



Housing & Accommodation Strategy UPDATE 2008

Housing and Accommodation Strategy



2004 - 2007



Supported Housing Residents of Yeovil Trinity Foyer



Renovating The Old Glove Factory, Crewkerne



Providing Homes in Rural Communities



Developing Housing Sectors



Sustaining our Rural Communities



Regulating Houses in Multiple Occupation

Balancing Housing Markets

This document is available in large print or on tape for people with a visual impairment. If you require translation of the key points of the strategy this can be arranged. Contact (01935) 462298.

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2007-2008
Neighbourhood and
Community Champions:
The Role of Elected Members
2006-2007
Improving Rural Services
Empowering Communities
2005-2006
Getting Closer to Communities



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Introduction -

Since the 2004-2007 Housing & Accommodation Strategy

Our last complete Housing & Accommodation Strategy document was produced in consultation with a range of stakeholders and partners set out the council's housing strategy from 2004 to 2007. The strategy was always seen as a working document, designed to help inform our partners, stakeholders and residents about our ideas and proposals to meet our strategic housing objectives.

When we published the last Strategy document we intended to refresh and review it in time to produce a successor 2008-2011 document. Our 2008 review is now due. However, we have agreed with the other four Local Housing Authorities in Somerset to work together on a County-wide Housing Strategy, building on the Strategic Housing Partnership Statement first produced in 2004.

The current Plan for the County-wide Housing Strategy is to produce a consultation draft during 2008, to be launched at our County-wide Housing Strategy day in September 2008, which, following extensive consultation shall emerge as a fully-fledged Strategy document for adoption by each of the partner Local Housing Authorities in the late spring/early summer of 2009.

It is envisaged that the County-wide strategy will be informed by the most recent data, some of which is currently being gathered, and contain a 'scheme of derogation' outlining the local variations in context, policy and practice.

For that reason we do not now intend to publish another fully fledged Housing and Accommodation Strategy for South Somerset alone. Instead we are issuing this document to bridge the gap. It is important to stress that this is merely an update document.

However, we do intend to set out:

- What has been achieved since the publication of the last full Strategy document
- What else has changed since that publication
- What the circumstances are that we now face
- What are our revised priorities and our reasoning for revision?
- What we intend to do next, at least over the year prior to the County-wide Strategy
- What we currently anticipate the County-wide Strategy will cover



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Summary of the main changes

Issue	2004-2007 Strategy	Since then
Household applicants on the South Somerset Housing Register	There were just over 3,500 at the time of publication.	In November 2007 this had risen to over 7,000.
House price affordability ratio	Average house prices were 7.8 times the average salary in the district (Fordham report).	Affordability ratios have risen. Estimated to be 11.7 by March 2006 (NHF)
Local Plan targets for affordable housing through planning gain.	The Local Plan had set a target for additional affordable homes of 185 per annum to 2011 to meet the overall need of 2,065 homes.	An annualised figure of 123 dwellings per annum for the period April 2004 -March 2007 was achieved, and this in terms of permissions, not completions.
Homelessness: coping with the numbers of households at crisis point.	Our focus was on reducing our over-reliance on B&B. During 2002/03 the council had spent £770k on B & B accommodation, storage and travel costs for homeless households. In addition we wished to develop a mixed portfolio of flexible temporary accommodation solutions.	B&B was reduced from its peak of over 60 households in the summer of 2002 to a handful of cases at the end of 2007. Our focus is now on reducing our reliance on other forms of temporary accommodation. As at March 2008 we had an outstanding commitment towards 412 statutorily homeless households.
Homelessness: Prevention rather than cure	In accordance with the spirit of the 2002 Act we wanted to intervene more 'upstream' and prevent the point of personal housing crisis from occurring wherever possible	Whilst the demography has not changed, the number of official approaches under the Act has fallen. Our intent now is to push the front line further out (through non-housing visiting professionals) in order to effect further upstream prevention.
Choice Based Lettings (CBL)	We set out to identify the CBL model for the district	We bid for and obtained central government funding (£100,000) for the introduction of a cross boundary scheme and have a County-wide partnership involving all five local housing authorities and all significantly sized RSL partners. The current implementation date is December 2008.
IT system	Having taken back the homelessness and housing register function in-house during 2004, we had set out to procure new IT to cover our	The CBL partnership led to the five Local Housing Authorities agreeing to procure the same IT for all strategic housing functions. Whilst this has delayed our



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	new situation.	implementation and made life a little more difficult for us in the interim, the longer-term benefits clearly outweigh the short-term pain.
Council structure	We had a strategic Management Team (SMT) consisting of the Managing Director and two Strategic Directors. The Corporate Business management Team (BMT) was made up of SMT plus nine Group Managers and four Area Development Managers	We now have a Management Board consisting of the Chief Executive, four Corporate Directors, Solicitor and Head of Finance. They are joined by a further seventeen Heads of Service to form the Senior Management Forum (SMF)
Corporate priorities	The Council had six corporate priorities, one of which was: "To develop affordable housing and thus reduce homelessness and the reliance upon bed and breakfast accommodation"	We have adopted a Corporate Plan (2005-2012), which sets out five corporate aims, which break down into nineteen objectives. Objective Twelve is to "Achieve an annual increase of 10 per cent in the number of cases in which priority housing is met" and Objective Thirteen is to "Achieve an appropriate balance of new housing provision by 2011"
South Somerset Together (Local Strategic Partnership)	The LSP Board decided it was going to update the sustainable community strategy	During 2007 extensive work was undertaken to collate 'bottom-up' community plans, develop a robust data evidence base, links to key strategies including the Economic Development Strategy and the emerging Local Development Framework and links to the emerging Local Area Agreement 2008. The Local Strategic Partnership's top priority for two consecutive years has been affordable housing. The LSP has funded several initiatives including a survey of available land and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
Housing Capital Expenditure	Between 1999 & 2003 equated to 37% of Council's total capital expenditure	Between 2004 & 2008 equates to 23% of Council's total capital expenditure

A schedule of key documents & the relevant web site addresses is listed at **Appendix C**



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Part 1: The Strategic Approach in South Somerset

1.1 Background & Context

1.1.1 South Somerset. South Somerset forms much of the eastern side of Somerset; comprising nearly a third of the county with a population of around 155,000 covering an area of 370 square miles, making it one of the largest districts in England. It consists of a mixture of both sparsely inhabited rural areas and a network of ten market towns. A third of the population live in the principal town of Yeovil, yet over 40% live in settlements of fewer than 2,500 people. Population density is only 1.6 people per hectare, compared to the England and Wales average of 3.4.

1.1.2 People and Quality of Life. The population of the area has grown by 1% a year for the last 10 years, and is expected to reach around 180,000 people by 2011. In addition, the proportion of elderly is rising steadily (with 25% over 60yrs); with 51% working age individuals (20-59 yrs) compared to the national average of 54%; and a slightly lower than average population of under 19yrs (24%). This demographic profile impacts on factors such as health and mobility; 32.3% of households have a person with a long-term limiting illness (Health and Social Needs Analysis 2004). With a resident ethnic minority population of 1.1%, South Somerset has recent experience of a growing population of economic migrants from Portugal, Poland and other European countries, in addition to established minority groups such as Gypsies and Travellers. Despite a low unemployment rate, with 0.9% claiming Job Seekers Allowance compared with 1.3% for the south west and 2.2% for the UK (NOMIS 2007), wages and educational qualifications are lower than the national average. The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004, shows that several wards in Yeovil and Chard are in the most deprived 20% in UK and 11% of children under 16 live in low-income households. 13.1% of rural households do not have access to a car.

1.1.3 Economy and the effect on the Housing Market. We have a low-skill, low wage economy based on manufacturing. SSDC has worked in partnership, especially through South Somerset Together's (LSP) Yeovil Vision (public, private and voluntary sector partnership) to attract inward investment to the area especially in technology and other high skill based industries building on the success of local businesses such as Augusta Westland. Any success in improving economic vitality will impact on the housing market, with the relative earnings keeping the market buoyant, but continuing the existing polarity for those on low wages. At the most extreme this can be seen in village housing where sections of the community with larger disposable incomes (including inward migration from London and the south east) are able to buy in to desirable villages where local lower paid workers (e.g. those in agricultural or manufacturing industries) are priced out and forced to move to more urban settlements. A balanced housing market can only be achieved through a vibrant mixed economy (in terms of industries, skills base and range of earnings).



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1.1.4 South Somerset Sub-Regional Housing Market. The work carried out by DTZ Peda on behalf of the Regional Housing Body to identify and examine the sub-regional housing markets, is accepted by the regional agencies (Housing Corporation, Regional Assembly etc) as definitive. In allocating funding the Housing Corporation has taken the boundaries to fit Local Housing Authority boundaries. As a result, South Somerset District Council is seen as a sub-regional housing market in it's own right (Torbay being the only other district in the south west region). SSDC recognises that the DTZ 'fuzzy' boundary of our sub-regional housing market includes areas of Dorset especially Sherborne. The house price income ratio in South Somerset is 11.7 compared to 10.7 for England. Re-assessment work is currently underway in conjunction with three other Districts in Somerset, the new Strategic Housing Market assessment (SHMA) covering both the South Somerset and Taunton Sub-Regional Housing Market Areas.

1.1.5 The District Council (SSDC). The Council's vision is to be "*an organisation consistently delivering and improving quality of life for all*". This is ambitious given it serves a dispersed and largely rural population with pockets of deprivation but it believes that this vision is being achieved by working together with partners and communities. This is reflected in the concept of 'Enable-Partner-Deliver' that is stated in the Council's mission and is a bold statement of how the Council works with communities and partners to seize opportunities, realise ambitions and secure improvement. The Audit Commission (AC) Letter 2007 acknowledged '*The Council demonstrates strong community leadership. It has a good understanding of its local area and has set out a strategic vision and a set of clear and challenging ambitions for the locality*'. In addition, the Council has achieved national recognition for its overall approach to getting closer to communities by winning three Beacon Awards in consecutive years.

1.1.6 Place Shaping. The Council and its partners, through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) share a common purpose that is driven by the community. During the early part of 2008 we have consulted on the new Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and begun the process of consultation on the Core Strategy within the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Issues and Options paper). Developing these key strategic documents in tandem will ensure clear linkages, not least in the area of developing a more balanced housing market. We shall also be revising and updating our Corporate Plan during 2008, influenced by the input of the community through the SCS.

1.1.7 Key Facts about Housing in South Somerset. The following points impact significantly across the whole of the district, including Yeovil and the market towns, but disproportionately on the 72% of people living in our rural communities. The "Top Ten" factors that have historically affected the Housing Market in South Somerset are:

- The low wage economy compared to high house prices (house price income ratio in South Somerset is 11.7 compared to 10.7 for England [2006]);



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- Inward migration; primarily from London and the south east which includes people retiring to the area and people who work further east but wish to live in the south west (facilitated by good rail links with London on both the Waterloo and Paddington lines); but also migrant workers mainly from Europe;
- Right to Buy has resulted in 4664 homes lost from housing stock since 1979;
- Under occupation in all sectors as a result of an above average ageing population (with 25% over 60yrs);
- The "leeching" of young people from the district due to a lack of affordable accommodation;
- The challenges of travel to work and access to services in such a large rural area (13.1% of rural households do not have access to a car);
- The additional challenges of developing affordable homes in rural areas;
- Planning Gain targets that favour the provision of affordable housing on large-scale developments;
- Urban and rural deprivation; the latter sometimes in very small pockets the statistical evidence for which is often masked;
- 1.1% of homes in South Somerset (766) are unoccupied furnished properties, which includes second homes; empty properties between lets and holiday let properties (often located in rural villages). It should be noted that this represents the reported figure and may underestimate the reality.

1.1.8 Stock transfer & Decent Homes Standard. In 1999, the Council took the decision to pursue large-scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) to South Somerset Homes (SSH). Although the housing stock transfer took place before the Decent Homes Standard (DHS), the capital receipt accurately reflected the stock condition survey carried out and allowed sufficient funding for the upgrading of the stock. SSH has since successfully embarked on a programme of improvements and modernisation that will end in 2011. Notable is SSH's policy to demolish and replace pre-cast reinforced concrete (PRC) housing at higher density, with the assurance that all will meet DHS by 2010.

1.1.9 Our key challenges now:

- The scale of housing need (the Common Housing Register has grown by 143% since 2001);
- The need to strengthen SSDC's Planning Policies to improve the delivery of Planning Gain;
- The reductions in central and regional budgets (for example in relation to the Supporting People and Private Sector Housing budgets);
- Understanding the implications of recent increases in migrant workers, primarily from Portugal, Poland and other EU states;
- Ensuring the Local Strategic Partnership and Sustainable Community Strategy continue to prioritise affordable housing, and to work collaboratively in Somerset to achieve the housing targets of the LAA;
- Longer term resourcing both in terms of capital and staff capacity.



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1.2 Progress against Targets set out in our Action Plan 2004 - 2007

Action	Milestone	Target Date	Completed?	Comment
Enable the provision of 800 new affordable homes from 1999 -2006	174 units of affordable accommodation in 04/05	31 st March 2005	√	Target exceeded - 837 homes delivered during 1999-2006
	211 units of affordable accommodation in 04/06	31 st March 2006	√	
	Enable 4 rural exception schemes	31 st December 2006	X	
	Undertake 4 new rural housing studies	31 st December 2006	√	
	Evaluate the number of RSL schemes achieving secure by design award; review approach	31 st March 2006	X	Evaluation delayed due to other priorities
45% of all new affordable housing, net of key sites identified in the Local Plan, to be delivered on previously developed land	Introduce a system to monitor the implementation of the Local Plan	31 st March 2006	√	
	Identify all land in district which may have been contaminated	31 st March 2006	√	
Complete new Housing Needs Survey	Agree outline specification	30 th Sept 2005	√	This survey is referred to as the 'Ark report' and was completed on a county-wide basis; we are now in the process of updating this, across the two sub-regional housing markets with a new SHMA.
	Tender survey	31 st December 2004	√	
	Agree methodology with provider	1 st February 2005	√	
	Complete survey	1 st June 2005	√	
	Review level of rough sleeping in district	1 st Sept 2007	X	This task postponed due to other priorities
Assess the housing needs of key workers	Include key worker element in Housing Needs Survey	1 st June 2005	√	Government definition of key worker too restrictive
	Assess and report on findings	1 st September 2005	X	



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Action	Milestone	Target Date	Completed?	Comment
Develop a system to monitor implementation of the Decent Homes Standard	Work with RSLs and private sector to implement a robust monitoring system	31 st March 2005	X	We successfully argued that HC should monitor all RSLs through RSR.
Produce Private Sector Housing Strategy	Produce a draft for consultation	1 st August 2004	√	Completed on target and a 2 nd iteration now completed
	Report to Health & Housing Policy Panel	30 th September 2004	√	
	Publish Strategy	1 st December 2004	√	
Improving energy efficiency	At least 200 private sector homes improve per annum	31 st March 2005	√	428 = 2006/07 613 = 2007/08
Provide a responsive handyman service	Assist at least 300 clients	31 st March 2005	√	619 = 2006/07 784 = 2007/08
	Publish the Home Aid annual review	31 st March 2005	√	
Developing our Empty Homes Strategy	Bringing into use at least 10 properties which have been empty for more than six months	31 st March 2005	√	12 = 2006/2007 10 = 2007/2008
	Relaunch the Landlords' Forum	31 st March 2005	√	
Raising standards in the private sector	Prepare licensing scheme for Houses of Multiple Occupation	No date stated	√	
	Inspect at least 50 HMOs per annum	31 st March 2005	√	50 = 2006/2007 56 = 2007/2008
Target 200 properties for the Home Maintenance scheme	50 in Area North	31 st March 2005	X	These was not completed due to lack of resources
	50 in Area South	31 st March 2005	X	
	50 in Area East	31 st March 2005	X	
	50 in Area West	31 st March 2005	X	
Review the Public Sector Grants Policy	Produce draft for consultation	31 st March 2004	√	
	Publish agreed policy	1 st July 2004	√	
	Implement the equity release scheme in conjunction with Wessex Reinvestment Trust	31 st December 2004	√	



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1.2.1 The above chart shows progress against those tasks identified in the action plan published in the 2004-2007 Housing Strategy. In addition we also accomplished the following:

- The Housing Register and Homelessness functions were returned to direct provision by the council with the ending of contracts in November and May 2004 respectively.
- The Housing Advice Centre opened in June 2005 and is situated in the town centre making it more accessible. This in itself encourages the public to make an early approach for advice and assistance before housing crisis occurs.
- In June 2002 we had 60+ families in Bed and Breakfast and with our on-going preventative approach, we had managed to reduce these levels, with no families being in bed and breakfast for over 6 weeks at the end of the 2006 calendar year and typically only 1 or 2 families at any one time.
- With our pro active prevention team and our multi agency approach, we managed to reduce homelessness approaches by more than 75% in the four year period June 2002 to June 2006. This reached as low as 22 in the quarter ending September 2006 but has steadily risen again since, reaching 75 in the same quarter 2007.
- We have also written up new policies and procedures to improve the service we offer and to ensure that money owed is collected where possible.
- The Housing and Accommodation Strategy for the period 2004-2007, subtitled "Balancing Housing Markets", was the first in Somerset to achieve the Fit for Purpose status now required of all local authority Housing Strategies.
- During 2006/07, 227 new social housing properties were delivered through the Social Housing Development Programme, an increase of 74 on the previous year which was itself the highest annual total in recent times. This exceeded the number produced by all the other Local Housing Authorities in Somerset put together.
- Continuing to provide a supply of new social housing has been clearly set within the context of our current Corporate Plan.
- In the last complete bid round to the Housing Corporation, a total of £6.9million was secured for the period 2006-08 for social housing within the district.
- We led the bid that secured £100,000 Government grant to develop Choice Based Lettings across Somerset and have played a pivotal role in the project since, allowing a key member of staff to second to the Project for a two year period.
- Our Welfare Benefits take up work has been highly successful. During the Year 2005/6 we undertook casework for 490 clients, achieving an annual income for clients of £784, 90



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5. In addition clients received a total of £136,707 in Lump Sums. Provisional figures for 2006/07 (as at August 2007) are 342 clients, £543,010 in annual income and £101,310 in Lump Sums [figures subject to confirmation, but lower than previous years due to staffing levels]. We continue to hold The Quality Mark awarded by the national Community Legal Service.

- Since taking direct responsibility for the two residential Gypsy sites in South Somerset (from the County in December 2002), we bid for and received refurbishment grant from Central Government sources in two successive years and changed the nature of the sites. In 2007 a further £ 927,000 was received for provision of additional pitches and other site improvements.
- Since the closure our own control centre some years ago, the Careline service consistently increased client numbers, for example by approx 6.7% during 2005/6, making the operation self supporting and financially viable

1.2.2 However, there have also been some failures and underachievement. In particular a prolonged period of staff absences (for various reasons) led to some tasks being postponed whilst others were prioritised to be achieved within available capacity. Significant 'misses' not listed in the table above are:

- Our pilot Private Sector Leasing scheme with South Somerset Homes was not successful - only 4 properties were achieved
- We have not established outcome based quality monitoring of work at the housing advice centre
- From around November 2007 the use of B&B had begun to rise again with several families breaching the 6 week rule
- Reduced access to private sector tenancies due to prolonged absence of a Private Sector Tenancy Sustainment Officer.

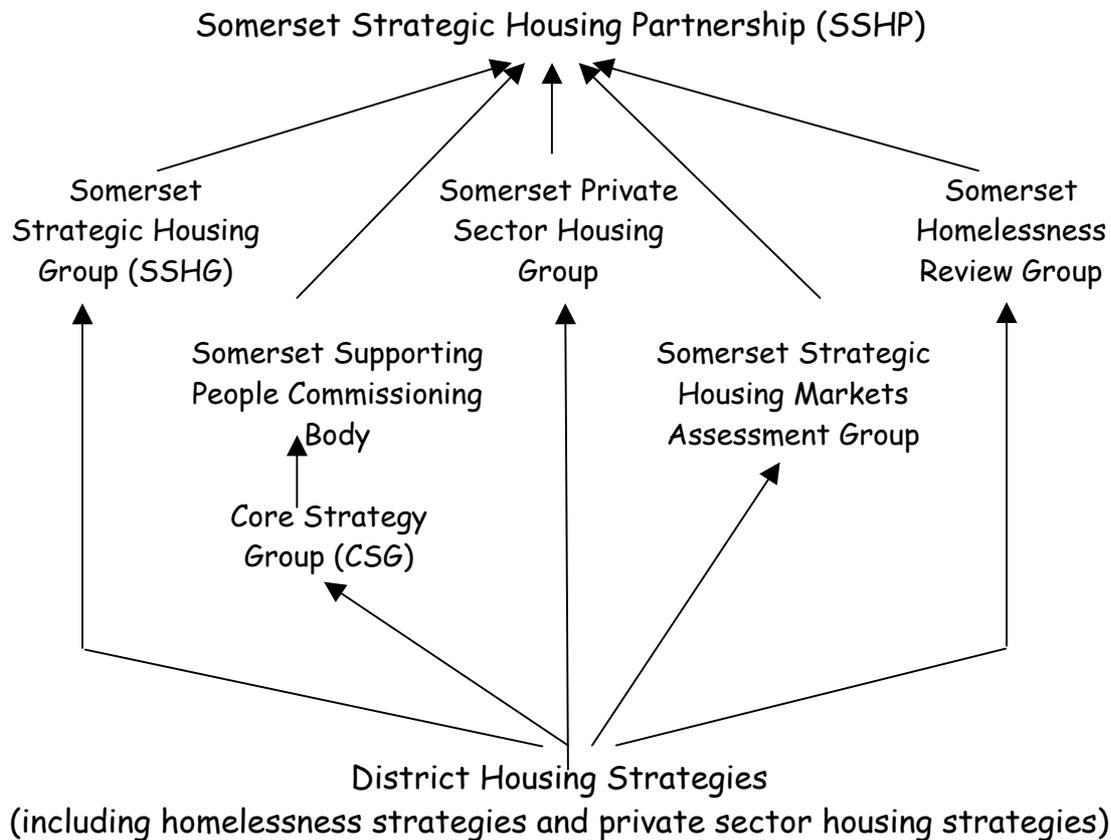
1.3 Sub Regional Context

1.3.1 **Somerset Strategic Housing Group (SSHG)**. Together with the four other district authorities in the county, (Mendip DC, Sedgemoor DC, Taunton Deane BC and West Somerset DC) we are active members of the long established (SSHG). This group works to improve the quality of housing services in the county, to seek additional value for money by working cooperatively on projects and to influence housing policy in the region ensuring that Somerset has a high profile. In 2004 it produced a Somerset Housing Strategy Statement and now plans to replace this, through extensive consultation, with a County-wide Housing Strategy.



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1.3.2 **SSHP (Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership).** This partnership encompasses the SSHG above and, crucially, the relevant portfolio holders as well as representatives from Government Office South West (GOSW), the Housing Corporation, and the County Council.



1.3.3 In recent years the SSHG & SSHP have undertaken and planned the following:

- A county-wide Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment commissioned and carried out in 2006;
- Two county-wide Housing Needs Assessment Projects involving Housing and Planning professionals from the five districts working with the Somerset Supporting People Team. The first of these was completed in January 2006 and is referred to as the Ark Report. The second of these, covering the two sub-regional Housing Market areas of Taunton and South Somerset, is being undertaken by Fordham Research and is referred to elsewhere in this document as the Fordham Report (due Summer 2008);
- Appointed the Somerset Housing Need and Private Sector Research Coordinator, based at Taunton Deane BC and working on behalf of all five Local Housing Authorities;
- The management of the Choice Based Lettings project, known as Homefinder Somerset, one of the largest schemes in the country and the only one to have a common housing register and Lettings policy;
- Related to this is a county-wide Housing IT project, which involves the joint procurement of a single housing needs system for Somerset, the development of consistent policies and procedures with the opportunity for significant synergies in the future, improve customer service and share resources;



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- o The sharing between Somerset Districts of officer expertise to improve delivery and strategy development for example SSDC's joint work with Mendip District Council (MDC) including the Housing Strategy Seminar in 2007;
- o Forming a foundation on which the Somerset Supporting People Commissioning Body was grafted;
- o The development of common Housing Application forms (facilitated through the CBL and Housing Needs IT projects) that ensures that vital housing needs data is collected at the point of application, ensuring consistency across the county;
- o The production of a county-wide Homelessness Strategy (due Summer 2008) and planned county-wide Housing Strategy by May 2009;
- o Coordination of input into the RSS, LAA and Regional Housing Forum;
- o Invited the Improvement and Development Agency for Local Government (I&DeA) to undertake a Peer Review of all Somerset authorities with the aim of identifying the most efficient model for future provision of strategic housing services across the County.

1.3.4. The Somerset Supporting People (SP) Commissioning Body. Supporting People is a programme introduced by the Government in April 2003 that drew together a number of funding streams that provide "Housing-Related Support" to a wide range of vulnerable adults. Although funded nationally the Supporting People programme is administered locally and in Somerset this is through a partnership comprising the County Council, the five District Councils, the Primary Care Trust, the Somerset NHS & Social Care Partnership, and the Avon & Somerset Probation Service. These organisations come together as a Commissioning Body, which oversees the local Supporting People programme. In South Somerset, housing related support is available to a wide range of adults, including, frail elderly, those with physical or sensory disabilities, people with drug problems, single homeless, women at risk of domestic violence, young people (16 years and over) at risk and many more. This was a significant step forward in multi-agency and multi-disciplinary partnership working. The share of the overall budget that relates to services in South Somerset peaked at £6,189,233 in 2004/5 and has fallen to £4,870,699 in 2007/8 (this equates to 26.4% of Somerset's total projected expenditure, an increase/decrease of 0.4% on the previous year) reflecting the county-wide budget reduction. SSDC facilitates a Supported Housing Forum providing "a voice" for the wide range of public, private and voluntary sector organisations contracted to provide supported housing projects. The Core Strategy Group (CSG) is the conduit between providers of supported housing and the SP Commissioning Body.

1.4 Resourcing

1.4.1 Following stock transfer we anticipate capital financing to be largely from useable receipts, which are predominantly the proceeds from sales of former council housing sold under the Preserved Right to Buy (PRTB). PRTB receipts are treated as deferred payments from transfer and are therefore not subject to the pooling arrangements. As time progresses there are a diminishing number of South Somerset Home's tenants who retain the PRTB. The receipt is further reduced by the amount required to compensate the landlord (loss of rental stream) under



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the transfer agreement, which ensures that the exercise of the PRTB does not pose a risk to their business plan. As a result some PRTB sales result in a net loss to the council.

1.4.2 The only other significant internal source of capital subsidy is the grant or sale at reduced value of land owned by the Council. The income foregone below the market value (subject to covenants etc) is effectively equivalent to a capital grant to the same value.

1.4.3 A further source of capital finance is the allocation of commuted sums gained through planning obligations. As our preferred route is for on-site provision of affordable housing, commuted sums are the exception and this source of capital finance is, thus, very limited.

1.4.4 Spending Outcomes 2003-2008

Activity (Grants)	Outturn 2003/04 £'000	Outturn 2004/05 £'000	Outturn 2005/06 £'000	Outturn 2006/07 £'000	Outturn 2007/08 £'000	Budget 2008/09 £'000
Social Housing	*0	897	926	1,210	2,464	2,101
Disabled Facilities	544	536	454	611	670	725
Renovation	0	0	0	0	0	0
Empty Property	79	122	68	85	56	85
Home Repair	84	102	108	97	109	100
Houses in Multiple Occupation	52	29	19	30	52	55
Loan Scheme for Somerset	20	159	70	0	60	70
Total	779	1,845	1,645	2,033	3,411	3,136

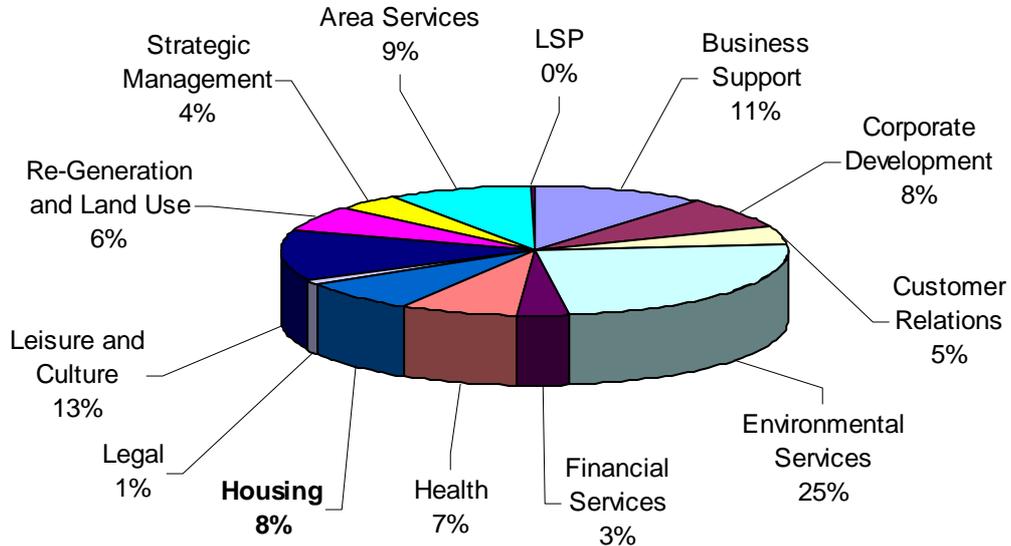
*Programme sustained through transitional Local Authority Social Housing Grant allocation

1.4.5 Revenue Funding. As a strategic housing authority the majority of our work is centred on capital funded projects. The largest area of revenue expenditure is our homelessness service. The pie chart below illustrates our projected revenue spending on housing net of income for 2004/5 in proportion to spending on other services.



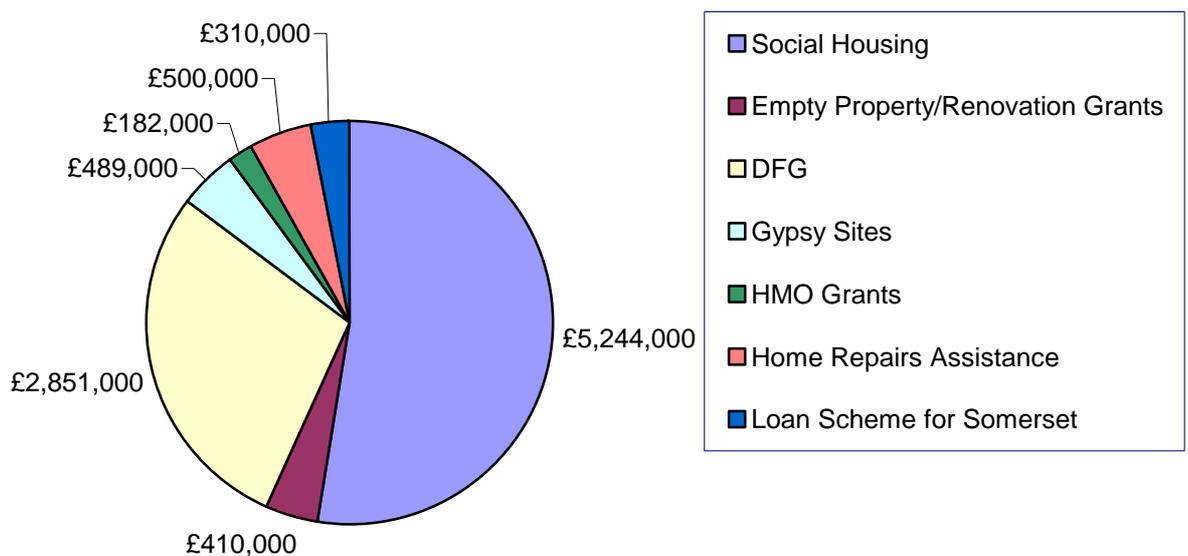
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Net Revenue Expenditure 2004-05



1.4.7 The pie chart below shows our actual and projected housing capital expenditure and demonstrates the Council's commitment to social housing provision over the Strategy period and up to 2008 with a total spend of over **£5 million**. The chart also demonstrates the scale of the Council's Disabled Facilities Grants and the impact of this on available finance.

Actual & Projected Capital Expenditure 2003/04 to 2007/08

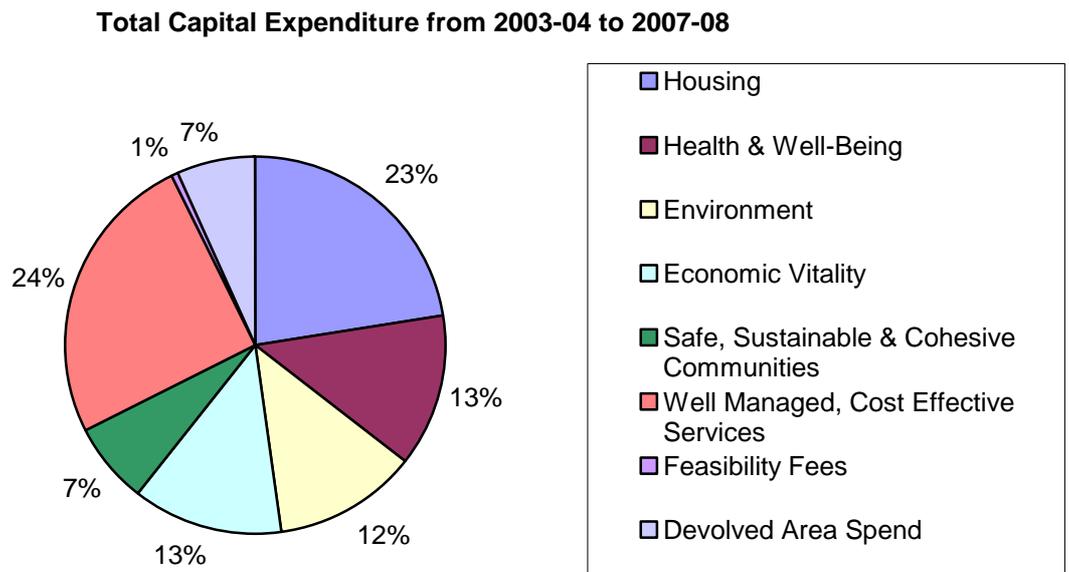




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1.4.8 During 2002/03 and 2003/04 £200,000 + was spent on the renovation of two of the District's Gypsy sites using a 75% Central Government Grant of £175,000 + and £50,000 + from the Council's Capital Contingency budget.

1.4.9 The Chart below shows that spending on Housing accounted for 23% of the Council's overall Capital Expenditure from 2004- 2008.



1.4.10 The chief source of relevant external capital funding is the affordable housing programme administered by the Housing Corporation on behalf of the Regional Housing Body. The Council has enjoyed an excellent relationship with the Housing Corporation, maximising the opportunities for joint funding of projects. For the 2008-11 Bid Round period the Corporation has published an indicative figure of £20-£25m for the South Somerset Sub-Regional Housing Market.

1.4.11 Other funding streams become available from time to time, usually administered by central government. In addition to the Gypsy Site funding referred to in 1.4.8 above, we have also been successful in securing £100,000 on behalf of the SSHP to introduce a county-wide choice based lettings scheme.

1.4.12 The most important resource in housing is the staff. In 2004 our staff base increased significantly with the transfer of the staff undertaking the homelessness function when this returned in-house. During the same year we recruited a new team to operate the Housing Register. There are significant pressures on the staffing budgets and a need to scrutinise the best way to provide services, making the best use of existing capacity and skills. Since 2004 the staff structure has changed significantly, most recently through the



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merger of the benefits and operational housing functions and the application of 'lean thinking' to the managed processes.

1.5 The Strategic Housing Inspection

- 1.5.1 During the spring 2008 the Audit Commission conducted an Inspection of the Councils Corporate Approach to Strategic Housing. The final report published in July 2008 concluded that the Council provided a 'fair' service with 'uncertain' prospects for improvement.
- 1.5.2 Whilst accepting the first judgement of a 'fair' service, the council finds the second judgement difficult to accept for five key reasons:
- o The Council has withstood a difficult period of staffing capacity, with a number of key posts vacant (for various reasons) for a considerable period. During this time much has been achieved in terms of our absolute priorities such as a continued reduction in the use of B&B and an increase in the numbers of social housing dwellings delivered. However, many other tasks have had to be delayed or postponed (some of which have been referred to in section 1.2 above. This difficult period is now behind us and in the early part of 2008 we began to resume full staffing levels once more.
 - o The Council inherited IT systems, which it did not deem to be fit for purpose when taking back the Homelessness and Housing Register functions in 2004. Initially we planned to replace these with a new system but this plan was delayed when the county-wide work on producing a choice based lettings system revealed that our neighbouring local housing authorities also intended to replace their systems. The new IT system has several advantages, not least of which is the flexibility that comes about from sharing the same system and processes with several other local housing authorities. However, implementation is not due until late 2008, meaning that we have chosen to manage on less than adequate systems for a longer period, accepting short term pain for longer term gain.
 - o The inspectors acknowledged a history of openness and willingness to learn from others. We contend that this extends to learning from the Inspection itself. An improvement plan is being developed which shall run in close parallel with the action plan set out at Appendix D of this document.
 - o All our major strategic documents are due to revision or review during 2008, including the production of this update document as a precursor to the first County-wide Housing Strategy. The Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Strategy is not strictly out of date but certainly at the end of its useful shelf-life and is also due to be replaced by a County-wide Homelessness Strategy during 2008. The Sustainable Communities Strategy, the Corporate Strategy and the Issues and Options paper for the Core Strategy of the LDF are all out for consultation during 2008.



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- Although we have striven to maximise the level of affordable housing brought forward through planning obligations on qualifying sites, this has not always resulted in delivery. As we pointed out to the Inspectors, no Council is in control of the macroeconomics, which seems to currently be dictating mothballing of many sites.

1.5.3 The Inspectors found much to commend the council for. In particular the history of good cross-boundary working was cited as positive practice and the following were noted:

- Positive achievements in the delivery of new affordable housing including rural housing and effective working with RSL partners
- A good understanding of stock condition and a reasonable range of advice and assistance for homeowners
- Success in improving homelessness prevention and planning performance, although still more to do
- Strong political leadership and an effective portfolio holder
- Positive approach to partnership working and an openness to external challenge and learning from others

1.5.4 The following are perhaps the most significant criticisms or weaknesses arising from the Inspection and these shall be addressed through the Improvement Plan:

- Uncertainty of our ability to deliver a sufficient supply of housing in the future, both through best use of existing stock and the development of new stock
- No significant growth in future budgets
- Ineffective approach to empty homes and houses in multiple occupation
- Understanding of housing needs should be more comprehensive
- Management of value for money is mixed
- Significant weaknesses in the quality of strategies

1.6 The Corporate and Sustainable Community Plans

1.6.1 The evidence base assembled to underpin the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework Core Strategy, which included community-led parish and town plans, has identified Housing as a key issue for the district. The Sustainable Community Strategy was made available for consultation in spring 2008, following consultation on the key issues and trends from mid-2007. Goal 10 of the draft Strategy aspires to a balanced housing market under the "Well designed and Well Built" theme, based on Egan's model of the components of sustainable communities.

1.6.2 At the same time our Corporate Plan is currently being refreshed during 2008. The Corporate Plan will tie in closely with the Sustainable Communities Strategy. This update document has an action plan (at Appendix D), which reflects the corporate aims and objectives we anticipate the Corporate Plan to contain, although it has not been formally adopted yet.



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Part 2: The Evidence Base

2.1 Fordham Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

- 2.1.1 Fordham Research were commissioned early in 2008 to undertake a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for the two sub-regional housing market areas of Taunton and South Somerset, covering four of the five local housing authorities in Somerset (Mendip being part of the much larger 'West of England' sub-regional housing market). The final report is due to be released in September 2008.
- 2.1.2 The full findings of the Fordham SHMA will feed into the county-wide Housing Strategy due to be developed later this year. In addition, each commissioning partner Local Authority will receive a District based report including housing needs assessment information which will inform revised planning policy - in our case it will inform the emerging Core Strategy of the LDF.
- 2.1.3 Fordhams preliminary findings have vindicated the original work carried out by DTZ Pidea for the Regional Housing Body, confirming that there is a clear distinction between the Taunton and Yeovil oriented parts of the County. However, the work cannot be relied upon enough to precisely confirm the geographical 'fuzzy' boundary between sub-regional housing markets.

2.2 Housing Register

- 2.2.1 In South Somerset we have operated a common housing register for well over a decade, being the 7th local authority in England to adopt one. The register allows for analysis on the basis of first choice or preference location as well as via household types. Since we published the last Housing Strategy document it has grown by 143%, reaching over 7,000 households in November 2007.
- 2.2.2 It is not entirely clear how much of this rise is due to demographic changes at a time of increasing inability to access owner occupation through the private sector market, although the increased homelessness and prevention caseload would bear this out. At least some proportion of the growth may be due to the increased awareness of the register thanks to the publicity at the time the operation was brought back in-house from previously being under contract to South Somerset Homes.
- 2.2.3 Details from the register, taken with predicted vacancy rates from within existing stock, are used to optimise the property mixes proposed when social housing is provided, either through planning obligation on larger sites or through RSL partners developing their own sites, such as the Pre Reinforced Concrete (PRC) redevelopments being undertaken by South Somerset Homes.
- 2.2.4 One area in which the Register is often seen as inadequate as a primary source is in the justification for rural exception sites. In such cases it is usual to undertake a local parish



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needs survey. As well as cementing the community development aspect for the proposed rural housing scheme, a local survey can identify additional households where either the local connection to the village is not obvious from details on the housing register or, more often the case, the household has not registered seeing no point in doing so as no vacancies occur where they wish to be housed. In this latter case the rural housing survey is a good way of discovering a level of otherwise hidden or unexpressed need.

- 2.2.5 In many of the pilot areas local authorities found their housing registers increasing in size when Choice Based Lettings was first introduced. As with the case of rural housing above, this is probably a reflection of the level of previously unexpressed need. The Council is seeking re-registration under the new county-wide Choice Based Lettings scheme from August 2008. It remains to be seen whether we experience a further step change in the overall size of the register.

2.3 Stock Condition

- 2.3.1 In 1999, the Council undertook large-scale voluntary transfer (LSVT) to South Somerset Homes (SSH). Although the housing stock transfer took place before the Decent Homes Standard had been devised and defined by Central Government, the capital receipt accurately reflected the stock condition survey carried out and allowed sufficient funding for the upgrading of the stock. In particular SSH inherited some 1147 PRC properties requiring extensive work to bring up to a mortgageable standard. In some cases it is more economic to demolish the remaining PRC housing and rebuild to modern standards. This has the added advantage of being able to make better use of the overall estate layout, adding additional properties whilst increasing the density, and tailoring some properties to the specific needs of existing tenants, for example replacing a family size house with a smaller bungalow. This programme of works is due to complete in 2011/12, with the expectation that all remaining properties will meet the decent homes standard by 2010.
- 2.3.2 Most of the other RSL stock in the district has been built in recent years to modern standards, although a small amount of this has been acquired from the open market under our 'bought not built' initiative. We currently do not have a clear picture of exactly how much of this stock may fall below the decent homes standard, although our expectation is that very little of it will fail. We suggested to the Housing Corporation that information on stock condition with regards to the decent homes standard should be contained in the annual return (RSR) completed by all registered social landlords, as this will give a full picture of an individual RSLs stock holding rather than a piecemeal approach depending on the local authority.
- 2.3.3 Information on the condition of the private sector has been recently undated through a BRE survey which confirmed our view of the general state of private sector housing in the District and provided further detailed analysis. In particular it found 24,275 non-decent private sector homes (estimated remedial cost £ 268 M) of which 4,529 have a vulnerable occupant who may be entitled to our financial assistance (estimated cost c £ 50 M). In addition 18,239 dwellings have a category one hazard under the Health & Housing Safety



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Rating System (e.g. substandard thermal insulation contributing towards fuel poverty). The worst concentrations of such properties were in certain wards in Chard and the east side of Yeovil, loosely aligned to similar 'hotspots' emerging from multiple deprivation indices.

2.3.4 The Council is steward of a property, Dorcas House, in Yeovil, managed on behalf of a charitable foundation. This property is currently used as a form of temporary accommodation for certain homeless households that meet the criteria set down by the charitable foundation. Extensive work is required to bring this property up to a modern standard, in particular works to the roof and windows. Our intention is to ensure that when this extensive work is completed, additional, minor works are carried out to ensure that the property meets the decent homes standard.

2.4 Homelessness

2.4.1 Table showing trends in homeless applications and acceptances

Year	Total Homelessness Decisions	Statutory Homeless	Average number in B&B	Decisions made within 33 days
1999/00	539	416	12	N/A
2000/01	714	484	20	N/A
2001/02	918	593	28	88%
2002/03	856	560	49	88%
2003/04	667	364	26	55%
2004/05	406	282	28	N/A
2005/06	118	83	14	N/A
2006/07	169	105	12	N/A
2007/08	217	172	14	60%

2.4.2 In 2002/03 560 homeless applications were accepted of which 336 were families and the council spent £770k gross on B & B, deposits, storage and travel costs for homeless households. Since then the numbers have been reduced but this is largely due to better intervention before the point of crisis.

2.4.3 Homeless trend analysis shows that non-violent disagreements leading to homelessness have risen by 270% in 5 years.

2.4.4 The three most common reasons for homelessness remain:

- o Loss of assured shorthold or other private sector tenancy
- o Parental or family/friends exclusion
- o Relationship breakdown

However it should be noted that, particularly for the first of these, there might be other underlying causes, which it is more difficult to establish. An assured shorthold tenancy may be terminated by using the correct legal procedure fairly easily by a private sector



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landlord without reasons being given - the underlying reasons could range from the landlord wishing to withdraw the property from the rented market (e.g. to sell up or to rehouse a family member) to deciding to terminate the tenancy to avoid 'hassle factors' such as intermittent rent payments or apparent poor behaviour on the part of the tenant.

- 2.4.5 2 out of 3 net lettings of all social housing are going to homeless households. As the largest provider of general needs social housing in the district, excluding one bedroomed accommodation 86% of SSH's suitable accommodation is allocated to the homeless.
- 2.4.6 Our success in meeting the government's target for reducing the number of families in B & B from 1st April 2004 represented a major challenge for the authority.

2.5 Other Sources of Data

In addition to the key sources of anticipated, expressed and assessed housing needs and stock condition issues highlighted above, we refer to much other data. Most significantly the following:

- 2.5.1 Evidence of expressed and assessed need for gypsy and traveller site provision. Initially this was conducted on a county-wide basis in co-operation with the other four districts and the County Council in parallel with the Ark Report. The work was completed prior to the (overdue) publication of guidance by central Government and for this reason was not entirely accepted as evidence for the new RSS. As a consequence the RSS refined the shortfall in pitches identified for South Somerset. A separate Gypsy Traveller Accommodation Strategy (GTAA) is now required to complement the new SHMA.
- 2.5.2 Individual parish housing needs surveys are conducted to identify the level of 'hidden' housing need (i.e. not expressed through the housing register). Over the past five years the following have been completed:



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PARISH	RSL	DATE	NEED
Aller		Mar-04	4
Beercrocombe			
Buckland St. Mary	Hastoe	Apr-05	4
Curry Mallet	Hastoe	2004	6
Hardington Mandeville	Hastoe	May-04	6
Keinton Mandeville	Hastoe	2003	6
Misterton	Hastoe	Jun-04	6 (2 x self build)
Winsham	Hastoe	2004	
Broadway		Mar-05	No significant need
Bruton	Raglan		
Charlton Horethorne	South Somerset Homes	Feb-07	11
Compton Dundon	Hastoe	Jun-05	6
Curry Rivel	South Somerset Homes	Aug-06	8 to 12
Donyatt		Sep-05	No sustainab-le need at present
High Ham	South Somerset Homes	Apr-04	2
Huish Episcopi		Apr-04	6
Long Load	South Somerset Homes	Aug-07	10
Long Sutton	South Somerset Homes		3
Norton Sub Hamdon	South Somerset Homes	Oct-05	8 to 10
Pitney	South Somerset Homes	Feb-03	0
Shepton Beauchamp		Sep-04	2
South Cadbury	South Somerset Homes	Dec-04	2 or 3
Sparkford	South Somerset Homes	Aug-05	6 to 8
Stoke Sub Hamdon	Hastoe	Mar-08	10
Tatworth & Forton	Hastoe	Aug-05	10 to 15
South Petherton		Jan-08	16

- 2.5.3 Information from the housing register on lettings verifies the proportion of 'casual' vacancies that can be expected from certain stock types and within certain areas - this is already taken into account when calculating overall unmet need such as the work conducted by Fordham and by Ark, but is also used to help inform our property mix requirements on individual sites.
- 2.5.4 Other demographic trends are referred to, for example the evidence of an increasingly aging population informs the Supporting People Strategy. A report in June 2006 by Tracy Caller "Population Growth and Ageing in South Somerset" states that South Somerset has a much larger than the UK average proportion of elderly residents and a much smaller than average proportion of residents aged 16 - 29 years. It is projected that 90% of the population growth between 2004 and 2028 will be in the 60 years and over age group. It is predicted that the population of South Somerset (currently 155,100) will reach 181,400 residents by the year 2028. Ageing will impact on housing as there may be a greater demand for supported housing, adapted houses and single-person properties and a likely increase in the degree of under-occupation.
- 2.5.5 A significant factor for the South West Region is inward migration from other regions. Research undertaken by DTZ Pieda on behalf of the Regional Housing Board showed that migration into the South West from every other English region outstrips migration from the South West to that region. The South East produced the largest slice of this net inward migration and much of this is retirement with those moving into the region having a



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purchasing power based on the value of their current home in what has traditionally been the most expensive part of the country. This has a knock-on effect elsewhere in the regional housing market, pricing out local people who, typically, have to purchase based on much smaller earnings. The South West is now the only region with higher than national average prices but lower than national average earnings.

- 2.5.6 More recently there has been an increase in migrant workers, primarily from Portugal, Poland and other EU states. Anecdotal evidence suggests a concentration in lower paid roles such as in the food processing industry. However, there is a lack of hard evidence to accurately quantify the number of households involved, for example latest census data is 2001, predating the accession of Poland and other eastern European states to the EU. This lack of data is a significant gap in our current evidence base. However, this will be addressed through the SHMA currently underway and expected to report later this year.



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Part 3: Current Issues

3.1 The Local Plan: Current policy & the Key Sites

3.1.1 Current policy is set out in the Local Plan that was adopted in April 2006 and is a saved plan with three years duration (subject to review). The section detailing policy on affordable housing contains a definition of affordable housing (conforming to the then current Government definition) and a target of 262 affordable homes per annum to 2011 of which 185 per annum derived through Planning Gain on qualifying sites. The Plan:

- Sets out site thresholds above which affordable housing is sought at 25 on settlements over 3,000 and 15 in smaller places and a level of provision of affordable housing of 35% of the total site;
- Expects provision of the affordable element on site but allows for commutation in exceptional circumstances;
- Seeks to meet housing need principally in Yeovil and the market towns where future growth is focussed.
- Has a policy seeking rural exception sites where there is evidence of need to provide a local small-scale solution appropriate for very rural locations;

3.1.2 Whilst the Local Plan states 35% affordable housing provision on qualifying sites, it has to be accepted that this will not always be possible, particularly if the total planning obligation costs might make the site unviable. Unless there are compelling reasons, we want to achieve this by provision on site, with the social housing element 'pepper-potted' throughout the site

3.1.3 The current plan focuses development on the large "key sites" in order to deliver sustainable communities. Although three of the key sites (Brimsmore and Lufton in Yeovil, and Wincanton) received consent last year, none have started construction. Our concern now is that the current lack of confidence in the housing market will lead to these developers, and others, effectively mothballing sites. Although we can demonstrate a significant level of affordable housing being achieved through these permissions, the danger is that in reality this housing will not be built in the foreseeable future.

3.2 The Local Plan: Emerging Local Development Framework (LDF)

3.2.1 We are undertaking a Local Development Framework Core Strategy Local Development Document with an Issues and Options report out for consultation. The Core Strategy will address settlement hierarchy, housing policy generally and affordable housing in particular as strategic matters. Through this mechanism we will update policies to take account of national and regional policy changes (such as PPS3 and the RSS) and our revised view of local need, informed and clarified by the Fordham SHMA and a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.



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3.2.2 The Local Development Scheme sets out the timetable for a Preferred Options document (by September 2008); consultation; final report submitted to Government (June 2009); adoption in Autumn 2010. Through this process we need to ensure that the revised policies and strategies adequately reflect the revised assessment of housing need whilst not producing planning obligations, which developers regard as so onerous as to outweigh the financial incentives to develop residential areas in the district.

3.3 Supporting People

3.3.1 The creation of the Supporting People Team (SP) facilitated a successful cross boundary, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approach that has ensured a high standard of services to vulnerable people in South Somerset. We have a close working relationship with a number of providers of supported accommodation including some provision of buildings for example we have been working very closely with the Women's Refuge on refurbishment plans and de-cant solutions.

3.3.2 Almost since its inception the Commissioning Body has been tasked with managing reductions in the budget. Until now this has been achieved via thorough service reviews which have highlighted inefficiencies (and, in some cases, aspects of service not eligible for this funding stream) and through vigorous re-orientation of services such as greater use of floating support packages (which add flexibility and reduce the site-based criteria formerly acting as a barrier to some potential clients). Part of this will help to ensure that appropriate 'move-on' accommodation is accessed to avoid the silting up of specialist schemes.

3.3.3 However, the reduction in funding continues and now has the potential to impact on high-risk families and individuals, as it is difficult to see where further savings can be made without real cuts in service provision.

3.3.4 From April 2009 the Government intends to remove the ring-fence from the Supporting People budget and place it effectively under the control of the county-wide LSP. It should be noted that this removal of the ring fence is being piloted in certain authorities, but it is difficult to see how the impact of these pilots can be truly assessed before the rollout across the rest of the Country. In addition, we need to ensure that the purpose, value and worth of the SP programme are adequately understood by the LSP.

3.4 Decent Homes

3.4.1 There is currently a joint Home Improvement Agency (HIA) set up between SSDC and Taunton Deane Borough Council. This agency:

- Carries out the usual range of services associated with HIAs including providing a complete design and aid package to vulnerable and low-income clients;
- Is funded by Supporting People (£116,000 per annum) and Somerset Social Services (£50,000 per annum);



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- Meets all basic Foundations performance criteria
 - Aims to expand its range of services and recently expanded its Handyman service.
- 3.4.2 The current contract will finish at the end of the year and the future for this service across the County is still under review with the relevant partner authorities.
- 3.4.3 The level of capital funding for work to private sector properties is inadequate. The Disability Facility Grant (DFG) funding is effectively capped at £ 336,000 for 60% of the qualifying works, with the Council having to find 40% of the costs of these DFGs and 100% of the costs of any other DFG work undertaken over and above this artificial limit. We are working with our MP to draw the financial implications of this to the attention of the Minister.
- 3.4.4 SSH is currently on schedule to complete its designated PRC works by 2011, with all properties meeting decent homes standard by 2010. However the increased densities have given some cause for concern for some residents (often not those benefiting from the works directly), which means the programme could be vulnerable to delays where planning permission is required.

3.5 Rural Housing

- 3.5.1 In the past few years we have been able to provide significant number of new affordable dwellings (over 200) in rural settlements, representing over a third of all new affordable development.
- 3.5.2 The emerging LDF recognises that village locations are not sustainable in accordance with Government guidance, concentrating new housing growth on urban areas (particularly Yeovil). Increasingly this will mean that very local housing needs will need to be met through rural exceptions sites as RSL providers will not be able to compete with private sector developers for any land that falls within current development limits.
- 3.5.3 Currently a significant number of settlements have or will benefit from additional social housing being made available on SSH PRC sites. However, this programme will come to an end in 2011.
- 3.5.4 In partnership with three other local housing authorities in Somerset we share the resources to two rural housing enablers based at the Community Council, i.e. roughly equivalent to 0.5 full time equivalent post each. This is a limited resource, which we have been able to temporarily boost in order to provide more survey work in certain targeted villages
- 3.5.5 Work is currently underway to identify land holdings across the district, which may become available for social housing schemes. The work is being undertaken by Clive Miller associates, in conjunction with Three Dragons and was originally funded by the South Somerset LSP. Match funding made available by the County Council has expanded this work



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to cover the entire county. It is anticipated that the completed work will give some indication of likely viable sites for future rural exception schemes.

3.6 Homelessness

3.6.1 SSDC has been in contact with Communities and Local Government (CLG) officials to discuss our ability to halve our reliance on temporary accommodation by 2010. Whilst we are doing everything possible to manage the flow of homeless households in a considerate way, minimising the disruption for all involved, the target to reduce by half will be challenging. In particular the PRC properties made available to us by SSH prior to their demolition are otherwise of a reasonable standard (often better in terms of space standard than modern construction), many already meeting decent homes standard but not mortgageable. As these sites are programmed in, properties becoming vacant through natural processes are set aside for temporary use for the homeless. It would not be justified to leave such properties empty whilst there is a bottleneck in approved homeless cases. Such properties will continue to be otherwise empty until towards the end of the PRC redevelopment programme in 2011.

3.6.2 In March 2008, SSDC had 412 households to whom we owe the full duty, either in temporary accommodation or 'Homeless at Home'. The challenge is that even if we were able to produce new social housing at the rate identified in the Local Plan, it would take us over 18 months to clear this backlog alone.

3.6.1 Whilst our preventative work has been successful in turning around the level of formal homeless approaches and subsequent use of all forms of temporary accommodation since the peak of 2002, the current figures suggest that no further progress is being made.

3.6.2 We have set up protocols with our main RSL partners who will alert us when there is a possibility of a housing crisis giving us the opportunity to work with the tenant to enable them to sustain their tenancy. We need to extend these further to other landlords.

3.7 Resident Social Landlord (RSL) Partnership

3.7.1 SSDC developed a system of selecting Best Level Partner RSLs for a number of key strategic reasons:

- o To build a stronger relationship with a small number of RSLs who met the criteria to ensure the consistent delivery of more affordable housing;
- o To spread the capacity and reduce the risk;
- o To encourage RSLs to work together rather than in competition;
- o To retain another level of Partner RSL (now called Threshold Partners) that we could use for specialist provision (such as on the delivery of Rural Exception Schemes and Supported Housing Projects);
- o To enhance critical mass of the future management to provide the best possible service to tenants and leaseholders.



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- 3.7.2 In September 2003, four RSLs were appointed as "Best Level Partners" (BLP), for a period of five years. These were; Jephson Housing Association; Raglan Housing Association; Somer Community Housing Trust and South Somerset Homes.
- 3.7.3 When discussing the planning obligations of qualifying sites with developers we have often found resistance to restricting the terms of the s106 agreement to the four best level partners only. In some cases larger developers already have good working relationships with RSL partners elsewhere which they would prefer to extend to South Somerset.
- 3.7.4 In a recent example a developer who found some difficulty in selling some open market housing went straight to an RSL with no previous presence in the district and sold the entire (small) development - thus further increasing the number of RSLs operating in the district and, in particular, the number with very low stock levels.
- 3.7.5 Whilst the Homefinder Somerset is a very wide partnership that will encompass nearly all social housing stock, the fact remains that tenants and leaseholders faced a variety of different housing management and maintenance procedures with varying degrees of ease of access.

3.8 Equality & Diversity

- 3.8.1 *"Particularly pleasing understanding of the broad based nature of equalities and diversities. It is not just about BME issues. [SSDC have] turned around criticism to something they should rightly feel proud of, especially their work with migrant workers". (I&DeA Beacon Round 7 Improving rural services: empowering communities, Advisory Panel)*
- 3.8.2 SSDC is Level 2 of the Equalities Standard for Local Government. We are committed to a programme of service-based Equality impact assessments to ensure that policies and processes do not accidentally create unnecessary barriers for any section of the public. However in some cases the data sources are insufficient to draw reliable conclusions, for example:
- o The numbers of people from most ethnic minority backgrounds are too low to be statistically significant
 - o Some ethnic minorities are not clearly identified within the categories currently used on monitoring forms. Housing registrations use the CORE categories, which RSLs report to the Housing Corporation, from which we can establish the numbers of 'white european' and 'black european' heads of household but we cannot distinguish polish or Portuguese families, anecdotally the two most significant ethnic groups amongst recent inward migration from Europe.
- 3.8.3 The needs of gypsy and traveller households are also not distinguishable from the CORE statistics, although these needs have been examined separately as described above. The chief issue we face in meeting the needs of these households is identifying suitable land to meet the shortfall of pitch provision. Identified sites invariably attract immediate



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opposition from other existing residents however well suited the site is in planning terms. A project co-funded by our Local Strategic partnership and the County Council is currently underway using consultants Clive Miller Associates and Three Dragons to identify land in public ownership or similar which may have potential for providing affordable housing and we anticipate that this may also assist us in identifying suitable sites.

3.9 More collaborative working

- 3.9.1 The principles of cross boundary and partnership working to address housing are firmly embedded within Somerset, this has become an integral part of our approach to service delivery providing additional capacity and resources which would not be available on a district wide basis. There is a well-established framework for delivery and a proven track record of innovative collaborative approaches. The Strategic Housing Inspection recognised this and put forward our history of cross-boundary working as an example of positive practice.
- 3.9.2 The scale of housing need and the agreed housing targets of the Local Area Agreement, together with the longer term resourcing issues (both in terms of capital and staff capacity), mean that we shall have to enhance even further our collaborative working to maximise housing opportunities. This also means that we must ensure the Local Strategic Partnerships continue to prioritise affordable housing.



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Part 4: Ambitions & Plans

4.1 County-wide Housing Strategy

- 4.1.1 In 2004 the SSHG produced a county-wide housing strategy statement, which set out the intention to work collaboratively where reasonable and practical. It has now been agreed to produce a fuller county-wide Housing Strategy document with the expectation that a shared evidence base and converging policies will lead to effective and efficient shared solutions.
- 4.1.2 The consultation draft of the county-wide strategy will be launched at the first county-wide Annual Housing Strategy Seminar at Taunton racecourse on Thursday 25th September 2008. Some of the workshop sessions at the seminar day will consult on issues and priorities within the new Strategy.
- 4.1.3 It is anticipated that the Strategy will be completed and endorsed through the various different district council committee cycles by May 2009.
- 4.1.4 The Action Plan at Appendix D of this document sets out our current activities as a natural progression from those set out in the last district wide Strategy (2004-2007) but also anticipate some of the actions we will need to undertake to assist the movement towards a county-wide approach.

4.2 Pioneer Somerset

- 4.2.4 The five local housing authorities in Somerset are all committed to more collaborative working through the Pioneer Somerset initiative. The intention is to enhance service provision whilst identifying efficiencies and reducing overall administrative costs.
- 4.2.5 In housing services the well established cross boundary working and the commitment to work towards a county-wide strategic approach puts us already well ahead in terms of achieving the goals of Pioneer Somerset. The peer review to be undertaken in the autumn of 2008 by the IDeA will greatly assist in providing an external view of how best to organise housing services in the future.

4.3 The LAA & the role of Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership

- 4.3.1 Within the LAA, the Council is committed to assisting enhanced performance against the chosen 35 indicators from the new national list. This includes NI 154 & NI 155, which, refer to the net housing increase and the net increase in affordable housing within that total. Also NI 187, which considers the level of fuel poverty. There is also a supporting tier of secondary indicators.



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4.3.2 It is envisaged that the SSHP will take on the responsibility of delivering against these targets on behalf of the LAA partnership and, whilst retaining its independence, report on these issues to the SSP (Somerset Strategic Partnership). As the SSHP includes the relevant portfolio holders from each of the local housing authorities this provides accountability to the relevant statutory authorities at the same time as a clear channel for the SSP.

4.4 Using the Planning Process to deliver affordable housing

4.4.1 We need to do more to deliver affordable housing through the planning process. This includes revising the thresholds for qualifying sites and reviewing the % affordable housing required on these sites.

4.4.2 Through the LDF we may also consider other ways of enhancing delivery, for example, whether there is a role for some land to be allocated for affordable housing only.

4.4.3 We have already established pre-application surgeries for significant sites and a round table for portfolio holders to consider the balance of planning obligations where the developer is able to demonstrate that the site may be unviable unless some or all are eased.

4.4.4 We need to ensure that what has been agreed is actually delivered, both in terms of making the sites come forward once planning has been obtained and checking that the terms of the s106 agreement are fully complied with.

4.5 Homefinder Somerset

4.5.1 The plans for Homefinder Somerset are already well established. During the summer we shall have a period of dual running whilst new applicants on the Housing register go straight onto the new system and existing applicants are asked to renew their registration.

4.5.2 It is anticipated that the county-wide 'go live' date will be in December 2008, i.e. the first formally advertised property cycle.

4.5.3 A Monitoring Board has been devised to monitor the outcomes of the scheme and report back to the relevant agencies, chiefly through the SSHP. Each of the partner local housing authorities and the largest landlord in each of the five districts shall have an automatic place on the Monitoring Board. Elections shall be held to identify the other five places on the Board, to be shared between all the remaining landlord partners.

4.5.4 During our research period we identified the two major failings of pilot choice based lettings schemes to be the treatment of vulnerable applicants and penetration of the private sector. Throughout the development work a high emphasis has been placed on the treatment of vulnerable applicants to the extent that we anticipate Homefinder Somerset



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will be a significant step up on previous schemes (although, of course, outcomes will be monitored to verify this). However, involvement of the private sector was not taken up as an initial priority and this is one of the areas that we intend to pursue once we are over the teething problems of the new system.

4.6 Preventing Homelessness

- 4.6.1 We shall continue our efforts to intervene in a timely way to prevent homelessness and other personal housing crises. Continued emphasis on upstream prevention should result in sustained lower numbers of formal approaches, acceptances and placements into temporary accommodation. Whilst we have proceeded well in this direction, the frontline needs to be 'pushed out further' by utilising other front line workers in other services better and responding to warning signs earlier.
- 4.6.2 We shall continue to seek reductions in the three main causes of homelessness:
- Loss of assured shorthold or other private sector tenancy
 - Parental or family/friends exclusion
 - Relationship breakdown

4.7 Rural Housing

- 4.7.1 We shall seek to produce a minimum level of new affordable housing in rural settlements (defined as those with a population of less than 3,000). This could be achieved through:
- Planning obligations on qualifying sites within rural settlements
 - The redevelopment of SSH PRC sites within rural settlements
 - The development of infill sites by RSLs within rural settlements, and, potentially
 - The allocation of land as affordable housing only through the LDF
- Where none of the above is possible we shall achieve additional rural housing through the use of the rural exceptions policy
- 4.7.2 We shall continue to support, including co-funding, the rural housing enabling posts currently hosted by the Community Council, subject to any recommendations arising from the IDeA peer review.
- 4.7.3 We shall achieve at least an additional three parish housing surveys in Area East during 2008/09 funded directly for that purpose.

4.8 Improving & Developing the Private sector

- 4.8.1 We have recently reappointed to the post of Private Sector Tenancy Sustainment Officer and expect that this renewed capacity should allow us to make further inroads with respect to use of the Private Sector. We shall also redouble efforts to work with the



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Landlords' Forum and consider private sector solutions to assist with meeting the needs of homeless and other priority households.

- 4.8.2 We need to better target the limited capital resources available to us for use in the private sector. In particular ensuring that a greater proportion of properties reaching decent homes standards are those occupied by the vulnerable groups in the Government original target.
- 4.8.3 We shall redouble our efforts to return empty properties to use, linking available grants to landlords with use of the Homefinder Somerset scheme to allocate the subsequent vacancy created.
- 4.8.4 We shall reallocate staff within existing capacity to meet these priorities and to deal with HMO licensing in the light of new legislation regarding HMO standards and fire protection and the need to tackle overcrowding in some parts of the private sector.
- 4.8.5 We shall review the provision of the Home Aid service in conjunction with partner authorities and seek a solution which provides the best use of resources on a county-wide basis
- 4.8.6 We shall work with our partner local housing authorities to bid for additional discretionary monies from regional funds to bolster our private sector grant activity and, specifically, to address fuel poverty.
- 4.8.7 Demand for DFGs has increased and so has the average cost per client (Government have raised the cap from £25,000 to £ 30,000). This has a significant impact on our capital resources. We shall seek additional funding from within our own capital resources and raise the fundamental issues with central Government
- 4.8.8 We shall better articulate the case for young people accessing private sector accommodation through a review of current activity and the publication of a separate strategy (to be integrated into future county-wide Housing Strategy or private Sector Housing documents)

4.9 Supporting People

- 4.9.1 Working with our partners on the Commissioning Body and the Core Strategy Group for supporting people in Somerset, we shall seek to maximise opportunities for floating rather than accommodation-based support where appropriate
- 4.9.2 In addition we shall assist SSH and other providers to move towards the new 'hub and spoke' model for sheltered housing as fast as possible, whilst maintaining a reasonable level of continuity for existing residents.



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- 4.9.3 A revised Supporting People Strategy for the County will be produced at a time and pace to best suit available capacity and the need to inform and influence the LAA partners, such as the SSP.

4.10 Welfare Benefits

We shall continue to provide this valuable service, and estimate carefully the number of cases in which our intervention and assistance has contributed towards the prevention of a personal housing crisis such as repossession.

4.11 Gypsy & Traveller Provision

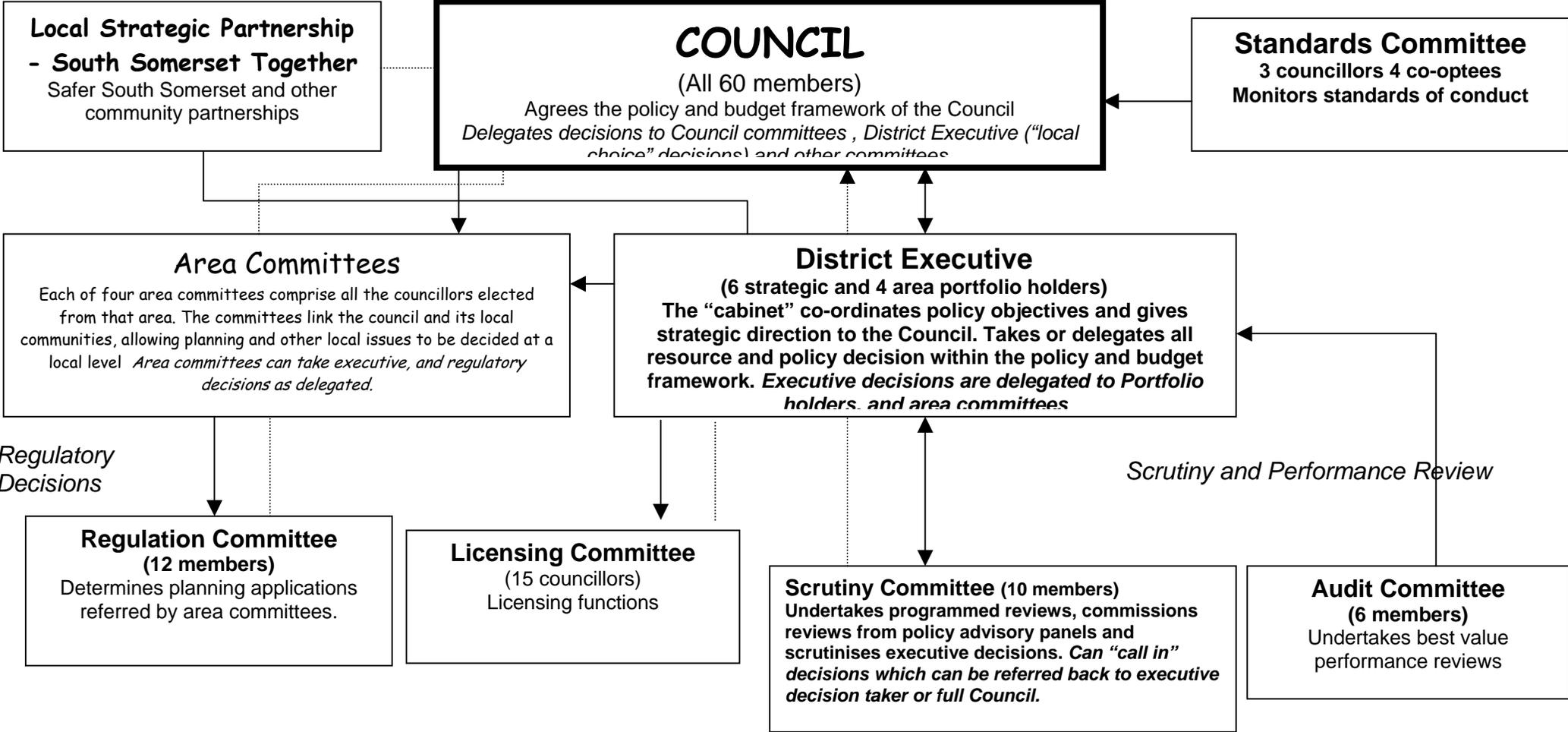
- 4.11.1 We shall undertake the refurbishment works to the site at Tintinhull
- 4.11.2 We shall undertake the additional works at the Ilton site as soon as management issues there have been resolved.
- 4.11.3 We shall identify suitable sites for both transit provision and emergency stopping place and seek capital grant funding from Central Government to support this provision. We want to develop a network of small transit sites and emergency stopping places within South Somerset and the immediate surrounding areas.
- 4.11.4 We also need to provide for the identified residential needs of Gypsies and travellers (i.e. a further 17 pitches, either allocated through planning or directly provided).

South Somerset District Council Political Management Structure

Appendix A

Community Development and Partnerships

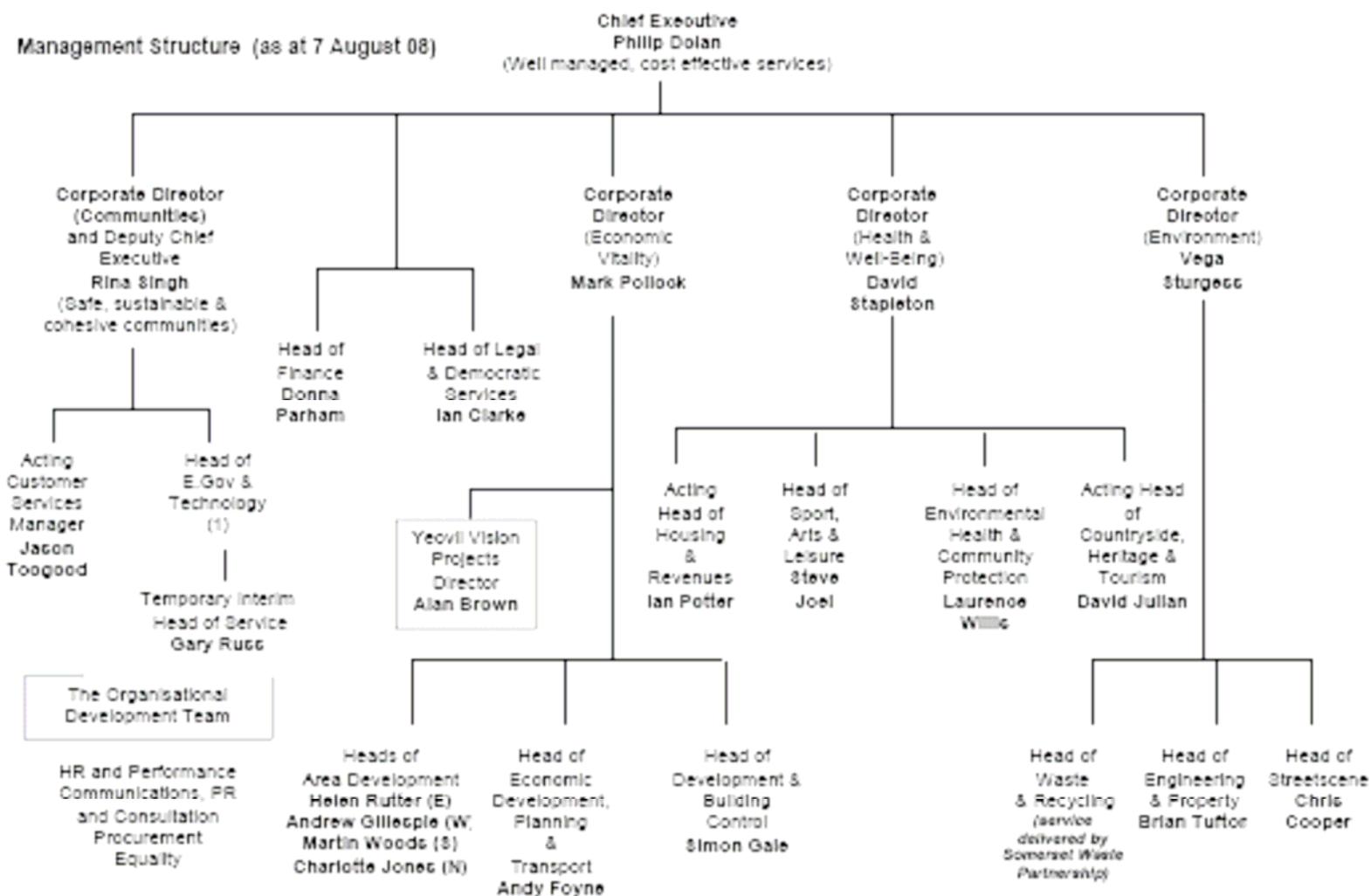
Ethical Framework



Regulatory Decisions

Scrutiny and Performance Review

Appendix B: SSDC - Management Structure



1. Anne Harland seconded to Somerset Choice Based Lettings Project

Appendix C: A schedule of key documents & the relevant web site addresses

- Community Safety Strategy (Crime and Drugs Strategy)
www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/pdf/g/0/Somerset_Strategy.pdf
- Strategy for Private Sector Housing Strategy 2007 - 2012
www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/pdf/i/i/Private_Housing_Strategy_1_1_.pdf
- Somerset Supporting People Strategy 2005 - 2010
www.spkweb.org.uk
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Strategy 2006 - 2009
<http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=651&backid=233>
- The Regional Housing Strategy
[www.gosw.gov.uk/497666/docs/164320/289802/SW_RHS_-_final_v5_\(29_June\).doc](http://www.gosw.gov.uk/497666/docs/164320/289802/SW_RHS_-_final_v5_(29_June).doc)
- The South Somerset Local Plan
www.southsomerset.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=9414
- The Somerset Together Community Strategy
www.southsomersettogether.org.uk/index.jsp?articleid=11545
- Homelessness & Temporary Accommodation Strategy 2005 - 2008
www.southsomerset.gov.uk/index.jsp?articleid=641
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy
www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/pdf/m/j/Strategy_Health_1.pdf

Appendix D: Detailed Action Plan 2008 - 2010

Key Task	Target Date	Milestone	Lead	Output	Outcome	Performance measure	Resource
Improve customer focussed access for all housing services	November 09	Develop, publicise and monitor comprehensive service standards by July 09	LW; IP; SG	Standards developed through consultation with users	Customers for all services having a clear understanding of what they can expect from the Council	Monitor performance against the developed standards	Within JD of existing staff and scope of existing & proposed IT
		Investigate potential Improvements to the provision of face to face access by April 09	LW;IP;SG	Revised range of surgery times and better publicity for home visits	Customers to have opportunity to talk through issues with relevant case officer	No of home visits undertaken; Footfall during publicised surgery times	Within existing JD and office provision. Possible marginal increase in travel costs
		Review delivery of advice & options service to clients outside Yeovil by December 08	IP/JB	Review completed	Judgement reached on cost vs benefit of operating regular surgeries or alternative means of delivery	Improved availability of service outside Yeovil	Within JD of establishment staff to review, but additional resources may be required to respond.
		Analyse feedback from on-going Housing Options user satisfaction survey by January 09	JB/MC	Survey information available	We will be in a better position to reduce the inherent stress of the process by analysing the results.	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff and within budget
		Introduce diversity monitoring across all housing related services by April 09	LW;IP; SG	More comprehensive and meaningful data gathered	A clearer understanding of whether certain processes have an adverse effect on any particular section of the community	Data available with more comprehensive breakdown	Within existing staff JD and scope of existing & acquired IT

Key Task	Target Date	Milestone	Lead	Output	Outcome	Performance measure	Resource
Introduce a structured process for quality control	November 08	Develop a comprehensive understanding of value for money by comparing costs with others by November 08	LW;IP;SG	Key processes costed	An understanding of cost which can be contrasted with performance	Published cost data	Time required to be found from within existing staffing resources
		Set challenging targets against all plans, service standards and relevant PIs by November 08	LW;IP;SG	Targets set	Clear understanding by all relevant staff of expected quality of performance	Relevant measures to be set for each target	Within existing staff JD
		Develop a system of quality monitoring by November 08	IP	System in place	Clear understanding of the quality of outcomes which can be contrasted with known costs	Published quality measures	Within JD of existing staff
		Revise targets for Homeless acceptances (operational decisions) by November 08	IP	Targets set	Targets available against which to compare actual performance	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff.
		Complete HSSA by July 08	LF	Completed and submitted	Auditable information provided to central Government	Completed	Within JD of establishment staff.
		Publish HL year end report by May 09	IP	Report published	Information available in a digestible form for distribution	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff.

Key Task	Target Date	Milestone	Lead	Output	Outcome	Performance measure	Resource
Meet the current need for gypsy and traveller accommodation	May 10	Identify location for transit site by December 08	PG	Site identified	Places service in position to bid for internal or external funding to develop site	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff
		Provide an emergency stopping point by May 10	CM	Point provided	Better ability to respond to sudden influx of travellers/unlawful encampments	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff but subject to available capital funding
		Contribute to a county-wide gypsy and traveller accommodation strategy by May 10	CM	Strategy developed	Future provision better aligned in a county-wide or wider network	Strategy to be developed by date given	With JD of existing staff but subject to cooperation of neighbouring authorities
Ensure adequate strategic documents in place	May 09	Develop a county-wide housing strategy by May 09	CM	Strategy developed	Future provision of services better aligned	Strategy to be developed by date given	With JD of existing staff but subject to cooperation of neighbouring authorities
		Develop a county-wide homelessness strategy by September 08	CM	Strategy developed	Future provision of services better aligned	Strategy to be developed by date given	With JD of existing staff but subject to cooperation of neighbouring authorities

		Revise the county-wide supporting people strategy by May 09	CM	Strategy revised	Future provision of services better aligned	Strategy to be developed by date given	With JD of existing staff but subject to cooperation of neighbouring authorities
		Develop and expand strategy to facilitate access of young people to private sector housing by April 09	IP/AB	Revised strategy adopted	Better use of private sector options to reduce likelihood of homelessness within the identified age group	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff.
		Hold county-wide housing Strategy day by September 08	CM	Day held	Wider world engaged in strategic progress and collaboration between Local Housing Authorities cemented	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff, subject to capacity of partner Local Housing Authorities
		Agree a strategy with Somerset Districts to ensure appropriate gypsy and traveller provision across Somerset by November 08	CM	Strategy agreed	Better coordination of provision across a wider area and better ability to collectively respond to incidents of unlawful encampments	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff, subject to capacity of partner Local Housing Authorities

Key Task	Target Date	Milestone	Lead	Output	Outcome	Performance measure	Resource
Set out a rural housing action plan	May 2009	N/a	CM	Written plan produced	Clear route forward for prioritising various strands of work relating to rural housing	Document produced.	Within JD of establishment staff
		Facilitate up to 6 Rural Parish Housing Needs Surveys by December 08	KP	Understanding of the very local needs for each chosen Parish	Information to target resources for successful local needs schemes (planning and bidding)	Number of surveys completed within each calendar year	Use of county-wide Rural Enablers based at Community Council
		Develop a programme for targetting remaining parishes	KP	Method for targeting agreed	Ability to better use resources where most likely to impact	Level of unmet need uncovered by Parish housing needs surveys	Use of county-wide Rural Enablers based at Community Council
		Bring forward more rural exceptions sites	KP	Further viable sites identified	Ability to deliver more rural housing	No of identified sites	Use of county-wide Rural Enablers based at Community Council and information forthcoming from site identification project

Key Task	Target Date	Milestone	Lead	Output	Outcome	Performance measure	Resource
Make better use of empty and under-occupied homes	May 2009		AB				
Examine potential for adopting area-based approach to addressing the worst housing conditions among the most vulnerable in the community	May 2009		AB				
Set and achieve challenging targets to meet best practice in relation to temporary accommodation	May 2009	Review uses of RSL buildings as temporary accommodation by Nov 08	SM	Uses reviewed	Better use of existing buildings currently available to us	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff, subject to capacity of partner RSLs
		Revise plan for future B&B usage with short, medium and long term targets by December 08	JB/IP	Plan in place	Trajectory available against which to compare actual performance	Accuracy of prediction (cf actual)	Within JD of establishment staff and within budget
		Review and update strategy for provision of Temporary Accommodation by December 08	KP/SM JB	Strategy updated	Improved portfolio of temporary accommodation options, more flexibility.	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff.
Set and meet appropriate targets for the 'end to end' waiting time for an adaptation which are in line with Government guidance	May 2009		AB				

Key Task	Target Date	Milestone	Lead	Output	Outcome	Performance measure	Resource
Achieve further improvements in housing options service	May 2009	Check resources are targeted at tackling the three main causes of homelessness by December 08	JB	Better targeting of non case specific prevention work	Task to be completed by date given	Ratio of staff time spent on these issues	Within JD of establishment staff.
		Review internal training programme by November 08	IP	Programme reviewed	Staff kept refreshed, improving quality of work and reducing likelihood of risk to staff, public or councils reputation	% staff receiving refresher training and % new staff trained	Subject to training budgets being available corporately
		Refine homelessness forecasting by March 09	CM	Predictive demographic model	Better position to switch resources in the light of external factors; reduced risk of budget overspend/earlier warning of escalating costs	Initial modelling to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff.
		Review information & advice leaflets to be available at HAC by March 09	JB/FJ IP	Revised leaflets available	Better direct access to available information; increased opportunity to request preventative intervention	Number and 'age' of available leaflets	Within JD of establishment staff and within budget
		Improve & expand information on council's website by March 09	JB/IP	Greater depth and breadth of information on website	Better direct access to available information; increased opportunity to request preventative intervention	Amount of accurate/'fresh' information on website	Within JD of establishment staff.

		New Housing IT to be operational by December 08	AH/KJ	New IT working	Improvement in database (quality & auditability) and in our ability to respond swiftly to individual queries; enhanced analysis and efficiencies gained in casework progress	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of shared county-wide staff and within existing budget for refreshed IT.
		County-wide CBL scheme to be launched by December 08	KC	New system in operation	CBL operating, providing better access to range of housing options and more transparency for applicants	Task to be completed by date given	Use of county-wide CBL post, 60% funded by DCLG grant for CBL
		Identify locations where customers seek advice before approaching the council and explore the provision of training/outreach by April 09	JB	Locations identified and training provided	Further 'pushing out' of the front line; greater opportunity for prevention or early intervention	No of cases identified by external agencies	Within JD of establishment staff.
		Explore the introduction of flexible opening hours/ telephone service out of hours by March 09	IP	Possibilities explored	Judgement reached on cost vs benefit of flexible opening & telephone services	Improved availability of service	Within JD of establishment staff to review, but additional resources may be required to respond.

		<i>Produce an education pack on homelessness for outreach work with schools (?with an RSL partner?) by March 09</i>	JB	Pack produced and available	Better education and informing expectations of younger generation, should result in further upstream prevention	Pack produced	Within JD of establishment staff.
		Explore possibility of developing a "supported lodgings"/Nights top scheme by December 08	JB/AB	Possibility explored	Judgement reached on cost vs benefit of such a scheme	Improved emergency service; reduced reliance on B&B	Within JD of establishment staff to review, but additional resources may be required to respond.
		Review level of rough sleeping in the district by November 08	SM/LF	Review completed	Better evidence base for revision of future policy/strategy	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff, but if revised count required according to existing Government guidance, additional resources may be needed

		Review protocols with other agencies including police, CAB & Benefits Agency by April 09	JB	Protocols amended or confirmed	Improvement in working relationships	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff.
		Expand protocol for RSL's advising of potential homelessness To next three largest RSL landlords in district by March 09	JB	Protocols in place	Greater opportunity to prevent homelessness or delay until other arrangements can be made.	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff, but dependant on willingness of other agencies

Key Task	Target Date	Milestone	Lead	Output	Outcome	Performance measure	Resource
Raise public awareness of social housing shortage	March 09	n/a	CM	Awareness raised	Better general understanding of the scale of the problem and the need to address it; reduced risk of community resistance to appropriate solutions.	Difficult to measure level of public awareness, except through shift in responses to general consultation such as simalto	Within JD of establishment staff.
Review and revise Careline Marketing Plan	March 09	n/a	FJ	Marketing Plan documented	Resources targeted to attract new customers	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff and within budget
Develop policy digest & Timetable for policy reviews	November 08	Digest by October 08	SM/LF	Digest completed & timetable prepared.	Ability to identify gaps and prioritise policies due for review. Better anticipation of impact of new legislation, guidance etc	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff
RSL stock database	October 08	n/a	KP	Comprehensive collation of spread of RSL existing stock	Better detailed understanding of existing provision, informing future development choices	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff
Review uses of Local Lettings Policies	September 08	n/a	SM/LF	Outcomes of current LLPs analysed	Recommendation to Portfolio Holder for continuation or otherwise of existing schemes and possible expansions	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff

Key Task	Target Date	Milestone	Lead	Output	Outcome	Performance measure	Resource
Develop improvement plan following inspection	September 08	n/a	CM	Plan developed	Realistic response to any weaknesses identified by the Strategic Housing inspection	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff to review, but additional resources may be required to respond.
Reassess position of 'key Workers'	November 08	n/a	SM/LF	Assessment completed	Consideration given to role of key worker provision in future developments in light of evidence gained	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff
Review RSL partnership	November 08	Revise criteria by October 08	CM	Revised RSL best level partnership	Best available RSL partners used and engaged in strategic processes	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff
Develop protocol for "rural-proofing" Housing Services	March 09	n/a	CM	Protocol produced	Should ensure that all new policies/practices do not disadvantage rural communities	Task to be completed by date given	Within JD of establishment staff.
Develop links with Districts overlapping with South Somerset sub-regional housing market	April 09	n/a	CM	Links developed	Better coordination across the sub-regional housing market	Task completed	Within JD of establishment staff.