

## **Adoption of the Somerset Housing Strategy (2019-2023)**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to inform members about the updated Somerset Housing Strategy (SHS) and seek a decision to adopt the Strategy.
2. The SHS highlights key facts and challenges within the local housing market and proposes a vision for homes and housing across Somerset that embraces strong and effective strategic leadership, a local economy that provides opportunity for all, homes in Somerset are good for your health and a society that supports the vulnerable.
3. To help address the housing need, we need to work together in a way which embraces communities, housing, health and wellbeing, social care and planning. We need to work together with our partners to develop solutions with residents, local businesses and communities.
4. The preparation of the SHS began in July 2017, with the publication of district housing market profiles (see Appendix A) and a multi-agency workshop. A consultation draft was published in February 2018. The consultation closed on 30th April 2018. During the summer the consultation responses have been considered and amendments made.
5. The SHS is developed by the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership (SSHP). South Somerset are active members of SSHP. SSHP is within the governance structure of the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board.
6. The SHS (Appendix B – published as a separate appendix) was approved by SSHP on 22nd November 2018.
7. SSHP plans to develop a multi-agency delivery plan (the first draft has already been created), with the expectation that the SSHP partners may then choose to develop their own response in the form of strategic housing action plan. We believe that there is a subset of the priorities identified within the SHS which are particularly relevant to South Somerset and we would certainly wish to develop our own set of actions. An early draft action plan for South Somerset is included at Appendix C and is consistent with and aligned to our incoming Council Plan 2019/20. A more clearly defined action plan will be developed by the Community of Practice that will form part of the new Council Plan priority project for accelerating the delivery of housing.

### **Forward Plan**

8. The Somerset Housing Strategy has been added to the forward plan for District Executive.

### **Public Interest**

9. The Somerset Housing Strategy is the housing strategy for the county, it sets out the strategic direction for housing activity covering housing need, supply and our approach to the quality and management of existing and new housing stock.

## Recommendations

10. That District Executive adopts the Somerset Housing Strategy (it's Vision, Themes, Priorities and Objectives) and supports the action plan for the district.

## Background

11. The previous SHS (known as the Somerset Strategic Housing Framework (SSHF) was prepared in 2013 and had an end-date of 2016.
12. The SHS has been prepared by the Somerset Strategic Housing Officers Group (SSHG) which reports to the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership (SSHP). There is representation from South Somerset, Mendip, Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and West Somerset (officers and members), the county council (public health, adult social care and strategic planning), housing associations and Exmoor National Park.
13. The draft SHS was published in February 2018 and then a 3 month consultation period began where we received input from housing forums, parish councils and a range of interested partnership bodies. The responses received have been considered and have helped to inform the final draft of the Strategy attached as Appendix B (see separate supplement).
14. The Strategy incorporates other specific strategies such as the Homelessness Strategy and the Tenancy Strategy, there is a diagram on page 11 of the strategy which shows how the relevant documents and policies are incorporated. The Strategy has been prepared to ensure we have the necessary sign up to support a strong, inclusive and effective partnership and make certain that we are supporting each other to achieve the housing ambitions for Somerset. It's an important tool that can help us realise national housing policy requirements; it also places us in a better position to tackle housing issues as a collective rather than individually; one example of this is when we recently developed a partnership response to the government on their Green Paper.
15. The process of the review began in late 2016. The first task was to build the evidence base, and build partnership arrangements around leadership and governance. The following was undertaken during 2017:
  - Data collection resulting in the publication of a 'benchmarking report'
  - Preparation of 5 x district based Housing Market Profiles and 1 x County-wide Housing Market Profile
  - Engagement of the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board on matters relating to health and housing
  - Stakeholder Conference (July 2017) at Taunton Rugby Club, involving 100+ people representing the housing sector and associated services. This conference ran 8 themed workshops on different aspects of housing issues / challenges
  - Consultation and engagement on all of the above
  - Development of an Equalities Impact Assessment

The above, in addition to national housing policy, provided the evidence base to the content of the draft SHS, which was published in February 2018.

## Financial Implications

16. None

## **Risk Matrix**

17. None

## **Council Plan Implications**

18. There are no implications for this as the Somerset Housing Strategy fully supports the Council Plan 2016 – 2021, housing focus detailed below:

**“To enable the provision of housing that meets the future and existing needs of residents and employers we will work with partners to:**

- Minimise homelessness and rough sleeping
- Work with the private rented sector to improve the standard and availability of rented accommodation
- Tackle fuel poverty
- Work to minimise the impact of personal or household debt
- Enable people to live independently for as long as they are able”.

## **Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications**

19. None

## **Equality and Diversity Implications**

20. There are significant equality and diversity implications. Understanding housing issues and the effect on those with protected characteristics, helps us to respond with interventions. The SHS is supported by a comprehensive EIA which has been used to help shape the priorities and objectives. The EIA is not a static document. Its content will continue to inform the development of projects / activity within the Delivery Plan, and any supporting partner action plans.

## **Privacy Impact Assessment**

21. None

## **Background Papers**

Appendix A – Market Profile for South Somerset

Appendix B – Somerset Housing Strategy (published as a separate appendix)

Appendix C – Housing in South Somerset Priority Outcomes for 2019-20 Actions

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