

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **3 December 2020**
Title: **Housing Strategy Public Consultation**
Portfolio Area: **Homes (Cllr Hilary Bastone)**
Wards Affected: **All**
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: Upon the expiry of the Scrutiny Call-in period – 5.00pm on Monday, 14 December 2020

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Recommendations:

That the Executive is recommended to:

- 1. approve the draft Housing strategy 2021-2026 for consultation;**
- 2. authorise the Head of Housing Revenues and Benefits to carry out a public consultation on the draft strategy; and**
- 3. note that a report on the outcome of the consultation will be brought back to the Executive in March 2021.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The draft joint housing strategy for South Hams & West Devon sets out the priorities, opportunities and challenges for the next 5 years.
- 1.2 The Strategy is titled “Better Homes, Better Lives” and has clear links to health, wellbeing, and the climate agenda and is split into 2 themes, each with 3 priorities

Housing for Place

- Ensuring sustainable housing growth
- Promote balanced and sustainable communities
- Ensuring that homes support the health and wellbeing of the area

Housing for People

- Homes that support the Health & wellbeing of our residents
 - Make the best use and improve quality of existing housing
 - Ensuring that people can access the support and advice they require and make best use of data
- 1.3 The strategy has been developed by Members, Officers and through a partnership event and a rich evidence base. Wider consultation will inform work to date, and ensure we are accurately representing the priorities of our residents, stakeholders and partners.
- 1.4 This report recommends that the Executive approve the draft strategy for consultation purposes and that the Council undertakes a public consultation commencing on the 7th December and running for 5 weeks.
- 1.5 The results of the public consultation and the final strategy would then be considered by the Executive and Council in March 2021. This would be accompanied by a Year 1 delivery plan.

2. Background

- 2.1 As was highlighted in the October report considered by the Executive, the Council does not currently have a housing strategy however it is clear that Homes remains a corporate priority. Through Member workshops and questionnaires, we have set out the vision for what we want to achieve.
- 2.2 Since the October 2020 report, we have shared the draft priorities with a number of partners by holding an online workshop. The workshop was attended by representatives from 23 partner organisations to seek their views and to ensure that our partners felt the Council priorities would complement their own.
- 2.3 The session included an introduction of the key themes and we have been reassured by partner agencies that our priorities chime with theirs as a strategy for South Hams & West Devon and that "Better Homes, Better Lives" is a message they share in improving the wellbeing of our residents through the homes they live in. Wider public consultation will be the test of this.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 It is important that the Executive considers the draft strategy as set out in Appendix A and ensure that it reflects Members priorities.
- 3.2 It is then proposed that the draft strategy be made available to a wide range of stakeholders including Residents, Government Departments, neighbouring authorities, statutory agencies, voluntary groups, Registered Providers, private developers and both the County Council and our Towns & Parishes for them to comment on.
- 3.3 In any other year we would have held a series of face to face events during the consultation period, however due to the restrictions on meeting and the increased workloads of our key partners related to responding to the pandemic the value of this is limited.

- 3.4 We will make the draft strategy available on the Consultation and Engagement Portal along with a summary of why we have chosen our priorities and some key statistics. We will then include a survey link to seek views of stakeholders and this is included as Appendix B to the report. In addition to this there will be opportunities for residents to comment via the each Council's Social Media channels.
- 3.5 All comments received will be reviewed and considered before a final version of the strategy is presented to Executive for approval and then Council for adoption.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The Strategy is being developed at a time when there is a fast moving national policy agenda. The upcoming planning white paper could have implications for the future deliverability of the Strategy not least because of the proposed changes to the threshold for affordable housing.
- 4.2 We have also yet to fully understand the long term impacts that the Covid-19 pandemic will have on the Council and South Hams communities. We know that there will be increased financial challenges for individuals and families which will have an impact on the housing options available to them.
- 4.3 Given the uncertainties currently faced, it has been important to develop a Strategy with enough flexibility so that the Council can adapt to meet future demands but also to develop any possible opportunities that may present.
- 4.4 It is anticipated that this strategy will be considered for adoption by Council in March 2021. This is however dependent on future impacts of Covid-19 as many of the officers required to support the development of the Strategy are the same officers that have the knowledge and skills to support our communities should this be needed.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 That the Executive agrees the draft Housing Strategy 2021-2026 "Better Homes, Better Lives" and that both South Hams and West Devon Councils begin public consultation from the 7th December 2021. This will be dependent on West Devon Borough Council also making the same decision at their Hub Meeting on the 1st December

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		Whilst not a legal requirement to publically consult on a Housing Strategy it is best practice and is the best available gauge that our priorities are aligned to those of our communities.

Financial implications to include reference to value for money		There is a small cost, predominantly in Officer time preparing for public consultation.
Risk		It is our intention to adopt the strategy from 1 st April 2021. It is important to make a decision through this report to enable the maximum time for public consultation and to properly consider the responses and comments.
Supporting Corporate Strategy		Homes & Wellbeing
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		There are actions in the strategy around climate change and carbon reduction, however this report and the request to go out to public consultation does not have any impact.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		We will be completing a full Equality Impact Assessment as part of the consultation
Safeguarding		None as a direct impact of this report
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None as a direct impact of the report
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None as a direct impact of the report
Other implications		None

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Draft Housing Strategy