

Decision Report - Executive Decision

Forward Plan Reference: FP/24/01/11

Decision Date – 6th March 2024

Key Decision – no

Confidential Information – no



Somerset Annual Report of the Director of Public Health 2023

Executive Member(s): Lead Member for Public Health, Equalities and Diversity

Local Member(s) and Division: N/A

Lead Officer: Professor Trudi Grant, Executive Director of Public and Population Health

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Summary / Background

1. The production of an annual report is a statutory obligation for Directors of Public Health (DsPH). It is an opportunity for the DPH to give an independent view of health and wellbeing priorities in Somerset. This is the first such report to discuss Somerset as a Unitary Authority, coterminous with the Integrated Care Board. The 2023/24 report covers the relationship between housing and health, providing context for the development of the Local Plan, due in 2028. It demonstrates the importance of housing as a factor in health and wellbeing and shows how working together in this field can improve lives in Somerset.
2. The DPH is given the independence by statute to make a personal statement in the Annual Report. It is brought to the Executive for endorsement rather than approval.

Recommendations

3. The Executive is asked to note and endorse the recommendations in the report as seen below:
 - 3.1. Maximise opportunities to join up and integrate commissioning and delivery of supported housing and support services to better serve people with multiple complex needs.

- 3.2. Ensure the new Local Plan gives significant attention to current and future demographic trends and the related housing needs. Innovate solutions to the development of more one and two-bedroom homes, affordable homes, housing stability and homes built to accommodate future health needs are required;
- 3.3. That the Council and Integrated Care Board prioritise collaborative work to address the needs of people who experience multiple disadvantage.
- 3.4. It is recommended that the Integrated Care Board continues to develop the Inclusion Health Service and develops an overarching Somerset Inclusive Health Strategy.
- 3.5. It is recommended that Somerset Integrated Care System adopt a collaborative approach to reducing injuries and falls overall and in the home, including continuing to provide support for retrofit interventions and housing adaptations that enable people to live safely in their homes
- 3.6. Maintain support for approaches such as Personalised Care that seek to wrap individualised support around a person in their current place of residence to reduce the risk of needs escalating.
- 3.7. That a communications plan is developed to raise awareness among the public of the need to plan ahead for ageing in their home or moving to a more suitable home when the time is right, to reduce the number of people in homes in Somerset that are difficult to live in into old age.
- 3.8. That the council commits to, and supports, the development of the Public Health Ambassador Programme.
- 3.9. That the council embeds the HDRC and its principles into the new Target Operating Model for the Council going forwards.
10. It is recommended that Somerset Council adopts a strong “health in all policies” approach to Neighbourhood Plans, the new Local Plan and Transport Plan, embedding consideration of local health needs when developing and implementing the plans, and seeking to design neighbourhoods that improve health, support community resilience and reduce the risks and impact of climate change.

Reasons for recommendations

4. The recommendations are based on the evidence presented in the report, using information derived from the 2021 census, Office for National Statistics, Somerset Citizens' Advice Bureau, Safe and Warm Somerset Helpline and more. The data describe the extent to which housing can affect health and wellbeing, and ways in which housing can be made a positive protective factor for health. The report also describes approaches and good practice undertaken by Somerset Council and partners have already brought about improvements.

Other options considered

5. The production of an Annual Report is a statutory duty for all DsPH. The subject matter and format is the responsibility of the DPH alone.

Links to Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan

6. This report illustrates how widely housing affects the economy, society and environment, and thereby promotes:
 - A healthy and caring Somerset
 - A greener, more sustainable Somerset
 - A flourishing and resilient Somerset
 - A fairer, ambitious Somerset
7. The report shows how housing can contribute positively to health and wellbeing in Somerset and is written at this time in order to influence the forthcoming Local Plan (2028) and Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (2025).

Financial and Risk Implications

8. There are no significant risks to the council from the report, although failure to produce a report would have repercussions for the Director Public Health.

9. Key risks

None.

Legal Implications

10. There are no significant legal implications.

HR Implications

11. There are no significant HR implications. The report does consider the importance of key worker housing in ensuring the availability of an appropriate workforce.

Other Implications:

Equalities Implications

12. There are no significant equalities implications from the production of the report itself. Its contents include discussions of how access to housing, and its quality, varies between different groups, such as older people, younger people and gypsies and travellers.

Community Safety Implications

13. There are no significant community safety implications from the production of the report, which does, however, consider how good neighbourhood design can help reduce crime, and the fear of crime.

Climate Change and Sustainability Implications

14. There are no climate change implications of the production of the report itself; it is published online, in part to reduce the environmental impact of printing several hundred copies, as happened in the past. The report shows how well-insulated and ventilated dwellings can have positive impacts on health and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.
15. The choice of housing as the subject of this year's report has been made particularly because of the forthcoming Local Plan (2028).

Health and Safety Implications

16. There are no specific "health and safety" implications of the report itself. One subject discussed is the way in which reduced overcrowding and better design can reduce the risk of falls at home.

Health and Wellbeing Implications

17. There are no health and wellbeing implications from publishing the report itself, although clearly the intention of its contents is the improvement of health and wellbeing in Somerset through better housing.

Social Value

18. There are no specific social value implications of publishing the report.

Scrutiny comments / recommendations:

19. The report's themes were discussed at the Adults and Health Scrutiny meeting on 8th February 2024. The findings and recommendations were noted. Comments included that:
 - While we await a Local Plan for the County, the Council should support the development of neighbourhood plans and the consideration of local health needs in the development of those.
 - That the Council and health partners should jointly consider the implications of decisions across the system that affect access to services, including health. Examples were given of a bus route being cut that was relied on to reach a GP surgery, and of a GP surgery being moved to a less accessible location without public transport services.
 - That there would be value in a communications campaign to encourage people to plan for their old age and prepare their homes for when they may be less mobile and independent.

Background

20. The production of an Annual Report is a statutory requirement for all DsPH. It is the personal responsibility of the DPH and an opportunity to give an independent view of the range of factors affecting health and wellbeing in the county.
21. Housing is amongst the most significant of the "wider determinants of health". The stress of unstable and insecure housing tenure can contribute significantly to mental ill-health; damp, mouldy accommodation can cause respiratory problems; heating draughty housing is expensive and exacerbates poverty, and so on. And homelessness (especially rough sleeping) is associated with multiple health impacts. On the other hand, well-designed and appropriate

housing can help prevent falls, encourage independence and provide affordable accommodation for key workers in health and care.

22. As a new Unitary Authority, and coterminous with the Integrated Care Board, Somerset is perhaps better placed than at any time previously to take a joined-up approach to housing as a determinant of health. A Local Plan is required by 2028, and a Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy is due for 2025. This report is intended to set the context for thinking about these issues as the strategies are prepared.

Background Papers

23. The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for Somerset is appended.

Assurance checklist

	Officer Name	Date Completed
Legal & Governance Implications	David Clark	21.02.24
Communications	Peter Elliott	21.02.24
Finance & Procurement	Nicola Hix	21.02.24
Workforce	Alyn Jones	21.02.24
Asset Management	Oliver Woodhams	Sent 27 Feb 2024
Executive Director / Senior Manager		21.02.24
Strategy & Performance	Alyn Jones	21.02.24
Executive Lead Member	Cllr Adam Dance	21.02.24
Consulted:	Councillor Name	
Local Division Members		All
Opposition Spokesperson	Cllr Lucy Trimnell	Sent 27 Feb 2024
Scrutiny Chair	Gill Slocombe – Adults & Health Scrutiny	08 Feb 2024