



Improving Homes

Thematic Progress Update

April 2022

Lead Member Introduction

This report is the first thematic update report on the progress we are making against our Better Lives for All Homes theme.

Since adopting our Corporate Strategy in September 2021, the Council has taken the step of declaring a Housing Crisis..... .



Some of the highlights in the first six months include:-

- ✓ **Declaring a Housing Crisis and quickly developing a detailed action plan for how we propose to respond**
- ✓ **Developing Year 2 of our Better Homes, Better Lives Housing Strategy and a new 5 year Homelessness Strategy**
- ✓ **Launched a £5,000 grant scheme to encourage people to ‘downsize’ freeing up much needed larger properties for families**
- ✓ **Launched the “Step on” scheme to support social housing tenants with a deposit towards a shared ownership home**
- ✓ **Commenced on site at St Anns Chapel to deliver 8 affordable homes for local people**

In the full year we delivered 139 affordable homes in the South Hams.

Each action has a number of activities and the following table sets out the progress against those specific activities.

Activities on Track	Activities slightly off track but plan in place	Activities at risk of not completing as agreed	Activities not yet due to start
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Over the coming pages, we set out more in-depth updated for each action and subsequent activities.

Cllr Judy Pearce

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Leader and Executive Lead for Housing



IH1.1 - Deliver local homes for local people that meet their needs (Delivery of 300 homes in the next three years across the South Hams and West Devon JLP area)

Key Highlights

- There are further 'additionality' properties due to come forward at South Brent. We will see more affordable homes in Dartmouth and Sherford as the build progresses on these strategic sites.

The council will start work on its first direct delivery scheme at St Anns Chapel which will provide 8 homes for local people. In total, 175 new affordable properties were delivered in the South Hams and West Devon JLP area. Within the South Hams, 139 new affordable homes were delivered and occupied. Included in this are 11 supported properties for people with disabilities at Dartington. These are self-contained units, which in most cases will allow people a first step towards living independently.

In West Devon, 36 units of affordable housing was delivered and occupied in 21/22. The planning consent was achieved on the homeless hostel to re-provide this much needed temporary accommodation.

There are a number of additional affordable properties being brought forward which are outside of the s106 obligations in both councils. This is due to funding from Homes England to our Registered Provider partners. We have seen this activity in Dartmouth and Sherford.

Key Risks / Issues

There will be affordable housing completions over the next 12 months although there is a risk delivery could slow down due to issues sourcing labour & materials. This has been reported as a potential issue nationally by Registered Providers and house builders.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- There are further 'additionality' properties due to come forward at South Brent. We will see more affordable homes in Dartmouth and Sherford as the build progresses on these strategic sites.
- The council will start work on its first direct delivery scheme at St Anns Chapel which will provide 8 homes for local people.

Overall Rating



Action IH1.2 – Carry out an evidence-led feasibility study for delivery of affordable housing in South Hams

Key Highlights

Housing Needs Surveys have been completed in 4 locations either through the Neighbourhood Planning process or to support a planning application. One survey was completed in House.

Housing Need mapping is currently being undertaken and this has provided useful information which is being finalised to evidence where the delivery of affordable house should be encouraged. This will be through consultation with Neighbourhood Planning Groups, communities and our Registered Providers when land opportunities arise.

Key Risks / Issues

There is a resource requirement to deliver housing needs surveys at pace which is being considered as part of the ongoing resource needed to respond to the housing crisis

Looking ahead to the next 6 months



Data mapping will be available with key information on towns and local centres. Further areas of high demand will be identified and added to the system to ensure there is a coherent picture of current stock, turnover, delivery of new properties and demand.

Overall Rating GREEN – On Track

Action IH1.3 – Continuing to lobby for closing the business rates loophole for second homes

Key Highlights

Following a long and arduous campaign, to urge the Government to close a tax loophole which allows second home owners to avoid paying any business rates of council tax on their properties, we are pleased that we have been listened to.

In January the Government announced changes that close the loophole whilst protecting genuine holiday lets and benefitting popular holiday destinations such as South Hams

Under the new rules, holiday lets must be rented out for a minimum of 70 days a year to qualify for business rates. Holiday let owners will have to provide evidence such as the website or brochure used to advertise the property, letting details and receipts. Properties will also have to be available to be rented out for 140 days a year to qualify for this relief.

Key Risks / Issues

The Valuation Office will be responsible for conducting the review exercise, which will be completed before the end of this financial year, with a view to altering the ratings list for 23/24. This is a significant resource implication for the valuation office, so a key risk is completing the work in time.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

Continue to lobby for changes to allow local councils to charge up to 200% for second homes/holiday homes as they do in Wales

Produce a report for the Executive summarising the action the Council could take in relation to reviewing holiday homes and second homes including whether they are paying the right charges, have appropriate planning permission, that they comply with safety regulations and to ensure they are paying appropriately for waste disposal

Overall Rating GREEN – On Track

Action IH1.4 – Improve the overall quality of housing with more homes exceeding the minimum energy efficiency standards

Key Highlights

Using a government grant, the council is currently working with Tamar Energy on the project to improve or have proper exemptions for an initial 150 non-compliant rental properties.

Key Risks / Issues

The original plan was to fund a post to support this work, however we were unable to recruit and have commissioned this support from Tamar Energy. This work has included building a bespoke webform for engaging with landlords, ensuring that all of the information is provided to landlord so that they are aware of the requirements. This should reduce advice calls and interactions. The webform and back office database is complete and ready to go.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- Engaging with non-complaint landlords, 800 properties have been identified, letters starting to go out week commencing 11/4 press release to follow.
- Exemptions database interrogated and checked for false claims.



- 90 homes improved or properly exempted

Overall Rating	GREEN – On Track
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Action IH1.5 – Delivery of Homelessness Strategy

Key Highlights

Public consultation on the Joint Homeless Strategy concluded on the 23rd March 2022. The final draft of the Joint Homeless Strategy and accompanying action plan for 2022-23 is recommended for adoption by Council at its May meeting.

An extension has been agreed for funding from Department for Levelling Up and Communities to be carried forward to 2022/23 for the purchase of a further 3 flat for our homelessness support scheme. This extension has meant that plans have been revised and this action can now be classed as ‘Green – On Track’

Key Risks / Issues

- The impact of the Housing Crisis has been taken into account within the Strategy document and more specifically within the Action plan for 2022-23.
- The ongoing impact of the pandemic, energy crisis and significant inflation has yet to be fully realised. The strategy has been designed to respond flexibly to changing needs over the next 5 years. This will be evident in the annual action plans.
- The potential impact of the Ukraine resettlement work has been mitigated as much as possible through provision of dedicated resource, however there will be wider impacts emerging.

Looking ahead to the next 6 months

- The action plan is due to be adopted in May and contains measurable goals for the year.
- The crisis in Ukraine and the resettlement of refugees, particularly with placement breakdown is anticipated to be a significant work stream.
- Look to make a business cases for The Vulnerable customer officer post to be made permanent as a key role in supporting those impacted on by the increased cost of living.

Overall Rating	GREEN – On Track
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This update will be considered at South Hams District Council Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on 21st April 2022 at 2pm. Watch live on  [YouTube s://www.youtube.com/user/southhamscouncil](https://www.youtube.com/user/southhamscouncil)

