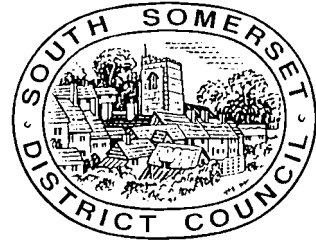


South Somerset District Council

Notice of Meeting



**South Somerset
District Council**

Making a difference where it counts

Thursday 11th December 2014

7.30 pm

**Council Chamber
Council Offices
Brympton Way
Yeovil
BA20 2HT**

(disabled access is available at this meeting venue)



All members of Council are requested to attend the meeting:

The public and press are welcome to attend.

If you would like any further information on the items to be discussed, please ring the Agenda Co-ordinator, **Angela Cox, Democratic Services Manager**

This Agenda was issued on Wednesday 3 December 2014.

Ian Clarke, Assistant Director (Legal & Corporate Services)

This information is also available on our website
www.southsomerset.gov.uk



South Somerset District Council Membership

Chairman: Mike Best
Vice-chairman: Carol Goodall

Cathy Bakewell	Andy Kendall	Ros Roderigo
Mike Beech	Jenny Kenton	Jo Roundell Greene
Dave Bulmer	Mike Lewis	Sylvia Seal
John Calvert	Pauline Lock	Gina Seaton
Tim Carroll	Tony Lock	Peter Seib
John Vincent Chainey	Ian Martin	Angie Singleton
Tony Capozzoli	Paul Maxwell	Sue Steele
Pauline Clarke	Nigel Mermagen	Paul Thompson
Nick Colbert	Graham Middleton	Kim Turner
John Dyke	Roy Mills	Andrew Turpin
Tony Fife	Terry Mounter	Linda Vijeh
Marcus Fysh	David Norris	William Wallace
Nigel Gage	Graham Oakes	Colin Winder
Jon Gleeson	Sue Osborne	Derek Yeomans
Dave Greene	Patrick Palmer	Martin Wale
Anna Groskop	Ric Pallister	Barry Walker
Peter Gubbins	Shane Pledger	Lucy Wallace
Brennie Halse	Wes Read	Nick Weeks
Henry Hobhouse	David Recardo	
Tim Inglefield	John Richardson	

Information for the Public

The meetings of the full Council, comprising all 60 members of South Somerset District Council, are held at least 6 times a year. The full Council approves the Council's budget and the major policies which comprise the Council's policy framework. Other decisions which the full Council has to take include appointing the Leader of the Council, members of the District Executive, other Council Committees and approving the Council's Consultation (which details how the Council works including the scheme allocating decisions and Council functions to committees and officers).

Members of the Public are able to:-

- attend meetings of the Council and its committees such as Area Committees, District Executive, except where, for example, personal or confidential matters are being discussed;
- speak at Area Committees, District Executive and Council meetings;
- see reports and background papers, and any record of decisions made by the Council and Executive;
- find out, from the Executive Forward Plan, what major decisions are to be decided by the District Executive.

Meetings of the Council are scheduled to be held monthly at 7.30 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month in the Council Offices, Brympton Way although some dates are only reserve dates and may not be needed.

The agenda, minutes and the timetable for council meetings are published on the Council's website – www.southsomerset.gov.uk/councillors-and-democracy/meetings-and-decisions

The Council's Constitution is also on the web site and available for inspection in Council offices.

The Council's corporate aims which guide the work of the Council are set out below.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the agenda co-ordinator named on the front page.

South Somerset District Council – Council Aims

Our key areas of focus are: (all equal)

- Jobs – a strong economy which has low unemployment and thriving businesses
- Environment – an attractive environment to live in with increased recycling and lower energy use
- Homes – decent housing for our residents that matches their income
- Health & Communities – communities that are healthy, self-reliant and have individuals who are willing to help each other

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South Somerset District Council

Thursday 11 December 2014

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence

2. Minutes

To approve and sign the minutes of the previous meeting held on Thursday, 6th November 2014.

3. Declarations of Interest

In accordance with the Council's current Code of Conduct (adopted July 2012), which includes all the provisions relating to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI), personal and prejudicial interests, Members are asked to declare any DPI and also any personal interests (and whether or not such personal interests are also "prejudicial") in relation to any matter on the Agenda for this meeting. A DPI is defined in The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012 No. 1464) and Appendix 3 of the Council's Code of Conduct. A personal interest is defined in paragraph 2.8 of the Code and a prejudicial interest is defined in paragraph 2.9.

Members are reminded that they need to declare the fact that they are also a member of a County, Town or Parish Council as a Personal Interest. As a result of the change made to the Code of Conduct by this Council at its meeting on 15th May 2014, where you are also a member of Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council within South Somerset you must declare a prejudicial interest in any business on the agenda where there is a financial benefit or gain or advantage to Somerset County Council and/or a Town or Parish Council which would be at the cost or to the financial disadvantage of South Somerset District Council. If you have a prejudicial interest you must comply with paragraphs 2.9(b) and 2.9(c) of the Code.

4. Public Question Time

Questions, statements or comments from members of the public are welcome at the beginning of each meeting of the Council. The total period allowed for public participation shall not exceed 15 minutes except with the consent of the Council and each individual speaker shall be restricted to a total of three minutes. Where there are a number of persons wishing to speak about the same matter, they should consider choosing one spokesperson to speak on their behalf where appropriate. If a member of the public wishes to speak they should advise the committee administrator and complete one of the public participation slips setting out their name and the matter they wish to speak about. The public will be invited to speak in the order determined by the Chairman. Answers to questions may be provided at the meeting itself or a written reply will be sent subsequently, as appropriate. Matters raised during the public question session will not be debated by the Council at that meeting.

5. Chairman's Announcements

Items for Discussion

6. **Chairman's Engagements** (Page 1)
7. **Non Domestic (Business) Rate Pooling** (Pages 2 - 27)
8. **Adoption of Housing Strategy Implementation Plan** (Pages 28 - 108)
9. **Loan to Drayton Community Venture** (Pages 109 - 110)
10. **Report of Executive Decisions** (Pages 111 - 113)
11. **Audit Committee** (Pages 114 - 115)
12. **Scrutiny Committee** (Pages 116 - 117)
13. **Motions**
There were no Motions submitted by Members.
14. **Questions Under Procedure Rule 10**
There were no questions submitted under Procedure Rule 10.
15. **Date of Next Meeting** (Page 118)

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Agenda Item 6

Chairman's Engagements

7th November

At the invitation of the Chairman of North Somerset Council, David Hitchins, Mike and Liz attended an informal civic evening which was held at the Winter Gardens, Weston-Super-Mare on the evening of the Weston Carnival.

9th November

At the invitation of Yeovil Town Council, Mike attended the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the War Memorial to commemorate Remembrance Day. This was followed by a Remembrance Service in St. John's Church. In the afternoon Michael attended a further service at Yeovil Cemetery.

14th November

At the invitation of the Headmistress of Chilton Cantelo School, Mike attended their Nursery Launch and "Release your Inner Child" session.

15th November

Mike attended the switching on of the Yeovil Christmas Lights at 6.30 pm.

22nd November

At the invitation of the Yeovil Town Council, Mike and Liz attended the Mayor's Charity Fundraising Ball at Westlands Leisure Centre, which this year raised funds for Yeovil District Hospital's Flying Colours Appeal.

29th November

The Leukaemia and Lymphoma Research Society held their annual Social Evening at The Old Barn Club, Yeovil. Mike attended this informal evening

Agenda Item 7

Non-Domestic (Business) Rate Pooling

Lead Officer: Donna Parham, Finance and Corporate Services
Contact Details: Donna.parham@southsomerset.gov.uk or 01935 462225

Purpose of Report

To seek endorsement of the urgent decision made to enter into a business rates pooling arrangement with other Somerset authorities under the Business Rates Retention scheme.

Public Interest

This report asks SSDC members to consider whether to join with other Somerset authorities to keep some of the money raised from business rates locally by creating a pool. Creating a pool would mean that less money will be returned to central Government if the estimated gains are correct. The pool also has additional risks if the authorities in the pool do not perform as well as expected.

Recommendations

That Full Council agree to;

- a) endorse the urgent decision to participate in the pooling arrangement with other Somerset authorities (Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset, Somerset County Council, Taunton Deane District Council, Mendip District Council, and Sedgemoor District Council, under the Business Rate Retention Scheme, for 2015/16; and,
- b) approve that delegated authority be given to the Assistant Director – Finance and Corporate Services in consultation with the Finance and Spatial Planning Portfolio Holder, to decide whether to remain in the pool once the government's settlement figures are announced in December 2014.

Background

The 2013/14 local government finance settlement saw the launch of the business rates retention scheme as a central part of local government funding.

Under the business rates retention element of local government funding, the level of business rates collected by authorities in 2013/14 will determine the actual funding received. Under the previous Formula Grant system, funding was provided via a fixed grant.

Under the proposed system, a Start-up Funding Assessment is determined for each local authority. This is determined in the same way as Formula Grant was determined previously i.e. using the four block model to determine a level of need and then taking into account changes in responsibility (e.g. with specific grants moving in and out of general grant).

The Start-up Funding Assessment is then split between Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Business Rates Retention (expressed as Baseline Need). The level of RSG is guaranteed throughout the year, whilst the Baseline Need element is not.

To fund the Baseline Need element, local authorities each has an expected level of business rates that is to be collected (NDR Baseline). For authorities with a Baseline Need that is higher than their NDR Baseline, a Top Up grant is required (this is also guaranteed). Whereas, for authorities with a baseline need that is lower than their NDR Baseline, a fixed Tariff is paid to central government.

Those authorities that collect a higher level of NDR income, compared to their NDR Baseline, will be rewarded through the scheme, as they will be able to retain an element of the associated increased NDR revenues. However, some of that gain has to be paid to the government in the form of a Levy.

Authorities that collect a lower level of NDR income will see a decline in their business rates revenue and a relative reduction in their overall resources.

The new scheme has a damping mechanism in place to limit individual gains/losses. The system uses a Safety Net (to limit losses) which will be funded through the Levy (on disproportionate gains). The Safety Net and Levy are explained below.

The Levy/Safety Net

The government has chosen to apply a proportional levy within the system. Under the proportional levy, each local authority is assigned an individual levy rate.

There are three key variables in determining the amount to be paid through the levy by an individual local authority. These are: the ratio of the proportional levy, the ratio of NDR Baseline to Baseline Funding Level and the level of NDR income.

The ratio of the proportional levy has been set at 1:1, meaning that a 1% increase in NDR income above the NDR baseline will translate into up to a 1% increase in Baseline Need. The actual rate of the levy for individual authorities will therefore be set at a level that limits the growth in cash resources to a set percentage of their respective Baseline Need. There is an upper limit on the Levy of 50 pence in the pound. Top-Up authorities (where the NDR Baseline is lower than the Baseline Funding Level), do not have to pay a levy.

Only local authorities that have growth in their NDR income are required to pay the levy. It is important to note that growth in NDR income is based on DCLG's determination of authorities' NDR baselines i.e. a levy will only be due if NDR income is higher than the amount that CLG has determined it should be.

It is also important to note that no levy is due on income increases due to annual changes to the multiplier or as a result of revaluation (scheduled for 2017).

The Safety Net within the business rates retention system will ensure no authority's income will fall by more than a set percentage of their original baseline funding level (and this level will be increased by RPI every year). The Safety Net percentage has been set at -7.5%.

How Business Rates Income is Split

The business rates income collected by billing authorities is split between central government (central share), the billing authority and its major preceptors. The government has set the central share at 50%.

Each billing authority's business rates will be further split between the billing authority and any relevant major precepting authorities (excluding Police Authorities) in its area, in order to

produce, for every authority, an individual authority NDR Baseline. The split will be undertaken on the basis of the proposed major precepting authority shares, in two-tier areas (shire counties with fire) the split of 80% district and 20% county is applied, in the West of England unitary area the split of 98% district and 2% Fire Authority is applied.

All the Somerset District Councils are 'tariff' authorities, but the County Council is a 'top-up' authority. This means that the Somerset Districts will need to pay a tariff to the Government which will be used to subsidise the 'top up' authorities such as the County Council. B&NES is a Tariff authority, whereas North Somerset is a Top-up authority.

Business Rates Pooling

Under the business rates retention scheme, local authorities are able to voluntarily form a business rates retention pool. Within a pool all Tariffs and all Top-Ups are combined, and a single levy rate is applied. Similarly, safety net eligibility is also calculated at aggregate pool level.

Tariff authorities are not required to pay a levy to the government if they are in a pool and combined tariffs are less than the aggregate top ups.

There is the potential for pooled authorities to receive a lower aggregate amount (than if they had acted individually), if authorities that would previously have been eligible for the Safety Net (if treated as individual authorities) were no longer eligible, due to being part of a pool.

Local autonomy to distribute resources amongst pool members applies; for example, authorities could decide that each member will receive at least the same amount as they would have if a pool had not been in place, and additional resources could be distributed through local discretion or weighted (potentially according to the level of benefit received).

The main points therefore in relation to pooling are that:

- Pooling is entirely voluntary.
- A pool can be comprised of two or more authorities.
- Local authorities cannot be members of more than one pool.
- Local authorities will themselves determine a pool's geographic coverage, including wider than within a county-region, although government has the ability to refuse pooling proposals where they perceive that there is no clear rationale for the proposed pool.

Government also has the right to consider whether the operation of pools could impact upon the level of funding available nationally for the safety net and (in exceptional circumstances) consider such affordability, when making decisions on pools.

- One pool member will need to act as the lead authority, in terms of payment/administrative arrangements.
- Pools can be any size, although authorities can only be a member of one pool.
- Pools will need to determine their own governance arrangements and must publish their pooling arrangements and financial information on how the pool will operate.

For 2015/16, pooling groups needed to notify DCLG by 31st October 2014 of their intention to pool, including the composition of the pool and its governance arrangements. As the timescales were so tight an urgent decision had to be made as to whether to pool or not.

Benefits of Pooling

The potential benefit from pooling has been estimated for a Somerset Pool containing Bath and North East Somerset, North Somerset Council, Somerset County Council, South Somerset District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, Mendip District Council, and Sedgemoor District Council. It should be noted that these estimates are based on the 2014/15 NNDR1 returns for each council. They therefore do not include any forecast of further business growth in this period. As no pool member is currently anticipating any significant reductions in their Rating Lists it may therefore somewhat underestimate the financial benefits of pooling.

The £2.063m additional resources that would be received, due to pooling, are shown in the table below. This sum represents the amount of Levy that is avoided being paid over to Central Government because the single pool becomes a Top-up pool. It is important to note that:

- The amount shown in the table below is *in addition* to the amount that each authority would have received outside of a pooling arrangement.
- If the County Council is not part of the pool, little gain from pooling would be possible (as the County is a significant “top up” authority).
- How the additional amount is split between the members of the respective pool is determined by the pool, through its governance arrangements.

Table 1; Forecast Change in Resources, Due to Pooling

Pooling using NNDR1: 2014/15								
£m								
Pool Membership	Basic System Numbers			NNDR1 2014/15			Allocation Methodology	
	Rates Target	Funding Target	Levy Rate	Retention (1)	Gain over Target	Levy	Pool Dividend	%
B&NES	30.750	21.097	31.4%	32.166	1.416	0.445	0.351	17.0%
North Somerset	27.993	28.306	0.0%	28.724	0.731	0.000	0.190	9.2%
Somerset County	14.123	60.830	0.0%	15.359	1.235	0.000	0.377	18.3%
Mendip	12.361	2.588	50.0%	14.000	1.639	0.820	0.408	19.8%
Sedgemoor	13.521	3.164	50.0%	14.897	1.376	0.688	0.349	16.9%
South Somerset	16.954	3.266	50.0%	18.139	1.185	0.593	0.304	14.7%
Taunton Deane	15.883	2.412	50.0%	16.166	0.283	0.141	0.083	4.0%
West Somerset								
Total Stand-alone	131.586	121.664		139.452	7.866	2.686	2.063	100.0%
Pool	131.586	121.664	7.5%	139.452	7.866	0.593		
Management Charge							-0.030	
Pooling gain						2.063		

(1) Includes SBRR compensation and other S31 grants

The Safety Net

In order to assess the potential impact of income volatility, the following analysis examines the loss in business rates required for an individual authority to reach the safety net level. It would be beyond this point that the gains of pooling would begin to be offset by a “cost”.

The table below shows the required percentage drop in NDR income in 2014/15 for each authority to reach the -7.5% Safety Net level. This assessment is shown against each authority's NDR Baseline and the Forecast NDR income.

Decline in Business Rates for Individual Authorities to reach for Safety Net

Pool Membership	NNDR1 14/15 £m	Loss %	Loss £m	(Tariff)/ Top-up £m	New position £m	Safety Net if stand alone £m	Diff. to be made up £m	= Equivalent fall in RV £m
B&NES	32.166	-9.3%	-2.998	-9.653	19.515	19.515	0.000	-12.694
North Somerset	28.724	-9.9%	-2.854	0.313	26.183	26.183	0.000	-12.086
Somerset County	15.359	-37.7%	-5.798	46.707	56.268	56.268	0.000	-133.648
Mendip	14.000	-13.1%	-1.833	-9.773	2.394	2.394	0.000	-9.509
Sedgemoor	14.897	-10.8%	-1.613	-10.357	2.927	2.927	0.000	-8.367
South Somerset	18.139	-7.9%	-1.430	-13.688	3.021	3.021	0.000	-7.419
Taunton Deane	16.166	-2.9%	-0.463	-13.472	2.231	2.231	0.000	-2.404
West Somerset								
Total Stand-alone	139.452	-12.2%	-16.991	-9.922	112.539	112.539	0.000	
Pool	139.452	-12.2%	-16.991	-9.922	112.539	112.539	0.000	-71.940

The table shows that as all of the authorities are forecasting higher NDR income than their respective NDR Baselines, the required reduction in NDR income to reach the safety net is higher than if the NDR Baseline was the assumed NDR income amount. Somerset County would require the largest fall in forecast NDR income to reach the safety net (at 37.7%), whilst South Somerset would require a 7.9% drop in forecast income to reach the safety net. The equivalent fall in each authority's Rating List's Rateable Value that such a percentage reduction represents is also shown.

As can be seen, very significant appeals or deletions would have to be experienced for any individual authority to get to this position, i.e. £7.4m for South Somerset. The biggest appeals risk to South Somerset is RNAS Yeovilton with an outstanding appeal on the 2005 list. However, SSDC has made an allowance of £2.4 million within its NDR for outstanding appeals.

It should be remembered that reaching the safety net level does not trigger an additional payment to an authority. It would only be reductions beyond the safety net level that are protected, i.e. at the -7.5% level; an authority would be guaranteed an income level equivalent to -7.5% of its Baseline Need.

The cost of supporting each authority, if it were to have a fall in income equivalent to, say, 8.5% of baseline need, i.e. 1% below the safety net level, has been calculated. This would be a cost met by the pool, which would reduce any pooling gains made or potentially cause the pool to make a loss.

Decline in Business Rates for Individual Authorities to reach 1% below Safety Net

Pool Membership	NNDR1 14/15 £m	Loss %	Loss £m	(Tariff)/ Top-up £m	New position £m	Safety Net if stand alone £m	Diff. to be made up £m	= Equivalent fall in RV £m
B&NES	32.166	-9.9%	-3.194	-9.653	19.320	19.515	-0.195	-13.522
North Somerset	28.724	-10.8%	-3.116	0.313	25.921	26.183	-0.262	-13.194
Somerset County	15.359	-41.4%	-6.360	46.707	55.705	56.268	-0.563	-146.617
Mendip	14.000	-13.3%	-1.857	-9.773	2.370	2.394	-0.024	-9.633
Sedgemoor	14.897	-11.0%	-1.642	-10.357	2.898	2.927	-0.029	-8.519
South Somerset	18.139	-8.1%	-1.461	-13.688	2.991	3.021	-0.030	-7.575
Taunton Deane	16.166	-3.0%	-0.486	-13.472	2.209	2.231	-0.022	-2.519
West Somerset								
Total Stand-alone	139.452	-13.0%	-18.116	-9.922	111.414	112.539	-1.125	
Pool	139.452	-13.0%	-18.116	-9.922	111.414	112.539	-1.125	-76.704

The cost of supporting an authority that falls 1% below the safety net ranges from £0.030m for South Somerset to £0.563m (Somerset CC) per annum. The potential risks associated with an individual authority requiring support from the pool if their business rates falls below the safety net is relatively small and could be funded by the additional resources continuing to be generated by the other members. The potential risk of the pool having fewer resources than if the individual authorities had not pooled is even less likely. This would require either 1) one authority falling significantly below its individual safety net or 2) simultaneous reductions in income across several authorities, with at least one dropping below its individual safety net level.

Governance Arrangements

The governance arrangements have been agreed and are attached at Appendix 2.

The overall principles for the allocation of resources are as follows:

- The running costs of the pool will be paid to the lead authority at a fixed management charge of £30k per annum.
- Each individual authority, where resources allow, will receive the same level of funding they would have received without the Pool (excluding running costs).

The remaining balance of the Pool consists of the levy payments that would have been paid to Government.

Any pool dividend will be distributed on the following basis:

- 18.3% to Somerset County Council
- 9.2% to North Somerset Council
- 62.1% to the remaining Councils in proportion to the levy saved
- 10.4% to the remaining Councils in proportion to their funding targets

The pool will not retain a reserve. Instead participants will maintain their own provision against future pool shortfalls.

Pool Shortfall

If a Member's business rate income drops by more than the Government determined safety net trigger, then, under the "No Worse Off" principle, that member will be entitled to receive the equivalent of a Safety Net Payment from the Pool. Safety Net Payments will be made as a first call on the Pool, before the Pool Dividend is calculated and allocated.

If there is a shortfall on the pool – i.e. there is insufficient funding to allow each authority to receive what it would have received outside the pool - it shall be met as follows:

Stage 1:

- 18.3% from Somerset County Council
- 9.2% from North Somerset Council
- 62.1% from any of the remaining Councils that failed to achieve its rates collection target. This shall be in proportion to the cash amounts that it is or they are below the target [needs to be clear whether this is total rates or only that council's 40% or 49%]
- 10.4% from the remaining Councils in proportion to their funding targets

No Council shall receive less than its safety net level outside the pool from this step.

Stage 2:

- If any councils do fall below their Safety Net level outside the Pool at stage 1 then a further deduction will be made, to fund the amount(s) that those councils have fallen below, from all councils with income in excess of their Safety Net amount outside of the Pool, pro rata to the amounts that they are above the Safety Net.

Stage 3:

- If any councils do fall below their Safety Net level outside the Pool at stage 2 then a further deduction shall be made, to fund the amount(s) that those councils have fallen below, from all Pool Members, pro rata to each authority's funding target. This is the only step at which an authority may receive less than its Safety Net level outside the Pool.

If a shortfall seems likely to continue, consideration will be given to the future of the pool, including dissolution.

Financial Implications

The estimates for 2014/15 indicate that if the pool had existed the authorities in the pool would share £2.063 million of which SSDC would retain an additional £304,000.

We cannot currently estimate the pool gain or loss for 2015/16 as the Government settlement figures have not been announced nor has each authority completed their NDR1.

SSDC can decide to withdraw from the pool once the settlement figures have been announced. As there will not be sufficient time to return to District Executive or full Council it is recommended that the final decision is delegated to the Assistant Director – Finance and Corporate Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Spatial Planning once the Government figures are announced. If a decision is made by any of the pool members not to continue at this point then the pool will collapse.

The financial risk to SSDC is if because of appeals/non-collection/demolition that the pool falls below the individual authority's safety net. South Somerset's safety net is around £250k below its baseline figure however the pool's safety net is around £9 million below its baseline figure. This means that losses up to this level would have to be borne by the pool. However the risk of this happening is extremely small as the 2014/15 figures show that the pool would have to lose £17 million of the expected income to reach this point. The pool has been set up to protect its members from individual losses beyond their own safety net as far as it possibly can.

Next Steps

The Governance of the pool cannot now be changed by any of the partners because they have now been submitted to DCLG.

Authorities retain then ability to withdraw from a designated pool before the pool comes into effect if after seeing the draft Local Government Finance Report they no longer believe that pooling provides the opportunities they had previously thought. If any authority decides to withdraw it will result in the pool collapsing for all the other authorities and they would revert to their individual positions.

Council Plan Implications

Council Plan 2012 – 2015: Focus One - Jobs “We want a strong economy which has low unemployment and thriving businesses”

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

None

Equality and Diversity Implications

None

Privacy Impact Assessment

None

Background Papers

None

Proposal to establish a Business Rates Pool based on Somerset Councils for April 2015/16.

1. Membership

- Bath & North East Somerset Council
- Mendip District Council
- North Somerset Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- Somerset County Council
- South Somerset District Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council

None of the councils listed are either part of an existing pool or proposed pool.

Membership of the pool will be reviewed on an annual basis. Other councils with a relevant geographic presence will be considered for inclusion within the pool (specifically West Somerset District Council) subject to there being no significant adverse impact on the financial viability of the pool.

2. Benefits of the pool

- 2.1 The make-up of the proposed pool includes Somerset County Council, Bath & North East Somerset (B&NES) and North Somerset Unitary councils, Mendip, Sedgemoor and South Somerset District councils, and Taunton Deane Borough Council, forming a continuous geographic area centring on the ceremonial shire county of Somerset, with a combined population of over 900,000.
- 2.2 The Pool will build on the economic and community links between Bath, the Somer Valley and Mendip market towns of Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Frome, Shepton Mallet, Street, Wells and Glastonbury in the east, and the principal towns of the Somerset Levels in the west; including Bridgwater, Burnham on Sea, Weston Super Mare, Nailsea, Clevedon and Portishead. The administrative centre of the county is located in Taunton, with the M5 motorway passing Wellington and running to the south of the county and Yeovil and small market towns including Wincanton, Chard and Ilminster.
- 2.3 The region is forecast to experience above average growth over the next several years. Pooling Business Rates would help to mitigate local demographic and service pressures arising from additional growth and, by fully rewarding those communities delivering such economic growth, will provide additional stimulus to new development. This will act as a further incentive for all the pooling authorities to proactively work together to drive economic growth within Somerset.
- 2.4 The Pool would complement B&NES and North Somerset councils' participation in the West of England City Deal agreement and support and incentivise the major development at Hinkley Point, the expansion of Bristol Airport as well as investment in large-scale distribution centres within the

region, development at key junctions on the M5 corridor and the Firepool central commercial district in Taunton. A wider Pool for Business Rates Retention would allow the full benefits of economic growth arising from the strategic transport and infrastructure investment expected from the City Deal and these other major developments to flow back to the local bodies, and therefore the communities, hosting that development.

- 2.5 The Pool would provide improved opportunities for co-ordination across the region, further re-investment in transport links in the area and would build on the joint-working that is already taking place, for example, between B&NES and North Somerset, including immediate opportunities to share expertise across the Pool membership. For example, the Pool would collaborate on best practice approaches to maximise business rates collection through the identification of high risk properties that could be missing from the Rating List.
- 2.6 In addition to providing the intended benefits of sharing the benefit from economic development across a wider area and benefitting the individual members, the Pool would also spread the risk of any volatility in Business Rates income.
- 2.7 The rationale for the Pool is to encourage economic growth; therefore Pool members are committed to use the additional resource to promote further economic growth. Subject to budgetary constraints, each Pool Member will allocate a significant proportion of their allocated Pool Dividend for activities that support:
- The creation of an environment where it is easy for businesses to start, locate and thrive;
 - Acceleration of the growth of the economy in Somerset through targeted support in the key strategic sectors;

In making these allocations Pool Members are emphasising their commitment to increasing their underlying business rates base.

3. Lead Authority

- 3.1 The Lead Authority will be Bath & North East Somerset Council.

This Pooling Proposal and the Governance Agreement set out below are agreed on behalf of each member of the Pool as follows:

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Jo Farrar

Signature:

Jo Farrar
Chief Executive

Date: 24/10/14

T. Richens

Signature:

Tim Richens
Divisional Director – Business Support
(S151 Officer)

Date: 24/10/14


Mendip District Council



Signature:

Stuart Brown
Chief Executive

Date: 27/10/14

Signature: 

Paul Deal
Corporate Financial Advisor
(S151 Officer)

Date: 27/10/14

North Somerset Council

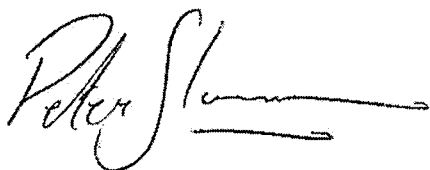
Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Jackson', written in a cursive style.

Mike Jackson
Chief Executive

Date: 28 October 2014

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Sloman', written in a cursive style.

Peter Sloman
Head of Financial Management
(S151 Officer)

Date: 28 October 2014

Sedgemoor District Council

Signature:



**Kerry Rickards
Chief Executive**

Date: 27/10/14


Signature:



**Alison Turner
Group Manager Finance
(S151 Officer)**

Date: 27.10.14.

Somerset County Council

Signature: 

Patrick Flaherty
Chief Executive

Date: 27/10/2014

Signature: 

Kevin Nacey
Director of Finance & Performance
(S151 Officer)

Date: 27/10/2014

South Somerset District Council

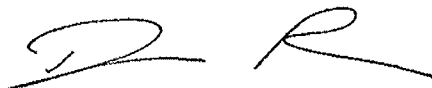
Signature:



Mark Williams
Chief Executive

Date: 28/10/14

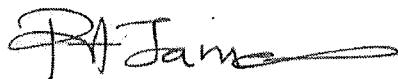
Signature:



Donna Parham
Assistant Director – Finance & Corporate Services
(S151 Officer)

Date: 28/10/14

Taunton Deane Borough Council



Signature:

Penny James
Chief Executive

Date: 30/10/2014



Signature:

Shirlene Adam
Director – Operations & Deputy CEO
(S151 Officer)

Date: 30/10/2014

Somerset Councils Business Rates Pool Governance Agreement

1. Pool Membership

- Bath & North East Somerset Council
- Mendip District Council
- North Somerset Council
- Sedgemoor District Council
- Somerset County Council
- South Somerset District Council
- Taunton Deane Borough Council

2. Introduction

This pooling proposal has been agreed by all pool members and signed by their Chief Executives and Section 151 Officers.

The proposal sets out various key principles and addresses the key governance areas to ensure that a robust framework is in place for the effective management of the Pool. Governance arrangements will stay in place until the Pool is fully dissolved.

Each time a new member joins or an existing member leaves the Pool the governance arrangements will need to be reviewed, renewed and agreed with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and its successors.

3. Status of this Agreement

The Pool Members agree that this shall be a binding contractual relationship and mutual commitments between them created by this Agreement shall from the date hereof be construed accordingly.

4. Key principles of the pool

- The aim will be to ensure that no participant receives less funding than if they had not pooled.
- Any dividend remaining or any shortfall will be calculated in accordance with the detailed clauses below.
- Outside of this agreement, individual authorities will retain their decision making powers and co-operate in good faith for the duration of this agreement to endeavour to procure the successful implementation of the Pool objectives.
- The Lead Authority is not left with any unforeseen costs or liabilities. Any such costs or liabilities will fall to individual authorities as set out in this agreement.

5. Definition of Pooled Funds

Pooled funds will include monies involved in the Local Government Business Rates Retention Scheme (BRRS). Subject to the requirements of the 2012 Local Government Finance Act and its related regulations, which must take precedence, authorities involved will pool all the business rates collected by each authority **except** the rates yield or growth from any local Enterprise Zone, New Development Deal Area or from renewable energy schemes or similar exemptions, as set out in current or future legislation, where an individual authority is allowed to benefit directly without deductions for levies or others' shares.

6. Governance Structure

The key element in the governance structure will be the s.151 officers of the authorities that are in the pool. They will form a Governance Board and will be responsible for guiding and managing the operational day-to-day running of the pool. The officers will seek to find unanimous agreement on all issues involving the pool.

The Governance Board will meet at least twice a year, initially quarterly, including an annual review meeting of the Pool arrangements and its performance to determine whether the Pool should be dissolved. For example, one or more members may wish to withdraw and the remaining members may wish to resubmit an amended pooling proposal.

If unanimity cannot be reached after a number of options have been considered, the circumstances and difficulties arising will be reported to and guidance sought from the Chief Executives of the councils that are in the Pool for a formal, binding decision to be agreed.

7. Duration of the pooling agreement

Membership of the Pool is voluntary and members will be able to leave the Pool in accordance with this agreement and the DCLG timescales that will be published from time to time (see clause 13).

8. Lead Authority

The Lead Authority for accounting purposes will be Bath & North East Somerset Council.

Responsibilities for the Lead Authority and individual Pool members are outlined in **Appendix 1**.

9. Management Charge

Pool set-up and administration costs incurred by the Lead Authority have been agreed at £30,000 per annum in the first year and thereafter will be uplifted in line with any Local Government pay award.

10. Pool Dividend

The Pool Dividend is defined as the amount remaining in the Pool after:

- The Management Charge has been deducted
- Any Tariff payment to Government
- Any Top Up payment from Government
- Any Levy payment to Government
- Any Safety Net payment from Government
- Payment to each participant of the amount they would have received should the Pool not have existed, including Tariff, Top Up, Safety Net and Levy payments and relevant s.31 grants
- Any interest payments or penalties to or from the Pool

The Pool will be based upon a “No Worse Off” or shared proceeds of net levy saved position. No Worse Off is determined to be that a member will be no worse off by being a member of the Pool than they would have been if they had not been a member of the Pool. Each member will retain the income they would have received under the BRRS if they were not a member of the Pool, as determined by Local Government Finance Settlement.

50% of rates collected are payable to Central Government (Central Share) and the remaining balance of the business rates will then be paid into the Pool on a net cash-flow basis. The Pool will effectively be responsible for the distribution of Tariffs/Top Ups.

11. Allocating any Pool Dividend

The remaining balance of the Pool consists of the Levy payments that would have been paid to Government less the deduction of the Management Charge and any payments made under the No Worse Off principle.

Any Pool Dividend will be distributed on the following basis:

- 18.3% to Somerset County Council
- 9.2% to North Somerset Council
- 62.1% to the remaining Councils in proportion to their Levy saved
- 10.4% to the remaining Councils in proportion to their funding targets

The Pool will not retain a contingency reserve. Instead participants will maintain their own provision against future Pool Shortfalls.

12. Pool Shortfall

If a Pool Member's business rate income drops by more than the Government determined Safety Net trigger, then, under the No Worse Off principle, that member will be entitled to receive the equivalent of a Safety Net payment from the Pool calculated according to the methodology set out in clause 10. The Management Charge and Safety Net payments will be made as a first call on the Pool, before the Pool Dividend is allocated.

However, if there is a shortfall on the pool – i.e. there is insufficient funding to allow each authority to receive what it would have received outside the Pool - it shall be met as follows:

Stage 1:

- 18.3% from Somerset County Council
- 9.2% from North Somerset Council
- 62.1% from any of the remaining councils that failed to achieve their rates collection target. This shall be in proportion to the cash amount that it is, or they are, below the target (based on their 40% or 49% local share).
- 10.4% from the remaining councils in proportion to their funding targets

No council shall receive less than its Safety Net level outside the Pool from this step.

Stage 2:

- If any councils do fall below their Safety Net level outside the Pool at stage 1 then a further deduction will be made, to fund the amount(s) that those councils have fallen below, from all councils with income in excess of their Safety Net amount outside of the Pool, pro rata to the amounts that they are above the Safety Net.

Stage 3:

- If any councils fall below their Safety Net level outside the Pool at stage 2 then a further deduction shall be made, to fund the amount(s) that those councils have fallen below, from all Pool Members, pro rata to each authority's funding target. This is the only step at which an authority may receive less than its Safety Net level outside the Pool.

If a Pool Shortfall seems likely to continue, consideration will be given to the future of the Pool, including dissolution.

13. Dissolution

The pooling arrangement will remain in place until any single authority or authorities say that they wish to leave the Pool. Pool members should consider the impact on the remaining members when making this decision.

Pool membership will be reviewed on an annual basis to determine whether a significant change in business rates is expected and consequently whether the Pool is still financially viable.

Authorities will be required to notify Pool members of their decision to leave the Pool in accordance with the notice period outlined below.

DCLG will be notified of any decision to dissolve the Pool in accordance with their published process and timetable.

Any subsequent decision to re-form a Pool, for example, if one member wishes to leave and the other authorities wish to continue in a new pool, will be made in a timely manner to ensure that a formal pooling proposal is submitted to the DCLG in line with their process and timetable.

14. Notice Period to Dissolve the Pool

Authorities will be required to advise the Pool of their intention to leave and consequently dissolve the Pool giving a **minimum of one month's notice** in advance of the DCLG deadline. This will allow remaining Pool members to consider whether they wish to submit a new pooling application.

Once the Pool has been finally designated by DCLG, the period of membership will be for a minimum of the forthcoming financial year. Should a member withdraw from the Pool during the settlement consultation period, the Pool will be dissolved in accordance with DCLG rules.

15. Distribution of Pool Assets / Liabilities on Dissolution

Pool members will be jointly and severally liable for the assets and liabilities of the Pool. However this should not override any of the detail included in this agreement.

16. Requests to join the Pool

If a new authority wishes to join the Pool it will be required to provide **three months' notice** prior to the DCLG deadline. This will allow time for existing Pool members to carry out due diligence and consider the relative merits of enlarged membership. Where a new member is admitted, the existing Pool is effectively dissolved and a new Pool formed.

17. Payment schedules and cash-flow

Payment schedules will need to be agreed and payments made on time so that the Pool can meet the payments required by Central Government and to share business rates collected. Payments into the Pool will include various payments and these will all need payment schedules as announced by DCLG or as agreed locally.

Payments to the Lead Authority will be made by direct credit on the day preceding the payment date to Central Government (the 'scheduled day'). All funds will be retained in the Lead Authority's own bank overnight.

The Pool shall charge interest at a rate of four percentage points above the prevailing Bank of England Base Rate on all payments from participants that are received after the scheduled day.

Safety Net payments are to be made in-year to provide some immediate protection to the authority involved. The Pool will attempt to replicate the timing and amount of any Safety Net payment that would have been due to its members if there was no Pool.

Levies are not finalised until after the year has ended. Thus any Pool Dividend or Shortfall cannot be finalised until after the year has ended. Forecasts of various elements, such as the likely Levy payments and Pool Dividend, will be needed so that authorities can make their decisions about whether to remain in the Pool.

Costs (or benefits) which may arise from the cash-flow into and out of the pooling fund will be offset against (or added to) the Pool Dividend.

Information, in the form of a monthly spreadsheet from the source business rates systems of the billing authority members of the Pool, will be provided to the Lead Authority who will provide at least quarterly monitoring reports to all Pool members of the resulting position.

18. Accounting adjustments (Bad Debts and Appeals provision)

The Forecast and Actual Retained Amounts are the net amounts receivable by the authority from ratepayers after taking account of transitional adjustments, empty property, mandatory and discretionary reliefs and adjustments for provisions for bad and doubtful debts and for losses on appeals.

The provision for losses on appeal will be calculated by individual authorities using Valuation Office data and statistical information on a consistent basis to be agreed by designated officers from all billing authorities.

The provision for bad and doubtful debts will be calculated by each billing authority in accordance with proper practices and will be subject to external audit. If the auditor does not certify the provision on the grounds that the authority has not acted diligently, any such amounts will be funded in full by the respective authority and an adjustment will be made to the Pool Dividend or Shortfall calculations to reflect this.

19. Treasury

The treasury function shall be provided by the Lead Authority. The Treasury Management Strategy of the Lead Authority (which will be at a minimum in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice) shall be followed in the operation of the Pool and the management of surplus balances. The funds shall be held in separately named account(s) from the remainder of the Lead Authority's business. All interest receivable is credited to the Pool at the actual rate achieved by the Treasury Management Team of the Lead Authority on an annual basis.

The Lead Authority will not be solely liable for any loss arising from invested sums provided it has operated within its Treasury Management policies. Any such loss will be borne by the Pool Dividend first, then in line with the Board's agreed policy for Pool Shortfall across the individual authorities.

APPENDIX 1

Roles and Responsibilities

The **Lead Authority** will be responsible for the following:

- All finances in relation to the Pool including payments to and from Central Government, the other members of the Pool and Preceptors.
- Calculating the funding position if all councils had not been part of the pooling arrangement and any Pool Dividend or Shortfall.
- Agreeing the various schedules of payment with other Pool members.
- All communications with Central Government, its agencies or other relevant third parties and completing all formal Pool returns to Central Government and DCLG on behalf of the Board including year-end reconciliations.
- All information and external reporting requirements for the Pool, details of which will be shared with all members of the Pool.
- The collation and submission of information required for planning and monitoring purposes by the governance structure, the DCLG or any other party.
- All audit requirements in relation to the Pool.
- Year-end positions for the Statements of Accounts for each member authority.
- The administration of the dissolution of the Pool.

To assist the Lead Authority in fulfilling its responsibilities **Pool members** (including the Lead Authority as appropriate) will be responsible for:

- The collection of relevant business rates to transfer to the Pool run by the Lead Authority.
- The implementation of their own Collection Funds.
- The submission of NNDR forms to DCLG.
- Providing accurate and timely information on the end of year financial performance of the business rates Collection Fund to enable the Lead Authority to calculate the end of year accounting entries needed.
- The provision of such information as the Board agree is reasonable and necessary to monitor and forecast the Pool's resources within the timescales agreed.
- Informing the Lead Authority, as soon as is practicable, of any intelligence that may impact on the resources of the Pool either in the current year or in future years.

APPENDIX 2

Glossary of Terms

“Agreement” means this Agreement comprising the terms and conditions together with its Appendices.

“The Board” means the Business Rates Pool Board whose functions are more particularly set out in section 6.

“BRRS” means the Business Rates Retention Scheme introduced by the Department for Communities and Local Government in April 2013.

“Lead Authority” means the authority taking on the responsibilities in Appendix 1.

“Levy” means a payment due to central government related to BRRS income above Baseline Funding levels, calculated using a nationally set formula.

“Management Charge” means the charge payable from the Pool to the Lead Authority in respect of the costs incurred by the Lead Authority in the performance of its obligations as Lead Authority, as more particularly described at section 8 and Appendix 1.

“Pool” means the Business Rates Pool containing the business rates collected from the Pool Members. A voluntary arrangement amongst a group of local authorities to pool the business rates generated locally in accordance with the BRRS pooling prospectus published by DCLG in July 2014.

“Pool Dividend” means the amount of Levy retained locally. This is calculated as the sum of levies to be paid by individual Pool members if the Pool did not exist, less any Safety Net funding that would have been due to individual Pool members if the Pool did not exist, less the administrative costs of the Pool.

“Pool Shortfall” means the Pool BRRS income is less than the sum of what Pool Members' BRRS income would have been in the absence of a Pool because the payment of compensation under the no worse off principle exceeds the Levy gains made by other Pool Members.

“Pool Members” means Bath & North East Somerset Council, Mendip District Council, North Somerset Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset County Council, South Somerset District Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council.

“Safety Net” means a payment received by an authority from Central Government under the BRRS if BRRS income falls by more than a specified percentage below the Baseline Funding Level. It is calculated using a national formula.

Agenda Item 8

Adoption of Housing Strategy Implementation Plan

Lead Officer: Colin McDonald, Corporate Strategic Housing Manager
Contact Details: colin.mcdonald@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462331

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to seek adoption of the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan.

Recommendation

The Council is asked to formally adopt the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan.

Public Interest

This report covers the Council's overall strategic approach to housing provision across the district, in partnership with other organisations such as the County Council (with respect to its health and wellbeing responsibilities) and a range of Housing Associations and other landlords operating within the district. The proposed document is the district specific plan which follows on from the county wide framework document adopted by the Council in March 2014.

It will be of interest to members of the public concerned about the provision of:-

- social housing for those in need in their local area
- low cost and other forms of affordable housing below prevailing market rates
- advice and support services to those who find themselves homeless
- housing related support for those who might otherwise find it difficult to maintain their current tenure
- practical assistance for those owning or occupying poor standard housing in the private sector
- temporary stopping points for the gypsy and traveller communities

and to members of the public interested in the wider economic benefits of improving housing provision.

It will be of particular interest to any member of the public who is seeking assistance with any of the above or has a friend or relative in need of assistance from the District Council or one of the other related partner agencies.

Background

Following the introduction of a new statutory requirement, the district council first published a Housing Strategy in October 1992 covering the three year period 1992-1995. The last full Housing & Accommodation Strategy was published in May 2004, covering the period 2004 – 2007. An update document was published in 2008, but since then no further updates have been issued, in anticipation of the development of the county-wide document.

The five housing authorities in Somerset have a long history of working collaboratively resulting in resources being used more effectively and various initiatives being developed consistently. This partnership working pre-dates the current government's emphasis on strategic, cross-border, multi-discipline partnerships and has been delivered through the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership (SSHP) and the Somerset Strategic Housing Group

(SSHG). The former includes the latter and all the relevant elected member portfolio holders from the five districts and the County.

Work began in earnest on a county wide housing strategy in 2011 with the creation of a vision statement, developed through wide consultation with affected agencies and groups. A project group began work in February 2012 to develop the vision into a full blown strategy framework. After originally holding back in order to allow for a county wide process, this councils scrutiny task and finish group considered the proposed framework document in January 2014. The Council formally adopted the Housing Strategy Framework Document on 13th March 2014.

When endorsing the county-wide framework document, the District Executive also endorsed the proposals for developing a district specific strategy document.

Development of the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan: Process

Following the proposals endorsed by the District Executive on 6th March 2014, an internal project team was created, led by the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager and included:

- Members of the Strategic Housing Unit
- The Environmental Health Manager
- The Empty Homes Officer
- A member of the Spatial Policy team
- A team leader from the Benefits team and
- The Council's Equalities Officer

The Housing Options team were also invited to send officers to the project team and were kept informed of progress at all stages.

The project team reviewed relevant strategies, action plans and other evidence to look at:

- How current each document is
- How consistent documents are with the county-wide housing strategy framework
- Whether the evidence base required a refresh
- Identifying and reviewing any outstanding actions
- Identifying whether anything needs to change in the light of the framework document and/or emerging issues
- Checking for options appraisals
- Inclusion of Equalities Analysis
- Opportunities for further partnership or cross boundary working.

A consultation draft was produced in July 2014 and widely circulated to a range of relevant stakeholders such as Parish Councils, Housing Associations and other partner organisations. The consultation draft was also made available on our web site. The formal consultation period ran for ten weeks, closing on 17th September. Embedded within the consultation draft were eight specific consultation questions at appropriate places within the text and a final catch-all question seeking comments on any other aspect. A web-based 'surveymonkey' questionnaire was also created using the same standard questions.

There was also a report back to Scrutiny and the Task and Finish Group (which commented on the pre-consultation draft). One of the regular Portfolio Holder discussion group mornings, open to all elected members, in early September, was set aside to go through the nine consultation questions. Finally the document was discussed at the Equalities Steering Group meeting on 21st October 2014.

Development of the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan: Content

The proposed Housing Strategy Implementation Plan for adoption is attached as Appendix 1.

The Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish group made suggestions with regard to the layout and content of the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan. The District Executive, meeting on 6th March 2014, endorsed that the plan be created with the following objectives:

- Ensuring SSDC addresses priorities based on its locality and demographic
- The strategy is supported by the most up-to-date information and evidence
- The strategy details the objectives and priority areas that should be addressed while providing flexibility in how this is achieved
- The document is accessible and uses 'Plain English' throughout

The document has been developed to be consistent with the county wide housing strategy framework and look at how some of the issues identified should be addressed at a local level. However, as suggested by the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish group it identifies four, rather than three, objectives:

- Objective 1 Health & wellbeing for all
- Objective 2 To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development.
- Objective 3 Making effective use of South Somerset's housing stock.
- Objective 4 To meet the housing and accommodation related support needs of Somerset's most vulnerable and least resilient residents by working in partnership.

The main part of the document provides commentary on these objectives in turn, recognising that some areas of activity straddle two or more of these objectives. On the whole the evidence behind the commentary is gathered together in a separate section towards the back of the document, or separately referenced, rather than set within the commentary text. Where new actions are proposed these are described in the main commentary but also summarised in an action plan table at the end of the main commentary sequence.

Financial Implications

There are financial implications arising from the some parts of the document, as described in the action plan section. Specific actions within that plan are either already resourced through existing budgets and staffing levels or will be subject to separate formal reports.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

All affordable housing in receipt of public subsidy, whether through the HCA or from the Council, has to achieve the minimum code three rating within the Code for Sustainable Homes.

Other interventions made by the Council or its partners in the private sector produce refurbishment or renovated properties achieving a higher standard than was previously the case, even if not reaching code three; particular emphasis is placed on tackling fuel poverty.

The proposed framework document supports these activities and therefore contributes towards reducing overall emissions.

Equality and Diversity Implications

An equalities analysis has been carried out and will be published alongside the document. It is attached as Appendix 2.

Implications for Corporate Priorities

The proposed framework document clearly provides a major plank in addressing “Focus Three – Homes” and in particular meets the stated aims:

This is what we will do:

- Minimise impact to our residents of the major changes to housing and council tax benefits proposed by the Government.
- Make optimum use of resources for home adaptations each year to enable people to live independently.
- Minimise homelessness by providing advice, support and housing options.
- With partners, enable additional new homes to meet the needs of the district, including mixed housing schemes to buy or rent that are affordable.
- Identify a temporary stopping point for gypsies and travellers by 2014.
- Continue to work with partners to bring private sector housing up to Decent Homes Standard
- Continue to work to bring empty houses back into use.
- Work with partners to combat fuel poverty”

and the major statement in the Plan:

“We want decent housing for our residents that matches their income”

The proposed framework document also contributes towards “Focus One – Jobs”, in particular through the positive economic impact of construction activity brought about by investment in new housing.

Privacy Impact Assessment

This report does not directly impact on any data held of a personal nature.

Background Papers

- Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy
- Somerset Homeless Strategy (2013 – 2016)
- Somerset Youth Housing Strategy & Action Plan (2012 -2015)
- Housing, Health, Care and Support Strategy for older People in Somerset
- Avon and Somerset Rough Sleepers Steering Group Action Plan (2012)
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) 2011 and update 2013
- Somerset Financial inclusion Strategy (2011-2013)
- Somerset Tenancy Strategy (2012)
- Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2026)
- Somerset Dementia Strategy (2010)
- Somerset Extra Care Housing Strategic Review (2008)
- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy (2006 – 2009)
- Private Sector Housing Strategy (2007 – 2012)
- Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2009)
- Empty Property Strategy (Jointly with Mendip) (2010)
- Temporary Accommodation Strategy (2011)
- Council Plan (2012-2015)
- Rural Housing Action Plan (2013)
- Asset Management Strategy (2014)

Previous reports:

Adoption of County-wide Housing Strategy Framework, Council, 13th March 2014

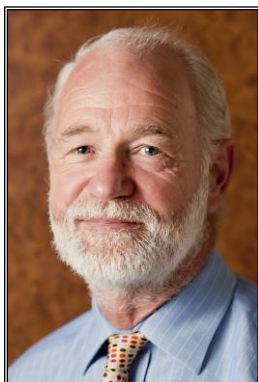
Adoption of Housing Strategy Implementation Plan, District Executive, 6th November 2014



Housing Strategy Implementation Plan



Forward



By Councillor Ric Pallister OBE,
Leader South Somerset District Council

Secure and affordable housing that is dry and warm is a pre-requisite to a healthy life whatever one's age and this has never been more important than now as we watch the housing needs gap widen year on year.

However, housing is more than just a roof over a family or individual's head and it is more than just bricks and mortar. These are just the physical structures that help to create the space and environment we live in which in turn should translate into a home. Place, community and neighbours all play their part and was a strong feature in years gone by but that is now at risk as we are told that a tenure for those renting, be that through a Housing Association or privately is far from secure. For many this is a strong disincentive to invest time, money and effort in a house, garden or neighbourhood to create a home.

Affordability is now a major factor for many, with rising utility bills outstripping wages, far too many residents of South Somerset are facing the effects of poverty and it seems to be getting worse.

Our task is not only to create the houses we desperately need, but also to work with the tenants to maintain their tenancies and invest in their homes.

In this plan we have tried to address all the elements of creating a home and supporting the households. We will never be able to do enough, but I believe that by working together across the public and private sector we can make a difference in the delivery of more houses that can become homes for those unable to make provision for themselves.

Credit

Throughout this document we have used various photographs to illustrate the text. Some of these are sourced internally but most have been kindly supplied by one or other of our Housing Association partners depicting recently completed and pipeline schemes.

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Introduction

This document covers the strategic approach of the District Council towards the provision of affordable housing in South Somerset. It outlines overall policy and suggests a series of discrete actions to help bring about the objectives listed.

Following the introduction of a new statutory requirement, the district council first published a Housing Strategy in October 1992 covering the three year period 1992-1995. The last full Housing & Accommodation Strategy was published in May 2004, covering the period 2004 – 2007, although an update document was also published in 2008.

Since the publication of the last full Housing Strategy the following related strategies and plans have been adopted:

- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy (2006 -2009)
- Private Sector Housing Strategy (2007 – 2012)
- Empty Property Strategy (Jointly with Mendip) (2010)
- Temporary Accommodation Strategy (2011)
- Council Plan (2012-2015)
- Somerset Tenancy Strategy (2012)
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2012-2015)
- Youth Housing Strategy (2012-2015)
- Rural Housing Action Plan (2013)
- Somerset Homelessness Strategy (2013 – 2016)
- Asset Management Strategy (2014)



Last year we adopted the county-wide Housing Strategy framework, which sets out the direction for all five local housing authorities (the district and borough councils) in Somerset. This implementation plan has been drawn up taking into account the following principle (as set out in the county-wide framework):

“Wherever possible working together on shared issues, developing joint strategies and policies and finding common solutions where appropriate; where separate approaches are required endeavouring to make these as consistent as possible whilst respecting local circumstances.”

This Implementation Plan is intended to be an overarching document. In developing it we have included those aspects of the county-wide housing strategy framework which require a district response or a degree of local refinement. The Council’s scrutiny task & finish group (made up of elected members), which originally looked at the county-wide framework document, asked that this document:

- ensures SSDC addresses priorities based on its locality and demographic
- is supported by the most up-to-date information and evidence
- details the objectives and priority areas that should be addressed while providing flexibility in how this is achieved
- is accessible and uses plain English throughout

We have reviewed all existing relevant SSDC strategies & action plans (as listed in Appendix A) to check for consistency with the adopted framework. Where the actions stated within these documents have been largely achieved, we have looked at what is outstanding and included those relevant actions in this document. We have also updated the local evidence base to check what things have changed since each of these strategies or plans were originally adopted and whether we now need to do something differently as a result. We have also included some new approaches in response to other factors which were not previously on the radar. Where something listed above has either been overtaken by events or run its due course, we have included the need to review it as part of the action plan arising from this document.

We have undertaken consultation (details are set out in Appendix C) and amended proposals in the light of the responses to this consultation.

The main part of this plan describes the issues, considers our options and proposes actions. It is set out in accordance with the four objectives (listed below), and as far as possible discussing issues in one place and avoiding repetition even though some issues will straddle these objectives.

Wherever possible the options and proposed actions include where we could or should be working with neighbouring councils or other agencies in a collaborative way to save resources, become more effective or both.

Objectives

The county-wide housing strategy framework sets out three objectives but this plan sets out four, because we feel the first is fundamental. These are:



Objective 1 - Health and Wellbeing for all

- Bringing homes up to the Decent Homes standard¹ wherever possible
- Maximising works to improve energy efficiency and thermal comfort
- Ensuring the diversification of the tenure mix within existing and new developments
- Ensuring all new developments conform with the minimum standards prescribed by the Homes and Community Agency²
- Supporting the delivery of the priorities within the Somerset Health and Wellbeing Strategy – developing effective information and advice
- Ensuring that composition of new developments make allowance for storage and waste
- Sustainable development – energy efficiency and diversity, local facilities and places of work

Objective 2 - To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development

- Effective use of planning
- Increasing supply of land for affordable housing
- Identifying need effectively
- Identifying more creative ways of delivering affordable homes
- Sustainable developments³

¹ The 'Decent Homes standard' is set nationally by the government and sets out minimum expectations such as the energy efficiency of a dwelling and the age of certain component elements.

² At the time of setting out this consultation draft it is unclear exactly what these minimum standards now are as they have been subject to some consultation, but previously this covered aspects such as minimum internal floor area.

- Continuing to maximise the New Homes Bonus⁴
- Co-ordination of partnership working with partner landlords such as housing associations

Objective 3 – To make effective use of South Somerset’s housing stock

- Ensuring that Homefinder Somerset continues to deliver mobility and choice of housing options to those wishing to access affordable housing in Somerset
- Ensuring that those already in social housing have mobility when they need it through the promotion and facilitation of mutual exchange wherever possible
- Bringing empty homes back into use and utilising them for those in housing need
- Implementing co-ordinated approaches to small scale adaptations and repairs to enable people to remain in their homes

Objective 4 - To meet the housing and accommodation-related support needs of Somerset’s most vulnerable and least resilient residents by working in partnership

- Participating in the refresh and implementation of the financial inclusion strategy, ensuring any changes to benefits are taken into account
- Constructive input into the review of extra care housing and support housing to support how the personalisation agenda in social care will affect housing service delivery
- Supporting the delivery of the priorities of the Somerset Homelessness Strategy, including the delivery of the Pathway for Adults (P4A)⁵
- Supporting the delivery of the key outcomes from the Somerset Youth Housing Strategy, including the implementation of the Pathway to Independence (P2i pathway)⁶
- Revising the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) and delivering the pitch requirements as set out in the GTAA 2013

³ This includes links to economic opportunities.

⁴ The ‘New Homes Bonus’ is a form of subsidy paid by central government to local government calculated according to the increase in the number of homes within the district, partly as a direct financial incentive to ensure that Local Authorities are not wilfully blocking new developments.

⁵ The ‘Pathway For Adults’ (P4A) is a combination of support packages commissioned by the County Council to assist individuals and families in maintaining an appropriate tenure. It covers a broad range of client groups including, for example, those escaping from domestic violence.

⁶ The ‘Pathway to Independence’ (P2i) is a programme of support packages commissioned by the County Council to assist young people, including those leaving care, to establish their own home or maintain an appropriate tenure.

Objective 1 – Health & Wellbeing For All

The quality of the housing stock

Just over a decade ago the Government introduced the Decent Homes standard as a 21st century benchmark representing the minimum aspects of quality that any dwelling should achieve. At the same time a target was set for all social landlords (councils, housing associations, etc.) to bring all their stock up to Decent Homes standard by now.



Thanks largely to a programme of replenishment and refurbishment agreed by Yarlington Housing Group (then known as South Somerset Homes) as part of the stock transfer arrangement when they took ownership of all the remaining former council housing, the Decent Homes standard was completely met for social housing last year at the point when the last remaining pre-stressed reinforced concrete homes were demolished, prior to replacement.

It is still possible for an individual property to fall outside the Decent Homes Standard when, for example, the heating system reaches a certain age and lower level of efficiency. So, in order to ensure that social housing remains within the Decent Homes standard, Yarlington and other housing associations need to maintain a cyclical programme of repairs and replenishment. This is slightly more problematic with some of the older stock (mainly former council dwellings transferred to Yarlington), where some retro-fitting may be necessary to achieve expected energy efficiency levels.

The problem of properties failing to meet the Decent Homes Standard in South Somerset exists largely in the private sector, the two areas of concern being:

- marginal owner-occupiers
- (parts of) the private rented sector

In 2007 we adopted a private sector housing strategy to address this (and other issues), largely through a series of grants to assist landlords and marginal owners, especially with respect to energy efficiency, an important part of the Decent Homes Standard. A lot has changed since then with the Government reforming the grants system, the introduction of soft loans⁷ in conjunction with Wessex Reinvestment Trust and the creation of the Green Deal. We do not propose to discuss these aspects further in this document; rather we feel this is best dealt with through a revised private sector housing strategy. Before setting out a new strategy we will first consider undertaking a new private sector stock condition survey to provide reliable up-to-date data on which to revise the relevant approach.

⁷ A 'soft loan' being one made available at an advantageous rate of interest, lower than might be available from a commercial lender

Action: Explore options to undertake a private sector stock condition survey, subject to available funding.

Action: We shall review and update the private sector housing strategy, with the intention of publishing a new document.

Tenure mix

We seek to achieve a diversification of tenure within existing and new estates. Former council housing estates have been broken up through the process of the Right to Buy and this continues, albeit at a slower pace, through the preserved Right to Buy still enjoyed by those former council tenants who have remained tenants of Yarlington since the day of the stock transfer.

On new estates we seek a proportion of new homes to be provided by a housing association, or other recognised provider, as affordable⁸ under planning obligations (i.e. sold at a price which allows the housing association to service the debt incurred on the rental stream available, whilst keeping the rent affordable). The proportion we initially seek under current planning policy is 35% of all the dwellings proposed on the site, although this figure may decrease if the developer is able to demonstrate that the overall package of planning obligations calls into question the economic viability of the site.



The tenure mix within the 35% is further broken down with at least two thirds being housing made available for social rent⁹ and the remaining (up to) one third being other forms of intermediate¹⁰ housing; traditionally this has largely been shared ownership. Further, we seek to pepper-pot (scatter) the affordable housing provision throughout the site, rather than have it as a mini-mono-

tenure estate in one corner of the larger estate. Our approach has been to, as far as possible, ensure that on casual inspection the ordinary bystander would not be able to immediately identify the particular tenure of any property on the overall development.

In the past this approach has been compromised for a number of reasons, for example where the economics of a site have led to the developer wishing to produce a significant proportion of the affordable housing at an early stage in order to

⁸ Put simply, 'affordable' here means available at a cost which is affordable for those who cannot afford market housing (either for rent or to buy) under current prevailing circumstances, i.e. it is sub-market.

⁹ 'Social rent' is the traditional rent regime operated by housing associations and, generally, is the cheapest available type of affordable housing.

¹⁰ 'Intermediate' is basically any form of housing which is more expensive than social rent but remains sub-market; this includes most forms of shared ownership and discounted market housing.

generate a (guaranteed) cash flow to help overcome necessary up-front infrastructure costs. Allowing an earlier provision of affordable housing has the advantage of helping to bring the entire site forward (when it otherwise might have remained stalled) and being able to rehouse a larger number of households from the register sooner rather than later. However, the disadvantage is a greater degree of clustering which has a longer term impact on the social mix within the overall estate. There have also been cases where the housing association has expressed a preference for some degree of clustering in order to ease future maintenance programmes. In one appeal decision¹¹, the inspector allowed the development to go ahead on the basis that, for this particular site, affordable housing was provided in a single strip along one edge of the site which, he felt, was well situated for access to town centre services.

We have almost always sought on-site provision of affordable housing, rather than the obligation being met through provision on an alternative site or through the developer paying a commuted sum¹² which we can then deploy to subsidise affordable housing elsewhere. Again, this is motivated by the desire to see a balance of social mix throughout rather than creating mono-tenure estates of any particular tenure. The one example where we might seek a commuted sum rather than on-site provision of affordable housing through planning obligations is where the site in question is an infill site otherwise completely surrounded by a former council housing estate which has not been subject to a high level of take up of Right to Buy or the preserved Right to Buy. In this example, the infill site is entirely private sector and adds to the overall balance of the wider neighbourhood.

Space standards, Lifetime Homes & other design issues

Where affordable housing is produced under planning obligation, our approach is to ensure that such housing meets the same standards as would be the case had the same Housing Association received public subsidy (by way of grant) either from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) or the district council. We are mindful that one of the unintended consequences of the so-called bedroom tax is the expectation that, for Housing Benefit purposes, any bedroom will be



treated as large enough for two children of an appropriate age and gender mix, regardless of the actual size of that bedroom. This leaves us to consider space standards with reference to only ever having an even number of bedspaces,

¹¹ The appeal was on a site known as Mitchell Gardens in Chard.

¹² A 'commuted sum' is a cash payment to the council equivalent to the cost of providing subsidy to create the housing on the same site but then available to spend on alternative provision on a different site.

although traditionally housing associations often refer to an odd number of bedspaces.

The minimum sizes we have been using until now refer to internal floor areas and are originally derived from the Housing Quality Indicator regime initiated by the now defunct Housing Corporation (although still referred to by the Homes and Communities Agency which took over its investment functions). They are:

1 bedroom flat	47 sq. m
2 bedroom flat	66 sq. m
2 bedroom house	76 sq. m (86 sq. m if 3 storey)
3 bedroom house	86 sq. m (94 sq. m if 3 storey)
4 bedroom house	106 sq. m (114 sq. m if 3 storey)
5 bedroom house	126 sq. m (134 sq. m if 3 storey)

The government consulted on housing standards during 2013, including the degree to which the Lifetime Homes standard is met. The government rightly pointed out that over the years a series of different standards have been developed by various agencies, which can lead to some confusion amongst the development industry and unnecessary additional costs in making adjustments to standard house types to meet local circumstances. As the results of this consultation were unknown, the Homes and Communities Agency then issued ambiguous messages on the standards to be met for properties within its most recent bid round (for 2015-18).



On 12th September 2014 the government issued a new consultation in which it set out proposed amendments to building regulations which it intends to legislate for in 2015 and a proposed national space standard for new housing. The government's stated intention is that the space standard will not be statutorily imposed but can be referenced in local planning policy where justified and subject to viability. However a single national space standard can effectively replace the 'many different space standards used by local authorities'. The consultation did not

seek views on this approach, but did seek views on the details of the proposed space standard.

Unfortunately this document is due to be finalised before the results of this latest consultation are known. However, we know that the proposed national space standard is, generally, higher than the internal space standards we have been using until now (although the government's proposal does not take into account the current Housing Benefit regulations, which assume that all bedrooms can be occupied by at least two children). We are therefore minded to adopt the proposed national space standard, although we currently (at the time of publishing this document) do not know the final form of that proposed space standard. We also accept that there are

some circumstances (such as the refurbishment of an existing building) where they may be harder to meet for very practical reasons.

The proposed standard, as published on 12th September 2014 in draft form, can be summarised as follows:

Number of bedrooms	Number of bedspaces	1 storey dwellings	2 storey dwellings	3 storey dwellings	Built-in storage
Studio	1 person	39 (37)*			1.0
One bedroom	2 persons	50	58		1.5
Two Bedrooms	3 persons	61	70		2.0
	4 persons	70	79		
Three Bedrooms	4 persons	74	84	90	2.5
	5 persons	86	93	99	
	6 persons	95	102	108	
Four Bedrooms	5 persons	90	97	103	3.0
	6 persons	99	108	112	
	7 persons	108	115	121	
	8 persons	117	124	130	
Five Bedrooms	6 persons	103	110	116	3.5
	7 persons	112	119	125	
	8 persons	121	128	134	
Six Bedrooms	7 persons	116	123	129	4.0
	8 persons	125	132	138	

*Smaller if shower room and no bath

Whilst the government has stated that these standards can be referenced in local planning policy, our intent would be to use them in other circumstances, such as being part of the conditions on which we provide grant subsidy to housing associations and others to build or acquire new housing.

The Lifetime Homes standard was originally proposed by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation many years ago following research into apportioning costs between amending initial design features and making future adaptations. Over the years gradual changes in building regulations have reduced the marginal cost of including the Lifetime Homes standard, for example by all new dwellings having electric sockets placed at an appropriate height above the floor. Criticisms have remained that other features are disproportionate in upfront costs for developers when considering the number of instances where a future adaptation might be avoided.

We therefore propose that all newly built affordable houses (whether achieved through planning obligations or through grant funding) are to have a wide enough staircase, wherever possible in a single straight run, to allow for easy fitting of a stair-lift chair when required. This being the only feature of the original Lifetime Homes standard we would seek to retain over and above those that have effectively been incorporated into building regulations.

In recent developments there has been more comment on the provision of space for waste storage, the use of water butts and, where HCA funding has been used, the provision of garden sheds, sometimes taking a disproportionate amount of the garden space. These features could be considered in a wider review.

Action: We shall develop an affordable housing design code, in collaboration with other local housing authorities if possible, using national space standards as a minimum.

In the past we have tried to incorporate Secured by Design¹³ wherever possible, although on a site by site basis there are sometimes conflicts between the objectives of Secured by Design and other desired aspects, for example the preservation of existing rights of way across the site. Including as many Secured by Design features as possible on an estate should reduce the incidence of opportunist crime and other antisocial behaviour, reinforced by a robust approach to housing management from housing association partners and private sector landlords. More recently the government has signalled the intention to reduce the overall burden of regulation on the private sector, including developers, and this has called into question the future of Secured by Design.

As we develop a design code for affordable housing we could include some aspects of Secured by Design. However this may become impractical when Secured by Design features by their very nature should cover the estate as a whole and our expectation is that affordable housing will be scattered, either through pepper-potting or through small clusters, throughout a larger site.

Housing for Independence

The Somerset Health & Wellbeing Strategy contains an action to achieve 'housing for independence':

"There needs to be an increased focus on the changing housing needs of the Somerset population, with particular emphasis given to widening the housing options for achieving and maintaining independent living."

This can be achieved through greater analysis of the tenure and property types commissioned on new sites and a review of the support systems in place to enable people to remain in their own home wherever possible or to retain or regain their independence for as long as possible.

¹³ 'Secured by Design' covers aspects of proposed designs and estate layouts with the intention to increase the security features of the built environment and reduce poor design features which might assist criminal behaviour.

Objective 2 – To Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing

The district council has a long and very successful history of providing affordable housing, particularly for rent at sub-market levels, but also for other tenures such as shared ownership. There are two main mechanisms for achieving this:

- through housing associations (and others) building on their own sites, or renovating buildings that they have acquired, using public subsidy i.e.
 - Grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)
 - Grant funding from the district council
 - Publicly owned land or buildings transferred at nil or reduced cost
 - Some combination of the above
- through private developers being obliged to sell a proportion of the dwellings on their site to a housing association (or other affordable housing provider) at a reduced rate as part of their package of planning obligations under a s106 Agreement¹⁴

Over the past six years we have delivered 1,460 new homes (representing a net gain of 1,116 new homes when taking into account replacements for demolished system built concrete dwellings) having deployed just over £2½m of our own capital resources and, in turn, levered in almost £53m of central public funding via the Homes and Communities Agency. More detail can be seen in graphs 1-4 and charts 1-4 in the evidence section (pages 41-45)

Action: We shall deliver a further 270 new homes during 2014/15 and aim to deliver at least a further 270 during the 2015/18 programme period.

Our current planning policy is that all qualifying sites (i.e. over a certain threshold) should provide 35% of the dwellings as affordable. Our current threshold is 15 dwellings or ½ hectare, but our intention is to reduce this to six. We are unable to reduce the threshold to six until we have an adopted Local Plan which, at the time of producing this draft, is subject to examination. The government has consulted on issuing a national minimum of ten which, if implemented, would undermine our locally based policy.

Action: We shall reduce our threshold through planning policy as soon as we are able to do so, either to six dwellings (as originally planned) or to ten (if this is imposed by central government policy).

Viability issues are important with several sites having recently had their overall affordable housing contribution reduced due to the economics faced by the developer; however, in all cases the affordable housing has been part of a package of reductions, with other obligations also being reined back, and we have considered

¹⁴ 's106' is section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). A s106 Agreement is a legally binding document which binds all parties to certain provisions, such as contributing towards community facilities, within the meaning of the Act.

overage clauses which (at least in part) restore the lost obligations should the economics of the site improve over time, prior to completion.

So, given that some sites fall below the threshold and others have reduced contributions due to viability, the overall level of affordable housing achieved through the planning obligation route falls short of the 35% expressed in the policy.

Whatever is agreed in the s106 Agreement does not necessarily get reflected in actions on the ground. In some cases, we have apparently secured a level of affordable housing through the s106 Agreement but many years have passed before the developer in control of the site has even really begun. In other cases we have agreed that the affordable housing provision does not need to commence on day one but at some later trigger point, taking into account some of the upfront costs that a developer might face (and thus needing a greater proportion of open market sales in the early stages).

On the other hand, we have agreed a greater degree of clustering and greater provision of the affordable housing in the early stages where this has given the developer a guaranteed income (albeit not at full profit compared with open market housing) to help overcome major infrastructure costs (such as essential road works). In a couple of cases, this has led to a major site being well over 35% affordable whilst still partially completed, even though it might, for overall viability reasons, fall below 35% overall when finally completed.

The 35% target is derived from the projected need for affordable housing compared to the projected overall need for housing (of all tenures) for the period of the Local Plan.

Sustainability and the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)

In this context, we are using sustainability in the economic sense rather than discussing the green features of housing. In some places our views on how much housing is required are based on expressed demand and an assumption of the future demographics. In other places our views are influenced by what future demand for housing might be predicted as a result of new job opportunities arising, i.e. sometimes the projected size of a settlement in the Local Plan is influenced by the projection of economic development rather than population or household growth per se. The new government guidance on Strategic Housing Market Assessments¹⁵ expects us to take these factors into account.



¹⁵ A Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) is a technical assessment of the current trends and shortfalls within a functioning housing market area intended to inform future housing and planning

The last SHMA was published in February 2009 based on data gathered in 2008. The evidence within the SHMA is now out of date and needs an urgent refresh. The county-wide framework relies more heavily on current housing register data and we can continue to do so for lettings purposes and to help inform desired property mixes in proposed sites as they come forward, but for longer term planning purposes we need a refreshed SHMA. We require a full refresh in accordance with latest guidance published in the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)¹⁶.

The housing register (see tables 9-12 on pages 52-55) provides a live picture of expressed housing need, but it has a number of limitations and is not necessarily a complete picture. For example we often find that in small villages there is a range of hidden need because many households who cannot afford to live in the village do not apply on the register. Their reasons may include:

- feeling that there is little or no point as they never see any vacancies occurring in their village
- thinking that the register is only for those who wish to rent (and not for those who aspire to home ownership, such as through shared ownership)

Because of this low take-up on the register, villages often undertake a local housing needs survey to establish the current level of local need and such surveys are often used as evidence when seeking planning permission outside of the ordinary development boundary for a rural exceptions scheme¹⁷.

The SHMA has different limitations: whilst it took into account the (then current) backlog of need as expressed through the housing register, it extrapolated need over the plan period by looking at income levels and household formation projections. It told us that two thirds of all those requiring affordable housing could only afford the prevailing rent regime (which we now refer to as social rent). The new SHMA needs to tell us more about local incomes and the affordability of different types of affordable housing (including the government's new affordable rent model and testing out the potential for discounted market housing). The previous SHMA gave us some idea of what proportions were needed of different size dwellings (e.g. one, two or three bedrooms) but did so before the slight amendments to entitlements brought about by the changes to the Housing Benefit system. We should also gauge, through the SHMA process, what proportions of new dwellings should be bungalows.

The SHMA should be refreshed as soon as possible. There are limitations on partnership working brought about by the point in the local plan cycle that each authority has reached. We should try to work collaboratively again, if we can, but cannot afford to let this desire hold us up from getting on with it.

policy. The government's recent change in guidance to the Housing And Economic Development Needs Assessment is intended to take into account the local economic factors.

¹⁶ The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is published by the government and provides technical guidance on a range of planning policy topics.

¹⁷ A 'rural exceptions scheme' is where affordable housing is permitted, as an exception, outside of the usual development boundary for the settlement on the basis that the local needs of the settlement for affordable housing cannot otherwise be met within the same settlement.

Action: We shall refresh the SHMA, in collaboration with neighbouring planning authorities if possible, with the intention of having full analysis available by December 2015.

Other Opportunities for Affordable Housing

Our ability to acquire new housing directly is limited by financial rules over the operation of a 'Housing Revenue Account' (which was effectively closed when the Council undertook a transfer of all its tenanted homes to a newly created Housing Association which has since become Yarlington). We intend to identify more creative ways of delivering affordable homes, possibly using some of our own available capital funding to lever in further investment. One way in which we could achieve this might be through the creation of a joint venture vehicle with a partner organisation, such as a housing association. In turn, an active joint venture organisation, or some similar model, could give greater certainty of bulk sales to some developers and thus bring forward stalled sites.

Action: We shall assemble a portfolio of around twenty properties and investigate creating a joint venture vehicle, or other options, to provide for local housing needs



In recent years, some housing associations, such as Yarlington, have employed alternative construction methods such as some timber framing systems which require less intensive labour on site. This has tended to be on sites where they are in control of the entire site rather than on larger sites where the affordable housing is only one element. We could also investigate

further alternative forms of construction, such as other forms of modular units, to reduce overall construction costs and promote these to the wider development industry.

Action: We shall investigate alternative forms of construction

Often developers sell houses on their new estates on a part-exchange basis as a way to assist the purchaser. These acquired properties may be of variable quality and sizes and scattered over a much larger area than the immediate area of the site which the developer has brought forward.

Every year we undertake the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)¹⁸. It might be that smaller parcels of land put forward for inclusion in the SHLAA could be developed by a housing association, one example being where we need to identify land on the edge of a village for a rural exceptions scheme.

¹⁸ The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) is a process undertaken by spatial policy planners to identify the local capacity to provide for the required increase in dwellings.

Housing associations continue to use smaller infill sites to produce affordable housing and, occasionally, redundant buildings such as former clothing factories. Here housing associations are in competition with private developers and may not always be able to compete on land prices. Where they are able to bring forward such sites, public subsidy is usually required, although some form of cross subsidy through a limited amount of market sale might be possible.

There may be some scope in finding some additional public sector land (but note, as previously stated, the desire to achieve diversification and avoid single tenure estates). We no longer own land in any great amount, although a couple of schemes are currently on site on land which we are leasing long term to a housing association partner. We have tried to consider public sector land in the past and this has also led to a couple of other schemes being brought forward based on a housing association purchasing land from the county council. However other public sector agencies, most notably the Ministry of Defence and the British Rail Residual Board were not so forthcoming. We look forward to working with the HCA, which is acting as the government's clearing house, and challenging why some of these land holdings have not been brought forward.

Maximising the New Homes Bonus

Since the introduction of the New Homes Bonus¹⁹, we have been a net gainer (compared with the loss of other central government funding), due to the number of new homes that have been brought forward during the qualifying period. For example the amount for 2013/14 exceeded £ 2.3m, about half of which was derived from the creation of new affordable housing, which also attracts an additional premium on the New Home Bonus. Funding an Empty Property Officer post has proven to be a spend-to-save measure as the net decrease in empty properties has also contributed significantly to the level of New Homes Bonus we qualify for.

Co-ordination of Housing Partners

We co-ordinate with partners such as housing associations and private sector landlords in order to provide a consistent response to issues in the affordable and private rented sectors.

We have had a partnership arrangement with a small number of housing associations for many years, choosing our main partners on a range of criteria; that is, not just concentrating on the efficiency and effectiveness of their development function, but also taking into account their record of housing management, such as their ability to robustly respond to substantiated incidents of antisocial behaviour.

Our current main partners are **Aster, Jephson, Knightstone, Raglan** and **Yarlington**, but we will also work with **Hastoe** on some more rural sites.

¹⁹ The 'New Homes Bonus' is a form of subsidy paid by Central Government to Local Government calculated according to the increase in the number of homes within the district, partly as a direct financial incentive to ensure that Local Authorities are not wilfully blocking new developments.

The last time we ran the selection process, we did so with Sedgemoor and Mendip District Councils. This had the added advantage of sharing resources to run the process and housing associations having to produce one submission rather than three. The result was that we chose exactly the same five main partners as Mendip and we both share four of these with Sedgemoor. There is currently a proposed merger between Jephson and Raglan, with a joint transition board already appointed. Assuming this does go ahead, we will be reduced to four main partners, as will Mendip. There is a risk to us (in terms of sector capacity) of having too many eggs in too few baskets, which could seriously impact on our delivery should anything happen to any one of the remaining partner housing associations (for example a moratorium on new building brought about by a significant failure on a site elsewhere in the country). We also want to continue to give private sector developers a wide enough choice when suggesting potential named housing associations to receive the affordable housing in s106 Agreements. The previous selection exercise was run too long ago to justify a simple promotion of the Housing Association that came sixth.

Action: We shall undertake the housing association partnership selection process, in collaboration with Sedgemoor and Mendip District Councils, with the intention of having a revised partnership in place by April 2015.

Self-Build & Custom-Build Housing

There is potential for some housing in the district to be provided via a self-build or custom-build route. The government is keen to promote these forms of provision and will be consulting on whether councils should set aside some of their own land to be made available for custom-build options (the so-called 'Right to Build').

Self-build tends to be where the future occupants either collectively or individually work on the site themselves, potentially buying in specialist trades at different stages of the construction. The 'sweat equity' accumulated through working on the build themselves either converts to a reduced rent (where the scheme is managed by a landlord such as a housing association) or to a reduced construction cost (where the scheme is to be owned by the participants).

Custom-build refers to where a house is not purchased from a volume builder but is commissioned as an individual unit. Custom-build could include self-build but could be entirely contracted out to a private builder (presumably a small scale company), provided that the future occupants remain in control of the process. In theory, this form of custom-build could prove to be cheaper than purchasing a standard house type from a volume builder, but the individual choices involved probably do not command the same economies of scale.

Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts are good examples of communities taking control and transforming the future of their local community. They are non-profit, community-

based organisations run by volunteers that develop housing, workspaces, community facilities or other assets that meet the needs of the community, are owned and controlled by the community and are made available at permanently affordable levels.



South Somerset currently has two active CLTs (at Norton-sub-Hamdon and at Queen Camel), both of whom are working in collaboration with a housing association (Yarlington and Hastoe respectively). In each case the CLT has taken ownership of land previously used for agriculture on the edge of their village and are entering

into a long term lease with the housing association. The ground rent raised under the lease forms the basis of a community fund for other projects. The CLT and the housing association are both legally bound by the s106 Agreement which ensures that the houses will be available for very local people in perpetuity.

In both cases the housing association has secured funding from the HCA under a special community-led pot of funding, thanks to the partnership with the CLT. In both cases the houses are a mixture of rent and shared ownership.

Objective 3 – Making Effective Use of South Somerset’s Housing Stock

Since December 2008, we have worked with the four other local housing authorities and all the major housing association landlords in the county on a single housing register and choice based lettings system, known as Homefinder Somerset. All applicants are placed in one of three broad bands ('gold', 'silver' or 'bronze'), which relate to their relative level of housing need and have an effective date (usually the date that they first applied). Rarely, the most urgent cases are placed in a fourth 'emergency' band.

Almost all available homes are advertised on a weekly basis, with applicants placing bids on those properties they are eligible for (e.g. with the right number of bedrooms or with the right type of adaptation for their family). Subject to verification the landlord will ordinarily offer the property to the bidder in the highest band, and where there is more than one eligible applicant in the same band, the bidder with the longest effective date.

In the early part of 2014, further changes were implemented to the system following new government guidance and changes to the welfare benefits system. The two most significant changes were:

- closing the register to those who cannot demonstrate a local connection to Somerset (with some exceptions such as certain services personnel)
- changing the bedroom eligibility to match current housing benefit rules on the age and gender split of children who can share a bedroom

A monitoring board, which represents all the councils and landlords involved in the Homefinder system, exists to check that actual outcomes (and other procedural practices) sufficiently reflect the intentions of such changes.

The partnership is now working together to introduce a county-wide mutual exchange site which should be introduced in November 2014 (see table 14 on page 57 for mutual exchange statistics).

Local Lettings Plans and Policies

In some cases, housing associations operate a local lettings plan (for initial lets of a new scheme) or a local lettings policy (longer term covering casual vacancies as they arise over time) in order to produce a sustainable community. In this context the word 'local' should not (necessarily) be taken to imply that lettings are only for local people – but that the plan or policy covers a local area rather than all stock in a single district.

One example might be on initial lets to set aside a significant proportion for existing tenants (of all housing associations) in need of a transfer. This creates a scattering of subsequent vacancies, not necessarily all of the same size as the original stock

and not even necessarily in the same settlement, which can then be let through the Homefinder system as normal, thus probably rehousing a high proportion of those in high level need such as gold and emergency band households. In this way a batch of new properties can contribute towards reducing a high level of need, but not necessarily directly and not all at the same time in the same location.

Local lettings policies have been used as a longer term measure where there are special circumstances, such as the need to turn an estate around, and often in conjunction with a range of other measures such as organising residents' associations and undertaking environmental works or refurbishing communal areas. The relevant legislation requires consent from the local housing authority and we, in turn, have delegated power to our portfolio holder to agree such local lettings policies, provided they are still justified and provided the total housing association stock covered by any such policy does not exceed 3% at any one time. Our concern here is that too many such restrictions would reduce our ability to meet our statutory obligation towards those in the reasonable preference²⁰ groups and may have other equalities impacts. Approval of such local lettings policies is time limited, so there are five such policies due for review.

Action: Review each of the following local lettings policies with a view to renewing, revising or revoking:

- Roping Road, Yeovil (Yarlington)
- Wellington Flats, Yeovil (Yarlington)
- Henson Park, Chard (Yarlington)
- Fosse Park, Yeovil (Jephson)
- Old Lloyd's Bank & Hanover House, Langport (Yarlington)

A Rural Lettings Policy



There is a potential for a rural housing lettings policy. This would be similar to the local lettings policies described above but could cover all housing association vacancies arising in our most rural settlements where the amount of available affordable housing has reduced over time. Similarly to the cumulative effect of the local lettings policies referred to above, we need to ensure that the

proportion of vacancies affected remains low in order to ensure that we fulfil our

²⁰ The 'reasonable preference' groups are those types of applicant households set out in the relevant legislation as having the greatest need, such as those who are overcrowded or living in insanitary conditions. The local housing authority must demonstrate that its policies and processes provide sufficient weight towards these groups, i.e. they should stand a greater chance of being rehoused than applicants who are not in a reasonable preference group.

statutory obligation towards the reasonable preference groups and consider other equalities issues.

The take up of the Right to Buy (and, since the transfer of former council stock to Yarlington, the preserved Right to Buy) has been disproportionate in rural settlements; at the same time, the opportunities for further provision have tended to be more limited. In many cases, we have spent years taking a rural exceptions scheme from concept to reality in order to meet very local needs that otherwise are not getting served through letting the existing stock if and when it becomes available.

Rural exceptions schemes typically give preference initially to: those with a proven local connection to the target village; then to those with a proven connection to the 'doughnut ring' (of immediately adjacent parishes); and finally to anybody with a connection to the district. Where there is more than one household with a need for the size and type of property on offer and a local connection on the same tier,



the normal Homefinder rules apply and this vacancy will be let to the household with the highest banding and, if in the same banding, the longest effective date. Usually the logic of the 'doughnut ring' of immediately adjacent parishes is to include all adjacent parishes (with a population of less than 3,000) even if they happen to be in a different district because the target village lies on the district border.

A Rural Housing Lettings Policy, similar to the one adopted by Mendip District Council²¹, would treat all vacancies in the target village as if they were subject to the same rules as rural exceptions schemes, but without going through all the expense and effort of creating a small number of new dwellings. Whilst being somebody with a very local connection and being in one of the reasonable preference groups are not mutually exclusive, we need to judge the number of affected dwellings carefully in order to ensure the balance between trying to meet very local needs and meeting our wider statutory obligations.

An analysis of total housing association general needs dwellings in villages with less than 3,000 population suggests that a cut-off point of 20 dwellings (or less) would encompass 50 parishes and represent 3.27% of all Housing Association stock (although probably a lower percentage of vacancies as these tend to arise less frequently in rural locations, initial analysis suggests around 2.5%).

²¹ <http://www.mendip.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=3587&p=0>

Another option might be to include all vacancies arising where there are 10 general needs dwellings or fewer (which would cover 38 parishes) and every other vacancy where there are 11 or more but fewer than 25 dwellings (which would cover a further 20 parishes). This would be equivalent to 3.22% of all stock (again, initial analysis suggests around 2.5% of vacancies).

Action: We shall develop and implement a balanced rural lettings policy with the intention that it takes effect from August 2015.

We are committed to bringing forward more affordable homes in very rural locations through the use of the rural exceptions policy and the emerging Local Plan policy SS2²². The Rural Housing Action Plan will need to be revised in due course and include specific actions in certain locations. In the evidence section we have updated one of the main summary tables from the previous Rural Housing Action Plan, showing where local surveys have been undertaken and where local schemes have been developed since. (Table 13 on pages 56 & 57).

Action: We shall review the rural housing action plan with the intention of publishing a new plan by May 2015.

Tenancy Strategy

The Localism Act 2011 placed a new statutory responsibility on local housing authorities to develop a Tenancy Strategy to guide social landlords (mostly housing associations) in developing tenancy policies for their own stock. It also required those landlords to have regard to the strategy. This was in response to the new freedoms for such landlords in granting new tenancies on fixed terms and on a different rent regime (to be up to 80% of the local market rents).



Starting in July 2011 we led a county-wide project team, including some of the larger housing association landlords, to create a single county-wide tenancy strategy to provide consistency across the county for all concerned. After significant consultation we adopted this strategy in July 2012. The other four local housing authorities in the county agree that it is now time to review the strategy in the light of actual outcomes resulting from lettings under the range of tenancy types and rent regimes currently available in the social sector.

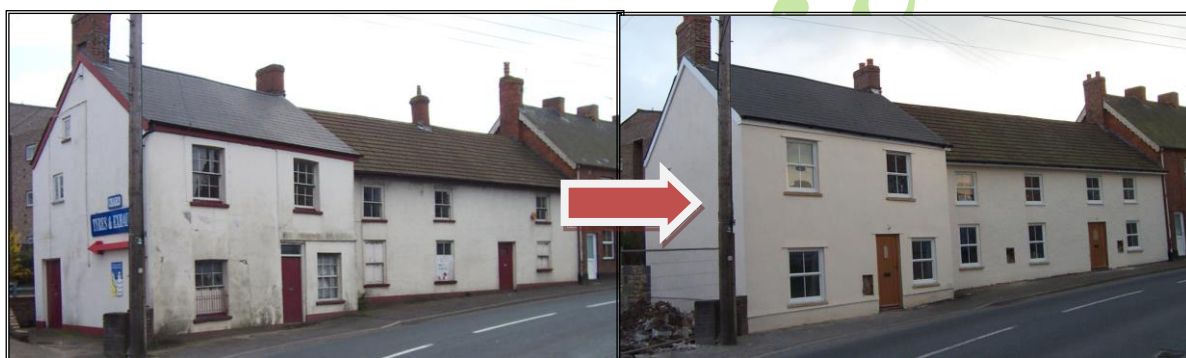
Action: We shall participate in the review with the intention of adopting a new county-wide tenancy strategy by June 2015.

²² Policy SS2 in the emerging Local Plan effectively replaces the previous rural exceptions policy and will allow development outside of the defined boundary in rural settlements where it can be demonstrated that such development is sustainable, such as new affordable housing that otherwise could not be built.

Making use of Empty Properties

Since the adoption of our Empty Property Strategy, we have had a very good track record in recent years of reducing the number of empty properties in the district. As at October 2013 we were 8th most successful council in the country at bringing empty properties back into use (546 properties). See graphs 9 and 10 on page 58 for a visual comparison with other authorities in Somerset.

In part this has been achieved by employing a specialist officer who can take a tenacious but tailored approach to each individual property. In some cases owners have brought the property back into use without any input from the council. In other cases we have made available an empty property grant, with conditions attached obliging the owner to let the refurbished property for a minimum period to somebody nominated by our Housing Options Team at a market rent within current housing benefit limits. We have also been able to refer some properties to Somerset Care & Repair who have also been able to bring the property back into a habitable condition whilst taking control of it under a lease and, in turn, being able to let.



Aids & Adaptation works

We provide a number of other grants to assist private landlords and owner occupiers with the condition and suitability of their property. This includes the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) to those in need of a specialist adaptation to meet their physical requirements, for example the provision of a wet floor shower room for those no longer able to get in or out of a bath. Across the rest of the county these works are organised through a Home Improvement Agency (HIA)²³, in place under a contract organised by the county council. This HIA contract is currently due for renewal.

The government have organised some social care and health funding into a new 'Better Care Fund' which is to be jointly managed by the County Council and the

²³ The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) provides services to owners of homes who need assistance to keep their home safe, warm or weather proof, particularly where the issue may cause or worsen a health problem. The HIA also assists tenants and helps with specific adaptations for the home to meet an individual's specific physical needs, such as organising the work covered by a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

Clinical Commissioning Group²⁴. There will be opportunities for the Better Care Fund to be deployed in more innovative ways to improve housing conditions and, thus, reduce the call on primary care services.

For just over a year the County Council has employed a housing specialist Occupational Therapist who has been able to intervene in certain cases to find better housing solutions, sometimes avoiding the need to use DFG funding altogether. We will support the continued funding of this service, possibly as a priority for the Better Care Fund.

A sub-regional group of local housing authorities across Avon and Somerset has funding to enhance services that will reduce non-priority single homelessness and rough sleeping. The group's gap analysis has identified a particular problem with mental health users who have been discharged from services in Somerset including in-patient wards. The group would like to invest in a service that will improve the experience for clients who are discharged from hospital but with nowhere to go.

Dorcas House Trust

The Council is the corporate trustee of a charitable trust set up to provide accommodation in Yeovil for single women. For almost 100 years this provision was made through a building known as Dorcas House but, following consent from the Charity Commission, this was disposed of in the light of it no longer being economically viable. We now hold the funds in trust and are obliged to procure alternative provision.

Action: We shall procure replacement properties for the Dorcas House Trust.

²⁴ The Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is the body created to commission some specialist services, working in collaboration with the public health services of the County Council, following abolition of the Primary Care Trust. The CCG is effectively practitioner led.

Objective 4 – Meeting the Housing Related Support Needs of the Most Vulnerable and Least Resilient Residents



Over the past year a county-wide project team has been reviewing financial inclusion work across the County with a view to producing a new Financial Inclusion Strategy. There has been a raft of reforms to the overall benefits system over the past couple of years, with more changes to come (such as the rolling out of Universal Credit). In particular changes to Housing Benefit such as the freezing of the Local Housing Allowance and the introduction of

the so-called bedroom tax, the introduction of an overall benefits cap and the changes to Council Tax Reductions have created a difficult new environment for those on marginal incomes to navigate through.

Action: We shall provide a high quality comprehensive Welfare Benefits advice service to ensure that people are able to access the advice they need and refer/signpost to other organisations where appropriate.

Sheltered and Extra Care Needs

Historically, South Somerset has had a good range of sheltered and extra care housing options, now mostly provided by Yarlington Housing Group. The additional support provided in such schemes (often referred to as 'housing-related support') is not funded through rents but through a separate contract with the County Council which gained responsibility for the Supporting People²⁵ regime.



The service is being challenged from two directions. Firstly, the demographics: with an ageing population we expect the demand for sheltered and extra care schemes to rise in coming years. Secondly, the pressure on public funding, with the county

²⁵ The 'Supporting People' regime was created just over ten years ago to bring together under one umbrella a series of separate forms of support services (for example support previously paid for by the Housing Corporation, the Probation service, the Local Housing Authority or Social Services). What all of these services had in common was the need to provide support to individuals or families in order to enable them to maintain their current tenure.

council making significant savings on contracts issued under the auspices of Supporting People. A third, related, factor is the movement towards personalised budgets²⁶, which calls into question the economies of scale that can be achieved under traditional budgets.

The County Council is also considering the relationship between places that it funds in residential care and the type of support that it can purchase for individuals in extra care schemes. It may be that some minor adjustment of the types of services provided means that an individual can be helped through a placement in an extra care scheme rather than placed in residential care (which often results in a greater loss of independence at a higher cost to the public purse).

Together with Yarlington and other housing providers, the district council is participating in a stakeholder partnership board created by the county to consider how to remodel the contracted services provided in extra care housing schemes. We remain concerned that prevention is key and that an appropriate level of support services provided at extra care schemes will reduce the call on other public services, i.e. there is an economic as well as a moral case for maintaining the type of support that has been provided historically.



Similarly, we would wish to assist people to remain independently in their own home for as long as possible and for some people this can be achieved through the assurance of having a dispersed community alarm unit²⁷.

Action: We shall provide and promote a high quality community alarm service through South Somerset Careline to support vulnerable residents staying in their homes.

Homelessness

The Homelessness Act 2002 placed a statutory duty on all local housing authorities to produce a Homelessness Strategy, the first of which had to be in place by July 2003. Last year we agreed the second county-wide Homelessness Strategy with the other four districts (we formally adopted it on 7th November 2013). As this document is so relatively recent we have not discussed most of it again here. More recent evidence suggests that we are seeing a continuing reduction in the number of homeless households making an approach (where homelessness is not prevented),

²⁶ Under 'personalised budgets' it is expected that individuals in need of help and support will be given control of the public funds available to meet their needs and exercise their own judgement as to how best to purchase that help or support and who from. This has significant implications for providers of such services who are used to the financial security (and economies of scale) of a block contract from the county council.

²⁷ A dispersed community alarm is usually fitted to the property but could be activated by a pendant worn by the resident and, in an emergency, it will contact a dedicated call centre who can assess the situation and call in relevant help. It is 'dispersed' because it can be fitted in any dwelling, rather than only those built in a group connected to a sheltered housing scheme, for example.

being found to be owed a duty by us under the act²⁸ and subsequently being placed in some form of temporary accommodation²⁹.

Action: We shall continue to deliver the actions set out in the Homelessness Strategy.

Temporary Accommodation

We have continued to reduce our reliance on temporary accommodation³⁰ and have kept the use of bed & breakfast to an absolute minimum, whilst nationally the reliance on B&B has grown and the number of families left, unlawfully, for over six weeks has increased dramatically over the past couple of years. In 2011 we published the Temporary Accommodation Strategy with the intention of maintaining a flexible portfolio of properties available for use as temporary accommodation and being prepared for the possibility of a spike in homelessness due to local economic circumstances.

Action: We shall review the actions set out in the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and publish a revised plan in the light of current circumstances by March 2015.

Rough Sleeping

The government has targeted rough sleeping, and the prevention of rough sleeping, as a priority within homelessness services provided by local authorities and other agencies. It has set aside a specific grant fund and divided this nationally among several groups of local authorities. In May 2011, £60,000 was allocated to a group of eight housing authorities (the five in Somerset, plus North Somerset, Bristol and Bath & North East Somerset) and placed in the stewardship of Mendip District Council. A cross authority steering group (including voluntary sector representation) was created to consider best use of these funds and it first met in June 2011. In 2012 the Government awarded a further £499,000 to the Avon & Somerset cluster. The steering group appointed a co-ordinator (managed by Mendip) and one of her first tasks was a thorough gap analysis, comparing facilities and services across the eight authorities against a good practice checklist.

Various vulnerable client groups (who may be at risk of rough sleeping if they fail to manage their current circumstances) are provided with assistance under contract (issued by the county council), based around certain properties. Much of this housing-related support³¹ is designated and time limited. One common missing factor in trying to help many (but not all) vulnerable people regain confidence and appropriate skills to engage in society, at least to the extent where potential repeat

²⁸ See Graphs 12 & 13 on pages 63 & 64 and Map 4 on page 66.

²⁹ See Graph 14 on page 65 and Map 5 on page 67.

³⁰ See Graph 14 on page 65

³¹ 'Housing-related' support services are defined as services that aim to develop or sustain an individual's capacity to live independently in accommodation. Housing-related support services are not general health, social care or statutory personal care services, but rather services whose aim is to support more independent living arrangements.

homelessness can be avoided, is the operation of a day centre facility providing a structured approach. The lack of a day centre facility in South Somerset was identified as the highest priority emerging from the gap analysis undertaken by the rough sleeping co-ordinator.

The council owns a grade 2 listed building at 80 South Street, Yeovil. In recent years it has had various uses including as an art gallery with associated café and as office accommodation, at one time housing the Town Centre Manager, and as a meeting room facility. We have agreed to lease this property to Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA) and allocated grant towards the refurbishment of the upper floors to create some self-contained flats. Funds are also being made available from the rough sleepers steering group to help turn the ground floor into the much-needed day centre facility to be run by Barnabas, part of the BCHA Group.

Action: We shall deliver the new Day Centre provision for supported housing clients in South Somerset in partnership with BCHA

Housing-Related Support

Over a number of years a range of housing-related support projects for various vulnerable groups has developed, often with input of capital grant from the district council. More recently, the county council consolidated the majority of these various support services into two major 'pathway' contracts, known as 'P2i' (Pathway to Independence) and 'P4A' (Pathway for Adults), both of which commenced in May 2013. The P2i contract is geared towards young people, including those leaving care, and the P4A contract is geared towards older adults with one or more of a wide range of vulnerabilities. Both contracts include services towards homeless people, both statutory homeless (within the meaning of the Act) and those who are homeless within the plain English meaning of the word.

There are four other key areas of housing-related support which formerly came within the Supporting People regime. In terms of numbers of people affected, the largest is the older people's contracts, centred around sheltered and extra care facilities and described earlier. The second largest area is providing support for those with learning disabilities, which the county is currently reviewing.

The two other main contracts are SDAS³², which covers drug and alcohol misuse, and the domestic violence contract which includes the provision of refuge and safe houses.

The P2i contract (younger people) has just entered the second year at which time there was a decrease in terms of the accommodation-based support, which effectively meant a reduction of



³² Somerset Drug and Alcohol Service (SDAS) offers free, confidential advice and support to anyone whose life is being adversely affected by drug and/or alcohol use.

approximately 29% in such placements (from 84 to 60), albeit accompanied by an increase in the level of floating support (but still representing an overall step-down). Whilst this represents a risk in terms of the potential bottleneck of newly arising cases, so far this has not impacted on our sustained reduction of temporary accommodation.

The changes in the contracts, and the P2i contract in particular, have led to a complex picture of buildings being procured, designed and subsidised for one purpose (within the ownership of one particular provider) now being used for a slightly different purpose (with the support contract being awarded to a completely different provider). We have been pro-active in trying to make sure that the best use is made of all the existing stock, especially that which we have put our capital subsidy into at some point in the past.

Action: We shall investigate options for future use of historically subsidised properties no longer required for the P2i contract to meet local housing needs

One of the emerging issues within many of the projects mentioned above is the apparent silting up of the accommodation-based support units with the lack of appropriate move-on, including for those who still require a level of support (called floating support - because it follows the individual rather than being provided at a specific property). Some of the difficulty may arise from Housing Associations being unwilling to rehouse former project residents into general needs housing because they do not believe that either

- the individual is truly ready to move on; or
- the level of floating support offered to them is inadequate; or
- the individual may refuse the floating support once the new accommodation is secured; or
- a combination of the above

In addition, the number of available properties may be in decline, partly because of the competition we now have with those needing to downsize because of the effect of the so-called bedroom tax.

Action: We shall develop a move-on plan for supported housing projects by December 2015.

One of the properties that have become vacant as a result of the various changes is owned by Chapter One and known as Christopher House. Following the award of grant from the HCA's 2015/18 funding programme, the building shall be remodelled to create some self-contained flats. We shall support Chapter One in their plans to create a new use for this building.

Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs

We already provide some residential pitches for Gypsies and Travellers in South Somerset, having taken control of the county-owned sites some fourteen years ago. At the time of publishing this document, two of the council's Gypsy sites are fully occupied, with two pitches remaining vacant at Twisted Willows near Ilton. There are currently four outstanding applications on the waiting list for our sites.

Since the 2006 Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy document was adopted:

- we have terminated our contract with a private sector provider to manage the sites under our control
- we have fully refurbished the sites under our control, now providing park homes
- we have extended the site at Ilton and taken back into public control a further piece of associated land there
- the county council-owned transit site (in Sedgemoor) has fallen into disuse
- the Supporting People grant towards our site management and community liaison work has been withdrawn
- a Travellers' CLT³³ has been created with a county-wide remit, although currently based in Mendip
- relevant regional structures have been disbanded
- the government has revised and re-issued planning guidance
- we have failed to locate a transit site in South Somerset
- we continue to hold unspent monies from central government grant in an acquisition fund
- the county-wide Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment has been undertaken and updated
- we have provided (including through the appeal process) sufficient residential pitches through the planning process



The most recent analysis of evidence, the GTAA³⁴, was conducted on a county-wide basis last year. Data was collected in May 2013 with the final document being published in September 2013. One area that remains a little unclear from the evidence presented in the GTAA is the needs of Showmen, i.e. travelling entertainers who may need yards for storage of equipment or animals. We want to be clearer about exactly what these needs might be.

In terms of residential pitches we are already ahead of schedule thanks to providing planning permission (including losing appeals) to enough privately owned residential sites so that we are likely to need no specific action over next few years (see Table 17 on Page 68). In that respect we are unique, with the other districts in the county (and probably much further afield) having predicted shortfalls making it harder for them to prevent unsuitable sites gaining permission at appeal. In planning terms, once the Local Plan has been adopted, we need to produce some policy guidance

³³ A Community Land Trust (CLT) is a community-led organisation that provides land and buildings to meet the long term needs of its community.

³⁴ The Somerset Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) provides independent evidence of the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in Somerset.

(known as DPD³⁵) to allocate sites to meet the identified need. In the spirit of the countywide framework we would like this to be a joint DPD if possible, providing consistency for individuals and communities across the county. The proposed timing for this is set out in our Local Development Scheme (LDS)³⁶.

However we still need to identify a suitable stopping point for Travellers who are travelling through the district and/or a transit site. We intend to work in collaboration with the other Councils in Somerset to investigate solutions across the County.

Action: We shall identify and secure emergency stopping point/transit site for travellers within Somerset in collaboration with other councils in Somerset.

Final Draft

³⁵ DPD stands for Development Plan Document.

³⁶ The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is part of the local planning framework where the planning authority sets out its proposals for developing detailed policies and guidance, such as DPD, including a timescale showing the order in which these should be dealt with.

Action Plan

Page Ref	Action	EqA required?	Lead Officer	Resources	Target Date
9	Explore options to undertake a private sector stock condition survey,	No	Environmental Health Manager	Time to explore the options available within existing staff capacity but full survey subject to funding being made available	October 2015
9	Review and update the private sector housing strategy	Yes	Environmental Health Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity	July 2015
13	Develop an affordable housing design code, in collaboration with other local housing authorities if possible, using national standards as a minimum (if these are adopted by Government)	Yes	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity	March 2015
14	Deliver a further 270 new homes during 2014/15 and aim to deliver at least a further 270 during the 2015/18 programme period.	No	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Capital funding in place for the programme up to and including 2014/15; subject to further bids to HCA and Councils own funding beyond that date.	March 2015 & March 2018
14	Reduce our qualifying site threshold through planning policy either to six dwellings (as originally planned) or to ten (if this is imposed by central Government policy)	No	Principal Spatial Planner	Time available within existing staff capacity	as soon as we are able to do so
17	Refresh the SHMA, in collaboration with neighbouring planning authorities if possible	Yes	Principal Spatial Planner	Time available within existing staff capacity but full refresh subject to funding being made available	December 2015

Page Ref	Action	EqA required?	Lead Officer	Resources	Target Date
17	Assemble a portfolio of around twenty properties and investigate creating a joint venture vehicle, or other options, to provide for local housing needs	Yes	Strategic Director (Place and Performance)	Time available within existing staff capacity. Capital acquisitions costs subject to approval of release of sufficient funding.	March 2016
17	Investigate gains to be made by promoting alternative forms of construction	No	Housing Development Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity	November 2015
19	Undertake the Housing Association partnership selection process, in collaboration with Sedgemoor and Mendip District Councils	No	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time commitment reduced through collaborative work and available within existing staff capacity	April 2015.
22	Review each of the following local lettings policies Roping Road, Yeovil (Yarlington) Wellington Flats, Yeovil (Yarlington) Henson Park, Chard (Yarlington) Fosse Park, Yeovil (Jephson) Old Lloyd's Bank & Hanover House, Langport (Yarlington)	No	Housing Policy Officer (all five reviews)	Time available within existing staff capacity	Dec 2014 Dec 2014 Dec 2014 May 2015 Dec 2014
24	Develop and implement a balanced rural lettings policy, improving access to affordable housing for those with very local housing needs	Yes	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity	August 2015

Page Ref	Action	EqA required?	Lead Officer	Resources	Target Date
24	Review the rural housing action plan in order to focus action to deliver a steady supply of new rural housing	No	Housing Policy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity. Capital funding for specific new proposed schemes subject to bids to HCA or Councils own funding.	May 2015
24	Participate in the review of the county wide tenancy strategy	Yes, county wide	Supported Housing & Strategy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity	June 2015
26	Procure replacement properties for the Dorcas House Trust	No	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Acquisition costs to be met primarily from Dorcas reserves.	To be agreed with Charity Commission
27	Provide a high quality comprehensive Welfare Benefits Advice service to ensure that people are able to access the advice they need and refer/signpost to other organisations where appropriate	No	Welfare & Careline Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity	
28	Provide and promote a high quality community alarm service through South Somerset Careline to support vulnerable residents staying in their homes	No	Welfare & Careline Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Equipment available through existing trading budget	
29	Deliver the remaining actions set out in the Homelessness Strategy	No	Housing & Welfare Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Cost largely available through existing budgets, some release of funds through 'spend to save' initiatives	March 2016

Page Ref	Action	EqA required?	Lead Officer	Resources	Target Date
29	Review the actions set out in the Temporary Accommodation Strategy and publish a revised plan	Yes	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. Revenue subsidy available through existing budgets	March 2015
30	Deliver the new Day Centre provision for supported housing clients in South Somerset in partnership with BCHA	Yes	Supported Housing & Strategy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity. Capital funding largely secured through three different funding routes including Councils own affordable housing development budget	July 2015
31	Investigate options for future use of historically subsidised properties no longer required for the P2i contract to meet local housing needs	No	Supported Housing & Strategy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity. Possibility that some capital subsidy may be needed to help with reconfiguration, in which case it will be subject to bids to the HCA or the Council's own funding.	Ongoing
31	Develop a 'move-on' plan for supported housing projects to ensure sufficient accommodation is available to avoid such projects 'silting up'	No	Supported Housing & Strategy Officer	Time available within existing staff capacity. Properties may become available through the above initiative or taken out of general needs management by Housing Association partners.	December 2015
33	Identify and secure emergency stopping point/transit site for travellers within Somerset in collaboration with other councils in Somerset.	No	Corporate Housing Strategy Manager	Time available within existing staff capacity. The Council has already secured an acquisition fund.	December 2015

Evidence

A wealth of evidence on housing issues across the County can be found within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) at the following website:
www.somersetintelligence.org.uk

The JSNA is continuously updated, in the sense that different data sets are changed as and when the new data becomes available rather than, say, the entire website being changed annually. Information on the website is, then, likely to be more up to date than any data we reproduce here (which will, inevitably, date). On the other hand some of the data held as part of the JSNA provides a country wide picture but not much more detail on a district by district basis. In the following section we have selected some details which have informed this Strategy Implementation document.

Evidence relating to Objective 1

Housing tenure data

Household spaces are broken down by tenure by district in the two tables below. Although the number of households can vary by district, the proportions remain very similar, differing only by a few percentage points. Most noteworthy is that South Somerset is the only district where the social rented sector is still more dominant than the private rented sector.

Table 1 - by number

Number	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
Owned Outright	17,387	18,320	26,718	16,329	7,024	85,778
Owned - Mortgage	15,051	16,482	22,137	15,064	3,397	72,131
Shared Ownership	349	273	542	251	72	1,487
Social Rented	5,473	5,951	9,697	7,321	2,288	30,730
Private Rented	7,136	7,113	9,272	7,227	2,510	33,258
Live rent-free	761	662	1,135	715	332	3,605
TOTAL	46,157	48,801	69,501	46,907	15,623	226,989

Source: 2011 Census (Table KS402EW) via Somerset Intelligence

Table 2 – tenure as percentage of homes in each district

%	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
Owned Outright	37.7	37.5	38.4	34.8	45.0	37.8
Owned - Mortgage	32.6	33.8	31.9	32.1	21.7	31.8
Shared Ownership	0.8	0.6	0.8	0.5	0.5	0.7
Social Rented	11.9	12.2	14.0	15.6	14.6	13.5
Private Rented	15.5	14.6	13.3	15.4	16.1	14.7
Live rent-free	1.6	1.4	1.6	1.5	2.1	1.6
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: 2011 Census (Table KS402EW) via Somerset Intelligence

Energy efficiency

The following two tables illustrate that, whilst improving energy efficiency is a national as well as a regional issue, the need is greatest among owner-occupiers.

Table 3 – energy efficiency ratings of South Somerset’s housing stock

SAP ³⁷ Band	Households	% of local housing stock	South West	England
A	0	0%	0%	0%
B	1	0%	0%	1%
C	7,798	11%	13%	13%
D	31,057	43%	35%	38%
E	17,049	24%	33%	34%
F	14,460	20%	14%	11%
G	1,414	2%	5%	3%
Total	71,779	100%	100%	100%

Source: Centre for Sustainable Energy, 2013

³⁷ The Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) is the methodology used by the government to assess and compare the energy and environmental performance of dwellings, where A is the most efficient and G the least. Its purpose is to provide accurate and reliable assessments of dwelling energy performances that are needed to underpin energy and environmental policy initiatives.

For more information see <https://www.gov.uk/standard-assessment-procedure>

Table 4 - modelling SAP ratings of the local housing stock by tenure

SAP Band	Private rented	Owner-Occupied	LA/ HA
A	0%	0%	0%
B	0%	0%	0%
C	19%	6%	28%
D	37%	44%	44%
E	19%	24%	24%
F	23%	23%	3%
G	2%	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: Centre for Sustainable Energy, 2013

There also remain a small percentage of homes without central heating, although the higher proportion in West Somerset seems to indicate that this may be more marked in rural than urban areas, possibly linked to the existing mains gas infrastructure, as shown below.

Table 5 - homes without central heating by district

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
Number of homes	1,291	1,906	2,513	1,448	828	7,986
Homes as % of total	2.8	3.9	3.6	3.1	5.3	3.5

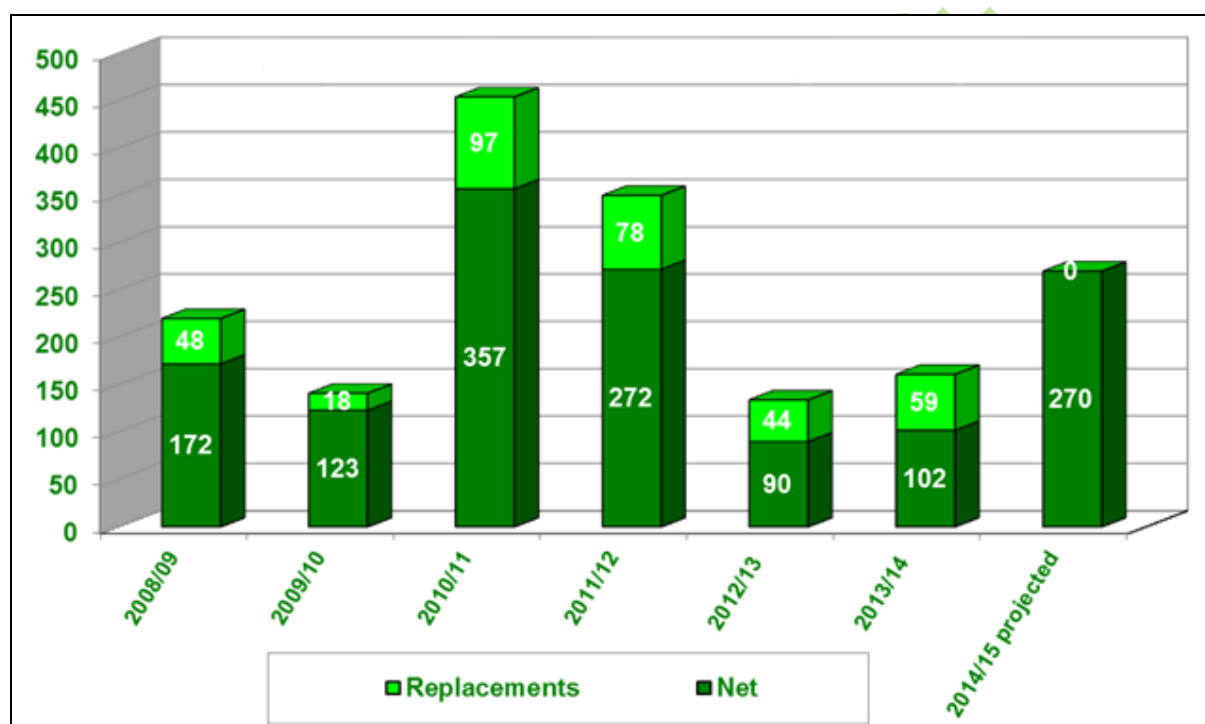
Source: Census 2011 via Somerset Intelligence

Evidence relating to Objective 2

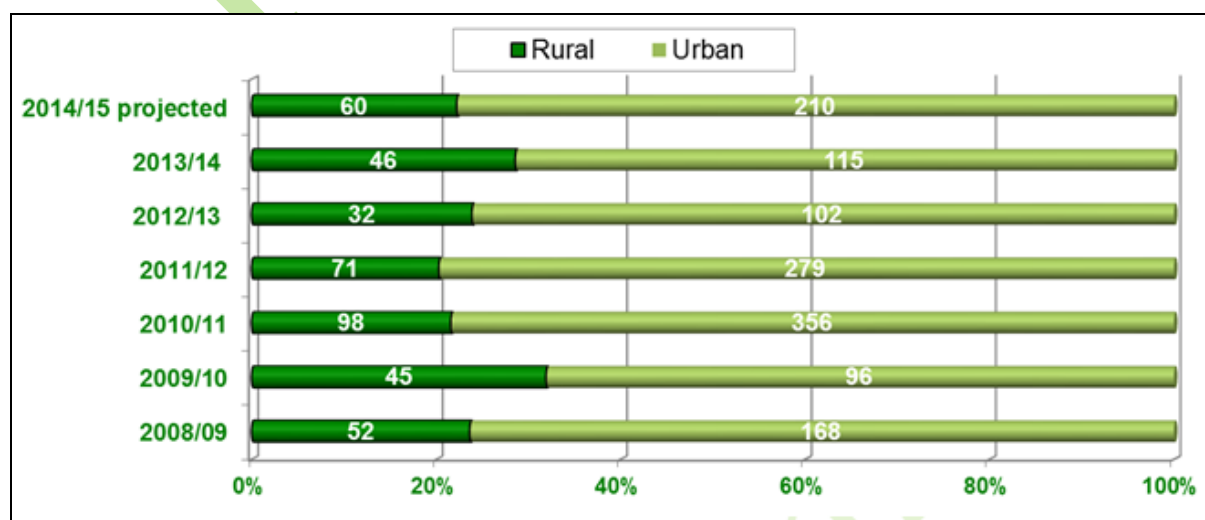
Affordable Housing delivery

The following graphs depict the affordable housing development programme over the previous six years and projected for the current financial year (2014/15). Graph 1 shows both the overall number of new affordable homes delivered and how this breaks down into replacement properties (following demolition of concrete houses for example) and the real net gain.

Graph 1 – affordable housing delivery



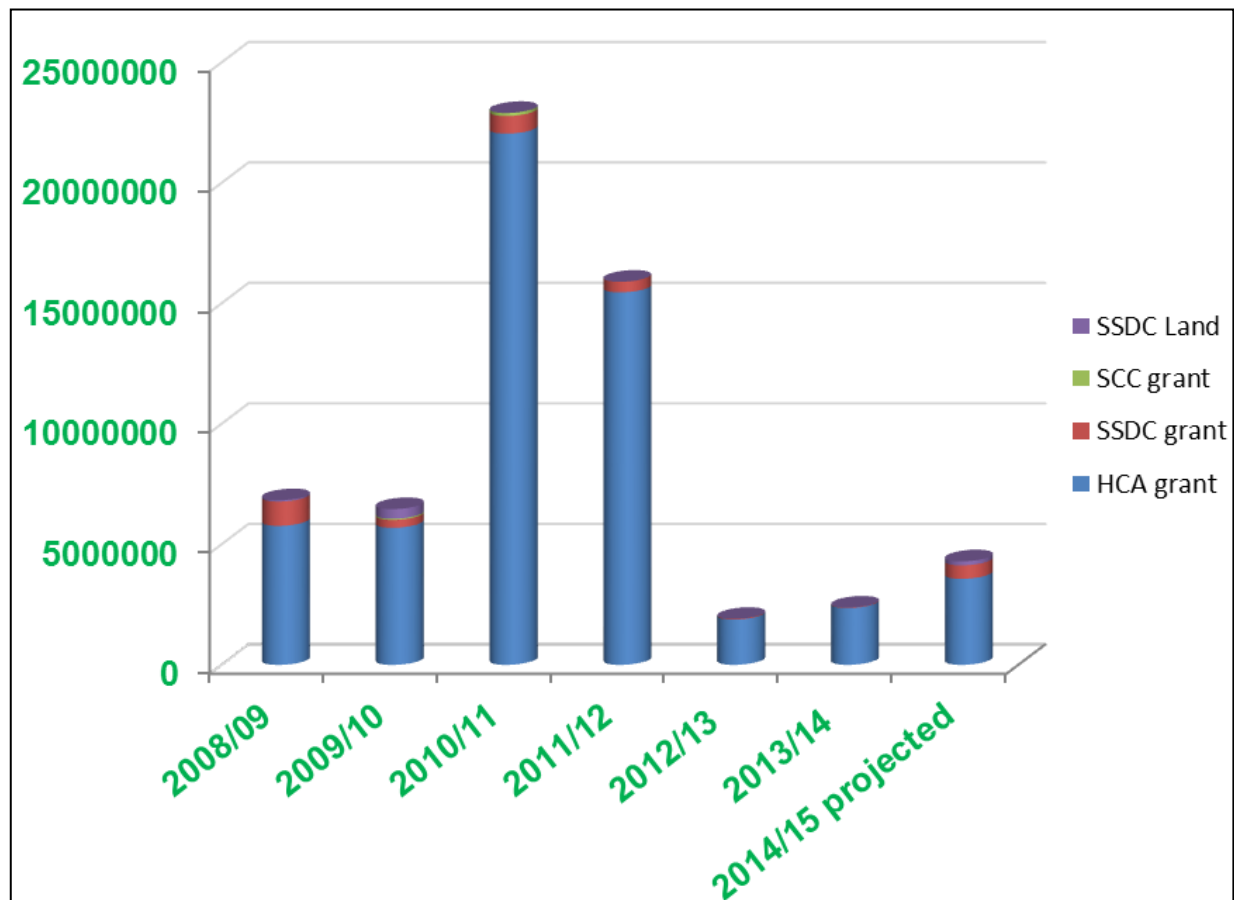
Graph 2 – rural housing as a proportion



In Graph 2 'rural' means within settlements of 3,000 or less population. It shows that we have consistently delivered at least one fifth of the programme each year in our most rural settlements (see also Chart 4 further below).

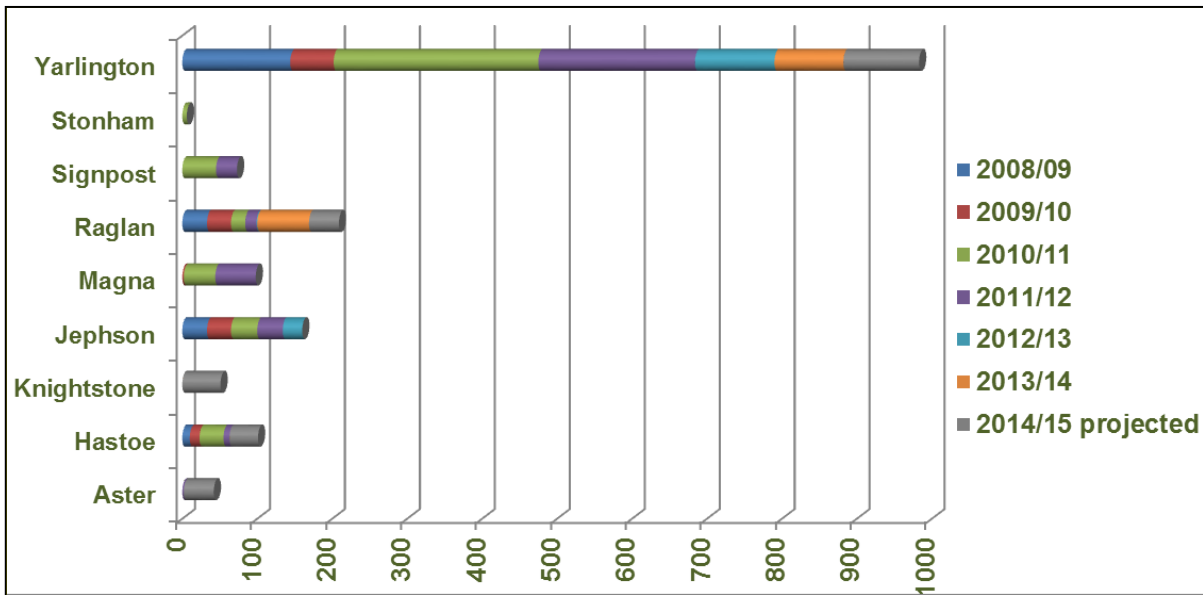
Graph 3 shows the breakdown of sources for public subsidy. Over the past six (complete) financial years this amounts to just over £ 56million, of which 94% (almost exactly £53million) has come through the Homes and Communities Agency and 5% (just over £ 2½million) has come as cash grant from the District Council. This demonstrates that we have, generally, deployed our own funds in a manner that maximises capture of central sources.

Graph 3 – level of public subsidy associated with completed schemes

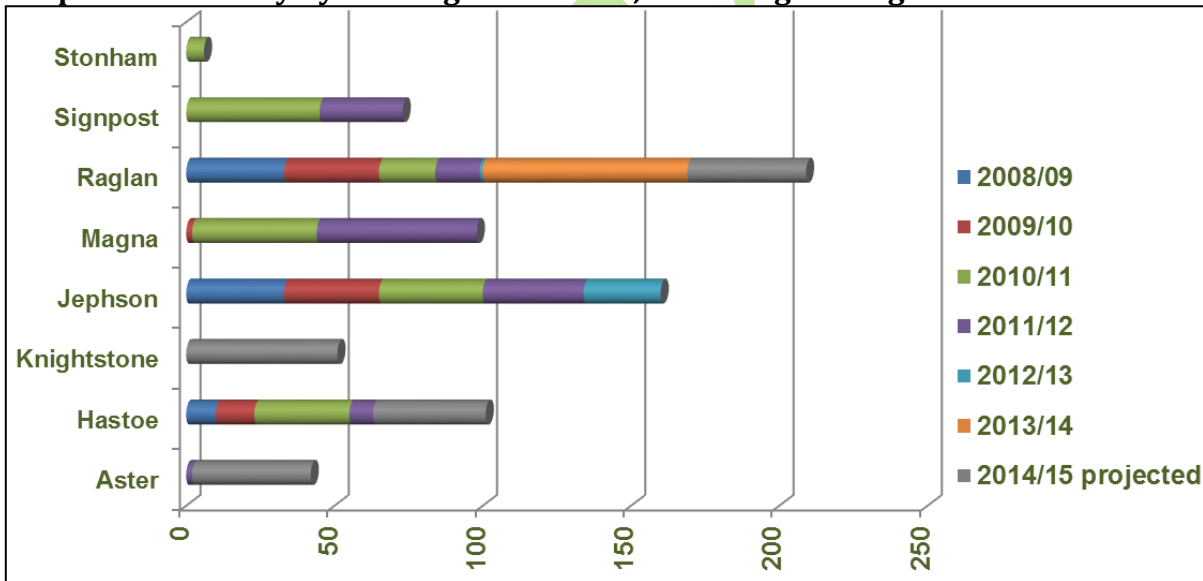


Although Yarlington are by far the largest social landlord in South Somerset in terms of both stock levels and delivery, a significant quantity of affordable housing has been (and is projected to be) delivered by some of our other partners, as illustrated by graphs 4a and 4b. Over the seven year period Yarlington will have delivered the best part of a thousand new homes in South Somerset (including replacements for concrete dwellings). Graph 4 b excludes Yarlington and thus better depicts the relative delivery between the other Housing Associations.

Graph 4a – delivery by housing association

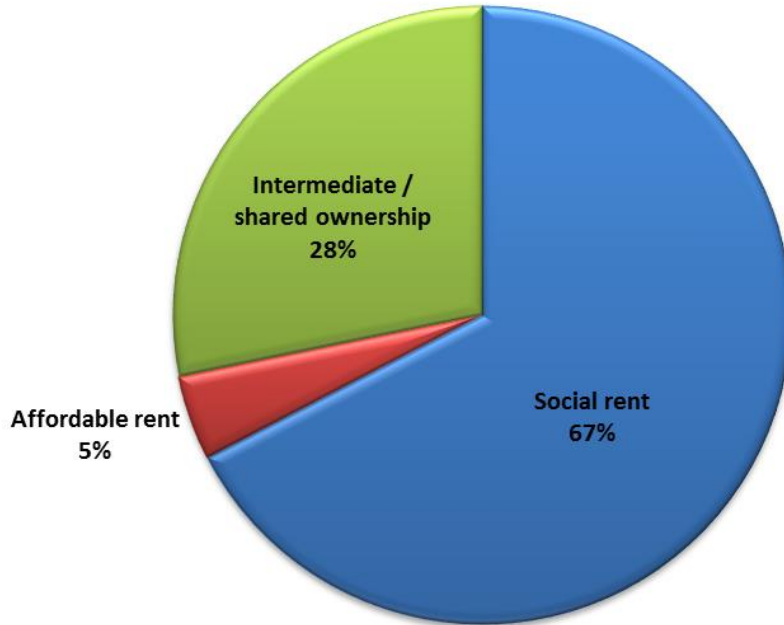


Graph 4b – delivery by housing association, excluding Yarlington



Charts 1-3 show the proportions of different tenure types within the affordable housing programme and clearly demonstrates the extent to which social rent is being replaced by affordable rent. Chart 4 gives a breakdown of the six-year development programme by location. Almost a quarter of delivery occurs in rural locations, with most other developments taking place, as expected, in major settlements such as Yeovil and Chard.

**Chart 1 - breakdown of affordable housing delivered
2008/09 to 2013/14**



**Chart 2 - breakdown of affordable housing delivered
2013/14 only**

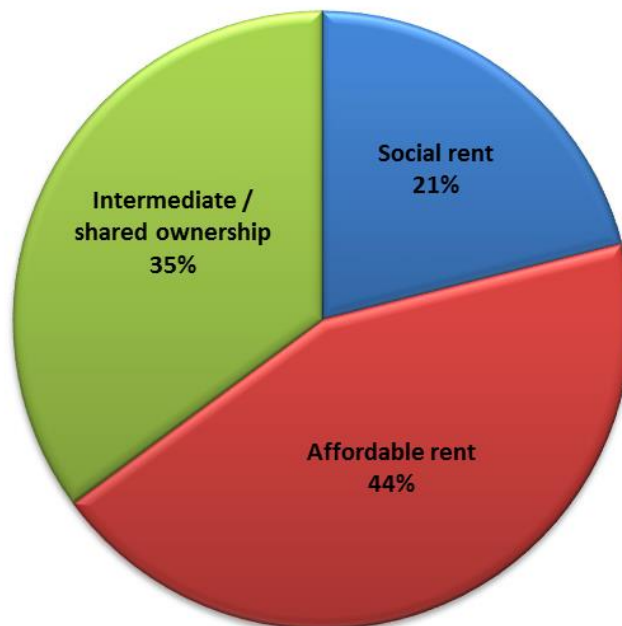


Chart 3 - breakdown of affordable housing programme for 2014/15

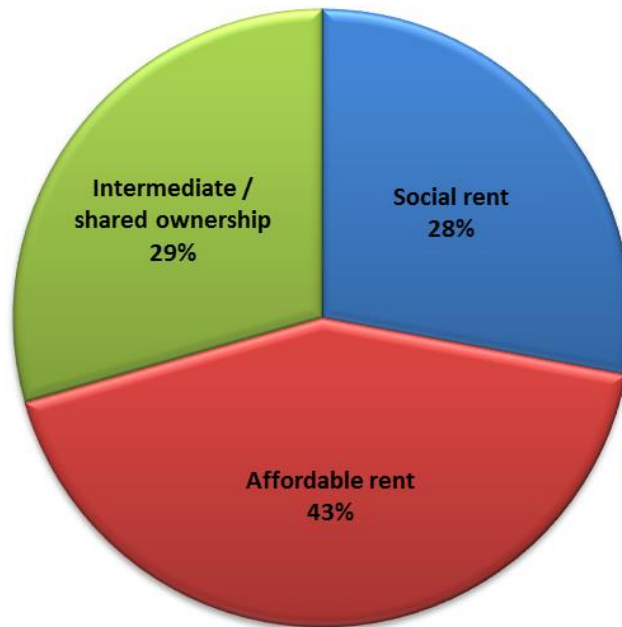
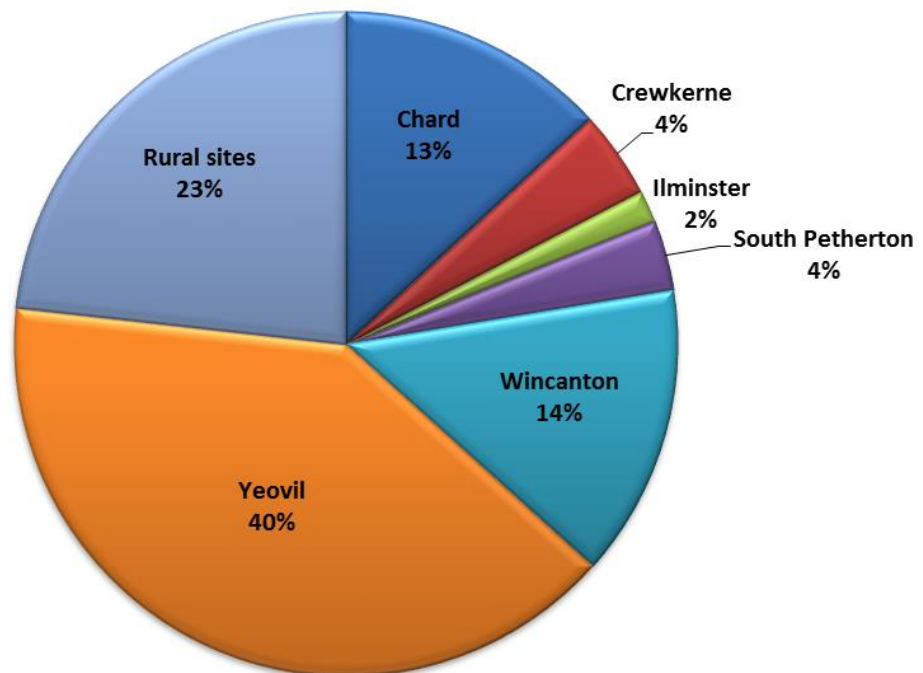


Chart 4 - six-year development by location



House prices and affordability

A comparison of property prices between the component districts and boroughs of Somerset shows some significant differences within the county. Sedgemoor in particular has much lower property prices than other parts of Somerset, whereas areas such as Mendip and West Somerset are often the most expensive on average.

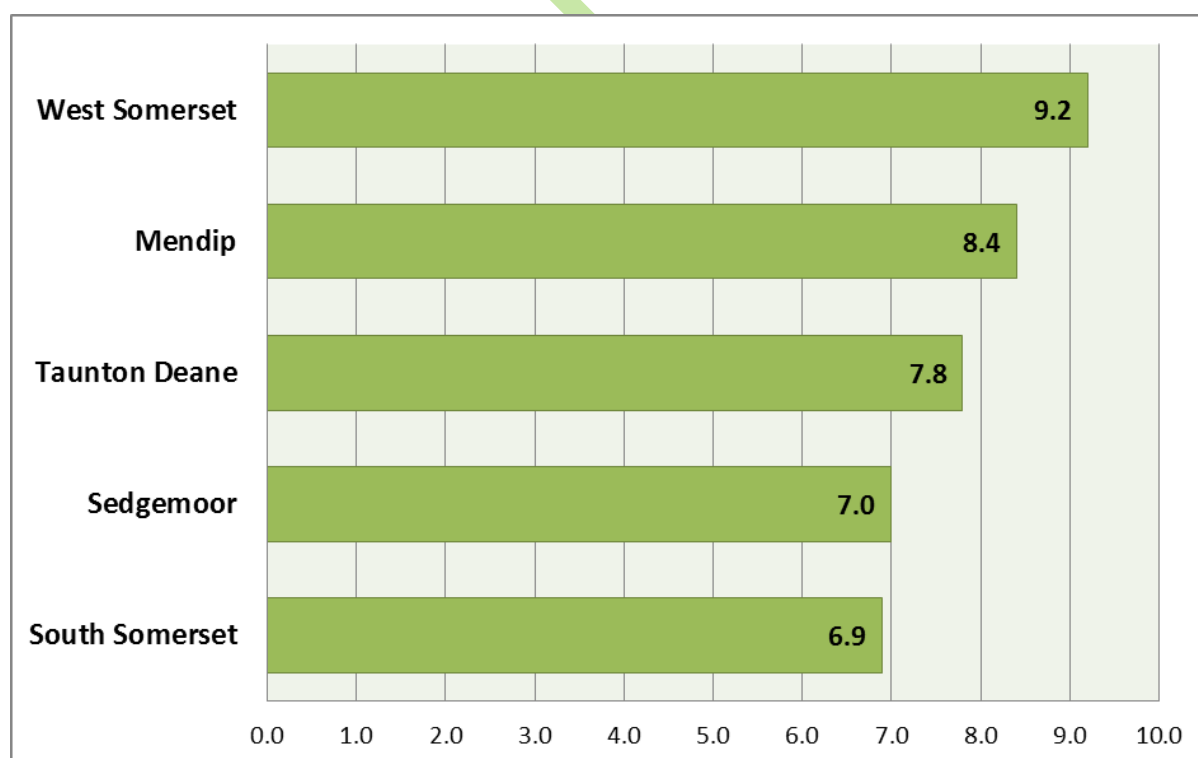
Table 6 – average residential property price, by type of property, 2012/13

District	Flat	Terraced	Semi-detached	Detached
Mendip	£119,659	£173,015	£193,232	£326,128
Sedgemoor	£102,770	£138,832	£175,764	£273,166
South Somerset	£102,504	£156,936	£178,201	£295,326
Taunton Deane	£112,888	£167,825	£190,998	£307,095
West Somerset	£122,232	£150,041	£202,040	£308,172

Source: Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

The data on the following pages compare house price affordability in South Somerset with elsewhere in the county, but also with national averages. On the one hand, the ratio of lower quartile house prices to earnings appears better than in other parts of Somerset; however, lower average wages mean that it remains more difficult for first-time buyers in South Somerset than in many other parts of England, despite lower property prices.

Graph 5 – ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings, Somerset districts, 2013

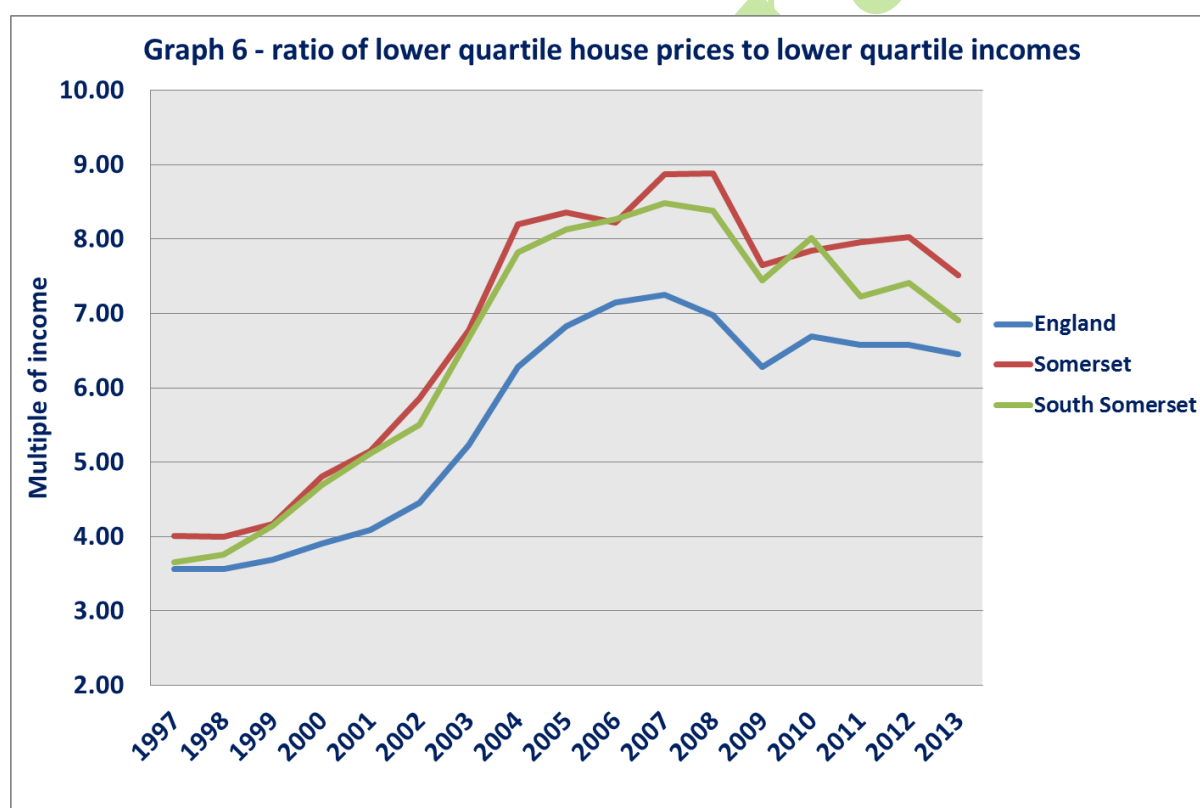


Source: Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Table 7 – house price and affordability – comparison with national figures

	South Somerset	England
Average (mean) house price ³⁸	£210,447	£256,643
Gross annual income needed for a mortgage on above ³⁹	£48,102	£58,661
Average (median) gross salary ⁴⁰	£19,774	£22,199
Ratio of house price to salary ⁴¹	10.6	11.6
Ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile earnings ⁴²	6.91	6.45

Graph 6, below, shows how the figures on the final row of Table 7 have changed over time, including a county comparison figure.



Map 1, overleaf, makes a snapshot comparison of the same with local authorities across England in 2013.

³⁸ Price Paid data for the period 01/01/2014 to 30/06/2014. Data produced by Land Registry © Crown copyright 2014.

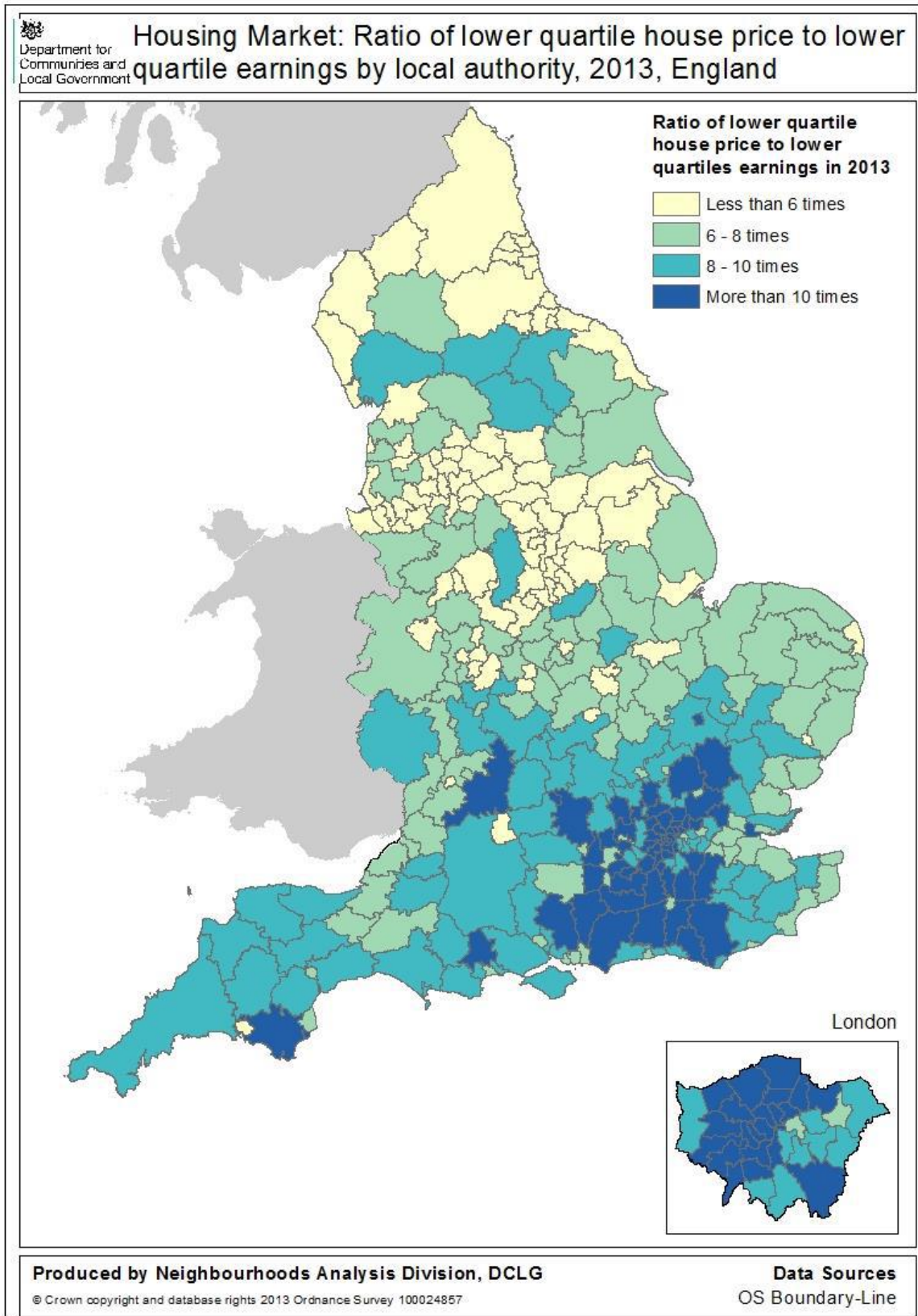
³⁹ 80% of average house price divided by 3.5.

⁴⁰ Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), Office for National Statistics, 2013.

⁴¹ House price divided by salary, using the above figures.

⁴² Department for Communities and Local Government, 2013.

Map 1 – ratio of lower quartile house prices to lower quartile incomes



Lettings and Rent Levels

In chart 5, below, 'other settlements' comprises 17 other parishes in South Somerset with three or fewer lets. These lets include those from new schemes as well as casual vacancies arising from existing stock. Yeovil and Chard account for almost half of all advertised vacancies, with significant numbers also in Crewkerne, Ilminster, Martock and Wincanton.

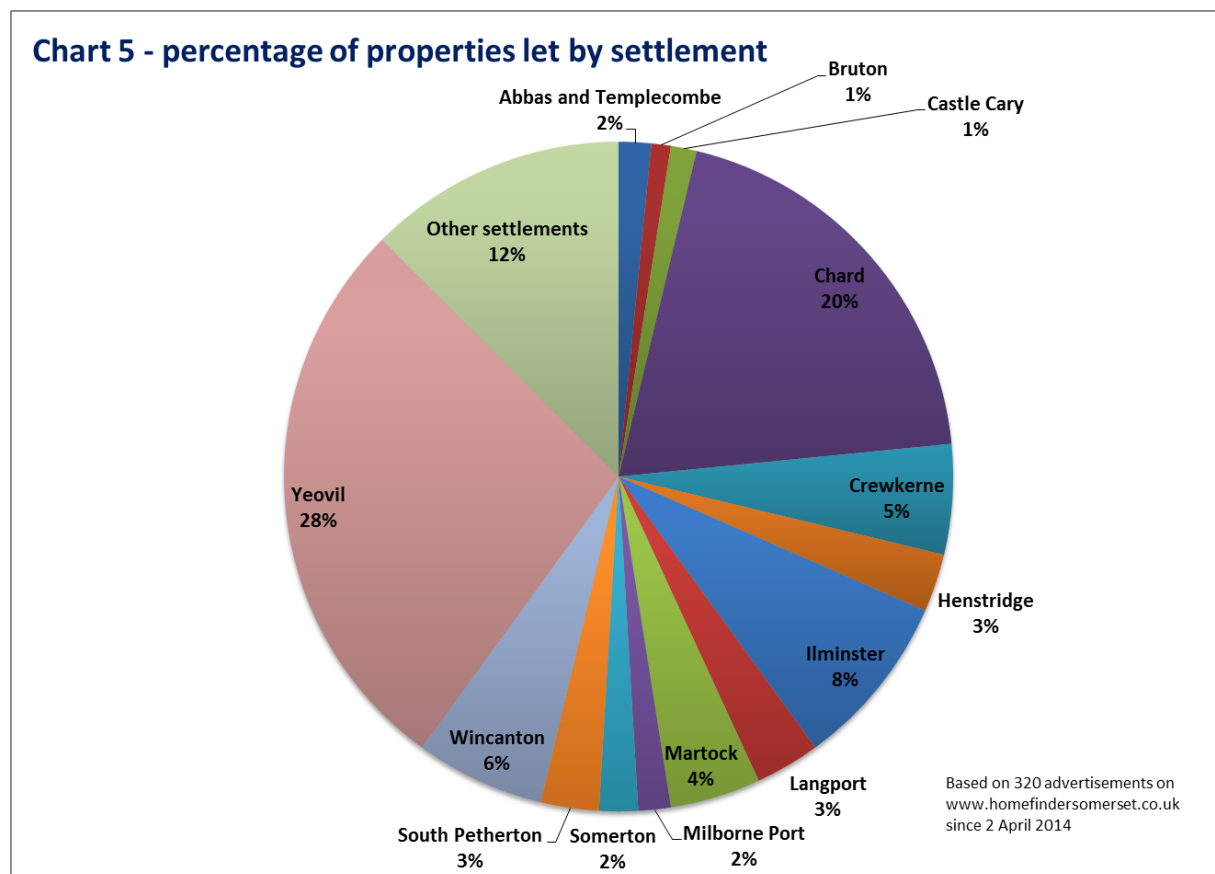
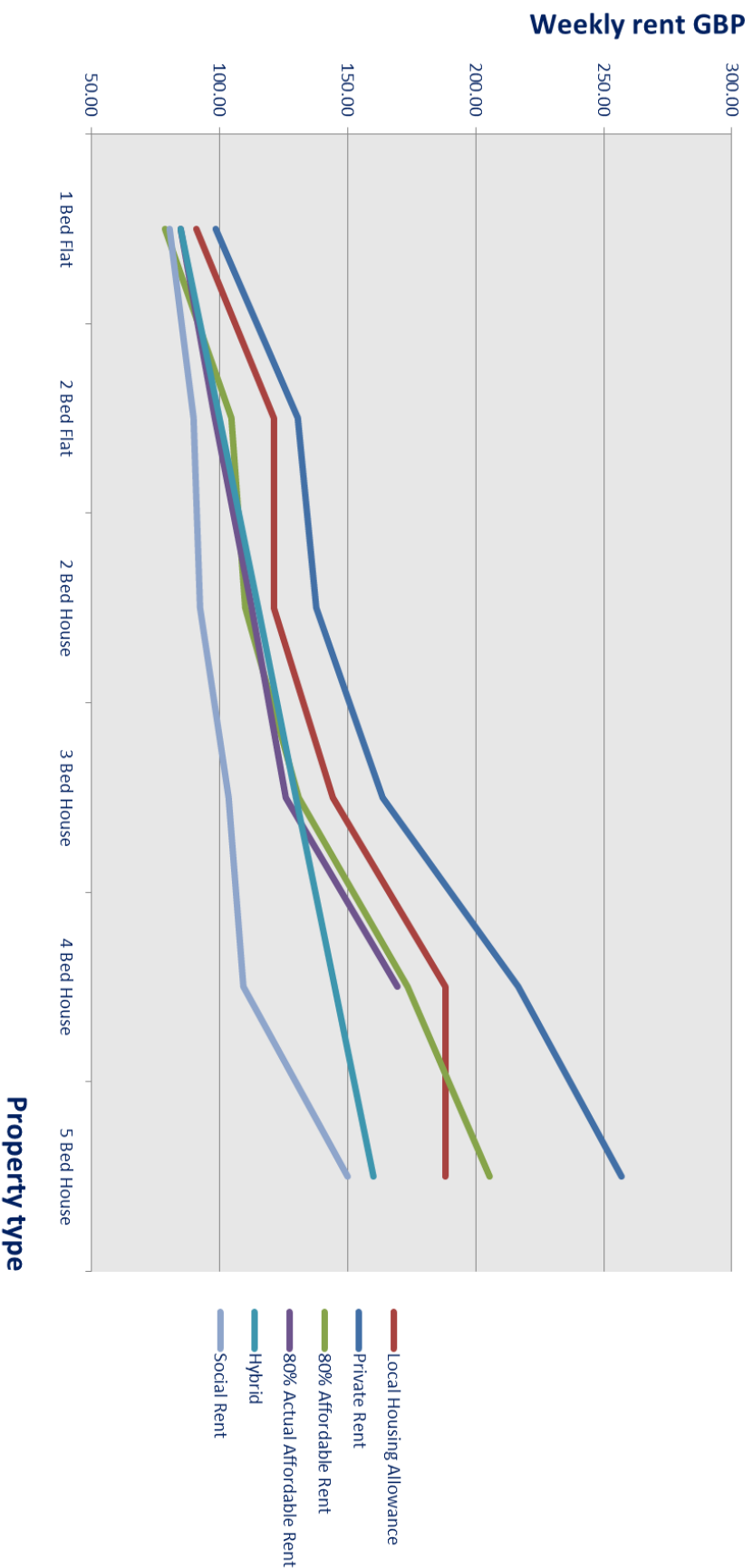


Table 8 is a detailed comparison of rent levels in South Somerset, using advertised vacancies since the beginning of this financial year. It shows a marked divergence in rent levels as property size increases; the private sector quickly becomes much more expensive compared to social and affordable rent. This is expanded in Graphs 7 & 8 on the following pages.

Table 8 - weekly rent levels and comparisons

	1 Bed Flat	2 Bed Flat	2 Bed House	3 Bed House	4 Bed House	5 Bed House
Private Rent	99.45	130.01	135.99	163.03	218.81	257.08
Local Housing Allowance	91.15	121.15	121.15	144.23	188.08	188.08
80% Affordable Rent	79.56	104.01	108.79	130.42	175.05	205.67
80% Actual Affordable	81.29	97.09	112.64	125.16	151.89	No data
Hybrid	85.00	100.00	115.00	130.00	145.00	160.00
Social Rent	80.32	89.92	92.09	103.93	109.39	133.49

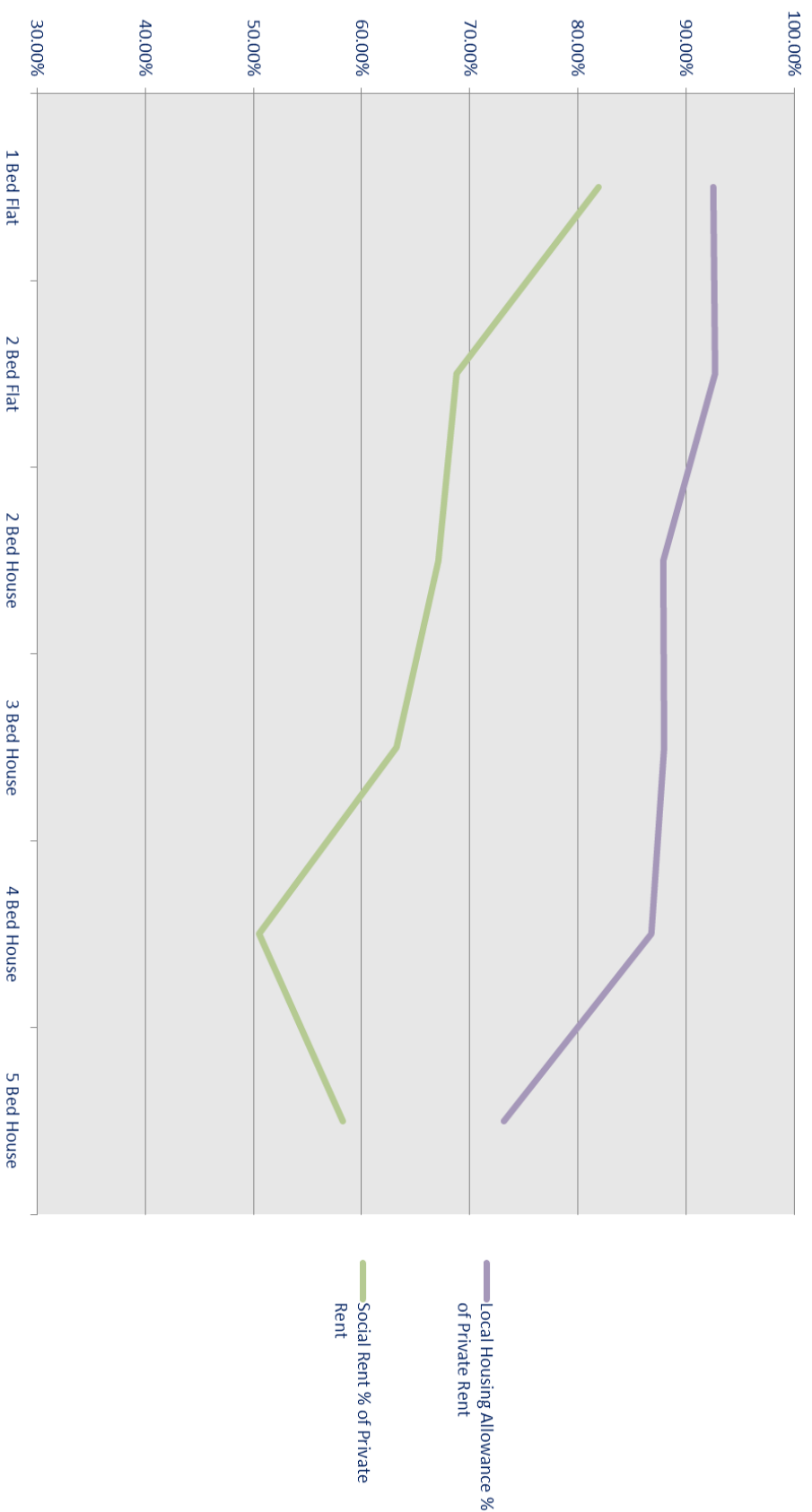
Graph 7 - weekly rent levels



Key:
Private Rent: 609 properties sampled from www.rightmove.co.uk from 02/06/2014 to 10/10/2014
80% Affordable Rent: 80% of the private rent average
80% Actual Affordable Rent: advertised on www.homefindersomerset.co.uk as Affordable Rent properties
Hybrid: calculated on 01/12/2013
Social Rent: average rents of all registered social landlords, taken weekly from www.homefindersomerset.co.uk, starting on 02/04/2014

Affordable Rent properties are smaller in number and due to sample sizes, rent levels are not available for every property type.

Graph 8 - comparison with private rent by property type



Private Rent: 609 properties sampled from www.rightmove.co.uk from 02/06/2014 to 10/10/2014
Social Rent: average rents of all registered social landlords, taken weekly from www.homefindersomerset.co.uk, starting on 02/04/2014

Tables 9-12 - Housing Register data on 16 October 2014

The following tables give a snapshot of the register broken down by Area, Ward and parish.

AREA EAST	Housing Register Data					Housing Register Data			
				Total					Total
BLACKMOOR VALE					IVELCHESTER				
Abbas & Templecombe	1	7	17	25	Chilton Cantelo				0
Charlton Horethorne			1	1	Ilchester	2	8	9	19
Compton Pauncefoot				0	Limington				0
Corton Denham				0	Mudford	1	1		2
Henstridge	1	4	12	17	Yeovilton	1		3	4
Holton				0	Total				25
Horsington		1	2	3					
Maperton				0	MILBORNE PORT				
North Cheriton				0	Milborne Port	5	12	20	37
Total				46	Total				37
BRUTON					NORTHSTONE				
Bruton	2	8	17	27	Barton St David			2	2
Total				27	Charlton Mackerell			2	2
					Keinton Mandeville			3	3
CAMELOT					Kingsdon			1	1
Marston Magna	1	2		3	Kingweston				0
Queen Camel	1	1	16	18	Total				8
Rimpton				0					
Sparkford		3	3	6	TOWER				
West Camel		2	2	4	Bratton Seymour				0
Total				31	Brewham			1	1
					Charlton Musgrove				0
CARY					Cucklington				0
Alford				0	Pen Selwood				0
Ansford				0	Pitcombe				0
Babcary				0	Shepton Montague	1			1
Castle Cary	4	14	26	44	Stoke Trister				0
Lovington				0	Total				2
North Barrow				0					
North Cadbury			1	1	WINCANTON				
South Barrow				0	Wincanton	13	41	49	103
South Cadbury			1	1	Total				103
Yarlington	2	6	4	12					
Total				58	TOTALS BY BAND	35	110	192	
					AREA EAST TOTAL	337			

There are an additional **32** applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within Area East.

AREA NORTH	Housing Register Data					Housing Register Data			
				Total					Total
BURROW HILL					MARTOCK				
Barrington	2			2	Ash	1	2		3
Kingsbury Episcopi		3	2	5	Long Load				0
Muchelney			1	1	Martock	4	14	32	50
Puckington			1	1	Total				53
Stocklinch				0					
Total				9	ST MICHAEL'S				
					Chilthorne Domer	1		3	4
CURRY RIVEL					Montacute	1		5	6
Drayton				0	Tintinhull	3	1	3	7
Curry Rivel	3	5	7	15	Total				17
Total				15					
					SOUTH PETHERTON				
HAMDON					Lopen				0
Norton Sub Hamdon		3	8	11	Seavington St Mary				0
Stoke Sub Hamdon	5	4	24	33	Seavington St Michael				0
Total				44	Shepton Beauchamp	1	2	2	5
					South Petherton	3	13	21	37
ISLEMOOR					Total				42
Beercrocombe				0					
Curry Mallett	1		1	2	TURN HILL				
Fivehead			1	1	Aller				0
Hambridge & Westport				0	High Ham	1			1
Ilton			1	1	Long Sutton			2	2
Isle Abbots				0	Pitney				0
Isle Brewers				0	Total				3
Total				4					
					WESSEX				
LANGPORT & HUISSH					Compton Dundon			3	3
Huish Episcopi			3	3	Somerton	5	18	37	60
Langport	5	14	31	50	Total				63
Total				53					
					TOTALS BY BAND	36	79	188	
					AREA NORTH TOTAL	303			

There are an additional **30** applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within Area North.

AREA WEST	Housing Register Data				Housing Register Data			
				Total				Total
BLACKDOWN					NEROCHE			
Buckland St Mary		1	2	3	Ashill			2
Combe St Nicholas		3	4	7	Broadway		1	3
Wambrook			1	1	Donyatt		1	1
Whitestaunton				0	Horton		1	5
Total				11	Total			14
CHARD AVISHAYES					PARRETT			
Total	3	17	28	48	Chiselborough		1	1
CHARD COMBE					East Chinnock			0
Total	3	3	15	21	Haselbury Plucknett			1
CHARD CRIMCHARD					North Perrott			1
Total	3	15	17	35	West Chinnock	1		1
CHARD HOLYROOD					Total			5
Total	6	29	59	94	TATWORTH & FORTON			
CHARD JOCELYN					Tatworth & Forton		3	9
Total	11	27	33	71	Total			12
CREWKERNE					WINDWHISTLE			
Crewkerne	9	44	60	113	Chaffcombe			0
Misterton	2		3	5	Chillington			0
Total				118	Cudworth			0
EGGWOOD					Cricket St Thomas			0
Dinnington				0	Dowlish Wake			0
Hinton St George				0	Kingstone			0
Merriott	2	4	12	18	Knowle St Giles			0
Total				18	Wayford			0
ILMINSTER					West Crewkerne			0
Ilminster	9	29	49	87	Winsham	2	2	4
Whitelackington				0	Total			8
Total				87	TOTALS BY BAND	51	181	310
					AREA WEST TOTAL	542		
There are an additional 24 applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within Area West.								

AREA SOUTH	Housing Register Data					Housing Register Data			
				Total					Total
BRYMPTON					YEOVIL EAST				
Brympton			2	2	Total	36	56	72	164
Yeovil Preston	23	36	54	113					
Total				115	YEOVIL SOUTH				
					Total	19	48	69	136
COKER					YEOVIL WEST				
Barwick	6	2	5	13	Total	25	35	82	142
Closworth				0					
East Coker	3	3	4	10					
Hardington Mandeville			1	1	YEOVIL WITHOUT				
Odcombe	2		2	4	Total	20	54	71	145
West Coker		5	9	14					
Total				42					
YEOVIL CENTRAL									
Total	39	103	140	282	TOTALS BY BAND	173	342	511	
					AREA SOUTH TOTAL	1026			
There are an additional 42 applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within Area South.									

In total, there are **128** applicants from other parts of Somerset whose first choice parish lies within South Somerset.

Additionally, there are **166** applicants from within South Somerset whose first choice parish lies elsewhere in Somerset.

The information in the above tables is only accurate as at the point in time it was taken – with new households joining the register on a day to day basis and existing households being rehoused following the weekly advert cycle.

Evidence relating to Objective 3

Table 13 – Local Parish Housing Needs Surveys completed since January 2004

Parish/es	Date	Population 2011 Census	Households 2011 Census	Need	Developed	Year
Abbas & Templecombe	Oct-08	1560	689	25	9	Nov-10
Aller	Mar-04	410	166	0	5 (net gain)	2006
Ash	Sept-09	626	261	3		
Barton St David	Aug-08	561	233	2	13	May-13
Brewham	Sept-11	441	186	1		
<i>Broadway</i>	<i>Mar-05</i>	<i>740</i>	<i>318</i>	<i>4</i>		
Bruton	Oct-08	2907	1082	27	13 4 15	Feb-10 Dec-10 Mar-12
Buckland St. Mary*	Apr-05	521	214	3		
Charlton Horethorne	Feb-07	591	265	1		
<i>Charlton Musgrove</i>	<i>Sept-11</i>	<i>398</i>	<i>166</i>	<i>0</i>		
Compton Dundon	Dec-10	705	300	3		
Curry Mallet	2004	306	132	2	6	Jan-09
Curry Rivel	Aug-06	2148	938	15	17 2 5 7	Aug-06 Jun-08 Aug-11 Apr-12
<i>Donyatt</i>	<i>Sep-05</i>	<i>347</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>2</i>		
Hardington Mandeville*	May-04	585	236	1		
High Ham	Apr-04	909	371	1		
Hinton St George	March-13	442		0		
Horton	Sept -10	812	361	6		
Huish Episcopi	Apr-04	2095	876	3	18	Sept-10
<i>Kingsdon</i>	<i>Oct-08</i>	<i>303</i>	<i>146</i>	<i>1</i>		
Long Load	May-12	332	145	0		
Long Sutton	Feb-13	833	367	2		
<i>Marston Magna</i>	<i>Mar-09</i>	<i>523</i>	<i>207</i>	<i>3</i>		

* Indicates the survey was not undertaken by the county-wide Rural Housing Enablers and methodology may vary.

Table 13 continued

Parish/es	Date	Population 2011 Census	Households 2011 Census	Need	Developed	Year
Misterton*	June-04	826	352	5	(see note)	
Norton Sub Hamdon	Oct-05	743	308	11	10	Mar-15
Pen Selwood	Sept-11	273	128	0		
Queen Camel	Sept-11	908	355	18	20	Mar-15
Shepton Beauchamp	Sep-04	728	320	5		
South Cadbury	Oct-04	284	132	1	3	Nov-08
<i>South Petherton⁴³</i>	<i>Jan-08</i>	<i>3367</i>	<i>1562</i>	<i>37</i>	<i>11 23 1 10</i>	<i>Mar-09 Nov-09 Feb-13 Apr-13</i>
Sparkford	Aug-05	617	258	6	8	Feb-13
Stoke Sub Hamdon	Mar-08	1968	861	33		
Tatworth & Forton	Aug-05	2660	1108	12	4 8	Jul-07 Mar-11
<i>West Camel</i>	<i>Oct-08</i>	<i>459</i>	<i>205</i>	<i>4</i>		
West Crewkerne	Sept-11	631	258	0		

It was originally thought that the need established at Misterton would be met through the affordable housing provision within the former yard site adjacent Crewkerne Station. However just before going to print it was accepted that the developer was unable to afford this planning obligation according to an independent viability report.

Mutual exchange

On 31st December 2013 there were 850 live mutual exchange applications across the county, the vast majority of which were split between Mendip, Taunton Deane and South Somerset.

Table 14 - mutual exchange applications by district

	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
Number of applications	212	73	258	293	14	850

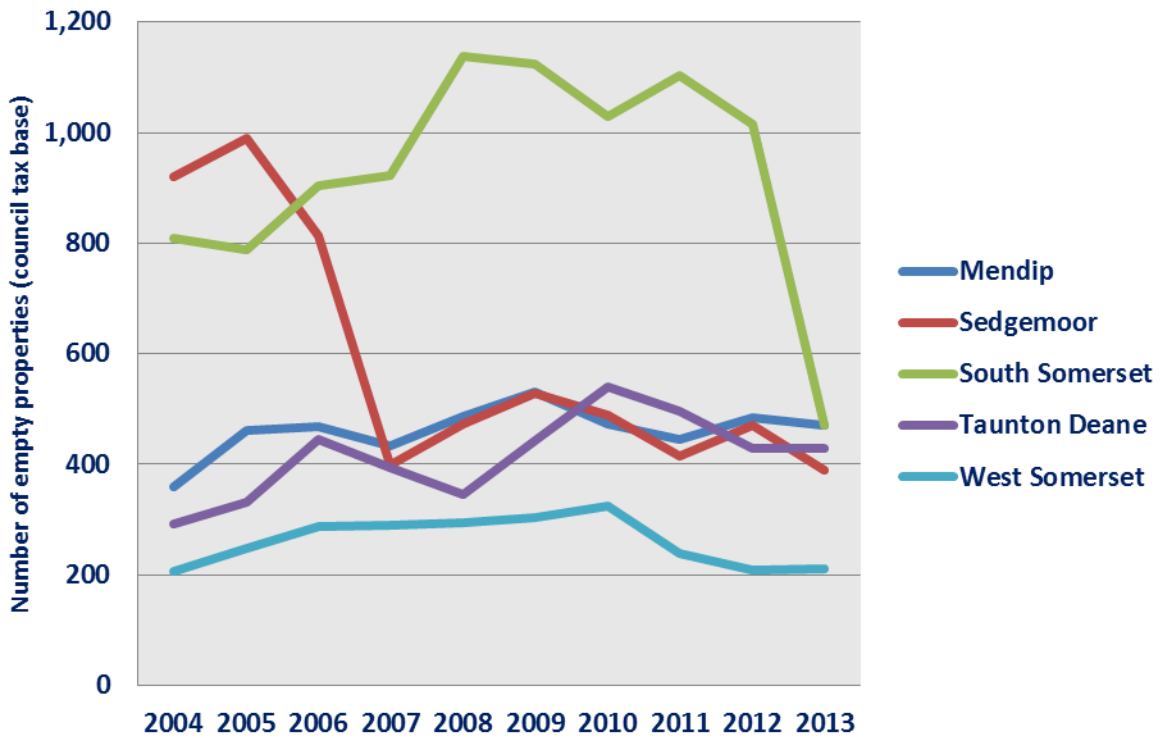
Source: Somerset Intelligence

Empty properties

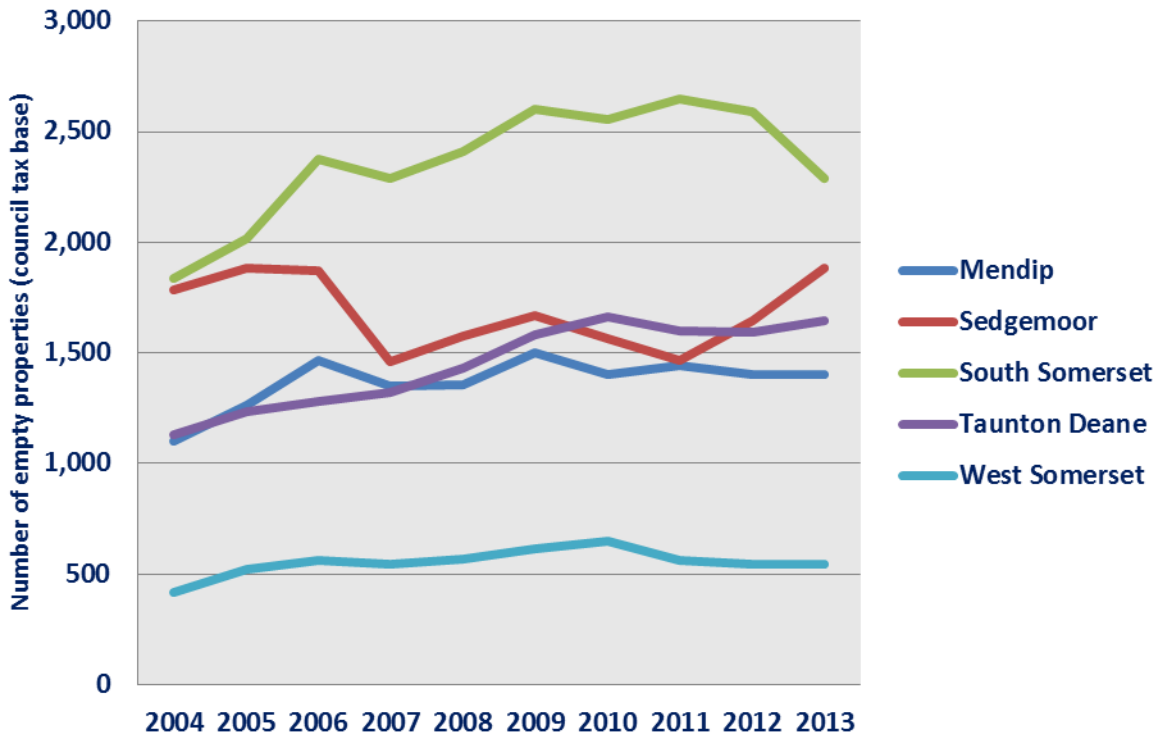
The graphs on the following page clearly show the results achieved following the appointment of the Empty Property Officer in 2012, among all such properties but especially among long-term vacant dwellings.

⁴³ South Petherton included for completeness sake given 2008 survey and fairly recently completed affordable housing provision; however most recent census data shows that the village has now exceeded 3,000 population

Graph 9 - long-term vacant dwellings by local authority, 2004 to 2013

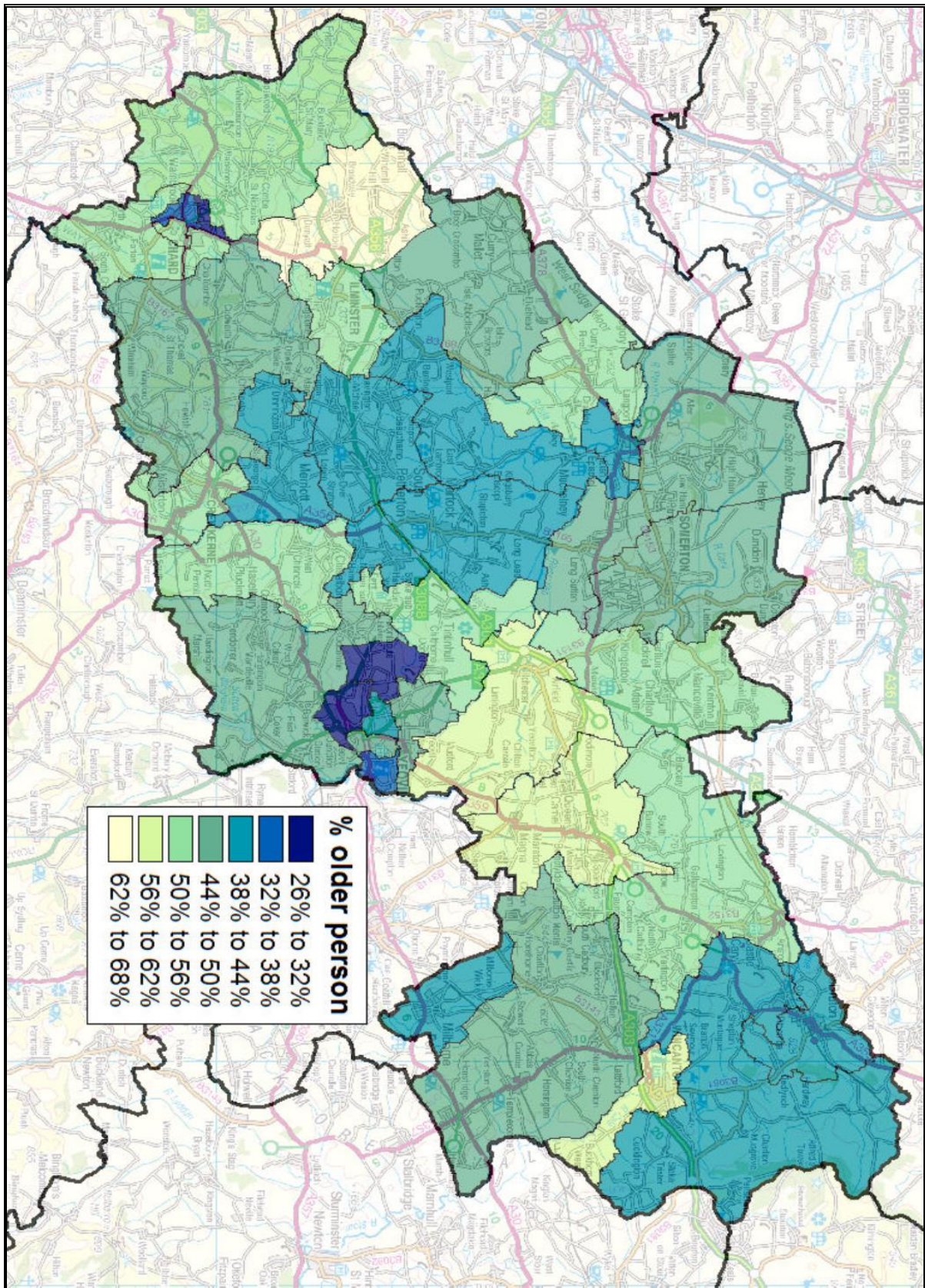


Graph 10 - all vacant dwellings by local authority, 2004 to 2013



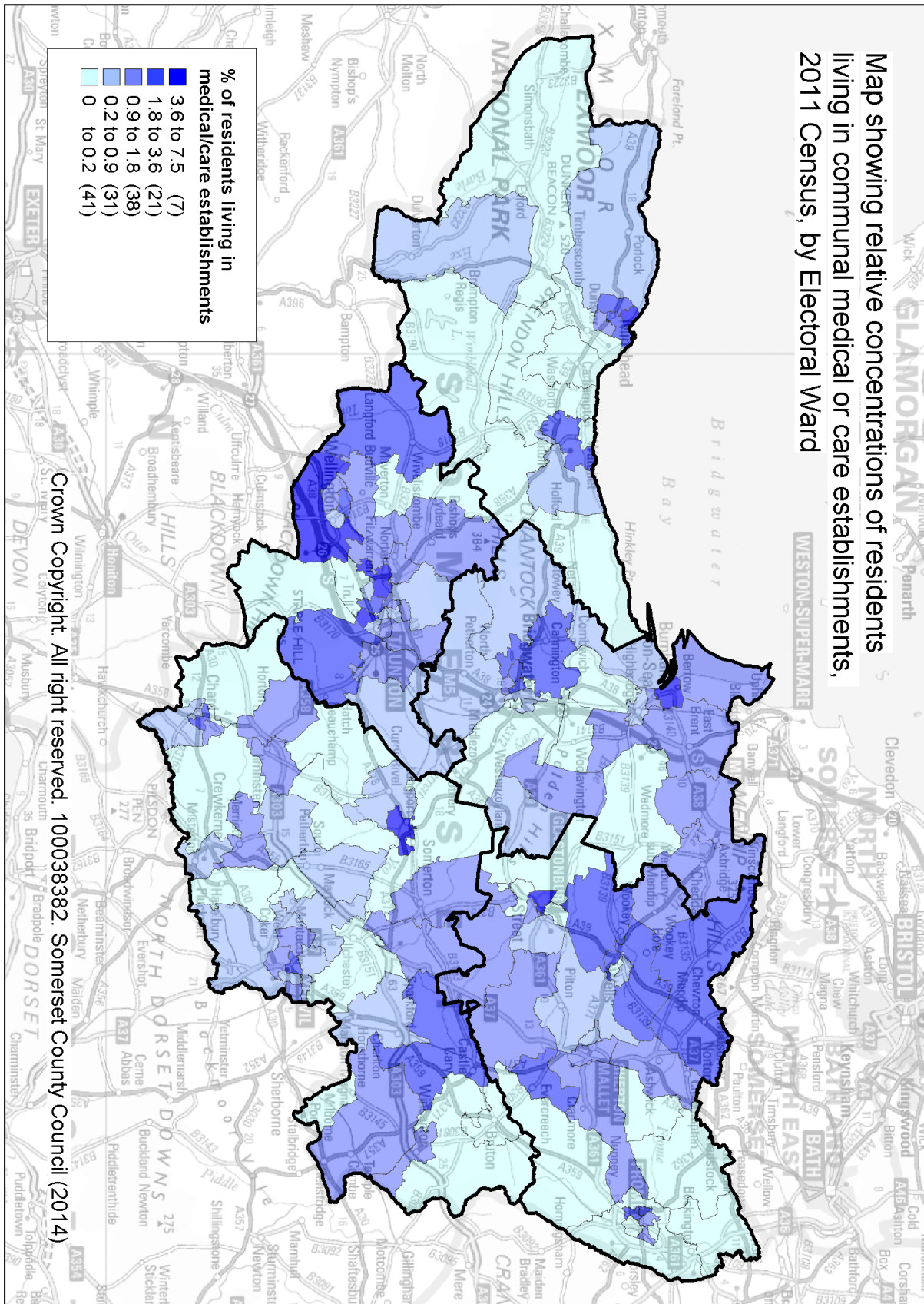
Evidence relating to Objective 4

Map 2 – age demographics in South Somerset as percentage



Source: Somerset SHMA household survey, Fordham Research 2008

Map 3 – percentage of residents living in medical/care establishments in Somerset, 2011 Census



Age & Care Distribution

On the preceding two pages, map 2 shows the higher percentage of older people in rural areas of South Somerset and map 3 shows that the higher percentages of residents living in medical/care establishments are concentrated in and around the major settlements of the district.

Under-occupation and overcrowding

Table 15 - under/over-occupancy - 2011 Census

The number of households within each occupancy rating category on **bedrooms** is broken down by district below:

Occupancy rating ⁴⁴	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset	TOTAL
+2 or more	17,713	18,612	26,549	17,024	5,800	85,698
+1	10,783	12,057	16,616	10,674	3,504	53,634
0	3,899	3,990	5,704	3,586	1,082	18,261
-1 or less	392	416	528	360	107	1,803

Source: Somerset Intelligence

Based on this measure, 53.7% of all households in South Somerset were highly under-occupied (a rating of +2 or more) while 1.1% are overcrowded (-1 or less).

Somerset households were more likely to be highly under-occupied than is the case regionally (South West: 38.7%) or nationally (England: 34.3%). There was very little variation across the five districts.

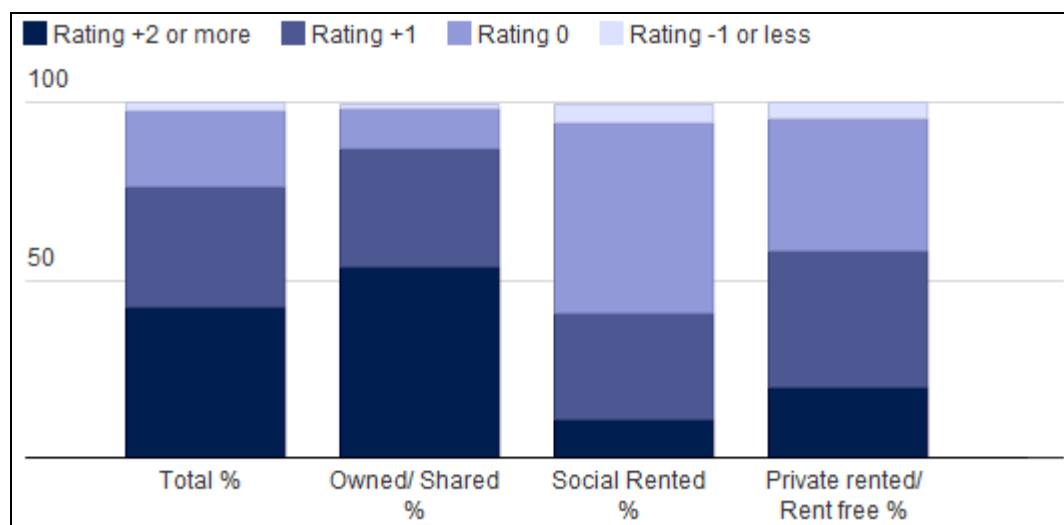
Graph 11 shows that this trend is most pronounced in the owner occupied sector (although the data source includes shared ownership properties) and clearly shows that the social rented sector has the greatest proportion of 'fit' between household and property size.

⁴⁴ From Somerset Intelligence:

“**Occupancy rating** provides a measure of whether a household's accommodation is overcrowded or under occupied. There are two measures of occupancy rating, one based on the number of rooms in a household's accommodation, and one based on the number of bedrooms. The ages of the household members and their relationships to each other are used to derive the number of rooms/bedrooms they require, based on a standard formula.

“The number of rooms/bedrooms required is subtracted from the number of rooms/bedrooms in the household's accommodation to obtain the occupancy rating. An occupancy rating of -1 implies that a household has one **fewer** room/bedroom than required, whereas +1 implies that they have one **more** room/bedroom than the standard requirement.”

Graph 11 – occupancy rating profile by tenure



Source: Office for National Statistics table DC4105EW1A via Somerset Intelligence

Homelessness

Table 16 – trends in homelessness acceptances per thousand households by area

Area	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Mendip	2.09	2.41	2.74	2.27
Sedgemoor	1.15	0.96	1.52	1.06
South Somerset	3.57	4.06	3.59	3.90
Taunton Deane	2.89	3.28	3.70	2.73
West Somerset	2.13	1.94	1.94	1.65
SOMERSET	2.51	2.75	2.88	2.56
South West	1.35	1.46	1.67	1.52
England	1.86	2.03	2.31	2.37

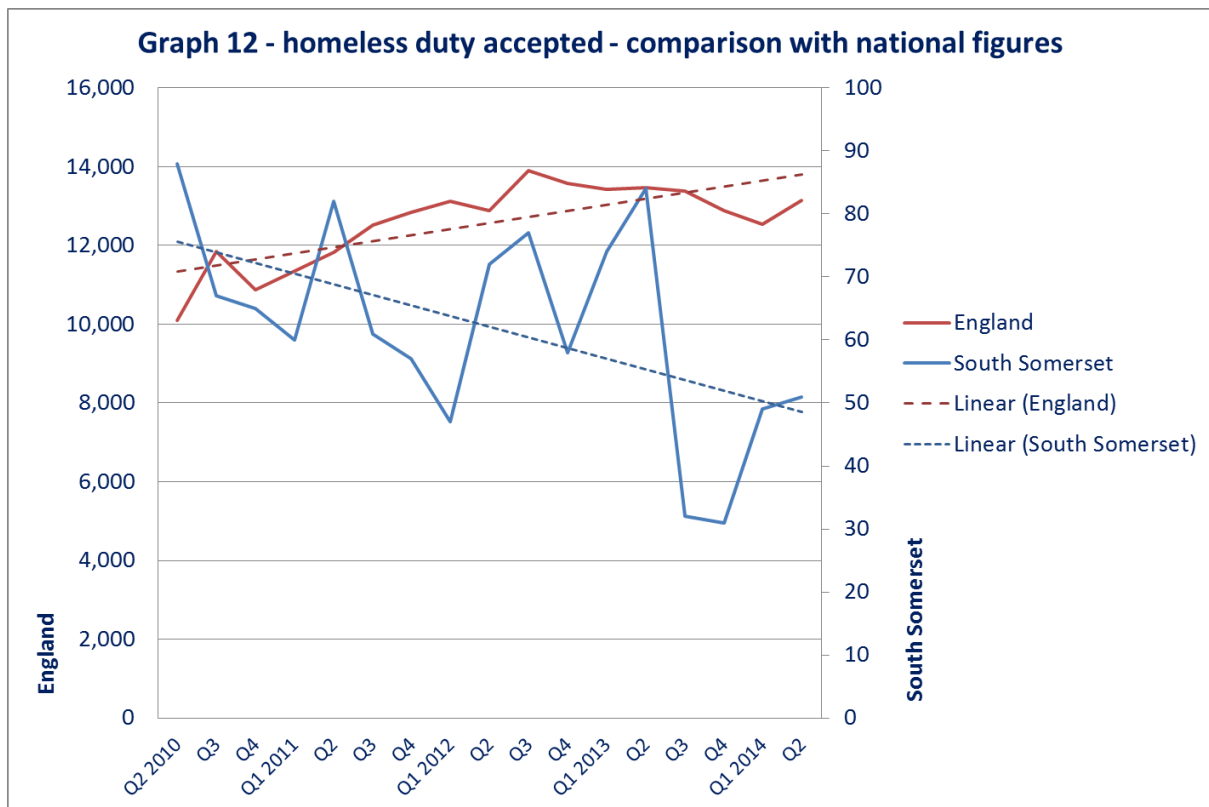
Source: Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

Graph 12, on the following page, demonstrates that our long term trend in acceptance of a duty under homelessness legislation is downwards, against the national trend.

Graph 13 shows this trend in the context of the overall number of approaches and formal decisions being made. All of these are downward, possibly reflecting a greater level of prevention prior to the point of homeless crisis being reached.

Graph 14 then shows the number of households in temporary accommodation which has also continued on a downward trend over the past four years. As with the previous graphs, more so as this graph depicts monthly snapshots, the line does jump up and down a lot from one reporting point to the next, but the long term trend is very clear (as shown by the dotted line). This trend is also against the national

trend where most housing authorities are finding themselves increasingly more reliant on temporary accommodation.



Source for national figures: Department for Communities and Local Government

Map 4 shows the number of households towards whom a duty was accepted as expressed per thousand population (in order to give a pro rata comparison).

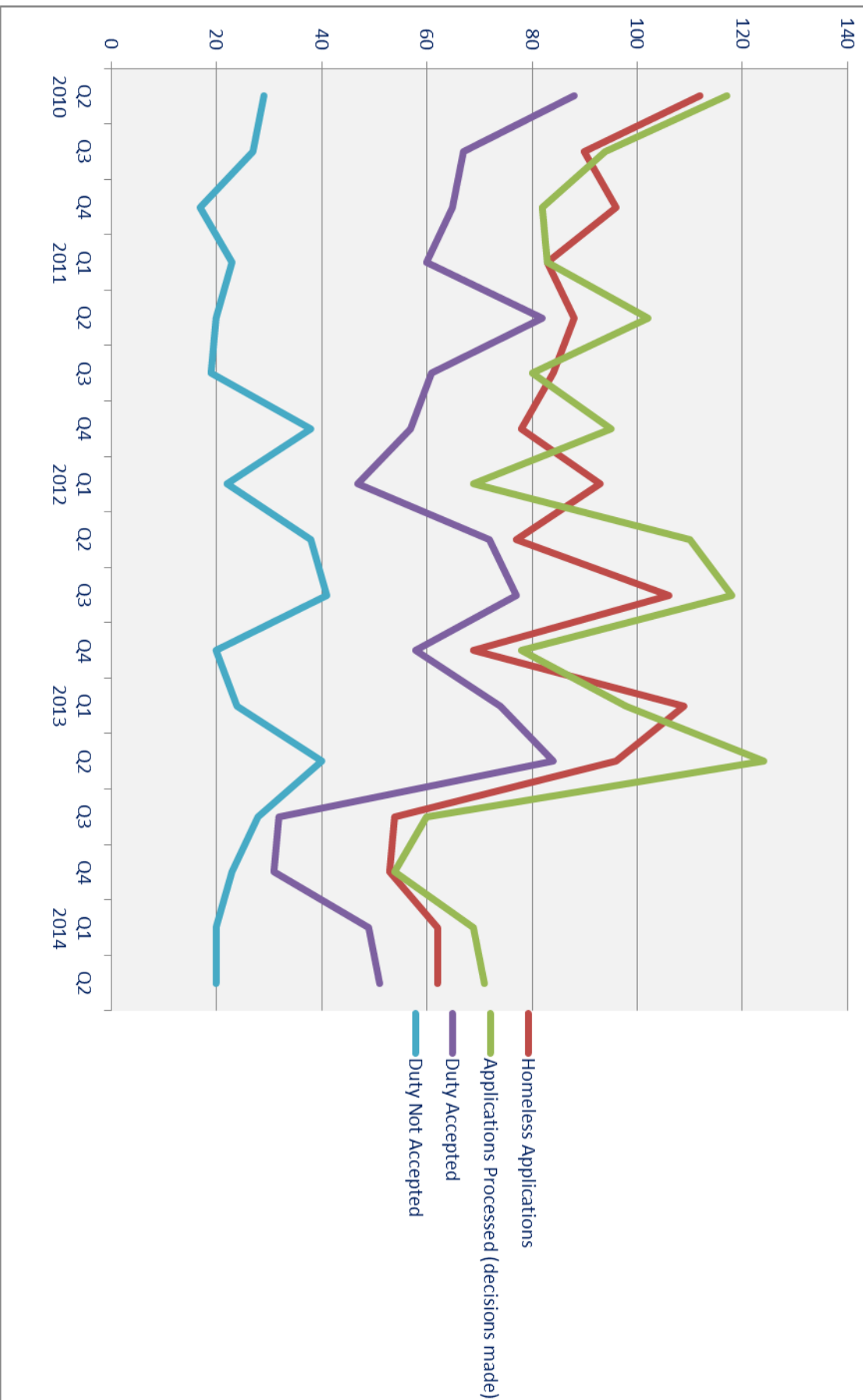
Map 5 depicts the number of households in temporary accommodation on the same pro rata basis (per thousand population)

These two maps show that South Somerset is now in one of the lowest concentrations on both counts, whereas four years previously we were in one of the highest. We have improved in both absolute and relative terms.

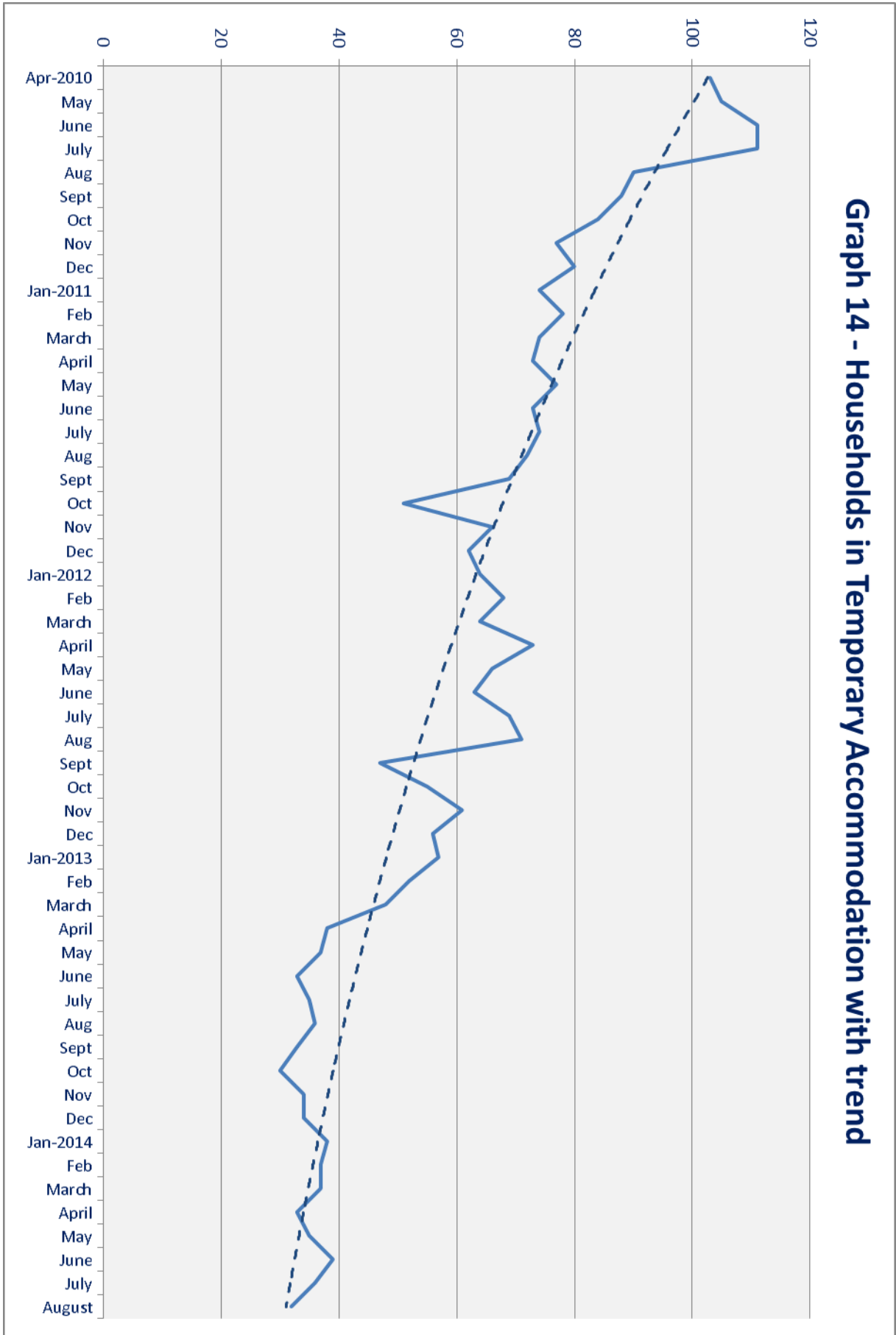
Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Needs

Tables 17 and 18 summarise the findings of the Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) . Table 17 shows that in South Somerset we have already made adequate provision for residential pitches up until the end of the 2010-2015 period (whilst shortfalls remain in the rest of the County). Table 18 predicts the further shortfalls that will occur during the period 2016-2020.

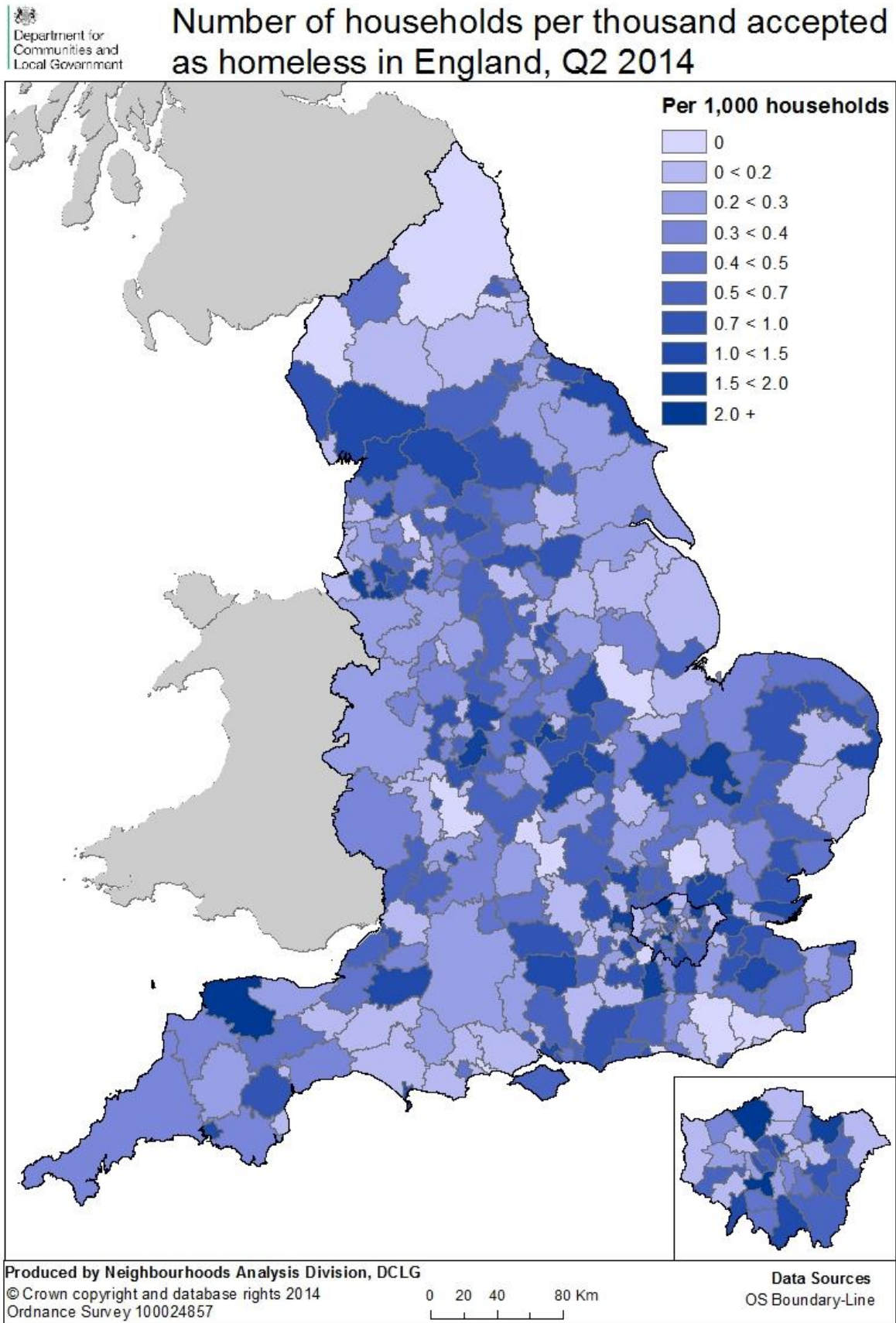
Graph 13 - Quarterly Homelessness Data



Graph 14 - Households in Temporary Accommodation with trend



Map 4 - households per thousand accepted as homeless



Map 5 – households per thousand in temporary accommodation

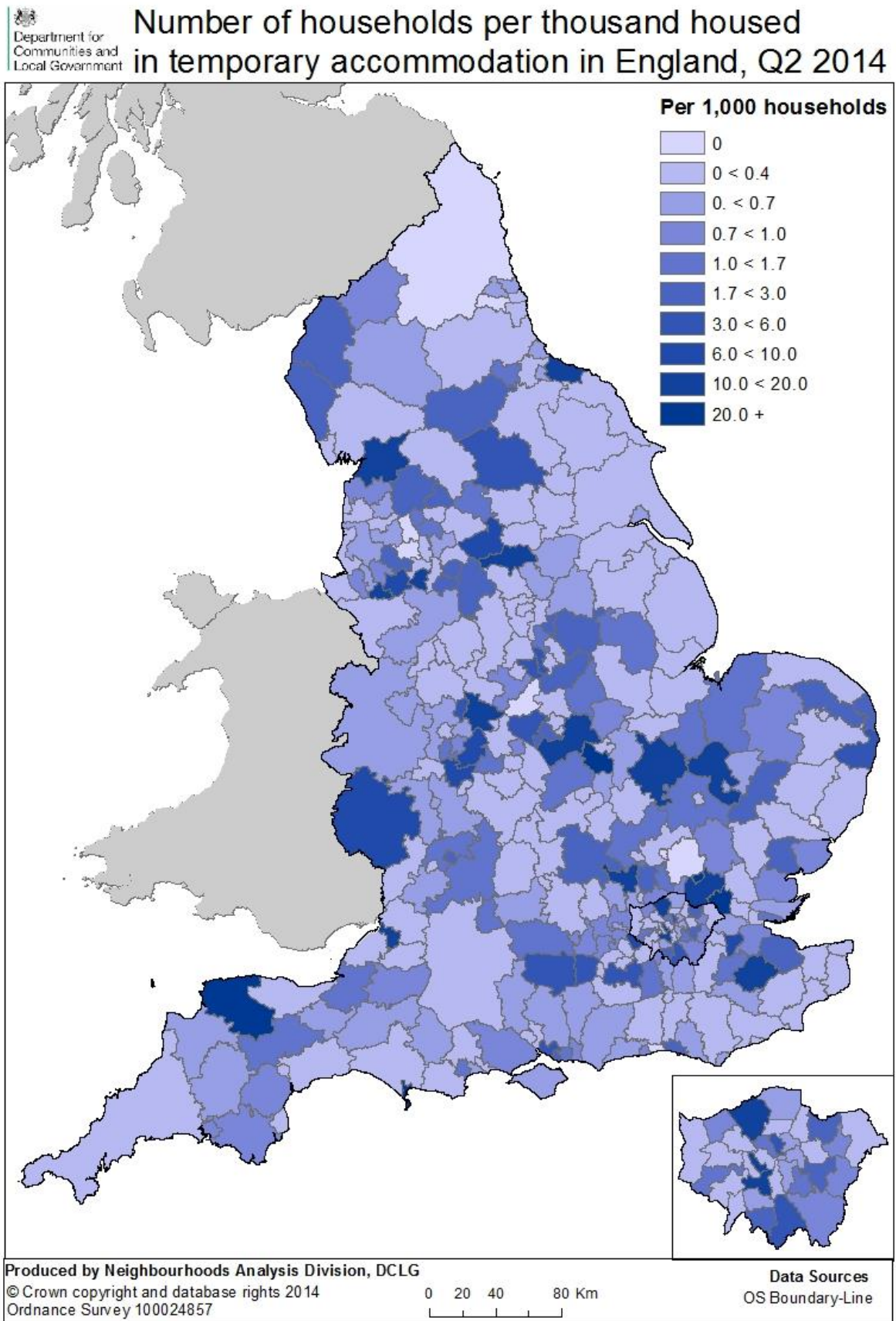


Table 17 – comparison of Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) requirement 2010-2015 and delivery to 29/07/2013

Local authority	GTAA requirement	Provision to date	Difference
Mendip	69	2	-67
Sedgemoor	24	10	-14
South Somerset	10	12	+2
Taunton Deane	25	11	-14
West Somerset	2	0	-2
All	130	35	-95

Source: De Montfort University

Table 18 – additional residential pitch requirements 2016-2020

Baseline	Study area	Mendip	Sedgemoor	South Somerset	Taunton Deane	West Somerset
Housed 2010 estimate	189	67	42	41	23	16
Pitches 2013 estimate	279	93	49	37	85	15
Recommended 2010-2015	130	69	24	10	25	2
Further additional pitches	0	0	0	2	0	0
Assumed total pitches 2015	409	162	73	49	110	17
Plus additional households formed						
From housed families	25	9	5	5	3	2
From families on sites	50	21	8	6	14	1
Giving additional pitch requirement						
From housed families (50%)	11	4	3	2	1	1
From families on sites	50	21	8	6	14	1
Requirement 2016-2020	61	25	11	8	15	2

Source: De Montfort University

Appendices

Appendix A: Relevant Action Plans & Strategies

Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy (2006 -2009)

This Strategy Implementation Plan follows up all the outstanding actions from our original Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy and we therefore no longer need a separate strategy.

Private Sector Housing Strategy (2007 – 2012)

The Private Sector Housing Strategy has become out of date. We have not attempted to replenish it through this document but will be creating a new Private Sector Housing Strategy shortly.

Empty Property Strategy (Jointly with Mendip) (2010)

This Strategy is also becoming out of date. We shall not attempt to replenish it through the new Private Sector Housing Strategy, keeping it as a distinct separate document, but we shall set out our plans to revise it.

Temporary Accommodation Strategy (2011)

This Strategy Implementation Plan follows up some of the outstanding actions from our original Temporary Accommodation Strategy and we will be creating a new Temporary Accommodation Plan shortly.

Council Plan (2012-2015)

The Council Plan is fundamental to everything we undertake as a district council. This document effectively expands on the housing issues cited in the Council Plan and reflects on more detail.

Somerset Tenancy Strategy (2012)

The Tenancy Strategy is a statutory requirement and we developed the first version in collaboration with the other housing authorities and many social landlords in the county. The Tenancy Strategy needs to be updated and a county wide project group has already begun work on this.

Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2012-2015)

The Health & Wellbeing Strategy is a document adopted by the County Council arising from its role in public health and related services.

Youth Housing Strategy (2012-2015)

The Youth Housing Strategy was a collaborative document drawn up by housing authorities and the county council. A county-wide project group has been set up to begin work on revising the Youth Housing Strategy.

Rural Housing Action Plan (2013)

This document has updated the information produced in last year's Rural Housing Action Plan and brought forward the major policy change to rural lettings overall. We will produce a revised Rural Housing Action Plan next year.

Somerset Homelessness Strategy (2013 – 2016)

The Homelessness Strategy is a statutory requirement and the document produced last year was the second county-wide collaboration agreed by all the housing authorities in Somerset.

Asset Management Strategy (2014)

The Asset Management Strategy has recently been adopted and has a bearing on those properties which we retain ownership of but are used for housing purposes.

Final Draft

Appendix B: Sources of Evidence

Affordable Housing Supply April 2012 to March 2013, England:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/259999/Affordable_Housing_Supply_2012-13.pdf

The Decent Homes standard:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance>

Greater London Authority Draft Housing Strategy April 2014 and Housing in London 2014 (evidence base):

<http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing-land/consultations/draft-london-housing-strategy>

HECA Further Report for South Somerset:

http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/471147/heca_further_report_south_somersetpdf.pdf

Heating and housing 2011 census data

<http://www.cse.org.uk/resources/open-data/output-area-level-census-data>

Homefinder Somerset:

<http://www.homefindersomerset.co.uk/Data/ASPPages/1/33.aspx>

JSNA Housing Summary:

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/housing-issues-for-2013-14-jsna-summary.pdf>

Lifetime Homes standard:

<http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/pages/revised-design-criteria.html>

Localism Act 2011 Tenancy Strategy:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/part/7/chapter/2/enacted>

National Planning Practice Guidance:

<http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/>

New Homes Bonus:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/increasing-the-number-of-available-homes/supporting-pages/new-homes-bonus>

P2i – Pathway to Independence:

<http://www.p2i.org.uk/>

Secured by Design:

<http://www.securedbydesign.com/professionals/guides.aspx>

Self-build and custom-build:

<http://www.selfbuildportal.org.uk/>

Somerset Intelligence housing information:

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/housing.html>

State of the Somerset Economy:

<http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/state-of-the-somerset-economy-2013-full-report.pdf>

Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment:

https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/633128/shlaa_2012_report_updated_23-10-13.pdf

Strategic Housing Market Assessment South Somerset:

https://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/media/321411/south_somerset_hns_report.pdf

Supporting People (Housing Executive):

http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/advice/supporting_people.htm

Final Draft

Appendix C: Consultation Process

Consultation began on 9th July 2014 and ran for ten weeks, closing on 17th September. Copies of the consultation draft were distributed to all county, district and parish councillors in South Somerset and to all major local stakeholders, including housing associations, community land trusts, relevant charities and organisations, architects and developers. An online survey was created and opened to the public and a press release was also published on South Somerset District Council's website⁴⁵.

The following nine consultation questions were set out in the draft:

1. What future approach do you think we should take to the degree of pepper-potting or clustering?
2. Should we continue to apply the stated minimum space standards, both in respect of affordable housing achieved through planning obligations and that achieved through grant of our own capital funding? Under what circumstances should we agree to a compromise?
3. Do you agree that these should be the only features of Lifetime Homes that we continue to seek for all newly built affordable housing?
4. Should we consider a design code for affordable housing covering internal storage space, waste storage facilities, water butts, circulation space, garden sheds and other aspects? If so, are there any specific measures you would wish to see incorporated (please tell us why)?
5. How should we approach Secure By Design in future?
6. What other ways could we use to create more affordable homes? Should we create a joint venture vehicle through which we can channel new investment? Should we investigate other forms of construction?
7. Do you agree that we should implement a rural lettings policy? If so, would you support a single cut-off point (e.g. 20 dwellings) or a tiered approach (e.g. all vacancies below 11 dwellings and half of those up to 25 dwellings)?
8. Should we change our Empty Property Grant regime so that there is an additional option of paying a higher level of grant in return for the outcome rent being kept at an affordable level (i.e. below market rent)?
9. Is there anything else that you wish to specifically comment on in the draft? Is there anything else that we haven't mentioned but you feel we ought to?

Whilst inviting feedback on these questions, the consultation draft also encouraged respondents to give any relevant views they might have, not only those covered by the above questions.

On 5th September 2014 there was also a Portfolio Holder briefing, in which councillors discussed each question and provided their own feedback. Finally, the draft was considered by the Equalities Steering Group on 21st October 2014.

⁴⁵ <http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/latest-news/july-2014/have-your-say-on-the-future-of-social-housing-and-housing-needs-in-south-somerset/>



More information is available from:

Strategic Housing

✉ Brympton Way, Yeovil, BA20 2HT

🌐 www.southsomerset.gov.uk

☎ 01935 462462

(8am to 6pm Monday to Friday)

Published by:

South Somerset District Council, Brympton Way, Yeovil,

Somerset BA20 2HT

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Este documento encontra-se disponivel em Pórtugues, a pedido.

Equality Analysis - Housing Strategy Implementation Plan

Impact	Medium Impact	Lead Officer	Paul Herbert
Date of EqA	27/10/14	EqA Review Date	31 December 2015
What are the main purposes of the policy, strategy or service area?			
<p>The strategy covers the strategic approach of the District Council towards the provision of affordable housing in South Somerset. It outlines overall policy and suggests a series of discrete actions to help bring about the objectives listed. The plan describes the issues, considers our options and proposes actions. It is set out in accordance with the following four objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Objective 1 - Health and Wellbeing for all - Objective 2 - To increase the supply of affordable housing to support economic growth and development - Objective 3 - To make effective use of South Somerset's housing stock - Objective 4 - To meet the housing and accommodation-related support needs of Somerset's most vulnerable and least resilient residents by working in partnership <p>Wherever possible the options and proposed actions include where we could or should be working with neighbouring councils or other agencies in a collaborative way to save resources, become more effective or both.</p>			
Evidence			
<p>An internal project team was created, led by the Corporate Strategic Housing Manager and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of the Strategic Housing Unit • The Environmental Health Manager • The Empty Homes Officer • A member of the Spatial Policy team • A team leader from the Benefits team and • The Council's Equalities Officer <p>The Housing Options team were also invited to send officers to the project team and were kept informed of progress at all stages.</p>			

The following pieces of evidence were reviewed to consider their relevance to and consistency with the county-wide housing strategy framework:

- Gypsy & Traveller Accommodation Strategy (2006 -2009)
- Private Sector Housing Strategy (2007 – 2012)
- Empty Property Strategy (Jointly with Mendip) (2010)
- Temporary Accommodation Strategy (2011)
- Council Plan (2012-2015)
- Somerset Tenancy Strategy (2012)
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy (2012-2015)
- Youth Housing Strategy (2012-2015)
- Rural Housing Action Plan (2013)
- Somerset Homelessness Strategy (2013 – 2016)
- Asset Management Strategy (2014)
- Strategic Housing Market Analysis
- Data from the live Housing Register
- Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment
- Home Truths document, National Housing Federation
- Home Energy Conservation Act report (2013)
- Relevant housing legislation

Consultation began on 9th July 2014 and ran for ten weeks, closing on 17th September. Copies of the consultation draft were distributed to all county, district and parish councillors in South Somerset and to all major local stakeholders, including housing associations, community land trusts, relevant charities and organisations, architects and developers. An online survey was created and opened to the public and a press release was also published on South Somerset District Council's website.

On 5th September 2014 there was also a Portfolio Holder briefing, in which councillors discussed each question and provided their own feedback. Finally, the draft was considered by the Equalities Steering Group on 21st October 2014.

See also Appendix B for other sources of evidence used to create the document.

Supporting Documentation/Links

Printed%20minutes%2002nd-Sep-2014%2010.00%20Scrutiny%20Committee.pdf?T=1, Minutes%2006-03-2014%20(de10m_-public.pdf).pdf

Please comment/explain how you will meet the General Equality Duty (GED)?

The operational delivery of the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan will fulfil the Council's General and Specific equality duties under the Equality Act 2010 (advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and foster good relations). It is envisioned that the strategy will support a number of positive outcomes for groups within the protected characteristics.

Each individual action within the strategy will form part of service plans, all of which will be individually assessed where necessary for equalities and monitored on TEN (internal Performance Monitoring System).

Lead Officer Sign Off	Paul Herbert, Housing Policy Officer	Date	27/10/14
Equalities Steering Group Comments	The Housing Strategy Implementation Plan was presented to and approved by the Equalities Steering Group on 21 October 2014.	Date	27/10/14
Equalities Officer Approval Comments	Jo Morgan	Status	Approved

Agenda Item 9

Loan to Drayton Community Venture

Lead Officer: Donna Parham, Assistant Director – Finance and Corporate Services
Contact Details: Donna.Parham@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01963) 462225

Purpose of the Report

To request that full Council approves a loan of £130,000 to Drayton Community Pub Ltd (an industrial and Provident society for the benefit of the community) to purchase Drayton Arms public house.

Recommendation

That Members approve a loan of £130,000 to Drayton Community Pub Ltd, to be repaid over 20 years, from the available capital balances subject to a first charge being made on the property.

Background

The Drayton Arms is the one remaining public house in the village of Drayton. It is listed on our list of Community Assets by the group with the assistance of the Parish Council. The public house is now up for sale and the residents have until the 24th January to purchase the building or it will return to the open market.

SSDC's Loan Policy

SSDC agreed a loans policy in 2003 to provide short to medium term loans at manageable interest rates to enable community groups to achieve their and the Council's objectives. Loans can be agreed by District Executive where they are made under the policy's criteria. If the loan is outside of the criteria then full Council must approve the loan. The loan falls out of the policy because of the following:-

- In this case the loan is for 20 years (the policy states 10)
- The capital payments are deferred for 6 months (the policy does not allow deferral)

Report

The Drayton Arms is the only public house in Drayton. It is currently open for business and is currently for sale. An open sale has been delayed to allow the Group to raise the funds required to purchase it as a community asset. Local residents have set up an Industrial and Provident Society named Drayton Community Pub Ltd to raise the funds to purchase the pub and to run it for the benefit of the local community. The Group have until the 24th January to purchase the property and this is why this report has not been considered by District Executive before being submitted to full Council.

The Group's aim is to purchase the freehold of the building and run it as a traditional tenanted village pub providing a venue for traditional pub sports and pastimes, local events, and celebrations. The Group are also assessing how best to meet community needs including possible space for a children's playground.

A Management Committee of between four and twelve members will manage the society. The society currently has pledges from private shareholders of £145,000.

Financial Implications

The loan agreement will be charged as a first charge on the property. SSDC's Valuer will check by the time of full Council that the property is of sufficient value to repay the loan. The selling price is £260,000.

The loan of £130,000 will be found from capital resources. There will be no impact on revenue as the interest will be repaid as part of the loan. The capital sum will be returned to capital balances over the 20 year period of the loan.

This loan requires Council approval as the Group wish to defer the first 6 months capital repayments to give them time to ensure the pub is up and running sufficiently to repay the loan. The interest will be payable from beginning of the loan. The loan will be fixed at an interest rate of approximately 3.05% (the same rate as the cost of Public Works Loans Board borrowing for 20 years). The annual payments would be approximately £330 per month rising to around £721.50 per month once the deferred period has ceased. The final rate will attract a fixed rate of interest for the duration of the loan period, being the PWLB rate at the time the grant is awarded.

The business case is currently being updated as the original request to SSDC was to take a shareholding in the company. The plan is now being updated to reflect the loan and also we requested that a building survey was carried out and expected repairs to be reflected in the business plan. The Group are also checking that all "goods and chattels" are included within the selling price. An updated Business Plan will be available for members as soon as it is available and will be distributed before the full Council meeting.

Funds of £145,000 have been pledged from prospective shareholders in the business.

The current business plan shows that the Group will need to defer initial capital payments for six months to give it time to get established. I have assessed that the annual payments of £8,658 are manageable for the business by year 2. However, this will have an impact on the amounts that can be distributed to other shareholders and the updated business plan needs to reflect this.

There are no previous accounts for this Group as it is a new venture and therefore I cannot give assurance to members regarding past performance and financial stability. In effect the main risk mitigation will be the first charge over the property.

Background Papers

None

Agenda Item 10

Report of Executive Decisions

Lead Officer: Angela Cox, Democratic Services Manager
Contact Details: angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462148

This report is submitted for information and summarises decisions taken by the District Executive and Portfolio Holders since the last meeting of Council. The decisions are set out in the attached Appendix.

A meeting of the District Executive was held on 4th December 2014.

Members are invited to ask any questions of the Portfolio Holders.

Background Papers

All Published

Ric Pallister, Leader of the Council
Angela Cox, Democratic Services Manager
angela.cox@southsomerset.gov.uk or (01935) 462148

Appendix

Portfolio	Subject	Decision	Taken By	Date
Regulatory & Democratic Services	Somerset Knowledge Test	<p>The Portfolio Holder and the Strategic Director (Operations & Customer Focus) agreed:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the introduction of the South Somerset Knowledge Test for taxi drivers with immediate effect. 2. the test be provided in a computer based format of multiple choice questions. The test to comprise of 50 questions. A time of 1 hour is allowed for completion. 3. the following categories be included in the test; Understanding & Numeracy, Highway Code, Road Signs, Directions & Cabology (Taxi Law & Customer Care). 4. a pass mark of 75% in each category is required to pass the test. 5. A candidate who fails the test will not be permitted to retake the test until 2 weeks have passed, since their last unsuccessful attempt. 6. A candidate will be prevented from taking the test for a six month period once they have had 3 unsuccessful attempts. 	Portfolio Holder	07/11/14 Executive Bulletin No. 649
Leader, Strategy & Policy	Presentation from the Environment Agency on Flooding trigger points	District Executive will receive a short presentation from the Environment Agency on flooding trigger points.	District Executive	04/12/14
Leader, Strategy & Policy	The Somerset Levels & Moors 20 Year Flood Action Plan – Proposed Somerset Rivers Authority	<p>District Executive is recommended to agree:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) That progress to date in the development of the Somerset Rivers Authority proposition is endorsed, together with the way forward as set out in the report, and that a further report follows in due course. (2) To endorse the on-going work by the Leader of the Council and the Flood Action Plan Leaders Implementation Group to progress the creation of a shadow Somerset Rivers Authority, as proposed in this report. 	District Executive	04/12/14
Strategy & Policy	Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Reports – 2 nd quarter 2014/15	District Executive is asked to note and comment on the corporate performance monitoring report.	District Executive	04/12/14

Portfolio	Subject	Decision	Taken By	Date
Finance & Spatial Planning	Non-Domestic (Business) Rate Pooling	The recommendations of this report appear elsewhere in this Agenda.	District Executive	04/12/14
Finance & Spatial Planning	Additional Revenues Team Resources	District Executive is recommended to approve: a) The addition of four additional Grade 3 Revenues Officers to the establishment; b) That the cost in 2014/15 of £24,050 is funded from Unallocated Balances in 2014/15 and the full year cost of £96,220 is added to the MTFP for 2015/16.	District Executive	04/12/14
Strategy & Policy	Community Right to Bid – Assets of Community Value	The District Executive is being asked to note the report.	District Executive	04/12/14
Finance & Spatial Planning	Delivery of the Car Parking Strategy (Confidential)	This report will be discussed in confidential session.	District Executive	04/12/14

Agenda Item 11

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee met on 27th November 2014 and considered the following reports:-

Treasury Management Performance to September 2014

The Principal Accountant – Exchequer provided an update on treasury management activity and the performance against the Prudential Indicators for the six months ended 30th September 2014. With regard to the Returns for 2014/15, she highlighted that the current estimate at the end of the financial year would be an overall variance of £153,300 which was due to extending the average length of investments to achieve higher returns and the good performance of the property fund.

With regard to Prudential Indicator 3 – Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), the Principal Accountant – Exchequer gave further clarification on the Minimum Revenue Position (MRP) and the opening and closing CFR.

During discussion on Recommendation 3, members were advised that if a temporary breach of the non-specified investment limit was required, members would be advised by email as and when it happened. If necessary an urgent meeting could be called.

Members were content to agree the recommendations outlined in the report subject to recommendation 3 being amended to include the decision being taken by the Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) in consultation with the Audit Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman.

- RESOLVED:**
- (1) That the Treasury Management Activity for the six month period ended 30th September 2014 be noted;
 - (2) That the position of the individual prudential indicators for the six-month period ended 30th September 2014 be noted; and
 - (3) That a temporary breach of the non-specified investment limit be approved by the Assistant Director (Finance & Corporate Services) in consultation with the Audit Committee Chairman and Vice Chairman if required when government support is removed from the banking industry due in January 2015.
-

Treasury Management Practices

The Principal Accountant - Exchequer asked the Committee to approve the Treasury Management Practices and Treasury Management Policy, copies of which were attached to the agenda. The only change from the previous year was that the Council had been out to tender with the bank.

Having considered the documents, the Committee indicated that it was content to approve the Treasury Management Policy and Practices.

- RESOLVED:** (1) that the Treasury Management Policy (Appendix 1) be agreed; and
(2) that the Treasury Management Practices (Appendix 2) be agreed.
-

2013 – 14 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) provided details of progress made on the 2013-14 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan.

Members were advised that the Audit Committee would receive an update on Risk Management at the December meeting and that the rolling programme of Data Protection training was progressing satisfactorily.

During discussion, members highlighted the importance of providing training on issues that may affect the new members in May 2015 which would include data protection. As much as possible, training would be delivered in house.

- RESOLVED:** That the progress made on the 2013-14 Annual Governance Statement Action Plan be noted.
-

Audit Committee Forward Plan

Members reviewed the Audit Committee Forward Plan and were content to note the contents.

The Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) advised that a bid for a joint fraud service had been successful and that the South West Audit Partnership would be providing the service.

- RESOLVED:** That the Audit Committee Forward Plan be noted as attached at Appendix A.
-

Councillor Derek Yeomans
Chairman of Audit Committee

Agenda Item 12

Scrutiny Committee

This report summarises the work of the Scrutiny Committee since the last Council meeting.

Items considered during Scrutiny Committee – 2nd December 2014

Planning Appeals – Update – item 7

At a previous meeting, members noted that there had been a drop in performance relating to the % of planning appeals allowed against the authority's decision to refuse. In response to this, the Development Manager attended the December meeting to update members on the remedial action taken to address this. Members were given a breakdown of all the appeals allowed, whether they were committee or delegated decisions, officer recommendations etc.

Members were pleased to note that in Quarter 3 performance is improving and suggested that a similar presentation is given to the area committees to provide a corporate context to this issue.

Members also commented on the reports due to be considered by District Executive on 4th December.

In relation to the proposals for the Somerset Rivers Authority:

- Members received a verbal updated report, including draft revised recommendations, from the Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) and were pleased to note the progress being made.
- Members sought clarification about who would have responsibility for the funding coming to Somerset from Government.
- Scrutiny understood the time constraints involved with this fast moving issue and took the unusual step of voting on formally endorsing the proposals as explained by the Assistant Director, which was carried unanimously.
- It was queried if the word 'Authority' could be used in the title without legislation.

Quarterly Performance and Complaints Monitoring Report – 2nd Quarter 2014/15 – item 8

Members were pleased to note that the complaints figures remained relatively low.

Additional Revenues Team Resources – item 10

Scrutiny members did not raise any issues and were content the recommendations went forward. Scrutiny members were accepted that without the additional resource, there would be serious implications for the future performance of this statutory service.

Delivery of the Car Parking Strategy (Confidential) – item 16

Members thanked the Assistant Director (Finance and Corporate Services) for attending the Scrutiny meeting to explain the issues raised by the Scrutiny Committee last month. Members were satisfied that this addressed most of their concerns. Members agreed that the report now contained the additional information required, however there were mixed opinions about whether Scrutiny agreed with the principle as outlined.

*Sue Steele, Chairman of Scrutiny Committee
Emily McGuinness, Scrutiny Manager (01935) 462566*

Agenda Item 15

Date of Next Meeting

Members are asked to note that the next scheduled meeting of the Full Council will take place on **Thursday, 15th January 2015** in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Brympton Way, Yeovil **commencing at 7.30 p.m.**