

Report to: **Overview & Scrutiny Panel**

Date: **8 October 2020**

Title: **Housing Strategy: Progress Update**

Portfolio Area: **Cllr Hilary Bastone**
Executive Lead: Homes

Wards Affected: **All**

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

Date next steps can be taken: A version of this report is to be presented to the Executive meeting to be held on 22 October 2020

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RECOMMENDATION:

That Overview and Scrutiny Panel:

- 1. note the progress of the Housing Strategy to date; and**
- 2. endorse the proposed way forward and for all Members to continue to contribute to this key policy development.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 South Hams District Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy which includes the theme of 'Homes- Enabling homes that meet the needs of all' and at the Executive meeting on 17th September 2020, the Leader set out as part of her future priorities, that we will Sustain and support our vibrant towns and villages, through the delivery of the JLP, and by putting housing for the community first.
- 1.2 In supporting these priorities, the Council is preparing a five year Housing Strategy (jointly with West Devon Borough Council) for adoption by April 2021. The Strategy will set out the Council's vision and priorities for Housing until March 2026.
- 1.3 This report seeks endorsement of the approach to date, and of Members emerging priorities.

- 1.4 It is anticipated that a draft Strategy will be presented to Executive in December 2020, with a recommendation to undertake a public consultation. The public consultation will be active over December/January, before returning to Executive in February with adoption (subject to all necessary approvals) by full Council in March 2021.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council currently has a number of housing related policies and strategies that set delivery priorities. These include the Homelessness Strategy, Community Housing Strategy and a Rough Sleeper Strategy. The Council does not however currently have a Housing Strategy to bring all of these strands together.
- 2.2 South Hams District Council already has a Joint Local Plan (JLP) with West Devon Borough Council and Plymouth City Council. The JLP is demonstrating, through our monitoring, that it is already delivering the required 30% of affordable housing of our overall supply on an annual basis. The Housing Strategy will not replace the JLP, instead it will exist to enhance it, with a focus not only on new affordable housing but across all areas of the Council's responsibilities in meeting housing need.
- 2.3 Since the Council last adopted a Housing Strategy there have been vast changes to national policy, including primary legislation and more locally we have seen adoption of our own local plan, jointly with West Devon & Plymouth.
- 2.4 In order to facilitate the development of the Housing Strategy, Members were asked to complete a survey setting out what they consider to be the priorities. The survey ran for two weeks with twenty-one responses being received. The full results of the survey are attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 2.5 In order to further explore Members priorities, a full member workshop was held on 17th September 2020. The session was attended by 19 Members who were provided with the opportunity to ask Officers questions to understand current activity and future challenges.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 During the workshop, Members were presented with the results of the survey and supported developing the Strategy under two broad themes:
 - **Housing for Place** which will concerns itself with actions around the built environment, quality and type of housing and;

- **Housing for People** which will focus on the housing needs of our residents and how we might contribute to improving these the proposal to develop a Strategy along two key themes;

3.2 The survey and workshop highlighted Member priorities under each of these themes as:-

Housing for Place

- Maximising affordable housing delivery according to need
- Promoting balanced and sustainable communities
- New Housing developments that reduce our carbon footprint and fuel poverty
- Council as a developer of new housing
- Planning for future health needs

Housing for People

- Reducing fuel bills through better designed and/or insulated homes
- Reducing fuel poverty through retrofitting existing housing stock
- Improving Health and Wellbeing
- Reducing Anti-Social Behaviour in Neighbourhoods
- Addressing under occupation and overcrowding

3.3 Having explored the priorities in more detail, Members were asked to consider an overall 'strapline' for the Strategy. "**Better Homes, Better Lives**" was put forward as this encapsulates the priorities Members have so far indicated they wish to include. It is also a clear and succinct statement of the strategy aims.

3.4 A short summary of outputs from the workshop is attached at Appendix 2 to this report. This, along with the results of the Member survey will now be used for Officers to engage with partner organisations in order to ensure that the final strategy is aligned to their priorities and where common aims are identified, these are captured in the Strategy.

3.5 The Housing Strategy will also have clear links to the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plan which was considered by Council on 24th September 2020. Through developing of the Recovery Plan, Members set a number of actions to be explored including:-

- a. Action 1.14 – Consider the benefits of the Council becoming a social landlord
- b. Action 2.1 Raise awareness of Community and Affordable Housing Schemes

These will both be considered through delivery of the Strategy.

3.6 The timeline for the next stages of Strategy Development is as follows:

22 nd October 2020	Executive Consideration of draft strategy priorities
23 rd October – 11 th November 2020	Officer engagement with partners on draft strategy priorities
3 rd December 2020	Executive consideration of draft strategy and agreement to commence public consultation
4 th December 2020 – 15 th January 2021	Public consultation
March 2021	Executive consideration of public consultation results and recommendation to Council for adoption of final strategy. Council – Adoption of Housing Strategy 2021- 2026

- 3.7 Additionally, the Executive Lead for Homes Invites the Overview & Scrutiny Panel to consider if they wish to have the opportunity to consider the results of the public consultation.

Strategy Development Governance

- 3.8 The development of the strategy is being undertaken by officers from across the Council.
- 3.9 The project team includes:-
- Strategic Director Place and Enterprise (SLT Lead)
 - Head of Housing, Revenues and Benefits (Project Lead)
 - Housing Specialists
 - Assets Specialists
 - Placemaking Specialists
 - EH Specialists
- 3.10 The project team meet on a weekly basis to ensure that the strategy is being developed in line with existing policy and strategy (JLP, Community Housing etc) but to also ensure that we draw on innovative practices from across the Country in shaping our strategy.
- 3.11 The Head of Housing, Revenues and Benefits regularly engages with the Senior Leadership Team and Deputy Leader (as Lead Executive Member) to ensure that progress is maintained.

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 will be important that the Strategy provides 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 a 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 While there are a number of uncertainties at this moment in time (as set out in Section 4), it is still considered that the Council should take the positive step of creating and adopting a five year Housing Strategy.

5.2 Between this report and December, Officers will be working with the Lead Member in developing Member's priorities and formulating the strategy on how we will deliver them. We will also consult with statutory and voluntary organisations to ensure where possible the strategy can be delivered using a multi-agency partner approach.

5.3 It is anticipated that when formal public consultation commences in December 2020, it will be carried out in line with the best practice for consultation and engagement currently being identified by the O&S Consultation and Engagement Task & Finish Group.

5.4 In order to ensure the Strategy remains relevant and responsive to the changing situation, it will be accompanied by a delivery plan which will be reviewed and refreshed each year with annual Member workshops informing the updates.

5.5 The proposed way forward is therefore that officers continue to develop the Housing Strategy along the timescales suggested in this report and the timeline in section 3.5

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	Whilst not a legal requirement to have a Housing Strategy, the Council has a range of statutory duties relating to housing conditions, housing, and

		homelessness. This strategy will assist the Council in meeting these duties.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	As part of the strategy all housing related budgets will be collated. Any additional activity, identified as part of any emerging delivery plan will be considered for feasibility within normal yearly budgeting activity.
Risk	Y	The risk of not delivering the strategy, or subsequent aspects of a delivery plan relate to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential changing factors (eg covid-19) could lead to an increased demand for statutory services • Future changes to national policy (in particular the planning white paper, which sets out for consultation fundamental changes to the thresholds for affordable housing)
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Homes & Wellbeing
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	The climate change strategy will be a key document and Members have already indicated their priorities for greener homes & energy, whilst balancing fuel poverty.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	There will be an Equality Impact Assessment completed as part of the process.
Safeguarding	Y	There are no direct safeguarding implications arising from this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	It is anticipated that the Housing Strategy will impact positively on social cohesion.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	The focus of the strategy is to improve wellbeing by a range of measures to address housing need.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Member Survey Responses

Appendix 2 – Summary of Member workshop outputs