



## Scrutiny Committee

**Tuesday 1st October 2019**

**10.30 am**

**Main Committee Room  
Council Offices, Brympton Way  
Yeovil, BA20 2HT**

(disabled access and a hearing loop are available at this meeting venue)



The following members are requested to attend this meeting.

**Chairman:** Crispin Raikes  
**Vice-chairmen:** Sue Osborne and Gerard Tucker

Robin Bastable  
Louise Clarke  
Nicola Clark  
Brian Hamilton

Charlie Hull  
Mike Lock  
Paul Maxwell  
Robin Pailthorpe

Jeny Snell  
Mike Stanton  
Rob Stickland

If you would like any further information on the items to be discussed, please contact the Case Services Officer (Support Services) on 01935 462596 or [democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@southsomerset.gov.uk)

This Agenda was issued on Monday 23 September 2019.

*Alex Parmley, Chief Executive Officer*

This information is also available on our website  
[www.southsomerset.gov.uk](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk) and via the mod.gov app



# Information for the Public

## What is Scrutiny?

The Local Government Act 2000 requires all councils in England and Wales to introduce new political structures which provide a clear role for the Council, the Executive and non-executive councillors.

One of the key roles for non-executive councillors is to undertake an overview and scrutiny role for the council. In this Council the overview and scrutiny role involves reviewing and developing, scrutinising organisations external to the council and holding the executive to account

Scrutiny also has an important role to play in organisational performance management.

The Scrutiny Committee is made up of 14 non-executive members and meets monthly to consider items where executive decisions need to be reviewed before or after their implementation, and to commission reviews of policy or other public interest.

Members of the public are able to:

- attend meetings of the Scrutiny Committee except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- speak at Scrutiny Committee meetings (limited to up to 3 minutes per person and at the Chairman's discretion usually no more than a total of 15 minutes is allocated for public speaking); and
- see agenda reports.

Meetings of the Scrutiny Committee are held monthly on the Tuesday prior to meetings of the District Executive at 10.00am in the Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

Agendas and minutes of these meetings are published on the Council's website [www.southsomerset.gov.uk](http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk).

Further information can be obtained by contacting the agenda co-ordinator named on the front page.

## Recording and photography at council meetings

Recording of council meetings is permitted, however anyone wishing to do so should let the Chairperson of the meeting know prior to the start of the meeting. The recording should be overt and clearly visible to anyone at the meeting, but non-disruptive. If someone is recording the meeting, the Chairman will make an announcement at the beginning of the meeting. If anyone making public representation does not wish to be recorded they must let the Chairperson know.

The full 'Policy on Audio/Visual Recording and Photography at Council Meetings' can be viewed online at:

<http://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/documents/s3327/Policy%20on%20the%20recording%20of%20council%20meetings.pdf>

# Scrutiny Committee

## Tuesday 1 October 2019

### Agenda

#### *Preliminary Items*

**1. Minutes**

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 September 2019.

The draft minutes can be viewed at:

<http://modgov.southsomerset.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=141&Year=0>

**2. Apologies for absence**

**3. Declarations of Interest**

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (as amended 26 February 2015), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting.

**4. Public question time**

**5. Issues arising from previous meetings**

This is an opportunity for Members to question the progress on issues arising from previous meetings. However, this does not allow for the re-opening of a debate on any item not forming part of this agenda.

**6. Chairman's Announcements**

#### *Items for Discussion*

**7. Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 - 2023** (Pages 5 - 49)

**8. Environment Strategy** (Pages 50 - 68)

**9. Somerset Climate Emergency Framework** (Pages 69 - 103)

**10. Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 5 September 2019**  
(Page 104)

**11. Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3 October 2019** (Page 105)

**12. Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews** (Page 106)

**13. Update on matters of interest** (Page 107)

**14. Scrutiny Work Programme** (Pages 108 - 109)

**15. Date of next meeting** (Page 110)

# Agenda Item 7

## **Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 - 2023**

*Executive Portfolio Holder:* Cllr. Val Keitch, Strategy and Housing  
*Director:* Netta Meadows, Director Strategy and Support Services  
*Service Manager:* Jan Gamon, Lead Specialist Strategic Planning  
*Lead Officer:* Leisa Kelly, Specialist Strategic Planning, Strategy & Commissioning  
Barbie Markey, Specialist Housing, Service Delivery  
*Contact Details:* [Leisa.kelly@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:Leisa.kelly@southsomerset.gov.uk) or 01935 462641  
[Barbie.markey@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:Barbie.markey@southsomerset.gov.uk) or 01935 462774

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. For members of Scrutiny to have sight of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment and Draft Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 2023 in advance of the final strategy which will be taken to District Executive and Scrutiny later this year for adoption.

### **Public Interest**

2. District Councils have a statutory duty to adopt a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy. This strategy sets out the strategic goals for the four Somerset Housing Authorities including a detailed action plan to show how this will be delivered. Our existing Somerset Homeless Strategy 2017 – 19 was adopted in May 2018; this was an interim strategy which only runs until this year so we need to update the strategy taking into consideration the priorities identified in the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment and the new requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

### **Actions Required**

3. Scrutiny Committee members comment and provide feedback on the first draft of the Countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2023 (attached), to inform its development prior to being shared with District Executive.

### **Background**

4. The 2002 Homelessness Act places a duty on Local Authorities to develop a homelessness and rough sleeper strategy and an obligation to renew it every five years. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced new measures for dealing with homelessness including:
  - increasing the length of time a housing authority should treat someone as threatened with Homelessness from 28 to 56 days
  - the introduction of Personalised Housing Plans for clients to outline the circumstances of homelessness, the housing needs of the client, any support required to secure and sustain accommodation, steps that the client is required to take along with the steps the Local Authority is required to take to assist the client
  - a new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible households threatened with homelessness
  - a new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants
  - a new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

5. A Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment 2019 (Appendix 1) was carried out to assess the need of the County, this has been used to inform the new Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 23 (Appendix 2). The strategy includes 6 priorities for 2019-23:
  - Provision of adequate, affordable housing stock
  - Support clients to remain in their existing accommodation where appropriate
  - Support specific client groups to access suitable accommodation through effective support
  - Support the government's commitment to combat rough sleeping.
  - Maintain strong working relationships across partnerships.
  - Track and respond to the impacts of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017
  
6. The 'Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2023' will be implemented by each district through the Homeless Managers Group (HMG), who will be responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the actions contained within the action plan. There will also be a link with the Strategic Housing Officers Group (SHOG) which is responsible for the delivery plan for the 'Somerset Housing Strategy 2019-2023'. Close links will be maintained between both groups to ensure we keep track of progress on all actions overall.



South Somerset  
District Council

Somerset West  
and Taunton

**DRAFT**

**Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy  
2019 - 2023**

**September 2019**

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

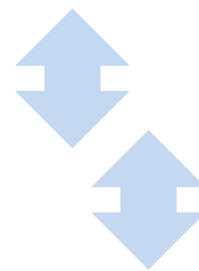
The 2002 Homelessness Act places a duty on Local Authorities to develop a homelessness and rough sleeper strategy and an obligation to renew it every five years. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017, introduced new measures for dealing with homelessness including:

- Increasing the length of time a housing authority should treat someone as threatened with Homelessness from 28 to 56 days;
- The introduction of Personalised Housing Plans for clients to outline the circumstances of homelessness, the housing needs of the client, any support required to secure and sustain accommodation, steps that the client is required to take along with the steps the local authority is required to take to assist the client.;
- A new duty to prevent homelessness for all eligible households threatened with homelessness;
- A new duty to relieve homelessness for all eligible homeless applicants;
- A new duty on public services to notify a local authority if they come into contact with someone they think may be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The current interim strategy was developed by the four District Councils in Somerset and was adopted in 2018. Since the adoption of the Interim Strategy we have conducted a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment which has been used as the evidence base for the “Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 2023” as well as considering the new requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

The delivery of this Strategy will be monitored by the Homeless Managers Group (HMG). A full review will be conducted in 2023 when a new needs assessment will be carried out to guide development of a refreshed strategy.

## 2 HOW THE STRATEGY LINKS IN WITH OTHER STRATEGIES



In Somerset we have an overarching strategy, developed by the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board “Improving Lives in Somerset Strategy 2019 - 2028”, which details the County Vision which includes the following:

- A thriving and productive Somerset that is ambitious, confident and focused on improving people’s lives
- A county of resilient, well-connected and safe and strong communities working to reduce inequalities
- A county infrastructure that supports affordable housing, economic prosperity and sustainable public services

- A county and environment where all partners, private and voluntary sector, focus on improving the health and wellbeing of all our communities

The “Somerset Housing Strategy 2019 – 2023” was launched in March 2019, covers the whole county and sits beneath the “Improving lives Strategy”. The Strategy sets out the following vision for the county:

- **Strong and effective strategic Leadership:**  
To deliver leadership across an integrated system that embraces communities, housing, health & wellbeing, social care and town & country planning
- **A local Economy that provides opportunity for all:**  
To increase housing supply across all tenures and maximise the proportion of affordable homes including within rural communities, to be constructed by a skilled local labour force
- **Homes in Somerset are good for your Health:**  
A healthy living environment with secure and decent homes that fosters independent living within strong communities
- **A Society that supports the vulnerable:**  
Coordinated support to individuals and communities to reduce the impact of Welfare Reform, to prevent homelessness, and to facilitate a balanced housing stock that meets the needs of all local people

The “Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 2023” sits beneath the “Somerset Housing Strategy” and works to support the vision and priorities detailed in it.. The “Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019 – 2023” details what we know, what we are doing and what we will do to continue to improve the service we provide.

### **3 OVERVIEW OF HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING IN MENDIP, SEDGEMOOR, SOUTH SOMERSET, SOMERSET WEST AND TAUNTON**

There were 478 homeless applications decisions taken in Somerset during 2018/19. Out of these 218 were owed a homelessness duty<sup>1</sup>. The most common reason for initial contact throughout the county was the loss of an assured shorthold tenancy. The main reason for priority need was having dependent children, with the remaining factors covering the main criteria for a vulnerable individual.

58% of applicants owed a main duty were aged 25 – 44 years followed by the 16 -24 years age group, who made up 25% of the applicants. The younger bias of those in need of support is very clear.

A total of 1495 prevention and relief cases presented during 2018/19. Of this total, 133 were assisted to remain in their accommodation and 516 were assisted into alternative accommodation under the prevention duty (there were also another 251 that were assisted under the prevention duty but we were unable to break this down further)<sup>2</sup>, whilst 589 were assisted to relieve their homelessness under the relief duty<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> A main homelessness duty is owed where the authority is satisfied that an applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Such statutorily homeless households are referred to as ‘acceptances’.

<sup>2</sup> Homelessness prevention means providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions>. This could involve services such as debt advice, undertaking the Tenancy Accreditation Scheme, rapid response service, Intensive Tenancy Support, rapid support that is carried out jointly

The use of temporary accommodation has been consistently low in Somerset over the last few years; we have accommodated 106 people, in such accommodation, as of quarter 4 (January – March) of 2018/19.

As a result of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 (HRA) we are expecting demand for temporary accommodation to increase. This expectation stems from the fact that under this statutory provision we are obliged to help prevent an applicant becoming homeless, or relieve them of homelessness regardless of whether they are intentionally homeless. This requirement can mean that an applicant who is intentionally homeless will still need to be placed into temporary accommodation, if needed, whilst we try to relieve their homelessness during the 56 days' 'relief duty'.

We are also seeing an increase in the volume of approaches and the length of time staff are working on an individual case. This increase in volumes can mean that often cases where an applicant is likely to be intentionally homeless now remain with the officer concerned, as part of their casework, until a final decision is made.

We currently have approximately 568 armed forces veterans in the county who neither own nor rent a property and who could potentially become homeless. Homeless veterans have been found on average to be older and more likely to have alcohol-related problems. In considering the needs of homeless veterans, directing them to specialist advice can be as important as meeting their accommodation needs.

Pathways to Independence (P2i) is the commissioned service that deals with youth housing in Somerset. The highest proportion of youths needing help during 2018/19 were aged between 18-21 years, with the main reason for presenting being the threat of homelessness.

Positive Lives, which support adults with complex needs, supported 850 people during 2018. They provided other support too, such as helping 380 people to engage with education and training, 226 people to move into independent living and 47 people to gain employment.

We also saw the launch, in April 2019, of the 'Second Step' service which helps clients with complex needs to live fulfilling lives in their communities, thus retaining their tenancy and reducing repeated homelessness.

We continue to assess gypsy and traveller provision within the county to ensure that we have suitable sites for settled or settling gypsies and travellers as well as transit sites for those who are moving through the county.

Rough sleeping within the county is currently a challenge in the Taunton area of Somerset West and Taunton Council and for Mendip District Council, but is at low levels in the other Districts

## **4 GAPS IDENTIFIED IN CURRENT PROVISION:**

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between CAB & LA, mediation, floating support, deposit schemes, rough sleeper outreach, direct access hostels, tech loan to enable support etc.

<sup>3</sup> Homelessness relief<sup>3</sup> is where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation, even though the authority is under no statutory obligation to do so - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions>

# SOMERSET HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY

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The Somerset Homeless Needs Assessment concluded that:

- Population projections show that the population is due to grow faster than anticipated, especially in the former Taunton Deane area and in Sedgemoor. The challenge to deliver sufficient affordable homes and to support the tenure needs of our residents will become more pressing, not less.
- Whilst earnings have reduced, the average selling price of a house in Somerset has increased over the last five years, with a house costing typically close to eight times the earnings in the lowest quartile.
- There is a considerable gap in the affordability of homes for private rent in Somerset. The average rent currently accounts for 36% of the median gross monthly pay compared with 28% in 2015. Whilst the delivery of additional social housing may go some way to deal with the gap it will not resolve the entire issue for example affordable rents are not always affordable to all prospective tenants.
- The gap between the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and the market rent for private lets is a significant barrier in allowing applicants to secure a private rented property because they cannot secure financial support to make the home affordable. This can force people to make a difficult choice and move away from support; e.g. to move away from their family.
- The need to keep pushing for access to more and better quality private, rented stock
- The wider roll out of Universal Credit will place further demands on homeless services; we should continue to track these demands and may need to increase the proportions of Homefinder applicants who present in the Gold Band.
- More work should be done to look at long-term vacant dwellings, mirroring good practice across the districts and stepping up our existing efforts so these dwellings may be brought into use.
- When assessing what housing is needed in the county we need to ensure that adequate housing is provided which is suitable and available to help prevent youth homelessness. This may point to the need for smaller shared units rather than larger multi occupancy dwellings. Stakeholders also point to the need for more access for single, non-priority households
- The highest proportion of homeless applicants are aged 25-44 years, with the most common reason for being made homeless being due to receiving a notice to quit from a landlord. Work could be undertaken to understand the reasons why notice was served and what we could do to reduce the occurrences of this happening. Support could be given to landlords facing difficulties to stay in the private renting market if they are finding it problematic.
- Whilst we have been successful with cases, preventing and relieving their homelessness, we continue to seek new ways to reduce the number of people approaching us needing temporary accommodation.
- We anticipate further demands on the time of service providers in dealing with cases and the volume of approaches following the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (namely, 56 days'

prevention duty and 56 days relief duty). We now have a duty to produce and agree a personal housing plan, support all clients for a longer period during the extended duty time, and including increased length of time in Temporary Accommodation.

- When working with veterans and their families, additional protocols may be needed to signpost to support with other factors, such as PTSD, alcohol or mental health problems exacerbating the situation.
- We have an ageing population in Somerset, especially in the 85 years and older group. The future needs of older people need to rise up the agenda and more energy given to understanding their requirements and delivering more options to meet them.
- Rough sleeping is a challenge in two districts in particular, due to numbers and complexity of need, and will continue to demand sustained focus and resource with additional interventions, strategies and coordinated partnership working. It's likely that there is rough sleeping which is 'unseen', which would include those sofa surfing, sleeping in vehicles hidden in rural areas.
- The need for increased collaborative working with partnership agencies especially to support the vulnerable and those with complex needs.
- We should continue to intervene where possible to help clients to remain in their existing homes to aid the prevention of homelessness.

## 5 WHAT WILL WE PRIORITISE?

Since the adoption of the Interim Homelessness Strategy we have seen the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act (HRA) in April 2018. A priority for the new strategy will be to review the impact of this Act over the term of the new strategy.

### **PRIORITY 1: Provision of adequate, affordable housing stock**

As a result of the widening affordability gap, it is important that we continue to press developers to deliver affordable homes of all tenures. We can also prop up the provision of appropriate housing through bringing existing vacant dwellings back into use and by supporting landlords to continue to make homes available for social rent. Finally, we should push for the continued improvement of the quality of private rented housing stock.

### **PRIORITY 2: Support clients to remain in their existing accommodation where appropriate.**

This priority involves looking at and improving the range of options, support and tools that can assist an individual in remaining in their existing accommodation. Needing to move accommodation can be hugely disruptive and costly for individuals and families; being able to sustain current accommodation can deliver cost savings for Local Authorities and their partner agencies. In particular, we need to reduce the incidence of those aged 25-44 years being given notice to quit. Understanding the detail behind this may require further engagement with this group.

This priority would help us to meet the 'prevention duty' detailed in the HRA 2017 which places a duty on us as districts to make available for all who are at risk of becoming

homeless and not just those individuals that are in 'priority need'<sup>4</sup>. Prevention duty lasts for 56 days and is designed to reduce homelessness. If we are not able to prevent the individual becoming homeless they will then come under 'relief duty' which requires housing authorities to help those that are homeless to secure accommodation. This duty applies to individuals that are both homeless and eligible for assistance. The 'relief duty' lasts for another 56 days; during this time reasonable steps must be taken by the housing authority and the applicant to secure accommodation. These steps are set out in a personalised housing plan (PHP) which is drawn up with the applicant. The PHP is a new requirement to help the applicant take ownership and work with the housing advice team to relieve their homelessness.

### **PRIORITY 3: Support specific client groups to access suitable accommodation through effective support**

It may not always be possible for a client to remain in their current accommodation so where a move cannot be avoided, this priority will support and empower them to access suitable accommodation that is affordable to them in a timely manner. This priority looks at the options open to clients and considers the accommodation choices available such as the private rented sector and move-on options.

More specifically, we need to ensure that adequate housing is provided to help prevent youth homelessness, which may point to the need for smaller shared units rather than larger, multi-occupancy dwellings. We also have an ageing population, especially evident in the growing number of those aged 85 years or older, and we need to commit to understanding their needs to enable us to plan to meet their future needs.

### **PRIORITY 4: Support the government's commitment to combat rough sleeping.**

All the district are committed to support the MHCLG commitment to combat rough sleeping. Whilst there will be common approaches within the county there will be targeted approaches to address specific needs within the district, such as:

Collectively being robust in our reconnection policies  
Effective emergency accommodation provision  
Cold weather provision and outreach service to support and empower individuals off the street

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<sup>4</sup> "The following have a priority need for accommodation:

- a pregnant woman or a person with whom she resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- a person with whom dependent children reside or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- a person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reason, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;
- a person who is homeless or threatened with homelessness as a result of an emergency such as flood, fire or other disaster."

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/52/section/189>

## **PRIORITY 5: Maintain strong working relationships across partnerships.**

This strategy is a partnership approach between four Local Authorities as well as their partners. It cannot be delivered in isolation and this priority recognises the need for existing working relationships to be maintained and built upon. Effective partnership working brings a number of benefits including the sharing of best practice and effective use of resources to deliver cost savings to all working partners and, for this reason, it remains a priority.

We especially need to work together to ensure there is support for vulnerable individuals and those with complex needs.

Many of those sleeping rough will have complex needs, but there will be others across the District who are highly vulnerable, including those with dual diagnosis, where the only option is to work in partnership if we are to improve their outlook.

## **PRIORITY 6: Track and respond to the impacts of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017**

The Act became effective from 3rd April 2018 and requires the expansion of existing homeless services. It presents a number of challenges due to the level of change it required and associated resource implications.

We need to:

- Continue to deliver prevention focussed housing options services in line with the HRA 2017
- Retain the staff we have to avoid recruitment due to the difficulty in obtaining experienced housing options staff
- Staff retention due to resilience of housing options staff.
- An increased number in temporary accommodation due to the length of time we now have to accommodate under the HRA 2017

## SOMERSET HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY

### 6 WHAT WILL WE DO?

The following actions relate to the conclusions identified in the ‘Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment 2019’. The priorities and actions relate to the county as a whole, if an action is just connected to a specific authority this will be detailed in the responsibility section so that this is clear. Each priority is detailed individually on the following pages with the relevant actions detailed below the priority for ease. The actions have been categorised as those which we can **deliver**, those which we will **enable** and those where the role of the council is to **support**:

#### PRIORITY 1: Provision of adequate, affordable housing stock

Our role	Action	Timescale (Importance)	Responsibility	Measure	Review date
Enable	Strengthen our relationships with registered providers and developers to increase the amount of new affordable housing provided within the county	Ongoing	Enabling Teams		
Enable	Maximise the provision of 1 bed affordable social housing accommodation across all areas by working with registered providers and new build developers		Enabling Teams		
Support	Work with P2i to look at the types of accommodation that is needed for dealing with youth homelessness and where these dwellings would be best located	ongoing	HMG		
Deliver	Look at the vacancies that have arisen on Homefinder for social housing supported accommodation for older people which have been difficult to let to try and establish the reasons why and look at what is needed to ensure that this accommodation is desirable to older persons		Homefinder Management and Monitoring Board		
Enable	Share best practice in bringing more private sector properties back into use to increase our success rate		Empty Homes Officers/Team		



## SOMERSET HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY

### PRIORITY 2: Support clients to remain in their existing accommodation where appropriate

Our role	Action	Timescale (Importance)	Responsibility	Measure	Review date
Support	Work with landlords to overcome barriers to keeping property on the private rented market.		HMG		
Deliver	Consider whether a Private Rented Officer is needed to work with landlords to overcome barriers such as: bonds not being accepted; Universal Credit applicants being rejected; finding solutions so that the applicant is accommodated and the landlord is reassured with any concerns they may have. This could also cover areas such as working with the applicants to get rent paid direct to the landlord if needed as there has been some movement on this since Universal Credit was first introduced		HMG		
Deliver	Continue to deliver “value for money” prevention schemes to support homelessness prevention, building on previous initiatives such as tenancy support; mediation and rent in advance for non-priority cases		HMG		
Deliver	Create a group with local authorities and registered providers across Somerset to highlight anti-social behaviour and rent arrears cases that are facing action as part of the prevention protocol		HMG		

### PRIORITY 3: Support specific client groups to access suitable accommodation through effective planning

Our role	Action	Timescale (Importance)	Responsibility	Measure	Review date
Deliver	To review how we deliver bespoke good quality and meaningful Personal Housing Plan tasks. Explore opportunities to improve and streamline the process as it is currently resource intensive		HMG		
Deliver	Look at joint training opportunities for staff to improve the quality of advice		HMG		
Support	Identify support schemes across the county and work in partnership to ensure clients can access effectively		HMG		

## SOMERSET HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPER STRATEGY

### PRIORITY 4: Support the government’s commitment to combat rough sleeping.

Our role	Action	Timescale (Importance)	Responsibility	Measure	Review date
Deliver	Continue to monitor the extent of rough sleeping bi-monthly so that swift action can be taken when new rough sleepers are identified	Ongoing	HMG		
Enable	Work with partner organisations to ensure there are viable accommodation options and effective housing pathways to help new and longer term rough sleepers	Ongoing	HMG		

### PRIORITY 5: Strengthen working relationships across partnerships.

Our role	Action	Timescale (Importance)	Responsibility	Measure	Review date
Deliver	Monitor the Second step contract to ensure that positive outcomes are delivered for this client group		HMG		

### PRIORITY 6: Track the impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 on available resource

Our role	Action	Timescale (Importance)	Responsibility	Measure	Review date
Deliver	Monitor the volume and quality of cases following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act 2017		HMG		
Deliver	Review the throughput of temporary accommodation given the increase in demand and length of time we now have to accommodate people under the act		HMG		
Support	Work with DWP to increase the advice and opportunities to our customers to maximise their income and skills		HMG		
Deliver	Review the process for dealing with homelessness and the Homefinder policy as some elements of the Homefinder policy can have a negative impact. Additionally review the quality and efficiency of advice given by the teams and make recommendations for improvement		HMG		
Deliver	Review the outcomes of the use of a hospital discharge worker in South Somerset		HMG		
Deliver	Review the outcomes of the use of a drug and alcohol worker in South Somerset		HMG		

## 7 HOW WILL WE BE MEASURED?

The 'Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2019-2023' will be implemented by each district through the Homeless Managers Group (HMG) who will be responsible for the day to day delivery of this strategy and actions contained within the action plan; including monitoring progress against actions and targets at the monthly HMG meetings. There will also be a link with the Strategic Housing Officers Group (SHOG) who are responsible for the delivery plan for the 'Somerset Housing Strategy 2019-2023' so close links will be maintained between both groups to ensure we keep track of progress on all actions overall.

Each district will also have their own additional measures in place to monitor the progress of the actions relating to their district as well as performance monitoring which covers things such as: number of households helped; number of households in temporary accommodation and average number of nights in bed and breakfast. These measures are normally reported on a quarterly basis so, can be evaluated at each quarter to assess if there is anything that needs to be looked at in more detail or actioned in addition to the action plan itself.

# **Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Needs Assessment 2019**

Mendip District Council  
Sedgemoor District Council  
South Somerset District Council  
Somerset West and Taunton Council

June 2019

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## INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the extent of homelessness and rough sleeping across Somerset at the level of a district authority. It takes into account the characteristics of those who find themselves homeless and the reasons for their homelessness. This assessment of need can be evaluated against existing provision and can assist in identifying gaps. Throughout this document, we will clarify the differences that arise within the county and understand these differences to assist in the development and delivery of plans that meet local need.

This information will inform the development of a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy for Somerset, which will be accompanied by a clear delivery plan.

### 1. THE SOMERSET DISTRICTS

1.1. There are currently four Somerset districts located in the South West region of England. In April 2019, Taunton Deane and West Somerset Council combined to form Somerset West and Taunton Council. For the purposes of this document some information from these two councils will be considered separately if this is how the evidence is presented:

- Mendip District Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- South Somerset District Council
- Somerset West and Taunton Council (formerly Taunton Deane & West Somerset District)

1.2. These councils are represented in the map below:



1.3. The size and population for each District is shown below:

Table 1: District Size and Population

	Size <sup>1</sup>	Population <sup>2</sup>
<b>Mendip</b>	739km <sup>2</sup>	113,500
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	606km <sup>2</sup>	122,200
<b>South Somerset</b>	959km <sup>2</sup>	167,200
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	463km <sup>2</sup>	117,500
<b>West Somerset</b>	747km <sup>2</sup>	34,800
<b>Total</b>	3514km <sup>2</sup>	555,200

1.4. South Somerset is the largest district, geographically, and has the highest population. West Somerset was the most rural district as it encompassed parts of Exmoor and the Quantocks and had a very low population density.

1.5. The table below shows population projections for each District. The predictions have been made using figures from 2016. It appears, based on the figures shown in Table 2 that the population of Taunton Deane, Mendip and West Somerset has grown faster than anticipated. It is expected that Sedgemoor however, will have experienced the largest population change. (Source: 2016 based, ONS, nearest thousand<sup>3</sup>)

Table 2: Population Projections

	2017	2018	2019	2020	% Change
<b>Mendip</b>	113,700	114,400	115,100	115,800	1.85%
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	122,400	123,600	124,700	125,900	2.86%
<b>South Somerset</b>	167,200	168,000	168,700	169,500	1.37%
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	116,900	117,800	118,800	119,800	2.48%
<b>West Somerset</b>	34,500	34,400	34,500	34,500	0%

1.6. This anticipated increase could have an impact on the need for additional affordable housing. Table 3 shows the current expressed need on Homefinder Somerset (our Choice Based Lettings system). It shows there are currently 8795 people expressing a need for affordable housing. This expressed need via Homefinder is likely to be less than actual need since there will be others who need affordable housing, but who have not registered on Homefinder.

<sup>1</sup> Source: ESRI ArcGIS 10.2.2

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/contents.aspx> - Local Authority Profile

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/localauthoritiesinenglandtable2>

Table 3: Current Expressed Housing Need for Somerset

Number of Bedrooms	District	Bronze	Emergency	Sliver	Gold	Total
<b>1 Bedroom</b>	Mendip	418	2	276	54	750
	Sedgemoor	612	1	268	59	940
	South Somerset	555	3	308	82	948
	Taunton Deane	898	3	378	150	1429
	West Somerset	300	1	104	40	445
<b>2 Bedroom</b>	Mendip	275	1	246	31	553
	Sedgemoor	381	1	273	30	685
	South Somerset	323	1	243	42	609
	Taunton Deane	470	0	334	76	880
	West Somerset	127	0	71	11	209
<b>3 Bedroom</b>	Mendip	76	1	132	12	221
	Sedgemoor	109	1	161	24	295
	South Somerset	101	0	168	21	290
	Taunton Deane	135	0	210	28	373
	West Somerset	43	0	40	3	86
<b>4 Bedroom</b>	Mendip	4	0	27	9	40
	Sedgemoor	18	0	56	9	83
	South Somerset	9	0	58	8	75
	Taunton Deane	22	0	70	20	112
	West Somerset	3	0	23	5	31
<b>5 Bedroom</b>	Mendip	1	0	1	3	5
	Sedgemoor	2	0	4	4	10
	South Somerset	1	0	6	5	12
	Taunton Deane	0	0	5	7	12
	West Somerset	0	0	1	2	3
<b>6 Bedroom</b>	Sedgemoor	0	0	1	2	3
	South Somerset	0	0	1	1	2
<b>Grand Total</b>		4883	15	3465	738	9101

\*Please note this is a snapshot of the number of active applications, on a given day. Unregistered and hidden housing need is not reflected in this figure.

- 1.7. These tables indicate that the highest demand for affordable housing is for one bedroom accommodation. Although this is the dwelling size with the highest need, it should be noted that vacancies arise more frequently for these types of dwellings so some of the need will be met through this natural turnover. The data shows that demand decreases, as the size of property gets larger. For example, a six-bedroom property has the lowest demand based on this data but the supply of these larger dwellings is significantly lower, and they are not often available through ad-hoc vacancies so demand for the larger dwellings, such as 5 and 6 bedroom homes is harder to meet.



- 1.8. The table below shows the population split by age within each district in 2017 (*Source: Nomis<sup>4</sup>*).

Table 4: Population by age

	<b>Mendip</b>	<b>Sedgemoor</b>	<b>South Somerset</b>	<b>Taunton Deane</b>	<b>West Somerset</b>	<b>Somerset Average</b>
<b>Under 15</b>	16.8%	17%	16.5%	17%	13%	16%
<b>15-24</b>	10.5%	10.3%	9.8%	10.0%	8.6%	10%
<b>25-44</b>	20.8%	21.1%	21.2%	23.0%	15.6%	20%
<b>45-59</b>	22.7%	21.9%	21.1%	21.0%	21.0%	22%
<b>60-64</b>	6.4%	6.5%	6.5%	6.2%	8.1%	7%
<b>65-74</b>	12.6%	12.9%	13.7%	12.1%	18.2%	14%
<b>75+</b>	10.1%	10.2%	11.2%	10.6%	15.6%	12%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

- 1.9. Data relating to age can be helpful in explaining the differences we see in requests for specific accommodation, for example, bungalows or assisted living accommodation. Across the districts, the highest prevalence is for ages 25-59, except in West Somerset where the highest groups are 45-59 and 65-74. In Taunton we see a slightly higher proportion of 25-44 year olds whilst, in West Somerset, 42% are 60 years or older, compared to 33% for Somerset as a whole.
- 1.10. Table 5 shows the details of working age people within the county who are claiming benefit principally because they are unemployed.

Table 5: Out of Work Benefits (*Source Nomis<sup>5</sup>*)

	<b>Mendip</b>	<b>Sedgemoor</b>	<b>South Somerset</b>	<b>Taunton Deane</b>	<b>West Somerset</b>
<b>Claimant count</b>	1,665	1,990	1,705	1,502	365
<b>Population aged 16-64</b>	67,300	71,800	96,500	69,600	18,400
<b>Percentage of population total</b>	2.47%	2.77%	1.77%	2.16%	1.98%

- 1.11. As part of its welfare reform programme, the government introduced a new benefit called Universal Credit.
- 1.12. Universal Credit is a new single payment for people who are looking for work or on a low income. Universal Credit helps claimants and their families to become more independent, it simplifies the benefits system by bringing together a range of working-age benefits into a single payment. It replaces: income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credits, Working Tax Credits and Housing Benefit <sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157378/report.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157378/report.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-welfare-reform/2010-to-2015-government-policy-welfare-reform#appendix-1-government-policy-on-universal-credit-an-introduction>

- 1.13. Under Universal Credit, a broader span of claimants is required to look for work than under Jobseeker's Allowance. As Universal Credits Full Service is rolled out in particular areas, the number of people recorded as being on the Claimant Count is therefore likely to rise.<sup>7</sup>
- 1.14. Research has been conducted into the impact of Universal Credit: Inside Housing reported that, since April 2018, among the 42 Universal Credit areas, 4,940 households have declared themselves homeless to their council while claiming the benefit out of 168, 653 universal credit households. In the other 31 areas over the same period, 3,500 households were receiving housing benefit at the point of presenting as homeless. This translates as 1 in 34 Universal Credit households having become homeless this year compared with 1 in 79 housing benefit households<sup>8</sup>. We believe we are seeing a negative impact amongst Universal Credit claimants on arrears compared to claimants of other benefits but we are not always able to evidence the link directly: as the number of people on Universal Credit rises, problems are likely to be compounded.

## 2. HOUSING MARKET, DEMAND AND SUPPLY

- 2.1. The Somerset Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) states, "A household is considered to be able to afford to buy a home if it costs less than four times the gross household income. It is assumed that a household would have a 10% deposit".<sup>9</sup>
- 2.2. Table 6 shows the ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile gross annual (where available) residence-based earnings (residence-based earnings refer to the median or lower quartile earnings based on the area in which an individual lives, whereas workplace-based earnings refer to earnings based on the area in which the individual works<sup>10</sup>) by local authority district since 2013. "The lower quartile is the value determined by putting all the house prices or earnings for a given area and year, in order of value, and then selecting the value of the house prices or earnings that fall three-quarters of the way down the list, such that 75% lie above and 25% lie below that value. These ratios are particularly useful for assessing housing affordability to indicate the entry level for first-time buyers".<sup>11</sup> 'Affordability ratios are calculated by dividing house prices by gross annual residence-based earnings.' (Source: ONS<sup>12</sup>)

Table 6: House price to residence-based earnings ratio

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
<b>Mendip</b>	8.37	8.73	8.77	8.75	10.23
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	6.87	6.98	7.64	7.74	8.04
<b>South Somerset</b>	7.16	7.33	8.19	7.89	7.61
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	7.83	7.94	8.06	8.04	7.97
<b>West Somerset</b>	9.17	10.09	9.02	10.09	10.25
<b>South West</b>	7.78	8.03	8.27	8.50	8.75
<b>England</b>	6.57	6.91	7.11	7.16	7.26

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157378/report.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/insight/insight/starting-to-bite--how-universal-credit-is-making-people-homeless-59445>

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/862544/somerset\\_final\\_shma\\_oct2016\\_revised.pdf](https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/862544/somerset_final_shma_oct2016_revised.pdf)

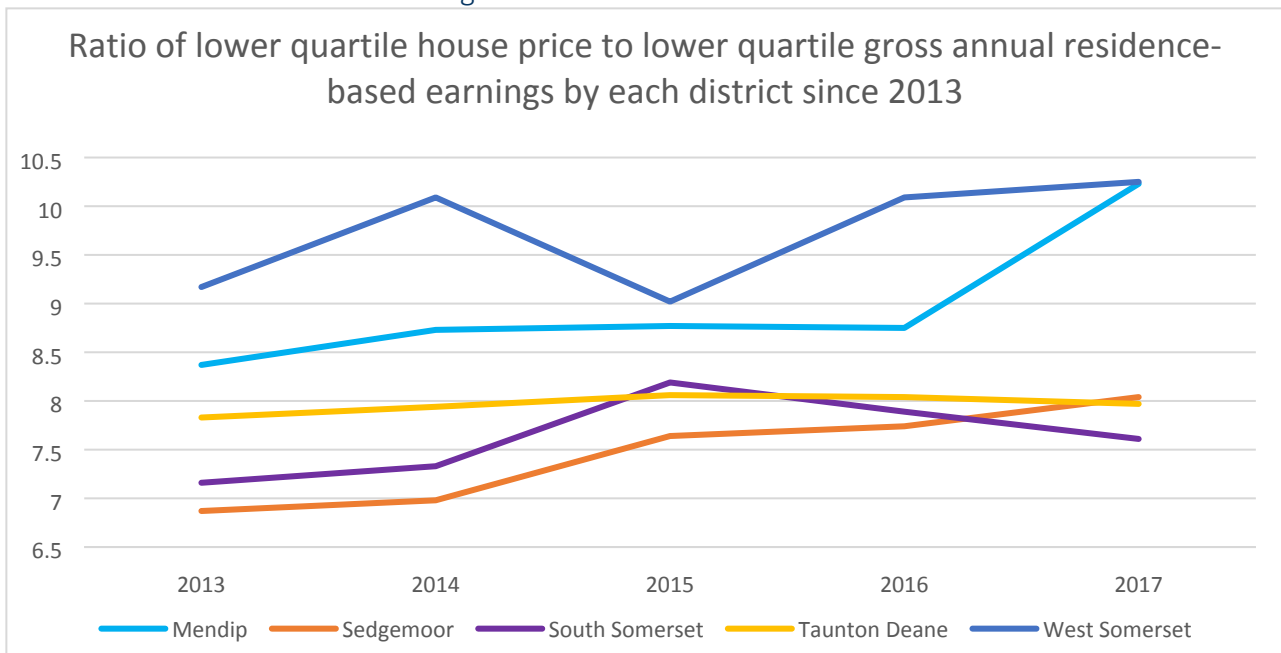
<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/qmis/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales> - quality and methodology information

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/qmis/housingaffordabilityinenglandandwales> - quality and methodology information

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/ratioofhousepricetoresidencebasedearningslowerquartileandmedian> - Table 6C and 2C

- 2.3. The data in Table 6 highlights that households would require more than 7.6 times their earnings to afford a home in Somerset, although there is wide disparity in affordability across the Somerset Districts. The highest ratio is in Mendip and West Somerset where in 2017 a household would have required more than 10 times their earnings to afford a home. Sedgemoor has also seen a sharp ratio increase.
- 2.4. This affordability is hindered further by the national employment shift to zero hour contracts rather than traditional employment contracts. This change can prove a barrier to accessing rented accommodation and in meeting any affordability tests of income and expenditure, thus obstructing the ability to become an owner-occupier. Mortgage lenders can be reluctant to lend against an uncertain income stream. ONS figures show that, in 2017, 16% of the UK workforce (aged 16 years and over) were on a zero hours contract, and in 2018, this rose to 16.4%. (Source ONS<sup>13</sup>)
- 2.5. The graph below shows how the lower quartile income in the area compared to the lower quartile house price over time since 2013. Taunton Deane is the only district to have maintained its ratio; in all other districts, the situation has been worsening, with house prices in the lower quartile typically being at best close to eight times earnings in the lowest quartile. This starkly illustrates the difficulty of housing affordability across Somerset when considered against the accepted standard for affordability (four times earnings).

Chart 1: House Prices to Earnings



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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/emp17peopleinemploymentonzerohourscontracts>

2.6. Table 7 depicts the mean price paid for homes by local authority area. (Source: ONS<sup>14</sup>)

Table 7: Mean House Price

District	House Type	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	% difference in last 12 months
<b>Mendip</b>	Detached	370,165	359,6222	419,599	419,056	-0.13%
	Semi Detached	211,331	221,067	244,488	260,846	6.69%
	Terraced	200,878	204,863	229,472	236,333	2.99%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	132,419	129,404	142,117	141,464	-0.46%
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	Detached	290,487	295,959	321,511	342,483	6.52%
	Semi Detached	177,000	194,351	204,238	215,171	5.35%
	Terraced	148,281	151,945	166,763	169,213	1.47%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	101,548	107,430	119,328	125,382	5.07%
<b>South Somerset</b>	Detached	310,574	324,102	345,141	367,622	6.51%
	Semi Detached	199,106	198,188	210,990	215,951	2.35%
	Terraced	165,312	171,053	183,227	186,697	1.89%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	108,275	109,226	110,009	118,113	7.37%
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	Detached	312,756	322,739	348,318	355,424	2.04%
	Semi Detached	200,648	209,542	213,849	232,881	8.90%
	Terraced	171,784	175,888	184,398	190,153	3.12%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	159,275	139,241	143,009	143,912	0.63%
<b>West Somerset</b>	Detached	318,137	315,281	336,123	361,327	7.50%
	Semi Detached	209,765	218,966	222,072	236,534	6.51%
	Terraced	172,906	182,168	177,088	195,998	10.68%
	Flats/ Maisonettes	159,970	128,097	133,442	130,037	-2.55%

2.7. The evidence shown in the table above demonstrates how the mean house price has changed over the last 4 years, moving house purchase further beyond the reach of many residents.

<sup>14</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/housing/datasets/meanhousepriceforationalandsubnationalgeographiesquarterlyrollingyearhpssadataset12> - Table 2b-2e

2.8. Table 8 shows the median private rents by District since 2014/15, data is taken from October to September (Source: ONS).

Table 8: Median Monthly Private Rents

	<b>Bedroom Size</b>	<b>2014/15<sup>15</sup></b>	<b>2015/16<sup>16</sup></b>	<b>2016/17<sup>17</sup></b>	<b>2017/18<sup>18</sup></b>	<b>% Increase over last 3 years</b>
<b>Mendip</b>	1 bedroom	465	455	475	475	4%
	2 bedroom	595	625	625	625	0%
	3 bedroom	730	750	775	775	3%
	4 bedroom	995	1,050	995	1,150	10%
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	1 bedroom	425	430	450	450	5%
	2 bedroom	550	550	575	595	8%
	3 bedroom	678	695	720	725	4%
	4 bedroom	885	900	900	925	3%
<b>South Somerset</b>	1 bedroom	430	450	450	455	1%
	2 bedroom	575	595	595	600	1%
	3 bedroom	695	700	725	750	7%
	4 bedroom	950	995	995	1,000	1%
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	1 bedroom	450	450	475	475	6%
	2 bedroom	585	595	600	625	5%
	3 bedroom	700	700	735	750	7%
	4 bedroom	1,000	995	1,000	1,100	11%
<b>West Somerset</b>	1 bedroom	453	475	475	475	0%
	2 bedroom	575	585	595	600	3%
	3 bedroom	675	675	695	700	4%
	4 bedroom	855	950	950	933	-2%
<b>Somerset</b>	1 bedroom	450	450	450	475	6%
	2 bedroom	575	590	595	610	3%
	3 bedroom	695	700	725	750	7%
	4 bedroom	950	988	995	1,000	1%
<b>South West</b>	1 bedroom	500	525	550	574	9%
	2 bedroom	625	650	675	695	7%
	3 bedroom	750	795	800	830	4%
	4 bedroom	1,200	1,250	1,288	1,368	9%
<b>England</b>	1 bedroom	540	575	595	600	4%
	2 bedroom	595	625	650	650	4%
	3 bedroom	695	715	750	750	5%
	4 bedroom	1,200	1,275	1,300	1,320	4%

\*Counts are rounded to the nearest 10

<sup>15</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-england-2014-15 - Table 2.3 - 2.6>

<sup>16</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-october-2015-to-september-2016 - 2.6>

<sup>17</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-october-2016-to-september-2017 - Table 2.3 - 2.6>

<sup>18</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/private-rental-market-summary-statistics-october-2017-to-september-2018 - Table 2.3 - 2.6>

2.9. Table 9 shows the gross monthly pay for full time workers. This sum has been calculated using a weekly gross pay for full time workers.

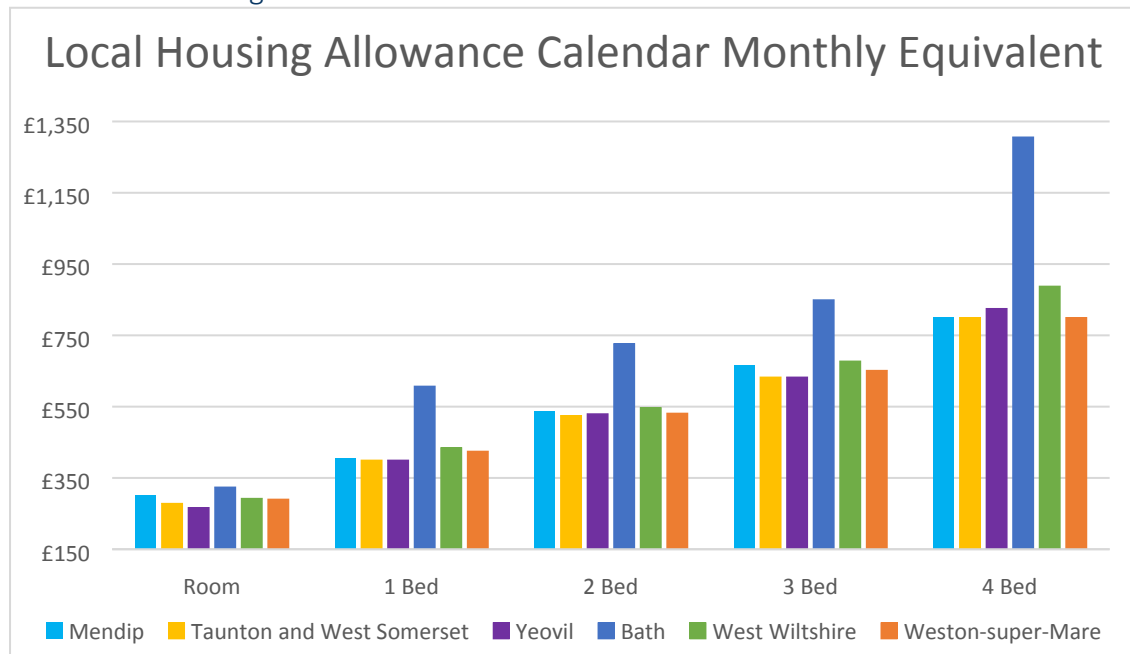
Table 9: Median gross monthly pay (Full time)<sup>19</sup>

	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Mendip</b>	£2216.5	£2178.8	£2314.9	£2129.4
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	£2063.1	£2019.8	£2262.9	£1763.2
<b>South Somerset</b>	£1975.1	£2074.4	£2107.3	£1791.0
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	£2119.9	£2200.0	£2225.6	£1789.2
<b>West Somerset</b>	£2375.1	No data	£1742.4	£1409.2
<b>Somerset</b>	£2076.1	£2093.4	£2228.6	£1733.3
<b>South West</b>	£2159.3	£2224.7	£2283.7	£1866.4
<b>England</b>	£2304.9	£2360.4	£2408.5	£2019.3

2.10. The figures in tables 8 and 9 indicate a widening gap in affordability to rent. Average monthly earnings have dropped significantly with the median monthly rent accounting for an average of 36% of the gross monthly pay. This figure has increased since 2015 where the average for Somerset as a whole was 28%.

2.11. The chart below shows the Local Housing Allowance rate in each district (Source: LHA 2016 table<sup>20</sup>). 'Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates are used to calculate housing benefit and the Housing Element of Universal Credit for tenants renting from private landlords. LHA rates relate to the area in which you make your claim. These areas are called Broad Rental Market Areas (BRMA). A BRMA is where a person could reasonably be expected to live taking into account access to facilities and services'<sup>21</sup>. There are six BRMAs being used within the county of Somerset:

Chart 2: Local Housing Allowance



<sup>19</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/earningsandworkinghours/datasets/placeofresidencebylocalauthorityshetable8>

<sup>20</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-housing-allowance-lha-rates-applicable-from-april-2018-to-march-2019> - Table 4

<sup>21</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/understanding-local-housing-allowances-rates-broad-rental-market-areas>

2.12. The LHA boundaries do not mirror district boundaries. Of the six BRMAs (see Chart 3), Bath receives the highest Local Housing Allowance (LHA) across all housing types. When comparing Yeovil, Mendip and Taunton Deane, it can be seen that Mendip has the highest LHA for all property sizes except for 4-bed accommodation, where this is higher for Yeovil. Taunton Deane and Yeovil have very similar LHAs across all property types; however, Taunton Deane has a higher rate for rooms.

2.13. We have seen from the data above that there is a considerable gap in the affordability of homes either to purchase or to privately rent in Somerset because of low earnings relative to house prices and rental values. The need for affordable housing is evident from these ratios.

2.14. Table 10 also included within the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2016, demonstrates the estimated annual need for affordable housing by location. There was no data available for West Somerset as they were not part of the SHMA although need for West Somerset is shown in the information obtained from Homefinder Somerset.

Table 10: Estimated Annual Affordable Housing Need

	<b>Current need* (annualised)</b>	<b>Newly forming households</b>	<b>Existing households falling into need</b>	<b>Total need</b>	<b>Re-let supply</b>	<b>Net need</b>	<b>Net need % of Total need</b>
<b>Mendip</b>	17	351	191	559	319	240	43%
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	15	408	232	655	354	301	46%
<b>South Somerset</b>	20	466	379	865	659	206	24%
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	17	363	393	774	613	161	21%
<b>Somerset</b>	74	1665	1274	3013	2058	955	

\* Current need reflects the annual number of households already expressing a need of affordable housing and includes households without housing ('concealed households'<sup>22</sup>).

2.15. Table 10a details the gross need for intermediate and affordable/social rented housing taken from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) 2016 (figure 7.13<sup>23</sup>). The SHMA also mentions other factors that should be considered when looking at the table below such as the savings an applicant may have/access to a deposit and the supply of intermediate housing.

<sup>22</sup> Concealed households are family units or single adults living within 'host' households - [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/6338/1776873.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6338/1776873.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/1344/strategic-housing-market-assessment-oct-16.pdf>

Table 10a: Gross need for Intermediate and affordable/social rented housing

Component of need (all per annum)	Intermediate Housing	Affordable rented	Social rented	Total
Current need	3	5	66	74
Newly forming households	234	244	1187	1665
Existing households falling into need	105	115	1054	1274
Total	342	364	2307	3013
Percentage of Total	11%	12%	77%	100%
Mendip	12%	14%	75%	100%
Sedgemoor	12%	13%	75%	100%
South Somerset	11%	10%	79%	100%
Taunton Deane	11%	13%	76%	100%

2.16. The figures above show the suggested percentages of need for the different tenures provided as affordable housing. It is clear in all districts that the highest need is for social rented dwellings which account for 70-80% of the need overall whilst intermediate housing and affordable rented housing account for 10-15% each.

2.17. The table below shows the number of households on Homefinder Somerset since 2013, data is taken up to 28th November 2018 (Source: Homefinder Somerset).

Table 11 Percentage of Households Registered on Homefinder Somerset in 2018

	Household population projection <sup>24</sup>	No of households on Homefinder	% of population on Homefinder
<b>Mendip</b>	11100	1491	1.34%
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	122000	1920	1.57%
<b>South Somerset</b>	164000	2041	1.24%
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	114000	2628	2.31%
<b>West Somerset</b>	33000	710	2.15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>545000</b>	<b>8790</b>	<b>1.61%</b>

2.18. There are currently just under 9000 active households who have registered on Homefinder and expressed a need for affordable housing, although in the last 12 months 10,562 have applied. This indicates there is a strong demand that outweighs the supply. The district with the most households shown as having an "active" status on Homefinder (as opposed to closed or housed etc.) reside in Taunton Deane and the least in West Somerset, although the expressed need is still high in South Somerset and Sedgemoor. The number of households registered on Homefinder account for just under 2% of the households, overall, in the county.

2.19. Table 12 shows the current need per district by band for all households currently registered on Homefinder Somerset (as at 28th November 2018). This should be seen in relation to Table 3 where property sizes were detailed for each district (Source: Homefinder Somerset Report).

<sup>24</sup> Where universal credit has already been rolled out, this would be used to calculate the housing element of Universal Credit

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/datasets/householdprojectionsforengland> - table 426






Table 12: No Registered in Each Band on Homefinder Somerset

<b>Local Authority</b>	<b>Band</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Mendip District Council</b>	Bronze	734
	Silver	636
	Gold	118
	Emergency	4
<b>Mendip District Council Total</b>		<b>1492</b>
<b>Sedgemoor District Council</b>	Bronze	1058
	Silver	738
	Gold	122
	Emergency	4
<b>Sedgemoor District Council Total</b>		<b>1922</b>
<b>South Somerset District Council</b>	Bronze	1028
	Silver	819
	Gold	186
	Emergency	7
<b>South Somerset District Council Total</b>		<b>2040</b>
<b>Taunton Deane Borough Council</b>	Bronze	1474
	Silver	899
	Gold	256
	Emergency	2
<b>Taunton Deane Borough Council Total</b>		<b>2631</b>
<b>West Somerset Council</b>	Bronze	437
	Silver	216
	Gold	56
	Emergency	1
<b>West Somerset Council Total</b>		<b>710</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>8795</b>

2.20. Registered households are placed into four bands – Gold, Silver and Bronze plus a separate Emergency banding - to determine the urgency of their affordable housing need. Taunton Deane has the highest combined number of “Gold” and emergency need households, followed by South Somerset. This result could be reflective of the area’s population rate, or that the right types of dwellings are not available for the households concerned; or that they are in the wrong location. Additionally, Taunton offers a significant number of supported temporary accommodation (via a range of providers) which could be a pull factor for those who are homeless.

2.21. The banding criteria for each band are shown at Table 13. The Emergency Band is for those applicants that require an ‘urgent’ move to ensure their safety and welfare. The data demonstrates that both Taunton Deane and South Somerset have a higher proportion of applicants falling within the Gold Band.

Table 13: Banding Criteria for Homefinder Somerset

Gold Band – High need 	Silver Band – Medium Need 	Bronze Band – Low Need 
Homeless households who are owed a main homeless duty by a Homefinder Somerset partner authority.	Where the applicant lacks 1 bedroom in their current home.	Where an applicant is adequately housed.
Applicants who lack 2 or more bedrooms or have been confirmed as overcrowded by a Local Authority officer.	Applicants who can demonstrate a need to move for employment reasons or to give or receive support where significant harm would result if this was not provided.	Where applicants own their own property but whose home is not suitable for their needs but they have sufficient equity to address their housing needs.
Current supported housing residents or care leaving applicants who are assessed as ready to move on to independent living.	Where there is a medium medical need. Medium welfare need	Applicants with a low medical need. Applicants with a low welfare need.
High disrepair for people living in the private sector.	Medium disrepair for people living in the private sector.	Applicants living in short term supported housing or are care leavers prior to being ready to move at which stage they will move up to the gold band.
High medical need High welfare need	Applicants with dependent children and are lodging with friends or family or in accommodation with shared living facilities.	Applicants with no dependent children and are lodging with friends or family or in accommodation with shared living facilities.
Applicants awarded a 'medium' medical priority, combined with 'medium' disrepair award from the silver band.	Other homeless (where Homefinder Somerset partners do not owe an applicant a full homeless duty).	Applicants are assessed as having adequate financial resources to address their housing needs.
Victim of harassment or violence at their current property within the Homefinder Somerset area.	Applicants of split families who not by choice are living separately.	Applicant has no housing need.
Applicant awarded 4 or more silver band housing needs with the exception of applicants found to be intentionally homeless.		Applicant has deliberately worsened their circumstances or made use of the under occupation band before, or has accepted an offer that doesn't meet their needs previously.
Social housing tenants whose homes are subject to major works for rebuilding/renovation or re-designation.		Applicants with low disrepair needs living in private sector rented property.
Where the Local Authority receives written support from a Homefinder Somerset landlord that an applicant has no legal right to succession and the landlord will pursue possession.		Applicants that have no local connection applying for extra care or sheltered properties.

2.22. Table 14 shows the estimated size of dwellings needed for affordable housing 2014 to 2039 by Local Authority area (Source: Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2016; figure 10.8).

Table 14: Estimated Size of Affordable Dwellings Needed 2014-2039

	One bedroom	Two bedrooms	Three + bedrooms
<b>Mendip</b>	48.2%	31.5%	20.2%
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	43.3%	28.4%	28.3%
<b>South Somerset</b>	44.6%	37.3%	18.2%
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	47.5%	32.3%	20.2%

2.23. Table 15 shows the number of long-term vacant dwellings per District since 2013. Long-term vacant dwellings mean 'dwellings which have been unoccupied and substantially unfurnished for over six months' (Source: ONS<sup>25</sup>). There was just over 2000 long-term vacant dwellings as of October 2018 within the County, the highest proportion being within South Somerset. Bringing these dwellings back into use could help with the current shortfall in housing. Work is already underway on this aim as detailed in points 2.24 – 2.29.

Table 15: No of long term Vacant Dwellings

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018*
<b>Mendip</b>	470	439	404	460	479	332
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	390	277	269	335	325	376
<b>South Somerset</b>	470	636	739	595	643	657
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	428	473	464	456	388	453
<b>West Somerset</b>	211	224	202	224	241	223
<b>Total</b>	1969	2049	2078	2070	2076	2041

\*Provided by the Local Authority direct

<sup>25</sup><https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-dwelling-stock-including-vacants> - Table 615 Long Term Vacants

- 2.24. All districts work within their Authority to identify empty dwellings. They proactively work with the owners to understand the reasons the dwelling is empty to enable collaborative working with partners to help the owners access low cost loans and advice and guidance on repairs and leasing.
- 2.25. In particular, Sedgemoor, with funding linked with the Hinkley development, is leading on assisting homeowners with bringing empty properties back into use, leasing them from the owner and managing them to completion. This is being carried out in phases, with Phase One producing 690 bed spaces against a target of 320 and Phase Two to date producing 481 against their original target of 270.
- 2.26. Due to recent changes in legislation under the Local Government Finance Act 1992, local authorities now have the discretion to increase the council tax charges on empty dwellings. This is in addition to the existing 150% council tax on all dwellings that are empty for 2 years or more.
- 2.27. All districts either have already introduced increases in council tax charges for empty properties or are looking to do so in line with the new legislation. The charges range from a total charge of 200% to 300% for dwellings vacant for longer periods. This will help the districts in their commitment to encouraging empty dwellings being brought back to use.<sup>26</sup>
- 2.28. In certain circumstances if a dwelling remains empty the relevant district can take enforcement action. This can be in the form of an enforced sale, compulsory purchase order (CPO) or an empty dwelling management order (EDMO).
- 2.29. It is imperative that all districts monitor the benefit realisation of each targeted action to help inform future strategies.
- 2.30. Table 16 shows the number of affordable homes delivered by each District over the last 3 years. This includes the number of:
- 2.30.1. **Social rented dwellings** - local authorities and private registered providers own social rented housing (as defined in section 80 of the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008), for which guideline target rents are determined through the national rent regime. It may also be owned by other persons and provided under equivalent rental arrangements to the above, as agreed with the local authority or with Homes England.
- 2.30.2. **Affordable rented dwellings** - local authorities or private registered providers of social housing let affordable rented housing to households who are eligible. Affordable Rent is subject to rent controls that require a rent of no more than 80% of the local market rent (including service charges, where applicable).
- 2.30.3. **Intermediate housing** - Intermediate housing is homes for sale and rent provided at a cost above social rent, but below market levels subject to the criteria in the Affordable Housing definition above. These can include shared equity (shared ownership and equity loans), other low cost homes for sale and intermediate rent, but not affordable rented housing.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/25/enacted>

<sup>27</sup> [https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/862544/somerset\\_final\\_shma\\_oct2016\\_revised.pdf](https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/862544/somerset_final_shma_oct2016_revised.pdf)

2.30.4. Units provided as part of planning obligations would not be included; so we have obtained this information direct from the local authorities to ensure we included both in Table 16.

Table 16: No of Affordable Homes Delivered

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19*	Estimated Annual Affordable Housing Need
<b>Mendip</b>	120	38	189	100	240
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	98	147	65	130	301
<b>South Somerset</b>	128	48	86	122	206
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	222	284	92	218	161
<b>West Somerset</b>	21	40	21	3	47
<b>Total</b>	589	557	453	573	955

\*please note these figures are indicative

2.30.5. Although the number of affordable homes delivered has increased considerably, most notably in Taunton Deane; we are still around 40% short of what we need, annually, in order to meet need.

### 3. HOMELESSNESS IN MENDIP, SEDGEMOOR, SOUTH SOMERSET, SOMERSET WEST & TAUNTON

2.1. A main homelessness duty is owed where the authority is satisfied that an applicant is eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and falls within a specified priority need group. Such statutorily homeless households are referred to as 'acceptances'.

2.2. Table 17 table shows the outcome of homelessness applications by district for the year 2018/19. (Source: provided direct by local authority as the Government Live Tables did not cover this period at the time of preparing)

Table 17: Homeless Application Decisions

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Somerset West and Taunton
<b>Eligible, unintentionally homeless &amp; in priority need</b>	10	84	83	62
<b>Eligible, homeless, in priority need but intentionally Homeless</b>	4	7	9	0
<b>Eligible, homeless but not in priority need</b>	18	38	25	7
<b>Eligible but not homeless</b>	2	14	2	2
<b>Lost contact prior to assessment</b>	2	3	0	0
<b>Withdrew prior to assessment</b>	1	0	1	89*
<b>Not Eligible for assistance</b>	0	1	4	10
<b>Total</b>	37	147	124	170

\* When the HRA was introduced in 2018 any approach regarding homelessness, including those who approached via email and telephone, were recorded onto the system and taken through an initial triage. Out of 1170 approaches, 89 either failed to continue to engage to enable an assessment to be carried out or did not meet the criteria to continue with an assessment (i.e. they were not homeless/ threatened with homelessness or ineligible for assistance).

2.3. The top five reasons why an individual contacts the local authority with a threat of Homelessness<sup>28</sup> is detailed below:

Table 18 Top 5 Reasons for Initial Contact

<b>Mendip</b>	<b>Sedgemoor</b>	<b>South Somerset</b>	<b>Somerset West and Taunton</b>
Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy	Loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancy
Family no longer able/willing to accommodate	Family no longer able/willing to accommodate	Non- Violent breakdown of relationship	Family no longer able/willing to accommodate
Non- Violent breakdown of relationship	Non- Violent breakdown of relationship	Family no longer able/willing to accommodate	Non- Violent breakdown of relationship
Domestic abuse	Domestic abuse	Domestic abuse	Rough Sleeping
End of Social Rented Tenancy <sup>29</sup>	End of Social Rented Tenancy	End of Social Rented Tenancy	Friends no longer able/willing to accommodate

2.4. The table below shows the number of applicants that were accepted by the Somerset local authorities as homeless and in priority need since 2013 (Source: Government Live Table<sup>30</sup>)

Table 19: Numbers accepted as being homeless and in priority need

	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19*</b>
<b>Mendip</b>	82	57	27	29	17	10
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	32	45	64	73	67	84
<b>South Somerset</b>	196	171	150	180	154	80
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	102	133	93	118	133	41
<b>West Somerset</b>	26	37	34	21	26	

\* Provided by the districts direct

<sup>28</sup> The term 'homelessness' is often considered to apply only to people 'sleeping rough'. However, most of our statistics on homelessness relate to the statutorily homeless, i.e. those households that meet specific criteria of priority need set out in legislation, and to whom a local authority has accepted a homelessness duty.

Such households are rarely homeless in the literal sense of being without a roof over their heads, but are more likely to be threatened with the loss of, or are unable to continue with, their current accommodation. -

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions>

<sup>29</sup> This termination would normally be because the tenant has failed to adhere to their tenancy agreement such as: anti-social behaviour, failing to adequately maintain the dwelling or garden or rent arrears

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#statutory-homelessness-live-tables> -

Detailed local authority homelessness figures April 17 – March 18

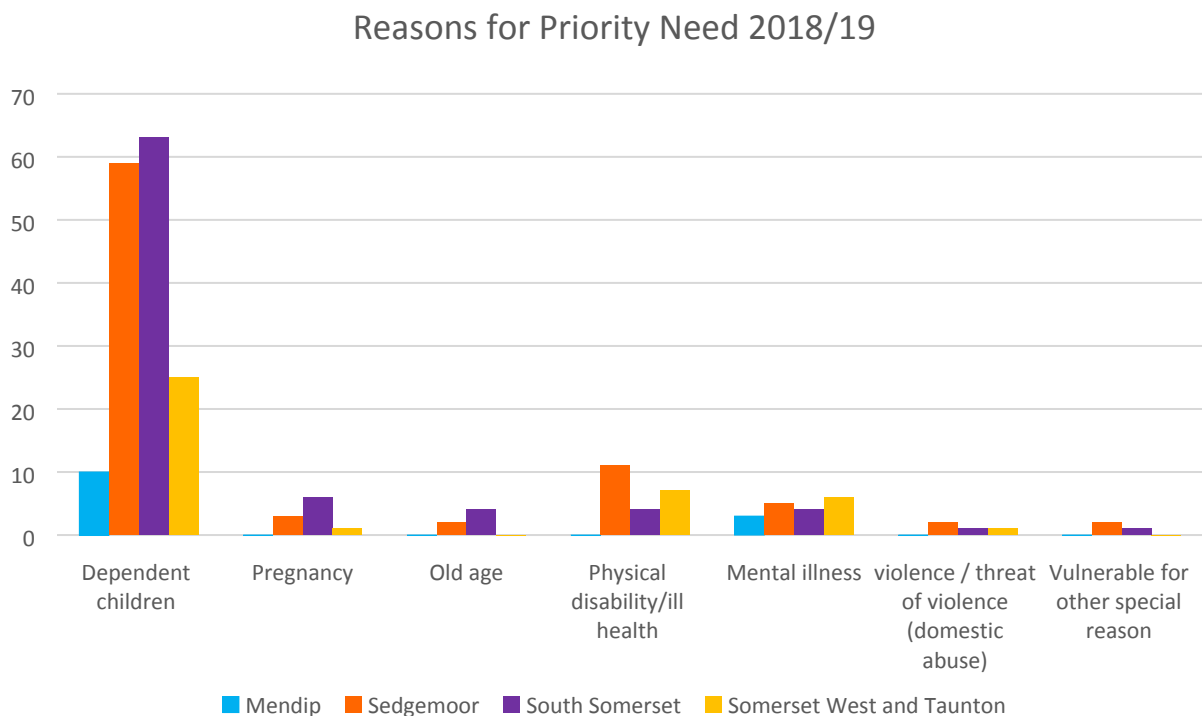
July 2019 - Final Document

2.5. “The priority need groups include households with dependent children or pregnant women and people who are “vulnerable” in some way; e.g. because of mental illness or physical disability. In 2002 an Order made under the 1996 Act extended the priority need categories to include applicants:

- aged 16 or 17
- aged 18 to 20 who were previously in care
- vulnerable as a result of time spent in care, in custody, or in H.M. Forces
- vulnerable as a result of having to flee their home because of violence or the threat of violence”<sup>31</sup>

2.6. The chart below shows the ‘Applicant households found to be eligible for assistance, unintentionally homeless and in priority need during the financial year 2018/19, by priority need category’. (Source: provided direct by local authority as the Government Live Tables did not cover this period at the time of preparing<sup>32</sup>)

Chart 3: Reason for Priority Need



2.7. The main reason for priority need is having dependent children; the remaining factors cover the main criteria for a “vulnerable” individual.

2.8. 58% of applicants to whom we owe a main housing duty are aged 25-44, this compares with a 20% incidence in the general population. 16-24 year olds follow, who disproportionately make up 25% of applicants, but has only around a 10% incidence of the general population.

2.9. Table 20 shows the breakdown of homelessness duty by age, the information has been provided direct by each local authority as the information was not available on the government live tables at the time of preparing:

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#statutory-homelessness-live-tables> – Detailed local authority homelessness figures April 17 – March 18

Table 20: Households accepted by LA as owed a main homelessness duty by age of applicant

2018/19	16-24	25-44	45-59	60-64	65-74	75 & above	Total
<b>Mendip</b>	3	2	5	0	0	0	10
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	13	53	11	1	6	0	84
<b>South Somerset</b>	23	48	6	0	3	3	83
<b>Somerset West and Taunton</b>	7	27	6	0	0	1	41
<b>Total</b>	46	130	28	1	9	4	218

2.10. Table 21 shows the number of households accommodated in temporary accommodation within each District since 2014 at the end of quarter 4 (January to March) each year. (Source: Government Live Tables Section 6<sup>33</sup>).

Table 21: No of Applicant Households Accommodated in Temporary Accommodation since 2014

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Mendip</b>	19	5*	7	6	3*
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	9	17	23	23	32
<b>South Somerset</b>	34	36	31	37	39
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	34	31	34	18	23
<b>West Somerset</b>	6	6	2*	3*	9

\* Provided via a report on Homefinder as this was not recorded on the live tables

2.11. There is some evidence of an increase in property change of use to houses of multiple occupants (HMOs) in Sedgemoor, possibly to accommodate an increase in single workers requiring accommodation in the area. This change has resulted in less family accommodation (3 or 4-bed) being available.

2.12. It should be noted that these statistics are a snapshot of the situation at the end of quarter four and do not necessarily reflect long-term trends in all cases. It is clear, however, that the use of temporary accommodation for applicants has been consistently low in Somerset over the past few years.

2.13. Since the first joint homelessness strategy between the Somerset districts in 2008, there has been a focus on the prevention and relief of homelessness.<sup>34</sup> Homelessness prevention means providing people with the ways and means to address their housing and other needs to avoid homelessness. 'Homelessness relief' is where an authority has been unable to prevent homelessness but helps someone to secure accommodation, even though the authority is under no statutory obligation to do so.<sup>35</sup> The number of homeless prevention and relief cases recorded by each local authority is shown in table 22 (Source: Government Live Table<sup>36</sup>):

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness> Detailed local authority level homelessness figures: January to March. Section 6.

<sup>34</sup> This could involve services such as debt advice, undertaking the Tenancy Accreditation Scheme, rapid response service, Intensive Tenancy Support, rapid support that is carried out jointly between CAB & LA, mediation, floating support, deposit schemes, rough sleeper outreach, direct access hostels, tech loan to enable support etc.

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-data-notes-and-definitions>

Table 22: Successful Homeless Prevention &amp; Relief Cases

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19*	% Change since 2012/13
<b>Mendip</b>	222	295	192	263	313	324	377	69.81%
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	483	797	1089	747	498	526	272	-43.6%
<b>South Somerset</b>	260	219	172	190	201	201	206	-20.76%
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	204	306	187	248	289	156	640	171.18%
<b>West Somerset</b>	32	97	46	85	94	68		
<b>South West</b>	17,100	19,500	19,090	18,080	18,090	18,660	Not Available	
<b>England</b>	202,900	228,400	220,700	213,260	215,220	214,970	Not Available	

\* Provided by the districts direct

2.14. The number of homeless prevention and relief cases can be further broken down to allow analysis of how many households were assisted to remain in their accommodation, how many households were assisted to move to alternative accommodation and how many homeless cases were effectively relieved. The breakdown of these figures for 2018/19 is shown in Table 23 by district (These figures were provided direct by local authority, as the Government Live Tables did not cover this period at the time of preparing<sup>37</sup>).

Table 23: Breakdown of Homeless Prevention &amp; Relief Cases 2018/19

	Prevention		Successful homelessness relief	Total
	Assisted to remain in accommodation	Assisted into alternative accommodation		
<b>Mendip</b>	77	251	49	377
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	32	161	73	266
<b>South Somerset</b>	24	104	78	206
<b>Somerset West and Taunton</b>	251*		389	640

\*unable to breakdown further

2.15. Further impact from the Homeless Reduction Act 2017:

- 2.15.1. We are expecting demand for temporary accommodation to increase since the Homeless Reduction Act of 2017, so continuing to prioritise growth in temporary accommodation will be important.
- 2.15.2. The four districts have noticed a range of sources of increased pressure, including volume of approaches and length of time staff are working with a case. In real time, this can mean applicants who are likely to be Intentionally Homeless, remain with the

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#statutory-homelessness-live-tables> - Table 792

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness#statutory-homelessness-live-tables> - Table 792



officers in the casework until the final decision. The Homeless Reduction Act has extended this to 56 days.

- 2.15.3. Personal Housing Plan<sup>38</sup> production and monitoring, H-Clic administration and process requirements are meaning that staff are less able to spend time to work effectively with applicants on good prevention or relief solutions.

## 2.16. Armed Forces Veterans and Homelessness

- 2.16.1. Identifying numbers, characteristics and needs of veterans and their families is difficult as there is no single reliable source of such data either nationally or locally.
- 2.16.2. In 2017 the MOD produced figures based on data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Annual Population Survey in 2016<sup>39</sup>. The study estimated that 75.64% of the veteran population in Great Britain own a house outright (or have a mortgage/loan) and 23.19% rent or part rent their property. This implies therefore that 1.17% (or 568) of veterans are potentially homeless, based on the estimated figure of 49,000 veterans living in Somerset<sup>40</sup>.
- 2.16.3. What we do know is that the vulnerabilities and support needs of homeless ex-Service personnel are, overall, very similar in nature to those of other non-statutory homeless people, but a greater proportion of ex-Service personnel have alcohol, physical and/or mental health problems<sup>41</sup>.
- 2.16.4. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) has been found among a small number of homeless veterans although other non-military related mental health problems were more common.
- 2.16.5. A 2013 study conducted by York University<sup>42</sup> (commissioned by the Centre for Housing Policy) identified several key reasons why veterans experience housing difficulties. These include:
- A shortage of affordable accommodation;
  - Problems sustaining a tenancy;
  - Relationship breakdown;
  - Inadequate transition planning from the Armed Forces
- 2.16.6. Other factors that may contribute to homelessness amongst single veterans include their experience of Service e.g. unfamiliarity with civilian life (e.g. housing markets, the welfare system and budgeting) making it difficult for them to secure housing and to manage tenancies.
- 2.16.7. Homeless veterans have also been found on average to be older, have slept rough for longer, be less likely to use drugs and more likely to have alcohol-related problems.
- 2.16.8. In considering the needs of homeless veterans, addressing the wider and contributory factors through informed advice and referral to specialist military support services can be, therefore, as important as the meeting the accommodation needs.

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<sup>38</sup> provides a framework for housing authorities and applicants to work together to identify appropriate actions to prevent or relieve the applicant's homelessness - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/homelessness-code-of-guidance-for-local-authorities/chapter-11-assessments-and-personalised-plans>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/annual-population-survey-uk-armed-forces-veterans-residing-in-great-britain>

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/veterans-and-dependants.html>

<sup>41</sup> Literature review: UK veterans and homelessness (2009) – Royal British Legion

<sup>42</sup> Centre for Housing Policy, University of York (2014) Meeting the Housing and Support needs of Single Veterans in Great Britain, Stoll/Riverside.

## 2.17. Youth Housing in Somerset

- 2.17.1. Pathways to Independence (P2i) is a commissioned service, by the county council with district council involvement that deals with youth housing in Somerset.
- 2.17.2. Somerset County Council and the four district councils across Somerset commissioned the setting up of Pathways to Independence (P2i), during 2012/2013 as a response to the escalating issues around youth housing in Somerset. P2i was launched in May 2013 and is the multi-agency homelessness prevention service for young people aged 16-25 who reside in, or have a local connection to the Somerset area.
- 2.17.3. Primarily, the service was designed to prevent homelessness by providing targeted prevention measures. If prevention was not possible the service allows young people with housing related support needs to progress along a pathway of outcome focused needs led provision, until they are able to sustain independent living without the need for support.
- 2.17.4. Whilst P2i has achieved its objectives and has provided a good service over the past three years there are some key areas of service delivery that were not considered as part of the original specification and as a result have arisen in gaps in provision for some of the most vulnerable young people. To understand these identified gaps, a comprehensive needs analysis was undertaken and informed the new specification which was launched on the 1st January 2017. For example, there is a need for smaller properties rather than larger multi occupancy dwellings such as a Foyer provision. The current contract is due to end in September 2021 and aims to create an outcomes focussed service.<sup>43</sup>
- 2.17.5. Table 24 shows the age demographics of P2i for all districts, it shows that the largest proportion of individuals are aged 18-21.

Table 24: P2i Age Demographics as of 28th March 2019 <sup>44</sup>

	<b>16/17</b>	<b>18/21</b>	<b>22 and over</b>
<b>Mendip</b>	4	30	5
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	10	19	9
<b>South Somerset</b>	5	17	9
<b>West Somerset and Taunton</b>	2	22	12
<b>Total</b>	21	88	35

- 2.17.6. Chart 4<sup>45</sup> shows the number of contacts that staff have had with individuals when an assessment of need has been completed; please note that one person could have had contact on more than one occasion. The reason for contact is largely being threatened with homelessness.

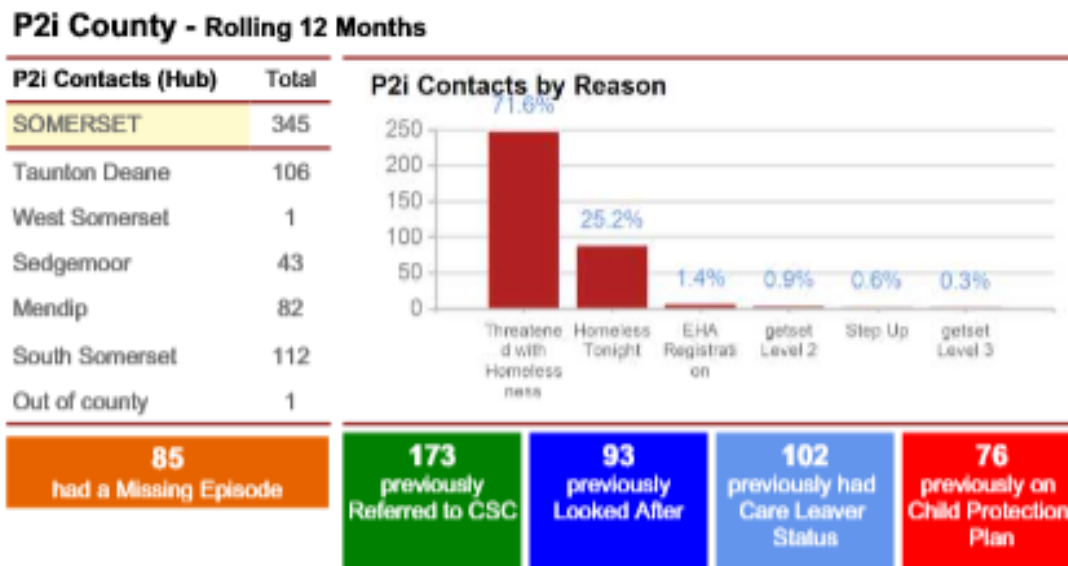
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<sup>43</sup> P2i Service Specification

<sup>44</sup> Provided by Somerset County Council

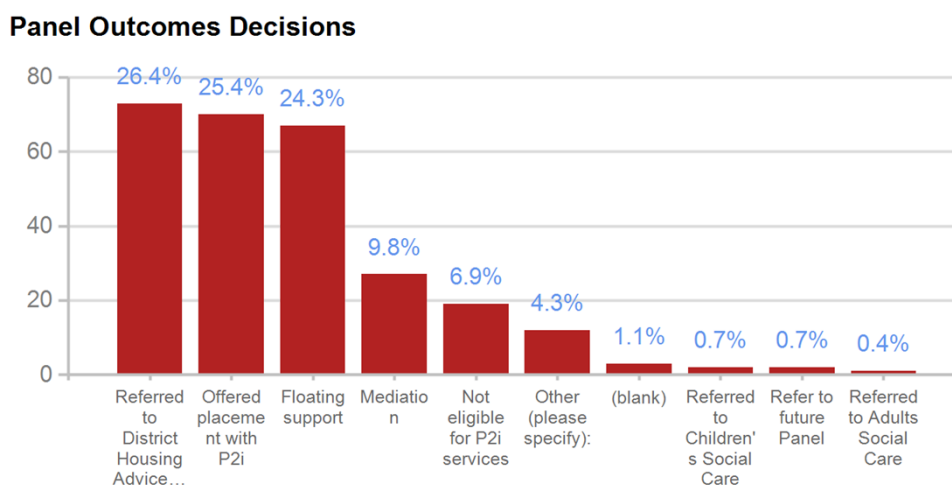
<sup>45</sup> Provided by Somerset County Council

Chart 4: P2i County Rolling 12 Months



2.17.7. The information below <sup>46</sup> shows that just over a quarter of all cases are referred to the local authority for housing advice with another 25% being offered a placement, there is also just under 25% that need floating support<sup>47</sup>. This highlights the need for adequate housing to be provided which is suitable and available to prevent youth homelessness.

Chart 5: P2i Panel Outcome Decisions



<sup>46</sup> Provided by Somerset County Council

<sup>47</sup> This is where a key worker supports an individual in their own accommodation or helps them to secure accommodation away from their supported accommodation. This could be helping them look for a suitable dwelling, helping them to apply for benefits etc.

## 2.18. Housing and Support for Vulnerable Adults and People with Complex Needs

### 2.18.1. Positive Lives

- 2.18.1.1. Following budgets being cut in May 2015 for adults with complex needs, it was agreed that a countywide approach was needed and a multi-agency, cross sector alliance was formed. It championed a new approach that innovated and delivered creative solutions for the most entrenched adults with complex needs. It offered greater flexibility and commitment around multi agency working as well as a strategy to deliver effective ongoing support.
- 2.18.1.2. Positive Lives was initiated through a Local Government Association (LGA) sponsored Design in Public Services programme undertaken in 2015. It has since then developed into a broad multi agency, cross sector coalition of partners.
- 2.18.1.3. Positive Lives has focused on the following objectives:
- To strengthen positive family and support networks
  - To promote physical and emotional health as part of a positive life
  - To reduce or avoid unnecessary admissions to hospital/care/prison
  - To help maintain stability of tenure
  - To provide the right support at the right time – least intervention first.
  - To reduce unnecessary financial burden on agencies
- 2.18.1.4. Over the last year Positive Lives have:
- Supported 850 people
  - Supported 400 people at any one time
  - 380 people engaged with education or training
  - 226 people moved into independent living
  - 47 people obtaining employment
  - 38 very vulnerable / high risk people moved into independent living
  - 20 people engaged in formal volunteering as a preparation for work
  - 262 people from local communities have provided voluntary support.

### 2.18.2. Step Together

- 2.18.2.1. “Step Together is a new support service commissioned by Somerset County Council for adults in Somerset who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and also have a mix of mental health needs, drug and alcohol problems, behavioural issues, debt or have been involved in the criminal justice system”.
- 2.18.2.2. “The service is provided by ‘Second Step’ whose clients have complex needs and often find it extremely hard to sustain positive change in their lives. Their service is primarily about helping people to live fulfilling lives in their own communities, retain their tenancy and reduce repeated homelessness”.
- 2.18.2.3. “They support people to build their strength and reach their goals in areas such as: maintaining a home; improving health and wellbeing; accessing treatment; reducing re-offending; and, becoming part of their communities through activities, training, volunteering or employment.”<sup>48</sup>

- 2.18.3. The contract will be closely monitored to ensure that positive outcomes are delivered for this client group.

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<sup>48</sup> <https://www.second-step.co.uk/our-services/support-and-housing/step-together/>

## 2.19. Gypsies and Travellers

2.19.1. When considering the needs of Gypsies and Travellers who travel through and temporarily settle in the County it is very unusual for members of that community to come into the housing office and present as homeless. Instead, their needs are normally assessed when we visit any unauthorised encampment and appropriate advice is given at the time.

2.19.2. We are already assessing our gypsy and traveller provision within the county and working to ensure that we have suitable sites for settled or settling Gypsies and Travellers, as well as transit sites for those who only stay for a short time.

## 2.20. Rough Sleeping

2.20.1. Rough sleeping is defined as “People sleeping, about to bed down (sitting on/in or standing next to their bedding) or actually bedded down in the open air (such as on the streets, in tents, doorways, parks, bus shelters or encampments). People in buildings or other places not designed for habitation (such as stairwells, barns, sheds, car parks, cars, derelict boats, stations, or “bashes” which are makeshift shelters, often comprised of cardboard boxes). The definition does not include people in hostels or shelters, people in campsites or other sites used for recreational purposes or organised protest, squatters or travellers (this includes new age/van dwellers).”<sup>49</sup>

2.20.2. The table below shows the extent of rough sleeping by District since 2012. This information is based on a single night snapshot carried out in autumn every year using street counts and intelligence driven estimates. (Source: Government Rough Sleeping Table<sup>50</sup>). Rough sleeping is a current challenge in the Taunton area of Somerset West and Taunton Council and for Mendip District Council.

Table 25: Extent of Rough Sleeping

	<b>2012</b>	<b>2013</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>
<b>Mendip</b>	19	16	20	20	16	19	14
<b>Sedgemoor</b>	5	2	4	6	2	7	3
<b>South Somerset</b>	1	1	2	5	8	4	3
<b>Taunton Deane</b>	15	7	18	21	20	23	14
<b>West Somerset</b>	0	2	6	4	2	4	2

<sup>49</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy\\_WEB.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/733421/Rough-Sleeping-Strategy_WEB.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Government Rough Sleeping Table, Rough Sleeping Statistics England Autumn 2017, Table 1  
July 2019 - Final Document

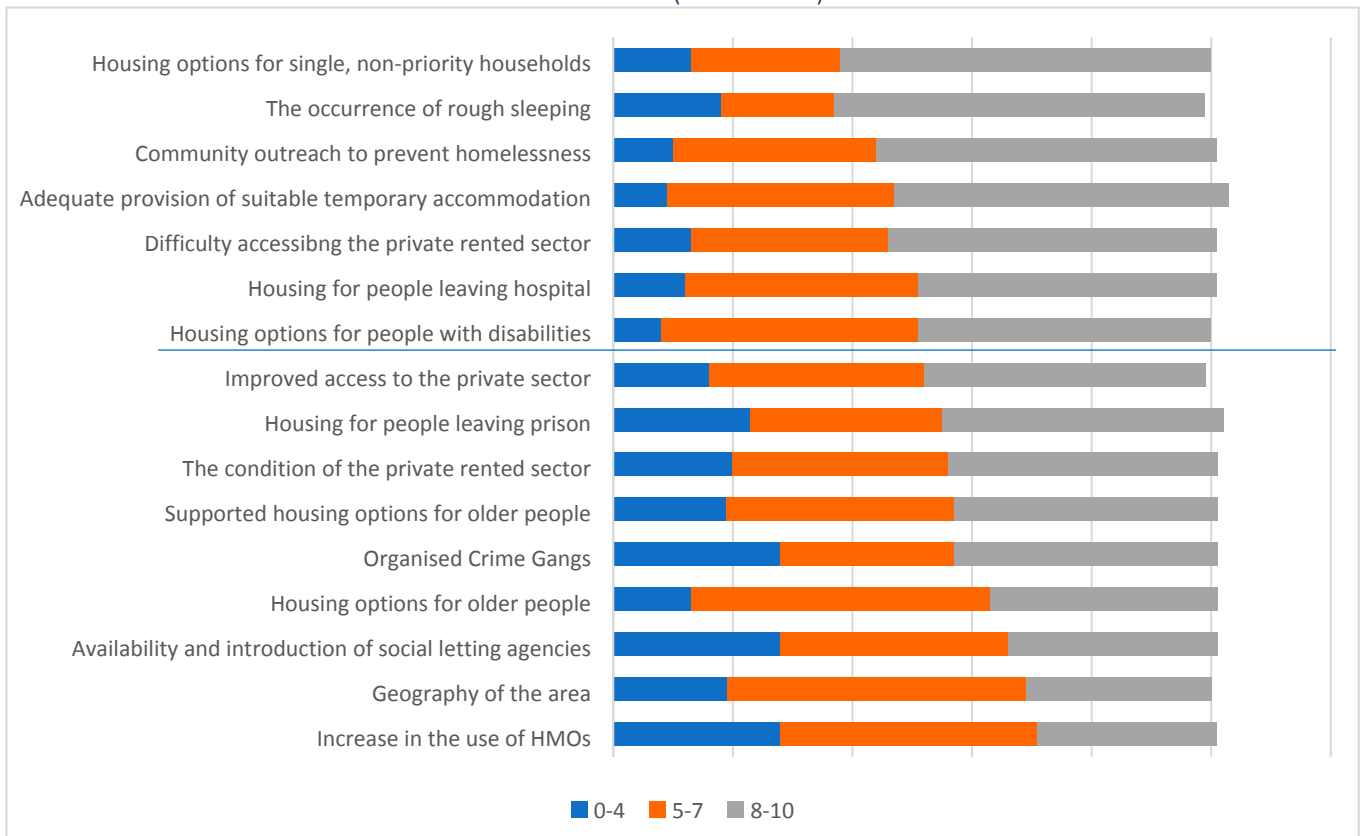
### 3. CONSULTATION EVENTS:

- 3.1. A Homelessness Survey was available throughout November and December 2018. The survey was sent to a sample of homeless applicants and all stakeholders. The number of responses received for each district is shown below. There were also consultation events across the County in December 2018.

	<b>Applicants</b>	<b>Stakeholders</b>
Mendip	7	32
Sedgemoor	12	22
South Somerset	11	12
Taunton Deane	11	4
West Somerset	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>73</b>

- 3.2. Amongst applicants, there were only 19 of the total who found the Personalised Housing Plan (PHP) useful and referred to it again. Some of the comments attached to this referred to the fact that it didn't feel personalised to them/their family. Perhaps more should be done to work with applicants to determine how to improve the PHP.
- 3.3. Those who had been offered temporary accommodation commented on the accommodation that they had been offered and, whilst some accepted this accommodation, several clients felt the accommodation was not suitable. Sometimes it felt unsafe because of the other tenants, or was unsuitable because of the applicant's specific needs around disability or because they were asked to share with a teenage child of the opposite sex. There were also comments more generally; that clients offered private rented accommodation felt they could not afford the accommodation proposed.
- 3.4. Stakeholders were asked how relevant a number of issues were to them in their roles. Shown in chart 6 are the priorities that were assigned the highest relevance. Those above the horizontal line are those that generate the highest scores for relevance; housing options for single, non-priority households and rough sleeping are deemed to be the most relevant priorities. However, there are other pressing needs, as shown:
- 3.5. Improved access to the private rented sector, and better quality of provision here, is a relatively high priority. It is also clear that there are groups with particular needs who remain a key priority: those with disabilities or those leaving hospital or prison. There is also a clear need for access to suitable temporary accommodation and better options for older people.

Chart 6: Perceived Relevance of Priorities (rated 0-10)



3.6. The responses to the survey shown above are supported by verbatim comments made as part of the consultation:

*‘Challenge to prevent homelessness and work together creatively in this respect. There is a huge gap in accessible temporary or longer term temporary accommodation to help move ons from hospital, repossessions etc. for people with complex medical needs for whom B&B simply is not an option’*

*‘Suitable and adequate housing choices. Affordable rents. Encouraging new and good quality landlords in the private sector to work with us. Prevention/Intervention Support after accommodation is found’*

*‘There is a huge gap for those who have a dual diagnosed with mental health and drugs misuse. The homeless rate for individuals within this category is on the increase. Accommodation officers are housing individuals who fall out of their sector because they have no option. It is a huge concern for many agencies at this present time, especially with the weather turning’*

## 4. CONCLUSIONS: GAPS IDENTIFIED

4.1. The Assessment has identified the following key Priorities for consideration for inclusion in the new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2019 - 2023:

1.1.1. Population projections show that the population is due to grow faster than anticipated, especially in the former Taunton Deane area and in Sedgemoor. The challenge to deliver sufficient affordable homes and to support the tenure needs of our residents will become more pressing, not less.

1.1.2. Whilst earnings have reduced, the average selling price of a house in Somerset has increased over the last five years, with a house costing typically close to eight times the earnings in the lowest quartile.

- 1.1.3. There is a considerable gap in the affordability of homes for private rent in Somerset. The average rent currently accounts for 36% of the median gross monthly pay compared with 28% in 2015. Whilst the delivery of additional social housing may go some way to deal with the gap, it will not resolve the entire issue for example affordable rents are not always affordable to all prospective tenants.
- 1.1.4. In addition, the gap between the LHA and the market rent for private lets is a significant barrier in allowing applicants to secure a private rented property because they cannot secure financial support to make the home affordable. This can force people to make a difficult choice and move away from support; e.g. to move away from their family.
- 1.1.5. We need to keep pushing for access to more and better quality private, rented stock
- 1.1.6. We are concerned that the wider roll out of Universal Credit will place further demands on homeless services; we should continue to track these demands and may need to increase the proportions of Homefinder applicants who present in the Gold Band.
- 1.1.7. More work should be done to look at long-term vacant dwellings, mirroring good practice across the districts and stepping up our existing efforts so these dwellings may be brought into use.
- 1.1.8. When assessing what housing is needed in the county we need to ensure that adequate housing is provided which is suitable and available to help prevent youth homelessness. This may point to the need for smaller shared units rather than larger multi occupancy dwellings. Stakeholders also point to the need for more access for single, non-priority households
- 1.1.9. The highest proportion of homeless applicants are aged 25-44 years, with the most common reason for being made homeless being due to receiving a notice to quit from a landlord. Work could be undertaken to understand the reasons why notice was served and what we could do to reduce the occurrences of this happening. Support could be given to landlords facing difficulties to stay in the private renting market if they are finding it problematic.
- 1.1.10. Whilst we have been successful with cases, preventing and relieving their homelessness, we continue to seek new ways to reduce the number of people approaching us needing temporary accommodation.
- 1.1.11. We anticipate further demands on the time of service providers in dealing with cases and the volume of approaches following the Homeless Reduction Act 2017 (namely, 56 days' prevention duty and 56 days relief duty). We now have a duty to produce and agree a personal housing plan, support all clients for a longer period during the extended duty time, and including increased length of time in Temporary Accommodation.
- 1.1.12. When working with veterans and their families, additional protocols may be needed to signpost to support with other factors, such as PTSD, alcohol or mental health problems exacerbating the situation.



1.1.13. We have an ageing population in Somerset, especially in the 85 years and older group. The future needs of older people need to rise up the agenda and more energy given to understanding their requirements and delivering more options to meet them.

1.1.14. Rough sleeping is a challenge in two districts in particular, due to numbers and complexity of need, and will continue to demand sustained focus and resource with additional interventions, strategies and coordinated partnership working. It's likely that there is rough sleeping which is 'unseen', which would include those sofa surfing, sleeping in vehicles hidden in rural areas.

1.1.15. Feedback from the consultation events about the key issues expressed the need for more suitable, affordable sustainable accommodation. To achieve this there needs to be:

- Increased collaborative working with partnership agencies especially to support the vulnerable and those with complex needs.
- Continue to intervene where possible to help clients to remain in their existing homes to aid the prevention of homelessness

# Agenda Item 8

## **Environment Strategy**

*Executive Portfolio Holder:* Councillor Sarah Dyke  
*Strategic Director:* Claire Pestell, Commercial Services  
*Manager/ Lead Specialist:* Jan Gamon – Lead Specialist Strategic Planning  
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[chereen.scott@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:chereen.scott@southsomerset.gov.uk)

## **Purpose of the Report**

To update Members on the development of the Environment Strategy following last month's Scrutiny workshop and to ask for any final comments before it is taken to District Executive for approval.

## **Actions Required**

To consider the Environment Strategy and identified intermediate actions and next steps, and to provide any final comments before it is presented to District Executive on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019. Assuming it is approved at District Executive, the strategy will go forward for adoption at Full Council on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019.

## **Background**

In May 2019, a Full Council resolution was agreed to develop a Strategy that sets ambitious targets to protect the environment and ecology; to reduce Carbon Emissions; and for a) South Somerset District and b) the Council to become carbon neutral. The Council agreed to deliver this strategy by the autumn.

The strategy's development has been led by our Environment Community of Practice (CoP) which comprises internal experts and those with strategic and /or operational responsibility in the areas identified. We have also drawn heavily on the views of a sample of various stakeholders, from within South Somerset and beyond, with whom we have engaged fairly extensively.

Members will recall that a draft of the Environment Strategy was presented to Scrutiny Members at a workshop in August. Comments raised were discussed in full at a workshop with District Executive Members later the same week.

The Strategy has been further shaped and since then shared with a number of the stakeholders we had previously engaged with (as mentioned above) to seek their comments. They were invited to attend a workshop on the 17<sup>th</sup> September to discuss their views and following this some further changes have been made to the strategy.

## **Report**

The Environment Strategy sets out the Council's ambition to be an exemplar local authority in both caring for, and enhancing, our environment. Adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change means changing the way we do things. The Environment Strategy outlines the first phase of our commitments and future direction of travel for the Council, but it is by no means the end of work. The strategy acknowledges that this is only the beginning of the journey and further work is required to

develop the optimum portfolio of activity in the future, ensuring a thorough assessment of return on investment (either monetary or environmental or other benefits) and the opportunity cost of the financial commitment has been completed.

The appropriate relevance checks have been undertaken and determined that no equality impact assessment is required. Form attached.

### **Financial Implications**

A sum of money has been identified in order to support our future delivery plans, but it is important that we know where to prioritise our efforts. This requires a stage beyond assessment criteria, to understanding the opportunity cost of pursuing one outcome over another and to understand the full life cycle of any decision we make, and some of the possible interventions will require far more detailed business cases to be put together.

### **Council Plan Implications**

Our current Council Plan (2019-20) identifies the environment as one of our five key areas of focus. It specifically details that 'we wish to be a leading Council in developing and adopting a Green Agenda to promote sustainable environment, economy and communities'

### **Background papers**

SSDC Full Council Minutes, May 2019

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## **South Somerset Environment Strategy October 2019**

### **Our Vision for South Somerset:**

'we wish to be a leading Council in developing and adopting a Green Agenda to promote sustainable environment, economy and communities'  
(South Somerset Council Plan 2019/20)

# 1. Context and Background

## 1.1 Context

During 2018 and 2019, many Councils in the UK and Governments around the world responded to public calls to take strong and rapid mitigation measures to reduce carbon emissions and have declared climate emergencies. Many of these declarations are often accompanied by a commitment to accelerate action to achieve carbon neutrality and to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and extreme weather.

In May 2019 South Somerset District Council formally recognised a climate and ecological emergency through Full Council and agreed to

*'develop a strategy by the Full Council meeting in the Autumn of 2019, that sets ambitious targets to protect the environment and ecology; to reduce Carbon Emissions; and for a) South Somerset District and b) the Council to become carbon neutral'.*

We are now working in partnership across Somerset to tackle climate change as the neighbouring authorities of Mendip, Sedgemoor, Somerset West and Taunton and Somerset County Council all made similar declarations. Mindful that a county-wide strategy is emerging, and that many issues are best tackled together, this South Somerset strategy is one piece of a larger puzzle. We identify here action which we will take locally; but these actions will sit within a much larger plan and align with it.

## 1.2 Why do we need an Environment Strategy?

The release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere from human activity is changing the world's climate and the planet is warming up. 17 of the 18 warmest years ever measured took place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in the last 30 years each decade has been hotter than any previous one on record. <sup>1</sup> Rising global temperatures in the long-term will create more extreme and unpredictable weather changes, rising sea levels, severe flooding and reduced water availability, all of which pose significant risk to human health, wildlife and ecosystems.

The extent of climate change depends on how successfully we, locally, nationally and globally reduce greenhouse gas emissions to limit temperature rises.

The Paris Climate Change Agreement (2015) is an international framework that aims to avoid the most devastating effects of climate change by cutting carbon emissions and has set to limit temperature rises to 2°C above pre-industrialisation levels with an aspiration of 1.5°C. The Paris Agreement was ratified by the UK in 2016 and as of May 2019, 194 states and the European Union had signed the Agreement. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-explained#history>

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris\\_Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris_Agreement)

The UK Climate Change Act 2008 sets a statutory target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80% compared to 1990 levels by 2050. In 2019 the UK government amended the Climate Change Act and set a *legally binding target to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions from across the UK economy by 2050*.<sup>3</sup>

In 2018 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reported on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty.<sup>4</sup> This report highlighted the stark risks and impacts of half a degree difference of warming targets for the world (between 1.5-2°C).

All Local Authorities have a "biodiversity duty" under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. The Government's 25 Year Environment Plan, A Green Future (2018), pledges that this will be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it, and pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future.

## 2. Our Current Commitment

Our current Council Plan identifies the environment as one of our five key areas of focus. We are committed to keeping the beautiful district of South Somerset clean, green, attractive and sustainable. Our expert teams already undertake a huge amount of work to ensure that we honour this pledge and below we give examples of some of the work we currently, and will continue to, do:

### Waste, Recycling and Resource Management

- Recycle More: from June 2020 the types of items that can be collected at kerbside will be expanded to include plastic tubs, pots and trays
- From Spring 2020, none of the waste collected at kerbside in South Somerset will go to landfill; instead it will be used to generate clean energy
- Over 90% of all recycling in South Somerset stays in the UK and the Somerset Waste Partnership (SWP) led the way in providing transparent information about what happens to waste collected for recycling
- Recycling of waste from house clearances is used to help residents furnish homes
- We recycle machinery parts and waste oil used at our Lufton depot and collected from flytipping
- The new cremators at Yeovil Crematorium are designed such that the emissions from mercury fillings will be captured by abatement plant, along with particulate and other emissions
- Any broken bikes or bike parts found abandoned are collected and passed on to a company which recycles bikes for rural communities
- We use only Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)-certified timber wherever possible

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/climate-change-explained#history>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

- Rainwater is harvested to water plants at our nursery
- We have installed a composting toilet at Chard Reservoir

## **Natural Environment**

- We are proud of our heritage in creating award-winning open spaces – we have been awarded 3 Green Flag Awards at Country Parks and local Nature Reserves – and will continue to work to this standard
- Natural green spaces are managed to a five-year plan, these include habitat management, biodiversity enhancement, species specific targets and invasive species control
- We engage the community to manage our countryside sites and run active conservation volunteer schemes
- We plant an average of c.500 trees each year at our countryside sites
- We run educational programmes and events at our countryside sites
- We encourage biodiversity in our verges and public open spaces through the use of wildflowers and diverse floral planting, which benefits pollinators
- We have submitted a bid to the Urban Challenge Tree Fund to plant 2,500 in Yeovil in phase 2 of the fund

## **Built Environment**

- Our adopted Local Plan encourages sustainability and energy assessment for new planning applications / encourages new build to be low or zero carbon
- We are currently exploring options to bring forward key housing sites and associated infrastructure and consider how solutions might use energy sourced at point through air/ground heat source pumps, solar or other means
- We consider green infrastructure in all larger scale projects e.g. Yeovil refresh, through contributions to public open space on- and off-site
- We are working with Highways to deliver a cycle path on the Eastern side of Yeovil
- We have an air quality action plan for Yeovil
- We secure the planting of new trees and shrubs where appropriate, whenever we grant a planning consent

## **Energy and Renewables**

- We are investing £750,000 in the Yeovil Crematorium to ensure compliance with environmental standards
- During 2018/19 we developed one of the largest UK Battery Energy Storage System facilities (25MW) to support Western Power Distribution and the National Grid to use clean, renewable energy across the region. This facility will also reduce currently wasted power generated through solar and wind throughout the UK and store it for use at peak times
- We have photovoltaics on several SSDC-owned buildings to generate electricity
- We have installed an air source heat pump at Ninesprings for reduced energy usage

## **Travel and Transport**

- We are currently accessing Highways England funding to install three rapid electric car chargers at strategic points which are easily accessible from the A303 in South Somerset. These will be at Wincanton, Ilchester and Ilminster
- We operate a cycle to work scheme
- We are working in partnership with the transport authority (Somerset County Council) to develop and cycling and walking infrastructure plan for Yeovil
- We are developing an Access Plan for Chard to encourage walking and cycling as part of the Chard Regeneration Programme
- The Council Plan 2019/20 identifies a priority for South Somerset to be to assess options to improve community transport provision. We are activating this project from October 2019

### **3. SSDC's Future Commitment**

We have developed our plans to tackle climate change in two clear pathways. One of these is to consider our own estate and operations and what actions we can take to become carbon neutral. The second is to consider our responsibilities in respect of the wider geography that comprises the South Somerset District.

SSDC's ambition is to be an exemplar local authority in both caring for, and enhancing, our environment. Adapting to and mitigating the effects of climate change means changing the way we do things. This encompasses looking to ourselves and our own operations, taking direct action wherever possible, enabling or supporting others where appropriate and lobbying government for action where we need change that can only be effected at national level.

We have recognised a climate emergency and, in doing so, we acknowledge that there is a need to act now to tackle carbon emissions and become carbon neutral. However, we need to balance the need to act, with the necessity to be accountable for the way in which we prioritise the allocation of funds. We will make bold decisions where there is robust evidence that these deliver the right outcomes for our residents, businesses and communities, but we will not commit public money before a thorough assessment of return on investment (either monetary or environmental or other benefits) and the opportunity cost of the financial commitment has been completed.

We recognise that the pace of change related to climate change and policy direction is fast and the strategy will therefore be fully reviewed in two years to ensure that our ambitions and actions are aligned to emerging national and global policy and to identify the next tranche of activities.



### 3.1 Ecology and Biodiversity

We recognise the need for a considered and robust approach to nature conservation across the district. At consultation sessions for this strategy it became clear that our residents want to be reassured that this is a high level priority, whether that be on our own land or that of others.

The South Somerset landscape is wonderfully diverse; from the protected landscapes of the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in the west and east, to the wetlands of the Somerset Levels further north and distinct heritage monuments like Cadbury Castle and Hamdon hillfort further south. Overall it is of high quality. There is a wealth of wildlife habitats largely integrated to the rolling lowland agricultural landscape. Large parts of the district's countryside are protected by national and international designation (4.9 Ha of AoNB, 3.39 Ha of Sites of Special Scientific Interest across 39 sites, 3 National Nature Reserves including Ramsar and Special Protection Areas sites on the Somerset Levels and Moors) together with a greater array of locally declared wildlife sites (5 Local Nature Reserves and 2 Country Parks).

Our Countryside team manages 290 Ha of the Authority's own land, as natural greenspaces for people and nature. The award winning parks and greenspaces retain conservation management principles at their core and the work of rangers and volunteers is to five year land management plans. Hedgerows are laid, dry stone walls repaired, woodlands managed and hazel coppices actively attended. Priority habitats like traditional hay meadows support skylark populations and a new species specific approach to margin management is designed to attract the rare shrill carder bumblebee. Reed beds have been expanded at Chard and marginal plantings on water courses are implemented to improve water quality and enhance the habitats for wildlife. Through the delivery plan of this Strategy the experience of the countryside team will be shared through new public education and engagement programmes.

Existing formal education provision for schools and groups will continue, with curriculum linked sessions available across the key stages. By building capacity in the Countryside and Environment Services teams, groups and communities will benefit from sessions covering a range of practical subjects from gardening for wildlife, tree planting and creating pollinator corridors. The networks of skilled volunteers, who play a pivotal role in habitat management across sites, will continue to be supported, enabling tasks from practical woodland management to species surveying to be completed. Records supplied to the Somerset Environmental Records Centre (SERC) will help inform and drive the strategies of the County ecological team and Local Nature Partnership (LNP).

We recognise the importance of protecting the existing tree stock of the district; from street trees, woodlands, hedgerows and veteran specimen trees. With South Somerset having below the county and national average for woodland tree cover, tree planting on our own estate will become a priority for us. We will also enable communities to deliver their own planting projects in their parishes through the provision of locally relevant guidance documents and factsheets providing the key elements and attributes needed to grow a successful project. The importance of creating green networks and corridors will feature in the 2020 Open Spaces Strategy and we will strive to reduce fragmentation and isolation of species through the provision of new networks where possible on our land.

We will work with the County ecological team and Local Nature Partnership to ensure the principles of nature recovery networks are understood at a local level and can be translated into action on the ground. By supporting the County Pollinator Action Plan through actions across our own estate and through influencing the management of others, where we can, it is hoped that tangible and lasting differences can be delivered. By feeding into the Local Nature Partnership and supporting its work we hope to enable cross sectional leadership on environmental issues that deliver powerful results.

Visitors choose to come to South Somerset to spend time in the high quality natural environment. Walking on the extensive rights of way network and regional trails, cycling the lanes and droves, visiting traditional craftspeople like willow weavers and cider makers is all dependent on a high quality, well managed and sustainable natural environment. This value is recognised through our Tourism and Economic Development teams and by starting the work to calculate the value of this natural capital we will be better placed to review our position to protect and improve our natural capital. Ensuring that South Somerset truly recognises the value of the natural environment for the health and wellbeing of our residents, visitors and also to the economy.

For nature conservation to be truly effective each resident and community must be enabled to make a difference in their garden or parish. This grass roots effort must be linked into county and regional nature networks that will bring the biggest and most powerful outcomes for ecosystems. We recognise that we have a central role to play supporting and enabling our human communities at a local level, whilst staying connected to the bigger picture, with our local and national partners.

#### **4. The Scope of the Strategy**

As a result of needing to undertake thorough assessments for some activities, this strategy could only ever outline the first phase of our commitments; more will follow. Our focus now is on delivering those actions which we know will deliver a positive impact and where we have the greatest control to take action.

We have followed a number of themes in exploring what we already do, what we currently know and what we might do to reduce our net carbon emissions. Under each theme we have given consideration to what we might do around our own estate to improve environmental performance and what we might do across the wider geography of Somerset to achieve the outcomes and Vision that we committed to. The themes identified include:

- Waste, Recycling and Resource Management
- Natural Environment
- Built Environment
- Energy Consumption and Renewables
- Travel and Transport
- Awareness, Engagement and Behaviour Change

This strategy precedes a Somerset-wide strategy that is currently being developed by a partnership of all Somerset Local Authorities to tackle climate change. South Somerset, through both officer and elected member participation, is fully engaged with the development of that strategy and our expectation is that the County and South Somerset strategies will be aligned. There are three themes which are consciously absent from the South Somerset strategy. This is because they are better tackled at county level, where the likelihood of meaningful engagement with some key stakeholders is improved and where the implementation of solutions is more achievable. These are:

- Flood Water and Adaptation to Heatwave and Drought  
NB. It should be noted that we already plan for extreme weather events at South Somerset specifically through our business continuity planning
- Farming and Food
- Health and Wellbeing

## 5. What do we already know?

We have access to national data (Source: 2017 BEIS Local Authority Emissions dataset) on the level of carbon emissions within South Somerset, split by domestic, industrial and transport emissions. This is a reliable source and will permit us to track progress; however, there is a considerable time lag in the data becoming available and it excludes emission from airports and motorways. In South Somerset, 42% of our carbon emissions emanate from transport, compared with 33% from Domestic activities and 25% from industrial.

Over the last ten years annual car mileage has been falling nationally, from an average of 8,300 in 2009 to 7,600 in 2018; a reduction of 8.4%. The percentage reduction has been far more marked in diesel vehicles (19.7%) but, as these form the minority of car types on the road, the overall numbers do not reflect this. We do not have data for Somerset, or even for the South West for most measures; however, we do know that the average annual mileage in the South West is slightly below the national average at 7,292. This may reflect the age profile of the South West, which means that a smaller proportion of the population is of working age.

We know that Somerset County Council has had to reduce subsidies for bus routes, which has resulted in a decrease in bus use since 2010. Many rural communities have now been left with no choice but to cling to the car and we need to offer viable, attractive alternatives to persuade our residents to give up their car or use it for fewer journeys.

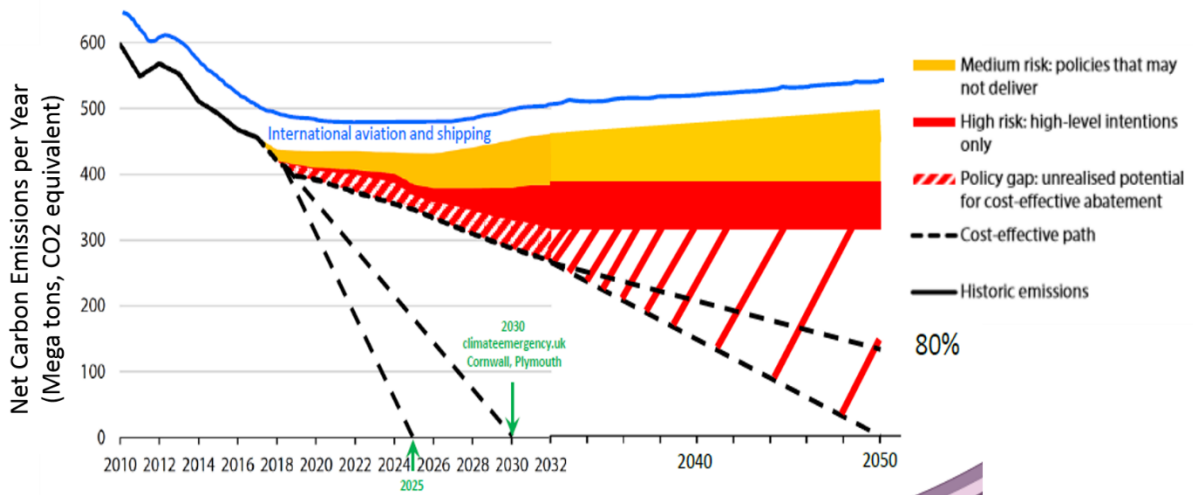
In South Somerset, our tree canopy is 4% district-wide and 18% in Yeovil; this compares with 2.6% across the County of Somerset. We know that our current tree stock is able to sequester (net annual removal of CO<sub>2</sub>) only a very small proportion of kilotons of carbon emitted; the tree canopy across the county of Somerset is sufficient only to absorb domestic emissions from one district (Sedgemoor). We will need to undertake further work to calculate more precise levels of offset achieved through increased tree canopy in our districts

We capture air quality data from a number of locations across South Somerset. Air quality across the district is currently good, although NO2 is high on some of Yeovil’s arterial routes and we experience sporadic rises in ozone across the district linked to weather conditions. We do not currently capture the carbon footprint of our own operations, so a benchmarking measure will need to be taken during this financial year to allow us to track our performance.

The chart below shows net emissions of CO2 for the whole of the UK. The red dashed line indicates the policy gap between the high-risk policies and projections to reduce emissions by 80% from the 1990 baseline or to net zero by 2050.

**Given the scale and rate of change required, it will be impossible for us to reach our targets of carbon neutrality within the county by 2030 without significant and immediate policy changes in central government coupled with individuals and businesses making major behavioural changes.**

Chart 1: The Scale of the Challenge



Whilst this means that major action from Central Government is required, we have identified some actions that we can take locally as described later. However, this evidences the need to lobby central government for increased policy, funding or powers for Local Authorities.

## 6. Progress to date

This work has been led by our own Environment Community of Practice, which comprises our internal experts and those with strategic and/or operational responsibility for each of the areas outlined above. In shaping next steps, we have also drawn heavily on the views of various stakeholders, from within South Somerset and beyond, with whom we have engaged fairly extensively. This includes community engagement activities with:

- expert local interest and action groups
- local primary schools
- Parish and Town Councils
- elected South Somerset District Council Members
- officers employed by South Somerset District Council

The purpose of this initial engagement activity was to hear what stakeholders feel the key environmental issues are and how we might address these. We plan wider engagement with our communities in the near future, and further engagement and consultation with stakeholders following adoption of this strategy, to help inform a more detailed delivery plan and shape the next phase of commitments. This will effectively become an Action Plan that sits below this overarching Environment Strategy once approved, detailing what, how and when we will deliver our Priority Outcomes (see below) and Vision.

**National Policy Development:** Whilst there is much that local authorities can do, either themselves or in partnership with others, there are some outcomes that can only be brought about by national policy change.

**National Planning and Policy Framework:** we need a shift in national planning policy to give local authorities the ability to demand higher environmental standards of developers, such as increased energy efficiency standards, installing electric charging points, solar panels, rain/grey water harvesting solutions. On adoption of this strategy, Elected Members of the Council plan to activate a campaign, through appropriate channels such as the Local Government Association, to persuade government to change Policy.

**Public transport:** this is arguably the biggest barrier to achieving reduction in carbon emissions. Somerset County Council, as the transport authority, is responsible for provision of bus routes across Somerset. Somerset has a low density, highly dispersed population and this makes providing a meaningful bus service extremely expensive. However, the paucity of bus provision means that we are largely a car dependent population. We need additional funding if public transport provision is to be improved or alternative solutions found, permitting people to desist from car use.

**Electric vehicle infrastructure:** whilst we are developing plans locally for enhancing electric vehicle infrastructure, we believe that a national, evidence-led approach to determining likely volume, demand, type and location of chargers and associated funding to support roll out, is essential to prevent poorly planned, reactive provision emerging.

**Local Grid:** we look to central government and Western Power/Scottish and Southern Electricity to deliver improvements to the Local Grid to permit us to harness energy produced locally for local use

## **7. Priority Outcomes**

Although we already undertake numerous activities that underpin our aim of caring for and enhancing our natural environment, we acknowledge that we could do more to achieve our goal of carbon neutrality.

**By 2030 we commit to achieving a significant reduction, in the order of 80%, in our carbon emissions. Our ambition is to be carbon neutral across our own operations and land holdings by 2030 at the latest, and ideally by 2023, so any residual carbon emissions will need to be offset.**

**We will also work to achieve a significant reduction in emissions and improve sequestration rates across the geography of South Somerset, through direct action, by supporting the communities of South Somerset to meet their ambitions and through the way we do things; ensuring that working towards carbon neutrality is a thread which runs through all of our decision-making.**

**We will contribute fully to the work of the county-wide Climate Change Group and by working to address issues collaboratively which have county-wide implications, to achieve our county-wide targets.**

**1. We will Reduce our Reliance on Fossil Fuels; by**

- reducing our energy consumption
- harnessing natural resources, for example by harvesting rain and grey water
- switching to renewable sources of energy
- raising expectations of developers, through our Local Plan policies
- making sustainable procurement choices,
- investigating in additional green energy investments

**2. We will Reduce Emissions; by**

- reducing our business mileage
- decreasing reliance on the car
- facilitating the growth of electric vehicles for both personal and operational use
- reducing the level of particulates in the district
- facilitating non-motor vehicle modes of transport

**3. We will Minimise Waste and Increase Recycling;**

- we need to generate less waste, and encourage the use of sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics and other single use items
- we will encourage reuse and recycling and savings in the use of natural resources
- we will explore opportunities to improve our existing housing stock and ensure that new homes are built with recycling in mind

**4. We will Offset carbon emissions; by**

- increasing our tree canopy through the combined efforts of SSDC, parish and town councils, volunteers and residents
- protect existing hedgerows and tree canopy from the effects of development and reviewing our policy on tree preservation
- protecting existing wetland, marsh and bog and encouraging additional vegetation planting in rivers and ponds
- increasing biodiversity across our own land holdings

- working with local food producers to accelerate the production of environmentally friendly food stuff
- minimising the environmental impact of food production
- investing in offset where we are not able to deliver it ourselves; i.e. as a last resort

## 8. How will we deliver our aims?

Together with our stakeholders, we explored numerous activities that we might take in order to meet these commitments. Some of these merit far more detailed investigation, but what we heard during our engagement events was a desire for us to make a start, to commit to a series of actions/targets that *are* achievable in the short-term and to focus initially on our own estate.

As a result, Section 8.1 below identifies a number of short-term, tactical actions which we believe we can deliver by March 2021 across our own estate, with the majority of these deliverable even earlier, by March 2020. In addition, there are a number of actions which we will put in place immediately for the benefit of the wider South Somerset District.

### 8.1 Interventions for Implementation in 1-2 year time frame

			<b>By When</b>
Over-arching	1	Have benchmarked the carbon footprint of SSDC's operations, working in partnership with the Carbon Trust and set ambitious targets for carbon neutrality	Dec' 2019
	2	Have adopted a measurement system for tracking our reduction in emissions and increased capacity for offsetting and publish our progress	April 2020 ff.
	3	Develop a procurement strategy which attaches social value to carbon reduction, either through reducing emissions or offsetting, using the National Scheme for assessing Themes, Output and Measures (TOMs)	Mar' 2020
	4	Develop a detailed and specific marketing and communications plan, that delivers bespoke materials to and for our communities and visitors. Examples might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• water refill points, an eco-business tool kit, green travel and vehicle pollution, householder how to be "green" tool kits, providing information on how communities can make a difference, tree planting tool kits for parishes and communities from "how to" guides and grant funding assistance, preventing water pollution, encouraging use of smart meters, tool kits for schools focusing on the educational benefits of managing for wildlife in their grounds, access to grants and how to run green clubs, calculating your carbon footprint and how to offset it and grant funding opportunities.</li> </ul>	Mar' 2020

		Shifts in behaviour will only be achieved if the right information is provided in a timely and accessible fashion, by providing high quality marketing materials that tap into national agendas and high profile campaigns and which are also locally engaging.	
Reduce our reliance on Fossil Fuels	5	Commit to sourcing our energy from renewables and give notice on our current contract if necessary	Oct' 2019
	6	Fully energise our 25 MW Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility	Mar' 2020
	7	Add a further 5 MW capacity into our BESS facility	Mar' 2021
	8	Capture rain/grey water for watering at Yeovil Recreation Ground	Mar' 2020
	9	Wessex Water will be installing two water bottle refill units in Yeovil town centre. We will investigate the feasibility of installing a further unit at the Yeovil Recreation Ground	Mar' 2020
	10	Provide support, alongside partners, for communities to access existing funding around renewable energy, including the newly launch National Lottery Community Fund, which aims to help people and communities to take the lead in tackling the climate emergency	Apr' 2020
Reduce Emissions	11	All staff have the technology and training to facilitate agile working, thereby reducing our business mileage	Dec' 2019
	12	We will investigate piloting a scheme to monitor NO <sub>2</sub> at key traffic congestion sites, using Diffusion tubes, married with a campaign to encourage drivers to switch off their engines, with the aim of reducing NO <sub>2</sub> .	Mar' 2020
	13	Develop a green travel plan for each of SSDC's operational sites	Dec' 2020
	14	Audit our cycle network to provide evidence to inform future decision-making and improve cycling infrastructure. Complete the development of a cycling and walking infrastructure plan for Yeovil as part of the Yeovil Refresh	Dec' 2020
	15	Audit community transport across the district and consider the feasibility of improvements/make recommendations	June 2020
	16	Propose revision of Local Plan policies for inclusion at the next stage of the Local Plan Review. These to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require improvements on carbon emissions for new buildings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 19% reduction on regulated carbon emissions (relative to Part L of Building Regulations 2013) through improvements to the building fabric</li> <li>○ A further 10% reduction on regulated carbon emissions through carbon sequestration by tree planting and/or on-site renewable energy systems</li> <li>○ Long term aim for zero carbon buildings</li> <li>○ Ability to pay into a fund to offset carbon emissions – the fund to be used on projects identified by SSDC</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	June 2020



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require electric vehicle charging points for new dwellings with parking spaces and set standards for installation of charging points in parking spaces for non-residential development (aligning with new Government consultation standards)</li> <li>Require the protection of important environmental features (landscape/biodiversity) in policy, to include all water bodies; i.e. streams, wet ditches, rivers, ponds and wetlands/marsh</li> <li>Ensuring that new homes are built with recycling and waste in mind</li> </ul>	
	17	Monitor developers to ensure they are meeting the energy standards they have committed to	Dec' 2020
Minimise Waste, Recycle More	18	Target the removal of all drinks for sale in plastic bottles in our canteen, entertainment venues and vending machines; where no alternative exists then ensure recycling facilities for those plastics exist at each site	Dec' 2019
	19	Collect paper, card, plastic, cans, glass and food across all of our key sites, including at our entertainment venues, and ensure that whatever waste remains does not go to landfill	Mar' 2020
	20	Review the provision and location of public waste bins	Mar' 2020
Offset	21	Use SSDC-owned land to draw down carbon through planting of 1,000 trees and investigate investment opportunities through the Woodland Carbon Fund	Dec' 2020
	22	Protect existing wetland, wet meadows, marsh and bogs and encourage additional planting of water vegetation in rivers and ponds	
	23	Review our policy on tree and hedgerow preservation, to include tree replacement standards	Dec' 2019
	24	Develop and adopt an Open Spaces Strategy which outlines our future direction in respect of conservation management and appropriate tree planting, alongside the need also to be meeting our residents' needs for play and leisure	Dec' 2019
	25	Progress enhanced mapping to inform Nature Recovery Networks	Mar' 2020
	26	Investigate natural capital schemes and consider approaches to enable SSDC to adopt a system that benefits habitats, wildlife and people	June 2020

## 8.2 Enabling Change through Others

There are activities which we cannot deliver directly, but which we can enable through others or support others to deliver. We also commit to:

- 1 Work with groups and individuals across the district to develop a tree planting network, invite the Woodland Trust and Forestry Commission to share funding opportunities and build a volunteer group to carry out planting

- 2 Work with Parish and Town Councils and County Highways to increase tree canopy
- 3 Support local food markets and local food production
- 4 Improve access to water refill points
- 5 Promote SWPs 'Recycle More' and 'Slim my Waste' campaigns
- 6 Discuss existing actions individual businesses are taking (with at least 100 businesses through key account scheme) on the key strategy themes – Reduce reliance on fossil fuels/Reduce emissions/Minimise waste.
- 7 Support the development of a county-wide Air Quality Strategy
- 8 Support the delivery of the county-wide Pollinator Strategy
- 9 Encourage developers to design around existing hedgerows, increase tree canopy and include exemplar features for biodiversity
- 10 Encourage developers to use sustainable materials
- 11 Support the growth of community allotments
- 12 Work with Somerset Local Nature Partnership to ensure Nature Recovery Networks are linked in at country and regional scale
- 13 Signposting business community to Government/Local Enterprise Partnership and other environment schemes
- 14 Producing information on how businesses can help themselves to be greener and reduce their carbon footprint
- 15 List funding opportunities on the Economic Development webpage as and when they become available
- 16 Clarify the government offer/regional/Local Enterprise Partnership/possibly even still EU
- 17 Seeking best practice and sharing with local business
- 18 Map out and celebrate existing 'green' businesses

### **8.3 Developing our Longer-Term Plans**

Following on from adoption of this strategy we envisage continuing to develop this work in earnest through the Environment Community of Practice (CoP). The CoP comprises officers from across the Council with expertise in the areas identified.

Before taking steps beyond the immediate interventions identified above, we will need to develop key criteria for decision-making, such as emissions saved, financial cost/investment, revenue opportunity, carbon offset, biodiversity gains, social or health benefits.

Furthermore, on the assumption that we will not have the resources to undertake everything that is desirable, we will also need to know where to prioritise our efforts. This requires a stage beyond assessment criteria, to understanding the opportunity cost of pursuing one outcome over another and to understand the full life cycle of any decision we make. We need a clear strategy for developing the optimum portfolio of activity.

Some of the possible interventions which will require far more detailed business cases to be put together, and appropriate assessment made are:

1. All Existing Building/Housing Stock: this falls into two areas. The first is around investigating options for bringing existing buildings back into use. The second is to explore in detail what the implications would be of retro-fitting existing housing stock in

the area with improved insulation, solar panels etc., or of making grants available to homeowners to do the same

2. New Housing Stock: we will need to agree our policy on new builds; for example, how will we balance our desire for zero carbon new homes with the need to deliver homes per se? Is there an acceptable compromise, where is this?  
In the light of our existing priority projects around accelerating housing growth, how could the provision of energy from renewable sources and green infrastructure more generally be baked into our plans, especially if we were to build and retain our own stock
3. We certainly need to develop an electric vehicle infrastructure plan and could consider a green infrastructure plan  
Once the Open Spaces Strategy is adopted, we should be in a better position to identify appropriate sites for additional tree planting and develop a detailed plan to achieve this. We will also investigate the use of treedges in place of hedges to increase carbon offset
4. We will look for examples of and opportunities for clean business growth across the District in accordance with the Local Industrial Strategy and related funding, including Government's proposed Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) Research
5. We should investigate opportunities for enhancing the natural beauty of South Somerset for green tourism
6. We will develop an environmental management system
7. We will continue to look for additional green energy investment opportunities, with business cases being developed to assure rigour in assessment of the RO



# Agenda Item 9

## **Somerset Climate Emergency Framework**

*Executive Portfolio Holder:* Councillor Sarah Dyke  
*Strategic Director:* Claire Pestell, Commercial Services  
*Manager/ Lead Specialist:* Jan Gamon, Lead Specialist Strategic Planning  
*Contact Details:* jan.gamon@southsomerset.gov.uk

### **Purpose of the Report**

To inform Members about the emergence of a framework for developing the county-wide Climate Strategy and to seek comments to shape further prior to going to District Executive in November.

### **Actions Required**

1. To review the Climate Change Framework and intended work streams and provide feedback
2. To note the timeline for delivery of the Strategy
3. For members to note the intended consultation activities and to share the opportunity to contribute with residents and community groups

### **Background**

In 2019 the five Somerset Local Authorities recognised a climate emergency and agreed to collaborate in producing a joint Climate Emergency Strategy. Whilst each declaration is slightly different, all aspire to achieving carbon neutrality in their own operations and to work towards achieving this across the geography of their administrative area.

### **Report**

A group of officers representing Somerset County Council, the four district authorities, Exmoor National Park Authority is guiding and shaping the framework within which the detailed investigation needed will be undertaken. This group – the Strategic Management Group - will have a critical overseeing role in shaping the desired outcomes that emanate from that work. SSDC's representation on that group is Jan Gamon.

Feeding into the Strategic Management Group will be the detailed work undertaken by operational experts and stakeholders within nine work streams:

1. Built Environment
2. Natural Environment
3. Energy
4. Farming and Food
5. Industry, Business and Supply Chain
6. Transport
7. Waste and Resource Management
8. Flood water and adaptation
9. Communications and Engagement

Each of these work streams is working to a detailed brief and has a nominated lead. They will be research and prioritising key issues, identifying possible actions to mitigate and understanding the full life cycle of decisions to implement these actions.

SSDC has representation on several of these work streams, if we are able to support with appropriate subject-matter expertise.

The work of officers is overseen by a group of portfolio holders from across the districts, which includes Sarah Dyke, and by the Leaders and CEOs, with Brendan Cleere and Michele Cusack acting as the conduit between these groups. The work of all groups is scrutinised by a Task and Finish Group; our representation on that group is through Councillors Gerard Tucker and Paul Maxwell.

## Proposed Timings

Members are asked to note the proposed timings for delivery of the Climate Emergency Strategy, which includes provision for consultation during November and December 2019.

Date	Stage
Sept 2019	Framework Strategy through joint T&F, Leaders & CEOs, Cabinet Members Group
Oct-Nov 2019	Framework Strategy through individual Council Scrutiny and Cabinets / Executive Committees
Nov 2019 - Jan 2020	Consult on Framework Strategy to include Climate "Summits" in December 2019
Feb 2020	Draft Strategy and action plan through joint T&F, Leaders & CEOs, Cabinet Members Group
Feb-Mar 2020	Consult on Draft Strategy and action plan
Apr 2020	Final Strategy and action plan through joint T&F, Leaders & CEOs, Cabinet Members Group
May-Jun 2020	Final Strategy and action plan through individual Council Scrutiny and Cabinets / Executive Committees
July 2020	Final Strategy and action plan to full Councils for adoption

Consultation activities are in the early stages of development, but are expected to include an online consultation aimed at secondary school-aged children 11-18 years, preceded by school visits to encourage participation. They also include an online consultation aimed at all residents, communities and businesses in Somerset and a series of Summits, one per district, which will take the form of a full day, face-to-face consultation event, open to all.

*[NB. Provisional date for South Somerset is 30<sup>th</sup> November but is still to be confirmed].*

## Financial Implications

At this stage, SSDC has committed £10k to support the development of the county-wide strategy; largely to permit the Strategic Management Group to access appropriate external expertise, including execution of the consultation plan.

All authorities have already committed considerable resource to development of the framework to date and, as a result of our activity so far, it is becoming apparent that future development would be better

served by securing project management expertise. This is likely to incur an additional cost but will be supported by a detailed costing plan and brought forward for approval through appropriate channels.

### **Council Plan Implications**

We believe that development of a county-wide approach to tackling the effects of climate change fits neatly with SSDC's current Council Plan (2019-20), which identifies the environment as one of our five key areas of focus.

### **Background papers**

Climate Emergency Framework, October 2019

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# **Draft Somerset Climate Emergency Framework**

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## **1: Introduction**

This framework document has been produced by the five Somerset Local Authorities (Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, Somerset West and Taunton District Council, and South Somerset District Council). It aims to summarise and outline the work currently co-ordinated by the Local Authorities to meet our targets for carbon neutrality. A brief account of the current situation in Somerset and issues associated with climate change is provided, highlighting why we are undertaking this work.

This framework is intended to spark a conversation with our communities, interest groups, businesses and other relevant stakeholders in order to generate true community engagement and strategy co-development, ensuring that everyone in Somerset feels a sense of ownership of the full Climate Emergency Strategy and the actions that arise from it. This initial document will provide some high-level detail explaining the expected directions of travel required to address the various issues that have been identified. However, it is essential that the detailed Climate Emergency Strategy and Action Plans derived from it are informed by listening to the communities that will be affected by any changes, whilst we learn from initiatives, projects and actions already planned and implemented within our communities. The final Climate Emergency Strategy produced by this work will not simply be a Council document; it will be recognised and owned by everyone in Somerset and be held as a collective response to the Climate Emergency.

The Climate Emergency Strategy will contain more detailed analysis of the changes required for Somerset to become carbon neutral and increase resilience to the risks posed by climate change locally. The Strategy will aim to detail programmes and projects to address these issues, with estimated costs, carbon emissions reductions and cost-benefit analysis included. Actions will be split over short-, medium- and long-term timescales to enable prioritisation and effective planning.

Individual Local Authorities will produce Action Plans supplementing the Climate Emergency Strategy. These Action Plans will specifically identify how the overall Strategy is relevant to each district, how projects will be delivered and funded, and detail the response to area-specific issues. To maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of the mitigation and adaptation responses implemented by the Local Authorities, these Action Plans will be dynamic and flexible in nature, continuously adapting to the most up to date evidence, methodologies, funding sources and ideas. Engaging with communities throughout the life-cycle of these Action Plans will be essential as the Plans evolve to meet new challenges or opportunities.

## **2: The Declarations**

In 2019, the five Somerset Local Authorities passed resolutions to declare or recognise 'Climate Emergencies' and have since agreed to collaborate to produce and deliver an ambitious, joint Climate Emergency Strategy encompassing the county of Somerset.

Each declaration is slightly different, but all aspire to achieving carbon neutrality and ensuring that we are adapted to the effects of climate change within each administrative area. The appendix contains the individual motions of each Council in full.

### **3: Contextualising Climate Change**

#### **3.1: Global**

A recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report highlights the importance of taking immediate action to limit global warming to a 1.5°C threshold, compared to temperatures from the pre-industrial period<sup>1</sup>. Whilst achieving this limit is a challenge, requiring 'rapid and far-reaching transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport and cities' to meet the required net-zero carbon emissions targets, it is certainly possible and requires action to meet these targets immediately<sup>1</sup>.

The risks associated with missing this 1.5°C threshold are significant: global warming reaching 2°C has considerable implications for sea level rise, Arctic Ocean sea ice coverage, and prevalence of extreme weather, whilst 99% of all coral reefs would be lost<sup>1</sup>.

#### **3.2: United Kingdom**

In response to the IPCC report, the Committee on Climate Change (the UK Government's independent advisor on Climate Change) published *Net Zero – The UK's contribution to stopping global warming*<sup>2</sup>, which suggested that the UK should set a national target for carbon neutrality by 2050, and recommended numerous 'core', 'further ambition' and 'speculative' options, policy changes and projects for the UK to pursue. Since then, the UK Government has declared a climate emergency and set a legally binding target for carbon neutrality in 2050 through amendments to the Climate Change Act<sup>3</sup>. However, Government policy continues to lag behind this target and the recommendations of the CCC.

Nationally, the UK has reportedly made significant progress, reducing emissions by approximately 40% since 1990. However, the majority of progress derives from changes made in the power, waste and industry sectors. Key sectors, such as the built environment and transport, have made little progress – transport emissions have remained steady with little reduction since 1990. The importance of achieving net-zero carbon emissions is highlighted within legislation; the UK's 2050 net zero target is legally binding<sup>3</sup> and offers an opportunity for the UK to be an exemplar case study in inspiring other countries to legislate for and meet ambitious carbon neutrality targets.

#### **3.3: Somerset**

The tangible impacts of climate change will be particularly visible in Somerset. Due to the topography of the region, rising sea levels will significantly impact coastal flooding in low-lying regions such as the Somerset Levels and Moors, whilst increases in extreme weather events will increase river and surface water flood risk. Coastal communities are likely to become more vulnerable to coastal erosion and shoreline retreat.

Additionally, temperatures are likely to increase in excess of the global average. Even if the global temperature increase is limited to 2°C, Somerset is likely to experience temperature change higher than this<sup>4</sup>. The latest projections (UK Climate Projections 18, produced by the Met Office) indicate that summers will be hotter, with increases by 3.7°C to 6.8°C, depending on how carbon emissions are managed, by 2070<sup>5</sup>. Hot spells, defined as consecutive days reaching temperatures in excess of 30°C, will increase in likelihood by almost 20 times<sup>5</sup>. This increases risk to drought, heat-waves, water stress and pressures to existing water infrastructure, which can become major issues disproportionately impacting those most

vulnerable in society. Current rates of heat-related mortality reach around 2,000 premature deaths per year; by 2020 this figure could increase to 3,400 and approach 11,000 in 2080<sup>6</sup>.

Ensuring local businesses are prepared for these projected climatic changes is important to consider for Somerset, due to the prevalence of small-medium sized enterprises in the region. If implemented incorrectly, a transition to a greener economy more resilient to the impacts of climate change could harm the most vulnerable in society. In order to avoid this, bottom-up engagement and co-development is essential to ensure a fair transition and provide adequate support, up-skilling and re-training for the necessary workforces at risk where industry is required to adjust to meet emissions reductions targets.

Changes to the natural environment, driven by increases to temperature and precipitation profiles, can mean existing ecosystems are vulnerable to die-back or different pest species; ensuring that the rich biodiversity found in our landscapes is preserved is of considerable importance. These changes will impact farming and agriculture, and so developing detailed and evidence-based strategies to mitigate these impacts and provide support to farmers within the industry is important.

### **3.4: Net Emissions in Somerset**

Work has been undertaken to baseline the current net carbon emissions picture within Somerset. Quantifying both emissions and sequestration in the present-day is fundamental to evidence-based strategy development. Understanding sources of emissions in each district is important due to both the geographical and demographical variation within Somerset and a singular action plan is unlikely to be successful. Highlighting key areas of focus to identify maximum benefits and prioritisation of areas for concentration will increase the success of the Strategy and relies upon accurate baselining and monitoring of changes implemented.

#### **3.4a: Emissions**

In 2017, a total of 3,285 kt (kilotons) of CO<sub>2</sub> were emitted in Somerset<sup>7</sup> from industrial, domestic and transport-related sources. For context, a kiloton of carbon is emitted by 200 average cars in 1 year. In fact, the majority of emissions in Somerset derive from the transport sector - 46.7%, compared to 29.5% from industry and 23.8% from the domestic sector.

The relative contributions of each sector vary by Local Authority: in Sedgemoor, 54.1% of emissions derive from transport (with the majority of these sourced from the M5 motorway), compared to only 38.6% of emissions in Mendip. For this reason, specific analysis of emissions sources within each overall sector is required.

Whilst the dataset used to calculate emissions at a high-level separates data at an overall District level, utilising other sources can provide a more detailed picture of emissions sources in Somerset. For example, using the Energy Performance of Buildings database<sup>8</sup>, emissions produced by individual houses can be analysed. Work going into further detail will be carried out by the Energy and Built Environment workstreams.

Calculating emissions produced by industries and businesses is more difficult, primarily due to emissions from their supply chains. Not all emissions have to be disclosed by businesses to the public, so there is a lack of data available online to assess the emissions of individual

organisations. The Industry, Business and Supply Chain workstream will work to assess these emissions.

### **3.4b: Sequestration**

Carbon sequestration is the natural process of capturing and storing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>. Long term storage of CO<sub>2</sub> through plants, soils and geological formations can mitigate the effects of climate change by offsetting carbon emissions produced by human activity.

Using data from the National Forest Inventory (NFI) it was calculated that approximately 66.1 kt of CO<sub>2</sub> is removed from the atmosphere each year by trees in Somerset<sup>9</sup>. This is equivalent to the domestic emissions of Sedgemoor alone – the lowest contributor to domestic emissions in Somerset – or 2.0% of the total emissions produced directly within Somerset in 2017 alone<sup>8</sup>.

Data from the NFI is updated annually, meaning any changes to tree cover can be tracked and monitored. It is important to note that sequestration rates vary between different tree species and age of trees – the figure provided is an estimate but gives a simple foundation for tracking the progress of Somerset to carbon neutrality. In comparison to the emissions produced in Somerset, the total volume of CO<sub>2</sub> removed is relatively low; this highlights the importance of emissions reduction at the source, rather than prioritising offsetting, which supports the foundational concept of the Strategy to take direct action to reduce total emissions and in situations where this is not possible, offset emissions.

Additional work will be undertaken by relevant workstreams to quantify the net sequestration rates of crops, hedgerows and soils (such as peatlands). Specific research is required due to the variation in management practices used by farms contributing to different net emissions totals.

## **4: The Climate Emergency Strategy Scope**

The Climate Emergency Strategy, co-ordinated by the Somerset County and District Councils in conjunction with relevant partners, will identify ways in which Somerset could become carbon neutral by 2030. This will undoubtedly include overcoming a number of issues that will require legislative change and we will actively lobby for the necessary amendments to legislation to be implemented. For the purposes of this Strategy, carbon neutrality is defined as:

*'Carbon neutrality, or having a net zero carbon footprint, refers to achieving net zero carbon emissions by balancing a measured amount of carbon released with an equivalent amount sequestered or offset'<sup>10</sup>*

The primary objective for the Strategy will be to identify ways that carbon emissions can be directly reduced or avoided. Offsetting and sequestration of emissions will be supplementary actions for situations where direct reduction is not possible, reasonable or cost-effective. It is important to note the distinction between *carbon neutrality* (the aim of the Strategy) and *zero carbon*; emissions will be reduced as much as feasibly possible, but any remaining emissions will be offset to the same quantum.

In this regard, the Strategy will uphold 'responsible research and innovation principles'<sup>11</sup>; offsetting of emissions will be implemented as close to the emissions source as possible. This

will increase the local relevance of the projects undertaken, whilst increasing the likelihood of adequately managing the primary and secondary impacts and effects of delivery.

As well as working to reduce emissions, the Strategy will identify the adaptations required to ensure Somerset is resilient to predicted environmental changes induced by climate change, such as increased temperatures, more varied precipitation profiles, extreme weather events and sea level rise. Secondary impacts associated with these changes, such as increased pest prevalence impacting the natural environment, will be also be identified, evaluated and mitigated within the Strategy.

## **5: Opportunities**

Immediately taking proactive steps to mitigate and adapt to these inevitable changes can offer numerous opportunities to improve the local communities we live in and living standards for all in Somerset. Projects and proposals can provide significant socio-economic, non-environmental 'co-benefits' and reduce costs to society in other places whilst contributing to increased standards of living of all residents of Somerset.

For example, changes implemented to reduce emissions from transport contribute to many health co-benefits, which can reduce healthcare costs and improve the quality of life for many – increasing rates of cycling or walking can contribute to reductions in heart disease rates or obesity-related risks and lower rates of urban and noise pollution<sup>12</sup>; whilst transport systems prioritising rapid transit can improve access for vulnerable groups improving equality and access to healthcare<sup>12</sup>.

Similarly, whilst tree-planting schemes are intended to increase the rate and volume of CO<sub>2</sub> removed from the atmosphere via natural sequestration, increasing tree coverage in urban areas can deliver public and mental health benefits for residents in the communities as well as serving to improve biodiversity in urban or natural regions.

Within the energy sector, actions intended to reduce reliance on fossil fuels or decrease energy consumption have numerous associated co-benefits. Construction of community renewable energy generation and storage projects can provide greater energy security, lower energy bills, revenue opportunities as well as jobs for both local communities and the wider region. Delivery of retrofit schemes, intended to reduce energy consumption and increase energy efficiency within domestic or other buildings, can contribute to reductions to energy bills and fuel poverty rates whilst decreasing health concerns associated with cold and damp homes for those in vulnerable communities.

Whilst the Climate Emergency Strategy will primarily focus on climate change and its associated impacts, delivery of projects intended to reduce carbon emissions or adapt to predicted changes are likely to have co-benefits relevant to other environmental issues. Issues relating to single-use plastic consumption, biodiversity and health and well-being of local communities are not the primary focus of the Strategy. However, in some situations individual workstreams may develop responses, action plans and projects relevant to these areas where there is a significant overlap with climate change and clear opportunities to meet the primary objectives of carbon neutrality and adaptation are present.

Although initial costs of project implementation may be high, it is undoubtable that these costs are minimal compared to those that will be incurred if a 'business as usual' approach is continued. For example, the 2013-2014 winter floods cost Somerset up to £147.5 million with £20 million to residential property alone<sup>13</sup> – climate change will increase both the frequency and severity of flooding, making similar events more likely in the region. Taking proactive steps to adapt to the impacts of climate change can considerably reduce these costs derived from flooding alone; long-term impacts to the economy associated with other changes, such as drought or reductions to water quality, can also be avoided.

## **6: Challenges to Delivery**

Whilst the direct contribution of the five Local Authorities to Somerset's total emissions has not yet been calculated it is likely to be a small proportion overall. Work commissioned by Manchester City Council indicated that they only produce 3% of the total emissions within their administrative area<sup>14</sup>. The immediate influence that we have in reducing the net emissions of Somerset is limited to internal infrastructure or contracts, such as making changes to the estates owned by the Authorities or to services delivered, supplied and procured.

However, the policies, strategies and other regulatory powers of the Authorities can influence reductions to net emissions externally across Somerset. For example, planning policies setting carbon reduction targets for new developments can influence the emissions picture county-wide as opposed to continuing a business as usual approach. In addition, the role that the Local Authorities play in encouraging action by stakeholders, businesses, partners or communities that can directly reduce emissions themselves is essential. By working with an array of groups, the Local Authorities can empower, encourage and support the strategic actions required by these parties to achieve carbon neutrality and act as a catalyst towards a carbon neutral Somerset. This underlines why it is essential to build consensus and ensure everyone in Somerset feels a sense of ownership of the Strategy and in delivery of its actions.

Other challenges associated with delivery are less simple to overcome. The composition of Somerset, in both environment and demographics, can add to difficulties associated with delivery. For example, whilst the beauty of the natural environment and rurality of the region makes Somerset a special place to live, reducing emissions from the transport sector is less simple than in an urbanised city region with a more concentrated, less dispersed population. In total, there are 6,604km (4,104 miles) of roads in the county with a total of 4.31 billion miles travelled in 2018<sup>15</sup>; whilst urban centres like Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgwater are well connected, accessibility is an issue in rural areas due to the limited local road network located in regions like the Mendip Hills or Exmoor. Additionally, the presence of the arterial roads spanning Somerset (M5 and A303) contributes to a large proportion of transport emissions with journeys not necessarily originating or terminating within the county – 26% of Somerset's total transport emissions derive from the M5 alone<sup>15</sup>.

Furthermore, the abundance of protected landscapes, such as Exmoor National Park and the four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), add to the natural capital within Somerset, yet may prove problematic when identifying areas suitable for renewable energy generation and storage or climate change adaptation projects.

Initial scoping work has highlighted the need for retrofit or replacement of a large proportion of existing domestic and commercial buildings in Somerset to improve energy efficiency, decarbonise heat and power, and ensure buildings are resilient to the impacts of climate change. To meet the national net-zero target it is estimated that 27 million properties across the UK will require deep retrofit by 2050; this equates to 20,000 properties per week, yet currently only 20,000 per year are in receipt of energy efficiency measures<sup>16</sup>. The lack of disposable income and prevalence of fuel poverty in some of our communities, as well as the limited opportunities for Local Authorities to influence existing properties, presents more barriers to project implementation.

With the current economic climate and lack of resources available for Local Authorities to deliver projects or infrastructure change, prioritising resource allocation is essential. Due to the limited availability of funds, identifying opportunities providing the optimal cost-benefit (e.g. carbon emissions savings per £) is essential and requires in-depth analysis. Producing an extensive evidence-base will enable the Local Authorities to prioritise where resources are concentrated and ensure optimal projects are delivered in Somerset.

This issue is made worse by the national policy gap - to reach net-zero emissions for the UK as a whole, further legislation and strategy needs to be delivered to prioritise investment and provide funding to enable delivery of the extensive projects required to achieve this target. In these circumstances, it will be most appropriate for the combined Local Authorities to lobby Central Government for increased national policy and action, funding, local regulatory powers, or all of the above. Identifying situations in which we will require further support – from stakeholders, Central Government, or other relevant parties – forms a crucial aspect of this work.

Overcoming these barriers will be important for the success of the Climate Emergency Strategy.

## **7: Strategy Development**

It is important that an overarching Strategy is developed to co-ordinate Somerset's response to the climate emergency and ensure actions are taken to achieve carbon neutrality. Without an aligned strategy, ad-hoc or piecemeal action is likely to result in higher costs, incompatible projects running in parallel, and potentially undesirable and/or unintended outcomes and consequences.

To produce the Strategy, we will collaborate with sector and industry experts to develop joint approaches in tackling climate change whilst sharing resources to maximise the benefits of projects implemented. Additionally, we will identify ways for the Local Authorities to assist businesses, industry, communities and individuals in making the necessary changes required for Somerset to achieve carbon neutrality, whilst ensuring that the most vulnerable within society are not disproportionately affected by these changes.

Traditionally 'co-developed' projects are more successful: we will be engaging with individuals, young people, the elderly, communities, interest groups, businesses and industry, educational institutions, wards, town and parish councils, and other relevant sectors. All sectors of society will have the opportunity to help us develop the strategic responses, action plans and projects

produced from this work. We will work with these groups to identify projects and proposals, and then provide support in assessing the wider benefits or unintended consequences of each action and assist in the delivery of projects.

Whilst the Somerset Climate Emergency Strategy will include higher level actions and projects that are relevant across Somerset, all individual Authorities will supplement the Strategy with their own Action Plan. These will outline the necessary policies, projects and actions required to meet the strategic targets and identify resources required to enable the delivery of the Strategy. These will be dynamic and evolve as our evidence-base grows, ensuring that the most up-to-date projects are prioritised and funding opportunities identified.

## **8: The Workstreams**

### **8.1: Workstream Function**

Climate change will impact every aspect of society. To make the task more manageable, work will be separated into nine workstreams:

- Built Environment
- Energy
- Farming and Food
- Industry, Business and Supply Chain
- Natural Environment
- Transport
- Waste and Resource Management
- Water
- Communications and Engagement

Due to the co-benefits associated with project delivery, public health will be important for consideration by all workstreams and will be a priority focus for all workstreams, with health experts contributing to project research, development and implementation for all workstreams.

Each workstream will contain sector and subject-matter experts. They will:

- Research and prioritise key issues
- Develop mitigation and adaptation strategies
- Evaluate costs, benefits and unintended secondary consequences
- Work together where appropriate

Work has been undertaken to identify key areas for further research. These are presented as initial themes within this framework, but to ensure the success of the overall Climate Emergency Strategy wider stakeholder engagement and input is crucial to provide feedback and alternative ideas for consideration to the workstreams. We are keen to draw on ideas, expertise and enthusiasm from all to ensure that the actions to be delivered are appropriate and informed by a wide cross-section of the people and organisations of Somerset.

This research has highlighted some potential projects for delivery over short-, medium-, and long-term timescales. These, and other ideas emerging from engagement and consultation



events, will be explored and evaluated in further depth to ensure that the Strategy and Action Plans are evidence-based.

Actions taken intended to mitigate or adapt to climate change often come with co-benefits, defined as 'the positive effects that a policy or measure aimed at one objective might have on other objectives'<sup>17</sup>. In many cases, these can help to meet the statutory duties of Local Authorities and other public-sector bodies. Evaluating these co-benefits will support business cases and enable us to access increased funding. Also, it is true that climate change may not be a priority for everyone in Somerset – by identifying the co-benefits, we can clarify how action taken to address the climate emergency can improve other aspects of life in Somerset<sup>18</sup>.

The broad range of stakeholders identified for engagement, as well as experts included within each workstream, will ensure that the views, ideas and concerns of relevant parties are considered and accounted for within the Strategy.

## **8.2: Built Environment**

32% of the UK's emissions derive from the business and residential sectors<sup>19</sup>, and 45% of energy use occurs in houses, offices, shops and public buildings<sup>20</sup>. In Somerset in 2017, total domestic emissions are greater than the national county average (783 kt CO<sub>2</sub> yr<sup>-1</sup> compared to 539 kt CO<sub>2</sub> yr<sup>-1</sup>), although domestic emissions per capita are comparable to the national county average<sup>21</sup>.

Therefore, minimising and decarbonising energy consumption in buildings will be crucial to meeting carbon neutrality targets by 2030. Through planning, local authorities have the power to influence location and type of development, materials used in construction, carbon reduction, building design and low carbon and renewable energy generation in relation to new development. However, the majority of buildings that will be standing by 2030 and beyond to 2050 are likely to have already been built and influencing how these are retrofitted and improved is more complex.

Both new developments and existing buildings and communities will need to be resilient to projected climatic changes.

### **Theme 1: New Developments**

The workstream will explore ways to ensure that new developments reduce carbon emissions. This can include minimising the need to travel, reducing energy consumption of homes and businesses, facilitating low carbon and renewable energy generation, encouraging sustainable behaviours, and ensure that they are adapted to the projected future climate of Somerset.

Initial directions of travel for this workstream are to:

- Identify opportunities to ensure that all new residential and commercial developments consider sustainable travel and transport links to lessen the impact of the scheme.
- Ensure that all new developments consider projected climatic changes and encourage planners to incorporate sustainable urban drainage schemes (SuDS), urban trees, and waste management.

- Highlight building designs that reduce the carbon footprint throughout the life cycle of homes and work towards all buildings achieving zero carbon accreditation as soon as possible.
- Review the effectiveness of existing planning policies against minimum standards for new housing development and identify opportunities to improve the delivery of those policies. This is likely to include the requirement to lobby Central Government to improve minimum building regulation and energy performance criteria, as well as implement changes to the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **Theme 2: Existing Buildings and Communities**

Whilst changes to planning policy improving the efficiency and resilience of buildings are essential to ensure that future developments are fit for the climate future, many improvements to the performance of existing buildings are required. Identifying priority buildings or communities, as well as projects intended to deliver improvement, is essential. Overcoming the issue of funding is likely the primary barrier to delivery of wide-scale changes across Somerset; lobbying Central Government for increased investment will be required.

This workstream will:

- Identify sources of funding, investment or subsidy for retrofit opportunities, in conjunction with the Energy workstream.
- Highlight priority buildings and communities requiring retrofit or improvements to resilience and develop high-level strategies for delivering the required changes. This will include specific focus on council-owned buildings and retained housing stock to ensure the Local Authorities set an example within Somerset, as well as identifying opportunities to incentivise and enable change in privately-owned properties.
- Explore the potential to simplify, encourage and de-risk action to deliver retrofit to existing buildings and communities via planning or other means.

### **8.3: Energy**

Somerset has significant potential for renewable energy generation, ranking highly in both a national and European context. In 2017, Somerset possessed installed renewable energy capacity of 506MW, of which 90% was attributable to photovoltaic technology<sup>22</sup> – but there is still a considerable amount of untapped renewable energy source. Increasing total renewable energy capacity and generation is crucial to meet carbon neutrality targets, yet changing the source of energy supply exerts significant pressure on the electricity grid. However, implementation of renewable energy technologies can contribute to a range of societal benefits, including: socio-economic development; increased energy access; a more secure energy supply and a reduction to negative environmental and health impacts associated with large-scale combustion of fossil fuels<sup>23</sup>.

37% of UK emissions derive from heating<sup>24</sup>; reducing end-user emissions totals, via retrofit and improvements to insulation, is important – yet only a start. Decarbonising heat, via innovative solutions such as decentralised heat networks or implementation of hydrogen or biogas technologies to green the gas grid, is cited as being essential to meet zero-carbon targets by 2050<sup>25</sup>. Whilst potentially difficult to implement in Somerset, due to the rurality and prevalence

of fuel poverty in some regions, developing projects that can overcome these barriers is crucial to meet the aspirations of carbon neutrality by 2030.

### **Theme 1: Reducing and Shifting Energy Demand**

Working with the Built Environment workstream, opportunities will need to be identified to reduce energy consumption within buildings in Somerset. This will include delivering retrofit projects to improve the performance of existing building stock whilst working to increase minimum energy standards and requirements for planning proposals to reduce energy consumption in new developments.

Priority tasks for this workstream are to:

- Identify existing houses or communities with high energy consumption and develop strategies to overcome these issues via retrofit.
- Research and develop mapping of identify existing/ potential major heat sources or loads.
- Liaise with planning departments and developers to produce a uniform, Somerset-wide approach to reducing energy consumption and increasing energy efficiency in new developments.

### **Theme 2: Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Generation and Storage Technologies**

The workstream will develop a co-ordinated strategy to increase the prevalence of low carbon technologies and renewable energy generation and storage in Somerset. Reducing emissions derived from heating in the domestic, industrial and commercial sectors will require development of decarbonised heat infrastructure. Working with relevant stakeholders - such as the Built Environment working group, energy providers and developers - opportunities identified by this workstream are likely to positively influence public health and reduce the impacts of fuel poverty on top of reducing carbon emissions.

This will include:

- Liaising with local community groups and relevant stakeholders to overcome issues relating to capital investment and grid infrastructure.
- Lobbying Central Government to incentivise uptake of such technologies, like photovoltaic energy generation or electric vehicle infrastructure and to change national policy to release the potential for onshore wind.
- Identifying sites suitable for renewable energy generation and storage projects.
- Explore opportunities for low carbon technology, like electric vehicle infrastructure or projects intended to decarbonise heat production, across Somerset.

### **Theme 3: Own Estate and Operations**

Whilst influencing external parties to minimise energy usage and carbon emissions may be difficult for Local Authorities, the ability to reduce internal emissions derived from estates and operations is more significant as direct action can be taken to increase the efficiency of internal infrastructure. The workstream will identify how to cost-effectively implement these proposals and then develop business cases ready for project implementation.

The workstream will:

- Explore utilising council owned land to generate renewable or low carbon energies to decrease reliance on fossil fuels and generate revenue for alternative climate-related projects.
- Develop an Energy Policy and Energy Management Plan for each Local Authority to minimise energy waste, mitigate future energy price rises and ensure responsible stewardship of public money.
- Initiate internal communications campaign to encourage best practice by staff and highlight the exemplar actions taken by the Local Authorities to external businesses and organisations.
- Identify current and historic activity implemented by Local Authorities and promote upscaling of similar projects county-wide.
- When contracts allow, look to collaborative procurement strategies in purchasing energy from renewable sources.

#### **8.4: Farming and Food**

The agricultural industry will be significantly impacted by climate change. Rising temperatures, rainfall patterns and variations to atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations will impact operations and productivity, as well as pest prevalence, within the UK<sup>26</sup>. Impacts to global food production could influence UK markets and the food industry<sup>27</sup>.

With the considerable importance of agriculture to Somerset's economy and livelihood of many residents, ensuring the sector remains resilient to these predicted climatic changes will be an important aspect of the Climate Emergency Strategy.

Working to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector will contribute to mitigating some of the impacts of climate change. The IPCC have highlighted the importance of reducing red meat and dairy consumption<sup>28</sup> and encouraged a transition to the consumption of more fruit and vegetables. However, we recognise the importance of agriculture within Somerset and the fact that the carbon efficiency of British farms is amongst the best in the world<sup>29</sup>; ensuring there is a balance between responsible consumption and prioritising locally sourced, high quality produce will be carefully considered within our Strategy.

The contribution of agriculture to the total emissions of the UK has been recognised by industry and sector experts, such as agricultural trade bodies or the NFU, and pathways to making the industry carbon neutral (e.g. via responsible land management practices and further reductions in emissions from livestock) have been identified<sup>30</sup>.

#### **Theme 1: Reducing Net Emissions**

Net greenhouse gas emissions can vary significantly between farms, dependent on many factors. Variations to land usage or management practices, such as quantity, timing or type of fertiliser used by arable farms or type of feedstock used for livestock on pastoral farms, can greatly influence total emissions production by a farm. Often, changes made to management practices intended to reduce the net emissions are more cost-effective than existing practices and come with associated economic benefits for farmers.

To work towards reducing the net emissions of farms in Somerset, this workstream will begin to:

- Identify and increase awareness surrounding best practice relating to emissions for both arable and pastoral farms.
- Explore opportunities to incentivise or provide subsidy to encourage best practice for both arable and pastoral farms.
- Produce a baseline for the net emissions picture of Somerset to monitor progress and identify optimal project delivery.

### **Theme 2: Carbon Storage**

By conserving and enhancing naturally existing hedgerows, woodlands or carbon-rich soils, and improving land management practices, higher volumes of CO<sub>2</sub> can be removed from the atmosphere. To encourage these changes, incentivising positive practices relating to carbon storage, via ecosystem service payments or similar schemes, may be required.

This workstream will:

- Explore methods to incentivise farmers to implement positive management practices.
- Identify restoration schemes, such as peatland or wetland restoration projects, to increase carbon storage, in conjunction with the Natural Environment workstream.
- Increase awareness of more innovative land management practices, such as silvopasture, intended to increase carbon sequestration and storage rates.

### **Theme 3: Climate Change Adaptation**

Many existing agricultural strategies, including crop selection and management, are not well adapted to predicted climatic changes, such as increased temperatures, variations to weather patterns and increasing prevalence of extreme events like floods and droughts. Improving the resilience of existing farmland ecosystems is important to minimise impacts of climate change and provides opportunities to enhance crop productivity. Additionally, changes to the climate are predicted to increase the prevalence and biodiversity of pest species. Co-benefits associated with the delivery of projects, intended to increase preparedness for the impacts of climate change, include supporting pollinator species and biodiversity.

In order to assist farmers in adapting to these changes, this workstream will:

- Model current farmland ecosystem and specific crop responses to climatic changes and classify regions by vulnerability.
- Identify crop species and management strategies that are adapted to predicted climatic changes and suitable for implementation within Somerset.
- Develop a strategy to implement and deliver 'ecosystem resilience improvement' projects.
- Develop education strategies to highlight the economic and environmental benefits associated with transitioning to more resilient management practices.

### **Theme 4: Food Consumption**

Reducing the demand for high-emissions livestock products has been highlighted as significantly important by both the IPCC<sup>31</sup> and CCC<sup>32</sup>. Increasing awareness surrounding the issues associated with carbon intensive products, such as beef or dairy, can lead to more balanced consumption practices and reduced environmental impacts. Eating more balanced diets can contribute to positive health impacts. Encouraging consumers to select locally sourced, ethically produced products, with lower carbon footprints - as opposed to foreign meat or dairy - can decrease the carbon footprint associated with the sector with a less radical change than eliminating meat or dairy products entirely.

Initial directions of travel for this workstream will be to:

- Produce education and engagement strategies highlighting the impacts of high-carbon food production and consumption, and suggest alternative foods with lower carbon footprints.
- Identify opportunities to reduce high-carbon food consumption within the respective Local Authority workplaces and operations.
- Encourage reductions to high-carbon food consumption externally within the wider community.

### **8.5: Industry, Business and Supply Chain**

Industry and businesses in Somerset contribute to approximately 29.5% of Somerset's emissions. Whilst many organisations have taken steps to reduce their carbon footprint, exploring strategies to reduce supply chain emissions is cited as the next step to reduce emissions further and mitigate some of the impacts of climate change<sup>33</sup>. Supply chains can contain between 60-80% of greenhouse gas emissions associated with both the production and consumption of goods and services<sup>34,35</sup>.

Despite the potential direct and indirect benefits for businesses associated with demonstrating best practice and minimising supply chain emissions, legislation is identified as a key driver to enable pro-environmental behaviour within organisations<sup>36</sup>. Working to incentivise and increase awareness of the benefits associated these changes will drive changes in industries and businesses in Somerset.

Specific engagement strategies will be required in order to appeal to these organisations and ensure engagement of SMEs and larger groups in Somerset. Highlighting the co-benefits of taking steps to reduce carbon footprints, which are often economic in nature, will comprise an important part of the work carried out by this workstream.

### **Theme 1: Emissions Reduction and Stakeholder Engagement**

Due to the minimal influence the Local Authorities have in reducing the emissions of private sector bodies, we require specific strategies for engaging with industries and businesses to encourage net emissions reduction. These strategies will highlight the economic and financial benefits often associated with actions intended to mitigate impacts related to climate change.

To do this, the workstream will:

- Explore ways to reduce supply chain emissions for industry and businesses in Somerset whilst encouraging sustainable material manufacture, processing and usage.

- Encourage the transition by corporations, industries and businesses to renewable energy providers or generation of on-site renewable energy.
- Incentivise positive behaviour change and showcase examples of best practice within Somerset with an environmental awards scheme.
- Create a peer network for engagement and collaboration to share knowledge and best practice regarding the shift to a low carbon, clean growth economy.
- Provide support and platforms for knowledge sharing and feedback between businesses and industries in Somerset.
- Hold business-specific Climate Summits during Strategy consultation stages.

### **Theme 3: Data Collection and Analysis**

Whilst large amounts of data are available for assessing domestic emissions at a high resolution, data quantifying emissions produced by individual businesses and industries is not available publicly. In order to track the progress of businesses in Somerset toward carbon neutrality, additional monitoring of data will be required.

To overcome this barrier, the workstream will:

- Incorporate monitoring of progress on emissions into the Somerset Local Economic Assessment (LEA).
- Present this data on the new LEA website (called Somerset Trends) in order to ensure a centralised online data resource for partners to use and evaluate their own progress to reducing emissions.
- Design a generic methodology or 'toolkit' to assist businesses and industries in quantifying, and then reducing, supply chain emissions.

### **Theme 4: Business and Workforce Resilience to Climate Change**

Ensuring business and industry in Somerset remains resilient to the projected impacts of climate change is important for the local economy. Additionally, a change to a low carbon society or greener economy must be delivered fairly in order to ensure a 'just transition' and ensure workforce skills and employability are preserved.

In order to achieve these goals, the workstream will:

- Design research to better understand the local skills and employment challenges relating to the climate change agenda and shift to a low-carbon economy
- Identify employment in at-risk sectors or businesses and undertake a skills gap assessment
- Develop guidance for re-skilling for training providers and relevant support bodies.
- Highlight businesses or industry susceptible to the projected impacts of climate change and aid in developing mitigation strategies to reduce the risk of these impacts.

### **8.6: Natural Environment**

Projected meteorological changes as a result of climate change, such as warmer temperatures, increasing variability and intensity of precipitation and extreme weather events (like flooding and droughts)<sup>37</sup>, will exert pressure on ecosystems adapted to present-day conditions. Increasing the resilience of Somerset's Natural Environment to predicted impacts is essential

– yet should be a minimum requirement, due to the potential for innovative projects to provide emissions mitigation and cross-sector benefits.

### **Theme 1: Sequestration and Land Usage Change**

The workstream will explore opportunities to increase the volume of CO<sub>2</sub> removed from the atmosphere by trees and plants via sequestration, whilst ensuring that existing carbon stocks contained in the natural environment - such as in soils, peatlands and existing trees - are preserved and managed responsibly.

To achieve this, the workstream will:

- Identify and designate land classification scenarios to provide an evidence-base for what is required to achieve a zero-carbon county.
- Liaise with the Built Environment workstream to ensure new developments minimise impacts to the environment. For example, adapting planning policy to ensure new developments produce Environmental Net Gain of minimum thresholds (e.g. 20%). This could follow the case study of Manchester with a clear mitigation hierarchy.
- Embed Natural Capital consideration into all planning and major investment decisions to minimise the declining condition of Natural Capital assets.
- Support schemes to increase tree cover in Somerset, such as the Urban Tree Challenge Fund or the Parish Tree Policy produced by the Re-Imagining the Levels programme.
- Work to stop peat extraction and increase peat restoration schemes in Exmoor to restore wetlands and coastal habitats.

### **Theme 2: Landscape Resilience**

Existing ecosystems are not well adapted to predicted climatic changes, such as increased temperatures, variations to weather patterns and increasing prevalence of extreme events like floods and droughts. These changes are likely to increase both the prevalence and biodiversity of pest species and impact pollinators. This workstream will utilise the latest climatic projections to identify vulnerable ecosystems and develop opportunities to increase the resilience of the Natural Environment.

### **Theme 3: Co-ordination and Data Collection**

Whilst all workstreams are required to identify key issues requiring a collaborative approach, co-ordination between the Natural Environment, Farming and Food, and Water workstream is particularly important. This workstream will develop a communications and implementation strategy between appropriate working groups ensuring relevant information, analysis and findings are shared.

Key objectives for this workstream are to:

- Bring together existing datasets to establish repeatable monitoring of Somerset's baseline as an ecological network for the county.
- Identify key opportunities for collaboration based upon the above science and evidence-base to ensure a targeted approach to the natural environment between relevant stakeholders.



- Engage with, or merge with, the Local Nature Partnership to ensure collective delivery is a priority and avoid duplication of work.

### **8.7: Transport**

Emissions from transport are the largest contributor to emissions across a range of scales, from locally in Somerset (45%, with Sedgemoor and Taunton-Deane >50%)<sup>7</sup> to the UK (27%)<sup>38</sup> and to Europe<sup>39</sup>. Since 1990, emissions totals have steadily declined across all sectors – other than transport, indicating the inherent difficulties associated with implementing wide-scale changes to sector<sup>7</sup>.

Whilst reducing transport emissions in Somerset is a challenge due to the rurality of the region, meaning it is difficult for public transport schemes to connect dispersed communities, the European Commission Strategy for low-emission mobility highlights the roles that local authorities can fulfil<sup>39</sup>. With the diversity of Somerset and variation in access to public transport, it is unlikely for there to be a singular solution appropriate for all areas. However, the Local Authorities encouraging a modal shift to more active or public transport where appropriate and seek investment to develop, improve or upgrade existing transport links.

#### **Theme 1: Public Transport**

Increasing both the frequency and quality of service provided by public transport is important to encourage a modal shift from personal vehicle usage. Whilst active travel is carbon zero, we recognise that not all journeys are appropriate for walking or cycling. Improving the public transport provided in Somerset whilst transitioning to lower emissions vehicles can significantly reduce emissions derived from Transport.

To achieve this, the workstream will:

- Amend evaluation criteria and contract terms for passenger transport contracts awarded by SCC in the DPS review in March 2021 to encourage usage of lower emission vehicles.
- Develop an innovative rural transport pilot project following on from work currently investigated in South Somerset.
- Commission a data analytics study to identify potential demands for bespoke passenger transport for clusters of working age people who may be attracted to a quality service.
- Develop a detailed proposal for mass-movement rapid transport on the A38 supporting existing priority infrastructure proposals; this could provide an opportunity for a testbed for electric fleets or CAV trials in the long term.
- Explore expanding Demand Responsive Transport Provision, potentially developing additional routes in the morning/afternoon for college students.

#### **Theme 2: Personal Transport**

Reducing the demand for car travel is essential for minimising transport emissions. Enabling active travel, via improvements to walking or cycling infrastructure or subsidising the cost of cycling equipment, can eliminate the need for car journeys. Increasing awareness surrounding the impacts associated with short car journeys may contribute to a modal shift in travel; however, under many circumstances car usage is unavoidable. Popularising car sharing schemes can eliminate repetition of similar journeys.

To reduce the demand for car travel and incentivise a modal shift to active travel, some examples of work to be undertaken include:

- Develop a detailed countywide travel behaviour change/travel demand management proposal, focusing on community action and individual responsibility, learning from previous and current activity in Bridgwater.
- Agree walking and cycling capital programme funding allocation.
- Submit Department for Transport (DfT) Pinch Points bid focused on walking and cycling.
- Develop feasibility designs and costed schemes from current Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) while commissioning additional LCWIPs for other towns.
- Lobby Central Government for a dedicated walking and cycling fund.
- Increase awareness of the impact short car journeys can have and highlight the benefits associated with active travel via numerous engagement schemes, such as the 'Think Travel' web portal to access travel-related information.

### **Theme 3: Logistics, Planning and Innovation**

Engaging with relevant communities, stakeholders and organisations is crucial to promote sustainable transport. With new developments, planning strategies can be implemented to minimise the need for travel and thus reduce emissions. A holistic approach to development can reduce emissions derived from logistical operations, such as 'last-mile' deliveries or HGV freight. With the considerable lack of progress made in reducing transport emissions since 1990 across the UK, innovative ideas and concepts are required.

Some objectives to explore for the workstream include:

- Liaise with parish/town councils to produce a list of high priority/biggest difference actions that could be taken relating to transport.
- Organise a commission to ensure engagement with academic experts and industry leaders to identify opportunities to reduce transport emissions.
- Understand logistics patterns, HGV vehicle movements and employee personal vehicle use to develop programs to reduce associated emissions, such as via car or freight share.
- Identify locations suitable for electric vehicle charging points.
- Work with planners and the Built Environment workstream to ensure new developments are designed to reduce the demand for car travel.
- Launch a digital competition to design an app enabling people to reduce demand for car travel.
- Upscale the agile-working Programme used in Shepton Mallet to other district council offices, enabling work from home for all staff within Somerset Local Authorities. Highlighting the benefits from this scheme can incentivise uptake of similar programmes by private sector organisations.

#### **8.8: Waste**

Recent research highlights the potential for the UK Waste Management sector to drive reductions to greenhouse gas emissions<sup>40</sup>. Since 1990, emissions have decreased by 70% with an acceleration in annual average abatement between 2012 and 2016 of 10%.

In Somerset, household and non-household waste contributes to a significant proportion of the region's carbon emissions – the majority (>90%) derive from methane produced by the decomposition of biodegradable waste<sup>41</sup>.

Somerset's domestic waste and recycling is managed by Somerset Waste Partnership. Somerset is independently ranked as a 'high flying' (top 10%)<sup>42</sup> area in England in carbon saving from its household waste and recycling services, saving 103kg of a carbon equivalent per person<sup>43</sup>.

Major progress in the Waste Management sector will only be achieved if waste is considered as a resource whilst increasing management of industrial and commercial waste. The workstream will look at opportunities to move towards a more circular economy and increase consideration of the relationship between Waste Management and other economic activities.

### **Theme 1: Commercial Waste and the Circular Economy**

Nationally, commercial recycling rates are low (30%) and minimal source segregation of waste or separate food waste collection is undertaken. Targeting this sector, in conjunction with the Business, Industry and Supply Chain workstream, can provide potential for considerable emissions reductions and show Somerset's national leadership on the climate agenda.

The workstream will:

- Identify how the Local Authorities can celebrate and share best practice, whilst avoiding 'greenwash' (or the deceptive promotion of an organisation's environmental policies).
- Work with local businesses and relevant partners to identify the support and guidance they require to improve waste management.
- Seek to pilot collaborative procurement for recycling and waste – reducing costs for businesses, improving environmental outcomes and aligning with local needs.
- Create a route-map identifying the steps required to create a more circular economy in Somerset.
- Explore opportunities to ensure that Somerset has the recycling reprocessing industry needed to match its ambitions for the future.

### **Theme 2: Residential Waste and Behaviour Change**

The workstream will explore opportunities to encourage behavioural change across a variety of sectors, such as minimising household waste in the domestic sector and increase recycling 'on the go'. This will be supported by identifying ways to ensure adherence to adequate planning standards for waste management within new housing developments.

This will include:

- Improving domestic waste recycling opportunities by adding in additional recycling to the existing weekly kerbside collection (Recycle More). This will result in reductions to waste by 15% and increase recycling by 20-30%, and improve on our already 'high-flying'<sup>42</sup> carbon saving performance.

- Introducing more stringent controls that ensure even more waste is processed within the UK and not exported elsewhere. Currently over 90% of Somerset's recycling remains in the UK.
- Roll-out a behavioural change campaign ('Slim my waste, feed my face') in early 2020. This scheme intends to encourage reducing food waste within homes.
- Working with the Built Environment workstream and planning departments to ensure new development planning proposals consider resource management, waste storage, and waste disposal.
- Moving away from landfill by Spring 2020. Whilst reduction, reuse and recycling always remain better, this transition will ensure that the little waste that is leftover is mostly used to generate electricity rather than going into landfill.

### **Theme 3: Public Sector Waste**

The public sector is a major employer in Somerset and can lead by example with how it deals with its own waste. There is potential for considerable improvement within the sector; for example, the current recycling rate in schools is only 25% and recycling across the Local authority's own buildings is patchy. Using the scale of the sector provides an opportunity to shape the market for commercial waste services in Somerset and instigate significant changes within the industry.

The workstream will:

- Develop a joined-up approach across the public sector in Somerset to maximise reuse, separate recycling and minimise waste arising from the public sector.
- Utilise the buying power across the public sector in Somerset to create a viable commercial market offering environmentally optimal commercial waste recycling.
- Identify if there are any stakeholders in Somerset who may need additional support in order to recycle effectively seek to develop a cost-effective pilot which improves recycling and reduces waste.
- Expand the Schools Against Waste programme and incentivise schools to recycle more (including though rolling out additional services to them such as plastic pots, tubs and trays, cartons/tetrapak recycling).

### **8.9: Water**

Climate projections predict increasing precipitation intensity and variability in the UK, leading to increased risks of flooding, drought and extreme weather events<sup>44</sup>. Flood risks in Somerset are exacerbated by sea level rise, with low-lying regions such as the Levels and moors particularly vulnerable to these changes<sup>45</sup>.

Additionally, predicted climatic changes impact current water management practices and adaptation schemes, which are unlikely to be robust enough to cope with these added pressures<sup>44</sup>. Ensuring future developments consider the most recent climatic projections is required to minimise flood risk and other issues.

The requirement for the Water workstream to be cross-sector in approach is significant; alterations to land usage and management practices in both the natural environment and agricultural ecosystems are likely to impact flood risk, water quality and other aspects of the

hydrological cycle. Ensuring these issues are both accounted for and minimised will be crucial to minimise the secondary consequences associated with project implementation.

### **Theme 1: Strategy and Policy**

Improving existing strategies and policies relating to water will ensure co-ordinated response by all partner organisations, provide long-term risk assessment for predicted climatic changes, and enable access to increased sources of funding.

Examples of reviews and updates to be explored by this workstream are:

- Update internal and statutory strategies to ensure the inclusion of most recent climate change projections and associated risks
- Support the establishment of the Somerset Rivers Authority to deliver adaptation schemes to address projected risks

### **Theme 2: Data Collection and Analysis**

Detailed modelling of changes to the flood, drought and extreme weather profile of Somerset is required to inform evidence-based project development, business cases and feasibility studies.

Initial tasks for this workstream will be to:

- Map changes to flood risk caused by climate change.
- Map changes to coastal erosion caused by climate change.
- Develop integrated flood investment strategies from predicted changes.
- Map priority regions suitable for sustainable drainage (SuDS) projects.

### **Theme 3: Schemes and Initiatives**

Developing projects to adapt to the projected risks of climate change is crucial to ensure the communities of Somerset remain resilient to these predicted impacts.

The workstream will:

- Continue to deliver adaptation schemes to minimise the risks of flooding, drought and coastal erosion.
- Assess pre-existing adaptation schemes and infrastructure to ensure they are resilient to the most recent climate projections.
- Identify opportunities and potential funding to develop water processing infrastructure for future resilience.

### **8.10: Communications and Engagement**

Substantial levels of communication and engagement will be crucial to the success of all the workstreams and delivery of the overall Climate Emergency Strategy. As well as facilitating changes within the areas under the direct control of the five Local Authorities, the success of the Strategy will be underpinned by encouraging action to be taken by the many individuals, communities and other stakeholders.

Whilst many groups and communities are actively engaged with the climate change agenda currently experiencing considerable coverage within the media, some groups prioritise the issue to less of an extent. Receiving feedback from these groups and individuals and encouraging them to engage with the development of the Strategy is a vital action for this workstream.

### **Theme 1: Engagement and Consultation**

Ensuring that everyone in Somerset feels a sense of ownership of the Strategy is fundamental to its success; therefore ensuring as many people as possible from a cross section of society have an opportunity to contribute to the development of the Strategy is essential.

To achieve this, the workstream will:

- Develop Climate Summits in each district in conjunction with Somerset Climate Action Network (SCAN).
- Produce an online forum for on-demand engagement with the Strategy development.
- Organise specific engagement with young people through school and college events.
- Explore further opportunities for ongoing feedback and suggestions for the Strategy and subsequent Action Plan development.
- Work with local communities, towns, wards and parish councils to ensure local interest and community buy-in with the Strategy and associated Action Plan development.

### **Theme 2: Internal Communications**

The five Local Authorities and partners have well-established internal communications channels. These can all be immediately used to engage and inform a significant workforce and seek to develop a significant body of ambassadors for the strategy and source of good practice case studies.

This workstream will:

- Highlight the importance of best practice, encompassing suggestions from all workstreams, within internal communication channels such as employee email and online newsletters.
- Explore opportunities to incentivise partner employee best practice and behaviour change.

### **Theme 3: External Communications**

An appealing online presence will be a major component of the external communications and engagement strategy. Developing a central repository or hub for information, case studies, progress updates, resource packs and relevant materials will be critical in informing the wider community of the climate emergency whilst ensuring community buy-in and contribution to Strategy development. More traditional forms of media, such as press releases, news features or specific events, will supplement the external communications strategy to ensure accessibility for all.

Initial components of this work will include:

- Developing a uniform communications strategy to be implemented at all levels from all five Local Authorities.
- Utilising the Councils' established communications channels, such as traditional PR, in conjunction with the combined social media presence and reach, to maximise engagement opportunities.
- Ensure that documents and resources are available in other, accessible formats.

### **9: Climate Emergency Strategy Delivery**

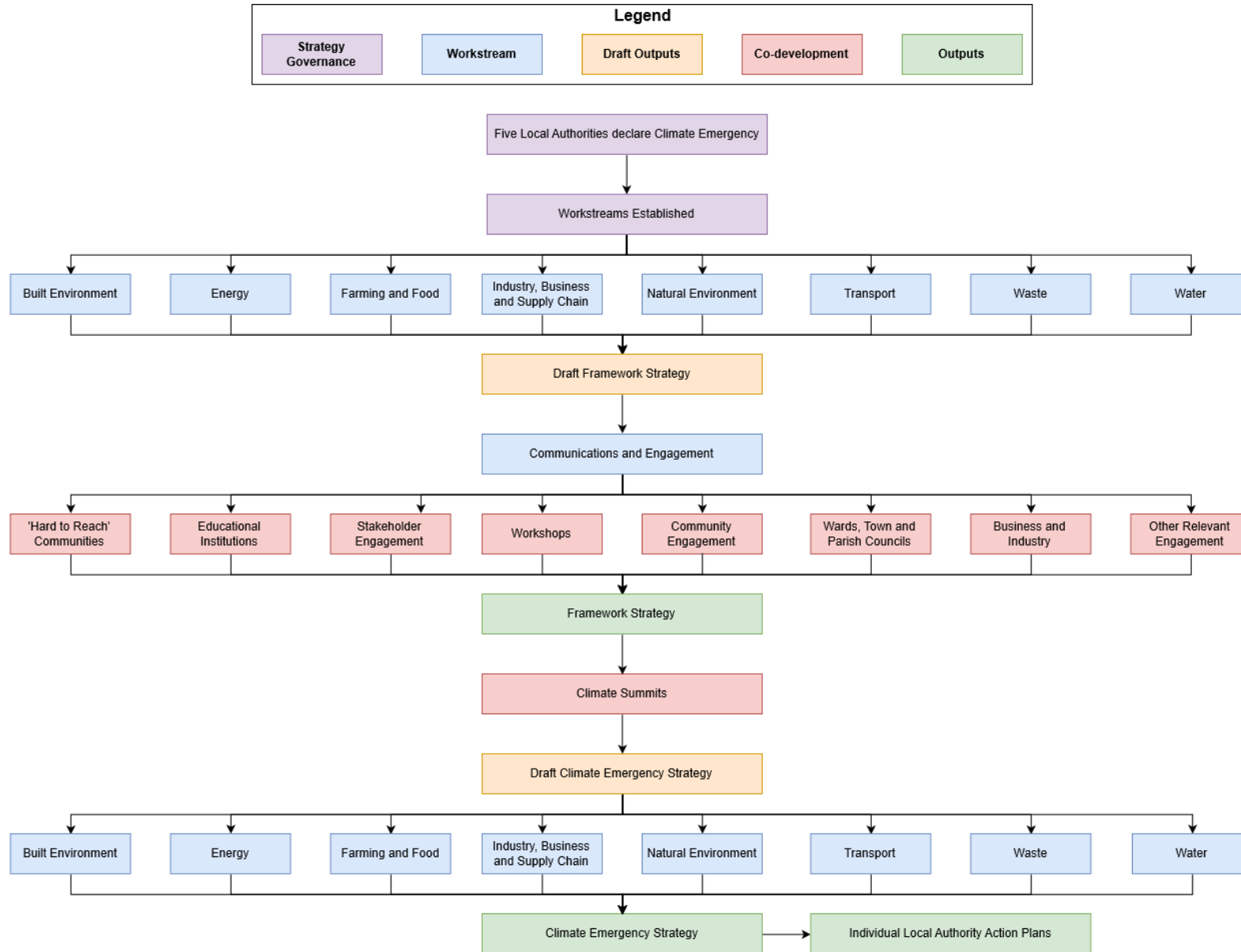
The flowchart below aims to simplify the steps that will be taken in order to develop and deliver the final Climate Emergency Strategy.

Community engagement will be a priority throughout Strategy development. We have chosen to deliver a 'Climate Summit' in each district to provide the opportunity for as many individuals and communities to engage with the development of the Strategy. However, this is only one strand of the engagement strategy. We will also be seeking feedback from an online platform as well as events at local schools and colleges to engage with the young people of Somerset. Each workstream will identify issues requiring stakeholder or sector-specific expertise and look to engage with the relevant academic or industry experts throughout Strategy development. It is hoped that through this engagement and consultation additional or alternative themes will be identified as priority issues for individuals and communities requiring action from the Climate Emergency Strategy.

Whilst workstreams appear independent in the flowchart below, it is important for these groups to work together. A collaborative approach is required to reliably evaluate key issues and develop projects encompassing a range of issues.

Additionally, development of the Individual Local Authority Action Plans is occurring simultaneously to the Climate Emergency Strategy. This means the Action Plans will be implemented alongside the final Strategy, ensuring that action is taken as soon as feasibly possible, once specific evidence-based projects are prioritised and developed following feedback from the public.

However, actions to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change are already in progress across Somerset. Whilst time is being taken to develop an evidence-based Strategy, it is key that the actions being undertaken already are not slowed down by this process. Many projects will continue to be delivered throughout Strategy development, such as those intended to increase Somerset's resilience to flood risks and the continuation of preparation for the roll-out of the Somerset Waste Partnership's Recycle More scheme in 2020.





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## **11: Appendix**

### **Somerset County Council**

Full Council resolves to:

- a) affirm the Council's recognition of the scale and urgency of the global challenge from climate change, as documented by the latest Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and declares a climate emergency; and
- b) mandate the Policy and Place Scrutiny Committee to review and recommend what further corporate approaches can be taken through a SCC Climate Change Strategy and to facilitate stronger Somerset-wide action through collaboration at a strategic, community and individual level; and
- c) pledge to work with partners, including the Heart of the South West LEP, individuals and community action groups across the county to identify ways to make Somerset carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3); and
- d) write to the Secretaries of State for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy, Transport, Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and Housing, Communities & Local Government calling for the creation, provision or devolution of powers and resources to make achievement of the 2030 target possible here in Somerset; and
- e) report to Full Council before the end of 2019 with the actions the Council has and will take to address this emergency; and
- f) allocate £25,000 from the Council's 2018/19 contingency budget and authorise the Lead Director for Economic and Community Infrastructure to utilise this funding to resource the work necessary to support Scrutiny Committee for Policies and Place and to assess any specific recommendations and financial implications. Any unspent allocation will be carried forward into 2019/20 to continue the work.

### **Somerset West and Taunton District Council**

Shadow Full Council resolves:

1. To declare a climate emergency.
2. With partners across the district and region, to start working towards making Somerset West and Taunton carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account emissions from both production and consumption (7).
3. To call on the UK Government to provide guidance and the powers and resources to make carbon neutrality possible by writing to local MPs, the Secretaries of State for Business Energy & Industrial Strategy, Transport, Environment, Food & Rural Affairs and Housing, Communities & Local Government.

4. To develop a Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan, starting from July 2019, with a cross party working group and the necessary officer support to assist with investigative work, drafting the plan and the delivery of early projects.

5. To report to Full Council before the end of 2019 with costed proposals for projects for the Council to effectively start addressing the climate emergency, which could include:

a) Enabling more cycling, walking and use of shared and public transport.

b) Providing electric car charging points in car parks and other suitable locations, including for use by council tenants and council vehicles.

c) Adopting high energy efficiency standards and providing for the effective use of recycling services in new buildings through the planning system.

d) Demonstrating and developing a programme for retrofitting high standards of energy saving and insulation in existing council buildings, including housing, and assets; initially focusing on where the greatest benefits could be gained.

e) Promoting waste reduction, reuse and recycling on the go, and supporting community projects.

f) Sourcing electricity used by the council from renewable energy suppliers and providing support for smart energy infrastructure, including demand management and storage.

g) Supporting green businesses and social enterprises.

h) Review of planning policies and investment opportunities for local renewable energy and infrastructure and environmental markets, as well as divestment from fossil fuels.

i) Adaptation for flooding, coastal erosion and other impacts of climate change.

j) The appointment of a specialist officer to develop and champion the delivery of the Carbon Neutrality and Climate Resilience Plan.

6. To provide an annual review and update of the plan thereafter.

7. A provisional budget of £25,000 to be allocated to allow this work, including early projects agreed by the working group, to be undertaken either through resources already available or through commissioning. This sum to include £15,000 as a supplementary budget allocation from the General Fund in 2019/20, to be taken from general reserves and returned if able to be undertaken from already available resources, and £10,000 to be prioritised from the proposed HRA Maintenance Budget in 2019/20.

## **South Somerset District Council**

*The Council have agreed to:*

1. Note the background information above.
2. Declare its recognition of a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency'.
3. Develop a Strategy by the Full Council meeting on 19th September 2019\*, that sets ambitious targets to protect the environment and ecology; to reduce Carbon Emissions; and for a) South Somerset District and b) the Council to become carbon neutral
4. Develop a delivery plan that sets out the necessary policies, projects and actions to deliver the targets, and identifies the resources necessary to enable the delivery of the strategy.
5. Work with councils and other partners in Somerset to develop collaboration, joint approaches and share resources in tackling climate change and protecting the environment

\*Now Autumn 2019

## **Sedgemoor District Council**

Proposed Climate Change Motion that Council:

- a) Affirms the recognition of the scale and urgency of the global challenge from climate change, as documented by the latest Special Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
- b) Pledges to work with partners, including the HoTSWLEP, Somerset County Council, Somerset Districts, individuals and community groups to identify ways to make Sedgemoor and Somerset carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions
- c) Joins with the County Council and Somerset Districts in writing to the Secretaries of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy, Transport, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Housing, Communities and Local Government calling for the creation, provision or devolution of powers and resources to make achievement of the 2030 target possible here in Sedgemoor and Somerset
- d) Allocates up to £25,000 from the Council's Community Development Fund and authorises the Strategic Director (Doug Bamsey) to utilise this funding to resource the work necessary and develop a strategy and actions
- e) Will receive a report before the end of 2019 with the actions that have been and will be taken to address this target.

## **Mendip District Council**

Full Council calls on Mendip District Council to:

1. Declare a 'Climate and Ecological Emergency';
2. Pledge to make the district of Mendip carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3);
3. Call on Westminster to provide the powers and resources to make the 2030 target possible;
4. Work with other councils and governments to determine and implement best practice methods to limit Global Warming to less than 1.5°C;
5. Continue to work with partners across the district and region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans;
6. Submit a bid as part of the Council's budget setting process for an additional £100,000 to fund a 'Sustainability' Officer Post for a two-year period to champion the scoping and delivery of the District Council's Climate Emergency 2030 commitment.
7. Report to Full Council every six months with the actions the Council will take to address this emergency.

# Agenda Item 10

## **Verbal update on reports considered by District Executive on 5 September 2019**

The Chairman will update members on the issues raised by Scrutiny members at the District Executive meeting held on 5 September 2019.

The draft minutes from the District Executive meeting held on 5 September 2019 have been published with the District Executive agenda.

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# Agenda Item 11

## **Reports to be considered by District Executive on 3 October 2019**

*Lead Officer:* Jo Gale, Specialist (Scrutiny)  
*Contact Details:* joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462077

Scrutiny Committee members will receive a copy of the District Executive agenda containing the reports to be considered at the meeting on 3 October 2019.

Members are asked to read the reports and bring any concerns/issues from the reports to be discussed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting on 1 October 2019.

The concerns and views of the Scrutiny Committee will be reported to the responsible Portfolio Holder(s) and officer(s) in advance of the District Executive meeting to be held on 3 October 2019, for consideration and response in advance of the decision being taken.

### **Please note:**

The Press and Public will be excluded from the meeting when a report or appendix on the District Executive agenda has been classed as confidential, Scrutiny Committee will consider this in Closed Session by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A under paragraph 3 (or for any other reason as stated in the District Executive agenda):

“Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).”

It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption from the Access to Information Rules outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

# Agenda Item 12

## **Verbal update on Task and Finish reviews**

The Task and Finish Review Chairs or Specialist (Scrutiny) will give a brief verbal update on progress made.

### **Current Task & Finish Reviews**

- Review of Council Tax Support Scheme
- SSDC Environment Strategy

# Agenda Item 13

## **Update on matters of interest**

*Lead Officers:* Jo Gale, Specialist (Scrutiny)  
*Contact Details:* joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462077

## **Action Required**

That members of the Scrutiny Committee note the verbal updates as presented by the Specialist (Scrutiny).

## **Purpose of Report**

This report is submitted for information to update members of the committee on any recent information regarding matters of interest to the Scrutiny Committee, and for the Specialist (Scrutiny) to verbally update members on any ongoing matters.

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## Scrutiny Work Programme

Meeting Date	Agenda Item	Background/Description	Lead Officer/ Lead Member
5 <sup>th</sup> Nov	Quarter 2 Performance Monitoring Report	Scrutiny Committee Monitor the performance of the Council and provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge, amplify the voices and concerns of the public and help to drive improvement and cost efficiency in South Somerset District Council services.  This includes the performance of the specific activities funded by the additional transformation budget detailed in SSDC Transformation Programme – Progress report 4 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	Charlotte Jones/Cath Temple/Val Keitch
3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec	Budget Update and Draft Options	Scrutiny Committee review the report and recommendations and provide comments to be considered by District Executive on 5 December 2019.	Paul Fitzgerald S.151 Officer and Lead Specialist (Finance)/Cllr Peter Seib -
4 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Draft 2020/21 Revenue and Capital Budgets	Scrutiny Committee review the reports and recommendations and provide comments to be considered by District Executive on 5 December 2019.	S.151 Officer and Lead Specialist (Finance)/Cllr Peter Seib -
4 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring Report	Scrutiny Committee Monitor the performance of the Council and provide constructive 'critical friend' challenge, amplify the voices and concerns of the public and help to drive improvement and cost efficiency in South Somerset District Council services.  This includes the performance of the specific activities funded by the additional transformation budget detailed in SSDC Transformation Programme – Progress report 4 <sup>th</sup> July 2019	Charlotte Jones/Cath Temple/Val Keitch

The Somerset Waste Board and Somerset Waste Partnership Forward Plan of key decisions can be viewed at:

<http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgListPlans.aspx?RPId=196&RD=0>

Agendas and minutes for the Heart of the South West (HotSW) Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Joint Scrutiny Committee can be viewed at:

<https://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CId=456&Year=0>

## Current Task & Finish Reviews

Date Commenced	Title and Purpose	Members
16 July 2019	SSDC Environment Strategy, to contribute to the development of the strategy representing the SSDC Community and providing a Councillor perspective.	Cllrs Brian Hamilton, Mike Hewitson, Charlie Hull, Paul Maxwell, Sue Osborne, Dean Ruddle, Mike Stanton, Gerard Tucker, Linda Vjeh
1 August 2019	Council Tax Support Scheme, to ensure the Council Tax Scheme is still effective for both recipients and the Council.	Cllrs Tim Kerley, Sue Osborne, Jeny Snell, Rob Stickland,

If you have any suggested topics for Scrutiny Committee to consider please contact Scrutiny Specialist – [joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk](mailto:joanna.gale@southsomerset.gov.uk)

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are committed to ensuring they have capacity to contribute to the Council's Transformation programme and (therefore fewer Task and Finish reviews may be conducted during the Transformation period).

# Agenda Item 15

## **Date of next meeting**

Members are requested to note that the next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee will be held on Tuesday 5 November 2019 at 10.30am in Council Chamber B, Brympton Way, Yeovil.

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