

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **7th June 2022**

Title: **Housing Crisis Update – Strengthening Housing Delivery**

Portfolio Area: **Homes – Cllr Barry Ratcliffe**

Wards Affected: **All**

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

Date next steps can be taken:

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Hub Committee:

- 1. note the proposed revised Housing Team Structure at Appendix 1; and**
- 2. RECOMMEND to Council, to approve an annual revenue cost pressure of £29,800 (WDBC share) to be built into the budget process for 23/24 onwards, and a one off expenditure of £100,520 to be funded from the 2021/22 Government Homeless Prevention grant. This will be used to fund the additional posts for the new Housing Team Structure as set out in Appendix 1.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 In February 2022, the Council declared a housing crisis. At the same time, it set out a range of activities it would undertake to tackle the crisis. The Leader of the Council has requested that an update be provided to the Hub at their regular committee.
- 1.2 The Council has been clear with its priorities around Housing and delivering homes for local people whilst making best use of existing stock, in accordance with A Plan for West Devon, and Better Homes, Better Lives (Housing Strategy 2021-2026).

Following a resources review to deliver against these aspirations, it is recommended that changes to staffing levels and structure are made to the Housing Team.

- 1.3 This report sets out the measures officers are taking to readdress this imbalance, to ensure there is sufficient capacity within the team to drive forward the projects within the housing strategy. This includes sites within our ownership at Springhill Tavistock and Wonnacotts Road in Okehampton, exploration of a strategic partnership with a Registered Provider and accelerating our work to bring forward affordable led schemes. All whilst continuing to deliver the various statutory functions to the best standard possible.
- 1.4 The proposal is that this team is increased 100% (by 4 FTE) to 7.8 FTE. This will be achieved through a mix of flexing existing resources within the Housing Options team, whilst recruiting new permanent and temporary resources. The additional resource, like the rest of the housing service will be shared with South Hams District Council on a 40/60 percentage split.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council has a number of functions regarding housing and the current structure is attached to this report (appendix 1). A number of those are statutory, which the Council must perform – particularly in relation to homelessness and housing advice. The team is high performing with a proven track record in homeless prevention, effective use of temporary accommodation and significant reductions in rough sleeping. The Council also own its own temporary accommodation and manages private sector accommodation on behalf of private landlords through our own in house letting agency Seamoor Lettings.
- 2.2 The Council also has a strategic and enabling role, responsible for negotiating affordable housing contributions with developers, working with our RP (registered provider) partners on S106 contributions, redevelopment, land opportunities and disposals. Gypsy & Traveller projects, policy, strategy and support to the development management and JLP teams are all service functions of this team. This team consists of 3 officers, 1 of which is a temporary resource and it is within this team (called housing delivery) where the staffing numbers are inadequate to address the housing crisis to the best of our ability.
- 2.3 The Council declared a Housing Crisis in the autumn of 2021 and the reconfiguration of resources and additional resources will enable the Council to create real momentum. Specifically:
 - Working on providing the necessary evidence base and housing need analysis to ensure that members will have a

choice in the future to seek to go further than the JLP currently does in its ask for affordable housing. The work will inform further iterations of the Housing Strategy and importantly be a direct contributing factor in S106 negotiations with developers.

- Enable closer interaction and engagement with our Registered Providers (RPs) at both a strategic and operational level.
- Commission and develop a strategic partnership with a Registered Provider to unlock delivery of new affordable homes on both Council land and elsewhere.
- Bring forward opportunities to purchase land and commission affordable social housing.
- By having a dedicated planning resource, ensure that schemes that are delivering affordable homes are progressed through the planning system efficiently, delivering the maximum number of affordable homes possible.

This proposal also takes into account the additional workload pressures such as the Homes for Ukraine scheme and maintains the number of FTE in Housing Advice & Homelessness Prevention team.

The total additional annual cost of the proposal for West Devon is £29,800 that we are recommending is built into the budget process for 23/24 onwards as a cost pressure. In addition, an amount of £100,520 will be funded from the Government homeless prevention grant for 21/22. This will fund the fixed term posts set out in appendix 1.

Housing Advice & Homelessness Prevention

Existing team

2 x FTE L4 Specialists

7.8 FTE Housing advisors

1 FTE Team Leader

1.8 FTE Seamoor lettings / Temporary accommodation

1 FTE Vulnerable person support (Temporary external funding)

2 FTE Rough sleeper / G&T Outreach (1 post temporary external funding)

0.8 FTE DHC (Devon Home Choice)

Total FTE 16.4

Key workload

Development & ongoing monitoring of the Homelessness Strategy and annual action plan

SeaMoor Lettings	Development and management of temporary accommodation and owned stock portfolio
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	<p>Develop owned stock property/Seamoor offer to provide House in Multiple Occupation and other specialist accommodation</p> <p>Work with assets to identify stock options that can be developed into housing</p> <p>Establish and monitor KPI's</p> <p>Develop and maintain the landlord engagement section including referring in for advice</p>
Refugee work	<p>Ukraine resettlement work</p> <p>Implementing, coordinating the provision and arrival planning for refugees under the UKRS & ALES scheme and ongoing high level management</p>
Housing Options team	<p>Case support for individuals at risk of homelessness</p> <p>Deal with homelessness presentation</p> <p>Provide temporary accommodation. Manage those in temporary accommodation so that they find permanent solutions as quickly as possible</p> <p>Homelessness Reviews</p> <p>Devon Home Choice Reviews</p> <p>Devon & Cornwall Housing options Partnership</p> <p>Devon Homelessness Health Cell</p>
Vulnerable person work	<p>Signpost and support individuals</p> <p>Co-ordinate 3rd sector partners</p>
Rough Sleepers G&T / Caravan Dwellers	<p>Manage projects including Outreach, property acquisition, negotiate with RPs,</p>
Other	<p>Safeguarding lead</p> <p>Perpetrator programme accommodation work</p> <p>work with MH & Adult service regarding current housing needs etc. for those with additional support needs</p> <p>Homemaker contract tender and management</p> <p>Care Leavers (16/17 year olds)</p>

Housing Delivery

Existing team

1 x L6 FTE Housing Strategy / Business Intelligence (2 year temporary funded)

1 x L5 FTE Housing Enabling – Minor schemes/policy

1 x L4 FTE Housing Enabling / Strategy

Total FTE 3

Key workload

<p>Housing Enabling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing the undertaking of viability assessments to get best value. • Decision making within policy for housing schemes and discretion in taking action in relation to housing delivery • Engagement across RPs on the housing mix requirements and aligning delivery with need and political preference to deliver better location specific outcomes • Develop and implement housing policy to support housing delivery and best use of existing stock • Research and development • Reporting on Housing and Corporate Strategy progress, updating action plan and ensuring it accords with Corporate Strategy format • Drafting and presenting Housing Crisis reports at Executive and Hub • Project managing the formation of a housing company, including articles of association, reserved matters and governance • Ensure effective partnership working with a range of providers, funders and 3rd sector organisations (Alms houses, LT's HE) • Town & Parish & community liaison • Work to identify sites, initiatives, secures funding and monitors delivery • Deliver bespoke housing solutions for a small number of individuals whose housing options cannot otherwise be met • Monitor S106 Expenditure/commuted sums manage and make recommendations as to where funding should be spent • Complete the selection criteria, liaison with communities/ward members, completion, publication and information sharing of Housing Needs Surveys and manage effectively the Housing needs survey administrator • Supporting the JLP housing team through the JLP review to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Setting housing policy and testing what is possible ○ Informing through appropriate evidence base ○ Commissioning and undertaking housing needs surveys ○ Setting outcomes and work programme for Housing Analyst to support the above, in partnership with the Place Team
<p>Devon Home Choice</p>	<p>Support people through application process, queries etc.</p>

Key Issues to address

	Issue	Proposal	Costs p.a. across both South Hams & West Devon	WDBC Share of the cost
1.	Insufficient resources to deliver all the housing enabling activities listed above.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move across 1 x L4 FTE from Housing Advice and Homelessness prevention • Therefore increasing Housing Enabling specialist resource by 50% from 2 to 3 	Nil	
2.	Create 1 x L5 specialist role to backfill (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade 1 of existing roles 	£14,100	£5,640
3.	Make Housing Strategy Officer secondment permanent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides case management support to strategy and enabling team • Monitor housing strategy • Succession planning 	£5,600	£2,240
3.	Maintains team capacity whilst taking on additional Homes for Ukraine scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move 1 x L6 FTE back from secondment to Revenues 	Nil *bring back with existing funding.	
4.	Ramp up the Housing Needs Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional 1 x L7 business admin resource (2 years) 	£33,600 (x 2 years = £67,200)	£26,880 Funded from Housing grant

	Issue	Proposal	Costs p.a. across both South Hams & West Devon	WDBC Share of the cost
5.	Ensure that planning have sufficient resource to prioritise affordable housing schemes (developer & in-house)	<p>1 x L4 Affordable Housing Planner (2 year role) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage through the planning service for land led / affordable housing led schemes to ensure faster and stronger support Shape strategic housing delivery and meshing it into Place outcomes through engagement across Place and Enterprise Directorate Informing and supporting the acquisition of strategic land Acting as planning agent for Council led (direct or through strategic partner) housing schemes to ensure best planning outcomes 	<p>£54,800 (x 2 years = £109,600)</p>	<p>£43,840 Funded from Housing grant</p>
6.	<p>Need a strategic housing partner. No in house skills to undertake this work. Once procured we will need to maximise the potential of this partnership to ensure delivery of housing projects. Required skillset: Chartered Surveyor with housing background</p>	<p>1 x L4 Housing Development Officer to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead and manage procurement of a strategic housing partner(s) to include responsibility for: setting Joint venture terms, financial structures, key outcomes, risk management, ongoing partner/client management, delivery functions, commercial agreements Supporting the Head of Housing in managing 	<p>£54,800</p>	<p>£21,920</p>

	Issue	Proposal	Costs p.a. across both South Hams & West Devon	WDBC Share of the cost
		<p>the strategic partner relationship, including any contract management requirements and reporting requirements to SLT and members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working up and defining scope of housing projects, for delivery by internal (assets) or external (strategic partner) teams • Defining scope, procuring and managing outsourced services to support housing delivery • Informing and agreeing specification for housing development standards, with internal and external partners 		
		Total Additional Annual Revenue Cost Pressure from 23/24	£74,500	£29,800 WDBC annual revenue cost pressure
		Total funded from Housing Government grant	£251,300	£100,520 (being £26,880 plus £43,840 for items iv) and v) and £29,800 for the revenue cost pressure in 2022/23

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The Council has set an ambitious plan through A Plan For West Devon and Better Homes, Better Lives (the Corporate and Housing strategies) it cannot reasonably be expected to achieve these without additional resource to deliver new and emerging work.
- 3.2 Whilst there is no silver bullet to solving the housing crisis, working to smooth the planning process for affordable led schemes, dedicated resource to manage strategic partnerships and/or direct delivery, and ensuring our intelligence regarding housing need is up to date and robust will all contribute to removing the obstacles to success. Accelerated delivery, increase of affordable led schemes and the capacity to respond to the need of our communities will all be achievable outcomes.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The Council can continue with its existing resource, as it is currently meeting its statutory duties regarding homelessness. However, these will become harder to perform without affordable housing delivery.
- 4.2 The Council will also need to be realistic in its ambition around housing if the proposals set out are not supported, and recognise that the Housing Strategy and Housing Crisis work will have to be reviewed.

5. Proposed Way Forward

That Members recommend to council approval of both the £100,520 from the government homeless prevention grant and to build in an additional cost pressure to the budget from 23/24 of £29,800 to fund the additional posts and that recruitment commences immediately.

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	<p>The Council has a number of duties to perform regarding its statutory housing functions. This report requests additional resource to ensure the Council continues to deliver these to the best of its ability.</p> <p>The Council has also declared a housing crisis, recognising the difficulty accessing accommodation for local people. The Council has made its ambitions around housing very clear and it is essential that where the Council has an opportunity to influence affordable housing delivery that those opportunities are fully explored. It can only do so with sufficient staff resource to do the job</p>

Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>It is recommended that the Hub recommend to Council, to approve an annual revenue cost pressure of £29,800 (WDBC share) to be built into the budget process for 23/24 onwards, and a one off expenditure of £100,520 to be funded from the 21/22 Government Homeless Prevention grant.</p> <p>This will be used to fund the additional posts for the new Housing Team Structure as set out in Appendix 1.</p> <p>West Devon Borough Council received a Homeless Prevention Government grant of £211,244 for 2021/22.</p>
Risk	Y	There are significant service delivery and reputational risks if there is insufficient staff to deliver the Council's significant ambitions around affordable housing.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Improving Homes, growing our natural environment, adapting our built environment, maximising our resources, strengthening communities, enhancing community wellbeing
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	N	No direct carbon/biodiversity impact arising from the recommendations
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		There is no impact on any of the proposals in the report. Any recruitment would be in line with our equality, diversity & inclusion policy and compliant with The Equality Act 2010.
Safeguarding		Ensuring there is sufficient resource to deliver the housing service, which is also the Councils largest referrer for children & adults safeguarding services will minimise as much as is possible the risks to vulnerable adults and children
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		Ensuring there is enough resource to deliver the housing service, will assist victims of crime including domestic violence, and support initiatives to address anti-social behaviour in our communities.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		Ensuring there is enough resource to safely deliver the housing service will address these concerns
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Existing & proposed structure

Background Papers:

None