

SWT Executive

Wednesday, 18th August, 2021,
6.15 pm



Somerset West
and Taunton

The John Meikle Room - The Deane
House

[SWT MEETING WEBCAST LINK](#)

Members: Federica Smith-Roberts (Chair), Derek Perry (Vice-Chair),
Chris Booth, Dixie Darch, Caroline Ellis, Ross Henley,
Marcus Kravis, Mike Rigby, Francesca Smith and
Andrew Sully

Agenda

1. Apologies

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting of the
Committee.

(Pages 5 - 10)

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive and note any declarations of disclosable
pecuniary or prejudicial or personal interests in respect of
any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this
meeting.

(The personal interests of Councillors and Clerks of
Somerset County Council, Town or Parish Councils and
other Local Authorities will automatically be recorded in the
minutes.)

4. Public Participation

The Chair to advise the Committee of any items on which
members of the public have requested to speak and advise
those members of the public present of the details of the
Council's public participation scheme.

For those members of the public who have submitted any
questions or statements, please note, a three minute time
limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak
before Councillors debate the issue.

Temporary measures during the Coronavirus Pandemic

Due to the temporary legislation (within the Coronavirus Act 2020, which allowed for use of virtual meetings) coming to an end on 6 May 2021, the council's committee meetings will now take place in the office buildings within the John Meikle Meeting Room at the Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton. Unfortunately due to capacity requirements, the Chamber at West Somerset House is not able to be used at this current moment.

Following the Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), the council meeting rooms will have very limited capacity. With this in mind, we will only be allowing those members of the public who have registered to speak to attend the meetings in person in the office buildings, if they wish (we will still be offering to those members of the public that are not comfortable in attending, for their statements to be read out by a Governance and Democracy Case Manager). Please can we urge all members of the public who are only interested in listening to the debate to view our live webcasts from the safety of their own home to help prevent the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

5. Executive Forward Plan

To receive items and review the Forward Plan.

6. Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public

During discussion of the following items (Item 7, Appendix 2 only and then Item 8) it may be necessary to pass the following resolution to exclude the press and public having reflected on Article 13 13.02(e) (a presumption in favour of openness) of the Constitution. This decision may be required because consideration of this matter in public may disclose information falling within one of the descriptions of exempt information in Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The Executive will need to decide whether, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption, outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

Recommend that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next items of business (Item 7, Appendix 2 only and then Item 8) on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

(Pages 11 - 14)

7. Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy & Delivery Plan

(Pages 15 - 76)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor for Housing, Councillor Fran Smith.

The Strategy identifies the demand, splits this down by specific need, and puts in place an end-to-end process of interventions, from early help through to tenancy support. The delivery plan looks at the accommodation and support requirements and identifies how these may best be delivered, whether that is through partner providers or whether this is through direct intervention by SWT.

8. Levelling up Bid

(Pages 77 - 206)

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor for Planning and Transportation, Councillor Mike Rigby and Executive Councillor for Asset Management and Economic Development, Councillor Marcus Kravis.



**JAMES HASSETT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

Please note that this meeting will be recorded. You should be aware that the Council is a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 2018. Data collected during the recording will be retained in accordance with the Council's policy. Therefore unless you are advised otherwise, by taking part in the Council Meeting during Public Participation you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of the sound recording for access via the website or for training purposes. If you have any queries regarding this please contact the officer as detailed above.

Following Government guidance on measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19), we will be live webcasting our committee meetings and you are welcome to view and listen to the discussion. The link to each webcast will be available on the meeting webpage, but you can also access them on the [Somerset West and Taunton webcasting website](#).

If you would like to ask a question or speak at a meeting, you will need to submit your request to a member of the Governance Team in advance of the meeting. You can request to speak at a Council meeting by emailing your full name, the agenda item and your question to the Governance Team using governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Any requests need to be received by 4pm on the day that provides 2 clear working days before the meeting (excluding the day of the meeting itself). For example, if the meeting is due to take place on a Tuesday, requests need to be received by 4pm on the Thursday prior to the meeting.

The Governance and Democracy Case Manager will take the details of your question or speech and will distribute them to the Committee prior to the meeting. The Chair will then invite you to speak at the beginning of the meeting under the agenda item Public Question Time, but speaking is limited to three minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes and you can only speak to the Committee once. If there are a group of people attending to speak about a particular item then a representative should be chosen to speak on behalf of the group.

Please see below for Temporary Measures during Coronavirus Pandemic and the changes we are making to public participation:-

Due to the temporary legislation (within the Coronavirus Act 2020, which allowed for use of virtual meetings) coming to an end on 6 May 2021, the council's committee meetings will now take place in the office buildings within the John Meikle Meeting Room at the Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton. Unfortunately due to capacity requirements, the Chamber at West Somerset House is not able to be used at this current moment.

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SWT Executive - 21 July 2021

Present: Councillor Derek Perry (Vice Chair in the Chair)

Councillors Chris Booth, Caroline Ellis, Ross Henley, Marcus Kravis and Francesca Smith

Officers: Clare Rendell, Tracey Meadows, Emily Collacott, Chris Hall, Lisa Redston, Malcolm Riches and Richard Sealy

Also Present: Councillors

(The meeting commenced at 6.15 pm)

17. Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors D Darch, M Rigby, F Smith-Roberts and A Sully.

18. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Executive

(Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 16 June 2021 circulated with the agenda)

Resolved that the minutes of the Executive held on 16 June 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

19. Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Councillor or Clerk of a County, Town or Parish Council or any other Local Authority:-

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Cllr C Booth	All Items	Wellington and Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr C Ellis	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr D Perry	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Cllr F Smith	All Items	Taunton Charter Trustee	Personal	Spoke and Voted

20. Public Participation

Mrs Lori Busch from the Mankind Initiative asked the following question on agenda item 11:-

Can the Executive Committee please confirm whether they will honour the original request from 2 December 2020 Scrutiny Committee that a decision on this historic asset be made by Full Council?

The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development replied and clarified that a working group had been set up to discuss the decision on the future of Flook House, which was then fed into a report taken to the Executive. He confirmed that as it was an Executive Decision, the report would not be taken to Full Council.

Mr Robert Barnes addressed the Executive and spoke about his concerns on the cleanliness of Taunton town. He advised members that he went out every night to clear up broken glass and litter from the streets as he did not believe that the council took their responsibilities on the matter seriously. He stressed to the members that something needed to be done on the matter as it should not fall upon a member of the public to carry out such tasks.

The Deputy Leader of the Council replied and thanked Mr Barnes for his comments and that he had taken the time to address the Executive. He advised contact would be made to follow up Mr Barnes' individual concerns.

21. **Executive Forward Plan**

(Copy of the Executive Forward Plan, circulated with the agenda).

Councillors were reminded that if they had an item they wanted to add to the agenda, that they should send their requests to the Governance Team.

Resolved that the Executive Forward Plan be noted.

22. **Somerset West and Taunton Volunteering Policy and Procedure**

During the discussion, the following points were raised: -

- Councillors praised the work that volunteers carried out within the local community.
- Councillors queried whether the policy was for Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) volunteers only or would it be used by the wider community.
The Economic Development Manager confirmed that it would be used for SWT volunteers only.
- Councillors warmly welcomed the policy and agreed there were lots of positive points and potential within the scheme.
- Councillors queried the makerable system that would be used.
The Economic Development Manager gave information on how the volunteers would use the system, which included case notes and data protection.

- Councillors were pleased that the policy encouraged those that wanted to give their time to work in the community and gave options to those who maybe didn't want to be in paid employment.
- Concern was raised that some other voluntary organisations would struggle to engage with volunteers as some may only want to go with SWT due to the policy.

The Economic Development Manager advised that they would work closely with SPARK to try and appoint to other organisations. They would also encourage as many volunteer posts as possible across the whole sector.

Resolved that Executive approved the adoption of the SWT Corporate Volunteering Policies and Procedures attached to this report.

23. **Corporate Performance Report, Quarter 4 and Out-turn, 2020/21**

During the discussion, the following points were raised: -

- Councillors praised officers for all their hard work in achieving the green indicators in the report and agreed that they can quite often focus on the red indicators and forget to highlight the good work carried out within the organisation.
- Councillors queried whether there were any plans to reduce the number of complaints received.

The Assistant Director for Customer advised that there was a plan in place and that they had been working on the figures since July 2020. He also confirmed that the percentage quoted in the report was a cumulative figure for the whole year, so they should slowly progress towards the target now.

Resolved that the Executive considered the attached performance report.

24. **Access to Information - Exclusion of the Press and Public (Agenda Item 9, Appendix H ONLY)**

Resolved that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the next item of business (Appendix H ONLY) on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 respectively of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

25. **Financial Monitoring - Outturn Position 2020/21**

During the discussion, the following point was raised: -

- Councillors queried why the Leycroft Grove development had not been mentioned with the Housing Revenue Account report.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing confirmed it had not been forgotten and she would discuss this with officers and report back to the Executive with the information.

Resolved that the Executive: -

- a) Noted the impact of COVID on the Council's cost and income during 2020/21 financial year.
- b) Noted the reported General Fund Revenue Budget underspend of £1.25m in 2020/21 and the General Reserves Balance of £7.915m as at 31 March 2021.
- c) Noted the S151 had approved General Fund Revenue Budget carry forwards totalling £1,139,360 as detailed in Appendix A.
- d) Approved an additional General Fund Revenue Budget carry forward of £939,940 for items greater than £150,000 as detailed in Section 8.
- e) Approved a supplementary budget of £806,000 for the 2021/22 General Fund Revenue budget funded from general reserves as detailed in Section 9.
- f) Noted the reported Housing Revenue Account Budget overspend of £15k in 2020/21 and the HRA General Reserves Balance of £2.8m as at 31 March 2021.
- g) Noted the Capital Outturn position.
- h) Approved the proposed carry forward of £41.6m approved budget to 2021/22 General Fund Capital Programme (as per Appendix C) and the £125.3m HRA Capital Programme for the MTFP period (as per Appendix E).
- i) Approved the retrospective inclusion of £3,789,053 Budget in the 2020/21 Capital Programme funded with matching grant income for the Watchet East Quay Development, as SWTC was the accountable body for the Coastal Communities Fund grant allocated to this scheme which commenced in previous years, noting there was no net cost to the Council.
- j) Noted the Capital Programme schedule identifying the schemes and overview profile providing the basis for future performance monitoring (as per Appendix E).

26. **Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2022/23**

During the discussion, the following points were raised: -

- Councillors supported the Strategy and the work carried out by the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources.
- The Chair of Corporate Scrutiny highlighted the points raised by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and that they were aware of the imminent decision to be announced of the formation of a Unitary Authority but that SWT still needed to carry on.

Resolved that the Executive: -

- 1) Approved the Financial Strategy 2021/22 to 2022/23.
- 2) Recommended Council approved the revisions to the Budget and planned reserve transfers in 2021/22 as set out in Table 1 and Appendix A.

27. **Future of Flook House, Belvedere Road**

During the discussion, the following points were raised: -

- Councillors were pleased that the consensus of the Working Group was to keep the building and develop the house and surrounding area.
- Councillors queried whether officers had looked at options for an interim use.
The Assistant Director for Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management advised that the Working Group would meet again to discuss what the building could be used for in the interim.
- Councillors thanked the tenants for defending the building.
- Councillors queried how many tenants were in Flook House and what was the length of their tenancies.
The Assistant Director for Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management advised that there were no protected tenancies remaining and that there were no break clauses included.
- Councillors gave some background information from the Working Group and the options that had been discussed.
- Councillors advised that the building could be offered to a Housing Association or charity to set up a Foyer scheme.
- Concern was raised that the report did not include much detail and only included high level options to retain the building.
The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development (Chair of the Working Group) thanked all for their comments and advised that the project was still in the early stages and that he wanted to secure a budget first before discussing any of the finer details.
- Councillors queried whether the Working Group had sight of the schedule of repairs for the building.
The Portfolio Holder for Asset Management and Economic Development (Chair of the Working Group) advised that the Working Group could not look at the design phase yet as they would have had to go through the procurement process to engage with an architect, which would take time and hold up the initial stage of the project. He advised that a condition survey would be required as part of the process and that the report included information on the debate and options discussed by the Working Group.
- Councillors queried how the decision on the Unitary Authority would impact on the work.
The Assistant Director for Climate Change, Regulatory Services and Asset Management advised that the work would still carry on until the New Authority was created.

Resolved that Executive agreed: -

- 1) To retain Flook House for its historical interest and potential future social value.
- 2) To establish a new project as part of the business planning process for 2022/23. Taking forward the feasibility works for potential development of the area including the retention of Flook House as part of the longer-term solution.
- 3) That a new budget of £125,000 was established as part of the business planning process for 2022/23 to provide project management resource, engage architects, and the other necessary specialists to produce a costed business case.

- 4) That the Member Working Group continued to support the project and Portfolio Holder, if 2.2 and 2.3 were approved.

(The Meeting ended at 7.40 pm)

EXECUTIVE

Executive Meeting	Draft Agenda Items	Lead Officer
18 August 2021	Single Homeless accommodation strategy and delivery plan	Chris Brown/Mark Leeman
venue =	Levelling Up Bid	Joe Wharton
Exec RD = 6 August		
Informal Exec RD = 6 July		
SMT RD = 23 June		
15 September 2021	Financial Performance 2021/22 Q1	Emily Collacott
venue =	Corporate Performance Report	Malcolm Riches
Exec RD = 3 September		
Informal Exec RD = 3 August		
SMT RD = 21 July		
20 October 2021	Tower Street	Natalie Kirbyshire
venue =	Longforth Masterplan	Sarah Povall
Exec RD = 8 October	Firepool Design Guidance and Masterplan	Graeme Thompson/Tim Bacon
Informal Exec RD = 7 September	Employment Land Feasibility Study in West Somerset	Robert Downes
SMT RD = 24 August		
17 November 2021	Voluntary and Community Sector Grants Review	Scott Weetch
venue =	General Fund 2022/23 Draft Budget Update	Paul Fitzgerald
Exec RD = 5 November	Housing Revenue Account 2022/23 Draft Budget Update	Paul Fitzgerald
Informal Exec RD = 5 October	Public Realm Design Guide for Taunton Garden Town – Feedback	Fiona Webb
SMT RD = 22 September	Somerset West and Taunton Districtwide Design Guide	Fiona Webb
	Marina Lease	Chris Hall
15 December 2021	Financial Performance 2021/22 Q2	Paul Fitzgerald
venue =	Corporate Performance Report	Malcolm Riches

Exec RD = 3 December		
Informal Exec RD = 2 November		
SMT RD = 20 October		
19 January 2022	CCTV	Sally Parry/Scott Weetch
venue =	Housing Revenue Account 2022/23 Budget	Paul Fitzgerald
Exec RD = 7 January		
Informal Exec RD = 30 November		
SMT RD = 17 November		
Budget - 9 February 2022	General Fund 2022/23 Budget	Paul Fitzgerald
venue =	Council Tax Resolution 2022/23?	Paul Fitzgerald
Exec RD = 28 January		
Informal Exec RD = 4 January		
SMT RD = 8 December		
16 February 2022		
venue =		
Exec RD = 4 February		
Informal Exec RD = 4 January		
SMT RD = 8 December		
16 March 2022	Financial Performance 2021/22 Q3	Emily Collacott
venue =	Capital, Investment and Treasury Strategy 2022/23	Paul Fitzgerald
Exec RD = 4 March	Corporate Performance Report	Malcolm Riches
Informal Exec RD = 1 February		

SMT RD = 19 January		
20 April 2022		
venue =		
Exec RD = 6 April		
Informal Exec RD = 8 March		
SMT RD = 23 February		

Report Number: SWT 66/21

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Executive – 18 August 2021

Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy & Delivery Plan

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member Fran Smith (Housing)

Report Authors: This report has been prepared by the following:

Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy: **Mark Leeman** (Strategy Specialist, Housing) and **Simon Lewis** (AD – Housing and Communities)

Delivery Plan and Funding Request: **Chris Brown** (AD – Strategy, Development and Regeneration)

1 Executive Summary / Purpose of the Report

1.1 SWT has a significant challenge in meeting the accommodation needs for single homeless customers. This challenge will be exacerbated by both the need to decant Canonsgrove (homeless campus located at Trull, Taunton) by 2023, and the expected general increase in homelessness that is forecast as a result of the easing of Lockdown restrictions (i.e. end of furlough, end of the ban on evictions and the end of the uplift on Universal Credit payments).

1.2 To meet this challenge, SWT has prepared the following:

- Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy
- Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation – Delivery Plan

1.3 The Strategy identifies the demand, splits this down by specific need, and puts in place an end-to-end process of interventions, from early help through to tenancy support. SWT and provider partners have significant control over much of the strategy, although we are reliant on strong partnership working to deliver the necessary housing management and support services

1.4 The delivery plan looks at the accommodation and support requirements and identifies how these may best be delivered, whether that is through partner providers (preferred) or whether this is through direct intervention by SWT. The delivery plan makes specific request for additional capital (£1.55M) and revenue expenditure, both of which are necessary to enable the effective delivery of the strategy.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The recommendations to be considered by Full Council will be:

- a) Adopt the Single Homelessness & Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy (SHRSAS) (Appendix 1) and associated Delivery Plan (Confidential Appendix 2).
- b) To approve the virement of £1.17m and a supplementary General Fund capital budget of £0.38m to support the capital investment of £1.55m as set out in section 6 and Confidential appendix 2.
- c) To delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to make the final funding decision for any capital budgets used in the GF or HRA, including any reallocation of part of the capital budget (b) from the General Fund to the HRA.
- d) For members to note the predicted increase in revenue costs 2022-2025, and to delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to agree the revenue funding allocations 2022-2025 through a combination of homelessness earmarked reserves, future successful bids for government grant, and Better Care Fund grant (subject to Health and Wellbeing Board approval on 22nd November 2021).

3 Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

- 3.1 Housing Directorate risks HC39 (Homeless Rough Sleeping Service Failure) and Corporate Risks CR28 (Rough Sleeper Provision) are directly relevant i.e. failure to deliver a prevention-based homelessness service and providing alternative provision to Canonsgrove.
- 3.2 Significantly, if successful, the strategy and delivery plan will help us move to a position of more financial stability within the Housing Options Service, as we become less reliant on the need for costly B&B accommodation and are able to invest in prevention based services such as floating support. Collectively this will help reduce the risks that we currently face around spend and improve the safety/health outcomes for our vulnerable customers.
- 3.3 The implementation timeframe (2021-2027) is within the period for the establishment of a Unitary Authority
- 3.4 There are several risks associated with the delivery of the strategy:
- 3.5 We need to act quickly to facilitate the decant of Canonsgrove and find/deliver alternative accommodation options. This needs to be done by Spring 2023, which is significantly in advance of the end date of strategy that is set at 2027. Elements of the strategy, such as changes to strategic commissioning arrangements, are likely to take longer to deliver than the end date of 2023. The debate around strategic commissioning will take place within multi-agency partnerships such as the Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board (HRB) and the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board (HWBB). Such conversations will also be an integral component to the Unitary debate. Maintaining good partnership working is essential.
- 3.6 Whilst delivering a successful decant of Canonsgrove by March 2023 officers are considering how demand would be managed should sufficient alternative new supply not be achieved in time. Alternatives will include selective use of Bed and Breakfast accommodation, new lease arrangements and (worst case) a return to streets.
- 3.7 Providing additional 'move-on' accommodation is essential to the delivery of the strategy in the short, medium and long term. Supported accommodation becomes 'silted' without 'move-on' options. However, move-on accommodation (often 1 bed units/shared facilities) are not always easy to provide. Nor are they very popular within the financial portfolio of registered providers given factors such as the changing nature of the housing

benefit regime. The lack of 'move-on' could present a significant risk and dialogue with the council's housing service, emerging corporate company, housing association partners and the private rented sector will need to be an ongoing activity.

- 3.8 Financial risks are in respect of projected reductions in B&B costs through the planned intervention being successful, and obtaining funding as identified in this report across the period 2022-2025 to mitigate the additional costs of this expanded discretionary (non-statutory) service provision.

4 Background and Full details of the Report

Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy

- 4.1 The draft Single Homelessness Accommodation Strategy was initially considered by Scrutiny on 3rd March 2021, and by Executive on 17th March 2021. The draft was then presented as a background paper to inform the options appraisal for delivering future single homeless and rough sleeper accommodation in SWT. The expectation was that the draft accommodation strategy should be brought back for full consideration and approval.

- 4.2 A link to the previous report to the Executive can be found here:

[Options Appraisal for Delivering Future Single Rough Sleeper and Homeless Accommodation in Somerset .pdf \(somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk\)](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/Options%20Appraisal%20for%20Delivering%20Future%20Single%20Rough%20Sleeper%20and%20Homeless%20Accommodation%20in%20Somerset.pdf)

- 4.3 That report (Executive – March 2021) explains the reasoning for and purpose of a single homelessness accommodation strategy for SWT.

- 4.4 The basic premise of the strategy remains unchanged:

- To reduce the Council's dependency on Bed and Breakfast accommodation
- Provide directly or through partners the accommodation required to support the Council's statutory obligation and any additional voluntary obligation to support single homeless
- Provide accommodation which will maximise the opportunities for complex single homeless to stabilise their lives and present the opportunity for them to sustain a tenancy or other form of settled accommodation. This will mean a potential change for elements of the current supply of accommodation, and the use of new and existing investment and support models
- Identify investment models which are sufficiently flexible to manage the scale and the fluid nature of homelessness. This is essential to ensure the Council de-risks its own investment and critically, partners feel able to participate and invest their funds appropriately to support the Council's strategy
- Work with the HRB to progress their commissioning role to enable commissioning partners to bend their revenue spend to improve the support to homeless customers. Success in this area should allow confidence for partners to invest capital but also reduce the concerns raised by MHCLG in relation to SWT's housing benefit levels for complex need single homeless households.
- To help facilitate the successful decant of Canonsgrove over the next 18 months
- To end rough sleeping across SWT by 2027

- 4.5 Since initial consideration by Scrutiny and the Executive, the SHRSAS has been refined to now include the following:

- Amended *vision statement* to reflect the essential emphasis on early help and prevention
- *Objectives* have been refined and sharpened
- Calculations relating to *demand* have been updated
- A clearer picture of *demand, broken down by levels of need* (i.e. none, low, medium and high)
- More detail on the work required to develop future *commissioning* arrangements
- More clarity on the *accommodation options* that we are currently considering
- *Finances* – more clarity on sources of capital and revenue funding

4.6 A Delivery Plan to support the early implementation of the Strategy is attached at confidential Appendix 2. The Delivery Plan sets out a route to achieving the Single Homeless Accommodation Strategy ambition by 2027. However, the loss of bedspaces at Canonsgrove by March 2023 means new supply is front loaded in the delivery plan and changes to the Council’s and partners services needs to be embedded early. The repurposing and/or redesign of some accommodation is also front loaded to help ensure the current accommodation supply is being used to its optimum to effectively support the wide range of customer needs. These often-complex actions mean significant resources in personnel and finance are required up to March 2023. The Plan provides a timeline, financial requirement and milestones whereby the progress of the strategy can be measured.

4.7 The delivery plan is proposing to work with several small voluntary organisations to provide some of the new supply. This includes exploring new models of delivery such as Malachi project with Citizens Somerset, and Green Pastures funding model with Canon Street and Trull churches. Officers are recommending to the Council the lease of a ‘meanwhile site’ to Citizens Somerset/Salvation Army for a 10year period with the opportunity for additional extension periods of five years subject to mutual agreement. A ‘meanwhile site’ is a site which is awaiting development and can be put to a meanwhile use. The ‘meanwhile site’ will be a HRA underused garage site. The properties will be removed by the Salvation Army when the lease ends. This project is subject to grant support and if progressed the council will carry out consultation and preparatory works ready to hand over the site. Officers are requesting delegated authority to the Section 151 Officer, Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Director of Housing to lease HRA land (garage site). The approval of the portfolio holder will only be sought after consultation with local members. See section 14.

5 Links to Corporate Strategy

5.1 The report and its recommendations strongly support our ‘Homes and Communities’ corporate priority and in particular the Council’s ambition to “work to end homelessness and rough sleeping in the District.”

6 Finance / Resource Implications

6.1 The Single Homeless Accommodation Delivery Plan aims to reduce the Council's dependency on bed & breakfast accommodation currently funded by the General Fund Homelessness budget, to facilitate the successful decant of Canonsgrove over the next 18 months, and to end rough sleeping across the District by 2027.

6.2 The successful delivery of the Single Homeless Accommodation Delivery Plan is dependent on financial support being provided by SWT, by both the General Fund and

the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Given the existing financial pressures recognised in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), affordability is a real challenge. Significant investment is also required by partners and/or increased government funding for the plans in this report to be affordable.

- 6.3 Members should note that possible impact on the MTFP in respect of this Plan, however the intent is to fund the additional costs through a combination of Better Care Fund grant income, homelessness earmarked reserves (in 2022/23), and will pursue successful bids for further government grant funding. This should provide sufficient funding, but represents a risk for current MTFP projections if not successful.

General Fund Capital Budget:

- 6.4 The Single Homeless Accommodation Delivery Plan aims to increase single homeless bedspace capacity through the provision of an additional 54 bedspaces over the 18 months ending March 2023. This will require an estimated total capital investment of c£5m. The intent in this Plan is that the property assets will be purchased and owned by the individual partners and not SWTC. This will need to be financed through a combination of capital grant contributions received from MHCLG, other associated partners and has been modelled on the basis of some capital subsidy from SWTC.
- 6.5 The proposal is for SWTC to provide a one-off General Fund capital grant contribution to the lesser of (up to) 31% of partners’ capital costs or a maximum of £1.55m in total. The current proposal is for this to be financed through commuted sums S106 capital grants, Better Care Fund capital grant, and Hinkley Point C capital grant as shown in table 1 below. As with other capital financing arrangements it is proposed to delegate authority to the S151 Officer to determine the final financing mix for each scheme on its own financial merit and will approve on a scheme by scheme basis.
- 6.6 It is believed sufficient funding has been identified to remove any borrowing requirements. The capital funding approach has prioritised options to support investment by partners over direct investment, avoiding the need for borrowing as this would add further cost into the MTFP for debt repayment and interest costs, further exacerbating the Council’s existing budget gap.
- 6.7 The Single Homeless Delivery Plan seeks to increase the supply of accommodation primarily through partners purchasing bedspaces or through leases. The Council will only increase its assets if it directly invests in place of partner investment. This is considered only beneficial where partners are unable to deliver certain types of accommodation or where the Council is more appropriate as a landlord to manage properties, and would likely require an increase in the level of the Council’s proposed capital investment.

Table 1: Financing of Capital Grant (indicative funding split)

Source of Finance	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
	£k	£k	£k	£k
S106 Commuted Sum Capital Receipts	300	0	0	300
Better Care Fund	350	790	30	1,170
Hinkley Point C S106 Funds	50	30	0	80
Right to Buy Capital Receipts	TBC	0	0	TBC
Total Financing	700	820	30	1,550

- 6.8 The estimated total cost of capital investment is uncertain and the financing of this is

dependent on the success of the Council and partners accessing capital grants and partnership contributions to complete the necessary funding. Total costs are also based on reasonable estimates but are not certain with properties to be bought on the open market.

General Fund Revenue Budget:

- 6.9 The Single Homeless Accommodation Delivery Plan is a voluntary adoption by the Council to enhance its core service provision to support and provide accommodation for the additional homeless client group across SWT in order to achieve the Government’s ambition to end rough sleeping by 2027.
- 6.10 The expectation by the service is that demand on the homelessness statutory service, including the voluntary adoption of the homeless client group, will increase over the next 5 years. The Single Homeless Accommodation Delivery Plan aims to mitigate the increased financial impact on SWTC of this projected increase in demand through partners providing more accommodation and support and through better care funding.
- 6.11 Financial modelling undertaken by the housing service to estimate the projected costs suggest that the future mitigated additional revenue budget requirements are as per table 2 below. The service is requesting the support of the Health and Wellbeing Board at their meeting on 16th September to support SWT utilise better care funding to support the revenue element to complement the use of the fund to contribute to capital costs. The service will continue to seek other grant funding and service efficiencies to remove or minimise any additional funds through the General Fund revenue budget.

Table 2: Estimated additional revenue budget requirements over the next five years

Financial Year	Amount (£)
2021/22	0
2022/23	113,000
2023/24	255,000
2024/25	73,000
2025/26 (+)	0
Total	441,000

- 6.12 The current financial position of the Homelessness Service and planned spend for 2021/22 is summarised in table 3 below. The General Fund Homelessness base budget in 2021/22 is £1.378m. This budget covers the costs of staffing, bed & breakfast accommodation costs, third party payments to partners and other operational costs. The Homelessness service also receives ringfenced funding from MHCLG in for the form of the Homeless Prevention Grant (£443k in 21/22) and Rough Sleepers Initiative Grant (£660k in 21/22). These annual allocations are not guaranteed and are also not known in advance. The Executive also approved a carry forward request of £320k on 21st July 2021. Table 3 below shows a predicted net budget surplus 2021/2022 of £253k. This net surplus prediction is anticipated to reduce due to several factors including the ending of the landlord ban on evictions and additional lease costs for Canonsgrove and other properties.

Table 3: Current Financial Position of the Homelessness Service for 2021/22

	2021/22 £000
Sources of Revenue Funding	
Base Budget – Staffing	736
Base Budget - Operational	642
Base Budget - Housing Options	48
Earmarked Reserves (RSI, NSAP & Positive Lives) – ring fenced and to be allocated	246
Earmarked Reserves – not ring fenced	163
Carry Forward Request - to be added to above EMR	320
Homeless Prevention Grant	443
Rough Sleepers Initiative Grant	660
Sub Total Income	3,258
Expenditure	
Staffing	916
B&B, Third Party Payments and other Operational Costs	860
Grant Spend - Homeless Prevention	443
Grant Spend - Rough Sleeping	786
Sub Total Expenditure	3,005
Net Surplus / (Deficit)	253

Housing Revenue Account Capital Budget:

- 6.13 As mentioned above, the provision of an additional 54 bedspaces over the 18 months ending March 2023 is hoped to be delivered through the partners. However, there may be a need to obtain approximately 5 bedspaces within the near future. Whilst other avenues are being explored to deliver this, the HRA may be asked to purchase (and own) additional temporary accommodation. If this is the case, this is expected to cost in the region of £0.5m and met from existing HRA capital budget (financed through RTB Capital Receipt and HRA borrowing). Whilst we aim for partners to purchase the accommodation the HRA could also be used to speed up delivery through purchasing new supply or repurposing a small number of existing properties to support homelessness. Should the HRA increase its role in increasing new supply the intension would be to manage this within the total capital allocation and utilise where possible Right to Buy Receipts. However, the HRA will not have access to the revenue streams identified in table one above and therefore the Director of Housing and Communities would need to consult with the S151 Officer on a scheme-by-scheme proposal.
- 6.14 The delivery plan also refers to the HRA providing a garage site to a partner to utilise. This may require the purchase of up to three individual garages within a site that is otherwise fully owned by SWT, although garage swaps are being offered. Therefore, there may be a capital cost required to purchase up to three individual garages. If this is required, then this is expected to cost in the region of £12k per garage and would be financed through a HRA revenue contribution to capital via the social housing development earmarked reserve. Strategically this would provide the HRA with block ownership and provide more options for future utilisation of the site such as re-development.
- 6.15 The request is to provide delegated authority to the Housing & Communities Director to vire HRA capital funds if required Page 21 the purchase of additional temporary

accommodation bedspace and the garage sites, and to delegate authority to the Section 151 Officer to agree on the final financing of this.

Housing Revenue Account Revenue Budget:

- 6.16 The Single Homeless Accommodation Delivery Plan includes leasing 'meanwhile' HRA garage sites at peppercorn rent for the next 10 years. This would be a rental income loss of £5k per year (assuming full capacity for 10 units at 21/22 weekly private tenant rates) however these are currently under-occupied, and the actual rental loss is significantly lower.
- 6.17 If the HRA does purchase additional temporary accommodation and/or garages then the financial impact on revenue in relation to the cost of financing and the repayment of debt will need to be taken into consideration.

7 Legal Implications

7.1 The following legislation and legal obligations are relevant:

- Part VII of the Housing Act 1996 to deal with homelessness and the prevention of homelessness; and in particular the statutory assessments around priority need (of which being 'single' is not of itself a qualifying criteria)
- Part VI of the same Act dealing with allocation of accommodation
- The need to ensure that all allocation decisions are taken in compliance with the Homefinder Somerset policy, having particular regard to the duties around reasonable preference

7.2 The council needs to be aware of these duties when creating, approving or operating any strategy focused on one particular type, or element, of homelessness.

8 Climate and Sustainability Implications

- 8.1 The Single Homeless Accommodation Strategy has included a low carbon requirement on homeless accommodation.
- 8.2 The Delivery Panel includes sustainability as one of the measures of accommodation suitability including access to public transport routes, facilities, green space, walkways and cycle ways.

9 Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications

- 9.1 The SHRSAS provides an ambition to provide sustainable accommodation and support for rough sleepers. This will enhance our ability to safeguard a group of very vulnerable adults. The average life expectancy of a rough sleeper is 47 which indicates the extent of risks faced from living on the streets which this strategy will help mitigate. The strategy greatly promotes the welfare of adults at risk.
- 9.2 Any accommodation that hosts a number of rough sleepers can expect some level of noise nuisance and related anti-social behaviour, particularly where tenants have poor mental health, learning difficulties and addictions. The impact of this and measures to mitigate this will need to be considered as part of any long-term proposal.

10 Equality and Diversity Implications

- 10.1 Comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA) were recently completed to inform the development of the Somerset Housing Strategy (2019) and Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (2019). An EIA was also undertaken to inform the Canonsgrove Options appraisal.
- 10.2 These EIA illustrate that it is the vulnerable who are often disadvantaged in relation to housing conditions and housing circumstances. The following are presented as examples in relation to single homeless and rough sleeping:
- Age: For the elderly - dementia, cold homes, lack of accessible/adapted properties, rising incidence of homelessness. For the young – increasing incidence of homeless, care leavers and access to supported accommodation and move-on accommodation, overcrowding, rising incidence of case complexity, ‘sofa surfing’, reluctance to use/lack of awareness of Homefinder;
 - Armed Forces Veterans: case complexity, need for support services, access to Homefinder;
 - Race and Ethnicity: language barriers, exploitation, overcrowding, hate crimes, failure to meet the housing and health needs of the gypsy and traveller community;
 - Disability: increasing complexity of mental health problems for rough sleepers/complex homeless, lack of accessible/adapted properties for physical and mental disabilities;
 - Rurality: social isolation, distance from services, lack of transport options.
- 10.3 The accommodation options, improved support services and enhanced collaboration proposed by the SHRSAS will help address the issues highlighted above.
- 10.4 An Equalities Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 3.

11 Social Value Implications

- 11.1 We are working with partners to jointly commission support services for our rough sleeper and single homeless community. This will deliver clear social value benefits, not only socially but also economically for this group. We shall co-design and coproduce solutions with our partners in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). We shall also be working with our VCS partners to help them explore accommodation options, this includes financial support drawn down from MHCLG or via SWT. Our approach will place our partners within the VCS in a position to better work with this client group, and so maximise the efficiency of their service. This will be good for the VCS and also for the client group who will experience improved health related outcomes. We have engaged with the DWP to see how they can support our work so that not only can we help people address social and health issues, but can help move them ultimately to greater independence with a focus on improving skills and ideally accessing employment opportunities.

12 Partnership Implications

- 12.1 The success of any future accommodation proposal will require strong partnership working with accommodation providers such as the YMCA, Arc and others as well as a wide range of support services partners including SCC (Social Care, Public Health), NHS, Somerset Partnership, Turning Point (drug and alcohol service), Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Second Step, Salvation Army, Probation, Open Door and local church and voluntary and community groups.

- 12.2 The principle approved through the HWBB (and to be delivered through the HRB) is that we should develop a joint commissioning approach for support services, and we will continue developing this approach alongside the work we do on accommodation.

13 Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 13.1 The strategy's vision and objectives align themselves with the aspirations of the HWBB as expressed in Improving Health and Care Through the Home in Somerset – a Memorandum of Understanding (2020). This includes the proposal to create a Homelessness Reduction Board that will report into the Health and Wellbeing Board. The HRB will be critical to the delivery of the SHRSAS. There are clear links between people being health and being suitably accommodated with the correct support, so there is a strong alignment between the objectives of this report and improving health and wellbeing. One of the three Health and Wellbeing priorities for Somerset is "Somerset people are able to live independently" and therefore this strategy and delivery plan will be key to enabling this.

14 Asset Management Implications

- 14.1 The Single Homeless delivery plan seeks to increase the supply of accommodation primarily through partners purchasing bedspaces or through leases. The Council will only increase its assets if it directly invests in place of partner investment. This is considered only beneficial where partners are unable to deliver certain types of accommodation or where the council is more appropriate as a landlord to manage properties.
- 14.2 The delivery plan is proposing to lease one underused garage site to Salvation Army/Citizens Somerset to use on a meanwhile basis at a peppercorn rent. The garage site will be a 'meanwhile site' (site with development potential for the Council). It will be leased on a 10 year initial lease with 5 year review periods thereafter subject to mutual agreement. The properties will be removed by the Salvation Army when the lease ends. the council will carry out consultation and preparatory works ready to hand over the site.

15 Data Protection Implications

- 15.1 None at this stage. We will require information sharing agreements between the Council and any providers and support services that we use

16 Consultation Implications

- 16.1 The development of the strategy has been an iterative process, involving regular dialogue with local accommodation providers, and prospective providers of accommodation.
- 16.2 The framework to the strategy is provided by the Better Futures programme, which underwent extensive consultation with the commissioners and providers of support services (among many others)
- 16.3 As the Council identifies new sites to support single homeless accommodation requirements consultation will take place at the appropriate time.

17 Scrutiny comments/recommendations

17.1 The SHRSAS was considered by Community Scrutiny on 29th July 2021. Community Scrutiny supported the progress of the strategy and delivery plan, and asked that officers / Executive consider the following (summarised):

- The Chair on behalf of Community Scrutiny welcomed the report and the ambitions of the strategy and delivery plan
- Contextual evidence needs to be added to the strategy to explain the justification for a focus on single homelessness (as opposed to other forms of homelessness) - Officers have made this amendment
- Community Scrutiny is aware the report includes a number of delegated financial decisions to officers, and seek reassurance delegation is not being over used
- The importance of the delivery of key elements highlighted within the Equalities Impact Assessment e.g. female only accommodation, accessible accommodation, etc. To be mindful of the impact of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Community Scrutiny is keen to see the strategy continue and progress within the larger unitary authority arrangement
- To ensure that the Canonsgrove facility is closed at or before March 2023
- To maximise the opportunity of external funding (e.g. Government grants)

Democratic Path:

- **Community Scrutiny – Yes**
- **Executive – Yes**
- **Full Council – Yes**

Reporting Frequency: Once only

List of Appendices

Appendix 1	Single Homeless Accommodation Strategy
Appendix 2	CONFIDENTIAL - Single Homeless Accommodation Strategy – Delivery Plan
Appendix 3	Single Homeless Accommodation Strategy – Equality Impact Assessment

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**Single Homelessness and Rough Sleeper
Accommodation Strategy – 2020 to 2027**

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Introduction

SWT as the local housing authority has a statutory duty to prepare a homelessness and rough sleeper strategy. We prepare this in collaboration with the other district councils within Somerset. The current version of the countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy was prepared in 2019 and adopted by SWT during 2020. The adopted strategy covers all forms of homelessness and sets out a range of actions against the following six priorities:

- Provision of adequate affordable accommodation
- Provision and effective use of temporary accommodation
- Support the Government's commitment to end rough sleeping
- Support prevention and early intervention
- Enable specific client groups to access suitable accommodation
- Maintain strong relationships across partnerships

Monitoring and delivery of the strategy is currently coordinated through Somerset Housing Managers Group (HMG) although going forward this responsibility will pass to the newly created Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board (HRB).

The strategy can be viewed here:

[Housing strategy \(somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk\)](https://www.somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk/housing-strategy)

Why is there a need to focus on single homelessness?

As the local housing authority we seek to help all who are homeless, whether they are singles, couples or families. By far the greatest numbers that we support are singles. And as a service responding to crisis, the significant majority of presentations are by singles. Many of these have suffered trauma and are struggling with a range of conditions such as poor mental health, poor physical health, and drug and/or alcohol dependency. Over the past five years we have seen a general worsening of case complexity. We work with several housing providers who support these individuals (over 90% are singles) in a range of accommodation settings. This is often paid for by enhanced housing benefits. In addition, there are a range of support services that seek to help such individuals – these range from mental health teams, General Practitioners (GPs), social care practitioners and specialist drug and alcohol teams. These services are all costly to provide.

A recent report by Faculty for Homelessness and Inclusion Health (2021) presented a summary of some of the health-related challenges facing those who are homeless / rough sleepers, together with challenges for those who are seeking to support them (extract below):

- *The annual cost of unscheduled care for homeless patients is eight times that of the housed population*
- *Homeless patients are overrepresented amongst frequent attenders in Accident and Emergency (A&E) departments.*

- *High costs are associated with multi-morbidity, but can mask the fact that many homeless people have poor access to healthcare, with less resource allocation than they need. Despite this expenditure, the average age of death for homeless patients is just 43 for women and 47 years for men and is associated with the reduced quality of life caused by multi-morbidity*
- *Standardised mortality ratios for excluded groups, including homeless people, are around 10 times that of the general population*

These statistics are a stark reminder of the health risks faced by those individuals (singles) who are most excluded from society. Much of this is rooted in trauma, and much of that can often be traced back to childhood trauma. However, there is hope. The recent success of the Canonsgrove facility at Taunton (60 bed singles homelessness campus) has demonstrated that, with the correct accommodation and person centred / wrap-around support, that it is possible to help people make the journey from a complex crisis to stability and independence. At the same time, we have evidenced a fall in presentations at hospitals, other health settings as well as a declining need for a variety of other support. Accordingly, we have the ability to improve peoples' lives and make significant savings in service delivery.

Tackling single homelessness within SWT

Accommodating single homeless is a significant challenge for any locality, especially when seeking solutions for individuals with multiple/complex problems. Over recent years this challenge has increased due to the repercussions of the recession and austerity. This has resulted in ongoing funding pressures, changes to benefit regimes, and worsening case complexity. The pressures across SWT are significant. SWT has a high number of complex homeless and rough sleepers. The ongoing Covid emergency, and the government's 'Everyone In' initiative, shined a spotlight on the challenges of accommodating and supporting complex clients. It also presented opportunities to find lasting solutions to this difficult problem.

To plan a way forward, multi-agency workshops (on-line, facilitated by Ark Consultancy) were held during the during Summer 2020. A range of partners were involved, from district councils, housing providers, and the commissioners and providers of support services. These workshops highlighted several important contextual considerations. These include:

- Locally, we have strong partnership arrangements (strategic, tactical and operational)
- There are not enough units of accommodation both in the social rented and private rented sectors
- The opportunity to improve commissioning and support arrangements through the Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board
- Increasing case complexity and the threat of Covid to worsening the current levels of homelessness

Partners agreed that now is the time to build on the pace and good will generated by the Covid response/'Everyone In'.

Commonly agreed ambitions are to:

- End rough sleeping
- Develop a prevention approach that is client centred
- Provide flexible pathways within a range of accommodation options
- Provide quick and easy access to support services
- Facilitate timely move on to secure and affordable accommodation with ongoing support available if required

The strategy that follows reflects these ambitions. It is also informed by *Better Futures for Vulnerable People in Somerset (Better Futures Programme – Somerset Strategic Housing Group (SSHG)/Ark Consultancy - 2020)*. This is a Local Government Association (LGA) sponsored multiagency programme that seeks to provide appropriate support to the most vulnerable in society. It also seeks to close the 'revolving door' that often traps customers in a perpetual 'toing and froing' between services. Ark have recently been re-appointed (July 2021) to help with the delivery of this programme.

Vision

Rough sleeping in Somerset West and Taunton will end by 2027. An active programme of Early Help and prevention will be established to proactively reduce the chance of homelessness and escalating need. For those requiring support, all single homeless people shall have access to a client centred service that will provide excellent coordinated support within a range of appropriate accommodation options that can flex according to changing demand

Objectives

The objectives for the Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy (SHRSAS) are grouped under four themes: Accommodation, Support, Cost and Commissioning

Theme 1: Accommodation options will be improved:

- Suitable by reason of size, affordability, and accessibility
- Self-contained wherever possible
- Flexible
 - between level of need
 - between singles and families where appropriate
 - between licence and tenancy where appropriate
- In locations consistent with demand and access to services
- Sufficient by reason of numbers, including an availability of accessible units and move-on options

Theme 2: Support services will be enhanced:

- Early Help – a neighbourhood approach that includes 'no wrong door'
- Prevention first – seeking to stop the escalation of problems

- Improved working between housing options, the providers of accommodation and housing management, and support services to provide:
 - Improved initial assessment and placement
 - Person centred approach – right client, right place
 - The right level of housing management and support (wrap-around)
 - Timely and effective move on
- Provision of floating support – a service that goes with the client on their journey
- Working together to ensure tenancy sustainment
- Working together to develop customer skills and access to training and employment

Theme 3: Costs will be managed, and as far as possible:

- Ensuring affordability for the client
- Ensuring affordability for SWT and providers (accommodation, housing management, and support)
- Reducing the use of enhanced Housing Benefit
- Eliminating the need for Bed & Breakfast accommodation and other expensive leasing arrangements
- Working with partners on joint funding proposals to maximise the opportunities for collaboration

Theme 4: Commissioning will be enhanced:

- Support the Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board to
 - Develop strategic integrated commissioning arrangements across health, care and housing
 - Improve the coordination and effectiveness of multi-agency tactical and operational delivery
- Local (SWT) Service Level Agreements and associated partner performance will be improved by
 - Co-production
 - Flexible use of budgets
 - Focus on client wellbeing –physical and mental
 - Monitoring the right things e.g. client wellbeing, duration of stay, move on, nomination rights

The strategy that follows explains how the above will be delivered. However, it is important to note that a significant proportion of this requires a multi-agency response. Much of this is being coordinated through the *Better Futures* programme (BF) that sits within the remit of the Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board. The BF programme can be viewed here:

[Housing Advisers Programme - Better futures for vulnerable people, Somerset | Local Government Association](#)

Equalities considerations

Equalities considerations are important to the provision of new accommodation options and support services. The recently adopted Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (2020) is supported by a comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment which highlights a range of issues. These are highlighted below, together with a comment on how the delivery of the SHRSAS will help.

Gender

- Currently no specific accommodation / service for females*

*other than for victims of domestic abuse, which is to be reviewed under the provisions of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021

SHRSAS: There is a need for female only provision. This matter will be actively explored with providers and appropriate provision will be made

Age

- Significant issues for under 35s and young adults – rising incidence of case complexity, care leavers and access to supported accommodation and move-on accommodation, overcrowding, sofa-surfing, reluctance to use / lack of awareness of Homefinder
- Need to consider ageing population. We are seeing more presentations from older homeless clients with age related health issues

SHRSAS: The provision of more supported accommodation, together with additional move-on facilities, will actively help both young and elderly. As will enhanced support services including (importantly) tenancy support. Outside the remit of the SHRSAS, other work such as regulating HMOs and improvements to Homefinder (digital access) will also help

Disability

- increasing complexity of mental health problems for rough sleepers/complex homeless, lack of accessible/adapted properties for physical and mental disabilities

SHRSAS: A key requirement is to improve the provision of support services, including mental health and drugs/alcohol. In addition, we understand that we require 8 units of accessible accommodation. We are working with providers to enable this provision.

Armed Forces Veterans

- Case complexity, need for support services, access to Homefinder

SHRSAS: The accommodation requirements for armed service veterans are currently met at Victory House, East Reach (10 bed spaces). We consider that, at present, there is no need to increase this provision.

Race and ethnicity

- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community: There is no transit facility within Somerset, and there is a shortage of permanent accommodation*
- BAME: Language barriers and a lack of understanding of the housing system are potential challenges in accessing support. BAME community are over-represented in the rough sleeper community (15%)

*Note: this is an issue for the whole of the GRT community, and not specific to 'singles'

SHRSAS: Consideration of accommodation matters for the gypsy and traveller community is to be addressed within the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment that is due for completion later in 2021. The CCG, districts and the county council currently fund Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officers (GLO) that are available for advice and assistance. For the BAME community, we need to ensure that data is being captured within appropriate risk assessments, and that this information is used to identify appropriate accommodation and associated support

In addition to the above, SWT also recognises the following characteristics when developing policy: - Carers, Rurality, Low income, Economic and Social Disadvantage, Digital Exclusion. The people we are seeking to support with this initiative will all have one or more of these characteristics. All will benefit from the enhanced provision that the SHRSAS will deliver

Client Groups and accommodation options

Client groups can be distinguished by their level of need. Each level of need often requires bespoke accommodation solutions.

Low Needs

Description: Periods of rough sleeping and homelessness. Some needs that require support. Can move to independent living accommodation in 6-11 months

Accommodation: Private Rented Sector (PRS), Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), social housing, temporary accommodation (TA)

Support: Floating support, some support services

Medium Needs

Description: Require intervention of 1+ statutory service, inconsistent engagement, with sustained support could move to independence in 12+ months

Accommodation: Low to medium supported accommodation

Support: Intensive Floating Support, coordinated and sustained support service engagement

High Needs

Description: Entrenched rough sleepers, revolving door clients, multiple statutory services involved, minimal or no engagement, never/rarely been independent

Accommodation: Highly supported accommodation

Support: Intensive, coordinated and sustained support service engagement

The accommodation options as stated above need to be understood, as there is a need for nuanced provision:

- Short-term assessment accommodation for those believed to be in priority need including emergency assessment accommodation for rough sleepers
- Temporary self-contained accommodation for those owed a 'statutory duty' from the council's housing service
- Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Accommodation for high risk offenders approved by police and probation
- Accommodation for those new to the streets
- Supported short/medium-term accommodation for medium/high risk individuals
- Trainer flats – to prepare individuals for independent living
- Accommodation for those escaping domestic violence
- Female only provision
- Veteran (armed forces) Accommodation
- Dry house / abstinence house
- Under 25's with additional support needs, including crash pads – Pathways to Independence (P2I) service
- Move-on (shared and self-contained)

In meeting the housing needs of young people (aged 18-25) we work closely with Pathways to Independence (P2I). P2I is a Somerset County Council commissioned service that provides 48 bedspaces across SWT (based in Taunton and Minehead). The service is provided by the YMCA Dulverton Group. SWT employs a P2I coordinator that is based within the Housing Options service. Their role is to work with statutory services and the YMCA (multi-agency panel) to identify the best option for the individual, including seeking (where possible) a return to their family. The current contract for the P2I service has been extended until April 2023.

There are other accommodation providers that we work alongside to help support vulnerable customers – some of these are listed below:

- Rethink – mental health support
- Second Step – mental health & drug and alcohol support
- Women's refuge – for victims of domestic abuse (often out-of-area placements)
- Life Project – 6- 8 units available for vulnerable women (pregnant and/or with children under 5 years of age)
- Julian House – 8 units for high risk offenders

Overall Demand

Demand for a single person homeless accommodation by client group is shown in the table below.

Table 1: Single homeless and rough sleepers Headline summary of demand for units of accommodation	
All demand	374
Current provision	287
Current provision - unsuitable*	74
Gap	87
Need (unsuitable + gap)	161

*Some of which can be reconfigured into more suitable accommodation

Assumptions

We have modelled future need on the current need at May 2021 (i.e. after lockdown starting to ease). There are downward and upward pressures that we expect in the future:

- Downward – reducing demand: There will be a significant cultural shift in the Homelessness Service with a greater emphasis on early engagement and prevention. We shall also work collaboratively with partners to deliver neighbourhood based early help services
- Upward – increasing demand: Covid will have negatively impacted the economic fortunes of many, as well as people's mental health and relationships. We can expect to see upward pressures on demand through job losses, affordability and debt; evictions due to rent arrears and Section 21 (eviction) backlog being tackled, relationship breakdown, domestic abuse etc; plus reduced availability of B&B accommodation as 'normal' (e.g. tourism/business) client groups return

The above assumptions and figures have been tested and verified in consultation with local providers.

The analysis of demand includes those whom the council has a 'statutory duty' to support, together with those the council may offer a 'voluntary duty'. Those for which we have a 'statutory duty' include those with dependent children, pregnant women, homeless in emergency, prison leavers, members of the armed forces, and those who are vulnerable by reason of age (young and elderly), domestic violence or mental/physical disability.

The analysis indicates that there is demand for 374 units of accommodation for people who fall into the single homeless category of whom 287 have their accommodation needs met through the council or its partners.

There is an accommodation gap of circa 87 units for this client group. This gap is largely accounted for by the chronic shortage of move-on accommodation (see item j) below.

The analysis also identifies that some of the single homeless are housed in accommodation which is unsuitable for one of the following reasons:

- Bed and Breakfast – which is not ideal for the customer due to its very temporary nature, also the high cost to the Council
- Shared accommodation – which is unsuitable in some circumstances e.g. single people with complex needs, or when mixing different levels of need
- Accommodation where management practice and support services do not appear to be helping customers stabilise their lives and develop skills to sustain tenancies
- Accommodation which insufficiently reflects the diversity of the client group i.e. low, medium and high support needs, female and male customers, arson risk, registered sex offenders, drug and alcohol, mental and physical health needs
- Accommodation location that does not sufficiently match locations of need of customers
- To reflect anticipated loss of accommodation currently available (such as temporary units in Sneddon Grove, Taunton due for regeneration).

It is estimated that there are 74 units of accommodation that are deemed 'unsuitable' and that need to be decommissioned / considered for alternative use. See section g) below

In addition to the above, it is also recognised that there is often a failure of partner services to provide the necessary support to the customer. This impacts on the ability of the housing provider to stabilise and work with vulnerable clients. This is an issue for all accommodation settings, although good progress has been made at Canonsgrove and Lindley House with the development of hub arrangements. There are also good practices being developed where the service can flex and come to the client (physically/digitally).

Existing Breakdown of Need

We have sought to assess current provision against whether clients have low, medium or high needs. For this exercise, we have discounted those currently in P2I provision, mental health provision and move on accommodation.

Table 2: Existing breakdown of need					
Location	Total clients	No or very low needs	Low needs	Medium needs	High needs
SWT B&B	17	0	2	7	8
SWT TA	7	1	3	2	1

At home	1	1	0	0	0
Lindley House	39	0	5	15	19
Arc Satellite inc Norie House	76	7	50 (inc: Norie 4)	19 (inc: Norie 6)	0
Veteran's house	8	0	5	3	0
The Beach Hotel	12	5	1	4	2
Canonsgrove	51	13	15	15	8
No First Night Out	4 (1 void)	0	3	1	0
RSI	5 (3 void)	0	3	2	0
Total need	220	27	87	68	38

Meeting the demand

Below are described the essential elements that comprise this Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy. The *Better Futures Programme* is an important reference point, as is the work of the *Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board*. Both will complement and support our local aspirations

The key components of the BF programme are shown below, and illustrate a solution that starts with early help and prevention, before moving to considering how we are to commission services, before then ensuring that clients are placed in the correct accommodation with appropriate supports. We then must consider access to more stable accommodation, and then understand how we can work with customers and landlords to deliver sustainable tenancies. All the while, we must continue to learn and provide leadership. All of these components can be developed simultaneously within an overall project framework.

Figure 1: BF programme – key components



(note: top left icon missing)

We have used the above as a framework. Below you will find the detail of how we intend to meet demand.

a) Early help

Early help means taking action to support a person or their family as soon as a problem emerges. It can be required at any stage in a person's life and applies to any problem or need that the family can't deal with alone. It requires agencies (health, housing, education, social care, DWP, police etc) to be linked and to understand each other's role, and to understand the valuable contribution that can be made by the local community and voluntary sector assets, including sports,

leisure and recreation. The Better Futures Programme has established a working group that will define the approach, set direction, influence others and monitor impact. This early help initiative is critical. It will eventually work to stem the flow of people falling into homelessness

b) Commissioning

By commissioning we refer to the process of analysing a problem, agreeing solutions, and identifying those who can provide or deliver the solution. The commissioner can also be the 'provider', or (more likely) this role is taken by a third party/parties. In this section we are concerned with our working relationships with the commissioners and providers of accommodation and support services.

Commissioning operates at three levels, strategic, tactical and operational

Strategic commissioning: The challenge here is to bring together the commissioners of support services (health, care and housing) to develop integrated commissioning arrangements. Often, these services work in silos and as services we are all dealing with the same customers, whether that be Accident & Emergency (hospital), mental health services, drug and alcohol teams, social care, General Practitioners (GPs) and housing. As a result, customers often bounce around the 'revolving door' or service provision. This must change. And there must be a greater focus on early help and prevention – intervening before problems escalate.

This issue is now recognised and will be addressed at a strategic level:

- Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board – resounding commitment to bring together health, care and housing
- Somerset Homelessness Reduction Board – recently established. This is the forum that will seek to drive the integration of health, care and housing (as well as other partners such as the Voluntary and Community Sector, Probation, DWP etc)
- Leading for System Change (LFSC - NHS pilot initiative within Somerset) – recently agreed to adopt 'complex homeless/rough sleepers' as one of its pilot projects for the Integrated Care System leadership programme
- Better Futures Programme – the action plan for seeking the integration of health, care and housing

Tactical and operational commissioning: Coordinating and directing operational working arrangements. This is currently undertaken via:

- Positive Lives Operational Board (multi-agency)
- Covid Homelessness Cell (multi-agency – and will soon merge with the Positive Lives Operational Board)
- Local assessment and referral panels (including that for the P2I service)
- Contractual arrangements between SWT and local providers of accommodation/housing management and support

Within this area of work, it is important to build on lessons learnt. E.g. the committed multi-agency approach at Canonsgrove allowed us to transition 22 high needs clients down to 8 (their needs lessened, or they moved to more independent accommodation). Lindley House has not had sustained support from agencies and has 17 clients that have been revolving door for between 3 and 7 years. Commitment from support services to work alongside housing providers is key to the success of individual clients.

It is also important to note the importance of housing management, alongside the provision of support services, in contributing towards positive outcomes for individuals. Housing management plays an essential role in maintaining the quality of the accommodation setting, developing person centred / supportive relationships with clients, providing the correct level and intensity of support, and encouraging progress towards independence.

The HRB is committed to delivering the following

- Pilot work (delivered at pace) to explore and deliver the necessary inter-agency working arrangements required at operational level
- Longer term work to bring together (integrate) the commissioning of services between health, care and housing (bringing together strategy, budgets and workforce). Commissioning arrangements that allow flex at operational level are essential, given the rapidly changing dynamic of this complex cohort. This longer-term piece of work will be a necessary aspiration of the Unitary council.

Going forward, contractual arrangements must be flexible, seeking to break down barriers between commissioners and providers. Co-production is essential, as is listening to the client voice. The metrics around contract management must be based on the client – their personal journey, their needs, and their aspirations. Again, the Better Futures programme is highly relevant (alongside best practice from Homeless Link / St Mungos etc). The Better Futures programme has devised a set of metrics that have been agreed among partners (see the diagram below). These are a key reference point, in helping to shape and monitor contracts.

Figure 2: Suggested individual and community metrics for future commissioning



c) Creating a robust referral and allocation process

Notwithstanding the Early Help project, there will be those who will be unfortunate enough to fall into homelessness and/or rough sleeping. For these individuals, it is essential that we develop an informed and consistent process of referral and allocation. Through the *Better Futures Programme* it has been agreed that the most effective way of ensuring that customers obtain the most appropriate accommodation and support is to form an 'allocations panel' comprising of representatives from housing providers, social care providers and support providers. This panel will assess a person's needs and identify the most appropriate accommodation solution having regard to the level of support required.

d) Units of accommodation - flexible approach

There is a limited supply of accommodation and, at present, clearly not enough. Adopting a flexible approach (flexing to client needs dependent on changing demand) is essential to meet the demand. This includes flexibility within the current stock, even that which is defined as 'suitable' within the current analysis.

e) Mixing units of accommodation

It is considered that the following accommodation types could be mixed within the same building

- Short term-assessment accommodation
- Emergency assessment accommodation
- Supported short/medium-term accommodation for medium/high risk customers
- Could also include Trainer flats, but these could also benefit from being dispersed

The above could be in one place and closely linked with support provision/hub arrangements. This would aid with specialist assessment and access to those services that are most needed by this client group.

f) Accommodation that needs to remain separated

The following need separate accommodation solutions and cannot be mixed with others

- MAPPA
- Under 25s – currently provided by the P2I service
- Dry house / Abstinence
- Women Only

Some women will actively benefit from female only accommodation options. At present we have none, other than the refuge for victims of domestic abuse. This matter needs active consideration to assess the level of need (including catering for the needs of pregnancy and children). As a broad estimate – of the 50 beds at Canonsgrove we have had between 5 and 10 women resident at any one time

g) Units of accommodation that need to be decommissioned

The following existing units are unsuitable and need to be decommissioned

- Arc crash pads
- B&B – to be minimised*
- MAPPA – i.e. current provision which is 'out of area'
- Temporary Accommodation units (Wheatley Crescent/Sneddon Grove)
- Homes in Multiple Occupation i.e. Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI)/No First Night Out (NFNO)

There will always be a place for some minimal use of B&B accommodation. For example

- to help stop silting (see section k) below)
- for 'move-on' use for some 'low needs' customers until something more suitable becomes available
- for 'on the night' and 'out of hours' referrals

h) Location

Convenient access to services is a fundamental consideration. Accordingly, provision will need to be met primarily in Taunton and its environs, with some also being met at Minehead and Wellington.

For any new provision, impact on adjoining neighbours / communities will be an important consideration.

i) Standard of Accommodation

Canonsgrove is a temporary facility at Trull on the south-west fringe of Taunton. It has capacity for approx. 60 individuals designated as complex homeless/rough sleepers. It was provided in response to 'Everyone In'. The Canonsgrove project reflects much of what is now regarded as best practice for hostel accommodation. There are a number of factors that have made it a success:

- Partnership working – all main services working collaboratively
- Self-contained units (and the ability for segregation in the presence of covid)
- On-site provision of housing management and support services (e.g. mental health, drugs and alcohol)
- An environment that offers green space providing opportunities for relaxation, recreation and sport
- Communal areas within the building
- Engaging activity
- A sense of community

Many of these features are replicated at other provision. For example, Arc have recently opened an on-site GP surgery at their Lindley House facility.

However, there are issues. It can be difficult to segregate the most challenging individuals from those who are less complex and require less intensive support. This can have the effect of holding back progress for some individuals. This raises questions over the size of the facility and the ability to segregate the different levels of need and complexity. These are problems that have challenged housing services for many years.

Hostels are the most common homeless accommodation projects in the country and will continue to have a role locally. However, the recent Covid situation has emphasised that we (providers and support services) need to enhance the quality of the offer. We have undertaken best practice research on Homeless Hostels. A useful summary of recent research in this area was provided by Homeless Link in their report 'The Futures Hostel (2018).

Summary from Homeless Link "The Futures Hostel" (2018)

- Hostels account for 90% of all homeless accommodation projects
- Most provide medium level support.

- Key metrics are successful move on; unplanned moves, plus other measures (e.g. Outcome Star); employment & training participation rates etc
- They are important to help develop skills, abilities, resources and personal development for independence

Providers and commissioners should aim for:

- *Supportive staff with positive, engaging culture who can build trust. Interventions to be personalised and responsive to individual needs, goals, and aspirations.*
- *Strong partnership working with agencies (housing, addiction services, mental health services, financial support, physical health, training etc). The more integrated these services are, the better.*
- *Accepting dogs (otherwise this becomes a barrier for some homeless)*
- *Good range of engaging activities for the tenants*
- *Support for tenants to engage with mental health support, including emotional support, counselling and advisory.*
- *Floating Support to follow tenants during and after Move-On is key. This needs to be part of local housing pathway*
- *Some flexibility around rules and regulations. Alternatives considered and residents involved in developing (e.g. communal space for visitors)*
- *Good quality and range of food offered*
- *A lack of affordable housing is the main issue and needs to be addressed.*
- *Hostels should see their role as time limited, and should focus on supporting people to move towards independence*
- *Consider the benefits of Trauma-informed care and Psychologically Informed Environment*

*Homeless Link are the national membership charity for organisations working directly with people who become homeless in England

These aims are recommended for all future hostel provision across SWT.

It is worth noting that MHCLG, in an advisory capacity, recommend the provision of self-contained accommodation. This is something that we support, as we have seen the benefits of such provision at Canonsgrove and elsewhere. However, whilst we will adopt this as an aim, we are also mindful of the need to adopt a pragmatic approach. There is a place for HMOs. Also, we can be constrained by the Local Housing Allowance (LHA - for PRS options) and the provision of the shared room rate.

There is also a need to deliver accessible units of accommodation. Our analysis shows that we have a need for 8 units of accessible accommodation across the spectrum of single homeless accommodation. Financial assistance is available to help with the delivery of accessible accommodation (see Finances below).

A further factor to consider is climate change and the provision of homes that provide thermal comfort. Any properties that are purchased by SWT will be

compliant with legislation as it affects local authority land holdings. All partners will be encouraged to adopt 'best practice in the private rented sector' and achieve an EPC rating C by 2030.

The above aspirations are consistent with the *Better Futures Programme*. This will ensure that our future homeless provision complies with what is seen as best practice. We will require reporting and monitoring that evidences the outcomes and successes described. See item b) above.

- j) Replacing Canonsgrove and anticipating future demand – accommodation options

At any one time there can be up to 50 residents at Canonsgrove. Of this, approximately 30 can be regarded as having medium or high needs. Approximately 20 have low needs and should ideally be in other accommodation options including move-on, if there was capacity in the system.

The Canonsgrove facility will be stood down during the early part of 2023. At the point of adoption of this strategy (September 2021) this provides 18 months to find alternative capacity. It will be necessary to work closely with a range of partners to manage this situation.

All future provision (to meet overall demand i.e. demand over and above that within Canonsgrove) will seek to provide accommodation according to the level of client need (low, medium or high). It will be for the 'assessment and referral panel' (see *item c* above) to assess which clients are suitable for which accommodation.

Note: This strategy is supported by a detailed delivery plan (see 'Timescales and Delivery Plan' below). The delivery plan will be continually updated. As such, it is important to note that the delivery plan will reflect intelligence (on demand and need) that may differ slightly to that of the strategy.

Our current thinking / progress can be summarised in the tables below

(note: we are in confidential discussion with a range of providers regarding accommodation options – these are referred to Accommodation A, B, C etc)

Table 3: Low Needs Clients – Accommodation Profile		
Accommodation	No of Units	Comments
SWT TA	12	Shift to low over time
NFNO	5	Low needs (prevention)
Satellite – various (Arc)	66	Shift to all low
Veterans House (Arc)	5	(Flexible: others are medium)
Accommodation A	4	Lease to be negotiated
Lindley House	16	To be agreed
Accommodation B	10	To be agreed
Over-supply	(4)	Can reduce TA if required

Total	114	
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Table 4: Medium Needs Clients – Accommodation Profile		
Accommodation	No of Units	Comments
Gascony (YMCA)	18	Minehead
Prospect House (YMCA)	10	Minehead
Lindley House (Arc)	24	To be flexible – longer term, some low
Veterans House (Arc)	3	(Flexible – others are low)
Accommodation C	4	(Offered 2-11 self-contained – to be negotiated)
Accommodation D	0	MHCLG failed bid for 15
Unresolved gap	9	To resolve
Total	68	

Table 5: High Needs Clients – Accommodation Profile		
Accommodation	No of Units	Comments
Accommodation E	10	Will need SWT revenue funding plus strong HRB commissioned services
RSI Houses	8	Can be scaled to zero
Accommodation F	8	Accommodation to be sourced. To be agreed.
Accommodation G	5	Provider to be commissioned. Can be scaled to zero.
Unresolved gap	7	To resolve
Total	38	

The above separation of clients with different levels of need is easier to support from a housing management perspective. The disadvantage is the difficulty of delivering support services to dispersed facilities. This will need careful consideration. Dispersed facilities in proximity may be a solution.

We expect the best practice aims (item (i) above) to be adhered to, and this will be established within commissioning / contractual arrangements.

It should be noted that the accommodation provision also needs to recognise turnover and void properties some of which are inevitable if supply is to be available through partner organisation and provide value for money. In addition, there will always be a number of customers with very low or no support need who are ready to 'move on' to settled accommodation but who are awaiting opportunities in the private sector or social housing sectors. Properties subject to these situations could be as high as 20% and require good management practices

and greater access for customers to affordable private rented or social housing to limit their number.

It would be sensible to 'stress test' the assumptions on future demand (e.g. +/-15% so that we have a broader range of numbers), however the accommodation would need to be flexible enough to be able to step up or down to accommodate these numbers.

Similarly, we need to do further work to ensure that we are creating the right geographical mix. We also need to be clear about which units need to meet accessibility standards.

Housing First – Pilot. 'Housing First' is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed. The fundamental ethos of Housing First asserts that housing is not contingent upon readiness, or on 'compliance' (for instance, sobriety). Rather, it is a rights-based intervention rooted in the philosophy that all people deserve housing, and that adequate housing is a precondition for recovery. We see the potential for a pilot project. This option will only cater for a small number of people – possibly four to six in the first instance, as we would wish to test the application of the model before making any further commitments. Housing First is subject to wider pilot work within the *Better Futures* Programme and progress will be monitored by the HRB.

Ultimately, SWT want to eradicate / minimise B&B costs, which will release revenue funding to support high needs provision and fund floating support (refer to item (l) below).

A further solution is still required for overnight / very short-term assessment. Inevitably, this will include low, medium and high needs clients. This could be B&B, however some more intense support accommodation will be required.

The model needs to be flexible enough to transition to lower needs over time. For example, 31 clients with high needs (currently) should be able to shift to say 15 in 2-3 years. Similarly, Lindley House needs to be configured so that one third could be shifted from medium to low needs as support proves successful

Once the provision of accommodation is agreed, work will be required by all parties to steadily shift existing use to meet the future accommodation profiles (tables 3, 4 and 5 above). This will require significant move on, albeit this must be a client focussed decision for each case.

k) Move on

Lack of affordable single rented accommodation is a national problem and a key issue to resolve in this accommodation strategy. Simply put, without an adequate supply of suitable and affordable accommodation for single people, both supported housing accommodation and the council's temporary accommodation

becomes silted up. Our analysis suggests up to 28 bedspaces in the system are currently being used by customers able to sustain a tenancy in the social or private rented sectors with minimal or no support. The problem is exacerbated by average local rents that exceed local housing allowance (LHA). Accommodation for single households is circa 50% of registered Homefinder demand.

Homeless Link have published a report "Moving on from homelessness – how services support people to move on" which found that nationally 30% of people ready to move on are unable due to lack of supply. Lack of move-on accommodation was our main issue from the rough sleeping workshops held in Summer 2020.

Different housing providers and services refer to move on in a number of ways however for our purpose we mean a home to move into from supported housing, be that a room in a HMO or self-contained accommodation. An important element of move on is the ability of individuals to sustain accommodation and to ensure they are supported appropriately to avoid repeat homelessness.

Our strategy to increase move on includes the following:

- Increasing the capacity and focus in our homeless team to work with the private rented sector to increase supply for our client group
- Explore the case for a council owned Housing Company to procure units of single accommodation available for our client group
- Provision of floating support to increase supply from landlords (who would otherwise be reluctant from a risk perspective), and to improve sustainability of tenancy across all tenures.
- Encourage social landlords using schemes such as tenancy accreditation to take a greater proportion of homeless directly from supported accommodation
- Utilise shared HMOs with lower support e.g. Arc satellite accommodation
- Engage with supported housing, registered provider and other partners to increase supply locally through lease arrangements

l) Floating Support

Floating Support is key to improving the sustainability of a tenancy once homeless clients have moved on from supported accommodation. P2I in Somerset has adopted this approach and evidenced success. It was also raised as important by the supported housing providers at the rough sleeper workshops during Summer 2020. It is also a fundamental component of the *Better Futures* programme.

The St Mungo's research paper 'Home for Good: The role of floating support in ending rough sleeping (December 2018)' describes floating support (or tenancy sustainment) as helping people, who might otherwise struggle to cope, to live independently in their own home. It helps prevent vulnerable people from losing their home and can prevent a return to the street, for those who were rough

sleepers. Support is delivered by skilled case workers who visit people in their homes or meet them somewhere close by. Services can also be delivered digitally.

Benefits include improved outcomes for their customer group, increased independence and more homes available for vulnerable people to rent, by providing more reassurance for landlords. The St Mungo's report also highlights that funding cuts to 'Supporting People' has led to a reduction in this support across the country.

SWT regards floating support as an essential component of this single homeless accommodation strategy. It is as important as any other element and without it the strategy will fail. Ideally floating support should be provided in collaboration with partners, as all elements of the housing, health and care sectors have a vested interest in keeping clients secure and stable. The resourcing and commissioning of floating support will require cross sector conversations within the remit of the Homeless Reduction Board. However, this may take a couple of years to develop. Before then SWT will invest in the provision of floating support

Finance model

The delivery of the strategy will require a significant financial investment, utilising external grants, SWT funding, partner funding and a review of current commissioning arrangements for support services. A mix of capital and revenue funding is required. Capital is required to secure additional supply, while revenue is critical for the maintenance and development of support services along with customer security and safety. Capital is much easier to secure as it is usually a one-off payment, and can sometimes bring a return on investment, Revenue funding is much harder to secure being a commitment to year-on-year financial investment. A strategic review of commissioning arrangements for support services (health, care and housing) should identify opportunities to develop holistic system-wide prevention-based services, with coordinated funding arrangements. This will be driven by the *Better Futures Programme* within the remit of the Homelessness Reduction Board.

An important component of the financial support to the strategy, and beyond the control of SWT and local partners, is the current housing benefit (HB) regime, including Local Housing Allowance (LHA). There is pressure on HB spend (particularly enhanced HB that is used to support tenants with complex issues), with MHCLG encouraging councils and their partners to deliver targeted and financially sustainable models of support. A complicating factor is that local rents exceed LHA rates, which presents an additional challenge when seeking to place / support customers within the private rented sector. Often, we require Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) to bridge the gap. DHP is a finite resource, with budgets reducing.

The delivery plan for the strategy sets out the capital and revenue requirement by scheme. The preferred investment route of the service is through partners. Direct delivery by the council will only be used where it is economically advantageous

or where partners are unable to support. The total capital investment for 54 new bedspaces is estimated to be just under £5m with an anticipated Council contribution of up to £1.55m.

It is predicted that most of the additional revenue costs will be met after 2024/2025 through reduced bed and breakfast costs. At that point, it is envisaged that additional revenue costs for accommodating more single homeless responsibility will reduce to £0 being covered through existing budgets. However, the service needs to go through change to ensure customers are supported in the correct location and can progress towards sustainable tenancies. The following additional revenue forecasts is required in addition to the 2022/2022 base budget:

- 2021/2022 = £0
- 2022/2023 = £113,000
- 2023/2024 = £255,000
- 2024/2025 = £73,000
- 2025 onwards = £0

Existing voluntary sector partners and potential new partners have investment models which use their own borrowing strength to purchase accommodation. Each partner has its own business model. Sometime the voluntary sector would welcome capital grants to support their investment, however revenue costs tend to be a greater consideration. Existing partners are also being asked to consider their current provision to better achieve outcomes and in some cases this will divert capital investment away from new supply.

SWT's Housing Revenue Account and SWT Corporate Company will explore how they could invest to create more one bed opportunities to help meet the significant demand in the district

Timescales and Delivery Plan

The Council has created a detailed single homeless accommodation delivery plan to support the ambitions of this strategy. The delivery plan outlines how the remaining 54 units (approx. figure) of accommodation will be achieved by 2027 and clarify the existing and new partners who will be engaged in delivery. The delivery plan seeks the early delivery of a significant proportion of the units given the need to decant Canonsgrove by March 2023. The delivery plan will be updated regularly and used by a panel of officers reporting to the Director of Housing and Communities and to the Portfolio Holder for Housing. The panel will prioritise and promote the most beneficial purchases and leases and will help to ensure new supply fits the needs of the customers. The panel will also allow the council to align grant opportunities through MHCLG and Homes England with new supply opportunities. The delivery plan will be supported by a live database of accommodation opportunities which has been set up. Revenue needs have also been addressed by scheme and need group.

Summary

In summary there are several key elements to this strategy. We shall work with our partners to meet the demand for single homeless accommodation and to end rough sleeping by 2027. We shall do this in accordance with the *Better Futures programme* and by delivering the following:

- A more effective regime of early help and prevention
- To deliver effective local commissioning within an appropriate monitoring framework
- The successful establishment of a Homeless Reduction Board, working with partners to undertake a fundamental review of strategic commissioning arrangements
- A new assessment and referral panel and procedures
- Flexibility of provision within our accommodation choices
- Very high standards of accommodation
- The decommissioning of Canonsgrove and replacement with suitable alternatives
- The stabilisation of residents through working collaboratively with support services
- The provision of additional move-on accommodation through the activity of a SWT housing company. We shall also look to other providers to help with the provision of move-on accommodation
- The provision of enhanced levels of floating support
- The delivery of specialist accommodation
 - MAPPA
 - Trainer Flats
 - NFNO
 - Women only
 - Accessible units
 - Housing First – pilot
- A finance model that exploits all available resources, including that of SWT, the willingness and capital expenditure of our provider partners, grant opportunities made available from MHCLG, and the integration of budgets to deliver more effective support services.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

Somerset Equality Impact Assessment

The [EIA guidance notes](#) will help you complete this assessment.

If you need help or advice please contact Paul Harding. P.harding@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

Organisation prepared for	Somerset West and Taunton Council		
Version	1	Date Completed	29th June 2021
Description of what proposed change or policy is being impact assessed			
SWT Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy (2021 – 2027) and Delivery Plan			
Evidence			
What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups? Sources such as the Office of National Statistics , Somerset Intelligence Partnership , Somerset's Joint Strategic Needs Analysis (JSNA) , Staff and/ or area profiles ,, should be detailed here			
<p>Report to SWT Executive – Options Appraisal for Canonsgrove (March 2021) Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and Action Plan 2019 to 2023 Somerset Housing Strategy 2019 – 2023 Improving Health and Care Through the Home in Somerset – A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (2020) Homelessness Act 2002 The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Crisis report “It’s no life at all” 2016 Crisis report “homelessness kills” 2012 NHS Rough Sleepers Report 2019: https://www.england.nhs.uk/2019/10/rough-sleepers-in-homeless-hotspots-to-benefit-from-nhsmental-health-outreach/ https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-homelessness Public Health England – Health Matters 2020 https://www.homeless.org.uk/connect/blogs/2019/feb/13/making-homelessness-services-more-trans-inclusive</p>			

<https://www.bigissue.com/latest/black-people-are-more-than-three-times-as-likely-to-experience-homelessness>

Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?

Comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessments (EIA) were recently completed to inform the development of the Somerset Housing Strategy (2019) and Somerset Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy (2019). Both documents were subject to consultation, seeking the input of those who provide services (accommodation and support) to vulnerable customer groups. These EIA illustrate that it is the vulnerable who are often disadvantaged in relation to housing conditions and housing circumstances. For example (the following list is not exhaustive):

- Age: For the young – increasing incidence of homeless, care leavers and access to supported accommodation and move-on accommodation, overcrowding, rising incidence of case complexity, 'sofa surfing', reluctance to use/lack of awareness of Homefinder; for the elderly - trips and falls, dementia, cold homes, lack of accessible/adapted properties, rising incidence of homelessness.
- Armed Forces Veterans: case complexity, need for support services, access to Homefinder;
- Race and Ethnicity: language barriers, exploitation, overcrowding, hate crimes, failure to meet the housing and health needs of the gypsy and traveller community;
- Disability: increasing complexity of mental health problems for rough sleepers/complex homeless, lack of accessible/adapted properties for physical and mental disabilities;
- Rurality: social isolation, distance from services, distance from gas network (contributing to fuel poverty), lack of transport options.

At a more operational level, we have undertaken detailed needs assessments with everyone accommodated at Canonsgrove. We have also undertaken several case studies which have supported much of the national evidence that exists around statistics on rough sleepers. For example: -

- Average life expectancy of a male rough sleeper is 44 and female rough sleeper 42 (compared to 80 for men and 84 for women in Taunton) (source: Public Health England – Health Matters and Somerset Intelligence website)

- 90% of rough sleeper deaths are male and 10% female (compared to 48% and 52% nationally) (Source Crisis: homelessness kills).
- Suicide accounts for 13% of deaths (source Public Health England)
- Nationally, 84% of rough sleepers are male and 16% female. 6% were aged 25 or younger (and 94% over 25) - Nationally, 64% are UK nationals; 22% EU nationals and 3% non-EU nationals (Public Health England: Health Matters)
- 77% of people sleeping rough experience violence or anti-social behaviour against them (Source: Crisis: It's no life at all)
- 45% had been intimidated or threatened (Source: Crisis It's no life at all)
- 80% of rough sleepers experienced childhood trauma (Source: NHS rough sleepers report)
- 46% had physical health needs. One third nationally are not registered with a GP and homeless people access to A&E services are 8x higher than the average person. (Source: Public Health England)
- 80% of homeless people have reported poor mental health and 45% have been diagnosed with a mental health condition. (Source: Mental Health org.uk)
- Addiction is a big issue. 42% had alcohol misuse needs and 41% had drug misuse needs (Source: Public Health England)
- Nationally, 10.7% of people applying for help with homelessness were black (but only 3% of population) (Big Issue 2020)

It is worth noting that the work over the past year through providing a 'hub' model of support (Canonsgrove) that brings together practitioners on mental health, addiction services, physical health, social care and other support has made a positive difference on many of the above inequalities locally. For example, 9% of deaths nationally are related to liver related disease (Source: Public Health England) and we have brought in Hepatitis screening and treatment. We have also registered everyone with a GP and many of the risk factors associated with rough sleeping above are removed simply through accommodating rough sleepers. The success of collaborative working across health, care and housing can be evidenced at Canonsgrove, which is a rough sleeper hostel that was established under the Government's (Covid) 'Everyone In' initiative. After 12 months of operating, two thirds of the 'highly complex' people at Canonsgrove have either been moved on to settled accommodation or their needs have reduced. This is far better than was achieved previously at other settings. This is an affirmation of the strong partnership working and impact it can have when we all work 'shoulder to shoulder' to address health (and other equalities related) vulnerabilities.

The Single Homeless and Rough Sleeper Accommodation Strategy (SHRSAS) seeks a solution to provide appropriate support and accommodate to complex homeless/rough sleepers into the longer term and therefore will positively affect all the issues outlined above once delivered. Consultation in relation to the SHRSAS has been primarily held with providers of homeless accommodation to consider alternative models of delivering accommodation to this customer group. The consideration of support services is an active ongoing dialogue at the Homelessness Reduction Board, involving representation from all interested support services and provider representation.

In addition, there is ongoing evidence gathering – Public Health are coordinating research into Vulnerability Pathways and Health Needs Assessment. Both will provide a rich source of equalities relevant data to inform the development of specific proposals/future commissioning arrangements. These will be considered by the Homelessness Reduction Board in relation to the recommissioning of support services. The HRB is also seeking to ensure that the ‘customer voice’ is present and able to influence decision making.

Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, make an assessment of the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age needs to be defined differently for complex homeless / rough sleepers. With rough sleepers, the average life expectancy is 44 (men) and 42 (women). The SHRSAS proposes a way forward to provide accommodation and support to this customer group which will inevitably lead to people’s life expectancy increasing. The provision of more supported accommodation, together with additional move-on facilities, will actively help both young and elderly. As will enhanced support services including importantly) tenancy support. Outside the remit of the SHAS, other work such as the regulating HMOs and improvements to Homefinder (digital access) will also help. 	☐	☐	☒
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence above shows that complex homeless and rough sleepers are disproportionately affected by poor physical and mental health. The SHRSAS allows resources to be focused on the client group. The strategy will enable us to better match accommodation and individual needs including access and 	☐	☐	☒

	<p>mobility requirements. We recognise that there is a need for 8 units of accessible units of accommodation. The SHRSAS will seek to deliver these. Working with the Homelessness Reduction Board, we shall improve the provision of support services to help tackle poor mental health, and drug and alcohol addictions.</p>			
Gender reassignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence suggests that homeless amongst trans people is disproportionately high, although we have not encountered this locally. Provision of more accommodation (including self-contained) will provide greater capacity to provide safe shelter for single homeless customers including those going through gender reassignment. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Marriage and civil partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified. However the recommended option provides SWT with the accommodation capacity to provide safe shelter for single homeless customers status. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and maternity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified as a statutory consideration applies for women who approach the Council and are homeless and are pregnant. We work closely with the Life Project, who have accommodation to support vulnerable women who are pregnant and / or have small children. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Race and ethnicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is national evidence to suggest that BAME communities are more likely to suffer from homelessness and rough sleeping. However, we are not seeing this locally. No specific additional outcomes identified. However, the SHRSAS will provide SWT with the accommodation capacity to provide safe shelter for single homeless customers regardless of their race and ethnicity. Similarly, the introduction of a multi-agency 'assessment and referral panel' will enable us to consider individual clients and any issues they may be encountering because of their race/ethnicity. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	<p>The panel will also perform the same function in relation to the other protected characteristics.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of accommodation matters for the gypsy and traveller community is to be addressed within the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment that is due for completion later in 2021. The districts and the county council currently fund Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officers (GLO) that are available for advice and assistance. 			
Religion or belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific additional outcomes identified. However, the SHRSAS will provide SWT with the accommodation capacity to provide safe shelter for single homeless customers regardless of their religion and beliefs. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homelessness and rough sleeping disproportionately affects men. However, for women, the impact can often be worse, as they may become extremely vulnerable and subject to the worst excesses of exploitation. Life expectancy for female rough sleepers is less than that for men (although it is chronically poor for both). The strategy has identified a lack of single homeless accommodation exclusively for women. We shall work with partners to enable safe female only provision. The strategy will provide accommodation capacity to provide safe shelter for single homeless customers regardless of sex. • The council and its partners are currently considering the implications of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Act widens and clarifies the definition of domestic abuse, seeks to establish multiagency partnership boards (within the remit of the upper tier authority) and places specific housing requirements on the local housing authority e.g. use of B&B not acceptable for victims of domestic Abuse. The implications of the Act are currently subject to active consideration between all key partners. It will be for the Homelessness Reduction Board working alongside the 'Domestic Abuse Board' to advise the level of need (with the 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

	<p>upper tier authority being responsible for the commissioning of support services) and the housing solutions that need to be established. This work is subject to ongoing dialogue.</p>			
<p>Sexual orientation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific additional outcomes identified. However, the strategy provides SWT with the accommodation capacity to provide safe shelter for single homeless customers regardless of their sexual orientation. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Other, e.g. carers, veterans, homeless, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SHRSAS builds on the ambitions and contribution to equality made in the Somerset Housing Strategy and the Somerset Homeless and Rough Sleeper strategy and action plan. This report reflects the sentiments of these strategies. The SHRSAS provides a framework to better match the diverse range of needs which single homeless customers have ranging from access to accommodation that matches their ability to live independently, to accommodation which provides a higher level of support which will increase their opportunity to develop skills and habits which over time will help them sustain independent accommodation. The SHRSAS includes consideration of provision for veterans to ensure these are catered for. The accommodation requirements for armed service veterans are currently met at Victory House, East Reach (10 bed spaces). We consider that, at present, there is no need to increase this provision The SHRSAS seeks to provide accommodation options in Minehead, so that provision is provided to serve rural western sector of the district The SHRSAS will retain and focus SWT resources on the provision of accommodation and support for single homeless and not dilute energy and financial resources in accommodation which the market is able to provide. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Negative outcomes action plan

Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.

Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete
N/A	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>

If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.

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Completed by:

Mark Leeman

Date

30th June 2021

Signed off by:

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Date	
Equality Lead/Manager sign off date:	
To be reviewed by: (officer name)	
Review date:	

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Agenda Item 8

Document is Restricted

