

Date of Meeting March 2022

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release NA

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## Housing Task Force - An Introduction

### Report in Full:

East Devon District Council (EDDC) have lost significant numbers of social homes via the Right to Buy scheme since its inception and are set to lose many more in future. This is causing increasing issues with meeting the levels of housing need within the district, especially in our larger coastal towns. People on the Devon Home Choice waiting list can expect to wait up to 10 years for a 4 bedroomed home in Exmouth and this is not a position anyone wants to continue

A Social Housing Task and Finish Forum was convened to look into the concerns, issues and potential solutions and the new Housing Task Force (HTF) is the result of their findings and recommendations

The team will initially have 4 officers; Service Lead, 2 Enabling Officers and a Development Surveyor. All other specialist roles will be brought in as required, via procured 'call off' consultancy contracts, these will include; Quantity Surveyors, Architects, Structural Engineers, Planning Consultants, Community Consultancy specialists etc

The HTF team is funded for the next 2 years and has 2 clear aims;

- To facilitate a step change in the delivery of new affordable and social housing units across the district
- To write an evidence based 30-50 Year Housing Development Strategy, Pipeline Development Programme and a robust Active Asset Management Strategy

To achieve these aims the team will be exploring any and all options available to it, including;

- Strengthening existing and forming new relationships with housing delivery partners such as Registered Providers, Housing Associations, Community Land Trusts etc to support and maximise their building programmes
- Maximising the enforcement of S106 agreements with the large and medium volume builders
- Direct development on purchased land – especially to support larger in-house regeneration schemes. With this in mind we are currently exploring a small site in Axminster, which could support a much larger re-development if the feasibility work is favourable
- Acquisition of pre-built homes via the open market or in bulk from volume builders – this will diminish as the build programme gets under way
- Direct development of homes on EDDC or HRA (Housing) land – we are already exploring building on existing underused assets such as car parks and garage sites and will shortly be starting feasibility on several potential sites
- EDDC Estate Regeneration – like many local authorities we have an aging housing stock, a proportion of which is coming to the end of its financially viable/ fit for purpose life. These older and post war homes tend to be on very large plots, giving us huge scope to raise to the ground and rebuild not only in a higher density, but to do so using modern methods of construction that will offer tenants much better quality, sustainable, zero carbon homes that cost very little to heat and cool. The Stock Condition Survey will give us the data required to

make decisions in relation to any/all estate regeneration programmes undertaken in the coming years

- Work closely with Homes England by preparing bids for funding to support our building development programmes
- To monitor and spend the Councils Right to Buy receipts within given time scales and legislative parameters

Housing Development is a very exciting but complex (and slow) process, especially when you are starting from scratch as we are. There is a significant amount of work that needs to be undertaken upfront to ensure the right people are in place, that processes are as smooth as possible and that due diligence is considered from the outset and at each key stage. With this in mind we are currently working on ensuring we have everything in place to support the delivery aspirations of the service, these include but are not limited to;

- Recruitment and induction of the team
- Budget allocation discussions
- Developing and adopting a robust Options Appraisal process
- Devising accurate Financial Modellers containing all agreed EDDC parameters
- Discussing constitutional changes (if required) to support delivery
- Agreeing governance processes, delegated authorities and approval pathways
- Starting procurement processes to secure specialist consultants
- Compiling a database of opportunities to be used as a 'live' document by the team

**Is the proposed decision in accordance with:**

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

**Recommendation:**

This report is for introduction and information purposes only, no decisions are currently required

**Reason for recommendation:**

The service is in its infancy as it only went 'live' on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022

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**Portfolio(s) (check which apply):**

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** High Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk; report for information only at this stage

## Links to background information .

Link to [Council Plan](#)

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
  - A greener East Devon
  - A resilient economy
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### **Financial implications:**

“An annual revenue budget of £250k for two years (2021/22 and 2022/23) has been allocated to the Housing Task Force. Due to the timing of approval being part way through 2021/22 the budget underspends that will occur in 2021/22 will be carried forward to ensure a full two year period of operation is funded. To fund this revenue budget, estimated additional income that has been identified of £500k over the period of 2021/22 to 2022/23 from additional business rates over the base income budget will be utilised or in the event that this does not materialise business rates reserves will be used”

### **Legal implications:**

There are no legal implications on which to comment.