

September 2021 notes for Parish Councils

Council Declares a Housing Crisis

Due to a number of factors, including the lack of rented accommodation which is available for longer than six months, an excessive rise in house prices due to second home-owners, the conversion of properties to Airbnb's and people moving into the District since the pandemic:

South Hams District Council says it has no choice but to declare a Housing Crisis.

The District does have a five-year supply of land for housing, an adopted Joint Local Plan with Plymouth and West Devon, and an adopted Housing Strategy that they consulted on last year, but local leaders say that due to recent events, there is just not enough properties for local people and those people wanting to work in the District.

Cllr Judy Pearce Leader of South Hams District Council Said: "We are all very aware of the problems that have been created this summer, because so many properties have been turned into Airbnb's. We have every sympathy with people wanting to come and visit the South Hams, but we have to look at the sustainable future of our district and if people can't afford to live here for work, then the system is going to break down. We can't have innumerable tourists here if there is nobody here to service the businesses that they are using.

"We do have the Joint Local Plan, it is working well, but it has been drawn up on government guidelines, and whilst we are building the right number of houses, we are not building the right kind of homes that are needed in the South Hams. It is becoming more and more evident that the housing policy which is promoted nationally is not working in areas like ours.

"That is why, with Cllr Bastone, I brought a motion to the Council. It has a number of actions in it, which are complemented by and are in addition to our plan "Better Lives for All" and our housing strategy. This is a list of actions and I am suggesting that we do not do a lot of talking, but we get on and take action."

At a meeting of their full Council, Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council and Deputy Leader Cllr Hilary Bastone, laid out ten actions that they asked the Council to take urgently in order to address the crisis; two further actions were added during the meeting. They are:

1. The District Council will lobby government, through MPs and the Local Government Association, to allow a Council Tax charge on housing plots with planning permission if they have not been built after a specified period of time. This would encourage developers to get on and build their sites without delay.
2. They will also lobby Government to review all holiday accommodation. This would ensure that it is properly regulated, complying with local planning policies and taxes. This could include an extension of the 90-day short let legislation, a proper planning class for short lets and proper licencing for them. This would prevent people finding loopholes in the taxation system and prevent too many local homes being converted to holiday accommodation.

3. The Council should also immediately review all holiday letting in the District to ensure that the owners are paying the correct amount for the removal of waste and recycling. Businesses should not be on the normal domestic recycling and waste collection.
4. South Hams District Council will also ask the Joint Local Plan project team to review the amounts of affordable housing in the Joint Local Plan and see if this can be increased, so that the percentage of “First Homes” on a development is in addition to the existing requirement for 30% affordable housing.
5. The District Council already runs a letting agency to encourage landlords to make properties available for local families in need. There should be further promotion of this and regular landlord forums to encourage more properties to become available.
6. The District Council works closely with registered providers on many housing projects across the District; they will now be working with them to ensure the best use of those properties, such as to encourage tenants to downsize where possible and make larger properties available for larger households.
7. In addition to this, the District Council is proposing to use some of the affordable housing revenue to increase payments made to those tenants downsizing to make the move more attractable and affordable.
8. The Council are committed to using Section 106 affordable housing contributions as soon as possible, to help fund developments anywhere in the District where the terms of the Section 106 agreements will allow.
9. The Council also wants to campaign for changes to the Broad Market Area, to better reflect the costs of rents in the South Hams.
10. The Council would encourage the development of an exemplar site of low carbon modular housing such as ZEDpods, to show that developments like this can be both stylish and great to live in.
11. South Hams District Council also agreed to actively seek opportunities to invest in Council owned social housing with highly sustainable specification.
12. To lobby Government to allow local councils to be able to charge 200% Council Tax on second / holiday homes, as they do in Wales.

Cllr Hilary Bastone, South Hams District Council’s Deputy Leader added: “It is so very important for our residents, their families and their future generations that we tackle this problem now and do everything in our power to enable local residents to have a decent home. If people move away because they cannot afford to live here or they cannot find affordable rented properties, then our towns and communities will collapse.

“I am pleased that our motion was passed by full Council, but now is the time for us to stop talking and take action.”

The People's Plan To Shape Better Lives for All

South Hams District Council Councillors today agreed to adopt a 20-year vision for the District that will help businesses and residents to thrive. Developed through an ongoing consultation with local residents and businesses, the strategy identifies six local priority themes to achieve 'Better Lives for All.'

The six priority themes for the next 20 years are:

Adapting and mitigating climate change and increasing biodiversity

Improving homes

Protecting, conserving and enhancing our built and natural environment

Stimulating a thriving economy

Strengthening community wellbeing

Delivering quality Council services

What difference will this strategy make for local people and business?

The strategy has people and place at its heart. It acknowledges the challenges faced by communities and recognises the unique landscapes that need to be protected. The projects and schemes outlined in the document will make the South Hams a better place to live and work. These include:

Projects to tackle climate change and improve local biodiversity

Outdoor community projects such as skate parks and games areas

Town centre improvement plans

A cycle network

In addition to this, the document pledges ongoing lobbying of the Government to close a loophole which enables second home and holiday let owners to avoid paying council tax and business rates. It also supports a Freezone to encourage economic growth.

Inviting public comment has ensured that the priority areas match with local opinion and core areas of concern can be tackled. The consultation took many forms, to encourage as wide a response as possible. This included face-to-face interviews, online surveys and a photo competition, which asked communities to share a visual personal record of what is important about the South Hams to them.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council said: "With our priorities adopted by our local Councillors and supported by our residents and businesses, we can now confidently move forward to deliver actions that meet the diverse needs of our communities. From addressing the need for housing that is truly affordable for local people, to taking action now to combat climate change, creating Better Lives for All will be at the heart of everything we do.

“I’d like to thank everyone who has got involved to help us shape this document. District, Town and Parish Councillors gave their knowledge on the individual situation in their local areas. Local residents, businesses and visitors told us what matters to them. Talented photographers have captured on film the landscapes and people that make the South Hams unique. Your input has ensured that this document focuses on addressing the real challenges and opportunities faced every day by all of us who call the South Hams home.”

Cllr Hilary Bastone, Deputy Leader of South Hams District Council added: “Local people have spoken and shown us what is important to them to give us a solid basis for our vision. It’s really important to emphasise that we are listening. Your feedback is noted and will inform our ongoing decisions to respond to the evolving needs of our communities.

“It is heartening to know that 70% of the businesses that responded felt optimistic about the future, despite the difficult last year and a half. But we’re also listening to business owners who tell us that the ability to hire the right people was amongst the largest areas of concern. This is partly due to the lack of affordable housing – an area of key concern to our residents too. Poor transport and low paying jobs are also noted as major issues for local people.

“The next step is to put our plans into action to address the issues highlighted. The overall vision is supported by a detailed delivery plan, which will measure success and identify where more needs to be done.”

A snapshot of what you told us:

We asked if the challenges set out in the Better Lives for All Strategy were recognised, with 88% saying that they were

80% of respondents were concerned about their carbon footprint

38% of respondents have already, or are currently thinking about moving to an electric vehicle

85% of people feel that poor broadband or digital connectivity impacts on their ability to stay in touch or run a business

88% of respondents felt that their local outdoor recreation spaces didn’t currently meet the needs of their community

We asked people how often on average they visit their local high street. 46% visited once a week but 23% hardly ever visited their local high street (with the rest falling somewhere in between)

77% of respondents felt that there wasn’t a good level of community sports facilities across the district

44% of people felt that it could be easier to access Council services online than it currently is (vs 35% who felt it was easy to engage with the Council online)

92% felt that we should do more to encourage people to use our environment more respectfully

97% of respondents (with 150 people completing this poll), are worried about the affordability of buying a home in the District

We also asked if our residents are worried about being able to afford their rent or mortgage payment in the coming months. This question was answered by 160 people. 86% said yes, they were worried about being able to afford their rent or mortgage

84% supported improving Cycle / Active travel across the district

Over 100 photographers took part in the competition this summer to depict the South Hams. Many of the stunning images are included in the strategy document, to now bring it to life and show the District through the eyes of residents.

Voted for by Councillors, the overall winner of the photography competition, who receives a hamper of local goods, was Sophie Rennie. Judges felt that her image of 'The Gate' captured a sense of both the past, present and future for the South Hams.

To read the adopted Better Lives For All strategy, go to:

<https://www.engagement.southhams.gov.uk/betterlivesforall>

Garden Waste Suspension to Continue in South Hams

Garden Waste

South Hams District Council and its contractor FCC Environment have made the reluctant decision to keep the suspension of all garden waste collections in place and say residents will be notified when they can start using their brown bins again.

At a meeting of the South Hams Executive on Thursday September, Councillors received an update on the waste and recycling situation in South Hams and have reluctantly agreed to keep the suspension of garden waste in place. The Executive will review the situation when they meet again on 14 October.

A lack of drivers meant that in August, the Council and FCC Environment made the tough decision to prioritise vital collections of general waste, clinical waste, recycling and refuse collections at the expense of garden waste collections.

At the request of the Council, FCC Environment has taken several steps to try and alleviate the situation. On a local level they have increased pay to retain their current drivers and at a national level, have launched a campaign to try and recruit more drivers.

However, with the national picture not improving, the decision has been made to keep focusing resources on essential waste and recycling collections and continue the suspension of garden waste collection in the South Hams.

Cllr Keith Baldry, South Hams Executive Member for the Environment, said: "As a Council, we were hoping that the nationwide situation on drivers may have shown signs of improvement, but in reality the situation is not getting better. When we made the original decision to suspend garden waste collections, we were left little choice to do so - and we still have no choice now but to keep the suspension in place.

"We realise that it is frustrating for our residents, but we must do all we can to keep the collections of general waste, clinical waste and recycling in place as best we can. We're sorry

to everyone for the inconvenience and hope you understand that this situation is one playing out across the country, not just here in the South Hams.

"We will let you know when you can start using your brown bins again, and there is some advice below on what you can do with your garden waste until then."

According to Government figures, the driver shortage is reported to have increased over the last five years from 45,000 drivers in 2016 to 76,000 today. A recent Road Haulage Association (RHA) survey put the estimated shortfall at more than 100,000, with the warning that it will take 18 months to train enough drivers to address the problem, even if there are enough candidates to take the roles.

Commenting, FCC Environment Operations Director Steve Longdon said: "All our staff have worked tirelessly throughout the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain our services and ensure household waste continued to be collected but, as we return to normality, the sector is facing new challenges.

"LGV 1 and 2 drivers are essential for the waste and recycling sector, and we are committed to doing everything we can to fill our driver vacancies to continue to play our part in protecting public health and the environment, as well as the UK's green economic recovery."

FCC Environment was one of the signatories on an open letter that the Environmental Services Association (ESA) has sent to the Home Secretary, Priti Patel.

In the letter which represents local authority waste companies and recycling businesses, the ESA says that the shortage of drivers could hinder the sector's ability to deliver upon the government's resource-efficiency and environmental ambitions in the "longer term". The letter goes on to say that immediate relief is "urgently" needed for "this acute situation".

FCC Environment is currently running a campaign to attract more trained LGV 1 and 2 drivers to support domestic waste collection crews and household waste recycling in South Hams. If you are interested in joining the team follow the link below to find out more:

[FCC Environment - Careers](#)

The Council and FCC Environment will continue to review the situation, as the national driver shortage crisis develops. In the meantime, residents are being asked not to put garden waste in the grey wheelie / residual waste bin.

The Council is offering advice on what residents can do with their garden waste:

Compost: [More on home composting](#)

Recycle centres: All three recycling centres located in South Hams, operated by Devon County Council, take garden waste. Full details, including opening hours, [here](#).

Please do not burn your garden waste. The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service firmly advises against having bonfires, given the risks of fires spreading, the likely nuisance for neighbours and the potential diversion of emergency services. Check out their downloadable bonfire leaflet.

Better Lives for All - Partner Feedback

Better Lives For All

As you are aware, we have been discussing the emerging 'Better Lives for All' strategy with our key partners.

We wanted to share with you correspondence from Cllr John Hart and Phil Norrey of Devon County Council.

It is encouraging to receive this positive endorsement of the strategy and to see that we are very much aligned along with the commitment to continuing to work closely on our plans.

Devon County Council response to Better Lives for All

The SHDC strategy includes projects for the next three years which will be the result of ongoing partnerships, collaborations and joint working between our councils and others. There are also actions in them which we can address together in the context of the work of Team Devon (Leaders and Chief Executives) and the potential offered by the prospect of the devolution deal. Devon County Council is fully committed to contributing to those projects and actions.

The core focus areas in the South Hams strategy are:

Adapting and mitigating climate change and increasing biodiversity.

Improving homes.

Protecting, conserving and enhancing our built and natural environment.

Stimulating a thriving economy.

Strengthening community wellbeing.

Delivering quality Council services.

There is a very close alignment between those aims and the emerging Devon County Council priorities for the next four years which will be formally considered by the Cabinet in November:

Responding to the climate emergency - reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Devon to net zero.

Supporting people and communities - continuing to work with partners to support strong, resilient and safe communities.

Tackling inequality and poverty – measures will include the development of local support networks to reduce food poverty and support people that are experiencing hardship.

Raising children and young people's aspirations – ensuring that all children and young people have the best possible start in life, good health and emotional wellbeing.

Transforming, developing and improving children's services - making sure that all young people have the best possible experience of care and that care leavers have better life chances.

Investing in Devon's economic recovery – measures will include support for training providers and employers to increase the number of traineeships and apprenticeships for young people and to upskill to reflect changes in employment opportunities.

Improving health and wellbeing – continuing to work with partners to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.

Transforming Devon County Council - reimagining and redesigning the way the organisation works.

As we begin to look beyond the immediate responses to the pandemic, I am confident that we can continue to work together to deliver the vision for South Hams which the strategy describes.

Wedding Attendance Numbers at Follaton House

Following a discussion at Executive about Follaton House this week, members enquired if more guests could be permitted to attend weddings at the venue.

The numbers permitted to attend are set by the Registrar service, not by District Council. The Registrar service has a risk assessment process that has been agreed by Devon County Council and is applied at all of their venues. Having applied that methodology to Follaton House, the following guest numbers are permitted: Nash Room: 8, Repton Room: 20.

To help increase capacity, Officers have agreed that the Registrar can use the Portico area of the old house as well. This provides a capacity of 30; the couple, 8 standing and 20 seated. The Registrar has confirmed that due to high COVID infection rates in Devon this position is unlikely to change in the near future.

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<https://www.fccenvironment.co.uk/about-us/careers/current-jobs/>

The Council and FCC Environment will continue to review the situation, as the national driver shortage crisis develops. In the meantime, residents are being asked not to put garden waste in the grey wheelie / residual waste bin.

The Council is offering advice on what residents can do with their garden waste:

Compost: www.recycledevon.org/in-the-garden/how-to-compost

Recycle centres: All three recycling centres located in South Hams, operated by Devon County Council, take garden waste. Full details, including opening hours: www.devon.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/centre

Please do not burn your garden waste. The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service firmly advises against having bonfires: www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome/Bonfires

This is because of the risks of fires spreading, the likely nuisance for neighbours and the potential diversion of emergency services.

Check out their downloadable bonfire leaflet:

www.dsfire.gov.uk/YourSafety/SafetyInTheHome/Bonfires/documents/DS2018-2734BonfireSafetyLeaflet.pdf

GET ACTIVE WITH A ‘MIDWEEK MILE’ THIS NATIONAL FITNESS DAY

Free passes available Wednesday 22nd September

Fusion Lifestyle, West Devon Borough Council and South Hams District Council will be celebrating National Fitness Day on Wednesday 22nd September by encouraging the local community to clock up a ‘Midweek Mile’ at Meadowlands Leisure Centre, Parklands Leisure Centre, Ivybridge Leisure Centre, Dartmouth Leisure Centre, Quayside Leisure Centre and Totnes Leisure Centre.

The mile can be completed by walking, running, rowing, swimming, or a combination of all of these, and is open to members and non-members alike. With a free gym and swim pass available to download at www.fusion-lifestyle.com/offers/free-pass/ (terms and conditions apply).

Each participating centre will keep a running tally of the miles achieved throughout the day and will announce their totals on social media.

Anthony Cawley, Director of Operations for Fusion Lifestyle, commented: “National Fitness Day is a brilliant way to help the local community get active. We hope by offering a free pass our members will bring their friends and family and residents who want to try out their local centres will use this opportunity to do just that. Some friendly competition between all our centres will provide an extra incentive too and we can’t wait to see how many miles Fusion users all over the country can achieve.”

Cllr Tony Leech, West Devon Borough Council Lead Member for Leisure, added: “Whether people are taking their first steps towards getting fit, adding some extra midweek movement to their schedule or celebrating the exercise they already do, the ‘Midweek Mile’ is a brilliant reminder of the importance of exercise to everyone. We are looking forward to seeing the people of West Devon get active to mark National Fitness Day and hope we can rack up those miles and smiles.”

Cllr Jonathan Hawkins, South Hams District Council’s Executive Member for Leisure, said: “If anyone needs a little extra motivation to get active, the ‘Midweek Mile’ is perfect. You

can get involved regardless of your current fitness (or unfitness) level and whether you're a member of Fusion or not. We can't wait to see how many miles our centres across the South Hams achieve – so get your friends and family together and celebrate World Fitness Day in the pool, on the treadmill or on the rowing machine to see who can go the extra mile.”

To take part simply attend your nearest Fusion Lifestyle centre on Wednesday 22nd September and share the number of miles you achieve with staff. To join in the fun on social media take a picture of yourself post workout and tag #FitnessDay and #Fitness2me.

Gas Safety Week

Good afternoon,

At Wales & West Utilities we keep the gas flowing safely, so I want to share some important information about this year's Gas Safety Week (13-19 September) and encourage you to share our gas safety tips with people living in your ward.

Gas Safety Week is now into its second decade of keeping people safe and this year has an ongoing focus on keeping communities' gas safe, as well as advising on topics such as illegal gas fitters.

It is a timely reminder to homeowners and tenants to make sure they know how to stay gas safe ahead of the winter months.

Badly fitted and poorly serviced gas appliances can cause leaks, fires, explosions and carbon monoxide poisoning. We urge everyone to look at their appliances before the winter sets in, when more and more people start to use their gas central heating.

In the past 18 months or so we have seen communities come together to support one another. Through taking these simple steps and sharing information with family, friends and neighbours, we can save lives.

We would encourage you to share this information with your constituents as widely as possible. To this end, please find below a suggested tweet/social media post which you can post from your own social media account(s).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to get in touch by responding to this email.

Best wishes,

Reece

Reece Emmitt

External Relations Manager

Wales & West Utilities

South Hams District Council has launched a public consultation on its gambling policy.

The Council is required to review its gambling policy, known as the ‘Statement of Principles’, every three years. The policy sets out the principles South Hams District Council will apply under the Gambling Act 2005 over the next three years. This policy covers everything from family entertainment centres and betting premises to gaming machines, charity lotteries, and bingo premises.

This is the Council’s fifth Statement of Principles since the introduction of the Act in 2007 and, once approved, the updated policy will be in effect from 31 January 2022 to 30 January 2025.

As the policy was updated in detail in 2019, only minor changes are required. The main proposed changes include more detail on the Licensing Authority’s expectations when dealing with separation of premises, further information regarding premises licence plans and an overall update to the document with regard to the Gambling Commission’s new guidance and codes of practice.

Cllr Jonathan Hawkins, South Hams District Council Executive Member for Licensing said: “We’re only considering minor changes to the policy but I urge anyone interested to take a look and send us your comments.”

Any comments must be received by Sunday 24 October 2021 at the latest. Following the consultation, views will be considered by the Licensing Committee and necessary amendments made before the new policy is adopted by the Council.

You can find out more and share your views here: www.southhams.gov.uk/gambling-consultation

You can also respond in writing to Licensing, South Hams District Council, Follaton House, Plymouth Road, Totnes, TQ9 5NE.

Modernising Local Democracy

The pandemic has changed the face of local government, pushing it online and in the process making it more accessible to more people.

By holding Council meetings online, many councils have found that they are giving greater transparency to their democratic processes and this in turn has led to greater engagement and better accountability.

However, on 7 May this year (2021), the temporary laws allowing virtual meetings ended and councils have been back making face to face decisions ever since.

Having dipped their toes into the on-line world, many councils are now embracing what are called hybrid meetings. This is where the decision makers (those who vote at meetings) are in a council meeting room, and contributors, speakers and observers join the meeting remotely.

Before the pandemic, South Hams District Council had already agreed to keep Follaton House as its base of operations and democracy. However, in order to provide a modern flexible space in which democratic decisions can be made, and local politicians can be held publicly accountable, the Council Chamber at Follaton House needs modernising.

Having taken the leap forward with modern technology during the pandemic, and providing a much clearer view of local democracy and decision making by having online meetings, it could be seen that by not offering online hybrid meetings now, local democracy at South Hams would be taking a backward step.

At present the Council Chamber at Follaton House, has a very fixed table layout, the audio visual equipment is old and failing (microphones and cameras) and the current set up does not allow for hybrid online meetings.

South Hams District Council's Leader Cllr Judy Pearce now wants the Council to take advantage of their online learning and create a future proof council chamber that will enable everyone to benefit from the kind of hybrid meetings as described above.

The Council has to replace the old and failing air handling system and the old microphones, regardless of the desire for hybrid meetings. But this now presents the council with the opportunity to create a truly modern space that makes local democracy far more accessible than ever before.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council, said: "Being able to hold hybrid council meetings presents a rural council like ours with a huge opportunity to be more flexible and more accountable.

"It could save everyone a great deal of travel time and expense as well as provide savings on our individual and business carbon footprint. With such a large geographic area to cover, some people attending council meetings at Follaton House, have been known to travel for over an hour across the District and back for just one meeting.

"Since we have been streaming council meetings to social media, we have seen more people watching than would ever have turned up in person and this has stimulated local debate and made our decision making more visible to more people.

"I think everyone in local government agrees that holding virtual council meetings during the pandemic opened our eyes to the future of local democracy.

"Therefore, at the Executive next week, I will be asking our Executive to agree to an urgent improvement scheme for the Council Chamber.

"This will enable us to embrace the benefits of virtual meetings that we experienced during the pandemic and ensure that we are more prepared, with a more robust system, should we need to return to more socially distanced meetings once again."

South Hams District Council are not alone in their desire to benefit from hybrid meetings, in a recent survey by the Local Government Association (Remote council meetings temperature check 2021) 63% of the councils who responded said that they would be likely to hold hybrid meetings after the pandemic.

The Local Government Association also found from their survey that virtual meetings worked well throughout the pandemic and positively benefited local democracy in a variety of ways. They led to more transparency and overall visibility in the decision-making process and encouraged more public and press interest.

It was noted that holding meetings in this way has the potential to encourage other prospective candidates from under-represented groups to consider standing for public service. Virtual meetings were especially beneficial for those councillors with other commitments such as caring responsibilities or employment or those with health issues as it made it easier for them to attend.

Efficiencies were also made in hospitality, travel, venue and staffing costs.

Cllr Judy Pearce, said: “We cannot predict when something like the COVID-19 pandemic will occur, but we can provide ourselves with modern technology and a flexible working space that ensures local democracy and decision making can continue under public scrutiny.”

Allowing for supplier timelines and installation, it is hoped that if recommended by the Executive next week, and approved by Full Council in September, then the new chamber could be operational in time for the February Council Meeting next year.

Better Lives For All - Councillors Discuss 20 Year Plan

Councillors of South Hams District Council’s Executive will be discussing the delivery plans behind their emerging vision for the next 20 years later this week.

‘Better Lives for All – A vision for South Hams’, highlights projects and schemes that the Executive think will enhance and protect the special place and unique economy that makes up South Hams. They include:

Climate change and biodiversity mitigation projects

Outdoor community projects such as skate parks and games areas

Town Centre Improvement plans

A cycle network

In addition to this, the document pledges ongoing lobbying of the Government to close a loop hole, which enables second home and holiday let owners to avoid paying any council tax or business rates. It also supports a Freezone, Freezones or Freeports are areas designated by government where normal tax and customs rules do not apply, in order to encourage economic growth.

The ‘Better Lives for All’ document is a fusing together of many different conversations, consultations, aspirations and pledges for the future.

It has been in development since before the pandemic hit, but now is being driven forward with renewed vigour.

South Hams District Council’s Leader, Cllr Judy Pearce, hopes that this new plan will have a positive impact on the lives of residents as the District comes together to build a better future.

Cllr Judy Pearce, Leader of South Hams District Council said: “I am very proud to be able to bring the detail behind this document to the Executive for discussion.

“I would also like to thank all of my fellow councillors and the members of the public who have commented on the draft vision that was circulated at the start of the summer.

“All of your comments and feedback have been very helpful. In addition to this, all of the consultations that you have responded to in the last 12 months, consultations about play parks, our housing strategy, parking provision, development projects; in fact everything that we have come and talked to you about, in some way has also been fed into the work that underpins this vision.

“There is no denying that South Hams is an incredibly special place, but we also have our challenges. If we are to overcome those challenges and support the notion of ‘Better Lives for All’, then we must work together. Residents, businesses, councillors, towns and parishes, neighbouring authorities and partners, you will all have your part to play in working with us on this vision.”

A formal consultation on the emerging document was held over the summer which consisted of face to face engagements with residents, businesses and visitors, a public and partner survey, a series of online polls and conversations with key stakeholders.

Overall the responses indicated that the ‘Better Lives For All’ strategy was welcomed and the areas which the Council had identified as focus areas for the next three years, were broadly supported.

It is clear from the responses that a lack of affordable housing, poor transport and low paying jobs are of concern to residents. While 70% of the businesses that responded felt optimistic about the future.

Amongst the largest areas of concern for businesses within the South Hams was the ability to hire the right people.

All of the responses and the comments that have been made are being reviewed and will help to inform how this vision progresses in the coming months.

At the same meeting of the Executive on Thursday 16 September, councillors will be asked to discuss the thematic delivery plans that sit behind the ‘Better Lives for All’ vision, the plans that will help the Council to deliver projects like these:

£300,000 for community climate change and biodiversity projects

32 outdoor space projects worth £2.5 million

Further £1.5 m investment in Totnes Leisure Centre

Dartmouth Health Hub - £4m

Lobby for the closing of the second homes business rates loophole

£9m investment in Ivybridge improvements

Creation of a town centre plan

Supporting the FreeZone

20 year vision for a cycle network

Cllr Judy Pearce added: “One of the additions to the vision which I am delighted to see is under the section, “The South Hams you see”. It is really important to me that we represent the District that you see when you look out of your window, which is why we ran a photo competition, asking residents to show us what South Hams means to them.

“Many of the images we received are peppered through the document, but we had so many wonderful entries that we felt we wanted to showcase more of them.

“In fact those residents who have read the vision document will have noticed that under every theme we are also encouraging you to play your part. Whether this is through helping with your Neighbourhood Plan or doing your part for the environment.

“As this vision moves forward, we must all come together to build a better future.”

At the same meeting of the Executive on 16 September, councillors will also be discussing the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy. All local authorities must produce a balanced budget and it is important to see their aspirations in tandem with their financial planning.

Business funding for low carbon initiatives

West Devon and South Hams enterprises can now apply for funding up to £7,500 to support the development of products and services for the low carbon sector.

The Devon Net Zero Innovation Fund is a research and innovation opportunity funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), delivered through the Low Carbon Devon project at the University of Plymouth. The aim is to bring Devon enterprises together with University of Plymouth academics to collaborate to accelerate the development of new products or services in the low carbon sector, or other sectors, leading to a reduction in carbon emissions.

Key dates for funding applications

The closing date for applications is 12 midday on 28 October 2021.

Scoring of applications will take place in November 2021 and upon approval, partnerships will have six months to deliver their project (by 31/05/22.)

Your questions answered

Register now to take part in the ‘Take Action: Devon Net Zero Innovation Fund’ information and questions event on 22 September 2021 at 4.00pm.

Spending Review 2021 (SR21)

The Chancellor launched Spending Review 2021 (SR21), which will conclude on 27 October 2021 alongside an Autumn Budget and set out the Government’s spending priorities for the Parliament. The three-year review will set UK government departments’ resource and capital budgets for 2022-23 to 2024-25.

The Treasury has opened a process for the Spending Review and Autumn Budget to allow external stakeholders to submit representations by 30 September.

We will be putting together our representation for submission by the 30 September deadline. The Covid-19 pandemic has drawn into sharper focus the financial challenges faced by Local Authorities which have existed for some years.

Developer Contributions Benefit South Hams

Tennis, cricket, swimming, biking, bowls and football are just some of the sports to have benefitted from contributions made by developers in the South Hams.

Add this to the extensive list of play park, recreation and open space improvements in Dartington, Ivybridge, Ermington, Chillington and Salcombe to name just a few and affordable housing, employment space and ecology projects - it is clear that a lot of work has gone into securing and allocating funds from new developments.

Next week, on Thursday 16 September, South Hams District Council's Executive will be considering a report which details how £5.9 million of Section 106 money, has been, is being, or will be spent.

Section 106 monies are the financial contributions sought from developers towards the cost of community and social infrastructure when a new development takes place.

The £5.9 million of Section 106 funding that the Council will be discussing next week, has come from developments across the District including, Langage Energy Centre, Great Court Farm at Berry Pomeroy, Sherford, Origins and Yarners Mill at Dartington, Harford Mews at Ivybridge and many others.

Cllr Hilary Bastone, South Hams District Council's Deputy Leader, said: "There are so many varied and exciting projects on the list. It is wonderful to see our communities really benefitting from developments.

"In recent years there has been a lot of controversy over various new developments in South Hams, because rightly the public understand our need to protect our green spaces, retain the character of our District and build communities that are sustainable.

"However, looking at this report it is clear that there have also been significant benefits from some of these developments. As well as providing much needed local housing and job opportunities, these developments have contributed towards community infrastructure that we would otherwise have not been able to afford.

"This report clearly illustrates that we have followed through our commitment to pursue, collect and allocate Section 106 money and that we have allocated it to a wide variety of projects across the District. This includes money for affordable houses, to support local ecology, provide employment space and provide essential community facilities."

Where money has not yet been spent, the Council wants to continue working with Town and Parish Councils to identify specific projects that will benefit those communities where

development has taken place. The Council is keen to do this and spend the money before the allotted time to spend elapses.

The Council negotiates Section 106 contributions with the developer during the planning application process. South Hams would then receive the payment when either the development work begins or, when it is partially complete, depending on what they have agreed. For example on a big development like Sherford, different amounts of money may be paid out as the development reaches certain milestones.

The aim of S106 funds is to mitigate the impact of development, and support or enable local communities to provide and improve affordable housing and open space, sport, recreation and community facilities.

S106 contributions can only be spent on new facilities or improvements where the new development has or will create a need for new infrastructure or the upgrading of existing infrastructure. This means that funding will normally be allocated to facilities within the same locality or catchment area where the development is located. The District Council then acts as the accountable body for collecting and spending the S106 funding.

Cllr Hilary Bastone added: “I would actively encourage all members to engage with their Towns and Parishes and help us identify specific projects so that we can allocate the remaining funds.”

If you would like to listen to the discussion at the meeting of next week’s South Hams Executive – visit: <https://youtu.be/yiKTpON15d4>

Holding Waste Contractor to Account

Residents can watch or listen into a meeting of South Hams Executive next week, where the Council’s Executive and officers will be holding FCC Environment to account, as they try to resolve the ongoing issues with the collection of waste.

At a meeting of South Hams Executive next week, to be held from 10am on Thursday 16 September, councillors will discuss the ongoing issues with the District’s recycling and waste service.

Over the last few months the issues with the new recycling and waste service in South Hams have been well covered in the local media. These issues have been compounded further by a national shortage of HGV and LGV drivers, and in July the Council suspended the collection of garden waste.

As promised, Cllr Keith Baldry, South Hams Executive Member for Recycling and Waste, will be bringing a much anticipated update report to the Council’s Executive for discussion.

This will be the first time that councillors will have an opportunity to discuss the service since their meeting of the full council on the 15 July, and since the garden waste service was suspended.

Cllr Keith Baldry, South Hams Executive Member for Recycling and Waste, said: “Since we began having issues with the service, the Executive and I have been extremely firm with FCC

Environment. We have instructed them that we will, and we are, holding them to account through the contract including penalties for failed performance.

“Through this report it is abundantly clear that at every turn we have been monitoring progress and taking action. This has included supporting FCC with the Government’s COVID-19 Support grant, meeting with FCC’s management team on a weekly basis, and officers through daily performance calls. Our monitoring of their performance is an ongoing daily process.

“We agreed to suspend garden waste so that FCC Environment could focus on the main recycling and waste collections and we still have council officers seconded to their staff. Our concerns and expectations have also been laid out formally in writing as we seek to gain an improvement in their performance through the contract.”

“The shortage of LGV and HGV drivers, is also now having a dramatic affect our recycling and waste service as well, and once again we have been firm with FCC, asking them to take direct action.”

A recent Road Haulage Association (RHA) survey put the estimated shortfall at more than 100,000, with the warning that it will take 18 months to train enough drivers to address the problem, even if there are enough candidates to take the roles.

FCC Environment, the Council’s recycling and waste contractors have now taken several steps to address the driver shortage. They have launched a national recruitment campaign, awarded drivers in the South Hams a 12% pay increase, they looked at wider pay and conditions packages, introduced a driver apprentice scheme and flexible employment.

In addition to this FCC environment has written an open letter to the Home Secretary Priti Patel calling for more support for the haulage industry and been a signatory on another letter that the Environmental Services Association (ESA) has sent.

Commenting, FCC Environment Operations Director Steve Longdon said: “All our staff have worked tirelessly throughout the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain our services and ensure household waste continued to be collected but, as we return to normality, the sector is facing new challenges.

“LGV 1 and 2 drivers are essential for the waste and recycling sector, and we are committed to doing everything we can to fill our driver vacancies to continue to play our part in protecting public health and the environment, as well as the UK’s green economic recovery.”

Cllr Keith Baldry, continues: “As a Council, we were hoping that the nationwide situation on drivers may have shown signs of improvement by now, but in reality the situation is getting worse.

“Unfortunately, it is with a heavy heart that on Thursday, I will have to ask the Executive to keep the suspension of Garden Waste in place.

“My recommendation in the report is that we continue to keep a close eye on FCC’s resources and their recruitment, because I would like the collection of garden waste to begin again as soon as is practically possible.”

“I can assure you that we are doing everything we can though the contract with FCC environmental to convey how frustrated you are.”

South Ham Executive will be meeting on Thursday 16 September from 10:00 am.

If you would like to listen to the Meeting of the South Hams Executive and see their discussion on the recycling and waste update report, you can watch live here:
<https://youtu.be/yiKTpON15d4>

FCC Environment is currently running a campaign to attract more trained LGV 1 and 2 drivers to support domestic waste collection crews and household waste recycling in South Hams.

If you are interested in joining the team follow the link below to find out more:
www.fccenvironment.co.uk/about-us/careers/current-jobs/

The Council is also offering residents advice on what they can do with their garden waste:

How to Compost: www.recycledevon.org/in-the-garden/how-to-compost

Recycle centres: All three recycling centres located in South Hams, operated by Devon County Council, take garden waste. Full details, including opening hours can be found here:
www.devon.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling/centre

Please do not burn your garden waste. The Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service firmly advises against having bonfires, given the risks of fires spreading, the likely nuisance for neighbours and the potential diversion of emergency services.

Check out their downloadable bonfire leaflet here: <https://bit.ly/3BNcD7K>

The Electric Car Challenge

At the next meeting of South Hams District Council’s Executive, councillors will be discussing electric car charging points and deciding if the Council should enter the Devon and Torbay Residential Charge Point Scheme.

The Devon and Torbay residential charge point scheme, is a scheme that would enable the Council to install electric charging points at four more locations in the District with grant funding.

Through its emerging future vision 'Better Lives for All', South Hams District Council has made a commitment to help others adapt and mitigate against climate change and biodiversity loss. One of the ways they could do this is by enabling more local people to switch to electric vehicles. However, like many other councils in the county, the biggest challenge they face, is how to provide the charging infrastructure that is needed.

This is something that was echoed by many local residents in our recent “Better Lives for All” survey.

One resident said: “We’ve had an EV car for two years and the lack of chargers in Dartmouth, Kingsbridge and Salcombe is annoying.”

Another said “It is something that visitors are asking for and is woefully under supplied.

Someone else, said: “These public charging points are essential.”

Cllr Keith Baldry, South Hams District Council’s Executive Member for Car Parking, said: “In our emerging vision for the future, 'Better Lives for All' we have set out many actions we plan to take to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

“In terms of electric vehicles, this includes a commitment to adopt an electric vehicle charging strategy, because we know how important infrastructure is and we are currently consulting the public on whether they would be interested in an electric car and bike club.

“With our partners at Devon County we are working to install electric charging points in Totnes, Kingsbridge, Dartmouth, Salcombe and Modbury, however, I am aware that this is not enough.

“While the whole nation is still absorbing the IPCC’s new report on the impacts of global warming, one thing is abundantly clear; we all have to do more.”

South Hams District Council says that it plans to take advantage of every available funding scheme, such as the one that they will discuss next week, the Devon and Torbay Residential Charge Point Scheme, and that this in turn will help residents to play their part and switch to electric. However, the Council also stresses that they cannot do this alone.

Cllr Keith Baldry added: “As we saw from our recent survey, there are clearly significant barriers stopping residents from going electric. Only 26% of those polled said they were thinking of switching to an all-electric vehicle, citing affordability and lack of charging points as two of the main barriers.

“I would encourage all Towns and Parish Council where possible to take advantage of the funding schemes available to install electric charging points. Together with Devon County we will do what we can, but this will need significant support from central government too. We will also continue to lobby government for that support to make it easier for people to make the switch.”

Cllr Tom Holway, South Hams District Council Executive Member for Climate Change and Biodiversity concluded: “I totally support Councillor Baldry in this initiative. It makes sense for Devon authorities to adopt the same infrastructure across the county and will provide a much needed incentive for our residents to consider acquiring electric vehicles.”

You can watch and listen to the Executive debating the Devon and Torbay Residential Charge Point Scheme on 16 September at 10:00 am here: <https://youtu.be/yiKTpON15d4>

eCargo Bike Grant

We recently contacted businesses across the South Hams and reached out to Parish Councils to share details of the Government's eCargo Bike Grant.

£400,000 has been made available by the Department for Transport in 2021/22 for the purchase of eCargo bikes, to support businesses switching to a sustainable transport solution.

Funding covers up to 40% of the total cost of an eCargo bike, up to a maximum of £2,500 for two-wheel models and £4,500 for three-wheel models.

You can apply for up to five eCargo bikes per organisation.

Limited companies, sole traders, partnerships, charities and not-for-profit organisations are all eligible to apply. Public, community or third sector organisations are also eligible provided they are legally constituted and have the appropriate formal structure.

The deadline for applications is 14 December 2021. Please direct your local businesses to find more information about the scheme.

Enhanced Response Area Information

In response to high COVID rates, South West local authorities, including the South Hams, have been added to a list of areas receiving an enhanced response package.

Being designated as an enhanced response area will help with support measures for education settings and increased national communications support, clearly outlining the continued risks of COVID-19 and the need to take personal action, such as the wearing of face masks and social distancing. Additionally, prioritised access to Wastewater testing, sequencing, national contact tracing capacity and national support with messaging will also be supported.

The District Council will continue to be required to support this public health advice from Central Govt through its communications with residents and businesses. We have not been asked to carry out any additional tasks at this time.

Further information and advice can be found at – <https://www.devon.gov.uk/coronavirus-advice-in-devon/enhanced-response-area/>

Council Plea to Landlords to Help Them Help Families in Need

South Hams District Council is appealing to landlords to come forward now to help meet the acute need for homes for fleeing Afghan workers and local families.

The unprecedented pressure on local housing has been well documented this summer. There is now a pressing need to find accommodation for people fleeing from Afghanistan as well as rising demands for housing for local people who have been asked to leave their homes through no fault of their own.

Cllr Hilary Bastone, South Hams District Council's Deputy Leader explains:

“As a community, we want to do whatever we can to support the government and County Council in finding accommodation for formerly employed Afghan workers and their families. The lack of affordable private rented accommodation in the area also continues to mean many families face long periods of time in temporary housing situations whilst we struggle to secure them long-term homes. The problem is that we simply don't have enough properties to meet our local needs. That's why we are asking landlords in our local communities to come forward now and help us offer a solution.

“Under the Afghan resettlement scheme, we are looking to source a private-rental sector property to offer to an eligible family. The County Council will commission support to assist the family to integrate and settle into the area. Our understanding is that the scheme will be similar to the Syrian Resettlement scheme, which South Hams District Council already supports.

“We also continue to reach out to landlords to sign up to our SeaMoor lettings scheme, which offers a full property management service. We are hopeful that the community of South Hams will show their generosity and that we will receive offers of accommodation to help those relocating from Afghanistan and those local families who are also in need of homes.”

Due to the importance of access to support, there are restrictions on where Afghan families can be rehoused. As a result, the Council is specifically looking for family-sized properties in Totnes to support a family fleeing from Afghanistan.

However, many local families are also desperately seeking homes where they can settle and bring up their children. If anyone has a property anywhere in the District that is available to rent please email seamoor.lettings@swdevon.gov.uk to find out more about the landlord support available.

Find out more about the options and support for landlords provided by SeaMoor Lettings:
www.southhams.gov.uk/SeaMoorLettings