

A REPORT CALLING FOR A
HOUSING EMERGENCY
DECLARATION IN WEST
SOMERSET

“HOMES ARE HEALTHCARE”

There is no one solution. Each contributory issue has to be considered and addressed.

The Service Director of Housing for Somerset Council, Chris Brown, has stated the three housing policy areas on which the Council intends to focus. The measures the HE Group propose are aimed at both preventing the loss of existing social and affordable homes and providing new ones. An emerging concern is that costs of emergency housing will bankrupt many local authorities soon.

- **The need for more housing**
- **Delivering (and preserving) sustainable tenancies**
- **Prevention of homelessness**

The need for more housing

7 measures are proposed in this section: Example

1.5 Planning rules which preclude building sufficient affordable homes on expected increased need

Planning permission depends on housing need at the time of application, but the time lag involved means that the provision does not catch up with the need. An uplift to the number of homes given planning permission would bring the provision more in line with the actual need at time of completion.

Delivering (and preserving) sustainable tenancies.

7 measures are proposed in this section: Examples

2.1 Enforce the associated legal requirements of Section 106

- a) Housing staff to check if a Section 106 breach is the cause of loss of tenancy, advise the tenant of their rights **and** inform the Planning Department.
- b) Section 106 tenants given a leaflet explaining their rights.
- c) Developers made aware that it is a criminal offence to breach the condition.
- d) Somerset Council state that it will not rescind Section 106 agreements once agreed.**

Prevention of homelessness

4 measures are proposed in this section. Example

3.1. c)

A group of volunteer 'buddies' should be formed to assist applicants with Homefinder and other housing procedures.

Bonus Section! **Establish a Commission**

Our group is composed of concerned individuals, including councillors. We note that Devon County Council has established a **Housing Commission** made up of councillors and housing experts. We call on Somerset Council to establish a similar commission to address the very serious problems we have identified in this report as well as others we could not include. The HE Group would give this full support.

A summary version and full version (with costing, timing and feasibility summary) of this report is available from info@wsclt.com and in paper form.