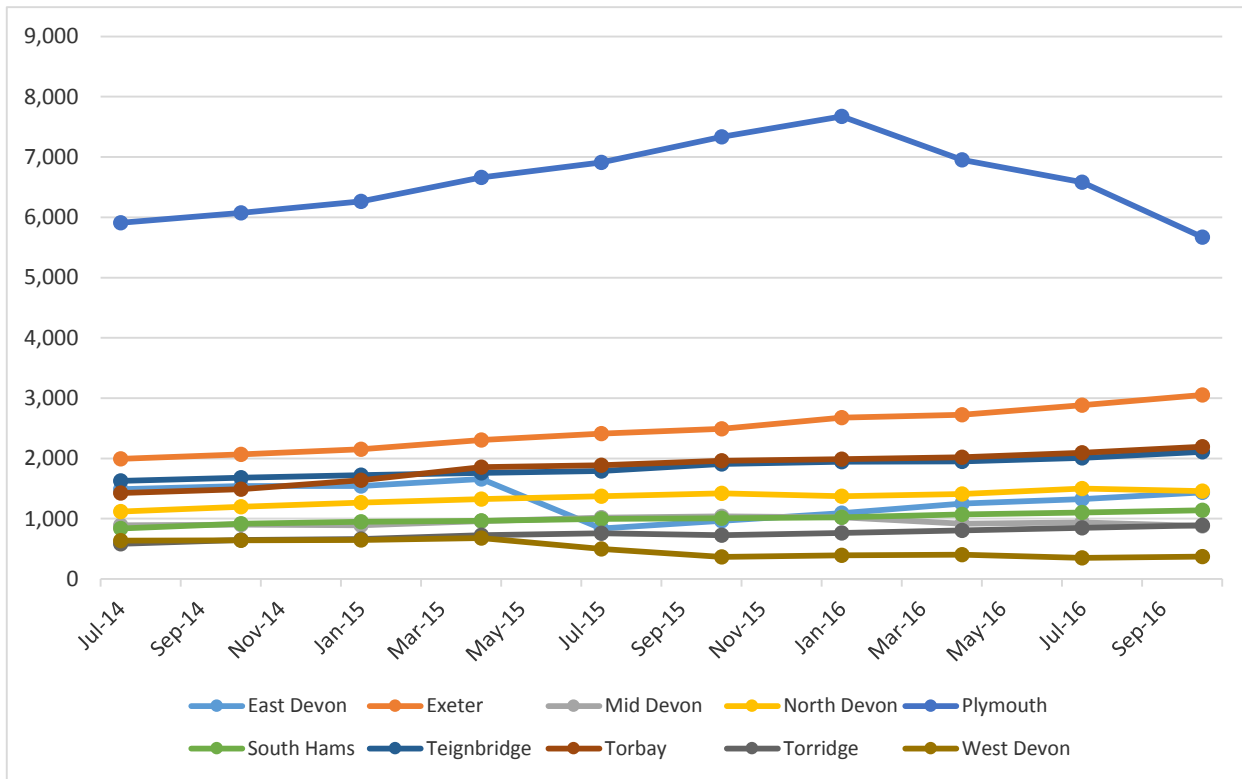
Table 3: Numbers on the register in Bands A to D per Local Authority by quarter

	Jul-14	Oct-14	Jan-15	Apr-15	July-15	Oct-15	Jan-16	Apr-16	Jul-16	Oct-16
East Devon	1,489	1,541	1,543	1,661	836	967	1,092	1,252	1,323	1,435
Exeter	1,993	2,069	2,150	2,305	2,409	2,492	2,674	2,724	2,883	3,053
Mid Devon	889	904	890	962	1,017	1,039	1,021	917	941	878
North Devon	1,117	1,199	1,265	1,325	1,373	1,423	1,375	1,410	1,499	1,456
Plymouth	5,908	6,074	6,264	6,659	6,909	7,335	7,672	6,952	6,581	5,673
South Hams	837	918	950	964	999	1,005	1,022	1,073	1,101	1,139
Teignbridge	1,630	1,681	1,721	1,762	1,794	1,906	1,944	1,950	2,011	2,111
Torbay	1,428	1,489	1,638	1,857	1,886	1,962	1,990	2,017	2,092	2,193
Torridge	585	649	661	728	757	729	763	804	848	890
West Devon	634	641	646	678	500	364	395	404	348	374
Total	16,510	17,165	17,728	18,901	18,480	19,222	19,948	19,503	19,627	19,202

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Chart 1: Numbers on the register in Bands A to D per Local Authority by quarter



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Bidding Patterns

Table 4 below shows the proportion of applicants by local authority and Band who are considered to be inactive (e.g. they have not logged in during the last 6 months and are not on autobid).

Across Devon 53% of applicants in Band B are not active. This ranges from 18% in North Devon to 63% in Plymouth. The overall percentage of applicants who are inactive has fallen from 60% in July to 58%. The overall reduction is due to falls in the Band D and E figures in Plymouth where a lot of inactive applications have been cancelled.

Table 4: Percentage of applicants who have not logged in during the last 6 months, and are not on autobid.

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E	Total
East Devon	0%	30%	31%	53%	57%	50%
Exeter	38%	57%	42%	65%	0%	58%
Mid Devon	0%	43%	42%	59%	62%	57%
North Devon	0%	18%	45%	69%	68%	63%
Plymouth	0%	63%	54%	49%	55%	55%
South Hams	0%	56%	56%	67%	63%	63%
Teignbridge	0%	48%	49%	63%	0%	55%
Torbay	0%	50%	53%	74%	0%	65%
Torridge	0%	53%	62%	63%	80%	70%
West Devon	100%	24%	23%	50%	55%	46%
Total	21%	53%	49%	61%	62%	58%
Previous quarter	13%	50%	49%	63%	65%	60%

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Table 5 and Chart 2 below show the average number of bids received by property size. The average number of bids received in this quarter was again higher than the Home Connections average for all property sizes.

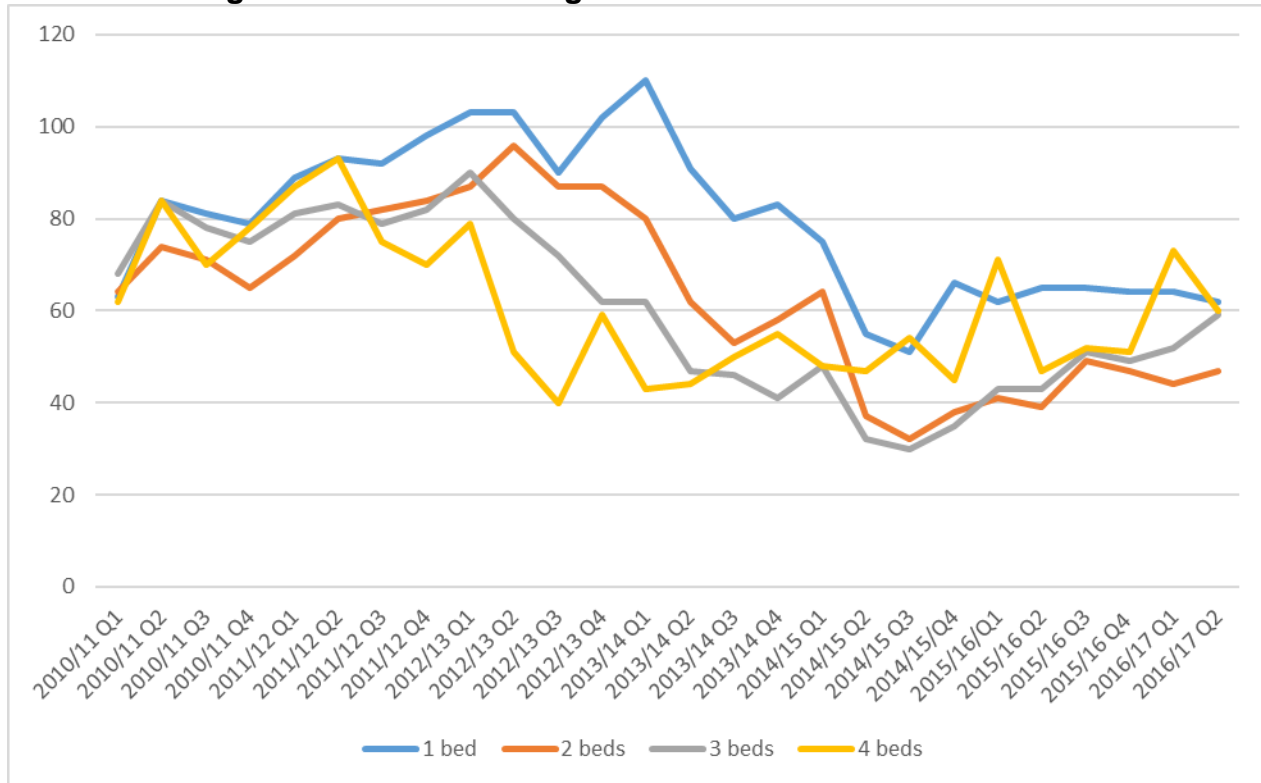
Table 5: Average number of bids for general needs homes

	1 bed	2 beds	3 beds	4 beds
2010/11 Q1	63	64	68	62
2010/11 Q2	84	74	84	84
2010/11 Q3	81	71	78	70
2010/11 Q4	79	65	75	78
2011/12 Q1	89	72	81	87
2011/12 Q2	93	80	83	93
2011/12 Q3	92	82	79	75
2011/12 Q4	98	84	82	70
2012/13 Q1	103	87	90	79
2012/13 Q2	103	96	80	51
2012/13 Q3	90	87	72	40
2012/13 Q4	102	87	62	59
2013/14 Q1	110	80	62	43
2013/14 Q2	91	62	47	44
2013/14 Q3	80	53	46	50
2013/14 Q4	83	58	41	55
2014/15 Q1	75	64	48	48
2014/15 Q2	55	37	32	47
2014/15 Q3	51	32	30	54
2014/15/Q4	66	38	35	45
2015/16/Q1	62	41	43	71
2015/16 Q2	65	39	43	47
2015/16 Q3	65	49	51	52
2015/16 Q4	64	47	49	51
2016/17 Q1	64	44	52	73
2016/17 Q2	62	47	59	60
Home Connections average	62	42	43	56
Overall average	80	63	60	61

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Chart 2: Average number of bids for general needs homes



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The average number of bids received for 1 and 2 bedroom sheltered properties in the quarter (Table 6 and Chart 3 below) were both above Home Connections and overall average figures.

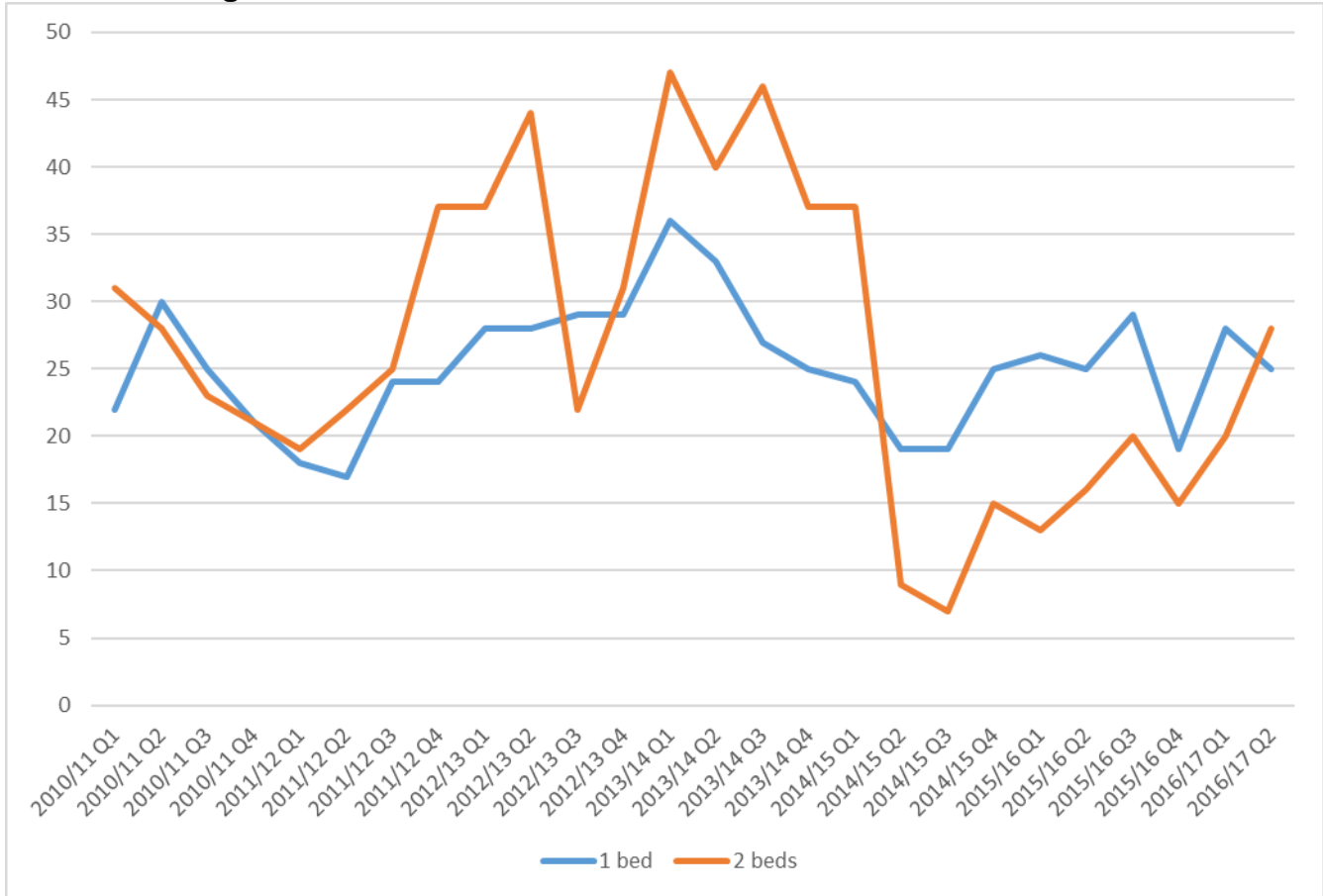
Table 6: Average number of bids for sheltered homes

	1 bed	2 beds
2010/11 Q1	22	31
2010/11 Q2	30	28
2010/11 Q3	25	23
2010/11 Q4	21	21
2011/12 Q1	18	19
2011/12 Q2	17	22
2011/12 Q3	24	25
2011/12 Q4	24	37
2012/13 Q1	28	37
2012/13 Q2	28	44
2012/13 Q3	29	22
2012/13 Q4	29	31
2013/14 Q1	36	47
2013/14 Q2	33	40
2013/14 Q3	27	46
2013/14 Q4	25	37
2014/15 Q1	24	37
2014/15 Q2	19	9
2014/15 Q3	19	7
2014/15 Q4	25	15
2015/16 Q1	26	13
2015/16 Q2	25	16
2015/16 Q3	29	20
2015/16 Q4	19	15
2016/17 Q1	28	20
2016/17 Q2	25	28
Home Connections average	24	15
Overall average	25	26

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Chart 3: Average number of bids for sheltered homes



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Homes let

The proportion of general needs homes let to applicants in Band B during this quarter was the highest since the 2013/14 financial year at 53%. The figures range from 34% in South Hams to 66% in Exeter. All areas other than Plymouth saw an increase in the proportion of lets to Band B applicants.

Table 8: General needs homes let (1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016)

	Band A		Band B		Band C		Band D		Band E		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
East Devon	0	0%	19	42%	12	27%	9	20%	5	11%	45
Exeter	1	1%	72	66%	30	28%	6	6%	0	0%	109
Mid Devon	0	0%	26	49%	15	28%	9	17%	3	6%	53
North Devon	1	2%	38	61%	7	11%	9	15%	7	11%	62
Plymouth	2	1%	144	54%	59	22%	46	17%	18	7%	269
South Hams	0	0%	20	34%	16	27%	17	29%	6	10%	59
Teignbridge	0	0%	20	42%	19	40%	9	19%	0	0%	48
Torbay	2	3%	29	50%	11	19%	14	24%	2	3%	58
Torridge	0	0%	26	62%	11	26%	4	10%	1	2%	42
West Devon	0	0%	22	56%	13	33%		0%	4	10%	39
Total	6	1%	416	53%	193	25%	123	16%	46	6%	784

Table 9 and chart 4 below show the overall proportion of general needs lets by band and quarter.

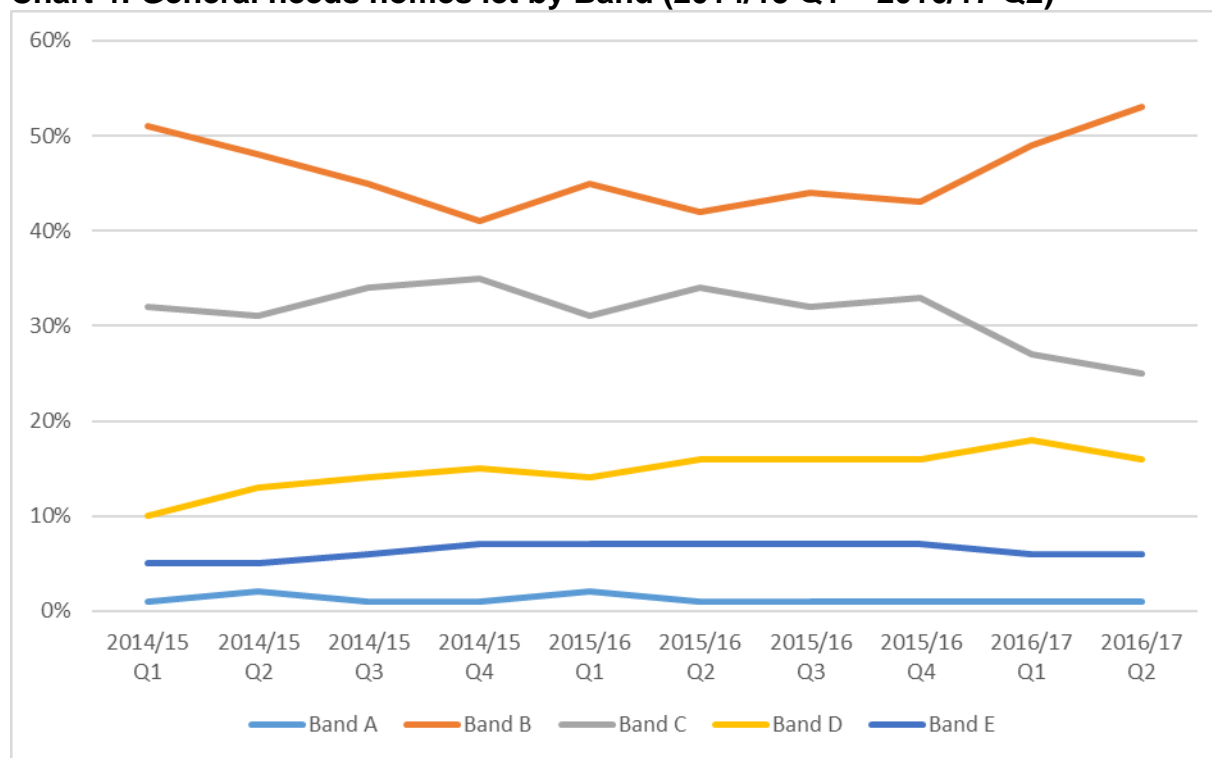
Table 9: General needs homes let by Band (2014/15 Q1 – 2016/17 Q2)

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E
2014/15					
Q1	1%	51%	32%	10%	5%
Q2	2%	48%	31%	13%	5%
Q3	1%	45%	34%	14%	6%
Q4	1%	41%	35%	15%	7%
2015/16					
Q1	2%	45%	31%	14%	7%
Q2	1%	42%	34%	16%	7%
Q3	1%	44%	32%	16%	7%
Q4	1%	43%	33%	16%	7%
2016/17					
Q1	1%	49%	27%	18%	6%
Q2	1%	53%	25%	16%	6%

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Chart 4: General needs homes let by Band (2014/15 Q1 – 2016/17 Q2)



The proportion of sheltered lets to Band B applicants over the quarter was 41%, up from 36% last quarter.

Table 10: Sheltered homes let (1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016)

	Band A		Band B		Band C		Band D		Band E		Total No.
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
East Devon	0	0%	4	50%	2	25%	2	25%	0	0%	8
Exeter	0	0%	1	33%	2	67%	0	0%	0	0%	3
Mid Devon	0	0%	2	33%	3	50%	1	17%	0	0%	6
North Devon	1	5%	8	42%	2	11%	5	26%	3	16%	19
Plymouth	0	0%	7	32%	2	9%	8	36%	5	23%	22
South Hams	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	25%	3	75%	4
Teignbridge	0	0%	8	53%	4	27%	3	20%	0	0%	15
Torbay	0	0%	5	42%	1	8%	4	33%	2	17%	12
Torridge	0	0%	4	57%	2	29%	1	14%	0	0%	7
West Devon	0	0%	2	40%	2	40%	1	20%	0	0%	5
Total	1	1%	41	41%	20	20%	26	26%	13	13%	101

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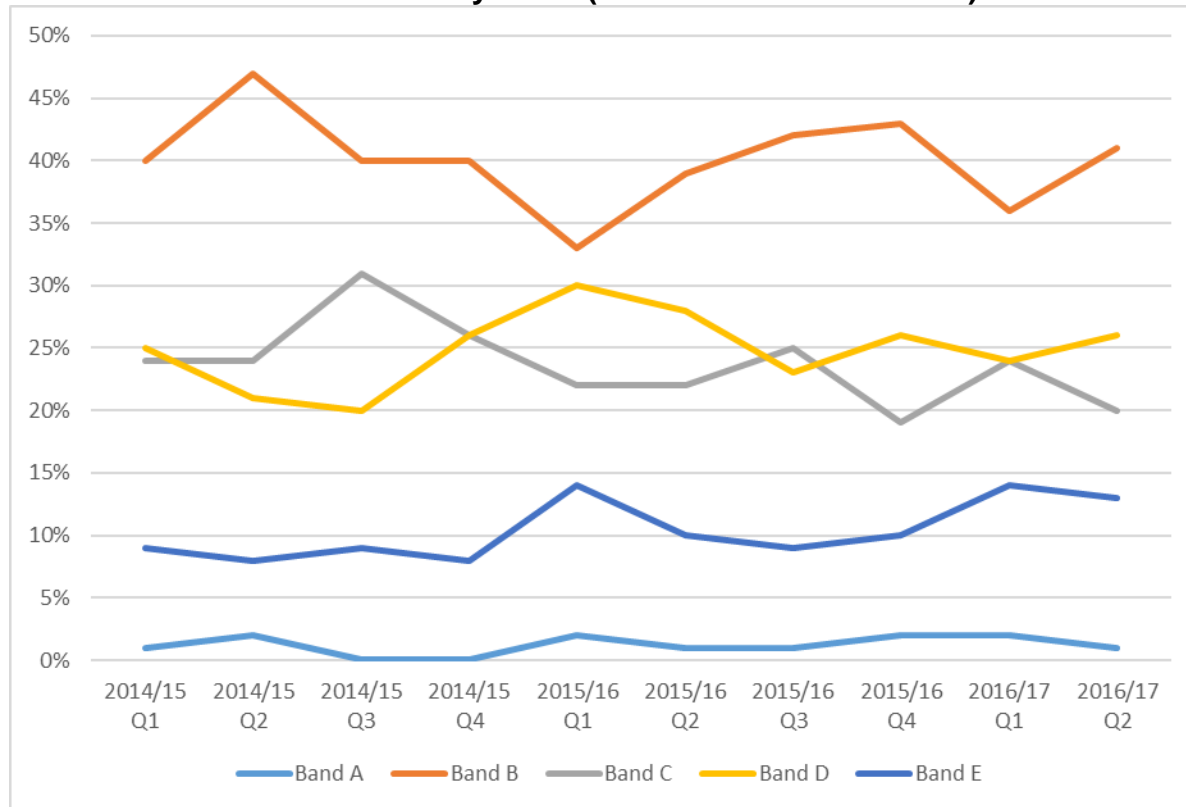


Table 11 and chart 5 below show the overall proportion of sheltered lets by band and quarter.

Table 11: Sheltered needs homes let by Band (2014/15 Q1 – 2016/17 Q2)

	Band A	Band B	Band C	Band D	Band E
2014/15					
Q1	1%	40%	24%	25%	9%
Q2	2%	47%	24%	21%	8%
Q3	0%	40%	31%	20%	9%
Q4	0%	40%	26%	26%	8%
2015/16					
Q1	2%	33%	22%	30%	14%
Q2	1%	39%	22%	28%	10%
Q3	1%	42%	25%	23%	9%
Q4	2%	43%	19%	26%	10%
2016/17					
Q1	2%	36%	24%	24%	14%
Q2	1%	41%	20%	26%	13%

Chart 5: Sheltered homes let by Band (2014/15 Q1 – 2016/17 Q2)



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The total number of lets by quarter is shown in Table 12 and Chart 6 below. The total number of properties let in this quarter was the lowest Q2 figure since Devon Home Choice started and follows on from a Q1 figure which was the lowest since 2012/13.

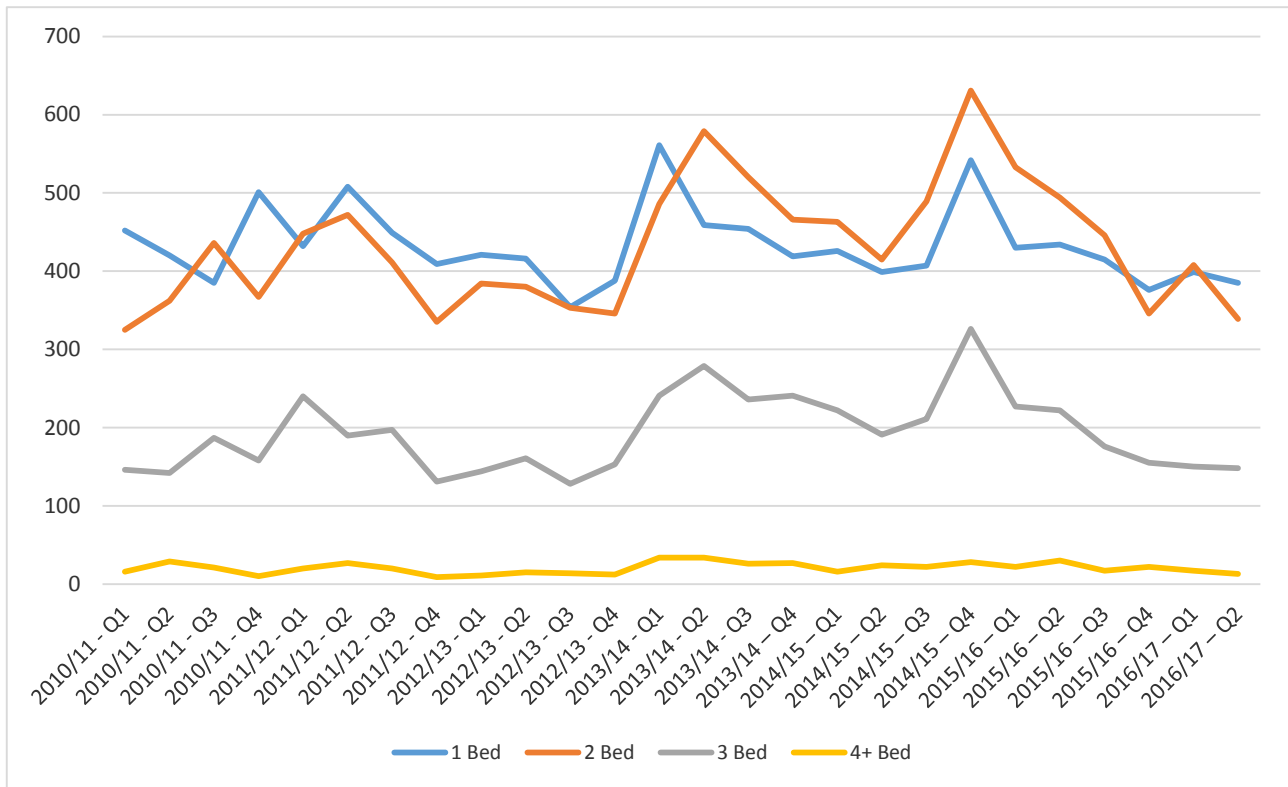
Table 12: Number of properties let by quarter

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	4+ Bed	Total
2010/11 - Q1	452	325	146	16	939
2010/11 - Q2	420	362	142	29	954
2010/11 - Q3	385	436	187	21	1,029
2010/11 - Q4	501	367	158	10	1,037
2010/11 Total	1,758	1,490	633	76	3,959
2011/12 - Q1	432	448	240	20	1,140
2011/12 - Q2	508	472	190	27	1,198
2011/12 - Q3	449	411	197	20	1,080
2011/12 - Q4	409	335	131	9	884
2011/12 Total	1,798	1,666	758	76	4,302
2012/13 - Q1	421	384	144	11	961
2012/13 - Q2	416	380	161	15	973
2012/13 - Q3	354	353	128	14	849
2012/13 - Q4	388	346	153	12	900
2012/13 Total	1,579	1,463	586	52	3,683
2013/14 - Q1	561	486	241	34	1,324
2013/14 - Q2	459	579	279	34	1,358
2013/14 - Q3	454	520	236	26	1,236
2013/14 - Q4	419	466	241	27	1,153
2013/14 Total	1,893	2,051	997	121	5,071
2014/15 - Q1	426	463	222	16	1,127
2014/15 - Q2	399	415	191	24	1,029
2014/15 - Q3	407	489	211	22	1,129
2014/15 - Q4	542	631	326	28	1,527
2014/15 Total	1,774	1,998	950	90	4,812
2015/16 - Q1	430	533	227	22	1,212
2015/16 - Q2	434	494	222	30	1,180
2015/16 - Q3	415	446	176	17	1,054
2015/16 - Q4	376	346	155	22	899
2015/16 Total	1,655	1,819	780	91	4,345
2016/17 - Q1	399	408	150	17	974
2016/17 - Q2	385	339	148	13	885

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Chart 6: Number of lets by quarter

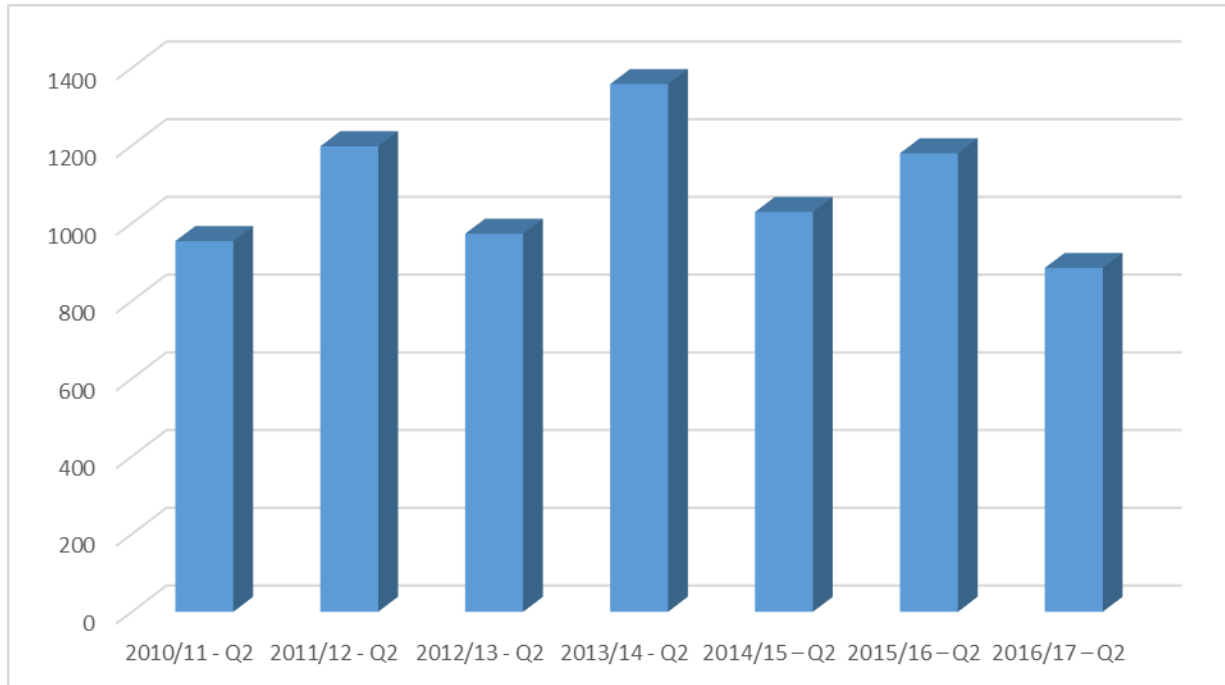


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Chart 7 below provides a comparison of the total number of properties let during quarter 2 of each financial year that Devon Home Choice has been operating.

Chart 7: Quarter 2 lets



For more information please contact Rupert Warren (rupert.warren@exeter.gov.uk) or Gary Pitman (gary.pitman@exeter.gov.uk).

**Devon Home Choice
FINAL Equality Impact Assessment – May 2016**

1 Introduction

1.1 The aims of this Equality Impact Assessment are to:

- Ensure that Devon Home Choice policy or practice does not unlawfully discriminate
- Identify any adverse impacts of policy or practice upon particular groups
- Consider how Devon Home Choice policy or practice could better advance equality of opportunity

1.2 This assessment follows the initial Equality Impact Assessment previously undertaken in 2010.

1.3 Further updates will be undertaken as part of the annual policy review process.

2 The Equality Act and the public sector equality duty

2.1 The Equality Act 2010 brought together and replaced the previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. The majority of the Act came into force on 1 October 2010. The Act includes a public sector equality duty (the 'general duty'). This came into force on 5 April 2011.

2.2 The aim of the general duty is to ensure that public authorities and those carrying out a public function consider how they can positively contribute to a fairer society through advancing equality and good relations in their day-to-day activities. The duty ensures that equality considerations are built into the design of policies and the delivery of services and that they are kept under review.

2.3 Public bodies are required to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic¹ and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not

3 Devon Home Choice

3.1 The aims of Devon Home Choice are to:

- Provide choice for people seeking housing and the ability to move within Devon

¹ The general duty covers the following protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Pregnancy and maternity, Race (including ethnicity, nationality or colour), Religion or belief, Sex and Sexual orientation

**Devon Home Choice
FINAL Equality Impact Assessment – May 2016**

- Develop a common scheme across Devon that is transparent, easy to understand and accessible to all

3.2 Devon Home Choice operates as follows:

- People who are seeking a council or housing association home complete an application form to join the Devon Home Choice register
- The application is then assessed and placed in a particular band dependent on their circumstances and housing need
- Each week council and housing association homes available to let in Devon will be advertised
- People on the Devon Home Choice register are able view all the homes being advertised and bid for up to 3 homes each week that they feel suit their needs
- Homes are offered to the person/ household who is eligible for the property with the highest priority band, who has been in that band the longest

4 Approach taken to this equality impact assessment

4.1 This assessment will consider each of the protected characteristics in turn.

4.2 An initial draft report will be presented to the Devon Home Choice Operational Group and the Management Board. Comments will be invited on the draft report and the extent of any further work that is required.

5 Protected characteristic: Age

5.1 Table 1 shows that for nearly half (45%) of the households registered with Devon Home Choice, the oldest person is between 25 and 44 years old. In 29% of households the oldest person is between 45 and 64 years old, whereas there are smaller proportions for those over 65 (14%) or between 16 and 24 (12%).

5.2 The most significant differences with the age profile across Devon from the 2011 Census is the much higher proportion 25 to 44 year olds registered with Devon Home Choice, and the lower proportion of over 65 year olds.

5.3 It is suggested that these differences are due to the fact that people in the 25 to 44 year old are more likely to be seeking a home (e.g. moving from the parental home, new couples seeking a home, single people whose relationship has ended, having a new/ additional child etc.), than those over 65 who are more likely to have settled accommodation and are not seeking to move.

**Devon Home Choice
FINAL Equality Impact Assessment – May 2016**

Table 1: Age of the oldest household member (Active applications as at 25 April 16)

Age Group	No.	%	2011 Census	
			No.	%
16 - 24	3,870	12%	131,423	14%
25 - 44	14,823	45%	259,290	27%
45 - 64	9,545	29%	312,309	33%
65+	4,728	14%	240,995	26%
Total	32,966	100%	944,017	100%

- 5.4 The Devon Home Choice policy makes clear that anyone over 16 years of age who is eligible may apply.
- 5.5 Households who apply to join the Devon Home Choice register are treated equally, and assessed in line with the policy without reference to age.
- 5.6 The only specific provisions in the Devon Home Choice policy related to age and the assessment of applications are that:
- Households with 2 children lacking a bedroom, who would otherwise normally be assessed as lacking 1 bedroom, are considered to be severely overcrowded: Band B
 - Households with children under 8 who are living above the third floor: Band C
- 5.7 However there are other categories that will address the needs of particular age groups. For example:
- Health and wellbeing (all age groups): Bands A - D
 - Move-on from supported accommodation (all age groups): Band B
 - Underoccupying tenants (older age groups): Band B
 - Moves for work (working age households): Band C
 - Shared facilities (all age groups but includes those people living with their parents): Band D
- 5.8 Older people who require support to live independently can use Devon Home Choice to bid for suitable accommodation to meet their needs
- 5.9 In order to ensure that people of all ages can register with, and participate in Devon Home Choice the following measures are in place:
- Information is available in a range of different formats on request
 - Newsletters are sent to applicants identified as vulnerable, who are in one of the high priority groups and who cannot otherwise access information about available homes. The newsletter can be produced in large font for those who need it

**Devon Home Choice
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- An advocate (for example family, friend or support agency) can complete the application form and bid for homes on behalf of a vulnerable person. If an applicant does not have an advocate and can't bid themselves automatic bids can be placed on their behalf.
- The Devon Home Choice website is W3C AA compliant, and meets current accessibility standards.

6 Protected characteristic: Disability

- 6.1 In over a third (37%) of households registered with Devon Home Choice the main applicant indicated on their application that they have a disability. It should be noted that the proportion of households that include at least one person with a disability will be higher than this due to joint applicants and other household members (e.g. children) with a disability.
- 6.2 Of those households where the main applicant indicated that they have a disability, the most common disabilities were:
- Physical disability: 24%
 - Mental illness: 19%
 - Other: 13%
 - Mental illness and Physical disability: 9%
- 6.3 In a significant proportion (38%) of households the main applicant indicated that they have more than one disability.
- 6.4 The 2011 Census data for Devon reveals that 27% of all households in the county included at least one person with a long-term health problem or disability.
- 6.5 The proportion of households registered with Devon Home Choice who have a disability is therefore significantly higher than for the population in the county as a whole. This is not unsurprising given that for many people, their disability may affect their housing need and the ability to find alternatives to social housing.
- 6.6 The health and wellbeing element of the Devon Home Choice policy seeks to address some of the specific needs of people with disabilities, whose health and wellbeing is being adversely affected by their current accommodation.
- 6.7 In order to ensure that people with disabilities can register with, and participate in Devon Home Choice the following measures are in place:
- Information is available in a range of different formats on request
 - Newsletters are sent to applicants identified as vulnerable, who are in one of the high priority groups and who cannot otherwise access information about available homes. The newsletter can be produced in large font for those who need it

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- An advocate (for example family, friend or support agency) can complete the application form and bid for homes on behalf of a vulnerable person. If an applicant does not have an advocate and can't bid themselves automatic bids can be placed on their behalf.
- The Devon Home Choice website is W3C AA compliant, and meets current accessibility standards.

7 Protected characteristic: Gender reassignment

- 7.1 36 households registered with Devon Home Choice include a main applicant who described themselves as transgender on their application (0.1% of all applications). Following the 2015 policy review it has been agreed that Transgender will be changed to 'Other' on the application form (e.g. so the gender question becomes 'Female, Male or Other').
- 7.2 However the 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) Health Needs Assessment' published by Public Health Devon in 2014 states that this is likely to be an underestimate. Some people may be unwilling to identify themselves as transgender on their application.
- 7.3 There is no specific reference to transgender people in the Devon Home Choice policy. However if transgender people experience harassment or violence from neighbours their application will be considered as other applicants in this situation. For example, their application could be assessed as Band A to escape violence, Band B if it is accepted that it is unreasonable for the applicant to continue living there and they are assessed to be homeless and in priority need (and that private rented accommodation is not appropriate) etc. Any assessment would be determined on a case-by-case basis.

8 Protected characteristic: Pregnancy and maternity

- 8.1 In over 1,200 (4%) of households registered with Devon Home Choice the main applicant indicated on their application that they were pregnant. There will also be a number of applications where the joint applicant or another household member is pregnant.
- 8.2 Time-related medical conditions (such as pregnancy-related conditions) are explicitly excluded from the health and wellbeing framework. However the health and wellbeing element of the policy would be applied to those households with new babies with specific needs (e.g. they need to be on the ground floor, have an extra bedroom due to the equipment they need etc.).
- 8.3 The Devon Home Choice IT system will automatically assign an extra bedspace if someone within a household is pregnant. In addition the local authority managing the application will also assess whether the size of home an applicant needs should be increased because they are pregnant. For example, a single person who is pregnant will have the size of home they need manually increased from a 1 bed to a 2 bedroom home. This assessment is done manually as it depends on the number, sex and gender of any other children (e.g. a couple with 3 children under 16 who are expecting a 4th child will not have their bedroom need increased)

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9 Protected characteristic: Race (including ethnicity, nationality or colour)

9.1 Table 2 below shows the proportion of the Devon Home Choice register and lets made in 2015/16 (data taken from the Devon Home Choice Monitoring report April 2016), together with the profile of the county population from the 2011 Census.

Table 2: Devon Home Choice register and homes lets in 2015/16 by ethnicity of the main applicant compared with the 2011 Census results for Devon

	Devon Home Choice Register	2011 Census	Lets 2015/16
Asian/ Asian British	0.9%	0.8%	0.5%
Bangladeshi	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Indian	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%
Other	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%
Pakistani	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Black/ Black British	0.7%	0.3%	0.9%
African	0.4%	0.2%	0.6%
Caribbean	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%
Other	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%
Chinese	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%
Mixed	0.7%	0.9%	0.9%
White & Black African	0.2%	0.1%	0.4%
White & Black Asian	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%
White & Black Caribbean	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%
White & Black Other	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%
Other	0.8%	0.2%	0.6%
Prefer not to say	1.7%	n/a	1.8%
White	95.2%	97.3%	95.2%
British	91.2%	94.5%	90.9%
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Irish	0.3%	0.4%	0.4%
Other	3.6%	2.3%	3.9%
Not specified	0.0%	n/a	0.0%

9.2 The table shows broad consistency between the profile of households registered with Devon Home Choice, homes let and the 2011 Census results. The largest difference is the lower proportion of white British households registered on Devon Home Choice and let homes in 2015/16 compared to the profile of the county population from the 2011 Census. However these differences may be partly

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explained by some applicants selecting the ‘Prefer not to say’ option on the Devon Home Choice application.

- 9.3 Similarly, Table 3 below shows a similar profile of the nationality of main applicants registered with Devon Home Choice, compared to the county as a whole. The only difference is the lower proportion of households registered with Devon Home Choice where the main applicant indicated that they were not a British or EU national. However this could again be explained by the number of households where an answer is not recorded on Devon Home Choice for this question.

Table 3: Nationality of the main applicant compared with the 2011 Census results

	Devon Home Choice	2011 Census
British/UK National	94%	94%
European National	3%	3%
Other	1%	3%
Not specified	1%	n/a

- 9.4 Certain people from abroad with limited rights to remain in the United Kingdom are not eligible to join the Devon Home Choice register. Local authorities therefore conduct an initial assessment of applications to assess whether they are eligible².
- 9.5 All households who are assessed to be eligible to apply to Devon Home Choice have their application assessed in exactly the same way, regardless of race or nationality.
- 9.6 In order to ensure that people of different races and nationalities can register with, and participate in Devon Home Choice the following measures are in place:
- Information is available in a range of different formats on request. Local authorities can provide translation and interpretation services
 - The Devon Home Choice website can easily be translated into over 100 different languages using Google translate.
 - People can bid for homes using a multi-language automated telephone service. This uses a standard script which is available in 19 languages
 - An advocate (for example family, friend or support agency) can complete the application form and bid for homes on behalf of a vulnerable person. If an applicant does not have an advocate and can't bid themselves automatic bids can be placed on their behalf.

10 Protected characteristic: Religion

- 10.1 Table 4 below reveals a much lower proportion of households registered with Devon Home Choice where the main applicant gave their religion as Christian compared to the 2011 Census results for the county. However, as above, this may be affected to a large extent by the number of Devon Home Choice applications

² Torbay Council also apply a local connection qualification for applications they manage – please see the Devon Home Choice policy for more information

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where this information is missing or applicants have selected the ‘Prefer not to say’ option, as this accounts for a third of all Devon Home Choice applications.

- 10.2 Devon Home Choice, both the policy and day-to-day practice is considered to be neutral to faith groups.

Table 4: Religion of the main applicant compared with the 2011 Census results

	Devon Home Choice	2011 Census
Christian	32%	61%
None	32%	29%
Not specified/ Prefer not to say	32%	8%
Other	2%	1%
Muslim	1%	1%
Buddhist	0%	0%
Hindu	0%	0%
Jewish	0%	0%
Sikh	0%	0%

11 Protected characteristic: Sex or Sexual orientation

- 11.1 Women are the main applicant in 61% of households registered with Devon Home Choice. It should be noted however that for couples or families the choice of main applicant may often be a random one depending on who is completing the application.
- 11.2 It is worth noting that over three quarters of households with a male main applicant are made up of single males or childless couples. There is a significant difference for households with a female main applicant, where the majority (59%) include at least 1 child.
- 11.3 The Devon Home Choice policy is generally considered to be gender neutral. However there may have a negative impact on men who have children from a previous relationship who regularly stay with them. The Devon Home Choice policy previously sought to minimise this impact by providing such applicants with some additional priority and placed their applications in Band D. However, this category was removed from the policy in 2012 following a policy review.
- 11.4 Table 5 shows the Sexual orientation of the main applicant compared with the estimate from the ‘Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) Health Needs Assessment’ published by Public Health Devon in 2014. As above, there is a far higher proportion of households where this information has not been provided or the applicant has selected the ‘Prefer not to say’ option. Indeed the LGB&T health needs assessment states that sexual orientation is under-reported on Devon Home Choice.

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Table 5: Sexual orientation of the main applicant compared with the estimate from the ‘Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGB&T) Health Needs Assessment’ published by Public Health Devon in 2014

	Devon Home Choice	Public Health Devon 2014
Bisexual	1%	0%
Gay man	1%	1%
Gay woman/lesbian	1%	0%
Heterosexual/straight	68%	94%
Other	1%	0%
Not specified/ Prefer not to say	29%	4%

- 11.5 As for transgender people above, there is no specific reference to sex or sexual orientation in the Devon Home Choice policy. However if people experience harassment or violence from neighbours as a result of their sexual orientation their application will be considered as other applicants in this situation. Any assessment would be determined on a case-by-case by basis.
- 11.6 Similarly, same-sex partners who are fleeing domestic violence will be assessed in the same way as someone fleeing domestic violence from a heterosexual couple.

12 Conclusion

- 12.1 This Equalities Impact Assessment Update was approved by the Devon Home Choice Management Board at their meeting on 13 May 2016

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Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Date:	24th November 2016
Title:	Q2 2016/17 Performance Report
Portfolio Area:	Strategy & Commissioning
Author:	Jim Davis, Specialist - Performance & Intelligence
Presented by:	Cllr Michael Hicks

Recommendations:

1. Members note the performance levels against target communicated in the Balanced Scorecard and the performance figures supplied in the background and the exception report.
2. Members review the new online dashboards: these include ones for O&S, Planning, and the CST, and feedback on any changes or requests for additional information.

Executive summary

- 1.1. Performance measures for Quarter 2 have stayed relatively consistent with the previous quarters but with a marked improvement in the benefit processing speed noted.
- 1.2. Q2 performance was below target for Average call answer time and complaints response speed. More detail about these measures can be found in the exception report (Appendix B).
- 1.3. Issues with Devon County data collection means recycling figures are not available, more detail and most up to date figures are available on the online dashboards.
- 1.4. Planning determination performance in Q2 was above target for all types of applications for the third successive quarter continuing the above target performance into the new financial year.
- 1.5. New dashboards have been developed to display information in an easy to understand way.
- 1.6. These are available online from any web-enabled device and can be used to monitor performance in between the O&S reporting cycle. There is a regular update of the previous month's figures that occurs

by the 3rd Wednesday of the month, for SLT to keep on top of performance issues.

- 1.7. A new online solution for benefits claims has been implemented and the improvement in the figures for the quarter has continued.

2. Background

- 2.1. The current set of indicators came from a review of all Performance measures which was undertaken by a Task & Finish Group. The format has changed to allow better viewing in black & white and to include target information to provide context.
- 2.2. The new web-based performance dashboards provide monthly up-to-date information to provide context against the report that comes to Committee and gives access to a much larger range of data if desired.
- 2.3. Attached to the report are the new dashboards for the CST and Planning which give access to a wide range of information that is updated monthly and accessible to all Members.
- 2.4. The planning dashboard is split into three pages covering planning performance, planning enforcement and planning appeals

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1. **Appendix A** is the balanced scorecard – this contains the high level targeted performance information.
- 3.2. **Appendix B** is an information and exception report. This contains the data only performance information for context and the detail of the targeted measures which have fallen below target in the quarter being reviewed.
- 3.3. **Appendix C** contains the description of the targets chosen for the Balanced Scorecard
- 3.4. **Appendix D** shows the data available on the CST Dashboard
- 3.5. **Appendix E** shows the data available on the Planning Dashboard
- 3.6. Covalent Dashboards are accessed via a web-link and users have access to more than one dashboard. All the dashboards can be 'drilled into' for more information and they can be viewed on any web-enabled device, smartphone or ipad.
- 3.7. The new online benefits software, is now transforming the way new benefit claims are dealt with, with change of circumstances live too. Final automatic integration with W2 should be completed soon.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1. O&S reporting could be dealt with completely through dashboards or in conjunction with reports, with the report element focusing on other areas such as management comments rather than data.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1. The first dashboards are available for Members to view and consider what other information they would want to be shown.
- 5.2. Feedback from Members is encouraged to improve dashboard usability and usefulness to aid Members fulfil their scrutiny role. Further training sessions will be organised and communicated through the Member bulletin.
- 5.3. Members consider whether these reports continue to be presented in a paper format or just viewed online with supplementary information supplied in a report format that could be provided as part of the papers to Committee or accessible as a link on the portal online.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	N	Whilst there are no longer statutory performance measures, some measures are still reported nationally. We collect these in the same format as required to improve consistency. Other measures aim to improve efficiency & understand workload.
Financial	N	There are no direct financial implications of the contents of the report
Risk	Y	Poor performance has a risk to the Council's reputation and delivery to our residents. These proposals should give the Scrutiny Committee the ability to address performance issues and develop robust responses to variation in delivery
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	
Safeguarding	N	
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	
Other implications	N	

Appendices:

- Appendix A – Corporate Balanced Scorecard
- Appendix B – Background and Exception Report
- Appendix C – Explanation of targets
- Appendix D – CST Dashboard
- Appendix E – Planning Dashboard

Corporate Balanced Scorecard

Community/Customer

Q1	Q2	
	-	Overall waste recycling rate % <i>(Awaiting data from DCC)</i>
	-	Residual waste per household <i>(Awaiting data from DCC)</i>
		CST: Average Call Answer Time
		CST: % of enquiries resolved at first point of contact

Processes

Q1	Q2	% of planning applications determined within time frame
		Major(Statutory)
		Minor
		Other

T18 Programme

Q1	Q2	
		T18: Programme timescales on track
		T18: Performance vs. Budget
		T18: No. of Processes live
		T18: Ratio call/web submissions

Performance

Q1	Q2	
		EH: % of nuisance complaints resolved at informal stage
		Avg days short term sickness/FTE
		Complaint response speed

Key

	Below target performance
	Narrowly off target, be aware
	On or above target

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Information Report



Non-targeted (data-only) performance measures that will be reported every quarter to provide context and background information – not suitable for the Balanced Scorecard page as no targets applicable or relevant.

PI Description	Managed By	Q2 15/16	2015/16	Q2 2016/17		16/17	Comment (If Applicable)
			YTD or Total			YTD or total	
<p>Planning Enforcement (Workload)</p> <p>Change: Due to issues extracting the information, breaking down the action in each enforcement case isn't possible. Volume of all current outstanding work is being reported instead</p>	Pat Whymer	-	-	Enforcement cases closed: 71 Live enforcement cases: 115 Enforcement cases received: 78		-	<p>Figures as at the end of September, the end of Q2.</p> <p>Latest figures available on the online dashboards as soon as it is available</p>
<p>All: Complaints resolved</p> <p>Complaints logged against each Service per quarter. Highlights changes over time and the effects of initiatives.</p>	Area	2016/17 Q1		Total	Avg Time (Days)	YTD	<p>This breakdown of area and average time to complete timings is only available for the completed complaints.</p> <p>168 complaints were logged during the quarter, 60 of the completed processes were service issues that were dealt with immediately and aren't formal complaints. The remaining 31 processes that are yet to be completed will be a mix between service issues and formal complaints.</p> <p>Additional information about complaints is detailed in the exception report</p> <p>Note: Service Issues – Some issues are logged as complaints as the customer has a justified concern. Often these are simple issues resolved by talking with the customer so don't form part of our formal complaints process but still are captured for improvement and analysis purposes</p>
	Case Management	3	Case Management	1	1.1	4	
	Council Tax	5	Council Tax	2	18.5	7	
	Customer Service Team	5	Customer Service Team	7	4.4	12	
	Environmental Health	1	Environmental Health	1	33	2	
	Environmental Protection	-	Environmental Protection	1	69	1	
	Housing Benefits	5	Housing Benefits	1	14	6	
	ICT/Internet	1	ICT/Internet	-	-	1	
	Legal	-	Legal	1	22	1	
	Planning	7	Planning	13	21	20	

PI Description	Managed By	Q2 15/16	2015/16	Q2 2016/17			16/17	Comment (If Applicable)
			YTD or Total				YTD or total	
	Waste		7	Waste	43	59	50	
	Commercial Services		1	Commercial Services	3	29	4	
	Car Parks/Parking		4	Car Parks/Parking	4	24	8	
	Total		40	Total	77	40	117	
	Service Issues		53	Service Issues	60	N/A	113	
Long term sickness (days) Number of days lost due to long term sickness	Andy Wilson	347	YTD 1001	669			YTD 1125	Equivalent to 1.99 days/FTE for the Qtr. Q1 figure: 1.39/FTE
Short term sickness (days) Number of days lost due to short term sickness	Andy Wilson	203	YTD 381	243			YTD 431	Equivalent to 0.72 days/FTE for the quarter. Q1 figure: 0.57/FTE Public sector averages are around 8-9days/FTE
Top 5 call types	Anita ley			1) Waste - Missed Bin 2) Council Tax - Move 3) Waste - order/Query about r/sack 4) Benefits - Change of circs - first enquiry 5) Waste - Order bin or caddy / repair / extra / Collection			-	Last Qtr 1) CST Elections - SH Electoral register query 2) SH Planning - Planning Officer, current application 3) CST Waste - Place order for recycling sacks 4) SH Benefits - Change of Circumstances 5) CST Waste - 1st Missed Waste
Top 5 website views/trend	Kate Hamp		-	1) Planning 2) Contact Us 3) Dartmouth Lower Ferry 4) Recycling & Waste 5) Joint Local Plan			-	1. Planning Search 2. Planning 3. Contact Us 4. Recycling and Waste 5. My Account
% of customer contact through online interaction (W2) Demonstrating channel shift	Kate Hamp		-	23.8%			Q1 17.8%	We are now receiving almost 25% of requests via the web with over 13000 accounts being registered. An increasing number of W2 processes (fully integrated needing no additional admin) are now available online and

PI Description	Managed By	Q2 15/16	2015/16	Q2 2016/17	16/17	Comment (If Applicable)
			YTD or Total		YTD or total	
						the usage should start to increase as the service is advertised. A number of reporting processes that offer improved functionality for the customer to submit online rather than through the call centre have gone live, mostly circumventing case managers to route directly to operational staff to deal with.
Total number of online transactions	Kate Hamp		-	Workflow360(W2): 5160 Goss Forms: 475	<i>Via Workflow 360:8771 Goss forms: 1100</i>	Number of online interactions continues to increase as well as the percentage of all contact through online means
% of calls resolved at first point of contact Percentage of calls which are resolved at initial contact with CST	Anita Ley	70%	70%	58%	55%	As more Workflow360 processes go live this should improve as they have been designed to enable first point of contact resolution but the simpler processes being available online means the more complex processes remain with the customer service team. This means this measure will be harder to measure and not as relevant. The new contact centre system will allow for other statistics to be captured for Q3 onwards that will be communicated via this report
Nuisance complaints Received	Ian Luscombe		-	141	220	The nuisance process (covering noise, odours, smoke, etc) has now gone into Workflow360, this has moved the processes into the Customer Service Team and case management with specialist involvement only required later for more complex investigation.
Average time taken for processing Disabled Facilities Grants (Portion under council control) (Days)	Ian Luscombe	-	-	3 days	3	This is the portion of the process completely under the council's control (from application to approval). Our target is completion within 5 days The average number of days is 3. This measure is improving and was down to 1 day for the last month

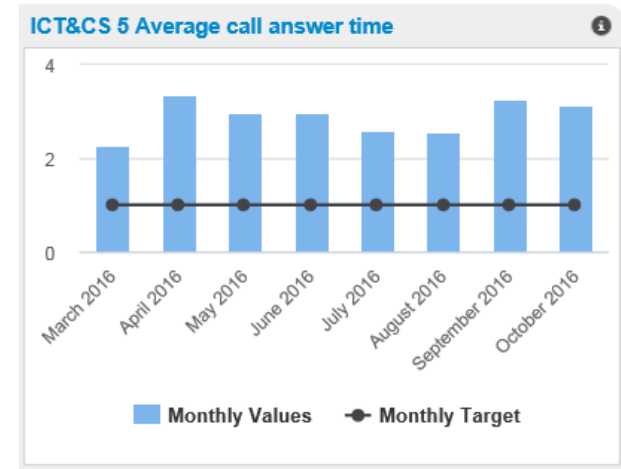
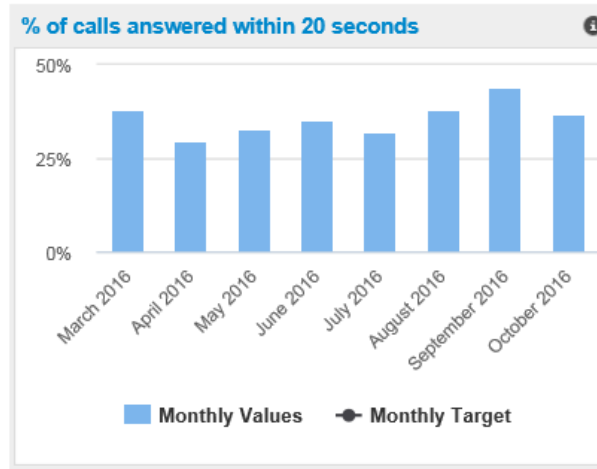
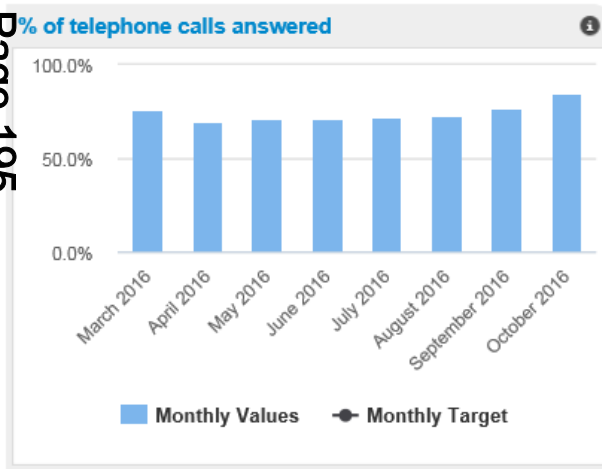
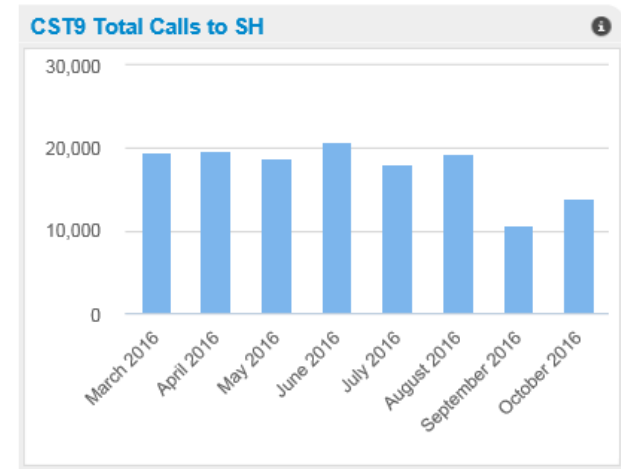
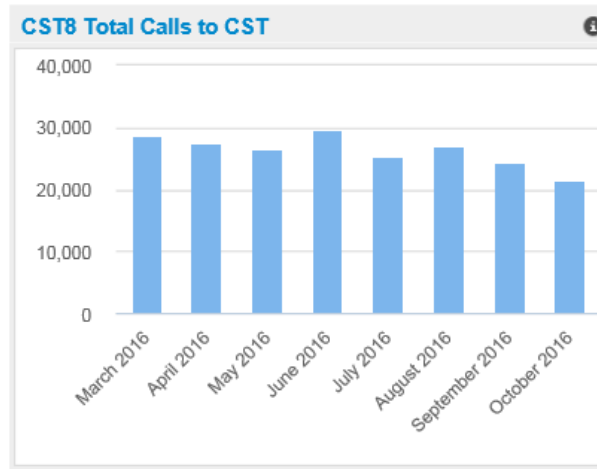
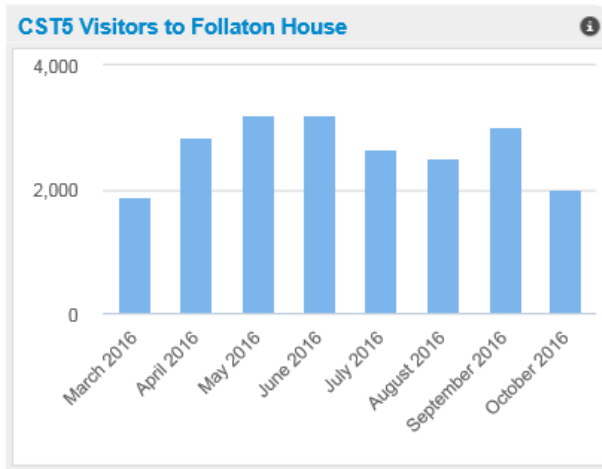
Exception Report:

Code and Name	Managed by	Prev Status	Last Qtr	July 2016	Aug 2016	Sep 2016	Q2 2016/17		Action Response
			Q4	Value	Value	Value	Value	Target	
Average Call Answer Time The average time in minutes for a call to be answered. This time shows as an average over each month.	Anita Ley		3.1	2.59	2.55	3.28	3.07	1 min	<p>Over 75,000 calls over the quarter which historically, and understandably over the summer holidays, has higher than normal levels of leave and this year had a slightly higher level of sickness both of which would have contributed to the increased call time.</p> <p>This number needs to be compared with the additional processes now dealt with by customer services that previously were passed immediately to the back office. Whilst better for the customer and case management it does place additional strain on the CST with increased call length.</p> <p>As online uptake increases the self-service cases are generally the simpler cases, this leaves the more complex or multi-faceted issues for the contact centre to resolve.</p>
Complaints response speed	Kate Hamp		23 days	48	48	18	40 days	30 days	<p>The dip in overall performance for the quarter is explained mainly by performance issues towards the end of quarter 1. As complaints are only counted when they are closed, the slow response time can be explained by the focused work to clear the backlog of complaints especially within waste.</p> <p>A lot of good work in administrative side of commercial services and how they interact with customer first case managers has been undertaken in the past few months with performance up across the board. Dealing with these late complaints added significantly to the average completion time but as the backlog was cleared the average time to fully deal with complaints went back below the target time as can be seen by the September figure.</p>

Measure	Target	Explanation
Overall waste recycling rate %	55%	A combination of recycling, re-use & composting for household waste. A self-set stretching target based on historic collection rates and current ambitions
Residual waste per household	92kg/qtr	The residual waste left after recycling and re-use. Equivalent to c.14kg per fortnightly collection per household
Average Call Answer Time	1 min	Simple statistic to judge overall call answer speed. Can mask the complexity of call answer times but provides useful yardstick for comparing performance over time. If capacity exists in CST then answering calls in 20secs is common and simple. Answering calls consistently around the minute (or any) timeframe occurs only when incoming calls are being matched with the speed calls are being completed. As an example with our avg call and wrap up time of 7 mins this target is passed with only 2 extra calls being received per minute. Each additional extra 2 calls/minute would add another 1 minute wait to all callers wait time.
% of enquiries resolved at first point of contact	60%	In contrast to the measure above this focuses on when the customer gets through, can CST deal with the issue at hand. Driving increased success in this measure pushes up call times so has a negative impact on call answer speed.
% of Applications determined within time frame Major	60%	Statutory performance measure target
% of Applications determined within time frame Minor	65%	Old statutory performance measure target
% of Applications determined within time frame Other	80%	Old statutory performance measure target
Avg End to End time Benefits New Claims	24 days	Time for processing new claims
Avg End to End time Benefits Change of circumstances	11 days	Time for processing changes to existing claims
% of nuisance complaints resolved at informal stage	90%	Handling nuisance complaints informally saves time and money and often provides a more satisfactory outcome for all involved

Avg days short term sickness/FTE	1.5days/qtr	Private sector average of c.6 days/year, Public sector average of c.8 days has informed this initially stretching target. Agile working has had a very positive impact on sickness as people feeling under the weather have remained at home, working and reduced the likelihood of transfer of communicable infections to colleagues.
Complaint response speed	10 days	Time to respond to a Level 1 complaints
T18: Programme timescales on track	Against Plan	Performance against programme timelines. Recently re-baselined following agreement of milestones with Civica
T18: Performance vs. Budget	Under/over spend	Measure to compare the forecast spend on the programme at the end of the period to the actual spend. To judge budget control. Green: Actual spend less than planned Amber: Overspend of less than 5% Red: Overspend greater than 5%
T18: No. of Processes live		Against baselined projection for the month. There is a rolling programme of processes being worked on together by the Business Development Team and the services that is dependent on system fixes and adoption/buy in from the organisation.
T18: Ratio call/web submissions	10% increasing over time	Ratio for customers calling vs self-servicing using integrated processes online. Customers currently fill in online forms but this then requires input into our systems. The new integrated approach inputs directly to our system and routes work where needed. Initially requires creation of account before first submission so expectation of slight drop off in ratio to begin with and then increasing as more customers sign up. Communication initiatives will be coordinated at key times during the year, for example, with annual council tax bills to drive sign ups so a stepwise increase in submissions is expected.

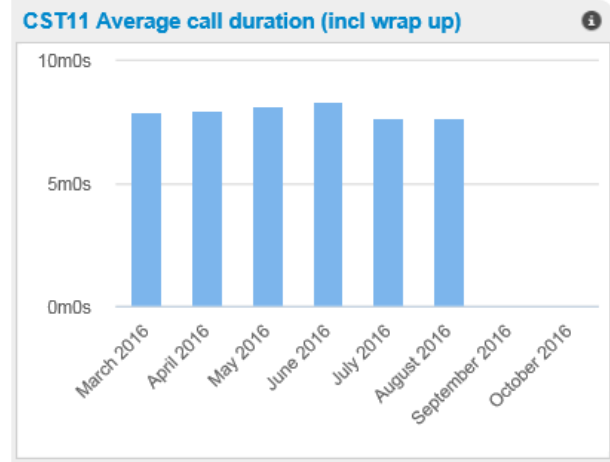
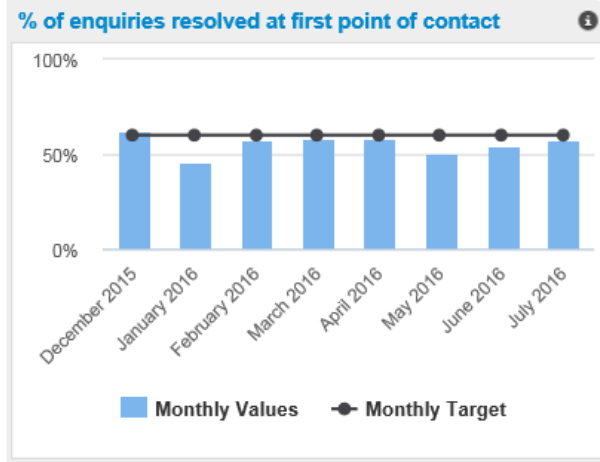
CST Dashboard SH



Page 195

Customer Services Dash board showing trend data

By default the portals show the previous 8 months of data but can be adjusted to include quarterly data or alternative timescales



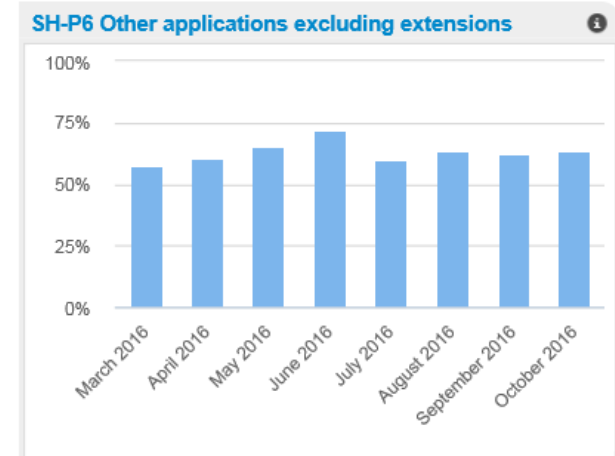
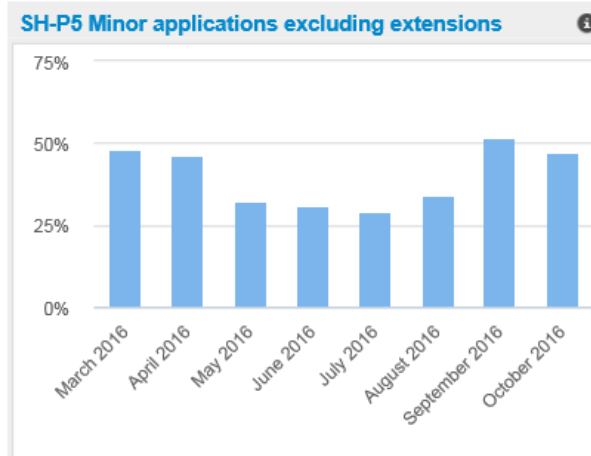
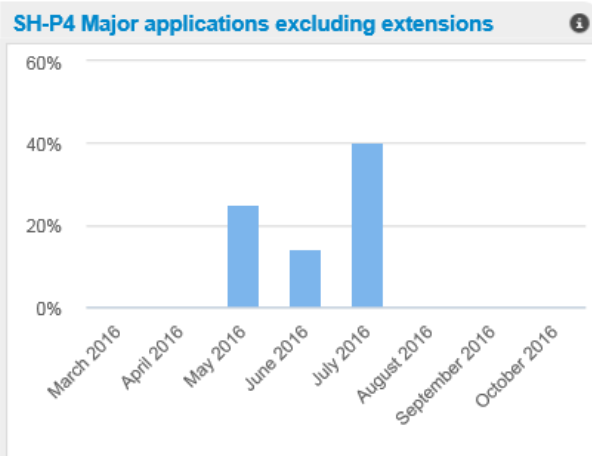
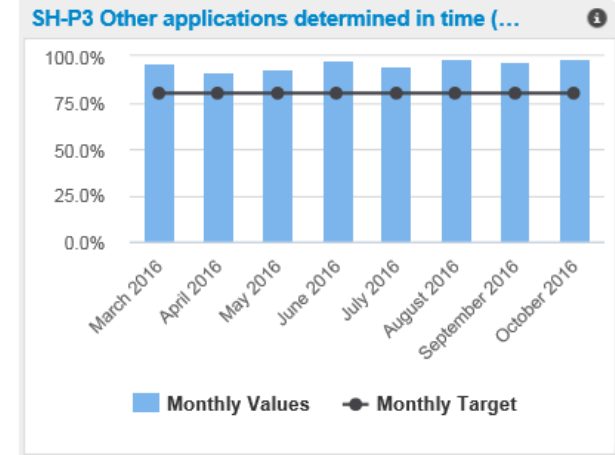
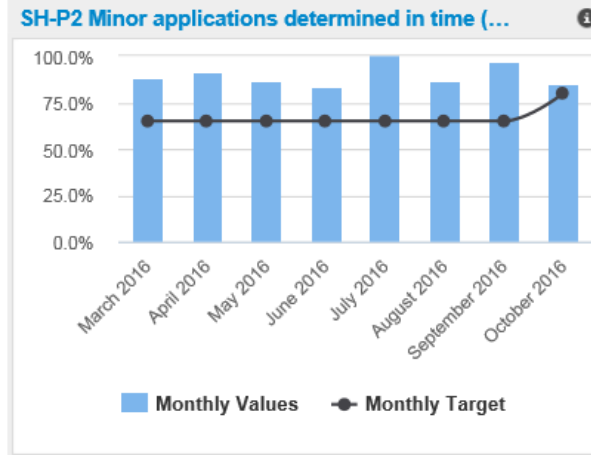
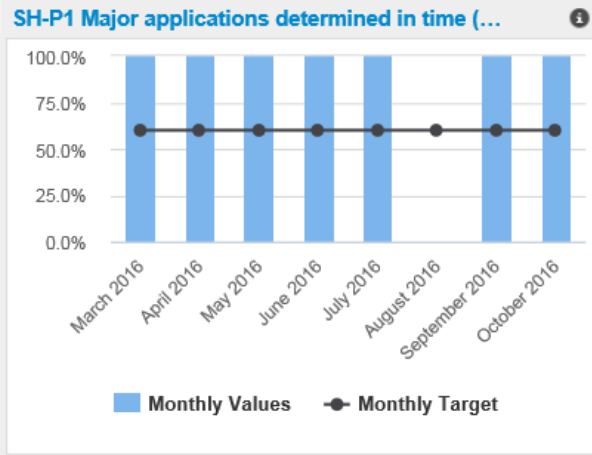
All fields can be hovered over on the dashboard for the actual figure and all titles can be clicked to drill down into the measure to see the numbers behind the chart.

Planning Dashboard

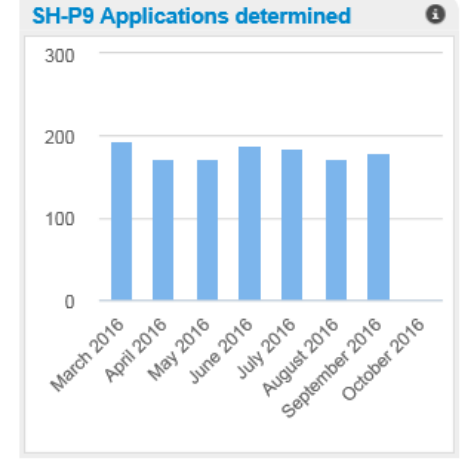
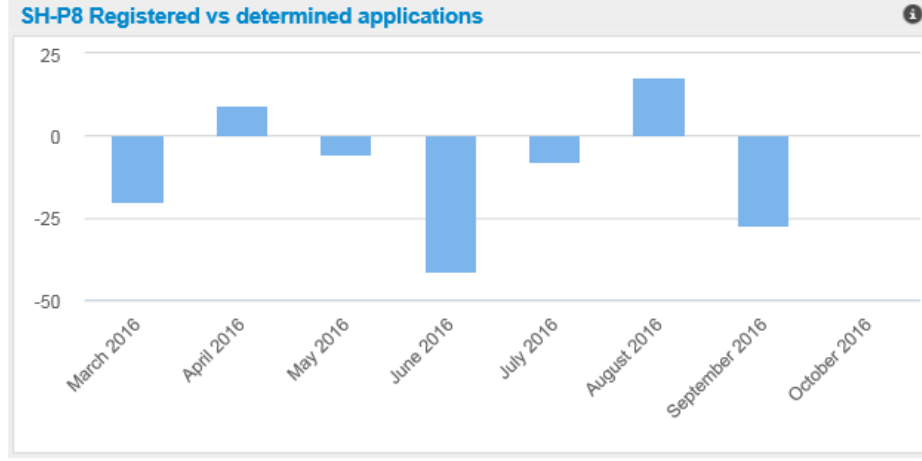
Planning Performance

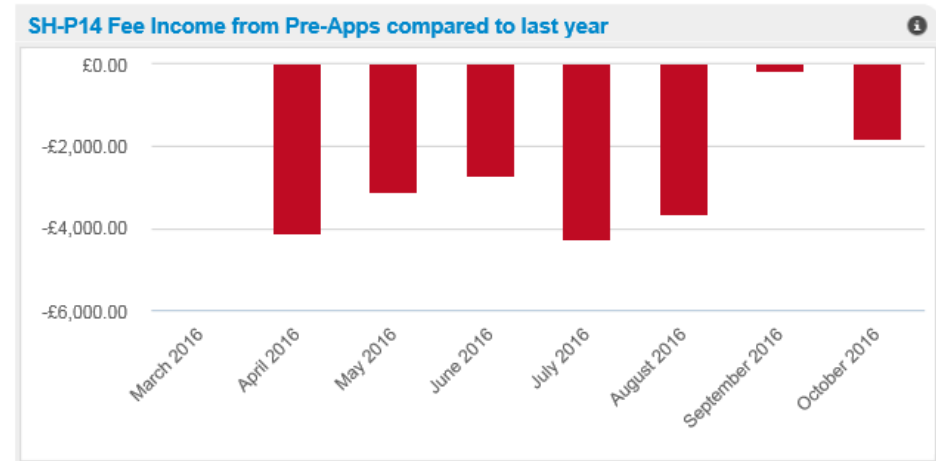
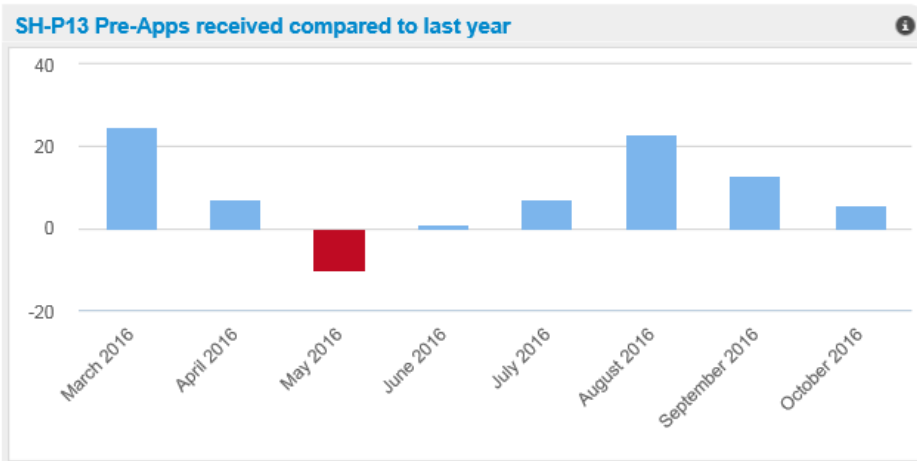
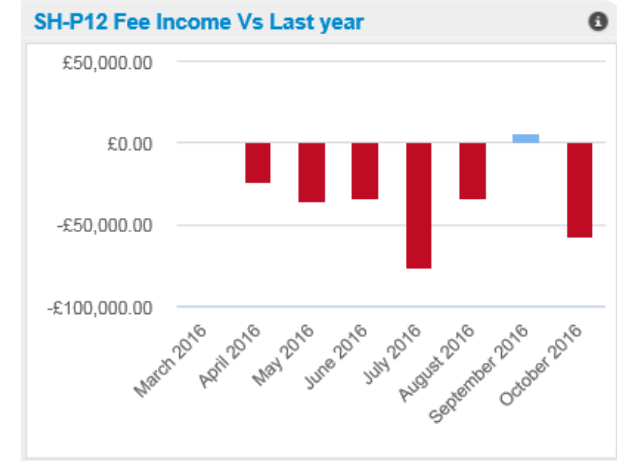
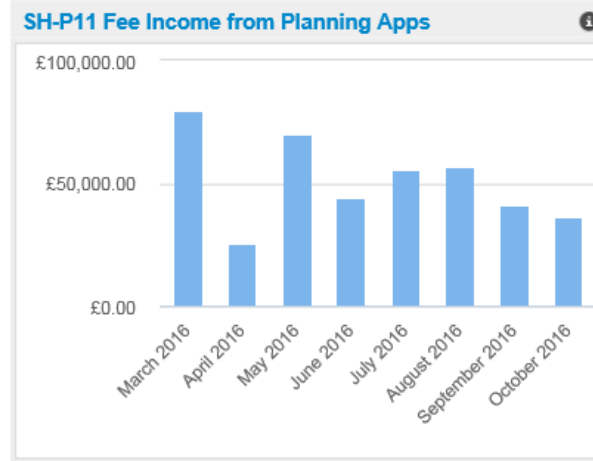
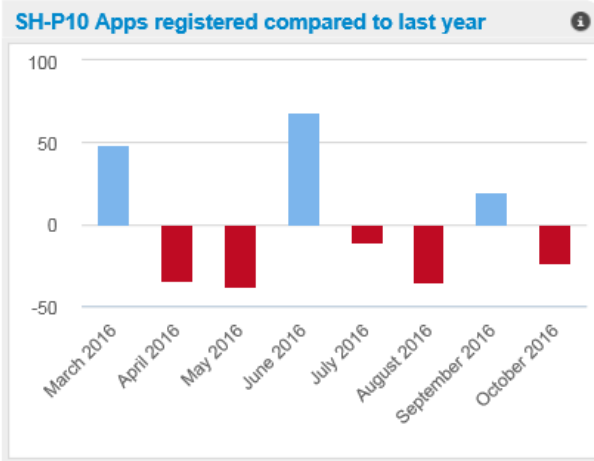
Planning Enforcement

Planning Appeal Performance



The Planning Dashboard contains three pages of information; planning performance, planning enforcement performance & planning appeal performance





These charts show a positive/negative comparison with the same measure the previous year (this helps to remove seasonal variation)

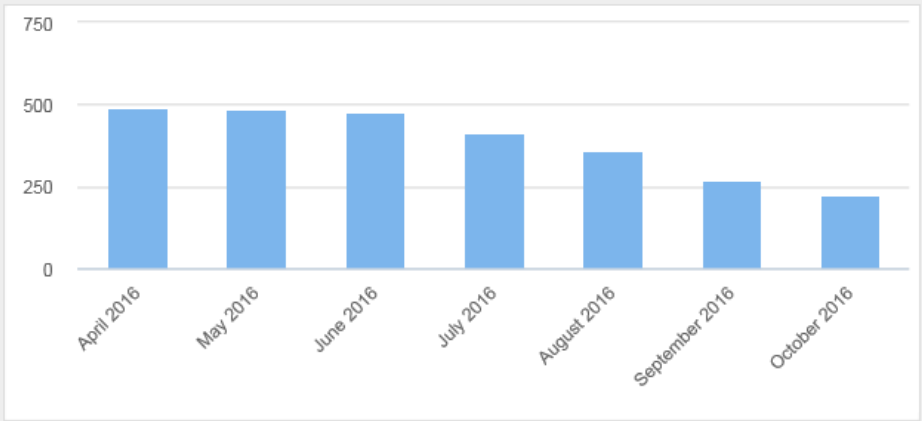
Planning Enforcement

Planning Performance

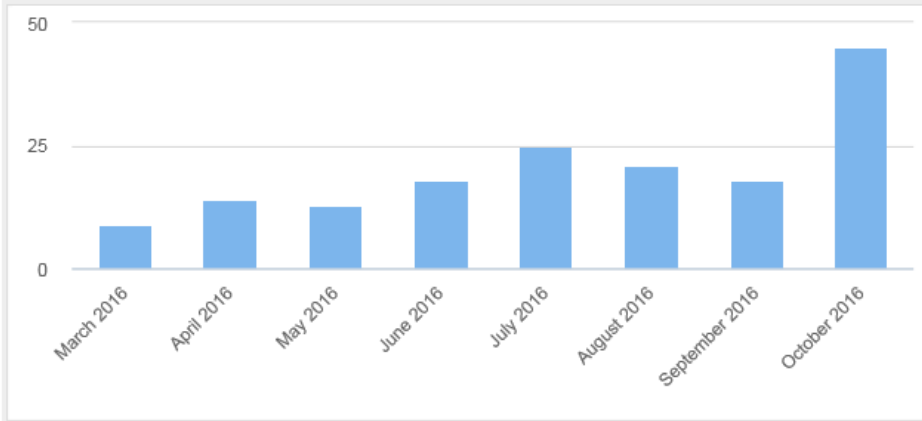
Planning Enforcement

Planning Appeal Performance

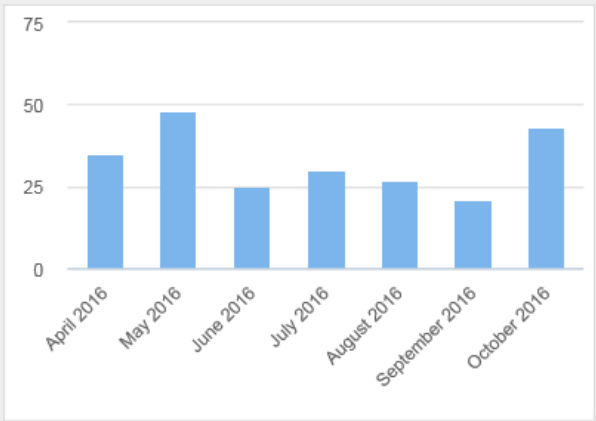
SH-E1 Enforcement Cases Outstanding Backlog



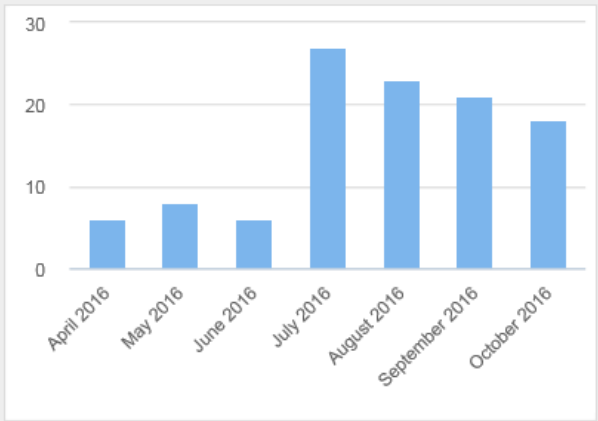
SH-E2 Enforcement Cases Closed Backlog



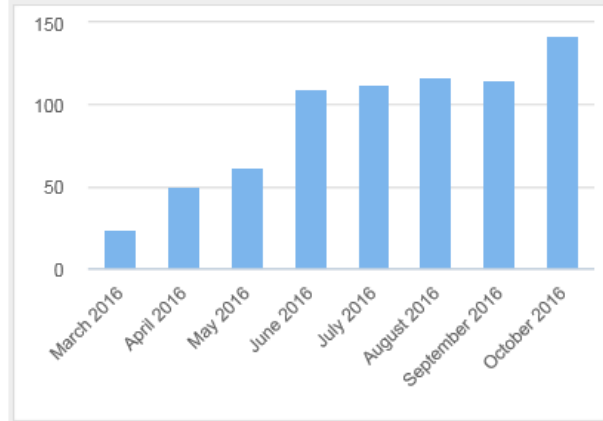
SH-E3 Enf Cases Received (since March 2016)



SH-E4 Enf Cases Closed (since March 2016)



SH-E5 Enforcement Cases Outstanding



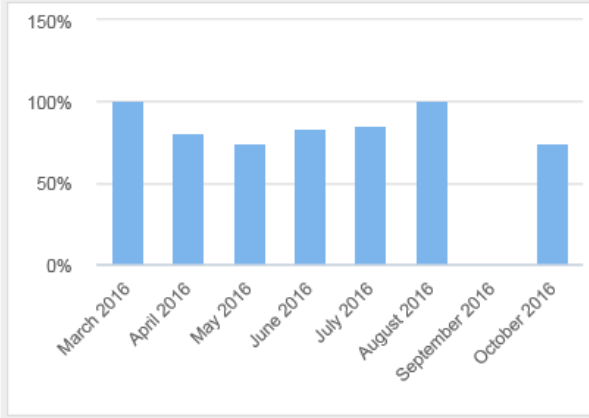
Planning Appeal Performance

Planning Performance

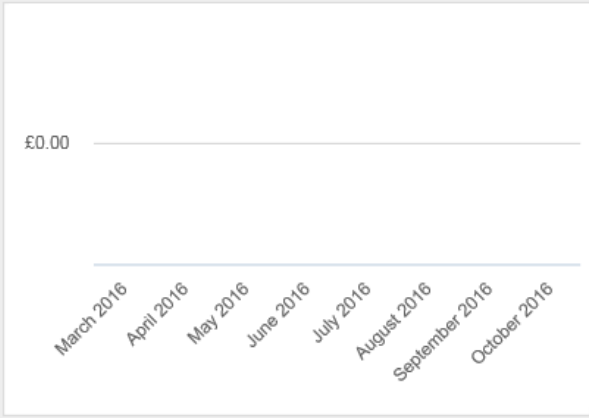
Planning Enforcement

Planning Appeal Performance

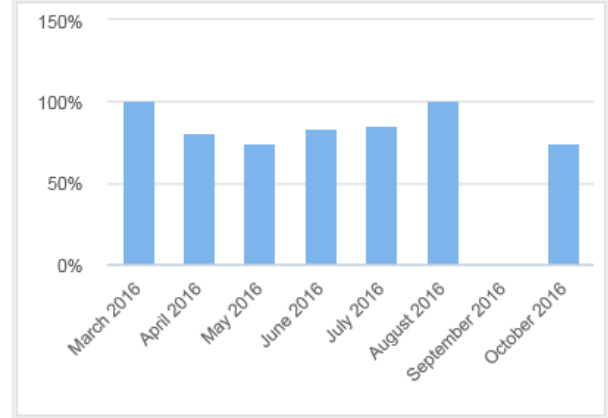
W2PEC 33 % of Appeal Decisions by Officer



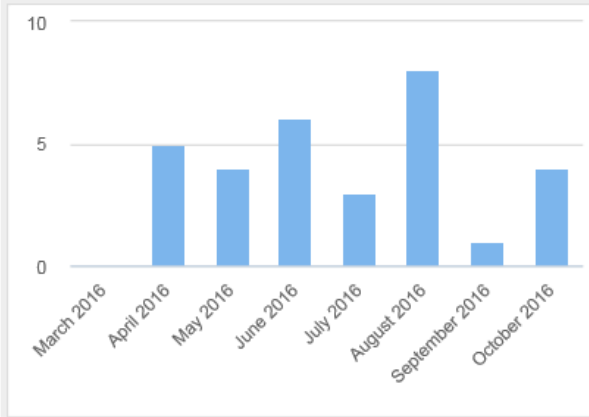
W2PEC 34 Appeal costs awarded to SHDC



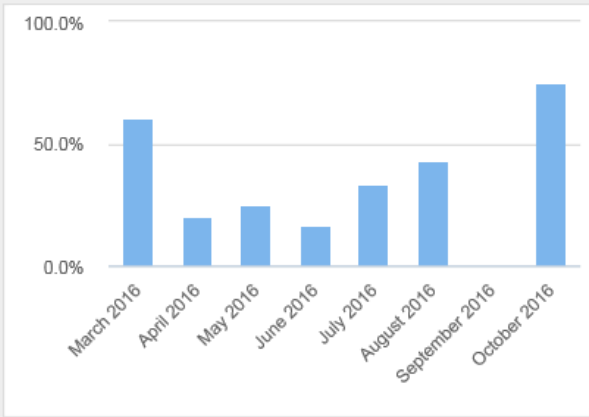
W2PEC 33 % of Appeal Decisions by Officer



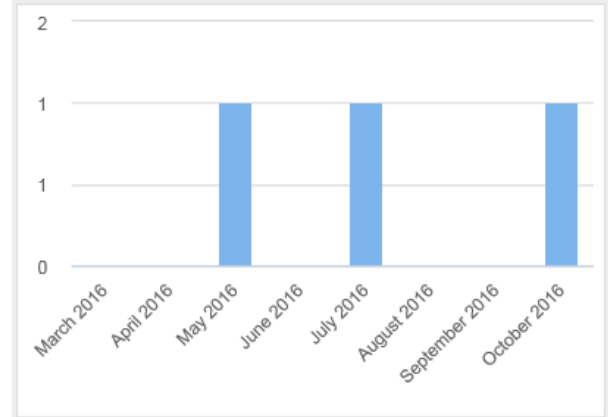
W2PEC 28 Appeal Decisions



BV204 Planning appeals allowed



W2PEC 29 Appeal Decisions (Member v Officer)



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Report to: Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Date: 24 November 2016
Title: OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2016
Portfolio Area: Customer First
Wards Affected: All
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Urgent Decision: N Approval and clearance obtained:

Date next steps can be taken: Executive: 1
December 2016

Author: Catherine Bowen Role: Legal CoP Lead Specialist and Monitoring Officer

Contact: Email: Catherine.Bowen@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. To review the Ombudsman Annual Letter for 2016 (attached at Appendix A) and consider what corporate lessons may be learnt and whether further service improvements are required.**
- 2. To make any necessary recommendations to the Executive.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. To consider the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2016 regarding Ombudsman complaints received against the Council for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 (attached as Appendix A to this report).
- 1.2. Members are requested to review the Annual Letter 2016 from the Ombudsman and consider what corporate lessons have been learnt (or can be learnt) from the outcome of the complaints and whether further service improvements can be made.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Local Government Ombudsman's corporate strategy is based on the twin pillars of remedying injustice and improving local public services, and as part of this role the Ombudsman investigates complaints made by members of the public about public authorities. This currently excludes parish and town councils. A consultation was undertaken by the Government in March 2015 on proposals to extend the Local Government Ombudsman's services to larger parish and town councils, but the response and outcomes from the consultation have yet to be published.
- 2.2. The Ombudsman will investigate a complaint if it relates to maladministration or injustice by the Council. The Ombudsman is not able to investigate all of the complaints referred to her, as some will fall outside of her remit, and the Ombudsman can only consider complaints that have first been considered through the Council's own internal complaints procedure; this is because the Council must have had the opportunity to consider, and respond to, the complaint first.
- 2.3. A complainant cannot appeal against the Ombudsman's decision, but complaints may be reviewed if new information is presented to the Ombudsman.

3. The Annual Letter 2016, Complaints and Decisions

- 3.1. The Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2016 is attached at Appendix A and comprises a written report and a table of complaints and enquiries received between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016.
- 3.2. The Ombudsman's office changed its business processes during 2012 with the Annual Review Letter presenting only high level statistical information on the number of complaints received against the Council. However, the Ombudsman has recognised that presenting the total number of complaints may not, by itself, give a clear picture of how well these complaints have been responded to and in response, therefore, to feedback from Local Authorities, the Ombudsman now includes data on the number of complaints upheld / not upheld, as well as highlighting the outcomes of those complaints rather than just the numbers received. In making recommendations where the Ombudsman has found fault, the purpose is to remedy injustice caused to individuals and also to prevent injustice to others by improving practice.
- 3.3. Members will note a box at the bottom of the Ombudsman's table (Appendix A) which highlights the number and percentage of complaints that were remedied satisfactorily following recommendations by the Ombudsman and those satisfactorily remedied by the Council before the Ombudsman's involvement (this figure is 100% for South Hams).

- 3.4. A recent review of Local Government complaints for 2015/16 by the Ombudsman shows that, nationally, the Ombudsman is upholding more complaints (a rise from 46% to 51% on approximately the same number of complaints as the previous year). A summary of the report and the report itself can be accessed at the following link: <http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2016/jul/ombudsman-upholding-more-complaints-about-local-government>. The report also includes national tables of Ombudsman complaints by category and by outcome (including the compliance rate with the Ombudsman's recommendations). Nationally the Ombudsman is most likely to find fault in complaints about benefits, tax and housing; at South Hams this was a mixed range of complaints.
- 3.5. The Ombudsman provides a breakdown of the investigations that she has upheld to show the number of cases where the Ombudsman's recommendations remedied the fault, and also where the Council had already offered a satisfactory remedy during the local complaints part of the process. In these latter cases, the Ombudsman provides reassurance that the Council had satisfactorily attempted to resolve the complaint through its internal complaints process.
- 3.6. Where the Ombudsman finds that the Council has acted with fault, and that fault has caused injustice to the complainant she will make recommendations to the Council to put things right and this can include; asking the Council to make an apology (if it has not already done so), reinstating a service, making a decision on something under the right grounds, or providing information. If injustice cannot be remedied through remedial action, the Ombudsman may recommend a financial payment.
- 3.7. The South Hams Review Letter shows that in 2015/16 the Ombudsman received 15 complaints and enquiries compared to 27 for the year 2014/15 and 28 complaints for 2013/14. The Ombudsman made 21 decisions in 2015/16 compared to 19 in 2014/15 and 44 in the year 2013/14, The Council is unlikely to be in a position where no complaints are referred the Ombudsman because some complainants will remain unsatisfied with the outcomes of the Council's investigations where there is no finding in their favour. However, there is a reduction in the number of Ombudsman complaints over the past two years, and a significant reduction in the number of matters where the Ombudsman has found fault.
- 3.8. A more detailed summary of the complaints and Ombudsman's decisions for 2015/16 is attached as Appendix B, and Members will note that the Ombudsman has only upheld three of those complaints. The final column

shows what actions or measures the Council has taken or put in place as a result of the complaint in order to improve services or processes.

- 3.9. Members will note that the figures in the Ombudsman table do not strictly correspond with the figures in the Council’s records at Appendix B, and this is due to several factors; for example, the Ombudsman’s figures include enquiries from people that they signpost back to the Council but who may not necessarily make a complaint, and not every decision will relate to a complaint made in that financial year (it may have been received in the previous financial year but a decision made this year; conversely a complaint may have been received before 31 March 2016 and the decision not made until the next financial year).

4. Proposed Way Forward

- 4.1. Members will note that the overall number of complaints received by the Ombudsman, and the number of upheld complaints have reduced significantly during 2015/16. It is considered that this is a direct result of the new corporate complaints policy introduced in 2015 which sets out a clear and consistent two-stage process across the Councils for considering complaints.
- 4.2. A further factor in the reduction in the number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman can be attributed to the complaints-handling training undertaken by officers across the Authority during the last financial year, which has resulted in a more proactive approach by officers with the aim of remedying any faults found in line with the Ombudsman’s guidelines.
- 4.3. It is recommended that the Council continues to embed the corporate complaints policy across the Council and endeavour to resolve complaints at a local level, and embed the learning outcomes to enable even further improvements.

5. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Local Government Ombudsman is governed by the Local Government Act 1974 and is responsible for considering complaints against local authorities which the complainant considers have not been resolved locally.

		<p>The Overview & Scrutiny Panel is responsible for having an overview of complaints handling and for an overview of Ombudsman complaints, and the Ombudsman Annual Review Letter is an important part of that process.</p> <p>The decisions in respect of each case are provided to the relevant service in order that any recommendations made by the Ombudsman are acted upon and lessons learnt can be implemented.</p>
Financial		<p>Where is it necessary to settle a complaint by the payment of compensation (or the Council has already offered a settlement) payment is made out of the current year's revenue budget for the service in question. No compensation payments were made in this financial year.</p> <p>There are resource implications in the officer time spent in dealing with the complaint in both the initial stages under the Council's internal complaints policy as well as the resources required in responding to the Ombudsman complaint, but it is not currently possible to quantify this time.</p>
Risk		<p>It is important that the Council is aware of the number and type of complaints made to the Ombudsman together with the outcomes and lessons learnt.</p> <p>Whilst it is not possible to eliminate complaints, it is possible to manage the complaints efficiently and learn from the outcomes of these complaints to mitigate the risk of recurrence and deliver service improvements.</p>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		This has been considered in the Complaints policy and within the individual complaint's where relevant
Safeguarding		N/a
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		N/a
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		N/a

Other implications		
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Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A: The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2016
Appendix B: Table of South Hams District Council's Complaints for 2015 – 2016

Background Papers

None

21 July 2016

By email

Sophie Hosking & Steve Jorden
Executive Directors
South Hams District Council

Dear Sophie Hosking & Steve Jorden,

Annual Review Letter 2016

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about your authority for the year ended 31 March 2016.

The enclosed tables present the number of complaints and enquiries received and the decisions we made about your authority during the period. I hope that this information will prove helpful in assessing your authority's performance in handling complaints.

Last year we provided information on the number of complaints upheld and not upheld for the first time. In response to council feedback, this year we are providing additional information to focus the statistics more on the outcome from complaints rather than just the amounts received.

We provide a breakdown of the upheld investigations to show how they were remedied. This includes the number of cases where our recommendations remedied the fault and the number of cases where we decided your authority had offered a satisfactory remedy during the local complaints process. In these latter cases we provide reassurance that your authority had satisfactorily attempted to resolve the complaint before the person came to us. In addition, we provide a compliance rate for implementing our recommendations to remedy a fault.

I want to emphasise that these statistics comprise the data we hold, and may not necessarily align with the data your authority holds. For example, our numbers include enquiries from people we signpost back to the authority, but who may never contact you.

In line with usual practice, we are publishing our annual data for all authorities on our website, alongside an annual review of local government complaints. The aim of this is to be transparent and provide information that aids the scrutiny of local services.

Effective accountability for devolved authorities

Local government is going through perhaps some of the biggest changes since the LGO was set up more than 40 years ago. The creation of combined authorities and an increase in the number of elected mayors will hugely affect the way local services are held to account. We have already started working with the early combined authorities to help develop principles for effective and accessible complaints systems.

We have also reviewed how we structure our casework teams to provide insight across the emerging combined authority structures. Responding to council feedback, this included reconfirming the Assistant Ombudsman responsible for relationship management with each authority, which we recently communicated to Link Officers through distribution of our manual for working with the LGO.

Supporting local scrutiny

Our corporate strategy is based upon the twin pillars of remedying injustice and improving local public services. The numbers in our annual report demonstrate that we continue to improve the quality of our service in achieving swift redress.

To measure our progress against the objective to improve local services, in March we issued a survey to all councils. I was encouraged to find that 98% of respondents believed that our investigations have had an impact on improving local public services. I am confident that the continued publication of our decisions (alongside an improved facility to browse for them on our website), focus reports on key themes and the data in these annual review letters is helping the sector to learn from its mistakes and support better services for citizens.

The survey also demonstrated a significant proportion of councils are sharing the information we provide with elected members and scrutiny committees. I welcome this approach, and want to take this opportunity to encourage others to do so.

Complaint handling training

We recently refreshed our Effective Complaint Handling courses for local authorities and introduced a new course for independent care providers. We trained over 700 people last year and feedback shows a 96% increase in the number of participants who felt confident in dealing with complaints following the course. To find out more, visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Ombudsman reform

You will no doubt be aware that the government has announced the intention to produce draft legislation for the creation of a single ombudsman for public services in England. This is something we support, as it will provide the public with a clearer route to redress in an increasingly complex environment of public service delivery.

We will continue to support government in the realisation of the public service ombudsman, and are advising on the importance of maintaining our 40 years plus experience of working with local government and our understanding its unique accountability structures.

This will also be the last time I write with your annual review. My seven-year term of office as Local Government Ombudsman comes to an end in January 2017. The LGO has gone through extensive change since I took up post in 2010, becoming a much leaner and more focused organisation, and I am confident that it is well prepared for the challenges ahead.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jane Martin
Local Government Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our website:
<http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/interpreting-local-authority-statistics>

Complaints and enquiries received

Adult Care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environment Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
0	5	2	0	1	0	0	7	0	15

Decisions made

				Detailed Investigations			
Complete or Invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for Local Resolution	Closed After Initial Enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld	Uphold Rate	Total
0	0	5	6	8	2	20%	21

Notes

Our uphold rate is calculated in relation to the total number of detailed investigations.

The number of remedied complaints may not equal the number of upheld complaints. This is because, while we may uphold a complaint because we find fault, we may not always find grounds to say that fault caused injustice that ought to be remedied.

The compliance rate is the proportion of remedied complaints where our recommendations are believed to have been implemented.

Complaints Remedied

by LGO	Satisfactorily by Authority before LGO Involvement	Compliance Rate
1	0	100%

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South Hams DC
Decisions made in period (Apr 2015 - Mar 2016)

	Ref	Category	Brief Description	Decision date	Decision	Decision Details	Learning Outcomes
1	15 000 080	Planning	Neighbour's hedge too high	14/Apr/2015	Not reviewing	Mr B appealed to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government through the Planning Inspectorate, therefore Ombudsman cannot	n/a
2	14 019 772	Support Services	Dartmouth BID - challenge to legality	15/Oct/2015	Not upheld	Council acting as administrators under terms defined by statute - no	n/a
3	14 018 681	EH	That it took too long to process a disabled facilities grant	15/Oct/2016	Ombudsman found fault by the Council but that no injustice had resulted	Delays to application were partially due to waiting for report from a third party; delays also due to discovery that planning permission was required after all, slight delay in planning app was not sufficient fault.	Importance of dealing with matters diligently
4	15 001 959	Council tax	a) Property being charged council tax for full year but not allowed to use all year round. When SHDC sold site a covenant was placed on the land preventing occupation in January and February. This went to Valuation Tribunal. b) Also Data Protection issue during hearing	03/Jun/2015	Unable to investigate	Ombudsman not investigating – already gone to tribunal for a) and should go to Information Commissioner for b)	n/a
5	14 020 989	Planning	Wind turbine planning app granted but is in flight path of private airfield. Also application determined under delegated powers rather than committee	09/Sep/2015	Some fault but would not have altered outcome	Case officer's report was misleading and did not include information re CAA guidance, nor how far turbine was from airstrip. Also fault for not mentioning turbulence as written objections had	All specialists reminded about importance of writing accurate reports on planning apps and that they should contain all relevant information.

South Hams DC
Decisions made in period (Apr 2015 - Mar 2016)

6	15 008 441	Benefits	Issues with over payments, freedom of information request, and taking complainant to court for non payment of Council Tax	n/a	Premature	Because this complaint had not completed the Council's complaints policy, it was not investigated	N/a
7	15 009 981	Planning	Complaint about delay by the Council in processing planning application	30/Sep/2015	Not investigated as the option to appeal to Planning Inspector was available - permission subsequently granted	Retrospective planning application for works not determined. Complainant can appeal to Planning Inspector if not determined within 8 weeks.	Planning CoP aware of the need to process applications within the statutory dates. Improvements have been made
8	14 013 759	Planning	Wind turbine - Council accused of administrative failings in the handling of the planning app.	05/Nov/2015	Mostly no fault, some fault but insufficient injustice	Following complaint to Information Commissioner, Council had to release all information relating to this application. However, although partial fault by Council, the complainants did not suffer significant injustice through fault to warrant	Review of information released to public on request
9	15 009 894	Planning	Maladministration re planning app granted	23/Oct/2015	Not investigating	Not investigating as unlikely would find evidence of fault causing injustice to complainant	n/a
10	15 012 122	Standards	Complaining the Council did not properly investigate his complaint about town councillors	27/Nov/2015	Not investigating	Not investigating as no jurisdiction over town council	n/a
11	15 017 005	Benefits	Complainant says Council made navigation authority repossess his boat causing him to become homeless. Council should have paid Housing Benefit.	25/Feb/2016	Not investigating	Not investigated as complaint is late & no grounds for discretion to investigate. No jurisdiction over Navigation Authority. Also complainant could have appealed housing benefit decision but did not for	n/a

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Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**
Date: **24th November 2016**
Title: **Final update and recommendations from Partnerships Task and Finish Group**
Portfolio Area: **Strategy and Commissioning**
Wards Affected: **All**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee;

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **N/A**

Date next steps can be taken: Executive meeting 1 December 2016

Author: **Ian Luscombe/Louisa Daley** Role: **CoP Lead/Partnership Specialist**

Contact: **Telephone/email: louisa.daley@swdevon.gov.uk**

Recommendations:

That the Executive be RECOMMENDED:

- 1. that the funding levels remain the same for the South Hams Citizens Advice and South Hams Community Voluntary Sector.**
- 2. to consider the proposed caveats with the South Hams Community Voluntary Sector.**

1 Executive summary

Background Information

- Following the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Report in September 2015 Members requested further information around partnerships that South Hams District Council were involved in, therefore a Task and Finish Group was created. The role of the Task and Finish Group was to review all of the partnerships where South Hams District Council had financial interest, either through direct funding or officer resource and to make recommendations as to whether the partnership offered value for money and supported the Council in delivering its priorities.

- 2 The review was undertaken in conjunction with West Devon Borough Council, as many of the partnerships are run across both Councils. During the period of the review the following documentation has been presented to Members:
 - Partnership Register
 - Partnership Policy
 - Partnership Policy Guidelines
 - Partnership Review documentation - significant and desirable partnerships
 - Partnership Register of recommendations
 - Partnership Financial Information Plan

- 3 The final meeting of the Task and Finish Group was to determine recommendations for funding for South Hams Citizens Advice and South Hams Community Voluntary Sector. Both partnerships receive significant levels of funding from South Hams District Council for core costs, to the values of £41,867 and £42,616 respectively.

- 4 Prior to the Task and Finish Group meeting both partnerships were asked to submit a business plan which would respond to the following points:
 - How will funding be spent?
 - How will it benefit residents?
 - Demonstrate links to Councils Strategic Priorities
 - Demonstrate the value for money it will provide
 - What success measures will be used?

Both partnerships submitted business plans which can be seen in Appendices 1 and 2.

- 5 Following the meeting of the Task and Finish Group on 9th November 2016 the following recommendations from Members are being sought:
 - **That South Hams Citizens Advice funding remains the same, at £41,867 for core costs for 2017/18. The Task and Finish Group were satisfied with the value provided by Citizens Advice.**

 - **That South Hams Community Voluntary Sector funding remains the same, at £42,616 for core costs for 2017/18 with the recommendation that the following items included within the business case are followed:**
 - Expectation by Councillors for CVS to:
 - Maximise their paid membership – currently have significant membership yet most do not pay their membership fee
 - Include project management/administration costs into funding bids
 - Reduce accommodation costs
 - To approach Parish Councils for specific grants

- Use the business case supplied in August 2016 to:
- Define current roles, objectives and outcomes so that these are measurable
 - Demonstrate the four clear areas of saving and provide the response to officers
 - To approach West Devon (and other) CVS groups to look at other ways of reducing costs

2. Proposed Way Forward

1. The proposal is for Members to recommend to the Executive the financial requests for both South Hams Citizens Advice and South Hams Community Voluntary Sector and also to agree with the conditions attached to the Community Voluntary Sector funding stream.
2. The recommendations are justified as part of the Councils responsibility to promote value for money and efficiencies whilst remaining mindful of cost implications.

Failure to fund the partnerships will affect the partnerships ability to produce outcomes that will have a direct impact on the Councils residents.

3. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		<p>No Legal Governance support required at this stage.</p> <p>The Council has discretion to support these groups and award funding under the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>The Task and Finish Group has looked extensively at value for money during the Partnership Review.</p>
Financial		<p>The recommendations are for the funding levels to remain for 2017/8 the same as current, therefore there are no new, or additional financial implications on the decision.</p> <p>Engagement has been undertaken with the S151 Officer.</p>
Risk		<p>There are few financial risks as the same level of funding is being sought.</p> <p>There is a reputational risk to the Council if the recommendations made to the Community Voluntary Sector are not monitored or acted upon.</p>

Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		There are no direct Equality or Diversity issues.
Safeguarding		There are positive links to Safeguarding our communities through future work with our partners, working more closely and effectively with those in crisis.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		There are no direct crime and disorder impacts relevant within this report.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		There are positive Wellbeing implications within our communities due to the nature of the work undertaken by our partners.
Other implications		N/A

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Citizens Advice business plan

Appendix 2: Community Voluntary Sector business plan

Report to South Hams District Council Overview & Scrutiny Committee 14th September 2016

1. Introduction

This report supplements Citizens Advice South Hams annual report and other documents we send to councillors and council officers each year. For instance, in our partnership review questionnaire, submitted on 9th June 2016, we outlined how our organisational goals and activities have, and will continue, to support the aims and strategic priorities of South Hams District Council.

The aim of this report is to provide supplementary information to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which moves on from previously submitted papers and where background details can be found.

Specifically the purpose of this report is:

- To give clarity to the costs and income of Citizens Advice South Hams
- To amplify the value for money we achieve through low staff compliments, high numbers of highly trained volunteers and the economies of scale brought through membership of the national Citizens Advice service
- To highlight the geographical spread of our client base and numbers of issues we address
- To highlight the risk to South Hams residents if funding is reduced
- To suggest further ways our two organisations can work together in partnership to support each other's aims, principles and service delivery

2. How we spend funding from SHDC

As you will see below our core advice services costs run at around £130k per annum. This has been consistent for several years and represents the minimum base costs of running the operation. The staffing compliment is the equivalent of 2.4 full time equivalents (FTEs). However the overall manager secures, and works on, funded

projects which allow us to offset some of the costs leaving the resources of paid staff in the core service as 1.8 FTEs. Any employment requirements for projects are on a fixed term contract that end with the project and are therefore not seen as an overhead of the operation.

However the core services income, as seen in the table below, is lower than these costs at £85,863 for this year. The difference in the costs and income comes from our success in securing funded projects where the core staff and all overhead costs are allowed to be offset. However where in the year 2015/2016 we had approaching £190,000 of projects income, the year 2016/17 is reduced at £105,000. We were faced in April 2016 with a re-organisation of the people employed within specific projects, with the appropriate reduction of paid staff.

CORE INCOME	Income 2014/15	Income 2015/16	Income 2016/17
Devon CC	33700	32583	34796
South Hams DC	41867	41867	41867
Town Councils	3700	3000	3000
Parish Council	2000	2000	2000
Bank Interest	500	500	200
Fundraising	1094	3000	2000
Donations	1643	1000	1000
Misc	2601	1000	1000
CORE INCOME	87,105	84,950	85,863

The essential grant (£41,867) we receive from SHDC covers 32% of our core costs and so supports the generalist advice service we provide to residents of South Hams. Whilst the Council's contribution does not cover the entire core costs of running our service, it is significant. It provides a stable footing on which we can bid for and secure significant external project funding for services for the people of the South Hams.

Core Costs	Actual 2015/16	Current budget 2016/17	YoY Variance	Explanation
SHDC Rent & Utilities	31,550	26,000	-5,550	Reduction on VAT payments
Insurance	2,766	2,288	-478	Better fit policy
Core salaries incl pension , NHI	71,591	79059	7468	1% salary increase plus extra 10 hours staffing to extend service capacity
Subscriptions	750	750	0	
Office Costs	2,250	2,280	30	
Marketing/Comms	250	250	0	
Trustees Expenses	500	250	-250	
Volunteer Travel	9,000	9,000	0	
Training	1,450	1,450	0	
Equipment/Depreciation	1000	2000	1,000	replace 10year old PCs
Other	100	100	0	
Prof Fee/Audit	1,600	1,500	-100	
Citizens Advice Membership fees	4,500	4,500	0	
IT/Software	1,000	700	-300	
Total Core costs	128,307	130,127	1,820	

A key part of our service delivery model is to provide access to face-to-face services in outreach locations across the district. Again the grant funding (£10k) we receive from SHDC is significant, but does not entirely cover the core costs of running this service.

The outreach grant is essential as the economies of scale of our central office in Totnes with telephone advice and more people resources, makes outreaches and home visits difficult to justify. However they are an absolute necessity in the rural district where travel costs, people's disabilities and lack of good public transport infrastructure make Totnes inaccessible to many. We would be guilty of not fulfilling the needs of the wards in the district if we were to offer a reduced outreach and home visiting service.

Note the outreach funding is classed as project funding so not outlined in the core service income above, which is in accordance with accounting requirements.

Whilst we are part of a national accredited membership association that has substantial public awareness, what is not so apparent is that we receive no direct funding from Citizens Advice. Although the central Citizens Advice body will tender for national projects there is no guarantee that any particular independent Citizens Advice office will

be successful. This is a similar situation to SHDC Money Advice services project which, having been with another provider last year, South Hams District Council sought bids for and we were successful in winning earlier this year.

It is important to note that without winning specific funded projects in addition to grants from County, District and Town councils there would be a financial income gap for the main core advice services we provide. In addition projects we win are always focussed on the local community thereby increasing our services to the vulnerable and disadvantaged.

Current funding levels don't allow us to operate face-to-face services five days a week.

3. How funding from SHDC helps residents

As you will have seen from our end of year report, the headline figures for 2015/16 are:

Our Service 2015/16



Our report also demonstrated how we helped clients in each ward:

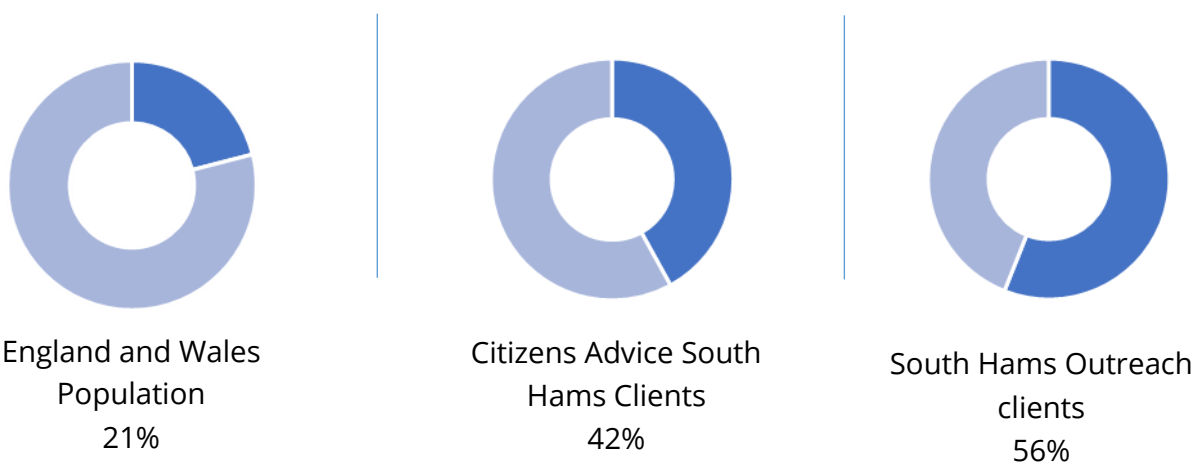
Local Authority	Local Authority Ward	Advice issues	%
South Hams	Allington & Strete	228	3%
South Hams	Bickleigh & Cornwood	117	1%
South Hams	Blackawton & Stoke Fleming	229	3%
South Hams	Charterlands	181	2%

South Hams	Dartington & Staverton	449	6%
South Hams	Dartmouth & East Dart	766	9%
South Hams	Dartmouth and Kingswear	1	0%
South Hams	Ermington & Ugborough	111	1%
South Hams	Ivybridge East	444	5%
South Hams	Ivybridge West	503	6%
South Hams	Kingsbridge	640	8%
South Hams	Kingsbridge North	3	0%
South Hams	Loddiswell & Aveton Gifford	179	2%
South Hams	Marldon & Littlehempston	345	4%
South Hams	Newton & Yealmpton	317	4%
South Hams	Salcombe & Thurlestone	454	6%
South Hams	South Brent	509	6%
South Hams	Stokenham	210	3%
South Hams	Totnes	2,045	25%
South Hams	Wembury & Brixton	150	2%
South Hams	West Dart	231	3%
South Hams	Woolwell	41	1%
South Hams Total		8,153	100%
Grand Total		8,153	100%

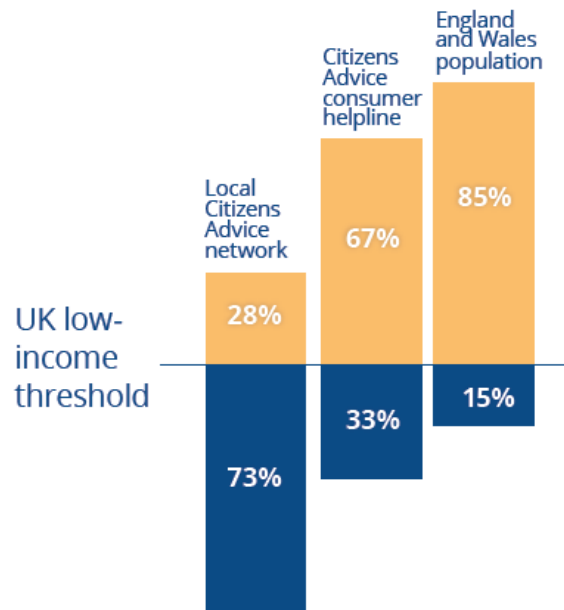
We know from research conducted by Citizens Advice¹ that compared to the general population, the clients we help locally are more likely to:

- live on a low income
- be unemployed
- rent their home
- be disabled or have a long term health condition
- lack basic digital skills
- not have access to the internet

For example, the number of people we see who are disabled or with long term health condition is double the national average, and nearly three times as high in outreach:



Furthermore our clients are five times more likely to live on a low income than the general population.¹



4. The value for money our service provides

We are accredited members of the national Citizens Advice service. This means that our work, processes and people are continually quality assured and audited against the Advice Quality Standard (AQS). Even on a daily basis we review our case work and self-assess the advice we give to clients and the skills of our employed and volunteer staff.

At an annual cost of £4,500 our membership fees ensures SHDC receive unparalleled benefits for the grants provided. Such areas are:

- Effective leadership and governance
- Risk management
- National case management IT system and IT infrastructure support
- An extensive public facing internet portal on all advice topics accessible 24-7
- Internal, specialist knowledge areas beyond the public system
- A national call centre for specialised areas e.g. Consumer Advice
- Expert back up advice to support our experts locally
- HR & legal support
- National quality standards in training and operational service delivery
- Branding and materials
- A measured and managed call-centre phone routing system to enhance the calibration agreement between Citizens Advice Devon local offices

We work in a collaborative partnership with other local Citizens Advice offices across Devon to provide an automated 'call centre' telephone advice service that is open Monday-Friday 9am-4pm. This brings us substantial efficiencies where on Friday, when the office is closed, South Hams residents can still receive a telephone advice service, plus we have cover for lunch breaks. It should be noted the term 'call centre' doesn't do

this justice as the average time spent on the client issue is presently running at 27 minutes. We pride ourselves on the transition from a mainly face-to-face service delivery model to a highly automated, multi-channel interface with clients, where our ability to handle the volume of client issues has been made possible. Note demand for our face-to-face service is just as busy as ever but we do more with our resources with the proven methodologies implemented over the last few years. It is not unusual to see our entire compliment of five private interview rooms in use at the facility that we rent at Follaton House.

We record all work with clients and when we achieve financial outcomes this is recorded and the value annualised. The work we undertook in 15/16 brought the following financial benefits to local individuals:

Category	Benefits & tax credits	Debt	Employment	Other	Total
Income gain	£1,986,553	£2,393	£1,000	£18,003	£2,007,948
Re-imburements, services, loans	£0	£0	£0	£75	£75
Debts written off	£0	£684,658	£0	£0	£684,658
Repayments rescheduled	£0	£535	£0	£0	£535

It is impossible to put a financial value on everything we do. However achieving outcomes for clients prevents detriment from occurring or escalating and has a positive impacts on our clients' lives and on society at large. Nationally, Citizens Advice has developed a Treasury approved 'return on investment' model to demonstrate our impact. The full report can be found at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/difference-we-make/impact-of-citizens-advice-service/all-our-impact/> where details of the model used is discussed at length. As a result of this work Citizens Advice was awarded the accolade of 'Charity of the Year 2015' and can confidently claim that every £1 invested generates at least £1.52 in fiscal savings to government; £8.08 in economic and social value to the public; and £10.97 benefits to individual clients.

Using the same modelling techniques applied to our local figures we can see the following benefits locally:

Headline statistics 2015-16

Name of local Citizens Advice member	Citizens Advice South Hams
Reported funding to local Citizens Advice in 2015/16 (including project to support core)	£224,445
Reported funding to local Citizens Advice from LA in 2015/16	£86,418

Overall value (advice and volunteering)

Fiscal benefit total 2015/16: £	£1,256,661
Public value total 2015/16: £	£7,626,763
Benefits to individuals total 2015/16: £	£9,413,927

For every £1 invested:

For every £1, £x in fiscal benefit 2015/16	£5.60
For every £1, £x in public value 2015/16	£33.98
For every £1, £x in benefits to individuals 2015/16	£41.94

Savings to Local Authority

Fiscal benefit to LA total 2015/16: £	£182,968
For every £1 of LA funding, £x in fiscal benefit to LA 2015/16	£2.12

Savings to other government departments

NHS	£201,581
DWP	£609,073
CJS	£13,050
HMRC	£115
Housing providers	£249,874

Value of advice provision

Fiscal benefit of advice provision total £	£1,256,254
Public value of advice provision total £	£7,389,111
Benefits to individuals of advice provision total £	£9,413,927

Value of volunteering

Fiscal benefit of volunteering total £	£407
Public value of volunteering total £	£237,652

All of the above activity would not be possible if it were not for the highly trained and accredited volunteer advisors and assessors, which number between 42 and 47 in any year and compliment the 2.4 full time equivalent staff employed in the core services. Our volunteers solely receive travel cost reimbursement.

With demonstrable benefits such as these to individuals, partner organisations and to wider society, combined with our proven methods of helping people and continued quality assurance, South Hams District Council can be confident of a similar and continued return on investment in the future.

5. Links to Councils Strategic Priorities

Further to the report submitted in June outlining how our organisational goals support the aims and strategic priorities of the Council, we are keen to look for practical synergies between our two organisations that could allow for more effective ways of operating, focussing on shared outcomes to improve and protect residents' health and wellbeing.

Significantly, and in the short term, we would like to develop practical ways to improve communications at an operational level. We can document many occasions when adviser time is lost trying to make contact with the most appropriate SHDC specialist. We would like to establish a protocol for when our advisers can contact your specialist teams to directly resolve a client's issue. This would generate efficiencies not currently seen. We would also like to establish a series of operational meetings where issues, trends and (with the correct procedures in place) clients' needs and demands can also be discussed.

In the longer term we would look to drive a more intelligence led approach to service delivery. Who are our shared clients? Do they present to us, the Council or to both?

Further to last year's scrutiny report, we are pleased to inform the Council that after much work with Citizens Advice Plymouth, we can expect much better cross-border working between our two districts. The funding authority for Plymouth recognises that a reciprocal relationship will be beneficial to all and once operational strategies are in place clients will be able to access Citizens Advice wherever is most convenient to them. We will need to monitor numbers to make sure there is not a knock on effect elsewhere and will keep you informed as to how this progresses.

6. Measures of success

We have spoken to other local Citizens Advice to explore how they report to their local authority. Not surprisingly the range of reporting techniques and KPIs varies significantly. We hope to make use of this benchmarking activity and work with SHDC officers and councillors to draw up ways of measuring any future SLA or contract that would allow effective monitoring and reporting on the outcomes of our partnership.

We are also in the process of drawing up a calendar of key dates for 2016/17 which will include meetings for members and funders and to which officers and councillors will be invited to attend.

7. The risk if funding is reduced

As you can see from the income on our core services, we are always seeking more project funding to supplement the shortfall in the core advice services element which we are primarily in business to give.

We have already seen projects funding reduce in this present fiscal year versus last year and have accordingly made cut backs in staffing areas. These staffing resources were 100% funded by specific projects not the income from grants such as those from SHDC and therefore didn't affect our services, yet did affect our income.

With a background of a very small staff compliment, then the only other option open to us is to reduce service hours worked by the 1.8 FTE paid staff. Unfortunately there is a level of cover by FTEs that allows us to manage the volunteers, which could be breached in respect of the risk to our professional assurance standards and therefore the impact of this would be to immediately reduce those hours that the advice element was available to the South Hams population. We would see proportionately less face to face consultations and less telephone service calls over fewer days.

After staff costs the rent and utilities costs charged at £26,000 per annum would be our next area to address, however with no sub-letting and a lease that goes into 2018, we would trust that SHDC would look favourably on the wish to rationalise this area or reducing the rent. We could also look at reducing or sharing our office space.

After this cost the only other major cost is our volunteer travel, recruitment and training. Training is an essential requirement and as such costs here remain relatively fixed. With the benefit of free parking at Follaton House, our volunteer travel costs amount to an average of £3.87 per person per week, which in essence is the variable cost for a volunteer who works one day per week and again represents exceptional value for money.

8. Summary

We have worked in partnership with SHDC for many years and understand our respective values, strengths and weaknesses. In a constantly changing environment and circumstances the continuity our partnership provides is a source of strength for our volunteers, clients and other stakeholders.

In this report we hope to have demonstrated that our service continues to represent excellent value for money and offers practical support to those struggling with debt,

benefits queries, employment issues, housing or other problems. The low overhead costs versus the sheer number of people we see and speak with enables us to deliver a service that is available to all and at a level of efficiency that makes our highly skilled hourly costs a fraction of the delivery costs for an alternative. SHDC can be confident that its grant directly benefits the clients we help whilst at the same time providing a stable footing from which Citizens Advice South Hams can secure additional funded projects which brings value and added support to local residents.

Reference

1 – Helping people find a way forward, A snapshot of our impact in 2015/16
Citizens Advice

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SOUTH HAMS COMMUNITY & VOLUNTARY SERVICES

REPORT TO

SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 OCTOBER 2016

Registered Charity No.
1124273

Company No. 6215893

Registered Office:
The Cottage, Follaton
House, Plymouth Rd.,
Totnes, TQ9 5NE

What will South Hams CVS spend the SHDC funding on?

South Hams CVS are the leading local charity supporting individuals, communities and organisations in South Hams to **create the services and support they need to live happier healthier lives**. The grant continuation requested from South Hams District Council (SHDC) is to continue providing its core 'umbrella' services to community groups and organisations delivering services in South Hams communities and supporting individuals wanting to volunteer and become involved in community action.

The grant will support our core provision alongside our grant from Devon County Council.

These core services are based on those defined by the National Association for Community & Voluntary Action (NAVCA) and provide the foundation for our activities. From this position we can also go out to other funders and enter into other partnerships, enabling new projects which help **develop & sustain the resilience of local communities, making them good places to live and work and provide greater support for those most in need**.

The funding will be spent on

- Staff, volunteer and office costs allowing us to
 - ◇ offer one to one support across the South Hams
 - ◇ provide one to many support for shared learning & information opportunities eg workshops, forums and outreach sessions
 - ◇ provide online information and delivery through our own website and email bulletins and through our Devon Voluntary Action (DeVA) partnership to community organisations and individuals at a local level
 - ◇ resource our range of equipment for loan to groups
 - ◇ maintain our intelligence about community groups in the South Hams and keep up to date with the issues and challenges facing them
 - ◇ develop our strategic direction in line with our communities needs
 - ◇ set clear budgets; review and investigate new funding & income streams, partnerships and cost saving collaborations
- continuing our membership of national organisations who, using our local intelligence, inform and lobby government and funders so policy and funding supports local charities and community groups
- professional fees to fulfil our legal obligations



“The input from South Hams CVS has given us better knowledge and confidence to move ahead, without your input I doubt that we would have started and ... the project would not have progressed or continue to make significant progress over the past 4 years. It was important to get it right for people with dementia in our parishes”

Liz Hitchins, Secretary
Dementia Friendly
Parishes around the
Yealm

How will the funding support South Hams residents?

Through helping people to help others, directly through charitable & community services or through the benefits of volunteering, South Hams CVS will continue to support residents of South Hams, leading to **improvements in their wellbeing**, often for those who are most vulnerable and in need, helping **reduce health inequalities and social isolation**. We will do this, with your funding, by supporting:

- **Existing community organisations delivering services in the South Hams**

- ◇ with issues such as governance, funding, developing projects, capacity building; enabling them to **continue and develop their support, particularly for vulnerable people** in our community

*“Totnes Caring has been involved with South Hams CVS over a number of years, and I have worked very closely with your organisation for over 6 years. You continue to provide the same **high level of support** through individual one to one help, through meetings and through the **immensely valuable training** you provide. South Hams CVS is **an anchor** to other Charities and we rely upon your expertise to guide us through the **maze of requirements** that is required today. Your training has helped to **improve our understanding** across the spectrum and encompassing support for volunteers and staff alike, and especially on **the roles and responsibilities for our Trustees**. Your organisation provides a link to other organisations and the statutory sector which is **more vital now than ever before**. **There is a real need for the CVS to continue this work which is so valuable in the community.**”* Bob Alford, Chief Executive, Totnes Caring

- ◇ to provide new volunteering activities and services, helping ensure **local people have access to activities that support positive healthy lifestyles**

Ben Ballard, Development Manager at Sharpham Trust writes: *“South Hams CVS have proven a **valuable and supportive partner**, referring individuals to our volunteering programme and meeting with us to help think through how we might further **develop and expand volunteering** here on the Sharpham Estate. Additionally two of our members of staff have attended **valuable training** with South Hams CVS including ‘Volunteers and the Law and ‘Setting and Maintaining Boundaries’. As a result we feel much **better equipped and informed** as a charity with respect to managing volunteers and our growing partnership with South Hams CVS offers an **important link** in our future plans which include **growing and developing our volunteering programme.**”*

- **Individuals wanting to start local community action**

- ◇ South Hams CVS helps them in developing new ideas for their communities and supports them to develop new ideas, enterprises & projects thereby **empowering and increasing the number of people involved in and helped through community action**

Helen Vice-Chair of Townstal Community Partnership (TCP) says *“I started with attending a couple of TCP meetings as a local resident to see what was going on. I was introduced to Katie (Groups Development Officer) from the CVS, she took me on a course about engaging your community. I found this very interesting as one of my wishes was for the residents of Townstal to start **working together more to make it a better place** to live. As a result of the support from the CVS I am now **more involved in my local community and feel able to make things happen.**”*

How will the funding support South Hams residents? (cont'd)

- **Communities who want help to address identified needs and gaps in services**
 - ◇ helping them in **building local resilience** through using the assets of their communities to **improve people's well-being**, leading to **different ways** of doing things and **new initiatives**

Case Study — New Services for vulnerable people in Yealmpton

In January 2016 South Hams CVS co-ordinated a meeting in Yealmpton to consider the need for a new befriending style service and to replace the lunch club, that had recently closed. The meeting was attended by 16 people from 11 organisations including representatives from local churches, parish councils, the health centre, W.I, local projects and individuals. The need for an initiative **to reduce loneliness and isolation in the local area** was confirmed by the local people present. South Hams CVS helped to convene another meeting of interested parties to move this forward and is now supporting the development of a Yealmpton Caring project. This will be a project of the Yealmpton Community Association (a new service for them) and will aim to support people within both Yealmpton and Brixton villages, an example of **new joint working within communities**. South Hams CVS will continue to support this group to get up and running.

- **Potential volunteers**
 - ◇ both through our on line systems and face to face support for individuals who need extra help to get volunteering, helping them **develop employability & other skills, feel valued & achieve a sense of purpose**

Volunteering Case Study— A 30yr old Man whose family life had broken down and is living in supported lodging wanted to do some volunteering to **engage with the community in a positive way** and feel like he has a **positive focus to his life**. He met with the CVS volunteering coordinator who found out that he had cared for his child with a disability and wanted to work in this area in the long term but wants to take small steps to get there. CVS liaised with his key worker and he is **now volunteering** at the Community Hospital.

- **Networks & alliances**
 - ◇ South Hams CVS bring organisations together to network, to learn together & from each other, 'see the bigger picture', and have a voice; **reducing duplication** and **creating a wider network of 'joined up' support** for people across the South Hams

*"South Hams CVS has helped us forge all kinds of **positive and reciprocal relationships**. We are part of two regular groups now, of similar organisations, that have been set up & facilitated by the CVS. We meet to exchange information, experiences, challenges and resolutions which helps greatly to **alleviate any sense of isolation** as we operate in very rural communities. It would not have been such a **focused and positive journey** without the CVS **sharing past experiences** of other groups, **making introductions** to the wider voluntary sector or being the **supportive and easily accessible organisation** that it is." Sue Burgess, Coordinator, South Brent Caring*

What links does this spending have

to South Hams District Council's Strategic Priorities?

South Hams CVS' core services particularly contribute to the Council's strategic objectives in the areas of **WELLBEING** (see page 6) & **COMMUNITIES**.

Of the over 500 community organisations that South Hams CVS is in contact with, approx. 55% are working in South Hams, in areas of:

- Financial support including CAB, Credit Unions, British Legion
- Health and Wellbeing including patient support schemes, specialist groups, exercise and leisure providers
- Housing and Homelessness including Church-based, Foodbanks, Feoffees

as well as Family support providers, Advocacy providers, Faith Groups, Carer Support providers, Equality providers

The other 45% include a range of charities and community groups including **ENVIRONMENT & HERITAGE** projects and Community **INFRASTRUCTURE & RESOURCES** such as Village Halls and Transport schemes.

In areas of **ECONOMY**, South Hams CVS will

- provide access to opportunities for local residents to **develop skills** and enable them to **better contribute to the local economy**
- share community intelligence and input with new and existing partnerships bringing **new activity and investment into South Hams**
- provide continued support to village halls, play areas, community transport, sports and recreation, environmental & heritage projects helping **create thriving communities, attractive to new businesses and employees**
- bring **new funding** into South Hams through our own projects (only possible if we keep our strong core service) and by supporting local organisations in identifying and applying for funding
- South Hams' voluntary sector **employs an estimated 9%** of South Hams population

SHDC's commitment to communities will benefit from working closely with community organisations, through South Hams CVS, enabling engagement, mapping and providing local intelligence and supporting community development. Linking with all priorities South Hams CVS is able to help the council **facilitate engagement and consultation** with voluntary sector providers and users at a number of different levels, **ensuring the voice of local residents is heard and people protected under the Equality Act 2010, within the 9 protected characteristics are included.**

South Hams CVS supports organisations in the South Hams who have over 9300 people contributing 'formal' volunteering giving almost 1 million hours per year equating to £124,620 per week

Based on an average 2hrs/volunteer/week at minimum wage

What links does this spending have to South Hams District Council's Strategic Priorities?

South Hams CVS Example of our link with SHDC's WELLBEING Priorities

South Hams CVS has a history of establishing and working with organisations supporting the well being of South Hams residents. Through our involvement with Community Health & Social Care teams, delivering on a project which supports the recruitment & co-ordination of voluntary sector representatives on the teams, we have forged strong links with health providers from the statutory sector as well as strengthening our existing relationships with voluntary & community organisations (VCOs). Some examples of what we did in 2015-16 are given in the table below.

SHDC/SHCVS SHARED Objectives	SHCVS ADDED VALUE	EVIDENCE OF WORK
to deliver positive health and well being outcomes for communities	Very close working with VCOs delivering health and well being outcomes supporting them with funding, governance & development advice; re-cruiting volunteers and co-ordinating VCS representation on health teams	1842 new patient referrals were made to 48 different VCOs through South Hams CVS co-ordination of representatives on Community Health & Social Care Teams (CH&SCT)
to reduce health inequalities and social isolation	Working with statutory partners and VCOs, identifying gaps in services and supporting the development of new services to improve them; liaising on their behalf with statutory authorities	South Hams CVS & Teignbridge CVS brought together local organisations into a 'Well Being Partnership', securing a contract to deliver well being and hospital discharge services, from Torbay & South Devon Foundation Trust, of over £150,000 for the partnership, which includes Totnes Caring & Dartmouth Caring organisations
to ensure local people have access to activities that improve health outcomes and promote healthy lifestyles	Enabling the prevention of worsening health conditions through support organisations, volunteering opportunities, co-ordinating activities, such as Walking for Health schemes. Enabling VCOs to share ideas, good practice and filling gaps across the area	Local CVS led alliances are implementing and reviewing the integrated care plans developed in 2014/15 with Plymouth Community Healthcare CIC (now Livewell SW) in Kingsbridge & Ivybridge areas 6 Walking for Health schemes supported, in partnership with Active Devon. 660 walkers in the year 2015-16, attended 465 walks in the South Hams

What value for money does the funding provide?

Our core funding has decreased in recent years, from £73,550 in 2013-14, to £64,930 in 2015-16. In each year, with this core basis, we bid for national and local funding to run additional projects and make up our operating costs. A small amount of income is generated through memberships & loaning resources. In 2015-16 we generated £34,935 of project work, all of which enhanced the service levels we were able to provide and directly benefitted South Hams communities. In 2016-17 we estimate achieving additional income of circa £35,000.

Approximately two thirds of our time is spent on interventions with voluntary and community organisations and volunteers, with the remaining third being spent on strategic, partnership and policy work. Based solely on two thirds of our core funding in 2015-16 (£68,802) each of the 7091 interventions we had with organisations and volunteers across the year equated to £9.70 per intervention. Each intervention with a group has a **ripple effect, multiplying the number of individuals who benefit** – either because they are beneficiaries, staff or volunteers of the organisation.

We provide an efficient and effective service, from a small team, with **relatively low management costs and overheads**, employing skilled and experienced part-time staff members **supported by volunteers** who help in the office and at our outreach events, adding value to our funding. We will be **reviewing our charging structures**, including our £20 membership charge and fixed fee for extra hours of support, as well as looking at the potential for **taking on outsourced projects** for other providers eg management of grants, community development, user engagement.

South Hams CVS are committed to making change in South Hams to help support those most in need, whilst preserving our communities, heritage and natural environments. Our work is effective in bringing about change as highlighted in our impact report. Effectiveness of our outcomes is seen through the benefits to the organisations we support; in turn the preventative services that they deliver can **provide significant cost savings** to individuals and statutory providers and contribute to **healthier South Hams communities**.

Many of the organisations who South Hams CVS support raise money to help vulnerable people in South Hams communities, with our help.

*"We have attended numerous CVS grant and fundraising training courses over the last ten years, including an **excellent recent Funding Masterclass**, and we read every CVS grant update email that pops into our inbox. We have frequently used the Funding Support Service and have also had guidance from CVS on other income streams including Community Fundraising, Online Fundraising, Gift Aid and Sponsorship and **we use all of these techniques effectively**. As a result of this, we apply on average for about 10 grants a year. Our **success rate is over 80%**. The amounts received vary from £250 to £10,000 per year."*

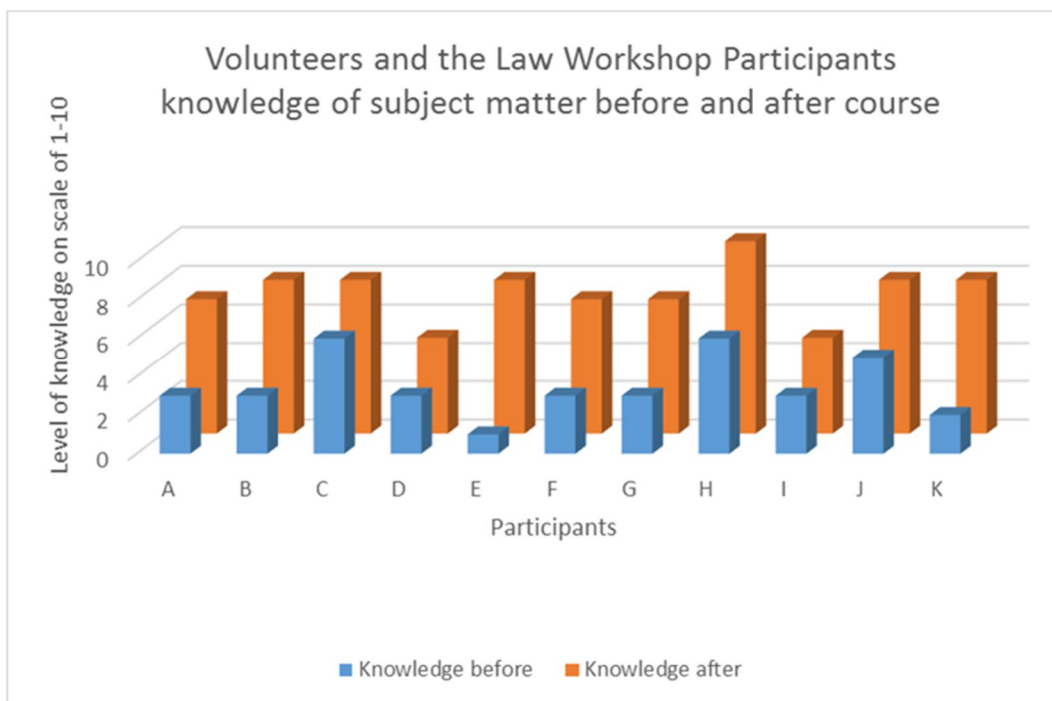
Laura Hughes, Founder & Coordinator for Moorvision, a local charity set up by a mother from Ivybridge who established the charity to provide support for families of blind and partially sighted children and parents.

What success measures will be used?

In 2017/18 we will

- demonstrate clear outcomes & impact to our funders and stakeholders by:
 - ◇ recording changes for South Hams CVS beneficiaries (individuals, organisations & communities) through feedback and case studies and linking it to our activities
 - ◇ creating outcome specific targets with our funders

Example of feedback collected at a South Hams CVS workshop 2015:



- set key performance targets , which will include:
 - ◇ Stakeholder survey to be conducted
 - ◇ A 3yr Business Plan to be prepared for implementation in 2018
 - ◇ Charging structures will be reviewed
 - ◇ 2 new projects set up in South Hams communities in 2018 to include management costs
 - ◇ Achieve PQASSO Quality mark
 - ◇ Budget achieved
 - ◇ Increase partnership working with West Devon CVS and within the Devon Voluntary Action partnership, keeping focus on achieving outcomes for South Hams residents

2015-16 South Hams CVS Service Delivery Figures

Number of
Existing groups
sustaining
services —592

Groups supported
one to one —68

Workshops & Events
held—30

Individuals
participating in
Workshops &
Events—380

Mandated
Representatives —5

Potential Volunteers
advised —150+

Volunteering
Opportunities
advertised —230

What risk will there be if the SHDC funding is reduced?

The money received from SHDC provides the core foundation from which to deliver our services to individuals, organisations and communities who tell us our support is needed. In the current unsettled climate, where more people are becoming vulnerable in our communities, voluntary sector organisations are facing higher demands on their services, with less funding and resources to deliver them. In these uncertain times, South Hams CVS support; helping groups access needed learning and resources, bringing them together to share issues and ideas; is vitally important.

Mat Price, Co-founder of Proud2Be CIC says:

*"The ongoing support we receive from South Hams CVS is **invaluable to our organisation**. We have received support in **recruiting and retaining volunteers**, identifying **grant funding opportunities**, accessing low cost and/or free **informative workshops** and are currently receiving support towards thinking about **a more strategic approach** through their Facing Forward to 2020 (FF20) project. As a grassroots social enterprise, knowing that organisations like the South Hams CVS are just an email or phone call away, provides a **huge amount of reassurance**, particularly in times of uncertainty. The whole team are **friendly, approachable, professional, knowledgeable** and always **go out of their way** to support our organisation."*

If the core funding from SHDC is cut or reduced, South Hams CVS would need to review its services and consider its future. A reduction in our core service provision would be necessary and this would lessen our ability to attain further funding or bring in new projects to the district. It would also decrease our voice and influence on behalf of the sector

Over the last few years we have reduced staff hours and made economies of scale and it is not viable for staff roles to be further reduced or to make other cost savings without having a serious effect on our delivery to the community. Our designated reserves fund is just short of meeting our reserves policy which is to aim for a reserve fund equivalent to six months running costs plus the amount needed for redundancy payments and other contractual obligations.

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Report to: **South Hams Overview and Scrutiny**
Date: **24 November 2016**
Title: **Task and Finish Group: Parking Permit Review**
Portfolio Area: **Environment Services**
Wards Affected: **All**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

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

Date next steps can be taken: To be considered by the Executive on 1 December 2016

Author: **Cathy Aubertin** Role: **Operational Manager (Environment Services)**

Contact: Cathy.Aubertin@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Following the work by the Permit Task and Finish Group, that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive that it recommends to Council that the parking permits available in South Hams be amended, and that the Off-Street Parking Places Order is amended to reflect this.**
- 2. The amendments are as follows:**
 - Full and Commuter permits to be eliminated and replaced with Town Centre, Peripheral and Rural permits which will be limited to specific towns/ villages. The cost of permits to be reduced to reflect the new restrictions, with the exception of Business Permits.**
 - Permits to become 'virtual', ie customers will no longer receive a paper permit, with the exception of Business Permits.**
 - New permits be limited to one vehicle registration number only, with the exception of Business Permits.**
 - The availability of permits be limited to 10% of the total number of parking bays available for each category of permit.**

- **Permits currently issued free of charge to various organisations to be ceased.**
- **Other permits which are not used often will be eliminated, as detailed at Paragraph 5.6.**
- **The Residents' Parking permit to be extended to allow parking from 3pm to 10am, with an increase in cost to £40.00. This amendment to be reviewed after one year.**
- **The costs of permits to be as detailed at Paragraph 5.8.**
- **All leisure-related permits will be reviewed in partnership with the new leisure contractor, with the exception of permits currently issued to Tone Leisure employees.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report requests that Members consider the recommendation to make amendments to South Hams parking permits, as considered and agreed by the Permits Task & Finish Group.

2. Background

- 2.1 Having recognised that the array of parking permits available had become confusing for customers and unwieldy to manage, a Task & Finish Group considered the issue with a view to simplifying and streamlining permits available, whilst improving the future management of them and protecting the District Council's income.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The group met twice and considered every permit currently available. It considered and evaluated the value of each permit and made proposals to improve and simplify the current offer to customers.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 Should the review of permits not be progressed as recommended, confusion for customers will continue and the District Council will not have control over how many permits are utilised in each town/village at any given time.
- 4.2 The availability of virtual permits will allow customers to self-serve and 'obtain' their permit immediately, rather than having to wait for their application to be processed. Paper permits will be available to customers who, for whatever reason, are unable to self-serve.
- 4.3 Should the recommendations above be resolved, they will be the subject of a 21-day consultation period, which customers will be alerted to by a notice in the local press and on the Council's website, together with notices in all affected car parks. This will

allow customers to object to the proposals, should they wish to do so. If a large number of objections is received, the matter will be referred to the Executive for further consideration.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 Town Centre, Peripheral and Rural permits
In order to make permits clearer for customers, Full and Commuter permits to be eliminated and replaced with Town Centre, Peripheral and Rural permits which will be limited to specific towns/ villages.
- 5.2 The cost of permits should be reduced to reflect the new restrictions, with the exception of Business Permits.
- 5.3 Transition to virtual permits
Following the roll-out of updated parking software, permits to become 'virtual' with the exception of Business Permits, which are issued in the business name. This will allow customers to self-serve and for their permit to become valid as soon as their purchase has been completed.
- 5.4 Depending on the software provider we choose, customers may also have the option to change the registration number associated with their permit whenever they need to do so.
- 5.5 Vehicle registration number on permits
New permits to be limited to one vehicle registration number only, with the exception of Business Permits but the cost of permits should be reduced to reflect this restriction.
- 5.6 Availability to be limited to 10% of total parking bays
The availability of permits should be limited to 10% of the total number of parking bays available for each category of permit. This may be detailed as follows:

Town/ permit type	Valid in car parks	10% of parking bays/ number of permits available
Dartmouth Town Centre	Mayor's Avenue	22
Dartmouth Peripheral	None applicable	
Kingsbridge Town Centre	Quay Duncombe Park	26
Kingsbridge Peripheral	Cattle Market Lower Union Road	17
Salcombe Town Centre	Shadycombe Creek	31
Salcombe Peripheral	None applicable	
Totnes Town Centre	Old Market Heaths Way North Street	20

	Heaths Nursery	
Totnes Peripheral	Long Marsh Pavilions Steamer Quay	29
Bigbury Rural	Bigbury-on-Sea	25
Ivybridge Rural	Leonards Road	16
Modbury Rural	Poundwell Meadow	6
Slapton & Torcross Rural	Slapton Memorial Strete Gate Torcross Tank	29

5.7 Cessation of free permits

Permits currently issued free of charge to be ceased. Officers will be delegated with the responsibility to negotiate a gradual cessation where appropriate, for example Tone Leisure employees where, for TUPE reasons, it may be necessary to issue permits to transferred staff only.

5.8 Details of the permits to be ceased are as follows:

	Number issued
Tourist Information Modbury	5
Tourist Information Dartmouth	5
Tourist Information Totnes	3
Tone Leisure staff	172
RNLI	15
Garden for Health	4
Ivybridge Gardening Volunteer	1

5.9 Cessation of other permits

The Task & Finish Group gave consideration to permits which are little used and agreed to eliminate three, without replacing them with revised permits, for the following reasons:

Creek reserved, Salcombe	Only one permit has been sold and parking is of a premium in Salcombe. It is proposed to allow the current permit holder to continue renewing his/her permit but that no new permits would be sold.
Aveton Gifford boat	Only two permits have been sold and it is impossible to enforce in respect of boats that are 'parked' without a permit. In addition, there is work currently being undertaken with the Parish Council which, it is anticipated, would result in this asset being transferred to the Parish.
Disabled annual permits	Blue badge holders are currently able to purchase the current Full permits at a 25% discount. However, only four have been sold. Bearing in mind the reduction in the

	cost of the annual permits, it is proposed that these are eliminated.
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5.10 Residents' Parking Permit

Following comments received from customers, the Task & Finish Group gave consideration to the Residents' Parking permit, which currently allows residents to park in any car park from 4pm to 10am each day for an annual fee of £21.00.

5.11 It is proposed that the times this permit is valid are extended in order to assist with school runs, so should be valid from 3pm to 10am each day, but with an increased cost of £40.00 per annum, which still represents excellent value for money.

5.12 The Group would like to review this amendment after one year to assess how successful the change has been and the impact on the sales of permits.

5.13 Cost of permits

The current cost of all permits was considered by the Task & Finish Group. It was recognised that prices have not increased for several years and, even with an increase on some permits, still represent excellent value for money and revised costs are proposed as follows:

Permit type	Current cost	Proposed cost
Town Centre (previously Full)	£387.00	£280.00
Six months	£233.00	£150.00
Peripheral (previously Commuter)	£191.00	£150.00
Six months	Not available	£80.00
Rural (previously Modbury and Torcross commuter)	£143.00	£150.00
Six months	£191.00	£80.00
Business	£581.00	£650.00
Weekly	£32.00	£40.00
Residents	£21.00	£40.00
Reserved bay	£1,431.00	£1,500.00
Pavilions reserved bay	£1,023.00	£1,100.00

5.14 Although it is proposed to reduce the cost of some permits (Town Centre, Peripheral and Rural), this is to reflect the new restrictions on them in respect of location and registration numbers. It is recognised that approximately 80% of permits have two registration numbers on them. Whilst not all those customers will buy two permits rather than one, it is estimated that a minimum of 10% of customers will purchase two permits rather than one to cover two vehicles. With the increase in the cost of other permits the overall proposal is likely to result in an increase of £10,000 per annum for permits.

5.15 Leisure related permits

It is acknowledged that little can be done to review current leisure permits, whilst the current contract is reaching an end and with a new contractor due to provide leisure services. Therefore the Task & Finish Group propose that a review of all leisure permits be undertaken with the new contractor at a later stage, with recommendations being reported back to the Overview & Scrutiny Panel.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		<p>The Council has power to provide off-street parking under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (as amended).</p> <p>The Council has the power to deal with the provision, management and control of car parks.</p> <p>The Council has the powers to provide this service under the General Powers of Competence in the Localism Act 2011.</p>
Financial		<p>The consultation exercise will cost approximately £600 to advertise.</p> <p>Although not the focus for this Task & Finish Group it is likely that these proposals, if all resolved, will result in increased income for the Council of approximately £10,000 per annum.</p>
Risk		None at this stage.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		A comprehensive impact assessment has been completed in respect of this matter which shows that there is a negative impact for a few blue-badge holders. However, the reduction in the cost of annual permits should ensure that these customers aren't adversely affected in comparison with the current offer.
Safeguarding		No implications.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		No potential positive or negative impact on crime and disorder reduction.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing		No implications.
Other implications		None.

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		<p>Management Committee on 19 January 2017;</p> <p>In providing an update on the new Council website, assurances were given that all Members would have the opportunity to test and provide feedback on it in the next few weeks. Following a rigorous testing exercise, it was anticipated that the new website would go live in December/January;</p> <p>As a general point, some Members felt that the presentation and format of the monitoring report did not easily illustrate to the reader that it was a positive news story.</p>	<p>Steve Mullineaux</p> <p>Steve Mullineaux</p>	
3 November 2016	<p>Locality Service Performance</p> <p>O&S.40/16</p>	<p>That the performance of the Locality Service be noted and the Locality team be congratulated on the success of the operation.</p>	Nadine Trout	
3 November 2016	<p>Task and Finish Group Updates (b) Partnership – Update Report</p> <p>O&S.42/16(b)</p>	<p>It was intended that an outcome report would be presented to the Panel meeting on 24 November 2016.</p>	Louisa Daley	<p>Work programme updated accordingly.</p>
3 November 2016	<p>Task and Finish Group Updates (c) Waste and Recycling</p> <p>O&S.42/16(c)</p>	<p>A Member expressed his disappointment that the Council had built in a projected £120,000 saving from the service that had now proven to be unachievable. In accepting the point, other Members recognised the need for greater challenge (and assurance) in respect of whether a proposed saving was realistic before it was included in the budget proposals.</p>	Lisa Buckle	
3 November 2016	<p>Task and Finish Group Updates (d) Events</p> <p>O&S.42/16(d)</p>	<p>The Group Chairman advised the Panel that a meeting had recently taken place and a further meeting was due to take place before the conclusions of the Group were presented to the next Panel meeting on 24 November 2016.</p> <p>In light of a request, it was agreed that Members should send a list of</p>	<p>Darren Arulvasagam</p> <p>Darren Arulvasagam</p>	<p>Next T+F Group meeting scheduled for 17 November 2016.</p>

		organisations who they believe should be included in the direct consultation exercise to the Group Manager – Business Development and/or the Group Chairman.	/ Cllr Bramble	
3 November 2016	Task and Finish Group Updates (e) Permits O&S.42/16(e)	The concluding report will be presented to the Panel meeting on 24 November 2016.	Cathy Aubertin	Work Programme Updated accordingly.
3 November 2016	Actions Arising / Decisions Log O&S.43/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Member asked that the specific query on the number of apprentices working on-site on the Sherford development be followed up; - It was noted that a date for the meeting between the Economy Working Group and the Joint Local Plan Steering Group had still to be scheduled. In response to a request, it was agreed that (once confirmed) the date would be circulated to interested Members accordingly. 	Ian Sosnowski Darren Arulvasagam / Tom Jones	
3 November 2016	Draft Annual Work Programme O&S.44/16	<p>(a) It was noted that the Programme for 24 November 2016 meeting currently indicated three separate agenda items for: ‘Customer Services: Six Month Update; ‘Development Management (DM): Six Month Update’; and Quarterly Performance Measures. However, the Panel agreed that these items should be combined under the umbrella of the Performance Measures report, with Customer Services and DM related indicators being subject of ‘deep dive’ analysis;</p> <p>(b) The Panel agreed that an Empty Homes Strategy Update should be included on the Work Programme for the meeting to be held on 23 February 2017;</p> <p>(c) In respect of the potential to generate more income from local markets, it was noted that this had been raised by the Permits Task and Finish Group. As a consequence, it was likely that officers would be recommending to the Panel</p>	Darryl White / Jim Davis Isabel Blake Cathy Aubertin	Work Programme updated accordingly Work Programme updated accordingly

		that a Task and Finish Group be established to investigate this matter in more detail.		
3 November 2016	Beach & Water Safety O&S.46/16	That the Executive be RECOMMENDED to adopt the proposals outlined within paragraph 3.1.2 of the presented agenda report, with the exception of the removal of buoyage at selected locations, which would be subject to a further update briefing paper being circulated to Members in April/May 2017.	Adam Parnell	Reccs to be presented to the Executive at its meeting on 1 Dec.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

DRAFT ANNUAL WORK PROGRAMME – 2016-17

Date of Meeting	Report	Lead Officer
19 January 2017	Executive Forward Plan	Kathy Trant
	Draft Budget 2017/18	Lisa Buckle
	Quarterly Performance Measures	Jim Davis
	Task and Finish Group Updates	
23 February 2017	Executive Forward Plan	Kathy Trant
	Devon and Cornwall Housing – Annual Update	Paul Crawford
	Street Naming and Numbering Briefing Paper	Kate Hamp
	Empty Homes Strategy Update	Isabel Blake
	Task and Finish Group Updates	
April 2017	Executive Forward Plan	Kathy Trant
	Sherford Project Update	Steve Jordan
	Health and Safety Policy Progress Report	Ian Luscombe
	Task and Finish Group Updates	
4 May 2017	Executive Forward Plan	Kathy Trant
	Draft Annual Report	Darryl White
	NEW Devon and South Devon and Torbay CCG Representatives	
	Task and Finish Group Updates	

Future items to be programmed:-

- DNPA report on Sustainable Community Fund;
- Our Plan: South Hams Updates.

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