

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **7th April 2022**

Title: **Better Homes Better Lives Year 2 Update and Homelessness Strategy 2022-27**

Portfolio Area: **Homes – Cllr Judy Pearce**

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** Sophie.cobbledick@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is RECOMMENDED that the Executive:

Part 1 – Housing Strategy Year 2 Action Plan

- 1. That Members review the progress to date on Better Homes, Better Lives; and**
- 2. That Members endorse the Year 2 Action Plan**

Part 2 - 2022/27 Homelessness Strategy

- 1. That Members approve the Joint South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 be adopted with effect from the 1st April 2022; and**
- 2. That Members approve the Joint Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2022-23 be adopted with effect from the 1st April 2022**

Part 1 – South Hams & West Devon Housing Strategy Year 2: Review and Update

Author: Alex Rehaag

Role: Senior Housing Specialist

Contact: 01822 813722 Email: alex.rehaag@swdevon.gov.uk

1 Executive summary

- 1.1 The Council adopted a new Housing Strategy “Better Homes, Better Lives in April 2021. This was a joint plan between South Hams and West Devon. Housing has since been recognised as a priority for both Councils in their separate corporate strategies and further endorsed by the declaration of a Housing Crisis in both South Hams & West Devon.
- 1.2 The first year of the Housing Strategy will shortly be complete. This report contains a review of progress against the themes and priorities to date and a new delivery plan for the second year. Significant achievements include:
 - The housing of 40 households requiring adaptations through our Disabled Adapted Panel
 - Completion of bespoke development to cater for the needs of residents with learning disabilities and adaptation needs.
- 1.3 The new delivery plan contains some further activity around the Housing Crisis declaration actions. The opportunity has been taken to align the delivery plans of the corporate strategies, Housing Strategy and Housing Crisis.

2 2. Background

- 2.1 Better Homes, Better Lives, was adopted in April 2021, as the Country started to emerge from the covid-19 pandemic. There were still many unknowns about the longer term impacts at that time, hence the need to create a strategy that was able to be flexible to changing needs.
- 2.2 The consequence of the pandemic has had several local impacts, which led in part to the declaration of a housing crisis in the District. The availability of private rented accommodation was vastly reduced, as landlords flocked to take advantage of the rising demand for holiday accommodation as opportunities for foreign travel were drastically reduced. The stalled construction and lack of building materials also saw fewer homes built than was anticipated, again leading to an increase in demand. The County also has reported significant difficulties in retaining and recruiting carers for some of our most vulnerable residents particularly in rural areas, leading to challenges in providing care packages. It is important for the Council to be responsive to these changes and to look at creative and innovative solutions to the challenges.

- 2.3 So critical are those challenges to the South Hams, that the Council declared a housing crisis in September 2021. Accompanying this was an 11 point plan – a mix of partnership work and direct action and a raft of lobbying activity for campaigns for change to national policy and legislation.
- 2.4 Better Homes, Better Lives is subject to an annual review as documented in the Housing Strategy document with an updated action plan made publically available in the Spring. This will in future reports as this one, be presented to members alongside the homeless strategy and as closely as possible to the Overview and Scrutiny review of the Housing Theme of “Better Lives for All” the South Hams corporate strategy. The Housing Crisis remains a standing item on the Executive committee agenda, allowing for ample opportunity to report on progress.
- 2.5 Attached to this report are:
- Appendix 1 the review of the first year of Better Homes, Better Lives and introduction to year 2
 - Appendix 2 – New action plan Year 2

3 Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 This report seeks to inform members of the Executive of the progress to date on Better Homes, Better Lives the 5 year housing strategy for South Hams and West Devon. It also seeks endorsement of the Year 2 Action Plan.
- 3.2 Progress on the Action Plan will form the basis of the regular Housing Crisis update reports to the Executive.

4 Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The Council has been clear in its ambition to tackle the housing crisis. A renewed Action Plan demonstrates the steps the Council is taking to address this.

5 Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 That the Executive reviews the progress of the Year 1 Action plan for “Better Homes, Better Lives” and endorses the Action Plan for Year 2.

Part 2 – Joint Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 and 2022-23 Action plan

Author: Sophie Cobbledick

Role: Senior Housing Specialist

Contact: 01803 861441

Email: sophie.cobbledick@swdevon.gov.uk

1.1 Executive summary

- 1.1 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 Joint South Hams and West Devon Homelessness five year Strategy was last published in 2017 and has now completed its 5 year span. A review of the achievements made over the lifetime of the strategy and a review of current and likely future needs and trends was conducted as part of the process of developing the new strategy.

- 1.2 Notable achievements identified following the review included
 - The prevention of homelessness for 1140 households between April 2018 - Feb 2022
 - Successful application for funding to provide four 'leap pad' homes with support attached for rough sleepers
 - Reduction of the rough sleeper count from 7 to 1
- 1.3 As a result of this review four key areas of housing need were identified: Single Households, Families, Households with additional needs and Rough Sleepers. These key areas formed the content for the Joint South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy 2022-27
- 1.4 The Content of the Strategy has been developed following extensive and robust consultation with Members, Stakeholders and the public.
- 1.5 The strategy will sit with the Housing Strategy and link with the Corporate Priorities for: Improving Homes - Better homes enabling better lives and Strengthening Community Wellbeing - Strong and prosperous communities where residents live healthy lives and are empowered to make a positive impact.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to review homelessness and the influencing factors for the area and produce a strategy which addresses local need.
- 2.2 The review of the progress made under the 2017-22 Homelessness Strategy identified significant differences in the opportunities and challenges experienced by four main groups within our communities. These are Single households, Families, Households with additional needs and Rough sleepers.
- 2.3 In order to address the varying challenges experienced by these groups our strategy focusses on solutions for each of these different groups.
- 2.4 The impact of the pandemic on local housing need has been significant and this Strategy comes at an opportune time to take into account the additional challenges the council and our residents are facing.
- 2.5 Consultation on the content of the strategy took place between the 9th February and the 23rd March 2022. A range of methods of consultation were used to enable us to target a broad audience, indicative of the demographic across both areas. These included:
 - Online survey publicised online and through direct email and conversation with customers and stake holders

- Poll style questions posed on social media for those wishing to respond to an aspect of housing that is meaningful to them at the time.
 - Conversations taking place over time with rough sleepers to identify perceived areas of need, demand and those requiring improvement.
 - Discussions held in multi agency and stakeholder attended meetings where views, challenges and horizon scanning reflected multiple related disciplines.
- 2.6 The consultation was received well. Over 167 people completed the online survey and 32 poll responses on social media.

3. Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 Members are asked to approve the Joint South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy 2022-27 be adopted with effect from the 1st April 2022
- 3.2 Members are asked to approve the Joint Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2022-23 be adopted with effect from the 1st April 2022
- 3.3 Officers will report back in 2023 on the progress made against this Action Plan.

4. Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 Some actions may require funding. It is important to note that Local Authorities still received a prevention of homelessness grant from central Government and this is likely to remain for the foreseeable future. For the year 2022-23 South Hams has been awarded £169191 in prevention grant, plus an additional £6046 new burdens funding to support the delivery of the Domestic Abuse Act. We are not making a request for any additional funding to deliver this strategy.
- 4.2 Members will note that our financial advice was contracted to Homemaker for 2018/19 and extended to 2021/22 following successful delivery of the contract. Additional funding received enabled us to extend this service to offer support to those impacted upon by the Covid 19 pandemic. The tender process for the new financial advice contract will commence this year with a contract to be in place by September 22.
- 4.3 Failure to adopt and deliver a Homelessness Strategy will result in the Local Authority not meeting its duty under the 2002 Homelessness Act.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 That members recommend the adoption of the Joint South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy 2022-27
- 5.2 That members approve the 2022-23 Joint Homelessness Strategy Action plan

Implications	Relevant to	Details and proposed measures to address
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	proposals Y/N	
Legal/Governance		<p><u>Part 1 – Housing Strategy</u> As part of the commitment in the Better Homes, Better Lives Housing Strategy document, it was agreed to review progress annually and produce a new delivery plan.</p> <p>Unlike the Homeless strategy it is not a statutory requirement to have a Housing Strategy, however it is a corporate priority for the Council and therefore essential it has a plan for delivery</p> <p><u>Part 2 - Homelessness Strategy</u> 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.</p>
Financial implications to include reference to value for money		<p><u>Part 1 – Housing Strategy</u> None as a direct implication of this report. All new initiatives requiring finance will be subject to separate reports</p> <p><u>Part 2 – Homelessness Strategy</u> It is important to note that Local Authorities still receive a prevention of homeless grant from central Government. For the year 2022-23 South Hams has been awarded £169191 in prevention grant, plus an additional £6046 new burdens funding to support the delivery of the Domestic Abuse Act. 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.</p>
Risk		<p><u>Part 1 – Housing Strategy</u> The Council has declared a Housing Crisis and has prioritised housing in its corporate strategy. Failure to produce an action plan detailing housing activity would undermine these commitments.</p> <p><u>Part 2 – Homelessness Strategy</u> It is a statutory requirement to have a current Homelessness Strategy. Failure to produce one would need to be explained to the MHCLG.</p>

Supporting Corporate Strategy		Themes: Improving Homes Strengthening communities & Delivering quality Council Services
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		<u>Part 1 – Housing Strategy</u> No direct impacts arising although individual projects will consider their impact. <u>Part 2 – Homelessness Strategy</u> No direct impact – individual projects will consider their impact
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		<u>Part 1 – Housing Strategy</u> The housing Strategy was subject of an Equality Impact Assessment <u>Part 2 – Homelessness Strategy</u> Consultation on the strategy was reflective of the demographic of the area.
Safeguarding		<u>Part 1 – Housing Strategy</u> No direct implications as a result of this report <u>Part 2 – Homelessness Strategy</u> 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		<u>Part 1 – Housing Strategy</u> No direct implications as a result of this report <u>Part 2 – Homelessness Strategy</u> 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		<u>Part 1 – Housing Strategy</u> No direct implications as a result of this report, however there is activity within the action plan that is designed to respond positively to health and wellbeing. <u>Part 2 – Homelessness Strategy</u> 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		None identified

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Part 1 – Housing Strategy

- Appendix 1 the review of the first year of Better Homes, Better Lives and introduction to year 2
- Appendix 2 - New action plan Year 2

Part 2 Homelessness Strategy

- Appendix 3 - Draft Joint South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy 2022 – 27
- Appendix 4 - Joint South Hams and West Devon Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2022-23

Background Papers:

Part 1 – Housing Strategy

- Better Homes, Better Lives South Hams and West Devon Housing Strategy 2021-2026
- Better Lives for All
- Plymouth, South Hams & West Devon Joint Local Plan

Part 2 Homelessness Strategy

- Housing Strategy 2021-26
- Corporate Strategy