

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **25th January 2024**

Title: **Housing Crisis Update - Housing & Homeless Strategy Action Plan**

Portfolio Area: **Housing – Cllr O’Callaghan**

Wards Affected: **All**

Author: **Isabel Blake** Role: **Head of Housing**

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 1. review the progress on the previous Housing Strategy Action Plan; and**
- 2. agree the refreshed Action Plan (as set out at Appendix 2).**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council and West Devon Borough Council adopted the current joint Housing Strategy in 2021. This reflected Housing as a priority for both Councils. In May 2023 there was a change in the political administration at both Councils, but the focus on Housing remains a top priority for both.
- 1.2 It is a statutory requirement to have a Homeless strategy, and best practice to have a Housing Strategy, particularly when it is a priority for the Council. It has been the practice to review the action plan each year and this report recommends that Members agree the refreshed Action Plan which considers both election pledges and the Council Plan priorities of both Councils and links to specific actions within the plan. This detailed action plan will underpin the Council Plan
- 1.3 Due to the close links between the homeless and housing strategies, the 2 have been merged to avoid duplication and demonstrate clearly the steps the Councils are taking to

eradicate homelessness and support those in housing need. There is a legal duty placed on the Council through the Homelessness Act 2002 to review homelessness, the influencing factors that cause homelessness and to develop a strategy which addresses the findings of the review.

- 1.4 The review and new action plan can be found appended to this report (Appendix 1 & 2)

2. Background

- 2.1 The South Hams & West Devon joint housing strategy – Better Homes, Better Lives was adopted in April 2021 as the Country began to emerge from the Covid-19 global pandemic. At that time there were still many unknowns about the longer-term impacts, so the strategy was purposefully designed to be able to flex to changing needs. As part of the requirement of the strategy an annual action plan is brought back to the Executive to agree and endorse.
- 2.2 Both Councils held local elections in May 2023, which resulted in changes in administration in both Councils. Housing had been a major topic during the campaigning and a focus of election pledges. A new council plan for South Hams was adopted in November 2023 following member and public consultation. The 4 primary aims for the Housing priority are.
 - Take action to ensure a good mix of the right houses, in the right places to meet the needs of residents, with a focus on affordable housing
 - Tackle damp and disrepair in rented properties
 - Make sure that all new housing developments are carbon neutral as far as possible
 - Support the housing needs of our most vulnerable residents
- 2.3 The priorities of the Housing Strategy are already in synergy with the corporate plan with the 4 priorities remaining as
 - Homes that support the health and wellbeing of our residents
 - Make the best use and improve the quality of our existing housing
 - Promote balanced and sustainable communities
 - Ensuring that homes support the health and wellbeing of our area

- 2.4 Alongside the Housing Strategy there is a statutory requirement under the Homelessness Act 2002 to review homelessness in the District and develop an action plan to address the causes identified. Appendix 1 sets out the review of both the homelessness and Housing strategies, which has been amalgamated to avoid duplication and bring together all the detailed action the Council is taking in relation to housing.
- 2.5 The Housing Strategy review sets out the progress against the strategy targets and gives examples of work undertaken, all statistics relate to the financial year 2022/23 and it is recommended that a further update on 23/24 progress is subject to a housing report to the Executive in early summer 2024.
- 2.6 Appendix 2 contains the draft detailed action plan.

3. Proposal and Next Steps

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Executive review the progress of actions to date and agree and endorse the action plan for 2024/25

4. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		<p>The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to review homelessness, and the influencing factors that cause homelessness, and to develop a strategy which addresses the findings of the review.</p> <p>It is not a statutory requirement to have a housing strategy, however it is a corporate priority for the Council, therefore it is essential there is a plan for delivery.</p>
Financial implications to include reference to value for money		<p>None as a direct implication of this report. All new initiatives requiring finance will be subject to separate reports.</p> <p>It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a prevention of homeless grant</p>

		<p>from central Government. For the year 2023-24 South Hams has been awarded £181,050 in prevention grant, with an additional £132,315 in Ukraine homeless prevention grant top up. A further £34,043 was received and ringfenced to support the delivery of the Domestic Abuse Act. With the exception of the Domestic abuse funding the grants must be spent in year. And this pays for some core service delivery and temporary accommodation costs. The action plan contains a number of actions around reducing the reliance on pay nightly bed and breakfast type accommodation, which it is anticipated will bring down these costs. This not only offers the best service for the customer but is the most efficient in terms of the Local Authority</p>
Risk		<p>The Council has prioritised housing in its council plan. Failure to produce an action plan detailing housing activity would undermine these commitments, It is a statutory requirement to have a current Homelessness Strategy.</p>
Supporting Corporate Strategy		<p>Housing</p>
Consultation & Engagement Strategy		<p>Members of the Housing Advisory Group have been consulted and participated in the formation of the Action Plan. Consultation from the Council plan has also been reflected.</p>
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		<p>No direct impact as a result of this report, however individual projects will have their impact assessed, and commitments to new houses being carbon neutral wherever possible is part of the Council plan.</p>
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		<p>The original Housing strategy has been the subject of an equality impact assessment</p>
Safeguarding		<p>As the Homeless Strategy Action Plan concerns work with very vulnerable people and one of the priorities is around Health and Wellbeing, the corporate safeguarding policy will underpin</p>

		the work of officers who regularly work with homeless households
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		Devon & Cornwall Police contributed to the development of the strategy and will remain significant partners during the delivery of relevant actions in the action plan
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		No direct implications as a result of this report, however there is activity within the action plan that is designed to respond positively to health and wellbeing.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1- Review and progress of the 22/23 Action Plan

Appendix 2 – 24/25 Action Plan