

Report to: **Hub Committee**

Date: **16 March 2021**

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

Portfolio Area: **Homes – Cllr Debo Sellis**

Wards Affected: **All**

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

Date next steps can be taken: Following the Council meeting to be held on 30 March 2021

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Recommendations:

That the Hub Committee:

- 1. RECOMMEND to Council the adoption of “Better Homes, Better Lives” – the South Hams & West Devon Housing Strategy 2021-2026 appended as Appendix 1 to this report; and**
- 2. agree the Delivery Plan for 2021 that supports the South Hams & West Devon Housing Strategy 2021-2026 and appended as Appendix 2 to this report.**

1. Executive summary

- 1) The Council has been developing its joint Housing Strategy with South Hams for much of the last 12 months. The final draft is attached at Appendix 1. "Better Homes, Better Lives", is 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. These were established through a questionnaire and a workshop session in autumn 2020. Following on from this there was an engagement with our partners before seeking agreement from Members to release a draft of the strategy document for public and partner consultation, which ran from December 2020- February 2021. 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
- 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 Hub Committee is asked to recommend to Council the adoption of the Housing Strategy, there is also a reliance that the Executive of South Hams District Council also making the same recommendation, and that both Councils ultimately adopting the strategy.

2. Background

- 1) The Council currently does not have an up to date Housing Strategy. 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 Council's delivery under 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 have adopted a climate change and biodiversity strategy, The Housing Strategy has an important part to play in delivering against the priorities of climate change.
- 4) The results of the public and stakeholder consultation responses have resulted in changes being made to the final draft document presented as part of this report, and the results of the consultation are found at Appendix 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 formal engagement and consultation has previously been, because of the challenges of the pandemic and the relating lockdowns, 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 and regularly conduct robust equality impact assessments.
- 5) Our public consultation received 75 responses from the public with a further 192 responses completed through the South Hams survey. Questions were broadly answered similarly and a number of the comments were on the same themes.
- 6) Our partner consultation received 30 responses, the majority of which worked in services in West Devon. We received 5 email submissions, 2 of which were after the deadline but we have been able to consider them for this report.
- 7) As a result of the consultation we have streamlined the priorities and added greater clarity to the document, reducing 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.
- 8) 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. The Strategy will return to Committee annually to report on progress against the priorities and to agree a new delivery plan

- 9) 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 Hub 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

		<p>made in the budget reports for 2022/23 to make this a permanent establishment post.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 4.
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 Council's 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 – Results of the consultation

Appendix 4 – Equality Impact Assessment