



North Devon Council

Report Date: 9th December 2021

Topic: NDC's response to the housing crisis

Report by: Jeremy Mann ; Head of Planning, Housing and Health

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This report seeks to update members on the draft recommendations arising from the stakeholder meetings which occurred on the 21st October 2021 and 25th November 2021.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1. It is recommended that members declare: their broad approval of the recommendations set out in paragraph 4.3, and support their development into key programmes of activity in the revised corporate plan; and endorse the representations which have been made to Government (paragraph 4.4).

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. (Reason 2.1) To take the action necessary to tackle the widening imbalance in housing supply and demand.

4. REPORT

4.1. A multi-disciplinary team of officers met with councillors and local stakeholders to carry out a rapid housing needs assessment to lessen the gravity of the housing crisis which is sadly increasingly impacting on more households in north Devon.

4.2. On the 21st October 2021 the scale and nature of the current housing problems effecting the community were discussed. Then on the 25th November 2021, officers presented draft consultative recommendations on solutions (for direct council action), which were identified to be both appropriate and cost effective.

4.3. The recommendations were to: bring more empty homes back into use; provide more housing for people who are working in north Devon or want to move here for work; develop a place-based approach for providing more housing options for people in Ilfracombe; use Community land Trusts to boost supply of affordable housing; reduce the 'loss' of

affordable housing due to viability challenges; improve efficiency in dealing with planning applications; improve home energy efficiency and reduce fuel poverty; enhance the council's homelessness prevention services; provide more suitable and affordable temporary accommodation; and improve standards in shared rented accommodation and provide opportunity to people who are socially marginalised.

- 4.4. Recognising that positive change requires both financial support and a joined up approach with Government, the council will continue to escalate concerns. The council will raise issues via the Devon Leaders/Chief Executives Group and directly with Government. The following representations have already been made: it is imperative that the current business rate criteria allowing a property to be valued for business rates based on the number of days that it is available for rent should change, as recommended by the HMT Tax Policies and Consultations Spring 2021 report; consideration should be given to allowing councils to set higher rates of council tax on second homes; powers should be given to council to enable them to take action where use as a short term let causes issues, including making changes to the Town and Country Planning Act to make clear that a change from permanent residential use to short term let is a material change of use; a system for licensing and regulating short term lets should be introduced; whilst new housing is needed, there needs to be recognition that this cannot be the only answer. At some stage, the flow of homes into the second home and short term letting market needs to be constrained; In order to increase the supply of properties suitable for use by housing authorities, consideration should be given to inducing landlords to make their properties available such as grants etc., or regulating the market so that landlords are required to make their properties available to local people prior to being used as short term lets; and remove any barriers to local planning authorities that wish to introduce policies requiring all new builds to be main residences etc.
- 4.5. The draft recommendations will be developed for consideration on the 16th December 2021 at a member workshop. Members will appraise the financial aspects of the recommendations in the context of all the corporate priorities.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. All recommendations will be the subject of a detailed financial appraisal.

6. EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Equality impact assessments will be presented in advance of the implementation of any new services or policies. This will ensure that the recommendations do not discriminate against anyone and where possible promote equal opportunity.

7. CONSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

7.1 Part 3 Annexe 1 para 6.3.1(a) and that this is a referred power.

8. STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1. This report contains no confidential information or exempt information under the provisions of Schedule 12A of 1972 Act.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1. The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: (The background papers are available for inspection and kept by the author of the report).

10. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL ADVICE

10.1. The author (below) confirms that advice has been taken from all appropriate Councillors and Officers:

Ken Miles; Chief Executive