

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **1th March 2021**

Title: **“Better Homes, Better Lives” adoption of South Hams & West Devon Housing Strategy 2021-2026**

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

Wards Affected: **All**

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

Date next steps can be taken: Full Council Meeting on 25 March 2021

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RECOMMENDATION

- 1. That the Executive RECOMMEND to Council the adoption of “Better Homes, Better Lives” – the South Hams & West Devon Housing Strategy 2021-2026; and**
- 2. That the Executive agree the delivery plan for 2021.**

1. Executive summary

- 1) The Council has been developing its joint Housing Strategy with West Devon for much of the last 12 months. The final draft is attached at Appendix 1. “Better Homes, Better Lives”, the name given to the Housing strategy. This sets out the long term vision of the Councils aspirations to meet local need over the next 5 years.
- 2) Whilst engagement has been more challenging than usual because of the restrictions of Covid-19, the strategy has been shaped around Member priorities which were established through a questionnaire and a workshop session. Following on from this there was engagement with our partners before seeking agreement from Members to release a draft of the strategy document for public and partner engagement. There

was a good response to the public consultation with general agreement to the themes and priorities chosen, however there were a number of useful comments received which have been incorporated into changes made to the final draft attached to this report. A previous report detailing these changes was presented to the Overview & Scrutiny panel on the 25th February who discussed and endorsed the changes proposed.

- 3) The strategy document sets out the vision and priorities which will guide the approach taken over the next 5 years and then detailed in annual delivery plans. (Appendix 2). The delivery plan will be subject to an annual review of progress and a refresh of actions for the following year. Some of these will be achieved within the year, others will take the 5 year life of the strategy and beyond to complete. The delivery plan will be reliant on partnership working and much of the first year will be on ensuring there is good evidence and strong data to ensure we are targeting resources where they can be most effective. The following months also may see a changing landscape as we start to emerge from the pandemic. Whilst our key themes and priorities are unlikely to change we must be ready to adapt our delivery plan to respond to the needs of our residents and capacity of our partners.
- 4) Whilst the Executive are asked to recommend to Council the adoption of the Housing Strategy, there is also a reliance that the Hub committee of West Devon Borough Council also make the same recommendation, and that both Council's ultimately adopt the strategy.

2. Background

- 1) The Council currently does not have an up to date Housing Strategy currently. Although this is not unlawful, the Council lists "Homes" as one of its strategic priorities. It is therefore important to have a plan that identifies the direction of travel and the issues locally that are important to our residents and communities.
- 2) The Housing Strategy is not a replacement for the Joint Local Plan. Its focus is jointly on the existing housing already built and making the best use of it, and ensuring the homes we build meet the specific needs of residents. The Joint Local Plan and the emerging Dartmoor National Park Local Plan are both important documents in relation to the Housing Strategy and reviews of either are required to have input from each other. Sitting underneath the Housing Strategy will be the Homeless, Private Sector Renewal, Community Housing & Tenancy strategies which will influence the delivery against the priorities.
- 3) There is no doubt that developing the strategy against a backdrop of uncertainty brought on by a global pandemic and Brexit has been challenging. Any plan developed needs to be flexible enough to respond to emerging needs whilst still delivering on the priorities agreed. Whilst the draft strategy was out for consultation both councils adopted a

climate change and biodiversity strategy and at South Hams Council on the 11th February, Members voted for a motion to adopt "Healthy Home" principles. The Housing Strategy has an important part to play in both of these work streams.

- 4) The results of the public and stakeholder consultation responses were presented to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the 25th February 2021. Various changes have been made to the final draft document presented to Executive. This was in response to the comments received from the public regarding what the housing strategy was. As a result a summary page for clarity has been added, so that readers could be clear that this was not supplementary planning guidance, and exactly where the Council can and cannot intervene. This was required particularly around second homes which was the source for a number of comments. Changes were also made to some of the text for better use of plain English and to ensure it was as clear as possible.
- 5) Also as a response to the comments we reduced the number of priorities to 2 under each theme. This reduced duplication (but not ambition) and the number of "back office functions" which were then removed from the delivery plan.
- 6) The accompanying delivery plan sets out the work that will be completed annually (some actions will take longer than one year) and it is anticipated that much of this work will be done within existing budgets, working with partners and understanding better than ever the local need through robust data and evidence. In order to undertake this work to a better standard a new staffing resource will be required. It is anticipated that this will be funded, through existing homeless, strategic housing and better care funding for a period of 12 months before assessing the value for money and recommending for establishment budget consideration.
- 7) Individual capital projects or priorities which require significant investment will be subject to reports to Members for decisions or other Governance arrangements at appropriate times

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 1) The strategy sets out the key objectives and the priorities for the Council and the delivery plan offers the practical detail on how we will achieve these and when. The annual review of this action plan will be an important milestone in measuring the success of the Housing Strategy.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 1) Whilst not a legal requirement, a new Housing Strategy that reflects the priorities of Residents, Partners & Members is highly desirable for a Council which has homes as a priority theme. Without one there is a

risk that opportunity to meet those residents needs will not be fully met.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 1) That the Executive recommend to Council the adoption of "Better Homes, Better Lives" 2021-2026 Housing Strategy for South Hams & West Devon.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	It is not a legal requirement to have a Housing Strategy.
Financial	Y	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The delivery plan sets out the funding implications where possible and much of the proposed actions can be completed within existing budgets. • There will be an additional staff resource required for research and data analysis. This will be a 12 month post, funded through homelessness grant budget, housing enabling and Better care funding. If the post proves value for money a request will be made in the budget reports for 2022/23 to make this a permanent establishment post. • Capital projects or projects requiring a high level of investment will be subject to individual reports to Members for decision making or other Governance arrangements
Risk		The high level of public responses to the consultation indicates healthy interest in housing. It will be important to ensure delivery against the action plan and robust monitoring arrangements at both officer and member level.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	An Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 3.
Safeguarding	Y	The Council's housing role plays a fundamental role in protecting the welfare of vulnerable adults and families with children

Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	Y	The Councils housing role plays a part in community safety particularly around anti-social behaviour in neighbourhoods.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	Housing has a fundamental influence on our resident's health and wellbeing. Actions around quality and supply will no doubt benefit this.
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Better Homes, Better Lives South Hams & West Devon
Housing Strategy 2021- 2026
Appendix 2 – Year 1 (2021/22) Delivery Plan
Appendix 3 Equality Impact Assessment

Background Papers:

None