

Appendix 1



**Dorset**  
Council

# **HOUSING STRATEGY**

## **INTERIM INTERNAL ENAGEMENT REPORT**

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<p>What was the engagement about?</p>	<p>The purpose of the internal engagement was to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify the challenges facing Dorset Council and our residents, in relation to housing.</li> <li>• Assess whether the proposed objectives for the Housing Strategy would meet these challenges.</li> <li>• Gain a ‘boots on the ground’ perspective of the challenges facing Dorset residents in relation to housing.</li> <li>• Establish what work is already being undertaken to meet these challenges and what we could be doing to improve housing options and outcomes for Dorset residents.</li> </ul>
<p>Over what period did this engagement take place?</p>	<p>Engagement started in December 2022 with a presentation the Extended Leadership team. A staff survey was opened in February 2023 and is currently still running. The internal engagement will last up until the delivery of the housing strategy for public consultation in July 2023.</p>
<p>Level of response</p>	<p>To date, eighty-seven staff members have completed the internal engagement survey. The survey remained open until the end of April.</p> <p>There have been several group/team meetings which have been shown a housing strategy presentation and have provided feedback.</p> <p>Feedback has also been obtained via meetings with services leads.</p> <p>Internal and some focused external engagement will continue throughout April &amp; May and a final report will be prepared at that stage.</p>

What is the reason for the interim report?	Whilst the internal engagement is continuing, early assessment of the responses has indicated that a change of the wording of the proposed objectives should be considered, to provide greater clarity and direction, and to meet plain English requirements.

## The Engagement

Respondents were asked to consider:

- Whether they agreed with the objectives which were proposed for the strategy
- What the challenges they and their clients faced, in relation to housing.
- How housing related issues impacted on the work they do.
- The work they are currently doing to resolve these issues.
- What Dorset could do to resolve housing issues if there were no barriers.

## Analysis Method

Questions which required a Yes or No answer were considered alongside open text responses.

Open text responses were grouped, to identify common themes and similar feedback and given a score based on the number of times those themes were mentioned.

## YES & NO Responses

1. Do you agree that this is the right objective for the housing strategy? SUPPLY - To assist, influence, and provide support for a range of high-quality housing options for Dorset residents, which are affordable for them to buy or rent, and live in.

**96% YES 4% NO**

2. Do you agree that this is the right objective for the housing strategy? STANDARDS - To improve the quality of housing for everyone by forming strong partnerships, using resources wisely and making sure regulations are enforced.

**95% YES 5% NO**

3. Do you agree that this is the right objective for the housing strategy? CHOICE AND HOUSING NEED - To tackle homelessness by offering a range of housing options for people in crisis, and to support them to find suitable long term housing solutions.  
**98% YES 2% NO**
  
4. Do you agree that this is the right objective for the housing strategy? PARTNERSHIPS - To invest in and provide a selection of housing support services which promote healthy, safe, and independent lives.  
**93% YES 7% NO**
  
5. Do you agree that this is the right objective for the housing strategy? ENVIRONMENT - To contribute actively to the protection and enhancement of Dorset's unique environment and heritage.  
**92% YES 8% NO**

Overall, there was a significant majority who felt that these were the right objectives for the strategy. However, analysis of the open text section showed that both yes and no voters felt that they were not worded in an accessible or plain English way.

Those who answered NO did so, not in response to the objective, but in response to the way it was worded.

### **Open Text Responses**

For each question, the responses were analysed to identify key words. Those with the highest response were:

SUPPLY - To assist, influence, and provide support for a range of high-quality housing options for Dorset residents, which are affordable for them to buy or rent, and live in.		
Objective	Key word	Summary of Feedback
1. Supply	Affordable	<p>Affordable was the most used word and is linked to two further areas of feedback.</p> <p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strategy and objectives to be clear on what affordable means.</li> <li>2. Greater supply of affordable housing needed for younger people and working age residents.</li> </ol>

	Supply	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More homes needed for younger people and working age residents.</li> <li>2. More affordable homes for people to buy or rent.</li> <li>3. Homes in areas where people want to live.</li> </ol>
	Clarify & Re-word	<p>Combined these were the highest scoring keywords.</p> <p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Use plain English.</li> <li>2. Make it clearer.</li> <li>3. use language which is easier to understand and less open to interpretation.</li> </ol>
	Local people	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prioritise housing for Dorset residents.</li> <li>2. Reduce inward migration.</li> <li>3. Planning policies should reflect this.</li> </ol>
	Second homes & Holiday Homes	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reduce numbers of second homes.</li> <li>2. Influence sale of homes to Dorset residents.</li> <li>3. Dorset residents should be given first choice on any open market homes.</li> </ol> <p>*Note: second and holiday homes features more widely in the feedback and I would recommend that, as an action for the Strategy, we revisit the findings in the Local Plan – Second Home Paper and the we follow up on the recommendations made in 8.1.3 of that document - <i>commissioning of further studies to look into the implications, and</i></p>

		<i>extraction of more local evidence may indicate that a policy could be beneficial for Dorset</i>
	Working Age & First Time (Buyers & Renters)	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More affordable housing needed for working age &amp; young people.</li> <li>2. Housing as a tool to increase working age population of Dorset.</li> <li>3. Housing to support young people to remain in Dorset.</li> </ol>
	Accessible & Meets Need	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Properties need to accessible or easily adaptable.</li> <li>2. Build lifetime homes.</li> <li>3. Build a mix of housing to suit a diverse range of needs.</li> </ol>
	Council Housing	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Council to build housing on its own land.</li> <li>2. Consideration to be given for Dorset to become a housing landlord.</li> <li>3. More conversations and debate needed around this issue.</li> </ol>
	Location & Right Place	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Build homes in easy reach of employment and amenities.</li> <li>2. Homes should be provided where there is the most need.</li> </ol>
STANDARDS - To improve the quality of housing for everyone by forming strong partnerships, using resources wisely and making sure regulations are enforced.		
Objective	Key word	Summary of Feedback

2. Standards	Energy efficiency	<p>The highest individual score and reflected concerns relating to both standards of homes, renewable energy, and affordability.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Energy efficient homes</li> <li>2. Renewable energy options for all new developments.</li> </ol>
	Clarify, Re-Word & Partnerships	<p>Combined these were the highest scoring keywords.</p> <p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make the objective clearer.</li> <li>2. use language which was easier to understand and less open to interpretation.</li> <li>3. Partnerships should be within the strategy but not the objective.</li> </ol>
	Housing standards	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve private rented accommodation.</li> <li>2. Housing condition is a priority.</li> <li>3. Need to clearly define what acceptable standards are for existing and new build properties.</li> </ol>
	Enforcement & Targeted Enforcement	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make sure rules and regulations are enforced.</li> <li>2. Targeted enforcement against bad housing landlords.</li> </ol>
	Private Rented Sector	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Standard of private rented needs to increase.</li> <li>2. Private rent regulation needed.</li> <li>3. Improve landlord services to tenants.</li> <li>4. Target bad housing landlords.</li> </ol>

CHOICE AND HOUSING NEED - To tackle homelessness by offering a range of housing options for people in crisis, and to support them to find suitable long term housing solutions.

Objective	Key word	Summary of Feedback
3. Choice and Need	Support Services & Supported Housing	<p>Combined these were the most often used keywords.</p> <p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More specialist supported housing needed.</li> <li>2. Support needed for homeless people to help them to sustain tenancies.</li> <li>3. Support and education services for prospective tenants in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment</li> <li>• Tenancy sustainability</li> <li>• Empowerment</li> <li>• Debt &amp; financial management.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
	Re-word, Clarify & Too Narrow	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Objective is too narrow.</li> <li>2. Housing need and homelessness should be separate objectives.</li> </ol>
	Prevention	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Focus should be on prevention of homelessness.</li> <li>2. More options to support applicants to remain in their homes.</li> <li>3. If homeless, support clients to find homes which meet their needs.</li> </ol>
	Publicise Services	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More publicity needed about the true state of homelessness and challenges with finding housing in Dorset.</li> <li>2. More publicity to show that social housing is not a quick or easy option.</li> </ol>



		3. More information to show what services are available through partner agencies.
	Temporary Accommodation, Modular Housing	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More temporary accommodation needed.</li> <li>2. Different types of temporary accommodation needed.</li> <li>3. A wider geographical spread of temporary accommodation needed across Dorset.</li> </ol>
PARTNERSHIPS - To invest in and provide a selection of housing support services which promote healthy, safe, and independent lives.		
Objective	Key word	Summary of Feedback
4. Partnerships	Clarify, Remove Re-word,	<p><b>Note:</b> This objective drew the least number of free text responses, and these were mostly about housing need, rather than partnerships.</p> <p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Partnership working fits within all objectives not as a standalone.</li> <li>2. Dorset Council already exceptionally good at partnership working.</li> <li>3. Actions within the strategy</li> </ol> <p>Whilst there was a call for the objective to be re-worded or clarified, based on the commentary it would sit better as an action within the strategy, rather than a standalone objective.</p>
	Supported Housing	<p>Main point:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More specialist supported housing needed.</li> </ol>

	Care leavers	Main point:  1. More accommodation for care leavers
	Independent living & independent lives	Main point:  1. Greater access to accommodation which would facilitate independent living.
ENVIRONMENT - To contribute actively to the protection and enhancement of Dorset's unique environment and heritage.		
Objective	Key word	Summary of Feedback
5. Environment	Re-word & Clarify	Main point:  1. Make clearer. 2. Show how this links to housing. 3. Link to Council's carbon neutral goal.
	Planning policy, Local Plan, Other strategies	Main points:  1. Should link to and reflect planning policy and the draft Local Plan. 2. Should link to and reflect Dorset's Climate strategy. 3. As this is covered in other strategies does it need to be a main objective for this strategy.
	Energy efficiency, solar panels, net zero, housing standards	Main points:  1. Links to housing standards and affordability. 2. Homes need to be energy efficient. 3. Solar panels and renewable energy for all new developments.
	Green spaces & green developments	Main points:  1. Developments need to have green spaces. 2. Developers to plant trees and hedges.

		3. Don't build on green spaces.
	Brownfield sites, empty properties, council assets	<p>Main points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop on brownfield sites.</li> <li>2. Better use of empty residential and commercial units, including Council owned assets.</li> </ol>

### **Challenges for Dorset Council**

These responses come from both the staff survey as well as group and 1:1 feedback.

Lack of available private rented accommodation.	<p>This represents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the challenge for services who are trying to find suitable private rented accommodation to place their clients.</li> <li>• the challenge for services trying to recruit staff.</li> <li>• the challenge for staff trying to find housing for themselves.</li> </ul>
Limited stock in certain areas	<p>Areas mentioned included:</p> <p>Weymouth &amp; Portland</p> <p>West Dorset</p> <p>Bridport</p>
Landlords refusing referrals & nominations.	Both private and registered providers mentioned, specifically in relation to refusing single homelessness.
Lack of affordable housing	Better access to more affordable housing and a wider range of properties to meet housing needs.

Supported housing	Greater need for specialist supported housing for Dorset residents, covering a wider area.
Cost of housing & impact on economy	Cost of housing means that Dorset residents have less to spend in local shops & business creating a financial impact on local economy.
Housing for young people & working age residents	Lack of affordable housing for younger Dorset residents and those of working age. This is pushing people out. Links to recruitment.
Clients living on boats and in caravans/camper vans.	Although not fully understanding why, it has been noted that more people are living in boats and caravans.
Cost of living & energy prices	Increased homelessness approaches from clients who cannot afford to live in their homes.
Delays in planning approval	Delays in approval of planning applications is creating a barrier to the delivery of new homes.
Planning policy	Need to tighten loopholes which are allowing developers to avoid provision of affordable housing.
Care Leavers	Struggling to access housing either through housing register or in the private rented sector.
Housing Impact on Health & Wellbeing	The impact of poor, or lack of, housing on health & wellbeing was a key topic with many stating that it is the foundation for good health.

Lack of housing for key workers.	Acknowledging the need for housing for low-paid key workers and those providing essential services, as well as the impact on the ability to recruit to these professions due to housing.
Council Run Schemes	Increase Council run care schemes for older people.
Increased temporary accommodation	Increase in number, type, and area to avoid additional costs.
Low Carbon Dorset Team	The team have been trying to work with registered providers to support them to create energy efficient homes, renewable energy, and electricity infrastructures. This has proven challenging.
Second homes & holiday lets	Concerns as to the levels of second homes, and holiday lets, and the impact these have on stock availability for long term rental. This pushes up the cost to buy or rent remaining stock.
Local Housing Allowance	Needs to be reviewed as has not increased in several years and impacting on rental affordability.
New developments	<p>Various comments in relation to new developments including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Health involvement at planning stage</li> <li>• Green spaces &amp; landscaping on each development</li> <li>• Design sensitive to local environment and character</li> <li>• Energy efficient homes &amp; renewable energy</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater level of affordable %</li> <li>• Travel &amp; infrastructure</li> </ul>
Ageing population	<p>Our ageing population was mentioned in a few different ways, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost of care home placements and impact on Council resources.</li> <li>• Impact on availability of homes for working age families.</li> <li>• Occupancy levels of homes (see point above)</li> <li>• Driving up price of homes</li> <li>• Need for housing suitable for older people (relating to mobility issues)</li> </ul>
Housing Needs	<p>As well as being affordable, a wide range of housing is needed to meet the needs of Dorset residents including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Larger homes for families</li> <li>• One bedroom accommodation</li> <li>• Homes which meet disability &amp; mobility needs</li> <li>• Life-time homes or those which can be easily adapted to meet changing needs.</li> <li>• Supported housing for those with specialist needs.</li> <li>• Homes in areas people want to live – linked to social isolation.</li> </ul>

The ongoing engagement will dig deeper into these issues to ensure that they have been properly understood and are reflected accurately in the strategy.

**Decisions made following engagement.**

Based on feedback and analysis the recommendations which made and agreed were:

1. Re-word objectives to simplify and clarify.
2. Separate Housing Need and Homelessness in to two objectives.

3. Remove partnerships as an objective and include within the body of each section.
4. Remove Environment as a separate objective and embed throughout the strategy.
5. Re-order to provide clarity and flow within the strategy document.