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**-PRESS RELEASE**

## **Coming soon a combined Housing Need Survey for Withycombe and Old Cleeve parishes.**

Withycombe and Old Cleeve parish councils are working with Smart Communities (part of the Community Council for Somerset) to identify the housing need for people living and working there.

The parish councils want to ensure they are providing the right type of properties for the community and future generations. The survey will be arriving at your doors early March with a response deadline of 25<sup>th</sup> March 2019. Or you can complete it online at [www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/withycombeandoldcleeve](http://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/withycombeandoldcleeve)

It is important that the community have their say and ensure their voices are heard, to get a clear idea of the views and needs of those who are currently living in the parish and those who may not live here at the moment but would like to, if they could.

The provision of appropriate and affordable housing is key to the future prosperity of these communities and this survey is designed to make sure that they have proper and up to date information on which to make decisions about future housing needs.

House prices remain high and out of reach of many households on average incomes, making it especially difficult for young people to afford their own homes. In the Exmoor National Park, the average house price is £295,000 and the median monthly rent for West Somerset is £610.

It is also important to know if there are other types of properties needed. For example, there may be people who need smaller more manageable homes that are easier to adapt to meet changing needs. This survey will help the parish council's to provide the information needed for communities to continue to survive over the longer term.

Smart Communities are part of CCS are conducting the survey who are a completely independent Somerset based charity with many years of experience. This is supported by West Somerset Council as the local housing authority and planning authority for the area outside the national park and Exmoor National Park Authority as the local planning authority for areas within the park. The National Park's new Local Plan sets out what types of housing can be built on Exmoor, and as some of the first parishes to undertake housing surveys we can find out the housing we need for the future.

This survey is being funded by a grant from West Somerset Council from the Community Housing Fund.

Please do take the time to complete the Survey when it is distributed in March and please encourage anyone with a local connection to also complete this survey.

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### **Editors Notes:**

The Smart Communities Limited (SCL) is a Company Limited by Guarantee, No. 11480430 and VAT Registered No.311926619, created in 2018 as a subsidiary of **Community Council for Somerset (CCS)** Registered charity (number 1069260) and part of the Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE) Network.

Our vision is for vibrant and viable communities with health, happy people and strong, sustainable businesses – the perfect place to live.

We aim to strengthen communities, innovate and encourage enterprise, support and serve people and tackle disadvantage.

We deliver an extensive range of personalised support and services for rural (and urban) communities across Somerset. Our primary focus is on the needs of whole communities rather than narrowly focussed service provision. We aim to build capacity, capability and vision in communities so that they can shape their own futures, address vulnerabilities and make their place the perfect place to live.

Smart Communities part of CCS has considerable experience and knowledge of how to carry out effective, inclusive and robust community consultation and engagement. This expertise has been invaluable across the county where we have worked with large numbers of communities creating the foundations for their Neighbourhood Plans, community plans and carrying out Housing Needs Surveys, as well as specific community need consultations on specific services and community facilities to help establish local priorities.

For more information on the Smart Communities Services visit: [www.somersetccc.org.uk/smart-communities](http://www.somersetccc.org.uk/smart-communities)