

Report to: **Overview & Scrutiny**

Date: **25th February 2021**

Title: **Housing Strategy 2021-2026**
Better Homes, Better Lives consultation responses

Portfolio Area: **Homes – Cllr Hilary Bastone**

Wards Affected: **all**

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

Date next steps can be taken:
[Report to Executive 11th March 2021 for a recommendation to adopt the strategy at Full Council on the 25th March 2021.](#)

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Recommendations:

That Overview and Scrutiny Panel consider the approach and responses to the Housing Strategy public and partner consultation and suggest any further changes for inclusion in the final draft strategy to be submitted to the Executive

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council has been developing its draft Housing priorities which will form a new Housing Strategy for 2021-2026
- 1.2 The draft Housing Strategy "Better Homes, Better Lives" commenced public & partner consultation on the 14th December 2020, closing for comment on the 1st of February 2021.
- 1.3 The consultation, due to the current Covid-19 restrictions was predominantly digital, with an online survey and social media campaign.
- 1.4 Whilst the strategy was in the main, well received there were a number of comments on a wide range of subjects which it is important to address wherever possible. It is therefore suggested

that some changes to the document are required. This includes reducing the number of priorities under both Housing for Place and Housing for people to 2 and taking priority 3 from housing for people (ensure that people can access support and advice they require and make best use of data) and making it an overarching principle of the strategy, alongside reducing our carbon footprint and working with partners.

- 1.5 In addition since the draft was written both Councils have adopted a climate change and biodiversity strategy, it is therefore fundamental that this is more prominent within the final Housing Strategy.
- 1.6 Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to consider the consultation process and responses

2. Background

- 2.1 The draft Housing Strategy was developed through Member workshops, a member survey, a stakeholder session and a working group of officers across the Council who contribute to the Homes agenda in their day to day work.
- 2.2 Members at both the Overview & Scrutiny Panel and the Executive agreed on the themes of Housing for Place and Housing for People and that "Better Homes, Better Lives" represented clearly the direction of travel. The draft strategy commenced public consultation on the 14th December and closed on the 1st of February. Although the consultation ran over the Christmas period there was healthy engagement.
- 2.3 The public consultation was promoted through press releases, a social media campaign, e-bulletins, mail outs to Town and Parishes Councils, local Members of Parliament and regular requests to District Members to encourage responses. Whilst not as inclusive as former engagement and consultation has been in the past, the challenges of the pandemic and the relating lockdowns meant that community events and public meetings were not possible. The response rate is however very good compared to other Local Authorities (many authorities 2-3 times our size received a great deal fewer responses). We will continue to engage with residents and stakeholders to inform our annual delivery plan and through the lifetime of this strategy.
- 2.4 Our public consultation received 192 responses from South Hams with a further 75 responses completed through the West Devon survey. The full reports are attached at appendix 1 (West Devon's response at appendix 3) and show that the questions were broadly answered similarly and a number of the comments were on the same themes.
- 2.5 Our partner consultation received 30 responses (appendix 2), although somewhat disappointingly only 5 of these were from stakeholders for South Hams, with 16 in West Devon, 4 who worked across both areas (the other 5 skipped the question about which area they represent) We received 5 email submissions, 2 of which were after the deadline but we have been able to consider them for this report.

- 2.6 The full results are documented in the appendices. These do illustrate that the majority of the public found our priorities were very easy or easy to identify, however a number of responders stated that they were not sure if the strategy reflected the housing challenges in the South Hams.
- 2.7 There were a number of comments accompanying the question which we were able to separate into infrastructure, environment, affordable housing and planning. These continued to be themes throughout the remaining questions and the comments made.
- 2.8 The majority of people did believe the strategy explained the current work being undertaken across the South Hams, but there were comments that the strategy lacked a level of detail. The draft strategy deliberately does not contain specific details about what will be delivered as this will form the annual delivery plan. The delivery plan is currently under development and will be considered by Executive in March for adoption alongside the strategy.
- 2.9 The themes of Housing for Place and Housing for People were overwhelmingly supported, however there were various comments which has led to a revisit of these themes.
- 2.10 The Partner consultation yielded some interest in the possibility of further participation through a sub-group and separately to the formal consultation, the Deputy Leader, Deputy Chief Executive and the Head of Practice attended by invitation a sub group of Kingsbridge Town Council to discuss the strategy and the Town Council extended an offer to assist the Council in monitoring and reviewing the strategy and delivery plan.
- 2.11 Overall the Partner consultation showed strong support for the themes and ease of understanding for the document. This consultation response can also be found in appendix 2. The comments provided some rich context and chimed with the issues highlighted in the public consultation.
- 2.12 A number of the comments received did relate to subjects that are not within the scope of the Housing Strategy. Some require National Policy or legislative changes. Whilst important to be ambitious it is clear that the strategy may have been perceived by some to be supplementary planning policy or that we may wish to set out priorities that are at odds with our joint local plan. The Housing Strategy is neither and as a result some changes will be required to the final draft to give better clarity.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 Officers have considered the consultation responses and as a result, consider that there may be a number of changes that can be made to the strategy before it is finalised;
- 3.2 The priorities to be reworded under the two themes as follows.
Housing for Place
 - Promote balanced & sustainable communities
 - Ensure that homes support the health and wellbeing of the area

Housing for People

- Homes that support the health and wellbeing of our residents
- Make the best use, and improve the quality of existing housing

The third priority under People (Access to Support and Advice) will now be an overarching theme ensuring easy access to advice and assistance is embedded in all we do alongside making best use of evidence and data.

3.3 Information that explains the scope of the Housing Strategy will be included before the introduction, setting out clearly what we are hoping to achieve and also what we cannot do, because it requires changes to legislation or is regarding infrastructure. We can seek to influence these issues and lobby Government where appropriate through the strategy but won't be able to necessarily deliver. These issues are clearly important to our residents and we will ensure these are not lost.

3.4 We will add more detail regarding second homes and holiday lets as this was a major theme in comments.

3.5 We will simplify the language and reduce some of the text in the People & Place sections

3.6 It is anticipated to incorporate these changes in the final draft to be considered by the Executive on 18 March 2021

4. Options available and consideration of risk

4.1 The draft strategy with its accompanying delivery plan could be considered at Executive & Full Council without any of the proposed changes. Public consultation is not a legal requirement of the Housing Strategy, however there has been a high level of engagement and some good suggestions for improvements to the document to make it clearer and easier to understand. There is support for the principles and priorities, so these minor changes to the document will not change the overall direction of travel.

5. Proposed Way Forward

5.1 The overview & Scrutiny Panel is recommended to consider the consultation process and proposed amendments set out in Section 3. A final draft of the Strategy will be presented to the Executive at their meeting in March alongside the Year 1 Strategy Delivery Plan. The final Strategy will then be considered for adoption by Council on 25 March 2021.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	N	Whilst no statutory obligation to publically consult, it is generally accepted as best practice and there

		has been a high level of engagement with this exercise.
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	N	There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report
Risk	N	There are no risks associated with this report
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Homes, Environment, Wellbeing
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	N	There are no issues associated with this report, however there are actions within the strategy that have positive intended impacts to climate change and biodiversity
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		Due to covid-19 restrictions our consultation was predominantly online, which will have failed to reach all stakeholders. We will continue to seek engagement opportunities with hard to reach groups and their representatives and the Policy itself will be subject to its own Equality Impact Assessment
Safeguarding		There are no safeguarding implications of this report
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		There are no implications as a result of this report
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		There are no implications as a result of this report
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Consultation Response for South Hams
- Appendix 2 Consultation response for stakeholders
- Appendix 3 Consultation response for West Devon
- Appendix 4 Supplementary responses
- Appendix 5 Social Media responses.

Background Papers:

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Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed/sign off	Yes/No
SLT Rep briefed/sign off	Yes/No
Relevant Heads of Practice sign off (draft)	Yes/No

Data protection issues considered	Yes/No
Accessibility checked	Yes/No