

Report to: **Executive**
Date: **6 June 2024**
Title: **Housing – Parish Profiles and Update on South Hams Housing Offer**

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

Wards Affected: **All**

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RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 1. Endorse the Parish Profile approach; and**
- 2. Note the progress of the South Hams Housing Offer**

1. Executive summary

1.1 Parish Profiles

The Council recognises that traditional housing needs surveys are only a snapshot of the situation, based on various opinions at a point in time. Furthermore, they can be divisive, and the methodology relied upon does not always reflect the need or the content of other nationally recognised data sources.

- 1.2 Instead, officers have created the Parish Profile – a broader basket of data and information. This easily digestible, short document provides information from secondary data for use by developers, Registered Providers (RP’s) and Members on a defined parish. It presents the facts in relation to house sale prices, tenures, availability on Devon Home Choice and numbers of people waiting for housing. It will also have further information on school availability and children on roll in receipt of free school meals.

- 1.3 The data will provide greater understanding of each demographic within a community and where those areas of need are.

- 1.4 The information will be publicly available on the Council website and updated annually.

1.5 The South Hams Housing Offer

The South Hams Housing Offer launched in December following a report to Members in Autumn 2023. Whilst it is still a young programme, it is pleasing to report that it has already gained traction in a spread of locations across the District.

- 1.6 To date there have been 9 enquiries. 4 of which are currently being progressed through the initial viability stages. One of these is from an existing Community Land Trust. To date there have been no funding applications from local groups looking to set up a new community housing organisation, however this is to be expected so soon after launch as it takes time for new groups to form and mobilise.

2. Background

- 2.1 The traditional methodology for creating housing needs surveys relies heavily on people completing a form that is usually posted to an address in the parish and asks questions relating to housing need.
- 2.2 One of the fundamental issues with collecting data in this way is that response rates are normally low and people who have had to leave the parish due to availability and affordability of local housing are not easily represented. We have also attended events where people wishing to speak to a Housing Advisor about their circumstances are intimidated or embarrassed due to louder, often affluent voices who are anti-development and have left without the advice or support they often need.
- 2.3 Whilst it is recognised that housing needs surveys can have significant short comings, it is important to collate evidence in relation to housing that people can use to inform decisions and support the mix, size, tenure of any future development, whilst also understanding the local needs of a particular parish. Responding to this need Katie West our Housing Data Officer created parish profiles.
- 2.4 It is the intention to use parish profiles to support the responses by the Council in relation to affordable housing as a statutory consultee. Also to share them with our RP partners to support the need for development when seeking approval for funding bids through Homes England and through internal Boards. It will also support development on exception sites that may be brought forward through the South Hams Housing Officer.
- 2.5 To ensure these are as useful as possible these profiles will be publicly available on the Councils website so that they are accessible to all. Ward Members will be invited to comment on their parish profile and share widely as required. They will be updated annually as the source data changes.

- 2.6 As a pilot the Parish Profiles were trialled alongside the traditional Housing Needs Survey. The profiles were enthusiastically received by RP's and utilised by both the dedicated Affordable Housing Planner and the affordable housing team immediately.
- 2.7 It is the intention that these are refreshed annually and that if further information is felt to be of use this is reviewed as part of the work of the Housing Advisory Group.

2.8 South Hams Housing Offer

There has been a good early response to the South Hams Housing Offer since the website went live in February 2024

- 2.9 4 sites are being progressed under the 3rd stage of funding and are being progressed through the initial viability study. A further 3 sites have not been progressed for a variety of reasons including the landowner looking for a commercial return and another site with challenging access which would make the site unviable.
- 2.10 One of the progressed sites is working alongside an established CLT. We are hopeful that we will receive more enquiries from community groups keen to explore affordable housing as the schemes progress.
- 2.11 Members are urged to direct any interested parties to the website where there is a wealth of information relating to the South Hams Offer where they can find out more.
- 2.12 **Options available and consideration of risk:**
- 2.13 The Council wishes to adopt an evidence-based approach to housing need, without the reliance on traditional housing needs surveys. It is fully accepted that there may be times where these are appropriate however the information supplied within parish profiles is a clear indication of housing need in a specific location from accepted secondary data sources.
- 2.14 It will be useful information for elected members, RP's and developers to understand the housing requirements of a specific location and as useful evidence in an easily digestible format for planning officers and members of the housing committee.
- 2.15 It is intended to use the Housing Advisory Group to consider any improvements that could be made to the parish profile, including any additional information. Each Member will be invited to comment on their own parish profile.

3. Proposal and Next Steps

- 3.1 It is the intention to launch the Parish Profiles on the Council website as soon as they have been endorsed by the Executive.
- 3.2 For the South Hams Housing Offer, officers will continue to report internally to the Housing & Planning Board, and at the appropriate time seek committee approval on taking schemes further.

4. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	<p>The Council is a consultee on affordable housing applications, parish profiles will inform the response and give certainty to providers before commencing costly planning applications.</p> <p>The South Hams Housing Offer is an adopted policy approved by Members in Autumn 2023.</p>
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	N	<p>The Parish Profiles rely on secondary data from a number of publicly available evidence sets. The approach offers better value for money than the traditional housing needs surveys, both those done in house and those completed by a 3rd party contractor.</p> <p>The South Hams Housing Offer has an allocated budget of £100k in the year 1 delivery plan.</p>
Risk	Y	<p>The Council is adopting Parish Profiles as an approach to capture housing need on an individual parish level. It may be that for some developments, particularly in the AONB or Dartmoor National Park that it is beneficial to also capture evidence through a traditional housing need survey. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis</p>
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Homes
Consultation & Engagement Strategy	Y	<p>Local Ward Members will be sent their own Parish Profile to review. The Member Housing Advisory Group will also discuss the content and make recommendations as appropriate.</p>
Climate Change - Carbon /	Y	<p>The parish profiles have reduced the reliance on paper forms, postage costs and milage. The</p>

Biodiversity Impact		information will be readily available electronically and only printed by request. The South Hams Housing Offer includes criteria to wherever possible ensure the most energy efficient green homes
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	None as a result of this report
Safeguarding	N	None as a result of this report
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	None as a result of this report
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	None as a result of this report
Other implications	N	None as a result of this report

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix A: Sample Parish Profile for Salcombe