

West Devon Hub Committee



West Devon
Borough
Council

Title:	Agenda								
Date:	Tuesday, 28th July, 2020								
Time:	2.00 pm								
Venue:	Remote Meeting - Skype								
Full Members:	<p style="text-align: center;">Chairman Cllr Jory Vice Chairman Cllr Samuel</p> <p><i>Members:</i></p> <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Cllr Cheadle</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Cllr Mott</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Edmonds</td> <td>Cllr Pearce</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Leech</td> <td>Cllr Sellis</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Cllr Moody</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Cllr Cheadle	Cllr Mott	Cllr Edmonds	Cllr Pearce	Cllr Leech	Cllr Sellis	Cllr Moody	
Cllr Cheadle	Cllr Mott								
Cllr Edmonds	Cllr Pearce								
Cllr Leech	Cllr Sellis								
Cllr Moody									
Interests – Declaration and Restriction on Participation:	Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any disclosable pecuniary interest not entered in the Authority's register or local non pecuniary interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda (subject to the exception for sensitive information) and to leave the meeting prior to discussion and voting on an item in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.								
Committee administrator:	Democratic.Services@swdevon.gov.uk								

1. Apologies for absence

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are invited to declare any personal or disclosable pecuniary interests, including the nature and extent of such interests they may have in any items to be considered at this meeting.

If Councillors have any questions relating to predetermination, bias or interests in items on this Agenda, then please contact the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.

3. Items Requiring Urgent Attention

To consider those items which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be considered by the Meeting as matters of urgency (if any)

4. Confirmation of Minutes

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Minutes of meeting held 30 June 2020

5. Public Questions - a period of up to 15 minutes is available to deal with issues raised by the public

6. Hub Committee Forward Plan

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7. Month 3 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/21 (to the end of June 2020)

11 - 34

8. Homeless Strategy Year 4 Action Plan

35 - 80

9. Changes to Pest Control Services

81 - 86

PART TWO ITEMS ARE THOSE WHICH MAY BE TAKEN IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS ON THE GROUNDS THAT EXEMPT INFORMATION IS LIKELY TO BE DISCLOSED (if any)

If any, the Committee is recommended to pass the following resolution:
"RESOLVED that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the Meeting on the grounds that exempt information may be disclosed as defined in the paragraphs given in Schedule 12A to the Act."

This document can be made available in large print, Braille, tape format, other languages or alternative format upon request. Please contact the Committee section on 01822 813664 or email janice.young@swdevon.gov.uk

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Agenda Item 4

At a Meeting of the **HUB COMMITTEE** held via Skype on **TUESDAY** the **30th** day of **June 2020** at **2:00 pm**

Present: Cllr N Jory – Chairman
Cllr L Samuel – Vice Chairman

Cllr R Cheadle	Cllr C Edmonds
Cllr A F Leech	Cllr J Moody
Cllr C Mott	Cllr T G Pearce
Cllr D K A Sellis	

In attendance: Chief Executive
Deputy Chief Executive
Director of Place and Enterprise
Director of Governance & Assurance
Section 151 Officer
Head of Strategy and Projects
Head of Finance
Head of Democratic Services
Specialist Democratic Services

Other Members in attendance:
Cllrs Daniel, Ewings and Yelland

***HC 78 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were invited to declare any interests in the items of business to be discussed and none were made

***HC 79 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Hub Committee meeting held on 28 January 2020 were confirmed as a correct record.

***HC 80 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

There were no questions submitted by the Public

***HC 81 HUB COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN**

Members were presented with the Hub Committee Forward Plan setting out items on the agenda for Hub Committee meetings for the next four months.

The contents of the Forward Plan were agreed subject to the following amendments:

- Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) being deferred to a Committee meeting in October/November 2020;
- In the light of the Recovery Plan, if agreed, Forward Plan (FP) to be reviewed and brought to next Hub Committee meeting;
- The Commercial Investments Update agenda item to be reassigned to Portfolio Area of Council with Lead Member therefore being Cllr Jory.

***HC 82**

COUNCIL RESPONSE AND RECOVERY TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

At the Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 23 June 2020, consideration was given to a report titled: 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response and Draft Recovery and Renewal Plan (the report and four parts of the Appendix that were initially presented to the Meeting were outlined at Appendix A of the published agenda report). The Meeting had considered at length both the Response and Draft Recovery and Renewal Plan and the key discussion points were outlined in parts 1 to 4 of the recommendation and Appendix B of the published agenda report;

The Leader introduced the report and invited Member questions and comments.

Following Member discussions, it was agreed that, due to the potential overlap, the Council's adopted Corporate Strategy should be reviewed in light of the emergent Recovery Plan and the two plans amalgamated to one single document to take the Council forward. Officers confirmed that an Extended Leadership Team lead officer for the proposed Business theme would be appointed soon.

The Chairman moved the recommendations on block and these were seconded by the Vice-Chairman.

It was then declared **CARRIED** by unanimous vote that:

1. the Council's response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic to date be noted and endorsed and the Town and Parish Councils and other Community Groups be thanked and congratulated for their response and actions to the COVID-19 Pandemic;
2. Officers develop a Recovery and Renewal Plan in-line with the Framework and Objectives that are outlined in Appendices A2, A3 and A4 of the presented agenda report;
3. the conclusions of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on the priority areas for the Strategic Framework for Recovery and Renewal (as summarised at Appendix B) be taken into account;
4. an update on progress against the development of the Plan be presented back to a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on 1 September 2020; and

That, in light of the discussions at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting:

5. A series of Recovery and Renewal Theme-Based Member Workshops be convened in advance of the Meeting that is to be held on 1 September 2020.

***HC 83**

REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING FOR APRIL AND MAY 2020

Members were presented with a report that outlined the impact on the Council's Budget following the lockdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Lead Member introduced the monitoring report which was the first since the outbreak of the pandemic. It was confirmed that there would be monthly reporting to Members going forward with an amended budget to be brought to Council in September. When questioned, it was confirmed that regular meetings of the Financial Stability Review Group would be arranged once the definitive financial announcement had been received from Central Government.

Members were informed that the financial accounts were nearly completed for 2019/20, with a report presenting the accounts to be brought to the Audit Committee in July. Also, a Member Budget Setting workshop would be set up during August and would follow the same format as previous years. It was then intended that a draft amended Budget for 2020/21 would then be presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting to be held on 1 September, on to the Hub Committee meeting to be held on 15 September, and then on to Council for ultimate approval at its meeting to be held on 22 September.

Cllr Edmonds moved the recommendations on block and these were seconded by Cllr Mott.

It was then unanimously **RESOLVED** that:-

- i) the significant forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2020/21 financial year and the overall projected overspend of £1.028 million (14.3% of the total Budget £7.212 million) be noted.
- ii) the loss of income streams already experienced by the Council in April 2020 and May 2020 of £0.371 million in total as shown in Section 6 of the presented agenda report be noted.
- iii) an Amended Budget for 2020/21 be presented to the September cycle of Committee meetings, setting out recommendations as to how the projected losses could be financed and what action could be taken. This is in order to achieve a balanced budget for 2020/21, in light of the Covid 19 pandemic.
- iv) a comprehensive review be undertaken into all of the Council's Earmarked Reserves.

(The meeting terminated at 14:57 pm)

Chairman

(NOTE: THESE DECISIONS WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE FROM WEDNESDAY 8th JULY 2020 UNLESS CALLED IN, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SCRUTINY PROCEDURE RULE 18).

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WEST DEVON BOROUGH COUNCIL: HUB COMMITTEE FORWARD PLAN

This is the provisional forward plan for the four months starting July 2020. It provides an indicative date for matters to be considered by the Hub Committee. Where possible, the Hub Committee will keep to the dates shown in the plan. However, it may be necessary for some items to be rescheduled and other items added.

The forward plan is published to publicise consultation dates and enable dialogue between the Hub Committee and all councillors, the public and other stakeholders. It will also assist the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee in planning their contribution to policy development and holding the Hub Committee to account.

The Plan is published on the Council's website (www.westdevon.gov.uk)

The Hub Committee consists of nine Councillors. Each has responsibility for a particular area of the Council's work.

Leader – Cllr Neil Jory

Deputy Leader – Cllr Lois Samuel

Lead Member for Environment – Cllr Caroline Mott

Lead Member for Health and Wellbeing – Cllr Tony Leech

Lead Member for Enterprise – Cllr Ric Cheadle

Lead Member for Communities – Cllr Terry Pearce

Lead Member for Customer First – Cllr Jeff Moody

Lead Member for Resources and Performance – Cllr Chris Edmonds

Lead Member for Homes – Cllr Debo Sellis

Further information on the workings of the Hub Committee, including latest information on agenda items, can be obtained by contacting the Democratic Services Section by e-mail to democratic.services@westdevon.gov.uk

All items listed in this Forward Plan will be discussed in public at the relevant meeting, unless otherwise indicated

Portfolio Area	Report Title and Summary	Lead Member / Officer	Documents to be considered in making decision	Date of Meeting	Consultees and means of consultation
Council	<p>Title: Revenue Budget Monitoring for April, May, and June 2020</p> <p>Purpose: A revenue budget monitoring report to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved revenue budget for 2020/21 for April, May, and June 2020.</p>	Cllr Edmonds / Lisa Buckle	Report of S151 Officer	28 July 2020	
Homes	<p>Title: Homeless Strategy year 4 Action Plan</p> <p>Purpose: To provide to Members an update on the Homeless Strategy Action Plan</p>	Cllr Sellis / Isabel Blake	Report of Head of Housing, Revenues, and Benefits Practice	28 July 2020	
Council	<p>Title: Devon Districts Procurement Strategy</p> <p>Purpose of Report: To seek adoption of Devon procurement strategy</p>	Cllr Pearce / Rosie Wilson	Report of Corporate Procurement Officer	15 September 2020	South Hams, Teignbridge, Torridge, Exeter, Mid, and North Devon Councils
Council	<p>Title: Recovery Plan to the Covid-19 Crisis</p> <p>Purpose: to consider the recommendations of the Joint Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel and Development Management Committee on the draft Recovery Plan</p>	Cllr Jory / Drew Powell	Report of the Director of Governance and Assurance	15 Sept 2020	To be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1 Sept 2020
Council	<p>Title: Amended Draft Budget 2020/21</p> <p>Purpose: To consider a report that presents an amended budget for 2020/21 in light of the impact of Covid-19</p>	Cllr Jory / Lisa Buckle	Report of the Section 151 Officer	15 Sept 2020	To be considered at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1 Sept 2020

Portfolio Area	Report Title and Summary	Lead Member / Officer	Documents to be considered in making decision	Date of Meeting	Consultees and means of consultation
Council	Title: Commercial Investments Update Purpose: to update the Council on any commercial investment opportunities	Cllr Jory / Chris Brook	Report of Director of Place and Enterprise	15 September 2020	
Strategic Planning / Environment	Title: Coastal Concordat Purpose of report: To outline to Members the protocol for formal processes where these are shared across administrative boundaries / responsibilities	Cllr Mott / Rob Sekula	Report of Head of Place Making Practice	15 September 2020	
Homes	Title: Empty Homes Premium Purpose of report: To consider an increase to the Council Tax premium on properties that have been empty for over two years	Cllr Sellis / Steve Henstock	Report of the Senior Specialist of Housing, Revenues and Benefits, and Customer First	15 September 2020	Consultation with various Heads of Practice
Council	Title: Write Off Report for Quarter 4 2019/2020 Purpose of report: The Council is responsible for the collection of: Housing Rents, Sundry Debts including Housing Benefit Overpayments, Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates. The report informs members of the debt written off for these revenue streams.	Cllr Edmonds / Lisa Buckle	Report of S151 Officer	15 September 2020	
Strategy	Title: Housing Strategy Purpose of report: To recommend to Members the adoption of a revised Housing Strategy	Cllr Sellis / Chris Brook	Report of the Director of Place and Enterprise	15 September 2020	

Environment	Title: 3 weekly waste update Purpose: To provide Members with an update on the 3 weekly waste trial	Cllr Mott / Jane Savage	Report of Head of Contracts and Commissioning	15 September 2020	
Council	Title: Revenue Budget Monitoring up to August 2020 Purpose of report: A revenue budget monitoring report to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved revenue budget for 2020/21 up to August 2020	Cllr Edmonds / Lisa Buckle	Report of S151 Officer	15 September 2020	
Council	Title: Capital Budget Monitoring Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 Purpose of report: The report advises Members of the progress on individual schemes within the approved capital programme for 2020/21, including an assessment of their financial position	Cllr Edmonds / Lisa Buckle	Report of S151 Officer	20 October 2020	
Council	Medium Term Financial Strategy for the five years 2021/22 to 2025/26 Purpose of the report: To set the strategic intention for all of the different strands of funding available to the Council. This brings together all known factors affecting the Council's financial position and its financial sustainability, to provide a long term financial forecast.	Cllr Jory / Lisa Buckle	Report of S151 Officer	20 October 2020	
Homes	Title: Springhill update Purpose: To provide Members with an update on Springhill	Cllr Sellis / Dan Field	Report of Senior Specialist (Assets)	20 October 2020	

Council	<p>Title: Revenue Budget Monitoring up to September 2020</p> <p>Purpose of report: A revenue budget monitoring report to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved revenue budget for 2020/21 up to August 2020</p>	Cllr Edmonds / Lisa Buckle	Report of S151 Officer	20 October 2020	
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Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **28th July 2020**

Title: **Month 3 Revenue Budget Monitoring
2020/2021 (to the end of June 2020)**

Portfolio Area: **Performance & Resources – Cllr C Edmonds**

Wards Affected: **All**

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

Date next steps can be taken: **N/A**

Author: **Pauline Henstock** Role: **Head of Finance Practice
and Deputy S.151 Officer**

Lisa Buckle **Corporate Director for
Strategic Finance
(S151 Officer)**

Contact: pauline.henstock@swdevon.gov.uk
lisa.buckle@swdevon.gov.uk

Recommendations:

That the Hub Committee resolves to:-

- i) Note the significant forecast income and expenditure variations for the 2020/21 financial year and the overall projected shortfall of £0.501 million (6.9% of the total annual Budget of £7.212 million).
- ii) Note the loss of income streams already experienced by the Council in April 2020 to June 2020 of £0.474 million in total as shown in Section 6 of the report.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 Covid 19 has caused financial strain for all Councils up and down the country where Councils find themselves being caught in a 'perfect storm'. Councils have to manage both the increased costs of coping with Covid19 and supporting vulnerable people in the community and the loss of key income streams such as car parking income and council tax income.

- 1.2 The factors affecting the Council's finances are issues affecting the whole Local Government sector. The Council is well-placed to meet the financial challenges arising from Covid19, due to its prudent financial management over previous years. It is important to stress that the Council is not in financial difficulty and a plan will be drawn up as to how the Council meets these challenges.
- 1.3 This report enables Members to monitor income and expenditure variations against the approved budget for 2020/21, and provides a forecast for the year end position.
- 1.4 The gross service expenditure budget for 2020/21 was set at £23 million (£7.212 million net). ***There is projected to be an overall shortfall of £0.501 million when compared against the total net revenue budget set for 2020/21, due mainly to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.*** This position is after taking into account the £0.585 million Government grant already received for Covid-19 and the estimated £0.453 million Government funding that the Council is anticipating towards income losses on sales, fees and charges (the Government 'income guarantee scheme'). More detail on this is in section 2.6 to 2.12.
- 1.5 This forecast shortfall is based on a range of assumptions which have been made as to how much the income streams of the Council could be affected by Covid19. Projections could improve and it is difficult to predict as we don't know how quickly things will bounce back. We will be monitoring our finances on a monthly basis and as actual figures emerge, we will refine these figures and our assumptions. The Council has also not yet had the detail of the Government's 'income guarantee scheme' and therefore this report is based on the Council's best estimate of how the scheme might work. This will need revising once the details of the scheme have been published.
- 1.6 The month 2 budget monitoring report to the Hub Committee on 30 June 2020 predicted a projected shortfall of £1.028 million. This improved position for the month 3 budget monitoring report is a reduction of £0.527 million and is predominantly due to the Government announcement on the 2 July 2020 regarding a comprehensive package of financial support for Councils as detailed in paragraph 1.5. This is a result of successful lobbying of the Government as set out in section 2.
- 1.7 The significant extent of these predicted losses present imminent funding challenges for the Council. With income falling, unemployment expected to rise and a lack of certainty around funding, there are going to be difficult decisions to be made. An amended budget for 2020-21 will be presented to the September cycle of Committee and Council meetings.

- 1.8 The Council's Accounts for 2019/20 were published with the Audit Committee Agenda for the 21 July 2020. The Accounts show that the Council has underspent against its 2019/20 budget of £7.08 million by £133,000 (1.9%). This underspend of £133,000 will go into the Council's unearmarked reserves which now stand at £1.219 million. One of the options that Members could consider as to how to meet the budget shortfall in 2020/21 would be to use the 2019/20 underspend of £133,000 towards the projected budget shortfall set out in this report.

2. Background

2.1 Regional and national context

- 2.2 The budget monitoring position for April and May was reported to the Hub Committee on 30th June 2020. This report contained details on the joint lobbying with 'Team Devon' regarding the Coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the Councils' finances across Devon Councils. Local Government is a frontline service and we want to ensure our voice is heard in the calls for financial support.
- 2.3 Since the previous budget monitoring report, a further lobbying letter from South West Councils has been sent to the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government). Attached in Appendix C is a copy of the joint lobbying letter. This letter set out that the latest Government returns to MHCLG showed a financial challenge to South West Councils of over £1 billion across the region.
- 2.4 The Council will continue to lobby the Government so that we receive the appropriate level of funding to be able to plan confidently for the future. Each month, Councils complete a national return that informs the Government of how much COVID-19 is affecting the finances of Councils. The point has been made that these income losses have had a much bigger impact (in proportion to Net Budgets) on District Councils, than they have on County Councils and Unitaries.
- 2.5 The Society of District Council Treasurers (SDCT) has engaged Local Government Futures (who are specialists in the field of Local Government Finance), to put together evidence to show the losses experienced by District Councils. This will then be used for the purpose of lobbying the Government for further funding for District Councils. In a letter from the Chairman of the District Councils' Network to the Chancellor, the financial needs of District Councils were set out, as well as stating that no part of the public sector is better placed than District Councils to catalyse and lead the recovery and that we will rise to the challenge.

2.6 On 2nd July, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP announced a new comprehensive package of support for Councils, to address spending pressures and losses in income streams. There were three central pillars of support announced:-

- A new scheme to compensate Councils for losses of income, though not in their entirety (an 'income guarantee' scheme)
- An extra £500million to cover extra COVID19 expenditure costs
- To allow council tax and business rate losses in income to be repaid over the next 3 years of budget cycles, instead of just the next one year

2.7 We are very pleased that our lobbying has been successful but there is still further work to do on this.

2.8 The main element of the announcement is that the Government will compensate Councils for their income losses above the first 5% of their budgeted income from sales, fees and charges. Income losses above the first 5% will be compensated by the Government paying for 75 pence in every pound of the losses thereafter. This is only the income losses from sales, fees and charges so it isn't clear yet which categories of income this will include.

2.9 It was specifically mentioned by the Minister at the Local Government Association conference that it will include losses in car parking income. So the Council will be compensated for these. It is expected that the Council will have to declare its losses and there will probably be some auditing of the figures involved – so it is expected that any funding will be retrospective once the 'actual losses' are known and quantified. The Government has promised that further details about these new allocations of the funding will be made in due course, including the principles which the Government intend to cover losses on, which will be shared with Councils ahead of the first process of collecting, calculating and compensating for relevant losses. For the new income loss scheme, the 5% deductible sum is to take account of volatility in income streams and to encourage Councils to minimise losses where they can.

2.10 The Government has said that they will further compensate Councils for their extra COVID expenditure, through a £500 million allocation nationally. It is not yet known how this will be allocated and details are awaited. The Council's main item of additional expenditure relates to the support for three months for the Leisure contract.

2.11 In the next Spending Review the Government will also determine what support Councils will need, to help them meet the pressures of income losses from council tax and business rates. The Government has said that they are bringing in changes to allow Councils to spread their Collection Fund losses (for losses in Council Tax and Business Rates income) over the next three years instead of over the next one year. So this will allow council tax and business rate losses in income, to be repaid over the next 3 years of budget cycles, instead of just

the next one year. The Government will also agree an apportionment of irrecoverable council tax and business rate losses, between central and local Government for 2020 to 2021. More details are needed on this to be able to understand the detail of how Councils will be supported by this.

- 2.12 The Government announcement is below:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/comprehensive-new-funding-package-for-councils-to-help-address-coronavirus-pressures-and-cover-lost-income-during-the-pandemic>

2.2 How we plan to respond as a Council

- 2.21 In this report, assumptions have been made as to how much the income streams of the Council could be affected by Covid19. Projections could improve and it is difficult to predict as we don't know how quickly things will bounce back. We will be monitoring our finances on a monthly basis and as actual figures emerge, we will refine these figures and our assumptions.
- 2.22 The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Response and Draft Recovery and Renewal Plan (a separate item considered at the Hub Committee meeting on 30th June) sets out the strategic objectives, part of which is the recovery and sustainability of the Council's financial position (Section 11). The financial sustainability Theme sets out a list of proposed areas for development.
- 2.23 The lockdown due to Covid19 has been eased and the financial assumptions around the Council's income streams have been revised. For example, the Council's car parks have re-opened and therefore the estimates in this report reflect this updated position.
- 2.24 This Budget Monitoring report also excludes the impact of reductions in income from Business Rates and Council Tax as these do not affect the General Fund in 2020/21 (apart from the pooling gain). This is further explained in Section 6.
- 2.25 Future service delivery discussions are currently taking place with each Head of Practice area to discuss what services might look like under 'the new normal'. A thorough review of all expenditure will be needed, which takes into account a review of statutory expenditure against non-statutory (discretionary) expenditure and also the corporate priorities.
- 2.26 This will include a review of the Council's Capital Programme and all capital projects. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy will also be revised in October.

- 2.27 The Council is undertaking a Comprehensive Review of all Earmarked Reserves, which total £3.895 million as shown in Appendix A. Budgeted contributions to and from Earmarked Reserves as part of the 2020/21 Budget are also being assessed. Unearmarked Reserves stand at £1.219 million following the closure of the 2019/20 Accounts (see Section 9). The Council has a limited amount of Reserves, which could be used if absolutely necessary. Reserve levels will be kept under constant review.
- 2.28 Time needs to be taken over the next few months and weeks to put together proposals for Members to consider for an Amended Budget for 2020/21. A Member Budget Workshop in August will be arranged, to explore all areas with Members, supplemented by Informal Council briefings. If there are areas that Members would like the Financial Stability Theme of the Recovery and Renewal Plan to cover, please let the Member lead (Cllr Edmonds) or the Officer lead (Mrs Buckle) know. This is an evolving plan, to ensure and safeguard the delivery of services.
- 2.29 Options will be presented to Members for a revised Budget for 2020/21 during August and September 2020. This is in order to achieve a balanced budget for 2020/21, in light of the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 2.30 It should be noted that the financial landscape for Councils is ever-changing and there is still a great deal of uncertainty that Councils are working with in planning their finances for the longer term. The large areas of unknowns are around New Homes Bonus funding, Negative Revenue Support Grant (the Council no longer receives any core Government grant) and future allocations of Rural Services Delivery Grant. We are making the point to the Government that we must know what is happening to these key areas by this September, so that we can plan confidently for our finances for the future.

2.3 Financial Monitoring arrangements

- 2.31 The Council's financial procedure rules require that reports must be made on budget monitoring on a regular basis to the Hub Committee as part of the Council's arrangements for budget management. Revenue budget monitoring reports are normally brought to the Hub Committee on a quarterly basis. However due to the current Covid 19 pandemic and the subsequent financial pressures facing Local Authorities, it was felt more prudent to update the Hub Committee on a monthly basis going forward, with monthly budget monitoring reports.

3. Outcomes/outputs

3.1 **Budget overview** - Table 1 below provides an analysis of the projected variances against budget. The report is 'high level' at this early stage of the year and does not include any in-depth monitoring of the salaries budgets within each area or some of the smaller areas of expenditure. This will be done for the Quarter 2 Budget Monitoring report.

TABLE 1: 2020/21 BUDGET FORECAST

	2020/21 Budget expenditure /(income)	Budget variations		£000	Note
		%	£000		
	£000			£000	
APPROVED BUDGET				7,212	
Reductions in expenditure/additional income					
Customer Service & Delivery					
COVID-19 Government grant support (the Council's share of £1.6bn allocation)	-	-	(585)		A
Savings on staff and Member travel and expenses	91	50%	(45)		B
Governance & Assurance					
Garden Waste income	(205)	12%	(25)		C
Sub total of variations				(655)	
Increases in expenditure/reductions in income					
Customer Service & Delivery					
COVID-19 expenditure	n/a	n/a (no budget)	105		D
Homelessness - reimbursement of expenditure	(144)	50%	72		E
Investment income	(105)	90%	95		F
Licensing income	(114)	40%	46		G
Land Charges income	(95)	30%	29		H
Council Tax Collection income	(102)	50%	51		I
Housing Benefit overpayment recoveries	(135)	100%	135		J
Place and Enterprise					
Car parking income - assumes actual losses in April to June and 40% drop in income levels from 1 st July 2020	(1,147)	52%	597		K

	2020/21 Budget expenditure /(income)	Budget variations			Note
Commercial Property Investment net income	(1,099)	20%	220		L
Employment Estates income	(328)	25%	82		M
Kilworthy Park income	(141)	10%	14		N
Governance & Assurance					
Leisure – interim support to the leisure contractor	n/a	n/a (no budget)	46		O
Waste & Recycling income - mainly recycling credits	(280)	10%	28		P
Other Comprehensive Income & Expenditure					
Business Rates Pooling gain	(135)	100%	135		Q
Sub total of variations				1,655	
PROJECTED OUTTURN				8,212	
Less: Use of Earmarked reserves:					
Leisure: Interim support to Leisure contractor (Note P) to be funded by the Leisure Services Earmarked Reserve (Minute Reference CM87)					
				(46)	O
Government grant funding anticipated from the income guarantee scheme for sales, fees and charges				(453)	R
PROJECTED SHORTFALL				501	

There is projected to be an overall shortfall of £0.501 million when compared against the total net revenue budget set for 2020/21, due mainly to the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic.

This position is after taking into account the £0.585 million Government grant received for Covid-19 and the estimated £0.453 million Government funding that the Council is anticipating towards income losses on sales, fees and charges.

Notes

- A. **COVID-19 grant support** – The Council has received nearly £585,000 of Government grant support for the Covid19 pandemic. This will assist the Council to partly meet its projected loss of income streams but it will only be part of the solution.

- B. **Savings on staff and Member travel and expenses** – due to Covid 19 it is currently anticipated that a saving of up to £45,000 could be achieved in 2020/21. These savings are due to staff and Members working from home in accordance with Government guidance.
- C. **Garden Waste income** – this income target is expected to be exceeded in 2020/21 by £25,000.
- D. **COVID-19 expenditure** – small one-off items of direct Covid 19 expenditure such as extra housing costs, ICT, waste collection and remote working and shielding costs.
- E. **Homelessness** – homelessness reimbursement of expenditure is currently forecast to be reduced by 50% (£72,000) due to Covid 19.
- F. **Investment income** – due to the historic low in interest rates (base rates are 0.1%), investment income is currently anticipated to be 90% down which equates to a shortfall of £95,000. Further options for fixed term deposits will continue to be explored with the Council's treasury management advisers.
- G. **Licensing income** – due to Covid-19 it is currently anticipated that licensing income could be reduced by 40% (£46,000) in 2020/21.
- H. **Land Charges income** – based on income to date a shortfall of 30% in land charges income is currently forecast for 2020/21 which equates to £29,000.
- I. **Council Tax Collection income** – summons costs recovered in respect of Council Tax and Business Rates are currently anticipated to be 50% down on the 2020/21 budget.
- J. **Housing Benefit overpayment recoveries** – it is unlikely that any of this income target (£135,000) will be achieved in 2020/21 as we expect to see fewer overpayments being created due to the introduction of DWP Real Time Information referrals. There is also an expectation that recovery will reduce year on year as collection becomes more difficult. This is partly due to Covid 19 but also reflects the outturn position for 2019/20 where this income target has not been achieved in full. The income target needs to be reduced to Nil for 2021/22 and reflected within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- K. **Car parking income** – The prediction for the year (a £597,000 reduction in income) includes the actual losses in car parking income for the first three months and an assumption of an on-going 40% drop in income levels from 1st July 2020 for the rest of the year. This would equate to an overall 52% reduction in the budgeted income for the year of £1.147 million. In the first three months income has been down by £86,000 in April, £95,000 in May and £73,000 in June. This position will be monitored on a monthly basis.

- L. **Commercial Property Investment gross income** – Income from Investment properties could be impacted by tenants’ ability to pay during the Covid19 pandemic. A reduction of 20% (£220,000) has been modelled across the Investment property portfolio as a ballpark estimate. This is in line with estimates being made in other Councils. It is early in the year to be able to firm up this figure but this is envisaged to be a worse case scenario. A monitoring and update report on the Commercial Property Investment portfolio is being presented to the Audit Committee on 21st July 2020. This report details the rental income position on the portfolio to the end of June.
- M. **Employment Estates income** – Income from Employment Estates properties could be impacted by tenants’ ability to pay during the Covid19 pandemic. A reduction of 25% (£82,000) has been modelled across the Employment Estates property portfolio as a ballpark estimate. This is in line with estimates being made in other Councils. It is early in the year to be able to firm up this figure but this is envisaged to be a worse case scenario.
- N. **Kilworthy Park income** – It is anticipated that rental income from Kilworthy Park could be down by 10% (£14,000) due to Covid 19.
- O. **Leisure Centres interim support** – due to Covid 19, an interim support package has been agreed with the Council’s Leisure provider (Fusion Lifestyle) at a one-off cost of £45,900 (three months for April, May and June at £15,300 per month), to be funded from the Leisure Services Earmarked Reserve. Minute Reference CM87. There are additional impacts regarding leisure which are still to be quantified in relation to the leisure contract. A separate report will be presented to Members as soon as more details are known about the leisure provision. The Government has only just recently announced that leisure centres can re-open later in July and the Council’s leisure contractor is working through the detail of the Government announcement and guidance issued on 9th July. Appendix E to the Month 2 Budget Monitoring report presented to the Hub Committee on 30th June gave an outline position.
- P. **Waste & Recycling income** – the projection assumes a 10% reduction in income due to Covid 19.
- Q. **Business Rates Pooling Gain** – due to Covid 19 it is anticipated that there will be no Business Rates Pooling Gain in 2020/21. The S151 Officer and the Business Rates Specialist will continue to attend the Devon Business Rates Pooling meetings and provide quarterly monitoring information on the business rates position. A worst case scenario of no pooling gain has been modelled in this report.

- R. **Government Grant Funding for Income Losses** – on 2 July, the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP announced a comprehensive package of support for Councils. This included a new scheme to compensate Councils for losses of sales, fees and charges income, though not in their entirety. The Government will compensate Councils for their income losses above the first 5% of their budgeted income from sales, fees and charges. Income losses above the first 5% will be compensated by the Government paying for 75 pence in every pound of the losses thereafter. This has been estimated at £453,000 for the Council based on the income shortfalls to date. Detailed guidance from the Government is awaited on this.

Savings/Additional Income identified in the 2020/21 Budget

- 3.2 This monitoring report includes an update on the position regarding the savings and additional income that were identified in the 2020/21 budget setting process, set out in Appendix B. This sets out that of the extra Income/savings budgeted for in 2020/21 of £530,200, an amount of £413,200 is currently projected to be achieved. Therefore there is a projected under-achievement of extra income and savings of £117,000. This is reflected within the overall projected loss of £501,000 where there is a reasonable amount of certainty over this figure. Projections which include 'TBA' will be firmed up in future monitoring reports.

4. Review of Earmarked Reserves

- 4.1 The Council annually undertakes a review of the level of its Earmarked Reserves as part of the budget setting process. Recommendation 4 of this report recommends that a comprehensive review of all Earmarked Reserves is undertaken as part of the process of putting together an Amended Budget for 2020/21. Budgeted contributions to and from Earmarked Reserves as part of the 2020/21 Budget will also be assessed. A schedule of Earmarked Reserves is attached at Appendix A, which shows Earmarked Reserves have a projected balance of £3.895 million at 31.3.2021 currently.
- 4.2 The Council's level of Unearmarked Reserves currently stands at £1.219 million. As part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Members have set a minimum balance for Unearmarked Reserves of £900,000.

5. Prudential Indicators

- 5.1 The prudential code indicators were approved in the Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategy report to Council on 28th April 2020. The indicators are monitored during the year through the normal revenue and capital monitoring processes. All Treasury Management limits have been adhered to.

6. Income and Reserves

Income monitoring is an integral part of financial management. Below shows the current income shortfalls already experienced for April, May and June 2020 (**which total £474,000 - being £183,000 in April, £188,000 in May and a further £103,000 in June**). The table also shows the latest 2020/21 projections for the major streams of income.

Service	Income Shortfall			Projected Income 2020/21 £'000	Income Budget 2020/21 £'000	Deficit/ (Surplus) £'000	Deficit/ (Surplus) %
	April 2020 £'000	May 2020 £'000	June 2020 £'000				
Car Parks*	86	95	73	550	1,147	597	52%
Planning	12	6	(44)	402	402	-	-
Commercial Property *	23	23	18	879	1,099	220	20%
Employment Estates*	10	10	6	246	328	82	25%
Garden Waste	-	-	-	230	205	(25)	(12%)
Trade Waste*	-	-	-	15	15	-	-
Waste & Recycling	2	2	2	252	280	28	10%
Kilworthy Park*	1	1	1	127	141	14	10%
Homelessness	6	6	6	72	144	72	50%
Business Rates Pooling Gain	11	11	11	-	135	135	100%
Investment income	8	8	8	10	105	95	90%
Licensing*	4	4	4	68	114	46	40%
Land Charges	5	7	3	66	95	29	30%
Council Tax Collection	4	4	4	51	102	51	50%
Housing Benefit overpayments	11	11	11	-	135	135	100%
TOTAL	183	188	103	2,968	4,447	1,479	

Note* N.B. It is difficult to gauge an exact income position for these services as some of the income is raised via sundry debtors. As soon as the sundry debtor invoice is raised the income is credited to the ledger in line with proper accounting practice. For these services a best judgement has been made at this stage in terms of how much debt is likely to remain unpaid. All invoices raised in excess of £5,000 have been looked at in detail to see if they have been settled as at 30th June 2020.

Planning Income

Planning Income is currently expected to be on target for 2020/21, achieving the income budget of £402,000. This follows the receipt of a large one off application in June 2020 of £46,000. However, this is a volatile area which can be very difficult to forecast so it will be kept under close review over the coming months.

Council Tax and Business Rates Income

Reductions in Council Tax and Business Rates income are excluded from this report, as these do not affect the General Fund in 2020/21, due to the way the accounting for these income streams go through the Collection Fund. Therefore a large part of the reductions in income will affect the Council's financial position in 2021/22, although it does affect the cashflow position of the Council in 2020/21.

Reductions in the collection rate for Council Tax and Business Rates will be reflected within the Collection Fund accounting. No pooling gain for Business Rates has been assumed for 2020/21.

Business Rates: By May 2020, WDBC collected 34.77% of the yearly total (compared to 23.01% in 2019/20). The higher collection rate is due to the impacts of the reliefs being given for retail, hospitality and leisure and timing differences of some larger payments.

Council Tax: By May 2020, WDBC collected 19.74% of the yearly total (compares against 20.18% in 2019/20) – the 0.44% drop equates to £190,000 (WDBC share £22,800). This is how much council tax income is down by in May 2020, compared against May 2019.

Business Rates and Council Tax form a large share of the funding for the Council's budget and therefore these income streams are funding the essential services being delivered.

Section 2.11 sets out details of the Government support for loss of Council Tax and Business Rates income.

7. Management Actions

- 7.1 It is best practice as part of Budget Monitoring reports, for the Council to state whether there are any corrective actions that need to be taken for the variances identified in the report.
- 7.2 The Recovery and Renewal Plan, as the Council's response to Covid19, sets out Financial Stability as a Recovery and Renewal Theme.
- 7.3 The management actions for this Budget Monitoring report are as set out below:-

- To complete monthly Government returns on COVID costs and loss of income
- To continue lobbying with 'Team Devon' for further Government financial support in light of the impact of Covid 19
- Monthly budget monitoring reports, to including monitoring reserves
- Service delivery discussions, to discuss what services might look like under the 'new normal'
- A review of statutory versus discretionary expenditure
- A review of the Council's Capital Programme
- A comprehensive review of all Earmarked Reserves and contributions to Earmarked Reserves
- To revise the Medium Term Financial Strategy in October
- To lobby Government for a change in some of the 'rules' for Councils (such as to change the accounting rules for capital repayments on borrowing and capital receipts flexibility)
- To press Government for an early decision on factors affecting our 2021/22 Budget such as New Homes Bonus funding, Negative Revenue Support Grant and Rural Services Delivery Grant
- To lobby for fair funding for rural Councils
- Assess options for further investment
- A Member Budget Workshop will be arranged for August to explore all areas with Members, supplemented by Informal Council briefings.
- Propose options to Councillors for an Amended Budget for 2020/21 by September 2020

8. Options available and consideration of risk

- 8.1 At this early stage it is important to note that these forecasts can change over the course of the year. Managers can seek out opportunities to reduce any budget shortfalls, whilst considering the risk of any adverse impact on the customer experience.

9. Closure of 2019/20 Accounts

- 9.1 The draft Statement of Accounts will be presented to the Audit Committee on 21st July 2020. In 2019/20 an underspend of £133,000 was generated, which equates to 1.9% of the net budget of £7.08 million. This saving will go into the Council's Unearmarked Reserves which now stands at £1.219 million.

10. Proposed Way Forward

- 10.1 Revenue budget monitoring will continue on a regular basis and further reports will be brought to the Hub Committee each month during the current Covid 19 situation.

11. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Statutory Powers that apply to this report are the Local Government Act 1972 Section 151 and the Local Government Act 2003 Section 28.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	The report identifies an overall predicted shortfall of £0.501 million which is 6.9% of the overall budget set for 2020/21 of £7.212 million, due to the current pressures on the Council's income targets due to the Covid 19 situation and extra expenditure incurred. The loss of income streams already experienced by the Council in April, May and June 2020 total £0.474 million, as shown in Section 6 of the report.
Risk	Y	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Budget variances – continual monthly budget monitoring at all levels within the Council ensures early identification of variances. Reporting to the Hub Committee provides an opportunity for Members to identify and instigate remedial action where appropriate. 2) Resource Planning – the Hub Committee takes into account any significant issues when developing the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. These are identified in the Management Actions section of the report (Section 7).
Supporting Corporate Strategy		The budget monitoring process supports all six of the Corporate Strategy Themes of Council, Homes, Enterprise, Communities, Environment and Wellbeing.
Climate Change – Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		None directly arising from this report.
<i>Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications</i>		
Equality and Diversity		None directly arising from this report.
Safeguarding		None directly arising from this report.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None directly arising from this report.

Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None directly arising from this report.
Other implications		None directly arising from this report.

Supporting Information

Appendix A – Schedule of Reserves (Earmarked Reserves and Unearmarked Reserves)

Appendix B – Savings/Additional income schedule

Appendix C – Lobbying letter from South West Councils to the Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government).

Background Papers:

Hub Committee – 30 June 2020 - Month 1 and 2 Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/2021

Finance Community of Practice budget monitoring working papers.

Approval and clearance of report

Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed	Yes
SLT Rep briefed	Yes
Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	Yes
Data protection issues considered	Yes
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Committee/Scrutiny)	N/A

RESERVES - PROJECTED BALANCES						APPENDIX A
	Cost Centre	Opening Balance 01.04.2020 £000's	Additions to Reserve 2020/21 £000's	Predicted Spend 2020/21 £000's	Projected Balance 31.03.2021 £000's	Comments
EARMARKED RESERVES						
Specific Reserves - General Fund						
2016/17 Budget Surplus Contingency	W0848	196	0	(80)	116	This is the Budget Surplus from 2016/17 which was put into an Earmarked Reserve. Commitments relate to the Capital Programme £50k, Future IT Procurement £18k and Community Housing Staffing £12k
Business Rates Retention Scheme	W0824	904	0	0	904	This relates to a timing issue on the accounting adjustments required for the localisation of business rates. This reserve also deals with any volatility in Business Rate income e.g. due to appeals. N.B. The opening balance of this earmarked reserve has been updated following the closure of the 2019/20 Accounts.
Cannons Meadow, Tavistock	W0900	8	0	(3)	5	This reserve contains a commuted sum to be written down to revenue annually over 10 years
Car Parking Maintenance	W0833	464	0	(238)	226	The commitments include Brook Street Car Park, Council Owned Asset Investment & Development £20k (minute ref HC4) and Grounds Maintenance £30k (Hub 10/9/19)
Economic Grant Initiatives	W0914	22	0	(14)	8	Reopening High Street Grants - COVID 19 £10k
Elections	W0903	0	20	0	20	Reserve utilised in full in 2019/20 to fund the cost of District Council Elections held in May 19
Environmental Health Initiatives	W0857	20	0	(2)	18	Contribution towards the cost of an Environmental Health Specialist Student Placement
Financial Stability	W0859	454	0	0	454	This is a new reserve created in 2018/19 from the Business Rates Pilot funding.
Flood Works	W0915	16	0	0	16	
Grounds Maintenance	W0901	18	0	0	18	
Homelessness Prevention	W0924	115	0	0	115	This reserve has been created following underspends on Homelessness Prevention Costs in previous years
ICT Development	W0836	66	25	(75)	16	The commitment mainly relates to the New IT Procurement, Hub Cttee Jan 20 Min Ref HC73 (£65k)
Innovation Fund (Invest to Earn)	W0850	432	0	(175)	257	Commitments totalling £175k mainly relate to the upgrading of Hayedown Depot
Invest to Save	W0902	12	0	(8)	4	
Joint Local Plan	W0860	20	0	0	20	
Leisure Services	W0855	204	0	(143)	61	Capital Programme Funding £90k, Fusion leisure monthly support due to temporary closure of leisure facilities during COVID-19 pandemic £46k (April - June 20)
Maintenance Fund (Estates)	W0927	170	0	0	170	
Management, Maintenance & Risk Management	W0861	190	119	(2)	307	This is a relatively new reserve set up to manage the ongoing maintenance costs of the Council's Commercial Property Portfolio. The contributions to the reserve equate to 10% of the rental income.
Neighbourhood Planning Grants	W0897	16	0	0	16	
New Homes Bonus (NHB)	W0804	401	348	(416)	333	The NHB is used to support the funding of the revenue budget and the Capital Programme. The commitment includes £228,135 to fund the 2020/21 revenue budget.
Outdoor Sports & Recreation Grants	W0852	18	0	0	18	
Planning Policy and Major Developments	W0840	122	25	0	147	
Revenue Grants	W0821	508	33	(33)	508	This reserve comprises of government grants received for specific initiatives or new burdens and are held in the reserve for accounting purposes. The commitment relates to a contribution towards the cost of Housing Advice Case Management posts from Flexible Homelessness Support Grant (FHSG) prior to 2020/21
Section 106 Monitoring	W0929	0	0	0	0	This reserve funds the cost of an officer to oversee the administration of S106 deposits and how they are spent. It was fully utilised in 2019/20.
Support Services Trading Opportunities	W0856	8	0	0	8	
Strategic Change (T18)	W0925	67	0	(60)	7	The commitments include £50,000 for the capital requirement of the Public Toilets pay on entry review (HC.19) and £10,000 for Kilworthy Park marketing.
Vehicle Replacement	W0931	396	50	(446)	0	This is a new reserve set up to fund the Council's vehicle replacement programme (Council 4 Dec 2018)
Waste & Cleansing Options Review	W0853	104	0	(14)	90	The commitment relates to three weekly collection trial costs (Hub 4 June 2019)
Other Reserves below £15,000 (combined)		33	0	0	33	
TOTAL EARMARKED RESERVES		4,984	620	(1,709)	3,895	
TOTAL UNEARMARKED RESERVES	W0950	1,219			1,219	Note: This Unearmarked Reserve has a minimum balance of £900,000 (set by Members as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy). Therefore the spare headroom on this Reserve is not sufficient to fund the projected overspend of £0.501 million due to the Covid19 pandemic. The Unearmarked Reserves opening balance at 1.4.20 of £1.219m incorporates the 2019/20 underspend of £133,000 following closure of the 2019/20 Accounts.
TOTAL REVENUE RESERVES (EARMARKED AND UNEARMARKED RESERVES)		6,203	620	(1,709)	5,114	

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Summary of Savings and Additional Income from the 2020/21 Budget Setting Process

APPENDIX B

The table below summarises the savings and additional income that were included in the 2020/21 Budget Setting process and indicates whether the saving/additional income is on track to be delivered.

	Savings and Additional Income for the 2020/21 Budget	Income/Savings Target for 2020/21 (£)	Latest Projection for 2020/21 (£)	Narrative
1	Income from investments in commercial property	80,000	64,000	This additional income could be impacted by tenants' ability to pay during the Covid 19 pandemic. A reduction of 20% has been modelled across the rental income portfolio.
2	Re-procurement of contracts (e.g. savings from Leisure contract)	80,000	TBA	Unlikely to achieve this saving in full due to Covid 19. This situation will be closely monitored over the coming months.
3	Reduction in Pension Employer secondary rate contributions (due to a reduction in the actuarial deficit at 31.3.2019 - based on 17 year deficit recovery period)	175,000	175,000	Saving has already been achieved and is reflected within the Council's contribution letter from the Devon Pensions Fund.
4	Additional treasury management income (invest an extra £0.5m in CCLA)	15,000	Nil	This additional income is unlikely to be achieved in 2020/21 due to the current historic low level of interest rates. The extra £0.5m investment in the CCLA has not yet been made due to the need to keep investments short term due to Covid19.
5	Senior Leadership Team (SLT) - Interim arrangement	60,000	60,000	On target to achieve this saving - the SLT and ELT (Extended Leadership Team) restructure was completed in 2019/20.
6	Additional Employments estates income	25,000	19,000	This additional income could be impacted by tenants' ability to pay during the Covid 19 pandemic. A reduction of 25% has been modelled across the rental income portfolio.
7	Income from Street Naming and Numbering	15,000	15,000	Although there could be a small reduction in Street Naming & Numbering income due to the Covid 19 pandemic, this is anticipated to be offset by planning income due to a large planning application being received in June 2020.
8	Reduction in Partnership funding	2,000	2,000	On target to achieve this reduction.
9	Corporate consultancy income	10,000	10,000	The Council is currently processing Disabled Facilities Grants on behalf of Torridge District Council which will contribute to this income target in 2020/21 (total corporate consultancy income budget is £30,000). This income target will be kept under close review during the year to assess the impact of Covid 19.
10	Council Tax Support Grant	59,000	59,000	All Town and Parish Councils were notified of their 2020/21 grant levels as part of their 2020/21 precept setting process.
11	Reduction in ICT contracts	8,000	8,000	On target to achieve this saving.
12	Implement e-billing in council tax	1,200	1,200	To be implemented during 2020/21.
	TOTAL	£530,200	£413,200	

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30 June 2020

Dear Robert

Financial lobbying for local government across the South West

We are writing as Leaders across the SW about our financial position in the context of the Covid-19 crisis across the region. Whilst I appreciate that individual councils have lobbied you regarding funding, the financial situation is so critical that we are united in also lobbying as a region, with one voice regardless of tiers of local government. We have led our communities through the coronavirus crisis to protect the most vulnerable, support local businesses and try and keep normal services running. In parallel we play a vital role in now supporting our communities through recovery and into renewal of our regional economy. This will bring further challenges driven by increased unemployment, business failure, demands for children's social care and mental health, fragility in the adult social care markets and our leisure industries and further pressure to our high streets, to name a few. We want to continue to provide local leadership to recovery, however this will be difficult to help drive forwards if we have to rebuild our finances. It is therefore critical that councils emerge from Covid financially strong and enabled to provide this place-based leadership. This is vital for our long-term recovery but even in the short term the region has a particular role to play in helping to regulate the return to normal, we provide a welcome retreat for citizens from other regions whilst needing to carefully manage the consequences of that.

SW Economic research

South West Councils commissioned Oxford Economics to review the impact of Covid and the outcome forecasts a potential loss of 13% productivity and unemployment of 7.4% on average across the region, with a gradual recovery from 2020/21 and return to previous performance only by 2027. It also highlighted that the areas most impacted are Tourism, Retail and Manufacturing. We are determined to work with national government to achieve the regeneration of the SW region, combatting the impact of Covid-19 on our communities and businesses and mitigating these forecasts. Our region is clear that the employment and skills agenda, so crucial to economic recovery, needs leadership and pace. We remain focused on keeping businesses afloat and people in work, however we need your support to achieve this:



- skills devolution,
- data flow linked to the Job Retention Scheme so we can target sectors, businesses and individuals,
- funding for short-term interventions for delivery over the next two to three months focused, amongst other things, on re-skilling and creating employment opportunities within sectors with growth potential.
- long term investment in infrastructure

Latest financial forecast for the SW based on recent returns

The financial position, despite two welcome tranches of funding from government, is unsustainable. The latest MHCLG returns shows a financial challenge of over £1 billion across the region with six councils worried about running out of cash by the end of the summer. This is a financial challenge on a scale and a timescale we have not faced before. Only by concerted action between central and local government can we meet this challenge and protect our communities and economy. We need further funding and financial flexibilities in the weeks and months ahead to meet ongoing Covid-19 pressures and to keep services running normally.

Spending pressures are a significant element of the £1 billion cost, totalling over £440m across the region. The most significant cost pressures are in Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Education, totalling over 60% of the cost. This reflects fragile markets with providers experiencing extraordinary staffing and PPE costs and voids in residential homes.

In the SW, as across the country, councils have dealt with austerity by a series of transformation, efficiency and savings programmes. Some of our transformation programmes have been delayed, representing a further 17% of the additional spend costs. This reflects capacity to transform as we focus on our response to the pandemic and indeed ability to transform some services such as Adult Social Care when the priority is again focusing on caring for vulnerable residents.

Cost pressures, whether Adult Social Care or delays in transformation, will continue into future years until programmes can be delivered, if they still can at all. This is a clear illustration that this is a medium to long term issue, not one that the level of support announced to date will solve.

In addition to our increased costs and demand pressures, we are also experiencing a significant drop in income, over £274m across the region. We rely on these diverse income sources e.g. car parking, leisure, longstanding rentals and charges to fund services, with some LAs disproportionately impacted by their loss. We are especially vulnerable to income loss in the SW, given that one of our key economic strands is tourism, which brings the significant revenues, to councils directly and to our communities that pay Council Tax and Business Rates. It is already clear that the 2020 summer season will not be "normal" in any way – the full scale of the damage is still emerging, and it will not be a quick fix.

We would want to stress that while some Councils in the SW have made recent commercial property investments to produce a surplus on the associated borrowing costs, this is only to a small degree, and is not material across the Region. From our analysis the commercial income we generate is overwhelmingly from regeneration projects and

from rental in traditional infrastructure. This is the kind of local authority investment that has helped our economy grow for many years and will be even more crucial to help us emerge from this crisis.

In his letter to Councils on 28th May Alex Skinner of MHCLG spelled out the priorities that government financial support to Councils is intended to meet. It must be recognised that the pressures on Councils from Covid go far beyond this narrow definition. In the May 2020 returns, over £350m of pressures in the SW (excluding Collection Fund) fell outside of this definition and this figure is likely to have risen in the latest returns. Councils will have to balance their budgets overall, not just by priority areas, e.g. large shortfalls in income we are seeing mean that base levels of all our services are under threat.

The impact on collection fund losses are estimated to exceed £293 million across the region, a significant source of council funding. This is a huge concern as we see employment and benefit claims rise and businesses cease. The pressure in 2020/21 is one thing, however it becomes even more challenging moving into 2021/22. When added to level of uncertainty we face regarding 2021/22 funding, it poses a significant financial risk to local authorities.

Implication of current financial position for local authorities

The financial concerns being experienced are culminating in emergency cabinet and council meetings across the SW with councils contemplating significant budget reductions to deal with this problem. Without further government funding and with a legal duty to balance our budgets, this will mean major cuts to key services, and a reversion to minimum interpretations of statutory duties. It will mean job losses and a reduction in our ability to help people, communities and employers at just the point that they need that support most acutely. The focus on balancing revenue budgets is likely to have a negative impact on capital investment, as councils review their borrowing costs, and other required investments such as transport, none of which support the economic recovery in the way we want to. This cannot be the right thing for the Region or the UK.

We are also concerned about the potential failure of particular sectors across the South West, for example Tourism attractions and our cultural sectors.

We are pleased that Government have indicated it is working on a comprehensive plan to address the ongoing financial challenges councils face this financial year. We urge the Government to bring forward details as soon as possible and ensure it addresses the key elements of the pressures facing councils – additional costs and loss of income including both non collection fund income and our income relating to business rates and council tax.

We also urge government to give some certainty to funding for 2021/22 and beyond, recognising the on-going pressures from Covid. Without certainty of future funding we will again face further cuts to balance budgets, particularly as the increased costs in social care markets are likely to remain and the strain on collection fund losses continues.

The role the SW can play in recovery and economic renewal

We recognise that the current crisis is different to that of 2008 and requires different interventions underpinned by quality local leadership. We have already demonstrated our importance as local leaders, collaborating and harnessing the power of place and operating in partnership at the local, regional and national level in joint endeavour to aid communities. There are many examples of recovery and renewal plans being developed

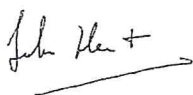
with growth at their heart. We are already working with government to attract investment and indeed identify opportunities to work collectively to de-risk potential investments to make them more attractive to investors, via our LEPs, Western Gateway and Great South West. We want our recovery to be growth led but recognise that investors are attracted by the ability of places to demonstrate resilience and so with government's support we can provide that place-making leadership across the SW to boost our local economies. We would welcome more place-based deals and tailored approaches to individual localities from Government, enabling us to maximise the benefit of our capital programmes, Government support and investor interest. Investment by Government to enhance fibre, digital and transport connectivity and ensure energy supply resilience are also all vital in underpinning investment confidence in our region. We need greater devolution around the skills agenda and related funding; infrastructure investment at the heart of the growth agenda; business support flexibilities at the local level so we can respond to local circumstance; and Government being more flexible in relation to funding, whether that is bringing support packages together to enable more cohesive approaches in what we are trying to achieve for our places or making funding available earlier e.g. already providing access to the first two or three years of the UK Social Prosperity Fund.

Summary

In summary, to continue our journey of recovery and renewal effectively we need immediate additional funding to cover our expenditure and income losses. Without this additional funding in 2020/21 and into 2021/22, vital services will be cut and some councils in our region may fail altogether. We also need greater flexibilities in many aspects of how we, as councils, operate in the months and years ahead. Without it, the foundations on which we need to build in our societies and economies simply won't be there.

We look forward to your response and immediate action.

Yours sincerely



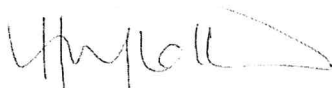
Cllr John Hart
Chairman SW Councils and
Leader Devon County Council



Cllr Stephen Jordan
Deputy Chair SW Councils and
Leader Cheltenham Borough Council



Cllr Spencer Flower
Vice Chair SW Councils
and Leader Dorset Council



Cllr Helen Holland
Vice Chair SW Councils
and Cabinet Member
Bristol City Council



Cllr Julian German
Vice Chair SW Councils
and Leader Cornwall Council

Report to: **Hub Committee**
Date: **28 July 2020**
Title: **Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2020/2021**
Portfolio Area: **Homes / Cllr D Sellis**
Wards Affected: **All**

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

Date next steps can be taken: NA

Author: **Sophie Cobbledick** Role: **Senior Housing Specialist**

Contact: **01803 861441 email:**
Sophie.cobbledick@swdevon.gov.uk

Recommendations:

That the Hub Committee agrees that the Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2020-21 attached at Appendix 3 be adopted with effect from the 1 April 2020.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. Members will recall the adoption of the 2017-22 Homelessness Strategy. The document is attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.2. The review of the 2019/20 Action plan has been completed and surmised in Appendix 2.
- 1.3. The draft 2020-21 Action plan is attached as Appendix 3 and details the proposed actions for the Strategy's third year 2020 - 2021.

2. Background

- 2.1. It is a statutory requirement of the Homeless Act 2002 for each Local Authority to have a homeless strategy, which reviews homelessness and its causes locally, and the plan to tackle and prevent homelessness in their area. It is also a requirement that the Authority will consult with the public or Local Authorities, voluntary organisations and/or others as they

consider appropriate. Whilst it is not a requirement to consult on the annual action plans we would normally consult on the content of the annual action plan as part of our annual Homelessness Forum. Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 our annual forum could not take place and our action plan has therefore been developed to take into account the changes brought about by the recent pandemic.

- 2.2. The South Hams and West Devon Joint Homelessness Strategy was adopted in 2017 and included a requirement to produce an annual Action plan and the requirement to report to members annually on progress against the previous year's action plan.
- 2.3. Members will appreciate the need to respond effectively to emerging trends and developments as a result of the Covid19 pandemic. The action plan has been structured to take into account the need for flexibility in the face of our communities changing needs.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1. Members are asked to approve the 2020-2021 South Hams & West Devon Homeless Strategy Action Plan.
- 3.2. Officers will report back annually on progress against the Action Plan, which includes actions pertaining to the Rough Sleeper strategy, and to agree the actions for the following year.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1. The introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 altered the legislative framework within which Local Authorities are required to perform. The formulation of the 2018-19 Action plan took into consideration the impact of the legislative changes. The review of our 2018-19 action plan has indicated that the approach taken by South Hams and West Devon has successfully delivered against the legislation changes. The 2020-21 action plan is designed to build upon these successes. The plans to tackle and prevent homelessness, as contained in the strategy, are designed to strengthen wherever possible the effective work of early intervention.
- 4.2. Some of the actions may require funding. It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a 'prevention of homeless' grant from central Government. This is likely to remain at least until 2020. We are not making any request for additional funding to deliver this strategy.
- 4.3. The extension to the Homemaker contact and the increased costs attached to the provision of temporary housing as a result of Covid 19 have been met through grant received from central government.
- 4.4. Members will note that our financial advice service was contracted to Homemaker for 2018/19. The contract value is £40,000 over two years split equally between South Hams and West Devon. Following the successful delivery of the contract the tender has been extended for a further year. Additional funding has enabled us to expand the service to take into account the difficulties caused by the Covid19 pandemic.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1. That members recommend the adoption of the 2020-21 Action Plan.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	It is a legal requirement of the 2002 Homeless Act to have a homeless strategy as set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 4.1 above
Financial	Y	No additional funding is sought at this time. It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a prevention of homeless grant from central Government. As most of the Actions are designed around homeless prevention and early intervention, the larger costs of temporary accommodation and rehousing will wherever possible be negated. This by far not only offers the best service for the customer but is the most efficient in terms of the Local Authority.
Risk	N	
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	The public consultation on the Strategy was reflective of the local demographic.
Safeguarding	Y	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 the work of officers who regularly work with homeless households.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	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	Y	The prime concern for the Strategy is around tackling and preventing homelessness which in turn is designed around improving the health and wellbeing of people living in the area.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 Homeless Strategy 2017-2022

Appendix 2 Review of 2019/20 Action plan

Appendix 3 Draft South Hams & West Devon Homelessness Strategy Action Plan
2020-21

Appendix 4 Schools Report

Background Papers:

None

South Hams & West Devon Homelessness Strategy





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Foreword

Cllr Lois Samuel

Lead Member for Health & Wellbeing, West Devon Borough Council



I am proud to introduce the first Joint Homelessness Strategy for South Hams and West Devon.

The aims and objectives we have set in this strategy build on the progress we have made in the past five years of preventing homelessness in West Devon for 1060 households.

In a predominantly rural area such as West Devon, homelessness can easily go undetected. However, it is a very real problem for many of our residents, who face the challenge of poor quality housing, lack of affordable housing or problems with their own health, which means general needs housing is not always appropriate.

We recognise the complexities and challenges that many of our most vulnerable people face when dealing with homelessness. The four priorities set out by this strategy will ensure West Devon Borough Council, together with South Hams District Council, can help people overcome these difficulties enabling them to lead lives where they have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Cllr Hilary Bastone

Portfolio Holder for Customer First, South Hams District Council



This strategy represents a continuation of the partnership working between South Hams District Council and West Devon Borough Council and sets out our ambition to further tackle homelessness in our areas.

Since 2012, 1169 households have had their homelessness prevented in South Hams due to interventions put in place by the District Council. This strategy further cements our commitment to homeless prevention and sets some ambitious actions as to how we will do this.

Lack of social housing, high costs of the private rented sector and lack of supported accommodation make the South Hams a challenging place for anyone experiencing homelessness. Working in partnership with West Devon has allowed shared learning and opportunity for best practice, which in turn improves the service we are able to offer people.

Homelessness can happen to anyone, at any time and through this strategy we aim to ensure that people are given the access to help when they need it, where they need it and for as long as they need it.

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Introduction



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.

The Homelessness Strategy is required to:

- ◆ Address the levels of homelessness now, and the factors likely to impact on future levels of homelessness, through accurate profiling of the area
- ◆ Ensure that there is sufficient accommodation available for people who are, or may become, homeless
- ◆ Provide services that help to prevent people from becoming homeless. This will include a review of their effectiveness and the identification of new opportunities to support prevention of homelessness
- ◆ Ensure that through effective partnership, working support services can be accessed for those people who are, or who may become, homeless – or who need support to prevent them from becoming homeless again
- ◆ Promote a cultural change so that homelessness is viewed in a wider context than just lack of accommodation

This Homelessness Strategy sets out the strategic aims for South Hams District Council and the Borough of West Devon. Central to this strategy is the belief that people should have settled homes, which will enable them to build settled lives. The overarching aim of this strategy is to prevent homelessness. It is hoped that this will be achieved by building on our already successful prevention focussed model, and by increasing our focus on the single homeless and housing for the under 35's.

The 2017-2022 strategy has been designed to address the changes in national policy; reductions in public spending; changing demography in the area; the impact of the government's 2013 Welfare Reform Act and the Localism Act 2012 on local people.

With Council spending power continuing to decline, South Hams and West Devon have radicalised their approach to service delivery across both Councils. It is central to the success of this strategy that the opportunities presented to us, as part of our new ways of working, are maximised, and that high quality processes are put in place. This will ensure that every contact made will count, in our drive to improve the quality of lives and homes within our communities.

This strategy details our commitment to provide straightforward and effective advice and assistance to those affected by homelessness. The varying factors which contribute to homelessness and to housing instability are complex and interlinked. People facing homelessness are often vulnerable; they may be experiencing, for example, poor health, loss of income and/or relationship breakdown. The importance of effective partnerships, with both statutory and voluntary sector organisations, is recognised as essential in ensuring a holistic approach toward homelessness, with the aim of achieving the best possible outcome for those affected.

The previous South Hams Homeless Strategy covered the period 2008 -2013, whilst in West Devon this was incorporated within a wider housing strategy series which ceased in 2010. Latterly objectives relating to tackling homelessness have formed part of the South Hams and West Devon joint Council-wide Connect strategy 2011-15.

We will continue to review progress around these previous strategies but, as we face the challenges of the future, we will primarily be looking ahead to the opportunities that joint working can offer. A full review of this strategy can be expected in 2022, complemented by an annual refresh of the action plan and progress made to date.

In the last five years, over a thousand households have been prevented from becoming homeless in both West Devon and South Hams. We are keen to continue this good work and believe this strategy sets out our plan to achieve this, while seeking to address the reduction in resources and the impact of welfare reforms.

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Progress to Date

The last adopted document setting out the Councils' commitment to tackling homelessness formed part of the Joint Connect Strategy 2011-2015.

The priorities were to:

- ◆ Improve housing options and choices for vulnerable people
- ◆ Ensure Devon Home Choice is able to meet local housing needs within the new policy framework
- ◆ Prevent homelessness
- ◆ Raise awareness of housing options

These four priority areas were complemented each year with a delivery plan as to how these would be achieved.



Improving Housing Options and choice for vulnerable people

- ◆ Our Money Advice Project assisted 241 people in 2015 across South Hams and West Devon and brought an additional £121,743.65 in previously unclaimed benefits and other entitlements. This enabled people who had struggled to pay their rent and day-to-day bills with the means by which to do so.
- ◆ No Second Night Out has seen 75 people accommodated in South Hams and 33 in West Devon, since we launched this initiative in 2013. This has enabled us to minimise rough sleeping in our area and prevented people, new to the streets, becoming entrenched in the street lifestyle.
- ◆ We have assisted Revival Life in the provision of an emergency cold weather rest centre in Totnes. This ensures that on the coldest and most inclement nights of the winter, no-one needs to sleep on the streets.
- ◆ We have increased our in-house letting agency to 47 properties in South Hams and have been able to prevent homelessness, while increasing the supply of good quality, affordable, private rented accommodation.
- ◆ We have completed sanctuary scheme security upgrades to 20 properties in South Hams and 9 properties in West Devon, to ensure survivors of domestic violence could remain in their own home.
- ◆ Jointly with Devon County Council and other Devon Districts, we have developed a young person's homeless protocol to ensure that the needs of young people are best met. By focusing on early intervention work, this has contributed to low numbers of youth homelessness and young people being taken into care.

Ensuring Devon Home Choice is able to meet the local housing needs within the new policy framework

- ◆ In 2015/16 207 general needs properties were let through Devon Home Choice in South Hams. An additional 36 were let to people requiring sheltered accommodation. In West Devon, there were 136 general needs homes and 31 sheltered properties.
- ◆ Of this figure, 7 new tenants had been previously homeless or threatened with homelessness in South Hams and 37 in West Devon
- ◆ Both Councils further underpinned the need to address local needs, in rural areas with less than 100 units of affordable housing, by prioritising people with a local connection through our allocations policy.

Preventing Homelessness

- ◆ Since 2012/13, 1169 households have avoided homelessness in South Hams and 1060 in West Devon.
- ◆ Since 2011, no families have been placed in Bed and Breakfast accommodation for longer than 6 weeks in either West Devon or South Hams
- ◆ By working proactively with the County Council, we have been able to offer bespoke advice on options for young people. Until recently, this was delivered by a dedicated, in-house, Young Person's worker.

Raising Awareness of Housing Options

- ◆ We have established a multi-agency Health and Wellbeing Panel to discuss individual cases, and to ensure the best solution to their housing crisis.
- ◆ A successful advertising campaign, with detailed information, was targeted to people affected by welfare reform. Everyone affected by the spare room subsidy rate was offered an appointment with a Housing Advisor.
- ◆ Trained Housing Advisors have been in regular attendance at Council Connect events, to raise awareness of options and the importance of early intervention.



The Strategic Context

The Legal Framework

The Housing Act 1996

Part 7 of the 1996 Housing Act is still the overarching piece of legislation used by councils in determining the way in which they respond to homelessness. The Act has since been amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, which has included notable changes in the way Councils use temporary accommodation, with greater emphasis on the role of prevention. The 2002 Act is also where the requirement to publish a Homelessness Strategy was introduced.

The Localism Act 2011

This Act, in effect, brought an end to the automatic entitlement of a homeless household to be offered a social housing tenancy following the acceptance of a full homeless duty under the 1996 Housing Act.

The Care Act 2014

The Care Act set a strong expectation that agencies would work together to protect children, young adults and people with care and support needs, who were at risk of abuse and neglect, and who, due to those care and support needs, were unable to protect themselves from the risk or experience of abuse and neglect.

Housing and Communities Act

This new Act of Parliament makes widespread changes to housing policy.

It introduces legislation to allow:

- ◆ The building of 200,000 starter homes which will be available to first time buyers, between the ages of 23 and 40, for sale at 20% below market prices.
- ◆ The extension of the right to buy, to include housing association properties.
- ◆ The Act also includes a package of measures to help tackle rogue landlords in the private rented sector.

This includes:

- Allowing local authorities to apply for a banning order to prevent a particular landlord / letting agent from continuing to operate when they have committed certain housing offences
- Creating a national database of rogue landlords/letting agents, which will be maintained by local authorities
- Allowing tenants or local authorities to apply for a rent repayment order, where a landlord has committed certain offences (for example ignoring an improvement notice). If successful, the tenant or the authority may be repaid up to a maximum of 12 month's rent.

National Policy

In 2011 The Government produced a report 'Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England' that identified homelessness as a key priority. Two reports were produced by a Ministerial Working Group on homelessness in 2011 and 2012. Eight government departments including Health, Work and Training, as well as Housing, were brought together with local authority and voluntary sector partners, to consider ways to end rough sleeping (No Second Night Out 2011). In 2012, the second report built on the progress of the first and focused on ways in which services could jointly prevent, wherever possible, a household reaching a homelessness crisis point. (Making Every Contact Count 2012.)

No Second Night Out – A vision to end Rough Sleeping July 2011

Piloted in London, No Second Night Out was rolled out nationally to assist in helping homeless people, through the creation of a 'single service offer'. Its purpose was to ensure that everyone would have access to some form of help.

This, in some cases, involved a reconnection to a place where a person had a local connection, or working with other providers to find a solution to rough sleeping. It was designed to address the needs of deep-rooted rough sleepers, often the hardest to engage with. It was also intended to stem the flow of new rough sleepers, by offering a safety net before they themselves became rooted in a street lifestyle.

Funding was available for a short period of time and there were some local successes. However, this initiative has had little impact on our rough sleeper figures locally, although it was successful in achieving steady numbers rather than an increase.

Making Every Contact Count – A joint approach to preventing homelessness August 2012

The aim of Making Every Contact Count was to ensure, wherever possible, that any contact with any local agency, by vulnerable families and individuals, was seen as effective and meaningful.

The report posed 10 Local Challenges to Local Authorities and both South Hams and West Devon pledged their commitment to these. While acknowledging there is, already, good progress under these challenges, the Joint Homelessness Strategy will build on this and ensure that they remain key to our continuing commitment to prevent homelessness.

The 10 Local Challenges are to:

- ◆ Adopt a Corporate Commitment to prevent homelessness, which has buy-in across all local authority services
- ◆ Actively work in partnership with the voluntary sector and other local partners to address support, education, employment and training needs
- ◆ Offer a Housing Option Prevention Service, including written advice, to all clients
- ◆ Adopt a No Second Night Out model or an effective local alternative

- ◆ Have Housing Pathways agreed, or in development, with each key partner and client group that includes appropriate accommodation and support
- ◆ Develop a suitable private rented sector offer for all client groups, including advice and support to both clients and landlords
- ◆ Actively engage in preventing mortgage repossessions including through the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
- ◆ Have a homelessness strategy, which sets out a proactive approach to preventing homelessness that is reviewed annually, so that it is responsive to emerging needs
- ◆ Not place any young person aged 16 or 17 in bed and breakfast accommodation
- ◆ Not place any families in bed and breakfast accommodation, unless in an emergency, and then for no longer than 6 weeks

The Community House Building Fund

The Community House Building Fund was announced at the end of last year. This is a fund of £60 million pounds nationwide, with £20 million being directed to the South West. The South Hams was granted £1.8 million to assist with the development of community led housing schemes. The first half of this money has been paid to the local authority and the remainder will be paid once the government has approved our spending plans.

The properties delivered through this fund or any community led scheme should be affordable for people to rent or buy in perpetuity and meet the local needs. A plan is being formulated at present as to how to spend this fund. If the government approve of the ways in which we will spend this money, it is hoped that the South Hams will be eligible for future funding over the next four years.

The white paper which has just been published references this fund when working with Local Communities.

Regional Picture

Devon County Council

Devon County Council has invested £2.5 million in countywide homeless prevention contracts. These provide a total of 3,300 support hours per week, through ten independent support providers to, on average, 450 people,.

South Hams and West Devon have been placed in a locality based 'Southern Hub' together with Teignbridge District Council. The Southern Hub receives 15% of the total support hours for Devon.

Due to a lack of supported accommodation in both South Hams and West Devon, assistance is provided through 'floating support' rather than linked to where an individual is living. While this has its benefits, some high needs groups, such as those experiencing problems relating to substance misuse, mental health, offending behaviour or deep-rooted rough sleeping, remain challenging to accommodate in general needs accommodation.

Devon and Cornwall Housing Options Partnership

All ten Devon and Cornwall Authorities are committed to working together to improve the consistency and quality of housing options and advice services across the two counties. Held up nationally as an example of good partnership working, the partnership has enabled shared policy and practice development, while also yielding opportunities for Government funding in the form of grants for rough sleeping, debt advice, youth homelessness and working with the private sector.

Local Policy

Tenancy Strategy South Hams and West Devon

The Localism Act 2011 places a duty on all local authorities to produce a Tenancy Strategy that sits alongside its Housing Strategy and Allocations Policy. The strategy is required to set out what Registered Providers of Social Housing should take into consideration when making decisions about their individual tenancy policies. As the Council no longer has any housing stock, this strategy outlines how we expect Registered Providers, with affordable housing in the area, to respond to the relevant changes introduced by the Act.

In accordance with the Localism Act, this strategy sets out:

- ◆ The kind of tenancies Providers should offer
- ◆ The circumstances in which Providers should grant a tenancy of a particular kind
- ◆ Where the tenancy is for a fixed term, the recommended length of the term
- ◆ Circumstances in which the Provider should grant a further tenancy, on the ending of the existing tenancy

Our Plan

Our Plan identifies the corporate priorities of the Councils, and is reflected in the emerging spatial policies within the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP).

The challenges of ensuring equitable access to good quality housing are well known in rural areas. The JLP will include policies that seek to deliver an appropriate mix and type of new housing, in locations that are well connected to established services and facilities, and at prices that cater for all incomes. The JLP will have strategic objectives that seek to: improve access to housing; reduce the affordability gap; reduce health inequalities related to housing; reduce fuel poverty and positively responding to identified housing needs.

South Hams and West Devon Joint Asset Strategy

The Council's adopted asset strategy identifies the delivery of a limited number of residential properties in the medium term, as determined by the following actions and data:

- ◆ Gather intelligence on housing need using; members, parishes and communities, supported by official data, in order to prioritise residential development by the Council
- ◆ To commence a limited programme of housing development on existing council land, that is appropriate to the site, (i.e. both open market and affordable) using a strategy of re-investment based on a mixture of rental and disposal.

The Review

The Local Picture

- As of 30 September 2016, there were 43,239 dwellings in South Hams and 25,403 in West Devon. Of the number in South Hams, 3,878 are second homes, 470 are empty, with an additional 54 empty for 2 years or more, and 127 are uninhabitable. In West Devon there are 534 second homes, 295 empty properties, a further 37 empty for 2 years, and 52 properties that are uninhabitable. (Source - Council Tax Base, 14th October 2016)
- In the year 2015/16, the number of affordable homes in South Hams was 4659, and in West Devon this was 2350 (this includes 50 units of extra care accommodation). In this same year, 60 affordable homes were built in South Hams and 32 in West Devon.
- The proportion of minority ethnic groups living in South Hams equates to 1.7% of the population and 1.6% in West Devon (Source 2011 Census). With regard to homeless applications, as a percentage 5.3% were made in SH by minority groups and 1.6% in WD.
- Average house price in South Hams is £331,625 – land registry and the average house price in West Devon is £239,160 (Source - Land Registry)
- Of the 204 households who had their homelessness prevented by South Hams District Council in 2015/16, 68 related to rent arrears or reasons of unaffordability. In West Devon, of the 282 cases of homelessness the Council was able to prevent, 65 of those households also approached for reasons of rent arrears or unaffordability. This has followed the same trend in South Hams since 2012/13, while in West Devon there has been less consistency, with relationship breakdown, parental/family eviction and private sector tenancies ending with notice, all being in high proportions.
- In 2015/16, 26 households approached South Hams as homeless, of which 11 had the full homeless duty accepted, while in West Devon, 58 applications were made and 17 of these were accepted.
- Of those accepted as homeless in South Hams, 82% were households with children or expectant mothers and 18% were single vulnerable adults. In West Devon, 53% of accepted households had dependent children or an expectant mother, with 47% single vulnerable adults.
- As of 31 March 2016, there were 7 households in temporary accommodation in South Hams and 11 in West Devon. This was a slight increase on the same date in 2015.
- The number of properties let through Devon Home Choice in 2015/16 was 243 in South Hams and 167 in West Devon. Of this, seven were allocated to people to prevent them becoming homeless, or where the Council had accepted a homelessness duty, to rehouse them in South Hams, while in West Devon this figure was 37.
- In South Hams the rough sleeper estimate for 2015 was nine - an increase of one on the previous year and in West Devon this figure was zero, a reduction of two on the previous year's figure.

How the Strategy was developed



Homelessness is a key issue within three of our identified corporate priorities – Homes, Communities and Wellbeing.

This strategy has been developed through a Joint Member Task and Finish Group, who have worked together to consider the progress we have made in tackling homelessness, within our areas, and the key challenges we have to come. The Group have been instrumental in setting the priorities for this Strategy and the formulation of the Year One Action Plan, informed by the evidence base.

Throughout the process of the review, we have looked carefully at the people who currently access our services. This strategy does not seek to create a specific service plan to address the needs of each vulnerable group. We have successful existing services developed in partnership that we will continue to improve. However, the Strategy and Action Plan reflects gaps in services or additional services we wish to offer which will improve how we tackle homelessness in our area.

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The original Task and Finish group was made up of the following members. A Member group focused on the delivery of this strategy will continue to meet to review progress on the Action Plan.

Member	Council
Cllr Brown	South Hams
Cllr Cuthbert	South Hams
Cllr Green	South Hams
Cllr Hawkins	South Hams
Cllr Leech	West Devon
Cllr Samuel	West Devon
Cllr Yelland	West Devon

The Strategy went out to public consultation from the 13th December 2016 to the 13th February 2017. The Consultation sought the views from both partner organisations and the public.

We used the following methods of consultation:

- ◆ Online survey
- ◆ Press releases
- ◆ Outreach events at Okehampton, Tavistock, Totnes, Dartmouth, Lee Mill & Kingsbridge at high footfall sites.
- ◆ One to one sessions with rough sleepers at Burke Road Drop-in
- ◆ Emails to Partner organisations (both voluntary and statutory), all Town & Parish Councils, other Devon Authorities and all partner landlords
- ◆ All elected members.

The Key Priorities for the Homelessness Strategy

The review of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon has identified four key priorities to reduce and prevent homelessness. These form the basis of this strategy and the annual Action Plan. These are:



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There is overlap and a proven relationship between these areas. However, in order to continue to build on the solid track record of preventing homelessness in South Hams and West Devon, it is necessary to start to tackle some of the root causes of homelessness, in order to make meaningful differences not only to a person's homeless situation, but the reasons why they arrived there in the first place. By continuing to be pro-active and work alongside our partners, we stand the best chance of reducing homelessness and improving people's chances in life.

This strategy comes at a very challenging time for all local authorities, as continuing budget pressures mean some tough choices on how best to target reduced resources in the most meaningful way. With this in mind, we have formulated an action plan which, we consider, is both realistic and achievable while recognising our changing position.



Priority 1: Understanding the true cost of homelessness

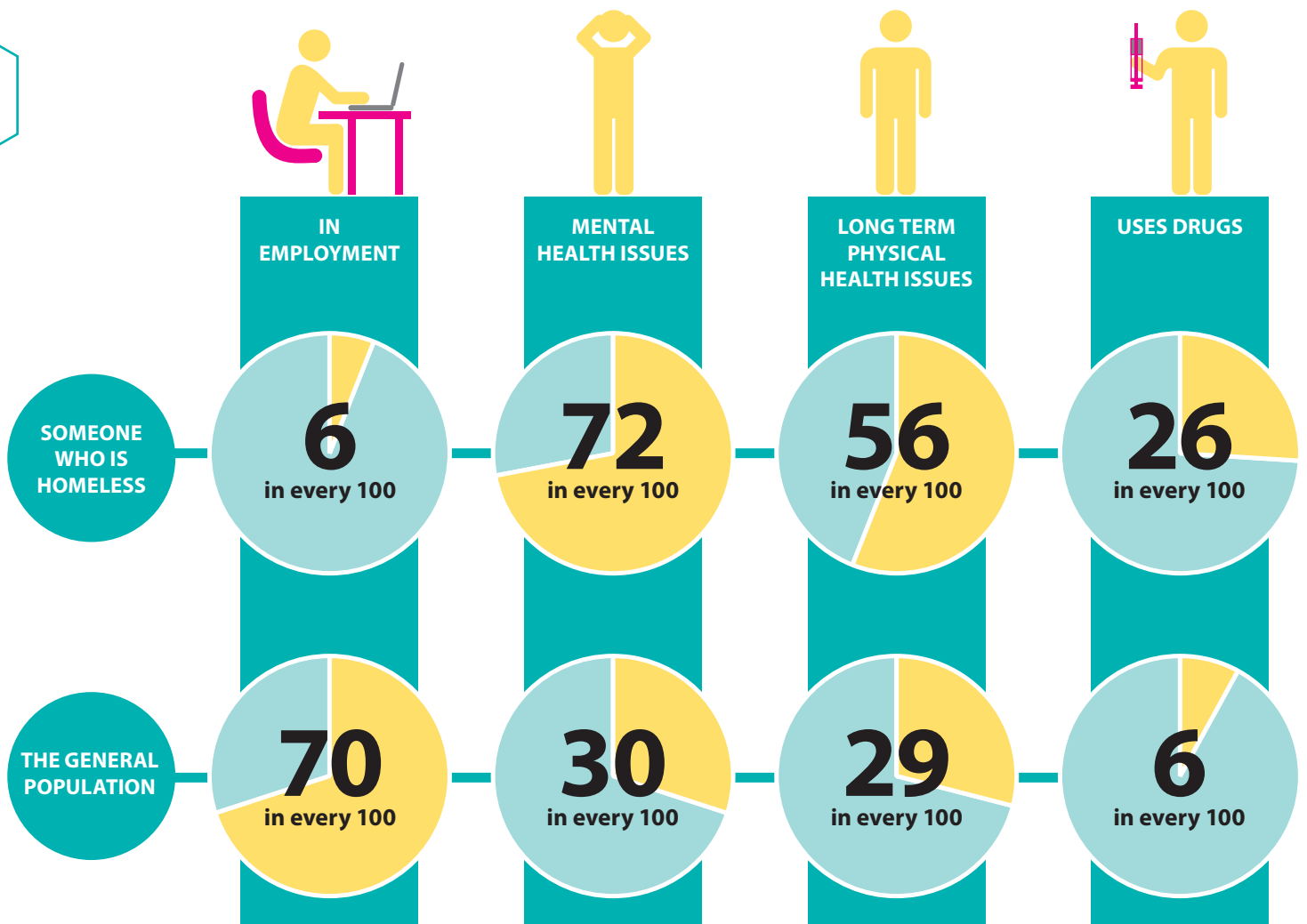
Not having a home can make it harder for individuals to find a job, stay healthy and maintain relationships. (Homeless Link)

The review highlighted a need to create a solid evidence base, about the true cost of homelessness and how its long term impact can be measured more fully. Our findings were informed by data from all statutory and voluntary agencies and localised to South Hams and West Devon.

To meet this priority we will:

- Ensure we establish a solid evidence base which informs practice across all sectors and clearly illustrates the true cost of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon.
- Monitor the impact of welfare reform, and ensure that this informs future strategic priorities
- Recognise the continuing pressures on the Councils' budgets and how best to target resources in the most meaningful way
- Ensure partnerships with other agencies demonstrate value for money
- Ensure access to good quality financial advice to help tackle poverty, poor quality housing and homelessness

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Priority 2: Access to Services

While we recognise the importance of face-to-face interaction in building rapport, trust and confidence, we also recognise that, increasingly, people who are able to resolve their own housing issues would like to access services in a different way. We would like to ensure that people who are able to resolve their own situation are given access to good quality advice, so that they have every opportunity to remedy their situation, independently.

Of course, the very nature of homelessness means a large proportion of the people requiring housing advice and homeless services will be vulnerable. Disclosures they may need to make to staff are often upsetting and traumatic and some, as a result, choose not to make contact, or do so, too late. Through improving partnership working, we have a real opportunity to make a difference to the lives of people who have struggled to engage with the Council in the past.

In addition to external partnership working, the Council has been through a significant service transformation project, which has been successful in breaking down artificial departmental barriers and restraints. It is because of this, that we are in a position to design a multi-service approach, based on the needs of the customer. This will strip out duplication and inefficiencies, while at the same time collectively offering people the services they need, at a time and place they need them most, without the need to repeat the details of, what is often, a distressing course of events.

To meet this priority we will:

- Offer advice and assistance in a range of formats, so the customer can choose how they communicate with their Council
- Ensure our most vulnerable customers are able to access advice services effectively
- Work with partners to ensure that we are able to offer services at the time and place our customers need them most
- Readily and regularly consult with our customers and stakeholders to make sure we get our services right



Priority 3: Access to Housing

The review highlighted the need to improve the supply and quality of affordable accommodation, with the largest number of people needing assistance with homelessness and housing advice, doing so for reasons of unaffordability. Changes to the benefit system, brought about by welfare reform, have had a significant effect on the lives of homeless people in South Hams and West Devon. To ensure we tackle these challenges, it is important to look at wider housing solutions in order to continue to meet needs, while also looking to the future in order to prepare for the further challenges which welfare reform will bring.

The need to 'do things differently' can be compounded in the South Hams by our rough sleeper count. Although a very small proportion of the people requiring assistance because of homelessness become rough sleepers, there is a small population in Totnes where we recognise that access to traditional housing is a step too far. There needs to be an acceptance of offering help in a new way to maximise opportunities for people who have disengaged from traditional society.

The review also highlighted how successful the South Hams in-house social letting agent had been at preventing homelessness, in an area of high demand and high costs. As of the 30 September 2016, there were 47 properties managed by the Council. This has prevented scores of families from requiring temporary accommodation and we are keen to expand the model in South Hams to take on single person's accommodation and extend the scope of the scheme into West Devon.

To meet this priority we will:

- Increase the supply, standard and options for people who face homelessness within our area
- Develop innovative options for our Rough Sleeper Community
- Continue the downward use of temporary accommodation for homeless households

Priority 4: Health and Wellbeing

South Hams and West Devon both recognise the importance of wellbeing for people living in our communities, and as a result, it is one of our key corporate priorities. Tackling homelessness takes more than just the provision of a house, if we are to maximise the opportunities for our most vulnerable residents.

The health inequalities of homeless people can be evidenced in a national health audit undertaken in 2014 by Homeless Link and The Department of Health. This showed that 41% of homeless people reported a long-term physical health problem (compared to just 28% of the general population) and 45% had been diagnosed with a mental health problem (compared with 25% of the general population) (Source – The Unhealthy State of Homelessness: Health Audit Results 2014)

Often, poor health, addictions and unhealthy lifestyles mean that people are unable to secure, and maintain, accommodation for themselves or their families. We recognise our supporting role as a protector of public health and the importance of working, in partnership, to effectively meet and support the needs of vulnerable people in South Hams and West Devon.

To meet this priority we will:

- Work in partnership with our voluntary and statutory sectors to holistically address people's needs as fully as possible.
- Ensure we adequately protect and safeguard the most vulnerable members of our community
- Enable early help, to avoid crisis and tackle homelessness at its root cause.

How the Homeless strategy and Delivery Plan will be monitored

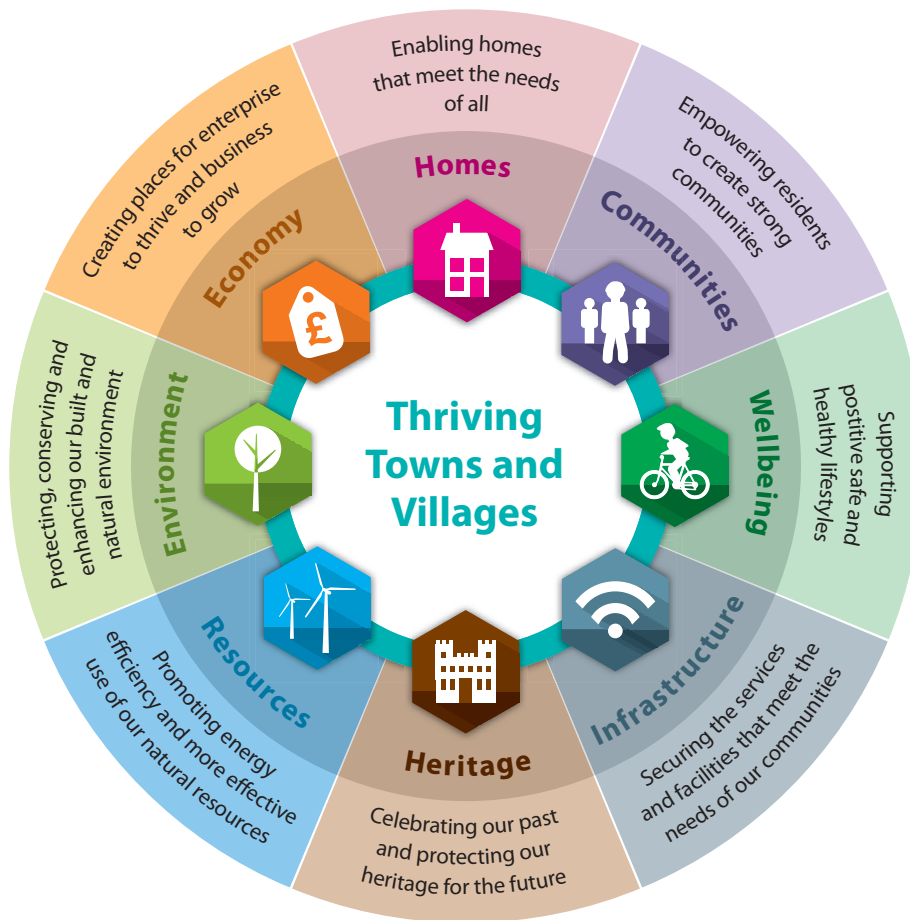
The life of this homeless strategy is intended to be five years.

Annually we will publish our progress to date and a refreshed Action Plan.

The delivery of the Action Plan will rely on the resources of both Councils and their partners, working together to achieve positive outcomes, for people in South Hams and West Devon.

It is proposed that the established Task and Finish Group, will continue as a Homelessness Steering Group to monitor progress against the priorities and the formulation of Years 2-5 of the Action Plan for this strategy. This will ensure an ongoing conversation, to keep the strategy relevant and ensuring that local people continue to have a voice through their elected representative.





Working together



South Hams
District Council



West Devon
Borough
Council

South Hams & West Devon Rough Sleeper Strategy



The purpose of the strategy

This Rough Sleeper Strategy will be delivered and monitored alongside the Homelessness Strategy.

South Hams and West Devon will build on the current work that has minimised the incidences of rough sleeping within the area. We will adopt a robust approach to all forms of rough sleeping in the two Local Authority areas and aim to reduce the number of people sleeping rough by 50% by the end of 2022 and ensure that no one has to sleep rough by 2027.

It is common for the council to be perceived by people sleeping rough as enforcers and historically the level of engagement that we are able to achieve with rough sleepers has been low. There has always been an open offer of accommodation for rough sleepers through our No Second Night Out principles and the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol. In recent years these schemes have been increasingly successful at providing longer term accommodation for rough sleepers. However, for some rough sleepers with complex support needs it has proved difficult for them to maintain this accommodation and ultimately some of these accommodations fail.

South Hams and West Devon are committed to providing a service to rough sleepers that responds quickly to their changing needs, promotes independence and self-worth and is delivered in a client centred way.

To achieve more sustainable positive outcomes for people sleeping rough we will focus on the key targets of the South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy.



Understanding the true cost of Homelessness

To fully understand the true cost of homelessness we need to ensure that we working from a solid evidence base.

To meet this priority we will:

- ◆ Increase our knowledge of the number of people sleeping rough by building on the annually required rough sleepers estimate by introducing a quarterly rough sleeper estimate. This will ensure that the service delivery can respond more quickly to need.
- ◆ Continue to work with partnership agencies to ensure that we are taking account of information from a wide sphere of organisations who have contact with or knowledge of rough sleepers to maximise our knowledge base. We will monitor these working arrangements to ensure that they continue to offer good value for money.

Access to services

The very nature of homelessness means a large proportion of the people requiring housing advice and homeless services will be vulnerable and may need additional support to enable them to access services.

To meet this priority we will:

- ◆ Introduce an intensive outreach service to enable the council to talk to rough sleepers in their own environment, build rapport and a working relationship to enable them to navigate the services that are available. This service will reflect an holistic approach focusing on addressing barriers to accessing and maintaining accommodation including; access to health care, benefits, support and meaningful occupation.
- ◆ Link this provision in with our continued work with partners to identify true rough sleepers, and those at risk of rough sleepers. Enabling us to provide appropriate support to assist them to become ready to access accommodation, increasing our focus on early intervention where possible.
- ◆ Work with the Prison Navigator to ensure that we work to prevent homelessness for people being released from prison and intervene early to identify any support needs and help them access the support they need.
- ◆ Continue to work with StreetLink to ensure that a clear reporting mechanism remains in place for members of the public to let us know about people sleeping rough.
- ◆ Remain committed to the Shared Young Persons Protocol that was developed in partnership with Devon County Council to ensure early intervention and a homeless prevention approach to engaging with young people.
- ◆ Continue to provide a Housing Options service that offers tailored advice to everyone who is homeless or threatened with homelessness. The focus of the team's work will continue to be on early intervention and homelessness prevention wherever possible.

Access to Housing

Housing options for those with a history of rough sleeping need to be innovative and reflect the needs of the individual. The Local Authority seeks to achieve this through the provision of multiple housing options which will be tailored to meet the needs of the individual.

To meet this priority we will:

- Ensure that the focus of the outreach support is to encourage rough sleepers to access accommodation and to ensure that they are equipped with the support and resources to maximise their chances of success.
- Introduce a supported housing scheme rooted in the Housing First Principles specifically targeted at entrenched rough sleepers.
- Continue to work with our partners to refer into supported accommodation and rehabilitation accommodation to as part of the recovery process where appropriate.
- Continue to provide accommodation to people sleeping rough under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol wherever possible and to build on this contact with people sleeping rough to encourage them to consider longer term housing options.
- Continue to adhere to the principles of No Second Night out by offering emergency accommodation to people who are verified as rough sleeping.
- Remain committed to working with rough sleepers to access the most suitable accommodation for their needs including assisting rough sleepers to access private rented and social housing where appropriate.

3

Health and Wellbeing

Tackling homelessness takes more than just the provision of a house, if we are to maximise the opportunities for our most vulnerable people. Often, poor health, addictions and unhealthy lifestyles mean that people are unable to secure, and maintain, accommodation for themselves or their families.

To meet this priority we will:

- Introduce a Tenancy Ready training scheme which will help prepare people sleeping rough for the significant changes and responsibilities involved in sustaining accommodation and maintaining good standards of health.
- Utilise the services engaged with the Multi Agency Hub to support delivery of an holistic service offer to those rough sleeping focused on recovery to enable the individual to thrive. To include; Mental Health Services, Drug and Alcohol Support Services and Adult Social Care
- Promote the long term benefits and cost avoidance of developing a high quality outreach program with partner agencies and statutory services including Mental Health Team, Drug and Alcohol Support agencies and GP's to enable rough sleepers the opportunity to access the health care they need.

Monitoring Our Progress

The strategy actions will be monitored in conjunction with the Homelessness strategy, reviewed on an annual basis and the strategy will undergo a full evaluation in the 2022 at the end of the life of the Homelessness Strategy.

In addition to this we will increase the annual estimate to a quarterly estimate to ensure that we have up to date information available to assess the success of the strategic aims.

We will record detailed information regarding the rough sleepers that we interact with including detailed information about their support needs and their journey to enable to better shape the services that we offer.

Appendix 2

Review of progress against 2019-20 Action Plan

Background

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.

Our 2017-2022 Homelessness Strategy for South Hams and West Devon has been designed to address changes in national policy, reductions in government spending, changes in demography in the area and the impact of the 2013 Welfare reform Bill, 2012 localism Bill and 2017 Homeless Reduction Act.

The Key Priorities for the Homelessness Strategy

The review of homelessness in South Hams and West Devon identified four key priorities to reduce and prevent homelessness.

These are:

- Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness
- Access to Housing
- Access to Services
- Health and Wellbeing

These four key priorities form the basis of the strategy and the annual Action Plan. Our 2020-2021 Action plan has been developed following a review of the progress made to date on our existing 2019-20 Action plan.

Progress to date

The review of the 2019-20 Action Plan demonstrates the positive progress made against our targets for the year. At this stage in the delivery of our strategy, many projects that have been established now form part of our ongoing work. Whilst we can confirm that good progress has been made on the actions for the year certain elements of our action plan have been hampered by the recent Covid-19 pandemic and our ongoing delivery of services has needed to flex to support both new ways of working and emerging trends and issues relating to the impact of the virus.

Review of 2019-20 Action Plan

Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness

- In the year 2019-20 348 Households were prevented from becoming homeless in South Hams and 228 in West Devon.
- Our Money Advice Contract assisted 174 households across South Hams and West Devon in the financial year 2019/2020 and brought in excess of £177,600 in previously unclaimed benefits and other entitlements.

- Our DCC commissioned tenancy support service has worked with ** households. (Awaiting figures from provider – will be updated asap)
- Less than 0.5% rent arrears levels across the portfolio of properties managed by SeaMoor lettings.
- Worked with registered providers to develop a rent in advance scheme that can meet the needs of both the provider and the tenant; enabling tenants to build up the security of an advance payment over time alongside financial advice to ensure feasibility.
- Developed a direct referral method to ensure those in arrears in housing association properties are able to access support at an early stage.

Access to Services

- Training in referrals process for partner agencies maintained at a high level with training delivered to Adult Services, DV services and those in the voluntary sector; to ensure the process is embedded in partner agency service delivery. Regular training delivered to partner agencies to ensure that referral processes are understood and that the focus on a preventative approach to homelessness is maintained
- Increased early identification of those at risk of homelessness within the social housing sector through improved joint working.
- Communication with landlords improved across commercial letting agent sector through frequent contact and evidenced positive outcomes following joint working.
- Homelessness information and advice has been delivered to approximately 710 students in South Hams and 750 in West Devon to ensure young people are equipped to access services. [See Appendix 4]

Access to Housing

- Seamoor lettings scheme poised to manage council owned properties and involved in the development of longer term housing investment opportunities.
- Leasehold arrangement established to facilitate the provision of a high standard 6 bedroom HMO accommodation to those in need of affordable shared accommodation.
- Rough sleeper count reduced from 7 to 1 in South Hams
- 16 rough sleepers supported into long term housing.
- Housing first model developed with Livewest generating provision of 4 properties for housing first use over the coming 2 years.

- 54 Households identified as requiring disabled adapted accommodation. Housing needs met for 31 households. Currently work is focussed on the remaining 15 households in South Hams and 8 households in West Devon requiring adapted accommodation.
- Two Temporary Accommodation Support officers recruited and in post to provide high level support to those in temporary accommodation to facilitate effective move on.
- Having explored the Homes for Cathy project with Registered Providers a number have signed up to the commitment. We have established that all of the housing providers we work with there is an appetite to work towards the general goals but for some a more flexible approach to this is preferred. We are working with Livewest to deliver the housing element of our rough sleeper project.

Health and Wellbeing

- Working in partnership with Marketplace Ministries we have produced a Tenancy Ready Training Scheme to support rough sleepers in their transition into long term accommodation.
- Feasibilities studies commenced into the provision of specialist housing for those with learning difficulties in partnership with Devon County Council.
- H&W panel for adapted housing - 31 households identified and resolved and additional 251 adaptations made to enable people to remain in their homes.
- Through the Disabled Adapted need panel and Health and Wellbeing we have been using the data from Devon Home Choice to identify households in high and medium housing need that have specific housing requirements. This information is shared with the affordable housing time who are looking to integrate these properties into new development plans.

Actions to be rolled over as incomplete:

- Homelessness forum – booked for mid-March 2020 but cancelled due to pandemic. Options for future forum formats to be considered.
- Landlord Bulletin – 1st edition created early this year. Dissemination paused due to conflicting guidance released relating to renters in response to the Covid 19 Pandemic.
 - Bespoke advice around changes made as a result of Covid 19 delivered across the borough. All 'park home'

establishments contacted to ensure compliance and to reduce the risk of homelessness.

South Hams & West Devon Homelessness Strategy







2020/21
Action Plan





Understanding the True Cost of Homelessness

-  Ensure there is a solid evidence base which informs, across all sectors, the true cost of homelessness in South Hams & West Devon.
-  Monitor the impact of welfare reform, to inform future strategic priorities.
-  Recognise the continuing pressures on Council's budgets and how best to target resources in the most meaningful way, ensuring partnerships with other agencies demonstrate value for money.
-  Ensure access to good quality money advice, to help tackle poverty, poor quality housing and homelessness.

PI	Action	Measure
HSU1	Continue to build on the success of the current service delivery of Money advice and extend this to identify trends specific to the Covid 19 pandemic to ensure resources are targeted appropriately.	Effective targeting of support.
HSU2	Improve communication and information sharing with landlords across the rental sector on support available to tenants impacted on by welfare reform. To enable early identification and intervention.	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation. Reduction in repeat service users.
HSU3	Using existing data; map support services available to those who are vulnerable.	Effective targeting of support and reduction of cost to LA.
HSU4	Prepare to use 2021 Census data to create an accurate picture of the area demographic using 2011 data available to identify changing trends.	Effective targeting of support and reduction of cost to LA.
HSU5	Explore methods of identifying approaches as a result of worklessness following Covid19 pandemic to enable early intervention and build on our prevention focused approach.	Effective targeting of support and reduction of cost to LA.
HSU6	Maintain the current low levels of rent arrears for tenants of the SeaMoor lettings scheme through the appropriate targeting of support.	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation.
HSU7/RS	Conduct quarterly Rough Sleeper estimates to ensure that services can respond quickly to needs.	Effective targeting of support and reduction of rough sleeper numbers.

Access to Services

- ◆ Offer advice and assistance in a range of formats, so the customer can choose how they communicate with their Council.
- ◆ Ensure our most vulnerable customers are able to access advice services effectively.
- ◆ Work with partners to ensure that we are able to offer services at the time and place our customers need them most.
- ◆ Ensure we are readily and regularly consulting with our customers and stakeholders to make sure we get our services right.

PI	Action	Measure
HSS1/RS	Improve links with the 3rd sector services currently offering support to increase the number of early identification referrals made from this sector. Focussing particularly on the community groups supporting those impacted on by the Covid 19 pandemic to drive forward the partnerships that are improving lives.	Increased early intervention and homeless prevention work.
HSS2	Offer training opportunities to those working or volunteering in the 3rd sector to promote early homeless prevention and safeguarding activity within these groups.	Increased early intervention and homeless prevention.
HSS3	Develop effective ways to deliver our Homelessness Forum objective whilst observing social distancing, to ensure ongoing dialogue with partner agencies and to ensure our service reflects a holistic approach to customers and encompasses a community response.	Maintenance of partnership working and effective consultation.
HSS4	Produce an annual landlord bulletin enabling landlords to sign up to receive legislative updates which may impact on their lettings, reflect any FAQ's raised through the inquiry line and offer guidance on legal matters.	Reduction in the number of households evicted from private rented accommodation.
HSS5	Develop interactive online communication options for landlords.	Improve communication with landlord to increase early identification of homelessness.
HSS6 /RS	Work with the Prison Navigation Steering Group to develop a pathway to prevent the homelessness of prisoners released.	Maintain low numbers of rough sleepers.

PI	Action	Measure
HSS6 /RS	Deliver intensive bespoke support to those rough sleeping which is focused on breaking down barriers in accessing a wide range of services to aid recovery.	Maintain low numbers of rough sleepers.
HSS7	Improve partnership working with local schools in the form of bespoke training/information sharing annual forums to ensure vulnerable children and families are equipped to access services both in the statutory and voluntary sector.	Increased early intervention reduction in Youth and family homelessness.




Access to Housing

- ◆ Increase the supply, standard and options for people who face homelessness within our area.
- ◆ Develop innovative options for our Rough Sleeper Community.
- ◆ Continue the downward use of temporary accommodation for homeless households.

PI	Action	Measure
HS1	Review current landlord incentive scheme to increase supply of private rented accommodation through Seamoor Lettings.	Reduction in cost of temporary accommodation.
HS2	Establish a Housing Company in the form of a Community Benefit Society to enable and increase provision of affordable housing across our community.	Increase in availability of affordable homes.
HS3	Use the Health & Wellbeing Panel to accurately identify barriers to accessing housing for those in medium housing need and to predict future trends and needs.	Reduction of those in high housing need on housing register.
HS4/RS	Continue to develop the Housing First model, alongside other housing options, to ensure options are bespoke to the needs of those rough sleeping.	Reduction in Rough Sleeper estimated count.
HS5	Continue to build the SeaMoor property portfolio to increase access to the private rented sector for those on mid to low incomes.	Increase in new properties under the a management of SeaMoor Lettings.

PI	Action	Measure
HS6/RS	Deliver targeted support to those in temporary accommodation and rough sleeping to enable faster identification of suitable private rented and social housing options.	Reduction in the cost of temporary accommodation.
HS7	Continue to develop bespoke and high quality temporary housing solutions in West Devon through the Springhill project	Reduction in the cost of temporary accommodation.
HS8	Work collaboratively with housing partners to ensure that BAME households are not disadvantaged by current approaches to housing application and allocations.	Improved transparency in housing allocation and the impact current systems have on the housing opportunities of BAME residents.

Health & Wellbeing

-  Work in partnership with our voluntary & statutory sectors to holistically address people's needs, as fully as possible.
-  Ensure that we adequately protect & safeguard the most vulnerable members of our community.
-  Enable early access to help, to avoid crisis and tackle homelessness, at its root cause.

PI	Action	Measure
HSW1	Develop innovative ways of engaging with community groups to facilitate shared learning and understanding of local needs as part of the Vulnerable Customer Charter approach.	Provision of more holistic service to customers with complex needs resulting in more suitable and sustainable prevention opportunities.
HSW2	Work with DCC to develop and publish the 'Care Leavers Offer' to ensure an holistic approach to their needs and help equip them for the future.	Early identification of need and prevention of homelessness.
HSW3	Work with Devon County Council to develop bespoke housing options for those with Learning Disabilities to ensure high level of quality housing and care provision.	Improved future planning for service delivery and reduction in housing needs due to H&W.
HSW4	Create a joint working protocol with Adult Services to target issues around hoarding and self-neglect in the home.	Early identification of need and prevention of homelessness.

PI	Action	Measure
HSW5	Develop a dynamic new approach to working with perpetrators of domestic abuse to link in with the success of the existing Behaviour Change scheme by introducing an accommodation element to reduce the risks presented to the victim.	Increased wellbeing of customer as a result of the most appropriate Intervention.
HSW6	Investigate the use of DFG funding to create adapted emergency housing opportunities to reduce bed blocking in hospitals.	Increased wellbeing of customer as a result of the most appropriate Intervention.

Making a positive impact on the lives of local people by providing valued and easy to use services



Working together



Work we have done to date?

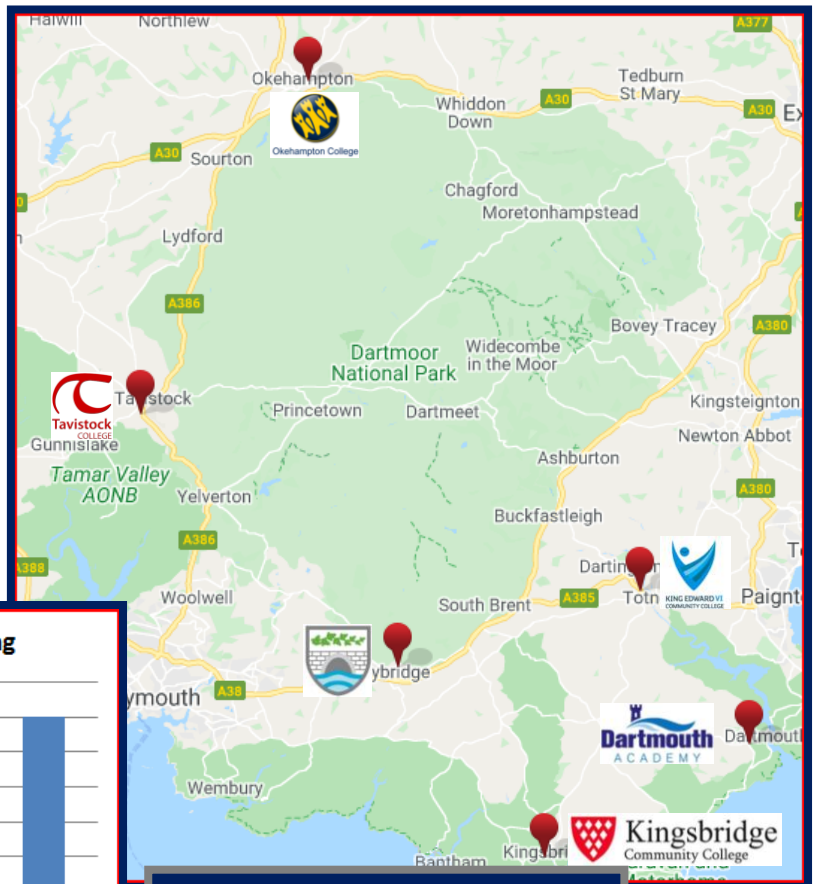
In setting up this post we were looking at developing a sustainable model which could continue past the 24 months of funding. We spent the first part of time collating contacts and numbers of the schools, making those links with relevant people in each school who would support in organising the sessions.

We have also created workshop session plans with tools and activities for young people to take part in, designed power points to deliver to the groups we meet and put together a school's pack which can be left for teachers to use in PSHE lessons.

We created feedback forms which have been used by young people and professionals in the sessions we have delivered.

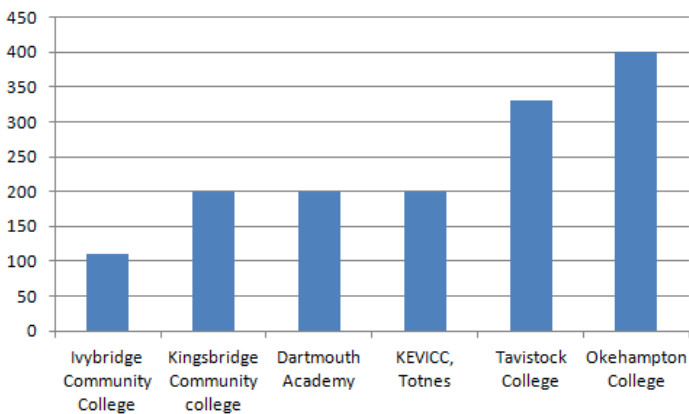
So far we have visited...

- Ivybridge Community College
- Kingsbridge Community College
- Dartmouth Academy
- KEVICC, Totnes
- Tavistock College
- Okehampton College



3 Assemblies
&
3 Sessions

Number of Young People seen in each setting



What We Found?

Positives

Some schools were really keen and organised.

Initially we tried to get in touch with heads of year but we realised getting in touch with the PSHE organiser in each school was better, as they were better placed to offer lessons.

Lots of Schools wanted assemblies instead of lessons; this meant we reached more young people in the school.

Some schools targeted young people for sessions; this meant we spoke to those who might have been most at risk of homelessness in the future.

We found the informal conversations between young people really useful for myth busting and targeting sessions to particular locations within the districts.

Challenges

Initially making contact with schools was a challenge, Schools didn't always contact back and we realised knowing who to send an email to or call was vital.

A number of schools changed our dates back and forth due to other commitments in the schools.

Lots of schools wanted assemblies instead of lessons this meant we did not go in to depth in an interactive way with as many young people, as if we had done sessions with them all.

In some schools we didn't fit in their timetable.

Following our visits we emailed our feedback form after the visit asking for feedback, we did not receive any in this way so learnt feedback at the time is the best way to get this.

Report to: **Hub Committee**
Date: **28th July 2020**
Title: **Changes to Pest Control Service**
Portfolio Area: **Wellbeing**
Wards Affected: **All**
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: 28 July 2020

Author: **Ian Luscombe** Role: **Head of EH and Licensing**

Contact: Ian.Luscombe@swdevon.gov.uk

Recommendations:

That the Hub Committee:

1. approve the removal of free pest control (rats and mice treatments) service for residents and replace it with a free service for benefit recipients only; and

2. accept and approve the tender from Terminix to deliver the service in South Hams and West Devon areas.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The report proposes to replace the existing free pest control service (rats and mice treatments) for all residents with a free service only for those who are in receipt of benefit payments.
- 1.2 The contract to provide the service has expired and the Council went out to tender using a procurement framework. The current provider did not tender as they no longer had the resource available to provide coverage throughout the Council area.
- 1.3 The tender prices received were far in excess of the previous contract price and the budget that the Council has available.
- 1.4 It is recommended that the Council resumes the service by providing a free service (rats and mice treatments) to residents who are in receipt of benefits only. The reduced number of treatments that will be required should not present a serious cost pressure. The contract price will be based on the price per treatment quote in the previous tender documentation. It is

anticipated that approximately 50% of residents who will enquire about treatment will be entitled to a free service. The remaining residents who do not qualify for a free treatment will have the option of a paid for treatment with the contractor or going elsewhere for a service.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council has a legal duty to take steps to ensure as far as practicable that its own land is kept free from rats and mice, and that owners and occupiers of land keep their land similarly free (Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949). In some cases, the Council may also require "vermin" to be destroyed along with other steps such as the cleaning of premises (Public Health Act 1936). Use of these powers generally involves the service of a legal notice requiring the owner or occupier to carry out treatment and/or other related works (such as clearing waste that is attracting rodents). There is no legal duty to have a free treatment service for rats and mice.
- 2.2. A pro-active treatment service enables rodent populations to be controlled before a serious infestation causes a major health hazard.
- 2.3. The pest control service has been provided for the last ten years by Pro Pest Solutions (formerly trading as County Mole Pest Control). The service has been provided on a contractual basis to provide free rats and mice treatments to all residents. The demand for rats and mice treatments has slowly risen over the last five years from 1483 in 2015 to 1686 in 2018 (combined SH and WD) last year.
- 2.4. The tender prices received were far in excess of the previous contract price and the budget that the Council has available. There are a number of options available that are presented in this report.
- 2.5. The current provider is maintaining a service until the end of July 2020, after which time a new provider needs to be found.
- 2.6. The Council has a duty to keep its land free from rats and mice, and owners of land have similar responsibilities. The rodent population varies from place to place and from year to year and can be seasonal. The more recent trend has been for an increase in the rodent population due to warmer, wetter winters and where a plentiful supply of food is available.
- 2.7. COVID-19 disruption is likely to have had an impact on the population with less food available from discarded food in town centres meaning the rodents may seek an alternative source from domestic premises.

- 2.8. The Council needs to ensure that new arrangements are in place following the expiration of the current contractual agreement with the current service provider. Residents need to be notified of the changes.
- 2.9. The removal of free treatments for some residents may result in the number of rat and mouse infestations increasing and a general increase in the rodent population. Complaints regarding rodent infestations may increase and Environmental Health Officers will be required to inspect premises and take action to resolve problems. This may require service of legal notice and the carrying out of treatment and proofing works in default, with a charge being placed upon the property for example.
- 2.10. This work fits with the Council's Wellbeing theme, rodents can be a carrier of infectious disease that can be passed on to humans.
- 2.11. This issue will affect residents, but the impact on more vulnerable people should be offset by the Council offering a free service to those on qualifying benefits.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The Council should aim to secure a value for money pest control service that protects the wellbeing of the most vulnerable who are not able to obtain a private funded service.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 Option 1. Take up the winning tender to provide a full service (free treatment for all for rats and mice). The cost pressure to take on the proposed services would be approx. £18,421 per annum. This will be £73,685 cost pressure on the Council during the life of the 4 year contract. The Council would have a good service in place to provide free pest control treatments to all residents for rats and mice. This will protect the health and wellbeing of residents and control the rodent population in residential areas.
- 4.2 Option 2. Withdraw from providing a free rats and mice service for all residents and carry out enforcement activity where residents/RSL's/private landlords do not take appropriate steps. The Council has the power to serve legal notice on residents, landlords and businesses where adequate steps are not taken to prevent/remove and infestation. The Council can do works in default and put a charge on the property. This is resource intensive and will require officer resource (with appropriate training and competency). It is usually a reactive response to a problem that is having serious impacts on health and wellbeing.

The Council will put some advice about how to deal with Pests online to provide some support and re-assurance to residents.

4.3 Option 3. Provide in house service. There are significant costs arising from running an in house service and a level of competency that requires membership of an approved trade association. There are also stringent regulations around poison storage and distribution.

Annual costs may include;

Operative salary 25k per annum

Training to maintain competency £1k per annum

Van – rental costs plus fuel >£5k per annum

Poisons store to comply with Regs – initial costs >£20k

Poisons costs 20k per annum

Insurance and indemnity as part of overall Council cover.

Approx cost year 1 ; £75k plus management costs

4.4 Option 4. Provide a service that is free to residents on benefits where the qualifying criteria is met. The cost of the service to the Council will be approximately 50% of Option 1. Residents that do not qualify for a free service will have the option of using the contractor in a private arrangement or seek the services of another pest control professional. The cost pressure in West Devon will be approx. £1000 per annum.

4.5 Qualifying benefits will include;

- Income Related Employment & Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance
- Disability Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Attendance Allowance
- Housing Benefit (must be paid 100%)
- Council Tax Benefit
- Pension Guarantee Credits
- Universal Credit

4.6 It is recommended that option 4 is taken up.

4.7 The Council's procurement officer and the Lead Members for Wellbeing have been consulted. Councils with similar services to what is being recommended have also been contacted

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1 It is proposed to use the rate per treatment contained within the framework agreement tender process to identify a preferred

bidder and to commence the contract based upon 50% of the treatments carried out in the previous year. A free service will continue to be offered to those residents who can prove receipt of benefits (listed in 4.5 above), with the option of a paid for treatment being purchased for those not in receipt of benefits.

- 5.2 Any change to the contract value of greater than 50% will require a re-procurement exercise to take place.
- 5.3 As the proposal in 5.1 is based upon 50% of the original tender estimate the Procurement Officer has advised that the Council will **not** need to go through a new tender process and a contract can be agreed based upon the proposed rate for treatments contained in the original preferred tender.
- 5.4 This proposal provides vulnerable residents with support to treat rodent infestations in their properties and is also affordable as it can be covered within the existing service budget.
- 5.5 Public dissatisfaction will need to be countered by good communication explaining the proposed changes to the service.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Council has a legal duty to take steps to ensure as far as practicable that its own land is kept free from rats and mice, and that owners and occupiers of land keep their land similarly free (Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949). In some cases, the Council may also require "vermin" to be destroyed along with other steps such as the cleaning of premises (Public Health Act 1936). Use of these powers generally involves the service of a legal notice requiring the owner or occupier to carry out treatment and/or other related works (such as clearing waste that is attracting rodents). There is no legal duty to have a free treatment service for rats and mice.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	To continue with the existing service at the tendered prices would mean a cost pressure of approx. £18,421 per annum. That is £73,685 over the duration of the 4 year contract. The offer a service of only providing a free service for residents would present a cost pressure of approx. £1000 per annum (£4000 over the duration of the contract). This cost pressure can be met by savings/income elsewhere in the EH budget.

		The cost of the contract should be considered as an investment in preventative treatments that prevent a wider issue with infestations in the area. Numerous , uncontrolled infestations would take Officer costs to resolve and also expose residents to risk of infection.
Risk	Y	To not offer a free service to treat rats and mice to all residents raises the risk of more widespread and more serious rodent infestations in the area. Rodents can be a carrier of infectious disease that can be passed on to humans. The potential impact on vulnerable residents will be significantly reduced by providing a free treatment service for those on benefits.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	The Council should aim to secure a value for money pest control service that protects the wellbeing of the most vulnerable who are not able to obtain a private funded service. This work fits with the Councils Wellbeing theme, rodents can be a carrier of infectious disease that can be passed on to humans.
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	Y	The contract procurement process ensured that all potential service providers must be able to comply with the National Standards in terms of control of use of pesticides and the impact on other species and ecosystems.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	The Council will act in accordance with Equality Act legislation and Equality and Diversity implications have been taken into account during the Procurement Exercise.
Safeguarding	Y	None
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	The procurement process ensured that all potential service providers must be able to comply with the National Standards in terms of health and safety at work , control of use of pesticides and have suitable safe systems of work in place
Other implications		

Supporting Information
None