

WHAT HAS SOUTH HAMS DISTRICT COUNCIL DELIVERED TO THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES OF THE DISTRICT IN 2009/10

CP1 – Secure a supply of housing for local people at affordable levels

- The Affordable Housing Development Plan Document was adopted in September 2008 and Site Allocation DPDs were published in April 2010, making proposals for 1,500 new homes by 2016 with targets that up to 55-60% of these be affordable, subject to consideration of viability
- 11 new homes completed at Beeson near Kingsbridge - Mix of for sale, affordable, shared ownership and for rent. The properties have been built to Level 3 of the government's "Code for Sustainable Homes" which aims to design homes which use less energy and produce fewer carbon dioxide emissions
- Local charity 'Feoffees' (Kingsbridge) were given a financial contribution of £82,500 which will enable them to provide three new affordable homes for local people in Kingsbridge
- The Council has contacted owners of empty properties to offer help and support to encourage the owner to voluntarily bring the home back into use which is kinder to the environment than building new homes
- The Council is one of the first authorities in England to sign up to the National Housing Federation's (NHF) "Save our Villages" campaign which aims to tackle the severe housing and sustainability issues affecting rural communities across the country
- The Council in partnership with Tor Homes & Communities Agency have put in place £1.4m to build 19 homes for local people at Culverdale, Totnes. Homes will be available to rent
- The Council has earmarked £1.37m to fund new and innovative ways to provide affordable homes for local people. One proposal is buy unsold market housing for use as social rented homes. In addition new affordable housing schemes (6) which between them will deliver 42 affordable homes in Totnes, Kingsbridge, Dartmouth and other locations across the district
- The Executive agreed to the disposal of the Council's allotment site at Marlborough to Hastoe Housing Association to enable the delivery of 15 affordable homes
- The Council is part of an innovative Partnership with South Devon Rural Housing Association (SDRHA). The initiative 'SHIRE scheme's' aim is to provide more affordable homes. By buying properties from the private market and bring them up to SDRHA's letting standard. The Council has contributed £10,000 equity loan per property as part of the joint funding package with SDRHA
- Between September 2009 and January 2010 we did not have any applicant in bed and breakfast. In any one of the other months we have not had more than 1 household in bed and breakfast at any one time. This is in comparison to the situation experienced in 2006 where we had up to 19 families in bed and breakfast. In the last 12 months we have prevented homelessness in 217 cases which is an increase of 39 over the 2008/09 preventions

CP2 – Create the conditions for the growth and maintenance of quality economic activity

- The Council has taken up the fight against business rate increases with Westminster. Council has lobbied against the recently announced revaluation of business properties
- The Aveton Gifford Village Eco Shop is the first project to receive funding through the South Devon Coastal Local Action Group (SDCLAG), with a £35,000 grant to fit-out the shop interior. The new shop also hopes to become an information point for local people who will be able to access computer facilities in the building
- The Council is helping small and medium sized businesses by aiming to pay invoices within 10 days of receipt and dealing with disputes over invoices as swiftly as possible
- Business Link, in partnership with the Council, Federation of Small Businesses, Kingsbridge Town Council and Kingsbridge and Salcombe Chamber of Commerce is hosting free business advice clinics for local businesses. The aim is to help increase sales and customer service; manage people and develop skills; reduce costs and improve productivity; identify new products or markets; and implement plans for growth
- Achieved the re-establishment of a Post Office at Townstal, Dartmouth. The Council helped to establish a Devon & Torbay Post Office Task Force. Two branches were 'saved' in Torbay. The Task Force was influential in persuading Post Office Ltd to improve its 'outreach' offer in 15 communities to the benefit of their local residents. The reason for joint working was to achieve visibility and influence that was greater than could have been achieved by the partners individually

CP3 – Maintain the district's distinctive environment whilst enabling access and sensitive development

- The Council is implementing the agreed the Capital Programme in July 2008 which includes proposed upgrades to a range of open spaces/parks
- The Executive adopted the Carbon Management Plan in March 2009 and will review its performance in carbon saving
- The Council as part of its Public Space Improvement Programme has been working closely with representatives from the town's community and amenity groups on the future of Coronation Park. £300,000 has been allocated
- Batson pontoons replaced as they were beyond economic repair and required replacing. The 245 berths provided by the Batson pontoons have been safeguarded for the foreseeable future, at least 25 years. The access is improved; security has been improved as have the public safety features
- Work started on the restoration of castle woodland garden. Scheme is part of the council's Public Space Improvement Programme. A programme of clearance and thinning will help improve the woodland whilst opening up views of the river estuary
- In the Langage area initial phases of strategic planting implemented

- 6,700 new trees at 30 different locations have been planted as part of a new initiative between South Hams District Council and the South Hams Tree Wardens. Trees on village greens to small copses, hedges and shelterbelts, a variety of tree planting schemes have been carried out

CP4 – Maintain a clean environment

- The Council recycles 58% of household waste, which places us in the top six in the country and we have the least amount of landfill per household in the country – just 339.89 kg per household in 2008/09 (figures released November 2009)
- Collections more efficient as new lorries are fitted with compactors this means fewer journeys back to the Severnside's sorting depot to unload. This saves fuel and helps towards reducing the Council's carbon footprint. On average, 5 tonnes of recycling can be carried in one journey compared to just one tonne using the smaller caged vehicle

CP5 – Work with others to improve access to key services

- We have launched new Customer First standards jointly with West Devon Borough Council to clearly set out what customers can expect when they contact us. The standards cover our commitment to improve services by listening to our customers and to continue to work hard to provide the best possible service for all. The successful launch of South Hams Connect means that we now run regular outreach surgeries in Kingsbridge, Ivybridge, Dartmouth and Totnes in partnership with 25 other organisations, making it even easier for customers to access a whole range of advice and services. The South Hams Connect service can also be found at local shows and markets, getting out to as many new locations as possible. Since October 2009 over 1,500 customers have benefited from this new service
- The Council in partnership with the Devon Strategic Housing Group and local debt advice charity Homemaker Southwest, is offering free, independent and confidential advice to home owners who are finding it difficult to cope with mortgage payments
- More than 150 people have made use of the 'Pink' Pig' campaign which helps residents find out if they are entitled to financial help. Council officers visit residents in their home to give advice about discounts, exemptions and help complete the form
- The Council has contributed towards funding and delivery for the South Hams Volunteer Centre. The Volunteer Centre provides new and innovative methods of recruiting and retaining volunteers, taking into account local needs and trends, as well as supporting organisations that involve volunteers in their activities. The project is delivered through South Hams Community and Voluntary Services
- Many communities have benefited from money awarded to a range of community projects from the Community Locality Fund (Members Grant scheme). Each ward councillor in the South Hams was given a small grant pot of £1,000 in a pilot scheme to support community projects. This funding must be used to support projects that benefit the local community

CP6 – Improve core service performance in a cost-effective way

- The Council, with West Devon, is one of the leading authorities in the country pioneering shared services. We have achieved total savings of over £1.5 million for both Councils since starting our shared arrangements. We have also created greater capacity, shared learning and provided the potential for reinvestment of some of the savings in front line services
- South Hams has won an Exemplar Award for 'Most Improved' Local Land and Property Gazetteer 2009. The 'Most Improved' category identified only 10 Authorities out of a potential 348 Authorities in the Country. The achievement has effected more joined up inter departmental working at South Hams, particularly between Elections, Council Tax, Waste, Customer Services and more recently Environmental Health and its raised the profile of the LLPG within South Hams
- The Council has again taken a clear decision to try to help hard-pressed residents by just asking for a little over 1p per day increase on Council Tax based on an average Band D property. Householders living in a Band D rated property will see their bills increase by just £3.86 for next year to pay for district council services
- The Council actively engaged with local communities in delivering the new Sustainable Communities Act. Of the 11 proposals submitted, 3 were supported by the Government relating to encouraging community use of land and buildings; improving the viability of Post Offices by broadening the range of services provided; and promoting local renewable energy initiatives

AND GENERALLY

We saw off the threat of Local Government Review and were very pleased that the Minister agreed with our arguments, stating:

"Across Devon we listened carefully to the views of interested councils, MPs and other stakeholders and the option of a unitary structure for the whole of Devon did not have sufficient support from key councils.

Legitimate fears were expressed that a single authority would not be able to cope with the divergent needs across such a large area. As a result the Government had no option but to rule out a unitary authority for the whole of Devon, as it could not succeed without local support."

On the unitary decisions as a whole:

"Our highest priority is to have the best and most efficient local services for the people of Devon, Norfolk and Suffolk and for those areas to have the strong local leadership they need. We have considered the Boundary Committee advice, the views of local councils, MPs and local people and made individual decisions according to the unique circumstances in each area.

Across Norfolk, Devon and Suffolk we listened carefully to all views and it was clear the options of unitary structures for the whole of Norfolk and Devon had no support.

As a result the Government had no option but to rule out unitary authorities for the whole of Norfolk and Devon as we did not feel these bodies could succeed without local support.”

Our first Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) highlights that the authority has a good understanding of the needs of local people and is improving services to put customers first. The report indicates that the Council performs well with a score of 3 out of 4.

CROSS CUTTING THEMES

While many of the initiatives under the Council's 6 corporate priorities relate to the Council's cross-cutting themes, there are a number of specific additional actions which have been implemented

CCT 1 – Children and Young People

- Around £1million is being made available for specialist play equipment providers to rejuvenate the current facilities in more than 60 play areas. Open spaces will also be undergoing a facelift; £600,000 will be spent on rejuvenating up to 50 key parks and green spaces. There will be improvements to access paths, benches, bins, signs and other furniture. Tennis facilities will also be upgraded, with £300,000 being spent on refurbishing 11 courts in Totnes, Dartmouth and Kingsbridge

Other specific examples include:

- Stray Park in Yealmpton has undergone refurbishment; its old play equipment has been removed and replaced with new playground. The refurbishment cost £25,000. The new equipment has been designed to offer the children a broad variety of play experiences
- New BMX stunt bike facility delivered at Woolwell. Woolwell Riders requested the facility and the Council worked with them along with Devon Youth Service, Bickleigh Parish Council, Bickleigh Community Centre, Police and Groundwork Trust to design and deliver the scheme
- Additional external funding has been secured and improved play spaces installed: Supported by the Council, five South Hams communities successfully bid for a combined total of £225,000 for Play Builder projects. As a result, new and improved play spaces are being installed at: Woolwell Green, Collingwood Road in Dartmouth, Kingsbridge Recreation Ground and St John's Close in Ivybridge. A new play space in Totnes will be developed later this year. The South Hams Play Builder projects are all innovative designs that are particularly attractive to eight to 13-year-olds and are inclusive for children with disabilities. Younger children will also be catered for as the Council has allocated a further £350,000 for upgrading existing toddler and junior play areas at these locations. Devon as a whole secured £1.1 million from the Government's Children's Plan Play Builder project

CCT 2 – Climate Change

- As part of Cosy Devon, the Council has joined forces with all district authorities across Devon, Devon County Council, Energy Action Devon, National Energy Action and E.ON, one of the UK's suppliers of gas and electricity, to offer free or greatly reduced prices for loft and cavity wall insulation. Under the scheme, householders in South Hams can get a free, no obligation survey and then have their home insulated for as little as £150. It can even be free for those over 60, households with an annual income of less than £18,000 or for those in receipt of certain qualifying benefits
- The Council has been successful in a further grant of £38,000 to help with a changing future coastline. The grant is to help extend the Slapton Line partnership's existing work on coastal changes. The Council will provide support for local businesses and tourism in

the area, work with schools, develop a project capturing the history of coastal change in the area and the development of online learning resources. The grant will pay for these schemes to be put in place

- The Council has plans for one of the first affordable Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) Level 5 eco-developments in the country. Whilst the scheme is still in the early stages, and subject to Member approval, the project will place the Council at the forefront of sustainable construction and wider sustainability agenda. The project will aim to set the benchmark for affordable homes of the future and will therefore generate significant interest both regionally and nationally
- Over 15,263 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents were saved from release through recycling and composting household waste in the South Hams financial year 2008 - 2009. This is just District collection activity. This is the equivalent of taking 5,122 cars off local roads for a year. The achievement is a direct result of the composting and recycling of household waste from district waste collections

CCT 3 – Healthier Communities

- A Disabled Facilities Grant was awarded to adapt a bungalow so that a disabled young man could move in to it. Following the purchase of a suitable property and its subsequent adaptation - funded by a Disabled Facilities Grant - the young man is living in a property that completely meets his current and future needs - a life time home. This has transformed the life of the young disabled person
- The Council fully funded a Street Sports Festival that consisted of 4 events in each of the 4 market towns in the South Hams. This event was for 11-19 year olds and provided positive activities for young people in a safe and fun environment. Over 170 young people turned up to this and some great prizes were won by some talented local young people
- Over 60's swim free - The scheme offers free swimming sessions to encourage older members of the local community to keep active and improve their health and well-being. The scheme is partly funded for two years by a government grant