

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **26th May 2022**

Title: **Housing Crisis Update – Strengthening Housing Delivery**

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

Wards Affected: **all**

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

Date next steps can be taken:

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Executive:

- 1. endorse the proposed approach to increase resources within the Housing Delivery Team and note the revised Housing Team Structure detailed in Appendix 1.**
- 2. RECOMMEND to Council, to approve an annual revenue cost pressure of £44,700 (SHDC share) to be built into the budget process for 2023/24 onwards, and a one off expenditure of £150,780 to be funded from the 2021/22 Government Homeless Prevention grant. This funding will double the resource in the housing delivery team and drive forward the ambitions of the Council in tackling the Housing Crisis.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. In September 2021, the Council declared a Housing Crisis. At the same time, it set out a range of activities it would undertake to tackle the crisis. The Leader of the Council and Executive Member

for Homes has requested that an update be provided, to the Executive at their monthly committee.

- 1.2. The Council has been clear with its priorities around Housing and delivering homes for local people whilst making best use of existing stock in accordance with Better Lives for All and Better Homes Better Lives (The Housing Strategy). Following a resources review to deliver against these aspirations, it is recommended that changes to staffing levels and structure be made to the Housing Team.
- 1.3. This report sets out the measures officers are taking to readdress this imbalance to ensure there is sufficient capacity within the team to drive forward the projects within the housing strategy, sites within our ownership at Kingsbridge and St Anns, exploring a strategic partnership with a Registered Provider and accelerating our work to bring forward affordable led schemes. All whilst continuing to deliver the various statutory functions to the best standard possible.
- 1.4. The proposal is that the Housing Delivery team, who deal with the enabling role of the council is increased 100% (by 4 FTE) to 7.8 FTE. This will help realise a range of strategic ambitions in both South Hams and West Devon and be key in both Councils responses to the Housing Crisis. The aim is to achieve this through a mix of flexing existing resources within the Housing Options team, whilst recruiting new permanent and temporary resources.

2. Background

- 2.1. The Council has a number of functions regarding housing and the current structure is appended to this report (appendix 1). A number of those are statutory, which the Council must perform – particularly in relation to homelessness and housing advice. The team is high performing with a proven track record in homeless prevention, effective use of temporary accommodation and significant reductions in rough sleeping. The Council also own its own temporary accommodation and manages private sector accommodation on behalf of private landlords through our own in house letting agency Seamoor Lettings.
- 2.2. The Council also has a strategic and enabling role, responsible for negotiating affordable housing contributions with developers, working with our RP (registered provider) partners on S106 contributions, redevelopment, land opportunities and disposals. Gypsy & Traveller projects, policy, strategy and support to the development management and JLP teams are also service functions of this team. This team consists of 3 officers, 1 of which is a temporary resource and it is within this team (called housing delivery) where the staffing numbers are inadequate to address the housing crisis to the best of our ability.

- 2.3. The Council declared a Housing Crisis in the autumn of 2021 and the reconfiguration of resources and additional resources will enable the Council to create real momentum. Specifically:
- 2.3.1. Working on providing the necessary evidence base and housing need analysis to ensure that members will have a choice in the future to seek to go further than the JLP currently does in its ask for affordable housing. The work will inform further iterations of the Housing Strategy and importantly be a direct contributing factor in S106 negotiations with developers.
 - 2.3.2. Enable closer interaction and engagement with our Registered Providers (RPs) at both a strategic and operational level.
 - 2.3.3. Commission and develop a strategic partnership with a Registered Provider to unlock delivery of new affordable homes on both Council land and elsewhere.
 - 2.3.4. Bring forward opportunities to purchase land and commission affordable social housing.
 - 2.3.5. By having a dedicated planning resource, ensure that schemes that are delivering affordable homes are progressed through the planning system efficiently, delivering the maximum number of affordable homes possible.
- 2.4. This proposal also takes into account the additional workload pressures such as the Homes for Ukraine scheme and maintains the number of FTE in Housing Advice & Homelessness Prevention team.
- 2.5. The total additional annual cost of the proposal for South Hams is £44,700 that it is recommended is built into the budget process for 23/24 onwards as a cost pressure. In addition, an amount of £150,780 will be funded from the Government homeless prevention grant for 21/22. This will fund the fixed term posts set out in appendix 1.

3. Existing workload and structure

- 3.1. Housing Advice & Homelessness Prevention
- 3.1.1. Development & ongoing monitoring of the Homelessness Strategy, which is a statutory function. A range of legal duties and powers that are the responsibility of the Local Authority. And;

SeaMoor Lettings	Development and management of temporary accommodation and owned stock portfolio
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	<p>Develop owned stock property/Seamoor offer to provide HMO, learning dis, Young Persons, adapted property</p> <p>Work with assets to identify stock options that can be developed into housing</p> <p>Establish and monitor KPI's</p> <p>Develop and maintain the landlord engagement section including referring in for advice</p>
Refugee work	<p>Ukraine resettlement work</p> <p>Implementing, coordinating the provision and arrival planning for refugees under the UKRS & ALES scheme and ongoing high level management</p>
Housing Options team	<p>Case support for individuals at risk of homelessness</p> <p>Deal with homelessness presentation and the discharge of the Councils legal duties surrounding this.</p> <p>Provide temporary accommodation. Manage those in temporary accommodation so that they find permanent solutions as quickly as possible</p> <p>Homelessness Reviews</p> <p>Devon Home Choice Reviews</p> <p>Devon & Cornwall Housing options Partnership</p> <p>Devon Homelessness Health Cell</p>
Vulnerable person work	<p>Signpost and support individuals</p> <p>Co-ordinate 3rd sector partners</p>
Rough Sleepers Gypsies & Travellers/ Caravan Dwellers	<p>Manage projects including Outreach, property acquisition, negotiate with RPs,</p>
Other	<p>Safeguarding lead</p> <p>Perpetrator programme accommodation work</p> <p>work with MH & Adult service regarding current housing needs etc. for those with additional support needs</p> <p>Homemaker contract tender and management</p> <p>Care Leavers (16/17 year olds)</p>

3.1.2. Existing team

- 2 x FTE L4 Specialists
- 7.8 FTE Housing advisors
- 1 FTE Team Leader
- 1.8 FTE Seamoor lettings / Temporary accommodation
- 1 FTE Vulnerable person support (Temporary external funding)
- 2 FTE Rough sleeper / G&T Outreach (1 post temporary external funding)
- 0.8 FTE DHC (Devon Home Choice)
- **Total FTE 16.4**

3.2. Housing Delivery

Housing Enabling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Managing the undertaking of viability assessments to get best value.• Decision making within policy for housing schemes and discretion in taking action in relation to housing delivery• Engagement across RPs on the housing mix requirements and aligning delivery with need and political preference to deliver better location specific outcomes• Develop and implement housing policy to support housing delivery and best use of existing stock• Research and development• Reporting on Housing and Corporate Strategy progress, updating action plan and ensuring it accords with Corporate Strategy format• Drafting and presenting Housing Crisis reports at Executive and Hub• Project managing the formation of a housing company, including articles of association, reserved matters and governance• Ensure effective partnership working with a range of providers, funders and 3rd sector organisations (Alms houses, LT's HE)• Town & Parish & community liaison• Work to identify sites, initiatives, secures funding and monitors delivery• Deliver bespoke housing solutions for a small number of individuals whose housing options cannot otherwise be met• Monitor S106 Expenditure/commuted sums manage and make recommendations as to where funding should be spent• Complete the selection criteria, liaison with communities/ward members, completion, publication and information sharing of Housing Needs Surveys and manage effectively the Housing needs survey administrator• Supporting the JLP housing team through the JLP review to include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Setting housing policy and testing what is possible○ Informing through appropriate evidence base○ Commissioning and undertaking housing needs surveys○ Setting outcomes and work programme for Housing Analyst to support the above, in partnership with the Place Team
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Devon Home Choice	Support people through application process, queries etc.
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3.2.1. Existing team

- 1 x L6 FTE Housing Strategy / Business Intelligence (2 year temporary funded)
- 1 x L5 FTE Housing Enabling – Minor schemes/policy
- 1 x L4 FTE Housing Enabling / Strategy

- Total FTE 3

4. Outcomes/outputs

- 4.1. The Council has set an ambitious plan through Better Lives for All and Better Homes, Better Lives (the Corporate and Housing strategies) it cannot reasonably be expected to achieve these without additional resource to deliver new and emerging work.
- 4.2. Whilst there is no silver bullet to solving the housing crisis, working to smooth the planning process for affordable led schemes, dedicated resource to manage strategic partnerships and/or direct delivery, and ensuring our intelligence regarding housing need is up to date and robust will all contribute to removing the obstacles to success. Accelerated delivery, increase of affordable led schemes and the capacity to respond to the need of our communities will all be achievable outcomes.
- 4.3. The new draft structure is attached at Appendix 1. The key outcome for doubling resource in the Housing Delivery team is so that the Council can realise the ambitions around tackling the housing crisis, and the objectives of Better Lives for All.
- 4.4. The proposal addresses the lack of resource in the Housing Delivery team by moving one Senior Specialist role from Housing Advice & Homeless Prevention across to support enabling activity listed above. To backfill the gap in Housing Advice an opportunity to promote existing talent within the team to take on a specialist role will be created.
- 4.5. Further additions to the team include making the housing strategy officer permanent, as until 12 months ago there was no case management support to this team. Strong administrative roles are key to the organisation together with a solid evidence base and for this reason, a 2 year fixed term role to carry out housing needs surveys is proposed. It is the ambition to have an up to date housing needs survey for everywhere in the District, either by ourselves or through support to a neighbourhood

planning group and to ensure this is available to provide the evidence of where housing is most in need.

4.6. The draft structure also includes an affordable housing led planner role. This innovative role demonstrates the Council's serious commitment to affordable led schemes. It will allow anyone – Registered Provider, Landowner or Developer- who brings forward an affordable led scheme, to benefit from a dedicated planning resource to advise and support them. It is anticipated that this will speed up our element in the process for affordable housing and drive speedier delivery. This innovative role is for 2 years and if proven results are shown, the Council may wish to look at extending further.

4.7. The Council has shown interest through the recent Housing Task and Finish housing group and through discussions with the portfolio holder, to seek out a strategic delivery partner. This could see the Council look at local land acquisitions as a joint venture with the purpose of providing more affordable housing locally. It is also clear that Members wish to see projects come forward on our own limited sites which requires resource to project manage. At the moment this is work resourced very much on an adhoc basis and needs dedicated resource in the form of a Housing Development Officer to set within the housing delivery team.

5. Options available and consideration of risk

5.1. The Council can continue with its existing resource, as it is currently meeting its statutory duties regarding homelessness. However, these will become harder to perform without affordable housing delivery.

6. Proposed Way Forward

6.1. That Members recommend to council approval of both the £150,780 from the government homeless prevention grant and to build in an additional cost pressure to the budget from 23/24 of £44,700 to fund the additional posts and that recruitment commences immediately.

7. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Council has a number of duties to perform regarding its statutory housing functions. This report requests additional resource to ensure the Council continues to deliver these to the best of its ability.

		The Council has also declared a housing crisis, recognising the difficulty accessing accommodation for local people. The Council has made its ambitions around housing very clear and it is essential that where the Council has an opportunity to influence affordable housing delivery that those opportunities are fully explored. It can only do so with sufficient staff resource to do the job
Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>It is recommended that the Executive recommend to Council, to approve an annual revenue cost pressure of £44,700 (SHDC share) to be built into the budget process for 23/24 onwards, and a one off expenditure of £150,780 to be funded from the 21/22 Government Homeless Prevention grant.</p> <p>This will be used to fund 60% of the additional posts for the new Housing Team Structure shared with West Devon Borough Council as set out in Appendix 1.</p> <p>South Hams District Council received a Homeless Prevention Government grant of £204,667 for 2021/22.</p>
Risk	Y	There are significant service delivery and reputational risks if there is insufficient staff to deliver the Council's significant ambitions around affordable housing.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	Improving Homes, Wellbeing, protecting, conserving & enhancing our built and natural environment, delivering quality council services, climate change
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	N	No direct carbon/biodiversity impact arising from the recommendations
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		There is no impact on any of the proposals in the report. Any recruitment would be in line with our equality, diversity & inclusion policy and compliant with The Equality Act 2010.
Safeguarding		Ensuring there is sufficient resource to deliver the housing service, which is also the Councils largest referrer for children & adults safeguarding services will minimise as much as is possible the risks to vulnerable adults and children

Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		Ensuring there is enough resource to deliver the housing service, will assist victims of crime including domestic violence, and support initiatives to address anti-social behaviour in our communities.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		Ensuring there is enough resource to safely deliver the housing service will address these concerns
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Existing & proposed structure

Background Papers:

None