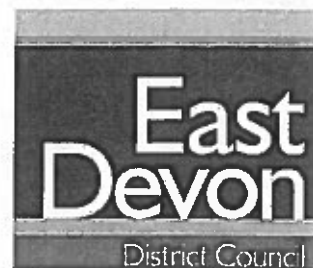


Date: 9 September 2009
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To: Members of the Overview/Scrutiny - Communities Committee
(Councillors: Vivienne Ash, Christine Drew, Roger Giles,
Darryl Nicholas, Marion Olive, Helen Parr, Margaret Rogers
Philip Skinner, Graham Troman, Mark Williamson)

Portfolio Holders

Other Members of the Council for information

Chief Executive; Corporate Directors

Head of Housing and Social Inclusion

Housing Strategy Manager; Housing Enabling Officer

Principal Planning Officer

Mike Hooper, Leisure East Devon

Paul Diviani, Chairman of Development Management Committee

Meeting of the Overview/Scrutiny - Communities Committee

Wednesday 16 September 2009 – 6.30pm

Council Chamber, Knowle, Sidmouth

Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting.

- A period of 15 minutes has been provided to allow members of the public to raise questions.
- In addition, after a report has been introduced by the relevant Portfolio Holder and/or officer, the Chairman of the Committee will ask if any member of the public would like to speak in respect of the matter and/or ask questions.
- All individual contributions will be limited to a period of 3 minutes – where there is an interest group of objectors or supporters, a spokesperson should be appointed to speak on behalf of group.
- The public is advised that the Chairman has the right and discretion to control questions to avoid disruption, repetition and to make best use of the meeting time.

A hearing loop system will be in operation in the Council Chamber.

AGENDA

Page/s

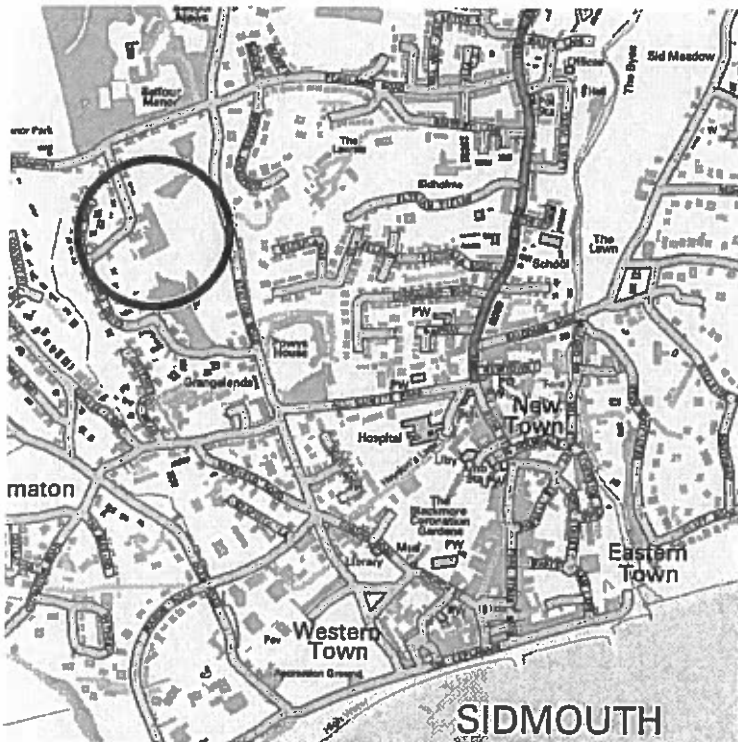
1. **Public question time – standard agenda item (15 minutes)**
Members of the public are invited to put questions to the Committee through the Chairman.
 - Each individual questioner exercising the right to speak during this public question time is restricted to speaking for a total of 3 minutes.
 - Councillors also have the opportunity to ask questions of the Leader and/or Portfolio Holders during this time slot whilst giving priority at this part of the agenda to members of the public.
 - The Chairman has the right and discretion to control question time to avoid disruption, repetition, and to make best use of the meeting time.

	Page/s
2. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Overview/Scrutiny – Communities Committee held on 24 June 2009.	5 – 10
3. To receive any apologies for absence.	
4. To consider any items, which, in the opinion of the Chairman, should be dealt with as matters of urgency because of special circumstances. (Note: such circumstances need to be clearly identified in the minutes; Councillors please notify the Chief Executive in advance of the meeting if you wish to raise a matter under this item. The Chief Executive will then consult with the Chairman).	
5. To agree any items to be dealt with after the public (including the press) have been excluded. There are no items that the officers recommend should be dealt with in this way.	
6. Place Survey – Comparison of results (Engagement and Funding Officer. Cllr Paul Diviani, Chairman of Development Management Committee; Cllr Iain Chubb, Member Champion for Young People; Mike Hooper, Head of Business Development and Marketing, Leisure East Devon, are invited to attend) Members to consider the 'community related' results of the Place Survey in comparison with national results and to recommend actions to the Executive Board	11 - 26
7. Neighbourhood Assessments (Head of Health and Health Equalities) Members to consider the achievements to date of the assessments.	27 - 38
8. Virtual Affordable Housing Team & interim affordable housing policy proposal (Head of Housing and Social Inclusion. Cllr Paul Diviani, Chairman of Development Management Committee is invited to attend) Members to consider for adoption a Rural Departure site policy designed to encourage more affordable housing development in rural areas.	39 – 50
9. Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 – review of progress (Head of Housing and Social Inclusion) Members are asked to note the progress made on the implementation of the EDDC Homelessness Strategy and other significant homeless issues.	51 - 66
10. Forward Plan for Scrutiny and Overview - Communities Committee Members to debate items for future meetings of the committee	67 – 68
11. Former Gas Works, Exmouth Members to note a report providing an update on the Docks/Former Gas Works site in Exmouth. As requested by Members	69

Members remember!

- You must declare any personal or prejudicial interests in an item whenever it becomes apparent that you have an interest in the business being considered.
- Make sure you say the reason for your interest as this has to be included in the minutes.
- If your interest is prejudicial you must leave the room unless you have obtained a dispensation from the Council's Standards Committee or where Para 12(2) of the Code can be applied. Para 12(2) allows a Member with a prejudicial interest to stay for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business but only at meetings where the public are also allowed to make representations. If you do remain, you must not exercise decision-making functions or seek to improperly influence the decision; you must leave the meeting room once you have made your representation.
- You also need to declare when you are subject to the party whip before the matter is discussed.

Getting to the Meeting – for the benefit of visitors



The entrance to the Council Offices is located on Station Road, Sidmouth. Parking is limited during normal working hours but normally easily available for evening meetings.

The following bus service stops outside the Council Offices on Station Road:
From Exmouth, Budleigh, Otterton and Newton Poppleford – 157

The following buses all terminate at the Triangle in Sidmouth. From the Triangle, walk up Station Road until you reach the Council Offices (approximately ½ mile).
From Exeter – 52A, 52B
From Honiton – 340 (Railway Station), 387 (Town Centre)
From Seaton – 52A, 899
From Ottery St Mary – 382, 387

Please check your local timetable for

times.

The Committee Suite has a separate entrance to the main building, located at the end of the visitor and Councillor car park. The rooms are at ground level and easily accessible; there is also a toilet for disabled users.

Visitors please note that the doors to the civic suite (meeting rooms) will be opened ¼ hour before the start time of the meeting. Councillors are reminded to bring their key fobs if they wish to access the area prior to that time.

For a copy of this agenda in large print, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01395 517546



EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of the Overview/Scrutiny – Communities
Committee held at Knowle, Sidmouth
on Wednesday 24 June 2009

Present: Councillors:
Helen Parr (Chairman)
Graham Troman (Vice Chairman)
Vivienne Ash
Christine Drew
Roger Giles
Marion Olive
Philip Skinner
Mark Williamson

Officers: Sue Bewes – Housing Strategy Manager
John Golding – Head of Housing and Social Inclusion
Peter Jeffs – Corporate Director
John Maidment – Planning Policy Manager
Rachel Perram – Democratic Services Officer

Also Present Councillors:
Graham Brown
Iain Chubb
Paul Diviani
Jill Elson
Mike Green
Ann Liverton
Graham Liverton
Andrew Moulding
Frances Newth
Bob Peachey
Pauline Stott

Apologies: Ben Ingham
Ray Bloxham
Darryl Nicholas

The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 9.10pm.

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the first meeting of the Overview/Scrutiny - Communities Committee. Members of the Committee agreed that the item on Sustainable Communities Act be taken after the item on Affordable Housing in East Devon, to enable a more meaningful discussion on sustainability to take place.

***1 Public question time**

There were no questions from the public raised at this meeting.

*2 **Remit of the Overview/Scrutiny – Communities Committee**

Five meetings were scheduled for the Committee each year. The remit proposed covered:

- Affordable housing, housing availability.
- Urban, rural and Safe Communities.
- Developing, reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of the Council's work on equality and diversity.
- Developing and implementing the community empowerment visions.
- Scrutinise community engagement and empowerment initiatives and governance arrangements, with input from communities to drive improvement.

The Corporate Director reminded members of the Committee that their role was to scrutinise Officers, outside bodies and the work of Portfolio Holders.

Members of the Committee noted that Environmental Health and Culture were missing from the remit list.

3 **Resolutions from the former Scrutiny Committee on improvement to the Scrutiny Function**

Members focussed discussion on two of the resolutions from the Scrutiny Committee:

Training (resolution 2 referred)

The Chairman advised Members that she would be attending a training session on Scrutiny at Mid Devon District Council on 20 July and that Members would be de-briefed after this.

Dedicated Officer (resolution 4 referred)

Members of the Committee agreed that a dedicated officer for the Scrutiny and Overview function would be very beneficial, even though the creation of this role had not been supported by the Executive Board. The Chairman advised that this matter had been raised by the other Scrutiny/Overview Committees and would be discussed at the Co-ordinating Committee.

Members agreed that it was important for all the Scrutiny/Overview Committees to have a period in which to get established and to start to drive forward their work so that the exact role of a facilitating officer could be clearly defined. Members took into account the difficult current economic climate in their discussions.

RECOMMENDED: that the Scrutiny/Overview Committee – Communities support the principle of a dedicated Scrutiny Officer at a future date.

RESOLVED: that the original report to Scrutiny Committee of 12 November 2008 on Improvements to the Scrutiny Function be circulated to the Committee for their information.

4 **Affordable Housing in East Devon**

The Head of Housing and Social Inclusion showed Members of the Committee a presentation that highlighted a number of different types of affordable Housing Schemes that had been constructed within the past few years in East Devon. Although these schemes were excellent examples of what could be achieved, it was clear that East Devon had so far failed to deliver more than 61 houses in any year, against a Government target of 300 in the district.

Affordable Housing in East Devon cont'd...

Members noted that historically the Council had been very reliant upon the planning system for delivering housing development approval. It was clear however that this system could be inflexible and constrained progress – particularly true in the many rural areas of East Devon, where demand for affordable housing was high, but lacked availability in parcels of land that met planning and highway requirements. Although planning policy allowed for 100% affordable housing on 'exception sites', few landowners were prepared to make land available for development on this basis, as it gave them a limited financial return. However, an exception scheme was due to commence in Colyton and the Council had already helped to deliver an excellent exception scheme in Beer.

Members noted that despite limited funds, the Council employed a dedicated 'Enabling Officer' and had developed a virtual "Affordable Housing Delivery Team", which included officers from housing and planning departments. Members welcomed the formation of this team and hoped that its good work would continue.

Members agreed that there needed to be a move towards a system of local determination on planning policy that could encompass such considerations as narrow lanes, lack of street lighting and future sustainability in rural areas. Consultation with parish and town councils was clearly an integral part of the planning process. Members recognised the work that had been carried out by communities in the production of Parish Plans. A thorough examination of their proposals for affordable housing land and suggestions from residents were key to moving this process forward. The Rural Champion felt strongly that Ward Members were to be encouraged to support affordable housing projects throughout the District, as long as sites were appropriate for that use. It was felt that there might be land owners that could fund development and to own houses and become landlord. Clinton Devon Estates had done this widely in East Devon for over 100 years.

The Deputy Leader of the Council proposed that the Council encourage a 'departure' route for proposals for affordable housing and some market housing. This could also allow affordable homes to be constructed on land that had no real financial value – such as agricultural and low-grade land on the periphery of towns and villages. It was a time for bold moves and tough decisions to drive these projects forward. The Council had recently recognised the need for development to be 'managed', rather than 'controlled' by their planning officers. Members agreed that departure sites needed to be approved but for the right reasons, such as sustainability in small communities. Such areas had already seen a huge erosion of facilities such as shops, post offices, public houses and public transport. It was clearly important to keep young people in villages and small towns.

Members heard of another Council in Devon that had been award 'Beacon' Council status for their work in delivering affordable housing schemes. Planning decisions had led to a number of successful schemes in that District proceeding with great success.

It was clear that developers were placing projects on hold and that social landlords were not interested in shared ownership schemes at present. This worrying situation was mainly due to problems with risk averse banks for funding and also due to difficulties with selling properties on in the current economic climate.

Due to Government policy, East Devon District Council paid £5.8 million from the Housing Revenue Account to Central Government last year. This meant that the Council was not in a position to afford large sums of money on social house building. Members felt strongly that they should continue to lobby Government to keep this money and ring fence these large sums for the provision of local affordable housing.

Affordable Housing in East Devon cont'd...

- RECOMMENDED:**
- 1) that pending the Local Development Framework (LDF) being developed, EDDC work with Parishes and Town Councils to identify acceptable 'departure sites' (allowing modest cross subsidy) on a site by site basis.
 - 2) that EDDC enter into discussion with County Highways to discuss its ambitions for affordable housing and to recognise the impact of highways objections upon these.
 - 3) that a summit be arranged with Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), the Communities Agency, the Government Office for the South West (GOSW) and Council Members with the aim to move forward affordable housing development in East Devon.
 - 4) that privately developed affordable housing will be accepted but with the equivalent requirements to those expected of RSLs.
 - 5) that the Council continue to lobby Government on the subsidy paid to them from the Council's Housing Revenue Account.
 - 6) that Development Management review each site as to its overall capacity and consider whether the affordable housing threshold applies, irrespective of how the site is to be developed or the phasing of it.
 - 7) that the Council seeks to find new funding options for undertaking Housing Needs Surveys in rural locations.
 - 8) that where site viability is a genuine issue, the Council will consider reducing the affordable housing percentage (along with other planning gain).

5 Sustainable Communities Act

Members of the Committee heard that the Sustainable Communities Act was designed in part to help drive forward affordable housing. The report presented to Members at this meeting would be tabled at the Executive Board on 15 July – this was necessary to the tight timescales for proposal deadlines back to the Government.

Members noted that consultation had taken place with residents in East Devon, as a result of submissions received by local communities. Residents would be asked to prioritise proposals that had been submitted and to consider their merits. Affordable Homes was the top priority for residents in the creation of sustainable communities in East Devon. This mirrored the top priority for EDDC. Consultation over this Act was expected on an annual basis, with this being the first for discussion with residents. EDDC's role in this process was that of validator and facilitator.

In future, prioritised proposals would be examined by the Overview/Scrutiny – Communities Committee before going to the Executive Board.

Members agreed that it would be interesting to see what national priorities came out from the consultation results issued by Government.

RECOMMENDED: that the Chairman's proposal that *'All authorities keep the Housing Revenue Account subsidy to spend on affordable housing initiatives within their District'* be noted and that Cllr Mrs Pauline Stott would take this proposal to the forthcoming meeting of the Housing Review Board.

RESOLVED: that the consideration of proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act this year by the Executive Board on 15 July 2009 be noted.

***6 Future meetings plan and key issues for Overview/Scrutiny – Communities Function**

Members noted the proposals for future meetings of the Committee and congratulated the Lead Officer on the clear format of those presented. A proposal was made to think about whether the Committee would like to hear from local groups in East Devon and their work - East Devon District Council funded and supported a number of these.

RESOLVED: that Members email their suggestions for future meeting agenda items to Peter Jeffs, Corporate Director and to the Chairman.

Chairman Date

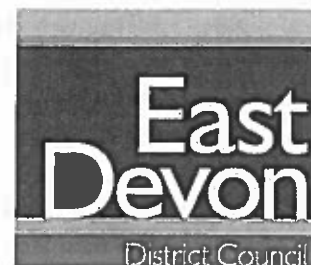


Agenda Item 6

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Communities

16 September 2009

PS O&SC 160909



Place Survey – Comparison of results

Summary

The Place Survey was sent out by the Council on behalf of national Government to 2476 randomly selected households in East Devon between September and December 2008. The purpose was to gain information that would improve outcomes for local people and places, so many of the questions are more relevant to East Devon as a place rather than East Devon District Council specifically.

The national results for this survey were published on 23 June 2009 which means that some comparison information is available so that the Council's results may now be considered in context against the results of other councils in England.

The Place Survey results are statistically reliable as there were 1,263 respondents, when anything over 400 is considered to be reliable.

The results contain 18 National Indicators. These National Indicators and what action the Council is taking to improve any poor results gained from the survey will be assessed by the Audit Commission through Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

Recommendation

That the Committee considers the 'community related' results of the Place Survey in comparison to the national results and recommend actions to Executive Board.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

The Place Survey is a very important Government survey, carried out by every local authority in England. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) expect that the results will be used by all local public service providers, including EDDC, to understand the area they serve. They expect action to be taken on any issues arising in the results of the survey, including residents' priorities for the area, in particular any poor results. It is very important that these follow up actions are completed for the benefit of residents and the Council's reputation, and also for CAA and the developing Engagement and Empowerment Agenda.

b) Alternative Options

None

c) Risk Considerations

It is expected that the Council will consider and act upon the results and doing so will avoid the Council being criticised in a future inspection and prevent any compromising of the Council's reputation and budgets.

d) **Policy and Budgetary Considerations**

The recommendation involves considering the results in relation to current practice and policy. There could be subsequent policy changes and there are no immediate budgetary implications.

e) **Date for Review of Decision**

The Place Survey is due to be carried out every two years with the next one scheduled for Autumn 2010.

1 Main Body of the Report

1. Place Survey

The Place Survey involves the use of a questionnaire to capture residents' views, experiences and perceptions, so that public bodies can use the results to decide upon their priorities and solutions for their area.

2. History

In 2000, 2003 and 2006 local authorities sent out a General User Satisfaction Questionnaire on behalf of national Government. This asked a variety of questions with a focus on residents' experiences of local services.

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) revised the General User Satisfaction Survey and replaced it with the 'Place Survey' for 2008 which focuses on improving outcomes for local people and places, rather than on processes, institutions and inputs. However, some of the questions have remained the same, allowing for trend data to be reported.

3. What we did

The survey was carried out in line with government rules. We sent out the Place Survey questionnaire to 2,476 randomly selected households, whose addresses were provided by the Audit Commission. We received back 1,263 completed questionnaires, giving us a response rate of 51%, higher than in many other district council areas. This gave us more than the amount required by the Audit Commission (1,100).

4. Reliability

The results for this survey are statistically reliable. If there are over 400 respondents to the survey it can be considered to be statistically reliable for the overall district, and there were 1,263 respondents to the Place Survey. When Ipsos MORI conducts its national polls it is confident about the result from surveying a few hundred people.

5. National results and comparisons

We now have the national results for the Place Survey which allows some comparison with other councils in England. This makes the results more meaningful as we are able to demonstrate how well our results appear in relation to our peers.

There are 28 national results which are of relevance to the Council – 18 National Indicators and 10 others, 7 of which relate to specific services and the remaining 3 concern the Council overall.

In addition to the results for every council in England, averages for the Devon Districts, South West Councils and English Councils have been provided. How the Council's results compare with these three averages is set out in the first appendix which follows and is summarised below.

Comparison of the Council's results with the three averages	Number of questions	Percentage
Questions for which our result is higher than the three averages for the Devon Districts, South West Councils and English Councils	17	61
Questions for which our result is higher than two of the averages and lower than the other one	2	7
Questions for which our result is higher than one of the averages and lower than the other two	4	14
Questions for which our result is lower than the three averages for the Devon Districts, South West Councils and English Councils	4	14
Questions which are neutral	1	4
Total number of questions	28	100

This is an excellent overall result as for the 28 questions we have comparisons for, 17 of them are above average results.

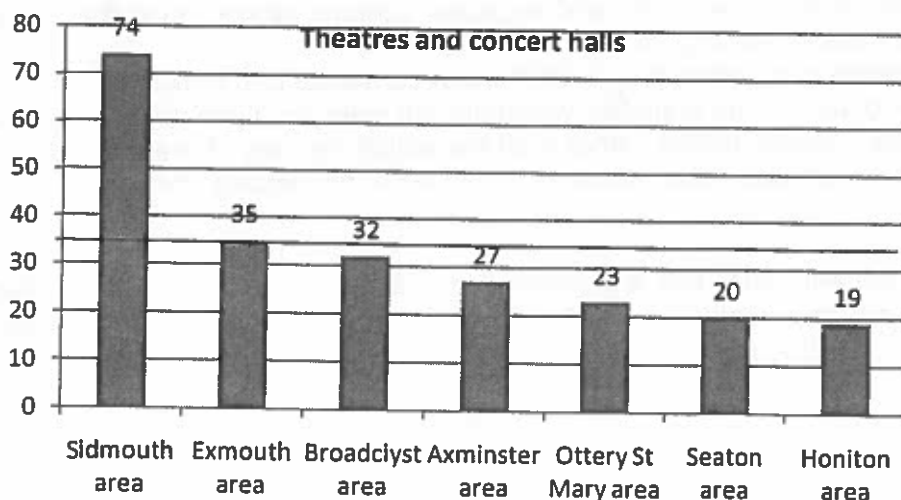
The Council is a member of the Sparsity Partnership for Authorities delivering Rural Services (SPARSE) which has undertaken a comparative analysis of the Council with 201 district councils (and the 89 district councils who are members of SPARSE).

The 'above average' results should not make us complacent, particularly as it is expected that the Council will take action on the results of the survey. The questions for which our results were below the county, regional and/or national averages are those on which we should focus our attention. These questions are set out below. Where the results are shown in a grey box it means that East Devon's result is lower than that score, or below average.

5.1 THEATRES AND CONCERT HALLS

% of people very or fairly satisfied with theatres and concert halls= 35.3%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst 201 District Councils	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst 89 SPARSE councils
41.2	43.9	43.2	117 th	Below average	44 th



Officer comments

Evidently the survey relates to theatres and concert halls operated by EDDC. In reality we have only 2 that properly fit into that description Exmouth Pavilion (operated by LED though owned by us), and Manor Pavilion (Sidmouth) directly operated by EDDC.

Whether the community are clear of which venues are run by us and which by other people we do not know (so Blackmore Theatre, and I.E.Theatre, for instance are not ours, and many people will travel to the Northcott etc). Most towns and villages have no such specialist facilities and will use community halls for such events. We are also uncertain about how any expression of dissatisfaction relates, for instance, is it the lack of a venue, the size quality and facilities of the venue, the type of programming of shows, accessibility of the nearest venue, or the cost of shows? This suggests that there could be a need for follow-up engagement exercises with those that stated they were dissatisfied.

The Exmouth Pavilion has had major face-lift in recent years and continues to show a good financial return suggesting it is heavily used. Similarly the Manor Pavilion is much better used and has significantly cut its deficit and increased its offer. (Interestingly Sidmouth shows a good level of satisfaction, and Exmouth is at an average level). Presumably the other towns show a lower than average level of satisfaction as they feel they have no specific Council provided facility or reasonable access to one (though such a provision in each town might be unsustainable).

Possible actions

- That follow up engagement be carried out with a selection of residents that were dissatisfied.
- That follow up engagement be carried out with those that were dissatisfied in Exmouth, as they have a facility but are not as satisfied as those in Sidmouth.

5.2 DOORSTEP RECYCLING

% of people very or fairly satisfied with doorstep recycling= 61.2%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst 201 District Councils	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst 89 SPARSE councils
75.8	72.2	69.8	179 th	Bottom Quartile	80 th

In relation to the figures above, the results were split into those who are in phase 1 of the new recycling scheme and those households that are not. 72.3% of those in phase 1 were satisfied which would put us above the average for South West Councils (72.2%) and English Councils (69.8%). However this would still be lower than the average for Devon Councils (75.8%).

Officers Comments

A survey was commissioned by WRAP (the Government's organisation which offers advice and information to local authorities) which carried out a door to door survey in the Axminster area following the implementation of the new waste and recycling scheme which found that 97% of those households surveyed were in favour of the new scheme.

We are aware that householders may not be fully satisfied with our waste and recycling service but we believe that this is more to do with the materials which are not collected such as cardboard and in the non-new service areas – plastic bottles rather than the actual delivery of the service by our contractor. We could carry out work with local residents to find out if this actually the case.

Possible actions:

- That work is carried out with those that are dissatisfied to find out why they are dissatisfied.
- That work is carried out once more households are taking part in the new recycling service to find out if they then become more satisfied.

5.3 INFLUENCE DECISIONS IN THE LOCAL AREA

% of people that feel they can influence decisions in their local area= 24.8%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils	89
27.9	27.4	28.9	168 th		Bottom Quartile	81 st	

Officer comments

We do not know what issue the people who felt they could not influence decisions in their local area were trying to tell us about. For example, they may feel that they have plenty of opportunities to have their say and tell public services what they think, but then what they have said to us is not acted upon, so they feel they cannot influence decisions as they are not listened to.

We are already trying to work more closely with local communities in many ways, for example:

- The last annual meeting of the towns and parishes was held in September 2008. To make this event relevant and useful, we involved volunteer town/parish councillors and clerks in the arrangements – a working group decided on the agenda and approach. This was effective and we are doing it again this year with the intention of the event being town/parish led to improve partnership working and sharing information.
- We are taking steps to widen the work of local democracy week by offering other events through the year, such as the use of the council chamber for debates, visiting schools through the year and staging political speed dating events. Work experience students are also provided with a valuable insight into council work/local democracy through a planned programme of work and interaction. The intention is to make politics real to young people so that they are engaged and able to have their say.
- There has been a Democratic Services/Communications Team led campaign to make sure that Officers are keeping Councillors informed about what is going on in their ward. This means that Ward Councillors have the local information to be able to work with their community at grass roots level.
- Public speaking at Committees was introduced in 2008.
- Other areas of the Council are taking steps to promote local influence on decision making include:
 - Use of Quality Town/Parish Councils to determine certain categories of planning applications
 - Transfer of Assets
 - Participatory Budgeting
 - Sustainable Communities Act
 - The increased usage of the Council's residents' panel

We could do further work with communities to try to find out why this result is poor, and take action on what we find out. For example if opportunities for the public to have their say are in place but the consultees feel that the comments are not acted on, the council could put a procedure in place to ensure that the results of engagement and consultation are properly taken into account and the decision reported back to consultees.

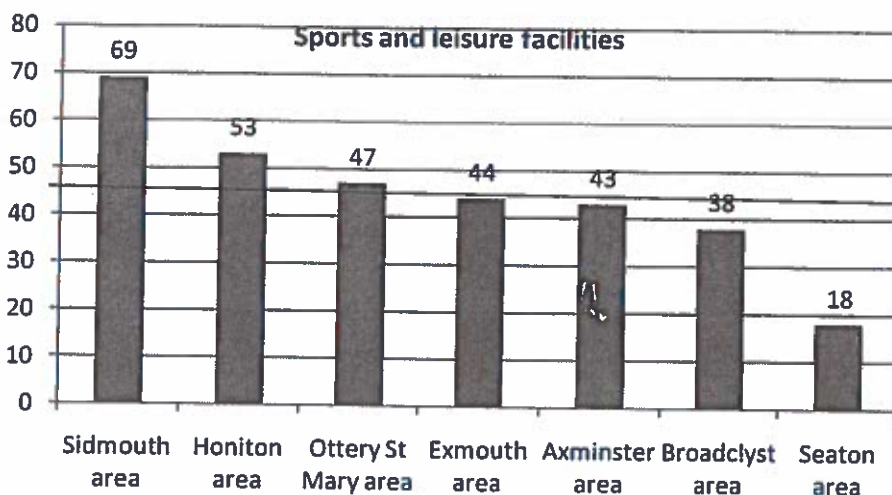
Possible action:

- That further engagement work is done with the respondents that felt they could not influence decisions.

5.4 SPORTS AND LEISURE FACILITIES

% of people very or fairly satisfied with sports and leisure facilities= 45.5%

Devon Districts	South Councils	West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils	89
48.1	47.4		46.2	108 th		Below average	41 st	



Officer comments

Evidently the survey relates to leisure facilities operated by EDDC. We have 9 centres (probably high compared to any equivalent district council) that properly fit into that description though operated by Leisure East Devon. We also have 2 sets of sports pitches which are managed directly by EDDC. Many of our sports facilities are long-leased to community organisations.

Whether the community are clear of which venues are ours and which are owned and run by other people we do not know (so Flamingo Pool for instance is not ours, and some Parishes have their own sports fields, yet some of our 'dual use' facilities might be assumed to be school operated).

Most villages have no such specialist facilities and will use community halls for such activity.

We are also uncertain about how any expression of dissatisfaction relates, for instance, is it the lack of a venue, the size, quality, cleanliness and facilities of the venue, the type of programming of uses, accessibility of the nearest venue, or the cost? We know that the level of use of LED facilities is not declining and users are regularly surveyed as to satisfaction levels.

Around the time of the Place Survey the Council had decided not to offer 'free swimming' and the potential redevelopment of the Exmouth sports centre site was delayed. Similarly some of the sports centres had been changed and improved (Honiton and Exmouth) so it may be that other localities were disappointed that theirs had not been.

Because of our dual use policy with schools there is a long running dissatisfaction that Seaton does not have its own EDDC operated sports facilities (provided at Colyton instead), which is aggravated by the closure of the holiday camp pool, and Seaton Heights. The facilities at Broadclyst are under threat from closure of the school site once Cranbrook is constructed.

The resolutions of the Scrutiny Committee (8 April 2009) regarding this result were:

2. that Leisure East Devon be invited back to a future meeting of the Committee to answer questions in light of the survey findings;

3. that the availability of school premises for activities outside school hours be explored at a future meeting, to include an invitation to the Member Champion for Young People;
4. that the inclusion of specific planning conditions to provide leisure facilities be explored at a future meeting, to include an invitation to the Development Control Manager and the Chairman of Development Control.

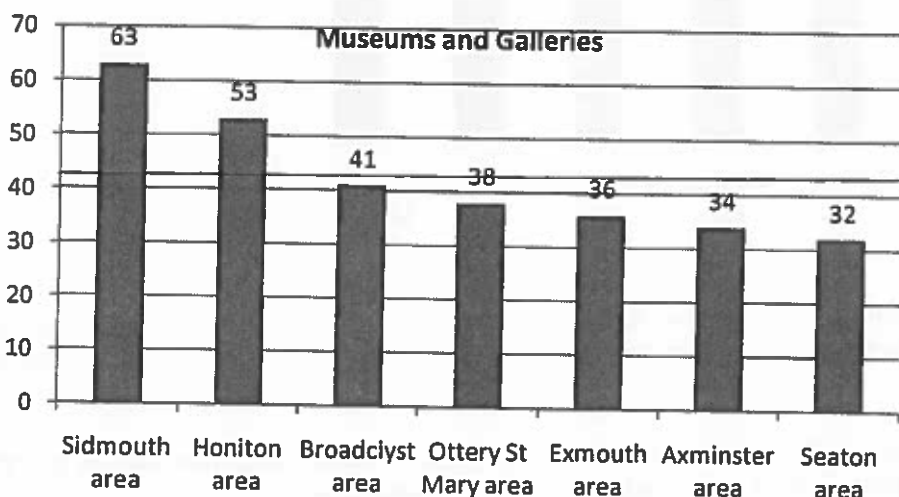
Possible action

- That Leisure East Devon, the Member Champion for Young People, the Chairman of Development Management Committee and the Development Management Manager be invited to this meeting to consider leisure and other facilities for young people as resolved by the Scrutiny Committee on 8 April 2009.

5.5 MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

% of people very or fairly satisfied with museums and galleries= 42.5%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils	89
44.2	44.2	41.5	66 th		Above average	23 rd	



Officer comments

Evidently the survey relates to museums and galleries operated by EDDC. In reality we have only one that properly fits into that description, Thelma Hulbert Gallery directly operated by EDDC. Whether the community are clear of which venues are run by us and which by other people we do not know (so local museums for instance are not ours even though they may be in our buildings in some cases e.g. Seaton).

Other than Honiton towns and villages have no such facilities operated by EDDC.

We are also uncertain about how any expression of dissatisfaction relates, for instance, is it the lack of a venue, the size quality and facilities of the venue, the type of programming of exhibition, quality of exhibits, accessibility of the nearest venue? This suggests that there could be a need for follow-up engagement exercises with those that stated they were dissatisfied. The major museum in our catchment (RAMM in Exeter) is currently closed for refurbishment.

The Thelma Hulbert Gallery is now due for major expansion and relaunch. We do support our local museums in a small way via curatorial advice etc.

Possible action:

- That further work is done with the respondents that were dissatisfied.

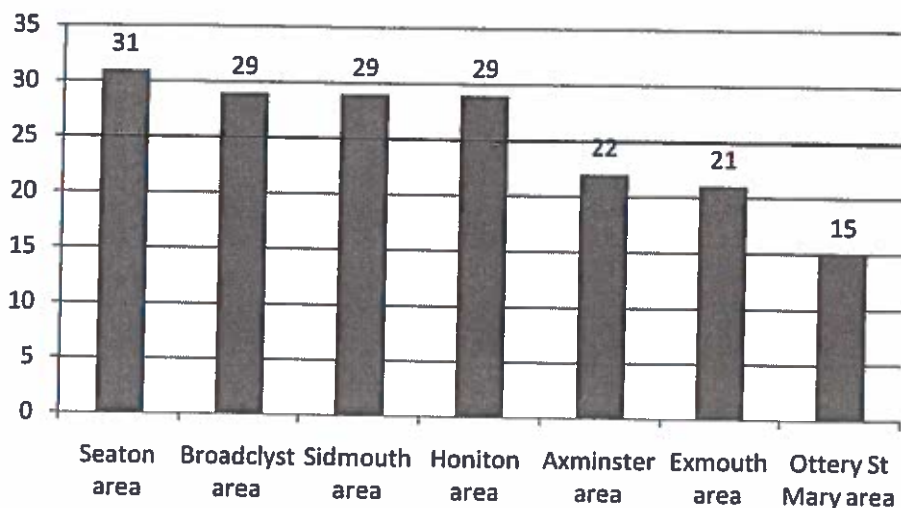
5.6 POLICE AND OTHER LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES SEEKING PEOPLE'S VIEWS ABOUT CRIME AND ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

% of people who agree that the police and other local public services seek people's views about anti-social behaviour and crime in their local area= 24.1%

Devon Districts	South West English Councils	Position amongst District Councils 201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils 89
24.0	24.8	24.8	106 th	Below average 57 th

Please note that the East Devon figure is very close to all three averages.

Police and other local public services seek people's views about crime and ASB



Officer comments

All the other results in relation to crime and anti social behaviour are very encouraging, only 9.9% feel that anti social behaviour is an issue in their local area. This more than balances up the issue of concern.

With regard to this ironically both the Police and District Council have, over the last 18 months to two years, carried out a great deal of consultation about just those issues.

Through the Neighbourhood Assessments across the district we have been asking those questions and in the main people have very few complaints regarding crime or anti social behaviour. The Police, almost on a daily basis, consult the public as part of the PACT (Partners and Communities Together) form of consultation and ask people to identify their top three priorities. One of these is often anti social behaviour as well as speeding, parking and dog fouling. The PACT priorities for each ward are shown on the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary website for the public to view. They can even see what has or is being done to tackle the problems highlighted.

Possible action:

- That the result be raised with the Devon and Cornwall Police through the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership for action.

5.7 SELF REPORTED HEALTH MEASURE

% of people who say their health is good or very good= 77.3%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils	89
78.4	77.5	75.8	107 th		Below average	52 nd	

Note that the East Devon figure is very close to the two averages it is below.

Officer comments

We know that, standardised for the age profile of East Devon, the health of our residents is very good. However with an older population there will always be a greater proportion of age related conditions, some of them chronic which can affect people's quality of life.

Possible action:

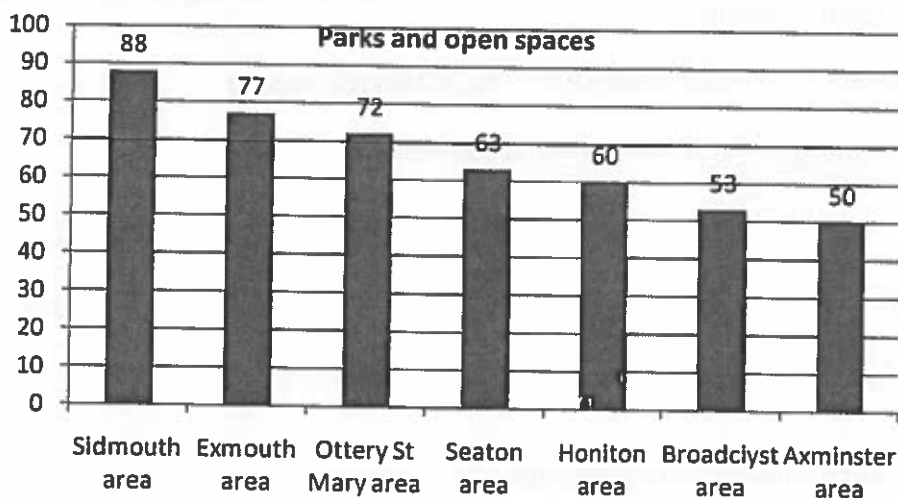
- That the issue be brought to the attention of the PCT for action and report back.

5.8 PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

% of people who are very or fairly satisfied with parks and open spaces= 69.8%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst District Councils	201	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst SPARSE councils	89
70.3	69.9	68.5	99 th		Above average	36 th	

Note that our figure is extremely close to all three averages.



Officer comments

Broadclyst (along with the majority of rural villages) has no parks or playing fields provided by EDDC and so residents are likely to be dissatisfied with the provision. There has been no change since Sept 2008 and I am not aware of any plans to do so other than the building of Cranbrook.

Axminster has no formal park, but does have 3 playing fields, 4 equipped play areas and a recreation ground provided by EDDC. For the size of the population this may be inadequate. Plans are currently being discussed with developers for the provision of a 1 hectare park and 2 more play areas within the town boundaries which may help to address the perceived problem.

Honiton has 18 equipped play areas, 3 playing fields, 3 recreation grounds, a woodland park, a nature reserve and many sizeable informal public open spaces. The town could be considered as well provided for, it may be a question of perception.

Seaton has 5 equipped play areas, a skate park, 3 formal park areas, a playing field, a recreation ground, a large nature reserve and at least 7 sizeable open spaces. The town is reasonably well provided for but field sports provision could be better. Seaton Town Council is involved with EDDC to secure land to improve this provision.

Possible action:

- Further engagement work with those in Honiton, Axminster, Broadclyst and Seaton who were dissatisfied and the Town Councils.
- Publicity about facilities available.

5.9 INVOLVED IN DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THE LOCAL AREA IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS

% of people that have been involved in decisions that affect the local area in the last 12 months= 16.3%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst 201 District Councils	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst 89 SPARSE councils
16.9	16.1	14.0	43 rd	Top Quartile	39 th

Note that East Devon's figure is very close to the Devon District average.

Officer comments

Although we have scored below the Devon Districts average we have scored 2.3% above the average for English Councils. East Devon is also in the top quartile when we compare ourselves to the 201 other District Councils.

Possible action:

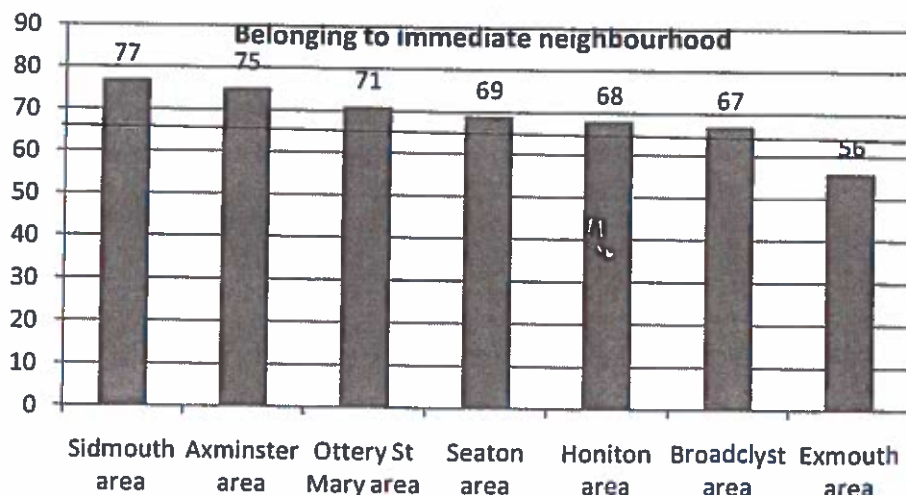
- That we focus on the towns showing poorest results by seeking advice on public engagement from Town Councils.

5.10 SENSE OF BELONGING TO THEIR IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURHOOD

% of people that feel they belong to their immediate neighbourhood= 65.9%

Devon Districts	South West Councils	English Councils	Position amongst 201 District Councils	Quartile position amongst Districts	Position amongst 89 SPARSE councils
66.0	62.3	58.7	54 th	Above average	44 th

Note that the East Devon figure is extremely close to the Devon District average.



Officer comments

As a larger town with several distinct communities within it is perhaps not so surprising that, of all East Devon towns, Exmouth is the one with a below average feeling of belonging. There may also be a more movement in the resident population of this town, a more diverse community, and a large number of people who may live but not work there, all of which can affect the sense of closeness of a community. Clearly the large tourist population may also affect views about community.

Evidently there has been a lot of public debate voiced about development proposals in the local press over the past few years which may have also divided the views of the town. With progress on regeneration we would hope that there will be a new 'pride, and sense of place' created within the town, but there is scope for more community building activities.

Possible action:

- That no action be taken as East Devon is only 0.1% below the average for Devon Districts, and is 54th out of 201 District Council areas and place shaping activities are in hand.

6. Actions

Members are asked to select from amongst these 10 questions the areas that they would like to consider with a view to recommending improvement action to the Executive Board. We are expected to take action on any poor results to the survey and will be assessed on how well we have done this through Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Legal Implications

No matters requiring comment

Financial Implications

There are no identifiable financial implications.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

A report containing the headline results for the Council was considered by Members at:

- The Corporate Overview Committee on 26 March 2009.
- The Scrutiny Committee on 8 April 2009.
- The Executive Board on 6 May 2009.

A report containing this comparison information was presented to the Executive Board on 15 July 2009.

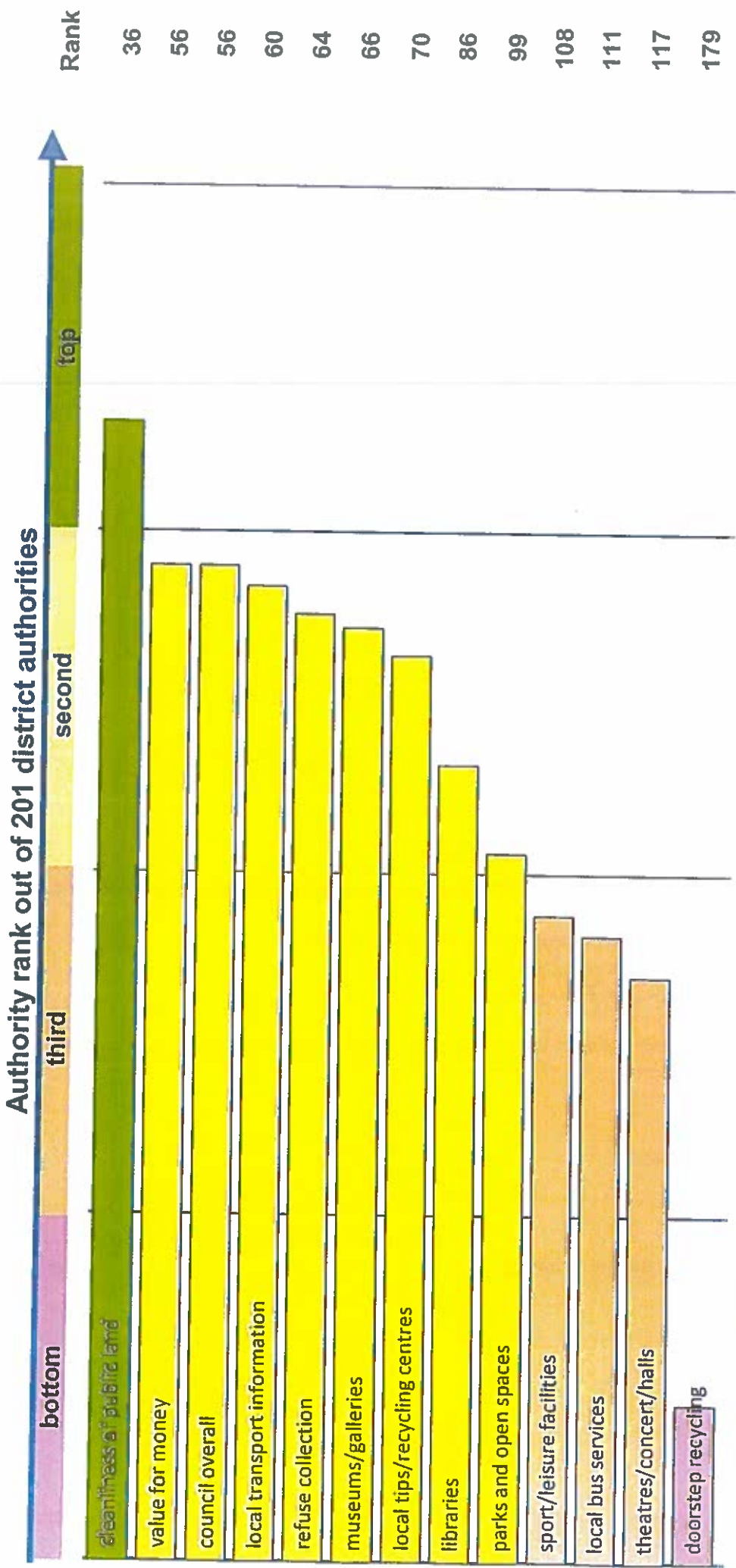
Background Papers

Two appendices which follow.

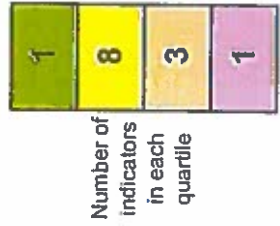
Bob Darbourne Ext 2618
Communications and Improvement Manager

Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Communities
16 September 2009

Comparative Analysis of Place Survey Satisfaction with Public Services Questions

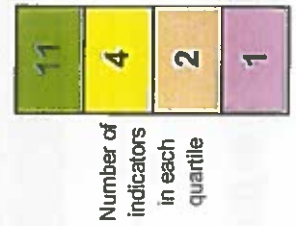
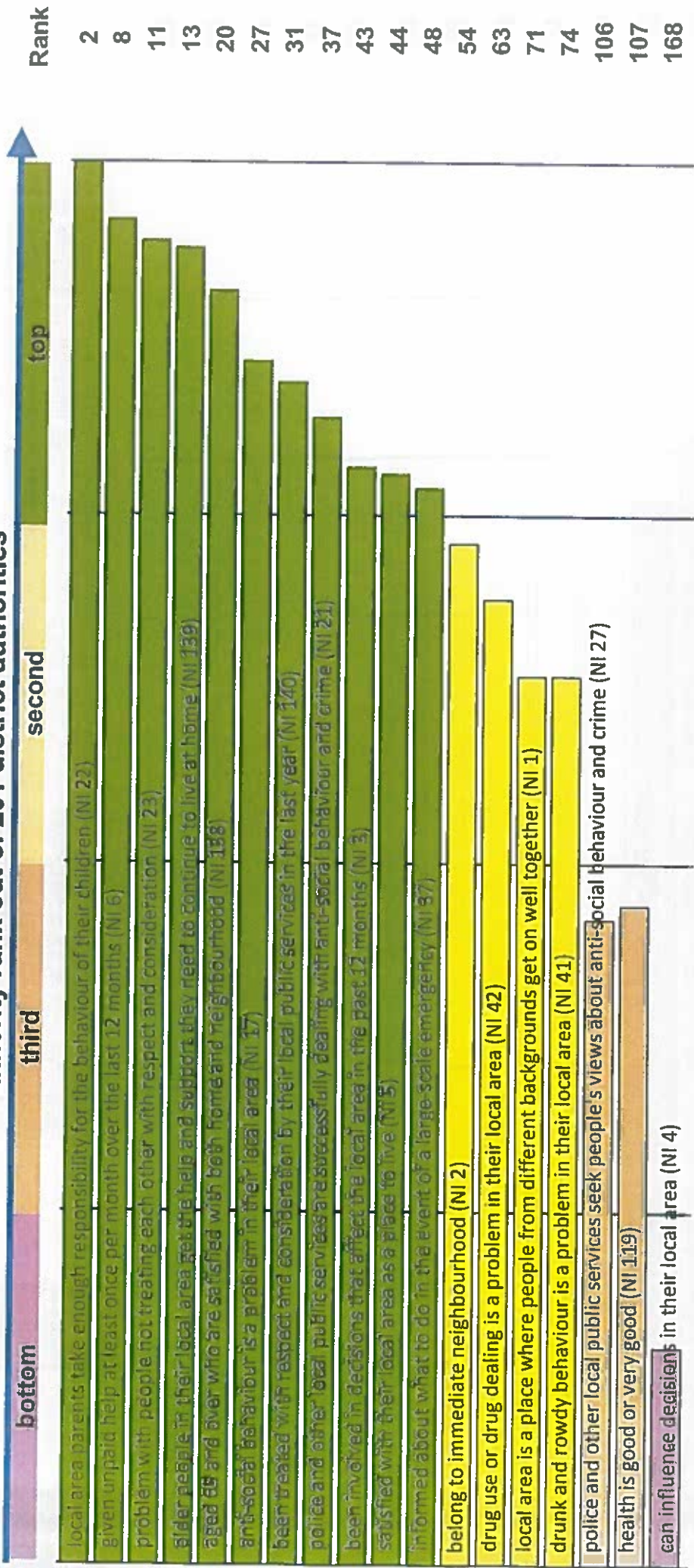


The analysis shows, for each of the satisfaction questions from the Place Survey, the Council's rank compared with all 201 district councils. The colour coding shows the quartile for each of the satisfaction rates. The bars represent rank and should not be confused as actual satisfaction values. The purpose of the analysis is to provide a one page view of the Council's residents' comparative satisfaction levels across all services. A separate SPARSE analysis provides detailed comparative information for each of the individual Place Survey questions.



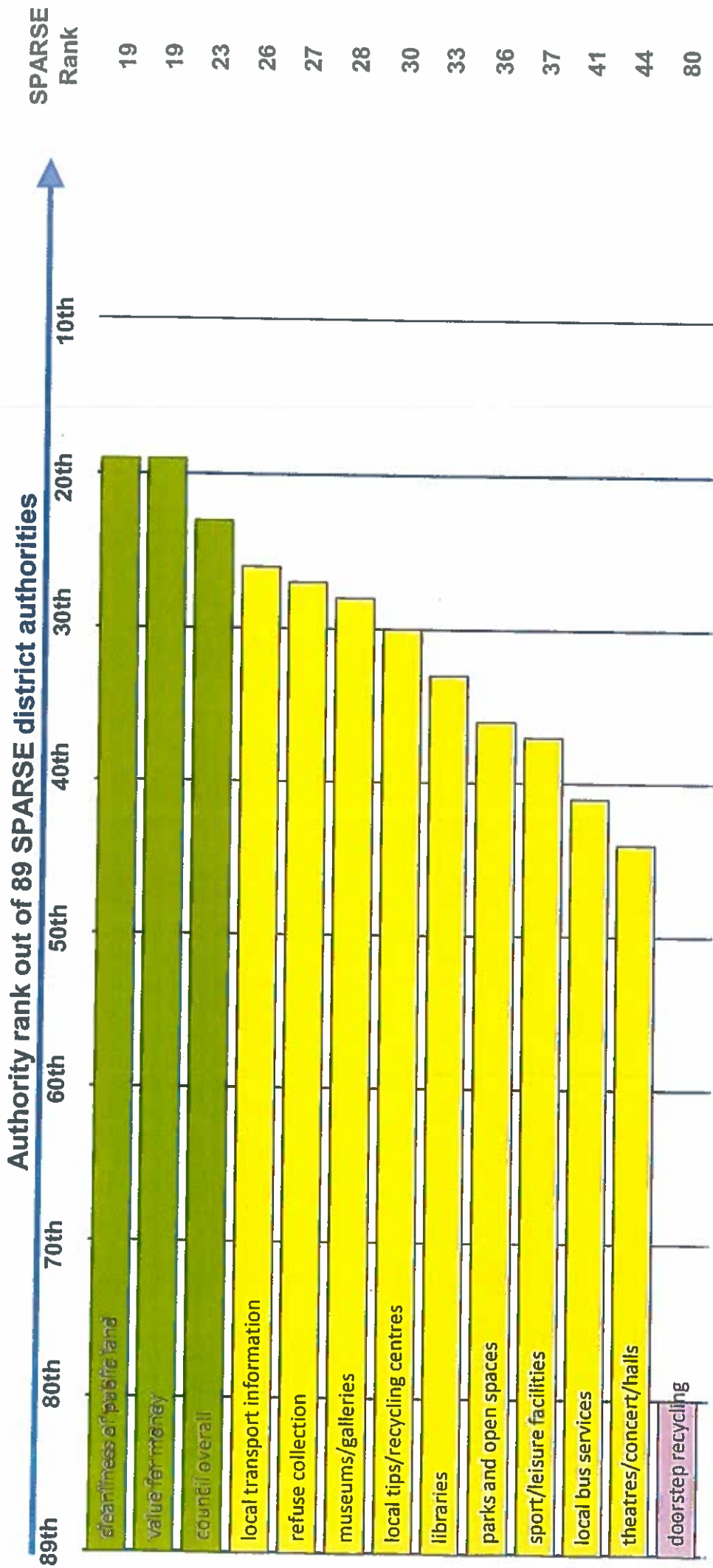
Comparative Analysis of Place Survey National Indicators

Authority rank out of 201 district authorities

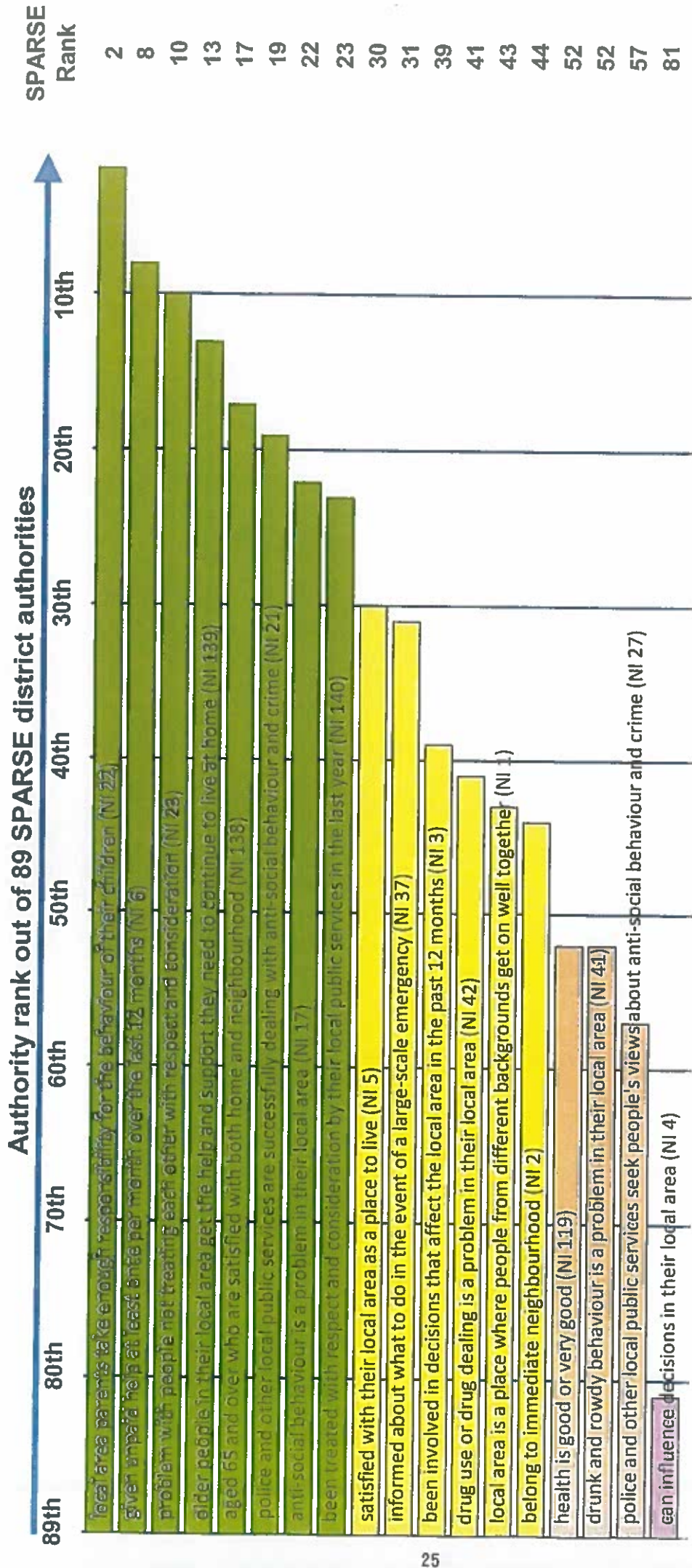


The analysis shows, for each of the National Indicators derived from the Place Survey, the Council's rank compared with all 201 district councils. The colour coding shows the quartile for each of the indicators. The bars represent rank and should not be confused as actual indicator values. The purpose of the analysis is to provide a one page view of the Council's national indicators. A separate SPARSE analysis provides detailed comparative information for each of the individual Place Survey questions.

Comparative Analysis of Place Survey Satisfaction with Public Services Questions



Comparative Analysis of Place Survey National Indicators



East Devon

8
6
3
1

Number of national indicators in each quartile

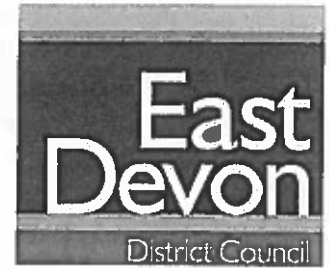
The analysis shows, for each of the National Indicators derived from the Place Survey, the Council's rank compared with all 89 SPARSE district councils. The colour coding shows the quartile for each of the indicators. The bars represent rank and should not be confused as actual indicator values. The purpose of the analysis is to provide a one page view of the Council's national indicators.

Agenda Item 7

Communities Overview and Scrutiny

16 September 2009

AE



Neighbourhood Assessments

Summary

This report provides an overview of recent work on Neighbourhood Assessments. The initiative has provided new opportunities to consult and engage with residents, provide services and deliver outcomes that might otherwise not have arisen.

Recommendation

That the Committee considers the report and recommend actions to the Executive Board.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

An innovative and successful initiative improving levels of consultation and engagement with communities.

b) Alternative Options

To provide our core services on demand and to stop carrying out neighbourhood assessments

c) Risk Considerations

None

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

The project is ongoing and can be met within existing budgets.

e) Date for Review of Decision

September 2011

1 Main Body of the Report

1.1 Introduction

'Neighbourhood Assessments' were introduced by the Environmental Health service in 2007 as a means of moving from a service delivery based on reacting to service requests/complaints to one which was more proactive and outward-looking. The aim was that a multi-agency team would engage with local residents, not only to raise awareness of available services, but also to seek out what local issues were causing residents concern and collectively to seek to resolve them. The agencies working with Environmental Health have included the Police, Fire Service, Devon County Highways, British Red Cross, Devon Primary Care Trust and East Devon District Council Officers from Street Scene, Housing, Planning Enforcement and Building Control.

The scheme, highlighted as an area of 'best practice' by the Customer Service Excellence assessor, fulfils the Council's new statutory duty to engage with the community, and the commitments laid down in the Council's new Community Engagement Policy, and has been used as a key piece of evidence in our 'Use of Resources' assessment by the Audit Commission.

1.2 Methodology

Our neighbourhood assessments actively seek to engage with residents either at home or at a drop in surgery near to their home. Their essence is that they provide an opportunity for residents to have a confidential discussion about local issues and to draw attention to problems that the authorities might otherwise have overlooked or considered to be unimportant. Issues raised and action taken are in each case summarised in newsletters that are available online with a limited run of printed copies being made available to participants and within the study area in libraries, GP surgeries, town and parish council offices and at sports and leisure centres.

1.3 Phase 1 (2007 / 2008)

The first year's work targeted *Axminster, Seaton, Honiton, Sidmouth, Budleigh Salterton, Ottery St Mary and Exmouth*. Neighbourhood assessments were completed for these seven towns by Spring 2008. The areas were selected to ensure representation from owner occupiers, people renting privately and the Council's own tenants. The surveys were followed by a drop-in surgery in the local town halls which were open to all residents to attend to discuss any problems or concerns, make complaints or obtain advice from Environmental Health staff.

Teams of EDDC staff, Police and Fire Officers visited approximately 1900 properties in total during the first phase. Packs of information literature were distributed providing information and advice and signposting residents to other sources of assistance including information about energy efficiency grants, how we deal with noise complaints, improving your home security, preventing fire in the home, how we investigate problems with unsatisfactory housing and local dog control information. An explanatory leaflet and calling card was left at properties where there was no reply. The leaflet invited follow-up contact (via email, telephone or post) to enable us to take into account the views of as many people as possible.

Residents were invited to comment generally and were prompted by officers to seek their views on a specific range of local issues. They were asked whether they enjoyed living in their neighbourhood and whether they were satisfied with the Council's services. Officer prompts included questions about litter, recycling and waste, noise control, crime & antisocial behaviour, housing problems, energy efficiency, traffic, pests and dogs etc.

The results of the surveys were collated and any Environmental Health issues were dealt with where appropriate. All other concerns raised were passed to the relevant authorities, which included; Devon County Council, South West Water, Police, Fire, Planning, Housing etc, with a request for feedback on the outcomes and responses.

A Community newsletter for each town was then produced and distributed. This highlighted which issues were raised, the action taken already, any future action planned and who to contact to bring any other matter to our attention. The newsletters also included practical advice concerning fire and security, HomeSafeguard, Care and Repair and other Council services.

1.4 Phase 2 (2008/2009)

In Summer 2008 we launched phase 2. The strategy was again to target specific areas. We reviewed the data we hold on people who have previously made use of Environmental Health services and were able to identify seven areas – invariably more remote rural communities whose residents had previously had very little contact with our services. The intention was to challenge the assumption that people may not be users of our services because they simply

had no need of them. An important question was "...do the residents in these areas have issues that we ought to be involved with but they have not been able to access our services for other reasons...". This method selected the following communities: *All Saints/Smallridge, Offwell/Cotleigh, Upton Pyne, Aylesbeare, Plymtree, Musbury and Woodbury Salterton*. This phase was carried out in partnership with local Police forces who provided PCSOs and Police Officers to assist. A door to door assessment was completed in each village enquiring whether residents had any concerns about their neighbourhood or the Council services they received. A number of promotional low energy light bulbs were supplied by Energy Companies which enabled us to distribute free low energy light bulbs to each property visited. Residents were offered further advice about grants available for home insulation. We also began promoting the services provided by Homesafeguard together with advice about the small repairs service available for disabled or vulnerable residents from Care and Repair. All residents were offered a free home security checks (including a free security marker) by the Police and a free fire safety check by Devon & Somerset Fire Service.

During these surveys around 1300 properties were visited and around 370 people were interviewed. 98% of residents said they enjoyed living in their village and 84% were satisfied with the Council services they received. Overall, the largest number of complaints received were concerning dog fouling, recycling, litter and waste.

Newsletters were produced in-house for each Parish giving feedback and have been very well received by residents and parish councils.

1.5 Discussion of Outcomes

Having established that the neighbourhood assessment format was proving to be successful mechanism for consultation and engagement, we set out to review in more detail the key outcomes of this second phase.

- **Dog fouling and dog bins**

The issue that came up again and again was of course dogs and dog fouling in particular. There is now a clearly stated intolerance of dog fouling in any public place. This has been important in influencing the Council's decision to make a Dog Control Order that will, from 1 autumn 2009, apply to all land to which the public are entitled or permitted to have access and will increase the fixed penalty notice charge to £80 (from £50) for anyone who fails to comply.

Despite the numbers, all persons who raised dog fouling as an issue have been contacted by our specialist enforcement officer. We no longer use uniformed wardens on general patrols as experience has shown us that this approach is no longer effective; the vast majority of dog owners clear up after their dogs but there are a minority who do not clear up when no-one else is around. This minority can have a significant impact on an area. Our enforcement officer now gathers intelligence and carries out a limited number of targeted monitoring exercises. Where offenders are caught or we have received statements from witnesses we issue fixed penalty notices. Where we have received information but insufficient evidence we write to the alleged offenders explaining potential fines and the law. We encourage any persons with information on offenders to call us to either offer to supply the necessary evidence to secure a conviction or to discuss that information in confidence with an officer.

Dog fouling was of course not the only issue. Our dog warden service is now primarily concerned with the promotion of responsible dog ownership and dealing with stray dogs. Where residents have told us that an owner is allowing their dog to stray, that owner has been contacted by the Dog Warden to advise of the law and seizure procedure and potential costs involved. Letters were sent to several dog owners whose dogs were reported staying around the villages of Musbury and Woodbury Salterton.

This Council now has well over 300 bins dedicated to dog waste. They are emptied three times each week by our contractor at an annual cost of over £40,000. There were requests for additional dog bins in Aylesbeare, Musbury, Upton Pyne but the Council has previously indicated that it is unable to fund any additional bins. The estimated costs of supplying, erecting and emptying new bins at the specified locations have been given to the respective Parish Councils to consider and in a few cases where the local council has been able to raise the necessary funding, additional bins have now been installed.

As requested, a number of additional "no fouling" signs have been erected in Musbury, Woodbury Salterton, Offwell and Upton Pyne to remind dog walkers of their responsibilities.

- **Improved recycling**

We noticed from residents' responses in All Saints, Smallridge and Musbury, there were very few complaints about the Council's recycling scheme and in fact a number of compliments about the system were received. The Council's new recycling scheme had been in operation in these areas for around a year.

In contrast we noticed that there were a good many requests for more recycling in the west of the district, where the new recycling scheme had not yet been implemented. In Plymtree it emerged as the largest single issue and in Woodbury Salterton, Offwell/Cotleigh and Upton Pyne it was the second greatest concern.

Residents in the west of the district have been informed about the anticipated dates for their inclusion in the new service, and more recently it has been introduced in the Sidmouth and Ottery area.

Many residents said they were disappointed about the length of time being taken to introduce the new recycling system in all areas. The start dates for the new system have recently been brought forward by StreetScene. Across the district there was also a great desire to include cardboard in the collection as soon as possible.

- **Waste collections – StreetScene**

Requests for assistance with their refuse collections were received from several vulnerable residents in each village... Each one has been contacted and an assisted collection service has been put in place for a number of blind, disabled and elderly householders. Some have also been provided with gull proof sacks following reports that they were struggling with the large wheeled bin.

As requested, large volume wheeled bins have now been provided for some households with 5 or more residents, following concerns about overflowing bins.

A number of incidents of fly tipping were reported and all incidents were promptly investigated by Enforcement Officers.

A number of residents requested replacement bins and in each case, these have been provided.

A small number of residents complained about missed recycling collections for several consecutive weeks. StreetScene promptly looked into the matter, wrote an apology to each affected resident and contacted the contractor. A supervisor has been tasked with monitoring the situation and the situation improved.

There were a number of complaints about litter falling from our recycling vehicles during collections. Officers from StreetScene have been in discussion with the contractor SITA to ensure operatives clear up all waste and leave the area in a clean condition.

Residents have been informed about their responsibilities and asked to report large spillages, which StreetScene will clear.

There were concerns about the safety of operatives sorting recycling in slippery vehicles, whilst driving with the doors open. StreetScene have instructed SITA to ensure their employees do not sort recycling materials in moving vehicles. These residents' comments have drawn our attention to what appears to have been an ongoing problem.

- **Speeding and speed limits**

In Upton Pyne a number of residents felt strongly that a 20 mph speed restriction through the village ought to be imposed and enforced. These comments were passed to the Police and Devon County Council Highways who were in discussions with the Parish Council to introduce this in 2009. This was at first agreed, but there are now further discussions between the partner agencies.

Calls for a reduction in the 40 mph speed limit in Musbury were also discussed with Devon County Council Highways and the Police. The Police confirmed they had carried out additional speed checks in this area and Devon County Council Highways confirmed this area will now be included in their forthcoming countywide speed limit review for consideration.

Many residents appear to have an issue with speeding motorists. Excessive speed was reported in every neighbourhood assessment. A list of complainants has been passed to the local police who have been carrying out speed checks in many locations.

Offwell residents were also concerned about the amount of traffic travelling through the village to Sutton Recycling Centre. It appears that the Parish Council had requested Devon County Council Highways to erect alternative signs two years ago. Following our assessment we passed formal requests to Devon County Council Highways and the Highways Agency. A new sign has now been installed on the A35 directing traffic away from the village.

- **Rats and pests**

Perhaps not too surprising in such rural areas but a number of residents expressed concerns about rats in their area. This gave us an opportunity to provide information about the Council's own pest control service (provided by Rentokil for residents at preferential contract rates. For several years now we have directly subsidised the cost of treatment for rat infestations to such an extent that infestations on domestic property should never need to go untreated.

We also took the opportunity to raise awareness with advice about signs of rat infestations. Several households have subsequently requested pest control treatments.

A number of residents in Offwell & Cotleigh were concerned about badgers. Because badgers have a level of protection under the Protection of Badgers Act they are of course not covered by our domestic pest control service. We simply supplied these people with a leaflet outlining government (DEFRA) advice on what can and can't be done.

- **Housing EDDC**

A request to downsize to a smaller Council property was forwarded to Housing who are attempting to find suitable alternative accommodation.

Numerous requests for repairs to Council properties have been investigated, considered and repairs carried out where necessary by Housing Repairs.

A number of requests were made for replacement double glazed front doors to Council properties. Although there is an ongoing programme of replacement, several residents complained about poor insulation and draughty doors. The programme is expected to take over 3 years, some residents have been informed that their doors will not be replaced for some time.

One family requested assistance with housing due to overcrowding following the birth of their twins, and have since been assessed for the housing register.

An elderly tenant has been referred to Social Services for an assessment of needs after saying she was struggling to cope with bathing. She has now being assessed with a view to provide alternative arrangements within her property.

A request to cut back high hedges by a tenant in Woodbury Salterton was investigated. Loss of light caused by high hedges can be a problem but unfortunately the particular circumstances of the case meant that no action was appropriate.

A tenant who requested disabled access path to be installed in their property has been referred to Care and Repair for assessment by an occupational therapist.

- **Litter, waste, street cleaning and fly tipping**

Residents have consistently told us that litter in hedges and on roads should be a high priority. In fact it was the joint number one complaint in Upton Pyne. All such comments were forwarded to StreetScene who had already made plans to carry out deep cleans and litter picks in the areas to coincide with the Neighbourhood Assessments where possible.

A complaint about a slippery pavement caused by a build up of moss has been responded to by StreetScene. The path has been cleared and a programme for maintaining it and thereby preventing a recurrence has been put in place.

A number of residents called for more frequent street cleaning in most areas, and for the return of walking street sweepers in the villages rather than mechanical sweepers. Although to the best of our knowledge there have never been 'walking street sweepers' around the rural villages within East Devon, Devon County Council did previously employ 'lengths men' who were assigned various villages to maintain ditches and channels and to keep the place generally tidy (often being directed by the Parish clerks). Over the last 20 years EDDC has used mechanical sweepers wherever possible and presently our newly formed REACT workforce (5 members of staff) aim to undertake village 'clean up's' twice annually. In addition REACT hand litter pick primary roads and lay-byes throughout East Devon along with the clearance of dead animals and fly tips. Turning specifically to the request for walking street sweepers, this would be costly to the local authority, is possibly something that individual Parishes may wish to introduce themselves.

A pattern of requests for the Council to provide a service to collect green (garden) waste has begun to emerge. Our contractor (SITA) does provide such a collection service for an additional charge but despite this, many people expressed the opinion that this should be included in general collections without additional charges. These residents are being advised that at present there are no plans to introduce this service.

- **Anti social behaviour, crime & vandalism**

Residents in all of these areas conveyed a general feeling of safety and a good community spirit in their village. Levels of reported crime and fear of crime are both reassuringly very low. There were some reported incidents of theft from sheds and gardens and some residents did comment that there ought to be more Police Officers

"on the beat". These comments were of course forwarded to the Police. Many households in these areas took the opportunity to have their property security marked by the Police and many residents have taken up the police's free home security check.

In Musbury residents were invited to sign up to the Axminster Police community messaging service. The scheme is run by Axminster police and provides an early warning (e-mails and telephone calls) to residents about criminals or criminal activity locally. It is free of charge and many residents signed up to the service during the neighbourhood assessment.

In one case a number of residents took the opportunity of the assessment to report a suspected benefit fraud that was allegedly being perpetrated by a neighbour. A criminal investigation followed.

In Upton Pyne residents reported a small number of minor incidents of crime and antisocial behaviour. These were all passed to the Police.

- **Noise & pollution**

In spite of the rural character of the area, a number of residents raised the issues of noise, flies and smells arising from the keeping of animals and poultry, particularly in domestic gardens. A number of cases including the keeping of ducks and ferrets were raised and in due course, investigations were made by Environmental Health Officers. The cases were resolved informally and the key element of advice in these circumstances is invariably to strictly control numbers to levels suited to the size of the property in question.

Residents took the opportunity presented by the assessment days to report a few noisy and dangerous dogs. These cases have now been opened by the dog warden and in most cases having discussed the problems and possible implications with the owners, the cases have been resolved informally with advice offered to the owners.

- **Devon County Council transport and street lights**

Some residents voiced their requests for additional public transport in Upton Pyne. These requests were forwarded to Devon County Council who have confirmed they would re-consider this again when future funding allowed but would not be taking any further action for the time being. Similar requests for additional public transport in Aylesbeare were also turned down by Devon County Council.

We sent details of the Community Transport scheme to the Parish Council to consult directly with residents. We were told that this service could be extended to include Aylesbeare if sufficient requests were received from the residents.

A number of reports of faulty street lights in Aylesbeare were reported to Devon County Council who investigated promptly and carried out the necessary repairs.

- **Pot holes & roads**

Interestingly in Plymtree pot holes and the general surface of the roads generated the second highest level of complaints. These were forwarded to Devon County Council who carried out inspections in the area. They subsequently confirmed that repairs were necessary in certain places and have agreed to carry out the repairs.

In Aylesbeare storm water had exposed cables outside a property. Devon County Council carried out an inspection and confirmed that the utility company responsible would be made to repair the damage.

Surface water which was freezing on the road was reported in Aylesbeare. Devon County Council investigated and have agreed to carry out substantial repairs to defects on the road.

A request to cut back an overgrown hedge restricting the view in Aylesbeare was logged with Devon County Council who in response inspected the area and promptly cut back the hedge.

- **Flooding**

Residents raised a particular concern about the ongoing problem of flooding and overflowing sewers in Musbury. We responded and brought these concerns to the attention of South West Water. They then carried out their own investigations revealing a build up of fat and debris in the public sewer. Contractors have now cleaned the pipes out and installed non return valves. They have since agreed a six monthly maintenance programme to jet clean this sewer in an effort to avoid further problems in this area.

A pool of surface water in Plymtree was reported and this was passed on to Devon County Council to investigate and they have agreed to carry out the necessary repairs

- **Private sector housing**

A large number of Devon Warm Zones' reply cards were distributed in each village for residents to request grant assistance for home insulation. The properties current insulation and heating was discussed with every resident and where appropriate advice given on how to apply for additional insulation.

A resident who said she was struggling to use the bath, was referred to Devon Care and Repair for assistance. She is now being assessed by social services to provide alternative arrangements within her property.

A few elderly residents, living alone who were concerned about their security were referred to Care and Repair who have now received a number of requests for chains on doors to be installed by their small repairs scheme.

- **Parking**

Dangerous parking was highlighted by residents at school collection times in Plymtree, Woodbury Salterton, All Saints and Musbury. The head teacher was contacted in Plymtree and she has asked staff to consider alternative parking. PCSOs carried out patrols outside schools, speaking to parents, discussing alternative arrangements, installing no parking cones and encouraging walking buses. This is an ongoing problem for many areas as many children attend village schools outside their locality and are unable to walk there or use a bus.

The owner of a garage who parked hire vehicles close to the main road junction has been asked to move the vehicles back following complaints from several concerned nearby residents. He has since moved the vehicles and is considering alternative arrangements.

- **Miscellaneous**

When the lack of equipment for younger children in the play park was highlighted in Upton Pyne there were discussions with StreetScene and the Parish Council. Two new additional toddler swings have now been agreed and installed in the park.

Following a request for more financial assistance from the Offwell Woodland & Wildlife Trust, from a resident in Offwell. Information was supplied highlighting future grants

available of up to £10,000 from the National Environment Awareness Grant Fund, enabling the Trust to submit a bid for future funding.

One resident who was concerned that they may be paying too much Council Tax was contacted by a revenues officer and has had her contribution reassessed.

In response to bonfire complaints, advice leaflets and log sheets have been provided to complainants and letters have been sent to offenders warning of the law and restrictions. A report of burning tyres has also been investigated.

A man reported for spray painting commercial vehicles on the road was visited by our Enforcement Officer and told to cease.

Dangerous dogs reported in Cotleigh and Musbury were investigated by the Dog Warden.

A number of residents who smoke, had declined from installing a smoke detector in their properties for fear of false alarms. They were given advice about modern alternative detectors which would be suitable for their properties. Several people since agreed to install a smoke detector including the occupiers of two thatched properties.

- **Planning & affordable homes**

Additional affordable homes for local people and their children were requested in several areas and these requests have been passed to Planning. An additional affordable home has since been approved in Aylesbeare.

The owner of a Grade II listed property requested advice and assistance before carrying out renovations. They were put in touch with the Council's Listed Building Officer who has contacted them to offer given advice and information about the requirements.

There were several strong requests from residents of Woodbury Salterton to restrict the development of Greendale Barton, due to noise, heavy vehicles and the rural location of the site. Planning gave a statement stating reasons for expansions, but has confirmed they will further consult local residents and the Parish Council about future developments

Complaints about a structure in Smallridge were received and planning enforcement confirmed action was being taken to remove the structure.

1.6 Phase 3 Neighbourhood Assessments

We began our third phase of neighbourhood assessments in Honiton in the summer of 2009. We began with the theme of encouraging healthy lifestyles and neighbourhoods. Environmental Health staff worked in partnership with the Primary Care Trust. Their aim was to highlight the risks and symptoms of Type 2 Diabetes, which is on the increase partially due to obesity and lifestyle and frequently remains undiagnosed. Residents were also offered a free swim voucher for Honiton Sports Centre when they visited the centre for a free guided tour of the gym, to thank them for completing the questionnaire. A pack of information was given out showing classes available and opening times at the Sports Centre. Information was again distributed concerning Care and Repair, HomeSafeguard and Energy Efficiency grants.

There was a disappointing response to the health questionnaire and it quickly became clear that residents did not want to talk to us about Type 2 Diabetes. There was also a lack of feedback from the general practitioners and the PCT were not able to offer a great deal of assistance with the survey due to work pressure.

Residents informed us that most of their concerns were directed at EDDC or the Police. Issues such as parking, speeding and vandalism were raised by many together with litter, dog fouling and waste and recycling concerns.

The response from the vast majority of residents visited has been overwhelmingly positive. People have expressed their pleasant surprise that someone has actively gone to them not only to seek out their views but to report back what action had been taken. This has been particularly the case in the more outlying areas which, in other surveys, have indicated that they feel detached and remote from the Council. There has also been a positive response to the information given to people about a range of other services of which they were unaware.

1.7 What next?

There have been requests from a number of Councillors and Parish Clerks to carry out neighbourhood assessments in their areas. In particular there has been interest in us taking a closer look at some of our larger villages or smaller towns in this next phase. We have developed a programme for the coming year and there will be six further assessments to be carried out in *Uplyme, Newton Poppleford, Whimble, Lympstone, Dunkeswell and Beer*. These will be carried out in partnership with Police and began in August 2009 in the village of Uplyme.

Having heard about the partnership work we had been doing, the Red Cross approached us and have specifically requested to work with us and are offering a free life saving course to residents in each area giving advice about first responses and first aid.

Building Control have requested to be included in this next phase and a question has been incorporated in the questionnaire concerning dangerous structures and new building work. Issues raised will be brought to their attention and appropriate investigations and enforcement as necessary will follow.

HomeSafeguard and Care and Repair services will again be promoted, together with details of grants available for home insulation for home owners and tenants.

Tenant participation Officers will join this phase and intend to visit the Council properties in the areas to carry out the survey, whilst offering advice and information where required and feeding back any requests for service or complaints to Tenant Liaison and Estate Management.

Details of Devon & Somerset Fire Service's free fire prevention service will also be distributed.

Phase 3 is expected to be completed by Spring 2010.

Neighbourhood Assessments have been extremely well received in all areas to date and as mentioned above great interest in other areas for a similar approach.

The particular benefits they bring are:

- Raising awareness of Council services of which there is a surprising ignorance in some areas particularly the more remote
- Providing a positive image for, and increasing confidence in, the Council which will hopefully break down barriers and forge a closer relationship between the Council and local communities.
- Providing an opportunity to explain Council policies and the constraints within which it has to work.
- Making services more accessible particularly to harder- to- reach groups

- Obtaining a more balanced view on issues/concerns from the wider community rather than relying on feedback from more traditional means from those who are more inclined to ,or have the confidence to, 'speak up'.
- More imaginative and effective solutions to problems through inter-agency working.
- A formalised process for reporting back progress to residents has tended to concentrate minds and galvanise agencies into action.
- Resolving problems at an early stage before they escalate.

The process could be extended to other areas of service delivery:

- Planning -consultations with the community on strategic planning issues
- Housing benefits-raising awareness amongst harder to reach groups
- Streetscene-determining local priorities
- Community Safety-more effective multi agency working
- Youth issues

As a result of neighbourhood assessments, a number of changes to the way in which services are delivered have already been implemented:

- Whilst the response from the vast majority of residents visited has been overwhelmingly positive, the level of concern about dog fouling has informed our current intelligence based investigation and enforcement approach. We now focus on information known to (and supplied by) the community instead of sending uniformed patrols out to act as a deterrent. One example is that acting on intelligence received, the Council's enforcement officer has been working with Police and PCSOs to target specific dog fouling hot spots in Seaton. It has also been possible, following additional funding identified by a few parish councils, for our contractors to install a small number of additional dog bins in strategic locations that had been identified during neighbourhood assessments.
- Street Scene officers have now developed a clear understanding with the Council's contractor over the level of clearing and tidying-up expected during refuse and recycling collections. The contractor now ensures that bins are returned in a tidy manner and that any dropped litter is promptly picked up.
- In response to the demand identified in a Neighbourhood Assessment the Council has been able to fund the installation of additional children's play equipment in a village.
- The REACT team has re-prioritised its work programme to conduct a timely comprehensive litter pick in each assessment area.
- The police and Devon County Council Highways have in a number of cases been able to re-order their priorities to respond to local issues. Examples include additional warning signs at the roadside to deter speeding motorists in certain areas and there have been a couple of cases where a significant presence of PCSOs around school gates is discouraging unsafe parking on the school-run. In Woodbury Salterton traffic cones have been put out and parents encouraged to park in a nearby pub car park and to continue their journey to school on foot.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications set out within the report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications in the attached progress report.

Background Papers

- None

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Environmental Health Manager

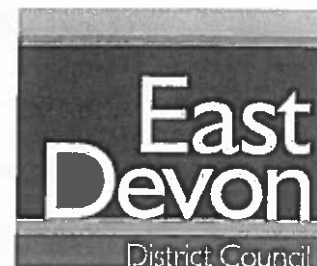
Communities Overview and Scrutiny
16 September 2009

Agenda Item 8

Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Communities

16 September 2009

JG



Virtual Affordable Housing Team & interim affordable housing policy proposal

Summary

This report informs the Committee of the work of the Virtual Affordable Housing Team. The report also puts forward for consideration an interim affordable housing planning policy to encourage more affordable housing development in our rural areas.

Recommendation

To consider and recommend for adoption the Rural Departure site policy set out in the report.

a) Reasons for Recommendation

To raise awareness of the multi-disciplinary team established to promote and deliver affordable housing schemes and testing the appetite for an interim affordable housing policy for Rural Departure sites.

b) Alternative Options

Not to vary current planning policy now but await its reconsideration through the Local Development Framework (LDF) process.

c) Risk Considerations

The policy is not used or we are oversubscribed with applications.

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

These are set out in the report.

e) Date for Review of Decision

In one year.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 At your last meeting I reported on the constraints and issues of delivering affordable housing and the Committee resolved to push forward on a number of items outlined in the report. Last time we considered the barriers to delivering affordable housing and the financial and other constraints which were conspiring to prevent us delivering against this important corporate target.
- 1.2 A further report has been requested on the work of the Virtual Affordable Housing Team mentioned in my earlier report.

2 Virtual Affordable Housing Team

- 2.1 The Virtual Affordable Housing Team concept arose nearly two years ago and is essentially a meeting of representatives from council services who meet to promote and provide affordable housing. An informal arrangement has been developed between council officers.
- 2.2 An important element of the idea behind the creation of the Team was to take sites that are outside present planning policy, but appealing for housing development, and use them to develop affordable housing for the community. The Team would need to be prepared to push the boundaries of planning policy and consider opportunities that would not normally be possible within our present policy. In practice the process would operate in much the same way as the 'exceptions policy' for development of affordable housing in villages.
- 2.3 In outline the projects adopted would entail selection of an appropriate town, and tackling the affordable housing issue there in a proactive rather than reactive fashion. The town would be selected taking into consideration a number of factors, including the appetite of the Town Council to proceed in this way, levels of housing need in the locality, availability of possible sites and supporting infrastructure solutions, etc.
- 2.4 In order to optimise the effects of the approach, it was considered useful to focus simultaneously on the private sector housing in the area, so as to maximise the use of empty buildings and unused facilities, etc. Similarly the Housing and Social Inclusion Service would pay particular attention to tackling the under occupation of its housing stock in the town.
- 2.5 Good communication was seen as central to the success of this approach and might be facilitated by the creation of a 'virtual team' to consider these ideas and move the project forward. Membership of the virtual team needed to include officers from Development Management, Planning Policy, Legal; Housing and Environmental Health sections. Consideration could be given to widening the team in future to include Members, Town/Parish Council, developers, housing associations, etc, according to the requirements of the project at that time.
- 2.6 To take this forward an initial scoping meeting of appropriate officers was arranged in February 2008 to consider how this idea may be developed and set in motion during April 2008. The following purpose, composition and objectives were agreed:

Purpose: To deliver the corporate priority and targets in relation to providing more affordable housing.

Composition: Housing Enabling Officer; Section 108 Officer; Heads of Housing, Planning and Legal; Senior Planning Officer; Principal Planning Policy Officer; Senior Estates Surveyor, as required.

Objectives:

- To proactively identify sites with development potential and bring these forward for affordable housing development.
- To undertake land availability assessments to identify land suitable for affordable housing development.
- To work intensively on an identified site to provide affordable housing.
- To overcome obstacles (policy, funding etc) to development and progress schemes.



- To work as a team and extend the Council's role from enabler to developer, including land assembly and project management.
- To involve partners as appropriate who will contribute towards achieving these objectives (landowners, developers, RSL's, Housing Corporation).
- To add value as a team to the individual work undertaken by officers.

2.7 The team have been meeting on an occasional basis since its creation. Formalising the team was one of the ideas put forward as part of the Leaders Service Transformation Group exercise.

2.8 An example of the work of the team is an affordable housing scheme at Rodney Close, Exmouth. This potential scheme is situated on what is currently designated open space and should use approximately half this area. We are working with Devon and Cornwall Housing Association to provide a mixed scheme comprising a four bedroom house, a bungalow, three bedroom houses and a number of flats. Due to the current economic situation all fourteen homes will be available as rented accommodation. We are hopeful that a planning application will be submitted within a few months.

2.9 Another project the team has taken on is looking at an innovative affordable rural housing policy and the remainder of this report is dedicated to this work.

3. Affordable housing planning policy proposal

3.1 The current economic climate and the ongoing problem of delivering affordable homes in any significant numbers have combined now to reach a point where it is appropriate to consider a more pragmatic approach in respect of the relevant planning policies to secure alternative solutions, which in normal circumstances would be judged to be unacceptable.

3.2 It is proposed therefore to widen the scope of the affordable housing model for delivery. However, this is to be seen as an interim measure, applicable only during the current economic crisis and to be reviewed on an annual basis to assess whether economic circumstances have changed for the better, ultimately it will be replaced by LDF policies.

3.3 There are two pre-requisites to delivering affordable housing – these are finance and land. The Council is examining separately the issue of finance options. This paper looks specifically at how landowners could be persuaded to release land for the purpose, ahead of the delivery of the Core Strategy and other Development Plan documents, which will deal far more comprehensively with the release of land for housing, of all categories.

4.0 Development Economics

4.1 An appreciation of development economics by Local Planning Authorities is essential as developers seek to maintain construction activity against a back drop of limited credit availability and reduced property values. The number of land sales in recent months has contracted sharply, leading to a substantial reduction in land values relative to that of property.

4.2 The opportunity for securing planning obligations from the development process to fund infrastructure and affordable housing can be found in the residual land value of a development. Residual land value is calculated after deducting costs and reasonable profit from the gross development value (GDV), this is expressed by the following formula:-

$$\text{GDV} - (\text{costs} + \text{profits}) = \text{residual land value.}$$



- 4.3 A developer is rarely able to control the overall costs of development and as such will have limited ability to extract more value to pay for increase contributions to strategic infrastructure, particularly during the later stages of the process. Ultimately, therefore land value will provide the main element for negotiation and the landowner may be passed the majority of effects for strategic infrastructure contributions via a lower land price.
- 4.4 Theoretically affordability is becoming less stretched, as pricing and mortgage rates have fallen. Mortgage affordability was only marginally higher than the long term average by the fourth quarter of 2008. Throughout late 2008 it was increasingly evident that mortgage rates were more closely aligned to the high LIBOR rates (London Inter-Bank Offered Rate - the rate at which international banks lend to each other) than the base rate. This finance rate though has fallen sharply from a peak of 6.3% in October 2008 to 2.1% in January 2009, further easing affordability in the New Year supposedly. However, mortgage approvals remain near record lows, though there are some signs of stabilisation. The RICS does not anticipate a notable bounce back in approvals this year as the range of mortgage products remains limited, though Government initiatives may ameliorate this situation in due course.
- 4.5 Developer activity has fallen dramatically in response to low end sales values. Completions are anticipated to drop as low as 60,000 units nationally this year (2009) which is half the estimated level for 2008. Such extreme constraints in short term supply are set to result in medium term pricing pressure.
- 4.6 With house builders sales expectations remaining weak and constrained development finance, land transactions have dropped sharply. Lower sales rates result in slower developer activity. This in turn leads to an extension in the life span of the existing land bank, reducing the need to acquire new sites. With lower end sale pricing weakness, land values fell by 50 – 70% in 2008.
- 4.7 Where demand has been evident, developers are either looking for medium to long term deals on an options basis, once planning consent has been secured or draw downs on a plot by plot basis in order to avoid a high capital outlay. Most landowners have been content to hold assets throughout the recent down turn, but further double digit falls in land values are anticipated in 2009, again making the likelihood of landowners releasing land unlikely ahead of an upturn
- 4.8 In a plethora of Government initiatives in January to encourage lending, two schemes are notable. Firstly, the decision to guarantee mortgage back securities as recommended in the Crosby Report. Wholesale funding, as opposed to customer deposits, provided 60% of funds used by lenders to provide new mortgages prior to the credit crunch. Since then this source has been effectively frozen. Tax payer provided guarantees will be offered to re-energise this market, but not until April 2009.
- 4.9 The second issue is the role of Northern Rock, which will become a net lender again, subject to European Commission Approval, having previously been forced to run down its loan book. The combined effect should see improved mortgage availability in the spring this year.
- 4.10 Whilst initiatives are being introduced to avert the worst of the financial crisis, the effects of the downturn in the real economy are set to affect the housing market for some time to come. For example, rising unemployment will result in repossession levels rising possibly to levels last seen in the early 90s.
- 4.11 A related concern for Local Authorities would be the prospect of reduced quality of development as the ratio of build cost to gross development value becomes less favourable.
- 4.12 As a result of the downturn, Local Authorities have to think of more proactive, collaborative and 'light footed' ways of maintaining



development activity, in broad terms. Measures being considered consist of either or both of the following:-

- Stimulating private sector development
- Public sector lead

- 4.13 In the longer term the Council will need to undertake, or more likely commission work, on affordable housing viability to determine appropriate policy targets for affordable housing. PPS3 advises of the importance of viability considerations and in the future Planning Inspectors can be expected to place considerable weight on viability considerations. Having policies that are non-viable in practice will not be acceptable.

There was a Court of Appeal decision in 2008 in which Persimmon Homes, Barratt Homes and Millhouse Developments challenged Blyth Valley Borough Council Core Strategy policy of seeking 30% affordable housing on qualifying sites. The Core Strategy policy had been endorsed by Inspector at Examination; however, in the first such case to be heard by the courts, the house builders challenged adoption of the strategy under section 113 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 in the High Court. Mr. Justice Collins allowed their application and quashed the affordable housing policy; the council appealed. Affirming the earlier decision, Lord Justice Keene said: "One only has to read paragraph 29 of PPS3 to see that such an informed assessment of the viability of any such percentage figure is a central feature of the PPS3 policy on affordable housing. It is not peripheral, optional or cosmetic. It is patently a crucial requirement of the policy."

- 4.14 Economic considerations and house prices, and developer returns in Blythe will differ from those in East Devon, but the same basic concerns will still apply. What a viability study will need to demonstrate is that there is enough profit for developers and enough of a return for land owners to make it commercially viable and credible and desirable for them to go ahead with development. The viability of affordable housing provision will relate not just too overall affordable percentages sought, but also the mix of affordable housing types and other economic considerations.
- 4.15 Affordable housing at one extreme can cost a lot of money (i.e. it will require large subsidies whether from the public and/or private sectors). The rents on social rented houses are not high enough/scarcely high enough to repay interest on capital loans required to build them (let alone pay for/contribute any money to land acquisition costs or any ongoing costs). Therefore, social rented homes require considerable public subsidy.
- 4.16 At the more expensive end (shared owners for example) of affordable housing provision costs may not be that much less than renting or buying a property on the open market. There are two further key qualifying considerations to note:
- (a) The Exeter and Torbay Housing Market Assessment points to around 2/3rds of the affordable housing need falling in the social rented sector. Therefore, if housing is to be provided for this majority in need then subsidy hungry forms of affordable housing will be required.
 - (b) There are likely to be very few households in the 'need of affordable housing bracket' that have incomes sufficient to afford to pay for the types of 'affordable' housing that require minimal/nil subsidy (or can generate a profit).



5.0 Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) – Housing

5.1 PPS3 was written in response to the recommendations in the Barker Review of the housing supply, in March 2006. It was seen as a new, more responsive approach to land supply at the local level. Whatever amended policy we opt for, it will still be necessary to achieve general compliance with the requirements of PPS3 and the Regional Spatial Strategy.

5.2 PPS3 advocates, amongst other things, that an implementation strategy for housing delivery should include:-

- "Scenario and contingency planning to identify differing delivery options, in the event that actual housing delivery does not occur at the rate expected.
- A risk assessment to identify obstacles and constraints to housing delivery and development of management strategies to address any risks."

5.3 The definition of the term 'affordable housing' in PPS3 includes social rented and intermediate (e.g. shared equity housing) but excludes what it calls 'low cost market' housing. It explains that the terms 'affordability' and 'affordable housing' have different meanings. 'Affordability' is a measure of whether housing may be afforded by certain groups of households. 'Affordable housing' refers to particular products outside the main housing market. 'Housing need' is defined as the quantity of housing required for households who are unable to access suitable housing without financial assistance. Local Planning Authorities are charged with ensuring that provision of affordable housing, meets the needs of both current and future occupiers, taking into account information from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

6.0 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment

6.1 PPS3 sets out requirements for authorities to undertake Strategic Housing Market Assessments. East Devon District Council teamed up with Devon County, Exeter City, Torbay, Dartmoor National Park and Teignbridge and Mid Devon District Councils to commission consultants to undertake the study. The combined areas Housing Market Assessments was completed in late 2007.

6.2 With respect to East Devon the study identifies that Exeter has a fundamental impact on housing demand for/in the District. The study also recognises the growing population level/need for housing in East Devon and the elderly population profile of the District; one consequence of which is under-occupation of larger family homes. The studies identified 6,767 households in East Devon as living in unsuitable accommodation, with over half of these households being unsuitable on account of major repairs being needed, though many households have support needs, and overcrowding is a significant contributor to unsuitability of current accommodation. The study highlights options for better use of the housing stock in East Devon, but also highlights the need for additional development. Overall the study concludes a need for 3,211 dwellings to be built in East Devon over the next five years with 1,967 (61.3%) being market housing, 373 (11.6%) being intermediate housing and 870 (27.1%) being social rented housing.

6.3 It should be noted that the report was produced and completed at a point in time when the housing market was buoyant. Over the past 18 months significant changes have occurred in the housing market and these will have impacted on need/supply/demand considerations.

6.4 Planning and housing officers from across the two HMAs have discussed options for an update of the HMA. This would seem sensible and if the same consultants (Opinion Research Services) were re-employed by all of the original commissioning authorities the cost is likely to be relatively modest.



6.5 The remainder of this report now concentrates on rural affordable housing provision.

7.0 Cross Subsidisation

7.1 To date Rural Exception sites are defined (both nationally and locally) as sites solely for 'affordable housing' in perpetuity. The use of such sites for low cost or other market housing is therefore contrary to policy (both national and local). The Taylor Review of Rural Economy and Affordable Housing made two recommendations regarding landowner's interests with a view to securing more sites for affordable housing. These were that *landowners should be allowed to nominate someone such as a family member or employee to occupy houses on an exceptions site and that schemes should be investigated in which landowners retain some interest / income from the land.* In responding to these recommendations in March 2009 the Government stated:

"It is important to clarify that the Government has no intention of allowing market housing to be built on rural exception sites as this would undermine their very purpose. However, we think that now is the time to show a degree of flexibility to encourage and incentivise landowners to come forward to provide land for rural exception sites. We therefore are going to set up a practitioners' Working Group which will examine Matthew Taylor's proposals for landowners to have nomination rights for affordable housing units while retaining an interest in their land.

The working group will be established in April and will provide a guidance note for local authorities and housing associations in the autumn on the practical implications of making these changes work."

The Affordable Rural Housing Commission was set up by DeFRA and the then ODPM to inquire into the scale, nature and implications of the shortage of affordable housing for rural communities in England and make recommendations to help address unmet need. In their 2006 report they refer to having considered a range of proposals for more detailed changes to be made to the planning system, including whether cross subsidy should be allowed on exception sites. They rejected this for a number of reasons. Concern was expressed that this could increase landowners' expectations of the value of land in the locality, reducing the chances of bringing forward windfall exception sites. In addition, it would be difficult to define the limit of cross subsidy and ensure it was funding the affordable housing as opposed to inflating the return to the landowner or profit for the developer.

7.2 Against this background the key question is whether or not, given the exceptional circumstances pertaining at the moment, this stance could be relaxed or an alternative approach to rural housing could be taken, for a short period, in order to encourage landowners to release blocks of land on the edge of rural settlements. However, this of course, will only take the solution so far, as the financial institutions are presently loathed to lend to potential new home owners having anything less than a 30% deposit, a figure well beyond what many can secure.

7.3 Discussions with the Government Office of the South West (GOSW) last year indicated that there may be some potential for limited cross subsidisation schemes, but based on an assessment of 'need' for open market housing similar to that for affordable housing, underpinning the provision. The size of units was also important with small housing being preferred (on the basis that they would be more likely to be justified in respect of meeting a local need) rather than large executive style properties, potentially serving no local need and just meeting a housing choice that might typically be expected to be met through purchase of housing on the open market.

7.4 GOSW would want to be kept informed of all potential cross subsidisation schemes and indeed of any intended temporary change of policy approach.



8.0 Proposed Interim Affordable Housing Policy

8.1 Given the acute need for affordable housing in East Devon it is considered that an interim policy should be applied in respect of housing development in rural areas beyond Local Plan Built-up Area Boundaries. The following wording is suggested as a starting point to help define a new interim policy.

NB – Policy must be supported by documented evidence.

Interim Rural Departure Site Policy for Mixed Affordable and Market Housing

Rural departure sites for development of a mix of affordable and market housing will be allowed provided that the following criteria are met in full:-

- (a) The development is well related to and will complement and be compatible with the built form of a settlement.
- (b) The residents of any scheme will have easy walking or public transport access to a range of facilities such as a shop, pub, church and (in particular) state primary school.
- (c) A local housing needs assessment has been undertaken showing a need for affordable dwellings in the settlement and in surrounding areas.
- (d) At least 66% of all dwellings will be affordable in perpetuity and of these at least half will be available as social rented properties.
- (e) Secure arrangements are made, by the imposition of a planning condition or planning obligation, to ensure that the initial and subsequent occupation of any open market housing proposed on the site is restricted to people currently living in the local area, having local connections or working in the local area.
- (f) Any planning permissions granted under the terms of this policy will be for a period of one year only to ensure early delivery of the scheme and the policy will apply (in the first instance and subject to annual review) to the end of year 2010 (unless superseded by adopted LDF Development Plan Policy before this time).
- (g) -No open market property/ies may be occupied until at least twice that number of affordable dwellings have been built and occupied.
- (h) The development will be for no more than a total of 15 dwellings.
- (i) The scheme is economically viable.
- (j) The open market housing will be designed to meet evidenced local needs (no., size and type)

8.2 This policy proposal is an addition to our adopted Rural Exception site policy, which will be retained as an alternative affordable housing delivery option.

8.3 This proposed new policy is presented as a starting point for discussion. The following observations about the criteria are made to inform council debate:

- (a) We have not sought to define settlement but consider that to accord with national and regional policy (and to accord with the



thrust of Local Plan policy) a settlement should have a number of buildings/developments and a resident population. A settlement under this policy could be considered to be all those with a Built-up Area Boundary under Local Plan policy, but could also include other smaller villages (policy does not seek to define the point at which a group of buildings or hamlet would be too small to fall under the coverage of this policy). As a general objective it is desirable for new development to be well related and close to existing developments rather than dispersed across the countryside. It may be preferable to specify in the policy that it applies only to sites within or on the edge of a village with a population of fewer than 3,000 persons. This would accord with government guidance for exception housing sites and make the policy less likely to attract objections from the Government Office.

- (b) Linked to the above is the need to recognise that residents of any new housing will need access to facilities, this can be particularly important for affordable housing occupants who are typically poorer and may be disabled (or for other reasons) may lack access to private transport. Therefore, walking and public transport are important means of travel and facilities should be accessible by these modes of travel. Also reducing the need to use private vehicles is a broad objective of planning policy at a national, regional and local level. It is important that we focus on delivering communities, not remote housing estates and the connection to a village school is important for both the village and the school.
- (c) It would be inappropriate to provide housing under this new policy if it is not related to a local need. However, it is recognised that need may be from an area that is larger than just the immediate settlement or village. As drafted policy provides flexibility in respect of assessing what is local and spatially relevant to a settlement. It is not proposed that 'local' should be defined by parish or other administrative boundary. It may need some form of definition however.
- (d) These % figures are not justified by any viability assessment and may need to be refined. What the policy is implying to a land owner is "you won't get open market housing on your land and therefore sell it at open market residential value, but neither will/should you receive an agricultural value. As a land owner you will get somewhere between the two. Although it would be unusual (perhaps unacceptable) for a planning policy to be explicit on land values perhaps we should do this. What the policy is intending to do is advise that in practice a large part of the uplift in land value that planning permission will result in will need to go into paying for (cross-subsidise) some or all of the affordable housing. Also what some landowners aspire to is to get planning permission for a bigger house for themselves and as a 'pay-off' to accept that they will have to give some land away for some affordable houses. On a pragmatic level this may not be seen as a bad thing. What these percentages and the policy as worded does not do is to advise on what will happen if there is no public subsidy available. The availability of public subsidy will be absolutely critical to the viability of any scheme
- (e) This criterion is seeking to establish that the market housing relates to a local need and the draft policy includes local occupancy requirement. The Government Office have suggested a more rigorous local needs test, so that the requirement would be that housing should be of a type under-represented in the market place in the locality and it would therefore be 'needed' or justified to house this need. If this approach were applied in practice it might typically be expected to be small or smaller dwellings that would be developed, but could also be elderly person housing or other specific housing types. This criterion reflects the need for time limiting the policy.
- (f) This criterion seeks to ensure that the open market houses are not built and then the affordable housing element is abandoned or not built.



- (g) Having a size limit may be an appropriate as a means to ensure schemes are of a smaller scale.
- (h) .We would not want to see potential and bogus schemes where the development fails to complete due to a viability issue.
- (i) The open market housing must also be designed for the appropriate market need, in line with the Government Office suggestion.

8.3 One potential negative of this policy approach is that it could further suppress the potential for exceptions site (100%) affordable housing. Landowners might choose not to bring forward exceptions sites in the hope of higher returns on these mixed sites. In the longer term a land owner might also gain permission for development and then sit on the permission and seek to argue that the precedence has been set for housing but that a lower affordable housing mix is appropriate (perhaps on viability grounds). Furthermore, a danger is that it could set long-term aspirations that if and when the policy is defunct it may take some time before the mind set of landowners reverts to accepting that lower value exceptions site policy (100% affordable) is the only means to secure housing on (remoter) rural sites and therefore the value of land will be lower.

8.4 Some anecdotal evidence suggests that where authorities take a consistent long term policy stance on resisting open market housing in rural areas the result is that landowner's hopes/aspirations for higher market values diminish and they are more prepared to release land for much lower exceptions site values. As such the rural housing policy could be counter-productive in the longer term in respect of the objective of securing higher rural affordable housing levels.

9. Consultation

9.1 The Government Office was keen to promote the importance of consultation on any policy and its implementation prior to any permission being granted. It is considered that a new interim policy could be given some weight before any consultation was concluded. However it would be desirable to undertake targeted consultation with housing and planning stakeholders. It is proposed that we use the Affordable Housing Summit that the Council are running on 17th September 2009 to launch the policy and invite responses from delegates. We would also make the policy available on the Council website for comments.

9.2 With respect to any planning applications and especially pre-application inquiries it is suggested that we ensure that consultation is undertaken in the locality of the application as part of the application process. This could dovetail with a local needs assessment, and it is considered that we should give further thought to how the local needs assessment exercise can be slimmed down from its current (relatively) lengthy set process to a much quicker exercise.

Legal Implications

There are no legal issues requiring comment in this report.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications identified in this report.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

None.



Background Papers

None.

John Golding
Head of Housing and Social Inclusion.
Kate Little
Head of Planning and Countryside

Overview & Scrutiny - Communities

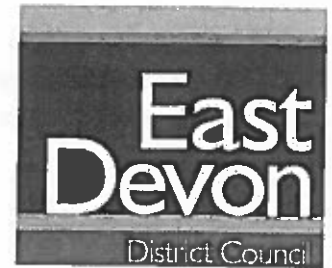
16 September 2009

Agenda Item 9

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Communities

16 September 2009

JG/DB/EC



Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 – review of progress

Summary

We published our first Homelessness Strategy in July 2008. We agreed to provide Members with an annual update on implementation of the Strategy. The report outlines progress so far and other significant homeless issues.

Recommendation

Note progress on implementation of the EDDC Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013

a) Reasons for Recommendation

Legislation requires the publication of a new Homelessness Strategy every 5 years. Members agreed that they should receive an update report annually.

b) Alternative Options

None

c) Risk Considerations

None

d) Policy and Budgetary Considerations

None

e) Date for Review of Decision

An annual up date report on the Homelessness Strategy

1. Homelessness Strategy Update

- 1.1 The Homelessness Strategy 2008-2013 sets out the homelessness problem in East Devon and how we intend to address it. It is our second Homelessness Strategy. It forms part of a number of strategies that the Council has adopted for housing and fits within the objectives of our overarching Housing Strategy. An action plan was approved as part of the Homelessness Strategy.
- 1.2 A review group meet quarterly to review the Homelessness Strategy and the action plan. The group is made up of representatives from partner agencies working with homeless households, such as Young Devon, Homemaker South West, CAB, Community Housing Aid and Open Door Centre; and statutory bodies such as Probation, Children and Young Persons Service, Drug Action Team, Supporting People and the PCT; and housing providers such as DCHA and WCHA .
- 1.3 A copy of the updated action plan is enclosed at Annex A for information. The majority of actions have commenced and many have been completed or are ongoing. For example,

the targets set by Government to reduce the use of temporary accommodation to below 117 by December 2009 has been achieved – we had 82 homeless households in temporary accommodation as at July 2009. However, Members should note the following whose timescales for starting action have been missed.

- I. Action 1.1 - targets for housing development are not currently being met by the Council, mainly due to the current economic climate. Anticipate less opportunity to house vulnerable households over the next few years.
- II. Action 1.4 - the directory of services available to homeless people in East Devon is low priority and timescale is delayed until April 2010.
- III. Action 3.3 – requires significant capital and revenue funding from EDDC and Supporting People and is not a viable opportunity within the timescales of current strategy.
- IV. Action 3.10 – hoped to be funded by LPSA reward monies – not enough funding available – alternative options being considered by Childrens Trust Housing Steering Group.

1.4 Two other key issues that Members should note are:

- I. A recent House of Lords Judgment on the case R (G) v Southwark LB has led to a significant change in the way 16/17 year olds who are in need of housing and support are managed. Whilst this is a significant ruling and will challenge the way all agencies in East Devon work with this group of young people, we are in a strong position to implement any necessary changes. In recent years we have worked closely with other district councils and CYPS (Devon County Council) to reduce homelessness applications from this age group and a number of resources have been provided to support vulnerable 16/17 year olds in housing need. We see it as essential that we build on the success of our partnership and the challenges brought by this judgement, and continue to prevent homelessness among this group of young people. A briefing note on this issue is at Annex B for information.
- II. The government has recently published a new strategy to tackle rough sleeping – “NO ONE LEFT OUT – Communities ending rough sleeping”. This strategy sets a target of having no rough sleepers by 2012. A huge amount of work was done to reduce homelessness, reduce use of B&B and increase the quality of accommodation for homeless households. Lessons from this can be applied to reducing the numbers of rough sleepers. In order to achieve such a challenging target there is a recognition that all Local Authorities need to work in partnership to end rough sleeping, not just those Authorities with a visible problem, but their neighbouring Authorities as well.
- III. Another key element of the initiative is preventing the need for people to sleep rough in the first place. A joint approach across Devon by the Devon Housing Options Partnership, a sub group of the Devon Housing Strategic Partnership to tackle this issue is being developed. In East Devon we are beginning work with partner agencies to understand the problem of rough sleeping in our area and what opportunities/solutions are available. A county-wide co-ordinator has been funded by Government and Supporting People, and is funded initially until March 2010. The aim is to work across the districts including Plymouth and Torbay to agree some common aims amongst the districts that will form the basis of a County-wide Rough Sleeper Strategy; explore the feasibility of a county-wide data base recording approaches to agencies and housing advice by people who are non- priority homeless; carry out a Devon-Wide Street Needs Audit; and identify rough sleeping hotspots outside of the traditional areas (Exeter, Plymouth and North Devon), such as Exmouth. Members will be kept informed of developments.



2. Performance and Achievements

- 2.1 Members have provided additional staff resources in the Housing Needs team in 2008/09, and in 2009/10 provided an additional £20,000 to part fund a worker with SmartMove – see below. The emphasis over the last 3 years has been to develop options and prevention measures for homeless households. A number of initiatives/measures, including funding workers with CAB, Young Devon and more recently Smartmove has achieved significant reductions in homelessness acceptances and the use of temporary accommodation, and improved the quality of our service provision. Key performance data is provided below.
- 2.2 Homeless acceptances in 2008/09 were 78 households compared with 108 households in 2007/08, and 113 households in 2006/07. A 28% reduction from 2007/08 to 2008/09.
- 2.3 Use of temporary accommodation has reduced to 96 households as at 31 March 2008 (Government target of 117 by December 2009 was set in 2005). This compares with 145 as at 31 March 2007, and 194 as at 31 March 2006. The reduction in acceptances and the use of temporary accommodation led to relinquishing the homeless hostel at the Kerans Hotel in 2008/09 at a cost of £99,372 per annum.
- 2.4 Our rent deposit/bond and rent in advance scheme has helped people access accommodation in the private rented sector. Financial help is in the form of a loan (actual money) or a bond (a guarantee by the Council to pay an agreed amount, if required). Some of these households are families or single people who would have been homeless, but are either non priority or intentionally homeless. However, without our financial support they potentially would have been 'sofa surfing' or rough sleeping or staying with relatives and overcrowding their accommodation. Most households using the scheme were homeless and in priority need and who without our help would have been accepted as homeless and placed in temporary accommodation until offered settled accommodation. A total of 242 loans have been made at a cost of £267,000. 35 loans (£34,000) have been repaid fully. There is £109,000 currently outstanding and the Council receives payments averaging £3,700 per month.

3. Smartmove

- 3.1 Members approved a 'growth' bid in 2009/10 of £20,000 to part fund a worker with Smartmove. This was a joint venture with Mid Devon. This has been a great success in helping to prevent homeless; reduce our use of temporary accommodation and reduce the number of our homeless acceptances. Our £20,000 buys us a caseworker for two and half days a week and allows us to refer up to 8 people a month for help to find private rented accommodation. Since April we have actually referred 58 households. 50% of these were non statutory homeless either non priority or intentionally homeless. The remaining households would have been considered homeless and in priority need and we would have had a duty to find them settled accommodation. 50% of our referrals do not get accepted by SmartMove due to being high risk, or not suitable, or have own resources and do not need help, or disengage/find own accommodation. Most of these are non statutory homeless. Some also refuse SmartMove help and are referred back to us.
- 3.2 Since April Smartmove has helped 19 households access private rented accommodation. In some of these cases we have provided the rent in advance loan because Smartmove were unable to access financial support from other sources. In addition, 10 cases have been referred to other agencies for help or they have accessed supported accommodation such as the Exeter Foyer, Alexandra House in Exmouth, Longragg Court in Axminster or relocated outside our area.



4. Quality Standard Framework/Enhanced Housing Options (QSF/EHO)

- 4.1 District Councils in Devon are working together to improve the quality of housing advice and to deliver comprehensive housing options to customers. Working together with Shelter we are adopting a uniform quality standard framework that gives clear guidance for the strategic development, planning, delivery, and monitoring of housing options and homelessness prevention activity.
- 4.2 The framework is a quality assurance system that reflects good practice and is a shared set of aspirational standards that each authority can strive to achieve at its own pace. It does not replace statutory provisions or government guidance, but has been designed to work within the context of relevant legislation and codes of guidance. It provides a 'standard' for working with partners; awareness and access; case management; support for staff; and monitoring of the service. We have started a joint benchmarking, audit and assessment and mystery shopping exercise that will identify strengths and weaknesses in these areas and provide guidance on meeting the standard.
- 4.3 Housing Services has applied the Systems Thinking approach to the provision of our housing advice and options service. We have also applied the QSF and EHO and adopted some good practice from other district councils. Changes have been made to our service and we are emphasising that our focus should be on gathering information to fully understand the clients housing issues; resolve issues at 'one stop'; focussing on homeless prevention; and proactively managing our casework. This should improve the quality of our service while maintaining the ongoing improvements in homeless performance and doing 'what matters' for the customer.

5. Repossession Prevention Fund

- 5.1 The Government recently provided additional grant funding of £47,500 to help prevent repossessions during the 'recession'. This is a one off payment that each local authority has received. It is expected to be used to help people who through no fault of their own are struggling with their mortgage or rental payments in the current climate and are at risk of becoming homeless through repossession or eviction. Loans or grants can be provided where the arrears are as a result of an income 'shock' caused by ill health; job loss; bankruptcy or relationship breakdown. Where loans are provided funding is expected to be repaid to the Council. This will allow the fund to be replenished and potentially be available for use in future years, albeit at a reduced level. What is not spent in 2009/10 is expected to be carried forward to subsequent years.

6. Summary

- 6.1 The actions approved in the Homelessness Strategy for East Devon 2008-2013 are being progressed and are being monitored quarterly by a multi agency review group. Overall the strategy is being implemented. However, the key action relating to the provision of social rented housing will not be met because of the current economic situation. We have made significant progress in tackling homelessness in the district by targeted investment and adopting a clear and effective plan of action.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications requiring comment.

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications in the attached progress report.

Consultation on Reports to the Executive

None.

Background Papers

EDDC Homelessness Strategy July 2008



Dennis Boobier
Housing Needs Manager

Overview and Scrutiny
Committee - Communities
16 September 2009

East Devon District Council Homelessness Strategy Action Plan 2008-2013

The actions set out below are 'new'. The actions may, but are not intended to, replicate actions already included in other strategies, plans or policy documents developed and published by other agencies,

Abbreviations:

- | | | | |
|------|--------------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------|
| RSL | Registered Social Landlord | PSL | Private Sector Leasing |
| DCHA | Devon & Cornwall Housing Association | TA | Temporary Accommodation |
| EDDC | East Devon District Council | ADVA | Against Domestic Violence & Abuse |
| DAAT | Devon Drug and Alcohol Team | HSRG | Homeless Strategy Review Group |

Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome	Current position
1. STRATEGIC ITEMS						
1.1 R	EDDC	April 2008	July 2013	Targets - 200 units each year from 2008-2011 and 300 units from 2011-2015	Reduced use of TA and reduced waiting times to be rehoused.	Not within Council's control in current financial conditions Does not include private sector rented properties
1.2 G	EDDC	October 2008	July 2013	Regular HSRG meetings	More effective joint working, ensuring that targets in action plan are met	Ongoing Agreed. Full group to meet twice a year and Monitoring Group twice a year
1.3 G	All	October 2009	October 2012	Annual survey informs service delivery	Better understanding of service provision	Start date moved to October 2009 Will include landlords etc
1.4 R	All	April 2010	June 2010	Directory published and available to users and agencies	Better understanding by clients of service provision	Agreed to look at DAAT's directory in first instance

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome	Current position
1.5 R	Record and analyse, on an ongoing basis, those households who require housing and who are not accepted as homeless by the Council	All	April 2008	July 2013	Information on unmet need	Improved service delivery	Consider at next meeting of Monitoring group
2. ACTIONS FOR COUNCIL PROPERTIES							
2.1 G	Undertake bi-monthly occupancy checks of Council TA	EDDC	April 2008	July 2013	Ensure properties correctly occupied and address any problem issues	Improve communication, reduce anti social behaviour and breaches of tenancy agreement	On going. There are no large numbers of non-occupiers.
2.2 A	Undertake review with all non secure tenants yearly	EDDC	October 2008	Twice a year to July 2013	Needs of every non secure tenant reviewed twice a year	Increased use of alternative accommodation options Reduced use of TA	Links to 2.1 Contact tenants in temporary accom. Quarterly to see if circumstances have changed
2.3 G	Reduce use of TA by Council by 50%	EDDC	April 2008	December 2009	Target of 117 units of TA by December 2009	Reduced use of TA – meeting government targets	Met. TA units currently 92 (Dec 08)
2.4 G	Maintain homeless acceptances by Council below 100 each year post 2010	EDDC	April 2011	July 2013	Homeless acceptances below 100 each year after 2010	Reduced use of TA – meeting government targets	Not yet due
2.5 G	Maintain a 10% reduction in use of TA year on year after 2010	EDDC	April 2010	July 2013	10% reduction year on year after 2010	Reduced use of TA – meeting government targets	Not yet due

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome	Current position
2.6 G	Increase the number of PSL units to 37	EDDC	August 2008	April 2010	40 PSL units available for use as TA	Improved quality of accommodation available to homeless applicants	23.7.09 Met. Reduced target to 37 as that is the number required at present. Not yet due
2.7 G	Phase out the use of 'supported' hostel type accommodation used by the Council as TA	EDDC	October 2009	December 2012	No supported hostel type accommodation used as TA	Less inappropriate TA used	
2.8 G	Make full use of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) to help prevent homelessness	EDDC	June 2008	July 2013	Full DHP budget spent each year	Reduced cost of TA Prevent homelessness Reduce hardship for low income households in private rented sector	Ongoing
2.9 G	Consider the alternative use of decommissioned sheltered housing in East Devon	All	Oct 2009	April 2010	Identify those units of accommodation to be decommissioned and what the opportunities are for their use.	Better use of existing housing stock	Delayed until outcome of the current review of sheltered housing
2.10	AGREED TO DELETE THIS ACTION						

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome	Current position
2.11 G	Ensure funding is secured to enable EDDC tenants to extend/improve property to prevent homelessness	EDDC	April 2009	July 2013	Capital funds available 2008/09. Ensure funds available each year.	Reduce homelessness in EDDC housing stock Reduced overcrowding	In hand – 2 done, 3 in pipeline
3. HOMELESSNESS AND SPECIFIC CLIENT GROUPS							
3.1 A	Develop emergency hostel accommodation with 4 units for young people in Exmouth	All/	April 2009	July 2013	Emergency hostel accommodation of 4 units available in Exmouth	Improved quality of accommodation and support for young people	YMCA looking at possibilities
3.2 G	Support vulnerable new tenants to enable them to maintain tenancy in the longer term	All	July 2008	July 2013	All identified vulnerable tenants to be visited within 2-4 weeks of start of tenancy	Decrease in number of vulnerable tenants who lose tenancy within first year	Ongoing Limited to new tenants identified as needing help
3.3 R A	Develop suitable supported accommodation to allow young people to develop independent living skills prior to own tenancy	All/	April 2009	July 2013	Provide a minimum of 4 units	Increase tenancy sustainment by young people	Now due
3.4 A	Increase the number of Supported Lodging Scheme places available to young homeless people from 4 units to 10 units	All/	April 2009	April 2010	6 additional hosts in East Devon	Better quality outcomes for young people	LPSA reward money being used to <u>increase</u> places from 3 to 6

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome	Current position
3.5 G	Develop a 'satellite' Foyer type supported accommodation project in Exmouth providing a minimum of 6 units	All	April 2010	April 2012	Foyer accommodation available in Exmouth	Better quality outcomes for young people Improved employment and training opportunities	23.7.09 Not yet achieved. Capital costs not such an issue as the revenue costs
3.6 G	Develop a 'satellite' Foyer type supported accommodation project in Axminster providing approximately 7 units	All	April 2010	April 2012	Foyer accommodation available in Axminster	Better quality outcomes for young people Improved employment and training opportunities	
3.7 G	Commit to not using B&B type accommodation for 16/17 year olds except in an emergency	EDDC	April 2010	July 2013	No 16/17 year olds placed in B&B type accommodation	Improved quality of accommodation and support	Not yet due
3.8 G	Undertake a home visit to all young people excluded from home	EDDC	June 2008	July 2013	Less than 23% of homelessness acceptances are young people	More young people remain at home	Ongoing
3.9 A	Develop a joint approach to work with homeless people with high chaotic/dual diagnosis need	All	April 2009	April 2010	Joint procedures in place	Better signposting to appropriate services Improved outcomes for service users	Link with Access project – work with prisoners released from jail
3.10 R	Develop a mediation service for people excluded from home (requires funding and commissioning from SP)	EDDC/	April 2009	October 2009	Mediation service in place and well used	More young people remain at home Less homelessness acceptances	Had hoped there would be enough LPSA for this – but not the case

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome	Current position
3.11 G	Research the housing and/or homelessness need for members of BME or minority groups in East Devon including gypsies and travellers	All	October 2009	April 2010	Information available for service users and agencies	Better understanding of housing need Improved/targeted service provision	23.7.09 Not yet due Provision in Housing Strategy for gypsy and traveller sites
3.12 G	Work closely with other agencies to provide suitable accommodation for ex-offenders	EDDC/ Probation	June 2008	July 2013	Fewer ex-offenders without suitable accommodation and sleeping rough		Housing needs officers regularly place ex offenders
4. HOMELESSNESS AND OTHER LANDLORDS							
4.1 A	Encourage RSL's to help prevent homelessness wherever possible	RSL's/ED DC	October 2008	July 2013	RSLs have strategies in place to address homelessness issues	Reduced homelessness presentations Better outcome for RSL tenants	Denise raised at Wider Housing Strategic Partnership meeting CLG doing pilot project with Devon RSLs
4.2 G	Closely monitor nominations from RSLs to ensure maximum availability of social rented lettings	EDDC/RS L's	September 2008	July 2013	RSLs produce bi-annual returns of nominations	More opportunities to house homeless households	Ongoing
4.3 A	Work closely with private rented sector to maximise opportunity for households to secure settled accommodation	EDDC/All	May 2008	July 2013	Number of homeless acceptances arising from loss of Assured Shorthold Tenancies falls year on year	More homeless households or those at risk of homelessness accessing the private rented sector	Ongoing Needs more work

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome	Current position
4.4 A	Introduce a Panel of agencies to agree appropriate "move on" for young people from temporary or supported accommodation	All	July 2008	July 2009	Panel set up and agencies agreeing which applicant is ready for move on to available accommodation	Increased access to suitable settled accommodation Improve quality of 'offer' process	23.7.09 Youth Homelessness Prevention Panel set up Exeter have a well developed process – likely to use this for East Devon Links to 4.4
4.5 A	Provide 20% of lettings annually to 'move on' from emergency and supported housing projects in East Devon	EDDC	April 2009	July 2013	20% of lettings to 'move on' from supported housing	Increased access to suitable settled accommodation	Need to ensure Devon Home Choice move on policy links with this.
4.6 A	Ensure all agencies know their role in homeless prevention	All	July 2008	July 2013	Raise awareness of their roles in preventing homelessness – what is expected and what can be achieved	Better communication and joint working	No specific action carried out. Awareness raised across sector. Not sure what else can be done

Revised at Homelessness Strategy Review Group meeting 23.07.09

Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome	Current position
4.7 G Undertake research with service users to:- a) determine the level of hidden homelessness in East Devon b) determine the reasons for homelessness and differences between national and regional figures	All (coordinated by EDDC)	September 2009	April 2011	Information available to users and agencies Ensure homelessness services are more and developed to meet individual needs	Understand who is homeless or at risk of homelessness and areas of need	23.7.09 Not yet due
4.8 G Identify the cost of homelessness to agencies working in East Devon	All	April 2010	April 2011	Costs involved in homelessness collated	Understand the real cost of homelessness in East Devon	Not yet due

	Action	Agency	Start Date	Completion Date	Output	Outcome	Current position
4.9 A	Develop and implement (or use existing) joint risk assessment process for homeless vulnerable people	All	February 2009	October 2011	Joint risk assessment process in place for all agencies	Reduced risk to staff and service users Reduce duplication	23.7.09 CAFs in place Do EDDC need to do this as a separate exercise? Not yet due
4.10 G	Develop and implement (or use existing) joint assessment process for homeless vulnerable people	All	February 2010	October 2011	Joint assessment procedures in place for use by all agencies	Better joint working Reduced bureaucracy Better outcomes for service users	
4.11 G	Raise awareness of CAB "Court Desk" at Exeter County Court and increase referrals to help prevent homelessness	All	July 2008	December 2008	Posters and leaflets available advertising the court desk	Increased legal support/representation at Court for homeless people	Ongoing

Interim Arrangements Between Children and Young People's Services, Devon's Housing Authorities and the Voluntary Sector for working with 16/17 year olds who are in Housing Need
June 2009

Introduction

The recent House of Lords Judgment on the case R(G) v Southwark LB has led to a significant change in the way 16/17 year olds who are in need of housing and support are managed. This interim guidance has been issued by Devon Children's Trust of which Devon's Housing Authorities and Children and Young People's Services (C+YPS) are members. These arrangements will remain in place until the necessary changes can be made to the Housing and Support protocol between C+YPS and the local Housing Authorities.

Whilst this is a significant ruling and will challenge the way all agencies work with this group of young people, we are in Devon in a strong position to implement any necessary changes following a long period of successful joint working between the Housing Authorities and C+YPS.

In recent years we have worked together to reduce homelessness applications from this age group and a number of resources have been developed to support vulnerable 16/17 year olds in housing need. We see it as essential that we build on the success of our partnership and the challenges brought by this judgement are met collaboratively.

Whilst this judgement is challenging for all agencies to implement, the young people we are supporting will be anxious and frightened about their future and their welfare is at the centre of this agreement.

Back ground and legal context

The recent House of Lords Judgment on the case R(G) v Southwark LB confirmed that local authorities should presume that any lone, homeless child should be provided with accommodation and under s 20 of the Children Act 1989 unless the child is not in the local authority's judgment (based on an initial screening assessment), a child "in need". In nearly all cases the impact of a child being homeless and their parents being unable to provide them with suitable accommodation or care would result in such significant challenges to the child's welfare, that the child will be a child "in need". Where the criteria for s 20 have been met children's services do not have discretion to choose to use s 17 powers instead to provide accommodation. The effect of providing accommodation under s 20 is of course that the child becomes "looked after" within the meaning of section 22 of the Act.

Some homeless 16 and 17 year olds will still have priority need under the homelessness legislation (by virtue of article 3 of the *Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002*) these will include those whose need for accommodation did not fall within the circumstances specified in s.20(1) of the 1989 Act - for example, because they had been living independently for some time prior to their homelessness - and those whose need for accommodation fell within s.20 but who did not want to be accommodated under s.20. Such young people must be judged to be competent to make such a decision and have had the benefit of advice about the consequences of making such a decision.

The duties of local authority children's services to accommodate children in need can not be circumvented by referring the child to the housing authority, whose duties under the homelessness legislation (Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996) provide a safety net only for those (very few) children who will not meet the criteria for accommodation under section 20 of the 1989 Act. Their Lordships made it clear that the Children Act duties take priority.

It will be extremely important that there continues to be close partnership between children's services and housing authorities to support local authority responsibilities under the Children Act for meeting the needs of children in their area. Baroness Hale referred to section 27 of the Children Act 1989, which empowers Local Authorities (that are children's services authorities) to ask other authorities, including any local housing authority, for "help in the exercise of any of their functions" under Part III of the 1989 Act.

The requested authority must provide help if it is compatible with their own statutory or other duties and does not unduly prejudice the discharge of their own functions. But, she said, this does not mean that the children's authority can avoid their responsibilities by "passing the buck" to another authority; rather that they can ask another authority to use its powers to help them discharge theirs.

Agreed Interim arrangements

Presenting in Housing Need

1. Liaison between Managers in Children and Young People Assessment Teams and Housing Needs Managers within Local Housing Authorities will be expected to take place to manage the arrangements listed below in a manner that works at a local level.
2. Young people aged 16/17 who present to their local housing department in housing need will continue to be offered a housing options interview or be seen by the dedicated youth prevention worker. The Housing Options interview will be provided within the Housing Department or within the Voluntary Sector. This will depend on what local District arrangements are in place. The purpose of the interview will continue to be the prevention of homelessness. A significant number of young people receive advice and support about their housing and support options and do not go on to make applications.
3. In the event that homelessness cannot be prevented and a 16/17 year old requires accommodation the local housing authority will contact the local C&YP Team to request that the YP be accommodated under s.20 of the Children Act 1989 pending the outcome of a Initial Assessment as set out in the National Framework for Assessment 2002. The C&YP Team will make the necessary arrangements to accommodate the young person under s.20 of the Children Act 1989 whilst undertaking a Initial Assessment CIN assessment.
4. The local housing authority may be able to assist the C&YP Team in securing a placement for the young person, dependent on available resources; (for example supported lodgings, B&B or other temporary accommodation.) In such circumstances the young person will be accommodated under s.20 Children Act 1989 and not under s.188 (1) of the Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.
5. If a Young Person decides they do not want to be looked after under s. 20 after they have been given a fair and balanced advice about the benefits and disadvantages not to be accommodated under s.20 then the case will be passed on to the relevant Housing Authority and the young person provided with advice and assistance to secure alternative accommodation. If homelessness cannot be prevented the case will be assessed under the Housing Act 1996 Part VII, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002.
6. Where a young person has refused assistance under section 20, but has additional needs other than a housing need, then C&YP team will remain involved with the young person, providing Social Work time or ensuring their needs are met by an alternative provision, whilst their Housing needs are being met by the Housing Authority.

Presenting in Housing Need with complex Needs

1. There will be some Young People who present in Housing Need with a range of high and complex needs. In these cases where the Housing Authority/Voluntary sector are looking at means to prevent the young person from becoming homeless, an Initial Assessment should also be requested by the Housing Authority to the local Children and Young People services.

Young People who have experienced Tenancy Breakdown

1. All measures are expected as per the current Housing and Support Protocol and Existing Homeless Prevention Panels to prevent tenancy breakdown within the Supported Housing Sector. If this can not be achieved then Supported Housing Providers should alert their local children and young people's service team and make a referral on behalf of the young person for an Initial Assessment prior to the eviction date.
2. The local CYPS team will need to provide emergency accommodation for the young person where necessary pending the results of their Assessment.

Overview and Scrutiny – Communities Committee

Future Meetings Forward Plan – Suggested Items

Affordable Housing (Corporate Strategy)

Children and Young People (Corporate Strategy)

Progress on Home Safeguard budgets

Parish Plans

Outcomes from Leaders' Transformation Group

Engaging with the Community

Mental Health Issues

Childhood and Adolescent Obesity

Presentation from Community Groups funded by EDDC

Rural Champion }

Cultural Champion }

Equalities Champion }

Post Offices Champion } what work is being done for communities & how can the Council assist further?

Youth Champion }

Community Safety Champion }

Sustainability Champion }

Dates of future meetings:

28 October 2009	
20 January 2009	
10 March 2009	



To Members of the Overview/Scrutiny – Communities Committee 16 September 2009

The former Gas Works, Fore Street, Exmouth

Background

At a recent Committee meeting an update on progress on the Docks/Former Gas Works site in Exmouth was requested by Members.

Report

The Housing Enabling Officer has been working closely with the developers, and our Legal Services team, to try and advance the affordable housing at the Gas Works site.

The delivery trigger for the affordable housing has not yet been met i.e. 50% of the units at the Docks have not been occupied, and they are close to completion. As the trigger point has not been reached the developers are not obligated to provide any affordable housing at this time.

I can confirm that due to the extreme difficulties in the housing market, the developers are discussing the 2004 Section 106 agreement with us. One option would allow the developer to engage with a Housing Association on the basis that the Housing Association could bid for Homes and Communities Agency grant.

Having checked with Legal Services, and after reviewing the Section 106 agreement, the total number of affordable houses will be dependent on the final build at the Docks. We are aware that the developer has submitted an amended planning application for the final phase. This application intends to increase the total number of units on the whole development to 53. If successful, the developer would have to provide 11 units instead of 10.

It appears that the developers are keen to commence building these homes as soon as possible. In addition to amending the original Section 106 agreement, we are also currently considering the possibility of the developer building out the whole site, to provide 18 affordable flats as part of a wider arrangement.

As with the current agreement, any amended proposals would be time bound.

Peter Jeffs
Corporate Director

