

The Council's Vision:

To enable people to live, work and prosper in West Somerset

CABINET

Meeting to be held on 8 January 2014 at 4.30 pm

Council Chamber, Williton

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes

Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 4 December 2013 to be approved and signed as a correct record – **SEE ATTACHED.**

3. Declarations of Interest

To receive and record declarations of interest in respect of any matters included on the agenda for consideration at this meeting.

4. Public Participation

The Leader to advise the Cabinet 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 wishing to speak at this meeting there are a few points you might like to note.

A three-minute time limit applies to each speaker and you will be asked to speak before Councillors debate the issue. There will be no further opportunity for comment at a later stage. Your comments should be addressed to the Chairman and any ruling made by the Chair is not open to discussion. If a response is needed it will be given either orally at the meeting or a written reply made within five working days of the meeting.

5. Forward Plan

To approve the latest Forward Plan published on 19 December 2013 – **SEE ATTACHED.**

6. Cabinet Action Plan

To update the Cabinet on the progress of resolutions and recommendations from previous meetings – **SEE ATTACHED.**

7. Low Cost Home Ownership Scheme

To consider Report No. WSC 2/14, to be presented by Councillor K H Turner, Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing – **SEE ATTACHED.**

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The purpose of the report is to outline to Members the proposed amendment to the Council's Low Cost Home Ownership Policy, in particular how it relates to the sale of properties at Clanville Grange in Minehead and the circumstances that have led to these proposals being made.

8. Somerset Strategic Housing Framework and West Somerset Action Plan

To consider Report No. WSC 3/14, to be presented by Councillor K H Turner, Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing – **SEE ATTACHED.**

The purpose of the report is to outline to Members the proposed Somerset Strategic Housing Framework 2013 - 2016 and the supporting West Somerset Action Plan.

9. Tobacco Declaration

To consider Report No. WSC 4/14, to be presented by Councillor K H Turner, Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing – **SEE ATTACHED.**

The purpose of the report is to outline the issues relating to tobacco and health and for Cabinet to consider recommending that Council sign the Tobacco declaration.

10. Non Recovery of Debts in respect of SW Apprenticeship Company and Dunster Holdings Ltd

To consider Report No. WSC 6/14, to be presented by Ian Timms, Corporate Manager Housing Welfare and Economy – **SEE ATTACHED.**

The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval in accordance with the Financial Regulations to authorise individual write offs in excess of £5,000.

COUNCILLORS ARE REMINDED TO CHECK THEIR POST TRAYS

The Council's Corporate Priorities:

- Local Democracy:
Securing local democracy and accountability in West Somerset, based in West Somerset, elected by the people of West Somerset and responsible to the people of West Somerset.
- New Nuclear Development at Hinkley Point
Maximising opportunities for West Somerset communities and businesses to benefit from the development whilst protecting local communities and the environment.

The Council's Core Values:

- Integrity
- Respect
- Fairness
- Trust

CABINET**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 DECEMBER 2013****AT 4.30 PM****IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, WILLITON****Present:**

Councillor C Morgan.....In the Chair

Councillor K M Mills
Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew
Councillor D J WestcottCouncillor S J Pugsley
Councillor K H Turner**Members in Attendance:**Councillor G S Dowding
Councillor E May
Councillor M A SmithCouncillor A P Hadley
Councillor I R Melhuish**Officers in Attendance:**Corporate Director (B Lang)
Interim Executive Director (A Dyer)
Section 151 Officer (S Campbell)
Planning Manager (A Goodchild)
Economic Regeneration Manager (C Matthews)
Principal Accountant (S Plenty)
Scrutiny and Performance Officer (S Rawle)
Meeting Administrator (K Kowalewska)**CAB69 Election of Chairman****RESOLVED** that Councillor C Morgan be elected Chairman for the meeting.**CAB70 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K V Kravis and T Taylor.

CAB71 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 November 2013

(Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 6 November 2013 - circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held on 6 November 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

CAB72 Declarations of Interest

Members present at the meeting declared the following personal interests in their capacity as a Member of a County, Parish or Town Council:

Name	Minute No.	Member of	Action Taken
Councillor K H Turner	All	Brompton Ralph	Spoke and voted
Councillor D J Westcott	All	Watchet	Spoke and voted

CAB73 Public Participation

No member of the public had requested to speak.

CAB74 Forward Plan

(Copy of latest Forward Plan published 22 November 2013 – circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of this item was to approve the latest Forward Plan published 22 November 2013.

RESOLVED that, subject to adding ‘Tobacco Declaration’ in January 2014 and deferring the reports relating to ‘Fees and Charges’ and ‘Draft Capital Programme’ to February 2014, the latest Forward Plan published 22 November 2013 be approved.

CAB75 Cabinet Action Plan

(Copy of the Action Plan – circulated with the Agenda.)

RESOLVED (1) that CAB67 – Request for Allocation of Section 106 Funding – Fit to Work Hinkley be deleted as actioned.

RESOLVED (2) that CAB68 – Council Tax Rebate Scheme be deleted as actioned.

CAB76 Review of Financial Regulations

(Report No. WSC 159/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was for Cabinet to recommend to Council the changes to the Financial Regulations.

In the absence of the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support, the Lead Member for Community and Customer introduced the item and the Section 151 Officer presented the report and advised that the changes brought the Financial Regulations in line with the new management structure which would be in place from 1 January 2014, for example, amendments to job titles and management team names. The Section 151 Officer confirmed that the appendix presented to Council would incorporate the tracked changes.

The Lead Member for Community and Customer proposed the recommendation which was duly seconded by Councillor S J Pugsley.

RESOLVED that the proposed changes to the Financial Regulations, attached at Appendix A to the report, be recommended to Council.

CAB77 Corporate Performance April – September 2013/14

(Report No. WSC 164/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide Members with an update on progress in delivering the corporate priorities, performance of council services covering the period from 1 April 2013 to 30 September 2013.

In the absence of the Leader, the Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing presented this item and advised that the report made due reference to the questions, comments and concerns raised by Scrutiny Committee when this matter was considered at its meeting held on 18 November 2013.

The Lead Member for Housing, Health & Wellbeing proposed the recommendations contained in the report which were seconded by Councillor D J Westcott.

RESOLVED (1) that the progress in delivering the corporate priorities for 2013/14 be noted.

RESOLVED (2) that the performance against the measures of success and key service indicators be noted.

CAB78 Financial Monitoring April – September 2013/14

(Report No. WSC 165/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to provide updated in year financial information on a range of issues including budgetary monitoring and business rate retention together with an updated Medium Term Financial Plan.

In the absence of the Lead Member for Resources and Central Support, the Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy introduced the item and drew Members' attention to the performance against the budget, the major estimated budget variances and corrected paragraph 5.7.2 of the report advising it should read '... the gross yield had increased by ...'.

The Lead Member for Executive Support and Democracy proposed the recommendation in the report which was seconded by Councillor K H Turner.

In response to a question as to whether money had been spent on the East Wharf Warehouse, it was advised that the figure in table 5.4 of the report related to the predicted spend until the end of the year and in the event that no satisfactory agreement with the Marine Operator could be reached, the Council would have to spend money to make the building safe or commence with the demolition.

Members requested clarification regarding the budget levels set for staffing, Clanville housing and the disposal of leisure land.

RESOLVED that the current financial standing of the Council together with the estimated position at the end of the financial year be noted.

CAB79 Review of the Pre-Application Planning Advice Charging Scheme

(Report No. WSC 160/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The report was a review of the pre-application planning advice charging scheme which was introduced in April 2013. The review was a requirement of the formal resolution at the Council meeting in March 2013. The intention of the review is to ensure that any changes to the scheme can be introduced and factored into the budget for 2014/15 and particularly the fees and charges setting process to be introduced in April 2015.

The Lead Member for Environment – General presented the item and reported on the following: the income to date was £17,250 after the deduction of VAT, the majority of pre-application requests had been from minor applications, and the percentage of applications refused had gone down.

He proposed the recommendation in the report, with an amendment to be made to (i) to read 'To reflect the fact that the provision of advice is VAT rated the fees be increased by the current rate of VAT'. The recommendation, as amended, was seconded by Councillor S J Pugsley.

There was an in-depth discussion on whether the revised charging schedule should detail the price inclusive or exclusive of VAT and the Planning Manager explained the reasoning for producing a charging schedule in Appendix B which detailed the prices inclusive of VAT. The Section 151 Officer advised that the schedule on the Council's website would show the charge exclusive of VAT and it would be incorporated into the Fees and Charges Cabinet report in February 2014.

It was noted that it was good to see people using the pre-application planning advice which was a credit to the exemplary work of the planning team.

RESOLVED that in order to inform the budget setting process for 2014/15 and particularly the fees and charges setting process for April 2014 onwards, the following be agreed:

- (i) To reflect the fact that the provision of advice is VAT rated the fees be increased by the current rate of VAT.
- (ii) That increasing the fee for Type 2 Minor Developments and above which will be paid to the County Council to enable the provision of timely and effective Highways advice in accordance with an agreed countywide approach be positively considered.
- (iii) That Town and Parish Councils contemplating development to provide community related facilities be given a 50% fee reduction.
- (iv) That the fee schedule be amended to remove the option to seek pre-application advice without a site visit.
- (v) That the Major development categories (Types 1, 2 and 3) be amended to include the provision of written advice and two meetings within the initial fee.
- (vi) That where work is proposed which falls into two categories on the same site the fee payable is the higher of the two categories and not the combined fee for the two categories.
- (vii) That accompanying information makes it clearer that the initial fee is payable on submission and will not be invoiced upon the provision of the advice.

CAB80 Somerset Growth Plan Framework

(Report No. 161/13, circulated with the Agenda.)

The purpose of the report was to advise Cabinet of work to produce the Somerset Growth Plan and to seek endorsement for the framework.

The report was presented by the Lead Member for Regeneration and Economic Growth who drew Members' attention to Appendix A of the report which detailed Somerset's plans to promote growth and the purpose of the Growth Plan which was to attract and guide investment, to overcome barriers and maximise sustainable growth from local opportunities, benefiting Somerset's communities, businesses and residents, advising that the Economic Regeneration Manager was involved in the project. The Lead Member also advised that the Council had very little control of the top slicing of the New Homes Bonus.

She proposed the recommendations in the report which were duly seconded by Councillor A H Trollope-Bellew.

The point was raised that one of the major barriers to growth in Somerset were lifestyle businesses.

The Economic Regeneration Manager advised that West Somerset could feel marginalised within the Growth Strategy and the aim was to try to influence and ensure the district had better business support to help the micro/small businesses to thrive and become more resilient in West Somerset, and to put more support in and around Market Towns.

In response to a query as to whether Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) would have access to funding if they did not get a share of the New Homes Bonus, the Economic Regeneration Manager stated that the

government would flex existing budgets which would devolve to the LEPs for them to use as they saw fit in their areas.

Concern was raised regarding the existing infrastructure in West Somerset and the urgent need to improve the road network.

RESOLVED (1) that the strategic framework for the Somerset Growth Plan be endorsed.

RESOLVED (2) that the work undertaken to date to produce the document and the further work that will be undertaken to produce more detailed investment packages of work to address the priorities be noted.

The meeting closed at 5.43 pm

Weekly version of Forward Plan⁷ published on 19 December 2013

Forward Plan Ref / Date proposed decision published in Forward Plan	Date when decision due to be taken and by whom	Details of the proposed decision	Documents and background papers to be available to decision maker	Does the decision contain any exempt information requiring a resolution for it to be considered in private and what are the reasons for this?	Contact Officer for any representations to be made ahead of the proposed decision
FP/14/2/01 18/01/2013	5 February 2014 By Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central Support	Title: Annual Budget & Council Tax Setting 2014-15 Decision: to provide Members with all the information required for Council to approve the revenue budget and capital programme for 2014/15 for recommendation to Council.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Section 151 Officer
FP/14/2/02 18/01/2013	5 February 2014 By Councillor T Taylor – Leader of Council	Title: Draft Corporate Plan for 2014-15 Decision: to introduce the draft West Somerset Council Corporate Plan 2014/15 for recommendation to Council.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Chief Executive 01984 635212
FP/14/2/03 13/02/2013	5 February 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Consideration of nomination/s received under the Community Right to Bid Legislation Decision: To approve listing		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/2/04 4/07/2013	5 February 2014 By Councillor C Morgan – Lead Member for Environment – Hinkley Point	Title: Hinkley Point Decision: to consider key issues relating to Hinkley Point		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Andrew Goodchild, Planning Manager 01984 635245

Forward Plan Ref / Date proposed decision published in Forward Plan	Date when decision due to be taken and by whom	Details of the proposed decision	Documents and background papers to be available to decision maker	Does the decision contain any exempt information requiring a resolution for it to be considered in private and what are the reasons for this?	Contact Officer for any representations to be made ahead of the proposed decision
FP/14/2/05 25/10/12	5 February 2014 By Councillor A Trollope-Bellew – Lead Member for Environment - General	Title: Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014-19 Decision: To endorse the Management Plan as a cohesive means to safeguard the unique beauty and distinctive character of the Quantock Hills.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Angela Lamplough, Climate Change & Community Liaison Manager 01984 635318
FP/14/2/06 18/01/2013	5 February 2014 By Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central Support	Title: Fees and Charges Decision: to propose levels of fees and charges for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 (in some cases fee increases will be implemented earlier, this will be stated in the relevant sections of the report).		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Section 151 Officer
FP/14/2/07 18/01/2013	5 February 2014 By Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central Support	Title: Draft Capital Programme 2013-14 and Capital Strategy Decision: to present the draft Capital Programme 2013/14 and draft Capital Strategy for recommendation to Council.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Section 151 Officer
FP/14/2/08 03/12/2013	5 February 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Extension of Public Place Designations Zones Decision: to approve the extension of Public Place Designation Zones		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Peter Hughes, Community Safety Officer 01984 635302

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FP/14/2/09 10/12/2013	5 February 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Supporting claims in work in the 2015/16 Council Tax Rebate Scheme Decision: to support council tax rebate claimant who are in work in the 2015/16 scheme		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Paul Lamb, Principal Benefits Officer 01984 635224
FP/14/3/01 1/03/2013	5 March 2014 By Councillor T Taylor – Leader of Council and Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central Support	Title: Corporate Performance & Budget Monitoring Report 2013-14 – Quarter 3 Decision: to provide Members with an update on progress in delivering corporate priorities, performance of council services including budgetary information and customer satisfaction.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/3/02 19/03/2013	5 March 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Consideration of nomination/s received under the Community Right to Bid Legislation Decision: To approve listing		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/13/3/03 4/07/2013	5 March 2014 By Councillor C Morgan – Lead Member for Environment – Hinkley Point	Title: Hinkley Point Decision: to consider key issues relating to Hinkley Point		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Andrew Goodchild, Planning Manager 01984 635245
FP/14/4/01 19/03/2013	2 April 2014 By Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member	Title: Allocation of Section 106 funds held – Quarter 4 Decision: to make proposals for		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Ian Timms, Group Manager Housing, Welfare and Economy 01984 635271

Forward Plan Ref / Date proposed decision published in Forward Plan	Date when decision due to be taken and by whom	Details of the proposed decision	Documents and background papers to be available to decision maker	Does the decision contain any exempt information requiring a resolution for it to be considered in private and what are the reasons for this?	Contact Officer for any representations to be made ahead of the proposed decision
	Resources & Central Support	the allocation of monies secured through planning obligations to individual schemes, and to update members with the current funding position.			
FP/14/4/02 19/03/2013	2 April 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Consideration of nomination/s received under the Community Right to Bid Legislation Decision: To approve listing		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/9/03 4/07/2013	2 April 2014 By Councillor C Morgan – Lead Member for Environment – Hinkley Point	Title: Hinkley Point Decision: to consider key issues relating to Hinkley Point		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Andrew Goodchild, Planning Manager 01984 635245
FP/14/5/01 23/05/2013	7 May 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Consideration of nomination/s received under the Community Right to Bid Legislation Decision: To approve listing		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/5/02 4/07/2013	7 May 2014 By Councillor C Morgan – Lead Member for Environment – Hinkley Point	Title: Hinkley Point Decision: to consider key issues relating to Hinkley Point		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Andrew Goodchild, Planning Manager 01984 635245
FP/14/6/01 23/05/2013	June 2014	Title: Cabinet Appointments on Outside Bodies Decision: to appoint		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200

Forward Plan Ref / Date proposed decision published in Forward Plan	Date when decision due to be taken and by whom	Details of the proposed decision	Documents and background papers to be available to decision maker	Does the decision contain any exempt information requiring a resolution for it to be considered in private and what are the reasons for this?	Contact Officer for any representations to be made ahead of the proposed decision
		representatives to serve on outside bodies for the period to the Annual Meeting in 2014 (except where specific periods are stated).			
FP/14/6/02 23/05/2013	June 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Consideration of nomination/s received under the Community Right to Bid Legislation Decision: To approve listing		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/6/03 4/07/2013	June 2014 By Councillor C Morgan – Lead Member for Environment – Hinkley Point	Title: Hinkley Point Decision: to consider key issues relating to Hinkley Point		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Andrew Goodchild, Planning Manager 01984 635245
FP/14/7/01 23/05/2013	July 2014 By Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central Support	Title: Allocation of Section 106 funds held – Quarter 1 Decision: to make proposals for the allocation of monies secured through planning obligations to individual schemes, and to update members with the current funding position.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Ian Timms, Group Manager Housing, Welfare and Economy 01984 635271
FP/14/7/02 23/05/2013	July 2014 By Councillor T Taylor – Leader of Council and Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central	Title: Corporate Performance & Budget Monitoring Report 2013-14 – Quarter 4 Decision: to provide Members with an update on progress in delivering corporate priorities,		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200

Forward Plan Ref / Date proposed decision published in Forward Plan	Date when decision due to be taken and by whom	Details of the proposed decision	Documents and background papers to be available to decision maker	Does the decision contain any exempt information requiring a resolution for it to be considered in private and what are the reasons for this?	Contact Officer for any representations to be made ahead of the proposed decision
	Support	performance of council services including budgetary information and customer satisfaction.			
FP/14/7/03 23/05/2013	July 2014 By Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central Support	Title: Review of Financial Regulations [FR2] Decision: to offer comment on the Financial Regulations.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/7/04 23/05/2013	July 2014 By Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central Support	Title: Medium Term Financial Plan Update Decision: to present the updated Medium Term Financial Plan.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Section 151 Officer 01984 635253 01823 355482
FP/14/7/05 23/05/2013	July 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Consideration of nomination/s received under the Community Right to Bid Legislation Decision: To approve listing		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/7/06 4/07/2013	July 2014 By Councillor C Morgan – Lead Member for Environment – Hinkley Point	Title: Hinkley Point Decision: to consider key issues relating to Hinkley Point		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Andrew Goodchild, Planning Manager 01984 635245
FP/13/8/01 25/07/2013	August 2014 By Councillor T Taylor – Leader of Council and Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central	Title: Corporate Performance & Budget Monitoring Report 2013-14 – Quarter 4 Decision: to provide Members with an update on progress in delivering corporate priorities,		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200

Forward Plan Ref / Date proposed decision published in Forward Plan	Date when decision due to be taken and by whom	Details of the proposed decision	Documents and background papers to be available to decision maker	Does the decision contain any exempt information requiring a resolution for it to be considered in private and what are the reasons for this?	Contact Officer for any representations to be made ahead of the proposed decision
	Support	performance of council services including budgetary information and customer satisfaction.			
FP/14/8/02 25/07/2013	August 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Consideration of nomination/s received under the Community Right to Bid Legislation Decision: To approve listing		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/9/01 24/09/2013	September 2014 By Councillor T Taylor – Leader of Council and Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central Support	Title: Corporate Performance & Budget Monitoring Report 2014-15 – Quarter 1 Decision: to provide Members with an update on progress in delivering corporate priorities, performance of council services including budgetary information and customer satisfaction.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/9/02 24/09/2013	September 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Consideration of nomination/s received under the Community Right to Bid Legislation Decision: To approve listing		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200
FP/14/10/01 24/09/2013	October 2014 By Councillor K V Kravis – Lead Member Resources & Central Support	Title: Allocation of Section 106 funds held – Quarter 2 Decision: to make proposals for the allocation of monies secured through planning obligations to individual schemes, and to update members with the current funding position.		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Ian Timms, Group Manager Housing, Welfare and Economy 01984 635271

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FP/14/10/02 24/09/2013	October 2014 By Councillor D Westcott – Lead Member for Community and Customer	Title: Consideration of nomination/s received under the Community Right to Bid Legislation Decision: To approve listing		No exempt / confidential information anticipated	Bruce Lang, Corporate Director 01984 635200

Note (1) – Items in bold type are regular cyclical items.

Note (2) – All Consultation Implications are referred to in individual reports.

The Cabinet comprises the following: Councillors T Taylor, K V Kravis, K M Mills, C Morgan S J Pugsley, A H Trollope-Bellew, K H Turner and D J Westcott.

The Scrutiny Committee comprises: Councillors K J Ross, R Lillis, M J Chilcott, M O A Dewdney, G S Dowding, J Freeman, P N Grierson, B Heywood and P H Murphy.

CABINET ACTION PLAN

Date/Minute Number	Action Required	Action Taken
4 December 2013 CAB76 – Review of Financial Regulations	<u>RESOLVED</u> that the changes to the Financial Regulations, attached at Appendix A to the report, be recommended to Council.	

Report Number: WSC 2/14
Presented by: Cllr Keith Turner
Author of the Report: Heather Crockford – Housing Enabler
Contact Details:

Tel. No. Direct Line 01984 635297
Email: hcrockford@westsomerset.gov.uk

Report to a Meeting of: Cabinet
To be Held on: 8th January 2013
Date Entered on Executive Forward Plan Or Agreement for Urgency Granted: 5th December 2013

LOW COST HOME OWNERSHIP SCHEME

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline to Members the proposed amendment to the Council's Low Cost Home Ownership Policy, in particular how it relates to the sale of properties at Clanville Grange in Minehead and the circumstances that have led to these proposals being made.

2. CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 Corporate Priority: Local Democracy - Objective 2: Maximise the funding opportunities from Central Government:

Key Task 2.1: Enable and support new housing schemes to increase housing availability within West Somerset

Key Task 2.2: Facilitate the delivery of 80 affordable homes within the West Somerset area by 31 March 2013

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that Members accept the proposal that the mechanism for selling properties at Clanville Grange is amended and that a discount of 25% is applied. In line with other Low Cost Home Ownership properties secured across the District, their affordability in perpetuity will be secured by Covenant rather than a Deed of Pre-emption. It is further recommended that the Council's Low Cost Home Ownership Policy is amended to take account of these changes.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
At present, the Council owns three properties at Clanville Grange which are not mortgageable due to the fact there is a Deed of Pre-emption securing their affordability in perpetuity. This places an ongoing financial liability on the Council and puts its reputation at risk	4	4	16

<i>By adopting the recommended changes to the sales mechanism contained within this report, the properties will be mortgageable</i>	1	2	2
There is a risk that other owners of homes purchased from the Council under the scheme will find they are unable to sell them on should the Council not exercise its right to purchase under the Deed of Pre-emption.	4	4	16
<i>By adopting the recommended changes to the sales mechanism contained within this report, the properties will be mortgageable</i>	1	2	2

The scoring of the risks identified in the above table has been based on the scoring matrix. Each risk has been assessed and scored both before the mitigation measures have been actioned and after they have.

5. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 5.1 West Somerset Council first introduced its Low Cost Home Ownership Scheme to specifically deal with the sale of properties secured under Planning Obligations at Clanville Grange in Minehead. However, since 2005, the Policy has been used as a basis by the Council and private developers to deliver in excess of 90 affordable homes for purchase by local people.
- 5.2 Low cost home ownership has always been a niche market in so far as mortgage availability was concerned and the Council's scheme was developed to be reviewable in order to change with prevailing conditions. Over the last four years a number of changes have been made to the Policy to reduce length of local connection, amend definitions and increase the income of eligible households, all to meet the needs of mortgage lenders.
- 5.3 Back in 2005 when the scheme was designed, the Council created a scheme which would meet the needs of those local people who aspired to purchase a home, but who didn't have large deposits and were only earning around the average income. In order to do this, the scheme was capable of having varying discounts applied to each sale to meet the needs of the purchaser.
- 5.4 The mechanism by which this was made possible was a Deed of Pre-emption which meant that the Council could step in and buy the property back whenever it came onto the market; in fact, the Deed went as far as to impose a legal requirement for the Council to do so on first sale. Specific consent was obtained from the Secretary of State to lengthen the amount of time the Deed of Pre-emption remained with the property (21 years rather than 5) and which allowed the Council to sell the properties at a discount higher than it is within its existing powers to do so (35%).
- 5.5 There remains no shortage of prospective purchasers for low cost home options throughout the District; however, it has become impossible to obtain a mortgage offer on any of the affected properties at Clanville Grange due to the existence of the Deed of Pre-emption.
- 5.6 Legal advice has been taken regarding an alternative mechanism for selling properties at Clanville and consideration has been given as to whether there is scope for altering it without having to revert back to the Secretary of State.
- 5.7 Taking into account the advice received, it is recommended that, without have to seek any further consent, the Council amends its Low Cost Home Ownership Policy to securing

affordability via a Covenant and Legal Charge rather than a Deed of Pre-emption. In effect this would bring the properties at Clanville Grange into line with all other Low Cost Home Ownership products currently operating within the District.

5.8 Rather than a procedure which is resource intensive in both financial and staff time terms, the Council's input will be simplified to the following:

- Procedures for re-sales will be as defined within Transfer Documents and these should be checked by the sellers Solicitor at the time of re-sale. The following points will, however, act as general guidance
- The owner of the property wishing to sell should obtain two independent valuations for the property from Estate Agents of their choice
- Copies of both valuations should be sent to the Housing Enabler at West Somerset Council who will calculate an average valuation and apply the relevant discount for the individual property concerned. The Enabler will then notify the seller as to the maximum sales figure
- The Enabler will liaise with the seller to ascertain if they wish their property to be advertised on the South West Home web-site. If they do, arrangements will be made to take external photographs of the property and will place the advert
- Unless they wish to sell the property privately, the seller should appoint an Estate Agent to handle the sale of the property
- When a purchaser has been found for the property, the Solicitor acting on behalf of the seller will contact the Enabler during the legal process to ascertain if the property has been sold within the correct procedure.
- The Enabler will check that the proposed purchaser is eligible to proceed and has the required Local Connection. A standard Certificate will then be issued to the Solicitor confirming that West Somerset Council is happy for the property to be sold

5.9 Under the proposed mechanism, the Council will be able to determine the amount of discount applied to the property (up to a maximum of 35%) and a 25% discount is recommended. The Council will also retain control over the eligibility criteria (income and local connection) for prospective purchasers through its low cost home ownership policy.

6. FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 At the present time, there are three properties (all two bedroom flats) in the ownership of the Council. The following table gives an idea as to the amount the property was purchased for and how much it could be sold on for if the new mechanism is adopted

Property Number	Purchased for	Assumed current Open Market Value	25% Discount applied
7 Clanville	£92,362	£145,000	£108,750
15 Clanville	£96,000	£145,000	£108,750
21 Clanville	£92,500	£145,000	£108,750

6.2 Financial implications for the properties not currently under the ownership of the Council will be advised as soon as the appropriate legal advice for implementing any changes is received.

7. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS

- 7.1 It is important that this policy is revised to ensure that the Council is not left with un-saleable assets.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

Members need to demonstrate that they have consciously thought about the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty as part of the decision making process.

The three aims the authority **must** have due regard for:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

- 8.1 The Audit Commission Inspection recommends that the Council should maximise all opportunities to monitor and measure responses and outcomes against diversity criteria to help plan future housing provision in a way that reflects the needs of all groups within the community. All actions should be in compliance with the Human Rights Act.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 All housing developments should be designed to minimise the potential for crime and disorder. If the recommendations in this report are not accepted, the result could be that some homes designed to be sold under the scheme will remain empty for potentially long periods of time. This will make the scheme susceptible to crime and disorder issues.

10. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The proposed changes were discussed at Housing PAG on 10th December. No changes have been made to this report as a result.

11. ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 At present, the Council owns three properties at Clanville Grange. Adopting a changed sales mechanism will allow the properties to be sold, removing any ongoing Asset Management responsibility.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 None

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 Legal advice has been sought on the proposed changes to the sales mechanism affecting the sale of properties at Clanville Grange and the Council will be acting within existing powers if it accepts the recommendations contained within this report.
- 13.2 Legal advice on how to apply the new mechanism to the affected properties at Clanville that aren't currently in the ownership of the Council is still outstanding and will be presented as soon as it is available. Advice sought is whether the Council will have to buy each property one more time or whether it can be amended retrospectively. This will mean that the Council will not have to make provision for any future purchases but will lose the discount originally offered.

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Report Number: WSC 3/14
Presented by: Cllr Keith Turner, Lead Member for Housing, Health and Wellbeing
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Report to a Meeting of: Cabinet
To be Held on: 8 January 2014
Date Entered on Executive Forward Plan Or Agreement for Urgency Granted: 5 December 2013

SOMERSET STRATEGIC HOUSING FRAMEWORK & WEST SOMERSET ACTION PLAN

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to outline to Members the proposed Somerset Strategic Housing Framework 2013 – 2016 and the supporting West Somerset Action Plan.

2. CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The Strategic Housing Framework is directly related to the delivery of the WSC Corporate Plan. The comprehensive Action Plan has aligned the housing related priorities and tasks of the Corporate and Service plans, along with those of other joint strategies, and has adopted existing corporate progress and performance measures.

Corporate Priority: Local Democracy - Objective 2: Maximise the funding opportunities from Central Government:

- Key Task 2.1: Enable and support new housing schemes to increase housing availability within West Somerset
- Key Task 2.2: Facilitate the delivery of 80 affordable homes within the West Somerset area by 31 March 2013

Corporate Priority: New Nuclear Development at Hinkley Point – Objective 5: The availability of housing supply within West Somerset is increased to mitigate the extra demands linked to Hinkley Point workers.

- Key Task 5.1: Using the Hinkley Point Housing Fund to provide 100 additional bedspaces in the West Somerset area by 31 March 2014
- Key Task 5.2: To work with landlords and owners of empty properties to return 55 back into use across West Somerset with priority on the eastern area parishes
- Key Task 5.3: To work with landlords and owners to bring 400 properties up to the Decent Homes Standard making them available for use across the West Somerset area

3. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that:

- 1) Cabinet endorse the Somerset Strategic Housing Framework (Appendix A) for formal adoption by Council.
- 2) Cabinet endorse the principles of the West Somerset Action Plan (Appendix B) and note that further enhancements to delivery may be made prior to submission to Council for adoption.

4. **RISK ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
Lack of focus on housing in West Somerset due to lack of up-to-date Housing Strategy and Action Plan	4	4	16
<i>Adopt Strategic Housing Strategy and WS Action Plan</i>	2	4	8
Lack of focus on housing in West Somerset due to loss of knowledge and experience of dedicated WSC officers because of organisational changes.	3	4	12
<i>Dedicated WSC officers are retained</i>	1	2	2
Lack of resources or priority from partner organisations in delivery of relevant actions	3	3	9
<i>Ongoing engagement with partners via range of partnership groupings eg Affordable Housing Group, Health & Wellbeing Board</i>	2	3	6

The scoring of the risks identified in the above table has been based on the scoring matrix. Each risk has been assessed and scored both before the mitigation measures have been actioned and after they have.

5. **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Somerset Strategic Housing Framework 2013 – 2016 was commissioned by the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership. It sets out a new sub-regional housing strategy framework for Somerset to be complemented by individual District Action Plans. This framework approach enables each partner to identify specific actions to be implemented within individual local authority areas supported by the overarching common key areas of focus identified within this strategic framework.

The document is intended to:

- Provide a framework for the future of housing in Somerset and identify sub-regional priorities;
- Show the crucial roles played by partnerships in delivering and improving housing and housing services in the sub-region and
- Illustrate the linkages between this framework and other key national and sub-regional policies and strategies

The Framework has identified three priorities as the key issues for the sub-region:

- **Priority 1:** To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development
- **Priority 2:** To make the best use of Somerset's existing housing stock
- **Priority 3:** To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of Somerset's most vulnerable and least resilient residents by working in partnership.

Each of these priorities are supported by a number of Key Areas of Focus.

The West Somerset Action Plan supports the Key Areas of Focus with local key issues and actions to deliver the overall priorities. The Action Plan attempts to align the housing-related corporate priorities with those of other relevant partnership Strategies to make sure they all work together and outcomes are delivered effectively. This comprehensive and integrated approach has led to a high number of actions which may well still need to be refined!

Furthermore, few of the individual actions in the Action Plan stand alone, the majority need to be seen within the interlinked corporate context of Housing Enabling, Housing Options and Planning, and delivered by a partnership framework. Partners include other Somerset Authorities, Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA), the Rural Housing Project (RHP), Developers and Registered Providers (RPs), many of which belong to the Affordable Housing Group (AHG), Parish Councils, the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP, a partnership of West Somerset, Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane Councils working jointly to improve private sector housing conditions), Homefinder Somerset (the Somerset-wide Choice Based Lettings Scheme), etc.

A number of actions are cross-referenced as they affect more than one Key Area of Focus and we have also identified a number of cross-cutting Key Local Principles which underpin many of the actions in the Action Plan.

We recognise that this is a comprehensive but comparatively complex Action Plan that may still need to be simplified.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There will be no financial implications as a result of the recommendations in this report being accepted.

7. **SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS**

The S151 officer has read the report and has no comment to make.

8. **EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

Members need to demonstrate that they have consciously thought about the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty as part of the decision making process.

The three aims the authority **must** have due regard for:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The Strategic Housing Framework and Action Plan comply with recommendations that the Council should maximise all opportunities to monitor and measure responses and outcomes against diversity criteria to help plan future housing provision in a way that reflects the needs of all groups within the community. All actions should be in compliance with the Human Rights Act.

9. **CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

All housing developments should be designed to minimise the potential for crime and disorder. If the recommendations in this report are not accepted, the result could be that

some homes designed to be sold under the scheme will remain empty for potentially long periods of time. This will make the scheme susceptible to crime and disorder issues.

10. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

A number of key organisations attended a consultation workshop to help develop the Strategic Housing Framework.

The Report for Cabinet takes account of issues raised by Housing and Environmental Health Policy Action Group on 10th December 2013.

Following Housing and Environmental Health PAG, the Framework and revised Action Plan was circulated to Affordable Housing Group partners for comment. More time has been requested for Consultees to have more involvement in delivery

11. ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

None

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

None

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None



Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership

Strategic Housing Framework 2013 – 2016

V2
March 2013

Document Approval

Group	Date
Project Team (SSHG)	March 2013

Version Control

Version	Author	Review	Reason For Issue	Date
0.1	Anne Harland		Initial draft for discussion by project team	6.9.12
0.2	Anne Harland		Following comments and discussion at SSHG 13/9/12	3.11.12
1.0	Anne Harland		Following further comments from SSHG	30.11.12
1.1	Anne Harland		Following comments from Penny Guppy	10.12.12
1.2	Anne Harland		Following comments from Sally McCarthy/Colin McDonald	14.2.13
2.	Anne Harland		Following discussions at SSHG 22.2.13	

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Forward

To be inserted when document is finalised and to be signed off by SSHP

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Our Vision

The Strategic Housing Vision for Somerset strives to:

- Provide the opportunity for people to live in decent, warm and affordable homes, where communities are sustainable and built on partnership working with shared responsibilities.
- Work in partnership to deliver efficient housing services.
- Respond to change and maximise opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of people living and working in Somerset.
- Ensure that current and future housing is sustainable by developing housing that is affordable, reducing homelessness and improving access to services for vulnerable adults.

1.2 Our Priorities

The three priorities listed below have been identified as the key issues for the sub-region. More information on these issues can be found in the section called – Our Priorities.

Priority 1	<p>To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development.</p> <p>Key Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Effective use of planning ➤ Increasing supply of land for affordable housing ➤ Identifying need effectively ➤ Identifying more creative ways of delivering affordable homes ➤ Sustainable developments ➤ Continue to maximise New Homes Bonus ➤ Co-ordination of partnership working with partner landlords such as housing associations
Priority 2	<p>To make best use of the of sub-region’s existing housing stock.</p> <p>Key Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To ensure that Homefinder Somerset continues to deliver mobility and choice of housing options to those wishing to access affordable housing in Somerset. ➤ Ensure that those already in social housing have mobility

	<p>when they need it through the promotion and facilitation of mutual exchange wherever possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Bringing homes up to the decent homes standard wherever possible. ➤ Bring empty homes back into use and utilise them for those in housing need. ➤ Maximise works to improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort ➤ Combat deprivation by ensuring the diversification of the tenure mix within existing and new developments. ➤ Implementing co-ordinated approaches to small scale adaptations and repairs to enable people to remain in their homes.
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<p>Priority 3</p>	<p>To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of the sub-region's most vulnerable and least resilient residents.</p> <p>Key Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support the delivery of the priorities within the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy ➤ Support the priorities within the Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for Older People in Somerset ➤ Support the delivery of the priorities of the Somerset Homelessness Strategy ➤ Support the delivery of the key outcomes from the Somerset Youth Housing Strategy ➤ Deliver the pitch requirements as set out in the GTAA 2011
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Our framework and the key areas of focus with it, is focused on:

- Building on existing partnerships to develop shared approaches to the issues we face and ensuring that the links between housing and health are maintained and developed further.
- Addressing sub-regional challenges in ways that are appropriate to each locality and the specific housing issues that are faced in those areas.
- Wherever possible we shall continue to work together on shared issues, developing joint strategies and policies and finding common solutions where appropriate, where separate approaches are required we shall endeavour to make these as consistent as possible whilst respecting local circumstances.

Please note that this is a living document that may be affected by both local and national potential policy changes arising as a result of elections or changes to funding etc. Much of the data within the evidence base is taken from the Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) as at September 2012. As the JSNA becomes updated with 2011 census information the document may be refreshed if the update JSNA data shows significant changes in overall trends identified within this framework document.

The framework approach will enable each partner to identify specific actions that will be implemented within individual local authority areas supported by the overarching common key areas of focus identified within this strategic framework.

2. Introduction

2.1 This document sets out a new sub -regional housing strategy framework for Somerset. It describes how the strategy has been created and is intended to:

- Provide a framework for the future of housing in Somerset and identify sub-regional priorities;
- Show the crucial roles played by partnerships in delivering and improving housing and housing services in the sub-region and;
- Illustrate the linkages between this framework and other key national and sub-regional policies and strategies.

2.2 The document is structured in the following way:

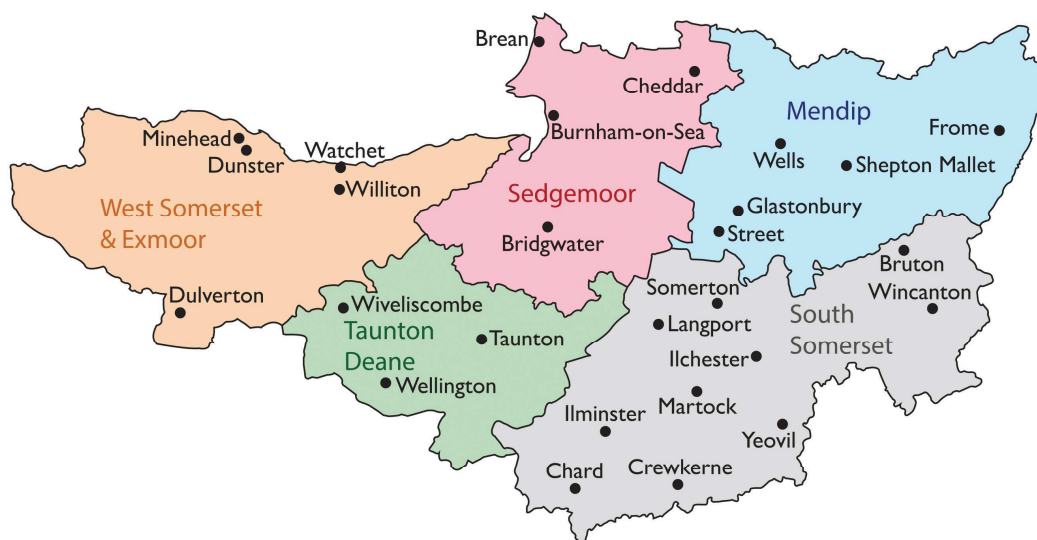
Section A The Evidence Base for the Strategic Framework

Section B The Strategic response to that evidence

Section C The priorities and key areas of focus for the Somerset Housing Partnership authorities.

2.3 For the purposes of this strategic framework document the area of Somerset comprises the following local authorities within the boundaries of Somerset County Council:

- Mendip District Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- South Somerset District Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- West Somerset Council



- 2.4 The authorities in the sub-region, social landlords¹ and other key partners have a long and successful history of working together to develop and improve housing services and standards. This partnership working pre-dates the current government's emphasis on strategic, cross-border, multi-discipline partnerships and has been delivered through the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership (SSHP).
- 2.5 The SSHP was formed in 2004 to bring together key stakeholders from all housing and related fields (including health and social care) to:
- Share ideas and experience and work towards a greater understanding of the housing needs and aspirations of the sub-region's diverse population;
 - Raise awareness of the issues affecting the sub-region and lobby for additional funding;
 - Work together to improve the standards of new and existing housing within the sub-region; and
 - Ensure the provision of appropriate, affordable homes, in the right locations, for future generations.

The partnership comprises the five housing authorities, Somerset County Council and NHS Somerset and reports into the shadow Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board.

- 2.6 This partnership has already delivered a number of key Somerset wide projects:
- Homefinder Somerset Choice Based Lettings scheme
 - Overarching Somerset Vision for Strategic Housing
 - Skills mapping exercise to establish where the strengths and weaknesses lie within the partnership.
 - Financial inclusion framework
 - Youth Housing Strategy
 - A foundation document for the Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for Older People
 - A multi-agency approach to the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA)
 - Somerset Tenancy Strategy (in conjunction with key social landlords within the Homefinder Somerset partnership)
 - Somerset Homelessness Strategy (in preparation)
 - Cost and Performance Analysis project for housing authority partners

¹ Social landlords are Registered Providers (RPs), independent housing organisations registered with the Homes & Communities Agency under the Housing Act 1996. Most are housing associations, but there are also trusts, co-operatives and companies.

- 2.7 The partnership is also currently jointly reviewing the Homefinder Somerset Common Allocations Policy in light of the recent allocations guidance from government, in particular the requirement to ensure that the needs of those leaving the armed forces are recognised within the policy. This review is being carried out with our Homefinder Somerset social landlord partners.
- 2.8 We recognise that working together to produce a Housing Strategy Framework for the partnership will provide our partners with a clear approach of what our priorities are across the sub-region. However this is not a ‘one size fits all’ approach: different localities require different approaches and different solutions. Our framework will allow each partner to fulfil their own duties and priorities in addressing housing needs, within the boundaries of the common principles set out within the framework document.
- 2.9 We also recognise that housing and health are intrinsically linked and want this framework to tie together these two important areas of service delivery even though they are delivered by different public bodies. The shadow Health and Wellbeing Board will further this relationship. The recent government Homelessness Strategy – Making every contact count re-inforces this approach by specifically stating that local housing authorities should be working together with colleagues in health to ensure the integration of housing and health services. There will be a legal duty to do so within the draft Care and Support bill which mirrors the existing legal requirement on the local NHS to ensure the integration of services and equality of access for all.²
- 2.10 We are in a time of unprecedented change with the government reducing public spending, implementing major changes to welfare benefits (in particular Housing Benefit) and ending permanent social housing tenancies for most new tenants. Changes to the allocation of social housing and to the homelessness legislation (in terms of discharge of duty into private sector accommodation) have also been made³. Whilst the detail of some of these proposals has yet to be finalised by government⁴ there is a consensus that they will have a significant impact on homelessness and homelessness/housing options services. At the same time, the economic outlook remains uncertain and local authorities are facing unprecedented cuts in funding and consequentially to service provision – both factors are likely to add to the pressures on housing options services and make the focus and role of strategic housing all the more vital.
- 2.11 This framework document has been produced by a project team consisting of all the strategic housing leads from the housing authorities and representatives from the NHS and Somerset County Council.

² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2200459.pdf> paragraph 37 page 16

³ Allocation of accommodation: Guidance for local housing authorities in England <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2171391.pdf> and Part 7 s148/149 of Localism Act 2011 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/7/chapter/1/crossheading/homelessness/enacted>

⁴ Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) Order 2012 – Consultation <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/21513539.pdf>

- 2.12 Please note that this is a living document that may be affected by both local and national potential policy changes arising as a result of elections or changes to funding etc.
- 2.13 The framework approach will enable each partner to identify specific actions that will be implemented within individual local authority areas supported by the overarching common key areas of focus identified within this strategic framework.

Section A - Strategic Housing Framework – Evidence Base

3. The National Context

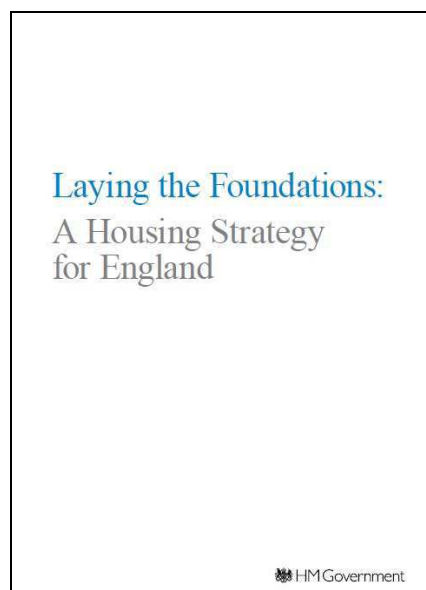
3.1 There are a number of key legislative, strategic and evidence issues that set the scene for this framework. These have been broadly grouped as follows:

- Government Housing Strategy
- Key strategic housing issues
- Homelessness
- Affordable Housing
- Planning Policy

Laying the Foundations – A Housing Strategy for England November 2011⁵

3.2 This national strategy for housing in England set out the government's key areas of action to ensure a thriving, active but stable housing market is in place that offers choice, flexibility and affordable housing given how critical this is to our economic and social wellbeing. The strategy sets out a package of measures and reforms to:

- Support the delivery of new homes and support aspiration
- Support choice and quality for tenants
- Promote better quality homes, places and housing support
- Tackle empty homes



In drawing up our strategic framework we have taken account of these measures within our priorities.

Key Strategic Housing Issues

3.3 The following are key strategic housing issues that our framework takes account of:

⁵ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2033676.pdf> Nov 2011

- Housing Act 2004⁶ which created the housing, health and safety rating system for dwellings, the licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) empty dwelling management orders, tenancy deposits and the assessment of accommodation of Gypsy and Travellers
- Living, Working Countryside – The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing 2008⁷ which stated that large scale migration to rural areas has pushed house prices significantly above the national average whilst those working in rural areas earn substantially less than their urban counterparts. It reinforces the need to create better job opportunities for those living in rural areas whilst providing affordable housing for them if rural areas are not to become exclusive enclaves of the wealthy and retired
- Delivering Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods – A National Strategy for an Ageing Society (2008)⁸ set out the priorities for older people:
 - that they will have housing that supports healthy, active and independent living in welcoming communities (lifetime homes standards)
 - housing, neighbourhoods and communities will become more inclusive, attractive and sustainable for an ageing population
 - more mainstream and specialist homes of the right type and location for older people
- The Community Infrastructure Levy⁹ enabling local authorities to place a charge on new developments within the area that can then deliver additional funding which can be used to deliver a wide range of infrastructure projects that support growth and benefit the local economy. This levy effectively replaces the planning obligation process that was previously in place
- Building Better Lives – Getting the Best from Strategic Housing¹⁰ (2009). This Audit Commission report focuses on the need to think of housing more broadly as a vehicle to combat poverty, ill health, educational under-achievement and promote strong and safe communities. The report states that council's should look not only at new builds but in improving the standard of existing housing stock for the benefit of all
- The Energy Act 2011¹¹ introduces both the 'Green Deal' and the requirement that private sector residential landlords allow tenants requests to undertake energy efficiency improvements (from April 2016) and that all private

⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/contents>

⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/livingworkingcountryside>

⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/deliveringlifetimehomes.pdf>

⁹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/communityinfrastructurelevy/>

¹⁰ <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/nationalstudies/localgov/buildingbetterlives/Pages/buildingbetterlives.aspx>

¹¹ http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/legislation/energy_act2011/energy_act2011.aspx

residential properties will be at the minimum EPC rating of E by 2018. The 'Green Deal' itself creates a new financing framework to enable the provision of fixed improvements to the energy efficiency of households and non-domestic properties, funded by a charge on energy bills that avoids the need for consumers to pay upfront costs

- The General Power of Competence provide by the Localism Act 2011.¹² That allows local authorities to:
 - carry out any lawful activity
 - undertake any lawful works
 - operate any lawful business; and
 - enter into any lawful transaction

This will provide local authorities with the freedom to work together to improve services and drive down costs, working creatively to meet local needs.

Homelessness

3.4 The Homelessness Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities to:

- provide free advice and information about homelessness and preventing homelessness to everyone in their district
- assist eligible individuals and families who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, and in priority need
- produce a homelessness strategy that sets out the way in which authorities will prevent homelessness in their areas

3.5 The local housing authority partners are working together to create their second Somerset wide homelessness strategy for Somerset. This strategy sets out the partnership's response to the current national challenges generated by:

- Welfare benefit reforms, as set out below:

Table 1: Changes to Housing Benefit, Local Housing Allowance and Council Tax Benefit

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uprating and increasing the non-dependent rate from April 2011 is likely to place pressure on households with adult children still living at home who cannot contribute towards household expenses ○ Capping the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) is likely to make applicants for private sector letting less attractive to landlords. In
--

¹² The DCLG brought the GPC into force with effect from 18 February 2012 by means of the *Localism Act 2011 (Commencement No.3) Order 2012*.¹⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/411/contents/made>

addition the change to the way in which LHA is uprated (from a market led percentile to an index) will lead to further disparity between the level of LHA and actual market rents in the private sector.

- **Capping the total benefits** to a household at no more than the national average wage is likely to impact on larger families and any reduction in benefit will be removed via a reduction in housing benefit.
- **Limiting payments for people under 35** to the shared room rate (up from 25), will make it harder for single people under 35 to afford private rented accommodation if they rely on housing benefits.
- **Limiting Housing Benefit entitlements** for working age people in the social housing sector deemed to be under occupying their homes could increase arrears for those tenants that are under occupying their properties.
- **Uprating LHA in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI)** instead of Retail Price Index (RPI) will impact on the number of private sector homes available for rent in terms of affordability.
- **The move towards a Universal Credit** will end housing benefit payments being made directly to landlords, making benefit claimants potentially less attractive as tenants and making it harder for socially excluded applicants to gain private sector tenancies. In addition universal credit will be paid monthly which may lead some claimants into budget difficulties.
- **Abolishing Council Tax Benefit** leaving local authorities to develop their own local discount schemes (protection for pensioners has been guaranteed) determining the amount of support that the most vulnerable need to meet their council tax bills within the constraints of local budgets. This could impact on the same group that are affected by other benefit changes and in the worst case drive people into homelessness and expensive temporary accommodation. The five Somerset districts are working on a separate schemes for council tax benefit.

- The Government's vision to end rough sleeping: No Second Night Out (July 2011) ¹³ places a clear emphasis on single homeless people who are not in

¹³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/1939099.pdf>

‘priority need’¹⁴ who are living on the streets or are in insecure accommodation such as hostels or shelters. Local authorities are now required to provide count statistics or robust estimates for the numbers of rough sleepers in their areas. Rough sleeping in England is on the increase with latest government figures showing a 23% rise from autumn 2010 to autumn 2011 figures¹⁵

- Changes to the way homeless duty can be discharged. Local authorities can now fully discharge their duty to secure accommodation by arranging an offer of suitable accommodation in the private rented sector (for a period of 12 months), without requiring the applicant’s agreement. Where applicants become homeless again within two years, the duty will be retained by the original authority¹⁶
- Making every contact count: A joint approach to preventing homelessness (2012)¹⁷ sets ten local challenges for housing authorities to ensure that every contact local agencies make with vulnerable people and families really counts to ensure that we prevent households, regardless of household make up, from reaching a crisis point where they are faced with homelessness

3.6 The Government has introduced a Troubled Families programme to address those families that have serious problems including parents not working and children not in school, and has the potential to cause youth crime and anti-social behaviour. A lot of time and money is spent by local service providers routinely responding to these problems. Previous government research has highlighted that 2 per cent of families suffer significant multiple problems that in turn make them more likely to place demands on local services, such as health, social care and criminal justice. In England this equates to 120,000 families.¹⁸

3.7 As part of the Troubled Families programme, the Government, alongside local authorities, wants to change the way that these families are worked with by:

- joining up local services
- dealing with each family's problems as a whole rather than individually
- appointing a single key worker to get to grips with their problems and work intensively to help them change for the long term

The Government will contribute up to £4,000 per family towards the cost of successfully intervening with eligible families across England. In Somerset this

¹⁴ Priority need categories as set out within the homelessness legislation

¹⁵ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/20936571.pdf> Rough Sleeping England Autumn 2011

¹⁶ [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted part7](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted%20part7), chapter 1 section 148/149

¹⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2200459.pdf>

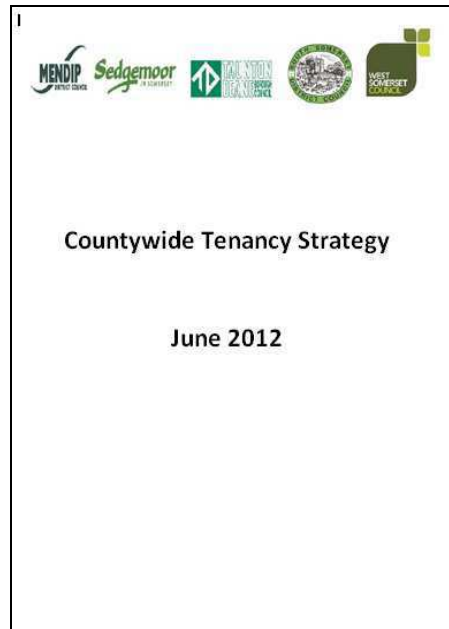
¹⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/troubledfamilies/>

programme is being co-ordinated by Somerset County Council working with the local housing authorities.

Affordable Housing

3.8 There are a number of legislative, strategic and policy changes that are affecting the provision and use of affordable homes nationally:

- The Localism Act 2011 enacted changes that mean that tenancies for life for new social housing tenants have been replaced by the facility to offer fixed term (with a usual minimum of 5 years) flexible tenancies, renewable depending on household circumstances¹⁹. Impacts may include reduced turnover in social housing, reduced demand for new social housing tenancies (not least because rents on new build and possibly re-lets will increase to up to 80% of market rents) and challenges to community sustainment. On the other hand, the narrower gap between social and market rents may, as the Government hopes, start to change perceptions about the acceptability of the private sector as a long term housing solution. The Somerset Tenancy Strategy (jointly drawn up by the five local housing authorities together with social landlord partners) sets out the approach that the housing authorities wish landlords to take on:
 - the types of tenancy that social landlords grant
 - the circumstances in which they grant a tenancy of a particular type
 - where they grant fixed term tenancies, the length of the term, and also the circumstances in which such a tenancy can be ended;²⁰
 - the requirement for a review of the tenancy six months prior to any termination date for the tenancy (allowing local authorities and landlords more time to provide housing options advice)



- The New Homes Bonus²¹ from government provides additional funding or a 'bonus' for new homes by match funding the additional council tax raised for

¹⁹ http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/contents/enacted_part7 chapter 2 section 154 onwards

²⁰ <https://www.homefindersomerset.co.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/106.aspx>

²¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/housingsupply/newhomesbonus/>

new homes and empty properties brought back into use, with an additional amount for affordable homes, for the following six years. The 2012-13 allocations include the first affordable homes premium whereby the development of each additional affordable home attracts an enhancement of a flat rate £350 per annum.

- The Localism Act 2011 has provided local housing authorities with a number of new freedoms with regard to the way in which they manage their housing register.²² In addition the revised guidance on allocations from government²³ provides for additional priority to be given to key groups, such as service and ex-service personnel. As mentioned earlier, the Homefinder Somerset partnership is currently discussing the best way to implement these changes within the current allocations policy.
- The new Affordable Homes Programme (2011-2015) aims to increase the supply of affordable homes (an additional 170,000 homes within the period) with the majority of these homes being provided at the new affordable rent level.²⁴ ²⁵ Social landlords are also able to convert existing social rented stock to the new affordable rent. This change will increase rents for prospective tenants and also impacts on social landlords in terms of pressures upon them to deliver the financial requirements of the new funding model. A recent National Audit Office report (July 2012) has highlighted that the majority of the new homes are due for delivery in the final year of the programme and some providers are expressing concerns that they may not be able to charge the rent levels needed to make the programme financially viable.²⁶
- Increasing the discounts available for Right to Buy (RTB) and preserved RTB to enable more tenants to purchase their homes. The Government has also made a commitment to ensure that the receipts of every home sold under the RTB scheme are used to fund a replacement on a one for one basis, with a new home for affordable rent.²⁷

Planning Policy

- 3.9 With the abolition of centrally-determined targets for new homes (both private and affordable), the existing Regional Spatial Strategies no longer apply, replaced by locally-determined plans. This is likely to lead to some uncertainty in the market and a possible hiatus in new house building in the short to medium term particularly given the overall economic climate.

²² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/7/chapter/1/crossheading/allocation/enacted>

²³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2171391.pdf>

²⁴ Affordable rent in this context meaning up to 80% of prevailing market rent.

²⁵ <http://www.homesandcommunities.co.uk/affordable-homes>

²⁶ National Audit Office – Affordable Homes Programme Report

<http://www.nao.org.uk/idoc.ashx?docId=bbc6f7f9-588f-45c8-b529-e43734bbf2b6&version=-1>

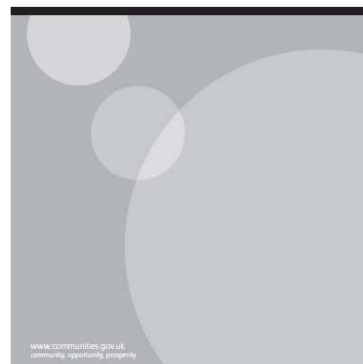
²⁷ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/housing/homeownership/righttobuy/>

3.10

The National Planning Policy Framework²⁸ (March 2012) sets out the Government's planning policy for England. This is a framework within which local people and councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans which reflect the needs and priorities of the community.



National Planning Policy Framework



- 3.11 These neighbourhood planning provisions²⁹ within the Localism Act 2011 empower communities to shape the development and growth of a local area through the production of a neighbourhood development plan, a neighbourhood development order or a Community Right to Build Order. This will provide local people with a genuine opportunity to influence the future of where they live.
- 3.12 Whilst the requirement for planning permission to build new Houses of Multiple Occupations (HMO) has been reversed³⁰ by this government local authorities can still make an Article 4 Direction³¹ to ensure that specific geographical areas do require planning permission for new HMOs. Given the changes to welfare benefits for under35s and the need for more shared housing, planning changes to implement Article 4 Directions will need to be fully reviewed for their impact on the housing market.
- 3.13 Following on from a commitment made in *Laying the Foundations, A Housing Strategy for England* to tackle the problem of households earning high incomes who continue to occupy subsidised housing, the Government has issued a consultation document on introducing a 'Pay to Stay' scheme³² whereby landlords could charge a higher rent to tenants on high incomes who want to stay in their social homes.

²⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/nppf>

²⁹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/637/contents/made>

³⁰ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1759707.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2160020.pdf>

³² <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2160581.pdf>

- 3.14 In addition the Government has also introduced consultation that would help landlords reduce the prevalence of tenancy fraud within the social housing stock³³. This includes measures that would greatly increase both the deterrent to tenants to commit fraud and landlords' ability to detect and prosecute those who do. It would also extend local authorities' powers of prosecution, allow for restitutionary payments to be made to landlords and remove the loopholes that allow those abusing their tenancies to retain them.
- 3.15 The national context within which this framework is set provides its own challenges for the local housing authority partners when addressing the priorities – however there are also more local issues set out in section 4 that we need to take account of.

4. Background and The Local Strategic Framework

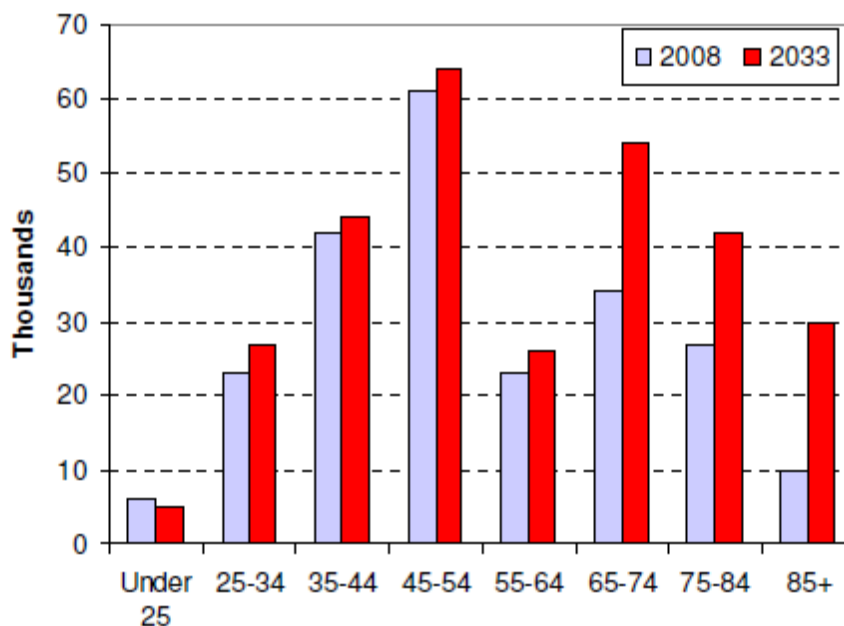
Demography

- 4.1 It is estimated that around 530,200 people live in Somerset. Outside of Somerset's main towns, the county is characterised by a dispersed pattern of settlement and a relatively low population density and migration. Somerset has fewer 20 to 29 years old than would be typical. This is thought to be due to young people leaving the county to attend university or for employment (please see the internal migration section for further information). 21% of Somerset's population is aged 65 or over. This figure increases to 30% in West Somerset.
- 4.2 Somerset's non-white British population is estimated to have more than doubled in the last nine years from 3% in 2001 to 7% in 2009. This is a much larger increase than seen regionally and nationally. The largest non-White British group is the "White Other" category, associated with an influx of migrant workers and their families from the A8 states of Eastern Europe after 2004. In Somerset's schools the five most common first languages after English have remained the same over the last three years, with Polish the most common followed by Portuguese, Bengali, Malayalam and Tagalog/Filipino.
- 4.3 In 2033, the Somerset population is projected to be 619,400, an increase of 18% from 2008. The largest increase is projected to be in Somerset's older population in particular the 90+ population, which will increase by 267% from 5,100 in 2008 to 18,700 in 2033. By 2030 there are projected to be around 70,000 people over 65 living alone in Somerset, most of whom will be over 75. This will pose significant challenges for health, housing and social care. The largest increase in terms of household types will be in single person households.

Table 2 Projected change in households by age, Somerset³⁴

³³³³ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2064044.pdf>

³⁴ Source JSNA Somerset April 2011 Section 6 Housing



- 4.4 One in four people live in one of Somerset's three largest towns: Taunton (58,200 people, 11% of the population), Yeovil (41,800 people, 8% of the population) and Bridgwater (35,200 people, 7% of the population). At district level population density is highest in Taunton Deane with 238 people per km² compared to 48 people per km² in West Somerset.³⁵

Economy and Employment

- 4.5 Our framework should influence those who have a greater direct impact on the local economy and its employment levels such as the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).³⁶ LEPs are led by local authorities and businesses across natural economic areas. They are intended to provide the vision, knowledge and strategic leadership needed to drive sustainable private sector growth and job creation in local areas. The Heart of the South West LEP covers Devon and Somerset and has shown that we have significant economic issues to overcome.

Table 3 Economic Overview of heart Of South West LEP³⁷

	Heart of South West LEP Area	National Average
Productivity		
Output per worker	£32,000	£45,000 (UK)
% premises not receiving 2 Mbps	17.00%	11.00%
Number of people per square kilometre	162	398 (England)

³⁵ All population data taken from JSNA Section 2

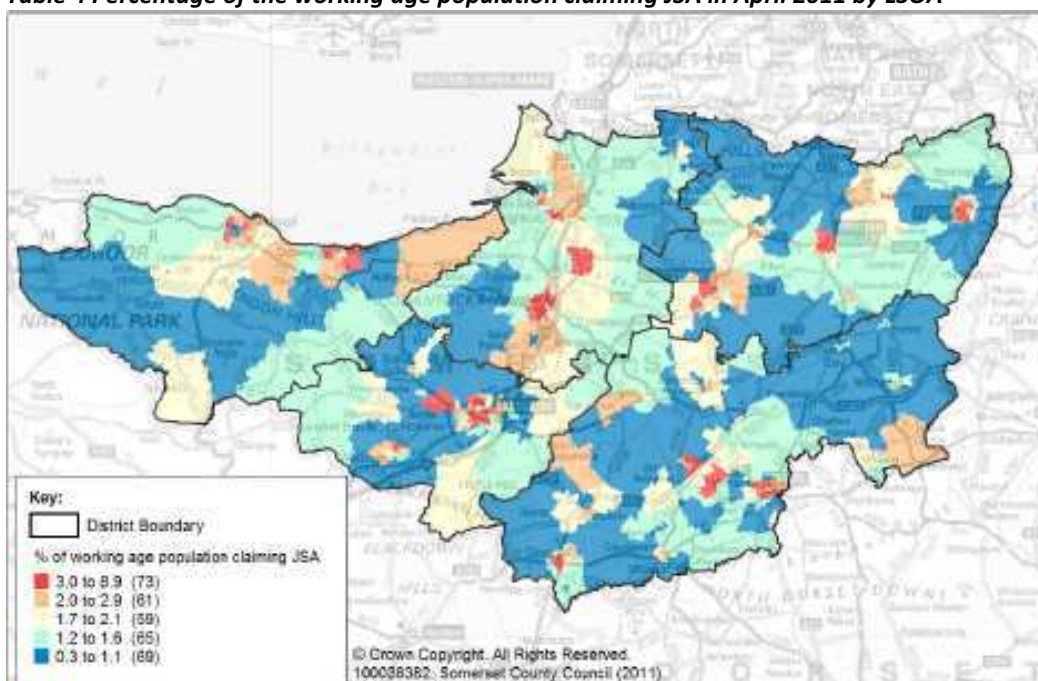
³⁶ <http://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/home>

³⁷ <http://www.heartofswlep.co.uk/vital-statistics>

Earnings		
Weekly Wages	£355.40	£405.70 (England)
Gross disposable household income	£13,520	£14,890 (UK)

- 4.6 Whilst the overall rate of unemployment in the area is below the national average³⁸ there are large variations within the Somerset area in the numbers of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) from a high of 8.9% in Bridgwater Fairfax to 0.3% in Ruishton and Creech.

Table 4 Percentage of the working age population claiming JSA in April 2011 by LSOA³⁹



- 4.7 Youth unemployment is a particular concern, with Sedgemoor having the highest level of youth (18 to 24) unemployment (7.4%) and West Somerset the lowest (4.5%).

Table 5 Percentage of JSA claimants by age band (April 2011)⁴⁰

³⁸ In April 2011, 1.2% of Somerset's working age population were claiming JSA, compared to 2.6% regionally and 3.7% nationally. Source JSNA April 2011 Section 3

³⁹ Source Somerset JSNA April 2011 Section 3

⁴⁰ Source JSNA Section 3

	18 to 24 (%)	25 to 49 (%)	50 to 64 (%)
Mendip	6.4	2.3	1.2
Sedgemoor	7.4	3.0	1.4
South Somerset	4.8	1.8	1.0
Taunton Deane	5.6	2.3	1.1
West Somerset	4.5	2.4	1.1
Somerset	5.8	2.3	1.1

Deprivation

4.8 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment for Somerset (JSNA) has used the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)²² to measure deprivation at local levels. The IMD ranks each Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA) in England using 38 indicators split into seven domains:

- income
- employment
- health deprivation and disability
- education, skills and training
- barriers to housing and services
- crime
- living environment

4.9 There are 327 LSOAs within Somerset, 14 of which fall within the 20% most deprived nationally. These 14 LSOAs contain approximately 21,200 people and can be found in Taunton, Bridgwater, Highbridge, Williton, Shepton Mallet and Yeovil.

4.10 Comparing the IMD 2010 with the 2007 version shows that in some of the 'most' deprived areas of Somerset deprivation has increased:

- five of the 14 most deprived LSOAs also fall into the 10% most deprived nationally, three more than in 2007. Together, these five LSOAs represent around 7,700 people
- two of the 14 most deprived LSOAs also fall within the 5% most deprived nationally; there were no LSOAs in this category in 2007. These LSOAs are in Bridgwater Sydenham (1,600 people) and in Taunton Halcon (1,700 people)

4.11 Barriers to housing and services are the most prevalent form of deprivation within Somerset. Eighty-seven out of 327 LSOAs in Somerset fall into the 20% most deprived nationally, affecting 147,900 people.

Affordability

4.12 The ratio of house price to earnings is greater in all the Somerset housing authorities than the national average. The ratio is particularly high in West Somerset where, even in an economic downturn, house prices at the market entry levels are almost nine times the average earnings figure. This makes it almost impossible for most

people to get onto the property ladder or move into the area for employment.⁴¹ In the South West region there has been a 21% increase in the number of households that are housed in the private rented sector in the last 14 years.

Table 6 Trends in Tenure – South West Region⁴²

Tenure type	Owner Occupiers	Social rented	Private sector rented
1997	72.6%	15%	12.4%
2010/11	70.9%	12.7%	15%
%change	-2.3%	-15.3%	+21%

- 4.13 Outside of the London, the South East and East Anglia, the South West region has the highest private sector rents (as at 2010).⁴³
- 4.14 Within Somerset (as at 2010) 86% of the available stock was in the private rented sector with almost half of all housing association stock being in South Somerset, largely due to the transfer of all council housing stock.⁴⁴

Housing Demand

- 4.15 The number of people on the Homefinder Somerset housing register has doubled between 2000 and 2010 compared with increases of approximately 60% in the South West and England in general.⁴⁵ Housing supply remains an issue. On average we are able to house between 12.5% and 16.8% of applicants on the housing register⁴⁶ in any given year.

Empty Homes

- 4.16 In 2010-11 there were 7,837 empty homes in Somerset with almost 90% of these in the private sector and 36% of them being empty for more than 6 months.

Table 7 Empty homes data for Somerset 2011-12 – Source Empty Homes Agency Ltd⁴⁷

Local Authority/Borough	Total Dwellings	Total Empty	% Empty	Short Term Empty	Local Councils	Housing Associations	Other Public Bodies	Private Owners	Long Term Empty
Mendip	49,197	1,403	2.85%	918	-	77	-	1,326	485
Sedgemoor	52,025	1,643	3.16%	1,173	52	30	-	1,561	470
South Somerset	73,853	2,588	3.50%	1,572	-	109	-	2,479	1,016
Taunton Deane	49,930	1,596	3.20%	1,167	32	62	-	1,502	429
West Somerset	17,563	545	3.10%	336	-	12	4	529	209
Total	242,568	7,775	0	5,166	84	290	4	7,397	2,609

⁴¹ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment <http://www.sine.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=50761> section 6 page 2

⁴² English Housing Survey – Household Table FT1111 (S135a) <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/2176166.xls>

⁴³ http://www.housing.org.uk/pdf/HomeTruths2011_England.pdf

⁴⁴ Joint Strategic Needs Assessment <http://www.sine.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=50761> section 6 para 6.3

⁴⁵ Ibid para 6.7

⁴⁶ Based on Homefinder Somerset accepted offer and housing register data for 2009-10, 2010-11 and 2011-12

⁴⁷ Empty Homes Agency 2011-12 statistics <http://www.emptyhomes.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Empty-Homes-Stats-2011-2012-Complete.xls>

This is a wasted resource that can be brought back into use to help combat the shortage of housing.

- 4.17 The sub-region's rural communities not only suffer from a lack of affordable homes, but the sustainability of existing communities is at risk due to increasing pressure on transport, schools, shops, healthcare and other services.

Rough Sleepers

- 4.18 Whilst rough sleeper data has to be provided to the Government annually, the Avon and Somerset Rough Sleepers Steering Group (being led by Mendip District Council) is collecting data monthly (not all authorities collect monthly) as follows:

Table 8 Extract from Rough Sleeper Figures – Avon & Somerset Rough Sleepers Steering Group

Local Authority Area	Nov-	Dec-	Jan-	Feb-	Mar-	Apr-	May-
Mendip		21	*	*	*	*	*
Taunton Deane	25	27	22	17	22	22	24
Sedgemoor	10	5	*	*	*	*	*
South Somerset	6	10	8	9	9	8	9
West Somerset	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Totals	41	53	30	26	31	30	33

* denotes data not currently monitored in LA district on monthly basis

- 4.19 The number of rough sleepers in Taunton Deane and Mendip, and to an extent in South Somerset were high and the figures in Taunton Deane show a marked increase from where they were in 2010 and were the highest in the South West (apart from the unitary authority of Cornwall) in autumn 2011.⁴⁸ More recently in South Somerset the introduction of specialist outreach workers has seen a massive decline in rough sleeping in that area.

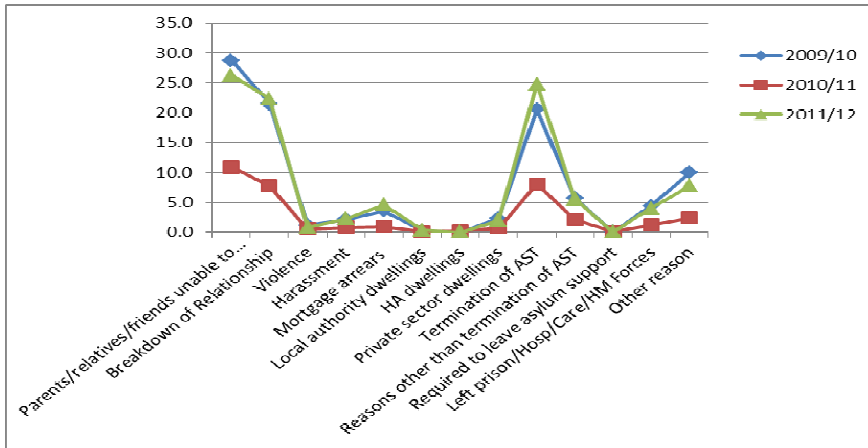
Homelessness

- 4.20 While the causes of homelessness across the sub-region are complex, P1E statistics show that (in 2011/12) termination of an assured shorthold tenancy, and eviction from the family home (through parental eviction or relationship breakdown) are the major causes of homelessness in the sub-region. This has been the case for the last three years, and whilst 2010/11 saw a reduction, the figures show acceptances have returned to 2009/10 levels with the reasons for homelessness remaining static across all 3 years.

Table 9 Acceptances by Reason (shown as a percentage) 2009/10 to 2011/12 for the sub-region– Source P1E Returns

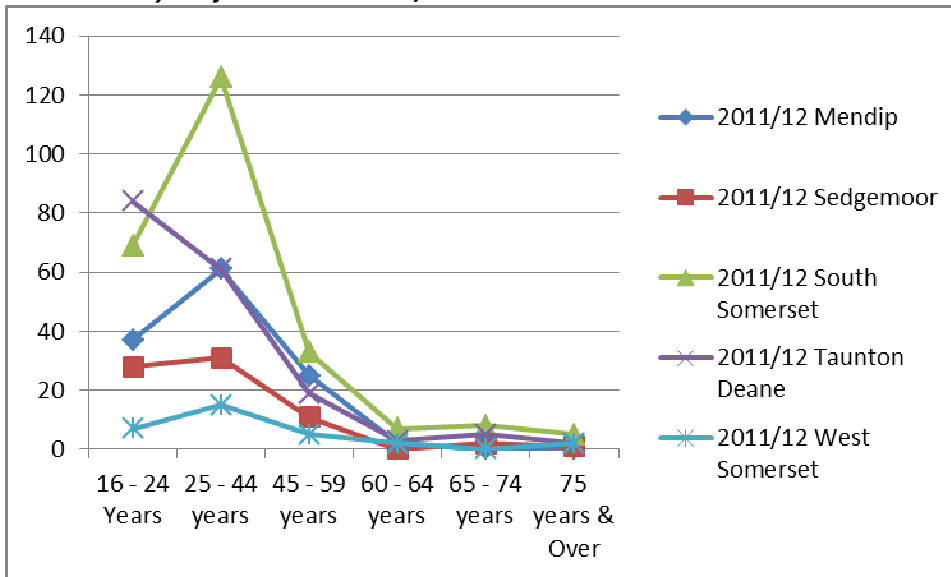
⁴⁸ Rough Sleeping England Autumn 2011 Data Tables

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/xls/20936651.xls>



4.21 Looking at 2011/12 homeless acceptances by age breakdown the majority of acceptances are from those under 45 years old.

Table 10 Analysis of P1E returns 2011/12 – Source P1E Returns



4.22 The upward trend in single person households⁴⁹ coupled with private sector rents at record high levels⁵⁰ will potentially increase the number of households who apply for local authority assistance with their housing. It will therefore be key that we make the most of the resources that we have in delivering housing options services.

Proposed Development of Hinkley Point Power Station

4.23 All of the Somerset authorities will in some way be impacted by the proposed development of the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station (if full planning permission is granted) The housing markets in the Sedgemoor, West Somerset and Taunton

⁴⁹ Joint Somerset Needs Assessment 2011 Section 6.2 <http://www.sine.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=50761>

⁵⁰ Research undertaken by LSL property Services July 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19288208>

Deane housing authority areas will be most dramatically affected by this development.

- 4.24 EDF Energy's workforce assumptions regarding the scale of temporary workforce are that the lifetime of the project is likely to require some 26,600 full time equivalent (FTE) workers across the lifetime of the build project with a peak of 5,600 FTE on site by 2016. Of this number it is agreed that an estimated 34% could be home-based leaving 66% (approximately 3,700 workers) requiring accommodation in the local area. The analysis undertaken by EDF includes geographic areas represented by a ninety minute travel zone to Hinkley Point and includes Sedgemoor, West Somerset, Mendip and Taunton Deane.⁵¹ We also believe that there is potential for South Somerset to be affected because parts of the South Somerset area are within the ninety minute drive time as identified in EDF documentation.
- 4.25 This development (if it goes ahead) will have a significant impact on the availability of private sector accommodation and may well increase homeless applications as private sector tenants are given notice by landlords wishing to let their properties to EDF workers.
- 4.26 All the Somerset housing authorities aim to make best use of existing resources to try to ensure that there is a sufficient supply and range (in terms of property size) of decent accommodation to meet demand. Any development such as Hinkley Point needs to be considered in the context of local needs in order to avoid exacerbating pressures on the provision of housing.
- 4.27 In 2008 the Strategic Housing Market Assessment highlighted data from 2006 to show a demand in the private rented sector from households aged under 30 years old. More recent data from Homefinder Somerset supports this finding although there are still high levels of demand from the 30s to 40s age bracket. This heightens concern that the demand from Hinkley workers for accommodation will have a particular impact on the under 40s who are reliant on low cost accommodation in the affected areas.⁵² This will place additional demands on private sector accommodation in the affected areas which will impact on the ability of local housing authorities to place/discharge homeless applicants into private sector accommodation.

Affordable Housing

- 4.28 The key driver for entering the affordable housing⁵³ market is the fact that other forms of tenure are unaffordable (home ownership and private renting). In areas where incomes are low relative to the market price of homes, there is pressure to provide more homes which those on lower incomes, including benefits, can afford. Without these homes, many people, especially the very old, very young and the

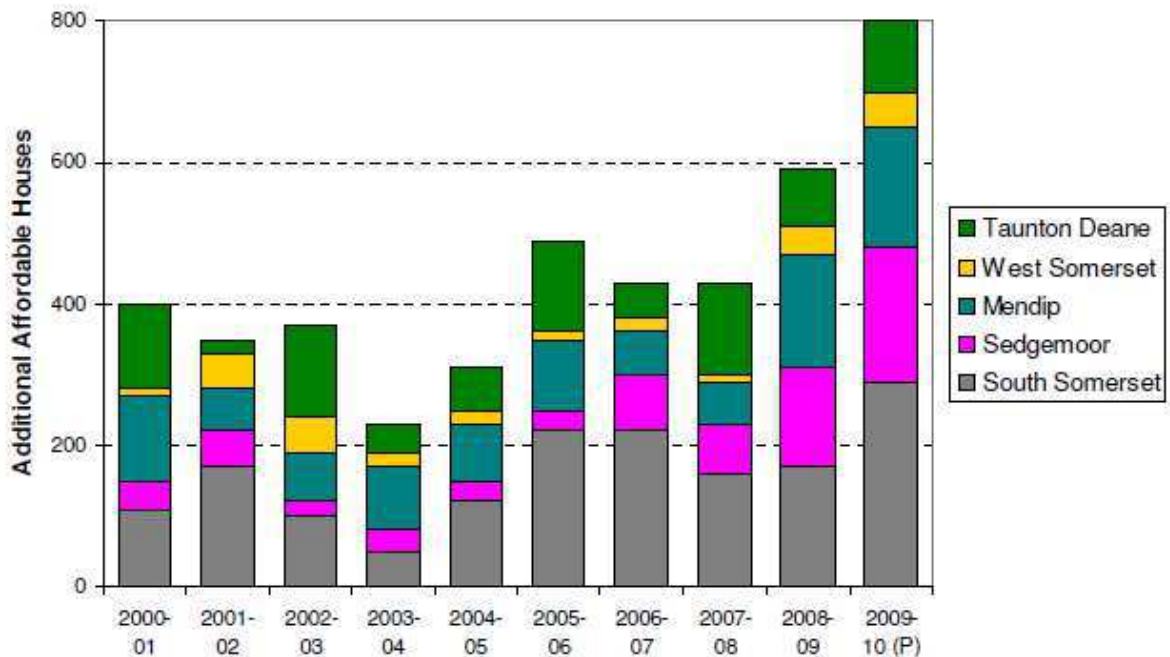
⁵¹ EDF Energy Proposed Development at Hinkley Point Accommodation Strategy

⁵² EDF (2011) Draft Accommodation Strategy

⁵³ 'Affordable housing' is a term used to describe housing made available for people who cannot otherwise afford housing available on the open market.

vulnerable, will be forced to move out of the area or into situations that could adversely affect their health and wellbeing. The past few years have seen an increase in additional social, intermediate and low cost home ownership housing. Mendip, Sedgemoor and South Somerset housing authorities have provided more new properties than at any time in the past decade..⁵⁴ Social rental units have comprised the majority of these additional homes but the proportion that is intermediate housing⁵⁵ has increased from 10% ten years ago to 30% as at April 2011.

Table 11 - Trends in additional affordable dwellings provided by local authority⁵⁶



(P) denotes Provisional figures

Source: Homes & Communities Agency/ Local Authorities

- 4.29 The 2008 Strategic Housing Market Assessments covering Taunton, South Somerset, Sedgemoor and West Somerset and Mendip (part of the West of England Housing Market Assessment) indicate that demand for affordable housing is set to outstrip supply and the subsequent economic downturn is likely to widen that supply gap.
- 4.30 In Mendip, the total net annual need for affordable housing between 2009 and 2021 was forecast to be 271 social and 54 intermediate homes, but based on existing policies, only 37 per year were predicted to be supplied, creating an ever increasing gap.⁵⁷
- 4.31 The Taylor report 'Living Working Countryside' (2008)⁵⁸ identified the issue of the supply gap that exists in rural areas. Nationally 90% of existing rural residents wish

⁵⁴ JSNA Section 6

⁵⁵ Intermediate renting is the intention of renting property at a subsidised rent from a housing association. It is higher than a social rent but below that found in the prevailing market.

⁵⁶ Source JSNA section 6

⁵⁷ Source JSNA section 6

⁵⁸ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/livingworkingcountryside.pdf>

to stay in rural areas whilst 50% of urban residents wish to move to rural areas. This creates excess demand consequentially raising market prices beyond the economic reach of rural residents. This is shown by the number of second homes in the area. Research in 2009 showed that almost 6% of West Somerset's homes are second homes, placing this area tenth out of all rural and coastal authorities.⁵⁹

Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

- 4.32 Councils across Somerset jointly commissioned the Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) from De Montfort University to assess the need for residential and transit pitches for the gypsy and travelling community in the county, as required by national policy. This work highlighted the following needs.

Table 12 Summary of requirements highlighted in Somerset GTAA Jan 2011

Pitch requirement across Somerset
The report outlines a need for 131 additional pitches across the study area between 2010 and 2015. The detail and stratification by district is provided in chapter six.
An estimated 64 further pitches will be required by 2020.
Transit provision is needed for around 100 caravans by 2015 across Somerset. The detail and stratification by district is provided in chapter six.
At least 4 Showmen's yards needed by 2015 ¹

Summary of pitch requirement by district

	Pitches 2010 - 2015	Pitches 2015 - 2020	Transit Pitches
Mendip	69	24	80
Sedgemoor	24	10	5
South Somerset	10	8	10
Taunton Deane	25	19	5
West Somerset	2	3	0
	131²	64	100

⁶⁰See footnote for details of 1 & 2 references above

- 4.33 The number of gypsy and traveller caravans is counted twice a year. The most recent published total for Somerset is 503 (January 2011). This is very slightly down year-on-year but higher than two years ago. Currently, Mendip has more than any other district and with Taunton Deane, accounts for more than two in three caravans counted in the whole county.

⁵⁹ JSNA section 6 housing page 9

⁶⁰ ¹Only one Showmen's survey was achieved in the sample, so this need relates solely to the identified need for the one family surveyed. ²Due to rounding of figures during calculation (see table 6.2 in the main report) there is a difference of 1 between rows and columns in the main set of figures for 2010 – 2015 between the study area as a whole and the total of all districts. The collective calculation for the county results in a figure of 131; but when distributed by district the total is 130.

- 4.34 Just over half of all gypsy and traveller pitches currently in Somerset are private, the vast majority (92%) with permanent planning permission and almost one in four pitches are socially rented. The remainder are on other sites, either owned or not by the gypsies themselves. Of those on other sites, three in four are what is classed as 'tolerated'. This proportion has increased considerably since 2009 when a substantial majority were 'not tolerated'.⁶¹

Older People

- 4.35 Many older people want to live independently in their own home for as long as possible. The 'Housing and Older People Study, Taunton and South Somerset Housing Market Areas' (Fordham Research, 2010) reports that few older people (aged 55 and over) plan for future housing needs and it is only unexpected events or sudden deterioration in health that necessitates moving to specialist accommodation. However, when asked why they didn't plan ahead, a major factor was not knowing the options open to them and the precautions they should take to prepare. Almost one in four older person households, equivalent to around 12,000 in Somerset, said they had one or more age-related problems with their home.⁶²
- 4.36 The most commonly required adaptations to help older people manage in their homes, were a downstairs toilet and handrails. However, only half those who needed adaptations actually had them. This is partly the result of not knowing how to arrange for adaptations to be made to their homes and believing the adaptations needed are unaffordable. As with overall housing need in Somerset, Fordham calculated that over the next five years there would be an unmet need for almost 100 extra units per year of affordable specialised accommodation for older people across the two Housing Market Areas, which cover all districts apart from Mendip. There was a preference for sheltered housing with a live-in warden, the traditional form of warden provision, although the current trend is towards 'community wardens'.

House Conditions

- 4.37 Housing Stock Projections by the Building Research Establishment (BRE, 2007)⁶³ estimated that more than two in five of all private sector stock in Somerset (excluding Mendip) would fail to meet the national Decent Homes Standard (DHS)⁶⁴. The proportion ranged from 41% in Sedgemoor to 55% in West Somerset.⁶⁵
- 4.38 The 2006 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix25 also showed that West Somerset had a relatively high proportion of 'unfit' dwellings, indicating that this particularly rural district faces a notable issue in terms of private housing condition. The BRE report (2007) also pointed out that half of households categorised as 'vulnerable' lived in non-decent homes, with little variation across the districts. All local

⁶¹ Source JSNA section 6 Housing

⁶² Source JSNA section 6 Housing

⁶³ <http://www.bre.co.uk>

⁶⁴ Taunton and South Somerset Housing Market Assessment

⁶⁵ Source JSNA Section 6 page 36

authorities have improvement programmes. In 2009-10, 1,027 dwellings were improved with relation to the DHS, the vast majority benefiting (what are termed as) 'vulnerable' groups. In particular, 497 dwellings which were improved benefited pensioners and 511 benefited families with children. The DHS also affects local authority stock. At 1st April 2010, 1,867 Local Authority dwellings were designated 'non decent' while 455 had received work to prevent non-decency in 2009-10.⁶⁶

Fuel Poverty

- 4.39 Of all the English regions the South West has the highest proportions of dwellings with Energy Efficiency Ratings (EER) F and G⁶⁷ (22.2%) and of those with a Category 1 Excess Cold Hazard (18.1%)⁶⁸ There is a clear link between poor energy efficiency (and consequential fuel poverty⁶⁹) and excess cold hazard which in turn affects the health of residents.
- 4.40 The 2010 Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix⁷⁰ estimates there are around 31,000 dwellings in Somerset with Category 1 hazards and this total excludes private dwellings in Taunton Deane for which no data was available. Based on the dwellings for which data are available, the proportion for the county is 16%, below the regional average, but above the national average of 12%. The proportions are particularly high in south and west Somerset. The latter district also stands out as having a relatively low average Standard Assessment procedure (SAP) rating on which the EERs are based and is the only district within Somerset with a SAP rating below the national average.
- 4.41 South Somerset's average SAP rating is relatively high, but it also has a high proportion of dwellings with a SAP rating below 35, indicating a wide range across the district. Over 400 private sector dwellings with Category 1 Hazards in Somerset were made free of hazards as a direct result of local authority action in 2009-10.
- 4.42 A statistically positive relationship between low thermal efficiency of housing and excess winter deaths (EWD) and the considerable number of EWDs attributable to cardio-vascular disease (CVD) and respiratory diseases has been shown to exist.⁷¹ Cold housing can impact on health in various ways. For instance, children living in cold homes are more than twice as likely to suffer from a variety of respiratory problems, including asthma, than those living in warm homes. It is clear that fuel poverty/cold housing can impact a variety of health outcomes and affect different groups of people, including those that may be asset rich but revenue poor.

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Energy efficiency ratings have a scale from A (the most efficient) to G (the least efficient)

⁶⁸ The Health Costs of Cold Dwellings CIEH

http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/reports/warm_homes_nhs_costs.pdf

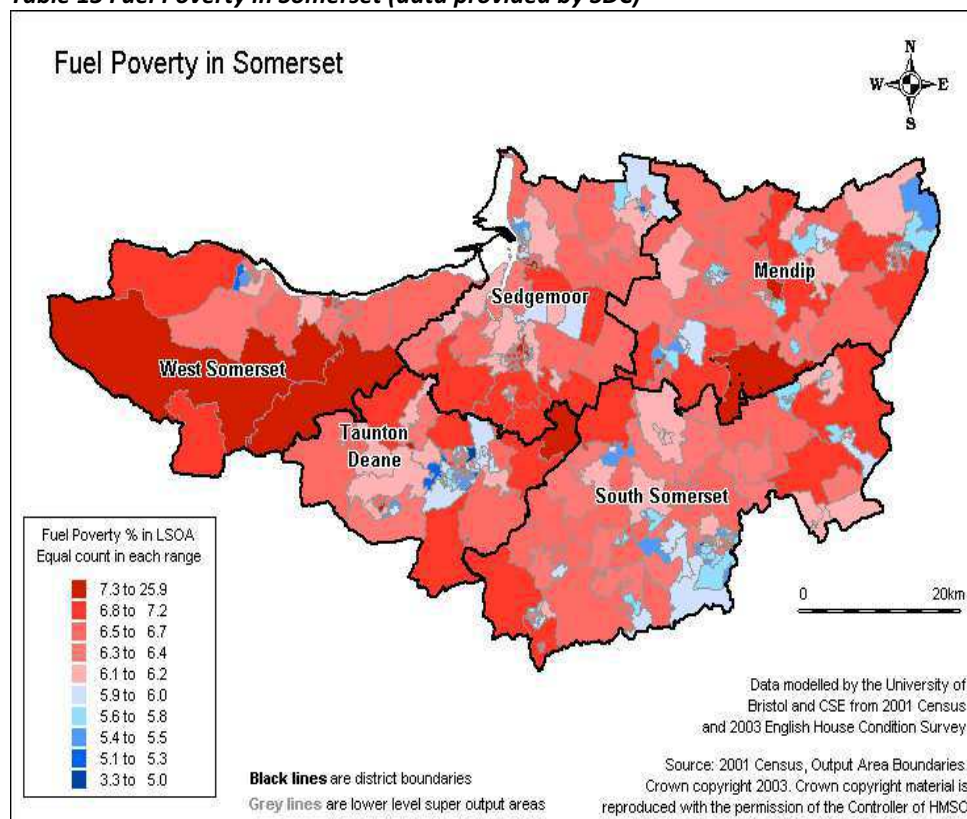
⁶⁹ Fuel poverty is defined as having to spend 10% or more of a household's net income to heat their home to an adequate standard of warmth (usually 21 degrees centigrade for the main living area and 18 degrees for the other occupied rooms.

⁷⁰ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/lahousing200910>

⁷¹ <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/the-health-impacts-of-cold-homes-and-fuel-poverty/the-health-impacts-of-cold-homes-and-fuel-poverty-full-report.pdf>

- 4.43 Mental health is negatively affected by fuel poverty and cold housing for all age groups. In particular, more than one in four adolescents living in cold housing are at risk of multiple mental health problems compared to one in twenty adolescents who have always lived in warm housing. Cold housing also increases the level of minor illnesses such as colds and flu and exacerbates existing conditions such as arthritis and rheumatism, which can have a greater impact on the morbidity and mortality of older people who are more likely to have pre-existing conditions.
- 4.44 The level of fuel poverty in Somerset is shown graphically in table 13 below.

Table 13 Fuel Poverty in Somerset (data provided by SDC)



Community Safety

- 4.45 The 2008 Place Survey⁷² found that 92% of people in Somerset felt very safe or safe outside in their local area during the day. This figure fell to 62% after dark. Women, under 25s, people with a limiting disability and those in social housing were the most likely to feel unsafe. The 2010 Community Safety Strategic Assessment identified four key community safety priorities for Somerset in 2011:

- reducing anti-social behaviour (ASB), crime and re-offending

⁷² 2008 Place Survey <http://www.sine.org.uk/publications/place-survey/>

- road safety
- protection of vulnerable groups
- substance misuse

The Local Strategic context

- 4.46 All tiers of government within Somerset have a commitment to working together to deliver positive housing outcomes for the people of Somerset. The Somerset local housing authorities, together with the County Council and local NHS have a long and successful history of working together with those from the third sector to respond to the issues facing the housing sector.
- 4.47 We recognise the importance of working together to ensure a positive and vibrant housing market exists within Somerset.
- 4.48 This Housing Strategy Framework takes account of the following local strategy documents in its priorities for action:
- Draft Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy
 - Strategic Housing Market Assessments
 - Somerset Homeless Strategy (in production)
 - Somerset Youth Housing Strategy & Action Plan 2012 -2015⁷³
 - Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for older People in Somerset⁷⁴
 - Avon and Somerset Rough Sleepers Steering Group Action Plan 2012⁷⁵
 - Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) 2011⁷⁶
 - Somerset Financial inclusion Strategy 2011-2013⁷⁷
 - Somerset Tenancy Strategy 2012⁷⁸
 - Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2026⁷⁹
 - Local Development Framework
 - Somerset Dementia Strategy (2010⁸⁰)
 - Somerset Extra Care Housing Strategic Review (2008)⁸¹
- 4.49 This integrated approach together with a focus on building more affordable homes, bringing empty properties back into use (targeted at those on the housing register), improving the availability of private rented sector accommodation, and making the

⁷³ <http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/irj/go/km/docs/CouncilDocuments/TDBC/Documents/Housing/Somerset%20Youth%20Housing%20Strategy%202012-2015.pdf>

⁷⁴ www.sine.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=50614

⁷⁵ Avon & Somerset Rough Sleepers Steering Group is made up of all 5 Somerset local housing authorities together with North Somerset Council, Bath & North East Somerset Council and Bristol City Council.

⁷⁶ <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/business-and-law-documents/research/cchr/somersetgtaafinalreport14jan2011.pdf>

⁷⁷ http://www.moneymatterssomerset.org.uk/downloads/Somerset_Financial_Inclusion_Strategy.pdf

⁷⁸ <https://www.homefindersomerset.co.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/106.aspx>

⁷⁹ <http://www.somersetstrategicpartnership.org.uk/community/>

⁸⁰ <http://www.sine.org.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=50618&type=Full&servicetype=Attachment>

⁸¹ <http://www.sine.org.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=50697&type=Full&servicetype=Attachment>

best use of existing stock (through adaptation or improvement works) provides the context within which each of the local housing authorities can set out their own specific actions to address the priorities set out within this framework document.

Section B - Strategic Response to the Evidence Base

5. Our Response to the Evidence Base

5.1 We have developed three key priorities to address the evidence and issues arising. The context for each priority is set out within the detail of this section. Wherever possible we shall continue to work together on shared issues, developing joint strategies and policies and finding common solutions where appropriate, Where separate approaches are required we shall endeavour to make these as consistent as possible whilst respecting local circumstances.

5.2 ***Priority 1 - To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development.***

5.2.1 This priority links the requirement to deliver the right quantity of housing in the right mix of tenures to meet the local need in a sustainable way, whilst enabling people's aspirations to access housing they can afford in areas that they want to live in.

Priority 1 Issues and Barriers to Progress

5.2.2 **Affordability.** As mentioned previously (see the earlier section on Affordability) affordability is a key issue. House prices in the sub-region have risen rapidly in recent years and are now well out of affordable range for most residents. Increasing energy prices and other basic household costs have intensified the affordability problem and obtaining a mortgage can be difficult given the size of deposit required

5.2.3 **Economic Viability.** Much affordable housing is delivered through planning obligations where a developer of a proposed housing scheme is expected to deliver a proportion as affordable under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (a 's106 Agreement'). The Government has recently consulted on the potential for developers to challenge affordable housing obligations expected under existing s106 Agreements where these are considered to render the overall scheme unviable.⁸² This is symptomatic of the wider issues within the general economy. To quote the former Housing Minister, Grant Shapps, "...lenders aren't lending, buyers aren't buying and builders aren't building..."⁸³. As peoples' ability to purchase has dwindled, especially first time buyers, largely due to a dearth of available mortgages, the appetite of volume house builders for speculative building has also dwindled. Even where full planning permission is in place and the legally binding s106 Agreement sets out the expected level of affordable housing – this does not guarantee delivery in such adverse economic circumstances

5.2.4 **Economy and Employment.** The lack of affordable housing impacts on all age groups but particularly on the young. Demographically Somerset has fewer 20 to 29 year olds in comparison to national figures, possibly due to young people leaving the county for education or employment opportunities. In addition there is a net

⁸² <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/renegotiation-of-section-106-planning-obligations>

⁸³ <http://www.reallymoving.com/property-news/new-scheme-for-first-time-buyers-announced-by-uk-g>

emigration of young adults (16 to 24) from Somerset again thought to be due to a lack of employment opportunities and attendant issues with obtaining housing. Those young adults that remain in Somerset face difficult prospects in terms of employment. Both regionally and nationally, youth unemployment is of particular concern. In Somerset, 5.8% of 18 to 24 year olds claim JSA compared to 2.3% of 25 to 49 year olds and 1.1% of 50 to 64 year olds. Sedgemoor has the highest level of youth unemployment in the county at 7.4%, and West Somerset has the lowest at 4.5%.

- 5.2.5 Almost 3 million people aged 20 to 34 were living with their parents in 2011, a 20% increase on the number in 1997. As well as rising house prices young people are experiencing higher education costs, increasing rents and a credit squeeze. It is anticipated that by 2020 3.7 million 20 to 34 year olds will be living with their parents. Around 1.5 million more young people will be pushed towards the private rented sector in 2020 reflecting the growing problems of accessing home ownership and the social rented sector.⁸⁴
- 5.2.6 **Social Inclusion.** There are pockets of deprivation throughout the sub-region and there is evidence that improving access to housing and employment increases the existing tenure mix and encourages social inclusion and community cohesion by breaking up pockets of deprivation. We must ensure that new affordable housing is of the right size and type and in the right place to support regeneration initiatives, economic growth, reducing worklessness and encouraging a more balanced tenure mix, particularly in our most deprived neighbourhoods.

⁸⁴ Housing options and solutions for young people in 2020 – Joseph Rowntree Foundation
<http://www.irf.org.uk/publications/housing-options-solutions-young-people>

5.2.7 **Maximising New Homes Bonus.** The allocations for 2012-13 are shown in the table below and include the premium payments for affordable homes (£350 per property). For 2012-13 the local housing authority partners have brought £404,600 of additional funding to the sub-region.

Table 14 New Homes Bonus Figures Source CLG⁸⁵

Local Authority	Current housing stock	Net change in stock	Affordable housing supply	Affordability ratio	Year 1 allocations (£): inc empty homes, inc AH premium	Year 2 allocations (£): inc empty homes, inc AH premium	Total payment in year 2012-13 (Year 1 plus Year 2)
Mendip	48709	427	113	7.85	504,175	492,609	996,784
Sedgemoor	51150	661	323	7.42	624,174	772,746	1,396,920
South Somerset	73175	680	468	8.02	601,146	790,317	1,391,463
Taunton Deane	49429	510	238	7.59	391,980	647,745	1,039,725
West Somerset	17466	135	14	8.92	91,342	147,213	238,556
	239929	2413	1156		2,212,817	2,850,631	5,063,448
Affordable Homes Bonus			£404600				

5.2.8 **Enabling Housing Development.** It is the role of each strategic housing authority to co-ordinate the development programme of partner landlords such as housing associations in order to optimise the outcomes, making best use of each development opportunity as it arises. To achieve this four of the districts have developed key partnerships using similar selection criteria and continuous assessment.

Priority 1 – Key Areas of Focus

5.2.9 The key areas of focus for the delivery of this priority are as follows:

- effective use of planning
- increasing supply of land for affordable housing
- identifying need effectively
- identifying more creative ways of delivering affordable homes
- sustainable developments
- continue to maximise New Homes Bonus
- co-ordination of partnership working with partner landlords such as housing associations

⁸⁵ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/xls/2079136.xls>

5.3 **Priority 2- To Make the best use of the sub-region's existing housing stock.**

This priority will both raise the quality and sustainability of existing housing stock (via energy efficiency and decent homes works) as well as bringing back into use that stock which is currently not used (empty homes).

Priority 2 Issues and Barriers to Progress

- 5.3.1 **Decent Homes Standard.** Large investments have been made in the sub-regions social housing stock to achieve the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) but this work is not yet complete. There is a strong correlation between unsatisfactory housing conditions and households in economic and social disadvantage. Elderly and vulnerable private sector households are over-represented in non-decent housing. There are limited resources available for private sector housing renewal but increasing decency levels in the private rented sector and among vulnerable owner-occupiers who may be capital rich but revenue poor, will be key.
- 5.3.2 **Energy Efficiency and Thermal Comfort.** The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 introduced a national target for local authorities to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and improve domestic energy efficiency by 30% by the year 2010. Effective insulation and efficient heating is an important element of the DHS and one of the main reasons that social housing fails the standard is thermal inefficiency. There are clear links between homes that have poor thermal efficiency and health, with issues such as cold and damp having a direct impact on occupants' health and quality of life as previously stated.
- 5.3.3 Improving energy efficiency is also beneficial in terms of the environment, helping to conserve precious resources and lower carbon dioxide emissions. As noted in Priority One, environmental sustainability is a key consideration, not just in terms of the impact of new developments but also in terms of improving the energy efficiency and long-term sustainability of existing homes.
- 5.3.4 **Empty homes.** Empty properties are a wasted resource that could be brought back into use to increase the supply of housing; preferably, affordable housing. We would hope to link incentives provided to owners to bring these properties back into use to the fact that the homes are used to house those on the housing register.
- 5.3.5 **Loss of social housing stock.** Social housing stock continues to be depleted through the Right to Buy (RTB)/ Preserved Right to Buy (PRTB), though tenants buying their homes in this way often have no other means of accessing home ownership. The RTB and PRTB have a particularly significant impact in villages and rural areas, where family homes are often at a premium, in very desirable locations and have a high resale value. Although the receipts from these sales can be used to fund the building of replacement social housing, more often than not the opportunity to do does not exist in rural areas.

5.3.6 **Welfare reforms.** The changes to welfare benefits, in particular housing benefit and the reduction in rates if tenants are under occupying their property will place additional demands on the existing social housing stock that is available. Existing tenants may be looking to move to smaller properties (which are in the highest demand) at a time when other pressures are also squeezing the availability of that stock. The use of mutual exchange within the Homefinder Somerset area will need to be encouraged across landlords and within landlord stock to aid social mobility and address underoccupation.

Priority 2 – Key Areas of Focus

5.3.7 The key areas of focus for the delivery of this priority are as follows:

- to ensure that Homefinder Somerset continues to deliver mobility and choice of housing options to those wishing to access affordable housing in Somerset
- ensure that those already in social housing have mobility when they need it through the promotion and facilitation of mutual exchange wherever possible
- bringing homes up to the decent homes standard wherever possible
- bring empty homes back into use and utilise them for those in housing need
- maximise works to improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort
- Combat deprivation by ensuring the diversification of the tenure mix within existing and new developments
- Implementing co-ordinated approaches to small scale adaptations and repairs to enable people to remain in their homes

5.4 *Priority 3- To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of the sub-region's most vulnerable residents.*

5.4.1 This priority focuses on the requirement to ensure that vulnerable people (older people, gypsy and traveller groups, those with disabilities, including learning disabilities, and socially excluded applicants) can access suitable accommodation and support options and are aware of what help is available.

Priority 3 Issues and Barriers to Progress

5.4.2 **Older people.** The projected increase in the number of older people living in the sub-region will have a major impact on the type of housing and related services demanded and the way those services are provided. A large proportion of older people are owner-occupiers and research shows that the vast majority want to stay in their own homes and retain their independence for as long as possible. This necessitates moving away from institutionalised models of care, in favour of enabling independent living through the provision of appropriate support mechanisms.

- 5.4.3 Changing demographics and health outcomes mean that there is a much greater diversity of need within older age groups than ever before and the ability to ensure that everyone can enjoy an active lifestyle for as long as possible depends on the availability of an appropriate range of housing and support services. The *Code for Sustainable Home*⁸⁶ emphasises the importance of building to Lifetime Homes Standards and encourages developers and housing providers to build homes that can be easily adapted to meet people's changing needs, particularly in later life.
- 5.4.4 **Homeless people.** Preventing homelessness is a key priority for the sub-region. The Somerset Homelessness Strategy sets out the key priorities for the local housing authorities in preventing and dealing with homelessness (including rough sleeping). The major challenge will be addressing the population 'bulge' that could occur if the Hinkley power station development goes ahead – placing an additional squeeze on available social and private sector housing.
- 5.4.5 **Young people.** Young people are over-represented among homeless presentations in the sub-region and a lack of suitable temporary housing makes it difficult to accommodate them, particularly those individuals with complex support needs. Similarly, there is a lack of accommodation with relevant support for adults leaving prison and young people leaving care. The Youth Housing Strategy was developed to address this issue. It sets out four priorities for youth housing in Somerset. The key development arising from the strategy is the Pathway to Independence (known as P2I) project which aimed to develop a pathway through which early intervention services can be provided to young adults seeking housing related support services.⁸⁷ The strategy also set out the importance of prevention services to ensure that wherever possible young adults remained (where safe and possible) in the family home.
- 5.4.6 **Disabled/Vulnerable people.** Although new social housing must conform to Lifetime Homes Standards, the vast majority of the existing housing stock in the sub-region was not designed to accommodate people with physical or learning disabilities and installing aids and adaptations is expensive. A lack of move-on accommodation means that disabled and vulnerable individuals can be effectively trapped in supported accommodation, which is not suitable for long-term occupancy and can actually prevent them from progressing to independent living. It also means that others in need of supported accommodation are unable to access it, due to 'bed-blocking' caused by the lack of move on units. A Pathway for the Socially Excluded (known as the pathway for adults or P4A) has been developed by Somerset County Council which aims to provide support for these groups. The way these services are commissioned will need to be integrated into the way in which districts deliver their own housing services.

⁸⁶ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/sustainability/codesustainablehomes/>

⁸⁷ <http://www.tauntondeane.gov.uk/irj/go/km/docs/CouncilDocuments/TDBC/Documents/Housing/Somerset%20Youth%20Housing%20Strategy%202012-2015.pdf> Priority 1 and Appendix 1

5.4.7 **Gypsies and Travellers.** The GTAA has set out the provision that we need to make to provide for the gypsy and traveller community in the future. However we also need to ensure that there are adequate services in place where pitches are provided. These pitches must be sustainable places to live, with good access to services (such as health and education) for those living there. It is possible that future estimates of pitch requirements are an underestimate given possible concealed need.

Priority 3 – Key Areas of Focus

5.4.8 The key areas of focus for the delivery of this priority are as follows:

- support the delivery of the priorities within the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- support the priorities within the Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for Older People in Somerset
- support the delivery of the priorities of the Somerset Homelessness Strategy
- support the delivery of the key outcomes from the Somerset Youth Housing Strategy
- deliver the pitch requirements as set out in the GTAA 2011

6. Strategic Priorities and Key Areas of Focus

6.1 The three priorities are in no particular order. Listed below, they have been identified as the key issues for Somerset.

<p>Priority 1</p>	<p>To increase the supply of affordable housing⁸⁸ to support economic growth and development.</p> <p>Key Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Work towards addressing blockages to delivery ➤ Effective use of planning ➤ Increasing supply of land for affordable housing ➤ Identifying need effectively ➤ Identifying more creative ways of delivering affordable homes ➤ Sustainable developments ➤ Endeavour to maximise benefits for housing supply through the New Homes Bonus ➤ Continued co-ordination of partnership working with partner landlords such as housing associations ➤ Deliver the pitch requirements as set out in the GTAA 2013
<p>Priority 2</p>	<p>To make best use of Somerset's existing housing stock.</p> <p>Key Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To ensure that Homefinder Somerset continues to deliver mobility and choice of housing options to those wishing to access affordable housing in Somerset. ➤ Ensure that those already in social housing have mobility when they need it through the promotion and facilitation of mutual exchange wherever possible. ➤ Bringing homes, across all tenures, up to the Decent Homes Standard wherever possible. ➤ Bring empty homes back into use and utilise them for those in housing need. ➤ Maximise works to improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort ➤ Combat deprivation by ensuring the diversification of the tenure mix within existing and new developments. ➤ Implementing co-ordinated approaches to small scale

⁸⁸ As defined within the National Planning Policy Framework Annex 2
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

	<p>adaptations and repairs to enable people to remain in their homes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤
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<p>Priority 3</p>	<p>To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of the sub-region's most vulnerable residents by working in partnership.</p> <p>Key Areas of Focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Support the delivery of the priorities within the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy – e.g. develop effective information and advice ➤ Refresh and implement financial inclusion strategy. ➤ Support the priorities within the Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for Older People Somerset e.g. review extra care housing and support housing. Understand how the personalisation agenda in social care will affect housing service delivery ➤ Eg ➤ Support the delivery of the priorities of the Somerset Homelessness Strategy – including the delivery of the Pathway for Adults (P4A) ➤ Support the delivery of the key outcomes from the Somerset Youth Housing Strategy – e.g. the implementation of the P21 pathway ➤ Revise the GTAA – and deliver the pitch requirements as set out in the GTAA 2013
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Wherever possible we shall continue to work together on shared issues, developing joint strategies and policies and finding common solutions where appropriate, Where separate approaches are required we shall endeavour to make these as consistent as possible whilst respecting local circumstances

7. Moving Forward

- 7.1 This strategic framework will build on the achievements we have already made and provides a focus for continued action that supports the creation of balanced, sustainable communities, where all residents can achieve independent living in good quality, affordable homes that are appropriate to their needs. It actively supports other local and sub-regional strategies and provides the impetus to further develop existing partnerships and expand on the good practice and innovation that already exists in the sub-region.
- 7.2 Wherever possible we shall continue to work together on shared issues, developing joint strategies and policies and finding common solutions where appropriate, Where separate approaches are required we shall endeavour to make these as consistent as possible whilst respecting local circumstances
- 7.3 We do not expect future progress to be easy. The resources available to us and our partners in the housing sector already fall far short of meeting the demands placed upon them and the 'credit crunch', the weakening in the UK housing market and falling employment levels will present additional challenges in an already testing environment. The mis-match between the resources available to us and the levels of need existing in the sub-region means that we cannot realistically hope to deal with all the issues identified; we must therefore ensure that we generate the maximum benefit from the resources that we do have at our disposal.
- 7.4 Each local housing authority will produce its own detailed housing strategy action plan that will be based on a pragmatic view of what can be achieved, taking into account their anticipated resources and the priorities we have identified through the research that has informed this document together with local priorities.
- 7.5 We will review our priorities on a regular basis and will continue to develop new and innovative solutions for housing in the sub-region, that will allow us to respond more quickly to the most pressing needs and to compete more effectively for resources in the fast-changing and complex environment in which we work.

Appendix 1 – Organisations involved in consultation workshop that helped to align priorities with key areas of focus

South Somerset District Council – Private Sector Housing, Planning Policy, Strategic Housing, Housing & Welfare Services, Assistant Director, Enabling
Sedgemoor District Council – Corporate Director, Private Sector Housing Manager (also covers Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council), Strategic Housing, Lead on Gypsy & Travellers
Taunton Deane Borough Council – Strategic Housing, Housing Options, Enabling, Planning Policy, Housing Services
Mendip District Council – Corporate Manager (Built Environment), Strategic Housing, Private Sector Housing, Enabling,
West Somerset Council – Strategic Housing, EDF project, Enabling, Planning Policy
SCC – Commissioning Adults & Health, Commissioning for Older People, Social Services (Adult), Commissioning Officer (learning Disabilities),
SHAL Housing
Magna West Somerset
NHS - Director of Clinical Commissioning
Yarlington Housing Group - Director of Customer and Community Services
Homebuy Manager South West Homes
South West Seniors Network for West Somerset
Taunton CAB
Barnabas Housing - Director
SCC - Commissioning Officer Pathway for Adults
Knightstone Housing - Director of Development
Somerset - Planning Policy
Homes in Sedgemoor - Director
NHS Somerset
Hastoe - Regional Head of Development
Aster Living Project Manager -
CAB Mendip Manager
Sedgemoor CAB - Housing Caseworker

SOMERSET STRATEGIC HOUSING PARTNERSHIP – STRATEGIC HOUSING FRAMEWORK: WEST SOMERSET COUNCIL COMPREHENSIVE ACTION PLAN v11 – 19.12.13

1. BACKGROUND

The Somerset Strategic Housing Framework 2013 – 2016 was commissioned by the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership. It sets out a new sub-regional housing strategy framework for Somerset to be complemented by individual District Action Plans. This framework approach enables each partner to identify specific actions to be implemented within individual local authority areas supported by the overarching common key areas of focus identified within this strategic framework.

The document is intended to:

- Provide a framework for the future of housing in Somerset and identify sub-regional priorities;
- Show the crucial roles played by partnerships in delivering and improving housing and housing services in the sub-region and
- Illustrate the linkages between this framework and other key national and sub-regional policies and strategies

The Framework has identified three priorities as the key issues for the sub-region:

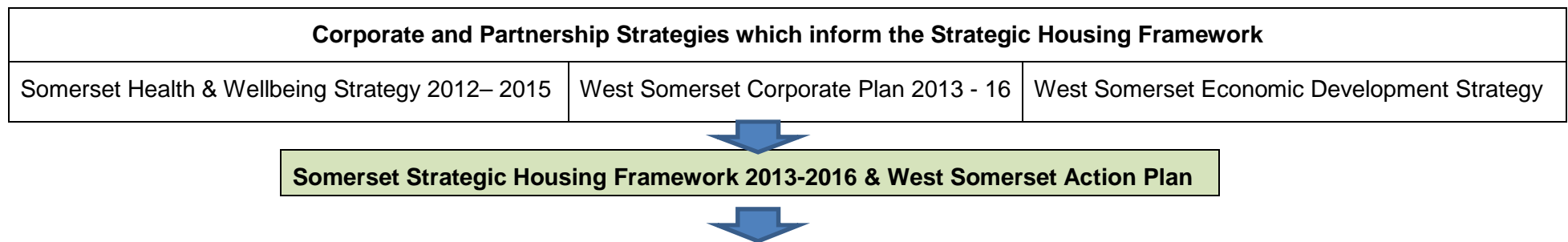
Priority 1: To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development

Priority 2: To make the best use of Somerset's existing housing stock

Priority 3: To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of Somerset's most vulnerable and least resilient residents by working in partnership.

Each of these priorities are supported by a number of Key Areas of Focus.

The West Somerset Action Plan supports the Key Areas of Focus with local key issues and actions to deliver the overall priorities. The Action Plan attempts to align the housing-related corporate priorities with those of other relevant partnership Strategies, including the Exmoor National Park Authority Local Plan, to make sure they all work together and outcomes are delivered effectively.



Somerset-wide Partnership Strategies informed by the Strategic Housing Framework				
Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2013 – 2016	Housing, Health, Care & Support Strategy for Older People in Somerset	Somerset Youth Housing Strategy 2012-2015 & Somerset P21 (Pathways to Independence for Young People)	Somerset P4A (Pathways for Adults)	Somerset Financial Inclusion Strategy 2011-13

The Strategic Housing Framework Priorities complement West Somerset's Corporate Plan 2013-16 – set out below are the housing-related priorities, objectives and key tasks. These corporate key tasks have been incorporated in the Strategic Housing Framework West Somerset Action Plan.

WSC Vision: To enable people to live, work and prosper in West Somerset by			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Championing and enabling the people, local organisations and communities of West Somerset Working with partners, both inside and outside West Somerset 			
Priority: Local Democracy - Securing local democracy and accountability in West Somerset, based in West Somerset, elected by the people of West Somerset and responsible to the people of West Somerset		Priority: New Nuclear Development at Hinkley Point Maximising opportunities for West Somerset Communities and businesses to benefit from the development whilst protecting local communities and the environment	
Objective 2: Maximise the funding opportunities from Central Government	Key Task 2.1: <i>Enable and support new housing schemes to increase housing availability within West Somerset</i>	Protecting Local Communities	
	Key Task 2.2: <i>Facilitate the delivery of 80 affordable homes within the West Somerset area by 31 March 2014.</i>	Objective 5: The availability of housing supply is increased to mitigate the extra demands linked to Hinkley Point workers	Key Task 5.1: <i>Using the EDF Housing Fund to provide 100 additional bed spaces in West Somerset by 31.3.2014</i>
	Key Task 5.2: <i>To work with landlords and owners of empty properties to return 55 back into use across West Somerset with priority on the eastern area parishes</i>		
			Key Task 5.3: <i>To work with landlords and owners to bring 400 properties up to the Decent Homes Standard making them available for use across West Somerset</i>

This comprehensive and integrated approach has led to a high number of actions which may well still need to be refined!

Furthermore, few of the individual actions in the Action Plan stand alone, the majority must be seen within the interlinked corporate context of Housing Enabling, Housing Options and Planning, and delivered by a partnership framework. Partners include other Somerset Authorities, Exmoor National Park Authority (ENPA), the Rural Housing Project (RHP), Developers and Registered Providers (RPs), many of which belong to the Affordable Housing Group (AHG), Parish Councils, the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP, a partnership of West Somerset,

Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane Councils working jointly to improve private sector housing conditions), Homefinder Somerset (the Somerset-wide Choice Based Lettings Scheme), and many others.

We have also identified a number of cross-cutting Key Local Principles which underpin many of the actions in the Action Plan.

Key Local Principles:

- Maintain focus on West Somerset by retaining the dedicated resource of the West Somerset Housing Enabler and other key WSC officers with local knowledge and experience
- Make best use of available funding including maximising local funding opportunities such as NHB, EDFe Housing Fund, and S106 funding as alternatives to dwindling HCA funds
- WSC is the Local Housing Authority for the whole of the West Somerset administrative area but only the Local Planning Authority for about one third of the geographic area i.e. the parts lying outside the Exmoor National Park. This West Somerset Action Plan includes the Somerset part of the Exmoor National Park. The Strategic Housing Framework and Action Plan should align with the adopted and emerging Local Plans of both West Somerset and the Exmoor National Park.
- Make best use of existing property (commercial, agricultural, industrial, residential), encouraging conversion where economically viable
- Utilise positive, open and flexible working relationships with all partners, including the Affordable Housing Group, to maximise opportunities, using a variety of delivery mechanisms.
- Engage with Parish Councils on housing assessment and local supply of affordable housing sites to assess housing needs at a local level, and in liaison with developers and Registered Providers, seek to provide appropriate housing in the right locations and at the right affordability level
- Maintain strong links with local planners re S106 Agreements, retaining flexibility in negotiations on S106 Sites to reflect local needs for affordable housing.
- Work flexibly with key developers and Registered Providers to ensure viable, sustainable developments e.g. that sites are brought forward and not stalled over viability issues; aspire to build to the highest Code level possible without making schemes unviable;
- Investigate and adopt good practice and successful alternative rural models (eg Community Land Trusts) from wider partnership working including partnership with Taunton Deane
- Key housing-related actions from joint Somerset Strategies and Frameworks are aligned to the priorities of this Action Plan to help ensure they all work together effectively

Finally, a number of actions are cross-referenced (highlighted below) as they affect more than one Key Area of Focus:

S106 Agreements/Affordability/Viability	Partnerships including Affordable Housing Group	Planning Policy	Rural Housing Project
Homefinder Somerset	Empty Homes	Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership	

2: SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

The Action Plan has taken the Key Areas of Focus, looked at the key facts and issues for West Somerset and developed actions to deliver the outcomes, aligning them with the Corporate Plan and other partnership strategies. As already stated this comprehensive and integrated approach has led to a high number of actions which may well still need to be refined! This is a summary of the Actions, followed by the comprehensive Action Plan at section 3.

Action No	Action	Progress
Strategic Housing Framework Priority 1: Increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth & development		
Key Area of Focus 1.1: WORK TOWARDS ADDRESSING BLOCKAGES TO DELIVERY		
1.1	Service Plan Key Task 2.2.1 – 2.2.7: Facilitate the delivery of 80 additional affordable homes on 7 specified sites by 31.3.2014	Current
1.2	Work with the West Somerset Affordable Housing Group (WSAHG) to identify barriers and facilitate solutions (eg developing a Planning & Transport Protocol) and support both traditional and innovative ways of delivering affordable housing, including through RSL's, Private Developers or Self-build opportunities	Current
Key Area of Focus 1.2: EFFECTIVE USE OF PLANNING		
1.3	Service Plan Key Task 2.1.1: Undertake a review of planning decisions, their effect on increasing supply and report findings to Housing PAG by 30.1.14	Current
1.4	Service Plan Key Task 2.1.2: Prepare Publication documentation and produce final Local Plan Publication draft for endorsement by council and submission to the Government Inspector by 31.3.14	Current
1.5	Service Plan Key Task 2.1.3: Through partnership with the Rural Housing Project carry out 4 housing need surveys to aid in identification of new housing sites for inclusion in the joint work plan by 31.3.14 – see also Key Area of Focus 1.3	Current
1.6	Review Supplementary Planning Document to include: - including by reviewing the principles and wording of S106 agreements to enable greater flexibility including exploring the cascade of S106 monies to smaller communities – see also Key Area of Focus 1.1, - Adopt and, wherever possible, use standard clauses regarding the delivery of affordable housing	Future
Key Area of Focus 1.3: INCREASING SUPPLY OF LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING		
	See Key Principles and other actions	
Key Area of Focus 1.4: IDENTIFYING NEED EFFECTIVELY		
1.7	Negotiate for higher proportion of 1 & 2 bedroom properties on appropriate developments? Homelessness Strategy Action 15: To ensure planners and enablers are aware of lack of 1 & 2 bedroom properties by providing evidence from Homefinder Somerset	Current

1.8	Utilise information from the recently completed Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update to inform planning applications	Current
1.9	Rural Housing Project – Making better use of existing rural housing project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey of rural housing applicants - Rural Housing Fair - Accurate reflection of need and how to address it for next HCA bid round 	Current
Key Area of Focus 1.5: IDENTIFYING MORE CREATIVE WAYS OF DELIVERING AFFORDABLE HOMES		
1.10	Facilitate a supply of investor ready schemes to maximise use of funding pots.	Current
1.11	Review current delivery model for Empty Homes	Future
Key Areas of Focus 1.6: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT		
1.12	Secure social rent levels wherever possible although appreciating this may affect the numbers delivered	Current
1.13	Monitor market to determine levels of “Affordable Rent”	Current
1.14	Evaluate HCA Special Interest Group Rural Network	Future
Key Area of Focus 1.7: ENDEAVOUR TO MAXIMISE BENEFITS FOR HOUSING SUPPLY THROUGH THE NEW HOMES BONUS		
1.15	Work with WSC Members to ensure that New Homes Bonus is ring-fenced as capital funding for housing related matters in W Somerset	Current
1.16	Work with Council Tax to ensure accuracy of database	Current
1.17	Work with Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to maximise the benefit of the pooling arrangement	Current
Key Area of Focus 1.8: ENHANCE AND CONSOLIDATE CO-ORDINATION OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH PARTNER LANDLORDS		
1.18	Maintain a West Somerset focussed Affordable Housing Group into the future	Current
1.19	Carry out annual evaluation of the West Somerset Affordable Housing Group to ensure partnership remains effective	Current
1.20	Deliver Homefinder Somerset policy change and system upgrade including Wizard Housing Options module	Current
Key Area of Focus 1.9: DELIVER PITCH REQUIREMENTS AS SET OUT IN THE GYPSY & TRAVELLER ACCOMMODATION ASSESSMENT 2013		
1.21	Identify sites for gypsy and traveller pitches	Future
1.22	Investigate effectiveness of Mendip Loan Scheme for private gypsy sites	Future
Key Area of Focus 1.10: INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING SUPPLY TO MITIGATE THE EXTRA DEMANDS OF EDF WORKERS		
1.23	Keep under review: Service Plan Key Task 5.1.1: Submit a bid for use of the Hinkley Housing Fund by 30.7.2013 to the Planning Obligations Board detailing the proposed interventions to deliver the key task. Subject to the approval of the bid:	Under review
1.24	Service Plan Key Task 5.1.2: Facilitate the delivery of 15 bed spaces by Housing Associations in priority areas through implementation of their Downsizing Policies	Current
1.25	Service Plan Key Task 5.1.4: Work with Bridgwater YMCA to deliver a minimum of 4 bed spaces in Minehead over & above those	Current

	delivered at Beach Hotel (Action 3.15)	
1.26	Service Plan Key Task 5.1.5: Work with private developers to maximise opportunities in conjunction with the fund to bring forward both open market and affordable homes on sites in Watchet (120 bed spaces) and Williton (50)	Current
1.27	Service Plan Key Task 5.1.6: Provide empty property loans and advice to deliver an additional 30 bed spaces over and above the requirements of Key task 5.3 (400 properties)	Current
1.28	Include an affordable housing focus in the Community Investment Plan to maximise resources for community benefit	Current

Strategic Housing Framework Priority 2: To make the best use of Somerset's existing housing stock		
Key Area of Focus 2.1: TO ENSURE THAT HOMEFINDER SOMERSET CONTINUES TO DELIVER MOBILITY AND CHOICE OF HOUSING OPTIONS TO THOSE WISHING TO ACCESS AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SOMERSET		
2.1	Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2013-16 – Action 16: Encourage shared applications to Homefinder Somerset enabling single people to make joint applications to improve their opportunity to secure social housing; to encourage landlords to take a flexible approach when providing accommodation for single persons.	Current
2.2	Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2013-16 – Action 16: To ensure registered providers are not skipping applicants for anti-social behaviour when it occurred more than 2 years ago	Current
2.3	Undertake analysis of Homefinder Somerset for a better understanding of applicant's needs as part of Rural Housing Project – Making better use of existing rural housing project - including an analysis of refusals. Refer recommendations back to Homefinder Somerset CBL Working Group	Current
2.4	Homefinder Somerset Newsletter or Factsheet to address the impact of the policy change and also perceptions and myths in applicants consultation feedback	Future
2.5	Better provision of information to applicants on what it means to bid, and to be ready to move (see 2.4 above), and the implications of refusal. Promote use of Homefinder Somerset via: Annual Housing Fair, Quarterly Newsletters and Housing Surgeries, /events; Community Matters	Future
2.6	Consider developing and piloting a Tenant Ready Scheme – preparing prospective tenants with bank account, budgeting skills, photo id, rent in advance, moving costs, etc	Future
Key Area of Focus 2.2: ENSURE THAT THOSE ALREADY IN SOCIAL HOUSING HAVE MOBILITY WHEN THEY NEED IT THROUGH THE PROMOTION AND FACILITATION OF MUTUAL EXCHANGE WHEREVER POSSIBLE		
2.7	Explore ways to encourage tenants registering for a transfer on Homefinder Somerset to also register for Mutual Exchange as a means	Future

	of resolving their housing issues	
2.8	Provide support to Mutual Exchange applicants including considering dedicated support, factsheets on advertising your property (inc how to take photos, how to describe your property), getting ready to move leaflets, Moving checklist etc.	Future
2.9	Support the Homefinder Somerset CBL Working Group in the choice of Mutual Exchange product and promote via Homefinder Somerset with Operations Group, RPs, Parish Councils, District Councillors, Community Matters, Factsheet, RP Newsletters, Housing Surgeries and Workshops, Somerset-wide event, etc.	Future
2.10	Work with the largest providers on funding a Mutual Exchange officer to pro-actively deliver chains of exchanges	Future
Key Area of Focus 2.3: BRINGING HOMES, ACROSS ALL TENURES, UP TO THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD WHEREVER POSSIBLE		
2.11	Service Plan Key Task 5.3.1: In partnership with Wessex Home Improvement Loans deliver 15 low interest loan products	Current
2.12	Service Plan Key Task 5.3.2: Delivering 40 Disabled Facilities Grants	Current
2.13	Service Plan Key Task 5.3.3: Improving 50 privately rented properties to the minimum standard	Current
2.14	Service Plan Key Task 5.3.4: Delivering the remaining 295 properties through other mechanisms	Current
2.15	Encourage SWELT to develop and deliver Private Sector Action Plan including maintaining a wide range of financial assistance options	Current
Key Areas of Focus 2.4: BRING EMPTY HOMES BACK INTO USE AND UTILISE THEM FOR THOSE IN HOUSING NEED		
2.16	Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2013-16: Action 7: <i>Consider creating an EH Action Plan which sets out how the LA will bring EHs back into use to help those on the housing register or threatened homeless</i>	Current
2.18	Service Plan Key Task 5.2.1: Deliver 25 empty properties back into use in the Quantock Panel Area	Current
2.19	Service Plan Key Task 5.2.2: Deliver 10 empty properties back into use within the Exmoor Panel Area	Current
2.20	Service Plan Key Task 5.2.3: Deliver 20 empty properties back into use within Minehead and Dunster Panel Areas	Current
Key Area of Focus 2.5: MAXIMISE WORKS TO IMPROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND THERMAL COMFORT		
2.23	Promote SWELT service including free CSE energy grants, landlord accreditation, EPCs, Green Deal options	Current
2.24	Promotion of West somerset Ichooser scheme	Current
Key Area of Focus 2.6: COMBAT DEPRIVATION BY ENSURING DIVERSIFICATION OF TENURE MIX WITHIN EXISTING & NEW DEVELOPMENTS		
2.25	Negotiate a high proportion of social housing on development sites	Current
Key Area of Focus 2.7: IMPLEMENTING CO-ORDINATED APPROACHES TO SMALL SCALE ADAPTATIONS AND REPAIRS TO ENABLE PEOPLE TO REMAIN IN THEIR HOMES		
2.26	Developing Joint Plan for Disabled Facilities Grant funding by 31.3.14;	Current
2.27	Be involved in recommissioning of Home Improvement Agency contract by SCC:2014	Future
2.28	Promote with Clinical Commissioning Group and Adult Social Care	Current

Strategic Housing Framework Priority 3: To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of the Somerset's most vulnerable and least resilient residents by working in partnership		
Key Area of Focus 3.1: SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE PRIORITIES WITHIN THE <i>Somerset Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2012-15</i> – DEVELOP EFFECTIVE INFORMATION AND ADVICE		
3.1	Adopt the Somerset Health & Wellbeing Framework	Future
3.2	Deliver the actions	Future
3.3	One Page Action Plan-P6: Review strategic housing policy in relation to demographic change, economic growth and the future care needs to inform the Joint Strategic Housing Framework (The local planning system needs to support a mix of housing developments. This must take into account the needs and preferences of the future population)	Current
3.4	One Page Action Plan-P8: Integrated and early support for families in need – increase preventative activity for targeted families through the Family Focus Programme and Early Help Strategy. WS – Maintain pro-active involvement	Current
3.5.	One Page Action Plan-P9: Monitor and minimise the health and wellbeing impact of financial hardship	Future
3.6	Develop effective information and advice: One Page Action Plan-P1: Local Information: review how information is available on community activities, services, and volunteering opportunities and support more joined up, effective and efficient approaches (Older people need to be better informed of housing options at an early stage and more practical support needs to be available to help people with their housing needs in later life).	Future
Key Area of Focus 3.2: REFRESH AND IMPLEMENT THE <i>Somerset Financial Inclusion Strategy 2011-13</i>		
3.7	Refresh and implement the Financial Inclusion Strategy	Future
3.8	Implement and Deliver the Financial Inclusion Strategy Action Plan	Future
Key Area of Focus 3.3: SUPPORT THE PRIORITIES WITHIN THE <i>Housing, Health, Care & Support Strategy for Older People in Somerset 2012 – 15</i> – REVIEW EXTRA CARE HOUSING AND SUPPORT HOUSING, UNDERSTAND HOW THE PERSONALISATION AGENDA IN SOCIAL CARE WILL AFFECT HOUSING SERVICE DELIVERY		
3.9	Review extra care housing and support housing: ST1.1: Contribute to the development of the commissioning plan and service specification following the review of extra care housing and supported housing	Current
3.10	Understand how the personalisation agenda in social care affects housing service delivery	Current
3.11	ST1.3: SSHG to negotiate with Wessex Homes Improvement Loans to develop a product to be provided through the local housing authority's enabling teams and registered providers (Autumn 2012)	Current
3.12	Address the needs of older people by delivering the Strategic Theme Actions which are addressed by other actions in this Action Plan	Current

Key Area of Focus 3.4: SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE PRIORITIES OF THE Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2013-16 – INCLUDING THE DELIVERY OF THE Pathway for Adults (P4A)		
3.13	Address key goals of the <i>Somerset Homelessness Strategy</i> through delivery of the adopted Action Plan Specific Actions featuring in Strategic Housing Framework:	Current
3.14	Deliver the Pathway for Adults	Current
Key Area of Focus 3.5: SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE Somerset Youth Housing Strategy 2012 – 15 – THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE P2I PATHWAY		
3.15	Support and facilitate the development of the Beach Hotel by YMCA Somerset Coast, delivery partners for P2I, to provide the West Somerset Hub. Links to <i>Homelessness Strategy - Action 10: Preventing young people from becoming homeless by creating a single point of access (HUB)</i>	Current
3.16	Implement and deliver the P2I: <i>Links to Somerset Homelessness Strategy – Action 10 (as above): Work within schools and colleges to provide young people with information on what to do in a housing crisis (including how to access Homefinder Somerset).</i>	Current

3. SOMERSET STRATEGIC HOUSING FRAMEWORK: WEST SOMERSET ACTION PLAN

Strategic Housing Framework Priority 1: To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development

Key Area of Focus 1.1: WORK TOWARDS ADDRESSING BLOCKAGES TO DELIVERY

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

SHF 4.12 West Somerset has the highest ratio of house price to earnings in Somerset at almost nine times the average earnings figure

SHF 4.31: In 2009 almost 6% of West Somerset's homes are second homes, placing this area tenth out of all rural and coastal authorities.

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- Geographical constraints including lack of large-scale sites
- Lack of opportunities to achieve economies of scale, which can make development more expensive leading to viability issues
- Perceived lack of desirability of West Somerset as a location for development amongst non-local and/or national developers/operators due to its accessibility to the strategic communications networks (e.g. West of England main railway, M.5/A.303)
- Decrease in HCA funding resulting in low prospect of RPs bidding in 2015-18 HCA round; without grant RPs are unable to develop even their own sites;
- Increased reliance on private developers may impact on space standards, location, staff resources to facilitate the development
- Currently (Autumn 2013) a rising and active construction market resulting in:
 - Increased costs of materials and labour leading to increased tender prices;
 - Making it difficult for developers to appraise financial viability of development sites when having to guess tender prices in 18months time
 - Materials shortages and trades skills shortages which can result in contractors paying more to sub-contract for poorer quality
 - WS schemes competing on financial viability with other schemes in other districts that may be easier/cheaper to deliver
 - Contractors less likely to tender as currently over-committed within the current bid process until 2015
 - The Hinkley development likely to exacerbate all the above

OUTCOME: Delivery of 140 affordable homes by 2014

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
1.1	Service Plan Key Task 2.2.1 – 2.2.7: Facilitate the delivery of 80 additional affordable homes on 7 specified sites by 31.3.2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan: Service Plan: Key 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Plan: Deliver 80 	WS Housing Enabler

1.2	Work with the West Somerset Affordable Housing Group (WSAHG) to identify barriers and facilitate solutions (eg developing a Planning & Transport Protocol) and support both traditional and innovative ways of delivering affordable housing, including through RSL's, Private Developers or Self-build opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tasks 2.1, 2.2 Somerset County Council WS AHG Key Area of Focus 1.8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> affordable homes (2013/14); 2016 target of 140; Planning & Transport Protocol 	WS Affordable Housing Group
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Key Area of Focus 1.2: EFFECTIVE USE OF PLANNING

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- Viability issues may well effect the ability for developers to provide the full quota of affordable housing requirement under the Council's SPD
- Legal Agreements have a perception of slowing down negotiations
- Delays in signing of S106 Agreements because of planning/legal/transport/development viability issues

OUTCOME: Reduce blockages to delivery of affordable housing target of 140 affordable homes by 2014

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
1.3	Service Plan Key Task 2.1.1: Undertake a review of planning decisions, their affect on increasing supply and report findings to Housing PAG by 30.1.14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Plan 2013-16: Key Tasks 2.1, 2.2; • Service Plan 2013-14: • West Somerset Local Plan • ENPA Local Plan • Rural Housing Project • WS SPD • Hinkley Community Investment Plan – see Key Area of Focus 1.10 	Report to Housing PAG	Corporate Service Manager
1.4	Service Plan Key Task 2.1.2: Prepare Publication documentation and produce final Local Plan Publication draft for endorsement by council and submission to the Government Inspector by 31.3.14		WS Local Plan	WS Planning Policy WS Housing Enabler
1.5	Service Plan Key Task 2.1.3: Through partnership with the Rural Housing Project carry out 4 housing need surveys to aid in identification of new housing sites for inclusion in the joint work plan by 31.3.14 – see below Key Area of Focus 1.3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 rural housing need surveys • Housing sites 	Rural Hsg Project WS Development Control,
1.6	Review Supplementary Planning Document to include: - including by reviewing the principles and wording of S106 agreements to enable greater flexibility including exploring the cascade of S106 monies to smaller communities – see Key Area of Focus 1.1 , - Adopt and, wherever possible, use standard clauses regarding the delivery of affordable housing		Revised SPD by 2015	

Key Area of Focus 1.3: INCREASING SUPPLY OF LAND FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

KEY FACTS:

The Strategic Housing Market Assessment update has identified the objectively identified housing need for the West Somerset LPA area as 2,400 dwellings over the 20-year period ending in 2032. The emerging Local Plan is seeking to provide for 2,900 new dwellings over this time-scale in the West Somerset LPA area during that time, half of which are proposed to be built on a number of selected sites at Minehead, Watchet and Williton.

KEY ISSUES:

See 1.1 above

OUTCOME: Identified supply of land adequate to meet affordable housing need in West Somerset

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
	See above: Key Principles See Actions 1.4, 1.5; 3.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HHC&S for OP Rural Housing Project ENPA Local Plan WS Local Plan 	ENPA & West Somerset Local Plans	WS Housing Enabler Rural Hsg Project Parish Councils

Key Area of Focus 1.4: IDENTIFYING NEED EFFECTIVELY

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

- SHF 4.3:** The largest increase in terms of household types will be in single person households.

Number of West Somerset applicants on Homefinder Somerset by bedroom size required:

Size	1B	2B	3B	4B	5B	6B	Total
Number	707	343	131	38	7	2	1228
%age	57%	28%	11%	4%			100%

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- The number of 1 bedroom accommodation units available
- Homefinder Somerset Lettings 2012/13 in West Somerset by bedroom size:

Size	1B	2B	3B	4B	5B	6B	Total
Number	55	76	31	1	0	0	163
%age	34%	47%	19%				100%

- Of the 163 vacancies, 52 (32%) were in sheltered accommodation, of which 38 were 1B, and 14 x 2B, accommodation all with age/support restrictions.

OUTCOME:				
Homelessness Strategy: That evidence from Homefinder Somerset has been taken into consideration by planners and enablers				
Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
1.7	Negotiate for higher proportion of 1 & 2 bedroom properties on appropriate developments? <i>Homelessness Strategy Action 15: To ensure planners and enablers are aware of lack of 1 & 2 bedroom properties by providing evidence from Homefinder Somerset.</i>	Homelessness Strategy Action 15 See Key Areas of Focus: 2.1; 2.2;	Increased proportion of 1B affordable properties	WS Housing Enabler Homeless Strategy Action Plan
1.8	Utilise information from the recently completed Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update to inform planning applications	Strategic Housing Market Assessment	ENPA & WS Local Plans	Housing Enabler
1.9	Rural Housing Project – Making better use of existing rural housing project: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survey of rural housing applicants - Rural Housing Fair - Accurate reflection of need and how to address it for next HCA bid round 	Rural Housing Project See Key Areas of Focus: 2.1, 2.2	Fewer refusals of offers	Rural Housing Project

Key Area of Focus 1.5: IDENTIFYING MORE CREATIVE WAYS OF DELIVERING AFFORDABLE HOMES

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

- See 1.1 above – Addressing blockages to delivery: Geographical constraints, Lack of available sites, Funding etc

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- Lessons learned from the legacy of previous creative ways of delivering affordable homes!

OUTCOME: Maximising the number of affordable homes becoming available from limited resources

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
1.10	Facilitate a supply of investor ready schemes to maximise use of funding pots.	See Key Principles; See Key Areas of Focus: 1.1; 1.2; 1.3; 1.8; 2.4; 3.3; HHC&S for OP	Bid to HCA for unspent funding	WS Housing Enabler
1.11	Review current delivery model for Empty Homes			WS Affordable Housing Group

Key Area of Focus 1.6: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENTS				
WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to deliver homes that are affordable to reside in and maintain • Affordable rents are not affordable in West Somerset – cross reference with Financial Inclusion Strategy below 				
OUTCOME: Homes that are affordable to live in and to maintain, in sustainable communities				
Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
1.12	Secure social rent levels wherever possible although appreciating this may affect the numbers delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPD • Planning Framework • Rural Housing Project 	Additional social rent/affordable homes	Developer partners
1.13	Monitor market to determine levels of “Affordable Rent”			WS Planners
1.14	Evaluate HCA Special Interest Group Rural Network			WS Housing Enabler

Key Area of Focus 1.7: ENDEAVOUR TO MAXIMISE BENEFITS FOR HOUSING SUPPLY THROUGH THE NEW HOMES BONUS				
WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of volume building • Focus on bringing empty properties back into use but is complex and time-consuming for individual properties – lack of multiple owners 				
OUTCOME: New Homes Bonus is ringfenced as capital funding for housing related matters in West Somerset in order to maximise housing supply				
Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
1.15	Work with WSC Members to ensure that New Homes Bonus is ring-fenced as capital funding for housing related matters in West Somerset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Key Principles • Corporate Plan: Corporate Priority - Local Democracy • WS Local Plan 	Corporate Plan: NHB for 2014/15 is in excess of the accumulated total of £444k (based on 2012/13 figures)	WS Housing Enabler
1.16	Work with Council Tax to ensure accuracy of database			SWPSHP
1.17	Work with Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to maximise the benefit of the pooling arrangement			Local Enterprise Partnership

Key Area of Focus 1.8: ENHANCE AND CONSOLIDATE CO-ORDINATION OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING WITH PARTNER LANDLORDS

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

West Somerset Affordable Housing Group (comprising RPS and private developers) – evaluated effective partnership to encourage and monitor development

OUTCOME: Effective partnerships contributing to maximising housing supply

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
1.18	Maintain a West Somerset focussed Affordable Housing Group into the future	See Key Principles See Key Area of Focus : 1.1	AHG attendance; Resolving barriers	WS Affordable Housing Group
1.19	Carry out annual evaluation of the WS AHG to ensure partnership remains effective			
1.20	Deliver Homefinder Somerset policy change and system upgrade including Wizard Housing Options module	Homefinder Somerset See Key Areas of Focus: 1.4; 2.1; 2.2; 3.4;	Smooth operation of Wizard	HS CBL Working Group

Key Area of Focus 1.9: DELIVER PITCH REQUIREMENTS AS SET OUT IN THE GTAA 2013

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

- HS4.32: Pitch requirements: 2010-15: 2; 2015-20: 3;
- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment adopted for the Local Plan

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- Often community opposition to planning applications for gypsy and traveller site

OUTCOME: An additional 2 pitches delivery by 2015 followed by a further 3 by 2020.

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
1.21	Identify sites for gypsy and traveller pitches	Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA); WS & ENPA Local Plans	2 pitches by 31.3.15 2 further pitches reqd. between 2016 and 2020 and a further 5 pitches between 2021 and 2030	Criteria based policies in emerging Local Plan to provide Planning Framework for additional pitches
1.22	Investigate effectiveness of Mendip Loan Scheme for private gypsy sites	HCA, MDC		

Key Area of Focus 1.10: INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF HOUSING SUPPLY TO MITIGATE THE EXTRA DEMANDS OF EDF WORKERS

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

- Joint EDFe Housing Fund Strategy developed, with SDC and in consultation with key stakeholders, prioritising Housing Fund bids, with in principle approval from Planning Obligations Board (POB) in January 2013

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- SHF 4.27:** This heightens concern that the demand from Hinkley workers for accommodation will have a particular impact on the under 40s who are reliant on low cost accommodation in the affected areas. This will place additional demands on private sector accommodation in the affected areas which will impact on the ability of local housing authorities to place/discharge homeless applicants into private sector accommodation.

OUTCOME: An adequate supply of available housing to meet the needs of local residents and Hinkley workers

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
1.23	Keep under review: Service Plan Key Task 5.1.1: Submit a bid for use of the Hinkley Housing Fund by 30.7.2013 to the Planning Obligations Board detailing the proposed interventions to deliver the key task. Subject to the approval of the bid:	Corporate Plan 2013-16: Service Plan 2013-14: Key Tasks 5.1	Provide 100 additional bedspaces in the West Somerset area by 31.3.13 using the EDFe Housing Fund – when it becomes available	Service Plan Performance Measures: – Housing Enabling – SWPSHP Affordable Housing Group
1.24	Service Plan Key Task 5.1.2: Facilitate the delivery of 15 bed spaces by Housing Associations in priority areas through implementation of their Downsizing Policies	EDFe Housing Fund Strategy		
1.25	Service Plan Key Task 5.1.4: Work with Bridgwater YMCA to deliver a minimum of 4 bed spaces in Minehead over & above those delivered at Beach Hotel (Action 3.26)	See Actions 2.17,		
1.26	Service Plan Key Task 5.1.5: Work with private developers to maximise opportunities in conjunction with the fund to bring forward both open market and affordable homes on sites in Watchet (120 bedspaces) and Williton (50)			
1.27	Service Plan Key Task 5.1.6: Provide empty property loans and advice to deliver an additional 30 bed spaces over and above the requirements of Key task 5.3 (400 properties)	See Key Area of Focus 2.3 (Decent Homes) and 2.4 (Empty Properties)		
1.28	Include an affordable housing focus in the Community Investment Plan to maximise resources for community benefit	Community Investment Plan	Community Investment Plan – Action Plan	Service Plan – Community Dev?

Strategic Housing Framework Priority 2: To make the best use of Somerset's existing housing

Key Area of Focus 2.1: TO ENSURE THAT HOMEFINDER SOMERSET CONTINUES TO DELIVER MOBILITY AND CHOICE OF HOUSING OPTIONS TO THOSE WISHING TO ACCESS AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SOMERSET

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

Number of West Somerset **applicants** on Homefinder Somerset by priority band:

Band	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Number	123	470	635	1228
%age	10%	38%	52%	100%

Homefinder Somerset **Lettings** 2012/13 in West Somerset by priority band:

Band	Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
Number	64	73	26	163
%age	39%	45%	16%	100%

Homefinder Somerset (HS) Lettings 2012/13 in West Somerset (WS) by residency at time of let:

Resident in WS	Moving to be near to relatives in WS	Previously resident elsewhere in HS area	Moving to be near relatives in HS area	No local connection whatsoever
109	5	38	6	5

WSC Refusals 2012/13: 43 applicants refused properties

Reasons for Refusal (after expressing an interest in a property)

Unsuitable Area/Location	Unsuitable Property	Unaffordable Property	Can't afford/ don't want to move	Failed to respond to offer	Failed to attend viewing/letting	Failed verification	Landlord not prepared to accept	Change of Circumstances	Total
8	13	1	6	2	2	7	1	3	43
Property Related: 22				Applicant Related: 21					

Current address:

Outside HS area	Homefinder Somerset area	West Somerset	(Of which, WS RP tenants)	Total
6	17	20	(9)	43

9 Transfer tenants refused accommodation they had previously bid on:

Property/Area unsuitable	Property unaffordable	Can't afford/don't want to move	No response to offer
4	1	3	1

Band:

Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
18 = 42%	22 = 51%	3 = 7%	43

WSC Skipping Reasons 2012/13: 84 applicants skipped by landlords

Reason for Skipping:

Unable to proceed	No longer want to be considered	Other	Total
27	44	13	84
The majority have been unable to be contacted	Of which 38 considered the location or property unsuitable	Of which 4 were on health grounds	

Band:

Gold	Silver	Bronze	Total
19 =23%	54 = 64%	11 =13%	84

- Change of Homefinder Somerset Policy – adopted October 2013 will adversely affect around 250 households. It's difficult to quantify how many applicants will directly benefit from the changes although most will indirectly benefit from having less competition.
- Homefinder Somerset Housing Options Wizard upgrade being introduced in February 2014 which will deliver a much more joined up and consistent housing options service and a wider set of options available via the website.
- Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP) was established to improve private sector housing conditions including private rent and owner-occupied properties; SWPSHP set up Somerset West Landlord and Tenant Service (SWELT), a one stop shop providing information to tenants and landlords.

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- Currently a significant number of properties are refused when offered to applicants who previously expressed an interest. Refusals are roughly 50% related to the suitability of the property and its location, and 50% related to the personal circumstances of the applicants. Accepting that some applicants will not consider the suitability of the property until an offer is made, why are people expressing an interest even if they don't want to move, or failing to respond to the offer process? Do we need to consider reviewing information provided to applicants regarding the bidding process and implications? Are there implications? What is the cost to landlords?
- To maximise the outcomes by ensuring that "bids" are seen through to offers by reducing the number of refusals ie that applicants are offered properties that they really want to move into! This means ensuring that applicants only expressing an interest in properties they really want to live in, and that there are no barriers to landlords offering them a tenancy.
- On the face of it, people from within West Somerset seem just as likely as those from outside not to know the rural areas and subsequently refuse properties because of their isolated location. There doesn't appear to be an apparent correlation for people from outside West Somerset . Do we need to consider providing more information about location, facilities and amenities.
- A third of the 9 transfer applicants above expressed interest in another property, which they then refused, even though they can't afford/don't want to move!
- 10% of applicants over all are in Gold Band but 42% of refusals are by Gold Band applicants.
- Perceptions that the Homefinder Somerset policy does not treat everyone equally despite it treating those in the same housing need equally.

OUTCOME: Homefinder Somerset is an effective choice based lettings scheme providing mobility, housing options & access to affordable housing

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
2.1	Homelessness Strategy Action 16: Encourage shared applications to <i>Homefinder Somerset</i> enabling single people to make joint applications to improve their opportunity to secure social housing; to encourage landlords to take a flexible approach when providing accommodation for single persons.	Homefinder Somerset Somerset West Landlord & Tenant Service (SWELT)	See 1.4 above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SWPSHP • CBL WG • Homelessness Strategy Action Plan • RP Policies
2.2	Homelessness Strategy Action 17: To ensure registered providers are not skipping applicants for anti-social behaviour occurring more than 2 years ago	Tenant Passport Scheme	Number of skippings per advert by landlord?	
2.3	Undertake analysis of <i>Homefinder Somerset</i> for a better understanding of applicant's needs as part of <i>Rural Housing Project</i> – Making better use of existing rural housing project - including an analysis of refusals. Refer recommendations back to <i>Homefinder Somerset</i> CBL Working Group	Rural Housing Project	Lower Number of refusals per advert by applicants	Rural Hsg Project; WS Hsg Options; CBL Working Group
2.4	<i>Homefinder Somerset</i> Newsletter or Factsheet to address the impact of the policy change, also perceptions and myths in applicants consultation feedback	Homefinder Somerset Policy	Better info for applicants (via new Scheme Guide etc); Annual Housing Fair; Quarterly Newsletters	
2.5	Better provision of information to applicants on what it means to bid, and to be ready to move (see 2.4 above), and the implications of refusal. Promote use of <i>Homefinder Somerset</i> via: Annual Housing Fair, Quarterly Newsletters and Housing Surgeries, /events; Community Matters			
2.6	Consider developing and piloting a “Tenant Ready Scheme” – preparing prospective tenants eg bank account, budgeting, photo id, rent in advance, moving costs,etc		Tenant Ready Scheme	

Key Area of Focus 2.2: ENSURE THAT THOSE ALREADY IN SOCIAL HOUSING HAVE MOBILITY WHEN THEY NEED IT THROUGH THE PROMOTION AND FACILITATION OF MUTUAL EXCHANGE WHEREVER POSSIBLE

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

- There is a free (for tenants and landlords) mutual exchange facility on Homefinder Somerset that advertises properties but does not show tenants potential matches to their stated criteria. By advertising mutual exchange properties on Homefinder Somerset applicants can also see nationwide vacancies via the links to the National Homeswap Scheme (which ties together the House Exchange, Homeswapper, Abritas and Locata mutual exchange systems)
- 791 M/E properties advertised on 12.11.2013 – of which 22 are in West Somerset;
- In addition to Homefinder Somerset, some of the larger landlords are signed up to the House Exchange or Homeswap
- The majority of mutual exchanges are within Somerset.

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- Exchanging tenants generally have to take the property in its existing condition and only emergency or urgent repairs, but not routine repairs, may be carried out for 12 months.
- Currently no method of reporting on the number of successful Mutual Exchanges – Homefinder Somerset CBL Working Group are considering purchasing a Mutual Exchange operating system that will also become a housing option for social tenants receiving advice at the end of their fixed term tenancy. The module will also enable reporting on the number of mutual exchanges
- Mutual Exchanges can benefit from pro-active dedicated mutual exchange officer involvement within housing providers, to identify and promote multi-way exchanges

OUTCOME: Mutual exchanges become an effective housing option for social tenants enabling moves to more suitable housing in terms of size/location/rent

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
2.7	Explore ways to encourage tenants registering for a transfer on Homefinder Somerset to also register for Mutual Exchange as a means of resolving their housing issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Housing Project • Homefinder Somerset Policy • Support Workers Network • Housing Exchange • Homeswapper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in number of mutual exchanges to ?? • Factsheets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HS CBL Working Group • Housing Options • Registered Providers
2.8	Provide support to Mutual Exchange applicants including considering dedicated support, factsheets on advertising your property (inc how to take photos, how to describe your property), getting ready to move leaflets, Moving checklist etc.			
2.9	Support the Homefinder Somerset CBL Working Group in the choice of Mutual Exchange product and promote via Homefinder Somerset with Operations Group, RPs, Parish Councils, District Councillors, Community Matters, Factsheet, RP Newsletters, Hsg Surgeries, Somerset-wide event, etc.			
2.10	Work with the largest providers on funding a Mutual Exchange officer to pro-actively deliver chains of exchanges			

Key Area of Focus 2.3: BRINGING HOMES, ACROSS ALL TENURES, UP TO THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD WHEREVER POSSIBLE**WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:**

- SHF 4.38: WS has a relatively high proportion of 'unfit' dwellings, indicating this rural district faces a notable issue in terms of private housing conditions
- Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP) was established to improve private sector housing conditions including private rent and owner-occupied properties

OUTCOME: Increased number of decent properties available from Accredited Landlords				
Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
2.11	Service Plan Key Task 5.3.1: In partnership with Wessex Home Improvement Loans deliver 15 low interest loan products	Key Area of Focus 1.10 Green Deal Plan Service Plan Key Task 5.3: To work with landlords and owners to bring 400 properties up to the Decent Homes Standard making them available for use across W Somerset.	See Action Outputs Increased Number of accredited landlords 400 properties brought up to the Decent Homes Standard	SWPSHP – SWELT Private Sector Action Plan
2.12	Service Plan Key Task 5.3.2: Delivering 40 Disabled Facilities Grants			
2.13	Service Plan Key Task 5.3.3: Improving 50 privately rented properties to the minimum standard			
2.14	Service Plan Key Task 5.3.4: Delivering the remaining 295 properties through other mechanisms			
2.15	Encourage SWELT to develop and deliver Private Sector Action Plan including maintaining a wide range of financial assistance options			

Key Area of Focus 2.4: BRING EMPTY HOMES BACK INTO USE AND UTILISE THEM FOR THOSE IN HOUSING NEED

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

See SHF Table 7: Empty homes data for Somerset

2011-12 – Source Empty Homes Agency Ltd:

LA	Total Dwellings	Total Empty	% empty	Short term empty	LA	Hsg Ass	Other Public Bodies	Private Owners	Long Term Empty
WSC	17,563	545	3.10%	336	-	12	4	529	209

- During 2012/13 63 empty properties were actively assisted back into use, exceeding the target of 45.
- During 2013/14 WSC aims to bring 55 empty properties back into use, plus an additional 70 for the next 2 years to mitigate the effect of the Hinkley Point development by targeting properties in the Hinkley Point, Watchet, Williton and Minehead priority areas
- The potential of Empty Property Regeneration is recognised in the joint WSC & SDC EDFe Housing Fund Strategy. £650,100 has been identified to provide an additional 72 “top up” loans of £15,000 to top-up the existing maximum loan of £15k, to a total of £30k, via Wessex Home Investment Loans, to provide an additional 300 bedspaces over 2 years from properties in substantial disrepair requiring more than the initial £15k loan.

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- Lack of multiple owners of empty properties – tends to be individuals owning one property
- Bringing empty properties back into use can be complex and time-consuming for individual properties
- Empty properties are not always classified as such – a number of high profile empty properties are classified as second homes or uninhabitable which can be difficult to disprove and/or take further action.
- Maximise re-use of empty properties to contribute to New Homes Bonus (see above 1.7)
- Maximise re-use of empty properties in villages where they may also be more visible.

OUTCOME:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empty Homes Action Plan • Increase in number of empty properties brought back into use, occupied by people registered on Homefinder Somerset 				
Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
2.16	Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2013-16: Action 7: <i>Consider creating an EH Action Plan which sets out how the LA will bring EHs back into use to help those on the housing register or threatened homeless</i>	Somerset Homelessness Strategy	<i>Empty Homes Action Plan</i> <i>No of EH brought back into use in each LA</i>	SWPSHP - Jan 2014 Rural Housing Project
2.18	Service Plan Key Task 5.2.1: Deliver 25 empty properties back into use in the Quantock Panel Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDFe Housing Fund • See Action 1.5: Key Area of Focus 1.10 • See Action 1.27 	Service Plan Key Task 5.2: Return 55 empty properties back into use across West Somerset with priority on the eastern area parishes	Housing Enabler
2.19	Service Plan Key Task 5.2.2: Deliver 10 empty properties back into use within the Exmoor Panel Area			Homelessness Strategy Action Plan
2.20	Service Plan Key Task 5.2.3: Deliver 20 empty properties back into use within Minehead and Dunster Panel Areas			

Key Area of Focus 2.5: MAXIMISE WORKS TO IMPROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND THERMAL COMFORT

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

- **SHF 4.40:** West Somerset has a high proportion of dwellings with Category 1 hazards – above the national average of 12%.
- It also stands out as having a relatively low average Standard Assessment procedure (SAP) rating on which the EERs are based and is the only district within Somerset with a SAP rating below the national average.
- **SHF 4.44:** high level of fuel poverty throughout West Somerset
- **SHF 4.42:** A statistically positive relationship between low thermal efficiency of housing and excess winter deaths (EWD) and the considerable number of EWDs attributable to cardio-vascular disease (CVD) and respiratory diseases has been shown to exist. Cold housing can impact on health in various ways. For instance, children living in cold homes are more than twice as likely to suffer from a variety of respiratory problems, including asthma, than those living in warm homes. It is clear that fuel poverty/cold housing can impact a variety of health outcomes and affect different groups of people, including those that may be asset rich but revenue poor.
- **SHF 4.43:** Mental health is negatively affected by fuel poverty and cold housing for all age groups. In particular, more than one in four adolescents living in cold housing are at risk of multiple mental health problems compared to one in twenty adolescents who have always lived in warm housing. Cold housing also increases the level of minor illnesses such as colds and flu and exacerbates existing conditions such as arthritis and rheumatism, which can have a greater impact on the morbidity and mortality of older people who are more likely to have pre-existing conditions.

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES: Fuel Poverty is a key issue for WSC

OUTCOME: People living in comfortable homes with a reduced risk of physical or mental illness				
Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
2.23	Promote SWELT services including free CSE energy grants, landlord accreditation, EPCs, Green Deal options	SWELT; H&W Strategy; HHC&S; Green Deal:		SWPSHP
2.24	Promotion of West somerset Ichooser scheme	Forum 21; WS Community Development		WS

Key Area of Focus 2.6: COMBAT DEPRIVATION BY ENSURING DIVERSIFICATION OF TENURE MIX WITHIN EXISTING & NEW DEVELOPMENTS

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

- SHF 4.9: The Williton LSOA falls within the 20% most deprived nationally.
- Williton is priority area for EDF Housing Fund

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- Affordable Housing: Social Rent/ "Affordable Rent"/Low Cost Home Ownership/Intermediate Rent/Market Rent?
- Affordable Rent is unaffordable in West Somerset

OUTCOME: All new developments contain a mix of tenure

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
2.25	Negotiate a high proportion of social housing on development sites	See all other Actions		WS Hsg Enabler

Key Area of Focus 2.7: IMPLEMENTING CO-ORDINATED APPROACHES TO SMALL SCALE ADAPTATIONS AND REPAIRS TO ENABLE PEOPLE TO REMAIN IN THEIR HOMES

OUTCOME: People able to remain in their own homes longer

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
2.26	Developing Joint Plan for Disabled Facilities Grant funding by 31.3.14;	Other Strategies; SWPSHP	DFG Joint Plan	SWPSHP
2.27	Be involved in 2014 recommissioning of SCC Home Improvement Agency contract	HHC & S Framework for Older People in Somerset		Strategic Partnership Group Board
2.28	Promote with Clinical Commissioning Group and Adult Social Care	See below 3.3 H & W Strategy		

Strategic Housing Framework Priority 3: To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of the Somerset's most vulnerable and least resilient residents by working in partnership

Key Area of Focus 3.1: SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE PRIORITIES WITHIN THE *Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2012–15 (SH&WS)* – DEVELOP EFFECTIVE INFORMATION AND ADVICE

KEY ISSUES: *Somerset Health & Wellbeing Strategy 201 – 16 (SH&WS): Actions relevant to the Somerset Housing Strategy:*

- **Action 2 – Healthy planning and policy:** The Health and Wellbeing Board will ensure that health and wellbeing is given due consideration in planning and other policy decisions to maximise the positive impact of our environment on healthy lifestyles. Examples of action could include identification of community food growing spaces and use of planning to influence the position of takeaways.
- **Action 4 – Well-connected, vibrant communities:** There will be a much greater focus on supporting neighbourhoods and communities to take responsibility for shaping and transforming their own lives and their local services. Examples of action include the development of more local community and health services.
- **Action 6 – Supporting families with low resilience:** There will be specific focus on working with the least resilient families in our communities and ensuring smooth access to relevant and tailored services. Examples of action include the development of a Troubled Families Programme.
- **Action 7 - Housing for independence:** There needs to be an increased focus on the changing housing needs of the Somerset population, with particular focus given to widening the housing options for maintaining independent living. Examples of action include delivery of the Somerset Vision for Housing through a joined-up Somerset Housing Strategy, which also considers issues of affordability, benefit changes and fuel poverty.
- Social Isolation

OUTCOME: Somerset residents are aware of the importance of housing and housing-related options for maintaining independent living

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
3.1	Adopt the Somerset Health & Wellbeing Framework	HHC&S Strategy for Older People in Somerset	H&W Framework adopted	Corporate Plan ServicePlan
3.2	Deliver the actions			
3.3	One Page Action Plan-P6: Review strategic housing policy in relation to demographic change, economic growth and the future care needs to inform the Joint Strategic Housing Framework (The local planning system needs to support a mix of housing developments. This must take into account the needs and preferences of the future population)	See other Key Areas of Focus: 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6 WS & ENPA Local Plans	Strategic Hsg Framework No of houses given pp? No affordable homes? No of new lifetime homes?	Joint Strategic Hsg Framework Action Plan; WS Local Plan; H&W Board
3.4	One Page Action Plan-P8: Integrated and early support for families in need – increase preventative activity for targeted families through the Family Focus	• Family Focus Programme;	16 yr olds not in education or training	Health & Wellbeing Board

	Programme and Early Help Strategy. WS – Maintain pro-active involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early Help Strategy 		
3.5.	One Page Action Plan-P9: Monitor and minimise the health and wellbeing impact of financial hardship	Key Areas of Focus: 2,3,2.5; 3.3, 3.2 Financial Inclusion Strategy	FI Strategy %age of children in relative poverty	
3.6	Develop effective information and advice: One Page Action Plan-P1: Local Information: review how information is available on community activities, services, and volunteering opportunities and support more joined up, effective and efficient approaches (Older people need to be better informed of housing options at an early stage and more practical support needs to be available to help people with their housing needs in later life).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key Area of Focus: 3.3 HHC&S Framework for Older People in Somerset SWPSHP 	The proportion of people who use services and carers who find it easy to find information about services	WS Housing Options

Key Area of Focus 3.2: REFRESH AND IMPLEMENT THE *Somerset Financial Inclusion Strategy 2011-2013 (SFIS)*

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

- Somerset Financial Inclusion Strategy – due to be refreshed
- Key partners include West Somerset Advice Bureau, Moorvale Credit Union, West Somerset Food Bank;
- Established model of regular meetings with practioners, to resolve practical issues

WEST SOMERSET KEY ISSUES:

- Affordability, benefit changes and fuel poverty; “Affordable Rent”; Bedroom tax; Council Tax;
- Community Policy Action Group - large amount of social isolation particularly as West Somerset is such a rural area

OUTCOME: Somerset Financial Inclusion Strategy/Framework 2013 - 16

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
3.7	Refresh and implement the Financial Inclusion Strategy	See above: 2.3, 2.5, 3.1; Corporate Debt Policy; H&W Strategy; HHC&S Framework for OP;	Somerset Financial Inclusion Strategy & Action Plan	
3.8	Implement and Deliver the FIS Action Plan			

Key Area of Focus 3.3: SUPPORT THE PRIORITIES WITHIN THE *Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for Older People in Somerset 2012 - 15 (HHC&SS)*

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HS4.1: 30% of West Somerset's population is aged 65 or over. HS4.35: When asked why they didn't plan ahead, a major factor was not knowing the options open to them and the precautions they should take to prepare 				
KEY ISSUES: <i>Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for Older People in Somerset 2012 – 15 (HHC&SS):</i>				
STRATEGIC THEME 1: Within the available resources, we will make best use of all types of housing and related services to meet, where possible, the needs of older people.				
STRATEGIC THEME 2: We will promote health and wellbeing through an emphasis on preventative services in order to reduce the impact on high cost health and social care services				
STRATEGIC THEME 3: We will seek to promote housing and related services as one system, so that each part links together to meet the needs of older people where possible				
STRATEGIC THEME 4: We will promote the integration of those services that will improve outcomes and the seamless service provision that older people seek				
STRATEGIC THEME 5: We will promote workforce stability and recognise the value of unpaid carers and the voluntary sector in working to achieve more joined-up services				
STRATEGIC THEME 6: We will seek to share and use data and other available information more effectively				
STRATEGIC THEME 7: We will seek to change the way we work across traditional agency boundaries to create the right partnerships for seamless service delivery				
OUTCOME: Housing options integrated within a seamless service for older people				
Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
3.9	Review extra care housing and support housing: ST1.1: Contribute to the development of the commissioning plan and service specification following the review of extra care housing and supported housing	HHC&SS Action Plan	All to be determined by the Health, Housing, Care & Support Strategy for Older People in Somerset Action Plan	Registered Providers
3.10	Understand how the personalisation agenda in social care affects housing service delivery			
3.11	ST1.3: SSHG to negotiate with Wessex Homes Improvement Loans to develop a product to be provided through the local housing authority's enabling teams and registered providers (Autumn 2012)	Wessex Home Improvement Loans	Note that older people's housing needs are included in overall assessments of need – eg affordability, transport links, etc are relevant to all age groups.	Somerset Strategic Housing Group; SWPSHP
3.12	Address the needs of older people by delivering the Strategic Theme Actions (outlined below) which are addressed by other actions within this Action Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ST1.7.2: <i>Engage with Parish Councils on housing assessment and local supply of affordable housing to assess older people's housing needs at a local level, particularly in rural areas, and in liaison with developers, seek to provide appropriate housing in the right locations and at the right affordability level</i> ST1.8.1: <i>Local forward planning policy to address, as part of core strategy that all future housing is developed as far as possible to meet the affordability needs of older people</i> Ongoing promotion of existing schemes for hard to treat properties and those off the gas network and promotion of low cost schemes (ST1.8.2: <i>That fuel poverty is reduced by promoting energy efficiency schemes particular to those living in hard</i> 	<p>See Key Principles</p> <p>See Key Areas of Focus: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.28, 2.3, 2.5, 2.7, 3.1, 3.2, 3.12,</p> <p>WS & ENPA Local Plans</p> <p>Financial Inclusion Strategy</p>		

	<p>to treat properties and ST1.8.3: That low cost loan schemes, which enable vulnerable owners to improve their properties are promoted)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST3.1: Further develop joint working through integrated support services and housing options teams • Influence enablers and planners (developers) to create a market for older person specific housing across all tenures • ST3.3: Influence enablers and planners (developers) to create and maintain good transport links for older person specific housing across all tenures • ST3.4: Establish links between community enterprise, affordable housing provision and business support • ST4.3: Establish links with GP Federations to promote understanding of the importance of housing options on health and wellbeing, underpinned by the Countywide Health & Wellbeing Strategy S • ST4.4: Promotion of the existing Home Improvement Agency service, ongoing identification of opportunities for work with specific groups and projects, for example Warm Homes • ST6.2: Contribute to the JSNA which is a live document and to the annual refresh via the JSNA Technical Working Group • ST7.1: Continue to ensure housing is reflected across agency boundaries, through improved representation on boards and cross-referencing in strategies. Increase joint commissioning and joint Action Plans 	<p>Health & Wellbeing Strategy</p> <p>Local Enterprise Partnership</p>		<p>Policy</p> <p>WS Housing Options</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>Rural Hsg Project</p> <p>SWPSHP</p> <p>Housing Providers</p>
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Key Area of Focus 3.4: SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE PRIORITIES OF THE *Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2013-16* – INCLUDING THE DELIVERY OF THE *Pathway for Adults (P4A)*

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

- West Somerset Council has adopted the Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2013 -2016 and Action Plan
 - Contracts began 1.5.13 for The Somerset Pathway for Adults to provide an**integrated* range of targeted services to meet the needs of vulnerable people.
- *Integrated Services each with three elements:- Outreach, Accommodation, Resettlement

KEY ISSUES: *Somerset Homelessness Strategy 2013-16* Goals:

Goal 1: Reduction and prevention of homelessness

Goal 2: Provision of appropriate advice, accommodation and support if crisis occurs

Goal 3: Maximise effective partnership working to provide cost-effective and responsive services

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of move-on accommodation from supported housing 				
OUTCOME: People have settled homes which enable them to build settled lives				
Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
3.13	Address key goals of the Somerset Homelessness Strategy through delivery of the adopted Action Plan-specific Actions featuring in Strategic Hsg Framework: Homeless Strategy Action 7 = Key Area of Focus 2.4 Homeless Strategy Action 10 = Key Area of Focus 3.5 Homeless Strategy Action 15 = Key Area of Focus 1.4 Homelessness Strategy Action 16 = Key Area of Focus 2.1 Homelessness strategy Action 17 = Key Area of Focus 2.1	See above:2.4, 3.5, 1.4, 2.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empty Homes Action Plan Youth Housing Strategy Local Plan Homefinder Somerset 	Reduction in homelessness; Increased number of empty homes brought back into use for homeless households	Housing Options Managers Homeless Strategy Action Plan
3.14	Deliver the Pathway for Adults (any specific actions for P4A?)			

Key Area of Focus 3.5: SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF THE KEY OUTCOMES FROM THE *Somerset Youth Housing Strategy 2012-15* – the implementation of the *P2I Pathway*

WEST SOMERSET KEY FACTS:

West Somerset Council has adopted the Pathway to Independence (P2I), an Integrated Pathway of accommodation and support services in all relevant localities to meet the needs of young people. P2I is the delivery mechanism for the Somerset Youth Housing Strategy, YMCA Somerset Coast is the delivery partner.

KEY ISSUES: *Somerset Youth Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2012 – 15: Priorities*

Priority 1: Preventing young people from becoming homeless or from living in unsuitable accommodation

Priority 2: Encourage young people to develop positive relationships

Priority 3: Encourage and assist young people to live in safe environments

Priority 4: Enable young people to grow in confidence, strength, self esteem and skills. Help young people to enjoy life.

OUTCOME: There is a clear pathway of housing options and accommodation available for young people

Action No	Actions	Links	Measure/Output	Delivery
3.15	Support & facilitate the development of the Beach Hotel to provide the West Somerset Hub. Links to Homelessness Strategy - Action 10: Preventing young people from becoming homeless by creating a single point of access (HUB)	Somerset Homelessness Strategy – Action 10	<i>HUB established – Dec 2013</i>	Homeless Strategy Action Plan
3.16	Implement and deliver the P2I -Links to Somerset Homelessness Strategy Action 10 (as above): Work within schools and colleges to provide young people with information on what to do in a housing crisis	Service Plan Somerset Coast YMCA	<i>Number of P2I advice sessions delivered to schools and colleges-Jan 2014</i>	P2I Dashboard WS Service Plan

Report Number: WSC4/14
Presented by: Cllr Keith Turner
Author of the Report: Ian Timms, Corporate Manager Housing, Welfare and Economy
Contact Details:
 Tel. No. Direct Line 01984 635271
 Email: itimms@westsomerset.gov.uk

Report to a Meeting of: Cabinet
To be Held on: 8th January 2014
Date Entered on Executive Forward Plan Or Agreement for Urgency Granted: 5th December 2013

TOBACCO DECLARATION

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To outline the issues relating to tobacco and health.
- 1.2 Cabinet consider recommending that Council sign the Tobacco Declaration attached as Appendix A of this report.

2. CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 None identified for this report.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Cabinet recommend that Council sign the Tobacco Declaration in line with the request from the Health and Wellbeing Board.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
Council fails to contribute to countywide approach on Health and Wellbeing especially the linked impacts of smoking	4	3	12
<i>Sign Declaration</i> <i>Develop clear action plan to address all health concerns</i>	3	3	9

The scoring of the risks identified in the above table has been based on the scoring matrix. Each risk has been assessed and scored both before the mitigation measures have been actioned and after they have.

5. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 5.1 **The Impact of Smoking.** Every year in England more than 80,000 people die from smoking related diseases. This is more than the combined total of the next six causes of

preventable deaths, including alcohol and drugs misuse. Smoking accounts for one third of all deaths from respiratory disease, over one quarter of all deaths from cancer, and about one seventh of all deaths from heart disease. On average a smoker loses 10 years of life. The earlier you quit, the less life you lose.

- 5.2 **Reducing smoking in our communities significantly increases household incomes and benefits the local economy.** The annual cost of smoking to the UK national economy has been estimated at £13.7 billion. A smoker consuming a pack of twenty cigarettes a day will spend around £2,500 a year on their habit. Based on 2009 prices, poorer smokers proportionately spend five times as much of their weekly household budget on smoking than do richer smokers. If poorer smokers quit they are more likely to spend the money they save in their local communities.
- 5.3 **Reducing smoking amongst the most disadvantaged in our communities is the single most important means of reducing health inequalities.** About half of all smokers in England work in routine and manual occupations. Workers in manual and routine jobs are twice as likely to smoke as those in managerial and professional roles. The poorer and more disadvantaged you are, the more likely you are to smoke and as a result to suffer smoking-related disease. Ill-health caused by smoking is therefore much more common amongst the poorest and most disadvantaged in society.
- 5.4 **Smoking is an addiction largely taken up by children and young people.** Two thirds of smokers start before the age of 18, and across the UK more than 200,000 children aged between 11 and 15 start to smoke every year, even though it is illegal to sell cigarettes to anyone below the age of 18. Two thirds of smokers say they began before they were legally old enough to buy cigarettes. Research shows that by the age of 20, four fifths of smokers regret they ever started. Growing up around smoke puts children at a major health disadvantage in life. Children exposed to tobacco smoke are at much greater risk of cot death, meningitis, lung infections and ear disease, resulting in around 10,000 hospital admissions each year.
- 5.5 **Smoking is an epidemic created and sustained by the tobacco industry.** The tobacco industry (outside China) is dominated by four multinationals, Japan Tobacco International and Imperial Tobacco (which together account for 85% of the UK market), British American Tobacco and Philip Morris International. These firms are some of the most profitable in the world: the global tobacco market is worth about £450 billion a year.
- 5.6 The tobacco industry needs to recruit 200,000 smokers a year in the UK to maintain current levels of consumption, replacing those smokers who have quit or who have died from diseases related to their addiction. The great majority of these new smokers will be under 18 years old. Although tobacco advertising is now banned in the UK, the tobacco multinationals use packaging of their products to try to attract young people in general, with specific brands aimed at target groups such as young women. The illicit trade in tobacco funds the activities of organised criminal gangs and gives children access to cheap tobacco. HM Revenue and Customs estimate that in 2010/11, the illicit market in cigarettes accounted for about 9% of the UK market, and the illicit market in hand-rolled tobacco accounted for about 38% of the UK market. The total amount of revenue lost to the Exchequer was estimated at £1.20 billion for cigarettes and £0.66 billion for hand-rolled tobacco. (All figures are mid-range estimates).
- 5.7 **Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.** The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is the world's first public health treaty, negotiated through the World Health Organisation. It has been ratified by more than 170 countries, including the UK. Key provisions include support for: price and tax measures to reduce the demand for tobacco products; public protection from exposure to tobacco smoke; regulation of the contents of tobacco products; controlling tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship; measures to reduce tobacco dependence and promote cessation; tackle illicit trade in tobacco products;

and end sales to children. Article 5.3 commits Parties to protecting their public health policies from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry and the UK has explicitly committed to live up to this obligation in chapter 10 of the Tobacco Control Plan for England.

5.8 **Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control.** The Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control (Appendix A) is a response to the enormous and ongoing damage smoking does to our communities. It is a commitment to take action and a statement about a local authority's dedication to protecting local communities from the harm caused by smoking. Further, it is an opportunity for local leadership. The best way to tackle smoking is through a comprehensive approach working with all partners. The Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control can be a catalyst for local action showing the way for partners both inside and outside the local councils. This is a cross-party Declaration built on the same principles as the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change which is now endorsed by over 300 councils across the country. There is strong cross party consensus on tobacco control with every major party signed up to a comprehensive approach to reduce smoking. Everything contained in the Declaration has previously been committed to at a national level by all political parties. The Declaration is also strongly supported by the wider public health community including the Trading Standards Association, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and the Association of Directors of Public Health as well as Public Health England, the Public Health Minister and the Chief Medical Officer.

5.9 **It is also necessary to protect local policy from the tobacco industry.** Tobacco companies have a long record of attempting to influence council policies. In England they have:

- Sponsored schools and museums.
- Paid for industry branded smoking shelters on council property.
- Provided staff and funding and sniffer dogs for joint work on illicit tobacco. These campaigns have focussed on counterfeit and "cheap white" brands rather than main stream branded products sold without tax.
- Worked through front campaigns such as "Love where you live". Supporting environmental campaigns is a great strategy for companies that produce a large proportion of street litter. It has also been a way of distributing industry branded giveaways such as portable ash trays.
- Used subsidiaries to arrange meetings with members and officers on local harm reduction policies.

When they cannot divert local policies in their favour they will seek to delay and dilute their implementation. Previously secret industry papers released in court talk of "throwing sand in the gears" of health policy. Under the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, countries have pledged to protect health policy from the commercial interests of the tobacco industry. Local authorities are also subject to this treaty, but policies on how to ensure local compliance are rare. By signing the Declaration councils are reinforcing their existing obligations and sending a message that they will protect policies from tobacco industry lobbying.

5.10 Councils which sign up to the Declaration are committing to taking action on smoking, and will develop plans in partnership to reduce smoking prevalence, monitor progress and publish the results. They will also need to ensure that the tobacco industry is not able to exert influence. This will require reviews of any relevant work programmes in which the tobacco industry has an involvement, such as the Keep Britain Tidy Group's 'Love Where You Live' campaign, sponsored by Imperial Tobacco, and any involvement with the tobacco industry by Trading Standards in relation to the illegal trade, as well as ensuring there are safeguards against direct or indirect tobacco company influence through lobbying or other means.

6. FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The resource implications relate to working with the Health and Wellbeing Board and identifying any specific actions that are required as a result of signing the Declaration.
- 6.2 It is intended to create a West Somerset Action Plan for Health inequalities and tackling smoking prevalence will be included within this approach.

7. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS

- 7.1 As the Council is a key organisation with regard to tackling Health and Wellbeing signing this non statutory Declaration action does commit the Council to action.
- 7.2 There appear currently to be no significant resource implications. However, Cabinet and Council will need to ensure that in setting the 2014/15 budget and associated service plans that this Declaration is taken into account.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

Members need to demonstrate that they have consciously thought about the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty as part of the decision making process.

The three aims the authority **must** have due regard for:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

- 8.1 There are no specific issues identified that are associated with this report.

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are some links to tobacco smuggling and avoidance of tax that relate to this objective but these are wider implications for the community as a whole. There is no clear link to specific issues in West Somerset.

10. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Housing and Environmental Health PAG considered the Declaration and considered that the Portfolio Holder should take it forwards to Cabinet and Council for signing.

11. ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 In signing the Declaration there will be indirect links around.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The main implications relate to the wider impacts of smoking on the built environment.

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The signing of this Declaration is voluntary so any implications flow from any decision that Council may make to sign up to it.

Local Government Declaration on Tobacco Control

We acknowledge that:

- Smoking is the single greatest cause of premature death and disease in our communities;
- Reducing smoking in our communities significantly increases household incomes and benefits the local economy;
- Reducing smoking amongst the most disadvantaged in our communities is the single most important means of reducing health inequalities;
- Smoking is an addiction largely taken up by children and young people, two thirds of smokers start before the age of 18;
- Smoking is an epidemic created and sustained by the tobacco industry, which promotes uptake of smoking to replace the 80,000 people its products kill in England every year; and
- The illicit trade in tobacco funds the activities of organised criminal gangs and gives children access to cheap tobacco.

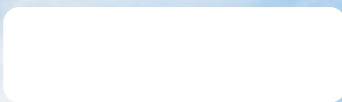
As local leaders in public health we welcome the:

- Opportunity for local government to lead local action to tackle smoking and secure the health, welfare, social, economic and environmental benefits that come from reducing smoking prevalence;
- Commitment by the government to live up to its obligations as a party to the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and in particular to protect the development of public health policy from the vested interests of the tobacco industry; and
- Endorsement of this declaration by the Department of Health, Public Health England and professional bodies.

We commit our Council from this dateto:

- Act at a local level to reduce smoking prevalence and health inequalities and to raise the profile of the harm caused by smoking to our communities;
- Develop plans with our partners and local communities to address the causes and impacts of tobacco use;
- Participate in local and regional networks for support;
- Support the government in taking action at national level to help local authorities reduce smoking prevalence and health inequalities in our communities;
- Protect our tobacco control work from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry by not accepting any partnerships, payments, gifts and services, monetary or in kind or research funding offered by the tobacco industry to officials or employees;
- Monitor the progress of our plans against our commitments and publish the results; and
- Publicly declare our commitment to reducing smoking in our communities by joining the Smokefree Action Coalition, the alliance of organisations working to reduce the harm caused by tobacco.

Signatories



Leader of Council



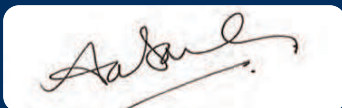
Chief Executive



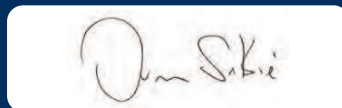
Director of Public Health

Endorsed by

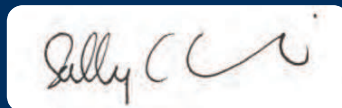
Anna Soubry, Public Health Minister, Department of Health



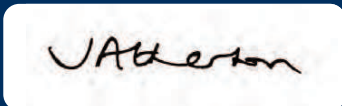
Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive, Public Health England



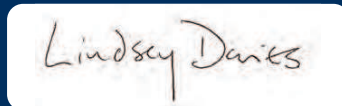
Professor Dame Sally Davies, Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health



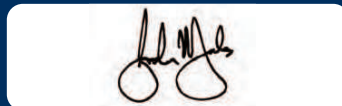
Dr Janet Atherton, President, Association of Directors of Public Health



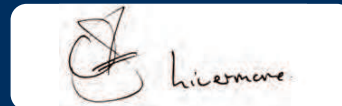
Dr Lindsey Davies, President, UK Faculty of Public Health



Graham Jukes, Chief Executive, Chartered Institute of Environmental Health



Leon Livermore, Chief Executive, Trading Standards Institute



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Report Number: WSC 6/14

Presented by: Ian Timms, Corporate Manager Housing Welfare and Economy

Authors of the Report: Corinne Matthews – Economic Regeneration Manager & Steve Perkins – Principal Recovery Officer

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Email: cmatthews@westsomerset.gov.uk
srperkins@westsomerset.gov.uk

Report to a Meeting of: Cabinet

To be Held on: Wednesday 8th January 2014

Date Entered on Executive Forward Plan Or Agreement for Urgency Granted: n/a

NON RECOVERY OF DEBTS IN RESPECT OF SW APPRENTICESHIP COMPANY AND DUNSTER HOLDINGS LTD

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To seek cabinet approval in accordance with the Financial Regulations to authorise individual write offs in excess of £5,000

2. CONTRIBUTION TO CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 No contribution to corporate priorities.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To agree to write off an unpaid invoice for £13,024 and an unpaid Non Domestic Rates account of £14,542.31. The Companies have either gone into administration or being wound up therefore no further recovery action can be taken and both debts are deemed uncollectable.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

Risk Matrix

Description	Likelihood	Impact	Overall
No risks identified			

5. SW APPRENTICESHIP COMPANY - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 5.1 In 2010 funding was drawn down from the Local Strategic Partnership (£50,000) Working Neighbourhood Funds (£20,000) and matched with a successful bid to the Local Action in Rural Communities programme (£50,000) which amounted to 42% of total project cost to run a three part apprenticeship / graduate placement scheme called Starting Out and Lifting Off.

- 5.2 Initially three separate organisations were commissioned to deliver the activity, namely SW Apprenticeship Company (SWAC), Somerset Skills & Learning and Exeter University. Three separate contracts were issued. The reason for this was because three different models were being piloted, which included hosted apprentices via SWAC, traditional apprentices managed by SS&L and graduate placements managed by Exeter University.
- 5.3 The SWAC model was trialled due to local intelligence informing us that whilst small businesses wanted to employ apprentices, a barrier to this was the availability of seasonal employment / or the perceived levels of 'red tape' that came with an employee.
- 5.4 The National Apprenticeship Service recommended Triangle Fusion a Gloucester based company trading as South West Apprenticeship Service as an established and reputable service provider for this model. Therefore a contract was issued to SWAC that allowed for up to a maximum of £36,500 to be drawn down for the placement of a maximum of 10 apprentices and included a sum of £3,000 for management, publicity and marketing of the programme.
- 5.5 The final report for LARC in relation to both apprenticeship programmes is attached as an appendix and provides more detail in relation to the final costs and outputs of the project, which was, despite the issue with this debt, ultimately a very successful programme run over 3 years.
- 5.6 The Starting Out / Lifting off project started in late 2010, but was slow getting off the ground, with all of the contracted organisations finding it difficult to recruit placements. Finding employers was not so difficult and during mid 2011 SWAC had six vacancies available for recruitment, and SS&L similar. SWAC invoiced us at the beginning of September 2011 for 6 placements and associated costs totalling £19,876. The invoice was passed for payment, due to the requirement of the funders LARC needing to see defrayal of the payment before the end of September to allow for 42% of cost to be claimed as grant. Once the electronic claim has been checked and agreed, LARC request copies of placement contracts / invoices / confirmation of payments / timesheets for staff costs etc. This information was requested from SWAC. Unfortunately SWAC only provided information pertaining to two apprentices in employment, and whilst £3,000 worth of invoices and timesheets relating to management costs and publicity / marketing was provided, SWAC were unable to provide all the fully comprehensive information requested by LARC. The outcome of this was that LARC would only accept £6,852 of expenditure.
- 5.7 Despite repeated requests of SWAC to provide more information, this was not forthcoming therefore WSC issued SWAC with an invoice for £13,024 to refund the over payment.
- 5.8 Recovery of the above mentioned debt commenced with an original invoice (number 12298) being sent on 18 October 2011 for £19,876. An amount of £6,852 was credit noted on 24 April 2012 leaving a reduced balance of £13,024 to pursue. No payments were ever made despite the issue of a Reminder on 21 November 2011 and Final Notice on 5 December 2011. The case has been on a permanent hold since we were advised by Burton Sweet Corporate Recovery that the company Triangle Social Enterprise Ltd had been placed in administration on 13 January 2012 and therefore no further recovery action was possible. A proof of debt form for the £13,024 has been submitted to the administrator on 5 September 2012. However it would appear that action was commenced by H M Revenues and Customs who took walking possession of office furniture and equipment I am not envisaging any dividend being paid to unsecured/non preferential creditors. A write off is recommended and as with any case if a dividend is ever received the amount received will be written back.

DUNSTER HOLDINGS LTD - BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 5.9 Investigations in November 2012 revealed that Dunster Holdings Limited was incorporated on 15 Nov 2001 and is located in Somerset. The company's status is 'Winding Up Order', with one director. Grahame Miles James Bond is Dunster Holdings Limited's sole shareholder. They have no known group companies. Dunster Holdings Limited have total assets of £4,300,000 plus total liabilities of £16,390,505. They owe £7,122,470 to creditors and are due £566,173 from trade debtors. As of their last financial statement, they had £25,108 in cash reserves. Their book value is £-5,526,798, and the value of their shareholders' fund is £-5,526,798. Dunster Holdings Ltd originally went into a Voluntary Arrangement on 17 April 2012 and a claim was made to David Rubin & Partners LLP, however, due to non-compliance this arrangement was terminated.
- 5.91 Despite sending prompt bills, reminders and final notices no payments were ever forthcoming. This resulted in Summonses being issued and Liability Orders being awarded on 20 April 2012 and 1 May 2013. Bailiff action followed, however, neither Ross and Roberts Ltd or Bristow and Sutor managed to obtain any payments. Further investigations revealed Her Majesties Revenues and Customs were owed nearly half a million pounds therefore they had made a Winding Up Order against the company on 11 February 2013. A claim was submitted to the Official Receiver on 6 August 2013. A write off is recommended and as with any case if a dividend is ever received the amount received will be written back, although this is very unlikely due to the millions the company owe.

6. FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 In relation to the SWAC write-off, there is no direct financial impact to the Council's revenue budget, as this project was directly funded utilising Working Neighbourhood and Local Strategic Partnership funding.
- 6.2 In relation to the NDR debt the Council bears 20% of the actual debt.

7. SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTS

- 7.1 In accordance with Financial Regulations, debts in excess of £5,000 require write-off by Cabinet. All avenues of recovery have been pursued prior to being recommended for write-off.

8. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

Members need to demonstrate that they have consciously thought about the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty as part of the decision making process.

The three aims the authority **must** have due regard for:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

- 8.1 None

9. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None

10. CONSULTATION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11. ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None

13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None

**AUTHORISATION TO WRITE-OFF IRRECOVERABLE DEBT(S) OWED TO
WEST SOMERSET DISTRICT COUNCIL OVER £5,000**

APPENDIX A

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19 December 2013

TO: CABINET

1 From: Steve Plenty – Deputy 151 Officer

2 System: Non-Domestic Rates Council Tax Homelessness
(mark relevant box) Housing Benefit Debtor Corporate Debtor Other

3 Debtor(s) Details:
Name/Business DUNSTER HOLDINGS LTD IN LIQUIDATION
Address TUDOR HOUSE
HALSWELL PARK
GOATHURST
SOMERSET
TA5 2DH

Address of Debt ALFOXTON PARK HOTEL
HOLFORD
BRIDGWATER

4 Ref No:

5 Dates/Periods relating to Debt:


6 Total amount of debt(s) less any court costs to be written-off (excl VAT): **£14,395.31**
(£7,577.50 2011 & £6,817.81 2012)

7 Court Cost to be written –off (if applicable) **£147.00**
(£72.00 2011 & £75.00 2012)

8 Recovery Action taken:

9 Brief Reason(s) for Write-Off:

10 I recommend that the above debt(s) be written-off as irrecoverable

Signed Steve Plenty: 

Date: 19 December 2013

11 Date agreed at Cabinet: Minute Number: CAB.....

Official Use Only Action taken by Officer/Section Manager: Write Off Code 511-17 (Costs 812-99)
Actioned by Date
Authorised by Date ¹⁰⁹.....
(If applicable move summons cases to settled)